

Focalization and mental representations in Lu Xun's madman stories

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Abstract

This paper explores the intrinsic relationships between focalization and mental representations of narrative fiction by studying the modern Chinese writer Lu Xun's three classic short stories about schizophrenics: 'Diary of a Madman', 'The White Light' and 'The Lamp of Eternity'. Drawing on narratological analyses of focalization and cognitive analyses of mental representations, the study reveals that via dynamic arrangements of focalization, Lu Xun constructs a continuum of madness that cover both the clinical and social dimensions of schizophrenia. 'Dairy of a Madman', mainly focalized internally but with some external fluctuations, represents a paranoid mind that is both deranged and insightful; 'The White Light', using a double-level focalization, i.e. a general zero focalization embedded with limited internal focalization, shows omnisciently the protagonist's delirium and provides a close-up on his deranged world per se; 'The Lamp of Eternity', employing an external focalization exclusively, keeps the protagonist's mind inaccessible to the reader and consequently stresses madness as a social construct. The present study argues that Lu Xun artistically contributes to modern Chinese fiction by expanding the range and level of focalization, and the Luxunian madman representation refreshes the reader's world schema by making him/her re-examine the 'normal' worlds and minds. It also argues that classical studies on focalization and cognitive studies on mental representation are inherently compatible as exemplified in the three madman stories.

Keywords: focalization; mental representations; Lu Xun; short stories

1. Introduction

Modern Chinese writer Lu Xun (1881-1936) is among the greatest names in the twentieth-century Chinese literature. His works are read and researched worldwide. In a study on the reception of Lu Xun in Europe and America, Eber (1985: 242) holds ‘that Lu Xun has achieved a worldwide reception as a writer is obvious’. In China, studies on Lu Xun’s works have become a main stream in literature research during the past one hundred years, and even the term ‘*Luxun xue*’ (literally translated as ‘Lu Xun studies’ or ‘Luxunology’) is created for the discipline.

Lu Xun wrote only thirty-four short stories. However, these short stories have an unsurmountable place in the history of Chinese fiction. ‘By absorbing and introducing the artistic methods of Western novelists, Lu Xun made comprehensive artistic innovations in traditional Chinese fiction’ (Tan, 2001: 1). However, most Chinese scholars embark on Lu Xun studies from a socio-historical perspective, placing more emphasis on the contents rather than on the writing techniques and formal values of his works. At the turn of the century, Tan’s (2001) PhD thesis *Narrative Modes in Lu Xun’s Short Stories*, conducted under the framework of Western narratology, is one of the earliest systematic investigations into the formal properties of Lu Xun’s works. In this thesis, Tan (2001: 3) stresses the goal of his study is ‘to open new ways of research on Lu Xun’s fiction’.

However, almost twenty years after, the research landscape is still a far cry from Tan’s aspiration. The content-outweighs-form tradition still holds a strong fort in Lu Xun studies in China. In addition to the imbalance in the division of labour between form and content, another insufficiently attended dimension is the mental worlds. Like James Joyce whose major concern is the paralysis of the Dubliners, Lu Xun’s short stories are best known for his mastery in depicting the Chinese that are mentally sick. However, the mental worlds of Lu Xun’s fictional characters still remain rarely explored.

The purpose of the present study is to address the above-mentioned imbalances by investigating the formal properties and the mental worlds in Lu Xun's three classic short stories about schizophrenics, i.e. 'Diary of a Madman', 'The White Light' and 'The Lamp of Eternity'. I will examine the distinctive features of each story as well as the patterning of these stories in terms of their modes of focalization and mental representations, aiming at further exploring the intrinsic relationships between these two issues as well as the literary and social values of Lu Xun's works.

2. Modes of focalization in madman stories

Focalization is about the selection and presentation of information in a narrative. It 'denotes the perspectival restriction and orientation of narrative information relative to somebody's (usually, a character's) perception' (Jahn, 2005: 173). The three madman stories in the current study instantiate different modes of focalization.

