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Beyond Borders:

Lu Xun's "Professor Fujino" and the Possibilities for "World Literature"

Eileen J. CHENG and Shu AKIYOSHI¹

Abstract:

Zhou Shuren (1881-1936), best known by his pen name Lu Xun, was a literary giant who left his mark on 20th-century Chinese literature, culture, and politics. Canonized as "the father of modern Chinese literature" in mainland China, he remains highly influential today and his works are routinely included in the Western world literary canon. His image as a quintessential Chinese writer of "national allegories," however, presents a limited view of an intellectual who actively engaged with the global circulation of ideas and texts. An accomplished scholar, cultural critic, and poet, he was also a prolific reader and lifelong translator of foreign works and wrote critical essays introducing a wide variety of foreign thinkers and writers. Why this interest in translation and world literature?

Lu Xun maintained a faith in the transformative value of translations and cultural exchange. Voices of protest from beyond one's borders, he wrote, had the potential to awaken one's voice and revitalize elements of native traditions that had been muted or submerged. His essay "Professor Fujino" (1926), commemorating his Japanese anatomy teacher Fujino Gekurō (1874-1945), is a case in point. Lu Xun deploys affect and narrative to depict an ideal student-teacher relationship that crosses space and time. Their relationship – rooted in benevolence, empathy, and reciprocity – harks back to a tradition of literati exemplars and imagines a form of relationality based on Confucian ethics and other traditional ideas that goes beyond national and colonial discourses. A testimony to the power of storytelling and "new voices," their story has become an enduring symbol of Sino-Japanese friendship which continues to generate cross-cultural exchanges, collaborations, and friendships to this day.

Key Words:

Lu Xun, Fujino Gekurō, "Professor Fujino," translations, world literatures, literati friendships

¹ This paper is part a collaborative research project, Lu Xun and World Literature, by Eileen J. CHENG, Professor of Asian Languages and Literatures at Pomona College and Shu AKIYOSHI, Professor of Languages and Cultures at the Department of Multicultural Society at Kyushu University. Cheng was a visiting scholar at the Graduate School of Languages and Cultures at Kyushu University from August 1, 2022 to July 31, 2023.

Beyond Canonization

Lu Xun 鲁迅, penname of Zhou Shuren 周樹人 (1881-1936) lived in a tumultuous period and his life exhibited many of the contradictions of his times. He was born in the last decades of the Qing empire (1644-1911) and died before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945). Born into a gentry family, he was educated in the classics and sat through the lower-level exams before the examination system was abolished in 1905. He was also among the first generation to enroll in a Western-style school – first at the Jiangnan Naval Academy in 1898 and then transferring to the School of Mines and Railways. Zhou received a government scholarship and was among the early wave of students to study abroad. He arrived in Tokyo in 1902 and spent his formative years in Japan, returning to China in 1909.



Replica of a portrait of Zhou Shuren took in Japan in 1903 and sent to his friend Xu Shoushang. The classical poem inscribed on the back expresses his patriotism and willingness to sacrifice himself for the country.

A common account of Lu Xun's literary career follows: After two years spent at the language preparatory school *Kōbun Gakuin* 宏文學院² in Tokyo, Zhou Shuren enrolled in the Sendai Medical Academy 仙台医学専門学校 in 1904. A particular slide shown during the intermission period of one of his classes led him to abandon his medical studies. In the slide, a group of able-bodied Chinese had gathered to watch the decapitation of one of their Chinese compatriots – purportedly a spy for the Russians during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). Zhou Shuren was shocked by what he perceived to be the

² Originally 弘文 but changed to avoid the taboo of using characters in the Emperor's name. Students mainly studied Japanese language, but were also instructed in subjects such as English, mathematics, science, geography, and history.

apathetic look on the bystanders' faces as they witnessed the execution of their own comrade. What is often now referred to as the "slide incident" inspired an epiphany: there was no real point in curing the physical ailments of his people if they were bereft of a soul. Zhou then decided to abandon his medical studies to pursue a literary career, to wield his pen to transform the soul of his people.

Lu Xun published his first short story, "Diary of a Madman (1918)" in the progressive journal *New Youth*.³ It was in part inspired by Nikolai Gogol's (1809-1852) story by the same name and is widely credited as the first Chinese short story written in the modern vernacular. This and subsequent short stories Lu Xun wrote, collected in *Outcry* 呐喊 (1923) and *Hesitation* 彷徨 (1926), exposed the deficiencies of his people and the predatory nature of their culture and society. After his death, Lu Xun was lionized by Mao Zedong as the "sage of modern China." He is now hailed as a radical revolutionary and the "father of modern Chinese literature." Lu Xun is also now regularly included in world literary canons as the quintessential Chinese writer of "national allegories."³

Such canonization in mainland China and world literature studies, however, contradicts Lu Xun's preface and other self-writings. Some Western and Japanese scholars, the first among them being Shohei Iikura, have argued that the "slide incident" leading to Lu Xun's decision to embark on a literary career may have been either exaggerated or fictionalized.⁴ Lu Xun's "literary conversion" in the first half of the "Preface to *Outcry*" is often highlighted, but the second half in which he recounts his increasing disillusion toward literature as a tool for social reform is often overlooked. Lu Xun recounts how his planned launch of a journal of translations *New Life* (*Xin sheng* 新生)—inspired by Dante's poetry collection and to have the Italian *La Vita Nuova* on the cover—was aborted. His *Stories from Abroad* (*Yuwai xiaoshuo* 域外小說 (1909)—consisting of Russian and Eastern European fiction—self-published with his younger brother Zhou Zuoren (1885-1967) in 1909 sold paltry few copies. The little attention his early literary endeavors garnered and the violent and chaotic warlord period that ensued after the fall of the last dynasty contributed to his pessimism. In his preface to *Outcry*, Lu Xun reflected on his literary ambitions as a student in Japan: they were, he writes, a product of his immaturity and arrogance and that his mission of using literature to transform the spirits of his people was but a self-indulgent and naïve dream of his youth. This

³ One of the most influential articles hailing Lu Xun as a writer of "national allegories" is written by Frederic Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text*, No. 15 (Autumn, 1986), pp. 65-88.

