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Translating Lu Xun's Māra: Determining the "Source" Text, the "Spirit" versus "Letter" Dilemma and Other Philosophical Conundrums

Abstract Not long after he withdrew from medical studies at Sendai and returned to Tokyo in 1906, Lu Xun began research on the history and philosophy of science, modern European thought, and comparative literature which produced five treatises he eventually published in an archaic classical prose style influenced by that of Zhang Taiyan. Central to, and the longest among these essays is *Moluo shi li shuo* (On the power of Māra Poetry), which focuses on literature East and West and, in particular, the Byronic poets and their international legacy. In translating, annotating, and analyzing this essay, one meets with a number of quotations and terms derived originally from Western sources, sometimes through a secondary Japanese, German, or English translation. This article will focus on issues that arise in the translation and interpretation of that essay, in particular on the question of determining the source text, what bearing that has or should have on scholarly translation and how the study of textual issues can shed light not only on texts but also on literary and intellectual history. It offers an analysis of Lu Xun's own interpretation of the source texts as well as conclusions reflecting on the significance of his literary career and broader mission.

Keywords Lu Xun, Māra Poetry, Zhang Taiyan, Chinese-English literary translation, Byron, *Cain*, Nietzsche, Satanic school, Demoniac Poets

The Significance of Lu Xun's Early Essays

In his mid-20s, not long after he left Sendai Medical Academy and returned to Tokyo in 1906, Lu Xun (1881–1936) began research to write a series of five essays, each of substantial length, in an archaic style of classical Chinese.

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Wang Dehou, senior scholar of Lu Xun's work in China, has argued that these essays in fact fit together as an integral whole to constitute a book, expressing Lu Xun's formative ideas on evolution, the history and philosophy of science, culture, politics, literature, and religion.¹ Elsewhere I have held that they may in fact be read as a blueprint for the rest of his career.² The five essays were published in 1907–8 in Tokyo in a Chinese expatriate journal titled *Henan*, which was soon thereafter banned by the Japanese authorities under suspicion of revolutionary leanings at the request of the Qing embassy.

The first of the essays, *Ren zhi lishi* (orig. *Reijian zhi lishi*, The history of [the evolution of] humankind), traces the development of the theory of evolution from Thales to Darwin, focusing on Ernst Haeckel's *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte* (History of creation, 1868).³ The second, *Kexueshi jiao pian* (Lessons from the history of science) outlines the development of science in the West from ancient Greece to the nineteenth century, introducing Bacon and Descartes and arguing that scientific truth will ultimately emerge only through a balance of their inductive and deductive methods.

In the third, *Wenhua pianzhi lun* (On imbalanced cultural development) Lu Xun criticizes the "lopsided" or "unbalanced" developments in 19th century civilization, with its emphasis on materialism and the usually self-centered will of the majority, the defects of which he proposed to counteract by stressing the value of the individual, of intellect, and enlightenment. He looked for inspiration toward the "new idealism" that had emerged from Germany in the late 19th century (Stirner, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche). The fourth, *Moluo shi li shuo* (On the power of Māra Poetry) the longest of all is a treatise on Chinese and comparative literature, offering a critical assessment of the Chinese poetic tradition followed by an introduction of Byron and an extensive discussion of his influence on other English, Russian, Polish and Hungarian poets including Shelley, Pushkin, Lermontov, Mickiewicz, Slowacki, and Petöfi, ending with an appeal for China to produce such writers who can speak with what he calls the "voices of the heart" (*xinsheng* 心声) to strike a responsive chord in their readers, stirring them to struggle for freedom from oppression and to build a new, more humane order, both in China and the world.

The fifth essay, *Po e sheng lun* (Toward a refutation of malevolent voices, 1908) is one which I have translated for the American journal *boundary2*,⁴

¹ See the collected articles of Wang Dehou published under the title *Lu Xun jiao wo*, 234–38.

² See my article on "Lu Xun's Early Essays and Present-Day China," 1301–13.

³ For an analysis of this article and more, see Lydia H. Liu, "Life as Form: How Biomimesis Encountered Buddhism in Lu Xun," 21–54.

⁴ For this new annotated translation of Lu Xun's "Toward a Refutation of Malevolent Voices," see *boundary2: an international journal of literature and culture*, vol. 38, no. 2, summer 2011, 39–62.

published at Duke University, along with a commentary by Wang Hui, a prominent public intellectual and leader of what has been termed the “New Left” in China today. In it Lu Xun criticizes China’s gentry elites for attributing the nation’s backwardness to “superstition,” i.e. folk religion and Buddhism, the former of which he sees as connected to celebration of the seasons and their link with agricultural production and the latter of which he views as part of a great philosophical tradition. He condemns iconoclastic demands with regard to the abolition of the Chinese language and religious festivals, as well as chauvinism, militarism and jingoism, emerging as an internationalist who would have China go to the aid of weaker nations, as did Byron and the Polish general Bem.

Unlike the leading reformers of the time, Lu Xun’s focus was inward-looking rather than focusing on external factors such as modernization of the military, financial reform, spurring the growth of industry and the expansion of trade and commerce. For him what was important was rethinking social practices, attitudes, priorities and morality. China’s modernization would need to rely on its people and this is what he meant by emphasizing the idea of *li ren* (lit. establishing the people) as a modern, independent, self-reflective and responsible citizenry, cherishing the scientific spirit but at the same time maintaining links to the humanistic elements in tradition and treasuring the life of the intellect.

