

# On Translating Lu Xun's Fiction

Jon Eugene von Kowallis

In 2009 when Penguin Classics published a complete anthology of Lu Xun's fiction titled *The Real Story of Ab-Q and Other Tales of China: The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun*, Jeffrey Wasserstrom wrote that it »could be considered the most significant Penguin Classic ever published«. <sup>1</sup> However Wasserstrom, a professor of Chinese history at the University of California, Irvine, does not actually comment on the quality of the translation. What he draws attention to is the fact that this volume appears in a series by a major publisher in the Western world that usually makes its money by reprinting already proven classics. That may be its true significance: since his reputation is already proven, Lu Xun has at last come of age in the West, or at least enough for Penguin to pick up on it.

Many readers familiar with Lu Xun may think the first English translation was done by Yang Xianyi 楊憲益 (1915–2009) and his wife Gladys Taylor Yang (Dai Naidie 戴乃迭, 1919–1999) and published by the Communist-government run Foreign Languages Press in Beijing. Actually, efforts to translate, explain and popularize Lu Xun's works to the West had been a serious undertaking for over a quarter of a century already by the time the first edition of the Yangs' single volume *Selected Stories of Lu Hsun* came out in 1954. Lu Xun was first translated into English in 1925 by George Kin Leung (Liang Sheqian 梁社乾, 1889–?) under the title *The True Story of Ab Q*, which was published in 1926 as a single volume of 100 pages by the Commercial Press at Shanghai. <sup>2</sup> By 1936 the

<sup>1</sup> See his review titled »China's Orwell«, *Time Magazine* 174,22 (Dec 7, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Chinese American writer and translator George K. Leung, a.k.a. S. C. Liang also published an expanded *Ab Q and Others* (repr. San Bernardino, CA: Borgo Press, 2002), 180 pp., and several books on Mei Lanfang and his American tour in 1929.

book had gone through five printings, so there must have been considerable interest in it. In the three-page preface, the translator tells us that he interacted with Lu Xun concerning the translation and »the author replied to my many inquiries« (vii).<sup>3</sup> Their interaction seems to have been confined to correspondence, as is borne out by entries in Lu Xun's diaries for 1925–26. Leung also says Lu Xun »was most obliging in granting me the right of English translation and supplying me, from time to time, with printed matter, as well as two sets to the original pages of the story« (vi). The last four pages of the book contain an appendix that retells the story of Lu Xun's life, largely based on his own Preface to *Naban* 吶喊 (Outcry; 1923). Leung's choice of an English title was adopted by the Yangs and used at least for sixty years as the standard translation of the title of Lu Xun's novella »Ah Q zhengzhuan« 阿Q正傳.

Lu Xun's first French translator, overseas Chinese student Jean Baptiste Yin-Yu Kyn's (Jing Yinyu 敬隱漁, 1901–1931), perhaps today more famous for his involvement in the Lu Xun–Roman Rolland affair,<sup>4</sup> in 1926 published an abridged French translation of Ah Q, then was involved in publishing *The Tragedy of Ah Qui and Other Modern Chinese Stories* (London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1930—xi, 146 pp.) containing an abridged English translation based on his French rendition of Ah Q, two other stories by Lu Xun: »Kong Yiji« 孔乙己 (the title was transliterated as »Con Y Ki«) and »Guxiang« 故鄉 (translated as »The Native Country«) plus six other modern stories by Luo Huasheng 落花生 (i.e. Xu Dishan 許地山, 1893–1941), Bing Xin 冰心 (1900–1999), Mao Dun 茅盾 (1898–1981), Yu Dafu 郁達夫 (1896–1945) and one by himself.<sup>5</sup> The cover lists it as part

- 3 One minor deviation from Lu Xun's Preface to *Naban* is in the account of the lantern-slide show. Leung writes: »While in Tokyo, he decided to study medicine in the Sendai School of Medicine. He had been studying for two years when the Russo-Japanese War broke out. It was at that time that he attended a *motion-picture performance* and saw a captured Chinese spy, who was about to undergo the penalty of decapitation; and *he felt so depressed over the matter that he wished to do something for the masses at once.*« (95)—italics my own, JK).
- 4 See Rolland's letter of Jan 12, 1926, to L. Bazalgette, cited in Wang Xirong 王錫榮, *Lu Xun shengping yian* 魯迅生平疑案 [Unresolved 'Cases' Regarding Lu Xun's Life] (Shanghai: Cishu Chubanshe, 2002), 107–108. Also see Paul B. Foster, »The Ironic Inflation of Chinese National Character: Lu Xun's International Reputation, Romain Rolland's Critique of "The True Story of Ah Q" and the Nobel Prize«, *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 13,1 (2002), 140–168. Foster examines in detail the odyssey of translation, retranslation, paraphrasing, and circulation of praiseful remarks about Ah Q attributed to Romain Rolland.
- 5 A significant portion of this early work can be read on Google Books by searching under the

of »The Golden Dragon Library« series. A publisher's note adds: »Translated from the Chinese by J. B. Kyn Yn Yu and from the French by E. H. F. Mills.« Obviously, this was an estimable effort made by a major publisher in the West as long ago as 1930 to popularize modern Chinese literature, and Lu Xun was the key figure. Considering the extent of his reputation nowadays, is Penguin really demonstrating a comparable commitment?

After Kyn Yn Yu's book there followed a substantial volume edited by the prominent American journalist Edgar Snow and published under the title *Living China: Modern Chinese Short Stories* (London: Harrap, 1936; New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1937—360 pp.),<sup>6</sup> which includes a selection of Lu Xun's stories translated by Yao Hsin-nung<sup>7</sup> and others, as well as an essay on the development of modern Chinese literature by Nym Wales, Snow's first wife. This volume presents a fair selection of works by modern Chinese writers, which includes seven short stories by Lu Xun; two each by Mao Dun, Ding Ling 丁玲 (1904–1986) and Tian Jun 田軍 (Xiao Jun 蕭軍, 1907–1988), as well as one each by Rou Shi 柔石 (1901–1931), Ba Jin 巴金 (1904–2005), Shen Congwen 沈從文 (1902–1988), Sun Xizhen 孫席珍 (1906–1984), Lin Yutang 林語堂 (1895–1976), Yu Dafu, Zhang Tianyi 張天翼 (1906–1985), Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978) and Sha Ting 沙汀 (1904–1992). In fact, Lu Xun might have been involved in their selection and the volume is dedicated to Snow's benefactor »S.C.L.« (»Soong Ching-ling«, Song Qingling 宋慶齡, 1893–1981), the Leftist widow of Dr Sun Yat-sen. In that sense, Lu Xun was himself an anthologist of Chinese literature in English translation well before the Communist victory in 1949.