⁴ Shohei Iikura 飯倉照平, *Ro Jin* 鲁迅 Kodansha, 1980.

Shohei Iikura's theory about the "slide incident" and rebuttals by Chinese scholars are also summarized in detail in Liao Jiuming 廖久明 *Probing into Lu Xun's 'Professor Fujino'* 鲁迅《藤野先生》探疑, Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1922.

experience taught Lu Xun that he was “by no means a hero who could rally the masses with a battle cry and a raised fist.” (LXQJ 1:439-440; *Jottings* 22)⁵

Contrary to his canonization as a radical iconoclast and leader of the New Culture movement, Lu Xun depicts himself in the “Preface to *Outcry*” as a bystander who was merely “cheering from the sidelines” during the inception of the movement. When new-style intellectuals were on the streets agitating for change and promoting the advent of a new culture, Lu Xun wrote that he was ensconced in his room, copying ancient tomb inscriptions. Even as he started publishing in *New Youth*, Lu Xun attributed the writing of his short stories to happenstance. He found himself unable to turn away his friend’s insistent request that he contribute to the journal. Without any scholarly books to consult or foreign works on hand to translate, Lu Xun ended up writing a short story — “Diary of a Madman.”

Indeed, Lu Xun’s short stories betray his skepticism towards the movement. Far from stories of hope and reform, they underscore the iron grip of tradition. The new-style intellectuals depicted are often unreliable narrators, some of them aping Western norms and ideas to poor effect. Some are depicted as unsympathetic or helpless in the face of the suffering of those less fortunate. The reformists, revolutionaries, and nonconformists who appear in his stories are unable to change the society around them: some become disillusioned and submerge their voices to conform to the ways of the predatory society; others are ostracized or executed. Indeed, Lu Xun’s stories might be read as traumatic repetitions and variations on the theme of the slide incident — with intellectuals and bystanders looking on apathetically or helplessly as one of their own is persecuted. Echoed is Lu Xun’s disillusion resulting from his failed ambitions and dreams, as his stories underscore the seeming impossibility of transforming society’s predatory ways.

By the time Lu Xun started writing fiction in 1918, he no longer fully believed in literature as a tool for social reform. He also renounced images of himself as a poet-revolutionary which he had at one time embraced while in Japan.⁶ By 1926, he largely curtailed his short story writing. Why, then, did he continue his literary activities, in particular, promoting and translating world literature until the end of his life?

⁵ LXQJ is used hereon in the in text citation, referring to the 2005 edition of *Lu Xun quan ji* 鲁迅全集 (Complete works of Lu Xun). 18 vols. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe. Translations are from *Jottings under Lamplight* by Lu Xun, co-edited by Eileen J. Cheng and Kirk Denton, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017.

⁶ For an article that examines Lu Xun early embracing of the self-image as a young poet revolutionary and later renunciation of it, see “Performing the Revolutionary: Lu Xun and the Meiji Discourse on Masculinity.” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* (Spring 2015), 1-43.

Lu Xun, Translation, and New Voices to Inspire the Soul⁷

While Lu Xun is now best known for his short story collections, his initial literary aspiration, as noted in the “Preface to *Outcry*,” was not to be a writer of fiction, but a translator introducing world literature to his readers. Lu Xun was a bibliophile. Along with his extensive collections of classical Chinese literature are works of world literature translated into Japanese and German. His own translations of foreign works exceeded his voluminous literary output. His first translation was Jules Verne’s *De la terre à la lune* (From the Earth to the Moon, 1865) published in 1903, rendered from the Japanese version, itself translated from English. Even when Lu Xun curtailed his writing of creative fiction, he remained a lifelong translator. He was translating Gogol’s *Mjórtyvje dúshi* (Dead Souls, 1842), unfinished, from the German rendering on his deathbed.⁸

After the failed launching of his journal of translations, *New Life* in 1907, Lu Xun remained committed to translations and promoting world literature, even as he warned his readers against superficially adopting Western ideas. He published a series of critical articles promoting world literature and thought in the journal *Henan* 河南 founded by Chinese students with revolutionary sympathies that same year. Lu Xun cautioned against simplistically equating “modern” with the “civilized” West. In “On the Extremes of Cultural Development 文化偏至論 (1908),” he noted the extreme developments in modern Western societies, which included rampant materialism and the erosion of moral values, which might inadvertently be transmitted to the countries that mindlessly mimic Western ways. He argued that civilization is defined not by the accumulation of material wealth or weaponry, but by the development of an inner soul (LXQJ 1:57).

In “The Power of Mara Poetry 摩羅詩力說 (1908),” Lu Xun promoted poetry as an expression of the soul and a powerful medium to voice one’s protest against regimes of power and oppressive social conventions (LXQJ 1:65-120). He writes that the Chinese, inculcated in a culture based on strict hierarchical norms and accustomed to autocratic rule, were conditioned to be “slavish” in the face of power and readily submitted to systems of oppression. Few individuals raised their voices in protest and those who did were often silenced, punished, or killed. This led Lu Xun to search for “new voices from alien lands” (求新聲於異邦). Outcries from afar that challenged convention had the potential to inspire the voices of those that had been muted to fight against injustice and

⁷ Portions from the sections that follow are adapted from Eileen J. Cheng, “‘In Search of New Voices from Alien Lands’: Lu Xun, Cultural Exchange, and the Myth of Sino-Japanese Friendship.” *Journal of Asian Studies*, (August 2014), 589-618.

