

A Translator's Testament: Lu Xun's *Si hunling* (Dead Souls, 1935–36)

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1 *The Setting*

Probably, there are few translation experiences in world literature as well documented as Lu Xun's work on a Chinese version of Gogol's *Mertnye dushi*, produced in 1935–36. All extant letters by Lu Xun are published, and as his fame reached a first peak towards the end of his life that almost coincides with the completion of his *Si hunling*, it happens that the letters which have survived also increased in number when he was working on his Gogol' translation. Lu Xun's diaries are published as well, and although they are written in a dry traditional Chinese factographic mode, they provide fairly reliable basic data on his work. Moreover, as Lu Xun has published his translation in portions, he has left a number of Translator's Notes and other documentation of this kind. One of his self-appointed pupils who has been crucial in spreading his posthumous fame meticulously compiled the essential information.¹ The compiler Sun Yong himself an important translator contributing to the journal *Benliu* (Torrent; 1928–29), having learned English and Esperanto while working in the Postal Administration, later became a successful translator of Petőfi, Lermontov and Pushkin.

Nonetheless, the essentials shall be briefly recounted here: On February 15, 1935, Lu Xun first recorded in his diary to have translated a piece from Dead Souls. On March 11 he completed ch. 2, reaching »some 20,000 characters«. On May 8 he took up translation of ch. 3, and on the 23rd of the same month sent chapters 3 and 4 off to Zheng Zhenduo, the then editor of the *Shijie wenku* (World Literature Library) monthly series at the Wenhua shenghuo chubanshe, then under the chief-editorship of Ba Jin, where Gogol's work should be published. On the basis of Kropotkin's *Ideals and Realities*

I wish to express my gratitude to my once Bochum colleague Alexander Vovin for providing Japanese Gogol' translations, to Itamar Livni (Jerusalem) for help in gaining access to English translations unavailable in continental Europe, and to Elena Šinka (Bratislava) for invaluable advice about peculiarities of Gogol's vocabulary.

1 Sun Yong 孫用, »Lu Xun yiyen jic« *jiaodu ji* 《魯迅譯文集》校讀記 [Notes from a Critical Collation of »Collected Translations by Lu Xun«] (Changsha: Hu'nan renmin chubanshe, 1986), 246–264.

in *Russian Literature* (1905), Zheng Zhenduo has written a Brief History of Russian Literature (*Eguo wenxue shilüe*, 1923), a work certainly known to Lu Xun.

The following chart can be established on the basis of Lu Xun's working notes in his diaries:

			<i>Shijie wenku</i>
I	ch.s 1–2	Feb 15–Mar 11, 1935	no 1 (May 1935)
	ch.s 3–4	May 8–23, 1935	no 2 (June 1935)
	ch.s 5–6	June 11–24, 1935	no 3 (July 1935)
	ch.s 7–8	July 4–27, 1935	no 4 (Aug 1935)
	ch.s 9–10	Aug 5–28, 1935	no 5 (Sep 1935)
	ch. 11	Sep 16–28, 1935	no 6 (Oct 1935)
	appendix	Sep 29–Oct 6, 1935	
	preface	completed Oct 17, 1935 ²	
			<i>Yiwen</i> new series
II	ch. 1	Feb 25–Mar 25, 1936	1,1 (Mar 16, 1936), 1–14
	ch. 2	no indications	1,2 (Apr 16, 1936), 474–502
	ch. 3	May 8–15, Oct 1936 (unachieved)	1,3 (May 16, 1936), 671–684 2,2 (Oct 16, 1936), 411–438

Upon completion of part I of *Dead Souls*—published in installments between May and October 1935—Lu Xun immediately continued work. The chart demonstrates that between completion of the respective translation manuscript and its publication on the 20th of each month there were roughly three weeks for typesetting and proofreading. The fact that both the Appendix and the Preface by Nestor A. Kotlyarevskij, a famed critic and Gogol's editor, were not published in *Shijie wenku* is already an indication of the separate book edition, published in November 1935 as vol. 5 of the Selected Works of Gogol' drafted by Lu Xun. The appendix gives variants of the Story of Kopeikin in ch. 11, among them the version banned by the Czarist censure—something that must have sounded familiar to Lu Xun. It also shows that the translation of *Dead Souls* has taken some 15 months of Lu Xun's lifetime, partly through 1936 when in extremely bad health. The chart also suggests that this was the very last publication by Lu Xun during his lifetime, ch. 3 of part II carrying a date three days before Lu Xun's death (Oct 19, 1936).

When Lu Xun took up translation of *Dead Souls*, Gogol' was familiar to him for quite some decades. In one of his earliest publications, *On the Power of Mara Poetry* (1907), he lists Gogol' among the Romantic poets who have the potential to change social realities: »In the latter half of the 19th century, Gogol' made his appearance and moved his countrymen by an unprecedented tragic mood of tears and suffering. [...] It

2 Cf. also the list in Gu Jun 顧鈞, *Lu Xun fanyi yanjiu* 魯迅翻譯研究 [A Study on Lu Xun's Translations] (Fuzhou: Fujian jiaoyu chubanshe, 2009), 303.—Numerous studies have been devoted to the topic, both on particular works and on Lu Xun's translation activities in general. Among monographs should be mentioned Lennart Lundberg, *Lu Xun as a Translator. Lu Xun's Translation and Introduction of Literature and Literary Theory, 1903–1936* (Stockholm: Orientaliska Studier, 1989), Wang Yougui 王友貴, *Fanyijia Lu Xun* 翻譯家魯迅 [Lu Xun as a Translator] (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 2005), but none of these provide systematic research into the complex source situation—with the remarkable exception of Mark Gamsa, *The Chinese Translation of Russian Literature. Three Studies* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008).