A third volume of translations was published by Wang Chi-chen 王際真 (a.k.a. C. C. Wang, 1899–2001), under the title *Ah Q and Others: Selected Stories of Lusin* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941—227 pp.).<sup>8</sup> This was the first collection devoted exclusively to Lu Xun's stories. Wang Chi-chen (Wang Jizhen in *pinyin*) was then Professor of Chinese literature at Columbia University. His

title.

6 Available today in Hyperion Press, repr. 1983—360 pp.

7 In *pinyin* Yao Xinnong 姚莘農; a.k.a. Yao Ke 姚克 and others. Yao (1905–1991), then a »student« or younger associate of Lu Xun, later became a famous Chinese dramatist, writing *Qing gong yuan* 清宮怨 (play 1941; film 1948; tr. by Jeremy Ingalls in 1970 as *Malice of Empire*), a tragic tale of the betrayal of the 1898 Reformers which was read as an anti-authoritarian allegory.

8 Wang Chi-chen also translated an abridged version of *Dream of the Red Chamber* (1929; expanded edition 1959 with a preface by Mark Van Doren), *Traditional Chinese Tales* (1944) and another collection *Contemporary Chinese Stories* (1944), including two by Lu Xun, and more stories in *China at War* (1947).

translations were well-received at the time, as was his learned introduction, which compares Lu Xun, as a satirist, with Jonathan Swift. Harriet Mills, who submitted her PhD dissertation »Lu Hsün: 1927–1936, The Years on the Left« (1963) at Columbia (after having been released from thought reform in Beijing as an alleged American spy) and who subsequently became Professor of Chinese at the University of Michigan, remarked that it was Wang Chi-chen's beautiful translations of Lu Xun's stories that first interested her in Lu Xun, although Wang Chi-chen subsequently resigned from her dissertation committee (according to Mills) out of fear of McCarthyite reprisals (the dissertation argued Lu Xun really did become a convinced supporter of the Communists out of alienation from the oppressive policies of the Guomindang—this was considered too controversial a stance within US academia during the Cold War). American sinologist George A. Kennedy (1901–1960) had translated »Guxiang« as »My Old Home« for *Far Eastern Magazine* (3,5 [1940]) and S. C. Liang (Liang Sheqian 梁社乾, aka George Kin Leung) re-translated »The True Story of Ah Q« in 1940.<sup>9</sup> Other translations of Lu Xun's stories (probably by Liang and Kennedy, although the translator is unspecified) were anthologized and published in bilingual format in the 1940s in Shanghai under the titles *War Cry* and *Wandering*, although those are not giving the complete collections *Naban* and *Panghuang* 彷徨 (1926).

The Yangs' translation of »The True Story of Ah Q« first came out in the English-language periodical *Chinese Literature* (2/1952, 161–204), then as a single volume from the Foreign Languages Press (FLP) in Peking in 1953. Other stories and essays also came out in *Chinese Literature*. The single volume *Selected Stories of Lu Hsün* first came out from FLP in 1954 (second edition 1960—255 pp.) and a complete translation of all his short stories in *Naban* and *Panghuang* by the Yangs was co-published by Indiana University Press with the FLP in 1981 under the title *The Complete Stories of Lu Xun*, using *Hanyu pinyin* romanization for the first time. All this time the Yangs were making revisions and tinkering with the

9 Published in a bilingual anthology titled *Naban* (translated as »War Cry«), ed. by Zhao Jingshen 趙景深 (a Western name for an editor also appears as »Jorgensen«) (Shanghai: Pei-hsin Shu-chu, 1949). The anthology contains only a partial selection of the stories in *Naban* along with annotations for words in the English translation, giving the impression it was intended for students of English and may have appeared in a Shanghai edition even earlier (during WWII). As noted previously, there is also an expanded volume translated by George Kin Leung and reprinted under the title *Ah Q and Others* (San Bernardino, CA: Borgo Press, 2002—180 pp.)—the author's name is still spelled Lu Hsun. This type of reprinting certainly indicates a market demand exists in the English-speaking world, even for under-publicized translations of Lu Xun.

translations, as well as expanding their number. The 1981 edition of his stories also uses pinyin for the first time. The 1980 edition of *Lu Xun Selected Works*, 4 vols. (Beijing: FLP) also converted to *pinyin* from modified Wade-Giles.

Then came William A. Lyell's *Lu Xun: Diary of a Madman and Other Stories* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990—389 pp.), which contains a completely new translation of the stories into American-style English, with an informative scholarly introduction. Lyell, the author of *Lu Hsün's Vision of Reality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), based on his 1971 PhD dissertation at the University of Chicago («The Short Story Theatre of Lu Hsün»), was Associate Professor of Chinese literature at Ohio State and later Stanford.

What is different and perhaps most significant about Julia Lovell's 416-page paperback volume is that she includes not only all the stories from *Naban* (Outcry) and *Panghuang* (Hesitation), but also the eight in the anthology from Lu Xun's last years, *Gushi xinbian* 故事新編 (Old Tales Retold; 1936), which she translates as «Old Stories Retold». Those in this third collection are challenging satiric fiction, mostly written in the 1930s, using characters from ancient history both as a meditation on China's past, as a device to make comments on the murky present, and (some would argue) to speculate on the future after the victory of the Communist revolution and the ultimate abandonment of the ideals of Socialism in favor of materialism.<sup>10</sup> In that sense, Lu Xun became a visionary who saw perhaps even farther than George Orwell.

