

7 Russia as Master and Monster: Absorbing GOGOL's Madness and the Chinese "Little Tradition" in the Prose of LU Xun

Abstract. In the light of FOUCAULT's theory, this chapter examines the association between the theme of madness and the consciousness of darkness in the works of Nikolai GOGOL (Nikolaï Vasil'evich GOGOL', 1809–1852) and LU Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936), showing how the two writers inherit Russian literary legacy and Chinese "little tradition" of the dark world, respectively. A comparative analysis of GOGOL's *Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki* (Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka) and PU Songling's 蒲松齡 (1640–1715) story collection *Liaozhai Zhi Yi* 聊齋志異 (Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio) demonstrates not only a Chinese modernity acquired from Russia, as many scholars have done, but also the Russian Eurasian mentality resembling Chinese transcultural characteristics. Similarities in the two works account for LU's admiration and appreciation for GOGOL and motivate both writers to create the image of madness through absorbing the imagination of the strange and of others, which originated correspondingly from Ukrainian folklore and Chinese "little tradition". With juxtaposed texts and a comparative analysis, it can thus be better understood that the crazed is the product of the "self and others" that echoes the phenomena or the spirit in the Classical era and Age of Reason. FOUCAULT's theory reveals, particularly when both GOGOL and LU, and meanwhile Russia and China respectively, face the challenges of westernized civilization.

Keywords. Lu Xun, Gogol, Foucault, Madness, Chinese "little tradition."

Published in: Gotelind MÜLLER and Nikolay SAMOYLOV (eds.): *Chinese Perceptions of Russia and the West. Changes, Continuities, and Contingencies during the Twentieth Century*. Heidelberg: CrossAsia-eBooks, 2020. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/xabooks.661>.

Literary Relationship between GOGOL and LU Xun

The prominent Chinese writer LU Xun (1881–1936) narrates in his prose work “How I came to write fiction” that he has never read any theoretical book about such literary theme before his first published story “Diary of a Mad Man” (*Kuangren riji* 狂人日記).¹ The most beneficial factor of finishing his first collection *Nahan* 吶喊 (The Scream) is, as LU Xun suggests, the experience of reading a wide range of foreign short stories, literary history, and criticism during his stay in Japan.² He continues to expound that the writers he adores the most are GOGOL (1809–1852) and Henryk SIENKIEWICZ (1846–1916). Such narration also explains why LU Xun acknowledges his literary debts to GOGOL when he describes the inspiration of creating his own short stories:

Since May in 1918, my works “Diary of a Mad Man”, “Kong Yiji”, “Medicine” and so on have been published one after another, showing the achievements of the literary revolution. They were reviewed as works with “profound presentation and distinguishable form” so that they could touch young readers. However, such stimulation was one of the results of neglecting the introduction of European literatures. Russian writer GOGOL created “Diary of a Mad Man” in 1834. NIETZSCHE speaks by means of Zarathustra that “you have evolved from worm to man, but much within you is still worm. Once you were apes, yet even now man is more of an ape than any of the apes.” Furthermore, the treatments and ending of “Medicine” are clearly inherited from ANDREEV’s gloomy and grim style.³

The literary relationship between him and GOGOL, on top on being acknowledged by LU Xun himself, is further reinforced by the memoirs of his younger brothers ZHOU Zuoren and ZHOU Jianren.⁴ Like his elder brother, the prominent writer

This chapter mostly includes the essence of my Chinese article: “Fengkuang de qianzouqu – chutan guogeli yu lu xun zuopin de ‘he’an sijie’” 瘋狂的前奏曲——初探果戈理與魯迅作品的「黑暗世界」(The Prelude to Madness: The Dark World of GOGOL and LU Xun). In: *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu tongxun* 中國文哲研究通訊 (Newsletter of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy) no. 85, 2012, pp. 151–176.

1 LU Xun 魯迅: “Wo zenme zuoqi xiaoshuo lai” 我怎麼做起小說來 (How I came to write fiction). In: *Lu Xun Quanji* 魯迅全集 (Complete Works of LU Xun) vol. 4, Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe 2005, p. 525; Patrick HANAN: *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, New York: Columbia University Press 2004, p. 218.

2 Ibid.

3 LU Xun: “*Zhongguo xinwenxue daxi xiaoshuo er ji xu*” 《中國新文學大系》小說二集序 (Preface to the second collection of short stories in “The great compendium of new Chinese literature”). In: *Lu Xun Quanji* (2005), vol. 6, pp. 246–247.

4 ZHOU Zuoren 周作人 and ZHOU Jianren 周建人: *Nianshao cangsang: xiongdi yi LU Xun* 年少滄桑: 兄弟憶魯迅 (Time brings great changes since childhood: memoirs of LU Xun’s

ZHOU Zuoren, who lived under the same roof with LU Xun during their stay in Tokyo, specifies that GOGOL is the first foreign writer motivating LU Xun to create works,⁵ resulting in the production of the Chinese version of “Diary of a Mad Man”. For that reason, eminent scholars, such as Leo Ou-fan LEE,⁶ Patrick HANAN,⁷ V. I. SEMANOV⁸ and FUJII Shōzō⁹ in their studies in different languages, all demonstrate how LU Xun reads, identifies, imitates and absorbs the literary theme and writing techniques of GOGOL to represent and embody the Chinese mad man. Their research also indicates the multilingual influence (Chinese, Japanese, and German) and the characteristics of intertextuality of foreign works in LU Xun’s writings. Some of these studies further trace the literary heritage of Chinese classics, showing how LU Xun combines and contrasts the two different genres, *wenyan* 文言 (literary Sinitic) and *baihua* 白話 (vernacular), in order to transform the former and transcend its longstanding tradition.¹⁰

These aforementioned scholars, however, rarely deliberate the literary ties linking LU Xun with his favorite writers GOGOL, SIENKIEWICZ, NIETZSCHE and ANDREEV (Leonid Nikolaevich ANDREEV). What bonds LU Xun with these foreign writers is neither a simple relationship of imitation, identification and inspiration, nor an oversimplified question about supply and demand; or to illustrate the economic conditions in the writers’ different life stages and thus to determine the motivations and motifs of their evolutions. In fact, it is problematical to categorize the two writers’ motivations, philosophical thoughts and inner worlds into a pure, simple and lucid characteristic.

The literary creation of both GOGOL and LU Xun is analogous to holding a masquerade, sharing similarities under varied masks in their works, particularly when the text queries the nature of human beings and the characters interact or conflict with one another. The most common technique employed in their works

brothers), Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, vol. 1, 2001, p. 193. (LU Xun was the pen name of ZHOU Shuren 周樹人).

5 ZHOU Zuoren: “*Guanyu LU Xun*” 關於魯迅 (About LU Xun) and “*Guanyu LU Xun zhi er*” 關於魯迅之二 (More about LU Xun II). In: ZHI An 止庵 (ed.): *Zhou Zuoren ji* 周作人集 (Collection of Zhou Zuoren), Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, vol. 2, 2004, pp. 604–623.

