

Revolution and the Awakening of Individual Consciousness in Modern Chinese Literature: The Conflict Between Family Destiny and Modernity Transformation in Family

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Abstract: Taking Ba Jin's novel *Family* as the research subject, this paper focuses on using various methods such as textual analysis, historical background research, cultural criticism and reader response to thoroughly explore the conflict and integration between family fate and individual consciousness awakening in modern Chinese literature. Through the detailed analysis of the fate of the characters in the work and their social environment, the paper further examines Ba Jin's profound thoughts on the family tradition and the change of modernity. The fate of the characters in *Family* is closely related to the social environment in which they live. The three brothers—Jue Xin, Jue Min, and Jue Hui—are at the heart of the story, and their fates not only highlight the tension between the individual and the family, but also reflect the turmoil and transformation of society as it moves from the old to the new. Additionally, this paper explores the psychological changes of the characters in *Family* and their symbolic significance in the quest for modernity. Jue Xin's struggle between family responsibility and personal freedom reflects the suppression of the individual by traditional family values. The article aims to reveal the fates of the characters, particularly the three brothers—Jue Xin, Jue Min, and Jue Hui—in the tide of the times, illustrating their psychological changes during the transition from the old to the new and their symbolic search for modernity. Through this, it analyzes the complexity of China's social transformation and the human struggles within it.

Keywords: Ba Jin, *Family*, Modernity, Family Destiny, Individual Awakening

1. Introduction

Ba Jin's *Family* is a classic in modern Chinese literature, holding a key place in literary history due to its profound ideological depth and artistic quality. The novel highlights the intense conflict between traditional family values and modernity. Through the fates of the three brothers—Jue Xin, Jue Min, and Jue Hui—it explores the personal struggles and awakenings that occur during a period of social transformation. Scholars have offered a range of interpretations of *Family*, examining it from various angles such as family ethics and social history. For example, some argue that the three brothers embody the diversity of family roles and individual consciousness across different historical periods. Their destinies are shaped not only by their personal choices but also by the powerful influence of their social and historical context [1-3].

However, from the basis of existing research, this paper aims to further explore the theme of family destiny and individual consciousness awakening in *Family* through the lens of modernity theory. It seeks to uncover Ba Jin's unique reflections on modernity and his literary expression of these ideas. Modernity is not merely a social and historical transformation; it is also a complex process involving the awakening of individual consciousness and the pursuit of self-identity. Through the psychological changes of the main characters in *Family*, especially their choices and struggles between tradition and modernity, Ba Jin depicts the diverse responses of individuals under the challenges of modernity. This diversity is reflected both in the differing attitudes towards family responsibility and in the specific reactions to social transformation [4-6].

Jue Xin, as the eldest son of the family, bears the family's expectations and responsibilities, yet he constantly struggles with family traditions and personal ideals. Jue Xin's inner conflict reflects the powerlessness and compromises individuals experience when faced with the impact of modernity, leading to the tragic ending of his fate [7-9]. In contrast, Jue Min and Jue Hui represent individuals awakened by the new era: Jue Min chooses his own way of life by resisting the constraints of the family, while Jue Hui achieves self-liberation by completely leaving the family, becoming a typical symbol of rebellion against tradition and the pursuit of freedom [9-11]. The different fates of the three brothers reflect the conflict between individual desires and family traditions, while also highlighting the diverse possibilities of choice during a period of social transformation [11-12]. Through the depiction of the main characters, Ba Jin not only reveals the deep contradictions between the traditional family system and modernity, but also presents, in literary form, the complex psychology and difficult choices individuals experience in this process [13]. The novel's focus on issues of modernity enriches the thematic content of *Family*, making it an important text for understanding the modern themes in modern Chinese literature. By integrating modernity theory, this paper aims to reexamine the themes of family destiny and individual consciousness awakening in *Family*, providing a more comprehensive presentation of Ba Jin's reflections and expressions on modernity in his literary work, and offering new perspectives and insights for related research.

2. The Conflict between Family Destiny and Social Transformation

Family is set in early 20th-century China, a time when the feudal family system clashed violently with Western modern thought. Ba Jin, through the depiction of the Gao family—a large feudal household—vividly reveals the deep contradictions and crises within traditional families. In this family, the fate of each member is deeply constrained by feudal ethical codes, and individuals struggle within the confines of the family system, unable to pursue their own happiness and freedom.

