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DISABLED AESTHETICS IN THE PROSE POETRY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE
AND LU XUN

ZHE GENG
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Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Janet Lyon
Associate Professor of English
Thesis Supervisor

Lisa Sternlieb
Associate Professor of English
Honors Adviser

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes Charles Baudelaire's collection of prose poems, *The Spleen of Paris* (1869) and Lu Xun's collection of prose poems, *Wild Grass* (1927) in a *pendant*, or counterpart relationship while incorporating disability theory into the study. The *pendant*, defined as “two objects d’art approximately alike, destined to appear together as a corresponding relation” envisions a model of reading both works in light of the other. *The Spleen of Paris* and *Wild Grass* were the considered among the first collections of prose poetry in their respective countries (France and China). When read together, these two texts work together to outline an aesthetic that overturns conventional poetic ideals; they celebrate the fragmented and the marginalized through their unconventional form and contents. In the preface to *The Spleen of Paris*, Baudelaire invites the reader to fragment and reorder the sequential fabric of his work. I take up this invitation and conjoin poems from both collections to create new ways of understanding these textual relationships.

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A NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

The translations used for *The Spleen of Paris* are from Keith Waldrop's *Paris Spleen: Little Poems in Prose*. I have slightly adapted the title to adhere more closely to the French: *Le Spleen de Paris*. The translations for *Wild Grass* are taken from Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's bilingual edition. I will refer to all works by their English title except for "Mademoiselle Bistouri".

Introduction

I. Baudelaire and the *Pendant* Prose Poem

Charles Baudelaire's collection of prose poems, *Petits Poèmes en Prose: Le Spleen de Paris* or *Little Poems in Prose: The Spleen of Paris* [1862] is widely considered the first major work of prose poetry with few precedents. Baudelaire's provocative eschewal of traditional verse form in favor of "a poetic prose, musical without a rhythm or rhyme" was a formal embodiment of the critique of conventional bourgeois values (3). Some poets and critics have disputed this lineage by tracing the prose poem to the Han Dynasty [206 BCE-220 CE] in China where it was known as *fu* 賦, or rhymed prose. However, recent scholarship distinguishes the *fu* from the 20th century prose poetry tradition, known as *san wen shi* 散文诗 best exemplified by Lu Xun's 鲁迅 (the pen name of Zhou Shuren 周树人) prose poetry collection, *Ye Cao* 野草 or *Wild Grass* published in 1927.¹ *Wild Grass* draws its influences directly from Baudelaire.²

Numerous studies have compared the influences of *The Spleen of Paris* on *Wild Grass* and have traced Lu Xun's direct or indirect responses to Baudelaire's work.³ In this thesis, I continue this comparative study but from a perspective that incorporates disability theory into my readings. I resist a model of comparison which simply traces

¹ The term *san wen shi* was directly translated from the Western term "prose poem"

² Lu Xun was also influenced by the prose poetry of the Russian writer Ivan Turgenev and the theories of the Japanese literary critic Kuriyagawa Hakuson 厨川白村 who also translated Baudelaire's prose poetry.

³ For some examples see: Leo Ou-Fan Lee, Zha Peide, Sun Yushi, Chen Yuankai, and Li Tiejun

Baudelairean influences in Lu Xun's work; instead, I will follow a model laid out in his private correspondence by Baudelaire himself: the model makes use of the concept of the "pendant" or, in English, the "counterpart."⁴ In his own words the *pendant* is defined as "two objects d'art approximately alike, destined to appear together as a corresponding relation". He understood *The Spleen of Paris* as a *pendant* to *Les Fleurs du Mal* [*The Flowers of Evil* 1857]; each collection could be read in light of the other.⁵ Reading these texts together produces an enhanced understanding of both works.

My reading of *Wild Grass* and *The Spleen of Paris* makes use of the *pendant* relationship in a way that differs slightly from Baudelaire's original outline; I will read them as *prosthetic pendants* to each other. The prosthetic relationship can be understood in two ways. Firstly, I am substituting the "natural" counterpart to *The Spleen of Paris*, *The Flowers of Evil* with *Wild Grass*. Secondly, I am conceiving of *Wild Grass* and *The Spleen of Paris* as mutually supportive of one another, in their critique of *normate* culture, to use a term current in disability theory. I adapt the term *normate* from Rosemarie Garland-Thomson who defines *normate* as "the social figure through which one can represent themselves as definitive human beings, [...and] is the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them" (8).⁶ My use of metaphoric prostheses does not signify that either work is defective and must be supplemented by the other, or that one work is the "real" or "original" work and the other an artificial addition. Rather, drawing from

⁴ This bears some resemblance to Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of dialogism and Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality.

⁵ From the Emile Littré *Dictionnaire*, translation from *Intratextual Baudelaire* by Rudolph Runyon.

⁶ Instead of conceiving the *normate* as a physical being, I use *normate* broadly in the sense of pre-existing conventions.

Simi Linton's call to re-evaluate terminology associated with disability, namely the prescriptive judgments imposed upon prefixes such as *dis* as well as negative labels such as *cripple*, I propose a reading of *Wild Grass* and *The Spleen of Paris* through an adaptation of the term *alternate ability* for use on literary form.⁷ I do so not only because both poets address non-typical bodies and stigmas attached thereto but also because the prose poetic form itself breaks from normative poetic forms. In the following chapters I look at how the subversive form and content of Baudelaire and Lu Xun's work together create an alternate set of aesthetic values that can be conceived of as an anti-normative aesthetics.

Additionally in the following discussion of a handful of poems by both writers, I show how disability permeates the very fabric of the texts themselves. I am less concerned with representation of disabled figures in the poems, but those figures do appear, and they bear out Tobin Siebers' argument that a *disability aesthetic* "refuses to recognize the representation of the healthy body...as the sole determination of the aesthetic. Rather, disability aesthetics embraces beauty that seems by traditional standards to be broken, and yet it is not less beautiful...as a result" (3). Thus I will move between form and content beginning with a view of both works as fragments of a body (organs) and as sites of disease through the discussion of spleen.

II. Spleen as Disease

Baudelaire's title for his collection of prose poems, *The Spleen of Paris*, first mentioned in an 1863 letter to the publisher Pierre-Jules Hetzel, indicates the centrality of

⁷ I differ from Linton's solution to inherently prescriptive terminology. Linton calls for a reassignment of meaning to existing terminology instead of adopting newer ones and uses the term "nondisabled" in lieu of "abled" in an act of destabilizing and reversing the center from the abled to the disabled. I shy away from a mere reversal of structures and use the term alternately-abled as a neutral or simply descriptive term.

a disabled aesthetic to his experimental endeavor. “Spleen” denotes any number of maladies, both mental and physical, and this is a point to which I will return directly. Baudelaire had several other titles under consideration, and it is worth noting that at least one of Baudelaire’s alternate titles signaled malady as well: *Petit Poèmes Lycanthropes* or *Little Lycanthropic Poems*.⁸ Lycanthropy is defined in Emile Littré’s *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française* [1872-77] as “a species of mental disease in which the afflicted imagines himself changed into a wolf”, Therefore, the set of poems would be attached to a diagnosis that suggests the poems believe themselves to be monstrous and capable of transmitting disease through a bite to the neck. Notably, both iterations hint at the possibility of infection and disease.

The Spleen de Paris, however, eventually became the preferred title and similarly, “spleen” designates a set of chronically imbalanced conditions that have persisted, in various forms, since Hippocrates. In the ancient humoral system, as in its later configurations, the spleen is the organ that produces black bile, the excess of which results in melancholy. In the French language, “spleen”, borrowed from the English name for an organ, came to signify the disease: the 5th Edition of the *Dictionnaire de L’Académie Française* [1798] defines the word spleen as, “[A] word borrowed from the English by which one expresses a state of consumption”.⁹ The 6th Edition (1835) as, “A word borrowed from the English. A mental malady which consists of a disgust for life.” Subsequently the *Littré* defines it as the “English name given sometimes to a form of

⁸ Other titles considered were *Poemes Nocturnes*, *La Lueur et La Fumée*, *Le Rôdeur Parisien*, and *Le Promeneur Solitaire*. In his 1997 translation, Edward Kaplan champions the title *Parisian Prowler* (*Le Rôdeur*), which he believes “typifies more than any other title Baudelaire considered, the intellectually curious, though alienated narrator’s repeated journeys of initiation”.

⁹ Consumption was the term for tuberculosis

hypochondria consisting of an ennui without cause, and a disgust for life.” By Baudelaire's time, the word spleen underwent a shift from the 1798 “state of consumption” (tuberculosis), to a mental condition of decline. Essentially, the term “consumption” suggests the physical reality of the malady; the state of consumption is brought upon the individual, and the disease can be thought of as separate from the individual. The disease manifests itself through physical symptoms that take a toll on the body. In contrast, the 1835 edition of the *Dictionnaire* (as well as the *Littre*) indicates that the condition of “spleen” originates internally, and therefore it results in a mental condition. Notably, both later definitions include the phrase “a disgust for/aversion to life” signifying that the notion of involuntary “wasting away” physically from consumption had now become a voluntary act of mental decay. Furthermore Littré’s definition includes the idea of hypochondria and an “ennui without cause,” with hypochondria defined in the same edition as largely an imagined condition. Therefore these two later definitions of spleen, one originating from over a decade after Baudelaire’s birth and the other just a couple of years after his death depict increasingly nuanced definitions moving from a vague notion of mental instability to a medicalized term for a mental disease.

Thus the title of the collection suggests that the prose poems are symptoms of the disease of Paris. This suggestion was certainly recognized by a critic who, in an 1864 issue of *Le Figaro*, responded to the publication of six of Baudelaire’s prose poems under the title *The Spleen of Paris* in the same edition:

There are those who believe that Londoners alone enjoy the aristocratic privilege of suffering from spleen and that Paris, gay Paris, has never been subject to that

grievous affliction. But it may be that, as the author claims, there exists a special kind of Parisian spleen, known, as he argues, to many people who will recognize what he is talking about.

Whether lycanthropic or splenic, the poems hint at the possibility of infection:

The degenerate underbelly of Paris, teeming with disease, may be transmitted as through the bite of a werewolf.