6 LEE Leo Ou-fan: *Voices from the Iron House: A Study of LU Xun*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1987.

7 HANAN Patrick: *Chinese Fiction* (2004), pp. 217–244.

8 SEMANOV V. I.: *Lu Sin’ i ego predshestvenniki* (LU Hsun and His Predecessors), Moskva: Nauka 1967; *Lu Hsun and His Predecessors*, trans. and ed. by Charles J. ALBERT, London: Routledge 2016.

9 FUJII Shōzō 藤井省三: *Roshia no kage: Natsume Sōseki to Ro Jin* ロシアの影: 夏目漱石と魯迅 (The Shadow of Russia: NATSUME Sōseki and LU Xun), Tokyo: Heibonsha 1985.

10 LEE: *Voices* (1987); HANAN: *Chinese Fiction* (2004), pp. 217–244.

is to display the multilayers of chaotic conflicts and intellectual arguments between the inner worlds (i.e. self-imagination, illusion, delusion, and dream) and the external environments (i.e. reality, patriarchal society, system, and authority). In addition, the conflicts buckle themselves with one of the most vital themes during the Chinese May Fourth Movement: humanity and humanism, both of which are to explore the deep bottom of unknown souls and probe the unreasoned power, in order to question and even criticize the constructed code of etiquette and the norm of reason. Adopting the words, phrases and ideas by FOUCAULT from his book *Madness and Civilization*, this chapter defines the “irrational” in the works of GOGOL, SIENKIEWICZ, NIETZSCHE, ANDREEV and LU Xun as elements that cannot be understood or managed via reason (brightness and day are usually the incarnations of normality). Furthermore, ingredients of the “dangerous” mind, such as passion, loneliness, solitude and strangeness, as FOUCAULT suggests, are all “excluded” and demarcated into categories of mysticism, heresy, atheism, or “madness”.¹¹ In their respective scrutiny of GOGOL and LU Xun’s writings, K. MOCHUL’SKIĬ and Tsi-an HSIA designate the “irrational” mental and psychological phenomena as “night consciousness” (*nochnoe soznanie*)¹² and the spirit opening “heian zhamen” 黑暗閘門 (the gate of darkness),¹³ correspondingly. The so-called “irrational” and the “dangerous” mind is exactly the leitmotif that forms a solid chain connecting the oeuvre of GOGOL, SIENKIEWICZ, NIETZSCHE, ANDREEV and LU Xun, beyond the peripheral and mere relationship of reading, identifying, and learning. Among these writers, GOGOL and LU Xun predominantly share similarities of inherent perception of the cosmos easily summoned by the inspiration and stimulation of the so-called “night consciousness” and “darkness”, both of which are merged and termed as “the consciousness of darkness” in this article.

Based on the above studies of the consciousness of darkness, several questions are thus raised. How are the inherent perception and the consciousness of darkness shaped in their works? How are formations, symbols, masks, and incarnations of such perception and consciousness represented in the writings of GOGOL and LU Xun? What are the similarities and differences between the works of the two writers? Furthermore, what do these similarities and differences indicate? Would new denotations and perspectives be found through a comparative analysis apart from the study of the individual original text? All these questions are taken into consideration in this article.

11 Michel FOUCAULT: *Madness and Civilization*, London and New York: Routledge 2002, p. 4.

12 Konstantin MOCHUL’SKIĬ: *GOGOL’. SOLOV’EV. DOSTOEVSKIĬ.* (GOGOL. SOLOVYOV. DOSTOYEVSKY), Moskva: Respublika 1995, p. 49.

13 HSIA Tsi-An: *The Gate of Darkness: Studies on the Leftist Literary Movement in China*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press 1968, pp. 101–145.

Association between Madness and Consciousness of Darkness in the Classical Era and Age of Reason

Almost all researchers on GOGOL and LU Xun have noted that the theme of madness in their works is significant and meaningful because insanity perpetuates throughout the plot and atmosphere or simply in words, phrases and incarnations of the entire creation. Meanwhile, literary factors of madness are often linked with the imagery of heresy, the consciousness of darkness, and emotions of the irrational. The following textual analysis reveals that treatments of madness, darkness and the irrational in the writings of GOGOL and LU Xun are not only inherited from Russian and Chinese literary legacy respectively; they also fit in with the innovative components of *natural'nost'* (naturalness), *sluchai'nost'* (fortuity) and *netipich'nost'* (the atypical), as nineteenth century Russian critics regularly accentuate in their critiques. Although there are plentiful works of GOGOL and LU Xun which are related to the theme of madness and the consciousness of darkness, this chapter focuses on a comparative analysis of their earlier works written before both the Russian and Chinese “Diary of a Mad Man”.

David Der-wei WANG regards “positive” and “negative” values generally acknowledged in LU Xun’s “Diary of a Mad Man” as the vague demarcation between madness and reason, cannibalism and civilization, as well as revolution and feudalism, albeit with seemingly distinct boundaries on the surface. However, these dichotomies are often so interlaced and interactive that their borderlines are hard to delimit at the end of the story.¹⁴ As suggested by WANG, it is necessary to comprehend how the reality hybridizes the unreality in every layer when the narrative refers to madness, darkness and irrationality in both the Russian and Chinese “Diary of a Mad Man”. Such literary means is a remarkable writing strategy that GOGOL and LU Xun both share in common and which stimulates readers to think about problems and thus question authorities, the structure of power, family and society.

The general criticism of LU Xun’s “Diary of a Mad Man” is that this story exposes how the code of etiquette and the Chinese family system corrode individuals. I would, however, argue that the highly complex ingredients of this story are oversimplified with such clichés because it is neither sufficient to justify both the profound meaning and the avant-garde role of “Diary of a Mad Man” in the intellectual history and the development of Chinese literature, nor is it eligible to indicate the epoch-making significance the story radiates.

14 WANG Dewei 王德威: *Zhongsheng xuanhua: 30 yu 80 niandai de Zhongguo xiaoshuo* 眾聲喧嘩: 30 年代與 80 年代的中國小說 (Heteroglossia: Chinese Fiction in the 1930s and 80s), Taipei: Yuanliu chubanshe 1988, p. 12.

