Narrative Modes in Lu Xun's Short Stories

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CHAPTER ONE

The Significance of Lu Xun's Short Stories in the Evolution of Narrative Modes in Chinese Fiction

1.1 Theory of Narrative Modes

Although narrative modes are as old as fiction itself, their study in Western literary theory started only at the end of the nineteenth century. Selden L. Whitcomb included in his book The Study of a Novel (1905) a section with the title “The Narrator. His Point,” claiming that “the unity of a passage or a plot depends largely on the clearness and stability of [the narrator’s] position” (Friedman 114-15). The claim anticipates a trend: later manuals on the art of fiction usually contain a similar section.

In recent decades, studies on the narrator’s position have been noticeably successful, however problems appeared due to differences in terminology. Scholars have been using “point of view” and “narrative perspective” most frequently, but “focus of narration,” “narrative situation,” “narrative viewpoint,” “narrative manner” and “narrative point of view” have also been used. Stanzel distinguished in his 1955 study three types of novelistic “narrative situations”: Auktoriale Erzählsituation, which is that of the “omniscient” author (e.g. Fielding’s Tom Jones); the Ich Erzählssituation or first-person narration, where the narration is done by a character (e.g. Melville’s Moby Dick); and the Personale Erzählssituation, when a narrative is told “in the third person” but according to the point of view of a character (e.g. James’s The Ambassadors).

In the same year, Norman Friedman presented a more complex classification with eight terms, by considering who talks to the reader, from what position (angle) with respect to the story he or she tells, what channels of information the narrator uses to convey the story to the reader, and, at what distance he or she places the reader from the story. The eight resultant categories are: 1-2) “omniscient” narration with or without “authorial intrusion” (Fielding in Tom Jones or Thomas Hardy in Tess of D’Urbervilles); 3) “first-person” narration by a witness who tells the reader only what he or she as observer may legitimately observe (Marlow in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness), 4) I-protagonist, who tells his own story (Dickens, Great Expectations); 5) “selective-omniscient” narrating, with a “multiple” point of view, where the appearance of the characters and the setting can be transmitted to the reader only through the mind of someone present (Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse), 6) single point of view, where the reader is limited to the mind of only one of the characters (Joyce, Portrait of the Artist); and, finally, two types of purely objective narrating: the “dramatic mode” (where the information available to the reader is limited largely to what the characters do and say, and the reader apparently listens to no one but the characters themselves, who move as it were upon a stage: Hemingway, Hills Like White Elephants), and “the camera,” (in which the aim is to transmit a pure and simple recording, without apparent selection or organization) (118-31).

Gérard Genette thinks that this classifications creates a confusion between what he calls mood and voice, a confusion “between the question who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective? and the very different question who is the narrator?—or, more simply, the question who sees? and the question who speaks?” (Narrative Discourse 186) In Genette’s opinion, it is not legitimate to draw up a list where the two determinations compete with each other. Thus, he thinks that it is convenient to consider only the purely modal determinations, which concern what people ordinarily call “point of view” and Jean Pouillon calls “vision.” Genette regards terms such as “point of
view," "vision," or "field" as too specific in their connotations, and he adopts therefore
the slightly more abstract term "focalization" (Narrative Discourse 188-89).

Genette distinguishes three types of focalization: the first (in general represented
by the classical narrative) is nonfocalized narrative, or narrative with zero focalization. It is
associated with omniscient narrators. When the position is locatable (in one character or
another) and entails conceptual or perceptual restrictions (with what is presented being
governed by the perspective of a character), this is the second type: the narrative with
internal focalization. Internal focalization can be fixed (when one and only one
perspective is adopted), variable (when different perspectives are adopted in turn to
present different situations and events), or multiple (when the same situations and events
are presented more than once, each time in terms of a different perspective). The third
type is narrative with external focalization, which is limited to the characters’ external
behavior (actions and words spoken aloud but not thoughts or feelings), their appearance,
and the setting against which they come to the fore (Narrative Discourse 189-94; Prince
32-33). In Genette’s opinion, the theory of focalization is only a general presentation of
the standard of “point of view” (Revisited 84).

Mieke Bal uses the term “focalization” in a different sense. If Genette uses it to
c caracterize the narrator’s relation to the narrated world, Bal uses it in a broader sense,
whenever something is seen from a certain “point of view,” by the narrator but also by
characters. She notes that the existing terms do not make an explicit distinction between
the vision through which the elements are presented and the identity of the voice that is
verbalizing that vision: “they do not make a distinction between those who see and those
who speak” (Narratology 100-01). To counter this, she applies focalization “to the
relations between the elements presented and the vision through which they are presented
with the term focalization.” Focalization is, then, “the relation between the vision and that
which is ‘seen, ’ perceived” (Narratology 100). Consequently, Bal speaks of “focalizers”
and “focalized,” terms that Genette does not use. In Bal’s view, the definition of
focalization refers to a relationship, and each pole of that relationship, the subject and the
object of focalization, must therefore be studied separately. The subject of focalization,
the focalizer, is the point from which the elements are viewed. That point can lie with a
character or outside it. Based on this, Bal distinguishes between internal and external
focalization, but she does not recognize Genette’s zero, internal and external focalization.
According to Bal, focalization can be called internal when it lies with one character which
participates in the story as an actor; it is external when an anonymous agent, situated
outside the story, functions as focalizer (Narratology 104-05). Thus, there is an internal
character-bound focalizer (CF) and an external, non-character-bound focalizer (EF). Bal
considers it important to ascertain which character focalizes which object. The
combination of a focalizer and a focalized object can be constant to a large degree, or it
can vary greatly. In her view, research into such fixed or loose combinations is of
importance because the image we receive of the object is determined by the focalizer.
Conversely, the image a focalizer presents of an object says something about the focalizer
(Narratology 106).

In Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics, Shlomit Rimmon-Kenan speaks of
both Genette’s and Bal’s approach to focalization: “It has both a subject and an object.
The subject (the ‘focalizer’) is the agent whose perception orients the presentation, where
the object (the ‘focalized’) is what the focalizer perceives” (74). Rimmon-Kenan
recognizes that Genette’s use of focalization dispels the confusion between perspective
and narration which often occurs when “point of view” or similar terms are used, although
her use of focalization is different from Genette’s. Her analysis is based on the following
notions: 1) focalization and narration are, in principle, distinct activities; 2) in so-called
"third-person centre of consciousness" the centre of consciousness (or "reflector") is the focalizer, while the user of the third person is the narrator;
3) focalization and narration are also separate in first-person retrospective narratives; 4) There is no difference between third-person centre of consciousness and first-person retrospective narration. In both, the focalizer is a character within the represented world. The only difference between the two is the identity of the narrator. 5) Focalization and narration may sometimes be combined (73).

Following Bal, Rimmon-Kenan distinguishes external and internal focalization according to the narrator's position relative to the story. External focalization is felt to be close to the narrating agent, and its vehicle is therefore called "narrator-focalizer"; while the locus of internal focalization is inside the represented events and this type generally takes the form of a "character-focalizer" (74). Focalization may remain fixed throughout the narrative, but it can also alternate between two predominant focalizers, or shift among several different ones. This distinction between fixed, variable and multiple focalization applies to the focalized no less than to the focalizer (76-77).

In China, research on narrative modes started around the May Fourth Era, in 1919, associated with the influence of Western literary theory, especially Bliss Perry's *A Study of Prose Fiction* and Clayton Hamilton's *Materials and Methods of Fiction.* "Point of view" was first mentioned in *The Writing of Short Stories* (1921). According to the author, Wu Jiesan, one of the main points of short-story writing is to choose a "point of view"; authors of fiction have to think whether they are characters of fiction, assume the attitude of a witness, or have close relationship with the characters. Authors can write only once they decide what their field of vision is going to be (132). The author, Wu Jiesan, distinguishes between five types of narrating methods, including third person and first person narratives (133). The other three types are letter-narrative, diary-narrative and mixed-narrative (134-35). Although this distinction is not clear, it had a historical significance, since it first mentioned an important concept and made a distinction between first and third person narratives.

In Xia Mianzun's *The Composition of Writing* (1926) one of the six chapters is on narrative modes. Sections Five and Six of this chapter are called "Point of View in Narrative Text" and "Changing Point of View." In his preface, the author confesses that he has drawn some of his materials from Japanese books (i). Thus certain aspects of Western literary theory entered China via Japan. In Xia's opinion, "the point of view of the narrative text is the position of the author," and "the composition of narrative text must hold on to one kind of point of view, and the whole text should be united" (26-27). He notes that "in narrative texts, the same material can yield different writings, if different points of view are adopted." The ability to recognize and master different points of view "is very important for learning how to write narrative texts" (32). In the section on "Changing Point of View," he points out that adherence to a single point of view is only a general principle, for "in lengthy or complicated narrative texts the point of view has to be changed in order to depict properly the situations" (33). The author also deals in this chapter with pauses, and the order of narrative texts, topics that are included in Western micro-level research on modern fiction.

