

Lu Xun and Russian Literature

A study of the typological affinities between Lu Xun's awakened hero and his Russian precursors*

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I. The Lonely Reformer

'When I was young, I too had many dreams. Most of them came to be forgotten, but I see nothing in this to regret. For although recalling the past may make you happy, it may sometimes also make you lonely, and there is no point in clinging in spirit to lonely bygone days. However, my trouble is that I cannot forget completely, and these stories have resulted from what I have been unable to erase from my memory.¹

Preface to *Nahan* (呐喊), 1922

In order to attain a better understanding of Lu Xun's fictional works,² it is worthwhile delving into the inner world of his early life, and trying to detect how

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1. Lu Xun, "Nahan zixu" (呐喊自序), *Lu Xun Quanjì* (鲁迅全集 Collected Works of Lu Xun), v.1, p.269, 1938. Hereafter this title will be annotated as *QJ*. English translation in *Selected Works of Lu Xun*, Peking, 1956, v.1, p.1, hereafter *SW*. Citations of Lu Xun's works in English, unless otherwise specified, are from *SW*.

2. A considerable number of works on Lu Xun have been published in China in the last few years. Of these, *Lu Xun nianpu* (鲁迅年谱 A chronological study of the life of Lu Xun), v.1, is one of the most meticulously researched. On Lu Xun's fictional works, two full-length books, Wu Zhongjie (吴中杰) and Gao Yun's (高云) *Lun Lu Xun de xiaoshuo chuanguo* (论鲁迅的小说创作, On Lu Xun's fictional works) and Li Xifan's (李希凡) *Nahan Panghuang de sixiang yu yishu* (《呐喊》《彷徨》的思想与艺术 *On the thought and art of Nahan and Panghuang*), were published in Shanghai in 1978 and 1981 respectively. For a recent study of Lu Xun's life and works in English, see William A. Lyell, *Lu Hsun's Vision of Reality*, University of California Press, 1976. For foreign influences on Lu Xun's works, see J. D. Chinnery, "The Influence of Western Literature on Lu Xun's 'Diary of a Madman'", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 23.2:309-322, 1960; and Patrick Hanan, "The Technique of Lu Hsun's Fiction", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 34:53-96, 1974.

past events helped to shape his stories.³ The importance of this intimate, poetic and often melancholic returning to the past in the stories lies not so much in his regret and nostalgia, as in this rediscovery of the microcosm of Chinese society familiar to him, where he could exercise his acumen 'not only in analysing other people, but more ruthlessly analysing my own self to the last fibre all the time'.⁴

As a writer of fiction, Lu Xun's output is relatively small—twenty-five short stories in all; yet his popularity and influence have remained unsurpassed to this day. His first collection *Nahan* (1918-1922), and his second, *Panghuang* (彷徨 Wandering, 1924-1925) were written during one of the loneliest and darkest periods of his life. Reminiscing in 1932 over the period leading up to the Literary Revolution in 1917, he says: 'I had seen the 1911 Revolution, the second revolution, Yuan Shikai's assumption of the imperial title, and Zhang Xun's restoration of the monarchy, and all this had made me rather cynical. I gave up hope and lost heart completely.'⁵ Neither the political autocracy, the economic bankruptcy, nor even the 'cannibalistic morality and tradition' of Chinese society oppressed him as much as the plight of the frustrated reformer. He expressed this succinctly in the preface to *Nahan*: 'I felt that if a man's proposals met with approval, it should encourage him; if they met with opposition, it should make him fight back; but the real tragedy for him was to lift up his voice among the living and meet with no response, neither approval nor opposition, just as if he were left helpless in a boundless desert. So I began to feel lonely.'⁶ The poignancy of his desolation was even more accentuated at the time he wrote *Panghuang*. Having witnessed the dispersal of his fellow reformers who had clustered around the magazine *Xinqingnan* (新青年), Lu Xun recounted the loss of his former 'fellow feeling' which urged him to issue a call 'to encourage those fighters who are galloping in loneliness, so that they do not lose

3. Zhou Xiashou's (周遐壽 pseudonym of Zhou Zuoren 周作人) *Lu Xun xiaoshuo li de renwu* (魯迅小說裏的人物), The Characters in Lu Xun's fictional works), Shanghai, 1954, sheds much light on this aspect of Lu Xun's art. See also Leo Ou-fan Lee's psychohistorical study of Lu Xun's early life, "Genesis of a Writer: Notes on Lu Xun's Educational Experience, 1881-1909," in Merle Goldman ed., *Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era*, Cambridge, Harvard Univ. Press, 1977.

4. Lu Xun, 'Xie zai *Fen* de houmian' (寫在《墳》的後面 An afterword to *Fen*), *QJ*, v.1, p.261. J. Průšek attaches much importance to the predominantly reminiscent and lyrical character of Lu Xun's short stories, referring to this tendency in his short stories as 'the penetration of the epic by the lyric and the breaking up of the traditional epic forms', 'Lu Hsun's "Huai Chiu", a precursor of Modern Chinese literature', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 24:174, 1964.

5. *SW*, v.3, p.172.

6. *As* n.1, p.4.

heart.⁷ China, he observed in 1922, had 'no flowers, no poetry, no light, no warmth, no interests, not even any curiosity.'⁸ Tormented by this gnawing loneliness and lethargy, Lu Xun in his stories depicts with unmitigated sadness the fate befalling many a solitary reformer—an intellectually honest and morally sensitive hero, who, in his groping for a brighter future, is caught in the web of a hostile environment, purged of his ideals, and finally made to compromise his principles. The aim of this article is to study the typology of Lu Xun's awakened intellectual, and compare him with his counterparts in the Russian short stories that he translated into Chinese. There are some striking affinities between them.

In his investigation of Lu Xun's literary relations, mainly with the works of Russian writers, Patrick Hanan demonstrates that in choosing an artistic tradition with which to work, Lu Xun was drawn 'primarily to Gogol, Sienkiewicz and Soszki, with their range of ironic techniques, and only secondarily to Andreyev and literary modernism.'⁹ Hanan argues convincingly that Lu Xun's experimentation with the ironic mode represents something quite original, and the study of literary relations provides little more than a starting point for studying the technique of his fiction. It is indeed a delicate task to study foreign influences on Lu Xun, especially on his later works. Lu Xun himself stated that as his skill matured, he gradually 'escaped from the influence of foreign writers in his later stories.'¹⁰ The emphasis of the present undertaking on the delineation of the typology of Lu Xun's solitary hero, therefore, is not so much on Russian influence on his hero types as such, but rather on seeing how Lu Xun was inspired by, and responded to some themes and conventions which are embedded in Russian literature. Moreover, it is of interest to see what shape literary transformations take in a writer of Lu Xun's stature, and to compare the treatment of some parallel themes and similar typologies by writers of different literary and cultural traditions.

I shall begin with an examination of Lu Xun's literary attitude in the *Nahan* and *Panghuang* period, in relation to his response to Russian literature.

7. Lu Xun recounts his desolation in 'Zixuanji zixu', (自選集自序 Preface to my selected work) 1932, *QJ* v.5, p.49; *SW* v.3, p.173 (1932): '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.'

8. *QJ*, v.2, p.102.

9. Hanan, as n.2, p.75.

10. *QJ*, v.6, p.242.

II. Response to Russian Literature

'Lu Xun's closeness to us lies in his personal characteristics as a humanitarian writer. It is fair to say that humanitarianism in nineteenth century Russian literature originated from "The Overcoat" by Gogol, a short story depicting the Russian "little man." The distinctive quality of Lu Xun's humanitarianism is exemplified in his "A Q zhengzhuan" (阿Q正傳), a story depicting the Chinese "little man." Lu Xun's intimacy to us Russian readers is further evinced in that, like our classical writers, he is a critical realist, that is to say, one who exposes and scourges old social conventions and the forces that oppress people and curtail the individuality of the "little man."¹¹

Fadeyev, 1949.

Any study of Lu Xun's relationship with Russian literature has to start, as Fadeyev's tribute indicates, with the general humanitarian appeal in the Russian convention that captured the attention of Lu Xun, notably the depiction of the underdog and the unheroic, and a concern for literature as an instrument for social reform. Writing in 1920, Lu Xun explained how, failing to find works in the Chinese heritage that would transform the national spirit,¹² he extended his search to foreign literature. He had read many books by 'writers from Russia, Poland, and the Balkan States . . .' and absorbed the 'monitory and insurgent' content of these works.¹³ Russian literature, as Lu Xun pointed out years later, acted as an impetus, and a form of solace to many May Fourth men of letters, who were conscious of being oppressed: 'from it we can see the kindled souls of the oppressed, their sufferings and struggles. Hopes blazed up in our hearts when we read the works of the forties, and sorrow floods our souls when we read those of the sixties . . .'¹⁴

Lu Xun's concern for the plight of the little man and the down-trodden in Russian literature is further evidenced in his translations and testimonies. Zhou Zuoren mentioned that in his student days in Japan (1902-1909) Lu Xun liked the

11. Fajiejefu (法捷耶夫 Fadeyev), 'Guanyu Lu Xun — jinian Lu Xun shishi shisan zhounian' (關於魯迅—紀念魯迅逝世十三週年 On Lu Xun — in commemoration of the thirteenth anniversary of his death), *Wenyi bao* (文藝報 Literary Gazette), 3, 1949. 10, p.4

12. In his 'Lun zhengle yan kan' (論睜了眼看 On looking facts in the face), 1925, Lu Xun refers to literature of the past as 'a literature of concealment and deceit', *QJ*, v.1, p.222; *SW*, v.2, p.191.

13. 'Wo zenmo zuoqi xiaoshuo lai' (我怎麼做起小說來 How I come to write stories), 1933, *QJ* v.5, p.107; *SW*, 3, p.229.

14. 'Zhu Zhong E wenzi zhi jiao' (祝中俄文字之交 The ties between Chinese and Russian literature), 1932, *QJ* v.5, pp.54-55; *SW*, 3, p.181. As Lu Xun did not read Russian, most of his translations of Russian literary works were rendered through German translations which he came across in his student days in Japan. For Lu Xun's early educational experience, see Leo Lee, as n.2.

works of Garshin, Korolenko, and above all, Gogol and Andreyev. In particular, Gogol's 'Diary of a Madman', 'How Ivan Ivanovich Quarrelled with Ivan Nikoforovich', and his comedy 'The Inspector General' impressed Lu Xun most.¹⁵ This is a valuable piece of information. As there is no dearth of studies on Lu Xun's relation with Gogol,¹⁶ suffice it to say here that Gogol's main appeal for Lu Xun lies in his comic vision — his celebrated device of 'tears through laughter', and his ability to satirize. Lu Xun stated as early as 1909 that Gogol 'revitalized his countrymen with his invisible tears.'¹⁷ The appeal of Garshin and Korolenko is understandably their benign attitude towards humanity, and their faith in a better future. Garshin's 'Four Days', which Lu Xun translated in 1909,¹⁸ expresses a detestation of the horrors of war; it depicts with sympathy and psychological insight the suffering of the helpless hero, a wounded soldier who remained four days on the battlefield unable to move, lying next to the putrefying corpse of a dead Turk, his supposed enemy. His *Red Flower*, another story that Lu Xun loved, is about a madman in an asylum who sees it as his mission to root out the evils of society — the prevalence of sin and wickedness, the oppression of the weak by the strong — and to restore his fellows to a state of purity and innocence.¹⁹ This deep concern for the unfortunate has prompted Mirsky to call Garshin 'the "genius" for pity and compassion.'²⁰ Sympathy and faith in human goodness permeated Korolenko's

15. Zhou Zuoren, "Guanyu Lu Xun, zhier" (關於魯迅(之二) On Lu Xun (2)), 1936.12.1. *Yu Zhou Feng* (宇宙風 Cosmic wind), no.30, pp.305-306. Zhou's testimony remains to date the most useful for understanding the early Lu Xun, as the brothers shared practically the same views on literature and worked very closely together until their relations cooled off in 1923.

