Introduction

History, or What Remains in the Present

Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present.

Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*

I am well aware that the past has already passed and that there is no way to chase after ghosts and spirits. Yet one cannot break with the past so absolutely. I still want to gather the remains, build small, new graves, burying and memorializing at once.

Lu Xun, Preface to *Graves*

Political canonization can have bizarre consequences for a writer’s literary afterlife: key aspects of his works that contradict official narratives may be elided; some of the writer’s most outstanding attributes may be overlooked. Lu Xun—the pen name by which Zhou Shuren (1881–1936) is known—is a case in point. In spite of his affinity for darkness and images of death, Lu Xun, the “soul of the nation,” has often been appropriated as a symbol of light. Since his death, he has been lionized by the Chinese Communist Party as a revolutionary hero par excellence. In the annals of literary history, he has been depicted as the quintessential embodiment of May Fourth iconoclasm and a pioneer of the New Culture movement. During the inception of the movement, usually dated to 1915 with the founding of the progressive journal *Youth Magazine* (*Qingnian zazhi*), new-style intellectuals called for a radical break with tradition and the abolition of classical language (*wenyan*) and literary forms; in their stead, they promoted a new literature written in the vernacular (*baihua*) that would pave the way for a cultural renaissance. As the prevailing literary history would have it, these
developments led to the birth of “Modern Chinese Literature,” Lu Xun its acknowledged forefather with the publication of his first vernacular short story, “Madman’s Diary” (Kuangren riji, 1918).

This version of literary history—which views the modern as a radical break from the past—and the narratives informed by it, however, often obscure what are arguably Lu Xun’s most remarkable contributions as a writer: he was one of the most astute critics of the process of modernization, as well as a radical innovator who actively transformed traditional forms, styles, and conventions in his “modern” literary works. His creative writings—eclectic fusions of indigenous and foreign conventions, plagued by contradictions and uncertainties—simultaneously represent and replicate China’s tumultuous encounter with the larger world in the early twentieth century, both in content and in form. Indeed, the ambiguity that lies at the heart of Lu Xun’s literary experiments captures an aspect of Chinese modernity that most haunted him—that is, as a fundamentally alienating and traumatic process of cultural disintegration.

Lu Xun’s ruminations on cultural devastation were inextricably linked to the cataclysmic transformations of his time. The period spanning from his birth in 1881 to his prime adult years coincided with the turbulent last decades of the Qing empire. The toppling of the last imperial dynasty in 1911 by a series of revolutionary insurrections was abetted by a process that can well be described as a self-implosion. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, the Qing government was confronted with natural catastrophes and uprisings of unprecedented scale, including the Taiping (1851–1864) and the Boxer (1899–1901) rebellions. The empire, successively defeated in conflicts with foreign colonial powers beginning with the First Opium War (1839–1842), signed a series of unequal treaties, paying indemnities and ceding territories to the victors. The institution of a new Republican government in 1912 did little to stem the tide; a country already fractured by colonial “spheres of influence” disintegrated into warlordism.

Repeated incursions from foreign powers brought the larger world outside to the forefront of Chinese attention. A blossoming curiosity about the West and Japan, by then a de facto Western power, emerged in intellectual circles beginning in the late Qing. Students embarked on overseas studies in unprecedented numbers, translations of foreign works proliferated on the literary scene, and foreign ideas, texts, and technology were imported on a large scale, creating a vibrant period of cultural
exchange and experimentation. This cultural ferment, however, was also accompanied by the destruction of fundamental elements of traditional culture, a complex process that came to define Chinese modernity.

As Edward Said has observed, the fight for territory often involves a contestation in the realm of culture and representation. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the image of China as "the sick man of Asia" (dongya bingfu) on the verge of extinction, a by-product of missionary and social evolutionary discourse influential at the time, captured the global imagination. Imported to China, this image left a searing impression. Keenly aware of the need for reform, some intellectuals began to recast tradition, turning former marks of civility into symbols of barbarity. Among the metaphors Lu Xun deployed in hopes of inspiring critical reflection and spurring cultural reform: Chinese civilization, as a hermetically sealed iron house, slowly suffocating its sleeping inhabitants to death; Chinese history, as an ongoing cannibalistic banquet, feasting on the flesh of its own people.

