

# Feminine Consciousness in the Works of Lu Yin

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This paper is concerned with examining Republican Chinese woman writer Lu Yin's (庐隐 1898-1934) several fictional works and concentrated on the expression of feminine consciousness. The awakening of feminine consciousness expressed in her fiction is comprised of two aspects. The first section of this paper focuses on the first aspect that reflects feminine consciousness—the subversion of traditional familial narratives—in which four short stories were analysed. Two fiction pieces, “A Scene” and “A Victims of the Times”, in which Ling Fen's *shimu* and Xiuzhen were used as examples of typical victims in traditional families during the early 20th-century transitional period, revealed Lu Yin's compassion for women's sufferings. In “Father” and in “The Failure of Professor Qin”, several male characters played dominant roles; however, in fact, Lu Yin's purpose was to deconstruct phallogentrism through debasing the image of an authoritative father as the prelude to awakening female self-consciousness. Thereafter, the paper explored the second aspect in terms of the awakening of feminine consciousness—that is, the freedom of marriage and love. Focusing on two respective heroines Lan Tian and Supu in “The Confession of Lan Tian” and in *The Heart of Women*, this section explores the issue of marriage issues and love affairs from different perspectives. Lu Yin expressed her objections to feudal arranged marriages and her advocacy of pursuing true love, but at the same time she also emphasised the antinomy of romantic love. Overall, women's subjects that Lu Yin created in her works represent her affirmation of self-perception in terms of gender issues. With her particular feminine consciousness, Lu Yin broke through powerful mainstream ideological discourse.

*Keywords:* Lu Yin, “new woman”, feminine consciousness

## Introduction

The emergence of female writers in the early decades of the 20th century of China “marked a significant stage in the emancipation of Chinese women” (Feng, 2004, p. 126). They realised the difficulties that “entrapped them within past paradigms” (Larson, 1998, p. 132), and expressed their solicitude and concern for females in Chinese society and contributed to the phenomenon of “new woman” (Xin nüxing 新女性)—against the stereotypes of the “traditional” Chinese woman. The term “new woman” in the New Culture Movement (Xin wenhuayundong 新文化运动) revealed “the unique alchemy of gender and modernity in early twentieth-century China” and she emphasised “newness” and “modernity” of female figures, either authors or heroines (Feng, 2004, p. 5).

As a leading “new woman”, Lu Yin (庐隐 1898-1934) had scaled the heights of her writing profession in mid-Republican China. In her short 36-year life, she published over 200 works in all, including novels, essays, proses, and travelogues (Wang & Guo, 1984, p. 167). Meanwhile, her 32 articles were published in *Short Story Monthly* (Xiaoshuoyuebao 小说月报), a chief Chinese literary journal that was edited by Mao Dun (茅盾 1896-1981) and has been called “the unchallenged pacemaker for modern Chinese literature” (Hsia, 1961, p. 55). Lu Yin was most well-known for her fiction such as “Father” (Fuqin 父亲 1925), “Old Friends on the Sea Shore” (Haibinguren 海滨故人 1925), “The Diary of Lishi” (Lishi de riji 丽石的日记 1923), “Manli” (曼丽 1928), and others, and the majority of these novels aim to reflect the subtle changes of women’s status as well as to restore them to their rightful place in Chinese society.

Lu Yin forged “the conjunction between subjectivity and women” (Larson, 1998, p. 165), and indeed she was fairly clever at catching subtle nuances of feminine thoughts or feelings that cannot be easily discerned by male writers or even by some other female writers. Accordingly, through systematically analysing several representative novels in detail, this study will focus on two aspects of how Lu Yin conveys feminine consciousness in her literary creations and in the construction of female protagonists in her fiction and will explore how these female characters reveal definitions of themselves as women in Republican China.

Born in a miserable time, Lu Yin witnessed China’s failure in a series of resistance struggles and was greatly influenced by general pessimistic attitudes of Chinese citizens. Besides this, the familial misfortune covered happiness in her childhood and against a backdrop of a country in turmoil, familial issues were indeed a greater factor influencing her creations, especially when expressing her compassion for women of “old society” (Jiu shehui 旧社会). From Lu Yin’s birth, she began to confront a series of challenges and setbacks that plagued her whole 36-year life. From the day she was born, Lu Yin was considered an evil presence by her mother and other family just because Lu Yin’s grandmother died on the very day of her birth. Since then her mother and her father were indifferent to her and sent her to the countryside to live with her wet nurse. Although Lu Yin’s father was a rich Qing Dynasty bureaucrat, she never enjoyed her distinguished family. In her *Autobiography*, Lu Yin recalled her childhood, “as an infant, I was pushed aside, never to experience the warmth of motherly love” (Ng & Wickeri, 1996, p. 97). When she grew up, her mother and her auntie sent her to a Protestant missionary boarding school because they did not want her to live at home with them. However, “ironically, it was her family’s rejection that enabled Lu Yin to obtain the education she needed to become a professional writer and teacher, and to develop the fierce independence for which she would later become famous” (Dooling & Torgeson, 1998, p. 136).

Moreover, as a member of the Association of Literary Studies into which was inaugurated in Peking on January 4, 1921 (Lee, 1973, p. 12), Lu Yin was more or less influenced by the principles of the association. In “My Opinion on Creativity” (Chuangzuo de wojian 创作的我见 1921), Lu Yin expressed her idea about literary creation as a writer and she said that, “The only thing a work worthy of being called a ‘literary creation’ cannot do without is personality—the crystallisation of art is subjectivity, the feelings of personality” (Denton, 1996, p. 235). Although indicating having no preference between those two kinds of art—“art for life’s sake” and “art for art’s sake”, she tended to depict the pain and misery that people throughout the world had been experiencing and to reflect on their real lives. “I cannot bear to speak in detail of such sorrow and misery!” (Denton, 1996, p. 236)

With intense sympathy, Lu Yin took responsibility for raising the youth's self-consciousness "to find light in the midst of darkness" (Denton, 1996, p. 236).

