

Interpreting Lu Xun

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Wolfgang Kubin, et al., trans., *Lu Xun, Werke in sechs Bänden* [*Lu Xun: Six Volumes of His Works*]. Zürich: Unionsverlag, 1995. Six vols, 1584 pp. DM/sFr.198. 1545 pp. (HC).

Japanese Nobel Laureate Ōe Kenzaburō 大江健三郎 has recently called Lu Xun 魯迅 “The greatest writer Asia produced in the 20th century.”¹ This is yet another reason to hope he will soon break out of what Margery Sabin has termed “the closed world of Chinese studies.”² Whether Chinese studies is a closed world, or the outside world chooses to maintain a closed attitude toward “Chinese studies,” the importance of expert translation in the whole enterprise of getting the West to take Chinese literature seriously seems, finally, on the verge of being recognized. With this six-volume publication, Wolfgang Kubin has established himself as a principal player in this world-wide undertaking. The attractive set of red, cloth-bound volumes he has produced (along with his students and colleagues) contains an all-new German translation of selected works by Lu Xun (1881-1936), a number of which have never been published before in English or French, including some of Lu Xun’s early essays in *wenyan* 文言, written in 1907-1908 during the period of the author’s stay in Japan, which Xu Guozhang once referred to as Lu Xun’s *Lehrjahre*.

The first five volumes contain complete translations of all the pieces in: I *Nahan* (“Applaus”/ Applause), II *Panghuang* 徬徨 (“Zwischenzeiten Zwischenwelten”/ Between times, between worlds), III *Zhaohua xishi* 朝花夕拾 (“Blumen der Frühe am Abend gelesen”/ Flowers of the morning read in the evening), IV *Gushi xinbian* 故事新編 (“Altes, frisch verpackt”/ Old things newly packaged), the essays in the collection in volume V *Fen* 墳 (“Das Totenmal”/ The monument to the dead) and, in the sixth volume entitled “Das trunkene Land” (The drunken land), Lu Xun’s poems in the classical and vernacular, selected reminiscences, plus an afterword by Wolfgang Kubin. Thanks to the determination of Professor Kubin, and a sizeable number of his students and colleagues, aside from the Japanese *Rojin zenshu* 魯迅全集 [Complete works of Lu Xun] (Tokyo: Gakken, 1986), this is now the most complete edition of Lu Xun’s works in any foreign language. Regrettably, however, it omits all of his essays after 1925, a loss which can be partially made up by directing readers who are confined to the Western languages to consult volumes 2-4 of the Yangs’ four-volume translation.³ William A. Lyell’s newer one-

¹ *Mingbao yuekan* 明報月刊, March 1995, p. 13.

² See Margery Sabin, “Lu Xun: Individual Talent and Revolution” in *Raritan*, IX, no. 1 (Summer 1989), p. 45.

³ The 1980 edition of Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang’s *Lu Xun: Selected Works* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press) differs in several notable ways from the 1956-1960 edition. All of the romanization has been redone into pinyin, which is far preferable to the unreliable “modified” version of Wade-Giles previously used by the Foreign Languages Press at Beijing. A number of translations have been revised for

volume translation confines itself to works of fiction (Lu Xun's short stories), which Professor Lyell has translated with the sometimes controversial exuberance of a creative writer and the informative, at times delightful, footnotes of a meticulous scholar.

The style of the German translations compiled by Kubin varies, particularly because they were done by so many different hands. At times they strive to be very close to the original and at others to be playful and creative, as is already hinted at by the titles of the above collections such as *Zwischenzeiten Zwischenwelten* (Between times, between worlds), instead of the German equivalent of the by-now almost standard English renderings of "Hesitation" or "Wandering". And that is an important aspect of these translations—they are not done from the English, as were some of the previous German renderings, but rather from the Chinese originals. That is not to say that Kubin & Co. have ignored English renderings; they have not, but rather have judiciously referred to them in certain instances and wisely avoided their errors in others.

