RETELLING STORIES AS A WAY TO CATHARSIS: AMBIVALENT FEELINGS, FACECIOUSNESS, AND RE-EVALUATION OF LU XUN'S *OLD STORIES RETOLD*

by

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(Under the direction of Thomas Cerbu)

ABSTRACT

Old Stories Retold is Lu Xun's last short story collection of fiction, published in 1935. Eight, classic tales were re-written by Lu Xun for specific purposes; however, this collection is underappreciated because of its opaqueness and complexity. The purpose of this thesis is to re-evaluate *Old Stories Retold* by focusing on, firstly, the reasons this collection has been underappreciated. The ambivalent feelings caused by the trauma of modernization and the personal attitude of Lu Xun's toward writing will be explained. Furthermore, the opaqueness and complexity will be decoded by exploring different techniques Lu Xun employed in *Old Stories Retold*. Most crucially, such an examination proves that *Old Stories Retold* bears a significant meaning—a way to catharsis.

INDEX WORDS: Catharsis, Facetiousness, *Gushi xinbian*, Lu Xun, Modernization, *Old Stories Retold*, Trauma, *xiaoshuo*.

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INTRODUCTION

Old Stories Retold[1] is the last short story collection Lu Xun compiled before his passing away. It is very curious that after many years of composing fiction based on the principles of realism, Lu Xun decided to use ancient pre-Tang tales as the source text and gave them new lives through his re-writing. Published in 1935, one year before Lu Xun passed away due to tuberculosis, *Old Stories Retold* took Lu Xun thirteen years to finish. He wrote the first story, "Mending Heaven" (Butian, 补天), in 1922 when his most famous, collection of short stories, *Outcry (Nahan,* 呐喊),[2] was still in progress. "Forging the Swords" (Zhujian, 铸剑) was written during 1926-1927. "Flight to the Moon" (Benyue, 奔月) and "Anti-Aggression" (Feigong, 非攻) were completed, respectively, in 1927 and 1934. "Taming the Floods" (Lishui, 理水) was written in November 1935. The last three stories, "Leaving the Pass" (Chuguan, 出关), "Gathering Ferns" (Caiwei, 采薇) and "Bringing Back the Dead" (Qisi, 起死), were finished roughly in the same period, by the end of December 1935. Although *Old Stories Retold* is the last collection Lu Xun published before his death, it did not attract much attention until the late 20th century. Literary critics, reviewers and scholars seem to be more interested in *Outcry* and *Hesitation* (*Panghuang* 彷徨)[3] than *Old Stories Retold*. This collection is less famous than the other two. Furthermore, whether Lu Xun truly

[1] *Old Stories Retold*, in Chinese 《故事新编》 has two existing English translations. Here the penguin classics version, translated by Julia Lovell, is chosen. The other version titled *Old Tales Retold*, translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, was published by the Foreign Language Press in Beijing.

[2] *Outcry* 《呐喊》, also known as *Call to Arms*, is Lu Xun's first collection of fiction and includes fourteen short stories Lu Xun composed in 1918-1922. *Outcry* is considered the beginning of modernity in Chinese xiaoshuo, in which "Diary of a Madman" was the first literary work ever written in vernacular Chinese.

[3] *Hesitation*, also known as *Wandering*, is the second collection of Lu Xun's fictions and includes eleven stories he wrote between 1924 and 1925. This volume focuses on peasants and elites in China of his time. Stories like "New Year Sacrifice" and "Public Exhibition" depict peasants in hard conditions, while stories like "The Misanthrope" portray Chinese elites in deep despair and helplessness.

detested "facetiousness 油滑"[4], an unavoidable phenomenon in the stories in *Old Stories Retold,* is still in dispute. Facetiousness is crucial in Lu Xun's re-writing of stories, because it means the mockery of seriousness in the original stories. Eventually, the mockery of seriousness allowed Lu Xun to take on the path toward catharsis. There are many factors that led to the perceived "inferiority" of *Old Stories Retold* compared to Lu Xun's other short story collections, but in recent decades people have increasingly realized that *Old Stories Retold* has been underappreciated.

Being one of the most eminent figures in the history of Chinese literature, Lu Xun's stories, in particular, have been highly praised by his readers. Nevertheless, *Old Stories Retold* has received the least praise among the three collections, and it is the most controversial one. Whether Lu Xun managed to maintain the same great writing quality in *Old Stories Retold* as he had in *Outcry* and *Hesitation* is a debate in Lu Xun studies. Hsia Chih-tsing[5] took *Old Stories Retold* as the sign of the decaying of Lu Xun's writing ability. He criticizes this collection as being "shallow and messy" [6] in *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* 中国现代小说史. But the importance of *Old Stories Retold* in Lu Xun studies is undeniable. Qian Liqun[7], in *Lu Xun Zuopin Shiwu Jiang* (鲁迅作品十五讲*, Fifteen Lectures on Lu Xun's works*), affirms the indispensable position of *Old Stories Retold* among Lu Xun's works, and refers to Lu Xun's re-writing of old stories as a process of "censoring the old myths and tales with a skeptical perspective 以怀疑的目光审视古代神话

[4]See Lu Xun, *Old Stories Retold, Preface*: "And so I began the slippery descent into facetiousness—the arch-enemy of literary creation. I still hate myself for it." p.296. See below for a clearer explanation and analysis of facetiousness in chapters two and three.

[5] Hsia Chih-tsing, a Chinese literary critic, who wrote *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* 《中国现代小说史》, is considered one of the most influential critics of Chinese literature for promoting works of marginalized writers in the 1960s.

[6] See Hsia Chih-tsing, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* 《中国现代小说史》, p. 39. The author's translation of "浅薄而零乱."

[7] Qian Liqun, born in 1939, is one of the most authoritative scholars in Lu Xun studies.

、传说”[8]. Moreover, this collection is a crucial witness to Lu Xun's shifting attitude, from writing for the Chinese people to writing for himself. Lu Xun stopped several times in the process of completing this collection. Finally, in 1935, he finished this collection after thirteen years. It seems unlike Lu Xun's normal practice to write at such a slow pace, for he is famous for being a fast writer with high productivity and great dedication. *Outcry* was written in 1923, and *Hesitation* took him two years to finish. The techniques Lu Xun applies in *Old Stories Retold* show that his ability in writing did not regress at all. Quite the opposite, his writing style was heading in a completely new direction. Lu Xun's ambivalent feelings toward this collection, which he expresses in the preface to *Old Stories Retold*, might be one of the reasons that this collection has long been ignored by some. However, the value of a work should not be simply determined by the author's attitude since the readers might not know what has influenced that attitude. Once the work is published, it is possible that new characteristics may appear that even the author was not able to foresee. Furthermore, Lu Xun's reservations about facetiousness, which he overtly expressed in the preface to *Old Stories Retold*, did not prevent him from putting together this collection. The discontinuity between his "words" and "actions" should provide clues for his real attitude towards those re-written stories.

Old Stories Retold is criticized for being "不伦不类" (bulun bulei, neither fish nor fowl), because it cannot easily be assigned any kind of classification. Lu Xun used transcriptions of foreign languages and various techniques to lessen the seriousness of the original stories, such as, anticlimax, parody, irony and appropriation, techniques not familiar to readers in his time. Many pedantic scholars in Lu Xun's time were obsessed with the past without any thoughts of the future;

[8] See Qian Liqun, *Lu Xun zuopin shiwujiang* 《鲁迅作品十五讲》 (*Fifteen Lectures on Lu Xun's works*), p.150.

some of them were not just old-fashioned but also ethnocentric. Sometimes they praised only the past rather than the modern and the familiar rather than the foreign. Here, the "foreign" is a general idea which includes both "western" elements and the techniques people were not familiar with in traditional Chinese *xiaoshuo*, such as parody. In contrast, another group of people were advocating for "complete westernization." They realized that some part of traditional Chinese culture was poisoning society, and therefore they turned to modernity for help. In this process, "westernization" provided a seemingly plausible plan. Under these circumstances, *Old Stories Retold* came to be a hybrid creation of the old and the new, the traditional and the foreign. It was experimental and advanced in Lu Xun's time. He writes in the preface to this collection: "but as long as I haven't made the ancients seem even deader than they already are, I suppose this book has a flimsy justification for its existence."[9] Even though he "hates himself"[10] for his descent into facetiousness, and despite all the negative comments he makes in the preface about his stories being "badly written," he acknowledges the value of his work in that it hasn't "made the ancients seem even deader than they already are."[11] Therefore, it will be more reasonable to consider his negative comments as either self-criticism, a way of being modest, or perhaps, even a method to set himself free from the self-censure caused by his deep affection for those original stories—his unforgettable past. These two possibilities also reveal his true opinions about this collection in that he is content to use his experimental method in order to dispel the seriousness of the original stories.

Qian Liqun, in *Lu Xun zuopin shiwu jiang* (鲁迅作品十五讲, *Fifteen Lectures on Lu Xun's works*), points out that scholars and readers, for a very long time, have focused only on *Outcry*,

[9] See Lu Xun, the Preface to *Old Stories Retold.* p.297.
[10] Ibid, p.295.
[11] Ibid, pp.296-297.

Hesitation, and Lu Xun's collections of essays, and paid little attention to *The Grass* and *Old Stories Retold*, because those works are opaque and complicated. Since the 1980s, people have been attracted to *The Grass*, but it wasn't until the 1990s that the academic worlds became interested in *Old Stories Retold*. According to Qian, this collection is, despite the earlier lack of interest, one that readers and scholars should pay more attention to.

This thesis focuses on this underappreciated work, re-evaluating it by exploring the reason for its lack of appeal to readers, explaining Lu Xun's real intention behind using facetiousness in the stories and affirming the value of dispelling the seriousness in old tales. Then, through comparing Lu Xun's and Gao Xingjian's respective re-writing of *zhiguai* tales, we can get a better understanding of the true intention in their re-writings.

Chapter one explains the difference between the Chinese concept of "*xiaoshuo* 小说" and the western concept of "fiction." By explaining the differences between these seemingly equivalent concepts, firstly, we will gain a basic knowledge of the development of "*xiaoshuo*," and secondly, we will understand more clearly the discrepancies between these two concepts. With this background in mind, the creativity and innovation of *Old Stories Retold* can be explained. In this part, Lu Xun's attitude toward *xiaoshuo*, especially pre-Tang *xiaoshuo*, will be introduced as well. It will give us some preparation for Lu Xun's ambivalent attitude toward the stories in this collection. The ambivalent attitude—Lu Xun's detest for writing with facetiousness and his satisfaction with not "having made the ancients seem even deader"[12] because of the application of facetiousness—will be brought up in this chapter as well.

[12] See Lu Xun, the Preface to *Old Stories Retold*: "And Because I can't convince myself that the ancients are as worthy of respect as my contemporaries, I've found myself periodically slipping into the quicksands of facetiousness. After thirteen years, I've not progressed beyond 'The Broken Mountain.' But as long as I haven't made the ancients seem even deader than they already are, I suppose this book has flimsy justification for its existence." pp.296-297.

Chapter two tries to explain Lu Xun's ambivalent attitude toward *Old Stories Retold*. We will look at his unforgettable past—the haunting Chinese traditions which Lu Xun wanted to get rid of, including his love for Chinese *xiaoshuo* and his dislike of the deeply-rooted traditions which paralyze Chinese people. This will lead to the catharsis he experienced through stripping the divinity and loftiness from the old stories. Ban Wang, in the *Illuminations from the Past*, says: "The past is not something one can throw out the window on the morning of enlightenment."[13] On the one hand, Lu Xun suffered from that unforgettable past. On the other hand, he was also influenced by modern revolutionary ideas, both domestic and from abroad. Accordingly, the changes in Lu Xun's attitude toward writing will be introduced in this chapter. The shift of writing purpose from one side to the other is also one of the reasons that caused the underappreciation of the collection. Because Lu Xun's readers were attracted to him more as a revolutionary than a writer, when he applied various experiments in his works his readers were sometimes confused and thought he deviated from what was his true purpose—writing for society.

Chapter three focuses on the details and techniques Lu Xun applied in his stories to dispel the seriousness in the original stories. Then the facetiousness he mentions in the preface to *Old Stories Retold* will be explained, and examples will be presented to show that this specific phenomenon is the result of the application of various techniques to dispel the seriousness in the ancient classic tales. The demotion of the deities, which drags them down from the heavens to earth, was Lu Xun's experimental move in his fictions, and this process was referred to by him as "facetiousness." Then appropriation theory will be introduced in this part, along with elements of anticlimax, parody, and irony, as the tools Lu Xun used to give the source text new content. By

[13] See Ban Wang, *Illuminations from the Past: Trauma, Memory, and History in Modern China*, p.33.

analyzing the techniques he used, we will get a better understanding of how facetiousness, as a unique phenomenon existing in *Old Storied Retold,* manages to dispel the seriousness inherited from the old tales and how the re-writing successfully led Lu Xun to a catharsis in which his emotions were released.

Then chapter four compares Lu Xun's re-writing of old stories with a later writer's own re-writing of ancient tales. "Forging Swords," the original story used by Lu Xun for one of the eight pieces of the collections is taken from *Lieyizhuan* 列异传. This volume of *zhiguai* tales was included in *Guxiaoshuogouchen* 古小说钩沉, [14] which Lu Xun collected as back-up materials for *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* 中国小说史略.[15] Interestingly, Gao Xingjian, a contemporary writer who was born in 1940, also re-writes a *zhiguai* story in his novel—*Soul Mountain* 灵山. Comparing these two different re-writings of *zhiguai* stories, helps to gain a better understanding of Lu Xun's cathartic experience in *Old Stories Retold*. Translations of the source texts for both "Forging the Swords" and the story in *Soul Mountain* are given in the Appendix, because none could be found so far.

[14] *Guxiaoshuogouchen* 《古小说钩沉》 is an anthology Lu Xun compiled and his wife published, after his passing away. It includes various pre-Tang *xiaoshuo*, mostly, *zhiguai* tales.

[15] *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, also known as *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue* 《中国小说史略》, was published in 1930 in Chinese as a survey of traditional Chinese fiction. Later, in 1959, the English version translated by Yang Hsien-Yi and Gladys Yang was published. The coverage extends from early myths and legends through the *zhiguai* stories of the Six Dynasties, the *chuanqi* 传奇 stories of the Tang and Song dynasties, the vernacular stories of the following dynasties, and late Qing novels. The scholar John C. Y. Wang finds the study is still "significant and enduring" in providing a strong interpretive framework and detailed presentations of many previously neglected works, but also that it has obvious shortcomings, such as overemphasis on early forms of fiction, not enough coverage of later forms, such as the *bianwen* and vernacular short stories. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Brief_History_of_Chinese_Fiction.