Xia included in his book three of his articles, among them "On the Position of the Author in Narrative Texts and Comments on Contemporary Fiction" (1925). He stresses here that authors should drop only a hint as to their own character and personality in a narrative text. They should in no way reveal themselves through the form of the writing: "If the existence of the author cannot be seen in the form of the writing, then, when the reader reads he or she can get an unadulterated impression as if he or she experienced and saw everything himself or herself. If the author joins in to give explanations and give comments, the reader's interest in reading will be greatly reduced. [...] In all good
narrative texts the author is largely invisible” (100). Xia Mianzun introduces to China Western distinctions between several different points of view:

There are three points of views in the third person fiction: 1) *The omniscient point of view*; 2) *The limited point of view*; and 3) *The rigidly restricted point of view*. In the omniscient point of view, the author is like an omniscient god who looks at the human world from heaven. The author knows everybody’s secrets. [...] The limited point of view reduces the scope of the omniscient point of view and exercises omniscient authority over only one character of the fiction. The scope of the rigidly restricted point of view is more narrow. The author does not think that he himself has an omniscient power but holds an objective bearing to the characters in the fiction (109; passages in italics were originally in English).

Xia Mianzun’s notion of three different points of view (in fact, three kinds of narrative modes), was China’s introduction to Western theories on point of view in narrative fiction. The three narrative modes seem to correspond to Genette’s categories. Xia also used this theory to analyze Chinese fiction, but his study met work very little response at that time. Research on point of view was neglected until the 1980s, when China opened her door to the world. Narrative theory was then among those Western literary theories that were brought to the attention of Chinese literary scholarship and criticism.

A comprehensive analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the different narrative terms is beyond my work. I shall choose a suitable set in order to investigate briefly the change of narrative modes in the history of Chinese literature and to apply it to the study of Lu Xun’s short stories. Genette’s introduction of “focalization” is an important contribution. It brings traditional narratological distinctions into one systematic theoretical framework, clearing up old confusions. As Bal says, focalization is “the most important, most penetrating and most subtle means of manipulation” (Narratology 116). Genette’s distinction between three types of narrative modes is, in my opinion, reasonable. Although scholars have raised some questions about it, it provides a useful choice for analyzing narrative modes. Its overhaul by Bal, Rimmon-Kenan and other scholars has produced some valuable amendments and additions. Although Bal’s extension was rejected by Genette, it is helpful, because it clearly describes the relationship between focalizer and focalized. Moreover, she explains that the relationship between the two is dynamic and she points out the importance of research into fixed and loose combinations between the two. Rimmon-Kenan analyzes the relationship between focalization and narration in first-person retrospective narratives. I agree with Genette that “the choice is purely operational” (Revisited 74). My narrative study of Lu Xun’s short stories is based on Genette’s approach, although I also consult and use Bal, Rimmon-Kenan and others.

Following Genette (Narrative Discourse 188-90), I distinguish then as a starting point of my study the following narrative modes:

1) **Narrative with zero focalization**
This type is generally found in classical and traditional narratives. It is the so-called narrative with the omniscient narrator: the narrator is not subjected to any restriction and knows everything. With omnipresent eyes, he is able to see the depth of every character’s heart and to view everything that the character may conceal.

2) **Narrative with internal focalization**
In this form of narrative, the narrator knows as much as the character knows. The narrator merely reports the information that the character receives from outside and the emotions that he or she could be feeling, however he does not provide the reader with explanations of which the character himself or herself is unaware. The narration is confined as strictly
as possible to what the character could feel or know. In this sort of narrative, the narrator could be a person, or could be several persons in turn.

3) Narrative with external focalization

This narration only describes for the reader the characters' speeches, dialogues and actions and never infers the inner world of the character. Nor does the narrator make any subjective judgments or psychological analyses. The characters perform before the readers' eyes, but the readers know nothing about their thoughts, they do not enter into the minds of the characters. Their secrets are never revealed.

In narrative texts, even in a short story, the author is not likely to use only one fixed narrative mode, though there may be a dominant one. Specific narrative modes dominated certain historical periods or prevailed within a historical trend. I shall now show that this was the case in Chinese literary history.

1.2 The Formation of Traditional Narrative modes in Chinese Fiction

Chinese literature can boast of a long history. Its major achievements are in poetry, as well as in historical and argumentative prose. The ancient poem collection The Book of Songs is an outstanding representative of the former; Chun qiu [Spring and Autumn Annals] and Zuo zhuan of the latter. They have strongly influenced Chinese literature.

Orthodox men of letters have discriminated against fiction and kept it in low esteem over a long period in Chinese history. They almost never wrote fiction, and when they did, they usually used pseudonyms instead of their true names, in order not to be ridiculed. In “How I Came to Write Stories” (1933), Lu Xun writes that when he first took an interest in literature, “fiction was not considered as literature, and its writers could not rank as men of letters. Thus nobody thought of making a name in this way.” Since no importance was attached to fiction, nobody wanted to write about its Chinese history. Lu Xun, who took the initiative, pointed out in his preface to A Brief History of Chinese Fiction: “There has never been a history of Chinese fiction, if we except the accounts in the histories of Chinese literature written by foreigners” (LXQJ 9: 4; History iii).

In ancient Chinese books and records, xiaoshuo [hsiao-shuo], the present-day word in Chinese for fiction, appeared more than two thousand years ago. Lu Xun says that it was first used by Zhuang Zi [Chuang Tzu] (about B. C. 369-286) who spoke of winning honor and renown by means of xiaoshuo (LXQJ 9: 5; History 1). What did xiaoshuo exactly mean to Zhuang Zi? People have different views on this. Lu Xun thinks, all that Zhuang Zi meant by it was “chit-chat of no great consequence” (LXQJ 9: 5; History 1), such as fables and tales that illustrate certain principles. In the centuries leading up to the Qin dynasty (B.C.221-206), we know, there were many writings which used fables and tales to illustrate principles and so were clearly different from poetry, which mainly expressed the author's feelings and emotions.

Although Chinese fiction was undervalued for a very long time, it continued to develop alongside with the development of society and literature, gradually displaying its strength. If the centuries before Qin dynasty are considered as the bud of classical Chinese fiction, then the appearance of prose romance in the Tang dynasty (618-907) marks its maturity: the literary form became independent and the authors made conscious efforts to a prose romance that was closer to the xiaoshuo (fiction) of today. Lu Xun writes:

Fiction, like poetry, underwent radical changes in the Tang dynasty. Though tales were still written about marvels and strange phenomena, the plots became more elaborate and the language more polished. [...] Another and more significant fact was that by this time writers were consciously writing fiction (LXQJ 9: 70; History 80).
The great change in classical fiction took place during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), when vernacular fiction, based on the storytellers' prompt-books in the Song dynasty (960-1279), reached a peak. A large number of fictional works appeared, many of them excellent. This impetus continued into the Qing dynasty (1616-1911). During the late Qing dynasty, the development of fiction itself and the strong influences of foreign literature led to the modernized Chinese fiction of "New Fiction." Henceforth fiction was no longer depreciated.

Viewing the development of Chinese fiction in terms of narrative modes, we can say that zero focalization was the dominant mode, although other narrative modes also appeared occasionally. Only in fiction of the late Qing dynasty did Chinese novelists and critics consciously depart from the tradition of zero focalization.

Why did zero focalization become dominant in Chinese fiction? Let us start with the first and third person modes. First-person narrators, especially the first-person character-narrators, were very seldom used in traditional Chinese narratives. The first person mostly gave way to the third person even in autobiographical texts. This might be called a mode of objectification or an avoidance of the subjective. There is, for example, a famous autobiography of the author at the end of Sima Qian's [Ssu-ma Ch'ien] (about B.C.145 or 135-?) The Historical Record, where Sima Qian calls himself Qian in the third person. He uses "Taishigong says" (Taishigong is Sima Qian's official title in Chinese) instead of the first person "I." The same occurred in later fiction. In a number of the tales of Pu Songling's [Pu Sung-ling] (1630-1715) Strange Tales of Liao zhai, one of the most famous Chinese collections of tales, the author comments in an authorial tone and capacity, but never uses the first person pronoun "I." Instead, he calls himself "yishishi" and his comments are always introduced by "yishishi says." Since yishishi means in Chinese something like "the recorder of strange tales," or "the historian of the strange," the author considered himself "the recorder of strange tales" or "the historian of the strange" in the third person.