Still, some problems arise from this. Does *Nahan* really mean "Cheering from the Sidelines" as Lyell boldly asserts in *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*?⁴ He certainly makes a case for it, both philologically and in terms of at least one context Lu Xun creates for it in the preface to that collection, but can that then translate into "Applaus" (Applause) in German? Or is that still further removed from the oldest English translation of "Outcry," based on another Lu Xun-created context elsewhere in the preface? (See *Lu Xun quanji* 鲁迅全集, 1991, I, p. 419). I tend to prefer "Outcry," the oldest rendering, and disagree with the Yangs' not-so-creative "A Call to Arms" as well as Lyell's version. I seriously doubt that Lu Xun meant "Go out and get 'em, kids!" with this title just as much as I would like to avoid turning him into China's Hemingway. He has already suffered too much from the "China's Gorky" comparison.

At other points, the question of "over-translation" frequently arises. Where and when should the line be drawn between translating and interpreting (that is, *explicating* the meaning)? For instance, Kubin calls *A Q zhengzhuàn* [lit. "The proper/true biography of Ah Q, usually referred to in English with the Yangs' translated title "The True Story of Ah Q"] *Die wahre Geschichte des Herrn Jedermann* (The true story of Mr. Everyman). One interpretation of "The True Story" is that Ah Q does indeed represent Everyman. Another, perhaps more popular one, is that he represents China; and a third, that he represents certain bad aspects of the Chinese "national character" (*guominxing* 國民性).⁵ Although I am personally sympathetic to

the sake of readability and accuracy and two new essays have been included in volume IV. These are "The International Settlement in March" (1936) which attacks the hapless literary critic "Mr. Dick" (then the pseudonym used by Zhang Chunqiao, later member of the "Gang of Four," which supposedly ruled China from behind the scenes in the early 1970s) and "Reply to Xu Maoyong on the Question of the United Front Against Japanese Aggression" (also 1936), which is important for understanding Lu Xun's position in the "Battle of the Slogans" and the controversy over "literature for national defense," even though its authorship is questioned.

⁴ William A. Lyell, trans., *Lu Xun: Diary of a Madman and Other Stories* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), p. 28.

⁵ See Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity — China, 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 45-76.

Kubin's interpretation, I don't think we have the right to make such a major alteration in a title, simply to do the thinking for the reader. In Chinese, Ah 阿 as a form of address is very informal—clearly less respectful than “Herr” in German, which originally meant “Lord” and has come to be the equivalent of “Mr.” in modern German. So why not call him “der ganze Kerl Q” or something like that, at least to preserve the Q, if for no other reason. Although my German may begin to sound pre-War already, I would suggest *Die wahre Geschichte des ganzen Kerls Q* as a tentative title. To omit “Q” is highly regrettable because, according to Lu Xun's brother, Zhou Zuoren, Lu Xun employed the Latin letter “Q” amid the Chinese characters of the title for its pictographic qualities as a picture of the head of a Qing-era “Chinaman,” with the queue dangling down behind his head (the tail of the Latin letter Q becomes the “pigtail”). It may also be a clever pun on the English word “queue”.

In his afterword Kubin speaks disparagingly of the earlier German renderings, especially those by East German scholar Johanna Herzfeldt (in Kubin's vol. VI, *Das trunkene Land*, pp. 172-173), some of which were made from the original Chinese. Yet it is difficult, and perhaps undesirable, for translation to avoid recreation, and the examples he cites in her work are not without their more recent parallels. Nevertheless, I like Kubin's renderings of *Yecao* 野草 (“Unkraut—Prosagedichte” [Weeds—prose poetry] also in *Das trunkene Land*) and a number of the classical-style poems. There are problems with the early *wenyan* essays, however, and I hate to admit this because I tried at one point to help the translators with some of these. For instance, the style of the German version of the lengthy 1907 piece *Moluo shi li shuo* 摩羅詩力說 (“Über die Macht der dämonischen Poesie”/ On the power of demonic poetry), which Nanjing University professor Zhao Ruihong once said marked the beginning of Chinese studies in comparative literature, is far too convoluted.⁶ I suspect this is due to the translator's well-placed desire to remain “true” to the original, but wasn't *da* 達 (“to convey the meaning”) the second of Yan Fu's principles that came before *ya* 雅 (“elegance”)? And if the meaning is not conveyed, how can one even begin to speak of the first principle *xin* 信 (“fidelity” or “loyalty” to the original). Of course, these are ultimately philosophical conundrums, but there is a need to find some middle ground for the whole enterprise of literary translation to work. Yes, Johanna Herzfeldt made some mistakes à la Florence Ayscough by reading too much into the Chinese by focusing on certain single