These essays are important from a historical point of view, chronicling China’s reception of Western civilization and differentiating Lu Xun’s position from other intellectual leaders at the time such as Kang Youwei 康有为 (1858–1927), Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873–1929) and Wu Zhihui 吴稚晖 (1865–1953). Although he had read Yan Fu (1853–1921), was a student of Zhang Binglin 章炳麟 (*hao* Taiyan 太炎; 1868–1936) and had been exposed to a vibrant intellectual milieu in Tokyo, Lu Xun emerges both as a serious, self-motivated researcher⁵ and an independent thinker. They also reveal a change in the role of literature, which had become a vehicle for exposing corruption and popularizing new ideas in the late Qing, but in Lu Xun’s hands became a tool for challenging people to rethink the way they live and how they relate to others. And most importantly for Lu Xun studies—they outline his concerns and ideals at the outset of his literary career, many of which resurface in his later writings and activities.

Māra Poetry, Demoniac Poets or Satanic Verse: literal, figurative or back to the source?

From the perspective of the literary scholar, central to the five essays is *Moluo shi li shuo* the longest, which focuses on literature East and West and, in

⁵ See Kitaoka Masako, *Mara shirikisetsuzaigenkōnōto* 摩罗诗力说材源考 / 一ト, 35.

particular, the Byronic poets and their international legacy. The essay was written in 1907, is divided into nine parts and was first published serially in Tokyo in February and March of 1908 in the journal *Henan*. The late Stanford Professor William A. Lyell once suggested that it in itself could be the subject of a book-length study and Zhao Ruihong of Nanjing University did just that.⁶ Elsewhere I have argued that Lu Xun was trying to create a language for literary and cultural criticism that was at once more authentically “Chinese” by reverting to the *gǔwen* (classical writing) of the Han, Wei, and Jin eras, while at the same time attempting to develop a discursive style that could accommodate modern concepts and yet resonate with a moral and intellectual authority akin aurally and linguistically to that of the classics.⁷ Here I will focus on issues that arise in the translation and interpretation of that essay, in particular on the question of determining the source text and what bearing that has or should have on scholarly translation and how the study of textual issues can shed light not only on texts but also on literary and intellectual history.

The first question that arises for a translator is how to render the title of the essay *Moluo shi li shuo*. The celebrated husband-wife team of Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang translated this title as “On the Demoniac Poets” in a brief English *nianpu* (chronology) of his life.⁸ But the word “demoniac” sounds jarring in English and also lacks accuracy. “Demoniac” suggests inner-possession by a demon, either that or a source of inspiration as in “the demoniac fire of genius.”⁹ This makes me begin to suspect that the Yang’s never actually read the essay. Their translation also omits the word 力 (strength/power) and translates *shi* as “poets” rather than its literal meaning of “poetry” or “verse.”

A literal translation of the title would be “On the Power of Māra Poetry” but that begs the question of what Māra means or, better put, who or what Māra is. The name is derived from the Sanskrit word for “Death,” from *mri*, to die, and hence *a-mrita*, not mortal. In Hindu legend, Māra as a deity is associated with pestilence and fatal disease, and also with killing or destroying. In Buddhist mythology Māra is portrayed as the Destroyer, the Evil One, who attempted to dissuade the Buddha from his mission by a vision of temporal power.¹⁰ So why not simply translate it “On the Power of Māra Poetry”? Because when Lu Xun created this title for his article he was referring to a transnational group of poets, all of whom had, in one way or another, been inspired by Byron, whom Robert

⁶ Zhao Ruihong, *Lu Xun Moluo shi li shuo zhushi, jinyi, jieshuo*.

⁷ See my chapter titled “Lu Xun’s Han Linguistic Project: The use of *wenyan* to create an ‘authentic’ Han vocabulary for literary terminology in his early essays,” 289–312.

⁸ *Lu Xun: Selected Works*, vol. 4: 336.

⁹ Cited in the *Collins Compact Australian Dictionary*, 223.

¹⁰ Margaret and James Stutley, *A Dictionary of Hinduism: Its Mythology, Folklore, and Development 1500 B.C.–A.D. 1500*, 182.

Southey (1774–1843), then Poet-Laureate of England, once derided as the “chief of the Satanic school, inspired by the spirit of Moloch and Belial.”¹¹ With his famous penchant for irony already developing, it is this epithet that Lu Xun translates into Chinese as Moluo (Māra), writing in 1907:

新声之别，不可究详；至力足以振人，且语之较有深趣者，实莫如摩罗诗派。摩罗之言，假自天竺，此云天魔，欧人谓之撒但，人本以目裴伦 (G. Byron)。今则举一切诗人中，凡立意在反抗，指归在动作，而为世所不甚愉悦者悉入之，为传其言行思惟，流别影响，始宗主裴伦，终以摩迦 (匈牙利) 文士。¹²

The variety of such voices precludes any attempt at a complete treatment here, but judging in terms of strength sufficient to stir people, as well as the depth of their subject matter, one poetical school has emerged as clearly unexcelled, this is the Māra group. The name is a Sanskrit word [I have] borrowed from India to translate an epithet once applied to Byron that meant he was a celestial demon (*tiammo*), or what the Europeans call “satanic.” But here [I am using it] to refer to all poets who are resolved to be rebels, whose themes agitate [their readers] to action, and who call down upon themselves the open displeasure of society. A delineation of their ideas and their deeds, their sub□divisions and their literary influence begins with Byron and runs all the way down to the Magyar (Hungarian) writer [Petöfi].