Since her career in creative writing began, Lu Yin felt the need to consider "women's writing" not only as a means of expressing complicated individual feelings but as a method for exploring women's particular existential value and attempted to interpret a specifically "feminine consciousness" with her own experience as a female being. Understanding women constitutes modernity in Lu Yin's novels and she had been speculating on women's fates through emphasising their agony and individual misfortune as female beings in love relationships or in married life.

Many May Fourth women writers were dissatisfied with the characterisation of women in the 19th-century or even in earlier fiction and they tended to go beyond stereotypes and to attempt to create characters with individual perceptions. One aspect that they had in common was to pay attention to women. However, distinguished from women writers who tried to transcend intrinsic female identity, "Lu Yin was always a woman throughout her works" (Zhao, 1987, p. 374). In other words, her fictional writings are about various female issues and written for females with their own experiences; additionally, the values of the narrative subject in her novels are based on female selves, and thus the writer enables the narrator of the story to express innermost female thoughts and feelings. This form of narrative discourse to some extent explains the way in which Lu Yin revealed the characters' inner lives and established a female world in her stories, which can be regarded as exploitation of feminist theory on *l'écriture féminine*—literally women's writing, proposed by the French feminist Hélène Cixous in "The Laugh of the Medusa":

Woman must write her self; must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement. (Cixous, 1976, p. 875)

Cixous clearly expressed her viewpoint that women were supposed to write themselves rather than standing in the world constructed by men. She repeatedly stressed that "I write woman; woman must write woman" and "your body must be heard". Although female writers existed in the May Fourth era, not every female writer was able to write about women or to provide a voice for women. Many of them were to some extent a kind of appendage and were following similar themes as male writers, merely with the perception of the opposite sex, and thus we cannot assume that all written works created by women writers will necessarily be with "feminine consciousness". By contrast, Lu Yin reflected female issues that were untouched by male writers or by popular critics.

According to Cixous, for female writers, "psychoanalytic theory and social experience both suggest that the leap from body to language is especially difficult for women" (Cixous, 1976, p. 880), and in Larson's eyes, the difficulty with a woman's writing was "not entirely because writing itself was unwomanly but because it could lure a woman out of the cloistered, domestic space into the outer space" (Larson, 1998, p. 133). Therefore, male writers as well as male critics always had dominant discourse power while the majority of female writers hardly transcended conventional narrative techniques.

In Yue Daiyun's opinion, feminine consciousness has different levels, including a social dimension, a physical dimension, and a cultural dimension. The social dimension refers to women's rebellion against

oppression from the perspective of social structure and the physical dimension is about female individuals in terms of their special experience such as child bearing. The cultural dimension emphasises “fringe culture” created by females and distinguished from mainstream masculine culture (Yue, 1991, p. 27). From the perspective of female characters that Lu Yin created in her works, feminine patterns are mainly based on social dimension as well as on cultural dimension. She indicated the difference of feelings experiences between males and females and stressed its coexistence as well as equality. Meanwhile, instead of speaking for females being supposedly respected by males in social life, Lu Yin advocated that as existential beings, women should respect themselves and even need to respect gender issues as well. As mentioned above, “the crystallisation of art is the feelings of the personality” and thus Lu Yin really shows her subjectivity in her creation (Denton, 1996, p. 235).

Accordingly, this study will firstly explore counter-familial narrative and familial revolution and will focus on four examples of her short stories, which collapse authoritative patriarchal or other male images in traditional fiction. Then, this paper will focus on the subject of freedom of marriage and love. It explores the issue of marriage issues and love affairs from different perspectives. In the third section, it will mainly be about the reception of Lu Yin and her series of heroines in her novels in contemporary criticism.

### **Subversion of Traditional Familial Narratives**

In ancient China, the appearance of women writers was unable to jeopardise the position of patriarchy; without independent creativity, they attached themselves to male-centred aesthetic principles in literary creations. Along with the development of the New Culture Movement, western culture in a short period influenced Chinese literature. Ideas about freedom, equality, radicalness, and revolution permeated mainland China and “new” modern literature voiced protest, as well as resistance, not only in political aspects but also in familial aspects.

Therefore, “May Fourth” was an unprecedented era of patricide, and until this era women realised how to speak out for themselves and against patriarchal society. In light of social backgrounds in the May Fourth era, this section will describe two aspects in detail to illustrate how Lu Yin reveals her idea in terms of opposing phallocentrism as well as advocating women’s equal social status.

### **Compassion for Women’s Suffering**

Lu Yin’s compassion for women of “old society” in essence was to sympathise with the weak, which was not only her emotional resonance as a female being but relevant to her humanistic thoughts to favour the weak. These short stories, such as “A Scene” (Yi mu 一幕 1931) and “A Victim of the Times” (Shidai de xishengzhe 时代的牺牲者 1931), represent the life of women in different social classes. Transcending the censure for individuals producing tragedies, Lu Yin’s criticism aimed at social systems as well as ideology. “If an intellectual lacks compassion, his or her works will not possess soul and will never resonate with readers or comfort them” (Xiao, 1983, p. 227).<sup>1</sup> She dedicated her compassion to women’s sufferings and made her own value judgement, which constitutes feminine consciousness in her novels from the perspective of subverting the male-dominant familial narrative.

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<sup>1</sup> All of the following translations of Lu Yin’s works are by my own.

In “A Scene”, for instance, Ling Fen witnesses a tragic scene in an old friend’s flat—a woman abandoned by her husband, Xu Wei. Ironically, Xu Wei is an educator advocating humanism as well as equality of gender. This woman tearfully complains of her husband to Ling Fen:

At that time, I was not only a wife and a mother but also a domestic servant. I was burdened with whole family’s responsibilities. However, I was totally wrong. In fact a man treats his wife as an outfit and if becoming rich he will change it; consequently, now I am just like a useless saddle being abandoned in the stable. (Lu, 2001a, p. 256)

It is sad that this woman’s marriage should end in such an anticlimax, and as a witness Ling Fen feels deep resignation as well as great grief for her *shimu* (teacher’s wife). “It is so difficult to be a human being. There are traps everywhere in this society and once losing their feet they will not free themselves anymore” (Lu, 2001a, p. 256). Lu Yin makes full use of Ling Fen to express her sympathy for the sufferings of numerous Chinese women, like *shimu*, whose life revolved around their husband but who was eventually abandoned. Lu Yin examined this kind of general phenomenon in reality and criticised it. Meanwhile, she gave expression to her hope as a “new woman”—“One day women in modern civilisation will have their own power as flame breaking through earth” (Lu, 2001a, p. 257).