CHAPTER 1

XIAOSHUO AS A CHINESE CONCEPT

Before exploring *Old Stories Retold*, I would like to clarify the word "fiction" (*xiaoshuo*, 小说) in the Chinese context. Fictional prose like short stories, novellas and novels are translated in general as *xiaoshuo* (小说), with an adjective indicating the difference in length, such as short (duanpian, 短篇) and long (changpian, 长篇). However, *xiaoshuo* can be traced back to the Han dynasty where the word *xiaoshuo* was recorded in *Hanshu* (汉书, *Book of Han*)— 小说家者流，盖出于稗官，街谈巷语，道听途说者之所造也(translated as "the *hsiao-shuo* writers succeeded those officers of the Chou dynasty whose task it was to collect the gossip of the streets")[16], which means the term *xiaoshuo* originally referred to stories and anecdotes which were picked up from street gossip. The mention in *Han Shu* is the earliest record of the nature of *xiaoshuo*. Not a formal writing style, *xiaoshuo* was not born with noble blood. In fact, before the "revolution in *xiaoshuo* 小说革命," in the late Qing Dynasty, *xiaoshuo* had thrived in folk literature and was dismissed as a second-class literary form. Victor Mair addresses *xiaoshuo* and fiction's distinctions:

> The Chinese term for "fiction" is *hian-shuo* (literally, "small talk" or "minor talk"). This immediately points to a fundamental contrast with the English word, which is derived ultimately from the past participle of Latin *fingere* ("to form" or "to fashion," "to invent"). Where the Chinese term etymologically implies a kind of gossip or anecdote, the English word indicates something made up or created by an author or writer. "Hsiao-shuo" imports something, not of particularly great moment, that is presumed actually to have happened; "fiction" suggests something an author dreamed up in his mind. By calling his work

[16] See Ban Gu 班固, *Hanshu* 《汉书》 (*Book of Han*). Translated by Yang Hsien-Yi and Gladys Yang in *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction.*

> "fiction," an author expressly disclaims that it directly reflects real events and people; when a literary piece is declared to be "hsiao-shuo," we are given to understand that it is gossip or report. For this reason, many recorders of *hsiao-shuo* are at great pains to tell us exactly from whom, when, where, and in what circumstances they hear their stories.[17]

From Mair's explanation of *xiaoshuo* in a Chinese context, we can tell that the very notion of *xiaoshuo*, before it absorbed any western influences, was quite different from "fiction" in origin. Not only are the origins of *xiaoshuo* and fiction different, but also *xiaoshuo* as a genre is conceptually between "narrative" and "fiction." The fictional nature of *xiaoshuo*, was at first not clearly specified. The fictional connotation of *xiaoshuo* was not imported from the West until modern China. Sometimes it is still very confusing to distinguish *xiaoshuo* from other fiction even in the modern Chinese context. Moreover, as Ming Dong Gu mentioned in *Chinese Theories of Fiction*, *xiaoshuo* is not as broad as the general term "narrative" in scope, which he describes *xiaoshuo* as "a 'catchall basket' in the Chinese tradition, broad enough to necessitate a reconsideration of its denotations and connotations over history and a delimiting of its parameters."[18] *Xiaoshuo* is a broader concept which includes both "narrative" and "fiction."

However, after the "revolution of *xiaoshuo* 小说革命" led by Liang Qichao in 1902, the position of *xiaoshuo* as a literary genre was much promoted, and no longer considered a lower one. Then the concept of *xiaoshuo* began a long process of absorbing Western elements and becoming increasingly westernized. The "revolution of *xiaoshuo*" was accompanied by the "vernacular movement 白话文运动, " which was led by Lu Xun, Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi and other elites with revolutionary intentions. This helped prepare a rich soil for the westernization of *xiaoshuo*. It thus holds true that speaking of Chinese *xiaoshuo* without the Chinese context would be misleading; however, talking about Lu Xun's *xiaoshuo* without mentioning western influences might confuse

[17] See Victor Mair, *Narrative Revolution in Chinese Literature*, pp.21-22.
[18] See Ming Dong Gu, *Chinese Theories of Fiction*, p.17.

as well. As Ming Dong Gu puts it: "nowadays, Chinese fiction writers generally turn to Western masters for artistic inspiration and technical innovations."[19] Lu Xun is one of the practitioners who experimented with the hybridization of both Chinese and Western elements in his stories. Now when we talk about "fiction," it is likely that we are talking about it as a Westernized concept. The word "fiction" might often be translated as *xiaoshuo* in Chinese, but that doesn't mean that *xiaoshuo* is its Chinese equivalent. There are fundamental differences between these two concepts.

Lu Xun, who published the first vernacular fiction in Chinese literature in 1918—"Diary of a Madman 狂人日记"—was influenced by these movements, and he led the vanguard which helped in the process of a transition of *xiaoshuo* from historicity to fictionality, from traditional to modern. The "Dairy of a Madman" has been highly influential since it was published, not only because it was the first fiction ever written in vernacular Chinese, but also because it marked a new era in Lu Xun's use of a realist writing style. As one of the most famous writers of fiction in modern Chinese history, he composed three *xiaoshuo* collections in total—*Outcry*, *Hesitation*, and *Old Stories Retold*. *Outcry* and *Hesitation* focus on the present, when Chinese people were trapped by so-called "traditions." In "Diary of a Madman," collected in *Outcry*, the madman is a prey of people-eaters, but at the same time he is forced to become one of the people-eaters, which means he is both criminal and victim. Kong Yiji[20], who suffers from people's indifference, disappears after he makes his weak protest of saying: "Don't make fun of me."[21] In "New Year's Sacrifice" Xianglin's wife is mentally suffocated by the intangible hands of biased judgment from other people. The short stories in *Outcry* and *Hesitation* portray the miserable lives of middle- and lower-class people while Lu Xun also condemns their numbness and non-action. In these two collections,

[19] Ibid, p.20.
[20] Kong Yiji is the protagonist of Lu Xun's short story "Kong Yiji,". It is collected in *Outcry*.
[21] See "Kong Yiji", *Outcry*, p.36.

Lu Xun provides critical social commentary in an attempt to awaken the sleepy Chinese people out of their ignorance. His criticism is due to his earnest wish for a bright tomorrow.

Old Stories Retold, however, is unique among Lu Xun's works because it combines "the present" with "the past," using old tales and stories as a source text and then re-writing them into a new context. The complicated hybridization of "the present" with "the past" and "the traditional" with "the modern" explains why people think *Old Stories Retold* is difficult to understand, and that difficulty contributes to how little read it once was. Hsia Chih-tsing takes this collection as a sign of the decay of Lu Xun's talent. Moreover, among all the works of Lu Xun, *Old Stories Retold* alone has raised arguments as to what kind of collection it is exactly.

Tang Tao believes it is a collection of "old stories' retelling and new stories with old elements."[22] Wang Li and Han Rixin see it as a collection of historical fiction treated sardonically. Li Helin regards it as new historical fiction, while people like Feng Xuefeng and Xue Yi call it allegorical fiction. Some question whether this collection should actually be called fiction at all. Huang Jingrong describes it as essay-styled fiction, but Yi Fan says it is a collection of essays in narrative form. This question is not settled and in a way demonstrates the complicated nature of the work. Li Min, in "*Old Stories Retold:* Game of Languages*,"* argues that Lu Xun had lots of fun playing a linguistic game in the collection, where he put the burden of "saving Chinese people from their numbness" aside and began to enjoy composing a labyrinth of languages with his erudition.

[22] See Li Min, "Gushixinbian shi yuyan de youxi" 《故事新编》：语言的游戏 (*Old Stories Retold*: Game of Languages), p.69. Tang Tao, as well as Wang Li, Han Rixin, Li Helin, Feng Xuefeng, Xue Yi, Huang Jingrong, Yi Fan's arguments are brought up by Li Min in "Gushixinbian shi yuyan de youxi."

The strange mixture of realist style and fictionality sets *Old Stories Retold* apart from *Outcry* and *Hesitation*. As Marston Anderson explains, "realist" does not equal "realistic," which means "faithful to observed reality,"[23] but simply refers to the body of formal characteristics common to mid- to late-nineteenth-century European fiction employed most typically by Chekhov and Maupassant. The three characteristics of realist novels are: "1) nonheroic protagonists from the middle or lower classes; 2) a plot whose primary gesture is an unveiling of one level of hypocritical meaning to establish a more fundamental level of meaning; 3) the concealment of the work's fictionality by the absence of overt authorial intervention."[24] Most of Lu Xun's works in *Outcry* and *Hesitation* have these three characteristics of realist fiction. *Old Stories Retold*, however, is a strange mixture of fictionality and realism. The original source texts come from tales, myths, and legends which are innately fictional, and yet Lu Xun makes them less divine by adding realistic elements. For example, in "Flight to the Moon" the heroic figure Yi struggles to earn his family's food.

It is hard to define *Old Stories Retold* as a certain kind of *xiaoshuo*. The ambiguity of classification is one of the barriers to a broader popularity. Another barrier is Lu Xun's ambiguous attitude toward this work. Lu Xun was interested in ancient Chinese *xiaoshuo* tales and stories when he was a child. In Ah Chang and *Classic of Mountains and Seas* 阿长与《山海经》, a personal reminiscence from *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk*[25], he tells a story about his ambivalent feeling towards his nanny, Ah Chang, who murdered his beloved pet but consoled him

[23] See Anderson, Marston, "The Morality of Form: Lu Xun and the Modern Chinese Short Story," *Lu Xun and His Legacy*, p.33.
[24] Ibid, pp.33–34.
[25] *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* is a collection of ten short memoirs Lu Xun composed in 1928 and published in 1932. This collection is in *LXQJ*, vol.2. pp.235-333.

with *Classic of Mountains and Sea* 山海经[26]. He once dreamed of a chance to own *Classic of Mountains and Seas* because he heard from his uncle about the bizarre creatures and tales recorded in this book, like the snake with nine heads, the bird with three feet, the human being with wings, and the monster with two nipples as its eyes. When he was still in the mood for avenging his dear pet mouse, Ah Chang, the murderer, came to him with *Classic of Mountains and Seas* in her hand and he forgave her immediately. This nostalgic moment illustrates how important it always was for Lu Xun to look back to the Chinese past through myths, tales, and stories. Lu Xun started collecting pre-Tang *xiaoshuo* in 1898, when he was seventeen years old and those materials later become his source material for his work, *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* 中国小说史略. At first, he was collecting stories to kill time; however, this turned into a life-long mission. His wife helped with the publication of *Guxiaoshuogouchen* 古小说钩沉 in 1939, after he had passed away. In the introduction to *Guxiaoshuogouchen* 古小说钩沉 he explained the reasons for *xiaoshuo* being underappreciated for hundreds of years, and he addressed his desire to keep them from being marginalized.

The first story in *Old Stories Retold*, "Mending Heaven," comes from a Chinese tale about Nüwa 女娲, who created human beings and then helped to repair the leaky sky. It is in the *Classic of Mountains and Sea*s that Nüwa appears for the first time in a written work. The earliest record of Nüwa creating people out of mud was in *Huannanzi* 淮南子, while that of mending heaven is in *Liezi* 列子. Lu Xun conflates the two different tales as his source text, so that in "Mending

[26] The *Classic of Mountains and Seas* or *Shan Hai Jing*, formerly romanized as the *Shan-hai Ching*,(山海经) is a compilation of mythic geography and beasts. Versions of the text may have existed since as early as the 4th century BC, but the present form was not reached until the early Han dynasty a few centuries later. It is mostly a fabulous geographical and cultural account of pre-Qin China, as well as a collection of Chinese mythology. The book is divided into eighteen sections; it describes over 550 mountains and 300 channels.

Heaven" Nüwa creates human beings and then sacrifices herself to repair the leaky sky. For the second story, "Flight to the Moon," the source tale about Yi 羿 and Chang'e 嫦娥 is recorded in *Huainanzi* 淮南子. The third story, "Taming the Floods," also draws on the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, while other versions of the story of Yu 禹 are recorded in *Shangshu* 尚书, *Mengzi* 孟子, *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* 吕氏春秋, *Records of the Grand Historian* 史记 and *Zhuangzi* 庄子. "Forging the Swords," a *zhiguai* 志怪 tale, was recorded in both *Soushen Ji* 搜神记 and *Lieyi Zhuan* 列异传, and the story was collected by Lu Xun himself in *Guxiaoshuogouchen* 古小说钩沉 as part of the back-up material for *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* 中国小说史略. The title of the next story, *Gathering Ferns*, is taken from *The Book of Songs* 诗经, while the story of Boyi 伯夷 and Shuqi 叔齐 comes from *Records of the Grand Historian* 史记. *Leaving the Pass*, a story of Laozi 老子 leaving Hangu Pass 函谷关, is recorded in *Records of the Grand Historian* 史记 as well. "Anti-Aggression," a story about Mozi 墨子, who with eloquence and intelligence persuades Gongshuban 公输般 and the King of Chu 楚 against declaring war with Song 宋, is recorded in the eponymous book, *Mozi* 墨子. The last story "Bring Back the Dead" of Zhuangzi 庄子, who brings the dead back to life, is recorded in the eponymous work, *Zhuangzi* 庄子.[27]

When considering why Lu Xun chose all his source texts in pre-Tang myths and tales, his intention might be explained in *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* 中国小说史略, in which he divided Chinese fiction according to the creator's intention: "Unconsciously Composed Fictional

[27] All the source-texts mentioned above can be found in the Appendix of the Chinese version of *Old Stories Retold*.

Works" and "Consciously Composed Fictional Works."[28] The most important thing is the realization of fictionality in *xiaoshuo*. Before the Tang dynasty, when *chuanqi* tales (also known as "Tang legends") came into a ruling position, *xiaoshuo* was regarded as the recording or documenting of things that really existed or happened, even though *zhiguai* tales, which included many supernatural stories, were also considered as records. The word *zhiguai*(志怪) means recording of the strange. Lu Xun takes conscious fictionization as the turning point in the development of Chinese *xiaoshuo*, and therefore, by looking at the source texts of *Old Stories Retold* it is not hard to understand why all the sources come from pre-Tang texts. As Ming Gu Dong mentions in *Chinese Theories of Fiction*:

> In his (Lu Xun's) opinion, *xiaoshuo* at that time was a form of writing that is halfway between philosophy and history. This view has become the scholarly consensus up to the present day. When people talk about *xiaoshuo* before the Six Dynasties, few have looked upon them as literary work. But even in Lu Xun's speculation, *xiaoshuo* does have some characteristics that come close to the later notion of fiction. *Xiaoshuo*'s recording of people is shallower than philosophical writings, and its recording of events does not adhere to facts. The first point shows *xiaoshuo* writing as a reflection of human life; the second point touches on fictionality. The combination of the two points comes close to the modern notion of fiction, which is a fictitious reflection of and on human life.[29]

The deliberate selection of source texts from pre-Tang *xiaoshuo* indicates Lu Xun's intention: to re-write stories with less modern fictionality. But why did he pick distant and remote stories and then re-write them in a new context? The whole process of re-writing can be viewed as a cathartic experience. By re-writing these stories with the seriousness dispelled, Lu Xun expressed his ambivalent feelings about the haunting Chinese past, which was the "enemy" of the revolutionary future.

[28] See Ming Dong Gu, *Chinese Theories of Fiction*, p.36.
[29] Ibid, p.29.

The ambivalent feelings Lu Xun had toward these re-writings can be found in the preface to *Old Stories Retold,* where he writes:

> I was so amused by the spineless treachery (of people who persuade young men from writing romantic poems like those in *Orchid Breeze*[30]) of it all that when I started up again I couldn't help a little simulacrum—in classical robes—appearing between Nüwa's legs. And so I began the slippery descent into *facetiousness*—the arch-enemy of literary creation. I still hate myself for it.....Our Esteemed critic Cheng Fangwu chose this moment to try a few swings of his axe at the gate of the palace of pure literature. *Outcry* he dispatched with a few brutal strokes as 'vulgarly naturalistic'; only 'The Broken Mountain' met with his discerning, though still reserved, approval. In truth, his denunciation not only failed to convince me; it also undermined any confidence I might have had in his opinion.[31]

Lu Xun does not agree with Cheng Fangwu's statement that only 'The Broken Mountain'[32] can be taken as the one and only great work among the stories in *Outcry*, because at that time his primary urgency was to promote a "revolutionary future" for the Chinese people who still drank in their numbness and refused to face social problems directly. Now Lu Xun was, indeed, on the way to making peace with the haunting Chinese past, which doesn't mean he hated "the unforgettable past," but rather he has ambivalent, paradoxical feelings about it.

[30] *Orchid Breeze* is a collection of new romantic verses, edited by Wang Jingzhi. It was published in August 1922, and the critical review (by Hu Menghua) printed in October that year.
[31] See the Preface to *Old Stories Retold,* p.295.
[32] "Mending Heaven" was titled "The Broken Mountain" when it was collected in *Outcry*.

CHAPTER 2

AMBIVALENT FEELINGS: RUPTURE OF THE PAST AND THE PRESENT, THE TRADITIONAL AND THE FOREIGN

"The past is not something one can throw out the window on the morning of enlightenment."[33]

—Ban Wang

Although Lu Xun hates the restraining parts of traditional culture that confine Chinese people in their banality and numbness, he was never an enemy of classic and traditional literature. Instead he was a protector of them. His affection towards *xiaoshuo* was innate and inherent. He began to collect *xiaoshuo* when he was still in his youth, as he mentions in the preface to *Guxiaoshuogouchen* 古小说钩沉, where he describes how he began to collect *xiaoshuo* and the current biased views toward this genre.