16. Hanan argued that Lu Xun was primarily drawn to the ironic technique of Gogol. D. W. Fokkema attributed Lu Xun's use of the underdog as the spokesman of truth to the influence of Gogol, see Fokkema, "Lu Xun: The Impact of Russian Literature", in Goldman ed. *Modern Chinese Literature*, pp.89-101. See also my study "Lu Xun yu Eluosi wenxue" (魯迅與俄羅斯文學 Lu Xun and Russian Literature), *Dousou* (抖擻 Rouse up) 22:1-13, 1977.7.

17. *QJ*, v.1, p.57.

18. *QJ*, v.11, pp.215-231. Lu Xun also translated "A Very Short Tale" by Garshin, collected in *Lu Xun yiwen ji* (魯迅譯文集 A Collection of Lu Xun's translated works), v.10, Peking, 1959. This translation first appeared in *Funü zazhi* (婦女雜誌 Women's Magazine), 1922.2. V. D. Garshin (1855-1888), Russian writer of stories. Obsessed by the evil and suffering of the world and consumed by pity, he wrote a few fine stories, often allegorical, before melancholy drove him to suicide. Particularly remarkable are "Chetyre Dyna" (Four Days, 1877) and *Krasnyy tsvetok* (Red Flower, 1883).

19. Zhou Zuoren refers to the similarity between Garshin's 'Red Flower' and Lu Xun's 'Changmingdeng' (長明燈 The lamp that was kept alight) in *Lu Xun xiaoshuo li de renwu*, p.179. Hanan, however maintains that the similarity is confined to a single thematic device, and Lu Xun 'must have learned much from Garshin's formal technique, but the influence is not apparent in this particular story.' As n.2, pp.72-73.

20. Mirsky, D. S., *A History of Russian Literature*, London, 1968 (repr.), p.335.

fundamentally optimistic world. His story 'Makar's Dream', much to Lu Xun's liking,²¹ deals with an old Yakut who is freezing to death and dreams of disputing in Heaven with the Lord about the hardships and injustices of earthly existence. Korolenko holds that man is good by nature, only the evil conditions created by despotism and the brutal selfishness of capitalism have made him what he is — a poor, helpless, absurd, pitiful and irritating creature. Lu Xun's concern for Russian humanitarianism is further embodied in his appreciation of Andreyev's *Red Laugh*, a novel about the horrors of war and the bestiality in men which allows them to wage war,²² and his *The Seven Who Were Hanged*, a novel which protests vehemently against the inhumanity of capital punishment.

While Lu Xun's regard for Russian humanitarianism persisted, it is important to point out that his emphasis in the nineteen-twenties shifted from the Russian underdog to the battered intellectual hero, as his translations of the period testify.²³ Permeating these translations — 'Into the Dark Distance' and 'The Book' by Andreyev, 'The Doctor' and 'Shevyrev' by Artzybashev,²⁴ and Chirikov's 'Provincial

21. See Zhou Zuoren, as note 15. "Makar's Dream" was translated by Zhou and published in *Xin Qingnian* (新青年 New Youth), 1920.10.1. Vladimir G. Korolenko (1853-1921), Russian short story writer. Of mixed Ukrainian and Polish origin he was educated in St. Petersburg and Moscow, and known for his populist sympathies. His stories are memorable for their profound humanity and affectionate humour. Apart from "Son Makara" (Makar's Dream, 1885) and other stories, Korolenko's finest work is his unfinished autobiography *Istoriya moyego sovremennika* (The story of my contemporary, 1909-1922).

22. Leonid N. Andreyev (1871-1919), Russian novelist and dramatist. His first stories were published in 1895, and he became a bestseller with the story *Zhili-byli* (Once there lived, 1901). His fame and talent declined after 1908. Although he sympathized with the 1905 Revolution he rejected that of 1917 as a threat to civilization and died in exile in Finland. Andreyev's works were widely translated in May Fourth China. Of these the most well known is his play about the meaninglessness of life *Zhizn' cheloveka* (The Life of Man, 1906). Lu Xun began, but never completed, a translation of his story *Red Laugh*. See *QJ*, v.7, p.484.

23. That Lu Xun was less interested in the intellectual predicament in his student days in Japan could be deduced from his relative lack of interest in Turgenev, whose work mainly deals with the superfluous intellectual hero. According to Zhou Zuoren, Lu Xun then 'valued Turgenev's works, but had no intention of translating them,' as n.15, p.305.

24. Mikhail Artzybashev (1878-1927) was generally regarded as a decadent writer. His works, which succeeded in capturing the atmosphere of decay and social reaction of his time, were immensely popular with the educated Russians in the years preceding the Russian Revolution. Among his works, *Sanin* (1907), *Tales of the Revolution* and *At the Brink* (1911-1912) caught the imagination of such major Chinese writers as Lu Xun, Mao Dun, Ba Jin, Zheng Zhenduo and others. For Artzybashev's impact on Chinese sensibilities, especially his impact on Ba Jin, see my study "Ba Jin and Russian Literature", *Chinese Literature, Essays, Articles, Reviews*, 3.1:67-92, 1981.1.



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Town²⁵ — is the theme of the frustrated intellectual hero, who finds himself misunderstood, tormented, isolated and even hounded to death in his struggle to reform society.

In the epilogue to his translation of Andreyev's 'Into the Dark Distance', Lu Xun declared that in many of Andreyev's short stories and plays is depicted 'the boredom and gloom of the Russians towards the end of the nineteenth century.'²⁶ This could be taken to apply as much to the Russian works he translated, as to Andreyev's works in particular. All the stories of Andreyev that Lu Xun rendered into Chinese interestingly dwell on the theme of the failure to communicate, and all have intellectuals as their protagonists. Though a lapse of twelve years divides Lu Xun's first translations of 'The Lie' and 'The Silence' (1909), and 'Into the Dark Distance' and 'The Book' (1921),²⁷ the close proximity of the theme of these stories underlines Lu Xun's concern for the intellectual typology in Andreyev's work.²⁸ 'Silence' delineates the punishment of the penitent priest, whose pride prevents him from communicating with his daughter, and subsequently culminates in her suicide. 'Into the Dark Distance' depicts a family whose son, Nikolai, presumably rebelling against the restricted life of the older generation, leaves home mysteriously for some other existence. His unexplained return home seven years later brings no joy to the family and they are oppressed by his presence. The alienated existence of the awakened intellectual, felt as a threat by the secure conventional world, is brought to the fore when Nikolai returns at the end of the story to 'the dark menacing distance from which he comes.' Human deception is the theme of 'The Lie', expressed in the student's inability to tell whether the girl he loves is lying when she says she loves him. The student kills the girl, only to realize that he has 'immortalized the lie.' The lie symbolizes grief at a basic lack of understanding and of confidence between people. 'The Book' portrays the tragic fate of a dying writer, who consumes all his energy in the completion of his novel 'For the Unfortunate.' All he

25. *QJ*, v.11, pp.277-301. Little is known of Eugene Chirikov (1864-1937), except that he was of noble descent, and the author of social plays and light, sentimental novels about youth. He emigrated after 1917 and died in exile in Prague. The story "Shenghui" (省會) has no English translation. Lu Xun presumably rendered it from the German.

26. *QJ*, v.11, p.259. This is not a translation of Andreyev's 'In Fog', as Hanan mistakenly stated in his study.

27. All these translations are contained in v.11 of *QJ*.

28. In his study of Andreyev, James Woodward summed up succinctly Andreyev's art and his age: "The isolation and rootlessness of the intellectual in contemporary society, . . . the inevitable bankruptcy of an assertive individualistic philosophy of life, the irreconcilability of abstract ideals and mundane reality, the relation of man to his neighbour and to the universe as a whole — these are the problems to which his thoughts were constantly directed . . .," *Leonid Andreyev, a study*, Oxford, 1969, p.278. Such were also the problems to which Lu Xun's thoughts were constantly directed, hence his appreciation of Andreyev's works,

receives in return is the protest of the printing workers, the cynicism of the supposed 'unfortunates' whom he is championing. Lu Xun was deeply struck by the stark reality and cynicism of the story, commenting that it is 'seemingly as funny as the gloomy colour of lead.'²⁹

The plight of the solitary reformer and his lack of communication with a hostile world figures even more explicitly in Artzybashev's 'The Doctor' and 'Shevyrev', both translated by Lu Xun in 1921. 'The Doctor' describes the Czar's pogrom of the Jews at the turn of the century. Caught up in the conflict between duty and hate — should he cure the merciless commissioner of police or not? — scenes of the atrocities for which the Commissioner was responsible flare up in the doctor's mind, and he gallantly defies the police, risking his own life. Lu Xun commented: 'this story lucidly portrays (the author's) resistance to the principle of non-resistance, and the conflicts between love and hate. The author rejects the principle of non-resistance because there cannot be no hate in human nature, and this hate is rooted in a greater love.'³⁰ The defiance of the principle of non-resistance is taken to an extreme by Shevyrev in a story of the same title. Shevyrev's life can be epitomized by resistance — from resisting despotism and reforming society, to taking revenge on human society in his utter disillusionment. Lu Xun's response to the story is worth noting. While admiring Shevyrev's endeavour 'to die for the common cause', and sympathizing with his plight in being practically persecuted to death, Lu Xun took issue with the nihilistic revenge of Shevyrev, who 'took revenge on everybody, destroyed everything.'³¹

Chirikov's 'Provincial Town' differs from the blandness of Artzybashev's stories, and lacks the chilliness of Andreyev's tone. The theme of the solitary revolutionary is filtered through the lyrical reminiscences of the I-hero, who returns to his native place after many years of absence. His sense of superfluousness is highlighted by his realization that the good old world is lost, while the present situation is still oppressive. Upon seeing an old acquaintance selling out his former principles, and feeling his inability to render any help, the I-hero leaves amidst a sense of uncertainty and helplessness.

It could be safely deduced at this juncture, that given their thematic consistency, coupled with Lu Xun's own testimony, the appeal these works held for him was principally thematic — the typology of the intellectual hero in his various manifesta-

29. *QJ*, v.11, p.269. The irony of this remark can be understood in the light of the fact that Lu Xun's major preoccupation of the time was the torment of the awakened reformer by the ignorant and unsympathetic masses.

30. *QJ*, v.11, p.345.

31. *QJ* (1961), v.3, p.263. See also his essay on 'Nora leaving home', *QJ*, v.1, pp.150-151.

tions. It is revealing, and indeed remarkable to see that in Lu Xun's own stories of this period, he deals with a strikingly similar phenomenon — the plight of the awakened intellectual. Certain thematic and typological parallels can be discovered between his own works and those of his Russian precursors.

III. The Awakened Intellectual

'Passer-by: ". . . I must go on. If I go back, there's 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. I am not going back.'" ³²

'Guoke' (過客), 1925, in *Yecao* (野草)

And forward trudges the passer-by, with his feet gashed and spirit drained, knowing neither repose nor destination.