III. Reading Baudelaire in China

Baudelaire's title introduces the prose poem as a vehicle or symptom of an era of cultural malaise. In the China of Lu Xun, who took up the Baudelairian prose poem for his own aesthetic ends, Baudelaire's anti-bourgeois aesthetic earned him the name of the Demonic or Satanic poet 恶魔诗人. Tian Han 田汉, a Chinese playwright and revolutionary activist wrote in a 1922 article that Baudelaire's poetry is associated with "all that is decadent and evil". Baudelaire nevertheless gained a significant following among Chinese poets who followed the symbolist and decadent movement.¹⁰ The first translations of Baudelaire's poetry into Chinese came from *The Spleen of Paris* and Zhou Zuoren 周作人, Lu Xun's brother, was a foremost translator of the prose poems as well as one of the earliest Chinese writers in the form. Lu Xun himself possessed a German translation of *The Spleen of Paris* at the time of composing *Wild Grass*.

However, before taking up a literary career, Lu Xun initially trained in Japan at the Sendai Medical Academy, and in the preface to his short story collection, *A Call to*

¹⁰ See Tian, Han, "On The Centenary of the Satanic Poet Baudelaire".

Arms, he declares that his motivations for studying medicine stem from the medical malpractice he witnessed during the treatment of his father's illness:

Recalling the talk and prescriptions of physicians I had known and comparing them with what I now knew, I came to the conclusion those physicians must be either unwitting or deliberate charlatans; and I began to sympathize with the invalids and families who suffered at their hands. From translated histories I also learned that the Japanese Reformation had originated, to a great extent, with the introduction of Western medical science to Japan. These inklings took me to a provincial medical college in Japan. I dreamed a beautiful dream that on my return to China I would cure patients like my father, who had been wrongly treated.

Yet Lu Xun would dramatically alter his intended course of study after a viewing of a Russo-Japanese war film shown during the free time after his class. The film depicted a Chinese man indicted for being a Russian spy bound for execution by the Japanese, while his Chinese compatriots stood apathetically around him enjoying the spectacle. Lu Xun remembers the disgust he felt towards the apathetic Chinese spectators who felt no compassion for their compatriot:

I felt that medical science was not so important after all. The people of a weak and backward country, however strong and healthy they may be, can only serve to be made examples of... The most important thing, therefore, was to change their spirit, and since at that time I felt that literature was the best means to this end, I determined to promote a literary movement.

Thus Lu Xun shifts his focus from healing the body to healing the mind, and prescribes literature as spiritual therapy. If Lu Xun's works were designed to "cure" the apathy of the spirit, then we must ask why he invokes Baudelaire, the Satanic Poet, in his own works. Indeed, *Wild Grass* is singular within Lu Xun's corpus. Lu Xun himself wrote of its uniqueness in the 1931 preface to the English edition of *Wild Grass*: "Afterward, I wrote no longer this kind of thing. The era, which is changing daily, doesn't allow this kind of writing and even this kind of thought to exist".¹¹ *Wild Grass* had been initially criticized by leftist writers such as Qian Xingcun 钱杏邨 for its anti-revolutionary dark and depressive atmosphere; Qian believed that it lacked the exigent rallying call to action of Lu Xun's previous works such as *The True Story of Ah Q* or "The Diary of a Mad Man" which both harshly criticized Chinese feudalism and called for social change.¹² Later scholars dismiss Qian's claims and reach a consensus that *Wild Grass* does contain poems which demand social justice, but have also remarked that *Wild Grass* is distinctly different from Lu Xun's other works.

Critics have found it difficult to reconcile the poems of combative social justice and satiric poems with the poems depicting inward melancholy, decadence, and despair. Therefore a large body of scholarship is dedicated to systematically categorizing the poems based on these themes.¹³ Lu Xun himself was keenly aware of the darker aspects of the *Wild Grass* poems and exhibited a profound measure of unease concerning its melancholic atmosphere. In a 1934 letter to the writer Xiao Jun 箫军, he writes: "That

¹¹ This edition never came into print; the project was destroyed in the Shanghai anti-Japanese campaign of 1932.

¹² These two works spotlight figures who can be interpreted as disabled, yet the madness of the narrator in "Diary of a Madman" and Ah Q's peculiar mental method of "gaining spiritual victories" figure as metaphors for larger social and political conditions.

¹³ See Xue Wei, Feng Xuefeng, Xu Qinwen

book of mine *Wild Grass*, the technique is not considered bad, but its mood is too melancholy (tui tang 颓唐) because I wrote it after hitting upon many nails. I hope you can distance yourself from the influence of this kind of melancholic mood.¹⁴ Lu Xun worries that the poems will be vehicles or transmitters of spleen, a mental disease. The phrase *tui tang* itself is not a direct reference to spleen but connotes depression, degeneration, decay, and even disability. Thus we may think of *Wild Grass* as a site of disease and a even source of possible infection rather than a remedy.

In the following chapters, I will analyze how *The Spleen of Paris* and *Wild Grass* treat “deviant” or “abnormal” subjects as I analyze the fragmented elements within the poems. In *Wild Grass*, instead of attempting to unite the decadent, melancholic poems with the “healthy”, social justice poems under a unified thesis, I suggest that these categories cannot be established so easily and that the poems are not as clearly delineated as previous critics may suggest. I argue that both *The Spleen of Paris* and *Wild Grass* reject the possibility of achieving a holistic interpretation but instead foreground and revel in their fragmented existences. Both collections of poems overturn normative ideals of the “healthy” and “beautiful” to question the nature of poetry through their subversive form and content.

In Chapter I, I analyze the unofficial preface of *Le Spleen de Paris* with the official preface or forward of *Wild Grass*. In the unofficial preface, Baudelaire invokes the imagery of a severed serpent whose pieces can rejoin at will to describe the collection of poems. I then read Baudelaire’s serpent imagery pendant to Lu Xun’s preface to *Wild*

¹⁴ Translation from Nick Admussen’s article “A Music for Baihua: Lu Xun’s *Wild Grass* and ‘A Good story’”

Grass which describes the poems as weeds. When read together, these prefaces dictate the aesthetic values of the following poems; that of the beauty of fragmentation and decay.

In Chapter II, I take up Baudelaire's invitation to fragment by cutting and rejoining two poems from *Le Spleen de Paris*: "La Femme Sauvage et La Petite Maîtresse" ["Wild Woman and Little Darling"] and "Mademoiselle Bistouri" ["Miss Bistoury"], with one poem from *Wild Grass*: "Tui Bai Xian de Chan Dong" 颓败线的颤动 ["Tremors of Degradation"]. I impose the frame of the freak show, which explicitly appears in "Wild Woman and Little Darling", onto "Mademoiselle Bistouri" and "Tremors of Degradation". These three poems, when read together, expose the elements necessary to stage the freak show as artificial constructions: that the "freak" only exists through the freak show.

Chapter 1 Dual Prefaces of *The Spleen of Paris* and *Wild Grass*

I. Genesis of *The Spleen of Paris* and *Wild Grass*

Charles Baudelaire intended *The Spleen of Paris* collection to comprise a larger set of prose poems as part of his *Complete Works*. However, he did not survive to see the project's completion, and instead the existing collection of fifty poems (fifty-one with the inclusion of “A *Arsène Houssaye*” [“For Arsène Houssaye”], a letter to his editor) was published by his sister. In “For Arsène Houssaye”, now included as the unofficial preface of the prose poetry collection and read as such by scholars, Baudelaire readily (and as critics have argued, ironically) acknowledges that the origins of *Petits Poèmes en Prose* derives from Aloysius Bertrand's *Gaspard de la Nuit* or *Gaspard of the Night*, subtitled *Fantasies in the Manner of Rembrandt and Callot* (1842).¹⁵¹⁶ The letter itself can arguably be read as a prose poem in its own right and also as Baudelaire's treatise on the prose poetry on display in *The Spleen of Paris* collection. Baudelaire writes to Houssaye regarding the influence of *Gaspard de la Nuit* on his work:

I have a small confession. Leafing through Aloysius Bertrand's famous *Gaspard de la nuit* for at least the twentieth time (when a book is known to you, me and a few of our friends, doesn't that make it famous?), the idea came to me to try something analogous, and to apply to the description of modern life, or rather a modern and more abstract life, the process he applied to his portrait of an earlier

¹⁵Edward Kaplan, Maria C. Scott, and others argue for caricatural dedication to Houssaye with whom Baudelaire had personal difficulties and that the reference to Bertrand is tongue in cheek.

¹⁶Jacques Callot, French engraver (1592-1635), often depicted the morbid and grotesque in his works. Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-69), Dutch painter known for portraiture.

age, curiously picturesque. // Who has not, in bouts of ambition, dreamt this miracle, a poetic prose, musical without rhyme, supple and choppy enough to accommodate the lyrical movement of the soul, the undulations of reverie, the bump and lurch of consciousness? (3)

Bertrand's *Gaspard* is widely credited as the first attempt at prose poetry in French literature, and the subtitle--*Fantasies in the Manner of Rembrandt and Callot*—suggests that *Gaspard* is a work in between and across the genres of poetry, music, and art. The poems, which depart from traditional verse forms, are inspired by visual art and furthermore, take the form of a musical *fantaisie*, a spontaneous and often virtuosic outpouring of musical inspiration. Baudelaire, in his own work, aims to emulate the impromptu spirit of the musical *fantaisie* encapsulated in the form of the prose poem. Significantly, Lu Xun wrote about his own similar impressionistic style in *Wild Grass*: “When I had some minor impressions and thoughts, I would write a few short compositions. More pretentiously, they were called prose poetry.”¹⁷ It is worth noting that both poets refer to their work as “minor” or “little”; neither intended to formally establish a new, major genre.¹⁸

This haphazard genesis of both poets' prose poems can be re-emphasized through the publication histories of both works. As already noted, *The Spleen of Paris* is a post mortem assembly of pieces, some of which had already been published in journals and periodicals during Baudelaire's lifetime. The poems comprising *Wild Grass*, composed

¹⁷ "Zixuanji xu" (Preface to self-selection of Lu Xun) from Leo Ou-fan Lee's translation in *Voices from the Iron House*

¹⁸ *Wild Grass* was categorized as prose poetry after its publications by others leading Lu Xun to somewhat reluctantly adopt the term. Also, two poems in *Wild Grass* are not in prose. One is in verse while the other is structured as a miniature dramatic work.

between 1924 and 1926 during a period of hardship in Lu Xun's personal life, were first serially published in the periodical *Yu Si* 语丝 (*Threads of Language*).¹⁹ In 1927, Lu Xun assembled the 23 pieces for publication. It is immediately evident upon a first reading that the poems in *Wild Grass* are carefully ordered; poems directly respond to and follow from one another or are clustered by similar themes or narrative styles.

