

Mr. Fujino

Tokyo wasn't so remarkable after all. During the season in Ueno when cherry blossoms were at their most radiant, the flowers, seen from a distance, appeared as light puffs of crimson-colored clouds. But underneath the blossoms, there was no shortage of "foreign students from the Qing empire" enrolled in cram courses,¹ congregated in clusters. Their student caps, pushed up over thick queues that had been coiled on top of their heads, rose majestically like Mount Fuji. Some had untied their braids and coiled their hair flat on top of their heads; when they took off their caps, their lustrous locks glistened like a young lady's loosened chignon, which they would toss about with a few twists of the neck. It was really an exquisite sight.

The front office of the Chinese students' hostel sold some books so it was sometimes worthwhile to go by for a look. In the mornings, relaxing in a few of the Western-style rooms there wasn't bad, either. Come nightfall, however, the earth-shaking sound of "*dong, dong, dong*" would invariably reverberate from the floorboard of a particular room, a mess of smoke and dust. If you asked those in the know, they would reply: "They're learning how to dance."

Then why not go elsewhere to have a look?

So I left for the Sendai Medical Academy. Not long after departing from Tokyo, we arrived at a transit station. The sign read: Nippori station. For some unknown reason, I still remember this name now. Of the stops that came after that, I can only remember Mito. This was the place where the Ming loyalist Zhu Shunshui had died in exile. Sendai was a mid-sized town. It was extremely cold in the winter. There were no Chinese students there yet at the time.

Presumably, goods that are scarce are the most prized. Cabbages from Beijing when sent to Zhejiang are hung upside down in fruit stands with a red string tied around their roots and referred to as "Shandong vegetable." When the aloe that grows wild in Fujian arrives in Beijing, it is immediately escorted into the greenhouse and assumes a beautiful name: "Dragon's Tongue Orchid." When I arrived in Sendai, I, too, received such special treatment. Not only did the academy not collect tuition, some of the staff even expressed concern over my room and board. First I lived in a guesthouse next to the prison. It was already quite cold in early winter, but there were still many mosquitoes. And so I covered my whole body in a blanket and wrapped my head and face in some clothes, leaving only two nostrils exposed for breathing. The mosquitoes didn't have anywhere to insert their beaks into this space where breaths were continuously being drawn in and out, so I was able to sleep soundly. The food wasn't bad either. But there was a gentleman who felt that the guesthouse, which also prepared meals for the prisoners, wasn't a suitable place for me to live and repeated this to me incessantly. The fact that the guesthouse also prepared the prisoner's meals had no direct bearing on me, but it was difficult to rebuff the man's good intentions, so I ended up having to look for another suitable place to live. And so I moved to

This essay was originally published in vol. 2, issue 10 of the journal *The Wilderness* on May 25, 1927 in Beijing and later included in Lu Xun's fictionalized memoir, *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* (1928).

¹ Refers to the preparatory Japanese language courses offered at the Tokyo Kōbun Academy designed for newly-arrived Chinese students.

another guesthouse far from the prison. But what a pity that every day I had to drink taro-root soup, which I found rather unpalatable.

From then on, I encountered many new teachers and heard many novel lectures. Teaching responsibilities for the anatomy course were shared between two professors. The first part of the course was osteology. At this time, a dark, thin gentleman with a moustache the shape of the character “eight” (八), wearing spectacles and carrying a pile of books of various sizes in his arms, entered the classroom. After setting his books on the lectern, he introduced himself to the students, speaking with a drawn out voice with a distinct accent.

“I am called Fujino Genkurō...”

A few people in the back of the classroom started laughing. He then recounted the history of the study of anatomy in Japan. Among his pile of books of various sizes included works from the earliest times to the most recent publications in this field of study. Some of the older books were bound together with thread; some were reprints of Chinese translations. Their translations and study of modern medicine, it turns out, had not preceded the Chinese.

The students who sat in the back laughing had been held back a year after failing the course the previous academic year. Having already been at the school for a year, they were quite familiar with various anecdotes. They proceeded to regale the new students with the history of each professor. This Mr. Fujino was rather careless when it came to his attire; sometimes he even forgot to wear a tie. In the winter he would appear shivering in an old overcoat; once on the train he was even mistaken for a pickpocket by the train conductor, who warned all the passengers to be vigilant.