This situation continued until the end of nineteenth century, when Western fiction was introduced into China in a big way. Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward (1894), Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes (1896), and Alexandre Dumas's La Dame aux Camélias (1899) were the first Western novels translated into Chinese. But the Chinese translators substantially changed the original texts. Where the originals used the first person, the translators sometimes changed it to the third person: Timothy Richard transformed the "I" into "a certain person"; Lin Shu, a famous Chinese translator then, transformed "I" into the author's name, "Alexander Dumas," while the newspaper The Times that published Sherlock Holmes transformed the "I" into "Watson." The tremendous influence of the dominant Chinese tradition of narrative with zero focalization is evident here.

Of course, there were some exceptions. For example, classical Chinese poetry that contained narrative elements frequently used the first person. Qu Yuan's (B.C.340?-B.C.277) Li Sao [Encountering Sorrow] is an outstanding example. This long lyrical poem expresses the poet's ideas and feelings, but it narrates the poet's sadness and the reason for his anxieties. This lyrical poem has therefore many narrative elements, and it could almost be seen as the poet's "autobiography" that painfully describes his thoughts and action throughout almost half his life. In the 373 lines of this poem, over 2,490 Chinese characters, the first person "I" appears more than 150 times. Since the poet gives priority to conveying emotions, the "I" that represents the lyric hero frequently appears. In other classical Chinese lyrical poems we can feel the presence of the hero of the poem even though the first person pronoun is never used. Chinese histories of poetry, which represented the orthodox part of classical Chinese literature, deliberately or unintentionally ignored such narrative elements. Thus Zhuang Zi believes that "The

A traditional Chinese moral principle regards the “constant mean”¹¹ as the standard. Confucius says: “Perfect is the virtue which is according to the Constant Mean!” (Four Books 115). The basic Chinese philosophical attitude is that the facts should be hinted at, instead of expressed directly. In the opening sentence of his Dao De Jing [Tao Te Ching], Lao Zi [Lao Tzu] says, “The Dao [Tao]¹² that can be spoken of is not eternal Dao.” When applying this philosophical and moral principle to the domain of society and life, it implies that everything should be in moderation, without having to speak or do too much. When one applies this philosophy to aesthetics, it implies that the most important factor is not how carefully and detailed the artist can present his materials, but how insight can be revealed through details. For an author to express himself or herself openly, directly and in detail is incompatible with the traditional Chinese way of thinking and aesthetics, and it is in conflict with traditional philosophical and moral attitudes (Wang Jingyú 17-18). This could be one of the explanations as to why the third person was so much preferred to the first person in classical Chinese narratives.

Further studies show that in classical Chinese narrative texts a gradual process of transition took place from the third person as a pure recorder of facts, to the third person with an unlimited, omniscient view (Wang Jingyú 17). The third person as a pure recorder mainly appeared in the early stages, especially in narrative texts that fused literature, history, and philosophy, like Zuo Zhuan and The Historical Records. Subsequently, the narrator was able to control his narrative texts and its “omniscient” degree increased gradually. In later narrative texts, especially in vernacular fiction, the narrator completed his transformation from the pure recorder to the omniscient narrator in the third person.

The third-person omniscient narrator was developed finally in vernacular fiction, the formation of which during the Song and Yuan dynasties had great significance in the history of Chinese fiction. The narrative in vernacular called huaben, came from the people and was created, developed, and improved by popular storytellers. At the beginning, huaben was just a form to make a living, not serious literature. It consisted of prompt-books or scripts for storytellers. The people called story “hua”; “shuo [tell] hua” means to tell a story:

The hua pen or storyteller’s scripts of this dynasty [Song] were used in the pleasure parks in different cities. Story-telling in public places of entertainment started in the Tang dynasty but became more popular during the Song. By and large, these stories dealt with one of three topics: the life of the townsfolk, Buddhist legends, and historical incidents (Feng Yuan-chun 79-80).

The storyteller makes a living by telling stories. The purpose of the author, who may or may not be the storyteller himself, is to tell stories to the growing number of urban residents. The prompt-books of the storytellers, the huaben, must therefore serve the needs of the storytellers. For example, Wu Zimu, who lived during the South Song dynasty (1127-1279), describes the scripts of historical romances as “a medley of fact and fiction,” but he also says that the storytellers “relate events of past dynasties and in a twinkling make up a story” (LXQJ 9: 112; History 135, slightly modified). The storytellers had to rely on their ingenuity and wit. They had to entertain their audience through telling some interesting stories, and they had to meet the requirements and tastes of various audiences. Thus huaben had gradually assumed definite forms. In order to convince people to return, the storyteller does not tell the whole story all at once, but piecemeal. He terminates his narration when the story reaches an interesting situation. This method has gradually formed the style of the later zhanghuï novel, which ends each
chapte rr b y saying: "To find out what happens next, read the next chapter," or "More of this in the next chapter." In huaben, some well-meaning advice is normally given at the end of the story (Liu Dajie 2: 720-29). All of these require that the storytellers firmly control their stories, and this contributed to the gradual evolution of the omniscient narrator in the third person.

As the popularity of story-telling started to decline, imitations of prompt-books emerged during the Song and Yuan (1206-1368) dynasties. Finally, between the end of Yuan and the beginning of Ming dynasties, oral story-telling was gradually replaced by written tales. During the Ming dynasty, authors began to make conscious efforts to create vernacular fiction. Story-telling was no longer popular during the Ming dynasty, and the stories were written down by men of letters and read by readers. The narrative mode of zero focalization with omniscient narrator in the third person had become standard and prevailed until the Qing dynasty.

1.3 The Beginning of the Transformation of Narrative modes: the Late Qing

Contemporary Chinese fiction is rich and colorful in narrative modes. Ma Yuan, for instance, opens his short story "Making up" as follows:

I am that Chinese who is called Ma Yuan. I write short stories. I enjoy writing freely and without restraints, and most of my stories contain a measure of sensationalism. I tell my story in Chinese. [...] To write this piece of fiction, I buried this time my head in thoughts and hibernated for seven days at Maqu Village. To explain a bit further, this story is about lepers. Maqu Village is an area specifically designated by the government for people with diseases, a village for lepers. [...] I need to use what I experienced during those seven days to produce a sensational story. I dare say that troubled writers (including those who aspire to become writers) who search for original plots for their stories must surely envy my good fortune. Is there any such person among the readers of this story? Please write and tell me. Ma Yuan is my real name. I have used pen names before, but not this time (1: 1-3).

This example of one of the narrative modes used by contemporary Chinese authors clearly differs from the traditional narrative mode. When did authors begin to consciously transform the narrative mode of Chinese fiction? The fiction of the late Qing dynasty forms an important juncture linking the narrative modes of classical and modern Chinese fiction. The new narrative modes used by the writers of that period were perfected in Lu Xun’s short stories and in the fiction of the May Fourth Era.

The late Qing dynasty saw a flourishing of Chinese fiction. Although the exact number of publications has not yet been established, A Ying estimates it to be more than 1,000 (1). His Catalogue of Fiction and Drama in the Late Qing, includes as many as 1,145 pieces of fiction published between 1898 and 1911. Chenzhi (Lu Simian) observed in “About Fiction” (1914): “Traveling in big cities and small towns, I find that fiction books account for sixty to seventy per cent of the total books in bookstores” (1: 412). Lin Mingde thinks that from the moment when Liang Qichao published a monthly magazine entitled New Fiction in Yokohama, Japan in 1902, to 1911, there were 461 pieces of original fiction and 608 pieces of translated fiction published (1 - ii). According to Chen Pinyuan, twenty-seven magazines and newspapers that started publication between 1902 and 1917 had directly used “fiction” in their titles (Transformation 273).

New narrative modes with internal and external focalization were used in a large number of narratives. Let’s take a sample analysis based on Chen Pingyuan’s account.13
In four magazines that mainly published fiction, *New Fiction*, *Illustrated Fiction*, *The All-Story Monthly* and *A Forest of Fiction*, 204 original and translated pieces of fiction were published between 1902 and 1908; of these 167 used zero focalization, thirty-seven internal and external focalization. Among the hundred-and-eleven pieces of fiction by Chinese writers, ninety-one used zero focalization, twenty internal and external focalization. Although zero focalization still prevailed in number, internal and external focalization reached significant proportions. A large-scale transformation of the narrative modes had started. In the early days of the Chinese Republic this trend continued. According to an incomplete account of four fiction magazines published in 1914, *Fiction Magazine Serials*, *The Short Story Magazine (Issued Monthly)*, *A World of Chinese Fiction* and *Saturday*, sixty-six of the eighty original pieces used zero focalization, thirteen internal focalization, and one external focalization. The transformation of narrative modes was more obvious during the time of the May Fourth Era. Of the fifty-seven original pieces published in *New Youth*, *Modern Trends* and *The Short Story Magazine*, twenty pieces used zero focalization, thirty-one internal focalization, and six external focalization. The latter two categories made up sixty-five per cent of the total.