Such is the fate awaiting Lu Xun's awakened intellectual hero. Having appointed himself to work for the betterment of his fellows, his hero has no other option but to soldier on, burdened with his never-ending suffering, or to relapse into passivity.

Before actually delineating the typology of Lu Xun's awakened intellectual, let us examine the implications of his talk at the Peking Women's Normal College on December 26, 1923, which is a revealing guide to his fiction of the period. This talk, entitled 'Nala zouhou zenyang' (娜拉走後怎樣 What happened to Nora after she left home?) takes over where Ibsen leaves off in *A Doll's House*. Assuming that Nora has not been starved to death, Lu Xun conceives that only two alternatives lie ahead of her: to go to the bad or return to her husband. Lu Xun compares Nora's fate to that of a caged bird: 'Of course there is no freedom in the cage, but if it leaves the cage there are hawks, cats, and other hazards outside; while if imprisonment has atrophied its wings, or if it has forgotten how to fly, there certainly is nowhere it can go.'³³ On this sombre note, Lu Xun broaches his pathetic theme that the most painful thing in life is to wake up from a dream and find no way out. For Lu Xun, 'dreamers' are fortunate people. If no way out can be seen, the important thing is not to awaken the sleepers.'³⁴ But for those awakened, like Nora and her kind, it is hard to return to the dream world. They are doomed to suffer,

³². *Yecao*, *QJ*, v.1, p.497, English translation, *Wild Grass*, Peking, 1974, p.32.

³³. *QJ*, v.1, p.145, English translation in *Silent China, Selected Works of Lu Xun*, edited and translated by Gladys Yang, Oxford, 1973, p.149.

³⁴. *Ibid.* Lu Xun confided to Xu Guangping (許廣平) in March 23, 1925, his pessimism upon seeing people awakening from their dreams: 'In a word, once men got out of their paralysed state, they would only add to their suffering and be rendered speechless. "Hopes for the future" is but a way of consoling or even deceiving oneself.' *Liangdishu* (兩地書 Correspondences), *QJ*, v.7, p.42.



whipped and lashed along the path to their defective vision of the future, 'made more sensitive to the intensity of their misery, (they) are awakened in spirit to see their own putrid corpses.'³⁵ It is precisely these frustrations and this dejectedness of the awakened intellectual in his chosen path that Lu Xun typifies in some of the most pathetic stories of this period.

'Toufa de gushi' (頭髮的故事 Story of the hair) written in 1920 provides an appropriate introduction to the consideration of Lu Xun's awakened intellectuals. As the first story of its kind, it contains all the rudiments that are to be re-echoed in Lu Xun's more mature typologies. A story cast in the form of a reminiscence, 'Toufa de gushi' is topic-centred — with very few changes it could be cast as an essay. The I-narrator, who listens nonchalantly to his friend N's memories of the 1911 Revolution and its aftermath, is scarcely more than a listening ear (even so, he is already bored, like the later models). As an early zealot for social reform, N suffered untold miseries after he cut off his queue when he went abroad to study — 'laughter and taunts followed me wherever I went.' His fellow comrades, however, suffered even more intensely:

'. . . some young men, after years of toil and struggle, were quietly dispatched with bullets; others who had escaped the first blow were imprisoned and thrown into the torture chamber for months; some with their lofty ideals simply disappeared without trace . . . scorn, vilification, persecution and betrayal were their lot when they lived; now their tombs, neglected and forgotten, are gradually being levelled by time . . .'³⁶

As for N, lacking the gallantry and endurance of his fellow revolutionaries, he opts for forgetfulness and oblivion, and retreats into a solitary existence. This explains his cynicism, believing it would only cause 'senseless suffering' when the so-called visionaries advocated bobbed hair for women in 1920. For him, the real 'blessing is to forget' — both the past and the present.

Can N really find 'blessing' in 'forgetting'? We are not told. What we know is that his Nietzsche-like remark towards the end of the story: 'You people have no poison fangs in your mouths; why must you put the label "poisonous vipers" on your foreheads to invite destruction by the beggar snake-catchers'³⁷ is complicated by a feeling of helplessness. Only a few years before, he was one of those who labelled himself a 'poisonous viper.' While N's typology remains sketchy, his helplessness and downward slide represent the prevailing path of Lu Xun's awakened intellectuals in *Panghuang* — the dejected hero Lü Weifu (呂緯甫), the penitent hero Juansheng (涓生), and the renegade hero Wei Lienshu (魏連陞).

35. *Ibid.* p.150. Lu Xun has borrowed these two lines from Artzybashev's 'Shevyrev', a point I will go into later in the article.

36. *QJ*, v.1, p.326. 'The Story of Hair', trans. Chi-chen Wang, in *Ah Q and Others, Selected Stories of Lusin*, New York, 1941, p.60. Cited here with minor adaptations.

37. *Ibid.* p.64.

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A) The Dejected Hero — Lü Weifu in 'Zai Jiulou Shang'
(在酒樓上 in the Wineshop)

'Sometimes I think: "If my old friends were to see me now, probably they would no longer acknowledge me as a friend. But this is what I am like now."' (in *Selected Works*, p.181)

Lü Weifu.

The above remark, wrung from the once enthusiastic and sentimental Lü Weifu, reveals a woeful situation. The story (1924) takes the shape of the I-narrator's reminiscence of his encounter with his old friend Lü Weifu in the town of S, near his native place, where both of them had taught. The futility of the lives of both characters is underlined in the course of their gloomy and desultory conversation.

In his younger days, Lü Weifu was full of noble sentiments; he sought to define his mission in life as the betterment of his country. In line with many iconoclastic young men of his time, (the I-narrator is one of them), he scathingly attacked superstition, believing this to be one of the major obstacles to the country's progress. As he reminisces:

'... I still remember the time when we went together to the Tutelary God's Temple to pull off the images' beards, how all day long we used to discuss methods of revolutionizing China until we even came to blows.' (pp.180-181)

His degeneration since those 'heroic' days is shown by his stony stare and pallid hue, and his slow movements, in stark contrast to his 'piercing looks' and 'vigorous gestures' of the past. To the I-narrator, he has become 'thinner and weaker. He looked very quiet, or perhaps dispirited, and his eyes beneath their thick black brows had lost their alertness.' (p.177) The mystery of his sluggishness is unveiled when he discloses that he had been doing 'simple futile work, equivalent to doing nothing at all' (*ibid.*) in these intervening years. Even his return this time, as he reveals to the I-hero, is 'for something quite futile' — to move the grave of his young brother, and at the same time, to send some artificial flowers to A Shun, the daughter of his former neighbour. Why should these tasks be futile? We have to approach them in the light of Lü Weifu's past.

First, his present act of moving the grave of his young brother would undoubtedly have been treated with derision by his former iconoclastic self, as something perpetuating superstition. The 'futility' of the whole affair is heightened, when finding that the 'bedding, clothes, skeleton all had gone . . . and not even a trace of hair remained', (pp.179-180) Lü still spread out the bedding, wrapped up in cotton some of the clay where the body of his young brother had been, and buried it in a new coffin beside the grave of his father. In doing so, he reckons that he can 'deceive

his (my) mother and set her mind at rest.' (p.180) This incident poignantly exposes how much has been undone by someone who once fervently championed the destruction of idols, and the destruction of the family. As Lü Weifu sighs in dismay, revealing his helplessness: 'now I am like this, willing to let things slide and to compromise.' (p.181)

The futility of his second task is to be interpreted in a different light. It lies not in the act of presenting artificial flowers to A Shun (阿順), which is perfectly honourable, but in the effect of that act which torments him. Not knowing that A Shun is already dead, Lü arrives with goodwill and enthusiasm, only to be greeted as an 'unwelcome being.' No sooner did A Shun's younger sister A Zhao (阿昭) see him than 'she fled as if I were a wolf or some monster' (p.184), and A Shun's brother 'stared at me wide eyed and asked me what I wanted her for, moreover he seemed very fierce, as if he wanted to attack me.' (*ibid.*) The reaction of Lü Weifu — his immediate recoiling into himself, sinking into deep despondency — is striking: 'hesitantly I walked away. Nowadays I just let things slide . . . you have no idea how much more afraid I am of calling on people than I used to be. Because I know very well how unwelcome I am. I have even come to dislike myself, and knowing this, why should I inflict myself on others.' (*ibid.*) The present 'self' that he dislikes is in sombre contrast to his past self. He recounted that, sensitive to the feeling of A Shun, he shoved down the bowl of buck-wheat prepared by her even though he knew indigestion would cause him to have nightmares. Full of goodwill, he still 'wished her a lifetime of happiness, and hoped the world would change for the better for her sake' (p.183). Alas, he comes to recognise that such noble feelings 'were only traces of my dreams of old days.' (*ibid.*)

The unmitigated sense of remorse, the realization of his own unworthiness, is blatantly disclosed in his revelation that he is now teaching the Confucian classics. The following conversation is worth quoting in full:

' . . . when I have muddled through new year I shall go back to teaching the Confucian classics as before.'

'Are you teaching that?' I asked in astonishment.

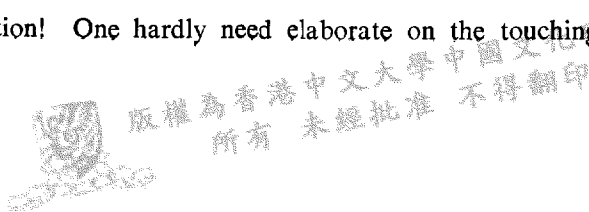
'Of course. Did you think I was teaching English? First I had two pupils, one studying the *Book of Songs*, the other *Mencius*. Recently I have got another, a girl, who is studying the *Canons for Girls*. I don't even teach mathematics, not that I wouldn't teach it, but they don't want it taught.'

'I could really never have guessed that you would be teaching such books.'

'Their father wants them to study these. I'm an outsider, so it's all the same to me. Who cares about such futile affairs anyway. There's no need to take them seriously.'

(p.186)

A pathetic revelation! One hardly need elaborate on the touching ridiculousness of



the situation, where a former campaigner against the 'cannibalistic traditions' is teaching the *Nüerjing* 女兒經 (*Canons for Girls*), a work enshrining the feudal standard of behaviour for girls and the virtues they should cultivate.

By the piquant contrasts of Lü Weifu's past with his present — his former revolutionary ideals and his present retrogression, his past sensitivity and his present lethargy, his bygone enthusiasm and his present compromise — Lu Xun depicts the dejectedness of Lü Weifu with understanding and sympathy. Lü Weifu may have betrayed the world-weariness that many take on with the years, but his fate is much more pathetic than that. His is the tragedy which befalls many an awakened intellectual, the tragedy of someone that Lu Xun observed with bitterness in the 'Nala' essay. After he has woken from the dream world, and taken his first stride forward, Lü has reached a point of no return. In seeking his refuge from the disappointment of life in daydreams and oblivion, deep down in his heart Lü is plagued by an intense desolation. His solitary existence synchronises his dual sense of remorse and helplessness.