> I liked reading ancient texts when I was a child. When I found seemingly false-recorded content, I would check the credibility of other books to make additions for missed sentences. Because most of them are incomplete, the order of the sentences in those texts is not perfectly arranged, yet the meaning is roughly conveyed to the reader. The contents are mostly about trivial disciplines in history; deities, demons and fairies; metaphysical stories pertaining to Wu-Xing theory 五行; immortals and blessed places; transportation tools of the immortals; insightful stories. The trivial position and the late emergence of *xiaoshuo* in the history of Chinese literature were its barriers and limitations; however, by collecting ordinary people's thoughts, assembling elites' ideas, it is indeed a precious genre in Chinese literature. Like a blooming flower, it decorates Chinese culture. Some people still hold biased opinions toward this genre. Alas, I feel the bitterness, seeing these precious

[33] See Ban Wang, *Illuminations from the Past: Trauma, Memory, and History in Modern China*, p.33.

> ancient stories perish in history. Because my spare time will be less in the future, I collect stories from previous books and correct some of them in order to finish this compilation which I have named "*Guxiaoshuogouchen* 古小说钩沉"(Hooking the sinking ones in the ancient novels).[34]

From what he says in the preface to *Guxiaoshuogouchen*, we can tell that Lu Xun acknowledged the importance of *xiaoshuo* in the history of Chinese literature. Therefore, he compliments *xiaoshuo* as "a precious genre in Chinese literature, which like a blooming flower decorates Chinese culture 其在文林，犹如舜华，足以丽尔文明," although it had been undervalued so far. He understood that these sparkling pearls, especially pre-Tang *xiaoshuo*, including *zhiguai* 志怪, were eclipsed by major genres because of their "underprivileged" ancestry: street rumors and gossip. They had long been underestimated and marginalized. Because of his affection for the source text, one might be confused about his comments in the preface to *Old Stories Retold*. He was very modest when it came to this collection. His attitude can be understood as the rupture created by a sharp opposition of "the present" and "the past," "the traditional" and "the foreign."

Although Lu Xun was interested in pre-Tang *xiaoshuo* and stories, he had quite mixed feelings toward "the traditional."[35] He openly expressed his dislike of Confucian and Mencian principles that are based on the obedience of human beings to "heaven" (天)[36] in *Sanxian Ji* 三闲集. According to him, to wake up the Chinese people, the younger generations need to stop adhering to Confucian, Mencian, and other old ways. They should speak with new voices, which for Lu Xun means to speak in modern ways, with vernacular Chinese.

[34] The preface to *Guxiaoshuogouchen* doesn't have an authoritative translation. See the original text in the Appendix below.
[35] See Lu Xun, *Sanxian Ji* 《三闲集》, *LXQJ*, vol.4, p.15.
[36] Ibid.

Lu Xun disliked classical Chinese. He indicated that the debate about the advantages and disadvantages of classical versus vernacular Chinese should have ended a long time ago, but there were still questions in his time about whether or not people should write in the vernacular. In Lu Xun's opinion, to speak is to speak with courage, and that means the courage to be free of tradition, and so to speak in the vernacular.[37] More crucially, he hated the ideology inherited from the feudal, classical system imposed on Chinese people for thousands of years. So-called "traditions" are merely tools by which to master over people. Lu Xun himself, too, was troubled by the old ideology which was imposed on him, and was not able to fully forget. He expressed the trouble of the unforgettable past of Chinese tradition in the Postscript to *The Grave*, that he had always had to keep ancient, classical books around for his teaching position. Even if he was deeply influenced by them, he wanted to "get rid of those ancient, haunting spirits"[38] as well, which made him depressed.

In *Outcry* and *Hesitation*, Lu Xun utters his dissatisfaction with the old, people-eating traditions through vivid portrayals of peasants and middle-class Chinese lives. In the Postscript to *The Grave* 写在《坟》后面, Lu Xun expresses his discontent with Zhuangzi 庄子 and Confucius 孔子. However, the influence of tradition was so strong that even when he writes in vernacular Chinese, his words are in the shadow of what he has read before. He often felt upset because heavy, serious thoughts haunted him like ghosts. This might explain why he used facetiousness to engender a cathartic experience. Later, in *Old Stories Retold*, he reached back into that Chinese past, which he saw as the root of the numbness and obedience of Chinese people instead of direct criticism he employs facetiousness, which lessens the seriousness of the old stories. By attacking

[37] See Lu, Xun. *Lu Xun Quan Ji* 《鲁迅全集》, vol. 5, pp.14-15. *Lu Xun Quan Ji* is referred to as *LXQJ* below.
[38] See Lu Xun 鲁迅, Postscript to *The Grave* 写在《坟》后面, *LXQJ*, vol. 1, p.301.

some of the core elements of the old tales, he might lessen his ambivalent feelings through this as well, therefore, making his "descent into facetiousness" a cathartic experience.

He regarded "The Broken Mountain" (later re-named as "Mending Heaven") as "an extraordinarily sloppy piece of work." In the preface he writes:

> For one, I delight in vulgarity. And on the subject of historical fiction: those very detailed works, stuffed with research, every fact checked, that some deride as scholarly fiction—they're no picnic to pull off. If instead you take one tiny scrap of fact, add a bit of colour, the extrapolate it into a story of sorts: this doesn't take much out of a person. Anyway, 'a fish knows whether the water is hot or cold', as the vulgar saying goes—a writer is his own best critic: the second half of 'The Broken Mountain' is an extraordinarily sloppy piece of work; only a fool would find anything to recommend in it. Determined not to lead readers further down the road of Cheng's misjudgment, I respectfully parried his axe-blows by removing the piece from the second edition of A *Call to Arms*, in 1930, reshaping the volume into a monument to my beloved vulgarity.[39]

One might note that the above comments were based on the justification of other works in *Outcry*, as well as on disagreement with Cheng's remarks. Lu Xun, in the next thirteen years, after he had written "The Broken Mountain," never stopped the slippery descent into facetiousness. Furthermore, we might ask ourselves, what the point is to insist on writing with facetiousness despite his disliking it?

The disparity between his words and actions might result from Lu Xun's unforgettable past, which was the product of various conflicting forces: Lu Xun's innate obsession with traditional Chinese literature, his dislike of the controlling power of tradition over people's spirit, and the social responsibility he felt to lead Chinese literature on its way to "westernization." As we have mentioned before, Lu Xun was born in a period when Chinese elites were making attempts to break the old rules that confined Chinese people within certain "traditions." This trend was pervasive not only politically, but also in the literary field. Practitioners like Chen Duxiu published

[39] Ibid, p.296.

articles about his proposals for new leading principles in the literary field and many revolutionary writers and scholars followed the three principles proclaimed by Chen in his response to Hu Shi's "Wenxue gailiang chuyi 文学改良刍议." The three principles are:

> 1.Topple the ornate and fawning aristocratic literature and establish a plain and expressive people's literature; 2. Topple the decrepit and extravagant classical literature and establish a fresh and truthful realistic literature; 3. topple the pedantic and obscure hermit literature and establish a clear and popular social literature.[40]

In a time when modernization was associated with a denial of Chinese identity, the struggle to escape the confinement of traditional, aristocratic literature was beginning. People like Chen started to offer a path to lead Chinese literature into modernity, but the hold of traditional Chinese literature was so strong that "westernization" became a tool to help escape from the old traditions. It was a period when Chinese elites were experiencing a crisis in regard to identity, self-recognition and ideology. Whether they should choose to be completely westernized or not became an issue. As Theodore Huters mentions in *Bring the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China*, it was a time where any "perception of the legacy of the past invariably turned up as a negative, and anything that became associated with the old came to be regarded as that which had to be left behind." [41] It was painful to abandon the old and embrace the new because no one could promise a bright future by complete westernization. Furthermore, whether complete westernization was a practical solution was another question. Andrew Stuckey addresses "complete westernization" as a logical extension of the denial of the Chinese past and identity, which he says:

> The logical extension of the argument, and one which was quickly arrived at, was complete westernization; that is, the denial of Chinese identity or specificity. Beyond being an impossibility because of the sheer mass of the Chinese population and weight of tradition,

[40] See Chen Duxiu, "Wenxue Geming Lu," Xi Qingnian 2, no.6 (1917).
[41] See Theodore Huters, *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China*, p.20.

> this denial explicitly undermines the ultimate goal that Chen laid out for literary revolution, namely, Chinese parity with the Europeans, not for the Chinese to be newly recreated in the European image.[42]

He points out the inaccessibility of complete westernization in China, and its fundamental conflict with Chen's proposal of Chinese parity with Europeans. However, it was the denial of one's Chinese identity because of the trend toward westernization that ruptured Lu Xun's feelings. The urgent need to find a replacement for the old created a disjuncture between the present and the past, marking them as each other's enemy, where "the present" only asked "the future" for validation. Although the radical dichotomy of the traditional and the foreign, which is in a way the dichotomy of the past and the future, raised debate, there seemed no third way for the youth to choose. They could be either a conservative who clung to the past or a reformer.

Not only Chinese writers, but anyone who lived in that time was influenced and even traumatized by this rupture. As Andrew Stuckey puts it: "in China as in the West, the experience of modernity can be conceptualized a form of trauma." [43] Lu Xun also suffered this trauma of modernization. On the one hand, he was a boy who was curious about the fantastic stories in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* and a teacher who had to knew ancient texts; on the other hand, he was a reformer, at the vanguard of new thoughts about "westernization."

In the preface to *Outcry*, he writes:

> When I was young I, too, had many dreams, most of which I later forgot—and without the slightest regret. Although remembering the past can bring happiness, it can also bring a feeling of solitude; and where is the pleasure in clinging on to the memory of lonely times passed? My trouble is, though, that I find myself unable to forget, or at least unable to forget entirely.[44]

[42] See Andrew Stuckey, *Old Stories Retold: Narrative and Vanishing Pasts in Modern China*, p.2.
[43] Ibid, p.6.
[44] See Lu Xun, Preface to *Outcry*, written in December 1922, p.15.

The unforgettable Chinese past and the need to take revolutionary steps by denying it traumatized Lu Xun, and *Old Stories Retold* was born under these circumstances.

What he wanted to forget could not be forgotten, and stories became ghosts, haunting his fiction. Therefore, he had an urgent need to find release. Things he cannot forget find their way back in Lu Xun's fiction. As he says in the preface to *Outcry*, writing down the things that cannot be forgotten is a cathartic process, during which he releases them by writing them down. The trauma caused by the total denial of one's identity and the Chinese past, which is impossible to fully forget, is one of the reasons for his ambivalent tone. There is another likely reason for his strict self-limitation and hesitation to indulge himself in advocacy. As I have mentioned, *Old Stories Retold* reveals the changing of Lu Xun's writing from more provocative to more reticent.

Lu Xun was first a student in medical science and studied in Japan. However, he later realized that Chinese people need to be cured "mentally" rather than "physically." The numb "spectators" he noticed in a documentary he watched for a class, who stand aside with detachment when others are troubled in trouble, made him aware of "the Chinese illness." Thus, he left medical science and turned to literature and art as a way to help. His early essays and poems often contain stark criticism of the Chinese illness and the earnest desire to revive the Chinese people from their numbness. Even though Lu Xun harshly criticized various "people-eating" traditions in his fiction, he did so out of his expectations of a better world. As the old Chinese saying goes: "爱之深，责之切 (love well, whip well)." Early stage in life, Lu Xun overtly expressed his determination to dedicate himself to the nation, as in his celebrated poem "Inscribed on a Small Photograph" in 1903:

In the spirit tower is no plan
to elude divine arrows.

Wind and rain, like giant flagstones,
darken the old garden.
Entrusting intentions to a cold lone star,
...the Fragrant One considers them not.
I take my blood and offer it up
to Xuan Yuan [the Yellow Emperor].[45]

Here, the determination to sacrifice himself for the nation is strong and unbreakable. Accordingly, most of his fiction and essays aims at finding a "treatment" to awaken the mass. Writing for the society and the youth is supposed to be one of the main goals of Lu Xun's works, which we can easily find in his fiction. He realized the most urgent need for Chinese people was the treatment not of their poor physical condition, but of their numb mind. However, in *Outcry* the provocation to "take my blood and offer it up to Xuan Yuan" was muted. He started to question whether he should indulge himself in advocacy, and thus, he wrote in the preface to *Outcry*:

> I thought I had changed: that I was no longer the kind of person who felt the imperative to speak out. Yet neither could I forget the lonely sorrows of my youth. And so I found myself issuing a few battle-cries of my own, if only to offer comfort or sympathy to those still fighting through their loneliness, and to alleviate their fear of the struggles ahead.[46]

Lu Xun began to question the legitimacy of intense advocacy when he was writing the preface to *Outcry* in December 1922. Although he had never considered himself a hero, a savior to his fellows, he started to contemplate whether he should speak out or not. Furthermore, he understood that "his single battle-cry" would not awaken the masses. He was afraid his negative depiction of Chinese society would extinguish the light of hope in Chinese youth. This self-limitation was becoming increasingly evident as he kept writing, so that he often "stooped to distortions and untruths" by "adding a fictitious wreath of flowers to Yu'er's grave in 'Medicine';

[45] *Jiwai ji shiyi* 《集外集释义》(A supplement to the addenda collection), *LXQJ*, 7: 861. English translation by Kowallis, *Lu Xun's Classical Chinese Verse*, p.61.
[46] See Lu Xun, preface to *Outcry*, pp.19-20.

forbearing to write that Mrs. Shan never dreams of her son in 'Tomorrow.'"[47] It demonstrates the self-limitation and hesitancy of indulging in being overly-negative. In Huters' argument, Lu Xun was experiencing the crisis of figuration, which is "a systemic instability of the relationship between the means of constructing a piece of narrative and its possible referent in the social life of the period."[48] This is the very reason that Lu Xun was more negative and reserved compared to Yan Fu, who had given the opening shots of westernization years earlier. He further states that Lu Xun's "hesitation becomes even more marked in his post-1918 work."[49]

Besides being increasingly cautious and hesitant about over-advocacy, Lu Xun's intentions for writing also changed during the thirteen years he composed *Old Stories Retold*. It is the responsibility Lu Xun took voluntarily that required him to write with a mission, be it to cure the Chinese illness or to awaken numb people in their unrealistic dreams. Eventually, there was a new guiding voice, a personal wish to write for self-entertainment in his late years. He wrote his wife: "You know that I have two contradictory wishes: on the one hand I want to write for the sake of society, on the other hand, I want to write for fun, for myself."[50] As a writer of high social responsibility, Lu Xun devoted himself to "waking the numb Chinese people," to "criticize the indifference in Chinese society," to "cure 'diseases' with his pen," while in *Old Stories Retold*, this wish to comfort people in fighting through their loneliness and the intention to save people from their numbness grew dim. The stories read for a more personal purposes such as his own entertainment. In the preface to *Old Stories Retold*, he wrote：

> Anyway, 'a fish knows whether the water is hot or cold', as the vulgar saying goes—a writer is his own best critic: the second half of 'The Broken Mountain' is an extraordinarily

[47] Ibid, p.20.
[48] See Theodore Huters, *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China*, p.260.
[49] Ibid, p.276.
[50] See Lu Xun, *Liangdishu* 《两地书》. LXQJ, vol.11. The author's translation.

> sloppy piece of work; only a fool would find anything to recommend in it. Determined not to lead readers further down the road of Cheng's misjudgment, I respectfully parried his axe-blows by removing the piece from the second edition of *A Call to Arms* to my beloved vulgarity.[51]

The preface was written December 26th, 1935, after he had finished all eight stories, and he spoke honestly without any pretension that he was determined not to lead readers further down the road of Cheng's misjudgment (Cheng Fangwu had crowned Lu Xun's "The Broken Mountain" as the only decent work in *Outcry* and criticized all the others for being vulgar). We can tell that Lu Xun, in this late phase of his writing career, became more reserved than ever, wherein he indicated that his readers should not read those stories with great seriousness. The self-limitation cultivated at this time, as well as the focusing on self-entertainment, are two of the reasons for his ambivalent attitude toward this collection.

