The Emergence of Hope in the Fiction of Lu Xun

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE EMERGENCE OF HOPE
IN THE FICTION OF LU XUN

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BY

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PREFACE

My thesis examines modern Chinese literature, specifically the writings of Lu Xun, a prominent 20th century writer. Lu Xun wrote about the weariness of a people caught up in the everyday struggle of life, a life full of hardships, steeped in poverty, ignorance, and injustice. In his short stories, Lu Xun does not provide solutions to these struggles; he does, however, offer small rays of hope. It is the purpose of this paper to uncover these rays of hope which lead to a better understanding of China as a nation and of the Chinese people as part of our global family.

The idea for this topic germinated from a course I took in the Graduate Liberal Studies program, *East Asia and the West*. This was my first course after completing the three core courses of the program, *Fate of the Earth*, *Perspectives on Polity*, and *Love and Work*. The common thread of these core courses is survival: survival of the earth, survival of a nation, and finally, survival of the self. This thread is also woven into my thesis.

In *East Asia and the West*, I was introduced to the Chinese writer Lu Xun and his short story, "The True Story of Ah Q." Ah Q, the narrator-protagonist, embodies the psychological weaknesses of the Chinese people and their inability to face their sociopolitical reality. Ah Q was a coward and a villain. He was very cunning and had a propensity throughout the story for rationalizing the humiliations he endured. His ability to rationalize his humiliations allowed him to survive the constant bullying of the townspeople and, in turn, allowed him to bully those who were weaker than he. Like China, he lacked self-awareness and the ability to change.
Through the character of Ah Q, Lu Xun expounded on the problems and struggles China faced as a new Republic. He examined the role of women, the humiliating connotations of the queue, religion, foreigners, revolution, and finally, death. Ah Q was a non-person who had no given or family name and his place of origin was never known. For a Chinese person, this was a social stigma since a family name meant everything, from a place within a family to a place within society. Thus, when Ah Q appeared in Wei Village from out of nowhere, without a name or family, he was tolerated by the villagers only because he was a strong worker and served as the butt of their jokes.

In Lu Xun's story, Ah Q sported a queue (historically a symbol of humiliation for the Chinese male). The queue was a mandate imposed on Chinese males from the Manchu Conquest of 1640. It was a hairstyle in which the hair was completely shaved from the head except for a small, round patch in the center. And from this patch, the hair grew long and was braided, forming a "q." Chinese males continued to wear the queue until the fall of Manchu rule and the beginning of the Republican government of 1911. However, once the Republican government took control, most Chinese males immediately cut their queues or refused to braid their hair. As a consequence, in the tenuous days of the Republic, they lived in fear that the Manchu rulers could come into power again. Hence, fake queues began to be sported by these men, to save face, and possibly to save their lives. Ah Q wore a scrawny queue and he believed this gave him the right to attack those "foreign devils" who wore fake ones. For his attack on others however, Ah Q was often beaten and humiliated.

Ah Q's final humiliation was his death. Ah Q wanted to be part of the revolution, but the revolution transpired without him. He was arrested. He assumed it was for revolutionary subversion. Actually he was arrested for stealing. While imprisoned, he awaited the death awarded all revolutionaries, death by decapitation. However, this was
not to be. Ah Q was paraded through the town, wearing a white mourner's vest which listed his crimes. Then he was shot. This was the death sentence imposed on common criminals, not on "heroes" of the revolution.

Ultimately "The True Story of Ah Q" served as the impetus for my thesis topic which embraces literature and history. Literature is like a window into the world of others. The images and emotions evoked from a powerfully-written piece stay with the reader long after the story has ended. Through the power of the written word, one can experience the joys, sorrows, pains, and triumphs of a people. It is also through literature that one may come to understand the culture, the religious and political beliefs, and the history of a nation. As readers, we can expand our narrow views about humanity and, hopefully, come to understand that we are all part of a global community.

In a course titled "Chopin, Lessing, Woolf," I encountered not only the work of these three great women writers but also the concept of Feminist Criticism which assumes that literary works inevitably reflect the structures and the dynamics of gender and power in a society. Applying both traditional textual analysis and Feminist contextual analysis to the novels read in the course made the reading and understanding of the material vastly richer. It also provided me with the skills to read at greater depth and to articulate with confidence levels of meaning found in the work. I attempted such a critical approach for the first time with Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*.

The modernist novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, presented many departures from the traditional 19th century novel. Its interest centers not on the plot but on the inner lives of its characters. But it also implicitly criticizes the society of Woolf's day in an intense manner. After World War I, life in England was far less restricted and the social conventions under which Clarissa Dalloway and her generation lived were changing rapidly. Woolf's novel affords us an exposé of these changes and how they were affecting all social classes, the governing class and those who served them.
Clarissa was a society matron, married to a member of Parliament. She was conscious of her position, not only in society, but also in her own household. She maintained the correct distance between herself and those who served her. She was not a cruel mistress, but she was the mistress of the house, nonetheless. Woolf balanced this picture of master over servant by allowing the reader a view from downstairs. She allowed the doorman at Clarissa's party to have a "voice of authority" and Lucy, the housekeeper, to look upon the rooms of the house with ownership-pride. On a larger scale, the novel sheds light on the patriarchal conventions of the upper classes as well as on the institution of marriage, the barbarism of war, and the fallibilities of the medical profession.

After my initial foray into feminist criticism, I was drawn to other courses in literature offered by the Graduate Liberal Studies program. I signed up for Dante's *Divine Comedy*, a survey course on *Shakespeare*, and *Victorian Prose and Poetry*. Thus it seemed natural for me to choose a thesis topic which involved literary analysis. Why Chinese literature? My passion for the East and for Asian cultures began with my college studies. As an undergraduate, I had studied Japanese history, film, and art. The MLS course *East Asia and the West* provided me with the opportunity to experience another Eastern culture, China.

As I pondered the scope of my project, I realized that it is a bold undertaking. Were it not for the courses I took in the Graduate Liberal Studies program, I would not have the confidence nor possess the skills necessary to succeed. In my final graduate course, *Victorian Prose and Poetry*, I came across a definition of a liberal studies education by Cardinal John Henry Newman that succinctly describes why the MLS program so enriched my academic and intellectual life. In his discourse, "*Knowledge Viewed in Relation to Professional Skill,*" Newman wrote that a liberal education is a process of training the intellect, not for the purposes of a narrow focus or specialization
such as in the study of the sciences, trades or professions, but solely for the benefit of its own end, "for the perception of its own proper object, and for its own highest culture" (Trilling 127).

Liberal education trains a person to discriminate between truth and falsehood, to sift out the grains of truth from the mass, arrange things according to their real value, and to use this knowledge or truth to build up ideas. In essence, it trains an individual to learn on an intellectual level, to acquire true knowledge, and to be able to impart this knowledge to others. Thus, in my paper, I will analyze the writings of Lu Xun, examine his stories for themes of hope, and communicate my findings in a lucid and persuasive manner.
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I would first like to thank my committee (Ann Harrington, Associate Professor of History, and Mary Griffin, Professor Emeritus of English) for their helpful criticisms and guidance throughout this project. I also thank my son Adam for his patience and my family for their support. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my friends, who endured the arduous task of proofreading the many revisions of this paper.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**PREFACE** ......................................................................................................................... iii

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** ......................................................................................................... viii

Chapter

1. **INTRODUCTION** ........................................................................................................ 1
   1.1. Short Biography of Lu Xun
   1.2. Defining Hope

2. **"CHEERING FROM THE SIDELINES" [1918 - 1922]** ............................................. 13

3. **"WONDERING WHERE TO TURN" [1924 - 1925]** ............................................... 25

4. **CONCLUSION** ............................................................................................................ 42

**WORKS CITED** .................................................................................................................. 45

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** ............................................................................................................... 47

**VITA** ................................................................................................................................. 50
"Hope isn't the kind of thing that you can say either exists or doesn't exist. It's like a path across the land -- it's not there to begin with, but when lots of people go the same way, it comes into being."

Lu Xun
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of my thesis is to identify and analyze the themes of hope in the fiction of Lu Xun, the most prominent of modern Chinese writers. Lu Xun, who was influenced by Western writers and philosophers (i.e., Leonid Andreyev, Ibsen, Nikolai Gogol, Maxim Gorky, Shelley) wrote about the misery, pain, and despair of his people and the sociopolitical environment of early twentieth century China. But beneath this tortured surface, hope continued to beckon. Lu Xun believed, "hope isn't the kind of thing that you can say exists or doesn't exist. It's like a path across the land -- it's not there to begin with, but when lots of people go the same way, it comes into being" (Lyell, Diary 100). This viewpoint leads me to ponder the philosophical question of hope, and to ask how hope evolves from the depths of despair. In this paper I will demonstrate the connection between Lu Xun's philosophy of hope and how hope springs forth from his fiction: hope manifested in metaphors and symbols; hope evident in the lives of his characters; and hope emerging obscurely from his somber later parables.

Before analyzing the fiction of Lu Xun, a biographical sketch of the author is relevant. During Lu Xun's lifetime (1881-1936), China was plagued by defeat, humiliation, revolution, and reform. It was a period in which vast changes were taking place in China's intellectual, political, social and economic life -- changes wrought by the

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1This spelling of Lu Xun's name is in the pinyin or modern tradition. Many of the sources used in this study use the Wade-Giles spelling of his name, Lu Hsun.

2Sources consulted for biographical information on Lu Xun include: Lu Xun and His Legacy, by Leo Ou-Fan Lee; Lu Xun: A Diary of a Madman and Other Stories, and Lu Hsun's Vision of Reality, both by William A. Lyell. The above also provide historical information on China. Another source used for historical context was Sentimental Imperialists edited by James C. Thomas, Jr., Peter W. Stanley, and John Curtis Perry.
impact of the West upon an ancient civilization (Chen 3). Lu Xun was influenced greatly by his political environment and he in turn fueled a literary revolution. While not extensive, Lu Xun's literary canon is impressive. He wrote articles, essays, short stories, prose and in his later years, zawens -- biting, satirical essays on political and cultural themes. The characters in Lu Xun's fiction often seem autobiographical in that they faced the same challenges as did Lu Xun, living in oppression, poverty, despair and, sometimes, with a glimmer of hope.

