
Lu Xun–Huxley–Nietzsche
A Footnote to a Familiar Subject

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In the following pages I will put forward a remark concerning Lu Xun's reception of Nietzsche and evolutionary theory, a subject, which is indeed familiar to everybody who is engaged in the field of modern Chinese literature, and of Lu Xun studies in particular. The small format of my remark does not allow me to do any justice to all of those, whose contributions to this subject have informed and inspired me. Elsewhere, I have discussed the state of the field in more detail. Here, however, I would like to confine myself to some very general, introductory words. Generally speaking I will summarise some bits and parts of my earlier attempt to find something in Lu Xun, which corresponds with Takeuchi Yoshimi's notion of "Lu Xun's contradiction" between "literature" and "politics."¹ The "contradictory self-identity" of "literature" and "politics" – this is Takeuchi's code for the "particular" and the "universal", for "individual" and "society", etc. – is the key concept of Takeuchi's 1944 seminal work on the "father of modern Chinese literature", *Rojin*,² which, as I contend, is the deepest and most exiting interpretation of Lu Xun's writings until the present day. This my contention may already mark where my own reading of

1. C.f. Christian Uhl, *Wer war Takeuchi Yoshimis Lu Xun? Ein Annäherungsversuch an ein Monument de japanischen Sinologie (Who was Takeuchi Yoshimi's Lu Xun? Approaching a Monument of Japanese China Studies)*, (Munich: Iudicium, 2003), pp. 36 - 136.

2. Takeuchi Yoshimi, *Rojin [Lu Xun]* (first published in 1944), *Takeuchi Yoshimi zenshū (Complete Works of Takeuchi Yoshimi)* (subsequently: TYZ), vol. I, (Chikuma shobō: 1980), pp. 3 - 157. *zenshū*, vol.2, Tōkyō, Chikuma shobō, 1960.

Lu Xun is at odds with the majority of the existing interpretations, i.e. with both, the few which serve the enterprise to de-politicise him, as well as the many which more or less enthusiastically emphasize his role as a social revolutionary.

Lu Xun himself occasionally spoke about his light and shady sides, his “many contradictions”, or his wavering “between humanism and individualism”,³ and already Onoe Kanehide (in the 1960s), to whom I am indebted for many important hints, linked the formation of this “humanism” with Lu Xun’s reception of evolutionary theory, and that of his “individualism” with his reception of Nietzsche. However, Onoe perceived Nietzsche rather as another proponent of a sort of evolutionary theory: “[...] Nietzsche too was thinking of an evolution of the pattern: worm → ape → human being → super human, and for this reason both [evolutionary theory and Nietzsche] have been received by Lu Xun without particularly contradicting each other.⁴ Accordingly, for Onoe, Lu Xun’s humanism and individualism do not constitute a real contradiction either, but are rather the poles of an in the end harmonious, and “complete” synthesis.⁵ Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, who was the first to point out to a Western audience (in 1982) the problematic aspects of Lu Xun’s attempt to fuse Huxley and Nietzsche, also came to the conclusion that Lu Xun was neither a follower of Nietzsche, nor of evolutionary theory, but rather incorporated in his own thinking elements from both, if only these elements appeared to be appropriate for him in the context of his own experiences.⁶ Cheung, to give another example, even saw in Lu Xun’s “grab-

3. In a letter to Xu Guangping (30.5.1925), quoted from Findeisen, R.D., *Lu Xun (1881-1936). Texte, Chronik, Bilder, Dokumente*, (Basel: Stroemfeld, 2001), p. 149; English mine.

4. Onoe Kanehide, “Rojin no ‘kojin shugi’ to ‘jindōshugi’” [Lu Xun’s ‘Individualism’ and ‘Humanism’] (1968), in: *Rojin shiron [My Lu Xun]* (Tokyo: Namifuru shoin, 1988), p. 162.

5. Ibid. See also, for example, Onoe’s earlier essay, “Shinkaron to Niiche” [Evolutionary theory and Nietzsche]: “Lu Xun’s evolutionary theory was strongly influenced by Nietzsche” (ibid, p. 100). The tension between Nietzsche and any kind of Darwinism, as far as I can see, has been largely overlooked, or passed over by Onoe.