In terms of the hybridity of reality and unreality, and the multiple layers of the consciousness of darkness in the theme of madness, FOUCAULT provides a noteworthy analysis of the works of European writers in his book *Madness and Civilization*. His theory coincides with the artistic quality, writing characteristics, and purpose GOGOL and LU Xun are both concerned about in their “Diary of a Mad Man”:

Tamed, madness preserves all the appearances of its reign. It now takes part in the measures of reason and in the labor of truth. It plays on the surface of things and in the glitter of daylight, over all the workings of appearances, over the ambiguity of reality and illusion, over all that indeterminate web, ever rewoven and broken, which both unites and separates truth and appearance. It hides and manifests, it utters truth and falsehood, it is light and shadow.¹⁵

Notwithstanding FOUCAULT’s providing examples of the Baroque period to show how madness is experienced, identified with and represented in European works, several characteristics he induces, such as the hybridity and duality of reality and illusion, truth and falsehood, brightness and darkness, are repeatedly used in the writings of GOGOL and LU Xun. It is thus not surprising that the manifestation of madness is often associated with the characteristics of duality, hybridity and changeability, all of which are highly relevant to the historical development of reason in different ages. Such reason is frequently labelled as civilization earlier in FOUCAULT’s theory and later in the monograph by SCULL.¹⁶

Madness and Civilization aims at the “mad men” imprisoned in European mental hospitals in the Classical era. To FOUCAULT, the meaning of immurement is to control, manage, punish and correct patients and the main purpose is to tame and rationalize the madness. The so-called “tameness”, if rephrased in psychological or sociological terms, corresponds to “rationalization”, “normalization” and “socialization”. In this book, FOUCAULT articulates the chronological meanings of madness in European cultures in different periods, concluding that the definition of the so-called “normal” or “average” condition, standard and mode has never been solid. In other words, what changes the historical meanings of madness is knowledge, identification, and acceptance of humankind.

FOUCAULT continues querying and arguing that the history of madness has been constructed as a kind of mental illness excluded by morality, society or normality, and further categorized into the structure of control and management via reason for a long term. Such structure will not allow madness to be treated as a

15 FOUCAULT: *Madness* (2002), p. 32.

16 FOUCAULT: *Madness* (2002); Andrew SCULL: *Madness in Civilization*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2015.

subject to speak out via reason. Like the “others” under the structure constructed by civilization, madness is speechless and finally “disappears/ed”. As a result of “La folie, l’absence d’œuvre” (madness, the absence of the oeuvre),¹⁷ as FOUCAULT suggests, the history of madness is in fact “an archaeological excavation of such silence”¹⁸ of others.

Similar to the aforementioned European works, the theme of madness in both Russian and Chinese literature before the writings of GOGOL and LU Xun had rarely been represented systematically. As FOUCAULT signifies the works of “silence”, the Russian and Chinese “Diary of a Mad Man” produced in an uproar of heteroglossia in the age of westernized civilization in Russia and China, respectively revealed their extraordinary significance and impressive power in the face of Russian and Chinese literary traditions. If we follow FOUCAULT’s arguments to review the Russian and Chinese “Diary of a Mad Man” published in 1833 and 1918 respectively, it is notable that these two specific years were exactly the points in time when Russia and China correspondingly encountered violent and severe challenges of European superpowers and empires established and dominated by “reason” and “science”. GOGOL and LU Xun both choose the diary as a form and a mad man as the first-person narrator to manifest how the male protagonist subsists on the “civilized” surroundings full of huge differences between strongness and weakness, brightness and darkness, as well as greatness and insignificance. “The other” (mad man) who is usually silent reverses to the subject who is empowered to speak in both the Russian and the Chinese “Diary of a Mad Man”. More skillfully, the reversed “others” in the two stories not only signify the “normal” characters, but also connote the two societies which cannot accommodate a mad man in the age of westernized civilization.

By narrating insanity and showing the circumstances the protagonist encounters, GOGOL and LU Xun respectively insinuate that Russia and China, similar to their European counterparts which chase “reasoned” westernization and “civilized” modernization in the face of international competition, cannot tolerate the mad, weak, dark, and little characters. Therefore, the unreasonable, feeble and unacceptable others should be odd and crazed,¹⁹ and even dogs, for example, in both

17 Cited from LIN Zhiming 林志明: “Yizhe daoyan: Fuke double 譯者導言: 傅柯 Double” (Avant-propos of the translator: Foucault Double). In: *Gudian shidai fengkuangshi: daodu biece* 古典時代瘋狂史: 導讀別冊 (Introduction to History of Madness in the Classical Age), Taipei: Shibao wenhua chubanshe 2016, pp. V–LXIV.

18 Ibid., p. XLV.

19 It is well known that GOGOL suffered from illusion and delusion of the Devil before his death, and his health was broken due to the great pain resulting from anorexia. I would suggest that all these symptoms originated from the irrational elements as we can see in this article. This chapter uses the word “madness” to signify how GOGOL embodies the illusion

stories belittle them. For that reason, the Russian and Chinese mad men finally fail to live or love in daylight; otherwise they would confront the others' scorn and taunt. Only in the shadow, moonlight, and darkness can Russian and Chinese mad men survive to write their feelings in diaries. Both GOGOL and LU Xun associate the theme of madness with the multiple layers of meanings, connotations, insinuations and images.

Despite their similarities, what GOGOL emphasizes more is to question the peculiar phenomena caused by the eminent development of the westernized and civilized Russian capital St. Petersburg in his time, while LU Xun stresses the criticism of the "eerie" code of etiquette in a Chinese old town, which defends tenaciously the thousand-year Chinese civilization. The former shows the grotesqueness of madness because of the westernized Russia while the latter ridicules China that has become the symbol of madness under the invasion of westernization and modernization. GOGOL's male protagonist is sent to the mental hospital at the end of the story, showing the author's unending mockery against the reason of Western European civilization via Russian madness. Nonetheless, the Chinese mad man eventually returns to normality and becomes tamed under the civilization of a thousand-year tradition, revealing LU Xun's resentment and criticism of the rationality and authority reinforced and justified by the old civilization. Regardless of GOGOL's or LU Xun's position vis-à-vis westernized reason or science, it is now clear that the Russian and Chinese "Diary of a Mad Man" both represent the authors' shared sympathy for the weak and mad intellectuals imprisoned in darkness under the historical currents of powerful and bright civilizations.

In addition to the Russian and Chinese "Diary of a Mad Man", several stories in either GOGOL's *Peterburgskie povesti* (Petersburg Novellas, 1830–1840) or LU Xun's collections such as *Nahan* and *Panghuang* 彷徨 (Hesitation, 1926) repeat a series of questions on the theme of madness, tameness, and civilization. It is evident that the two writers are deeply concerned about this topic, so it is noteworthy to probe its meanings, contexts, ideas, and ideologies. From the association between madness and the consciousness of darkness as FOUCAULT suggests, the following questions are thus raised. Firstly, how are the elements of the dark, the irrational, and the abnormal bound together to form and signify the theme of madness in the works of GOGOL and LU Xun? More importantly, it has been shown

and delusion in the crazed and possessed characters in his writing. It is also noteworthy that another foreign writer, NIETZSCHE, whom LU Xun adores and cites the most in his prose works, encountered similar predicaments in life and creation. Most of the crazed or the possessed characters in the works of GOGOL, NIETZSCHE, and LU Xun are in fact not mentally insane. Nonetheless, they are sensitive, intelligent, and regarded as products of social circumstances in the extravagant pursuit of civilization. Please see my arguments in this chapter.

that FOUCAULT links the multiple layers of brightness and darkness with truth and falsehood to illuminate a possibility of explicating the dark cosmos in the prose of GOGOL and LU Xun. With this in mind, was there a concrete tradition of associating darkness with madness in both Russian and Chinese literature that GOGOL and LU Xun had inherited before the creation of “Diary of a Mad Man”? If yes, how did the two writers absorb, identify, and convert such literary heritage into their writings?