II. Baudelaire's Fragmented Serpent

In contrast, *The Spleen of Paris* appears to have no inherent organization. Although Baudelaire, before his death, created a list of the poems to be published, scholars have argued over whether his ordering was highly deliberate in "For Arsène Houssaye," or whether in fact, Baudelaire encouraged the reader to freely reorder his poems.²⁰ Baudelaire gives out an invitation to "cut up" the sequential fabric of the collection:

Dear friend, I send you a work no one can claim not to make head or tail of, since, on the contrary, there is at once both tail and head, alternating and reciprocal. Consider, I beg you, how admirably convenient this combination makes it for each and all--you, me, the reader. We may stop reading whenever we like, I my daydream, you the manuscript, the reader his reading--whose stubborn will I would not hold to the unbroken thread of some superfluous plot. Cut out any vertebra and the two pieces of this serpentine fantasy will easily rejoin. Chop it into many fragments and you will see how each is able to exist apart. Hoping

¹⁹ "Hitting upon nails" in the quote on page 7 refers to this period of hardship which stems in part from a quarrel with his younger brother Zhou Zuoren. They eventually became estranged, and Lu Xun is thought to have attempted suicide due to the depression he suffered.

²⁰ See J.A. Hiddleston, Edward K. Kaplan, and Randolph Paul Runyon

some of these stumps will be lively enough to please and amuse you, I make bold to dedicate to you the entire snake. (3)

Scholars have commented upon the violent imagery in this invitation. Mary Miner, for example, proposes that:

Like Houssaye, readers of *Le Spleen de Paris* are invited to take an ax to this fantastic serpent, which will either (both?) reunite its segments or set them all wriggling on their own. Such a temptation to connect reading with mutilation leaves the prose poems in a precarious position [...] between sordid realism and poetic convention. (39)

However, instead of the act of reading as a “mutilation” as Miner suggests, I would argue that Baudelaire precisely implies the opposite: that the act of mutilation, Houssaye’s and the reader’s “chopping,” instead suggests that the work is rather infinitely adaptable; the reader’s chopping has no damaging effect on the collection.²¹ *Le Spleen de Paris* defies mutilation or an idea of complete reunion; the reader is neither violently conjoining nor dispersing pieces within the work through the act of reading. Instead, the act of reading is a testament to the work’s resilience and shows that the work can not only withstand such reshaping, but also can create new meanings through different variations of the poetic sequence. The “stumps,” or the individual poems that have been cut out of the sequence, which Baudelaire hopes will be “lively enough,” become individually animated.²² What

²¹ Miner further comments upon the instability of the act of reading, “The temptation similarly opens the readers’ position to question, since it will rarely be clear whether the primary effect of their reading is to conjoin textual fragments or disperse them, to promote extraordinary animation or inflict haphazard damage” (39).

²² The original phrase in French, “lively enough”, is “assez vivante” which can also be interpreted as “enough alive”.

might be perceived as mutilation through the act of reading is actually a creative action; the individual wriggling stumps become autonomous life forms.

Furthermore, each individual stump can be interpreted as both a head and a tail thereby obliterating any hierarchical order within and between poems. Baudelaire declares that tail and head both alternate and reciprocate. The designation of each poem as both head and tail equalizes the content of the collection since now each poem is weighted equally within the collection. That is, the contradictory image of simultaneously alternating and reciprocating heads and tails eliminates the distinction between head and tail. It is also important to note that in describing the “stumps” as both head and tail, Baudelaire operates through a negative speculation in the original French sentence: “I send you a small work whom one cannot say without injustice that it has neither head nor tail since all, on the contrary and at once are head and tail, alternatively and reciprocally.”²³ This sentence cunningly challenges the apathetic reader who expects to receive information passively from the work. Instead, the reader must individually create meaning out of the work’s fragments.

This subtle attack is made clear through careful analysis of the sentence above. Baudelaire’s declares that he sends a work which one *cannot* say has *neither* heads *nor* tails. The next phrase, which declares that all parts are both head and tail, seems at first glance to transform the negative speculation to a positive statement—that is, there are now heads and tails. However, this instead merely reaffirms that no heads or tails exist. Instead of establishing clear definitions of “head” and “tail”, Baudelaire further complicates attempts to “make heads or tails” out of the work through the introduction of

²³My translation. For the original text, see Appendix A: A Arsène Houssaye.

multiple heads and tails that are additionally interchangeable. This interchangeability redefines the head and the tail. After all, if they are mutually interchangeable, the boundaries between “head” and “tail” are eliminated; heads now *are* tails and vice versa. The inference that there are no clearly delineated definitions of heads or tails through this elaborate scheme to declare every segment to be both heads and tails effectively subverts Houssaye’s and the reader’s expectations for literary order. Baudelaire tricks Houssaye, and by extension the reader, into assuming a position that expects conventional order, while in reality he suggests that the structure of *The Spleen of Paris* subverts reader expectations. In this reading, the stumps and amputations that constitute the poems are neither disabled nor signify trauma or brokenness. Rather, they make the poems possible. As with much of Baudelaire’s work, the devalued elements of the social world become central to his anti-normate poetics. In this case, amputation produces a new vista of creativity.

III. Weeds

There is much to be gained from reading Lu Xun’s preface to *Wild Grass* alongside Baudelaire’s preface, despite the fact that Lu Xun’s is an official preface written just before *Wild Grass*’ publication, while Baudelaire’s is a letter that has over time assumed the status of a preface. For just as Baudelaire’s preface shakes readerly expectations, Lu Xun’s preface also undermines and even mocks the reader’s expectation of reading conventional poetry.²⁴ Importantly, we can see that the title, *Wild Grass*, already foreshadows the collection’s nonconformity: *Wild Grass* can be alternately

²⁴ “Conventional poetry” in China and “conventional poetry” in France are of course different. However, *Wild Grass* is innovative in Chinese poetry in a manner similar to *The Spleen of Paris*’ innovation in French poetry. Additionally, the only poem in *Wild Grass* in verse form is a mockery of the popular love poetry of the day.

translated as *Weeds*. Thus the collection is seemingly insignificant; it grows out of decayed life and lives an unwanted existence. Lu Xun himself later wrote that the majority of the poems are “small and pale blossoms growing on the rim of deserted Hell” and for that reason “cannot be considered as objects of beauty.”²⁵ Yet paradoxically, these pale blossoms, though small and frail, are the only objects with any semblance of beauty in the wasteland of hell. He explicitly describes the bleak existence of wild grass:

Wild grass strikes no deep roots, has no beautiful flowers and leaves, yet it imbibes dew, water and the blood and flesh of the dead, although all try to rob it of life. As long as it lives it is trampled upon and mown down, until it dies and decays. (2)

The wild grass sustains itself upon the “blood and flesh of the dead” and lives only to be “trampled upon.” However, in this case the rotten matter of the dead is not repulsive and useless, but instead it spawns a process of regeneration. In a similar manner to Baudelaire’s flexible serpent whose stumps only become animated through fragmentation, Lu Xun’s wild grass only exists through nourishment from the decomposed. Additionally, although he denies that the poems are beautiful, he takes pleasure in precisely their lack of conventional beauty.

This transvaluation of values continues in the preface, where death and decay are full of life:

The past life has died. I exult over its death, because from this I know that it once existed. The dead life has decayed. I exult over its decay, because from this I

²⁵ See Appendix B: Preface to the English Translation of *Wild Grass*.

know that it has not been empty. // From the clay of life abandoned on the ground
grow no lofty trees, only wild grass. For that I am to blame. (2)

Wild Grass germinates from and more importantly, even thrives on the decay of life. Death and decay indicates not void but fruitfulness, and the silence of death is actually replete with meaning. However instead of “lofty trees”, the life that springs from death and decay are weeds. Lu Xun takes the “blame” for creating “weeds.”²⁶ However, it is evident that Lu Xun values the wild grass far more than the lofty trees: “I love my wild grass but I detest the ground which decks itself with wild grass” (2). Lu Xun rejects the idea that his wild grass can be used as an adornment; unlike cultivated grass, its beauty does not solely reside at the surface. Wild grass is valuable and unconventionally beautiful precisely because of the harsh conditions of its existence.

It then seems counterintuitive that Lu Xun would also take pleasure in the destruction of his wild grass, and yet he does:

A subterranean fire is spreading, raging, under ground. Once the molten lava
breaks through the earth’s crust, it will consume all the wild grass and lofty trees,
leaving nothing to decay. But I am not worried; I am glad. I shall laugh aloud and
sing. (2)

Life and death become part of the same aesthetics of beauty; the abounding contradictions and binaries in the preface as Lu Xun deliberately repeats opposing pairs of words such as “life and death”, “heaven and earth”, “past and future” and so forth. This recalls the distinction between “heads” and “tails” in Baudelaire’s preface. Just as

²⁶ The Chinese term for “blame” that Lu Xun uses is “zui guo” 罪过. This term, associated with Buddhism, can also be used to show humility when praised or even to express thanks.

Baudelaire's preface reveals that heads *are* tails, Lu Xun's binaries actually operate in circular motion: life seeps into death, past into future, light into darkness, and "beauty" is the sum total of this flux. Where then does *Wild Grass* stand in these cosmic cycles? *Wild Grass* moves between these binaries and is a part of the process of regeneration; it is insignificant and yet the "the tussock of wild grass" is Lu Xun's "pledge" to the reader, and the wild grass marks Lu Xun's place as a poet.

Both Lu Xun and Baudelaire clearly indicate in their respective prefaces that the poems in *Wild Grass* and *Le Spleen de Paris* do not adhere to conventional poetic standards—whether these standards be French or Chinese. It remains for me to take up Baudelaire's invitation to "cut up" his poems. In the following chapter, I will explore the consequences of dispersing and conjoining poems from both collections and demonstrate how the poems read together as counterparts create new meanings that are deliberately set against the normate symmetry and classical beauty of received literary style.