6. C.f. Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, “Lu Xun und das ‘Prinzip Hoffnung’. Eine Untersuchung seiner Rezeption der Ideen von Huxley und Nietzsche” [Lu Xun and the ‘Principle of Hope’. An Inquiry into his Reception of the Ideas of Huxley and Nietzsche], in: *Bochumer Jahrbuch zur Ostasienforschung [Bochum Yearbook of East Asian Studies]*, no. 3, 1982, p. 429.

bism” (*nalai zhuyi*), i.e. Lu Xun’s pragmatic eclecticism, the paradigm of the appropriation of ideas by an intellectual, who was suffused with a strong sense of social responsibility.⁷

I do not intend to neglect the political side of Lu Xun, and his sense of social responsibility. On the contrary, I regard this his political sense as a *conditio sine qua non* of Lu Xun’s literature. However, I don’t see any evidence that Lu Xun deliberately tailored Nietzsche and successfully incorporated his ideas in his evolutionist program to revitalize the Chinese society. On the contrary, I think that Lu Xun in his early years was especially susceptible to Nietzsche’s apotheosis of the artistic existence and succumbed to the temptations of Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*, which subsequently gained in weight more and more and became the gravitational centre of Lu Xun’s intellectual universe, forcing everything else in a circular path around it. In this gravitational field, as I see it, even Lu Xun’s revolutionary strive became curved and bended, until it pointed back to Lu Xun himself. It is only under this tension that the conflict between the solitary reviver of the society on the one hand, and the dull and indifferent masses on the other, could break open, the conflict, which became the motor of Lu Xun’s literary production – until finally under the impact of the conflicting forces this whole constellation collapsed in a massive implosion, an event, which has manifested itself in Lu Xun’s famous collection of poems in prose, *Yecao*. Thus, in a nutshell, I’d rather read Lu Xun’s fictional literature as the expression of a process, which was set in motion and was driven by an inner contradiction, the root cause of which was Lu Xun’s attempt to amalgamate the fundamentally incompatible ideas of Nietzsche and evolutionary theory, and which ended in a catastrophic and tragic failure; and I believe, that precisely with this fundamental contradiction, and with this tragic failure, lays the fascination, and the true significance of Lu Xun.

7. C.f. Chiu-ye Cheung, *Lu Xun: The Chinese ‘Gentle’ Nietzsche*, (Frankfurt, Berlin, New York, Oxford, Vienna: Peter Lang, 2001), esp. p. 69.

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Nietzsche repeatedly warned his readers about himself. “The moving appeal is uttered from each of his words”, writes Fridell, “do *not* follow me!”⁸ Of course no heed was paid to Nietzsche’s warning as history has shown the effect it had. This, as Jaspers remarked, “[...] will never be achieved by any other philosopher”, it seems “[...] that each and every stance, every ideology, every attitude gets hold of him as a reference point.”⁹ When an anthem-like pathos caught fire in Europe over the author of *Zarathustra*, in the light of which Nietzsche himself appeared like a superman and the saviour of humanity and the “greatest charismatic phenomenon in intellectual history”¹⁰ reached its perhaps most dazzling radiance, Nietzsche begins to be acknowledged in the far East as well, at first in Japan where he attained acceptance into intellectual life during the 90’s of the 19th century. The first wave of the Nietzsche reception in Japan reached its peak with the “Nietzsche Dispute” in 1903. After the Russian-Japanese war of 1904/5 the effects of Nietzsche unfolded mainly in Japanese literature, at first in naturalism, and then in the anti-naturalist literature of *l’art pour l’art* and the works of the members of the group The Birch (*Shirakaba*),¹¹ whilst the established philosophers shirked Nietzsche and initially left the involvement with him to “shallow everyday philosophy”¹² (Lüth) and to social criticism. As early as 1913 Inoue Tetsujirō stated satisfiedly that Nietzsche had just remained a temporary “fashion”, which ebbed away after a few years¹³. But just at that

8. Egon Fridell, *Kulturgeschichte der Neuzeit. Die Krisis der Europäischen Seele von der Schwarzen Pest bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* [Cultural History of the Modern Age. The Crisis of the European Soul From the Black Plague to the First World War], (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1979), p. 1402.

9. Karl Jaspers, *Vernunft und Existenz. Fünf Vorlesungen*, [Reason and Existence. Five Lectures], (Munich, Zürich: 1987), p. 30.