2.1 Internal focalization with external fluctuations in 'Diary of a Madman'

Published in 1918, 'Diary of a Madman' is the first short story written in modern vernacular Chinese. The main story is a first-person narration told by the protagonist in the form of dairies written during his days of persecution complex. In his derangement, he sees in everything signs of cannibalism. He tries every means to protect himself from being eaten and to stop the flesh-eating tradition. He reckons children as the only innocent ones not yet contaminated by the cannibalistic practice. So, like a megaphone, he calls out: 'Save the children...' ('Dairy of a Madman': 31)

Following the Genettian model of focalization (Genette, 1980), Tan (2001) holds that 'Diary of a Madman' uses internal focalization. Likewise, I see this story focalized internally in general, while I also find the pattern not monolithic but dynamic. The madman narrates most of the stories as an 'experiencing self' (Cohn, 1978). For example, in the opening sentence of the dairies, 'The moon is bright tonight' ('Diary of a Madman', 21), the narrator and character madman brings the reader in situ by using the deictic words 'the', 'is' and 'tonight'. However, the madman sometimes oscillates

between an 'experiencing self' and a 'retrospective self', examining externally his past experiences: 'When he was teaching me history as a boy, he once told me people could 'exchange sons to eat' in times of scarcity' ('Diary of a Madman', 26). Focalized through a 'retrospective self', the narrator and the character are separated: the narrator is the grown-up schizophrenic while the character is the young boy, who was taught by his brother about cannibalism.

The 'experiencing self' provides the vantage point through which the reader can vicariously experience the madman's mental traumas, while the 'retrospective self' externally provides the madman chances to re-examine his past. This embedding of focalization (Bal, 1997), i.e. external focalization within internal focalization, allows the reader to see the madman's worlds as he experiences and manages to make sense of it.

Lu Xun fully or partially uses the mode of internal focalization in the majority of his short stories, including some of his best-known ones such as 'Kong Yiji', 'Medicine' and 'New Year's Sacrifice', etc. Tan (2001) holds that in traditional Chinese fiction, narratives with internal focalization are very rare, and argues that this is a contribution that Lu Xun made to the modern Chinese fiction. Following Tan, I argue that by introducing 'retrospective self', Lu Xun also experiments with internal focalization by bringing dynamicity into it.

2.2 Internal focalization within zero focalization in 'The White Light'

'The White Light', published in 1922, tells the story of Chen Shicheng who, obsessed with passing the examinations for a post in the government, eventually becomes deranged under the strikes of repeated failures. Under hallucination, he starts to dig under the ground in his room in hopes of uncovering the fortune that is said to have been buried by his ancestors. Digging up no fortune, Chen runs to the mountain following a hallucinated voice and a white light and gets himself drowned in the river.

In this story, an omniscient heterodiegetic narrator presents everything about the protagonist to the reader. For example, the narrator portrays Chen's emotion on the

verge of a breakdown upon learning his sixteenth failure: ‘A pitying laugh escaped him. Fury succeeded’ (‘The White Light’: 134). The narrator also presents Chen’s worldview to the reader: Chen holds climbing up into officialdom as his ultimate life pursuit.

Based on the heterodiegetic narrator’s omniscience, I classify ‘The White Light’ into Genette’s (1980) zero focalization, a conclusion that is consistent with Tan’s (2001) finding. However, I also find there is an inconsistency in focalizer within this general omniscience—the focalizer may sometimes shift from the narrator to the character, i.e. a slip from a first-level external focalizer to a second-level internal focalizer (Bal, 1997: 158).

- (1) With the county competition behind him, he could have tried his luck at the provincial level, soaring through the ranks of government... All the best people would try to marry their daughters off to him... He would get rid of the tenants who had rented rooms in the derelict old family house – though likely as not, they would all have deferentially moved out of their own accord, to make way for him. The whole house would be made good as new, its gate embellished with a flagpole and plaque... If he preferred to work behind the scenes, away from the cut-and-thrust of local politics, a cosseted job in the capital would be his; otherwise, he could settle for a lucrative post in the provinces... (‘The White Light’: 133)

In (1), the use of modal verbs indicates these are the ‘free indirect thoughts’ (FIT) (Leech and Short, 2007)—hypothetical situations projected from Chen’s mind. The narrator temporarily transfers the vantage point to the character, and the reader thereby sees through Chen’s eyes his illusions directly, a sketch of his dream life. Similarly, the reader can also look straight into Chen’s hallucinating mind:

- (2) ‘Failed again’ (‘The White Light’: 134)

‘A white fan of light flickered through his rooms’ (‘The White Light’: 135)

‘To the mountains...’ (‘The White Light’: 137)

The hallucinated scene and voices as shown in example (2) give the reader a direct experience of Chen’s auditory and visual hallucinations.