Yet, in spite of Lu Xun’s iconoclastic rhetoric, certain elements of tradition continued to serve as sources of personal inspiration, albeit at times troubling ones, structuring his worldview as an intellectual and informing his sensibilities as a writer. Conventional literary histories, however, often cast Lu Xun in the mold of a “radical iconoclast” who vehemently rejected traditional culture, a view that has dominated scholarly criticism on the stories collected in Call to Arms (Nahan, 1923) and Hesitation (Panghuang, 1926). With few exceptions, traditional literary and aesthetic influences on Lu Xun’s short stories, if mentioned at all, are treated in a cursory manner. Studies that explicitly address Lu Xun’s ties to traditional culture have largely confined themselves to his scholarly writings on traditional literature or his poems and compositions in classical Chinese.

Lin Yusheng’s influential work astutely notes a central tension in Lu Xun’s writings—between his wholesale rejection of tradition and commitment to certain traditional values. He concludes that Lu Xun’s inability to resolve this tension ultimately prevented him from embarking on a transformative interpretation of Chinese tradition. I argue, however, that the scholarly propensity to reify the notions of “tradition” and “modernity” and to compartmentalize Lu Xun’s interest in tradition have, in part, contributed to the obscuring of his radically transformative engagement with traditional literature in his creative fiction and essays. These occlusions may be the result of interpretive frameworks that reveal
how much we, as scholars and readers, remain captive to the spell of a teleological narrative of history, a spell that I show Lu Xun consciously tried to break.

_Literary Remains: Death, Trauma, and Lu Xun’s Refusal to Mourn_ examines how Lu Xun’s literary encounter with the modern involved a sustained engagement with the past.11 His creative writings—fragmented, disjointed, and sometimes bizarrely incoherent in nature—eschew the framework of a totalizing narrative and resist linear plotlines. His stories often unfold in flashback, dwell insistently on the past, and conclude without resolution. Filled with images of death and decay, his writings are records of a culture in the midst of disintegration,12 represented through a transformative engagement with the forms, styles, and conventions of traditional literature by means of allusion, imitation, adaptation, and parody. Lu Xun’s literary experiments illustrate how traditional cultural resources continued to provide an illuminating lens for contextualizing and assessing the predicaments of the modern world.

In his seminal work _Voices from the Iron House_, Leo Ou-fan Lee observes that Lu Xun transcended “traditional Chinese influences, while consciously borrowing from Western literary models.”13 Building on his insights, I examine more extensively the ways in which Lu Xun engaged the form and content of traditional literature in his creative oeuvre. His eclectic fusion of native and foreign sources result in the aesthetically innovative, if at times puzzling and uneven, nature of his creative works, reflecting and reenacting the awkward encounter between tradition and the modern in literary terms. His writings provide a platform through which the tensions and contradictions between the traditional and the modern are played out, often to no seeming resolution. In spite of the grim tone of his writings, however, Lu Xun’s insistence on confronting the messy intertwining of past and present suggests that only through an informed engagement with tradition can one hope to overcome its power and harness it as a means of understanding the present; at the same time, it is the act of fully confronting the present—without indulging in nostalgic memories of the past or utopic visions of the future—that holds the possibility of change and transcendence. This possibility of transcendence, however remote, imparts glimmers of illumination to Lu Xun’s otherwise bleak literary world.

In examining the dialogical interplay between the past and the present in Lu Xun’s writings, this book attempts to overcome the artificial
divide between the “modern” and “premodern” that has long defined Chinese studies. It aims to open up a critical space in which Lu Xun’s literary engagements can be viewed as active responses to the cultural developments of his time—from the ebbing tide of a traditional literati order and the influx of foreign representational forms, to the increasing commercialization of the literary field. Readings of Lu Xun’s works as critiques of national character and manifestations of a crisis of consciousness have served well to illuminate aspects of his thought and writing.14 There remains, however, a relative dearth of scholarship examining his works as reflections on and critical responses to the process of cultural transformation and disintegration. Lurking behind the deep-seated ambiguity characteristic of his creative writings are larger questions on cultural exchange, accommodation, and transformation which he grappled with as a writer and intellectual: How can a culture estranged from its vanishing traditions come to terms with its past? How can a culture, severed from its traditions and alienated from the foreign conventions it attempts to appropriate, conceptualize its own present and future?15

