A THEMATIC STUDY OF LU XUN'S PROSE POETRY COLLECTION WILD GRASS

by

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M.A., The University of Henan, 1986
M.A., The University of British Columbia, 1994

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of Asian Studies

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

September 1998

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Abstract

This thesis is a comprehensive thematic study of the unique prose poetry collection *Wild Grass* by the famous modern Chinese writer Lu Xun. It provides a general survey of previous *Wild Grass* studies both in China and abroad in the past 70 years in Chapter 1. The survey clarifies the achievements and defects of those studies, and finds that they are still insufficient and can and should be further expanded.

By employing a comprehensive methodology, including close reading, rhetorical analysis, intertextual interpretation, and some standard psychoanalytic insights, the thesis explores the themes of *Wild Grass* on three different levels. In Chapter 2, on the historical level, the thesis reveals the theme of social and political criticism of the dark reality of mid-1920s China. In Chapter 3, some *Wild Grass* poems are interpreted on the philosophical level to show the theme of Lu Xun's meditations on the ego, will to life, and the meaning of human existence. In Chapter 4, the thesis examines some *Wild Grass* poems on the emotional level to display Lu Xun's dilemma of love and moral responsibilities at a crucial juncture of his life when he contemplated deserting his old-style wife and accepting a young lady's love. Some poems are informed by a strong awareness of repentance, which is essentially an embodiment of Lu Xun's sense of morality and responsibility.

In its conclusion, the thesis summarizes the intellectual and artistic values of *Wild Grass*, deeming it a magnificent book marking a creative peak in Lu Xun's career and an achievement in modern Chinese literature of the twentieth century. Lu Xun's spirit of struggle, awareness of repentance, and subjective emotion and lyricism that are incorporated in *Wild Grass* have become an important legacy for Chinese literature and the Chinese people. The symbolic and surrealistic features, the expressionistic characterization, the structure of the logical dilemma, and elegant language make *Wild Grass* a great modern masterpiece.

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Acknowledgments

During the period of more than two years' writing of this doctoral dissertation, I have profited greatly from the academic guidance of my professors. I would like to express my profound gratitude to Professor Michael S. Duke, my supervisor, who encouraged me to begin this challenging topic and helped me to structure this work to be what it is today. I owe a particular debt to him for his critical reading of my drafts, patient correction of my expressions, inspiring comments and suggestions, and, in general, for the strict intellectual training that I received in the last six years.

I am deeply grateful to Professor Jerry Schmidt for his generous encouragement. Even though he was as far away as China in the summer vacation of 1998, he kindly finished reading my dissertation and provided me by mail with new ideas, which inspired me to think more deeply about some of my arguments.

I would also like to express my profound gratitude to Professor George McWhirter, who kindly and carefully read my work and helped me to improve the expression of my ideas. I benefited immeasurably from his suggestions and encouragement.

My special gratitude is to Mrs. Vera Burnham, my English teacher, who kindly and generously proofread the second draft of my dissertation and corrected my grammatical and spelling mistakes.

Sincere thanks are also due to Dr. Yang Chang, my friend, who read the whole of the first draft, and Mr. James Keefer, Ph. D. candidate and my classmate, who read part of the first draft. They also offered me valuable advice and warm support.

I would like to express my particular thanks to Professor Yang Yonglong and Professor Jin Zhaoxia in the Art Faculty at Henan University in China, both of whom helped me to find and photocopy many necessary references, and mailed them to me from China. Without their help, my work would be impossible.

I also owe especial appreciation to my wife Li Ning, who typed the whole of this dissertation and, more importantly, from beginning to end of my long period of studies, tenaciously and selflessly supported me and the family, even in the most difficult days.

INTRODUCTION

Wild Grass (*Yecao*, 野草) is a unique collection of prose poetry (*sanwenshi*, 散文诗) by the famous modern Chinese writer Lu Xun (鲁迅, 1881-1936). Prose poetry, as a subgenre similar to the short poetic essay, first emerged in 1920s China. In the 1930s it was formally called prose poetry. Lu Xun's *Wild Grass* contains twenty-three pieces of prose poetry. All were written during the period from 1924 to 1926 and published successively in the literary weekly *Talking String* (*Yusi*, 语丝). In July 1927 after Lu Xun wrote an inscription to them, these prose poems were republished as a collection under the title *Wild Grass*. At present this collection is contained in volume two of the 1987 edition of *The Complete Works of Lu Xun* (*Lu Xun quanji*, 鲁迅全集).

Compared in size with other collections in Lu Xun's *Complete Works*, *Wild Grass* is a short book of only seventy pages. The length of each prose poem varies from three hundred to three thousand Chinese characters. However, owing to its admirable artistic distinction, stylistic originality, and the impressive thematic complexity, *Wild Grass* is very significant in Lu Xun's creative output as well as in the whole of modern Chinese literature. It has become an indispensable text in studies of Lu Xun and of modern Chinese literature as well.

Lu Xun himself cherished a special fondness for *Wild Grass*. In its "Inscription" (*Tici*, 题辞), he declared: "I myself love my *Wild Grass*."[1] In 1929 he expressed his sorrow to a friend for being unable to write prose poetry like *Wild Grass* any more.[2] In 1931 Lu Xun

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[1]Lu Xun, "Tici" 题辞 (Inscription) to *Wild Grass*, *Lu Xun Quanji* 鲁迅全集 (Complete works of Lu Xun), Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1987, vol. 2, p. 159. Hereafter *LXQJ*. In this dissertation, unless otherwise noted, English translations are my own. Others' translations may be slightly changed wherever I think it's necessary.

[2]Feng Xuefeng 冯雪峰, *Huiyi Lu Xun* 回忆鲁迅 (Recollections of Lu Xun), Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1953, p. 23.

mentioned it again in his "Preface to the English Edition of *Wild Grass*" (*Yecao yingwen yiben xu*, 野草英文译本序):[3]

> These twenty some short essays were all written in Beijing between 1924 and 1926, as indicated at the end of each piece, and published one after another in the periodical *Yü-ssu*. For the most part they are only small reflections of the moment. Since it was difficult to speak out directly at the time, occasionally the phrasing is very muddled.
>
> Now I would like to raise some examples. Because I was critical of the sentimental poetry then widely current, I wrote *Wo-ti shih-lien* 我的失恋 (My lost love), because I hated the numerous sideline-observers of society, I wrote the first *Fu-ch'ou* 复仇 (Revenge); and because I was alarmed by the despair of youth, I wrote *Hsi-wang* 希望 (Hope). *Che-yang ti chan-shih* 这样的战士 (Such a fighter) was written because of a feeling that men of letters and scholars were assisting the warlords. *La-yeh* 蜡叶 (The dry leaf) was composed for the person who loves me and wants to preserve me. After the Duan Qirui Government fired upon the unarmed populace I wrote *T'an-t'an ti hsüeh-hen chung* 淡淡的血痕中 (Amid pale bloodstains), at which time I had already fled to other quarters. When the Feng-t'ien 奉天 and Chih-li 直隶 warlord factions joined in battle I wrote *I-chüeh* 一觉 (The awakening), and after this I could no longer remain in Beijing.
>
> Therefore, this much can be said, the larger proportion of [these essays] are small and pale blossoms growing on the rim of deserted Hell, and for that reason cannot be considered as objects of beauty. And yet, this Hell is also bound to be destroyed . . .
>
> Afterward, I wrote no longer this kind of thing. The era, which is changing daily, doesn't allow this kind of writing and even this kind of thought to exist. I think that perhaps this is fine.[4]

The preface is the most detailed, and also public, explanation of the genesis of *Wild Grass* by the author himself. In 1932, *Self-Selection of Lu Xun* (*Lu Xun zixuanji*, 鲁迅自选集) was published. In it Lu Xun selected a total of twenty-two pieces of short fiction, prose, and prose poetry. *Wild Grass* poems numbered seven, almost one third of the book. In the preface, Lu Xun also specifically mentioned *Wild Grass*:

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[3]This English edition of *Wild Grass* was translated by Feng Yusheng 冯余生. The project failed when the print was destroyed during the Shanghai Anti-Japanese Campaign starting on January 28, 1932.

[4]Lu Xun, "Yecao yingwen yiben xu" 野草英文译本序 (Preface to the English edition of *Wild Grass*), *LXQJ*, vol. 4, p. 356. The first three paragraphs are William Schultz's translation in "Lu Hsün, The Creative Years," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1955, p. 296.

> When I had some minor impressions and thoughts, I would write a few short compositions. More pretentiously, they were called prose poetry. Later on they were published in one volume under the title of *Wild Grass*.[5]

In this preface, Lu Xun also told that he had withdrawn from the *Self-Selection* some *Wild Grass* pieces that might convey "a feeling of heavy oppression" to his readers. As for the reason, he said: "I am unwilling to transmit the loneliness that I myself felt so bitterly to the young people who are having a rosy dream like I did when I was young."[6] The book does not include the most grotesque and gloomy poems such as "Revenge" (*Fuchou*, 复仇) and "Tombstone Inscriptions" (*Mujiewen*, 墓碣文), which are perhaps, in Lu Xun's view, among the pieces that might convey "the feeling of heavy oppression."

In 1934 Lu Xun once again mentioned *Wild Grass* in a personal letter. He said:

> The technique of my book *Wild Grass* is not bad, but the mood is too dejected. Because the book was written after I suffered many hardships. I hope you will be able to break away from the influence of this dejected mood.[7]

In view of Lu Xun's own comments, two points become clear. First, Lu Xun tended to treat *Wild Grass* in a tone of understatement. He called it "small essays" (*xiaopin*, 小品), "small reflections of the moment" (*suishi de xiao ganxiang*, 随时的小感想), "short compositions" (*duanwen*, 短文), and finally "prose poetry." Second, Lu Xun worried that the subject matter and artistic effect of *Wild Grass*, which are usually perceived as despairing and nihilistic, might depress the readers, especially China's youth in the historical context of the 1930s, a time for the Chinese people to resist the Japanese invasion. Therefore Lu Xun's own

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[5]"Zixuanji xu"自选集自序 (Preface to self-selection of Lu Xun), *LXQJ*, vol. 4, p. 456, Leo Ou-fan Lee's translation in *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987, p. 91.
[6]Ibid. P. 457.
[7]Lu Xun, a letter to Xiao Jun 萧军 dated October 9, 1934, in *LXQJ*. vol. 12. p. 532.

comments should not be understood as a self-denigration, as a critic declared: "The author was . . . to become disenchanted with his work [of *Wild Grass*]."[8]

Seventy years have passed since *Wild Grass* was first published as a collection. *Wild Grass* has not only survived the twentieth century, but also been recognized as a great work in modern Chinese literature. *Wild Grass* studies in the past seventy years witnessed a particular phenomenon, that is, no matter who the literary critics are, and what ideological attitudes they take toward Lu Xun, they almost unanimously compliment the artistic achievement of *Wild Grass*. For example, the renowned critic Jaroslav Prusek once enthusiastically lauded the aesthetic value of *Wild Grass*:

> Undoubtedly his greatest work of art, which corresponds exactly to the concepts of what modern poetry should be, is the collection of his poems in prose in *Yeh-ts'ao* 野草 *Wild Grass*. Here Lu Hsün created a work of art which, in relation to the period and environment it was created, is almost a miracle.[9]

Another highly regarded critic, Tsi-an Hsia also praised Lu Xun's art that is embodied in *Wild Grass*, although his study focused on its "dark side":

> The rest of the book (referring to all the poems in *Wild Grass* except for "My Lost Love") is genuine poetry in embryo: images imbued with strong emotional intensity, flowing and stopping in darkly glowing but oddly shaped lines, like molten metal failing to find a mold.[10]

Su Xuelin is perhaps the only scholar who entirely denied Lu Xun's political and moral qualities, sometimes by quoting certain pieces of *Wild Grass* like "Revenge" and "Amid Pale Bloodstains" as evidence to illustrate Lu Xun's "ferocity and ruthlessness," and "malignity in his mind."[11] But she too could not but admit the artistic merit of *Wild Grass*:

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[8]Charles, J. Alber, "*Wild Grass*, Symmetry and Parallelism in Lu Hsün's Prose Poems," in *Critical Essays on Chinese Literature*, William H. Nienhauser, Jr. ed., The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1976, p. 2.
[9]Jaroslav Prusek, *The Lyrical and the Epic*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980, p.56.
[10]Tsi-an Hsia, *The Gate of Darkness*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1968, p. 150.
[11]Su Xuelin 苏雪林, *Wo lun Lu Xun* 我论鲁迅 (I comment on Lu Xun), Taizhong: Wenxing shudian, 1967, p. 12.

> The language [of *Wild Grass*] is calm, sharp, accurate, and epigrammatic as well as sophisticated, precise, profound, and beautiful. It fuses the sentences of Buddhist classics with the Western color to achieve a distinctive style. . . . Inside there are many poetic and picturesque descriptions of nature, which are not only absent in classical literature, but also seldom seen in new literature.[12]

However, compared with the unanimous compliments on the artistic achievement of *Wild Grass*, the interpretations of and comments on its themes, significance, effect, and the author's intention vary greatly from the 1920s to the present.

In Chapter One of this dissertation, I shall offer a general survey on the history of the seventy years of *Wild Grass* studies, especially its thematic studies, both in China and abroad. This survey will clarify the achievements and defects of those studies. Also based on this survey, I have decided on the subject, goal, and methodology for the dissertation.

Through this general survey, I found that previous studies of *Wild Grass* within China and abroad demonstrate different features. In China, *Wild Grass* studies have been constantly impacted by ideology in different historical stages. In the late 1920s, *Wild Grass* was severely attacked by leftist writers and theorists during the discussion of "revolutionary literature" (*geming wenxue*, 革命文学). They tended to quote some passages from *Wild Grass* that they felt were pessimistic or nihilistic to denounce Lu Xun and his thought. This sort of attack ceased with the end of the discussion in the second half of 1929. In the 1930s and the 1940s, the value of *Wild Grass* was gradually recognized, but the commentary on it was not adequate. During the period from the 1950s to the 1980s, the mainland China authorities strove to make use of Lu Xun as a tool to strengthen Maoist ideological control. *Wild Grass* studies became a continuous process to find Lu Xun's "fighting spirit." Although numerous critical essays and more than half a dozen books were written interpreting *Wild Grass* during this time, most of them were shaped basically under the influence of government ideological censorship.

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[12]Su Xuelin 苏雪林, *Zhongguo ersanshi niandai zuojia* 中国二三十年代作家 (Chinese writers in the 1920s and the 1930s), Taibei: Chunwenxue chubanshe, 1983, p. 294.

Therefore many of the studies do not have high academic value. In the 1990s, with the Chinese government policy on literature and art gradually becoming tolerant, *Wild Grass* studies in mainland China began to flourish.

Outside China, *Wild Grass* remains a relatively peripheral work and needs many more studies. For instance, there have already been two specialized books published in English on Lu Xun's poetry in the classical style.[13] By contrast there is no specialized book in English on *Wild Grass*, and even a complete English translation is not yet available. Except for Leo Ou-fan Lee's study of Lu Xun, which contributes a prominent chapter analyzing *Wild Grass*, very few specialized articles are found in English. Many comments on *Wild Grass* are general and introductory, seen in books and articles which deal with topics related to Lu Xun and/or modern Chinese literature, but not specifically to *Wild Grass*.

The survey of *Wild Grass* studies leads me to the conclusion that the studies are still insufficient and can be further expanded. Especially at present, *Wild Grass* has proven itself to be a long-lasting work of creative intelligence, emotional sincerity, and imaginary power that has shaped one particular aspect of Lu Xun's legacy and become a rare specimen of modern Chinese literature. The time for a comprehensive study of *Wild Grass* has finally come.

Based on the importance of *Wild Grass* and the inadequacy of previous studies. I chose *Wild Grass* as the topic of my dissertation. Because the most significant disagreements in *Wild Grass* studies concern its themes, my study will be mainly a systematically thematic study. I shall provide interpretations for most poems in *Wild Grass*, and also offer necessary analyses of their aesthetic characteristics, wherever they are helpful, to reveal Lu Xun's intention or the themes of the poems.

In order to make my interpretation valid, accurate, and acceptable, I shall utilize a multi-level interpretation. It is inspired by some relevant methods of particular scholars. When Lin

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[13]They are David Y. Ch'en's *Lu Hsün Complete Poems*, Arizona State University, 1988 and Jon Kowallis's *The Lyrical Lu Xun, A study of His Classical-style Verse*, Honolulu: U. of Hawaii Press, 1996.

Yü-sheng delineates Lu Xun's complex consciousness, he classifies it into three levels: the conscious and explicit level, the conscious but unexplicated level, and the subconscious level. He considers *Wild Grass* as an important source for fathoming the nature of Lu Xun's subconscious during the period from 1924 to 1926.[14] As far as *Wild Grass* itself is concerned, Leo Ou-fan Lee points out: "We can easily detect in the collection three interwoven levels — the evocative, the imagistic, and the metaphorical."[15] Because of the complexity of Lu Xun's consciousness and art, I shall treat *Wild Grass* as a multi-theme collection of prose poetry and attempt to illustrate its three major themes on different levels: the historical level, the philosophical level, and the emotional level.

In Chapter Two, I shall deal with the first theme of *Wild Grass* on the historical level, that is, the social and political criticism of reality. As shown in the brief survey in Chapter One, many scholars have explicated this theme to underline the significance of *Wild Grass* as social and historical criticism. Some scholars also examine Lu Xun's motives in the composition of *Wild Grass* on the historical level. For instance, Jaroslav Prusek argues:

> The impulse for Lu Hsün to create this poetry did not stem from any morbid moods and feelings, but on the contrary, these personal confessions are proof of how Lu Hsün's thinking was dominated by one single thought: anxiety for his nation and the fight for its future. . . . Its impulse is in the need for new and exact expressions of the feeling of the revolutionary epoch.[16]

Based on this understanding, in Chapter Two, placing *Wild Grass* in the historical context of its production, I shall interpret a number of *Wild Grass* poems to demonstrate Lu Xun's social criticism and his spirit of resistance against the warlord politics in the mid-1920s.

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[14]Lin Yü-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979. p. 105.
[15]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 93.
[16]Jaroslav Prusek, *The Lyrical and the Epic*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980, p. 57.

In Chapter Three, I shall reveal the second theme of *Wild Grass*, that is, Lu Xun's philosophical meditations on some universal issues, such as the ego, will to life, and the meaning of human existence. As early as 1925, Lu Xun explicitly told a friend that "his philosophy was all included in his *Wild Grass*."[17] Xu Shoushang (许寿裳), Lu Xun's life time friend, also considered the book a general outlook on his life and the world: "*Wild Grass* can be said to be Lu Xun's philosophy."[18] William Lyell is perhaps the first Western scholar to examine *Wild Grass* on the philosophical level. He says: "From an abstract point of view, Lu Hsün was writing about . . . the ultimate question of life, death, and meaning. . . . He expressed this wonder most openly in the prose poems of *Wild Grass*."[19] Leo Ou-fan Lee recently gives an opinion about how an interpretation of *Wild Grass* should be done. He says: "I consider that, in order to be honest to Lu Xun's art, an analyst should raise his interpretation to a more abstract, philosophical level and need not make political explication on hearsay evidence."[20]

When dealing with the theory of interpretation, Steven Mailloux distinguishes two different strategies: historicizing and allegorizing. The former is "a strategy of placing the text in the historical context of its production" to find its social and historical meaning, while the latter is "a strategy that assumes poetry can refer to a second, more universal level of meaning beyond its particular historical reference."[21]

According to Mailloux's theory, I shall analyze *Wild Grass*, especially those pieces composed in a framework of logical dilemma, at the philosophical level to illustrate Lu Xun's

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[17]Zhang Yiping 章衣萍, "Yemiao zatan" 野庙杂谈 (Miscellaneous talks in a wild temple), no. 5. in *Jingbao fukan* 京报副刊 (Supplementary of Beijing Herald), March 31, 1925.

[18]Xu Shoushang 许寿裳, *Wo suo renshi de Lu Xun* 我所认识的鲁迅 (The Lu Xun that I knew), Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1952, p. 42.

[19]William Lyell, *Lu Hsün's Version of Reality*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1976, p. 309.

[20]Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Lu Xun yu xiandai yishu yishi" 鲁迅与现代艺术意识 (Lu Xun and the consciousness of modern art), in *Tiewuzhong de nahan* 铁屋中的呐喊 (Voices from the iron house), Taibei: Shidai fengyun chubanshe, 1995, p. 297.

[21]Steven Mailloux, "Interpretation," in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, Frank Lentrichia and Thomas McLaughlin ed. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 124.

personal philosophical vision — "a second, more universal level of meaning beyond its particular historical reference" — that is, to value the will to life and personal responsibility, to challenge the troubled human life, and to progress forever.

In Chapter Four, I shall explore the third theme of *Wild Grass*, that is Lu Xun's emotional dilemma between love and moral responsibility. This interpretation is mainly made on the emotional level, a level that has been generally ignored in previous *Wild Grass* studies in mainland China. Jon Kowallis has a good idea on the effect of different interpretive levels. He asserts: "Interpretation of Lu Xun's work can be done at various levels of meaning, and this is a worthwhile undertaking for all, not merely the domain of the specialists."[22] But he attempts to base his studies of Lu Xun's classical-style poetry "on an emotional level." because studies on the emotional level "might bring us closer to knowing the 'real' Lu Xun."[23]

Wild Grass was written during the time when Lu Xun started his romantic association and established his love relationship with his student and later common-law wife Xu Guangping (许广平, 1898-1968). This affair significantly influenced Lu Xun's life and writing. For a long time, Lu Xun's sorrowful, old-style, arranged marriage with his wife Zhu An (朱安, 1879-1947) and later his cohabitation with Xu Guangping were intentionally or unintentionally ignored by many mainland China scholars.[24] They hoped not to "tarnish" the image of Lu Xun, who was once defined by Mao Zedong (毛泽东, 1893-1976) as "an unprecedented national hero on the cultural front, who is the most correct, the bravest, the firmest, the most loyal, and most zealous hero."[25] William Lyell first points out that the change in Lu Xun's private life, or to put it concretely, his romantic involvement, love, and

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[22]Jon Eugene von Kowallis, *The Lyrical Lu Xun — A Study of His Classical-Style Verse* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996, p. 5.

[23]Jon Kowallis, *The Lyrical Lu Xun*, p. ix.

[24]Many scholars view Xu Guangping as Lu Xun's legitimate wife, calling her *Lu Xun furen* 鲁迅夫人 (Lu Xun's wife). A few serious scholars cautiously use a vague term to call her *Jingsong furen* 景宋夫人 (Madam Jingsong, Jingsong is a pen name of Xu Guangping). In Lu Xun museums in both Shaoxing and Beijing, Zhu An's bedroom is still closed as a forbidden area to visitors. See Wang Runhua 王润华, *Chongxin renshi Lu Xun* 重新认识鲁迅 (Re-understand Lu Xun), in *Ershiyi shiji* 二十一世纪 (The 21st century), no. 12, 1992, p. 109.

[25]See *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Bombay: People's Publish House, 1954, vol. 3, p 144.

personal warmth of the cohabitation with Xu Guangping greatly influenced his writing career.[26] This affair certainly left a mark on *Wild Grass*. Leo Ou-fan Lee argues: "I always consider that *Wild Grass* is a symbolic incorporation of Lu Xun's inner conflict and turmoil — according to Kuriyagawa Hakuson's definition. It represents a surrealistic dream and has little relationship with outer social and political reality."[27] The so called Kuriyagawa's definition refers to the Japanese literary theorist Kuriyagawa's viewpoint about the genesis of literature, that is, an author's inner turmoil, resulting from suppressed anguish, becomes the root of all artistic creativity.[28]

Based on the above suggestions, in Chapter Four I shall treat *Wild Grass* primarily as a confession of the private feelings of Lu Xun, who, consciously or unconsciously, revealed his emotional and moral state of mind in the prose poems. I shall attempt to pay particular attention to the texts which contain Lu Xun's private allusions and richly suggest his profound emotional dilemma between love and moral responsibility at the critical juncture when he contemplated deserting his wife Zhu An and accepting Xu Guangping as his lover. This interpretation is a new attempt, for few scholars have explored the theme of personal emotion and morality in *Wild Grass* poems before. In the process of my interpretation, both what the textual object offers the reader to interpret and what the reading contributes to the interpretation are equally emphasized.

The multi-level interpretation does not necessarily interpret each *Wild Grass* piece on only one particular level. On the contrary, the same poem may be examined successively on different levels to reveal its different themes from different perspectives. This approach differs

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[26]William Lyell, Jr., *Lu Hsün's Vision of Reality*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1976, p. 310.
[27]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Tiewuzhong de nahan* 铁屋中的呐喊 (Voices from the Iron House), 1995, p. 295.
[28]Kuriyagawa Hakuson 厨川白村, *Kumon no shocho* 苦闷の象徴 (Symbols of mental anguish), Lu Xun's translation is in *LXQJ*, 1973, vol. 13, p. 18.

from what has often been used by many mainland China scholars to classify each and every piece of the twenty-three prose poems into different discreet thematic categories.[29]

The second way I shall discuss the poems is a comprehensive interpretation, that is, to treat the poems on different levels as different coherent series. Each poem in a series is supposed to express a relevant theme, to present mutually-related characters, and, sometimes, to achieve a similar artistic effect. Lu Xun himself once stated that his miscellaneous essays are essentially a comprehensive entirety:

> What each of my miscellaneous essays presents is often one nose, or one mouth, or one piece of hair. To combine them, they become almost the entirety of a certain image. . . . I also write postscripts. . . . They become a complete visualization.[30]

Although Lu Xun's statement concerns his miscellaneous essays, it is also applicable to the poems in *Wild Grass*. Evidence shows that Lu Xun himself treated *Wild Grass* collection as an integrated entirety. Each poem in the collection was originally published under an ordinal number such as "The first piece of *Wild Grass*" or "The twenty-third piece of *Wild Grass*." In view of this we know that Lu Xun had already formed a general idea about the themes and aesthetic characteristics of *Wild Grass* before he initiated the project.

Therefore I shall try to pay special attention to the thematic relationship of the poems. Chief images will be classified and analyzed as diverse chains. The achievement of this comprehensive interpretation will be displayed in the three summaries to the three main chapters and in the conclusion of the dissertation.

In this comprehensive methodology, I shall also apply in my analysis all possible strategies such as close reading, rhetorical analysis, and some standard psychoanalytic insights. I shall refer to Lu Xun's biography, his other works, and any related external materials that can

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[29]For example, as Xue Wei 雪苇, Feng Xuefeng 冯雪峰, and Sun Yushi 孙玉石 did.

[30]Lu Xun, "Zhun fengyue tan houji" 准风月谈后记 (Postscript to *Quasi-Romances*), *LXQJ*, vol. 5, p. 382.

be applied as evidence to explore a variety of aspects of these poems from form to content to support my distinctive arguments.

My goal is to produce some novel results that previous studies have not been able to achieve.

Chapter One. A Brief Survey of *Wild Grass* Studies

I shall start my dissertation with a general survey of *Wild Grass* studies in the past seventy years. This survey will help us to obtain a general concept about the past and current situation of *Wild Grass* studies and understand better the advances that this dissertation attempts to achieve. In this survey I found that *Wild Grass* studies in mainland China displayed different characteristics from those overseas, therefore I introduce them separately as follows:

Wild Grass studies in mainland China

According to the different developments in different historical eras, this survey will discuss *Wild Grass* studies in mainland China in terms of three stages: the period from the 1920s to the 1940s, from the 1950s to the 1980s, and the 1990s.

The period from the 1920s to the 1940s is the first stage in *Wild Grass* studies. One of the earliest comments, which is still somewhat influential in critical circles today, is Gao Changhong's (高长虹) opinion. In 1926, Gao said: "When I read 'Autumn Night' (*Qiuye*, 秋夜), the first piece of *Wild Grass* in *Yusi* issue three, I felt surprised and it made me wonder. What surprised me was that Lu Xun never produced this kind of writing before. What made me wonder was this history penetrating his mind."[1] Although Gao Changhong's comment focused on only "Autumn Night," he was the first to speak out that *Wild Grass* is different from Lu Xun's other writings and it reflects Lu Xun's deep inner mind. Gao Changhong's argument of a "history penetrating his mind" may be correct in my understanding, but it has been criticized time and again for more than half a century.[2] With a careful scrutiny I found two reasons that could account for this. The first reason is that Gao

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[1]Gao, Changhong 高长虹, "Zoudao chubanjie" 走到出版界 (Walk to the circle of publication), in *Kuangbiao* 狂飙 (Hurricane), no.5, November 11, 1926.

[2]One example is Sun Yushi 孙玉石. See his *Yecao yanjiu* 野草研究 (*Wild Grass* study), 1982, p. 279.

Changhong's comment contains his personal resentment and arrogant attitude towards Lu Xun. Lu Xun himself, and many scholars as well, didn't like it. In a private letter Lu Xun once criticized Gao Changhong and his comment, saying that "he pretends to be my intimate friend and comments on the bone by licking the skin."[3] The second reason perhaps lies in that mainland China scholars tend to view *Wild Grass* as a work protesting against the outer world rather than a work "penetrating his own mind" in order to underline Lu Xun's "fighting spirit." It was not until the beginning of the 1990s that a few scholars started to accept Gao Changhong's argument as somewhat reasonable in so far that *Wild Grass* is a work that both criticizes the outer world and penetrates his own inner mind.[4]

Gao Changhong's comment is actually not a formal literary critique of *Wild Grass*, but something like a reading impression. Formal commentary on *Wild Grass* appeared in 1928 when Lu Xun became involved in the discussion of "revolutionary literature" (*geming wenxue*, 革命文学). In the discussion, a group of leftist writers who were centered around The Creation Society (*Chuangzao she*, 创造社) and The Sun Society (*Taiyang she*, 太阳社) launched an attack on Lu Xun in their series of polemical essays alleging Lu Xun's thought to have lagged behind "the revolutionary era" and classifying him as "a non-revolutionary writer."[5] *Wild Grass* became one of their major targets of criticism. Qian Xingcun's "The Era of Ah Q That Has Died" (*Siqule de Ah Q shidai*, 死去了的阿Q时代) is an example of this sort of criticism. After he quoted some paragraphs from a number of *Wild Grass* poems, Qian concluded:

> The life that Lu Xun observed is only like this. Therefore no sooner is the book *Wild Grass* unfolded, than you feel oppressed by its cold atmosphere, just like stepping on a dark and scary ancient road. If what is described is not anguished human life, it is gray

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[3]Lu Xun, "Haishang tongxin" 海上通信 (A letter from the sea), in *LXQJ*, 1981, vol. 3. p.398.
[4]Wang Yao 王瑶 and Li Helin 李何林, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue ji Yecao Gushi Xinbian de zhengming* 中国现代文学及野草故事新编的争鸣 (Modern Chinese literature and the debates on *Wild Grass* and *Old Tales Retold*), Shanghai: Zhishi chubanshe, 1990.
[5]About the discussion, see Tsi-an Hsia, *The Gate of Darkness*, 1968, Chap. 3.

> and dim destiny; if it is not cruel slaughter, it is hostility towards society; if it is not the death of hope, it is the destruction of human life; if it is not the killing of spirit, it is the worship of dreams; if it is not to curse human beings to death, it is to explain the demonization and beastlization of human being. . . . All of these are to lead the young people towards the road of destruction and to excavate numerous graves for the youth who are following him.[6]

Obviously, Qian's criticism of *Wild Grass* was not sincerely grounded on a scholarly foundation. He simply enumerated the unusual subject matter, gloomy atmosphere, and nightmarish images in some *Wild Grass* poems as evidence to illustrate the so-called backwardness of Lu Xun's thought without exploring the real significance of these symbolic poems. According to the leftist theorists, revolutionary literature should manifest the essential tendencies and determinants of the epoch and should be full of positive, optimistic, and progressive spirit. Any passive elements such as pessimism and disappointment are intolerable in revolutionary literature. This is the fundament of their criticism of *Wild Grass*. Qian Xingcun's radical criticism has proven incorrect today. However, his opinion at least threw some light on the fact that the motifs presented in *Wild Grass*, such as darkness, void, despair, death, meaninglessness, and the gloomy mood throughout the whole book, established a particularly distinctive attribute that was rarely seen in the new literature during the May Fourth era. Therefore, since the very beginning of *Wild Grass* studies, how to analyze and evaluate its themes and aesthetic effects has become a crucial issue.

With the change within the Communist leadership in its literature and art policy, the attack on Lu Xun staged by Shanghai-based leftist writers ceased in the second half of 1929. In March 1930, the League of Left-Wing Writers of China (*Zhongguo zuoyi zuojia lianmeng*, 中国左翼作家联盟) was established and Lu Xun, owing to his nationwide reputation, was

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[6]Qian Xingcun, "Siqule de Ah Q shidai" 死去的阿Q时代 (The era of Ah Q that has died), in *Taiyang yuekan* 太阳月刊 (The sun monthly), 1928, no. 3.

pushed to the position of its leadership.[7] In the 1930s China entered the era of resisting Japanese invasion outside and demanding democracy and human rights from the Guomindang Nanjing Government inside. Under these circumstances, the 1930s and 1940s witnessed a hesitation and stagnancy in *Wild Grass* studies. The reason for this is perhaps related to Lu Xun's own understatement of *Wild Grass* and the historical context of that period. Many critics and scholars kept a cautious silence towards *Wild Grass*. In 1935, in order to record the achievements of the new literature in its first decade from 1918 to 1927, *The Grand Series of Chinese New Literature* (*Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi*, 中国新文学大系), a sizable collection of Chinese new literature with ten volumes in total, was published. Volume six and volume seven are prose. More than two hundred pieces of outstanding prose produced during these ten years were selected and reprinted in these two volumes. Yu Dafu (郁达夫, 1896-1945) took charge of the editing of Lu Xun's prose. He selected twenty five pieces of Lu Xun's prose, among them six from *Wild Grass*. In the preface to volume seven, he gave a general comment on Lu Xun's prose writing, claiming that his achievement in prose, together with Zhou Zuoren's, "is the most colorful and greatest."[8] But he did not refer to any poems from *Wild Grass*. Some literary historical books published in the early 1930s also left *Wild Grass* untreated, while their authors usually complimented Lu Xun as "the greatest fiction writer."[9]

The critic who first attached a high value to *Wild Grass* was Li Subo. In his book *A Study of Small Essays* (*Xiaopinwen yanjiu*, 小品文研究), which was published in 1932, Li Subo analyzed a number of *Wild Grass* poems and gave a general acclamation:

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[7]New study indicates that the top leading group of the Communists tried to make use of Lu Xun's reputation to establish a unified literary front in the 1930s. See Li Hui 李辉, "Ningwang Xuefeng" 凝望雪峰 (Look at Xuefeng with reverence), in *Xinhua wenzhai* 新华文摘 (Xinhua abstracts of essays), 1995, vol. 11, pp. 130-1.

[8]*Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi* 中国新文学大系 (The great series of Chinese new literature), Zhao Jiabi 赵家璧, ed., Hong Kong: Wenxue yanjiushe, 1935, vol. 7, p. 15.

[9]One example is found in Wang Zhefu's 王哲甫 *Zhongguo xin wenxue yundong shi* 中国新文学运动史 (A history of Chinese new literature movement), Beijing: Jiecheng yinshuju, 1933, pp. 296-298.

> What needs to be mentioned seriously is the author's precious and rare gift, the collection of extremely poetic small essays — *Wild Grass*. It is a wonderful blossom in the bleak garden of China's literature and art. Just as what is drawn on the front cover of this little book, between the gray, dark sky and ground, there are a few stems of grass, green, pleasing to the eye, and quite lovely. . . . We only perceive its beauty, but cannot say why it is beautiful. . . . From it wise readers can obtain real and unusual strength.[10]

Prior to Lu Xun himself calling *Wild Grass* prose poetry, Li Subo defined it as poetic prose (*shi de sanwen*, 诗的散文).[11] This term, like prose poetry, also reveals the aesthetic essence of *Wild Grass*. Li Subo first associated *Wild Grass* with Charles Baudelaire's *Flowers of Evil* (*Les Fleurs du mal*) and made a brief comparison between them. The statement that "We only perceive its beauty, but cannot say why it is beautiful," is perhaps, to some degree, a common perception of *Wild Grass* critics in the early 1930s. At that stage, the now widely shared and lasting intellectual and aesthetic values of *Wild Grass* had not been fully realized.

Generally speaking, the responses to *Wild Grass* directly evoked from the critics in the 1930s were inadequate. In the 1940s several critical articles specifically on *Wild Grass* appeared. Among them Xue Wei's "On *Wild Grass*" (*Lun Yecao*, 论野草) was perhaps the most important one. Both his critical method and opinion should be noted. He divided the poems into two categories. The first category, beginning with "The Passerby" (*Guoke*, 过客), mainly "anatomizes the author himself" by displaying the dark side of his own mind; while the second category, beginning with "Autumn Night," mainly calls for "a direct attack against the darkness" of contemporary society.[12] By making a comparison between *Wild Grass* and Lu Xun's social commentary essays written during the same period, he also pointed out that Lu Xun's essays mainly protest the outer environment, while *Wild Grass* is mainly "a book

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[10]Li Subo 李素伯, *Xiaopinwen yanjiu* 小品文研究 (A study of short essay), Xin Zhongguo shuju, 1932, pp. 112-3.

[11]Ibid., p. 89.

[12]Xue Wei 雪苇, "Lun Yecao" 论野草 (On *Wild Grass*), in *Lu Xun sanlun* 鲁迅散论 (Miscellaneous comment on Lu Xun), Shanghai: Xinwenyi chubanshe,1953, pp. 71-2.

that describes the dark corner of his own mind at that time."[13] Both Xue Wei's method and his conclusion were widely adopted in later *Wild Grass* studies for several decades. Following Xue Wei's model, many later students classified *Wild Grass* poems into different thematic categories. Some emphasized more Lu Xun's spirit of struggle against social injustice; some emphasized more his inner conflict; others attempted to strike a balance between the two.

The period from the 1950s to the 1980s is the second stage in *Wild Grass* studies. It is a slowly evolving stage. In 1954, Wei Junxiu's *Exploration of Lu Xun's Wild Grass* (*Lu Xun yecao tansuo*, 鲁迅野草探索) was published. It is the first specialized book on *Wild Grass*. The author analyzed all the twenty-three prose poems. Abundant relevant materials from Lu Xun's other writings and from memoirs concerning Lu Xun's life were recommended in his exploration of the significance of each poem. The book becomes a helpful reference for later studies of *Wild Grass*.

However, the tendency to sanctify Lu Xun and to overstate the significance of social criticism in *Wild Grass* began to emerge in the 1950s. The preface to Wei Junxiu's book was written by Zhang Yu who, after quoting Mao Zedong's description of Lu Xun as "not only a great writer, but also a great thinker and a great revolutionary," declares:

> The period when *Wild Grass* was written was a high point in Lu Xun's whole career. . . . At that time, Lu Xun had shifted from general criticism of certain thoughts or phenomena to vigorous and consistent attack against the reactionary ruling class *more directly*, and shifted from ideological criticism through literature to a desperate fight by means of *face-to-face and even bloody violence.* (original emphases)[14]

He defines Lu Xun as a staunch social revolutionary. In his opinion, no matter what kind of material *Wild Grass* employs, it is never a "pessimistic work," but "a revolutionary's

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[13]Ibid., p.70.

[14]Zhang Yu 张禹, "Yecao zhaji, daixu" 野草札记, 代序 (Reading notes of *Wild Grass*, in lieu of a preface), in Wei Junxiu 卫俊秀, *Lu Xun yecao tansuo*, 鲁迅野草探索 (*Exploration of Lu Xun's Wild Grass*), 1953, pp. 4-5.

lyrical poetry of struggle."[15] Here Zhang Yu first mingled literary discourse with ideological discourse and then identified social critique with practical social struggle. Zhang Yu's argument actually diverged from the academic attitude and became a clumsy footnote to Mao Zedong's politically-oriented appraisal of Lu Xun.

In 1956, the twentieth anniversary of Lu Xun's death, Feng Xuefeng (冯雪峰), Lu Xun's student and disciple, published his book *On Wild Grass* (*Lun Yecao*, 论野草). Following Xue Wei's strategy, Feng divided the twenty-three *Wild Grass* poems into three categories: The first category includes "Autumn Night" and six others, which are "poetic," "healthy, positive, and combative," though they also contain some "pessimistic elements." Five in the second category are "sharp satirical poems."[16] The third category, including the remaining eleven pieces, Feng said, "obviously reflects the author's mood of emptiness and disappointment, and the deep contradiction in his thought."[17] When Feng Xuefeng located the "healthy, positive, and combative" feature in some pieces, he also correctly pointed out the depressed mood in others. But his opinion became a target of criticism after 1957, when he was condemned as a "rightist" (*youpai fenzi*, 右派分子), a political charge against "dissidents." Since then Chinese scholars tended to schematize the collection and explain away its predominantly depressing mood.

For example, in the later 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, Xu Qinwen (许钦文), another student and disciple of Lu Xun, wrote several articles denying any "pessimism and skepticism" in *Wild Grass*. He maintained that "the fighting spirit in *Wild Grass*, needless to say, is ardent."[18] Xu Qinwen even argued that *Wild Grass* was not written during the same time as *Wandering* (*Panghuang*, 彷徨), Lu Xun's second story collection, but later — in spite

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[15]Ibid., p.7.

[16]Feng's judgment is not accurate. Strictly speaking there is no standard piece of satire in *Wild Grass*. I will provide my argument about this in the conclusion.

[17]Feng Xuefeng 冯雪峰, *Lun Yecao* 论野草 (On *Wild Grass*), 1956, p.15.

[18]Xu Qinwen 许钦文, "Yecao chutan" 野草初探 (A tentative exploration of *Wild Grass*) in *Wenyi Bao* 文艺报 (Literary Gazette), 1959, no. 24. pp. 32-33.

of the general agreement among scholars as to the simultaneity of their writing. In this way he attempted to illustrate that Lu Xun's "fighting spirit" contained in *Wild Grass* is stronger than that in *Wandering*. Without analyzing themes and effects of *Wild Grass* by referring to its subject matter, techniques, style, and tonality, Xu Qinwen mechanically adhered to the Maoist literary theory and made every effort to deduce that *Wild Grass* is a revolutionary and optimistic work full of eternal fighting spirit, since it is a product of the social and ideological determinants specific to the warlord era by "a great revolutionary" Lu Xun. Thus his argument provided an extreme version of political interpretation, bearing obvious marks of the Maoist era.

During the long period of two decades from 1957 when Mao Zedong launched the Campaign against Right-Opportunism (*Fandui youqing jihuizhuyi*, 反对右倾机会 主义) to his death in 1976 when the Great Cultural Revolution (*Wenhua da geming*, 文化 大革命, 1966-76) was brought to an end, China was under severe Maoist ideological control. There was no tolerance of dissension in the academia. China lacked the free atmosphere necessary for all intellectual studies. Academic studies of *Wild Grass* became impossible at the time. During this period few were willing to engage in the troublesome *Wild Grass* studies. Except for some papers, only one book, Li Helin's *Annotation and Explanation of Lu Xun's Wild Grass* (*Lu Xun yecao zhujie*, 鲁迅野草注解), appeared in 1973. There was actually no significant progress on the study of *Wild Grass* at that time.

After the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, *Wild Grass* studies entered a flourishing stage in the 1980s. Five specific books, a collection of academic essays, and a great number of articles were published.[19] Sun Yushi's *Wild Grass Study* (*Yecao yanjiu*, 野草研究) can be

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[19]These books are Min Kangsheng's 闵抗生 *Diyu bianyan de xiaohua* 地狱边沿的小花 (Small flowers at the rim of hell.), Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1981; Xu Jie's 许杰 *Yecao quanshi* 野草诠释 (Annotation and interpretation of *Wild Grass*), Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 1981; Shi Shangwen 石尚文 and Deng Zhongqiang's 邓忠强 *Yecao qianxi* 野草浅析 (A simple explanation of *Wild Grass*), Changjiang wenyi chubanshe, 1982; Sun Yushi's 孙玉石 *Yecao yanjiu* 野草研究 (*Wild Grass* study), Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1982; *Yecao yanjiu lunwenji* 野草研究论文集 (A collection of *Wild Grass* study essays), edited by

viewed as a representative work in this period. It is comprehensive with treatment on the content, form, artistic genesis of *Wild Grass*, and an informative summary of *Wild Grass* studies from the 1920s to the 1970s. However, a general examination of *Wild Grass* studies in the 1980s will show there were no significant breakthroughs, especially in the thematic study of *Wild Grass*. The prevalent methodology of many critics at that time was still the Maoist theory of reflection used by Xue Wei in the 1940s. Frequently asserted were still "the fighting spirit," "social reproach" of *Wild Grass*, and Lu Xun's "self-anatomy."[20] Lacking alternative critical approaches and viewpoints, *Wild Grass* studies seem to have entered an impasse during this period — many scholars were repeating what others had said.

The 1990s can be considered the third stage. During this period, the academic atmosphere in China gradually becomes free. In *Wild Grass* studies, a number of new students appear. They try to explore *Wild Grass* from many new perspectives with alternative methods. As a result, plenty of academic papers have been published. Many of them provide new insights to varying degree on its whimsical subject matter, expressive mode, visionary effect, elegant rhetoric, and so on.

New interpretations of the themes of *Wild Grass* and the author's intention are frequently put forward. For example Jing Hui's 1992 reading of "The Passerby" (*Guoke*, 过客) offers a brilliant insight. He argues that the passerby, the little girl, and the old man in the poem represent Lu Xun's three distinct egos, and symbolize the emotional and intellectual fluctuation of his inner mind. Each of the egos acts as a judge to interrogate the other two.[21]

Another essay which analyzes four poems of *Wild Grass* and views them as "a special series" is also important and novel in its argument. Although the author does not specify

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the Association of Lu Xun study of Jiangsu province, published inside the association, 1984; Wang Jipeng 王吉鹏, *Yecao lungao* 野草论稿 (A treatise of *Wild Grass*), Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1986.

[20]Sun Yushi 孙玉石, 1982, p. 1.

[21]Jing Hui 靖辉, "Linghun de zixing: cong wenbei de xiangzheng yiyi xi 'Guoke'" 灵魂 的自省: 从文本的象征意义析过客 (The self-examination of the soul: to explain "The Passerby" from the symbolic meaning of the text), *Lu Xun yanjiu* 鲁迅研究 (Lu Xun studies), 1992, no. 4, pp. 30-2.

explicitly what kind of series they are, his argument that these poems are related to Lu Xun's experience of love is still clear. He declares that "The Good Story" (*Hao de gushi*, 好的故事) can be read as "feelings of longing for a beautiful and harmonious life of love," and "The Passerby" (*Guoke*, 过客), "Dead Fire" (*Sihuo*, 死火) , and "Dry Leaf" (*Laye*, 蜡叶) characterize the different stages of love that Lu Xun underwent from initiation to maturity.[22] This is a totally new vision that has not been attempted before, but it has received little attention from scholarly circles. Even though the essay has been neglected, it is among the few essays that I have found to echo some of the arguments that I shall provide in Chapter Four.

With the prosperity of *Wild Grass* studies in the 1990s, even some senior scholars have started to revise their previous viewpoints by "re-interpreting" *Wild Grass*.[23] Many of the papers that appeared in the 1990s focus on a single poem or a few pieces, or examine *Wild Grass* from a particular angle or in a particular aspect. Ambitious and comprehensive studies are rare, and no new book on *Wild Grass* is published at this time.

Wild Grass studies outside China

Since the 1950s *Wild Grass* has become an international topic. As early as 1955 William Schultz wrote in his Ph. D. dissertation, entitled "Lu Hsün, the Creative Years," a concise but insightful comment upon Lu Xun's prose poetry:

> *Yeh-ts'ao* (*Wild Grass*) is an altogether different matter. These half-poetic, half-critical comments on diverse events observed in Peking between 1924 and 1926 are unusual among the works of an imaginative character. None of the habitual genres are employed, and they are a thing apart as to form, mood, manner of expression, and overall artistic effect. A distinctive spirit of critical reproach identifies them as coming

[22]Youyang 又央, "Yecao: yige teshu de xulie" 野草: 一个特殊的序列 (Wild Grass: a special series), *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan* 鲁迅研究月刊 (Lu Xun study monthly), 1993, no. 5, pp. 21-4.

[23]Sun Yushi 孙玉石 , for example, published a series of "Yecao chongshi" 野草重释(Re-explanation of *Wild Grass*) in the magazine *Lu Xun yanjiu* 鲁迅研究 (Lu Xun studies) in 1996. But it is a pity that the "re-explanation" has not given many new insights.

> from Lu Hsün's hand, but, when contrasted with the short stories, there is seen to be a stark, even a barren mood not a peculiar feature of his works of fiction, although suggested perhaps in the poetic story *Yao*. Lightly sketched impressionistic word pictures, they derive from a spirit suspended halfway between hope and despair.
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> Freer here under a symbolic imagery and a poetic style, the author was able to speak out with greater force and clarity. Almost every selection grew out of a positive, pragmatic belief, but the mood under which they were written was tinged with hesitancy, indecision and despair. Even the few which employ a comic situation cannot escape a hollow, bitter ring; and not one disappoints the reader who has learned to expect the sardonic laugh or the censorious jab. Combining a practiced skill in incisive criticism with a decided genius for precise, pointed expression, this collection, when taken as a unit, reveals an excellent blending of his greatest gifts.[24]

In order to demonstrate the variety of subject matter and artistic characteristics of the collection, Schultz translated nine prose poems from *Wild Grass* and included them in his dissertation.[25] Both his comments and translations are among the earliest in the English language. He calls *Wild Grass* "an altogether different matter," and notes Lu Xun's inauguration in it of an unprecedented genre, subject, style, and artistic effect. His opinion is revealing even today.

In 1956 a Chinese magazine printed an article "Lu Xun and his *Wild Grass*" (*Lu Xun he tade yecao*, 鲁迅和他的野草) by a Czechoslovakian scholar, who, by comparing the evocative description in Lu Xun's first story collection *Call to Arms* (*Nahan*, 呐喊) and the radical attitude in his social commentary essays with the indecisive feelings in *Wild Grass*, argues that *Wild Grass* is mainly a work expressing Lu Xun's inner psyche.[26] This opinion seems to be an expansion of Gao Changhong's view, so it was later refuted by Xu Qinwen.[27]

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[24]William Schultz, "Lu Hsün, The Creative Years," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, U. of Washington, 1955. pp. 293-4.

[25]They are "Inscription," "Autumn Night," "Ying de gaobie" 影的告别 (The shadow's Leave-Taking). "The Beggars," "Gou de bojie" 狗的驳诘 (The dog's retort), "My Lost Love," "Hope," and "The Passerby."

[26]Berta Krebsova, "Lu Xun he tade Yecao" 鲁迅和他的野草 (Lu Xun and his *Wild Grass*), in *Wenyi bao* 文艺报 (Literary Gazette), special supplement to 1956 vol. 20, p.33.

[27]Xu Qinwen 许钦文, "Yecao chutan" 野草初探 (A tentative exploration of *Wild Grass*), In *Wenyi bao* 文艺报 (Literary Gazette), no. 24, 1959.

