

全英譯魯迅舊體詩

The  
Lyrical Lu Xun

*A Study of  
His Classical-Style Verse*

Jon Eugene von Kowallis



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## Contents

PREFACE ix

### Introduction

Lu Xun's Childhood and Youth (1881-1901) 9

Japan and Back (1902-1909; 1909-1917) 17

The May Fourth Era (1918-1927) 27

A "Fellow Traveler"? (1927-1936) 33

### Verse in the Classical Style

1. Three Verses on Parting from My Brothers 55

2. Lotus Seedpod People 62

3. Seeing Off the Kitchen God in the Year 1901 67

4. An Offertory for the God of Books 71

5. Three Verses on Parting from My Brothers 82

6. A Fondness for Flowers: Four Regulated Verses 88

7. Untitled (usually referred to as "Personally Inscribed on a Small Picture") 100

8. Three Stanzas Mourning Fan Ainong 108

9. Redressing Grievances on Behalf of the Beanstalks 121

10. My Heartfelt Sympathies for Rousseau 126

11. Untitled ("To kill people we have generals . . .") 131

12. For Wu Qishan (Uchiyama Kanzō) 135

13. For Mr. O. E. on the Occasion of His Return [to Japan] with [a Shipment of] Orchids 142

## 8.

## Three Stanzas Mourning Fan Ainong

## 哀范君三章

(Ai Fan jun san zhang)  
JULY 22, 1912

LU XUN first met Fan Ainong at a meeting of overseas students in Tokyo, called as a result of the news that Xu Xilin (1873–1907), a Chinese revolutionary leader, had been executed for assassinating En Ming (1846–1907), Manchu governor of Anhui province.<sup>1</sup> Qiu Jin (1875–1907), famed anti-Qing woman revolutionist, was later also beheaded for her involvement with Xu Xilin in this conspiracy to spark a nationwide revolt, of which the successful but premature assassination had been a part.

When a faction among the students proposed drafting a telegram to Peking to inveigh against the brutality of the executions, Fan Ainong opposed it, saying: "Those killed have been killed, those dead have died—what's the use of sending a stinking telegram?" This irked Lu Xun, who felt that Fan, himself once a student and friend of Xu Xilin, was being too callous.

The two did not meet again until the spring of 1910, when Lu Xun was teaching chemistry and physiology at the Hangzhou Normal School. As William Schultz describes it: "Lonely and reduced to a bare tutor's existence, the latter [Fan] regularly came into the city on foot to pass the evening with Lu Xun and discuss topics of the day over wine."<sup>2</sup>

After the 1911 Revolution had toppled the Manchus, Lu Xun was made the principal of the Shaoxing Normal College, where Fan Ainong served as *xuejian* ("supervisor of studies"). The two soon became the target of threats from a local warlord, Wang Jinfa, who felt maligned by the attacks of a newspaper launched by a group of students under Lu Xun's sponsorship. At the same time, Fan Ainong's eccentric behavior and outspoken style quickly won him enemies at the school and in local government. Lu Xun writes:

But then by a fortunate coincidence, Xu Shoushang sent me a letter urging me to go at once to Nanking [to serve as an official in the newly formed Ministry of Education]. Ainong was in favor, though extremely depressed as well.

"Things have grown so bad again, you can't stay here," he said. "You'd better leave at once."<sup>3</sup>

Relating how rapidly events transpired after his departure from Shaoxing, Lu Xun continues:

By the time I moved from Nanking to Peking, the dean [of the Shaoxing Normal School], who was head of the Confucian League, had contrived to remove Ainong from his post as supervisor of studies. He was once more the Ainong of pre-revolutionary days. I wanted to find a small post for him in Peking, which was what he longed for, but there was no opening. Later he went to live off a friend, and I often heard from him. He grew poorer and poorer, and sounded more and more bitter. At last he was forced to leave this friend's house and drift from place to place. Before long I heard from a fellow-provincial that he had fallen into the river and been drowned.

I suspected he had committed suicide. For he was an excellent swimmer: it would not be easy for him to drown.

... Later, when I went home, I learned more details of the story. First, Ainong could find no work of any description, because everybody disliked him. He was very hard up indeed, but he went on drinking whenever friends treated him. . . . But they did not want to hear his complaints all the time—they liked his jokes better.

"I may get a telegram tomorrow," he used to say.

"When I open it, I'll find Lu Xun has sent for me."

One day, a few new friends invited him to go by boat to watch an opera. It was after midnight by the time they started back, and there was high wind and rain. He was drunk, yet he insisted on standing on the bulwarks to urinate. And when his friends protested, he would not listen to them. He assured them he could not fall. Fall he did, though, and although he could swim, he did not come to the surface.

The next day they recovered his body. They found him standing upright in a creek where water caltrops grew. To this day I do not know whether he lost his balance or committed suicide.<sup>4</sup>

A few days after Lu Xun first received the news of Fan Ainong's death, in his grief he composed the following three *wuyan liushi* (pentasyllabic regulated verses). The day after composing these verses in Peking, Lu Xun mailed them back home to Shaoxing, requesting that they be published in the *Minxing ribao*, a local daily newspaper. They were carried in its August 21, 1912, edition. To the manuscript of

the poems Lu Xun appended the following statement addressed to the editors:

Ainong's death has had a disquieting effect on me for several days now, and I am still unable to shake it off. Yesterday I suddenly made up three verses and, while writing them down, the [pun on He Jizhong's name] *jichong* ["chicken-ant"] came to me in a flash. In its extreme novelty, [it seemed to me that] the most lowly of groveling insects had been laid even lower by a bolt of lightning. Now I've recorded that too and present it herewith for your inspection and sagacious editing. If it is up to your standards, print it in the *Minxing Daily*. Although I am not yet a man seasoned by the years and tempered by experience, I dare say that it would have been impossible for me to remain silent on this matter.<sup>5</sup>

There are at least three different editions of these poems, all with variant characters (see Cao Liwu, pp. 15–17). Here I have followed the 1991 edition of the *Lu Xun quanji* (vol. 7, p. 425), which I believe to be the most reliable version in this instance. There is a slight inconsistency in the Chinese rhyme in the third of these pentasyllabic regulated verses caused by the last character in the sixth line, *yan* ("words"), not belonging to the same rhyme category as the characters in the second line, *ren* ("man"); the fourth line, *lun* ("sink"); and the eighth line, *chen* ("dust"). *Yan* belongs to the thirteenth rhyme category of *yuan* ("first," "primordial"), whereas all the others fall under the eleventh rhyming category of *zhen* ("truth").

Although in *gushi* (ancient-style verse), characters in the eleventh and thirteenth rhyming categories are considered interchangeable, in *lüshi* (regulated verse) and *jueju* (quatrains) this is hardly ever the case. Lu Xun's verse is intended as a *wuyan lüshi*, so he has stretched the rules a bit here, employing neighboring rhyme. This was frequently done at the time and does not detract from the artistic quality of these verses.



Fan Ainong (left), and woman revolutionist Qiu Jin (right).

## 其一

風 雨 飄 搖 日

Fēng - yǔ piāo - yáo rì,  
Wind and rain swirling/whirling day

余 懷 范 愛 農

Yú huái Fàn Ài - nóng.  
I remember/think back on Fan Ainong.

華 顛 萎 寥 落

Huá diǎn wēi liáo - luò,  
Graying head/hair, dry, [turning] sparse,

白 眼 看 雞 蟲

Bái yǎn kàn jī chóng.  
Whites of eyes look [at] chicken ants.

世 味 秋 荼 苦

Shì wèi qiū tú kǔ,  
World's flavor autumn wormwood bitter,

人 間 直 道 窮

Rén - jiān zhí dào qióng.  
Mortals-among, straight path impoverished.

奈 何 三 月 別

Nài - hé sān yuè bié,  
How could [in] three months absence,

竟 爾 失 畸 躬

Jìng ěr shī jī - gōng.  
Actually [have] lost so uncommon a figure?

1. 'Mid whirling wind and rain this day,<sup>6</sup>  
My memories of Ainong stay.  
With thinning, dry, and graying hair  
How his eyes would roll at the scappers for fare!<sup>7</sup>  
His gorge rose at men's worldly lust—  
What gain's in store for those who're just?<sup>8</sup>  
Three months away, at such a cost—  
This uncouth friend I've truly lost.<sup>9</sup>

## 其二

海 草 國 門 碧

Hǎi - cǎo guó - mén bì,  
Sea [shore] grass country's gates greened,

多 年 老 異 鄉

Duō nián lǎo yì xiāng.  
Many years old alien land.

狐 狸 方 去 穴

Hú - li fāng qù xué,  
[The] foxes just left lairs,

桃 偶 已 登 場

Táo - ǒu yǐ dēng - chǎng.  
Peachwood puppets already took-the-stage.

故 里 寒 雲 惡

Gù - lǐ hán yún è,  
Former village wintry clouds ill/evil,

炎 天 凜 夜 長

Yán tiān lǐn yè cháng.  
Fiery [summer] days icy night's length.

獨 沈 清 冷 水

Dú chén qīng lěng shuǐ,  
Alone sinking clear cold waters,

能 否 滌 愁 腸

Néng fǒu dí chóu cháng?  
Could it or not cleanse forlorn entrails?

2. Its green our home-shore grass regained,  
Each year that we abroad remained.<sup>10</sup>  
The foxes had just left their lairs,  
When peachwood puppets took stage stairs.<sup>11</sup>  
Cold clouds engulfing home bade ill;  
Sultry summer had a long night's chill.  
In that limpid river you sank alone to depart—  
Could its waters cleanse your forlorn heart?

## 其三

把 酒 論 當 世

Bǎ jiǔ lùn dāng shì,  
Holding wine, opined on the then world,

先 生 小 酒 人

Xiān - shēng xiǎo jiǔ rén.  
[You,] sir, little/belittle drinking man.

大 園 猶 酩 酊

Dà huán yóu mǐng - dǐng,  
Great universe is as if reeling intoxicated,

微 醉 自 沈 淪

Wēi zuì zì chén - lún.  
Slightly drunk, by yourself sunk-down.

此 別 成 終 古

Cǐ bié chéng zhōng gǔ,  
This parting shall be till end of ages,

從 茲 絕 緒 言

Cóng zī jué xù - yán.  
From here on cut-off provocative words.

故 人 雲 散 盡

Gù - rén yún sǎn jìn.  
Old/former friends clouds scatter completely,

我 亦 等 輕 塵

Wǒ yì děng qīng chén.  
I also equal light dust.