Lu Xun was born in 1881 in Shaoxing, a southeastern city in Zhejiang Province, to an affluent family in decline. He spent most of his youth living among an assortment of relatives in the family compound, New T'aimen. Lu Xun's young life was marked by tragedy and humiliation. His Grandfather Chou, the family patriarch, was brought to trial in 1893 for bribing a civil service examiner. He was tried, convicted, and received a sentence of decapitation. While awaiting his execution, Grandfather Chou was imprisoned. He was eventually released in 1901 under the general amnesty brought about by the Boxer Rebellion. The imprisonment of Grandfather Chou must have had a negative effect on Lu Xun. He went from being the grandson of an esteemed civil officer to the grandson of a convicted one.

Tragedy struck once again with the death of his father in 1896. During his father's prolonged illness, Lu Xun spent his days going from the pawnbroker to the herbalist. He sold the family's clothing and jewelry to pay for the medicine needed by his father. But his father's protracted illness, which may have resulted from his addiction to opium and alcohol, proved to be beyond the expertise of Chinese medicine. The herbalists tried common "curing" techniques such as prescribing black ink when Lu Xun's father started to cough up blood. (The premise behind this treatment was that since the black color covered the color of blood, the patient would believe he was cured.) After his father's death, Lu Xun became a severe critic of traditional Chinese medicine. It was
his dissatisfaction with Chinese medicine which served as the impetus for Lu Xun to study Western medicine.

During this period in Lu Xun's life, China was experiencing a political revolution. In the mid-nineteenth century Western traders and missionaries came to China and Japan in search of souls and profits. Unlike Japan, China turned her back on the influences of the West and this proved to be her undoing. In the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5, Japan waged war against China and won. As a result of her victory, Japan took control of Taiwan and the Pescadors. Along with this defeat and humiliation, mainland China was undergoing a series of political reforms and rebellions that would span half the twentieth century. In 1898, a group of reformers tried to influence young Emperor Kuang Hsu to institute reforms that would transform China into a constitutional monarchy. These reforms would help China to modernize her economic and educational systems. However, Manchu officials, under directions from the retired Dowager Empress Tz'u Hsi, seized the young emperor and through military force squelched the reform movement.

Rebels and revolutionaries took to the streets, creating a period of violent uprisings across the country. The violence reached a peak in 1900 with the famous Boxer Rebellion. The Boxers were a secret Chinese society of anti-foreign and anti-dynastic rebels. The Boxers gained momentum because of the decades of humiliation China had suffered at the hands of Westerners. The Empress Dowager, along with Manchu leaders, decided to allow the Boxers their Rebellion so that they would rid China of Western influence and leave the dynastic rulers alone. The Boxers killed two Western diplomats, over 200 missionaries, and about 30,000 Chinese Christian converts before the Rebellion was over. After the Boxer Rebellion was crushed by a Western expeditionary force, the Manchu government realized that it no longer had power over the people. Its leaders decided to institute their own reform program which included a limited constitutional government. As a result of this reform movement, the ancient civil
service examinations were abolished in 1905. The civil service examinations had been the only opportunity Chinese males had to progress. If they passed the examinations, they were assured of an official post. If they failed however, their lives and those of their families could be spent in poverty and shame.

In 1898, Lu Xun decided to attend the Naval Academy in Nanking, bypassing the civil service examination. From there he transferred to the government-sponsored School of Mines and Railroads, where he found the curriculum more challenging than that of the Naval Academy. The School of Mines and Railroads' curriculum included courses in the natural sciences, geology, and mineralogy. Also during this time his brother Tso-jen arrived in Nanking to attend the Naval academy. The two brothers were extremely close and spent many hours together exploring the great seaport city. It was while Lu Xun was studying in Nanking that he was introduced to Western classics translated by Yan Fu.

Yan Fu had translated or offered synopses of many Western books dealing with topics that ranged from philosophy to the sciences to literature. Among these translated works was T. H. Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*. Lu Xun was fascinated by this book to the point of committing much of it to memory. For him it opened a whole new world of knowledge and ideas. It was from this book that he came to know about the 'struggle for existence,' and 'survival of the fittest' (qtd. in Sung-k'ang 30). Lu Xun's own early view of human beings was somewhat pessimistic and dark. Although the theory of evolution sometimes haunted him with a fear that in the struggle for existence the Chinese race might perish, it also led him to adopt a more dynamic and hopeful view of human beings. As a result of his understanding of Darwinism, he was convinced that there was no limit to the progress of the animal kingdom and that mankind represented the highest development of living things (Chen 62). From this point on he embraced the

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3Yan Fu was a reformer/philosopher best known for his translation of Western works of political science and philosophy as a means of introducing modern thought and modern ideas into China (Sung-k'ang 16).
philosophy that humans have the power within themselves, to better themselves. He also came to believe that the cure to China’s ills would be to look outward to the world—not to imitate, but to learn, and to share as well (Lyell, Diary xxix).

The humiliations which China suffered after the Sino-Japanese War of 1895 and the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 shocked Lu Xun, revealing to him the weakness, corruption, and foolishness of the Manchu rulers, and convinced him that in order to preserve China, the Manchus must step down (Chen 82). Lu Xun, like many of his fellow literati, believed that China needed to modernize in order to survive; this modernization must come from the West. Since Japan was the closest country to China that seemed to know the secrets of Western modernization, it made sense for China to turn to Japan for aid; did she not after all, defeat China with her knowledge? Many Chinese students emigrated to Japan and Europe to learn the secrets of modernization and to bring this knowledge back to China. One of these students was Lu Xun. After graduating from the School of Mines and Railroads in 1901, Lu Xun spent the next two years in Tokyo as a student of the Kobun Academy. At Kobun, Lu Xun learned Japanese in order to continue with his goal of studying medicine. While studying at Kobun, he wrote articles and published them in Chinese student journals. From there Lu Xun went on to study medicine at the Sendai Medical School.

While attending classes in microbiology at the Sendai Medical School, Lu Xun experienced an eye-opening encounter. When the class instructor had finished the day’s lesson, he would often use slides of natural scenery or scenes of war to occupy the time until the class period was over. It was during one such occasion that a slide shown by the instructor contained a shot of a Chinese prisoner on the verge of being decapitated. His executioners were Japanese soldiers and the prisoner was accused of spying for the Russians. While the scene may have been uncomfortable for Lu Xun, what caught his eye and disturbed him most were the Chinese bystanders gathered around enjoying the spectacle of the execution. Watching the expression on the faces of these bystanders, Lu
Xun realized that China's physical well-being did not need looking after, it was her spirit that needed nurturing. Lu Xun walked out of the classroom and decided to devote himself to the creation of literature, which he believed would minister to the needs of an ailing Chinese people (Lyell, Diary xi).

In the summer of 1906, Lu Xun returned to his home in Shaoxing to marry Zhu An. This was a pre-arranged marriage which according to Lu Xun's biographers was said not to have been consummated. Leaving his wife behind in China, Lu Xun returned to Tokyo and became immersed in his writing and the forging of a literary movement with other Chinese nationals living in Japan. One of the members of this movement was his brother Tso-jen. The group that became known as the Society for the Promotion of National Learning invited Zhang Taiwan, an anti-manchu sentimentalist, to become its leader and lecturer. The objective of the group was to write and publish articles in the magazine New Life. However, the deadline date for the inaugural issue drew near, but the manuscripts and funds never materialized. As the group disbanded, Lu Xun published some of his articles in a Japanese magazine called Henan. While he was writing his articles and essays, it became clear to Lu Xun that literature was meant to be read by everyone not just by the literati. In an essay titled "The Power of Mara Poetry," Lu Xun called upon his fellow countrymen to become "warriors of the spirit," writers who would give voice to the sufferings of China's silent masses and articulate their hopes and fears, writers who would, at the same time, exhort the whole Chinese people to reform their society and stir them to resist oppression (Lyell, Diary xiii).

However, while Lu Xun was involved in a literary revolution, China was involved in a political one. In mid-1911, an uprising occurred over the proposed Ch'ing national railroad system. The rebellion began in central China and gained momentum as it spread throughout the provinces. One of the great reform leaders of this revolution was Sun Yat-sen, whose goal was to establish a republican government. The followers of Sun Yat-sen were Chinese students studying overseas and merchants who were dissatisfied
with Manchu rule, among them Lu Xun. The rebellion, led by Sun Yat-sen, was no match for the Manchu armies that were reorganized by General Yuan Shih-k'ai. But the General did not use military force to stop the rebellion; instead he negotiated with its leaders to become the first president of the new republican government.

Sun Yat-sen was named provincial leader of the Republic on January 1, 1912 and stepped down in favor of Yuan on February 12th of that year. However, peace did not last long in the Chinese Republic. Even though a constitution was enacted, warlordism and rebel forces kept the Republic from becoming strong and unified. At the same time, Yuan Shih-k'ai's quest for personal gain shook the foundation of the Chinese Republic even further. Sun Yat-sen, now the leader of the newly formed Kuomintang party, attempted to limit Yuan's power. Yuan retaliated through the use of provincial military power and crushed the insurgency of the Kuomintang. The Kuomintang was outlawed and Sun Yat-sen sought refuge in Japan. Yuan was forced by popular opposition to abandon his plans to restore the empire and install himself as emperor.

While the country was fragmented by rebel and warlord leaders, Japan tried again to gain control of China. In 1915, Japan presented China with the so-called Twenty-one Demands\(^4\), which if met, would have made it a protectorate of Japan. China agreed with a modified version of the demands, giving Japan the German holdings in Shandong. In 1917 China entered World War I on the side of the Allies in order to gain a seat at the Versailles peace table. The Chinese delegation hoped to curb Japan's political ambitions with their move. China expected the United States, according to the Open Door policy, to offer its support. However, at the Versailles peace talks, President Woodrow Wilson withdrew U. S. support of China over the Shandong issue. Wilson's decision was based

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\(^4\)Japan, in exchange for trading off major financial loans for territorial and economic concessions in China, presented these Twenty-one Demands. Japan pushed for special economic privileges in Manchuria, Shandong province, and the Yangtze Valley, for the right to lease agricultural lands in Manchuria, and reside there with extraterritorial legal status, and for permission to station Japanese police on Chinese soil (Spence 97).
on the fact that Japan agreed to withdraw its demands for a racial-equality clause in the
League of Nations Covenant. Enraged over Wilson's apparent betrayal, the Chinese
delegation refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles.