Another early commentary on *Wild Grass* in the English language is found in Tsi-an Hsia's book *The Gate of Darkness*, in which one chapter was focused on the dark side of Lu Xun's thought and art. Tsi-an Hsia examines the social and cultural genesis of Lu Xun's "darkness" and uses *Wild Grass* as evidence to show the influence of the Chinese traditional culture on Lu Xun. He lauds *Wild Grass* as "genuine poetry" with "unique interest" and "strong emotional intensity."[28] He highly appreciates the novel language of *Wild Grass*, pointing out that "he let *pai-hua* do things that it had never done before — things not even the best classical writers had ever thought of doing in *wen-yen*." In this sense, he says, "Lu Hsün was a truly modern writer."[29] Most importantly Tsi-an Hsia observes the non-realistic characteristic in *Wild Grass*. He cautions:

> Those who admire Lu Hsün as a great realist should be reminded of the dimensions of his realism. He began several pieces in *The Wild Grass* with the statement "I had a dream . . ." and those dreams have such a bizarre beauty and delirious terror that they are really nightmares. Even pieces not marked out as dreams have that nightmarish quality of inconsequence and the shock of misplaced reality. In *The Wild Grass*, therefore, Lu Hsün glanced into the unconscious.[30]

Although Tsi-an Hsia's book is not specifically on *Wild Grass*, his view is of great significance for the later *Wild Grass* studies in the English-speaking world. His psychoanalytic insight that "Lu Xun glanced into the unconscious" inspired, and was iterated by, later scholars such as Leo Ou-fan Lee and Lin Yü-sheng. This insight asserts a privileged access to the intimate mental and physical experiences of Lu Xun's own life.

In 1972, Charles J. Alber presented a paper on *Wild Grass* at a panel discussion on Lu Xun at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in New York. Its final draft was published in 1976. This is an important and timely paper, the purpose of which,

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[28]Tsi-an Hsia, *The Gate of Darkness*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1968, p. 150.
[29]Ibid., p.151.
[30]Ibid., p. 152.

according to Alber, was "to arouse interest in Lu Hsün's prose poems."[31] In the paper, he expressed his dissatisfaction with *Wild Grass* studies in mainland China:

> Many critics have looked back on the collection with a certain distaste, a certain sense of displeasure. Many find in the poems thoughts and emotions which are paradoxical, contradictory, and above all, depressing. Nor have contemporary critics, for that matter, altered past judgments.[32]

Alber was also disappointed to find that *Selected Works of Lu Xun*, translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang and published in 1956, did not include *Wild Grass* poems "Inscription," "Revenge," and "Tombstone Inscriptions," the last two of which, in Alber's opinion, are among "the most grotesque" and "the most important" pieces.[33] In order to remedy this defect, he himself translated these two poems and printed them, together with the Yangs' translation of "The Beggars" and William Schultz's translation of "Inscription," as an appendix to his paper.

As for the studies of *Wild Grass* outside China, Alber points out that the first English language book devoted to Lu Xun by Huang Sung-k'ang avoids any discussion of his prose poetry. In the then Soviet Union, critics almost totally ignored *Wild Grass*, although a complete translation of the collection did appear in 1971.

Even though Alber's paper deals mainly with symmetry and parallelism, a leading structural characteristic of *Wild Grass*, he also provides his distinctive idea concerning the theme of these prose poems. He says:

> The cosmos which Lu Hsün creates for *Wild Grass* is, admittedly, rather oversimplified and romantic. Essentially, the world is a battleground of two opposing forces, the forces of good and the forces of evil. On the one side there is creation, on the other destruction. Light struggles against darkness, love against hate, hope against

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[31]Charles, J. Alber, "*Wild Grass*, Symmetry and Parallelism in Lu Hsün's Prose Poems," in *Critical Essays on Chinese Literature*, William H. Nienhauser, Jr. ed., The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1976, p.1.
[32]Ibid., p.2.
[33]Charles, J. Alber, p.3, William Schultz's translation also does not include these two poems.

> despair. The poet is trapped, as it were, between the two forces, in a no-man's-land — somewhere "between dark and light, life and death, past and future." He is caught between action and inaction, in a semi-conscious state of emotional and psychological paralysis.[34]

Without making any reference to others' opinions, Alber's idea is novel and distinctive. Emphasizing Lu Xun's psychological impasse from the emotional and moral perspective, Alber defines the conflict in "Beggars" (*Qiuqizhe*, 求乞者) between the narrator "I" and the beggars as an "emotional conflict" and "Revenge " as a "quasi-morality play."[35] Although some of Alber's arguments seem not to be absolutely accurate, his distinctive interpretation is based on the text of the poems and his own understanding, and can serve as a paradigm of originality in the 1970s.

Since the 1950s some Japanese scholars have successively published their studies of *Wild Grass*. There also appeared two complete Japanese translations, by Takeuchi Yoshimi (竹内好) and Iikura Shohei (飯倉照平).[36] The Japanese scholars' views are to some extent based on the Chinese scholars' opinions. In 1991 *A Complete Explanation of Lu Xun's Wild Grass*, (*Rojin yaso zenyaku*, 魯迅野草全释), a specialized book in Japanese, was published. It provides not only the third complete Japanese translation of *Wild Grass*, but also a complete interpretation. Although many of its interpretations follow Li Helin's and Sun Yushi's studies, the book does offer a few new viewpoints that are worthy of note. The author pays appropriate attention to the relationship between the motivation of the composition of *Wild Grass* and certain important events in Lu Xun's personal life, such as Lu Xun's estrangement from his younger brother Zhou Zuoren (周作人) and his romantic involvement with his student Xu Guangping.[37]

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[34]Charles, J. Alber, p. 3.
[35]Ibid., p. 5 and p. 8.
[36]See Katayama Tomoyuki 片山智行, *Rojin yaso zenyaku* 魯迅野草全释 (A complete explanation of Lu Xun's Wild Grass), 1991, p. 278.
[37]Ibid., pp. 253-6.

In his *Voices from the Iron House*, Leo Ou-fan Lee contributes a whole chapter to the discussion of *Wild Grass*. Lee's principle viewpoint on the theme of *Wild Grass*, as shown in the title of the chapter "The Impasse between Hope and Despair." was actually formed in his previous paper entitled "The Tragic Visions of Lu Hsün: Hope and Despair in *Wild Grass*," which was presented at a panel discussion on Lu Xun in 1974. Regarding *Wild Grass* as "literary crystallizations of his dark moods and tortured feelings which comprise a surrealistic world of the subconscious,"[38] Lee declares that the poems in the *Wild Grass* collection "bring out not merely his dissatisfaction with the social environment but also, more importantly, certain configurations of his inner tensions which certainly go beyond the realistic confines of politics and political ideology."[39] In his convincing analysis of a number of *Wild Grass* poems, he consistently traces the intellectual and psychological predicament in Lu Xun's deep mind, and locates some private morbid feelings such as anguish, self-doubt, pessimism, and nihilism in the poetry, which had been, to different degrees, intentionally or unintentionally ignored by many Chinese scholars around the time Lee's book was published in 1987. Lee's book has profoundly affected the study of *Wild Grass* in the 1990s, and has provided a solid foundation to further and comprehensive *Wild Grass* studies.

Based on previous achievements of *Wild Grass* studies both in China and outside China, I shall explore the different themes of *Wild Grass* from various perspectives and hope my study will produce some new results.

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[38]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987, p. 89.
[39]Ibid., p.91.

Chapter Two: Social and Political Criticism of a Dark Reality

Wild Grass was written during the period from 1924 to 1926. It was a time when warlords of different factions controlled China. Constant civil wars took place among these warlords, drawing China into a dark era full of political, military, and economic chaos. In 1924 after the defeat of Wu Peifu (吴佩孚, 1873-1939) and the removal of Cao Kun (曹琨, 1862-1938) from the presidency, the victorious Feng Yuxiang (冯玉祥, 1882-1948), Zhang Zuolin (张作霖, 1875-1928), and other powerful military chiefs in the lower Yangtze provinces, reached a compromise to inaugurate Duan Qirui (段祺瑞, 1865-1936) as the Provisional Chief Executive (*Linshi zong zhizheng*, 临时总执政) of the Beijing government. As a senior member of the Beiyang militarists, Duan Qirui enjoyed considerable prestige, even though he did not command much military strength of his own.

The Duan Qirui reign (1924-1926) proved to be an atrocious dictatorship. His government excluded the formal participation of the Guomindang. On March 18, 1926, his army opened fire on a large crowd of peaceful petitioners, killing forty-seven and wounding one hundred and fifty. After the massacre Lu Xun wrote a series of articles denouncing the cruel slaughter of civilian lives by the Duan Qirui government and called March the18th "the darkest day since the Republic."[1] The last two pieces in *Wild Grass* were written after the massacre. At that time he had taken refuge in a German hospital, because he was said to be on the list of those wanted by the government.[2]

Literary works are always created within a particular social context at a particular moment of history, and it is beneficial to understand literary works by connecting them with

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[1]Lu Xun, "Wuhua de qiangwei II" 无花的蔷薇, 二 (Rose without flowers II), in *Lu Xun Quanji* 鲁迅全集 (Complete works of Lu Xun), Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1987, vol. 3. p. 264. Hereafter *LXQJ*.
[2]Rumors spread via Beijing's newspapers that over fifty people including Lu Xun were ordered arrested. Actually only Li Dazhao and another four were listed as wanted by the government. See Xue Suizhi 薛绥之 and others ed., *Lu Xun shengping shiliao huibian*, 鲁迅生平史料汇编 (A collection of the historical materials of Lu Xun's career), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1983, vol. 3, p. 395.

the social and historical background in which they were produced. The above introduction provides the minimum necessary background for a better understanding of the theme of social and political criticism in *Wild Grass*. Although Lu Xun's criticism of society and politics is mainly incorporated in his miscellaneous essays, it is also evident in *Wild Grass*, especially in such pieces, whose subject matter is somewhat related to the harsh and dissonant reality under warlord rule, as "Amid Pale Bloodstains" (*Dandan de xuehen zhong*, 淡淡的血痕中) and "The Awakening" (*Yijue*, 一觉).

"Autumn Night" (*Qiuye*, 秋夜)[3]

"Autumn Night," the opening piece, has become the most well known prose poem of *Wild Grass* and even of modern Chinese literature in the sense of both its popularity and aesthetic merit. It is often included as an indispensable piece in secondary school and/or college literature courses, and various literary selections.

The poem can be divided into two parts. The first part describes the first person persona's garden under the autumnal dark night. A number of tangible images are depicted in this part to construct the natural scenery of the garden. Among them, two date trees are the most conspicuous:

> As for the date trees, they have lost absolutely all their leaves. Before, one or two boys still came to beat down the dates other people had missed. But now not one date is left, and the trees have lost all their leaves as well . . . They may have lost all their leaves and have only their branches left; but these, no longer weighed down with fruit and foliage, are stretching themselves luxuriously. A few boughs, though, are still drooping, nursing the wounds made in their bark by the sticks which beat down the dates: while, rigid as iron, the straightest and longest boughs silently pierce the strange, high sky . . .[4]

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[3]This poem was written on September 15, 1924 and published in *Yusi* 语丝, vol. 3, December 1, 1924.
[4]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, pp. 162-3. The translation is in *Lu Xun Selected Works*, translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1956, vol. 1, p.317. Hereafter *LXSW*.

Besides the date trees, there are also some wild flowers and wild grass in the garden. Above the garden is the night sky, which, accompanied by the moon and stars, "dusts the wild plants in my courtyard with heavy frost."[5]

The landscape of the garden is not necessarily presented for its own sake but as a visualization of the author's feelings and meditations. The chief natural images in the poem are endowed with anthropomorphic forms, thus the natural scenery is subtly woven with Lu Xun's feelings and emotion. The sky is "strange and high." It seems willing to detach itself from this mortal world, so that people will not be able to see it again. It has scores of eyes, eyes of stars, which are blinking coldly. A smile appears at the corner of the sky's mouth, as though deep in contemplation. When the date trees silently pierce the sky with their iron-like boughs, the sky feels more and more uneasy, as if eager to escape. The date trees, "silent still and as rigid as iron, are resolved to inflict on it a mortal wound, no matter in how many ways it winks all its bewitching eyes."[6] The little pink flowers are having a "dream of spring" under the heavy frost. The date trees also have a dream — in the autumn they will be weighted down with bright foliage and dates again.

A garden of fantasy full of dreams and imaginations is vividly presented in the first part. It is so fantastic that even the I persona himself seems to be lost in it, or more accurately, lost in his own reverie. With a shriek, a fierce bird that is wandering at night passes. The "fierce bird" (*eniao*, 恶鸟) is Lu Xun's private designation that refers to an owl. Its shriek suddenly breaks the silence of the fantastic garden and draws the I persona back to reality. Then, at midnight, he hears a laugh, the only sound in the poem that accompanies the shriek of the owl. Half lingering in fantasy, the I persona realizes that the laughter comes from his own mouth.

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[5]Ibid., p. 163, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 317.
[6]Ibid., p. 163, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 318.

In the second part the I persona returns to his study. With the dreams of the little pink flowers and date trees still haunting his mind, he admiringly watches several tiny green insects flying against the lampshade. Entering the room from the garden through a hole in the window paper, they thrust themselves towards the fire of the lamp.

"Autumn Night" is a deceptively easy piece with ordinary images in a seemingly natural garden. But when the fantastic nature of the garden and the anthropomorphic form of the main images are identified, the allegorical and symbolic attributes of the poem are shown. Its interpretation therefore becomes intricate. In a dark, cold, and inauspicious atmosphere, a silent confrontation is perceptible between two ranges of images: the date trees, the little pink flowers, and the little green insects versus the sky, the moon, and the stars. The confrontation behind the distorted setting reveals an invisible tension in the author's inner mind.

Usually there is a consensus in scholarly circles about the symbolic meaning of the leading images in "Autumn Night." The date trees are a symbol of Lu Xun himself, whose sober and irreconcilable personality is figuratively expressed in the poem. The little pink flowers symbolize China's youth, who, although trivial in strength in contrast with the harsh environment, still cherish a dream-like faith in the future, while the sky, the moon, and the stars are an incorporation of the oppressive reality or, more concretely, the warlord reign.

However, the ambiguity of the allegorical context of the poem generates interpretive variations upon some minor images. For instance, the image of the owl has long been debated. Some scholars classify it into the range of the sky, arguing that it flies to the garden and cries out to assist the evil power represented by the sky, and the I persona laughs to hold its vain endeavor in contempt.[7]

A contrary opinion comes from other scholars. William Schultz, for instance, writes:

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[7]Li Helin 李何林, *Lu Xun yecao zhujie* 鲁迅野草注解 (Annotation and Explanation of Lu Xun's Wild Grass), Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1973, p.29. Sun Yushi 孙玉石 holds a slightly different opinion. He remarks that the owl is flying to escape, and the I persona's laugher is a victorious one, broken for the owl's defeat. See Sun Yushi 孙玉石 *Yecao yanjiu* 野草研究 (*Wild Grass* study), Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1982, p. 22.

> Among others of a positive nature may be mentioned the cry, sounding either like a wounded wolf in the wilderness or a wandering owl, which rings out in *ku-tu-che*, ("The Misanthrope," 孤独者) and *ch'iu-yeh* ("Autumn Night") respectively. It is the voice of protest, a lonely cry amidst depressing silence.[8]

Schultz does not examine the owl image in isolation, but associates it with other relevant images in Lu Xun's fiction. This intertextual association helps to bring out a convincing interpretation. The owl image actually frequently appears in Lu Xun's various writings. A comprehensive observation will make its symbolic meaning more understandable. In traditional Chinese culture, people eye the owl as "a bird of ill-omen" — its emergence or cry heralds disaster.[9] Therefore Lu Xun calls it a "fierce bird" and its cry a "fierce voice" (*esheng*, 恶声). But in his writing he changed its "ill-omen" nature by endowing it with a rebellious meaning. For instance, in 1924, the same year he composed "Autumn Night," Lu Xun was dissatisfied with the inactivity in contemporary Chinese literary circles and hoped for a powerful voice to awake the people and society. He wrote: "Where is the true fierce voice of the monster owl, only one cry of which is able to shock the people?!"[10]

By associating the owl's cry with other symbolic sounds such as the wounded-wolf-like cry of the autobiographical protagonist Wei Lianshu (魏连殳) in Lu Xun's fiction, and by identifying the metaphorical nature of the owl image, Schultz's interpretation that "it is the voice of protest, a lonely cry amidst depressing silence" is quite logical and reasonable.

Controversy also exists over the interpretation of the little green insects. In the poem they are described as pitiful in appearance: "Like sunflower seeds with their large heads and small tails, they are only half the size of a grain of wheat, the whole of them an adorable,

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[8]William Schultz, "Lu Hsün, The Creative Years," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1955, p. 373.

[9]Wolfram Eberhard, *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols — Hidden Symbols in Chinese Life and Thought*, G. L. Campbell, Routledge, and Kegan Paul trans., London and New York, 1986, p. 221.

[10]Lu Xun, "*Yinyue*?" 音乐? (Music?) in *LXQJ*. vol. 7. p. 53.

pathetic green." Although they are small, they boldly dash themselves against the chimney of the lamp. "One hurls itself into the chimney from the top, falling into the flame. Two or three others rest on the paper shade of the lamp, panting."[11]

In the 1950s some scholars considered the little green insects as symbols of ordinary, brave people, who struggle to seek brightness or hope. Although they may fail in their endeavor, they never retreat.[12] In the 1970s, a different interpretation was put forward by other scholars. One argued that the little green insects are too insignificant to symbolize those ordinary, brave people who seek brightness at the expense of their lives, because "their image is ugly rather than beautiful and the author's feelings towards them is not admirable but ironic."[13] Afterwards a more extreme view was imparted, arguing that the little green insects are never images of "heroes" but "egoists." "Only because they fear darkness and coldness of the autumn night, and want to seek safety, do they struggle to squeeze into the house."[14]

This sort of argument was derived from the literary criterion prevailing in the Maoist era, according to which a literary "hero" should be a completely virtuous image from its appearance to its motive for action. Otherwise it is not. The scholars who hold this viewpoint ignored that *Wild Grass* was not created in the so called "revolutionary realistic mode" that was harshly advocated by the authorities in the Maoist era.

Leo Ou-fan Lee provides a different viewpoint. He regards the little green insects as "a subtle reminder, perhaps, of the tumultuous flights of his own fantasy."[15] This viewpoint is applicable. It also can be extended in terms of what kind of "tumultuous flights of his own fantasy" it could be.

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[11]*LXQJ*. vol. 2. p. 163, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 318.
[12]Wei Junxiu 卫俊秀, *Lu Xun yecao tansuo*, 鲁迅野草探索 (*Exploration of Lu Xun's Wild Grass*, 1953), 1953, p. 63.
[13]See Li Helin 李何林, 1973, pp. 32-3.
[14]Min Kangsheng 闵抗生, *Diyu bianyan de xiaohua* 地狱边沿的小花 (Small flowers at the rim of hell.), Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1981, p. 18.
[15]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1989, p. 105.

Lu Xun himself once observed the phototaxis of insects in his essay:

> As for the insects that dash to the lamp, somebody says that they are to admire light; somebody says that they are to seek heat; somebody says that they are for sexual desire. All will do. I only wish they would not go around and around.[16]

Although Lu Xun's remark is not particularly on "Autumn Night," it can still be used as a reference to his feelings. At the end of the poem, he writes: "I yawn, light a cigarette, and puff out the smoke, paying silent homage before the lamp to these green and exquisite heroes."[17] As an implied authorial presence, the I persona's praise of the little green insects guides the reader's rational and emotional response to achieve an aesthetic consent. The authorial voice in the text should not be ignored in the interpretation.

Combining Lu Xun's own observation of the insects in the essay and the authorial voice in the poem, we know that it is their courage that makes the I persona pay "silent homage before the lamp to these green and exquisite heroes." They are not just "going around and around." No matter what they are seeking, they really dash toward the fire. Even though their pursuit might be fatal, they still persist, not considering the possible tragic result. In this sense they are totally different from the fly in Lu Xun's story "In the Wineshop" (*Zai jiuloushang*, 在酒楼上), which flies in a small circle and finally returns to its original place. As an important symbol, Lu Xun created it to reflect the hesitation and hopelessness of some Chinese intellectuals.

Lu Xun describes the little green insects with sustained lament and sympathy, and treats them in a sincere tone, even though they do not manifest decency and power. They are in his mind "heroes," who bear a strong tragic meaning due to their dauntless sacrifice. In short, the little insects can be taken as a symbol of the tenacious spirit to act. It may well be understood

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[16]Lu Xun, *Wuti* 无题 (No title), in *LXQJ*. vol. 8, p. 102.
[17]*LXQJ*. vol. 2. p. 164, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 319.

as an incorporation of one significant aspect of Lu Xun's own spirit and can be found in many *Wild Grass* poems, especially in "The Passerby" (*Guoke*, 过客).

"Autumn Night" has been cherished for a long time by readers owing to its elegiac diction, fantastic imagery, lyrical tone, and profound significance. The date trees have erected in readers' mind perhaps the most admirable image in *Wild Grass*, which represents righteousness, sobriety, tenacity, maturity, and selflessness. They epitomize Lu Xun's most precious intellectual quality: never compromise with dark power and always seek for a bright future. This intellectual quality, to varying degrees, penetrates many *Wild Grass* poems.

"Revenge" (*Fuchou*, 复仇) and "Revenge II" (*Fuchou qi'er*, 复仇其二)[18]

The only two poems which share the same title in the collection are "Revenge" and "Revenge II." They may be regarded as variations of the same theme. In "Revenge," two naked lovers stand face-to-face in the open wilderness, each holding a sharp, pointed dagger in hand, and each about to hug or kill the other. Onlookers rush over from all sides like swarms of larvae or ants and stretch their necks high to expect an exciting sensation. But the couple eventually neither hug nor kill. There is not even the least sign that they intend to hug or kill. The onlookers' appetite for lust or violence cannot be satisfied. In the stalemate, they finally lose interest and dry up. Although the couple also dry up during the stalemate, they are intoxicated in "great pleasure" for their grotesque "revenge" on the crowd:

> At length only the vast wilderness remains and this dried couple, completely naked, standing in the middle; with dead men's eyes they enjoy the pedestrians to dry up, the great bloodless massacre, and are eternally plunged into life's giddy, excruciating bliss.[19]

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[18]These two poems were written on the same day of December 20, 1924, and both published in *Yusi* 语丝 no. 7, December 29, 1924.

[19]*LXQJ*. vol. 2, p. 173. Charles, J. Alber's translation in "*Wild Grass*, Symmetry and Parallelism in Lu Hsün's Prose Poems," in *Critical Essays on Chinese Literature*, William H. Nienhauser, Jr. ed., The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1976, p. 24.

In "Revenge II," Lu Xun adopts Christ's crucifixion from the *Book of Matthew* as its subject matter and translates this ancient biblical story into a modern text directed at contemporary Chinese politics. At the moment the Son of God is nailed on the cross, a crowd gathers to enjoy the exciting spectacle.

> All around is hate, pitiable, execrable . . . All the passers-by insult and curse him, the chief priests and the scribes also mock him, the two thieves being crucified with him ridicule him too.[20]

Christ refuses to drink the wine mixed with myrrh. He wants to stay sober to see how the Israelites treat the Son of God. In great agony from his broken bones, "he savors the sorrow of the pitiable creatures who are crucifying the Son of God, and the joy of the execrable creatures who are crucifying the Son of God." Even though the pain shoots through his heart and marrow, he is intoxicated in "great ecstasy and compassion" for his more grotesque "revenge" on the crowd.[21]

Anguish at the spiritually paralyzed crowd of China is a reiterated theme of Lu Xun's writing, not only in prose poetry, but also in his stories and essays. For example, in 1923, one year before he wrote "Revenge" and "Revenge II," he wrote in an essay:

> The masses, especially in China, are always spectators at a drama. If the victim on the stage acts heroically, they are watching a tragedy; if he shivers and shakes, they are watching a comedy. Before the mutton shops in Beijing a few people often gather to gape, with evident enjoyment, at the skinning of the sheep. And this is all they get out of it if a man lay down his life. Moreover, after walking a few steps away from the scene they forget even this modicum of enjoyment.
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> There is nothing you can do with such people; the way to save them is to give them no drama to watch.[22]

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[20] *LXQJ*. vol. 2, p. 174, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 324.

[21] Ibid., p. 175.

[22] *LXQJ*. vol. 1, p. 163, Leo Ou-fan Lee's translation in *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987, P. 72.

Attempting to launch an enlightenment to change the minds of the crowd was what several generations of Chinese intellectuals wanted to do after the middle of the Qing dynasty when China gradually became the target of aggression by powerful Western countries and Japan. But even after the Revolution of 1911 and the May Fourth Movement in 1919, the enlightenment achieved little and the crowd changed little. This made Lu Xun very pessimistic.

This pessimism concerning the ignorant Chinese crowd is powerfully visualized in the striking scenes in "Revenge" and "Revenge II." When Lu Xun criticizes the apathy and cruelty of the crowd, his feelings are paradoxical. The protagonists' target of revenge is precisely the people Lu Xun wants to save spiritually. This paradox determines that the revenge can only be "a passive revenge."[23] In "Revenge" the protagonists neither hug nor kill in order not to give the crowd "a drama" to watch. In "Revenge II" Lu Xun protests the majority's tyranny over an awakened individual, who can only sacrifice his own life in the hope that the crowd may awaken in the future.[24]

Both poems are compact in structure. They are written without line breaks, but they are highly poetic in that conventional modes of versification such as pronounced rhythms, sonorous words, and repeated verses are employed to achieve a poetic perfection.

Although these two poems bear some similarities in the aspects of theme and structure, a number of differences can still be found in artistic expression and effect. First, the subject matter of "Revenge" is visually erotic,[25] while the subject matter of "Revenge II" is physically violent. "Revenge" is quiet and still — no voice is exhibited in the scene. Except for the silent swarming of the larvae-like or ant-like onlookers, there is no action either.

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[23]This is a term used by Su Xuelin to criticize "Revenge," in Su Xuelin 苏雪林, *Wo lun Lu Xun* 我论鲁迅 (I comment on Lu Xun), Taizhong: Wenxing shudian, 1967, p. 12.

[24]This argument evolves from Charles Alber's viewpoint. He maintains that the protagonist "enjoys suffering on the cross, because he knows that his own anguish will cause the Israelites much greater anguish in the future." See *Critical Essays on Chinese Literature*, p. 9.

[25]Charles Alber, in *Critical Essays on Chinese Literature*, p. 9.

From beginning to end, the couple stand still in the open wilderness, like a splendid sculpture high above the horizon. The description of the "thick layers" of larvae-like or ant-like onlookers and of their stretching necks to watch visually enhances the sculptural effect of the scene. By way of contrast, "Revenge II" is agitated and noisy. In a turmoil, the soldiers beat, mock, and insult the Son of God. They wildly hammer nails through his palms and the soles of his feet. The clicking sounds of the hammering and the curses of the crowd mix with Christ's painful moans. The whole poem is presented in a visually and audibly disturbing scene. Its effect is similar to a stage play.

Secondly, in "Revenge" the confrontation between the protagonists and the crowd is presented on the emotional level and in the author's unintrusive attitude. Without any emotional indulgence, Lu Xun narrates the confrontation in a totally calm tone. He even gives up the privilege of describing the protagonists' inner feelings and motives. By contrast, the conflict in "Revenge II" involves bloody violence. All the descriptions of Christ's suffering are rendered with the author's strong emotion. At the end of the poem, he cannot help but intrude to present a didactic comment: "Those who reek most of blood and filth are not those who crucify the Son of God, but those who crucify the son of man."[26]

The author's intrusion with a direct comment is not often seen in the *Wild Grass* poems that are written in a third person narration. A few other examples can be found only in "Snow" (*Xue*, 雪) and "Amid Pale Bloodstains." The verse quoted above became a well-known epigram, which profoundly encompasses Lu Xun's indignation at not only the failure of the awakened to enlighten the crowd, but also the participation of the crowd in the persecution of the awakened.

Critics offered various comparisons between these two poems from different analytic perspectives. Charles Alber argues that "Revenge" is "a quasi-morality play," while "Revenge II" is "highly humanistic." Furthermore, "Revenge II" itself balances "Revenge" in

[26]*LXQJ.* vol. 2, p. 175, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 325.

the sense that "The crowd depicted in the former truly becomes dehumanized. The animate actually becomes inanimate."[27] Leo Ou-fan Lee also makes a comparison of "the tone and mood" between the two:

> It is revealing to compare the tone and mood of the two poems. While "Revenge I" is more "individualistic" in its alienating confrontation between the lone couple and the crowd, the ending for "Revenge II" seems more "humanistic."[28]

All these comparisons assist us to understand better these two famous poems with the same title, in which Lu Xun focuses his criticism not only on dark society, but also on the mental ignorance of the Chinese masses. This theme can also be found in his story "Medicine" (*Yao*, 药), in which the awakened character Xia Yu (夏瑜) conflicts with both the oppressive authorities and the ignorant crowd.

"The Lost Good Hell" (*Shidiao de hao diyu*, 失掉的好地狱)[29]

"The Lost Good Hell" is presented in a dream and reads like a mythical allegory with a relatively complete plot. Thematically it is one of the most ambiguous poems in *Wild Grass*. It describes the successive fights between god, the devil, and man to control hell. The opening two paragraphs are a prologue, in which the first person narrator tells of his fortuitous encounter with a devil close to hell. The rest of the poem is a monologue of the devil, whose story constructs the principal part of this allegorical poem.

It was when heaven and earth were the color of honey that the devil overcame god and controlled the three regions: heaven, earth, and hell. Under the devil's rule, the ghosts in hell lived a terrible life. Many years passed, the ghosts awakened and finally cried out to rebel. Man arose to respond to the ghosts' rebellion, defeated the devil, and became the new ruler of

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[27]Charles Alber, in *Critical Essays on Chinese Literature*, pp. 8-10.
[28]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1989, p. 105.
[29]This poem was written on June 16, 1925 and first published in *Yusi* no. 32, June 22, 1925.

hell. Man's emissary reorganized hell and ruled over the ghosts with the majesty of man. "The decadent face" of hell changed; the ghosts' situation, however, became even worse than before.

Some fictional techniques are employed in this poem. Because there are clear characters and plots, it is not difficult to observe its surface meaning: since man became the new ruler of hell, the situation of the ghosts worsened. However, the moral this allegorical poem presents and the explanation of its chief allegorical agents such as god, the devil, and man have long been controversial in the interpretations.

In 1956 Feng Xuefeng tried to reveal the theme of the poem: "On the one hand 'The Lost Good Hell' foresees the darkness of the Guomindang authorities. On the other hand it also betrays the author's pessimistic viewpoint towards the revolutionary future at that time." As for its allegorical agents, Feng argued that hell "refers to contemporary Beijing under the reign of Imperialism and the Beiyang warlords. It also can refer to semi-colonial and semi-feudal China in general." The devil, of course, refers to the warlord rulers and the ghosts refer to ordinary people, while man "obviously refers to the members of Guomindang who had not yet seized power at the time."[30] Feng's interpretation was echoed by Wang Yao, another Chinese Communist scholar. He came forward to say that Lu Xun "had the presentiment of a genius that these people (the Guomindang) could never shoulder the task of destroying hell and liberating the ghosts."[31]

"The Lost Good Hell" was written in 1925, but the Guomindang seized power and established China's new government in 1927. How can the theme of the poem be to denounce the Guomindang's future rule? Was Lu Xun really able to "foresee" or "have the presentiment of a genius" about the Guomindang's future? Although Feng and Wang's viewpoint does not sound plausible, it has been repeated again and again by many Chinese

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[30]Feng Xuefeng 冯雪峰, *Lun Yecao* 论野草 (On *Wild Grass*), 1956, p. 25.

[31]See Wang Yao 王瑶, "Lun Yecao" 论野草 (On *Wild Grass*), in *Lu Xun zuopin lunji* 鲁迅作品论集 (Commentary collection of Lu Xun's works), 1984, p. 129.

scholars for more than half a century, and become an interpretative canon of this poem.[32] Also during this interpretative process, Lu Xun has been dressed up as an anti-Guomindang hero with a genius for foresight.

It was not until the 1980s or so that some scholars started to challenge Feng and Wang's point of view. For instance, a historian of Lu Xun studies asks:

> If it was really as Feng and Wang's articles have said that Lu Xun in 1925 had already "foreseen the darkness of the Guomindang authorities," does that not mean they have overestimated Lu Xun's predictive abilities and made him into a "fortune-teller"?[33]

Even though Feng and Wang's interpretation of god, the devil, and man is problematic, it has remained the exclusive interpretation. No alternative and reasonable interpretation has been put forth to replace it since. In view of the above-mentioned facts, I attempt to provide a novel and reasonable interpretation by means of a careful examination of both the text of the poem and the historical context in which it was produced.

Rather than viewing god, the devil, and man respectively as "the Qing dynasty, the Beiyang warlords, and the Guomindang,"[34] I regard them as referring to the rulers of different historical stages in China, that is, the imperial dynasties established by the Chinese people, the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) that was established by the Manchu people, and the Republic of China, the first modern government.

The time "when heaven and earth were the color of honey" can be considered a remote past. The defeat of god can be regarded as an allegory of the termination of the Ming

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[32]See Li Helin 李何林, 1973, p. 147; Sun Yushi 孙玉石, *Yecao yanjiu* 野草研究 (*Wild Grass* study), Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1982, p. 124; Li Xifan 李希凡, *Yige weida xunqiuzhe de xinsheng* 一个伟大寻求者的心声 (The mental voice of a great explorer), Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1982, p. 59; and Sun Yushi 孙玉石, *Lu Xun Yecao chongshi*, viii 鲁迅野草重释, 八 (Re-interpretation of Lu Xun's Wild Grass, viii), in *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan* 鲁迅研究月刊 (Lu Xun study monthly), 1996, no. 8, p. 21.

[33]Yuan Liangjun 袁良骏, *Dangdai Lu Xun yanjiushi* 当代鲁迅研究史 (A contemporary history of Lu Xun study), Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1992, p. 305.

[34]Li Xifan 李希凡, *Yige weida xunqiuzhe de xinsheng* 一个伟大寻求者的心声 (The mental voice of a great explorer), 1982, p. 59.

dynasty, the last imperial regime with Chinese as emperors. The devil's victory accordingly can be interpreted as the beginning of the Qing dynasty, established by the Manchu people after a long bloody fight in the conquest of the Chinese people. Lu Xun commented on this grievous event a number of times in his essays. For instance, in April 1925, one and half months before he composed "The Lost Good Hell," when he discussed the social disorder that usually occurred during the time of dynastic changes, he especially mentioned the people's suffering in the late Ming and the rebel leader Zhang Xianzhong's (张献忠) cruelty. He said: "From an extreme chaos of numerous groups of bandits, a person would emerge, who was relatively smart, or relatively canny, or a foreigner. He would create relative order in the world. . . . Therefore, 'thousands of families became happy' or, to use a proverb, 'the world was in great peace' (*tianxia taiping*, 天下太平)."[35] Lu Xun's remark is applicable to the fact that "a foreigner" or, to put it concretely, the Manchu ruler, finally created "relative order in the world" by founding a new authority, that is the Qing dynasty, after the extreme social chaos in the later Ming dynasty. Therefore it may also serve as a footnote for the description in the poem: After the devil conquered hell, he proclaimed "Hell is in great peace" (*dixia taiping*, 地下太平). In another essay, Lu Xun wrote in an ironic tone, "The imperial family of the Qing . . . had great humanity and virtue, and then it won over the country."[36] This remark also assists in understanding the image of the devil, who "came in person to hell and sat in the midst of it, radiating great brightness over all the ghosts."[37]

During a long historical period of more than two hundred years, the Chinese people suffered heavily from political and racial oppression under the rule of the Qing dynasty, or in Lu Xun's words, "had been slaves for two hundred and fifty years."[38] Lu Xun's criticism of

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[35]Lu Xun, "Dengxia manbi" 灯下漫笔 (Jottings by lamplight), in *LXQJ*, vol. 1, p. 212.
[36]Lu Xun, "Weizhang he timu" 文章和题目 (Assays and topics), *LXQJ*, vol. 5, p. 122.
[37]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 200, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 346.
[38]Lu Xun, "Suanzhang" 算帐 (Settle an account), *LXQJ*, vol. 5, p. 514.

the rule of the Qing dynasty throws light on the allegorical description of the devil's hell. Under the rule of the devil,

> hell had been long neglected: the spiked trees had lost their glitter, the edges of the boiling oil no longer seethed, at times the great fires merely puffed out a little smoke.[39]

Instead of viewing "man," who "fought against the devil" and "forced him to withdraw from hell," as representing the Guomindang, I suggest that this allegorical agent represents the republican revolutionaries led by Sun Yat-sen (孙中山, 1866-1925). After the Revolution of 1911, which was launched by the republican revolutionaries and brought an end to the Qing dynasty, Sun Yat-sen was inaugurated as the Provisional President of the Republic on January 1, 1912 in Nanjing. In February Sun offered to favor Yuan Shikai (袁世凯, 1859-1916), the most powerful former military leader of the Manchu government, with the presidency if he would openly declare his support for the Republic. Yuan Shikai accepted and was formally inaugurated as the Provisional President on March 12, 1912 in Beijing. After the inauguration of the presidency, he tried to establish a constitutional monarchy.

This historical event is perhaps suggested in the poem where man gave "the highest post to the Ox-headed Demon (*Niushou Ah Pang*, 牛首阿旁)," who in the legend is a powerful demon with the head of an ox and the strength to move a mountain, and serves as the guard of hell.[40] I tend to interpret the Ox-headed Demon as referring to the powerful warlords, who formerly served as militarists of the Qing dynasty. In fact, not only Yuan Shikai, but also his successors such as Li Yuanhong (黎元洪, 1864-1928), Cao Kun, and Duan Qirui, had all been former military leaders of the Qing dynasty. It is also interesting to note that the contemporary Provisional Chief Executive Duan Qirui, according to the Chinese

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[39]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 200, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 346.
[40]See the footnote of the poem in *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 201.

custom, had a "birth picture" (*shengxiao*, 生肖) of the ox, because he was born in the Year of the Ox. Lu Xun once called him "a fox" who stole "the power and prestige of a tiger" to maintain his reign of terror.[41] Therefore it seems plausible to view the allegorical agent Ox-headed Demon, who rules over all ghosts with the majesty of man, as the northern warlords.

Lu Xun's private reference to "man" as the leaders of the republican regime is also closely related to the historical context at the time. In 1925 when "The Lost Good Hell" was written, the Beijing warlord government was China's exclusive legitimate government and was formally recognized by the international community. It was also the first modern government of China. During the republican period, modern political, administrative, and legal institutions were established. The warlords governed the nation under the republican banner — the banner of "man." Among the warlords centered on the Anfu Clique, a political bloc headed by Duan Qirui, many were even self-styled believers in socialism.

It was due to the establishment of the Republic that in 1912 Lu Xun became an official in the newly-established Ministry of Education. Lu Xun once mentioned this in his autobiography: "The revolutionary government was established in Nanjing. The minister of education recruited me to be an official. I moved to Beijing and have worked there till now."[42] This autobiography was written twenty days before "The Lost Good Hell." We should note that Lu Xun addressed the republican government as "the revolutionary government." At least he thought its initial stage was "revolutionary." His remark helps us to understand the implication of the following description:

> Man then wielded absolute power over hell, his authority exceeding that of the devil. He re-established order, having given the highest post to the Ox-headed Demon. He also added fuel to the fires, sharpened the sword-hills and changed the whole face of hell, doing away with the former decadence.[43]

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[41]Lu Xun, "Yi Wei Suyuan jun" 忆韦素园君 (Remembering Mr. Wei Suyuan), *LXQJ*, vol. 6, p. 65.
[42]Lu Xun, "Ewen yiben *Ah Q Zhengzhuan* xu ji zhuzhe zixu zhuanlue" 俄文译本阿Q正传序及著者自叙传略 (Preface to Russian edition of *The True Story of Ah Q* and the author's brief autobiography), *LXQJ*, vol. 7, p. 83.
[43]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 200, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 347.

This can be viewed as a spectacle of the incipient stage of the Republic, which overwhelmed the imperial system in terms of power and reputation. But careful readers also find an irony in it. Lu Xun first indirectly expresses his dissatisfaction with the fact that the Republic fell into the hands of the warlords — "Man gave the highest post to the Ox-headed Demon," and then directly depicts the disasters that happened to the people (ghosts):

> At once the mandrake flowers withered. The oil seethed as before, the swords were sharp as before, the fires blazed as before, and the ghosts groaned and writhed as before, until none of them had time to regret the good hell that was lost.[44]

China's society in the 1920s resembled just what is allegorically described in the poem. Owning both military strength and political legitimacy, the warlords ruled China in absolute dictatorship, while the people suffered terribly. In view of this, the author intrudes and, through the mouth of the devil, articulates a direct condemnation: "This was man's success and the ghosts' misfortune."[45] With the above analysis the theme of the poem becomes clear: the Chinese people's life under the republican regime was worse than that before the 1911 Revolution. So the "good hell" under the imperial system was "lost."

Lu Xun, however, does not really mean that the imperial system was good for the Chinese people. He once divided China's history into two cycles, the cycle that people could temporarily settle into as slaves and the cycle in which people wanted to be slaves but couldn't.[46] In the imperial regime, there were probably some opportunities for the Chinese people to have a relatively stable life as slaves, while in the republican era even the opportunity to be slaves was lost. He explicitly utters his disappointment with the Republic in an essay of 1925, the same year he wrote "The Lost Good Hell":

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[44]Ibid., p. 200, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 347.
[45]Ibid., p. 200, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 347.
[46]Lu Xun, "Dengxia manbi" 灯下漫笔 (Jottings by lamplight), in *LXQJ*, vol. 1, p. 213.

I feel there has been no Republic of China for a long time.

I feel that I used to be a slave before the revolution [of 1911]. Not long after the revolution I was cheated by the slaves and became their slave.

I feel that many subjects of the Republic became the enemies of the Republic.

. . .

I feel that everything should be done again.

. . .

I feel that *the origin of the Republic has been lost*, although only fourteen years have past![47] (emphasis added)

Lu Xun's own words — "the origin of the Republic has been lost" — can be viewed as the best summary of the theme of the poem. He denounces the warlord politics, shows his sympathy for the Chinese people's suffering, and regrets the Republic falling into the hands of the former militarists of the Qing dynasty. In the republican period the Chinese people suffered even more than in imperial times. This theme is also implied in the title "The Lost Good Hell." The poem should have nothing to do with the rule of the Guomindang. In 1925 the Guomindang acted mainly in the south. It launched a war against the northern warlords in 1926, and finally won and became the new ruling party of China in 1927, that is, two years later than the writing of this poem.

"The Vibration of the Decrepit Line" (*Tuibai xian de zhandong*, 颓败线的颤动)[48]

This poem consists of the I persona's two dreams about a woman's life. The first dream displays a melancholy scene, in which a young woman, in order to make a living and feed her little daughter, is selling her flesh. Under a tyrannical male body, her thin and small body "vibrates with hunger, agony, panic, shame, and joy." Although she is reluctant to do this, she feels gratified because she is able to tell her daughter: "We have something to eat today."[49] The second dream shows a scene of many years later. The mother becomes old

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[47]Lu Xun, "Huran xiangdao III" 忽然想到, 三 (Sudden thought III), in *LXQJ*. vol. 3. p. 16.

[48]This poem was written on June 29, 1925 and published in *Yusi* 语丝 no. 35, July 13, 1925. Hereafter "The Decrepit Line."

[49]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 204.

and the daughter grows up. There is never any gratitude to the old woman for raising her daughter, only resentment, because her career as a prostitute has brought shame to the whole family. The little grandchild wields a reed leaf as a sword towards her and shouts: "Kill!" Her feelings are severely hurt. At midnight she goes out and stands in the center of the wilderness. Nude, stretching her arms high towards the sky like a stone sculpture, she recalls all "hunger, agony, panic, shame, and joy" in the past and speaks out in "a wordless language that is between man and animal, and lacking in the human world."[50] At this moment her whole decrepit body vibrates, like boiling water floating on raging fire. The air around her vibrates too, like the ocean tide in a storm surging violently in the boundless wilderness.

Lu Xun's concern over the misfortune of women, which is the theme of the poem, is easy to identify. The main part of the poem is a realistic, self-revelatory account focusing on the protagonist's poverty and humiliation. The image of the woman is reminiscent of other miserable female characters in Lu Xun's fiction such as Xiang Lin's Wife (*Xianglin sao*, 祥林嫂),[51] Fourth Shan's Wife (*Shansi saozi*, 单四嫂子),[52] and Aigu (爱姑).[53] The difference is that the nameless woman in "Decrepit Line" is among the earliest images of the oppressed and harmed urban people in modern Chinese literature. In this sense she is similar to the workwoman Chen Ermei (陈二妹)[54] and the rickshaw man[55] in Yu Dafu's fiction. The poem offers a picture of the urban life of ordinary Chinese in the 1920s, which was characterized by poverty and starvation. "The Decrepit Line" presents the woman's prostitution against the setting of poverty and starvation, but it is not aimed at accusing the

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[50]*LXQJ*. vol. 2, p. 206.
[51]Lu Xun, "Zhufu" 祝福 (The new-year sacrifice), .*LXQJ*. vol. 2, pp. 5-23
[52]Lu Xun, "Mingtian" 明天 (Tomorrow), *LXQJ*. vol. 1, pp. 450-7
[53]Lu Xun, "Lihun" 离婚 (The divorce), *LXQJ*. vol. 2, pp. 144-54
[54]Yu Dafu 郁达夫, "Chunfeng Chenzui de wanshang" 春风沉醉的晚上 (The night intoxicated in the spring wind), 1923.
[55]Yu Dafu 郁达夫, "Bodian" 薄奠 (Meager funeral gift), 1924.

"The Decrepit Line" is the only poem in *Wild Grass* that directly presents ordinary people's suffering. Its theme of social criticism is explicit. Artistically, the reader should pay special attention to the last part of the poem. Sharply contrasting with the previous matter-of-fact descriptions, it is "totally surrealistic."[56] In this part, Lu Xun deliberately interweaves markedly variant diction, both literal and figurative, into literary effects that can be perceived by different senses: sight, hearing, touch, and imagination. The nude old woman, her figure like a stone sculpture, her wordless language, her decrepit body's vibration, the vast expanse of the wilderness, and the powerful responses from nature are combined together to structure one of the most splendid scenes in *Wild Grass*.

"Such a Fighter" (*Zheyang de zhanshi*, 这样的战士)[57]

This poem, according to Lu Xun himself, "was written in reaction to the fact that men of letters and scholars were assisting the warlords."[58] At the opening of the poem, he asserts "There will be such a fighter!" The fighter appearing in the poem is armed with "neither a well-polished Mauser nor an automatic pistol." "He has nothing but himself, and for weapon nothing but a lance hurled by barbarians."[59]

In spite of his poor outfit, he still strides into the battle field. There, everyone he meets nods at him. Above their heads hang all kinds of flags and banners, embroidered with honorable titles: philanthropist, scholar, writer, elder, youth, dilettante, gentleman, etc. They wear all kinds of overcoats, embroidered with fine names: scholarship, morality, national culture, public opinion, logic, justice, oriental civilization, etc. The fighter knows that their nod is "a weapon used by the enemy to kill without bloodshed, by which many fighters have

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[56]This term is used by Leo Ou-fan Lee in his comment on the last part of the poem. See Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Lu Xun yu xiandai yishu yishi" 鲁迅与现代艺术意识 (Lu Xun and the consciousness of modern art), in *Tiewuzhong de nahan* 铁屋中的呐喊 (Voices from the Iron House), 1995, p. 299.
[57]This poem was written on December 14, 1925 and published in *Yusi* 语丝, no. 58, December 21, 1925.
[58]Lu Xun, "Yecao yingwen yiben xu" 野草英文译本序 (A preface to the English edition of *Yecao*), *LYQJ.* vol. 4, p. 356.
[59]*LXQJ.* vol. 2, p. 214, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 354.

perished."[60] He raises his lance and hurls it at them. All the flags and overcoats crumble and fall to the ground. Those who nodded at him have escaped.

"Such a Fighter" is the only poem in which the fighting spirit of "a fighter" is transformed into an active attack. Furthermore the fighter's faith stays steadfast and his morale remains high — he has been endowed with limitless courage by the author. Because of this, it has long been asserted that Lu Xun's fighting spirit reaches its "climax" in this poem.[61]

I pay appropriate attention to the symbolic meaning of the primitive lance that the fighter uses as the weapon. Lu Xun once figuratively called his essays of social criticism "dagger and lance" (*bishou he touqiang*, 匕首和投枪).[62] In the realm of Lu Xun studies, "dagger and lance" has become a synonym of his essays, which number several hundred pieces and involve numerous topics on China's society and culture.

The fighter is usually read as a self-portrait of Lu Xun. In view of this the active attack against the surrounding world by the unyielding fighter can also be regarded as a figurative incorporation of his constant social and cultural criticism. But he was only a writer and in his deep mind, he often felt his writing was ineffective in changing society and people's mind. Sometimes he was sad about this, as he wrote in a classical-style poem, "Dallying with writings, one gets caught in a written net;/ Resisting the times, runs afoul of worldly sentiment./ Slander, when built up, can dissolve the very bone:/ I leave behind naught but words on paper strown."[63] Lu Xun's sadness is also imbued in "Such a Fighter." Shortly after the fighter launches the attack, he finds his enemy is "nothingness" and the battle field "the lines of nothingness." He even loses his target of attack. He seems to have won, but actually he has been defeated:

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[60]Ibid., p. 214, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 354.
[61]Wei Junxiu 卫俊秀, 1954, p. 179; and Sun Yushi 孙玉石, 1982, p. 34.
[62]Lu Xun, "Xiaopinwen de weiji" 小品文的危机 (The crisis of short essays), *LXQJ*, vol. 4, p. 576.
[63]Lu Xun, "Ti Nahan" 题呐喊 (Inscribed to *Call to Arms*), *LXQJ*, vol. 7, p. 442, Kowallis' translation in *The Lyrical Lu Xun*, 1996, p. 254.

> The nothingness has escaped and won the victory, because now he has become the criminal who killed the philanthropist and the rest.
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> . . .
>
> At last he grows old and dies of old age in the lines of nothingness. He is not a fighter after all, and the nothingness is the victor.[64]

"Amid Pale Bloodstains" (*Dandan de xuehen zhong*, 淡淡的血痕中)[65]

This poem, which has a subtitle "In Memory of Some Who Are Dead, Still Living, and Yet Unborn" (*Jinian jige sizhe he shengzhe he weishengzhe*, 纪念几个死者和生者和未生者),[66] was written after the March Eighteenth Massacre, when Duan Qirui, the Provisional Executive of Beijing government, ordered his troops to open fire on students and other peaceful civilian demonstrators, who gathered to protest the government's compliance with Japanese interference in China. In the incident forty-seven demonstrators were killed, two being Lu Xun's students. The killing greatly disturbed Lu Xun and made him feel extreme anguish. It was at this juncture that he wrote this poem.