How did he deal with these two conflicting emotions in his re-writing of old tales? In the next chapter, I will explain the ways he managed to write himself a cathartic experience by using various techniques to create "facetiousness" in his new stories.

[51] See Lu Xun, *Old Stories Retold*, p.296.

CHAPTER 3

FACETIOUSNESS AND TECHNIQUES TO DISPEL SERIOUSNESS

As I have mentioned in the previous chapters, Lu Xun enjoyed reading books of ancient *xiaoshuo*, yet in *Old Stories Retold* he re-writes them in a sarcastic tone. He also admits in his preface to the book that "because I can't convince myself that the ancients are as worthy of respect as my contemporaries, I've found myself periodically slipping into the quicksands of facetiousness."[52] Based on what he has done in re-writing ancient *xiaoshuo*, it is not convincing that Lu Xun truly hated facetiousness. The "detestation" of facetiousness confuses Lu Xun's ambivalent feelings toward this collection. Though he says he hates facetiousness, he continues to write with it.

"Facetiousness 油滑" is a unique phenomenon in Lu Xun's writings. Lu Xun first mentions it in *Old Stories Retold*, and this term had never been mentioned by any other author before in his time. There are two Chinese characters in "油滑." The first one means "oily" and the second one "slippery." If these two characters are combined, it means "slippery," "sophisticated" and "hypocritical." The preface to *Old Stories Retold* also uses the word "slippery" itself: "I couldn't help a little simulacrum—in classical robes—appearing between Nüwa's legs. And so I began the slippery descent into facetiousness—the arch-enemy of literary creation."[53] Instead of being a singular technique, facetiousness is likely the result of various devises. Regarding this specific

[52] See Lu Xun, the Preface to *Old Stories Retold*, p.296.
[53] Ibid, p.295.

phenomenon in the last collection of Lu Xun's stories, scholars have not reached agreement on the definition of facetiousness. It is a tricky term, since both Lu Xun's use of it is ambiguous and his attitude is ambivalent as well.

Anyone who believes that he had no satisfaction or self-entertainment from using facetiousness would be misled by the camouflage. The inconsistency of his words and actions might provide us some clues. As the old Chinese saying goes: "what a man does shows his true intentions," which means instead of words, actions are better clues to a person's intentions. Although Lu Xun overtly "disliked the facetiousness" that he had once applied in "The Broken Mountain," there were no signs that he ceased to write with facetiousness in the following stories. Furthermore, even though the stories were written with facetiousness, Lu Xun was happy that these stories did not make the ancients even deader. On the contrary, facetiousness is the key to prevent ancients in the old stories from being "even deader than they already are."[54] The public announcement that he detested facetiousness might be a way to avoid sentimental didacticism from society and Lu Xun himself. On the one hand, the dispelling of the innate seriousness in classical, traditional Chinese tales is a risky task that might not be accepted by readers. On the other hand, Lu Xun himself has quite ambivalent feelings toward those stories. Therefore, showing a dislike for facetiousness might be an efficient way to avoid harsh censure from both society and his himself.

Lu Xun did not only appropriate the ancient, pre-Tang materials in a modern context which was highly influenced by "westernization," he appropriated the foreign into a Chinese context. Therefore, both the Chinese sources and the foreign elements were appropriated into a brand-new

[54] See Lu Xun, the Preface to *Old Stories Retold*, pp.296-297.

domain, for example, the shift between vernacular and classical Chinese in "Mending Heaven" and the insertion of transliterated English words in "Taming the Floods."

In the 1950s, Wu Ying's article— "How to Understand the Meaning of *Old Tales Retold*"—initiated the discussion of facetiousness in Lu Xun studies. Wu listed his understanding of facetiousness: firstly, he considers facetiousness a technique for composing essays; secondly, facetiousness is the production of a specific environment; thirdly, facetiousness worked as Lu Xun's weapon against traditional culture; lastly, he thought this technique has flaws but not very serious ones. Zhai Kuizeng and Ma Zhongfu, however, in their co-written article, "On facetiousness in *Old Tales Retold*" argue that facetiousness was never a minor technique which Lu Xun applied unconsciously in his essays. In order to grasp the meaning of facetiousness in its entirety, one should approach it based on a thorough understanding of the objective meaning of the stories, with careful analysis of the efficacy it brings to the stories. In 1960, Tang Tao in "The Retelling of Old Stories, the New Telling of Old Stories," disagreed. He didn't give a clear definition of facetiousness, but rather he encouraged readers to approach this specific technique as "the great mockery of traditional concepts."[55] Therefore, merely defining this collection as historical fiction, or excluding it from the category of "historical," was short-sighted. Zheng Jiajian brought the explanation of facetiousness into a new era in his book, *Lishi xiang ziyoudeshiyi changkai* 历史向自由的诗意敞开, by using Bakhtin's aesthetic theory. He takes facetiousness as a specific way of experiencing, one that always stands in opposition to the "truth," as a dominant, authoritative position. His explanation allows infinite possibilities for understanding facetiousness

[55] See Hu Yongliang, *Jie Gou Zhi Meii—Lu Xun Gushixinbian de yishutanxi* 《解构之美—鲁迅<故事新编>思想艺术探析》, p80-81. The author's translation of "对于传统观念的伟大的嘲弄."

from different levels, not confined to the discussion of what kind of technique it is, but instead focusing on the outcome of facetiousness for readers.[56]

In order to get a better understanding of facetiousness, let us compare it and another famous technique Lu Xun applied in *Outcry*. In the postscript to *The Grave*, Lu Xun mentions a technique called "distortion[57]," which he applied in *Outcry* to dispel the pessimistic effect of the stories. Lu Xun's intention is clearly explained in the preface:

> I thought I had changed: that I was no longer the kind of person who felt the imperative to speak out. Yet neither could I forget the lonely sorrows of my youth. And so I found myself issuing a few battle-cries of my own, if only to offer comfort or sympathy to those still fighting through their loneliness, and to alleviate their fear of the struggles ahead. I have no interest in passing judgement on these things of mine: on whether they are brave, despondent, contemptible or ridiculous. But since they are battle-cries, I naturally had to follow my generals' orders. So I often stooped to distortions and untruths: adding a fictious wreath of flowers to Yu'er's grave in 'Medicine'; forbearing to write that Mrs Shan never dreams of her son in 'Tomorrow,' because my generalissimos did not approve of pessimism. And I didn't want to infect younger generations—dreaming the glorious dreams that I too had dreamed when I was young—with the loneliness that came to torment me.[58]

One might note the last outcry, "Save the children,"[59] at the end of "Diary of a Madman" as a "distortion" used to call for a better future. Facetiousness, however, does not function as a glance at hopeful future or a remedy for excessive pessimism. It is a technique to dispel the seriousness in old, venerable stories, and it sometimes leads the audience to black humor or deep disappointment.

Facetiousness should not be simply considered as a technique, as Zheng and Tang indicate, but it is a way to declare war against the traditional, authoritative opinions in the old stories. This is the very reason that facetiousness did not make them "even deader," because it dispelled the seriousness. Facetiousness is the dispelling of the authority, the loftiness and the seriousness in

[56] Ibid, p.80. All the writers and articles mentioned in this paragraph can be found in this page.
[57] *qubi* 曲笔, literally means "crooked pen."
[58] See, Lu Xun, the Preface to *Outcry*, p.19-20.
[59] See, Lu Xun, "Diary of A Madman," *Outcry*, p.31.

those old stories. It is not a specific technique but an outcome and the result of applying different techniques to resolve the inherent seriousness in the original context. To understand facetiousness, it is necessary to know what techniques Lu Xun applied for the dispelling of seriousness.

Old Stories Retold is famous for being "techniques-abundant." Here, by "techniques" I mean techniques in its broad sense, as particular ways of carrying out a task. The result of different techniques is the dispelling of seriousness, which creates facetiousness in Lu Xun's re-writings. One of the ways to achieve facetiousness is appropriation. In the other two volumes of short stories, stories are set up in a realistic background, while in this one, all the stories are appropriated from the old tales. As mentioned above, Lu Xun selected tales from the pre-Tang period and appropriated them into new stories.

The definition of appropriation can be condensed as a recreation of previous work into a new cultural domain or context. Julie Sanders gives us a clear description of what "appropriation" is:

> Appropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain. This may or may not involve a generic shift, and it may still require the intellectual juxtaposition of (at least) one text against another that we have suggested is central to the reading and spectating experience of adaptations. But the appropriated text or texts are not always as clearly signalled or acknowledged as in the adaptive process.[60]

Lu Xun's alloying of old stories with new narratives is one of the unique characteristics of this collection. Unlike *Outcry* and *Hesitation,* using old tales as a frame was a revolutionary practice in Lu Xun's writings. Here we need to clarify the difference between adaptation and appropriation and explain why appropriation is the proper concept to describe Lu Xun's re-writing process. Sanders again:

[60] See Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, p.26.

> Adaptation can be a transpositional practice, casting a specific genre into another generic mode, an act of re-vision in itself. It can parallel editorial practice in some respects, indulging in the exercise of trimming and pruning; yet it can also be an amplificatory procedure engaged in addition, expansion, accretion, and interpolation. Adaptation is frequently involved in offering commentary on a sourcetext. This is achieved most often by offering a revised point of view from the 'original', adding hypothetical motivation, or voicing the silenced and marginalized. Yet adaptation can also constitute a simpler attempt to make texts 'relevant' or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the process of proximation and updating.[61]

According to Sanders' definitions of adaptation and appropriation, we should notice that first, adaptation includes generic shift, which appropriation does not necessarily. Second, appropriation is more radical because it takes the informing source into a new cultural product and domain, while adaptation is a gentler process, "offering a revised point of view from the 'original,' adding hypothetical motivation or voicing the silenced and marginalized."[62] In *Old Stories Retold,* the most significant feature of Lu Xun's re-writing is the dispelling of the stories' seriousness. Those stories lose the heroic, marvelous power they used to have; therefore "appropriation" is the more proper word to describe this process of the rejection of the old meanings and the endowment of new ones. Furthermore, the re-writing of old stories did not aim at offering commentary on the source text, in fact, one could claim generic shift. The old stories were re-written in a new cultural context and served new purposes. Moreover, the new stories absorb different elements to dispel the seriousness of the source text.

Appropriation is a crucial method to pave the way for "facetiousness" because it allows Lu Xun to mix various materials. Lu Xun not only appropriated "the past" into "the present," but also "the foreign" into "the traditional." Leo Ou-Fan Lee, in his essay. "Tradition and Modernity in the Writings of Lu Xun," claims that Lu Xun, as a crucial member of the May Fourth intellectual vanguard, who managed to view traditional Chinese culture in its entirety from a radically new

[61] Ibid, p.18.
[62] Ibid, p.26.

perspective, and aimed at finding counter strains in, and on, the immensely rich legacy. However, he takes *Old Stories Retold* as a failure in this respect:

> But he reworked both their style and content so creatively that he transformed the old genres into glittering new forms. He was not always successful, of course. The brilliance of conception in his *Old Tales Retold*, for example, did not carry through in execution, as Lu Xun himself admitted. In these cases Lu Xun's achievement is clearly flawed... [63]

By claiming that Lu Xun failed to transform "the old genres into glittering new forms"[64], Lee did not fully understand that Lu Xun was never determined to create such new forms. What he did was dispel the existing seriousness in the old stories rather than create new forms. Thus, Lu Xun created new stories as weapons against the old stories. In the preface to the collection, Lu Xun admitted that he did not mean to mislead the youth to believe the seriousness of his stories in this collection: "as long as I haven't made the ancients seem even deader than they already are, I suppose this book has a flimsy justification for its existence."[65] The underlying meaning of these words was perfectly hidden in Lu Xun's humbleness and in the distracting comments about his dislike of the descent into *facetiousness*. The proper understanding of his words would be that these stories managed to break previous conventions instead of calling it a failure, which failed to generate "glittering new forms," it would be better referred to as an experimental work that broke the old stereotype of the stories by the hybridization of the past and the present, the traditional and the foreign. The dispelling of the seriousness in the old stories ushered his readers into a new stage where the seriousness can be humored and mocked.

Lu Xun also appropriated foreign elements into his text, and that is also a form of "facetiousness." The use of foreign elements has incurred comments such as "不伦不类" (neither

[63] See Leo Ou-Fan Lee, "Tradition and Modernity in the Writings of Lu Xun," *Lu Xun and His Legacy*, p.5.
[64] Ibid.
[65] See Lu Xun, the Preface to *Old Stories Retold*, pp.296-297.

fish nor fowl). Some people are confused by the alloying of the foreign elements and the original text; for example, the transliteration of "Good morning" into "古貌林" (Goo-mou-lin[66]) is considered as 浮于表面 (being shallow). In this case, people either presumed a good literary work should be a production of the domestication of the foreign elements, which is opposite to Lu Xun's intentions in this avant-garde work, or they failed to understand Lu Xun's intention of dispelling seriousness. As to the first reason, they might be expecting a more domesticated work, a work that can be read fluently without being interrupted by weird transliteration or pidgin forms like "Nga" and "Akon."[67] However, it is ethnocentric to negate a work's value because of the weirdness due to came from foreign elements.

The domestication of exotic and foreign things is seen especially in translations. The translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* (translated as 天演论 in Chinese) was a huge success in the late 19th century, and it is a classic example of "domesticating." Many of the concepts and opinions were altered in order to fit in the Chinese context. Expectations of domestication and naturalization of the text play a large part in both translation and literary fields which is not healthy to keep the diversity in both fields. The over-domestication will lead to elimination of foreignness in original texts. Take 天演论 as an example, Yan Fu, for the purpose of domestication, deleted some of the contents because they did not fit the Chinese conventions. In order to domesticate the text, the foreign, exotic elements were mostly taken out, and this was not the best way to translate a foreign text.

[66] This is an imitation of the way that the learned residents of Mount Culture preferred to communicate in heavily accented English. See the endnotes [8] and [9] of "理水", 《故事新编》, *LXQJ*, vol.2, p.403.

[67] "Nga" and "Akon" are Latin written onomatopoeia, like modal particles, such as "Ah." See the endnote [4] of "补天", 《故事新编》, *LXQJ*, vol.2, p.367.

The appropriation of English and Latin words is a blatant display of "foreignness" in Lu Xun's stories, while the profound reason for such "foreignness" comes from the dispelling of the seriousness in old stories. This was a new perspective that Lu Xun applied to view the Chinese past, with which he didn't criticize it by negating the meaningfulness of those stories, but he removed the seriousness and turned the stories against themselves. To go a step further, "foreignness" includes, but is not restricted to, the application of foreign language, narration and techniques. It is the foreign and distancing feeling of the annihilation of seriousness. Besides appropriation, Lu Xun applied many other techniques in *Old Stories Retold* to dispel the seriousness, such as anticlimax, parody and irony.

ANTICLIMAX

Have you ever experienced a disappointing ending that did not meet up with your expectations? In *Old Stories Retold*, Lu Xun uses this technique to create an unexpected and sometimes darkly-humorous ending to dispel the seriousness. In "Mending Heaven," the respectable Nüwa devoted her life to rescuing humans, and yet after her death, the people she created "dodged and feinted their way"[68] to her corpse, showing no respect to their creator, and they argued about who is the right descendant of Nüwa, which turns this "heroic" resurrection into a pointless argument. In the end of "Mending Heaven," Lu Xun writes:

> A vast, ancient banner unfurled behind them as they dodged and feinted their way towards Nüwa's corpse. Their caution was unnecessary: there was no trace of life. They cleverly chose to pitch camp on her stomach, as this was the most fertile place on her body. But then came a sudden change of heart: claiming they were Nüwa's only true descendants, they now revised the text on their banner—the ancient characters drooping like a tadpole tails—to 'The Entrails of Nüwa'.[69]

[68] See Lu Xun, "Mending Heaven," *Old Stories Retold*, p.306.
[69] See "Mending Heaven," p.305-306. "The Entrails of Nüwa" refers to a curious legend in the mythological text *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* (c. third century BC), which describes how ten genies declared themselves the metamorphosed entrails of the goddess. See the endnotes 2 of "Mending Heaven", *Old Stories Retold*, p.409.

