

## Original Paper

# An Analysis of Writers' Sentiment for Shaoxing: Based on the Book *The Literary Homeland*

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### Abstract

*This article aims to explore the profound sentiment of the writers' group towards Shaoxing as presented in the book *The Literary Homeland*. By analyzing the background of the book's creation, the classification of the writers' group, and their specific expressions of sentiment towards Shaoxing, this article reveals the far-reaching influence of Shaoxing's regional culture on the writers and how they convey this sentiment to readers through literary works. It further examines the significance of this sentiment for contemporary literary creation and the inheritance of regional culture.*

### Keywords

*The Literary Homeland, Writers' Group, Shaoxing Sentiment, Regional Culture, Literary Creation*

## 1. Introduction

The homeland is the softest corner in everyone's heart and also an eternal theme in literary creation. In the map of Chinese literature, Shaoxing is undoubtedly a shining pearl. Emerging from Lu Xun's pen, Shaoxing is not only a geographical concept but also a cultural symbol and a spiritual home. The book *The Literary Homeland: A Visit to Shaoxing by Lu Xun Award Winners* (2022) gathers the heartfelt writings of many Lu Xun Literary Award winners about Shaoxing, Lu Xun's hometown. These writers, with different perspectives and writing styles, depict a colorful and poetic Shaoxing, showing their love, attachment, and contemplation towards it.

As pointed out by Li Jingze (2022, pp. 3-5) in the speech, Lu Xun's firm patriotic feelings and indomitable fighting spirit, together with his deep concern for the destiny of the nation and humanity, is still a precious treasure of the new era in gathering the national spirit and building the spiritual home. He used literature and art as a beacon, illuminating the path forward for the nation with his courage and determination. In the history of modern Chinese culture, he has erected a towering monument, inspiring and encouraging generations of literary and art workers to continuously strive for the construction of a

socialist cultural power. Today, the commemoration of Mr. Lu Xun is to deeply recognize the practical significance and contemporary value of Lu Xun's spirit, and deeply recognize that Lu Xun's spirit is a great driving force for the construction of a strong socialist cultural nation.

## 2. Background of the Book

On September 25, 2021, it was the 140th anniversary of the birth of Mr. Lu Xun, the great Chinese writer, thinker, revolutionary, and leader of the New Culture Movement. The magazine *Fiction Selection* (Xiaoshuo Xuankan in Chinese), in collaboration with the Shaoxing Municipal People's Government and the Zhejiang Writers' Association, organized the activity of "Shaoxing Visit by Lu Xun Award Writers". Thirty award-winning writers gathered in Lu Xun's hometown to discuss their spiritual homeland and pay their respects to Mr. Lu Xun with great reverence. The publication of *The Literary Homeland* has profound contemporary and cultural significance. In the face of the impact of globalization and urbanization, traditional regional cultures are facing unprecedented challenges. While people pursue modern life, they also experience confusion in identity recognition and loss of cultural memory. Against this backdrop, *The Literary Homeland* came into being. It is not only the writers' heartfelt declaration of love for Lu Xun's hometown but also a way to preserve and inherit regional culture. The publication of this book aims to arouse people's attention to their hometowns and cherish regional culture, allowing them to pause in the fast-paced modern life, look back at their hometowns, and listen to the voices from the depths of their hearts.

Meantime, there is another book entitled *Depth Interviews with Lu Xun Literary Award Writers* (shendu duihua lujiang zuojia in Chinese) is worth paying enough attention to. The book, written by the well known reporter Shu Jinyu, and published by People's Literature Publishing House in October 2021, takes the "Lu Xun Literary Award" as the entry point. It observes Chinese contemporary writers and the literary world from the perspectives of writers' creation and judges' selection. It outlines the spiritual map of contemporary literary development and provides comprehensive and detailed evidence for the study of contemporary writers in the new era context and literary education under the background of new liberal arts, which can be further discussed in the following three aspects (Liu, 2022; Ma, 2022; Tu, 2022).

The first point is about the Richness of the book, for it is a collection of precious contemporary literary historical materials. The book interviews 49 winners of the Lu Xun Literary Award from the 1st to the 7th session, who frankly respond to questions about their creative motives, award-winning experiences, literary concepts, and writing positions. Then, the book also interviews 10 judges who have participated in the selection process many times. They introduce and comment on the award-giving mechanism, standards, characteristics, and judges' mentality, making the content more objective and historical. In terms of time span, the interviews cover a period of more than two decades; in terms of content coverage, it consciously compares literary creation with literary criticism, complementing each other comprehensively and vividly. In addition, the book selects interviewees who cover a variety of literary

styles involved in the Lu Xun Literary Award, which helps readers to have a comprehensive understanding of the development of the Lu Xun Literary Award and the works of the award-winning writers in each session (Ma, 2022).