Chapter 2 Dismantling the Freak Show in Baudelaire’s “Wild Woman and Little Darling” and “Mademoiselle Bistouri” and Lu Xun’s “Tremors of Degradation”

I. The Freak Show

Freak shows exhibit non-normate human physical features for general public audiences. Sensationalist posters promoting freak shows often spotlight people with deviant features such as “the bearded woman” or “the two-headed man” aiming to arouse reactions of disgust and curiosity in the spectator. In this chapter I look at the construction of the freak show in Baudelaire’s poem, “La Femme Sauvage et La Petite Maîtresse” or “Wild Woman and Little Darling.” The poet narrator, disgusted with the constant complaints of his over-indulged maîtresse, uses the figure of a wild woman in a freak show to force his maîtresse to realize the relative comfort of her position when compared to the degraded conditions of the wild woman.²⁷ I then read Lu Xun’s poem “Tui Bai Xian de Chan Dong” 颓败线的颤动 or “Tremors of Degradation,” and another poem from *The Spleen of Paris*, “Mademoiselle Bistouri” or “Miss Bistoury” while using the freak show as an overarching frame to analyze these poems. Although the freak show does not appear explicitly in “Tremors of Degradation” or “Mademoiselle Bistouri,” I suggest that the figure of the constructed wild woman resonates in both “Tremors” and “Mademoiselle.” “Tremors of Degradation” depicts a dream narrative in which the narrator assumes the position of a voyeur by watching an unnamed woman during two

²⁷ The *Littre* defines “petite maîtresse” as: “une femme qui est d’une élégance recherchée dans son ton, dans ses manières, dans sa parure, et qui a un air avantageux” (a woman who betrays an artificial elegance in her tone, in her manners, in her finery, and who has a supercilious air about her)

intimate moments of her life, while “Mademoiselle Bistouri” depicts a poet narrator accosted by a woman, the titular Mademoiselle Bistouri, at night. Mademoiselle Bistouri reconfigures the narrator’s identity by imposing an alternate identity upon him: that of the doctor. These three poems, when read together, work to unmask the necessary elements of staging the freak show-- the show manager, the authorities, the spectator, and the cage itself-- as artificial constructions which create the “freak.” In other words, the poems demonstrate how the freak show constructs the freak; rather the “freak” is the result of the imposition of normative standards on the “deviant” subject. In “Wild Woman,” the speaker reveals the instability of the freak show staging, in “Tremors,” the central female figure breaks free from previously restrictive forces and from male representation, and Mademoiselle Bistouri demonstrates that she can wrestle away the reins of the freak show from the narrator and control the narrator with them instead.

II. Wild Woman as Freak

“Wild Woman and Little Darling”, the 11th poem in the *The Spleen of Paris*, is structured as a monologue where the male speaker (also a poet) addresses his maîtresse while giving her no opportunity to speak. The speaker tells her, “Really, my dear, you endlessly and without pity wear me out; one would suppose, to hear you sigh, that your sufferings are worse than those of the sextagenarian gleaners or the old beggar women who dig out crusts of bread from dance hall garbage cans” (20). This beginning suggests that the narrator responds to a recent provocation from his maîtresse. The narrator expresses his annoyance with his maîtresse’s preciousity and treats her sighs, pleas, and

complaints as the symptoms of melancholia or spleen.²⁸ Her suffering, in the poet's eyes, is an imagined plight, especially in comparison to the aged debilitated outcasts of society. He tells her, "If at least your sighs expressed remorse, they might do you honor; but they convey merely a surfeit of well-being and despondency from sleeping too much" (20). Thus her sighs and supplications are the symptoms of over-indulgence. Not only is her melancholy an imagined or mental condition, but the source of her disease, which originates from over-refinement, over-indulgence, and affectation, is repulsive to the poet. Unlike the sextagenarian gleaner women or the old beggar women, the *maîtresse*, young and well cared for, should have no reason to complain. However, it is precisely her inactivity and her extravagant surroundings that breed "disease." Her disease, in the eyes of the poet, is constructed in part by her excesses of her lifestyle, and the poet reveals the artificiality of her disease by proposing an impromptu cure. The poet mockingly paraphrases his *maîtresse*'s complaints: "love me more," "console me," "caress me." These pleas can be understood as invocations to a doctor since the poet proposes to devise a remedy: "I'm going to try and cure you; maybe for a few pennies at a fair" (20). Therefore, the narrator becomes an illegitimate doctor curing an illegitimate disease through an illegitimate method. He can assume the doctor role on a whim, propose these unmedical "cures," and also create patients; the *maîtresse* is only sick through the effects of her complaints on the poet. The speaker imposes disease upon her, and without this appropriation of disease, the *maîtresse* would not be ill.

²⁸ From the Encyclopedia Britannica, "preciosity" is a "style of thought and expression exhibiting delicacy of taste and sentiment, prevalent in 17th century French salons."

Similarly, without the staging of the freak show, the wild woman would not be seen as deviant. The “cure” proposed by the husband consists of regarding the carnival spectacle of the *femme sauvage* whom the narrator presents as his maîtresse’s double:

“Do note, please,” The narrator says to his maîtresse , “ in this iron cage-bounding, howling like the damned, shaking the bars like an orangutan exasperated by exile, imitating to perfection, sometimes the circular sulk of the tiger, at other times the stupid waddle of a polar bear-a hairy monster whose form suggests, vaguely, yours. //This monster is one of those animals generally addressed as ‘my angel!’ that is to say, a woman.” (20)

The doubling of the maîtresse with the *femme sauvage* suggests that each is one aspect of the other and, obviously this strips both of their humanity; both become “monsters.” Furthermore, both women are confined through an imposed cage. The maîtresse is confined by the poet’s words while the wild woman is doubly confined, once through the cage in which she resides and another within the imagination of the poet. The poet presents his maîtresse as spectacle, diseased and “deviant,” for the reader to ogle and judge.

However, the position of the narrator here is more complicated than simply a masculine force which acts to restrict, exploit, and objectify the female. He also presents his own double alongside the wild woman: “That other monster, the one yelling at the top of his voice, stick in hand, is a husband” (20). Initially this solidifies the narrator’s position of power since the husband is complicit with the authorities in the exploitation of the woman: “He has imprisoned his legitimate wife like a beast, and displays her in the suburbs on the days of the fair-with, it goes without saying, permission of the authorities”

(20). However, both authorities and husband are also presented as “monsters” or monstrous by the poet, and the whole spectacle of the wild woman is revealed to be a social construct. The poet points out, “Have you heard her flesh pop, despite the *false hair* [my emphasis]” (21)?²⁹ The woman wears a postiche, or a fake hair piece, indicating that the husband is engaged in fraud. He has constructed this “wild woman” through subjecting her to the cage, his whips, and the false exterior of hair to impose “deviance” upon her.

The speaker’s position, then, is a precarious one because he reveals the unstable structures surrounding his own existence. He fuses with the monstrous husband at the end of the poem by declaring, “Poet that I am, I’m not the dupe you’d like to think me, and if you wear me out too often with you *precious* whining, I will treat you like a wild woman” (20). He threatens to create his own “wild woman”, yet this reveals his own insecurities. The poet recalls Jean de la Fontaine’s fable “The Frogs Who Ask for a King” and applies this tale to his relationship to the maîtresse. The fable describes a group of frogs who tires of their democratic government. They demand for a king from Jupin who initially sends down a log.³⁰³¹ Unsatisfied with the impotence of the log, the frogs quickly begin to mock it and demand a more powerful king. Jupin then sends a crane that begins to eat the frogs. The narrator uses this tale to warn his maîtresse:

And to see you, my so delicate beauty, your feet in muck and your eyes turned
nebulously skyward, as if beseeching a king, you’re the very image of a young
frog invoking the ideal. If you don’t like your King Log (which at the moment, as

²⁹ The French reads *le poil postiche*.

³⁰ Jupin is Jupiter/Zeus.

³¹ The French word is *soliveau* or in English, *small solive*, defined as a “piece of carpentry that supports the floors”.

you know, I am) watch out for the crane who will crunch you up, gulp you down,
kill you at his pleasure. (21)

The narrator associates himself with the *soliveau* or the “King Log”, as a supporter (financially and otherwise) of the maîtresse, yet the *soliveau* comparison suggests impotence. The maîtresse seeks a more ideal “king”, and the narrator feels threatened by her aspirations.

III. Breaking Through Lines

Unlike the speaker in “Wild Woman and Little Darling” who unwittingly exposes his own powerlessness, in “Tremors of Degradation,” the sixteenth poem in *Wild Grass*, the narrator clearly has no control over his work. The poem’s first line, “I dreamed I was dreaming,” indicates that the events occur within the narrator’s subconscious. However, even when in his own mind, the narrator is not in full control of his faculties. The dream structure gives the narrator no agency in the occurrences within the dreams; he is not an active character within his own dreams but can only stand passively watching the unnamed woman (who is a prostitute) at the center of the poem. He observes two intimate moments of the woman’s life: the first scene depicts the woman at home with a client, and the second depicts the woman in old age surrounded by her daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren who have gathered to condemn her for her previous occupation.

The narrator in the beginning of the poem states his confusion: “I had no idea where I was, but before me was the interior of a tightly closed cottage late at night.” In

the Chinese text, the narrator literally does not know where his own body is placed.³² Additionally, the Chinese text omits the subject “I” within the sentence and depicts the narrator as simply a floating pair of eyes.³³ The suggestion is that the narrator has no body of his own, yet he focuses his narration specifically on bare bodies. He describes the people first encountered within the dream(s) as solely bodies which are engaged in physical action: he sees the unnamed woman “under the hairy, muscular flesh of a stranger.” Furthermore, the masculine body of the stranger in the Chinese text is objectified; the poet describes it as a “chunk of meat.”³⁴ The unnamed woman, by contrast, is “a slight frail body [which] trembled with hunger, pain, shock, humiliation, and pleasure” (85). Her interior emotions are represented as exterior bodily sensations; she is given subjectivity through her body, which feels “hunger, pain, shock, and humiliation.”