is only Gogol' who manages to arouse extraordinary interest with his great works describing the bleak sides of human life, but he goes even further.«³ This is probably the first time Gogol' is taken notice of by a Chinese author. It is well possible that Lu Xun read *Dead Souls* at the time in its earliest German translation, published in the series of cheap books, of which he frequently found second hand copies in Tôkyô's antiquarian bookshops. The copy he held is extant.⁴ To what extent his landmark *Diary of a Madman* (1918) is indebted to Gogol's homonymic work is a topic controversially discussed by Lu Xun scholars. It was also Lu Xun who proposed a Chinese translation of Gogol's *Overcoat* (»Shinel'«, 1842), prepared by Wei Suyuan in 1926.⁵

If he started to consider himself to translate Gogol' only two years before his death, it might have also been motivated by the fact that a chapter from *Dead Souls* was published that year, along with Gogol's *Diary of a Madman*.⁶ Another collection of stories, published in the volume devoted to Gogol' in a series of *Famous Works from Russia*, included a Chinese version of the *Nose* (»Nos«, 1836),⁷ and might have motivated him to translate the famous story himself only a few months later for the opening issue of freshly founded journal *Translations*.⁸ In the postfactory note to this translation he also reveals a sort of 'national interest' in *Dead Souls*, suggesting that China would catch up with the world if only this masterpiece by Gogol' were translated: »With the exception of China, there are translations in all civilized countries, and there are even three of them in Japan where his *Complete Works* are just being published.«⁹

Soon afterwards, he presented the plan for a Chinese edition of Gogol's selected works to young Meng Shihuan (also known as Meng Sigen) who had studied in the Soviet Union and was among the regular contributors of the *Yiwen* journal. Meng

- 3 Lu Xun, »Moluo shi li shuo« 摩羅詩力說, in *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集 [Complete Works], 18 vols. (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 2005; hereafter *LXQJ*), 9: 68 and 66.
- 4 *Die toden Seelen. Ein satirisch-komisches Zeitgemälde*, 2 vols., tr. by Philipp Löbenstein [1846] (Leipzig: Reclam, s.a. [1872/81]. Reclams Universal-Bibliothek; 413/414, 1466/1467). See *Lu Xun shouji he cangshu mulu* 魯迅手跡和藏書目錄, ed. by Lu Xun bowuguan 魯迅博物館 [»neibu ziliao« 內部資料], 3 vols. (Beijing: Lu Xun bowuguan, 1959), 3.2: 31. In any instance he could not have read it in Japanese, as the first translation only came out in 1917 (*Shi seru tamashii* 死せる魂, 3 vols., tr. by Morita Sôhei 森田草平, Tôkyô: Kokumin bunko kankôkai), probably in turn prepared from English.
- 5 For further details on the reception of Gogol' in China, see the impressive number of sources processed by Mark E. Shneyder, *Russkaya klassika v Kitae* [Classical Russian Literature in China] (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Nauka, 1977) who does, however, only devote special sections to Pushkin, Dostoevskij, Chekhov and Gor'kij, thus revealing a biased concept of 'classicism'. Cf. also Wang Zhigeng 王志耕, »Guogeli zai Zhongguo de bashi nian licheng« 果戈理在中國的八十年歷程 [Eighty Years of Gogol in China], *Waiguo wenzue yanjiu* 外國文學研究 2/1990, 94–99.
- 6 »Si ling« 死靈 and »Kuangren riji« 狂人日記, tr. by Xiao Huaqing 蕭華清, in *Guoguo'er duanpian xiaoshuo ji* 郭果爾短篇小說集 (Shanghai: Xinken shudian, 1934).
- 7 *Guogeli zhuanji* 果戈理專集, tr. by Li Bingzhi 李秉之 (Shanghai: Yadong tushuguan, 1935. Eluosi mingzhu 俄羅斯名著; 2).
- 8 »Bizi« 鼻子, *Yiwen* 1,1 (Sep 16, 1934). Also for this translation, Lu Xun used a German translation from the popular Reclam series, certainly among his acquisitions in Japan as well, i.e. *Die Nase*, tr. by Wilhelm Lange (Leipzig: Reclam, s.a. [?1884]).
- 9 »"Bizi" yizhe fuji« 《鼻子》譯者附記, in *LXQJ* 10: 515.

Shihuan was more or less ordered to contribute a translation of *Mirgorod*, evidently prepared from its Russian source, whereas Lu Xun's version of *Dead Souls* would appear as the last two of a total of six volumes:

- vol. 1 Nights at *Dekanka* [*Vechera na kbutore bliz Dikan'ki*, 1831–32]
- vol. 2 *Mirgorod*
- vol. 3 Stories and *Arabesque* [in German]
- vol. 4 Plays
- vol. 5 *Dead Souls*, part I
- vol. 6 *Dead Souls*, part II; research material¹⁰

A similar plan was drafted in a letter to Huang Yuan, the *Yiwen* editor, and soon later, Lu Xun now makes a polite proposal: »I would like to agree with you [*xiansheng*] that we translate together [*yitong lai yi*] selected works of Gogol'.«¹¹ This ostensibly well-balanced formulation highlights to which extent the collective endeavour was a delicate matter, and that Lu Xun wished to keep control without formally taking the overall responsibility. The situation was further complicated by what was to become known in literary history writing as the »quarrel in the Life Bookstore.«¹² As almost always in publication business, money was at play, it is »really difficult to get along with these business people.«¹³ Nonetheless, the book edition of part I was after all published in the *Yiwen* series.