According to Průšek, "There can be no more fascinating subject in the history of Asian literature than the profound rift separating the modern from the traditional literature and an examination of its causes and significance. Analysis of the nature of this cataclysm dividing two epochs also enables us to penetrate more deeply into the essence of the phenomena surrounding it" (*Precursor* 169). The transformation of the narrative modes in late Qing fiction was related to the move to modernize fiction, and it is significant that the most forceful spokesman of the "New Fiction" was not a novelist or a literary critic, but a reformist and politician: Liang Qichao (1873-1929). Liang, like the other reformists, placed great hope for national rejuvenation in fiction:

> To develop a nation's citizens, one must first develop a nation's fiction. To uphold the highest morals, one must develop fiction; the progress of religion needs the progress of fiction writing; to modernize politics, one needs to modernize fiction; to change social customs, one must change fiction; to develop the art of knowledge, one must develop fiction; and even to influence public sentiment, to uphold human dignity, one must develop and uphold fiction. And why? Because fiction has an inconceivably strong hold over human emotions ("On the Relationship between Fiction and Popular Sovereignty" 2).

The "modernization" of fiction comprises many aspects, including content, form, language, style, and the transformation of the narrative mode. Which direction did the transformation take? The transformation of fiction received a strong influence from Western fiction:

> As Chinese fiction was undergoing modernization, it actually revealed two important movements: 1) the move of fiction from the fringe to the heart of literature; 2) the move of Chinese fiction to foreign fiction, and the learning and acceptance of foreign fiction, which caused Chinese fiction to incorporate more foreign elements. It means that the modernization of Chinese fiction had to face two important missions: complete acceptance as part of literature, i. e. changing the traditional disregard for fiction, and spurring the "modernization" of fiction (Yuan Jin·3-4).

Translations of foreign fiction provided an innovative impetus to the process of transformation. Before 1898, only few pieces of foreign fiction were translated into Chinese, and their influence was very limited. From the turn-of-the-century onward,
Western learning had gained power, people attached unprecedented importance to fiction, and translations of foreign works of fiction were increasing. Along with the large number of translated pieces, new forms of fiction were brought to China. Many translated fictional works with internal and external focalization were introduced. At the beginning, as in the cited cases of Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*, Arthur Conan Doyle’s *Sherlock Holmes* and Alexandre Dumas’s *La Dame aux Camélias*, the translators revised the original mode and person. However, this was soon to change. Faced with more and more translated fiction in new narrative modes, people gradually accepted them. Under the flag of “New Fiction,” Chinese writers gradually started to write fiction in new narrative modes. Wu Jianren’s [Wu Woyao] (1866-1910) novel *Strange Events of the Last Twenty Years* (1903-1910) is of special significance. This is the first time in the history of the Chinese vernacular novel that the first person is used. A central character of the novel, the narrator “I,” appears throughout the book and calls himself “Jiusi yisheng” (“A narrow escape from death,” or “The man with nine lives”). Relating his experiences during the past twenty years, starting from childhood, he deals with many aspects of society with a wide-ranging content. Although the novel mostly uses Jiusi yisheng’s travel as a frame of narration, his image and characteristics remain succinctly intact and could be felt by readers. Following this book, internal and external focalization became more and more widely used in fiction.

1.4 Lu Xun’s Use and Perfection of New Narrative Modes

The process of modernizing Chinese fiction, which had started in the late Qing dynasty, was completed by the writers of the May Fourth Era, of whom Lu Xun is the main representative. He knew well that it was not easy to change old Chinese customs and traditions. However, he believed that “if there are no trailblazers who break through all old traditional thoughts and methods, there will be no real literature and art in China” (LXQJ 1: 241). Lu Xun himself was exactly this trailblazer, creating the first great achievement of modern Chinese literature with his short stories. By skilfully using different narrative modes he established new modes and gave traditional modes a modern meaning.

Lu Xun turned strongly against tradition, but he grew up and had been nurtured in an environment of Chinese culture and traditional literature. It is therefore not difficult to discover traditional influences in his life, thought, literary production, and goals. In fiction, this influence certainly existed. Lu Xun, we know, liked to read classical Chinese fiction. After his return from Japan in 1909, he spent vast amounts of time and energy to reconsider the ancient books, compiling and sifting them for ideas. As a result, in 1912 he edited an anthology of thirty-six fictional pieces, entitled *Gu xiaoshuo gou chen* [Selections from Ancient Fiction]. In 1920 he started to lecture on the history of Chinese fiction at Beijing University and made collected materials on old novels, which were later edited and published as *Xiaoshuo jiawan lu* [Recordings of Ancient Fiction]; also compiled *Tang Song chuanqiji* [Collections of Tang and Song Dynasty Tales]. Based on these well-researched and carefully chosen anthologies, he completed his important history of Chinese fiction.

Lu Xun had been long engrossed in the compilation, collation, editing, and research of ancient Chinese fiction before he started to produce his own work. This undoubtedly had a substantial, though not overriding, impact on his creative oeuvre, including the shaping of the modes he chose to use. By creatively digesting traditions, including ancient Chinese fiction, he assimilated only parts of the ancient culture and literary heritage and remained free to make important innovations and creative improvisations in his own works. Leo Ou-fan Lee says, “One of the most important aspects of Lu Xun’s role as a
modern writer was his quest to evolve something new and unprecedented in a literary tradition laden with precedents" (*Legacy* 4). His innovations are recognizable in his pioneering work in narrative modes.

Relying on the literary heritage of other countries allowed and demanded literary innovations. Lu Xun believed that originality was “most valuable for everything,” but, he added, “since China is a country in the world, it is naturally hard to avoid the influence of other countries. [...] Concerning literature, we still know too little and absorb too little” (*LXQJ* 7: 162). In his first critical article “Molu o shil i shuo” [“The Power of Mara Poetry”] (1907), Lu Xun introduced and commented on Byron, Shelley, Pushkin, Lermontov, Mickiewicz, Slowacki, Kiasinski, Petőfi and others, in order to “seek new voices from other countries” (*LXQJ* 1: 65). He borrowed “Mara” from India, where, according to him it means “devil in heaven”; for him, these were poets of destruction and rebellion (Mills 191-92). The large number of countries and writers he mentions clearly indicates that he had already widely read and researched the works of foreign authors. In fact, the decisive source of Lu Xun’s inspiration for literary creation and use of new literary forms came from foreign literature.

Lu Xun was a successor of the late Qing writers; like them, he was influenced by foreign fiction and he was involved in translating it into Chinese. Compared to the late Qing writers, these influences on his case were broader and more profound. People thought at that time that a new writer of the May Fourth Era must have a good command of at least one foreign language and must be familiar with foreign literature. Lu Xun had a good command of Japanese and German, and he was able to use a large body of foreign literary works for reference. In “How I Came to Write Stories,” he wrote:

Though I never read a single book on the art of writing fiction, I read more than a few stories, some for my own enjoyment, most of them because I was looking for materials to introduce. I also read histories of literature and literary criticism, to find out about different writers’ characters and ideas in order to decide whether they were suitable for introduction to China or not. [...] I started writing short stories not because I thought I had any particular talent, but because I was staying in a hostel in Beijing and had no reference books for research work and no originals to translate. I had to write something resembling a story to comply with a request, and that was “A Madman’s Diary.” I must have relied entirely on the hundred or more foreign stories I had read and a smattering of medical knowledge. I had no other preparation (*LXQJ* 4: 511-12; *Works* 3: 262-63, slightly modified).

Lu Xun laid the foundations of his knowledge when in 1902 he started to study in Japan. In his first two years, he was officially enrolled at Kobun College in Tokyo, a preparatory school for Chinese students to acquire the necessary fluency in Japanese. After graduating in April 1904, he went to Sendai and studied medicine in Sendai Medical College until 1906. Then he gave up medicine and threw himself into literature. In Japan, he not only read much foreign fiction, he was also very interested in Chinese translations by the late Qing writers and translators. For example, he was very fond of “Lin’s translated fiction” by the famous translator Lin Shu. Lu Xun’s younger brother, Zhou Zuoren, writes in *Lu Xun’s Early Years* that, in Tokyo, when a new book of “Lin’s translated fiction” appeared, Lu Xun would go to the Chinese bookstore at Kanda to buy it (79). Lu Xun started his literary career with the translation and introduction of foreign fiction, and also ended with it. About the beginning of his literary pursuits he said: “I did not set out to write, being more interested in introducing and translating—short stories in particular, especially those by the writers of oppressed peoples” (*LXQJ* 4: 511; *Works* 3: 262).
Lu Xun started his first period of translating fiction when he studied at Kobun College in Tokyo. In 1903, the magazine *Zhejiangchao* [*Tides from Zhejiang Province*] published the prose narrative “The Soul of Sparta,” a reworking of Leonidas’ stand at Thermopylae. He started translating Jules Verne’s *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* in 1903 and *A Journey to the Moon* in 1906 from Japanese translations. From then on, through the rest of his life, translation became a necessary part of his literary pursuits. He translated about two-hundred works by a hundred writers from fourteen countries, including Russia, Britain, France, USA, Spain, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Japan. His translations contain more than three million Chinese characters, almost half of his total output.