“A Victim of the Times” is another short story that narrates women suffering from the feudal patriarchy, in which the teacher, Li Xiuzhen, plays a similar role as the *shimu* in “A Scene”. She is abandoned by her husband, Zhang Daohuai, an overseas returnee. He uses a series of stratagems to force Li Xiuzhen to divorce him so that he can marry another rich, pretty girl, Lin Yayu. Zhang implores her wife. Li Xiuzhen is surrounded by her husband’s ghastly lies and she trusts him. Finally, Xiuzhen’s friend, Xiuyu, tells her the truth. Unlike in “A Scene”, however, after Lin Yayu learns the truth, she rejects Zhang Daohuai and comes to see Li Xiuzhen with her mother. “Oh! Mr. Li, we are suffering from misfortune alike!” (Lu, 2001a, p. 144) This alliance of the unfortunates can be seen as a preliminary awakening of feminine consciousness of the female characters in Lu Yin’s fiction. Although there is no practical effect to rebel against male-dominated power, the modern idea it contains is a major breakthrough compared with previous numerous and voiceless females such as *shimu*. The coexistence of the wife and concubine contributes to the patriarchal society completely subjugating traditional women.

As a secondary wife by ritual, a concubine plays a role between the principal wife and the maids, and her secondary status is permanent (Lieberman, 1998, p. 51). Normally, a wife’s jealousy and resentment towards the husband’s other spouse is a kind of natural reflection of a woman’s self-consciousness as an existential being, but traditional ethics accepted it as a universally accepted truth that men ought to have a wife and several concubines. Traditional women’s obedience to it reinforces the power of male dominance and hurts them more deeply. Compassion with each other is a woman’s automatic behaviour after a complete awakening of feminine consciousness, which includes the realisation of enslavement as well as the common preservation of self-respect as female beings.

Lu Yin sharply observed the current condition that men constantly considered themselves as spiritual guides and misunderstood women (Xiao, 1983, p. 226), and she always attempted to search for her own subjective voice, looking for the female as a narrator in her fiction. Yet, in “A Victim of the Times”, the narrator as a reader of Xiuzhen’s diaries, actually does not transcend Xiuzhen’s self-narrative, which reveals the predicament that

women are dominated by the men, which is not only the dilemma of reality in this era but the spiritual frustration that they confront. It seems that Lu Yin is unable to comfort these women as tragic characters, and she says that “you are indeed a victim of the times but do not forget that grief is of great significance” (Xiao, 1983, p. 145). As the culmination of one’s emotion, great grief is able to evoke innermost resistance. Accordingly, Lu Yin’s reflection on victims’ weak status is the urge to condemn the backwards social systems rather than compromise with the patriarchy. What her writings succeed in doing is to subvert the masculine tone in male-dominated works. Lu Yin endeavoured to rewrite herself and created the narrator as an autonomous female subject, with a feminine consciousness that hardly existed in traditional Chinese discourse (Liu, 2003, p. 160). Therefore, compared with contemporaneous women writers who narrated feminine consciousness, Lu Yin was the one who was the most introspective, and her pioneering works touched on existential frustration as well as the dilemma of woman as “Other” (Butler, 1990, p. 133).

### **Transcendent Revolution of the Family**

A series of backward views of value and feudal moral regulations, such as “three obediences and four virtues” (Sancong side 三从四德), chastity and submitting to husbands, were imposed on “old society” women. In addition, they had to completely dedicate themselves to the family. Based on her own dilemma and on friends’ sufferings, Lu Yin always deplored supreme patriarchy and advocated gender equality. Moreover, she analysed the primary causes leading to the unrealistic and failed Nora in Chinese society:

Some slack women utilise the slogan of “supporting matriarchy” as their shield and buckler but actually they made a parasitic materialistic life. Others, due to pernicious influence of feudalism, firmly believe the ridiculous theory that “men should manage external affairs while women should be responsible for internal issues” (Nanzhuwainüzhuinei 男主外女主内). (Lu, 1983a, p. 222)

Meanwhile, she argued that these factors would make women lose individuality and personality as well as social status. Lu Yin challenges the male-dominated traditional family and creates a few male characters, including fathers as well as husbands, who subvert conventional authoritative male figures.

The women’s liberation movement lasted for a long time in Republican China. Its rise was a hybrid that fused foreign influence and native revolution, and thus it was proposed and advocated by men and then continued by women, which was destined to be the unique feature that the Chinese women’s liberation movement had been closely related to ethnic revolutionary practices transcending gender, and was bound to get entangled in national politics. Accordingly, we should know that there existed two different concepts—“women’s liberation” (Funüjiefang 妇女解放) and “liberating women” (Jiefangfunü 解放妇女). Essentially, the latter refers to passive women being supposed to rely on others to liberate them, which is exactly the subject of Lu Yin’s criticism, while “women’s liberation” is to liberate themselves with definite self-consciousness. As a representative female writer who was concerned with the women’s liberation movement, Lu Yin insisted on women’s initiative to liberate themselves, the first step of which was to abandon conventional masculine images as well as to subvert phallogentrism. In other words, through deconstructing male images, Lu Yin wrote the body of women and constructed the relationship between body and language, which is actually a rupture with previous fixed male discourse.