From the moment Lu Xun took up translating the *Dead Souls*, his letters abound in complaints about the difficulties of his task—differently expressing himself according to the addressee, both in style and register (a tempered convention in letters to his age-mates, and in particular towards in those to his old Shaoxing friends, and an emphatically colloquial vernacular register in letters to his *protégés*) and in content: Content-wise, while with friends he seemingly considered his equals, he tries to identify objective reasons for his difficulties, he is overtly didactic towards his pupils, generalizing the case of *Dead Souls* and furthermore expounding on translation issues.

Particularly revealing, however, is a letter to Hu Feng which I quote more extensively, as it may provide a basis for a detailed assessment of Lu Xun's actual translation:

I really consider a burden translating Gogol'. After every second chapter, I feel as if becoming ill. The German translation is very clear and attractive, yet to transform it into Chinese and moreover to reduce the number of adjectives is as exhausting as it has been till now. I find it pointless [*wuliao*], am shaking the head about myself and do not want to look at it again. Translating is definitely not an easy task. Now I know that Udeda Susumu's

10 Letter to Meng Shihuan, Dec 4, 1934, in *LXQJ* 13: 273. Asterisks * in the example above indicate usage of Latin script within the Chinese text.

11 Letter to Meng Shihuan, Feb 4, 1935, in *LXQJ* 13: 369.

12 See *Huang Yuan huiyilu* 黃源回憶錄 [Memoirs of Huang Yuan] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2001); cf. also Qiu Shi 秋石, »Guanyu Lu Xun, Huang Yuan tong Shenghuo shudian fengbo youlai kaobian« 關於魯迅、黃源同生活書店風波由來考辨 [An Examination of the Origins of Lu Xun's and Huang Yuan's Quarrel with Life Bookstore], *Wenyi lilun yu piping* 文學理論與批評 5/2003, 129–138; abridged version in *Xin wensue shiliao* 新文學史料 1/2004, 14–21; see also Ba Yirong 巴一榕, »Ba Jin, Huang Yuan xin zhong tan Lu Xun« 巴金、黃源信中談魯迅 [Ba Jin and Huang Yuan Talking About Lu Xun in Their Letters], *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan* 魯迅研究月刊 8/2004, 72–75.

13 Letter to Meng Shihuan, Dec 4, 1934, *LXQJ* 13: 272.

translation is full of errors. In many cases, he translates into several sentences one single sentence, thus drawing close to interpretation. I find this procedure quite suitable, yet if there are mistakes, it makes me angry. However, although I feel handicapped, this translation of mine might still become a bit better than the Japanese one. But the German translator is probably a Jew: Wherever Jews are abused, he translates evasively, which is ridiculous.¹⁴

It is striking that a translator as experienced as Lu Xun seems to be aiming at producing sentences of similar length in the target language—which is linguistically untenable. Leaving aside he was talking about German and Japanese texts as a source, it may yet be considered an element of his concept of *yingyi* ('hard translation') in which literal faithfulness, i.e. lexical equivalence, quantity of translations into Chinese at the expense of their quality, and not least secondary translation played a key-role.¹⁵

If read against Lu Xun's many other reports about his ongoing translation work, his assessment of quality of existing translations seems rather shaky. He appears to prefer the »very clear and attractive« German to the Japanese translation, given that he even hopes to overcome that latter in quality by his own Chinese version. However, some time earlier, Lu Xun had believed to detect »some errors in the [German] translation of the Nose«¹⁶ upon receiving a new edition of Gogol's complete works in German—actually an unaltered post-war reprint of the edition he already possessed. One wonders on what basis such impressionistic assessment was made.

As for his speculation about the ethnic origin of the complete work's editor and translator, Lu Xun is right indeed. Otto Buek was born in St Petersburg and is said to have been a close friend of Lou Andreas-Salomé, the Nietzsche confidant and later propagator of psychoanalysis.¹⁷ However, again, it is unclear how Lu Xun reached the conclusion Otto Buek was »translating evasively«. The text of *Dead Souls* does not contain any passage that would offer itself to be tempered with: »Jews« are mentioned just three times throughout the whole text of part I. The first occurrence is in a relatively innocent passage using the idiomatic expression 'rich as a Jew' to describe the assumed wealth of Chichikov. As the expression in ch. 9 is part of the rumours circulating after Chichikov had made unsuccessful advances at the Governor's daughter, the narrator, using a hyperbolic mode throughout the two ladies' dialogue, doubly takes his distance:

R232 *potomu chto Chichikov bogat, kak zhid*

G322 »reich wie ein Jude«

C186 因為他有錢，像猶人一樣¹⁸

14 Letter to Hu Feng 胡風, June 28, 1935, in *LXQJ* 13: 490.

15 See his two contributions to the Free Talk column, »Lun chongyi« 論重譯 [On Secondary Translation] and »Zai lun chongyi« 再論 [On Secondary Translation Again], June 24 and July 3rd, 1934, in *LXQJ* 5: 531–536, and written while he was working on the translation of Gogol's »Nos«. See the excellent overview on 'hard translation' in Gu Jun, *Lu Xun fanyi yanjiu*, 12–28.

16 Letter to Meng Shihuan, Dec 4, 1934, in *LXQJ* 13: 272.

17 I have not found any evidence for this allegation in <de.wikipedia.org> (retrieved Apr 17, 2009) in any of the most reliable biographical studies about Lou Andreas-Salomé, namely Heinz Frederick Peters, *My Sister, My Spouse* (London: Gollancz, 1963; tr. into German as *Lou. Das Leben der Lou Andreas-Salomé*, München: Kindler, 1968), and Stéphane Michaud, *Lou Andreas-Salomé. L'alliée de la vie* (Paris: Seuil, 2000).