Lovell's book begins with a five-page chronology of Lu Xun's life, a thirty-page introduction, and a list of further readings. That all seems quite scholarly, as if the book were intended for the university textbook market. But the demographics of the university classroom are changing and nowadays practically the only texts that are acceptable for serious courses on Chinese literature are set in a bilingual format. FLP has come around to face that fact, in part due to my own arguments when I worked for them as an editor/translator, finally reissuing in

10 Here I have in mind the two satiric stories «Fei gong» 非攻 (Aug 1934; translated as «Opposing Aggression») about Mozi 墨子 and «Li shui» 理水 (Nov 1935; translated as «Curbing the Flood») about the legend of the Great Yu 大禹. See the discussion in Cheung Chiu-ye, *Lu Xun: The Chinese Gentle Nietzsche* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 176–178.

2000–06 most the Yangs' translations of Lu Xun's works in bilingual format, with Chinese text on the left page and English on the right.<sup>11</sup>

Lovell next explains her philosophy on translation in »A Note on the Translation« (xliv–xlv):

In an attempt to enhance fluency of the text, I have kept the use of footnotes and endnotes to a minimum, and where background information that Chinese audiences would take for granted can be unobtrusively and economically worked into the main body of the text, I have taken that option. A translation that, without compromising overall linguistic accuracy, avoids extensive interruption by footnotes and endnotes can, I feel, offer a more faithful recreation of the original reading experience than a version whose literal rendering of every point dictates frequent, disrupting consultation of extra references.

Well and good, but what if the reader wants more information? Should a footnote or an endnote (she ends up using the latter sparingly anyway) be considered an »extra reference« or a convenient service to the reader? And can't we trust readers who don't want to read them simply to skip them? Lovell's position would also seem to be similar to all the other contemporary translators of Lu Xun's fiction, who aim at the »general reader« (as did the FLP before the introduction of bilingual texts), so how is the approach used in Lovell's translation new or different?

Lovell begins her translation of Lu Xun's famous and moving Preface to *Naban* (Outcry):

When I was young, I too had many dreams, most of which I later forgot—and without the slightest regret. Although remembering the past can bring happiness, it can also bring a feeling of solitude; and where is the pleasure in clinging on to the memory of lonely times passed? My trouble is, though, that I find myself unable to forget, or at least unable to forget entirely. And it is this failure of amnesia that has brought *Outcry* into existence. (15)

Let us compare that with the Yangs' version, which they call »Preface to *Call to Arms*«:

When I was young, I, too, had many dreams. Most of them I later forgot, but I see nothing in this to regret. For although recalling the past may bring happiness, at times it cannot but bring loneliness, and what is the point of clinging in spirit to

11 These bilingual editions from FLP include *Call to Arms* (2000; 2002); *Wandering* (2000); *Wild Grass* (2000; 2001); *Lu Xun: Selected Essays* (2006). The proofreading in the first editions was either poorly done or not done at all.

lonely bygone days? However, my trouble is that I cannot forget completely, and these stories stem from those things which I have been unable to forget.<sup>12</sup>

The original text reads:

我在年青時候也曾經做過許多夢，後來大半忘卻了，但自己也並不一位可惜。所謂回憶者，雖說可以使人歡欣，有時也不免使人寂寞，使精神的絲縷還牽着已逝的寂寞的時光，又有甚麼意味呢，而我偏苦於不能全忘卻，這不能全忘的一部分，到現在便成了《吶喊》的來由。

Lovell's version clearly reads more smoothly in English than the Yangs' translation. One does not have to think twice about it to get the meaning. But is it Lu Xun's meaning? Lovell's passage in its straightforward simplicity is different from the original Chinese version, which is, I would argue, intentionally convoluted. Look at the length of Lu Xun's second sentence in Chinese, for instance, in particular the clause in the middle of that long sentence ... 使精神的絲縷還牽着已逝的寂寞的時光 ... (literally 'causing the silken threads of the spirit to go on clinging still to moments of bygone loneliness already past'). It sounds vaguely Proustian because Lu Xun has *that* much sophistication, if not more. The 'awkwardness' of the original is of the author's design: it is bringing this sort of disjointedness into the Chinese narrative that is one distinctive characteristic of his modernity.<sup>13</sup>

Is this crucial modernity a feature that is lost on, or just conveniently forgotten, by Penguin? If we examine the cover of the book, we see a pigtailed man, photographed from the back, standing on a stone bridge, perhaps for a hand-tinted postcard for sale to Western tourists, *circa* 1912.<sup>14</sup> The image suggests a timeless China, a concept familiar to those who have studied orientalism. This is not necessarily wrong: Lu Xun argued that one problem in China was the reluctance, on the part of some people, to change (usually motivated by a desire to hang onto their own privileged positions). But what it sets the reader up for is the book's title: *The Real Story of Ab-Q and Other Tales of China*. Whereas Lovell eschews »tales« in translating *Gushi xinbian* (the Yangs used *Old Tales Retold*, Lovell uses *Old Stories Retold*), she uses it here in a much more prominent place.

12 *Call to Arms* (bilingual edition), tr. by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2002), 3.

13 Another example is the disjointed narrative and mixed-up time frames of »Zhufu« 祝福 (lit. 'Benediction', tr. by the Yangs and Lovell as »The New Year's Sacrifice«).

14 The back cover tells us it is a »young man on the Datongqiao bridge in the suburbs of Beijing, photographed by Stephane Passet, June 1912«.

The word »tale« suggests a form of traditional, pre-modern folk narrative.<sup>15</sup> Again, I wonder where Lu Xun's modernity figures in the equation, or perhaps Penguin decided that modernity wouldn't sell as well in its series as stereotypes. The back cover of the book begins with a quote from »Diary of a Madman« (in red letters—source and title unstated): »The most hated man in the village had been beaten to death ... and some of the villagers had dug out his heart and liver, then fried and eaten them, for courage.« The reader might well get the impression that the book contains the lurid details of savage brutality and cannibalism among the Chinese, *à la* Zheng Yi's accounts of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>16</sup> Never mind that cannibalism in Lu Xun's fiction is a metaphor for something else. We are next told: »His celebrated short stories assemble a powerfully unsettling portrait of superstition, poverty and complacency that he perceived in late-imperial China, and the revolutionary Republic that toppled the last dynasty in 1911.« Again, are the instances of superstition in Lu Xun's short stories simply that: »portraits of superstition«? Or is »superstition« merely a device to highlight other features of human interaction. Here I call to mind Lu Xun's contempt for those »enlightened« »scientific« members of the Chinese gentry who denounced Buddhism and folk religion as superstition, expressed in his 1908 essay »Po e'sheng lun« 破惡聲論 (Toward a Refutation of Malevolent Voices).<sup>17</sup> Was the early Republic »revolutionary«? Not according to Lu Xun. Was the dynasty »toppled in 1911«? In fact it mounted an estimable resistance, until done-in by the treachery of its own commanding general in 1912.