In this sense, Lu Xun’s view of culture resonates with the stance of Theodor Adorno (1903–1969).16 Unlike his New Culture peers who rejected the relevance of tradition and heralded its demise, Lu Xun seems to have held, like Adorno, the belief that “one must have tradition in oneself, to hate it properly.”17 Neil Lazarus’ explication of Adorno is particularly poignant and relevant to understanding Lu Xun’s relationship with the past: “‘hating tradition properly’ in fact represents a uniquely illuminating and enabling rubric under which to think in a politically engaged fashion about intellectual and cultural practice.”18 While the presumption of “cultural privilege is a sine qua non of criticism, the critic’s task ought to be to use this privilege against culture, to de-fetishize culture by way of puncturing its elitist pretensions.”19 To hate tradition properly “indicates that it is not enough merely to hate it thoroughly” but “rather to mobilize its own protocols, procedures, and interior logic against it—to demonstrate that it is only on the basis of a project that exceeds its own horizons or self-consciousness that tradition can possibly be imagined redeeming its own pledges.”20 The reconfiguration of “tradition,” as critics have noted, is a decidedly “modern” phenomenon. As such, renegotiating the past and rethinking tradition are at heart means of conceptualizing the parameters of the modern. Adorno’s statement, then, must also be understood as meaning “to hate modernity
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properly,” for, as Lazarus observes, “the de facto referent of Adorno’s injunction to hate tradition properly is not the pre-modern world but that of capitalist modernity.”

Indeed, as Lu Xun emerged as a prominent literary figure in the mid-1920s, he became increasingly critical of the new literary trends that came on the heels of the New Culture movement. He challenged reductive uses of the categories of “traditional” and “modern” by exposing the ways in which the two are mutually imbricated: the most pernicious aspects of tradition continued to be transmitted in “foreign” guises, while new cultural practices set up systems of hierarchy and oppression that operated in a manner not dissimilar to the traditional conventions that new-style intellectuals sought to overthrow. Lu Xun was also disturbed by the increasing commercialization of the literary field, in which a “literature and art of concealment and deceit” that pandered to readers’ desires for cathartic and harmonious narratives proliferated, numbing writers and readers alike to the grim realities around them and eroding their capacities for critical thought.

Marston Anderson and Theodore Huters’ analyses have brilliantly shown how Lu Xun’s use of an unreliable narrator and contradictory narrative frames reveals his misgivings over the act of writing itself—that is, his awareness of the limitations of writing as a catalyst for reform and his suspicion that his narratives served little purpose other than to replicate injustices in second-order form. Building on their work, I show how Lu Xun initiated a self-conscious mode of writing that simultaneously affirms the value of critical engagement even as it exposes the limits of representation. He plays with the conventions of traditional historiography and new narratives of nationhood to challenge the idea of textual authority and reveal the inner workings of elite culture. At the heart of his modernist enterprise lie deeper reflections on the ethics of relationality, representation, and cultural exchange that question notions of subjectivity, authority, and the power of representational forms. Lu Xun’s textual reordering of the world—often portrayed as nonsensical, chaotic, and sadly unjust—represents an ethical urge to rethink conceptions of the world derived through linear narratives that legitimize paradigms of power and domination rather than challenge them. What appear to be narratives of incoherence, contradictions, and uncertainty can be seen instead as a rejection of communally sanctioned ways of meaning-making, a refusal to apprehend the world through teleological notions of
history, which opens up imaginative possibilities of comprehending the past and present without necessarily reifying them.

Given Lu Xun’s tortured reflections, it seems only fitting that the writer/“hero” of his first vernacular short story, “Madman’s Diary,” published in *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian*) in 1918, would assume the split subjectivity of a paranoid madman. The madman’s discovery that Chinese history is composed of a series of cannibalistic acts is intertwined with the horrifying revelation that he himself may have unwittingly participated in such feasts. His recognition of his complicity in a culture he condemns leads to an epiphany— aspiring to a subjective position free from the clutches of a tradition that defines one’s very being was, at heart, a gesture of futility. As a metaphor for new literature, the madman’s fragmented diary—undated and marked by gaps, missing information, and filled with musings not entirely intelligible to its readers—underscores the limits of representation and captures the dilemma of writers forced to renounce tradition while still firmly under its binding spell. The epistemological crisis that Lu Xun suffered as a writer must have felt at times like a form of utter lunacy, one that could only be (in)adequately captured through the disjointed account of a frenzied madman—later canonized as the hero of the first modern Chinese short story.