In part three of the essay Lu Xun continues:

迨有裴伦，乃超脱古范，直抒所信，其文章无不函刚健抗拒破坏挑战之声。平和之人，能无惧乎？于是谓之撒但。此言始于苏惹 (R. Southey)，而众和之；后或扩以称修黎 (P. B. Shelley) 以下数人，至今不废。¹³

...Only when Byron came on the scene did he transcend the old limitations and give direct voice to his convictions; his every work resounded with defiant strength and iconoclastic challenge. Could genteel society not but tremble at this? And so they called him “satanic.” Although this term originated from Southey, the public at large concurred. Later, [membership in the “satanic school” of poets] was broadened to include Shelley and a number of others who came after him; in fact, the term is still in use at present.

Therefore I would argue that in this instance, research and back-translation yield the corresponding English “equivalent” of the important title word

¹¹ As quoted in Roden Noel, *Life of Lord Byron*, 165.

¹² *Lu Xun quanji*, vol. 1: 65–66.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 73.

“Moluo,” namely “Satanic.” So why haven't all scholars adopted this translation? There is an old Chinese saying: *xianruweizhu* 先入为主 (lit. “first impressions are the dominant ones”) and “On the Power of Māra Poetry” was Professor William A. Lyell's translation of the title early on, although (like the Yangs) he did not actually attempt to translate any of the essay.¹⁴ But the other part of the reason, I think, is the drive for exoticism. When you say “the power of Māra poetry” in English, it has a certain cachet to it and the appeal of mystery. This gets even stronger if you know that Māra had something to do with death, destruction, or even better: seduction. If you say “Satanic poetry” it sounds a bit like devil worship but if you use “Satanic verse,” it sounds like a plug for Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*, which won him a fatwa. So the choice is this: Does one go with the “correct” translation or the not-so-correct one that happens to sound closer to the original but isn't?

To be fair, I had discussions with the Indian sinologist N. C. Sen when we were both working at the Foreign Languages Press in Beijing. Sen held that in Buddhist legend, Māra is a trickster but not a fiend. For that reason, I concluded that there is not the same association of Māra with diabolical evil as one might have with Satan in Christianity.¹⁵ In other words, if this is the case, then Lu Xun not only sinocizes the translation of “Satanic,” he also modifies it to fit into his theme of Māra poetry as subversive, but not actually evil. In fact, it is the opposite of evil, or at least in an area “beyond good and evil” (*Jenseits von gut und böse*) as Nietzsche might say.

Lu Xun Translates Nietzsche

Lu Xun in fact begins the entire essay with a quotation from Nietzsche:

求古源尽者将求方来之泉，将求新源。嗟我昆弟，新生之作，新泉之涌于渊深，

¹⁴ William A. Lyell, *Lu Hsun's Vision of Reality*, 91.

¹⁵ The contemporary *Hanyu da cidian* (Great dictionary of the Chinese language) 12 vols. (1990) 6: 826 defines *Moluo* thus: “A transliteration of the Sanskrit Māra, i.e. *mo* (demon). It implies creating chaos (*rao'luan*) or hindrance (*zhang'ai*).” In Buddhist sutras it originally referred to Boxun 波旬 (Pāpiyas), the demon king of the sixth sky in the realm of desires. Later it was used as a general reference to ways of obstructing the Dao (path/way/teachings). In “On the Power of Māra Poetry” (in “The Grave”) Lu Xun writes: “The word Māra is borrowed from India, here it refers to a celestial demon, who the Europeans call Satan, and was an epithet applied to G. Byron.” The entry for Boxun (5:1117) states: “Pāpiyas—the name of a demon king, lord of the sixth sky in the realm of desires. Its meaning is ‘the Evil One,’ or the ‘One Who Kills.’” Pāpiyas abhors Buddhist teachings and often kills monks.... Zhang Binglin in his *Wu wu lun* 五无论 (Discourse on the five nothings) writes: *Tianmo you ren*, *Boxun rao Fo* 天魔诱人，波旬烧佛 [“The celestial demon lures people, Pāpiyas tempted (rao 诱) the Buddha.”].

其非远矣。

—尼佉¹⁶

This is an important quotation because it not only sums up Nietzsche's position, it also delineates Lu Xun's at the outset of his literary undertaking. In order to make the best possible rendering into English, we need first to locate it in Nietzsche's works and compare. Lu Xun had studied German as well as Japanese and some English at the time. But he does not give us any citation other than the author's name. If we are familiar with the career of Lu Xun as a literary translator, we know that he undertook two separate translations of the introduction to *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (Thus Spake Zarathustra), one into classical Chinese and one into the vernacular. The corresponding passage is not there, but reading further in *Zarathustra*, we locate it in part three, section 25 titled "Von alten und neuen Tafeln" (Of old and new tablets):

Wer über alte Ursprünge weise wurde, siehe, der wird zuletzt nach Quellen der Zukunft suchen und nach neuen Ursprüngen. —Oh meine Brüder, es ist nicht überlange, da warden neue Völker entspringen und neue Quellen hinab in neue Tiefen rauschen.

—Nietzsche's *Werke*, Leipzig: C.G. Naumann, 1899, VI, 308.

For this Walter Kaufmann gives us his English version:

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

—Walter Kaufmann, trans. *The Portable Nietzsche*, Middlesex: Penguin, 1976, 323.