As the central figure of the family, Old Mr. Gao represented the epitome of feudal thought. He maintained family order with an extremely conservative attitude and regarded ethical principles as inviolable sacred beliefs. Under such patriarchal authority, the Gao family fell into a quagmire of decline. For instance, Old Mr. Gao's strong intervention in family matters not only increases family tension but also makes its members lose their right to make personal choices. He takes an authoritarian approach to his grandchildren's marriages, putting the interests of the family first and completely ignoring the feelings and wishes of the individual. On the surface, such a family culture upholds traditional ethical order, but in fact, it gradually aggravates internal rift. Among them, the fate of Jue Xin epitomizes the typical conflict between tradition and modernity. As the eldest son of the family, Jue Xin is given great responsibility and pressure to bear the burden of maintaining the family's honor. This sense of duty forces him to sacrifice his personal happiness. His love for Mei, which was originally sincere and beautiful, is mercilessly killed by the mandatory requirements of his family. As written in the novel, "I can give up everything, but not my family." Jue Xin deeply knows what his family expects of him and is unable to resist the authority of his parents' order. Eventually, he accepts the marriage arranged by the family. This sacrifice is both the suppression of individual will

by the traditional family system and the concentrated reflection of Jue Xin's inner conflicts and struggles. In addition, the lives of other members of the Gao family are also full of pain and contradiction. Jue Hui, as the most rebellious member of the younger generation in the family, courageously challenges tradition and seeks individual liberation. His critical thinking about the feudal ethical code made him a symbol of transformative thought in the family. His cry as he observes the suffering fate of Jue Xin: "Why can't a man have a life of his own? Why should one have to sacrifice everything to satisfy those hypocritical traditions?" This passage profoundly expresses the oppression of feudal family ethics on individual life, and it also draws the foreshadowing of Juehui's later freedom from the family's constraints.

Through his portrayal of the characters within the Gao family, Ba Jin vividly shows the crisis of the feudal family system: the seemingly stable ethical norms are in fact full of repression and contradictions. Each individual has fallen victim to the family's interests, while the relationships between family members are alienated or even opposed due to the constraints of tradition. In the end, the rigidity of the family system and the forces of social change formed an irreconcilable conflict. All this not only reveals the contradictions within traditional families but also reflects the pains of Chinese society in the early twentieth century as it moved from feudalism to modernization. Against this historical background, Ba Jin warned the world about the rise and fall of the Gao family.

Only by breaking away from the shackles of tradition and pursuing individual freedom and liberation can Chinese society truly move towards a new life. This profound exploration of the individual and the family, tradition and modernity has given *Family* an eternal ideological value.

3. Private Consciousness Awakening and Modernity Transformation Symbols

Through the three sons of the Gao family, particularly Jue Min and Jue Hui, Ba Jin deeply demonstrates the enlightenment of individual consciousness and the impact of modern thoughts on the classic family structure. Their tolerance and waking represent two different paths and reveal the many difficulties of Chinese society in the early 20th century during the intermediate period between tradition and modernity.

First of all, Jue Min's opposition is subdued and affecting. He fights against the arranged marriage, falls for the family's meddling in his marriage, and eventually decides to escape with his favorite Qin. Jue Min is not entirely independent of his family's control, even though this kind of weight challenges the traditional concept of family. He also takes the Family's feelings into account even in the resistance and won't completely split the family's affection. Jue Min's enlightenment is characterized by a sense of sacrifice as he strives to maintain family harmony while pursuing personal happiness. His relaxed status in the Family is highlighted by the softness of this revolt, which also shows how deeply embedded some young people are in the traditional social code. Although his choice half frees up specific emotions, it also demonstrates how limited individual resistance is in a conventional society.

Jue Hui's revolution, in contrast, is more ferocious and complete, and he is the most obstinate critic of conventional ideas in his family. Jue Hui slowly develops a strong sense of individuality and the struggle for democracy and freedom as a result of studying new textbooks and coming up with new ideas. He positively participates in social movements like the May Fourth Movement, experimenting with fresh ideas, and heroic to openly oppose the Family's conflict. The conventional family system, in Jue Hui's opinion, is at the core of the oppression of individual freedom and value and must be completely eradicated. His claims and weight actions in the book reflect the spiritual awakening of the new generation. For instance, when he is faced with the traditional wedding arranged by his family, he announces the program as a constraint of human nature and also tries to persuade other sisters and brothers to join him in his opposition. This furious fight makes Jue Hui an "outsider" in the Family and a symbol of modern thought. Jue Hui's revolution, however, does not guarantee his full

emancipation. He must contend with the perplexing persecution and challenges of society after leaving the family. His social ideals are constantly thwarted by reality, and the path to revolution is full of challenges. "I left one box, but I entered another larger," he laments in the novel. This reflects Jue Hui's struggle through the intermediate time between tradition and modernity in addition to exposing his sadness and helplessness as an individual.