The original story ends without anyone's sacrifice. Nüwa has saved the world and people are grateful for her heroic deeds. However, in Lu Xun's story the ending is quite thought-provoking. She died in the "exhausted shell of her body,"[70] but her descendants did not show their respect. Instead, they stood on her body like taking a battlefield, satisfied with the fact that they had taken the most fertile part. The taking-over of Nüwa's body is, surprisingly enough, not the end of the story, although it feels already sarcastic and anticlimactic enough for the reader. Lu Xun spends three more paragraphs describing a Daoist priest's sub-story, in which on his deathbed he told his disciple about the magic mountains (Nüwa's body). Later, Emperor Qin, who heard about the island, dispatched an alchemist to find it, but he found nothing, and a second attempt made by the Emperor Wu of Han[71] also ended in vain. In the last paragraph, Lu Xun mocked the Emperors' stupidity by explaining the disappearance of the magic mountains as an absurd coincidence:

> It was probably just happy coincidence that the turtles nodded when they did—probably they understood none of Nüwa's instruction. After swimming in aimless formation for a while, the shoal doubtless dispersed to sleep, leaving the magic mountains to sink. No one has discovered a trace of them since—only the occasional island of savages.[72]

Nüwa's heroic deeds, her descendants' ingratitude, and the great efforts the Emperors made to find the magic mountains are all mocked by Lu Xun as a "happy coincidence."

The creation of her descendants, human beings, however, is not made on purpose either. It is by pure coincidence that Nüwa "knelt, scooped up some mud and—after a little pressing and kneading—held in the palm of her hand a tiny creature, almost exactly in her image."[73] By adding an even more bizarre ending about "coincidence," the anticlimactic effect reaches maximum

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[70] See "Mending Heaven," *Old Stories Retold,* p.305.
[71] "Emperor Wu of Han (30 July 157 BC – 29 March 87 BC), born Liu Che, courtesy name Tong, was the fifth emperor of the Han dynasty of China, ruling from 141–87 BC. His reign lasted fifty-four years — a record not broken until the reign of the Kangxi Emperor more than 1,800 years later." See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emperor_Wu_of_Han.
[72] See Lu Xun, Mending Heaven, p.306
[73] See "Mending Heaven," *Old Stories Retold,* p. 299.

potential in the story. The only explanation offered the reader is just "coincidence," and the innate seriousness is dispelled in the last line of the story. It only leaves in morose bleakness. It is not only in "Mending Heaven" that Lu Xun adds an ironic ending, but also in "Forging the Swords," where he depicts the crowd's response to the farce:

> The tables of offerings now emerged from among the kneeling ranks of the crowds. A few of the empire's more zealously loyal subjects wept with rage that the souls of two regicides would enjoy the same memorial sacrifices as their king; but it was not to be helped.
>
> Then came the carriages of the queen and the host of concubines, weeping as they gazed at the assembled crowds, and the assembled crowds gazed back at them. After them came the ministers, eunuchs, dwarfs, and so on, their faces draped with expressions of woe, as they jostled their way chaotically forward, ignored by their audience.[74]

This description of the crowd after the king's death is not in the original story. By adding the reactions of the crowd, Lu Xun dispels the seriousness in this heavy motif—vengeance. Mei Jianchi's vengeance was completed in the absurd fighting between three heads in a cauldron:

> The moment it hit the water, his head made for the king and took an enormous bite at his nose, almost taking the whole thing off. Shouting with pain, the king opened his mouth, and Mei Jianchi's head seized the opportunity to escape, spun round and clamped down on the king's jaw. On they hung, yanking the head to and fro between them, giving the king's mouth no opportunity to hold a bite. Then they fell frenziedly upon him, like starving hens pecking at rice, mauling him until his entire face was a scaly, ruptured mess. In time, he stopped thrashing about the cauldron and merely floated, moaning, until even that lay beyond him. Finally, he breathed his last.
>
> Slowly closing their own mouths, the dark man and Mei Jianchi let the king's head alone and swam a circuit around the cauldron to check whether he truly was dead, or just playing dead. When they were satisfied that the king's head was indeed finished, they locked glances, smiled, then closed their eyes, faced upwards and sank to the bottom of the cauldron.[75]

The completion of Mei Jianchi's vengeance is a bizarre but curiously epic battle scene among three heads. In these two paragraphs, readers might sense the determination of Mei Jianchi, that he would fight his battle even though there was only his head left. According to Qian Liqun,

[74] See Lu Xun, "Forging the Swords," *Old Stories Retold*, p.371.
[75] Ibild, p.368.

the vengeance is grand and heroic, and the depiction of the forging of the swords by Mei Jianchi's mother is magnificent. The terror of the swords was astonishing: "a jet of white vapour roared up, shaking the ground beneath our feet. Then it enveloped the room in a cloud that slowly glowed crimson, a halo of peach-blossom light about it."[76]

What happened after this great revenge was complete?

The last chapter in the story tells what people did with their king's head. The queen, the concubines and the ministers could not tell which one of the three heads was their king's head, therefore the three heads were buried together. The discussion of which head should be the king's turns this revenge story into a head-recognizing farce. Being buried together, Mei Jianchi, the dark man, and the king were all in an awkward situation. Moreover, and most ironically, the tomb of the three is called "The Tomb of Three Kings." Again, by using an anticlimactic ending Lu Xun managed to indulge his readers with his protagonists in absurdity, and the previous seriousness is dispelled.

An anticlimactic ending can also be found in "Flight to the Moon," where another ancient hero, Yi, also known as Hou Yi 后羿, [77] suffers from his wife Chang'E's,[78] betrayal. She stole his elixir awarded to him by the Mother Queen of the West, and taking the pill she flew to the Moon.

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[76] See Lu Xun, "Forging the Swords", *Old Stories Retold*, p.355.

[77] "Hou Yi 后羿 is a mythological Chinese archer. He was also known as Shen Yi and simply as Yi(羿). He is also typically given the title of "Lord Archer." He is sometimes portrayed as a god of archery descended from heaven to aid mankind. Other times, he is portrayed as either simply half-divine or fully mortal. His wife, Chang'E 嫦娥 , is a lunar deity. In Chinese mythology, there were ten suns. Initially the ten suns would cross the sky one by one, but one day all ten suns came out at once scorching the earth. Hou Yi was tasked by the mythical King Yao to rein in the suns. Hou Yi first tried to reason with the suns. When that didn't work, he then pretended to shoot at them with his bow to intimidate them. When the suns again refused to heed Hou Yi's warnings, he began to shoot at them one by one. As each one fell, they turned into three legged ravens. Finally only one sun was left and King Yao as well as the sun's mother, asked for him to be spared for the prosperity of man." See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hou_Yi.

[78] "Chang'E 嫦娥 originally known as Heng'E 姮娥, is the Chinese goddess of the Moon. She is the subject of several legends in Chinese mythology, most of which incorporate several of the following elements: Houyi the archer, a benevolent or malevolent emperor, an elixir of life, and the Moon." See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chang%27e.

In Lu Xun's re-writing, Yi is no longer a heroic figure who shot down nine suns with his bow to save humanity, but a man who is afraid of his own wife. Chang'E complained about Yi not being able to provide her a better life. They even ate crows with fried-bean noodles. Yi quickly stands up and in a low voice says: "I shot a sparrow, too—for your dinner tonight."[79] Yi speaks carefully because he does not want to piss his wife off; however, she leaves anyway, despite all his caring and cautiousness. At the end of this story, we almost witness the heroic, masculine Yi's return:

> Taking the bow in one hand, the three arrows in the other, he placed the arrows against the string, drew it fully taut and aimed at the moon. Straight-backed, eyes flashing, hair and beard blowing about him like tongues of black fire, at that moment he might have been the same Yi who, all those years ago, shot the nine suns out of the sky.
>
> As at one instant, the arrows whipped away from the bow, the action blurred with speed, their separate trajectories coalescing into a single hum. To be sure of hitting his target, Yi quivered his hand a fraction as he released the string, to disperse his simultaneous missiles—to make three separate wounds.[80]

He quivered his hand anyway, since he was no longer a hero anymore. Yi has been tormented and worn out by the trivial things in the daily life. A hero is turned into an ordinary man by chores. He blames himself:

> Yi sat down, sighing. "Well, I hope your mistress enjoys eternity on her own. How could she have left me like that? Did she think I was getting past it? Just last month she told me how young I still was. That the moment you start thinking you're old, you're halfway to the grave."[81]

His servants comforted him by saying that he looked great, and one of them wanted to cut a bit off the leopard skin by the wall to patch the middle, yet Yi stopped her:

> "No hurry," Yi said thoughtfully. "I'm starving—fry that chicken with some chillies, and steam me five pounds of wheat cakes. I'll sleep better on a full stomach. Then I'll get another elixir from that Daoist priest tomorrow and go after her. Number Seven: go and tell Wang Sheng to measure eight pints of white beans for my horse!"[82]

[79] See Lu Xun, "Flight to the Moon," *Old Stories Retold*, p.308.
[80] Ibid, p.316.
[81] Ibid, pp.316-317.
[82] Ibid, p.317.

Just when the reader expects Yi to regain his heroic characteristics, Lu Xun changes course and begins the descent into the slippery facetiousness with an anticlimax. Yi is permanently changed into a coward.

In "Taming the Floods," Yu is a national hero for his selfless deed to tame the flood. Lu Xun sketches Yu in his story as a man of responsibility and integrity. In contrast, the "scholars" who contribute nothing to the flood-taming, murmur behind Yu's back about him. Yu does not respond to their nonsense. Instead, he concentrates on finding a solution to stop the raging flood:

> "I know, I know." Yu smiled faintly. "Some say my father turned into a brown bear, others that he turned into a soft-shelled turtle with three legs. Others again say that I am hungry only for profit and fame. Let them say what they like. I have investigated the lie of mountain and march, consulted the people and assembled facts. My mind is made up. Channels are the way of the future—this is my last word on the subject. [83]

The conversation between Yu and his colleagues proves his devotion to the flood-taming task. Besides, he has no mind to think about how to fit in with his colleagues. However, such a man with great ambition has been unconsciously changed at the end of the story, and after the appeasement of the flood, his attitude is slightly different. Yu returns triumphally to the capital, "Although he cared little about food or drink, he was capable of ostentation in his performance of sacrifices and rites. And though he remained none too particular about his day-to-day clothes, at court or on official visits his outfits were always immaculately assembled."[84] Yu has been changed by his colleagues and by the environment. The ending, ironically, says: "so peace and prosperity returned: even the beasts of the kingdom danced for joy, and phoenixes descended to join the fun."[85] This is in sharp contrast to an ending with "distortion." The difference is that an ending with facetiousness does not provide any comfort, and quite the opposite, it provides a sense of

[83] See "Taming the Floods," *Old Stories Retold*, p.330.
[84] Ibid, p.333.
[85] Ibid.

absurdity, and sometimes disappointment at an unexpected anticlimax. The result of ending in facetiousness is that the seriousness of the original text is completely dispelled.

Similarly, of the end of "Anti-Aggression," when Mozi succeeds in persuading Chu[86] against declaring war with Song[87] and is on his way home:

> Mozi took his time over his return journey,… But fortune seemed to be against him: just past the frontier into Song, he was searched twice by patrols. Near the capital, his path crossed with that of a fundraising National Salvation Squad, which claimed his tattered old knapsack as a donation. And just outside the capital's southern pass, he was caught in a downpour. When he tried to take shelter under the city gate, two patrolmen chased him away with spears. As a result, he got soaked to the skin and spent the next ten days with a blocked nose.[88]

Not being treated like a hero by the people of Song, Mozi was chased away by two patrolmen like a beggar. This is a typically ironic scene where Lu Xun uses facetiousness, deleting the didactic ending of the original text, and then puts Mozi in an embarrassing situation to dispel the seriousness of the original story. The sudden anticlimactic descent of the story turns a sage into a blocked-nose man. Readers might notice the deliberately created facetiousness by anticlimax and be disappointed. Anticlimactic endings produce an unexcepted effect which breaks the commonplace and directly leads to the crumbling of innate seriousness in the original stories.

PARODY

[86] "Chu (Chinese: 楚) was a hegemonic, Zhou dynasty era state. From King Wu of Chu in the early 8th century BC, the rulers of Chu declared themselves kings on an equal footing with the Zhou kings. Though initially inconsequential, removed to the south of the Zhou heartland and practising differing customs, Chu began a series of administrative reforms, becoming a successful expansionist state during the Spring and Autumn period. With its continued expansion, Chu became a great Warring States period power, until it was overthrown by the Qin in 223 BC." See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chu_(state).

[87] "Song (Chinese: 宋) was a state during the Zhou dynasty of ancient China, with its capital at Shangqiu. The state was founded soon after King Wu of Zhou conquered the Shang dynasty to establish the Zhou dynasty in 1046 BC. It was conquered by the State of Qi in 286 BC, during the Warring States period. Confucius was a descendant of a Song nobleman who moved to the State of Lu." See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Song_(state).

[88] See "Anti-Aggression," *Old Stories Retold*, p.392.

> Whoever has gained wisdom concerning ancient origins will eventually look for wells of the future and for new origins. O my brothers, it will not be overlong before new peoples originate and new wells roar down into new depths.
>
> --Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Lu Xun quoted this short paragraph in his essay[89] collected in *The Grave* in 1908. Lu Xun was very clear that new things came from ancient origins, and one of the ways to create new things based on old stories is to parody the ancients. In order to create a new world, first things first, the old world and order must be rejected. Parody, in this case, seems an efficacious way to reject the past.

The word "parody" can be traced to a Greek word, *parodia*, which means a song sung in opposition or an imitative song. There is an innate ambivalence in *parodia* since "para" can be translated as both nearness and opposition.[90] This characteristic allows Lu Xun to sustain his ambivalent feelings in the re-writings, where he gets the chance to retain the parts he likes from the old stories while offering stark mockery of what he dislikes.

Parody, a popular post-modernist literary technique, does not have a long history in Chinese literature. Applying parody to one's writings was an avant-garde and experimental move back in Lu Xun's time, while parody plays a crucial role in the history of Western literature. Famous writers like Miguel de Cervantes and Laurence Sterne both applied this technique in their novels, *Don Quijote* and *Tristram Shandy* respectively. There is evidence that Lu Xun had read

[89] See Lu Xun, "Mo Luo Shi Li Shuo 摩罗诗力说," *LXQJ*, vol. 1, p.65. Lu Xun's translation: "求古源尽者将求方来之泉，将求新源。嗟我昆弟，新生之作，新泉之涌于深渊，其非远矣。"—尼佉.

[90] See Margaret A. Rose, *Parody//Meta-Fiction: Analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the Writing and Reception of Fiction*, p.18.

Cervantes' works before the publication of *Old Stories Retold*. In *Huagai Ji* 华盖集[91], Lu Xun mentions *Don Quijote* in one of his essays. Our analysis of *Old Stories Retold* will go lacking without mentioning this specific technique. As Andrew Stuckey says:

> Nevertheless, we should be wary of applying Western terms like satire and parody wholesale to Chinese texts. On the other hand, satire has long played a role in Chinese literature—from the Warring States period philosophical polemics (some passages of Zhuangzi in reference to Confucius come to mind) to the seventeenth century novel Rulin waishi (*The Scholars*), which was so influential to May Fourth writers—and as such its continued pertinence seems assured. The history of parody, on the other hand, as a category of classification, is much hazier, if it exists at all. This fact notwithstanding, I feel that, for at least the twentieth-century stories like "Mending Heaven" and "Shi Xiu" that update older tales, the Chinese saying *jiuping zhuang xinjiu*, which literally means pouring new wine into an old bottle, may provide us with an indigenous view of parody.[92]

Parody can be found in almost every one of stories. What is the meaning of applying parody in the stories? The answer lies in the need to create "facetiousness." Parody is an excellent way of creating a comic effect in one's writing and compared to satire, it relies on both nearness and, opposition; it creates a sharp contrast between the old version and the new version. In order to make parody work, both imitation and variation are required, as Stuckey further explains:

> Parody, however, for it to work at all, requires both imitation and variation, both proximity to and separation from the parodied text which it uses to produce an ironic difference between the two texts. Thus "one has to have a certain knowledge of the pre-text (even if it stems only from the parody itself) and to use it to perceive the alterations of the parodied text in the parody." Otherwise the parody fails as a parody.[93]

Stuckey's definition of parody exactly fits Lu Xun's purpose, which is to dispel the seriousness existing in the pre-text. Parody can be seen as part of facetiousness, as an approach to mock the ancients. The parodies Lu Xun used in *Old Stories Retold* can be roughly sorted into two categories: text-parody and language-parody.