3. Goblet in hand, you held forth on the day;  
To a bit of drinking, often gave way.<sup>12</sup>  
Sure 'twas drink the whole world did confound,  
That alone, slightly drunk, you could sink and then drown.  
This time our parting will be forever,  
What you left unsaid, I'll know now never.<sup>13</sup>  
Old friends finished like a cloud by a gust,  
Thus what am I but some specks of light dust!<sup>14</sup>

袁克昌三章

黃棘

風雨飄揚日。余懷危。憂。憂。晨。華。顛。蓋。空。女。臨。白。眼。眉。眉。羅。世。味。  
秋。荼。苦。一。間。直。道。窮。奈。行。三。月。別。家。遠。燭。火。時。躬。

海。草。因。門。與。多。年。走。息。鄉。狐。狸。方。去。穴。桃。偶。盡。壘。塢。故。里。  
別。雲。老。矣。天。潭。後。長。獨。沈。清。湖。能。公。洗。愁。腸。

把。酒。偷。當。世。先生。小。酒。大。圈。猶。如。自。後。知。自。然。倫。乎。成。  
於。左。從。茲。絕。緒。言。故。人。雲。散。盡。我。心。等。輕。塵。

歌于愛者。此如之。惟思日三。今去。諸。科。並。外。各。成。言。三。章。隨。于。寫。之。字。念。

將。理。世。做。人。生。其。奇。地。妙。絕。辟。歷。一。聲。連。如。云。天。飛。恨。美。余。亦。不。希。

大。筆。定。家。筆。定。如。公。莫。乃。不。及。汝。此。世。已。五。工。未。成。仰。見。之。久。世。我。上。皇。皇。例。

三于美乎

二十于

樹人誌



## Notes

1. See *Selected Works*, 1, pp. 410–421, for Lu Xun's own account of this and subsequent events under discussion.

2. Schultz, "Lu Hsün," p. 133.

3. *Selected Works*, 1, p. 418. This piece titled *Fan Ainong* was written by Lu Xun in 1926. The information inserted in brackets is my own. I have altered the romanization of proper names.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 419–420. I have revised the Yangs' translation and corrected one omission. The standing corpse is probably a symbol of defiance, and the water caltrops make it sound a bit like Qu Yuan.

5. Ni Moyan, p. 49.

6. According to Lu Xun's diary, the day he composed these poems lamenting Fan Ainong's death was one of fierce winds and storm. It was also on such a night that Fan went to his watery grave. But this phrase in Chinese is also a common metaphor for a time of crisis or a precarious situation. Such were the conditions in which the ill-led infant Republic of China found itself. Speaking of Lu Xun's 1926 prose piece titled *Fan Ainong*, William Schultz states: "It is a description of his strange friendship with this sympathetic figure, which then becomes the vehicle for a post-mortem judgment of the 1911 Revolution" (Schultz, "Lu Hsün," p. 133). I feel it important for those reading these poems not to underestimate Lu Xun's indictment of local Shaoxing society as well as the national political climate for the role they had in bringing about Fan Ainong's demise.

7. The expression involving "looking at someone with the whites of one's eyes" (as a gesture of contempt) is said to have originated with the poet Ruan Ji (210–263), who lived during the Jin dynasty and was a member of a coterie of eccentric intellectuals referred to as the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove. As *juan* 49 of the *Jin shu* [History of the Jin dynasty] relates, Ruan Ji looked people whom he liked directly in the eye, letting them see the dark-colored irises of his eyes. Upon encountering someone who displeased him, however, he flashed a glance toward the sky, exposing the whites of his eyes to express his displeasure. See *Jin shu* (Peking: Zhonghua, 1974), 5, p. 1361. Lu Xun, when he first encountered Fan Ainong in Japan, wrote of him: "The speaker was a tall, burly fellow with long hair and more white than black in his eyes, who always seemed to be looking at people contemptuously." *Selected Works*, 1, p. 411.

A colleague of Lu Xun and Fan Ainong at the Shaoxing Normal School, He Jizhong, was often characterized as a lickspittle and toady to those in power. On occasion, he attempted to have Fan Ainong demoted or fired, and for this Fan, Lu Xun, and their friends crowned him with the demeaning epithet *jichong*, a pun on his given name Jizhong. See Zhou Xiashou (Zhou Zuoren), *Lu Xun xiaoshuo li de renwu* [The characters in Lu Xun's stories] (Shanghai: Shanghai chuban gongsi, 1954), p. 104. The word *jichong* is a reference to an image from Du Fu's (712–770) *Fu ji xing* [Ballad on trussing a chicken], in which the poet inveighs against people preying upon one another

by reflecting on how a chicken that once fiercely stalked ants in his courtyard now squawks and struggles at being trussed up for market by a servant in the poet's household. Thus, the epithet was intended both as a pun on He Jizhong's given name and as a reference to his preying upon those in positions inferior to his own. After Lu Xun left the Shaoxing Normal School in 1912 for Nanking, He Jizhong ingratiated himself with Fu Lichen, the new headmaster and concurrent leader of the local Confucian Moral Rearmament League. Soon this neoconservative block pushed Fan out of his job and into financial straits, bringing about his increasing despondency.

8. A literal rendering of this couplet might read: "Society's tastes were, to him, as bitter as the *tu* plant in autumn [*Sonchus oleraceus*, a bitter edible plant at the height of its most pungent season]; In this world, however, those who stick to the paths of righteousness are readily ruined [i.e., righteousness is ruin]."

9. *Jigong*, here rendered as "this uncouth friend," refers to a person who is markedly different from others, consequently thought of as weird, and thus rejected or ostracized. Yet because his ways may be very much in accordance with Nature, he is to be admired. The *Dai zong shi* [Great and venerable teacher] chapter of the book of *Zhuangzi* has this line: "The person deemed *ji* is *ji* to other people but is in accordance with [the way of] Nature." See Chen Guying, *Zhuangzi*, 1, p. 194. Here Lu Xun is using *jigong* as a sympathetic appellation for Fan Ainong.

10. Lu Xun spent a total of seven years (1902–1909) studying in Japan. Fan Ainong went to Japan in 1905 in the same group as Xu Xilin, but remained a bit longer than Lu Xun.

11. Cao Liwu (p. 11), basing himself on a gloss of the character *hu* ("fox") as *yao shou* ("demon beast") from the *shuowen jiezi*, says this line refers to the death of the empress dowager Ci Xi (the fox). That seems a bit far-fetched. The standard interpretation of this couplet is that as soon as the Manchus (the "foxes") were toppled, their former commanding general—with his own imperial aspirations—Yuan Shikai (1859–1916) and his underlings took over the government of the Republic of China. Here Lu Xun, referring to them as "peachwood puppets," likens Yuan Shikai and his henchmen to puppets of foreign imperialism. See Ni Moyan, pp. 52–53. This interpretation is based on a statement by Xu Shoushang in *Renshi de*, pp. 25–26: "I particularly love this couplet because from it it becomes apparent that he [Lu Xun] had already seen through Yuan Shikai and knew he was about to start his machinations [against the Republic]." Another plausible understanding is that the lines are meant to denounce the local Shaoxing authorities as puppets and instruments of warlords like Wang Jinfa and the landlord class. See Zhang Xiangtian (1972), 1, pp. 64–65. Lu Xun's essay on Fan Ainong hints at the latter interpretation in its discussion of how little real effect the 1911 Revolution had on their own locale:

As winter approached we grew more hard up; still, we went on drinking and joking. Then suddenly came the uprising, and after that Shaoxing was freed. That following day Ainong came to town in a felt cap of the type farmers often wear. I had never seen him with such a smiling face.

"Let's not drink today, Xun. I want to see free Shaoxing. Come out with me."

So we walked through the streets, and saw white flags everywhere. But though outwardly all was changed, beneath the surface all went on as before; for this was a military government organized by a few of the old-style gentry. The chief shareholder in the railway company was head of the administration, the money-lender had become director of the arsenal. . . .

*Selected Works*, 1, p. 415. Transcriptions have been altered. Cao Liwu (pp. 12-13) suggests that the power of these lines lies precisely in the way they move the mind's eye of the reader from the center to the periphery.

12. Some commentators gloss the character *xiao* as a verb meaning *xiao kan* ("to regard [other drinkers] with contempt"). See Xia Mingzhao, p. 45; Ni Moyan, p. 53. This seems too much in contradiction with the first line to me.

13. The Chinese term *xuyan*, rendered here as "what you left unsaid," can be used to describe a provocative statement left unfinished as an inducement for the listener to ponder over its meaning. The allusion originates in the *Yu fu* [Old fisherman] chapter of *Zhuangzi* in a sentence supposedly spoken by Confucius to hail an old fisherman who had just made some critical observations about Confucius and then left the scene. The line goes: "Confucius said, 'A moment ago, sir, you made some *xuyan* ("incomplete or prefatory remarks") and then left.'" Chen Guying, ed., *Zhuangzi*, 3, p. 816.

14. "Specks of dust" (*qing chen*) is a Buddhist image for the transitory nature of human life in the mortal world. Lu Xun invoked the same image in a similar context in his December 27, 1933, letter to Tai Jingnong, saying: "I've never seen a situation like that which we have on our hands now in my entire life. Of my friends in the last thirty years, no matter if they were my own age or but half my age, there are truly only a handful of survivors. My sorrow turns to anger and thereupon I often view myself as nothing but a few specks of dust. Yet at times I get the idea I should take care of myself, if only to spare my loved ones pain and to avoid giving my enemies any pleasure." *Quanji* (1961), 9, p. 357.

## For Wu Qishan (Uchiyama Kanzō)

贈 鄔 其 山

(Zeng Wu Qishan)

FEBRUARY OR MARCH 1931

WU QISHAN is intended as a sinicized name for Lu Xun's Japanese friend Uchiyama Kanzō (1885–1959), the proprietor of Neishan shudian (Uchiyama's Bookstore) in Shanghai. Previous Chinese commentary on Lu Xun's poetry suggests that the name Wu Qishan was given Uchiyama in jest by Lu Xun.<sup>1</sup> Ni Moyan, basing himself on an article by Xu Guangping (Lu Xun's widow), disputes this, contending that *wu qi* is nothing more than a transliteration of the initial sound *uchi* in Uchiyama's name, and that Uchiyama had adopted it himself.<sup>2</sup> The Chinese character *shan*, being read *yama* in Japanese, one got a closer approximation of the Japanese pronunciation of at least the first two syllables in the surname *Uchiyama* when pronouncing the graphs in Chinese.

After Lu Xun moved to Shanghai in October of 1927, he became a frequent patron of Uchiyama's Bookstore, buying mostly Japanese translations of Russian and other foreign books. In March of 1930, after having been elected to the seven-man executive committee of the League of Left-Wing Writers, Lu Xun became apprehensive about being tailed by police agents and hid in Uchiyama's Bookstore for over a month. At the time, Kuomintang authorities were, for the most part, hesitant to seize Chinese in the houses or on the property of foreign nationals. Again, after the arrest of Rou Shi and the other leftist writers, Uchiyama helped Lu Xun and his family obtain lodgings at a Japanese-owned guesthouse in Shanghai on January 20, 1931. During the January Twenty-eighth Conflict the following year, Uchiyama again proved instrumental in preserving Lu Xun's safety, taking him in and later conducting him, through gunfire, to a branch store he operated in the British concession of Shanghai.<sup>3</sup>

Uchiyama's devotion to Lu Xun continued even after the latter's

death. During World War II when Shanghai was under the control of a quisling government, Lu Xun's grave was desecrated. According to Xu Guangping, it was Uchiyama who secretly restored it.<sup>4</sup> In 1959, while leading a Sino-Japanese friendship delegation to China, Uchiyama died of a stroke and was buried in Shanghai, in compliance with his own request.