In presenting Chen’s illusions and hallucinations, the omniscient narrator chooses to foreground the limited focalization of the character, allowing a direct representation

within an indirect pattern. Shigematsu (2018: 74) contends that the effect of directness in indirect consciousness representation lies in ‘the illusionary feeling on the part of the reader that there is no narrator and that he/she is looking directly into a character’s consciousness’. Using this double-level focalization, Lu Xun instills into the story a sobriety that distances the reader from the protagonist while snapping close-ups of a disordered world through the protagonist’s eyes.

Lu Xun also employs zero focalization in his other works such as ‘The Real Story of Ah-Q’, ‘Soap’ and ‘Tomorrow’. Zero focalization is a typical feature of traditional Chinese fiction. Tan (2001) contends that Lu Xun both assimilates into Chinese tradition with his frequent use of zero focalization and introduces innovations into this tradition. The double-level focalization in ‘The White Light’ is a good example to showcase Lu Xun’s artistic innovation. He artfully weaves the character focalizer into a narrative that predominantly uses zero focalization, expanding the levels of focalization in fiction.

2.3 External focalization in ‘The Lamp of Eternity’

‘The Lamp of Eternity’, written in 1925, tells the story of a madman who insists on putting out the Lamp of Eternity at the altar in the Goodlight village. The lamp is a tradition in the village; the villagers believe if the lamp is put out the village will be swallowed up by the sea and the people will turn into mudfish. People concerned meet to discuss a way out and finally reach a consensus on locking up the madman in the temple.

‘The Lamp of Eternity’ uses exclusively external focalization (Genette, 1980), where a video camera seems to make a complete live record of the characters’ words and actions in this story. The story begins by depicting people gather in the teahouse to talk about someone at his absence. The scene produces a series of suspense: Why is the atmosphere of the teahouse clotted with tension? What are the people in the teahouse conspiring to do? Who is this ‘he’? Why do people have to get rid of him?...

The reader's view is subsequently brought to the temple gate where the protagonist madman makes his debut. The reader sees his 'square, sallow face' and his eyes with 'unblinking stare', hears his words— 'That lamp has to be put out...' ('The Lamp of Eternity': 209), and observes his action— 'Their antagonist now turned his flashing eyes directly on Kuoting' ('The Lamp of Eternity': 210).

The reader then witnesses the entire process in which the people concerned conspire to deal with the madman. In the words of his uncle and others, the madman's insanity is defined, and the proposal to lock him up becomes a rational solution in everyone's interest. Thus, the madman is sentenced in absentia.

The madman is locked up and the village is brought back to its usual order. 'I'll burn it down', the outcry of the madman's characteristic phrase reminds the reader of his existence, accompanied by 'one hand tugging on a wooden grille, the other clawing at some bark, two eyes flashing between' ('The Lamp of Eternity': 215).

The external focalization in 'The Lamp of Eternity' gives the reader a strong sense of presence. Thanks to the camera lens, the reader may visualize the above described actions in every detail, but it is not within the range of the camera lens to show what the world is like in the madman's eyes.

Lu Xun only uses external focalization in two of his short stories (the other one being 'A Public Example'). Although small in number, they are important in demonstrating Lu Xun's artistic innovations. Traditional Chinese fiction uses '*baimiao*' to depict the character's words, actions, nature and feelings, etc., with no narrator involved. This traditional method is akin to external focalization in modern narratological terminology, but the traditional Chinese fiction only used external focalization partially and never used it throughout the entire work. In the West, external focalization catches people's attention with the popularity of, for example, Hemingway's short stories such as 'The Killers' and 'Hills Like White Elephants' in which external focalization is used as the canonic form. In 'The White Light', Lu Xun

uses the Hemingwayan camera lens throughout, but he also attends to the depiction of the character's feelings, a method reminiscent of the Chinese *'baimiao'*. Experimenting with an external focalization, Lu Xun both draws on strong points from Western fiction and inherits traditions from Chinese fiction.