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[91] *Huagai Ji* 《华盖集》, which was published 1926 is an anthology of Lu Xun's *zawen* 杂文 (essays).
[92] G. Andrew Stuckey, *Old Stories Retold: Narrative and Vanishing Pasts in Modern China*, p. 24.
[93] Ibid, p.25.

By text-parody I mean a general parody of the whole story. “Mending Heaven” is a parody of Nüwa’s myth recorded in *Huainanzi* 淮南子. Lu Xun managed to use the original story as a framing device to create a variation that artfully cancels the seriousness. In the ancient records, Nüwa is the creator of human beings. When Gonggong hit the Broken Mountains, the supporting pier resulted in a tremendous crush. Nüwa came to the rescue of human being, as recorded in *Liezi* 列子.

> 然则天地亦物也。物有不足，故昔者女娲氏练五彩石以补其阙；断鳌之足以立四极。其后共工氏与颛顼争为帝，怒触不周之山，折天柱，绝地维，故天倾西北，日月星辰就焉；地不满东南，故百川水潦归焉。[94]
>
> Heaven and earth are matter too, but there were deficiencies. So in ancient times Nu-kua melted coloured stones to fill out these deficiencies and cut off the feet of a giant turtle to prop up the four extremities of the earth. Later Kung Kung contended against Chuan-hsu for the mastery and in his rage crashed into Mount Puchou, breaking the pillars of heaven and earth’s foundations. Then heaven tilted down on the northwest and the sun, Moon and stars all got that way. The earth has a gap in the southeast and thither all the streams and rivers flow.[95]

Lu Xun parodied the text. He told a story about Nüwa creating and rescuing humanity, which is the imitation of the old text. Then, he added at the end of the story Nüwa’s miserable death and her descendants’ disrespect, which deviated the story from the original. Therefore, facetiousness was created by the parody, which includes both imitation and variation.

Besides the parody of the text, there is another kind of parody—language-parody, including the deliberate imitation of a certain kind of style of writing. For example, in “Mending Heaven,” there is a strange conversation between Nüwa and human beings, where human beings are speaking classical Chinese with a deliberate imitation of the writing style in *Shangshu* 尚书, and

[94] See *Liezi*, 《列子·汤问》, p.383.
[95] See Lu Xun, *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* 《中国小说史略》, p.10. Translated by Hsien-Yi Yang and Gladys Yang.

Nüwa is speaking vernacular Chinese. Thus, she could not understand her descendants' words at all:

> 'What's happened?' she (Nüwa) asked.
>
> 'Alas, heaven has cursed us,' it told her despairingly. 'When the treacherous Zhuan Xu rose up against our king, he fought back, as heaven willed. We did battle outside the city, yet heaven forsook our virtuous cause, and our forces were repelled."
>
> 'What?' This, indeed, was a novelty.
>
> 'Our forces were repelled and our king dashed his brains out against the Broken Mountain, smashing the Pillar of Heaven between earth and sky[96]. Oh, woe, woe –'
>
> 'That's quite enough of your nonsense.' She turned towards another of the creatures—again encased in iron plate, but its face beaming with triumph.[97]

The absurdity of the contrast between classical Chinese and vernacular Chinese is washed away in the translation. In the original text:

> "那是怎么一回事呢？"伊顺便的问。
>
> "呜呼，天降丧。"那一个便凄凉可怜的说，"颛顼不道，抗我后，我后躬行天讨，战于郊，天不祐德，我师反走，. . . . . "
>
> "我师反走，我后爰以厥首触不周之山，折天柱，绝地维，我后亦殂落。呜呼，是实惟. . . . . "
>
> "够了够了，我不懂你的意思。" [98]

This echoes the "Vernacular Movement 白话文运动." Lu Xun, by adding the parody of *Shangshu* 尚书's writing style in his fiction, mocks the banality and conservativism of classical Chinese. Moreover, its mockery of the original text's seriousness lies in the absurdity of Nüwa talking in a modern manner while her descendant talk in a traditional manner, and the discrepancy

[96] *our king dashed his brains out... smashing the Pillar of Heaven between earth and sky*: "A reference to the legendary battle between Zhuan Xu, descended from the Yellow Emperor, and the giant Kang Hui. After Zhuan Xu's victory, the furious giant knocked his head against the mountain that held up heaven, cracking the sky." See the endnote 1 of "Mending Heaven," *Old Stories Retold*, p.409.
[97] See Lu Xun, "Mending Heaven," *Old Stories Retold*, p.302.
[98] See "补天", 《故事新编》, *LXQJ*, vol. 2, p.362.

counters readers' expectations. Here, Lu Xun imitates the writing style in *Shangshu* 尚书 (also known as the *Book of Documents*) [99], which further shows his critique of old Chinese traditions. Lu Xun also expresses his disagreement with Confucian and Moist opinions in *Sanxian Ji* 三闲集; he thought the first step of Confucius and Motzi's revolutions was to convince people, yet they used "Heaven (天)" to suppress them instead of real conviction.

Therefore, the parody of the writing style in *Shangsu* 尚书 with Nüwa's comment abouot "nonsense," mocks the regression of human beings from children who spoke a natural language to people who use over-loaded complexity. Lu Xun translated from classical Chinese into vernacular as well. Those translated paragraphs are also parodies of the original text because, in re-writing the old text into the vernacular language, one can easily sense the imitation of the old sentence structure and content. By parodying the classical style and language, he expressed his discontent with the old traditions.

Conversely, in "Leaving the Pass," when Laozi is talking to Confucius, he quotes a paragraph from *Shangshu* 尚书 and re-writes it in vernacular Chinese:

> 'You were lucky,' Laozi replied, 'not to encounter a ruler of real talent. The six classics are the remains of the former kings. What use are they for the future? Your words are like a path; and a path is tramped out by sandals—but are they the same thing?' He paused. 'White herons conceive through eye contact; insects conceive through their calls; hermaphrodites conceive spontaneously, both sexes contained within one body. Nature is unchangeable; fate is unalterable; time is unstoppable; the Way is unblockable. Once the Way is within your grasp, all will go your way. Without it, you are lost.' [100]
>
> "你还算运气的哩，"老子说，"没有遇着能干的主子。六经这完艺儿，只是先王的陈迹呀。那里是弄出迹来的东西呢？你的话，可是和迹一样的。迹是鞋子踏成

[99] "*Book of Documents*, also known as the *Shangshu* ("Esteemed Documents"), is one of the Five Classics of ancient Chinese literature. It is a collection of rhetorical prose attributed to figures of ancient China, and served as the foundation of Chinese political philosophy for over 2,000 years." See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Documents.
[100] See Lu Xun, "Leaving the Pass," *Old Stories Retold*, p.372.

的，但迹难道就是鞋子吗？”停了一会，又接着说道：“白鸦们只要瞧着，眼珠子动也不动，然而自然有孕；虫呢，雄的在下风应，自然有云；类是一身上兼具雌雄的，所以自然有孕。性，是不能改的；命，是不能换的；时，是不能留的；道，是不能塞的。只要得了道，什么都行，可是如果失掉了，那就什么都不行。”

老子曰：“幸矣，子不遇治世之军也。夫六经，先王之陈迹也，岂其所以迹哉？今子之所言，犹迹也；夫迹，履之所处，而迹岂履哉？夫白之相视，眸子不运而风化；虫，雄鸣于上风，雌应于下风而风化；类，自为雌雄，故风化。性不可易，命不可变，时不可止，道不可壅。苟得其道，无自不可；失焉者，无自而可。”[101]

If we compare Lu Xun's re-writing with the original text, it is not difficult to notice the shift from classical to vernacular, modern style. This parodies the rigidity and complexity of the original style in *Shangshu* 尚书 and dispels its seriousness. Unlike the conversations between Nüwa and her descendants, the strange feeling reading the mingled styles of classical and vernacular Chinese is not present here. However, there is another strange feeling， of hearing Laozi speaks in vernacular Chinese. This new absurdity also dispels the didactic seriousness in Laozi's words.

A similar parody of re-writing the classical Chinese into vernacular can be found in *"*Anti-Aggression".

'Delighted to hear it!" Mozi straightened up, then bowed a couple of times to him, as if intensely relieved. "But I still have business to discuss with you,' he imperturbably continued. 'Back north, I heard you'd invented a siege ladder to attack Song. What has Song done to deserve this? Chu has too much land, and too few people. What is the point in killing what you lack, to take more of what you already have in plenty? He who attacks an innocent victim is inhumane; he who fails to oppose such a plan is no patriot; he who opposes it but dissuades no one is weak; he who refuses to kill one man, but it willing to kill many is inconsistent. So—what do you say to that?'[102]

“那好极了！”墨子很感动的直起身来，拜了两拜，又很沉重的说道：“可是我又几句话。我在北方，听说你造了云梯，要去攻宋。宋有什么罪过呢？出国有余的是地，缺少的是民。杀缺少的来争有余的，不能说是智；宋没有罪，却要攻他，不能说是仁；知道着，却不争，不能说是忠；争了，而不得，不能说是强；义不杀少，然而杀多，不能说是知类。先生以为怎样？……”[103]

[101] See the endnote 5 in "出关", 《故事新编》, *Lu Xun Quan Ji* 《鲁迅全集》, vol. 2, p465. The original text can also be found in *Shangshu* 尚书.
[102] See Lu Xun, "Anti-Aggression," *Old Stories Retold*, p.388.
[103] See 鲁迅,《出关》,《故事新编》, *Lu Xun Quan Ji* 《鲁迅全集》, vol.2, pp.474-475.

> “请说之。吾从北方闻子为梯，将以攻宋。宋何罪之有？荆国有余于地，而不足于民。杀所不足而争所有余，不可谓智；宋无罪而攻之，不可谓仁；知而不争，不可谓忠；争而不得，不可谓强。义不杀少而杀众，不可谓知类。”[104]

If we compare the reverse re-writings that translate vernacular into classical Chinese and the re-writing from classical Chinese to vernacular Chinese, we can easily see that the imitation of classical style is often accompanied by mockery. For example, we see it in the conversation between Nüwa and her “little men,” where she called their words “nonsense” when she heard classical Chinese. The parody of language dispels the seriousness in classical language and proclaims Lu Xun’s preference of the vernacular over the classical. It also conforms with Chen’s suggestion to topple the pedantic and obscure hermit literature and establish clear and popular social literature. The classic Chinese represents the pedantic while the vernacular represents the mass. Parody is connected to irony, as Margaret A. Rose puts it:

> In a general sense parody is related to irony, in the terms of an older rhetoric, as the “dissimulation” of an utterance. And both irony and parody confuse the normal processes of communication by offering more than one message to be decoded by the reader, which may also serve to conceal the author’s intended meaning from immediate interpretation. Thus the ambivalent relationship of the parody text to its target, which it satirizes but on which it is also dependent for a part of its own material and structure, may also conceal an ironic relationship to the multiplicity of messages which the embedding of another text in its structure may create.[105]

Parody, in *Old Stories Retold*, depends on irony, that is to say, irony is one of the most pivotal literary for which creating variations. For example, when Nüwa fails to understand her descendants’ words because of the classical Chinese they speak, the situational irony is produced by the sharp discrepancy between the expected and the actual result. Irony, generally speaking, is “a statement of an ambiguous character, which includes a code containing two (or more) messages,

[104] See endnote 4 in “非攻”, 《故事新编》, *LXQJ*, vol.2, p.480. The original text can also be found in *Mozi*. “*Mozi* (Chinese: 墨子), also called the *Mojing* (Chinese: 墨经) or the *Mohist canon*, is an ancient Chinese classic form the Warring States period (476–221 BC) that expounds the philosophy of Mohism. It propounds such Mohist ideas as impartiality, meritocratic governance, economic growth and aversion to ostentation, and is known for its plain and simple language.” See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozi_(book).

[105] Margaret A. Rose, *Parody//Meta-Fiction: An Analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the Writing and Reception of Fiction*, p.51.

one of which is the message of the ironist to his 'initiated' audience, and the other the 'ironically meant' decoy message." [106]

Situational irony is the most basic technique Lu Xun applied to construct the parody of old stories. It dispels their innate seriousness as well. For instance, Yi is depicted in "Flight to the Moon" as gentle, timid, while his expected figure is that of that of a heroic, masculine savior of human beings. The discrepancy between the expected and the actual characteristics of Yi cancels of Yi's divinity in the original story. Furthermore, the hesitancy Yi demonstrates when he aims the arrow at the moon, ironically, contrasts with his decisiveness in the original story. Lu Xun deliberately mentions that this scene resembles "the moment he might have been the same Yi who, all those years ago, shot the nine suns out of the sky."[107] The hero we expected no longer exists and the original seriousness in Yi's heroic deed is annihilated.

Situational irony also happens when the scholars in "Taming the Floods" starts to discuss the rumors about Yu rather than figuring out solutions to block the raging flood. In "Anti-Aggression," after Mozi has persuaded Chu against declaring war with Song, he is not treated as a hero, but he is caught in a downpour and then chased away by two patrolmen.

The techniques Lu Xun applied in his re-writings—appropriation, anticlimax, parody and irony—all serve one purpose, the dispelling of seriousness. Appropriation allows different techniques and materials to be alloyed together, and it opens the door for the unfamiliar, foreign elements into the old stories. Anticlimax provides readers with an emotional shock when the story ends unexpectedly, which is one way to notify readers that these stories are only stories, taking

[106] Ibid.
[107] See Lu Xun, "Mending Heaven," *Old Stories Retold*, p.316.

them too seriously would be an unworthy practice. Parody and irony rely on each other to accomplish the task of the dispelling of seriousness.

Even though he overtly claimed he detested facetiousness, everything he did in his stories sustained facetiousness. Therefore, we might question his “detestation” of facetiousness.

CHAPTER 4

RE-WRITING AS A WAY TO CATHARSIS: A COMPARISON OF LU XUN AND GAO XINGJIAN'S RE-WRITING OF *ZHIGUAI* TALES

All higher knowledge is acquired by comparison, and rests on comparison.... He who knows one, knows none.

—Friedrich Max Muller (1872,9-13)

Among the eight stories in *Old Stories Retold*, "Forging the Swords" is the one which Lu Xun admits having written with less facetiousness. The specific material was curiously selected by Lu Xun. Compared to stories like "Mending Heaven," "Taming Floods" and "Flight to the Moon," which are known by almost everyone, this specific story is less famous and widespread. Although he says that he kept the original frame of the story, whether he was faithful to the original text is not our main focus here; instead, we will compare his re-writing of this *zhiguai* tale to the Nobel-winning writer Gao Xingjian's re-writing of another *zhiguai* story in his novel *Soul Mountain*.

Such a comparison will give us to gain a better understanding of Lu Xun's re-writing. With the same genre as their source text, the two different re-writings have been adapted into new contexts.