18 The numerals used hereafter refer to the editions *Mertrye dushi*, 2 vols., ed. by A. N. Pecherskaya (Moskva: Detskaya literatura, 2007), vol. 1; »Die Abenteuer Tschitschikows oder Die Toten Seelen«, tr.

The other two occurrences are in ch. 11 where we are told of Chichikov's previous life as a customs' officer is narrated and his skill in diverting smuggled goods to his own advantage:

R289 *byla groza i tchayanie vsego Pol'skogo zhidovstva*

D405 »Er war der Schrecken und die Verzweiflung der gesamten polnischen Judenschaft.«

C223 他是所有波瀾一帶的猶太人幫的災星和惡煞。

This can be hardly considered a racial prejudice, as it accurately reflects the situation of Jews in divided Poland occupied by Russia and Prussia. In the same passage, though, Chichikov is described as 'even more clever than all the Jews in the world'. Is it conceivable then that Lu Xun was so prone to anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda than also raging in Shanghai that he considered the character of Nozdrev (to whom ch. 4 is devoted) who has the 'nose' in his name and is indeed an repulsive example of greediness as an expression of prejudices? Yet, with the exception of Korobochka (C59n3) and Kopeikin (as derived from the smallest money unit, explained as 'Mr Coppercoin', C193n1), he does neither annotate nor transpose the 'speaking names' throughout the text, but simply renders him phonetically (Luoshitelaiifu). If any, then extensive narrator's deliberations based on national rather than racial stereotypes are pervasive in *Dead Souls*, not least those referring to the 'Russian soul', the 'Russian people' and 'Russian writers'. It is, however, possible that Lu Xun's confused impression was due to his concurrent reading of *Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki* where anti-Semitism is indeed a component.

In another letter written shortly afterwards, Lu Xun provides further material as to his difficulties with the Gogol' translation:

My head and brain are confused because I have read too little of Gogol' in the past. I thought it would be easy to translate and did not imagine it so difficult. His satire is extremely elaborate [*qianzhong bailian*]. There are not just outdated nouns [*wu modeng mingci*] (there was not even electricity at the time), but also 18th century [*si! recte 19th century*] dishes and gambling-terms which make it quite a thorny matter. The translation by Udeda Susumu is not really bad, but there many passages that considerably differ from the German version. When thinking about it carefully, it seems that he has many mistakes. Translating is not easy indeed.¹⁹

Again, we find Lu Xun's indecisive judgement about the quality of the two main translations which he used. It is evident that his own requirement in the usage of intermediary translations—i.e. »it is necessary to pay attention to a translation's excellence and its weaknesses [*yao kan yiven de jialiang yu fon*]²⁰—is not that easy to fulfill. If he mentions »outdated nouns«, this is certainly true for the by-then one century old translation by Otto Buek. It is indeed true as to, for instance, specialized vocabulary denoting all kinds and shapes of vehicles, but not necessarily for Gogol's Russian vocabulary which in many cases proves to be of local, i.e. Ukrainian origin.

From the available material and in particular Lu Xun's own comments, it appears reasonable to start a detailed analysis of the translation text by grouping the vocabulary

by Otto Buek, in *Sämtliche Werke*, 8 vols., ed. by Otto Buek (München; Leipzig: Müller, 1909–14), vol. 1 (1909); and *Lu Xun yiven quanji* 魯迅譯文全集 [Complete Translations], 8 vols. (Fuzhou: Fujian jiaoyu chubanshe, 2008), vol. 7, for Russian (R), German (G), and Lu Xun's Chinese (C), respectively.

19 Letter to Hu Feng, May 17, 1935, in *LXQJ* 13: 458.

20 »Lun chongyi«, in *LXQJ* 5: 532.

into three categories: Alleged Jewish self-hatred by the German translator may be duly excluded, as far as *Dead Souls* is concerned. Instead, for the purpose of the present study, I shall pay particular attention to what I should label as (1) Clouds of Qualifiers (i.e. Lu Xun's 'adjectives'), (2) Russian cuisine, and in addition (3) Administrative Terms and Officials' Titles, while concentrating on the achieved part I of the whole work.

2 Sources

According to Lu Xun's own testimony given in various places, his main translation source was Otto Buek's German version of *Dead Souls*, first published in 1909 as first and second volumes of a Complete Works' edition in eight volumes, reedited and typeset in five volumes in 1923, and including the two parts in volume 5.²¹ Although both editions are in Lu Xun's private library, there is some evidence (elaborated below) that he used the latter. In any case, it is the edition that animated his plan to bring out a Chinese version of Gogol's selected works, and it is the edition Lu Xun was provided with on Nov 27, 1934, through unknown channels, by Huang Yuan. He paid for package and postage nearly as much as for the books themselves, i.e. 15 silver dollars for the former and 18 for the latter.²² There is also a very early German translation in Lu Xun's possession (1846), in one of the cheap editions mentioned earlier. He probably made his first acquaintance with *Dead Souls* in that version. As his main source for the »Nos« translation was published in the same series, it is not unlikely he reread that older *Dead Souls* version mentioned above on the occasion.

Being familiar with translated literature in Japanese since his student days, and having translated »Nos« from the version by Yushima Toshio earlier in 1934, he also regularly consulted Udeda Susumu's version, one of the volumes from the then brandnew Japanese edition of Complete Works (6 vols.) published the very same year. Lu Xun also held in his private library a copy of another Japanese translation by Endō Toyoma, published too in 1934.²³ It is not clear why there is no evidence that he also utilized it, and why he does not mention or discuss it at all. Whenever he mentions a Japanese version of *Dead Souls* he makes explicit reference to Udeda or otherwise handles the issue as if there were just one translation.