3. Mental representations under the prisms of focalization

Mental representation is an essential quality of narrative fiction. Palmer (2004) argues that classical narratological studies on consciousness (including focalization) are intrinsically linked to the study of fictional minds. The perspectival restrictions as discussed in each of the story above to a certain extent determine the cognitive strategies that are essential in the representation of the three distinctive mindsets all labeled as schizophrenic.

3.1 The madman's literalization of cannibalistic metaphors

Through the prism of internal focalization, the reader of 'Diary of a Madman' is privileged with a direct view of the protagonist's world, thus his distinct way of conceptualization. Departing from this point, the reader sees a cannibalistic world conceptualized by the madman via his unique cognitive strategy—literalizing cannibalistic metaphors. All the madman's mental events are derived from and centralized on his paranoid notion—'cannibalism', as reflected in his speech, action and thought.

Whatever aspects of cannibalism, the madman tends to literalize cannibalistic metaphors. Common people usually give literal interpretations to phrases such as 'Yi Ya steamed his son'ⁱ ('Diary of a Madman': 28) and 'exchange sons to eat' ('Diary of a Madman': 26), but metaphorical interpretations to phrases such as 'his flesh should be devoured, his skin flayed into a rug' ('Diary of a Madman': 26) and 'benevolence, righteousness, morality... eat people' ('Diary of a Madman': 24). The latter belong to Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) structural metaphor, where people resort to the source domain concept 'to eat human flesh' to interpret the abstract concepts in the target

domain: {deep seated-hatred, cruelty...}. However, the madman uses the source domain only, and thus interprets everything related to cannibalism literally. When hearing his brother mention a notorious villain and say ‘his flesh should be devoured, his skin flayed into a rug’, the madman conceptualizes his brother’s lips as being ‘smeared with human grease, his thoughts only of eating people’ (‘Diary of a Madman’: 26). Based on his literal interpretation of cannibalism, the madman has developed a unique system of cannibalistic concepts, which are linguistically realized to construct a cannibalistic world.

In a study on pragmatic failure and mind style, Semino (2014: 154) points out that the ASD protagonists in her study have ‘some kind of cognitive impairment that makes it unusually difficult for them to interpret figurative language’. Like the ASD protagonists in Semino’s (2014) study, the madman’s literalization of cannibalistic metaphors signifies his inability in interpreting the nonliteral meaning, a sign that indicates his cognitive impairment.

Literalizing metaphors is an artistic strategy adopted by authors as different as Hawthorne, Ionesco and Kesey. Using such a strategy, Lu Xun gives force and credence to the worlds presented through the eyes of the madman. The paranoid often see the world more accurately. ‘Paranoics’ blindness and insights are closely related’, argues Abootalebi (2017: 376) in his study of paranoid fiction. The madman’s conceptualization gives the reader a better way of viewing the world than otherwise.

3.2 Figures vs. ground in Chen’s derangement

Like the madman suffering from a persecution complex, in ‘The White Light’ Chen’s schizophrenia also results from his paranoid notion—obsession with government positions and fortunes. However, filtered through a different prism of focalization, this story foregrounds the protagonist’s derangement in contrast to the reality and neurotypical minds rather than his distinct pattern of conceptualization. This is realized through the figure-ground contrast.

The heterodiegetic narrator presents the protagonist's mental functioning omnisciently, such as his depression and dizzy state upon learning his sixteenth failure, while the embedded focalizer character Chen presents a deranged world directly through his own eyes.

(3) 'He turned dejectedly towards home, numb with disappointment.

...

He held up his hand, counting on his fingers: eleven, thirteen, sixteen times, counting this year – sixteen times not a single examiner had known a good essay when he saw it. A pitying laugh escaped him. Fury succeeded... ('The White Light': 134)

In example (3), in a 'thought report' featuring a 'thought-action continuum' (Palmer, 2004), the narrator reports Chen's mental state: deject, numb and disappointed. Then, the narrator uses a 'free direct thought' (FDT) (Leech and Short, 2007) to show how Chen reflects on the examiner's judgment: counting the years he has taken the examinations, he thinks all the examiners fail to recognize the value of his essays. Here, the focalizer shifts from the narrator to the character, directly presenting Chen's own thoughts: his illusions of the merits of his essays. Then, the focalizer slips back to the narrator once more to describe how these thoughts drive Chen to uncontrolled behavior and emotion: a sudden burst of laughter succeeded by a fit of fury, a sign that is commonly seen as characteristically schizophrenic.