B) The Penitent Hero — Juansheng in 'Shangshi'

(傷逝 Regrets for the past)

'I want, if I can, to describe my remorse and grief for Zijun's sake as well as for my own . . . ' (p.238)

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所有 未經批准 不得翻印 — Juansheng

Different from his other stories, 'Shangshi' (1925) has a special quality in its being Lu Xun's attempt to explore imaginatively the problem posed in the 'Nala' essay — more of a scenario than a story. It begins with the hero Juansheng's remorse for the death of his former lover Zijun. The hero then reverts in flashback to their courtship, cohabitation, and eventual parting. As an awakened intellectual of the May Fourth period, Juansheng manages to persuade the innocent Zijun to share his belief in individualism and freedom. Inspired by him, she breaks with her family and sets up house with him with unexampled firmness of principle. Their bold action, however, meets with the censure of society, and Juansheng loses his job as a result. With their worsening financial situation, their estrangement, which had already begun, grew greater. Dissatisfied with her growing domestication, and the fading of her fearlessness, Juansheng observes after the news of his dismissal from his job has broken: 'I had never imagined a trifle like this would cause such a striking change in someone so firm and fearless as Zijun,' (p.247) and he begins to think that she has forgotten 'all she had ever learned.' (p.248) As their relationship cools, the hero holds that Zijun 'ought to make a clean break,' (p.253) believing

that she is holding him back. The final break comes after he reveals that he no longer loves her, and she eventually returns to face the sternness of her father. The hero repents his heartless action. His penitence reaches its climax with the news of her death. In his solitariness, he opts out of facing the reality of his experience and retreats into forgetfulness, prepared to accept illusions he knows to be false.

Contrary to the assertion that Juansheng is a character of courage and stamina, and that his final recognition heralds a new life,³⁸ I believe that he is essentially a self-centred person, and his final decision is no more meaningful or 'heroic' than that of Lü Weifu before him.³⁹ Certain contradictory traits pervade his character. He is idealistic yet self-centred, inspiring yet unsympathetic, intellectual yet impractical, strong-willed yet feeble-minded. His discourses on the tyranny of home life, the need to break with tradition, and the equality of men and women, inspiring as they are, do not offer practical solutions. Zijun's fearless break with her family: 'I am my own mistress. None of them has any right to interfere with me' (p.240) is largely a response to his call. Like a young flower that requires sunshine and watering, her strivings need to be buttressed by the hero's care, understanding, and above all, love. But this is what seems to be lacking. The fact that her house-keeping 'left her no time even to chat, much less to read or go out for walks' (p.244) may indeed be a cause for concern, but on the other hand, a relationship built on visionary dreams and on the intellect, without any practical sense of understanding and sympathy, is little more than a house built on sand. While picking on Zijun's worrying over trifles, the hero's own impatience, his over-reaction to the care she devotes to the household animals, reveal exactly how persistent trivialities are. He pillories her for lacking the understanding that 'the first thing in life is to make a living, that to do this people must advance hand in hand, or go forward singly . . .' (p.253) but this begs the question whether he has endeavoured, with due care and understanding, to forge ahead with his lover? What dominates him once their relationship has gone sour is his own personal well-being, 'he must soar anew in the

38. For example, Xu Qingwen (許欽文) in *Panghuang fenxi* (彷徨分析 *An Analysis of Wandering*), Peking, 1953, simply states that Lu Xun put much hope on the character of Juansheng. His most admirable quality lies in his vigour and persistence in striving on irrespective of the many obstacles (p.84). Wang Xiyen (王西彥) in *Lun A Q he tade beiju* (論阿Q和他的悲劇 *On Ah Q and his tragedy*), Shanghai, 1957, p.88, goes a step further and attempts an explanation of the paradoxical ending of the story. He holds that Juansheng's path towards 'falsehood' and 'oblivion' is meant to be ironical. The sentimentalism and sorrow pervading the story is to him an expression of the author's agitation and anger, rather than pessimism and desperation. I find both explanations far-fetched.

39. Though in a recent article, Li Xifan (see n.2, p.200-201) sees Juansheng as a self-centred intellectual, his interpretation of the ending of the story, that Juansheng has awakened from his dream and strode forward onto his new path, left unexplained the hero's reference to 'falsehood' and 'oblivion'.

wide sky before it was too late, while he can still flap his wings.' (p.248) Zijun, who was a source of strength in his life, has become, in the course of just a few months, a yoke too burdensome for him to bear: 'all she could do was cling to someone else's clothing, making it difficult for even a fighter to struggle, and thus bring ruin to both.' (p.253) Moreover, in his cold indignation, thoughts of her death keep coming into his mind, though he immediately reproaches himself whenever such thoughts occur. His insensitivity and egoism are patently manifested when he lays bare the facts to Zijun:

'... you asked me to tell the truth. Yes, we shouldn't be hypocritical. Well, to tell the truth — it's because I don't love you anymore! Actually, this makes it better for you, because it'll be easier for you to work without any regret...' (p.254)

No wonder that Zijun is hurt, is heart-broken, whereas the hero, finding the sight of Zijun's suffering unbearable, instantly hurries off, and the thought of her death returns.

Only after Zijun's departure, when he is oppressed by a sense of loneliness, does the hero begin to see, for the first time in the story, her view of things. Her ashen face and childlike eyes haunt him, together with the adamant sternness of her father, the unsympathetic gaze of bystanders, and the thought that at the end there will not even be a tombstone for her grave. The recognition of his selfishness and heartlessness fills him with a remorse which is intensified when the news of Zijun's death reaches him. He repents his own follies and pride, and admits that he is but 'a weakling . . . deserved to be cast out by the strong, no matter whether they were truthful or hypocritical'. (p.258) Silence and emptiness torment him:

'All around was a great void, quiet as death. I seemed to see the darkness before the eyes of every single person who died unloved, and hear all the bitter and despairing cries of their struggle.

I was waiting for something new, something nameless and unexpected. But day after day passed in the same deadly quiet.' (p.259)

There seems to be no individual regeneration open to the penitent hero, who is resigned to advancing silently, led along towards 'oblivion and falsehood.' (p.261)

One sees from the above that Juansheng is essentially a self-centred intellectual. His self-centredness makes him impervious to the hardships and aspirations of Zijun, who yearns for a tender and loving family life after she has broken away from the stringent and cold family of her father. This constitutes an important reason for the breakdown of their relationship. On a deeper level, this is a conflict between feeling and intellect, as is pointed out by Lyell.⁴⁰ Juansheng's intellectual pride

40. As n.2, p.208.

induces him to seek what he thinks is intellectually honest and satisfying. From this springs his disappointment at Zijun's increasing domesticity, symbolizing, to the intellectual hero, that she has 'forgotten what she has learnt.' Ideals, visions of the future, the honouring of one's ego and one's principles overshadow his craving for care, tenderness and sympathy. For intellect, he sacrifices sensitivity, his heart for his head. Zijun's romantic notion of a happy home life is shattered by his intellectual scrutiny. From being a willing captive to his intellectual discourses, she has become the victim of his pride and integrity, operating under the cloak of truthfulness.

Where does this intellectual integrity lead him? Nowhere. In a wholly philistine and hostile society, he is doomed to fail. His refusal to compromise precipitates his personal tragedy, and occasions the death of Zijun. His remorse has a wider implication than just regret for her passing away. The bell tolls also for him, for the burial of his principles, something he values more than he values his lover. It is fair to say that for all his insensitivity and lack of understanding, Juansheng's tenacity of purpose deserves a certain admiration. He refuses to become disillusioned when his letter of dismissal arrives, but strives for some other means of getting a living — putting an advertisement in a newspaper, doing translations meanwhile, anything to keep going. However, in his remorse, we see that all this steadfastness and singlemindedness is exchanged for emptiness. For all his honesty and aspirations, he sees hypocrisy and humbug prosper. In forcing Zijun to her destination he has stifled an innocent striving soul, only to witness the menacing forces of authority acting mockingly and openly before him. Faced with all this, he flounders, he compromises. In place of individualism, he chooses oblivion, instead of honesty, falsehood. In his remorse is therefore intricately interwoven the loss of his beloved, of his ideals, and above all, of his own self. One almost sees him joining forces with Lü Weifu and N in sticking to his solitary path, and eating his heart out in perpetual lethargy and remorse. In the tragic fate of this couple, one is reminded of Lu Xun's remark about the awakened intellectuals, that they are 'awakened in spirit to see their own putrid corpses!'

C) The Renegade Hero — Wei Lienshu in 'Guduzhe' (孤獨者 the Misanthrope)

'Perhaps you would like to know what has happened to me. To put it simply: I have failed. I thought I had failed before, but I was wrong then; now, however, I am really a failure . . . ' (p.228)

Wei Lienshu.

If the typologies of both Lü Weifu and Juansheng are characterized by their



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lapse into oblivion, that of Wei Lienshu is coloured by his ugly course towards revenge.

'Guduzhe' (1925) is the narrator's reminiscence of his friendship with Wei Lienshu, which begins and ends with a funeral. He recounts in a disconnected way the life and death of this 'strange' hero — the wolflike howl at his grandmother's funeral, the attack on him by conservative circles on account of his liberal ideas, his dismissal from his job, his abject poverty, his final sell-out to become an adviser to General Du, and the disturbing sight of his corpse.

The typology of Wei Lienshu is unmistakably one of the most pathetic among Lu Xun's intellectual heroes. His angular face, his dishevelled hair, dark eyebrows and moustache together with his gleaming eyes, all conjure up the picture of a sick and melancholic young man. His 'strangeness' is borne out by his inconsistencies — as a zoology graduate, he teaches history in school; while treating others in a cavalier fashion, he likes to concern himself with their affairs; and while maintaining that the family system should be abolished, he remits his salary to his grandmother the same day he draws it.

His habitual reserve and surface coldness conceal an ardent heart. A man generous in nature, he sympathizes with the downtrodden, and never turns away a 'lame dog.' A person of 'remarkable ideas', he eloquently discourses on the nature of society and social reforms.

Two incidents show his nobility of mind. The wolflike howl during his grandmother's funeral ('tears filled his eyes, then he burst into a long wail like a wounded wolf howling in the wilderness at the dead of night, anger and sorrow mingled with his agony'), (p.225) highlights not only his indignation at the hypocrisies of those around him, not only his intense feeling for the passing away of his grandmother who tasted the bitterness of the loneliness she created for herself, but above all, epitomises his agony that 'there were many people like that. I wanted to weep for them . . .' (p.226)

This sorrow at his powerlessness to champion the cause of the oppressed is relieved temporarily by his tenderness towards the children of his landlord. The mere sight of them would 'dispel Wei's (his) customary coldness.' (p.218) Believing that 'children are always good. They are so innocent . . . children have none of the faults of grown ups. If they turn out badly later . . . it is because they have been moulded by their environment . . . I think China's only hope lies in this,' (*ibid.*) he rankles at the narrator's insinuation that 'without the root of evil how could they bear evil fruit.' (*ibid.*) One can therefore readily envisage his mortification when he recounts later that a mere toddler he once met pointed at him with a reed, and shouted 'kill.'

For a person of Wei's temperament and situation, his break with society is only

a matter of time. As the only student to leave his native village to study, he has always been a 'freak' to his fellow villagers. His liberal ideas further put him in deep water. The fact that the incident of his grandmother's funeral, though he abided by the three regulations stipulated by the elders, is still thought 'freakish', pinpoints the narrow-mindedness and prudishness of the conservative villagers, and above all, the near impossible situation of the pioneers for reform.