These minor issues of »interpretation« aside, let us go back to Lu Xun's Preface and consider word choice: *jimo* 寂寞 is an important term in Lu Xun's oeuvre and a challenge to translate, but the Yangs' »loneliness« hints at emotional hurt and the feeling of isolation, whereas Lovell's »solitude« is simply a state, and often a desirable one at that, nearer to Henry David Thoreau (1817–

15 Random examples from the *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 2:3210, are: A. Thwaite: »Old countrymen tell tales of hedgehogs sucking a cow dry.« Or Kurt Vonnegut: »Bluebeard is a fictitious character in a very old children's tale.«

16 Zheng Yi, *Scarlet Memorial: Tales of Cannibalism in Modern China*, ed. and tr. by T. P. Sym (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

17 See my new translation of the essay in *boundary2: an international journal of literature and culture* 38,2 (summer 2011), esp. 49–56. This is followed by Wang Hui's »The Voices of Good and Evil: What is Enlightenment? Rereading Lu Xun's "Toward a Refutation of Malevolent Voices"« (69–123). As a cross-cultural phenomenon, a classical-style essay by Lu Xun making it into a postmodern-type journal in America may in fact be more significant than his stories making it into the Penguin series.



1862), perhaps, in English, than the hurt and troubled voice of Lu Xun's narrator. Lu Xun is talking about memories of the past (the phrase *suowei huiyi zhe* 所謂回憶者 'what is called »memories« / »recollections«' is nominalized by the use of the word *zhe* 者, i.e. lit. 'those things which [are called / we call]...'). But neither the Yangs nor Lovell nominalize here, instead preferring to use a gerund: »remembering«; »recalling«. Then we come across Lovell's »amnesia«—the term does not appear in the original, instead it says: 'This portion [of my memories] that [I] have been unable to forget completely has, at present, become the source for [my stories in this collection] *Naban*.' Why pick at this? It is passive and Lu Xun's narrator has been making an active attempt to forget. What he cannot forget are, in fact, traumatic memories. They are part of his history, but also the collective history of China and the social indictment: the fact that he is willing to face »the horror« (as Conrad would put it) is the strength (and the appeal) of Lu Xun. This is the mettle behind the 'resistance to despair' (*fankang juewang* 反抗絕望) that Wang Hui 汪暉 (b1959) and others have pointed to in Lu Xun.<sup>18</sup>

That much being said, still assuming that she can be trusted to bring about a fairly accurate version, after all, Dr Lovell is a lecturer in Chinese history at the University of London and has translated several novels and part of *Lust, Caution*, a selection of short stories by Zhang Ailing 張愛玲 (»Eileen Chang«, 1920–1996), we might next examine the question of register, since Lovell wants to pay attention to style. Lu Xun begins his first vernacular short story with a (fictitious) prefatory passage in »high-register« literary (classical) Chinese, then jolts the reader with a sudden switch into the vernacular for the »diary« part. This is an important stylistic feature and ought to be observed or at least noted by any translator who wants to pay attention to style. In Chinese Lu Xun's »Kuangren riji« 狂人日記 (The Diary of a Madman; 1918) begins:

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，今攝錄一篇，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。至於書名，則本人愈後所題，不復改也。七年四月二日識。

18 Wang Hui, *Fankang juewang: Lu Xun de jingshen jigou yu »Naban« »Panghuang« yanjiu* 反抗絕望：魯迅的精神結構與《吶喊》《徬徨》研究 [Resisting Despair: Research on Lu Xun's Spiritual/Intellectual Underpinnings and [His Collections of Stories] »Outcry« and »Hesitation«] (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1991).

—

今天晚上，很好的月光。

我不見他，已是三十多年；今天見了，精神分外爽快。纔知道以前的三十多年，全是發昏；然而須十分小心。不然，那趙家的狗，何以看我兩眼呢？

我怕的有理。

The Yangs translate this:

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 color 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 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.

I

Tonight the moon is very bright.

I have not seen it for over thirty years, so today when I saw it I felt in unusually high spirits. I begin to realize that during the past thirty-odd years I have been in the dark; but now I must be extremely careful. Otherwise why should the Zhaos' dog have looked at me twice?

I have reason for my fear.<sup>19</sup>

19 Lu Xun, *Selected Works*, tr. by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, 4 vols. (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980), I: 39; hereafter *SW*.

Lovell gives us:

At school I had been close friends with two brothers whose names I will omit to mention here. As the years went by after we graduated, however, we gradually lost touch. Not long ago, I happened to hear that one of them had been seriously ill and, while on a visit home, I broke my journey to call on them. I found only one of them at home, who told me it was his younger brother who had been afflicted. Thanking me for my concern, he informed me that his brother had long since made a full recovery and had left home to wait for an appropriate official post to fall vacant. Smiling broadly, he showed me two volumes of a diary his brother had written at the time, explaining that they would give me an idea of the sickness that had taken hold of him and that he saw no harm in showing them to an old friend. Reading them back home, I discovered his brother had suffered from what is known as a 'persecution complex'. The text was fantastically confused, and entirely undated; it was only in differences in ink and styles of handwriting that enabled me to surmise parts of the text were written at different times. Below, I have extracted occasional flashes of coherence, in the hope they may be of use to medical research. While I have not altered a single one of the author's errors, I have changed all the local names used in the original, despite the personal obscurity of the individuals involved. Finally, I have made use of the title chosen by the invalid himself following his full recovery.