Langacker (2008: 58) holds that foreground and background 'can all be seen as manifesting a very general feature of cognition', and '[a] manifestation in perception is the phenomenon known as figure vs. ground'. Through focalizer Chen, his salient features of delusional perception and cognition are amplified and foregrounded as figures, contrasting sharply with the reality.

One more example will suffice to illustrate this figure-ground relationship. As discussed in (1) above, Chen's illusion of a prosperous future built on successes in examinations is presented through his own perspective. This particular version of dream success is a foregrounded figure, contrasting bitterly with the stark background of

repeated failures. Thus, through the internal focalizer, the reader sees a foregrounded version of Chen's deranged world marked by illusions and hallucinations. Lu Xun uses this cognitive strategy consistently throughout the story.

The figures foreground the salient features in Chen's mindset. Chen's over-obsession with government positions and fortunes puts him into a paranoid state—his deranged world is built upon hallucinations and guided by illusions. The inclusion of focalizer Chen within an omniscient focalization provides the reader with an unmediated view of Chen's derangement, shortening the distance between the reader and the character. However, due to the limited focalization of the character and the overarching omniscient narrator, the reader finds it hard to discern Chen's distinctive pattern of conceptualization and trusts the narrator's judgement of his mental state.

3.3 Socially constructed schizophrenia in 'The Lamp of Eternity'

In 'The Lamp of Eternity', the external focalization restricts the reader from a direct access to the protagonist's mind. The reader can only make his/her judgement of the Goodlight village madman's (in)sanity via two channels: the villager's word-of-mouth knowledge and the reader's own judgement based on the madman's appearance and behaviours. In both cases, schema is an indispensable cognitive means for diagnosing the protagonist's madness.

Schizophrenia is a type of mental disorder with psychotic symptoms as the defining feature. According to DSM-V (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), schizophrenia is often diagnosed on the basis of the following diagnostic features:

The characteristic symptoms of schizophrenia involve a range of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional dysfunctions, but no single symptom is pathognomonic of the disorder. The diagnosis involves the recognition of a constellation of signs and symptoms associated with impaired occupational or social functioning. Individuals with the disorder will vary substantially on most features, as schizophrenia is a heterogeneous clinical syndrome. (American Psychiatric Association: 100)

In the lay person's schema, schizophrenia is simply madness. Stockwell (2002: 77) holds that in the linguistic field a schema is 'the conceptual structure drawn from memory to assist in understanding utterances'. The clinical diagnostic features, i.e. cognitive, behavioural, and emotional dysfunctions, substantiate such a schema.

The madman's psychiatric history is told by Mrs Hui in the form of an embedded narrative. Being the proprietor and waitress of the only teahouse in the village, a hub of rumors, Mrs. Hui is the most suitable candidate for the informant role. As a person familiar with the madman, Mrs. Hui's report is clinically valuable in the diagnosis of his mental disorder. In her narrative, Mrs. Hui mentions the madman's family history of schizophrenia: '... his old man was a bit gone himself'; she describes his behavioural and emotional disorders when the symptoms first developed: '... one day his grandfather took him to the village temple and told him to kneel before the Earth God, the Plague General and the Guardian of the Gate, but for some reason he got scared and refused to kneel, then ran out'; she reports his disturbed speech that reflects his cognitive disorder: '...telling everyone he met he had to put out the Lamp of Eternity'; and his typical behavioural disorder: 'he charged in and tried to blow it out himself' ('The Lamp of Eternity': 208). Mrs. Hui's report of the madman's psychiatric history corresponds with the key elements of the madman schema: verbal, behavioural and emotional disorder with genetic factors included. Based on these schematic properties, Mrs. Hui reaches her conclusion: 'He went crazy before, right, just like he has now' ('The Lamp of Eternity': 207) .

Like Mrs Hui, others also judge the madman insane based on the madman schema. It is this common conceptual structure that drives people to the consensus—the madman is mad, dangerous and should be put under control.

However, based on the same schema, the reader may make an entirely different judgement. For example, when the madman makes his first appearance in front of the temple, he seems to present a different picture.