His liberal ideas about society and the family continue to alienate him from his colleagues. The articles he has written, and his daring arguments, give rise to rumours about him. Anonymous attacks in the 'less reputable papers' culminate in his dismissal from his teaching post. His malady is further reinforced by the desertion of his landlord's children, that they 'don't even want to eat anything I give them.' (p.223) In this dry mockery is cloaked his loss of hope, not only for these children but for the future of the country in general. However, he still soldiers on with great tenacity. As he writes to the I-narrator:

'Would there be anything for me there? Even copying work at twenty to thirty dollars a month, would do, I . . .' I was surprised. I had not thought he would consider anything so low, and did not know how to answer.
'I . . . I have to live a little longer . . .' (p.227)

'What for?' is the immediate reaction of the narrator, as much as it is ours. Having lost out on all counts, and with his hope for the future vanquished, what is the purpose of such persistence?

Wei himself provides the answer, and, moreover, reasons for his dramatic change, in his pathetic letter to the narrator. According to him, it is not his own self, but his principles that sustain him through his days of decline, that he is 'willing to beg for the cause, to go cold and hungry for it, to be lonely for it, to suffer hardship for it.' (p.229) With the death of this 'other self', which is 'trapped and killed by the enemy,' (*ibid.*) he finds no further cause to live for. Thereupon he decided 'to live on (simply) to spite those who wish me dead, for at least there is no one left who wants me to live decently, and so no one can be hurt.' (*ibid.*) However, his revenge takes a very different form from the customary bombing and blood-letting of others. He goes against his former principles, and with morbid delight, mocks the old self he had sacrificed to the will to survive:

'What a joy. Wonderful. I am now doing what I formerly detested and opposed. I am now giving up all I formerly believed in and upheld. I have already failed — but I have won.' (*ibid.*)

What has he won? — new guests, new ways of bribing and flattering, new kowtows

but also a new haughtiness and contempt, a new sleeplessness and vomiting of blood. By becoming a wilful agent of the insidious power of the established order, Wei² is in fact tormenting himself through his 'delights', destroying himself in his conquests.

His growing dejection is most acutely manifested in the retribution he exacts from the landlord's children. While he still buys them presents, he would 'make them bark like dogs and make a thumping kowtow.' (p.235) What a contrast to the former Wei Lienshu who became so worried when one of these children was said to have measles that his already dark face took on an even darker hue!

This strange hero who was prepared to die to carry out his revenge, makes his final gesture in death. As the narrator observes, 'in his awakened costume he lay placidly, with closed mouth and eyes, there seemed to be an ironical smile on his lips, mocking the ridiculous corpse.' (p.237)

One need hardly explain that Wei Lienshu personifies many characteristics of the awakened May Fourth intellectuals — his liberal ideals, his uncompromising attitude, his isolation, and even his helplessness. His blind faith and subsequent humiliating of the children is not only symptomatic of his whole change of behaviour, but also reflects his yearnings for, and ultimate abandonment of his hopes for the future of his country.

In a word, in this part three of the 'trilogy of the awakened intellectual', one sees clearly that Wei is drinking hemlock to his death, through his active cooperation with the devil. His fate however, is not much different from that of the 'opium addicts' Lü Weifu and Juansheng in the twilight world of dreams. The point where these destinies finally meet and merge is, sadly, extinction in its different guises.

D) The Inadequate I-Narrator

'... Whether spirits exist or not I do not know; but in the present world when a meaningless existence ends, so that someone whom others are tired of seeing is no longer seen, it is just as well, both for the individual concerned and for others.' I listened quietly to see if I could hear the snow falling outside the window, still pursuing this train of thought, until gradually I felt less ill at ease. (p.157)

— The I-narrator, 'Zhufu' (1924).

One interesting characteristic of some of Lu Xun's short stories is the emergence of the inadequate I-narrator, notably in those that deal with an intellectual predicament, such as 'Yijian xiaoshi' (一件小事 A small incident), 'Guxiang' (故鄉 My old home), 'Zai jiulou shang', 'Zhufu' and 'Guduzhe'. In these stories, the narrator not only narrates, observes, or is involved in the action, but in so doing reveals his own

inadequacy, both intellectually and morally.⁴¹ As Hanan observes of the narrators of 'Shangshi' and 'Zhufu', 'both narrators are slightly false, or at least inadequate personalities', who 'show us pathetic figures, and the pathos (of the stories) is heightened by the obliqueness of their presentation.'⁴² As Hanan's study deals mainly with the technical side of Lu Xun's fiction. I shall study these intellectual I-narrators in typological terms. Aspects of the narrator in Lu Xun's fiction have also been dealt with in Lyell's study;⁴³ I shall try to be brief here.

'Yijian xiaoshi' (1920) highlights the moral as well as intellectual inadequacy of the I-narrator. Simple yet touching, the story depicts an act of kindness on the part of the rickshaw man, in sharp contrast to the lack of sensitivity of the narrator. An old woman complains that she has nearly been hit by the rickshaw. The rickshaw man immediately hurries her off to a nearby police station, ignoring the I-narrator's demand to move on. This 'trifling' incident, as the title in Chinese signifies, provokes the intellectual, and above all, the moral scruples of the narrator:

'Suddenly I had a strange feeling. His dusty, retreating figure seemed larger at that instant. Indeed, the further he walked the larger he loomed, until I had to look up to him. At the same time he seemed gradually to be exerting a pressure on me, which threatened to overpower the small self under my furled gown. (p.50)

The compassion of the rickshaw man makes him aware of his own moral inadequacies. As Lyell observes, 'against this gloomy background of disenchantment with the new order (ie. the 1911 Revolution and its aftermath), the ray of hope embodied in the rickshaw man's simple act of kindness and responsibility shines forth with double intensity and awakens the narrator to the possibility of a new mode of being and (were everyone to act in the same fashion) the possibility of constructing a different society.'⁴⁴ The narrator reminisces that in these dark years, he has forgotten what he was taught in the way of intellectual pursuits, but the kindness of the rickshaw man keeps coming back, 'teaching me shame, urging me to reform, and giving me fresh courage and hope.' (p.51)

This idea of the lack of understanding between the intellectual wearing the

41. I find it difficult to agree with Ding Ergang's (丁爾綱) assertion that, taken as a whole, the 'I-narrator' in Lu Xun's fiction is a revolutionary intellectual with an unmistakable sympathy towards the working people, and he is forever fighting the dark forces of society. See his article, 'Lu Xun sixiang fazhan de xianming guiji — lun Lu Xun xiaoshuo zhong "wo" de yishu xingxiang' 魯迅思想發展的鮮明軌跡——論魯迅小說中'我'的藝術形象 The clear pattern of the development of Lu Xun's thought — on the typology of the I-narrator in Lu Xun's fiction." *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* (中國現代文學研究叢刊 Modern Chinese literature study series), 1980.1, p.158.

42. As n.2, p.87.

43. As n.2, pp.263-288.

44. *Ibid.*, p.80.

'furlined gown' and his fellow men by virtue of his intellect and class continues to oppress Lu Xun. In 'Guxiang' (1921), the sense of inadequacy of the I-narrator is precipitated by his encounter with his childhood friend Runtu after twenty years of separation. He laments how this once lively and daring boy, whose mind was 'a treasure-house of (such) strange lore(s)' (p.67) has aged prematurely. He is baffled when the latter calls him 'Master' — immediately 'a shiver ran through me, for I knew then what a lamentably thick wall had grown up between us.' (p.71) This thick wall is interposed by the inability to renew old friendships, and in this case also a conflict of classes. Furthermore, an inability to keep old dreams intact enhances the I-narrator's awareness of his precariousness. Even his hope for the future is overshadowed by gloom. Hoping that their children will one day demolish this barrier, he is suddenly struck by the thought that 'the access of hope made me suddenly afraid', that it may just be 'an idol I had created for myself.' (p.75)

Disenchanted as they are, it is important to see the essential difference between the I-narrator in *Nahan* and those in *Panghuang*. It is true, as Lyell observes, that the narrators in 'Yijian xiaoshi', 'Guxiang' and 'Toufa de gushi', 'have the courage to keep on, though from a purely intellectual point of view they may occasionally suspect that such courage is virtually irrational.'⁴⁵ In *Panghuang*, the typology of the I-narrator is characterized by a sombre detachment, a grey kind of helplessness. The narrator in 'Zhufu', the first story in the collection, marks this transition. The question of the heroine, Xianglin's wife, induces in the narrator an inner crisis: 'You are a scholar . . . I just want to ask you . . . after a person dies, does he turn into a ghost or not?' (p.53) Hesitantly, the I-narrator provides the classic non-committal answer: 'I am not sure.' In failing to provide an adequate answer, his doubts as to his own intellectual capability are evoked, and he comes to realize that he is 'a complete fool.' (pp.153-154) Moreover, the torment that he has let this poor helpless woman down, impresses on him a feeling of guilt. One sees the irony of the whole situation in his shallow remark 'by simply concluding with this phrase "I am not sure", one can free oneself of all responsibility.' (p.154)⁴⁶ This feeling of oppression characterizes the spiritual burden of many awakened May Fourth Intellectuals. What is the responsibility of the narrator to this poor woman, one is prompted to ask? In failing to provide a satisfactory answer to her questions? In all honesty,

45. *Ibid.*, p.17.

46. I agreed with Zhu Tong (朱彤) that the I-narrator not only witnessed the tragedy of Xianglin's wife, but also tried to avoid taking responsibility. In this way, he has become the object of criticism of Lu Xun, and this criticism becomes more acute towards the end of the story. See Zhu Tong, "Lun Lu Xun xiaoshuo duchuang de gongxian" (論魯迅小說獨創的貢獻 On the unique contribution of Lu Xun's fictional works), *Lu Xun yanjiu* (魯迅研究 Lu Xun study), 4:58, 1981.7. Hanan also sees the I-narrator in the same light, p.88.

who could? By virtue of his intellectualism, he is either regarded as a person who can right all wrongs, as in this case; or conversely, treated as 'a deluge or a wild beast' (洪水猛獸), as the current expression goes, or as one who wrongs all rights — a person like Wei Lienshu.

Both narrators in 'Zai jiulou shang' and 'Guduzhe' are more resigned, more oppressed by their powerlessness, and in their sombre detachment lose even the ability to feel guilty, a quality which had pervaded all the aforementioned I-narrators.