Yet, while the madman protagonist, the competing narrative frames of the preface and the text, and the ambiguous ending of the story all convey a sense of uncertainty, this uncertainty is also fraught with possibilities. Curiously, despite the many readings the story has generated, critics rarely point out that the moment of enlightenment that appears in this foundational “modern” text comes about only after the madman’s rigorous grappling with the ancient classics. Readings of “Madman’s Diary” as Lu Xun’s wholesale indictment of a cannibalistic traditional culture miss the madman’s key insight that the haunting presence of the past must somehow be dealt with in the present, both for the lessons it imparts and as sites of illumination.

In this sense, Lu Xun’s stance toward history resonates with that of Walter Benjamin (1892–1940). In his “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Benjamin explicitly challenges modernist notions that view history as a linear chain of events on a teleological continuum, highlighting instead the catastrophe that comes with “progress.”24 To Benjamin, the task of the historian is not to recover a reified past, but to “brush history against the grain,” re-constellate its fragments, and engage it in a dialogic
encounter with the present. "By wrenching elements of everyday life [here I would add and history] from their original contexts and rearranging them in a new constellation," writes Richard Wolin, "Benjamin hoped to divest them of their familiarity and thereby stir the reader from a state of passivity into an active critical stance."  

So too might we read Lu Xun’s refusal to mourn the passing of tradition and his insistent rearticulation of its fragments. While he may have felt powerless at times in the face of the destruction wreaked by “progress,” he nonetheless found a constructive means of dealing with the violence that is history. As the epigraph from the preface to Graves suggests, Lu Xun can be seen as a solitary wanderer paying vigil at the site of destruction; he sifts through the debris, building new graves and composing epitaphs to mark both the presence and absence of that which has gone before and will soon come to pass. In the rubble of the remains, he recovers precious gems of illumination, giving him a unique vantage point through which to assess, critique, and transform the present. In the case of “Madman’s Diary,” it is the recognition of how the present is enmeshed in the past that brings forth an epiphany and a sense of hope, however remote: of the possibility of a new world where children would be freed from a tyrannized existence.

Since Lu Xun has been the subject of numerous biographical studies, my book focuses on the nature of his literary experiments and the historical circumstances that engendered them. In particular, I examine the five collections that Lu Xun himself designated as representative of his creative work: the short stories, essays, plays, poems, memoirs, and reworkings of old tales and fables in Call to Arms, Hesitation, Wild Grass (Yecao, 1927), Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk (Zhao hua xi shi, 1928), and Old Tales Retold (Gushi xin bian, 1936). Since many studies have examined his engagement with foreign works and criticism of tradition, I concentrate more, though not exclusively, on Lu Xun’s experimental use of traditional conventions in his creative writings. In examining his ambivalent relationship to tradition, I also note inconsistencies in his thought, some of which he attempted to work through in his writings, others of which he may not have necessarily been aware of. While this may appear as an inconsistency in my approach, my intent is not to limit Lu Xun or his writings, complex as they are, to a certain interpretation. Rather, I seek a departure from canonical depictions of Lu Xun as a sage or saint, to show that in spite of being a radically
self-conscious thinker, he was also fundamentally human and subject to human failings and flaws, something which he himself took pains to show in his writings.

The first portion of the book examines Lu Xun’s rethinking of the past and his reconstruction of a literati tradition in his writings. Chapter 1 analyzes his fascination with death and his “refusal to mourn” through a critical reading of some of his autobiographical essays. I read his preface to Call to Arms as an allegory of failure—that is, the failure of literature to deal ethically with the suffering and death of others, illustrated through what Lu Xun portrays as his belated recognition of his own imbrication within an elite culture and complicity in violent acts of representation. The form of his autobiographical accounts—which turns against itself and undermines the authority of the writer—reflects a conscious pursuit of an alternative form of writing that validates a self-critical engagement with one’s historical and personal past even as it exposes the limitations of the writing subject and narrative representation itself. His disjointed and fragmented accounts deliberately eschew communally sanctioned conventions that reinforce orthodoxy and privilege in an attempt to represent the past and the lives of others more faithfully.