The following section investigates how GOGOL and LU Xun respectively inherit the theme of madness and the consciousness of darkness in Ukrainian folk culture and the “little tradition” of Chinese classics,²⁰ in order to show the structure of the dark world in their inherent perceptions. I will also demonstrate that the two writers share relative similarities of coping with their interests in the consciousness of darkness originating from the eastern elements, i.e. Ukrainian folk literature and Chinese little tradition, in relation to the strange or others; evil spirits, demons, devils, and ghosts.

Absorbing “Madness”: Imagination of the Strange and Others and the Formation of the Dark World

The earlier works of GOGOL, *Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki* (Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka, 1831–1832, hereafter *Dikanka*)²¹ and *Mirgorod* (1835), are tales both highlighting the relationship between human beings and rustic nature, which had not experienced the westernized industrial revolution before the eighteenth century. In comparison with GOGOL’s inner perception of the dark cosmos in traditional Ukraine in these collections, LU Xun shares the similarities of that in traditional China in his prose works, for instance, “She xi” 社戲 (She Drama, 1922) and “Nü diao” 女弔 (A Hanged Woman, 1936), and the poems collection *Ye cao* 野草 (*Weeds*, 1927). The parallels of their inner perceptions of the old world are related to, or motivated by, the characteristics of what MOCHUL’SKIĭ and Tsi-An

20 LEE Leo Ou-fan terms popular fiction, mythology, fable, fantasy and the so-called *zaxue* 雜學 (miscellaneous learning), the knowledge of subjects somewhat beyond the pale of the orthodox Confucian canons, as “little tradition”. Please refer to *Voices from the Iron House: A Study of Lu Xun*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1987, pp. 4–5.

21 This paper refers mainly to the English translation by Leonard J. KENT (ed.): *The Complete Tales of Nicolai Gogol*, vol. 1, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press 1985.

HSIA respectively and coincidentally term in their research on GOGOL and LU Xun the allurements of darkness.²²

It is worthy of note that GOGOL evolves the theme of madness acknowledged by westernized civilization in his *Petersburg Novellas*. His two earlier collections *Dikanka* and *Mirgorod*, however, focus mainly on how countrymen in rustic villages in Ukraine from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries created stories for peasants after a busy day. These rural inhabitants play the role of both storytellers and literary characters, perceiving darkness as an occasion to indulge themselves in their productive imagination. It is common knowledge that most of this region was called Little Russia, where GOGOL's characters have not yet identified themselves as citizens in the westernized, nationalized, and modernized Great Russian Empire as those in the *Petersburg Novellas*. Both *Dikanka* and *Mirgorod* show how people treat, deal and struggle with the obscure in nature or with others from different worlds in darkness and at dawn. It is thus not surprising that these two collections are tinged with the color of Ukrainian folklore and a mysterious mood fashioned by ghosts and goblins.

According to most researchers of Slavonic studies, the Ukrainian folk tales in *Dikanka* and *Mirgorod* play a significant role in GOGOL's creation of the *Petersburg Novellas*.²³ Coincidentally, a few scholars note that the "little tradition"²⁴ of Chinese fantasy literature in particular deeply influenced LU Xun's writings and his evolution, such as the ancient *Shan Hai Jing* 山海經 (Classic of Mountains and Seas), *Youyang Zazu* 酉陽雜俎 (Youyang Miscellany) of Tang times, *Xi You Ji* 西遊記 (Journey to the West) of Ming times, and *Liaozhai Zhi Yi* 聊齋誌異 (Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio) and *Yuewei Caotang Biji* 閱微草堂筆記 (Random Notes at the Cottage of Close Scrutiny) of the Qing times.²⁵

The creation of *Dikanka*, as its title implies, targets this rustic village in Little Russia, which was once the station of Cossack armies famous for their extreme

22 K. MOCHUL'SKIĬ: *GOGOL'* (1995), pp. 48–51; HSIA: *The Gate* (1968), pp. 151–153.

23 M. B. KHRAPCHENKO: *Izbrannye trudy: Nikolai Gogol': Literaturnyi put'. Velichie pisatel'ia* (Selected Works: Nikolai GOGOL: The Literary Way – The Writer's Greatness), Moskva: Nauka, 1993, pp. 104–208; Y. V. MANN: *Poëtika Gogolia: Variatsii k teme* (Poetics of GOGOL: Variations of a Theme), Moskva: Voda 1996, pp. 39–53.

24 LEE: *Voices* (1987), p. 5.

25 HSIA has pointed out LU Xun's obsession of the power of darkness in his childhood. His study is very inspiring for this article. Please refer to HSIA: *The Gate* (1968), pp. 146–162. Following HSIA's research, Leo Ou-fan LEE attributes LU Xun's obsession of the power of darkness to his favorite reading of the "little tradition". Please refer to LEE: *Voices*, pp. 4–6. It is noteworthy that ZHOU Zuoren specifies the significant relationship between LU Xun and the *Shan Hai Jing* because this classical work is the root of both LU Xun's creation and his understanding of traditional Chinese mythology. See ZHOU Zuoren and ZHOU Jianren, *Nianshao cansang: Xiongdì yì Lu Xun*, vol. 1, p. 47.

love for freedom and defiance against oppression. Before the dismissal order from Catherine the Great in 1775, the relation between this frontier region and the central authorities, the so-called Great Russia, had been neither friendly nor aloof.²⁶ For such historical, geographical, social, and cultural backgrounds, it would be understandable, if we borrow Leo Ou-fan LEE's term and follow its logic of the development of Chinese literature, to define GOGOL's Ukrainian folk tales in *Dikanka* as the representation of Little Russia; it is as well the "little tradition" in the history of the nineteenth-century Russian literature. The term "little tradition" would aptly and meaningfully describe GOGOL's literary debut *Dikanka* because this collection plays a vital role in showing the strange, the marginal, and others. Juxtaposing the works of the little traditions of the aforementioned Chinese and Russian literature, the following section details several remarkable similarities.

First, in terms of content and context, the leitmotifs in both GOGOL's two collections of Ukrainian tales and Chinese works of little tradition, such as *Xi You Ji*²⁷ and *Liaozhai Zhi Yi*,²⁸ are madness and tameness. All these works relate to the imagination of the strange and others in the dark world, mirroring the feelings, emotion and passion of the metamorphosing characters. They are often night creatures or animals, for instance, devils, goblins, monsters, and evil spirits from different worlds to disturb the order, harmony, and authoritative power consolidated by the domestic institution "on the surface of things in the glitter of daylight" in FOUCAULT'S words. The arrangement of plots in these aforementioned fantastic literary works is gives a sense of the grotesque and ludicrous.