Back home, Chinese youth and intellectuals, who had looked to the West for
models and ideas for reform, were crushed by what they thought of as a betrayal by
Wilson at Versailles. When news reached China, a mass anti-Japanese demonstration
known as the May Fourth Movement of 1919 erupted at the University of Peking and
swept throughout the country. Students in Peking organized huge demonstrations
demanding the dismissal of the three Chinese representatives who attended the Versailles
Peace Conference. This unrest spread to other cities with more demonstrations, student
strikes, and boycotts of Japanese goods. The editors of La Jeunesse (a literary
magazine), in spite of the fact that they had agreed not to get involved in politics, found
themselves supporting the students against the then warlord government. This brought
about a merger of the literary movement with the student movement and thus achieved
influence over almost every aspect of life for literate Chinese (Ming 354).

The May Fourth Movement marked no real break in the continuity of Lu Xun's
thinking. Prior to the May Fourth incident, Lu Xun had already concluded that while the
sciences were valuable to the physical well-being of the Chinese people, it was literature
which would nurture its wounded soul. The May Fourth Movement added fuel to the
burning embers of a literary movement that had been simmering for half a century.
Writers such as Mao Dun, Guo Morou, and of course Lu Xun, who surfaced from this
movement, created a literature that would establish new values and a new consciousness.
Like their political counterparts, they were looking to save China and bring her into the
modern world (Goldman 1). Unlike their political counterparts, their "call to arms"5 was
the written word, not firearms. They would borrow from Western cultures their

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5A Call to Arms is the title of a volume of short stories by Lu Xun.
romanticism, realism, naturalism, and symbolism. They would in short, create a modern Chinese literature.

In 1920, the year in which the Ministry of Education declared the colloquial language to be the official language throughout China, Lu Xun began to lecture on the history of Chinese fiction at University of Beijing. A few years later while still lecturing at the University, Lu Xun had a falling out with his family, the cause of which is still unknown to his biographers. However, the situation was serious enough to cause a deep rift between Lu Xun and his brother, Tso-jen. As a result Lu Xun moved away from the family home and established quarters elsewhere. It was while living in his new quarters that Lu Xun began to concentrate seriously on his writing.

As Lu Xun's writing career continued to grow, China was still experiencing political chaos. In 1923 Sun Yat-sen, influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideology, reformed the Kuomintang. While he was re-structuring the Kuomintang, Sun agreed to admit Communists to its membership. After Sun's untimely death in 1925, the rejuvenated Kuomintang, under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek launched an attack from its base in Canton. Chiang sought to unify China under Kuomintang rule and rid the country of imperialism and warlords. Chiang also wanted the Kuomintang to be strictly a Nationalist party and he purged the Communists from its membership. These Chinese Communists, after being purged from the Kuomintang, later resurfaced under the direction of Mao Zedong. For two decades, the Communists and Kuomintang fought for supremacy. In the summer of 1949, the Nationalist party collapsed. Chiang and his forces fled to Taiwan and Mao took control of mainland China.

While China was being split apart by these two warring factions, there were recurring attacks between the masses and the government. The May Thirtieth Incident of 1925 brought about a resurgence of anti-British and anti-Japanese sentiments. This incident refers to the shooting of a Chinese worker by a Japanese foreman. Again there were mass demonstrations, strikes, and violence throughout the provinces. Another
incident took place in March of 1926, where the police fired into a crowd, killing forty-seven and wounding one hundred and fifty people. What effect did this constant political turmoil have on Lu Xun? A combination of personal and political events conspired to radicalize Lu Xun and to move him increasingly away from the indirect critique he could make through fiction writing to the open criticism of the political essay (Lyell, *Diary* xxvi). Lu Xun wrote essays condemning the government for the atrocities it was committing against the people and his name was put on a list of radicals who were to be arrested.

During this time (1925-1926), Lu Xun fled Beijing along with Xu Guangping, a student he had met while teaching at the University of Beijing. While hiding in Shanghai, Lu Xun and Xu Guangping lived as man and wife and had a son, Haiying. Lu Xun would spend the remaining years of his life cultivating young writers, translating, lecturing, and writing. Among the writing were the zawen, biting essays against the Nationalist party and their rightist sympathizers. Sensitive to human suffering, and having faith in the value of human life, Lu Xun had a hard time reconciling himself to a reform program which would require years or even decades for its realization—a program which failed to offer an immediate and all-embracing solution for his nation's political and social ills. It was such an all-embracing solution which he had sought in the West. (In socialism he thought he had found a humane philosophy and a political technique which could be used by the intelligentsia to guide an awakened people in their effort to create a better and more humane society [Chen 210].) During this period Lu Xun suggested that the purpose of a writer is to serve the peasants and the workers. And in 1930 the Communists, having won Lu Xun over, launched the *League of Leftist Writers* (Ming 355).

Lu Xun died in 1936. But before his life's journey was over he had left his mark on the literary world. In his short stories, Lu Xun chronicled the misery, pain and despair of his people and the chaotic, political arena in which they lived. His novels,
essays, and letters taught people of his generation to see in every defeat an incentive to greater effort, and in every obstacle a challenge to their intelligence and will-power. His ideas and ideals constituted a dynamic philosophy which provided the suffering people of war-torn China with the spiritual power and moral strength to bear the tragedies of life with courage and perseverance (Chen 47).
1.2 Defining Hope

During the reign of the New Criticism (1930's to 1960's), the predominant emphasis in English and American critical practice was on the intrinsic quality of a work rather than on its biographical or historical context. Indeed the American New Critics (e.g. Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate), rejected out of hand "extrinsic criteria," making an effort to "see the object as in itself it really is." Poetry succumbed almost totally to this kind of close textual analysis. Fiction, less so.

With the advent of Feminist Criticism (later 1960's to the present), came a reaction against such critical neutrality along with the assertion that literature is inescapably political. Feminist critics protested what they termed the "marginalization" of social content, arguing as does Susan S. Lanser, that "literary works both reflect and constitute structures of gender and power." Today, in the wake of widespread deconstructive critical practice, literary criticism routinely examines context along with text.

To examine Lu Xun's fiction in this manner is to uncover not only its historical and social implications but its powerful emotional impact as well. However, for the purposes of this paper, I will be emphasizing the contextual aspects of literary criticisms to support the identification of the themes of hope in Lu Xun's fiction. Despair floods these stories of ordinary people living out their lives against a backdrop of political oppression, bitter poverty, and incipient revolution. But hope is a powerful dynamic as well. Sometimes it flames out as in "Hometown." Sometimes it almost defies detection as in "Medicine," as it hides in imagery, in metaphor, in symbol. Or it rides the tide of revolutionary enthusiasm dramatically embodied in Lu Xun's characters and their lives.
CHAPTER TWO
"CHEERING FROM THE SIDELINES"

The stories in Lu Xun's collection, *Cheering From the Sidelines* (1918 - 1922), were his outlet for the years of loneliness and sorrow he had experienced. These stories represented a "cheering" if you will, "to console those bold warriors still charging through the fields of loneliness, and to encourage them to ride on" (qtd. Lyell, *Diary*, 28). The "warriors" in this collection include the mothers in "Medicine"; the wine server in "Kong Yiji"; Sister Shan in "Tomorrow"; the children in "Hometown"; and the rickshaw passenger in "An Unimportant Affair." With the exception of the rickshaw passenger, these characters lived in poverty, oppression, and near despair: but through all their hardships, they were sustained by a glimmer of hope or expectation that far on the horizon a better day was dawning. An experience of despair, which tears a man out of himself and forces him to question the meaning of his existence, can also be the trigger for a new, authentic way of life, a life full of hope and meaning (Evans 20).

One way to analyze Lu Xun's short stories is to see how he manages to evolve something new in both form and content, by transforming and thereby transcending traditional Chinese influences, while consciously borrowing from Western literary models (Lee, *Voices* 52). In these stories, Lu Xun questioned the quality of his own existence as well as that of his fellow Chinese. He was preoccupied with China's survival. He believed that literature could minister to the needs of an ailing Chinese people. It would help her survive. In one way or another, the stories in this collection center on survival. They were written in a period of Chinese history (1918-1922) in which the stability of the Republican government was still tenuous. Clearly, they reflect the pain, struggle, and
the uncertainty of a people divided between embracing the new revolutionary government and clinging to the dynastic rule of the Manchus.

Some of the stories in this collection are reflective of the May Fourth Movement of 1919. This movement merged the literary and political revolutions which were occurring in China almost simultaneously. And this merger created a modern Chinese literature that was directed at throwing off the weight of China's Confucian tradition and absorbing Western culture (Goldman 1). This new literary movement borrowed from the West elements of romanticism, of realism, of naturalism, and of symbolism. This cultural movement culminated in a literary flowering that was one of the most creative and brilliant episodes in modern Chinese history (Goldman 1). Two important factors contributed to the success of this literary revolution. One was the attempt by scholars to develop new systems of written Chinese in an endeavor to increase the literacy of the population. The other was the establishment in 1912 (by the Ministry of Education) of a Committee for the Standardization of Chinese Pronunciation (Ming 350). These factors affected modern Chinese writers like Lu Xun, who probably felt themselves to be the critical conscience of Chinese society vis-a-vis the political establishment. At the time of the May Fourth movement, Lu Xun knew himself to be an originator and a creator of a new literature in conscious reaction against tradition (Lee, Legacy 4).

Lu Xun can be oblique, hiding his central meaning in tantalizing images and symbols. He is at his artistic best in "Medicine," (a story written in 1919). It is the story of a young boy who suffers from tuberculosis. The boy's parents will try anything to save his life. Traditional medicine, non-traditional. It matters not. Anything to save him. Naively, (and at a great cost), they feed the boy a mantou (large, steamed bread roll) soaked in human blood. Big Uncle Kang (a blow-hard quack) assures them that it is a guaranteed cure for T.B. As a matter of fact, the blood in which the mantou was soaked was that of a revolutionary rebel who was convicted and executed. Kang ridicules the young rebel who, to protect his family, did nothing to save himself. He dies,
making a revolutionary speech proclaiming that the Great Manchu Empire "belongs to all of us," and terming his executioner as "pitiful."