Chapters 2 and 3 examine Lu Xun’s reconstruction of a lineage of talented yet politically marginalized literati figures, most notably Sima Qian (145–86 BCE?) and Qu Yuan (340–278 BCE?). Affiliating himself with a line of lonely geniuses spurned by their times may have provided Lu Xun a prism through which he could comprehend, articulate, and work through the predicaments he and others faced as marginalized intellectuals in their own chaotic times. Chapter 2 shows how Lu Xun’s ambivalent relationship to the literati tradition was fraught with anxiety—an “anxiety of influence,” a sense of his inability to live up to a daunting lineage; and an “anxiety of obsolescence,” a recognition that the literati values, practices, and beliefs that continued to sustain him as a writer and critic were on the verge of vanishing or becoming irrelevant, a sense that his own works might not be properly understood or transmitted in the evolving literary field. In spite of the sense of anxiety and loss conveyed in his prefaces and autobiographical essays, the mission of his literary predecessors—to transmit truth and record history for posterity—remained a driving force motivating his writings. His critically introspective writings aspired to the moral imperatives of writing set by his literary predecessors, even if they failed to attain them.
Along with a large corpus of autobiographical writings, Lu Xun left a trove of essays memorializing the lives of public figures, friends, and acquaintances. Chapter 3 examines how his biographical writings emulated the mission of the Grand Historian, Sima Qian, to create a literary universe in which the words and actions of the marginalized, the excluded, and the unfairly wronged could be justly revaluated and transmitted to posterity. In particular, I show how Lu Xun employed traditional biographical conventions to depict the life of his friend Fan Ainong (1883–1912) as a talented scholar unrecognized in his time. By rendering visible and intelligible the lives of Fan Ainong and others who would have otherwise been deemed forgettable in historical terms, Lu Xun allows the abject to return in narrative form to expose the limitations of the textual histories that have denied them voice.

The second portion of the book shifts the emphasis from Lu Xun’s grappling with his crises of consciousness to his growing disdain for new literary trends. His works insistently call attention to the moral imperative of writing and reveal how the present remains inextricably enmeshed with the past. He derided intellectual efforts aimed at “liberation” by showing how the reforms proposed were often motivated by self-advancement and unwittingly replicated the very ills of traditional culture they aimed to overthrow. Lu Xun was also troubled by the proliferation of representational forms in the cultural field whose main purpose was to entertain and provide consolation. His parodies of modern romantic poems and sentimental fiction illustrate the ways in which traditional images and conventions continued to surface in modern disguise. Severed from their original context and meanings, however, their new iterations often appeared as degraded imitations. In essence, Lu Xun’s out-of-joint parodies can be read as textual reenactments of the dilemma of cultural displacement—that is, of being inscribed by yet alienated from tradition, while being out of place in the modern world.

Chapter 4 examines in particular Lu Xun’s criticism of the “Nora phenomenon” and the images of “new women” circulating in popular culture. In his view, such images, like the traditional ideals of femininity, merely reflected the desires of the men who promoted them. In an increasingly commercialized cultural field still bound by traditional norms, images of the modern woman and the rhetoric of emancipation could accomplish little, in Lu Xun’s eyes, other than to offer false promises to women while subjecting them to new and old forms of exploitation. Chapter 5 explores
Lu Xun's denigration of the theme of love in modern romantic poems and tales. In his parodies, love in its modern incarnations surfaces neither as an expression of loyalty to one's ruler as in the world of classical poetry, nor as the revolutionary force that New Culture intellectuals claimed it to be. Rather, love turns out to be little more than tawdry sentimentality, strikingly similar to that found in traditional scholar-beauty (caizi jiaren) tales. Chapter 6 examines Lu Xun's adaptation of yet another prevalent theme in classical poetry to his stories: yearning for home. Rather than an image of the idyllic native place (guxiang) commonly found in the classical poetic universe and modern narratives, the natal home in his fiction is depicted as a veritable dystopia. In so doing, he highlights the plight of his intellectual wanderers: of being without a home in the world.

