

# On the Enlightenment Ideology of Lu Xun——Taking Call to Arms and Wandering as an Example

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## Abstract:

Lu Xun as an anti-feudal pioneer, is committed to the enlightenment of people and national liberation. His works *Call to Arms* and *Wandering* promote the development of literary genre and enlightenment ideology. The image of “intellectuals” and “uncivilized underlying characters” have deeply reflected the enlightenment ideology of Lu Xun. This paper starts from the perspective of two types of characters, and analyzes how the enlightenment is reflected in *Call to Arms* and *Wandering*. From the perspective of “intellectuals”, different intellectuals have different enlightenment explorations. The victims of the feudal system reveal the destruction of the intellectual spirit of the old feudal society. Through their tragic destiny, Lu Xun stresses the importance of carrying out enlightenment for national awakening. The maintainer of the feudal system is facing the attitude of the enlightenment ideology to maintain resistance, and it strongly maintained feudal rule and has become the resistance of enlightenment. While Lu Xun criticizes these feudal system maintainers, he also embodies the dilemma of spreading enlightenment ideology and deep expectations for intellectual awakening. The rebels of the feudal system are intellectuals with enlightenment ideas. They are brave enough to fight against the feudal system and dare to speak out for the people. From the perspective of “uncivilized underlying characters”, they are deeply affected by feudal ideas and lack enlightenment consciousness. Through the depiction of these characters, Lu Xun hosts the enlightenment ideology on the underlying people, debunking the cruelty of the feudal system and calling for the awakening of the nationals.

**Keywords:** Lu Xun; enlightenment ideology; intellectual; uncivilized underlying character

## 1. Introduction

*Diary of a Madman* known as the first modern vernacular short story in the history of Chinese literature, marking the beginning of modern Chinese fiction. Subsequent *Call to Arms* and *Wandering* two novels mark the maturity of modern Chinese novels. These two collections were created during the May 4th Movement. When the New Culture Movement rose, and the new ideas of democracy and science were widely spread. After accepting the new ideas, Lu Xun recognized the disadvantages of the feudal society and the urgency of social reform. He expressed the expectations of enlightening the people and revitalizing the national progress, actively promoting national modern transformation. *Call to Arms* and *Wandering* with the realistic spirit of “Facing the tragic life, facing the dripping blood”, revealed feudal thinking to the spiritual slavery of the people and exposure of national inferiority. They not only reflected the transformation of literature from traditional to modern, but also promoted the development of enlightenment ideology [1].

Wang Furen pointed out in *Comprehensive Discussion on Call to Arms and Wandering*: “Literary research is a chain of infinite development. The study of Lu Xun’s novels will also have a long-term development future. Any research system is impossible to be the end of this study, but can only be a small chain and link of this research [2].” There are a large number of existing monographs on enlightenment ideology. These existing monographs mainly analyze the historical background of Lu Xun, based on the development of Chinese modern literature, analyzing the difficulties encountered by the enlightenment ideology of Lu Xun. For example, *On the enlightenment of Lu Xun from the perspective of “pioneers”* from three aspects to explore the enlightenment ideology of Lu Xun. It contains “The distance between pioneer and the public, the spiritual confusion of pioneers themselves, and their scrutiny and transcendence of the path of enlightenment [3]. *Since calling to arms, why wandering? ——Lu Xun’s enlightenment ideology and creation* demonstrates the height and depth of enlightenment ideology from three aspects: “profound science”, “criticism of Chinese feudal ethical

culture” and “lofty thought” [4]. These monographs have laid a solid foundation for studying Lu Xun’s enlightenment ideology. However, most of them are studied from a macro perspective, mainly selecting some works showing the enlightenment ideology in the two novels *Call to Arms* and *Wandering*. The perspective is relatively single, and it is difficult to fully show the enlightenment ideology of Lu Xun.

This article will explore the perspectives of two types of character images: “intellectuals” and “uncivilized underlying characters”, to demonstrate the national awakening through specific examples of these two types of character images, and analyze how enlightenment ideology is reflected in *Call to Arms* and *Wandering*. This paper hopes to supplement the blank of the research perspective of the enlightenment ideology of Lu Xun.