Although he had a very low opinion of the English version at his hand, he seems to have consulted it now and then. He complains that the version was of no use and »even omitted the Story about Captain Kopeikin, so that not even one [Chinese] character is left.«²⁴ It is an anonymous translation with an introduction by Stephen Graham which is not recorded among Lu Xun's books and may never have been in his possession.²⁵ And last but not least, going back to the first source: No evidence can be

21 As the edition does not carry any year of publication, estimates of various holding libraries differ between 1920 and 1925. It is unclear from where the compilers of *Lu Xun shouji be canshu mulu*, 3.2: 31, got their information.

22 Diary Nov 27, 1934, in *LXQJ* 16: 487.

23 *Lu Xun shouji be canshu mulu*, 3.1: 34.

24 Letter to Meng Shihuan, Oct 20, 1935, in *LXQJ* 13: 565.

25 *Dead Souls*, introduction by Stephen Graham (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 3rd ed. 1916). From the

found for Lu Xun having checked a Russian version, nor is there any reference to that effect. There are several Russian books in Lu Xun's private collection, also illustrations to the novel, but not a single copy of the text of Gogol's novel.

Lu Xun had started to learn German in 1899 while studying in Nanjing. When he went to Japan, he did not only learn the Japanese, but also had, as a future medical student, to continue his study of German. This is why he had a fairly solid command of German, and though he felt uncomfortable in oral communication in his later years, German was the medium through which he became acquainted with world literature, before Japanese would catch up. Moreover, according to Xu Guangping's account, in the early 1930s Lu Xun invested quite some time and energy to keep alive and enhance his skills in German: »When we were living near the Hongkou Park in Shanghai, he exercised his German during at one year, he bought a number of specialized dictionaries and books in German, and frequently learnt every night at a fixed hour. When he met Agnes Smedley, he sometimes used German in conversation, and she corrected his German pronunciation.«²⁶ She puts so much emphasis on the heroic efforts of Lu Xun shortly before his death to conclude the translation of fragments from part II of *Dead Souls* which have also remained a fragmentary translation, that an otherwise absolutely sober scholar could not help commenting ironically: »In brief, Lu Xun sacrificed his life on the watchpost of translation, and he sacrificed it for *Dead Souls*. If he had never started to translate this book, could he not have lived longer?«²⁷

As for his mastery of English, it was no doubt not much more than basic and allowed to get a rough idea of texts. A letter he wrote in 1935 to Harold Isaacs was drafted by Mao Dun and then signed by Lu Xun.²⁸ Notwithstanding, Lu Xun had a number of excellent dictionaries at hand in his library. Among them stand out a comprehensive German-Japanese dictionary and a Russian-Japanese dictionary from 1933, then just freshly published.²⁹ He might have made extensive use of the former, but had obviously few occasions to do the same with the latter.

To talk about first things first, some words about the various translation versions of the work's title are in place. When Lu Xun first made explicit reference to *Dead Souls*, in his note to the translation of »Nos«, he called it *Sidiao de nongnu* (Deceased

fact that even the Library of Congress holds just the 3rd edition, and does not provide any information about the 1st, it may be inferred that the book is very rare. I have not been able to see a copy, but do not believe that the framed narration about Kopeikin might have been skipped. As Lu Xun was definitely not fluent in English, it is more likely that, as in other English translations, the Story was not typographically separated from the main text, as he could have reasonably expect from the editions at his disposal. See for an example of running text not separating the story from the main text-body *Dead Souls*, tr. by D. J. Hogarth (London: Dent, 1915), 164–165.

26 Xu Guangping 許廣平, »Lu Xun huiyilu. Beijing shiqi de dushu shenghuo« 魯迅回憶錄·北京時期的讀書生活 [Reminiscences About Lu Xun. Reading Experience During His Period in Peking], in *Xu Guangping wenji* 許廣平文集, 3 vols. (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe, 1998), 2: 242–243.

27 Gu Jun, *Lu Xun fanji yanjiu*, 65.

28 Letter of Oct 17, 1935, in *LXQJ* 14: 372–373, see 373n1.

29 Gonda Yasunosuke 權田保之助 (ed.), *Doitsu-Wa jiten* 獨和辭典 [German-Japanese Dictionary] (Tôkyô, 11th ed. 1929), and S. Sotomura [Sotomura Shirô 外村史郎], *Russko-japonskij slovar'* (Tôkyô: Tetto shoin, 1933). I have not been able to consult either of these dictionaries.

Serfs [or Bondslaves]), according to the title imposed by the Czarist censorship, in response to the Church's claim that souls, being immortal, cannot possibly be 'dead'.³⁰ However, both in Russian and German, the terms for 'soul' (*dusha* and *Seele*) are, at least since the 18th century, well also established and lexicalized terms to denote a number of 'persons', especially when they form a distinctive group, e.g. the population of village. Subsequently, Lu Xun uses both equivalents *linghun* and *hunling* intermittently, without any clear preference in his less formal writings, even after he had opted for *hunling* in his own translation. Therefore, it may be permissible not to persist with details of the connotations in the terms. Unlike the earliest translator of *Dead Souls* who simply used *ling*, later Chinese translators have mostly followed Lu Xun and chosen *linghun*.

Before turning to the semantic fields drafted above, I should like to comment on some particular translation issues that explicitly bothered Lu Xun: In the *Story of Captain Kopeikin*, in ch. 10, the framed narrator (namely the Postmaster) makes his hungry protagonist's imagination run wild with the sophistication of French cooks.