⁸ For a collection of Lu Xun’s translated works, see *Lu Xun yiwen quan ji* 魯迅譯文全 (Complete translations of Lu Xun). 8 vols. Beijing: Lu Xun bowuguan, 2008.

oppression. In “Malevolent Voices 破惡聲論,” Lu Xun writes: “Only when one speaks from the heart, becoming the master of one’s soul, can one begin to have an identity; only when each person possesses an individual identity will the public approach total awakening” (LXQJ 8:26).⁹

How can one tap into one’s inner voice and soul? The Confucian term *Liren* 立人 “cultivating the human,” which Lu Xun first uses in “Cultural Development,” Such traditional Confucian thought may have played a role. As recorded in the *Analects* (*Lun yu* 論語), when asked to define benevolence (*ren* 仁) Confucius responded: “A benevolent person wanting to cultivate himself, cultivates others (*liren* 立人); wanting to achieve, enables others to achieve 夫仁者，己欲立而立人，己欲達而達人”¹⁰ In “On the Extremes of Cultural Development” Lu Xun associates the human ideal to be cultivated with the “individual” *geren* 個人, a newly imported Japanese neologism (LXQJ 1:51).¹¹ *Liren* involves the full development of an individual’s self-awareness and moral conviction, models of which are to be found in Henrik Ibsen’s Dr Stockmann in *Enemy of the People*, Friedrich Nietzsche’s *uebermensch* (superman), and the Romantic poets Byron and Shelley who defied the customs and norms of their time. Defiant in the face of injustice, these nonconformists fearlessly raise their voices in protest on behalf the oppressed and downtrodden.

This notion of the individual—derived through Lu Xun’s engagement with a world of ideas—modern, traditional, Chinese and otherwise—is an embodiment of a universal human spirit that crosses boundaries of space and time, one that opposes all systems of hegemony. Lu Xun refers to this human ideal as the 真人 “authentic person”—a spiritual warrior 精神戰士 in touch with his voice of his heart 心聲, capable of inspiring others with a new voice 新聲, in turn, leading to 新生—to regeneration, rebirth, or new life.¹²

⁹ Translation is from Jon Kowallis’ forthcoming volume. *Warriors of the Spirit: the Early Thought and Essays of Lu Xun*. University of California, Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies Monograph Series.

¹⁰ Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 trans. and annotated. *Lun yu yi zhu* 論語譯注 (Analects with translations and annotations). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980, 65.

¹¹ For discussions on the term *geren* and the discourse of individualism, see Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity-China 1900-1937*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995, 77-99 and Wang Weidong, *Lu Xun qianqi wenben zhong de “geren” guannian* 魯迅前期文本中的“個人”觀念 (The concept of “individualism” in Lu Xun’s early writings). Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2006, 1-36.

¹² Emily Sun notes Lu Xun’s use of the homonyms of “*xinsheng*” in 新聲, 心聲, and 新生 in her book *On the Horizon of World Literature: Forms of Modernity in Romantic England and Republican China*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2021.

Fake Foreign Devils and Submerged Voices

Lu Xun's earliest translations and attempts to promote world literature and thought occurred a decade before the New Culture Movement. By the time Lu Xun started writing the short stories he is most well-known for, he had a change of heart. In his "Preface to *Outcry*" (1923), he wrote that the failure of the journal *New Life* to launch in 1907 was, in hindsight, an ill omen. The little success he had in promoting world literature and thought contributed to his skepticism regarding the ability of literature to reform society. Yet, despite these doubts, Lu Xun continued to read, translate, and promote world literature until the end of his life.

Unlike his early essays published in *Henan*, however, his essays written after he began publishing under the penname Lu Xun in the 1910's seldom promoted "new voices." Instead, his essays and stories focused on what he saw as the ongoing systemic suppression of voices of protest. With the advent of the new culture movement and renewed efforts to promote Western thought, Lu Xun observed similar developments—materialism and eroded moral values—he had cautioned against a decade earlier. He was disturbed that his fellow intellectuals were appropriating foreign discourses not in the name of justice and liberating individuals from the tyranny of subjection but to consolidate their own status as the new elite, and in the process, perpetuating forms of oppression, new and old.

Indeed, readings of Lu Xun's stories often overlook his warning against the ways Western thought is promoted in ways that perpetuate systems of oppression. The "Diary of a Madman" is a case in point. The story is highly critical of scientism and the way Western science has been used as a tool for oppression. The voice of the defiant diary writer excoriating society's predatory ways is contradicted by the preface writer who introduces the diary. Writing in classical Chinese and citing the authority of Western medical discourse, the preface-writer proclaims that the diary writer suffers from a "persecution complex." He copies the madman's diary to serve as a "medical case study." Western medical science, rather than curing the diseased mind and body, is used to persecute those who challenge society's cannibalistic ways. The voice of the "authentic person" and prototype of the "spiritual warrior" in Lu Xun's first short story, then, is not just submerged or silenced by an unwitting collusion of traditional norms and modern science. For his outcry against oppressive societal norms and the need "to save the children," the diary writer is branded a lunatic.

While the voices of "authentic persons" are being submerged, silenced, or dismissed, whose voices are being transmitted? Lu Xun directed his criticism at the "estimable gentlemen 正人君子" whom he viewed as cultural compradors. Rather than challenging Western imperialism, a new generation of ruling elite "natives" have become complicit

in legitimizing colonial rule while oppressing their kind. Lu Xun's was particularly disturbed by the rampant promotion of Western bourgeois mores by influential intellectual groups such as the Contemporary Review Group 現代評論派 and the Crescent Moon Society 新月社, most of whose members were educated in Europe and America,¹³ ridiculed in "The True Story of Ah Q 阿 Q 正傳" (1921). Devoid of his own inner voice, the "Fake Foreign Devil 假洋鬼子" pretentiously apes foreign manners and Western dress. His incongruous outward appearance—his suit and the cane he carries in the manner of a Western gentleman, paired with his fake queue—suggests his slavish devotion to two masters: Manchus and the Westerners. These seemingly well-educated cosmopolitan gentlemen had little regard for the plight of their own people. Slavish in the face of foreigners and masters, the Fake Foreign Devil uses the cane—a symbol of his appropriation of the West—as a weapon to whip comrades he deems inferior into submission.