The original stories which were appropriated in *Old Stories Retold* all belong to pre-Tang tales. Among the different stories, whether myths or historical legends, one specific genre has drawn scholars' attention—the *zhiguai* tale. *Zhiguai* is a vital genre that treats anomalies and strange things. However, in contemporary Chinese literature it has been marginalized. Liu Yeqiu has indicated that some professors when speaking of the history of *xiaoshuo* are unlikely to introduce *zhiguai*.[108] The word "*zhiguai*" can be traced back to *Zhuangzi* 庄子, which says "Qixie is a book which assembles strangeness (*zhiguai* 志怪, 《齐谐者》志怪者也)."[109] *Zhiguai* originally means "assembling and recording strange things," but it gradually became a noun for a specific genre of recorded anomalies and strangeness, the especially supernatural events. *Zhiguai* emerged in the Han Dynasty and thrived during the Six Dynasties (also known as Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties). The introduction and popularization of Buddhism and Daoism in the Six Dynasties nourished the soil for the blooming of *zhiguai* tales. Li Jianguo in *Tangqian zhiguai xiaoshuo shi* (唐前志怪小说史 *A History of Pre-Tang Zhiguai Xiaoshuo*) overtly expresses his disappointment at the undervaluing of *zhiguai*. He rebukes taking *zhiguai* tales merely as superstitions that should be eliminated. He stresses the literary value of *zhiguai* tales, even though *zhiguai* tales mainly record supernatural events and figures, for example, ghosts coming back to life, or stories of monsters, fairies, and deities. He suggests readers view these tales from a different perspective—as texts which reflect the worldview, ontology, lifestyle and psychology of the ancients—and admire the absurdity and creativity in those stories.[110] Regarding the indispensable

[108] See Liu Yeqiu 刘叶秋, "Guxiaoshuo de xintansuo 古小说的新探索", the Preface to *Tang qian zhiguai xiaoshuo shi* 《唐前志怪小说史》(*A History of Pre-Tang Zhiguai Xiaoshuo*), p.2.
[109] See Zhuangzhou, *Zhuangzi* 《庄子》, p.6.
[110] See Li Jianguo 李剑国, *Tang qian zhiguai xiaoshuo shi* 《唐前志怪小说史》 (*A History of Pre-Tang Zhiguai Xiaoshuo*), pp.24-75.

role *zhiguai* played in the building of Chinese communities, Robert F. Campany lists three crucial factors of *zhiguai*.

Beginning with the occasion for creative thought that anomalies can offer us, he argues that Western scholars tend to "overemphasize congruity, conformity, repetition, 'mechanisms,'[111] and the logic of systems," while discrepancy and discord are usually ignored and underappreciated. In this respect, anomalies serve as stimulations for a re-evaluation of knowledge-systems and action patterns. He states that anomalies "provide a lever for intellectual, ideological, and social change.... The concept of anomaly includes some of what falls under the rubric of 'liminality'.... Anomaly is to ideology or worldview what liminality is to ritual. To deal with anomaly is often to enter an arena charged with danger and to engage issues of power."[112] Finally, anomalies, by their alterity, can prompt "individual and collective self-reflection."[113] In the process of human beings constructing their communities, anomalies play a crucial role because, as "otherness," they trigger the negotiation of "resemblances and differences through classificatory, comparative processes."[114]

The original text of "Forging the Swords" is an untitled, short story which Lu Xun collected in *Guxiaoshuogouchen* 古小说钩沉. Because *zhiguai* tales came from street gossip and were preserved mostly through an oral tradition, the author of this specific story is impossible to trace. The earliest recorded collector is Cao Pi.[115] However, his version of *Lieyizhuan* 列异传 was lost during the Song period. Lu Xun's version of *Lieyizhuan* was based on other collections of ancient

[111] See Robert F. Campany, *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China*, p.7.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid. p.8.
[114] Ibid.
[115] "Cao Pi 曹丕, was the first Emperor of the state of Cao Wei and the first son of Cao Cao 曹操. Born in 187 AD and died in 226 AD, Cao Pi was an erudite, talented man. He was interested in supernatural things. In his poem 游仙诗, he expressed his obsession with demons and deities." See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cao_Pi.

xiaoshuo, such as *Taipingguangji* 太平广记, *Beitangshuchao* 北堂书钞, and *Taipingyulan* 太平御览. Lu Xun himself, in the preface to *Guxiaoshuogouchen*, explains that he made the collection as preparation for *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, and that since he was aware of the marginalization of pre-Tang tales, therefore he wanted to save them from disappearing. This is the very reason that this collection was named *Guxiaoshuogouchen* 古小说钩沉 (literary meaning: hooking the sinking ancient fictions up). Lu Xun's preface to *Guxiaoshuogouchen* has not been translated into English, thus I translated it myself:

> *Xiaoshuo* is taken as a "thing that comes from trivial positions" by Ban Gu. He also says: "this is what people with little knowledge make, they are written down to be recorded, but if someone thinks they are accountable, he must be young or vulgar." People with unimportant positions also write *xiaoshuo* to record what they have done, just like the old tradition of "collecting poems," which offers the Emperor a way to know the secular world and to know his achievements and misdeeds. Although *xiaoshuo* belongs to one of the Ten Schools, it is said "there are only nine valuable schools among the ten," and *xiaoshuo* is excluded from the nine valuable schools. There were once fifteen collections of *xiaoshuo*, but now some of them are lost. One can only find some of Shi Qin's *xiaoshuo* in *Dadailiji* (*The Book of Rites of Great Dai* 大戴礼记). In *Zhuangzi*, there are some of Song Xing's fragmented sentences that are incomprehensible. *Xiaoshuo* has a long history, and many schools inherited its tradition. People who talk about *xiaoshuo* still hold old-fashioned opinions. However, using old standards to judge new things is like measuring a young sapling by the seed's criteria. [116]

One can easily sense the suffering of Lu Xun of the marginalization of ancient *xiaoshuo*, including *zhiguai* tales, as one reads the preface to *Guxiaoshuogouchen*. But just as I have mentioned before, this kind of sorrow is accompanied by his hatred of the authoritativeness and seriousness of traditional culture.

Since we now have a better understanding of why *zhiguai* stories are chosen, we might also ask why among all the *zhiguai* tales Lu Xun collected in *Guxiaoshuogouchen*, did he pick this

[116] The original Chinese text is attached in the Appendix below. Because there is no existing translation of the preface to *Guxiaoshuogouchen*, the preface is translated by the author herself, and a complete translation is attached below in the Appendix.

story about revenge? This relates to Lu Xun's opinions about the fatal sickness in Chinese people—"the passion for revenge out of personal reasons and the incapability to revenge for the greater good 勇于私仇，怯于公仇."[117] The motif of revenge is prominent in Lu Xun's fiction. For example, "Revenge 复仇" in *The Grass* 野草 and "The Loner 孤独者" in *Hesitation* 彷徨, both focus on the motif. "Forging the Swords" tells a story about revenge as well, but there are two revengers, in the story, Mei Jianchi and the dark man. This is not Lu Xun's addition, but an element in the original text. The most interesting thing about the original story is that it already has the absurdity of a man with no name (he is simply called "a passer-by" in the original text) who comes to help Chibi (in Lu Xun's version as "Mei Jianchi") finish his revenge. Lu Xun adds a detailed description of the dark man and emphasizes the motif of revenge for revenge's sake. Mei Jianchi wants to avenge his father, while the dark man, strangely enough, helps Mei Jianchi, not to do justice but for pure revenge. When Mei Jianchi askes if the dark man has come to do justice, he replies: "justice, pity—once, these words were pure. Now, they are the debased capital of fiendish usurers. I know nothing of these things. All I seek is revenge on your behalf."[118] Mei Jianchi serves as a fake protagonist, while the dark man is the true hero of this story. Lu Xun admires the concept of "pure revenge," revenge that does not hypocritically crown itself with justification and righteousness. This is perhaps one of the reasons he picked this story among the hundreds he collected.

The story is one of Lu Xun's most bizarre and opaque. Qian Liqun ushers his audience into his lecture on *Old Stories Retold* by clearly indicating the complication of "Forging the Swords." He says that one of his students once came to him for help with the question— "how to understand

[117] Wang Hui 汪晖. *Fan Kang Jue Wan* 《反抗绝望》, p.29.
[118] See Lu Xun, "Forging the Swords," *Old Stories Retold*, p.361.

'Forging the Swords'." The student, who had read all of Lu Xun's works, was surprised by the humor and satiric tone in *Old Stories Retold*. He expressed his admiration for the courage to make fun of "seriousness," as in the open laughter of pedantic scholars in "Taming the Floods" and the sharp mockery of old-fashioned conservatives in "Gathering Ferns." He cannot, however, understand "Forging the Swords" at all.[119] To understand Lu Xun's re-writing of this *zhiguai* tale, we should first compare his re-writing to the original text, then to his previous writings, which might relate and then to other people's re-writing of similar stories.

The original story in *Guxiaoshuogouchen* goes like this:

> 干将莫邪为楚王作剑，三年而成。剑有雄雌，天下名器也，乃以雌剑献君，藏其雄者。谓其妻曰："吾藏剑在南山之阴，北山之阳；松生石上，剑在其中矣。君若觉杀我。尔生男，以告之。"及至君觉，杀干将。妻后生男，名赤鼻，告之。赤鼻斫南山之松，不得剑；忽于屋柱中得之。楚王梦一人，眉广三寸，辞欲报仇。购求甚急，乃逃朱兴山中。遇客，欲为之报；乃刎首，将以奉楚王。客令镬煮之，头三日三夜跳不烂。王往观之，客以雄剑倚拟王，王头堕镬中；客又自刎。三头悉烂，不可分别，分葬之，名曰三王冢。[120]
>
> Moye forged two swords for the King of Chu, a process which took him three years. One of the swords was a female sword and the other a male sword. They soon became famous among the people. Moye offered the female sword to the King, while the male one was kept. He said to his wife: "I have hidden the male sword at the northern side of the South Mountain, on the stone which grows in a pine tree. If the King kills me, thou shall tell our unborn son and give him the sword." Later, the King wanted to kill Moye, as Moye once said. His wife did what Moye told her. She gave the sword to their son, *Chibi* (red nose). The son chops the pine tree off South Mountain off, but the sword has disappeared. He then returns, and surprisingly, the sword is in Chibi's house. That is how he gets the sword. The King of Chu dreamed of a man with eyebrows three *Chi*[121] wide, who said that he would make the King pay his debt by finishing his life. The King wakes up and puts the man from his dream on the wanted list. Chibi then flees to the Zhuxing Mountain. A passer-by wants to avenge Moye. He asks for Chibi's head in order to complete the mission. When he gets Chibi's head, he offers the head to the King. Then he tells the King to boil the head in a pot, so the King does what he was told. Strangely enough, the head keeps dancing in the pot for the next three days without being damaged. When the King, curiously,

[119] See Qian Liqun 钱理群, *Lu Xun zuopin shiwu jiang* 鲁迅作品十五讲 (*Fifteen Lectures on Lu Xun's works*), p. 135.
[120] See Lieyizhuan 列异传, Guxiaoshuogouchen 古小说钩沉, pp.134-135.
[121] Chi 尺, a Chinese measurement. One Chi equals about 13.12 inches.

> approaches the pot to check the magic head, the man, holding the male sword in his hand, is waiting for the right moment. Once the King gets close to the pot-side, he beheads the King with the male sword and the head falls into the pot. He beheads himself at the same time. Hereafter, the three heads rot together. Because the heads are not recognizable, people buried the three heads together and call the grave "The Tomb of Three Kings."[122]

One should notice that the original story does not focus on the passer-by's description, while in Lu Xun's re-writing, the passer-by, who is named the dark man, is highlighted. The entrance of the dark man, when Mei Jianchi was chased by the King's man, is very impressive, with mysterious and enchanting descriptions:

> "Flee, Mei Jianchi! The king is after you!" he hooted, like an owl.
>
> Seized by trembling, Mei Jianchi strode off with him as if bewitched; soon, they began to run like the wind. When he stopped to catch his breath, he realized that he had reached the edge of the fir-tree wood. Far behind him lay the silver rays of the rising moon. In front, the stranger's eyes gleamed phosphorescently in the darkness. [123]

The description of the dark man in the re-writing is far more detailed than in the original, and one might note that the reason the dark man would like to help Mei Jianchi complete his vengeance is not explained in the old text. In Lu Xun's re-writing, the dark man's motivation is implicitly expressed by himself, who says he wants no justice and pity, because those are just the debased capital of fiendish usurers. All he seeks is revenge on Mei Jianchi's behalf. Even if he doesn't know Mei Jianchi, just on hearing Mei Jianchi's story, the dark man decides to avenge Mei Jianchi's father, because he is revenge itself: "Everyone saw, at close quarters, that he was indeed dressed in blue[124] clothes, with his beard, eyebrows and hair were black; that he was so thin his cheekbones, eye sockets and brow bone jutted out."[125] There is actually a photo of Lu Xun where he resembles the dark man with black cloth, black hair and jotted cheekbones. There is no

[122] Because there is no existing English translation of the story, the translation is offered by the author herself. The translation is also attached below in the Appendix
[123] See Lu Xun, "Forging the Swords," *Old Stories Retold*, pp.360-361.
[124] A Chinese blue robe is mostly in dark blue, which resembles black.
[125]Ibid, p.364.

evidence, though, showing that Lu Xun took himself as the prototype of the dark man. In some ways, the dark man represents Lu Xun's attitude about revenge, in that he despised the beautification of revenge in the name of justice. What he liked is a simpler, purer action without any justification and whitewashing—revenge itself. Furthermore, "spectators" (看客) are highlighted as well in "Forging the Swords."

The "spectators" are a specific type of people in Lu Xun's work, those people who would stretch their necks long when tragedies happen; who would step on carcasses, declaring triumph, who would take a funeral as their carnival. Such are the spectators in Lu Xun's work. They are the dark side of the crowd. In "New Year's Sacrifice," they push Xianglin's wife to her grave with their "comments" and when Xianglin's wife is forced to re-marry a man she does not love, they tell her to tolerate the man. The life they once promised Xiangling's wife never comes, and they start to call her "crazy woman." After Xianglin's wife's death, their lives go on as if nothing has happened. With the sound of the raucous blaze of firecrackers, in the yellow flame of the lamp, the happy little town and its people are all in great peace and happiness. They prepare to welcome the new year with Xianglin's wife as the sacrifice for it, and the process of the sacrifice as their carnival. In "Revenge," they stay far away, expecting a killing between the two people with knives. Soon they begin to feel bored and leave one by one. In "Forging the Swords," they are the mass in the lively city who turn 'the king's grand exit 大奔丧'[126] into their own carnival, and the carnivalization of the grand exit dispels the seriousness of the original story as well. Lu Xun explicitly expressed his hatred of the "spectators" in the preface to *Outcry*, where he says: "However rude a nation was in physical health, if its people were intellectually feeble, they would

[126] See Lu Xun, "Forging the Swords," *Old Stories Retold*, p.371.

never become anything other than cannon fodder or gawping spectators, their loss to the world through illness no cause for regret."[127]

Lu Xun's re-writing of this bizarre *zhiguai* story refreshes the old tale with new concepts and perspectives. Rather than being an absurd story about revenge, Lu Xun makes it more coherent and endorses it with a deeper, more complicated motif—pure revenge. By creating the dark man, in contrast to Mei Jianchi's indecisiveness, as a determined revenger who would give his own life for pure revenge, Lu Xun managed to intensify the story, making it more thought-provoking, and in a way extending the lifespan of the old story. The old story serves as a frame, new story which is a medium for the author's opinions and ideas. Thus, the concept of pure revenge, which is hard to grasp, is one of the reasons for the story's opaqueness and incomprehensibility.

It is easy to see the difference between Lu Xun's re-writing and Gao's re-writing of a *zhiguai* tale. Lu Xun's story is more stylish, while Gao's is less radically re-written.

The original text of Gao's re-writing comes from *Mingxiag Ji* 冥祥记. This volume of *zhiguai* stories was also included in *Guxiaoshuogouchen* 古小说钩沉. *Mingxiang Ji* 冥祥记 was written by Wang Yan 王琰 in the Qi-Liang Period 齐梁时期. It is said that Buddhism grew in influence and its position was elevated in the Southern Dynasty. The increase of more stories pertaining to Buddhism in *zhiguai xiaoshuo* also mirrored the great influence of Buddhism during the Southern Dynasty. The story Gao picked from *Mingxiang Ji* 冥祥记 is a *zhiguai xiaoshuo* pertaining to Buddhism.