This wave of sensations—of hunger, pain, shock, and humiliation-- is again paralleled in the second scene which occurs after the narrator awakens from his dream. The narrator again states that he “[has] no idea where [he] was”, but this time he recognizes this scene to be the continuation of the first dream. Several years have passed and the unnamed woman, now old, suffers the condemnation of her daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren for having once been a prostitute. The woman’s family gathers around to accuse her of bringing shame upon the family. Their accusations culminate in the youngest grandson’s cry, “kill!,” which causes the woman to walk out of the house “stark

³² The sentence in Chinese reads “Zi shen bu zhi suo zai, yan qian que you yi jian zai shen ye zhong jin bi de xiao wu de nei bu” 自身不知所在，眼前却有一间在深夜中禁闭的小屋的内部 (self body not know place exist, eyes before but have one room in deep night middle tightly closed small room inner part)

³³ Omission of the subject in sentences is a standard feature in the Chinese language, but there is no mention of the narrator’s physical body until the last sentence.

³⁴ The Chinese phrase reads “Rou kuai” 肉块.

naked [...] out into the depth of night [...] until she reached the boundless wasteland” (88). The woman chooses to retreat to a place outside of boundaries.

The idea of breaking through boundaries or lines is apparent in the Chinese title. The translation, “Tremors of Degradation” omits a key word in the original Chinese: “xian” 线 or “lines.” An alternate translation reads: “The Tremors of Degraded Lines.”³⁵ The “lines” here could indicate the sentences or the language of the poem itself and the woman’s desire to break out of coherent speech.³⁶ The degraded lines could additionally symbolize the degraded lines of social expectations which the woman rejects through her trek to the wasteland, and even the idea of articulate speech as a “debased” form of communication. Indeed, the woman eventually expresses herself most clearly without the use of speech:

In another flash she pieced it all together: devotion and estrangement, loving care and revenge, nurture and annihilation, blesses and curses...She raised both hands then with all her might towards the sky and from her lips escaped a cry half-human, half-animal, a cry not of the world of men and therefore wordless. (88)

Her wordless cry, “half-animal” and unintelligible, in fact allows her to encapsulate within a single syllable the entirety of her emotions in a way that is impossible through “normal” speech.

We must briefly turn back to Baudelaire to further understand this inarticulate cry that is replete with meaning. There is a mirror cry in Baudelaire’s “Wild Woman and

³⁵ The word degraded can alternately be translated as decadent or debased.

³⁶ Gloria Davies argues that the “degraded lines” indicate the urgent necessity of using *baihua* 白话 or written vernacular Chinese for Lu Xun as opposed to using classical Chinese. *Wild Grass* is written in *baihua*.

Little Darling”. Recall that the maîtresse’s presence is felt throughout the poem but she never speaks. However, this pent up speech breaks free and manifests itself as the wild woman’s howls prompted by the beatings of the husband. The poet states: “And, eyes starting from their sockets, now [the wild woman] howls *more naturally*” (20).

Baudelaire emphasizes the words “more naturally” as opposed to the woman’s initial howls which seem to be contrived for performance. These howls, however, are real and are induced by rage. This wordless, inhuman howl is the only means by which the women (both the wild woman and her counterpart, the maîtresse) can retaliate against the poet’s articulate speech. The cry of Lu Xun’s woman not only retaliates against articulate speech but it also crosses the lines of social conventions. Baudelaire’s poet wild woman has been created by the imposition of a cage, and the wild woman’s inarticulate howls are extensions of the freak show spectacle. Lu Xun’s woman similarly is incredibly vulnerable in the moment of “howling.” She is also made into a spectacle through the poet’s dreaming.

However, the poet’s voyeurism gives him no power over the woman; he cannot represent her as a “freak.” Her cry in fact threatens the poet’s very ability to write. She emits the cry and afterwards, “her tremors, radiating like sunbeams, set the waves in the air whirling around as if in a cyclone to sweep headlong across the illimitable wasteland” (88). She generates her own “lines” which are powerful enough to profoundly disrupt the poet’s “lines” of writing. The poet is swept up by the waves generated by the woman’s tremors and is shaken out of the dream: “It was a nightmare, yet I knew this was because I had pressed my hands on my chest” (88). It is worth noting that in the Chinese text, the term for “nightmare”, meng yan 梦魇, is also the term for sleep paralysis, the condition

where one is unable to move while asleep although he or she is fully conscious of his or her surroundings.³⁷ The narrator struggles to remove his own hands from his body, but these “overpowering, heavy hands” seem like foreign entities. In short, the woman’s reclamation of her voice causes the poet to relinquish control of his hands—the instrument necessary for writing.

IV. Reversals

In “Mademoiselle Bistouri,” the forty-seventh poem in *Le Spleen de Paris*, the poet narrator is similarly divested of control of the poem. It is taken over by the titular character whose name, Bistouri, is the term for a surgical knife.³⁸ The poem depicts the narrator wandering the streets of Paris by night. He meets a young woman, Mademoiselle Bistouri, who mistakes him for a doctor. However, she soon reveals that she has made no mistake; this is an activity she pursues at all times. She meets men and insists they are doctors (when in fact they are not). That is, she forces them to assume the doctor identity through her persistence. She relates to the narrator her many encounters with “doctors,” and then she quickly begins to fabricate the narrator’s identity by recalling in detail his friends, colleagues, and even the medical positions he has held. She says, “I recall you assisting at difficult operations. A man liking to cut, to carve, to trim! It was you who handed him his instruments, threads, sponges” (89). The narrator eventually relinquishes his control over his narration to Mademoiselle Bistoury as he allows himself to be led away to her home and also led away from his identity. Unlike the previous poems, this poem is mostly comprised of Mademoiselle Bistouri’s speech and begins with

³⁷ The Chinese also call sleep paralysis “ghost pressing upon body” 鬼压身 just as the incubus is used in European traditions to describe sleep paralysis.

³⁸ The word is bistoury in English.

Mademoiselle Bistouri interrupting the narrator. Therefore, Mademoiselle Bistoury literally dictates the poem.

Later, it becomes apparent to the narrator that Mademoiselle Bistoury has a “peculiar passion” for doctors. Her interactions with doctors reverse the doctor/patient dynamic in several ways. She tells the narrator, “I’ve known quite a few [doctors]. I so love them that, without being sick, I go to see them, merely to see them” (91).

Paradoxically, her fetishization of doctors strips them of their authority. In the traditional doctor/patient relationship, the doctor is in a position of power and the sick patient is dependent on him. However, in Mademoiselle Bistouri’s case, the doctor does not serve any purpose except for her own fancy; she dictates the terms on which she sees the doctor. Furthermore, Mademoiselle Bistouri has a sexual interest in doctors, particularly surgeons. She tells the narrator of a young hospital intern with whom she had a relationship:

‘I would like him to come to me with his doctor’s bag and in his apron, even with a trace of blood still on it.’ She said that completely candidly, as a sympathetic man might say to an actress he loves, ‘I would like to see you in the costume you wore for the famous role you created.’ (91)

The narrator equates the uniform and tools of the doctor with an actor’s costume. Thus the doctor’s identity is defined through these external “costumes”: the apron, the bag, and the mask. To Mademoiselle Bistouri, the doctor is an artifact, an object created by humans. She shows the narrator her collection of her “doctor artifacts” which are painted portraits of illustrious physicians of the day. Eventually, she demands a portrait from him: “Next time we meet, dear, you will give me your picture, wont you” (90). The

narrator also becomes a part of Mademoiselle Bistouri's collection. He will be included in this display and will be literally transformed into an object for the viewing pleasure of the "madwoman".

The narrator reflects on his bizarre experience at the end of the poem:

What bizarre things you find in a big city. Life swarms with innocent monsters.

Lord have pity, have pity on madmen and madwomen! O Creator! could there exist monsters in the eyes of the only One who knows why they exist, how they were made and how they could have not been made? (91)

The forces that create the "monstrous" personage are dispersed through this view of the world. If life indeed swarms with monsters, then the monstrous are no longer anomalies. Furthermore, the word "innocent" and the word "monster" seemingly contradict one another. If monsters are innocent, how can they be monstrous? Therefore the answer to his final question is: no, monsters cannot exist if one knows how and why there were made. The wild woman is only monstrous because she is presented as an anomaly, a freak. If the freak's existence has a reason, explanation and purpose, the freak no longer exists. The freak show stage becomes thus dismantled.

Conclusion

I end with a brief discussion of the most direct example of Lu Xun's response to Baudelaire's *The Spleen of Paris* within *Wild Grass* to perhaps present a clearer picture of the dialogue between these two works. Critics have compared Lu Xun's "Gou De Bo Jie" 狗的驳诘 or "The Dog's Retort" to Baudelaire's "*Le Chien et le Flacon*" ["The Dog and the Flask"].³⁹ "The Dog and the Flask" depicts the narrator offering a dog from the streets a flask of the finest perfume. When the dog rejects the perfume, the narrator rebukes the dog: "Ah! wretched dog, if I had offered you a bundle of excrement, you would have sniffed its scent with delight and perhaps devoured it" (14).

Lu Xun's "The Dog's Retort" is another dream narrative.⁴⁰ Unlike "The Dog and the Flask", the narrator is actively pursued by the dog who first catches his attention by barking. The narrator "look[s] back contemptuously and shout[s] at him, 'Bah! Shut up! Lick-spittle cur!'" (74). The dog retorts: "I'm ashamed to say I still don't know how to distinguish between copper and silver, between silk and cloth, between officials and common citizens, between masters and their slaves, between..." At this point the narrator turns and flees.

It is as if Lu Xun's dog is responding to Baudelaire's narrator. Baudelaire uses the dog as a metaphor for the public who can only recognize "carefully selected crap," while Lu Xun's dog tells the narrator that he still has not acquired the standards of a human. Gloria Bien remarks that "Baudelaire's poem is a recrimination against popular taste, [and] Lu Xun's is an attack on the snobbery that might lead to such recrimination" (90). These poems appear to use this kind of transparent metaphor which lead critics of both works to conclude that these two poems are

³⁹ See Gloria Bien, Leo Ou-fan Lee.