Lu Xun's pen battles with his literary adversaries grew increasingly polemical and vicious in the mid-1920s, as anti-warlord and anti-imperialist protests swept cities across China from the May Thirtieth Incident in 1925¹⁴ to the March 18 Incident in 1926—the latter of which Lu Xun was actively involved in.¹⁵ Rather than simply repudiating the actions of foreign imperialist powers, Lu Xun in "Sudden Thoughts 忽然想到 (1925)" and other essays written after the May 30th incident challenged simplistic understandings of imperialism as a binary structure. Lu Xun exhorts his comrades to learn from the foreign "enemies"—in particular, those who pointed out the weaknesses of the Chinese and whose criticism would enable reform. He warned against the dangers of ethnocentric nationalism and the "comrades 同胞" who appear as fervently anti-imperialists, yet were complicit with the warlord regime's oppression and brutality

¹³ Among his adversaries were the influential critic the literary critic Chen Yuan (1896–1970), the popular writer Lin Yutang (1895–1976), and the poet Xu Zhimo (1897–1931), also known as the "Chinese Shelley."

¹⁴ Students held demonstrations in the Shanghai concessions after news spread of an incident on May 15, during which a Chinese worker was shot and killed at a Japanese-owned mill. The subsequent student arrests led to a mass demonstration of over 10,000 students and workers in the International Settlement on May 30, which was met with gunfire by British forces, killing thirteen protestors.

¹⁵ Lu Xun himself was embroiled in a series of student protests between 1924 and 1925 at the Peking Women's Normal College where he taught. Students at the college had agitated for the right to protest. Lu Xun sided with the students who opposed the restrictive policies of their American-educated principal, Yang Yinyu (1884–1938), supported by Lu Xun's literary adversaries and the minister of education, who were backed by the Beiyang government warlord Duan Qirui (1865–1936). The public outcry over the dispute eventually led to the dismissal of Yang, but the student victory, however, proved to be pyrrhic. On March 18, 1926, which Lu Xun referred to as "the darkest day of the Republic," Duan Qirui ordered the quelling of anti-warlord and anti-imperialist demonstrators protesting Japanese aggression at Tiananmen Square. Forty-seven students, including one of Lu Xun's own from the Beijing Woman's Normal College, Liu Hezhen 劉和珍 (1904–1926), whom he memorialized in an essay, were shot and killed (*LXQJ* 3:289–295).

against its own people (LXQJ 3:98-99). Harking back to the revolutionary poets he hailed in “Mara Poetry,” Lu Xun urges writers to “shout maniacally” (*kuang han* 狂喊) in protest against those killed and brutalized by their own people. The function of writers, he notes, was to record the lives of the sacrificed so that the written records could “touch people and enlighten posterity” (LXQJ 3:99-100).

Lu Xun’s pen battles with his literary adversaries revealed his increasing pessimism toward the effect of cultural exchange to bring about transformative reform and his little faith in finding “authentic persons” dedicated to fighting oppression and injustice among his intellectual peers. Echoing his ideas in “Malevolent Voices,” Lu Xun expressed the need to unmask the men of letters who retreated into the ivory tower and turned a blind eye to imperialist and warlord aggression. In a speech delivered at Yanjing University in 1929 titled “The Current State of New Literature 現今的新文學的概觀,” Lu Xun mocked the intellectual fashion of associating oneself with foreign figures: “...Xu Zhimo has a Tagore, Hu Shih has a Dewey—and yes, Xu Zhimo also has a Mansfield, he had gone to her grave and wept” (LXQJ 4:137). In Lu Xun’s mind, these new-style intellectuals’ identification with foreign thinkers had little to do with searching for authentic new voices that might inspire their readers and reinvigorate elements of a tradition in a way that would forward an emancipatory cause. In this regard, Lu Xun saw these intellectuals as complicit with both Western imperialism and the warlord regime’s brutal oppression of its own people.

Amidst Lu Xun’s almost uniformly pessimistic essays published during this time, “Professor Fujino,” first published in the journal *Mangyuan* 莽原 (The Wilderness) in October 1926 and collected in his experimental memoir, *Morning Blossoms Gathered at Dusk* (1928) two months later, stands out as a beacon of light. “Professor Fujino” returns to Lu Xun’s early aspirations in Japan, as he imagines a way of using “new voices” to reinvigorate native traditions. Through his depiction of his relationship with his Japanese anatomy teacher, Lu Xun proposes a different way of seeing and being in the world, and a way of relating to “alien” others based on benevolence, empathy and reciprocity. Fujino’s voice inspires Lu Xun’s “voice of the heart” and revives his hopes of cultural regeneration.

A Benevolent Gentleman from an Alien Land

Reading, engaging, and translating foreign works no doubt had an impact on the content, style, and language of Lu Xun’s creative writings. Lu Xun was well-versed in modern Japanese literature and particularly fond of Natsume Sōseki’s 夏目漱石 (1867-1916) writings.¹⁶ He translated Natsume’s essay “*Kureigu sensei* クレイグ先生”

¹⁶ , Natsume Soseki’s *Ten Nights of Dreams* may have inspired Lu Xun’s experimental short pieces in *Wild Grass*. Major Related Research. Lin Cong 林叢, 魯迅の『野草』における漱石の『夢十夜』の影

(Professor Craig, 1909)¹⁷ into Chinese and included it in the *Collection of Modern Japanese Short Stories* 現代日本小説集(1923)--the first anthology of modern Japanese short stories published outside of Japan which Lu Xun co-edited with his brother, Zhou Zuoren.

Translating “Professor Craig” may have in part inspired Lu Xun to write “Professor Fujino,” which he completed in Oct. 1926. Unlike Natsume Soseki’s dispassionate depictions of “Mr. Craig” and Lu Xun’s later essays written in memory of another one of his teachers, Zhang Taiyan (1868-1936),¹⁸ the portrait of Lu Xun’s Japanese anatomy teacher is almost uniformly laudatory and uncharacteristically sentimental. Deploying a combination of affect and compelling storytelling, Lu Xun’s essay is what he referred to as a “maniacal shout,” as he deploys new voices and perspectives to “touch people and enlighten posterity.”