In 1925, Lu Yin created a short story “Father” (Fuqin 父亲), in which the son reveals the real domestic normal life dominated by his father and expresses his intense dissatisfaction with his father (Xiao, 1983, p. 91). The mother of the narrator married the narrator’s father when she was 17 years old; because of his ongoing whoring and gambling constantly, the mother eventually died of consumption. Soon afterwards, the father married a prostitute who is now the narrator’s stepmother, and then they had a child. Yet, on a business trip, the father married another girl, and deceived her into believing that he would like to live with her at her home and that she becomes the narrator’s *shumu* (concubine mother). After 10 years, *shumu* knew the truth that she had to be incommunicado outside her home. Since she was much younger than the father, she is the age-mate of the narrator in this novel. Out of pity for her sufferings, the narrator fell in love with her and gave her a bunch of red roses, which stood for love in a love relationship. Unfortunately, she died of serious melancholia. In her last moments, she said to the narrator that “actually I did not fall in love with your father when we married. Unfortunately I am a woman and I cannot do nothing with my marriage” (Xiao, 1983, p. 112). Meanwhile, she expresses her disappointment to men—“some people persuaded me to divorce with your father but I did not think it beneficial to me because men rarely can be relied on” (Xiao, 1983, p. 112).

With growing disillusionment with the father, *shumu* struggles between hope for the narrator and desperation of reality. What she expresses reveals familial oppression of women in a patriarchal society, and breaks the enchantment of loving relationships in a male-dominated world. In this story, Lu Yin criticises the inhumane family systems with two approaches. Firstly, she exposes immoral behaviour through the sons’ narration, which directly transcends conventional cardinal guides. Normally, no matter what a patriarch did in a family, the junior generation had no right to condemn it; however, in “Father”, the narrator expresses his dissatisfaction with his father without any disguise. The narrator in it depicts his father as a “ridiculous old grouch” and even he says that “without moustache he still looks old because of the line at the corner of his eyes and of forehead” (Xiao, 1983, p. 93).

As a son against the traditional patriarch’s claim to his concubine or to other families, the narrator does not preserve the dignity of his father and tramples upon his authoritative father-like image. This kind of counter-familial narrative subverts phallocentrism and there appears a rupture within conventional male discourse. Lacan locates the man in a phallogentric subject position from a symbolic perspective, while the woman is situated on the edge (Coakley, 2005, p. 168). Under phallocentrism, male superiority in the traditional family existed for a long time and thus female discourse was constrained all the time. Secondly, the son-*shumu* romance can be rendered in narrative as revolutionary and subversive. Lu Yin pitted the love of “mother” and “son” against a backwards family system, which ostensibly offends the incest taboo but in fact reconstructs the “May Fourth” discourse against authoritative patriarchs.

With the contents of counter-familial narrative, “The Failure of Professor Qin” (Qin jiaoshou de shibai 秦教授的失败 1925) is another short story that Lu Yin published in *Short Story Monthly*. It portrays a character, Professor Qin, who seems obsessed with reforming Chinese corrupt and backward families and always advocates a new hope in the future of China to young students. He argues that “New China” will not involve paternal possession as the majority of them take opium, marry several concubines, dally with women or adopt illegal methods in an attempt to make more money. Professor Qin encourages numerous youths to resist arbitrary fathers; ironically, however, he actually has an inglorious family and his father possesses all the inappropriate behaviour

that he despises. When he arrives at home, his father reprimands him. The discourse of Professor Qin's father completely reveals his imperious attitudes towards his son. As a patriarch of the family, in fact he does not take his responsibility for others seriously and his behaviour is really inappropriate, and thus he loses his dignity. Yet, Professor Qin does not back off from his father's harsh words, "I would rather die than be humiliated by you...I would rather be a roamer without family in the world than endure hardships in this family!" (Lu, 2001a, p. 10) This dialogue, arranged by Lu Yin, reaches a climax of declaring a straight conflict between the patriarchal system and "May Fourth" new ideas.

In addition, the character of "mother" indeed awakens female consciousness, but not to yield to her husband. Facing her husband, she indignantly rebukes him. Distinguished with her son's state and political position, the awakening of her consciousness is derived from a woman's specific experience as a female being, which criticises inequality of rights and obligation on the two sexes. In Lu Yin's views, the male-centred family is a single construction of patriarchal benefits as well as desires; along with the awakening of feminine consciousness, the phallocentrism within gender privilege will be eventually deconstructed.

Overall, Lu Yin's fiction not only enabled us to detect antinomy and self-consciousness of May Fourth's "new women", but also impelled us to examine the complexity and contradictions in mainstream ideological discourse. The discourse convention marginalised expression of female subjects and excluded females from the symbolic order, so that they could only narrate modes centring on males. In this discourse dilemma, Lu Yin struggled with fixed male conventions and sought marginal discourses with female subjects. Moreover, she expelled authoritative and righteous male images out of texts, providing an effective backdrop for conveying feminine consciousness.

### **The Freedom of Marriage and Love**

In the May Fourth era, the subject of marriage and love was still recognised as an intimate feeling experience and as an essential sign of women's literature. Love was not only a normal feeling for a human being, but a spiritual motivation to realise female intellectuals' self-identity.

Accordingly, the May Fourth "subversive woman" (Pannü 叛女) challenged the feudal autocratic system and romanticised love into extreme freedom; they denied conventional female norms in love or in married life.

Similar to other women's literary works, Lu Yin's fiction tackles the conflict between old-style marriage and modern love and of practising rights and dignity as a female being. On the other hand, distinguished from others, in Lu Yin's fictional world, love is not blind but clairvoyant and the sublimity of love parallels its nihility. In other words, Lu Yin objects to feudal arranged marriages and advocates pursuing true love, but at the same time she emphasises the antinomy of romantic love and reveals her growing disenchantment with love's freedom.

#### **Objecting to Arranged Marriage**

It is widely believed that notions of marriage and love are synonymous and that both of them represent basic emotional needs of human beings, normally a romantic relationship between a male and female; however, marriage is different from love. As Emma Goldman says, "marriage and love have nothing in common; they are as far apart as the poles; are, in fact, antagonistic to each other" (Goldman, 2015, p. 3). Lu Yin's fiction exactly reflects what Goldman thinks in terms of the relationship between marriage and love. In her eyes, marriage could



be the result of love, because “few people can completely outgrow a convention” (Goldman, 2015, p. 1), but not because only marriage could assert love.