⁴⁰ A large portion of *Wild Grass* consists of dream narratives.

among the least interesting in their respective collections.⁴¹ Indeed, both poems are considered oddly unpoetic in comparison to the other poems in their respective collections. I would propose that we might reassess these poems in light of my discussions in the previous chapters. Both poems are essentially allegories for the reading experience; the reader is the dog. However these allegories are not as transparent as they would appear at first glance. For example, Maria C. Scott suggests that “The Dog and the Flask” “urges readers to seek out hidden allegories in the prose poems”.⁴² The act of reading becomes an act of excavation and of generating new meaning. If we follow this interpretation and bring in Lu Xun’s dog, “The Dog’s Retort” would then call for readers to re-evaluate their pre-existing values while reading the work. Both sets of poems reverse conventional poetic practices in their form and content. As another of Baudelaire’s narrators declare in “Good dogs,” the final poem in *The Spleen of Paris*: “I sing the dirty dog, the poor dog, the homeless dog, the dog at large, the performing dog.” (96). Both collections, in fact, sing of the downtrodden, the poor, and the debilitated, but they do so in ways that make use of neither pity nor stigma. Rather, they recast debility as a an aperture through which to view, on one hand, the profoundly insecure and unstable power of normate culture, and on the other hand the aesthetic powers of the world beyond normate culture’s reach.

⁴¹ See J.A. Hidleston, Nicholas Kaldis.

⁴² She reads “The Dog and the Flask” in light of the preface to Rabelais’ *Gargantua*. This preface uses the metaphor of a dog licking bone marrow for an ideal reader seeking out the hidden meanings of a text. Therefore, to Scott, the “hidden allegory” within “The Dog and the Flask” is the reference to Rabelais.

Appendix A

Le Spleen de Paris Selections

A Arsène Houssaye

Mon cher ami, je vous envoie un petit ouvrage dont on ne pourrait pas dire, sans injustice, qu'il n'a ni queue ni tête, puisque tout, au contraire, y est à la fois tête et queue, alternativement et réciproquement. Considérez, je vous prie, quelles admirables commodités cette combinaison nous offre à tous, à vous, à moi et au lecteur. Nous pouvons couper où nous voulons, moi ma rêverie, vous le manuscrit, le lecteur sa lecture; car je ne suspends pas la volonté rétive de celui-ci au fil interminable d'une intrigue superflue. Enlevez une vertèbre, et les deux morceaux de cette tortueuse fantaisie se rejoindront sans peine. Hachez-la en nombreux fragments, et vous verrez que chacun peut exister à part. Dans l'espérance que quelques-uns de ces tronçons seront assez vivants pour vous plaire et vous amuser, j'ose vous dédier le serpent tout entier.

J'ai une petite confession à vous faire. C'est en feuilletant, pour la vingtième fois au moins, le fameux *Gaspard de la Nuit*, d'Aloysius Bertrand (un livre connu de vous, de moi et de quelques-uns de nos amis, n'a-t-il pas tous les droits à être appelé fameux?) que l'idée m'est venue de tenter quelque chose d'analogue, et d'appliquer à la description de la vie moderne, ou plutôt d'une vie moderne et plus abstraite, le procédé qu'il avait appliqué à la peinture de la vie ancienne, si étrangement pittoresque.

Quel est celui de nous qui n'a pas, dans ses jours d'ambition, rêvé le miracle d'une prose poétique, musicale sans rythme et sans rime, assez souple et assez heurtée pour s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme, aux ondulations de la rêverie, aux soubresauts de la conscience?

C'est surtout de la fréquentation des villes énormes, c'est du croisement de leurs innombrables rapports que naît cet idéal obsédant. Vous-même, mon cher ami, n'avez-vous pas tenté de traduire en une chanson le cri strident du Vitrier, et d'exprimer dans une prose lyrique toutes les désolantes suggestions que ce cri envoie jusqu'aux mansardes, à travers les plus hautes brumes de la rue?

Mais, pour dire le vrai, je crains que ma jalousie ne m'ait pas porté bonheur. Sitôt que j'eus commencé le travail, je m'aperçus que non seulement je restais bien loin de mon mystérieux et brillant modèle, mais encore que Je faisais quelque chose (si cela peut s'appeler quelque chose) de singulièrement différent, accident dont tout autre que moi s'enorgueillerait sans doute, mais qui ne peut qu'humilier profondément un esprit qui regarde comme le plus grand honneur du poète d'accomplir juste ce qu'il a projeté de faire.

Votre bien affectionné,
C. B.

For Arsène Houssaye

Dear friend, I send you a work no one can claim not to make head or tail of, since, on the contrary, there is at once both tail and head, alternating and reciprocal. Consider, I beg you, how admirably convenient this combination makes it for each and all-you, me, the reader. We may stop whenever we like, I my daydream, you the manuscript, the reader his reading-whose stubborn will I would not hold to the unbroken thread of some superfluous plot. Cut out any vertebra and the two pieces of this serpentine fantasy will easily rejoin. Chop it into many fragments and you will see how each is able to exist apart. Hoping some of these stumps will be lively enough to please and amuse you, I make bold to dedicate to you the entire snake.

I've a small confession to admit to you. In leafing through, for at least the twentieth time, the famous *Gaspard de la Nuit* of Aloysius Bertrand (a book known to you and to me and to a few of our friends, don't we have the right to call it *famous*?) that the idea came to me to try something analogous, applying to the description of modern life-or, rather, to a certain modern and more abstract life-the procedure he applied in painting a life long gone, strangely picturesque.

Which of us has not, in his ambitious days, dreamt the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm or rhyme, supple enough and striking enough to suit lyrical movements of the soul, undulations of reverie, the flip-flops of consciousness.

Above all, it's from being in crowded towns, from the criss-cross of their innumerable ways, that this obsessive ideal is born. Have you yourself, dear friend, not attempted to translate into song the strident cry of the *Glazier*, and to express in a lyric prose all the distressing possibilities his cry sends even to the dormers through the street's upmost haze?

But, truly, I'm afraid my jealousy has not ended happily. The work hardly begun, I realized that not only did I remain far below my mysterious and brilliant model, but also that I had made something (if this can be called *something*) singularly different, mischance anyone else would doubtless brag about, but which profoundly humiliates a mind that considers the poet's highest honor to have accomplished just what he proposed to do.

Your most affectionate,
C.B.

La Femme Sauvage et La Petite Maîtresse

"Vraiment, ma chère, vous me fatiguez sans mesure et sans pitié; on dirait, à vous entendre soupirer, que vous souffrez plus que les glaneuses sexagénaires et que les vieilles mendiannes qui ramassent des croûtes de pain à la porte des cabarets.

"Si au moins vos soupirs exprimaient le remords, ils vous feraient quelque honneur; mais ils ne traduisent que la satiété du bien-être et l'accablement du repos. Et puis, vous ne cessez de vous répandre en paroles inutiles: " Aimez-moi bien! j'en ai tant besoin! Consolez-moi par-ci, caressez-moi par-là! " Tenez, je veux essayer de vous guérir; nous en trouverons peut-être le moyen, pour deux sols, au milieu d'une fête, et sans aller bien loin.

"Considérons bien, je vous prie, cette solide cage de fer derrière laquelle s'agite, hurlant comme un damné, secouant les barreaux comme un orang-outang exaspéré par l'exil, imitant, dans la perfection, tantôt les bonds circulaires du tigre, tantôt les dandinements stupides de l'ours blanc, ce monstre poilu dont la forme imite assez vaguement la vôtre.

"Ce monstre est un de ces animaux qu'on appelle généralement " mon ange! " c'est-à-dire une femme. L'autre monstre, celui qui crie à tue-tête, un bâton à la main, est un mari. Il a enchaîné sa femme légitime comme une bête, et il la montre dans les faubourgs, les jours de foire, avec permission des magistrats, cela va sans dire.

"Faites bien attention! Voyez avec quelle voracité (non simulée peut-être!) elle déchire des lapins vivants et des volailles pialliantes que lui jette son cornac. " Allons, dit-il, il ne faut pas manger tout son bien en un jour ", et, sur cette sage parole, il lui arrache cruellement la proie, dont les boyaux dévidés restent un instant accrochés aux dents de la bête féroce, de la femme, veux-je dire.

"Allons! un bon coup de bâton pour la calmer! car elle darde des yeux terribles de convoitise sur la nourriture enlevée. Grand Dieu! le bâton n'est pas un bâton de comédie, avez-vous entendu résonner la chair, malgré le poil postiche? Aussi les yeux lui sortent maintenant de la tête, elle hurle plus naturellement. Dans sa rage, elle étincelle tout entière, comme le fer qu'on bat.

"Telles sont les moeurs conjugales de ces deux descendants d'Eve et d'Adam, ces oeuvres de vos mains, ô mon Dieu! Cette femme est incontestablement malheureuse, quoique après tout, peut-être, les jouissances titillantes de la gloire ne lui soient pas inconnues. Il y a des malheurs plus irrémédiables, et sans compensation. Mais dans le monde où elle a été jetée, elle n'a jamais pu croire que la femme méritât une autre destinée.

"Maintenant, à nous deux, chère précieuse! A voir les enfers dont le monde est peuplé, que voulez-vous que je pense de votre joli enfer, vous qui ne reposez que sur des étoffes aussi douces que votre peau, qui ne mangez que de la viande cuite, et pour qui un domestique habile prend soin de découper les morceaux?

"Et que peuvent signifier pour moi tous ces petits soupirs qui gonflent votre poitrine parfumée, robuste coquette? Et toutes ces affectations apprises dans les livres, et cette infatigable mélancolie, faite pour inspirer au spectateur un tout autre sentiment que la pitié? En vérité, il me prend quelquefois envie de vous apprendre ce que c'est que le vrai malheur.

"A vous voir ainsi, ma belle délicate, les pieds dans la fange et les yeux tournés vaporeusement vers le ciel, comme pour lui demander un roi, on dirait vraisemblablement une jeune grenouille qui invoquerait l'idéal. Si vous méprisez le soliveau (ce que je suis maintenant, comme vous savez bien), gare la grue qui vous croquera, vous gobera et vous tuera à son plaisir!

"Tant poète que je sois, je ne suis pas aussi dupe que vous voudriez le croire, et si vous me fatiguez trop souvent de vos précieuses pleurnicheries, je vous traiterai en femme sauvage, ou le vous jetterai par la fenêtre, comme une bouteille vide."