In “Professor Fujino,” Fujino Gekurō,¹⁹ Lu Xun’s anatomy teacher when he was a student at the Sendai Medical Academy between 1904-1906, is first introduced in the following manner: “At this time, a dark, thin gentleman with a mustache the shape of the character “eight” (八), wearing glasses and carrying a pile of books of various sizes in his arms, entered the classroom. After setting his books on the lectern, he introduced himself to the students in a drawn-out voice with a distinct accent: ‘I am called Fujino Genkurō’” (*LXQJ* 2:314) The students laugh at his shabby appearance and strange accent. Students who had previously failed and retaking his class regaled the others with tales of Fujino’s careless dressing habits. Dressed in the same tattered coat all winter, he had purportedly once been mistaken for a pickpocket on a train.

響」(“The Influence of Soseki’s ‘Ten Nights of Dreams’ on Lu Xun’s ‘Wild Grass’: On ‘Passenger’ and ‘Seventh Night’”), *Comparative Literature* 比較文学, 32, 1990, 35-48. For an overall “野草” study, see Shu AKIYOSHI 秋吉 收, *Ro Jin* 鲁迅, *Kyushu University Press* 九州大学出版会, 2016.

¹⁷ Natsume Soseki’s “*Kureigu sensei*” was written to commemorate the Irish scholar of Shakespeare, William James Craig (1843-1906), who was his tutor for ten months when he resided in London in 1900 (Natsume 8:136-144). Craig in this personal portrait appears eccentric and miserly scholar who devoted his life to scholarship. Natsume speculates that the fruits of his teacher’s scholarship might go unappreciated, even as his tribute was a means of ensuring that Craig’s name would not be forgotten. For related research, see Yukihiro Hirakawa 平川祐弘, 「クレイグ先生と藤野先生--漱石と鲁迅, その外国体験の明暗 (“Kureigu sensei” and “Fujino sensei”: Soseki and Lu Xun, Light and Dark in Their Foreign Experiences)” in *New Wave* 新潮 70-2, 1973、Nishimaki Isamu 西槇偉, “Echoing Texts (3): The Face of a Foreign Master: Feng Zikai’s ‘Mr. Lin’ and Soseki’s ‘Kureigu sensei’ and Lu Xun’s ‘Mr. Fujino,’” 「異国の師の面影: 豊子愷の「林先生」と漱石の「クレイグ先生」、鲁迅の「藤野先生」, *Journal of Japanese Studies* 日本研究 2007, 36:47-66. Rin So 林叢, 漱石と鲁迅の比較文学研究 (A comparative study of the literature of Soseki and Lu Xun). Tōkyō: Shintensha, 1993, 23-102.

¹⁸ See Lu Xun’s “A Few Matters Regarding Mr. Taiyan 關於太炎先生二三事 (1936)” in *LXQJ* 6:565-571 and “A Few Matters Recollected in Connection to Mr. Taiyan 因太炎先生而想起的二三事 (1936)” in *LXQJ* 6:576-582.

¹⁹ Fujino Gekurō (1874-1945) was born in Fukui Prefecture in 1874. After graduating from Aichi Medical School, he worked as a teacher at the same school until October 1901, when he was invited to Sendai Medical College to become a lecturer in anatomy.

Fujino's disregard for social norms and devotion to books is not just a stark contrast to to the outwardly polished "estimable gentlemen" whom Lu Xun ridiculed. His depiction conjure a familiar image of the lonely genius and non-conformist scholars, recalling the long lineage of frustrated scholars drawn up by the Grand Historian Sima Qian.²⁰

The moral fortitude and the compassionate nature of Fujino comes to light as the essay unfolds. Fujino mentors Lu Xun's studies and meticulously corrects his notes. He demonstrates care and empathy for the lone Chinese student in his class and defends him when he suffers racial discrimination. In the essay, Lu Xun portrays his youngers self as arrogant and lackadaisical. Conforming with his classmates, he at first scorns his teacher's eccentric ways. His teacher's care and persistence eventually transforms Lu Xun, who finds himself indebted to his teacher in the end. In hindsight, Lu Xun attributes the care and affection that Fujino demonstrated toward him as part of his teacher's larger humanitarian concern and mission of enlightenment—that is, to cultivate his student's potential so that he can in turn contribute to a larger humanitarian cause. Lu Xun concludes: "His fervent hopes for me, his tireless teaching were, on a smaller scale, for China, on a larger scale, in the name of research, that is, in the hopes that medical studies would be transmitted to China." (LXQJ 2:318)

Details in "Professor Fujino" have been subject to dispute. Fujino's own account, "In Memory of Zhou Shuren 謹んで周樹人様を憶ふ" (1937) written after Lu Xun's death and in response to his student's commemorative essay gives a watered-down version of events. 21 Little-known and little read, Fujino's lackluster account downplays their relationship to an ordinary student-teacher relationship. Given the over two decade gap of the events being narrated, minor factual inaccuracies, to be sure, can be attributable to

²⁰ For more on Lu Xun's identification with Sima Qian and the long lineage of frustrated scholars in Chinese history, see Eileen J. Cheng, *Literary Remains: Death, Trauma, and Lu Xun's Refusal to Mourn* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 2013, 58-78.

²¹ Fujino Genkuro 藤野巖九郎, "In Memory of Zhou Shuren" 謹んで周樹人様を憶ふ *Literature Guide* "文学案内," Vol. 3, No. 3, March 1937.