Playing a pivotal role in the development of the anarchist political movement, Goldman was well known for her feminist activism (Haaland, 1993, p. 2). She opposed marriage without love and in her opinion marriage is an economic arrangement as well as an insurance pact, and women should not be slaves in married life. In traditional Chinese society, the feudal systems of arranged marriage were just like a shackle for the majority of girls. Therefore, struggling with this shackle became new women’s coincident response to the feudal system. “The Confessions of Lan Tian” can be taken as a typical example, in which Lan Tian, as a representative of the “new woman” group, firmly opposes marrying a rich playboy, which is arranged by her father and stepmother. Lan Tian’s mother in this fiction only appears in her memory about combing hair. “One year after my mother died my father married another woman and this new mother is totally different from my mother who always hugged me or kissed me while combing my hair” (Lu, 2001b, p. 4). Meanwhile, the author did not describe the dialogue between Lan Tian and her father or her stepmother. Focusing on the inner soliloquy of the narrator and on her contradictory emotions with her family, Lu Yin attempted to depict a female intellectual’s real psychological struggle with the feudal system. When Lan Tian learns that the fact that this “fiancé” is already married to three wives, she is determined to run away from home for the sake of struggling with an arranged marriage as the emancipated Nora left home to escape from her marriage. Lan Tian talked about it with her best friend, Sister Xiu:

I should go! I will triumph over this kind of unfree marriage...To escape from a tyrannical family and to pursue my brilliant future are not only for the sake of my personal happiness but also play a vanguard role for other female fellow sufferers. (Lu, 2001b, p. 4)

After the victory of defeating the arranged marriage, Lan Tian’s life was immersed in depression again. Although as an aspiring new woman with a clear purpose, Lan Tian worked as a messenger of a magazine with a considerable salary; not long afterwards she unfortunately suffered from serious hepatopathy. Whilst sick, Lan Tian was looked after well by He Ren, a colleague of Lan Tian. Thereafter, they got engaged as soon as she recovered from her illness; however, their story tragically ended with the utter abandonment of Lan Tian by He Ren, who married another girl. Dramatically, back to “A Victim of the Times”, He Ren’s new wife ultimately visits Lan Tian and states, “oh my sister, both of us are victims” (Lu, 2001b, p. 4). In a disaster situation that defies description Lan Tian is enmeshed in failed performance in either arranged marriage or autonomous marriage. Moreover, from “three wives” of the arranged fiancé to Lan Tian onwards to He Ren’s new wife, Lu Yin seems to depict a revolving betrayal of modern women by marriage and makes intense accusation of a cruel social reality. As Lu Yin wrote in the novel, “I have to curse human beings; however, it is because of her sincere that I will immediately forgive women in the world and I will cry bitterly for them” (Lu, 2001b, p. 7).

According to the above analysis, it can be found that what distinguishes Lu Yin’s fiction about objecting to arranged marriage from that of other female writers, such as either Feng Yuanjun (冯沅君 1900-1974) or Ling Shuhua (凌叔华 1900-1990) in the May Fourth era, is her apparent indifference to the concrete depiction of conflict between parents and girls. The specific image of a father or mother disappears in her fiction and seems like an invisible power which manipulates marriage in reality. Furthermore, the father is the main character who

fiercely arranges marriage for his junior generation, while the mother is constantly mentioned in passing or is sitting on the fence without determined attitudes, which to some extent imply the influence of Lu Yin's miserable childhood memory of her parents' apathetic experience on her fictional creations.

Moreover, Lu Yin accentuates girls' liberation from the family and thus they are usually able to find a job so as to support their own life. Female characters are privileged with ample subjectivity in her fiction. In addition, "of all the May Fourth writers, Lu Yin probably privileged the modern form of first-person narration most in her fiction" (Feng, 2004, p. 142). Unlike most novels in which the conflict between the heroine and her parents is narrated in the third person, Lu Yin's works always employ a first-person as the narrator expressing her agony and determination to rebel against her father's mandatory requirements in respect of marriage.

Lan Tian has been forever immortalised in Lu Yin's works against arranged marriage and she represents the author's misgivings on modern female intellectuals' status in their marriage life. Lu Yin, in her own way, responded to discussion and concern of Lu Xun in terms of "what happened after Nora leaves home", and as a women's writer Lu Yin herself interpreted Noraism with her own experience. Lu Xun advocated women's economic independence in marriage and in family life and he "was therefore pessimistic about Nora's future" in his lecture "What Happens After Nora Leaves Home" (Nalazouhouzenyang 娜拉走后怎样) (Feng, 2004, p. 7). Lu Xun declared that she would "either degrade herself, or come back home...another alternative is starving to death" (Lu, 1973, p. 179), while Lu Yin answered it in a different way. "The times keep changing all the time and Ibsen has already indicated the future way for women for us. Of course Nora leaving home is an indisputable fact" (Lu, 1983a, p. 222).

As a modern "Nora", Lan Tian finds a decent job and achieves economic independence after leaving home. Similarly, misfortune regarding the familial experience developed Lu Yin's fierce independence for which she would teach and save money so as to enrol at Beijing Women's Normal College (Dooling & Torgeson, 1998, p. 136). Lu Yin's new narrative, in terms of the fate of "Nora", gradually separated from May Fourth enlightenment discourse and focused on liberation speech with female subjectivity. In view of utterance interpretation, she preferred to examine the influence of marriage itself on women and to find a way in which the marriage issue connected with feminine discourse.