Regardless of the mutual confrontation or coordination among human beings, ghosts, devils, and monsters, the characteristics of greed, temper, obsession, stupidity, and lust are all portrayed and accentuated in these Russian and Chinese works. In *Dikanka*, these characteristics are usually depicted and constructed via

26 In 1834, GOGOL wrote an article "Otryvok iz istorii Malorossii" (Excerpt from the History of Little Russia) to show his knowledge of his hometown in Little Russia. This article refers to its Chinese translation: Guogeli 果戈理 (GOGOL): "Lüelun xiao Eluosi de xingcheng" 略論小俄羅斯的形成 (Briefly on the formation of Little Russia). In: ZHOU Qichao 周啟超 (ed. and tr.): *Guogeli Quanji Wenlunjuan* 果戈理全集文論卷 (GOGOL's oeuvre: literary theory), Hefei: Anhui wenyi chubanshe 1999, vol. 7, pp. 61–72.

27 This Chinese novel written in the sixteenth century is attributed to WU Cheng'en. Based on historical events, i.e. on Chinese monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664, well-known as TANG Sanzang) in Tang Dynasty who travelled to India and studied Buddhism, *Xi You Ji* fantasizes how he and his three followers, SUN Wukong 孫悟空 (or Monkey King), ZHU Bajie 豬八戒 (or Pigsy) and SHA Wujing 沙悟淨 (or Sandy) overcame all difficulties of threat, allurements and harassments from monsters, demons and goblins on the pilgrimage.

28 It is a collection of Chinese fantasy stories and marvel tales written by PU Songling (1640–1715), who spent most of his life attempting to pass the Imperial examinations on the authoritative Four Books and Five Classics of Confucianism and failed until he was 71.

dialogism, with specific reference to the description of the literary type of devils and goblins. GOGOL uses the form of a conversation between two or among more persons to show the general fear that people have of devils and demons and how they look for powers representing goodness, kindness, and decency to overcome such fears. This literary technique resembles that in *Xi You Ji* and *Liaozhai Zhi Yi*. Take “Solochinskaia iarmarka” (The Fair at Sorochintsy) in *Dikanka* as an example. The pig monster in a red jacket is almost the mirror personification of Zhu Bajie 豬八戒 (Piggy)²⁹ in *Xi You Ji*, both of which are portrayed with a pig’s face and oink to scare people. Although both characters embody the animal metamorphosis of the pig, the former is from hell while the latter is from heaven. Their respective representation of the nature of evil and the inclination toward goodness reflect the different writing purposes of GOGOL and WU Cheng’en, to whom *Xi You Ji* is attributed.

It is not difficult to note that GOGOL tends to use animal traits, with specific reference to the pig’s snout, to illustrate the physical and psychological characteristics of a monster or the strange/others identified by the general public. Employing such literary means, GOGOL satirizes those of the upper class and their resemblance with the pig symbolizing the dispositions of laziness, greed, and impurity. For example, the German-like assessor of Sorochintsy in “Noch’ pered Rozhdestvom” (Christmas Eve) and the role of the mayors appointed by the Tsar in this collection are frequently represented with such physical features and have similar psychological and mental characteristics. While the symbol of pig is marked in the character, the atmosphere is infused with grotesqueness, ludicrousness, irony, and mockery. In GOGOL’s writings, most of the powerful upper-class characters in the Ukrainian society are transformed into the appearance of pigs so that the image can create double and subversive meanings: fear and laughter. While civilians are awed by these powerful characters from the upper class, their pig image dissolves the former’s fear via ridicule. Russian scholars Mikhail BAKHTIN and Yuri MANN, both term GOGOL’s evolution of early writings as a “carnival debut”, of which the literary motivation is not only to turn the social status of bigwigs and the authorities upside down, but also to enrich the rhetoric of folktales.³⁰ It is interesting that the pig like characters created by GOGOL share certain similarities with the wild and mad Piggy during his stay in Gao Village

29 Bajie literally means eight precepts. In some English versions of *Xi You Ji*, this character is translated as Piggy.

30 BAKHTIN M.M.: “Rable i Gogol’ (Iskusstvo slova i narodnaia smekhovaia kul’tura)” (RABELAIS and GOGOL: The Art of Discourse and the Popular Culture of Laughter). In: *Voprosy literatury i estetiki* (Questions of Literature and Aesthetics), Moskva: KHudozhestvennaia literatura 1975, pp. 484–495; MANN: *Poetics* (1996).

rather than the tamed disciple of the monk TANG Sanzang 唐三藏 (Tripitaka) in *Xi You Ji*.

In the Cossack folk tale “Maïskaïa noch’, ili Utoplennitsa” (A May Night or the Drowned Maiden), the young witch stepmother transforms into a monstrous black cat at the first night when she comes to her new home and tries to drive her stepdaughter away. The stepdaughter is finally turned out of the house by her own father and drowns herself in the water. Her ghost assembles all the drowned girls every night and searches for the witch, trying to take revenge. The character of a young fair lady who can metamorphose into different kinds of animals, chiefly cat or fox, is, however, not a unique technique in Ukrainian Cossack tales. Such literary tropes of a beautiful young lady and the plot of wreaking vengeance via supernatural powers after death are both repeatedly seen in PU Songling’s *Liaozhai Zhi Yi*³¹ which LU Xun loved the most in his childhood.

Take “Propavshaïa gramota” (The Lost Letter) as another example. The horse-faced devil with human elements portrayed in it has a comparable character (Mamian 馬面, horse-face) in Chinese mythology. Though alike, these creatures or personalities embody different cultural meanings in Russian folklore and Chinese strange tales. In *Dikanka*, plenty of images of Cossack armies, peasants and devils are depicted as mad, mischievous, greedy and arrogant. Furthermore, the tales often begin with narrating the characteristics of these protagonists i.e. how they are fond of drinking, playing, dancing, and singing. It is not difficult to find Chinese counterparts of either such Russian literary types, or arrangements of plots and genres in *Liaozhai Zhi Yi*. For instance, “Luo cha haishi” 羅刹海市 (The Rakshas Sea City), “Hu xie” 狐諧 (The Jocular of Fox), “Huang Ying” 黃英 and “Ma Jiefu” 馬介甫 have similar plots and narrative openings for the fantastic adventures of human protagonists with ghosts, demons or characters metamorphosed from animals after binge drinking as in *Dikanka*. Moreover, *Dikanka* and *Liaozhai Zhi Yi* share the semblance of literary technique and device – *mise en abyme*, i.e., a story within a story; a tale within a tale, which is often seen in terms of magic realism.