In the third person, the intrusive author not only reports, but also comments on and evaluates the actions and motives of the characters from an omniscient point of view. The diction is literal, instead of figurative, as is usually the case with poetic diction. Lu Xun strongly condemns the warlords' bloody killing of the peaceful demonstrators. He employs "the creator" as a metaphor to signify its opposite, the destroyer, to denounce the warlord killers. He explicitly declares "the creator is still a weakling":

> In secret, he causes heaven and earth to change, but dares not destroy this world. In secret, he causes living creatures to die, but dares not preserve their dead bodies. In secret, he causes mankind to shed blood, but dares not keep the bloodstains fresh for ever. In secret, he causes mankind to suffer pain, but dares not let them remember it forever. . . . He has not the courage yet to destroy mankind.[67]

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[64] *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 215, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 362.
[65] This poem was written on April 8, 1926 and published in *Yusi* 语丝 no. 75, April 19, 1926
[66] This subtitle was originally lacking and added by Lu Xun in 1927 when *Wild Grass* was first published as a collection.
[67] *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 211, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 361.

"The creator" does not have the courage to destroy mankind, because he needs "loyal subjects." He wants them to live in a state between "sobriety and drunkenness, consciousness and unconsciousness." He makes them desire either to live or to die. "This is what he wants them to be."[68] As a strong protest against the warlords' brutality, in the poem Lu Xun appeals to a "rebellious fighter," who "sees through the creator's game. And he will arise to awaken or else destroy mankind, these loyal subjects of the creator."[69]

Although he did not approve of the ineffective and vulnerable petition,[70] Lu Xun embedded his commendation of the demonstrators in the rebellious fighter, the visionary image of directly resisting "the creator." As an antagonist of "the creator," the rebellious fighter has a more determinate target of revenge than the protagonists in "Revenge" and "Such A Fighter." He, however, like all protagonists with a rebellious mind in *Wild Grass*, remains a loner. He still suffers from being disappointed by the crowd — "the loyal subjects of the creator." If he cannot rescue them, he will destroy them. Furthermore he does not show enough strength to be a powerful fighter. All he can do is to remember and face the violence:

> He remembers all the intense and unending agony; he faces squarely the whole welter of clotted blood; he understands all that are dead and all that are living, as well as all that are being born and all that are yet unborn.[71]

This paragraph actually reflects Lu Xun's humanistic vision. His rebellious fighter represents only an emotional and moral revenge and is unable to rebel against "the creator" in a more effective way. At most, it evokes from the audience emotional sadness and moral indignation at the brutality of the warlords and is powerless to change society effectively.

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[68]Ibid., p. 221.
[69]Ibid., p. 222, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 362.
[70]After the March 18 Incident, Lu Xun wrote: "'Petitioning' should stop." See "Sidi" 死地 (Dead field), *LXQJ*, vol. 3, p. 267.
[71]Ibid., p. 222, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 362.

But from an ultimate perspective, it is powerful in the sense of justice and morality. In this sense, the rebellious fighter is a superior antagonist and will be bound to triumph over "the creator." Therefore at the end of the poem, Lu Xun writes:

> The creator, the weakling, hides himself in shame. Then heaven and earth change color in the eyes of the fighter.[72]

Justice and morality will finally win over evil. This is what Lu Xun hoped. Even though it was still in the darkest days, he predicted a hopeful future for the Chinese people. Although his prediction sounds romantic and unrealistic, the stanza cited above becomes the most encouraging passage in *Wild Grass*.

"The Awakening" (*Yijue*, 一觉)[73]

In April 1926 when this poem was written, warlord Feng Yuxiang of the Zhili faction was fighting the northeast warlords Zhang Zuolin and Li Jinglin (李景林). Zhang and Li's planes flew several times daily to bomb Beijing. This triggered Lu Xun's inspiration to write this last piece of *Wild Grass*. "Each time I hear their engines attack the air, I feel a certain slight tension, as if I were witnessing the invasion of Death, though this heightens my consciousness of the existence of Life."[74]

Perhaps because of the threat of death, Lu Xun senses his responsibility to finish editing some young writers' manuscripts that have accumulated in hand. In editing these manuscripts, he feels that the young writers are unhappy. In their writing they cry out in protest. Lu Xun quotes a paragraph, which says that the contemporary society is so chaotic and gloomy that it is even worse than a sterile desert. Lu Xun shares the same feeling. He cannot help but consent and solemnly give a direct comment:

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[72]Ibid., p. 222, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 362.
[73]This poem was written on April 10, 1926 and published in *Yusi* 语丝 no. 75, April 19, 1926.
[74]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 223, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 363.

> Yes, the young people's spirits have risen up before me. They have grown rugged, or are about to grow rugged. But I love these spirits which bleed and suffer in silence.[75]

Lu Xun's compliment to the young people, of course, conveys his respect for those young demonstrators killed or wounded in the March Eighteenth Massacre. "Their spirits become rugged because of the onslaught of wind and dust."[76] The atrocity of the warlord government and the blood of the civilians awaken the youths and make them rugged. The title of the poem suggests "the awakening" of Chinese youths.

Summary

Analyzing some *Wild Grass* poems in the historical context of their production, we know that the political and historical criticism of the dark society is one of the most important themes of *Wild Grass*. Lu Xun's criticism mainly focuses on two targets: the warlords' political tyranny and the crowd's spiritual ignorance.

First of all, Lu Xun spares no pains to expose and denounce the warlords' brutal rule. He identifies warlord politics with "the dark night sky" ("The Autumn Night"), "hell" ("The Lost Good Hell"), and "a desert" ("The Awakening"). The conflict between Lu Xun and the warlords is uncompromising, even if it is ineffective. The date trees, as his symbol, unyieldingly confront the dark night sky ("Autumn Night"). The brilliant protester in "Such a Fighter" brings himself into a face-to-face battle against the enemy. Lu Xun even invokes a powerful "rebellious fighter" to rescue the Chinese people. However, all these rebellious images, like Lu Xun himself, are images of the lonely awakened, who see the social evils but have no effective way to change them. Thus they are often faced with a paradox. In most cases they can only engage in an emotional resistance like the date trees in "Autumn Night"

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[75]Ibid., p. 224, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 365.
[76]Ibid., p. 223, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 363.

or a moral protest like the rebellious fighter in "Amid Pale Bloodstains." Occasionally a brilliant fighter such as in "Such a Fighter" launches an active attack, but his fight is so ineffective that he is unable even to find a real enemy.

The other target of social and political criticism in *Wild Grass* is the ignorant crowd. Lu Xun sympathizes with their suffering ("The Lost Good Hell") and hopes they will awaken ("Revenge II"), but more frequently he expresses his disappointment in them. There is no sign of their awakening ("Revenge" and "Revenge II"). They don't even realize their situation is getting worse ("The Lost Good Hell"). In view of this, Lu Xun occasionally feels deep despair towards them: if they cannot be rescued, they deserve to be destroyed ("Amid Pale Bloodstains"). Of course this radical attitude indicates Lu Xun's outrage against the bloody suppression of the warlords and the apathy of the crowd. But this never means that his protagonists can really destroy the crowd. What the awakened protagonists can do is either to perish together with the crowd ("Revenge") or to sacrifice himself for their salvation ("Revenge II"). Because Lu Xun has no effective way to facilitate a mental rescue of the crowd, he feels disappointed. The reader can easily detect in *Wild Grass* a melancholy tone, which is partly an echo of Lu Xun's disappointment.

Some poems relating to the theme of social criticism are written in the third person — there are only six such pieces in *Wild Grass* — as "Revenge," "Revenge II," and "Amid Pale Bloodstains." Some are written in the first person. In this case, the first person narrator is either a fortuitous auditor or witness such as in "The Lost Good Hell" and "The Decrepit Line," or an insignificant participant as in "Autumn Night." These poems, by and large, voice Lu Xun's protest against the outer world and show less introspection than those poems in which the first person narrator is the central character. And the poems that aim at social and political criticism account for only a small part of *Wild Grass*.

Social and political criticism is only one theme of the *Wild Grass* poems. In the past, because some mainland Chinese scholars overemphasized this theme in *Wild Grass*, their

interpretations obviously bear marks of the influence of the Maoist ideology and sound implausible. Taking Feng Xuefeng's interpretation of "The Lost Good Hell" as an example, on the one hand, he argues that the image of "man" refers to the Guomindang, while on the other hand he asserts that the Guomindang cannot fulfill the task to destroy hell and liberate "the ghosts." So he concludes that "the poem does not conform to reality."[77] It seems to me that it is not the poem, but Feng's interpretation that does not conform to the text of the poem, the intention of the author, and the historical context.

A majority of poems in *Wild Grass* are scarcely related to outer society and contemporary history, but display a more "introspective nature."[78] Therefore I shall examine other themes of *Wild Grass* beyond social and political criticism in the following chapters.

[77]Feng Xuefeng 冯雪峰, *Lun Yecao* 论野草 (On *Wild Grass*), 1956, p. 26.
[78]Leo Ou-fan Lee considers most of *Wild Grass* pieces are introspective except for some such as the last few pieces, which demonstrate a more combative frame of mind. See *Voices from the Iron House*, 1989, p. 90.

Chapter 3. Philosophical Meditations on the Ego, Meaning of Life, and Human Will

In his life, Lu Xun experienced two periods of depression. The first was from 1912 to 1918. The second was from 1923 to 1926, approximately during the same time that he composed *Wild Grass*. During the first period of depression Lu Xun was disappointed with China's social and political disorder since the Revolution of 1911. For seven years, Lu Xun lived alone in the Shaoxing Hostel (*Shaoxing huiguan*, 绍兴会馆) in Beijing.[1] He served in the Ministry of Education and used up the spare time in studying Buddhist classics, collecting ancient stone inscriptions, and editing literary classics. He felt extremely lonely, recording his feelings in a later essay: "The sense of loneliness grew from day to day, entwining itself about my soul like some huge poisonous snake."[2]

It was in the May Fourth New Culture Movement (五四新文化运动, 1918-1921) that Lu Xun, urged on by his friend Qian Xuantong (钱玄同, 1887-1939), started to write for the *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian*, 新青年) and other magazines. His stories and miscellaneous essays written at this time were extremely successful and brought him nationwide recognition as the founder of modern Chinese literature and one of the outstanding intellectuals of modern China.

By the beginning of the 1920s, the high tide of the May Fourth New Culture Movement gradually subsided. The intellectual leaders of the New Culture Movement, centered around the *New Youth* magazine, split in 1921. The pragmatist Hu Shi (胡适, 1891-1962) left the New Youth group and began research on Chinese classical and vernacular literature. The Marxists Li Dazhao (李大钊, 1889-1927) and Chen Duxiu (陈独秀, 1880-1942) concentrated more enthusiastically on social revolution instead of cultural reconstruction.

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[1]Lu Xun didn't move his mother and wife from his hometown Shaoxing to join him in Beijing until 1919.
[2]Lu Xun, "Nahan zixu" 呐喊自序 (Self-preface to *Call for Arms*), *LXQJ*, vol. 1, p. 417. The translation is in *Lu Xun Selected Works*, translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1956, vol. 1, p.36. Hereafter *LXSW*.

Without the active participation of the right-wing and left-wing leaders, the New Culture Movement greatly lost its energy. Lu Xun had no party affinity and, as an advocate of individualism and democracy, and a radical opponent of Chinese traditional culture, he couldn't agree with either side.

When the New Culture Movement actually came to an end in the mid-1920s, Lu Xun experienced his second depressed period. He entitled his second fiction collection — written approximately during the same period as *Wild Grass — Wandering* (*Panghuang*, 彷徨) to record his "wandering" feelings. More explicitly he explained them in an essay:

> Later the *New Youth* group broke up. Some of its members rose to high positions, some went into retirement, some moved forward. And I, after seeing this transformation of my comrades of the united front, was left with the label "author" and went on pacing up and down in the desert. But it was too late to get out of writing what I called table-talk for various magazines. When struck by any idea, I wrote a short piece — prose poems to give them a high-sounding title — and these were later printed as *Wild Grass*. If I had more systematic material I went on to write short stories. But as I was now a free lance, unable to form a camp of my own, though technically I had improved a little and my ideas were perhaps less limited, my fighting spirit had diminished considerably. Where were my new comrades-in-arms? I seemed to be in a very bad position. So I called the eleven stories of this period *Wandering*, hoping that the future would be different.[3]

During the second depressed period, what Lu Xun underwent was not only loneliness as in the 1910s, but more serious inner agony. Shortly before and during the composition of *Wild Grass*, Lu Xun became involved in several trying issues, such as personal disputes within his own family, public polemics with other scholars, and a law suit against his superior. Thus besides intellectual "wandering," Lu Xun also suffered from severe emotional painfulness in his personal life.

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[3]Lu Xun, "Zixuanji zixu" 自选集自序 (Preface to *Self-selection*), *LXQJ*, vol. 4. p. 456, the Yangs' translation is in *LXSW*, vol. 3, pp. 201-2.

One source of Lu Xun's emotional suffering may be related to his breakup with his younger brother Zhou Zuoren.[4] On July 19, 1923, Zhou Zuoren announced his sudden severance of brotherly affection with Lu Xun without offering a reason. On that day Zhou Zuoren handed him a letter, which reads:

> Mr. Lu Xun:
>
> I didn't know until yesterday — but it is unnecessary to mention the past. I am not a Christian, but fortunately I can stand it. I also don't want to blame anyone — we are all pitiful people. All my previous rosy dreams turned out to be illusory. What I see now is perhaps real life. I want to revise my thoughts and enter a new life. From now on please don't come to the back compound again. I have no other words. I wish you to be at ease and take care of yourself.
>
> July 18, Zhou Zuoren[5]

What Zhou Zuoren meant by "I didn't know until yesterday" may refer to something that happened on July 14, 1923, five days before he handed over the letter to Lu Xun. Since that day Lu Xun was forced to cook and eat by himself. As he wrote in the diary: "Since this evening I begin to eat in my own room. I cook a dish by myself. This deserves a record."[6] Half a month later he moved out with his wife to another residence.[7] On July 11, 1924, when Lu Xun went back to the previous house to pick up his books and utensils, the Zhou Zuoren couple came out and abused him verbally and physically.[8] After that he never met Zhou Zuoren again. During the period from 1924 to 1926, as a main contributor to the magazine *Talking String* (*Yusi*, 语丝), Lu Xun did not attend the monthly banquets sponsored by the

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[4]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1989, p. 90.

[5]Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., *Lu Xun, Xu Guangping cuocang shuxin xuan* 鲁迅、许广平所藏书信选 (Selected letters that were kept by Lu Xun and Xu Guangping), Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 1987, p. 34.

[6]Lu Xun, Diary of July 14, 1923, *LXQJ*, vol. 14. p. 460.

[7]Lu Xun, Diary of August 2, 1923, Ibid., p. 462.

[8]Lu Xun, Diary of July 11, 1924, which reads: "I went to the Badaowan residence to pick up my books and utensils. As I entered the western chamber, Qimeng (Zhou Zuoren) and his wife suddenly appeared to curse and beat me. . . . His wife recounted my crimes with a lot of filthy language. As her fabrication contained loopholes, Qimeng corrected them. But I finally went with my books and utensils." Ibid., p. 500.

magazine in order not to encounter Zhou Zuoren, who was also one of its editors and contributors.[9]

Seventy years have passed since the breakup between these two beloved brothers, who were both among those famous leaders of the New Culture Movement and who enjoyed an equal prestige nationwide. Despite a variety of guesses at its reasons, the event remains a mystery in Lu Xun studies.[10] For whatever reasons, it greatly disturbed Lu Xun; he felt hurt and regretful. These feelings are implicitly expressed in some of his writings such as the story "Brothers" (*Dixiong*, 弟兄) and the prose poem "Kite" (*Fengzheng*, 风筝).

Lu Xun's physical frailty may be another cause of his depression. At the time he wrote *Wild Grass*, he was in his mid-forties. He was not old, but in poor health. In September 1923, shortly after his estrangement from his brother, he fell ill for thirty-nine days because of a relapse of his tuberculosis.[11] In Lu Xun's diary of 1924 there are as many as thirty-five records of his illness, pain, seeing doctors, and taking medicine.[12] In September 23, 1925, he found himself with a sudden and continuous fever. He suffered another severe attack of

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[9]Lu Xun, "Wo he *Yusi* de shizhong" 我和语丝的始终 (I and the beginning and ending of *Yusi*), *LXQJ*, vol. 4. p. 168.

[10]Most scholars consider that the dispute started due to financial reasons. At that time, these two families lived together in a large compound and the finances of the whole Zhou family were managed by Habuto Nobuko 羽太信子, Zhou Zuoren's Japanese wife. The Zhou Zuoren couple's extravagance brought about Lu Xun's dissatisfaction. But the direct reason that triggered the event, judging from Zhou Zuoren's letter, may lie deeper than the finances.

Zhang Chuandao 章川岛 (1901-1981), who had an intimate relationship with both families at the time, recalls: "The reason of the event was perhaps that Zhou Zuoren's wife started a rumor to say Lu Xun had taken liberties with her. She also spoke to me that Lu Xun eavesdropped beneath the window of her bedroom. It was absolutely impossible, because many flowers and bushes were planted in front of the window." See Chen Shuyu 陈漱渝, *Lu Xun shishi qiuzhen lu* 鲁迅史实求真录 (A real record of Lu Xun's historical facts), Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 1987, pp. 76-7.

No matter whether Nobuko's words were rumor or not, it was the tension between Lu Xun and Nobuko that triggered the breakup of the Zhou brothers. As far as Zhou Zuoren is concerned, he was only an outsider. Kowallis offered a new insight by saying that one factor involved besides family finances "was Zuoren's desire to step out from the shadow of his elder brother, for Zuoren was on the road to becoming an essayist, prose stylist, and academician of the first order." *The Lyrical Lu Xun*, 1996, p. 49. This event involved the private life of the persons concerned, any guess cannot be absolutely convincing. It is the biggest mystery in Lu Xun studies and will perhaps remain a mystery forever.

[11]Lu Xun, Diaries of September and October in 1923, *LXQJ*, vol. 14, pp. 466-71.

[12]Lu Xun, Diaries of 1924, Ibid., pp. 483-524.

tuberculosis. In the subsequent five months, he went to Shanben Hospital nineteen times for treatment.[13] Poor health made him look elderly. Both his friends and opponents called him "an old man." In 1927 when Mao Dun commented on Lu Xun's unyielding state of mind incorporated in "Such a Fighter," he wrote: "What a pungent and stubborn old man Lu Xun is!"[14] In 1926, Gao Changhong cursed Lu Xun for being "a canny old man" and "having fallen mentally and physically ill."[15] As a result of Lu Xun's poor health, his depressed mood of regret at aging and illness occasionally finds its way in the *Wild Grass* poems, such as "Hope," "The Passerby," and "Dry Leaf."

The third reason should be attributed to his open polemics with Chen Yuan (陈源, 1896-1970) and other Anglo-American educated scholars, who were centered on the magazine *Modern Review* (*Xiandai pinglun*, 现代评论). The polemics started in the autumn of 1924 over Lu Xun's support of the student rebels at Beijing Women's Normal University where he gave a one-hour lecture each week. Chen Yuan's group sided with the university authorities. Before long their polemics escalated into mutual attacks, which continued for the whole of 1925 and didn't stop until the middle of 1926. During this period Lu Xun spent much time and energy in writing polemical essays, which he himself called "boring stuff."[16] He entitled his two essay collections of 1925 and 1926 *Unlucky Star* (*Huagai ji*, 华盖集) and *Sequel to the Unlucky Star* (*Huagai ji xubian*, 华盖集续编) in memory of his bad luck and distress.

The fourth reason for Lu Xun's depression lies in the fact that he served as an official in the warlord government for fourteen years. As early as 1912, the Minister of Education Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培, 1868-1940), Lu Xun's patron, resigned from the ministry because his proposals to promote education could not be implemented by the Beijing government. Later

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[13]Lu Xun, Diaries from September 1923 to January 1924, Ibid., pp. 563-83.
[14]Shen Yanbing 沈雁冰 (Mao Dun, 茅盾), "Lu Xun lun" 鲁迅论 (On Lu Xun), in *Xiaoshuo Yuebao* 小说月报 (Fiction monthly), vol. 18, no. 11, November 10, 1927.
[15]Gao Changhong, "Zou dao chubanjie" 走到出版界 (Walk to the publication circles), in *Kuangbiao* 狂飚 (Turbulence), vol. 5, November 11, 1926.
[16]Lu Xun, "Huagaiji tiji" 华盖集题记 (Preface to *Unlucky Star*), *LXQJ*, vol. 3, p. 5.

in his position as the President of Beijing University, Cai Yuanpei established "The Association for Promoting Morality" (*Jinde hui*, 进德会) and demanded that its members not visit prostitutes, not gamble, not take concubines, and not be officials in the Beijing government or a member of the Parliament. The last demand came out of a concern that the Beijing government had heavily lost its legitimacy since Yuan Shikai attempted to restore the imperial sovereignty in 1916.

As an official in the Ministry of Education, Lu Xun became involved in the student political imbroglio at Beijing Normal University for Women in 1924. The involvement resulted in his being fired in August 1925 by Zhang Shizhao (章士钊, 1881-1973), the current Minister of Education. Lu Xun immediately filed a law suit against the Ministry of Education and finally won in March 1926.

Although Lu Xun's position was restored, this event deepened his embarrassment as a warlord government official. After Lu Xun was fired, Xu Shoushang and Qi Shoushan (齐寿山, 1881-1965), Lu Xun's good friends and colleagues, resigned to show their moral support of Lu Xun and protest against Zhang Shizhao. Lu Xun, however, strove hard to get the position back. When he did this, he perhaps thought that he had done nothing wrong and Zhang Shizhao had no reason to dismiss him. And he might also have had to take his finances into consideration. After all he had a family to support. As a part-time lecturer, he earned only a little pocket money by teaching.[17]

His social status as an official in the warlord government drew Lu Xun into a plight. He felt not only embarrassed but also vulnerable to his opponents' attacks. Once, for instance,

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[17]Lu Xun received a salary of three hundred silver dollars per month from the Ministry of Education and a pay of thirteen dollars and fifty cents per month from Beijing Women's Normal University. See Xue Suizhi 薛绥之 and others ed., *Lu Xun shengping shiliao huibian*, 鲁迅生平史料 汇编 (A collection of the historical materials of Lu Xun's career), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1983, vol. 3, p. 500, and p. 211.

during his polemics with the Modern Review Group, Chen Yuan seized upon this weakness of Lu Xun and declared: "He makes me sick!"[18]

Lu Xun described his awkwardness at being a warlord government official, sarcastically and explicitly, in his essay "Record of Issuing Pay" (*Ji faxin*, 记发薪),[19] and, implicitly, in some *Wild Grass* poems such as "The Dog's Retort" (*Gou de bojie*, 狗的驳诘), "To Express an Opinion" (*Lilun*, 立论), and "After Death" (*Sihou*, 死后).

All the things mentioned above made the mid-1920s the most trying days for Lu Xun. But this time was also the most productive period in Lu Xun's whole literary career. From 1924 to 1926, he finished more than two hundred pieces of creative writing and translation, including the story collection *Wandering*, the prose poetry collection *Wild Grass*, the essay collections *Unlucky Star* and *Sequel to the Unlucky Star*, as well as some pieces included in the story collection *Old Tales Retold*, the lyrical prose collection *Dawn Flowers Plucked at Dusk* (*Zhaohua xishi*, 朝花夕拾), and the essay collection *Tomb* (*Fen*, 坟).

Lu Xun tried to shake off his depression by engaging in writing desperately. During this period he often slept only two or three hours a night with his clothing on and without using a quilt.[20] He admitted: "Sometimes I hope to use up my life quickly, so intentionally I plunge into desperate writing."[21] It seemed that he also tortured himself in some other ways. For

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[18]Chen Yuan's 陈源 remark is: "Since he became an official in the Ministry of Education in the first year of the Republic, he has never left. Therefore when Yuan Shikai 袁世凯 claimed to be the emperor, he was in the Ministry of Education; when Cao Kun 曹琨 bribed the Congress to become president, he was in the Ministry of Education. . . . Even after Zhang Shizhao 章士钊, 'who represents shamelessness,' dismissed him, he still shouted: 'The position of Section Director (*qianshi*, 佥事) is not inferior.' . . . Actually it does not matter much for a person to be an official, but he makes me sick if he is an official but at the same time makes a face like this." See "Zhi Zhimo" 致志摩 (To Zhimo), in *Chenbao fukan* 晨报副刊 (Supplement of Morning Post), January 30, 1926, p. 3.

[19]On one hand Lu Xun tried to defend officials like himself: "The officials of the Republic of China all come from ordinary people and are never special race, although royal men of letters and newspapermen eye them as aliens and consider them particularly strange, mean, and laughable in comparison with themselves." On the other hand Lu Xun describes their occasionally financial straits, small political tricks, and mutually internal strives in a self-satiric tone. See "*Ji faxin*" 记发薪 (Record of issuing pay), *LXQJ*, vol. 3, pp. 349-54.

[20]Xu Guangping 许广平, *Xu Guangping yi Lu Xun* 许广平忆鲁迅 (Remembering Lu Xun by Xu Guangping), Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1979, p. 471.

[21]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping 许广平 dated may 30, 1925, in *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of *The Letters From Two Places*), Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., 1984, p. 69.

instance, he said, "I drank too much, intent on self-destruction."[22] Lu Xun himself clearly knew that his "drinking too much, smoking too much, and sleeping too little" accounted for his poor health.[23]

Lu Xun actually could not shake off his depression by "desperate writing" and "self-destruction." Rumor spread that he even contemplated suicide.[24] Lu Xun himself once confessed to an intimate friend: "I also often think about suicide and want to commit murder, but I can do neither. Perhaps I am not a warrior."[25]

People's social existence is a determinant in shaping their thoughts and feelings. Lu Xun's various frustrations at the mid-1920s must have severely affected his writing and have been encapsulated figuratively in *Wild Grass*. The somber element in some *Wild Grass* poems is ultimately the embodiment of his depressed mood. But on a deeper level, we can perceive in *Wild Grass* the unyielding mind, with which Lu Xun tried to grapple with his ongoing personal perplexities, overcome emotional suffering, and change current life.

Before I attempt to capture the glimpses of his philosophic meditations incorporated in *Wild Grass*, I also would like to trace the genesis of Lu Xun's philosophic and artistic thought during the mid-1920s.

Many scholars note the fact that Lu Xun began to translate *Symbols of Mental Anguish* (*Kumon no shocho*, 苦闷 的象徵), a literary theoretic work by the Japanese critic Kuriyagawa Hakuson (厨川白村, 1880-1923), just at the same time he started to write *Wild Grass*.[26] Ample evidence indicates that Lu Xun had been affected, to a degree, by

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[22]Lu Xun, "Zhe shi zheme yige yisi" 这是这么一个意思 (This is this kind of meaning), *LXQJ*, vol. 7, p. 263.
[23]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Qinwen 许钦文 dated September 30, 1925, *LXQJ*, vol. 11, p. 456.
[24]Xu Guangping accidentally found two daggers under the bedding in Lu Xun's bedroom. In the letter of June 1, 1925 to Lu Xun, she wrote anxiously: "It would be good if the gleaming daggers under the bedding is used to kill an enemy. To use for . . . seems . . . I don't want to hear that." (original elliptic marks). See *Liangdi shu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (Originals of *The Letters between Two Places*), 1984, p. 71.
[25]Lu Xun, a letter to Li Bingzhong 李秉中 dated September 24, 1924, *LXQJ*, vol. 11, p. 430.
[26]According to Lu Xun's diaries, he started to translate *Symbols of Mental Anguish* on September 22, 1924 and finished on October 10. The translation was published in *Chenbao Fukan* 晨报副刊 (Supplement of *Morning*

Kuriyagawa. In Kuriyagawa's literary theory, he saw a combination of Henri Louis Bergson's philosophy and Sigmund Freud's science. In the "Preface" to his translation of *Symbols of Mental Anguish*, Lu Xun wrote:

> According to the philosophy of Bergson and others, the author (Kuriyagawa) considers continuously ongoing vitality the foundation of human life. He also discovers in the science of Freud and others the roots of vitality, which he uses to interpret literature and the arts — particularly literature.[27]

Lu Xun's understanding of Bergson and Freud is not only through his translation of Kuriyagawa's work, nor are his references to them limited to this preface. He seemed to be quite familiar with their theories. Bergson's best-known concept is his vitalism. He argued against both Lamarck and Charles Darwin and asserted that biological evolution is impelled by a vital impetus that drives life to overcome downward drift and to struggle for upward development. Although Bergson's vitalism was not accepted by many scientists and philosophers, it became popular and influential in literature and art circles in the first half of the twentieth century. Those who are suffering from hardship in life are readily subject to his influence. Lu Xun's willingness to seek vitality is presented overtly in such poems as "Hope" and "The Passerby."

Several times Lu Xun mentioned Freud and his theory in his essays. He did not accept Freud's theory of sexuality as the main determinant in human life without reservation. He thought his notion of the pervasive importance of sexual motivation an overstatement. He wrote:

Gazette) from October 1 to 31. And later Lu Xun used it as a teaching material in his lecture at Beijing University and Beijing Women's Normal University. See *LXQJ*, vol. 14, p. 515.

[27]Lu Xun, "Kumen de Xiangzheng, yinyan" 苦闷 的象徵, 引言 (Preface to *Symbols of Mental Anguish*), *LXQJ*, vol. 10, p. 232.

> Freud perhaps had a little money and could eat his fill. He had no experience of hunger. so he only paid attention to sexual desire. . . . The root of hunger is certainly deeper than that of sexual desire.[28]

Lu Xun, however, did not deny the rational elements in Freud's theory. In 1922 Lu Xun experimented with Freud in the writing of his story "Buzhou Mountain" (*Buzhou shan*, 不周山). "At first I was serious," said Lu Xun, "although I only applied Freud's theory to explain the genesis of both man and literature."[29] In 1925, Lu Xun praised Freud, by contrasting him with some other philosophers and scientists such as John Locke and Blaise Pascal, who denied the beauty and function of poetry, for his "attention to literature and arts."[30] In 1927 Lu Xun explicitly declared that "Literary creativity is generally rooted in love."[31]

The above evidence exemplifies Bergson's and Freud's influence on Lu Xun's thought. This influence was realized partly through his translation of Kuriyagawa's *Symbols of Mental Anguish*, in which Kuriyagawa introduces both Bergson's and Freud's theories, and emphasizes what he calls "the power of life" in people's daily life and literary creativity.[32]

In Lu Xun's translation, we can find a paragraph as follows:

> There will be no evolution where there is no creation. . . . Therefore those who don't want to bring into play their own power of life at all, only imitate what their ancestors did under the hereditary yoke and within the traditional restraint, and possess the nature of slave but remain indifferent, in this sense, are the same as animals.[33]

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[28]Lu Xun, "Tiangshuo meng" 听说梦 (Listen to talking about dreams), *LXQJ*, vol. 4, p. 469.
[29]Lu Xun, "Gushi xinbian" 故事新编序言 (Preface" to *Old Tales Retold*), *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 341.
[30]Lu Xun, *Shige zhidi* 诗歌之敌 (The enemy of poetry), *LXQJ*, vol. 7, p. 236.
[31]Lu Xun, "Xiao zagan" 小杂感 (Little random thinking), *LXQJ*, vol. 3, p. 532.
[32]Kuriyagawa Hakuson 厨川白村, *Kumon no shocho* 苦闷 的象徵 (*Symbols of Mental Anguish*), Lu Xun trans., in *LXQJ*, 1973, vol. 13. pp. 17-132.
[33]Ibid., p. 29.

The Japanese scholar Katayama, when commenting on *Wild Grass*, considers that the Kuriyagawa remarks quoted above might readily appeal to Lu Xun and have spurred him to re-examine his ascetic life.[34] Katayama is right. Lu Xun did express the same opinion as Kuriyagawa in his private letters shortly after he finished the translation. One reads:

> I think that the mankind should act in order to progress, that is, to develop. It doesn't matter even if there are some mistakes in the action. It is totally wrong to live in half-alive and half-dead.[35]

In another letter, Lu Xun said:

> I tend to curse "the bitterness of the human world" (*renjianku* 人间苦), but not to detest death.[36]

Lu Xun's quotation of "the bitterness of the human world" came directly from *Symbols of Mental Anguish*. Kuriyagawa used it as an important concept in his exploring the relationship between human life and literary creativity. By borrowing Freud's viewpoint, Kuriyagawa sought to locate the genesis of literature and arts and their medium:

> Mental anguish and turmoil which result from a suppressed vitality are the root of literature and art. And their expressive medium is symbolism in the broadest sense.[37]

Lu Xun specifically accepted this paragraph and introduced it in the "Preface" to his translation. He seemed to take the theory as a given and experimented with it in his *Wild Grass*. In the following analysis I shall attempt to trace Lu Xun's philosophical meditations

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[34]Katayama Tomoyuki 片山智行, *Rojin yaso zenyaku* 鲁迅野草全释 (A complete explanation of Lu Xun's *Wild Grass*), 1991, p. 140.
[35]Lu Xun, "Beijing Tongxin" 北京通信 (Letter from Beijing), dated May 8, 1925, in *LXQJ*, vol. 3, p. 52.
[36]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping 许广平 dated May 30, 1925, in Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of *The Letters From Two Places*), p. 69.
[37]Lu Xun, "Kumen de xiangzheng, yinyan" 苦闷 的象徵, 引言 (Preface to *Symbols of Mental Anguish*), *LXQJ*, vol. 10, p. 232.

on the ego, will to life, the meaning of existence, and other relevant issues in *Wild Grass* based on the influence of Bergson's philosophy, Freud's psychoanalytic and Kuriyagawa's literary theory.

"Shadow's Leave-Taking"[38]

This poem was conceived in a unique imagination: a shadow offers a monologue expressing his unwillingness to go to "heaven, hell, or the future golden world." The shadow possesses nothing but "darkness and void." He can only exist between brightness and darkness. Otherwise, he will disappear into either of them. He is dissatisfied with his situation and wants to leave, but has no place to go: "I would rather wander in Nowhere."[39]

There has long been a debate on this poem in respect to Lu Xun's thought. During the discussion on "revolutionary literature" in the late 1920s, Qian Xingcun quoted two stanzas from the poem as evidence to show Lu Xun's "pernicious petty-bourgeoisie habit." He claimed that Lu Xun was neither reconciled to current reality nor did he cherish a hope for the future. As a result, he could only "wander in Nowhere."[40] In 1929 this opinion was echoed in an article in a leftist magazine *Leninist Youths* (*Liening qingnian*, 列宁青年), which condemned Lu Xun's "pessimism and nihilism," because he even didn't want to go to "the future golden world — the Communist world."[41] The article arbitrarily asserted that Lu Xun's "future golden world" was "the Communist world."

Lu Xun himself didn't think that such commentary was right. He discussed this poem several times with Feng Xuefeng. He said:

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[38]The poem was written on September 24, 1924 and published in *Yusi* 语丝, no. 4, December 8, 1924.
[39]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 165.
[40]Qian Xingcun 钱杏村, "Siqule de Ah Q shidai" 死去了的阿Q时代 (The era of Ah Q that died), in *Taiyang Yuekan* 太阳月刊 (The sun monthly), no. 3, March 1, 1928. Also see *Bei xiedu de Lu Xun* 被亵渎的鲁迅 (The Lu Xun blasphemed), Sun Yu 孙育 ed., Qunyan chubanshe, 1994, p. 50.
[41]De Zhao 得钊, "Yinianlai zhongguo wenxuejie shuping" 一年来中国文学界述评 (Review of the Chinese literature circle in the last year), *Liening Qingnian* 列宁青年 (Leninist Youth), March 10, 1929, vol. 1, no. 11.

> This time they quoted my "Shadow's Leave-Taking" and called me a nihilist. Because "there is something I dislike in your future golden world; I do not want to go there." They asserted that I do not even want to go to the Communist golden world. . . . But I would like to ask first, do we only look to the future golden world?[42]

Although Lu Xun rebutted the criticisms of the leftist writers, he admitted the gloominess in the poem. He said: "Perhaps I view reality too darkly."[43]

Later, in the 1980s for instance, the poem was interpreted in an absolutely different way. It was argued that "what this prose poem describes is the shadow's farewell to a person. Actually it is Lu Xun's breaking away from the passive thought represented by the shadow."[44]

The great interpretive gap between "pessimism and nihilism" and "breaking away from the passive thought" indicates a defect in the *Wild Grass* studies on mainland China: many scholars tend to assume Lu Xun's political thought at will and at the same time pay little attention to the text and Lu Xun's creative intent.

In my interpretation, I attempt to avoid previous wrangles over Lu Xun's political beliefs and emphasize Lu Xun's philosophy and private feelings more. In order to make my interpretation sufficiently acceptable, I apply a close reading. The poem begins with a prelude:

> When a man sleeps until he loses the sense of time, then comes the shadow to bid farewell, saying these words — [45]

From the prelude we know the shadow is bidding farewell to a "man" — his master. The rest of the poem consists of five stanzas, all of which are the shadow's monologue, addressed to his master who is sound sleep.

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[42]Feng Xuefeng, *Huiyi Lu Xun* 回忆 鲁迅 (Remembering Lu Xun), 1952, p. 16.
[43]Ibid., p. 17.
[44]Sun Yushi 孙玉石, *Yecao yanjiu* 野草研究 (*Wild Grass* study),1982, p. 49.
[45]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, 165.

> There is something I dislike in heaven, I don't want to go there. There is something I dislike in hell, I don't want to go there. There is something I dislike in your future golden world, I don't want to go there.
> It is you, though, that I dislike.
> Friend, I'll no longer follow you; I don't want to stay here.
> I don't want to!
> Ah, no! I don't want to. I would rather wander in Nowhere.[46]

Although there have been a variety of interpretations of "heaven, hell, and the future golden world," what each of them entails is not important to my interpretation. Most important is the verse: "It is you, though, that I dislike. Friend, I'll no longer follow you; I don't want to stay here."

Charles Alber declares that the shadow "substitutes for the author."[47] Leo Ou-fan Lee also views the image of the shadow as "the alter ego of the poet."[48] Based on these arguments, I would like to interpret the above verses as revealing a split that is taking place in Lu Xun's ego. Sigmund Freud treats the ego as an integral and unitary entity. He writes: "The ego represents what we call reason and sanity."[49] Once reason and sanity are lacking in a person's mind, a split in the ego will occur. If the shadow represents Lu Xun's ego, the "man" or the master whom the shadow wants to leave can be viewed accordingly as the author himself. In this light, the shadow's Leave-Taking may be interpreted as the Leave-Taking from Lu Xun's ego to Lu Xun himself.

In "Leave-Taking," the shadow manifests three major characteristics, all of which indicate from different perspectives that a split in the ego has taken place in Lu Xun's mind.

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[46]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, 165, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol., 1, p. 320.
[47]Charles Alber, *"Wild Grass*, Symmetry and Parallelism in Lu Hsün's Prose Poems," *Critical Essays on Chinese Literature*, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1976, p. 4.
[48]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987, p. 99.
[49]Mortimer J. Adler and Mark Van Doren, ed., *Great Treasury of West Thought*, New York: R. R. Bowker co., 1977, p. 219.

The first characteristic of the shadow is his skepticism about reason, which is mainly expressed in the second stanza. Henri Bergson said: "Reason is the distinguishing mark of man."[50] The shadow, however, challenges the validity of reason. He doubts not only the religious belief in "heaven and hell," but also the secular belief in "the future golden world." So he decides not to go to any of them. The shadow's skepticism about reason indicates a change in Lu Xun's thinking. For many years Lu Xun believed in evolutionism, which has long been defined as a key element of his early thought.[51] He said: "The future must be better than the past and the young must be better than the old."[52] But Lu Xun witnessed and experienced too many cases when his opponents, and even friends and relatives failed to exercise reason. He also realized that not all the young had the potential of calling upon reason to help when confronted with a problem. In his mid-forties, he himself was still unable to maintain a reasonable life. Finally he doubted that reason was the only way to recognize and guide human life. Personal frustration taught him to emphasize emotion as much if not more than reason, and to emphasize the present life more than "the future golden world." This kind of skepticism about reason permeates a number of poems in *Wild Grass*, such as, for example, "Hope" and "The Passerby."

The second characteristic of the shadow is his pessimism, which is explicitly expressed in the third and the fifth stanzas:

> I am but a shadow, now bidding you farewell before sinking into darkness. Yet darkness will engulf me; and light with also dissolve me.
>
> . . .
>
> You think of my bequest, yet what can I offer you? Nothing, except darkness and void.[53]

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[50]Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion,* R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton trans., Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1956, p. 68.
[51]Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白, *Qu Qiubai Xuanji* 瞿秋白选集 (A Selection of Qu Qiubai), Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1959, p. 335.
[52]*LXQJ*, vol. 4, p. 5.
[53]*LXQJ*. vol. 2, pp. 165-6 Leo Ou-fan Lee's translation in *Voices from the Iron House*, p. 98.

In the above quotation, the shadow is questioning his own essence. As a shadow with attributes of darkness and void, he can only exist in a paradoxical situation between darkness and light. Otherwise he will be engulfed by the former or dissolved by the latter. In Leo Ou-fan Lee's opinion, "The shadow's two parting gifts — darkness and void — can be viewed not only as the natural attributes of the shadow, but also as two metaphorical epithets characterizing the poet's inner self."[54]

Therefore the pessimism of the shadow can be viewed as a manifestation of Lu Xun's pessimism, an expressive form of the split in his own ego. In the mid-1920s, faced with many oppressive social and personal issues, he developed a deep pessimism about his own role as a thinker, writer, official, brother, and a husband. In the poem, it seems to me, Lu Xun is meditatively questioning himself: What am I? Who am I? What kind of person am I?

Unfortunately Lu Xun cannot come up with a satisfactory answer. In the poem the shadow's response is negative: "I am but a shadow." He has "nothing except darkness and void," and he can exist only between light and darkness. The shadow's plight is reminiscent of William Lyell's definition of Lu Xun as "an in-between intellectual."[55] In the mid-1920s, Lu Xun was perhaps not only "an in-between intellectual;" he was also an in-between official, brother, and husband or, more generally, an in-between person with an in-between ego. In the poem he actually implies that he himself — like the shadow between light and darkness

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[54]Leo On-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1989, p. 99.

[55]William A. Lyell, Jr., *Lu Hsün's Vision of Reality*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1976, p. 304. In mainland China, a similar argument to view Lu Xun as "a historical in-between object" (*lishi zhongjian wu*, 历史中间物) was made by Wang Hui 汪晖. See his *Fandui juewang — Lu Xun de jingshen jiegou yu Nahan Panghuang yanjiu* 反对绝望 — 鲁迅的精神结构与呐喊彷徨研究 (Resist despair — A study of Lu Xun's spiritual construction as well as *Call for Arms* and *Wandering*,) Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1991, p. 132. In spite of the awkwardness of the terminology, Wang Hui's definition of Lu Xun as "a historical in-between object," was viewed as a new breakthrough and "caused a sensation in Lu Xun study circles." See Mao Xiaoping 毛小平, "Lu Xun yanjiu gaishu" 鲁迅研究概述 (A summary of Lu Xun study), in *Zhongguo wenxue nianjian* 中国文学年鉴 (Almanac of Chinese literature), 1991-92, p. 392. Many scholars in mainland China were unaware that William Lyell had described Lu Xun as an intellectual between traditional and modern cultures a decade earlier than Wang Hui did.

— is deeply entrapped in a predicament. Lu Xun profoundly metaphorizes his pessimism as the dark and void shadow of the poem.

The third characteristic of the shadow is dissatisfaction with his own existence. This is mainly presented in the fourth and the sixth stanzas:

> However, I am still wandering between light and shade, uncertain whether it is dusk or dawn. . . . At the time when I lose the sense of time, I shall go far away alone.
>
> . . .
>
> This is what I would like, friend —
>
> To go far away alone to a darkness from which not only will you be excluded, but other shadows too. There will be myself alone sunk in the darkness. That world will be wholly mine. [56]

The shadow no longer wants to exist between light and darkness, so he bids farewell to his master. This is actually a reflection of Lu Xun's own feelings. He characterizes his predicament in the mid-1920s as the shadow, who, unsurprisingly, wants to be gone, — to change his existence. In Charles Alber's opinion, the shadow seems to speak to himself:

> "I can only be satisfied if I wander into nothingness. I can only be myself if I cease to exist." In this light, the shadow's so-called "Leave-Taking" is a traumatic experience, because Leave-Taking actually means death.[57]

From this we know that the shadow is absolutely dissatisfied with his own existence. In order to change his existence, the shadow is willing to pay any cost, even to cease to exist — "to sink into the darkness."

Some scholars consider "Shadow's Leave-Taking" the most difficult poem in *Wild Grass* to interpret.[58] But if we can discern the basic facets of the shadow's pessimism and

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[56]*LXQJ*, vol. 1, pp. 165-6, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 321.

[57]Charles J. Alber, *"Wild Grass*, Symmetry and Parallelism in Lu Hsün's Prose Poems," *Critical Essays on Chinese Literature*, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1976, p. 4.

dissatisfaction, we will know that the poem, through the existential dilemma of the shadow, reflects Lu Xun's intellectual and emotional paradox at a crucial juncture in his own life. In the poem, it seems that Lu Xun himself ponders shaking off his old, split ego and changing his miserable existence. In the following *Wild Grass* poems, he continuously expresses his desire to make a change and to find a rational existence. The "Shadow" serves as an initial poem to understand the subsequent pieces relevant to the same theme, especially those framing the logical dilemma between a protagonist's ego and his social and personal existence.

"The Beggars" (*Qiuqizhe*, 求乞者)[59]

This poem was written on the same day as "Shadow's Leave-Taking" and could be understood as a sequel to "Shadow." Beside a dilapidated wall, in the poem, the first person narrator is wandering alone in the autumnal breeze, which sends a chill through his clothes. Dust is everywhere. Several other people are also walking alone nearby. The setting of the poem is cold and desolate.

Two beggars in succession beg of the narrator, who refuses to give alms however, because neither "looks unhappy."

> I do not give him alms. I have no wish to give alms. I stand above those alms-givers. For him I have only disgust, suspicion, and hate.[60]

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[58]Wang Yao 王瑶 and Li Helin 李何林, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue ji Yecao Gushi Xinbian de zhengming* 中国现代文学及野草故事新编的争鸣 (Modern Chinese literature and the debates on *Wild Grass* and *Old Tales Retold*), Shanghai: Zhishi chubanshe, 1990, p. 103.

[59]This poem was written on September 24, 1924 and published in *Yusi* 语丝, no. 4, December 8, 1924.

[60]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 167, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 322.

A striking point of the poem is that the I narrator himself is planning to go begging at this time. Because he refuses to give alms, he fears that his own begging will be refused by those who also refuse to give alms:

> I shall receive no alms, not even the wish to give alms. I shall receive the disgust, suspicions, and hate of those who consider themselves above the alms-givers.[61]

In the poem, Lu Xun explores the essence of human beings and their relationship with others. A human being does not exist by himself. On the contrary he or she is surrounded by others. The essence of humanity is incorporated into a human being's relationship with others. The most individual social attribute which distinguishes a being as human is the ability to practice moral responsibility for others. In the poem, however, the I narrator, the beggars, and the people walking alone are all indifferent, selfish, and inconsiderate. "Society then is a collection of maimed individuals who cannot interact,"[62] said Charles Alber. The "dilapidated wall," accordingly, can be viewed as symbolizing a barrier to interaction between individuals.

Under these circumstances, Lu Xun compels the protagonist, who does not give alms and at the same time plans to beg, to face the first paradox: How can a selfish person, who does not want to benefit others, accept benefit from others? According to Charles Alber, "The conclusion, as the narrator himself realizes, seems inevitable, for even from a purely human standpoint, only the merciful can obtain mercy."[63]

Here a deeper question arises: why doesn't the protagonist avoid becoming a selfish person by simply giving the beggars some alms? To answer this question, I would like to start with an analysis of the image of the beggar. The beggar is one of the most important

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[61]Ibid., p. 168, Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 323.
[62]Charles Alber, "*Wild Grass*, Symmetry and Parallelism in Lu Hsün's Prose Poems," in *Critical Essays on Chinese Literature*, William H. Nienhauser, Jr. ed., 1976. p. 7.
[63]Ibid., p. 6.

images in the whole collection, in that he is a significant link through a number of the *Wild Grass* poems. The beggar image appears not only in "Beggars," but also in "The Passerby" and "The Dog's Retort." In "After Death," the protagonist, who dies by the road with no one to care for him, seems to be a beggar too. The protagonist in "Tombstone Inscriptions" (*Mujiewen*, 墓碣文), who used to be a "wandering soul" (*youhun*, 游魂), strongly suggests a character similar to a wandering beggar as well.

I would like to view the first person protagonist, who is also caught up in a dilemma similar to the "shadow," as Lu Xun's persona. This is not only because he himself had been labeled "a beggar" (*qishizhe*, 乞食者) in his teenage years, when he took refuge in his relatives' family after his grandfather was implicated in a bribery case and put into the imperial jail,[64] but also because he employs understated images such as shadow, beggar, and prostitute as a strategy to fulfill his figurative self-reflections. The strategy of understatement has an effect of maintaining his dignity in the face of humiliation.

When the I persona is associated with Lu Xun's own painful experience of having been regarded as a beggar, it is clear that the reason he refuses to give alms is that they "do not look unhappy." They do not deserve to accept alms. They go begging "as if this were some game." He hates the way they beg: to kowtow, to chase, or to pretend dumbness. They are not real beggars in real need. Therefore, emotionally, the I persona has "only disgust, suspicion, and hate" towards them. After he refuses to give alms, the I persona, however, prepares the strategy for his own begging:

> I wonder what method I would use in begging. In what voice should I speak? What dumb show would I use if pretending to be dumb?[65]

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[64]Lu Xun, "Ewen yiben *Ah Q Zhengzhuan* xu ji zhuzhe zixu zhuanlue" 俄文译本阿Q正传序及 著者自叙传略 (Preface to Russian edition of *The True Story of Ah Q* and the author's brief autobiography), *LXQJ*, vol. 7. P. 83.
[65]*LXQJ*, pp. 167-8, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 322.

Unfortunately, the description forces him to face the second and a more severe paradox: How can he receive alms by using the same begging strategies that cause only "disgust, suspicion, and hate"? This is an insurmountable paradox. As a result, he can do nothing but take an attitude of nihilism: "I shall beg with inactivity and silence. . . . I shall at least receive nothingness."[66]

The protagonist in "The Beggars" is still characterized by pessimism like the shadow in "Shadow's Leave-Taking." Also like the shadow who determines to leave, he decides to make a change by going begging, even if he may accept nothing. But when he attempts to beg, he hesitates to start.

In the following section I shall make a connection to Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist viewpoint to more deeply appreciate the I persona's hesitation. When I do this, it doesn't mean Sartre's thought had any influence on the creation of *Wild Grass*, because Sartre's existentialism developed later than the production of *Wild Grass*.[67] What I want to do is to demonstrate some common experiences of human life in an existentialist light.