The narrator in 'Guduzhe' fares only slightly better than the protagonist. His ineffectiveness comes to the fore when Wei, in desperation, asks his help: 'I was in no position to help myself then, let alone others.' (p.227) Instead of Wei's howls in the wilderness, the I-narrator opts for compromise, relieving his anxiety in the contemplation of nature: 'It had been snowing all day, and the snow had not stopped by evening. Outside it was so still, you could almost hear the sounds of the stillness. I closed my eyes and sat there in the dim lamplight, doing nothing, imagining the snow-flakes falling to fill the boundless drifts of snow . . .' (pp.227-228) This unconcerned mood is only slightly disturbed by Wei's dramatic letter of 'betrayal.' Aware that 'at least his livelihood was secure, and I need not worry any more at any rate, I could do nothing more', (p.231) he immediately lapses back into his customary silence. The recognition of his own failure of compassion explains his turn of mind upon seeing Wei's corpse. Compelled by the feeling that Wei mocked himself to death, he feels 'some heavy barrier' lies ahead of him that is impossible to break through. However, his sense of compunction is relieved when a voice like 'the howl of a wounded wolf' sounds in his ears. This sense of release can best be seen as a result of his shedding of conscience — the consolation that his friend's sorrow is over, and that he does not need to worry for him any more.⁴⁷

The inadequate I-narrator takes on an even more involved role in 'Zai jiulou shang', mainly because this story in reminiscence is essentially carried out in dialogue form. The feeling of futility of the I-narrator is clear in the first paragraphs. Seeing how his native town in the south has changed in the intervening years, together with his unsettled life in the north where he dwells now, his sense of rootlessness is reinforced. In his pathetic sensitivity to the mood of the protagonist Lü Weifu his own superfluousness is unveiled. Twice in their conversation Lü refers to the past

47. The ending of the story is obscure, Hanan remarks that the story seems to him inarticulate: 'the narrator hides his emotions, of affection, or helpless guilt, or whatever they may be, and the cry of grief with which he greets his friend's death is inexplicable unless the reader brings to the story a full interpretation', (p.94). The cry is surely that which Wei Lienshu uttered at his grandmother's funeral.

in terms of 'we' — we went to the Tutelary God's temple to pull off the images' beard and discuss possibilities of revolutionizing China; has any thing of all we planned in the past turned out as we hoped? — providing a glimpse of the past history of the I-narrator, adding more pathos to his reply to 'Couldn't you have flown a little further?' 'That's difficult to say. Probably I too have flown in a small circle.' (p.178) His inadequacy is further evinced by the fact that he can only listen with a passive receptiveness, totally incapable of rendering any help, to the pitiable 'sell out' of his friend — a one-time progressive now teaching *Nüerjing*. After a show of surprise: 'I never expected that you would actually go and teach that kind of thing, (p.186) he lapses back into his submissive silence, aware of his own powerlessness. After they have parted company he feels self pity, as much as pity for his friend. Heaving a sigh, and with mingled gloom and anxiety, he steps into the 'white, shifting web of thick snow, woven together with houses and streets.' (p.187)

To sum up, Lu Xun delineates succinctly, in his solitary heroes, the tragedies of many awakened intellectuals. Lured by the vision of a golden future, these people who are noble in character, generous by inclination, singleminded in purpose, contemplative by temperament and 'advanced' in thinking try to realize their ideals in their self-appointed tasks of achieving the betterment of society. In daring to commit themselves, they discover that they have unwillingly but inevitably been swamped by the sinister forces enveloping them. Their winning generosity and singleminded ideals prove to be pathetically vulnerable. We witness their wings being clipped, their body and soul crushed. Their downward slide pitifully reveals the 'dialectics' of change in these harbingers of reform. Lü Weifu retires in spite of himself into a solitary existence, haunted by his sense of guilt and helplessness. In his penitence, Juansheng opts voluntarily for oblivion and falsehood, yielding all his former principles, alone but for his agonizing soul. Wei Lienshu's fate epitomizes those who, with their ideals shattered, yet refuse to compromise and forget. In his morbid revenge, he goes a step further, to mock and avenge his former self and those who try to create a golden future in this iniquitous society. Moreover, the intervention of the inadequate I-narrator, with his wry yet languid comments, his pangs of conscience, and his eagerness to help but awareness of his total powerlessness adds a sombre note to the already pathetic situation. It is worth remarking that *the witness* in these stories has grown in stature and importance. Almost always present and always having the function of displaying indifference or varying degrees of incomprehension, he develops from being a mere cypher in 'Kungyiji' (孔乙己) and 'Toufa de gushi' to a kind of 'doppelgänger' in the later stories. In the typologies of these dejected and solitary heroes, Lu Xun not only reiterates that the forces of truthfulness and deception, freedom and authority, progress and conservatism

are by definition antithetical, but also that those of conscience and aspiration, awareness and commitment, nobility of mind and tenacity of purpose are seemingly incompatible, or even mutually exclusive, thus projecting in his stories a disturbingly pessimistic picture.⁴⁸ In the ensuing pages, I shall attempt a comparison with the Russian stories that Lu Xun translated.

IV. Comparisons with Russian Literature

All the Russian stories that Lu Xun translated in this period deal with the theme of the solitariness of the intellectual hero — his anxiety to communicate, and his agony upon recognizing his own powerlessness. Some collapse, like Andreyev's hero in 'Silence', some dwindle away, like Chirikov's heroes in 'Provincial Town', and some avenge themselves, like Shevyrev in Artzybashev's 'Shevyrev'. It is interesting to observe that certain thematic and typological parallels permeate Lu Xun's own stories of this same period. Lu Xun may actually have been inspired by his Russian precursors in the use of certain thematic devices.⁴⁹

A) General Thematic and Typological Parallels

First, I shall deal with the general thematic parallels. Lu Xun shares with his Russian precursors, in particular Artzybashev, a preoccupation with the plight of the awakened intellectual. One may go as far as to say that Artzybashev has inspired Lu Xun's thinking on the subject, as many of Lu Xun's writings bear out. He wrote in the 'Nala' essay: 'In one of his novels Artzybashev challenges those idealists who, in order to build a future golden world, call on many people here and now to suffer. "You promise their descendants a golden world, but what are you giving them themselves," he demands.⁵⁰ Here he is referring to the cry of woe of Shevyrev in 'Shevyrev', when he was hounded by his own people whom he has vowed to help. Lu Xun wrote with feeling about the plight of Shevyrev in the epilogue to his translation of the story:

⁴⁸. Though written in 1902, Lu Xun's poem 'Zi ti xiaoxiang' (自題小像 Self portrait), encapsulating his personal vision of a lone martyr, is still relevant to his thought in the 1920's:

'My heart has no tactic to dodge the magic arrow; my homeland is darkened
like a millstone, in the storm of wind and rain.

To the chilling stars I convey my thoughts, my people unaware of my sorrow.
With my blood I shall sacrifice myself to Emperor Xianyuan.'

⁴⁹. Lu Xun mentioned as late as 1933 that Chinese writers should learn from good translations. See his essay "Guanyu fanyi" (關於翻譯 On translation), *QJ*, v.5, p.148.

⁵⁰. As n.31, p.150.

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'Life is of the first importance to a human being. In their championship of the cause of the deprived, many reformers "sacrificed the most precious thing of their life", and "died for the common cause." Shevyrev (in the story) is the single surviving soul. Even then, he can only try to avoid the hunters pursuing him for his life, enveloped by forces of destruction. Not only is his suffering incommunicable to the fortunate, it is also incommunicable to the so-called "unfortunate." These unfortunates, on the contrary, help the pursuers to persecute, and take satisfaction in his death. They ruin their lives as much as the fortunate.'⁵¹

In the fate of Artzybashev's Shevyrev, Lu Xun visualizes the many sufferings of his Chinese counterparts. This constitutes his main reason for translating the story. As he said in 1926: "... not only (in China) now, but in the immediate future, or even decades later, the suppression of reformers, the sufferings of representatives, . . . will still resemble that of Shevyrev's.'⁵²

As we have seen in the above section, Lu Xun exemplified in his many short stories of the period his thinking and worries on this theme of the awakened hero. It is on this level that we see the thematic parallels with Artzybashev's work. In 'Toufa de gushi', a story written around the same time as Lu Xun's translation of 'Shevyrev', Lu Xun puts into N's mouth the same bewildered question he raised in his essay on 'Nala': 'Let me put to you the question raised by Artzybashev: "You promise their descendants a golden world, but what are you giving them themselves" '⁵³ Though without posing it directly we see this is the common question probed by Lü Weifu, Juansheng and Wei Lienshu. Like Shevyrev before them, they all degenerate from high idealism into a nihilistic existence when they recognize the futility of their endeavours.

B) 'Shevyrev' and 'Guduzhe'

More specifically, one can go further to pinpoint certain typological parallels between Shevyrev and Wei Lienshu.⁵⁴ Both are characterized by their solitariness. Shevyrev's 'grey metallic eyes had a cold impenetrable look in them',⁵⁵ and a pair of 'dark eyes' (in *SW*, p.214) appeared on Wei's dark face, signifying his coldness. However, an ardent heart lies concealed underneath their cold and forbidding looks.

51. *QJ*, v.11. Lu Xun reiterated this theme again, quoting the example of Shevyrev, in his letter to Xu Guangping in March 18, 1925 as n.34, p.36.

52. As n.31.

53. As n.36.

54. Xu Qingwen was the first to note a possible similarity between the two characters, though he did not elaborate, as n.38, pp.72-73.

55. 'Shevyrev' by Artzybashev; translated into English by P. Pinkerton, contained in *The tales of revolution*, London, 1917, p.14.

As Aladiev, Shevyrev's neighbour, observes, when he smiled, 'there was no doubt that his countenance completely changed. Its expression grew gentle, almost tender.' (in 'Shevyrev', p.17) As to Wei, the sight of his landlord's children would 'invariably dispel his (Wei's) customary coldness.' (p.218) Both set out with their ideals to reform society, and both came to 'taste the cup of bitterness', as victims of their hostile environment. Both react with cynicism. Shevyrev becomes a 'man-hater', arguing that not only an adverse environment can prevent man from doing good, but that 'man is by nature evil.' (p.19) As the story progresses, Wei in 'Guduzhe' also discards his belief that children are innocent by nature. He reacts with cynicism to his landlord's children and 'thinks poorly of his fellow men.' (p.223) It is thus interesting to observe that the life cycle of both heroes follows a similar pattern of progression — from love to hate, from an aspiration towards a better future to utter nihilism, from submission to evil to avenging themselves against their oppressors. Their typological similarity is more pronounced in the way their inner conflicts are depicted. In the climactic scene in 'Shevyrev', the protagonist's former self, embodied in the principle of non-resistance, comes back to haunt him, instigating him to love and sacrifice: 'You cannot do anything without sacrifice . . . and the greater the sacrifice, the purer and holier the meaning . . .'⁵⁶ His present self, the cold-blooded avenger, tormented by suffering and consumed by hate, fights back: 'Why should I love people? Because they devour each other like pigs . . .'⁵⁷ He chooses to take revenge on those who have 'drunk our blood and gratify our sufferings . . .'⁵⁸ The scene ends with Shevyrev's present self driving away his former self, to culminate in his later act of revenge. In a different manner, Wei's inner conflicts are also embodied in the battle between his former and present self, although, unlike those of Shevyrev which are carried on in dialogue form, Wei's are disclosed in his letter to the I-narrator. We have already seen how, inspired by a golden future, Wei's former self is willing 'to beg for the cause, to go cold and hungry for it, to suffer hardship for it.' Now that this former self is being 'trapped and killed', his present self wants 'to live to spite those who wish me dead.' (p.229) In their revenge however, is revealed their marked typological difference.

In 1926, Lu Xun wrote that while he shared Shevyrev's aspirations and sufferings, 'his trend of thought towards the end is horrifying . . . He took revenge for

56. 'Gongren Suihuiluefu' (工人綏惠畧夫 Workingman Shevyrev) translated into Chinese by Lu Xun, *QJ*, v.11, p.702. Pinkerton has left untranslated the entire section of Shevyrev's encounter with his own vision. Citations on this section are retranslations from Lu Xun's rendering of the story.

57. *Ibid.* p.700.