The mantou notwithstanding, the sick boy dies. Mother Hua⁶, mother of the dead child, prepares the burial ceremony, placing plates of food on the grave and burning paper money. She glances across the road to where the criminals are buried and sees another mother performing the same ceremony. (According to Chinese tradition, the paupers are buried to the right and criminals are buried to the left.)

As Mother Hua watches Mother Xia (the revolutionary's mother), she realizes that Xia Yu's mother is acting rather strangely. Mother Hua crosses the road to see what is the problem. Mother Xia points to the grave of her son upon which lies a wreath of red and white flowers. The wreath had to have been placed on the grave by human hands since it had no roots indicating that it had been planted. Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova in her article, "Lu Xun's Medicine" suggests that perhaps the grave was honored by Xia's revolutionary compadres. She explains that the shape of the wreath and its red and white colors may refer to a non-Chinese emblematic system, signifying non-Chinese customs and ideas (Velingerova 229).

Mother Hua is disturbed because her own son's grave is bare while Mother Xia is rejoicing that the wreath of flowers is a sign that her son was convicted unjustly. In her grief, Mother Xia turns to a superstitious belief (of looking for a sign) and asks a raven perched nearby to fly down and indicate the presence of her son's soul. This is clearly implied when Xia Yu's mother says, "I know they've wronged you... Yu, my poor, poor baby, they've wronged you in every way. But Heaven knows the truth of it. Sooner or later they'll get what they deserve. You just close your eyes in peace ... If you are really here and understand what I've just said, make that crow fly over and perch on your mound as a sign!"

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⁶The family name "Hua" taken together with the surname "Xia" (the name of the boy's family, Hua, and the criminal's family, Xia) form an ancient ideograph for "China" (Lyell, Diary 54).
As Mother Xia stands in the cemetery, waiting for a sign, the gentle breeze has died down and the stalks of withered grass stand erect "like ... many copper wires." Everything was as still as death, and the two women raise their faces to see the crow in its majesty. "Head pulled in, it stands straight as a writing brush on the branch, looking as though it were made of cast iron" (Lyell, Diary, 58). Dispiritedly, the two women start slowly to leave the graves and suddenly the raven caws loudly behind them. "Timorously they turn their heads and watch as the crow crouches, spreads its wings, and then, straight as an arrow, flies away into the distance" (Lyell, Diary 58). The symbolism is unmistakable. So will the revolution mount and fly, straight as an arrow into the distance. Lu Xun ends the story by having the raven "fly like an arrow toward the far horizon." Had the crow flown to the grave, as Mother Xia wished, the story would have ended on a note of despair: it would have directly validated the superstitious beliefs of Mother Xia and, indirectly, it would also have reinforced the superstitious set of medical assumptions to which the Hua boy was sacrificed. Hence the flight of the crow is a symbol of hope (Lyell, Vision 280).

By the spring of 1919, Lu Xun was suggesting that the revolution had been either useless or misconstrued, depending on one's angle of vision: Xia's blood had not saved the dying child Hua Shauan, and the Chinese people had been unable to see any significance in Xia's sacrifice. But Lu Xun was also suggesting a trace of hope, even if that trace was so faint and so ambiguous that it could be presented only through symbols. Someone, after all, had placed that circle of flowers on the dead revolutionary's grave, flowers red as the "blood on the steamed bread," and red as the flag of the Bolshevik revolution (Spence 113).

"Kong Yiji" (March, 1919) tells the story of a man caught between two worlds, the world of the Confucian scholar and the world of the peasant. Kong Yiji had never passed the civil service examination; therefore, he was destined to a life of poverty and humiliation. He had no profession and supported himself by book copying. But Kong
Yiji drank to obliterate his pain and loneliness and soon lost even these menial jobs. To survive, he resorted to begging and stealing. He was often beaten for his thievery and so lost face with the patrons of the *Prosperity for All*, the local tavern he frequented. The name *Prosperity for All*, can be seen as an ironic metaphor for China. The establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1912 was to have provided *prosperity for all* Chinese people, but it had not. The Chinese people were still suffering oppression, poverty, and social humiliations.

The treatment Kong Yiji receives from the patrons of the wineshop, can be seen as indicative of the trials and tribulations being felt by the Chinese masses during this time. Kong is ridiculed for wearing the long gown (the symbol of a civil service officer), and assuming the airs of a gentlemen scholar. Ironically, the patrons see themselves in a higher social position than Kong Yiji. However, he has had at least some formal education, while the majority of these patrons were of the "short jacket" crowd who could only afford to "lay down four coppers for a bowl of wine" (Lyell, *Diary* 42). Indeed, we quickly become aware that the traditional intellectual is probably the author of his own lack of success and to that extent is his own oppressor; and yet we cannot help but be disturbed that everyone around him connives in this oppression and takes delight in taunting him (Lyell, *Vision* 146).

Memorable characterization is at the core of much of Lu Xun's fiction. Lu Xun remarked on the importance of describing the physical features -- particularly of the eyes -- of his characters. For Lu Xun, as for Henry James, characters are action. If characterization forms the core of Lu Xun's fiction, the art of narration -- the way in which the characters and their interactions are introduced -- is the necessary complement in his technique. And, Lu Xun must be credited with initiating into Chinese literature, the complex role of the fictional narrator (Lee, *Legacy* 11). The wine server in this story is the narrator and it is through his voice that we come to know Kong Yiji's story, to feel his pain and despair, and his humiliation as he pleads with the tavern owner to allow him
his drink and not to ridicule him. But even after Kong has been beaten into a cripple and has to crawl to the tavern, the crowd shows no sign of compassion. Their entertainment is at the direct expense of Kong Yiji's suffering (Lee, Voices 73). The wine server alone (himself scarcely more than a boy), treats Kong Yiji with compassion, serving him his drink amid the laughter of the tavern's patrons.

As Kong Yiji pays for the drink, the wine server notices that his hands are caked with mud. He realizes suddenly that Kong Yiji had been so badly beaten that he has lost the use of his legs. These were now crossed under him on a "grass mat that was fastened by ropes to his shoulders" (Lyell, Diary 47). He'd dragged himself (to the Prosperity Tavern) on his "hands." The wine server is shocked. He serves the hot wine to Kong. Years later as he reflects on his own life, he could still see Kong's palms caked with mud. The moment stays fixed in his memory: an epiphany of man's greed and cruelty, the awakening of his "own compassion." Lu Xun describes the incident with characteristic objectivity, scarcely pausing over the moral insight of the narrator in whom compassion is reached that day. The indictment of society's cruelty and inhumanity is powerful.

In his story "Tomorrow," Lu Xun paints a portrait of the physical pain felt by a mother who has lost a child. It is also a story in which Lu Xun's lyric style is evident. Whenever the lyric voice is heard, meditative and melancholy, the subject is likely to be childhood, remembered friends, the countryside, or family. In "Tomorrow," we get the impression that we are onlookers, free to judge as we will. Yet toward the end of the story we are increasingly aware of the presence of the maker of the tale, aware of his personality (Lyell, Vision 301). It is this maker, or narrator, who tells the tale of Sister Shan's efforts to keep her son, Bao'er alive. She tries everything from drawing lots at the temple7, making her vows and giving the child his medicine. Her last ray of hope lies in

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7To draw lots was to seek advance knowledge of what was in store for her son and to make a vow to Buddha to perform a good deed once her prayers had been answered (Lyell, Diary 60).
visiting the doctor, He Xiaoxian. However, despite Sister Shan's efforts, the child dies and his mother is left to mourn the loss of her son.

Sister Shan goes through the motions of preparing a traditional Chinese funeral, from burning paper money to burning forty-nine scrolls of the Incantation of Great Compassion, to buying the coffin, and to preparing the meal for all who assisted in the burial. Amid the funeral preparation, she also has to deal with the callousness of the townspeople. For example, Auntie Wang, who assisted Sister Shan in the preparations, loses patience and pulls Sister Shan aside "long enough for those standing around to rush in and close the lid" of the coffin.

It isn't until after the funeral when Sister Shan finds herself alone that she realizes she will never see her dear Bao'er again. Her grief is so strong that she has to think of his death as a dream, "It's only a dream. Every bit of it is a dream. I'll wake up in the morning and find myself safe and sound in my own bed, and Bao'er will be sleeping safe and sound at my side too. He'll wake up, call me 'Ma,' and bound outside to play just like a young tiger" (Lyell, Diary, 64).

But through the long quiet night, it becomes apparent to Sister Shan that she will never see her Bao'er again; he is truly dead. Her surroundings became too oppressive, too large, too quiet and too empty. How can she go on, day after day, after day? The only thing that seems to give her hope is that she will see her Bao'er in her dreams, "Bao'er, I think your spirit is probably still here. Please, please let me see you in my dreams, if only for a little while" (Lyell, Diary 66). Therein lies the hope which can sustain those who are suffering insurmountable grief after losing a loved one: that they may meet in the land of dreams or in the land of spirits; both places of mystery which we as humans, cannot fully comprehend.

As the name of the story implies, there is hope in tomorrow. Today may be a day full of sorrow, pain, and despair, but through the "deep red hue" sunlight breaks through
the steely dawn. The character of Sister Shan may represent China. Like hers, China's "... world was terribly changed. She had gone through something she had never before experienced, something that could not possibly have happened, but in fact actually had" (Lyell, Diary 65). This *something* was the fall of Manchu rule and the birth of the Republican government, a government that was failing the very people who fought for it. It is through the song sung by Rednose Everbow, that Lu Xun makes a stinging indictment of about the fate of China if she didn't awaken from her oppressed state. "My darling! How I pity you, all alone in this great world..." (Lyell, Diary 66). But awaken she must, if she is to survive, "for only the dark night, intent on becoming tomorrow, still rushes through the silence" (Lyell, Diary 66).