Sartre tells us one is never free of one's "situation," although one is always free to deny that situation and to try to change it.[68] The ego, according to Sartre, is not simply self-awareness or self-consciousness, instead the ego is an ongoing project with other people in the world.[69] In "Beggars" Lu Xun allegorically tells us that a person's ego, or a person as ego, is always in the process of choosing. However, it is never a free choice, but a choice restricted by the relationship with others. Both the I persona's refusal to give alms and hesitation to go begging indicate this limitation. The paradox facing the I persona is a general philosophical dilemma that many protagonists in *Wild Grass* poems face, and it is

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[66]Ibid., p. 168, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 322.
[67]The same is that when I occasionally employ any other modern literary and psychological theories in my analyses of other poems from *Wild Grass*.
[68]Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 710.
[69]Ibid., p. 710.

more powerfully expressed in a number of other poems in *Wild Grass* such as "The Passerby" and "Tombstone Inscriptions."

"Hope" (*Xiwang*, 希望)[70]

This poem was written on New Year's day 1925, when Lu Xun was forty-four, and he felt very old:

> I am probably growing old. Is it not a fact that my hair is turning white? Is it not a fact that my hands are trembling? Then the hands of my soul must also be trembling. The hair of my soul must also be turning white.[71]

In this poem, the first person persona does not have any mask like "shadow" or "beggar" in the foregoing poems. In this analysis, I simply identify the I persona with Lu Xun himself and his feelings as Lu Xun's own. This identification is supported not only by the fact that Lu Xun's hands were also trembling as the I persona's in the poem,[72] but also by Lu Xun's actual life at the time the poem was written.

In "Hope" the I persona has long cherished a hope in his life: "Hope, hope, I wield this shield of hope to resist the invasion of the empty, dark night, although behind this shield is still the dark night of emptiness. Thus gradually I have wasted my youth."[73] At the time he feels old, he is still unable to obtain a reasonable life. Hope seems to him nothing but "void and vain." He then "put[s] down the shield of hope" and hears the *Song of Hope* by Hungarian poet Sándor Petöfi (1823-1849):

> What is hope? A prostitute!
> Alluring to all, she gives herself to all,

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[70]The poem was written on January 1, 1925 and published in *Yusi* 语丝 no. 10, January 19, 1925.
[71]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 117, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 326.
[72]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping dated Decembrt 2, 1926, *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of the letters from two places), Zhou Haiying 周海婴, ed., p. 259.
[73]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 177, Leo Ou-fan Lee's translation in *Voices from the Iron House*, p. 100.

> Until you have sacrificed a priceless treasure —
> your youth — then she forsakes you.[74]

Finally the I persona gives up "the shield of hope" and decides "to grapple alone with the dark night" in despair. But at this time he finds that "there is not even a real dark night" before him. Under these circumstances, Lu Xun concludes his poem with another line of Sándor Petöfi: "Despair is as void and vain as hope."[75]

There has long been a debate about the theme of the poem. Lu Xun himself once explained that he wrote the poem because of his surprise at "the spiritlessness of the young."[76] According to Lu Xun's own explanation, many scholars tend to decide the theme as a criticism of China's young. For example, Feng Xuefeng said: "The author's intention was to oppose the spiritlessness of the young and to call on them to rise up and struggle against the darkness."[77] Another scholar stated: "Lu Xun's purpose of writing this poem was not to lead people to indulge in despair, but to arouse the young to tenaciously resist despair."[78]

In the 1990s a Japanese scholar questioned the above statements by the Chinese scholars. He argued that Lu Xun's own words about "Hope" were mainly to show his expectation of the young. At the time "Hope" was written, the young in China were never "spiritless." So the theme of the poem is not to criticize the spiritlessness of the youth, but "to encourage the progressive young, who should surpass the poet himself."[79] However, before long this opinion brought a retort from a Chinese scholar, who criticized the Japanese

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[74]Ibid., p. 178, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 327.
[75]Ibid., p. 178, Leo Ou-fan Lee's translation in *Voices from the Iron House*, p. 101.
[76]Lu Xun, "Yecao yingwen yiben xu" 野草英文译本序 (A preface to the English edition of *Yecao*), *LXQJ*, vol. 4, p. 356.
[77]Feng Xuefeng 冯雪峰, 1956, p. 18.
[78]Sun Yushi 孙玉石, 1982, p. 52.
[79]Katayama Tomoyuki 片山智行, *Rojin yaso zenshaku* 鲁迅野草全释 (A complete explanation of *Wild Grass*), 1991, p. 78.

scholar "for having ignored the explicit explanation of Lu Xun himself, that is, the creative intention of the text that he himself illustrated."[80]

Although two different arguments come from Chinese and Japanese scholars concerning the theme of "Hope" are given tit for tat, both of them consider the theme of the poem related to the young. But I would like to argue that the theme of the poem does not directly concern the young. There are only two lines in the poem that involve the young — approximately three percent of the whole text. [81] The rest of the poem is all presentation of Lu Xun's own sentiments — his remorse at growing old and intention to seek "youth outside the body" (*shenwai de qingchun*, 身外的青春). In my opinion the poem expresses a change in Lu Xun's attitude towards life. After he presents a figurative summary of his past life without "hope," he decides to call for "youth" or vitality to support his coming life.

In the poem Lu Xun once again recapitulates the dilemma in his personal life. When he cherished a hope in life, he lost his youth in the dark night; when he decided to fight against the dark night, he lost the dark night itself — "There is not even a real dark night in front of me."[82] This means he lost his aim of fighting or, more precisely, the logical premise for his life and struggle. When Leo Ou-fan Lee comments on the paradoxical factor in quite a few *Wild Grass* poems, including "Hope," that are conceived in a paradoxical form, he says:

> It is clear that these series of paradoxical setups are means by which Lu Xun probes his own inner tensions. He seems to vacillate between, and agonize over, the opposite poles of hope and despair. How should he define the boundaries between inner self and outer reality and recover meaning in an existence trapped in a vortex of paradoxes? This question lies at the center of Lu Xun's personal "philosophy."[83]

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[80]Sun Yushi 孙玉石, "Lu Xun Yecao chongshi IV" 鲁迅野草重释, 四 (Re-interpretation of *Wild Grass*, IV), *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan* 鲁迅研究月刊, 1996, no. 4, p, 43.

[81]The two lines are: "Have the young of the world all grown old?" and "The young are very peaceful." in *LXQJ*, vol. 2, pp. 177-8.

[82]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 178.

[83]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987. p. 101.

As for "Lu Xun's personal philosophy" in the poem, I would like to suppose it a rejection of the rational concepts of both hope and despair, and see it as a resorting to both the inner impulse based on his own perceptual experience of life and the will required to overcome his predicament. As Lin Yü-sheng has pointed out:

> His agonized tension between hope and despair led him to emphasize will — the will to strive to answer the call in life. Here his thought is characterized by an existentialist stress on the meaning of will in human nature and history without entailing the existentialist conception of the absurdity of life.[84]

On the first day of the new year Lu Xun determined in the poem to "seek youth outside the body" or vitality and a reasonable life. Lu Xun also said the same thing in a private letter four months after he wrote "Hope": "I am now standing at an intersection and have many roads to go. I am afraid of nothing. The life is my own, so I might as well stride forward on the road that I think can be taken. Even though there are abysses, thorns, alleys, and fire pits ahead, I will take the responsibility. . . . It is totally wrong to live in half-life and half-death."[85] Based on the preceding discussion, I argue that the theme of "Hope" is longing for a new life by Lu Xun himself and only indirectly related to the young of China.

"The Kite" (Fengzheng, 风筝)[86]

In its style, to a large extent, this poem resembles Lu Xun's lyrical prose reminiscences selected for *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* (*Zhaohua xishi*, 朝花夕拾). As in "Hope," without any masquerade, the I narrator appears as Lu Xun's persona in "The Kite." In a sincere tone of voice, he seems to tell a true story that happened many years ago. As a teenager he never liked flying kites, because he detested kites as playthings of good-for-nothing children. One day in order to prevent his younger brother from flying kites, he

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[84]Lin Yü-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness*, 1979, p. 137.
[85]Lu Xun, "Beijing Tongxin" 北京通信 (A letter from Beijing), dated May 8, 1925, in *LXQJ*, vol. 3, pp. 51-2.
[86]This poem was written on January 24, 1925 and published in *Yusi* 语丝 no. 12, February 2, 1925.

trampled on and smashed the kite his brother had made behind his back. After that, he "stalked out proudly, leaving him standing in despair in that little room."[87]

Many years later, from a foreign book on child-rearing, the I persona learned for the first time that play is the best occupation of children, and playthings are their good angels.

> At once this childhood tyranny over the spirit forgotten for more than twenty years, came to my mind; and that instant my heart seemed to turn to lead and sink heavily down and down.[88]

Lu Xun's two younger brothers both denied the authenticity of the kite-making event. Zhou Zuoren said that it only happened in Lu Xun's "imagination" and was "a convenient way to make a point."[89] Zhou Jianren said that "He (Lu Xun) himself indeed did not fly kites, but he didn't harshly oppose others flying kites."[90]

Despite the denial of this kite event ever happening by Lu Xun's two younger brothers, Jon Kowallis still identifies the child in the poem with Zhou Zuoren, who "made kites while Lu Xun made himself sick with worry about how best they could apply themselves."[91] Kowallis also attempts to provide a reason for Lu Xun's dislike of Zhou Zuoren's flying kites. As the oldest son of a collapsing family, he felt the blow brought about by the case of his grandfather's bribery more acutely than Zhou Zuoren, who was only about ten at that time. Zhou Zuoren was at play, while Lu Xun, in order to support the family in a calamity, was frequently forced, under the disdainful eyes of the neighbors, to sell various household

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[87]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 183, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 331.
[88]Ibid., p. 183, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 331.
[89]Zhou Qiming 周启明 (Zhou Zuoren 周作人), *Lu Xun de qingnian shidai* 鲁迅的青年时代 (Lu Xun's youth), Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1957. Quote from Katayama Tomoyuki 片山智行, *Rojin yaso zenyaku* 鲁迅野草全释 (A complete explanation of Lu Xun's Wild Grass), 1991, p. 108.
[90]Qiao Feng 乔峰 (Zhou Jianren 周建人), *Luejiang guanyu Lu Xun de shi* 略讲关于鲁迅的事 (Briefly tell something about Lu Xun), Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1955, p. 8.
[91]Jon Kowallis, *The Lyrical Lu Xun*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996, p. 50.

sundries to the pawnshop.[92] This might well account for his dislike of Zhou Zuoren's enjoying play.

Even though the kite event may be imaginative as Lu Xun's two brothers said, I agree with Kowallis's judgment in the sense that the theme of the poem may be related to Lu Xun's breakup with Zhou Zuoren. After the split between the two brothers, Zhou Zuoren cut out about ten characters from his diary of July 17, 1923 when the break happened, deciding to hide the real reason for the occurrence and make no further mention of it.[93] But in 1924, after another disturbance occurred between them when Lu Xun returned to the previous residence to pick up his books and utensils, Zhou Zuoren wrote and published an essay entitled "Broken Leg Bone" (*pojiaogu* 破脚骨) — a slang word meaning "hooligan" in Shaoxing dialect — to curse Lu Xun.[94]

Lu Xun is known as a person of an uncompromising mind. He opposed capitulation and tended to fight back against every attack. But the conflict with Zhou Zuoren was an exception. He remained passive from beginning to end. "Lu Xun himself never published one word [on the conflict] during his life-time," admitted Zhou Zuoren. "This is a point of his greatness."[95] As for the reason why Lu Xun always kept silent, I guess that Lu Xun perhaps felt guilty for something that happened during the event. His guilty feelings toward his brother can be traced in "The Kite" and other works as well.

In "The Kite," Lu Xun profoundly regrets what he has done to his younger brother and hopes to earn his forgiveness. Beside "The Kite," in 1925 Lu Xun also wrote the stories "Regret for the Past" (*Shangshi* 伤逝) and "Brothers" (*Dixiong* 弟兄), both being imbued

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[92]Lu Xun himself once depicts this in his "Nahan zixu" 呐喊自序 (Preface to *Call to Arms*), *LXQJ*, vol. 1, p. 415.

[93]Zhou Zuoren 周作人, *Zhitang huixiang lu* 知堂回想录 (Reminiscence of Zhou Zuoren), pp. 424-6.

[94]The essay was published in *Chenbao fukan* 晨报副刊 (Supplement of morning gazette), no. 139, June, 18, 1924. Also see *Zhou Zuoren sanwen* 周作人散文 (Essays of Zhou Zuoren), Zhang Gaoming 张高明 and Fan Qiao 范桥 ed., Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1992, vol. 1, pp. 513-7.

[95]Zhou Zuoren 周作人, *Zhitang huixiang lu* 知堂回想录 (Reminiscences of Zhou Zuoren), p. 425.

with Lu Xun's feelings of deep regret for the break with his beloved brother. Zhou Zuoren himself clearly understood Lu Xun's regret. He admitted that the plot in "Brothers" was based faithfully on the fact that Lu Xun nursed him considerately during his illness.[96] And according to Zhou Zuoren's understanding, "'Regret for the Past' is not an ordinary romance, but a story that borrows from the death of the lovers to mourn the break with a the brothers' affections."[97]

What Lu Xun attempts to explain in "The Kite" may well be that he did not commit the misdeed on purpose to hurt his younger brother's feelings, but rather because of certain misunderstandings. Even so he still composes the poem in a severe tone of self-criticism. He bears the moral responsibility and criticizes himself for "this childhood tyranny over spirit."[98]

The I persona goes to his younger brother to ask for forgiveness. He admits his "thoughtlessness" in the past and hopes that in return the younger brother would say "But I don't blame you at all." And then he would have felt forgiven and his heart would henceforth have become relaxed. The younger brother, however, does not say as he expects. He has completely forgotten that there ever was such a thing. This makes the I persona feel sadder: "The thing was completely forgotten, with no hard feelings. In that case, what forgiveness can there be? Without hard feelings, forgiveness is a lie." The I persona is aware that he will never get forgiveness from his younger brother. "What hope is there for me now? My heart will always be heavy."[99]

One factor that should be mentioned here is that "The Kite" was adapted from an early essay of 1919 entitled "My Brother" (*Wo de xiongdi*, 我的兄弟), which might have been inspired by Lu Xun's regret for certain petty conflicts between these two brothers in their

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[96]Zhou Xiashou 周遐寿 (Zhou Zuoren 周作人), *Lu Xun xiaoshuo li de renwu* 鲁迅小说里的 人物 (The characters in Lu Xun's stories), Shanghai chuban gongsi, 1954, p. 195.
[97]Zhou Zuoren 周作人, *Zhitang huixiang lu* 知堂回想录 (Reminiscences of Zhou Zuoren), pp. 426-7.
[98]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 183, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 331.
[99]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 184, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 332.

childhood. This essay records the same story, but it differs from "The Kite" in two points. First, the essay does not have the detail about the author's ignorance of the importance and justification of children's playing. Second, it ends with a happy ending: "Later I realized my fault. But my brother totally forgot my fault. He always calls me 'brother' lovely."[100]

Even though in the adapted poem Lu Xun stresses that he perpetrated the misdeed out of misunderstandings, he still cannot obtain forgiveness. This may imply the injury in Lu Xun's mind caused by Zhou Zuoren's harsh attitude towards him after the breakup of their brotherhood. Zhou Zuoren never showed any trace of an intention to reconcile. He adopted a stance of what he himself called "no argument."[101] As a result, Lu Xun lost the possibility of receiving forgiveness.

At the end of the poem, Lu Xun expresses his "indefinable sadness." Although it is in the spring, the season of flying kites, he feels that "I had better hide in dread winter. But clearly all about me winter reigns, and is even now offering me its utmost rigor and coldness."[102]

January 24, 1925, the day Lu Xun wrote "The Kite," was the Chinese New Year's day. Traditionally this festival is the time for family reunion. Lu Xun couldn't reunite with his brother, even though they both lived in Beijing then. It is quite understandable that he wrote this poem as a self-imposed repentance for the break with his brother by describing an earlier wrongdoing. What disturbs Lu Xun most is still a paradox: he repents the misdeed and bears the moral responsibility, but even so, he is neither to be forgiven nor to be blamed, because he totally lost his counterpart, to whom he wants to express his repentance and from whom he wants to get forgiveness. The two brothers' separation hurt Lu Xun's feelings badly and

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[100]Lu Xun, *Wo de xiongdi* 我的兄弟 (My brother), *LXQJ*, vol. 8, p. 96.
[101]Zhou Zuoren 周作人, *Zhitang huixiang lu* 知堂回想录 (Reminiscences of Zhou Zuoren), p. 420.
[102]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 184, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 332.

left an indelible mark on the writing of *Wild Grass*. It too accounts for the gloomy tones of this prose poetry collection.

"The Passerby" (*Guoke*, 过客)[103]

This is the only piece cast in the form of a poetic drama. It is also the longest and perhaps the most important piece in the sense that Lu Xun concentrated in it his own philosophy about the ego, the meaning of life, the human will, and other relevant issues. The plot of the play can be briefly summarized as follows:

"Someday at dusk," a beggar, who is the protagonist of the play, appears "somewhere." Along a small road he travels from the east to the west. A barren and dismal landscape surrounds the space in which he acts. He meets an old man about seventy years old and a girl of about ten in front of a little mud hut where they live. The old man tells him there are only tombs ahead and persuades him to return. But the little girl disagrees with the old man and says there is the prospect of many wild flowers rather than tombs. She offers him a piece of cloth to dress the wound on his foot. He, however, refuses both the old man's advice and the little girl's cloth, and stubbornly continues his journey — "limps on towards the wilderness."[104]

By exploiting the dramatic device of simplification, Lu Xun reduces the characters, the plot, and the setting of the poetic play to the minimum. Thus the play is endowed with a strong symbolic effect. For example, there are only three colors described in the drama — the white beard and hair of the old man and his black gown, the black mustache of the passerby and his black clothing, and the little girl's auburn hair, black eyes, and her gown with black squares against a white background. The sharply contrasting colors seem to symbolize Lu Xun's feelings concerning life fluctuating between hope and despair.

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[103]This piece was written on March 2, 1925 and published in *Yusi* 语丝 no. 17, March 9, 1925.
[104]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 194.

Besides colors, a number of other dramatic designs, such as the time "dusk," the ages of the characters, the direction of the passerby's journey from the east to the west, the vague tombs or flowers at the end of his destination, and the metaphysical discussions among the characters all suggest heavy symbolism. As William Schultz points out, in "The Passerby," as well as in Lu Xun's story "Medicine" (*Yao*, 药), "without additional elaboration it can be reiterated that even his human types in one way or another all stand as symbols of the less desirable human characteristics."[105] Due to its symbolic features, the poetic drama is to some degree open to diverse interpretations.

Scholars have made various attempts from different perspectives to reveal the theme of the poem and to enrich its aesthetic connotation. William Schultz proposed in the 1950s to view the characters in "The Passerby" as symbols of different generations:

> In *kuo-k'e* ("The Passerby," 过客), for instance, the dramatic figures are no more than shadowy symbols meant to personify three generations — the old man who represents retreat from life in his refusal to face its fundamental problems, the middle-aged seeker after new and more meaningful values who is eternally hounded about a non-phenomenal symbolic world, and the young daughter who still sees the world and society through the tinted glasses of childish delight.[106]

In the 1970s Lin Yü-sheng saw "an existentialist stress on the meaning of will in human nature" that "is forcefully shown in Lu Hsün's *Kuo-k'e* (The Passerby, 过客)." He suggested that "His agonized tension between hope and despair led him to emphasize will — the will to strive to answer the calling in life."[107]

In the 1980s Leo Ou-fan Lee tried to derive a more universal or philosophic significance out of the poetic drama. In his opinion, the characters are not only

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[105]William Schultz, "Lu Hsün, The Creative Years," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1955, p. 373.
[106]William Schultz, "Lu Hsün, The Creative Years," 1955, p. 372.
[107]Lin Yü-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness*, 1979, p. 137.

"representatives of the older and younger generations," but also "personifications of the past and the future."[108] On the one hand, the play "may be taken as Lu Xun's personal allegory;" on the other hand, "however, Lu Xun seems to intend him to be a middle-aged 'every man.' He is nameless, for he does not know his real name. . . . He is, therefore, a composite reflection of what others see of him."[109] More importantly Lee points out Lu Xun's meditations on life that is cast in the play:

> "Ever since I can remember, I have been walking like this." Life is but a process of walking, and he must walk on, in order to complete his journey toward death. The act of walking becomes, therefore, the only significant act in an existence threatened with meaninglessness. Compared to "The Shadow's Farewell," the protagonist's decision seems to be not so much that of a nihilist as that of an existentialist. We sense that in the metaphor of walking Lu Xun has invested an inordinate amount of meaning; it must have held a central place in his own meditations of life.[110]

In the 1990s Jing Hui put forth a new interpretation about the symbolic meaning of the three characters. He disagrees with the interpretations to view them as different types of people as some Chinese scholars did[111] and different generations as William Schultz did. He argues: "I consider that these three characters imply, from different angles and aspects, Lu Xun's different egos, which are a compound symbol in the text."[112] In the poem, he adds, Lu Xun ingeniously epitomizes "the three egos" in the images of the girl, the passerby, and the old man. Through the dialogue among them, Lu Xun's three egos "interrogate" each other to

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[108]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 102.

[109]Ibid., p. 101.

[110]Ibid., p. 102.

[111]For example these images have been interpreted respectively as symbols of "the revolutionary in the old era," "the dejected," "fighter," "revolutionary," "the person who seeks for brightness," "the young," and so on. See Li Helin 李何林, 1973. p. 122; Min Kangsheng 闵抗生, 1981, p. 111; Li Xifan 李希凡, 1982, p. 24; Sun Yusi 孙玉石, 1982, p. 26.

[112]Jing Hui 靖辉, "Linghun de zisheng: cong wenben de xiangzheng yiyi xi Guoke" 灵魂的自省: 从文本的象征意义析过客 (Self-examination: an interpretation of "The Passerby" from the symbolic meaning of the text), *Lu Xun yanjiu* 鲁迅研究 (Lu Xun studies), no. 4, 1992, p. 31.

delineate different aspects of his consciousness. The three characters symbolize not only Lu Xun's "loneliness, contradiction, and anguish," but also the different stages of his life, that is, "The girl is the past of the passerby; while the old man is the future of the passerby."[113] Jing Hui's interpretation of "The Passerby" is considered a new break-through in *Wild Grass* studies in mainland China.[114]

All these interpretations introduced above enrich the thematic significance of this poetic drama. Based on previous achievements, I shall offer my own interpretation in the hope of throwing some new light on Lu Xun's metaphysical meditations and the philosophical connotations of the play.

In reading "The Passerby," first I pay appropriate attention to the passerby's appearance. According to the brief stage direction, he is "between thirty and forty, tired and crabbed, with a smoldering gaze, black mustache and tousled hair; ragged black jacket and trousers, bare feet in shabby shoes. A sack on his arm, he leans on a bamboo pole as tall as he is."[115] In the girl's eyes, he is obviously "a beggar." Readers can see his precursor in Xianglin's wife, a well-known character in Lu Xun's story "The New Year's Sacrifice," who is "in her forties, . . . a basket on her arm," and also "leans on a bamboo pole that is taller than she is."[116]

To identify the passerby as a beggar is helpful to illustrate a recurring theme in some *Wild Grass* poems. If we examine the beggar images as a sequence, we find now that the passerby has partially overcome the hesitation that the protagonist in "Beggars" once displayed when he first contemplated begging, and has stepped out on his journey of life to seek "blood," a symbol of vitality that he desperately needs to continue the journey.

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[113]Ibid., p. 32.
[114]Mao Xiaoping 毛小平, "Lu Xun yanjiu gaishu" 鲁迅研究概述 (A summary of Lu Xun studies), in *Zhongguo wenxue nianjian* 中国文学年鉴 (Almanac of Chinese literature), 1993, p. 323.
[115]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 188, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 336.
[116]Lu Xun, "Zhufu" 祝福 (The New Year's Sacrifice), *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 6.

In contrast to the beggar in "The Beggars," however, the passerby remains pessimistic in his mind. In his dialogue with the old man, he does not even know his own name. "My name? I don't know. Ever since I can remember, I've been on my own. So I don't know my real name."[117] He also doesn't know where he comes from and where he is going. "Ever since I can remember, I have been walking like this." What he knows about the destination of his journey is "someplace ahead" in the west.[118]

The ambiguity of the passerby's identification and the anonymity of the old man and the little girl make the theme of "The Passerby" more universal. Accordingly the old man, the passerby, and the young girl can be held as symbols of different attitudes towards life. Lu Xun manipulates their performances to deduce his own philosophical meditations on some general questions regarding life and its meaning.

When we talk about the meaning of life, we are questioning whether human existence has a positive value and what makes human existence a worthy one despite many negative aspects. For the old man, life seems to have no meaning at all. He declares that the passerby's journey is toward tombs, so he persuades him "to go back." In his opinion the place that the passerby comes from is "the best place." He does not probe the quality of human existence and does not care if the negative in life outweighs the positive or not. He even denies that the passerby is a beggar: "A beggar? That isn't likely." He seems to take it for granted that people live like beggars. He advises the passerby should be satisfied with his own life because "You may obtain tears that spring from the heart, and some genuine compassion."[119] He seems indifferent to anything around: the natural scenery, his own existential situation, and others' benevolence. He advises the passerby: "You need not be so serious."[120]

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[117]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 189, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 337.
[118]Ibid., pp. 189-190.
[119]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 191, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 339.
[120]Ibid., p. 192.

Since life is meaningless, any other questions relevant to life are also meaningless. The journey of life is meaningless, because "If you keep on, you may never reach the end of your journey." "The voice ahead" that urges the passerby to keep on is also meaningless, because it can simply be ignored, as the old man did when he was young — "I ignored it, so then it stopped." For him there is no difference between the past, the present, and the future, and there is also no difference between hope and despair. Everything in life seems to have been determined by fate. Life just resembles a meaningless physical span between birth and death and a passive acceptance of the role into which he has been socialized. In short the old man can be properly labeled a symbol of the life style of nihilism.

In contrast to the old man, the girl symbolizes idealism. First of all she cherishes a sincere hope in the future. She insists that there are "many wild roses and lilies" but not "tombs" at the destination of the passerby's journey. Secondly, life is meaningful to her, because she can engage in such benevolent acts as to offer water to quench the passerby's thirst and "cloth" (*bu* 布, a symbol of alms, *bushi*, 布施) to dress his wounded foot. Most importantly, she offers hopeful prospects to encourage him to fulfill his journey. All the girl's activities are aimed at decreasing human suffering and increasing human vitality. They make her life meaningful, because they produce a positive value. For her, the meaning of life is incorporated in the value she offers to others.

Between the old man and the little girl stands the passerby, who represents an existentialist attitude towards human life. On the stage he stubbornly struggles against his own fate and tries to go ahead. The old man explicitly tells him there are only tombs in his destination. The tombs suggest the inevitable destiny of the human individual — death. Nobody can escape it, royalty or commoners, rich or poor, young or old, saints or sinners. Death and its inevitability are common themes of literary works that have been fully shown by many great thinkers and writers.

Death is a natural limitation of human life, but it is not the only limitation. People in this world, according to the existentialist point of view, are forced to live in absurdity, a limitation that derives from human society and is more severe than a natural death. The whole play of "The Passerby" is cast in an absurd setting. Human life is characterized by poverty, exhaustion, alienation, and hatred, as the passerby complains:

> There is not a place without celebrities, not a place without landlords, not a place without expulsion and cages, not a place without sham smiles and hypocritical tears. I hate them.[121]

To the passerby it seems that there is never a positive balance in human life. When the old man predicts that he may obtain some tears and genuine compassion, he does not even want them. He declares: "I have no wish to see the tears that spring from the bottom of the heart. I don't want their compassion."[122]

Since a human being is destined to die and human life is full of absurdity, is there still any meaning to him? If so, what is it? In this poetic play Lu Xun seems to let the passerby answer this preliminary question from three diverse perspectives.

First of all, at present the passerby's life is meaningless. At the time he appears on the stage, he is nobody but a beggar. Except for walking, he does not show any creative initiatives; except for begging, he does not engage in any benevolent activities. In other words he is not a constructively valuable figure in this world. However, he was probably not like this in the past. In the play the passerby is said to have walked for a long distance. "The trouble is my feet are so gashed and cut through walking that I've lost a good deal of blood. I haven't got enough blood; I need to drink some. But where can I find it? Besides, I don't want to drink just anyone's blood."[123]

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[121] *LXQJ*. vol. 2, p. 191, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 338.
[122] Ibid., p. 191.
[123] *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 191, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 339.

The detail of "drinking blood" is a surrealistic description in the play. I view it as Lu Xun's private symbol. In order to understand it, I would like to examine Lu Xun's own remarks concerning "drinking blood" in a letter of 1925, the same year he wrote "The Passerby":

> In the past haven't I voluntarily spilled my blood on the road of life, drop by drop, to feed others? Although I felt myself gradually becoming thin and weak, I was pleased at doing this. But now people, except for that person (referring to Xu Guangping), laugh at my thinness. Even those who have drunk my blood laugh at my thinness. This really makes me angry.[124]

"Spill blood" to "feed others" is Lu Xun's private allusion for all the things that he did for others. Conversely he condemned some young writers, like Gao Changhong, who accepted his help and later became his foes, as "sucking (his) blood" (*shunxue*, 吮血) and "inhaling (his) blood" (x*ixue*, 吸血).[125] In his analysis of "The Passerby," The Japanese scholar Katayama Tomoyuki quotes the above remarks and argues that the idea of the passerby losing blood is "a symbolic description of this."[126]

In view of this I would like to identify the symbolic meaning of the passerby's losing blood and seeking blood, that is, the passerby may have been somebody in the past, but not a beggar as he is now. He may have been engaged in some benevolent activities as feeding blood to others in the past instead of merely begging to seek blood from others at present. Therefore the passerby's life may have been meaningful in the past.

Secondly, the passerby's life has no meaning for himself. As a beggar, his personal life cannot be worse. He is exhausted and weak, and has nothing except verbal thanks for others. His life is characterized by suffering and meaningless. But his existence may still be

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[124]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping 许广平 dated December 16, 1925, in Zhou Haiying 周海婴, ed., *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of the letters from two places), p. 284.
[125]Ibid., p. 235, p. 222, and p. 240.
[126]Katayama Tomoyuki 片山智行, *Rojin yaso zenyaku* 鲁迅野草全释 (A complete explanation of Lu Xun's *Wild Grass*), 1991, p. 132.

meaningful to someone else who is related to him. When the girl offers him a piece of "cloth," a symbol of alms, to dress his wounded foot, the passerby hesitates to accept, even though he desperately needs it. If he accepts the cloth, the acceptance will harm an unidentified female (*ta*, 她): "If I were to receive alms, I would be like a vulture catching sight of a corpse and hovering overhead, longing to see her destruction with my own eye. . . . But I'm not yet strong enough for that. Even if I were I wouldn't want her to come to such an end."[127]

From the passerby's words, we know he is still morally related to an absent "she," despite his declaration that "Ever since I can remember, I've been on my own."[128] Perhaps he is still carrying out some human responsibilities in his life. Therefore although his existence is meaningless to himself, it may be meaningful to others.

Thirdly, the passerby's life is meaningless at present, but it is still possible to be meaningful in the future. He always hears a voice in front of him urging him to keep on — this is another surrealistic description in the poem. In his journey he may reach the place with "many wild roses and lilies" that the little girl tells him about. As Leo Ou-fan Lee points out, the passerby's "walking is not entirely hopeless because it involves the crucial voluntary act of choice — to walk on and not to return."[129]

To sum up the above three points we know that the passerby cannot prove life to be totally meaningless, although in his eye it is absurd, full of logical inconsistency and uncertainty, and directed to a definitely-inevitable death. The value of his existence may lie in the past, the future, or relationship with others.

Since the passerby cannot prove life is totally meaningless, he has to make a choice in the process of his life. Under these circumstances, Lu Xun lets the passerby, through his

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[127]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 192, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 340.
[128]Ibid., vol. 2, p. 189, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 337.
[129]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 103.

performance, answer another thorny question: Am I free to make a choice in my life at my own will? Or, instead, is my fate fully predetermined by my existence? The question whether people can make free choices or not, poses one of the paradoxes that face many protagonists in the *Wild Grass* poems, this time for the passerby. His paradox can be described as follows:

It is possible for him to make a free choice in life, otherwise he cannot go ahead and beg for alms. It is also impossible for him to make a free choice in life, otherwise he should not refuse alms from the little girl.

The paradox indicates that people eventually have no absolute freedom of will. As the result of facing this paradox, the passerby finally practices in an existentialist way. He decides to keep on going, and not to return or stop for a rest as the old man suggested. This manifests his emphasis on freedom of will. He can make this choice, because its result impacts only himself. At the same time he also decides not to accept the girl's alms in order to avoid harming an absent "her," although he definitely needs them. This indicates that the passerby is not really free in making a choice, if the result impacts others negatively.

The passerby's life attitude figuratively echoes the two principles of Sartre's philosophy: "the precious notion of freedom and its concomitant sense of personal responsibility."[130] Therefore the image of the passerby can be viewed as a symbol of an existentialist attitude to life.

To sum up, "The Passerby" first of all "may be taken as Lu Xun's personal allegory" as Leo Ou-fan Lee has pointed out.[131] The old man, the passerby, and the girl, according to Jing

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[130]Robert Audi ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 710. According to Sartre, freedom is something that human beings cannot avoid. His contention that we cannot help being free presupposes that "man is condemned to be free." Actually Sartre means that man is always free to deny his existence and to try to change it, but man is never free of his "situation." See my foregoing analysis in the section of "Beggars."

[131]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 101.

Hui's commentary, can be viewed respectively as "Lu Xun's three egos"[132] — I prefer to view them as different manifestations of his ego — that vacillate between despair and hope, past and future. What differs in my interpretation from Jing Hui's is that I view the old man as a symbol of Lu Xun's past and the little girl as a symbol of Lu Xun's future instead of the other way round as Jing Hui has argued, because the girl symbolizes hope and the future.

Secondly, the play can be considered as a general allegory with a more universal significance for the whole of mankind. The old man, the little girl, and the passerby incorporate different attitudes towards life: nihilism, idealism, and existentialism. The passerby adopts the existentialist stance: indomitably emphasizing free will, constantly striving for a reasonable life, and at the same time insisting on the concomitant sense of personal responsibilities. An echo of the existentialist theme of this poetic drama can be found in a 1927 essay:

> I only know one destination for sure, that is the tomb. Everybody knows this and does not need the guidance of others. The problem is that the roads from here to the destination are more than one. I don't know which one is the best, although I am still sometimes seeking even now.[133]

"The Passerby" is said to have been conceived gradually in Lu Xun's mind for over ten years.[134] The poetic drama certainly contains painful experiences from his personal life. Because of marital frustration and physical frailty, he had to recognize many constraints and obstacles. Lu Xun's anxiety in the presence of death, his perception of the absurdity in human life, and emphasis on individual will and responsibility serve well as a thematic foundation in the dramatization of "The Passerby." His insights from his own personal

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[132]Jing Hui 靖辉, "Linghun de zisheng: cong wenben de xiangzheng yiyi xi Guoke" 灵魂的自省: 从文本的象征意义析过客 (Self-examination: an interpretation of "The Passerby" from the symbolic meaning of the text), *Lu Xun yanjiu* 鲁迅研究 (Lu Xun Studies), no. 4, 1992, p. 31.

[133]Lu Xun, "Xiezai Fen houmian" 写在坟后面 (Write as a postscript to *Tomb*), *LXQJ*, vol. 1, p. 284.

[134]Jing Youlin 荆有麟, *Lu Xun huiyi* 鲁迅回忆 (Remembering Lu Xun), Shanghai: Shanghai zazhi gongsi, 1947, p. 63.

experience on the ego and human life can be found abundantly in "The Passerby," which has proven to be a foremost existentialist drama in modern Chinese literature, even though it was written two decades before the existentialist movement came to prominence in Europe after World War II.

"Dead Fire" (*Sihuo*, 死火)[135]

Unique in its own right, "Dead Fire" presents one of the most bizarre images in *Wild Grass*, a fire frozen in a valley of ice:

> This is dead fire. It has a fiery form, is absolutely still, completely congeals, like branches of coral with frozen black smoke at their tips which look scorched as if fresh from a fire-place. And so, casting reflections upon the ice all around and being reflected back, it has been turned into countless shadows, making the valley of ice as red as coral.[136]

The first person persona meets the "dead fire" in the valley and wakes it. The "dead fire" confesses its paradox to him: if it stays in the valley, it will freeze to death; if it wakes and resumes burning, it will burn out. After a metaphysical discussion, the "dead fire" agrees to be brought out of the valley by the I persona: "I would rather burn out." At the end of the poem, just as they leave the valley, the I persona is crushed to death by a large stone cart, which appears suddenly out of nowhere.

A typical interpretation made by some mainland Chinese critics is to take the "dead fire" as "a revolutionary fire," which, in their opinion, "will never burn out,"[137] but "will probably spread to a blazing prairie fire."[138] This interpretation is based on their intent to

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[135]This poem was written on April 23, 1925 and published in *Yusi* 语丝 no. 25, May 4, 1925.
[136]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 195, Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 342.
[137]Feng Xuefeng 冯雪峰, *Lun Yecao* 论野草 (On *Wild Grass*), 1956, p. 30.
[138]Li Helin 李何林, *Lu Xun Yecao zhushi* 鲁迅野草注释 (Annotation and interpretation of Lu Xun's *Wild Grass*), 1973, p. 95.

demonstrate the process of Lu Xun's change in thought from evolutionist to Marxist. Leo Ou-fan Lee provided a different interpretation in the 1980s. He says:

> More likely, the metaphor of the dead fire refers to Lu Xun's inner predicament: entrapped in the cold, barren recesses of his heart is a passion which does not wish to lay dormant forever; it cries out for a life of action which, according to the workings of paradoxical logic in the poem, ultimately leads to death.[139]

In his interpretation Lee tries to identify Lu Xun's impulse to vitality as being incorporated in the image of the "dead fire." In the 1990s Lee points out even more explicitly:

> I do not agree to interpret the "dead fire" as revolution. According to Kuriyagawa Hakuson's theory, it may only represent a kind of inner vitality.[140]

Lee's interpretation is insightful and convincing, and accepted by many scholars. In mainland China some critics have started to change their previous viewpoint. For instance, Sun Yushi re-interprets the I persona and the "dead fire" as representing "two existential states of Lu Xun's own life."[141]

The symbolic meaning of the I persona's death is another focus of debate. The earlier scholars argued that his death symbolizes the persecution of the revolutionaries by the reactionary powers.[142] The Japanese scholar Katayama argues that the I persona's death in the poem is an incorporation of Lu Xun's own viewpoint on "evolution," because his death is exchanged for the resurrection of the "dead fire."[143]

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[139]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987, p. 100.
[140]Lee Ou-fan Lee, "Lu Xun yu xiandai yishu yishi" 鲁迅与现代艺术意识 (Lu Xun and the consciousness of modern art), in *Tiewuzhong de nahan* 铁屋中的呐喊 (Voices from the Iron House), Taibei: shidai fengyun chubanshe, 1995, p. 296.
[141]Sun Yushi 孙玉石, *Lu Xun Yecao chongshi*, VII 鲁迅野草重释, 七 (Re-interpretation of Lu Xun's *Wild Grass*, VII), *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan* 鲁迅研究月刊 (Lu Xun study monthly), no. 7, 1996, p. 36.
[142]Li Helin 李何林, *Lu Xun Yecao zhushi* 鲁迅野草注释 (Annotation and interpretation of Lu Xun's Wild Grass), 1973, p. 95.
[143]Katayama Tomoyuki 片山智行, *Rojin yaso zenyaku* 鲁迅野草全释 (A complete explanation of Lu Xun's Wild Grass), 1991, p. 71.

overcomes the pessimism and hesitation that the shadow, the beggar, and the passerby have displayed in the previous poems, and at last accepts the "dead fire" bravely — the only major image in *Wild Grass* that represents brightness, warmth, vitality, love, and hope.

"The Dog's Retort" (*Gou de bojie*, 狗的驳诘)[146]

This poem is the shortest one in *Wild Grass*. It reads as follows:

> I dreamed I was walking in a narrow lane, my clothes in rags, like a beggar.
> A dog started barking behind me.
> I looked back contemptuously and shouted at him:
> "Bah! Shut up! You, sycophantic dog!"
> He sniggered.
> "Oh no!" he said. "I'm not up to man in that respect."
> "What!" Quite outraged, I felt that this was the supreme insult.
> "I'm ashamed to say I still don't know how to distinguish between copper and silver, between silk and cloth, between officials and common citizens, between masters and their slaves, between. . . ."
> I turned and fled.
> "What a bit! Let us talk some more . . ." From behind he urged me loudly to stay.
> But I ran straight on as fast as I could, until I had run right out of my dream and was back in my own bed.[147]

The poem reflects Lu Xun's meditations on the basic nature of the human condition, a controversial topic that many great writers and thinkers have discussed and categorized. Some delineated human nature as glorious and majestic. In the *Book of Genesis*, the human race is declared to be created in God's own image.[148] In the era of the Renaissance, man was hailed as a work of nobility and beauty:

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[146]This poem was written on April 23, 1925 and published in *Yusi* 语丝, no. 25, May 4, 1925.
[147]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 198, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, 345.
[148]*New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, New York: Watchtower Bible And Tract Society of New York, Inc., 1984, p. 8.

> What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals![149]

In the era of romantic literature, a negative idea on the human condition was pungently expressed by Lord Byron in his "Inscription on the Monument of a Newfoundland Dog," which reads:

> Oh man! thou feeble tenant of an hour,
> Debased by slavery, or corrupt by power,
> Who knows thee well must quit thee with disgust,
> Degraded mass of animated dust![150]

The intent behind Byron's poem and Lu Xun's "The Dog's Retort" are strikingly similar. Byron portrays the human being as a disgusting creature by metaphorically denouncing a dog, while Lu Xun describes man's defeat in a metaphysical discussion with a dog because of his moral inferiority. Both examine the humanity negatively and conclude that humankind's moral quality is worse than that of a dog.

Crass materialism causes humans to pursue wealth — "to distinguish between copper and silver." The sense of vanity causes humans to pursue undeserved reputation — "to distinguish between silk and cloth." Admiration of power causes humans to pursue high ranking officialdom — "to distinguish between officials and common citizens." And the nature of currying favor with the powerful causes humans to be servile to their superiors and tyrannical to their subordinates — "to distinguish between masters and their slaves."

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[149]Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 2, scene 2.
[150]*George Gordon, Lord Byron, Selected Works; Revised and Enlarged*, edited by Edward E. Bostetter, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972, p. 5.

The imperfect nature of human beings is exposed in the poem. Lu Xun's meditations on human nature find an echo in Bertrand Russell's opinion of the poor job God has done in his evolution of the human species:

> If I were granted omniscience, and millions of years to experiment, I should not think Man much to boast of as the final result of my efforts.[151]

"After Death" (*Sihou*, 死后)[152]

In a unique dream of fantasy, Lu Xun imagines that he dies; his motor nerves paralyzes, but his sensations still remain. As Lu Xun's persona, the first person protagonist seems also a beggar. After he dies by the roadside, he is dressed in grave clothes donated by somebody and put into a coffin by the police. It was common to see nameless bodies by the roadside in mid-1920s Beijing. This sort of scene has also been described by Lu Xun in his story "The Brothers."[153]

Lu Xun transplants himself into this situation in "After Death," where he has no obvious aim to denounce social evils, only to reveal his anxiety about what others would say about him after his death:

> I felt a sudden longing to hear what they were saying. But just then I remembered how in my life time I used to say that criticism was not worth troubling about. Perhaps I didn't mean what I said: no sooner was I dead than I betrayed myself. But though I went on listening, I could not reach any conclusion, for the remarks seemed little more than this:
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> "Dead, huh? . . ."
> "Uhhuh! . . ."
> "Well! . . ."
> "Dear me. . . . Too bad. . . ."[154]

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[151]Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science*, London: Oxford University Press, 1949, p. 222.
[152]This poem was written on July 12, 1925 and published in *Yusi* 语丝 no. 36, July 20, 1925.
[153]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, pp. 132-43.
[154]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 210, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 350.

Several flies land on the I persona's face, licking his nose and lips. He is greatly disgusted by this. He wants to tell the flies: "I am not a celebrity, sir. You don't have to seek me out to find material for your gossip column."[155] But he cannot speak out. When the coffin lid is closed, the flies fly away and say, "What a pity!" The flies' words almost make him "pass out with indignation."[156]

Finally nailed into the coffin, the I persona thinks: "This time I shall be knocking into six walls. I am nailed in as well. This is really the end."[157] "To be knocking on six walls and nailed in as well" (*liumian pengbi, waijia dingzi*, 六面碰壁, 外加钉子) is a Chinese allusion meaning "extremely bad luck." By using it Lu Xun metaphorizes his awkward predicament like being sealed into a coffin alive without any hope of escape. The half-alive and half-dead situation is also a metaphorical presentation of Lu Xun's own life.

The tragedy is that even after his death, he still cannot be free from being disturbed by "the flies." who may be a metaphor for those picky newspapermen or critics. Lu Xun once wrote an essay "Soldiers and Flies" (*Zhanshi he cangying*, 战士和苍蝇) to satirize them in March 1925, that is four months before he wrote "After Death."[158] They eagerly want to find materials about celebrities for their "gossip column." The I persona also hears somebody asking: "Why would he die here?"[159] Immediately, he realizes that he does not even have a right to die of his own free will:

> I used to think that although people do not have the right to exist on the earth at their own will, but they have the right to die at their own will. Now I learn this is not the case. My death is also very hard to please everyone.[160]

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[155]Ibid., p. 210, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 350.
[156]Ibid., pp. 210-1, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 350.
[157]Ibid., p. 211, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 351.
[158]Lu Xun, "Zhanshi he cangying" 战士和苍蝇 (Soldiers and flies), in *LXQJ*, vol. 3, pp. 38-9.
[159]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 211, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 351.
[160]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 211, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 351.

Finally he decides to keep his death from his foes, because he is "unwilling to give them a little pleasure for free."[161]

"After Death" is perhaps the only poem in the whole collection that has a tint of humor. Within an overall surrealistic framework, there are a number of realistic, vividly-described details. The humorous tone alleviates its general gloom and makes it somewhat light reading. Tsi-an Hsia points out: "Lu Hsün seemed to be an expert in depicting death's ugliness, not only in his poem-in-prose, but also in his short stories."[162] He also summarizes the main aspect of Lu Xun's depiction of death, namely: "In his public utterances and creative writings, Lu Hsün did not seem to be so much horrified by death itself as by death as the symbol of a bygone age."[163]

Tsi-an Hsia's remarks are appropriate, especially for the poems from *Wild Grass*. Lu Xun's anxiety about the bygone age is obviously embodied in "Hope," "Snow," and "The Passerby." The death depicted in "After Death," however, is not so scary and ugly. At the end, for instance, the I persona feels happy with his death like a shadow without informing his foes. In exultation, he wants to cry. "No tears come, though, after all. There is a sort of flash before my eyes, and I sit up."[164]

In "After Death" what Lu Xun worried about most was neither his bygone age nor death, but his reputation with the public after death. His anxiety was shown not only in the poem but also in his private letters. Although in a letter he says: "Prestige after death is not as good as a glass of wine in the present,"[165] in the poem he admits otherwise: "In my life time I used to say that criticism was not worth troubling about. Perhaps I didn't mean what I said: no sooner was I dead than I betrayed myself."[166] Actually, as a famous and controversial

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[161] *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 213, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 353.
[162] T. A. Hsia, *The Gate of Darkness*, 1968, p. 153.
[163] Ibid., p. 153.
[164] *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 213, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 353.
[165] Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping dated Nov. 18, 1926, in Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of *The Letters From Two Places*), p. 233.
[166] *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 210, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 350.

writer in the mid-1920's, Lu Xun cared about his prestige very much. In another letter he said there were many hesitations in his mind: "These hesitations come mostly from my life, and some come from my status. This so called status refers to the little bit of work that I did before."[167]

This is the theme of the poem, and we can take the black humor in it as supporting evidence. When a messenger of the Boguzhai Book Shop brings him a classical book in a Ming dynasty edition after his death, the I persona forgets that he is unable to speak at this moment and says to the messenger: "Can't you see what condition I'm in? What use do I have for Ming dynasty editions?"[168] Lu Xun's meaning seems to be clear here: What I'm worrying about is my reputation after death. How can I still care about something else like an ancient edition?

Summary

In a general symbolic framework in *Wild Grass*, Lu Xun portrays the conflict between his unsatisfactory existence and suppressed vitality. Life described in the poems is dark, like a "dark night" ("Hope"). Sometimes the protagonist is a "shadow," who "is wandering between light and darkness" ("Shadow"). Sometimes the protagonist lives "like a shadow in the vanity which is neither light nor darkness" ("Hope"). Even if the protagonist dies, he dies "like a shadow" ("After Death"). In *Wild Grass* the "shadow" is an important image to highlight the darkness, meaninglessness, and hopelessness of Lu Xun's life.

Life in *Wild Grass* is not only characterized by darkness, but also by coldness. The beggars are begging in the cold autumn wind ("Beggars"). Even in the spring, Lu Xun feels that he is surrounded by dread winter that is offering him "its utmost rigor and coldness"

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[167]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping dated Nov. 28, 1926, in Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of *The Letters From Two Places*), p. 250.
[168]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 213, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 352.

("Kite"). His vitality is frozen into a "dead fire" in "the valley of ice" ("Dead Fire"). And even Lu Xun's departed youth is one that is "sad, cold, and uncertain" ("Hope").

In a wise illumination, Lu Xun presents his figurative meditations on death. Death is approaching all the time and inescapable. No matter who they are, the old man or the little girl, and no matter how they act, to retreat from life like the old man or keep on going like the passerby, their journey of life always leads to an absolute destination — death ("Passerby"). Life is too short: just like a temporarily burning fire, it will burn out at last ("Dead Fire"). Lu Xun laments the short duration of his life — hastening across the uncertain world, in a flash he is growing old ("Hope"). Even if the protagonist wants to release his suppressed vitality — to receive "dead fire" and to leave "the valley of ice," the result is still his death ("Dead Fire").

Because life is characterized by darkness, coldness, and approaching death, it is in the final analysis absurd and meaningless. As the passerby complains, there is no place without celebrities, landlords, expulsion, cages, sham smiles, and hypocritical tears ("Passerby"). Accordingly many protagonists seem to be thrown into a totally hopeless world. They are entirely alienated. In their minds, there is no "love and hate, joy and sadness, or color and sound" ("Hope"). People cannot relate to each other ("Beggars"), even brothers have no mutual understanding ("Kite"). Unavoidably, under these circumstances, many protagonists fall into deep pessimism ("Shadow," "Beggars," and "Kite").

Because of life's absurdity, the protagonists in various predicaments are forced to face their own paradoxes: The "shadow" covets a farewell, but he cannot go anywhere except "Nowhere" (*wudi*, 无地 in "Shadow"). The beggar yearns for alms, but he can acquire nothing except for "Nothingness" (*xuwu*, 虚无 in "Beggars"). Overlaid by "the dark night," Lu Xun's persona, however, fails to spot it. When he decides to "grapple with the dark night," he can only grapple with it in "Vanity" (*xuwang*, 虚妄 in "Hope"). Instead of the forgiveness he craves, the I person in "Kite" can only receive "a lie," which sinks him into a

heavier burden of guilt. The passerby urgently needs "blood" and other "alms" to refresh himself, but he lacks the freedom to accept them ("Passerby"). The "dead fire" has no other choice except either to be frozen to death or to burn out ("Dead Fire"). The I persona in "After Death" lives in a situation of half-life and half-death. All these paradoxes that Lu Xun conceives in some *Wild Grass* poems epitomize his own annoying existence in the mid-1920s.