Lu Xun’s translations underwent a change from rewriting, adapting, and free translation to literal translation. The publication of “The Soul of Sparta” was related to the Chinese movement against Russia. Using the story that three-hundred Spartan warriors put up a heroic fight and died against tens of thousands of aggressors under the command of the Persian King, Lu Xun encouraged the Chinese people to resist the Russian aggression as the Spartan warriors did. Of *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* and *A Journey to the Moon*, Lu Xun made free adaptations. He considered translating Jules Verne’s novels very important because leading the Chinese people forward “one must begin with science fiction” (*LXQJ* 10: 152). He emphasized the function of scientific enlightenment, and had not yet begun to pay attention to the artistic form of the novels.

As for narrative modes, Lu Xun’s translations also indicate a long process of change. In the early stages, he had been deeply influenced by the traditional Chinese narrative mode. One can see in his translation of *A Journey to the Moon*, and especially in *A Journey to the Center of the Earth*, the strong influence of Chinese narratives with zero focalization. The translator rewrote the originals as typical Chinese “*zhanghui* novels” – a type of traditional Chinese novel where each chapter was headed by a couplet providing the reader with the essence of its content. *A Journey to the Moon* was rewritten in fourteen chapters, *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* in twelve. The former used almost every convention of the “*zhanghui* novel.” Interventions of the omniscient narrator were ubiquitous. In some chapters, the narrator also addressed the reader directly.

In traditional Chinese novels it is very common to use illustrative verses. Lu Xun added them to his translations of Jules Verne’s novels, which, of course, contained no such verses in the original. Thus, for instance, in the first chapter of *A Journey to the Moon*, the narrator relates that the people are still full of noble aspirations, yearning to plunge into the battle. The translator then inserts a poem by the famous classical Chinese poet Tao Yuanming (365-427):

*Holding branches and pebbles, *Jingwei*19 tries to fill up the sea;*  
*Wielding his ax and shield, *Xingtian*20 is courageously determined to revolt*  
*(Translations 1: 8).*

The translator concludes each chapter with endings typical of the traditional Chinese *zhuang-hui* novel: “To find out what happens next, read the next chapter”; “More of this in the next chapter”; “To know what follows, turn to the next chapter”; “To know the sequel, read the next chapter.”

Verne did not allow the narrator such controls and interventions; the translator did. His narrator greatly resembles the narrator of traditional Chinese novels, who constantly intervene. The translations thus acquire a “storyteller” flavor: Lu Xun did not yet intend to reform the traditional Chinese narrative mode.

In 1909 Lu Xun and his younger brother Zhou Zuoren published *A Collection of Overseas Short Stories* in two volumes, the latter translating from English and the former
from German. Lu Xun no longer adapted here the originals to the traditional Chinese forms such as the zhuang-hui novel. This collection of sixteen short stories includes one each from Britain, France, the United States, and Finland, seven stories by four Russian writers, three stories by a Polish and two stories by a Czech writer. Lu Xun translated V. Garshin’s “Four Days,” as well as “The Silence” and “The Lie” by L. Andreev. In the preface Lu Xun expressed his hope that the new foreign literary techniques would be adopted (LXQJ 10: 161).21 His translation of the Russian short stories was completely true to the original.22 In “The Lie” and “Four Days” he retained the internal focalization in the first person.

*A Collection of Overseas Short Stories* was, however, not then accepted by Chinese readers, who were used to the traditional and very long Chinese novels that extended sometimes to one or two hundred chapters. They expected complete stories with integrated and well-organized plots, and they were unfamiliar with the type of short story that Lu Xun and his brother translated. As a result, only one thousand copies of the first volume were printed and 500 copies of the second; only about forty copies were sold in Shanghai and Tokyo during the first six months.

Nevertheless *A Collection of Overseas Short Stories* had an important impact on Lu Xun’s translation technique and his short story writing. When it was reprinted in 1921 by Qunyi Publishing House in Shanghai, Lu Xun said in his preface that although the translation may not flow smoothly, “it still is of some value today and it should be of some value even in the future” (LXQJ 10: 162). For the remaining twenty years of his translation career, Lu Xun’s approach remained unchanged: he adhered to literal translation, emphasizing fidelity to the original. When he translated Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Fadeyev’s *Destruction* in 1931, the famous translator Qu Qiubai, who had a keen command of Russian, praised it in a letter of December 5, 1931, as really true to the original. The foreign short stories and novels, their contents as well as some of their new techniques of expression, exerted a perceptible influence both on his translations, and on his short story writing. As William Lyell writes:

> Translation provided him with an intimate working knowledge of the structural techniques of authors beyond the walls of his own culture. With great critical acumen, he applied this knowledge to the design of his own works. Thus the form of his stories cannot be explained as a mere continuation of the native short story (*Reality* 307).

In his “Introduction” to *A Compendium to Modern Chinese Literature (The Second Volume of Fiction)*, Lu Xun says that the technique (specifically, the presentation and the style) of his early short stories found some favorable response and created a stir in China, simply because his readers were unfamiliar with European literature (LXQJ 6: 238). The content and the form of European literature were completely novel to Chinese readers. His early preferences are interesting:

> As I was looking for insurgent works, I inevitably turned towards Eastern Europe and read many books by writers from Russia, Poland and the Balkan states. […] I recollect that my favorite authors at that time were the Russian Gogol and the Pole Sienkiewicz. Also two Japanese—Soseki Natsume and Mori Ogai (LXQJ 4: 511-12; *Works* 3: 262-63, slightly modified).

The same “Introduction” describes the relationship between his and Gogol’s “A Madman’s Diary” and the influence of Nietzsche’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. The ending

By broadly assimilating the forms and techniques of foreign fiction, Lu Xun's short stories became different from traditional Chinese fiction both in content and in form. Lu Xun established and perfected these new forms, including narrative modes, and he successfully transformed traditional Chinese fiction. In an article in Modern Review, published in January 1925, Zhang Dinghen compared Lu Xun's "A Madman's Diary," the first work of modern Chinese literature, with Zhang Shizhao's Shuang Ping Ji and Su Manshu's Jiang Sha Ji and Fen Jian Ji. He did not reject Zhang Shizhao's and Su Manshu's short stories, but he thought that "A Madman's Diary" was totally different:

Shuang Ping Ji etc. appeared in Jiayin in 1914 and "A Madman's Diary" was published in New Youth in 1918. Although there were only four years between the two, they are very different from one another. Two forms of language used, two different feelings invoked, two completely different worlds! In Shuang Ping Ji, Jiang Sha Ji and Fen Jian Ji, much of our old style was maintained; they preserved the last remnants of classical Chinese fiction, the last images of "gifted scholars and beautiful ladies," the last of the romantic writings, the last glimpse of life's perspective left behind by our Chinese ancestors. If we read them before reading "A Madman's Diary," it would be as if we were approaching suddenly from the dim and dreary temple into the bright summer sun, as though we had leapt out from the darkness of the Middle Ages into modern times (1: 86).

"From the darkness of the Middle Ages into modern times"—this is the fundamental transformation that Lu Xun's short stories achieved in thought, content, and form, including narrative modes. Obviously, this transformation did not happen suddenly. It started with Lu Xun's forerunners, the late Qing authors, and evolved with the aid of many different factors. However, Lu Xun's achievement was a key link in the development of Chinese literature. As the Czech Sinologist Prášek writes, the old Chinese literature and the one that emerged after the First World War are as far apart as heaven and earth. One has difficulty believing that these two literary styles emerged from the same nation (Collection 40-41). I shall now discuss Lu Xun's "Remembering Past Times," which had a special role in this transformation.