April 1918

## I

The moon is bright tonight.

I had not seen it for thirty years; the sight of it today was extraordinarily refreshing. Tonight, I realized I have spent the past thirty years or more in a state of dream; but I must still be careful. Why did the Zhaos' dog look twice at me?

I have reason to be afraid.<sup>20</sup>

And William Lyell translates:

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.

20 Lu Xun, *The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China: The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun*, tr. by Julia Lovell (London; New York: Penguin Classics, 2009), 21–22.

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 is missing a sentence—JK].

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 Republic. \$really without month? \$

Moonlight's really nice tonight. Haven't seen it in thirty years. Seeing it today, I feel like a new man. I know now that I've been completely out of things for the last three decades or more. But I've still got to be very careful. Otherwise, how do you explain those dirty looks the Zhao family's dog gave me?

I've got good reason for my fear.<sup>21</sup>

From the above, it is clear that among the three translators, only Lyell has made an attempt to reproduce the sound of high-register in imitation of the classical Chinese prose-style of the preface to the Diary, he then switches to a casual, colloquial style of English for the first entry by the »diarist« in colloquial Chinese—a crucial stylistic feature of the original short story that corresponds to the switch in register in the Chinese original. From what Lovell tells us about her philosophy of translation, one might expect her to do so as well. As for the date on the preface to the Diary, the Yangs omit it, Lovell translates it into the Western calendar as »2 April 1918«, but only Lyell gives the reader the impression that the date is given according to the new way of counting years in China after the victory of the 1911 Revolution: the 7th year of the Republic. This might be important, because what Lu Xun intended to attack in the story were abuses in Chinese society (in part) left over from the past, hence one of the ironies of the

21 Lu Xun, *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories* tr. by William A. Lyell (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 29.

date: it signals that China is now a Republic with a constitution—people had rights, but were the weak being protected or simply preyed upon by the powerful? This is one of the themes of the story, but what is the quality of the evidence remaining if the story is smoothed out and simplified just for the sake of »readability«?

Lu Xun was worried that adapting or re-writing his stories would mean the loss of irony and, for him it seems, irony was what »The True Story of Ah Q« was all about. Let us look at a letter by Lu Xun to Wang Qiaonan 王喬南 (1896-?), dated October 13, 1930, which reads:

Dear Mr Qiaonan,

I have just received your letter of the 5th and am respectfully considering all the points you have raised. There is nothing about my works that makes them so lofty as to preclude their being adapted for the stage or the screen, but since you have kindly broached the matter, I'll give my views briefly below.

In my opinion, the True Story of Ah Q does not contain the requisite factors for adaptation for the stage or film, because as soon as it is put on stage, the only thing that will remain will be the comic aspects and in fact my writing of this piece did not have comedy or pathos as its goal; there are certain aspects of it which could not be performed by any of the current »stars« in China.

Moreover, just as that director put it, when producing films nowadays in China, there is a necessity to focus on women's feet—thus my work does not merit even a glance from this sort of audience, so it may be best to let it just »go off and die« after all.

In haste,

Yours truly,  
Xun

PS—I realize that just because you rewrite it in script form does not mean it will actually get performed, but if there is a script, there is always the possibility it will be performed, therefore I have made the above response.

Wang Qiaonan at this time was teaching mathematics in the Medical Academy operated by the Headquarters of the Beijing Infantry. He had done a screenplay adaptation of Lu Xun's True Story of Ah Q under the title *Nüren yu mianbao* 女

人與麵包 (Women and Bread).<sup>22</sup> Letting it [Ah Q] »go off and die« is a reference to the Leftist critic Qian Xingcun's 錢杏邨 (A Ying 阿英, 1900–1977) cavalier pronouncement that »the age of Ah Q is dead«, which Lu Xun resented. This letter is telling in that it gives a hint at Lu Xun's opinion on what the most significant aspect of *The True Story of Ah Q* is, namely the irony and subtleties of the written text, which he feared would be lost in a stage or filmic adaptation. He also comments sarcastically on the state of popular culture in China around 1930 and derides the self-orientalization and sexualization of the Chinese actresses by China's own film studios.

What is my point here? Simply that if style is the all-important factor, attention to style in the source language might well be reciprocated by attention to style in the target language and that readability is not a justification for omitting important (and interesting) details. It has often been observed that each generation has to produce its own translations. If that is the case, then perhaps what Lovell should be doing in the first decade of a new millennium is writing in a style of English that is global, rather than regional. The Yangs seem to have understood this in the 1950s, as they strove for a plain style of English that would be acceptable internationally and privately ridiculed William Lyell for his translation into »American«.<sup>23</sup> Looking at the subsequent debate between Howard Goldblatt and Denis Mair over how to translate the language of characters in Wang Shuo,<sup>24</sup> the Yangs could have been right. Lovell, for her part, fails to learn from this type of discussion, giving us tired Britishisms. From Lu Xun's preface to *Naban* (Outcry) we have:

因為這些幼稚的知識，後來便使我的學籍列在日本一個鄉間的醫學專門學校裡了。

- 22 This is my own translation. For this information and the Chinese text of the letter, see *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集 [Complete Works of Lu Xun], 18 vols. (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 2005), 12: 245–246; hereafter *LXQJ*.
- 23 This might be recalled by the many friends and admirers who visited them in their apartment in the Foreign Languages Press, which turned into a sort of literary salon in the 1980s. For my review of Lyell's translation of *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*, see *The China Quarterly* no 137 (London, Mar 1994), 283–284.
- 24 See »Yingyi Zhongwen wenzue ji qi zai Meiguo de chuban« 英譯中文文學及其在美國的出版 [English Translations of Chinese Literature and Its Publication in the US] in the Hong Kong journal *Mingbao yuekan* 明報月刊 36,7 (July 2001), 35–42. Mair argued Goldblatt was wrong to use the language of American subcultures to translate the utterances of certain lowlife characters in Beijing. Goldblatt countered that Mair had failed to produce concrete examples where his translations were at fault in this.