In the face of these paradoxes, the most significant characteristic of the protagonists' state of mind is their attempt to escape. The "shadow" would rather escape into "Nowhere" than linger "between light and darkness." Together with the "dead fire," the first person wanderer strives to flee "the valley of ice" ("Dead Fire"). The I persona in "Kite" desires to "hide in dread winter." Before an aggressive dog, the defeated human debater runs away in panic ("Dog's Retort"). The passerby takes flight from the place where he was and determines never to return ("Passerby"). The I persona in "After Death" escapes to death, but still unsatisfied, then he escapes back to life again.

Another characteristic of the protagonists is their belittled images. In *Wild Grass* poems, hardly any are portrayed as heroes and almost none of their actions are heroic. They are a shadow ("Shadow"), a prostitute ("Decrepit Line"), and, more frequently, a beggar. They are aged and weak ("Hope"), or sad and remorseful ("Kite"), or incompetent and trivial ("Dog's Retort"). This technique of belittling characters demonstrates not only Lu Xun's indignation at his absurd existence, but also his psychological dignity to resist his humiliation by it.

To sum up, Lu Xun's existence incorporated in *Wild Grass* is an inextricable despair. He seems to have reached a crucial juncture of his life — like the "dead fire" — either to endure the rest of his life, like being frozen to death in the ice valley or restart it, by leaving the valley and burning out. It is precisely because of the inextricable despair that Lu Xun resorts to his will, as is expressed in many poems. The shadow has a will to leave

("Shadow"). The beggar wants to pluck up his courage to go begging ("Beggars"). In "Hope" the I persona, though aging, is still eager to search for "the youth outside." The passerby does not give up his will to life and stubbornly keeps on going. Many protagonists in *Wild Grass*, if examined as a series, fulfill a transition from hesitancy to action. After the I persona decides to fight alone against the dark night in "Hope," he finally obtains the "dead fire" ("Dead Fire").

The theme of valuing the ego, human will, vitality, and the meaning of life has been summarized by Lu Xun himself in the "Inscription" (*Tici*, 题辞) to *Wild Grass*,[169] in which he writes:

> The past life is already dead. And in its passing I find happiness, because in this I know that I am yet alive. The dead life is already rotten, decayed. And in its decay I am greatly pleased, because in this I know that I am not yet a void.
>
> Discarded upon the ground the clay of life (*shengming de ni*, 生命的泥) gives no birth to stately trees; it enlivens only wild grass, and this is my transgression.[170]

"The clay of life" is Lu Xun's personal allusion, which takes its source from the Chinese legend of the goddess Nüwa's (女娲) creating mankind with clay.[171] Lu Xun's story "Buzhou Mountain (*Buzhou shan*, 不周山),[172] which describes the story of Nüwa's creation in detail, was — he said — written for the purpose of applying "Freud's theory to explain the genesis of both man and literature."[173] In the preface to *Wild Grass*, by employing the legend again, implicitly Lu Xun explains the genesis of *Wild Grass* — It is in "the clay of life" that *Wild Grass* grows, or in other words, it is a genuine record of his own frustration and private

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[169]It was written on April 26, 1927 and published in *Yusi* 语丝 no. 138, July 2, 1927.
[170]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 159, Schultz's translation in "Lu Hsün, The Creative Years," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1955, p. 297.
[171]Yingshao 应邵 (fl. 180), *Fengsu tong* 风俗通 (Guidance of mores). See Meng Guanglai 孟广来 and Han Rixin 韩日新 ed., *Gushi xinbian yanjiu ziliao* 故事新编研究资料 (Research materials for *Old Tales Retold*), Shandong wenyi chubanshe, 1984, p. 70.
[172]It was written in 1922, re-entitled as "Butian" 补天 (Mending the sky) in 1930, and now is included in the story collection *Old Tales Retold*. See *LXQJ*, vol. 2, pp. 345-356.
[173]Lu Xun, "Gushi xinbian xuyan" 故事新编序言 (A preface to *Old Tales Retold*), *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 341.

feelings in the mid-1920s. *Wild Grass* was created at the time Lu Xun was attempting to release his suppressed vitality and start a new life. The creation of *Wild Grass* appears to have been Kuriyagawa's theory in practice: "The mental anguish and turmoil which result from a suppressed vitality becomes the root of literature and art." [174]

Wild Grass is the poetry of Lu Xun's life and his philosophy of life. The theme of valuing the ego, will to life, and the meaning of human existence in *Wild Grass* becomes manifest.

[174]Lu Xun, "Kumen de xiangzheng, yinyan" 苦闷的象徵, 引言 (Preface to *Symbols of Mental Anguish*), *LXQJ*, vol. 10, p. 232.

Chapter 4, Emotional Dilemma between Love and Moral Responsibility

Lu Xun was born in a wealthy gentry family in southern China in 1881. His grandfather possessed the highest degree of *Jinshi* (进士) in the civic service examination system and was a Qing government official. Lu Xun's father passed the primary level in the examinations and showed much promise as a scholar and official, like Lu Xun's grandfather. Lu Xun had a happy and carefree childhood. In 1893, when he was thirteen years old, misfortune fell on the Zhou clan. In that year, charged with bribery, his grandfather was sentenced to death but later reprieved by the emperor. His father, who was also implicated in this case, was deprived of his *Xiucai* (秀才) degree. After that Lu Xun's family suffered various miseries and lived in humiliation and financial stress for many years. When Lu Xun was sixteen, his father died. Two years later he went to Nanjing to study in the Jiangnan Naval Academy, a Western-style school established by some Qing officials who were dubbed the "Foreign Affairs School" for advocating reform and self-strengthening by means of learning Western science and technology. At that time very few youths wanted to enter this kind of school, because in the public eye, it was not a "proper thing" to study "foreign affairs." But Lu Xun seemed to have no other choice. He recalled his feelings of having no-way-out in a later essay:

> My eagerness to go to Nanjing and study in the Jiangnan Naval Academy seems to have shown a desire to strike out for a different road and escape to a different land to find people of a different kind. . . . For at that time the proper thing was to study the classics and take the official examinations. Anyone who studied foreign affairs was regarded by the public as someone who could find no way out and was forced to sell his soul to foreign devils.[1]

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[1]Lu Xun, "Nahan zixu" 呐喊自序 (Self-Preface to *Call to Arms*), *LXQJ*, vol. 1, p. 415, Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang' translation in *Lu Xun Selected Works*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1956, vol. 2, p. 34. Hereafter *LXSW*.

When Lu Xun was in Nanjing, his mother started to arrange a marriage for him. At that time, the marriage of minors was always arranged by their parents. The bride to be was Zhu An, from a wealthy family in Shaoxing and two years senior to Lu Xun. According to Zhou Zuoren's diaries, in June of 1899, Lu Xun's mother, two of Zhu An's relatives, and two go-betweens set off together in two rented boats to watch the local operas in a village nearby. This might have been the beginning of the marriage arrangements between these two families.[2] In March 1901 the Zhou family sent messengers to the Zhu family to inquire about Zhu An's birthday. According to the custom in Shaoxing, this was a very important step in fulfilling the marriage arrangements, because only after this could a date for the wedding ceremony be set. Some scholars view the event as Lu Xun and Zhu An's engagement.[3]

In 1900, after the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1900) had been suppressed, the Qing government granted a special amnesty to a number of prisoners in order to win public support. Lu Xun's grandfather obtained remission and returned home in 1901. In the next year, Lu Xun was selected to study in Japan under the sponsorship of the Qing government. These two events brought a ray of hope to the miserable Zhou family. Under these circumstances, Lu Xun's mother speeded up the marriage arrangement. In 1903 when Lu Xun was in Japan, his mother informed him of the engagement that she had fixed for him. Lu Xun disagreed at first and requested that Zhu An marry another. But his mother insisted, because if the Zhou family broke off the engagement, it would be a humiliation to both families and especially to Zhu An, who would face the plight of nobody else wanting to marry her.[4] So Lu Xun's mother asked Zhou Guanwu (周冠五), Lu Xun's uncle, to write a letter to persuade him to accept this engagement. Although Lu Xun was reluctant to marry an

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[2]Li Yunjing 李允经, *Lu Xun de hunyin yu jiating*, 鲁迅的婚姻与家庭 (Lu Xun's marriage and family), Beijing: shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 1990, p. 18.

[3]Ibid., p. 19.

[4]This is according to the statement of Zhou Guanwu 周冠五, Lu Xun's uncle, who had a hand in the marital arrangements at the request of Lu Xun's mother. See Xue Suizhi 薛绥之 and others ed., *Lu Xun shengping shiliao huibian*, 鲁迅生平史料 汇编 (A collection of the historical materials of Lu Xun's career), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1983, vol. 1, p. 107.

unknown and uneducated woman, he could not disobey his mother. Zhou Jianren (周建人), Lu Xun's youngest brother, recalled once:

> I don't not know when Mother made the engagement for my eldest brother. He himself didn't know either. Because marriages had to be arranged by parents, my eldest brother could not ask about it. After my eldest brother became aware of it, he only asked that the woman loosen her bound feet and be literate. Except for these things, there was nothing else he could say.[5]

In the same year Lu Xun wrote a classical style poem "Personally Inscribed on a Small Picture" (*Ziti xiaoxiang*, 自题小像), which is subject to a wide variety of interpretations. In mainland China it has often been cited as evidence to pinpoint chronologically the beginnings of Lu Xun's revolutionary consciousness.[6] Among various interpretations, a unique one was put forth by Xi Jin, who argues that the poem expresses Lu Xun's disappointment in the engagement after he was made aware of it.[7] I consider this interpretation an acceptable one. Following his argument, I have tried to translate the poem as follows:

> My heart has no way
> to dodge the God of Love's arrows.
> Storms strike like big rocks
> and my hometown is in darkness.
> To cold stars I entrust my feelings,
> which my mother fails to recognize.
> I am to sacrifice my blood
> to Xuan Yuan, the ancestor of our race.[8]

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[5]Zhou Jianren 周建人, *Lu Xun gujia de bailuo* 鲁迅故家的败落 (The decline of Lu Xun's old family), Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1984, p. 240.

[6]Jon Eugene von Kowallis, *The Lyrical Lu Xun — A Study of His Classical-Style Verse*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996, p. 100.

[7]Xi Jin 锡金, "Lu Xun shi benshi" 鲁迅诗本事 (Stories behind Lu Xun's poems), *Wenxue yuekan* 文学月刊 (The literature monthly), November 1956, p. 9.

[8]*LXQJ*, vol. 7, p. 423. Jon Kowallis has another translation, which reads: "The spirit tower holds no plan / to dodge the arrows of gods or man; / These storms that strike like rocks a-fall / enshroud our land in their darkening pall. / A shooting star might convey men's will, / but the Fragrant One lacks judgment still; / So I shall offer my blood up for / Xuan Yuan, our progenitor." See his *The Lyrical Lu Xun*, 1996, p. 102.

In the summer of 1906, at the request of his mother, Lu Xun returned from Japan to his hometown. Because of constant pressure from the Zhu family, his mother used illness as a pretext to call her son back for the wedding ceremony.[9] At the time Lu Xun was twenty-six years old and Zhu An twenty-eight.

Why did Lu Xun accept an unsatisfactory marriage? To this question, Xu Guangping once provided an explanation. She said: "It was a revolutionary era, Lu Xun thought that he would die sooner or later. Since his mother wanted a company, he acted at his mother's will."[10]

Xu Guangping's explanation is hard to substantiate. Around 1906 Lu Xun was primarily engaged in literary activities in Japan. He was not a professional revolutionary like his fellow townsmen Xu Xilin (徐锡麟, 1879-1907) and Qiu Jin (秋瑾, 1872-1907). His literary activities were not endangering his life. There existed no problem regarding death for Lu Xun as Xu Guangping alleged. Although Xu Guangping's statement does not hold much water, it is often quoted by some mainland Chinese scholars.[11]

It seems to me that Lu Xun obeyed his mother to marry Zhu An mainly for the purpose of fulfilling the traditional obligations to be a filial son and a responsible husband. This obedience proved to be a big mistake in his life and brought him enormous grief. As he admitted twenty years later: "The mistake throughout my life is that I didn't plan it but obeyed all that others arranged. . . . Therefore hundreds of troubles ensued and I feel very

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[9]Yu Fang 俞芳, "Fengjian hunyin de xishengzhe — Lu Xun xiansheng he Zhu furen" 封建婚姻的牺牲者 — 鲁迅先生和朱夫人 (The victims of the feudalistic marriage — Mr. Lu Xun and Madam Zhu," in Xue Suizhi 薛绥之 and others ed., *Lu Xun shengping shiliao huibian*, 鲁迅生平史料汇编 (A collection of the historical materials of Lu Xun's career), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1983, vol. 3, p.483.

[10]Shan Yanyi 单演义, "Lu Xun shi ziti xiaoxiang tansuo" 鲁迅诗自题小像探索 (An exploration of Lu Xun's poem "Personally Inscribed on a Small Picture"), *Jinxiu cankao ziliao* 进修参考资料 (Reference for teachers' studies), 黑龙江爱晖县教师进修学校编, 1977, no. 1. Also see Xue Suizhi 薛绥之 and others ed., *Lu Xun shengping shiliao huibian*, 鲁迅生平史料汇编 (A collection of the historical materials of Lu Xun's career), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1983, vol. 1, p. 107.

[11]Liao Zidong 廖子东, "Shilun Lu Xun de jiating, hunyin he aiqing dui ta de sixiang yingxiang" 试论鲁迅的家庭, 婚姻和爱情对他的思想影响 (On Lu Xun's family, marriage, and love as well as their influence on his thought), *Lu Xun yanjiu* 鲁迅研究 (Lu Xun Studies), Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1983, vol. 7. p. 97.

frustrated."[12] Although the remark concerns his own "mistake," it does contain an opaque complaint about his mother and the marriage she arranged for him. At the very beginning, Lu Xun could not escape from the moral responsibilities that his mother set upon him. Even prior to the wedding, he had to make sacrifices.

Eventually Lu Xun was unable to conceal his disappointment in the marriage. Three days after the wedding he left his bride behind and sailed for Japan. Perhaps in his mind he never considered Zhu An his wife, only his mother's companion. He called the wedding a ceremony in which "Mother takes a daughter-in-law."[13]

The misfortune of Lu Xun's marriage became a huge psychological and emotional burden, which, in Jon Kowallis's words, "must have weighted heavily on him . . . and indeed continued to haunt him for the remainder of his life."[14] During a long period of twenty years, Lu Xun lived with his wife nominally as a couple with no substance of real marriage. Yu Dafu, a famous writer and Lu Xun's friend, once teased Lu Xun, saying the reason he did not wear cotton-padded trousers during the cold winters in Beijing was to dampen his sexual desire.[15]

In Chapter Three I discussed the estrangement between Lu Xun and his brother. This event happened in July 1923. Half a month later, Lu Xun moved out the compound that he had shared with Zhou Zuoren's family. Before the move, he suggested that Zhu An leave Beijing and return to Shaoxing to live with her relatives, but she refused.[16] If Lu Xun forced

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[12]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping dated Nov. 28, 1926, in *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of *The Letters From Two Places*), Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., 1984, p. 250.

[13]This is according to Xu Guangping's statement. See Liao Zidong 廖子东, Shilun Lu Xun de jiating, hunyin he aiqing dui ta de sixiang yingxiang, 试论鲁迅的家庭, 婚姻和爱情对他的思想影响, (On Lu Xun's family, marriage, and love as well as their influence on his thought), *Lu Xun yanjiu* 鲁迅研究 (Lu Xun Studies) Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1983, vol. 7. p. 97.

[14]Jon Kowallis, *The Lyrical Lu Xun — A Study of His Classical-Style Verse*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996, p. 21.

[15]Yu Dafu 郁达夫, "Huiyi Lu Xun" 回忆鲁迅 (Remembering Lu Xun), *Yu Dafu wenji* 郁达夫文集 (Literary collection of Yu Dafu), Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, vol. 4, p. 206.

[16]Yu Fang 俞芳 "Fengjian hunyin de xishengzhe — Lu Xun xiansheng he Zhu furen" 封建婚姻的牺牲者 — 鲁迅先生和朱夫人. (The victims of the feudalistic marriage — Mr. Lu Xun and Mrs. Zhu), in Xue Suizhi

Zhu An back to her hometown, according to the custom in Shaoxing, that would mean "divorcing a wife" (*xiuqi* 休妻). It was considered a great humiliation to both the wife and the wife's parental family. Not all divorced wives could stand this humiliation. As a result many would commit suicide.[17]

Although some of Lu Xun's friends and students such as Sun Fuyuan, Zhang Chuandao, and Chang Weijun often suggested that Lu Xun should send Zhu An back to her parental home, Lu Xun finally did not do as they suggested.[18] Perhaps Lu Xun's sense of moral responsibility prevented him from forcing Zhu An to leave and face despair.

Lu Xun's displeasing marriage lasted until March 1925 when he began receiving letters from Xu Guangping, a female student of his, who expressed admiration and love for her teacher in her letters. Their affair developed rapidly, and some scholars consider they consummated their love in the summer of 1925.[19]

From the very outset of Lu Xun's romantic involvement with Xu Guangping, he was faced with the dilemma of love versus moral responsibility. Lu Xun was a married, middle-aged scholar, while Xu Guangping was his student and eighteen years younger. At that time, an arranged marriage was not necessarily a justifiable reason to divorce a wife. Many famous leaders of the New Culture Movement, such as Cai Yuanpei, Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, and Hu Shi all had an arranged marriage. All of them accepted it, and maintained it throughout their lives. Before the New Culture Movement, few women in China received an education and almost none had a professional career. A woman had to rely on her parents before getting married and her husband after marriage. At that time almost no marriages happened without being arranged.

薛绥之 and others ed., *Lu Xun shengping shiliao huibian*, 鲁迅生平史料汇编 (A collection of the historical materials of Lu Xun's career), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1983, vol. 3, p. 480.

[17]Ibid., p. 484.

[18]Ibid., pp. 483-4.

[19]Wang Dehou 王得后, *Liangdishu yanjiu* 两地书研究 (A study of *The Letters between Two Places*), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1982, p. 324; and You Yang 又央, "Yecao; yige teshu xulie" 野草: 一个特殊序列 (*Wild Grass*, a specific series), in *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan* 鲁迅研究月刊 (Lu Xun Study monthly), 1993, no. 5, p. 23.

In 1920s China, it was still legal and usual for a man to take concubines, as long as he was economically able. But Lu Xun, as a radical critic of inhuman traditional morality from feet-binding to concubinage in pre-modern China, would never deign to practice a corrupt custom himself. Lu Xun cherished Xu Guangping's love very much. He certainly did not want to reject it. Love is a boon to human beings: its power can not only raise people up morally and psychologically, but also mitigate trouble. Xu Guangping's love had almost a remedial power to moderate Lu Xun's life tribulations. But how to deal with his affair with Xu Guangping in a way that would not seriously harm Zhu An became a conundrum for Lu Xun. This conundrum which I call the emotional dilemma of love and moral responsibility is embodied implicitly yet adequately in many *Wild Grass* poems.

Xu Guangping became Lu Xun's student in September 1923 and it is evident that they knew each other well before Lu Xun started writing *Wild Grass* in September 1924. The majority of the collection was written during their secret romantic involvement and certainly contains Lu Xun's most private feelings. I would like to argue that in a sense, it is love that inspired Lu Xun to compose some of the elusive *Wild Grass* poems.

The Japanese critic Katayama Tomoyuki points out: "Without scholars' annotation and interpretation, in the reading of *Wild Grass* it is hard to access Lu Xun's real intentions. Even for scholars, it is difficult to interpret all twenty-four pieces of *Wild Grass*."[20] The interpretive difficulty lies mainly in the oblique nature of these prose poems. Lu Xun himself once stated, "Since it was difficult to speak out directly at the time, occasionally the phrasing [of *Wild Grass*] is very opaque."[21] If readers want to access Lu Xun's real intention, first they have to understand the "opaque" phrasing that Lu Xun deliberately employed in *Wild Grass*.

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[20]Katayama Tomoyuki 片山智行, *Rojin yaso zenyaku* 魯迅野草全释 (A complete interpretation of Lu Xun's Wild Grass), 平凡社, 1991, p. 278. His twenty-four pieces include the "Preface."

[21]Lu Xun, "Yecao yingwen yiben xu" 野草英文译本序 (A preface to the English edition of *Yecao*), *LXQJ*, vol. 4. p. 356.

According to the theory of intertextuality, "any one literary text is inseparably inter-involved with other texts, whether by its open or covert citations and *allusions*, or by its assimilation of the formal and substantive features of an earlier text or texts, or simply by its unavoidable participation in the common stock of linguistic and literary conventions and procedures that are 'always already' in place and constitute the discourses into which we are born."[22] In this light Lu Xun's *Wild Grass* is not a closed system. The poems are "inter-involved" not only with each other to different degrees, but also with Lu Xun's other writings. Lu Xun's "opaque" phrasing may be regarded as his private allusions. Some of them are deliberately specialized, drawn from his private feelings and experiences, and are not intended to be recognized by general readers. In the following analysis, I shall attempt to explore Lu Xun's private allusions embedded in *Wild Grass* in order to better understand his emotional dilemma of love and moral responsibility, the most elusive theme of *Wild Grass*.

"Autumn Night"

At the opening of "Autumn Night," Lu Xun writes: "Behind the wall of my backyard you can see two trees: one is a date tree, the other is also a date tree."[23] As the most important image of the poem, the date trees have been commonly viewed as a symbol of Lu Xun's unbending personality. However, the reason why he describes the date trees separately has been debated for more than half a century and there is still no widely accepted conclusion. As early as 1935, Li Changzhi wrote that the opening stanza "simply falls into odious interest."[24] But he didn't tell his readers what he meant by the phrase "odious interest" nor why he used it. Without providing an explanation, Li's argument sounds arbitrary. In the 1950s Wei Junxiu countered Li's opinion, arguing that this stanza is never of "odious

[22]M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Harcourt Brace Jovanouich College Publishers, 1993. p. 285, original emphasis.
[23]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 162, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW* vol. 1, p. 317.
[24]Li Changzhi 李长之, *Lu Xun pipan* 鲁迅批判 (The criticism of Lu Xun), Shanghai: Beixin shuju, 1935, p. 136.

interest" but of "genuine interest." Wei Junxiu offered an assumption to support his argument. In the autumnal night, he suggested, Lu Xun perhaps first saw two trees, then he identified them one by one as date trees. Therefore the introductory description of the date trees is vivid and reasonable but never of "odious interest."[25]

In the 1970s Li Helin considered that Lu Xu intentionally employed a rhetorical repetition in order to highlight the date trees.[26] In the 1990s the Japanese scholar Katayama provided a new interpretation by associating the separately-described date trees with Lu Xun's "sense of loneliness and isolation." He says: "It is an expression of Lu Xun's sense of loneliness and isolation to describe these two date trees separately."[27] According to him, Lu Xun's estrangement from his beloved brother and his life with a dissatisfying wife are among the "significant elements" that account for his "sense of loneliness and isolation."[28]

Picking up where Katayama left off, I will go a step further to argue that these two separately-described date trees embody Lu Xun's dejected feelings for his marital situation and could be understood as metaphors for himself and his wife Zhu An. In my research, I have found that no scholar has paid any attention to the fact that Lu Xun, after delineating the appearance of the two trees, depicted the psyche of only one date tree and left the other one unexamined. He did this by subtly shifting the plural pronoun "they" (*tamen*, 他们) into the singular one "he"(*ta*, 他). I checked three versions of the English translation and found that in two of them the original "he" was changed into "they" throughout the poem,[29] and the third translation was done accurately according to the original.[30] The translators who changed the

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[25]Wei Junxiu 卫俊秀, *Lu Xun yecao tansuo*, 鲁迅野草探索 (*Exploration of Lu Xun's Wild Grass*, 1953), p. 6.
[26]Li Helin 李何林, *Lu Xun Yecao zhushi* 鲁迅野草注释 (Annotation and interpretation of Lu Xun's Wild Grass), Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1973, p. 27.
[27]Katayama Tomoyuki 片山智行, *Rojin yaso zenyaku* 鲁迅野草全释 (A complete explanation of Lu Xun's Wild Grass), 1991, p. 25.
[28]Ibid., p. 26.
[29]They are the the Yangs' translation, in *LXSW*, 1980, vol. 1, pp. 317-9 and William Schultz's translation in "Lu Xun's Creative Years," 1955, p. 298.
[30]It is Ng Mau-sang's translation in *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature*, Joseph S. M. Lau and Howard Goldblatt ed., Columbia University Press, New York, 1995, p. 595.

original text might think that they had corrected a minor textual mistake by making the number of trees and pronouns agree. Actually they failed to detect Lu Xun's trick, by which he distinguishes these two date trees in order to emphasize the difference between them, and furthermore, to allude to his own disaffection with his wife.

Some external supporting evidence can be found in Lu Xun's free style poems written in 1918. During the New Culture Movement, Lu Xun wrote five new style poems. Among them two take a garden as subject matter and both are love poems. "Their Garden" (*Tamen de huayuan*, 他们的花园) describes a young man, who steals a flower from his neighbors' garden. But he finally realizes that the stolen flower can never match the neighbors' flowers blossoming in the garden. He feels sad:

> Thinking about the neighbors, he fails to speak out:
> In their big garden, there are many pretty flowers.[31]

The poem expresses the protagonist's admiration of others' garden and flowers. By contrast, in "Peach Blossom" (*Taohua*, 桃花) the first person persona's garden displays a different scene. As in "Autumn Night," Lu Xun also describes two trees in the garden: a peach tree and a plum tree, each occupying one side of the garden and blossoming. The peach tree is irritated at the I persona, simply because he says that the flowers of the peach tree are different in color from the plum tree. This makes the I persona feel embarrassed. He questions the peach tree:

> My words have not really opposed you, so why blush so!
> Ai! Flowers have a flower's reasons, which I do not understand.[32]

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[31]Lu Xun, "Tamen de huayuan" 他们的花园 (Their garden), *LXQJ*, vol. 7, p. 32.
[32]Lu Xun, "Taohua" 桃花 (Peach blossom), *LXQJ*, vol. 7, p. 31.

We see from this garden an inharmonious relationship between the peach tree and the plum tree. The persona's feelings of having no-way-out are also obviously perceptible in the poem. I would like to argue that these two new style poems implicitly incorporate the author's marital dissatisfaction, and "Autumn Night" is not the first poem in which Lu Xun employs flowers, gardens, and disaffected trees as private allusions for love, marital life, and an inharmonious relationship between spouses. The images of the peach tree and the plum tree may be regarded as the forerunners of the two date trees in "Autumn Night."

Lu Xun's private allusion connoted by the trees becomes more identifiable when he declares in the "Preface" to *Wild Grass* (*Tici*, 题辞): "Discarded upon the ground, the clay of life gives no birth to stately trees; it grows only wild grass. And this is my guilt."[33] It seems to me that Lu Xun intentionally designs the "stately trees" and the nameless "wild grass" as his private allusions to reflect his personal life and juxtaposes them to pinpoint his opposite marital and romantic experiences.

The "wild grass," together with the wild flowers, contrasts with the "stately trees" and serves as an important clue to understand the most elusive theme of *Wild Grass*. "The wild flowers and wild grass" (*yehuacao*, 野花草) first appear in the garden in "Autumn Night." They are suffering from the hardship of the environment — in the autumn night the cold autumn sky scatters heavy frost on them. Lu Xun describes these wild flowers and wild grass, especially a kind of plant that bears small pink flowers, in a whole paragraph even prior to a detailed description of the date trees. He writes:

> I have no idea what these flowers and grass are called, what names they are commonly known by. One of them, I remember, has tiny pink flowers and its flowers are still lingering on, although smaller than ever. Shivering in the cold night air they dream of the coming of spring, of the coming of the autumn, . . . [34]

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[33] *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 159. William Schultz's translation in "Lu Hsün, The Creative Years," p. 297.
[34] *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 162, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW* vol. 1, p. 317.

Shivering in the coldness and darkness, the small pink flowers are still having the dream of spring. In their dream, bees start humming songs of spring, butterflies fly to and fro. Then the little pink flowers smile, though they have turned a mournful crimson with cold and are still shivering.

Lu Xun endows the plant that bears small pink flowers with female prettiness, calling it "she" and portraying it sympathetically and lyrically. It may be viewed as a symbol of Lu Xun's faint hope for love. Despite the harsh environment, the small pink flowers persist in blossoming and longing for the coming of the spring. In previous "Autumn Night" studies, critics revealed the conflict between the date tree and the sky sufficiently, but failed to pay enough attention to the affinity between the date tree and the plant with small pink flowers. Lu Xun personifies them as male and female characters and, more remarkably, associates them by stating twice in the poem that the date tree knows and will have the same dream as the small pink flowers.

In short "the wild flowers and wild grass" are collectively important images which frequently appear in some *Wild Grass* poems. Besides in "Autumn Night," there are also "blood red camellias" and "white plum blossom tinged with green" in "Snow"; "wild flowers" and "big red flowers" in "The Good Story"; "flowers in secret" in "Hope"; "wild lily and wild rose" in "Passerby"; "short grass" and "wild thistle" in "The Awakening"; and so on. Lu Xun himself once called his *Wild Grass* poems "small pale flowers on the rim of ruined hell."[35]

"The wild flowers and wild grass" (*yehuacao*, 野花草) are not only Lu Xun's private allusions to imply the love theme of *Wild Grass* in particular, but also commonly-recognized literary allusions, general in Chinese. They can be used to "metaphorize a man's extra-marital affairs" or refer to "a woman whom a man dallies with outside of marriage."[36]

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[35]Lu Xun, "Yecao yingwen yiben xu" 野草英文译本序 (A preface to the English edition of *Yecao*), *LXQJ*, vol. 4, p. 356.

[36]Luo Zhufeng 罗竹风, *Hanyu da cidian* 汉语大辞典 (Grand Chinese Dictionary), Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1993, vol. 10, p. 406 and p. 408.

All the above evidence — the suggestive title of *Wild Grass*, the contrast between trees and wild flowers, wild grass, the description of the sufferings of the insignificant wild flowers, wild grass, and Lu Xun's own explanation that the *Wild Grass* poems are "small pale flowers on the rim of ruined hell" — indicates that these prose poems reflect in part his miserable marital life and his profound emotional distress. I would like to examine and interpret some *Wild Grass* pieces as a sequence of melancholy love poems. "Autumn Night" serves as the initial piece to display Lu Xun's emotional dilemma, which permeates many subsequent poems of the collection.

"Shadow's Leave-Taking"

The image of the shadow is commonly accepted as Lu Xun's self-symbol as I have discussed in Chapter Three. As for the Leave-Taking, I would like to argue its interpretation as Lu Xun's farewell to his wife Zhu An. Lu Xun once said to his friend Xu Shoushang: "Zhu An is a gift (*liwu*, 礼物) given by my mother. I have to support her well. Love is something that I don't know."[37] As Lu Xun's wife, Zhu An tried her best to perform her duty. She once said to her neighbor Yu Fang: "The relationship between Lu Xun and me has not been good. I want to take good care of him and obey him in everything, then it will be good in the future."[38] As a wife, she wanted to be treated as a wife; as a "gift" given to Lu Xun, she also wanted to be repaid by a gift from him. She, however, never knew that her expectation was not to be met by him. In "Shadow's Leave-Taking" Lu Xun writes:

> You are still expecting a gift (*zengpin*, 赠品) from me. What is there for me to give? Nothing except darkness and nothingness. But I would like it to be only darkness,

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[37]Xu Shoushang 许寿裳, *Wangyou Lu Xun yinxiang ji* 亡友鲁迅印象记 (My impression of the late friend Lu Xun), Hong Kong: Shanghai shuju, 1957, p. 62.

[38]Yu Fang 俞芳 "Fengjian hunyin de xishengzhe — Lu Xun xiansheng he Zhu furen" 封建婚姻的牺牲者 — 鲁迅先生和朱夫人. (The victims of the feudalistic marriage — Mr. Lu Xun and Mrs. Zhu), in Xue Suizhi 薛绥之 and others ed., *Lu Xun shengping shiliao huibian*, 鲁迅生平史料汇编 (A collection of the historical materials of Lu Xun's career), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1983, vol. 3, p. 481.

> which may be lost in your daylight. I would like it to be only nothingness, which would never take possession of your heart.[39]

Just because the I persona has no gift to offer to his "friend" — "nothing except darkness and nothingness," and, more importantly, he has no desire to offer a gift — "I would like it to be only nothingness, which would never take possession of your heart." When his "friend" sleeps until losing the sense of time, he decides to leave:

> It is you, though, that I dislike.
> Friend, I'll no longer follow you; I do not want to stay here.
> I do not want to!
> Ah, no! I do not want to. I would rather wander in Nowhere.
> . . .
> At the time when I lose the sense of time, I shall go far away alone.
> . . .
> Friend, the time is at hand.
> . . .
> This is what I would like, friend —[40]

At this time, although he is still unaware of where to go — "I would rather wander in Nowhere," the farewell becomes inevitable. In the poem the title "Shadow's Leave-Taking" is the key word for the interpretation. It implicitly indicates Lu Xun's desire, that is, to "go far away alone." When the I persona plans to leave, he never reproaches his "friend." Instead he admits his weakness — having "nothing except darkness and nothingness" to offer his friend. He never betrays the least complacency that he may leave for a satisfactory place. Instead he condemns himself and is willing to accept any possible consequence. "There will be myself alone sunk in the darkness. That world will be wholly mine."[41]

"Shadow's Leave-Taking" is one of the most pessimistic poems in *Wild Grass*. At the very beginning of Lu Xun's plan to leave his wife, he feels guilty. His awareness of

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[39]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 166, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 321.
[40]*LXQJ*. vol. 2, pp. 165-6, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW* vol. 1, pp. 320-1.
[41]*LXQJ*. vol. 2, pp. 166, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW* vol. 1, pp. 321.

repentance is implicitly expressed in "Shadow's Leave-Taking" and, more strongly, in several ensuing *Wild Grass* poems, such as "The Passerby" and "Tombstone Inscriptions."

"My Lost Love" (*Wo de shilian*, 我的失恋)[42]

This poem, with its subtitle "a new doggerel modeled after the ancients,"[43] has received much scholarly criticism. Tsi-an Hsia takes it as the only inferior poem in the collection and excludes it from those that he calls "genuine poetry." He says:

> Of the twenty-four pieces included, only one reads like a formal *pai-hua* poem, "My Lost Love"; but it is a burlesque, not a very clever burlesque either, of the current love poems which Lu Hsün disdained for their cheap facile sentiments and jingling notes.[44]

Leo Ou-fan Lee comments on it together with Lu Xun's other poems written in the *baihua* style. He says:

> In the May Fourth period, he did make a few attempts to write "new poetry" in the *baihua* style. But the few pieces he produced seem to be veiled doggerel occasioned by a flippant impulse, as if he intended to poke fun at its naiveté of sentiment (a famous example is "My Unrequited Love").[45]

In spite of its alleged imperfection, I still view "My Lost Love" as an important link in the evolution of the emotional theme of *Wild Grass*. Once again the poem reveals the I persona's puzzlement and sorrow over the awkward relationship with his lover. It contains four stanzas. Like "Shadow's Leave-Taking," each involves problems caused by gifts. The first reads as follows:

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[42]This poem was written on October 3, 1924 and published in *Yusi* 语丝, no. 4, December 8, 1924.
[43]*LXQJ*. vol. 2, p. 169.
[44]Tsi-an Hsia, *The Gate of Darkness*, 1968, p. 150.
[45]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987, pp. 41-2.

She whom I love is on the mountain side.
I want to seek her but the mountain is too high.
I lower my head and helpless tears stain my garb.
My lover gave me a one-hundred-butterfly scarf.
What did I give her in return: an owl.
She got angry and ignores me now.
I don't know why and my heart is filled with awe.[46]

In the following three stanzas, the lover presents the I persona with a picture of double swallows, a golden watch belt, and a rose as gifts; while he presents sugarcoated haws on a stick, aspirins, and a red-chain snake to her in return. At each exchange of gifts, the lover gets annoyed at him. Finally the I persona has no other choice and gives up: "I don't know why, and let her alone."[47]

Although Lu Xun himself asserted that "My Lost Love" was written to "satirize 'lost-love poetry' (*shilianshi* 失恋诗) popular at that time"[48] and "to make a joke,"[49] his contemporaries considered it serious and not merely meant as "a joke." According to Sun Fuyuan's reminiscence, Lu Xun once told him that the "owl" and other gifts described in the poem were all things he liked.[50] Xu Shoushang also expressed a similar opinion: "Most readers consider it nonsense and only feel it funny. They don't know the owl was something that he himself valued; sugarcoated haws on a stick were things that he favored; aspirin was something that he often took; and the red-chain snake was something that he liked to watch. The poem is still serious without any affectation."[51]

I want to pay particular attention to the implications of the gifts that the I persona presents to his lover. All of them seem to be insignificant or meaningless but each actually

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[46]*LXQJ*. vol. 2, p. 169.
[47]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 170.
[48]Lu Xun, "Yecao yingwen yiben xu" 野草英文译本序 (A preface to the English edition of *Yecao*), *LXQJ*, vol. 4, p. 356.
[49]Lu Xun, "Wo he *Yusi* de shizhong" 我和语丝的始终 (I and the beginning and ending of *Yusi*), *LXQJ*, vol. 4. p. 166.
[50]Sun Fuyuan, 孙伏园 "Jingfu yi zhounian" 京副一周年 (One year of the *Supplementary of Beijing Gazette*), See Sun Yushi 孙玉石 *Yecao yanjiu* 野草研究 (*Wild Grass* study), 1982, p. 109.
[51]Xu Shoushang 许寿裳, *Wo suo renshi de Lu Xun* 我所认识的鲁迅 (The Lu Xun I knew), 1952, p. 70.

bears a special connotation. In *Wild Grass* the "owl" is a remarkable image, which also appears in "Autumn Night" and "Hope." In Chapter Three I discussed that Lu Xun changed its traditional meaning of an evil omen and usually used it in his writing as a rebellious image. I would like to further point out that the "owl" is also Lu Xun's self-symbol. According to Shen Yinmo's (沈尹默) reminiscence, one of Lu Xun's nicknames was "owl." He gained it because of his appearance, about which he didn't care much. He usually wore black clothes. On public occasions he didn't talk much and tended to sit and listen attentively. So his friends called him "owl."[52] Lu Xun did not detest this nickname. He not only often employed the "owl" as an anti-conventional symbol in various writings, but also drew it as his own mark to decorate covers of his books, such as the first version of his essay collection *Tomb* (*Fen*, 坟, 1927). Based on the above evidence Jiang Deming, a mainland Chinese scholar, argues that the "owl" in "My Lost Love" is "a self-metaphor of Lu Xun himself."[53]

I agree with Jiang Deming's argument. Lu Xun employs the "owl" as his self-metaphor not only in "My Lost Love," but also in his essays. More importantly, the "owl" is longing for love. For instance, he writes in an essay of 1919:

> The son of man is awake. He knows there should be love among mankind. . . . So he feels distressed, and opens his mouth to make this cry. . . .
>
> We can cry out at the top of our voice. If we were orioles, we would cry like orioles; if we were owls, we would cry like owls.
>
> . . .
>
> We shall also cry out the sadness of having no love and cry out the sadness of having nothing to love.[54]

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[52]Shen Yinmo 沈尹默, "Lu Xun shenghuo de yijie" 鲁迅生活的一节 (A thing about Lu Xun's life), in *Huiyi weida de Lu Xun* 回忆伟大的鲁迅 (Remembering great Lu Xun), Xinwenyi chubanshe, 1958, p. 2.
[53]Jiang Deming 姜德明 "Dushi liangti" 读诗两题 (Two topics of reading poems), *Lu Xun yanjiu jikan* 鲁迅研究集刊 (Collected papers of Lu Xun study), Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1979, vol. 1, p. 199.
[54]Lu Xun, "Suigan lu 40" 随感录 40 (Random thoughts 40), *LXQJ*. vol. 1, pp. 322-3, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 2, pp. 37-8.

This provides external evidence that Lu Xun used the "owl" as a self-metaphor to protest against conventional arranged marriages and to cry out for love. Actually in this poem not only the "owl," but also the "snake" is Lu Xun's self-metaphor. According to the Chinese lunar calendar, Lu Xun was born in the year of the snake. Thus he made himself a penname Tayin (它音), which, according to Xu Guangping, means "the voice of the snake," because *ta* (它) is the ancient character for the snake (*she*, 蛇).[55] During the period of the composition of *Wild Grass*, Lu Xun had another nickname, "wild snake," which was given to him by the sisters of the Yu family, his neighbors and landladies in Beijing.[56]

Like the "owl," the "snake" is also a reiterative image in *Wild Grass*. The protagonist in "Tombstone Inscriptions" is a serpent-ghost. In "Dead Fire" the I persona's fingers and clothes are burnt by the re-kindling "dead fire" and then his body is wreathed by a coil of black smoke, which rears up like "a wiry snake."

Lu Xun often juxtaposed "owls" and "snakes," together with ghosts and monsters, to refer to those who loved his writing. In his "Postscript to *Tomb*" (*Xie zai Fen houmian*, 写在坟后面), he writes: "Even if they are owls, snakes, ghosts, and monsters (*xiaosheguiguai*, 枭蛇鬼怪), they are my friends, my real friends."[57] A particular usage of the "owl-snake-ghosts-monster" can be found in Lu Xun's personal letters. As a private allusion, it is used as one word to refer to his lover Xu Guangping. He once made a nickname "Small Ghost" (*Xiaogui*, 小鬼) for her and in his mind, she was a person of his own kind and deserved his love. He writes:

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[55]Xu Guangping 许广平, *Xu Guangping yi Lu Xun* 许广平忆鲁迅 (Remembering Lu Xun of Xu Guangping), Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1979, p. 93

[56]Xu Qinwen 许钦文 "Lu Xun Xiansheng zai zhuanta hutong" 鲁迅先生在砖塔胡同 (Mr. Lu Xun in Zhuanta Lane), in Shen Yinmo 沈尹默 and others, *Huiyi weida de Lu Xun* 回忆伟大的鲁迅 (Remembering great Lu Xun), Shanghai: Xinweiyi chubanshe, 1958, p. 42.

[57]Lu Xun, "Xie zai *Fen* houmian" 写在坟后面 (Postscript to *Tomb*), *LXQJ*. vol. 1, p. 284.

> I only love the owl-snake-ghost-monster (referring to Xu Guangping). I will give him the right to trample me. I don't want reputation, status, and anything else. It is enough for me to have the owl-snake-ghost-monster.
>
> . . .
>
> Sometimes I feel ashamed. I'm afraid to be unqualified to love that person. . . . (Sometimes) I feel that I am not a bad person. I have the right to love.[58]

Let us go back to "My Lost Love," in which sugar-coated haws on a stick and aspirins are also presented by the I persona to his lover as gifts. The former is a special flavor of food popular in northern China and the latter was Lu Xun's medicine. Suffering from tuberculosis, he actually had to rely on aspirin to a great degree "to fight" his habitual fever. "I had a fever a few days ago," wrote Lu Xun in a letter, "I immediately took aspirin and quinine to fight it. . . . in three days I recovered."[59] More surprisingly, aspirin was really a gift for him. In his diary of July 5, 1924, that is three months before he wrote "My Lost Love," there is a note: "[Qi] Shoushan presents three cans of aspirin as a gift."[60]

After establishing the implications of these gifts, we know that Lu Xun is serious — all the gifts that he lets the I persona present to his lover are his own favorites or necessities. But the I persona cannot be understood by his lover. It seems to me that Lu Xun is presenting a tragedy of different destinies in the poem. The discrepancy in the lovers' characters determines their tragedy. It makes no difference who is right or who is wrong. The reader also cannot tell whose gifts are absolutely superior to whose.

A mainland Chinese scholar interprets "the lover" as "the reactionary ruling class," and the I persona as a "revolutionary," who presents the gifts for the purpose of "making trouble."[61] Another senior scholar argues that the poem is intended to satirize Xu Zhimo

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[58]Lu Xun and Jingsun (Xu Guangping), *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of *The Letters From Two Places*), Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 1984, pp. 314-5.
[59]Lu Xun, a letter to Zhang Chuandao 章川岛 dated July 7, 1927, *LXQJ*, vol. 11, p. 555.
[60]Lu Xun's diary on July 5, 1924, *LXQJ*, vol. 14, p. 504.
[61]Min Kangsheng 闵抗生, *Diyu bianyan de xiaohua* 地狱边沿的小花 (Small flowers at the rim of hell.), 1981, pp. 48-9.

(徐志摩, 1896-1931), a poet of the Modern Review School.[62] But both lack supporting evidence and neither sounds convincing. The most commonly accepted interpretation is based on Lu Xun's own statement to view it as a parody of the inferior "lost-love poetry" prevalent in the mid-1920s.

"My Lost Love" is of course a parody of contemporary "lost-love poetry," but it is inadequate to take it as a parody merely aiming at "a joke." I would like to view it as a parody with personal implications for Lu Xun's own sorrowful marriage. Lu Xun was a great thinker and famous modern Chinese writer; while his wife was a mediocre illiterate. They were destined to fail in emotional interchange as do the lovers in "My Lost Love." This emotional failure between lovers is further presented in "Revenge" to a more astonishing artistic effect.

I don't think there is much satire in the poem. Despite the great discrepancy between the lovers, Lu Xu never expresses ill-feelings or contempt toward his characters. On the contrary he betrays a sense of self-depreciation and having no-way-out. In view of this, it is a sorrowful, serious piece, but not merely a funny doggerel.

"Revenge" and "Revenge II"

Lu Xun's intimate friend Xu Shoushang once provided a unique interpretation of the theme of "Revenge," saying it is "a paradigm of his vow to experience misery and bitterness."[63] His interpretation did not receive the attention it deserves from scholarly circles. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, most scholars tend to highlight the conflict between the couple and the on-lookers in order to emphasize Lu Xun's criticism of the ignorant public.

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[62]Sun Xizhen 孙席珍, "Lu Xun shige zatan" 鲁迅诗歌杂谈 (Miscellaneous comment on Lu Xun's poems), *Wenshizhe* 文史哲 (Literature, history, and philosophy), 1978. no. 2. Also see Zhang Enhe 张恩和, *Lu Xun jiushi jijie* 鲁迅旧诗集解 (A collection of interpretations of Lu Xun's classic-style verses), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1981, pp. 102-4

[63]Xu Shoushang 许寿裳, *Wo suo renshi de Lu Xun* 我所认识的鲁迅 (The Lu Xun I knew), Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1952, p. 42.

An exception is Charles Alber, who points out that "a contrast is drawn between the two actors, the protagonist and the antagonist."[64] Alber also carefully traces the development of the conflict between the couple by dividing the poem into different scenes. According to him, the first two stanzas constitute the prologue, which reads:

> Human skin is probably no more than a fraction of an inch thick, yet behind it courses red, hot blood, which flows through vessels, more dense than layers of larvae climbing up a wall, and comes out warm. Everyone uses this warmth to seduce, excite, coax, tenaciously hug, kiss, and embrace each other in order to attain life's drunken bliss.
>
> But take a sharp, pointed dagger, give it one thrust, pierce this puny, peach-colored skin, and you will see that red, hot blood spurt out like an arrow, letting all the warmth drain straight out of the victim; then, with an icy breath escaping through pale lips, the human mind becomes dumbfounded, attains life's giddy, excruciating bliss, and the body too is eternally plunged into life's giddy bliss.[65]

In scene two, enter the lovers:

> So it was that this couple, completely naked, fingering sharp daggers, stood face to face in the open wilderness.
>
> The two were just about to embrace, just about to die. . . .[66]

When commenting on this scene, Alber states that it is "blunt and terse, but the image it evokes is highly erotic." Alber's commentary is well made on his direct reading of the text.

In my view this poem could also be read as a painful love story. As lovers the protagonists should act "to seduce, excite, coax, tenaciously hug, kiss, and embrace each other to attain life's drunken bliss." But the tragedy is that "the warmth" coming out of their bodies is not strong enough to seduce them into acting as lovers. The unrealized love therefore shifts into hatred. But the other side of the tragedy is that the hatred between them

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[64]Charles, J. Alber, "*Wild Grass*, Symmetry and Parallelism in Lu Hsün's Prose Poems," in *Critical Essays on Chinese Literature*, William H. Nienhauser, Jr. ed., The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1976, p. 8.
[65]*LXQJ.* vol. 2, p. 172, Alber's translation in *Critical Essays on Chinese Literature*, 1976, p. 24.
[66]ibid., p. 172 and p. 24.

is not strong enough to lead to mutual murder either. As a result the couple can do nothing but confront each other face to face until they dry up. This confrontation with neither love nor hatred is even more tragic than slaughter, thus Lu Xun calls it "the great bloodless slaughter" (*wuxue de dalu*, 无血的大戮).

It seems to me that the couple's silent and stationary confrontation is consistent with the potential conflict between the two date trees in "Autumn Night," but expressed in a startling visualization. In order to enhance the poetic tension, Lu Xun describes the cruel confrontation three times. I would like to argue that the confrontation between this couple can be viewed as another incorporation of his own terrible marital arrangement. My argument finds strong support in the title "Revenge" (复仇). The Chinese character 仇 means not only "foe" (*chou*) but also "spouse" (*qiu*).[67] Accordingly the title of the poem can be translated literally into "to reply to [my] foe" or "to reply to [my] spouse." The ambiguity of the title is richly suggestive of the couple's emotional status: they behave like neither foes nor spouses.

Leo Ou-fan Lee noted that in his original writing Lu Xun employed the ancient form for the character 仇, which is written as 雠, a character created by combining two birds with the radical of language between them. Its original meaning is to communicate.[68] A line in the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing*, 诗经) reads "Without language there will be no communication" (*Wuyan buchou*, 无言不雠).[69]

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[67]For example Cao Zhi's 曹植 "Fuping pian" 浮萍篇 (Poem of duckweed) has the lines: 结发辞严亲, 来为君子仇 (I braid my hair, bid farewell to my honorable parents, and come to be your spouse). See *Ci hai* 辞海 (Vocabulary sea), Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1979, p. 211. In Zhu Xi 朱熹 *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子语类 (The analects of master Zhu Xi) v. 81, there is 如此之淑女, 方可为君子之仇匹 (Only young lady like this can be the spouse of a gentleman), See Luo Zhufeng 罗竹风, *Hanyu da cidian* 汉语大辞典 (Grand Chinese Dictionary). Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1993, v. 1, p. 1105.

[68]Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Lu Xun yu xiandai yishu yishi" 鲁迅与现代艺术意识 (Lu Xun and the consciousness of modern art), in *Tiewuzhong de nahan* 铁屋中的呐喊 (Voices from the Iron House), Taibei: shidai fengyun chubanshe, 1995, p. 298.

[69]*Ci hai* 辞海 (Vocabulary sea), Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1979, p. 2013.