In this poem, Lu Xun makes sarcastic reference to the antics of various Chinese politicians and warlords over the then short history of the Republic. According to an article published in 1961, by Xu Guangping, the poem was prompted by the following observation made by the Japanese bookman to Lu Xun:

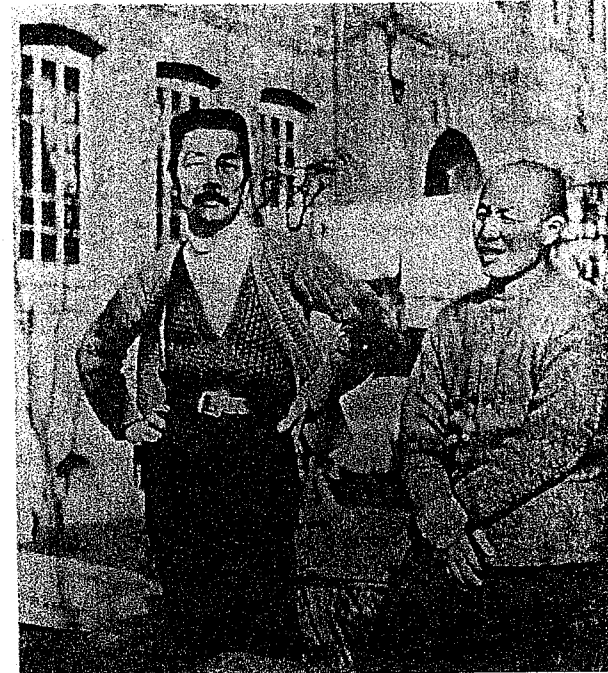
In the twenty years I've lived in Shanghai, I've noticed Chinese politicians and warlords behaving in the exact manner of their Japanese counterparts. This is to say that they spend their days biding time until they can get into positions of power, whereupon they set out to kill off, in the greatest possible numbers, all those who once stood against them. But should the situation become disadvantageous to them, they again lie low temporarily, declaring their retirement from the political arena in order to sneak off the scene and out of sight.<sup>5</sup>

Lu Xun must have been pleased by his Japanese friend's perceptiveness, for he produced this poem as a gift for Uchiyama the very next day. When Uchiyama asked him to affix his name seal, the poet, being caught without his personal chop, smeared his finger into a gob of red ink normally used for seals and made a fingerprint autograph.

Though the poem is at first glance written in the style of *wuyan liushi*, it fails to conform to the strict rhyme scheme set down traditionally for that verse form. Aside from a slight incongruity in the first line, the word *bua* ("splendors") at the end of the second line falls into the tonal classification of *xia pingsheng* ("lower level-tone") and belongs to the rhyme category of *ma* ("hemp"). The word *shu* ("book") at the end of the fourth line is a *shang ping-sheng* ("upper level-tone") in the rhyme category of *yu* ("fish"). The sixth line ends with the character *duo* ("many"), which falls under the rhyme category of *ge* ("song"). The poet then has the last line end with *tuo* (used in transliterating Sanskrit). That character is, like *duo*, in the category of *ge*.

In view of the above, the poet has employed three separate rhymes and has overstepped the bounds for complying with the strict rules of the regulated verse form. Judging from the depth of Lu Xun's knowledge of classical Chinese poetics, it is not likely that he would make an error. There are two possible explanations for the form employed: one, that this was deliberately intended as a type of *dayou shi* (doggerel

verse) to emphasize farcical overtones; the second has been suggested by Lu Xun's old friend Xu Shouhang: "In 'For Wu Qishan,' the use of *bua*, *yu*, *duo*, and *tuo* in the same rhyme is in accordance with the conventions of the *gushi* (ancient verse) style. But this use of characters from the *ma* and *yu* categories as rhyming words in a poem of regulated-verse style may indeed be termed unconventional (*qite*)" (*Renshi de*, p. 82).



Lu Xun (left) with the Japanese bookman in Shanghai (1933).

廿 年 居 上 海

Niàn nián jū Shàng - hǎi,  
A score of years living [in] Shanghai,

每 日 見 中 華

Měi rì jiàn Zhōng - huá.  
Every day seeing Middle Splendor.

有 病 不 求 藥

Yǒu bìng bù qiú yào,  
There is sickness [yet] no seeking remedies,

無 聊 纔 讀 書

Wú - liáo cái dú shū.  
[Out of] boredom only then is study [taken up].

一 潤 臉 就 變

Yī kuò liǎn jiù biàn,  
As soon as prosperous, faces immediately change,

所 砍 頭 漸 多

Suǒ kǎn tóu jiàn duō.  
Those-being severed heads gradually increase.

忽 而 又 下 野

Hū - ér yòu xià yě,  
[Then] suddenly again down to countryside,

南 無 阿 彌 陀

Ná - mó Ā - mí - tuó.  
[Chanting:] "Namah Amitabha!" [a Buddhist incantation].

Twenty years in Shanghai did you stay,<sup>6</sup>  
Glimpsing China's splendors every day:<sup>7</sup>  
Afflictions for which medicine's not sought,  
And study just as boredom's afterthought;<sup>8</sup>  
A volte-face when fortune comes their way<sup>9</sup>—  
Decapitations increase by the day.  
Then suddenly they're on the outs again,<sup>10</sup>  
"Let's trust the Amitabha Lord, Amen!"<sup>11</sup>

廿年居上海每日見中輩  
有病不求藥無聊纔讀書一  
個腔就受所坎歎氣無常  
又下野亭免阿彌陀

辛未初春書情

鄭其山先生教正

魯也

13.  
For Mr. O. E. on the Occasion of  
His Return [to Japan] with  
[a Shipment of] Orchids

送 O.E. 君携蘭歸國

(Song O. E. jun xie lan gui guo)

FEBRUARY 12, 1931

"O. E." STANDS FOR the name of the Japanese merchant Obara Eijirō, whom Lu Xun had met through his friend Uchiyama Kanzō (see the previous chapter). In his diary on February 12, 1931, Lu Xun recorded that Obara, owner of Keikadō, a business in Tokyo that specialized in assorted Chinese goods and floral articles, was about to depart for Japan. Lu Xun composed a *jueju* (in this case, a heptasyllabic quatrain) to present to him.<sup>1</sup>

The poem was not published until August 10 of that year, when it appeared in number 22 of the periodical *Wenyi xinwen* [Literature and art news], along with two of his later poems, under the headline "Lu Xun's Grief and Anger—Expressed in Classical Poetry." An editor's note followed:

We have learned that some Japanese sojourning in Shanghai would, at times, ask Lu Xun for a piece of writing as a souvenir, and that owing to his particularly troubled state of mind at the time, he would write out some poems he had thought of already, just to comply with their requests. From those Japanese nationals, we obtained the following three verses. Additionally, we were informed that they were composed after the Changsha Incident and the news of the deaths of Rou Shi et al.; this accounts for the tones of grief and anger expressed therein.<sup>2</sup>

Ni Moyan suspects the editor's informant to have been Lu Xun himself rather than his Japanese friends.<sup>3</sup>

On January 17, 1931, thirty-six suspected Communist conspirators were arrested at a meeting in Shanghai by the British police of the

International Settlement and handed over to the Kuomintang authorities.<sup>4</sup> Those arrested included five young writers, four of whom were known to Lu Xun through their activities in the League of Left-Wing Writers, a Communist-front cultural organization, of which he (Lu Xun) was the titular head. Lu Xun's name and address having been found on the person of one of the arrested parties, rumor had it that a warrant had also been issued for his arrest. Consequently, on January 20, he fled with his wife, child, and maid to a Japanese-owned guest-house, where he remained in hiding for a period of thirty-nine days until the heat died down.

Deep in the night of February 7, 1931, a group of twenty-three people, including the five writers, were secretly executed at the Long Hua Garrison Headquarters. Lu Xun, though suspecting the worst, was still trying to gather enough money for their bail on February 16. No Chinese newspapers carried the news of the executions. On February 24, in a letter to Cao Jinghua, Lu Xun wrote that he had learned the ill tidings from a Japanese paper.

These executions served only to intensify his hatred of the Nationalist government. In her dissertation on Lu Xun's later years, Harriet Mills states that to Lu Xun, Rou Shi (Zhao Pingfu, 1901–1931), one of the victims, had become the very symbol of all the sacrificed youths of China.<sup>5</sup> In the period following their deaths, Lu Xun wrote for an underground memorial publication of the League of Left-Wing Writers:

Since the rulers knew their flunkey-writers were no match for the revolutionary literature of the proletariat, they started banning books, closing bookshops, issuing repressive publishing laws, and putting authors on the black list. And now they have sunk to the lowest tactics of all—arresting and imprisoning left-wing writers and putting them to death in secret—they still have not made this "execution" public. While this proves them to be creatures of darkness about to perish, it testifies also to the strength of the camp of revolutionary literature of the Chinese proletariat.<sup>6</sup>

As to the poem for Obara Eijirō, I believe the first line to be indicative of Lu Xun's concern for the fate of the arrested writers, all youths in their twenties. The second line seems to be a testimony of the extent to which writers, including the poet himself, were subject to persecution and intimidation in the China of the 1930s. The third line reveals a feeling of warmth and friendship, offered despite the ill times in the poet's homeland and the growing animosity between the two nations, to the visitor from Japan. A twist then comes in the concluding line, which hits the reader through the sheer force of its imagery.

椒 焚 桂 折 佳 人 老

Jiāo fén guì zhé, jiā rén lǎo,  
Pepper-plant burned, cassia plucked, comely person[s] grow old,

獨 託 幽 巖 展 素 心

Dú tuō yōu yán zhǎn sù - xīn.  
Only consigned to secluded crags open-up pure-hearts.

豈 惜 芳 馨 遺 遠 者

Qǐ xī fāng - xīn wèi yuǎn - zhě,  
How could begrudge fragrant scents given to one-from-afar,

故 鄉 如 醉 有 荆 榛

Gù - xiāng rú zuì yǒu jīng zhēn.  
Native land like drunk has brambles thorns.

Pepper plant aflame and flowering cassia broken,<sup>7</sup>

comely men grow old.<sup>8</sup>

Only consigned to secluded crags

can pure hearts unfold.<sup>9</sup>

How can we feel reluctant to part with

these fragrant scents for one from afar,<sup>10</sup>

When our own old home, as if drunk,

has its brambles and thorns [to prick and scar].<sup>11</sup>

## Notes

1. *Lu Xun riji* [Lu Xun's diaries] (Shanghai: Shanghai chuban gongsi, 1951), 19.4b5-6 (i.e., *ce* 19, folio 4; "b" or verso side, lines 5 to 6). This is a traditionally bound edition of the diary, reproduced photostatically from the original in Lu Xun's own hand, hereafter to be cited as *Riji*, followed by a *ce*, folio, side, and line number as above.

2. As quoted in Ni Moyan, p. 73. For a brief description of the Changsha Incident, see chapter 16, note 3.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

4. Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *Policing Shanghai 1927-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 174. For a detailed study, see Hsia Tsi-an, *Enigma of the Five Martyrs: A Study of the Leftist Literary Movement in Modern China*, op. cit., reprinted in T. A. Hsia, *The Gate of Darkness* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), pp. 163-233.

5. Mills, "Lu Hsün," p. 288.

6. *Selected Works*, 3, p. 107.

7. Traditionally, the pepper and cassia were used to symbolize virtuous men of high principle. Their destruction may represent Lu Xun's apprehension about the fate of Rou Shi and the others taken into custody. Cf. the phrase *lan cui yu zhe* (literally, "the orchid has withered and the jade is broken"), used commonly in classical writing as a metaphor for the death of a man of virtue while still young.

8. *Jiaren lao* ("comely men grow old") suggests that the forces of good are battered and worn down by evil. Zhou Zhenfu has maintained that *jiaren*, which literally means "beauties" or "beautiful women," is a sarcastic reference to "fair-weather" leftists and literati—remnants of Lu Xun's own May Fourth generation who went back on their former ideals to make propaganda for the government or had been frightened into silence by the anti-Communist White terror; see Zhou Zhenfu, p. 71. I doubt that because the switch of topics within the same line would be too sudden.