In "An Unimportant Affair," a man witnesses an old woman being dragged under the wheel shafts of the rickshaw he is riding in. The rickshaw driver immediately stops to assist the woman and the passenger becomes irritated that his journey was interrupted by the accident. He stares in disbelief as the rickshaw driver heads straight to the police substation to seek aid for the women. As he is watching the driver and woman walk across the road, a strange feeling overcomes him. He feels an oppressive weight bearing down on him until the pettiness he is feeling is squeezed out of him. The narrator draws such courage from the example of the magnanimous rickshaw man's act of kindness. It's an act that constitutes a revelation, a door opened out into the light (Lyell, Vision 170). The narrator gets out of the rickshaw, hands a policeman money for the rickshaw driver and walks away pondering his own life. (Towards the end of the story, Lu Xun questions the wisdom of this action.) "I often think of that unimportant affair even today, and consequently I am often forced through the painful business of thinking about myself" (Lyell, Diary 69). Hence the narrator must turn within himself in search of hope and courage to be. He feels ashamed of his thoughts and of how he has treated others. He decides, then and there, to turn over a new leaf in life. This new perspective on life, he trusts, will increase his courage and hope. In the end he realizes that "hope" is
justified by its own creation. It is created by those who, despite everything, can find the life and courage to create it, just as a path is made by those who have enough life and initiative to move in a given direction across the land (Lyell, Vision 170).

It is ironic that Lu Xun titled this short narrative "An Unimportant Affair," for the affair was not so insignificant. This again is an epiphany of man's inhumanity to man and the awakening of his own compassion. He is completely changed by the humbling experience he witnessed. But though Lu Xun exalts the changes in the story's narrator, his accusations against China's political condition aren't even veiled. "For me, the momentous civil and military affairs of the past several years have long since become one with all that Confucius says and Poetry Classic status kind of thing that I had to memorize as a youth--can't recall so much as half a line" (Lyell, Diary 69). Thus, the revolution had become an unimportant affair. In essence, Lu Xun is saying that the Chinese people have not benefited from the revolution. The revolution like the Confucian classics (Confucius says and Poetry Classic) offers no solutions. There is much more work to be done if the social problems (oppression, injustice and inhumanity) plaguing the Chinese people are to be remedied. How much further do they need to be dragged, as was the woman under the rickshaw's wheel, before they become involved in their own future? Lu Xun believed that the future and hope for China rested in the hands of her people. Change, after all, requires human effort (Goldman, 199).

An example of hope that surfaces from incipient revolution is the story, "A Passing Storm." Written in October of 1920, "A Passing Storm," is a story presented through the voice of an omniscient narrator, which chronicles the effects of an aborted attempt by General Zhang Xun to bring down the Republic of 1912 and restore the Manchu dynasty. Sevenpounder, the protagonist, and his family, represent three generations whose "hands had not touched the handle of a hoe" (Lyell, Diary 79). While this family was not formally educated, they were peasants who were revered among the villagers. Sevenpounder was their link to the outside world, i.e., the next village.
In the story, "A Passing Storm," we encounter almost the entire range of structural devices that Lu Xun employed in building up his stories: formal envelope (in the opening and closing descriptions), distinguishing props to identify the characters (Sevenpounder and his long bamboo pipe are inseparable), repeated lines to lend rhythm and give bone to the story ("Each generation is worse than the last"), and the use of characters in structural fashion (the costume changes in Master Chao) [Lyell, *Vision* 273]. In the opening and closing descriptions (formal envelope) of this story, Lu Xun paints a picture of an idyllic summer evening. The women and children of the village are setting out tables, chairs and supper dishes onto the threshing ground. The sun is shining and the leaves are parched as family members gather around for the evening meal. But all this domestic tranquility belies the fact that soon in the story a crisis will erupt in the household of Sevenpounder.

The crisis involves the impending threat of the Emperor's re-ascension, and the fact that Sevenpounder has endangered himself and his family by cutting off his queue. Seventh Master Zhao, the town scholar, informs Sevenpounder that if the Emperor ascends the throne again, he will be punished for cutting off his queue. Since the revolution that established the Republic of 1912 was political not social, the peasants were not directly affected by this new republican government. As a result, they remained living in the past, deeply entrenched in ancient Confucian traditions and usually unaware of how traditions changed (or could change) with a new China. Thus, Sevenpounder, who was the only one of his village to venture to the outside world, adapted the custom of revolutionaries and rebels, of cutting off their queues.

Since Sevenpounder had foolishly cut off his queue, it could now cost him his life. Sevenpounder's wife's reaction when she hears the news that the Emperor might ascend the Dragon Throne is to feel that her husband is in mortal danger. According to Seventh Master Zhao the queue was more important now than ever, "It's much more
important than you might think. Remember back in the time of the Long Hairs9 how people used to say, 'Keep your hair and lose your head or keep your head and lose your hair?' (Lyell, *Diary* 82). While the family anxiously awaited for news regarding the Emperor's impending ascension, the atmosphere at home was quiet and bleak.

However, once it was determined that the Emperor would not ascend the throne, the villagers, especially Sevenpounder and his family returned to life as normal. The fact that they could resume their lives so quickly, so soon after the apparent failure of the Manchus to recoup the throne, indicates that there is much work still to be done. While life under the Republican government may not have been the best, it is evident that life under Manchu rule would be intolerable. The hope then lies in the *passing storm* (which could be a metaphor for the passivity of the Chinese people) which in its wake, paves the way for a brighter future.

Lu Xun's prose poem "Hope" revealed the loneliness of his heart and the emptiness of his hope. He seemed to believe that the spirit that permeated China was not a spirit of youth, but rather a spirit of old age. And this spirit of old age must be discarded. He was alarmed at the silence, pessimism, and despair of China's masses, especially her youth. For Lu Xun, the young represented the future. He wanted to stimulate these young people to do something for their world, in order to avoid future remorse. This was a stirring message to the youth of China (Chen 130).

Pessimism, despair, and hope are themes in Lu Xun's "Hometown." In "Hometown" (January, 1921), the narrator-protagonist (Lu Xun) returns to his boyhood home to sell the family compound and bid farewell to his former life. He has been away from his hometown for many years, and upon his return he is filled with a deep sense of melancholy. While on his visit, he is reunited with a boyhood chum, Runtu. However, while both men can reminisce about boyhood memories, they can no longer be friends.

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9The Taipin Rebellion (1851-64) was led by anti-Manchu rebels who let their hair grow free and were therefore known as the "Long Hairs," (Lyell, *Diary* 82).
Between them stands a division of social and economic status. Lu Xun has become the "Master" and Runtu the filial servant. As with men of their generation, they are irrefutably cut off from one another. Ironically, when they were boys, Runtu shared his mind's "inexhaustible treasure-house of exotic things" (Lyell, *Diary* 93). But as a man, Brother Xun, cannot share with Runtu the store-house of treasures his mind must possess as a result of his education. (Could he not share this knowledge because of the difference in their social status or because the Confucian classics, in which he must have been schooled, offers nothing to the masses of the Republic?)

As Lu Xun's hometown recedes in the background, his thoughts turn to the future. He thinks of the budding relationship between his nephew, Hong'er and Runtu's son, Shuisheng. Hope lies in the relationship between these two boys. Lu Xun thinks, "I hope they'll never live like my generation with everyone cut off from everyone else. ... There ought to be a new life for them, a life that none of us has ever known. As my thoughts turned toward hope, a feeling of anxiety suddenly presses me. ... What was this thing called 'hope' if not an idol that I had fashioned with my own hands" (Lyell, *Diary*, 99). Was hope something near at hand, or was it something rather vague and distant.

In this collection of stories, *Cheering From the Sidelines*, Lu Xun is involved in a literary revolution which he believed would provide answers to China's future survival. He believed that if she did not look outward to the world, not to imitate, but to learn and grow, China's future would be hopeless. The stories analyzed in this chapter reflect the hope that is embodied in the human spirit: hope which rises against social injustice as in the case of "Kong Yiji"; hope which sustains grief as in "Tomorrow"; and, hope which emerges though a symbol as the raven in "Medicine" who "flies like an arrow toward the far horizon." Hope, is what makes triumphant warriors of us all!
CHAPTER THREE

"WONDERING WHERE TO TURN"

During the period in which Lu Xun wrote the stories in his collection, *Wondering Where to Turn* [1924-1925], China's political situation was still undergoing revolutionary changes. The relationship between the Nationalist and Communist parties was troubled and warlordism was running rampant. And, according to Lu Xun, the Republic of 1912 was a failure because it was a political revolution that never addressed China's social problems. Amidst this political turmoil, Lu Xun turned his energies to the continuing development of the Chinese literary movement and also to his continued growth as a writer. He experimented with many genres such as a more complex, realist short story, prose, poetry and political satire. He also attempted various narrative styles such as parables which are showcased in this *Wondering Where to Turn* collection. It is through these literary achievements that Lu Xun's reputation as a writer flourished. Most of the stories in this collection provide the reader with insight into the plight, hopes, and desires of their characters. They also serve as a platform for Lu Xun to expose the effects of China's political situation on the lives of the Chinese people.

According to Marston Anderson in his article, "The Morality of Form: Lu Xun and the Modern Chinese Short Story," one characteristic of realist short stories, which is found throughout this collection, is the use of a plot whose primary gesture is an unveiling of some kind, the stripping away of one level of meaning that the text encodes as artificial or hypocritical to establish a more fundamental level of meaning. In practice this story form tends to focus on a hope or desire that is then frustrated by the gradual degeneration of the protagonist's fortune or character by the forces of "society" or "fate"
For Lu Xun, the realist short story form enabled him to protest against social injustice and at the same time compelled him to play the role of observer of the corrupt social order found in the China of the 1920's. Such is the case in the story "New Year's Sacrifice" (February 7, 1924), in which the protagonist Sister Xianglin's hope for life after death is shattered by the insensitivity of the story's narrator.

Sister Xianglin, the protagonist of the story, lives an existence destined to misery. Her life moves from a pre-arranged marriage to widowhood and finally to an arranged life in servitude. She comes to work as a servant in Fourth Uncle's household and tackles her many duties with zest and energy. "Despite all these demands on her energies, Sister Xianglin seemed quite content. Traces of a smile began to appear at the corners of her mouth, and her face began to fill out as well" (Lyell, Diary 228). Just as Sister Xianglin seems to flourish in Fourth Uncle's household, she is fetched by her mother-in-law to marry the sixth brother of the He family. Sister Xianglin is forcibly removed from Fourth Uncle's household and is coerced into marrying Sixth Brother. On her wedding day, she wails and curses every step of the way. She shouts herself hoarse as they drag her to the bridal chair. And just before the marriage ceremony begins, she slams her head on the corner of the table, making "a hole so big that the blood gushed out" (Lyell, Diary 232). Even though there is no love between her and her husband, Sister Xianglin bears his son. This child gives her a reason to continue living. But the fates betray her and soon after her husband dies from typhoid her beloved son is killed by a wolf. After this double tragedy strikes, Sister Xianglin returns to Fourth Aunt's household in Lu Town.