Lu Xun was proficient in Chinese ancient characters, which he once studied from the famous scholar Zhang Taiyan (章太炎, 1869-1936). It seems to me that it is not just a coincidence that he employed an ancient character in the title. He is well known to often choose characters with particular graphic connotations to achieve particular effects in his various writings.[70] I prefer to treat this deliberately-chosen character 雔 as a figurative and allusive display of his own terrible marital status. There certainly should be "language" between lovers. But in the poem not only is there no communication between the couple, but also no other sounds. The completely silent poem with a surprising visual effect magnificently represents the artistic conception of the line in the *Book of Odes*, "Without language there will be no communication," not to mention love.

Once Lu Xun's personal feelings and private allusions are identified, the theme of the poem, which concerns his marital anguish, becomes clear. It is no wonder that, having experienced such a painful marriage, he would be able to conceive the poem in such a shocking manner. And it is also no wonder that Xu Shoushang, having been aware of Lu Xun's anguish, would be able to assert that the poem is a "paradigm of his vow to experience misery and bitterness."[71]

In "Revenge II" after Lu Xun depicts the cruel crucifixion of Jesus, the Son of God, he concludes the poem with his own commentary: "Those who reek most of blood and filth are not those who crucify the Son of God, but those who crucify the son of man."[72] This

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[70]Here I will provide a famous example. Lu Xun used a penname Yan Zhi'aozhe (宴之敖者) in 1924 for his book *Sitang zhuanwen zaji* 俟堂专文杂集 (Miscellaneous collection of brick inscriptions by Lu Xun). see "Sitang zhuanwen zaji tiji" 俟堂专文杂集题记 (Prescript to *Miscellaneous collection of brick inscriptions by Lu Xun*), in *LXQJ*, vol. 10, p.63. In 1926 Lu Xun named the protagonist in his story *Zhujian* 铸剑 (Forging the Swords) the same Yan Zhi'aozhe. According to Xu Guangping's interpretation, Yan Zhi'aozhe means "the person who was exiled by the Japanese woman in the family," because the character 宴 consists of the radicals "family," "Japanese," and "woman," and the ancient form of 敖 consists of "exile" and "out." See *LXQJ*, vol. 10, pp. 63-4. Explicitly Lu Xun conceived this private allusion to refer to the fact that he was forced to move out his own house after his conflict with Zhou Zuoren's Japanese wife Nobuko in 1923.

[71]Xu Shoushang 许寿裳, *Wo suo renshi de Lu Xun* 我所认识的鲁迅 (The Lu Xun I knew), Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1952, p. 42.

[72]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 175, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 325.

commentary is particularly important in understanding Lu Xun's feelings and the theme of the poem. Many scholars have given a wide variety of interpretations to its key word "son of man" since the 1950s. Wei Junxiu considers the "son of man" as the opposite of the "Son of God." The former is "more noble" than the latter, because he is closer to the common people and their life.[73] Li Helin argues that both the "Son of God" and the "son of man" refer to Jesus, and Lu Xun emphasizes his significance as the "son of man," because Jesus seeks liberation for all mankind.[74] Sun Yushi even says: "Lu Xun is the 'son of man' in his own era, but not the 'Son of God,' who transcends history." As the "son of man" who cannot transcend history, Lu Xun, in Sun Yushi's opinion, reveals the "weakness of his thought" in the poem because of his "extreme views on the relationship between the revolutionary and the crowd."[75] It seems to me that Sun Yushi is arguing that the "Son of God" represents "the revolutionary," who is higher than the "son of man" Lu Xun.

I interpret the "son of man" as the awakened generation, including Lu Xun, who lacked love in their life. In 1919 Lu Xun wrote his famous essay "Random Thoughts 40" (*Suigan lu* 随感录 40), which is a commentary on a poem entitled "Love" by a young man unknown to him. In the poem the young man complains of the sorrow of his arranged marriage and the lack of love, saying: "Love, sadly, I don't know what you are!"[76] The poem touched Lu Xun greatly. Suffering from the same bitterness of an arranged marriage, he could not help but comment with an intense emotion:

> What is love? I don't know either. Most Chinese men and women just live in couples or in groups — when one man has several wives — so I don't know who does know.

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[73]Wei Junxiu 卫俊秀, *Lu Xun yecao tansuo*, 鲁迅野草探索 (Exploration of Lu Xun's *Wild Grass*), 1953, p. 91.
[74]Li Helin 李何林, *Lu Xun Yecao zhushi* 鲁迅野草注释 (Annotation and interpretation of Lu Xun's *Wild Grass*), 1973, p. 71.
[75]Sun Yushi 孙玉石 *Yecao yanjiu* 野草研究 (*Wild Grass* study), Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1982, p. 105.
[76]Lu Xun, "Suigan lu 40" 随感录 40 (Random thoughts 40), *LXQJ*, vol. 1, p. 321.

> In the past . . . the young men went to prostitutes, and the older men bought concubines. Each had ingenious devices to silence his conscience, and no problem arose until now. . . .
>
> But now the east is light. . . . The son of man is awake. He knows there should be love among mankind. He knows what sins have been committed by the old and the young. So he feels distressed, and opens his mouth to make this cry.
>
> Women are guilty of no crime, yet at present they are sacrificed to custom. Now that we have come to an awareness of human morality, our conscience will not let us commit the crimes of the young and the old, and we cannot blame everything on women. We'll just have to go along with them and pay off a four thousand year debt.
>
> . . .
>
> We still have to cry of the sadness of having no love, the sadness of having nothing to love.[77]

By contrasting Lu Xun's text to identify his own allusion, the meaning of the "son of man" becomes clear. He represents the awakened generation in general or Lu Xun himself in particular. Since he is awake, he knows that man should love and be loved. But also because he is awake, he has "come to an awareness of human morality." Therefore he can neither blame women, who "are guilty of no crime," nor commit the same crimes as those young and old in the past who visited prostitutes or bought concubines. This is the paradox of the "son of man." In Lu Xun's opinion, what he can do is to sacrifice himself and, together with the women, "to pay off a four thousand year debt."

In "Revenge II," we see that Lu Xun does not really want to present the religious story of the crucifixion of the "Son of God," but rather to imply the secular suffering of the common people — the "son of man." It was the traditional custom and social system that deprived him of the right of love. This is a kind of suffering during his whole life without visible blood and audible moans. It has been expressed in "Revenge" as "a great bloodless slaughter." In "Revenge II" it is further visualized as a bloody crucifixion. In short the poem embodies Lu Xun's invisible and inaudible mental agony at his terrible marital life in the

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[77]Ibid., pp. 321-2, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 2, pp. 37-8.

religious story of the visible and audible outrage of the crucifixion of Jesus — Lu sacrificed himself for his mother's sake until he met Xu Guangping.

"Hope"

In "Hope" the first person persona complains: "My heart is particularly lonely," because there is no "love and hate, joy and sadness, or color and sound."[78] Therefore he resolves to seek "the youth" outside him by engaging in "a naked combat with the dark night of emptiness." "Even if I cannot find the youth outside me. I should throw away the feeling of old age inside my body."[79]

How to interpret "the youth outside the body" (*shenwai de qingchun*, 身外的青春) becomes crucial to understanding the theme of "Hope." Li Helin asserts: "'The youth outside the body perhaps refers to progressive opinions and actions of the contemporary young people."[80] Sun Yushi holds a similar opinion, saying that "the youth outside the body" is "resistance and progress of the young people," which have already become "an inseparable part of Lu Xun's life."[81] This sort of interpretation seems to me too farfetched to be convincing. I argue that "the youth outside the body" represents a poetic call of the I persona for love and emotional life. In the poem we can find textual hints to support this argument. Lu Xun writes:

> I know, of course, that my youth had departed. But I thought that the youth outside me still existed: stars and moonlight, limp fallen butterflies, flowers in secret, the funereal omens of the owl, the weeping with blood of the nightingales, the vagueness of laughter, the dance of love . . .
>
> But why is it now so lonely? Is it because even the youth outside me has departed?

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[78] *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 177.
[79] Ibid., p. 178, Leo Ou-fan Lee's translation in *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987, p. 101.
[80] Wang Yao 王瑶 and Li Helin 李何林, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue ji Yecao Gushi Xinbian de zhengming* 中国现代文学及野草故事新编的争鸣 (Modern Chinese literature and the debates on *Wild Grass* and *Old Tales Retold*), 1990, p. 117.
[81] Sun Yushi 孙玉石, "Lu Xun Yecao chongshi IV" 鲁迅野草重释, 四 (Re-interpretation of *Wild Grass*, IV), *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan* 鲁迅研究月刊, 1996, no. 4, p. 39.

. . .
I have to grapple alone with the dark night in the emptiness.[82]

Except for the "owl," which is a self-metaphor of Lu Xun, the stars, moonlight, butterflies, flowers, nightingales, laughter, and dance of love are all commonly used images in love poetry. All the images represent "the youth" outside the I persona that he wants to seek. If he acquires them, his loneliness will be cured. Furthermore, the reason for him to seek "the youth outside the body" is to change the situation in which he has no "love and hate, joy and sadness, or color and sound" in his heart. Judged by this, the love theme of "Hope" seems to be clear.

Every human being inherently needs love and has a right to seek love; so does Lu Xun. In the poem, the I persona feels that he is "growing old" and his heart feels "particularly lonely." He needs love to moderate his tribulations and sustain him for the rest of his life. "For once the youth outside me vanishes, my own old age will wither away."[83]

That the poem calls for vitality and love can also be supported by some external evidence. The poem was written on the New Year's day of 1925. That day Sun Fuyuan invited him to a dinner in a restaurant. Except for Lu Xun, all the six others present were young people, including four young women. After the dinner they went to a movie. Lu Xun had an enjoyable day and wrote in his diary: "I didn't go home until night."[84] On that night he wrote "Hope." He might have been inspired to write this poem by the young people's life style, their enthusiasm, and vitality. Seeing these young people, a comparison with his own life without love and warmth probably made him sorrowful. His sorrow is figuratively re-cast in "Hope."

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[82]*LXQJ*. vol. 2, p. 177, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 2, pp. 326-7.
[83]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 178.
[84]Lu Xun's diary of January 1, 1925, *LXQJ*, vol. 14, p. 529.

The Japanese scholar Katayama Tomoyuki points out that Lu Xun had a close association with young people at the time "Hope" was written. In 1924 Lu Xun gave lectures in Beijing University, Beijing Normal University, Beijing Women's Normal University, and Esperanto College in Beijing.[85] He guided and helped many young people to write literary works and to establish literary magazines. Based on Lu Xun's diary, Katayama made a statistical study to demonstrate his association with youth at that time. Within one month prior to the composition of "Hope," as many as seventy-five guests, most of them young people, visited Lu Xun.[86] Katayama concludes that his association with the young was a moment to arouse his courage to seek a new life; the young at that time were not dispirited but active; his "particularly lonely feeling" was not derived from "the spiritlessness of the young," but came from "the aspect of his own private life."[87]

I consider Katayama's argument quite convincing. Lu Xun himself said in 1932 that the reason he wrote "Hope" was his surprise at "the spiritlessness of the young" at the time.[88] His explanation of the genesis of "Hope" was made eight years later. He might have been unable to remember exactly his real creative intention or he might want to hide it by offering such a public explanation. Furthermore, literary interpretation should be made on the ground of reading and analyzing the text itself. The author's own statement can be used as a reference, but it does not necessarily lead to the exclusive theme of the poem. I argue that it was under the influence of the young people around him that he reflected his own feelings of loneliness and depression. On the first day of 1925, Lu Xun decided in the poem to seek "the youth outside the body" or love and reasonable life. This is one theme of the poem or his one hope that is expressed in "Hope."

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[85]Although Lu Xun held a position in the Ministry of Education, he didn't have to stay in the office all day long and was able to give lectures in a variety of schools. This situation is described in his stories "Duanwu jie" 端午节 (The double fifth festival) and "Dixiong" 弟兄 (Brothers).

[86]See Lu Xun's diary of December 1924, *LXQJ*, vol. 14, pp. 521-4.

[87]Katayama Tomoyuki 片山智行, 1991, pp. 77-9.

[88]Lu Xun, "Yecao yingwen yiben xu" 野草英文译本序 (A preface to the English edition of *Yecao*), *LXQJ*, vol. 4. p. 356.

"The Good Story" (*Hao de gushi*, 好的故事)[89]

This poem was written on January 28, 1925. According to the Chinese lunar calendar, it was the fifth and also the last day of the Spring Festival season. People let off firecrackers to bid farewell to the New Year's holidays. In the poem, the I persona leans against the back of a chair and is surrounded by the explosive sounds of fire crackers on all sides as he falls into a beautiful dream. In the dream, he is sitting in a small boat traveling along a river in his hometown. On either bank there is beautiful natural scenery and the peaceful life in southern China. All the scenic splendors are reflected in the azure river. The I persona wants to stare more closely at them, but he wakes. He wants to catch the shattered reflections of the dream, but nothing is left.

"The Good Story" is "pure fantasy; nothing of the sort could exist in a real world of unresolvable polarities," Leo Ou-fan Lee comments. "In a way, 'The Good Story' offers the only good dream in a nightmarish collection."[90] On the superficial level, it may be said that the poem reveals Lu Xun's nostalgic passion for his childhood or his ideal country life. All the rural spectacles and idyllic life in his hometown are charming, lyrical, and rich in poetic flavor. In contrast with the impoverished and ignorant countryside displayed in his stories, the reader sees that the rural life in this poem has been deliberately idealized. It is bound to be scattered after the I persona wakes. In a more abstract sense the poem can be viewed as a reflection of Lu Xun's contradiction between dark reality and his ideal.

In the 1990s, You Yang tried to decipher in the poem a repressed desire for love deep in Lu Xun's mind. He argues:

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[89]This poem was published in *Yusi* no. 13, February 9, 1925. But it was originally dated February 24, 1925. The date is incorrect because it is later than the time of its publication. According to Lu Xun's diary of January 28, 1925, which records: "I wrote one piece of *Wild Grass*." The poem should be written on that day.
[90]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987, p. 95.

> The theme of the poem should perhaps be located in a harmonious and beautiful love between a man and a woman. The poem presents Lu Xun's longing for an ideal love during the dark night of his sad marriage.[91]

You Yang provides some evidence to support his argument. First, he traces the implication of the key word "good" (*hao*, 好) in the title. It consists of two components — "woman" (*nü*, 女) and "gentleman" (*zi*, 子), and can be connected with the conception of heterosexual love.

Secondly, Lu Xun combines the spectacles both in the sky and on the ground to achieve a great harmony of nature:

> It was a lovely, charming, enthralling story. Many beautiful people and beautiful things mingled like a cloud tapestry in the sky, flying past like a myriad shooting stars, yet stretching out into infinity.
>
> . . .
>
> Above the clear sky were countless beautiful people and beautiful things. I saw them all, and I recognized them all.[92]

According to ancient Chinese philosophy, the harmony of nature can be taken as a symbol of harmonious human life. The sky is regarded as male (*Yang*, 阳), and it pairs with the earth, which is regarded as female (*Yin*, 阴). The heaven covers and the earth bears. The heaven and the earth together are regarded as harmonious natural partners. Lu Xun may be describing this natural partnership to allude to a loving and generative marital life of the human being.

Thirdly, in the poem the scenery in the sky is interwoven with the scenery on the ground by the reflection in the water. Water catches the "flickering sunlight" and the "sunlight" fringes the reflections of all the beautiful images in the water with brightly sparkling borders. "With the blue sky in the water as a background, everything was

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[91]You Yang 又央, "Yecao: yige teshu xulie" 野草: 一个特殊序列 (*Wild Grass*, a specific series), in *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan* 鲁迅研究月刊 (Lu Xun study monthly), 1993, no. 5, p. 22.
[92]*LXQJ*. vol. 2, pp. 185-6, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, pp. 333-4.

intermingled, interwoven, even moving, even extending."[93] In traditional Chinese culture, water also symbolizes *Yin*, the primeval female principle, while the sun strongly suggests *Yang*, the male power. Therefore You Yang concludes that in the poem "Lu Xun is borrowing the *Yin-Yang* conception in traditional Chinese culture to symbolize harmonious and ideal love."[94]

You Yang's interpretation of "The Good Story" is unique in examining Lu Xun's psyche for cravings for love at the moment when he felt sad about his marital life. I think You Yang's interpretation is an acceptable one which can be convincingly supported by the textual evidence of the poem itself and becomes a link to establish the love theme of *Wild Grass*.

Owing to its aesthetic and emotional values, "The Good Story" has been selected as a required reading item for middle school students in mainland China. It is among the most lyrical poems in *Wild Grass*. The poem is focused on neither narrating a complete "good story" nor depicting some impressive images. Instead, it may be said to retain most prominently some musical elements and the author's feelings, which are in concord with the musical elements.

The main part of the poem, which consists of the I persona's beautiful dream, reads much like a piece of flowing music. So many colorful images from the white clouds, shooting stars, sunlight that darts out quick-silver flames in the sky to the azure stream, thatched cottages, pagodas, farmers and country women, and the fauna and flora of southern China successively appear in a few densely-worded stanzas. Each image is presented like a note in the flowing music. All the images in these stanzas are not static and isolated. Instead, they are organically interwoven into a vivid, integral motion picture. Furthermore, the reader cannot distinctly tell if these numerous images in the picture are seen by the I

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[93]Ibid., p. 186 and p. 334.

[94]You Yang 又央, "Yecao; yige teshu xulie" 野草: 一个特殊序列 (*Wild Grass*, a specific series), in *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan* 鲁迅研究月刊 (Lu Xun study monthly), 1993, no. 5, p. 21.

persona or created in the author's imagination. Therefore the whole picture of rural life is endowed with an identifiable utopian nature.

Structurally the poem is characterized by the music-like duplication of its motif. The longest two stanzas convey almost the same content, with only slight adjustments in diction and expression. Again, the fourth and the eighth stanzas are also quite similar in aspects of structure and content. Lu Xun comments directly in either stanza, saying twice that "It was a lovely, charming, enthralling story. Many beautiful people and beautiful things mingled like a cloud tapestry in the sky."[95] These duplications work like musical chants, by which he aims to highlight the beautiful nature of his "good story."

"The Good Story" was written shortly after "Hope" and in my opinion it has retrieved the same theme — desire for vitality and love. It is one of the most oblique pieces in *Wild Grass*, in which Lu Xun created a text involving his deep inner feeling as the major stanza-paragraphs of the poem. Thus its most obscure theme has not been recognized by many critics.

Lu Xun's surface nostalgia and deeper longing for vitality and love serve as two motifs — one explicit and one implicit — to weave lyricism into this prose poem. Finally, and more importantly, "The Good Story" conveys his emotional state of satisfaction at the moment he was craving an ideal future, though this satisfaction is only expressed as the I persona's imaginative apprehension: "In the blue sky there are countless beautiful people and beautiful things. I see them all, and I recognize them all."[96] Lu Xun's satisfied state of mind is rarely seen in *Wild Grass*. Besides in "The Good Story," a transient satisfaction appears only in "Dead Fire" after the protagonist first fulfills his desire by obtaining "dead fire," a symbol of vitality and love.

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[95]*LXQJ*. vol. 2, p. 185, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 333.
[96]Ibid., p. 186, and p. 334.

"The Passerby"

In this poetic drama Lu Xun portrays a passerby, who is exhausted on a journey but still strives stubbornly toward his destination, as a self-symbol to demonstrate his will to life. The passerby comes across an old man by the road. He confesses to him in a strange paragraph, which at first sight seems to deviate from the theme and plot of the drama. When the passerby hesitates to accept the girl's cloth as alms, he says:

> If I were to receive alms, I would be like a vulture catching sight of a corpse and hovering overhead, longing to see her destruction with my own eyes. Or I might curse everything except her to destruction, myself included, for I myself deserve it. But I'm not yet strong enough for that. Even if I were, I wouldn't want her to come to such an end, because such an end is one they mostly dislike.[97]

This paragraph is the most challenging passage in the drama or perhaps in the whole collection to *Wild Grass* critics. Who is "she" (*ta*, 她), whose destruction the passerby is longing to see? Who are "they" (*tamen*, 她们, plural for females in the Chinese original), who mostly dislike the result of "her destruction"? What is the relationship between the passerby and them? Why does the passerby hate "her" and care for "them"?

Li Helin interprets "she" as the little girl who offers the alms to the passerby. The reason that the passerby yearns for "her destruction" is that he wants to "extricate her from living a meaningless life like a lifeless corpse in the old society and from suffering oppression in the old society." "They" refer to "the younger generation," says Li Helin. "Since they don't want to be destroyed, [the author] then lets them live on in pain."[98] Similar to Li Helin, Sun Yushi interprets "she" as "those who are concerned about Lu Xun or love him." The reason Lu Xun curses them to destruction is that he "doesn't want to see them swallowed and eaten by the dark society." He adds: "Lu Xun doesn't want to see his own

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[97] *LXQJ*. vol. 2, p. 192, and the Yangs' translation is in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 340.
[98] Li Helin 李何林, *Lu Xun Yecao zhushi* 鲁迅野草注释 (Annotation and interpretation of Lu Xun's *Wild Grass*), 1973, pp. 123-4.

foes gloat over the failures that he himself and those related to him are suffering. This is one aspect of his philosophy of life."[99] In Sun Yushi's interpretation, he simply identifies the passerby with Lu Xun.

I find it hard to agree with Li Helin's and Sun Yushi's interpretations. Lu Xun is known as a great humanistic writer, who once cried out "save the children" in his famous story "Diary of a Madman" (*Kuangren riji*, 狂人日记). How and why would he curse to destruction those he loved, or those who loved him, or the new generation? "She" should not be the little girl, but someone the passerby hates. The relationship between the passerby and "she" should be similar to that between the "vulture" and the "corpse" as shown in the text.

A careful examination will discover that the "vulture" is another self-symbol. Lu Xun liked to use "vulture" and the like as his pen-names, among which we can find Sun (隼, a kind of eagle), Wengsun (翁隼, old eagle), and Lingfei (令飞, make it fly). Lu Xun, his chief pen-name, is also related to "vulture." According to himself, "Xun (迅) is Xin (卂), which is actually short for Sun (隼, eagle)."[100] One of Lu Xun's pen-names is Lü Sun (旅隼), which means "traveling eagle" and is actually a phonetic variation of Lu Xun. Xu Guangping once explained his pen-names related to eagles, saying: "The nature of the eagle is impetuous. The eagle is a self-metaphor of Lu Xun."[101]

After identifying the "vulture" as Lu Xun's self-metaphor, it becomes more incredible to interpret the little girl as the ambiguous "she" or the "corpse," which the passerby or the "vulture" wants to destroy. Lu Xun would not call a kind and naive girl who sincerely helps others a "corpse" and would not curse her to destruction. The text indicates that the passerby

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[99]Sun Yushi 孙玉石, "Lu Xun Yecao chongshi VI" 鲁迅野草重释, 六 (Re-interpretation of *Wild Grass*, VI), *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan* 鲁迅研究月刊, 1996, no. 6, p. 27.

[100]Lu Xun, a letter to 章廷谦 (川岛) dated August 17, 1927, *LXQJ*, vol. 11, p.572. Lu Xun's remark is according to Xu Shen 许慎's *Shuowen jiezi* 说文解字 (Analytic dictionary of characters), in which an entry reads: " 卂, 疾飞也, ...隼从 卂省, ...通用迅" (卂 means flying fast, ... 卂 is short for 隼, ... but 迅 is more commonly used). See 说文解字义证, annotated by Gui Fu 桂馥, Zhonghua shuju, 1987, vol. 2, p. 1028.

[101]Xu Ganging 许广平, "Lue tan Lu Xun xiansheng de biming" 略谈鲁迅先生的笔名 (Briefly talking about Mr. Lu Xun's pennames), *Xu Guangping yi Lu Xun* 许广平忆鲁迅 (Remembering Lu Xun by Xu Guangping), Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1979, p. 93.

and "she" are never friends but emotional foes. They cannot exist together emotionally. "She" could not be those whom Lu Xun loved, and Lu Xun's feelings towards "her" were not "love" as some scholars argued, but hatred, which accounts for the passerby's curse on "her."

In order to understand who "she" really refers to, I examine Lu Xun's own remarks about this paragraph. Shortly after "The Passerby" was published, Lu Xun and Xu Guangping mentioned it in their letters, which became the earliest documentation that involves *Wild Grass*. The topic was initiated by Xu Guangping, who told Lu Xun that her father and brother were dead and thus she liked to curse those who were the same ages as her father and brother and still alive.[102] In reply, Lu Xun wrote:

> But I am just the opposite. If the person related to me is alive, I cannot feel comfortable; [if the person] dies, I will feel at ease. These ideas have also been expressed in "The Passerby." Both are different from yours.[103]

Xu Guangping certainly understood to whom the person related to Lu Xun refers. In her reply she wrote: "I don't care about it. 'If the person is alive, I cannot feel comfortable' means feeling uncomfortable about that individual. The category is an individual. '[If the person] dies, I will feel at ease' also means at ease about the individual."[104] In her letter Xu Guangping wanted to persuade Lu Xun not to become a victim of conventional morality only for the sake of "an individual," that is Zhu An. She also expressed this opinion more explicitly in some later letters, saying "Why should we obey the old society and sacrifice several people for only one person?" In her opinion Lu Xun should not be so anxious about Zhu An, "if that person's life can be supported."[105]

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[102]Xu Guangping, a letter to Lu Xun dated May 27, 1925, in *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of *The Letters From Two Places*), Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., 1984, p. 66.
[103]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping dated May 30, 1925, ibid., p. 69.
[104]Xu Guangping, a letter to Lu Xun dated June 1, 1925, ibid., p. 71.
[105]Xu Guangping, a letter to Lu Xun dated November 22, 1926, ibid., p. 242.

From these private letters Lu Xun's ideas in "The Passerby" seem to be clear in the sense that "she," whom the passerby hates and curses to death, refers to Zhu An, who had become an obstacle in Lu Xun's way when he wanted to accept love from another woman and to start a new life. Although Lu Xun was aware that "women are guilty of no crime,"[106] he was unable to overcome the feeling of hate for Zhu An that occasionally occurred in his deep mind. As Sigmund Freud once said: "The ego hates, abhors, and pursues with intent to destroy all objects which are for it a source of painful feelings, without taking into account whether they mean to it frustration of sexual satisfaction or of gratification of the needs of self-preservation."[107] The feeling indirectly finds its way in this poetic drama. That is why the passerby is longing to see the vague female's destruction with his own eyes, if we view him as a self-portrait of Lu Xun as most scholars do.

Whenever Lu Xun longed for his wife's destruction, immediately he felt guilty. The sense of morality made Lu Xun move to condemn himself: "Or I might curse everything except her to destruction, myself included, for I myself deserve it." It was only Lu Xun's depressed desire to curse his wife to destruction. Actually he could not practice it. He himself was clearly conscious of this point. He let the passerby continue to say in the drama: "But I'm not yet strong enough for that (her destruction). Even if I were, I wouldn't want her to come to such an end, because such an end is one they mostly dislike."

I believe that "they," plural for females in the Chinese original, refers to Lu Xun's mother and Xu Guangping. Both were closely related to him and concerned about him the most, as he once acknowledged: "Those who have compassion for me are only two people: my mother and a friend (referring to Xu Guangping)."[108] In his actions, Lu Xun had to show careful consideration for them. They of course would be unwilling to see a wretched

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[106]Lu Xun, "Suigan lu 40" 随感录 40 (Random thoughts 40), *LXQJ.* vol. 1, p. 188.
[107]Sigmund Freud, *Instinct and Their Vicissitudes*, in *Great Treasury of Western Thought*, Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Yan Doren ed., New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1977, p. 219.
[108]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping 许广平 dated November 15, 1926, in *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of *The Letters From Two Places*), Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., 1984, p. 223.

outcome for Zhu An. Therefore it is not plausible to view "them" as the new generation as Li Helin argued. One simple reason is that Lu Xun would not use a pronoun for females to refer to the whole of the new generation.

After the most challenging paragraph becomes understandable, it is possible to further explore the most hidden theme of the poetic drama. One scholar argues that it "perhaps partially and indirectly expresses his psychology of love. The cloth that the little girl offers to the passerby symbolizes love. The passerby first accepts it, but he asks her to take it back after careful consideration, because it would become a heavy emotional burden on his shoulders and then the passerby would be unable to walk anymore."[109]

This argument seems acceptable because some textual evidence can be found to support it. When the passerby hesitates to accept the little girl's cloth, he says: "But how am I to walk when carrying this on my shoulders?"[110] In his mind, the cloth is too heavy to carry. According to the context, to view it as a symbol of "love" or, in Lu Xun's case, "a heavy emotional burden" is convincing.

The love theme of "The Passerby" and the symbolic meaning of love incorporated in the cloth were actually confessed by Lu Xun himself in a private letter written around one month after "The Passerby" was published. He writes:

> The meaning of "The Passerby" is only as you said in your letter; that is, even if the passerby clearly knows there are tombs on the road ahead, he still wants to go. That is to resist despair. . . . But this resistance is liable to fail in "love," including gratitude. Therefore after he obtains the alms of one piece of worn-out cloth from the little girl, the passerby is almost unable to keep on going.[111]

The last point that we should bear in mind is that readers finally don't know if the passerby has accepted the cloth or not. This ambiguity reflects the contradictory psyche of Lu

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[109]You Yang 又央, "Yecao: yige teshu xulie" 野草: 一个特殊序列 (*Wild Grass*, a specific series), in *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan* 鲁迅研究月刊 (Lu Xun Study monthly), 1993, no. 5, p. 22.
[110]*LXQJ*. vol. 2, p. 193.
[111]Lu Xun, A letter to Zhao Qiwen 赵其文 dated April 11, 1925, in *LXQJ*, vol. 11, p. 442.

Xun at that time, who himself never knew what the result of his seeking love would be, because the poetic drama was written at the very beginning of his romantic involvement with Xu Guangping.

On March 11, 1925, nine days after Lu Xun wrote "The Passerby," he received Xu Guangping's first letter. At that time Xu Guangping was twenty-four years old and had known Lu Xun for one and a half years since she became his student in September 1923. Like Lu Xun, she had also experienced a sad arranged marriage. When she was three days old, at a banquet where her father got drunk, he arranged an indiscreet engagement for her to a local squire's son. As she grew up, Xu Guangping herself never agreed to the engagement. Although her father felt regret afterward, he didn't want to abolish it in order not to be denounced for breaking a promise. The engagement was maintained until 1917, when, with her elder brother's help, Xu Guangping managed to abolish it by buying a concubine for the squire's son as compensation. And then she went to Tianjin and later Beijing to study.[112]

In classes she showed her interest in and admiration for her teacher Lu Xun. Every time she attended his lecture, she sat in the first row. Sometimes she covertly drew his portraits in the classroom, and sometimes she even asked Lu Xun such personal question as "Why do you dress so badly?"[113] In her first letter to him, she writes: "Anguish . . . always visits me without invitation and does not leave even when I urge it to. Professor, is there any way to add some sugar to this bitter medicine? If there is some sugar, will it absolutely not taste bitter? Professor! Could you please give me a sincere and clear guide? . . . If you are able to save a soul, please save it! Professor! He (referring to herself) is extremely eager to be

[112]Chen Shuyu 陈漱渝, *Xu Guangping de yisheng* 许广平的一生 (The life of Xu Guangping), Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1981, p. 6.
[113]*Xu Guangping yi Lu Xun* 许广平忆鲁迅 (Remembering Lu Xun by Xu Guangping), Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1979, p. 469.

saved!"[114] The letter can almost be regarded as an implicit statement of love to Lu Xun. From then on Xu Guangping entered Lu Xun's life.

"Dead Fire"

On April 23, 1925, that was six weeks after Lu Xun received Xu Guangping's first letter, he wrote "Dead Fire." It takes the form of a dialogue between the I persona and the figure of the "dead fire." When the I persona encounters the "dead fire" in a valley of ice, he wakens it, which is about to extinguish due to the freezing cold, with his own body's warmth.

In the 1980s, a mainland Chinese scholar first tried to interpret "Dead Fire" by associating it with Lu Xun and Xu Guangping's love. He says: "The environment of the icy mountain and the valley of ice is a poeticized indication of Lu Xun's ascetic life and lonely spiritual world. The re-kindling of the 'dead fire' at the time of obtaining 'warmth' symbolizes the instant revival due to an external stimulus of Lu Xun's emotions that were repressed by the old tradition and consciousness. This poem was written just at the beginning of Lu Xun's exchange of letters with Xu Guangping."[115] This argument was immediately refuted by a senior scholar, who criticized it for being "farfetched." And in his opinion the "dead fire" is simply a "symbol of the revolutionary spirit."[116]

In the 1990s, You Yang, another mainland Chinese scholar, argued again that in the poem "Lu Xun's longing for love that has been frozen for many years starts to revive with the warmth of Xu Guangping's ardent and sincere love."[117]

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[114]Xu Guangping, a letter to Lu Xun dated March 11, 1925, *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of *The Letters From Two Places*), Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., p. 3.
[115]Quoted from Xi Jin 锡金, "Guanyu sihuo he Lu Xun yu Xu Guangping de aiqing" 关于死火和鲁迅与许广平的爱情 (About "Dead Fire" and love between Lu Xun and Xu Guangping), *Changchun shiyuan xuebao* 长春师院学报 (Journal of Changchun Normal College), 1986, no. 3, p. 1.
[116]ibid., p. 8.
[117]You Yang 又央, "Yecao; yige teshu xulie" 野草: 一个特殊序列 (*Wild Grass*, a specific series), in *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan* 鲁迅研究月刊 (Lu Xun study monthly), 1993, no. 5, p. 23.

I agree with this view and regard "Dead Fire" as one of the most important poems that reveal the love theme of *Wild Grass*. In the poem, Lu Xun uses a "he" to refer to the "dead fire," but I prefer to interpret it as a metaphor for Xu Guangping. In their letters Lu Xun usually addresses Xu Guangping as "brother" and Xu Guangping also frequently uses "he" as a reference to herself.[118] Therefore I substitute a "she" for the original "he" in the Yangs' translation in order to make the meaning of the poem more identifiable.

> "Ah, friend!" she said, "You awoke me with your warmth!"
> ...
> "I was abandoned in the valley of ice by a man, . . . The man who abandoned me had already perished and vanished. And I was nearly frozen to death. If you had not warmed me and made me burn again, before long I would perish." (She said.)
> "I am glad you have woken. I was just wondering how to leave this valley of ice, and I would like to take you with me so that you may never be frozen but go on burning forever."
> "Alas! Then I will burn out." (She said.)
> "I should be sorry if you were to burn out. I had better leave you here."
> "Alas! Then I will freeze to death."
> "What is to be done then?"
> "What will you do yourself?" she countered.
> "As I told you, I will leave this valley of ice."
> "If so, I would like to burn out!" (She said.)[119]

What wakes the "dead fire" is "warmth" (*wenre*, 温热), and since "warmth" is summarized in "Revenge" as a decisive element in the arousal of love, we can assume that "Dead Fire" also involves a love affair. In the winter of 1923 Xu Guangping contracted scarlet fever. She survived it but her boyfriend Li Xiaohui died from the same disease. He was infected while visiting and taking care of her. This misfortune brought her great agony.

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[118]See Lu Xun and Jingsun 景宋 (Xu Guangping 许广平), *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of *The Letters From Two Places*).

[119]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 196, and the Yangs' translation is in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 343.

She wrote a reminiscence in memory of him eighteen years later, saying that her lover's death "destroyed a virgin's chaste heart, which has never revived."[120]

Xu Guangping's sorrowful experience of love seems to be metaphorically recapitulated as the abandoned "dead fire" in the valley of ice. In a sense her love with Lu Xun was partially established on the grounds of mutual sympathy. This point is also demonstrated in the poem. The I persona promises to bring the "dead fire" out of the valley of ice, because he himself wants to leave the valley. Having hesitated for a while, the "dead fire" agrees to leave with him and sacrifice for him: "If so, I would like to burn out!"

No sooner have they left the valley of ice, than the I persona is knocked down and killed by a big stone cart. This seemingly non-logical consequence implies that he is the first to deserve destruction, because he accepted the "dead fire." This implication is also revealed in "The Passerby." The passerby thinks that he himself should be cursed to destruction. if he accepts the little girl's alms.

Even though the I persona is destined to die, he still feels happy to have obtained the "dead fire." "Aha! . . . Dead fire, now I am the first to attain you!"[121] Judging from "the first," we know someone else also wanted to attain the "dead fire." He was Gao Changhong, Lu Xun's student, who once exchanged several letters with Xu Guangping in the first half of 1925 and fell in love with her. Later when he knew of her relationship with Lu Xun, he wrote a poem "To —" (*Gei* —, 给 —) in 1926 to attack Lu Xun. In it he compares Lu Xun to "the dark night," Xu Guangping to "the moon," and himself to "the sun." He implies that the dark night has stolen the moon.[122]

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[120]Jing Song 景宋 (Xu Guangping, 许广平), "Xinnian" 新年 (New year), in *Shanghai funü* 上海妇女 (Shanghai women), vol. 4, issue 2, January 10, 1940. Also see Chen Shuyu 陈漱渝, *Xu Guangping de yisheng* 许广平的一生 (The life of Xu Guangping), Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1981, p. 30.
[121]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 196.
[122]Lin Zhihao 林志浩, *Lu Xun Zhuan* 鲁迅传 (Lu Xun's biography), Beijing: Shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 1991, pp. 289-303.

Lu Xun was aware of Gao Changhong's offensive from Wei Suyuan (苇素园), who wrote Lu Xun a letter telling him about this. At that time Lu Xun had already moved to Xiamen. Lu Xun was certainly able to guess the reason of Gao's offensive. In his reply to Wei Suyuan, he says: "In Beijing Changhong perhaps had many plans about Xu Guangping, but they fell through, and so he suspected that I had been creating difficulties in the affair."[123] Immediately Lu Xun wrote the story "Flight to the Moon" (*Benyue*, 奔月) in the autumn of the same year. In the story Lu Xun created a character Fengmeng (逢蒙), who studies from his teacher but later betrays him, as an oblique counterattack on Gao Changhong.[124]

The line "Aha! . . . Dead fire, now I am the first to have you!" betrays Lu Xun's excitement at obtaining love for the first time in his life and being the winner in a romantic competition. During a short period of forty days between Lu Xun receiving Xu Guangping's first letter and writing "Dead Fire," they exchanged fifteen letters and Xu Guangping also started visiting Lu Xun. Lu Xun then seemed to be fairly confident in and satisfied with this romantic affair.

Leo Ou-fan Lee once made a brief comparison between "Shadow's Leave-Taking" and "Dead Fire." He points out: "If 'Shadow's Leave-Taking' inclines toward pessimistic nihilism, another piece, 'Dead Fire,' casts his internal conflict in a slightly more positive light."[125] It is really important to note the different meanings and effects between these two poems. A proper comparison may be greatly beneficial to a better understanding of them and the love theme of *Wild Grass*.

First of all, "Shadow" is in the form of a monologue, in which the I persona speaks out against his "friend." The "friend" is absent in the poem and there is actually no emotional communication between them. By contrast "Dead Fire" is a dialogue between the I persona

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[123]Lu Xun, a letter to Wei Suyuan 苇素园 dated December 29, 1926, *LXQJ*, vol. 11, p. 519.
[124]Wang Yao 王瑶 and Li Helin 李何林, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue ji Yecao Gushi Xinbian de zhengming* 中国现代文学及野草故事新编的争鸣 (Modern Chinese literature and the debates on *Wild Grass* and *Old Tales Retold*), Shanghai: Zhishi chubanshe, 1990, p. 159.
[125]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987, p. 99.

and the "dead fire." Both of them are active protagonists in the poem and they, like the date tree and the plant bearing small pink flowers in "Autum Night," are among a few pairs of characters who can understand each other in the *Wild Grass* poems. Secondly, in both poems the protagonists use the direct address "friend" to call their counterparts. The "shadow" bids farewell to his friend: "Friend, I'll no longer follow you," while the "dead fire" shouts out the joy of her revival: "Ah, Friend! You woke me with your warmth!" The feelings contained in these two addresses are totally different: one is sad and the other is joyful. Thirdly, the I persona in "Shadow" wants to leave the environment that he dislikes, while in "Dead Fire" the I persona and the "dead fire" succeed in their escape from the environment that they dislike. Fourthly, both poems have relatively uniform rhymes. If rewritten in broken lines, they would read much like new style poems. Lu Xun employs the melancholic "i," "in," and "ing" rhymes to build a gloomy tonality in "Shadow," while in "Dead Fire" the most resounding rhymes "a," "ai," "an," and "ang" are chosen to achieve a positive phonetic effect.

All these formal characteristics meet the demands of the different thematic significance of these two poems. From "Shadow" to "Dead Fire," Lu Xun seems to have accomplished an essential shift in life from lacking love to securing love. Therefore I consider that "Dead Fire" marks a turning point in the *Wild Grass* collection. Poems preceding and following it manifest different characteristics. I shall provide an analysis of their differences in the summary to this chapter.

"Tombstone Inscriptions" (*Mujiewen*, 墓碣文)

In this poem the first person narrator tells a bizarre story about a serpent-ghost that he reads about from the inscription on an eroded tombstone:

> Once there was a lost soul who was metamorphosed into a serpent with poisonous fangs. He did not bite other creatures, but he gnawed into his own body until he succumbed . . .
> "Stay away! . . ."[126]

In doubt and horror, he goes around behind the tombstone and sees the faded inscription on its reverse side:

> He plucked out his own heart and ate it; he wanted to find out its original taste. The pain was severe; how could he find out its original taste?
> The agony subsided and now he could enjoy the repast with more leisure. But the heart has already become stale; how could its original taste be known?
> "Answer me, or stay away! . . ."[127]

Leo Ou-fan Lee asserts that the poem is "definitely the most macabre and ghostly poem in *Wild Grass*, and perhaps in all of modern Chinese literature as well."[128] Tsi-an Hsia offers an explanation about the theme of the poem:

> The theme is a variation on that of cannibalism in the "Diary of a Madman," which is often read as an indictment of the "man-eating" old social system. But the imagined fear of the Diary is here turned into the quasi-reality of a nightmare. The conflict between the oppressive social force and its deluded victim of the short story is here reduced to a simple, but no less terrible, act of self-destruction.[129]

From an ideological perspective, Tsi-an Hsia considers that the poem extends the theme of cannibalism in Lu Xun's story "Diary of a Madman." But he also points out that the body in the tomb died of "self-destruction." He seems to stress the role of the "soul," which cannot be lost because it is important "in the general enthusiasm for social reform."[130]

Leo Ou-fan offers another point of view:

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[126]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, pp. 202-3, T. A. Hsia's translation in *The Gate of Darkness*, p. 151.
[127]Ibid., p. 203, T. A. Hsia's translation in *The Gate of Darkness*, p. 151.
[128]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 109.
[129]Tsi-an Hsia, *The Gate of Darkness*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1968, p. 151.
[130]Ibid., p. 151.

> Inscribed in this imaginary epitaph, dedicated to that strange incarnation of the martyr spirit that takes revenge by inflicting pain upon himself, is the message of a final insoluble paradox: now that he is dead, how can he ever find out the meaning of his life and his sacrifice?[131]

Lee Ou-fan Lee sees in the poem "the martyr spirit" and "a final insoluble paradox" facing Lu Xun, who is finally unable to find out "the meaning of his life and his sacrifice."

I shall attempt to construct an alternative interpretation from the perspective of Lu Xun's personal life and psyche. I take the poem as an moral exploration of his own feelings. Many scholars in mainland China agree that a spirit of Lu Xun's "self-anatomy" is embedded in the poem.[132] A Western scholar Charles Alber also declares: "The wandering spirit ("the lost soul" in Hsia's translation), I believe, is the poet's own spirit; the corpse, his own corpse. And the epigraph, written on both faces of the tombstone, is one that the poet has written for himself."[133]

If the arguments cited above are acceptable, the premise of my interpretation to view the dead man in the tomb as Lu Xun's persona is tenable. The textual evidence also supports this point. In a gloomy and astonishing scene, the I narrator sees a body in the tomb through a big crack: "Both his chest and belly are broken. Inside there are no heart and liver. But his face never shows sad or happy expression."[134] The body's facial expression without sadness or happiness is the same as that of the I persona in "Hope," who also has "no sadness and happiness" in his heart. The "wandering soul," that the protagonist used to be, is easily reminiscent of the wandering passerby and other beggar images in the *Wild Grass* poems. The "isolated tomb" also reminds the reader of the passerby's destination of tombs. The death of the protagonist makes it possible to associate this piece with "Dead Fire," in which the I

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[131]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987, p. 109.
[132]A footnote for "Tombstone Inscriptions," in *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 203.
[133]Charles Alber, "*Wild Grass*, Symmetry and Parallelism in Lu Hsün's Prose Poems," *Critical Essays on Chinese Literature*, 1976, p. 14.
[134]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 202.

persona also dies. So it seems reasonable to view the dead man as a link in the series of Lu Xun's self-symbols.

Inside the body, "there is no heart and liver." On the superficial level this is because he destroyed his own heart. But on a deeper level, the description seems to me also a pun that Lu Xun deliberately conceives for his moral reflection. In Chinese, "having no heart and liver" (*wuxingan*, 无心肝) is a figurative expression that means having no conscience.[135] Thus, that there is no heart and liver inside the body can be interpreted to mean that the protagonist has no moral conscience. The reader may understand this pun by associating it with "Dead Fire." In "Dead Fire," after the I persona obtains the "dead fire," he dies. In "Tombstone Inscriptions," after the protagonist dies, he loses his "heart and liver" or his moral conscience. These descriptions indicate that the deeper Lu Xun became romantically involved with Xu Guangping, the more he felt guilty to Zhu An and the more severely he condemned himself. Therefore the protagonist's act of plucking out his heart and eating it in order to find out its original taste can be viewed as a metaphor of Lu Xun's self-condemnation.

According to some scholars' research, Lu Xun and Xu Guangping eventually consummated their love in June 1925.[136] This conclusion is reasonable. "Tombstone Inscriptions" was written that June. Their letters written in June and July read more and more like love letters than letters between a teacher and a student. By the end of July, Lu Xun wrote: "It's always raining. How is your embroidered shirt? When the weather clears, hurry up and dry it in the sun. Be sure to do it! Be sure to do it!"[137]

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[135]In *Nanshi • Chenhouzhu ji* 南史 • 陈后主纪 (A history of the Southern Dynasty, the biography of Chenhouzhu), there is a record: "Shubao quanwu xingan" 叔宝全无心肝 (Shubao entirely has no conscience). See *Ci hai* 辞海 (Vocabulary sea), Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1979, p. 1589.

[136]Wang Dehou 王得后, *Liangdishu yanjiu* 两地书研究 (A study of *The Letters between Two Places*), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1982, p. 324; and You Yang 又央, "Yecao; yige teshu xulie" 野草: 一个特殊序列 (*Wild Grass*, a specific series), in Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan 鲁迅研究月刊 (Lu Xun Study monthly), 1993, no. 5, p. 23.

[137]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping dated July 29, 1925, *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of *The Letters From Two Places*), 1984, p. 105.

Lu Xun's words suggest that they had a sexual relationship during this period. The above letter is the last one written between them while they were both in Beijing. For a period of more than one year after that, they wrote no letters to each other until August 1926 when they left Beijing together for different cities in the south. During that period it seems that they did not need to communicate by means of letters anymore since their relationship of love had become firm.

Xu Guangping visited Lu Xun more frequently in the summer of 1925, and they sometimes went out together. Zhu An witnessed all this, but she couldn't intervene in their affair or even say a word. She was among the few who didn't show surprise at Lu and Xu's cohabitation in Shanghai that gradually became public by the end of the 1920s or at the beginning of the 1930s. "I expected that long ago," she said to her neighbor Yu Fang. "You saw how they went out together . . ."[138]

When Lu Xun enjoyed the pleasure of love brought him by Xu Guangping, he was certainly able to perceive Zhu An's mental pain. He himself suffered greatly from a guilty conscience. In the New Culture Movement, he passionately advocated a new morality based on humanism. He wrote in an essay: "Morality must be popularized. Everybody should practice and can practice it. Only when morality is beneficial to both self and others, is it worth keeping."[139] But now he painfully realized that such modern morality as he meant is a double-edged sword, which can benefit one and at the same time hurt another. Lu Xun's contradictory feelings are implicit in one paragraph of the tombstone inscriptions:

> At the time of crazy singing and reveling, he caught cold; in paradise he saw an abyss. He saw nothingness in all that struck his eyes; he was saved from hopelessness.[140]

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[138]Yu Fang 俞芳 "Fengjian hunyin de xishengzhe — Lu Xun xiansheng he Zhu furen" 封建婚姻的牺牲者 — 鲁迅先生和朱夫人. (The victims of the feudalistic marriage — Mr. Lu Xun and Mrs. Zhu), in Xue Suizhi 薛绥之 and others ed., *Lu Xun shengping shiliao huibian*, 鲁迅生平史料汇编 (A collection of the historical materials of Lu Xun's career), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1983, vol. 3, p. 481.
[139]Lu Xun, "Wo zhi jielieguan" 我之节烈观 (My views on chastity), *LXQJ*, vol. 1, p. 119.
[140]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 202

These short lines are among the most controversial *Wild Grass* passages, over which many scholars debate. Li Helin interprets these lines by contrasting the protagonist with "others." He writes:

> When others live in crazy singing and reveling; I feel the coldness of the human world. . . .
> When others view social reality as paradise and feel satisfied; I view it as an abyss like hell.
> When others consider that all in reality is good; I am satisfied with nothing . . .[141]

Sun Yushi disagrees with Li Helin's interpretation, which, in his opinion, is not appropriate because of its exclusive emphasis on the differences in ideas between the protagonist and "others." He considers that the subject of these lines should be the same person, that is the dead protagonist. He gives his own interpretation as follows:

> The first line: when I am crazy to sing and revel, I "caught cold" and became sick because of the decline in the revolution and the cold air. This is of course a self-description of Lu Xun's inner contradiction and dark, empty thoughts. . . .
> The second line: in the so-called "future golden world," which is described as paradise, I saw the abyss of the human world which is similar to hell. This is the dead protagonist's "mad remarks" brought on by illness and also a record of his sober thought. . . .
> The third line: in all that seems to exist in others' eyes, I saw the nihilism of "nothingness," in which nothing exists. . . .
> The fourth line: this is to say that my illness cannot ultimately be cured. In despair and hopelessness, I became detached from the misery of the human world by means of death. In a sense this escape by death is also a thorough "salvation."[142]

Sun Yushi's interpretation seems a little more suitable than Li Helin's in the sense that he treats all these lines as descriptions of the protagonist instead of a contrast between the

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[141]Li Helin 李何林, *Lu Xun Yecao zhushi* 鲁迅野草注释 (Annotation and interpretation of Lu Xun's Wild Grass), Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1973, p. 150.
[142]Sun Yushi 孙玉石, "Lu Xun Yecao chongshi VIII" 鲁迅野草重释, 八 (Re-interpretation of *Wild Grass*, VIII), *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan* 鲁迅研究月刊, 1996, no. 8, pp. 25-6.

protagonist and some vague "others." But it still doesn't sound quite plausible because a number of facts that are actually not in the original lines have been freely added in his interpretation.

