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Full Spectrum of Selves  
in Modern Chinese Literature:  
From Lu Xun to Xiao Hong

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in East Asian Languages and Cultures

by

Felicia Jiawen Ho

2012

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2012

# ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Full Spectrum of Selves  
in Modern Chinese Literature:  
From Lu Xun to Xiao Hong

by

Felicia Jiawen Ho

Doctor of Philosophy in East Asian Languages and Cultures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Shu-mei Shih, Chair

Despite postcolonial theory's rejection of legacies of Western imperial dominance and cultural hierarchy, the superiority of Euro-American notions of subjectivity remains a persistent theme in third world cross-cultural literary analysis. Interpretations of the Chinese May Fourth era often reduce the period to one of wholesale westernization and cultural self-repudiation. Euro-American notions of the self often reify ideologies of individuality, individualism, rationalism, evolution, and a "self-versus-society" dichotomy, viewing such positions as universal and applicable for judging decolonizing others. To interrogate this assumption, I examine the writing of Lu Xun and Xiao Hong, two May Fourth writers whose fictional characters present innovative, integrated, heterogeneous selves that transcend Western

critical models. This “full spectrum of selves” sustains contradicting pulls of identity—the mental (the rational, the individual), the bodily (the survivalist, the affective), the cerebral (the moral), the social (the relational, the organismic), as well as the spiritual and the cosmic. I argue that Lu Xun’s “A Madman’s Diary” transcends limited Euro-American notions of subjectivity and the self by blending Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian elements and by creating a “both/and” dynamic, inclusive of collectivist allegory and personal interiority. With regard to gender, I argue that Xiao Hong’s characters cannot be circumscribed by Euro-American notions of subjectivity and feminism, or by Chinese patriarchal nationalism. Contrasting Lu Xun’s tendency to kill-off female characters with Xiao Hong’s themes of female survivorship, agency, and accountability—I highlight the latter’s focus on agency over victimization, innovation over mimicry. Moreover, I explicate how Xiao Hong’s notion of female subjectivity re-introduces survival as agency, challenging the covert links among agency, accountability, subjectivity, and judgment. Moreover, her stories contest the assumptions of the Great Man theory of history, asserting that quotidian details offer an alternative narrative and undo History as such. I thus posit that May Fourth did not enact a totalistic iconoclastic rejection of China’s cultural self, but was an era of phenomenal self-inventory, re-invention, and change. By illustrating how different experiences of historic events, culture, gender, and class impacted cultural concepts of the self, I seek to recuperate cultural specificity from the dominion of Euro-American notions of subjectivity.

The dissertation of Felicia Jiawen Ho is approved.

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*To my mother and father,*

*Angella and Bart Ho*

*To my husband and son,*

*Lan-Feng Tsai and Joey Jing Tsaiho*

*And to my grandmother,*

*Jiang Shuqin's unnamed sisters*

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## Acknowledgement

The roots of this dissertation began in a cramped, musty room packed with eager Bryn Mawr faces, each hoping to win one of the 15 student spots in Katrin Burlin's "Women of Talents" senior seminar. Every year, it was this way, drawing a crowd—larger than her classroom could hold—as if somehow everyone knew that this was far more than just a literature class. Serendipitously chosen as one of the 15, I soon discovered that this was the year that my life would oddly parallel Late Qing-Early Republic Chinese political figure and writer, Lu Xun's. After reading about Lu Xun's quitting Sendai medical school and declaring that only literature could save the spirit; I too resolved to give up my medical school early admission to pursue literature.

I am thus much indebted to Lu Xun and my Bryn Mawr teacher and friend, the late Katrin Burlin, whose passionate love of cross-cultural literature and her openness to self-exploration, modeled a passion for literature's unique ties to the human journey. In her classes, I began to question my own constructions of self and my conflicted sense of being both Chinese and American and yet simultaneously rejected by both. Tracing my cross-cultural identity crisis to a pivotal childhood memory, I remember as a little girl asking my peasant grandmother, whether it was true in China that parents sometimes drowned their newborn female infants. I will never forget her response, which subsequently changed the course of my life, and how I came to define myself. For that, I owe my grandmother, Jiang Shuqin, and my ancestors a debt of gratitude in making this dissertation and my journey possible.

In this dissertation, I explore the elements that influence constituting the self. What is the nature of Euro-American ideas about the self, and how is it constructed, and what is the nature of

Chinese notions about the self, and how is it different? Namely, I explore how two Late Qing-Early Republic Chinese writers, Lu Xun and Xiao Hong, faced self-conflict and innovatively integrated Chinese and Euro-American notions of self. In many ways, this dissertation reflects my own internal landscape—my struggles against judging and imposing Euro-American value systems and my journey toward humility, forgiveness, and understanding. All the errors, theoretical and syntactic, and my tendencies toward the meta and the subjective rather than the empirical, are all my own. I am grateful to the committee’s generosity in granting me freedom to explore my path.

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I am truly indebted and thankful to many friends for their contributions. When I was struggling, Lucy Moran, read the early chapters, edited, and engaged in hearty conversation with me and rekindled my academic spirit. Mike Lucerno and Andrea Connell read through chapters and lifted my spirit during a time of need, adding fresh energy to my writing process. Sue Paige, Stacy Bloom, Jen Jacob, Lan-Feng Tsai, Kyla Quesada, and my Pathways buddies ceaselessly inspired and challenged me to overcome all obstacles and reach my goals. My colleague and dear friend, Linda Flores, always had words of encouragement, kindness, care, and humor to lighten the toughest of situations. Jen Jacob was my fiercely loyal angel: always by my side to

support and believe in me through every detail. I am deeply grateful to all my friends, who gathered together ceremoniously to shave my head—transforming me into a “woman-warrior” writer. I would also like to express my profound gratitude to my fellow cancer-fighter, Tai chi teacher and friend, the late Paul Russell (1937-2012), who continued to teach his classes through chemotherapy. Paul was my light in the darkness—a testament to perseverance, discipline, and undivided devotion to one’s calling.

Finally, I owe my deepest gratitude to my family for their manifestation of the power of love that dissolves the dualism of self and other. Without their support, this dissertation would not have been possible. My husband, Lan-Feng Tsai, devotedly loved and supported me and made countless sacrifices. My son, Joseph Tsaiho, cheered me on and was always my greatest teacher, his passion and wonder ceaselessly inspiring and humbling me. My parents, Bart and Angella Ho, attentively nurtured my studies since I was young, taught me everything I knew of “self,” and generously loved me often more than themselves. I am deeply grateful to my sister’s family: Alice, Jackson, Andrew, and Olivia Tsai supported my family through the entire journey. I owe sincere and earnest thankfulness to my dear father and mother-in-law, Tsai Min-Hsiung and Lu Hsueh-Chih, who kindly and patiently supported my degree and our family. Finally, I would like to express my humble gratitude to my ancestors: I would not be here if it had not been for your survival and sacrifices.

For all those named and unnamed, I offer my heartfelt gratitude for their generous support.

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## Introduction: “Subjectivity” Meets a “Full Spectrum of Selves”

*Full Spectrum of Selves in Modern Chinese Literature: From Lu Xun to Xiao Hong* explores the inherent problems in attempting to define a subjectivity for the “Modern Chinese self.” “Modern” immediately invokes the critique of its other, the backward and traditional. Literary critical texts like Shu-mei Shih’s *The Lure of the Modern* and Wang Dewei’s *Fin de Siecle* uncover the inevitable ties between “Modernism” and “Westernization”<sup>1</sup> and the “West’s” assertions of superiority. In addition, the diasporic movement of “Chinese” peoples across the globe has brought about a crisis of determining what constitutes Chineseness: blood, origin, location, belief, etc. Literary critics like Ian Ang, Rey Chow, and Ng Kim-chew have explored the myth of Chineseness and illustrated how China-centeredness acts as a totalizing discourse that erases and delegitimizes its margins such as Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan.<sup>2</sup> Those that exist in the geographic “margins” of China—immigrants and those of multiple racial origins, interrogate the limits of what constitutes “Chineseness” and defrays China-centeredness. In addition, recent women critics like Lydia Liu, Rey Chow, and Shu-mei Shih have also problematized the excluding of Chinese women in Euro-American feminist and Chinese nationalist theorizing.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, when critics come to grapple with “subjectivity” and all its inevitable ties to identity, individuality, consciousness, and other culturally-loaded terms—Euro-American notions of subjectivity have for the most part been left intact. Thus, while each of the terms “Modern,” “Chinese,” and “Gender” has come under critical scrutiny, Euro-American notions of subjectivity remain dominant. A collateral goal of this dissertation, thus, is to deconstruct the

use of the term “subjectivity” and to demonstrate how it is incapable of fully expressing the multiplicity of the cross-cultural self.

Through a close study of the fictional and autobiographical voices depicted in Modern Chinese May Fourth writers, Lu Xun and Xiao Hong’s writings, I explore how concepts of the self and agency become defined differently from the perspectives of historical events, culture, gender, and class, and how the painful Late Qing-Early Republic confrontation with the military aggressions of the West culminated into a crisis of Chinese notions of the self. Although for most of the twentieth century, leading critics have interpreted the Late Qing-Early Republic period as an era of wholesale westernization, and therefore assumed that this was proof of the superiority of the Euro-American idea of subjectivity; this dissertation presents a different understanding.

In the crucial moments of foreign nations invading and carving out portions of China as colonies and concessions—while the nation and individual lives hung in the balance—Chinese intellectuals determined to make a huge psychological and survival-based leap from their past traditions. When survival instincts of fight, flight, or freeze provided no resolution, the Chinese intellectuals conjointly decided to utilize literature to transform themselves so that they could fight for their individual and collective survival. While the focus is on the problematic of Chinese notions of the self and subjectivity, this dissertation seeks to acknowledge the brilliance, creativity, courage, and collective effort it took to actualize a national self-inventory of flaws and character defects in the hopes of creating a new feasible path for survival. As the four following chapters will illustrate, rather than wholesale westernization, I am arguing that the Late Qing-Early Republic intellectual and literary endeavors need to be understood as a creative



transformation of selective Euro-American notions of the self to arrive at a notion of the self filled with rich possibilities.

This transformed, integrated, and multiple notion of the self is what I call a “spectrum of selves” which encompasses the mental (the rational and intellectual), the bodily (the primitive, survivalist, and affective), the cerebral (the moral), the social (relational and organismal), as well as the existential and spiritual (cosmic and transcendental). As I will argue in the following chapters, the combined voices of Lu Xun and Xiao Hong present a wide spectrum of possible selves in the Late Qing-Early Republic era that can be utilized to demarcate the limitations of Euro-American notions of subjectivity. Finally, story-telling in the Late Qing-Early Republic takes on special agency with Lu Xun and Xiao Hong as they exploit the power of literature’s ability to present a full spectrum of selves.

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Chapter one, “Lu Xun’s Schizophrenic Re-invention of Euro-American Subjectivity in ‘A Madman’s Diary,’” explores Western notions of “subjectivity” as a conceptual network of meaning that is nested in specific cultural assumptions, values, and norms that are framed by terms such as individualism, individuality, identity, uniqueness, agency and personality. Rather than seeing “subjectivity” as universal, the chapter explores the possibility of Euro-American notions of subjectivity as a reaction to specific historical events and junctures such as the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent rise of secularism and rationalism. The chapter also explores the multidimensional Chinese notions of the “self” as a conceptual network of meaning drawn from Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, as well as from localized oral storytelling,

folk stories, and legends and invites readers to consider a spectrum of possibilities for the "self." This cultural model of "self" that allows for "both/and" invites balance and a solution to the competitive violence of the cult of individualism and the assumed antagonism between self and society. In the last section, I contextualize Lu Xun's writings within the contrasting literary criticisms of first world and decolonizing world studies to deconstruct the opposition between Chinese specificity and Euro-American universality. I offer a new interpretation of Lu Xun's "A Madman's Diary" in terms of its multiple schizophrenic voices of narration and the simultaneously co-existing multiple truths and realities, thereby illustrating Lu Xun's creative re-working of individualist subjectivity into harmonizing and co-existing multiple subjectivities. The various antiphonal voices of the text, I argue, represent the "hailing" ideologies of Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, folklore, legend, and oral-storytelling and their negotiations with the Western cult of individualism. Through creative fragmentation and innovation in literary form, Lu Xun integrates the needs of lesser and greater self (*xiaowo* and *dawo*) into a new model that critiques the limits of Western notions of subjectivity.

Chapter 2, "Allegory and Individual Interiority through a Spectrum of Selves in 'A Madman's Diary,'" explores the short story as both an allegorical collectivist work as well as an individualistic private expression, and examines how Lu Xun ingeniously reinvents and integrates Western notions of the self and individualism with Chinese notions of the self for a more balanced coexistence of self and society. The first section interprets the short story as articulating an allegorical and collective vision. In the second half, I utilize Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic* and New French feminist theory to interpret the short story as a personally fulfilling creative escape for Lu Xun. Integrating both sections, I illustrate how Lu Xun innovatively balances the allegorical and the subjective, thereby satisfying the

needs of the self as well as the greater self, as both the voices of the Chinese collective selves and personal aesthetic subjective selves achieve articulation.

In the first half of chapter 3, “Transcending Patriarchal Nationalism and Euro-American Feminism: Xiao Hong’s Stories,” I contextualize modern Chinese women’s writing within the totalizing discourses of (1) contestations of politics and unequal power between first and third world positions, (2) the disjunction between the views of decolonizing (third) and first world feminists, (3) the incommensurability of Chinese female historical specificity with so-called “Universal” Euro-American feminism, and (4) the incongruities in the intersection of distinctly different cultures and how these incongruities relate to Euro-American notions of “subjectivity.” The chapter explores how Euro-American paradigms, especially feminism, intersect with Chinese patriarchal nationalism and how these totalizing discourses circumscribe the articulation of modern Chinese women’s senses of the self and diminish and minimize the true brilliance of Xiao Hong’s work. In the first half, I also critique the Euro-American requirements for agency as a problematic imposition upon other cultures. The chapter illustrates how judgments about agency inevitably set up a framework that presumes Chinese women as victims. In the second half, I illustrate the problematic of Chinese patriarchal nationalism’s infantilization of women like Xiao Hong. Comparing and contrasting Lu Xun’s treatment of women in “Regret for the Past” and “A New Year’s Sacrifice” with Xiao Hong’s treatment of women in her short stories, I illuminate the differences that occur due to their differences in gender as well as economic status. I also explore different forms of agency that Xiao Hong presents for Chinese women—self-introspection, writing, survival, and even choosing death over life. The second half of the chapter further illuminates Xiao Hong’s unique views on the individual’s relationship with nationalism, especially by the poor and the dispossessed. She illustrates how all the countless

small details of everyday life—the daily, the banal, and the trivial—must unfold so that History with a capital “H” can unfold. By her unique articulations of Chinese female survivorship, agency, and accountability in her short stories and autobiographical writings, I find that she is ultimately able to create an alternative space from which Chinese women can articulate themselves into being.

In chapter 4, “Xiao Hong’s Spectrum of Selves,” I posit that Xiao Hong presents unique versions of selfhood that transcend the limits of Euro-American and Chinese patriarchal nationalism’s notions of subjectivity and agency, and invents an alternative space from what was offered by Lu Xun. In the first half of the chapter, I compare her treatment of the masses with Lu Xun’s to help illustrate her rich presentation of a “spectrum of selves” that traverses the highly antagonistic and limiting dualisms of self-other, colonizer-decolonizer, collectivism-individualism, woman-nation, perpetrator-victim and man-woman. Xiao Hong expands notions of multiplicity by integrating a Western sense of self with a full spectrum of selves that is more relational and inextricably interwoven within webs of people, nested and entangled within nature, and that is also simultaneously a more tactile and physically encompassing sense of being. In the second half of the chapter, I explore how her spectrum of selves can be found in her short stories, “Bridge,” “Hands,” “The Death of Wang Asao,” her novella, *The Field of Life and Death* as well as her books, *On Market Street*, and *Tales From Hulan River*. Her writing explores beyond the confines of Western notions of the self into the limitlessness of a spectrum of selves and transcends the limits of patriarchal nationalism and Euro-American Feminism.

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<sup>1</sup> In this instance, I am using Wang Dewei’s usage of the term “Westernization” and not my own. For the purpose of the dissertation, the words “West,” “Western,” or “Westernization” either reference a critic’s usage of the term, or refers to a Chinese literary critic’s usage of the term. “The West” designates the eight European and American countries that united to colonize China. I avoid using the term, “The West,” because it reifies the notion of a single homogeneous oppressor and fails to acknowledge that not all European nations attempted to colonize China. Not all European nations are homogeneous in terms of economic wealth, martiality, and political influence.

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<sup>2</sup> Kim-Chew Ng, "Minor Sinophone Literature: Diasporic Modernity's Incomplete Journey" in *Global Chinese Literature: Critical Essays*, eds. Jing Tsu and Dewei Wang (Boston, Brill, 2010); Rey Chow, "Thinking with Food, Writing Off Center: Notes on Two Hong Kong Authors" in *Global Chinese Literature: Critical Essays*, eds. Jing Tsu and Dewei Wang (Boston: Brill, 2010) and (Chow 1993); Ian Ang, "Can One Say No to Chineseness?: Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm" *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asian and the West*, London, Routledge: 2001), 21-51; Avtar Brah, "Diaspora, Border and Transnational Identities," in *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996), 180-210.

<sup>3</sup> (Chow 1991); (Shu-mei Shih, "Toward an Ethics of Transnational Encounters, or, 'When' Does a 'Chinese' Woman Become a 'Feminist,'" *Minor Transnationalism*. eds. Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 73-108; (Liu 1994).

## Chapter 1: Lu Xun's Re-inventive Schizophrenic

### Subjectivity in "A Madman's Diary"

In the Late Qing-Early Republic, urgent discourses and counter-discourses flooded the Chinese intellectual's sphere on what reforms would be necessary to save the Chinese nation from dissolution. Fragmented and torn by constant wars not only by foreign invasions but by the conflicts of its own warlords as well, China, accustomed in the past to being powerful, in the face of intruding foreign countries dividing its land, had to reconcile with itself the fact that it was now far behind Western economic, military and scientific development. With the awareness of Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest, and conversely the extinction of the weakest—Chinese intellectuals felt that this was a definitive historical moment in which China's national survival hung in the balances. Not only was the Chinese nation at stake; but individually, each Chinese person's life—socially, emotionally, physically, and spiritually—was also at risk. Each individual's felt sense of the fundamental need for survival only compounded the already insurmountable fears for national preservation and vice versa. Controversial discourses spanned from writers like Yan Fu (1853-1921) who prescribed “wholesale westernization” to others like Qian Zhixiu (1853-1921) who advocated “cultural blending.”<sup>1</sup> This period was marked by a massive movement of China's intellectual elites linking minds in search of a viable solution, a theoretical middle ground (*zhong yong zhi dao*) from which to strike a precarious balance between Chinese and Western cultures.

When Late Qing-Early Republic reforms focused on utilitarian and technological advances<sup>2</sup> failed to bring about much success in protecting the nation against foreign threats, the May Fourth intellectuals who followed found themselves caught in an impossible quandary.

Was superficial change possible without changing from the core? The reforms most needed to rebuild China into an equal power could no longer escape the controversial question of whether modernization was possible without some degree of westernization.<sup>3</sup> In their search for a viable solution, the drive for reform doubled both as a possibility for salvation of nation (to modernize), while simultaneously enacting a threat to the very fiber of Chinese national identity (ergo to westernize). But how was this transformation to come about?

While heated debates on reforms typically in the form of editorials, academic, and political arguments proliferated the contemporary popular news publications, like *Xin Qingnian* and *Dongfang Zazhi*, and successfully attracted wide readership, the majority of the *zhishi fenzi*, China's intellectual elite, never intended for these editorial-like commentaries to be the primary agent of social transformation and disseminating reform to the masses. The social commentaries would appear to have been the most straight-forward and culturally conventional route.

Interestingly, however, the literati elites, such as Ren Gong (1898), Yin Bing (1902) and Di Baoxian (1903) argued that critical reforms necessarily take place through fiction, the chosen locus for China's social transformation.<sup>4</sup> Intensified by fears for survival—individual, cultural and national—the May Fourth *zhishi fenzi* may have felt trapped by circumstances into a utilitarianism which swung towards the extremes of requiring all period literature to univocally serve their political and pedagogical goals.<sup>5</sup>

As these fears heightened the Chinese intellectuals' already stifling sense of responsibility, perhaps the overwhelming hopelessness in past failed late Qing reforms opened otherwise inconceivable possibilities. Perhaps this was the opportune moment that the Chinese nation first began to truly hear Lu Xun's radical avante-guard discourse of alternatives, one that would require a great cultural leap of faith from the relative comforts of history and tradition. As

seen from historical hindsight by latter-day scholars, the weight of national crisis fell heavily upon the shoulders of this one Chinese intellectual who tried desperately to disseminate his solutions through literature. Lu Xun—an enigmatic public figure and writer and one of the most respected and highly canonized May Fourth *zhishi fenzi*—is equally renowned for his literary writing as well as for his public commentaries.

While earlier critics often interpreted Lu Xun's life and work as the unified homogeneous message of totalistic iconoclastic westernizing reform, I agree with more recent critics such as Leo Lee, Lin Yusheng and Ted Hutters who have argued that Lu Xun struggled against identification with political causes. Fredric Jameson, without directly critiquing Lu Xun, in his controversial essay, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" (1986), lumps all "third world" literature as nationally allegorical work.<sup>6</sup> He means to criticize canonical Euro-American literature for being too individualistic and subjective, but he inadvertently suggests that Chinese literature lacks the exploration of a subjective experience. This trend of interpreting Chinese literature through a Euro-American literary standard that privileged subjectivity and found Chinese literature lacking began with Jaroslav Prusek in *The Lyrical and the Epic*.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, literary works of the past 20<sup>th</sup> century by famous Chinese writers such as Hu Shi, Mao Dun and especially Lu Xun have mostly been allegorical and are often accompanied with scathing self-analysis.

Despite the very culturally loaded implications of the Euro-American term "subjectivity" and all the differences between the two cultural notions of the self, other Euro-American educated critics continue to operate and interrogate other cultures with the underlying assumptions that attaining Euro-American subjectivity and a highly coherent self-defined identity is key for greater evolutionary status (i.e.: however one wishes to define it—success,



universal higher transcendence, happiness, or higher spiritual evolution). In critical interpretations of Modern Chinese writers, a character's spiritual or psychological maturity is often judged by how well he or she meets the criteria for an American/European notion of a highly-defined and constituted self as center. In many ways, Euro-American centered interpretations of decolonizing literatures remains bound by Euro-American standards and judgments. The failure of Euro-American "universal" constructs, however, to adequately express international needs and its experiences through "self" are surfacing in the ruptures of English language, visible in decolonizing writers struggles to invent new word choices and combinations. In recent studies, increasing numbers of decolonizing writers and critics purposefully pair "consciousness" with qualifiers such as "doubled," "double edged," and "split" as a syntactic resistance against notions of coherent identities and consciousnesses.

*Spectrum of Selves in Modern Chinese Literature: From Lu Xun to Xiao Hong* explores how concepts of the self and subjectivity become defined uniquely through different historical events, through their inter-articulation with culture, gender, and class, and how China's painful Late Qing-Early Republic confrontation with the West culminated into a crisis that redefined notions of self and subjectivity through literature. While current Euro-American literary criticism often interprets the May Fourth re-creation of self as lack of a Chinese subjective self and proof of Western universality and the need for mimicry of a Euro-American prescribed individualist subjectivity, I am arguing that two particular May Fourth writers, Lu Xun and Xiao Hong, created innovative re-workings of "trans-cultural" selves that transcend the limits—a "spectrum of selves"—a Chinese and Euro-American integrated plural notion of self that encompasses the body-heart, individual-organism, relational, spiritual, cosmic, practical, and affective. I propose that this term offers a more "organismic" perspective—a sense of self as a

cell of the larger universe, nation, society or family organism—that the Euro-American term “subjectivity” inherently misses. I am invoking Lin Yusheng’s term, “organismic,” which he used interchangeably with holistic to convey the notion of elements as being “shaped by the ‘whole.’”<sup>8</sup> While Lin is using the term as a description of Chinese intellectualistic-holistic modes of thinking, he is also referencing the perception of traditional Chinese society and culture as organismic.<sup>9</sup> I have intentionally avoided using “collectivist” as it inherently already suggests that the individual sacrifices for the good of the group. “Organismic,” on the other hand, implies that in order for the single cells to survive, their unity as a group is required. In other words, “organismic” is more biological, symbiotic and survival-based (i.e., ants are more organismic than collectivist).

As Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), Gayatri Spivak, and Arif Dirlik have forewarned, all discourses are to some extent totalizing. This discourse I am engaged in is bound by various contending discourses that shape it. 1) First world and decolonizing world: Decolonizing critics Gayatri Spivak, Arif Dirlik, Shu-mei Shih and Rey Chow often warn that the problem of politics and power, like the recording of history, is ultimately a question of representation—who has access, capital, and power to represent themselves and “others.”<sup>10</sup> The “Global,” often a substitute word for “First World,” rarely grapples with vital issues of who gets to represent the cultural, political, economic and social realities that arise in the negotiation between nations, realities that are often born out of the inequality of capital and power and subsumes the decolonizing writer’s voice.<sup>11</sup> 2) the disjuncture of decolonizing and Euro-American feminists, 3) the incommensurability of Chinese female historical specificity with so-called “Universal” Euro-American feminism (2 & 3 to be discussed later), and 4) incommensurabilities of different cultures and their relationship to Euro-

American “subjectivity.” Peppered among these contentious discourses lurk issues of imperialism, feminist orientalism, Chinese nationalism, traditional Chinese chauvinism, European/American chauvinism, and decolonizing feminist writings. Just as Rey Chow and Spivak have argued, I am arguing Lu Xun’s scathing self-reflection and iconoclastic stance can easily be misconstrued through imperialistic rationalizations. Deconstructing the universality of the Euro-American notions of subjectivity and self are a collateral goal of this dissertation.

### ***“Defining” Euro-American Notions of Subjectivity***

Rather than leaving Euro-American notions of subjectivity a vague hodge-podge bag of inter-related terms, I map out the referenced web of meaning that are invoked each time the term “subjectivity” appears in order to bring consciousness to exactly what is being referenced as missing. To work a basic working definition of subjectivity, the OED’s first definitions of subjectivity is “conscious of one’s perceived state,” “a conscious being.” A second common one is “The quality or condition of viewing things exclusively through the medium of one's own mind or individuality; the condition of being dominated by or absorbed in one's personal feelings, thoughts, concerns, etc.; hence, individuality, personality.” A third reads, “That quality of literary or graphic art which depends on the expression of the personality or individuality of the artist; the individuality of an artist as expressed in his work.” The term “subjectivism” on the other hand, implies, “The quality or condition of resting upon subjective facts or mental representation; the character of existing in the mind only.”

If we look at “subjectivity” as it slips into the concept of “individuality,” it links “subjectivity” to the terms “individual” and “individualism.” The O.E.D. defines “individuality” as, “The state or quality of being indivisible or inseparable; indivisibility, inseparability.” A

secondary meaning includes, “the fact or condition of existing as an individual; separate and continuous existence.” Yet a third meaning is, “The aggregate of properties peculiar to an individual; the sum of the attributes which distinguish an object from others of the same kind” or even “idiosyncrasy; strongly marked individual character” which bleeds into the term "unique." These similar concepts - “individuality,” “personality,” “uniqueness,” and “consciousness” draw upon the term "identity" as the reference point of characterization. Indeed, Dusing notes, "the concept identity has been generally used in the research of literature together, with or, instead of the concepts 'person,' 'personality,' or 'individuality.'<sup>12</sup> "Identity" in the OED denotes, “The quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration; absolute or essential sameness; oneness.” A secondary definition includes, “The sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality.” In Psychology, personal identity is defined as “the condition or fact of remaining the same person throughout the various phases of existence; continuity of the personality.”<sup>13</sup> Other definitions include, a “personal or individual existence” which again references “subjectivity” and “individualism.” Thus, an “identity crisis” is defined by the O.E.D. as “a phase of varying severity undergone by an individual in his need to establish his identity in relation to his associates and society as part of the process of maturing.” This last definition places identity in a relationship between self and outer world which again bleeds into the term subjectivity.<sup>14</sup>

Cross-referenced in each earlier term is the ever pervasive Western concept of “self,” for subjectivity is often described as the experience of the self, or as awareness of the self as a

subject.<sup>15</sup> If we follow this trail as David Hall and Roger Ames in *Thinking from the Han* once did,

We would gain nothing by searching out the origins of the term "self," for, as we are darkly told at the beginning of the OED entry, its etymology is "obscure." We are dependent, therefore, upon the history of the semantics of the concept and its referents, whose philosophical transmutations over time have been further ramified by the accreted significances of "soul," "mind," "person," "human being," "agent," and associated terms.... Not only is there little consensus as to the correct meaning of any given term, most of us...seem quite content to hold central cultural notions such as "freedom," "power," "nature," "knowledge," and "love" together in gloriously inconsistent clusters. With each use of such terms we are, willy-nilly, alluding to the entire cluster of associations, for the most part unaware of the logical tensions that might exist among the variant meanings.<sup>16</sup>

Hall and Ames emphasize the vagueness of the Western notions of "self" and how groups of words get associated with the concept of "self." Words like god, nature, power, law, freedom, knowledge and love each carry great cultural, social, emotional structures of belief and "bleed" into other equally vague meanings. This inevitable chain of words in reference is a prime example of Jacques Derrida's *point de Capitain*,<sup>17</sup> where each individual word actually designates an infinite slippage of words ad infinitum. Hall and Ames widen even this circle of references by adding even wider sets of related terms—such as "agent" to further illustrate the unvoiced assumption about the agency or power that an individual or subject must possess in order to qualify as subjectivity or self. In fact, they go to great lengths to illustrate the connections between "self" and the Western notion of "god" to prove the underlying value judgments inherent in religious frameworks that influence perceptions and judgments about another's subjectivity or quality of life.

As I work to "fix" the precise meaning of "subjectivity," other equally loaded words like "individuality," "personality" and "consciousness" become invoked. As the language slips into a proliferation of other inherent meanings such as "identity," "individual" and "human being," this secondary conglomerate of meanings and cultural structures refers to other conglomerates of

meaning and structures, ad infinitum. This web of meanings, connotations and invocations is what I will refer to as the conceptual network of meaning for “subjectivity” and represents the cultural, philosophical, framework and value judgments that become invoked each time one invokes the term "subjectivity." My usage of “subjectivity” refers precisely to the blurred, indissociable network of Euro-American cultural concepts scattered through the above definitions that are interchangeable, interconnected, mutually reflexive and reinforcing. For a visual map of this "conceptual network of meaning of subjectivity," please see Appendix A.

### ***Development of Euro-American Literary Notions of Subjectivity***

While liberal Euro-American definitions of subjectivity are loaded with connotations of individualism and freedom, Marxist and psychoanalytic understanding of subjectivity stands in stark contradistinction. From Louis Althusser’s immanent interpellation, claustrophobic Repressive State Apparatus, and confining Ideological State Apparatus that creates freely submitting subjects,<sup>18</sup> to Slavoj Žižek’s notion of ideology as what we do to the extent that we do not know we are doing it, to Michel Foucault’s notion of subjectivity in *Discipline and Punish* as self as a prisoner in the panopticon as representing how regulatory ideals conform, control, and shape the subject’s behavior—subjectivity is conveyed as a closed and repressive system.<sup>19</sup> Ironically, while the definition of subjectivity suggests the self is uniquely and individually constructed, amidst literary criticism, consciousness reduces to the simple product of one’s subjections and interpolations into ideology. Only through more recent works by Judith Butler, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe has a conception of agency within and against these claustrophobic narratives of subjectivity become a possibility.

Butler in *The Psychic Life of Power* utilizes Freud to fragment the subject's homogeneity into three parts, the ego, the id, and the superego.<sup>20</sup> Lacan finds an excess of signification against the social domain that is ruled by figurations and the imaginative.<sup>21</sup> In addition to individual resistance, Freud's prohibition is the site for the continuation of repressed desire.<sup>22</sup> Foucault argues power is not transferred intact but can change direction.<sup>23</sup> Butler's iterability accepts the notion of matter but notes that it is indissociable from the discourses that shape matter, and thus the vulnerability of the system via repetition with difference.<sup>24</sup> Laclau and Mouffe call for recognition of all identities as a field of antagonisms, and illustrate how subjection exists in multiple forms<sup>25</sup> and is an aggregate of ideas, institutions, and groups which mutually subject the individual but who do not necessarily possess an unifying logic.<sup>26</sup> These theorists all successfully deconstruct the homogeneity of subjectification and restore the possibility for uniqueness and individualistic identities.

While post-modern work of Laclau, Mouffe, Butler and Foucault, challenge traditional notions of subjectivity and open up greater possibilities for diversity by problematizing the delimitations of fixed terms and by embracing the hybrid, multiple, and heterogeneity of identity and cultures, the development of such theories may not challenge old first world and third world binarisms but may actually reinforce them. As Partha Chatterjee notes, deconstructionism and postcolonial discourse, thematically seek to criticize the imperialistic ways of the West. However, within this means of criticism, the West is always placed in the center of discourse, while pushing the decolonizing nation into the realm of the Other. Could this obsession with subjectivity possibly reflect the first world's desire to remain at the center of debate?<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, the new development in Western critical theory places decolonizing writer once more into the pre-history of the Euro-American critical literary evolution. The very core

concept of subjectivity has now come under attack by current Euro-American critical theorists. The habit of Euro-American theory to kill its “forefathers” and replace them can be seen in what is often called the evolution of (Euro-American) feminism, which is described by Julia Kristeva and many others as having evolved through three different stages. This Euro-American feminist timeline is often problematically applied to third world nations. Thus, while current theories of subjectivity appear to free identity and subjectivity to the multiple, it also freezes the decolonizing writer into the pre-history of the Euro-American evolutionary timeline. David Der-wei Wang in *Fin de Siecle* criticizes subjectivity for its links to modernity and its problematic presentation as a transparent tool in contesting the old, traditional and antiquated ways of thinking.<sup>28</sup> Such developments continue to propagate the assertions of linear Euro-American development, in which the non-Euro-American eternally chases behind its evolutionary antecedent, first in needing to “find” one’s subjectivity and then in deconstructing it. While current Euro-American theory appears to have moved “forward” to deconstructing subjectivity, the decolonizing writer appears anachronistically stuck, fighting to gain control of its “subjectivity” in a battle between nationalisms and feminisms.

Theodore Hutters, with his more precise redefining of Prusek's term "subjectivity" as "interiority"—a focus on the narrator, a delving into his psyche, feeling and personality, a focus on the narrator as a unique and different self—as "interiority"—helps alleviate the tensions imbricated within the concepts of subjectivity by suggesting that interiority is not indicative of literary or ontological evolution but merely a narrative choice—an author’s decision to show rather than to tell.<sup>29</sup> Hutters contends that Chinese authors purposely avoided subjectivity when they easily could have by using the Chinese term “*anxiang*,” (thinks to oneself) which does not distinguish between narrator and character to illustrate how easily subjectivity could have been



invoked by the narrator. Understanding “interiority” as one of many ways to narrate, we also understand that choosing other forms of narration no longer need be equated with inferiority or stunted developments of consciousness, but rather an author’s aesthetically driven choice where to show is better than to tell.<sup>30</sup> Rather than using a “Eurocentric universal” to determine the inferiority of others, non-Western cultures need to be understood as also revealing the limits of Euro-American literature.<sup>31</sup>

Just as Arif Dirlik who argues Marxism needs to be historicized, and Lydia Liu who argues the Euro-American concept of the “self” needs to be historicized, “subjectivity” too needs to be historicized.<sup>32</sup> Contextualizing subjectivity, we are reminded that the Euro-American concepts of individualism, secularism, rationalism and subjectivity may have been a direct reaction to specific historical events - the Industrial Revolution – that was occurring across European countries.<sup>33</sup> Hartley S. Spatt in *Encyclopedia of Romanticism: Culture in Britain, 1780-1850* describes the visible changes overtaking the country during the period when man was being replaced by steam power and machines.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps we need to read the rise of individualism and subjectivity shortly after, not as universal evolutionary progress, but as a specific reaction to the threat of machines replacing man. Significant to this culturally and historically specific period is its pattern of de-valuing and depreciating man in production and in life, and the loss of the uniqueness of man as a producer. Perhaps the European artist’s focus on individualism can be read as a reactionary emotive response to the mechanization of man and a resistance to the inhumanity of seeing man banded in poor living conditions in the city, and the harsh realities of the division of labor, production and wealth. Man's replacement by machines may have triggered difficult questions about one’s life and purpose. My use of “man” here, of course, intentionally highlights the very gender specific rhetoric of Euro-American notions of

individualism. Not only were the lower to middle-class suffering these changes, but artists, poets, and writers too found themselves struggling with huge life-changing differences and the ontological questions that such mechanization inevitably raised.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps individualism and subjectivity to a certain extent thwarted the threatening possibility of man out-creating his own image. Only through subjectivity, psychoanalysis and individualism, was man once again restored to his pinnacle of existence unchallenged by machines. Contextualizing and historicizing these philosophical constructs as reactions to specific historical events occurring in European countries allows us to understand these as products and part of a process of interacting and reacting to culturally and historically specific circumstances, rather than as a universal evolutionary timeline from which other culture's concepts about self and subjectivity need to be judged. This opens up the possibility for different conceptions of self.

Contemporary critic Elizabeth Fox-Genovese in “Toward a Feminist Critique of Individualism” included in her book *Feminism without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism*” finds individualism’s emphasis on the “personal subjective experience [or] radical personalism” as buttressing binary forms of thinking of equality and difference.<sup>36</sup>

By deconstructing the ideal of man, the individual, as the single subject—the hegemonic self-consciousness of the collective tradition—we are also deconstructing the ideal of woman that shapes our consciousness. Above all, we are groping toward an understanding of all individuals as hostage to the collectivities to which they belong and which alone give their identities meaning. We are thus challenging the residual narcissism that aspires to cast man’s relation to his tradition as the reunion of the Spirit with the spirit of each individual interpretation. By understanding the tradition as a collective product, feminist interpretation challenges “male” interpretation – the relation of the lord, or ideal man, to his past. For the real message of lordship and bondage is that where one is lord, all are enslaved.<sup>37</sup>

Fox warns, “The danger in the individualist tradition has been the ease with which it has invited individuals to objectify everything that they perceive as other, to view other human beings as

nothing more than obstacles in their path.”<sup>38</sup> Extrapolating to the global context, the problematic of the unvoiced aggression that lies in the rhetoric of individualism becomes all the more clear: it led to imperialism. Slavery and imperialism can perhaps be understood as the absolute ends of objectifying and perceiving everything else as other. Trapped in the dualistic structure of Hegel's “Lordship and Bondage,” exploring other realms such as collectivity and mutuality, or even imagining possible other configurations like equality, friendship, mutual learning, or respect become an impossibility. Equating individualism as transforming “slavery from one unfree condition among many into freedom’s antithesis...radical individualism that overrides the claims of society itself,”<sup>39</sup> for Fox, individualism privileges the “one,” an unabashed “celebration of egotism's claims” and the “denial or indefensible reduction of the just claims of the community.”<sup>40</sup>

In summary, we have explored how the Euro-American conceptual network of meaning of "subjectivity" has included the 19<sup>th</sup> century Euro-American cultural phenomenon and humanist values of individualism and identity, humanist notion of the bourgeois and its quest for identity, the cult of individualism and the privileging of one over many, the reifying of the rhetoric of universality, and the myth of the “autonomous subject,” where the focus on self is void of the external environment or others—anointing the self as egoist, racist and imperialist. We have also witnessed the carried assumptions and prejudices about the definitions and requirements to qualify as possessing agency which is often equated with having power over others (lordship), which only then qualifies a subject to be considered a subject rather than object, as well as the assumption of that subject's attachments to uniqueness and freedom and democracy, as well as the psychological realm of the self as ideal and universal.<sup>41</sup>

However, even with current literary developments locating an outside for subjectivity along with extensive historicizing and critiquing of Euro-centrism, these arguments are all, nevertheless, a reaction to the system and therefore ironically inextricably part of the system and function in the capacity of the object. Using an analogy of paths within a forest, while these escapes out of the system can be considered “outs,” they are still by-paths of an original path. Although the new path may depart from previous paths, they remain in the same forest. In the next section, I invite readers to a new terrain. This path in crossing over, however, is laden with potential violences as culturally specific concepts cross national boundaries.

### ***“Ego-lessness” in Chinese Notions of Self/Subjectivity***

Almost a century before, Lu Xun and many other May Fourth intellectuals were already tackling the problematic nature of cultural exchange and translations. Poignantly capturing the impossibility and contradiction inherent in translating concepts cross culturally, Lu Xun warns in “The Tablet”: “The fearful thing about Chinese writers today is that they keep introducing new terms without defining those terms...And everyone interprets them as he pleases.”<sup>42</sup> Translators simply perform code swapping – changing sounds to refer to the same matter. Rather than transcending one’s structure of understanding and achieving fresh possibilities, Lu Xun warns of the popularity and rush of new “buzz words” that carry the pomp of superiority and advancement but carry no substance. Centuries later, Lu Xun’s warning of translation still holds weight, self-reflexively challenging the act of translation on all fronts, including mine, that traverses language and culture. Solely using the English language, one cannot assume an alternative version of reality or structure of understanding. Utilizing an English interpretation of Chinese already inherently implies limitations of leaving Euro-American culturally constructed iron walls.

English words may not exist to fully convey meanings. In the worst case scenario, such work would be little more than code swapping – changing English words for other English words. Hu Ying's *Composing the New Woman* shows how any act of migrating specific cultural phenomenon through different cultures and value systems always requires negotiations, omissions, and a great degree of creativity and invention, especially in translation which often appears misleadingly translucent. Borrowing this metaphor of the impossibility of full cultural translation as the most basic cross-cultural exchange, I extrapolate that even greater incommensurabilities occur when traversing abstract boundaries of cultural value and ethical systems, structures of thought, and ontological beliefs such as “self” and “subjectivity.”

Looking at contemporary Chinese discussions of “subjectivity,” one finds various ways in Chinese as well as in English to delineate its meaning.<sup>43</sup> Late Qing-Early Republic Chinese intellectuals first attempted to capture the essence spanned a multitude of meaning from “private self,”<sup>44</sup> “little self,”<sup>45</sup> “centered self,” “internal self,”<sup>46</sup> “small I,”<sup>47</sup> to Hu Shi's “lesser self” (*xiaowo*). Often, in order to convey the Euro-American antagonistic relationship between self and society that did not exist in China, the translation necessitated that the translated words be paired with other words in reference to the exterior world. Denton pairs “private self” versus “greater self” (*da wo*).<sup>48</sup> Citing the difficulties to find Chinese, Japanese, or even Arabic equivalences to “self,” “person,” or “individual,” Lydia Liu illustrates the impossibility of translating cross-culturally by documenting the various attempts of May fourth intellectuals at translating the term “self.”<sup>49</sup> To make things even more complicated, Liu highlights another family of words, “*geren*, *gewei*, and *geti*”<sup>50</sup> that were translations in modern Chinese for the English word “individual” and yet were used interchangeably with “*ziwo*, *wo*, *ji*, *xiaoji*.” Thus, all seven terms were used to translate both “self” and “individual.” Ultimately, Liu illustrates

how the English term “self” can be translated into ten different Chinese terms: "geren, gewei, geti," and “ziwo, wo, ji, xiaoji.” geren, wo, ji.”<sup>51</sup> The multiple Chinese translations of “self” and “individualism” profess to the Chinese translators' difficulties in finding an exact word that could embody all of the cultural references to American concepts and values, as well as for a word that was not already culturally loaded with Chinese concepts and values or as Shu-mei Shih reminds us, Japanese influences.<sup>52</sup> Just as was demonstrated in the English definitions of subjectivity, pre-existing Chinese words were already richly imbedded with cultural significance and laden with connotations and conceptual networks of meaning.<sup>53</sup>

In the simple invocation of the Euro-American notion of “self” in Chinese literature, the Euro-American cultural, ethical, historical, and theoretical underpinnings become assumed. As "subjectivity" transgresses into Chinese space, negotiations, omissions and even contradictions to the Chinese notions of self become erased as Euro-American culturally loaded terms, concepts, and values take precedence.<sup>54</sup> While gaps of translations are often invisible to those versed in singular cultures and languages, these irreconcilable incommensurabilities amplify and run risk of justifying violence through cross-cultural theoretical analysis that can become political tools for the subjectification, judging and dehumanizing of other cultures and people.<sup>55</sup>

Is the mapping of Euro-American terms such as "self," “subjectivity,” “interiority,” “individualism” on Chinese soil problematic? Indeed violent transgressions inevitably occur in the very act of translation which doubles as a linguistic and cultural transgression and infraction of the cultural context from which a concept is translated. What is the price we must pay in achieving cross-cultural comparisons and can we justify the means taken and the violences risked? Spivak in, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” utilizes the Sati, the act of Indian widow sacrifice, to illustrate how the subaltern’s voice is subsumed. Colonizers appropriate her to illustrate

“benevolent” imperialism saving third world women from third world men. The indigenous colonial elite, however, use her as a symbol of nationalistic romanticization to uphold the national boundaries of purity, strength of love, and self-sacrifice. The Sati becomes lost in the institutional textuality of origin, and the illusion of pluralized subject effect fronts the imperialistic or elite’s ploy to remain center.<sup>56</sup> Spivak’s advice for the critic to disclose inherent biases have been met ironically with accusations of being universalistic and narcissistic in her reference to herself. Perhaps such writing replicates the same structures it simultaneously resists,<sup>57</sup> and yet without naming these structures, we are not necessarily any more unencumbered. Lack of self-disclosure, however, crosses into a guise of universal validity at the expense of unvoiced violence upon other cultures and languages. Of course, if we remain in radical relativism, no comparisons or cross-cultural dialogues can take place. Following Laclau and Mouffe, every point de Capitain explodes into a field of infinite antagonisms, infinite histories, and infinite inferences; or as Derrida coins, “la difference,” the infinite sequence of references to yet more references—explodes into infinite details with no danger of arrogance, judgment or generalization. Yet for cross-cultural communication to be possible, the risk of some violence is always inevitable.

Perhaps only by identifying our own biases are we able to reach a point of humble conversations with cultures not similar with our own,—mutually recognizing our own curiosity about diversity and non-similarities, and being willing to face our own limitations and blind spots.<sup>58</sup> Armed perhaps only with an awareness of the limitations of the English language,—the inevitability of incommensurabilities, limits, and transgressions in translations - as well as the overshadowing tension of potential violence in cross-cultural exchange amongst unequal power dynamics, I move forward to explore the different possibilities of the conceptual, philosophical

and cultural concepts of self or ego-lessness in Chinese culture that existed before its hybridization with Euro-American culture.

### *A Conceptual Network of the Chinese Notion of “Egolessness”*

If we broadly compare Euro-American philosophical concepts of subjectivity with Chinese philosophical texts of the experience of self, one might note that the Euro-American notion of self hyper-focuses on the knowable, visible, concrete limitations of the five senses, reason and the containment of human experiences, whereas, in terms of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, there is a focus on transcendence of the limitations of the ego. While one births the structures of dualism, the scientific and empirical versus the irrational and emotional, the other focuses on the more inter-connected, symbiotic, multiple, spiritual or transcendent aspects of self. This different articulation of self is a form of ontological awareness that is not solely cerebral or rational, or limited by the empirical information from the five senses but is linked to the physical, bodily, spiritual, intellectual and affective realms. This multidimensional aspect of the Chinese concepts of "self" can be traced throughout the history of philosophical schools, such as Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism as well as other more obscure schools of thought in influences both high and low, which would include oral story-telling, folk-stories, and legends. (Please see the multidimensional aspects of the Chinese concepts of self in Appendix B for a visual illustration.) Within Lu Xun's writings, we can see varied influences of Taoism, Buddhism, folk culture and legends, as well as myth and oral storytelling, which will be further explored in chapter two.<sup>59</sup>

Freeing "subjectivity" from dualisms, I posit “experiencing,” “knowing,” “perceiving,” “being,” as not limited to the cerebral brain, but propose that this culturally multiple notion of



“self” needs to be understood as a co-experiential of the mind, spirit and body, not the extreme polarities but the co-existence of all elements within humans in a non-dualistic way.

Challenging the monolithic definitions of subjectivity as defined by Euro-American notions of subjectivity, agency and individualism,<sup>60</sup> and what many have seen as the rigidity of the May Fourth discourse of individualism, we free the self to articulate its existence from a broader spectrum of possibilities than just ego, the senses, or the brain. By positing a more organismic association of self as imbedded with others, we open our imagination to an endless list of possibilities for self—multiple manifestations and paths to agency and subjectivity that can be defined with and against the nation, in terms of individual agency and survivorship as a form of agency and relational inter-subjectivity.

In the remaining sections of this chapter, I focus on the writings of Lu Xun and the historical and cultural events that brought about Lu Xun's decision to integrate Euro-American concepts of individualism through storytelling. I investigate how Lu Xun introduces and integrates foreign concepts into Chinese culture, how the overflow into Chinese notions of "self," "subjectivity," and "transcendence" led to Lu Xun's creative invention of a new form of “subjectivity.” As the Euro-American conceptual network of meaning of "self" is selectively integrated with Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist and other folk notions of "self," new aspects for Chinese notions of self become possible, and the Euro-American notion of the self as individual and antagonistic to society transforms amidst the pressures of Chinese philosophy. Lu Xun's new literary creation, I will argue, encompasses the Confucian, Buddhist, Taoist sense of a both/and where self and society are one rather than antagonistically opposed, a paradigm transcending the Euro-American binary-opposed paradigms of self and other. Lu Xun's works, I will show, transgress the limits of May Fourth pedagogy of Westernization by transcending the

limits of self versus society that Euro-American culture dictates, and by harmonizing the theoretical conflicts of realism and romanticism.

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Looking back, previous scholars of the May Fourth interpreted the famous madman in Lu Xun's classic story, "A Madman's Diary," as the symbol of Nietzsche and one of the most pure expressions of Lu Xun's truths. Critic Liu Dajie even remarked: "We need not mention that the madman is the author himself, borrowing the entity of the madman to reflect his own thoughts."<sup>61</sup> Reading the madman in conjunction with Lu Xun's other works—his political commentaries in which he repeatedly declared his devotion to saving China's spirit, his political articles, "Wen Hua Pian Zhi Lun" (1907) and "Mu Luo Shi Li Shuo" (1907) that were heavily influenced by Euro-American ideology, along with the May Fourth's mandate that all literature serve as a vehicle for reform—the madman's spirit easily can be seen to parallel a Western-inspired subjectivity.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the madman's observations of the Chinese world at times are so strange and alienated that he often appears external to it, as if a foreigner. Add on Lu Xun's refusal to sacrifice meaning over readability in his "soft" versus "hard" translation debates between him and Liang Siqu, as well as his own prolific body of translations, and his advocacy of "read more foreign books."<sup>63</sup> Early scholars unilaterally interpreted the diary as iconoclastic ideological dissemination for a radical new "Western" individualist subjectivity.

I follow Lin Yusheng in *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness* in presenting a more culturally sensitive reading. Rather than interpreting Lu Xun and May Fourth totalistic cultural reform as wholesale Westernization and totalistic iconoclastic rejection of one's past and proof of Euro-American universality, Lin emphasizes that it is rather a reflection of deeply held beliefs of changing from the core that originated in traditional Chinese modes of totalistic thinking.<sup>64</sup>

Indeed, looking at the organismic, transcendent and cosmic aspects of self in Chinese culture would explain the tendencies toward totalistic self-reform.

Although Lu Xun's vision of self-reform may have tended toward totalistic reform, Lu Xun's distrust of wholesale Westernization can be seen not only in his concepts of "Grabbism," but also as expressed in "Wen Hua Pian Zhi Lun." While his authorial voice to the Chinese world may have taken on a highly rationalized iconoclastic stance, Lin picks up upon Lu Xun's dichotomy between emotional attachment to China's past and intellectual commitment to Western values. Rather than advocating complete and total adoption of Western ideology and practice, I argue that Lu Xun, through his notion of "hard translations," was not advocating the superiority of Euro-American thought, but fighting to seize new possibilities and to remake it as one's own to empower oneself and one's nation.<sup>65</sup> In "Grabbism," Lu Xun argues that the Chinese have given too much (i.e., national treasures for peace keeping), and been forced to accept too much (i.e., English Opium) and now Lu Xun is employing his theory of "Grabbism" to find balance via taking control of incorporating or discarding potential new foreign tools.

All in all... we need to seize it, and then we need to [decide] either to use it, store it or destroy it. That way, the old master is the new Master and the house will become a new house... if you don't seize it, one can't call oneself a new person. If one hasn't seized it, literature and art can't call itself "new."<sup>66</sup>

Unable to police the boundaries of the nation or the influx of new influences inundating the Chinese intellectual sphere, Lu Xun advocates exploiting the permeability of the boundaries in order to find new tools to protect and fortify China's "new house." "Grabbism" is about intellectually choosing concepts and ideologies most beneficial and useful for China, and discarding the rest; this is far from wholesale.

Furthermore, Lu Xun's suspicions about solely using Western appropriations to find solutions for China surfaces in "Wen Hua Pian Zhi Lun." By the end of the first paragraph, he

argues that appropriation of Western mechanization and war-tactics can only bring about martial superiority, not a “pinnacle of civilization,”<sup>67</sup> and that “extreme materialism... leads to a civilization’s spiritual stagnation - first, its descent, and finally complete ruin.”<sup>68</sup> Critiquing an overly simplistic attempt to import the foreign to grapple with China’s culturally and historically specific problems,<sup>69</sup> Lu Xun cites the necessity of understanding the concept of cultural continuity: “The culminated results of the present, there is not one which is not linked to the traces of the past.”<sup>70</sup> He further suggests: “to plan for the present, one must research the past, gauge the future, flay materialism and illuminate the spirit mind, privilege the individual and reject the masses.”<sup>71</sup>

Indeed, arguing against mechanism, materialism<sup>72</sup> and mass rule, all of which his peers lauded, Lu Xun, however does support the primal necessity of the rise of the individual consciousness – a unique subjective voice that is not a “carbon copy” of the Euro-American model but a product of Lu Xun’s “grabbism” technique. Lin also finds in Lu Xun the desire to invent a creative integration of indigenous and Western elements.<sup>73</sup> I am arguing that Lu Xun’s use of “individual” here refers to his reworked Euro-American inspired sense of self that is already organismically connected to the world. His use of “masses” can be understood as the “tumored” parts of self that are resisting change, not all Chinese people. As we see in the conclusion of Lu Xun’s “Wen Hua Pian Zhi Lun,” Lu Xun advocated a balanced approach to modernization and strongly felt the need to preserve parts of Chinese tradition, which he called the “blood vessels” of his culture.<sup>74</sup> Lu Xun urged a reformist adaptation of elements from the West, while preserving elements of indigenous civilization. Lu Xun’s “grabbism” ideology, was applied to his “grabbing” of aspects of Euro-American individualism and notions of self and is not at all wholesale.

While predominating criticisms interpret “A Madman’s Diary” along the lines of ideological “propaganda,” and see the inevitability of the dichotomy between the individualist and the collective, by re-analyzing “A Madman’s Diary” through its multiple schizophrenic voices of narration, simultaneously co-existing multiple truths and realities, I wish to illuminate Lu Xun’s creative harmonizing of individualist subjectivity with collective subjectivities. The various antiphonal voices of the text, represent the fragmented spectrum of “hailing” ideologies of the time, such as Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism and influences from high and low cultures, and perhaps embody Lu Xun’s subconscious desire to play out these conflicts and ambivalences within his text. It is through creative fragmentation, I would like to suggest, that Lu Xun ultimately melds the needs of lesser self and greater self (*xiaowo* and *da wo*) and varying aspects of the Chinese self.

### ***Uniting Allegorical/Collective Selves and Nationalism***

Integrating the key concepts of reform in Lu Xun’s two earlier political commentaries “Wen Hua Pian Zhi Lun” (1907) and “Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo” (1907) with a close textual reading of his short story, “A Madman’s Diary,”<sup>75</sup> this section focuses on how Lu Xun addresses the needs of the collective and national through his fictional writing. Following, the section delves into a closer look at the discrepancies between these three significant pieces of writing. By detailing the subtleties in the differences in voice, tone, and confidence, along with minor inconsistencies or “anomalies” in the texts themselves, I consider the complexity of Lu Xun’s work beyond reductive allegory.

While previous scholars of the May Fourth initially read “A Madman’s Diary” as a univocal vehicle for May Fourth ideological dissemination and have mostly interpreted the madman as a model of spiritual rebellion and revolution,<sup>76</sup> not until more than half a century

later, beginning with Theodore Hutters' "Blossoms in the Snow" (1984) and Marston Anderson's "Morality of Form" (1985) did a new turn in literary interpretation evolve in which the form of the short story and the crisis of self-writing and representation come into critical focus. Leo Lee too in "Tradition & Modernity in the Writings of Lu Xun" (1985) highlights this disjunction between Lu Xun, the writer, and his first person narrator.<sup>77</sup> While May Fourth critics privileged the madman's voice in the diary as the univocal voice of the text, Hutters, Anderson and Lee problematized the madman's message against the voice of the narrator.<sup>78</sup> In general, I agree with recent readings of Lu Xun as an artist experiencing the crisis of representation, but would like to offer a new strategy for reading "A Madman's Diary." While recent interpretations have dichotomized perspectives of the madman and the narrator, I would like to suggest perhaps another overlooked facet - a third voice in the periphery, the madman's older brother, which distorts both the univocal and dichotomous interpretations of the short story.

"A Madman's Diary" begins with a narrator, who on his way home makes a special trip to see his middle school classmate, whom he learns has fallen ill. Arriving, he meets only the older brother who informs him that his sick younger brother is already cured and has since left home to fill a vacant civil servant job. As a reward for the narrator's journey, the older brother gives his now supposedly cured younger brother's old diary to the narrator for a few good laughs and to give him an idea of his younger brother's illness. After reading the diary, the narrator diagnosed the younger brother as having persecution mania, and extracts an essay from the two-volume diary to publish, claiming it is to be used for medical purposes. As we read the younger brother's journal, we enter his paranoid vision that the cannibalistic society wants to devour him and others. Abruptly, without warning, both short story and journal simultaneously conclude

with the younger brother's final plea for help, as he envisions himself being assimilated into the cannibalistic world.

Almost too conspicuously, Lu Xun seems to give the nod and even nudge us toward an allegorized reading. Exploring the allegorical references of the short story, we note that none of the main characters have names; not the narrator, the middle school friend, or his brother. In fact, the only named people have extremely generic ones that the narrator admits he has invented. The narrator even pointedly comments upon the inconsequentiality of these changes; "In my recording, the original slips of the pen (or tongue), I did not even change one word. The only thing I changed is the people's names. They are all villagers and no one in the world would know them, so it is of no great consequence that I changed them all."<sup>79</sup> The narrator's focus on this single change suggests a meaningful intent to refrain from referring to specific people and the insignificance of names and therefore also individuality per se. Such a confession suggests this story can be applied to any person and place of this era, which clearly alludes to allegorical roots.

Yet, told through a deceptively simple plot, what first appears like a straightforward allegorical story quickly becomes extremely complicated upon closer examination. The diary is a journey into one man's candid testimony of truths and partial truths that are so intersplined that one cannot separate what is real from what is false, madness from sanity. As we dive deeper into the exposed mind of this supposed madman, his testimony questions and challenges our own definitions of the borders between sanity and madness. Presented in a succession of frames, literally "concentric circles of narration,"<sup>80</sup> the core of the text is composed of the diary that contains excerpts of the madman's daily entries. However, the journal is presented and framed in part by his older brother's interpretation of this journal, which in turn is framed by the

narrator's story. Finally, on the outside are the readers who must act as scholar-detectives in solving this literary puzzle in which each concentric frame of narration appears to narrate its own, often contradictory, version of reality.

Huters, Marston and Lee also discuss the nested form of the short story, but interpret the diary through a doubled rather than multiple consciousness.<sup>81</sup> In the following, I re-interpret the short story through three distinct antiphonal voices. Through the multiple voices in the text, I explore Lu Xun's negotiations with Euro-American individualist subjectivity, amidst other contending discourses of Marxism (predominately in the next chapter), his own traditional Confucian background and culture, other schools of philosophical thought, and the discourses of other Chinese intellectuals' in his process of inventing a unique "subjectivity." Although Lu Xun once labeled these traditional influences as "illnesses of thought" (*sixiang shang de bing*),<sup>82</sup> I wish to look at the whole spectrum of different ideologies that were constantly vying for power in Lu Xun's consciousness. How does Lu Xun deal with the apparent conflicts of Euro-American individualism and the need for collective nationalism and how will he integrate these with the Chinese notions of the self? I posit how under China's specific historical context and needs, Lu Xun absorbs, re-invents, recreates, re-imagines and transforms the self-serving notion of Euro-American subjectivity. Is Lu Xun ultimately successful in recreating a coexistence of nationalism and individualism without antagonisms and integrate the Chinese notions of the self through his writing? I hope to illuminate how Lu Xun may have partially navigated his escape from binaries by his use of a schizophrenic voice – the voices of madman, brother, and narrator, and how each ensuing layer complicates the meaning of the short story while leaving gaps of interpretation as the voices converse with and against each other.



The core text, the madman's story, echoes tropes in Lu Xun's "Wen Hua Pian Zhi Lun" and "Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo." Namely, these include but are not limited to: 1) emphasis on Western rational thought, 2) image of the persecuted truth-seeker, 3) mass mentality of self-gain allegorized as a cannibalistic, patriarchal, Confucian system, 4) bleak omen for the community under a hardened apathetic crowd which alludes to Daoist and Buddhist philosophies and 5) expressed wariness of democracy and the process of rationalization.

Despite Lu Xun's voiced criticisms of aspects of Western culture, we see emphasis of Western rational thought in all three works, as well as striking similarities between the madman's methodology of argument and Lu Xun's political commentaries. The madman, also obsessed with the Western process of problem solving and rationalizing, begins each section with an attempt to find the truth and with a conclusion of reiterating his need to conduct further research for complete comprehension. Repeatedly the lines, "*Wo zhi dao* (I know),"<sup>83</sup> "*you li* (to have reason),"<sup>84</sup> "*xude yan jiu* (needs to be researched),"<sup>85</sup> "*tui yibu xiang* (to think from another perspective),"<sup>86</sup> and "*ke wuchu* (deduce)"<sup>87</sup> appear. In both "Wen Hua Pian Zhi Lun" and "Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo," Lu Xun couches the issue of saving China in the form of a historical investigation. In both, the process involves recounting history to deduce his hypothesis. In "Wen Hua Pian Zhi Lun" he recounts history to attribute China's military, economic and scientific lack of development to China's early self-imposed isolation and therefore lack of competition with other countries; and in "Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo" he reflects upon famous fallen nations of the world and their causes for extinction or salvation. The madman's ravings similarly are presented as a historical re-investigation of the past. The madman even cites history to deduce his hypothesis.

Moreover, all three works exhibit the influence of Charles Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest. Both political essays clearly pivot upon an "evolve or perish" mentality of Darwinism. In "Wen Hua Pian Zhi Lun" Lu Xun explains how lack of competition thwarted Chinese evolution and development and caused the nation's disintegration. Recounting how powerful nations exhibited a strong individual spirit, and how threatened nations lacked it, Lu Xun makes his case for advocating the essentiality of developing the individual spirit. Against the weaknesses of the Confucian *Daxue zhidao* and the cultivation of spirit,<sup>88</sup> Lu Xun uses Darwinism to prove the necessity of the individual spirit. Similarly, we also find Darwin's theory within the exaggerated, terrifying depiction of competition among the villagers to out-compete each other in "A Madman's Diary."

Second, when reading the diary alongside "Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo," distinct similarities among the madman, Nietzsche's persecuted truth-seeker/spiritual warrior, and Lu Xun the author emerge. As Lee points out, "The diarist in his first story can be seen as a direct descendant, albeit in a psychotic guise, of the Mara poet – a rebel and a "warrior of the spirit."<sup>89</sup> Repeatedly in "Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo," Lu Xun invokes Nietzsche's notion that the sole means to save a declining nation is through the work of a great writer capable of "relaying the truth and ...stirring the people self-consciously to move forward bravely and diligently strengthen the self."<sup>90</sup> Only with this kind of catalyst, he stresses, can a nation unify against its oppressors. The madman clearly mirrors the Nietzschean superman of "Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo." From the madman's coaxing, "But if you just turn your steps, if you just immediately change, then everyone will be trouble-free and safe. Although it was always like this in the past, we could from today on try to be especially good... who says we can't?"<sup>91</sup> to his warnings of "Cannibals they'd stoop to any

level. If they'd eat me, then they'd eat you too. Even within their group, they would cannibalize."<sup>92</sup>

Thus, from reminding others of the dark historical past to obsessively preaching about the depravity of cannibalism, the madman serves as an enlightened figure that struggles to turn others toward spiritualism. Repeatedly he claims to "*ming bai*" (literally, to understand through illumination).<sup>93</sup> We see similar motifs of the Nietzschean warrior within Lu Xun's "Amid Pale Bloodstains" in his collection of personal poems in "Wild Grass" which he dedicates to the "Memory of Some Who are Dead, Some Live, and Some Yet Unborn":

A rebellious fighter has arisen from mankind, who, standing erect, sees through all the deserted ruins and lonely tombs of the past and the present. He remembers all the intense and unending agony; he faces squarely the whole welter of clotted blood; he understands all that is dead and all that is living, as well as all yet unborn. He sees through the creator's game. And he will arise to resuscitate or else destroy mankind, these loyal subjects of the creator. April 8, 1926<sup>94</sup>

Indeed, the madman draws similarities with Lu Xun the poet and Nietzsche's superman.