Wild Woman and Little Darling

"Really my dear, you endlessly and without pity wear me out; one would suppose, to hear you sigh, that your sufferings are worse than those of the gleaners or the old beggar women who dig out crusts of bread from dance hall garbage cans.

"If at least your sighs expressed remorse, they might do you honor; but they convey merely a surfeit of well-being and despondency from sleeping too much. And then, you never cease breaking out uselessly, 'Love me more! I have such need of love! Console me, caress me, this way, that way!' Now hold on. I'm going to try and cure you; maybe for a few pennies at a fair, without going to any great trouble.

"Do note, please, in this iron cage-bounding, howling like the damned, shaking the bars like an orangutan exasperated by exile, imitating to perfection, sometimes the circular sulk of the tiger, at other times the waddle of a polar bear- a hairy monster whose form form suggests, vaguely, yours.

This monster one of those animals generally addressed as 'my angel!' that is to say, a woman. That other monster, the one yelling at the top of his voice, stick in hand, is a husband. He has imprisoned his legitimate wife like a beast, and displays her in the suburbs on the days of the fair- with, it goes without saying, permission of the authorities.

Now pay attention! see with what voracity (not necessarily simulated) she rips apart live rabbits and still clucking fowl that her keeper throws her'. 'Take it easy,' he yells, 'musn't eat up everything in one day,' and, with that good advice, cruelly rakes back the spoil, uncurled guts caught for an instant on a tooth of this ferocious beast- I mean to say, the woman's.

"Here we go! a good whack of the stick to calm her down! Since her terrible eyes dart covetously towards the food taken away. Good God! the stick is no music hall slapstick, have you heard her flesh pop, despite the false hair? And, eyes starting from their sockets, now she howls more naturally. In her rage, she throws our sparks like beaten iron.

"Such are the conjugal relations of these two descendants of Eve and Adam, these works of your hand, O my God! This woman is, to a certainty, unhappy, though perhaps to her the tilillations of glory are, when you come: right down to it, not unknown. There are sorrows more irremediable, and without compensation. But in the world where she has been thrown, it would never occur to her to suppose that a woman might merit a different fate.

And us, now, my precious! Seeing the hells that populate the world, how should I react to your pretty little hell? you who sleep on stuff soft as your skin, who eat only roasted meat carefully carved by servants.

And what could they mean to me, you well-fed flirt, all these sighs that inflate your perfumed bosom? And all the affectations you've gotten out of books, and this tireless melancholy, meant to inspire the spectator with a feeling quite other than pity? It has truly from time to time given me the urge to teach you what real unhappiness is.

"And to see you, my so delicate beauty, your feet in muck and your eyes turned nebulously skyward, as if beseeching a king, you're the very image of a young frog invoking the ideal. If you don't like your King Log (which at the moment as you know, I am) watch out for the crane who will crunch you up, gulp you down, kill you at his pleasure.

"Poet that I am, I'm not the dupe you'd like to think me, and if you wear me out too often with your *precious* whining, I will treat you like a wild woman, or else throw you out the window, like an empty bottle."

Le Chien et Le Flacon

"- Mon beau chien, mon bon chien, mon cher toutou, approchez et venez respirer un excellent parfum acheté chez le meilleur parfumeur de la ville." Et le chien, en frétilant de la queue, ce qui est, je crois, chez ces pauvres êtres, le signe correspondant du rire et du sourire, s'approche et pose curieusement son nez humide sur le flacon débouché; puis, reculant soudainement avec effroi, il aboie contre moi, en manière de reproche.

"- Ah! misérable chien, si je vous avais offert un paquet d'excréments, vous l'auriez flairé avec délices et peut-être dévoré. Ainsi, vous-même, indigne compagnon de ma triste vie, vous ressemblez au public, à qui il ne faut jamais présenter des parfums délicats qui l'exaspèrent, mais des ordures soigneusement choisies."

The Dog and the Flask

"-My beautiful dog, good dog, dear bow-wow, come closer and sniff an excellent perfume, purchased at the best scent shop in town."

And the dog, wagging his tail, which I suppose, in these poor creatures, the sign corresponding to laugh and to smile, approaches and, curious, puts his moist nose to the unstoppered flask; after which, drawing back in fright, barks at me, clearly a reproach.

"-Ah! Wretched dog, if I had offered you a bundle of excrement, you would have sniffed its scent with delight and perhaps devoured it. So you too, unworthy companion of my sad life, you are like the public, to whom one must not present the delicate perfumes which exasperate them, but carefully selected crap" (14).

Appendix B

Ye Cao Selections

《题辞》

当我沉默着的时候，我觉得充实；我将开口，同时感到空虚。

过去的生命已经死亡。我对于这死亡有大欢喜，因为我借此知道它曾经存活。死亡的生命已经朽腐。我对于这朽腐有大欢喜，因为我借此知道它还非空虚。

生命的泥委弃在地面上，不生乔木，只生野草，这是我的罪过。

野草，根本不深，花叶不美，然而吸取露，吸取水，吸取陈死人的血和肉，各各夺取它的生存。当生存时，还是将遭践踏，将遭删刈，直至于死亡而朽腐。

但我坦然，欣然。我将大笑，我将歌唱。

我自爱我的野草，但我憎恶这以野草作装饰的地面。

地火在地下运行，奔突；熔岩一旦喷出，将烧尽一切野草，以及乔木，于是并且无可朽腐。

但我坦然，欣然。我将大笑，我将歌唱。

天地有如此静穆，我不能大笑而且歌唱。天地即不如此静穆，我或者也将不能。我以这一丛野草，在明与暗，生与死，过去与未来之际，献于友与仇，人|与|兽，爱者与不爱者之前作证。

为我自己，为友与仇，人|与|兽，爱者与不爱者，我希望这野草的朽腐，火速到来。要不然，我先就未曾生存，这实在比死亡与朽腐更其不幸。

去罢，野草，连着我的题辞！

一九二七年四月二十六日记于广州之白云楼上

Foreward

When I am silent, I feel replete; as I open my mouth to speak, I am conscious of emptiness.

The past life has died. I exult over its death, because from this I know that it once existed. The dead life has decayed. I exult over its decay, because from this I know that it has not been empty.

From the clay of life abandoned on the ground grow no lofty trees, only wild grass. For that I am to blame.

Wild grass strikes no deep roots, has no beautiful flowers and leaves, yet it imbibes dew, water, and the blood and flesh of the dead, although all try to rob it of life. As long as it lives it is trampled upon and mown down, until it dies and decays.

But I am not worried; I am glad. I shall laugh aloud and sing.

I love my wild grass, but I detest the ground, which decks itself with wild grass.

A subterranean fire is spreading, raging, underground. Once the molten lava breaks through the earth's crust, it will consume all the wild grass and lofty trees, leaving nothing to decay.

But I am not worried; I am glad. I shall laugh aloud and sing.

Heaven and earth are so serene that I cannot laugh aloud or sing. Even if they were not so serene, I probably could not either. Between light and darkness, life and death, past and future, I dedicate this tussock of wild grass as my pledge to friend and foe, man and beast, those whom I love and those whom I do not love.

For my own sake and for the sake of friend and foe, man and beast, those whom I love and those whom I do not love, I hope for the swift death and decay of this wild grass. Otherwise, it means I have not lived, and this would be truly more lamentable than death and decay.

Go, then, wild grass, together with my foreword!

Written in White Cloud Pavilion, Guangzhou

April 26, 1927.

《野草》英文译本序

冯Y·S·先生由他的友人给我看《野草》的英文译本，并且要我说几句话。可惜我不懂英文，只能自己说几句。但我希望，译者将不嫌我只做了他所希望的一半的。

这二十多篇小品，如每篇末尾所注，是一九二四至二六年在北京所作，陆续发表于期刊《语丝》上的。大抵仅仅是随时的小感想。因为那时难于直说，所以有时措辞就很含糊了。

现在举几个例罢。因为讽刺当时盛行的失恋诗，作《我的失恋》，因为憎恶社会上旁观者之多，作《复仇》第一篇，又因为惊异于青年之消沉，作《希望》。《这样的战士》，是有感于文人学士们帮助军阀而作。《腊叶》，是为爱我者的想要保存我而作的。段祺瑞zheng府枪击徒手民众后，作《淡淡的血痕中》，其时我已避居别处；奉天派和直隶派军阀战争的时候，作《一觉》，此后我就不能住在北京了。

所以，这也可以说，大半是废弛的地狱边沿的惨白色*小花，当然不会美丽。但这地狱也必须失掉。这是由几个有雄辩和辣手，而当时还未得志的英雄们的脸色*和语气所告诉我的。我于是作《失掉的好地狱》。

后来，我不再作这样的东西了。日在变化的时代，已不许这样的文章，甚而至于这样的感想存在。我想，这也许倒是好的罢。为译本而作的序言，也应该在这里结束了。

（一九三一年）十一月五日。

Preface to the English Translation of Wild Grass

These twenty some short essays were all written in Beijing between 1924 and 1926, as indicated at the end of each piece, and published one after another in the periodical Yu Si. For the most part they are only small reflections of the moment. Since it was difficult to speak out directly at the time, occasionally the phrasing is very muddled.

Now I would like to raise some examples. Because I was critical of the sentimental poetry then widely current, I wrote Wo De Shi Lian (My Lost Love), because I hated the numerous sideline-observers of society, I wrote the first Fu Chou (Revenge); and because I was alarmed by the despair of youth, I wrote Xi Wang (Hope). Zhe Yang De Zhan Shi (Such a fighter) was written because of a feeling that men of letters and scholars were assisting the warlords. La Ye (The Dry Leaf) was composed for the person who loves me and wants to preserve me. After the Duan Qirui Government fired upon the unarmed populace I wrote Dan Dan De Xue Hen Zhong (Amid Pale Bloodstains), at which time I had already fled to other quarters. When the Feng Tian and Zhi Li warlord factions joined in battle I wrote Yi Jiao (The awakening), and after this I could no longer remain in Beijing.

Therefore, this much can be said, the larger proportion of [these essays] are small and pale blossoms growing on the rim of a deserted Hell, and for that reason cannot be considered as objects of beauty. And yet, this Hell is also bound to be destroyed . . .

Afterward, I wrote no longer this kind of thing. The era, which is changing daily, doesn't allow this kind of writing and even this kind of thought to exist. I think that perhaps this is fine.