Based on her past work experience and Fourth Aunt's inability to find qualified help, Sister Xianglin is immediately rehired. However, the pain and suffering she has encountered, prevent Sister Xianglin from working as diligently as before: "She was not so quick on her feet as she had once been" and "from one end of the day to the other, there was never so much as the trace of a smile on her corpse-like face" (Lyell, Diary
234). While Sister Xianglin goes about performing her household tasks in her present state, she is not permitted to share in the preparation of the family's New Year's sacrifices. If she were to touch any of the preparations, they would be tainted and the ancestors would not accept them" (Lyell, Diary 235).

Sister Xianglin's condition continues to deteriorate. So much so, that she becomes very absentminded, listless, and heavy of heart. She walks the streets of Lu Town telling anyone who will listen her tragic story. But after a while no one wants to listen, "by now everyone has long since chewed and savored the taste of her tragedy, has long since worked it into a pulp, flavorless and ready to be spit out. She may not have been aware of this herself, but she did sense something cold and sharp in their smiles and knew there was no point in speaking" (Lyell, Diary 237). To make matters worse, one of the town's people, Mother Liu, tells Sister Xianglin that when she dies, the ghosts of her two husbands will fight for her in the spirit world. The Great King of the Underworld, Yama, will have no other choice then to saw her in half, giving one piece to each husband. To ensure that her spirit has a chance in the afterworld, Sister Xianglin should donate money towards a doorsill in the temple. The doorsill would become her body, in that way, "thousands'll step on it and tens of thousands's walk over it. That way you'll make up for all your sins and you won't have to suffer after you die" (Lyell, Diary 238).

After making her sacrifice to the temple, Sister Xianglin seems almost like her old self. So much so that when it again comes time to prepare for the New Year's sacrifice, she tries to get involved in the preparations. However, Fourth Uncle and Fourth Aunt will have none of this. As she is setting out the winecups and chopsticks, Fourth Aunt reprimands Sister Xianglin severely. Sister Xianglin reacts as if she has been condemned. From this point on Sister Xianglin becomes totally withdrawn and timid. She becomes afraid of the night, of dark shadows, and even of people. Soon she is let go from Fourth Uncle's household and for the remaining days of her life she lives in poverty and despair. It is in this condition that Sister Xianglin confronts the story's narrator as he is making
his way through the streets of Lu Town. She is a woman who has lost almost all hope, except for the hope that she will one day be reunited with her beloved son.

As Sister Xianglin eyes the narrator, he is taken aback by her physical appearance. Sister Xianglin's face is sallow with dark circles under her eyes, and she no longer wears her expression of sadness; she seems carved of wood. As she approaches the narrator, she suddenly becomes animated with "a bright light suddenly glowing in her heretofore lifeless eyes" (Lyell, Diary 222). The narrator was an intellectual and to the peasant woman he represents someone worldly and brimming with knowledge. She wants to know if there really is a soul after a body dies, and if this is so, is there also a hell. The narrator is dumb struck by her questions, since he himself couldn't care less if souls exists or not; however, he realizes it matters to Sister Xianglin. He feels that to Sister Xianglin, her hope or vindication for life lies in the hope that ghosts and souls do exist. In this instance, the narrator is the resource by which Sister Xianglin desires can be fulfilled. Hope is after all, a feeling, an attitude, an emotion, by which the person hoping desires a favorable outcome, an outcome based upon the resources of the person hoping or the resources of others.

Like Lu Xun, the narrator grappled with the inability of intellectuals to find or produce meaning and the failure of the peasants to receive and actualize it (Lee, Legacy 37). As Sister Xianglin is asking the narrator these questions, he is thinking, "I might just as well have remained uneducated, for despite all my stalling, despite all my brain wracking, I had been unable to stand up to these questions posed by this simple woman (Lyell, Diary 223)." The narrator, unable to come to terms with his inability to satisfy Sister Xianglin's hopes, walks away and convinces himself that he won't be blamed for whatever happens to her. Later that night, the narrator has a premonition of impeding disaster. The next morning he finds out that Sister Xianglin has died.

Throughout her life, the fates had conspired against Sister Xianglin. While her life may have held very little happiness or joy, her death has an impact on the
towspeople. After her death, the narrator contemplates the quality of Sister Xianglin's life in her last days, and wonders why she continued to live in such a state, why she didn't just do away with herself.

I didn't know whether souls existed or not, but in the world we live in, when someone who has no way to make a living is no longer alive, when someone whom people are sick of seeing is no longer around to be seen, then one cannot say that she has done too badly, either by herself or by other people (Lyell, Diary 226).

In terms of parable, the death of Sister Xianglin on New Year's emerges as a symbol of hope for the people of Lu Town. (A parable operates as an extended allegory in which the characters of the story represent an abstract concept, such as hope, that is illustrated through comparison with real-life events.) The New Year's sacrifice was one of the most important ceremonies conducted in Lu Town. The townspeople with great reverence and punctilious observance, prepare to receive and welcome the gods of good fortune, and asked them for prosperity during the coming year (Lyell, Diary 220). By having Sister Xianglin die on New Year's, Lu Xun seems to suggests that she is a symbol of societal hope; a hope in which the desired outcome is for a collective whole instead of an individual one. After Sister Xianglin's death and the rejection of any blame for her tragic circumstances, the narrator-protagonist feels himself at peace, "wrapped in a comforting symphonic embrace, ... filled with a deep sense of well-being and wholly free of worldly cares" (Lyell, Diary 241). Hence, the narrator, like the townspeople, no longer has to accept any responsibility for Sister Xianglin. By no longer continuing to live, "then one cannot say that [Sister Xianglin] has done too badly, either by herself or by other people." Her death frees the townspeople from any moral obligations and provides hope, hope for the coming year.

Is this not also indicative of China's problem? She too had wrapped herself in the false sense of security that political change could provide a nation. Now that she was no
longer governed by the Manchus, the Republic should have offered the Chinese people an environment free of political oppression. However, like the narrator-protagonist, the Chinese masses could not or would not accept blame for their country's political chaos. They refused to awaken and work towards social change. Through this piece, Lu Xun suggests that a New Year's sacrifice needs to be made by all so that China can survive into the future. At the beginning of the story, Lu Xun uses the symbolic colors of red contrasted against white, to suggest that the red blood of the revolution can produce hope for the future. This symbol appears in the roof tiles of Fourth Uncle's house which are covered with snow. The snow that brightens the study by its reflected light. This reflected light illuminates the red ink-rubbing hanging on the wall. The characters on the hanging mean "long life." Long life to China.

"Upstairs in a Wineshop" tells the story of two former boyhood friends who are reunited as adults. They meet when the narrator-protagonist returns home for a visit. The setting for their reunion is the upstairs of a wineshop. When the narrator wanders through the streets of his boyhood home, he is saddened by all that has changed in his absence. Buildings have deteriorated or changed and his former colleagues have moved away. To pass the time he visits an old tavern haunt known as the Gallon. From the upstairs of this wineshop, as he sits waiting for his order, he looks out the window into the courtyard below. And then, "through forgetful eyes that had become accustomed to the scenery of northern China," his vision rests on a marvelous sight. There before him, in the midst of the snow, as though oblivious to the rigors of winter, a camellia shows more than a dozen red blooms against thick, dark green leaves. "Firebright against the snow, it stood there in all its grandeur, passionate and proud, seeming to scorn the wanderer's willingness to have ventured so far from home" (Lyell, Diary 243).

As he watches this brilliant spectacle, he can't help feeling that he is a man without a country. While the north really isn't his home, the south, to which he had returned for this visit, isn't his home either. China too, with the instability of its political
situation, could not (or did not want to) return to its prior dynastic rule and yet the Republic seemed to be failing. The Chinese people were still no better off. In fact, with the relationship between the Nationalist and Communist parties still tenuous and the warlords and bandits ruling the provinces, China was like the narrator: home wasn't home. She stood proud and passionate, scorning those who left her fold in search of a better future. And, China did not readily embrace those wanderers who returned home full of ideas and ideals that would aid her future survival.

Contemplating his situation, and continuing to drink rice wine, the narrator-protagonist is approached by an old boyhood chum, Lu Weifu. As the two men encounter each other, there is a stiffness in their greeting. The narrator is surprised that Weifu seems to hesitate as he joins him, "My first reaction was simply to consider his behavior a bit odd, but then I began to feel somewhat saddened and even offended. His spirit seemed subdued too--one might even have said enfeebled" (Lyell, Diary 245). But the moment Weifu catches sight of the abandoned courtyard (in which sets the red-blossomed camellia), his eyes blazed with the old flame of his youth and he seems as before.

Not surprisingly, some similes and metaphors center on the difficulty of breaking out of the old into the new. In this story, "Upstairs in the Wineshop," Weifu reflects upon his return to his home town with an extended simile that points to his failure to break away from the darkness of his intellectual home town to the light of that new society which he had hoped to create as a youth (Lyell, Vision 291).