And as foreshadowed in "Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo," the truth-seeker and great writer will become ostracized for his vision of truth and shunned as evil and labeled as "a devil"<sup>95</sup> just as the madman becomes scorned and ridiculed. An unappreciated and unrecognized truth-seeker who battles the oppressive forces alone, the spiritual warrior's only chance for rebellion lies in tormenting the oppressed masses. By standing avant-garde, the warrior forces the masses to face their own backwardness and ignorance, and by demonic scorn he propels them into motion.<sup>96</sup>

The unforgettable image of the isolated, truth-seeker persecuted by the cruel and callous crowd in the commentary is invoked too in the madman's journal entries; "Outside the door was a crowd of people poking their heads about, slinking in... Some of them their faces were indistinguishable as if covered by cloth, some of them, as old, were fanged with cold iron faces,

grimacing and laughing coldly.”<sup>97</sup> Mirroring Nietzsche’s demonic hero, the lone avant-garde, the madman, becomes cast out by the ignorant.<sup>98</sup>

Thirdly, the Chinese lack of spirituality and mindset of personal gain via the adoption of what Lu Xun saw as 19<sup>th</sup> century materialism that is so robustly attacked in “Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo” becomes allegorized in “A Madman’s Diary” as cannibalistic practices.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, Lu Xun prophesies in his commentary that the greatest obstacle to the spiritual warrior will be the masses’ stubborn allegiance to a mindset of “personal gain.” Obsessed with self-interest, inner conflict builds as unification shatters. Only literature, claims Lu Xun through Nietzsche, possesses the power to broaden the myopic vision of personal gain, to “spiritually stir people and move them to action.”<sup>100</sup>

The theme of cannibalism, a metaphor for people’s obsession over private gain to extremes, is reinforced through people’s actions and by the repeated savage images the madman envisions. Beside the madman and narrator, most other humans are constantly transposed into carnivorous animals. Ill-willed eyes appear “as if scared, and as if they want to hurt me.”<sup>101</sup> People “smile constantly”<sup>102</sup> with their “frighteningly sharp white”<sup>103</sup> teeth with “words full of poison,”<sup>104</sup> and “laughter full of knives.”<sup>105</sup> Seemingly harmless people become predatory as all actions translate into extremely menacing behavior. A mother is said to want to bite him and glare at him “green-faced and long toothed.”<sup>106</sup> An elderly doctor becomes an executioner and cannibal;

“His eyes were full of a malicious gaze...and from the side of his eyeglass frames he looked askance at me secretly...Of course, how could I not know that this old man was an executioner incognito. It had to be that he was using taking my pulse as an excuse to check my fatness. With his favor, he could also get a piece to eat.”<sup>107</sup>

By reading below the doctor's superficial kindness and his disguised motive of self-interest, the madman suggests that even apparently altruistic acts are expressions of cannibalistic desire. And in his seventh entry, the madman literally equates humans with Hyenas ripping apart flesh.

The madman uncovers this mindset of personal gain (cannibalism) that is deeply seeded in Chinese patriarchal history, Confucianism. Mirroring the form of Lu Xun's political essays, the madman frames his arguments as historical investigations. Citing historical evidence, the madman writes;

Yi Ya steamed his son and gave him to Jie Zhou to eat. This was a constant from the past. Who would know that after Pan Gu created the world, that they would eat sons all the way to Yi Ya, and from Yi Ya's son all the way to Xu Xiling, and from Xu Xiling all the way to the village people of Langzi? Last year in the city they killed a criminal, there was even a person with tuberculosis who used steamed bread to soak up the criminal's blood and eat it.<sup>108</sup>

In all of these referenced historical cases, cannibalism is condoned for personal gain. Moreover, quoting a passage from *Ben Cao Gang Mu*, an ancient Chinese medical book, the madman notes, "People's flesh can be pan-fried and eaten,"<sup>109</sup> to further illustrate how the entire society shares a long history of institutionalized cannibalism that remains an integral fiber to the present.

Since ancient times they often ate people. I still remember, but not too clearly. I flipped open the history book to check. This history had no date, on every page, lopsided and slanted was written these four words, "*Ren Yi Dao De (Rituals of Propriety and Righteousness).*" No matter what I did, I could not fall asleep, so I carefully looked over it half the night. Only then did I discover that reading between the lines, the entire book was filled with two words "chi ren (eat humans)."<sup>110</sup>

Thus, the entire Chinese social order that is predominately Confucian-based reduces to a latent cannibalistic structure that superficially appears civilized. Indeed, in Lu Xun's "Old Tales Retold" in which he reinvestigates China's mythological legends, Laura Kearns suggests that Lu Xun portrays Confucius as a "power-hungry man whose only intention in achieving enlightenment was to hold influence over others," and that the goal of the ancient philosophers was simply to gain fame, control, and power.<sup>111</sup> Rather than promoting the good of the whole, Lu Xun suggests the exploitation built into the Confucian and traditional Chinese system through

rationalization. This concept is echoed in the following passage; “In their village they have a notorious villain, who was beaten to death by everyone. A few people dug out his liver and heart, stir fried it in oil, and ate it so it would make them braver.”<sup>112</sup> Exposing a false pretense of justice, the madman reduces these villagers to a self-interested group looking for a meal and a reputation for bravery.

Indeed, both the madman and Lu Xun avidly attack the mindset of personal gain in China. In “Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo,” Lu Xun stresses that people must move beyond personal gain and understand that they are all integral parts of the national organism. The madman says eerily similar things about cannibalism.

You want to eat people, but are afraid others will eat you. Everyone uses paranoid and suspicious eyes, looking at each other and not knowing what to do. If you do away with these worries, you can at ease do your things, walk, eat, and sleep. How comfortable it would be. This is only something you need to step over, a small obstacle. They are all fathers and sons, brothers, husbands and wives, friends, teachers and students, enemies, and other strangers, banding together encouraging and inhibiting each other. Even if it kills them, they are not willing to go past it.... But if you just turn your steps, if you just immediately change, then everyone will be trouble-free and safe.<sup>113</sup>

Both “authors” portray private gain as a necessary obstacle everyone needs but is unwilling to transcend. In both worlds the obsession with private gain leads to a society of hostility and conflict rather than unification. Thus while, "personal gain" is a negative by-product of Confucianism, the goals Lu Xun is working toward—an ideal of a greater organismic, cosmic, and transcendent sense of self, is also from philosophies of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. In this example, the benefits and weaknesses of Chinese philosophies of self are both invoked.

Fourthly, just as prophesied in “Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo,” aside from self-gain, the greatest obstacles the truth-seeker confronts - people’s apathy, complacency and over-tolerance – becomes an omen of futility and demise for the nation. Emotional and spiritual numbness in people undermine a writer’s ability to influence change. With resignation, Lu Xun confesses that

a writer's influence cannot be over-estimated, for any utterance is futile against a hardened, apathetic audience.

Because in the hearts of people, there is not one that is not engraved with these two words, personal gain. There is not one that does not possess it. All day in a busy rush, those that have already been marked are daily in a dazed and drugged stupor. Even if there is a voice that moves people, how is it possible that it would stir them? Since the soul cannot be stirred, then it is either withered or gone.<sup>114</sup>

The atmosphere of apathy undermines any chances for emotive response and unification.

Tragically, all nations have such moving writers, states Lu Xun in "Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo," but in nations with apathetic people, even a powerful voice is useless. This disconnect between "self" and the society also seems to exhibit some strains to Daoist and Buddhist philosophies.

While Lu Xun in his later years devoted much time to his own Buddhist studies, we note that in the beginning he was very opposed to it. It is noted also that the antagonist in Lu Xun's tale of "Old Tales Retold" has Buddhist inclinations. In "Selected Stories of Lu Xun" it is suggested that when a close friend, Hsu Shoutang, in the 1930s started to believe that "China needed Buddhism for its moral fiber," Lu Xun heavily criticized him.<sup>115</sup> Perhaps in general, Lu Xun felt that Buddhism encouraged indifference towards life and a smothering of passions, desires and emotions. And it was passions and emotions that Lu Xun believed would stir people into action. Thus the Buddhist exterminating of desire, emotions, and passion, although promising one freedom from spiritual suffering,<sup>116</sup> can also be read as creating "numbing indifference."<sup>117</sup> Similarly, in terms of Daoism, Lu Xun in "Old Tales Retold" also seems to suggest that non-action and non-intention also contributed to the general atmosphere of indifference.<sup>118</sup> Kearns finds that Lu Xun portrays the Daoists as lukewarm, indifferent people whose "spirit[s] had[d] departed"<sup>119</sup> and who were indifferent to the political and societal affairs. Lu Xun suggested that Daoism promoted, "soft, inactive and indifferent than to fight."<sup>120</sup>

Thus, the concept of *wuwei* and naturalism also can be interpreted as criticized within the story. "In the hustle and bustle of daily life, only striving towards the dullness of daily survival, and the spirit dies away gradually each day. Even if new ideas come, there is no way to support it."<sup>121</sup> Complacency, over-tolerance, and increasing apathy thwart the writer's task of inspiring change. The villager's emotional apathy and focus on the daily rituals of life can be read as an allusion to Daoism, which encourages the art of non-doing, or purposeless "doing" and the lack of a greater structure or purpose, invokes images of Daoist, non-action and naturalness, and allowing things to run their course. The fatalism of Buddhism and the non-action of Daoism, Lu Xun saw as encouraging passivity and thwarting agency and action. Ultimately, the fate of the nation still rested in the hands of its own people. In the diary, the madman's efforts of inspiration are also similarly impeded. Says the madman, "[Cannibalism,] maybe it's already too common in history and an everyday practice so they don't think it's wrong."<sup>122</sup> The madman hints that constant daily exposure to cannibalism desensitizes everyone. It is as Lu Xun warned in "Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo," villagers who obsess about their daily rituals—eating, money, and basic human needs—become oblivious to other national needs.

Fifth, the madman shares with Lu Xun and Nietzsche's superman a keen wariness of democracy and rationalization. For example, Lu Xun warns in "Wen Hua Pian Zhi Lun" that democracy precariously risks degenerating into mass rule and poisoning individuality and freedom because it is a cloaked form of majority suppressing minority.<sup>123</sup> Likewise, in "A Madman's Diary," the madman is horrified when villagers slaughter and devour a man, and then become hailed as heroes simply because the majority believed the slain man to be evil. Under the masquerade of democracy, guilt becomes disassociated from facts and instead relies solely upon majority belief. As the madman rightly fears, a similar demise could happen to him as well.



Highlighting warped logic behind their “reasoning,” the madman exposes the dangers of mass rule and its superficial sense of justice, while simultaneously unveiling their subtext of rationalizing for private gain.

Again, in the following example, the madman illustrates the problematic of majority rules paired with the dangerous hidden agenda of personal gain.

At this time, I again understood another one of their tricks. They not only are not willing to change but have long ago planned to label me as a crazy man, so that in the future when they eat me, not only will they be safe and not criticized, but perhaps people will even sympathize with them. The case of the eaten man that the tenant farmer brought up was just so. This is their old formula.<sup>124</sup>

Again, we see the deadly combination of three elements - the mindset of personal gain, paired with the dangers of rationalization and a deeply problematic democracy. And even more blatantly, the madman reveals his deep suspicions about rationalization; “I still remember my brother taught me how to debate. Regardless of how good a person is, you can flip the heavens and turn it upside down.”<sup>125</sup> Similarly, in “Wen Hua Pian Zhi Lun,” rationalizing to serve one’s goals is also an issue for Lu Xun, who unpins the logical fallacies of his colleagues who insist that writing and reading translations and refining martial techniques will save the disintegrating nation. Thus, both writers are conscious of innate tensions between the use of logic and truth.

May Fourth critics once concluded that the madman and Lu Xun were one and the same as authors. Indeed, we note the uncanny likeness of tone between the two. When lecturing, both express fearlessness, determination and the ability to debate logically and rationally at a scientific distance. And both voices attempt to sound confident despite their uncertainty and doubts. Could this mirroring of intent and style suggest that “A Madman’s Diary” is simply a literary vehicle for the expression of Lu Xun’s political views? Yet this would leave unexplained the complicated concentric frames of narration. Is the older brother merely an

example of the ignorant masses, a man blind to the truth that knows only how to make comedy out of tragedy? Is the narrator only a vehicle for telling this purely political tale?

While “Wen Hua Pian Zhi Lun” comes off more than a strong opinion and closer to the point of a call to action, Hutters notes in “Lu Xun and the Crisis of Figuration,” that in both essays, Lu Xun consistently borrows the voices of others and refrains from making his own unequivocal statement which lends the essays both irony and distance. Given that “[Lu Xun] was...virtually unique among that group of young men [radical reformers] in expressing significant misgivings about the nature and the process of reform from the very outset of his participation,”<sup>126</sup> in part explains his authorial anxiety in both essays, but not fully.<sup>127</sup> I agree with Hutters that there is instead a “figural crisis” in Lu Xun.<sup>128</sup>

Linguistic uncertainty stems directly from the author’s radical uncertainty concerning the nature of the relationship of literature to life...The fear of the power of literature to create new things is perhaps a concomitant of the faith in literature to be able to bring about significant social reform.”<sup>129</sup>

In both commentaries, Lu Xun’s tentative voice and avoidance of making his own statement perhaps foreshadow a tension in the meaning of his short story he was to write. Though Lu Xun made efforts to appear confident in his commentaries despite his doubts, it perhaps foretells that this subtext of uncertainty will play out in the form of the short story of the madman.

In understanding the effects of the layered concentric frames of narration, I would like to draw upon the analogy of Susan Stewart’s *On Longing*’s explication of the effect of the events occurring within the dollhouse on the readers. Each layer of the text, like the structure of a dollhouse, increases the tension of unreality and ungrounds momentarily our suspension of disbelief. Amidst the medley of various voices, the reader becomes confused as to who we are to associate or trust as giving the “correct” version of reality. The problem being of course that there is no single privileged reality for each exists in its own right. If we return and take a closer

look at the concentric frames of narration, we note, the older brother is more than an easily disregarded by-stander. The madman's history is filtered through the perspective of his older brother who "laughs and then presents the two volumes of the diary, saying that one could see the nature of his illness during that time."<sup>130</sup> It is this older brother who first categorizes his younger brother as insane and labels the journal as a madman's ravings. By forcing the readers to look through the elder brother's perspective, Lu Xun compels us to take account of contradicting views.

Perhaps the brother represents the perspective of the hailing ideology of traditional Chinese culture. We note that his brother is one of the Confucian classic formulations of the "five relationships" - father-son, elder brother-younger brother, husband-wife, ruler-minister, and friend-friend,<sup>131</sup> and that he was a figure of authority. Although Lu Xun's commentaries were full of scathing criticisms of Confucianism, in the limits of "A Madman's Diary," the relationship between the elder brother and younger brother is not necessarily an antithetical one. In fact, I would argue, even though Lu Xun found great fault with the Confucian system, Daoism and Buddhism, his concepts of self were heavily influenced by these philosophies. For the elder brother, his brother's story is about becoming cured and taking the correct Confucian passage in life. From the outside, the older brother is a model Confucian in a positive sense. He has called upon a doctor to diagnose his sick brother, and he has fed and clothed, been patient, and supported his brother through all of his madness. In fact, he has shown himself to be not only a good brother, but also an excellent host and friend. When the narrator comes to visit his sick brother, the older brother graciously entertains the narrator, and even gives the narrator something to take back with him so that the narrator will not leave empty handed. Thus, the older brother is portrayed as a trustworthy, dependable model Confucian and would invoke all of

the structures, value systems, and ontological perspectives of Confucianism. Under the rules of the three bonds and five relationships, the older brother is a responsible and appropriate, caring, authority figure.<sup>132</sup> This traditional Confucian depiction encourages the reader to place trust in the older brother. Under the influence of the older brother's perspective, the discrepancies between the madman and Nietzsche's hero surface and demand to be addressed. Indeed we discover that besides sharing similar obstacles and opponents with Nietzsche's hero, the madman also possesses some interesting departures from Nietzsche's Superman and Lu Xun. The relationship is triangulated between Lu Xun's authorial voice, Nietzsche's madman, and the madman.

Rather at some points, the madman's drowning in self-truth and exploration begins to resemble what Tu Weiming might categorize as obsessively individualistic. "An uncontrollable expansion of the 'small body...inflated ego' where only the truth of the self matters."<sup>133</sup> The Confucian self is in the "center of relationships"<sup>134</sup> yet is not a self-centered paradigm. Could there be imperfections within this madman and his isolated cerebral meanderings? Upon closer scrutiny, we uncover problems with the madman's thought process. Although the madman possesses awareness of other's logical fallacies, he is completely blind to his own. When a young man jokingly says, "If it's not a famine, why eat people,"<sup>135</sup> the madman immediately deduces that the man would eat people in a famine and is thus a cannibal. The madman incorrectly reasons: if not A then not B, therefore if A then B. A necessary and erroneous relationship between the two facts is assumed. In other words, having a famine never guarantees that the young man would become a cannibal. The madman often falls into such logical fallacies. When the madman is fed fish for dinner and throws up everything, because "the eyeballs of the fish...with its mouth agape looked just like that group of cannibals,"<sup>136</sup> it leads him to

believe that he may be eating human flesh. And when confined and he starts feeling caged like a chicken and duck, he immediately concludes that his brother intends to fatten him up before eating him. Rather than identifying his feelings of suffocation with his enclosure, he concludes he feels like a chicken and will be treated accordingly. The madman, blind to his own paranoia, erroneously insists that everything he feels must be true.

In fact, his entire argument of cannibalism is based upon faulty causalities and generalizations. The madman suggests that because dogs, people, and children look at him oddly that they must want to hurt him. And when a mother who wants to bite her son looks at him, he decides she must want to eat him too. From these few and unconnected incidences, he deduces the entire human population to be cannibals. Odd gazes do not immediately translate into cannibalistic practices, and the madman is never attributed with the ability of mind reading. In addition, upon learning that villagers have eaten a villain and become heroes, the madman concludes that morality is just a tool for personal gain. In this fallacious reasoning, he links two unrelated issues: the moral character of the villagers, and the moral character of the villain. The ethical fortitude of these villagers is irrelevant to this single act. In other words, it does not follow that only “good people” can kill bad men; bad men can also kill bad men. These repeatedly warped rationalizations undermine the madman’s credibility.

Struggling to convince others to give up cannibalism, the madman exposes his own problematic reasoning. “If you all don’t change, you’ll just eat each other all up. Even if you have a lot of babies, they’ll be wiped out by real people!”<sup>137</sup> By suggesting that non-cannibals will obliterate cannibals like “hunters killing wolves,”<sup>138</sup> the madman reveals his internal contradiction; he too condones cannibalism for a worthy cause, the obliteration of cannibals. Ironically, this means non-cannibals will also become cannibals. Due to his extremely

problematic use of reasoning, the madman, unlike Lu Xun, ends up telling a warped version of Darwin's theory of evolution. This warped style of western scientific reasoning casts doubt upon the wholesale westernization that was previously assumed. What does this possibly suggest? Is Lu Xun poking fun or does such writing betray a profound self-doubt within the author's subconscious?

Moreover, unlike Nietzsche's enlightened warrior, the madman never possesses the power of either hero or demon, but instead becomes an easily disregarded and ridiculed figure.<sup>139</sup> When he declares, "Change immediately from the very core...you should know, in the future cannibals won't be permitted to live!"<sup>140</sup> while the housekeeper Chen Laowu is coaxing him physically into his room to lock him up, it is evident that the madman's reality is warped. Exactly who will not permit cannibals to live? Lacking power to utter such statements, the madman's zeal comes from a mixture of desperation and uncertainty, whereas the warrior's zeal comes from enthusiasm and urgency of cause. Without authority, the madman's pleas are more like begging than prophesying.

Furthermore, we are informed on the very onset of the short story that the madman has already become a civil servant. Only upon concluding the story and diary do we realize that the madman ends up selling himself out to become part of the oppressive system he was fighting against. And yet if we look at the only options left for the madman – to convert or to go mad – such was the demise of Nietzsche, Lu Xun reminds us. In "Grabbism" Lu Xun touches upon Nietzsche who claims to have needed nothing and required nothing, and ultimately turned irretrievably insane. Indeed, the madman mirrors a Nietzschean path. But is the madman's demise not met with some sympathy by the reader? Trapped between insanity and selling out, neither path suggests hope.

Perhaps Lu Xun empathized with the madman's dire predicament. In one of his essays, Lu Xun shares some of his own feelings of hopelessness and alienation;

A feeling of futility descended upon me—a futility that I had never known before. At first I did not understand what was happening to me, but I later realized that when a man's ideas meet with approval, he is encouraged and advances. When they meet with opposition, at least he has something real to struggle against. But a true tragedy occurs when he rises up a cry to the rest of humanity and meets with no response at all from anyone. By the presence of neither encouragement nor opposition, he is rendered completely helpless—just as if he were to awaken in the midst of a horizonless desert. It was then that I became conscious of loneliness. And this was a loneliness that increased by the day, wrapping coil upon coil about my soul like a great, venomous serpent.<sup>141</sup>

Even for Lu Xun, the emotions of hopelessness and despair, like a serpent, threaten to suffocate and destroy his passion and zest for life. Similarly, the madman's moment of giving up also parallel Lu Xun's expression of hopelessness and despair above. For the madman, the monotony of daily life, sometimes what Lu Xun associated with the flaws of Daoism and complacency, along with the torments of his paranoia, finally breaks him. A few days before he gives up and accepts the cannibalistic system, he records, "Sun doesn't come out. Door doesn't open. Everyday it's just two meals."<sup>142</sup> With no escape from the stagnant repetitive structures that imprison him in this mentality, the madman decides to rethink his tortured position. Imprisoned in his room, he recalls his 5-year-old sister, and how his mother, his brother, and finally how he too could have eaten her flesh. Because his mother was crying so hard when her daughter died, and because she remained wordless upon hearing filial legends of children feeding their flesh to sick parents, the madman immediately deduces that his mother knew about his little sister's death and his brother's role in it, and did not resist eating her child. The reasons for her death, however, are left unexplained and completely unaddressed in the short story. From this point the madman deduces he may have accidentally eaten some of her flesh too. These thoughts of how he participated in the cannibalistic system of feeding off the most helplessly oppressed and

unvalued of the Confucian hierarchy haunt him. This passage also echoes May Fourth criticisms of Confucianism in exploiting the "subservient, young and female."<sup>143</sup>

The inner struggle of the madman suddenly resolves when the madman discovers he too is implicated in the system: "Maybe it wasn't unintentional that I had a few pieces of my sister's meat."<sup>144</sup> Rationalizing that everyone has been a part of these practices, the madman finds comfort in company; "I had four thousand years of cannibalistic history."<sup>145</sup> Alluding to the Confucian self as descended from a long bloodline of lineage, as Donald Munro describes, along with the inescapability of that tradition, the madman implicates himself.<sup>146</sup> Unable to gain true self-awareness in confronting his own weaknesses of desiring private gain, he fails to see himself as a human mixture of both positive and negative traits. His reliance on self-righteousness - the problematic powerhouse of his crusade - instantly shatters when he is confronted with his own humanity and limitations, and he ends up swinging to the opposite extreme of disengaging himself from his efforts by justifying to the reader and himself that he doesn't want to be hypocritical. He further rationalizes that he has already tried his best and will never succeed in changing anyone, simply because his brother was not open to change.

Ironically, his final act of rationalization is his greatest mental pitfall. First, he over-generalizes that since he cannot convert his brother, no one will change. Second, he claims to be forced to end his battle against cannibalism for fear of being hypocritical. Oblivious to the words of his own preaching, "Although it was always like this in the past, we can from today on try to be especially good...Who says we couldn't?"<sup>147</sup> The madman, overwhelmed by the imposing structures of the society, tradition, ancestors and his past, chooses not to face his past and change. Instead of owning his flaws of self-interest and hypocrisy and resisting cannibalism, he joins those very forces.<sup>148</sup> Ironically, the madman, like those he criticized, also ends up using



rationalization as a tool for private gain - to free himself from his lonely guilt-laden existence and to embrace an easy conforming life.

This hypocrisy is perhaps most evident in the madman's final and most debated plea<sup>149</sup>, "Save the children!" Although the madman finds peace by relinquishing the burden of responsibility, the cry is extremely problematic. As Hutters suggests,

The ending gives no hint of any possible remedy beyond the celebrated, if rather pathetic, call to "save the children," an appeal rendered problematically ironic by the depiction of the children in a previous entry: "In front of me stood a band of children, standing there looking me over and discussing me. Their faces were just like wealthy Mr. Zhao, livid and unhappy... how come now they are staring at my strangely as if they are scared of me, as if they hate me... I understand, their parents taught them!"<sup>150</sup>

Thus his final plea merely releases him from his burdens, by shifting his responsibilities to others. Once he chooses conformity, he doubles back to undermine the true expression of all his suffering by labeling himself as a "madman." Unlike the demonic hero who stirs up responses, the madman achieves little. By framing the short story with the older brother's perspective, Lu Xun negates the madman's truths along with all of his political beliefs expressed in his commentaries. Thus from one inner concentric narration to another, the message seemingly circles back to cancel itself.

And yet, does not the re-filtering of this story through the narrator's pen soften the older brother's negation of the madman's story? My reading of the narrator differs slightly from that of previous critics, who have read the narrator as a straightforward counter-narration against the madman. I find the role of re-interpreting the role of this practically unknown character that is responsible for relaying all of this pertinent information to the reader, key to the hidden meaning of this story. Aside from learning that he is a classmate of the madman and his brother who has come to visit the sick younger brother, we hear only his assessment of the madman's journal.

After I took it home and looked it over, I knew that he suffered from something or other like persecution mania. The language is fairly involute and incoherent. And is also full of absurd and fantastic things. And it is not dated, but just from the variation of the shade of ink and his handwriting, once can tell that it was not written all at one time. Within it there is also that which lacks a connection. Today I extract one essay as an offering to scientific research.<sup>151</sup>

On the surface the narrator shares a similar attitude with the older brother, who sees his younger brother's journal as a shared joke among friends. The narrator too calls the writing "involute and incoherent," and "full of absurd and fantastic things." But significant differences between the older brother and narrator proliferate. The madman's diary that follows his older brother's synopsis is clearly discordant with his older brother's description, but the narrator is correct in his assessment that the writing is often absurd, fantastic and incoherent. And while the older brother sees it as entertaining, the narrator suggests that it is meaningful for scientific research.

Perhaps the narrator, like Lu Xun, feels profoundly torn between Chinese traditions and Euro-American influences. The narrator's connection to modernity is demonstrated through his spoken invocation of "Western science." Is Lu Xun ironically poking fun at his contemporaries' obsession with science or is he silently validating it? Or perhaps this cues an interpretation beyond the rational or literal? What plausible connection exists between the narrator and science? Of all the other possible symbols of "modernity" why science in particular? Wang Hui in his article, "The Fate of 'Mr. Science' in China"<sup>152</sup> notes, "In the first half of the twentieth century Chinese thinkers tended to make use of the prestige of science in areas that had hardly any relevance to science itself... The term science came to imply the pursuit of pure knowledge and recognition of its independent value."<sup>153</sup> The term was first most commonly translated as "*Gezhi*" which held heavy connotations with Confucian ideology.<sup>154</sup> One of the schools of thought felt that *gezhi* served as a kind of "*xinxue*," or "learning of the heart-mind"<sup>155</sup> and believed it was the means to "illuminate the luminous virtue, and to rest in perfect goodness"

(Wang 7). Chen Duxiu envisioned the future of science as a faith that would replace religion and harmonize man and the cosmos and saw it as a form of self-cultivation.<sup>156</sup>

Others, like Liang Qichao and Zhang, interpreted science as the antithesis to the immutability of human spirit.<sup>157</sup> Liang Qichao argued science could not explain man because human life was “subjective, intuitive, freely willed and unique to the individual.”<sup>158</sup> By Yan Fu’s time, its connections to Confucianism were rebuked, and the term “science,” became synonymous with the cultural practices of the West, but its initial connection to truth remained.<sup>159</sup> Thus, the narrator’s invoking “science” could double both in support of a Confucian reading, as well as a reminder to interpret from an alternative space, potentially a western space. Regardless, the link to science can best be interpreted perhaps as a reminder for truth-seeking.

Other possibilities for interpreting the narrator’s role could include his emulating past historical writers who were forced during especially repressive political periods to censure their opinions by using parody and self-contradiction while following Confucian moral imperatives of using education for social change. Historically, great writers and poets influenced rulers of their day through writing. As delineated in the *Confucian Analects*, Chinese intellectuals were morally responsible for speaking for those who were less privileged or illiterate.<sup>160</sup> Clearly, the May Fourth Chinese intellectuals felt a strong moral responsibility for saving the nation and felt compelled to write for social impact. The Confucian intellectual had a unique relationship with knowledge, representation, and society. Perhaps such feelings of strong moral responsibility attribute to China’s tradition of writing where the purpose of writing was for political change. Indeed the question of who is narrating and who is he narrating about and the reliability of the narrator constantly comes up into question. The narrator—his innocence or guilt, his altruism or

self-interest—is endlessly embroiled in larger and larger discourses of possibilities, given the antiphonal voices of the short story.

Rather, there is almost a purposeful intention for the narrator and narration to never reach full representation or explanation. Indeed, none of the narrator's intentions or motivations for visiting his sick friend or for presenting the diary is ever made clear to us. Does the narrator, as the madman would interpret, come as a fellow cannibal or out of good will to visit a sick friend? The fact that the three characters were friends during their transition from children into adults creates an even greater ambiguity about the character of the narrator. How would the story differ if only his brother presented the story? Of even greater curiosity is the choice of the narrator as a friend to the "madman." Friendship which is not included in the Confucian *sangang* (three bonds) implies an equality of relationship rather than hierarchy. An interesting note also to add biographically, in *Selected Stories of Lu Hsun* it is noted that Lu Xun had quite a few "good, loyal friends." Hsu Shoutang, who Lu Xun met while students in Japan, in 1933 accompanies Lu Xun to writer Yang Hsin-fo's funeral even at the risk of assassination, and after Lu Xun's death continued to publicize his work despite threats to his life.<sup>161</sup> Whether life imitates fiction or fiction imitates life, the similarities of the two events - one fantastical, the other historical, leave much to be answered. Surely, it would suggest that "friendship" probably meant a great deal to Lu Xun.

Perhaps the purposeful framing of the story by a well-intentioned character in the form of the story subtly critiques and softens the madman and our own pessimism. At least, the narrator found it important enough to read through both volumes of the diary, and meaningful enough to extract one section, as is, without changing it. Says the narrator, "In my recording, the original slips of the pen (or tongue), I did not even change one word... As for the book's title, the man

himself chose it after his recovery, so I did not change it either. Recorded April 2, 1918.”<sup>162</sup>

This insistence on exact documentation and dating of the chronicle clearly suggests the significance that the narrator attaches to the short story. In fact, it is from this narrator’s suggestion from the very beginning that nudges readers toward an allegorized reading; “It is of no great consequence that I changed them all [the names].”<sup>163</sup> While the older brother and narrator appear to share the diary as a shared joke, the relationship of the narrator and audience with whom he is sharing the diary is different. Almost intimately with the reader, on the side, he suggests taking an allegorized approach. We thus have three perspectives – older brother, madman, and friend - who vie for the reader’s trust in their testimonies to truth.

Exploring “A Madman’s Diary” through its multiple voices of narration and simultaneously co-existing multiple truths and realities illuminates the implausibility of Lu Xun’s wholesale acceptance of Western concepts. These antiphonal voices throughout the short story that co-exist in collusion and contradiction clearly echo the fragmented spectrum of “hailing” ideologies of Western culture, Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. This nesting of perspectives is Lu Xun’s unique view of the complexities of the “self” and introspection on how the self integrates conflicting ideologies. I believe it is through creative fragmentation that Lu Xun melds the needs of lesser self and greater self (*xiaowo* and *da wo*). As the Euro-American conceptual network of the "self" is selectively integrated with Chinese notions of the "self," new possibilities arise, and the Euro-American antagonistic paradigm of the self versus the other fades amidst the “reality” of Chinese philosophy. Lu Xun's reinvention of individualist subjectivity thus transcends the limits of pedagogic dissemination his May Fourth colleagues so urgently strove to convey, exceeds the limits of “self-versus-society” framework that Euro-American culture dictates, and harmonizes the theoretical conflicts of realism and romanticism.

In chapter two, I further explore the short story as both an allegorical and individualist work, and examine further how Lu Xun "grabs" the positive aspects of Euro-American notions of the self and individualism, and ingeniously reinvents and integrates it with various aspects of Chinese notions of the self for a balanced coexistence of self and society.

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<sup>1</sup> (Huters 2005, 43-74); I borrow Guy Alitto's phrases "wholesale westernization" and "cultural blending" (Alitto 1986).

<sup>2</sup> Please see Lin Yusheng's *Crisis of Chinese Consciousness* and Shu-mei Shih's *The Lure of the Modern* for more detailed analysis of the failures of earlier reforms.

<sup>3</sup> The terms "modernity," "modernization" and "modern" are especially laden with cultural meaning that often reified the dualistic ideologies of backward versus modern, and primitive versus evolved. Here, I am using the term "modern" as a translation of the Chinese term "*xiandai hua*." In this context, I am simply referring to a state in which China could compete militarily and economically with Europe, America, and Japan. Similar to Janet Ng, I utilize the terms "primarily as a temporal marker to bracket a particular era in which literature undergoes a significant transformation" (Ng 2003, ix).

<sup>4</sup> Ren Gong states, "The political novel is the most powerful influencing factor. . . . The novel is the nation's soul." Ren Gong, "Yi Yin Zhengzhi Xiaoshuo Xu," *Qingyi Bao* 1 (1898); Di Baoxian states, "The novel is the greatest among all literatures." Di Baoxian, "Lun Wenxue Shang Xiaoshuo Zhi Weizhi," *Xin Xiaoshuo* 7 (1903): 61; Yin Bing claims, "If one desires to renew a nation's people, one must first recreate the nation's novels. So if one wants to re-instill morality, one must first approach the novel; if one wishes to reform religion, there is first the novel; if one wishes to reform politics, there is first the novel; if one wishes to change customs, there is first the novel; if one wishes to renew knowledge, there is first the novel; All the way to refreshing people's hearts or renewing people's personalities, one must approach the novel first. Why is that? Because novels have unimaginable power to dominate humans." Yin Bing, "Lun Xiaoshuo Yu Qunzhi Zhi Guanxi," *Xin Xiaoshuo* 1(1902): 33.

<sup>5</sup> These influences were perhaps in part due to a Confucian tradition of relegating the importance of "*wenxue*" (literature) to pedagogic practices. To understand why the intellectual movement gravitated to such extremes, it is helpful to recognize the different cultural assumptions and expectations embedded within each culture's expectation about literature's purpose in society and history, as well as the different historical factors that contributed to constructing its meaning and purpose. Euro-American notions of literature arose as a direct contradiction to the Age of Enlightenment and the superiority of reason and rationality and thus focused on feelings, individuality, and the spirit. On the other hand, May Fourth intellectuals were responding to a whole different set of historical and cultural influences. Preceded by a Confucian tradition of relegating the importance of "Wenxue" (literature) to pedagogic practices, the Chinese intellectuals possessed a more direct connection with the government; namely, a tradition of writing satire and political pieces to influence the king, or the Keju system which tested intellectuals and placed them into government official positions. The May Fourth intellectuals, thus, likely perceived a different expectation in the purposes of writing.

<sup>6</sup> (Jameson 1986). In this section, the quotes around various words indicate Jameson's word choices, not my own.

<sup>7</sup> (Prusek 1980). Prusek suggests that Lu Xun "birthed" subjectivity into Chinese literature with his short story, "A Madman's Diary," and that previously it did not exist except solely within the confines of poetry where there was a true tradition of subjectivity in pre-modern Chinese literature. Prusek defines subjectivity as a focus on the narrator as a unique and different self, a process of delving into the narrator's psyche, feelings, and personality. Rather than questioning why Euro-American theory often privileges the self and subjectivity, or taking the opportunity to explore alternative value systems, Prusek labels the differences as a Chinese lack.

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<sup>8</sup> (Pohl 1999, 73-74); An organism is defined as “A form of life composed of mutually interdependent parts that maintain various vital processes.” Or “Any complex thing or system having properties and functions determined not only by the properties and relations of its individual parts, but by the character of the whole that they compose and by the relations of the parts to the whole.” (“Organism.” dictionary.com. dictionary.reference.com/browse/organism?s=t (accessed June 28, 2012)). For example, in scientific experiments, “Single, separate rat-heart cells in culture beat at different rates. When they grow into physical contact, the beating becomes synchronous. . . . Direct physical contact is necessary for attainment of synchronous contractions” (Harary 1960, 1839-1840). Thus, the “whole” effect cannot be explained by the behavior of the individual parts.

<sup>9</sup> Lin argues that the prioritizing of intellectual and cultural change originated primarily from a traditional Chinese mode of thinking. Thus, the cultural-intellectualistic approach had the potential to evolve into an intellectualistic-holistic mode of thinking: a totalistic view of culture perhaps called for a totalistic reform. Since traditional Chinese society and culture were perceived as organismic entities whose form and nature were affected by its fundamental ideas, then perhaps it also follows that the only way to change the nature and form of its parts would be to change the core genetic makeup of the organism (Lin 1979). The hints of this traditional organismic mode of thinking can also be seen in contemporary Taiwanese politics as “生命共同體” (*Shengming gongtongti*) which translates as, “All individuals in a group share the same fate.” “Lee Teng-hui proposed that people in Taiwan should consolidate as “one community,” emphasizing the shared fate and common interests of its people.” (Lee 1995, 106). Lee Teng-hui, *Jingying da Taiwan* (Managing Big Taiwan), New Edition (Taipei, Yuanliu, 1995), 106.

<sup>10</sup> Shu-mei Shih in "Globalization and Minoritization" exposes the underlying political struggles beneath the seeming innocent guise of moving toward multiculturalism and crossing cultural chasms. Shih interprets the multiculturalism as imperialism's ploy of appropriating the decolonizing voice. Exposing the illusion of globalization as mutual cultural free flow, Shih illustrates that it is a highly policed and regulated system. Through her example of Li Ang, Shih illustrates how the Euro-American is only willing to confer selective recognition of the “other.” It only sees what it willingly sees. That is the non-threatening and non-challenging. Shu-mei Shih adds to discourses of globalization the misleading illusion of globalization as mutually equal and innocuous cultural exchange and free flow, and demonstrates how it more resembles a highly policed and regulated narrow limiting one way street in which only one has the power to confer acceptability on the "other" but not vice versa. Through the power of selective recognition, all other culturally “different” theories would neatly be swept into the margins. Perhaps beneath any attempt at cross-cultural understanding lurks the possibility of a totalizing foreign discourse of greater political, economic, and social power that appropriates particular native needs and voices (Shih 2000, 86-101); Arif Dirlik in *The Post-Colonial Aura* argues that globalizing tendencies divert attention away from contemporary problems of social, political, and cultural domination in the negotiation between nations. Therefore, it hides the offenses of global capitalism and the inequality of capital and power. Global multicultural discourse uses culture as a cover for material relations and to divert capitalist criticisms and justify inequalities, exploitation and oppression (Dirlik 1997); Regarding authorship, decolonizing critics Gayatri Spivak and Rey Chow focus on the failure to recognize the intellectual author as a producer: the author should declare the differences between those speaking and those spoken for, and to recognize the unequal relationship. In "French Feminism Revisited" and in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak problematizes the role of the writer, who fails to question herself and her position to the decolonizing world, and how the decolonizing world sees her. Spivak warns that if the decolonizing feminist does not acknowledge her own production from the systems of Euro-American imperialism and Euro-American feminism, then she risks reproducing further violences upon her native sister. In "French Feminism Revisited," Spivak warns that the decolonizing literary critic in the U.S. must face up to the violence that produced her, and to the metropolitan feminism that is wedged in that structure of violence. Spivak argues that because the decolonizing literary critic is a privileged speaker in the U.S., she always bears the risk of inflicting further violence through imperialism of the structures that brought her about and the imperialism of metropolitan feminism; Rey Chow also argues that women critics must be cautious in speaking for “others” and need to realize their own privileged positions and destroy the illusion that they are doing social justice. Also, focusing on the issue of “who gets to represent” and “who gets represented,” Chow emphatically stresses the need to distinguish between the speaking subject and the spoken for, and the inherent inequality of such a discourse. Problematizing why critics never question their own positions in the intellectual and economic history or their own ideology, Spivak illustrates how this “negligence” to self-declare inadvertently abets the constitution of the “other” in its masking of the inequalities of economic and political power. Spivak emphasizes the need for mutual exchange, learning, and not assuming that the academic always has a superior theory and a greater sense of compassion. Furthermore, first

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world theorists need to stop its self-interest in "others" merely as mirrors for the self, or as an object for benevolence. The first world theorists often pose grandiose solutions with little or no historical specificity. Gayatri Spivak, "French Feminism Revisited" in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds. Judith Butler and Joan Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> In "Can the Subaltern Speak," Gayatri Spivak exposes the transnational movement as the "West's" attempt to retain its position as the center while demoting "others" into the periphery (Spivak 1988). The Euro-American academic intellectual often appropriates the subaltern under the guise of humanity and rationalizes imperialism. In the process, the intellectual confers greater visibility to herself. The decolonizing intellectuals' criticisms of his culture often dangerously serve to repudiate the pre-colonized past of nations and extol praise for the colonized present state. Much like decolonizing critiques against Zhang Yi-mou's *Raise the Red Lantern*, Dirlik warns the decolonizing critics about the potential for others to use the criticisms as excuses for humanitarian imperialism. With the rise of trans-capitalism, the dissolution of the three world boundaries, and the displacement of the primacy of Europe, these critics find such maneuvers of discourse a means of retaining the primacy of the West (Dirlik 1997).

<sup>12</sup> (Nikkila 1996, 47)

<sup>13</sup> (Erikson 1987, 675). According to Erik Erikson, "A subjective sense of identity is a sense of sameness and continuity as an individual."

<sup>14</sup> The referenced definitions all require "essential sameness," or "oneness" that suggests continuity of identity and subjectivity. This becomes problematic, however, for a person with multiple personality disorder, who would then according to Euro-American theory, be foreclosed to claiming an identity or subjectivity. This clearly is impossible since humans possess both subjectivity and identity. This illustrates one of the many consequences of the language slippage problem in attempting to define and fix the definitions for "subjectivity"—it leads to inaccurate and false conclusions.

<sup>15</sup> (Nikkila 1996, 48). To further complicate this term, there are "several types of specific identities of a person, like one's bodily identity, sexual identity, cultural identity, social identity, sub-cultural identity, national identity, religious identity."

<sup>16</sup> (Hall and Ames 1998, 3-4)

<sup>17</sup> According to Derrida, for every word there is an infinite number of words to describe any one word and the description of those words. Thus, all ideologies have inevitable attachments and structures.

<sup>18</sup> Theorist Althusser expands the concept of the subject as always under hierarchal subjection in "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus," where he uses the concept of ideology to explain how a subject is always already initiated into subordination and the subjective both through the Repressive State Apparatus (i.e., the police who work through instilling fear and threats) and through the Ideological State Apparatus that creates a freely submitting subject. Althusser defines ideology as the system of reproducing the system of the relations of production. He argues there is no history of ideology, but ideology exists throughout all of history. Like Freud's unconscious, ideology has no documented history but is omnipresent and eternal. Building upon Marx's State apparatus that cites that it is through the existing state that the systems of existing conditions of productions are upheld; Althusser complicates this concept of systems by adding to the Repressive State Apparatus, the Ideological State Apparatus which subjects through subordinating individuals to its ideology through more subtle ways (i.e., schooling, television, teachers, and libraries). Ideology carries out pertinent functions in maintaining the current state by subordinating and interpolating the individual, subjecting the subject, creating mutual recognition of the peripheral self in relation to its center, and by reassuring that all will be well if acted out in accordance with ideology. ISA serves the system by creating subjects who freely submit. This of course begs the question of how theories of subjectivity exist in apparent contradiction to the superficial definitions of the very term. Althusser's famous analogy for understanding the individual's interpellation is that of a person walking down the street when a policeman yells, "Hey You!" Within the action of turning around, the individual has become hailed into the law. Others, like Butler, have found Althusser's ideological interpolation of the individual problematic, for the individual is always already a subject: The process is always belated. Everyone is born into subjection and ideology, and the



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subject is always already subjected. Ideology is man's mediated imagined relation to the real, and there is nothing outside ideology and ideology is nothing but people. Althusser's structure of subjectivity is thus like an inescapable claustrophobic prison.

<sup>19</sup> Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* continues this theme of self as hierarchically imprisoned by showing how the regulatory ideal subjects the subject. His analogy of the prisoner in the panopticon is a vivid example of how regulatory ideals conform, control, and shape the subject's behavior. Says Foucault, "the prisoner who we are invited to free is in a deep subjection far more complicated than himself." Foucault's image of subjectivity reverses the body as the soft and malleable internal prisoner upon which regulatory ideals are acted out, and the psyche as the unchangeable hard exterior. The regulatory ideal forces the prisoner to conform to its behavioral norms and completely subjects and controls the body. This process of subjection is a continuous one, a moment of construction that takes place repeatedly.

<sup>20</sup> Butler critiques Althusser's example of interpolation by finding that subjectification must already exist to elicit such a reaction. Critiquing Althusser via Dolar, Butler cites that in order for a hailed individual to turn around, it already implies guilt or an interiority that would react to the call. Subjection must already be in place to elicit such a reaction, and Althusser fails to explain the existence of such a consciousness. While Althusser insists external rituals such as kneeling in prayer bring about real belief and subjection, Dolar argues something prior must exist in order for one to be repeatedly willing to pray and kneel. Interpellation always already requires pre-subjection. Dolar notes Althusser's theory of interpellation ironically mimics the image of the power of god in naming Peter and Moses, and if anything simply reveals Althusser's own interpellation by the bible. Thus, subjectivity is culturally-, historically-, and religiously-constructed. Through Lacan, Freud, and Foucault, Butler also searches for the resistance of the law while still being within the bounds of law for subjectivity. Freud fragments the subject's homogeneity by dividing the psyche into three parts, the ego, the id, and the superego, which retains the laws of the father. The superego, which is equivalent to subjection, retains the laws of the father and is only part of the psyche and must negotiate with the other two. Distinguishing different concepts of the subject, Butler finds Althusser's subject makes ideology possible, whereas Lacan and Freud's psyche is where ideology falls apart.

<sup>21</sup> Lacan insists there is always an excess of signification: against the social domain that is ruled by figurations, there is always the imaginative. Freud, on the other hand, finds melancholia at the limit of subjectivity. Because melancholia represents the individual's inability to face up to the loss of the loved object, this constitutes a position of impossible self-reflection. Because there is no possibility for self-reflection, melancholia lies at the limits of subjectivity.

<sup>22</sup> The afterlife of repressed desire continues to flourish in the act of repression itself. In an ideology's attempt to subordinate the subject, there is always the potential for that repression to cause an excess in that repression that allows the subject to retain that desire while co-existing within the confining law. Prohibition is the occasion for reliving the repressed instinct under the rubric of the very condemning law. Repression and prohibition do not eradicate the feelings of desire, but the repressed desire is proliferated and even magnified through the very act of repression. As Butler illustrates through Foucault on Freud, although guilt can stop a subject from doing what one desires, it cannot stop that desire. Prohibition only proliferates and continues the original desire with even greater force: prohibited desire exceeds even its original. The force with which prohibition is maintained is fed by the very force of the original desire itself magnified through repression. Butler concludes that there is always excess in the productions of prohibition and, therefore, excess in the formation of the subject.

<sup>23</sup> While Hegel and Althusser assume a direct transfer from exterior to interior occurs, neither account for how such a process occurs. Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* argues through prohibition that subjectivity exceeds power; power produces things that exceed power, and power does not always produce in terms of its desired purpose. Appropriated power changes form and direction. Power is not transformed intact, and appropriated power can change form or even turn against its originating power within the very confines of the law. The subject's subjection to power enables him or her to derive power for agency, but the power initiated does not necessarily match its original. Power may form the subject and invoke its agency, but the subject's agency does not have to conform to that power. The self, while taking on ideology with its power, is capable of transforming that power in redefining the self. Why there is such a discrepancy with the treatment of subjectivity from *The History of Sexuality* and in *Discipline and Punish* no one, not even Butler seems to be able to surmise.

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<sup>24</sup> Butler adds to the porosity of subjectivity in *Bodies that Matter* by emphasizing the concepts of “iterability.” Actual matter exists. However, it is indissociable from discourse in which regulatory norms condition, shape and form notions of matter that are made to follow these norms. She advocates moving away from concepts of construction into notions of matter, since construction always leads to unanswered questions of who is doing the constructing. Encouraging readers to focus on notions of matter, Butler shows sexual differences are not just created through discourse, but there is actual matter that is indissociable from discourse. Regulatory norms condition, shape and form notions of matter that are made to follow these norms. When materiality exceeds those of a regulatory ideal such as sex, these instances serve as resistance against the imposing system. In matter, there are always examples that exceed the norms. These are often viewed as the abject and treated as a threat to the system. In her previous book, *Gender Troubles*, Butler cites a specific historical example in which a subject possessed both male and female organs. These regulatory norms, which shape understanding of materiality, are not static and constant but require a constant repetition (i.e., a child is “girled” into existence not just by a nurse’s call, but an entire matrix of gender relations repeatedly invokes the child into girlhood). Repetition is necessary in sustaining regulatory ideals that are by nature incomplete and temporal. Thus, iterability is its greatest vulnerability and weakness, for it is the point of entry where one can repeat with difference. Butler finds that the only way possible for existence and resistance is by embracing the injurious terms that haunt us. Only by accepting subjection is the existence of the social subject guaranteed, and only by embracing those injurious terms can the self resist.

<sup>25</sup> In their search for a feasible solution to the Marxist impasse, Laclau and Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* and Balibar and Wallerstein in *Race Nation Class* deconstruct the homogenous surface of identity. Marx predicted that the bourgeoisie would overthrow the feudal lords, and following the proletariat would overthrow the bourgeoisie. When the bourgeoisie never became powerful enough to overthrow the feudal lords and the proletariat had to overthrow the feudal lords, the Marxist theoretical sequence was toppled. Theorists struggled over whether the nature of the pure and homogeneous working class would be transformed through executing the roles of another dominating class. Some pushed for an authoritative approach. Separating the leaders from the performers would no longer pose a threat to the identity of the working class because the task would be imposed upon them. Laclau and Mouffe expand the superficial hegemony of class by adding ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, and social status; and argue for no more privileged classes. Wallerstein finds the two identities, a narrow over-determined signifier, and complicates the classes: there is the nouveau riche, the descendant, the coaster, the “third world” administrator, the middle class which is both bourgeoisie and proletariat, and the aristocratic “wannabe.” Wallerstein complicates the homogenous surface of the Proletariat by adding differences in terms of the nature of the contract, length of work, degree of self-sustenance, and the degree of exchange versus monetary compensation. Laclau and Mouffe illustrate how identities by nature are relational, porous, and not closed. They assert a new understanding of hegemony that is metonymical. Utilizing Derrida’s point de capitane, Laclau and Mouffe illustrate how all discourses fight to stop the overflow of meaning and totalize. In order for the appearance of homogeneity and totality, equivalences (the erasure of differences) and frontiers must be assumed, yet when the arrest of meaning is allowed to overflow, all discourses inevitably fall apart. Identity is thus a representative of a field of differences where the antagonisms lie at the limits of discourse. Kristeva presents identity as the self’s outright rejection of “not that, not me, not self,” where the abject is the abhorred, un-symbolizable, and horrific other that denotes the boundaries of the self. The abject is always both radically outside and part of the subject and vital for the subject’s creation. The abject is the outright rejection. (For example, the “queer” compels heterosexual identity). The abject functions like an open wound, radically incomplete and threatening to disrupt the superficial homogeneity of the subject’s surface at any moment. What appears outside one’s subjection is always also radically part of the subject. Identity is open and porous and has no ultimate fixity, and no complete un-fixity just partial fixity. All hegemonies, realities, the social, and identities are open and never entirely sutured.

<sup>26</sup> Laclau and Mouffe problematize Althusser’s concept of subjection as a single determinate. There is no single determinate oppressor. For instance, Modern Chinese women are subjected both to Imperialism and patriarchal Chinese nationalism.

<sup>27</sup> For instance, Butler’s often has a monocular focus upon Euro-American theory and theorists. Butler’s omission of other cultures and lack of specification of the culturally limited scope of work reifies the Euro-American obsession with subjectivity. Her focus on subjectivity reifies the cultural notion that self should be of primary universal concern.

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<sup>28</sup> Wang refers to Prusek and Tang Xiaobing's *China Modern: The Heroic and the Quotidian* in the critics' use of "modernity" and "subjectivity."

<sup>29</sup> Theodore Hutters, "Creating Subjectivity in Wu Jianren's *The Sea of Regret*." in *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation: From the Late Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005). Jaroslav Prusek in *The Lyrical and the Epic*, herald's Lu Xun for birthing subjectivity into Chinese literature with his short story, "A Madman's Diary," in the Late Qing-Early Republic years. Prusek's accolade suggests, however, that subjectivity previously did not exist in Chinese fiction. Prusek does, however, acknowledge that subjectivity did exist in poetry where there was a true tradition of subjectivity in pre-modern Chinese literature. Literary critics of Pre-modern Chinese literature, such as Stephen Owen, David Schaberg, Ronald Egan and others have long argued that pre-modern Chinese literature such as *Rou Pu Tuan*, *Chin Pin Mei*, and *The Dream of Red Chamber*, to name a few, have demonstrated the existences of different forms of consciousness. Hutters further adduces that Prusek had no intention of basing his analysis on purely Western definitions of subjectivity. Prusek also found "rich veins of interiority . . . in other genres of Qing dynasty writing." Hutters notes, "First, what is actually at issue here is not really the thing "interiority" itself, but rather the means of its expression. Second, corollary to the recognition that interiority is primarily a question of literary technique is the fact that the existence of a particular means of narrative expression is no guarantee of quality."

<sup>30</sup> Hutters suggests there may be an intentional refusal to use interiority simply because it lacks art. Many literary critics view interiority as poor narrative form: "The author considered narrating the inner workings of a character's mind at such a key moment a matter of bad form. This might be akin, perhaps, to Siegfried Kracauer's objection to what he regarded as the crudeness of craft implicit in the use of voice-over in film—rather than a failure to demonstrate." (Hutters 2005). To dismantle the assumed superiority of subjectivity, Hutters illustrates that having subjectivity does not guarantee quality and that not having subjectivity does not necessarily equate to not doing meaningful work. He further argues that just because subjectivity cannot be found in the works cited, it does not necessarily mean that subjectivity did not exist. Subjectivity is an invention of Euro-Americans simply to confer universality on Euro-American literature. Hutters illustrates how authors purposely avoided subjectivity when they easily could have by returning to the literary criticism of narration, where to show is better than to tell. Hutters also illustrates another problem with Euro-American and Chinese cultural difference. In Wu Jianren's "The Sea of Regret" and in *Ru Lin Wai Shi*, the characters do not at any level chose to be evil, rather it is a series of increasingly bad choices, and the requirement to make other bad choices to protect those of the past, which leads the character to his final and inevitable path. Thus, there is no real conscious decision for becoming bad, and there is a philosophical difference in how one errors (actions/sometimes fate), or as in a Christian interpretation, how one chooses sin (emphasis on choice). Rather, Hutters suggests that there may be an intentional refusal for interiority simply because it lacks art. Perhaps the stories are more comparable with Aesop's fables in their desire to inspire morality and education, rather than individual psyche studies.

<sup>31</sup> (David Palumbo-Liu, "Universalisms and Minority Culture," 1995, 188-208) quoted in (Shih, 2001, 132). David Palumbo-Liu calls such operations the "Eurocentric universal," "applying Western criteria of judgment to non-Western cultural appropriations and productions."

<sup>32</sup> Liu concludes, "The notion of the individual [need] be studied as a historical category rather than assumed as a superior, transcendental value" (Liu, 1995, 86). Liu questions why the self should even be an analytical category since translation proves impossible and other fields such as philosophers, anthropologists and sociologists are already contesting the instability of notions of the self, the person, and the individual. Critiquing the "self" has become an analytical category in poststructuralist critique. This is not the first time "subjectivity"—or the concept of an immutable fully autonomous spirit—has come under suspicion. Arguing against Hegel, Marx too asserted that pure consciousness simply did not exist. Everything known was already burdened by language; consciousness needs to be understood as a social product. Along these lines, the Euro-American notions of "self" should be understood, not as pure consciousness, but as a product of language and society.

<sup>33</sup> Clifford Lines in the *Companion to the Industrial Revolution* writes about the first appearance of the term "Industrial Revolution" in 1882. He cites the effects of the industrial revolution from the beginning of 1760, when a significant increase in the rate of production growth occurred. Lines attributes this partly to the invention of the

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smelting of iron ore with coke instead of charcoal in 1760 (Lines 1990, 1). "One hundred years later, Britain had been transformed from a country with a predominantly rural and agricultural population to one with over 50% of the population living in towns and cities, and an economy based on industry and commerce" (Lines 1990, 1). Hartley Spatt documents the enormous influences upon the community, "Each innovation was associated with a cost in terms of social upheaval and environmental impact, . . . inadequate workers' housing, . . . city dwellers' illnesses and social privations, . . . [and] warrens of dingy streets and courtyards. . . Industrial by-products fouled the air, the streams, and the landscape. . . . Population growth . . . soared in the next century." Hartley S. Spatt, *Encyclopedia of Romanticism: Culture in Britain, 1780s-1830s* (New York: Garland Pub.), 1992, 283-5.

<sup>34</sup> As Spatt writes, "Over the course of a century, England's basic manufacturing industries were transformed from water-powered piecework establishments to steam-powered piecework establishments to steam-powered factories. In the process, the English countryside and the demands on the English worker changed forever. Although some Romantic writers and artists refused to acknowledge these changes, their impact on others was tremendous. The industrial revolution changed their life-styles, their economic prospects, and sometimes their entire esthetics." The industrial revolution was based on three main accomplishments: (1) the development of reliable, efficient steam power, (2) the manufacture of increasingly complex machines run by that power, and (3) the production of cast and wrought iron in sufficient quantity to build prime movers and machines" (Spatt 1992, 283-4).

<sup>35</sup> (Spatt 1992, 285). "Some artists saw these changes as blessings—others as cursed. Blake dreamed of supernatural visitations that might restore England's natural beauty; Wordsworth, apostrophized relics of pre-industrial society. . . . Perhaps the clearest statement of ambivalence is in Frankenstein. Its hero loses everything because of his desire to take technology to its extremes, but its creative impulse is ultimately affirmative: 'Oh! Be men, or be more than men. . . . [The world] is mutable, and cannot withstand you, if you say that it shall not.' In this desire to be 'more than men,' to outdo nature, lies the seeds of the Industrial Revolution, as well as its consequences."

<sup>36</sup> (Fox 1991, 234)

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>39</sup> Fox notes, "That hegemony has proved so powerful that most of us intuitively associate individualism with the defense of individual freedom, our highest value. . . . [I]ndividualism actually perverts the idea of the socially obligated and personally responsible freedom that constitutes the only freedom worthy of the name or indeed historically possible. Theoretically, individualism does not contain the possibility of establishing necessary limits on the will of the individual, on what Nietzsche called the 'will to power.' The problem lies at the heart of every modern discussion of democracy since Rousseau: What can be the relation between the will of the individual and the will of the majority? Theorists of individualism have not, in fact, arrived at a better definition of the social good than the individualistic notion that what more people want must be accepted as better. . . . Modern individualistic societies have significantly curtailed individual right in the name of the public good, but they have done so apologetically, defensively, not on the grounds of the prior rights of the collectivity. . . . Western societies, in any case, have . . . failed to develop a notion of individual right as the product of collective life rather than its justification" (Fox 1991, 8). "Individualism has decisively repudiated previous notions of hierarchy and particularism to declare the possibility of freedom for all. In so doing, it transformed slavery from one unfree condition among many into freedom's antithesis – thereby insisting that the subordination of one person to any other is morally and politically unacceptable. But the gradual extension of individualism and the gradual abolition of the remaining forms of social and political bondage have come trailing after two dangerous notions: that individual freedom could—indeed must—be absolute, and that social role and personal identity must be coterminous. . . . In grounding the justification in absolute individual right, they have unleashed the specter of a radical individualism that overrides the claims of society itself" (Fox 1991, 241).

<sup>40</sup> Fox explores the philosophical and ethical dangers in the universalizing of the rhetoric of individualism. Fox defines individualism: "the systematic theory of politics, society, economics, and epistemology that emerged following the Renaissance, that was consolidated in the great English, American, French, and Haitian revolutions of

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the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and that has found its purest logical outcome in the laissez-faire doctrines of neoclassical economics and libertarian political theory.” According to 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century political theorists, “individual right derives from nature and, accordingly, precedes any form of social organization” (Fox 1991, 7-8). Fox, thus, interprets individualism as a totalizing discourse: “The political triumph of individualism has led to its hegemony as *the* theory of human nature and rights, according to which, rights, including political sovereignty, are grounded in the individual and can only be infringed upon by the state in extraordinary circumstances.” “Individual” rights, however, are misleading as only white males with access to literacy and power are acknowledged as “individuals,” whereas property-less men, slaves, people of color, and women are excluded (Fox 1991, 23). “The political institution built on this theory did not, initially, expose the radicalism of the concept, if only because they did not acknowledge all people as individuals. Excluding propertyless men, slaves, and women from political participation, they perpetuated the illusion that individualism and collective life could coexist.” Fox implores, “We can no longer deceive ourselves that individualism suffices to define our collective purposes as a people and a nation” (Fox 1991, 8-9). On the other hand, “Feminist knowledge of self as ‘one’ and as ‘many’ carries an edge that male individualism lacks (Fox 1991, 231). This female experience of being man’s other allows the female to uniquely experience self-awareness of the “self as rooted in and inseparable from a collective [or] . . . community” (Fox 1991, 233).

<sup>41</sup> Denton notes that psychology must also be included within “subjectivity” since psychological literature too played an integral part of the individual and subjective and thus became incorporated into Euro-American subjectivity (Denton 1998, 13).

<sup>42</sup> Lu Xun, “The Tablet,” in *Lu Xun Selected Works*, Vol. 3 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980), 99.

<sup>43</sup> In my struggles with translation, I am struck by the lack of English words available to embody all of the cultural connections that accompanied the translation from Chinese back into English. This chapter written in the English language too attempts to bridge gaps in translating from English to Chinese, back from Chinese to English. From each leap from language and culture to another language and culture is a struggle to find adequate words for translating concepts and with each leap infinite erasures occur. Elements lost in the translation into Chinese and back into English surpass comprehension. Rather than additive, I find the erasures exponential. Misleadingly, the gap appears to cancel itself out. The re-translation back into English erases almost all signs of cultural incongruities. Is simply awareness enough to make a difference?

<sup>44</sup> (Denton 1998, 16)

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>46</sup> (Ng 2003, 13)

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>48</sup> (Denton 1998, 32)

<sup>49</sup> Liu captures the gaps that occur at the translation of the word “self” as “*ziwo, wo, ji, xiaoji*” (Liu 1995, 82) and the multiple connotations and meanings in different contexts. Each word’s history and meaning becomes erased through translation (Liu, 1995, 7-8). The trimming of excess meanings to make translations fit, stripped both the original English and Chinese words of their original connotations and resulted in blurred meanings. Janet Ng warns, “[There is an overriding] problematic of traditional influence studies that only examine product of transfers but do not trace the process of the transfer. . . . Transfer always requires narrative imperatives (such as linearity and teleology) that are not just formal stylistics, but also reflect particular ideological inclinations” (Ng 2003, 13-14). “Many of the European values reflected in western European literary forms, as Zheng argues, were antipathetic to Chinese intellectuals and their humanistic concerns. How, for example, was the rhetoric of racism and imperialism embedded in the European novel processed, once it was commuted to the reception sites outside of Europe?” (Layoun 1990 and Fujii 1993) quoted in (Ng 2003, 14-15); “The reception of a particular literary form from one polity that has aggressive designs on one’s own culture requires tremendous reprocessing and filtering, a procedure

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so complex and so elusive that traditional comparative or influence studies cannot fully encompass it" (Zheng Boqi, 18) quoted in (Ng 2003, 14-15).