Lu Xun's translation of 泉 (springs) for *Quellen* (springs/sources) is more accurate than Kaufmann's "wells." I also like his verb choice *yong* 涌 (to surge) to describe the action of water. In translating Lu Xun's version of this passage, one must also take into account the controversy over how best to translate *Zarathustra* into English. Walter Kaufmann and other scholars writing after World War II rejected the older, archaic rendering into Biblical-style English. But because Lu Xun had deliberately chosen an archaic style of classical Chinese influenced by the writings of Zhang Taiyan in *Min bao* (The People's journal) for his translation and for the text of these essays, we might

¹⁶ *Lu Xun quanji*, vol. 1: 63.

want to attempt to preserve or at least suggest the tone of the original in English. Looking at the Chinese text, with an eye toward the German original and also various English translations, I would propose:

Whosoever exhausteth the ancient sources shall seek after springs of the future for new sources. O my brothers, it shall not be overlong 'ere new life comes into being and new springs churn within the depths.

—Nietzsche

Why not just quote from Kaufmann, cite him and be done with it? Aside from the questions of style, register and accuracy, one obviously cannot do that and claim fidelity to the Chinese text because Lu Xun's translation is at variance with the original, both in tone and content (as is Kaufmann's). The tone of Lu Xun's rendering seems more pressing. Why not translate from the German original?—because Lu Xun changes it. He also avoids the Nietzschean image (and wording of) "...*neue Völker entspringen*" (new peoples arise) altogether, rendering this as *xinsheng zhi zuo* 新生之作 ("new life comes into being")—a more universal and humanistic vision. I have argued elsewhere that Lu Xun makes deliberate changes in his translations which reflect not misunderstandings, but rather deliberate recreations within texts.¹⁷ The term he uses here, *xinsheng* 新生 (new life), has even more relevance from the perspective of Lu Xun studies because it was intended as the name of the abortive literary journal that he and his associates had hoped to publish after his return to Tokyo. Here the scholarly translator has no choice but to follow Lu Xun's text and provide a footnote discussing the reasons for variation, or at least noting the variation by comparison with the original.

Terms Originating from Secondary Translations and Seeming Incongruities

Lu Xun had a long-term aversion toward blind patriotism, nationalism, militarism and all forms of chauvinism, which he denounced in 1908 in *Po'e sheng lun* as *shouxing zhi aiguo* 兽性之爱国,¹⁸ borrowing a term from the prominent Danish literary and intellectual historian Georg Brandes. Lu Xun's term *shouxing zhi aiguo* (lit. "bestial patriotism") seems to be a Chinese translation derived from the English translation of Brandes' term "a brutal

¹⁷ Jon Eugene von Kowallis, "Translation and Originality: Reexamining Lu Xun as a Translator," 320–33.

¹⁸ *Lu Xun quanji*, vol. 8: 32.

patriotism.” In Māra he uses the term *shou'ai zhe* 兽爱者 (bestial jingoism/jingoist). Kitaoka Masako tells us: “As it is used here, the word is a translation of [Brandes’ English term] ‘brutal patriotism’ and ‘patriot of brutality.’” She does not tell us it came from a Japanese translation of Brandes (there was none at the time), but rather observes that “although this passage in Brandes is short, the intellectual influence it exerted on Lu Xun was deep.”¹⁹ Kitaoka, being a meticulous scholar, states at one point that we are not sure whether he relied on Zhou Zuoren to make an oral translation of Brandes’ *Impressions of Russia*, or if he read it in German.²⁰ Zhou Zuoren tells us:

When we saw in the publication advertisements that *Impressions of Poland* by the Danish [critic] Brandes had been published in England, we ordered a copy through Maruzen Bookstore. It was published by Heinemann in London... Brandes, it seems, was a Dane of Jewish descent, so he was a bit unconventional in his approach and sympathized with those revolutionary poets, but this made him even more useful to us. His book *Impressions of Russia* had been translated into English for some time already and was easily available in Tokyo. This, together with Kropotkin’s *Ideals and Reality in Russian Literature*, were both excellent reference books for nineteenth-century Russian literature. As for [Brandes’] *Impressions of Poland*, that was particularly difficult to obtain. When writing “On the Power of Mara Poetry” for *Henan* magazine, when [the text] speaks of the Polish poets, in particular of matters concerning Mickiewicz and Slowacki, the so-called “poets of revenge,” this is all based on [Brandes’] *Impressions of Poland*, which I was translating orally [for Lu Xun].²¹

This accounts for the Chinese translation of *Impressions of Poland* but not *Impressions of Russia*, where the term originated. Hence we have a seminal term

¹⁹ See Kitaoka Masako, “Mara shirikisetsu no kōsei” 摩罗诗力说の构成 (The composition of “On the Power of Māra Poetry”) in *Kinda ibungaku ni okeru Chūgoku to Nihon* 近代文学における中国と日本 (China and Japan in the literature of the recent historic period), Kyūko Shoen, October 1986, 97; reprinted in her book *Rojin Kyūbō no Yume no Yukue: Akamaha Shijimronkara “Kyojojin Nikki” made* 鲁迅救亡の夢のゆくえ: 悪魔派詩人論から“狂人日記”まで (Surrounding Lu Xun’s dream of [national] salvation: From ‘On the Power of the Poets of the Satanic School’ to ‘The Diary of a Madman’), Suita-shi: Kansai DaigakuShuppanbu, 2006, 57. The original Danish term used by Brandes before Eastman’s late-19th century translation into English is *raat Fædrelønderi* (lit. raw, i.e. crude fatherlandishness). See his *Indtryk fra Rusland* (Impressions of Russia) in *Samlæde Skriffter* (Collected works of Georg Brandes), Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1899–1910, 10:465. Cf. Georg Brandes, *Impressions of Russia*, where Eastman uses “a brutal patriotism,” 240.