Thanks to the rudimentary knowledge I picked up in Nanjing, I found my name subsequently *fetching up* on the register of a medical school in rural Japan (16).  
and

凡是愚弱的國民，即使體格如何健全，如何茁壯，也只能作毫無意的示眾的材料和看客，病死多少示不必以為不幸的。

However *rude* a nation was in physical health, if its people were intellectually feeble, they would never become anything other than cannon fodder or *gawping* spectators, their loss to the world no cause for regret (17—italics my own, JK).

What does »fetching up« mean? *Xueji* 學籍 might be translated as 'academic affiliation'. Is »fetching up« then supposed to represent the verb *lie* 列? »Rude« is at best a partial translation of *zhuozhuang* 茁壯 (a vernacular Chinese word), but this English usage belongs more to the Anglo-Saxon chronicles than post-modern London, I would think. »Gawping« sounds like a word out of the Victorian countryside. I am not saying that translators should avoid writing in their own idiom or that Harry Potter may not call a truck a lorry, but the question is when is this appropriate and when not? Looking again at the second paragraph above, where does Lu Xun actually characterize the Chinese people as »intellectually feeble«? Perhaps in the 21st century imagination of Li Yiyun, who someone (Penguin? Lovell?) invited to write the sniping afterword about Lu Xun (see below), but nowhere in the text above. The phrase *yuruo de guomin* 愚弱的國民 comes from the discourse about oppressed nations in the late 19th–early 20th centuries and hints more at military and infrastructural weakness than »ignorance« due to lack of access to an educational system, modern or otherwise, and a vibrant moral system / religion that instills at least a modicum of sympathy for one's fellow human beings. Lovell might make a better translator if she would first return to reading a little more history, especially of that era. Another case in point is when Lu Xun tells us:

而且從譯出的歷史上，又知道了日本威信是大半發端於西方醫學的事實。

The translated histories I read, meanwhile, informed me that much of the dynamism of the Meiji Restoration sprung from the introduction of Western medicine to Japan (16).

A more accurate translation might be »the impetus for the Meiji reforms came to a great extent from [the study of] Western medicine«. The words *faduan yu* 發端於 mean 'had its beginnings in'<sup>25</sup> and indeed Lu Xun is accurate in his reading of Japanese history at the time. But there is no word like »dynamism« here.

25 The *Chongbian guoyu cidian* 重編國語辭典 [Revised Mandarin Dictionary], 6 vols. (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1987), 1: 569, defines *faduan* 發端 as *kaishi* 開始 ('begin'). The authoritative *Da Kan-Wa jiten* 大漢和詞典 [Great Sino-Japanese Dictionary], 13 vols., ed. by

At the end of Lu Xun's preface to *Naban*, Lovell 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》裡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。至於自己，卻也並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着好夢的青年。

But since they are battle-cries, I naturally had to follow my generals' orders. So I often stooped to distortions and untruths: adding a fictitious wreath of flowers to Yu'er's grave in »Medicine«; forbearing to write that Mrs Shan never dreams of her son in »Tomorrow«, because my generalissimos did not approve of pessimism. And I didn't want to infect younger generations—dreaming the glorious dreams that I too had dreamed when I was young—with the loneliness that came to torment me (20).

The problem here is that *qubi* 曲筆 (lit. 'a crooked pen') refers to 'literary devices' rather than 'distortions and untruths'—here she takes too literal an approach to the rendering (which she says she wants scrupulously to avoid, again see xiii–xiv), rather than investigating the precise meaning of the Chinese term first, then translating, which is the preferable, more scholarly and also more accurate choice. How much more of a burden on the reader could saying »literary devices« constitute? And how true can »untruths« be if the stories are fiction? Are his stories pure fiction or lyrical writings inspired by actual incidents? Lu Xun tells us in the same Preface, directly after his famous image of China as a hermetically sealed iron house full of unknowing sleepers.

In the Yangs' translation this is:

True, in spite of my own conviction, I could not blot out hope, for hope belongs to the future. I had no negative evidence able to refute his affirmation of faith. So I finally agreed to write, and the result was my first story A Madman's Diary. And once started I could not give up but would write some sort of short story from time to time to humour my friends, until I had written more than a dozen of them (2002, 15).

Lovell gives us:

He was right: however hard I tried, I couldn't quite obliterate my own sense of hope. Because hope is a thing of the future: my denial of it failed to convince him. In the end I agreed to write something for him: my first short story, 'Diary of a Madman'. And once I had started, I found it impossible to stop, rattling off poor imitations of fiction to keep my earnest friends quiet, until in time I found myself the author of some dozen pieces (19).

Morohashi Tetsuji 諸橋轍次 (Tokyo: Taishuukan, 1984), 7: 8131, says *butsu no hajime wo okosu* 物のはじめを起こす ('to give rise to the beginning of an event').



Both these translations contain over-simplifications to the point of distortion. As most people who read Lu Xun realize early on, hope is an important theme—his antidote to despair. Therefore, when he writes:

是的，我雖然自有我的確信，然而說到希望，卻是不能抹殺的，因為希望是在於未來，決不能以我之必無的證明，來折服了他之所謂可有，於是我終於答應他也做文章了。

the passage is important. If we make a more accurate translation, Lu Xun says:

Indeed [...], although I had my own convictions, yet when [he] mentioned hope, [that] was something that could not be denied. Because hope lies in the future, I was completely unable to use my evidence of the impossibility of its existence to refute his assertion that it could exist. Therefore, in the end, I agreed to his [request] and started writing.