1.5 "Remembering Past Times": Lu Xun's First Attempt at Integrating New Ideas with Classical Language

In December 1932, Lu Xun wrote in his "Preface to My Selected Works": "I started writing short stories in 1918, when New Youth was calling for a 'literary revolution'" (LXQJ 4: 455; Works 3: 200). He refers to the short stories written in the modern vernacular, beginning with his "A Madman's Diary." For a long time, he rarely mentioned "Remembering Past Times," which he wrote still earlier, possibly because he himself forgot that this story existed or because he did not consider it to be of the caliber of his later innovative work. It was not included in any of the collections of his short stories.23 "Remembering Past Times" was actually written in the winter of 1911 and published in The Short Story Magazine No.1, Vol. 4, in April 1913 under the pseudonym Zhou Chuo.24 This long neglected story is actually extremely helpful in understanding the development of his short-story writing over time, as well as in gaining a better appreciation of his literary projects and general ambitions. As for the transformation of narrative mode, it plays a special role, for it forms a link between the earlier translated fiction and the subsequent original short stories. Although "Remembering Past Times"
was written in the classical Chinese literary language, it employs much of the new style, coinciding with the direction in which new Chinese literature was developing with respect to subject matter, plot, construction, organization, and, particularly, the use of narrative mode. Průšek, who recognizes the significance of this story and holds it in high regard, writes that reading it "we feel quite clearly that it is a work entirely of the new modern literature and not the literature of the preceding period" (Precursor 170). Taking the change of literary construction as his point of departure, Průšek chooses the plot as his object of study and concludes:

We can consider Lu Hsün's [Lu Xun] approach to his plot as one of simplification, a reduction of the plot to its simplest components, and an attempt to present his subject without the framework of an explanatory story. The author wants to go right to the heart of his subject without the stepping-stone of a plot. This is what strikes me as the specifically modern feature of the new literature; I would even formulate it as a principle that it is characteristic of the new literature to play down the function of the plot, even to the point of dispensing with it altogether (Precursor 173).

I agree with Průšek, but I wish to analyze the story from the perspective of the narrative mode, in order to show its significance in the transformation of Chinese fiction.

"Remembering Past Times" uses internal focalization in the first person instead of the traditional narrative mode of zero focalization. The story is related by a nine-year-old boy, a participant in the story. The events are seen through his eyes, and the events described are confined, with a few exceptions that will be discussed later, to what this narrator-agent does, sees, thinks, and hears. This narrative mode is very rare in traditional Chinese fiction. It is not that we cannot find first person narration, but in these, the narrator only records the story or is only an onlooker of the events rather than an active participant-protagonist.

For a long time, authors in late Qing dynasty also organized their stories by means of first-person narrators who are merely onlookers or recorders. Sometimes, as in the case of Wang Junqing's Looking on in Cool Detachment and Xiaoran Yusheng's Traveling Notes from Utopia, we may guess from the title that a first-person narrator is used. In fact, most short stories in the initial stage of "New Fiction" in the late Qing dynasty use this method to organize the story and its events. Even Wu Jianren's Strange Events of the Last Twenty Years has, as we saw, a kind of onlooker or recorder as the first-person narrator. Using a passive narrator's travels, sights and sounds as a frame for the story, was still quite common in the late stage of "New Fiction."

Lu Xun wrote "Remembering Past Times" shortly after the publication of Wu Jianren's Strange Events of the Last Twenty Years. Although the title immediately reveals that recollections from the past are going to be its content, it differs greatly from the above-mentioned novel because it uses internal focalization in the first-person, and takes an important step forward in transforming narrative modes.

The narrator of "Remembering Past Times" tells about his experiences when he was nine-year old. In fact, he allows us a glimpse of several scenes in a day of his school life. At the beginning, he recalls his unhappy school life and an unpleasant teacher, Master Tu (tu means bald in Chinese), under whom he suffered as a child. One day, the lesson is interrupted by the local rich man, Jin Yaozong with the frightening news that eight hundred "long-haired rebels" are approaching the town. The rich man and the teacher take counsel about how to gain the rebels' favor. The teacher advises him to proceed obsequiously but cautiously because the government troops may later defeat the rebels. The wisest option, he says, would be to maneuver carefully between the two extremes. Although the rich man does not completely understand this, he leaves, thanking the
teacher many times. The teacher abandons his class and hurriedly leaves school, but he soon reappears in the company of the rich man and announces that this was a false alarm, for the group consisted only of refugees from famine-stricken parts of the county. They all laugh happily. The teacher disappears to console his terrified family, and the usual evening calm returns beneath the tree at the gate. The old servant Wang and Li continue to tell tales.

The story is basically restricted to the nine-year-old boy’s field of vision. As a character in the story, an innocent pupil, the focalizer is identified through his contact with the teacher and his comments on the teacher, who seems disagreeable and conservative. He asks the boy to compose parallel couplets, but does not explain to him the principles involved and the need for the tones to correspond to the words. The nine-year-old boy has, naturally, no idea of the differences in tone between the different words. He can do nothing:

Thinking over about it for a long time, I still can’t compose. Very slowly stretching my palm, I slap against my thigh, make a loud sound, just like swatting a mosquito. I am hoping the Master Tu would understand my difficulties, but he still seems to pay no attention to me at all (LXQJ 7: 215).

The teacher still lets him mull it over; when he explains The Confucian Analects, the boy feels weary and tired, since he does not understand it:

Shaking his head, shaking his knee, the teacher explains the book for a long time. He himself seems very interested, but I am very impatient. Although his bald head looks very strange, it makes me weary to look at it for a long time. (LXQJ 7: 216).

It is so hard and boring to follow Mr. Tu that the boy is hoping, early in the morning, that he would be taken ill and then recover in the afternoon. Then he would have a good half-day’s vacation. It is “better to let Mr. Tu to be taken ill, and best to let him die. If neither illness nor death overtook him, I have to go to school tomorrow and study The Confucian Analects” (LXQJ 7: 216). The next day, the rich man comes to tell the news about the “long-haired rebels,” and the teacher advises him. Once the rich man is gone, the teacher is very anxious. The boy already heard the news about “long-haired rebels,” but thinks nothing of it. On the contrary, he is very happy since he can skip his lesson. When the teacher announces that he can go home and that the class is canceled, the boy narrator continues:

With great happiness, I bound out to the tung tree. Although under the summer sun, I do not care a bit. I think it is my place under the tung tree right now (LXQJ 7: 218).

The boy sees that people are fleeing their homes like ants and “everyone is afraid,” but he does not mind: “I am too busy to think about the long-haired rebels: I catch a fly, and lure ants out with the fly, then kill them and pour water into their hole” (LXQJ 7: 219). All of the narrator’s responses to the events and all of his actions accord with the status of a nine-year-old boy. He shows his dislike for and disinterest in school life. He does not understand the news about the long-haired rebels that shocks everybody, and he remains happy, contented, and unaffected by the events.

In narratives with fixed internal focalization, the focalizer usually coincides with a character in the story; this character is used to view all the happenings in the story, including the narrator-agent’s experiences. Such characters will have a technical advantage over the other characters, for the readers watch the events through their eyes,
and they will, in principle, be inclined to accept their vision. But, such a character-bound focalization also brings about bias and limitations. In Henry James' *What Maisie Knew*, the story is told by an external narrator, but he focalizes internally, mostly through Maisie, a little girl who does not understand the problematic relations among people around her. The reader views the events through the limited vision of the girl, but they can do more with the received information than Maisie does, and they can interpret it differently. When Maisie sees only a strange gesture, readers may notice that it is an erotic one (Bal, *Narratology* 104-05). The May Fourth era author Wang Tongzhao does something similar in "A Child’s Talking at the Lakeside" (1922). The narrative focalizer in this story is a child who spends much time loafing around the reed marshes of the lakeside. The child says that his father, a blacksmith, allows him to go home only very late. Readers gradually discover through the child and his narration that his father is unable to feed the entire family and has to let his mother prostitute herself at home (39-46). The child, the character-bound focalizer, cannot understand the events he sees and talks about, but readers understand the truth. The story’s particular effect comes from the differences between the child’s point of view and the adult reader’s interpretation.

In “Remembering Past Times,” the boy narrator tells the reader what he sees and experiences, and the reader discovers the deeper significance of what the boy narrator describes but sometimes does not fully comprehend. The reader recognizes the teacher’s ridiculous and repulsive behavior through the contact between the narrator and the teacher. Certain details reveal their hidden meaning to the reader through the boy narrator’s observations; readers thus deepen their understanding of the teacher’s character. For example, there is a set of *Baming shuchao* on the teacher’s desk, a model for writing the essay required in civil service examinations. Mr. Tu takes a different attitude to it at different times. After hearing the news about the “long-haired rebels,” and seeing Jin Yaozong off, he is, according to the boy, “hurrying away with a big bundle of clothes under his arm. Normally he would only go home on the occasion of a special festival or at the end of the year. At those occasions he always takes several volumes of *Baming shuchao* with him. This time, however, the whole set remained on the desk (*LXQJ* 7: 218). When it turns out that the news about the “long-haired ones” was a false alarm, people who fled come back one after another. As the boy narrator reports, Mr. Tu is among them: “Mr. Tu paces around for a long time and then says that he is going home in order to reassure his own family. Saying he will be back the next morning, he takes *Baming shuchao* with him and goes home” (*LXQJ* 7: 220).