58. *Ibid.* p.703.

the sake of revenge, and destroyed for the sake of destruction.' Lu Xun went on to say that this type of avenger 'has not appeared in China yet, and is not likely to appear. I don't want him to appear.'⁵⁹ Thus, Lu Xun's own avenging hero follows a different course of development from that of his precursor. In utter desperation, Shevyrev takes his revenge on others — on his pursuers and the indifferent masses, whom he finds totally impotent and unsympathetic: 'without taking aim, (he) fired straight at the sea of calm, unconscious spectators', 'with cold-blooded brutal joy, it revenged the insults, the sufferings, or the ruined lives of which he knew so much.' (p.107) Wei's revenge, however, is essentially a self-immolation. Interestingly, in the I-narrator's observation that 'there seemed to be an ironical smile on his lips, mocking the ridiculous corpse' (p.108) there is a strange echo of what Shevyrev told Aladiev: 'for the sake of this hope (of the golden future) people are awakened in spirit to see their own putrid corpses',⁶⁰ a line that Lu Xun borrowed in his celebrated essay on 'Nala'.

While marking the above parallels, one should be careful to point out that 'Shevyrev' and 'Guduzhe' are stories different both in plot, tone, and the mode of narration. Artzybashev's story is a straightforward third person narration, whereas Lu Xun's is seen through the eyes of the narrator. Artzybashev's story attempts to be shocking, as shown by the mysteries enshrouding the central character, and above all, in the final dramatic and blood-letting scene. Lu Xun's story is both subdued and ironic. Through the morbid self-revenge of the hero and the helpless observation of the I-narrator, we see an awareness of the author's own impotence to change anything, and he is torturing both himself and his characters as he goes along.⁶¹ While it is not Lu Xun's aim to shock or fantasize, as is the case with Artzybashev, his story has greater effect by virtue of his deliberate use of obtuseness. Lu Xun's subdued treatment also comes to the fore in the comparison of his 'Shangshi' with Andreyev's 'Silence', where both writers use a single thematic device, silence, to symbolize the sufferings of the penitent hero.

C) 'Silence' and 'Shangshi'

One should bear in mind that, barring the similar thematic device of silence as a form of punishment for the penitent hero, the two stories show few other affinities. Both stories depict a proud, stubborn and determined hero. Father Igaty in 'Silence'

59. As n.31.

60. As n.35.

61. That Lu Xun toyed with the thought of revenge can be seen from his letters to Xu Guangping in 1925 to 1926.

is adamant that his daughter should abide by his moral codes: 'Am I responsible for her being born hard-hearted? Did I not teach her of God, of humility, and of love?'⁶² His daughter Vera's defiance therefore poses a staunch challenge to the core of his very existence — his pride, and results in his disappointment and anger. Juansheng in 'Shangshi' is also tainted by pride and self-centredness. He aims at moulding Zijun according to his own moral principles: 'the shabby room would be filled with the sound of my voice as I held forth on the tyranny of the home, the need to break with tradition, the equality of men and women . . .' (SW, p.239) His disillusionment grows from the heroine's failure to live up to his principles. In their different ways, the demand of both heroes for 'truth' leads to the death of the heroine.⁶³ Both heroes stumble into honouring intellect and reason at a higher level than love and understanding. Both become penitent, and are drowned in the sience that engulfs them. Both are haunted by the eyes of the innocent heroine. For Father Ignaty, the black and beautiful eyes of the heroine's portrait are as though enclosed in black mourning frames, 'and wherever Fr. Ignaty placed the portrait, the eyes continually followed him, not speaking, but silent.' (p.86) In 'Shanghai', in the gloom after Zijun's departure, 'I suddenly seemed to see a pile of groceries, then Zijun's ashen face appeared to gaze at me beseechingly with childlike eyes. But as soon as I took a grip on myself, there was nothing there.' (p.257) In their regret for the heroines' deaths, both heroes are depicted as enclosed in a state of emptiness, in an impenetrable silence. This silence seems to be invading their innermost self. For Fr. Ignaty, 'the silence choked him: it kept rolling backwards and forwards through his head in icy waves, and stirred his hair: it broke against his bosom, which groaned beneath the shocks . . .' (p.97) For Juansheng, 'all around was a great void, quiet as death. I seemed to see the darkness before the eyes of every single person who dies unloved, and to hear all the bitter and despairing cries of their struggle.' Couched or lying in this great void, he can only 'allow this deathly quiet to eat away my soul.' (p.259) This psychotic state, though found in *Yecao*,⁶⁴ is not described in anything like such lurid terms in Lu Xun's other short stories, and so may well be attributable to the example of 'Silence.'

62. "Silence" in *Silence and other stories*, translated into English by W. H. Howe, London, 1910, p.89.

63. The demand for truth also leads to the death of Andreyev's heroine in "The Lie", another of Andreyev's stories that Lu Xun translated into Chinese. The affinity in thematic device between "Shangshi" and Andreyev's two stories cannot be dismissed as coincidental.

64. For example, one can establish a close link between Andreyev's "Ben Tobit", which was translated into Chinese by Zhou Zuoren in 1919, with Lu Xun's "Fuchou qier" (復仇之二 Revenge II).

The endings of both stories also strike a parallel. Both heroes mourn the death of the heroine, begging for her forgiveness and pity. Fr. Ignaty goes out to Vera's tomb, hoping that by speaking to her, Vera will rise from her grave, 'and that not only would she rise; but all the dead who could be felt, so awesome in their solemn cold silence, would rise too.' (p.96) Torn apart by a near madness, the hero begs also the forgiveness of his wife, but is met with the look of the grey eyes, 'in them there was neither compassion nor anger, may be his wife forgive and pity him, but in those eyes there was neither pity nor forgiveness, they were dumb and silent.' (p.99) One can imagine the affliction of this proud hero, immured behind this wall of silence.

Likewise, 'Shangshi' ends with the hero's yearning for forgiveness from the heroine. Juansheng wishes that there really is a hell, so that he can, no matter how the wind of hell roars, 'go to find Zijun, to tell her of my remorse and grief, and beg her forgiveness. Otherwise, the poisonous flames of hell would surround me, and fiercely devour my remorse and grief.' (pp.260-261) He imagines that in the whirlwind and flames, he will put his arms around Zijun, and ask her pardon, or try to make her happy. But all he has 'is crying that sounds like a lilt as I mourn for Zijun, burying her in oblivion.' (p.261) In the words of Zhou Zuoren, the ambiguity of the story is partly a result of the 'Andreyevan' diction that Lu Xun employed.⁶⁵ I think what is most 'Andreyevan' in this story is precisely Lu Xun's using 'silence' as a thematic device for the punishment of the hero.

D) 'Provincial Town' and 'Zai Jiulou Shang'

The parallels are more pronounced between Lu Xun's 'Zai jiulou shang' and Chirikov's 'Provincial Town', a story Lu Xun translated some two years before writing his own. The similarities of the two stories cover both plot, theme and typology. Structurally, both stories relate the I-narrator's reminiscence of his visit to his native place after a long absence, a meeting with an old acquaintance, and the discovery that this acquaintance has abandoned his former principles. Both stories end with the I-narrator's disillusionment and uncertainty as to his future. Thematically, they both underline the sense of futility of the protagonists, in particular their inner conflict between trying to achieve a better society, their awareness of their impotence to change things, and the realisation that their own revolutionary fervour is draining away. Both stories are heavily tinted with the sombre and desolate mood of the solitary hero. The sense of futility of the I-narrator is

65. See Zhou Zuoren, *Zhitang huixianglu* (知堂回想錄 *The memoirs of Zhitang*), Hongkong, 1974, pp.426-427.

immediately captured through the interplay of the past and present in his memory. In 'Provincial Town', the sight of the familiar vegetation and the unfamiliar changes carries the I-narrator into a psychological malaise — through the contrast between his happy adolescence and his present unhappiness, his sweet first love and his present listlessness, his former feeling for the place and his present rootlessness. Haunted by his wanderlust, he says: 'to whose family should I go? I don't know. I will not go to anyone's family. O you sordid provincial town, which has witnessed my young days, I've come to you, should we not at heart know each other?' (*QJ* v.11, p.278) Similarly, the I-narrator in 'Zai jiulou shang' is tormented by his homelessness — his friends have gone, the school he had taught at has changed its name and looks different. He finds that 'the North was certainly not my home, yet when I came South, I could only count as a stranger.' (*SW*, p.176)

The sense of 'strangeness' of both narrators has a deeper meaning than being just a result of their long absence. It epitomizes their sorrow in recognising their failures in the strivings in life. Revolutionaries in their younger days, both have witnessed the waning of their passion. Chirikov's hero comes to admit his own futile existence. Like a ship without a rudder, he 'no longer believes in propaganda sheets, and my hands are no longer stained with the blue ink of the rubber prints . . .' (p.296) He is insignificant, futile, more so now because his 'aspiration to witness the coming of a happy motherland has evaporated.' (p.296) This sense of futility is further enhanced upon encountering an old acquaintance of his in the police station, who has since become the deputy commissioner. His friend talks with great enthusiasm about his former revolutionary fervour, of how in his undergraduate days he 'slapped the mouth of the executive.' His facial expression, as the narrator observes, has lost all trace of the police officer when he reminisces over these past enthusiasms. His futile question: 'Why has he joined the police force when he should be in their custody instead', is countered with an even more futile answer: 'Don't look at me like this. I am just wearing this uniform. Things are futile, please let them slide . . .' (p.299) Oppressed by his friend's surrender of his former principles, the narrator recognises the powerlessness of human being, and in resignation of mind, he reasons that 'may be like me, grey haired, he has lost his bloom along the lengthy road of life.' (p.301)

Similarly, the I-narrator of Lu Xun's story also meets his old friend. As we have already seen, Lü Weifu is also purged of his former revolutionary ideals and has taken up teaching the classics, including *Nüerjing*. To the I-narrator's piercing looks he also retracted and begged him not to look at him like that and expect anything from him. He too concludes with a sense of futility: 'who cares about such futile affairs anyway? There's no need to take them seriously.' (p.186) Likewise,

the I-narrator also leaves his friend in resignation of mind: 'I saw that the sky was already dark, woven together with houses and streets into the white shifting web of thick snow.' (p.187)

We can see from the above examples that the similarities between the two stories are manifold: the interaction of the I-narrator and his old acquaintance, the place where they meet, (the police station is the only place Chirikov's hero finds unchanged, likewise the wineshop in Lu Xun's story), and the situations of their friends — both have compromised their principles, and are doing things that they campaigned vigorously against before. Both now hold the same attitude to life — let things slide. It is the realization of their friend's futility and that their lives duplicate their own: — Chirikov's hero: 'he is like me,' Lu Xun's narrator: 'I too have simply flown in a small circle' — that further triggers their feeling of superfluousness. Moreover, the beginning and end of both stories are also similar. Chirikov's begins with the I-narrator's weariness and 'unspeakable sorrow' upon seeing the landscape of his native place, Lu Xun's story also begins with the I-narrator's travels, featuring his 'indolence and nostalgia', and his 'wanderer's wanderlust.' Both stories end poetically. The sense of uncertainty and inconsistency of Chirikov's story is symbolized in his thinking of the fading of the flower of life, whereas the *Weltschmerz* of Lu Xun's I-narrator is relieved in his contemplation of the 'thick web of shifting snow' — rendering the world featureless.