In reading all the previous interpretations, I have found that scholars tend to focus on Lu Xun's political or philosophical thought that may be incorporated in these lines. I shall try to give my interpretation from an alternative perspective of Lu Xun's personal life. It is difficult to give an "accurate" interpretation because of the metaphorical nature of the first two lines and the abstract nature of the last two. But by a close scrutiny, it is still possible to detect that things described in each line are strongly conflicting. All lines indicate sudden and thorough changes — the first two in the protagonist's life and the last two in his attitude towards the changes. I view these lines as also an expression of the contradiction deep in Lu Xun's inner psyche at the turning point of his life: When he achieved the crazy rapture of love, he felt that he was morally ill. His paradise might be another's abyss. After he obtained love, there was nothing he lacked. In despair he was saved emotionally.

This interpretation is thematically coherent to the rest of the poem. All these sudden and thorough changes, together with the chief metaphor of the protagonist's death, serve to evince Lu Xun's self-condemnation. The fact is that he accepted love from Xu Guangping and forsook Zhu An. He eventually failed to fulfill his vow of 1919 to sacrifice himself "to pay off a four thousand year debt."[143] This fact accounts for his feeling of guilt, which is metaphorically and profoundly expressed in "Tombstone Inscriptions" and is figuratively projected as the theme of the dilemma between emotions and moral responsibilities.

"Dry Leaf" (*Laye*, 腊叶)[144]

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[143]Lu Xun, "Suigan lu 40" 随感录 40 (Random thoughts 40), *LXQJ*. vol. 1, pp. 323, Tthe Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 2, p. 40.

[144]This poem was written on December 26, 1925 and published in *Yusi* 语丝 no. 60, January 4, 1926.

In this poem when the I persona is reading at night, he finds a dry, pressed maple leaf in a book. The leaf brings back to his mind the late autumn of the previous year, when he spotted it on a maple tree in his courtyard on a night of heavy frost. That was a blighted leaf, on which chequered red, yellow, and green were interwoven and in which an insect had bored a hole. The I persona felt that the hole fringed with black was staring at him like a bright eye. In order to preserve these chequered colors and the bright eye, he plucked it and slipped it inside a book.

When the I persona narrates the origin of the leaf, he mentions the garden, the trees in it, the heavy frost, the autumn night, and the fact that he plucked it in late autumn one year ago, which was the time Lu Xun wrote "Autumn Night." All this makes it possible for the reader to associate this poem with "Autumn Night." The blighted leaf is also easily reminiscent of the date tree with wounds on its bark, especially when the reader is aware that many scholars view the dry and blighted leaf, like the date tree, as one of Lu Xun's self-symbols.[145]

But the author's moods that are cast in these two poems are quite different. In "Autumn Night" even though the date tree has lost all its leaves, it stretches its boughs luxuriously. It knows "the little pink flowers' dream of spring" and has its own dream of autumn — it will be weighed down again with bright foliage and dates. But in "Dry Leaf," after only one year, the chequered colors of the leaf have faded and its "bright eye" also has become dimmed. At present it is lying yellow, waxen, and dispirited as "a dry, pressed leaf" in front of the I persona. At the end of "Autumn Night," Lu Xun exalts its positive effect by praising the little green insects that dare seek brightness at the risk of their lives. But at the end of "Dry Leaf," Lu Xun writes: "In late autumn there may have been blighted leaves like last year's; but unhappily, this year I even have no leisure to appreciate autumn trees."[146]

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[145]Li Helin 李何林, *Lu Xun Yecao zhushi* 鲁迅野草注释 (Annotation and interpretation of Lu Xun's Wild Grass), 1973, p. 205; Sun Yushi 孙玉石 *Yecao yanjiu* 野草研究 (*Wild Grass* study), 1981, p. 81.
[146]*LXQJ*. vol. 2, p. 219, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW* Vol. 1, p. 360.

It is not merely because Lu Xun this year has no time to appreciate autumn trees and to find blighted leaves. More importantly it is because his mood has changed. The faint yet perceptible hope incorporated in "Autumn Night" totally disappears in "Dry Leaf," and there is only tiredness and gloom left. Lu Xun dispiritedly predicts: "In a few more years, when its former hues have faded from my memory, I may even forget why I put it in the book."[147]

Lu Xun once explained on a public occasion that "'Dry Leaf' was written for the person who loves me and wants to preserve me."[148] As to whom "the person" who loves Lu Xun and wants to preserve him refers, he himself also divulged in private to his student Sun Fuyuan:

> Mr. Xu (referring to Xu Guangping) encourages me very much, hopes that I will work diligently and not slacken. But she also takes good care of me very much and hopes that I will conserve my health and not work too hard. However both cannot be done contentedly at the same time. There are contradictions between them. The inspiration of "Dry Leaf" was derived from this idea.[149]

From his own remarks we know that "Dry Leaf" is dedicated to Xu Guangping. But "Dry Leaf" never reads like a love poem dedicated to a lover. In the poem Lu Xun makes no secret of his feelings of tiredness and gloom. It seems that the psychological burden that love brought to Lu Xun weighed on him much more than the pleasure he received from it. On the one hand, he felt guilt toward Zhu An; on the other hand he didn't know the future result of his romantic involvement with Xu Guangping. There is an oblique line in the poem, which reveals Lu Xun's anxiety about the duration of his romance. The line reads: "It seems the chequered colors of the blighted leaf that was soon to fall can remain in my keeping for a very short time only — to say nothing of the lush and green leaf."[150] Lu Xun does not mention "the lush and green leaf" elsewhere in the poem and readers may feel perplexed at

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[147]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 219, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 2, p. 359.
[148]Lu Xun, "Yecao yingwen yiben xu" 野草英文译本序 (A preface to the English edition of *Yecao*), *LXQJ*, vol. 4, p. 356.
[149]Sun Fuyuan 孙伏园, *Lu Xun xiansheng ersan shi* 鲁迅先生二三事 (A few things about Lu Xun), zhuojia shuwu, 1944, quote from Sun Yushi 孙玉石 *Yecao yanjiu* 野草研究 (*Wild Grass* study), 1981, p. 78.
[150]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 219, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW* vol. 2, p. 359.

specifying its reference. From the context, we know that the I persona is anxious that the colors of the imagined lush and green leaf will fade sooner than that of the dry and blighted leaf. If it is reasonable to interpret the blighted leaf as a self-symbol of Lu Xun as many scholar do, it may also be reasonable to view the imagined lush and green leaf as a symbol of Xu Guangping, then an educated and pretty girl at the age of twenty-six.

No *Wild Grass* critics have ever attempted to give an appropriate interpretation to the imagined lush and green leaf in the I persona's mind. The whole line about it has actually been ignored. I would like to emphasize the thematic significance of this line. By intimately employing the colors of the different leaves to allude to the relationship of lovers, Lu Xun covertly reveals his worries about how long this romance could last.

Lu Xun didn't divulge his anxiety to Xu Guangping until years later. After Lu Xun died, Xu Guangping mentioned the symbolic meaning of the blighted leaf in an essay: "Later he himself acknowledged that the blighted leaf in 'Dry Leaf' from *Wild Grass* . . . was his self-description. But I had never perceived that. How insensitive I was!"[151]

"Dry Leaf" marks the end of the poems in *Wild Grass* which deal with the theme of feelings and moralities. After it only two pieces follow: "Amid Pale Bloodstains" and "The Awakening." Both were written in 1926 after the March Eighteenth Massacre to protest against warlord politics. Lu Xun did not write *Wild Grass* poems during a period of three months between writing "Dry Leaf" and the last two pieces. If the March Eighteenth Massacre had not happened, "Dry Leaf" might have been the last piece of *Wild Grass*. Lu Xun's tired and gloomy mood reflected in "Dry Leaf" indicates that the inspiration indispensable to poetic composition was exhausted in his mind. After he secured love, "He saw nothingness in all that struck his eyes" ("Tombstone Inscriptions"). His gloom was

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[151]Xu Guangping 许广平 "Yin jiaodui sanshinianji er yinqi de huajiu" 因校对三十年集而引起的话旧 (Talking about the old stories due to my proofreading of the *Collection of the Thirty Years*), In *Xuexi* 学习 (Studies), no. 10, 1940. Also see Xu Guangping 许广平, *Xu Guangping yi Lu Xun* 许广平忆鲁迅 (Remembering Lu Xun by Xu Guangping), Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1979, p. 146.

perhaps partially derived from his sense of guilt. He was clearly aware that more frustrations would be facing him once his affair became public.

About one month before Lu Xun wrote "Dry Leaf," he finished editing a collection of his essays and entitled it *Hot Wind* (*Refeng*, 热风). In the preface, he told why he chose that title:

> People's perception and reflection on the environment are probably like that "fish knows coldness or warmth by itself when it drinks water." I, however, feel the air around me is too cold. I am saying my own words, thus I entitled my book *Hot Wind* in contrast.[152]

Lu Xun's own words may serve as the best footnote to understand his mood at the time he wrote "Dry Leaf."

Summary

Lu Xun's anxiety about the future of his romantic relationship with Xu Guangping proved reasonable. As soon as their relatives knew their affair, Xu Guangping's family broke with her, and Zhou Zuoren declared their affair illegal.[153]

In August 1926 Lu and Xu left Beijing together for the south. In order to avoid attention from the public, they decided to live separately in different cities for two years and then to join each other. Therefore Lu went to Xiamen University to teach and Xu went to Guangzhou to work in a college. In Xiamen, Lu Xun immediately realized his own inability to live by himself. Without Zhu An's care, his life in Xiamen was terrible. But the things that made him more anxious were Xu Guangping's plans, in which she wanted first to go to

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[152]Lu Xun, "Tiji" 题记 (Preface to *Hot Wind*), *LXQJ*, vol. 1, p. 292.

[153]This is according to the reminiscence of Zhou Haiying 周海婴, Lu Xun and Xu Guangping's son. See his "Xie zai qianmian" 写在前面 (Write as a preface), in Chen Shuyu 陈漱渝, *Xu Guangping de yisheng* 许广平的一生 (The life of Xu Guangping), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1981, p. 6.

Shantou to join the revolution at the invitation of a young revolutionary[154] and then go to Wuchang to participate in the Northern Expedition (1926-1927).[155] The enthusiasm in her letters to Lu Xun during this period perceptibly faded in comparison with her letters written in Beijing. Lu Xun was afraid of losing her. He desperately wanted to change their previous decision and to join Xu in Guangzhou as soon as possible. In a letter, Lu Xun even pleaded with her to give him "a beam of light."[156] In another letter, he questioned her plans: "You also want to go to Wuchang. Do you feel it so urgent to find a job there? . . . I really cannot understand. I should spank your palm."[157]

Lu Xun taught in Xiamen University for only one semester and then set out for Guangzhou in January 1927 to join Xu Guangping. In October they moved to Shanghai and started to cohabit in secret. During the debate on "revolutionary literature" in 1928 and 1929, some leftist critics in the Creation Society such as Cheng Fangwu (成仿吾, 1897-1984) and Feng Naichao (冯乃超, 1901-1983) spread it around that Lu Xun "took a concubine, abandoned his legitimate wife in Beijing, and had sex with his female student." They asserted that Lu Xun's "thought was certainly backward."[158]

In May 1929 Lu Xun went to Beijing to visit his mother and Zhu An, while Xu Guangping, who was five months pregnant then, stayed in Shanghai. At this time he seemed to be more confident of the romantic affair than before. In a letter to Xu, he wrote:

> There seems to be no obstacle in our future. If there is any, I am determined to pass it together with you and press forward. I will never shrink.[159]

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[154]Xu Guangping, a letter to Lu Xun dated October 26, 1926, *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of *The Letters From Two Places*), Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., 1984, p. 177.
[155]Xu Guangping, a letter to Lu Xun dated December 30, 1926, ibid., p. 302.
[156]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping dated November 15, 1926, ibid., p. 223.
[157]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping dated January 6, 1927, ibid., p. 310.
[158]Zhou Bochao 周伯超, a letter to Lu Xun dated February 9, 1928, in Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., *Lu Xun, Xu Guangping suocang shuxin xuan* 鲁迅, 许广平所藏书信选 (Selected letters that were kept by Lu Xun and Xu Guangping), Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 1987, p. 88.
[159]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping dated May 19, 1929, *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of *The Letters From Two Places*), Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., 1984, p. 334.

Lu Xun's confidence primarily came from the facts that his relationship with Xu had finally become definite because of her pregnancy and had been recognized by some of their relatives including Zhu An, who considered herself the legitimate mother of the unborn baby.[160] But his remarks never meant that he had been free from the criticisms of the conventional society. Lu Xun continuously kept his cohabitation with Xu in secret, as he wrote in a letter to Li Bingzhong:

> Since I moved to Shanghai, I have been extremely cautious. I have almost retreated from the human world. I tie my tongue and say nothing.[161]

All the essays that Lu Xun wrote during this period were published under pseudonyms. It was not until 1931 that he gradually informed some of his friends of his situation. In another letter to Li Bingzhong, Lu Xun wrote:

> I have a family member (referring to Xu) and also a baby in Shanghai. We depend on each other for survival and will suffer if we live separately. Therefore I deeply hide myself in the hopes of extending my life. But the whole of society still cannot tolerate me.[162]

Li Bingzhong had one of Lu Xun's letters published in 1931. Only then did Lu Xun's cohabitation with Xu gradually become public.

What subsequently happened to Zhu An after Lu Xun's death also proved his apprehensions on her behalf reasonable. After he left Beijing with Xu for the south in 1926, Zhu An stayed in Beijing, living with his mother on his financial support. After Lu Xun died in 1936, Zhu An dictated a letter to Xu Guangping and authorized her full power to deal with

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[160]Yu Fang 俞芳 "Fengjian hunyin de xishengzhe — Lu Xun xiansheng he Zhu furen" 封建婚姻的牺牲者 — 鲁迅先生和朱夫人. (The victims of the feudalistic marriage — Mr. Lu Xun and Mrs. Zhu), in Xue Suizhi 薛绥之 and others ed., *Lu Xun shengping shiliao huibian*, 鲁迅生平史料汇编 (A collection of the historical materials of Lu Xun's career), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1983, vol. 3, p. 484.
[161]Lu Xun, a letter to Li Bingzhong 李秉中 dated February 4, 1931, in *LXQJ*, vol., 12, p. 37.
[162]Lu Xun, a letter to Li Bingzhong 李秉中 dated February 18, 1931, in *LXQJ*, vol., 12, p. 39.

the issue of the publication of all Lu Xun's works in 1937.[163] Thus Xu became the only legitimate heir of the huge income from the copyright of Lu Xun's works. She continued to remit money to support Zhu, but the remittance was interrupted several times due to the occupation of Beijing by the Japanese in 1937, Xu Guangping's arrest by the Japanese at the end of 1941 in Shanghai, and perhaps other reasons that are still unknown. Because of the interruptions of the financial support and the terrible inflation during the war, Zhu An's situation once became quite bad. In order to survive she intended with the help of Zhou Zuoren to sell Lu Xun's book collection left in their Beijing residence. Being aware of this, Shanghai scholars Tang Tao and Liu Zhemin made a special trip to Beijing in 1944 to persuade her not to sell the books in order to protect Lu Xun's heritage. They found that she was really living in poverty. When she knew the purpose of their trip, she said to them: "You always say to protect Lu Xun's heritage. I am also Lu Xun's heritage. You should protect me too!"[164] Zhu An was after all a rational woman. Although she was Lu Xun's legitimate wife and had the right to sell the books, she immediately promised to give up the planned sale. Her plight drew attention from society. In 1945 and 1946 some social elite in Beijing made donations of money to support her, but she refused the donations. In 1946 she, however, accepted from the Guomindang government $100,000 (*fabi*, 法币), which was given in the personal name of President Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek 蒋介石, 1887-1975). She mad brief statement about the acceptance to press circles, saying "I dare not refuse the President's grant."[165]

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[163]Zhu An, a letter to Xu Guangping dated July 2, 1937, see Li Yunjing 李允经, *Lu Xun de hunyin yu jiating*, 鲁迅的婚姻与家庭 (Lu Xun's marriage and family), Beijing: Shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 1990, p. 246.
[164]Yu Fang 俞芳 "Fengjian hunyin de xishengzhe — Lu Xun xiansheng he Zhu furen" 封建婚姻的牺牲者 — 鲁迅先生和朱夫人. (The victims of the feudalistic marriage — Mr. Lu Xun and Mrs. Zhu), in Xue Suizhi 薛绥之 and others ed., *Lu Xun shengping shiliao huibian*, 鲁迅生平史料汇编 (A collection of the historical? materials of Lu Xun's career), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1983, vol. 3, p. 485.
[165]Chen Shuyu 陈漱渝, *Xu Guangping de yisheng* 许广平的一生 (The life of Xu Guangping), Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1981, p. 148.

Frankly speaking, Zhu An did what she could to protect Lu Xun's heritage until she died in 1947. Her later life was miserable, just as Lu Xun had predicted in "The Passerby." Her only consolation perhaps came of the fact that Lu Xun never divorced her. From beginning to end she was his legitimate wife. In her life, she often said: "I am a member of the Zhou family when I am alive; and I will be a ghost of the Zhou family after I die!"[166] This is a conventional Chinese saying with which a wife swears to be faithful forever to her husband's family.

Since the very beginning of his romantic involvement with Xu Guangping, Lu Xun seemed to have made every effort to maintain Zhu An's status as his legitimate wife and to accept Xu Guangping as only a mistress. He cohabited with Xu without seeking legal approval or even arranging a wedding ceremony. In this way Lu Xun probably thought that he had done what he could in hopes of not hurting Zhu An too much and at the same time keeping his own psychological balance between his emotional life and moral responsibilities. Xu Guangping was Lu Xun's lover and devoted her whole life to taking care of him in his last ten years, and, more importantly, she worked painstakingly and effectively for the protection, collection, editing, and publication of his works, and wrote a great number of reminiscences about him after he died. In a sense she was a protective goddess of Lu Xun and his legacy, and made him the Lu Xun we recognize today. She, however, was from beginning to end only Lu Xun's common-law wife in the Western conception or concubine in the Chinese conventional conception.

When reading *Wild Grass*, if readers realize that Lu Xun was seeking love and individual fulfillment in the particular era and environment of 1920 China, which was shifting from a pre-modern society into a modern one, they would probably understand why

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[166]Yu Fang 俞芳 "Fengjian hunyin de xishengzhe — Lu Xun xiansheng he Zhu furen" 封建婚姻的牺牲者 — 鲁迅先生和朱夫人. (The victims of the feudalistic marriage — Mr. Lu Xun and Mrs. Zhu), in Xue Suizhi 薛绥之 and others ed., *Lu Xun shengping shiliao huibian*, 鲁迅生平史料汇编 (A collection of the historical materials of Lu Xun's career), Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1983, vol. 3, p. 486.

there are so many tensions in the poems. From "Autumn Night" to "Dry Leaf," Lu Xun seems to have completed the emotional journey of his life. If we take "Dead Fire" as a turning point in the collection, it is not difficult to find that the poems preceding it mainly involve various wishes and desires, through which Lu Xun expresses his will to shake off the yoke of a dissatisfying marriage and seek love and a reasonable life. "The wish," writes Sigmund Freud, "makes use of an occasion in the present to construct, on the pattern of the past, a picture of the future."[167] The date tree yearns to flourish and to bear fruit again in the next year ("Autumn Night"). The shadow longs for farewell to his "friend" and going to a far place ("Shadow's Leave-Taking"). The I persona in "My Lost Love" wants to find his lover, even if he fails several times due to various obstacles. The lovers in "Revenge" want to either hug or kill each other, although they can finally accomplish neither. The I persona in "Hope" decides to seek "the youth" outside himself. The passerby stubbornly strives after "blood" to replenish his vitality ("The Passerby"). In "The Good Story," the I persona eagerly craves to see more clearly the imaginary ideal and harmonious life of his dream.

All these wishes and desires expressed in the poems of *Wild Grass* indicate Lu Xun's struggle to make a change in his life. At the moment when he obtained love, he wrote "Dead Fire," which betrays a gleam of happiness and manifests an instant satisfaction because of the realization of his desires. Lu Xun's psychology reaches a transient balance in this poem. But immediately he falls into another psychological tension, which is mainly expressed as deep perturbations and apprehensions. Many poems that succeed "Dead Fire," especially the seven pieces in the form of a dream, are explicitly interwoven with his feelings of horror born of guilt on Zhu An's part. As Tsi-an Hsia has pointed out, "Those dreams have such a bizarre beauty and delirious terror that they are really nightmares."[168] In "The Dog's Retort," the I persona is afraid to debate with a dog and easily defeated by it. In "Tombstone Inscriptions,"

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[167]Strachey et al., ed., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, London: Hogarth Press, 1954-74, vol. 9. p. 147.
[168]Tsi-an Hsia, *The Gate of Darkness*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1968, p. 152.

the I narrator, who is usually viewed as Lu Xun's alter ego, is scared out of his wits by a body and escapes from him in panic. The I persona in "After Death" does not even dare to inform both his relatives and foes of his death.

There are four poems in *Wild Grass* which describe the death of the protagonists. But only one in "Revenge II" precedes "Dead Fire," while the other three succeed (and include) "Dead Fire." In "Revenge II" Lu Xun uses the death of Jesus as the subject matter to condemn the cruelty of the crowd and conventional society. But the nature of the other deaths after "Dead Fire" is completely different. Either the protagonist dies of his own destruction, as in "Tombstone Inscriptions," or the I persona dies voluntarily, as in "After Death." In "Dead Fire," the I persona cannot even help but exhibit his delight at his own death. In these poems the subject matter of death is employed by Lu Xun mainly as a metaphor for a dramatic change in life or a self-condemnation in morality brought on by guilt.

There are a total of nine poems in *Wild Grass* that are composed in the form of a dream. Two of them, "Shadow's Leave-Taking" and "The Good Story," precede "Dead Fire." The rest succeed (and include) it. After "Dead Fire," Lu Xun conceives seven dream poems in a row. He seems to have had a long and scary dream in which he experiences from a feeling of slight satisfaction to a feeling of severe self-repentance. These dream pieces may indicate that Lu Xun is so apprehensive about facing his would-be accusers due to his affair with Xu Guangping that he doesn't even want to wake up. After these seven poems in the form of a dream, during the period from July to December 1925, Lu Xun didn't write *Wild Grass* poems for more than five months. This is an exclusive situation in the *Wild Grass* composition. During this time, perhaps, on the one hand, Lu Xun had been indulging in his newly-secured love and had lost the inspiration to compose such nightmarish poems. On the other hand, he might have been thinking of how to act next. He was also under stress during this period from a lawsuit against Zhang Shizhao, the Minister of Education. All these

elements may account for the interruption of the *Wild Grass* composition for more than five months.

Also during this time, his romantic affair gradually became known to some of his friends and students in Beijing. They spread word of the affair around. Even though they were probably not ill-natured, Lu Xun, who had a sensitive and suspicious personality, became quite angry about this. Later he complained in a private letter, saying:

> If they saw there were female students at my place, they started rumors. They started rumors for sure no matter if there was an affair or not, unless I didn't meet women. They make up new stories, they are really tyrants, cruel officials, detectives, and small people.
>
> . . .
>
> Those who spread rumors are [Wang] Pinqing, [Sun] Fuyuan, [Zhang] Yiping, [Li] Xiaofeng, and Zhou Zuoren's wife.[169]

After a five-month break, Lu Xun wrote "Such a Fighter," in which he seems to have awakened from his long dream. He portrays the protagonist as an active and brave fighter against social conventions. In the poem, Lu Xun writes:

> Above their heads hang all kinds of flags and banners, embroidered with all honorable titles: philanthropist, scholar, writer, elder, youth, dilettante, gentleman. . .
> But he raises his lance.
> Together they give their solemn oath that their hearts are in the center of their chests, unlike the case of other prejudiced people. They try to prove by their breast-plates that they themselves believe their hearts are in the center of their chests.
> But he raises his lance.
> He smiles and hurls his lance to the side, and it pierces them through the heart.[170]

This passage may convey Lu Xun's anger at those who bruit his affair all around. He does not think they are fair, though "they give their solemn oath that their hearts are in the center of their chests." He describes them ironically as "philanthropist, scholar, writer, elder,

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[169]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping dated January 11, 1927, *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The originals of *The Letters From Two Places*), Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., 1984, p. 315.
[170]*LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 214, the Yangs' translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, pp. 354-5.

youth, dilettante, gentleman."[171] When he is beside himself with rage, in his mind they are "tyrants, cruel officials, detectives, and small people." At the time he needs to pluck up his courage to face the response of sociality directly, Lu Xun writes "Such a Fighter" to encourage himself. But he is not confident enough of the fight that he launches in the poem. The fact remains that his affair with Xu Guangping was never just a rumor. The protagonist finally "grows old and dies of old age," and "he is not a fighter after all."[172] The end of "Such a Fighter" reveals Lu Xun's dejection — he is unable to conceal his affair from being known and spread around. Furthermore, at that time he still did not know if his affair with Xu would succeed or not. This sort of anxiety is also implicitly reflected in "Dry Leaf," which was written half a month later.

The dilemma between love and moral responsibility is the most covert theme of *Wild Grass*. Many scholars have intentionally or unintentionally ignored it. My interpretation on the level of emotion has revealed Lu Xun's private allusions and puns in some of the *Wild Grass* poems and made his most intimate feelings identifiable. I hope this interpretation will be seen as reasonable and acceptable, and will arouse the interest of other scholars to engage in further studies along this line.

[171] *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p. 214, the Yang's translation in *LXSW*, vol. 1, p. 354.
[172] Ibid., p. 215.

CONCLUSION

Although many mainland Chinese scholars never acknowledge a decline in Lu Xun's writing career, the fact remains that, with the exception of a few stories collected in *Old Tales Retold*, Lu Xun stopped writing fiction, new style poetry, and prose poetry after *Wild Grass*. In the last ten years of his life, Lu Xun wrote mainly miscellaneous essays. In view of this, William Schultz argues that 1926 marks the end of Lu Xun's creative life.[1] Tsi-an Hsia also laments the decline in Lu Xun's creative output, saying that, "It was a loss to Lu Hsün himself and to Chinese literature that his inspiration should have withered so soon."[2] If we say that Lu Xun's story collection *Call to Arms* marks the first peak of his literary creation and earns him nation-wide recognition, then *Wild Grass* marks the final peak of his creative writing and solidifies his reputation as a great modern writer with multidimensional achievements.

Lu Xun's literary achievements are to be found in a number of forms: short fiction, miscellaneous essays, prose poetry, lyrical prose reminiscence, and classic-style poetry. With the exception of classic-style poetry, the other genres were first introduced into China through Lu Xun's experimentation with Western literary forms. These genres have been imitated by innumerable later writers and become paradigms for modern Chinese literature. If one surveys twentieth-century Chinese literature, one finds that after Lu Xun, outstanding works in different genres have continuously appeared, but few, if any prose poems, let alone a whole collection, have been produced as masterpieces that can favorably compare with the poems in *Wild Grass*. In the realm of prose poetry, none of the later writers can match Lu Xun's genius. As William Schultz points out, although later writers recognized that both the style and manner of *Wild Grass* are worthy of emulation, "no one has since proven capable of matching the quality which inheres in these highly personal prose poems."[3]

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[1]William R. Schultz, "Lu Hsün, the Creative Years," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, the University of Washington, 1955.
[2]Tsi-an Hsia, *The Gate of Darkness*, 1968, p. 129.
[3]William R. Schultz, "Lu Hsün, the Creative Years," 1955, p. 385.

It is not an overstatement to conclude that *Wild Grass* is not only a significant achievement in Lu Xun's individual creative output, but also stands as a masterpiece in modern Chinese literature. Its intellectual and aesthetic values have proven to be great and durable in the sense that *Wild Grass* always provides the reader with a vision of the strength of human will, wisdom of imagination, and sincerity of personal emotion and morality.

The spirit of struggle in *Wild Grass*

Although many of the poems in *Wild Grass* are melancholic, and at times even pessimistic, the reader can still strongly perceive a spirit of struggle in these poems. This spirit of struggle is an embodiment of Lu Xun's firm life attitude and indomitable personality. Many of the characters in *Wild Grass* are caught up in irreconcilable conflicts with not only their environments, but also their own fates. To a great degree, they can be regarded as symbols of Lu Xun himself, who devoted his entire life to enlightening the Chinese people at the time China was being transformed into a modern society. Lu Xun's spirit of struggle has been glorified as "the soul of the nation" (*minzu hun*, 民族魂),[4] which proves urgently needed by the Chinese people to reform their society and life, and more importantly to change their own weak "national character." Leo Ou-fan Lee and Lin Yü-sheng see in *Wild Grass* Lu Xun's "existentialist" repudiation of nihilism.[5] Michael S. Duke emphasizes Lu Xun's "debt to the tradition of genuinely tragic committed intellectuals who, in the traditional phrase, 'know that it cannot be done but do it anyway.' . . . It is this 'spirit' of struggle against overwhelming odds that . . . [is viewed as] the most obvious legacy of Lu's life and work."[6]

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[4]Chen Shuyu 陈漱渝, *Minzu hun* 民族魂 (the national soul), Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 1982; Huang Houxing 黄侯兴, *Lu Xun — minzu hun de xiangzheng* 鲁迅 — 民族魂的象征 (Lu Xun — the symbol of the national soul), Shandong renmin chubanshe, 1993.

[5]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 103; Lin Yü-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979, p. 137.

[6]Michael S. Duke, Review of *Voices from the Iron House*, in *World Literature Today*, Spring 1988, p. 332.

Indeed the spirit of struggle that informs *Wild Grass* — against not only the outer world, but also the inner self — has become a significant intellectual legacy to inspire Chinese readers.

Subjective emotion and lyricism

When Jaroslav Prusek comments on modern Chinese literature, he considers that its most characteristic feature is "the larger proportion of subjective elements. This would seem to be connected with the growing significance of the writer's personality, liberated from the fetters of tradition . . . to make of his work a personal confession and manifesto."[7]

Prusek's assessment is correct. The New Culture Movement broke the dam of traditional values, and a torrent of individual emotions, to a great degree in the form of literature, poured out in profusion. *Wild Grass* is such a book which lays great stress on the expression of the author's subjective emotions rather than depiction of a realist picture. It is dominated by Lu Xun's strong private feelings and imaginary power. The psychical distance between the author and many of the protagonists in *Wild Grass* is so close that the audience may interpret them as symbols or self-portraits of the author himself. As a result, the readers become active participants in the reading and, aided by their own aesthetic experience, generate an emotional identification with the characters and the author's feelings presented in the poems.

Because Lu Xun had been so deeply involved with his characters figuratively and psychically, I disagree with Feng Xuefeng's judgment that some poems in *Wild Grass* are "sharply satiric pieces."[8] Rather I would argue that in *Wild Grass*, Lu Xun did not intend to practice satire as a corrective of human vice or folly, or as a device to make his main characters ridiculous and to evoke toward them attitudes of amusement, contempt, or scorn.

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[7]Jaroslav Prusek, *The Lyrical and the Epic*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980, pp. 83-4.
[8]Feng Xuefeng classifies "My Lost Love" and other five poems as "sharply satiric pieces." See his *Lun Yecao* 论野草 (On *Wild Grass*), Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1956, p.10.

More perceptive critics rightly see in *Wild Grass* Lu Xun's subjective emotions and lyricism rather than satire. Tsi-an Hsia points out that the "images" in *Wild Grass* are "imbued with strong emotional intensity."[9] Jaroslav Prusek summarizes the artistic merits of the *Wild Grass* poems to be "their emotional atmosphere, complex images and metaphors, and the extraordinary strength of their feelings."[10] In a more detailed analysis on the lyricism of *Wild Grass*, William Lyell writes:

> When one thinks of a lyrical Lu Hsün, the two books that come to mind are *Wild Grass*, with its sometimes indecipherable prose-poems, and *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk*, with its poetic reminiscences. . . . By "lyrical," I refer to those poetic sections of Lu Hsün's prose in which we can hear a voice singing in the background, alternately joyous and sad. Whenever that lyrical voice is heard, the subject is likely to be childhood, remembered friends, the Chekiang countryside, or family life. Homeland and youth inspired him to the joyous lyricism . . .[11]

It is true that the most lyrical poems in *Wild Grass* have a subject matter related to homeland, youth, and reminiscence, such as "The Kite," "Snow," "Hope," and "The Good Story."

The awareness of repentance

In 1986 Liu Zaifu, a mainland Chinese scholar, delivered a paper entitled "Literature and the Awareness of Repentance" at a conference in Beijing. In his presentation he argued that the novels of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky achieved an elevated moral vision because of the religious concepts of sin and repentance in Russian culture. But Chinese culture and literature lacked such concepts. His point of view became famous in Beijing intellectual circles for its implicit call for more introspection and honesty in literature creation.[12]

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[9]Tsi-an Hsia, *The Gate of Darkness*, 1968, p. 150.
[10]Jaroslav Prusek, *The Lyrical and The Epic*, 1980, p. 56.
[11]William Lyell, *Lu Xun's Vision of Reality*, 1976, pp. 300-1.
[12]See Perry Link, *Evening Chats in Beijing, Probing China's Predicament*, W. W. Norton, 1992, p. 154.

In Chinese history, pre-modern intellectuals had a long tradition of awareness of social responsibility. They regarded themselves as playing important social roles by means of cultivating the self, regulating the family, governing the state, and pacifying the whole kingdom.[13] In this respect, modern Chinese writers share the same awareness of social responsibility with their ancestors, and in general Lu Xun was not an exception. The reason he chose writing as his career was his desire "to change the Chinese people's spirit."[14] Since the New Culture Movement, modern Chinese writers have tended to employ literature as a tool to reform society and to educate people. Few practice self-reflection in their own literary works. As a result, modern Chinese literature in general lacked the awareness of repentance.

Wild Grass, however, is an exception. Many of the poems are introspective. Unlike the religious concept of sin that informs the works of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, Lu Xun's awareness of repentance is based first of all on the deep intellectual conflict in his mind. As Lin Yü-sheng has pointed out: "Lu Xun both rejected Chinese tradition in toto and found some elements in traditional Chinese culture and morals meaningful. . . . It caused him great agony — indeed, a sense of guilt — in the face of an iconoclastic totalism in which he also deeply believed."[15] In *Wild Grass* Lu Xun's awareness of repentance seems more obviously based on morality, a humanitarian consideration for others, as he expounded it in a letter of 1925:

> My ideas are not immediately understandable, because in them are contained many contradictions. If I am asked to sum them up, they represent perhaps the ebb and flow of two kinds of thinking — humanism and individual anarchism. Therefore, sometimes I suddenly love people, sometimes I suddenly hate people. When I work, sometimes I certainly work for others, but sometimes I work for my own pleasure.[16]

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[13]*Liji* 礼记, (The Book of Rites), in *Shisan jing zhushu* 十三经注疏 (Annotation and interpretation of Thirteen Classic Books), Zhonghua shuju, 1979, p. 1673.
[14]Lu Xun , "Nahan zixu" 呐喊自序 (Self-preface to *Call to Arms*), *LXQJ*, vol. 1, p. 417.
[15]Lin Yü-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979. p. 105.
[16]Lu Xun, a letter to Xu Guangping dated May 30, 1925, in *Liangdishu yuanxin* 两地书原信 (The origi *The Letters From Two Places*), Zhou Haiying 周海婴 ed., Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 1984, p. 69, Leo Ou-fan Lee's translation in *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987, p. 104.

To a great extent the emotional tension in *Wild Grass* manifests the conflict between humanism and individual anarchism in Lu Xun's deepest inner mind. When this conflict occurs, sometimes Lu Xun "suddenly hate[d] people," as shown in "The Passerby." But immediately he turned to condemn himself for these feelings. Therefore a strong awareness of repentance is frequently embodied in many poems in *Wild Grass*.

This awareness of repentance is actually an embodiment of Lu Xun's humanistic thought and his sense of morality. Lu Xun's summary of his own ideas is helpful to readers in understanding the genesis of his awareness of repentance. This awareness of repentance is also closely related to his intention in writing *Wild Grass*, that is, in Lu Xun's words, when commenting on Dostoyevsky's fiction, "to torture and interrogate out the real innocence which hides beneath the sin."[17]

The Japanese scholar Takeuchi Yoshimi (竹内好) identifies Lu Xun's literature as "a kind of repentant literature," and considers his marriage and love as "the core of the repentance."[18] It seems to me an overstatement to view the whole of Lu Xun's literature as "a kind of repentant literature," but Takeuchi's comment is generally applicable to *Wild Grass*. Another Japanese scholar Katayama Tomoyuki, when he deals with *Wild Grass*, quotes Takeuchi's comment and agrees with him, saying "in a sense it is reasonable."[19] The awareness of repentance embodied in *Wild Grass* proves to be a very precious spirit for the Chinese people, especially after the atrocities and catastrophes of the Maoist era, to meditate on the weakness in their own human nature and "national character." As Michael S. Duke points out, "in the 1980s a new group of writers have begun in various ways to take up Lu Xun's use of creative literature to explore the roots (*xun-gen*) of Chinese culture and to ask once again what is so wrong with the Chinese 'national character' that it could bring about the

[17]Lu Xun, "Tuosituofusiji de shi" 陀思妥夫斯基的事 (Things about Dostoyevsky), *LXQJ*, vol. 6, p. 411.
[18]See Katayama Tomoyuki 片山智行, *Rojin yaso zenyaku* 魯迅野草全释 (A complete explanation of Lu Xun's *Wild Grass*), 1991, p. 255.
[19]Ibid., p. 255.

Cultural Revolution and its aftermath."[20] Like the spirit of struggle, the awareness of repentance that is strongly incorporated in *Wild Grass* should be regarded as one of the most important aspects of Lu Xun's legacy.

The modernistic artistry of *Wild Grass*

Michael S. Duke considers *Wild Grass* "a volume of nightmarishly modernistic prose poetry," which, together with his fiction, miscellaneous essays, and other writings, demonstrates Lu Xun's "modern genius."[21] He sees in *Wild Grass* the "modernistic" features, which are the most remarkable characteristics of this prose poetry collection.

The modernistic features of *Wild Grass* are, of course, incorporated in both its themes and artistry. Tsi-an Hsia has pointed out, "Lu Hsün might have carried Chinese poetry . . . into a new realm, to give formal rendering to a kind of terror and anxiety, an experience which we might call modern, since it is hardly found among the themes of traditional Chinese poetry, rich as its contents are."[22] In my preceding analysis, Lu Xun's strong personal feelings that are imbued in his various characters and the awareness of repentance that informs many pieces both contain modernistic thematic elements. However, the modernistic features of *Wild Grass* are most significantly displayed in its artistic aspects.

When talking about the modernistic features of *Wild Grass*, the critics might first identify its symbolism. The majority of *Wild Grass* poems includes symbolic devices and metaphors, or allegorical emblems that determine or suggest further significance beyond the literary meaning of the text itself. Lu Xun was extremely skillful in exploiting an order of private symbols in *Wild Grass* to suggest richly rather than to describe explicitly. Leo Ou-fan Lee asserts, "his prose poetry is definitely conceived in symbolic structures. By incorporating many fictional and dramatic devices, it seems to tell a fictive 'story' within the contours of a

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[20]Michael S. Duke, Review of *Voices from the Iron House*, in *World Literature Today*, Spring 1988, p. 332.
[21]Ibid., p. 332.
[22]Tsi-an Hsia, *The Gate of Darkness*, 1968, p. 151.

dream or an allegory."[23] In short, *Wild Grass* is a "magnificent harvest of symbolic art" in modern Chinese literature.[24]

The second modernistic feature of *Wild Grass* can be said to be its surrealistic imagination. Some of its poems are cast in dreams, which are deliberately conceived by Lu Xun as a surrealistic world. Even those non-dream pieces are created in a dream-like or nightmarish atmosphere such as "Autumn Night," "Revenge," and "Beggars." Lu Xun frequently interweaves reality with fantasy, life with imagined death, human beings with beasts or monsters, and so on to construct a surrealistic and imaginative framework in his prose poems to convey his troubled thoughts and feelings. Other surrealistic devices — including personification of natural objects, nonlogical sequences of events, and the juxtaposition of bizarre, shocking, and transcendental images such as the dead fire, the demon, the talking dog, and the dead man who still has awareness — are often employed to build his powerful imagination into a great surrealistic work of art. In this sense Leo Ou-fan Lee defines *Wild Grass* as "literary crystallizations of his dark moods and tortured feelings which comprise a surrealistic world of the subconscious."[25]

Because of the artistic complexity of *Wild Grass*, the reader can also decipher other modernistic features. For example, William Schultz considers the *Wild Grass* collection to be "impressionistic." In it "minor observations and poetic moods, ephemeral dream situations and critical ideas were invested with poetic dress."[26] Leo Ou-fan Lee sees in *Wild Grass* "characterization in the expressionistic mode" and regards this as one remarkable modernistic element of *Wild Grass*.[27] One remarkable feature of the characterization in *Wild*

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[23]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987, p. 96.
[24]Ibid., p. 89.
[25]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987, p. 89.
[26]William Schultz, "Lu Hsün, The Creative Years," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1955, p. 383.
[27]Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Lu Xun yu xiandai yishu yishi" 鲁迅与现代艺术意识 (Lu Xun and the consciousness of modern art), in *Tiewuzhong de nahan* 铁屋中的呐喊 (Voices from the Iron House), Taibei: shidai fengyun chubanshe, 1995, p. 301.

Grass is indeed its expressionistic mode, a revolt against the literary tradition of realism in characterization. Lu Xun undertook to express a troubled emotional vision of society and human life by diminishing or distorting his characters such as the beggar, the prostitute, the shadow, and the heartless rotten body, and/or by exaggerating their unusual behaviors such as the couple's eternal confrontation, the old woman's silent complaint to heaven, and the rotten body's revival. As a result, the characterization in *Wild Grass* conveys a strong expressionistic effect.

The most significant modernistic feature in the structure of *Wild Grass* may lie in its framework of logical dilemma. Many *Wild Grass* poems are conceived as a logical dilemma in which completely different images, situations, desires, feelings, and prospects are presented to reveal diametrical conflicts. Many of the main characters are caught up in these dilemmas without a perceivable solution. This kind of structure is essentially a recapitulation of Lu Xun's own psychical dilemma between ideal and existence, self and others, emotion and morality, love and hate, and so on. Lu Xun has clearly expressed his psychical dilemma in the "Preface" to *Wild Grass*, which reads:

> At the time between dark and light, life and death, past and future, I lay this collection of *Wild Grass* in front of friends and enemies, man and beast, those who love and those who love not as evidence.
>
> For myself, for friends and enemies, for those who love and those who love not, I wish the death and decay of the *Wild Grass* to arrive speedily . . .[28]

Lu Xun's own words can be taken as the best summary of the complex themes of *Wild Grass* and his emotional and psychical paradoxes at a critical juncture in his life. The structure of logical dilemma metaphorically and effectively serves to express the paradoxical themes of *Wild Grass*, to reveal his mental contradictions, and to achieve an astonishing artistic effect in these prose poems.

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[28] *LXQJ*, vol. 2, pp. 159-60, William Schultz's translation in "Lu Hsün, The Creative Years," 1955, p. 297.

On the most obvious level, we know that modern prose poetry itself is a modern genre, which was first practiced by Baudelaire and Turgenev, introduced to China during the New Culture Movement. There was a long tradition of rhyme and prose poetry in classical Chinese literature. Lu Xun certainly draws inspiration from this poetry tradition. Leo Ou-fan Lee points out that to some degree *Wild Grass* is similar to the classical subgenre *fu* (赋). "But Lu Xun obviously departs from the *fu* tradition, not only by his pointedly psychological interest but also by his invention of an unprecedented range of poetic images."[29] In addition, *Wild Grass* was written in vernacular language. In this sense the subgenre of modern prose poetry is lacking in Chinese literary tradition. It is really a miracle that *Wild Grass* achieved so splendid an artistic success at the earliest stage in modern Chinese literature. The artistic achievement of *Wild Grass* should also be partially attributed to its language. In general Lu Xun exploited a daily spoken language, sometimes in the form of dialogue or monologue, which reads natural and lyrical. Lu Xun frequently composed epigrams in the poems to enhance the wisdom and elegance of the language. In a few special pieces such as "The Lost Good Hell" and "Tombstone Inscriptions," vocabulary items from literary or Buddhist classics and classical syntactic structures are occasionally employed to achieve an effect of defamiliarization. When Tsi-an Hsia comments on the language in *Wild Grass*, he states, "he let *pai-hua* do things that it had never done before — things not even the best classical writers had never thought of doing in *wen-yan*. In this sense, Lu Hsün was a truly modern writer."[30]

To sum up, *Wild Grass* is a book that reveals the inner Lu Xun. It is a magnificent artistic crystallization of Lu Xun's will, emotions, morality, and intellectual wisdom. *Wild Grass* is primarily a product of Lu Xun's genuine private feelings, and displays Lu Xun's sincerity and honesty. Once readers understand it, they tend to have a strong aesthetic

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[29]Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*, 1987, p. 93.
[30]Tsi-an Hsia, *The Gate of Darkness*, 1968, p. 151.

response based on their own emotional experiences. In this sense, *Wild Grass* also possesses a universal significance. As an artistic treasure, it is a necessary book to read for the understanding of Lu Xun's complex intellectual and literary legacy. It is also very important to show one aspect of the achievements of modern Chinese literature in the twentieth century.

GLOSSARY

Aigu 爱姑
bishou he touqiang 匕首和投枪
bu 布
bushi 布施
Buzhou shan 不周山
Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培
Cao Kun 曹琨
Chang Weijun 常维钧
Chen Duxiu 陈独秀
Chen Ermei 陈二妹
Chen Yuan 陈源
Cheng Fangwu 成仿吾
Chuangzao she 创造社
diwei 地位
Duan Qirui 段祺瑞
duanwen 短文
eniao 恶鸟
esheng 恶声
fabi 法币
fandui youqing jihuizhuyi 反对右倾机会主义
Fen 坟
Feng Naichao 冯乃超
Feng Xuefeng 冯雪峰
Feng Yuxiang 冯玉祥
Fengmeng 逢蒙
Fengtian 奉天
Gao Changhong 高长虹
Geming wenxue 革命文学
Guomindang 国民党
Gushi xinbian 故事新编
Hu Shi 胡适
Huagai ji 华盖集
Huagai ji xubian 华盖集续编
Iikura Shohei 饭仓照平
Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) 蒋介石
Jinde hui 进德会
Jinshi 进士
Katayama Tomoyuki 片山智行
Kuriyagawa Hakuson 厨川白村
Li Dazhao 李大钊
Li Jinglin 李景林
Li Xiaofeng 李小峰
Li Yuanhong 黎元洪
Lidai jiyuan bian, 历代纪元编
Lingfei 令飞
Linshi zong zhizheng 临时总执政
Liumian pengbi, waijia dingzi 六面碰壁, 外加钉子
liwu 礼物
Lü Sun 旅隼
Lu Xun (Lu Hsun) 鲁迅
Mao Zedong 毛泽东
Nahan 呐喊
Niushou Ah Pang, 牛首阿旁
nü 女

Nüwa 女娲
Panghuang 彷徨
pojiaogu 破脚骨
Qi Shoushan 齐寿山
Qian Xuantong 钱玄同
qianmian 前面
Qing 清
qishen 其身
Qiu Jin 秋瑾
qixin, 其心
Refeng 热风
renjianku 人间苦
sanwenshi 散文诗
Shansi saozi 单四嫂子
Shaoxing huiguan 绍兴会馆
she 蛇
Shen Yinmo 沈尹默
shengxiao 生肖
shenwai de qingchun 身外的青春
shi de sanwen 诗的散文
Shijing 诗经
shilianshi 失恋诗
shunxue 吮血
suishi de xiao ganxiang 随时的小感想
Sun Fuyuan 孙伏园
Sun 隼
Sun Yat-sen 孙中山
Taiyang she 太阳社
Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好
Tayin 它音
Wang Pinqing 王品青
Wei Lianshu 魏连殳
Wei Suyuan 苇素园
Wengsun 翁隼
Wenhau da geming 文化大革命
wenre 温热
Wu Peifu 吴佩孚
wudi 无地
wuxingan 无心肝
wuxue de dalu 无血的大戮
wuyan buchou 无言不雠
Xia Yu 夏瑜
Xiandai pinglun 现代评论
Xiandai pinglun pai 现代评论派
Xianglin sao 祥林嫂
Xiaogui 小鬼
xiaopin 小品
xiaosheguiguai 枭蛇鬼怪
Xin 孔
Xin qingnian 新青年
Xinhai geming 辛亥革命
Xiucai 秀才
xiuqi 休妻
xixue 吸血
Xu Guangping 许广平
Xu Qinwen 许钦文
Xu Xilin 徐锡林
Xu Zhimo 徐志摩
Xun 迅
xuwang 虚妄
xuwu 虚无
Yang 阳
yehuacao 野花草
yeyou de eniao 夜游的恶鸟
yige qigai 一个乞丐
Yin 阴
youhun 游魂
youpai fenzi 右派分子
Yu Dafu 郁达夫
Yuan Shikai 袁世凯
zawen 杂文
zengpin 赠品
Zhang Chuandao(Tingqian) 章川岛(廷谦)
Zhang Shizhao 章士钊
Zhang Taiyan 章太炎
Zhang Xianzhong 张献忠
Zhang Yiping 章衣萍
Zhang Zuolin 张作霖
Zhili 直隶
Zhongguo zuoyi zuojia lianmeng 中国左翼作家联盟
Zhou Guanwu 周冠五
Zhou Jianren 周建人
Zhou Shuren 周树人
Zhou Zuoren 周作人
Zhu An 朱安
zi 子

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Abbreviation

LXQJ: Lu Xun Quanji 鲁迅全集 (Complete works of Lu Xun), Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshu, 1987, 16 vols.

LXSW: Lu Xun Selected Works, translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980, 4 vols.

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"Tici" 题词 (Inscription)
"Qiuye" 秋夜 (Autumn Night)
"Ying do gaobie" 影的告别 (The shadow's leave-talking)
"Qiuqizhe" 求乞者 (The beggars)
"Wo de shilian" 我的失恋 (My lost love)
"Fuzhou" 复仇 (Revenge)
"Fuzhou qi'er" 复仇其二 (Revenge II)
"Xiwang" 希望 (Hope)
"Xue" 雪 (Snow)
"Fengzheng" 风筝 (The kite)
"Hao de gushi" 好的故事 (The good story)
"Guoke" 过客 (The passer-by)
"Sihuo" 死火 (Dead fire)
"Gou de puojie" 狗的驳诘 (The dog's retort)
"Shidiao de hao diyu" 失掉的好地狱 (The lost good hell)
"Mujiewen" 墓碣文 (Inscriptions on a tombstone)
"Tuibaixian de chandong" 颓败线的颤动 (Viberation of the decrepit line)
"Lilun" 立论 (To express an opinion)
"Zheyang de zhanshi" 这样的战士 (Such a fighter)
"Congmingren he shazi he nucai" 聪明人和傻子和奴才 (The wise man, the fool and the slave)
"Laye" 蜡叶 (Dry leaf)
"Dandan de xuehen zhong" 淡淡的血痕中 (Amid pale bloodstains)
"Yijue" 一觉 (The awakening)

Fiction:

"Kuangren riji" 狂人日记 (Diary of a mad man), *LXQJ*, vol. 1.
"Yao" 药 (Medicine), *LXQJ*, vol. 1.
"Mingtian" 明天 (Tomorrow), *LXQJ*, vol. 1.
"Zhufu" 祝福 (The new-year sacrifice), *LXQJ*, vol. 2.
"Dixiong" 弟兄 (Brothers), *LXQJ*, vol. 2.
"Duanwu jie" 端午节 (The double fifth festival), *LXQJ*, vol. 2.
"Lihun" 离婚 (The divorce), *LXQJ*, vol. 2.