9. *Suxin*, a literary name for the orchid, means "pure heart," or "white heart"; it symbolizes purity of character and purpose. In times such as these, those determined to keep the cause alive would have to lie low, hence the image of *you yan* ("secluded crags"). The character *you* in classical Chinese is used like the archaic meaning of "abstruse" in English, implying "hidden," "unknown," "secret," or "obscure."

10. This line refers literally to the shipment of fragrant orchids (*fang-xin*) that Obara makes ready to take with him to Japan.

11. *Guxiang* ("our own old home") is a reference to one's native area or hometown but is used here with the implication of the poet's entire homeland. *Ru zui* ("as if drunk") signifies a state of exaggerated turbidity. "Brambles and thorns" (*jing zhen*) are plants that draw blood and probably symbolize the suppression by the Kuomintang of dissidents and their sympathizers,



傲焚桂折佳人老獨能  
巖展素心豈惜言  
遠者故鄉如醉有荆榛  
還日中三扇居攜扇東歸作

hence my addition to rhyme. Cf. Zhang Xiangtian (1972), 1, p. 88. Zhang feels that these thorns are used as a reference to "poisonous weeds," i.e., pieces of literature produced by "flunkey writers" with the official stamp of approval for circulation in Kuomintang-ruled China. In view of Lu Xun's use of a similar term, *jingji* ("bramble bushes"), in a letter of February 18, 1931, to Li Bingzhong, I cannot wholeheartedly agree with Zhang's interpretation. The second sentence in that letter runs: "Living at this time and in this place is truly as if dwelling amid a bramble thicker; it is especially disgusting to find that among our compatriots there are those who fatten themselves by selling the very lives and limbs of others" *Quanji* (1961), 9, p. 319. This clearly refers to his external surroundings. Iritani Sensuke says that the entire poem, and the fate of the orchids in particular, underscores the fact that it was composed in a time of crisis for China. It is not so much a depiction of the revolutionaries' resistance to oppression as it is of their tragic fate. Iritani also summarizes Wu Benxing's views in *Lu Xun jiusbi xintan* [New explorations into Lu Xun's old-style poetry] (Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 1981) that the *jiaren* of the first line refers not only to the hard-pressed revolutionists but to the poet himself. See *Rojin zenshū*, 9, p. 185. My own reading of the poem is that the orchids symbolize beauty and integrity here, as they do in the *Li sao*. See *Chu ci zhijie*, pp. 40, 44. Despite his disclaimers to the contrary, the poet mourns their departure for Japan all the more acutely when he turns back to look upon the brambles and thorns that are left in their native place. This line provides a good contrast with the *Li sao*, where the speaker is overcome at the end by feelings of nostalgia for his homeland (*Chu ci zhijie*, pp. 76-77). Nevertheless, like Qu Yuan, Lu Xun preferred to remain in his homeland, however debased, rather than seek asylum abroad.



The martyred writer Rou Shi.

## 14.

## A Lament for Rou Shi

悼柔石

(Dao Rou Shi)

LATE FEBRUARY 1931

IT IS POSSIBLE that Lu Xun composed this poem on the very night that news of the deaths of Rou Shi and the other leftist writers, who later came to be collectively referred to as the "Five Martyrs," reached him (see the preceding chapter). Two years later, in an essay on their tragic deaths titled *Weile wangque de jinian* [In memoriam in order to forget], he described his feelings at the time he learned of their execution: "Deep in the night I stood alone in the courtyard of a [Japanese-run] inn, surrounded by piled-up junk. Everyone around was asleep, as were my wife and son. I was profoundly aware that I had lost a true friend, and China one of her best youths. When my sorrow and rage had stilled a bit, old habits came to the fore again, resulting in my rattling off these verses."<sup>1</sup>

This poem was originally untitled, but it has most frequently been referred to in Chinese sources either under the title of the aforementioned essay in which it first appeared or by a title consisting of the poem's first four words, *guan yu chang ye* (literally, "Accustomed to long nights . . ."). I have taken *Dao Rou Shi* [A lament for Rou Shi] as the title here since Lu Xun himself once referred to it as such in a December 20, 1934, letter to his editor Yang Jiyun.<sup>2</sup>

The form of the poem is *qiyán liūshí* or heptasyllabic regulated verse. According to Ni Moyan, four different manuscripts of the poem exist, each with minor variations.<sup>3</sup>

慣	于	長	夜	過	春	時
Guàn	yú	cháng	yè	guò	chūn	shí,
Accustomed to		long	night[s]	passing	spring	time,
挈	婦	將	雛	鬢	有	絲
Qiè	fù	jiāng	chú	bìn	yǒu	sī.
Leading	wife,	taking	young; [my] temples have [white] silk.			
夢	裏	依	稀	慈	母	淚
Mèng	lǐ	yī	xī	cí	mǔ	lèi,
Dream	within	faintly	[see]	loving	mother's	tears,
城	頭	變	幻	大	王	旗
Chéng	tóu	biàn	huàn	dài	wáng	qí.
City-wall	atop	change	illusorily	"great	kings"	banners.
忍	看	朋	輩	成	新	鬼
Rěn	kàn	péng	bèi	chéng	xīn	guǐ,
To bear	looking-on	as	friends	become	new	ghosts,
怒	向	刀	叢	覓	小	詩
Nù	xiàng	dāo	cóng	mì	xiǎo	shī.
In anger	face	knife	thicket	seeking	little	verse[s].
吟	罷	低	眉	無	寫	處
Yín	bà	dī	méi	wú	xiě	chù,
Chanting	done;	lowering	brows,	there is no	writing	place,
月	光	如	水	照	緇	衣
Yuè	guāng	rú	shuǐ	zhào	zī	yī.
Moon's	rays	like	water	shine upon	black	clothing.

To long and sleepless night I've grown  
accustomed in the spring;<sup>4</sup>  
Fled with a wife and babe in arms,  
my temples are graying.  
'Mid dream there comes an image faint—  
a loving mother's tear;<sup>5</sup>  
On city walls the overlords<sup>6</sup>  
e'er-changing banners rear.<sup>7</sup>  
I can but stand by looking on  
as friends become new ghosts,<sup>8</sup>  
In anger face bayonet thickets<sup>9</sup>  
and search for verse ripostes.  
The poem intoned, my gaze turns low—  
one cannot write such down.<sup>10</sup>  
Moonlight shimmers with watery sheen  
upon my jet-black gown.

慣于長夜過春時  
翠婦將雛寄嶺  
有無夢裏依稀  
慈母淚城頭  
紅大玉棋  
思看朋輩成  
新愛  
向刁邊  
覓小詩吟  
霜紙  
紙看  
高  
愛月  
光如水  
照  
踏衣

中年春作  
錄  
香市見教

香  
正



## Notes

1. *Quanji* (1961), 4, p. 374. This is my own translation; for an English translation of this essay, see *Selected Works*, 3, pp. 202–213. The Yangs' 1980 revised translation uses the title "Written for the Sake of Forgetting." *Selected Works* (1980), 3, pp. 234–246.

2. *Quanji* (1961), 10, p. 224.

3. Ni Moyan, p. 79.

4. This line also suggests that the prime years of the poet's life have been passed amid such circumstances (as darkness and flight), further intensifying the irony of the couplet.

5. The mother could be either Lu Xun's mother who, hearing reports of her son's arrest and possible death, became ill with anxiety over his fate, or Rou Shi's blind mother, of whom Lu Xun wrote:

I remember Rou Shi had gone home just before New Year's and stayed so long that upon his return some of his friends reproached him. He told me in great distress that his mother had lost her sight in both eyes and that when she urged him to stay a bit longer, he could not bear to leave. I know how that blind mother felt and of Rou Shi's devotion to her. When *Bei dou* [The dipper] was first published, I wanted to write something about Rou Shi but could not. All I could do to commemorate him was to select Käthe Kollwitz' woodcut *The Sacrifice*, showing a mother giving up her son and depicting all the agony entailed therein. I alone knew that this was meant to commemorate Rou Shi. (*Quanji* [1961], 4, p. 374. Many commentators favor the former explanation. I would be more drawn to the latter, however, especially in view of the "title" used for this poem by Lu Xun himself—JK.)

6. The term *daiwang* ("overlord") was used historically to address chiefs of bandits. It is sarcastic in tone here, being composed of the characters *da* ("big") and *wang* ("king"). One commentator feels it refers specifically to Chiang Kai-shek; see Zhang Xiangtian (1972), 1, p. 102.

7. A Zhou Yang era (i.e., 1950s) interpretation says this line "refers to the contradictions and conflicts between the Kuomintang government in Nanking and the warlord powers in various locales, which resulted in outbreaks of armed conflict" (*Quanji* [1961], 4, p. 555). Although it stands to reason that Lu Xun would be disgusted by this, I fail to see how it enters into the suppression, arrest, and killing of leftist authors in Shanghai, a politically motivated action taken by the Kuomintang to consolidate its control over Shanghai. Rather, I am partial to the interpretation of Zhang Xiangtian, who holds that "banners" refer to slogans and propaganda reflecting the Kuomintang central government's fickle policies, ranging from trumpeting the "Rule of Law" one day to routing their doctrine of "Political Tutelage" the next ([1972], 1, p. 103). Such arbitrary designations reflected policy changes

on civil liberties that might well cost the actual lives of vulnerable dissidents then active in the urban areas under central government authority. The incident involving the execution of the "Five Martyrs" is but one case in point.

In *Enigma of the Five Martyrs* (pp. 6–10), the late critic T. A. Hsia has suggested that the deaths of these young writers may be attributable to internecine quarreling between two factions of the Communist Party in Shanghai. According to Hsia's account, the police of the International Settlement at Shanghai burst into a preparatory meeting for the All-China Congress of Soviets on January 17, 1931, after having been tipped off by an informer loyal to the more orthodox pro-Comintern leadership, which Rou Shi and the others opposed. One is impressed by the possibility that the "Five Martyrs" were, indeed, engaged in setting up a rival Li-Lisanist leadership faction along with the other participants in that ill-fated meeting. This would have broad implications in interpreting the poem in question were it not unlikely that Lu Xun was aware of any such double-dealing at the time; moreover, the fact that the writers were put to death by the Kuomintang authorities, to whom they were handed over by the foreign police, would still place the burden of guilt, in Lu Xun's eyes, squarely on the Nationalist government.

8. The words *ren kan* here mean "to endure the sight of" (some hideous or unbearable thing). *Ren* is probably not being used rhetorically, as a number of Chinese commentators hold, to mean *qi ren* or "how can one bear . . . ?" The original version of the poem, recorded in Lu Xun's diary on July 11, 1932, as written out for Yamamoto Hatsue, uses *yan kan* ("to witness before one's very eyes," "to watch helplessly," or "to look on passively as . . .") in the place of *ren kan*. Though the revision is of Lu Xun's own hand, the *intended* meaning becomes clear when the different textual versions are compared.

The image of people freshly slaughtered turning into "new ghosts" harks back to a line from an antiwar poem by the Tang master Du Fu titled *Dui xue* [Toward the snow]: "When battle's done, many a new ghost cries." This term has been in use as far back as the *Zuo zhuan* [Zuo commentary], where the statement "I've seen that new ghosts are enormous, whereas the old ones are small" occurs (Duke Wen section, year 2). See James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, reprint 1970), 5, pp. 232–234.

9. *Daocong* (literally, "knife thicker") is reminiscent of the image *daolin jianshu* ("groves of knives and trees of swords") used in descriptions of the Buddhist hell, where they are implements of torment.