There’s probably truth to what they said. Once I saw with my very own eyes how he came to the lecture hall without a tie on.

After a week elapsed, likely on a Saturday, he had his assistant summon me. When I arrived at the lab, he was seated in the center, surrounded by human bones and individual skulls. He was doing research on skulls at the time, the results of which were later published in the school journal.

“Are you able to copy down my lectures?” he asked.

“I can copy some of it.”

“Let me have a look!”

I handed him my lecture notes, which he took and returned to me two or three days later. From then on, he asked me to hand in my notes once a week for him to look over. When I retrieved my notebook and flipped it open for a look, I was taken by surprise and felt, at the same time, a sense of unease and gratitude. It turns out that my notes had been supplemented and corrected with red ink from beginning to end. Not only were there additions of things I had missed; each and every grammar error was also corrected. This continued until he finished teaching all the courses he was responsible for: osteology, angiology, neurology.

A pity that at the time I was not the least bit hard working and sometimes even rather headstrong. I still recall an instance when Mr. Fujino summoned me into his lab and flipped to a

particular diagram in my lecture notes. He pointed to a blood vessel below the arm and said to me in an amiable manner:

“See here, you slightly altered the position on this blood vessel. Of course, this slight alteration does in fact make it more pleasing to the eye, but anatomical illustrations are not works of art; how things actually look, we can’t just change them. Now I’ve corrected it for you, in the future, you have to copy everything as it looks on the blackboard.”

However, I still wasn’t convinced. While I responded in the affirmative, in my mind, I thought to myself:

“I still drew a fine diagram. As for how things actually look in real life, naturally I made a mental note.”

After the final exams of the academic year, I went to Tokyo for a summer vacation and returned in the early fall. Grades had long been publicized, I was in the middle of the pack of over a hundred students, but I hadn’t failed. This time Mr. Fujino was responsible for teaching practical anatomy and topographic anatomy.

After about a week of practical anatomy, he summoned me again. He was very pleased and in his usual distinctly accented voice said to me:

“I heard that the Chinese revered ghosts so I was worried that you would be reluctant to dissect corpses. Now I can finally feel at ease since I know that’s not the case.”

But there were also times when he made me feel embarrassed. He heard that Chinese women had bound feet but didn’t know the details, so he asked me how they were bound and what shape the deformed bones assumed. He even heaved a sigh and said: “I need to have a look to understand. Just what exactly is going on?”

One day, executives of the student union for my class came to my dorm. They wanted to borrow my notes. I took out the notes and gave it to them, but they simply flipped through the notes once without taking them away. But as soon as they left, the mailman brought me a thick envelope. When I opened it, the first line read:

“Repent!”

This was a phrase likely taken from the *New Testament*, which had recently been cited by Tolstoy. This happened to be the time of the Russo-Japanese War and old Mr. Tolstoy had written a letter to both the tsar of Russia and the emperor of Japan which started off with this phrase. The Japanese newspapers reprimanded him for his irreverence; the young patriots were also outraged, but they had long come under his influence without being conscious of it. The rest of the letter said in effect that I had known the questions for the anatomy exam last year ahead of time since Mr. Fujino had made marks on my lecture notes and so I was able to get the grade I received. It was an anonymous letter.

It was only then that I recalled the matter from several days ago. A meeting was to be held among students in my class and the student executive had written an announcement on the board. The last sentence of which read: “Everyone please attend, it’s important not to leak,” with a circle added beside the character “leak” for emphasis. Although I thought the circle was ridiculous at the time, I didn’t take it to heart in the least. It was only afterward that I realized the

character was a jab directed at me, as if describing how I was the recipient of questions leaked by the instructors.

I then reported this matter to Mr. Fujino. A few students who knew me well also felt injustice on my behalf. So they went together to reprimand the student executives for their rude behavior in checking my notes under false pretenses and also asked that they publicize the results of their investigation. In the end, the rumor was finally quashed, but the student executives agitated for the retrieval of their anonymous letter. The result was that I returned the letter written *à la* Tolstoy back to them.