> 晋大司马桓温，末年颇奉佛法，饭馔僧尼。有一比丘尼，失其名，来自远方，投温为檀越尼。才行不恒，温甚敬待，居之门内。尼每浴，必至移时。温疑而窥之：见尼裸身挥刀，破腹出脏，断截身首，支分脔切。温怪骇而还。及至尼出浴室，身形

[127] See Lu Xun, the Preface to *Outcry*, p.17.

如常。温以实问。尼答云：“若遂淩君上，刑当如之。”时温方谋问鼎，闻之怅然。故以戒惧，终守臣节。尼后解去，不知所在。[128]

In the Jin Dynasty, Hengwen, the Grand Marshall converted to Buddhism in his late years, and he always treated monks and nuns with meals. One time a Bhikkhuni nun[129] who lost her dharma name came to Hengwen seeking alms and was given the dharma name Tanyue. She was allowed to live under Hengwen's protection because of her righteousness, which Hengwen admired with respect. However, she always took a bath at noon, which roused Hengwen's curiosity. One time, he peeked into the bathroom. He saw the nun, naked, holding a sword toward her belly, and she cut her belly open, with her bowels out. Then she cut her feet and hands off, but later she came out of the bathroom as if nothing happened. Hengwen asked her what happened and she said: "If you dare to overwhelm the king, your penalty will be like that." Hengwen was about to usurp the king at that time. On hearing this, he threw away his ambition and behaved according to principle. Later the nun disappears, but no one knows where she went. [130]

Gao didn't alter or add much new content, nor did he try to dispel anything in the original story or make it a weapon to convey his ideas, as Lu Xun did, but he did add some details to the story. The most noticeable addition is the description of the nun's revitalized face and her charming body, which in the original story is described as merely "naked."

Her face is totally transformed, it is radiant and she has white teeth, pink cheeks and a jade-white neck, smooth shoulders and plump arms—a veritable beauty. He hurries away and returns to the hall in an attempt to compose himself...

But the sound of splashing water from her room continues, enticing him to have another look, so going back along the corridor he creeps stealthily to the door. Again, with bated breath, he goes up to the crack in the door and sees her delicate outstretched fingers rubbing her full breasts, which are white like snow and each adorned with a budding cherry flower. Her wet flesh is heaving and the line of life runs down from her navel. The Grand Marshall goes down on his knees and is transfixed.[131]

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[128] See *Mingxiang Ji* 冥祥记, *Guxiaoshuogouchen* 古小说钩沉, p.472.

[129] A bhikkhunī (Pali) or bhikṣuṇī (Sanskrit) is a fully ordained female monastic in Buddhism. Male monastics are called bhikkhus. Both bhikkhunis and bhikkhus live by the Vinaya, a set of rules. Until recently, the lineages of female monastics only remained in MahayanaBuddhism and thus are prevalent in countries such as China, Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam but a few women have taken the full monastic vows in the Theravada and Vajrayana schools over the last decade. From conservative perspectives, none of the contemporary bhikkuni ordinations are valid. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhikkhun%C4%AB.

[130] Because there is no existing English translation of the story, the translation is offered by the author herself. The translation is also attached below in the Appendix.

[131] See Gao Xingjian, *Soul Mountain*, p.283.

Gao's of this specific zhiguai story focuses on the story itself, compared to Lu Xun's re-writing, and his re-writing is shorter, with less additions and alterations. The protagonist You's monologue at the end of this chapter in Soul Mountain might provide us with some clues about what the purpose of this specific story is. Gao writes:

> The Grand Marshall protagonist of the story has a name and surname so a great deal of textual research, examining historical texts and old books, could be carried out. But as you are not a historian, don't have political aspirations, and certainly neither wish to become an expert in Buddhism, nor to preach religion, nor to become a paragon of virtue, what appeals to you is the superb purity of the story. Any explanation is irrelevant, you simply wanted to retell it in the spoken language. [132]

The pursuit is just to tell the story for the story's sake. Here, Gao indicated a tendency of ossification that people read stories with the presumption that they have a didactic purpose. Stories can merely be stories, just as revenge doesn't need any justification. "Purity" is something both Lu Xun and Gao pursued in their re-writings. Furthermore, Gao also addressed in his famous article, "Wenxue yu xuanxue 文学与玄学" ("Literature and Metaphysics"), the fact that xiaoshuo is a very general concept which includes geographical records, anomaly records (zhiguai), myths, allegories, historical legends, zhanghui[133], and biji.[134]

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[132] Ibid, p.285.

[133] *Zhanghui* 章回, a type of fiction derived from monologue story-telling. It is characterized by the form of Zhang 章 (chapters). *The Romance of Three Kingdoms 三国演义* and *Water Margin 水浒传* are typical works of *Zhanghui xiaoshuo*. See https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E7%AB%A0%E5%9B%9E%E5%B0%8F%E8%AA%AA.

[134] *biji* 笔记, is a genre in classical Chinese literature. It roughly translates as "notebook." A book of biji can contain anecdotes, quotations, random musings, philological speculations, literary criticism and indeed everything that the author deems worth recording. The genre first appeared during the Wei and Jin dynasties, and matured during the Tang Dynasty. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biji_(Chinese_literature).

EPILOGUE

The past is not something that can be abandoned so easily. More importantly, one's past has been written down in one's genes and has become an indispensable part of oneself. Trying to block the past or fully forget it will cause one damage beyond imagination. Lu Xun suffered from the trauma caused by the rupture between the past and the present, therefore he was constantly haunted, as he has mentioned in his essays, by the ghost of the past. In the preface to Outcry, he indicates: "My trouble is, though, that I find myself unable to forget, or at least unable to forget entirely."[135] The intention to fully forget one's past is caused by the urgent need to deny one's own identity. The situation was what literary people faced when the westernization trend was sweeping like a tornado. Lu Xun was struggling with his own past in *Outcry* and *Hesitation*, where he tried to forget his personal past in its entirety but failed. In *Old Stories Retold*, though, we see a different attitude, which did not try to forget, but instead turned the urgent need for denial into a writing style—facetiousness. Zhang and Black, in "Fiction and Forbidden Memory," hold that: "fiction provides the author with a way out of a descent into the depths of the past, which the narrator feels the need neither to justify nor to repent for, but which compels him to reconcile with himself." [136]

Old Stories Retold is such a work, in which Lu Xun reconciled himself with his own past and, more importantly, the Chinese past. The way he found for reconciliation was by experiencing cathartic moments when he re-wrote. It is a valuable and noteworthy work, and yet has been

[135] See Lu Xun, the Preface to *Outcry*, p.15.
[136] See Zhang Yinde, and Michael Black. "Gao Xingjian: Fiction and Forbidden Memory." *China Perspectives*, Jan. 2010, p.32.

underappreciated for a long time because of Lu Xun's ambiguous attitude and the complexity of the work. Retelling classic stories in the form of fiction allows writers to soak in the lake of past without sinking. Old stories are the threads to the past, and re-telling them allows readers to enter a new era, a brand-new area where the past will not be extinguished, and new life will be endowed.

In conclusion, Lu Xun managed to find a way to catharsis in *Old Stories Retold*, where he, for the first time, directly faced the haunting Chinese past and attempted to find a proper way to let his ambivalent feelings open up to the public. Eventually he succeeded in dispelling the seriousness, a process he called "facetiousness," as his way to catharsis. *Old Stories Retold* should be re-evaluated because it opens a door for us to understand the suffering and trauma of people in Lu Xun's time—a time when numerous people were shaken by fast changing norms, both in literature and society. These rapid changes also caused the later emergence of "xungen wenxue (root-finding literature)."[137] Lu Xun's *Old Stories Retold* is one of the earliest works created out of the trauma of modernization.

Moreover, Lu Xun applied various literary techniques in this collection. As we've seen, he used appropriation, anticlimax, parody, and irony in his re-writings. These techniques were ways to facetiousness, and facetiousness directly led to cathartic moments in those new stories. They demonstrate the high-quality of Lu Xun's writings, so that *Old Stories Retold* should not be regarded as an example of the decaying of Lu Xun's writing talent. On the contrary, it should be considered a crucial work, which took Lu Xun's writings a step further.

We've long considered Lu Xun as a revolutionary, a thinker, a philosopher rather than a writer. As a revolutionary, Lu Xun was supposed to waken his numb compatriot, for this was his

[137] See Andrew Stuckey, *Old Stories Retold: Narrative and Vanishing Pasts in Modern China*, part I, section 2, "Return to the Primitive: De-Civilized Origins in Han Shaogong's Fiction."

established duty. In fact, Lu Xun seemed quite frightened by the possibly strong advocacy in his writings; therefore, he asked people not to take him as a hero who would like to gather allies by uttering battle-cries. We contemporary readers might as well enjoy his fiction without judging how much work he had done for the society through his writings. We should understand that "writer" was the most pivotal role in his career among so many titles, and a writer writes for different purposes. *Old Stories Retold*. is a great work through which Lu Xun dove deep into the Chinese past and embraced what once haunted him and through this process experienced genuine catharsis from his own writing. This process does not seek agreement and applause, because it is a path toward self-reconciliation.

APPENDIX

小说者，班固以为“出于稗官,”“闾里小知者之所及，亦使缀而不忘，如或一言可采，此亦刍荛狂夫之议”。是则稗官职志，将同古“采诗之官，王者所以观风俗知得失”矣。顾其条最诸子，判列十家，复以为“可观者九,”而小说不与；所录十五家，今又散失。惟《大戴礼》引有青史氏之记，《庄子》举宋钘之言，孤文断句，更不能推见其旨。去古既远，流裔弥繁，然论者尚墨守故言，此其持萌芽以度柯叶乎！

余少喜披览古说，或见讹舛，则取证类书，偶会逸文，辄亦写出。虽丛残多失次第，而涯略故在。大共琐语支言，史官末学，神鬼精物，数术波流；真人福地，神仙之中弸，幽验冥征，释氏之下乘。人间小书，致远恐泥，而洪笔晚起，此其权舆。况乃录自里巷，为国人所白心；出于造作，则思士之结想。心行曼衍，自生此品，其在文林，有如舜华，足以丽尔文明，点缀幽独，盖不第为广视听之具而止。然论者尚墨守故言。惜此旧籍，弥益零落，又虑后此闲暇者尠，爰更比辑，并校定昔人集本，合得如干种，名曰《古小说钩沉》。

Xiaoshuo is taken as a “thing that comes from trivial positions" by Ban Gu. He also says: “this is what people with little knowledge make, they are written down to be recorded, but if someone thinks they are accountable, he must be young or vulgar.” People with unimportant positions also write *xiaoshuo* to record what they have done, just like the old tradition of “collecting poems,” which offers the Emperor a way to know the secular world and to know his achievements and misdeeds. Although *xiaoshuo* belongs to one of the Ten Schools, it is said “there are only nine valuable schools among the ten,” and *xiaoshuo* is excluded from the nine valuable

schools. There were once fifteen collections of *xiaoshuo*, but now some of them are lost. One can only find some of Shi Qin's *xiaoshuo* in *Dadailiji* (*The Book of Rites of Great Dai* 大戴礼记). In *Zhuangzi*, there are some of Song Xing's fragmented sentences that are incomprehensible. *Xiaoshuo* has a long history, and many schools inherited its tradition. People who talk about *xiaoshuo* still hold old-fashioned opinions. However, using old standards to judge new things is like measuring a young sapling by the seed's criteria.

I liked reading ancient texts when I was a child. When I found seemingly false-recorded content, I would check the credibility of other books to make additions for missed sentences. Because most of them are incomplete, the order of the sentences in those texts is not perfectly arranged, yet the meaning is roughly conveyed to the reader. The contents are mostly about trivial disciplines in history; deities, demons and fairies; metaphysical stories pertaining to Wu-Xing theory 五行; immortals and blessed places; transportation tools of the immortals; insightful stories. The trivial position and the late emergence of *xiaoshuo* in the history of Chinese literature were its barriers and limitations; however, by collecting ordinary people's thoughts, assembling elites' ideas, it is indeed a precious genre in Chinese literature. Like a blooming flower, it decorates Chinese culture. Some people still hold biased opinions toward this genre. Alas, I feel the bitterness, seeing these precious ancient stories perish in history. Because my spare time will be less in the future, I collect stories from previous books and correct some of them in order to finish this compilation which I have named "*Guxiaoshuogouchen* 古小说钩沉"(Hooking the sinking ones in the ancient novels).

晋大司马桓温，末年颇奉佛法，饭馔僧尼。有一比丘尼，失其名，来自远方，投温为檀越尼。才行不恒，温甚敬待，居之门内。尼每浴，必至移时。温疑而窥之：见尼裸身挥刀，破腹出脏，断截身首，支分脔切。温怪骇而还。及至尼出浴室，身形如常。温以实问。尼答云：“若遂凌君上，刑当如之。”时温方谋问鼎，闻之怅然。故以戒惧，终守臣节。尼后解去，不知所在。

In the Jin Dynasty, Hengwen, the Grand Marshall converted to Buddhism in his late years, and he always treated monks and nuns with meals. One time a Bhikkhuni nun who lost her dharma name came to Hengwen seeking alms and was given the dharma name Tanyue. She was allowed to live under Hengwen‘s protection because of her righteousness, which Hengwen admired with respect. However, she always took a bath at noon, which roused Hengwen’s curiosity. One time, he peeked into the bathroom. He saw the nun, naked, holding a sword toward her belly, and she cut her belly open, with her bowels out. Then she cut her feet and hands off, but later she came out of the bathroom as if nothing happened. Hengwen asked her what happened and she said: “If you dare to overwhelm the king, your penalty will be like that.” Hengwen was about to usurp the king at that time. On hearing this, he threw away his ambition and behaved according to principle. Later the nun disappears, but no one knows where she went.

干将莫邪为楚王作剑，三年而成。剑有雄雌，天下名器也，乃以雌剑献君，藏其雄者。谓其妻曰：“吾藏剑在南山之阴，北山之阳；松生石上，剑在其中矣。君若觉杀我。尔生男，以告之。”及至君觉，杀干将。妻后生男，名赤鼻，告之。赤鼻斫南山之松，不得剑；忽于屋柱中得之。楚王梦一人，眉广三寸，辞欲报仇。购求甚急，乃逃朱兴山中。

遇客，欲为之报；乃刎首，将以奉楚王。客令镬煮之，头三日三夜跳不烂。王往观之，客以雄剑倚拟王，王头堕镬中；客又自刎。三头悉烂，不可分别，分葬之，名曰三王冢。

Moye forged two swords for the King of Chu, a process which took him three years. One of the swords was a female sword and the other a male sword. They soon became famous among the people. Moye offered the female sword to the King, while the male one was kept. He said to his wife: "I have hidden the male sword at the northern side of the South Mountain, on the stone which grows in a pine tree. If the King kills me, thou shall tell our unborn son and give him the sword." Later, the King wanted to kill Moye, as Moye once said. His wife did what Moye told her. She gave the sword to their son, *Chibi* (red nose). The son chops the pine tree off South Mountain off, but the sword has disappeared. He then returns, and surprisingly, the sword is in Chibi's house. That is how he gets the sword. The King of Chu dreamed of a man with eyebrows three *Chi*[138] wide, who said that he would make the King pay his debt by finishing his life. The King wakes up and puts the man from his dream on the wanted list. Chibi then flees to the Zhuxing Mountain. A passer-by wants to avenge Moye. He asks for Chibi's head in order to complete the mission. When he gets Chibi's head, he offers the head to the King. Then he tells the King to boil the head in a pot, so the King does what he was told. Strangely enough, the head keeps dancing in the pot for the next three days without being damaged. When the King, curiously, approaches the pot to check the magic head, the man, holding the male sword in his hand, is waiting for the right moment. Once the King gets close to the pot-side, he beheads the King with the male sword and the head falls into the pot. He beheads himself at the same time. Hereafter, the three heads rot together.

[138] Chi 尺, a Chinese measurement. One Chi equals about 13.12 inches.

Because the heads are not recognizable, people buried the three heads together and call the grave "The Tomb of Three Kings."

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