<sup>50</sup> (Liu 1995, 82).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Shu-mei Shih in *The Lure of the Modern* illustrates that translations were a product of multiple literary cross-insemination, not only between the "West" and China, but triangulated through Japan's literary influences.

<sup>53</sup> Tracing the historical lineage of words, Liu further complicates the mix of elements lost through translation by reiterating the historical and cultural baggage that each term carries even before its intersection with the English language. Liu traces "ziwo" back to being a "returned graphic loanword imported from Meiji Japan." "Wo, ji, xiaoji," Liu notes, are already heavily laden terms within the context of the Neo-Confucian classical Chinese philosophy. As will be fully explored later, the Confucian philosophy presented a very different reality of self and the self's relation to the world. Thus, such words inevitably came with "radical and important shift[s] in meaning" (Liu 1995, 82). Liu notes "The slippage of ziwo, wo, geren, gewei, geti, and ji not only inherits the slippage of meaning between 'self' and 'individual' in the English original but reflects the complex scenario of translanguaging practices and its politics in the Chinese context." Just as the concepts themselves defy fixing, the attempt to pin down the notion of the "individual" or "individualism" in modern Chinese to one or two definitions will prove counterproductive. By tracing the historical lineage of words back to Japanese origin, Liu re-inscribes the historical and cultural baggage that each term carries. Focusing on the etymological relationship between Chinese, Japanese and English words in the translation of "individualism," Liu traces the movement of the Chinese words "ji, wo, or ziwo," to illustrate how the history and cultural context of each word and the varied historical translation paths of "self" became erased (Liu 1995, 7-8). Meticulously tracing Chinese intellectuals' confrontation with "individualism," Liu highlights the incongruities of the Euro-American concept's collision with Chinese culture.

<sup>54</sup> Liu cautions against cross cultural theories built on essential categories, such as "self" or "individual" applied cross culturally as its "linguistic identity transcends the history of translation and imposes its own discursive priority on a different culture" (Liu 1995, 8).

<sup>55</sup> The transplantation of the concepts of individualism, subjectivity and self into Chinese soil should be read, not as a completed task, but as an open, unfinished, unsutured event which, like translation, requires multiple omissions, negotiations and inventions to exist.

<sup>56</sup> In her essay, Spivak cites Ranajit Guha, who argues that the "historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism—colonist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism . . . which confirmed this process was exclusively or predominantly elite achievements" (Spivak 1994, 79). Spivak investigates the missing elements of what the subaltern work cannot say, for the peasant always becomes a pointer to an irretrievable consciousness. Spivak concludes that the critic thus has a moral responsibility in her depiction of the subaltern who has no history and cannot speak. Spivak questions whether the subaltern truly gets to "speak," but finds the "colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous" as the elite dominate the discourse.

<sup>57</sup> It is still questionable whether Spivak's theory of the subaltern leaves the subaltern enough agency. To some extent, her essay that focuses on appropriating discourses and intellectuals also backgrounds the subaltern's needs and desires. Gail Hershtatter in *Dangerous Pleasures* also self-consciously and repeatedly deconstructs herself and cites the various appropriating voices of the Shanghai prostitute. She, however, presents interviews of the women themselves while also warning readers that even these views carry biases from her framing of the interviews. Perhaps all intellectuals in representing a subaltern need to explore their assumptions about "agency," as well as the dangers of "all or nothing" thinking. Does Spivak's representation of the subaltern as completely void of agency and voice veer toward the more extremes of "black and white" thinking? Are subalterns not also consumers, or mothers of sons? Or sisters of powerful brothers? Furthermore, is the classification of a subaltern also problematic in terms of what criteria constitutes a subaltern as well as who determines who qualifies? Could a person be a subaltern for part of their life and then due to circumstances no longer be classified as a subaltern? Is it even possible to conceive of an absolute "subaltern," someone who has by definition, completely lost all power to express his/her

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needs or wants? Perhaps this simply is another imagined space from one who views an “other” who possesses less power? Does not the subaltern still feel the sensations of one's body, cry out when in pain or hurt, fight to survive, desire to avoid pain, and share the human emotions of pain, grief, sadness, happiness and fear? Do these qualify as subjectivity, feelings, emotions, needs? Is not the most basic primal instinct to survive, a will, a perspective, a need that does not need to be ranked against others? Perhaps critics are searching for a specific kind of identity, subjective voice, or need that fits specific ideas and criteria that only then qualify it as subjectivity? Value assumptions about "self," "existence," "purpose," and "meaning" and a person's relation to the society are culturally specific for each culture. The question of needs and perspectives need to be free of such hierarchal determination.

<sup>58</sup> I intentionally employ terms like “not similar,” “non-similarities,” and “diversity” that are more neutral and less hierarchical. Whenever possible, I avoid terms like “others” and “different,” because such terms reify the problematic first and third world discourse of Orientalism. “Judith Butler in *The Psychic Power of Life* cautions the use of the term “others” as it tends to be a word of exclusion and rejection. See Judith Butler's “The Horrors of Abjection.” Similarly, the term “different” often implies “less than.”

<sup>59</sup> Contemporary critic Leo Lee in *The Intellectual History of Modern Chinese Literature* illustrates how the influences of Chinese intellectuals varied. May Fourth Intellectual T'an Ssu-t'ung bore strong influences from Buddhist-Taoist phenomenology and supported cosmological wholeness and transcendence of selfhood. (Goldman and Lee 2002, 22-23.) T'an also supported the cosmological wholeness of mind and world; “[the] final culmination . . . would be the transcendence of selfhood itself. His message of humanity combined the “psychic energy” and the “spontaneous empathy of Mencian mind with the salvationist compassion of the Bodhisattva.” (Goldman and Lee 2002, 25.) Lee also finds Indian-inspired strains of thinking in Liang Qichao who passionately argued against the rigidity of self as antagonistic to society. Liang saw the evolution of humanity as moving from a Western-styled focus on mastery of external environments, to the Chinese harmonizing of the world, to evolve to its final ideal Indian civilization of “the Will's mystical self-abnegation and rejection of life itself.” (Goldman and Lee 2002, 61); Recalling Michael De Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life*, his work reminds us of the innovative forms of resistance to hegemony and control, thereby warning us of overestimating the totalizing power of ideologies. Even the multiplicity apparent in just these three major philosophical thoughts is incapable of circumscribing the Chinese notions of self. Textual analysis focused solely on one or two schools of thought without mention of the heterogeneity of influences like the Hundred Schools of Thought or that do not mention religious influences, folk and local legend, tend to foster the monolithic myth of nations and reifies the privileging of the “One” discourse and the structures of individualism. The Hundred Schools of Thought was a momentous cultural and intellectual expansion from around 770 BC to 222 BC that included diverse philosophies from Daoism, Confucianism, Legalism, School of Yin-Yang, Mohism, Yang Chu, Logicians, Eclectics, Coalition persuaders and Militarism.

<sup>60</sup> Hall and Ames note in their book, “Our task is to indicate the irrelevance of the philosophic inventory rehearsed above to Chinese understandings of self” (Hall and Ames 1998, 21).

<sup>61</sup> (Liu 1979, 162) as quoted in (Huters 1984).

<sup>62</sup> Many thanks to Theodore Huters who first brought attention to these fascinating connections in seminar class for his students to peruse.

<sup>63</sup> In “On Hard Translation (1922),” Lu Xun documents Liang Siqu's stinging criticisms of Lu Xun's translations for being so true to form and content that it sacrificed readability, enjoyment, intelligibility and comprehension. “Hard translation” refers to Lu Xun's style that stay as true to the meaning of the translated text, even trying to preserve the essential style and grammar of the original, without privileging readability. Lu Xun quotes Liang's “prime criterion,” as prioritizing “intelligibility,” not needing to “mak[e] a mental effort” as it is “no fun,” and creating looser translations that are pleasant. Lu Xun, *Lu Xun Selected Works*, Vol. 3 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980), 80; Liang comments; “It is impossible for a translation to be a complete misrepresentation. . . maybe unfaithful renderings give a wrong idea of the original, but they give the reader something even though they are mistaken. Even if the wrongness does damage, it is still pleasant to read” (Lu Xun 1980, 3: 78). Liang heavily criticizes Lu Xun for using Japanese translations of European writers for his translations, in that all Japanese errors will also carry over (Lu Xun 1980, 3: 94). To which Lu Xun replies; “I am afraid all we can do is to let others laugh at or abuse us for the time being, but go on translating from the Japanese, or making a literal translation from the

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original with the help of a Japanese version” (Lu Xun 1980, 3: 95). Lu Xun’s efforts at borrowing Western concepts via translation received much criticism, to which even he was not impenetrable (Lu Xun 1980, 2: 82). When criticized for translating rather than writing fiction, Lu Xun responds in “What I Ask of the Critics (1922)”:

“Then there are critics who review translations by declaring them labour lost and urging the translator to try his hand at writing. Presumably a translator knows how honourable the profession of a writer is, but sticks to translating because this is all he can do or what he likes best... to return to our compartment (analogy) with the cook: all the man (the food critic) need say is what he thinks of the flavour. If, instead, he reproaches the cook for not being a tailor or a builder, the cook, however stupid he may be, is sure to say, “The gentleman is balmy!” (Lu Xun 1980, 82). Although appearing tongue and cheek and nonplussed, some of his responses suggest that Lu Xun may have felt the criticisms deeply and that it may have sparked deep feelings of loneliness at being misunderstood and unappreciated as his invoking of the Prometheus analogy suggests. “Revolutionaries are often compared to the legendary Prometheus, because—in spite of the torture to which Zeus exposed him—he had such love and fortitude that he never regretted stealing fire for mankind. But I stole fire from abroad to cook my own flesh, in the hope that if the taste proved agreeable those who tasted it would benefit more, and my sacrifice would not prove in vain. Lu Xun, “On Hard Translations,” in *Lu Xun Selected Works* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980), 92. These excerpts suggest that despite ridicule and criticism, Lu Xun perseveringly translated with the hopes that it might prove a useful tool for reform, survival and spirit. Despite obstacles, Lu Xun’s prolific work and dedication to translation speaks of his hopes, however little or fragile, for translation and its possibility of transcending code swapping—a chance to create, seize, and “grab,” new ideological tools to reshape as his own. In “How I Came to Write Stories,” Lu Xun admits to aspiring to “transcend theoretical conflict between realistic and romantic schools.” (Lu Xun 1980, 3: 262-265).

<sup>64</sup> Please see Lin Yusheng’s book, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Anti-Traditionalism in the May Fourth Era* for more details on the holistic and the organismic nature of Chinese thought.

<sup>65</sup> Despite all the criticisms Lu Xun weathered for his translations, I believe, Lu Xun never gave up his hopes for translation as a cultural exchange and means of empowerment. Lu Xun, “Some Thoughts on Our New Literature,” in *Lu Xun Selected Work*. Vol. 3 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980), 56.

<sup>66</sup> (Lu Xun 2002, 557). Translations are my own.

<sup>67</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, I: 37)

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>73</sup> (Lin in “Lu Xun” 1979)

<sup>74</sup> (Lu Xun 1981, 1:56).

<sup>75</sup> “Wen Hua Pian Zhi Lun” and “Mu Luo Shi Li Shuo” can be located in *Lu Xun Sanshi Nian Ji (Lu Xun’s Collected Works of Thirty Years)* in volume 1 in the section called “Fen,” pages 36-100. “A Madman’s Diary” is quoted from volume 2 in the section called “Na Han,” pages 13-27 (Lu 1968).

<sup>76</sup> See Xu, Jian for an extended list and analysis of significant critical literary criticisms of “A Madman’s Diary”.



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<sup>77</sup> “Rather than being autobiographical, Lu Xun’s ‘I-narration’ proves an effective means of distancing himself and evolving perspectives different from what his contemporary readers would normally associate with his public stance” (Lee 1985, 63).

<sup>78</sup> Hutters refers to the madman as a “compromised narrator” which forces “self-scrutiny,” while Anderson refers to the narrator as a “mediating narrator” to signify its “powerful autocritique,” while Lee uses “unreliable narrator” to highlight the ironic dimension and counter-perspectives the structure of his stories open up (Xu 1999, 63).

<sup>79</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, II: 13).

<sup>80</sup> I borrow Gilbert and Gubar’s term in *Madwoman in the Attic* (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 224).

<sup>81</sup> Hutters notes the “complex narrative mode . . . contain[ing] an external and internal” narrator (Hutters 1984, 61); Leo Lee refers to this as a “double structure of a text within-text” (Lee 1987, 57).

<sup>82</sup> (Lu Xun 1981, 1: 313). Denton interprets these as his “inherited cultural values that lie latent in the unconscious of the individual.”

<sup>83</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, II: 14).

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>88</sup> Although Lu Xun aggressively critiqued Confucianism, I posit the essentiality of reading Lu Xun as a partial product of these structures of thought.

<sup>89</sup> (Lee 1987, 17)

<sup>90</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, I: 64)

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 24.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>94</sup> Lu Xun, *Wild Grass* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1974), 126.

<sup>95</sup> In “Muò Luò Shì Lǐ Shuò,” Lu Xun uses Bryon’s words, that this great writer will be labeled by everyone as a “devil.” Lu Xun here does not mean “devil” in a Christian sense, rather as a metaphor.

<sup>96</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, I: 76)

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 24-5.

<sup>98</sup> (Lee 1987, 17). Lee discusses how the madman becomes ostracized and powerless to carry out the spiritual warrior’s necessary work. “The madman’s enlightenment becomes the curse of his existence and dooms him to a paradoxical state of alienation—to be rejected by the very people whose minds he wishes to transform.”

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<sup>99</sup> (Lee 1987, 55). Lee notes how “Lu Xun has carefully built up an animal realm which parallels the human” and emphasizes how the humans “prove themselves even more cruel than animals by eating their own species.”

<sup>100</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, I: 64)

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 14.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>111</sup> Kearns, Laura Belle. "Fracturing Fairy Tales: Lu Xun's Old Tales Retold Reveals Power in Ancient Chinese Mythology." University of Georgia's Journal. [www.uga.edu/juro/2006/kearns.pdf](http://www.uga.edu/juro/2006/kearns.pdf) (accessed December 31, 2006), 14.

<sup>112</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, II: 16)

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-4.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 61.

<sup>115</sup> (Lu Xun 2001, xv)

<sup>116</sup> (Creel 1953, 191)

<sup>117</sup> (Kearns 2006, 18-19)

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> (Lu Xun 2000, 5) quoted in (Kearns 2006, 18).

<sup>120</sup> (Kearns 2006, 20)

<sup>121</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, I: 99)

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 21.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 41.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 25.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 16-7.

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<sup>126</sup> Hutters, "Lu Xun and the Crisis of Figuration," in *Bringing the World Home* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 2011.

<sup>127</sup> "Lu Xun extensively and approvingly cites nineteenth-century European thinkers like Ibsen, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, [and] Stirner in support of an activist spirituality. [But that] beyond this conflation of different ideas of subjectivity, however, the essay exhibits an even more striking peculiarity: Lu Xun almost never phrases any of this advocacy in his own voice. Throughout the piece, whenever he explains the rise of the powerful individual he invariably cites Ibsen, Nietzsche, Stirner or some other European as the authority for the perception" (Hutters 2011, 3-4). In "Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo," Hutters notes, "The final invocation of the superman reminds the reader that Lu Xun has not been directly presenting his own opinion, but has in fact been developing an argument of Nietzsche's. . . . The constant resort to the voice of Western authority lends a certain irony and distance to what otherwise seems intended as not just a powerful statement of opinion, but as a call for resolute action as well... perhaps we can already detect here some of his reserve and doubts about expressing strong views that comes to be such a prominent feature of a number of his writings from the May Fourth period" (Hutters 2011, 4-5).

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, II: 13)

<sup>131</sup> (Munro 1969, 24)

<sup>132</sup> Tu Weiming, "Probing the 'Three Bonds' and 'Five Relationships' in Confucian Humanism," in *Confucianism and the Family*, eds. Walter H. Slote and George A. De Vos (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998), 121. Tu Weiming defines the three bonds (*sangang*) as, "Authority of the ruler over the minister, the father over the son, and the husband over the wife."

<sup>133</sup> (Tu 1998, 76). Tu claims this will cause the "true self (the human heart)" to be lost.

<sup>134</sup> (Tu 1985, 127). The Confucian concept of rituals as a form of training the body and a graduated interpolation perhaps resembles Althusser's interpolation into subjectivity. However, while Althusser's subjective self is a single soul amidst ideology, Confucian's is in the "center of relationships" yet is not a self-centered paradigm. "The real threat to the maturation of the self is selfishness. A privatization of the self is, in Mencius' terminology, the frustration of the great body by the small one. The cultivation of the heart, then, is to make it receptive to the universal power of the self to communicate with other structures of being. . . . [Confucianism] rejects both an introspective affirmation of the self as an isolable and complacent ego and an unrestrained attachment to the external world for the sake of a limitless expansion of one's manipulative power. . . . To live a full life, then, requires the willingness and the courage to transform the limited and limiting structure of the ego into an ever deepening and broadening self. . . . The real challenge to self-realization is not the external world but self-ignorance and egoism."

<sup>135</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, II: 21-2)

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> (Lee 1987, 17). Lee also discusses the failure of the madman. "The way in which the story is told makes us no longer so sure that the Madman's insight and message can reach the crowd for whom they are intended. . . . The Madman's profound perception is also taken to be the defining symptom of his 'disease.'"

<sup>140</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, II: 25)

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<sup>141</sup> (Lu Xun 1981, 1: 417)

<sup>142</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, II: 26)

<sup>143</sup> (Kearns 2006, 121)

<sup>144</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, II: 27)

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> The Confucian also envisioned the "self" as one in a long lineage of blood relations that extend to the past as well as the future. Mark Elvin contrasts this perspective of a "unique place" with the Euro-American "autonomous individuality that attends the isolation of the soul from other souls" (Munro 1969, 26). Mark Elvin notes: "The Chinese believed, by and large, in a unique personal existence, no doubt fortified by the concept of a structure of kinship ascendants and descendants, stretching indefinitely forward into the future, in which the individual occupied his unique place." (Mark Elvin) quoted in (Munro 1969, 26). Munro also notes, "The familial relations constituted the ground for Chinese understandings of the world about them. Familial order is fundamental in determining... the Confucian sense of self. And the bureaucratic structure and the state itself are extensions of familial order."

<sup>147</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, II: 24)

<sup>148</sup> (Lee 1987, 8). Lee also notes how the madman ultimately fails as a spiritual warrior. "The narrator in the preface announces that the madman was eventually cured and went on to seek office. This reassuring 'happy ending' in fact accentuates the protagonist's failure."

<sup>149</sup> (Xu 1991, 61-92); Marston Anderson interprets this call as a "distortion" in the narrative to allow hope into his pessimistic short story. Lee first supports this reading as a "positive postscript to console his fellow warriors on the new cultural front" (Lee 1985) quoted in (Xu 1991, 71). Later in 1987, he argues that there are no impasses. "Since the introduction which frames the diary already annuls the true meaning of its content, even this last sentence loses its intended didactic validity, because given its textual placement inside the diary itself it becomes merely a last faint echo of madness" (Lee 1985) quoted in (Xu 1991, 71).

<sup>150</sup> (Huters 1985, 26)

<sup>151</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, II: 13)

<sup>152</sup> (Wang Hui 1995). Hui traces the roots of the term "science" in China—its reception, various translations and developed meanings.

<sup>153</sup> (Wang Hui 1995, 2)

<sup>154</sup> The first term suggested "zhi originated from sensory organs." The second believed zhi "originated from both without and outside the [the human mind]." The third believed that zhi came "from within, not from outside... spontaneously from one's innermost being" (Wang Hui 1995, 3). Zhu Xi, a neo-Confucian explicated *gezhi* as "essential for illuminating the virtue" and interpreted it as a "moral state" where the heart-mind is "completely illuminated" (Wang Hui 1995, 3). Thus, explains Wang, "It is clear that *gezhi* is not only a way of learning but also the fundamental method to rectify the heart-mind, to make thoughts sincere, to illuminate the luminous virtue, and to rest in perfect goodness" (Wang Hui 1995, 7).

<sup>155</sup> (Wang Hui 1995, 3)

<sup>156</sup> (Denton 1998, 50)

<sup>157</sup> These intellectuals feared the omnipotence of science like European Romantics.

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<sup>158</sup> (Lee 2003, 130); Zhang saw scientific method as “narrow” and incapable of capturing the “powerful and autonomous human subject.” Humans were beyond matter’s reach. Whereas Science was objective, ruled by theoretical method, analysis, and causality, and arising out of the uniformity of phenomena; philosophy of life meant “subjectivity, intuition, synthesis, free will, and individuation.” Emphatically, Zhang declares, “Free will is a constituent part of a personality which cannot be discovered by science.” (Zhang 1963, 21) quoted in (Denton 1998, 50).

<sup>159</sup> Says Yan Fu, “When the learning of *gezhi* is not put first, and the narrow and eccentric mind persists, when one is restrained by Confucian teachings and detained in a corner, harming his heart-mind and causing trouble to his government, wherever he goes he will certainly lead his family and state to astray” (Yan Fu ji, I: 6-7) quoted in (Wang Hui 1995, 18-19). In later developments, the term science took on the meaning of the West. “For Yan Fu, science and democracy were synonyms for Western civilization,” and there was a growing tendency to differentiate the practice of science with Confucianism of which the latter was rebuked” (Yan Fu ji, I:2) quoted in (Wang Hui 1995, 19). Yan even defined science as “‘simply denouncing the false and advocating the true in regard to learning, and subduing the self for the benefit for the public in regard to punishment and law.’ Thus science was a matter of distinguishing truth from falsehood”; Furthermore, in the “Role of Jiangnan Arsenal in the Jiangnan-Shanghai transformation of Culture,” Meng Yue states “The rhetoric of *gezhi* began to open itself to political crafts and started to show the tendency of transgressing its boundaries... The *gezhi* discourse was bound to bring forth internal changes of learning and scholarship because it broke the textual genealogy upon which the orthodox Confucian cultural and political authority was based (Meng 13); As Hutters states, “It was only after 1895, when a new group of thinkers took Chinese inadequacy in science and technology as emblematic of the need for a thoroughgoing reform of thought, education and the indigenous system in general, that the theory of Chinese origins came to be regarded as a hindrance to the radical reform they felt that the country so urgently required” (Huters, 1997, 8).

<sup>160</sup> For example, Tang poet Du Fu (712-770) commented about the wasteful extravagance and the Yang Guifei clan’s monopoly of power and wealth in comparison with the peasants’ poverty; Although, during the Late Qing-Early Republic period the Confucian system had fallen into serious corruption, the conscientious Confucian scholar may still have experienced a different impending sense of responsibility in his or her representation and defense of the less privileged. Thus, the Chinese tradition privileged learning and writing and representing one’s people in a way that was perhaps different from Euro-American culture that has a more clearly delineated separation of literature and politics, writers and the subaltern. Lin Yusheng highlights a cultural intellectualistic trend in which literature is highly prioritized; simply by studying writings and writing well, an individual could take service exams to obtain a governmental position (Lin 1979, 38). A discussion of representation of subalterns, however, always needs to address the problematic posed in Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?”—where the subaltern becomes a text of infinite referentiality simply to serve the purpose of the writer’s discourse. In China, the problem was perhaps even more exaggerated with a majority population of farmers who were illiterate and uneducated. Chinese intellectuals’ representations of this population, however, could never be free of one’s own interests, or as Lu Xun calls it “personal gain.” Leo Lee and Merle Goldman problematize the study of Chinese intellectuals. The process placed the intellectuals upon the “central stage of modern Chinese history and created new ‘cultural capital’ out of their new status and educational backgrounds”(Goldman and Lee 2002, 4). Benjamin Schwartz deems it a highly problematic “exclusive concern with the history of those called intellectuals” and calls for the need for interaction between popular and elite culture that does not privilege intellectual history over folk culture or the life of the masses. Benjamin Schwartz, “The Limits of ‘Tradition’ versus ‘Modernity’: The Case of the Chinese Intellectuals,” in *China and Other Matters* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 45-64.

<sup>161</sup> (Lu Xun 1972, xv). It was highly possible that any writer who went to the funeral alive might not return so. Hsu also resigned twice from teaching positions to support Lu Xun. Even after Lu Xun’s death, Hsu wrote 2 books on Lu Xun and continued to publicize Lu Xun’s works despite serious threats to his life. In 1948, Nationalist agents murdered Hsu.

<sup>162</sup> (Lu Xun 1968, II: 13)

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 2

### **Allegory and Individual Interiority through a Spectrum of Selves in “A Madman’s Diary”**

The previous chapter, “Lu Xun’s Schizophrenic Re-invention of Euro-American Subjectivity in ‘A Madman’s Diary,’” explored the story’s multiple narrative perspectives as an expression and transgression of the Late Qing-Early Republic collective and nationalistic ambitions. In this chapter, I explore the story more definitively as both an allegorical and a subjective work. Kirk Denton noted that there were “the irreconcilable values associated with enlightenment [individualism], on the one hand, and national salvation on the other, this dichotomy did not necessarily exist in Chinese notions of the self.”<sup>1</sup> To better illustrate the multidimensionality of Chinese notions of the self, I examine both the collectivist and the subjectivist threads in Lu Xun’s “A Madman’s Diary.”

In the first half of the chapter, I explore the collectivist aspects of the short story and analyze the schizophrenic voices in “A Madman’s Diary” as an expression of the self as a matrix or a web of subject positions that pulls the individual into a contradictory multitude of directions. According to Francis Hsu, the term “self” needs be re-understood as “psychosocial homeostasis,” (PSH) a concentric layering in the structuring of the self, in which selfhood is how “the individual strives to achieve a dynamic balance (homeostasis) between psychic demands and sociocultural requirements.”<sup>2</sup> In Hsu’s definition, to maintain a beneficial physiological stability, individuals are constantly striving for a psychic and interpersonal equilibrium that is always changing and dynamic. Interpreting the Late Qing-Early Republic sensibility could be understood as uniquely negotiating the often-contradictory structures interpolating them:

European-American sensibilities, Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, feminism, nationalism, Marxism, capitalism, traditional Chinese conservatism, and modernity. Perhaps what makes the subject an individual—the madman an individual—is the unique way in which he negotiates the conflicting ideological hailings that continuously beckon and attempt to claim him. In the first half of this chapter, I investigate the hailing ideologies of the madman’s constitution as an allegory of the struggles of the Late Qing-Early Republican intellectual as well as an allegory of the struggles of a nation grappling with reform, resistance, and loss.

### ***Ideological Allegories: Marxism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Folklore***

Previous scholarship on the story has often assumed the madman to be a one-dimensional allegory of the Chinese nation’s struggle with reform: the character was presented as a unilateral model of rebellion, enlightenment, and agency for reform, as symbolized through his similarities to Nietzsche.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps because Lu Xun was well versed in the Marxist theory of literature—especially the theories on art and literature by Leon Trotsky, Georgi Plekhanov, and Anatoliy Lunacharski—and shared their sympathy for the oppressed, the work’s connection with Marxism has often been emphasized, and Lu Xun is often credited with being the fountainhead of China’s proletarian literary revolution.<sup>4</sup> Themes such as conflict between the classes from Marx and Engels’s *The Communist Manifesto* can be found in the madman’s metaphor of cannibalism, which expresses the struggles between the empowered and disempowered, articulated in terms of class difference. The narrator, the brother, and the madman represent the privileged society and could be classified as representing the “bourgeoisie.” The narrator has privileged access to Western knowledge, and both brothers possess extensive Confucian education as well as the financial means to consume meat, which was a mark of class. In addition, they all owned or had

access to land, resources, or means of production. The situation is different for the little sister, who, like many other victims depicted in the story, has little access to power and ends up “consumed” by the powerful for private gain. Engels’s “essentiality of typicality,” mandating that art embody the commonality of a class or historical trend, is prevalent throughout this story, which focuses on the underprivileged, unvoiced, and exploited victims who qualify as proletariats.<sup>5</sup> The greatest challenge the madman must face is coming to terms with occupying multiple positions. He is part of the privileged as well as a proletariat, and in his past he, too, unknowingly exploited the powerless. Although depictions of class difference may not be as strongly suggestive in “A Madman’s Diary” as in “The True Story of Ah Q,” their shadows are already there. Perhaps the madman’s journal (not the short story) aspires but fails to create the ideological grounds necessary to overthrow the privileged and to redistribute power, but the story clearly carries Lu Xun’s early Marxist sympathies.<sup>6</sup>

Interpreting the diary as a simple message of Marxist struggle, however, strips it of its rich contradictions, antiphonal voices, and conflicting circles of narration and heterogeneity. According to Leo Lee, Lu Xun’s classification as a Marxist remains controversial.<sup>7</sup> Lu Xun admits never having read *Das Kapital* and was only familiar with Plekhanov’s and Lunacharski’s works through translations. While the debate of whether “A Madman’s Diary” exhibits Marxist sympathies is beyond the scope of this chapter, Lu Xun was clearly sympathetic to those with less power and may have shared beliefs with proletarian literature and Marxism. Rather than wholesale dissemination of Marxism, which used literature as its vehicle, I find Lu Xun employing “grabbism”—taking the best and leaving the rest. The diary is better considered as an allegory of the challenges of multiple, contradictory, and totalizing ideologies of the Late Qing-



Early Republic, and how Chinese intellectuals negotiated these terms as individuals and as a collective concerned with national survival.

### ***Multiple Cultural Influences***

While most critics interpret Lu Xun as subscribing to wholesale Westernization or Marxism, Lin Yusheng, arguing through a cultural perspective, and Leo Lee, through biographical details, questions this all-or-nothing approach to interpretation. According to Vladimir Ivanovich Semanov, Leo Lee, and Lin Yusheng, Lu Xun experienced a rather unorthodox childhood. Exposed to an expansive list of unorthodox readings, such as traditional novels, Daoist texts and commentaries, heterodox historical works, local histories, and treatises on painting since early childhood, Lu Xun also highly valued popular writing and alternative forms of art and was fascinated with the mysteries of folk theatre and folklore.<sup>8</sup> His judicious scholarly treatment of traditional Chinese popular fiction's evolution, as well as his extolling of *Chin Ping Mei* and *The Scholars* for their realistic humanism, suggests that the culturally specific traditional Chinese qualities fascinated him, not the universal cross-cultural aspect of art or their technical possibilities.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, his affinity for popular novels, from *The Journey to the West*, *Youyang zazu* and *Yuli chaozhuan* (early collections of anecdotes of bizarre and mysterious phenomena), and *Liaozhai zhiyi* (*Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*) to folk traditions such as the ghosts of “*Wuchang*” (the infernal agent) and “*Nudiao*” (the ghost of a hanged woman), and the Taipings “long-haired rebels” suggest that the young Lu Xun preferred the fantastical over what he saw as the dry, unanimated life of his traditional Chinese Confucian-minded tutor. For example, Lu Xun preferred listening to the “*Shanghai jing*” (*Classic of Mountains and Seas*) from his illiterate

nurse over his regular studies of classics.<sup>10</sup> This sentiment may have been shared with his grandfather who favored *Journey to the West*, and his father who liked *Liao Zai Zhiyi*, which Semanov calls a “synthesis of Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist ideas.”<sup>11</sup>

Clearly his diverse exposure to both high and low cultures played an important role in his political and literary imagination. Lu Xun’s *zawen*, titled “On seeing off the Kitchen God” and the characters from his stories like Xianglin sao who believe in “old wives tales”—such as her two husbands ripping apart her soul in the underworld—reveal the powerful impact of local folklore and legends in Lu Xun’s work and life. This attraction to traditional folk culture hints at the complexity of Lu Xun’s consciousness, and the presence of counter motifs to his presumed totalistic iconoclasm, as well as the implausibility of the assertion of a sole insular subjectivity within Lu Xun’s writings.<sup>12</sup> Thus, any analysis that focuses on a few schools of thought without mentioning the heterogeneous influence of the Hundred Schools of Thought, religion, or folk legends inevitably fosters a monolithic interpretation.<sup>13</sup> Mimicking Lu Xun’s life, any attempt to privilege sole authority or interpretation proves counterproductive to the rich heterogeneity of the story. As such, I argue that the proliferation of antiphonal voices bears testimony to the coexistence of a multiplicity of ideologies within “A Madman’s Diary.”

If we examine Lu Xun’s characters’ scathing self-assessments, perhaps most confusing is his predominately negative portrayal of influences of traditional philosophical and spiritual views on the self. Indeed, “A Madman’s Diary” and “The Tale of Ah Q” are renown for their scathing self-critique of the Chinese self and renunciation of traditional Chinese culture. So, what was Lu Xun referencing when he spoke of certain Chinese characteristics as “the life blood” of his culture? While Lu Xun may negatively portray Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism in “A Madman’s Diary,” I find that core aspects of these philosophical and moral

systems and notions of self, in fact, remain intact. Demarcating these retained traditional notions of the self will, I hope, offer a new understanding of Lu Xun's modern Chinese gendered self, not as one hungry for complete Westernization, but as an amalgamation of inventive notions of the self through the practice of "grabbism." In this way, we can read the short story as an allegory of May Fourth's theoretical struggles between native and imported philosophies and world views. Lu Xun's portrayal of the self in the diary can then be seen as an allegory of the internal conflict and negotiations of the modern Chinese self with Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucianist beliefs that commonly share an emphasis on the self's relational, cosmic, transcendent, organismic, and practical qualities, in contrast to Euro-American notions of individualism.<sup>14</sup>

### *Confucian Influences*

In terms of Confucianism, the three bonds and five relationships are alluded to in the madman's story as a cannibalistic system whereby the powerful dominate and exploit the weak. The application of Confucianism has gone awry and been rationalized by those in power for private gain. While we do witness the negative influences of Confucian notions of social organization in the madman's story as a cannibalistic system in which the powerful exploit the weak—attesting to Tu Weiming's criticism of Confucianism as "despotic, autocratic, patriarchal, gerocratic, and male-chauvinistic"—deeply embedded concepts of the Confucian self still remain deeply imbedded in the short story.<sup>15</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Confucian ideal is best expressed through the model of the older brother's care for his younger brother. Perhaps because of the three bonds of Confucianism, his older brother takes on the full financial burden and physical care of his younger brother, rather than letting his insane brother wander homeless and

destitute on the streets. His kindness invokes the Confucian five relationships: father-son, elder brother-younger brother, husband-wife, ruler-minister, and friend-friend, and the importance of appropriate social roles. In *Zhou li (Ritual of Zhou)*, a simpler division of the basic social positions included ruler, minister, father, son, older brother, younger brother, husband, and wife. The social function of each position was spelled out: “Let the prince be a prince, the minister a minister, the father a father, and the son a son.”<sup>16</sup> This Confucian principle mandating the elder brother to care for his younger brother can be seen in these two brothers’ relationships.

Donald Munro, in *The Concept of Man in Early China*, describes the Confucian self as one nested within a web of relations.<sup>17</sup> Denton calls it a “determined self,” in which the responsibilities of self include one’s responsibilities to others.<sup>18</sup> The older brother’s kindness and care extend even to his younger brother’s friend, whom he showers with hospitality and warmth. This friend cares enough about the younger brother to go out of his way and personally visit his home to see him. Although unclear, the bond among these three men seems strong and based on Confucian gentlemanly conduct as well as on Confucian definitions of friendship. In turn, the younger brother cares deeply about his younger sister, whose death he cannot forget. Considering that he was probably also only a child at the time of her death, his level of moral responsibility for her well-being and his guilt are so developed as to approach a paternal feeling. The strong relational bonding and organismic sense of connectedness among the characters in the short story thus are presented in varying and sometimes conflicting lights.

Other deeply imbedded aspects of the Confucian concepts of the self—the self as organismic, spiritual, relational, cosmic, and transcendent—can also be found throughout the story. The madman’s concern that his fellow humans change for the better echoes Confucian values. This interest is, of course, most apparent in his altruistic declaration to “save the

children!” In this way, the short story echoes the Confucian sense of the self focused on the transcendence of the ego. “In the Great Learning, the paradigmatic text of neo-Confucian thought, self-cultivation of the mind is recognized as the seminal step in the progressive process of ordering the state and bringing peace and harmony to the world.”<sup>19</sup> The madman’s desire to change himself for the society is organismic in nature—what benefits the part, benefits the whole. In Confucian philosophy, self-cultivation is simultaneously for the “self” as well as for a greater social and political actualization. The madman’s attempt at actualizing change is thus equated with the nation’s change for the better.

This collectivist endeavor between man and nature/the world/heavens can be seen in *Jinsi lu* (*Reflections on Things at Hand*) by the Confucian philosopher, Zhu Xi: “The man of humanity regards Heaven and Earth and all things as one body. To him there is nothing that is not himself. Since he has recognized all things as himself, can there be any limit to his humanity?”<sup>20</sup> The self is indivisible and porous with all other elements, people, objects, and nature.<sup>21</sup> During the Late Qing-Early Republic, such a concept of collectivity was not uncommon. Intellectuals like Liang Qichao, Sun Yat-sen, Hu Shi, and Li Daozhao advocated the concepts of *Qun*, the social organism and the need for harmony of individual autonomy and collectivity.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, the madman’s deep internal introspection can be read as engaging in Confucian *shendu*, whereby the focus of introspection is the self as a center of relationships, and the transcending of self is seen as changing the world as a form of agency. While the Euro-American idea of individual flaws and errors are perhaps based in the Protestant religion’s focus on sin and the need to ask for forgiveness and to atone for one’s ways through God, the holistic cosmic approach in Chinese philosophy, where all are one, was focused more on self-inspection and a determination to change oneself and to let the divine core inside shine through the ego’s

chaos, temptations, and delusional control of the outer world. From a Euro-American individualist perspective, that “the very assertion of a self entails its own denial” may seem deeply paradoxical, but according to Thomas Metzger’s understanding of the neo-Confucian philosophy, “rather than victimization of self, it is the existentially based belief that one must polish one’s core of goodness that lies behind layers of obfuscating selfishness.”<sup>23</sup> Says Denton,

Inherent in the Confucian structure of self is the notion that self-transcendence is achieved through self-introspection. The ground for self-transcendence lies in self’s innate divinity, which can be retrieved from within through the cultivation of self. Self-transcendence is an urge to go beyond what the self existentially is so that it can become what it ought to be.<sup>24</sup>

*Shendu* presents a cultural tool for completely opening, examining, and critiquing the self while focusing on personal accountability, rather than immediately connecting it to salvation and forgiveness. Perhaps in the madman’s diary, *shendu* presents a process of feeling emotions of healthy shame and accountability that allow for the self to open to change and new possibilities.

Moreover, the madman’s zeal and passion for reform may be interpreted not only as Nietzschean, but also Confucian. The madman’s connection with others, and his sense of purpose and moral responsibility, echoes Confucianism:

Whether it be Mencius’s *liang xin* (moral heart-mind), Zhu Xi’s *tianli* (heaven-endowed nature), or Wang Yangming’s *liangzhi* (innate knowledge), selfhood in this vision possesses an innate divine nature with the potential of achieving sagehood. These views of mind are predicated upon the cosmological assumption of “the unity of the divine and man” (*tianren heyi*), the belief that the divine is immanent in the individual and that the individual may potentially tap the power of that divinity to “transform” society.<sup>25</sup>

Each person possesses an “individual’s relation to *tian*, the divine or “heaven,” a direct connection to divinity (spirituality) that makes him part of the greater whole (collectivism), and the cosmos (cosmic).<sup>26</sup>

As expressed in *Great Learning*, through a process of moral and spiritual self-cultivation, the individual may rediscover the divine within the mind and use this

gained cosmic power to have positive influence on the outer world. Empowered by its inherent connection with the divine, the individual mind holds within the potential for what Hao Chang has called “transcendent consciousness,” by which he means a kind of critical consciousness that allows the individual to stand equal to the divine, with the power to attack even the representative of the divine on earth, the emperor.<sup>27</sup>

According to Tu Weiming, “Confucian humanism is therefore different from anthropocentrism because it professes the unity of man and Heaven rather than the imposition of the human will on nature.”<sup>28</sup> Man is one with nature rather than the god of nature. The Chinese notion of self is thus focused toward setting a win/win relationship with fellow humans, not a competitive win/lose with others.<sup>29</sup> The madman’s goal to reform society is thus also undeniably Confucian in influence.

Conflict, however, occurs when the madman’s truth differs from that of his elder brother, whose view, in Confucian ranking, should prevail. The Confucian tradition of the self’s connection to the cosmos posits the possibility of conflict between one’s own versus another’s connections to the divine. Hao Chang notes: the “Chinese self caught between own ‘ethics of aspiration’ (ren) and the ‘ethics of social constraint’ (li) ... the individual’s own oneness with divinity with the political institution’s oneness with divinity, both had ‘cosmological foundations.’”<sup>30</sup> This conflict between following hierarchy and following his own truth freezes the madman into indecision. While Chinese cosmological holism (harmony of self and universe of the Confucian mind) was grounded in an assumption of the unity of the individual mind with other minds through the divine, Lu Xun illustrates what happens when different truths emerge.<sup>31</sup>

Aside from acknowledging the philosophical aspects of Confucian ideals of the self, we need to note the practical application of Confucianism on training the self. Tu Weiming, in *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*, argues that Confucianism wasn’t merely sociological: “self-cultivation in its literal meaning refers to the cultivation of the

body.”<sup>32</sup> Confucianism’s highest form of teaching was nonverbal and literally means “to teach one’s body.”<sup>33</sup> “Ritualization disciplines the body. The use of ‘finely executed ritual acts’ [serve] as performative demonstrations.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, Confucianism is not only concrete and practical, but also addresses the interconnectedness of body and soul—the body being a vessel for the growth of the soul, which becomes displayed in body language. The “Great Body” is defined as

That which a profound person follows as his nature, that is to say, humanity, rightness, the rites and wisdom, is rooted in his heart, and manifests itself in his face, giving it a sleek appearance. It also shows in his back and extends to his limbs, rendering their message intelligible without words.<sup>35</sup>

The Confucian emphasis on the face can perhaps partially explain the hyper-detailed depictions of the villagers, the doctor, and his brother’s countenances and expressions.

In fact, as much as the story criticizes Confucianism, the madman’s ideal of a society that is mutually supportive and organismic is also, ironically, the ultimate desired product of a Confucian system. While the madman argues that “benevolence, righteousness, and morality” in Confucianism is merely a facade for cannibalism and that Confucianism never achieves its ends, these qualities are nevertheless the shared goals of both the madman and the Confucian ideal.<sup>36</sup> The madman’s conception of a desired ideal society—one filled with love of others and one’s country that is built on morals and not self-gains, in which people take risks for others and for what is right—invokes the transcendent and spiritual aspects of the Confucian world view. And while the 4,000 years of cannibalistic history referenced in the story casts a negative light on the cosmic and relational Confucian self, the organismic philosophy of the Chinese self would also inevitably suggest the opportunity for agency here. For the madman is also a part of the organism itself; by changing oneself, one inevitably changes one’s society. Logically then, the madman has an opportunity to change thousands of years of history of future generations. The madman’s chance for enlightenment serves as a reminder of the inherent significance of



changing oneself as a form of changing one's world. Thus, the story cannot be seen as expressing a wholesale rejection of the entirety of Chinese traditions and its past, rather we need to see the multiple influences and acknowledge a multiplicity of discourses of truth. Confucianism, of course, should not be equated with the entirety of Chinese culture, just as the story cannot be simply understood as an allegory of the Confucian intellect's crisis in conflict with Westernization or Marxism.

### *Daoism*

While scholars of Chinese culture often focus exclusively on Confucianism and inadvertently equate Chinese culture with Confucianism, Lu Xun himself argued that Confucianism did not have a totalized stronghold on the Chinese existence and imagination.<sup>37</sup> In terms of Daoism, I am referring here to the themes found in the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi*, and to concepts such as “naturalness, vitality, peace, ‘non-interference/non-resistance’ (*wu wei*), emptiness (refinement), detachment, flexibility, receptiveness, spontaneity, and the relativism of human ways of life.”<sup>38</sup> And yet the story, too, is not exclusively Daoist. Daoism can only be understood as but one of the sources of influence. Indeed, Lu Xun's works also heavily problematize Daoism. In “Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo” and “A Madman's Diary,” the problem of people's lack of passion, unification, and movement toward action is attributed to their general apathy and disconnection from others, which Lu Xun may have attributed to Buddhist and Daoist influences. Lu Xun may have seen Buddhism as encouraging “indifference” toward life and repression of passions and desires, and Daoism's non-action and non-intention as contributing to indifference, inaction, mindless doing, and passivity. Just as with Confucianism, however, these influences are treated with great ambivalence in the story. Like Confucianism, Daoism shares

the values of the self as relational, organismic, transcendent, cosmic, and bodily, which the short story upholds as an ideal state. Yet also notable is that whereas Confucianism and Daoism share a few similarities, the latter needs to be understood as acting in many ways as a counter-discourse to Confucianism. Denton, in his portrayal of Daoism as Confucian-like, diminishes the very real antagonisms between Confucianism and Daoism.<sup>39</sup> For the purpose of this chapter, however, I am exploring the similarities in Confucian and Daoist notions of the self.

The Daoist view of the self interrelates it to the cosmos. The “three treasures of the Dao”—compassion, moderation, and humility—focus on a relational connection. 我有三寶持而保之一曰慈二曰儉三曰不敢為天下先。<sup>40</sup> Ted Kardash explains this dynamic in the following way:

We must feel and experience our connection with all of humanity, all of life. In this way we are able to respond to various situations in an appropriate, helpful manner, serving the higher good. This is compassion. Practicing frugality works to preserve the delicate balance that exists in life and harmonizes our actions with those of the Universe. The Tao will nourish us if we make wise use of its resources. And adopting an attitude of humility allows us to be guided by the creative forces of the Tao and orients our actions towards service to all mankind and the Universe as a whole.

Daoism centers on the human interconnected relationship, one’s connection to the universe, and the cosmic connection of all things. The two treasures of the Dao—compassion and humility—endure as core missing ideal values in “A Madman’s Diary.” The madman’s obsession on cannibalism, by contrast, brings into prominence the society’s needs for compassion. The instances of care—his elder brother’s support, the classmate’s concern for his friend, and the madman’s feelings of guilt toward his little sister and his final plea to save the children—help convey the humanity underneath the madness. Humility is also a crucial missing element: the madman’s inability to reconcile his hypocritical imperfections sabotages all his efforts. His lack

of humility and subsequent failure, therefore, emphasizes in the story the essentiality of humility for examining flaws and changing.

The Daoist organismic self also underlies the madman's vision of the people and himself as one. Lao Zi speaks of all of nature as the "10,000 things." "The great Tao flows everywhere. It nourishes the 10,000 things. It holds nothing back." Within these 10,000 things, no one "thing" is privileged over any other. Grouping humans with 10,000 things syntactically equalizes, dissolving any notion of hierarchy.<sup>41</sup> Donald Munro states, "Taoism asserts that a Unity, Tao, underlies and is present in the many particular things in the world. Being a Unity, Tao cannot be more or less present in one thing than in any other."<sup>42</sup> Thus, this organismic understanding of self demonstrates no division between self and other. The Taoist dissolution of the self is not "self-lessness," but rather emphasis on interconnection with the world. In contrast, the Euro-American biblical story that animals were placed on earth specifically to serve man's purpose places great emphasis on the privilege of men over other beings.

In fact, one could argue that the madman's insanity represents a Daoist idyllic return to "chaos condition" or irrationality. Daoism focuses on the "men-cosmos correspondence" (天人相应)<sup>43</sup> whereby "man is the microcosm of the universe."<sup>44</sup> The Daoist ideal of "returning to the chaos condition" (*hundun*), while on the surface appearing to advocate chaos and irrationality, actually refers to returning to one's most original state, *Wuji* 無極, or "limitlessness," the "ultimate of beinglessness," or the "ultimate."<sup>45</sup> In the *Daodejing*, the return to chaos is one's return to original nature. "Know whiteness, maintain blackness, and be a model for all under heaven. By being a model for all under heaven, eternal integrity will not err. If eternal integrity does not err, you will return to infinity."<sup>46</sup> The word "infinity" referenced here is the *dao* or chaos. This original state references the legend of *Hundun* from *Zhuang zi*, referring to the

condition before language and words came about, and predating awareness that the senses provoked the soul's physical separation from the world and cosmos.<sup>47</sup>

The Emperor of the South Sea was called Shu (Brief), the emperor of the North Sea was called Hu (Sudden), and the emperor of the central region was called Hun-tun (Chaos). Shu and Hu from time to time came together for a meeting in the territory of Hun-tun, and Hun-tun treated them very generously. Shu and Hu discussed how they could repay his kindness. "All men," they said, "have seven openings so they can see, hear, eat, and breathe. But Hun-tun alone doesn't have any. Let's try boring him some." Every day they bored another hole, and on the seventh day Hun-tun died.<sup>48</sup>

Denton interprets that the boring of holes of sensuality (ears, nose, mouth, and eyes) into Hundun awakens consciousness of "his body and his physical separation from the external world; subject and object are torn apart, bringing an end to the blissful state of primal unity that had been his life."<sup>49</sup> "Chaos is thus a pure state of union with the Dao, from which man is severed by the linguistic distinctions and moral standards that constitute culture" and "before language splintered and fragmented existence."<sup>50</sup>

Because the imagery evokes a pre-linguistic state and return to an original, natural state, this return to Dao also appears to evoke a figurative return to the "mother."<sup>51</sup> "There was something nebulous yet complete/ Born before Heaven and earth/ Silent, empty/ Self-sufficient and unchanging, Revolving without cease and without fail / It acts as the mother of the world. / I do not know its name, and address it as 'Tao.'"<sup>52</sup> In contrast to Euro-American notions of self-identity, which are derived from—and solely predicated on—the five senses, we see in Daoism that the boring of holes triggers the conscious awareness of physical separation from the external world and "mother." For the Daoist, the senses bring separation from the external world and ultimately destroy our connection to the Dao. The imposition of words and senses bring upon the human's rupture from absolute interconnectness. These themes of Taoism invoke both a cosmological and transcendent sense of self.

Second, the madman's text mirrors Laozi's ideas in the *Daodejing* that "The Dao is nameless and defies naming." He continues:

In... Taoism, the negation is used reflexively to delimit the discourse of the function of language, and it is a realization of this limitation which allows the break-through (transcendence) to an alternative mode of experience to occur. Yet the negation is not simply a statement concerning the impotence of language; it is posed as a problem—the reflexivity of the negation is also problematic. It is pointing to an area outside of its operation, and hints at something unsayable, which has nevertheless allowed language to speak of it.<sup>53</sup>

As Doumoulin notes, "The transcendental reality cannot be described by ordinary language and hence has to be stated in negative ways."<sup>54</sup> The Dao speaks of the unspeakable—what exists beyond the perceived five senses of experience—whereas Euro-American notions of self remain confined to empirical sensations. That which defies naming, that which lies at the limits of expression or containment, is repeatedly echoed in the short story's many gaps and points of "un-expressibility," forcing the reader to read between the lines. This limitation of ordinary language is especially apparent in "Lion's cruelty, rabbit's cowardliness, trickiness of the coyote."<sup>55</sup>

Although many scholars interpret Daoism as anti-rationalist or link Daoism to Confucianism as a focus on the social aspects of self, an increasing trend in Daoist scholarship regards Daoism as a transcendence of self.<sup>56</sup> The "no-self" in Daoism "aimed toward breaking one's boundary, dissolving one's self, and even integrating oneself with the Other, and ultimately the Self" is not a form of self-abnegation, but rather a form of transcending the self or ego.<sup>57</sup> As Pinar has noted, Daoism deals with "the heart of our misconceptions about ourselves," the "process of unlearning the learned," and scrutiny of the structures that have come to construct our consciousness:<sup>58</sup>

One needs to be self-conscious of his or her own ideological world view in order to practice one's "subject position."... The issue is not method or no method, but the unconscious or self-conscious. In this situational pedagogy, following Zen teaching, uncertainty is a prerequisite for situational learning and students

somehow need to be ready to be taught ...The ultimate goal of Zen teaching is neither to transmit knowledge to learners, nor to help them construct their own knowledge. It strives to awaken in one's self-nature, the original "face," and to cultivate the wisdom to help others transcend their distorted perception and biased knowledge of the world. In other words, Zen teaching is a de/reconstructive process of self and others.<sup>59</sup>

Rather than anti-knowledge, Daoism is "anti-knowledge construction with distorted beliefs and attitudes," and is thus about the "dissolution (or deconstruction) process of one's self in order to form one's self," a more timeless, infinite self tied to the cosmological, not to the illusionary will and desires of the illusionary and unattainable.<sup>60</sup>

The goals of Buddhist and Daoist endeavors to transcend our misconceptions about ourselves is also apparent in the madman's effort to convince others that following Confucianism can, metaphorically, be a disguise for cannibalism. Like Buddhist and Daoist introspective awakenings, the madman uncovers a hidden personal truth that differs from what can be seen on the surface. This history of Confucian *shendu*, or Daoist and Buddhist goals of self-reflection for ego transcendence or other greater purposes, is clearly cultural. The allegory of the madman as Nietzsche's superman thus can be understood as a cross-fertilized Buddhist or Daoist enlightened self who wishes to turn others toward higher spiritualism. Attempting to fix the allegory of the madman as either insane or enlightened, however, proves impossible, for his "reality" is neither absolute nor determined. The Daoist "anti-rationalist" view appears in the short story as a warning against over-intellectualization as a danger to self-realization. The madman's over-rationalization is ultimately the most damaging form of self-sabotage. He reasons himself into enlightenment, and then rationalizes himself right back out. A refusal of absolute thinking, combined with multiple voices of narration that make any clear-cut interpretation impossible, perfectly allegorizes the May Fourth reality.

## ***Buddhist Influences***

These influences and conflicts produce a complex network of meaning for Chinese notions of self. Although Lu Xun once attributed people's apathetic response to life and their detachment from the world around them as a deadening of emotions advocated by Buddhism, a great deal of ambivalence toward Buddhism emerges in the text. Biographers have noted that during Lu Xun's "years of silence (1914-1918)," in which he completely devoted himself to Buddhism, Chinese literature, and popular tales, that his activities often centered around Buddhist interests.<sup>61</sup> Scholars V. Semanov, Lin Yusheng, and Leo Lee have found that he used the time not only to explore various aspects of Chinese culture, but also to a very large extent to nurture and further explore his interests in Buddhism. Semanov cites Lu Xun as using this time to collect imprints from ancient monuments and Buddhist books and to study Chinese literature and popular tales.<sup>62</sup> Apparently, Lu Xun held traditional art and philosophy in high regard, noting in his *zawen* the need to protect artwork and preserve frescoes and statues in Buddhist and Taoist temples.<sup>63</sup> Lee cites the memoirs of Xu Guangping (Lu Xun's wife), where she recalls Lu Xun once telling his friend Xu Shoushang that he was much impressed by the depth of Buddhism, as the sutras he read had provided answers to some of the "big questions" he was pondering.<sup>64</sup> According to Lee's documentation, Lu Xun read Buddhist sutras and even sponsored the printing of *Baiyu jing* (*The Sutra of a Hundred Parables*) during these "years of silence."<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Lee finds strong Buddhist imagery and influence within Lu Xun's most private writings; excerpts from *Wild Grass*—like "After Death" and "The Lost Good Hell"—evoke tranquility and terror, echoing images of Chinese Buddhism (1914–1916). The repetitive use of "I had a dream" in seven of the pieces Lu Xun wrote, including "A Madman's Diary," similarly evoke a Buddhist sense of reality and imagery.<sup>66</sup> Lee also finds Lu Xun's daring borrowing of Buddhist terms like

*sanjie* (“three realms”) and *da huanxi* (“great joy” or “passion”) in his invention of expression through vernacular language. Consider, for example, the following passage:<sup>67</sup>

Elder Brother, way back in the beginning, it’s probably the case that primitive peoples all ate some human flesh. But later on, because their ways of thinking changed, some gave up the practice and tried their level best to improve themselves; they kept on changing until they became human beings, real human beings. But the others didn’t; they just kept right on with their cannibalism and stayed at that primitive level. You have the same sort of thing with evolution in the animal world. Some reptiles, for instance, changed into fish, and then they evolved into birds, then into apes, and then into human beings. But the others didn’t want to improve themselves and just kept right on being reptiles down to this very day. Think how ashamed those primitive men who have remained cannibals must feel when they stand before real human beings. They must feel even more ashamed than reptiles do when confronted with their brethren who have evolved into apes.<sup>68</sup>

Although many scholars interpret this passage as an expression of warped Darwinian evolution, I find blended Buddhist images of reincarnation and karma, whereby each person comes back in different life forms, depending on levels of spiritual awareness and the kind of karma collected over a lifetime. The madman supports the Buddhist ideal of creating good karma. Indeed, the Buddhist idea that someone who commits bad karma may evolve into a lesser animal in the next lifetime is strongly present. The madman is thus, in a warped Buddhist-like way, encouraging fellow humans to engage in positive activities—compassion and kindness—that will accrue good karma.

In *Zen Enlightenment*, Heinrich Dumoulin discusses how Mahayana Buddhism<sup>69</sup> merged with Chinese Taoism to form the Zen meditation school, primarily in the Tang period (618–906).<sup>70</sup> Its principles included the concepts of (suffering), nirvana, the middle way, and the anatta (the not-self).<sup>71</sup> This cross-fertilization of the spiritual philosophies of Buddhism and Daoism enriched articulations of the “self” as transcendent, spiritual, and cosmological, as well as bodily and affective. As Doumoulin states, “Zen presents us with a way that leads to the



awakening of the self and hence to the depths of being human.”<sup>72</sup> The legend of the ascetic Gautama’s transformation into Buddha after his sudden enlightenment under the pipal tree—having reached the four meditation stages—indicates the Buddhist focus on sudden “enlightenment” or “breakthrough,” for afterwards he refers to himself as “The Fully Awakened.”<sup>73</sup> Thus, Buddhism and Taoism share the belief that one can transcend the delusional self or false beliefs through a process of enlightenment.<sup>74</sup> As such, to “look into your own mind” is “to turn one’s vision unto the source of the mind, and completely abstain from all reflection and discursive thinking.”<sup>75</sup> As in the Daoist process, Buddhist enlightenment involves getting out of one’s own way: “As soon as false ideas are got rid of, the great knowledge is automatically realized.”<sup>76</sup>

The madman’s revelations thus double as enlightenment *and* breakthrough. Beneath the surface of the madman’s insanity lurks the possibility of the madman as “The Fully Awakened.” As mentioned previously, the madman’s cryptic messages can also be seen as revealing the very limits of verbal expression—a notion with roots in Buddhist thought. In the story of the “Eye of the True Dharma,” Buddha holds up a flower, and no words are spoken; only one disciple smiles, and wisdom is transmitted wordlessly. As Dumoulin explains:

The mind of the master and the mind of the disciple smile. Thus is Zen. Because supreme truth cannot be spoken in words, there has to be a wordless transmission outside the scriptures.... the Buddha did not speak the supreme truth in words... the Buddha’s silence is a sign of his wisdom.<sup>77</sup>

Dumoulin further describes this wordlessness as part of “the wonderful Mind of Nirvana” and the “special transmission outside the scriptures.”<sup>78</sup> The Lankavatata Sutra focuses on the “psychic process... the inner experience that no words can communicate.”<sup>79</sup> Like the Dao, Buddhism suggests that supreme truth cannot be spoken through words. In the *Daodejing*, both strains are at work: “The teeming things/ All return to their roots./ Returning to one’s roots is

called stillness./ This is what is meant by returning to one's destiny./ Returning to one's destiny belongs with the eternal./ To know the eternal is enlightenment.”<sup>80</sup> Moreover, Doumoulin notes that Mahayana cosmic Buddha, the primal source of the universe, resembles the Tao; in fact, “Chinese Zen literature conceives the enlightenment of the Buddha as an ‘awakening to the Tao.’”<sup>81</sup> Such was perhaps the cross-fertilization of esoteric meditative Buddhism with earthly Taoism.

Contrasting the Chinese philosophies of Daoism and Buddhism and the Euro-American philosophies throws into relief distinct differences in each culture's relationship to language. Post-structuralist critic Judith Butler clearly grasps how to control and manipulate the power of language to her advantage by using the opportunity of iterability.<sup>82</sup> Luce Irigaray In *The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine* illustrates that the patriarchal system can be used to jam its workings by exploiting the weaknesses in the repetition of signifier and signified. For laws, regulations, and norms to be sustained and recognized as such, they must be reiterated. Thus, both Butler and Irigaray perceive reiteration as the site for turning back and spawning copies to contest the original hegemonic power. In Chinese philosophy, however, the very nature of language is suspect. It is broken, imperfect, human, and flawed. The Dao that is the Dao cannot be named and, in fact, defies naming. Likewise, that which can be named is not the Dao. Buddhist and Daoist philosophy focuses on the humanness of language and therefore on the limitation of words; however, the transmission of knowledge transcends these linguistic constraints. According to Daoism, language, morals, and the five senses splinter and fragment the human interconnection with the Dao—the sense of being one with the universe and with one's origin. In contrast to Euro-American notions of subjectivity, which privilege the experiences of the five senses, the legend of *Hundun* from *Zhuang zi* suggests that it is through

the boring of sensory holes into *Hundun* that triggers conscious awareness of the rupture between the self and the Dao. Biblically based Euro-American concepts of language connect “naming” to divine power, positing that God endowed man with the gift of naming, therefore expressing a belief in man’s perfection. In the Bible, God gives Adam the power to name animals, and the names Adam gives are what they shall be. We thus see a very different cultural relationship to language. The Judeo-Christian tradition ties words to God, the spiritual and all-powerful, so theories of subversion perhaps need to focus on deconstructing the words themselves. On the other hand, Buddhist and Daoist traditions limit the power of words, regarding them as simply human constructs, so the focus may often be on the spaces and gaps that words are incapable of conveying.

A cosmological connection to the universe also infuses Buddhist beliefs. A belief in karma—that the soul is repeatedly reincarnated in different forms until it learns its lessons of self-realization and is free to enter the celestial paradise of Amitabha—encourages a human interconnected relation to the world and nature.<sup>83</sup> That a being may be one form (male, female, human, non-human) in one life and another in another life promotes a cosmological sense of connectedness to the world. Comparing this belief to that espoused in biblical passages (i.e., “I know all the birds of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are Mine,”<sup>84</sup> and “Be Fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth... Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything,”<sup>85</sup> makes clear that humans are privileged in a way that simply does not exist in Buddhism. Buddhist reincarnation, instead, acts as a great equalizer for all things. The sense of cosmological oneness and life forms working toward a similar goal is core in Buddhism—and an element of the madman’s imagined idyllic world.

The Buddhist and Daoist “no self,” which has been negatively interpreted through Euro-American lens as being *selfless*, thus should be translated more accurately as ego-less, or “egolessness” in the same sense of “limitlessness.” Limitlessness implies the transcendence of limits, just as the Buddhist “egolessness” needs to be understood as transcending the limits of self, whereby the self is no longer one’s greatest hindrance. In contrast to Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection—whereby one’s identity is created through a physical repulsion of “not that, not me, other”—Buddhism sees one’s most challenging abjection as the self, for the self is the limitation of all experiences and emotions.<sup>86</sup> The ego is the only filter the “self” ever encounters. Buddhism, thus, places no emphasis on abjection of others, but rather on abjection of ego, because all experiences are the filtered reality of the self. Such a vision mirrors the madman’s reality—in which all characters appear almost to be extensions of his imagination. Moreover, the madman’s warning about the problematic use of rationalizations and words can also be seen as echoing the Buddhist distrust of excessive words and over-intellectualizing: “Wordiness and intellection—the more with them, the further astray we go; Away therefore with wordiness and intellection, and there is no place where we cannot pass freely.”<sup>87</sup> Excessive use of language or intellectualizing poses an obstacle to Buddhist self-realization and to the madman as well.

Thus Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, while openly criticized in Lu Xun’s works, are also positive contributing factors within the story and part of its basic moral and spiritual nature. Although these philosophies have, according to Lu Xun, failed in many ways to manifest their theoretical ideals, the basic concepts have not changed in terms of aspiring to transcending the self and feeling more connected (cosmic), creating a more compassionate and loving community (organismic), searching for a higher purpose (transcendence), wanting to survive (practical), and wanting to create a more positive relationship with the self and others

(relational).<sup>88</sup> In this way, the short story can be understood as an allegory of the struggles where Chinese philosophical, cultural, and local culture intersects with Westernization and individualism. Marxist, Buddhist, Confucist, Daoist, Traditional Chinese, or Western? Yes and also no. Ultimately, the story defies any attempt at dualism or singular notions of truth. Just as Lu Xun is much more than an author and a critic, the short story is more than a personal story or simple allegory. The short story lies beyond the limits of any structure that attempts to subsume it. It is both/and something more.