Rimmon-Kenan says that a trait may be implied both by one-time actions and by habitual ones. One-time actions tend to evoke the dynamic aspect of the character, often playing a part in a turning point in the narrative. By contrast, habitual actions tend to reveal comic or ironic effects, as when a character clings to old habits in a situation which renders them inadequate (61). Mr. Tu habitually brings his *Baming shuchao* with him, showing thus that he clings to old habits. But when he is frightened by the “long-haired rebels,” he leaves the whole set on the desk because he wants to save his life.

In a narrative with fixed internal focalization, character-bound narrators cannot go beyond their focalizer-character. The narrator is unable to go into the heart of the other characters, he or she can only guess what they feel and think. In this respect, “Remembering Past Times” proceeds properly. When the rich man and the teacher come back, they discuss the fact that the long-haired rebels were only a band of refugees. This discussion is followed by the words of the teacher as reported by the boy narrator: “‘Aha! Refugees!...Oh...’ Mr. Tu roars with laughter, and he *seems* to ridicule his own foolish panic as well as deride the refugees who were no threat at all” (*LXQJ* 7: 220, italics added). The word “seems” shows that the character-bound narrator does not enter into the teacher’s heart and can only guess from his words and actions. However, this guess
conforms to the internal logic of the narrative mode, and is expected. The teacher’s expression looks completely ridiculous to the reader. This glimpse into the teacher’s inner world in Lu Xun’s “Remembering Past Times” corresponds exactly to what Genette observes in Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*. He writes about the special uses of narratives with internal focalization:

We must interpret as indices of focalization those openings onto the psychology of characters other than the hero which the narrative takes care to make in a more or less hypothetical form, as when Marcel guesses or conjectures the thought of his interlocutor according to the expression on that person’s face [...] Since Spitzer, critics have often noted the frequency of those modalizing locutions (*perhaps*, *undoubtedly*, *as if*, *seem*, *appear*) that allow the narrator to say hypothetically what he could not assert without stepping outside internal focalization; and thus Marcel Muller is not wrong in looking on them as “the alibis of the novelist” (*Narrative Discourse* 202-03).

The servants’ almost apathetic reaction to the rumor about long-haired rebels stands in stark contrast to the reaction of the local rich men, Jin Yaozong, and reveals the true character of the latter. That “Remembering Past Times” is narrated and observed by a character-bound focalizer-narrator is conducive to the forming of a unified artistic style for the whole story. It also stimulates the readers to draw their own conclusions.

However, focalization and narration are not necessarily combined in a single narrator-character; they can be separate, even in first-person fiction (Rimmon-Kenan 73). In first-person retrospective narratives two different visions play a role in turn: one is the vision of the narrator “I” looking back; the other is the vision of the “I” in the past. They can reflect different degrees of understanding: the former is capable and seasoned; the latter is childish and naïve; the former knows the real situation of the events, while the latter is short of overall comprehension of the events. In “Remembering Past Times,” the boy is the focalizer, his adult self is the narrator. The nine-year-old boy is the dominant, but not exclusive focalizer. When the teacher suggests to the rich man a way to deal with the long-haired rebels and the rich man leaves the school thanking the teacher, the narrator remarks:

It is really true that people used to say that, search as you might in the town of Wu, you would never find a wiser man than Mr. Tu. My teacher could have lived very well at any time whatsoever, and he would have seen to it that he came to no harm. [...] Using the words of today’s evolutionists, it is probably a heredity of ancestors (*_LXQJ* 7: 218).

Obviously, this narrator’s intervention goes beyond the mind of the boy narrator-focalizer. The aim of the commentary is not to explain the plot, but to persuade the reader to agree with the narrator’s judgment of the events. Here, with irony, the narrator’s commentary on Mr. Tu steers the reader to interpret him in a certain way. However, the form (people say...), and the content of the commentary could only come from the narrator “I,” the adult self. We may say that the narrator assumes the task of commenting his character. Genette already noticed this situation in narratives:

The use of the “first person,” or better yet, oneness of person of the narrator and the hero, does not at all imply that the narrative is focalized through the hero. Very much to the contrary, the “autobiographical” type of narrator, whether we are dealing with a real or a fictive autobiography, is--by the very fact of his oneness with the hero--more
“naturally” authorized to speak in his own name than is the narrator of a “third-person” narrative. There is less indiscretion from Tristram Shandy in mixing the account of his present “opinions” (and thus of his knowledge) with the narrative of his past “life” than there is on Fielding’s part in mixing the account of his with the narrative of the life of Tom Jones. [...] The autobiographical narrator, having no obligation of discretion with respect to himself, does not have this kind of reason to impose silence on himself. The only focalization that he has to respect is defined in connection with his present information as narrator and not in connection with his past information as hero (Narrative Discourse 198-99).

There are several reasons why “Remembering Past Times” did not receive much attention when it was first published. First, the story was written in the old classical language. The writers in the new literary movement of the May Fourth era prided themselves in fighting against the old literature and promoting the new. Their most important formal aim was to replace classical Chinese with the modern vernacular. Hu Shi [Hu Shih], a leading figure in the new literary movement said: “It’s better to use the living language of the twentieth century than the dead words from three thousand years ago” (28). He thought that a new language was crucial for a new literature:

My purpose [...] is simply to suggest the creation of a literature in the national language and a national language suitable for literature. Our aim in the literary revolution is merely to create in China a literature in the national language. A national language may be established only after we have produced a literature in the national language, —only after we have established a national language suitable for literature. (245; Průšek’s translation, Precursor 175)

It is understandable that progressive people did not pay much attention to works written in the old classical Chinese language at a time when a totally new cultural language system was introduced by the new literary movement. The second main reason for the neglect was that Lu Xun’s very successful later vernacular stories came to overshadow “Remembering Past Times.”

Yet, “Remembering Past Times” should not be ignored. Although its language system was related to the old one, it was close to the direction of the new literary movement. It adopted some modern techniques from foreign fiction, defied some outdated conventions, and displayed some important characteristics of modern fiction. Meanwhile, it also anticipated some elements that reappeared time and time again in Lu Xun’s subsequent short stories, for example, the construction of the plot, the cool dialogues, the use of irony. The dialogues of “Remembering Past Times” are different from those in traditional Chinese fiction, which were instruments for developing the plot and determining the structure. Here, as Průšek points out, the dialogue is quite autonomous. It is simply a form of presentation of a certain atmosphere, a certain situation, or a set of human relationship, as it is in the works of Hemingway, Joyce, Faulkner and others. It is interesting that in Chinese literature it is Lu Xun, writing in the old classical language, who departs from the old mode. The whole setting of the story shows that Lu Xun’s work has affinity with new trends in European literature (Precursor 174-76).

Thus we can see a basic trend in Lu Xun’s literary works with regard to the use of narrative modes: he started with the traditional narrative mode of zero focalization, and moved towards the use of different narrative modes, including internal and external focalization. Seen from this perspective, “Remembering Past Times” is an important turning point. A new page was started; the use of different modes was introduced into modern Chinese fiction.
Clayton Hamilton's *Materials and Methods of Fiction* (1908) was translated into Chinese as *Xiaoshuo facheng* by Hua Linyi and published in 1924. One year later, Bliss Perry's *A Study of Prose Fiction* (1902) was translated into Chinese as *Xiaoshuo de yanyu*. In the 1920s and 30s, almost all theoreticians of fiction were influenced by these two books.

2. *The Writing of Short Stories*, was produced by the Qinghua Group of Fiction Research, which had seven members, including Liang Shiqiu and Wu Jiesan. This book has three parts, and in Chapter Six of Part Two, “Narrating Method of Short Stories,” written by Wu Jiesan, deals with “point of view.”

3. Xia does not list his references, but he states in the preface that his article “The Basic Attitude of Composition of Writing,” which is an appendix to this book, “directly comes from a chapter of the Japanese, Igarashi Riki’s *Thirty Lectures on Composition of Writing*” (i-ii). In his later book, *Wenyilun ABC* ([On Literature ABC]), he listed some of them: besides Arnold Bennett’s *Literary Taste* and Peter Kropotkin’s *Eguo wenxue de lilunyu shiji* ([Russian Literary Theory and Practice]), there were some Japanese critics and writers’ books: Arishima Takeo’s *Compositio nn o f  Writing,* *which is a n  appendi x  t o  thi s  book , “directl y  comes  from  a  chapte r  o f  th e  Japanese , Yakumo’ s  (Lafcadi o  Hearn )* *positio nn  o f  th e  perceive r  (th e  focalizer),  tha t  betwee n  internall y  focalize d  an d  externall y  focalize d  refer s  t o  th e  perceived object (the focalized) (Rimmon-Kenan 139).*

4. For example, Rimmon-Kenan stresses that her distinction between external and internal focalization deliberately departs from Genette’s classification of *récits* into non-focalized, internally focalized and externally focalized. She writes that his “non-focalized” corresponds to her “external focalization” and his “internally focalized” is analogous to her “internal focalization,” however, his “externally focalized” is based on a different criterion (138). Both Rimmon-Kenan and Bal think that Genette’s classification is based on two different criteria: while the distinction between non-focalized and internally focalized refers to the position of the perceive (the focalizer), that between internally focalized and externally focalized refers to the perceived object (the focalized) (Rimmon-Kenan 139).