R248 *rabotaet tam finserb kakoy-nibud'*

D344 »bereitet euch irgend so ein Finserb, oder Koteletts mit Trüffeln«

C197 預備炸排骨家香菌

Sun Yong: 在給你們做甚麼Finserb或炸排骨加香菌。³¹

In a letter to Meng Shihuan, Lu Xun had especially inquired about the term »Finserb« but obviously did not get a satisfying response. He solved the problem by just omitting the hyperbolic term derived from the French *finer herbes* ('fine herbs [as condiment]') which is an ironical exaggeration referring not only to the French cook, but also to the excessive usage of French in Russia to which the main narrator repeatedly allots some space, and therefore to 'something *aux fines herbes*' on menu-cards.

In general, segments of the Russian vocabulary that are of French origin have presented the biggest challenge to the translator Lu Xun—and they are indeed outdated insofar as it partly belongs to Gogol's idiolect, shaped for a 19th century educated readership in Russia that usually spoke and read French. Of similar range is another issue Lu Xun raises relating to 'pidginized French' (*yangjingbin de Faguoyu*), from a passage in the conversation between the *dama priyatnaya vo vseh otnosbeniyah* and the *prosto priyatnaya dama* (ch. 9) where the satirical usage of half-cooked Russified French is brought to its apogee. No wonder then that Lu Xun did not manage to identify the dog's name *Popuri* as derived from French *potpourri*—which is in turn ironical, because the term can be read both as 'half-bred' and as 'rotten pot'—and simply chose a phonetic transcription that evidently fails to express this dimension. The two ladies are also given relatively colourless names when they are unhappily called *tongti piaoliang de taitai* ('comprehensively beautiful lady') and *ye hai piaoliang de taitai* ('still beautiful...'). Lu Xun's question he had raised in a letter to Meng Shihuan, however, does not refer to either of these terms, but to

R221 *skonapel' istoar*

G307 »Bö kon apell istoar.«

C178 *'Ss' konapell istoar'*

30 Annotators to Lu Xun's Complete Works remark that the term 'soul' was »employed in old Russia to denote serfs« (see *LXQJ* 10: 516n4). This applies also for most European languages.

31 Sun Yong, »*Lu Xun yiwén jì*« *jiadu ji*, 251.

Not only does Lu Xun reveal by his innocent inquiry quoting the first German letter »S« which »therefore must be “C” in Russian« that he can hardly have consulted a Russian edition,³² but also reveals which of the two editions of the same German translation he has most likely used throughout. As can be seen above, the clause in the German version begins with »B«. This is obviously a typographical error, as in the pre-World War I edition of 1909, Gothic types are employed where the uppercase »B« and »S« look very similar. This was corrected in the post-war version, typeset in Latin Antiqua script, but in both cases, the transliteration of Russified French into German posed a problem, as can be seen from the variation in where words began and ended when Lu Xun copied from the 1923 edition. In fact, the Russian text is a faithful transcription of the French *ce qu'on appelle histoire* ('what it considered a story')—and not a 'so-called historical event', as Lu Xun's annotation claims. In its former part, Lu Xun further reveals that, when in difficulty with the German text, he has chiefly taken refuge in Udeda Susumu's Japanese version: It is from there that he took the assumption that the phrase is reproducing a »wrong pronunciation of French«—whereas in fact the Russian may well serve for a textbook of French.³³

3 Clouds of Qualifiers

The most frequent of Lu Xun's complaints is about his difficulties with the long rows of 'adjectives' he attributes either to Gogol' or to his German translator. It must be stated, however, that his concept of 'hard translation' did not leave him much space in this respect, as best expressed in his assumption quoted above that the number of sentences in source and target language must correspond. In some cases, Lu Xun's observation is definitely accurate, as in the following where one single adjective in Gogol's text is explicated in not less than three in the German translation:

- R191 *oni byli lyudi nadezhnye*
 G261 »hübsche, stattliche, vertraueneinflössende Leute«
 C157 漂亮・體面・殷勤足以感人的人物

Nonetheless, through seemingly misunderstanding the term of 'trustful', Lu Xun even added something and expanded it into 'making feel people being attended friendly'. In another instance, the German version is, contrarily, omitting one of the adjectives to the church (*temnyy* 'dark', 'mysterious'), while Lu Xun is even less cautious and skips another one (namely *geräumig* 'spacious', i.e. *shirokiy*):

- R134 *Pod'vezhhaya k derevne akogo-nibud' pomeschbika, ya lyubopytno smotrel na vysokuyu uzkiyuyu derevyannuyu kolokol'nyu ili shirokuyu temnyyu derevyannuyu stariyu cerkov'.*
 G178 »Näherte ich mich dem Dorfe irgend eines Gutsbesitzers, dann blickte ich neugierig auf den hohen, schmalen hölzernen Glockenturm oder die alte geräumige hölzerne Kirche.«

32 Letter to Meng Shihuan, Oct 20, 1935, in *LXQJ* 13: 564–566.

33 *Shi seru tamashii* 死せる魂, tr. by Udeda Susumu 上田進 (1934), rev. by Yokota Mizuho 横田瑞穂, 3 vols. (Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten, 1977; 32nd ed. 2006), 1: 102.—A great number of annotations throughout the translated text that exactly correspond to Udeda's version provide further evidence for the procedure.

C114 臨近甚麼地方的地主的村莊時，我就新奇的看著狹長的木造的鐘樓，或者陳舊的木造的教堂。

The rhythmic function of these ‘clouds’ in Gogol is emphasized by the alliterating *derev-* appearing three times, which changes its position with regard to the noun qualified.

As in his judgements about particular translations consulted, Lu Xun's assessment at times appears to be inspired by a particular problem appearing at the very moment of putting down his comments.