10. The import of this line is that because of government censorship, there is no chance for writing like this poem (or any other such outpouring of grief and anger) to see print. Lu Xun himself explained the phrase, saying, "In China at that time this poem could not be published. We were sealed up more tightly than in a tin can." *Quanji* (1961), 4, p. 374.

16.  
Untitled

無題

(Wuti)  
MARCH 5, 1931

LU XUN WROTE this pentasyllabic regulated verse for Katayama Matsuno, fiancée of Uchiyama Kakichi, the younger brother of his friend Uchiyama Kanzō.<sup>1</sup>

The poem makes reference to the state of his troubled homeland in the years immediately preceding its composition, "years of civil war and record floods, children sold because of destitution, decapitated heads on display, secret assassinations, and confessions extracted by electric shock under Kuomintang rule," as he was to describe them, writing later in 1931.<sup>2</sup> Since their first publication in August of that year, this poem and that in the next chapter have been identified with Lu Xun's grief at the loss of the "Five Martyrs" and the outbreak of civil war.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning in December of 1930, the Kuomintang leadership launched the first of its "Encircle and Annihilate" (*weijiao*) campaigns against the Communist base area known as the Jiangxi Soviet. The so-called soviet districts (*suqu*) were military strongholds incorporating adjacent villages in the mountains and plains of central China, to which the Communist forces had fled in 1927 after Chiang Kai-shek's victorious putsch, but this particular attempt to root out the Reds proved disastrous for its instigators. Aside from their campaign's commander being captured, the Nationalist forces also lost a good deal of military supplies to the Communists, who were in dire need of weapons and provisions at this time.

In successive years, the Nationalist government carried out four more "Encircle and Annihilate" campaigns, each on a more grandiose scale, yet still failed to overcome the tenacious guerrillas. Only in the last of these efforts, with the aid of German military advisers and relying on increased firepower, was it able to force the Reds out of their

base areas in Jiangxi and Fujian (Fukien). Employing tanks, airplanes, and an ever-tightening ring of blockhouses, the Nationalist troops inflicted such severe losses that the Communists had no choice but to break out of the strangling blockade at any cost. In 1934 the Ruijin (Juichin) Soviet Government collapsed and its remaining armies began a treacherously long retreat across China—which later came to be known as the Long March—ending only in mid-1936 with the gathering of survivors in the vicinity of Yan'an (Yen-an), soon to become their new base area in the north.



Lu Xun reclining in a cemetery outside Amoy, September 4, 1926.

大 野 多 鉤 棘

Dà yě duō gōu jí,  
Vast countryside many barbed brambles,

長 天 列 戰 雲

Cháng tiān liè zhàn yún.  
Length [of] sky arrange battle clouds.

幾 家 春 裊 裊

Jǐ jiā chūn niǎo - niǎo,  
How many families in spring [s breezes] a-sway?

萬 籟 靜 惘 惘

Wàn lài jìng wǎng wǎng.  
Ten-thousand sounding things quiet silent, silent . . .

下 土 惟 秦 醉

Xià - tǔ wéi Qín zuì,  
[On] Lower Earth only [due to] Qin's intoxication,

中 流 輟 越 吟

Zhōng - liú chuò Yuè yín.  
[At] mid-current ceases Yue singing.

風 波 一 浩 蕩

Fēng - bō yī hào - dàng,  
Storms/disturbances one spread/burst forth,

花 樹 乃 蕭 森

Huā shù nǎi xiāo - sēn.  
Flowers trees at that point [are] defoliated.

So vast a countryside  
the barbed bramble enflanks,<sup>4</sup>  
Across the lengths of heaven  
warclouds drawn up in ranks.<sup>5</sup>  
Of spring's gentle breezes  
few families enjoy their fill,  
Ten thousand sounding things  
hushed with an ominous still.  
This lower world fell to Qin,  
all of heaven's caprice,<sup>6</sup>  
And now amidst the torrent's course  
our bold Yue songs cease.<sup>7</sup>  
When a seething storm  
bursts forth its turbulence:  
Trees are left barren—  
flowers lose their scents.<sup>8</sup>

## Notes

1. *Riji*, 19.6b6–10. This is the diary entry for March 5, 1931. They married in August 1931 and opened the Tokyo branch of Uchiyama's Bookstore in 1935.

2. *Quanji* (1961), 4, p. 285.

3. See the prefatory statement in chapter 13 for a translation of the editor's note at the time of publication. The Changsha Incident refers to the Red Army's attempts at the seizure and occupation of the Hunan capital, which lasted from July to October of 1930. Enormous casualties were incurred as a result of this botched effort to realize a Communist takeover in the urban areas, later attributed to Li Lisan's (1899–1961) "erroneous line."

4. The "barbed bramble" (*gou ji*) refers to thorny plants. They often symbolize trouble or peril, but in ancient times the graphs were also used to represent spears and halberds—weapons of warfare.

5. This is obviously a reference to the civil war, but whether it points to the Changsha Incident or the Encircle and Annihilate Campaign of December 1930 to January 1931 is still a matter for debate.

6. The "lower world" (*xiatu*) is mortal society and, by extension, the body politic that was China in Lu Xun's day. This line is an allusion to the story narrated in Zhang Heng's (78–139) *fu* ("rhapsody," a genre that intersperses descriptive prose with verse) titled *Xi jing* [Western capital], which states:

In olden times, the Heavenly Emperor [the supreme being] took great delight in Duke Mu of the Qin house, honoring him with an audience in heaven. After much feasting and great revelry, which lasted throughout an entire day, the Heavenly Emperor grew drunk, presenting Duke Mu with a golden tablet [a great land deed], upon which was indicated that the stellar division known as the Quail's Head was to be cut off and vouchsafed to Qin [as sovereign territory].

See Xiao Tong, comp., *Wenxuan* [Selections of refined literature] (Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), *juan* 2, p. 38. Lu Xun seems to employ the allusion to underscore the arbitrary nature of the fashion in which the Nationalist revolution had swung to the right after the death of Sun Yat-sen and the coup by Chiang Kai-shek. Reference to the Qin usually conjures up a comparison with the tyrannical First Emperor (Qin Shihuang) of the Qin dynasty, who reigned from 246 to 210 B.C. See Zhang Xiangtian (1972), 1, p. 125.

7. Another allusion occurs here, this time to the story of Zhuang Xi, a man from the state of Yue who, though in the employ of the king of Chu, never forgot his loyalty to the land of his origin. Lu Xun uses the allusion to swipe at Chiang Kai-shek, who turned from the ideals of the Nationalist revolution while it was still in mid-course, forgetting his political origin as a member of a revolutionary coalition. See Ni Moyan, pp. 91–92.

8. A literal rendering of this line would be "Thereupon, flowers and trees wither and are [made] barren." It is a picture of desolation: perhaps a remembrance of things past, maybe a depiction of the present, but most likely a prediction of dire consequences for China, should its civil war continue. Some versions use the character *yi* ("thereafter") where *nai* ("thereupon") occurs here. Lu Xun produced these variant texts himself.



Lu Xun at an open-air lecture, Peking Normal University, November 1932.



## Ode to the Goddess of the Xiang River

### 湘靈歌

(Xiang ling ge)

MARCH 5, 1931

THIS POEM WAS written out for Matsumoto Saburō on the same day as the preceding two (see chapters 15 and 16). Its title originates in the *Yuan you* [Far-off journey] section of the *Chu ci* [Songs of Chu], which contains the lines:

I made the Hsiang [Xiang] goddesses play on their zithers  
And bade the Sea God dance with the River God.<sup>1</sup>

Legend has it that the Xiang River Goddess (some accounts tell of two goddesses) was either the concubine or the daughter of Emperor Shun (traditional dates, 2255–2208 B.C.) and that her spirit manifests itself eternally near the place where Shun died. References to this river goddess abound in Chinese poetry, including that of Mao Tse-tung, a native of Hunan province, in ancient times part of the Chu kingdom. Generally she is associated with purity and is the constant object of an unrequited quest by a poet or shaman. But her main role in this poem is perhaps as a personification of a legend specific to a certain geographical area—the vicinity of Changsha in Hunan, where great carnage was wrought as a result of the Red Army's thwarted attempts to seize that city from July to October 1930.<sup>2</sup>

In the past, Chinese commentators have offered a number of vastly different explications of the poetic imagery and subject matter of this heptasyllabic regulated verse. Zhou Zhenfu, writing at a time when Chinese artists were being called on to produce a "positive" literature along the lines of Soviet socialist realism, would have us believe that the poem's first four lines portray the beauty of life in the Communist base areas adjacent to the Xiang River valley.<sup>3</sup>

The subject matter of the poem is, however, evident when all the verses are read together as part of the same poetic entity. Lu Xun deals

with the state of China consistently throughout, but on different levels and from separate points of cognition. The first two couplets use unearthly imagery to describe unnatural manifestations in the world of men away from the poet's immediate vicinity and alien to his everyday perceptions. The second half of the poem describes his own feeling of the repression that lurks close at hand, the price it exacts from literary and art circles, and finally the hollowness of the victory enjoyed by those who can silence but cannot convert.



Martyred woman writer Feng Keng.

昔 聞 湘 水 碧 如 染

Xī wén Xiāng shuǐ bì rú rǎn,  
Formerly heard Xiang's waters blue-green like dyed,

今 聞 湘 水 胭脂 痕

Jīn wén Xiāng shuǐ yān - zhī hén.  
Now hear Xiang River [has] rouge/make-up traces.

湘 靈 妝 成 照 湘 水

Xiāng líng zhuāng chéng zhào Xiāng shuǐ,  
Xiang Goddess' make-up complete, reflects on Xiang's waters,

皎 如 皓 月 窺 彤 雲

Jiǎo rú hào yuè kuī tóng yún.  
Pale like/as white moon peeking through red clouds.

高 丘 寂 寞 竦 中 夜

Gāo qiū jì - mò sǒng zhōng yè,  
Lofty hills silent/alone, trembling mid night,

芳 荃 零 落 無 餘 春

Fāng - quán líng - luò wú yú chūn.  
Fragrant plants shed leaves/wither, nothing remains of spring.

鼓 完 瑤 瑟 人 不 聞

Gǔ wán yáo sè rén bù wén,  
Playing finished inlaid zither, person does not hear,

太 平 成 象 盈 秋 門

Tài - píng chéng - xiàng yíng Qiū - mēn.  
Great Peace manifestations fill-up Autumnal Gate.