Its importance lies in the fact that it is essentially an interior philosophical monologue about the existence of hope, provoked by his previous exchange with Jin Xinyi 金心異 (hinting to Qian Xuantong 錢玄同, 1887–1939), but entirely in Lu Xun's own mind. Lovell's

however hard I tried, I couldn't quite obliterate my own sense of hope. Because hope is a thing of the future: my denial of it failed to convince him [...]

pushes the rumination back into the dialogue, which it has already left. The Yangs'

[...] in spite of my own conviction, I could not blot out hope, for hope belongs to the future, I had no negative evidence able to refute his affirmation of faith.

is also an oversimplification, in part because of their »I had no negative evidence«, but more crucially because of their recourse to the word »faith,« which is nowhere in the original text. Although Lovell and the Yangs aim at readability, what they give the reader in fact are simplifications (and hence at times also distortions) of Lu Xun's more complex thoughts and diction, something he himself advised us to avoid in translation.<sup>26</sup>

26 For Lu Xun's views on translation, see his famous essay »Hard Translation« and the »Class Character of Literature«. This was written as part of a 'pen war' (*bizhan* 筆戰) with Liang Shiqiu 梁實秋 (1903–1987). The first salvo was fired by Liang in his essay »Lun Lu Xun xiansheng de yingyi« 論魯迅先生的硬譯 [On Mr Lu Xun's {Method of} 'Hard Translation'] published in the journal *Xinyue* 新月 2,6/7 (Sep 10, 1929). Lu Xun responded with »Hard Translation« and the »Class Character of Literature« («Yingyi» yu "wenxue de jieji xing" «硬譯”與“文學的階級性”) in the Shanghai journal *Mengya yuekan* 萌芽月刊 6,3 (March 1930). For an annotated edition, see *LXQJ* 4: 199–227. Texts of and relating to the debate have been reprinted numerous times, most recently in *Lu Xun Liang Shiqiu lunzhan shilu* 魯迅梁實秋論戰實錄 [Actual Records of the Debate Between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu], ed. by Li Zhao 黎照 (Beijing: Hualing chubanshe, 1997).

Where does this leave us? There is an old joke about Herbert Giles' (1845–1935) famous preface to Lim Boom Keng's 林文慶 (1869–1957) translation of the *Lisao* 離騷, which he obviously did not want to write in the first place, ending by saying that Lim's translation went a long way to leave the British Empire exactly where it had been before. Actually, Giles did not mean to be so critical—he meant that scholars writing in English had fallen behind the French and that Lim's English translation pushed the Brits back up to being neck-and-neck with their Continental rivals. Penguin's publication of Lovell's translation is a watershed, no doubt, but its significance does not lie in newness, accuracy or scholarship, rather in its completeness. Here we have, for the first time under one cover, all of Lu Xun's fiction. The problem is, we had it all before: readers just had to search through several different covers. It may have done some people in the English-speaking world good to be so adventurous as to obtain books from Beijing. Indeed, within the context of the Cold War, that in and of itself might have been an act of intellectual resistance.

Speaking of the Cold War, Lovell's book is concluded by an Afterword (412–416) by Li Yiyun 李翊雲 (b1972), an author from an elite background in the People's Republic of China (her father was a nuclear scientist), who graduated from Beijing University (BS 1996), was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship (2010) in the US and now lives in Oakland, California, writing about China in English.<sup>27</sup> Li Yiyun tells the reader:

[...] Lu Xun's ambition to become a spiritual doctor, and his intention for his fiction to become cultural medicine for the nation's diseased minds, in the end, limited him as a storyteller; the long shadow he cast in Chinese history has allowed the proliferation of many mediocre works while ending the careers of some of the most brilliant writers [...] (413).

It is [...] frustrating to reread Lu Xun, too. In an essay that detailed his literary theories, he created a phrase—one of his most famous creations in modern Chinese—to describe his feelings towards his characters: »[he is] as saddened by the miseries of those people as [he is] infuriated by their reconciliation with their fate.«

27 Li Yiyun has published *The Vagrants* (London: Fourth Estate, 2009), a novel based on appallingly true events: the horrid executions of two young women dissidents Li Jiulian 李九蓮 and Zhong Haiyuan 鍾海源 in 1977. In the US, she studied creative writing, teaching at UC Davis. She first learned the story of these women from the internet in the US. I was invited to engage in a formal dialogue with her as part of the Sydney Writers Festival on May 19, 2010, at which she faulted Lu Xun for setting himself above the Chinese people, looking down on the characters in his fiction, seeing himself as a doctor who could cure them with literature, and damaging Shen Congwen's reputation.

This fury, coupled with his goal to cure the nation's diseased minds with his writing, granted him a position of superiority; in many of his stories, this spiritual doctor with his authorial voice took over the stories, which, in my opinion, was more than mere technical missteps: in »My Old Home«, the author could not refrain from preaching at the end; in »Village Opera« (my favourite story by Lu Xun, a beautiful vignette of village life where characters seem to exist out of free will, rather than to live up to the author's sadness and fury), the opening passages with the sarcastic comments on the nation's citizens are rather unnecessary and pointless; »Diary of a Madman«, despite its historical significance, relies on a few pithy phrases fed to the narrator by the author to carry the story; and in »A Minor Incident«, an epiphany occurs towards the end, where a rickshaw-puller »suddenly seemed to loom taller, broader with every step he took, until I had to crick my neck back to view him in his entirety. It seemed to bear down on me, pressing out the petty selfishness concealed beneath my fur coat«—in retrospect, I think that moment of epiphany was repeatedly copied out in our own essays in secondary schools and, more damagingly, it became a successful mode of storytelling for a generation of mediocre writers after Communism took over China.

After Lu Xun's death, in many situations Mao Zedong hailed him as »a great revolutionary«, »the commander of China's Cultural Revolution« and »the saint of China«. It was out of ideological necessity that Lu Xun was canonized, his work overshadowing some of the other writers of his era—Shen Congwen and Lin Yutang, for instance—whose work, if not banned, was rarely seen in print for decades. I wonder, though, whether this posthumous fame would have pleased Lu Xun. Indeed, when he set his mind to cure the nation's spiritual disease with his writing, he had chosen an impossible role as a superhero and a god (415).