4 Russian Cuisine

The prominence of food and meals in *Dead Souls* is uncontested. It appears that characters are only in peace with the world and themselves when eating. In this context it is remarkable that though the physiological effect of excessive food consumption reaches the highest degree in the first part of chapter 2 when Chichikov pays a visit to Manilov, the dishes themselves are not as elaborately described as elsewhere—simply because the Manilov mental state is too simple-minded to feel uneasy with the world. This has certainly not escaped to the attention of Lu Xun who had never left the chopstick area during his lifetime. It is not surprising that the obvious importance of Russian dishes frighten him as a translator.³⁴ This includes also the mode of serving:

R284 *bufet*

G287 »Restaurationsraum«

C168 休息室

The passage where the big reception at the Governor's home is described (ch. 8) was obviously written before the era of Swedish breakfast buffets. Because not aware of the shared root of the French *restaurant* and the double usage of *Restauration* in German as ‘place where small dishes are served’ (derived from *restaurant*), and as ‘restoration’, he chose the second option and arrived at a term now among the many euphemism for ‘toilet’ in modern Chinese, in turn a lean-translation from the English »restroom«. French is doubly involved, by the *buffet* and by *restaurant* which is in fact also an euphemistic coining (‘an agent that restores’), working similarly to »restroom« and modern *xiuxishi*.

When the preparation of food does not reach high level of sophistication, Lu Xun does not have any difficulties, as there are perfectly equivalent terms in Chinese for kinds of fish in Russia that are also known in northern China—and in this case and in similar others he could refer to the *Kanji* equivalent in the Japanese version.

R181 *beluga, osetr', semga, ikra payusnaya, ikra svezheprosol'naya, seledki, sevryuzhki, syry, kopchenye yazyki i balyki,*

G248 »Störe, Hausen, geräucherter Lachs, frischer und gepresster Kaviar, Hering, Wels, allerhand Käsesorten, geräucherte Zunge«

C150 鱈魚，蝶鮫，熏鮭魚，新的腌魚子，陳的腌魚子，青魚，鯰魚，各種干酪，薰的舌頭

With particular preparations it is becoming more difficult.

34 As a consequence, a most recent translation into German as *Tote Seelen*, tr. by Vera Bischozky (Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 2009), gives an appendix with detailed explanations to dishes.

- R12 *shchi s sloenym pirozhkom [...], mozgi s goroshkom, sosiski s kapustoy, pulyarka zharenaya, ogurec solenyi i rechniy sloenyi sladkiyi pirozhoik*
- G5 Krautsuppe mit Pasteten aus Blätterteig, Hirn mit Schoten, Würstchen mit Kraut, gebratene Pularde, saure Gurke, Splittertörtchen
- C25 花捲兒的白菜湯，腦子燴豌豆，青菜香腸，烤雞子，腌王瓜，甜的花捲兒

In this instance, the very first meal Chichikov is having when he arrives in the city of N is partly misconceived by Lu Xun due to the German translation. He could therefore hardly recognize what *pirozhki* and *zhajiao* might have in common, and *sloenyi* ('made from puff paste') got lost, in favour of the *huajuan* made from yeast dough. As a consequence, the sweets become a total translation failure, not only because pastries were definitely not part of the cuisine Lu Xun knew and appreciated.

5 Administrative Terms and Officials' Titles

In a language that carries such rich and heavy loaded bureaucratic traditions as well as a status of jurisdiction that differs from early 19th century Russia, the renderings of respective terms are of particular interest. In one instance, Lu Xun simply errs when confounding the institution and the holder of an office in it. It is interesting to note, however, that he avoids introducing a Chinese term for a territorial administrative unit:

- R196 *zemskiy sud*
G270 »Kreisgericht«
C160 地方法官 ('local court official')

There are solutions that unveil a blurred separation of executive and military power:

- R236 *zemskaya policiya*
G327 »Gendarmerie«
C188 憲兵

In other cases, where the German translation is inconsistent, Lu Xun chooses a well-established functional description:

- R236 *zasedatel'*
G75 »Assessor«
G327 »Schöffe«
C188 陪審官

However, with the pompous and finely graded titles of the Czarist administration on which Gogol' likes to play, also by adding 'widows' or 'spouses' with their respective female forms, the rendering by Lu Xun emerges all-too-brief, although they retain the imperial flavour by simply indicating the grade in the bureaucratic echelon:

- R215 *kollezhskogo sekretar'*
G298 Kollegiensekretär
C173 十等官
R175 *kollezhskogo registrator*
G238 »Kollegienregistrator«
C144 十四等官

There could, of course, not be any better equivalent for governor general:

- R234 *general-gubernator*
G325 »Generalgouverneur für die Provinz«
C187 總督

In Chinese, the language of a country where a feudal system with corresponding legal rights—those that in Gogol's novel ultimately make the whole plot moving forth—had long been abolished, despite contrary claim, it was difficult indeed to find an appropriate rendering. This is even truer if the connoted religious legitimation is taken into consideration, while the German translation is not less misleading ('peasant pertaining to an official of the central administration').

R236 *krest'yane sel'ca*

G327 »Ministerialbauern«

C188 管家農奴

In the end of part I where Chichikov has a long inner monologue about the speed and direction of his cart rushing along the country road, the closing scene is swiftly transposed into an elaborate romantic allegory of Russia's fate. The very last words are:

R303 *narody i gosudarstva*

G427 »Staaten und Völker«

C234 國度和國民

Remarkably, Lu Xun has chosen not to use the then already well-established modern equivalents (*guojia* and *minzu*) of the Nationalist discourse, but more neutral terms rather emphasizing 'statehood' or 'organization in a state' and 'citizenship'.