Once ran the Xiang, 'twas said of old,  
bluer than indigo,

Yet rouge streamers now add new hue  
to her former cyan flow.<sup>4</sup>

The Xiang's surface, made mirror to  
the Goddess' made-up face,  
Shines glowing white like a pale moon  
that crimson clouds encase.<sup>5</sup>

Solitary stillness on this lofty hill—  
fear and trembling deep in night.<sup>6</sup>

Fragrant grasses wither and fall—  
the passing spring gains no respite.<sup>7</sup>

The inlaid zither's final notes  
are heard by none of late,<sup>8</sup>

As the trappings of a wondrous peace  
glut the Autumnal Gate.<sup>9</sup>

## Notes

1. Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'u*, p. 86. Original in *Chu ci zhijie*, p. 266.
2. *Wenyi xinwen* [Literature and art news], no. 22, August 1931. According to this source, published in Shanghai by persons in contact with Lu Xun and his Japanese friends at the time, this poem, like the other two verses presented that day, had been composed at an earlier date, while the news of the Changsha Incident and the executions of Rou Shi et al. was still fresh in Lu Xun's mind; "thence came the tones of grief and indignation."
3. Zhou Zhenfu, pp. 78-80.
4. The poet speaks of *yanzhi ben* ("traces of rouge") running through the Xiang's waters. These have been rendered "rouge streamers" in my translation and symbolize blood mixing into flowing water. It was common practice to dump the bodies of victims of fighting or execution into rivers when there were too many to bury. The Cultural Revolution saw a resurrection of this age-old practice.
5. A background of red-tainted water offsets the already pale face of the goddess, made up, as was the custom of the day, with white powder.
6. The "lofty hill" (*gao qui*), as originally used by Qu Yuan in the *Li sao*, symbolizes the isolation felt by those of high principles from the vulgar practices of roadies and social parasites (*Chu ci zhijie*, p. 61). It is a state of lonely alienation, but nevertheless a voluntary and necessary one. Qu Yuan used it as a symbol of his own plight, as does Lu Xun, deprived of allies and forced to stand alone once more. "Fear and trembling deep in night" (*song zhong ye*) is a graphic description of the so-called *baise kongbu* or "White terror" directed by the Kuomintang government (the "Whites") at leftist writers and artists (the "Reds"). Lu Xun had been victim to all types of threats and harassment by the date of this poem's composition, to say nothing of that which would follow.
7. Since the *Li sao*'s precedent, the term *fang quan* ("fragrant grasses") has been used to represent those of exemplary character, especially in political allegory. Here it most likely refers to the silenced writers such as Rou Shi, cut down by the firing squad. As in Western literature, spring is regarded as a time for growth and development; even that is gone.
8. The Xiang goddess supposedly plays a *yaose* or "inlaid zither." In high antiquity, shamans sought in vain after the elusive player of this divine music, only to find her vanished into thin air. But nowadays, paradoxically, none remain to hear her through.
9. Traditionally, times of peace were "without incident," making this line ironic already. See Cao Liwu, p. 31. The "Autumnal Gate" (*qiumen*) traditionally connotes a national capital—here Nanking. Sarcastic overtones are implied in this use of the term *ying* ("to fill up," here rendered as "glut"). Nanking brags of peace and stability, but at what cost? Also, the Taipings had their capital in Nanking (1853-1864) and reigned supreme in south China

until they lost popular support and were defeated militarily by armies loyal to the alien Manchu dynasty. This may function as a warning to the Kuomintang government now in its proud state of supremacy. To me, *qiumen* sounds a bit like *qiu jue* ("execution in autumn"—traditionally, executions were held in autumn), giving the final line an even more ominous tone: sacrificial victims glut the killing grounds.

*Composed on an Impulse  
in Late Autumn of 1935*

亥年殘秋偶作

(Hainian canqiu ousuo)

DECEMBER 5, 1935

ACCORDING TO Lu Xun's diary, he wrote out this heptasyllabic regulated verse on the above date "for Jishi" (his lifelong friend Xu Shou-shang).<sup>1</sup> From what we know of extant copies of Lu Xun's poems, this is the last classical-style verse he composed before his death of tuberculosis on October 19, 1936. As such, it is fitting that he again took the fate of his country and the welfare of its people to heart in this writing.

Having set up the puppet state Manchukuo in China's northeastern provinces in early 1932, by 1934 Japan had placed the last Manchu emperor of China, Pu Yi, on the throne there. Not content to confine its control to Manchukuo and Jehol, in the spring of 1934 Tokyo declared that no foreign power could take any major action in China without the prior consent of Japan, thereby making clear its plan of turning the whole of China into a Japanese client-state. In June of 1935 the Kuomintang concluded the "He-Umezu Accord" with the commander of Japanese forces in north China. In it, General Umezu Yoshijiro required the withdrawal from the provinces of Hebei and Chahar "any officials, armed detachments, or organizations that might prove unfriendly to Japan." It is to this withdrawal and tacit relinquishing of China's sovereignty that Lu Xun alludes in the fourth line of his verse.<sup>2</sup>

There have been varying interpretations of individual lines in this poem. Looming especially large is the question of whether or not the poet himself is to be taken as the subject in the third couplet. Perhaps the most authoritative statement comes from Xu Shoushang, who wrote: "This poem laments the suffering of the people and shows us the vast range of things that [Lu Xun] took to heart. He was deeply disturbed by much of what he saw. He had no place where he could go for

rest or shelter, so he was invariably tempered in struggle. Yet amid the dismal isolation he feels, the poem is yet infused with the first faint rays of the dawn of hope."<sup>3</sup> In an attempt to refute this poet-centered reading, Ni Moyan makes the point that unless the image of "having no place to go to rest or take shelter" is one describing the plight of the broad masses of common people, Xu Shoushang cannot contend that "this poem laments the sufferings of the people."<sup>4</sup> But it would appear to me in this case that Ni's argument is inappropriate. One needs only to see the first couplet in the poem as a general reference to the plight that befell China in the 1930s, the backdrop for the poem. Writing on September 27, 1933, just after the second anniversary of the Mukden Incident (September 18, 1931), with which pretext the Japanese military had illegally seized control of Manchuria, Lu Xun spoke more specifically of "autumns," saying:

We cannot tell what autumn was like in the earliest geological epochs, but in modern times there is little variation from one year to another. If the autumn before last was a stern one, this is a dismal one, and it looks as if the life of this earth is going to be considerably shorter than the astronomers predicted. Human affairs change most rapidly, however, and poets in particular are struck by the differences between different autumns, conveying them in tragic or pathetic language. . . .

The autumn before last [that of the seizure of Manchuria] did seem a tragic one. Townsfolk raised money, boys and girls risked their necks . . . compatriots [went] empty-handed and unarmed. . . .

In a mere two years, the volunteer troops have become "bandits," and some of the "heroes of the resistance" have settled down in Soochow, while there is even doubt about the war funds. On the anniversary of September 18 in the Chinese Settlement [of Shanghai] prison vans followed the armed patrols, but as a splendid conveyance thoughtfully provided for any "reactionaries" who "meant to seize the chance to stir up trouble." The weather was wretched too, with high winds and driving rain. The papers said this "cyclone" was heaven and earth weeping over China, but between heaven and earth—in the world of men—the day passed "peacefully."

So this has become a "peaceful" if somewhat dispirited autumn, like the season when a mourner lays aside mourning. [Some] poets, however, find such times suit them best. I heard low groans and comfortable words in "Autumn Dusk," published in *Current News* on September 25 and by the author of "Oh, Countrymen, Awake!"

Every autumn my spirits droop, and at dusk in autumn I shed tears. I am well aware that my depression is whipped up by the buffeting autumn wind, and it dawns on me that my surround-

ings are absolutely appropriate to autumn. Softly I caress the sound waves which autumn sends out to Nature. I know that fate has made me an "autumnal" man. . . .

In China today we often see fashionable young ladies chased by hooligans or young revolutionaries chased by detectives. We seldom see men of letters or writers chased. If we could do a little sleuthing for a few months or years, we should discover how many poets turn somersaults to suit the times.

Of course, a living man wants to go on living. Even slaves, the lowest of the low, struggle to survive. But at least they know they are slaves. They endure hardships, burn with resentment and struggle to free themselves—sometimes they succeed in doing so. Even if defeated for a time and fettered again, they are simply slaves. . . . But utterly damned are those who try to find "beauty" in slavery, praising and caressing it or being intoxicated by it, for they try to reconcile themselves and others to being slaves for ever. This slight difference between slaves gives rise to the difference in society between peace and disturbances, and the striking difference in the world of letters between escapist and fighting literature.<sup>5</sup>

The above quotation, though written in 1933, may shed some light on Lu Xun's feelings during the autumn of 1935 as well; for the Kuo-mintang's equivocation in the face of popular sentiment in favor of resisting Japanese aggression had become still clearer by the time of this poem's composition.



At the woodcut exhibition in Shanghai on October 8, 1936, photographed shortly before Lu Xun's death on October 19.

曾 驚 秋 肅 臨 天 下

Céng jīng qiū sù lín tiān - xià,  
Once alarmed at/by fall's grimness approaching heaven-beneath,

敢 遣 春 溫 上 筆 端

Gǎn qiǎn chūn wēn shàng bǐ duān.  
Dare let/set spring's warmth travel-up pen tip?

塵 海 蒼 茫 沈 百 感

Chén hǎi cāng máng chén bǎi gǎn,  
Dust seas hazy vastness [in] sink a hundred emotions,

金 風 蕭 瑟 走 千 官

Jīn fēng xiāo - sè zǒu qiān guān.  
Gold [autumn] wind sighing [amid], flee a thousand officials.

老 歸 大 澤 菰 蒲 盡

Lǎo guī dà zé gū pú jìn,  
Grown old, return to great marshes, reed and rush are spent/gone,

夢 墜 空 雲 齒 髮 寒

Mèng zhuì kōng yún chǐ fà hán.  
Dream plunge empty clouds, teeth hair chilled.

竦 聽 荒 雞 偏 闐 寂

Sǒng tīng huāng jī piān qù jì,  
Strain to listen for untimely cock, but [all is] silent/quiet,

起 看 星 斗 正 闌 干

Qǐ kàn xīng - dòu zhèng lán - gān.  
Rising, see star[s and] dipper just-now transverse [the skies].

Alarmed at autumn's grimness which

bore down upon the earth,<sup>6</sup>

Would I have set my pen to write

how balmy spring is mirth?<sup>7</sup>

Amid dust oceans' vastness sink

my passions hundredfold;<sup>8</sup>

To flee with sighing autumn wind—

officials all make bold!<sup>9</sup>

To marshes in old age return,

where reed and rush are gone,<sup>10</sup>

Chilled to the bone, when dreams that fall

through empty clouds are drawn.<sup>11</sup>

I strain to hear a rooster crow—

in silence all stands by. . .<sup>12</sup>

Arising, see the stars stretch forth,

across the nighttime sky.<sup>13</sup>

## Notes

1. *Riji*, 23.40a10–b3. The poem was originally untitled. The title in common use comes from a postscript appended to the poem by Lu Xun. See Ni Moyan, p. 240.

2. See Ni Moyan, pp. 240–242.

3. Xu Shoushang, *Renshi de*, p. 84.

4. Ni Moyan, p. 243.

5. *Selected Works*, 3, pp. 323–324. Chinese text in *Quanji* (1991), 4, pp. 586–588. The author of “Oh, Countrymen, Awake!,” whom Lu Xun satirizes, is Shao Guanhua, a proponent of “Nationalist Literature.”

6. As has been argued, this line refers to China's dire straits in the 1930s. Lu Xun had previously used the image of *qiu su* (“autumn's grimness”) to describe the dim prospects for China's future unless it embarked on a new course. This usage occurs in his 1907 essay *Moluo shi li shuo* [On the power of Māra poetry], which opens with the lines: “Those who read chronologically through the history of the world's most ancient cultures will unavoidably incur a depressing feeling upon reaching the end. It is like plunging from the warmth of spring into the grimness of autumn—budding sprouts are wrenched up and naught but withering and emaciation loom ahead. I have no name for this, but for the time being shall refer to it as ‘desolation.’” *Quanji* (1961), 1, p. 194.

7. Literally this line might be rendered: “Would I have dared use my pen to soak up spring's warmth?” The image is of the cheery warmth of spring soaking its way up a traditional Chinese writing brush. The poet's figurative meaning is that in times of trouble one should depict the world as it is in stark reality, not try to cloak it in a happy or colorful light, as did some government-approved writers.