Ultimately, no easy allegorical map exists; no one linear reality, authorial voice, or single moral needs to be learned. In our search for some stability in the text, even the narrator disappoints us. He is not omniscient. As Hutters has explained, there are “inadequacies in perception.”<sup>89</sup> The narrator relays the story only to desert the reader, leaving us at a loss for answers. Is the madman truly a madman? Or is he the one and only truth-seeker, while the rest of the world is mad? Even if he *is* mad, didn’t his sick society *make* him mad? Is he cured or has he just converted to cannibalism? Is everyone within the text a cannibal, even the children? Or are there still untainted children? Who is the reader of the madman’s diary, and how does this reader fit into this cannibalistic world? Is the narrator’s reading of the journal a symbol of hope? The reader struggles through this literary puzzle—to no avail. The text continually circles back, questioning its own voice and all the other voices in the text. The writing is startlingly apprehensive, self-protective, self-conscious, and tentative.

However, assuming that the basic intents and beliefs held by Lu Xun did not change drastically from political commentary to short story, why does his short story differ so markedly from his political commentaries? Whereas his political articles argue scientifically and rationally, “A Madman’s Diary” almost pokes fun at the use of science. In fact, every figure in the story

uses logic incorrectly—especially the madman. Whereas Lu Xun’s political writing conveys confidence, self-assurance, and rational distance, in his story almost everyone lacks confidence, and those who do act confidently have no reason for doing so. No one in the diary achieves any sort of objective distance. And, unlike the commentaries, the short story’s message is clouded and unclear. If in “Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo,” Lu Xun calls forth Nietzsche’s superman to save the world, why does this superman not appear in his writing? And, if Lu Xun truly regarded “literature as the basic vehicle for any spiritual reform,” and was intending to stir the blood and raise all Chinese voices into one powerful lung to fight imperialists, why did he write such a bleak, hopeless story?<sup>90</sup> Does “A Madman’s Diary” truly predict a hopeless, barren future for China?

Within the many contradictions, the struggles of the nation are allegorized in layer upon layer of story, of which the madman’s anxiety resides at the core. The short story, as I hope to have shown, embodies all of the warring discourses of modernity, tradition, communism, individualism, nationalism, and so on. And, yet, a question arises: Has the soul of the individual become irretrievably lost within the battlefield of antagonistic ideologies and allegorical representations? Or is it possible that the most profound and thorough view of society can be gained by seeing the self in great relief, as integral and inseparable from one’s society? Can a complete collectivist reading even be achieved without hearing the personal voice within? In the following section, I merge my separated artificial constructs of the individual self and the collective self to argue the Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist notion of the inseparableness of self and society.

***Beyond Subjectivity: Interpreting an Interior Subaltern Vision through New French Feminism***

In this second half, I explore the quest for an understanding of “self” that meets the needs of *xiaowo* and *dawo*—the individual self and the greater collective self—and disintegrates the Euro-American individualist subjectivity that insists on self versus society. I re-read Lu Xun’s “A Madman’s Diary” as a possible literary escape from the conflicts of subjectivity versus nationalism and individualism versus collectivity that may have plagued Lu Xun. By juxtaposing “A Madman’s Diary” to subaltern feminist texts, I find a presentation of “interiority” that allows the diary to be read as a fulfilling subjective expression and creative aesthetic escape, as well as an exploration of the author’s inner psychological journey. Counterbalancing the theme of interiority with collectivism and allegory, Lu Xun merges self and greater self, evoking a “self” that needs to be re-understood as an integral part of society and inseparable from it—a self similar to Francis Hsu’s homeostasis and balance, in which the desires and needs of self and community are inextricable and shared.

This second half explores the striking ways in which Lu Xun’s writing resonates with the work of New French Feminist writers who also felt marginalized and circumscribed by an exterior dominating culture.<sup>91</sup> By comparing the narrative strategies of Lu Xun to those of other subaltern writers, I hope to highlight how both have a preponderance of similar motifs, themes, and strategies, such as non-linear narratives, crises of authority and authorship, antiphonal qualities, nonhierarchical structures, a “both/and” vision, porous interpretations that subvert closure or definition, and escapes into madness as a bid for freedom and creativity.<sup>92</sup> In considering Lu Xun’s work through the lens of feminist theory, I am not suggesting that Lu Xun was feminist, or even read feminist work. Rather, I am suggesting that he may have adopted techniques of subversion against established social forces in ways that resemble feminist rebellions against patriarchy. The postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha notes similarities among

marginalized peoples: “Women, the colonized, ethnic minorities, immigrants, and other marginal people occupy the place of cultural undecidability”; perhaps because they fail to fit into the rigid categories of the majoritarian power, they often are open to greater possibilities.<sup>93</sup>

This “othering” of self and nation is best captured by Edward Said’s term “Orientalism,” a structure of discourse that defines universality as the West, and all other qualities as non-West; the European nation as center, and the Orient as other.<sup>94</sup> As Naoki Sakai summarizes Takeuchi Yoshimi,

Modernity for the Orient... is primarily its subjugation to the West’s political, military, and economic control. The modern Orient was born only when it was invaded, defeated, and exploited by the West. This is to say that only when the Orient became an object for the West did it enter modern times. The truth of modernity for the non-West, therefore, is its reaction to the West.<sup>95</sup>

According to this logic, to achieve a modern state, China must necessarily become marginalized and circumscribed by the West. In *The Lure of the Modern*, Shu-mei Shih persuasively points out the direct influence of the nation (larger organismic self) on the individual self by illustrating connections between the semi-colonizing of the Chinese nation and the semicolonizing effects on the Chinese mind evident in the work of writers like Yu Dafu, Lu Xun, and so on. In “The Global Context,” Shih attributes the psychological condition of anxiety neurosis—the hypersensitive, introverted, self-denigrating, and self-denying—embodied in the May Fourth intellectual to the triple forces of emasculation, national subordination, racial/ethnic subordination, and sexual emasculation.<sup>96</sup> In fact, several times, Shih interprets Lu Xun’s actions as spurred by his internalization of racist comments by Japanese classmates against the Chinese. Shih writes:

Incensed, Lu Xun cut off his queue, believing that it symbolized the slave-like status of the Chinese in the eyes of the Japanese, because it suggested to him the enslavement of the Han Chinese by the Manchurians... Cutting off his queue was



to take heed of the Japanese othering of the Chinese as inferior, and cutting off his queue was to take heed of the Japanese slur that the Chinese are slaves with tails.<sup>97</sup>

The effects of imperialism on the nation are directly experienced as effects upon the individual. Individual and collective selves therefore overlap, whereby the mentality of the greater self influences the mentality of the individual self. The crisis of cultural/national identity and survival has simultaneously become a crisis of individual self-identity and survival.

Prasenjit Duara has explained that when European cultures began to displace the world culture, and European philosophers like Hegel denied China a place in a Western-centered history based on Euro-American notions of progress, the Chinese sense of self was left especially vulnerable and marginalized.<sup>98</sup> In *The Lure of the Modern* Shu-mei Shih has described this East-West dichotomy as it impacted the identity of the individual:

The non-West is forced into a soul-searching self-examination and reinvention of the self as it becomes overwhelmed by the West [...] For the non-West, modernity is the condition of a forcible repudiation of the self and the often self-imposed internalization of a new identity structured in the image of the West. Hence modernity for the non-West is not merely the site of geopolitical, cultural, and psychological trauma, but also the site of an identity crisis. May Fourth modernist writing's demonstrative expressions of madness, anxiety, and melancholia indicate the depth of this identity crisis.<sup>99</sup>

In addition to considering imperialist forces, as Leo Lee states, perhaps Lu Xun was concerned with more than an East/West struggle but also with a battle between Chinese modernity and tradition.<sup>100</sup> Lu Xun, like the New French feminists, may have experienced acute marginalization of his existence. Perhaps amid the politically stifling environment of May Fourth and China's urgency to Westernize, Lu Xun felt hemmed in by both the traditional Chinese Confucian conventionalisms and the limitations he foresaw in his understanding of the Western/Japanese cultural apparatus that his May Fourth contemporaries insisted would deliver salvation.<sup>101</sup>

Indeed, both Lu Xun and the New French feminists share high hopes for the power of literature. Both the Chinese author and the feminist critics advocated a reality that differed from the majority. In her article “For the Etruscans,” Rachel Blau DuPlessis defined “female aesthetics” in the following way:

Female aesthetic: the production of formal, epistemological, and thematic strategies by members of the group Woman, strategies born in struggle with much of already existing culture, and overdetermined by two elements of sexual difference—by women’s psychosocial experiences of gender asymmetry and by women’s historical status in an ambiguously nonhegemonic group.<sup>102</sup>

Thus, for these women, literary writing becomes a political method of resisting the dominant culture’s version of historical and cultural truth. Carol Ascher has succinctly summed up the defining characteristics of this female aesthetic: “Mutuality, porousness, intimacy, reconnecting a both/and, using both sides of the brain, nonhierarchical, anti- or multiclimatic, holistic, lacking distance... perhaps didactic.”<sup>103</sup> The preponderance of negation in French feminist work (e.g., *non-linearity*, *non-hierarchic*, against authority, etc.) derives from a rejection of patriarchal structures—considered to be the norm—as inadequate to defining the self. Their need to reject historically imposed systems and to find a separate, often antiphonal, voice can also be seen in the struggle of Lu Xun’s madman.

“A Madman’s Diary” shares fascinating similarities with New French Feminist thought. The diary’s narrative conveys non-linearity and antiphonal qualities, while thematically demonstrating a crisis of authority, non-hierarchy, a “both/and” vision, subversion of closure, porousness, and the escape into madness as a realm of freedom. First, “A Madman’s Diary” is richly non-linear. Time takes random and abrupt jumps that disorient the reader. For example, the narrator first introduces us to his two middle school classmates—but in the very next sentence, we realize that these middle school students have already grown up, gone separate ways, and lost touch. Within a few more sentences, countless years have passed. When the

narrator learns that the younger brother has fallen ill and goes to visit him, he arrives only to discover that he is too late. The younger brother has already been cured. The narrator has rushed forward in his story, only to catch up with the past. When the older brother mentions that his younger brother is now waiting for a civil job to become available and, in the same breath, offers the narrator his brother's old diary, the narrator becomes stretched between the future of reading the detailed past of the diary and the unfulfilled, upcoming future. In other words, he is too early for the future, but too late for the past. Temporality becomes confusing for the narrator, but all the more for the reader. Within another few sentences, the narrator has read the book and gives both his critique and a small extract. Only at this point do we realize that the entire beginning was written as the narrator's reflection upon the past.

The story now assumes a doubled temporality: The diary progresses teleologically as the narrator tells his past tale. The narrator dates the madman's story, "recorded April 2, 1918," emphasizing that it is from the past.<sup>104</sup> But as the story delves deeper into the madman's diary, we lose any sense of the present, even forgetting the presence of the narrator as the madman's diary takes on the reality of the present. When the madman says, "That is true to this day..." his words eerily jump out of the madman's past and into the reader's present to create a warped and suspended temporality. Within the diary, time becomes convoluted. While the first person narrator is teleologically closer to the reader's present time, once the reader delves into the madman's diary, the diary's past becomes more like the present. The narrator's present, thus, becomes more like the past and the madman's past, more like the present. Indeed, the madman's diary seems as much a commentary on the narrator and older brother as they are on him and his writing. Who or what is commenting on whom? This suspension of temporality continues until, abruptly, both diary and narrator's tale ends, with the reader stranded in the diary's past with

apparently no bridge to return to the narrator's present, which has now long ago passed. Rather than being organized teleologically, the story, like much French feminist writing, "incorporates contradiction and nonlinear movement... showing... an organization of material in fragments," "break[ing] climactic structures, making an even display of elements over the surface with no climactic place or moment, since the materials are "organized into many centers," and "where there is no subordination, no ranking... multi-climatic, multiple centers of attention."<sup>105</sup> Each of the fragmented journal entries forms but one of the text's many multiple centers.

In addition, the multiple voices of "A Madman's Diary" create an antiphonal (many-voiced) quality that DuPlessis has described as a language full of "undertones, overtones, nuances, abstractions, symbols."<sup>106</sup> Each of the voices forms a concentric frame of narration, speaking distinctly, no one ever completely superseding or displacing the other. Rather, the voices speak *to* and *against* each other—a resistance to hierarchy that can also be traced through the changed relationship between the author and reader. DuPlessis has explained French feminist work as:

A structural expression of mutuality. Writers know their text as a form of intimacy, of personal contact, whether conversations with the reader or with the self... [The text contains] porousness and nonhierarchical stances of intimate conversation in both structure and function.... Because it is non-hierarchical, it is not imposing the authority of the writer... it is not above the reader... Not positing oneself as the only sole authority... Meaning, a statement that is open to the reader, not better than the reader, not set apart from; not seeking the authority of the writer. Not even seeking the authority of the writing... A self-questioning, the writer built into the center of the work, the questions at the center of the writer, the discourses doubling, retelling the same, differently.<sup>107</sup>

In other words, French feminism works to disintegrate the assumed ultimate authority of the writer over the reader and seeks to dissolve the writer's assertion of a privileged relationship to "Truth." This writing contrasts sharply with traditional European patriarchal writing. As Roland Barthes has explained,

To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing... [Patriarchy usually] relies on the author as the transcendental signified of his/her text. For the patriarchal critic, the author is the source, origin, and meaning of the text.<sup>108</sup>

Unlike these traditional patriarchal forms of writing, in “A Madman’s Diary” the narrator is practically unknown, a vague partial presence, and the author of the diary is a madman whose vision has become erased. There is no omniscient narrator or knowledgeable navigator for our journey, only someone who greets us in the beginning to relay a story and leaves us just as suddenly. And, unlike Lu Xun’s political articles, the short story offers no one we can trust, no higher authority.

But because it problematizes the authority of writing, the story resists a singular notion of truth. Lacking an omniscient authority figure allows the story to become pregnant with possibilities. The dissolution of the master narrative leaves us with infinite interpretive possibilities, with narrative threads uncategorized, multiple, and contradictory. The story rejects definite interpretation in the same way that Lu Xun as a person attempted to escape labeling or defining.<sup>109</sup>

This convoluted reality can be found in the madman’s explanation of Darwin’s theory, which, in his telling, becomes warped through Chinese ethics and reincarnation. Says the madman to his brother,

Probably at the beginning, barbaric people all ate a little people. Later because ideas changed, some didn’t eat people anymore. Unswervingly they wanted to be good, so they became people, real people. But some still ate people, --- and just like bugs, they evolved into fish, birds, monkeys, all the way to humans. Some of them didn’t want to become good. To this day they are still bugs...<sup>110</sup>

Although his logical explanation conveys the reasoning of a rational man, the ideas themselves betray the heart of a lunatic. His fantastic vision contains the core of some truths. In this way, Lu Xun portrays the internal contradictions of humans. The younger brother is both a madman

and an enlightened man. His writing breaks out of Western constructs and singular notions of truth by re-inscribing reality as a both/and experience.

Moreover, the very form and content of the short story mixes old and new, East and West. Beside Lu Xun's invention of new vocabulary and grammar for the new Chinese vernacular form, Leo Lee notes, "Each section reads, on the surface, like a classical essay—but pieced together the fragments tell a story of such intense psychological impact... To be sure, the diary form itself is nothing new in traditional Chinese literature. Personal notes (*biji*) and travel accounts have been written since the Ming dynasty, if not earlier. But Lu Xun has invested this old form with an extremely subjective point of view that is unprecedented in Chinese diarist literature."<sup>111</sup> The diary is an old form that undertakes a Euro-American psychological expedition. The writing has archaic Chinese words, but the syntax demonstrates the form of a newly invented vernacular that is invested with this "both/and" mentality.

Ultimately, the story reinforces a reality of multiple truths by disallowing the possibility of one academic truth. For example, the younger brother is both madman and clairvoyant, a doubled existence that appears at the very beginning of the madman's tale. The diary begins with "Tonight, the moonlight is beautiful. I haven't seen it for thirty some years... Today, after seeing it, I feel vitally refreshed. Now I know that in those previous thirty years, I've been in a daze..."<sup>112</sup> As Lee has explained the "recurring image of the moon gives rise symbolically to a double meaning of both lunacy (in its Western connotation) and enlightenment (in its Chinese etymological implication)."<sup>113</sup> Indeed, whereas reading the passage in terms of Western symbolism associates the writer with a lunatic, interpreting the same passage within a Chinese cultural framework that does not privilege allegory would suggest that the writer has attained clarity, understanding, and enlightenment.<sup>114</sup> The very words that make up the moon "ming yue"

imply enlightenment, as the word “ming” carries the meaning of being “bright, clear, open, clear-sighted, and understanding.”<sup>115</sup> In addition, the allusions to madness—if interpreted through Daoist anti-rationalism—suggest that the more insane the madman becomes, the greater and deeper his clarity and achievement of reaching the *Dao* becomes. As the story progresses, neither interpretation becomes privileged. Instead, this doubled meaning allows for a multiple reality. These beginning sentences thus perhaps foreshadow the madman’s and the text’s impending struggle to parse out Western versus Chinese truths. “A Madman’s Diary” is full of similar scenarios that straddle lunacy and enlightenment, and Western and Asian belief systems.

Perhaps Lu Xun attempted to embrace logically irreconcilable things because of his own experiences as an insider-outsider, a bifurcated identity that DuPlessis has described in the following way:

Insider-outsider social status will also help to dissolve an either/or dualism. For the woman finds she is irreconcilable things: an outsider by her gender position, by her relation to power, may be an insider by her social position, her class. She can be both. Her ontological, her psychic, her class positions all cause doubleness. Doubled consciousness. Doubled understandings.<sup>116</sup>

As a boy, Lu Xun reaped the benefits of being male in a patriarchal society, along with enjoying the status associated with wealth and the blessings of intelligence; however, when his family suddenly fell into poverty in his youth, he was exposed to outsider status. In addition, when he chose not to follow the conventional civil service examination route his father had wished—or become a medical doctor as his mother had wished—he may have also felt outsider pressures. These outsider pressures could only have been compounded by the ongoing marginalization of Chinese civilization from a global context, and by the exacting structures imposed by May Fourth radicals. In this sense, Lu Xun may have also suffered this doubled status of being “irreconcilable things.”

Each of the three perspectives in the short story ambivalently or antagonistically speak against each other. Moreover, deep ambiguity lies at the heart of each persona, who often expresses more than one prevailing ideology. The madman is part Nietzschean superman, part Daoist- or Buddhist-influenced apathetic example of humanity, part Communist realization, part reflection of Western enlightenment gone astray, and part Daoist or Buddhist undergoing a process of enlightenment. The older brother is a model Confucian, Daoist- or Buddhist-influenced apathetic person in a crowd—a symbol of the traditional Chinese society’s mental decay. The narrator, too, embodies contradictory qualities—part modern intellectual, and possibly part Daoist- or Buddhist-influenced emotionally detached person in a crowd, as well as specter of the morally responsible Confucian intellectual seeking social change.

“A Madman’s Diary” draws the reader in with its cryptic and enigmatic voice, its undercurrents of discourse and counter-discourse, the deeply “irreconcilable things” that dominate each persona, and the spaces between the concentric narrations.<sup>117</sup> For example, the narrator may represent cold science juxtaposed with free will and the spirit of the madman. Equally possible, the narrator may represent a morally responsible citizen existing in modernity, in contradistinction to the coldness of the older brother’s traditions. The narrator could adopt the perspective of the West, in contrast to the traditionally bound Chinese brother. Or, the emotional disconnection of the narrator and brother could be pitted against the passion of the madman. Each character’s possibilities are infinite. No one identity exists in black and white in representing a single hailing ideology; rather, each persona consists of his own warring ideology pushing against and colliding with other warring identities in either collusion or conflict.

For the purpose of relaying a non-privileged, multiple-centered possibility for the interpretation of the short story, I only briefly gloss over a few of the different infinite potentials



for interpretations. My brief summary by no means does justice to the short story. In refraining from privileging any one reality or interpretation, this paper refocuses on the spectrum of possibilities, realities, and hailing ideologies that vied for the ideological space within Lu Xun's head, so to speak.

Because the story portrays multiple realities, interpretation becomes porous. "Porous," explains Anita Barrows in "Form and Fragment," is "the statement that permits interpretation rather than positing an absolute. Not vagueness—I want each component to be clear—but a whole that doesn't pretend to be ultimate, academic."<sup>118</sup> "A Madman's Diary" is not vague, but intentionally left open for interpretation. The text is super-subversive, a writerly text that boldly contrasts the direct and rational. As explained by Roland Barthes, the crux of a story is meant to be determined through the reader's interpretive work: "Because the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text."<sup>119</sup> I believe that the role of the reader of Lu Xun's "A Madman's Dairy" surpasses even this task.

Like the madman and the narrator, the reader is forced to read between the lines, to come to a conclusion *about* the text that is outside of the actual written word. As in many subaltern works, as well as in Daoist and Buddhist texts, gaps and silences speak more than what is actually voiced. Literary critic Terry Eagleton summarizes his understanding of form and content:

It is in the significant silences of a text, in its gaps and absences that the presence of ideology can be most positively felt. It is these silences which the critic must make "speak." The text is, as it were, ideologically forbidden to say certain things; in trying to tell the truth in his own way, for example, the author finds himself forced to reveal the limits of the ideology within which he writes. He is forced to reveal its gaps and silences, what it is unable to articulate. Because a text contains these gaps and silences, it is always incomplete. Far from constituting a rounded, coherent whole, it displays a conflict and contradiction of meanings; and the significance of the work lies in the difference rather than unity between these meanings.<sup>120</sup>

The message of “A Madman’s Diary” cannot be found superficially. The madman is not simply a madman; the brother is not a simple Confucian, just as the diary is not a scientific extract of a paranoia complex. It is the reader’s responsibility to fill in the “spaces” of the text. For example, in one entry, the writer reveals, “It’s dark; I don’t know if it is day or night... The dog is barking. Lion’s cruelty, rabbit’s cowardliness, trickiness of the coyote.”<sup>121</sup> At first glance, these lines appear exactly as the narrator forewarns, they are “involute and incoherent,” “full of absurd and fantastic things,” and “lack a connection.”<sup>122</sup> Indeed, the meaning of these lines cannot be directly grasped without actively working to establish a connection between these lines and the rest of the text. But in a journal replete with references to human’s animalistic and cannibalistic tendencies, one can infer that the writer is not, in fact, speaking of animals but of humans. Humans are cruel as lions, as cowardly as rabbits, and as tricky as coyotes. As in Buddhist and Daoist texts, references exist to the *Dao* (the way) as unnamable. In this text, as in Buddhist narratives, that which needs to be understood—the necessary exchange and transmission between one being and another—is “unspeakable.” Ultimately defying the limits of language, information must be transmitted through the gaps and spaces of language. Like Buddhist narrative transmissions, the necessary message and lesson the madman needs to convey to the readers is beyond the limits of language.

Interestingly, the largest gap in the entire story abruptly presents itself at the end, at which point the narrative never returns to the original voice of narrator, and ends even without a conclusion to the madman’s diary. Deserted by both narrator and madman, the reader alone is left to guess the endings of both the madman’s and narrator’s stories. In order to achieve closure, the reader must fill in the space of the short story and join the present/past of the madman with the past/present of the narrator. But what exactly could this space mean? The reader only knows

that the madman's story ends temporally with an abrupt change in labels and status that actually occurs backward and in the present moment simultaneously, with the now young official's assimilation into "normalcy." The entire short story and all of its concentric circles literally and linearly conclude with the madman's final plea to save the children—but all of the children in the story have been corrupted. Is this a meaningless cry, an ironic cry, or an authentic call for some other possibility that is beyond the author's grasp?

In *Children's Literature in China: From Lu Xun to Mao Zedong*, Mary Ann Farquhar has suggested that the final plea is a request to allow children to grow to form a society of real people.<sup>123</sup> She defends that Lu Xun was truly interested in creating a children's literature that did not yet exist. "Hence, China could not move forward as long as the child was bound by false bonds, oppressed by social injustice and neglected through a total misunderstanding of his or her nature. In this light children became the perfect image for Chinese reformers: in children's 'liberation' lay China's salvation."<sup>124</sup> Indeed, Lu Xun truly seems to believe in reform starting at the roots of childhood. As can be seen in his *zawen*, "What Is Required of Us Father Today?"

Lu Xun writes:

We of this generation should start to emancipate all coming after us. The emancipation of children is something so natural that it should need no discussion... Thus the only way is for those who have seen the light to start by emancipating their own children... Burdened as a man may be with the weight of tradition, he can yet prop open the gate of darkness with his shoulder to let the children through to the bright, wide-open spaces, to lead happy lives hence forward as rational human beings.<sup>125</sup>

In his *zawen*, Lu Xun speaks openly about being criticized for overly doting on his son, which he defends as part of his struggle to rear his son free of the repressions of Confucianism. Is it possible that children represent a hidden potential for hope and change in the short story? Even if any untainted children *were* left in the story, how would they survive considering that even the

madman caves to the system? Perhaps Lu Xun realized that no one can completely escape the system of structures—his figurative iron house.

On the other hand, perhaps this gap/space, the undecidability of the children's role, reveals Lu Xun's own search for an escape. We, as readers, see the crushing nature of the system through the madman's eyes:

Chen Laowu coaxes me back into the room. Inside it is dark and somber. The beams and rafters above my head are all shaking, shaking for a while. Then they get bigger and pile on top of me. It's very heavy. I can't move any part of my body. It intends for me to die. But I know its weight is not real. So I struggle to get out, breaking into a sweat. But I still have to say, "You must change. The future won't permit you people."<sup>126</sup>

Obviously, the rafters of the building do not literally fall on the madman, as he is alive and unharmed. Perhaps, for the madman, the rafters serve as a symbol of the cannibalistic patriarchal system. In defense to the crushing pressures of the rafters, the madman shouts, "You must change. The future won't permit you people."<sup>127</sup> As he continues to try to subvert the cannibalistic system, it—like an organism—responds by trying to protect itself. Thus, the very system that civilizes is a source of threat, a cannibalistic storehouse.

How does the madman threaten the balance of the system? Given that the madman's ideas are expressed through writing, exactly what power does literature have? According to Salman Rushdie, throughout history, literature and politics have often been on opposing sides:

Redescribing a world is the necessary first step towards changing it. And particularly at times when the State takes reality into its own hands, and sets about distorting it, altering the past to fit its present needs, then the making of the alternative realities of art...becomes politicized. "The struggle of man against power," Milan Kundera has written, "is the struggle of memory against forgetting." Writers and politicians are natural rivals. Both groups try to make the world in their own images; they fight for the same territory. And the novel is one way of denying the official, politicians' version of truth.<sup>128</sup>

And, as Theodore Hutters has noted, the influence of politics in China has always been especially strong, creating a dynamic in which politics and literature constantly vie for control:

The idea that one can fabricate something radically other than the means of fabrication themselves has consequences far beyond the local province of literary texts—political implications, in particular. In looking at the relationship of literature and politics from this perspective, one does not dictate to the other, but rather they share an ideal of the powers of representation to bring imagined worlds into existence. This shared ideal also guarantees a perpetual series of encounters and mutual interventions between the two spheres—after all, they both have their eye on the same discursive space. This enduring symbiosis, the predominant link between politics and literature in China, has long been overshadowed by concern with the question of how politics has dominated literary discourse.<sup>129</sup>

Thus, perhaps the act of creating an alternate reality to the official version of truth—and the potential for this madman’s truth to become an inscribed reality—casts the madman as a potential threat to the political system. In other words, through the simple act of writing, the madman commits a political act. Perhaps what Lu Xun conveys, then, in his intense authorial anxiety, is literature’s double-edged ability to imitate reality *and* to create something new.

In all of these ways, Lu Xun’s work, which predates the New French Feminist movement by several decades, can be seen as similarly enlisting non-linearity and antiphonal qualities, thematizing a crisis of authority and authorship, non-hierarchy, a both/and vision, subversion of closure, and the assertion of multiple realities and porousness. Another similarity between the two is the use of writing as a bid for agency and a political means to self-empowerment and power. Indeed, both use creative writing as a venue for resisting the dominant culture’s version of historical and cultural truth—and as space for presenting their own definitions, inventions, and transgressions of the self.

### ***Madness, an Escape Artist’s Tool: Finding the Individual Within***

Continuing to trace the parallels and departures between Lu Xun and New French Feminist writings, I find similarities in the thematic trope of madness as freedom as conveyed in Sarah Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s revolutionary feminist critical text, *Madwoman in the Attic*

(1979). From this process of re-presenting “A Madman’s Diary” through the schizophrenic narrative form, and by identifying Lu Xun’s parallels and departures from feminist texts, I seek to illustrate how Lu Xun may have succeeded in evading the binary struggles of his time through a strategic use of form and content that enabled him to embrace his individual voice while meeting—and exceeding—the needs of his collective self. Is Lu Xun ultimately able to recover and recuperate both the individual and collective voices of self and greater self and escape being hemmed in by the totalizing discourses of the first world and of Chinese nationalism?

Indeed, during the politically stifling environment of the May Fourth period, the undefined space of madness may have served as a realm of freedom and creativity. During the May Fourth period, which demanded that all literature be utilitarian and political, Lu Xun may have felt at once trapped in a political system he did not support and caught in a problematic ideology he recognized in the complete appropriation of Western ideals.<sup>130</sup> Madness in literature may have been the only means of escape to an alternative space. While echoing strains of Daoist anti-rationalism, Lu Xun’s trope of madness in “A Madman’s Diary” also shares striking similarities with nineteenth-century British women who, Gilbert and Gubar argue, also used madness as a creative escape from the constraints of a patriarchal culture:

By projecting their rebellious impulses not into their heroines but into mad or monstrous women (who are suitably punished in the course of the novel or poem), female authors dramatize their own self-division, their desire both to accept the strictures of patriarchal society and to reject them....The madwoman in literature by women is... usually in some sense the author’s double, an image of her own anxiety and rage. Indeed, much of the poetry and fiction written by women conjures up this mad creature so that female authors can come to terms with their own uniquely female feeling of fragmentation, their own keen sense of the discrepancies between what they are and what they are supposed to be. For it is, after all, through the violence of the double that the female author enacts her own raging desire to escape male houses and male texts...<sup>131</sup>

To many Western women writers of the nineteenth century, madness was the singular route to freedom from the traditional bonds of society. For women confined and restrained by patriarchal stereotypes, madness was an undefined space in which to try on various definitions of self-ness, a way of “associating female creativity with freedom from male domination” because, for once, marginalized figures could move “out of the texts defined by patriarchal poetics into the open spaces of their own authority.”<sup>132</sup>

Perhaps Lu Xun also found the role of the madman liberating. In the short story, madness has certain privileged relationships with power.

These people want to eat people but are so sneaky trying to cover it up. They are afraid to take the responsibility and first handedly do the deed. They really make me want to laugh. Unable to hold it in, I let out a great guffaw, and felt really great. I knew that within the sound of my laughter, it was full of bravery, righteousness and integrity. Both the old man and my brother became pale, and were suppressed by my courage and righteousness.<sup>133</sup>

Here, what others interpret—and perhaps even what the reader interprets—as mad laughter, serves as a source of power. Laughter not only bolsters the madman’s courage and feelings of righteousness, but also serves as an exhibition of strength powerful enough to induce fear and silence from others. In “The Laugh of the Medusa,” New French feminist critic, Helene Cixous also notes the power of mad laughter.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, both New French feminists and Daoist antirationalists saw madness as a means to truth and to the power of that truth, enabling one to be free from the strictures of language and to embrace chaos. But if Lu Xun wrote the short story as an expression of his own confinement and frustration, why doesn’t he, like the female writers in nineteenth-century Britain, or as a Daoist might, grant himself aesthetic fulfillment by allowing the madman to escape from these confining structures? If, in feminist writing, the “double often escapes from her textual/architectural confinement,” or as in Daoism, retreats into a recluse in

the mountains, why does Lu Xun not grant himself and the reader such a psychological and spiritual escape?<sup>135</sup>

Perhaps in its very “un-telling” and “unfulfilling” of expectations, the story doubles both as Lu Xun’s political message and mode of escape. By resisting categorization as Western, Chinese, modern or traditional, he ultimately attempts to parry all that is structurally imposed. Perhaps the text serves as a newly invented subversive form for the colonized.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, Lu Xun may have been all too aware that after China’s great defeat, regardless of what Chinese writers wrote, they were nevertheless, as Foucault warned, always writing from within the structures of Western power. As Liu so eloquently summarizes Chatterjee

Subjugated people who use nationalism to oppose the colonial rule or European hegemony invariably speak the language of colonialism—modernity, progress, development, and so on...The very process of approximation means their continued subjection under a world order which only sets their tasks for them and over which they have no control... The problem is that the cultural domination of the West is homogenized and totalized to such a degree that an alternative narrative within the nation-space is virtually written out as a theoretical possibility.<sup>137</sup>

Feminists, explicating the unconscious tendency of writers to enable patriarchy in their very struggles to resist it, have also noted patriarchy’s ability to propagate itself through literature:

Literary texts are coercive, imprisoning, fever inducing; that, since literature usurps a reader’s interiority, it is an invasion of privacy... For while, on the one hand, we... “may inhale Despair” from all those patriarchal texts which seek to deny female autonomy and authority, on the other hand we... “may inhale Despair” from all those “foremothers” who have both overtly and covertly, conveyed their traditional authorship anxiety to their bewildered female descendants... Such...anxiety ensures that even the maker of a text...may feel imprisoned within texts—folded and “wrinkled” by their pages and thus trapped...<sup>138</sup>

Perhaps Lu Xun also felt trapped not only in the Western texts that denied autonomy and authority to China, but also by his Chinese fore writers, who may have “inhaled Despair” from other Western patriarchal texts and subconsciously conveyed their anxieties to other



descendants/writers. As Hutters notes in “Appropriations: Another Look at Yan Fu and Western Ideas”:

In [Yan Fu’s] apparent inability either to imagine a situation in which the Western ideas he is so eager to introduce lack underlying similarities to indigenous ideas on the one hand, or to accept that the ideas are indeed similar on the other, Yan fu in effect becomes the first enunciator of a new discourse of anxiety that was to become widespread in the twentieth century. The dominant premise in this discourse has been that certain key Western ideas were superior and that China could not do without importing them...<sup>139</sup>

Such writing by earlier Chinese writers may have fed into the “inhaled Despair” already plaguing the Chinese literati. Does Lu Xun succeed in finding a space to operate between the confining spaces of nationalism and imperialism, modernity and tradition, self and community?

### ***Disintegrating Polarities of Self and Other: Homeostatic Balance of Self and Society***

Perhaps if we interpret “A Madman’s Diary” as doubling as an allegory of China’s predicament, as well as a journey into interiority, we can find some possible answers for these questions. In writing a short story that served as an extended metaphor for the crisis China faced, Lu Xun perhaps felt much like Salman Rushdie did in defending his writing about the struggles and crisis of his “third world” nation.

I want to make one last point about the description of India that *Midnight’s Children* attempts... The book has been criticized in India for its allegedly despairing tone... but I do not see the book as despairing or nihilistic. The point of view of the narrator is not entirely that of the author. What I tried to do was to set up a tension in the text, a paradoxical opposition between the form and content of the narrative. The story of Saleem does indeed lead him to despair. But the story is told in a manner designed to echo...the Indian talent for non-stop regeneration. This is why the narrative constantly throws up new stories, why it “teems.” The form—multitudinous, hinting at the infinite possibilities of the country – is the optimistic counterweight to Saleem’s personal tragedy. I do not think that a book written in such a manner can really be called a despairing work.<sup>140</sup>

Perhaps Lu Xun wrote with a similar mindset, as a great tension exists between each of the concentric circles of narration. As in *Midnight's Children*, paradoxical opposition arises between the narrative's form and content. Along similar lines, Theodore Hutters has reminded us of the highly privileged position of realism in the May Fourth era, and how the theory of realism was attributed a "transcendent validity."<sup>141</sup> In "Ideologies of Realism in Modern China," Hutters highlights the "persistent social conscience [that] obliged writers to rule out of bounds the more utopian elements of the formulation."<sup>142</sup> Perhaps, like Saleem's tragedy, the madman's less-than-ideal-fate opens the story up to infinite possibilities. By understanding "A Madman's Diary" as an extended metaphor for China's crisis, perhaps we are able to finally grasp the basic motivation and message for Lu Xun's writing. Says Lu Xun:

The masses, especially in China, are always spectators at a drama. If the victim on the stage acts heroically, they are watching a tragedy; if he shivers and shakes, they are watching a comedy. Before the mutton shops in Peking a few people often gather to gape, with evident enjoyment, at the skinning of the sheep. And this is all they get out of it if a man lays down his life. Moreover, after walking a few steps away from the scene they forget even this modicum of enjoyment.

There is nothing you can do with such people; the only way to save them is to give them no drama to watch. There is no need for spectacular sacrifices; it is better to have persistent tenacious struggle.<sup>143</sup>

"A Madman's Diary," in its very *untelling*, refuses to be spectacle, drama, tragedy, or sacrifice. No hero comes to save the madman's world. Lu Xun warns in his political commentaries of the voyeuristic qualities he witnessed in fellow Chinese who emotionally fed off dramatic spectacles (like public executions) and then subsequently forgot shortly after.

Considering both Lu Xun's conflicted relationship to drawing emotions from "others" and the affective impact of storytelling, what precisely did Lu Xun wish to create in this short story? We know that, ironically, Lu Xun held high hopes for literature precisely because of its ability to stir the emotions and spirits of people, and that Lu Xun believed that only literature

possessed the power to broaden the myopic vision of personal gain, to “spiritually stir people and move them to action.”<sup>144</sup> As much preceding scholarship has documented, Lu Xun launched the rising wave of reform through literature by sharing his epiphany: he decided to quit *Sendai* (Western) medical school to pursue literature because he believed only literature held the power to save the nation.<sup>145</sup>

Before the term was over I had left for Tokyo, because after seeing these slides I felt that medical science was not such an important thing after all. People from an ignorant and weak country, no matter how physically healthy and strong they may be, could only serve to be made examples of, or become onlookers of utterly meaningless spectacles. Such a condition was more deplorable than dying of illness. Therefore our first important task was to change their spirit, and at the time I considered the best medium for achieving this end was literature. I was thus determined to promote a literary movement.<sup>146</sup>

In fact, Lu Xun’s faith in literature was so great that he was willing to give up his venue of success, wealth, and education. Lu Xun even said, “Literature is the bugle of mankind’s march towards life’s realm of truth, benevolence and beauty, can shake heaven and earth, and its power can touch millions for millennia.”<sup>147</sup> How could Lu Xun best insure that his story would not be voyeuristically read, emotionally satiating the needs of the reader as a spectacle, and then being discarded? In other words, how could he best ensure stirring the reader’s spirit and compelling them into action? Examining the relationship between literature and the self can, perhaps, help us find some sense of closure in “A Madman’s Diary.”

Returning to the question of why, during the national crisis of 1911, the *zhishi fenzi* chose to transform, re-educate, and reform the Chinese mind and spirit through creative stories, rather than through traditional avenues of education or even through straightforward editorials in the popular newspapers of the time, we also face questions around the special power of literature. Douglas Robinson, in his analysis of Leo Tolstoy, Victor Shklovsky, and Bertolt Brecht presents a clue:

Literature only comes into existence as literature to the extent that its forms are sensed by a reader... Those prosaic norms, collective guidance [are] stored somatically in the bodies of everyone who speaks the language well... Poetic language can only be sensed or felt by a person... [Authors] take their power from the reader's somatics... [and] reshape the traditional forms of literature precisely in order to manipulate the reader's somatic response as powerfully as they can.<sup>148</sup>

Perhaps literature is unique in creating intense somatic and emotional responses (responses that cannot be induced through rational and conscious willing), which can then be used to fortify agency for social change. Indeed, had he provided a conventional hero, Lu Xun would have saved readers from painful feelings and sensorial reactions that would only lead to a voyeuristic end with emotional and somatic closure for the reader. Without a savior, the story abruptly leaves readers to deal with their own emotions and somatic responses stirred. Ultimately, no hero comes to rescue the people in the madman's story simply because we are to be the heroes. Says Lu Xun in "Wen Hua Pian Zhi Lun,"

Most of the people, weak and dispirited, are getting worse everyday. Therefore when they gradually turn back to examine themselves, they will feel it impossible to help themselves. And so everyone just searches and prays for a person with strong conviction, who they can just lean on for all of their future hopes like some pillar. This is just like when during flooding, one doesn't know how to swim and wants to get to the bank, and one can only scream for help to someone who can swim. How pathetic it is!<sup>149</sup>

By not offering an aesthetic escape from the system, by refusing to grant readers the gratification of a hero to blindly follow—and thus an escape from the emotional and sensorial painful process of the short story—Lu Xun places the weight of responsibility upon the reader's shoulders and disallows the reader to fall habitually into dependency or to use the story's closure as one's own closure for the issues at hand. Whereas Leo Lee has suggested that there is no way out of this impasse, and that the diary's end in ellipsis ("...") indicates incompleteness and a visual retreat into echoes of madness as the "readers close the book on his diary," I would like to suggest that the figurative death of the madman gives the short story infinite possibilities, and that the story's

punctuation suggests a sort of optimistic lack of closure.<sup>150</sup> “Save the Children!” the madman cries. Only later do we realize that *we* are these very children.

Thus, in an amazingly simple, yet intricately complex way, the reader slowly realizes that she/he is ultimately responsible for the true ending of the story. We, the readers, ultimately determine whether the text achieves meaning. We are an integral part of the text and its meaning—the ever-changing, unpredictable life of the unfinished text—the intentionally uncompleted story. Like life, the text offers no conclusions. Lu Xun evades the constraints of both cultures and creates a story that involves and includes the reader, moving him/her to feeling, to emotions, and finally inviting him/her to action. In “Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo,” Lu Xun prophesizes that only literature has the power to spiritually move a nation. “A Madman’s Diary” goes beyond a straight prescriptive or public speech. We, as readers, cannot simply disengage ourselves from his text and from its multiple calling and connections to our selves. Lu Xun, in layering the story into different voices, attempts and succeeds to formulate a strategic structural escape of binaries through the gaps between narrations and voices.<sup>151</sup> As Lu Xun, a master escape artist, escapes because—and in spite of—these layers of structures and meaning, the readers are left to find the solution to his text. We are emotionally and intellectually stuck in the madman’s labyrinth, in the unresolved layers of narrative; thus we are also invested in finding a solution to our own emotional and somatic discomfort.

Perhaps these narrative strategies enable Lu Xun’s literature to surpass the constraints of political speech and, ultimately, to deflect the boundaries of May Fourth. Says Lu Xun in *Wild Grass*,

It is hard to state my views clearly, because they contain many contradictions. If you ask me to explain, perhaps it is the fluctuation between the two poles of “humanism” and “individual anarchism,” so that now I love man, now I hate man. As for my work, sometimes it is truly for the sake of others, sometimes just to

amuse myself; sometimes I stretch myself to the limit in order to make my life wear out quicker... My thought is too dark, but might not be right, so I can only experiment on myself, I cannot invite others to participate.<sup>152</sup>

And yet, without totalizing or reducing the rich heterogeneity of China, Lu Xun's story powerfully invites the reader to find his/her own space, free of the structures that imprisoned the madman, just as the author found his space within the creativity of his text. We are the beginning and ending of his personal story—the final element of universal hope.

With the short story's conclusion, Lu Xun figuratively bridges his emotional connection to the past, his artistic need for expression, and his urgent drive to change his own—and his nation's—future. The personal interior subjectivity doubles both as a collective and individual expression of desire: urgent primary needs of survival prevailed for most May Fourth Chinese individuals. The short story is able to embody all conflicting voices, privileging none, allowing all voices to coexist. "A Madman's Diary" is thus equally a private subjective experience and a collective/allegorical work.

In closing, in 1911 Chinese intellectuals were searching for Chinese character flaws: "The scope of their moral iconoclasm is perhaps unique in the modern world; no other historical civilization outside the West undergoing modern transformation has witnessed such a Phoenix-like impulse to see its own cultural tradition so completely negated."<sup>153</sup> For almost a century, leading theorists have read this May Fourth Phoenix-like behavior as self-negating—proof of the May Fourth *zhishi fenzhi*'s wholesale Westernization and the superiority of Euro-American ideas of the self.<sup>154</sup> I, however, find hope in Tu Weiming's reminder that the "ego has to be transcended... and sometimes even denied for the sake of realizing the genuine self."<sup>155</sup> From a different perspective, the *zhishi fenzhi* collectively engaged in Confucian *shendu*, as well as in

Buddhist and Daoist enlightenment journeys into self and society. Along these lines, in “On Looking Facts in the Face,” Lu Xun proclaims,

“Courage is needed to face facts squarely.” True we must dare look things in the face before we dare think, speak, act or assume responsibility. If we dare not even look, what else are we good for? [...] Chinese men of letters have seldom had the courage to look squarely at life, or at least at social phenomena [...] To return to this question of looking at things squarely: first you dare not, then you cannot; and of course in the end you do not see—you are blind [...] But though they will not face up to the sufferings caused by their own conflicts or evils in society, they have to suffer them [...] So there are no problems, abuses or injustice, and hence no solution, reforms or opposition [...] Afraid to look facts in the face, the Chinese resort to concealment and deceit to contrive ingenious lines of retreat [...] Instead of trying to recover our past heritage, we simply heap praises on the dead [...] The world is changing day by day; it is high time for our writers to take off their masks, look frankly, keenly and boldly at life, and write about real flesh and blood.<sup>156</sup>

Rather than implying a deeply flawed Chinese culture, could we interpret this deep, unflinching self-assessment as a symbol of strength, indeed, a willingness to transform and polish the self? Would it be possible to conceive of May Fourth as a necessary process of taking inventory of one’s weaknesses and strengths? At the least, perhaps there needs to be acknowledgement of the fortitude and courage necessary for any individual, notwithstanding a nation, to confront and boldly stare its own demons in the face. Perhaps only by having the courage to face their anxieties, self-hatred, and fears by painfully recognizing their current state of international powerlessness were the Chinese intellectuals ultimately able to focus on that over which they did have power—the chance to transcend their parameters/selves and to earn a chance at unifying for individual and national joint survival. Perhaps this period of self-inspection is better considered as an act of self-love and growth rather than one of self-destruction and negation. Ingeniously recognizing the special relationship between storytelling and transformation of the self, Lu Xun invents agency and empowerment through a metamorphosed, transformed self that meets particular Chinese needs—a journey to the very core of Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist self-

enlightenment. The unique relationship between literature and self that Lu Xun exploits is the unspeakable connection between reader and writer, which serves as a path of potential transformation through its unique and intimate connection to the reader and writer's self: affective, survival-based, sensory, spiritual, cosmic, organismic, and physical.

Although after May Fourth, later Chinese critics re-inscribed the period as a failure, deeming it bourgeois, self-absorbed, overly self-negating, and narcissistic—perhaps a different perspective can lead us out of this strict dichotomy of nativist rejection or extreme insistence on Euro-American universality. The human arrays of choices in these moments teetering between life and death circumstances are commonly characterized only by “fight, flight or freeze.”<sup>157</sup> This scenario was likely the intense emotional and instinctual survival situation that the Late Qing-Early Republic Chinese found itself in—circumstances that may have demanded more primitive, instinctual action than cerebral over-intellectualizing discourses and theory. In these life-threatening circumstances in Late Qing-Early Republic Chinese history, the nation probably would not have survived had it only reacted with “fight, flight, or freeze.” China was unable to “fight” equally given the disparity of martial warfare and had no place to take “flight”; immobilization only led to more of China being carved out and apportioned to other foreign nations. Facing this historical moment of a nation and individual's life in the balance, the *zhishi fenzhi* made a fascinating and huge psychological, survival-based, and emotional leap from their traditions and their past, and decided to transform their minds and spirits so that they could collectively unite and fight for their goals. During this period of frenzied struggle for survival, rather than reacting to the instinctual responses of “to fight, to flight, or to freeze,” how did Chinese intellectual elites so brilliantly come to the collective and miraculous decision “to write”—and, most of all, “to write stories”—to forge a path for self and national survival?



In the analogy of the May Fourth notion of the self as a phoenix—embracing self-immolation and rebirth—perhaps what often becomes overlooked is that the new phoenix emerges not from thin air, but from the previous phoenix's ashes. For the phoenix, the past is very fertile soil. Similarly, the Chinese past is the rich source from which May Fourth re-invents itself. Rather than escaping the past, the Chinese intellectual sheds dead weight, draws on the richness of its past, "grabs" the tools of the present, and is inextricably reborn in the present and future. Understanding May Fourth beyond the impasse of binaries—neither as the totalizing Euro-American-spawned idealistic totalistic iconoclasm, (e.g., the Phoenix was birthed anew solely from Western thin air), nor as the Nativist definitive rejection of one's past as an error in totality (e.g., the Phoenix should not have self-immolated), I wish to posit the possibility of re-imagining the May Fourth process as a courageous and self-reflective phase, an essential action and *reaction* to very real threats to national and individual survival, a phase that engendered the necessary unfolding of other stages.

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<sup>1</sup> (Li Zehou 1979) and (Schwarcz 1983-84) quoted in (Denton 1998, 5). Denton states, "Chinese Modernity is often portrayed as a tension between the irreconcilable values associated with enlightenment [individualism], on the one hand, and national salvation on the other." The use of the word "irreconcilable" suggests the inevitability of antagonisms.

<sup>2</sup> Hsu notes, "For every living human being *jen* is not a fixed entity. Like the human body it is in a state of dynamic equilibrium. It is a matrix or a framework within which every human individual seeks to maintain a satisfactory level of psychic and interpersonal equilibrium, in the same sense that every physical organism tends to maintain a uniform and beneficial physiological stability" (Hsu 1985, 33); "Differing cultural patterns create divergent forms of selfhood" (Hsu 1985, 8-9).

<sup>3</sup> "Allegory." Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed. (2011). Encyclopedia.com. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/allegory.aspx#2> (accessed June 24, 2012). *The Columbia Encyclopedia* defines allegory in literature as a "symbolic story that serves as a disguised representation for meanings other than those indicated on the surface. The characters in an allegory often have no individual personality, but are embodiments of moral qualities and other abstractions."

<sup>4</sup> Lin, Yusheng. "Lu Xun, The Intellectual," in *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in the May Fourth Era*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), 1979, 126-127.

<sup>5</sup> "Marxist Theory and Criticism." The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism. <http://litguide.press.jhu.edu/entries/M.html> (accessed June 10, 2006).

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<sup>6</sup> (Marx 1972, 157-169)

<sup>7</sup> Lee suggests there was a “lack of clear definition and in-depth analysis of what constituted a Marxist position on the leftist literary scene in China” (Lee 1985, xi).

<sup>8</sup> Lin Yusheng in *Crisis of Chinese Consciousness* notes Lu Xun’s lifelong interest in graphic art and Chinese woodblock engraving, as well as his intrigue with folk theatre and folklore (Lin 1979); Semanov illustrates Lu Xun’s high appraisal of traditional art, Buddhism and Taoism by quoting from Lu Xun’s *Zawen*.

<sup>9</sup> (Lin 1979)

<sup>10</sup> For greater detail of Lu Xun’s various influences, see (Lee 1987, 4-6).

<sup>11</sup> (Semanov 1980, 93)

<sup>12</sup> Lin Yusheng asserts, however, that the elements of Chinese tradition Lu Xun appreciated were accepted primarily on an aesthetic basis in the private realm of his consciousness.

<sup>13</sup> “Hundred Schools of Thought” is a momentous cultural and intellectual expansion from around 770 to 222 BC that included diverse philosophies from Daoism, Confucianism, Legalism, School of Yin-Yang, Mohism, Yang Chu, Logicians, Eclectics, Coalition persuaders and Militarism, etc. Please see (Graham 1991).

<sup>14</sup> While the classic formulation of the “five relationships was: father-son, elder brother-younger brother, husband-wife, ruler-minister, friend-friend”, my use of “relational self” intentionally references more ambiguous, and unnamed relationships, such as mothers and children, siblings, beggar to beggar, son-in-law to mother-in-law, children, and their nannies.

<sup>15</sup> (Tu 1985,123)

<sup>16</sup> (Munro 1969, 24)

<sup>17</sup> Rather than “self” as an isolation of one’s thoughts, feelings and perceptions—the Confucian self is a “relational self” who is defined by his/her position within a web of relations, in which there is an “interpenetration of self and society” (Munro 1969, 42); “The locus of the self as a field of social relations constituting and constituted by the person is fundamental to our understanding of Chinese conceptions of selfhood” (Munro 1969, 43); Donald Munro in *Concept of Early Man in China* notes, “The Confucians held that all things in nature, including human beings, stood in certain definite relationships to other things, and that there were natural rules dictating the actions of those things” (Munro 1969, 11). This self mirrors itself through its connection and similarities to its ancestors, and from its position among family members.

<sup>18</sup> Denton defines the “determined self” as “a nexus of diachronic heredity and synchronic social relationships, or . . . self inherited from one’s ancestry and shaped through the ceremonious practice of ritual, *li*. . . This view of self as determined by both social and biological forces is intertwined with the Confucian political system of kinship and imperial authority” (Denton 1998, 36).

<sup>19</sup> (Denton 1998, 32). “A clear understanding of one’s mind and profound self-knowledge are prerequisites for ethical, social, and political stability. Song neo-Confucians Cheng Yi, Cheng Hao, Zhang Zai, Zhu Xi placed greater importance on Four Books.”

<sup>20</sup> (W. Chan 1967a, 19) as quoted in (Denton 1998, 37).

<sup>21</sup> (Denton 1998, 40). Denton notes the collectivist themes where Confucian man and society were neither “antagonistic” nor “confrontational” but mutually enriching.

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<sup>22</sup> The May Fourth Chinese intellectual, Liang Qichao, also promoted the rhetoric of *Qun*, the social organism, explaining how it is “required for its survival the cohesiveness of its individual parts” and how there are thus “no basic contradiction between individual autonomy and collectivity” (Denton 1998, 43); Liang borrows from Xunzi the word “Qun (the social organism).” Others like Sun call for “Organic Unity and strong order” (Sun 1992: 239); Hu Shi defended the need for harmony and collectivism (Grieder 1970, 99) quoted in (Denton 1998, 53): “The fundamental error of this concept [individuality] lies in . . . regarding the individual as something that can be set outside of society and reformed. . . . It [is] essential to understand the individual as a result of numerous and varied social forces.” Hu Shi argues the utter futility of attempting to find the self devoid of human interaction or influences; Li Dazhao’s May Fourth writing also supported the unity of self and the external world: “So the basic duty of human life is to follow the forward movement of reality, so as to create for later generations great merit and virtue, offering them to the eternal ego for it to enjoy, enlarge itself, inherit to the utmost. Then the universe will be the ego and the ego the universe. Bonded to a vitalistic outer world, self can join in the movement of History” (Li Dazhao 1984, 1:535).

<sup>23</sup> (Denton 1998, 260)

<sup>24</sup> (Tu 1985, 126)

<sup>25</sup> In “Doctrine of the Mean,” Denton notes the “self’s ability to ‘assist the transforming and nourishing powers of heaven and Earth’” (Denton 1998, 37); As Pertti Nikkila in “Confucius’ Self-identity and the Divine” notes, “identity according to Confucius is created in relation to Heaven” (Nikkila 1996, 12); The individual’s transcendence is through his divine connection to heaven and earth. This focus on transcendence powerfully illuminates the cosmic and spiritual realms of existence that are often missing in the Euro-American conceptual network of subjectivity. Thome H. Fang (Fang 1968, 27) essentially equates this frame of mind as attaining a “co-creator” with the cosmos mentality; Denton calls it a mind predicated on “mutuality of self and divine” (Denton 1998, 40).

<sup>26</sup> Denton cites influences from Hao Chang, Theodore Bary, Tu Weiming, Thomas Metzger and Lin Yusheng (Denton 1998).

<sup>27</sup> (Hao Chang 1989b, 33-34) as quoted in (Denton 1998, 38).

<sup>28</sup> (Tu 1985, 75) quoted in (Denton 1998, 259)

<sup>29</sup> (Tu 1985, 114) quoted in (Denton 1998, 259). “A distinctive feature of Confucian ritualization is an ever-deepening and broadening awareness of the presence of the other in one’s self-cultivation. This is perhaps the single most important reason that the Confucian idea of the self as a center of relationships is an open system. It is only through the continuous opening up of the self to others that the self can maintain a wholesome personal identity. The person who is not sensitive or responsive to the others around him is self-centered; self-centeredness easily leads to a closed world, or, in Sung-Ming terminology, to a state of paralysis. Therefore, to encounter the other with an open-minded spirit is not only desirable; it is as vital to the health of the self as is air or water to one’s life.”

<sup>30</sup> (Hao Chang 1993, 17-31) as quoted in (Denton 1998, 40).

<sup>31</sup> (Denton 1998, 39); *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>32</sup> (Tu 1985, 96), (*Analects*, 8:3, 2:12, 5:3), and Herbert Fingarette. “A Confucian Metaphor - the Holy Vessel,” in *Confucius - The Secular and Sacred*. (New York: Harper & Row), 1972, 71-79. “Confucian tradition . . . repeatedly stresses the importance of taking care of one’s body as a necessary condition for learning to be human. . . . It is not merely out of a sense of filial piety that one respect one’s physical body as a sacred vessel. . . . The self as a concrete living reality is inseparable from the body.”

<sup>33</sup> Rarely do Confucian theorists allude to the physical body. “The Confucian self is basically a social, ethical one (Bary 1970, 3); Tu Weiming notes, “It is often assumed that the Confucian method of self-cultivation (hsiu-shen) is sociological, since it teaches a child to be obedient to his parents, to respect authority, and to accept societal norms (Tu 1985, 96); Hall and Ames deem it a “bodiless self,” (Hall 1998, 31) in that they see the body as an expression

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and extension of self within Confucianism; “The perception of the body in the broad sweep of the Chinese tradition precludes anything like a materialistic or atomistic interpretation...The Chinese conception of body is integrally related to the fundamental project of ‘cultivating oneself (*xiushen*),’ where *shen* in this expression has strong physical connotations in referring to one’s person. . . . The expression and “performance” of the body, like other Confucian preoccupations such as the practice of ritual, the playing of music, the writing of calligraphy, or the composition of literature, is a medium for self-articulation” (Hall 1998, 31-32); Munro finds an avoidance of discussing the body simply because the morality of the mind leashes its actions (Munro 1969, 12). “According to the Confucians, the content of human nature is threefold: first, a number of constant activities that man shares with other animals (eating, drinking, sleeping, sex); second, certain social activities unique to man. . . . And third, an evaluating mind that can assess the natural nobility or baseness, rightness or wrongness, propriety or impropriety of an object, act, position, or event. Man can use his evaluating mind to guide his innate social tendencies along the proper lines. These three components are shared by all human beings and make them biologically equal.” This seems to be an explanation for why Confucianism does not address the body as much. At the extreme end, Mencius suggests that the animalistic drives of man are not an essential part of man. “Man’s essential nature is *ren* (humanheartedness).” “Man is *jen*” (*jen che jen yeh*); The second phrase implies “animal needs, instincts, and reflexes are not the essential part of man” (Munro 1969, 15); Aside from the discipline and the teaching, Confucianism addresses the needs for the expression of feelings as it discusses in detail how music harmonizes the body. Please see *Analects*, 10:5 (Waley 1953, 147); Music harmonizes the body so “it can appropriately express our emotions in tune with the rhythm of life. Since all authentic music is said to arise from the human heart, it can shape the movements of the body into a graceful manifestation of the inner self and can channel all our ‘seven feelings’ into their proper courses” (Xu Fuguan 1969, 1-8); It also discusses “the six arts [as] ways of cultivating the body” (Tu 1985, 98); Transformation is not only limited to the soul, but the body too makes great changes. This mind is also not confined only to the social and serious. Says Mencius, “The great man does not lose his child-like heart” (Tu 1985, 103); The body is led by both the heart and the cultivated mind. “For a man to give full realization to his heart is for him to understand his own nature, and a man who knows his own nature will know Heaven. By retaining his heart and nurturing his nature, he is serving Heaven. Whether he is going to die young or to live to a ripe old age makes no difference to his steadfastness of purpose. It is through awaiting whatever is to befall him with a perfected character that he stands firm on his proper destiny” (Tu 1985, 103). The “self” transcends earthly existence and fulfills its greater spiritual purpose by disciplining the body and reaching self-awareness. He is connected to nature and to fellow humans and to the cosmos. The Confucian notions of self are relational, organismic, spiritual, practical, affective and bodily.

<sup>34</sup> Even though verbal instructions are common in Confucian teachings, the preferred method is to conduct them in an atmosphere suffused with nonverbal forms of communication. Exemplary teaching (*sen-chiao*), which is superior to teaching by words (*yen-chiao*), literally means to teach one’s body. Finely executed ritual acts as performative demonstrations of what one should do in given situations have greater educational force than verbal descriptions of them can ever have. . . . Ritualization disciplines the body. (Tu, 1985, 98).

<sup>35</sup> (Tu 1985, 103).

<sup>36</sup> (Lyell 1990, 32)

<sup>37</sup> (Lu Xun 1980, 4: 185). Lu Xun in “Confucius in Modern China” states, “Compared with the later imported Sakyamuni Buddha, he [Confucius] cut rather a poor figure. True, every county had a Confucian Temple, but this was always a lonely, neglected place where the common folk never worshipped. If they wanted to worship they looked for a Buddhist temple or a shrine to some deity. If you ask ordinary people who Confucius was, of course they will answer, “A sage,” but this is simply echoing the authorities.”

<sup>38</sup> “Taoism - Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia.” Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia.  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taoism> (accessed June 21, 2012).

<sup>39</sup> Denton thus concludes such philosophies are no longer feasible for the modern intellectual (Denton 1998, 234).

<sup>40</sup> (Lin Yutang 1948); (Wieger, Léon 1984)

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<sup>41</sup> Kardash, Ted. "Taoism - The Wu-Wei Principle - Part 4." holiday ca.  
<http://www.jadedragon.com/archives/june98/tao.html> (accessed June 20, 2012).

<sup>42</sup> (Munro 1969, 17)

<sup>43</sup> "Taoism - Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia.  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taoism> (accessed June 21, 2012).

<sup>44</sup> (Robinet 1997, 103)

<sup>45</sup> (Zhang and Ryden 2002, 71)

<sup>46</sup> (Mair 1990, 28, 93)

<sup>47</sup> (Denton 1998, 229). This refers to the "primal state of origins prior to the civilizing divisions of language."

<sup>48</sup> (Watson 1968, 95) quoted in (Denton 1998, 226).

<sup>49</sup> (Izutsu 1967, 2: 20) quoted in (Girardot 1983, 88) which is quoted in (Denton 1998, 226). Denton likens the results of boring to "nothing but the philosophy of names as represented by Confucius and his school, an essentialist philosophy where all things are clearly marked, delineated, and sharply distinguished from one another on the ontological level of Essences."

<sup>50</sup> (Denton 1998, 226); *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>51</sup> "To really know the world involves a mystic journey back to an individual's fetal origins where one's human face becomes the non-individualized face of all men or ultimately the no-face of Hun-tun" (Girardot 1983, 71) quoted in (Denton 1998, 234).

<sup>52</sup> (Dumoulin 1979, 29)

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>55</sup> (Lu Xun, II: 20).

<sup>56</sup> Denton reads the Daoist return to chaos as similar to the Confucian self-cultivation in privileging the individual mind's linkage to the social other (Denton 1998, 234).

<sup>57</sup> (Pinar 1998, 27); "To forget the self is to 'detach' from and to be enlightened by all things, by nature. . . . The way of Zen is a way to an end, certainly - but there is no end. It is an end in and of itself. It is precisely such efforts to 'free' oneself from oneself that makes one's work one's own; one finds who one has been by always getting away from oneself" (Pinar 1998, 34).

<sup>58</sup> (Pinar 1998, 23); *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>61</sup> The critics: Semanov (Semanov 1980, 36), Lee (Lee 1987), and Lin (Lin 1979) find strong Buddhist themes in Lu Xun's writing. Semanov dates the "years of silence" as the period from 1914 to early 1918 (Semanov 1980, 36). Leo Lee documents Lu Xun's reading of Buddhist sutras and sponsoring of the printing of *Baiyu jing* (*The Sutra of a Hundred Parables*) during the "years of silence" (Lee 1987, 26); In addition, Lee captures the degree to which Lu

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Xun highly regarded Buddhism. Citing the memoirs of Xu Guangping (Lu's Xun's wife), he cites how she recalls Lu Xun once telling his friend, Xu Shoushang, that he was much impressed by the depth of Buddhism, for the sutras he read had provided answers to some of the "big questions" he was pondering. Lee also finds strong Buddhist imagery within Lu Xun's private writings. Excerpts from *Wild Grass* like "After Death" and "The Lost Good Hell" evoke tranquility and terror, and echo images of Chinese Buddhism. The repetitive use of "I had a dream . . ." in seven of the pieces Lu Xun wrote, including "The Madman's Diary," also evoke Buddhist reality and imagery (Lee 1987, 97); Lee also notes Lu Xun's daring borrowing of Buddhist terms like sanjie "three realms" and da huanxi "great joy" or "Passion" (Lee 1987, 93-94) in his invention of expression through vernacular language; Semanov cites Lu Xun as using this time to collect imprints from ancient monuments and Buddhist books and to study Chinese literature and popular tales (Semanov 1980, 36).