"As soon as I got back, I realized what an absurd figure I must cut," he said with a wan smile, holding his cigarette aloft with one hand grasping his winecup with the other. "When I was a kid, I used to think that bees and flies were absurd and pathetic. I'd watch the way they'd light someplace, get spooked by something, and then fly away. After making a small circle, they'd always come back again and land just exactly where they had been before. Who could have imagined that someday, having made my own small circle, I would fly back too? And who would ever have expected that you would do the same thing? Couldn't you have managed to fly a little farther away?" (Lyell, Diary 246).
After catching up on their lives, Weifu tells the narrator that he returned to S-town\(^\text{10}\) for the re-burial of a little brother who had died many years before. The grave has not been tended and the riverbank was eroding fast, causing the grave to slide into the river. Weifu's mother could not bear the thought of her beloved son floating in the river, so Weifu was dispatched to take care of the situation. In the middle of recounting this, Weifu stops his narration long enough to comment, "When would you ever see anything like this up north--flowers blooming in all that snow, the ground underneath not even frozen?" (Lyell, *Diary* 247). He then proceeds to provide the narrator with details of the re-burial ceremony. Upon reaching his brother's grave he discovers that the coffin has almost rotted away, and that the skeleton and burial blanket are gone. He puts some dirt from the original grave inside the new burial quilt, places it in the new coffin and has the gravediggers seal it with bricks to make a good tight seal. In his eyes, Weifu has accomplished his mission, even if he has "pulled the wool over his Mother's eyes and set her mind at rest" (Lyell, *Diary* 248). (Is this not what the revolution had done to the Chinese people. Did not the revolutionaries pull the wool over the eyes of the masses--or had the masses allowed themselves to be fooled?)

As the men continue to drink and reminisce, Weifu seems taken aback by his friend. "I can tell from your eyes that you still have hopes I'll do something to realize some of our old ideals. Though I'm much more insensitive than I used to be, I can still sense some things by the way a man looks at me. I am grateful for your faith in me too. But at the same time, it makes me anxious for fear that, when all is said and done, I'll let down those old friends who, like you, continue to think well of me to this day" (Lyell, *Diary* 248). With these comments, Lu Xun seems to be suggesting how the revolution has let down the Chinese people. If the Chinese people don't awaken and push for social change, what would cure her ailing condition? Weifu like Lu Xun, belonged to that in-between transitional generation for whom schools like Sino-Occidental Academy in

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\(^{10}\)Lu Xun often uses the name "S-town" to suggest his hometown, Shaoxing (Lyell, *Diary* 311).
Shaoxing provided a chop suey of ABCD's and the Confucian Classics. He would, no doubt, have preferred modern learning both for himself and for China, but he has been dragged back into a morass of traditional Chinese words and Chinese morality (Lyell, *Vision* 182).

In order to break the seriousness of their conversation, Weifu recounts another mission his mother has sent him on. This one is regarding a very capable, practical girl who wanted one frivolous thing in her life, a red-velvet flower to put in her hair. Ah-Shun was her name and she cried and cried for the flower, but instead of receiving it, she was beaten. Weifu's mother was so bothered by this incident, that she asked him to buy a red velvet flower for Ah-Shun during his journey back to S-Town. However, when Weifu went to deliver the flower to Ah-Shun, he discovers that she had died the previous spring. The narrative structure in "Upstairs in a Wineshop," is not a confrontation between narrator and protagonist, but rather a virtual inflation of narrative levels distancing the narrator from the event. This allows Weifu to relate the story of Ah Shun without accepting any moral responsibility for her tragedy. It is as though Lu Xun had set up these narrative layers out of an extraordinary moral delicacy in approaching the lower-class protagonist (Lee, *Legacy* 42).

In the middle of this recitation, Weifu again stops to look out onto the courtyard. Outside the window, the camellia branch held an accumulation of snow which caused it to bend down into an arc. The snow slid to the ground as the branch stretched itself straight out, showing off its dark, glistening leaves and blood-red blossoms" (Lyell, *Diary* 251). Lu Xun uses this symbol throughout his story, specifically when Weifu is discussing the missions he is sent on by his mother, (the reburial of his brother and the bringing of flowers to someone from the past). This symbol also functions as an allegory of the plight of the Chinese people. With each new political or reform party that is controlling the government of modern China, the problems of the past continue to be re-buried. The conditions of oppression, poverty, and civil strife under which the Chinese
people continued to live, were not changing. With this symbol, Lu Xun seems to suggest that amidst China's political and social turmoil, her future lies in the hands of the her people. Through the voice of Weifu, Lu Xun indicates how worried he is about the future of his people. "After this? I don't know. Just think, not a single one of the hopes and dreams we had back then has worked out, has it? I don't know anything anymore. I don't even know what tomorrow's going to bring, or even the next moment...." (Lyell, Diary 254). Weifu/Lu Xun registers profound disappointments with what has happened in China (or failed to happened) in the wake of the Republican Revolution (Lyell, Vision 181).

The tone of the story, "The Loner," is heavy, pessimistic, and melancholy. The story is again set in S-town, and centers on the life of an oddball named Lianshu. He was an educated man, a history teacher, who treats those around him with indifference, and at the same time loves to involve himself in other people's affairs. He was a filial grandson who sent his earnings to his grandmother. Lianshu was always considered "not like us." He just couldn't fit in, not with the townspeople, not with his colleagues, and not with his family. He was not married, had no children, nor concubines; this again made him, "not like us."

When Lianshu's grandmother died, the villagers waited in anticipation for his arrival since he "was one of those 'new party' people who 'ate off foreign religions'" and had never talked reason in his whole life (Lyell, Diary 313). They had made decisions regarding his grandmother's burial without his consent. When the villagers made the funeral arrangements, they decided among themselves which of the mourning rituals and funeral ceremonies they would not let him change. These were the three principles from which they were determined not to budge: that he wear the customary mourning white; that he was to prostate himself before the casket; and that he was to call in Daoist and

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11The villagers use "new party" as a cover term to describe all modernization; to "eat off foreign religion" is to make a living by toadying to foreign missionaries (Lyell, Diary 313).
Buddhist priests to perform the customary funeral ceremonies (Lyell, *Diary* 313). The villagers "licked their lips" in anticipation of the confrontation between Lianshu and his family regarding these demands. However, when Lianshu arrived, he acquiesced and did not make a fuss.

Everything proceeded as normal for the encoffining ceremony without Lianshu shedding a tear. Then quite suddenly tears started to stream down his face and a sound broke from his throat and came together in a long wail. It sounded like the howling of a wounded animal, like a wolf on a deserted plain howling into the depths of night--sorrow and fury mixed with pain (Lyell, *Diary* 315). This display of emotion proved again that he was "not like us."

Lianshu continued to live his life very much in isolation. His only friend appeared to be the narrator. His life, along with that of the narrator, seemed to reflect the social conditions of 1920's China. Both men were educated but often found themselves without jobs. Lianshu's life was filled with a series of disappointments. He was embittered, lonely, oppressed and full of pain. His only joy seemed to come from children. For "children are always good. They are so innocent."

Among children you won't find the evil disposition you do among adults. The evil they grow into--the kind you too often attack--is the result of environment. It wasn't there in the beginning. In the beginning there was only innocence. I think this is the only reason we have for holding out any hope for China" (Lyell, *Diary* 318).

At one point, Lu Xun believed that the hope for China's future lay in the hands of its youth. However, as he continued to observe the direction in which his countrymen were headed, he realized that the youth would one day become corrupted adults. They would learn from their fathers and ancestors. They would remain uneducated and oppressed. If the Chinese did not awaken soon, they would remain like Lianshu's grandmother, living a life entirely in isolation. An isolation fashioned by their own
hands, an isolation she had put into her mouth and chewed on like a cud over the years. For the future of his people, Lu Xun wept bitterly (Lyell, *Diary* 325).

When the narrator heard that his friend Lianshu died, he went to his funeral. He was greatly affected when he saw Lianshu laid out in army clothes. When Lianshu could not find a job he became an aide-de-camp to a warlord divisional commander. With this job he had rejected and desecrated every thing he used to hold dear. As the narrator stood over the corpse of Lianshu, he remembered the words Lianshu spoke when he was alive, "What a hard thing it is to die and have no one to mourn you" (Lyell, *Diary* 325). Lianshu, even in death, was "not like us." As the narrator walked away, he felt a great burden weighing him down. Something was struggling to get out, it was a howl. The howl of a wounded animal in the depths of the night--sorrow and fury mixed with pain. But through the release of this pain and fury, there comes a lightness of heart. This howl, which is mixed with sorrow, pain and fury, suggests the hope that rises from the depths of despair, despair over the survival of China.

When Lianshu was asked by the narrator why he had wept so inconsolably at his grandmother's funeral, he said he remembered how she had lived her life. While he had changed, she remained exactly as she had always been, living in isolation. The pain that Lianshu felt for his grandmother was for what she could have become had she "opened herself to change." This is the same pain Lu Xun felt for China. China's hope for the future lies in change. She has to use her pain, suffering and oppression to pave the way for a better future.

The story, "Mourning the Dead," is a tale of sorrow and remorse. The narrator, through the first person, describes a moving love story between Juansheng and Zijun, that turns to tragedy and pain. We are introduced to Juansheng and Zijun as they are living in happy contentment that the throes of new love can provide. Love as Juansheng soon discovers, is something that must be constantly renewed, constantly nurtured, and constantly recreated. As he shares this insight with Zijun, she nods her head in loving
and sympathetic understanding (Lyell, Diary 344). However, as all affairs that start out blissfully, soon the events of every day life create problems.

One of the first problems that Juansheng and Zijun faced was finding a place to live. When the story was written in October of 1925, the social conventions for the Chinese were still steeped in Confucian traditions. Marriages were arranged by families and, once wed, the couple lived in the family compound. However, young, liberal intellectuals of the May Fourth period flouted the traditional claims of family to exercise free choice in the selection of their marriage partners (Lyell, Diary 341). As a result, a young couple looking for a place to live on their own would be doing so without the blessing of either family. They would be considered as immoral by society, and therefore were not desirable tenants. "Most of the time, people would manage to find some pretext or other to turn us away ... " (Lyell, Diary 343).

Another problem the couple faced was that Juansheng was let go from his position at the Secretary's office. After losing this official position, he had a difficult time securing another means of employment. At first the couple tried to bravely face their financial situation. "What ridiculous creatures we human beings are that such trifles should have the power to influence us right to the very core of our beings" (Lyell, Diary 347). Their first order of business was to economize. At this same time Juansheng put an advertisement in the classifieds offering his services as a copyist or tutor. Juansheng also wrote to his friend, the editor-in-chief of Freedom's Friend, asking him for the opportunity to translate for the magazine. Juansheng saw these opportunities as a "new road."