⁶ Examples can be found in vol. V, p. 92, paragraph 1: “Wo sind denn aber bitte die Beweise, wenn es in der Tat so viele Sanger voller Inbrust gibt?” (Without looking at the original, no reader of German could even attempt a guess at Lu Xun's meaning). At the end of the same paragraph we have: “Die Bemuhungen, uns endlich aus der Lethargie zu befreien, gehen auf Anstosse von aussen zuruck, wir sind nicht in der Lage, mit eigener kraftiger Stimme zu rufen.” In the original, the simile from the preceding sentence (someone trying to speak out in dream) continues here, but the German translation switches the subject. This is also true for the last sentence of the last paragraph on the same page: “Allein die Vielfaltigkeit und Anzahl dieser Stimmen macht es unmoglich, sie alle darzustellen, doch ausgehend von ihrem Einflu, der Kraft, mit der sie in der Lage sind, die Menschen zu bewegen, nicht zuletzt auch aufgrund ihrer eindrucksvollen Sprache, gibt es eine Dichterschule, die den Namen »Mara« verdient, ein Sanskritwort in der Bedeutung von »Himmelsdamon«, also etwa das, was die Europaer »Satan« nennen,” where a reader of German would have difficulty figuring out that the Mara school is one of the new voices the author seeks for from abroad. For more convolution, see p. 101, paragraph 2: “Wie viele Beispiele fur Dichter mag es seit dem Beginn der Schrift bis zum heutigen Tag in China wohl gegeben haben, denen es mittels einer ausdrucksvollen Sprache gelang, das Wesen der Menschen zu verandern und ihre Gedanken zu erhohen?”

characters that do not convey the main meaning of the *baihua* (vernacular) terms in which they occur (again see Kubin's afterword in vol. VI) or by taking things to an extreme by interpreting them too literally, but at least her German reads well while she is being creative.

The second point that occurs to me on reading the translation of Lu Xun's *Moluo shi li shuo* is the lack of annotations at certain critical points, say, for instance at the very end of section I of the aforementioned 1907 essay, where the origin of Lu Xun's Sanskrit word *Māra* 摩羅 as a translation of Southey's epithet ("satanic") for Byron and his cohort is completely unmentioned (see *Das Totenmal*, p. 93). Granted that it is best to remain close to the original, but if that is the case, why substitute the term *dämonisch* (demonic/ diabolical) for "Māra" in the German translation? That reminds me of earlier references to this title from the Foreign Languages Press in Beijing as "The Demoniac Poets," which sounds intriguing but is basically wrong. The *Lu Xun quanji* (1981 and 1991 editions) both have endnotes explaining the origin of the term at this point in the text; why couldn't the German version?

The translations of the classical-style poems (in Kubin's vol. VI, *Das trunkene Land*) I find more satisfactory, particularly those in a humorous or satirical vein, for instance, #3 of the 1932-1933 compositions entitled *Jiaoshou zayong sishou*:

教授雜詠四首

世界有文學
少女多豐臀
雞湯代豬肉
北新遂掩門

which Angelika Gu and Kubin render (VI, p. 42):

Wider die Professoren
Vier beliebige Gedichte

III

Draussen in der Welt gibt es eine Literatur,
Hier haben die jungen Mädchen einen runden Po.
Wer einmal Schwein ass, trinkt nun Hühnersuppe,
Da macht der Buchladen zu.

Rendering Gu's and Kubin's German version "literally" into English, we get:

Contra [i.e. against/ in criticism of] the Professors
Four random verses
Out in the world there is [a] literature,
Here young girls have round butts.
[Those] who once ate pork now drink chicken soup,
At that point the bookstore closes.

In contrast with my English rendering, which calls the poems, Four Desultory Verses on Professors,⁷ and runs:

⁷My annotated translations appear as a part of *The Lyrical Lu Xun: A Study of His Classical-Style*

III

The world has its literature
 And girlies' plump derrières' allure.
 With chicken soup galore, partake of pork no more;
 'Twas thus Beixin Bookstore thought best to close its door.