Though moved by the essay, Fujino expressed that he had not gone out of his way to accommodate his Chinese pupil. He did not recollect giving Lu Xun a photo, and speculated that it may have been gifted by his wife whom had since passed away. It is also possible that Fujino felt the need to be more circumspect as his essay was written in 1937, at a time of heightened patriotic sentiments and on the eve of the Japanese invasion of China. For more scholarship on Fujino's essay, see Shigeyoshi Tokunaga . 徳永重良, 藤野巖九郎と魯迅をめぐって: 「惜別」: その前後 (On Fujino Genkuro and Lu Xun: 'Regret at Departure: Before and After) *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 人文社会科学論叢, 2015, 24:117-132 and Hanzawa Shōjirō 半澤正二郎, "Zhuiyi Tengye xiansheng" 追憶藤野先生 (Remembering Professor Fujino) in *Lu Xun yu Xiantai* 魯迅與仙台, 2005. Translated by Jie Zechun 解澤春. Beijing: Zhongguo da baike quanshu chubanshe.173.。

lapses in memory.²² Subjective interpretations surely play a role in the writing as well. Yet, some discrepancies in Lu Xun's essay cannot be simply dismissed as memory lapses. Among the most glaring: Lu Xun's wrote that he was the first and only Chinese student in Sendai, when another Chinese student by the name of Shi Lin 施霖 was there concurrently, possibly preceding him; the two had purportedly roomed together for a time and photos of the two taken together in Sendai are extant.²³ Lu Xun did not receive passing marks in Fujino's anatomy course, a detail which he omits.²⁴ What, then, accounts for these discrepancies and omissions?

The fictionalization and elision of certain details were likely "distortions" (*qubi* 曲筆) to make for a more compelling story.²⁵ Academic failure would have been an odd premise for a story about a professor's transformative impact on his student. Lu Xun's sense of isolation becomes all the more palpable as the only Chinese student in Sendai at the time. Indeed, such incongruities between fact and fiction are rather common in Lu Xun's biographical essays. As noted earlier, scholars have speculated about the possibility of Lu Xun's fictionalization, even fabrication, of the slide incident, depicted as a beheading in "Preface," but as an execution by gunshot in "Professor Fujino."

In the preface to his memoir, Lu Xun acknowledges lapses in his memory but writes in the preface to his memoir that he was not necessarily concerned with factual accuracy *per se*. In this regard, his biographical sketches share much in common with traditional biographical writings. As Burton Watson observes of the early historical text: "Though it relates events which often have a basis in historical fact, it is concerned primarily with the literary and ethical import of its story."²⁶

²² Some of these discrepancies are noted in Ōmura Izumi 大村泉, 2006. "Lu Xun de 'Tengye xiansheng' shi 'huiyi sanwen' haishi xiaoshuo 鲁迅的《藤野先生》是“回憶散文”還是小說? (Is Lu Xun's "Professor Fujino" an "essay of remembrance" or a work of fiction?)." Translated by Jie Zechun 解澤春. In *Lu Xun kua wenhua duihua: jinian Lu Xun shishi qishi zhou nian guoji xueshu taolun hui lunwen ji* 鲁迅跨文化對話：紀念鲁迅逝世七十週年國際學術討論會論文集 (Cross-cultural dialogues: Collection of essays from the international conference in commemoration of the 70th death anniversary of Lu Xun), Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe, 285-96.

²³ See Huang Qiaosheng 黃喬生, "Lu Xun yu Xiantai' yanjiu shu lue" 鲁迅與仙台研究述略 (A review of studies on "Lu Xun and Sendai") in 鲁迅與仙臺 *Lu Xun yu Xiantai*, Translated by Jie Zechun 解澤春. Beijing: Zhongguo da baike quanshu chubanshe 2005, p.116.

²⁴ According to records found at 東北大学 Tohoku University (formerly 仙台医学専門学校 Sendai Medical College), Lu Xun did not pass the anatomy class taught by Professor Fujino. He received a score of 58 points—60 points or higher is passing. However, since he passed all other classes, Lu Xun was able to advance to the next grade based on his overall grade. See "The Records of Lu Xun in Sendai 仙台における鲁迅の記録," Association for the Study of Lu Xun's Records in Sendai 仙台における鲁迅の記録を調べる会編 vol. 2, 1978.

²⁵ In the preface to *Outcry*, Lu Xun wrote how he often resorted to using *qubi*, adding tokens of hope in his stories to mitigate their pessimistic tone (*LXQJ* 1:441).

²⁶ Burton Watson. *Early Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1962, 72.

Often read as one student's timeless tribute to his professor, "Professor Fujino" is, however, far more than a commemoration of a singular individual. As a foil to the "estimable gentlemen," projecting an outward cosmopolitan veneer but unconcerned with the fate of their people, Fujino emerges as an intellectual exemplar. As a prototype of the "authentic person," he is unconcerned with personal image or fame, or fashionable intellectual trends. Rather, he transmits knowledge—derived from an array of Chinese, Japanese, and other foreign sources—in the name of science and enlightenment. Devoted to his research and not blinded by scientism or worship of the West, Fujino emerges as an embodiment of the "warrior of the spirit," the "authentic individual" whose "voice from the heart" inspires his student to continue to fight against injustice and imperialist aggression and to be sympathetic to the plight of the oppressed.

The context of "Professor Fujino's" publication is remarkable, yet often overlooked. It was written at a time of Japan's exp and at the height of anti-Japanese sentiment. Lu Xun's one-dimensional and laudatory portrait of his teacher may have been necessary to overcome the vociferous anti-Japanese sentiments and to evade censorship. His sentimental tribute at once humanizes and exalts Fujino's character, downplaying his race while playing up his significance as a humanitarian figure dedicated to the cause of the subjugated Chinese. It is, ironically, the voice of a perceived "enemy" that galvanizes Lu Xun to wage pen-battles against his "comrades," to expose their complacency, even complicity, in the face of violent acts committed by imperialist powers and warlord regimes against their own people (*LXQJ* 1:252). Such a portrait questions Western universalism and underscores the possibility of forming uncommon alliances. Lu Xun's gestures, however, should not be construed as facile affirmations of Pan-Asianism, or evidence of his identity as a "traitor," a suspicion his close association with Japanese intellectuals has sometimes raised. It is, rather, an attempt to think beyond the limits of ethnocentric nationalism, and imperialist discourse, an imagining of a kind of relationality that goes beyond simplistic binaries and the oppressive logic of domination and submission.