## 2. The Enlightenment Exploration of Intellectuals

The modern intellectuals are a kind of group that first accept cultural education, and it should be a pioneer of ideological enlightenment and national awakening. However, due to the rule of the feudal system, the enlightenment ideology has different reflections on the intellectuals. The images of intellectuals created by Lu Xun’s works can be divided into the following three types according to their educational level and personal experience:

### 2.1 Victims of Feudal System

Kong Yiji in *Kong Yiji* and Chen Shicheng in *The White Light* are the typical images among victims of the feudal system. They are deeply poisoned by the feudal imperial examination system, hoping to seek fame through the imperial examination, full of the atmosphere of the old-style literati.

Kong Yiji, no matter how poor life was, always used so many archaisms that could not be understood. Also, he always wore a long gown that represented the identity of a scholar. Throughout the full text, he appears in the long shirt, standing, drinking, and arguing with people. But when he left, he sat on the ground with his legs crossed, wearing a tattered jacket and lacking energy and focus. These distinct contrasts reflected the tragic fate under the feudal imperial examination system [5]. Lu Xun has a strength that can see big things through small ones. Through the character image of Kong Yiji, let the public see the backwardness of the feudal system and the ignorance of National. Proceed to the next step, the public can reflect on society and themselves. This kind of reflection helps people get rid of the shackles of feudal thought, awaken ideological enlightenment, pursuing the new ideas of democracy and science, and providing ideological

guidance for the progress of the nation and society.

Chen Shicheng failed to pass the imperial examination sixteen times. After failing, he became lost and insane. Finally, he fell to the mountain and died on the treasure hunt road. In feudal society, it was normal for scholars to pursue fame and fortune, but Chen Shicheng excessively and blindly pursued fame, as if he were obsessed with ghosts. This thing showed the mental morbidity of the intellectuals under the feudal imperial examination system [6]. Lu Xun reveals the decay and cruelty of the feudal imperial examination system. Under the feudal imperial examination system, the pursuit of fame became the unique goal of intellectuals, and lost the value of the culture itself and the value of revitalizing the nation. The significance of the Enlightenment ideology is not only in the criticism of the feudal system, but also in guiding national thought, encouraging people to get rid of the shackles of the old thought and pursuing self-value and social value.

Such intellectuals lack the spirit to fight against feudal ideas. Their experience reflected a critique of the feudal imperial examination system. Lu Xun hopes to wake up people and promote national progress by exposing the sins of the feudal imperial examination system.

### 2.2 Maintainer of the Feudal System

Such intellectual images include novel characters such as Fourth Mr. Lu in *The New Year’s Sacrifice* and Professor Kao in *Professor Kao*. They opposed the New Culture Movement and maintained the old feudal thought, which became the resistance to the development of the enlightenment ideology.

Judging from the furnishings of the Fourth Mr. Lu’s study, He advocated neo-Confucianism, but he was a complete ignoramus about Confucianism. Fourth Mr. Lu was rigid and opposed social reform. He cursed the “New Party” and the “Reform Movement of 1898”. Xianglin’s sister was twice employed by the Fourth Mr. Lu’s home. But the Fourth Mr. Lu repeatedly forced Xianglin’s sister. When she did not use the value, she was ruthlessly driven out of Lu’s family. Even after her death, she was evaluated as “false” [7]. Various phenomena highlight the feudal ignorance of the Fourth Mr. Lu’s thought, is a traditional feudal guard. Enlightenment ideology contains rational freedom, democracy and science. It advocates awakening the people through ideological enlightenment, promoting social progress and modernization transformation. Through the image depiction of the Fourth Mr. Lu, it not only reflects the strong criticism of the feudal thought, but also reveals the heavy obstacles of the ideological enlightenment in the feudal society, thus reflecting the importance and necessity of the enlightenment ideology.

Professor Kao created a scholarly image that integrates

Chinese and Western cultures for himself. But in reality, he was a conservative figure who was ignorant and stubborn in feudalism. As a history instructor, he did not concentrate on studying academics. Instead, He peeked at female students with dirty minds when he taught in class. Under the guise of maintaining “ethics” to corrupt “ethics”. His story showed the dilemma of enlightenment ideology in feudal society [8]. The enlightenment ideology of Lu Xun is often reflected in the profound analysis of the feudal society and the call for the national awakening. Although Professor Kao does not directly embody enlightenment ideology, through this role. Lu Xun can guide readers to reflect on the disadvantages of feudal society, and thus stimulate people’s pursuit of ideological enlightenment and national liberation.

The intellectuals who maintained the feudal system could hardly undertake the important task of enlightening the wisdom of the people and revitalizing the nation. It can be seen from the feudal thought to the deep rule of the national thought, which Lu Xun reflected the difficult difficulties encountered by the development of enlightenment ideology.