Although Gu and Kubin might be closer to the original, they do not retain the rhyme or the rhythm of the original. Nevertheless, their use of the German word "Po" for *tun* 臀 (buttocks) is humorous and an excellent choice, in keeping with the farcical and satiric tone of the original. But does it have the satyric force of the rhyme connecting images of being a professor of "world literature" with girls' "derrières' allure," which I would argue is required to carry over the full irreverence of Lu Xun's couplet? Their treatment of the poem's backdrop (VI, pp. 240-241) explains that the poem caricatures Zhang Yiping 章衣萍 (1902-1946), a professor at Ji'nan University and editor of the "World Literature" series at Shanghai's Beixin Book Company, who once published a line about summer weather making him so lazy he had lost the energy even to rub a girl's bottom (which Lu Xun considered a flippant and irresponsible remark over half a century before the days of institutionalized sexual harassment codes).⁸ Zhang was also connected, in a way Lu Xun disapproved, with the demise of Beixin and the anti-Muslim scandal surrounding it,⁹ which Kubin explains adequately and succinctly in his notes. I would have appreciated more citation of sources there, however, as that would have helped future scholars in their own research, but although Kubin's citations of Chinese sources are scanty, they are an improvement over the total dearth in Jenner's work.¹⁰ Western language sources are cited more meticulously by Kubin throughout, and in this he has done an excellent job.

If we look at the more somber classical-style poems, however, I am not sure Gu and Kubin succeed in preserving the tenor of the original. One example which comes to mind is the untitled poem Lu Xun wrote out on December 30, 1933 for Huang Zhenqiu (Kubin has "Zhengqiu"), which is often read as a self-portrait:

無題

烟水尋常事
 荒村一釣徒
 深宵沈醉起
 無處覓孤蒲

Verse (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996). For this particular poem, see p. 214-218.

⁸From Zhang Yiping's *Zhen shang suibi* 枕上隨筆 [Random jottings upon the pillow] (Shanghai: Beixin shuju, 1929), where he waxes: "Ah, the effect of those lazy days of summer on a man! I can't even find the energy to rub a girl's bum..." As quoted in the *Lu Xun quanji* (1991), VII, p. 436.

⁹ Hence the reference to pork within the poem, as another slap at Zhang for his offhanded treatment of Chinese Muslims. See *The Lyrical Lu Xun*, p. 217.

¹⁰ W.J.F. Jenner, *Lu Xun: Selected Poems* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1982). My review article treating this and other works on "Lu Xun's Classical-style Poetry" appeared in *CLEAR* 13, (December 1991).

Kubin gives a title to the (originally) untitled poem:

Ein alltäglich Ding

Ein alltäglich Ding sind Rauch und Wasser,
Auf unbehaustem Land belassen sie nur einen Fischer.
Nächtens trunken auf den Beinen
Findet er weder Reis noch Stroh.

literally (from the German):

A Daily Thing

A daily thing are smoke and water,
On uninhabited land there remains only a fisher[man].
At night drunken [on his legs],
He finds neither rice nor straw.

my version (from the Chinese):

Mist-shrouded waters are the normal lot
For a lone fisher by deserted hamlet —
Deep in night, arising drunken yet,
Reed and rush are nowhere to be sought.

Granted, this is a tough call. The Gu-Kubin version is at times “closer” to the original and they have Wasser and Fischer in a near (but not actual) rhyme in German, but that is where no rhyme occurs in the original. I use a loose rhyme throughout, adding “shrouded,” but preserving “hamlet” *cun* 村, “deep in night” *shen xiao* 深宵 and “reed and rush” *gu pu* 菰蒲 from the original, which Gu and Kubin do not do. I would differ with their choice of “Rauch” (smoke) for *yan* 烟, which I think here must refer to the mist overhanging the waters (probably a river). Since the village is deserted there would be no smoke around. Smoke is something the Chinese poet usually associates with the presence of people. Moreover, I would suggest that the mists hint at the unknown, further alienating the subject of the poem from his immediate surroundings. If this is a self-portrait, it is not a happy one; and it represents a singular occurrence or revelation (“Deep in night, arising drunken yet . . .”), not necessarily a daily affair. Finally, “. . . trunken auf den Beinen,” which indicates a certain state of drunkenness (in which the speaker feels unsteady or wobbly), is perhaps too idiomatic here and fails to fully communicate the meaning of *qi* 起 (to rise up).

In *Yecao* [Wild grass], as I have said already, there are some really excellent renderings, these are Kubin’s *tour de force*. Still, some passages are succinct, yet lack the literary prowess that the Yangs’ earlier versions sometimes display. Compare the last lines of *Xue* 雪 [Snow/Schnee]:

在無邊的曠野上，在凜冽的天宇下。閃閃地旋轉升騰着的是雨的精魂。 . . .
. . . 是的，那是孤獨的雪，是死掉的雨，是雨的精魂。

in the Yangs' version:

On the boundless wilderness, under heaven's chilly vault, this glittering, spiralling wraith is the ghost of rain . . .