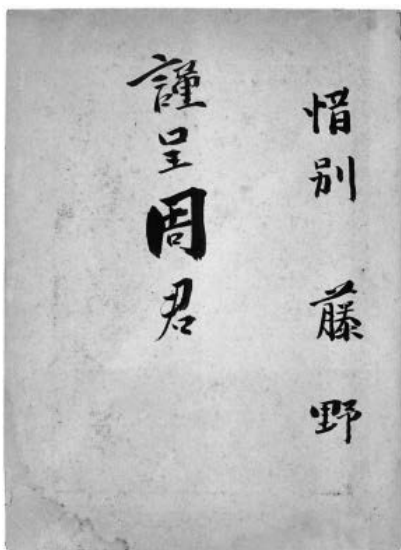
Cultivating the Human and Living in a World with Others

In "Random Thoughts Forty-eight," (*LXQJ* 1:352) Lu Xun writes: "Throughout history, the Chinese have only had two ways of referring to other races: beasts or royal highnesses. They are never referred to as friends, nor said to have anything in common

For an examination of how Lu Xun's fictional and non-fictional character studies engage the conventions of traditional biography, see Eileen J. Cheng, *Literary Remains: Death, Trauma, and Lu Xun's Refusal to Mourn* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 2013, 63-78.

with us.” Lu Xun’s “Professor Fujino” provides an exception. Indeed, it seems that is through this “new voice from an alien land” that the best of one’s native traditions can be revived and transformed, even if only in the realm of imagination: Fujino Genkurō embodies the Confucian ideal of the “benevolent man” – that is, he, “wanting to cultivate himself, cultivates others. Wanting to achieve, enables others to achieve.” Surrounded by “petty men” in his intellectual circles, it seems it is only abroad, and in this case, in Japan and the realm of imagination, that Lu Xun can reconstruct an ideal friendship with a consummate gentleman.

Indeed, the intimacy and affection conveyed in the essay go beyond a solemn teacher-student bond. Fujino appears in the essay as a *shiyōu* 師友, a revered teacher-friend and a *zhiyin* 知音 a confidante and kindred spirit so desperately desired yet rarely encountered in one’s lifetime. The affective ties and code of conduct between the two men hark back to traditional literati friendships, as their relationship is affirmed through the exchange of gifts and acts of reciprocity. As noted in the *Book of Rites* (*Li ji* 禮記): “In antiquity, what was prized was sincerity, and in later times, the obligation of giving and repaying. What the rules of propriety values are reciprocity 太上貴德，其次務施報。禮尚往來。”²⁷



Replica of Fujino Genkurō’s photograph given to Lu Xun, inscribed with words “Regret at Departure

²⁷ Wang Yunwu 王雲五, ed. and Wang Meng’ou 王夢鷗 trans. and annotated. 1984.

Li ji jin zhu jin yi 禮記今註今譯 (Book of rites with updated annotations and translations). 2 vols. Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1984, 2:7.

Professor Fujino transmits far more than scientific knowledge to his student and his impact on his student, according to Lu Xun, was lifelong. After Lu Xun abandons his study of medicine and departs the Sendai Medical Academy, Fujino bestows him a photograph, with the characters “regret at departure 惜別” inscribed on the back. Lu Xun writes regretfully at the end of the essay that the anatomy notes Professor Fujino corrected was lost after repeated moves, but that “his photograph till now still hangs on the eastern wall next to my desk in my home in Beijing” (LXQJ 2:318-319). The nondescript photo of his beloved teacher is prominently displayed in his study for the duration of Lu Xun’s life. The material relic reminds Lu Xun of Fujino’s voice and words and inspires him to enunciate his own “voice from the heart,” to fight injustice and refute “malevolent voices.” As he writes at the end of the essay: “Whenever I felt tired in the evening, right when I felt like slacking off, by the flickering light I would see the image of his dark and thin face, as if about to say some words of encouragement. This would ignite my conscience, strengthen my courage, and I would light a cigarette and continue writing things that would provoke the ire of those ‘estimable gentlemen’ ” (LXQJ 2:319).

Aware of the power hierarchies replicated in the world of ideas and literature, and in particular, the dissemination and passive consumption of cultural forms affirming Western superiority and colonial narratives, Lu Xun proposes an alternate model of sociality and relationality. Crossing the boundaries of space and time, the essay binds the Chinese student and Japanese teacher together in their shared moral commitment embedded in the cultivation of human relationships and emancipatory ideals which would bring about a more human way of relating to others and a more humane existence for all.

Lu Xun cherishes the “gifts” bestowed on him by his teacher. The “elegant debt” he owes to his teacher weighs heavily on him.²⁸ Lu Xun in “Professor Fujino” writes that he felt guilty for not responding to his teacher’s requests for a photograph and that Lu Xun correspond with him after his departure. However, Lu Xun does return a gift of far more import, albeit two decades later, in his written tribute to Fujino. When the Japanese translation of his selected works was being compiled, Lu Xun requested that “Professor Fujino” be included.²⁹ The essay transmits his teacher’s “voice from the

²⁸ The phrase is borrowed from the title of Craig Clunas’s book, *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhengming, 1470-1559*.

²⁹ Sato Haruo 佐藤春夫 and Masuda Wataru 増田渉, “Professor Fujino” in *Selected Works of Lu Xun* 鲁迅選集, Iwanami Shoten, 1935. In a letter dated December 2, 1934 written to Masuda Wataru 増田渉, one of the translators of the Lu Xun’s *Selected Works*, Lu Xun specifically requested that “Mr. Fujino” be included in the anthology. In the “Notes” at the end of Japanese translation of “Professor Fujino” Masuda wrote the following. “When I asked Mr. Lu Xun for his opinion on what kind of works I should choose for the “Lu Xun Selected Works,” he replied that I could choose as I pleased, but that he wanted me to include “Professor Fujino” by all means. The piece was subsequently translated by others, including 松枝茂夫

heart” and ensures that Fujino’s virtuous character and deeds are made known to posterity. In Lu Xun’s account, the encounter between the kindred spirits is depicted as a transformative cultural exchange based on Confucian values of sincerity, benevolence, and reciprocity. Fujino is neither worshipped as a “royal highness” nor scorned as a “beast,” but cherished as a friend.