As implied by their titles, *Dikanka* and *Liaozhai Zhi Yi* are the collections suitable for and targeted at the audience with preference of listening to stories in the evenings. On one hand, their mental status is more relaxed at night under the moon and stars; on the other hand, their perception in the dark is heightened, enabling their reception of literary characters that embody all elements of the irrational to unshackle their love, hatred, attachment, enmity, and other emotions.

31 This article refers chiefly to the English translation by LU Yunzhong, CHEN Tifang, YANG Liyi and YANG Zhihong: *Strange Tales of Liaozhai*, Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 1988. Their translations will be modified. Otherwise, the citation will be specified.

Provided the aforementioned analysis of Russian and Chinese works, it is noteworthy that GOGOL and PU Songling both articulate the special manners and cultural imagination of the aliens and outsiders in imperial Russia and China, when they respectively narrate the irrationality of their characters in the two collections of tales. To show Russian and Chinese subjectivity, GOGOL and PU both use numerous different tones and language varieties to mock, ridicule, tease and occasionally even curse, particularly when the discourse refers to the German and the Dutch. For instance, the narrator in GOGOL's "Christmas Eve" analogizes the German and the pig. In Sorochintsy, no matter where the foreigners come from, they are all categorized as "the German", which suggests the consistence of degrading aliens and others. Nevertheless, in GOGOL's writings, the Germans are treated entirely different from the Poles, the Russian's Slavonic kindred. According to BOJANOWSKA, the Poles represent traitors in most of GOGOL's works.³² Take the sorcerer in "A Terrible Vengeance" as an example. Any Ukrainian character conspiring with the Poles is branded as a traitor. The elements of the irrational are more vividly displayed in GOGOL's *Petersburg Novellas*, as BOJANOWSKA shows in her book.³³ Images of the Germans and the Poles in GOGOL's writings are certainly related to the historical backgrounds and the tense international relations in his age.

Similarly, several stories in *Liaozhai Zhi Yi* not only alienate foreigners from the Chinese, but also smear their image. For example, when the good-looking Chinese protagonist MA Ji, who loves singing, drinking, and dancing, drifts to Rakshas Sea City due to a hurricane on the sea, he finds the inhabitants there appallingly ugly. These fierce-looking Rakshas people, however, treat the handsome MA as a horrible monster. More interestingly, the discourse shows that Rakshas people value appearance more than literary accomplishment, which is highly appreciated in Chinese culture. They tell MA that the most handsome men in this country are appointed high officials; yet the prime minister whom MA sees in the street is described by the Chinese omniscient narrator as bearing Rakshas features.

雙耳接背生，鼻三孔，睫毛覆目如簾。³⁴

His ears join his back and he has three nostrils. His eyelashes cover his eyes like a screen.

32 E. M. BOJANOWSKA: *Nikolai GOGOL: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*, Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press 2007, p. 175.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 114–115.

34 PU Songling: *Liaozhai Zhi Yi* 聊齋誌異 (Strange tales from a Chinese studio), Changsha: Yuelu shushe 1989, p. 142.

In line with such a principle, all senior courtiers are “all dishevelled and queer-looking; the lower their rank, the less ugly they are”,³⁵ as the narrator depicts.

Compared with *Dikanka*, *Liaozhai Zhi Yi* provides two-way thinking in its narration of aliens, foreigners, strangers, or outsiders, particularly in the plot of the Chinese stranger regarded as a monster in a foreign country. Furthermore, PU’s usage of words and treatment of closures in his tales both show his leisure and carefree mood nurtured by the Chinese mentality of traditional intellectuals for personal enjoyment, which is relatively different from the peppery and acidic tone of GOGOL.

Looking at “The Jocularly of Fox” for instance, the king of Hongmaoguo 紅毛國 (Kingdom of Red Hair), which usually implies the Dutch from the Netherlands in Qing Dynasty, has never seen a fox, and as a result he has no idea of how to write the pictographic character. Although this plot shows mainly how the Huli-jing 狐狸精 (fox spirit) teases himself and amuses his guests for jocularly, it suggests the intense exclusiveness and solid subjectivity in Chinese imagination of strangers and others in the classics. As we have seen, such characteristics are repeatedly manifested in *Dikanka* as well. It is indeed contradictory that both Russian and Chinese tales on one hand show their strong opposition to any institutionalization or centralization, but on the other hand connote the two authors’ standpoint of nationalism in the face of other foreign countries.

Dikanka is GOGOL’s literary base for developing his Ukrainian folk style in Russian language; while *Liaozhai Zhi Yi* deeply influences LU Xun’s literary evolution and motivates him to construct the Chinese subjectivity of both anti-institutionalization and nationalism. The connection between *Dikanka* and *Liaozhai Zhi Yi* explains why it was much easier for LU Xun to accept, adore, and absorb GOGOL than other foreign writers in his wide-ranging reading experience in Tokyo. Additionally, it is thus understandable how LU Xun learns from GOGOL and PU Songling and synthesizes the tone of *Dikanka* and *Liaozhai Zhi Yi* to tease, mock, ridicule or criticize those he calls “Jia yang gui zi” 假洋鬼子 (fake foreign devils) in his works. The fake foreign devils to LU Xun appear in parallel to the Polish traitors to GOGOL.

In terms of content, theme, images, symbols, styles, atmosphere, multiple layers of designs, and various emotions, the Ukrainian stories in *Dikanka*, as well as *Xi You Ji* and *Liaozhai Zhi Yi*, all enrich LU Xun’s literary techniques and inspire him to create the Chinese version of “Diary of a Mad Man”. Therefore, both Russian and Chinese “Diary of a Mad Man” are epoch-making works and products of classical inheritance, deserving more in-depth examination in a worldwide literary area related to the theme of madness rather than studies of one-way influence.

35 LU, CHEN, YANG and YANG (trans.): *Strange Tales* (1988), p. 222.

More importantly, FOUCAULT's arguments illuminate a new perspective of analyzing the writing strategies and purposes of both GOGOL and LU Xun in the face of international competition and sociohistorical currents of westernization and modernization. GOGOL's imagination of the strange and others carries the passion and paranoia of madness to question the norm and power granted by the authority, which coincides with the "tamed madness" in the writings of the Classical age, as FOUCAULT reveals:

We owe the invention of the arts to deranged imaginations: the Caprice of Painters, Poets, and Musicians is only a name moderated in civility to express their Madness.³⁶ Madness, in which the values of another age, another art, another morality are called into question, but which also reflects — blurred and disturbed, strangely compromised by one another in a common chimera — all the forms, even the most remote of the human imagination.³⁷

According to the famous Russian critic V.G. BELINSKIĬ (1811–1848), GOGOL's *Dikanka* indulge people in the irrational fascination and lyricism, full of life and enchantment (oчерki, polnye zhizni i ocharovaniia).³⁸ Meanwhile, the writer spontaneously integrates sense and sensibility in a spacious cosmos to approach what BELINSKIĬ believes to be the perfection of poetic writing: "aimlessness with aim, unconsciousness with consciousness (bestsel'nost' s tsel'iu, bessoznatel'nost' s soznaniem)".³⁹ To BELINSKIĬ, GOGOL was not merely a "writer" with writings of normal or general standard, but an excellent and unique "poet" who succeeds to PUSHKIN's laurel wreath and literary estate.⁴⁰

The above comparative analysis of *Dikanka* and the Chinese traditional classics, *Xi You Ji* and *Liaozhai Zhi Yi*, has made clear that the "little tradition" of Russian folk and Chinese mythology shared essential parallels of both perceiving darkness and narrating the strange and others before the two "Diary of a Mad Man" were respectively created. *Dikanka* elucidates that Little Russia had preserved the Eurasian nomad mythology of polytheism when Ukraine was under incomparable influence of the Orthodox Church. Such a multicultural and contradictory situation between the so-called uncivilized and civilized in the frontier region is embedded

36 Charles de SAINT-ÉVREMOND: *Sir Politick would be* (ca. 1664), act V, scene ii. Cited from Michel FOUCAULT: *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, London: Routledge 2001, trans. by Richard HOWARD, p. 26.