- (4) ‘I’ve asked Mr Hei to open the door,’ he said in soft, subdued tones. ‘That lamp has to be put out. All the gods have got to go, too ... Once they’re gone, there’ll be no more locusts, or swine-fever, or –’ (‘The Lamp of Eternity’: 209)

Common sense tells us that putting out the lamp cannot be the solution to getting rid of these gods and the ensuing disappearance of the disasters. This false causal relationship seems to demonstrate the madman’s cognitive impairment. However, this diagnosis becomes precarious when the madman acknowledges his awareness of the false causal relationship:

- (5) ‘Even if you blow out the lamp, we’ll still have locusts, and swine-fever. Stop being such an idiot! Go home and sleep it off!’
‘I know that, I know.’ His lips curled into a malicious smile, which faded just as quickly.’ (‘The Lamp of Eternity’: 210)

The above dialogue seems to show the madman is fully aware of the false logic in his previous statement. Then, why does he make such a statement in the first place? Is it an exhibition of his disordered speech or an indication of his saneness? The answer remains unclear. In addition, the madman’s behaviour and emotion do not seem to conform to the schematic features of a madman, for example, ‘he said in soft, subdued tones’ (‘The Lamp of Eternity’: 209), a manner that is more sane than insane.

Based on the same cognitive mechanism, the reader and the villagers may reach different conclusions, an interesting twist produced by the joint work of external focalization and schema. This discrepancy seems to indicate the madman’s insanity is more social than clinical in nature. In his psychiatry studies, psychiatrist Laing (1990: 28) stresses the social dimension of psychosis: ‘The behaviour of the patient is to some extent a function of the behavior of the psychiatrist in the same behavioural field’. Likewise, Foucault (1988: 116) argues that ‘[m]adness is immediately perceived as a difference: whence the forms of spontaneous and collective judgment sought, not from physicians, but from men of good sense’. Social reality in essence is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), and the madman is insane in the eyes and mouths of the villagers because of his difference—his obsession with putting out the lamp, against the will of the villagers. To the reader’s mind, the villagers’ obsession with the lamp can be

as absurd as the madman's, an ironic observation on those who diagnose the madman's mental disorder.

4. Lu Xun's continuum of madness

Discussions in Section 2 and 3 reveal that classical studies on focalization and cognitive studies on mental representations are not only compatible but also complementary in the construction of the mental worlds of fictional characters. In Lu Xun's three short stories, a dynamic array of focalization joins hands with various cognitive strategies in constructing a variety of schizophrenic minds. Distinctive as these minds are, they are also inherently related to each other, constituting a continuum of madness.

It has remained a scholastic myth for over 100 years regarding the madman's (in 'Diary') (in)sanity status, with claims for both his sobriety and schizophrenia. I believe that one important cause for this myth is the story's internal focalization and the ensuing direct view of the madman's cannibalistic world, where the madman exhibits many features of a schizophrenic but is rather inconsistent in his psychotic behaviours, and sometimes his wisdom is beyond the normal minds' reach. In addition, since the whole affair is narrated by a cognitively impeded narrator, any conclusion based on the protagonist's narration is precarious. For this reason, I regard this madman as a sub-prototypical schizophrenic that possesses features of both sanity and insanity.

In 'The White Light', the omniscient narrator, as a reliable source of information, informs the reader of Chen's schizophrenic state, while the embedded focalizer, i.e. the character, gives the reader a chance to observe his deranged world per se through the foregrounded figures of his illusions and hallucinations. Undisputedly, Lu Xun characterizes Chen as a prototypical paranoid schizophrenic driven mad by his obsession with the civil-service examinations, where Chen's schizophrenia itself exists as a lively demonstration of his mental traumas.

Focalized externally, 'The Lamp of Eternity' creates a suspense in the reader concerning the mental state of the Goodlight village madman. Unlike the madman (in

‘Diary’) whose conceptualization is cognitively deficient or Chen whose illness is defined by the narrator, this madman’s insanity exists only in others’ conceptualization, being a social issue rather than a clinical diagnosis. As a result, this madman can be seen as a non-prototypical member of the category of schizophrenics.