<sup>62</sup> (Semanov 1980, 36)

<sup>63</sup> (Lu Xun, *Complete Works*, VII, 275) quoted in (Semanov 1980, 36f). Lu Xun in "Frescoes and statues" notes, "These are kept in Buddhist or Taoist temples, and are sometimes the products of outstanding artists. Lately, under the pretext of eradicating superstition they have been mercilessly destroyed. Their authorship should be clarified, and they should be protected in every way possible."

<sup>64</sup> (Xu 1961, 42-43) and (Xu 1966, 38)

<sup>65</sup> (Lee 1987, 26).

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-94.

<sup>68</sup> (Lyell 38).

<sup>69</sup> The roots of Zen meditation come from Shakayamni, the founder of the Buddhist religion and the ancient Indian tradition of Yoga (Dumoulin 1979, 140).

<sup>70</sup> (Dumoulin 1979, 14-41)

<sup>71</sup> "Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion" (SN 56.11), trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight*. <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html> (accessed June 23, 2012). Buddha lists these events as birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, despair, association with the unbeloved, separation from loved, not getting one's desires, and the five clinging. "For You Buddhism Articles - Is Buddhism a Pessimistic Way of Life?" Jeffrey Po. <http://www.4ui.com/eart/172eart1.htm> (accessed June 23, 2012). Jeffrey Po translates "dukkha" or *ku* more accurately as "disquietude" or "the condition of being disturbed"; (Kohn 1991). This is a Buddhist term that means achieving enlightenment and freedom from reincarnation; (Kohn 1991, 131, 143). This refers to a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, and between certain metaphysical views; (Carrithers 1986, 51). Cited in "The Buddha."

<sup>72</sup> (Dumoulin 1979, 3)

<sup>73</sup> The full legend as Dumoulin recounts, "The ascetic Gautama, after six or seven years of frustrated attempts to gain an experience through the force of austerities and Yogic practices, was driven anew to sit beneath a pipal tree near the Neranjara River. He resolved not to get up until his goal had been reached. . . . In the course of a night he acquired threefold knowledge . . . his previous life . . . the karmic chain of world occurrences . . . the redeeming knowledge of suffering - its causes, its cessation, and the way to the cessation of suffering (Dumoulin 1979, 314-5); (Dumoulin 1979, 16)

<sup>74</sup> (Conze 1959, 214-15). Cited in "The Quietist Controversy," "It is because for countless eons they have been unable to escape from false ideas that all living beings are . . . impregnated with the triple poison of greed, hate, and delusion . . . and cannot free themselves from it. But any being who can get rid of these false ideas will win

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emancipation and become a Buddha. . . . As soon as false ideas are got rid of, the great knowledge is automatically realized."

<sup>75</sup> (Conze 1959, 215)

<sup>76</sup> (Conze 1959, 214-15).

<sup>77</sup> (Dumoulin 1979, 17)

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Thus, Irigaray concludes that authority is not as monolithic as it purports to be. One needs to mimic and recuperate the female within the logic of repression, censorship, and non-recognition. Judith Butler in *Bodies that Matter* returns to a notion of materiality and matter to illustrate that the discourse and body are equally unstable and capable of transformations. Because regulatory norms materialize sex through reiteration of norms, the reiteration exposes the incomplete nature of materialization. Bodies never comply with the norm, and such instabilities make possible the chance to turn the regulatory law against itself to spawn different re-articulations. She argues a return to Matter, not as a surface but as a process of materialization that over time stabilizes to produce the boundary, fixity and surface effects that we call Matter. Thus, Butler argues sexual differences are marked and formed through discursive practices and are always indissociable from them. Similarly, sex is a regulatory ideal that produces, demarcates and differentiates the body it governs.

<sup>83</sup> (Conze 1959, 231-2). In Buddhism, the un-enlightened souls continue either to hellish reincarnation or hell.

<sup>84</sup> Psalm 50: Psalms 10-11. New King James Version.

<sup>85</sup> Genesis 9: 1, 3. New International Version.

<sup>86</sup> On the concept of identity, Butler uses Kristeva's notion of abjection, where the self-child is constituted through the abjection, the literal throwing up of the foreign object the parents are trying to feed, as "not that, not me, other," and thus begins to distinguish the wishes of others against his/her own. This leads Butler to call for an understanding of abjection as an open wound on the subject, the excluded horrific other that forms the self, but always possesses the potential to return and disrupt the seemingly homogeneous identity. For a more detailed explanation of Kristeva's food loathing as the most elementary and archaic form of abjection, please see Kristeva "Approaching Abjection," page 2-4.

<sup>87</sup> (Conze 1959, 172). Quoting Seng-Ts'an, "On Believing in Mind."

<sup>88</sup> Wong interprets that Lu Xun is deconstructing the Chinese beliefs of the spiritual and divine and finds his behavior equally "subversive and iconoclastic as the Nietzschean pronouncement that "God is dead." Wong dubs Lu Xun's efforts as "deconstruct[ing] man's manipulation of god" (Wong 2005, 27); Wong also emphasizes how Lu Xun's work would "change the way in which the Chinese viewed their mythological gods... [and] dethrone the emperor's status of a supreme deity" (Wong 2005, 31).

<sup>89</sup> (Huters, 1984, 73).

<sup>90</sup> Huters, Theodore. "Lu Xun and the Crisis of Figuration" in (Huters 2011).

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<sup>91</sup> When I reference French feminists, I refer to the intellectual tradition that began with Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva that was brought over to the US by post-modernist critics such as Rachel Blau Duplessis; Hutters summarizes, “These Western ideas claimed universality for themselves as a condition of their existence, a claim that would have been hard to deny to anyone who looked very hard at how history had developed in the nineteenth century.” The Chinese suddenly found themselves caught in the collision of two “bodies of knowledge that both claim[ed] universality, but in which one is in a superior material position to back up its claims.” (Huters 2005, 15).

<sup>92</sup> I use “subaltern” to denote a class or group of people “subordinated to the power of other classes or groups.” (Denton 1998, 294). Please see (Hershatter 1993) for further discussion of the subaltern.

<sup>93</sup> (Bhabha 1994, 304)

<sup>94</sup> (Said 1979).

<sup>95</sup> (Sakai 1988, 496)

<sup>96</sup> (Shih 2001, 138)

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-7.

<sup>98</sup> (Duara 1988); (Duara 1995)

<sup>99</sup> (Shih 2001, 145)

<sup>100</sup> (Lee 1985, 4-5)

<sup>101</sup> Chatterjee claims “Nationalism [is] a European discourse of domination that is appropriated by Third world nations for self-empowerment in the struggle for independence. This lack of autonomy, however, marks a paradoxical situation, because the subjugated people who use nationalism to oppose the colonial rule or European hegemony invariably speak the language of colonialism—modernity, progress, development” (Chatterjee 1993) quoted in (Liu 1993, 38); “The problem is that the cultural domination of the West is homogenized and totalized to such a degree that alternative narrative within the nation-space is virtually written out as a theoretical possibility” (Chatterjee 1993) quoted in (Liu 1993, 39).

<sup>102</sup> (DuPlessis 1985, 275)

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>104</sup> (Lu Xun, II: 13).

<sup>105</sup> (DuPlessis 1985, 278). Sheila de Bretteville cited in Deena Metzger, “In Her Image,” 5; *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 275-9.

<sup>108</sup> (Barthes 1974, 147)

<sup>109</sup> Lee notes that Lu Xun contradicted himself at different periods of his life. For example, Zhou notes how Lu Xun gives up medical school for writing because medicine cannot save the people’s spirit. Later Von Kowallis cites Lu Xun’s views that literature is meaningless without art and spontaneity, and documents Lu Xun’s dislike for having any previous agenda for literature (Kowallis 1996, 10-12).

<sup>110</sup> (Lu Xun, II: 24)



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<sup>111</sup> (Lee 1985 7)

<sup>112</sup> (Lu Xun, II: 14).

<sup>113</sup> (Lee 1987, 54).

<sup>114</sup> (Yu 1987). Yu in *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition* argues that the Chinese have a different relationship to their world from the Euro-American's. The Chinese connection with nature, Yu argues, is more direct than the Euro-American's. Thus, traditional Chinese literature does not have an allegorical component. In this Chinese tradition, the moon would signify clarity and insight.

<sup>115</sup> (Liang 1981, 469)

<sup>116</sup> (DuPlessis 1985, 278).

<sup>117</sup> Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, "Speaking in Tongues: Dialogics, Dialectics, and the Black Woman Writer's Literary Tradition" in *Aesthetics in Feminist Perspective*. eds. Hilde Hein and Carolyn Korsmeyer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 119-136. This phenomenon of multiple voices also occurs in black women's literature. Henderson notes, "The multiple voices of black female characters in literature can be explicated through Bakhtin's dialogics of difference and Gadamer's dialectics of identity, as well as by reference to the scriptural notion of glossolalia or speaking in tongues. Characters from novels by Zora Neale Hurston, Sherley Anne Williams, and Toni Morrison demonstrate how both the differences and identities of female subjectivity structure the discourse of black women. Because of doubled otherness—not white, not male—black women are positioned to speak in a plurality of voices, transforming the glossolalia—of spiritual witness of a few—to "heteroglossia"—multiple tongues of public discourse accessible to many" (Henderson 1993, 119); "According to [Mikhail] Bakhtin, each social group speaks in its own "social dialect"—possesses its own unique language-expressing shared values, perspectives, ideology, and norms. These social dialects become the 'languages' of heteroglossia 'intersect[ing] with each other in many different ways. . . . As such they all may be juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and be interrelated dialogically" (Bakhtin 1981, 292).

<sup>118</sup> (Duplessis 1985, 275). Quoted from Anita Barrows, "Form and Fragment," 7-8 in (Koolish 1981).

<sup>119</sup> (Barthes 1974, 4).

<sup>120</sup> (Eagleton 1976, 34-5)

<sup>121</sup> (Lu Xun, II: 20)

<sup>122</sup> (Lu Xun, II: 13)

<sup>123</sup> (Farquhar 1999, 29)

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>125</sup> (Lu Xun quoted in (Farquhar 1999, 57).

<sup>126</sup> (Lu Xun, II: 25-6)

<sup>127</sup> (Lu Xun, II: 26)

<sup>128</sup> (Rushdie 1991, 14)

<sup>129</sup> (Huters 1993, 161).

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<sup>130</sup> Huang Sung-K'ang cites Lu Xun as seeing the most important aspect of art and literature as being designated by creativity not purpose. "Here where the revolution is taking place, writers seem to be fond of saying that literature and revolution are intimately connected. For instance, they say literature can be used for propagating, agitating for, and stirring up revolution, and it can promote and bring revolution to a successful conclusion. But I think such writing are powerless, for good art always flows spontaneously and naturally from the heart; it does not accept orders of others nor weigh the pros and cons. If we first hang up a subject and then produce a composition, what is the difference between such writings and the eight-legged essay? They have no value as literature. The question of whether they are able to move readers simply does not arise" (Huang 1957, 112).

<sup>131</sup> (Gilbert 1979, 78); *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 82; *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>133</sup> (Lu Xun, II: 18)

<sup>134</sup> Helene Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa," in *The Signs Reader: Women, Gender, & Scholarship*, eds. Elizabeth Abel and Emily K. Abel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

<sup>135</sup> (Gilbert 1979, 91); For example, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1922).

<sup>136</sup> Lee argues that Lu Xun succeeds in "evol[ing] something new in both form and content." Lu Xun successfully transforms and transcends traditional Chinese influences by borrowing Western literary models (Lee 1987, 53). My paper highlights Lu Xun's frustration with what Hutters terms the "inadequacy of language" (Hutters 1984, 58) and the "futility of literature itself" (Hutters 1984, 73). "If Lu Xun like the madman was constantly trying to explore what he regarded as the horrifying subtext of this tale, he also realizes the futility of a purely discursive argument" (Hutters 1984, 58).

<sup>137</sup> (Liu 1995, 38-9).

<sup>138</sup> (Gilbert 1979, 52).

<sup>139</sup> (Hutters 1997, 14). "Appropriations: Another Look at Yan Fu and Western Ideas" in (Hutters 2011).

<sup>140</sup> (Rushdie 1991, 16)

<sup>141</sup> (Hutters, 1993, 161)

<sup>142</sup> (Hutters, 1993, 161)

<sup>143</sup> (Yang 1973, 153-154) quoted in (Semanov 1980, xvii).

<sup>144</sup> (Lu Xun, I: 64)

<sup>145</sup> (Shih 2001, 76)

<sup>146</sup> (Lee 1987, 17-18) quoted in *Lu Xun Quan Ji*, vol. 1, 416-7. *Lu Xun Quan Ji*. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981, 16 volumes.

<sup>147</sup> (Tsau 2001, 451)

<sup>148</sup> (Robinson 2008, 126-7)

<sup>149</sup> (Lu Xun, I: 135)

<sup>150</sup> (Lee, 1987, 71)

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<sup>151</sup> This subversion can also be seen in Euro-American poetry. In *A Tradition of Subversion: The Prose Poem in English from Wilde to Ashbery*, Marguerite S. Murphy writes: "The prose poem is an inherently subversive genre as well as a historically subversive one. Because of its marginality, its situation on the "borderline of prose" (T. S. Eliot's phrase), it must continually subvert prosaic conventions in order to establish itself as authentically other."

<sup>152</sup> (Lu Xun 1974, xxxviii)

<sup>153</sup> Hao Chang, "New Confucianism and the Intellectual Crisis of Contemporary China" quoted in (Furth 1976, 281) which is quoted in (Shih 2001, 138).

<sup>154</sup> The appearance of being "wholesale" was greatly due to the effects of the extreme imbalance of politics and power and the need always to negotiate through the political pressures of urgent national salvation in the May Fourth era.

<sup>155</sup> (Tu 1979, 106-7) quoted in (Denton 1998, 260).

<sup>156</sup> (Lu Xun 198-203) quoted in (Advance, 19.)

<sup>157</sup> Porges, Stephen. "Social Engagement and Attachment - PORGES - 2006 - Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences - Wiley Online Library." Wiley Online Library.  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1196/annals.1301.004/abstract?deniedAccessCustomisedMessage=&userIsAuthenticated=false> (accessed June 24, 2012).

### Chapter 3

#### Transcending Patriarchal Nationalism and Euro-American Feminism:

#### Xiao Hong's Stories

Focus on the work of a male writer, Lu Xun in terms of the intersections of Chinese and Euro-American notions of the self—now shifts to specificities of a Chinese woman writer, Xiao Hong. As Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan notes, feminist historiography is not just a woman's question but is also about re-articulating how all discourses are, by nature, gendered.<sup>1</sup> The preceding chapters on Lu Xun, thus, should be understood as an inquiry about a specifically modern Chinese male writer's experience. In the following two chapters, I balance the “other half of the sky,” as Lu Xun's avant-garde hegemonic voice integrates with the multiplicity of an equally visionary, female notion of subjectivity.<sup>2</sup> Some might argue that leading with a male writer re-enacts the very hierarchies I am attempting to deconstruct. But framing my argument of Chinese female notions of subjectivity with male nationalist discourse serves to emphasize that both the first and decolonizing world perspectives are always already gendered. My use of the term “decolonizing” rather than “postcolonial” suggests that decolonization is a constant process rather than a completed project. In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler contends that reiterating with difference carries the potential to mutate the very definition of what is perceived as the “norm.”<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, I hope to show how the assumptions of the “objective” and “universal” position of the Euro-American male are, in fact, gendered and culturally biased.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, this dissertation on male and female subjectivities breaks free from the Euro-American Manichaeic divide (especially pronounced in Euro-American feminism), instead emphasizing that all identities are integrations rather than polarities. By including a male writer,

a purposeful “outsider” to feminism, along with my readings of Chinese women’s texts, I intentionally contradict the Euro-American feminist presumption of an antagonism between patriarchy and women—the polarized camps of men wielding power and agency against powerless and victimized woman.<sup>5</sup> Ideologically, such camps are theoretical or fictive; a mass acting solely as a one-dimensional patriarch does not exist.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Dorothy Ko finds that one can possess less power in gender, yet greater power by economic and social status; in other words, one can inhabit both “camps.”<sup>7</sup> Because hierarchy was also dependent upon class, not all Chinese women were subordinate to Chinese men. Perhaps all individuals embody what Rachel Blau Duplessis calls “irreconcilable things.”<sup>8</sup> An integrated notion of identities is needed. Finally, the sequencing of the chapters highlights the historical and cultural distinctions between Chinese and Euro-American women’s liberation.<sup>9</sup> Lu Xun’s presence in the dissertation serves as a reminder that modern mainland Chinese women’s liberation came about not as a result of women’s united efforts, as it did in the West, but as a result of the liberation of the Chinese nationalist party.<sup>10</sup> Lu Xun, dubbed the “father of modern Chinese literature,” and credited with birthing Euro-American notions of the self in China, may be the origin of the modern paternalistic (father-daughter) nationalistic framework embedded within Chinese female notions of subjectivity.<sup>11</sup> I use the term “father-daughter” or paternalistic instead of patriarchal (which reifies the Manichaeic divide), because the term emphasizes a more neutral, interdependent relationship in which both positive and negative aspects of human relationships exist.<sup>12</sup> In the thick of Chinese nationalists’ liberation of Chinese women, Lu Xun’s credit as “father of modern literature,” as well as his being recognized as birthing Euro-American notions of the self in China, likely contributed to views of modern Chinese female notions of subjectivity as derived from males. Investigating how Lu Xun digested Euro-American ideas of subjectivity and

rendered them accessible to others is thus vital to understanding the subsequent development of Chinese female notions of subjectivity.

Because my dissertation focuses on the invention of a unique modern Chinese idea of “subjectivity,” I chose to focus on Xiao Hong’s innovative amalgamation of states of being that, I find, transcend Euro-American as well as Chinese nationalist notions of subjectivity. Although, historically, Ding Ling has been credited as being the first modern Chinese feminist writer for her contribution to revolutionary writing on women and nationalism, I read Ding Ling more along the lines of engaging in literary “play” with Euro-American notions of subjectivity.<sup>13</sup> And although critic Janet Ng has argued for the significance of the work of an earlier Chinese female writer, Cheng Hengzhe, that predates even Lu Xun’s modern short story, Cheng’s writing centers on her American overseas experiences.<sup>14</sup> Xiao Hong is of particular interest because, in addition to her unique contributions to modern Chinese female notions of subjectivity, she can also be read figuratively as both descending from a long lineage of educated women writers, the *cainu*, as well as for bearing unique personal and biographical ties to Lu Xun.

Xiao Hong’s connections to Lu Xun have been documented in Xiao Jun’s work—fifteen letters of correspondence written by Xiao Hong and Xiao Jun jointly to Lu Xun, and Lu Xun’s personal responses to them. Euro-American literary critic Howard Goldblatt calls Xiao Hong a member of Lu Xun’s “inner circle” as well as a “devoted follower.”<sup>15</sup> Clearly, Xiao Hong actively engaged with Lu Xun, wrote letters seeking his advice on her revolutionary writing, and, as Lu Xun did, wrote to expose the illnesses of the society. Thematic similarities in the works of Lu Xun and Xiao Hong also exist in their echoing of the exploitation of women and the poor by the wealthy and the powerful via manipulation of the decaying and degenerate Confucian system. Moreover, Xiao Hong’s portrayal of the dispossessed and the poor, and her

strikingly candid inquiries, shares with many of Lu Xun's other short stories—"Ah Q," "Medicine," and "A New Year's Celebration"—a compassionately painful and unflinchingly honest depiction of society's lowest rung.<sup>16</sup> On an even more personal level, aside from seeing him as a mentor and teacher, Xiao Hong had a special relationship with Lu Xun—a connection that biographers have likened to one between father and daughter. According to biographers, she often sought out Lu Xun when she needed sanctuary from Xiao Jun, her lover, who would pummel her with his fists until she was "black and blue."<sup>17</sup> Perhaps she found in Lu Xun a father-figure and a protector.

Arguing that Xiao Hong is *the* appropriate female literary inheritor of Lu Xun may be conventionally required, yet the abundance of modern Chinese women's texts would make the gesture, for me, not ingenuous. My selection of Xiao Hong thus should be understood not as a culmination of immanent mandates of superior rationale and reasoning, but as a result of personal readerly connections. As such, my decision to study Xiao Hong may be read as intentional "arbitrariness"—not "arbitrary" as in randomness, but as in the coincidental links I have found in their works versus the links found by others.<sup>18</sup> In humbly choosing whose work to interpret, I have determined that while it may seem somewhat arbitrary to others, the selection is not an accident for me. My focus on Xiao Hong is by no means intended to minimize the significance of other Chinese women writers, nor to create a hierarchy among these writers, but rather to illustrate how Xiao Hong may have served her unique purpose.

Interestingly, despite high commendations and support by Lu Xun to the extent that he wrote her book's preface and spent his own money publishing her novella *The Field of Life and Death* in his *Slave Series*, I find that Xiao Hong's work and life have still not been fully explored.<sup>19</sup> While Hu Feng commends her for her "anti-Japanese spirit and for awakening

peasants to nationalism,” and Lu Xun’s praises her for her representation of the meta-narrative of nationalism and her illustration of “the tenacity of the people of northern China in their struggle for survival and resistance to death,” other aspects of her work drew much criticism.<sup>20</sup> Many critics categorize her as one of the lesser writers who tried to follow in the footsteps of Lu Xun in terms of the themes of her work, her humanistic spirit, and her revolutionary thought.<sup>21</sup> Mao Dun criticized Xiao Hong for her writing being “richer in feeling than intellect,” and for her weak commitment to the cause of nationalism.<sup>22</sup> In *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, C.T. Hsia places her in the category of “internationally uniform literature... whose main service was the carrying out of party assignments.”<sup>23</sup> Hsia continues:

These refuges—Hsiao Chun and his wife Hsiao Hung... were all slipshod writers untrained in the craft of fiction. But because they were all undeviatingly Communist in their demand for an all-out war with Japan, and because they all wrote about the conditions in Manchuria with which the Chinese public was then keenly concerned, they became the darlings of the Left-wing League.<sup>24</sup>

For many decades, critical interpretation has reduced her writing to nationalist propaganda; not until Howard Goldblatt’s translations of her work, and the critical work by Dai Jinhua and Meng Yue in *Lishi li fuchu de xianxiang*, and Lydia Liu in “The Female Body and Nationalist Discourse: *The Field of Life and Death* Revisited,” have Xiao Hong’s writings been explored beyond the meta-narrative of “national allegory” or anti-imperialist novel.<sup>25</sup>

Xiao Hong’s connections to Lu Xun have thus proved to be both a blessing and a curse. Bringing exposure to her work, Lu Xun’s accolades have also provoked heavy criticism of her dependence on the publicity drawn for her links to the merit and endeavors of her famous mentor. This Confucian relational connection becomes a double-edged sword, for in the student-teacher paradigm, the student never exceeds the teacher. Moreover, details from her personal life in biographies have led a series of judgments to be carried over into evaluations that her work is



inferior to that of Lu Xun. Attacked for deviating from masculine-defined principles of nationalism, judged as lacking commitment to nationalism, and criticized for her writing's emotive texture, her work has been negatively judged by both a patriarchal nationalistic and a Euro-American feminist measuring stick. Xiao Hong's biographic details—her infamous love life, her subjection to abuse by men, her tendency to focus on the quotidian and affective details rather than on themes of revolution and nationalism—have led her to be labeled a lesser writer.

Howard Goldblatt notes,

...in literary histories...since 1949 she is accorded the rank of second-rate writer, whose personal life is more an object of discussion than her writing, and who is chided for the “wasted efforts” of her later works... According to these literary historians, she cannot be considered in the same category as the “giants” of modern Chinese literature, luminaries such as Pa Chin, Kuo Mo-jo, Lu Xun, Mao Tun, and Lao She, and they also compare her unfavorably with many lesser-known...but highly political writers.<sup>26</sup>

Though I am grateful to Goldblatt for translating and making Xiao Hong's works accessible to the English-speaking world, his analysis tacitly supports criticism of her work as insulated from the historical period.<sup>27</sup> Goldblatt notes that the “topical and doctrinaire message—whether patriotic, communistic, or anarchistic—at the core of the majority of novels... is generally missing in hers.”<sup>28</sup> While Goldblatt lauds her ability to “transcend time and space,” and praises her literature both for its “personal appeal” and for being “more intimately involved with the author herself,” he deprecates her with faint praise by suggesting that her work is “appealing, when removed from the context of the age in which they were written.”<sup>29</sup> Indeed her work transcends time and space, but transcendence comes from being nested in the midst of historical and cultural clashes, not from being insulated from them. Interpretation of her work as personally transcendent, historically disconnected, and removed from reality is the prevailing criticism—and one that is all too often directed against female writers.<sup>30</sup>

What literary criticism of Xiao Hong often emphasizes, in fact, reveals less about the subject of inquiry than about those conducting the inquiry. In the hierarchized framework of subjectivity and agency across the first and third world divides, all subjects of inquiry from the third world are inevitably reduced to objects; they simply mirror Gayatri Spivak's subaltern, who is but a lost signifier who ends up referencing the first world self or literary critic.<sup>31</sup> A reading free of cultural or political interests simply does not exist. But Xiao Hong's texts must be situated in their specific historical, political, and philosophical junctures. By investigating the ways in which critics—motivated by patriarchal nationalism, imperialism or Euro-American feminism—have judged Xiao Hong's works, my effort here is to restore a kind of balance to the interpretation. I find, for instance, that it is also essential to frame the discussion of Xiao Hong's work in terms of contemporary critical theory to understand how discussions of her work are being influenced and framed.

### *Disjunctures between Decolonizing Women and Euro-American Feminists*

On the one hand, Euro-American feminist concerns have much in common with those of decolonizing women, as in such issues as violence against women, abortion, rape, reproduction, and oppression. On the other hand, more and more works of Chinese literature are interpreted through Euro-American feminist theory, promising the possibility of a transnational feminism. However, most Chinese female critics reject the idea that Euro-American feminism is a suitable analytical tool for interpreting Chinese women's texts. The simplest task of translation already highlights deep historical and cultural incommensurabilities. For instance, the terms "girl," "ladies," "broad," "chick," "babe," "women," and "female" all carry different historical and cultural connotations, and so do Chinese terms like *funu*, *nuren*, and *nuxing*. All three Chinese

terms are commonly translated as “women,” but *funu* refers to “a female subject in Maoist state discourse,” while *nuxing* refers to the sexed subject, the “essential woman.”<sup>32</sup> These terms further carry completely different associations as they traverse the diaspora of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore.<sup>33</sup> Linguistic differences are just the tip of the iceberg; below them incommensurable realities of first and decolonizing world perspectives.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Euro-American critics tend to judge Chinese women against a Euro-American timeline that is designated as “universal,” and often impose a culturally based and class-limited notion of agency. Collaboration is difficult as experiences, priorities, and goals are unaligned. What follows is an elucidation of some of the critical positions.

(1) Literary critics Tani Barlow, Shu-mei Shih, Li Xiaojiang, Meng Yue, and Mayfair Yang concur that decolonizing women and Euro-American feminists often live in different realities. Whereas Euro-American feminism is grounded in the difference of women’s bodies—because Western capitalism commodified women into objects of desire and marginalized women for sexual differences, Maoist women were denied sexual difference.<sup>35</sup> Tani Barlow in *Gender Politics in Modern China* cites that most Chinese women shared that they felt too physically exhausted to debate on gender and that they felt disconnected from Euro-American women, whom they viewed as having more reforms, less suffering, more complaints, easier lives, and too much leisure time. Instead, Chinese women shared more similarities and related more with Chinese men in their pressing struggle for daily sustenance. Chinese women also felt that Euro-American women lacked a genuine interest in Chinese women as people, and were only interested in imposing their experiences to prove the universality of Euro-American feminism. Chinese women often felt that harmony between men and women was a more urgent and important social issue than feminism.<sup>36</sup> Xiao Hong’s works will show that there are

incommensurable realities not only between the first and third worlds, but also among ethnically similar but different classes.

(2) Nira Yuval-Davis in *Gender and Nation*, Andrew Parker in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, and Deniz Kandiyoti in “Women and Nation” posit that the conflicting pull of loyalty to either gender or nation, and the fragmented self, experienced by decolonizing women are often not shared by first world feminists.<sup>37</sup> Decolonizing women are often torn by the urgency for national salvation, though the work often comes at the price of nationalist appropriation or of fulfilling native women’s needs.<sup>38</sup> While Euro-American feminism is anti-totalizing *within* its own national borders, in the international realm, it supports an imperialist agenda by insisting on a forced collectivity that usurps native women’s independence and autonomy, and distracts from urgent issues of capitalist relations, as well as political and cultural domination.<sup>39</sup> At worst, Euro-American feminism can exacerbate conditions, as native women who take up Western-style feminism are often charged by their native men to be “anti-national.” The decolonizing woman thus experiences the unique circumstance of simultaneously being part of—and rejected by—both her gender and her nation, so that she must constantly negotiate between the two.<sup>40</sup> This phenomenon exemplifies Xiao Hong’s life and reputation, whereby she and her characters must constantly negotiate between ties as a women and ties to the nation.

(3) Tani Barlow, Mayfair Yang, and Shu-mei Shih establish that first world and Chinese women possess historically different relationships to the state. Because Maoist women’s rights were a result of state and class reforms, they inhabited a more symbiotic relationship to the state. Tani Barlow’s interviews show that Maoist women felt supported and indebted to the state for upholding women’s rights.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, Euro-American women needed to create a separate women’s movement to wrestle rights from the state, so their relationship is more

antithetically based. However, the Chinese woman's relationship with the state is also more complex and fraught with ambivalences. While the native women's movement in the nation represented modernity and progress, native women were, ironically, constructed as outside of the nation. Native women's needs were only acceptable in terms of how they would benefit the (male) state; all else was labeled anti-nationalistic, alien, or "Western."<sup>42</sup> In addition, when exposing native patriarchy's problems or requesting autonomy or rights, native women often faced accusations of betrayal from both groups.<sup>43</sup> This gap between nationalism's needs and a mother's needs can also be seen in Xiao Hong's novel *The Field of Life and Death*, in which a mother interrupts the nationalist recruitment that is taking place to interject her despair over having the nationalist cause, not the Japanese, take her son's life.

(4) The first world woman does not usually experience the decolonizing woman's commitment to survival, nor does she necessarily understand the logic behind the decolonizing woman's need to compromise with nationalism to survive. Nationalistic writing often eroticizes love for the nation, and tropes colonization as rape of the motherland and the emasculation of native men. Such projections by nationalism create a conservative demand on women to preserve their chastity, which becomes equated with maintaining national honor and purity.<sup>44</sup> Native women are thus required to uphold the ideological boundaries of the nation by serving as symbolic border guards of the nation's collectivity and by serving as forced carriers of tradition.<sup>45</sup> In the mean time, homo-social male bonding is solidified, as men acquire the privilege of fighting for the nation, which is equated with brotherhood.<sup>46</sup> In *Spaces of Our Own*, Mayfair Yang elucidates a pattern of Chinese male authors projecting themselves as victimized women to symbolize the nation, scapegoating women to confirm their own masculinity, or offering women as objects of sacrifice. In the urgent discourses of Chinese nationalism, the use

of women as symbols often aggressively subsumes women's individual needs and sexuality. As such, the Chinese woman becomes doubly written over—both a saintly symbol of tradition and an embodiment of Western victimization in China.<sup>47</sup> In some novels, like *Nie Hai Hua*, the woman even became a symbol of the aggressive West. We must understand, however, that her complicity in these roles was often tied to her very own—and her family's—survival. These issues are well exemplified in Xiao Hong's short story, "Bridge," and Niu Zhenghuan's "Lost in the Wind and Snow," as will be explored later.

(5) Chinese women, first controlled by patriarchy in premodern China, by nationalism during the period of decolonization, and by the Communist party during the post-Mao period, currently feel a need to reject imposed identities and to assert their voices as they experiment with autonomy and agency. Most illustrative of this problematic is the vehement refusal of Chinese female critic Li Xiaojiang to be appropriated by Euro-American feminism. Li views such appropriation as another form of ideological domination that forecloses the possibility for autonomous thinking—an imported discourse that damages the new woman's movement in China by breaking the autonomous creativity of native Chinese women.<sup>48</sup> Rejection of Euro-American feminism signifies breaking with *all* totalizing discourses—Euro-American feminism, the Chinese state, nationalism, and patriarchal tradition. Modern Chinese women are choosing to act autonomously as historical agents with full rights to self-representation and self-awareness.<sup>49</sup> Although Susan Mann, Gail Hershatter, and Dorothy Ko deconstruct restrictive views about Chinese women, their work also needs to be approached with caution as it can distract from native voices. According to Li Xiaojiang, of the two—Caucasian and diasporic Chinese feminists—the latter may displace the native voices more.<sup>50</sup> Diasporic intellectuals expose the nation's dark sides and impose a Euro-American standard for judging native women, but often

do not question their ideology or relation to imperialism (which their Caucasian counterparts usually feel compelled to do). I follow Shu-mei Shih in finding that the diasporic woman cannot assume the “authentic” spokesperson’s role, as neither can the native. Privileging any voice over others inevitably silences the full spectrum of modern Chinese gendered experiences. On the other hand, diasporic critics carry the potential to spark discussions that English readers otherwise would not engage in or be exposed to. Rather than voices seeking to competitively obliterate each other, I’d like to explore alternative ways of engaging with voices from multiple positions. In the following chapter, I show how Xiao Hong’s work creatively articulates a unique spectrum of Chinese female selves.

(6) For over a century, a Euro-American feminist timeline has cast decolonizing women as backward and outdated. Imbricated with Euro-American cultural ideologies of “subjectivity” and “evolution,” this timeline derives entirely from historically and culturally specific developments that occurred in Europe and the United States. Repeatedly, scholars have measured native women against ideas expressed, for example, by Julia Kristeva’s article “Women’s Time,” which maps the development of feminism in three waves. The first wave forged a place according to men’s linear time and made political demands, but ended as feminists found the limits of existing in a completely male-defined system. In the second wave, French feminists distrusted politics, refuted linear temporality, and sought a unique female experience and aesthetic that was closer to the body and emotions. This phase ended, however, due to essentializing tendencies that mirrored masculinist ideology in tending to restrict identity to biology and completely missing the social aspects of being female. Finally, in the third wave, Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler maintain the need to signify from the disjunction between the sign and its object through reiterations.<sup>51</sup> While Irigaray and Butler locate instability in

repetition, both rely heavily on Derrida's theory of language and other Western theorists such as Freud, Plato, and Lacan.<sup>52</sup> Even though the third phase calls for redefining identity, I would argue that not all cultures base identity on abjection or even share the same constructs of self-centered identity.<sup>53</sup> Thus, whereas it appears to embrace heterogeneity of identities and cultures, the third wave ironically reinforces the first and third world disjunctions through its monocular focus on—and reification of—Euro-American theory, which perpetuates the illusion of a feminist evolutionary timeline.

Li Xiaojiang and Shu-mei Shih also conclude that Chinese female historical specificity cannot be mapped upon this incongruous Euro-American feminist evolutionary model.<sup>54</sup> Failure to acknowledge irreconcilable differences in historical developments perpetuates two Euro-American myths: Chinese women as liberated or Chinese women as doubly oppressed. Because 1950s Maoist women already had equal work and pay while Euro-American women were returning to the home, Euro-American feminists designated Maoist women as liberated. Later, after discovering that Maoist women were oppressed by both tradition and the new Communist state, they were labeled as doubly oppressed.<sup>55</sup> Both myths oversimplify. While benefiting from some progressive ideas, Maoist women struggled to achieve a sense of gendered self-representation.<sup>56</sup> According to Julia Kristeva's *stigmism*, this circumstance would place them in the second wave. Many Euro-American feminists have thus criticized contemporary Chinese women writers' return to the body and sexuality as turning toward essentialism and moving backward on the feminist timeline.<sup>57</sup> Chinese critics, however, argue that this movement signifies a return to the body and to the irrational, thus expressing women's frustration with the limitedness of words, humanity, suffering, and the rational. Tani Barlow notes that in the proliferation of recent modern Chinese women writers' works, the primary associations with the



female body were blood, pain, and sorrow.<sup>58</sup> Their thematic concerns resemble *shanghen wenxue* (wound literature) that proliferated in the aftermath of China's Cultural Revolution. Although *shanghen wenxue* bears some striking similarities with French feminism, the motivations behind the writings are completely different. Kristeva's stagism, therefore, should be understood as an historically specific reaction to events and sources of Euro-American patriarchal oppression and cannot represent a universal timeline. Kristeva's timeline is, thus, impractical for interpreting modern Chinese women's developments, as critical humility is necessary to understanding that each culture transforms along its own intended path. Chinese women have survived through a wide variety of challenges in history—various dynasties pre-1911, the Republican period, the post-Mao period, and the contemporary. Just as contemporary women have been judged and minimized due to incommensurability between Chinese specificity and Euro-American feminism, I find that Xiao Hong has been placed on a Euro-American timeline with imperialistic implications.

(7) Euro-American analysis of decolonizing others often hyper-focuses on victimization, which denies native women agency. Whereas Lu Xun and other Late Qing-Early Republic biographers found Xiao Hong's tenacious courage remarkable and forward thinking, Euro-American critics—consciously or unconsciously—selectively focus on passages that portray Xiao Hong as a passive victim. In responding to this polemical characterization, I wish to show how the critic's strategic selective scrutiny of victimization and helplessness in Chinese women's writings may be largely responsible for the Chinese female victim framework.<sup>59</sup> We may see this subtle propensity to hyper-focus on third world victimization in the writing pieces on which Howard Goldblatt chooses to concentrate, as well as in his judgments about her personal life choices. Although Goldblatt is no proclaimed feminist, I argue that his reading shares and

exemplifies a common first world feminist perspective that imposes a monocular view of Chinese women as victims.

Howard Goldblatt's translation of Xiao Hong's semi-autobiographical work, *Tales of Hulan River*, highlights her gender-charged commentary on the issue of child brides committing suicide. Translates Goldblatt: "The young women, bewildered, cannot understand why they must suffer such a fate [prearranged marriage], and so tragedy is often the result; some jump down wells, others hang themselves... if you casually ask a man whether or not he would dare to jump down one, I'm afraid the answer would be 'no.'"<sup>60</sup> The child bride is the ultimate disempowered and abused victim of traditional Chinese culture. She is a helpless child who deserves the protection and love of her parents, but is instead sold as a commodity. Forced into labor-intensive child-rearing while still but a child herself, she must eventually marry the boy she has helped raise and take on the new duties of sex and bearing children. The juxtaposition of the male and female roles limns the deep disparity in gender-related life circumstances.

Later, Goldblatt includes another gender-charged quote from "Idols in the Temple of the Patriarch and of the Immortal Matron"<sup>61</sup>:

They fashioned the male figures with a savage, malignant appearance, as though in condemnation of men's dispositions... for the simple reason that a single glance will strike fear into someone... When men hit their wives they can say: "The immortal Matron is supposed to be in constant fear of being beaten by the Patriarch, so what makes a gossipy old woman like you any different?"... So it is obvious that for a man to beat a woman is a Heaven-ordained right, blessed by the gods and demons alike.<sup>62</sup>

And, once more, Goldblatt quotes Xiao Hong upon her deathbed: "The greatest source of sorrow and pain to me was my being a woman."<sup>63</sup> These selected passages promote the perception of a victimized and powerless female. In selecting a string of female victimizations, Goldblatt portrays Xiao Hong as the antithesis of a tenacious, determined, avant-garde independent thinker.

Goldblatt's judgments of Xiao Hong's life decisions depict this portrayal most clearly: "She was a woman who yearned for self-reliance, though in retrospect it is evident that she had an overpowering need to be dependent on others, primarily men."<sup>64</sup> After having left Xiao Jun, Xiao Hong immediately paired up with Tuan-mu rather than remaining on her own—a decision that Goldblatt is quick to judge, for the following reasons: first, Tuan-mu was less known and not as well-placed as a writer, and thus was in a position to exploit her fame; second, Tuan-mu's verbal and emotional abuse simply replaced Xiao Jun's physical abuse; and third, part of Xiao Hong's duty to Tuan-mu was subordinate, such as hand copying his novel *The Great River*. Goldblatt thus surmises, "Why she continued to stay with him when she realized this [these three pieces of information] is hard to understand, though it does serve to strengthen the argument that she was a desperately lonely woman prepared to sacrifice even her self-respect for a permanent relationship with a man."<sup>65</sup> Substantiating that Xiao Hong was weak and dependent, Goldblatt quotes

Leaving Hsiao Chun was the resolution of one problem, and going with "T" was the beginning of another...I should have left "T" long ago, but I still didn't want to return to my home. Now I want to surrender to my father, accept my bitter defeat, and throw away my weapons, because my body has failed me; I never thought I would see this day.<sup>66</sup>

With this series of passages to validate that Xiao Hong was overly dependent and oppressed, Goldblatt concludes, "If we are right, then the picture that emerges is not of a battler who defied convention as a matter of course, but rather a young woman with strong sensitivities and growing feelings of self pity, who was tragically unsure of herself and searching for someone on whom she could depend."<sup>67</sup> While he lauds Xiao Hong's writing, Goldblatt portrays her as the antithesis of a revolutionary. Applying cross-cultural values without hesitation, his appraisal of Xiao Hong, indeed, betrays subtle judgments about her being domestic and submissive, assessing

some desires as “appropriate” or “successful,” and others not. If the modern Chinese woman—known for her tenacity, determination, and independent thinking—is exposed as nothing more than a “sham,” precisely how does that leave us to assess other Chinese women of the period?

Considering the inventory of pitiful, exploited, and abused female characters in Xiao Hong’s writings (including herself), one might argue that certain conclusions about Chinese female victimization are inevitable. As Goldblatt notes, “That a blameless human being (especially a woman) should suffer the physical and mental abuses the girl [the child bride] receives is sheer anathema to her and appears as a recurring theme in much of her fiction, taking on the form of an obsession.”<sup>68</sup> Indeed, limited to interpretations through the lens of Euro-American notions of subjectivity and agency, most of Xiao Hong’s fictional characters would appear to fit in this category. On the other hand, considering the myriad interpretive possibilities in Xiao Hong’s texts, might this “obsession” with gender victimization be, in part, magnified by Goldblatt’s own projections and subjective interpretations? I would like to draw attention again to my concept of selective focus, which refers to the critic’s own biases—conscious or unconscious—in the selection of particular passages. Just in terms of diction and syntax, perhaps the simple repetition of the English word “woman” (once translated)—along with the text’s depiction of gender inequalities and injustices—inevitably compels the educated Euro-American reader to interpret from a feminist perspective. Collecting passages like tokens to prove Chinese women’s victimization, Goldblatt finally labels Xiao Hong “traditional,” “indecisive,” and “dependent,” insinuating that her “subjectivity” is weak. What surfaces in such assessments is Euro-American criticism’s covert link between subjectivity and agency and its tendency to apply its own ideologies for judging other cultures. In so doing, Euro-American feminism usurps

native women's agency. Exactly how Euro-American notions of agency have become linked to subjectivity, evolution, and the moral judgment of others is detailed in the following section.

(8) Euro-American notions of subjectivity are often linked to culturally and class-limited notions of agency against which decolonizing women are judged. "Human agency" is defined as "the capacity for human beings to make choices and to impose those choices on the world."<sup>69</sup>

The concept of agency can be traced back to Harry Frankfurt, who distinguished human will and desire from that of animals by the ability to form "second-order desires."<sup>70</sup> Charles Taylor added to this understanding the ability to evaluate impulses as "desirable" or "undesirable" through a mode of self-evaluation based on an internal value system, as well as on a mental prioritizing function that distinguishes higher and lower (more profound and more superficial) values that included more abstract concepts such as love, god, and altruism. He also notes the superiority of "strategic power in humans."<sup>71</sup> Thus, higher reasoning, action, consciousness, intention, and the construction of an internal value system are requirements for Euro-American notions of agency and subjectivity. According to Albert Bandura:

The evolutionary emergence of advanced symbolizing capacity enabled humans to transcend the dictates of their immediate environment and made them unique in their power to shape their life circumstances and the courses their lives take... People are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them. Social cognitive theory rejects a duality between human agency and social structure. People create social systems, and these systems, in turn, organize and influence people's lives.... To be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances... People are self-organizing, proactive, self-regulating, and self-reflecting. They are not simply onlookers of their behavior. They are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them.<sup>72</sup>

Bandura's notion of the self thus extends from historical and cultural requirements of individuality into requirements for agency: A subject must have immediate or long-term foreseeable impact and influence upon the world, the society, or the self. The subject's power of influence thus becomes a measuring stick with which to tacitly judge all others' subjectivity. A

subject without a Euro-American notion of agency becomes merely an object. Bandura's claim exemplifies such a problematic: "Consciousness is the very substance of mental life. It provides the means to make life not only personally manageable, but also worth living. Without deliberative and reflective conscious activity, humans are simply mindless automatons. Cognitive capabilities provide us with the means to function as mindful agents."<sup>73</sup> "Make life... worth living" offers a value judgment based upon the assumption that all humans have equal access to resources and that no one must expend energy simply to survive. These blanket value judgments deny the reality of those struggling to survive or to meet basic needs such as hunger pains, a warm, safe place to sleep, or access to clean water everyday—any individuals, who due to circumstances, may or may not have the luxury to focus on "second-order" desires in the present moment. "Higher" reasoning may or may not be a priority for a family struggling to survive. The phrases "worth living" and "mindful agent" are highly subjective and culturally and economically bound to a privileged life: Surviving and meeting basic needs are always already presumed.

Moreover, I question whether Judith Butler's and Luce Irigaray's work on recuperating female agency that hyper-focuses on intellectualism, scientificism, and the intricacy of words and signifiers have equal significance to the lives of women struggling with poverty, illiteracy, domestic abuse, homelessness, starvation, or daily sustenance—regardless of nation or ethnicity. Many of the fictional female characters in Xiao Hong's stories are challenged not only with self-care, but also with meeting the fundamental needs of their children and, possibly, the elderly or ill of the family as well. The Euro-American evolutionary timeline and requirements for agency perceive other cultures—as well as its own poor and dispossessed—as backward. As Xiao Hong will show, this tendency to hierarchize "higher" needs is problematic; needs are simply needs—

whether to define the self, to reiterate with difference, or to survive.<sup>74</sup> Such definitions of agency often assume that the subject of discussion is already an educated, financially secure, autonomous subject with connections to power and means. A stratified notion of agency in relation to the self and its access to power and resources is thus needed. Without a stratified notion of agency, an implicit assumption exists that all people in general have equal access to all forms of agency and that the decolonizing native is simply not choosing to act upon his or her agency. These implicit “one-size-fits-all” notions of agency justify cultural, economical, and moral judgments of the other. The problem of such rhetoric is not just cross-cultural or confined to national boundaries or poor and war-torn nations, but also as it applies to class. A displaced person caught in a war-torn country may have more in common with Americans surviving gang-infested inner-city ghettos than with someone of the same nationality living under military protection and wealth.<sup>75</sup> Rather than black-and-white judgments of whether agency or subjectivity is present, the discussion needs to take into account an understanding of one’s ability to impact one’s society and life in proportion to one’s access to power.

In both the Chinese nationalist dynamic of father and daughter and in the Euro-American assumption of a monolithic oriental victim, evaluation and judgment of Chinese women’s subjectivity is tied to issues of agency. In both meta-narratives, the modern Chinese woman takes a passive position that lacks agency and accountability. In recreated scenarios of rescuer and rescued, the modern Chinese woman is relegated to the role of the rescued, while others wield their agency as rescuers and authority-figures. The complicit interconnection of Euro-American notions of subjectivity and agency appear in Goldblatt’s appraisal of Xiao Hong, in subtle judgments of her failure to choose in a way that is consistent with Harry Frankfurt’s “second-order desires” and Charles Taylor’s “higher” and more “profound” values—judgments

that do not allow for a tiered relation to agency and power. Although Albert Bandura argues that current world culture is less insular due to the exchange of ideas and values through international global market, economies, transportation, and technologies, using Euro-American notions of agency and subjectivity to pass transnational judgments of Late Qing-Early Republic circumstances in general, and Xiao Hong's characters specifically, remains extremely problematic.<sup>76</sup>

### ***Transcending the Euro-American Framework of Modern Chinese Female Victimization***

To contest these hegemonic notions of agency and subjectivity, Chinese critics have held up the ideal traits of survivorship, tolerance, and—most of all—endurance (*ren*) to rectify China's "sick man" image. Rey Chow, however, problematizes the rhetoric of "to endure" as rationalizing defense for the Communist agenda. Chow finds that "to endure" and "to live" become "two points of a circular pattern of thinking which reinforce each other by serving as each other's condition of possibility." "Preoccupied exclusively with its own survival," China becomes vulnerable to repeatedly re-enacting its political catastrophes.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, Chow finds critics' focus on "the people," "ordinary folk," or the illiterate population in China's remote area—along with their emphasis on endurance and survival—to be a problematically utopic and nostalgic search for pure, uncorrupted "originary," and "primitive" knowledge.<sup>78</sup> Prioritizing survival over all else becomes a political tool to deny other political rights. Says Chow, "The government can blatantly disregard human rights in the name of human rights, since, after all, "human rights" means "having enough to eat," and China's food supply is an essentially "internal affair."<sup>79</sup> Thus Chow frames the "back to basics," "able to live through," and "in spite of disasters" to be a "catastrophic discourse."<sup>80</sup> Chow continues, "In the vicious circle of



‘political rights’—cum-biological needs... the denial of political rights will thus always be condoned in their best interests.<sup>81</sup> To Chow, the political motivation for hyper-focusing on endurance—and on the mundane and banal—is to distract from and to justify violence against human rights.<sup>82</sup>

Shifting away from the controversy over survival as agency, deimperializing scholars Dorothy Ko, Susan Mann, Wendy Larson, and Hu Ying utilize the historical existence of the *cainu*, traditional Chinese women who were educated and well-versed in reading, writing, creating poetry, painting, and/or playing musical instruments, to offer diversifying possibilities for traditional Chinese female notions of subjectivity. Contesting the feminist construction of a monolithic Oriental female victim, Ko’s *Women of the Inner Chambers*, Mann’s *Precious Records*, and Larson’s *Women and Writing in Modern China* show how Chinese women’s writing descended from a long line of educated women that trails back to the presence of *Nu Shu*.<sup>83</sup> Ko cites Ming Qing female teachers transmitting women’s culture across generations and calls for a more nuanced reading of foot binding as a form of social initiation into womanhood, a shared topic among sisters and mothers, a chance for female bonding, and material for poetry rather than as a symbol of the Chinese woman as crippled, cloistered, oppressed, and subservient.<sup>84</sup> Ko further argues that not all women were subordinate to all men—such configurations were specific to class and kinship. In *Precious Records*, Mann identifies agency in women at the core of the family and political order as well as at the center of histories of moral philosophy, as the mother embodied a moral autonomy and authority meant to teach children to follow Chinese ethics.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, writing empowered elite Qing women who were already writing their own histories. Ko, Mann, Larson, and Barlow powerfully remind us that wealthy, educated women, as well as wives, mothers, and sisters, held agency and influencing

power over the men in their lives—fathers, husbands, uncles, nephews, brothers, and sons as well as subordinate male servants.

In *Dangerous Pleasures*, Gail Hershatter problematizes the homogeneous image of Chinese prostitutes as victims, uncovering how varying discourses—Chinese intellectuals, the wealthy, nationalists, and the Communist Party—appropriate the signifier of the prostitute and reduce her to a subaltern, an endless signifier for other discourses.<sup>86</sup> Hershatter presents multiple contesting histories and a spectrum of prostitute identities—from the *Changsam*, who were known for their culture and refinement, and the *Yaoer*, all the way to the lowest level, the *Yeji*—to show how the discourse of Shanghai prostitution reveals more about society’s biases relating to class, gender, and modernity, than about the actual prostitute.<sup>87</sup> In citing prostitute interviews about the varying reasons for being in the profession—from economics, family support, ill fate, easy labor, avoiding factory life, ambition, to physical pleasure—Hershatter proves the fruitlessness of grouping people by profession. Parrying the fixity of a monolithic “victim” identity, Hershatter makes clear that no one person—not the madam, patrons, or prostitutes—ever solely held absolute power.<sup>88</sup> Interviews with prostitutes being “saved” by the Communist Party show the women crying and wanting to return, rather than feeling relief. When reformers label prostitutes as defiled and oppressed, one interviewee exclaims, “I like my job! I don’t want to do hard labor!” These women’s voices offer a different perspective than that of the monolithic female victim.

However, recalling famous contemporary Chinese female writer Tie Ning reminds us that the peasant population constituted over 80 percent.<sup>89</sup> How then are we to interpret the remaining majority population of women and Xiao Hong’s characters who were not *cainu*? Returning to the ideals of survival and endurance in Xiao Hong’s work, I wish to illustrate that her tenacity for

survival and agency is irrefutable and enduring. I agree with Rey Chow that the ideology of endurance can be used for political totalizing and the deprivation of other rights, but I argue that native Chinese women's writings are also manipulated for rationalizing imperialism.<sup>90</sup> That others "misuse" does not automatically mean they are invalid. Celebrating the triumph of human survival, strength, and endurance in the face of impossible conditions for daily sustenance may be critical to understanding modern Chinese realities and perspectives.

Rather than assessing the Euro-American theoretical framework of "agency" with more theory, which may be equally incapable of fully encapsulating the incommensurabilities between privileged Euro-American intellectual notions of agency and Chinese peasant survival, I pose an anecdote. No other story matches "Lost in the Wind and the Snow" by contemporary Chinese female writer Niu Zhenghuan in its detailed description of the decolonizing truth of survival as agency and in raising deeper questions about Euro-American values of "agency," "morality," and judgment of others. In the story, a young man, Jin Niu, who has amassed a small savings, runs into a man claiming he is selling his sister to bury their dead father.<sup>91</sup> Jin Niu donates money but frees the woman. The man and woman, however, insist that she is better off with Jin Niu than starving in the village, so Jin Niu accepts her. The two marry and have a child, but she always seems withdrawn and unhappy. When the child turns two, the woman leaves to visit her old hometown. When she doesn't return, Jin Niu is outraged and disgusted at his wife for abandoning their young son. As he and his son journey to her village, Jin Niu feels increasingly incensed, enraged, entitled, and pitiful about himself and his son, and fantasizes about making a scene. Rationally and logically, he concludes that she must come home and take care of their son. Who else will? As he enters the remote village, he sees her—plumper, singing, and happy as she is caring for a three-year-old boy, together with the man who "sold" her years ago. As he

confronts them, all three—man, woman, and three-year-old child—kneel and beg for forgiveness. Stunned, Jin Niu discovers the “brother” was actually her husband. To save their son from starvation, they devised the wife-selling plot. Essentially, she willingly plays the role of the *xiaonu* (dutiful daughter) to save her child from starvation.<sup>92</sup> This scenario is beyond Jin Niu’s—not to mention any modern reader’s—world of comprehension. No longer indignant or outraged, Jin Niu and his two-year-old quietly and confusedly take their leave.

Who would take care of the three-year-old if he insisted that she come with him? What became of his feelings of abandonment and his judgments about her abandoning her family? For Jin Niu’s “wife,” abandonment defined her very life: abandoning her one-year-old son so he could survive, being abandoned by her family that sold her, needing to choose to abandon her family, abandoning her two-year-old son, and—finally—abandoning her own sense of self—sexually, emotionally, and physically, as a commodity of exchange throughout each circumstance. Who could judge her choices? The text proliferates with ethical dilemmas, themselves magnified by issues of survival and starvation, love, loyalty, duplicity, and self-betrayal. Also illustrated is how those whose primary needs are met often see themselves as entitled to morally judge those fighting to survive, or for their loved ones to survive. How is one to judge morality, intention, survivorship, agency, or even loyalty, for that matter? There is simply no adequate gauge or perspective with which to judge. Only the subject who is attached to her world, her family, and the universe has the right to determine and evaluate her chosen path.

Clearly, the needs of the educated and privileged differ from the needs of the poor and starving. Perhaps from the Chinese peasant perspective, survival and the struggle for daily sustenance was of greater concern than subjectivity. Most definitely, survival is a prerequisite for any agency and subjectivity. Rather than obsessing over subjectivity (and minimizing the

importance of primary needs), I argue for the importance of the equally compelling ability of Chinese women and men to survive in impossibly difficult circumstances and to make the best of their circumstances. Indeed, if one is incapable of controlling external events and circumstances of life (such as poverty, war, illness, race, or class), then the only matter of difference becomes a question of survival—how well one endures physically, psychologically, emotionally, spiritually, and how one heals or transcends one’s limitations. Celebrating survival is not a realm only for decolonizing people—everyday wealthy and poor U.S. cancer patients celebrate their endurance and survival. Why does Euro-American theory only diminish “survival” as agency for decolonizing nations?

In the section below, I analyze possibilities for re-conceiving Xiao Hong outside the Euro-American framework of victimization. Returning to Howard Goldblatt’s interpretations and contrasting those same passages with my interpretations, I illustrate how these Euro-American and Chinese nationalist victim-centered readings are as “arbitrary” as my readings of Xiao Hong writing about female agency. Drawing attention to other merits of Xiao Hong’s writing will be crucial to breaking away from the Euro-American focus on Chinese female victimization. Imposing a reading of the Chinese female victim not only limits, but also actually occludes, the potential for creating new forms of female agency. In revisiting selected translated passages of Xiao Hong by Goldblatt—I challenge Euro-American critics’ representation of Xiao Hong as a one-dimensional traditional third world female victim sheltered from historical reality and in need of rescuing. To illustrate the provocation of tinted perspectives and selective focus, I now revisit Goldblatt’s same passages, but purposefully re-focus on traces of agency rather than victimization.

In the passage on child bride suicides, although the child bride is the ultimate powerless and abused victim of the traditional Chinese system, Xiao Hong's commentary is about more than just victimization. Her writing highlights illnesses of the society to bring about awareness and change. Notably, she focuses on the only form of agency these child brides possess: suicide. Although the child bride suffers repeated beatings, her power to choose life or death remains. Xiao Hong commends the warrior-like women who courageously face daily torment and expresses her respect for those that dare to choose death. In a tongue-in-cheek manner, Xiao Hong argues against the perception of women as weak:

An old saying goes: "A battlefield is no place for a woman." Actually, that's not true; those wells are terribly deep, and if you casually ask a man whether or not he would dare to jump down one, I'm afraid the answer would be "no." But a young woman, on the other hand, would certainly do so. An appearance on a battlefield doesn't necessarily end in death, and in fact might even lead to an official position later. But jumping down a well, there's not much chance of emerging alive—most never do.<sup>93</sup>

The message is unmistakable: These women, too, possess courage, agency, and the right to make the most basic decisions to live or die.

Xiao Hong fleshes out further traces of agency by noting that men do not record such events in history—or their motivations behind them. By keeping suicides unknown, men hide examples of agency from women in dire circumstances. Moreover, Xiao Hong locates "strategic power" in the child bride's threat of committing suicide, as the act results in loss in material goods, causes disrepute for the family, and instills fear in men that they might be left with motherless children. Xiao Hong uncovers in the most victimized Chinese women a potential space for agency or leverage, thus creatively seeking agency and power in even the most denigrated positions. Tragically, however, the "catch-22" for the child bride is that agency comes only from threatening to take her own life—and, yet, without life, she is denied any

chance for attaining future agency. Indeed, for the child bride, agency only derives from surviving, threatening to commit suicide, or choosing her own death. Awareness of these few choices could make a world of difference from feeling hopelessly trapped. This recognition of her right to life or death may have been the one space in which the child bride could maneuver and exist.

Similarly, in the “Temple of the Patriarch and Matron,” Xiao Hong not only laments women’s victimization but also brings gender injustices to the surface, thereby presenting an opportunity to deconstruct what has become the “norm.” Bringing the phenomenon to the reader’s attention serves as an opportunity to destabilize these constructs of behavior. Xiao Hong illustrates that what men praise in women—refinement, docility, gentleness, and not using one’s life as leverage—clearly allows men to continue exploiting women. Her writing can thus be read as providing clues, roadmaps, and tools for women to find the hidden wellspring of their own agency.

Returning to Goldblatt’s criticism of Xiao’s Hong’s confession: “Now I want to surrender to my father, accept my bitter defeat, and throw away my weapons, because my body has failed me; I never thought I would see this day” as a sign of her weakness, I contend that Xiao Hong, even sick and in physical pain, did not ultimately die in her father’s house.<sup>94</sup> Her expression of desire for peace and refuge is simply the most human of desires, but one upon which she never acted. Insisting that her self-revelation must be labeled a “weakness” suggests that a person of strength cannot be afforded even a momentary experience of fear or hopelessness amid pain and, possibly, impending death. After all, courage is not the absence of doubts or fears, but acting in spite of them. Despite longing for a peaceful place for death, she chooses not to act on her moments of fear and loneliness. It thus becomes evident that Xiao Hong is being judged simply

for sharing her most vulnerable fears and feelings—behaviors that are candid and courageous, and may actually aid in the reader’s identification with her. Had Xiao Hong wished to live a materially comfortable, male-dominated, and conventional life, she probably could have, considering her background. Despite fears, Xiao Hong forged on. In terms of Euro-American notions of agency, she was paradoxically beyond and bound by her primary needs. Her very life example defies the limits of Euro-American definitions of subjectivity and agency.

In fact, closer inspection of the concepts of selective focus raises questions about how Euro-American critical studies and feminism inspect other cultures. Indeed, selective focus exemplifies the reoccurring complexities of how Euro-American culture intersects with the specificity of Chinese history and Chinese women’s experience and identity. Why is the Euro-American critic preoccupied with China’s modern period? Does this particular segment of history thematically reify the Euro-American as superior, while the Chinese is made to westernize for the sake of survival? Given China’s thousand-year history, might this focus on China’s encounter with its “greater” other—and its need to change to survive—express deep anxiety about recuperating the “glory” of a now quickly fading Euro-American superpower? In *Black Skin White Mask*, Franz Fanon identifies the West’s desire to stay at the center of the imperialist impulse to save brown women from brown men. Imposed readings of victimization and helplessness exemplify and reify the problematic of first and third world politics. Extrapolating this metaphor to feminism and China, the obsession with Chinese women’s victimization, rather than their survival and agency, appropriates their experience for the discursive sphere and bestows it as a critical subject for Euro-American feminists. Labeling others as “victims” and forming responses based on the desire to protect, pity, and rescue need to be met with caution. Victim-slanted readings deny Xiao Hong and other Chinese women



acknowledgment for moments in their lives during which they held agency or fought hard to embrace it, neglects to take into account a tiered relationship to agency, power, and money, and judges from an assumption of equal access. Such readings foreclose possibilities of Chinese female agency and, not coincidentally, require the interference of outsiders to rectify or rescue. The problem with “humanitarian” imperialism lies in confusing love with pity. Pity affords little agency or empowerment for others, and elevates the giver as “better than.” Projected victimization silences native women’s culturally specific wants and needs, and supports Euro-American feminism’s goal to formulate a totalizing collectivity. Instead, treating others with greater humility, equality, and respect is needed.

Finally, perhaps the Euro-American need to demarcate and define in the language of absolutes, the need to label Xiao Hong either/or—traditional victim or modern empowered woman—is symptomatic of a compulsion to control the subject as object. If humans are not the sum of flaws but rather comprised of a *mixture* of defects, strengths, insights, and blind sides, then perhaps Xiao Hong’s human imperfections need not mar the very tenacious, courageous, pioneering work of her literature and life. Although we often contextualize discussions of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* with the wish that she had spent less time on her lover’s work, we continue to regard de Beauvoir as a pioneer and advanced thinker for her time. Despite possessing traits of both the conventional and the modern women, de Beauvoir continues to be honored for planting the seeds of the Euro-American feminist movement. Similarly, I do not believe that Xiao Hong’s life under domestic abuse and her search to understand and heal her personal connections to men diminish her agency or life work in any way. Rather, I find it even more remarkable, indeed, an attestation to her strength and perseverance, that a person living under physical, verbal, and emotional abuse by men, often in fear of her own survival—due to

the threat of starvation, freezing, and serious illness—found the time and fortitude to write as profusely and passionately as she did on significant issues of her time. Focusing on victimization and helplessness collectively diminishes Xiao Hong and her characters, depriving them of their agency and courage.