37 Ibid., Michel FOUCAULT: *Madness* (2001).

38 V. G. BELINSKIĬ: "O russkoĭ povesti i povestiakh Gogolia" (On Russian Story and Novellas of GOGOL). In: *N.V. Gogol' v russkoĭ kritike* (GOGOL in Russian Criticism). Moskva: Gos. izd-vo khudozhestvennoĭ literatury 1953, p. 56.

39 Ibid., p. 40.

40 Ibid.

in early GOGOL writings to contrast the central and westernized authorities. On the other hand, *Xi You Ji* and *Liaozhai Zhi Yi* are transcultural products representing the rebellion against the orthodox tradition of the “Four Books and Five Classics” deeply rooted in Confucianism. These similar characteristics of Russian and Chinese tales LU Xun loved to read the most, clarify why he adopts GOGOL’s literary heritage in choosing the leitmotifs of madness and tameness in his literary debut.

The Problematic Nature of Laughter and Illusion

According to the celebrated Russian symbolist writer and scholar D. S. MEREZHKOVSKIĪ (1865–1941), the recurring theme in GOGOL’s evolution from *Dikanka* to *Petersburg Novellas* is the fight with the devil, a metaphor signifying the evil in society and the spirit of SMERDYAKOV (Smerdiakovskaia dusha) in human nature. The oeuvre of GOGOL is devoted to examining “the mechanism of mysterious essence” and the laughter he designs shows that human beings are battling with the devil within their mind.⁴¹ According to MEREZHKOVSKIĪ’s criticism, Soviet scholars, such as M. M. BAKHTIN (1895–1975), V. I. PROPP (1895–1970), D. S. LIKHACHEV (1906–1999), and Y. MANN (1929–) all examine the theme of laughter in GOGOL’s works.⁴² These Russian studies on GOGOL inspire similar questions on LU Xun’s writings.

BAKHTIN argues that BELINSKIĪ’s criticism regarding GOGOL’s laughter and humor as a kind of pure and parochial irony falls short of explaining GOGOL’s profound and complex thoughts. It is necessary to investigate the origin of not only western influence on GOGOL, such as the laughter of romanticism (its carnival sources) and Don Quixote, but also Russian culture, for instance, the laughter of festivals, feasts, plazas, and students of religious schools. These sources reveal the extraordinary association of laughter with the illusion in the lower/other world; “the longstanding historical connection of laughter and death leads to the construction of a special form: the image of laughter and banter.”⁴³

41 D. MEREZHKOVSKIĪ: *Gogol' i chort*: *Issledovanie* (GOGOL and the Devil: Research), Moscow: Skorpion 1906, p. 95.

42 Both the movement and the sounds of laughter are important factors in GOGOL’s writing. The treatment of plots and the ending in the comedy *Revizor* (The Government Inspector) are one of the excellent instances to elucidate the performance of laughter on stage.

43 I quote and translate this information from the Chinese translation of BAKHTIN’s notes. The original text has not been found yet. Please refer to BAHEJIN 巴赫金: “Guogeli zhi xiao de lishi chuantong han minjian yuanyuan wenti” 果戈理之笑的歷史傳統和民間淵源問

In line with BAKHTIN's research of GOGOL, LU Xun should not be interpreted merely as a writer satirizing banality, laughing at society and criticizing the traditional system and authorities because he had read abundant traditional Chinese and modern Western classics and ruminated different literary themes of creation before he wrote "Diary of a Mad Man".⁴⁴ As Chinese scholar HSIA indicates,

It is general criticism of categorizing LU Xun and his writings into a movement, a role or even a direction of development. These categories sacrifice individual talent and overestimate the great history. The era LU Xun was situated in cannot be understood via the metaphor of contrast between brightness and darkness because there is something interesting in gray that lies in between. Sometimes at dawn, there is illusion like swinging shadows or flickering ghosts with whispers, and they are easily ignored if you are impatiently waiting for daybreak. LU Xun is similar to a historian catching and narrating this moment, using his profound perspective and sensitive insight and that is exactly the characteristic he lacks when he means to pose as a rebel to create works.⁴⁵

HSIA specifies that death, illusion in the lower/other world and the gloomy side of LU Xun's writing are frequently disregarded. However, HSIA's research, similar to BELINSKIĬ's criticism of GOGOL, treats the laughter of LU Xun as either a sort of joke or witticism, and is thus unable to unearth the seriousness of LU Xun's laughter in a broad sense. Hence, a comparative analysis of tracing the Chinese tradition and probing the origin of Russian influence of GOGOL's early writings would shed more light on LU Xun's power of laughter.

Different from BAKHTIN, PROPP develops his research of GOGOL's laughter and comedy according to BELINSKIĬ's criticism. It is noteworthy that BAKHTIN focuses on the irrational characteristics of the carnivalesque essence in GOGOL's early writings, absorbing the concept of madness in the folklores of Little Russia, but PROPP stresses that GOGOL's works after the *Petersburg Novellas* show the theme of madness in the age of westernized civilization. These two scholars, nonetheless, agree that laughter plays a significant role in these two periods of GOGOL's evolution. PROPP follows BELINSKIĬ to cite GOGOL as an example to demonstrate that elements of comedy can be meaningful in contradicting the general criticism of praising tragedy and devaluating the significance of comedy in nineteenth

題 (The Historical Tradition of GOGOL's Laughter and Problems of National Sources). In: QIAN Zhongwen (ed.): *Bahejin Quanji* 巴赫金全集 (Complete Works of BAKHTIN), Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe 1998, vol. 4, pp. 54–55.