Is a writer's mission simply to be a »storyteller«? That has not been my experience at the more-and-more numerous writers' festivals I have attended in the postmodern West, where writers find themselves often looked on by worshipful readers almost as oracles, expected to pronounce on a whole range of matters. From that, it should come as little surprise that writers sometimes loom larger than life in the public imagination. Did Lu Xun intend »his fiction to become cultural medicine for the nation's diseased minds«? He never said the Chinese had »diseased minds«. All he said actually was that he wanted to point out the sickness and suffering in society so that a cure might be sought.<sup>28</sup>

28 The material for his stories was drawn, he explained, »from the plight of unfortunate people in a sick society—it was my intention to expose this sickness and suffering so as to draw attention to it, in the hope that a cure might thereby be sought.« 我的取材，多采自病態社會的不幸的人們中，意思是在揭出病苦，引起療救的注意。 See *LXQJ* 4: 526. This is from Lu Xun's March 5, 1933, article

Is this so different than Vonnegut, Dreiser, Swift or Alexander Pope? What of his public debates with other Chinese writers such as Lin Yutang and Shen Congwen? In January 1926 Lu Xun published an essay »Lun “fei’epolai” yinggai huanxing« 論“費厄波賴”應緩行 (On Deferring ‘Fair Play’) <sup>29</sup> which played on the folk phrase *da luo shui gou* 打落水狗 (lit. ‘hitting a dog that has fallen into the water’) as a tongue-in-cheek translation for the opposite of fair play in a debate with his friend Lin Yutang, who had remarked that the Chinese lack a sense of fair play. Lu Xun died in 1936. During the nation-wide political purge known as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and its aftermath (1966–1976), it was argued by some members of the Maoist faction that because Lu Xun had advocated »beating dogs that have fallen into the water« they (the Maoists) were justified in relentlessly persecuting their unfortunate victims. The phrase was, of course, being employed in totally different contexts over four decades apart, yet after the Cultural Revolution faction was overthrown, people who, for the most part, have never read either essay, seized on this phrase to hold Lu Xun accountable for all the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. This is, needless to say, at least as ill-based as the argument that Nietzsche was responsible for World War I and World War II because of the misuse of his writing (and words ascribed to him) by German militarists—an argument which has been rejected by the Western academy for decades now. Lu Xun and Lin Yutang remained friends, despite their differences. After Lu Xun’s death, Lin Yutang wrote a moving essay *in memoriam* and subsequently translated his aphorisms into English. Although he lived in Hong Kong and Taiwan after 1949, Lin’s works continued to be published abroad and have enjoyed a successful re-emergence in China today. Shen Congwen’s career as a creative writer ended after the Communist take-over, when he had a nervous breakdown, but this had nothing to do with Lu Xun, with whom he had engaged indirectly in a ‘pen battle’ over ‘Beijing Types’ vs. ‘Shanghai Types’ in 1933–34.<sup>30</sup> Lu Xun did not even refer to him by name.

<sup>28</sup> »Wo zenme zuoqi xiaoshuo lai« 我怎麼做起小說來 [How I Came to Write Fiction]. The above is my own translation. The Yangs translate it as »How I Came to Write Stories«, SW 3: 262–265.

<sup>29</sup> For the original text of this essay, see LX 97 1: 286–297; translated by the Yangs as »On Deferring Fair Play«, SW 2: 228–241.

<sup>30</sup> Shen had portrayed Beijing intellectuals as high-minded, hard-working college professors and teachers, contrasting this with the laziness and decadence of Shanghai writers who he said were »opportunists who changed with the direction of the wind«. See his essay »Wenxue zhe de taidu« 文學者的態度 [The Attitudes of Authors] in *Wenyi fukan* 文藝副刊 [Literary Supplement] no 9 (Oct 18, 1933) to the Tianjin *Dagong bao* 大公報 (subtitled *L’Impartial*), and »Lun haipai« 論海派 [On Shanghai Types] in issue no 32 of the same journal. Lu Xun countered with »“Jingpai” yu

After 1949 Shen was given a job as a curator in the Palace Museum at the Forbidden City, wrote an important book on Chinese clothing, and was eventually rehabilitated after the Cultural Revolution—I met him in the US when he spoke at Berkeley as a celebrated visitor in 1981. Perhaps the acrimony is more directly related to the fact that Li Yiyun is now translating Shen Congwen's correspondence (I applaud her for doing so) and somehow resents his still being overshadowed by Lu Xun. This is hardly Lu Xun's fault—in fact he spent much of his time and money in his final years attempting to help younger writers.<sup>31</sup> That Shen Congwen was not one of them was not an oversight or a slight—Shen had already been lionized by Hu Shi and didn't need Lu Xun's backing. There were always lesser writers who sought to enhance their visibility by provoking Lu Xun and entering into pen-wars with him.

Was Lu Xun overly ambitious in thinking that writing could »save the nation«? Perhaps so, but that was a common fantasy among intellectuals over a hundred years ago when Lu Xun was still an idealistic young man embarking on a writing career and did not stop a recent internet poll among Chinese young people from ranking him as the most popular figure in all their history.<sup>32</sup> So if everyone in China read English for pleasure, the Penguins might be in their counting house a lot longer. Several years ago when I was in Beijing I asked Wang Dehou 王得后 (b1934), a preeminent senior scholar of Lu Xun, why other authorities on Lu Xun in China nowadays spend so much of their time editing and publishing annotated editions of his stories and essays in the *daodu* 導讀 format, all new »Lu Xun Readers«, so to speak, for the Chinese readership. He replied simply and elegantly, a faint smile gracing his face: »Yinwei Lu Xun de shu haishi hao mai.« 因為魯迅的書還是好賣。 ('Because Lu Xun's books still sell well').

*The University of New South Wales, Sydney*  
*The University of Georgia, Athens*

“haipai” « “京派” 與 “海派” (Feb 3, 1934), *LXQJ* 5: 453–455, and »“Jingpai” he “haipai”« (May 5, 1935), *LXQJ* 6: 312–316, counselling the avoidance of generalization, but adding facetiously that since Beijing was the old capital, writers there tended to be cosy with government officials, whereas Shanghai was a commercial center, so its writers were beholden to business interests. The first of these articles by Lu Xun is translated by the Yangs in *SW* 4: 19–21.

31 The most recent of these accounts to come to light, by the politically neutral writer Xu Yu 徐訐 (1908–1980), was published in Hong Kong He comments that in terms of supporting destitute younger writers, Lu Xun was the only prominent writer who was generous with his own money and time in the 1930s. See *Mingbao yuekan* 44,3 (no 519, March 2009), 61–62.

32 Cited at the outset of Graeme Smith, *Beijing* (New York: Frommers/Wiley, 2006).