### **Antinomy of Views of Romantic Love**

In the early 20th century, the concept of "romantic love", a modern ideology symbolising individual freedom and supreme individualism, sprang up in Republican China along with a social, cultural, and political revolution. From then on, it substituted the traditional ethos of propriety (Li 礼) and became the symbol of new morality. Many May Fourth female intellectuals regarded romantic love as an ideological weapon to resist parents' privileges as well as a series of hypocritical feudal ethics that could not fit in with the needs of the New Culture Movement, which sometimes bewildered itself in terms of the essence of love. As Lee points out:

...Love was identified with freedom, in the sense that by loving and by releasing one's passions and energies the individual could become truly a full and free man. To love was also considered an act of defiance and sincerity, of renouncing all the artificial restraints of hypocritical society so as to find one's true self and expose it to one's beloved. (Lee, 1973, p. 258)

Indeed, the theme of love in the May Fourth era bonded with the concept of modernity as well as female individualisation and focused on female free will. The Becks claim that modern women's individual life, produced in an individualised modern society, is experiencing new challenges, which contributes to modern love located in "normal chaos" (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995, p. 4). Accordingly, we can realise the importance of romantic love to modern women.

Moreover, it should be noted that this paper emphasises "love's freedom" instead of "free love" in Lu Yin's works; both of these two concepts always seem to refer to the same meaning. However, in fact, free love "was associated with pleasure-seeking and multiple partners" while the former "was the responsible pursuit of stable, monogamous, happy, and reproductive unions based on love" (Kaneko, 1999, p. 18). Lu Yin advocated a free choice of relationships and love as the necessary foundation for marriage, and she disagreed with reckless behaviour in love relationships. She seemed to corroborate the advocacy of Ellen Key about the relationship between love and marriage. As a feminist writer whose translated works were constantly published by *Lady's Journal* (Funüzazhi 妇女杂志) and who had a great impact on China's New Culture Movement (Rosenmeier, 2011, p. 48), Ellen Key developed a "new sexual morality" and her fundamental principle was that love and marriage must go hand-in-hand. Similarly to Goldman, Key contended that "marriage without love was unhealthy and debilitating to the species" (Lowy, 2004, p. 365).

What distinguishes Lu Yin's fiction about the subject of love from that of other contemporaneous female writers is her views of antinomy in terms of romantic love. First, she emphasised "love is better than any other things" (Aiqingzhishang 爱情至上) (Lu, 2001c, p. 15) and encouraged youths to be free to pursue their true love. The effects of Lu Yin's advocacy of freedom to choose one's love can be seen most clearly in her novella *The Heart of Women*, a love narrative in which the protagonist, Supu, believes that true love is capable of conquering all and thus she dedicates herself to her love (Lu, 2001d, p. 56). The story begins with Supu's friend, Liyun, who is in love with married Haiwen, and after three years Haiwen is divorced from his wife and then finally married Liyun. Supu and Chunshi came across each other at Liyun and Haiyun's wedding and then fell in love. Lu Yin does not narrate Liyun and Haiwen's story in detail; however, through the romance between them, readers can determine that Liyun is a brave girl to sacrifice herself and her family for her true love, which in a sense encourages Supu to be a real "modern woman".

Supu is also a married woman; when she was 17 years old, she married Heshi, or Mr. He, and one year later she had a daughter with him. Unlike Lantian, Supu's marriage is consensual rather than merely arranged by her parents; although, perhaps for them appropriation of each other is more important than being in love with each other. Thereafter, Heshi leaves for Europe to study and, gradually, Supu feels lonely and their marriage plunges into trouble. At this time, Supu meets Chunshi, or "Mr. Purity" (Larson, 1998, p. 92), and they fall in love at first sight. Soon after, they "indulge in the usual liberating behaviours of love" (Lu, 2001d, p. 93), overnight outings, drinking wine together, writing letters to flirt with each other, and they both always think about "what is woman's heart?" (Lu, 2001d, p. 56) Supu contends her desire for love with her inner guilt for her husband, Heshi, and her child. Only after she receives her husband's letter about his friendship with a German woman does Supu irrevocably decide to continue their relationship without any guilt. For Supu, she must dedicate herself to holy and pure love and similarly Chunshi is willing to sacrifice his family for enduring true love. In a letter to Chunshi,

Supu says: “My heart is full of joy that in this world I have met you—a pure and true youth...In this world, only you can actualize the life of my inner heart! (Lu, 2001d, p. 40)

Thereafter, Chunshi goes to America to be a Ph.D. student and Supu decides to follow him and leave for America, although she misses her mother and her daughter. However after a period of living with Chunshi, Supu begins to feel guilty again and regards her actions as irresponsible in terms of her family. Thus, she plans to visit Europe to create a solution with her husband, divorcing Heshi. Before leaving, Supu says to Chunshi that “there’s the social system that puts special pressure on women, and they can’t help but have so many worries!” (Lu, 2001d, p. 57)

When returning to America, Supu and Chunshi get married and hold a wedding, although Chunshi’s parents oppose it because Supu is not chaste. Not long after marriage, they return to China and Supu decides that they should separate and wait for one year to think about their relationship. Soon after, Supu writes to Chunshi to break off their relationship because of pressure from the public but finally the encouragement of Chunshi makes Supu feel there is still hope for their romantic love.

Lu Yin arranged an open-ended story ending without a clear result of a love relationship between Supu and Chunshi, while in the process of telling this story Lu Yin obviously conveys her idea in support of pursuing enduring, pure, and true love for youths. In her novels, romantic love is endowed with a special social meaning with worldly ideas and becomes the driving force behind the continuity of the May Fourth spirit, which accords with the literary creations of Feng Yuanjun and Ling Shuhua, to some extent. Accordingly, her female characters live for love and are bravely willing to die for love. In “Love Is Not a Game” (Lianaibushiyouxi 恋爱不是游戏 1933), Lu Yin says that “the real love is neither a game nor a value that can be experienced by degenerate life...it possesses the urge to impel youths and altruistic sentiment” (Lu, 2001c, p. 15).