China is a weak country and so naturally the Chinese must be mentally deficient. They couldn't possibly attain marks above sixty based on their own abilities. No wonder they suspected me. After that, I suffered the fate of having to witness the scene of a Chinese man about to be executed by gunfire.² In my second year, there was an additional class in bacteriology. The forms of the bacteria were all shown through slides. When we completed one section of the lesson before the class period was over, they would show a few slides on current events; naturally they all depicted Japan's victory over Russia at the time. But somehow, some Chinese people were injected into the scene: A Chinese spy for the Russians had been captured by the Japanese and was about to be executed by gunfire; those surrounding him to witness the scene were also Chinese, and in the lecture hall, there was me.

"Long live the Emperor!" they all clapped and cheered.

This cheering occurred regularly after each slide was shown, but to me, this instance of cheering was particularly jarring to the ear. After I returned to China, I saw idle onlookers watching criminals being executed by gunfire, and their drunken cheering was no different from this. Alas, there's nothing one can do about it! At that particular place and time, my thoughts went through a transformation.

At the end of the second year, I went to look for Mr. Fujino, to tell him that I would no longer study medicine and that I would be leaving Sendai. A pained expression appeared on his face and it seemed like he was about to speak, but he said nothing in the end.

"I'd like to study biology, all the knowledge that teacher has taught me will still be useful." The truth is, I hadn't decided to study biology, but seeing how dejected he looked, I told a lie in hopes of comforting him.

"I'm afraid anatomy classes taught for medical studies won't be any big help toward studying biology," he said with a sigh.

Several days before my departure, he summoned me to his house. He gave me a photograph, on the back of which he had written two characters: "惜别regret at departure." He said he hoped that I, too, would give him a photo. But I hadn't taken any photos at the time so he asked me to send him one in the future and to correspond with him regularly to inform him of my circumstances thereafter.

² This account differs from the "slide incident" described in the preface to *Call to Arms* (1923). While the execution is described as a beheading in the preface, it is described as execution by gunfire in "Mr. Fujino." The slide in question has never been found, leading scholars to speculate on its possibly "imaginary" origins.

After I left Sendai, I didn't take any photographs for many years. My circumstances were rather destitute at the time and to relay them would no doubt just bring him disappointment, so I didn't have the courage to write a letter. As the months and years went by, it became even harder to know where to begin; though the thought of writing occurred to me sometimes, I found it hard to take up my pen, which still remains the case now. So I never sent him a letter or a photograph. From his perspective, there was basically no news of me whatsoever after my departure.

But for some unknown reason, I would often think of him. Of all my teachers, he is the one who gave me the most encouragement and the one I feel most grateful toward. I often think: his passionate hopes for me, his tireless teaching, on a smaller scale was for China, in hopes that China would have new medical studies; on a larger scale, it was for scientific research, that is, his hope that new medical studies would be transmitted to China. In my eyes and in my mind, his character is a great one, even though his name isn't known by many people.

I had the lecture notes he corrected bound into three thick volumes, planning to keep them as mementos for a lifetime. Unfortunately when I was moving seven years ago, a box was damaged in the process and I lost half of the books in that box. Coincidentally, the lecture notes happened to be inside the box and were lost as well.³ When I went to the transport bureau in hopes of finding them, I received no response. All I have left is the photograph, which remains to this day hanging on the eastern wall across my desk in my apartment in Beijing. Whenever I feel tired in the evening, right when I wanted to slack off, I would look up and in the lamplight see his thin, dark face, as if he were about to say something in that distinct accent. This would immediately arouse my conscience and embolden my courage, and then I would light a cigarette and resume writing some more things that would provoke the ire of those "upstanding gentlemen" and their ilk.⁴

October 12

Translated by Eileen J. Cheng

³ The notes with Fujino's corrections have since been found and reproduced in various Chinese and Japanese sources.

⁴ "Upstanding gentleman" was an epithet Lu Xun used mockingly to refer to intellectuals from the Contemporary Review Group and the Crescent Moon Society, whose members had predominantly been educated in England and America. They included Chen Yuan and Xu Zhimo, whom Lu Xun was embroiled in "pen-battles" with at the time.