### 2.3 Resister of the Feudal System

The madman in *Diary of a Madman*, Zijun and Juan Sheng in *Remorse* all belong to this kind of intellectual image. As intellectuals with awakening consciousness, they are the pioneers of ideological enlightenment with modern consciousness the requirements of reform

In *Diary of a Madman*, the author shows the nature of the “cannibalism” of the feudal system by the hand of Madman. The madman and Lu Xun all said “cannibalism”. The former referred to the body, while the latter referred to the spirit. The madman in the text shouted “Is always like this, right?” and “Save the child”. It was not only the Exposing of the cruel nature of feudal ethics, but also the scream of the national awakening and resistance to the traditional ideology, placing hope on the next generation can get rid of the feudal bounds and realize free liberation. This hope and sustenance for the future is the inheritance and development of the ideas of democratic science, equality and freedom in the enlightenment ideology, and also provides an important ideological impetus for the later social reform and national revitalization.

Juan Sheng and Zijun “talked about family autocracy, breaking old habits, equality between men and women, Ibsen, Tagore, Shelley.....”. It can be seen that they have accepted the new thought of personality liberation, gender equality and love freedom since the May 4th Movement [9]. Zijun said: “I am my own, and none of them can interfere with my rights!” This sentence not only reflected her awakening of self-consciousness, but also

competed for the resolute struggle of the feudal forces who are obstructing her pursuit of love [9]. Zijun and Juan Sheng represented the intellectuals struggling between the ideal and reality, reflecting the dilemma of awakening intellectuals in the enlightenment road. Although their love story had a certain tragic color, they had the courage to pursue their self-value and deeply reflect on the darkness of feudal society. Their anti-feudal spirit is the display of the enlightenment ideology of Lu Xun.

The intellectuals shaped in Lu Xun have significant differences in the accepted level of new ideas in the May 4th Movement, revealing the thought trajectory of different types of intellectuals. Old literati intellectuals were devoted to the examination. However, they were trapped in the rule of the feudal imperial examination system and numb to the new ideas of enlightenment. Feudal guards were the defenders of the feudal system. They maintained the old feudal thought and the ruling order of the feudal class and did not realize the significance of ideological enlightenment to the people, strongly opposed the new culture movement. Intellectuals with awakened consciousness exposed the dark rule of the feudal society. They were not only the practitioners of enlightenment ideology, but also the conveyors of enlightenment ideology, undertaking the important task of national enlightenment and national rejuvenation.

At the same time, it reflected a deep contradiction between society and the complexity of launching the Enlightenment movement. Intellectuals faced double pressures in new and old ideological transformations, which were conservative and revolutionary, traditional and modern. Many of them lived in poverty, and it was difficult to get understanding and support in the dissemination of enlightenment ideas, so they had to compromise with real life. Not only that, the object of enlightenment was insensitive and ignorant. In the face of new ideas, these people took an irrelevant attitude, and even obstructed the spread of enlightenment ideas because enlightenment ideology might threaten their own profit. However, the intellectuals with awakening consciousness were the hope of Lu Xun’s enlightenment ideology. They could inherit the enlightenment ideology of the May 4th Movement, in order to awaken the soul of a nation and encourage the morale [10].

### 3. Uncivilized Underlying Characters

Lu Xun in *How Do I Start a Novel* said: “Speaking of ‘why’ writing novels, I still hold the ‘enlightenment’ of more than a decade ago. Because I think it must be ‘for life’ and improve this life. So my materials mostly from the unfortunate people of the sick society, meaning to expose the suffering of the disease and attract the attention of healing

[11]”. Lu Xun portrays many “uncivilized underlying characters” in *Call to Arms* and *Wandering*. The suffering they suffered from the darkness of the feudal society. The following passage focuses on the typical uncivilized underlying characters, and shows the enlightenment ideology of Lu Xun from their perspective.

### 3.1 Ah Qui in The Tragedy of Ah Qui

Ah Qui was a backward peasant image being deeply affected by the feudal thoughts. His most prominent feature was the “spiritual victory method”. It meant taking a spiritual self-comfort to their own tragic fate. The “spiritual victory method” was a severe resistance to the national awakening and national rejuvenation. It had many specific manifestations, such as: Did not admit their own backwardness and said, “We previously — is much richer than you.”; Or venting anger to the weaker; Or despising “ I am a bug — still not let me go?”; More or self-deception, said “the son beat his dad”, then “gradually proud up” [12]. By shaping the image of Ah Qui, Lu Xun revealed the shortcomings of national inferiority and feudal society, putting forward the importance of enlightenment and education, calling on the people to face reality, awakening the enlightenment of enlightenment of the feudal, and promoting social reform and progress.