Nevertheless, on the other side, some other female characters in Lu Yin’s novels repel and suspect males in heterosexual relationships, and men are no longer one of the subjects that construct love relationships. Instead, they serve as a blurred background so as to fill the narration of the story. With intense emotion of nihilism in terms of romantic love, Lu Yin removes feudal signifiers to idealise love itself. Lu Yin always situates two sexes in binary opposition and renders the female struggle between sense and sensibility. The heroine bravely pursues her true love, but once cheated on by the other side, the attraction will turn into fear and doubt of love, and thus Lu Yin admonished us that, “human affairs are acting plays and holy love is unreliable” (Lu, 2001c, p. 15). Facing a long courtship what these women feel is the “self-interest of mankind”, and they compare themselves to fish while males seem like fishermen with strong possessiveness (Lu, 2001c, p. 15). These women sensitively find the essence of nihilism of love in a patriarchal society and attempt to appeal to numerous women to triumph over hypocritical romance.

Therefore, these heroines, such as Ya Xia in “A Certain Person’s Melancholy”, cannot but lament that “my heart hesitates so much that I am able only to enjoy pleasure through life” (Lu, 1983b, p. 13), and this kind of attitude towards love affairs becomes a hopeless choice. “A Certain Person’s Melancholy”, for instance, is written in epistolary form, in which Ya Xia as the heroine writes several letters to her best friend, KY, to describe her romantic encounters with men, although they end in failure. Meanwhile, Ya Xia also narrates several similar misfortunes of her other friends involved in love relationships. Ya Xia always believes that the woman is supposed to enjoy pleasure through romance; however, finally, Ya Xia commits suicide because what she thinks

about “is no match for the powerful social conventions that expect a woman to committee herself to a heterosexual relationship” (Feng, 2004, p. 144) and eventually failed in practice in society. What Ya Xia embraces in her mind just reflects the author’s philosophy of *Carpe Diem*, which in fact is based on Lu Yin’s understanding of women’s existential dilemma out of sober recognition. She reminds women to build up an independent personality and that they should not be a *jardinière* serving as a man’s plaything and should not lose self-respect in love relationships.

### Reception of Lu Yin in Contemporary Criticism

Lu Yin was widely reckoned as a leading figure of “new woman” and as one of the 18 important female writers of modern China in *Writing Women in Modern China* (Dooling & Torgeson, 1998, p. 135). Also, according to the above multi-angled analysis of her several novels which reveal exceptional feminine consciousness, it can be suggested that Lu Yin can be considered a pioneer at that time.

In fact, among May Fourth women writers, Lu Yin was indeed one of popular women writers with increasing critical popularity in the early 20th century. Her series of heroines created in her literary works were also paid close attention by contemporary critics, especially by several male critics in the 1930s. Mao Dun had already realised her existential significance and proposed that Lu Yin was the offspring of “May Fourth” and awakened in the May Fourth times (Xiao, 1983, p. 235).

Mao Dun’s criticism of Lu Yin, from that time on, had a great influence on her status in May Fourth’s literary field. “On Lu Yin” (Lu Yin Lun 庐隐论 1934) was one of the most important criticisms of Lu Yin in the New Period and drew more attention to this women’s writer. Mao Dun affirmed her artistic achievement and underlined the inevitable relationship between Lu Yin and “May Fourth”, but at the same time Mao Dun implied his negative response to her narrative techniques in terms of portraying heroines as well as to the theme of “spiritual love” in her novels (Xiao, 1983, p. 236). Mao Dun proposed a concept of “Lu Yin’s standstill” (Luyin de tingzhi 庐隐的停滞) and he held that not only were the range of her novels’ subjects too narrow but they were untinged by the excessive streak of autobiographical nature. Mao Dun says:

...She has experienced for thirteen or fourteen years, which refers to the so-called Lu Yin’s standstill. However, the time goes ahead and thus standstill also means falling back although Lu Yin has always been struggling so as to go forward... her cognition with the present is really indistinct. (Xiao, 1983, p. 235)

Obviously, Mao Dun more or less felt regretful about Lu Yin’s “standstill” and about her later fiction and he attributed it to author’s indifference to society. That she transforms her passion of social movement into agony with individual or women’s sufferings acquired Mao Dun’s complete incomprehension. The critic’s male self-standard consciousness covered inherent feminine consciousness belonging to a woman writer and real existential status of female individuals.

In addition, taking “Old Friends on the Seaside” for instance, Mao Dun argued that its female protagonist Lu Sha was too sentimental with “a heart that cannot help being titillated” and that the structure of this short fiction was discursive and too complex (Xiao, 1983, p. 238). Five female figures being narrated led to readers feeling confused. Mao Dun felt pessimistic about the heroine Lu Sha in “Old Friends on the Seashore” and he considers this female figure as just Lu Yin’s direct autobiographical description in terms of her own experience to a great extent. On the contrary, the female worker in a cotton mill in “Is It Possible to Sell One’s Own Soul”

(Linghunkeyimai ma 灵魂可以卖吗 1921), the female missionary in “Leftover Tears” (Yulei 余泪 1922), and the heroine in “Memories Under the Moon” (Yuexia de huiyi 月下的回忆 1922) and several other heroines in her early fiction were much impressive with revolutionary progressive significance.

Additionally, Mao Dun attempted to express his opinion that Lu Yin should not preach the sermon of “spiritual love” in terms of love issues and should attempt to broaden her selection range of subjects. “What she depicts is merely herself” (Xiao, 1983, p. 238). In his eyes, the reappearance of Lu Sha, Supu, Lishi, and other alike heroines was to some extent Lu Yin’s incarnations only in seemingly different garb. However in fact, Mao Dun’s comments were only from the perception of a male critic and stressed what Lu Yin should become is a “May Fourth” writer instead of a real female writer. Like most male critics, Mao Dun ignored feminine characteristics of a female being, which was exactly what a male writer lacked.