Therefore, it can be argued that artistically Lu Xun creates schizophrenic characters as filtered through a wide range of focalization, constructing an entity in the fuzzy area of the category of schizophrenics. Each member owns a different schizophrenic status in this category, including a prototypical member Chen, a sub-prototypical member the madman (in ‘Diary’) and a non-prototypical member the Goodlight village madman (in ‘The lamp’). Different in membership status as the schizophrenic characters are, they are all considered abnormal based on their particular paranoid obsessions: from the madman’s (in ‘Diary’) cannibalistic delusion to Chen’s examination craze and then to the madman’s (in ‘The lamp’) persistence on putting out the lamp. These obsessions, similar but not the same, are related to each other by family resemblance (Wittgenstein, 1958), connecting the Luxunian schizophrenic characters into a continuum.

The Luxunian family of madmen are the artistic imageries that aesthetically refresh the reader’s schema of the world. Technically, Lu Xun chooses to let the madmen tell the unpleasant truths. This technique is widely practiced by writers worldwide. Gogol entertains the reader with the absurdities in Ivanov’s deranged world and satirizes the reality bitterly in his short story ‘Diary of a Madman’, a namesake of and precursor to Lu Xun’s madman. In Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, the King is deceived by his first and second daughter, but the fool sees everything clearly and tells the truth. In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, Kesey lets his schizophrenics expose the stark reality in a mental institution. The practice of literary preference of madmen is scientifically footed in psychiatrics, as Laing argues:

I am aware that the man who is said to be deluded may be in his delusion telling me the truth, and this in no equivocal or metaphorical sense, but quite literally, and that the cracked mind of the schizophrenic may let in light which does not enter the intact minds of many sane people whose minds are closed. (Laing, 1990: 27)

Lu Xun uses his madmen to exemplify perfectly Russian formalist Shklovsky's ([1917] 1965) famous notion of defamiliarization. As a group, the madmen are marginalized in the real world, considered potentially dangerous and secluded from the normal people, but individually, each lives in a world that either parallels or contradicts with the normal worlds, or remains unknown to the normal minds. The fictional madmen may temporarily transpose the reader from his/her familiar and comfortable worlds to an alien territory. By presenting the estranged version of the reality, Lu Xun's madmen and their deranged minds give the reader an opportunity to re-examine the familiar 'normal' worlds and 'normal' minds, triggering the process of 'schema refreshment' (Stockwell, 2002).

5. Concluding remarks

One distinctive feature of Lu Xun's short stories is the characterization of the sick characters, especially the mentally disturbed. Concentrating on Lu Xun's three classic madmen stories, the current study has explored the intrinsic relationships between focalization and mental representations so as to further illustrate the artistic and social values of Lu Xun's short stories.

As a formal feature, Lu Xun not only employs a wide range of focalization, ranging over all the three modes of Genettian focalization (Genette, 1980), but also introduces technical innovations. The analyses reveal that 'Diary of a Madman' uses a general pattern of internal focalization with external fluctuations, 'The White Light' zero focalization with embedded internal focalization of the character and 'The Lamp of Eternity' external focalization. Lu Xun adopts the strong points from both Chinese and Western narrative traditions and innovates the artistic forms of modern Chinese fiction. Lu Xun's innovation in focalization is not confined to its formal value; it also contributes to a multi-angled view of the continuum of schizophrenic minds. This fuzzy category of

schizophrenics presents to the reader an estranged version of the world, enriching and refreshing the reader's otherwise fossilized world schema.

As is widely known, Lu Xun initially pursued medical studies to medicate the suffering sick, but later gave up medicine for a career in literary and cultural reform. His medical background and his commitment to curing the mental traumas of his people seeded his literary creation of madmen. His madmen are either locked up by their family members or alienated by their neighbours, an oriental version of the alienation and confinement of the madmen that over half a century later Foucault (1988) theorized in his study of madness. Lu Xun puts the otherwise hidden madmen under the spotlight.

Lu Xun's madmen are both the sick men of a sick society and a cure. In the estranged worlds of the madmen, Lu Xun expounds his profound thinking in an artistic way. Foucault (1988) argues how throughout the course of history the great theme of the madness of the Cross changed and somehow inverted its meaning. Following Foucault, it might be worthwhile to postulate: if the norm is subverted, say, putting out the Lamp of Eternity becomes the norm in the Goodlight village, the madman is probably not only not mad, but a Christ-like figure in generating the new norm.

ⁱ This is an ancient Chinese story about the Chef Yi Ya who steamed his son and offered him to his King to eat.

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