The second point is about the profoundness of the book, for it can be regarded as a subtle path to the writers' inner world. Firstly, the "depth" of "depth interviews" is based on the author's overall grasp of the literary nature of the works and the formation of unique evaluations. The professionalism and dedication shown by the author Shu Jinyu, as well as her respect for writers' works, reverence for literature, and in-depth thinking and sincere grasp of art, make the interviewees feel warmth as well as depth. The questions carefully designed around the writers' creative psychology especially highlight Shu's sense of responsibility for writing the history of contemporary Chinese literature. Then, the author focuses on the most fundamental issues that writers are deeply pursuing in their heart. Reading the whole book, the author presents the writers' character, taste, personal charm, pursuit, and the subtle process of their spiritual evolution, development, maturity, and formation in front of readers and researchers in a panoramic way. In this sense, it can be seen that the writing attitude is sincere, calm, and solemn, showing the dual tones of rational thinking and emotional experience (ibid).

The third point is about the professionalism of the book, for it is a practical reference book for contemporary literary research and education. The unique value of this book lies in its combination of documentary and research nature, as well as its combination of historical and literary nature. The professional quality of a cultural reporter requires him to maintain a certain degree of objectivity and neutrality. The interviewees need to go through a series of verbal and ideological exchanges such as exploration, evasion, confrontation, and attack to gradually establish trust, consensus, and tacit understanding. The professionalism and depth of the interview are realized. As a writer, the setting of questions, "interview notes", narration, and the beauty revealed in the dialogue are sufficient to prove that the interview writing pays attention to literary nature. The issues involved in the exclusive interviews of this book contain profound literary thoughts and aesthetic values. They are the most reliable "oral history" of writers for contemporary literary history research, hot spots for theoretical research, and focal points of attention and doubts for ordinary readers and literary education workers (ibid).

### 3. Classification of Writers' Group

The book *The Literary Homeland* gathers writers from different regions and cultural backgrounds. Based on their writing characteristics and their relationship with Shaoxing, they can be roughly divided into the following two categories.

#### 3.1 Writers with Deep Connections to Shaoxing City

These writers, though not born in Shaoxing, have a special bond with the city. They may have lived, studied, or worked in Shaoxing, and its regional culture has had a profound impact on them, becoming an important element in their literary creation. With their unique perspectives and experiences, they add

new colors to the literary image of Shaoxing. Those writers who used to live in Shaoxing for many years often feature the city through their works in various ways. In this sense their works can depict the life scenes of the Jiangnan towns (usually in Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces) with delicate pens, including descriptions of Shaoxing's customs, life of local residents and social changes, showing their deep understanding and unique feelings for the city.

### *3.2 Writers Who Are Interested in Shaoxing Culture*

These writers have a strong interest in Shaoxing's culture. They gain in-depth knowledge of the city's history and culture through reading, research, and field visits, and incorporate it into their literary works. Their writings about Shaoxing are not only literary expressions but also a form of cultural inheritance. Writers who are fascinated can express their admiration for Shaoxing culture through their books, poems and other works. By describing the city's ancient architecture and folk customs, they can showcase the unique charm of Shaoxing as a historical and cultural city and also express their desire to cherish and pass on traditional culture from generation to generation. And this is the most valuable point that exists in literary creation and should be cherished most among readers.

## **4. Writers' Sentiment for Shaoxing**

In the book *The Literary Homeland*, the sentiment of the writers' group towards Shaoxing is mainly reflected in the following two aspects.

### *4.1 Delicate Depiction and Praise of Shaoxing's Scenery and Culture*

The natural landscapes and cultural attractions of Shaoxing are common subjects in the writers' works. They use delicate pens and sincere emotions to depict the beauty of Shaoxing's mountains and waters, as well as the charm of its folk customs. For example, Zhang Chu (2022, pp. 140-143) writes that every time he visits the Hundred-Plant Garden (Baicaoyuan in Chinese), he sits on the stone slab outside the vegetable plot. Although there are no mulberries, blackberries, polygonum multiflorum, or soapberry trees as described by Lu Xun in *From the Hundred-Plant Garden to the Three-Taste Study* (an article written by Lu Xun), he can still recall the lush garden and the children playing in it that are read in that article when he closes his eyes. Regarding Shaoxing's yellow wine and cuisine, although Zhang Chu does not particularly like them, he still shows respect and appreciation in his writings. Li Junhu (2022, pp. 151-152) focuses on the Jiang'nan charm, small bridges over flowing water, and the rhythm of ancient zithers (Guqin in Chinese) to deeply experience that Shaoxing remains a historical and cultural city full of charm in the face of modernization. With the understanding, planning, and construction of the government department, Shaoxing's traditional culture and Lu Xun culture are perfectly combined, and the exploration and practice of cultural and tourism integration have achieved fruitful results. These descriptions not only showcase the natural beauty of Shaoxing but also allow readers to feel the writers' love and attachment to both ancient and modern Shaoxing.