“Professor Fujino” has been anthologized in Chinese textbooks and Fujino Genkurō’s name, which surely would have faded into obscurity, is widely known in China. A replica of Fujino’s photo remains hanging on the wall above Lu Xun’s desk in his former residence and the Lu Xun Museum in Shanghai. Lest people forget, the photo is singled out and the story of their encounter is repeated by the museum guide. “Fujino sensei,” classified as a “story,” is anthologized in the widely used Japanese textbook published by Sanseido, *Modern Japanese* 現代文.³⁰ As a result of his association with Lu Xun, Fujino himself has become a celebrated figure in his hometown of Awara in Japan.

Indeed, the sentimental story of the bond between Fujino Genkuro and Lu Xun that overcame national boundaries has long since become an enduring symbol of Sino-Japanese friendship. The two never again communicated or reunited after Lu Xun’s 1906 departure from Sendai, and Fujino read Lu Xun’s tribute to him only after his famous pupil’s death. Yet, the splendor of the two men’s friendship as recounted in “Professor Fujino”—one that crosses national and cultural boundaries and breaks down the hierarchy between student and pupil—has become all the more lustrous after the repeated recall and polish in the realm of imagination and collective memory. The legendary friendship is enshrined not only in texts, but also material artifacts and exhibits created in their honor. Busts of Lu Xun and Fujino Genkurō and exhibits and materials relevant to the two are displayed in Lu Xun museums throughout China. The classroom where Lu Xun purportedly viewed the famous decapitation slide has been preserved at Tohoku University, formerly Sendai University. The classroom, the university, and the city of Sendai itself has become a famous tourist site. Fujino’s home and clinic in Awara and exhibits and materials related to Fujino are preserved in the Genkuro Fujino Memorial Museum, established in his hometown in 1984.³¹

Shigeo Matsueda’s 1955 translation of *Morning Blossoms Gathered at Dusk*, Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1955 and by Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好 in his edition of *Selected Works of Lu Xun* 鲁迅選集 Iwanami Shoten, 1956

³⁰*Modern Japanese* 現代文, Sanseido, 2008.

³¹ The museum was commissioned in commemoration of a sister-city relationship established in 1983 between Awara and Shaoxing, Lu Xun’s hometown.



Statue of Lu Xun and Fujino at the Genkuro Fujino Memorial Museum

The story of the two men's friendship has also inspired a wide array of fictionalized plays, novels, and comics.³² Steady streams of commemorative events, collaborative work, and intercultural exchanges continue as generations of readers moved by Lu Xun's essay continue, to keep the story of their friendship alive, in turn, fostering new cross-cultural works, connections, and friendships.³³

³² Among the most famous is Dazai Osamu's (1909–1948) *Farewell* (*Sekibetsu* 惜別) published in 1940, a fictionalized account of the two men's encounter. Recent comic books include: Goto Hiromi 後藤ひろみ "Dr. Fujino and Lu Xun: Master-Disciple Exchange Across the Seas, Bonds between Japan and China 藤野先生と魯迅 海を超えた師弟の交流日本と中国の絆 in 学習まんが 歴史で感動 *Educational Comics: Moved by History!* November 8, 2018, Poplar Publishing and Matsui Tsoshio 松井利夫 *Reading Lu Xun's "Mr. Fujino" with Five Times the Fun* 魯迅『藤野先生』を5倍楽しく読む本, Tokyo: Bungeisha July 1, 2023, 文芸社)

³³ Various Sino-Japanese collaborative conferences, events, and exchange programs have been held in both China and Japan. Most recently, "Lu Xun 'Dr. Fujino' and the Essence of Modern Literature" was held on January 23, 2025 in Awara Community Center to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Fujino Genkuro. Commemorative volumes have been published in honor of the two men's friendship in Chinese and Japanese. Lu Xun's fame in Japan, in connection to his friendship with Fujino and other Japanese intellectuals has also led to other surprising intercultural encounters. Seiichi Kamata 鎌田誠一 (1906-34), an aspiring artist and alum of Itoshima Junior High School (now

Lu Xun writes that the mission of a writer was to leave written records that could “touch people and enlighten posterity” (*LXQJ* 3:99-100). In a speech he delivered in February 18, 1927 titled “Voiceless China 無聲的中國”³⁴ Lu Xun noted that: “Only an authentic voice will be able to move the Chinese and the world’s people; it is necessary to have an authentic voice so that we may live in the world with others.” Lu Xun’s “Professor Fujino” has moved generations of readers across different spaces and times. The afterlives of the essay show the power of literary and cultural exchanges to touch “the voice of the heart,” transmit “new voices,” that in turn, would reinvigorate indigenous tradition and enable new ways of seeing and being in the world. Indeed, the positive sentiments, new encounters, forms, and exchanges that the story of the friendship between the two gentlemen has generated despite the tense relations between China and Japan show how “new voices” and stories from “alien lands” – from beyond and afar and in the realm of imagination – can continue to inspire ways of “cultivating the human,” so that “we may live in the world with others.”

Itoshima High School), went to Shanghai and worked as a clerk at Uchiyama bookstore 内山書店. The owner of the store Uchiyama Kanzo introduced Seiichi and Lu Xun. After Seiichi’s death, Lu Xun wrote his epitaph. An original painting given to him by Seiichi is displayed in Lu Xun’s former residence in Shanghai, now the Shanghai Lu Xun Museum. Moved by the life story of Seiichi Kamata and his friendship with Lu Xun, English teacher Yamasaki Toshishige at Itoshima High School established an exchange program between China and Japan and curated a small exhibit dedicated to the two men’s friendship in 2007 so that the story of the two men’s friendship would be known by all the students who attend the high school.

³⁴ The speech was first published in a newspaper in Hong Kong (unknown) and later published *Central Daily* 中央日報 on March 23, 1927.