While marking the above similarities, it is important to see one major difference between the two stories. Lu Xun remarked that Chirikov's stories 'in general lack subtlety of thought.' (p.275) This is clearly seen in a comparison of the treatment of the two stories. Chirikov's 'Provincial Town' represents a straightforward chronicle of the I-narrator's emotional changes, observations, and sense of oppression, mainly through the interplay of the past and present in his mind. Everything is said and seen through the eyes of the narrator; even in the climactic scene, the interchange between the I-narrator and his friend is filtered through the feelings of the former. The emotional charge of the story is thus primarily restricted to that of one single viewpoint. Lu Xun's story shows a basic difference. While following a similar framework, Lu Xun doubles the emotional charge of his story by allotting the centre of action to a fictional hero. The I-narrator immediately retreats into the background with the appearance of Lü Weifu, playing the concerned yet helpless observer, who sees his own fate intricately interwoven with that of the central hero's. In his detached and yet involved commentaries and observations, the author is able to engage the reader on two levels, reduplicating his sympathy towards the protagonist as well as towards the helpless narrator. Discounting Lu Xun's acute observations and analysis of typical events in his stories, this technique of 'distancing' is one main

reason for the subtlety of his story.⁶⁶ It marks out the major difference from the technique of Chirikov. In fact, as our comparison with the Russian stories shows, despite their treating a similar theme and typology, and using a similar thematic device, Lu Xun's stories betray more complexity and perception, and more 'realism' than the Russian stories, a point which I shall elaborate in the last section.

V. The Limits of Influence

'... the close of "Yao" clearly retains the sombre chill one associates with Andreyev ... From that point on, I escaped from the influence of foreign writers, and my technique matured; my depictions were also slightly more subtle.'⁶⁷

Lu Xun, 1935.

It is true that in Lu Xun's later stories, especially those in *Panghuang*, one sees no conscious effort on the part of the author to borrow directly from or adapt foreign sources, as he had done earlier. What is interesting, however, are the parallels and similarities between his own works dealing with the phenomenon of the awakened intellectual and those of the Russian writers he translated. These parallelisms — the theme of resistance and revenge, and the inner afflictions of the heroes in 'Shevyrev' and 'Guduzhe'; the thematic device of using silence as a form of punishment, and the battle between intellect and feeling, truthfulness and deception of the protagonists in 'Silence' and 'Shangshi'; and above all, the close proximity in theme, plot and mode of narration between 'Provincial Town' and 'Zai jiulou shang' show that in trying to depict the phenomenon of the awakened intellectual, Lu Xun is likely to have been inspired by the parallel themes and convention embedded in these Russian stories. However, as the above comparisons show, these similarities are not unqualified. In typological terms, they lie rather in the general traits, in the conflicts and torments of the heroes than in particulars. We see that preoccupied and inspired as he is by Artzybashev's 'Shevyrev', when he comes to actually writing stories that depict a common situation, his own avenging hero shares only the general conflicts of the

66. Li Changzhi (李長之) in his *Lu Xun pipan* (魯迅批判 Critique of Lu Xun, Shanghai, 1936) considers 'Zai jiulou shang' one of the failures among Lu Xun's short stories. Li argues that the monologue form of the story is monotonous. Lu Xun's efforts to bring in lyrical elements fail to break the monotone, and they also have the adverse effect of breaking its unity. I believe this is a misreading of Lu Xun's rather contrived efforts — the idea of distancing, the solitary mood extended through various contrasts; moreover, the story is expressed essentially in dialogue form, not monologue.

67. As n.10. In his study of Lu Xun's 'Kuangren riji' (狂人日記 Diary of a Madman) Chinnery points out that the sources from Gogol and Nietzsche helped to mould the content and form of the story, but they were all transformed by the author, and the story is far from being derivative (p.320).

Russian hero, the conflicts that oppress awakened intellectuals in general. Their inner life, the whole manner in which they solve their problems, differ enormously. Even in the case of 'Provincial Town', which is likely to have provided a framework for Lu Xun's 'Zai jiulou shang', where both stories essentially delineate the typologies of the hero through the contrasts of old and new, revolution and retrogression, Lu Xun's story differs in the subtlety of treatment, and in the device of distancing.

The fact that the parallels pervade these writings at a general level is understandable. This singles out a special quality of Lu Xun's fictional works, and as such, his strength as a writer. As he himself tells us, many of his stories have resulted from 'what I have been unable to erase from my memory.' Many stories in *Nahan* are simply flashbacks to the past. According to Zhou Zuoren, most of Lu Xun's fictional characters have models in the author's friends, relatives and acquaintances, e.g. Runtu in 'Guxiang', N in 'Toufa de gushi', Chen Shicheng (陳士成) in 'Baiguang' (白光 White light).⁶⁸ Likewise, many first person narrations in *Nahan* are no more than reflections of events in his past. Lu Xun's fictional world is therefore not only 'Chinese', but also 'private'. Things happen and evolve essentially around his native village, the nearby town, or familiar *hutong* (胡同 back alley). The action centres on his family, his friends or the neighbours. Lu Xun documents these past events with a depth of feeling, which provides his story with much lyricism, poetry and realism.⁶⁹

This pattern of creation prevails in the more mature works in *Panghuang*, albeit taking a slightly different form. To quote Zhou Zuoren again, there are no traceable prototypes in the characters of Lü Weifu, Wei Lienshu and Juansheng, quite unlike the other stories. While 'Shangshi' is more of a 'scenario' than a story and Juansheng's typology is an imaginary construction in the framework of 'Nora leaving home', those of Lü Weifu and Wei Lienshu point to a different case. The two incidents in 'Zai jiulou shang' — Lü Weifu's 'futile' affair of moving the grave, and the tragic death of A Shun his neighbour's daughter — according to Zhou Zuoren are 'references to his (Lu Xun's) own life, though the elements of poetry and reality are not the same.'⁷⁰ The strangeness of Wei Lienshu's being a zoology graduate teaching history stems from Lu Xun's own past history. Wei's wolflike howl during his grandmother's funeral, Zhou writes, 'is wholly the author's own.' Zhou Zuoren

68. For a detailed study of the prototypes of Lu Xun's fictional characters, see Zhou Zuoren, *Lu Xun xiaoshuo*, as n.19.

69. For lyricism in Lu Xun's fiction, see a recent article by Tang Tao (唐澂): "Lun Lu Xun xiaoshuo de xianshi zhuyi" (論魯迅小說的現實主義 Realism in Lu Xun's fictional works), *Wenxue pinglun* (文學評論 Literary Criticism), 1982.1, pp.3-24.

70. As n.19, p.163.

states that 'though there is no dearth of autobiographical elements in the author's prose and fiction, it seems that nowhere else is there as truthfully and realistically depicted an episode as this. Moreover, this affair is scarcely known to people.'⁷¹ Zhou's comments shed some valuable light on the art of Lu Xun's fiction. By transferring to the fictional hero the events and sufferings of his own life, and at the same time allowing the I-narrator helplessly to watch and describe them, Lu Xun succeeds in engaging the emotions of his readers on three different levels — the dejectedness of the fictional hero, the helplessness of the narrator, and above all, the presence of the author as an onlooker, who, delicate in emotion and heightened in consciousness, looks with concern upon the failings and agonies of his protagonists, which are no other than his own. In so doing, Lu Xun is doing exactly what he says: 'not only analysing other people, but more ruthlessly analysing my own self to the last fibre all the time.'⁷² This technique of distancing, of dividing and doubling the emotional charge, adds much subtlety and pathos to the story, and involves the readers more with the author's feeling of conscience and guilt.

This personal manner of narration, together with the sense of ambiguity that pervades these works, accentuated by the feeling of uncertainty covering the endings of such stories as 'Guxiang', 'Zhufu', 'Zai jiulou shang' and 'Guduzhe', endues Lu Xun's work with a particular sparkle. This ambiguity crystallizes the author's inner conflicts. His is a wandering soul, as he writes in 'Ying de gaobie' (影的告别 The shadow's leave-taking) in *Yecao*, 'wandering between light and shade, uncertain whether it is dusk or dawn.'⁷³ He confides to Xu Guangping in March 1925 that as much as he wants to battle against cannibalistic traditions and autocracy, his meticulous and scrupulous character and his wariness of bloodshed prevent him from taking action, except by relieving his anger in his writings.⁷⁴ However, this ambiguity adds to rather than detracts from his stories. Lu Xun has a strong sense of proportion as a writer of fiction. Instead of being carried away by his personal affairs, he typifies and generalizes. His creative writings, as a critic put it recently, 'reflect his persistent exploring of a kind of collective consciousness to which he could relate his personal experience.'⁷⁵ Lu Xun describes his creative method in 'Wozenmo zuoqi xiaoshuo lai', singling out the harmonising of these two elements: 'the happenings I described generally arose from something I had seen or heard, but I never relied entirely on facts. I just took one occurrence and modified or expanded it till it expressed what I had in mind. The same was true of the models of characters —

71. *Ibid.*, p.187.

72. As n.4.

73. *Yecao*, as n.32, pp.8-9.

74. As n.34, p.49.

75. Leo Oufan Lee, 'Genesis', p.188.

I did not pick on specific individuals. My characters were often a mixture of a mouth from Chekiang, a face from Peking and clothes from Shanshi.⁷⁶ His awakened intellectuals—N, Lij Weifu, Wei Lienshu and Juansheng, or the omniscient inadequate I-narrator, epitomize the conflicts tormenting many an intellectual of his time, as much as they are Lu Xun's own. As Lyell concludes in his study: 'a rare concatenation of individual talent and historical circumstances enable Lu Xun to contract a peculiar marriage with reality out of which those characters were born.'⁷⁷

The strength of Lu Xun as a 'realist' — in attempting both to individualize and typify, and his acute observation and analysis of the 'sickly symptoms' of Chinese society — roots his works firmly in Chinese soil. The ambiguous oscillation inherent in his art, which represents the marriage of the past and present, between sympathy and indifference, between privateness and typicality, and between a deliberate obtuseness and a sharpness of vision, reveals the special flavour of his works, and as such, his creativeness and innovative power in modern Chinese fiction. Foreign influences, therefore, are necessarily restricted in general terms. In trying to choose an artistic mode to depict his awakened intellectuals, Lu Xun is likely to have drawn on the Russian stories he translated, which either portray a similar phenomenon, provide a workable framework, or both. However, enthusiastic as he was about Russian literature, the strength of Lu Xun as a writer of fiction is more patently shown, perhaps paradoxically, in the limitation of such influence. In the strange combination of sympathy and cynicism towards his heroes, and the acute blending of the qualities of ambiguity and psychological realism, Lu Xun endows his stories with much insight, subtlety and pathos, and as such, a greater degree of universality. Lu Xun was indeed inspired by his Russian precursors, but, as we have attempted to show in this study, he became all the better a writer and an artist for it.

76. As n.13, p.131.

77. Lyell, *Lu Hsün*, p.312.

魯迅與俄羅斯文學

論魯迅筆下的「前驅者」與俄國小說人物的關係

(中文摘要)

吳茂生

本文旨在探討魯迅筆下的「前驅者」與俄國小說人物的關係。全文分四部份：

- (一) 探討魯迅對俄國文學的態度，闡明魯迅對十九世紀俄國文學裏「為人生」的傳統、以及對知識分子型人物的興趣。
- (二) 分析魯迅小說裏知識分子的形象，以及這類「前驅型」人物，如《在酒樓上》的呂緯甫、《孤獨者》裏的魏連受，和《傷逝》裏的涓生的人生道路。
- (三) 就魯迅翻譯的幾篇俄國小說，如安特列夫的《謾》《默》、阿爾志巴綏夫的《工人綏惠畧夫》、契里訶夫的《省會》等，和魯迅的作品比較，並申明魯迅的「前驅者」和這些小說的主人翁共通的地方。
- (三) 從魯迅借鑒俄國文學的例子，說明魯迅作品的特點，以及文學影響的一些普遍問題。