### *4.2 Inheritance and Admiration of Lu Xun's Spirit*

Lu Xun, as a famous writer from Shaoxing, has had his spirit inherited and promoted among the

writers' group. Lu Xun's critical spirit and concern for the lower social strata, and reflection on traditional culture have deeply influenced these writers. Their visits to Shaoxing are not only explorations of Lu Xun's hometown but also pilgrimages to his spirit. In the book, the writers express their admiration for Lu Xun through interpretations of his works and depictions of his living scenes, while also contemplating how to inherit and promote Lu Xun's spirit in contemporary society. Xu Zechen (2022, pp. 5-9) believes that Lu Xun, referred to as the "Great Teacher," is a beacon of national art and thought, whose language and ideas can still serve as the source of artistic and intellectual inspiration, guiding people to move forward. He Shaojun (2022, pp. 13-15) points out that Lu Xun's depiction of his hometown Shaoxing has left a deep impression on him. He and his childhood classmates used to recite Lu Xun's texts aloud to express their love and admiration. After in-depth reading, He Shaojun further deepens his understanding and recognition of Lu Xun, discovering that Lu Xun's complex feelings towards his hometown are what make him great. Guan Renshan (2022, pp. 65-69) believes that Lu Xun is a beam of light in people's hearts, emerging from the darkness and carrying a storm of light to destroy all decay, and "people look up to this star, which makes the country's sky clearer." This inheritance and admiration of Lu Xun's spirit are not only reflected in the writers' words but also in their literary creation. They take Lu Xun as an example, pay attention to social reality, criticize social injustice, and speak for the people, showing the sense of responsibility and mission of contemporary writers.

## **5. Exploration of the Contemporary Value of Shaoxing Elements**

### *5.1 In-depth Exploration and Contemplation of Shaoxing Culture*

Shaoxing has a long history and brilliant culture. By deeply exploring Shaoxing's traditional culture, such as Yue Opera, Shaoxing Opera, and yellow wine, writers can not only greatly enrich the content of literary works but also show their emphasis on the inheritance of Shaoxing culture. Through descriptions and interpretations of these cultural elements, they allow readers to better understand Shaoxing's cultural characteristics and also contemplate how to protect and inherit these excellent traditional cultures in modern society. For example, by describing Yue Opera, they not only showcase Shaoxing's cultural characteristics but also express their desire to cherish and pass on traditional culture. At the same time, they profoundly reflect on the challenges and difficulties faced by traditional culture in modern society, especially the loss of traditional skills and the dilution of cultural connotations. They call on society to pay attention to the protection and inheritance of hometown culture and let traditional culture shine with new vitality in the new era.

### *5.2 Feelings and Reflections on the Changes in Shaoxing*

With the progress of time, Shaoxing has also undergone significant transformations. Through their descriptions of the changes that have taken place in recent years, the writers in the book express their feelings and contemplations on the economic and social development of Shaoxing over the years. They have witnessed the convenience and opportunities for development brought to the city by

modernization, yet they also express concern over the disappearance of certain traditional elements. These feelings about the changes in the ancient city of Shaoxing are not only nostalgia for the good old days but also a contemplation of the future. People hope that in the process of modernization, some traditional cultural memories can be preserved, allowing the ancient city to retain its soul while continuing the economic and social growth. Therefore, future cultural and tourism planning and management should place greater emphasis on the protection of the ancient city's culture, enabling traditional culture and modern civilization to integrate and develop together.

## 6. Conclusion

The book *The Literary Homeland*, through the writings of numerous authors, showcases their profound sentiment for Shaoxing. This sentiment is not only reflected in the delicate depiction and praise of Shaoxing's scenery and culture but also in the inheritance and admiration of Lu Xun's spirit. It further provokes in-depth exploration and contemplation of Shaoxing culture, as well as feelings and reflections on the changes in Shaoxing. With their unique perspectives and profound thinking, these writers present to readers a colorful and poetic Shaoxing, allowing them to feel the charm of Shaoxing and the writers' love for it. This sentiment is not only a form of literary expression but also a means of cultural inheritance, which enables us, in the quick-fix life, to have a halt, look back at our own hometowns, and listen to the voices from the depths of our hearts. At the same time, this sentiment holds significant importance for contemporary literary creation and the inheritance of regional culture. It reminds people of an important point that literary creation should focus on regional culture, drawing inspiration and strength from it. The inheritance of regional culture should value the power of literature, using literary works to make more people understand and pay attention to traditional regional culture, and allowing traditional culture to shine with new vitality in the new era.

Lu Xun spent his life with his pen as a flag, recording the times with literature, with a rational critical spirit and an indomitable fighting posture, calling for the awakening of the people, reflecting the spirit of Chinese progressive intellectuals taking responsibility for the country and the nation, and bravely dedicating themselves, which is the "national soul" that people still admire in the new era. Learning from Lu Xun is to promote the spiritual strength of literature and art, for excellent literary works are the soul of the nation to inspire the most important values and spiritual driving forces, which will illuminate the way forward. Facing various risks and challenges, facing the value emptiness, moral decay, materialism, spiritual crisis, psychological imbalance, and moral decline, it is a must to hold high the banner of Lu Xun's spirit, with the patriotic sentiment of our country, and the spirit of dedication like "willing to be a cow for the people," to shape the strong cultural character of the Chinese nation, and enhance the spiritual strength of the people, in an attempt to truly make the people "strong in spirit."

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## Note(s)

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