### ***Lu Xun and Xiao Hong: Transcending the Father-Daughter Paradigm***

The ideological constraints of Euro-American feminism are perhaps only matched by the limiting structures of Chinese paternalistic nationalism. That Chinese women's independence came as a by-product of national reform—not through a separate women's movement—has been crucial to the creation of the father-daughter paradigm of modern Chinese women's literature. In this section, I refute nationalism's paternalistic fixing of the Chinese woman in the role of “daughter” and victim. As Rey Chow and Zhong Xueping have argued, in critics' acts of sympathizing, speaking for, or liberating, the female subject is situated in the role of object, not the subject who has the power to act.<sup>95</sup> Chinese women's experiences thus are fraught with ambivalent gratitude and resentment.

Exploring Xiao Hong and Lu Xun's father-daughter relationship as a mirror of the relationship between paternalistic nationalism and Chinese women, I explore questions of female agency in their writings and query whether the writing in which Lu Xun foregrounds the nationalist framework also inevitably limits the agency of Chinese women. Are these two forms of totalizing and containment—imperialist and nationalistic—equivalent? Do different intentions make any difference? Placing notions of female agency in victimized female figures in Lu Xun's writings into dialogue with the life of Xiao Hong and of her fictional female characters who struggle tenaciously to survive, I re-interpret modern Chinese women based on

principles of survival. Interpreting Xiao Hong's life in collusion and contradiction to Lu Xun's political commentaries, "What Happens When Nora Leaves," "My Beliefs on Chastity," and his short stories, "Regret for the Past" and "A New Year's Sacrifice," I distinguish nuanced differences in perspectives on gender, nation, subjectivity, and agency, and re-examine the different commitment each writer bore to new modern Chinese women according to his/her unique position in Chinese history, class, and gender.

Engaging Lu Xun's question, "What Happens to Nora after She Leaves?" I entertain possible responses suggested by the writings, commentaries, and expressed views of Lu Xun and Xiao Hong to investigate their personal views on modern Chinese women, reform, and nation. "What Happens to Nora after She Leaves?" is Lu Xun's response to Henrik Ibsen's play *A Dollhouse* (1879), the story of an unhappy housewife named Nora, who rebels against patriarchal oppression and leaves her loveless marriage and children to find independence and freedom.<sup>96</sup> Because the play ends with Nora leaving the house, Lu Xun picks up the narrative by continuing the line of thinking in "What Happens after Nora Leaves" and "My Beliefs on Chastity," concluding that Chinese women in the same predicament would have very few options—going into prostitution, returning to her husband, or starving to death.<sup>97</sup> For a Chinese woman leaving her male and sole source of financial support, few life-sustaining paths exist. These political ideologies play themselves out in the fictional space of Lu Xun's "Regret for the Past" and "A New Year's Sacrifice," both stories in which the female protagonists die and become victims of the residual Chinese traditional patriarchy.

"A New Year's Sacrifice" is told from the perspective of an educated, privileged male narrator who witnesses the demise of his uncle's maid, Xianglin Sao, who is widowed. Xianglin Sao escapes to the uncle's house to avoid being resold to another family, but when she is

discovered, her in-laws take her wages, kidnap her, and then sell her. Xianglin Sao tries to kill herself but fails and is raped and remarried. After her second husband and child die, she must return to work at the uncle's house to survive, but now the entire household ostracizes and shuns her as unclean because she remarried. When a maid cruelly tells Xianglin Sao that her body will be ripped apart by her two fighting husbands in hell, she becomes terrified and seeks confirmation from the well-educated narrator, who ends up shirking responsibility and refusing to commit to any answer. As the story concludes, the narrator celebrates New Year's, with a blemish to festivities arriving in the form of news that Xianglin Sao has starved to death in the streets.

“Regret for the Past,” told from another privileged male intellectual's perspective, also denies responsibility for the death of his ex-live-in girlfriend, Zijun. The narrator and Zijun, both passionate students for reforming China, live out their revolutionary dreams by seeking freedom in love and by moving in together rather than accepting an arranged marriage by their parents. However, when the narrator concludes that the daily monotony of living with Zijun has become an impediment to his search for the revolutionary spirit, he cuts her loose, rationalizing that, ideologically, new world men and women are equals. Zijun, with nowhere to turn, economically unable to sustain herself, and stigmatized as having lost her virginity, is unable to re-establish herself in society, and soon the narrator hears through the grapevine that she has died. Zijun, thus, symbolizes both the difficulties new women face in living a life of reform in a society unprepared and unwilling to accept their existence, as well as the modern female victim who is theoretically independent but, in reality, completely dependent for basic survival needs upon men who are also marginalized.<sup>98</sup> Juansheng and Zijun's hope for China's ideological reform tragically ends in a barren future wasteland. There is no child. Everything from the chicken to

the dog that Juansheng and Zijun raise ends up starving and dying in this quest for ideological selves. Perhaps Lu Xun warns of the flaws of Euro-American notions of subjectivity, in which egoism and self-centeredness reign, by showing how the male character's fixation on his individual desires for national ideological reform effects "others."<sup>99</sup>

Both Zijun and Xianglin Sao represent the victimized Chinese woman who, after being exiled by traditional Chinese patriarchy, has no alternative but death. Neither female protagonist survives—neither protagonist returns home to her father or becomes a prostitute; both end up starving to death in the streets. All possibility and hope is foreclosed. Why does Lu Xun choose death for both female heroines? In both stories, the educated first person male narrator, the beneficiary of Chinese culture and the only person in the story with the power to alleviate female suffering, does absolutely nothing, thus allowing traditional patriarchy to victimize the very weak he is bound by Confucianism to protect. The one person—the male protagonist—whom the reader hopes will enact necessary nationalistic reforms to rescue the victim fails. Why is there no rescuer? Recalling in "Muo Luo Shi Li Shuo," Lu Xun cautions readers against waiting for a hero—or others—to make the necessary sacrifices, asserting that everyone must awaken and do his or her part. Perhaps Lu Xun enacts the male protagonist's failure—and the female character's subsequent demise—for the express purpose of shifting the heavy weight of responsibility onto the shoulders of Chinese male readers in a dramatic effort to compel men to change. If the tragedy was lightened and the women survived, the intensity, motivation, and urgency for men to reform would lessen. Perhaps Lu Xun felt resigned that only by killing off female characters would he be able to send a powerful enough message of responsibility and guilt to challenge male readers to change and reform. Indeed, if Xianglin Sao went elsewhere to beg, or if Zijun was forced to return to her uncle or even descended into prostitution to support

herself, the emotional impact and effect upon male readers would be less dire—the greater the negative consequence, the greater the guilt and impetus to change.

The key distinction between Lu Xun's and Xiao Hong's depictions of women consists of identification and conversing with the collective group of women. Perhaps Lu Xun's audience—the readers he addresses in his commentaries and imagination—are predominately males. Let us take, for example, "What Is Required of Us Fathers Today," in which he addresses a father-son audience. The phrase "father and son" appears repeatedly in the essay. In addition, single-gendered terms, such as "filial son," "unfilial son," "rebellious younger brother," and "universal brotherhood," along with the statement "some may fear that emancipation may set up a barrier between father and son," repeatedly occur as if the only meaningful relationship is that between a father and his sons.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, such gender-specific statements suggest two possible interpretations: (1) Lu Xun had a male audience in mind; or (2) the audience of the times was, in actuality, predominately male. On a biographical note, Lu Xun's own child was a male. Perhaps if he had had a daughter, he would have offered very different commentary. I find that Lu Xun is specifically male-focused, because he is encouraging men to take full responsibility for the Chinese nation's problems. The male sphere was the realm—the only realm—in which he was an insider, and thus was the site of greatest potential impact to influence and change.

Perhaps from a Euro-American feminist perspective, Lu Xun's failure to address and include women in many of his writings, and his focus on fathers and sons at the possible expense of mothers and daughters, is an unforgivable act that abandons women and excludes them from the language of the nation. Does Lu Xun usurp female agency for males in his writing? Perhaps so, but his intentions and motivations differ from Euro-American critics. Rather than interpreting Lu Xun's works as intentionally excluding females and female agency, I find that his

writings are actively *directed* at men. Perhaps women were not included in the reforms because, to a great extent, they were victims and were the intended beneficiaries of reform. Perhaps Lu Xun, as a mentor, teacher, husband, and father, believed that women were not responsible for the state of the nation; or, he may also have avoided criticizing women because he was focused on empowering himself by determining and changing his own flaws, not by pointing fingers and blaming others. Perhaps already taking into consideration a tiered notion of access to agency and power, Lu Xun was focusing responsibility on privileged men who possessed direct access to power and thus had greater opportunities to influence change and reform. Understanding Lu Xun's audience as male suggests that his intention was to implore Chinese male intellectuals to hold themselves accountable for their actions to women often at a deep disadvantage in terms of access to power or agency, or being able to provide their own sustenance.

Notably, however, Lu Xun shares the first world perspective of the Chinese woman as a victim. In "What Happens after Nora Leaves," Lu Xun characterizes Chinese women of his era as caged birds that, should they find their way out, face predators. Says Lu Xun, "imprisonment has atrophied its wings... it has forgotten to fly... nowhere it can go... The most painful thing in life is to wake up from a dream and find no way out."<sup>101</sup> In "Na Han," Lu Xun conveys similar distress over whether or not to wake those who sleep unaware that they are in an impenetrable iron house. In order for a fighting chance, the awoken one must alert the others, yet if the iron house proves truly impenetrable, is it not cruel to disturb those sleeping? If Lu Xun feared even he and other male intellectuals, who were in a position to inherit most of the power in traditional Confucian society, may have been powerless against the impenetrable structures they inhabited, then he must have felt all the more fear for Chinese women, who were even further removed from direct access to power. If he bore extreme guilt for "waking" males, perhaps one can

understand why he may have felt exponentially so in waking females. Perhaps Lu Xun's motivation for excluding women comes from paternalistic instincts with the best intentions. Surely, seeing little agency in women's lives—and mostly victimization—posed a terrible conundrum.

Perhaps Lu Xun's tiered notion of agency is innovatively re-interpreted in "The New-Year Sacrifice." Although in *Voices from the Iron House*, Leo Lee calls "'The New-Year Sacrifice' ... one of Lu Xun's most intensely wrought portraits of a tragic heroine," one cannot help wondering if, in the Euro-American scheme of subjectivity and selfhood, Xianglin Sao can even qualify as one.<sup>102</sup> As Rey Chow, in "Modernity and Narration" notes, Xianglin Sao is denied any channels through which to formulate a sense of her "subjectivity." Indeed, the narrative strategies themselves oppress her subjectivity. First, Xianglin Sao is portrayed as more animal-like than human.<sup>103</sup> Second, according to Chow, her ultimate inability to comprehend her own life makes it difficult for others to see her as transcendent in any way.<sup>104</sup>

It is the impenetrability of Xianglin Sao... that accounts for our feeling of her passivity and victimization. All the events that shape [her] life are presented with the effect of a certain fatality that "happens" to her, and over which she has no control. By contrast, the narrator is extremely active, not only in his physical comings and goings, but also in his thinking and writing.<sup>105</sup>

How are we to understand Xianglin Sao, as Leo Lee suggests, as a heroine? Is it her ability simply to withstand victimization? Had she survived, the message may have been at least one of survival. But surviving just to endure further trauma until painfully starving to death hardly seems like a victory in the short story. Notes Chow, Xianglin Sao is a "useless, hopeless female existence on the lowest rung of the social ladder."<sup>106</sup> In terms of Lu Xun's conundrum about a tiered notion of agency, Xianglin Sao is constructed to totally lack agency. In fact, in the story, she cannot even successfully commit suicide. Says Chow, "Xianglin Sao is a symbol of



victimization, residual traditional anxiety, and its guilt of rejecting the past that cannot be forgotten.<sup>107</sup> It is perhaps precisely because of Lu Xun's vision of Chinese women as "caged birds"—or like Xianglin Sao—that he avoids critiquing them. Interestingly, however, both dead female protagonists haunt Lu Xun's texts with the affective intensity of a specter.

I now turn to a discussion of why Lu Xun bears such intense guilt and anxiety about "killing off" fictional male—and especially female—characters. Given that characters are not real, why did such anxiety and guilt arise? Perhaps guilt derives from Lu Xun's strong convictions about the power of fiction and its potential to impact the future—a power he so believed in that he was willing to sacrifice his medical career for it, believing that only literature had the power to heal the spirit of people. In "Lu Xun and the Crisis of Figuration," literary critic Theodore Hutters notes that Lu Xun bears an intense anxiety over self-expression. This anxiety becomes especially pronounced over the killing of characters in "Ah Q," and the two boys in "Medicine," but the affective state after killing off female characters is even more pronounced. Rey Chow finds Lu Xun's refusal to create a positive ending proof of his "refusal to use... his own educated tools to create false senses of optimism for oppressed classes."<sup>108</sup> Perhaps Lu Xun felt trapped within a "both/and" dynamic, needing to reflect his perspective of reality to resist culture's dominant tendencies of denial and shifting blame, and yet in that representation he was stuck reiterating and re-enforcing the very elements he wished to annihilate; he was trapped between authentic representation and reiteration with difference.

How exactly might have tragically cutting short these female protagonists' lives affected modern Chinese women readers of the period, and what message might it have sent? What significant symbolic differences would have occurred had the women become prostitutes or returned home? In other words, does Lu Xun's allegorizing of Chinese females such as Xianglin

Sao and Zijun as traditionally repressed victims—and subsequently writing them off—sacrifice modern Chinese women for the male nationalist cause? Perhaps, for women, such endings foreclose upon alternatives or on the chance to imagine change and survival, or even worse, offer textual re-enactments of violence. The endings evidently left little room for imagining women’s agency, casting them only as gifts from men. Moreover, extinguishing Chinese women’s lives prevents them from joining the collective national subjectivity and may even reinforce notions of the nation as a brotherhood—men fighting for “womenandchildren,” where woman is constructed as outside of the nation.<sup>109</sup> The Euro-American feminist perspective may even interpret Lu Xun’s narrative foreclosures of female subjectivity and survival as a betrayal. Simply being un-addressed as an audience, and by having agency and power denied to them even in the most avant-garde literature, women—to a certain degree—have been excluded in Lu Xun’s plan of action for reform. By removing all responsibility of the nation’s plight from women, does he not also invariably deny women agency and power?

Whereas Lu Xun, in an outsider position to women, may have been in an awkward position to critique modern Chinese women, Xiao Hong was in a perfect position for self-reflection and finding female responsibility and agency. In her study of Mao Dun and Ba Jin, Rey Chow argues that merely speaking about women’s conditions, no matter how sympathetically, does not change women’s situation of voicelessness.<sup>110</sup> Regardless of how much Lu Xun spoke for women, he would always be “speaking for” women.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, no matter how Lu Xun advocated for women, he could not experience the same events as an insider. Xiao Hong’s writing thus provides essential information about the “other half of the sky.” I am not presenting an essentialist argument—that men and women are constructed differently biologically or even that all groups are not arbitrarily constructed. Rather, I am asserting that

reading the colossal writers—Lu Xun, Mao Dun, Ba Jin, and others—does not depict a full picture of Chinese modernity. This canon of writers reveals only half-depictions of the modern period, and mostly privileged male intellectual ones. Perhaps one of the most meaningful ways Lu Xun saw that he could support women was by encouraging, mentoring, and using his own finances to publish Xiao Hong, whom he saw as greatly talented.

For Xiao Hong, hemmed in by global issues that demanded loyalty to Chinese masculinist nationalism as father and by rhetoric of Euro-American feminism that demanded her exclusive loyalty to gender as sister (but more like mother), she possessed a unique insider relationship to an arbitrary group of modern Chinese women that was particularly vulnerable to criticism by both sides.<sup>112</sup> In the following section, I aspire to restore the Chinese female agency that prevails in her texts, but which has been erased in the structures of Chinese paternalistic nationalism and by the first world victimization complex.

### ***Outgrowing Father-Daughter: Reclaiming Chinese Female Survivorship and Agency***

Dai Jinhua and Meng Yue, followed by Lydia Liu, have been at the forefront of reading Xiao Hong's work outside the constraints of nationalism, reinterpreting it as a representation of female experience.<sup>113</sup> Lydia Liu interprets Xiao Hong's focus in *The Field of Life and Death* on birth and death as a signifier that marks the significant rural experiences of rural women: "The field of *shen* (birth, life) and *si* (death)... primarily represents the experience of the female body—specifically, the two areas of rural experience relating to peasant women, childbearing and death from suicide, sickness, or abuse."<sup>114</sup> Liu thus finds the "body of [the] peasant woman... an important site of contestatory meaning," the site of an intellectual war in which the rural female body takes the brunt of casualties and suffers the greater part of violence and abuse from

both sides of the war—the Japanese and patriarchal Chinese.<sup>115</sup> Liu finds women’s blood repeatedly connected to the female body in that it is “always linked with bleeding, injury, deformation, or death, be it from childbirth, beating, sickness, or suicide,” and finds “the boundary of the female body in this novel is chiefly defined by rural women’s experience of childbirth, disease, sexuality, aging, and death.”<sup>116</sup> Thus, for Liu, “the female body actually provides the critical angle for viewing the rise and fall of the nation rather than the other way around.”<sup>117</sup> Problematizing attacks on Xiao Hong’s lack of commitment to the national cause, Liu refutes:

She was engaged in a different kind of struggle, a struggle that did not oblige her to share Mao’s view of private and collective experience or, for that matter, male-centered notions of society, nation and war. If... the meaning of “life” and “death” resides in the individual body—particularly the female body—more than in the rise and fall of a nation, then her lack of commitment to nationalism should by no means be construed as some kind of failure...<sup>118</sup>

I assert that Xiao Hong’s writing documents circumstances and periods in life when the disenfranchised—both men and women—truly were victimized in the Late Qing-Early Republic era. Victimization, of course, is not a phenomenon unique to China, but ever-present in the global world, including the United States, through acts of rape, sex-trade, murder, bullying, domestic abuse, and child abuse. Although many of Xiao Hong’s stories document victimization and human suffering, Xiao Hong’s self-critical stance on women is striking. In many of her literary works, Xiao Hong gently and subtly illuminates flaws she sees in herself and other women. To enumerate, these flaws are (1) the overly self-sacrificing nature of women; (2) women’s willingness to play predefined roles, such as a housewife, or trying to live up to Confucian standards of exteriority—appearing refined, docile, and kind; (3) women’s harm to other women; (4) women’s over-dependence and need to be rescued; and (5) women’s falling into inertia as they remain torn between split ways of thinking.

(1) In *On Market Street*, Xiao Hong's semi-autobiographical novel, the female character repeatedly voluntarily starves herself, allowing her lover to consume most of their scant food supply. At one point, she starves all day, leaving the only piece of bread in the house until her lover returns; then she proceeds to watch her lover first eat the best inner part of the bread. After a long while, he offers her some crust, but even then he eats most of the crust before giving her a bite. Another time, she splurges and buys ten meat dumplings and waits until her lover returns only to watch him eat every last one of them without offering her even one. In the epilogue, Xiao Jun comments that, ultimately, everyone loves the self first and foremost. And yet clearly that is not the case for Xiao Hong. Perhaps rather than a question of survival or starvation, the issue is even more deeply an existential question of who deserves to eat and who does not. Xiao Hong's behavior suggests that she (and possibly the group women) behave automatically as if they have no rights to eat, and no rights to put their needs and wants first. Although she does not question, rationalize, or attempt to intellectualize her own behavior in being "overly self-sacrificing," she records it, and her awareness is the first crucial step to gaining agency.

(2) On a lighter note, in *On Market Street*, when Xiao Hong contemplates the issue of female role-playing, she almost lightheartedly questions how women find themselves trapped in such roles. As Xiao Jun leaves their home to find means of attaining food, money, and sustenance, Xiao Hong records in her journal the first time she prepares food for the newly made family:

When he brought the firewood home, I began lighting a fire, and there, standing beside the stove, much to my surprise, I began cooking dinner, just like a little housewife. I scorched the vegetables, and the rice was half-cooked. If we called it gruel, then it was too chewy; if we called it steamed rice, then it was too sticky. And so I became a "housewife"; otherwise, how could the fact that I was cooking a meal be explained?<sup>119</sup>

Most fascinating is the author's very conscious transformation into the female role of housewife. At the beginning, she appears almost outside of herself, observing herself as object. As we progress into the details about cooking rice, its qualities and the physicality of food, we discover that she has moved into the body of the housewife, taking on the new female role within a few lines of a paragraph. Precisely the banal, the mundane, and the daily draw her into the role, and our association of her in it. Though she deliberately takes on this socially and self-imposed role, as the story unfolds, we begin to see how her role as housewife ultimately becomes inescapable. First, delightfully depicted as "house-play," the role quickly descends into an imprisoning nightmare of unmet needs and (from the details of her biography) physical abuse. The theme in which just below the surface of the banal, the mundane, and the daily lurks the viper of reality—repeatedly appears throughout her stories. We find this theme especially in "Bridge," in *On Market Street*, and in the vignette of Two-and-a-half Li's farcical lost goat at the beginning of *The Field of Life and Death*. As women continue to "play house" on the surface, the denial of the harsher realities swirling below constantly threaten to emerge and destroy the facade of stability and security. Perhaps this menace is what Xiao Hong means by "excessively self-sacrificing, not out of courage but out of cowardice"—to live as if playing on the surface and in denial of the dangers that lurk below.<sup>120</sup>

In the "Temple of the Patriarch and of the Immortal Matron," Xiao Hong further critiques women's tendency to role-play. She questions why women play the role of the ideal Confucian woman by acting refined, docile, and kind—behavior she believes makes women more susceptible to abuse. Finally, in "Hands," when the dyer's daughter is forced to hide in the basement, a strong critique emerges of the Confucian desire to maintain face and woman's privileging of superficial appearances.

(3) Xiao Hong warns that women victimize other women. In her memoir, *Yongyuan de chongjing he zhuiqui* (*Perpetual Dream and Pursuit*), Xiao Hong reveals her distant relationship to both her father and mother, of whom she was terrified:

the author describes her father as a man totally devoid of human compassion and decency. He was an influential scholar and powerful landlord in Hulan, who despised his daughter and would often beat her up. Xiao Hong's mother was also cruel to her. The only family member that loved her was her grandfather, but he was powerless and virtually an outcast in the family.<sup>121</sup>

In *The Field of Life and Death*, the mother-in-law beats the child bride at all hours of the night. And in "Hands," Xiao Hong depicts most poignantly how women oppress and harm other women. All of the educated Chinese women, the principal and the female teachers who are meant to share knowledge with the girls, become abusive exploiters of the dyer's daughter and perpetrate against the very person their education was intended to rectify and reform. The female authority figures' sabotaging behavior, combined with the student's outright rejection of her, almost renders her family's hopes for a brighter future impossible. In contrast, the kindness of the one female student, who is the narrator, significantly uplifts the poverty-stricken little girl's life. Interestingly, the story almost acts as an entreaty to female readers to reflect upon their own behaviors, essentially pleading with women to stop supporting traditional patriarchal oppressions, to let go of class prejudices, and to inspect how they are affecting the lives around them. Xiao Hong clearly problematizes the tendency of women to victimize other women.

(4) Xiao Hong also critiques women's dependency and desire to be rescued. In the most practical sense, in "The Death of Wang Asao," Wang Asao is powerless over the landlord's rape, and the only means of retaliation is through her husband's actions. However, his actions bring about no balance to the system. He is unable to rescue her, and the family is only further exploited when they lose him. In *On Market Street* the complex of needing rescuing is strongly

problematized. In terms of food, the narrator even waits for Xiao Jun to “rescue” her from decision-making about how basic resources should be rationed between them. Furthermore, we sense Xiao Hong’s dependence upon Xiao Jun and her anxiety as she waits for her lover to deliver all her basic necessities: food, warmth, and shelter. Janet Ng comments on the narrator’s pervading “feeling of suffocation when she waited anxiously in her lonely apartment for her lover to come home from work to give her daily food and emotional sustenance... [she] is constantly ill because of her persistent hunger, for both food and love, and anxiety about her survival, both physical and emotional.”<sup>122</sup> Perhaps Xiao Hong is unaware of her need to be deemed worthy of physical and emotional nourishment, but she is keenly aware that something is amiss and records it.

(5) The issue of rescue is thus also tied to Xiao Hong’s self-criticism about being overly self-sacrificing and feeling torn and unable to decide. As seen above, in *On Market Street*, her self-sacrificing behavior is linked to her conflicted decisions over how to fairly ration the food. In other words, she appears split between considering her own needs and those of Xiao Jun. This tendency toward indecision also appears in her choices of male partners. After separating with Xiao Jun only to take on the verbal and emotional abuse and belittling of Tuan-mu Hung-liang, Xiao Hong—torn by multiple perspectives—reflectively questions her own authentic inner voice.

Writes Xiao Hong,

I am a woman. The canopy of heaven over the heads of women is low, while our wings are flimsy and our burdens heavy and unpleasant! What’s even worse is that women are excessively self-sacrificing, not out of courage but out of cowardice. A state of inertia develops in us after living a long time with no one to aid us, and under conditions that require us to be sacrificing, so that we accept sacrifice willingly. I know that, but still I can’t help thinking: Just what am I in this world? What is scorn to me? What does disaster mean to me? For that matter, what is death to me? I don’t know. Am I, after all, one person, or am I two people? Should I be thinking like this? Or like that? You’re right, I want to fly, but still I have the feeling... that I’ll come crashing down.<sup>123</sup>



In fury, Xiao Hong metaphorically raises her fists to the heavens for what she sees as her own and other women's shared defects: potentially self-imposed limitations of the world, excessively self-sacrificing, cowardice, inertia, requiring rescue, fear of failure, overly accepting, fearful, emotionally torn, and indecisive. Reading Xiao Hong's texts as a critique of women thus raises the question: What possibly could be Xiao Hong's motivations for such biting self-critique?

Just as Lu Xun powerfully illuminates the faults he saw in male patriarchal culture, Xiao Hong, too, in a more understated and intimate way, shares some of her own weaknesses as well as what she saw of Chinese women's flaws more generally. In May Fourth's frenzied rhetoric about males reforming the nation, little was required of women. Perhaps the masculinist nationalist conviction that Chinese women were victims, on a certain level, simply reinforced their roles as passive, disempowered victims needing to be rescued. As a result, this mindset may have fueled Chinese paternalistic and Euro-American bourgeoisie-gendered stereotypes that women should be "good" and thus worthy of rescue—proper women waiting patiently as men reformed, rescued, and claimed all agency and power. Perhaps these events even set into motion the modern Chinese father-daughter paradigm whereby the nationalist daughter was presumed innocent and not responsible. Lured by the promise of the father-figures' protection, as well as by the gift of immunity from responsibility for the nation's plight, the "daughter" role may, at first, have appeared quite ideal. Gradually, however, the daughter role becomes infantilized, and she recognizes that she would never claim equal status or match the maturity, power, decisiveness, agency, or insight of the father. With no responsibility or blame, women also held little or no power or agency. Totalizing discourses—paternalistic nationalism, imperialistic travel tales, and Euro-American insistence on a pan-feminism that is more smothering mothering than equal sisterhood—cloud any hope of agency for Chinese women.

Perhaps the only escape, the only path to becoming an equal in nation making, presented itself in sharing half of the responsibility, “half of the sky.” Women, too, needed to reflect on their flaws, responsibility, and accountability in order to take back their agency and ability to choose and positively affect their futures. Perhaps Xiao Hong was not focusing on the various aspects of helplessness each person in a lifetime experienced, but the degree to which each person uses the power one has, no matter how great or small, to alter an outcome—no matter how grandly or minutely. Xiao Hong’s life and texts repeatedly challenge readers to reach deeper and find the lessons that need to be learned from life’s experiences of accepting one’s powerlessness and, therefore, also one’s power. In other words, exactly how empowering was it for Xiao Hong to hope others could change? From her abusive husbands and the Chinese patriarchal system to her own father, Xiao Hong, presumably, did not see depending on others to change as an empowering act, as her difficult circumstances were often the result of the behaviors of men. The term “powerlessness” is already cognizant of a tiered notion of agency, power, and circumstances. On the other hand, the Euro-American framework of helplessness implies an emotional state of passivity irrelevant to circumstances.

I argue that Xiao Hong deliberately focuses on what women, in fact, had power to change. In the act of reflectively pointing the finger back at herself and other women and claiming responsibility, Xiao Hong takes back her agency and breaks away from the victim/daughter role, thereby winning an opportunity to transform herself and her future. Introspectively examining Chinese women’s flaws, Xiao Hong, like Lu Xun, aspires to free women from the cycle of oppression from tradition and patriarchy. I thus urge readers to consider Lu Xun, Xiao Hong, and the Chinese people of the May Fourth through a different lens—and to grant respect for Chinese peoples’ courage to look at their flaws and their own contributions to the present

predicament, and to have the courage and conviction to change. Precisely because she enacted traditional self-defeating aspects in her writing and personal life, Xiao Hong was equipped to name, critique, and embody the potential for change and transformation. In fact, I would venture to say, her imperfections helped others to identify all the more with her. We only need to count the numerous times in which Xiao Hong searched outside of powerlessness for any tool, means, or form of agency available to women, to recognize her truly revolutionary, avante-garde spirit.

Whereas Howard Goldblatt chides Xiao Hong for her unflattering depiction of Lu Xun—her greatest benefactor—I see her criticism as a testimony to her courage. After all, Lu Xun, too, was human. Rather than framing her expression as ungrateful, perhaps what we are seeing here is her allegiance and identification with Lu Xun’s wife and her determination to stay true to her integrity in terms of her own feelings, beliefs, and views. In her memoirs, Xiao Hong depicts Lu Xun’s tendencies toward moodiness and late rising. Xiao Hong spent a great deal of time with Xu Guangpin, his former student and later wife, and Hai Ying, their son. Thus, it takes little imagination to figure out who was waking up early to perform the monotonous and intensive daily labors and tasks of childcare, housework, and chores. Perhaps Xiao Hong possessed her own opinions on the matter, which became hard to disguise in her candid personal writings about Lu Xun. In her life and writings, Xiao Hong clearly possessed her independent ideas and the courage to express those thoughts. In a letter in which Lu Xun explains and defends his use of “*xiansheng*” (sir) to address both Xiao Jun and Xiao Hong, Xiao Hong’s personality emerges as feisty and unafraid—even to challenge a well-known writer and political figure of Lu Xun’s stature who had the power to aid or abet her writing and its expression.<sup>124</sup> I find that Xiao Hong acted fearlessly. Her outspoken candor carried over also to her friends. When criticized by her friends for becoming romantically involved with Tuan Mu, “Your friends don’t oppose your

break with Hsiao Chun, but can't you be independent and live alone?"—Xiao Hong chooses her own path and retorts, "Why is it that I have to live alone? Because I'm a woman?... I don't give a damn about the opinions of my friends. I can't live in accordance with the ideals of my friends... I have my own ways."<sup>125</sup> Unswayed by the judgment of her friends, Xiao Hong goes against the grain and stays true to her instincts.

### ***history with a small "h:" Xiao Hong's Contributions to "history"***

Early May Fourth women writers were often deemed unable to write "realistically" by critics of their own times. Even today, such residual attitude influences our reading. In truth, it is not that women do not write realistically; they apprehend reality differently and thus record it differently... Having suggested that, I must stress that I am not arguing that women are essentially different, but that realism as defined at the time was a perspective and form inaccessible to women for social reasons. Thus they had to devise a different way of perceiving things and writing about them.<sup>126</sup>

I follow Chinese critics Dai Jin-hua, Meng Yue, Lydia Liu, and Janet Ng in finding Xiao Hong's works ingeniously emblematic of the period in its unique depictions of up-close, personal struggles. In spite of its specification of historical, cultural, and local struggles, Xiao Hong's work ultimately elucidates the universal human struggle for basic sustenance. Howard Goldblatt notes that in *On Market Street*, "One witnesses here the same demeaned existence of the dispossessed poor, the unique camaraderie of people who must constantly scrounge and compromise for food and lodging, and the overpowering psychological effects constant hunger has on them... [that] paint[s] a sobering picture of poverty."<sup>127</sup> A scene in *On Market Street* highlights the conflict between virtue and survival as the writer contemplates stealing a neighbor's piece of bread.<sup>128</sup> This image powerfully attests to the very real challenges of ideological reform. The theme of starvation versus morality is also invoked in "Bridge," in which Huang Liangzi steals food to ensure her son's survival. If personal ethics themselves

become a source of instability in the fight for basic sustenance and survival, then the chances for ideological reform are even more tenuous. In this particular passage, ethics prevail, and the narrator does not give in to the temptation to steal her neighbor's food—but any reader would have had trouble judging her even if she had. One wonders how long this thin, starving, and cold woman may have survived had not help finally arrived. Moreover, sobering thoughts arise about what would happen if, ultimately, she had to depend on theft to acquire food. That the passage presents a vivid and overpowering sense of hunger, along with symptoms of physical pain—to the point that the bread is almost swallowing the narrator—suggests that the narrator is losing the battle against hunger. And, although the narrator is never reduced to stealing in the autobiography, the lovers desperately struggle to meet their primary needs on a daily basis. Her passage about eating melon seeds for sustenance is painfully memorable and emotively heartbreaking, as melon seeds are insubstantial morsels. Repeated images of the lovers enduring hunger, huddling for warmth, sharing clothes, and rationing food and clothing permeate her novel. In one scene in *On Market Street*, after starving and having no place for shelter, the couple chooses to pawn their warm clothes for shelter and food. Interpreting Xiao Hong's detailed descriptions of hunger and coldness in *On Market Street*, in conjunction with her themes of starvation and survival in "Bridge," I find Xiao Hong strategically accentuates the critical urgency of people's prolonged struggle for basic sustenance—the power of gnawing hunger, biting cold, and ruthless physical pain—that is hugely underrated and simply incomprehensible by those who have never physically experienced it. Perhaps the "problem" with Xiao Hong's writing has always been a question of audience rather than literary talent—the incongruity between a materialistically and socially privileged readership free from struggles with basic needs and the dispossessed poor or illiterate who have no access to her materials.

In fact, Lu Xun probably would have agreed with Xiao Hong's reflection on the privileged intellectuals' inability to comprehend the experiences of the poor, a reality that Xiao Hong powerfully portrays in the cruelty of the female principal, teachers, and students in "Hands." After fasting a day himself, Lu Xun, too, determines that what Ibsen's Nora needs is money.<sup>129</sup> "People with empty stomachs cannot wait quietly for the arrival of a golden age."<sup>130</sup> After only a day of hunger (not starvation), Lu Xun becomes intensely aware of what he calls, "this world[']s] countless small actions," or what is often referred to as the small "h" of history. Just as Rey Chow articulates the importance of the details in Zhang Ai-ling's writing, I am arguing that the details and quotidian particulars are precisely where Xiao Hong resists the capital "H" of history.<sup>131</sup> Detailing her experiences with the society's poor and dispossessed, Xiao Hong illustrates the "countless small actions" necessary for grand "History" to unfold. Rather than recording the events of people involved in the broad strokes of history—the political leaders, the intellectual and nationalist leaders, and the army—Xiao Hong captures experience as mediated through space, time, and distance from the epicenter of intellectual ideological reform. In contradistinction to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Western Great Man theory of history that was popularized in the 1840s by Scottish writer Thomas Carlyle, in which he states, "The history of the world is but a biography of great men"—Xiao Hong's portrayal of the peasant world captures the Daoist sentiments of *wuwei*, in which acting is a natural, practical doing that innately contests reality as an intellectualized conscious effort.<sup>132</sup>

Her writing thus transcends the binaries of first and third world, feminism versus patriarchy, moving into something deeper, more organismically bound to nature and the universe—each living creature's most primal fight for survival and attachment to life. This tenacious attachment to life is poignantly captured by Xiao Hong's literary figure Harelip Feng,

whose experience is matched perhaps only by her own as a “determined struggler throughout her life.”<sup>133</sup> The powerful fight to survive comes through in her writing, the soundless and unnoticed struggles of often faceless, unknown people who equally deserve to be treated with respect and humility. Xiao Hong thus fills in History’s gaps with knowledge of the trivial, the banal, and the obscure detail—thus producing history with a small “h.” Her writing captures the “greater” outer world—comprised of the peasants, the dispossessed poor, the illiterate, the subalterns, the people at the margins, and all those simply struggling to survive, who must continue their lives without much change (except sometimes through worsening conditions), facing the daily challenges of making food, raising children, and tilling the fields—the details often cast as peripheral and secondary to the greater movement of History. Yet, only with those details—the struggle of people fulfilling their primary needs (such as food, water, shelter, warmth, and clothing)—can History, as we know it, unfold. History requires, first and foremost, the survival of its people, and the monotonous daily toil for basic sustenance makes it all possible.

Beyond such a focus, Xiao Hong shares her understanding of how History with a capital “H” affects everyone and everything—the environment, animals, scenery, and the various class divisions and how, in order for human history to unfold, the details, the tiny struggles of all living things to survive must endlessly, monotonously occur—from nature, the animals, the land, the crops, and the poor to the intellectual, the rich, and the powerful. As seen with the rich and poor in the story “Bridge,” and humans, animals, and nature in *The Field of Life and Death*, all living creature are inextricably interconnected and essential. Every single human, from all ends of the spectrum—first world to decolonizing world, illiterate to intellectual, white to blue collar, self to other, male to female, and all those between—constitutes its own center and influences each other. Yet when all are centers, and privileging ceases, centers as such no longer exist.

With its rich literary lineage—a juncture of Euro-American notions of subjectivity, imperialism, and feminism juxtaposed with a legacy of traditional Chinese women writers along with the radicalisms of a largely Chinese male-dominated Nationalist revolution—Xiao Hong’s vision of women’s relations to self, men, and the universe is particularly engaging. Her work actively digests and recreates the international and Chinese nationalist materials she encounters, as well as the most minute and local specificities. Xiao Hong’s works traverse the local, the specific, as well as the universal. Her writing purposefully and actively engages the existential questions that such historical and cultural tragedies inspire, while redefining notions of survivorship and agency.

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<sup>1</sup> Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan in “Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity” problematizes how “nation” is often articulated and constructed as a form of exclusion and division. He calls for a resurrection of a non-monolithic nationalism that encompasses its own contradictions and does not divide the inside and outside. Like Horkheimer and Adorno, Radhakrishnan warns that no one discourse can represent the totality. Rather, totality is the effect of dialogues, contestations, and exclusions. Butler in *Bodies that Matter*, too, calls for a reformulation of identity, in which complexity is not sacrificed for coherence. Nation, like gender, is shaped by what it opposes, and depends upon the construction of an “other.” In “Phantasmatic Identifications,” Butler explains that all identifications always seem coherent, but are actually maintained through a series of exclusions and repudiations of others. Perhaps all discourses of nationalism and gender risk becoming forms of exclusion.

<sup>2</sup> A Communist Chinese common reference to women.

<sup>3</sup> In order to maintain themselves, norms, as such, require constant re-iteration to maintain a position of normalcy. This dissertation shares a commonality with other women writers in working to disrupt the patriarchal “norm.” As Simone De Beauvoir, in her introduction to “Les femmes s’entetent” states, “It is not our intention to denounce all the injustices suffered by women, or to draw up a list of their demands, even less to propose revolutionary tactics; our only desire is to disturb” (Beauvoir in *New French Feminism*, 191).

<sup>4</sup> By deconstructing notions of a privileged center, the chapters work toward dispersing the Euro-American—as well as Chinese Nationalist—cultural structure of center and margin, self and other, primary and secondary. The chapters that follow, thus, are intended to unfold non-linearly, neither sutured nor complete, but as tangent points that open up infinite possibilities.

<sup>5</sup> I borrow Etienne Balibar’s term “camps,” which denotes the polarization of proletariat versus bourgeois (Balibar 1991). According to Butler, even in the case of exceptions, men sympathetic to women’s causes, or women reifying patriarchy; the exceptions often simply define the norm in this kind of binary thinking.

<sup>6</sup> Just as there is no pure Bourgeois and no pure Proletariat in the case of Balibar’s argument, there are no pure agents of patriarchy, imperialism, or their resistances either. Rather, individuals are connected and interwoven with other’s identities.

<sup>7</sup> In different circumstances, each individual has the potential to act as persecutor, persecuted, powerful, and powerless within the different groups each individual inhabits.



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<sup>8</sup> (Duplessis 1980)

<sup>9</sup> Chinese women were liberated, not through women's suffrage as was the case in American history, but rather through the reforms of the State and nationalist movements.

<sup>10</sup> Tani Barlow and Wendy Larson note the historical and cultural differences between Euro-American and mainland Chinese women (Barlow 1994); (Larson 1998); The term “modern Chinese women” is fraught with tensions. In this sentence I use “modern Mainland Chinese women” to refer to women who see themselves as Chinese in mainland China. The term “Chinese” is also not a homogeneous surface. Because of the diasporic expansions of China into Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Singapore, Canada, Europe, the United States, as well as ethnic intermarriages, it is crucial to specify those that inhabit the margins. Since not all “Chinese women” shared the same historical events, this different relationship with the state may only refer to mainland Chinese women. How Lu Xun’s literature affected other Chinese female readers is more ambiguous and difficult to ascertain.

<sup>11</sup> (Shih 2011, 56)

<sup>12</sup> The term “patriarchal,” I find, reifies the Manichaeic divide of men and women and supports the self versus society antagonism imbedded in Euro-American constructs of thinking.

<sup>13</sup> Lydia Liu in “Invention and Intervention: The Female Tradition in Modern Chinese Literature” points out that *Miss Sophie’s Diary’s* female protagonist “invert[s] the traditional heterosexual hierarchy by allowing Sophie control of the specular situation during a sexualized confrontation between Sophie and her lover. Ding Ling not only gives Sophie a voice in the I-narrative, but also ownership of the subjectivity of the gaze, exchanging her position with her male counterpart and making him the object of her desire. However, as women, usurp the original male position, they merely become male impersonators. Liu thus finds that Ding Ling ultimately sacrifices the feminine subjectivity. Having stated my interpretation of Miss Sophie’s subjectivity, I would like to emphasize that I am by no means minimizing the magnitude of her Ding Ling’s contributions. Ding Ling is a pioneer for daring to express women’s sexualized thoughts, motives, and actions. The full complexity of the effects of Miss Sophie’s Diary once introduced into Chinese imagination is, of course, unimaginable. Following Judith Butler’s theory of reiteration, we note, simply by translating these new revolutionary thoughts into Chinese words, started changing Chinese women’s norms. For example, Hu Ying in *Tales of Translation: Composing the New Woman in China, 1899-1918* illustrates the rich complexity of influences that imported foreign figures provided for Chinese women’s imaginations and how these foreign concepts could be used to reinvent a new Chinese female self. My point is not to create a hierarchy of innovations among modern Chinese women writers, but rather to illustrate how each writer may have served her unique purpose.

<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, recent revolutionary work by Janet Ng in *The Experience of Modernity* dates female writer, Cheng Hengzhe’s (1890-1976) “Yi Ri (One Day),” (published in *Liumei xuesheng jikan (Students Abroad in America Quarterly)*) as not only the first female modern short story, but the first modern short story in general (Dooling 1: 87). However, because the story dealt primarily with a Chinese female student attending an American University and did not grapple with national survival issues, the work was largely problematically categorized with overseas Chinese and foreign-related material. Ng goes into considerable detail about the political reasons for the demoting of Cheng Hengzhe’s work. Although I am unable to go into more detail of “Yi Ri,” I will later return to read it in conjunction with Xiao Hong’s writing to illustrate her connection with other modern Chinese women writers.

<sup>15</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 40)

<sup>16</sup> In *Tales of Hulan River*, Xiao Hong portrays the issues and experiences of those struggling daily to survive. In “Bridge,” the short story illustrates the conflicts between the wealthy and poor through the symbolism of a rich family's exploitation of a nanny. Through the course of the short story, it is clear the nanny takes the job to save her family from starvation. However, in the complications of ensuring her son's survival, he ends up emotionally and physically neglected and finally dead as the result of his mother’s absence. In *The Field of Life and Death*, we repeatedly see the landowner's exploitation of the poor farmers. When Ms. Wang takes her horse, bled dry through farming, to slaughter to pay the landowner’s rent, the reader notices that even that little money is never hers. A

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collector waits by her home and collects the money before she can even get in the door. This exploitation can also be seen when Golden Bough tries to survive by working as a seamstress in the city, but who ends up raped by the wealthy and powerful. And in the short story, "Hands," we see how a middle class family's hopes of educating their daughter for a better future become almost snuffed out by the callousness of the principal, teachers, classmates and even janitor of the educational system that is determined to keep class segregation. Most brutally, in the short story, "Death of Wang Asao," we witness the landowner's absolute exploitation of both the land and the poor through the circumstances of Wang Asao, whom the landowner rapes and impregnated. As her body helplessly whittles away from starvation, her immense growing belly symbolizes the landowner's exploitation and abuse of the tenet farmers: the fetus, the landlord's baby, grows absorbing all of her nutrition as well as the earth's. Abuse is compounded when the landlord beats her when she is too pregnant to work. When her husband tries to protect her, the landlord kills him. Ultimately Wang Asao's unborn child never makes the transition to life, and the landlord destroys the entire family except for one impoverished and now orphaned daughter. These themes of violence, exploitation, and abuse of the dispossessed echo Lu Xun's portrayal of the Chinese state.

<sup>17</sup> (Goldblatt 1976)

<sup>18</sup> Peter Levine notes that the human mind is bombarded with infinitely many sensory details, facts, and events each moment, but only a select infinitesimal portion is collected, while others are discarded or even unnoticed in the process of the mind making "sense" of it all (Levine 1997).

<sup>19</sup> (Hsia 1971, 273)

<sup>20</sup> (Liu 1994, 46) ; (Liu 1994, 47); Lu Xun commends Xiao Hong for her, "tenacity of survival and the resistance to death [that] forcibly permeate the pages." (Goldblatt quotes Lu Xun's Preface to *The Field of Life and Death* 278). He also finds "its spirit . . . robust."

<sup>21</sup> Both Lu Xun and Hu Feng criticize Xiao Hong's fictional character development. Says Lu Xu, "This is, of course, nothing more than a brief sketch whose narration of events and scenic descriptions are superior to its characterizations." (Goldblatt's translation of Lu Xun's comments on *The Field of Life and Death*, 278) I argue, however, that the Chinese woman may not have experienced her identity as a centered-being and thus no centered self is portrayed. The effects may thus be scattered like Chen's writing. Says Hu Feng, "First, there isn't sufficient organizing of the materials; the entire work comes across as a series of random sketches, without leaving an impression that a central theme is being developed, and thereby preventing the reader from experiencing the tension that he should feel. Second, a great lack of imaginative work in bringing unity to the characters depicted is evident. Looking at them individually, her characters give the appearance of life, but their personalities lack definition, and they tend not to be like other people, thus they fail to come alive truly to the reader." (Goldblatt's translation of Hu Feng's "Epilogue" to *The Field of Life and Death*, 282).

<sup>22</sup> (Liu 1994, 47)

<sup>23</sup> (Hsia 1971, 272).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 272-3.

<sup>25</sup> (Liu 1994, 45). Liu argues that Xiao Hong's work, *The Field of Life and Death*, has been reduced to "a quintessential anti-imperialist novel imbued with patriotic spirit, so much that one can hardly read Xiao Hong today without being aware of the existence of a highly developed, institutionalized, male-centered critical tradition that has tried to frame and determine the meaning of her work."

<sup>26</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 133-34)

<sup>27</sup> Goldblatt's readings of Xiao Hong have been much more positive and he deserves much recognition for his service in translating her works into English language and making her more accessible to English-speaking countries. His dedication to the labors of translation expresses beyond words, his dedication to this formerly less well-known Chinese female writer of Euro-American literary criticism.

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<sup>28</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 134)

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 135; Ibid., 133-34; "As the appeal of so much of what was written in Republican China abates in proportion to its distance from the time of its creation, the apparent enduring qualities of Hsiao Hong's best writings may ultimately establish her as one of the foremost literary talents of her time" (Goldblatt 1976, 135).

<sup>30</sup> (Ng 2003, 22)

<sup>31</sup> (Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak" 1988).

<sup>32</sup> (Barlow 1994, 339). Tani Barlow in "Politics and Protocols of *Funu*: (Un)Making National Woman" argues that the Chinese words *funu*, *nuren*, *nuxing*, all signify women differently. *Funu* translates to "women," but actually refers to "a female subject in Maoist state discourse. *Nuxing*, on the other hand, is more accurately defined with connotations of "woman the sexed subject, the other of humanist Man... essential woman." Finally, *nuren*, corresponds to women with a small "w," a "category in anglophone European social history." (Barlow 1994, 339) Although *funu* translates into the English term "women," for the Chinese she is clearly a political subject, a party comrade or proletariat, and not an ordinary Chinese female (Barlow 1994, 345). *Nuxing*, on the other hand, translates to "female sex," which most Western readers view as the natural starting point for discussions of women's past or future. However, due to Chinese historical and cultural events, *nuxing* has been made to be the other, the oppressor of *funu*. The final word, *nuren*, arose to problematize the subject woman *nuxing*, which then came to stand for essential woman (Barlow 1994, 353). Kang Keqing, Deng Yingchao, and Cai Chang summarize the constituting behaviors of the *funu* in official script as to "oppose feudalism, imperialism, individualism, and bureaucratism, while supporting the thought of Chairman Mao; share many interests with the oppressed proletariat; contribute to the nation's overall well-being precisely because they are neither bourgeois feminists nor ultra leftists unmindful of women's special characteristics; and enthusiastically accept that 'in our country the interests of the individual and the interests of the state are one.'"

<sup>33</sup> The diasporic women on the islands of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore had their own unique influences. In Taiwan, Chinese women continued Confucian as well as the other traditional views along with popular folk culture. Their views on gender bear influence of Euro-American Bourgeoisie stereotypical gendering. During Japan's fifty-year occupation of Taiwan, Japanese views of women and their roles were also blended into the culture, as well as the views of native aborigines, the Fukinese, the Hokonese, and other ethnic minorities. On the other hand, Hong Kong, which was Britain's colony, blended Euro-American cultural expectations, norms, and ideals for women. In addition, there were also Chinese families who fled to neighboring countries of Malaysia and Vietnam, who also still consider themselves Chinese. The surface of "modern Chinese women" is a highly contentious, non-homogeneous site.

<sup>34</sup> My choice of using "decolonizing" rather than "postcolonial" emphasizes that the process of decolonization is ongoing. I have avoided using the term "Third world" as it reifies the notion of hierarchies.

<sup>35</sup> First world feminists and Chinese Maoist women experienced different forms of oppression. Because "femininity" was associated with bourgeois capitalism, Maoist women were forced to wear non-gender specific, dull-colored, non-form fitting, masculine-looking party uniforms, short hair and no makeup. Due to the specific circumstances of Euro-American women's oppression, Euro-American feminism is moving away from sexuality, bodies, affect, and the subjective and toward rational discourse. Maoist women were given equal opportunities to participate in public labor, encouraged to act as liberated daughters, party comrades and strong party leaders and were equals in work.

<sup>36</sup> Like Helie-Lucas, many argued that harmony was infinitely more important than gender struggles.

<sup>37</sup> Decolonizing women's struggles with the nation and gender are not shared by Euro-American feminists. Unlike Euro-American feminists, who do not experience being torn between nation and gender, decolonizing women cannot prioritize gender or nation, but must constantly renegotiate their relationship to both gender and nation. Spivak in "French Feminism Revisited" notes that while the French feminists—such as, Simone de Beauvoir, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray—emphasize the primacy of the universal female subjective experience and

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privilege the role of uniquely female relationships above all else, Helie-Lucas, a decolonizing Algerian activist, argues that the claims of the nation cannot be ignored, and nation and collectivity need to come first. She posits the female individual in the political rather than familial collectivity and calls for a postponement of the production of individualities. The needs of the nation must supersede the individualization of selves, or risk an enactment of betrayal of the nation. Thus, while decolonizing feminists, like Helie-Lucas, feel the urgency to privilege the nation, most Euro-American feminists lack similar ties. In response to Helie-Lucas, Spivak notes that she too, as a decolonizing critic in the U.S, has inadvertently left out issues of race and that Euro-American feminists must stop feeling privileged as women. Thus, Spivak argues that Euro-American feminists need to stop privileging women's roles and to understand that imperialism, nationhood, democracy, citizenship, and culturalism are of equal or greater urgency (Spivak 1993, 141-171).

<sup>38</sup> Summing up recent critical theories of the nation that mainly privilege state bureaucracy, other state apparatuses, or intellectuals for creating nationalist ideologies, Yuval-Davis focuses on how such readings fail to see the contributions of gender relations into nationalist projects: reproduction, culture, citizenship, conflicts and war.

<sup>39</sup> For the decolonizing woman, the conflicts incurred by colonizing women often outweigh the possible benefits of a universal female perspective. In fact, first world feminist work supports imperialism in its desire to become universal. The decolonizing woman's rejection of Euro-American feminism needs to be understood as a group struggle for self-representation amidst conflicts of unequal political and discursive power. Transnational feminism is seen as using political power to subsume and dismiss decolonizing women's perspectives. By appropriating the term "women" as its universal signifier, the Euro-American feminist unknowingly "acts-out" imperialism by erasing the decolonizing woman's urgent unshared issues and incommensurable needs. Because universalizing denies decolonizing women's voices and needs and erases cultural and historical disjunctures, the motives behind transnational feminism are clearly more about power than partnership. Under the rationalizing rhetoric of "for the ultimate good of women," violences upon decolonizing women occur. "Women" simply becomes synonymous with Euro-American women. Refusing Euro-American feminism that views decolonizing women as unequals, thus needs to be understood as the native woman's refusal to choose between gender and culture. This rejection of imperialist apology, I interpret as an act of self-love.

<sup>40</sup> Decolonizing nationalists often construct the signifier of woman to be anti-national, so that the decolonizing woman must repeatedly be placed in situations in which she must choose between the two.

<sup>41</sup> While exploring individuality, post-Mao women's discovery of their individual desires has brought about recognition of their unique and independent desires and identities from that of the neuter politically-minded party comrade. As women began to identify the state with the suppression of women's differences—this was met with an ambivalence of anger and gratitude that was missing in the Euro-American feminists' experiences.

<sup>42</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti in "Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation" argues that the decolonizing nation often occupies the oppressed role, so native women are always already displaced. Women's needs have been repeatedly written over as they become forced to uphold the endangered nation's boundaries. Because of the changes brought about by industrialism and capitalism, the male felt threatened and humiliated in his new unknown place and identity, which causes a severe backlash upon women to maintain male honor and maintain the (male) state's boundaries. The problems were not simply limited to women being repeatedly used as symbols and pushed to the margins, but the very independent needs of women were being constructed as anti-national. As Spivak predicts, not only will the place of women be pushed into the margins, but her very existence will always be displaced by the needs of the nation. (Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-316.); By "Western," I am referring to the decolonizing literary critics' references during the period; In "Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity," R. Radhakrishnan posits anti-colonialism is often a story of colonist woman's betrayal. Nationalism appropriates dissenting voices and subsumes feminism under its territory as authentic discourse. Thus, feminism always needs to address national issues in order to become a political consideration. (R. Radhakrishnan, "Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity," in *Diasporic Mediations*. ed. R. Radhakrishnan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 185-202.)

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<sup>43</sup> For example, the criticisms of Gayatri Spivak exemplify the precarious role of decolonizing female critics. Dirlik criticizes postcolonial work in general and the work of Spivak because she too achieves academic fame by utilizing the subaltern and illustrating the dark side of the nation (Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-316.) And yet, is not Dirlik's critique similar to other Euro-American feminists'? Dirlik does not share the divide in gender, while universalizing feminists do not share the divide in nation. Both critics do not share the experience of being torn between nation and gender, a reality that decolonizing feminists must constantly negotiate. We see this tendency to scapegoat native women also in Franz Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*, in which he portrays the native woman as a traitor to native man and the nation. Rey Chow speaking from experience explains how she, as a Chinese decolonizing critic, must write against both Euro-American imperialism and Chinese paternalism, and is always under the threat of being labeled as a traitor (Chow 1993, "Against the Lures of Diaspora"). Both Chow and Kandiyoti cite the decolonizing female's need to wrestle her right to representation from both the culturally chauvinistic tendencies of the nation as it attempts to displace the needs of women, as well as from the Euro-American feminists who are trying to subsume them. China is interested in its marginal status to Europe and the United States, but not in the marginal status of women. Chinese official discourse inscribes itself within the space of the minority and skirts the subjection of women, because the space is always already filled. Aside from declaring such contradictions, few alternatives exist for women voicing out against both chauvinistic tendencies and imperialism. Wedged between first world feminists and the anti-colonial male state that uses nationalism to control and contain women, the native woman negotiates a lose-lose situation. Freedom is offered only by imposing a completely new set of controls—for a nation's cultural identity is defined only through exclusion. Her voice easily becomes lost in the static of imperialist and nationalist battles. Her position, thus, is extremely vulnerable to appropriation.

<sup>44</sup> Parker et al in *Nationalisms and Sexualities* find personifications of national love projected as an eroticized nationalism. Partha Chatterjee in *The Nation and Its Fragments* articulates Indian male intellectuals, who when confronted with the task of modernization, resort to a hyper-division in gender to maneuver cultural identity preservation under imperialism. I refer to the term, *xihua*, to designate the May Fourth critic's interpretation of the western transformations necessary to survive China's colonization. Because Indian reformers, like those of Chinese, also believed that European countries excelled only materially and not spiritually, they similarly strove to incorporate the material while preserving the spiritual. Dividing the inner from the outer to preserve the core of cultural and spiritual identity, men took on modernity, change, and the physical world while women were compelled to represent the nation's cultural essence and spirit. This hyper-division created a petrifying effect upon the Indian women to be pure, uncontaminated, and the unchanging essence of culture. Thus, for nationalist causes, women often bear the responsibility for representing the nation, the special spiritual quality of self-sacrifice, benevolence, devotion and religiosity that marked the nation and distinguished it from the "West." The notion shares striking similarities with Chinese attempts for "Western" utilitarianism and a Chinese core (*zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*). In hindsight it can be seen that both nations used similar techniques. Intellectuals glorified the nation's past to defend traditional values and beliefs, but such actions required the strict preservation and policing of conservative traditions. These conservative practices would often not allow women to modernize. Both Indian and Chinese intellectuals, when faced with the dilemma, attempt to preserve national culture by demarcating distinct boundaries between the material and spiritual world.

<sup>45</sup> In culturalized discourse, gendered bodies and sexuality play pivotal roles as territories, markers, and reproducers of the narratives of nations and other collectivities. In India, Partha Chatterjee notes how women's bodies and actions become sites for male policing as proper behavior is mandated to signify the collective boundaries of purity and spirituality (Chatterjee 1993). The decolonizing woman becomes lost in Spivak's "institutional textuality of origin" as she becomes an infinite signifier to an "irretrievable consciousness" as various contesting dialogues of nationalism, traditionalism, conservatism, and imperialism incorporate her into their agenda. Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-316.

<sup>46</sup> I allude to Yuval-Davis's creative presentation of "womenandchildren" in her book *Gender and Nation*. Haraway notes, "[In the] pattern of male kinship exchange . . . women serve as commodities to strengthen male bonding" (Haraway 1991, 137).

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<sup>47</sup> In the Chinese case, perhaps the nation's lack of boundaries, paired with imperialism's emasculation of Chinese males, caused a similar division of the inner and outer as a means to deal with the contradictions implicit in retaining one's culture and modernizing and westernizing. Indeed, in some modern Chinese literary works, woman became the symbol of purity, goodness, and traditional Chinese values. Interestingly, in modern China, the exact opposite was also true. Women became symbols of free transgressors of national boundaries. Women easily picked up and utilized Western culture and enacted the symbol of its threat. For example, in the modern story, *Nie Hai Hua*, the woman becomes the emasculator, the ultimate chameleon at survival. Similarly, in Lu Xun's utilization of female characters to define the space of Chinese culture, his "usage" of women is both constructive and problematic for the construction of modern Chinese male and female notions of subjectivity.

<sup>48</sup> Shu-mei Shih, Gail Hershatter, and Tani Barlow document the imperializing tendency of Euro-American feminist discourse in their works. For a more thorough analysis, please see bibliographic information on the critics above.

<sup>49</sup> Euro-American feminism's arrival was seen as yet another form of ideological domination that threatened to displace native women's voices by "foreign" women. Li's refusal to be identified as "feminist" is her refusal to be ethnicized by the global reach of Euro-American feminism whose mode of containing ethnic difference is through multiculturalism. Li agrees there are similarities in women's struggles and that she is not rejecting Euro-American feminist tenets per se; she states she is against its mode of incorporation and containment - its attempt to displace and subsume Chinese women into their social identity for greater power. Li's desire for autonomy and boundaries, however, has not been met with respectful distance. As Shih illustrates, Li's refusal to be appropriated has been met with new imposed assumptions and judgments. In "Toward an Ethics of Transnational Encounters, or, 'When' Does a 'Chinese' Woman Become a 'Feminist'?" Shih uncovers how Euro-American feminism masquerades under the guise of transnational feminism in a "seemingly" innocuous transparent cultural exchange between two women. At a 1997 conference, when Li Xiaojiang expresses her desire not to be seen as feminist, she is asked by a diasporic Chinese critic several illuminating questions. "1. What is feminism in your understanding? 2. Why do you say it is Western feminism? [and] 3. What are the differences between what you call 'particularities of the Chinese women's movement' and feminism?" Shih uncovers the critic's assumptions that 1. Li did not know true feminism, 2. Feminism was universal and not "Western," and 3. There was no particularity outside feminism. Thus, Shih illustrates how Euro-American feminists enjoy the powers of arbitrarily conferring difference and similarity onto non-Euro-American women, and how the Anti-Orientalist discourse meant to deconstruct Euro-American universalism has instead become an alibi for not looking for different paradigms of cross-cultural understanding. Shu-mei Shih, "Toward an Ethics of Transnational Encounters, or, 'When' Does a 'Chinese' Woman Become a 'Feminist'?" *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 73-108.

<sup>50</sup> Li argues that while Caucasian feminists are hindered by the need to defend their positions from orientalism, diasporic Chinese women often not only feel entitled to represent their native sisters, but also often shut native Chinese women out of the discussion.

<sup>51</sup> Feminists, like Isabelle Armstrong in *The Radical Aesthetic*, criticized the second wave for overly essentializing and invoking a feminist aesthetic that supported an oppressive tradition of associating women with emotion and devaluing the affective experience. Armstrong cites many feminists who, because of French feminism's connection with the emotions, have re-aligned with the rational; Gayatri Spivak in "French Feminism in an International frame" also finds the second stage of feminism a problematic way to search for female identity. While it deconstructs the metaphysics of identity, it also mirrored masculinist ideology. Placing female bodies at the center of the female identity search and tying females to the shape of their organs resorted simply to biology. It failed to recognize that biology itself was politically motivated and constructed, and ignored the social aspect of female existence; in the third wave, Luce Irigaray in *Speculum of the Other* uses the analogy of the power of the male subject's gaze through the speculum at women to illustrate how the scientific scrutiny of psychoanalytic inquiry, while making women appear like subjects, is actually a means of dissecting, controlling, objectifying and containing women. Irigaray compares the body of psychological theory and practice to the speculum that dilates the lips, orifices, and walls so the eye can penetrate the interior. The eye and scientific intellect substitute for the penis that penetrates, invades, and conquers. Irigaray thus uses the very system of "scientific" scrutiny to break down what she identifies as the patriarchal myth of origin. The subject position is appropriated by the masculine as the female body becomes the object. Since discourses set the law for other discourses, philosophical discourses too need be thoroughly re-analyzed to interrogate and destroy the discursive mechanism of the theoretical machinery's systematicity. Irigaray

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further illustrates how the system can be used upon itself to jam its workings by revealing its own inconsistencies and by exploiting the weaknesses of repetition – signifier and signified. For the law, regulation, and norms to be sustained and recognized as such, they must be reiterated; and, there is always the possibility of failure or displacement in that repetition. Thus, Irigaray concludes that authority is not as monolithic as it purports to be. One needs to mimic and recuperate the female within the logic of repression, censorship, and non-recognition. (Luce Irigaray, “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine” 1985); Judith Butler in *Bodies That Matter* returns to a notion of materiality and matter to illustrate that discourse and body are equally unstable and capable of transformations. Because regulatory norms materialize sex through reiteration of norms, the reiteration exposes the incomplete nature of materialization. Bodies never comply with the norm and such instabilities make possible the chance to turn the regulatory law against itself to spawn different re-articulations. A return to Matter, not as a surface, but as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface that we call “Matter” is needed (Butler 1993); Thus, for both critics, reiteration marks the site for turning back and spawning copies in contestation to the original hegemonic power.

<sup>52</sup> (Jacques Derrida, “Signature, Event, Context,” 1988). Derrida’s theory postulates that a surplus of meaning—an infinite list of signifiers to each word always exists; In terms of being more diverse, while Luce Irigaray’s recent work is more “Eastern” inclusive, the main body of her work centers around Freud, Plato, and other Euro-American philosophers and focuses on a Euro-American context. Her most recent work is titled *Between East and West*.