Juansheng had a hard time traveling this "new road." He had an opportunity to translate, but he kept finding excuses why he couldn't succeed in this endeavor. He didn't have a quiet place to work, Shadow (the dog) and the chickens made too much noise, Zijun was always interrupting him, and squabbles erupted between the two. The longer he put off submitting his translated essays to the Freedom's Friend magazine, the
more bleak their finances became. Soon there wasn't enough rice to eat. One of the reasons for this was that Zijun loved her dog Shadow so much that she would often feed him before herself or Juansheng.

As the couple became more pressed for money, they had to get rid of Shadow. Juansheng could have sold him at the temple fair, but he knew that the buyer might use Shadow as meat. Instead, he blind-folded Shadow, took him out to the city limits, and let him loose. Juansheng had to push the dog in a ditch when he tried to follow him. When he returned home he felt a sense of relief and freedom. However, when he looked at Zijun, the look of utter dejection he saw in her eyes shocked him. From this moment on the relationship between Zijun and Juansheng begins to deteriorate.

Since this story is being told from the first-person, the problems faced by this couple are being related through Juansheng's feeling and interpretation. For example, when he sees the look of utter dejection in Zijun's eyes, he perceives that she thinks he is a hard-hearted man with no feelings. He starts rationalizing with himself, that if he were in fact a man with no heart, he would not be with Zijun. He would be earning a good living, through the connections made by his family and circle of friends. It is then that the idea germinates in his mind, that if it were not for Zijun, he would be in some other place, and the "road ahead ... would be wide open" (Lyell, Diary 351).

As I sat by myself with nothing to do, I began to realize that for the better part of a year now, I had neglected every last essential of human life for the sake of love alone -- blind love. First of all, I'd forgotten about the business of making a living. A man has to be able to make a living before he can provide a place for love to dwell. Though I wasn't what I used to be by a long shot, I still had faith that new roads would always open up for a man who knew how to struggle" (Lyell, Diary 352).

By this last line, Juansheng is referring to his own struggles as a man. Lu Xun is also using this line to speak metaphorically about China. He is saying here, even though China is not the majestic, dynastically ruled country from before, she is a nation that
through the struggles of her people, could become stronger. China's roads would open far and wide, providing hope for the future. However, this would only be possible if she would look outward to the world, not to imitate, but to learn, grow, and prosper.

The possibilities were endless for those who had the courage to change and the fortitude to carry on the struggle. These are the bold warriors of a new China: the lone fisherman in the midst of towering waves; a soldier in his trench; a man of high rank riding in his motorcar; a speculator on the stock exchange; a bold bandit deep in his mountain lair; a professor behind his lectern; a political activist at dusk; a thief in the depths of night. But what about Zijun? Since she has lost courage, can she not be one of these bold new warriors?

Juansheng now felt indifference for Zijun and she in turn began to fear for the future of their relationship. Her constant need for reassurances from Juansheng made him lie to her about his true feelings. His hypocrisy was making him miserable and Zijun resentful towards him. This tension in their relationship made Juansheng realize that it was better for the two if they separated. However, now he lacked the courage to speak the truth to Zijun and was hoping that she would take matters in her own hands and leave him. But Zijun demanded that he speak the truth to her and so Juansheng let her know that he no longer loved her. He framed his rejection of her so that she felt it was in her best interest to leave. "I'm no longer in love with you! Actually it's much better for you this way, for now you can go ahead and do whatever you choose without having me to worry about ... " (Lyell, Diary 355).

Now it is Juansheng who becomes the coward. He cannot bear the expression on Zijun's face. "She looked around the room like a hungry child searching for its mother. Her frightened eyes constantly shifted their gaze as she desperately sought to avoid mine" (Lyell, Diary 355). He bolts from their home to the safe confines of the library. He rationalizes his behavior by telling himself that there are many roads still opened to him. But not if he continues to live the way he does. Again, Lu Xun is speaking
metaphorically about China's future. Many road will open to the Chinese people, only if they work towards social change.

Zijun's was taken back home by her father. Deliberately and with consideration, Zijun had left (salt, pepper, flour, half a head of cabbage, and a few dozen dollar coins) all there as a silent injunction for me to take it and use it to go on living as long as I could (Lyell, Diary 357). Zijun was condemned to a life of moralistic austerity, forever in the debt of her father, and the judgment stares of everyone else. Her life would be a void. She has to shoulder the burden of emptiness that Juansheng had thrust upon her. She would have to live this life for the remainder of her days. "And when at last she came to her end, her only reward would be a grave with no stone to honor her" (Lyell, Diary 358).

As Juansheng thought about her death, for this tale does end in tragedy, he realizes that he was indeed the coward and she the fearless warrior. He placed the burden of truth on Zijun, condemning her to death. While she in turn only hoped that he would continue to live as long as he could. Juansheng became guilt ridden. His life, after all was said and done, didn't open immediately to the "new roads." He was living in the depths of poverty, despair, and guilt. "I was enveloped by a vast emptiness and deathly silence. In the blackness of the night before my eyes, I seemed to see the face of each and every person who had ever died for lack of love, and to hear their cries of pain and despair" (Lyell, Diary 360).

In the midst of this "empty world" a gift from Zijun appears. The dog, Shadow, emerges emaciated and half dead. Taking Shadow with him, Juansheng leaves his rooms in Goodomen Lane to return to the quarters (Hometowners' Club) he once shared with Zijun, when their love was still new. There appeared to be many doors open to Juansheng, but without Zijun, who had brought him so much love, happiness, and hope, he couldn't seem to take the first step. There was nothing left but emptiness, an emptiness he has brought about with the truth (Lyell, Diary 361).
The parable Lu Xun creates with this story is universal: its themes are guilt, remorse, and hope. Juansheng continued to live with guilt over his treatment of Zijun. He hoped that there really was a hell, for in the midst of the roaring flames he would seek Zijun to ask for her forgiveness. If he couldn't receive her forgiveness, he hoped his body would be engulfed in the raging flames, consuming all his sorrow and remorse. Juansheng seems to symbolize China. His hope, as is the hope for China, lies in the "new roads." Juansheng, like China, must put the past behind him and take the first step in the direction of the future. This first step is social change. Both must "hide the truth in their hearts and take forgiveness as their guides."
CHAPTER FOUR
CONCLUSION

Lu Xun was a visionary who wrote about what he cared for the most, the survival of his beloved China and the lives of the Chinese people. He chronicled the everyday events that shaped the lives of his people, their pain, misery, and despair. Apart from these themes which are rooted in particular times and attached to specific circumstances, there are others that are somewhat more transcendental. "Hope" or the "courage to be" is one such theme. Hope is created by those who, despite everything, can find the life and courage to create it, just as a path is made by those who have enough life and initiative to move in a given direction across the land (Lyell, *Vision* 170).

The themes of hope in Lu Xun's fiction surface through the strength of his characters, symbols and metaphors, and his somber parables. It is evident in the two symbols found in "Medicine." The first symbol is the red and white wreath which appears on the grave of the dead revolutionary and the second is the raven at the cemetery. Both symbols represent the failed revolution, but they also represent hope. Hope for China's future, that she might "fly like an arrow toward the far horizon." In "Upstairs in the Wineshop," again Lu Xun uses symbols of red and white to represent hope. The "red-blossomed" camellia stands, "firebright against the snow, in all its grandeur, passionate and proud." China too can stand tall and proud, entrenched in national pride if her people awaken from their oppressed state and take control of their future. The red can signify blood spilt during the revolution (or Bolshevik colors indicating Lu Xun's leanings toward socialism/communism), and the white (the color of
mourning clothes) based on Lu Xun penchant for Western influences, could refer to purity, rebirth, and hope. Lu Xun suggests with these symbols that amidst her political turmoil, the hope for China's future lies in social change. Social change which will only occur if the Chinese masses awaken and band together to walk "the path of hope."

The hope in Kong Yiji is manifested in the character of the wine server, who stands alone in his compassion amidst those who would treat others with inhumanity. He alone exhibits a sign of compassion in the face of a society that is cruel and callous. In "An Unimportant Affair," hope again comes through in characterization, that of the rickshaw passenger. He is the narrator-protagonist, who experiences an epiphany of man's inhumanity to man and the awakening of his own compassion. He turns within himself to find hope and courage.

Hope also takes on the shapes of dreams and spirits as in the stories, "Tomorrow" and "A New Year's Sacrifice." In both stories, mothers have lost their sons to death. Sister Shan lost her dear Bao'er to an illness and Sister Xianglin lost her son to a wolf. But amidst their suffering, both women's hope lie in the fact that they need and want to believe that they will see their loved ones in the spirit or dream world. Another story in which hope lies in the afterworld is "Mourning the Dead." In this story, the narrator-protagonist, condemns his beloved Zijun to death by having her bear the burden of their love. Zijun is destined to a "grave without a headstone" because Juansheng casts her aside. Juansheng, in turn, is inconsolable upon her death because of the guilt he feels over his treatment of her, in life. His hope then is that he will see her again in the afterworld, to beg for forgiveness. It is only through this forgiveness that Juansheng can begin his life anew, and seek the adventures and hope that the "new roads" of life could provide for him.

The underlying theme of hope, found throughout the stories analyzed in this paper, was for the survival of China and the Chinese people. Lu Xun was often haunted by the theory of evolution and a fear that in the struggle for existence, the Chinese race
might perish. This fear led him to adopt a more dynamic and hopeful view of human beings. From this point on he embraced the philosophy that humans have the power within themselves, to better themselves. He also came to believe that the cure to China's social ills would be for her to look outward to the world -- not to imitate, but to learn, and to share as well.

Lu Xun believed it was not her physical well-being but China's spirit that needed tending. It was through the creation of literature that Lu Xun felt he could offer a cure for China's ailing condition. While Lu Xun was writing his articles and essays, it became clear to him that literature was meant to be read by everyone not just by the literati. In an essay titled "The Power of Mara Poetry," Lu Xun called upon his fellow Chinese to become "warriors of the spirit," writers who would give voice to the sufferings of China's silent masses and articulate their hopes and fears, writers who would, at the same time, exhort the whole Chinese people to reform their society and stir them to resist oppression. Finally, we ought to remember that his strongest and most heartfelt aspiration (ever since his student days in Japan when he wrote "The Power of Mara Poetry") was not primarily to be an artist, but to be an agent of change in China (Lyell, *Vision* 303).
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VITA

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The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

March 31, 1994
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