Yes, it is lonely snow, dead rain, the ghost of rain.

with:

In grenzenloser Weite unter kaltem Firmament wirbelt blitzend der Geist des Regens auf . . .

Ja, das ist der einsame Schnee, der verstorbene Regen, der Geist des Regens. (Kubin, VI, p. 101)

literally:

In the borderless expanse/waste under the cold firmament whirls flashing the spirit of rain . . .

Yes, that is the lonely snow, the dead rain, the spirit of the rain.

True, it is difficult to render directly into English the power and the beauty of Kubin's spartan German prose. The whole image reminds the reader very much of a vision out of Joyce's "The Dead," but I would submit that it is the Yangs' imagination and deft juxtaposition of words like "glittering, spiralling wraith" that carry the beauty of the original passage over into English. In Kubin's version it is "wirbelt blitzend . . ."

Being a meticulous scholar, Kubin avoids many of the pitfalls of the Yangs' versions. For instance, again in *Yecao*, he does not add quotation marks to the text of *Ying de gaobie* 影的告别 ("Der Abschied des Schattens"/ The Shadow's farewell; VI, pp. 87-88). The Yangs add these in English where they do not appear in the original, causing confusion among English readers as to who exactly is doing the speaking at different points (it is the Shadow throughout).

In the preface ("Vorrede") to *Nahan* Kubin's colleague Raoul Findeisen translates:

。 。 。 但既然是吶喊，則當然須聽將令的了，所以我往往不恤用了曲筆，在“藥”的瑜兒的墳上平空添上一個花環，在“明天”裏也不敘單四嫂子竟沒有做到看見兒子的夢，因為那時的主將是不主張消極的。至于自己，卻也不願將自以為苦的寂寞，再來傳染給也如我那年青時候似的正做著好夢的青年。

. . . Da er jedoch eine Massnahme zur Anfeuerung ist und daher dem Muster militärischer Befehle gehorchen muss, habe ich mir gelegentlich erlaubt, bewusst und mit literarischen Mitteln von den Tatsachen abzuweichen: Das Grab des Jungen in der Erzählung "Das Heilmittel" ist wie aus dem Nichts plötzlich mit einem Kranz von Blumen bedeckt; in der Kurzgeschichte "Der morgige Tag" erwähne ich mit keinem Wort, ob Schwägerin Shan nun von ihrem Sohn nur träumt oder nicht, denn damals war der Oberfeldshaber gegen negative Schilderungen. Und ich möchte keinesfalls die Jugend, die jetzt ihren schönen Träumen nachhängt, die auch ich einst in meiner

¹¹ *Wild Grass* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1974), p. 22.

Jugendzeit geträumt habe, mit der so bitter empfundenen Einsamkeit anstecken. (I, *Applaus*, p. 14).

Cf. the Yangs':

However, since this is a call to arms I must naturally obey my general's orders. This is why I often *resort to innuendoes*, as when I made a wreath appear from nowhere at the son's grave in "Medicine," while in "Tomorrow" I did not say that Fourth Shan's Wife never dreamed of her little boy. For our chiefs in those days were against pessimism. And I, for my part, did not want to infect with the loneliness which I found so bitter those young people who were still dreaming pleasant dreams, just as I had done when young. (*Lu Xun: Selected Works*, I, p. 38).

Dr. Findeisen uses the words "mit literarischen Mitteln von den Tatsachen abzuweichen" to paraphrase Lu Xun's 用了曲筆, which the Yangs attempt to translate "resort to innuendoes." Their version is simply not accurate now; at least not in the American idiom of the 1990s, where innuendo means insinuation or a form of implied slander. Findeisen's phrase means "to use literary devices to modify reality" (lit. "to deviate from the facts"), which brings across Lu Xun's original meaning more clearly.