8. *Chen bai* (“sea of dust”) is an appellation used by both Buddhists and Taoists for the world of mortals. Here Lu Xun may well be saying that the passions and hopes he has invested in China seem to be dashed at every turn of events. See Zhang Xiangtian (1973), 2, pp. 315–316.

9. *Jin feng* is a literary term for “autumn wind.” The onomatopoeic word *xiaose*, which is used here much as English-speaking people refer to the wind as “soughing,” carries the connotations of “cold” and “desolate” as well as the sound of the wind blowing through rustling, dry leaves. The clause *zou qian guan* (“a thousand officials flee”) refers to the Kuomintang's withdrawal from Hebei and Chahar in June of 1935 under Japanese coercion.

10. This implies that the subject of the line cannot find the comforts of a secure life or a safe home. See chapter 42, note 13. Itō Masafumi says that *gu* refers to wild rice, hence sustenance, and *pu* suggests a mat woven of bulrush stems, hence a bed. See *Rojin zenshū*, 9, p. 585. Angelika Gu and Wolfgang Kubin translate “weder Reis noch Stroh” (neither rice nor straw). See *Das trunkene Land*, volume 6 of *Lu Xun: Werke in sechs Bänden* (Zürich: Unionsverlag, 1994), p. 64.

11. One explanation by a Chinese commentator would have this line read: “In a dream I fall down through layers of clouds and, because of my alarm, even my teeth and hair turn white.” *Chi fa ban*, meaning literally “chilled unto the teeth and hair,” is similar to our “chilled to the bone,” though one commentator insists it is an indication of Lu Xun's awareness of his advancing age (see *Sbi jian: fu shigao*, p. 159). Most commentators feel that this sentence is in fact a *dao zhuang ju* or “inverted construction.” My reading is that it is the dreams, ideals, or hopes that fall through empty clouds and not the dreamer himself; or, as we would say, the dreams are dashed. See Zhang Xiangtian (1973), 2, p. 314. Cf. *Sbi jian: fu shigao*, p. 157; Ni Moyan, p. 242.

12. Again, this is the recurrent allusion to Zu Ti and Liu Kun (d. 317), loyalists of the Jin dynasty, who were awakened at night by the premature crowing of a rooster and then chose to use the early morning hours to practice their swordsmanship. Consequently, they helped deliver the Jin state from invaders. See the biography of Zu Ti in the *Jin shu*, op. cit. in my chapter 47, note 21. Some speculate that this line expresses Lu Xun's hope for a patriotic resistance to Japan (*Sbi jian: fu shigao*, p. 160), whereas others feel he waits anxiously for news of revolution (Ni Moyan, p. 242). To me, he seems distraught at the lack of a serious response to the plight of the nation. He is unnerved by the dearth of commitment at an hour already critically late.

13. Translated literally, this line means only: “Arising, [I] see the stars just now arrayed across the sky.” *Langan* means to “crisscross,” or “cross diagonally.” Many commentators take *xingdou* (the stars; heavenly bodies) to be a poetic stand-in for *beidou* (the dipper), and *langan* to mean “slant downward.” See Zhang Enhe, pp. 405–408. Since the implication of that stellar phenomenon is that dawn is about to break, I might have taken the liberty to add the clause “and know the dawn is nigh” to the text of the English translation, but have refrained from doing so out of consideration of loyalty to the original. There has been much debate in China about the interpretation of this final line. Typically, Ni Moyan reminds us that those were really the days when one could say “it's always darkest before the dawn” (p. 242). Xia Mingzhao disagrees, saying the stars indicate it is still night (p. 317). So does Itō Masafumi in *Rojin zenshū*, 9, p. 585. Seemingly, the poem ends on a hopeful note. Xu Shoushang, its earliest recipient, gives this reading in *Wo suo rensbi de Lu Xun*, p. 84: “Amid the dismal isolation he [Lu Xun] feels, the poem is yet infused with the first faint rays of the dawn of hope.” But to second-guess the poet on the specific reason for the positive note is next to impossible. Perhaps he did mean that he felt the revolution or some other form of deliverance was at hand, but he could just as easily be referring to that “blow from a giant whip” which he sometimes insisted would be necessary to straighten China out. See *Quanji* (1991), 1, p. 164. Even if the latter were the case, however, he was on no account a total pessimist about China's long-term future. “To say that we have no place on the twentieth-century stage,” he once wrote, “is sheer rubbish.”

37.  
A Lament for Yang Quan

悼楊銓

(Dao Yang Quan)  
JUNE 20, 1933

YANG QUAN (1893–1933), also known as Yang Xingfu, was a founder of the Science Society of China and secretary-general of the Academia Sinica. When the China League for the Defense of Civil Rights was established in December of 1932, he became its head.

He was educated at Cornell and Harvard, first in mechanical engineering and later in business administration, and became a leading academic figure as well as a political organizer and economic planner in China. A loyal follower of Sun Yat-sen, he worked inside the Kuomintang establishment for seven years after Sun's death in 1925, until he became increasingly critical of the Nationalist Party's abuses of the human rights of its political opponents and its seeming indifference toward Japanese encroachment upon Chinese sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> Aside from Yang, such noted reform and liberal figures as Soong Ch'ing-ling and Cai Yuanpei participated in the founding of the China League for the Defense of Civil Rights. On January 17, 1933, Lu Xun was elected to its executive committee. Writing on the organization's goals, Mills explains:

The League announced it was dedicated to the abolition of illegal arrest, detention without formal appeal, torture, and execution. It fought for the liberation of political prisoners, particularly the unknown and unbefriended. It investigated and published facts on prison conditions and the denial of civil liberties. It sought to promote freedom of speech, press, assembly, and organization by advocating the repeal of all legislation infringing upon civil rights. In February [1933], it publicly advocated the unconditional liberation of all political prisoners.<sup>2</sup>

In short, the league was an organization dedicated to the ideals of the democratic tradition, similar to the American Civil Liberties Union or Amnesty International.

Yet Yang Xingfu and even the league itself were soon to fall victim to the Kuomintang's "White terror." On May 14, 1933, the famous woman novelist Ding Ling (Jiang Bingzhi, 1904–1986) was abducted by Kuomintang police agents in Shanghai.<sup>3</sup> Mills elaborates:

Kidnapped with her was the left wing writer Pan Tsu-nien, who Lu Hsün also knew. The Civil Liberties League protested and its Vice-Director, Yang Hsing-fu [Yang Quan], headed a special committee on the case. Eventually Yang obtained information linking the Kuomintang Central Party Headquarters to the deed. In mid-June he was shot to death in broad daylight in the French Concession.

Yang's death shocked China. The influential *Ta Kung Pao* of Tientsin declared that a reign of terror hung over Shanghai. The Civil Liberties League, which collapsed fairly quickly after Yang's assassination, issued an indignant statement. Lu Hsün lamented that China had so few men like Yang.<sup>4</sup>

Writing in a letter of June 20, two days after Yang Quan's assassination, Lu Xun told Tang Ke: "The White terror is raging here. Yang Xingfu, who was only advocating the defense of civil liberties, was murdered treacherously the day before yesterday. I hear that there are still over ten people whom they plan to kill as well. I cannot walk about openly."<sup>5</sup>

Although informed that the government intended to have him killed,<sup>6</sup> Lu Xun displayed a defiant courage by paying his respects at the bier of Yang Quan on that same day (June 20). His friend Xu Shoushang recalls:

In June Xingfu was assassinated, and at the time the word was out that Lu Xun would not escape [death] either. He told me that we really should go pay our respects and, thinking it over, I answered: "Then let us go together." It was a day of heavy rains and upon his return from the funeral parlor, Lu Xun wrote a poem . . . [here Xu quotes the text of the poem]. This is a powerful show of literary prowess, informed with new depths of meaning and equal to [the achievements of] Gong Zizhen.<sup>7</sup>

On a copy of this poem written out by Lu Xun for his wife Xu Guangping, the date of June 20, 1933, appears.<sup>8</sup> On June 21 he mailed another copy of this heptasyllabic quatrain to a friend of Dr. Tsuboi's in Japan.<sup>9</sup> The title of the poem was added later, probably by Xu Guangping.<sup>10</sup>



豈有豪情似舊時

Qǐ yǒu háo - qíng sì jiù shí,  
How can there be grand - feelings as [in] old/prior times?

花開花落兩由之

Huā kāi huā luò liǎng yóu zhī.  
Flowers blossomed flowers fell/fall both on/of their own.

何期淚灑江南雨

Hé qī lèi sǎ Jiāng - nán yǔ,  
How could expect tears shed Yangtze-south-[of] rain?

又為斯民哭健兒

Yòu wèi sī mǐn kū jiàn - ér.  
Again for this people cry [for] stalwart son/man.

Gone, I thought, impassioned moods

like those of long ago:

Flowers blossomed, flowers fell—

and of their own did so.<sup>11</sup>

That tears would fall 'mid southern rain—

how was I then to know<sup>12</sup>

Our people's loss of a dauntless son

could plunge me again to woe?<sup>13</sup>

### Notes

1. Boorman, *Biographical Dictionary*, 4, p. 4.
2. Mills, "Lu Hsün," p. 293.
3. Boorman, *Biographical Dictionary*, 4, p. 6.
4. Mills, "Lu Hsün," pp. 296–297. Mills notes that "Yang had a license number and other information linking Ma Shaowu, secret service agent of the Kuomintang Central Headquarters then attached to the Bureau of Public Safety in Shanghai, to the kidnapping."
5. *Quanjī* (1961), 10, p. 150. The letter is addressed to the Liuhua she (Pomegranate Blossom Society), publishers of an art magazine in Taiyuan concerned with woodblock prints.
6. See Lu Xun's letter of June 25, 1933, to Masuda Wataru. *Shuxin ji*, 2, pp. 1135–1138.
7. Xu Shoushang, *Wangyou*, p. 102.
8. For a photostatic copy, see *Shi jian: fu shigao*, pp. 113–114.
9. *Riji*, 21.20b8–9.
10. Ni Moyan, p. 186.
11. The first two lines suggest the poet was hardened by suffering, tragedy, and loss over the years and had come to feel that getting worked up over such things could have little or no effect on their final outcome. In a preface to the works of the martyred father of Chinese Marxism, Li Dazhao, Lu Xun wrote on the night of May 29, 1933:

But the blood of revolutionary pioneers is no longer a novelty. Take my own case, for example. Seven years ago, on account of a few martyrs, I gave vent to a good deal of stirring, empty talk. Since then I have grown accustomed to stories of electric torture, firing squads, decapitation, and secret murders. By degrees my sensibility has become so numbed that nothing shocks me any more and I have nothing to say. I fancy the "vast crowds" who, according to the papers, go to see the heads displayed as a public warning can hardly feel more excited than during a lantern festival. Too much blood has flowed. (*Selected Works*, 3, pp. 259–261)

12. *Jiangnan* ("South of the Yangtze River") means, by extension, southern China; hence *jiangnan yu* becomes "southern rain." As Xu Shoushang records, it was raining the day they paid a last tribute to Yang Quan. This line also carries the import of the heavens weeping or the poet's tears streaming down like southern rain. Yet I think it best understood literally as "How could I have expected that [my own] tears would fall 'mid the southern rain?" in order to bring out the effect this loss has had on the poet, who once thought himself already too numb for grief and too cynical for such outpourings of emotion.