<sup>53</sup> On the concept of identity, Butler uses Kristeva’s notion of abjection, where the child’s notion of self is constituted through her literal throwing up of the food her parents are trying to feed her as “not that, not me, other.” This begins the child’s ability to distinguish the wishes of others against her own. This leads Butler to call for an understanding of abjection as an open wound on the subject—the excluded horrific other that forms the self but always possesses the potential to return and disrupt the seemingly homogeneous identity. (Kristeva “Approaching Abjection,” page 2-4.)

<sup>54</sup> Shih, Shu-mei in “Towards an Ethnics of Transnational Encounter”

<sup>55</sup> At first in the 1950s, because Chinese women were entering the society and work force and attaining equal rights when the Euro-American women were returning home, the Euro-American feminist designated Chinese women as liberated. Li, however, contests that Chinese women felt more exhausted than liberated because of the hard labor. Later, Euro-American feminists found Chinese women oppressed both by tradition and the new Communist state and labeled them as doubly oppressed. This tendency to jump from labeling Chinese women as avante-garde to doubly repressed suggests that Euro-American feminists too quickly leap to conclusions because of their stagism. A deeper understanding of Chinese history is needed. Shih argues against such interpretations since Chinese women were advanced beyond their counterparts in various aspects. Even by the early 1950s, women in Maoist China already had equal work and equal pay, and the socialist state already guaranteed women equal rights in all social and political spheres, while the Fulian (the women’s federation) along with the government, had capillary extensions down to the village level that safeguarded and guaranteed women’s economic, political, social and educational rights. Rather than achieving a deeper understanding of post-Mao Chinese women, Shih finds, Euro-American feminists over-simplistically plot their developments on a Euro-American feminist timeline only to assert their superiority to “others.”

<sup>56</sup> Contemporary Chinese author Wang Anyi states, “[W]e have just encountered differences between men and women; we lived without such a difference for such a long time.” While Euro-American women were oppressed for their differences, Chinese women were prevented from exploring theirs. Sexuality and the female body are the very sites of resistance in China.”

<sup>57</sup> (Shih 2002, 101). In “Towards an Ethics of Transnational Encounter”

<sup>58</sup> Tani Barlow in *Gender Politics in Modern China* notes that while Euro-American feminism has moved on from the second feminist phase of finding women’s unique relation to their body, writing, bodily suffering and effusion, Chinese writers are just starting to revel in it. For many Chinese writers, writing expresses painful wounding, bleeding, passivity, and victimization. Placing Chinese female writing in Euro-American feminism’s second phase, however, fails to take into account that because the nature of repression differs, so too do the nature of resistances.

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<sup>59</sup> (Levine 1997); Peter Levine describes the mind's information gathering as the necessary process of collecting and discarding infinite information constantly bombarding the five senses.

<sup>60</sup> (Goldblatt 1988, 108.)

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 121-22.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 66-7.

<sup>63</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 116). Shih Huai-chi'ih, "On Hsiao Hung" 95.

<sup>64</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 130)

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>66</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 113) Quoted in Biography, 151-2.

<sup>67</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 41)

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>69</sup> "Agency (philosophy) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia." Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agency\\_\(philosophy\)#Human\\_agency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agency_(philosophy)#Human_agency) (accessed June 25, 2012).

<sup>70</sup> H. Frankfurt in "Freedom of the will and the concept of a person" in *Journal of Philosophy*, 67: 1 (Jan. 1971), 5-20. Notes "Human beings are not alone in having desires and motives, or in making choices. They share these things with members of certain other species, some of which even appear to engage in deliberation and to make decisions based on prior thought. It seems to be peculiarly characteristic of humans, however, that they are able to form . . . second order desires."

<sup>71</sup> (Taylor 1985, 16, 115-116); (Taylor 1985, 104). This refers to "their ability to conceive different possibilities, to calculate how to get them, to choose between them, and thus to plan their lives. The striking superiority of man is in strategic power."

<sup>72</sup> (Bandura 2006, 164).

<sup>73</sup> I agree that there is no absolute isolated autonomous individual, but more likely a fluid self that has mutually-influencing, permeable boundaries of society and self. However, I find problematic insertions of subtle Euro-American value judgments. Says Bandura, "People do not operate as autonomous agents. Nor is their behavior wholly determined by situational influences. Rather, human functioning is a product of a reciprocal interplay of intrapersonal, behavioral, and environmental determinants. . . . People do not live their lives in individual autonomy. . . . In acting as an agent, an individual makes causal contributions to the course of events" (Bandura 1986 165). "As an agent, one creates identity connections over time and construes oneself as a continuing person over different periods in one's life." ((Korsgaard 1996) quoted in (Bandura 2006, 170). "The self is the person, not a homunculus overseer that resides in a particular place and does the thinking and acting. Selfhood embodies one's physical and psychosocial makeup, with a personal identity and agentic capabilities operating in concert. Although the brain plays a central role in psychological life, selfhood does not reside solely in the brain, any more than the heart is the sole place where circulation is located" (Schechtman 1997) quoted in (Bandura 2006, 170); (Bandura 2006, 167)

<sup>74</sup> "To reiterate with difference" refers to articulating the self through "not me" or "different."



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<sup>75</sup> "The differences associated with sociodemographic characteristics are even greater than the differences between cultures" (Matsumoto, Kudoh, & Takeuchi, 1996) quoted in (Bandura 2006, 174). For example, "there are generational and socioeconomical differences in communality in collectivistic cultures. Analyses across activity domains and classes of social relationships further reveals that people behave communally in some aspects of their lives and individualistically in many other aspects" (Freeman & Bordia, 2001; Matsumoto et al., 1996) quoted in (Bandura 2006, 174-5). "Currently socio-demographic characteristics might create greater similarities than national boundaries, and world cultures are moving away from the polarization of East as individualistic and West as communal, where one may act communal in one circumstance and independent in another, (Freeman & Bordia, 2001; Matsumoto et al., 1996) quoted in (Bandura 2006, 174-5) so that cross cultural understandings can move toward an understanding that is more circumstantially determined and focused on choices and their application."

<sup>76</sup> "Not only are cultures not monolithic entities, but they are no longer insular. Global connectivity is shrinking cross-cultural uniqueness. Transnational interdependencies and global market forces are restructuring national economics, and shaping the political and social life of societies. Advanced telecommunications technologies are disseminating ideas, values, and styles of behavior transnationally at an unprecedented rate" (Bandura 2006, 174-175).

<sup>77</sup> (Chow 1998, 128-129). Quoted in full, "[My] reading does not celebrate the common people's ability to live—to adapt to and endure harsh circumstances—as an unequivocal virtue; rather, it problematizes it as China's most enduring ideology. 'We, the Chinese, are the oldest culture, the oldest people in the world,' this fantasy says. 'The trick of our success is the ability to stick it out—to absorb every external difficulty into ourselves, to incorporate even our enemies into our culture. We endure, therefore we are.' Like the structure of all powerful ideologies, endurance-cum-identity works tautologically: the ability to endure is what enables one to live, but in order to endure, one must stay alive. 'To endure' and 'to live' thus become two points of a circular pattern of thinking which reinforce each other by serving as each other's condition of possibility. In accordance with this circular, tautological reasoning, the imperative 'to live' through endurance becomes what essentially defines and perpetuates 'China.' As such, it operates as a shield in two senses: 'living' protects China from destruction at the same time that it prevents China from coming to terms with reality. That is, China—preoccupied exclusively with its own survival—is in reality its own worst enemy because that preoccupation is precisely what has led China's political history, with all its catastrophes, to be repeated ad infinitum."

<sup>78</sup> "In their discontent with current circumstances, Chinese intellectuals seem to be seeking in the 'ordinary folk' a source of past knowledge that has remained uncorrupted by the lies and errors perpetrated in the decades of bureaucratized revolution. Inscribed in representations of China's remote areas and often illiterate populations, the search for such uncorrupted knowledge stems from a wish, in the post-Cultural Revolution period, for enlightenment through what is considered 'primitive' and 'originary.' In terms of a shared political culture, therefore, this unmistakable nostalgia is not simply nostalgia for 'the people' as such; it is also nostalgia for the ideals of popular resistance that once inspired political revolution. The continued fascination with 'the people' suggests an attempt to cling to the beliefs that lay at the foundation of modern Chinese national identity. Yet precisely because that turn to 'the people' is nostalgic as much as utopic—a desire for home as much as for change—it inevitably reencounters all the problems that are fundamental to that turn" (Chow 1998, 116).

<sup>79</sup> (Chow 1998, 130). Quoted in full: "Self-perpetuating ideology of endurance and survival—by an ethical insistence on accommodating, on staying alive at all costs . . . such an insistence, despite its nobility, is not ethical enough, or it can be and frequently has been co-opted by precisely the forces it seeks to resist. The ideology of endurance and survival has been so thoroughly and 'spontaneously' incorporated into 'the imaginary relation' between the Chinese and their real living conditions that the government can blatantly disregard human rights in the name of human rights, since, after all, 'human rights' means 'having enough to eat,' and China's food supply is an essentially 'internal affair.'"

<sup>80</sup> "The film's sympathetic portrayal of "Living" is made in the spirit of a resistance to bureaucratized resistance, a struggle against the state-sponsored struggle of official rhetoric. To be able to live through—and in spite of—disasters should in this light be seen as a 'back to basics' approach in what I have elsewhere called the post-catastrophic discourse of contemporary China" (Chow 1998, 126).

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<sup>81</sup> (Chow 1998, 117)

<sup>82</sup> (Chow 1998, 119); (Chow 1998, 126). Quoted Chow, “After the grandiose messages of revolution, for which millions of lives have been lost in the name of salvation, it is as if the sheer possibility of simply living has become cause enough for celebration and respect. The commonplace ‘to live,’ then, has the same nostalgic function as the figure of ‘the people’ in that it, too, asserts the value of a return to something fundamental. Having lived through years of war, poverty, separation, illness, fatal accidents, and the loss of loved one, ordinary people now prefer to occupy themselves with the mundane and the banal—such as eating, for instance. Under such patterns of governance and self governance... ‘endurance’ excels as the foremost moral virtue in the struggle ‘to live.’ Perhaps nowhere is the violence that goes into the making of this moral virtue more evident than in the Chinese character for ‘endurance’—*ren*—which is composed of a ‘knife’ above the ‘heart.’”

<sup>83</sup> A form of phonetic writing women in the remote village of the Jiangyong county of Hunan province invented to communicate with each other.

<sup>84</sup> Ko refuses the Euro-American inscription of bound feet as a symbol of the crippled, cloistered, oppressed, and subservient Chinese woman that has propagated the orientaling fiction of China as feudal, patriarchal and oppressive.

<sup>85</sup> Wong, David, "Chinese Ethics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/ethics-chinese/>; David Wong cites these influences as Confucianism, Mohism, Daoism, Legalism and Buddhism..

<sup>86</sup> Like the essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Hershtatter illustrates how the prostitute becomes used as a signifier by various contesting discourses.

<sup>87</sup> This translates to "wild chicken," which was the lowest level of prostitution. For the wealthy bourgeoisie, who was nostalgic of the past, the prostitute was the *Changsam*, a symbol of culture, nostalgia, wealth and refinement. For the nationalist reformers and revolutionists, the prostitute symbolized the oppressed victim in need of saving. For the Communists, she doubled as the oppressed who needed to be saved from the evils of traditional China, but also took on the symbol of contagion and disease that could infect and transgress the nation at any time.

<sup>88</sup> In some situations, the prostitute could negotiate her wage and even exploit patrons.

<sup>89</sup> In her interview featured in *Morning Sun: Interviews with Chinese Writers of the Lost Generation* (Leung 1994).

<sup>90</sup> According to Burney Hollis, an African-American literary critic, during America's slave era, Christianity became a tool to keep slaves well-behaved and docile. Christianity was used to convince the slaves that to behave well in this lifetime would guarantee them an afterlife in which they would be properly rewarded.

<sup>91</sup> (Niu 1991)

<sup>92</sup> (Peterson 2000)

<sup>93</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 108).

<sup>94</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 113) Quoted in *Biography*, 151-2.

<sup>95</sup> (Zhong 2000, 2-3). “Focusing on the May Fourth intellectual’s attention to women’s issues, and especially their sympathy for women, critics have started questioning the patriarchal implications embedded in this male sympathy. They have argued that, on the one hand, part of the formation of Chinese modernity discourse was closely related to intellectual’s sympathy for the plight of Chinese women and their strong interest in liberating them from oppression. On the other hand, critics have also questioned the paternalistic nature of the relationship between male intellectuals and the object of their sympathy.”

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<sup>96</sup> *A Dollhouse* is grounded in Euro-American notions of developing consciousness, agency and selfhood.

<sup>97</sup> Lu Xun notes that an Englishman guessed Nora was reduced to a brothel, whereas a Shanghai gentleman suggested that Nora went home.

<sup>98</sup> Lydia Liu calls Juanshen in "Regret for the Past" a "split self... [he is] both a liberator and one who abandons the woman he supposedly liberated... As a 'modern' man, he can act as a woman's liberator because of his access to 'New' ideas and the possibility that they provide him as a man. At the same time, this male position is also limited because it is a marginal one itself in relation to the tenacious traditional power structure and in the face of China's lack of a powerful modern identity." According to Lydia Liu, Chinese men are marginalized by their position in traditional culture as well as their international relations (Liu 1995) quoted in (Zhong 2000, 21).

<sup>99</sup> (Zhong 2000, 20). Zhong Xueping notes, "Lu Xun inserted into Chinese literature a new kind of problematic self, a self in a state of crisis over its own identity."

<sup>100</sup> (Lu Xun, "What is Required of Us Fathers Today?" in *Lu Xun Selected Works*, Vol. 2, trans. Yan Xiayi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1980), 64; *Ibid.*, 68; *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, 67; *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>101</sup> (Lu Xun, 86-87).

<sup>102</sup> (Lee 1987, 75).

<sup>103</sup> (Chow 1991). She has "big strong feet and hands" and "would eat anything." No one calls her by her own name or even bothers to find out her real name, but simply refers to her as someone else's possession, "Xianglin's wife." Moreover, she is repeatedly sold as a commodity.

<sup>104</sup> Her perplexity over life and death never become articulated collectively, and her obsession with her dead child becomes ridiculed psychosis.

<sup>105</sup> (Chow 1991, 110-111)

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>107</sup> Ray Chow finds Xianglin Sao a symbol of an "ancient detail about China that cannot be forgotten." Says Chow, "Lu Xun's fiction remarkably demonstrates that the most powerful formal writing... the effect of representation as distancing—never truly alleviates suffering but only compounds guilt" (Chow 1991, 111). "As a detail, [Xianglin Sao] remains unabsorbed by the narrative action, creating a surplus of emotion that is always present as guilt" (Chow 1991, 112).

<sup>108</sup> (Chow 1991, 112). Chow notes in Lu Xun a "Disenchantment of, refusal to use neutralizing of differences among different groups that arise from education . . . to use his own educated tools to create false senses of optimism for oppressed classes . . . to deproblematize their suffering within a class-generated ideology of revolution."

<sup>109</sup> (Yuval-Davis 1997). I borrow Yuval-Davis's creative presentation of the concept in her book *Gender and Nation*.

<sup>110</sup> Despite the genuine concern these two writers display toward women's situation, Chow argues that their female characters are still spoken for in male language and represented through male feelings toward them. She finally concludes that Ba Jin and Mao Dun reveal appreciable sensibilities as male observers, but their female objects remain faceless and voiceless as ever.

<sup>111</sup> (Ng 2003, 43). Rey Chow in "Virtuous Transactions" notes, "Woman's articulation of self and reality were already usurped by a literary language dominated by overarching rhetorics of humanism and nationalism."

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<sup>112</sup> My use of “arbitrary,” reminds readers of the very impossibility of defining any group. The word “arbitrary” invokes the wisdom of Judith Butler and the impossibility of even labeling male or female. Transgenders, diasporic Chinese women, and women who may be partially Chinese interrogate the margins.

<sup>113</sup> Howard Goldblatt’s study of Xiao Hong deviates from the tradition of reading her work as purely nationalistic. In *Hsiao Hong*, there are already plenty of signs of his reluctance to treat the novel as an anti-imperialist work. A radical break with the nationalist reading of Xiao Hong, however, did not occur until two mainland Chinese female critics, Meng Yue and Dai Jinhua, began to read the work in light of the female experiences it represented. (Dai 1989, 174-99) quoted in (Liu 1994, 63)

<sup>114</sup> (Liu 1994, 46).

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>119</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 42, 60)

<sup>120</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 84.) Nieh Kan-nu, “In Sian,” 92.

<sup>121</sup> (Liu 1994, 62). See *Baogao* (Report) 1 (1937): 164-70.

<sup>122</sup> (Ng 2003, 50).

<sup>123</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 84.) Nieh Kan-nu, “In Sian,” 92.

<sup>124</sup> In a letter, in which Lu Xun explains why he addresses both Xiao Jun and Xiao Hong as “*Xiansheng*” (the modern equivalent of Mister), he seems humorously defensive, as he explains how no other terms of the present day, appropriately addressed her. Lu Xun even candidly expressed to the couple, “Well you know how she gets when she wants her way, she’s like an obstinate child, there’s no convincing her otherwise.”

<sup>125</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 85). Mei Lin, “In Remembrance of Hsiao Hung” 33-34.

<sup>126</sup> (Ng 2003, 22)

<sup>127</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 58)

<sup>128</sup> (Goldblatt 1986, 58)

<sup>129</sup> (Lu Xun, 88)

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>131</sup> (Chow 1991)

<sup>132</sup> (Carlyle 1966); (Hirsch 2002); (Borgatta 1954); Kardash, Ted. "Taoism - The Wu-Wei Principle - Part 4." holiday ca. <http://www.jadedragon.com/archives/june98/tao.html> (accessed June 20, 2012); Examples might include breathing, swallowing, and sleeping. These actions occur naturally and are most effective when not forcefully willed. *Wuwei* 無為 implies natural action "as planets revolve around the sun and revolve without doing it, as trees grow, they grow without doing it. It involves knowing when to act and when not to act not in an intellectualized conscious

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way, but just as a natural process. Thus *wuwei* becomes 'effortless doing' or as a practical doing; not mindless but natural."

<sup>133</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 40). As Mao Tun writes, regarding the people in this work [*Tales of Hulan River*]: "Harelip Feng of the mill has [the] most vitality of them all, so much so that we cannot but admire his spirit. And yet we find nothing outstanding about his character, apart from the outstanding tenacity of his will to live, and that is a primitive tenacity." (Mao Tun in "Preface" to *Tales of Hulan River*, 27-28) quoted in (Goldblatt 1976, 111).

#### Chapter 4: Xiao Hong's "Spectrum of Selves"

During the May Fourth, while a majority of writers followed the path of literary intellectuals like Yu Dafu, focusing on the lonely and lost self of history with an emphasis on the fore-grounded individual, Xiao Hong pointedly writes against this current and its limits on the relationship of self and other. Her writing transcends the limits of male Chinese nationalistic constructs of self as well as Euro-American constructs of subjectivity and agency and even differs from Lu Xun in creating alternative understandings of being.<sup>1</sup> While both Lu Xun and Xiao Hong share being circumscribed by first and decolonizing world politics and unequal power, incongruities of Chinese and Euro-American notions of subjectivity, as well as the hemming in of Chinese Nationalist discourse, the circumscribing of Xiao Hong was even more complicated. For Chinese female writers, there were the added complications of gender. In Euro-American feminisms attempt at trans-nationalism, there was the silencing of the needs and perspectives of decolonizing women which often included nation, the erasure of historical and cultural differences, and the imposition of Euro-American standards and judgments upon an incommensurable Chinese female historical specificity. In terms of Chinese nationalism, there was nationalism's fixing of Maoist women in the father-daughter paradigm. Dealing with similar issues of Euro-American notions of self as individual, Xiao Hong uniquely integrates the Western sense of self into a "spectrum of selves" that is more relational, nested within nature, earth, and the cosmos.<sup>2</sup> Expanding the multiplicity of self that has been limited through political dialectics of first and third world, rich and poor, patriarchal, nationalistic, and gendered, Xiao Hong's writing invites the possibility of a broader gender, social, spiritual, emotional, and physically encompassing sense of being as Euro-American and Chinese notions of self and being

merge.<sup>3</sup> This cross-fertilized term I designate as a “spectrum of selves” to emphasize the heterogeneity of self, and embodies the New French Feminist “both/and,” that transcends the limits of one.<sup>4</sup> This “spectrum of selves” is more intimately connected to a wider spectrum of humanity that embraces the contradictions inherent in being human—the mental (the rational and intellectual), the physical and bodily (the primitive, survival, gut level and affective), the cerebral (the moral), the social (relational and organismic), as well as the existential and spiritual (the cosmic and transcendent).<sup>5</sup>

### ***The Social and Relational***

A “relational” reality can be seen in Xiao Hong's personal life, autobiographies and stories. In “Hands,” the little girl's loyal bond to her family and her linked fate to her family's economic situation as well as the future of her little sisters, whom she needs to educate, strongly demonstrates how human's fates are inextricably interconnected. Moreover, the behaviors of the schoolmaster, teachers, and students, in contrast to the behavior of one compassionate child, illustrate the level of power each person carries within one's relationship with others. In *The Field of Life and Death*, when Yueying and Fifth Elder Daughter are abandoned and abused by their husbands and unable to care for themselves, the peasant women collectively care for them. The Daoist treasures and the Buddhist ideal of compassion are clearly a powerful element in Xiao Hong's story, and often the only sources of hope and light within the struggle for survival. A theme of humans as nested within a web of relationships emerges. In Xiao Hong's descriptions of her father, mother and grandfather in her semi-autobiographical novel, *Tales of Hulan He*, a sense of being nested within the various relationships also pervades, as well as her personal string of abusive relationships with men that further illustrates her struggle for

connection and detachment. In fact, her much publicized father-daughter relationship with Lu Xun may have also been rooted in Confucianism in its following of the master-student paradigm, where the pupil never surpasses the master. Because politically their relationship was marked with power imbalance, Lu Xun being well-established and well-known, the limits of their personal relationship tainted over into implications of the inequality of accessibility to tools, knowledge, and truth that became invoked with the teacher-student paradigm. Despite Lu Xun's position as mentor, teacher and protector in her personal life, and the tradition of reading Xiao Hong's work as a derivative inheritor of Lu Xun—like Mencius to Confucius—I posit that Xiao Hong invents her own unique understanding of a "full spectrum of selves" that traverses Chinese paternalism, Euro-American feminism, collectivism, individualism and gender to cross into questions of existence, survival, and humanity, and how each person's connections and relations to others are vital.

### ***Xiao Hong's Unique Relation to Affect, Empathy and Organismic Connection to the Masses***

While Xiao Hong and Lu Xun's father-daughter relationship may be interpreted as mirroring mainland Chinese women's relationship to Chinese nationalism, I illustrate the problematic of the father-daughter paradigm of Chinese Male nationalism's rhetoric. Exploring Xiao Hong's similarities and departures from Lu Xun, I show how her writings complement Lu Xun's by creating a richer, full, spectrum of colors to the Chinese self within the nation, and how Xiao Hong's "spectrum of selves" is an innovative practice stepping in tune to a very different sense of the universe and of life's meaning and purpose. By investigating the different relationship each writer holds with affect, as well as the different impact that insider and outsider status with poverty and dispossession bear upon each writer's work, I emphasize the different



perspectives and contributions Xiao Hong brought to the discourses of nationalism, globalism, and beyond.

During the Late Qing-Early Republic era, the education of the masses, based on a profoundly negative understanding of the nature of masses, became the focus of national reforms. Although many critics read Xiao Hong as parroting Lu Xun's vision of the masses, I find each contributes a unique portrayal and understanding of the masses.” How each defined the problem, as well as the issues each found most urgent to focus upon and disrupt, spoke of the distinct affective relationships that each writer had with the masses. In Lu Xun’s “A Madman’s Diary,” the narrator describes the cruel and callous crowd as indistinct and distant from the narrator: “Outside the door was a crowd of people poking their heads about, slinking in... Some of them their faces were indistinguishable as if covered by cloth, some of them, as old, were fanged with cold iron faces, grimacing and laughing coldly.”<sup>6</sup> In “Medicine” the protagonist, Old Shun, views the crowd witnessing a public execution as “strange people, in twos and threes, wandering about like lost souls...”<sup>7</sup> and “With a trampling of feet, a crowd rushed past. Thereupon the small groups which had arrived earlier suddenly converged and surged forward...craning their necks as far as they would go, they looked like so many ducks, held and lifted by some invisible hand.”<sup>8</sup> In *The True Story of Ah Q*, Ah Q first experiences the crowd as a representative, member, and leader—a part of the organism; but with no loyalties or ethics, it later turns upon him. In the execution of revolutionaries in “Medicine,” and during Ah Q's execution, the image of the callous crowd gathering to witness human suffering for entertainment is most pervasive. Lu Xun's narrators deduce that the crowd's attachment to the spectacle of grotesque violence lies in voyeurism. Tones of judgment against the crowd for its apathy and focus on personal gain prevail. This sentiment is echoed in “Muò Luò Shì Lǐ Shuò;” “In the hustle and bustle of daily

life, only striving towards the dullness of daily survival, the spirit dies away gradually each day. Even if new ideas come, there are no ways to support it.”<sup>9</sup>

An emotive distancing, criticism, and judgment of the masses’ complacency with the monotony of daily survival pervades. However, in all three short stories, the narrator who judges is ultimately hypocritical. All three of the mob pieces resolve by having the one who judges become vulnerable to other’s judgment. By the conclusion of the *Madman’s Diary*, the madman, too, becomes implicated into the callous apathetic crowd that he judged. Old Shun, despite feeling repelled and terrified by the blood thirst of the crowd, nonetheless becomes one of the cells of the mob, seeking other’s blood for his own personal reasons. He finally ends up losing not only his hard earned money but also his sick son, who dies anyway after receiving the blood “medicine.” In addition, the violence Ah Q commits in playing the revolutionary, and his condemnation of others, circles back and becomes his own enacted fate. At first a part of the tormenting crowd itself, Ah Q discovers that the tides easily turn as he becomes the new object of torment—the spectacle of a public execution. Within Lu Xun’s works there is often a complicated distancing, shaming, repulsion, and judging of the masses by the narrator which metamorphoses into the narrator’s own terror, guilt, and feelings of engulfment by the masses. What one rejects and is repulsed by always lurks beneath the surface of the unexpressed self. As much as the individual wishes to distance himself, he is part and parcel of the masses he so fears and is repulsed by. Lu Xun’s passages of morbid curiosity and mass spectatorship in “A Madman’s Diary,” “Medicine” and *The True Story of Ah Q* exhort feelings of horror, disgust, disbelief, and judgment. He presents a hardened, emotionally disconnected, apathetic crowd, present simply to relieve their boredom or curiosity—a mass deserving little but disgust and

potential disturbing self-recognition from readers of themselves. The emotive effect is one of distance, regret for the human condition, and as Rey Chow calls it, “compound[ed] guilt.”<sup>10</sup>

Such a distancing, judging, and then repulsively engulfing relationship between the self and the other in Lu Xun’s representation of the masses, I find less morally antagonistic and more personally and emotionally painful and intimate in Xiao Hong’s representation of relationships with others. While Goldblatt equates Xiao Hong’s treatment of the masses as critical and judgmental as Lu Xun’s—“Both pathetic and courageous, mistreated and doggedly stoic; but they are seldom wise, and are all too often the perpetuators of their own misery,”<sup>11</sup> I contend that a similar passage about the spectacle of the grotesque in Xiao Hong’s *Tales of Hulan River* elicits distinctly different emotions and portrayals of reality:

Someone spotted a coil of rope on Harelip Feng's brick bed and quickly spread the rumor that Harelip Feng was planning to hang himself. Talk of a "hanging" proved a powerful stimulant....those who were coming to watch the fun or who were making plans to come, it's hard to tell just how many there were...With the children that made over forty... Figuring that among them there were some who were too old or too sick to come...Then there were quite a few of the men....who made bean noodles, stoked the furnace, or ran errands for the mill. At all events, not less than twenty or thirty from our compound went to watch the fun. They were joined by innumerable others from the neighborhood who came as soon as the word reached them. A hanging! Why should a good man choose not to live but prefer to hang himself? Hurry up and see! This is something too good to miss! Hurry up and see! Besides it doesn't hurt to look. After all, it isn't like a circus where you have to pay admission. That's why crowds always gather when a woman in the town of Hulan River jumps down a well or into the river, or when a man hangs himself. I don't know if this is true all over China, but at least it applies where I come from. A woman who throws herself into the river is not buried as soon as they recover her body. Her corpse is left on the bank for a couple of days for everyone to see. A woman who jumps down a well is not buried as soon as they recover her body, but displayed to the curious eyes of eager spectators just like an exhibition of native products.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, at first glance, Xiao Hong’s passage about morbid curiosity, relieving boredom, voyeurism, and the apathetic treatment of human deaths parallels Lu Xun's narrators’ emotional detachment from death, spectatorship and the masses. However, if we look closer differences emerge. Unlike Lu Xun’s narrators’ detached judgments towards the masses, in Xiao Hong's

portrayal of the crowd there is a description of events with an intentional withholding of judgment. The glee with which the peasants go is equally obtuse and as difficult to comprehend as the reason why the peasants traumatize themselves and their children.

And yet these are not pleasant sights... Timid women cannot sleep for several nights after seeing the body of a suicide. But the next time some unfortunate takes his own life, they flock around just the same. The fearful and vivid impression they take home makes them lose their sleep and appetite again, but as if under some strange compulsion, they go a third time, even though it frightens them nearly out of their wits. They buy yellow paper money and a bundle of incense sticks to burn at the crossroads, then kowtow three times towards the north, south, east, and west, imploring the evil spirits: "Don't take possession of me! I've sent you off with incense and paper money!" One girl died of fright after seeing a hanged corpse. And I heard of another who died of fright after seeing a body brought up from a well. She fell ill from the shock and no doctors were able to save her.... Yet people choose to look... Women even take their children along to look. Long before they've even grown up they're taken along, perhaps to accustom them to this exciting world of ours, so that they will not be totally inexperienced in the area of suicides.<sup>13</sup>

The masses are portrayed as more childlike and difficult to understand than cruel or ill-willed. And their behaviors hurt not only the sources of the spectacle but even more so, themselves and their children.

In contrast to Lu Xun's apathetic, voyeuristic crowd that gathers at spectacles, in *The Field of Life and Death*, Old Mother Wang's experience of witnessing executions is different. When Wang must take her beloved horse to the slaughterhouse, "the memories of what she had witnessed on an execution ground in her youth....unfolded in spite of her efforts: a young man crumpling to the ground; then an old man; the executioner with his axe poised over yet a third man."<sup>14</sup> This is followed by Wang feeling as if she has entered her own execution ground; "She shivered at the horrible vision of the butcher's knife severing her own spine... her hair so disheveled, she looked like a specter..."<sup>15</sup> After Wang returns home, the landlord immediately takes the slaughter money. Like her horse, Wang is bled dry. The onlooker here was simply a child, another victim, who may have grown up to view executions as mirroring her own feelings

of worthlessness, exploitation, and being slaughtered. Thus, Xiao Hong's non-explanation for the gathering of the masses presents an emotively different reality. For Xiao Hong, her neighborhood villagers gather like moths to a flame, as if subconsciously drawn to repeatedly view what they might foresee as the mirroring of their own potentially terrifying fates. The villagers are powerless to resist witnessing the grotesque, just as one is helplessly curious about one's own fate. As Goldblatt notes, the villagers perpetuate their own misery and lack "wisdom" in their choices, yet Xiao Hong does not depict this experience from an emotionally distant, rational, or detached perspective. Rather, her writing questions how one cannot empathize with the horrors peasants repeatedly experience in psychologically reliving the potential reenactment of their horrendous fates. The peasants watch, tormented and haunted: some even lose their lives after witnessing it.

Perhaps understanding the peasants can never be reached solely through the cerebral venues of pure intellect and rationality, but rather through emotions. Xiao Hong provides no real logical reason, nor does she judge the behavior. The crowd gathers for irrational and difficult reasons that perhaps even the author herself has trouble understanding in herself or others. It simply is irrational and yet, painfully, exists. Her writing thus invites questions rather than answers. Do the answers lie in an emotive, existential, spiritual, or primitive, survival-based spectrum of the human psyche? There are no answers, only questions that unfold into more deep and probing questions. Instead, Xiao Hong's writing focuses on relational aspects of self—her connection to the community and others, as well as their shared emotions and experiences. In this way, her writing more closely mimics behavioral documentation saturated with emotions that even she herself cannot logically comprehend, but of which she, too, is an ambivalent and confused insider. Janet Ng critiques her work as "lack[ing] mirroring moments."<sup>16</sup> Perhaps Xiao

Hong does not provide rational solutions, because she candidly admits her own struggle to understand. Her honesty and lack of pretense lend a different perspective—awareness and acceptance of reality. Although she cannot understand the behaviors, she shares that the behaviors emanate from the ones she may dearly love or care about: her own and other neighborhood mothers and perhaps her own beloved grandfather. In other words, this passage is an intimate portrait of her village and her home, and the figures in her childhood she is most attached and connected to. There is a sense of being part of the masses.<sup>17</sup> Repeatedly, she claims the irrational masses as her own: "I don't know if this is true all over China, but at least it applies where I come from. A woman who throws herself into the river... [or] jumps down a well is...displayed to the curious eyes of eager spectators just like an exhibition of native products."<sup>18</sup> While Lu Xun distances himself but feels guilt and engulfment by the masses in his portrayal of them as helplessly ignorant, mindless automatons exploited and manipulated by the wealthy and the powerful, Xiao Hong is more relationally connected to the masses. In the group that goes to see Harelip Feng's hanging, the onlookers are described intimately as "[Those] who made bean noodles, stoked the furnace, or ran errands for the mill." It was as if she has bought bean noodles, or personally knows these people who are her neighbors. Xiao Hong does not act as an omniscient narrator here. She simply records and questions, no better or worse than the others. The result is a surplus of emotions, no necessary logical explanations, and the proliferation of deep meaningful questions. Perhaps, in a way, Xiao Hong answers an emotive question with an emotive answer. What is simply is. What one feels is simply what one feels—confusion, grief, sadness, pity, powerlessness. Writing is her acceptance of reality, and perhaps the first step, into gaining further understanding of where change might be possible.

Emotively, the two writers' passages clearly differ: Lu Xun's is filled with shock, disgust, judgment, despair and guilt, while Xiao Hong's is saturated with emotions of ambivalence, sadness, intimacy and powerlessness. In his short stories and commentaries, Lu Xun predominately speaks through an educated, elite voice, a position which carries a great deal of guilt toward the peasant masses, and is essentially an outsider of peasant consciousness; Xiao Hong occupies a position of "irreconcilable differences." Daughter of an often cruel and opportunist landowner father, which her own sense of humanity and sensitivities at times must have rejected, she was nevertheless an insider to wealthy landowner status through blood.<sup>19</sup> However, other experiences and personal qualities also made her somewhat of an insider to some of the circumstances of poverty. Brought up by her gentle, kindhearted, but often powerless, grandfather, and paired with her emotive, empathetic response to the poor and landless her father often exploited, even in childhood her perspective seemed partial to the poor, exploited, and disenfranchised. Compounded with these tendencies, her later nomadic homeless experiences after running away from her home, and her daily struggles to meet basic life needs like food, shelter and warmth, along with her physical and emotional abuse by men in her life, made her an insider to some of the circumstances of poverty, as well as exploitation and abuse. Her life as a wealthy, powerful, upper class, literate, and highly educated elite, as well as a dispossessed, disempowered, exploited, and abused, poor nomad, places her as an insider of "irreconcilable things." A marked difference thus surfaces between the two writers due to "insider" or "outsider" status with experiences of starvation and meeting basic daily needs. While Lu Xun, after fasting for a day, agrees that people need basic necessities, the fact that he needed to fast for a day in order to grasp the concept of lacking basic needs, suggests his struggle to fully embody that experience not just intellectually, but emotively, physically and psychologically. No matter

how he tried to experience the external forces of starvation, fasting for a day with a storehouse of food waiting, could not equate with peasants who struggled since birth to survive, or the psychological conditions of living daily under the threats of starvation or physical violence.

While most focus upon Xiao Hong's nationalistic messages, I find unique her attention to the mundane, the daily, and the banal that asks probing existential questions. Repeatedly, the question of who has and has not the right to exist and live well, unfolds along with the most trivial and banal of details. The juxtaposition of the daily and the banal with the circling back to expose the utter randomness and insanity of why some are born with rights and others not, lends the stories an earthy, inexplicable, existential question.

### ***“Bridge”: The Practicality of Survival and Its Interdependence on Others***

In “Bridge,” a mother saves her newborn son from starvation by hiring herself out as a nanny. The first time we hear of her is through her employer’s repetitive calling of her name that becomes a constant white noise.

Late at night or early in the morning these were the shouts that came from the bridgehead. As time went on, the people who lived at the bridgehead became well acquainted with the sound and grew accustomed to hearing it. “Huang Liangzi, the baby’s hungry! Huang Liangzi... Huang Liang... zi.” Especially on rainy evenings or on a windy morning, in the midst of a solemn quiet, this sound echoed off the water under the bridge or was reinforced by the gusting wind as it carried into distant homes. “Huang...Liangzi. Huang...Liang...zi,” sounding like the refrain of a song.<sup>20</sup>

Like Lu Xun’s Xiangling Sao, the female protagonist, Huang Liangzi, has no personal name and is referred to by her husband’s name with a diminutive “zi” afterwards, or as “she (ta),” or even as “Mother (ma),” all of which simply refer to a role. Her little boy is equally nameless and is “Xiao Liang” or “Xiao Liangzi,” a little version of his father or mother. At first she runs to the bridge to find out why she is being called; later her behavior changes. “The phrase 'Huang



Liangzi' was like a code, for as soon as it reached her ears she quickly left, following the words."<sup>21</sup> Accustomed to being summoned like a dog, her body begins to obediently follow without question. Mutual respect is utterly nonexistent. The complete monopolization and exploitation of her physical presence and body is most poignantly presented in a comical but disturbing scene where she runs to the young master's house believing she had been called. Finding the doors of the master's house still locked, disoriented and still asleep, she realizes the source of confusion—a vegetable street peddler is hawking cucumbers and eggplants that phonetically sound like her name, "Huang...gua, qie...zi..."<sup>22</sup> Her body is stripped from her. Her breasts become property of her employer's son. Her breast milk becomes sold property. And when the rich demand she be a live-in nanny, even her physical presence must be sold, as she is forced to abandon her own child.

Before introducing both children, marked environmental differences already surface: "The bristlegrass atop the master's wall was getting plump, while on the eastern side of the bridge, the crying sounds of Huang Liangzi's child grew louder as they carried over to the West side of the bridge."<sup>23</sup> Like his mother, our first meeting with Xiao Liang is also through an echo, which comes to symbolize the emptiness and lack in poverty. We do not experience Xiao Liang's cries, just the echoing of his cries. In contrast, among the wealth, even the grass is healthy, robust and abundant. Juxtaposed against the wealthy opulence and waste of the wealthy and powerful lies her son on the other side of the bank, wailing from obvious scarcity, lack and hunger. Juxtaposing the two boys exacerbates the disparity. Physically, Huang Liangzi is always pictured with the little master. She often takes the little master strolling in his carriage and sings a childhood ditty to the little boy: "Strolling, strolling...push our little angel to the top of the span. / Atop the bridge catch a great butterfly; / Mama sits down to rest by and by. /

Strolling, strolling...push our little angel to the top of the bridge.”<sup>24</sup> She is also depicted as often dozing against the baby carriage under the elm tree in the summertime. The external image is one of abundance, peace, presence and love: “In his carriage with its creaky wheels the little master slept; white and delicate moon face, a frosty white cap neatly arranged on his head just above the eyebrows, and a lovely, spotlessly clean set of clothes covering his body.”<sup>25</sup>

In contrast, we learn of Xiao Liang through great distance—across a bridge, through his increasing cries, and his mother's pain. Says Huang Liangzi, seeing her son across the bridge, “Must you cry? Don’t cry now... Daddy will take you in his arms to hop and run around.”<sup>26</sup>

Then, we are presented with a painful image,

Daddy was holding him now, standing on the opposite side of the bridge – her own child, pale and drawn, with a tinge of blue around the eyes and a neck just a bit too long, looking something like the withered branch of a tree...His laughs were about the same as his cries, and when he cried he never shed big, bright tears.<sup>27</sup>

Following, there is a hint at his father's physical and emotional neglect through Huang Liangzi's concerns: “Hey! Wipe his nose! It’s running into his mouth. What’s wrong, are you blind? Ai! Ai!”<sup>28</sup> The mother’s forced, extended, physical and emotional abandonment of her child for insurance of his survival, is captured by the passing of seasons: “The bristlegrass atop the master’s wall was devoid of moisture.... But the child’s cries coming from the Eastern side... Carried on the wind, they drifted over to the master’s house and straight into Huang Liangzi’s ears, where they were magnified in much the same way as the wings of a fly appear enormous under a microscope.”<sup>29</sup> Through the passage of time, we sense the long-term deprivation of the impoverished family. The magnification of sounds has the equal effect of magnifying the affective intensity. This over-magnification of a creature that usually rouses physical disgust, similarly creates an affect of physical repulsion in the reader—an imagined, felt, sensorial,

bodily connection. Feelings of pity and injustice arise for the poor little boy and his mother, who suffers to keep him alive.

Yet, Xiao Hong is not just creating a snapshot rendition of the inequality of classes: rather it is an intimate portrayal of the nuances of love, power imbalance, necessity, and intimacy. Both the rich and poor need change. Below the masquerade of the wealthy family's abundance, something has gone amiss: "Nonetheless, Huang Liangzi felt that he (her son) was cuter than the child in the carriage (the little master). But in what way?"<sup>30</sup> And again, "And yet she felt that he was cuter than the child in the carriage, though she couldn't have told you why."<sup>31</sup> And, "She smiled. Invariably she found it funny that this child who so loved to cry, and who never really laughed, was somehow cuter than the one inside the carriage."<sup>32</sup> Another time, she sings her child's ditty to the little master, but intentionally "omitted the two middle lines," "Atop the span catch a great butterfly; Mama sits down to rest by and by." Upon which the narrator informs us that "Since there was no spiritual bond here, they weren't really necessary... gradually the song died in her throat. She paid no attention to whether or not the child enjoyed her little ditty... even when the little master was asleep in his bed, she kept singing."<sup>33</sup> At first, the nanny's dozing against the rich boy's carriage invokes a lazy peace, but as the lack of attention escalates, it reveals that both wealthy and poor child share a similar tragedy. Both live in absence, silence, neglect, and separation from their mothers. The caregivers, who are to reflect unconditional love, are not present, and both children are emotionally neglected and abandoned. With the little master, Huang Liangzi is physically present; yet in spirit, heart, and mind, there is only her missing son. This becomes apparent in the repeated images of her dozing against his carriage, the lack of spiritual bond, and her not being able to reflect joy, emotion, or any response to the little master's experience. At one point, she pushes the carriage so fast to get to her son and back

that it “jolted the baby’s head around, but what she feared most was the creaking of the wheels.”<sup>34</sup> Her focus on her and her son's needs invariably distract her from the innocent helpless infant’s needs. In another, she runs so quickly she endangers the infant’s life: “Without having full control of the carriage, she pushed it recklessly along the bank of the ditch, occasionally coming so close it nearly tumbled into the water; only two wheels were touching the ground and the child was on the verge of bouncing out.”<sup>35</sup> Love for her employer’s child cannot substitute for the love and presence of her own child, and the unvoiced pain of denial for her child’s survival saturates the text.

Her son, too, experiences the physical and emotional disconnect from his mother, which manifests in his behavior towards her: “Even more disturbing was his apparent lack of love for his mama, now standing on the other side of the bridge; he never clapped his hands when he saw her, nor flailed his legs as he lay cradled in his daddy’s arms.”<sup>36</sup> Despite grieving separation and her son's starving frame, seeing her son alleviates her pain. Only after she meets her son’s physical and emotional needs is she capable of being present and loving with the other child. The rich’s imposed circumstances make it impossible for her to meet her or her family’s needs, and limit her ability to give. This creates the sterile environment the wealthy boy must live in. This is apparent when, after seeing her son, Huang Liangzi suddenly finds herself able to love both boys.

She smiled...Walking back to the western side of the bridge, her mind was at ease. As she headed north alongside the ditch she spotted a tiny purple chrysanthemum growing on the bank. Her spirits soaring, she reached down and picked it to stick in her hair. “Little angel. Aiya! What do you think of this?” She waved the flower as she called out to the little one, the words coming from her heart. Calling out to him was the only way she could express her momentary sense of happiness. A great weight had been lifted from her heart, for the first time she felt her little master was as cute as her own child, she gave his cheek a friendly pinch.<sup>37</sup>

After seeing her son, Huang Liangzi's spirit rises for the first time, and she suddenly, lovingly, calls the other little boy "Little angel" with heartfelt meaning and a true desire to connect. Only after easing her emotional turmoil is she able to love both children. Only then are both equally cute and lovable.

The relational aspects are stressed as we witness Huang Liangzi physically and emotionally, although differently, bonded to both children. She is bonded to her birth son through flesh and blood and by the love and responsibility to be his greatest advocate. Yet, she is distanced through space and time, and is unable to be physically present for her son, so they cannot fully experience each other. She is bonded to the "nannied" child beyond work ethics and responsibility, for she has also given a vital part of herself, emotionally and physically. She and the child have shared space, time, and physical affection. She has nursed him from her breast, and held him, and perhaps watched him as he gazed into her eyes. At first, she struggles to meet the needs of loving both children by sneaking peaks at her son across the river. However, when even her wages are not enough to sustain him, she is forced into a moral dilemma of whether taking food to be thrown away constitutes "stealing." Pressured into stealing to ensure her son's survival, this ethical quandary leads her through a tortuous constant cycle of self-recrimination, guilt, fear, self-loathing, and remorse. The fear of getting caught constantly consumes her.

The master never did see her tossing things over to the Eastern side of the bridge, but whenever a ripple spread across the surface of the water it frightened her as much as if there were a mirror in her heart. It's obvious these things are stolen... the old man in the sky knows it too. The surface of the water reflected a blue sky and white clouds, so very close to her; there it was, right under her hand as she tossed the food across the water.<sup>38</sup>

These feelings of wrongdoing, with God watching so closely, are emotional torture. It is not only against her principles, but she could also be abused or lose her job because of it. Exacerbating her emotional condition, she has internalized the constant, abusive, accusatory

voice of the mistress within her head: “Huang Liangzi, Huang Liangzi! Where have you pushed that child to? ...What did you steal to take home? Do you hear me, Huang Liangzi!”<sup>39</sup>

Exploitation of the poor occurs on all levels: emotionally, spiritually, and morally.

Unaware that proximity of the two irreconcilable worlds has already aggravated stress and trauma, Huang Liangzi dreams of a bridge to connect the two sides of the river, East and West, as an ideal solution, so she can simultaneously love and care for both children. Physically, the bridge represents her ability to connect two children and two worlds with herself in the same time and place; but symbolically, it carries the hopes of dissolving the ravine between the wealthy and the poor. Indeed, after the bridge is built, the possibility of an abundant, loving, harmonious future is fleetingly suggested.

The bristlegrass atop the wall around the master’s house was once again plump and flourishing. There was also some bristlegrass growing at the base of the wall, along with other varieties of grasses – wild poppies, sparrow-reed grass, and some grasses whose names are not commonly known. Huang Liangzi picked the sparrow-reed grass to make flute-whistles, giving one each to the skinny and to the stocky child. The two of them went to the base of the wall and picked the grass, so much that her lap overflowed with it. Then they went and picked the wild opium poppies. “Bzzz bzzz.”... Under the elm tree in the courtyard they clamored, laughing and playing their flute-whistles....The sounds of the child’s weeping at the bridgehead were no longer heard. There, at his mama’s knee, the boy laughed and sang. The children were always standing in front of Huang Liangzi, one at each knee; to her they were both cute, and occasionally when they pretended to be crying, she’d sit them on her knee.<sup>40</sup>

This utopian world of united poor and wealthy quickly disintegrates as the children grow up, and suddenly all dimensions of a nightmare overtake. The ideal family is a short-lived, false dream.

Once the bridge is permanent, the inequality and unfairness become more pronounced and unbearable. The injustices no longer merely exist in her head, but are an acrid ongoing reality.

The clashing two worlds create significant moral as well as emotional dilemmas. As the boys grow, and the wealthy boy thrives and demands, while the poor boy must eat the leftovers of the wealthier boy and become scolded for his physical needs, the inequality and impossibility

of the three becoming a “family” becomes clear. Painfully, she must now discipline her son for trying to meet the basic needs that others have.

“Mama, I want one of those too...”

The little master was eating meaty buns, one in each hand, the oozing oil bringing a sheen to his hand. The fragrance from the buns seemed to fill Little Liangzi’s nostrils, no matter how far away he stood.

“Mama, I want one too...I want one...”

“What do you want? Little Liangzi, you shouldn’t beg for things...have you no shame? Such a greedy little mouth! How thick-skinned you are!”

Whenever the little master ate fruit, he cocked his head and slowly rolled his dark, round eyes.

As for Little Liangzi, when he watched the other boy eat, he’d suck on a leaf or stick a piece of bark on his tongue, rolling it around in his mouth and sucking at it with the tip of his tongue.<sup>41</sup>

As any child would, Xiao Liang asks for food when he is hungry, but instead of empathy, his cry for food only incurs the shaming wrath of his mother, who is under immense pressure. She, too, feels helplessness, frustration at her demeaned status, and the need to seek approval from an unreasoning toddler, in addition to guilt for not being able to provide for her son. Unfortunately, unable to cope with the onslaught of her own emotions and grief, unable to set limits with the “master’s” child, she displaces these as rage, blame, and verbal abuse against her innocent son, whom she does have power and status over.

Her relationship with the innocent infant she nurtured and protected quickly erodes into terror, guilt, and fear, as the little master gains power and begins his passage to becoming a potential, future, exploiter like his parents. We are provided a small glimpse of the magnitude of verbal and emotional abuse the wealthy inflict upon the poor. There are signs the rich boy is hurting Xiao Liang and that Huang Liangzi is desperately trying to stop him: “two gashes on her child’s hands,”<sup>42</sup> “scars on his face,”<sup>43</sup> and “an earlier wound, which had been caused by the little master.”<sup>44</sup> Below the superficial friendly dynamics between the boys lies an unspeakable jealousy. As the nanny’s underlying favoritism of her biological child surfaces, the rich boy’s

grievances grow, as both must share one caretaker. This subtext of jealousy is revealed through the rich boy's acting out, mainly in the form of bullying the object of Huang Liangzi's love, her son. The two children as love objects become warring entities for Huang Liangzi, in which her love for both cannot be reconciled.

Huang Liangzi's social position and circumstances leave her powerless to change the situation. From a brief dialogue she has with the little master, it is clear she can neither change the rich little boy or her son's feelings of jealousy, nor can she stop the rich child from hurting her or her son.

That kind of roughneck behavior isn't allowed! What are you up to...what are you doing?" Beyond the wall or on the street or, for that matter, wherever there was no one around to see, Huang Liangzi would grab the little master's wooden rifle away from him. He'd then fall to the ground, crying and scolding, and sometimes he'd go over and hit Huang Liangzi with a toy or with a dirt clod...<sup>45</sup>

Due to social and economic circumstances, Huang Liangzi is made powerless over a toddler. She can only remove his weapon when no one is looking, and even then she is helpless to his hitting and throwing dirt. The tantruming boy is not responsible for abuse, but his parents, who allow him to abuse others, are. While the behavior can be dismissed as childish antics, at a deeper level it warns of the present and future worsening imbalance of power, symbolized through Huang Liangzi's inability to do much but accept the torment of a child, along with the conditioning and normalization of wealthy children to abuse the poor and powerless. Poor Xiao Liang, even when he ventures to defend himself against his bully, he only incurs the wrath of his parents, who must stop his behavior to insure his survival. The rich tormenting the poor is only exacerbated in the next generation by the pattern of the poor tormenting their own children for their survival.

On the morning that Little Liangzi split the little master's lip, Huang Liang's whole family was involved in an uproar at the bridehead. Huang Liangzi was shouting, Little



Liangzi was running and screaming: “Daddy...Daddy...Ai!...Ai!...” By that evening Little Liangzi also had a bloodied lip. An earlier wound, which had been caused by the little master, was bleeding again, but this time it was Little Liangzi’s own mother who had done it. She wiped the little master’s wound clean, but her husband left the wound on her own child untended.<sup>46</sup>

Undoubtedly, Huang Liangzi does not intend to hurt her child, but her son’s life hinges on the little master's approval, as he is the crux of financial support to keep Little Liangzi alive.

Perhaps fear of losing her job and Little Liangzi’s means of food, unleashes fear, violence, and desperation in her actions.

As the intensity of jealousy and inequality increases, the bridge becomes an overly permeable place in desperate need of boundaries. As a symbol, the bridge shifts from a place of connection and intimacy to one of engulfment and suffocation. Repeatedly, we see the mother walking Little Liangzi to the East end of the bridge where the father resides, calling across the bridge for the father to fetch him home, or when Little Liangzi runs across the bridge, he is stopped half-way by his father. Torn between her unconditional love for her biological son and the child she must both mother and fear, she begins to wish the bridge of her dreams never existed. Forced to discontinue all “family” visits upon the bridge for fear of jeopardizing their “secret,” and thus her job and Liangzi’s chance at survival, the story suddenly and quickly concludes, putting the mother out of her dilemma and previous “misery.” I have placed “misery” in quotes because I believe the narrator plays with the reader's own notions of injustice and misery. Previously, the narrator notes the mother feels like crying but simply cannot: “She felt like crying, but her chest merely heaved twice, and that was it.”<sup>47</sup> By the end, the reader is met with an awakening and redefinition of “misery” and “tragedy.” After the narrator informs us that the events of the family visits on the bridge have stopped for a long time, and that the father has dissuaded his son from crossing, the mother on the other side of the bridge suddenly hears her

child screaming and the sound of falling. Running to the bridge in terror, she sees her little boy lying dead at the bottom of the bank. As the narrator reveals to us, since they had last visited, the city had built a new bridge and torn the old one down. Only concerned with getting past his father, the little boy thought he saw his mother, and bounded excitedly across an old bridge that no longer existed. Physically and symbolically, with no bridge to connect—one which no longer physically existed and was more a mirage than ever a reality, and the other built in modernity, but without knowledge of it—the little boy simply fell over the phantasmic bridge and died. Symbolically, neither bridge carries any real potential to link the poor with the wealthy and powerful. They are both mirages; constructed false hopes to further disempower and torment the poor. The relationship between rich and poor is not symbiotic and destructive for all “selves” involved—destructive for the wealthy, but more destructive for the poor.

The tragedy of “Bridge” struggles with questions of who has and who doesn’t have the right to live and to have their basic needs met. In this warped, upside-down, unnatural world, it is the son’s love and need for his mother, and the mother’s love and need to have him live well, that set up his tragic death. In order for her biological son to survive, she must abandon him in almost every sense of the word—to give her love, milk, and presence to another child. When she realizes her son is gone, never to return, Xiao Hong writes, “Then the lungs in her chest heaved and expanded. *This time she was truly crying (emphasis mine).*”<sup>48</sup> While Goldblatt critiques that “the forced sentimentalism...makes it only a second-rate effort,” I argue she is emphasizing an affective reality rather than a rational or intellectual one. For a mother, can the death of a child ever truly be “over” sentimentalized? I agree that the emotive intensity is too painful to empathize with a felt sense. Perhaps this is why it is easier for readers to dismiss the writing as overly sentimental, to distance oneself from the intensity of the emotions evoked and felt through

the utter injustices captured in her writing. Rather than overly exaggerated or dramatic, I find she presents one version of the reality of the imbalance of power—a documentary of a small taste of the emotive world which she inhabits. Moreover, more than just documenting victimization, I believe Xiao Hong is constantly creating a proliferation of unanswered questions. What is grief, and what constitutes grief? How to alleviate the poor's propagation of abuse upon their own children? What at first seems like torture in Euro-American defined subjectivity—poor self-esteem, emotions of guilt and abandonment, unfair circumstances—becomes meaningless when compared to the alternative. A child's life, no matter how difficult and painful, is precious and invaluable. This is the tragedy the mother realizes and shares. Thus, the narrator writes, she finally “truly” cries. Xiao Hong almost suggests that the mother, in trying to make the unequal equal - by giving her son delicacies and fruits he would never have tasted, by dreaming for her son to be and have more than was within his destiny, and by creating false hope—that she also partially sets up her family for the crushing annihilation of its unreachable dreams and despairing disappointments. Indeed, “the bridge seemed to shorten Huang Liangzi's life.”<sup>49</sup> The bridge becomes a symbol of false dreams and hopes for both herself and her son. Extrapolating it further, the phantasmic bridge symbolizes the false hopes of a society which dreams unity can be created simply by forming a bridge between the poor and the wealthy, especially a bridge in which the poor must make all of the reforms and suffer the consequences of these reforms. No one from the wealthy side ever attempts to cross the bridge.

In both "Bridge" and *Lost in the Wind and Snow*, the possibility of a child's starvation forces a mother into selling herself—the ultimate sacrifice for ensuring her child's survival. Both mothers sacrifice their lives (daily life), their bodies, and abandon their children to insure their survival, as well as their sense of morals. The mother in “Lost in the Wind and Snow” lies

about who she is, while Huang Liangzi must steal food for her starving son. Both stories question that when struggles are for basic necessities like food, water, warmth, and survival, who is anyone, with all their basic needs answered, to judge a mother, a father, or any other person, for that matter, in their fight for survival or their children's survival? Intellectually, idealistically, theoretically, one can argue to morally remain strong. Yet we receive a different answer emotively from these stories. How is one to deny a malnourished child, or any child, life? These are not the tough, heartbreaking, decisions that most readers are afflicted with on a daily basis. How then would one judge that simply because one has his/her basic necessities attended to, that he/she is more spiritually advanced, stronger, or wiser? The questions Xiao Hong and Niu Zhenghuan present are difficult for any human—male, female, rich or poor—to grapple with. Yet, often the material privileges first world countries often take for granted become grounds for assuming spiritual superiority. These hidden agreements and assumptions often are taken as empirical fact in Euro-American feminist critiques. No direct relation exists between material external circumstances and spirituality. In fact, the relationship may even be inversely related. When choices of survival include not only one's own, but also loved ones and one's children, perhaps one's perspectives of values and judgments alter in terms of whether survival is "enough."

The images and emotions in Xiao Hong's writing highlight the distinguishing factors among victimization, agency, and survivorship. Problematizing Euro-American feminists' tendency to immediately equate hardship with victimization, and by emphasizing survival as a mode of female agency, Xiao Hong's writing illustrates how it is the ability to endure that makes a survivor, and that, like growing pains, it is through one's tribulations that one gains strength. Contrary to Euro-American feminist belief that a well-defined self and subjectivity are superior,

Xiao Hong's writings, like many other writers of the period, warn us that autonomous, individual subjectivity is always secondary to survival, and advocate the understanding of human relationships in terms of connections to others.<sup>50</sup>

***“The Death of Wang Asao”: Practicality of Self-Preservation and Bodily Suffering as Inscription***

This story depicts the exploitation and abuse of power by wealthy landowners over landless peasants, and touches upon issues of survival and agency, rights or non-rights of existence, intimate connections, and spirituality. As Wang Asao goes into labor, neither the unborn child, a product of the landlord's rape, nor its mother, make the natural journey to life. By contrasting the un-naturalness of the landowner, Xiao Hong emphasizes his warped connection to nature. In contrast to images of expansive natural fertile lands and abundant harvests, Wang Asao and her family are treated most un-naturally. While the oxen are permitted rest and respectfully treated as laborers of the harvest, Wang Asao is treated worse than an animal. The landlord rapes her, physically abuses her, exploits her, and insists she continue to till the fields while eight months pregnant. When too weak to work, the landlord physically and verbally abuses her. The great contrast of the abundance of food and harvest versus the peasants' muscular but thin dark bodies exemplify the landowner's exploitation. This exploitation is further pronounced by Wang Asao's starving, emaciated, skeletal body in contrast to her huge, bulging, belly sucking the life from her. Just as in “A Sleepless Night,” the mother experiences her body as an ultimate betrayal of body and self. The little sustenance Wang Asao receives from the landowner, now goes directly to the child the landlord has sired from raping

her. His exploitation occurs on various disturbing levels – starvation, violence, rape, economic control, and finally taking her, her husband, and her unborn child's life.

After their deaths, only one daughter survives. Although orphaned, a peasant neighbor woman pities her and takes her in. Perhaps not the best of fates, but in contrast with Lu Xun's female protagonists, at least the little girl survives. I agree with Rey Chow that the highly appraised "ability to endure"<sup>51</sup> is not motivating for change or very empowering at this moment. I also understand how Lu Xun, in his commentaries, comes to equate the desire for self-preservation with selfishness and private gain. In *The True Story of Ah Q*, Ah Q's focus on sustaining existence and bettering his life through denial and fantasizing hurts others, as well as himself and prevents him from the possibility of reform. And yet, Xiao Hong contests that even before reform, change or awareness can occur, one must survive. Change, agency, and subjectivity are all secondary to survival. The older daughter is the sole witness to her parent's history, events, and the truth of their lives. With all others, their tragedy will only melt into an undefined mass of tragedies, but not for their daughter. Unlike others, these events are deeply personal, connected, and intimate to her life. The little girl, rather than dying to emphasize the utter depravity of the landowners and the tragedy of the peasants, on the contrary, survives. As long as she survives, she has the capacity to develop more selfhood, gather more awareness and tools, and to construct her own reality and truths. Each day she survives is a chance to gain greater access to power and agency, and to find her purpose and will, and to share her own understanding of "being," and if not in her lifetime, perhaps in the lifetime of her child or grandchildren. Rather than hyper-focusing on survival, Xiao Hong may be pointing to survival paired with an awakening—an awareness that, once enlightened, cannot be taken away. The

emphasis on awareness as a key towards greater agency can also be seen in “Hands,” where it becomes a tool for survival.

***“Hands (The Dyer’s Daughter)”: Awareness and Survival as Agency***

Tenacity for survival and searching for awareness as agency can also be found in “Hands.” It is the story of a poverty-stricken little girl who goes to school but is ridiculed, rejected, and tortured by wealthy children and the school authorities, simply because she has unexplainable black hands. The school becomes a desperate symbol of opportunity for the little girl’s family to break the cycle of poverty and exploitation and backbreaking physical labor. By educating their eldest daughter, and having her teach the other children in their family, the family desperately hopes to raise their class status and quality of life so their children can live a better life. The little girl, however, never stands any chance of succeeding at the school, and the symbol of hope is a false one. Ignorant of why her hands are black, most simply assume she is evil. As the cruelty of the privileged students and the authorities escalates, it becomes clear that the false hope and promise only further exploit, abuse and exacerbate the financial precariousness of the poor family, and most inhumanely undermines the spirit of the little girl. As we witness the cruelty of students who refuse to talk to her, sit next to her, and how she finally ends up sleeping on a cold bench in the hallway rather than sharing a warm bed and blankets with the other girls, we see the injustice of the difference between those who deserve to and those who don’t deserve to get their physical needs met. The principal and teacher, who are responsible, are no source of relief or shelter, but only further humiliate, shame, and abuse her.

As the story closes, the narrator reveals the heartbreaking mystery - the little girl’s hands are black because she helps with the backbreaking labor of dying fabrics so her family can send

her to school. The respectable, grueling labor turns her hands black. The underlying truth is revealed: the roots of rejection stem from her black hands—a symbol of poverty and hard labor. Ultimately, no matter how she tries to fit in, or to cover up her differences, her hands expose her class and poverty. Her stigma is painfully depicted when visitors come. In the past, the principal always instructed the dyer's daughter to shamefully hide in the basement rather than stand in the courtyard with all the other students. However, in a final heartbreaking attempt to join and be worthy of being seen, the little girl appears on her own will, wearing her father's oversized white gloves to cover her dark hands. The treasured white gloves lovingly bestowed by her father, represent all of the blood, sweat, and tears of her family's labors of love and her connection to them. Sadly, the symbol of love, hope, and dreams only unleashes the principal's wrath. Infuriated, the principal publicly humiliates the little girl. As the gloves fall from the stunned little girl's hands, the principal kicks the family's prized white gloves with her foot. The repeated images of poverty—the little girl's worn, repeatedly re-dyed, dull clothes, compared to others' crisp, fresh, new uniforms; her inability to buy books; the janitor's refusal to unlock the door for her and leaving her in the snow—all these images exhibit the hopelessness of breaking down class barriers. Those with power and privilege are unwilling to share it.