Ba Jin explores the issues facing Chinese society at the beginning of the 20th century through Jue Min and Jue Hui's two distinct opposition strategies. Jue Hui's extreme revolution embodies the need for modernity without completely rejecting tradition, while Jue Min's subdued opposition to compromises and misgivings represents a transitory awakening. However, their common destiny reveals a stark contrast between the boundaries of society and individual consciousness waking. In a world with a strong tradition, individual awakening cannot immediately realize independence and liberation. *Family* has both a profound social value and historical significance because of this intricate psychological and intellectual tension.

4. The Literary Expression of Family Destiny and the Enlightenment of Individual Consciousness

Through delicate writing, Ba Jin vividly depicts the different attitudes of the three brothers of the Gao family as they face the fate of the family and reflect the changes of the times through their destinies. Jue Xin's compromise and endurance, Jue Ming's hesitation and resistance, and Jue Hui's rebellion and awakening constitute the multiple patterns of personal struggle and choice between tradition and modernity. Their destinies are not only a display of their personal trajectories, but also a microcosm of the intense conflict between family and society during the period of social transformation in China at the beginning of the twentieth century.

4.1. Jue Xin's Compromise and Endurance

Jue Xin is the eldest boy, and he always has the Family's expectations in mind. He chooses to comply and compromise, becoming a common victim of the family structure, under the influence of family tradition. Jue Xin is never brave enough to resist even when his love for Mei is ruthlessly destroyed. He painfully follows the family's arrangement and marries Rui Jue, who is not in love with him, and buries his guilt and longing for Mei deep inside. When Jue Xin recalls Mei with sadness in the book, He declares, "She is gone, and there is no light in my world again." His impotence and internal struggle are clearly demonstrated in this world. It looks like the family's harmony is maintained by Jue Xin's sacrifice. But the loss of personal happiness is doomed at the same time, showing the destruction of individual freedom by the old family system.

4.2. Jue Ming's Hesitation and Resistance

Jue Xin's weight has a voice of reluctance and conservation, but Jue Ming's is more prominent. He chooses to escape with his favorite Qin instead of the family-arranged relationship. This behavior challenges the family power and reflects his desire for personal fulfillment. But Jue Ming's weight is fairly divorced from tradition. He continues to have heartfelt feelings for his family throughout his weight, and the family strikes a balance between keeping family ties and fighting. The prospect will always be good as long as we hold on to one another, Jiu Ming assures Qin. His desire for free love is expressed in this quote, which also gives hints about his reluctance to deal with and hope for family relationships. The unavoidable conflict between tradition and modernity is reflected in this complicated feeling.

4.3. Juehui's Rebellion and Awakening

Jue Hui's actions and thoughts represent a perfect modern awakening because he is the most powerful rebel against the Gao family's feudal ethical code. He proudly criticizes the family system's strength and corruption, embraces democratic and liberal thoughts, and reads new books and magazines. He asks, "Why can't a person even control his destiny, such a family, with such a tradition, is not worth respecting!" after witnessing the tragedy of Jue Xin. Through lively participation in real-world activities like the May Fourth Movement, Jue Hui not only learns new things intellectually but even pursues cultural change. His revolution fully frees him from the boundaries of his family and represents the new generation's total rejection of the traditional order. Jue Hui's waking, however, only brings new grief and confusion and never complete flexibility. He says, "I thought liberty was just away, but each action I take feels heavier than the last." after leaving the family. This is not only a tragedy of personal destiny, but also a collision between ideals and reality in the process of social change.

The rise and fall of the Gao family serves as a reflection of the deep crisis within the feudal family system of old China, according to the author Ba Jin. Under the rule of Old Mr. Gao, every family member is oppressed and unable to attain true freedom. The family's cohesion gradually dissolves, and the contradiction between traditional rites and daily life becomes increasingly prominent. The profound depictions of the characters' fates vividly recreate the turmoil and transformation of Chinese society during this period. Meanwhile, the female characters in *Family*, such as Rui Jue and Qin, also showcase their struggles and resistance in this process. Rui Jue represents the patience and helplessness of the traditional woman; as Jue Xin's wife, she completely sacrifices her own happiness and becomes a victim of the family system. Qin, on the other hand, symbolizes the awakening and rebellion of the new woman. She dares to pursue love, to break free from old constraints, and represents the independent spirit and resistance of the new woman.