13. *Sī mǐn* ("this people") refers to the people of China. *Jiàn'ér* literally means "strong son" but according to ancient usage is a laudatory term for a

宜有豪情似蒼時  
花開若在信雨由  
何期淚灑江常雨

又為斯民進兒

酉年六月二十日作

錄應

梁宗伯先教

魯正



Feng Xuefeng notes that after Yang's assassination, while Lu Xun still felt his own life in danger, he reminisced about Yang, telling Feng:

That a man like him [Yang], who was originally a Kuomintang person, would come to sympathize with the Communists I feel could only be owing to his concern for the interests of the Chinese people. . . . To be for the interests of the people is, at present, the foremost thing. The reactionaries can only worry about how to keep ahold of their power, even at the expense of the national interest. We, in contrast, are for both revolution and the national interest. The point is that revolution is *for* the Chinese people.

*Huiyi Lu Xun* [Remembering Lu Xun] (Peking: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1957), pp. 42–43. Although Feng was a “liberal” communist and later purged for his deviations, his reminiscences of Lu Xun have been criticized for their left-wing biases by scholars outside China. Nevertheless, the degree of Lu Xun's shock and anger at Yang Quan's murder is clear from the text of the poem itself.



Lu Xun and the soon-to-be-slain human rights activist Yang Quan, February 1933.

## Inscription for the Stupa of the Three Fidelities

題三義塔

(Ti San yi ta)

JUNE 21, 1933

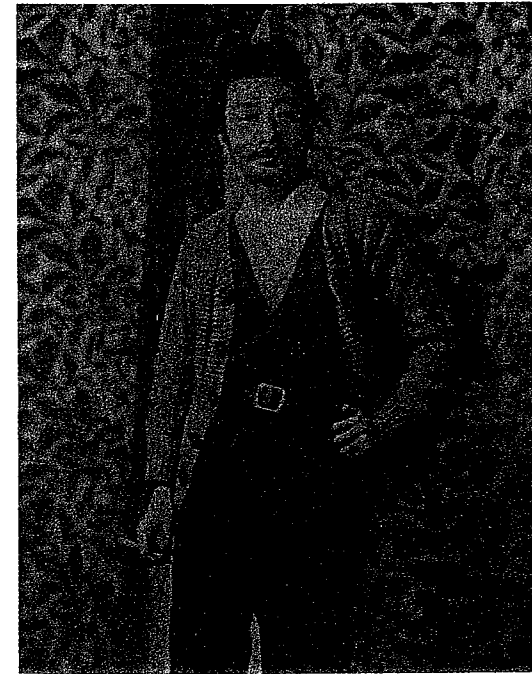
THE BOMBING of Shanghai by Japanese planes in 1932, during the hostilities referred to as the January Twenty-eighth Conflict, reduced many homes to piles of scorched rubble. Most affected was the Zhabei section of the Chinese city, where there lay a street known as San yi li (“Three Fidelities Lane”). Nishimura Makoto (1883–1956), a Japanese biology professor then in Shanghai as head of a fact-finding delegation sent by *Mainichi Shinbun*, was walking through the bombed-out area when he spotted a domesticated dove perched amid the ruins of what he took to be the home of its former owner. He assumed that the dove had winged its way out of the death trap while the fighting raged and returned home after the bombing had ceased.

Taking pity on the dove and moved by the uncertain fate of its owners, Dr. Nishimura brought it home with him and later took it back to Japan, planning to breed it with Japanese doves as a symbol of his hopes for peace between the two countries.<sup>1</sup> “At first it got on well,” writes Lu Xun, “but later it passed away.”<sup>2</sup> According to Ni Moyan, the Japanese peasants in the area where Nishimura lived were much taken with the story of this dove, and, assuming that it had died out of homesickness for its country and original owner, they deemed it a “faithful dove” and enshrined its remains in a specially built stupa, which was named San yi ta (“Stupa of the Three Fidelities”), to commemorate both the dove's home and its loyalty thereto.<sup>3</sup> All we know for certain, however, is that some peasants assisted Nishimura in placing a rather weighty tombstone atop a small burial mound that housed the dove's remains. The word “stupa” (*ta*) in the title of the poem may have been chosen by Lu Xun as a poetic term for the dove's grave, rather than the more common word “burial mound” (*zhong*), which is generally used when referring to the final resting places of pets.

Judging from the details of the incident, the sentiments expressed here are not confined to those of two commiserating animal lovers. Nishimura had been in Shanghai since early 1932. In his capacity as a medical investigator he bore witness to the human misery caused by the Japanese attack on Shanghai.<sup>4</sup>

Based on Lu Xun's diary, we have no indication that he ever met with Nishimura in person. But he did receive three letters from him, the first of which included a sketch of the dove.<sup>5</sup> On June 9, 1933, Lu Xun's diary records the receipt of a letter from Nishimura, which probably mentioned the death of the dove and the proposed burial mound, asking Lu Xun to contribute a poem for its dedication or as an inscription to be placed on the tombstone. On June 21, Lu Xun sent Nishimura a copy of this poem, written on a scroll. The dove's grave and tombstone are, today, still intact in Japan. But the "inscription," were it actually intended as such, was never carved on the stone.

This heptasyllabic regulated verse, containing Buddhist terms used in common between the Chinese and Japanese, provides an example of Lu Xun's internationalist spirit and humanist world-view. Stylistically, it represents a high level of accomplishment in the use of traditional imagery in a modern context, a challenge taken up by some of the poets of the late Qing era and continued by Lu Xun.



Lu Xun photographed on May Day, 1933.



Ad designed by Lu Xun for an exhibition of the woodblock prints of Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945), the German artist whose works Lu Xun had published at his own expense in 1936.

奔 霆 飛 爍 殲 人 子  
 Bēn tíng fēi biāo jiān rén - zǐ,  
 Dashing thunderbolt flying flame annihilate sons-of-man,  
 敗 井 頹 垣 剩 餓 鳩  
 Bài jǐng tuí yuán shèng è jiū.  
 Caved-in wells collapsed walls remains-alive hungry dove.  
 偶 值 大 心 離 火 宅  
 Ōu zhí dà xīn lí huǒ zhái,  
 By chance meets great/kind heart leaving fiery dwelling,  
 終 遺 高 塔 念 瀛 洲  
 Zhōng yí gāo tǎ niàn Yíng - zhōu.  
 In the end is left lofty stupa commemorating [in] Japan.  
 精 禽 夢 覺 仍 銜 石  
 Jīng qín mèng jué réng xián shí,  
 Spirit fowl/bird in dream awakens as before carries pebbles,  
 鬪 士 誠 堅 共 抗 流  
 Dòu shì chéng jiān gòng kàng liú.  
 Fighting warriors true resolute together resist flow/tide.  
 度 盡 劫 波 兄 弟 在  
 Dù jìn jié - bō xiōng dì zài,  
 Passing over kalpa waves, brothers [will] remain,  
 相 逢 一 笑 泯 恩 仇  
 Xiāng féng yī xiào mǐn ēn - chóu.  
 Together meeting, one smile wash-away feelings of enmity.

Lu Xun prefaced the poem:

"The Stupa of the Three Fidelities was built with the help of peasants in Japan; here the remains of a dove from Three Fidelities Lane in the Zhabei section of Shanghai, China, are interred."

Dashing thunder and flying flame<sup>6</sup>  
 leave mortal men slain;  
 'Mid crumbling walls and caved-in wells  
 a hungry dove remains.  
 By chance he meets a kindly heart  
 and leaves the fiery dwelling;  
 In old Nippon a lofty tomb  
 commemorates our starveling.  
 Were he to wake as though from dream,  
 the dove's shade would carry pebbles;<sup>7</sup>  
 And stand with comrades resolute—  
 'gainst tide and flood as rebels.<sup>8</sup>  
 We brothers will yet see the day  
 when stormy surges all abate;<sup>9</sup>  
 On reuniting, with one smile,  
 we'll wash away the hate.<sup>10</sup>

To the poem, he appended the following remark:

After the fighting in Shanghai, Dr. Nishimura found a homeless dove, which he then took back to Japan with him to raise. At first it got on well, but later it passed away, so a stupa was erected in which to bury the dove. Asked to supply a verse for the stupa, I scratched out this poem in response to these sentiments from afar.

postscript by Lu Xun on this 21 June 1933

## Notes

1. Xia Mingzhao, p. 250.
2. This line is taken from a statement appended to the poem by Lu Xun. A translation appears in this chapter, following the text of the translated poem.
3. See Ni Moyan, pp. 188–191.
4. Nishimura received his Ph.D. from Columbia University. He was also a part-time artist and student of Buddhist philosophy. See Xia Mingzhao, pp. 249–250.
5. *Riji* 21.14b1–2. This is the entry for April 29, 1933.
6. *Ben ting* (“dashing thunder”) and *fei biao* (“flying flame”) are metaphors for bombs dropped by enemy planes during the aerial bombardments of Shanghai.
7. Literally translated, this line would read: “If the bird’s *jing* (“spirit”) were to awaken as if from dream, it would yet carry pebbles in its beak.” This is an allusion to the story of Nü Wa, daughter of Emperor Yan, which is found in the ancient Chinese mythological text *Shanhai jing* [Classic of mountains and seas], *juan* 3, “Beishan jing,” 12a 7–10. The girl was drowned while swimming in the Eastern Sea. It is said that after death, her spirit manifested itself as a bird called *jingwei*, which was seen carrying stones from the Western Hills in its beak with the intention of gradually filling in the Eastern Sea. It seems the girl’s spirit wanted revenge on the sea for taking her life as a human. In China the *jingwei* bird became a symbol of diehard determination. Lu Xun here uses the allusion to praise the dedication and persistence of those who continue to work for peace, opposing the Japanese government’s militaristic and aggressive policies toward China. See *Shi jian: fu shigao*, p. 125.
8. That is to say, those among the populace in China and Japan who oppose the imperialist war are working together. See Ni Moyan, p. 190.
9. Here Lu Xun invokes a Buddhist image—*jiebo* (from the Sanskrit *kalpa*), which I have rendered as “stormy surges”—to describe the mounting hostilities between China and Japan. The term itself originally denoted various natural disasters that beset mortals. See Zhang Xiangtian (1973), 2, p. 130.
10. Though an advocate of resistance to Japanese aggression, Lu Xun always distinguished between the innocent common people of Japan and the warmongers who controlled their government. A good example is a cable he is said to have sent to the family of martyred Japanese writer Kobayashi Takiji (1903–1933), a victim of police brutality. Kobayashi, a member of the Communist Party of Japan since 1931 and general secretary of the Proletarian Writers’ Guild, was beaten to death after his arrest by Japanese authorities. The text of Lu Xun’s telegram expressing his condolences appears in *Lu Xun shuxin xuan* [Selected letters of Lu Xun] (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1973), p. 72. I translate from it on p. 271:

The peoples of China and Japan are as close as brothers, but the bourgeoisie, seeking to deceive the people, is separating us by a chasm filled with blood. Moreover, they are presently in the process of widening that chasm. Yet the proletariat and its vanguard are using their own blood to destroy the chasm. Comrade Kobayashi Takiji’s death is a proof of that. All this we know and shall not forget. Resolute, we walk hand-in-hand forward on the path laid down by Comrade Kobayashi Takiji’s blood.



Left to right, Agnes Smedley (seated); George Bernard Shaw; Soong Ch'ing-ling; Harold Isaacs; Lin Yutang; center foreground, Cai Yuanpei; extreme right, Lu Xun. February 17, 1933.