44 This point of view can be seen in HSIA: *The Gate* (1968), pp. 146–162 and LEE: *Voices* (1987).

45 HSIA Tsi-An 夏濟安: *Xia Ji'an xuanji* 夏濟安選集 (The Selected Works of HSIA Tsi-An), Taipei: Zhiwen chubanshe 1974, p. 30.

century Great Russia.⁴⁶ PROPP provides two further examples, “Diary of a Mad Man” and “The Overcoat”, articulating that the content of GOGOL’s works is in fact a tragedy although both styles and techniques are represented in the form of comedy.⁴⁷ Moreover, PROPP highlights the significance of GOGOL’s humor and argues that this is the key to pondering over GOGOL’s artistic and moral value in the field of aesthetics. Otherwise, critics may think that most of GOGOL’s works involve vulgar and contemptible problems of comedy.⁴⁸

The laughter of satire, humor, seriousness, and comedy constitute styles, forms and literary means for manifesting GOGOL’S multiple layers of emotion and his integration of tragedy with comedy. LU Xun’s reading of GOGOL is similar to the criticisms of BAKHTIN and PROPP that he comments on his own prose works, with specific reference to “Cong fengci dao youmo” 從諷刺到幽默 (From Satire to Humor) and “Cong youmo dao zhengjing” 從幽默到正經 (From Humor to Seriousness). In these two pieces, LU ridicules different types of satirists in his age, arguing that his contemporary critics do not understand his cosmos of satire. That is why they judge his works as full of “freezing irony, invectives, witticism, venom, resentment”, and himself as *xuefei* 學匪 (academic bandit) and *Shaoxing shiye* 紹興師爺 (Master Shaoxing).⁴⁹ In the face of such criticism, LU Xun resists by saying:

If I am not totally dead and even there is only half breath left, I would rely on the signboard of laughter, exhaling haha...⁵⁰

Unfortunately, GOGOL’s style of satire and humor which LU Xun identifies with, has unavoidably transformed into a kind of hypocritical and paradoxical seriousness in Chinese society when China encounters national calamities, as LU Xun explains in another essay, for the reason that satire and humor are either misunderstood or incriminated.⁵¹

Following the transformation of satire and humor, LU Xun uses a facetious tone and comic talk:

46 V. I. PROPP: *Problemy komizma i smekha* (Problems of Comedy and Laughter), Moskva: Iskusstvo 1976, pp. 4–5.

47 Ibid., pp. 8–10.

48 Ibid.

49 LU Xun: “Cong fengci dao youmo” 從諷刺到幽默 (From Satire to Humor). In: *Lu Xun QuANJI* (2005), vol. 5, p. 46. Shaoxing is LU Xun’s hometown.

50 Ibid., p. 47.

51 LU Xun: “Cong youmo dao zhengjing” 從幽默到正經 (From Humour to Seriousness). In: *Lu Xun QuANJI* (2005), vol. 5, pp. 48–49.

The saying “A wise man does not fight when the odds are against him” is the exhortation of Chinese sages. Meanwhile, humor passes away and seriousness unifies the rest of China.⁵²

Such narration connotes that these Chinese critics prefer the pretense of a serious face to the seriousness of humor; and they force writers not to laugh at society, nation, and authorities. This literary phenomenon is unacceptable to LU Xun, and therefore he employs GOGOL’s writing technique to portray a tamed “zhengjingren” 正經人 (Chinese serious character) who fits in with the normal standard in order to show the ridiculous problems in China. LU Xun’s resistance of being tamed motivates him to choose the gesture of a rebel and mad man in the later evolution, and he thus uses different forms of comedy and laughter to flicker in the spectra of lightness and darkness, normality and abnormality, flippancy and seriousness, truth and falsehood. Therefore, the art of the mad world in the writings of GOGOL and LU Xun is comparatively close to what FOUCAULT suggests:

It plays on the surface of things and in the glitter of daylight, over all the workings of appearances, over the ambiguity of reality and illusion, over all that indeterminate web, ever rewoven and broken, which both unites and separates truth and appearance.⁵³

LU Xun is not only a thoughtful and sophisticated writer, but also an avant-garde and professional critic superior to his contemporaries. While commenting on GOGOL’s notable novel *Mërtvyë dushi* (Dead Souls), LU Xun lists specific and representative examples to expound the frequent literary means in GOGOL’s writings:

These most ordinary tragedies even close to nothing are the same as the works full of silent words. It is not easy to become aware of them unless they are depicted as the images by a poet. However, people who die in heroic tragedies are much fewer than those in the most ordinary ones.⁵⁴

Despite being unable to read GOGOL’s works in Russian,⁵⁵ LU Xun undoubtedly has an insight into the core and essence of GOGOL’s artistic world. Also, it is

52 Ibid.

53 FOUCAULT: *Madness* (2002), p. 32.

54 LU Xun: “Jihu wushi de beiju” 幾乎無事的悲劇 (Tragedies of almost nothing). In: *LU Xun Quanji* (2005), vol. 6, p. 383.

55 ZHOU Zuoren recalls that LU Xun and he studied Russian language for several months when they were in Tokyo in 1907, but they soon gave up. ZHOU Zuoren thinks that Russian language is too difficult for Chinese people, and they felt tense while they were learning it.

considered unusual among Chinese translators and critics during the May Fourth Movement that LU Xun regards GOGOL as a poet rather than a novelist, although the nineteenth century Russian critics have generally accepted such a title of honor for GOGOL. LU Xun also suggests that laughter with tears is the characteristic of comedy and tragedy combined in GOGOL's writings. These proofs sufficiently validate LU Xun's sense and sensibility and most importantly his absorption of GOGOL's works.

Conclusion

It is clear that GOGOL and LU Xun share relatively significant similarities in their early works. These parallel characteristics are not merely embedded in the process of how LU Xun adores, identifies, imitates and absorbs GOGOL, but are more notably represented in the inner perception and external attitude of LU Xun when he faces his "self and the others" under the historical currents of westernization and civilization.

More importantly, GOGOL and LU Xun respectively inherit the literary legacy of Russian and Chinese "little tradition" of the dark world. They both show an inclination for the consciousness of darkness, and their works are about problems of the marginal, strange, crazed, and others in society. The comparative analysis of *Dikanka* and *Liaozhai Zhi Yi* in this chapter demonstrates not only the Chinese modernity acquired from Russia, as many scholars have shown, but also the Eurasian-Russian mentality resembling Chinese transcultural characteristics. These similarities serve as the main reason why GOGOL is enthroned in LU Xun's wide-ranging reading list of Chinese and foreign literature.

Finally, the early works of both GOGOL and LU Xun are associated with the theme of madness and the consciousness of darkness; and both writers choose the literary treatment of comedy and laughter to represent the derivative problematics as demonstrated in this article. Hence, it can be concluded that the power of darkness is more subversive than the discourse or sermon of morality in the usual realistic works for the purpose of deconstructing westernized civilization. When the curtain of these two writers' carnival debut rises on the literary stage, their early works transform the vulgar and contemptible problems into an aesthetic combination of both tragedy and comedy and become classics in Russia and China.

Please refer to ZHOU Zuoren and ZHOU Jianren: *Nianshao cangsang* (2001) vol. 1, pp. 119–120.