《颓败线的颤动》

我梦见自己在做梦。自身不知所在，眼前却有一间在深夜中禁闭的小屋的内部，但也看见屋上瓦松的茂密的森林。

板桌上的灯罩是新拭的，照得屋子里分外明亮。在光明中，在破榻上，在初不相识的披毛的强悍的肉块底下，有瘦弱渺小的身躯，为饥饿，苦痛，惊异，羞辱，欢欣而颤动。弛缓，然而尚且丰腴的皮肤光润了；青白的两颊泛出轻红，如铅上涂了胭脂水。

灯火也因惊惧而缩小了，东方已经发白。

然而空中还弥漫地摇动着饥饿，苦痛，惊异，羞辱，欢欣的波涛……

“妈！”约略两岁的女孩被门的开合声惊醒，在草席围着的屋角的地上叫起来了。

“还早哩，再睡一会罢！”她惊惶地说。

“妈！我饿，肚子痛。我们今天能有什么吃的？”

“我们今天有吃的了。等一会有卖烧饼的来，妈就买给你。”她欣慰地更加紧捏着掌中的小银片，低微的声音悲凉地发抖，走近屋角去一看她的女儿，移开草席，抱起来放在破榻上。

“还早哩，再睡一会罢。”她说，同时抬起眼睛，无可告诉地一看破旧屋顶以上的天空。

空中突然另起了一个很大的波涛，和先前的相撞击，回旋而成旋涡，将一切并我尽行淹没，口鼻都不能呼吸。

我呻吟着醒来，窗外满是如银的月色*，离天明还很辽远似的。

我自身不知所在，眼前却有一间在深夜中禁闭的小屋的内部，我自己知道是在续着残梦。可是梦的年代隔了许多年了。屋的内外已经是这样整齐；里面是青年的夫妻，一群小孩子，都怨恨鄙夷地对着一个垂老的女人。

“我们没有脸见人，就只因为你，”男人气忿地说。“你还以为养大了她，其实正是害苦了她，倒不如小时候饿死的好！”

“使我委屈一世的就是你！”女的说。

“还要带累了我！”男的说。

“还要带累他们哩！”女的说，指着孩子们。

最小的一个正玩着一片干芦叶，这时便向空中一挥，仿佛一柄钢刀，大声说道：

“杀！”

那垂老的女人口角正在痉挛，登时一怔，接着便都平静，不多时候，她冷静地，骨立的石像似的站起来了。她开开板门，迈步在深夜中走出，遗弃了背后一切的冷骂和毒笑。

她在深夜中尽走，一直走到无边的荒野；四面都是荒野，头上只有高天，并无一个虫鸟飞过。她赤身露体地，石像似的站在荒野的中央，于一刹那间照见过往的一切：饥饿，苦痛，惊异，羞辱，欢欣，于是发抖；害苦，委屈，带累，于是痉挛；杀，于是平静。……又于一刹那间将一切并合：眷念与决绝，爱抚与复仇，养育与歼除，祝福与咒诅。……她于是举两手尽量向天，口唇间漏出人|与|兽的，非人间所有，所以无词的言语。

当她说出无词的言语时，她那伟大如石像，然而已经荒废的，颓败的身躯的全面都颤动了。这颤动点点如鱼鳞，仿佛暴风雨中的荒海的波涛。

她于是抬起眼睛向着天空，并无词的言语也沉默尽绝，惟有颤动，辐射若太阳光，使空中的波涛立刻回旋，如遭飓风，汹涌奔腾于无边的荒野。

我梦魇了，自己却知道是因为将手搁在胸脯上了的缘故；我梦中还用尽平生之力，要将这十分沉重的手移开。

一九二五年六月二十九日

Tremors Of Degradation

I dreamed that I was dreaming. I had no idea where I was, but before me was the interior of a tightly closed cottage late at night, and yet I could also see the dense growth of stonecrop on the roof.

The globe of the paraffin lamp on the wooden table had been newly polished, making the room very bright. In this light, on the rickety couch, under the hairy, muscular flesh of a stranger, a slight frail body trembled with hunger, pain, shock, humiliation and pleasure. The skin, slack but still blooming, glowed; the pale cheeks flushed faintly, like lead painted with liquid rouge.

And the lamp flame too shrank with fear, for the east was already light.

However, the air was still pervaded, pulsating, with a wave of hunger, pain, shock, humiliation and pleasure

"Ma!" A little girl of about two, awakened by the door creaking open and shut, cried out from the floor in one corner of the room screened off by a straw mat.

"It's still early. Go back to sleep," urged her mother, disconcerted.

"I'm hungry, ma. My tummy aches. Will we have anything to eat today?"

"Yes, we will. When the pieman comes, I'll buy you some sesame cakes." For reassurance she tightened her grip on the small silver coin in her hand, her low voice trembling with grief as she went to the corner of the room, moved away the matting, picked up the child, and laid her on the rickety couch.

"It's still early. Go back to sleep." As she spoke she raised her eye helplessly towards the sky visible above the tumble-down roof.

Suddenly another great wave sprang up in the air, colliding with the first and whirling to form a maelstrom which swallowed up everything, myself included, so that I was unable to breathe.

I woke up groaning. Outside the window all was silver moonlight. Dawn still seemed far away.

I had no idea where I was, but since before me was the interior of a tightly closed cottage late at night; I knew that this was the continuation of my last dream. However, many years had passed in the dream. The cottage was well kept now inside and out; within it, a young couple and a troop of children resentfully and contemptuously confronted an elderly woman.

"All because of you, we can't face the world," the man fumed. "You imagine you raised her, but in fact you ruined her. It would have been better for her to starve to death while she was small."

"You wrecked my whole life," cried the woman.

"And involved me too," said the man.

"Involved them as well" His wife pointed to the children.

The youngest, who was playing with a dry reed, now brandished it like a sword and shouted:

"Kill!"

The elderly woman's lips twitched convulsively, she started, then calmed down, and presently she was standing there as impassively as a stone statue. She opened the door and walked out into the depth of night, leaving behind her all derisive taunts and vicious laughter.

She walked on and on through the depth of night till she reached the boundless wasteland. All around lay wasteland, with only the sky high above and neither bird nor insect flying past. Stark-naked, like stone statue, she stood in center of the wasteland and the whole past flashed through her mind: hunger, pain, shock, humiliation and pleasure...she trembled; ruin, wreck and involvement...she twitched convulsively; "kill!"...she calmed down...In another flash she pieced it all together: devotion and estrangement, loving care and revenge, nurture and annihilation, blessings and curses...She raised both hands then with all her might towards the sky and from her lips escaped a cry half human, half animal, a cry not of the world of men and therefore wordless.

When she uttered this wordless cry, her whole body, great as a statue but already wasting and degraded, was shaken by tremors. These tremors, small and distinct at first as fish-scales, started seething like water over a blazing fire; and at once the air too was convulsed like waves in the wild, storm-racked ocean.

Then she raised her eyes to the sky, and her wordless cry was swallowed up in silence. Only her tremors, radiating like sunbeams, set the waves in the air whirling round as if in a cyclone to sweep headlong across the illimitable wasteland.

It was a nightmare, yet I knew this was because I had pressed my hands on my chest. And in my dream I strained every nerve to remove these overpowering, heavy hands.

June 29, 1925

《狗的驳诘》

我梦见自己在隘巷中行走，衣履破碎，象乞食者。

一条狗在背后叫起来了。

我傲慢地回顾，叱咤说：

“吠！住口！你这势力的狗！”

“嘻嘻！”他笑了，还接着说，“不敢，愧不如人呢。”

“什么！？”我气愤了，觉得这是一个极端的侮辱。

“我惭愧：我终于还不知道分别铜和银；还不知道分别布和绸；还不知道分别官和民；还不知道分别主和奴；还不知道……”

我逃走了。

“且慢！我们再谈谈……”他在后面大声挽留。

我一径逃走，尽力地走，直到逃出梦境，躺在自己的床上。

一九二五年四月二十三日

The Dog's Retort

I dreamed I was walking in a narrow lane, my clothes in rags, like a beggar.

A dog started barking behind me.

I looked back contemptuously and shouted at him:

“Bah! Shut up! Lick-spittle cur!”

He sniggered.

“Oh no!” He said, “I’m not up to man in that respect.”

“What!” Quite outraged, I felt that this was the supreme insult.

“I’m ashamed to say I still don’t know how to distinguish between copper and silver, between silk and cloth, between officials and common citizens, between masters and their slaves, between...”

I turned and fled.

“What a bit! Let us talk some more...” From behind he urged me loudly to stay.

But I ran straining on as fast as I could, until I had run right out of my dream and was back in my own bed.

April 23, 1925

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ACADEMIC VITA

Zhe Geng

1399 Chestnut Ridge Dr.
State College, PA 16803
zwg5029@psu.edu

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University, Schreyer Honors College
Bachelor of Arts in English and Comparative Literature
Minor in Physics, French Language, and Violin Performance

Study Abroad

Centre de Linguistique Appliquée, Besançon, France

EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant, Department of French Studies, University Park, PA

- Researched on French occupation during World War II
- Identified and collected a list of relevant materials from a wide variety of sources
- Worked with bilingual texts and French databases

Research Assistant, Department of Physics, University Park, PA

- Researched in condensed matter physics
- Presented on relevant topics with research group
- Attained basic machine shop skills

Research Assistant, Department of Comparative Literature, University Park, PA

- Researched on the use humor and satire in 20th century Chinese literature
- Compiled a bibliography of relevant articles from various databases
- Summarized relevant books and articles for faculty review

ACTIVITIES

Co-chair, The Schreyer Honors College Literary Committee

- Led a group in reviewing and selecting summer reading books for new student orientation
- Launched and organized book drives benefiting the African Library Project

Nonfiction staff, Kalliope Magazine

- Teamed with a small group in reviewing nonfiction submissions for the Kalliope Literary Magazine
- Participated in workshops and group discussions designed to develop skills for critiquing writing samples

AWARDS

Department of Comparative Literature Student Marshal

Phi Beta Kappa

Schreyer Honors College Academic Excellence Scholarship

Paterno Undergraduate Liberal Arts Fellowship

Dean's List, all semesters