Since Lu Yin’s literary works were published, bitterness or emotionalism have been reckoned as the general tone of her novels and she was described as “a female writer of the sentimental school” (Ganshangpainüzuoqia 感伤派女作家) by Cao Ye (草野) (Cao Ye, 1932, pp. 43-45), another Republican critic. In his criticism which has become one of the three most important criticisms in the New Period besides “On Lu Yin” by Mao Dun as well as Lu Yin by Huang Aying (Ma, 2013, p. 12), Cao Ye wrote that “the author argued that the defect was a must principle in the world and that the embittering fate was a beautiful poem”. In his eyes, “what she (Lu Yin) saw about this world was not perfect at all and she recognised the bitter as the sweet”.

Cao Ye affirmed Lu Yin’s talent of depicting tragic stories, however this critic argued that speaking in general “it should not be sympathised by the public”. In his eyes, without social consciousness, “the author is a fragile woman” and “she cannot create appealing works but just complain about everything”. Significantly, Cao Ye denied her social consciousness but Mao Dun thought that it can be manifestly perceived in her novels (Xiao, 1983, p. 235). These contradictory statements to some extent are able to intrigue people and to create the uncertainty of adverse evaluation of Lu Yin’s works. From the perspective of Lu Yin’s characterisation of females in novels, Cao Ye judged her as a novice in portraying characters without in-depth observation about social conditions. In his opinion, Lusha and Manli were immature with excessive intense pessimistic emotion, while the narrator’s *shumu* in “Father” was original and unique. However, “*shumu*’s death due to desperation with romantic love is a really outdated idea”, which to some extent revealed the author’s banality. Therefore Cao Ye in no sense advocated Lu Yin’s tragedy writing.

In general, the comments of Cao Ye on Lu Yin were not favourable to her, but at least “sentimental school” has been acknowledged and has become a kind of Lu Yin-style in characterisation of females in her fiction. Not only Cao Ye but another critic He Yubo reprimanded her works and series of emotional heroines which embittered readers to a great extent. “Accordingly, her works did not have any function of reforming society and of transforming women’s fates but only remained as surviving feudalism and trite moral ideas” (He, 1937, p. 45). He even considered “Old Friends on the Sea Shore” as an exercise writing of pupils and some heroines created by Lu Yin were of no point to readers. It can be said that He Yubo’ criticism on Lu Yin and her characters was the most harsh comparing with that of other contemporary critics.

Obviously, Lu Yin’s methods of characterisation of females in fiction were not praised by contemporary criticism, especially by mainstream male critics in the 1930s, which perhaps can be seen as one of reasons why

Lu Yin—unlike Ding Ling and Xiao Hong—has been unpopular with the literati. The expression of feminine consciousness in her fiction was reckoned as being incongruous with themes in a revolutionary age.

Meanwhile, it can be found that whether a female writer's works are good or not depended on the viewpoint of male critics and they could not be the master of their own creations. Writings by females were always considered as being over-emotional and irrational. In other words, when considering women's novels or essays, male critics adopted their own logic to marginalise or to reprimand female literary creations. Besides, "if a work is undeniably good, male critics attempt to attribute its excellence to the improving influence of a male figure close to the writer" (Russ, 1984, p. 49).

However, in fact, "a woman's writing is always feminine; it cannot help being feminine; at its best it is most feminine" (Abel, 1982, p. 14). In this sense, Lu Yin examined the real definitions of feminine consciousness as a female being as well as a writer. The body became the source of her discourse and she combined the woman's body with her language. Making women's texts available to women, Lu Yin entered into a role played by a female novelist with autonomous aesthetic and her voice represented the awakening of feminine consciousness.

### Conclusion

In one sense, Lu Yin's literary works provide a good example for republican feminist literary criticism (Abel, 1982, p. 378). However, rather than directly advocating feminism politically, she preferred to deconstruct traditional concepts of women and to explore feminine consciousness as female beings. This paper has been concerned with examining Lu Yin's several fictional works and concentrated on the expression of feminine consciousness. In a special and limited way, the concept of "feminine consciousness" as a literary device in this paper mainly referred to the approaches of characterisation of female characters in fiction.

Through analysing Lu Yin's literary works and a series of heroines in detail, it can be found that the awakening of feminine consciousness expressed in her fiction was comprised of two aspects. The first section of this paper focused on the first aspect that reflects feminine consciousness—the subversion of traditional familial narratives—in which four short stories were analysed. Two fiction pieces, "A Scene" and "A Victims of the Times", in which Ling Fen's *shimu* and Xiuzhen were used as examples of typical victims in traditional families during the early 20th-century transitional period, revealed Lu Yin's compassion for women's sufferings. In "Father" and in "The Failure of Professor Qin", several male characters played dominant roles; however, in fact, Lu Yin's purpose was to deconstruct phallocentrism through debasing the image of an authoritative father as the prelude to awakening female self-consciousness. Meanwhile, the narrator's *shumu* and Professor Qin's mother were seemingly insignificant in these two stories; however, their appearance redefined the "new woman" in a traditional male-dominated family, to some extent.

Thereafter, the paper explored the second aspect in terms of the awakening of feminine consciousness. The second aspect was concerned with the freedom of marriage and love. Focusing on two respective heroines Lan Tian and Supu in "The Confession of Lan Tian" and in "The Heart of Women", this section explores the issue of marriage issues and love affairs from different perspectives. Lu Yin expressed her objections to feudal arranged marriages and her advocacy of pursuing true love, but at the same time she also emphasised the antinomy of romantic love. In other words, Lu Yin on the one hand encouraged youths to pursue their real true love and emphasised that "love is better than any other things".

Having provided the specific analysis of Lu Yin's fiction for the sake of exploring feminine consciousness conveyed through female characters, the final section examined the reception of Lu Yin and her heroines in contemporary criticism, particularly by several well-known male critics in the 1930s, through which it could be found that Lu Yin and her female protagonists were not very approved of by contemporary male critics and the expression of feminine consciousness to some extent was misunderstood as the indifference with social issues.

Although Lu Yin and her heroines were reproached in some respects by contemporary critics, it cannot be denied that women's subjects that Lu Yin created in her works represented her affirmation of self-perception in terms of gender issues. With her particular feminine consciousness, Lu Yin broke through powerful mainstream ideological discourse.

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