“Hands” and “The Death of Wang Asao” differ from Lu Xun's stories in that the little girls survive. In “Hands,” despite ostracization, being bullied, humiliated, and looked down upon, the little girl still receives knowledge and lives on, bearing witness to her experience. Her tenacity to exist builds her character as a fighter and survivor, and she learns about her own and other's agency. Despite all the obstacles in her path, the dyer's daughter receives knowledge. The experience, although painful, has changed her. While her classmate's cruelty changed her, she has also experienced the power of kindness and compassion of the little girl who befriended



her. Thus, tenacity for life and its agency cannot be measured through the experiences of those who have never struggled with meeting daily sustenance. I believe “Hands” was written with educated women especially in mind, asking them to question which of the characters the reader identified with- the teachers, students or the compassionate girl? For this was the point of power in the story—pulling readers into her story, and bringing about self awareness in areas women held agency or power unaware. The short story almost queries, “How has the reader behaved? And more importantly, how will one choose to behave in the future?”

### ***A Full Spectrum of Selves in The Field of Life and Death***

While Lu Xun’s relationship with the masses is fraught with distance, enmeshment, and suffocation, in Xiao Hong's work there is a surplus of feeling, intimacy, and connection in everyone and everything, including nature. In *The Field of Life and Death*, even the lives of animals are saturated with meaning and affect, and the seasons, too, take on human qualities: “Winter mistreated the village children the way it mistreated the flowers and the crops. Every child’s ears swelled up; his hands or feet were frostbitten.”<sup>52</sup> Hu Feng commends Xiao Hong’s capturing of peasants’ attachment to livestock: “Her rendering of the peasant’s affection for their livestock (goats, horses, and cows) is so realistic and sincere that nowhere else in our corpus of peasant literature can we come across such moving poetry.”<sup>53</sup> We see the Buddhist and Daoist inter-connectedness, the cosmic sense of being intimately connected to the universe in her writing. Indeed, Xiao Hong captures a unique, unspeakable organismic and cosmic connection to animals. But something even more complicated emotively, philosophically, spiritually is happening in the undercurrents of the surface of her written words. When Old Mother Pockface thinks she lost her goat, she breaks down in grief.

She was weeping beside the rice pot. "My ... my goat. I fed it every day... and it grew. I raised it with my own hands." By nature, Old Mother Pockface was uncomplaining. Whenever she was unhappy, or was being scolded by her husband, or had a quarrel with a neighbor, or when the children gave her trouble, she would act like a pool of melted wax. By nature she did not like to resist, nor did she like to fight. She seemed to be forever storing sorrow in her heart, which forever seemed to be like a piece of worn-out cotton. Racked by sobs, she mechanically went outside to take down the clothes that were already sun-dried; she did not notice the goat at all.<sup>54</sup>

The death of animals is dealt with most intimately—she is intensely connected to them—which leads us to question why human deaths are dealt with from such an emotionally detached angle.

I emphasize two different passages written about Old Mother Wang—a scene where her daughter dies, and another in which her old work horse must die. The passage on her child's death begins with Old Mother Wang singing the praises and reminiscing about her good old days when her cow gave birth to another calf.

She would talk about a year when the harvest was so good that she had bought an additional cow; about how the cow had given birth to a calf; and about what had happened to that calf. Her talks...had climaxes and anticlimaxes. And when it came to the cow, she never ran short of words. She would describe its color, the amount of grass it could consume in a day, and even the position it slept in.<sup>55</sup>

Within a few paragraphs, however, in shocking surprise, Mother Wang announces how her own child dies in great detail, but with what appears at first like emotional detachment.

The child was three when I let her fall to her death...Anyway, I placed her on the haystack when I went to feed the cow...When I remembered the child, I ran to get her. But she wasn't there....She had fallen right on top of the rake. At first I thought she was still alive, but when I picked her up... Aah!... Aah... I threw her in the haystack, with blood flowing all over her nostrils and her mouth. It was like her throat had been cut. I could still hear a rumbling in her stomach. It was just like a puppy run over by a cart. I've seen that happen with my own eyes. I've seen everything. Whenever a family in this village decided not to keep a child, I would take a hook, or maybe a paring knife, and I would dig the child out from its mother's womb. A child's death is nothing. Do you really think I'd moan and wail because of that? At first I trembled. But when I saw the wheat field before me, I no longer had any regrets. I didn't shed a single tear. After that we had a good harvest of wheat. I was the one who reaped it, who picked up the wheat grains one by one. That entire fall I worked like the devil, never stopping to gossip or even to catch my breath. Then came winter. I compared my grains with the neighbors', and mine were so much larger. That winter I had terrible pains in my back from all that

bending over, but in my hands I held those big full grains. But when I noticed that my neighbors' children were growing, I paused to think of my own Hsiao Chung."..."My child's name was Hsiao Chung. For several nights I suffered. I couldn't sleep. What was all that wheat worth? From then on, grains of wheat didn't matter much to me. Even now, nothing matters to me. I was only twenty..."<sup>56</sup>

Later when Mother Wang speaks, "Her response seemed to come from an empty bottle or from some empty, hollow vessel."<sup>57</sup>

In contrast, when Old Mother Wang takes her bled dry, exhausted mare to the butchers to be slaughtered, affectively it is dealt with differently. One of the longest and most emotionally painful deaths we witness in the whole novel, I quote it in detail to emphasize the affective, physical, sensorial impact. On her way to the butchers with her old mare, she runs into Two-and-a-Half Li.

Two-and-a-half Li felt very sad, and his body trembled. Before long he turned back and caught up with them. "It's not right to send it to the soup caldron. It's just not right..." But what could he do? He was at a loss for words. He limped forward and patted the horse's mane. The horse snorted in response. Its eyes looked as if they were crying, wet and glassy. Waves of pain stabbed Mother Wang's heart. In a choked-up voice she said: "What is to be must be. If I don't send it to the caldron, the only alternative is starvation"..."<sup>58</sup> Mother Wang was wondering how a person could change so much. How many times had she accompanied old horses and oxen to the slaughterhouse in her youth? She shivered at the horrible vision of the butcher's knife severing her own spine... her hair so disheveled, she looked like a specter..."<sup>59</sup>

Liu focuses on the sequence of Old Mother Wang, the old horse, and an old leaf on her shoulder, and notes: "The dying animal, the old woman, and the fallen leaf are all coordinated in a single syntactic sequence — reminiscent of classical Chinese Song poetry—that emphasizes the process of aging involving all three."<sup>60</sup> The passage highlights not only the organismic connection, but the cosmic as well. As Mother Wang, racked with grief, walks her horse to be slaughtered, she passes various "deserted houses and dilapidated temples"<sup>61</sup> in which another important event is transpiring. "In front of one of these small temples lay a dead child bundled up in straw. The child's head and pitiful little feet extended from the straw. Whose child was this, sleeping in

front of this temple in the wilderness?"<sup>62</sup> Immediately following, "They drew near the slaughterhouse... Mother Wang's heart turned over"<sup>63</sup> While the human death is lightly glossed over, the passage continues into Wang's nostalgic memories of the horse's past.

Five years ago it had been a young horse, but because of farm work it had been reduced to skin and bones. Now it was old. Autumn was almost over and the harvesting done. It had become useless, and for the sake of its hide, the unfeeling master was sending it to the slaughterhouse. And even the price of its hide would eventually be snatched from Mother Wang's hands by the landlord."<sup>64</sup>

In the words "unfeeling master," it is as if the author, Two-and-a-half Li, and Mother Wang all agree as to how they feel and the immorality of the prospect. Yet, the master is anything but "unfeeling."

...when Mother Wang saw the cowhide nailed to the wall, she felt as if her heart, too, were suspended in the air, about to crash to the ground...As she drew nearer, she could see bloodstains splattered all over the door. The old lady was frightened by the bloodstains and felt as if she herself were entering an execution ground. She strove for self-control so as not to be put out of sorts by the memories of what she had witnessed on an execution ground in her youth. But the memories unfolded in spite of her efforts: a young man crumpling to the ground; then an old man; the executioner with his axe poised over yet a third man...<sup>65</sup>

Having delivered her mare to the butcher, she begins to see a great many hides "nailed to the walls,"<sup>66</sup>"horse and ox hooves tied together with hemp in pairs," hanging "looped intestines,"<sup>67</sup> some blackened after drying out for days, "trails of blood running from the site where those leg bones had been dismembered,"<sup>68</sup> and then finally "coils of steaming intestines drying in the sun,"<sup>69</sup> which could only mean that "the particular animal had just recently been slaughtered because its intestines were still warm."<sup>70</sup> Liu notes the parallel feeling between horse and human: Old Mother Wang "felt as if she herself were entering an execution ground." The old leaf, old Mother Wang and the old horse share a similar fate of the circumstances of aging. They are cosmically and organismically tied. As she takes leave of her horse, the intensity crosses the limits of grief and terror Old Mother Wang's body can bear, as well as what appears to be the

author's limitation with words to express. A deadened, emotional disconnect overcomes Old Mother Wang: "The entire courtyard gave off an overpowering stench, and amidst this world of stench, Mother Wang seemed to have turned to lead...She just stood there as if weighted down, devoid of any emotion."<sup>71</sup> As grief and trauma surpass her body's ability to handle emotions, she numbs to protect herself from the emotional trauma of the experience.

By this point, readers, too, anticipate Mother Wang's speedy exit to gain reprieve from intensive emotional pummeling. Like Mother Wang and her horse, the reader, too, is intimately tied to Old Mother Wang's emotions. The momentary relief of Wang leaving, however, transpires into more grief. Suddenly, Mother Wang hears shouts;

"Hey! The horse is leaving!" Mother Wang turned and looked back – the horse was following behind her. Not knowing what was happening, it was heading for home as always. Several men with hideous faces came running out of the slaughterhouse, prepared to lead the horse back in with them. Finally it lay down at the side of the road; it planted itself there as if it had taken root in the earth. There was nothing Mother Wang could do but walk back into the courtyard, and the horse followed her back in. She scratched the top of the horse's head, and slowly it lay down on the ground, seemingly about to go to sleep. Suddenly Mother Wang stood up and walked briskly toward the gate... she heard the sound of a gate slamming shut... how could she have the heart to buy wine? She wept all the way home until her two sleeves were completely soaked with tears. It seemed as if she had just returned from a funeral procession... A servant from the landlord was already waiting by the door. Landlords never let even a single penny go to waste on the peasants. The servant left with her money. For Mother Wang, her day of agony was all for naught. Her whole life of agony was all for naught.<sup>72</sup>

The creature's blind trust in Mother Wang pushes grief to a new level that surpasses the body's ability to numb out. It is this connection, the organismic, relational, and emotional link between Mother Wang and the horse, this inexplicable connection and attachment that refuses to be refuted or denied. How are we to judge Mother Wang for bringing her old companion in for slaughter? There simply are no grounds to judge.

Comparing the two passages, a contradiction in the way human and animal deaths are dealt with surfaces. The documented human deaths are seemingly treated by peasants as a

common everyday “unremarkable” affair versus the great grief expressed towards the loss of animals, or as Xiao Hong notes, the feelings of loss at all funeral processions where one utilizes the opportunity to mourn all one's losses in a lifetime. This contradiction compounds the emotive reality of ambivalence, shock and grief, because contrary to what Old Ms. Wang states, "A child's death is nothing. Do you really think I'd moan and wail because of that?"<sup>73</sup> one realizes “her response seemed to come from an empty bottle or from some empty, hollow vessel.” The reader understands the greater magnitude of grief in the loss of one's child over the loss of a horse. Thus within these two juxtaposed circumstances, between the unexpressed gaps, is an affective, bodily, sensorial, ontological experience that transcends the limits of words, description, or even understanding, of anyone who has not shared similar circumstances. The emotions of despair here are so beyond the limits of words and expression that the writer does not even attempt to capture it. The un-inscribable, unspeakable, unexpressed can only be partially and fragmentally expressed through gaps. Even though it has been argued that due to high mortality rates of rural children, children's deaths were considered common,<sup>74</sup> and some even note, “The traditions stem from China's agrarian past, where child deaths were common, and not considered something to dwell on,”<sup>75</sup> common does not equate with emotionless. The story details Xiao Hong's version of reality and truth — the mother's pain approaches the Daoist limits of the unutterable, what lies beyond words.

As Doumoulin notes, “The transcendental reality cannot be described by ordinary language and hence has to be stated in negative ways.”<sup>76</sup> Dao speaks of the unspeakable—what exists beyond the perceived five senses of experience, while Euro-American notions of “self” remain confined to empirical senses.

[In] Taoism, the negation is used reflexively to delimit the discourse of the function of language...it is a realization of this limitation which allows the break-through...to an

alternative mode of experience to occur...Negation is not simply a statement concerning the impotence of language; it is posed as a problem - the reflexivity of the negation is also problematic. It is pointing to an area outside of its operation, and hints at something unsayable, which has nevertheless allowed language to speak of it.<sup>77</sup>

Daoism calls upon people not just to listen to the intellect of the mind, but the wisdom and knowledge of the whole body, as well as the environment, to experience the self united with the Dao. Lao Tzu writes,

...we must be quiet and watchful, learning to listen to both our own inner voices and to the voices of our environment in a non-interfering, receptive manner. In this way we also learn to rely on more than just our intellect and logical mind to gather and assess information. We develop and trust our intuition as our direct connection to the Tao. We heed the intelligence of our whole body, not only our brain. And we learn through our own experience. All of this allows us to respond readily to the needs of the environment, which...includes ourselves. And just as the Tao functions in a manner to promote harmony and balance, our own actions, performed in the spirit of *wu-wei*, produce the same result.<sup>78</sup>

Knowing and defining the “self” occurs in the entire body, not just the brain. Daoism thus adds an understanding of the “being” self. It de-emphasizes the intellectual, intentional, and controlling self-willed-self as “Agent” with a capital “A,” and focuses on the space that is created when one acknowledges one is more than one’s mind and what one does. These concepts are further enriched through China’s Buddhist influences. In this Buddhist and Daoist tradition, transmission of education transcends words. In the story of the “Eye of the True Dharma,” Buddha holds up a flower and no words are spoken, but only one disciple smiles and the wisdom is transmitted wordlessly. “The mind of the master and the mind of the disciple smile. Thus is Zen. Because supreme truth cannot be spoken in words, there has to be a wordless transmission outside the scriptures... the Buddha did not speak the supreme truth in words... the Buddha's silence is a sign of his wisdom”<sup>79</sup> This state of the “wonderful Mind of Nirvana,” this “special transmission outside the scriptures,”<sup>80</sup> focuses on a “psychic process...inner experience

that no words can communicate.”<sup>81</sup> Likewise, in Xiao Hong's passages on death and loss, the peasant mother's truths cannot be transmitted through the paucity of words.

While Lydia Liu focuses on the “emphasis on the sheer physicality of the animal existence, stubbornly mute and intransigent, that parallels the condition of human existence in the rural community,”<sup>82</sup> and finds rural women often suffer more physically and emotionally than female animals especially in childbirth—“In their experience of the body, female animals and women have more in common than women and men do. The agony of having one’s flesh torn apart, bones cracked, and life endangered generates a kind of knowledge impermeable to the male sex,”<sup>83</sup> and concludes the emphasis on physicality privileges women’s suffering, I attribute the phenomenon to a more Daoist reality that is physical, affective, non-hierarchical, and cosmic. In Fifth Sister’s elder sister’s labor, Xiao Hong writes, “On the haystack behind the house a bitch was giving birth. Its limbs trembled, and its whole body shook. After a long period of time the puppies were born.” In the next paragraph, we immediately hear news of Fifth Sister’s elder sister going into labor. Even the midwife notices the parallel: “When the midwife arrived and saw how things were, she cocked her head to one side and said: ‘I’ve never seen anything like this. A well-to-do family like yours, and you have to give birth on the straw.’”<sup>84</sup> Painfully, the reader is made aware that both Fifth Sister’s elder sister and the dog must share the same “bedding” material for birth. However, while the laboring dog receives shelter, privacy, peace, and solitude, and reasonable efficiency, Fifth Sister’s elder sister, on the contrary, receives not empathy but disgust and abuse during her labor from her husband, who is half responsible for her condition.

While I agree with Liu that women appear to suffer more than their animal counterparts, I do not find that Xiao Hong is hierarchizing suffering here. Instead, like Daoism that advocates a



balance of mind and physical body, her writing focuses on the physical and bodily and, in this circumstance, the suffering of the body is most illustrative of the warped, anti-natural behavior that patriarchal hierarchies have created. For example, during Elder sister's labor, the climax occurs not upon the birth or death of mother or child, as one would expect, but on its interruption.

Suddenly the woman was in so much pain that her face turned first ashen and then yellow. Her whole family was growing uneasy, and had actually begun to prepare her shroud. In the eerie candlelight they looked around for suitable garments, the entire household under the disturbing influence of the shadow of death. The naked woman could no longer even crawl; she was unable to muster the final burst of effort in this moment of life and death. Though the sky was getting light, fear, like a shroud, enveloped the house... A man stumbled in. He was drunk. Half of his face all red and swollen, he came up... and snarled: "Give me my boots!" The woman could not reply. He tore at the curtain... as he said menacingly: "Feign death, will you? Let's see if you still want to feign death now! With that he took the tobacco pouch at his side and flung it at the corpse-like figure. His mother came over and dragged him out. It was like this every year; whenever he saw his wife giving birth, this was how he showed his disapproval... Suddenly the red-faced devil rushed in again. Without saying a word, he raised his fearful hands and threw a bucket of water through the curtain.<sup>85</sup>

The rhythm, progression, and focus of childbirth are disrupted by her husband, who flings his searing hot tobacco pouch at his exhausted wife to burn her. Just when one expects he is gone, he intrudes once again to pour cold water to further torment her. Even thematically, the anxious cycling of thoughts most typically perpetuated during difficulty in labor—the survival of mother and child—are simply usurped by this man's need for attention to express his rage. Rather than supporting his wife, the husband becomes a nuisance and danger to her, as his wife's supporters must repeatedly intercept him. Exploding in rage, self-pity and violence, the husband finally succeeds in hoarding all the attention and care his wife desperately needs. His behavior inhibits the very people who are trying desperately to help his pregnant wife's struggles in labor. In terms of sequence and theme, Xiao Hong illustrates how the life of mother and child are less important than the emotional needs of a husband to express himself.

Moreover, a sense of unnaturalness prevails due to a proliferation of abundance throughout the natural surroundings and entire story, but which is disturbingly missing in the peasants' lives. Because of this hyper-focus on the unnatural, it highlights the missing cosmic and organismic relation of humans to the world.

Warm air rose from the haystack behind the house. The whole village was flooded with sunshine; stalks of grain swayed in the gentle breezes. Summer had returned and with it the leaves on the trees. If flowers could bloom on trees, then the trees would have been blossom-laden. On the haystack behind the house a bitch was giving birth. Its limbs trembled, and its whole body shook. After a long period of time the puppies were born. In the warm of the season the entire village was occupied with the birth of its young. Big sows were leading their litters of piglets squealing and running, while the bellies of others were still big, nearly scraping the ground, their many teats virtually overflowing.<sup>86</sup> [After Fifth Sister's elder sister's still birth...] In May, birds were also hatching. Yellow-billed fledglings could often be seen swooping down, skipping and pecking beneath the eaves. The litters of piglets grew fatter. Only the women in the village, like horses used in farming, became skinnier in the summer.<sup>87</sup>

Although it's unclear whether the child dies due to its father's interference (since birthing usually must occur within twenty-four hours after onset of labor before suffocation of the child), it is at least clear that if the child ever had any chance at life, its father did everything to prevent it. We are told that year after year Fifth Sister's elder sister undergoes such an ordeal and that this time she herself barely escapes alive. Fifth Sister's elder sister shares similarities with Golden Bough, the mother in "Abandoned child," as well as with Xiao Hong herself, as her autobiographically revealed. These women all receive punishment and deal with the consequences of men's sexual desire alone, without support from their male partners. Fifth Sister's elder sister becomes the sexual scapegoat like other women, and is utterly terrified of her husband.

The pregnant woman with her still bulging abdomen sat in silence, her body drenched with water. She dared not move a single muscle, for like the child of a patriarchal society she lived in dread of her man... Suddenly there was a sound at the door...the young woman was in such a nervous state that she panicked. She was not allowed even a single moan. This poor woman – had there been a hole beside her, she would have jumped in. Had there been poison beside her, she would have swallowed it.<sup>88</sup>

After the birth of Fifth Sister's elder sister's dead baby, she just lies there. "The woman lay in her own blood, soaking it up with her body...In the green world of the fields everyone was bathed in sweat."<sup>89</sup> In these lines, the physical, affective, survival, organismic and cosmic are invoked. From the movement in plot, however, it is clear that the man's needs, even emotional needs, take precedence over the lives of his wife and children, as well as the universe. Indeed, he asserts his needs as primary through his behaviors of violence, domination, intimidation, and control. Irony pervades as Fifth Elder sister's predicament reveals itself even in contradiction to Confucian filial piety. When the husband must be repeatedly removed by his own mother, only to have him return once again to throw cold water upon his laboring wife, the irony is unmistakable. The husband's mother is the only person able to coerce him to leave, and yet even she is ineffective. Her marked presence stands in as a reminder of the sacrifice his mother, and every mother, had to make in order to give birth. She is the very person that this man is indebted to for his very life. His disrespect for labor is thus doubled in his actions – disrespect for his mother and his wife. It is as if he spits in the face at the same act of nature that brought him to life, and at the sacrifices his mother made in ensuring his survival.

Rather than pointing the blame towards men, however, I find an even deeper message about how nature has been malformed, warped, and made dysfunctional by man. This is most clear in the "Story of Wang Asao," in the final depiction of Wang Asao's dead, frail, deformed body, in contrast to the limitless abundance of the fields and the natural environment around her. We see her starved body, swollen with pregnancy, the product of the landlord's rape; both child and mother are unable to make the journey to birth and rebirth, and all this is depicted against the ripe, abundant autumn harvest. Perhaps Xiao Hong suggests that it is not nature that has cruelly afflicted humans, as much as fellow humans with power who have raped, exploited, and warped

nature's abundance and robbed life of meaning. As Hu Feng says: "Fertilizing the soil with their blood, sweat, and lives, they brought forth food and raised livestock. They squirmed, diligently and painfully, beneath the might of two tyrants – nature and man."<sup>90</sup> "Humans" are by far the greater tyrant, as nature requires endurance and survival, but not abuse or torture. While Fifth Sister's elder sister's horrific treatment cannot be ignored, there is also no sense of the condemnation of men; only grief and asking the unanswerable question of why. Why are women treated worse than animals? Why are some women treated with such disdain and cruelty?

While Lu Xun's writing echoes Confucianism's "individual's relation to *tian*, the divine,"<sup>91</sup> where the individual transcends through a divine connection to the heaven and earth, and is able to judge other's behaviors, I find in Xiao Hong a conflicted relationship with "*Tian*." Perhaps because of women's lower status there is instead a repeated ontological questioning of why women have been abandoned by the divine, and whether such a state is divinely imposed, or as Xiao Hong suggests, patriarchally imposed. These ontological questions repeatedly circle throughout her stories, especially in the ghostly faces of Yueying and the enraged figure of Golden Bough, as well as the dead child bride. Fifth elder sister and her baby girl are treated worse in childbirth than any animal. Questions proliferate as to why there is so much female bodily suffering, and why Golden Bough's little girl is dashed to the floor and killed so thoughtlessly just for crying? Is it because she is a girl? A tradition of girls deemed as worthless is invoked, as well as suggestions that such actions may not have occurred had it been a boy. Questions of who deserves to have basic needs and wants met also arise in *Market Street*, as the female narrator purchases food but waits to see how her man decides to divide the rations, and how he consumes most of the food. All of these images repeatedly circle back and ask existential questions of why some live and others suffer and die. And why particularly women?

Liu notes women's "lack of control over body and destiny,"<sup>92</sup> and points out how in "Days of Punishment" the author carries a negative portrayal of fertility that aggravates poverty, almost as if pregnancy is the female body being punished explicitly for its sexual desire.<sup>93</sup> A theme of female bodies betraying their host can be found in the rural women—Fifth Sister's elder sister, Golden Bough and Yueying, and even Old Mother Wang in her inability to poison herself. It is also echoed in "Abandoned Child," where a woman experiences her growing belly in horror and leaves her baby in the ward without ever looking at the child. And in "The Death of Wang Asao," Wang Asao's pregnancy is a product of rape; she watches helplessly as her fetus grows as she starves. In *The Field of Life and Death*, Yueying, with the most beautiful eyes and gentle face, was once very desirable, but after she becomes ill and can no longer serve her purpose as cook, sexual partner, or object of envy, her husband not only abandons and neglects her, but humiliates and torments her. Refusing to help his invalid wife clean away her feces, the beautiful Yueying sits in her own feces with her maggot infested body. The cruelty reaches unbearable levels as he taunts her by taking away her blanket and leaving her with a pile of bricks to lean upon because he says she is merely a rotting corpse, rather than a real person waiting for death.<sup>94</sup> Contrary to beauty scholar romances, Yueying dies a horrendous fate. In the whole story, she experiences the most degrading, cruel, emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual torture before her death. Her beautiful exterior body wanes away, the flesh pulling away from her bones, leaving her soul vulnerable to torment and cruelty. Her beautiful bottom becomes maggot infested and her hair and teeth turn greenish until she views herself as a freak. Perhaps Xiao Hong writes against Scholar-beauty romances, and warns readers not to over-romanticize rural life; even rare beauty is not privy to elicit kindness from her husband. One could even venture to say that because of Yueying's feminine power of attraction, and her subtle

position of power as an unattainable sexual object, that she fares a worse fate than other peasant women. It is as if she is being punished for her power. Yueying's fate also echoes the Chinese saying, "*Hongyan bo ming* (the beautiful woman bears a terrible fate)." These experiences of reality are simply outside the physical, sensorial, and even cerebral comprehension of Chinese male intellectuals and nationalism.

### ***Beyond Feminist/ Proletariat/ Nationalist Divides***

Because of the impermeability of Chinese nationalism to the female experience, Lydia Liu argues that Xiao Hong's works cannot be simply read as anti-Japanese; her writing documents the problematics of a patriarchal Chinese nation even before it critiques Japanese occupation.

Whatever happens to the nation, it is the female body that suffers most. The final chapters of her novel make it clear that national identity is largely a male prerogative, which allows the village men to acquire national consciousness and preach the new gospel to their women despite their own lowly status in society.<sup>95</sup>

This theme is further fleshed out in Xiao Hong's portrayal of Golden Bough's fate. The Chinese man, who she believes will struggle alongside her and their daughter, abuses them, and in a fit of rage dashes the one-month-old daughter to the ground for crying and kills her. As Liu argues, Xiao Hong presents few alternatives for rural women trying to survive through the Japanese invasion.

The novel opens up two grim possibilities for rural widows: she either rejects her female identity, joins the ranks of the "brothers" without the comfort of the elevated sense of manhood that real brothers" enjoy, and gets herself killed like Mother Wang's daughter, or, like Golden Bough, she subjects herself to rape and exploitation in order to survive.<sup>96</sup>

Golden Bough's tragedy makes a purely utilitarian anti-imperialist reading of Xiao Hong's work impossible. After her abusive husband kills her daughter, Golden Bough tries to become a nun,

but even then the “nation” disappoints her. When she gets to the “red brick nunnery,”<sup>97</sup> it is no more. Says Liu, “Despite her (Golden Bough’s) hatred for the Japanese, the woman never succeeds in becoming a national subject like the latter (the Chinese males). The experience of her body at the hands of her husband and the rapist contradicts the national identity that the presence of the Japanese imposes on her.”<sup>98</sup> The philosophical as well as psychological difficulty in accessing, and placing accountability, of who the real perpetrator is, is most poignantly expressed in Golden Bough’s exclamation upon being raped by a Chinese man while trying to make her living as a seamstress, “Golden Bough snorted: “I used to hate only men; now I hate the Japanese instead.” She finally reached the nadir of personal grief: “Do I hate the Chinese as well? Then there is nothing else for me to hate. It seemed that Mother Wang’s knowledge was no longer the equal of Golden Bough’s.”<sup>99</sup>

In a mother’s confrontation with Li Ch’ing-shan—leader and recruiter of the Patriotic army—it is clear that the nationalist army’s harms to rural mothers is clearly equally as devastating as other’s abuses.

Just then an old woman from the north village came charging in, weeping hysterically. She wanted to tear Li Ch’ing-shan to pieces. She held her head, like she would hold a rock, and dashed toward the wall, uttering disjointed phrases: “Li Ch’ing-shan...enemy...you led my son to his death!” They tried to drag her away, but she struggled mightily, like a crazed bull. “I can’t go on. You might as well deliver me over to the Japs! I want to die...it’s time for me to die.”<sup>100</sup>

Finally, the reality of the rural child-bride simply cannot coexist with the male nationalistic agenda that privileges idealism and sacrifice for one’s country. If the child-bride cannot even survive day to day amidst the onslaught of Chinese male patriarchal exploitation and repression, how is she to be able to sacrifice and follow ideals for a future she may not even be a part of? The text constantly circles back to question how Chinese women are to embrace nationalistic

fervor and sacrifice if they are too busy defending themselves against multiple assailants, part of whom are part and parcel of the nationalistic movement.

While other critics have lauded Old Chao San's patriotic fervor, as a sign of Xiao Hong's enthusiastic support of nationalism, taking his words as her own, I find something much more ambivalent, complicated and even ironic below the surface of the text.

Old Chao San stood in front of the table, and even before he spoke, his tears started to flow: "The nation...the nation is lost! I...I am old, too. You are still young, you go and salvage the nation! My old bones...are useless! I'm an old nationless slave, and I'll never see you rip up the Japanese flag with my own eyes. Wait until I'm buried...then plant the Chinese flag over my grave, for I am a Chinese!...I want a Chinese flag. I don't want to be a nationless slave. Alive I am Chinese, and when I'm dead, I'll be a Chinese ghost...not a nation...nationless slave."<sup>101</sup>

The tone is serious indeed; the whole crowd has fallen to "weeping and wailing."<sup>102</sup>

Impassioned by Old Chao San's patriotic fervor, each person takes the gun and kneels to take the oath, repeating, "If I am not sincere, may Heaven slay me; may this gun end my life. The bullet has eyes, is all-knowing and sacred."<sup>103</sup> These lines, however, are met immediately with the farcical comedy of Two-and-a-half Li.

Even the widows took their oaths with the gun barrel aimed at their hearts. But Two-and-a-Half Li did not return until after the oath-taking, and the assembly was about to kill the goat [his goat as the sacrifice]. He had managed to find a rooster somewhere. He was the only person who did not take the oath. He did not seem particularly distressed about the fate of the nation as he led the goat home.<sup>104</sup>

Two-and-a-Half Li is the butt of the joke. He is ignorant, uneducated, and simple-minded. Even the women profess loyalty and patriotic fervor, but only one thought exists in Two-and-a-Half Li's mind—his beloved goat. When the new nationalists decide to sacrifice his goat for their cause because they cannot find a chicken, Two-and-a-half Li desperately searches for a substitute to save his goat. His primary concern lies not in brothers uniting against the Japanese, or Nationalist concerns, but to save this goat he is deeply emotionally attached to.



The juxtaposition of this farcical character and his goat charade creates a double comedy. Through the parallel unfolding of the two events, it not only makes a comedy of Two-and-a-Half Li's exuberant discovery of the rooster that will save his goat from slaughter, but also makes the exaggerated self-importance of Old Chao San and the overly dramatic swearing with the gun, tongue in cheek. The introduction of Two-and-a-Half Li is a collision of two colliding worlds and realities—one of rural daily hardship and sustenance, and the other, the ideality, fervor, totalizing self-importance of an intellectualistic nationalism. From Two-and-a-Half Li's rural reality, he is triumphant. His behaviors are clear. His loyalty and attachment lie with his goat. He is unwilling to sacrifice it for the patriotic army. The parallel, and thus assumed, equality between the dramatic display of loyalty or death in the patriots' swearing of "If I am not sincere, may Heaven slay me," with the mini-drama of the potential sacrifice and death of the goat for Two-and-a-half Li, I find intentionally, ironically humorous. It serves as a point of introspection on both sides of the nationalistic and rural reality, in which neither reality can reconcile with the other. In this dual reality, I find traces of Daoism's anti-dualism: "To a Taoist, things arise dependently...if there were no yin, there would be no yang and if there were no yang, there would be no yin."<sup>105</sup> Instead, there is acceptance of tension and the coexistence of two conflicting realities: one of the mind (nationalism) and one of the body (emotional attachment). The two characters are the two ends of the spectrum of the Late Qing-Early Republic self. Thus, Xiao Hong's characters, in contrast to Lu Xun's emotionally dead crowd, are filled with a surplus of emotions and connections; unable to detach, even when emotionally tortuous. For Two-and-a-half Li, ironically, his source of troubles stem not from traditions or landlords, but the nationalist cause meant to empower and lead him to a better life. The inclusion illustrates further that this bodily, affective, emotive understanding is not limited by gender, but rather

through circumstances. Because of Two-and-a-half Li's purposeful non-inclusion in nationalism, and some other women's marked inclusions, I cannot completely agree with Liu that nationalism is a sole male prerogative. Rather I argue it is portrayed with an intentional arbitrariness that is situational.

While Xiao Hong's writing documents issues particular to women, I do not find that she privileges women's experiences. Rather, her stories grapple with questions of victimization—those who victimize and those who are victimized. Although Xiao Hong does address specific issues of the struggle between Chinese women and men, unlike Euro-American feminists her writing and her life experiences clearly emphasize that no division by gender or class is possible. In fact, not only does she not privilege gender or class, but she also finds herself not fitting into female roles of mother or wife either. In "A Sleepless Night," Xiao Hong writes about a woman who has no home, belongs to no place, and lives a nomadic existence. In "Abandoned Child," after giving birth, she refutes the role of motherhood and leaves her infant behind without a glance. In the "Story of Wang Asao," the division is not between men and women, but between the wealthy landowners and the disenfranchised. The struggles are shared by all the poor, regardless of gender: Wang Asao is kicked and raped at the hands of the landowners; the husband is killed when he confronts the landlord who raped his wife; the malnourished non-gendered fetus dies in childbirth; and the girl loses her parents. The specificity and details of the struggle is gendered for Wang Asao. Wang Asao struggles in ways specific to women; she is raped, becomes pregnant, plows the fields pregnant, struggles through labor, and dies giving birth. While the details of her struggle and experience are specific to gender, victimization and abuse of power are not gender specific. All of the disempowered poor, male and female, suffer under the hands of the landlord.

While “The Death of Wang Asao” appears to separate the peasants and landowners into two distinct camps, in “Hands,” the class and gender alliances are ambiguous. Those with the greatest power to reform education—the female school teachers and the principal—inflict the cruelest damage on the poor girl’s psyche. The “educated” little girls, who tease and reject the poor little girl, also add to the atmosphere of emotional humiliation and torture, but they are only children imitating authority figures. However, the narrator, a wealthy fellow classmate, befriends the poor girl and even lends her books and keeps her company. On the other hand, the janitor, the one person in the school who one would expect to be most empathetic to poverty and the backbreaking toil of hard labor, looks down upon the dyer's daughter and pretends she doesn't exist. When she first arrives to school one snowy day, the janitor refuses to unlock the school door for her, making her wait out in the snow. Only after the wealthy narrator arrives, does the janitor rush forth apologetically to open the door for the wealthy girl. Along this theme of no class alliances in “Hands” is also a suggestion for no gender alliances. The greatest symbol of love and warmth that infuses the text comes from a male, the girl’s loving father who bestows his beloved gloves to his daughter. Thus, rather than gender or class, Xiao Hong is speaking of people as humanity—indivisible of gender or class. Focus is on the humanity of the poor little girl’s father and the empathy of the narrating little girl. Their genders are irrelevant. In fact, it is the educated and reformed female principal and teachers who take advantage of the little girl and abuse her most brutally. In Xiao Hong’s life, she admittedly was terrified of her mother and found love and safety in her grandfather's care. In contrast to Euro-American feminism’s agenda for universal womanhood, Xiao Hong found solace, companionship, and kindness through her grandfather’s nurturing love and care.

While Liu focuses on the abuse of women, Xiao Hong does not privilege women's body with greater significance. Rather, Xiao Hong widens the audience's viewfinder by expressing the unrecognized, unspoken, and unvoiced. In fact, I find the nature of her beliefs precisely non-hierarchical. Repeated violence and blood occur pervasively not only in women, but also in bleeding children non-specific to their sex. Ironically, as in "Bridge," it is often the mothers or fathers who are responsible. In *Tales of Hulan River*, a well-reputed Mother-in-Law beats her robust and healthy child-bride to insanity, sickness, and death. The abusers of women are not specific to a given gender. The men's brutal perpetrations of violence are often equally matched by women themselves. Instead, I find a repeated portrayal of the disturbing depictions of perpetrator and victims, the cycle of violence, and the constant shifting and switching in between that is even more apparent in "Bridge." I believe Xiao Hong intentionally presents these contradictions of gender and class alliances to question the limits of nationalism and gender and to create an alternative ideological space that is unknowable, a gap that sets off a proliferation of infinite, unanswerable questions.

### ***Spirituality and Spiritual Awakenings***

Euro-American literature often maintains a separation between spirituality and rationality, emotions and reason, which can perhaps be traced all the way to the Age of Enlightenment and later with Friedrich Nietzsche's "God is dead" movement.<sup>106</sup> In fact, Kirk Denton interprets romantic subjectivity as a reaction against Enlightenment, Protestantism, and capitalism.<sup>107</sup> Attributing the separation of society from man as a result of religious doctrines, Troeltsch notes, "Western individualism's origin [is from the] Judeo-Christian emphasis on the individual relationship between self and God where [the] individual is whole and

autonomous...and the bond between God and individual is private and spiritual.”<sup>108</sup> Denton grounds romantic individualism and its literary movement toward psychoanalysis and subjectivity as a product of Protestantism and capitalism,<sup>109</sup> which inherently valued self apart from social and ethical relationships and collective tradition.<sup>110</sup> Thus, according to Troeltsch, Protestantism brought about the division of man from society. However, with the industrial revolution, the mechanization of man, the rise of Rationalism and the “Death of God,” this created a chasm between the spiritual and rational. 19<sup>th</sup> century Euro-American humanist values of individualism and identity thus often predicate an inevitable antagonism between self and society that serves to highlight the individual.

This philosophy often clashes with a consciousness that highly values harmony and symbiosis and that possesses an organismic, relational, and cosmic view of community. Concepts of "self" often do not take into account integrating the multiple facets of self—body, mind, heart, senses, emotions—nor even recognize the more transcendent aspects of being human because of the division of state and religion. Perhaps due to the politics of first and third world dynamics, Euro-American values have dominated and asserted a Western intellectual version of subjectivity and reality as superior. Euro-American contemporary criticisms upon the topic of “subjectivity” often preclude the more abstract elements of affect and spirituality. The term “subjectivity” in Euro-American critical theory has for the most part largely focused upon the rational and intellectual capacity of humans within the limited parameters of self versus society, due to its strong historical ties to the European age of enlightenment, rationalism, and the death of God. An exploration into spirituality is often less pronounced or missing in current Euro-American criticisms of the topic of “subjectivity” because they often focus on the rational and intellectual, and reject what becomes labeled as "religion."

Isobel Armstrong in *The Radical Aesthetic* documents how New French feminist work that focused on a shared community of women, came under attack for mysticism and privileging women over men.<sup>111</sup> However, what Xiao Hong presents is organismic, not gender specific. In Xiao Hong's writing there exists the presence of spirituality, nature, or the “universe” as an abstract entity, which is encompassed within her spectrum of selves. This self is uniquely distinguished from other highly-intellectualized and rationalized thoughts of the Modern Chinese period. Xiao Hong's notion of self, like the Confucian relational self, rejects the “self as an isolable and complacent ego.”<sup>112</sup> The images of the landowners are portrayed negatively as an “unrestrained attachment to the external world for the sake of a limitless expansion of one's manipulative power.”<sup>113</sup> I find Xiao Hong's signature “spectrum of selves” more fully incorporates the more abstract elements of spirituality, a belief in something greater than the self, or the self as nested within a greater universe—a cosmically and organismically grounded self.

Spiritual transcendence in Xiao Hong's writing stems from surviving despite difficulties, and giving compassionately despite having little to offer. In *The Field of Life and Death*, when Old Mother Wang lost her goat and her only child and assists Yueying, the portrayal of human kindness and compassion is beautifully transcendent. Old Mother Wang, exhausted and exploited as she is, expects nothing of visiting Yueying and wiping her clean of her feces. This is where I believe Xiao Hong captures the true transcendence of existence. With little to give even to herself, Old Mother Wang continues to extend herself the best she can to others. Moreover, in “The Death of Wang Asao,” the presence of an unnamed female peasant that pities the little orphaned girl and takes her in leaves a memorable image. These moments lend much needed light and hope in the story. In the scene where an old mother from the North village has

an emotional breakdown from the death of her son, the presence of camaraderie among the women pierces through the darkness of the text.

Gradually she sank down to the ground, out of breath. She patted Mother Wang's knees gently. "Old sister, you know how I feel. Widowed at nineteen, I struggled for decades, struggled for the boy...all those days that I had to go hungry, I went with my son to the hillside to cut grasses..." her warm tears soaked through and drenched Mother Wang's knees. She began to sob quietly. "Tell me, what is there left for me?"<sup>114</sup>

Old Mother Wang, too, had lost her son in the army and tried to kill herself. Perhaps the old woman from the North in the moment finds herself less alone. The text speaks without revealing in words that only Old Mother Wang can truly empathize and understand the magnitude of her pain. Only mothers who have labored and brought children into the earth, to fight agonizingly for their survival, only to have them taken away or die—only these mothers are capable of understanding. Even the reader or the writer herself, it seems to suggest, cannot understand; only those who have lived through and survived such events can understand. Again a Daoist sense of transcendence beyond humanity, human comprehension, and the limitation of words are touched upon. With great humility, Xiao Hong does not pretend to understand or even grasp these moments, but simply to record these banal moments of daily survival that become monumental, transcendent and hopeful.

In fact, Xiao Hong's universe that includes the suffering of non-humans touches upon even deeper thematic meaning. Xiao Hong's organismic, collectivist endeavor between humans and nature/the world/heavens can be understood through the influences of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. The Confucian philosopher, Zhu Xi in *Jinsi lu (Reflections on Things at Hand)* says: "The man of humanity regards Heaven and Earth and all things as one body. To him there is nothing that is not himself. Since he has recognized all things as himself, can there be any limit to his humanity?"<sup>115</sup> Here we see the self as indivisible, almost porous, with all

other elements—people, objects, nature, and earth. In Euro-American Christianity-inspired structures of reality, there is often an underlying assumption that humans are of greater importance than animals in the Bible, and thus animals are rightfully sacrificed and used to serve the needs of people, which is treated as natural and justified. In contrast, below the surface of Xiao Hong's writing there are subtle suggestions of Buddhist reincarnation, in which a clearly delineated hierarchy does not exist because of a more richly organismic connection to the earth and animals. Howard Goldblatt also notes a “strong Buddhist flavor that runs through much of the novel.”<sup>116</sup> The lives of peasants and animals are much alike. Humans are no better off and no better than the animals. In fact, humans are often crueler, suffer more, and experience worse fates than animals. This theme is most apparent in the juxtaposition of Fifth wife's elder sister's labor that occurs simultaneously with a female dog's labor. While Fifth wife's labor is made infinitely harder by her husband, who burns her and drenches her in cold water, right next door the dog experiences an easy, quiet, peaceful birth in a warm, sheltered barn with straw. Her writing thus focuses on the human, unmistakably similar, primitive attachment to life. We are “less than the gods, more than the beasts, yet somehow also both.”<sup>117</sup> As in Daoism, where the bodily is balanced with the mind, the greater Xiao Hong focuses on the bodily and sensorial, the closer our links from humans as animals is evoked. This invoking of the bodily, instinctual, sensorial, and affective simultaneous is reminiscent of the Buddhist warning on resisting incarnation. It is through physical desires that humans resemble animals.

An overpowering craving will come over you for the sense-experiences which you remember having had in the past...which through your lack of sense-organs you cannot now have. Your desire for rebirth becomes more and more urgent; it becomes a real torment to you. This desire now racks you; you do not, however, experience it for what it is, but feel it as a deep thirst which parches you as you wander along, harassed, among deserts of burning sands....Everywhere around you, you will see animals and humans in...sexual intercourse. You envy them, and the sight attracts you...Do not go near the couples... do not try to interpose yourself between them, do not try to take the place of



one of them! The feeling... would make you faint away, just at the moment when egg and sperm... unite... afterwards you will find that you have been conceived as a human being or as an animal.<sup>118</sup>

Like Xiao Hong's writing, this sensorial passage invokes a human response of desire and craving. These sensorial images of instinctual and basic bodily needs, such as thirst and sensual desire, trigger strong emotions of longing, aching, and yearning. By invoking strong sensorial images, instinctual responses, and emotions, the scriptures tell of how these human aspects become temptations to lure the soul back into reincarnation. In Buddhism, the bodily, instinctual, sensory, and affective work against the soul's journey to nirvana.<sup>119</sup> Xiao Hong's bodily self can thus also be understood as a sensorial and affective self. Her writing captures the sensorial and affective aspects of life, and encourages the readers to empathize, feel, interact and feel feelings that cannot be dictated by rhyme or reason. This bodily self is the core of what I find the calling of her story. It is the spontaneous flow of the reader to empathize, feel angered, frustrated, cry, laugh aloud, and mostly to feel the sensory details as she shares a story. This feature of triggered emotional empathy in both Lu Xun and Xiao Hong is the most powerful agency present in storytelling. Stories are powerful emotive tools. And it is our emotions that best compel us into action. Thus, the power of channeling emotions in Lu Xun and Xiao Hong's writings is a very powerful act of agency. In Buddhism, "Intense emotions are seen as reactions to various forms of delusions 苦 (suffering),<sup>120</sup> thus emotions are the core of what compels the human into incarnation."<sup>121</sup> Emotions have the power to compel our actions as well as our reactions. We as readers are thus tied to Old Mother Wang's story as Old Mother Wang is to her horse.

Xiao Hong is not only sharing her beliefs about humanity, but something greater—a reality that includes the entire living world in which we live, and the importance of all life forms—the land, the fields, animals, dogs, and livestock. Goldblatt notes "in the first two

chapters alone, the characters' appearance and actions are portrayed with the aid of animal images nearly twenty times. The visual effect... on the reader is substantial."<sup>122</sup>

This "connection with all of humanity, all of life," and practicing "compassion," "harmony," and focusing on nourishing the human soul, while having an attitude of "humility" and being action-oriented toward "service to all mankind and the Universe as a whole," echo the ideals of Daoism and Buddhism. Combined with the shared suffering of humans and animals, a different truth emerges in which humans are connected to this earth and no more or less than the environment in which they live. Because one may be one form (male, female, human, non-human) in one life, and another in another life, Buddhist reincarnation promotes a more cosmological connectedness to the world and serves as a great equalizing factor. All living creates move toward a similar transcendent goal. Xiao Hong's articulations of "self" is thus one which, in addition to being cerebral (moral) and mentally discerning (intelligent), is also equally transcendent, spiritual, and cosmological, as well as bodily and affective.

The spectrum of selves as seen in Xiao Hong's work is inextricably nested and tangled within nature, the greater universe, and questions of existence and survival. Her unique visions of humanity, the human soul, its inextricable interweavedness among webs of people and the universe, explode the more specifically, detail-oriented, materially, and control-focused perspective of Euro-American New French Feminism, and the limits of nationalism and subjectivism, into the infinity of the meanings of existence, survival, humanity and harmony with the universe. Xiao Hong restores the primitiveness and spirituality of being human. Her writing is reminiscent of Zen. Mindfulness teaches that mind is larger than the self; we are more than our feelings, perception, egos, thoughts, and actions. Xiao Hong's writing transcends the limits of Euro-American subjectivity which is quartered within the concrete five senses and empirical

perceptions. In contrast to agency, Xiao Hong's notion of survival carries strong overtones of Zen notions of self as "being" and non-doing. Seng-Ts'an notes the light of sun and moon give in ways that are not consciously thought out.<sup>123</sup> Both spiritual, bodily, and human, Xiao Hong's story reminds us that one's spiritual journey must never be forgotten, and yet survival is necessary before subjectivity. Her writing leaves readers with an impact that is felt not only with their minds, but even more so, with the powerful punch of affect in their bodies. It defies all reason and logic, and insists that one return to the core and ask difficult questions about personal responsibility, what each person can do to change things on the smallest to grandest scale, and if the nature of who we are is more like the shining sun or the consuming vortex of a black hole in our relationship with the world around us.

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<sup>1</sup> In the previous chapter, by inspecting the ways in which critics may gather, analyze, and articulate "others" through the term of "History," I hope to have exposed the process by which discourses subsume and totalize other discourses and entities—in the intersection of Chinese patriarchal nationalism, the intellectual and imaginative space of Chinese women; and in the Euro-American feminist labeling of the third world female victim, the very real agency of Chinese women.

<sup>2</sup> Limited by the English language and Euro-American structures of understanding, it is my hope that a "full spectrum of selves" more adequately embodies the philosophies of "Both/and" and represent greater possibilities for one's relationship to the world and others.

<sup>3</sup> (Chow 1993). Repressed Chinese male subjectivities, in their efforts toward national bonding in the international scene, obliterate Chinese female subjectivities; and silenced Euro-American feminists under Euro-American patriarchy, in their efforts for a transnational feminism, subsume decolonizing women and erase Chinese cultural specificities. First world critics and feminists are perhaps subconsciously drawn by Xiao Hong's depictions of the victimization of woman and children because, to a certain extent, they enable the rationalizations and justifications necessary for imperialists to continue cultural and intellectual violations of boundaries. Violences are always justified through the intention of "doing good." In "Against the Lures of Diaspora," Rey Chow warns that a Chinese decolonizing female critic must write against both Euro-American imperialism and Chinese paternalism. In critiquing Chinese paternalism, the Modern Chinese woman's critique inevitably becomes vulnerable to being appropriated as supporting an imperialist agenda.

<sup>4</sup> Lydia Liu in *Translingual Practices* traces the cross-fertilization of Lu Xun's translated term, "individualism," as it traversed into Chinese culture in the Late Qing-Early Republic (Liu 1995). The phrase, "spectrum of selves," serves as a linguistic marker—a code-swapping red flag to designate the transgressions between cultures so that cultural baggage does not unknowingly become transmitted. By using a "spectrum of selves" to constantly flag the transgressions of cultures and cultural realities, I interrogate the cultural assumptions implicitly invoked with the term "subjectivity." The discourses of "subjectivity" and Euro-American feminism already were preloaded with structures of imperialism, racism, and dualism that precluded the antagonistic identities of self and society. The term embraces not only intellectualism but influences high and low, intuitive and intellectual, maternal presence and symbolism, primitive and rational, the morality of *li* (the mind and rational) and the empathy of *ren* (humanism), as well as the holistic cosmological belief of harmony of self, other, and the universe. There are thus multiple forms of

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subjectivity and ways of defining the self. The boundaries of self are no longer limited to Euro-American literary critical theory that constructs subjectivity in terms of its historical reactions to the Enlightenment, the Industrial age, romanticism, and "God is dead."

<sup>5</sup> Lin argues that the advocacy of the priority of intellectual and cultural change originated primarily from a traditional Chinese mode of thinking, and thus the cultural-intellectualistic approach had the potential to evolve into an intellectualistic-holistic mode of thinking; a totalistic view of culture perhaps called for a totalistic reform. Since traditional Chinese society and culture were perceived as organismic entities whose form and nature were affected by its fundamental ideas, then perhaps it also follows that the only way to change the nature and form of its parts would be to change the core genetic makeup of the organism (Lin 1979) quoted in (Pohl 1999, 73-74). The hints of this traditional organismic mode of thinking can also be seen in more contemporary Taiwan politics as “生命共同” (*Shengming gongtongti*) which translates as, “All individuals in a group share the same fate.” “Lee Teng-hui proposed that people in Taiwan should consolidate as “one community,” emphasizing the shared fate and common interests of its people.” (Lee 1995, 106). Lee Teng-hui, *Jingying da Taiwan* (Managing Big Taiwan), New Edition (Taipei, Yuanliu, 1995), 106; Organism is defined as “A form of life composed of mutually interdependent parts that maintain various vital processes.” Or “Any complex thing or system having properties and functions determined not only by the properties and relations of its individual parts, but by the character of the whole that they compose and by the relations of the parts to the whole.” (“Organism.” dictionary.com. dictionary.reference.com/browse/organism?s=t (accessed June 28, 2012)). For example, in scientific experiments, “Single, separate rat-heart cells in culture beat at different rates. When they grow into physical contact, the beating becomes synchronous. . . . Direct physical contact is necessary for attainment of synchronous contractions” (Harary 1960, 1839-1840). Thus the effect as a whole cannot be explained by the individual parts.

<sup>6</sup> (Lu Xun 1980, II: 24-5)

<sup>7</sup> (Lu Xun 1980, I: 59)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>10</sup> (Chow 1991, 111)

<sup>11</sup> (Goldblatt 1976, 118)

<sup>12</sup> Xiao Hong, *The Field of Life and Death*, trans. Howard Goldblatt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 236-238.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 31. Lydia Liu suggests that the parallel of the old woman, the leaf, and the horse speaks of their shared fate.

<sup>16</sup> (Ng 2003, 61)

<sup>17</sup> Lu Xun, preface to *The Field of Life and Death*, by Xiao Hong, trans. Howard Goldblatt (Boston Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 278. Goldblatt quotes Lu Xun's preface to *The Field of Life and Death*, which is also the preface to Xiao Jun's *Village in August*, published in the same series on August 1935. The village “represents a part and also the whole of China, the present and the future, the way of life and the way to death.”

<sup>18</sup> Xiao Hong, *The Field of Life and Death*, trans. Howard Goldblatt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 236-238.

<sup>19</sup> (Xiao and Goldblatt 2002, ix-x)

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<sup>20</sup> (Xiao Hong, "Bridge," trans. Goldblatt, 34)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 42-4.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 58-60.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 62.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> An alternative methodology of understanding needs to be applied to Euro-American literary critical interpretations of Ibsen's "Nora." Her choice to leave implicitly hints at a nebulous future. In this future, however, death is not an expected outcome. In this dramatic heroic moment—it is not a choice between choosing life and death per se—but choosing between life aligned with one's principles and beliefs versus life without passion and intention. Such arguments simplistically overlook that not all people are accorded the same rights, access to power, choices, primary needs and necessities. "Freedom" often comes with an unspoken assumption that survival is imminent and death is not.

<sup>51</sup> (Chow 1993).

<sup>52</sup> Xiao Hong, *The Field of Life and Death*, trans. Howard Goldblatt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 38.

<sup>53</sup> Hu Feng, "Epilogue," in *The Field of Life and Death*, trans. Howard Goldblatt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 279.

<sup>54</sup> Xiao Hong, *The Field of Life and Death*, trans. Howard Goldblatt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 8-9.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 10-12.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Lydia Liu, "The Female Body and Nationalist Discourse: The Field of Life and Death Revisited," in *Scattered Hegemonies*, eds. Grewal and Kaplan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 50.

<sup>61</sup> (Xiao Hong, *The Field of Life and Death*, trans. Howard Goldblatt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 31.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>74</sup> "Rural Children Have Higher Death Rate in China - China.org.cn." China.org.cn - China news, weather, business, travel & language courses. [http://www.china.org.cn/china/2010-03/27/content\\_19698157.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/2010-03/27/content_19698157.htm) (accessed June 23, 2012). According to *China Daily*, Reuters, March 27, 2010, even in contemporary times, "Rural Chinese children are three to six times more likely than city children to die before they turn 5, a study found, highlighting the wide gulf in healthcare for the rich and poor in China." It has thus been argued that due to the high death rate of rural children, rural children's deaths were considered common.

<sup>75</sup> Chang, Anita. "Chinese Rural Tradition Eyed After Dead Babies Found - Story - World - 3 News." Latest News: New Zealand & the World - 3 News. <http://www.3news.co.nz/Chinese-rural-tradition-eyed-after-dead-babies-found/tabid/417/articleID/149079/Default.aspx> (accessed June 23, 2012). 3News states, "The traditions stem from China's agrarian past, where child deaths were common, and not considered something to dwell on." Common death, however, has come to signify emotionless or unimportance. Xiao Hong's story details her version of reality and truth in the matter.

<sup>76</sup> (Dumoulin 1979, 31)

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>78</sup> Kardash, Ted. "Taoism - The Wu-Wei Principle - Part 4." holiday ca. <http://www.jadedragon.com/archives/june98/tao.html> (accessed June 20, 2012). "The principle of *wu-wei* contains . . . the need to consciously experience ourselves as part of the unity of life that is the Tao."

<sup>79</sup> (Dumoulin 1979, 17)

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>82</sup> (Liu 1994, 50)

<sup>83</sup> (Liu 1994, 51). The animals were often "gifted" with ignorance like Old Mother's Wang's horse.

<sup>84</sup> Xiao Hong, *The Field of Life and Death*, trans. Goldblatt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 52.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 54.

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<sup>90</sup> Hu Feng, "Epilogue," in *The Field of Life and Death*, trans. Goldblatt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 279.

<sup>91</sup> (Denton 1998). Denton cites influences from Hao Chang, Theodore de Bary, Tu Weiming, Thomas Metzger and Lin Yusheng.

<sup>92</sup> (Liu 1994, 53).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Xiao Hong, *The Field of Life and Death*, trans. Goldblatt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 53.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>105</sup> "Wu wei - Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wu\\_wei](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wu_wei) (accessed June 23, 2012). "To a Taoist, things arise dependently. The soul and body go together, because if there were no soul, there would be no body and if there were no body, there would be no soul. All these arise dependently like this (this is the meaning of the Yin-Yang symbol; if there were no yin, there would be no yang and if there were no yang, there would be no yin). A person who follows the principle of *wuwei* thus realizes how ridiculous it is to cling to good and to obsessively stay away from evil. By realizing how things arise dependently, a Taoist is able to accept both the good and the bad. . . . The concept of *wuwei* alludes to balancing mind and body, nature and self, and includes the bodily and practical."

<sup>106</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 125.

<sup>107</sup> For a discussion on how Protestantism and Capitalism and German metaphysics and British romantics influence the obsession with self, please see (Denton 1998, 28-32).

<sup>108</sup> (Troeltsch 1991:237-72).

<sup>109</sup> (Watt 1965: 60-85).

<sup>110</sup> (Denton 1998, 29-30)

<sup>111</sup> (Armstrong 2000)

<sup>112</sup> (Tu 1985, 75-77)



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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Xiao Hong, *The Field of Life and Death*, trans. Howard Goldblatt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 104.

<sup>115</sup> (W. Chan 1967a, 19) quoted in (Denton 1998, 37).

<sup>116</sup> (Xiao Hong and Goldblatt 2002, xiii). In the introduction, Goldblatt notes “The villagers’ fatalistic attitudes and repeated mention of the four distresses (birth, old age, sickness and death)” that reference Buddhism.

<sup>117</sup> (Kurnst 1992, 2)

<sup>118</sup> (Conze 1959, 231-232)

<sup>119</sup> Nirvana is “death with a halo of lofty spiritual glory . . . and became synonymous with absolute peace” (Edkins 1968, x). In other words, it was focused on “higher attainments.” Said the Buddha on his upcoming death, “I am not to be destroyed, but shall be constantly on the ‘mountain of instruction’ (*ling-shan*, ‘efficacious mountain’).” Nirvana is where “there is neither life or death” (Edkins 1968, 46), to learn what is “truly permanent” so that suffering can cease (Edkins 1968, 47).

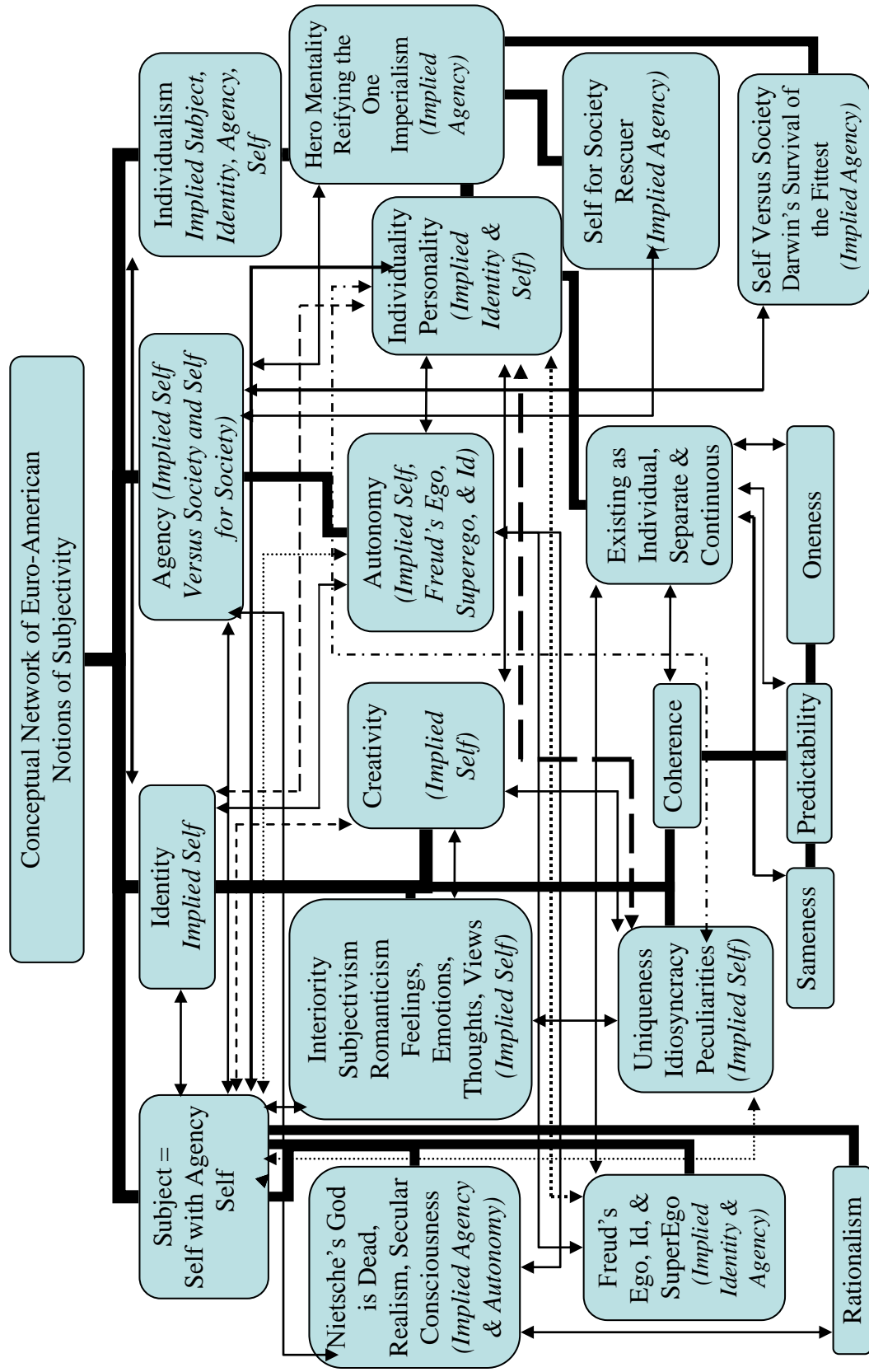
<sup>120</sup> "Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion" (SN 56.11), trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight*. <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html> (accessed June 23, 2012). Buddha lists these events as birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, despair, association with the unbeloved, separation from loved, not getting one's desires, and the five clinging. "For You Buddhism Articles - Is Buddhism a Pessimistic Way of Life?" Jeffrey Po. <http://www.4ui.com/eart/172eart1.htm> (accessed June 23, 2012). Jeffrey Po translates “*dukkha*” or *ku* more accurately as “disquietude” or “the condition of being disturbed.”

<sup>121</sup> (Kohn 1991, 131, 143). “Intense emotions are seen as reactions to various forms of delusions 苦 (suffering), and are derived from man's attachment to things rather than to the universal truth of *kong* (emptiness). On the other hand, nirvana brings about serenity and joy in the freedom from reincarnation. Thus the enlightened person embodies serenity and peace. In the principals of the middle way which advises moderation away from the extremes, one can also see a recommendation of the tempering of the extremities of emotions.”

<sup>122</sup> (Xiao Hong and Goldblatt 2002, xiv)

<sup>123</sup> (Conze 1959, 216). Conze quotes Seng-Ts'an in "On Believing in Mind." "Even without thought-processes one can be useful to other beings. For one can be like the sun or moon whose rays light up all things . . . [or] like the great earth which has the power to produce all things."

Appendix A: Conceptual Network of Euro-American Notions of Subjectivity



## Appendix B: Integrated Spectrum of Selves' Model



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