### 3.2 Hua Laoshuan in Medicine

In order to treat his son, Hua Laoshuan almost spent all his savings to buy human blood steamed bread. However, he did not pay attention to who the “human blood” belonged to and how it came from and did not realize his behavior of “buying human blood” was wrong. Hua Laoshuan only cared about the health of his son [13]. He treated the blood of the revolutionary Xia Yu as a “good medicine” to cure diseases, which was a blind belief in feudal superstition. People under the rule of feudal thought were ignorant and indifferent to the revolutionaries of the revolutionary, revealing the arduousness and urgency of enlightenment ideas. The feudal ignorant of Hua Laoshuan is a typical representative of uncivilized underlying characters. They did not recognize the meaning of enlightenment to the people’s educational significance. Lu Xun went to criticize the people and called on people to abandon feudal superstition and accept the new idea of democratic science.

### 3.3 Run Tu in The Native Country

The life track of Run Tu contained the reflection of enlightenment ideology. From the loveliness of youth to the silence of middle age, this huge change in character profoundly revealed the tragic experience of the people in the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. The “I” in the novel is an intellectual who has accepted new ideas. Although feel helpless and Sorrow, can understand Run

Tu. The reason was that “many sons, harsh taxes, soldiers, bandits, officials, gentry, are so hard that he looked like a puppet man [14]”. The tragic fate of Run Tu showed that real enlightenment was not only the spread of enlightenment ideology, but also the pursuit of people’s free liberation and the fight against social dark rule. Lu Xun shows the conflict between his enlightenment ideology and the reality of the feudal society, enlightening people to reflect on the oppression of the feudal system, calling people to break free and pursue democratic science.

### 3.4 The Numb Audience Group

Liang Qichao mentioned the image of The numb audience group in his book: “They are standing on the east bank, watching the fire on the west bank, looking at red light for joy [15]”. The uncivilized bottom character of the numb audience group, profoundly showed national inferiority. The numb audience group in *Medicine* showed no sympathy towards the revolutionaries who were killed, but ran forward to see the head of the revolutionary killed. It could be say that the sacrifice of the revolutionaries did not awaken the public consciousness. In *Peking Street Scene* the old woman holding a child was the same as other numb audience, holding the child and becoming an indifferent spectator. She passed on the wrong values to the child, which is the distortion of human nature in the feudal social environment. Through this detail, Lu Xun expressed his deep concern for the education of the next generation and his call for enlightenment, which is an important part of his enlightenment ideology.

In summary, the uncivilized underlying characters were trapped in the oppression and rule of feudal thought, and they were also the objects of Lu Xun’s enlightenment ideology. According to these figures, Lu Xun reflects on the national roots of inferiority and national awakening, calling for social reform.

## 4. Conclusion

This paper is incorporated into the point of “intellectuals” and “uncivilized underlying characters”. It shows the development status of Lu Xun’s enlightenment ideology and opens up the research perspective of Lu Xun’s enlightenment ideology.

In the feudal society in China, the ideological enlightenment movement is facing huge complexity and arduousness. Those intellectuals who maintain the feudal system and uncivilized underlying characters have deeply traditional concepts. Oppressed by the feudal system, they did not know how to resist. They were not only the objects of criticism by Lu Xun, but also the groups that he hoped to change through the enlightenment ideology. The formation of stark contrast is awakened intellectuals. As

the vanguard of ideological enlightenment, they shouted out in the darkness, which is a profound criticism of the reality of feudal society. The image of awakening intellectuals shaped by Lu Xun was deeply rooted in the hearts of people. They became the transmitter of enlightenment ideology, and prompted the people to pay attention to the social reality and ideological enlightenment, reflecting on the feudal traditional concepts. Therefore, *Call to Arms* and *Wandering* deeply showed the enlightenment ideology. These novels promoted the national awakening and national liberation and played an important role in promoting the dissemination of enlightenment ideology.

In the future, the author hopes to conduct a deeper study of the enlightenment ideology of Lu Xun on the basis of ability improvement, in order to more comprehensively understand its profound connotation, and further explore the enlightenment of Lu Xun and his works to society today.

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