²⁰ Kitaoka Masako, *Mara shirikisetsuzai genkōnōto*, 46.

²¹ Zhou Zuoren, *Zhitang huixianglu*, 210.

for Lu Xun that developed out of someone else’s translation from Danish, either into English or German, and then perhaps, if it were from the English version, an oral translation and discussion with Zhou Zuoren.

Fortunately, Lu Xun helps “define” the concept for us by giving it a context in Māra when he writes:

千八百三十一年波蘭抗俄，西歐諸國右波蘭，于俄多所憎惡。普式庚乃作《俄國之誇誇者》暨《波羅及諾之一周年》二篇，以自明愛國。丹麥評騭家勃蘭克思 (G. Brandes) 于是有微辭，謂惟武力之恃而狼藉人之自由，虽云愛國，顧为兽爱。特此亦不仅普式庚为然，即今之君子，日日言愛國者，于国有诚为人爱而不坠于兽爱者，亦仅见也。²²

In 1831, when Poland resisted Russia and the Western nations aided Poland, frequently decrying Russian actions there, Pushkin wrote two pieces: *To the Calumniators of Russia* and *On the Anniversary of Borodino* as displays of his patriotism. The Danish critic Georg Brandes rebukes him for this, saying that though the usurpation of another’s freedom through military might may be hailed as a manifestation of love for one’s country, this is a bestial love. His assessment applies, in fact, not only to Pushkin, but to all those gentlemen of our own day who frequently hold forth on love of country yet are themselves, or at least the vast majority of them, devoid of anything approaching the sincerity of love in human terms, above and beyond bestial jingoism.²³

In the original *er bu zhuyi shou'ai zhe* 而不坠于兽爱者 simply means: “and do not degenerate into bestial patriots/patriotism” so I have added jingoism in order to further clarify, but perhaps strengthened the term too much. Brandes’ original is *raat Fædrelønderi* (lit. raw fatherlandishness), which by now has become something else in Lu Xun’s text, but still has the impact of Brandes’ Danish term, as *Fædrelønderi* is an uncommon, obviously derisive term describing an action or a type of behavior and *raat* (raw) connotes “crude.”²⁴ And it is here that I would submit that it is the context and the usage Lu Xun assigns to the term, more so than its philological derivation (it is essentially a new term he has created in Chinese) that determines its meaning and therefore how one “back-translates” it into English.

Another unfamiliar and, at first glance, incongruous term is *wuzhuo zhi pinghe* 污浊之平和 (lit. “muddy/foul, /filthy peace”), which occurs in section 2 of *Māra*.

²² This passage occurs in section 7 of *Māra*, see *Lu Xun quanji*, vol.1: 88. As translated in Kowallis, *Warriors of the Spirit*.

²³ As translated in Kowallis, *Warriors of the Spirit*.

²⁴ Thanks to Swedish sinologist Dr. Anders Hanssen for explicating the implications of both terms.

Earlier, at the outset of the same section, Lu Xun announces to the reader with some flourish that *pinghe weiwu, bu jian yu renjian* 平和为物, 不见于人间 (“Such things as peace and harmony are not manifest the human world”),²⁵ openly questioning the feasibility of peace within the human order; he follows directly with the elaboration: 其强谓之平和者, 不过战事方已或未始之时, 外状若宁, 暗流仍伏, 时劫一会, 动作始矣 (“What people insist on calling peace is merely an interlude between wars. When on the surface all appears calm, but an undercurrent is still present which, at a certain moment and with the right combination of factors, will set the entire process in motion again”).²⁶ But in other instances in Lu Xun’s writing, *pinghe* 平和 implies “accord” or “compromise” in terms of compromising one’s principles to make peace with the status quo. One example is Lu Xun’s comparison of Pushkin with Lermontov in section 7 of *Mara*, when he remarks: “Accordingly, after his return to Moscow, Pushkin’s writings took on a markedly conciliatory (平和) tone...” and concludes: “Pushkin eventually submitted to the Tsar’s authority, choosing reconciliation (平和), whereas Lermontov fought on....”²⁷ Obviously he favors Lermontov over Pushkin. Lu Xun saw great poetry as something that disrupts the tranquility of the state. So in fact *wuzhuo zhi pinghe* means something closer to “the muck and mire of passivity and accord,” as he uses it in *Mara*:

中国之治, 理想在不撓, 而意异于前说。有人撓人, 或有人得撓者, 为帝大禁, 其意在保位, 使子孙王千万世, 无有底止, 故性解 (Genius) 之出, 必竭尽全力死之; 有人撓我, 或有能撓人者, 为民大禁, 其意在安生, 宁蜷伏堕落而恶进取, 故性解之出, 亦必竭尽全力死之。柏拉图建神思之邦, 谓诗人乱治, 当放域外; 虽国之美污, 意之高下有不同, 而术实出于一。盖诗人者, 撓人心者也。凡人之心, 无有不诗, 如诗人作诗, 诗不为诗人独有, 凡一读其诗, 心即会解者, 即无不自有诗人之诗。无之何以能解? 惟有而未解者, 诗人为之语, 则握拨一弹, 心弦立应, 其声激于灵府, 令有情皆举其首, 如睹晓日, 益为之美伟强力高尚发扬, 而污浊之平和, 以之将破。平和之破, 人道蒸也。虽然, 上极天帝, 下至舞台, 则不能不因此变其前时之生活; 协力而天阙之, 思永保其故态, 殆亦人情已。故态永存, 是曰古国。惟诗究不可灭尽, 则又设范以囚之。²⁸

²⁵ This is at the very beginning of section 2 of *Mara*, see *Lu Xun quanji*, vol. 1: 66. In *Po e'sheng lun* (Toward a refutation of malevolent voices) he expresses similar views, saying: 顾战争绝迹, 平和永存, 乃又须迟之人类灭尽, 大地崩溃以后... (Yet the total elimination of war and the realization of permanent peace would seem possible only with the extinction of the human race and the destruction of the earth). See that essay in *Lu Xun quanji*, vol. 8: 32; as translated in Kowallis, *Warriors of the Spirit*.