5. Genette writes in response to Mieke Bal’s terms: “Mieke Bal introduces ideas (focalizer, focalized) I never thought of using because they are incompatible with my conception of the matter. For me, there is no focalizing or focalized character. focalized can be applied only to the narrative itself, and if focalizer applied to anyone, it could only be the person who focalizes the narrative—that is, the narrator, or, if one wanted to go outside the conventions of fiction, the author himself, who delegates (or does not delegate) to the narrator his power of focalizing or not focalizing” (Revisited 73).


7. “Though storytellers had to rely on their ingenuity and ready wit, they also had prompt-books known as *hua pen* (huan) to fall back on” (LXQJ 9: 112; History 135).

8. In 1902 Liang Qichao published a monthly magazine entitled *New Fiction* in Yokohama, Japan, and called for a “Revolution in poetry” and “Revolution in fiction.”

9. Some narratives with other than zero focalization can be found in Tang dynasty prose romances and Ming and Qing dynasties fiction. For example, Wang Du’s *The Ancient Mirror*, Zhang Zhuo’s *The Fairies’ Cavern*, Li Gongzuo’s *The Story of Xie Xiao’e*, Li Chaowei’s *The Story of Liu Ti*, and *The White Monkey* (author unknown), etc. Chen Pingyuan analyzes this in *The Transformation of the Narrative Mode in Chinese Fiction* (66-68).

10. The changes are here mainly in person, not in narrative mode. For example, in Lin Shu’s Chinese translation of *La Dame aux Camélías*, the translator using “Alexandre Dumas says,” several times reminds the reader of what is said by the author. However, Lin still uses “I” as narrator to tell the story in his translation.

11. Of the many English translations for the important concept of *Zhong yong* the following are the most common: “the constant mean,” “state of equilibrium,” “the course of the mean,” “the doctrine of the mean.” The famous philosopher of the Song dynasty Zhu Xi [Chu Hsi] (1130-200) said: “*Zhong* means keeping middle, not too much, not too less; *yong* means normal.”

12. Of the many English translations for Lao Zi’s concept of *Dao* the followings are the most common: “the path (of duty),” “the path (of Mean),” “the right path,” “the way,” “the proper way,” “reason,” “rule.”

13. The following is based on Chen Pingyuan’s analysis of the fiction magazines, in which the narrative modes gradually changed from the traditional Chinese one to the new one. Chen uses Xia Mianzun’s terms 1) “omniscient point of view;” 2) “limited point of view;” and 3) “rigidly restricted point of view” (Transformation 5-14, 66). I replace these with zero focalization, internal focalization, and external focalization respectively.

14. Since exact statistical data is lacking, people have different estimates of the number of translated foreign fiction in the late Qing dynasty. Luo Pu claims that he had found at least 1,000 items published yearly (Pi Fasheng: Preface of *Hong Lai Ying*), while Yu Mingzhen believes that: “more than 100 fiction books were published every year, and translated fiction accounted for ninety per cent.” To take a example, the famous
translator Lin Shu, who started to translate in 1897, translated 184 books, including 40 literary masterpieces of world literature, using ten million Chinese characters during his career of twenty-six years.

Opinions differ on the question which was the first modern Chinese narrative in the first person. Doleželova, writes, "The first-person personal narrative is certainly an innovation in the history of Chinese vernacular fiction. Wu Woyao's [Wu Jianren] Strange Events [Strange Events of the Last Twenty Years] is the first occurrence of the first-person narrative in baihua literature" (Chinese Novel 66). Chen Pingyuan thinks that Fu Lin's Qinhai shi, published in 1906, "is the work that describes self-life and experience with the form of zhonghui novel in the first time in the history of Chinese literature, and it really uses the first-person narrative method in the writing of "New fiction" (Transformation 78). I agree with Doleželova for the following reasons: although Wu's whole novel was written between 1903 and 1910 and published with three major interruptions, the first installment of the novel was indeed published in New Fiction in 1903. The novel is presented as the memoirs of the protagonist, Jiusi yisheng. In the prologue (first chapter), which is written in third-person, Jiusi yisheng has been introduced. Then, Jiusi yisheng begins to relate his own experiences in first-person from the second chapter. First he explains to the reader about his odd name, then Jiusi yisheng recalls his experience that happened when he was fifteen-year-old. A narrator-character in first-person thus has actually formed in the second chapter. I think, earlier than Qinhai shi, Strange Events of the Last Twenty Years is the first time that first person was used in the history of Chinese vernacular fiction.

15 In addition to introducing the above eight poets, Lu Xun also mentioned in this article Nietzsche, Goethe, Thomas Carlyle, Dante, N. Gogol, Shakespere, Plato, Walter Scott, John Milton, Henrik Ibsen, John Keats, and other writers and thinkers.

16 "The Soul of Sparta" was written in classical Chinese and published in the fifth and ninth issues of Zhejiang chao (June and November 1903). In 1934, it was included in a collection of Lu Xun's works Ji weiji (Collection of Uncollected Works). In the preface to this collection, Lu Xun writes he probably stole "The Soul of Sparta" from somewhere, but he cannot recall from where. He adds that at that time he just started to learn Japanese and was eager to read and to translate something (LXQJ 7: 4).

17 According to Lu Xun, the first "zhonghui novel" in the history of Chinese fiction was Tripitaka's Search for Buddhist Sutras by an anonymous author. The book was published on the late Song or Yuan dynasties.

There are seventeen chapters in it—the earliest known example of Chinese fiction divided into chapters—each concluded by a poem (LXQJ 9: 120; History 144).

19 Jingwei is the name of a bird. It is said that she was the youngest daughter of the Emperor. She drowned in the Eastern Sea. After her death, she became a bird trying to fill up the sea with branches and pebbles.

20 Xingtian is the name of a monster. It is said that Xingtian vied to be a god with the Emperor. The Emperor cut off his head, but he, using his nipples as his eyes, his navel as his mouth, wielding his ax and shield, still fought against the Emperor.

21 He states in his later "A Letter about Translation" that translations "introduce not only new contents but also new techniques of expression" (Friend 54).

22 Lu Xun's friend Xu Shoushang, who had studied in Japan with Lu Xun, said that he had compared the German translation with that of Lu Xun's, and found that "his translation is true to the original word-for-word and has no additions and deletions at will. This ushered in a new epoch in the Chinese translation circles" (Friend 54).

23 In his letter to Yan Jiyun of May 6, 1934, Lu Xun said: "Now people all say that my first short story is 'A Madman's Diary.' In fact, the first one is a short story in classical Chinese, which was published in A Forest of Fiction, probably before the Revolution of 1911. The name of the story and the pseudonym I have forgotten. The content is about something that happened in an old-style private school" (LXQJ 12: 403).

24 Lu Xun's brother Zhou Zuoren says: "His writing of fiction, had not started with 'A Madman's Diary.' While at home in the winter of 1911, he wrote a short story in classical Chinese, using a rich man who was the next-door neighbor as a model. It was written about the situation on the eve of the Revolution of 1911 [...] and had no title. Two or three years later, I added a title and a pen name, and sent it to The Short Story Magazine. At the time the magazine was relatively small in size. Its editor Yun Tieqiao, wrote in reply gave it high praise and promised to publish it as the forthcoming issue's first or inaugural story" (Memories 274).

25 "Remembering Past Times" was reprinted for the first time in the seventh volume of his collected works in the Collection of Items Not Included in Any collection in 1958. In 1990, as an appendix, it was put at the end of Complete Selection of Lu Xun's Short Stories.

26 Genette adds in a note: "Of course, this distinction is relevant for the classical form of autobiographical narrative, where the narrating is enough subsequent to the events for the narrator's information to differ appreciably from the hero's. When the narrating is contemporaneous with the story (interior monologue, journal, correspondence), internal focalization on the narrator amounts to focalization on the hero."

27 Prošek qualifies the importance of the new language system: "Without wishing to deny the importance of a new literary language close to and freely drawing on the colloquial language, we must admit that the fundamental requirement was not a new language, but a new writer brought up in a modern way and capable
of looking at the world with modern eyes, endowed with a new and very different interest in certain aspect of reality. A revolution had first to take place in the minds of writers, and then it could find its expression in their work" (Precursor 175-76).