Putting the question of accuracy and "loyalty to the original" to rest for the time being, there is the issue of "register," raised by William Lyell's controversial translation of the narrator's *wenyan* (classical language) introduction to the *baihua* (vernacular) story *Kuangren riji* (*Das Tagebuch eines Verrückten/ The Diary of a madman*):

某君昆仲，今隱其名，皆余昔日在中學校時良友，分隔多年，消息漸闕。日前偶聞其一大病，適歸故鄉，迂道往訪，則僅晤一人，言病者其弟也。勞君遠道來視，然已早愈，赴某地候補矣。因大笑，出示日記二冊，謂可見當日病狀，不妨獻諸舊友。持歸閱一過，知所患蓋「迫害狂」之類。語頗錯雜無倫次，又多荒唐之言，亦不著月日，惟墨色字體不一，知非一時所書。間亦有略具聯絡者，今撮錄一篇，以供醫家研究。記中語誤，一字不易，惟人名雖皆村人，不為世間所知，無關大體，然亦悉易去。至于書名，則本人愈後所題，不復改也。七年四月二日識。

Kubin renders this:

Die Herren X, zwei Brüder, deren Namen ich jetzt unerwähnt lasse, sind mir in früheren Tagen auf der Mittelschule gute Freunde gewesen. Doch mit den Jahren der Trennung waren die Nachrichten immer spärlicher geworden. Vor einigen Tagen hörte ich zufällig von der schweren Erkrankung des einen. Es traf sich nun, dass ich mich auf dem Weg in die Heimat befand, und so machte ich einen Umweg, um sie aufzusuchen. Ich fand jedoch nur einen von beiden vor, der mir erklärte, dass der jüngere Bruder der Kranke sei. "Sie sind," sagte er, "von weit her gekommen, um uns mit Ihrem Besuch zu beehren. Doch mein Bruder ist nun schon seit langem wieder genesen und hat sich nach X zur Übernahme eines Amtes begeben." Daraufhin holte er unter grossem Gelächter zwei Bände eines Tagebuches hervor, die er mir in die Hand drückte. Man könne darin Aufschluss über den damaligen Krankheitszustand gewinnen. Mir als einem alten Freunde vertraue er sie ohne weiteres an. So nahm ich

sie mit auf den Weg, und nach der Lektüre war mir klar, dass der betreffende Bruder an einer Art Verfolgungswahn gelitten haben musste.

Sprachlich waren die Tagebücher verworren und zusammenhanglos, vieles wirkte ganz einfach absurd. Auch hatte es ihr Verfasser versäumt, Daten anzugeben, so dass man nur aufgrund der Uneinheitlichkeit von Tusche und Zeichen auf unterschiedliche Zeiten der Abfassung schliessen konnte. Es gab jedoch auch zusammenhängende Teile, die ich nun in einer Auswahl der medizinischen Fachwelt zum Studium vorlege. Fehler in den Aufzeichnungen habe ich grundsätzlich nicht verbessert. Lediglich die Personennamen habe ich geändert, obwohl es sich bei den Betreffenden um Leute vom Lande handelt, welche in der Öffentlichkeit unbekannt und ohne jeden Belang sind. Den Titel hat der Verfasser nach seiner Genesung gewählt, ich habe nichts daran geändert. Aufgezeichnet am 2. April 1918. (*I, Applaus*, p. 16).

The Yangs have:

Two brothers, whose names I need not mention here, were both good friends of mine in high school; but after a separation of many years we gradually lost touch. Some time ago I happened to hear that one of them was seriously ill, and since I was going back to my old home I broke my journey to call on them. I saw only one, however, who told me that the invalid was his younger brother.

"I appreciate your coming such a long way to see us," he said, "but my brother recovered some time ago and has gone elsewhere to take up an official post." Then, laughing, he produced two volumes of his brother's diary, saying that from these the nature of his past illness could be seen and there was no harm in showing them to an old friend. I took the diary away, read it through, and found that he had suffered from a form of persecution complex. The writing was most confused and incoherent, and he had made many wild statements; moreover, he had omitted to give any dates, so that only by the colour of the ink and the differences in the writing could one tell that it was not all written at one time. Certain sections, however, were not altogether disconnected, and I have copied out a part to serve as a subject for medical research. I have not altered a single illogicality in the diary and have changed only the names, even though the people referred to are all country folk, unknown to the world and of no consequence. As for the title, it was chosen by the diarist himself after his recovery, and I did not change it. (*Selected Works*, I, p. 39).

And Lyell gives us:

There was once a pair of male siblings whose actual names I beg your indulgence to withhold. Suffice it to say that we three were boon companions during our school years. Subsequently, circumstances contrived to rend us asunder so that we were gradually bereft of knowledge regarding each other's activities.