The annotations added by Lu Xun further reveal that when he started work, he tended to indulge in detail—which reflects his own process of accommodation with his source. The only strictly language-related annotation quoting from the Russian text can be found in ch. 3. Although the term *koroviy kirpich* ('cowpat', here appearing as a person's nickname) does not present any particular difficulty,³⁵ it is the sole instance where Lu Xun makes some reflection of the kind that is attempted systematically here. It might appear as an evidence for his knowledge of Russian, yet as other material presented above has shown, it must be assumed that he relied on the help of Meng Shihuan whom he also consulted in writing.³⁶

Some Conclusions

The first and foremost conclusion that may be possibly be applied to translations of all regions and of all times is that, not only in the case of Lu Xun and definitely not only in the case of his version of Dead Souls, translators and particularly first translators of a work, act in a network of interliterary communication that is multilateral, i.e. involving far more than the two languages of origin and target and their literary communities—in this case Russian and obviously Chinese.³⁷

35 C66; R 70. Lu Xun uses the erratic transliteration »Korrovuii Kirpitch« and mentions the remarkable difference in renderings by Buek on the one hand and Udeda Susumu on the other who translate the full term accurately as *muniushi* 母牛屎 and literally according to elements as *munizhuan* 磚, respectively.

36 Between May 8 and 23rd, 1935, when Lu Xun worked on the chapter, the two exchanged letters at least twice (cf. *LXQJ* 16: 530–535).

37 Even this seemingly unambiguous term is disputable, given that Lu Xun is among the very few authors who produced a translation of the very same text into two different registers of Chinese, namely of »Zarathustra's Vorrede« from Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883–85) into classical Chinese as

Indeed, the use of many intermediary languages frequently involved in translation (and thus producing the »secondary translations« so much despised by translation criticism) reach a significant peak in Lu Xun's work on Gogol's *Dead Souls*. One ought to note here that none of the translations from *Yunwai xiaoshuo ji* (1909)—his very first collection inspired by literary ambition and prepared together with his brother Zhou Zuoren—has been prepared from their original source language.

It is certainly an unintended *memento* of the persisting neglect and even despise of translation if the scholar who has so far most systematically worked on the issue of Lu Xun as a translator allots just parts of a page in a fairly voluminous Chronology of Lu Xun's Translations to the period between 1938 and 2008.³⁸ This indeed would be the right place to demonstrate to what extent translations survive by being reprinted (however biased it might have been in the case of Lu Xun, simply because he and none else was the translator) and, implicitly, to what extent they have been superseded by more recent translations, in this case that of *Dead Souls*, mostly done from Russian. It would identify the space where translations reveal their historicity, that is: they are not just imbedded in literary history insofar as they are translated for the first time, but also in the historical process to which language in general is subjected. In other words, the commonly vague translation criticism, based on normative prejudices at its best, is condemned to a limited perspective from it is impossible to understand the meaning of translation in the history of literature. Any work that does not fail to attract readers' and translators' interest will be translated over and over again, and such is the case of Gogol's *Dead Souls*.³⁹

»Chaluodusideluo xuyan« 察羅堵斯德羅序言 (?1918, in *Lu Xun yiwen quanji*, 8: 72–75) and into vernacular Chinese as »Chalatusitela de xuyan« 察拉圖斯忒拉的序言 (*Xinbao* 新潮 2,5 [1920]; *ibid.* 8: 76–90).—The date for the translation into classical Chinese is taken from the *Yiwèn jì* edition of 1958 and seems more than dubious: In all likelihood, Lu Xun has prepared that translation when he was still in Japan, i.e. before 1909.

38 Gu Jun, »Lu Xun fanyi nianbiao« 魯迅翻譯年表, in his *Lu Xun fanyi yanjiu*, 254–309.

39 In China, except for Zhijiang 之江 (1944) and for Man Tao 滿濤 and Xu Daoqing 許道清 (1949; repr. several times until 2003) of which the latter seems to dominate the market for *Dead Souls* after Lu Xun's translation was republished in 1952, 1958, 1973, 1977 and 2006, there have been well over a dozen new translations since the late 1980s: Chen Dianxing 陳殿興 and Liu Guangqi 劉廣琦 (1987, first as *Si nongnu* 死農奴 [Dead Serfs]; repr. 1991 and 1995), Zheng Hailing 鄭海凌 (1996, various reprints till 2005), Wang Lixin 王立新 (1997), Wang Wendong 王文東 (1998), Chi Wei 郗薇 (1999), Chen Zhi 陳之 (1999), Hui Xin 慧欣 (1999), Wang Shikui 王士夔 (2000), Shen Xiaofeng 沈小鳳 (2001), Xiao Jiancheng 肖建誠 (2001), Tian Dawei 田大畏 (2001) Fan Jinxin 樊錦鑫 (2003), Ding Ying 丁盈 (2003) and Tian Guobin 田國彬 (2008). The sheer number makes it improbable that *Mertvee dusbi* has been actually re-translated from Russian every time, but rather that translators copied from each other, or took translations in other languages as their source—or simply used pen-names to relaunch their translations. However, it testifies a persistent interest in Gogol's satire, as do the many abridged, edited, rewritten and retold versions, such as by Wang Yong 王勇 (2001), Wang Xiaoqiang 王小強 (2001), Yan Yongxing 嚴永興 (2001), Jin Yuanyuan 金媛媛 (2003), Xiao Yunru 肖雲儒 (2004), Pan Yunbo 潘雲波 and Bu Fan 不凡 [*sic*] (2005) and an explicit remake by Zhu Yuqi 朱玉琪 (*Zhentan si linghun* 偵探死魂靈, 2006). Non-scholarly procedures of translation as applied by Lu Xun still seem to play an overwhelmingly important role in interliterary communication.

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