²⁶ *Lu Xun quanji*, vol. 1: 66.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 88; 91.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 68. This passage occurs in the middle of section 2 of *Mara* and is notable for the way Lu Xun broaches this topic (“harmony” vs “disruption” in the governance of China) as a sub-section with a new paragraph—*Mara* has few paragraph breaks (section 2 has only three).

In Chinese politics, curtailing “disruption” has always been the ideal, but for reasons quite different from the above [notion that a return to high antiquity would bring the world back to the state of “great harmony”]. Anyone with the capacity to disrupt others or anyone with a marked susceptibility to such “disruptions” would be suppressed by our emperors. This was done out of fear that disruption might somehow threaten the throne and the emperor’s right to secure the line of succession for generations to come as the exclusive domain of his own offspring. So whenever genius²⁹ appeared, every possible effort was expended to destroy it. By the same token, the people themselves also suppressed anyone who disrupted them or had the potential to disrupt others. After all, they too valued their tranquility, preferring to curl up and atrophy because they detested the notion of having to go out and strive for anything. Thus when genius appeared, the people would expend their every effort to destroy it. [Similarly], when Plato formulated his ideal state, he said that poets would incite turmoil and should be exiled from its borders. Though nations [such as China and Plato’s *Republic*] may be qualitatively different, their methods of governance actually stem from one and the same impetus. Poets are indeed “disrupters of men’s hearts.” For every human heart contains poetry within it, and when a poet has written a poem, it no longer belongs to him exclusively, but to others who, upon reading it, come to an emotional understanding of it in their own hearts. If there were no poetry in their hearts to begin with, how could they arrive at an understanding? This is only possible because they themselves have had similar feelings but could not put them into words. Poets say these things for them. Like [a musician] plucking a note, a response comes immediately from the heartstrings of the audience and the note reverberates throughout the caverns of the soul, causing all men of feeling to look up, inspired, as though they might be gazing on some new dawn ablaze with light that has the power to strengthen, ennoble, beautify, and enlighten until the muck and mire of passivity and accord are broken down thereby. The shattering of passivity and accord spells the burgeoning of the human experience. At that point, the lives of all, from the emperor on high down to his vassals and thralls below, will never be the same again. They shall be compelled to work thenceforth in concert in the hope of stifling [the spread of] this [poetry] so as to insure the preservation of the old order. This is, perhaps, quite a normal reaction. Those places where they have succeeded in preserving the status quo are what we now

²⁹ Here, Lu Xun uses the English word “genius” alongside an early Chinese translation devised by Yan Fu—*xingjie* 性解, which connotes the “liberation of one’s basic nature.” Presently the term *tiancai* (lit. “heaven/nature given talent”) has gained wider acceptance as a translation for the word genius, which of course has different connotations.

term the world's "ancient civilizations." But since poetry could not be eliminated entirely, certain specifications had to be set down in order to confine it.³⁰

Here it becomes obvious that some terms must be defined by their context and not by their philological derivations or more general linguistic deployment at the time. To a degree, Lu Xun creates his own language in the early essays much as he did in his mature period, when he held that the Chinese language would have to change in order to revitalize by bringing in new, more complicated ideas, through new, more complicated sentence structures.³¹

Sympathy for the Devil

In some instances, for example, Lu Xun adds material to the text. Take for example his discussion of good and evil (in terms of the battle between God and Satan) in Byron's poem "Cain." Here the Faustian protagonist Cain has just reminded Lucifer that he has a superior, i.e. God. Lu Xun first comments, then translates:

卢希飞勒不然，曰吾誓之两间，吾实有胜我之强者，而无有加于我之上位。彼胜我故，名我曰恶，若我致胜，恶且在神，善恶易位耳。³²

Lucifer did not agree, saying: "I swear it on all the world [lit. between the two, i.e. heaven and earth]: forsooth that though there be a mighty one who defeated me, there is no one above me. Because He defeated me, I was called evil. If I had been victorious, evil would have been associated with God, [and good and bad would have changed places]."

This passage corresponds to Byron's lines:

Of worlds and life, [which I hold with him—
No!]
I have a victor—true; but no
superior ...
He as a conqueror will call the
conquer'd

³⁰ As translated in Kowallis, *Warriors of the Spirit*.

³¹ See his famous essay defending his approach to translation against criticism by Liang Shiqiu: "'Ying yi' yu 'wenxue de jieji'" ("Hard translation" and the "class character of literature"), in *Lu Xun quanji*, vol. 4: 195–222. English translation in Lu Xun, *Selected Works*, vol. 3: 75–96.

³² *Lu Xun quanji*, vol. 1: 78. This is in section 4 of *Māra*.

Evil; but what will be the *good* he gives?

Were I the victor, his works would be Deem'd

The only evil ones.³³

Lu Xun has deleted part of the first line and also added a line of his own—the last one, which I have marked in square brackets["and good and bad would have changed places"], perhaps to clarify it for Chinese readers, whom he suspected were not always a tune to irony. Lu Xun, needless to say, had sympathy for the devil as a rebel against tyranny and hypocrisy and the failed leader of a cowardly humankind in rebellion. There may be something of Lu Xun himself in this portrait as well.