Not too long ago, however, I chanced to hear that one of them had been hard afflicted with a dread disease. I obtained this intelligence at a time when I happened to be returning to my native haunts and, hence, made so bold as to detour somewhat from my normal course in order to visit them. I encountered but one of the siblings. He apprised me that it had been his younger brother who had suffered the dire illness. By now, however, he had long since become sound and fit again; in fact he had already repaired to other parts to await a substantive official appointment.

The elder brother apologized for having needlessly put me to the inconvenience of this visitation, and concluding his disquisition with a hearty smile, showed me two volumes of diaries which, he assured me, would reveal the nature of his brother's disorder during those fearful days. [*Here Lyell's translation is missing a sentence—J.K.*]

As to the *lapsus calami* that occur in the course of the diaries, I have altered not a word. Nonetheless, I have changed all the names, despite the fact that their publication would be of no great consequence since they are all humble villagers unknown to the world at large.

Recorded this 2nd day in the 7th year of the Republic¹²

Of the above three translations, only Lyell's makes an attempt to address the question of register by translating into the language, style and diction of turn-of-the-century "high narrative." The other two versions make no, or very little, attempt to tip off the reader to the differences in style and language between this and the rest of the text. Although Lyell's critics fault him for being excessively "wordy" in translating Lu Xun, and this passage in particular, I fail to see this as a valid charge, judging strictly on the basis of word counts (Kubin 295 words; the Yangs 286; Lyell 262). Even if the sentence he inadvertently leaves out were put back in, I doubt that Lyell's word count would exceed that of the Yangs' version by much (note that the Yangs omit "Recorded this 2nd day in the 7th year of the Republic," while Kubin converts, perhaps unadvisedly within the text, to 1918 for the reader). I say "unadvisedly" because there may be irony in Lu Xun's use of the Republican calendar here—this is a Republic, yet we are still "eating" people.¹³

The title *Das trunkene Land* (The drunken country), Kubin's creation as a volume title, not Lu Xun's, seems to be derived from a line in one of Lu Xun's classical-style poems and is intended as a reference to China. In Gu's and Kubin's translation (p. 30), the whole poem

送 O. E. 君攜蘭歸國

椒焚桂折佳人老，
獨托幽岩展素心。
豈惜芳馨遺遠者，
故鄉如醉有荆榛。

runs:

Für O. E. mit Orchideen auf dem Weg nach Japan

Der Pfeffer wird verbrannt, die Kassia gefällt, was ohne
Fehl ist, kommt in die Jahre,
Allein die Orchidee erblüht in dunklem Tal.
Wie gern folgt sie dem Fremden in die Ferne,
Hierzulande lebt's sich trunken angesichts der Dornen.

¹² William A. Lyell, p. 29.

¹³ Zheng Yi's book, *Scarlet Memorial: Tales of Cannibalism* (New York: Westview, HaperCollins, (1996) sheds new light on the question of just how "metaphorical" and how historical the whole image is. Perhaps Lu Xun's madman was more prophetic than anyone realized. Also see Zheng Yi and Kowallis in the "Freedom to Write Forum" at Brown University March 21, 1996 in C-Span Archives at Purdue University, video tape #96-08-31-20-2, where Zheng discusses cannibalism during the Cultural Revolution.

literally, from the German:

For O.E. on his Way back to Japan with Orchids

The pepper is burned, the cassia fallen, what is without
 fault grows old,
 Alone the orchid blooms in [a] dark valley.
 How happily it follows the stranger/foreigner in the distance,
 Here at home one lives drunken in the face of thorns.

finally, in my version:

Pepper plant put to flame, cassia plucked up,
 comely men grow old;
 Only consigned to some remote crag
 can the orchid's pure heart unfold.
 How can we begrudge this fragrant lot
 to one from afar;
 When our own homeland, as if drunk,
 has its brambles and thorns to prick and scar.¹⁴