"Benyue" 奔月(Flight to the moon), *LXQJ*, vol. 2.
"Zhujian" 铸剑 (Forging the Swords), *LXQJ*, vol. 2.
New style poetry:
"Tamen de huayuan" 他们的花园 (Their garden), *LXQJ*, vol. 7.
"Taohua" 桃花 (Peach blossom), *LXQJ*, vol. 7.
Zawen:
"Wo zhi jielieguan" 我之节烈观 (My views on chastity), *LXQJ*, vol. 1.
"Suigan lu 40" 随感录 40 (Random thoughts 40), *LXQJ*. vol. 1.
"Xie zai *Fen* houmian" 写在坟后面 (Postscript to *Tomb*), *LXQJ*. vol. 1.
"Nahan zixu" 呐喊自序 (Self-preface to *Call for Arms*), *LXQJ*, vol. 1.
"Dengxia manbi" 灯下漫笔 (Random writing under a lamp), *LXQJ*, vol. 1.
"Gushi xinbian xuyan" 故事新编序言 (A preface to *Old Tales Retold*), *LXQJ*. vol. 2.
"Huran xiangdao III" 忽然想到, 三 (Sudden thought III), in *LXQJ*. vol. 3.
"Wuhua de qiangwei II" 无花的蔷薇, 二 (The rose without flower II), *LXQJ*, vol. 3.
"Haishang tongxin" 海上通信 (A letter from sea), *LXQJ*, vol. 3.
"Ji faxin" 记发薪 (Record of issuing pay), *LXQJ*, vol. 3.
"Xiao zagan" 小杂感 (Little random thinkings), *LXQJ*, vol. 3.
"Beijing Tongxin" 北京通信 (A letter from Beijing), *LXQJ*, vol. 3.
"Sidi" 死地 (Dead field), *LXQJ*, vol. 3.
"Jinian Liu Hezhenjun" 纪念刘和珍君 (In memory of Miss Liu Hezhen), *LXQJ*, vol. 3.
"Xuaopinwen de weiji" 小品文的危机 (The crisis of short essays), *LXQJ*. vol. 4.
"Tiangshuo meng" 听说梦 (Listen to talking about dreams), *LXQJ*, vol. 4.
"Wo he *Yusi* de shizhong" 我和语丝的始终 (I and the beginning and ending of *Yusi*), *LXQJ*, vol. 4.
"Yecao yingwen yiben xu" 野草英文译本序 (A preface to the English edition of *Yecao*), *LXQJ*, vol. 4.
"Suanzhang" 算帐 (Settle an account), *LXQJ*, vol. 5.
"Weizhang he timu" 文章和题目 (Assays and topics), *LXQJ*, vol. 5.
"Shige zhidi" 诗歌之敌 (The enemy of poetry), *LXQJ*, vol. 7.
"Zhe shi zheme yige yisi" 这是这么一个意思 (This is this kind of meaning), *LXQJ*, vol. 7.
"Yinyue?" 音乐? (Music?), *LXQJ*. vol. 7.
"Wuti" 无题 (No title), *LXQJ*. vol. 8.
"Wo de xiongdi" 我的兄弟 (My brother), *LXQJ*, vol. 8.
"Kumen de Xiangzheng, yingyan" 苦闷的象征, 引言 (Preface to *Symbols of Mental Anguish*), *LXQJ*, vol. 10.
"Sitang zhuanwen zaji tiji" 俟堂专文杂集题记 (Prescript to *Miscellaneous collection of brick inscriptions by Lu Xun*), in *LXQJ*, vol. 10.

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ORIGINAL CHINESE PASSAGES CITED IN TEXT

Footnotes for Pages 1-15

Introduction:

1. 我自爱我的野草.

4. 这二十多篇小品, 如每篇末尾所注, 是一九二四至二六年在北京所作, 陆续发表于期刊‹‹语丝››上的. 大抵仅仅是随时的小感想. 因为那时难于直说, 所以有时措辞就很含糊了.

现在举几个例罢. 因为讽刺当时盛行的失恋诗, 作‹‹我的失恋››, 因为憎恶社会上旁观者之多, 作‹‹复仇››第一篇, 又因为惊异于青年之消沉, 作‹‹希望››. ‹‹这样的战士››, 是有感于文人学士们帮助军阀而作. ‹‹腊叶››, 是为爱我者的想要保存我而作的. 段祺瑞政府枪击徒手民众后, 作‹‹淡淡的血痕中››, 其时我已避居别处; 奉天派和直隶派军阀战争的 时候, 作‹‹一觉››, 此后我就不能住在北京了.

所以, 这也可以说, 大半是废弛的地狱边沿的惨白色小花, 当然不会美丽. 但这地狱也必须失掉. 这是由几个有雄辩和棘手, 而那时还未得志的英雄们的脸色和语气所告诉我的. 我于是作‹‹失掉的好地狱››.

后来, 我不再作这样的东西了. 日在变化的时代, 已不许这样的文章, 甚而至于这样的感想存在. 我想, 这也许倒是好的罢.

5. 有了小感触, 就写些短文, 夸大点说, 就是散文诗, 所后印成一本, 谓之‹‹野草››.

6. 重压之感. / 并不愿将自以为苦的寂寞, 再来传染给也如我那年青时候似的正做着好梦的青年.

7. 我的那一本‹‹野草››, 技术并不算坏, 但心情太颓唐了, 因为那是我碰了许多钉子之后写出来的. 我希望你脱离这种颓唐心情的影响.

11. 凶狠. / 心性的恶毒.

12. 笔墨冷峭精警, 遒炼幽丽, 以旧有佛经句调与西洋色彩融和而成功 一种特创的风格.....里面有许多富有诗意画意的自然描写, 不但为旧文学所无, 也为新文学所罕有.

17. 他的哲学都包涵在‹‹野草››里.

18. 至于‹‹野草››, 可说是鲁迅的哲学.

20. 我觉得为了要对得起鲁迅的艺术起见, 一个分析者也应该把自己的诠释提升到这个较为抽象的哲学层次, 不必作捕风捉影式的政治索引.

27. 我一直认为‹‹野草››是鲁迅内心的冲突和纠葛的象征式(用厨川的定义)的写照, 呈现的是一种超现实的梦境, 于外界的社会和政治现实关系不大.

30. 我的杂文, 所写的常是一鼻, 一嘴, 一毛, 但合起来, 已几乎是或 一形象的全体. .....所以我要写后记, ...更成为完全的一个具象.

Chapter 1:

1. 当我在‹‹语丝››第三期看见‹‹野草››第一篇‹‹秋夜››的时候, 我既惊异而又幻想. 惊异者, 以鲁迅向来没有过这样的文字也. 幻想者, 此人于心的历史.

3. 谬托知己, 舔皮论骨.

6. 鲁迅所看到的人生只是如此, 所以展开‹‹野草›› 一书便觉得冷气逼人, 阴森森如入古道, 不是苦闷的人生, 就是灰暗的命运; 不是残忍的杀戮, 就是对社会的敌意; 不是希望的死亡, 就是人生的毁灭; 不是精神的杀戮, 就是梦的崇拜; 不是咒诅人类应该同归于尽, 就是说明人类的魔鬼与野兽化. .....一切一切, 都是引着青年走向死灭的道上, 为跟

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Chapter 1:

着他的青年们掘了无数无数的坟墓.

10. 还有要郑重地提出的, 便是作者不多赐予的珍贵的赠品, 极其诗质的小品散文集—《野草》. 这是贫弱的中国文艺园地里的一朵奇花, 正如这本小书的封面所绘的, 在灰暗的天地间, 有几痕青青悦目的小草, 非常的可爱. .....我们只觉得它的美, 但说不出它的所以美. .....但是明智的读者却能从这里得到真正的希有的力量.

12. 解剖自己. / 号召战斗及直接对于黑暗底攻击.

13. 描述自己当时心境之阴影角落的一本书.

14. 写作《野草》的时期, 乃是他一生事业的一个高峰. .....此时的鲁迅已由一般地攻击某种思想或现象转到更直接地向反动统治阶级 猛烈而执着的进攻, 由通过文学形式的思想战线上, 转到面对面的, 直到流血为止的殊死战斗. (original emphasis)

16. 诗的 / 健康, 积极, 战斗的. / 尖锐的讽刺.

17. 明显地反映着作者的空虚和失望的情绪以及思想上的深刻的矛盾.

18. 《野草》中的战斗意气, 不消说, 是热烈的.

20. 战斗精神 / 针砭社会 / 自我解剖.

22. 一种对于美好和谐的爱情生活的向往的意绪.

Chapter 2:

1. 民国以来最黑暗的一天.

4. 枣树, 他们简直落尽了叶子. 先前, 还有一两个孩子来打他们别人打剩的枣子, 现在是一个也不剩了, 连叶子也落尽了. 他知道小粉红花的梦, 秋后要有春; 他也知道落叶的梦, 春后还是秋. 他简直落尽了叶子, 单剩干子, 然而脱了当初满树是果实和叶子时候的弧形, 欠伸得很舒服. 但是, 有几枝还低亚着, 护定他从打枣的竿梢所得的皮伤, 而最直最长的几枝, 却已默默地铁似的直刺着奇怪而高的天空.

5. 将繁霜洒在我的园里的野花草上.

6. 默默地铁似的直刺着奇怪而高的天空, 一意要制他的死命, 不管他各式各样地眨着许多蛊惑的眼睛.

10. 只要一叫而人们大抵震悚的怪鸱的真的恶声在哪里!?

11. 头大尾小, 向日葵子似的, 只有半粒小麦那么大, 遍身的颜色苍翠得可爱, 可怜. ..... 一个从上面撞进去了, 他于是遇到火, ...两三个却休息在灯的纸罩上喘气.

13. 他们的形象不是美, 而是丑. / 作者对他们的感情不是敬爱, 而是揶揄.

14. 利己主义者 / 它们只是因为害怕黑暗和秋寒, 贪图安全, 才争着挤到房里来的.

16. 我想: 虫的扑灯, 有人说是慕光, 有人说是趋炎, 有人说是为了性欲, 都随便, 我只愿他不要绕圈子就好了.

17. 我打一个呵欠, 点起一支纸烟, 喷出烟来. 对着灯默默地敬奠这些苍翠精致的英雄们.

19. 于是只剩下广漠的旷野, 而他们俩在其间裸着全身, 捏着利刃, 干枯地立着; 以死人似的眼光, 赏鉴这路人们的干枯, 无血的大戮, 而永远沉浸于生命的飞扬的极致的大欢喜中.

20. 四面都是敌意, 可悲悯的, 可诅咒的. .....路人都辱骂他, 祭司长和文士也戏弄他, 和他同钉的两个强盗也讥诮他.

21. 玩味着可悯的人们的钉杀神之子的悲哀和可诅咒的人们要钉杀神之子, 而神之子在就要被钉杀了的欢喜. / 大欢喜和大悲悯.

Footnotes for Pages 36-50

Chapter 2:

22. 群众, — 尤其是中国的, — 永远是戏剧的看客. 牺牲上场, 如果显很慷慨, 他们就看了悲壮剧; 如果显得觳觫, 他们就看了滑稽剧. 北京的羊肉铺前常有几个人张着嘴看剥羊, 仿佛很愉快, 人的牺牲能给与他们的益处, 也不过如此. 而况事后走不几步, 他们并这一点愉快也就忘记了. 对于这样的群众没有办法, 只好使他们无戏可看倒是疗救.

23. 消极复仇.

26. 钉杀了"人之子"的人们的身上, 比钉杀了"神之子"的尤其血污, 血腥.

30. ‹‹失掉的好地狱››一方面预见着国民党政权的黑暗, 一方面也流露着作者当时对革命前途的一种悲观的看法. / 指当时帝国主义和北洋军阀统治下的北京, 也可以广泛地指半殖民地半封建的中国. /显然是指那时还未取得政权的国民党中的人物.

31. [作者从那时自以为是"鬼魂"的解放者, 而当时尚未得志的一些 国民党"英雄们"的嘴脸上,] 已天才地预感到这些人根本不可能 担负打破地狱, 解放鬼魂的使命的.

33. 假如真如冯, 王二文所说, 1925年的鲁迅就"预见了国民党政权的黑暗", 这是否过高估计了鲁迅的预见能力而把他当成"算命先生" 呢?

35. 群盗如麻, 纷乱至极之后, 就有一个较强, 或较聪明, 或较狡猾, 或是外族的人物出来, 较有秩序地收拾了天下, ...于是便"万姓胪欢" 了; 用成语来说, 就叫做天下太平.

36. 爱新觉罗氏.....厚泽深仁, 遂有天下.

37. 他于是亲临地狱, 坐在中央, 遍身发大光辉, 照见一切鬼众.

38. 作了两百五十年的奴隶.

39. 地狱原已废弛得很久了, 剑树消却光芒; 沸油的边际早不腾涌; 大火聚有时不过冒些青烟.

41. 狐虎之威.

42. 革命政府在南京成立, 教育部长招我去做部员, 移人北京, 一直到现在.

43. 人类于是完全掌握了主宰地狱的大威权, 那威棱且在魔鬼以上. 人类于是整顿废弛, 先给牛首阿旁以最高的俸草; 而且, 添薪加火, 蘑砺刀山, 使地狱全体改观, 一洗先前颓废的气象.

44. 曼陀罗花立即焦枯了. 油一样沸; 刀一样钻; 火一样热; 鬼众一样呻吟, 一样宛转, 至于都无暇记起失掉的好地狱.

45. 这是人类的成功, 是鬼魂的不幸.....

47. 我觉得仿佛久没有中华民国. 我觉得革命以前, 我是做奴隶; 革命以后不多久, 就受了奴隶的骗, 变成他们的奴隶了. / 我觉得有许多民国国民而是民国的敌人. ..... 我觉得什么都要从新做过. / .....我觉得民国的来源, 实在已经失传了, 虽然还只有十四年!

49. 为饥饿, 苦痛,惊异,羞辱,欢欣而颤动. / 我们今天有吃的了.

50. 人与兽的, 非人间所有, 所以无词的言语.

56. 完全是超现实的.

58. ‹‹这样的战士››是有感于文人学士们帮助军阀而作.

59. 要有这样的一种战士 — / 他只有自己, 但拿着蛮人所用的, 脱手一掷的投枪.

60. 这点头就是敌人的武器, 是杀人不见血的武器, 许多战士都在此灭亡.

63.弄文罹文网, / 抗世违世情./ 积毁可销骨./ 空留纸上声.

64. 无物之阵已经脱走, 得了胜利, 因为他这时成了戕害慈善家等类的罪人.

Footnotes for Pages 50-63

Chapter 2:

67. 他暗暗地使天变地异, 却不敢毁灭一个这地球; 暗暗地使生物衰亡, 却不敢长存一切尸体; 暗暗地使人类流血, 却不敢使血色永远鲜浓; 暗暗地使人类受苦, 却不敢使人类永远记得. .....他还没有灭尽人类的勇气.

69. 他看透了造化的把戏; 他将越来使人类苏生, 或者使人类灭尽, 这些造物主的良民们.

71. 记得一切深广和久远的苦痛, 正视一切重叠淤积的凝血, 深知一切已死, 方生, 将生和未生.

72. 造物主, 怯弱了,羞惭了, 于是伏藏. 天地在猛士的眼中于是变色.

74. 每听得机件搏击空气的声音,我常觉得一种轻微的紧张、宛然目睹了"死"的袭来, 但同时也深切地感着"生"的存在.

75. 是的, 青年的魂灵屹立在我眼前, 他们已经粗暴了, 或者将要粗暴了, 然而我爱这些流血和隐痛的魂灵.

77. 是同现实不符合的.

Chapter 3,

2. 这寂寞又一天一天的长大起来, 如大毒蛇, 缠住了我的灵魂了.

3. 后来‹‹新青年››的团体散掉了, 有的高升, 有的退隐, 有的前进, 我又经验了一回同一战阵中的伙伴还是会这么变化, 并且落得 一个"作家"的头衔, 依然在沙漠中走来走去, 不过已经逃不出 在散漫的刊物上做文字, 叫作随便谈谈. 有了小感触, 就写些短文, 夸大点说, 就是散文诗, 以后印成一本, 谓之‹‹野草››. 得到较整齐的材料, 则还是做短篇小说, 只因为成了游勇, 布不成阵了, 所以技术虽然比先前好一些, 思路也似乎较无拘束. 而战斗的意气却冷得不少. 新的战友在那里呢? 我想, 这是很不好的. 于是集印了这时期的十一篇作品, 谓之‹‹彷徨››, 愿以后不再这模样.

5. 鲁迅先生: / 我昨天才知道, — 但过去的事不必再说了. 我不是基督徒, 却幸而尚能担受得起, 也不想责难, — 大家都是可怜的人间. 我以前的蔷薇的梦原来都是虚幻, 现在所见的或者才是真的人生. 我想订正我的思想, 重新入新的生活. 以后请不要再到后边院子里来, 没有别 的话. 愿你安心, 自重. / 七月十八日, 作人

6. 是夜始改在自室吃饭, 自具一肴, 此可记也.

8. 下午往八道湾宅取书和什器, 比进西厢, 启孟及其妻突出骂詈殴打. .....其妻向之述我罪状, 多秽语, 凡捏造未园处, 则启孟救正之, 然终取书, 器而出.

10. 事情的起因可能是, 周作人老婆造谣说鲁迅调戏她. 周作人老婆对我还说过: 鲁迅在他们的卧室窗下听窗. 这是根本不可能的事, 因为窗前种满了花木.

14.鲁迅是怎样辛辣倔强的老头儿呀!

15. 世故老人 / 入于心身交病之状况矣!

16. 无聊的东西.

18. 让人有些恶心. / 他从民国元年就做了教育部的官, 从没脱离过. 所以袁世凯称帝, 他在教育部, 曹琨贿选, 他在教育部, ... 甚而至于"代表无耻的章士钊"免了他的职后, 他还大嚷 "佥事这一个官儿倒也并不算怎样的 '区区'"..... 其实一个人做官也不大要紧, 做了官再装出这样的面孔来可就叫人有些恶心了吧.

21. 有时则竟因为希望将生命从速消磨, 所以故意拼命的做.

22. 酗酒 / 自暴自弃 .

23. 是喝酒太多, 吸烟太多, 睡觉太少之故.

Footnotes for Pages 63-76

Chapter 3:

24. 褥子下明晃晃的钢刀, 用以杀敌是妙的, 用以.....似乎.....小鬼不乐闻了! (省略号原有.)

25. 我也常常想到自杀, 也常想杀人, 然而却不实行, 我大约不是一个勇士.

27. 作者根据伯格森一流的哲学, 以进行不息的生命力为人类生活的根本, 又从弗罗特一流的科学, 寻出生命力的根柢来, 即用以解释文艺 — 尤其是文学.

28. 佛洛伊特恐怕是有几文钱, 吃得饱饱的罢, 所以没有感到吃饭之难, 只注意于性欲. .....食欲的根柢, 实在比性欲还要深.

29. 首先, 是很认真的, 虽然也不过取了弗罗特说, 来解释创造 —人和文学的 — 的缘起.

30. 注重文学和艺术.

31. 创造总根于爱.

33. 没有创造的地方就没有进化. .....所以那些全不想发挥自己本身的生命力, 而只是在因袭的束累和传统的樊篱下, 摹仿先人所为, 而又无动于衷的具有奴隶根性的人, 在这个意义上, 是和畜生同列的.

35. 我以为人类为向上, 即发展起见, 应该活动, 活动而有若干失错, 也不要紧. 惟独半死半生的苟活, 是全盘失错的.

36. 我是诅咒"人间苦"而不嫌恶死的.

37. 生命力受了压抑而生的苦闷懊恼乃是文艺的根柢, 而其表现法乃是广义的象征主义.

39. 我不如彷徨于无地.

40.小资产阶级的恶习性 .

41. 悲观和虚无 / 将来的黄金世界(共产主义世界) .

42.这回是引了我的‹‹影的告别››, 说我是虚无派. 因为"有我所不乐意的在你们将来的黄金世界里, 我不愿去", 就断定共产主义的黄金世界, 我也不愿去了. .....但我倒先要问, 真的只看将来的黄金世界的么?"

43. 也许是我将现实看得太黑暗了.

44. 散文诗写的是"影"向人的"告别", 实际上是鲁迅向"影"所代表的消极思想的决我裂.

45. 人睡到不知道时候的时候, 就会有影来告别, 说出那些话 —

46. 有我所不乐意的在天堂里, 我不愿去; 有我所不乐意的在地狱里, 我不愿去; 有我所不乐意的在你们将来的黄金世界里, 我不愿去; / 然而你就是我所不乐意的. /朋友. 我不想跟随你了, 我不愿住. / 我不愿意! / 呜乎呜乎, 我不愿意! 我不如彷徨于无地.

52. 将来必胜于过去, 青年必胜于老人.

53. 我不过一个影, 要别你而沉没在黑暗里了. 然而黑暗又会吞并我, 然而光明又会使我消失. / 你还想我的赠品. /我能献你什么呢? 无已, 则仍是黑暗和虚空而已.

56. 然而我终于彷徨于明暗之间, 我不知道是黄昏还是黎明.....我将在不知道时候的时候独自远行/ 我愿意这样, 朋友 — / 我独自远行, 不但没有你, 并且再没有别的影在黑暗里. 只有我被黑暗沉没, 那世界全属于我自己.

60. 我不布施, 我无布施心, 我但居布施者之上, 给与烦腻, 疑心, 憎恶.

61. 我将得不到布施, 得不到布施心; 我将得到自居于布施之上者的烦腻, 疑心, 憎恶.

65. 我想着我将用什么方法求乞: 发声, 用怎样声调? 装哑, 用怎样手势? .....

Footnotes for Pages 76-91

Chapter 3:

66. 我将用无所为和沉默求乞...../ 我至少将得到虚无.

71. 我大概老了. 我的头发已经苍白, 不是很明白的事么? 我的手颤抖着, 不是很明白的事么? 那么, 我的魂灵的手一定也颤抖着, 头发也一定苍白了.

73. 希望, 希望, 用希望的盾, 抗拒那空虚中的暗夜的袭来, 虽然盾后面也依然是空虚中的暗夜. 然而就是如此, 陆续地耗尽了我的青春.

74. 希望是什么? 是娼妓: / 她对谁都蛊惑, 将一切都献给;/ 待你牺牲了极多的宝贝 — / 你的青春 — 她就弃掉你.

75. 而我的面前又竟至于并且没有真的黑夜. / 绝望之于虚妄, 正与希望相同!

76. 有感于青年的消沉.

77. 作者的用意是反对青年们消沉, 号召他们奋发起来同黑暗斗争.

78. 鲁迅写这篇散文的目的, 并不是引导人们沉湎于绝望之中, 而是激发青年向绝望作顽强的抗战.

80. 忽略了他自己的明白的解释, 也就是他自身说明的文本创作意图.

85. 我自己也正.....站在十字路口, 是可走的路很多. 我自己, 是什么也不怕的, 生命是我自己的东西, 所以我不妨大步走去, 向着我自以为可以走去的路; 即使前面是深渊, 峡谷, 火坑, 都由我负责. .....惟独半生半死的苟活是全盘失错的.

87. 于是傲然走出, 留他绝望地站在小屋里.

88. 于是二十年来毫不忆及的幼小时候对于精神的虐杀的这一幕, 忽地在眼前展开, 而我的心也仿佛同时变了铅块, 很重很重的坠下去了.

89. 是表现一种意思的方便而已.

90. 他自己的确不放风筝, 可是并不严厉地反对别人放风筝.

95. 鲁迅本人在他生前没有一个字发表. .....这是他的伟大之处.

97. ‹‹伤逝››不是普通恋爱小说, 乃是借假了男女的死亡来哀悼兄弟恩情的断绝的.

99. 全然忘却, 毫无怨恨, 又有什么宽恕之可言呢? 无怨的恕, 说谎罢了. / 我还能希求什么呢? 我的心只得沉重着.

100.我后来悟到我的错处. 我的兄弟却将我的这错处全忘了, 他总是很要好的叫我"哥哥".

101. 不辩解.

102. 我倒不如躲到肃杀的严冬中去罢, — 但是, 四面又明明是严冬, 正给我非常的寒威和冷气.

104. 向野地里跄踉地闯进去.

111. 旧时代的革命者 / 消沉者 / 战士 / 革命者 /寻求光明的人 / 青年

112. 我认为这三个人物从不同的角度和侧面暗示了鲁迅不同的自我, 在本文中是一个聚合象征.

113. 女孩是过客的过去; 而老人是过客的将来.

114. 约三四十岁, 状态困顿倔强, 眼光阴沉, 黑须, 乱发, 黑色短裤皆破碎, 赤足著破鞋, 胁下挂一个口袋, 支着等身的竹杖.

117. 称呼? — 我不知道. 从我还记得的时候起, 我就只一个人. 我不知道我本来叫什么. / 从我还能记得的时候起, 这就在这么走.

119. 你也会遇见心底的眼泪, 为你的悲哀.

120. 你不要当真就是.

Footnotes for Pages 91-101

Chapter 3:

121. 没一处没有名目, 没一处没有地主, 没一处没有驱逐和牢笼, 没一处没有皮面的笑容 没一处没有眶外的眼泪. 我憎恶他们 我不回转去

122. 我不愿看见他们心底的眼泪, 不要他们为我的悲哀.

123. 可恨的是我的脚早经走破了, 有许多伤, 流了许多血. 因此, 我的血不够了; 我要喝些血. 但血在哪里呢? 可是我也不愿意喝无论谁的血.

124. 我先前何尝不出于自愿, 在生活的路上, 将血一滴一滴地滴过去, 以饲别人. 虽自觉渐渐瘦弱, 也以为快活. 而现在呢? 人们笑我瘦了, 除掉那一个人之外. 连饮过我的血的人, 也都在嘲笑我的瘦了, 这实在使我愤怒.

127. 倘使我得到了谁的布施, 我就要像兀鹰看见死尸一样, 在四近徘徊, 祝愿她的灭亡, 给我亲眼看见; .....但是我还没有这样的力量; 即使有这力量, 我也不愿意她有这样的境遇, 因为她们大概总不愿意有这样的境遇 .

128. 从我还记得的时候起, 我就只一个人 .

132. 鲁迅的三个自我.

133. 我只很确切地知道一个终点, 就是: 坟. 然而这是大家都知道的, 无须谁指引. 问题是在从此到那的道路, 那当然不只一条, 我可正 不知哪一条好, 虽然至今有时也还在寻求.

136. 这是死火. 有炎炎的形, 但毫不摇动, 全体冰结, 像珊瑚枝; 尖端还有凝固的黑烟, 疑这才从火宅中出, 所以枯焦. 这样, 映在冰的四壁, 而且互相反映, 化为无量数影, 使这冰谷, 成红珊瑚色.

137. 绝不会烧完.

138.可能引起燎原大火.

140. 我不赞成把死火解作革命, 如照厨川白村的说法, 也许它只能代表一种内心的生命力.

141. 鲁迅自身生命存在的两种形态.

145. "哈哈! 你们是再也遇不着死火了!" 我得意地笑着说, 仿佛就愿意这样似的.

147. 我梦见自己在隘巷中行走, 衣履破碎, 像乞食者.

一条狗在背后叫起来了.

我傲慢地回顾, 叱咤说:

"呔! 住口! 你这势利的狗!"

"嘻嘻!" 他笑了, 还接着说, "不敢, 愧不如人呢. "

"什么!?" 我气愤了, 觉得这是一个极端的侮辱.

"我惭愧: 我终于还不知道分别铜和银; 还不知道分别布和绸; 还不知道分别官和民; 还不知道分别主和奴; 还不知道....."

我逃走了.

"且慢! 我们再谈谈....." 他在后面大声挽留.

我一径逃走, 尽力地走, 直到逃出梦境, 躺在自己的床上.

154. 我忽然很想听听他们的议论. 但同时想, 我生存时说的什么批评不值一笑的话, 大概是违心之论罢; 才死, 就露了破绽了. 然而还是听; 然而毕竟得不到结论, 归纳起来不过是这样 —

"死了? ....."

"嗡. — 这 ....."

"啧. ..... 唉! ....."

Footnotes for Pages 101-121

Chapter 3:

155. 我不是什么伟人, 你无须到我身上来寻做论的材料.

157. 这回是六面碰壁, 外加钉子. 真是完全失败, 呜呼哀哉了! .....

160. 我先前以为人在地上虽没有任意生存的权利, 却总有任意死掉的权利的. 现在才知道并不然, 也很难适合人们的公意.

161. 不肯赠给他们一点惠而不费的欢欣.

164. 然而终于也没有眼泪流下; 只看见眼前仿佛有火花一闪, 我于是坐了起来.

165. 身后名, 不如即时一杯酒 .

166. 这些顾忌, 大部分自然是生活, 几分也为地位, 所谓地位者, 就是指我历来的一点小小工作而言, 怕因为我的行为的剧变而失去力量 .

168. 你看我这模样, 还要看什么明版? .....

170. 过去的生命已经死亡. 我对于这死亡有大欢喜, 因为我借此知道它曾经存活. 死亡的生命已经朽腐. 我对于这朽腐有大欢喜, 因为我借此知道它还非空虚.

生命的泥委弃在地面上, 不生乔木, 只生野草, 这是我的罪过 .

173. 取了弗罗特说, 来解释创造 —人和文学的 — 的缘起.

174. 生命力受了压抑而生的苦闷懊恼乃是文艺的根柢.

Chapter 4:

1.我要到N进学堂去了, 仿佛是想走异路, 逃异地, 去寻求别样的人们. .....因为那时读书应试是正路, 所谓学洋务, 社会上便以为是一种走投无路的人, 只得将灵魂卖给鬼子.

5. 母亲什么时候为大哥定的亲, 我根本不知道, 当事人大哥也不知道, 因为婚姻要由父母包办 是不能过问的. 后来大哥知道以后 只是要求女方放大脚 要识字而已 因为除了这以外, 是没有什么可说的了.

8. 灵台无计逃神矢, 风雨如磐暗故园. 寄意寒星荃不察, 我以我血荐轩辕.

10. 当时正在革命时代, 认为自己死无定期, 母亲愿意有个人陪伴, 也就随她去了.

12. 我一生的失计, 即在历来并不为自己打算, 一切听人安排, ...于是遂弊病百出, 十分无聊.

13. 母亲娶媳妇.

21. 因为那时难于直说, 所以有时措辞就很含糊了.

24. 简直堕人恶趣.

25. 真趣.

31..说不出话, 想起邻家: 他们大花园里, 有许多好花.

32. 我的话可并没得罪你, 你怎的便涨红了面孔! 唉! 花有花道理, 我不懂.

33. 生 命的泥委弃在地面上, 不生乔木, 只生野草, 这是我的罪过.

34. 我不知道那些花草真叫什么名字, 人们叫他们什么名字. 我记得有一种开过极细小的粉红花, 现在还开着, 但是更极细小了, 她在冷的夜气中, 瑟缩地做梦, 梦见春的到来, 梦见秋的到来.

35. 地狱边沿的惨白色小花.

36. 喻指男人的外遇. / 婚姻之外所玩弄的女人.

37. 这是母亲给我的一件礼物, 我只能好好地供养它, 爱情是我所不知道的.

38. 过去大先生和我不好, 我想好好地服侍他, 一切顺着他, 将来总会好的.

Footnotes for Pages 121-131

Chapter 4:

39. 你还想我的赠品. 我能献你什么呢? 无已, 则乃是黑暗和虚空而已. 但是, 我愿意只是黑暗, 或者会消失于你的白天; 我愿意只是虚空, 决不占你的心地.

40. 然而你就是我所不乐意的.

朋友, 我不想跟随你了, 我不愿住.

我不愿意!

呜乎呜乎, 我不愿意, 我不如彷徨于无地.

.....我将在不知道时候的时候独自远行.

.....朋友, 时候近了.

.....我愿意这样, 朋友—

41. 只有我被黑暗沉没, 那世界全属于我自己.

43. 拟古的新打油诗

46. 我的所爱在山腰; / 想去寻她山太高, / 低头无法泪沾袍. / 爱人赠我百蝶巾; /回她什么: 猫头鹰. / 从此翻脸不理我, / 不知何故兮使我心惊.

47. 不知何故兮 — 由她去罢.

48. 讽刺当时盛行的失恋诗.

49. 开开玩笑的.

51. 阅读者多以为信口胡诌, 觉得有趣而已, 殊不知猫头鹰本是他自己所钟爱的, 冰糖葫芦是爱吃的, 发汗药是常用的, 赤练蛇也是爱看的. 还是一本正经, 没有什么做作.

53. 是鲁迅的自喻.

54. 人之子醒了; 他知道人类间应有爱情; .....于是起了苦闷, 张口发出这叫声. ..... 我们能够大叫, 是黄莺便黄莺般叫, 是鸱枭便鸱枭般叫.....ÿ

我们还要叫出没有爱的悲哀, 叫出无所可爱的悲哀.

57. 即便是枭蛇鬼怪, 也是我的朋友, 这才真是我的朋友.

58. 我就爱枭蛇鬼怪, 我要给他践踏我的特权. 我对于名誉, 地位, 什么都不要, 我只要枭蛇鬼怪就够了.....

我有时自己惭愧, 怕不配爱那一个人; 但看看他们的言行思想, 便觉得我也并不算坏人, 我可以爱.

59. 前几天生热病, ...我即用 Aspirin 及金鸡那霜攻击之, ...三天就好了.

60. 寿山赠阿司匹林三筒.

61. 反革命统治阶级. / 捣乱.

63. ‹‹复仇››乃其誓尝惨苦的模范.

65. 人的皮肤之厚, 大概不到半分, 鲜红的热血, 就循着那后面, 在比密密层层地爬在墙壁上的槐蚕更其密的血管里奔流, 散出温热. 于是各以这温热互相蛊惑, 煽动, 牵引, 拼命地希求偎倚, 接吻, 拥抱, 以得生命的沉酣的大欢喜.

但倘若用一柄尖锐的利刀, 只一击, 穿透这桃红色的,菲薄的皮肤, 将见那鲜红的热血激箭似的以所有温热直接灌溉杀戮者; 其次, 则给以冰冷的呼吸, 示以淡泊的嘴唇, 使之人性茫然, 得到生命的飞扬的极至的大欢喜; 而其自身, 则永远沉浸于生命的飞扬, 的极致的大欢喜中.

66. 这样, 所以, 有他们俩裸着全身, 捏着利刃, 对立于广漠的旷野之上.

他们俩将要拥抱, 将要杀戮 .....

72. 钉杀了"人之子"的人们的身上, 比钉杀了"神之子"的尤其血污, 血腥. 他 们

Footnotes for Pages 131-142

Chapter 4:

75. 鲁迅是自己时代的 "人之子", 而不是超越历史的"神之子". / 思想弱点. / 对革命者与群众的关系不无偏激的看法.

76. 爱情! 可怜我不知道你是什么!

77. 爱情是什么东西? 我也不知道. 中国的男女大抵一对或一群 — 一男多女 — 的住着, 不知道有谁知道.

从前.....少的另去姘人宿娼, 老的再来买妾: 麻痹了良心, 各有妙法. 所以直到现在, 不成问题 .....

可是东方发白, ...人之子醒了; 他知道人类间应有爱情; 知道了从前一班少的老的所犯的罪恶; 于是起了苦闷, 张口发出这叫声.

但在女性一方面, 本来也没有罪, 现在是做了旧习惯的牺牲. 我们既然自觉着人类的道德, 良心上不肯犯他们少的老的的罪, 又不能责备异性, 也只好陪着做一世牺牲, 完结了四千年的旧账.

我们还要叫出没有爱的悲哀, 叫出无所可爱的悲哀. . . .

78. 我的心分外的寂寞. / .....没有爱憎, 没有哀乐, 也没有颜色和声音.

79. 肉薄这空虚中的暗夜了. / 纵使寻不到身外的青春, 也总得自己来一掷我身中的迟暮.

80. 身外的青春可能是指当时青年进步的言行.

81. 青年的反抗与进步. / 鲁迅生命中不可分割的一部分.

82. 我早先岂不知我的青春已经逝去了? 但以为身外的青春固在: 星, 月光, 僵坠的蝴蝶, 暗中的花, 猫头鹰的不祥之言, 杜鹃的啼血, 笑的渺茫, 爱的翔舞.....

然而现在何以如此寂寞? 难道身外的青春也都逝去, ...我只得由我来肉薄这空虚中的暗夜了.

83. 因为身外的青春倘一消灭, 我身中的迟暮也即凋零了.

84.至夜归.

88. 惊异于青年之消沉.

91. 其旨归, 恐怕应该是以和谐美好的男女爱情为本位的, 它表现了作者在不满婚姻的暗夜对理想爱情的憧憬.

93. 水中的青天的底子, 一切事物统在上面交错, 织成一篇, 永是生动, 永是展开.

94. 鲁迅在这里是借用我国古代文化中的阴阳观念来象征和谐理想的爱情.

95. 这故事很美丽, 幽雅, 有趣许多美的人和美的事, 错综起来像一天云锦, 而且万颗奔星似的飞动着, 同时又展开去, 以至于无穷.

96. .....青天上面, 有无数美的人和美的事, 我一一看见, 一一知道.

97. 倘使我得到了谁的布施, 我就要像兀鹰看见死尸一样, 在四近徘徊, 祝愿她的灭亡, 给我亲眼看见; 或者咒诅她以外的一切全部灭亡, 连我自己, 因为我就应该得到咒诅. 但是我还没有这样的力量; 即使有这力量, 我也不愿意她有这样的境遇, 因为她们大概总不愿意有这样的境遇.

98. 免得象一个没有生命的死尸活在旧社会, 过着无意义的生活, 忍受着旧社会的压迫. / 他们既然不愿意灭亡, 那么就痛苦地活下去吧!

99. 关心鲁迅或爱鲁迅的人. / 不愿意看到他们被那个黑暗的社会所吞食. / 鲁迅不愿意看到自己的对手尝味自己和与自己有关的人的失败的痛苦. 这是他的生命哲学的一个方面.

案迅即 卂 卂实即隼之简笔.

Footnotes for Pages 141-153

Chapter 4:

101. 隼性急疾, 则为先生自喻之意.

103. 而我正相反, 同我有关的活着, 我就不放心, 死了, 我就安心. 这意思也在‹‹过客›› 中说过: 都与小鬼的不同.

104. 我且不理它, "活着, 就不放心", 是替活着那个人个体不放心的, 范围是个人. "死了, 就安心", 也是为死人的本体打算.

105. 我们何苦因了旧社会而为一人牺牲几个? ....如果对于那一个人的生活能维持.

108. 为我悲哀的大约只有两个, 我的母亲和一个朋友.

109. 部分的可能是曲折地表现了他的爱情心理, 姑娘送给"客"的布片象征爱情, "客"起初接取过来, 但考虑再三还是请她收回去, 因为背在身上会成为感情的沉重负担, 无法再走了.

111. ‹‹过客›› 的意思不过如来信所说那样, 即是虽然明知前路是坟而偏要走, 就是反抗绝望, ...但这种反抗, 每容易蹉跌在"爱" — 感激也在内 — 里, 所以那过客得了小女孩的一片破布的布施也几乎不能前进了.

114. 苦闷.....总时刻地不招即来, 挥而不去, 先生! 有什么法子在苦药中加点糖分? 有糖分是否即绝对不苦? 先生! 你能否给我一个真切的明白的引导? .....能够拯拔得一个灵魂就先拯拔 一个! 先生呀! 他是如何的"惶急待命之至"!

115. 冰山, 冰谷的环境是鲁迅当时古寺僧人般的生活和孤寂的精神世界的诗意化表现. "死火"遇"温热"而复燃, 象征被旧传统, 理智压抑下去的感情, 由于外界因素刹那间的复苏, 写作此篇时, 正是与许广平通信之初.

116 革命精神的象征.

117. 作者那冻结多年的对爱情渴求的意念, 在许广平热烈, 真纯的爱心的温暖下开始复苏.

119. "唉, 朋友! 你用了你的温热, 将我惊醒了. " 他说.

"我原先被人遗弃在冰谷中,"..... "遗弃我的早已灭亡, 消尽了. 我也被冰冻冻得要死. 倘使你不给我温热, 使我重行烧起, 我不久就须灭亡. "

"你的醒来, 使我欢喜. 我正在想着走出冰谷的方法; 我愿意携带你去, 使你永不冰结, 永得燃烧. "

"唉唉! 那么, 我将烧完!"

"你的烧完, 使我惋惜. 我便将你留下, 仍在这里罢. "

"唉唉! 那么, 我将冻灭了!"

"那么, 怎么办呢?"

"但你自己, 又怎么办呢?" 他反而问.

"我说过了: 我要出这冰谷....."

"那我就不如烧完!"

120. 摧毁了一个处女纯净的心, 永远没有苏转.

121. 哈哈! .....死的火焰, 现在先得到你了!

123. 长虹大约在京时, 对她有过各种计划, 而不成功, 因疑我从中作梗.

126. .....有一游魂, 化为长蛇, 口有毒牙. 不以啮人, 自啮其身, 终以殒颠.....

.....离开!.....

127. .....抉心自食, 欲知本味. 创痛酷烈, 本味何能知? .....

.....痛定之后, 徐徐食之. 然其心已陈旧, 本味又何由知? .....

.....答我. 否则, 离开! .....

Footnotes for Pages 153-166

Chapter 4:

137. 天只管下雨, 绣花衫不知如何, 放晴的时候, 赶紧晒一晒罢. 千切千切!

138. 我是早想到了的, ...你看他们两人一起出去.....

139. 道德这事, 必须普遍, 人人应做, 人人能行, 又于自他两利, 才有存在的价值.

140. 于浩歌狂热之际中寒; 于天上看见深渊. 于一切眼中看见无所有; 于无所希望中得救.

141. 当别人在浩歌狂热中生活着的时候, 我感到人世的寒冽.....

当别人把现实社会看作是天上的乐园, 颇为满意的时候, 我看见这是地狱似的深渊.

当别人认为现实的一切都是好的, 我却对什么也看不上眼.....

142. 第一句: 我在浩歌狂热的时候, 突然因为革命的落潮, 因为太冷冽的空气, "中寒"得病了. 这当然是鲁迅内心矛盾和阴暗空虚思想的自况.....

第二句: 我 在被 描绘 得如天堂一样的所谓 "未来的黄金世界" 中, 看到了人间地狱般的深渊. 这是病中的"昏话", 也是死者的清醒思想的记录.

第三句: 我在似乎存在于别人的眼里的一切事物中, 看到了任何事物都是不存在的一种"无所有"的虚无.

第四句: 是说, 我的病最终无法救治, 在无所希望的绝望之中, 由死亡而得到了超脱人间尘世的痛苦. 死的解脱, 在或一种意义上说, 也是一种彻底的"得救".

146. 当深秋时, 想来也许有和这去年的模样相似的病叶的罢, 但是可惜我今年竟没有赏玩秋树的余闲.

147. 假使再过几年, 旧时的颜色在我记忆中消去, 怕连我也不知道他何以夹在书里面的原因了.

148. ‹‹腊叶››, 是为爱我者的想要保存我而作的.

149. 许公很鼓励我, 希望我努力工作, 不要松懈; 但又很爱护我, 希望我多加保养, 不要过劳. 这是不能两全的. 这里面有着矛盾. ‹‹腊叶››的感兴就从这儿得来.

150. 将坠的病叶的斑斓, 似乎也只能在极短时中相对, 更何况是葱郁 的呢.

151. 后来据他自己承认, 在‹‹野草››中的那篇‹‹腊叶››.....里的斑驳的枫叶, 就是自况的. 而我却一点也没有体会到, 这是多么麻木的呢!

152. 对于周围的感受和反应, 又大概是所谓"如鱼饮水, 冷暖自知"的; 我却觉得周围的空气太寒冽了, 我自说我的话, 所以反而称之曰‹‹热风››.

156. 给我一条光.

157. 害马(referring to Xu Guangping)又想跑往武昌去了, 谋事逼逼欤? .....殊不可解, 该打手心.

158. 讨姨太太, 弃北京之正妻而与女学生发生关系, 实为思想落伍者.

159. 我们的前途似乎毫无障碍, 但即便有, 我也决计要同小刺猬 (referring to Xu Guangping) 跨过它而前进的, 绝不畏缩.

161. 我自旅沪以来, 谨慎备至, 几于谢绝人世, 结舌无言.

162. 我又有眷属在沪, 并一婴儿, 相依为命, 离则两伤, 故且深自韬晦, 冀延余年, 倘举朝文武, 仍不相容.

164. 你们总说鲁迅遗物, 要保存, 要保存! 我也是鲁迅遗物, 你们也得保存保存我呀!

165. 长官赐不敢辞.

166. 我生为周家人, 死为周家鬼.

Footnotes for Pages 167-179

Chapter 4:

169. 看见我有女生在坐, 他们便造流言. 这些流言, 无论事之有无, 他们是在所必造的, 除非我和女人不见面. 他们貌作新思想, 其实都是暴君, 酷吏, 侦探, 小人.

.....传播的是品青, 伏园, 衣萍, 小峰, 二太太.

170. 那些头上有各种旗帜, 绣出各样好名称: 慈善家, 学者, 文士, 长者, 青年, 雅人, 君子.....

但他举起了投枪.

他们都同声立了誓来讲说, 他们的心都在胸膛的中央, 和别的偏心的人类两样. 他们都在胸前放着护心镜, 就为自己也深信心在胸膛中央的事作证.

但他举起了投枪.

他微笑, 偏侧一掷, 却正中了他们的心窝.

207. 他终于在无物之阵中老衰, 寿终. 他终于不是战士.

Conclusion:

13. 修身, 齐家, 治国, 平天下.

14. 改变他们的精神.

16. 其实, 我的意见原也不容易了然, 因为其中本有着许多矛盾, 教我自己说, 或者是"人道主义"与"个人的无治主义"的两种思想的消长起伏罢, 所以我忽而爱人, 忽而憎人; 做事的时候, 有时确为别人, 有时却为自己玩玩.

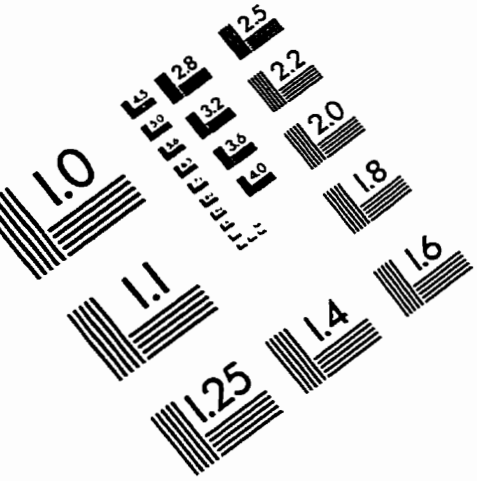
17. 拷问出藏在罪恶之下真正的清白来.

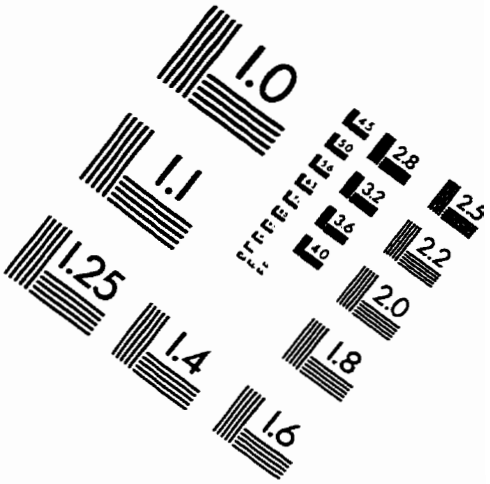
27. 表现派式的人物造型.

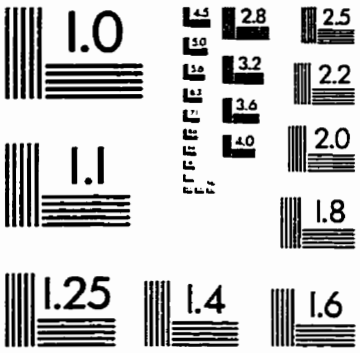
28. 我以这一丛野草, 在明与暗, 生与死, 过去与未来之际, 献于友与仇, 人与兽, 爱者与不爱者之前作证.

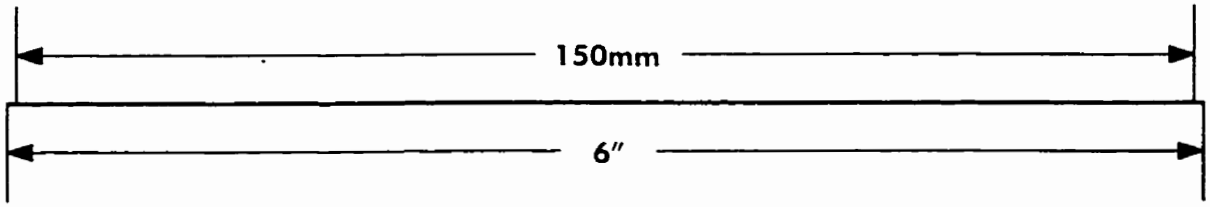
为我自己, 为友与仇, 人与兽, 爱者与不爱者, 我希望这野草的死亡与腐朽, 火速到来.

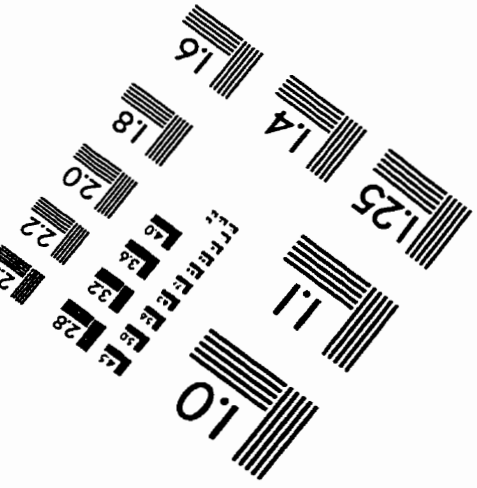
IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)

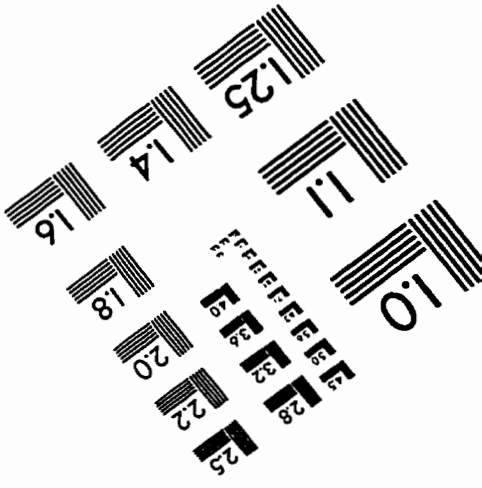












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