Translating the Persecution of Byron

Another problem is dealing with omission or condensation in translation, particularly if the locus is unclear or a combination of passages from different sources. In part four, Lu Xun discusses the persecution of Byron, which he likens to literary inquisitions in China as far back as Han and Jin times, 34 continuing:

顾裴伦由是遂不能居英，自曰，使世之评鹭诚，吾在英为无值，若评鹭谬，则英于我为无值矣。吾其行乎？然未已也，虽赴异邦，彼且蹶我。³⁵

These factors made it impossible for Byron to remain in England. As he himself put it: "[I felt that] if society's verdict were true, I was unfit for England; if false, England was unfit for me. Should I leave—or would there be no end to it even in that—would they not pursue and hound me even into other countries?"

Although it is presented as a quotation (the word *yue* 曰 in classical Chinese normally signals the beginning of a direct quotation), I have found no passage in

³³ *Cain: A Mystery*, Act II, Scene II *Hades*, lines 428–29; 443–46. The original reads: "Of worlds and life, which I hold with him—No! I have a victor—true; but no superior." (l. 429) "He as a conqueror will call the conquer'd/Evil; but what will be the *good* he gives?/ Were I the victor, his works would be deem'd/The only evil ones. And you, ye new/And scarce born mortals, what have been his gifts/To you already, in your little world?" (l. 443–48).

³⁴ He writes: "*Zhongguo Han Jin yilai, fan fu wenming zhe, duo shou huibang*" 中国汉晋以来，凡负文名者，多受谤毁... (In China since the Han and Jin eras, most of those who won distinction through their writing became the subject of slander). *Lu Xun quanji*, vol. 1: 76.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Byron's works directly corresponding to it. What we have instead are Byron's letter of December 7, 1818 to Scrope Davies which runs in part:

You can hardly have forgotten the circumstances under which I quitted England, nor the rumours of which I was the subject—if they were true I was unfit for England, if false England was unfit for me....

Also Byron's own evaluation of the circumstances under which he left England:

[I felt that] if what was whispered and murmured was true, I was unfit for England; if false, England was unfit for me. I withdrew; but this was not enough. In other countries... I was pursued.... (written in retrospect in August 1819).³⁶

Lu Xun has construed the second sentence above as a question and thus occasioned a shift in time sequence. But this rendering is also consistent with his portrayal of Byron as self-reflective, a quality that every good Confucian literatus should possess. Again, we need to be circumspect in treating this alleged quotation and its rendering into English, in part for accuracy but in part because it is reflective of Lu Xun's, and indeed the Chinese understanding and appreciation of Byron as a poet who was also an internationalist and a man of action, who combined the pen and the sword in a tragic quest to rescue subjugated people, sometimes even from themselves.³⁷ Lu Xun and Byron's other biographer/translators such as Liang Qichao, Su Manshu, Ma Junwu and Hu Shi never bought into the moral condemnation of Byron as a libertine and sexual adventurer that gained credence in the Victorian West ("Mad, bad and dangerous to know").³⁸

"I Love America"

Finally, there arises the question of what to do about quotations one cannot find

³⁶ *The Works of Lord Byron: complete in one volume*, 802. Accessed November 4, 2012 at books.google.com/books?id=e9MTAATAAAQAAJ. Also see John Nichol's *Byron*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1902, 98. Nichol's biography was first published in 1880.

³⁷ I have in mind Byron's criticism of the Greeks, whom he called "hereditary bondsmen in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* 1–86: "Hereditary bondsmen! Know ye not/who would be free themselves must strike the blow?"

³⁸ The quotation is attributed, ironically, to Lady Caroline Lamb, who had had an adulterous affair with him, but continued to seek him out afterward. In his treatment of Byron, Lu Xun avoids details of an overly personal nature, such as Byron's morality, the ill feelings between Shelley and Byron over Byron's affair with Jane Clairmont, etc.

in any of the original texts. For example, Lu Xun concludes his treatment of Byron in part four:

故既揄扬威力，颂美强者矣，复曰：吾爱亚美利加，此自由之区，神之绿野，不被压制之地也。³⁹

[As for Byron,] however, at the same time he exalted power and praised the strong, he also proclaimed: "I love America, this realm of freedom, green meadow of God, land unbowed."

Neither I nor any of the Chinese scholars working on this essay could locate this alleged quotation anywhere in Byron's works. In fact, it turns out to be an attribution by Byron's Meiji-era Japanese biographer and translator Kimura Takatarō, attributed to Byron: 1) on the field of battle in Greece (p. 273–32) in a conversation with an American which took place approximately three months prior to Byron's death in Greece (p. 334) in Kimura's 1902 book *Bairon: Bungai no Dai Maoo* (Byron: Great Satan of the Literary World).⁴⁰ Neither of these attributions can be verified.⁴¹ Byron did have a conversation with the captain of an American ship from Philadelphia in which he expressed a desire to go to America, but there was no praise as poetic as this for the United States, then perceived as a weak nation defying the reactionary powers of Europe, as well as a spiritual successor to the democratic traditions of ancient Greece. This type of lyrical passage, though a conundrum for scholars and scholarly translators, is rhetorically crucial for Lu Xun in setting up his final point about Byron:

由是观之，裴伦既喜拿破仑之毁世界，亦爱华盛顿之争自由，既心仪海贼之横行，亦孤援希腊之独立，压制反抗，兼以一人矣。虽然，自由在是，人道亦在是。⁴²

From all these things it becomes evident how Byron could delight in Napoleon's decimation of the world, while at the same time love Washington's struggle for liberty; how he could be fascinated by the ravages of pirates, yet go off alone to aid the cause of Greek independence; how repression and resistance could be embodied in one and the same person. It is, in fact, [on this paradox that] his dedication to both liberty and humanism turned.