Neither Kubin nor I delve into the debate about the proper translation of the Chinese *lan* 蘭; to be sure, that is better left to others more qualified than I. What concerns me more here is that the simile in the Chinese line *guxiang ru zui you jingzhen* 故鄉如醉有荆榛 (lit. old land like/as drunk, has brambles/thorns) does not work completely in either English or German. This can be dealt with by altering the simile, which I did not do, or adding to it, which I did, in this case, partially for the sake of rhyme, but partly to clarify the meaning of the original. Kubin's choice is not to modify or amplify in any way, which is admirable in its restraint, but places the burden of interpreting the simile squarely back on the reader. Perhaps this is one reason why Kubin chooses to paraphrase the image elsewhere (*Das trunkene Land* = "The Drunken Land" of the volume's title), seeking thereby to clarify it. But what does *Das trunkene Land* imply to the German reader? I would hope it conjures up the final scene from Lu Xun's *Zhufu* [Benediction; "The New-Year Sacrifice" in the Yangs' translation and also "Das Neujahrsopfer"¹⁵ in Kubin's rendering] where Lu Xun writes with great irony:

我在這繁響的擁抱中，也懶散而舒適，從白天至初夜的疑慮，全給祝福的空氣一掃而空了，只覺得天地聖眾歆享了牲體和香煙，都醉醺醺的在空中蹣跚，豫備給魯鎮的人們以無限的幸福。

¹⁴ *The Lyrical Lu Xun*, pp. 142-146.

¹⁵ *Das Neujahrsopfer* is, again, regrettably, "The New-Year Sacrifice." I say regrettably because there is great irony in Lu Xun's choice of the word *zhufu* 祝福 ("benediction"; "blessing"; literally "[I] wish you happiness") for the title of this story; hence it ought to be preserved. Of course, Xiang Lin Sao is the human sacrifice, deprived of her human dignity even more with each passing day by her heartless gentry employers and her jealous peasant rival at work, then finally cast out by her employer and allowed to die by the people of her adoptive town, whom the author actually curses, rather than "blesses" at the end with its irony; anyone can "win" if they are totally ruthless.

Ich lag müssig und bequem inmitten dieser Umarmung aus Lärm und Getöse, und die Zweifel, die mich bis in den Abend hinein bewegt hatten, schienen durch die Atmosphäre der Feierlichkeiten hinweggefegt. Ich spürte nur, dass die Heiligen des Himmels und der Erde die Opfertgaben, den süßen Wein und den Weihrauch angenommen und sich daran erfreut hatten und nun volltrunken in der Luft herumtorkelten und voller Freude Luzhen mit grenzenlosem Glück belohnen wollten.

In the Yangs' English version:

Enveloped in this medley of sound I relaxed; the doubt which had preyed on my mind from dawn till night was swept clean away by the festive atmosphere and I felt only that the saints of heaven and earth had accepted the sacrifice and incense and were reeling with intoxication in the sky, preparing to give Luzhen's people boundless good fortune.¹⁶

and in William Lyell's translation:

All the worries and concerns that had plagued me from morning till night the day before had been totally swept away by the happy atmosphere of the New Year. I was conscious of nothing except that the various gods of heaven and earth were enjoying the ritual offerings and all the incense that burned in their honor. Comfortably tipsy by now, they staggered through the sky and prepared to shower the people of Lu Town with infinite blessings.¹⁷

Nevertheless, I'm afraid the title *Das trunkene Land* won't suggest such intertextual irony, unless that reader is intimately familiar with Lu Xun's works. I think *Das trunkene Land* is actually a bit too "orientalized" an image, one that conjures up whirling dervishes, opium-inspired ranting and the eternal (or seemingly so, even for the sophisticated Western readers of this "postmodern" era) *Dream of Orient*. I would, for that reason, have avoided it. Otherwise, it sounds quite poetic and that is the strength of many of Kubin's renderings of the classical-style poems as well—they read like successful German poetry. For this, and for his feats of organization in bringing about this remarkable set of volumes, Wolfgang Kubin is to be highly commended, as are his students and collaborators. German letters will be far the richer for them—to think what Bertolt Brecht or Heinrich Mann might have made of them

From the pen of each editor/translator there emerges a different Lu Xun. Kubin's Lu Xun is a lyrical genius, plagued by brooding, doubts and skepticism; Lyell's is a vital, humorous and energized creator; the Yangs' is an unambivalent fighter against injustice and a dauntless voice for the oppressed. Each of these projects represents an aspect of Lu Xun, but all these and other works will have to be examined together before Western-language readers can begin to form a more complete picture.

¹⁶ *Lu Xun: Selected Works*, I, p. 188.

¹⁷ Lyell, p. 241.