Lu Xun's fiction challenges works intent on disseminating bourgeois notions of individualism, love, and peasant life by revealing their illusory/elusory nature. Like Adorno, Lu Xun is concerned with the “truth content” of art, which is not to be found in narratives of harmony and reconciliation; rather, it is manifested in art’s ability to mirror the internal contradictions and antagonistic state of the world. Through these chapters, I suggest that Lu Xun's curtailing of his fictional experiments in 1926 may in part have been a refusal to have his work interpellated by what he perceived to be an increasingly commercialized literary field, akin to what Adorno called the “culture industry.” His turn to the polemical essay (zawen) as a main forum for his writings, then, may have arisen in part from his concern over the possibly “conciliatory” and “harmonious” misreadings elicited by his creative writings; the form of the essay allowed him to directly criticize the oppressive mechanisms of culture with less of a nagging suspicion he was being misread or implicated in them.

The third portion of the book examines Lu Xun's most conspicuous engagement with tradition in the corpus of his creative writings: the reworkings of traditional legends and fables in Old Tales Retold. In the 1930s, his public promotion of a proletarian literature seemed to mark a radical departure from the aesthetic vision informing his creative stories and essays; such a change suggests an overcoming of his earlier anxieties over the persistence of tradition and the efficacy of writing as a tool for social transformation. Yet his return to the work of revising old myths, legends, and fables in the last years of his life reveals a continued attachment to traditions of the past, which he reanimated as a means of reflecting upon the predicaments of the present. Indeed, his revisions of old
tales bear a striking continuity with his earlier creative efforts in their insistent revelation of the limits of narrative representation and the bleak prospects for reform.

Chapter 7 shows how Lu Xun’s rewrites of historical tales and biographies expose both the arbitrary nature of literary canonization and the constructed nature of narrative. His mocking of the sages, in tune with the spirit of the classic *Zhuangzi*, is an indictment of a cultural and literary apparatus that continues to nurture elite privilege. Chapter 8 examines Lu Xun’s affinity for what I call “literatures of enchantment”—fables, myths, and supernatural tales. While initially invoking the magical and otherworldly, his revisions of old fables almost invariably reveal a world similar to that of his earlier vernacular stories—a world devoid of enchantment. The characters in his old tales operate without a mission and seem bereft of a soul; they turn their backs on the divine, destroying paradise and resurrecting the dead, just to fill up empty time. Lu Xun seems to suggest that if vestiges of tradition should be resuscitated as forms of amusement or for questionable moral purposes, then perhaps those remains would be best left behind.

Such a parting of ways with tradition, however, did not come easily to Lu Xun. His last creative endeavors turn out to be radical reworkings of old tales whose language, content, and allusions are at turns so highly abstruse and esoteric, and also so absurd and nonsensical, as to confound and elude even the most initiated of readers. Here the “facetiousness” that marks, or as Lu Xun himself asserts, “mars” his last creative endeavors reflects the skepticism articulated in his earlier creative writings—of the impossibility of escaping one’s past and the inadequacy of literature as a tool to incite social reform. For it is through the ghosts of the past—who return with a vengeance and in increasingly bizarre forms, more alive than dead—that Lu Xun gleefully ridicules his adversaries’ escapist tendencies while at the same time engaging in a bit of self-mockery—namely, of the limits of his own public platform heralding a proletarian literature yet to come.

The Epilogue concludes the book with a reading of images of decay and destruction in the prose poems collected in *Wild Grass*. I show how the fragmented images in the collection, constant reminders of the ephemeral nature of life, reflect Lu Xun’s doubts over the ability of writing to adequately capture a past and present in the midst of destruction. Yet while his prose poems point to the violence of language and the limits
of representation, they simultaneously contain an urgent, almost desper-
ate plea—for the need to bear testimony to loss and the necessity of
commemoration. Lu Xun’s writings serve as literary remains, fragmented
records left by an eclectic historian. At the heart of the contradictory
images and competing impulses of remembrance and forgetting in
Lu Xun’s works lies the notion of “radical hope”—a faith, in spite of the
destruction and his own ambivalence toward the act of representation,
that his writings might somehow capture fragments of the past and a
present that is itself in the midst of disappearing. Lu Xun harbored the
hope that in the hands of a discerning reader, his writings, like the texts
that inspired them, would allow glimmers of the past to yet flicker alive,
as lessons and sources of inspiration to illuminate the past, the present,
and a future yet to unfold.