This depiction of Byron, whom Lu Xun greatly admired, may well be, at the

³⁹ *Lu Xun quanji*, vol. 1: 78.

⁴⁰ Kimura Takatarō, *Bairon Bungai no Dai Maoo* 裴 伊 朗 文 界 の 大 魔 王, 273; 334.

⁴¹ According to my own search and later confirmed by my correspondence with American Byron scholar Leslie Marchand.

⁴² *Lu Xun quanji*, vol. 1: 79.

same time, an image of one aspect of Lu Xun's own personality: a defender of liberty and human rights who lent his name, at the same time and sometimes against his own better judgment, to the Communist-led opposition movement in Nationalist China of the 1930s.

Conclusion: No Apologies for Translation

When I first address my students in an MA-level course on "Chinese Poetry and Poetics: Theories of Translation," I often tell the story of Stephen Mitchell, who, though not knowing any Chinese, was given an advance payment of US \$160,000 for his translation of the book of Laozi/Lao Tzu 老子 or the *Daode jing* by a major New York publisher. This was because he had proven a successful translator of the Austrian poet Rilke and several portions of the Bible (Job and Genesis, if memory serves me correctly) and so the New York publishers felt he could be trusted to give them what the American readers wanted out of Laozi by merely reading some older translations and re-writing them into his own elegant modern English version, as the prominent Roman Catholic theologian Thomas Merton once did with portions of Zhuangzi/Chuang Tzu 庄子. The crucial step in being a successful literary translator is envisioning your audience and then giving them the translation they want, which is not necessarily the one you yourself deem to be "correct." If we translate for a scholarly readership we must give them what they want in order to be a success. This includes tracing back quotations given within already obscure languages and formats, such as undocumented classical Chinese. But the final English text we turn out can never be recreated without taking into account the process of recreation from the original sources, its whys and wherefores. If not, then this is not real textual scholarship, it is either "cut and paste" or the indolent version of a so-called "direct" translation that actually does precious little to shed light on the historical and intellectual significance of the text.

Finally, I will not apologize to those who hold that literary translation is impossible or that translation of poetry is even more impossible. Hegel held that poets speak in poetic ideas not in specific languages, and therefore these ideas can be translated. The imagist school took a similar position with regard to the possibility of the linguistic transfer of imagery. The King James version of the Bible is itself a translation, yet it contains some of what has been recognized as the greatest poetry in the English language. And anyhow, I tell my students that even if we all were to agree that the translation of poetry is impossible, people will still go on translating it and others will still go on buying their translations, taking them home and reading them. We cannot stop them from doing so. Literary translation is an intrinsic part of human activity, brought about more by

human curiosity than by human folly. Translation is part of the endeavor to understand other people's ideas and cultures. This is an admirable thing, and also an even greater necessity in the current century. Lu Xun understood this when he first read *Tanyan lun* (On natural selection), Yan Fu's version of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* at the end of the nineteenth century. Reading that translation changed his life, as reading Chinese literature, first in translation and later in the original, changed mine.

Chinese students in Japan were enamored of Byron because of the way he gave his life for the cause of Greek independence. But Lu Xun touched on aspects of Byron that Liang Qichao, Su Manshu, Ma Junwu, Hu Shi and others ignored—they translated "Isles of Greece"—he focused on the humanistically-motivated defiance of God in "Cain." How did Lu Xun differ from his age? Lu Xun did something more important than sending an alarm call or responding to it. He addressed the problem of how to regenerate China culturally and spiritually. For him the question was not how to regain wealth and power, but rather how best to use it for the benefit of all of humankind.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Ari Larissa Heinrich

Zoology, Celibacy, and the Heterosexual Imperative: Notes on Teaching Lu Xun's "Loner" as a Queer Text

Abstract This essay reflects on the reception of Lu Xun's short story "The Loner" (*Gudu zhe*, alternately translated as "The Lone Wolf," "The Misanthrope," and "The Isolate") in American classrooms, where students have sometimes wondered whether that character might be read as "queer." It suggests that the title character's unusual and self-imposed celibacy is probably best explained by his belief, in a very general sense, in the foundational values of zoology as practiced in Japan and China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and thus that the story may be a better gateway to understanding the ways in which Lu Xun envisioned the mixed impact of new political economies on private life than a source text for queer studies. At the same time, however, this essay emphasizes that in "The Loner," as elsewhere, accounting for the "heterosexual imperative" of early zoology (e.g., with its emphases on animal husbandry, propagation, reproduction) can have meaningful consequences for "queering" interpretations of received texts from literature, history of science, and beyond.

Keywords queer, Lu Xun, zoology, celibacy, modern Chinese literature, "The Loner," pedagogy

Introduction

[*Queerness* names the side of those *not* "fighting for the children," the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism.

—Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*

In undergraduate survey courses on modern Chinese Literature that include Lu

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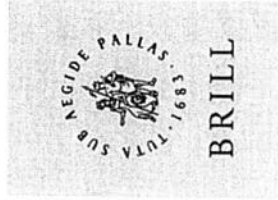
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