5. Social Criticism and the Search for Humanity in the Modern Transformation

The enlightenment of the individual and the collapse of the Family have become parental events under the influence of modern thought. The complicated relationship between social organizations, family ethics, and individual destiny is explored in Ba Jin's philosophy of modernity, which does not just address the pursuit of individual freedom. According to Ba Jin, modernity is more than just a personal waking and rebellion; it also involves deep cultural structural changes and the rebuilding of moral principles. The family program, which serves as the foundation of the conventional world, limits the scope of individual freedom and development in addition to enforcing familial estate. Under the influence of modernity, the family system steadily deteriorates, and individual awakening and resistance developed as a result.

Through works such as *Family*, *Spring*, and *Autumn*, Ba Jin draws a portrait of how the power structure and social rules within the Family and individual destiny. The older era, in accordance with Old Mr. Gao and the family elders he represents, maintains the family order based on feudal ethics and suppresses the will of the family members through authority, and the stability of this order relies precisely on the sacrifice of individual freedom. Jue Xin's compromise is the result of the traditional family system's persecution of individual will and shows up in his submission to the family. Although this persecution maintains simplistic family unity, it eventually leads to a serious gap within the Family and a tendency toward collapse. Ba Jin shows how trapped human nature is in the transformation of modernity at the same time. In their transition to modernity, Jue Xin, Jue Min, and Jue Hui go through intense inward battles and external forces. Although Jue Xin chooses to sacrifice, a continual conflict will result from his desire for freedom and self-repression. His compromise is not only the assumption of responsibility for his family but also reflects the deterioration of personal

ideals. Jue Min is finally forced to strike a balance between tradition and modernity, and his love is also constrained by family ethics. Jue Hui tries to leave his or her home in an effort to achieve specific liberation as a representative of a total uprising. But the "freedom" he seeks does not fully address his sense of isolation and unease. Ba Jin demonstrates how the influence of contemporary changes on social structures and family ethics has a significant impact on personal decisions through his description of the fate of these figures.

He also expresses his concerns about isolation, uncertainty, and confusion in modernity while criticizing the traditional family system's persecution of human nature. Through the problems and decisions of the figures, this inquiry includes artistic works as well as attempts to make philosophical connections between traditional ethics and individual freedom for current people.

Thus, Ba Jin's design calls for serious reflection on social system reform and ethical reconstruction as well as individual freedom. While paying attention to the new conflicts brought about by modernity, his writings make users reflect on the tension between tradition and modernity. With the investigation of "the connection between social system, family ethics, and individual destiny," Ba Jin's writings transcend contemporary conventions and has far-reaching significance for everyone.

6. Conclusion

Through an in-depth analysis of Ba Jin's *Family*, this paper explores the complicated relationship between family destiny and the awakening of individual consciousness, revealing the comprehensive nature of modernity issues in the transformation of modern Chinese society. The family is not the individual's base in Ba Jin's writings, but it also serves as a major impediment to the revelation of individual consciousness. As the world changes, the fight between the traditional family structure and present considerations becomes more obvious. People eventually begin to question and concerned the outdated social norms and family ethics as a result of this process.

First, through the fate of the three sons of the Gao family, Ba Jin demonstrates the tremendous conflict of people when facing family duties and personal ideals. Jue Xin's sacrifice and perseverance exemplify the person who veers between tradition and modernity, Jue Min's fear and challenge reflect family stress, and Jue Hui's harsh revolution exemplifies the new generation's desire for freedom and independence. The different options of these figures reflect the psychological changes of persons during historical transitions and picture the conversion process of the whole Chinese society.

Second, this paper emphasizes the engaging connection between family destiny and the transition to modernity. As the basis of traditional culture, the family method slowly disintegrates under the effect of modern thought, and the awakening of individual consciousness is not only the pursuit of personal freedom but even a revolt against family constraints. In this transition approach, individuals face many pressures from Family while seeking self-personality. It also reveals how complicated and contradictory human nature is as a result of contemporary change.

Lastly, Ba Jin's literary creation provides an important view to understand the revolution and the enlightenment of individual consciousness in modern Chinese literature. In the *Family*, the revolution is not only a change in the past but also the psychological struggle of the individual when confronting the old family structure and the problems of modernity. Through this job, Ba Jin asks us to consider how people seek self-identity and independence as well as the tension between tradition and modernity. Ba Jin's *Family* provides numerous resources and ideas for future conversations on modernity and individual consciousness as a far-reaching reflection on the social changes of the time.

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