10. Gottfried Benn, “Nietzsche – Nach fünfzig Jahren” [Nietzsche – 50 Years Later], in: *Gesammelte Werke in Vier Bänden* [Collected Works in Four Volumes], vol. I, p. 484.

11. C.f. Gino K. Piovesana, *Recent Japanese Philosophical thought (1862 – 1962)*, (Tokyo: Enderle Bookstore, 1962), p. 131f; c.f. Raul David Findeisen, “Die Last der Kultur. Vier Fallstudien zur Chinesischen Nietzsche-Rezeption” [The Burden of Culture. Four Case Studies Concerning the Reception of Nietzsche in China], part I, in: *minima sinica. Zeitschrift zum Chinesischen Geist* [Minima Sinica. Journal for The Chinese Mind], No. 1, 1990, p. 17.

12. C.F. Paul Lüth, *Die Japanische Philosophie* [The Japanese Philosophy], (Tübingen: 1944), p.78.

time when the Nietzsche-reception had reached its loudest in Japan, in the years from 1902 to 1909, Lu Xun was living in Japan, first of all for the study of medicine, then as a budding author, and that there he encountered Nietzsche is indeed, as Cheung writes, actually an event of virtual necessity:¹⁴ Lu Xun *had to* encounter Nietzsche at that time, and the philosopher was to leave such profound traces in Lu Xun's work that even in Lu Xun's lifetime he was called "China's Nietzsche."¹⁵

Every ideology, as Jaspers said above, seems to draw on Nietzsche. But what would a young Chinese person at the beginning of the 20th century make of Nietzsche? The country into which Lu Xun had been born in 1881 was experiencing one of the most melancholy periods in its history. China had become an object of colonial exploitation and had had to concede extensive privileges to the European powers. The contract of Shimonoseki which in 1895 sealed China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War and forced the country to grant the same privileges to the Japanese as the Europeans had been enjoying, was only another in a series of depressing humiliations which China had had to accept since the Opium wars. The Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese War, at the same time as the desolate weakness of China seemed however to reveal on yet another aspect, that is the necessity of learning from Japan how, by taking on western "means" to put itself in the position to keep the impertinences of imperialism at a distance and to catch up

13. Inoue, T., "Die japanische Philosophie" [The Japanese Philosophy], in: Paul Hinneberg (ed.), *Die Kultur der Gegenwart [The Culture of the Present Day]*, vol. V, *Allgemeine geschichte der Philosophie [General History of Philosophy]*, (Leipzig: 1913), p. 113.

14. C.f. Chiu-ye Cheung, "Tracing the 'Gentle' Nietzsche in Early Lu Xun", in: Raul David Findeisen & Robert H. Gassmann (ed.), *Autumn Floods* (Suisse Asian Studies, Monographies vol 30) (Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Paris, Vienna: 1989), p. 583.

15. C.f. He, Lin, "Die Verbreitung der Philosophie Nietzsches in China" [The Spread of Nietzsche's Philosophy in China], in: Kuo, Heng-Yü (Hg.), *Von der Kolonialpolitik zur Kooperation. Studien zur Geschichte der deutschen Beziehungen [From Colonial Politics to Cooperation. Studies on the History of German-Chinese Realations]*, p. 454, who regards the publication of Lu Xun's collection of prose writings, *Refeng*, in the year 1925 as the occasion at which this name became popular. C.f. Findeisen, "The Burden of Culture [...]", Teil II, in *minima sinica [...]*, no. 1, 1990, p. 24, who argues more convincingly, that this name for Lu Xun became popular already in 1919, and has probably been coined by the May-Fourth-activist Liu Bannong.

with the west. It was in this spirit that the operators of the 1898 plan defeated by the defence of the Emperor's widow Cixi acted to set up a constitutional monarchy in China based on the example set by the Japanese Meiji-Restoration as did a considerable number of young Chinese who were intent on studying at a Japanese university. When the 21 year old Lu Xun went to Japan to study medicine, he had already, with the entry into the Jiangnan-Naval-Academy (the postal address at that time being the Kiangnan-Naval-Academy) in Nanjing in the year 1900, departed from the traditional education path and had turned his interests towards western literature and western ideas. In the preface to his collection of prose, *Nahan* (The Scream, 1923) Lu Xun recalled:

“I wanted to enter the K- Academy in N in those days to be able to tackle another path, in order to arrive somewhere else. [...] I found out there that there were other things in the world like natural history, mathematics, geography, history, drawing and gymnastics[...] I read books [...] such as “A New Theory of the Body” and “Chemical Hygiene Studies” [...] additionally I learned from translations that the Meiji Reformation Movement in Japan was essentially based on western medicine. [...] This naïve knowledge later prompted me to enter a medical college in the Japanese province.”¹⁶

Of course, what we see here is autobiographical fiction. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Lu Xun's decision to study medicine in Japan is directly connected to his hope of saving China by means of science – or more precisely to cure it from its backwardness by means of a scientifically enlightened mind. Lu Xun's reception of the ideas of the British biologist and of the Darwin school, Thomas Huxley, has to be mentioned in this context, which Lu Xun had already become familiar with through the commented translation done by Yan Fu of the book *On Evolution and Ethics*, that is in the

16. Lu, X., *Nahan*, “Cixu”, in: *Lu Xun quanji* [*Complete Works of Lu Xun*] (subsequently referred to as LXQ), (Urumqi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 1995), Bd.I, p. 139.

form of a preconceived interpretation. According to Ng Mao-sang what marks Yan Fu's text is the complex rendering of the original. Yan Fu provides an answer as readily as he describes and interprets, as Ng points out: as if he wanted to dispel the doubts of his readership, Yan Fu furnishes his text with elaborate comments, explaining that nature only chooses those which have at their disposal the greatest abilities and the best constitution; only they would be intellectually, physically and morally superior. Due to his focussing on ethical as well as intellectual and physical aspects, Yan Fu obviously represents his own agenda, which is most apparent in his introduction of "qundao" – the path of society – which he incorporated into his text.¹⁷ According to Yan Fu, the selection of the stronger by means of struggle is the principle and the only constant which determines the process of becoming and dying to which all life, including also that of a nation, a society is subject. But whilst according to Huxley this natural process cannot be intervened, Yan Fu grants a disparately greater importance to human intervention: precisely because of the knowledge of the principle and the insight into the striving for self-preservation it should be possible for a nation to consciously break the cycle and to avert any threatening downfall.¹⁸ Lu Xun's decision towards the understanding of western science as the origin also of Japanese superiority, has to be observed in front of the background of the reception of Yan-Fu's agenda.

Lu Xun however, did not remain true to medicine for long: immediately after the passage quoted above, Lu Xun describes an event through which he had become conscious of his countrymen's pitifulness and after three years of study, the opinion ripened within him that it was not the physical health of his countrymen which was in such disorder, but their intellectual and cultural state of mind.¹⁹ I do not wish to dally here with the account of this event but wish to stress the consequences that Lu Xun hence drew according to his notes, namely that the "ideal" had to be given priority over the "materialistic"

17. Ng, M., "Reading Yan Fu's 'Tian Yan Lun'", quoted in R.D. Findeisen, *Lu Xun [...]*, p. 31.

18. C.f. Wang Yi-chu., *Chinese Intellectuals and the West 1872 - 1949*, (Chapel-Hill: 1966), p. 202ff.

19. Lu Xun, *Naban*, "Cixu", LXQ, vol. I, p. 140.

and that the scalpel had to be exchanged for the paintbrush and science for literature. Lu Xun stopped his training to become a physician in order to become a poet, that is to become a “doctor” of the backward intellect and the sick soul of his people.

One may speculate on the question if already the actual reorientation of Lu Xun or only the account of it, was a result of Nietzsche’s influence; the metaphor of poet and philosopher as a “doctor” to the “entire health of a people, time, race, humanity” is also to be found with Nietzsche.²⁰ It is certainly a fact, that in some of the writings Lu Xun composed, after dropping out of his studies and his relocation from the province to Tokyo in the year 1907 there is repeated mention of Nietzsche. These writings are a series of essays which all centre on the question of the evolution of or the causes of China’s backwardness and the solution to it. If we examine the titles of the essays in the order of their publication – “Ren zhi lishi” (The History of Human Kind; in which Lu Xun deals mainly with the theories of Haeckel, Darwin, Huxley etc.); “Kexueshi jiaopian” (The Teachings of the History of Science); “Wenhua pian zhi lun” (On Wrong Tendencies in Culture); “Moluoshi li shuo” (The Power of Demonic Poetry) – then a gradual shift of the perspective from science to literature can be identified. Where in his second essay Lu Xun had still emphasised the importance of scientific discovery for the development of peoples, in his fourth essay he challenges the profane mode of thinking which elevates science to a purpose and orientates itself purely towards “practical use.”²¹ Here already a further central theme is hinted at which reminds us of the proponents of the aforementioned “Nietzsche struggle”, such as Tobarī Chikufu, but especially of Takayama Chōgyū: the idea of the grand, creative individual as saviour of the people and culture from torpor and backwardness standing above the dull mass of the “ordinary people.” In this context Lu Xun exclusively cites writers such as Gogol, Petöfi, Byron, Milton or philosophers like Stirner, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard – and over and over again Nietzsche:

20. Friedrich Nietzsche, preface to *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* [*The Gay Science*], in: *Werke in drei Bänden* [*Works in Three Volumes*] (subsequently referred to as NW), vol. II, p. 12.

21. Lu Xun., “Moluo shili shuo”, LXQ, vol. I, S. 34.

“As far as Nietzsche is concerned, he was one of the most outstanding individuals; he placed his hopes on important public figures and geniuses. He believed that in a country governed by a majority, the vitality of the society would be destroyed within a very short time. It would be better to sacrifice mediocrity in order to allow a society to blossom with the help of one or two geniuses. This idea of the so-called *Übermensch* shocked the European intellectual world to the core [...].”²²

“[...] Hopes should now be concentrated on those people whose willpower exceeds the masses by far. Only this type of person is able, through his sensitivity and his will, to cope with real society. Furthermore, people like this possess fighting power [...] Nietzsche [...] wished upon the world a unique willpower, namely that of an almost godlike *Übermensch*.”²³

“Only the epiphany of the *Übermensch* can bring peace to the world. If no *Übermensch* is to be found then man will have to depend on exceptional people [...].”²⁴

It is at this point that the question raised by Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, and in Japan by Onoue, has to be addressed on the nature of Lu Xun’s simultaneous reception of evolutionary theory and Nietzsche. Lu Xun took on board elements of both systems of thought, whenever they seemed useful to him, as Weigelin-Schwiedrzik concluded. I believe, however, that this is precisely where the problems begin.

The impetus for Lu Xun’s project of marrying Darwin with Nietzsche could have been given by Zarathustra’s following remarks:

“What is the ape for mankind? A guffaw and painful shame. And that is precisely what mankind should be for the *Übermensch*: a guffaw and painful shame./ You have completed the transition from worm to man and much of you is still worm. Once you were apes and

22. Lu Xun, “Wenhua pianzhi lun”, LXQ, Bd.I, S. 24n.

23. Ibid, p. 26.

24. Ibid, p. 24.

even now man is more of an ape than any actual ape.”²⁵

The fact that elements of Nietzsche’s philosophy are actually thanks to Nietzsche’s preoccupation with Darwinism becoming apparent here,²⁶ may have distorted Lu Xun’s view of the fact that Nietzsche, with his teaching of the ascent of the “Übermensch”, actually did apply a strict contrast program to the Darwin school. This matter of fact, which has been largely overlooked, or at least passed over by Lu Xun research as well, is, in fact, of pivotal significance for the understanding of Lu Xun and requires the appropriate attention.

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The theory of Evolution, also in its forms transferred from the realm of nature into the sphere of culture, as is well known, bases itself on that famous “one long argument” of Darwin, which *in nuce* has to be understood again as the result of a transfer of Adam Smith’s political economy into biology.²⁷ According to Smith, the best social order, arises from “the invisible hand”, as it were, i.e. when individuals are allowed to compete with each other unchecked. Accordingly, Darwin sees in the order of life the result of an unchecked struggle for self-preservation of the living beings, an idea which was just as shocking for the majority of his peers as Nietzsche’s analysis of the death of God: nature was no longer the result of an act of creation and an expression of godly intention and heavenly grace, but rather a bloody battlefield governed by a blind mercilessness, which allows only “the fittest”, i.e., those organisms best able to adapt to their environment, to prevail. Compared to earlier theories, namely that of Lamarck,

25. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra* [*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*], NW, vol. II, p. 279.

26. C.f. Günter Abel, *Nietzsche. Die Dynamik der Willen zur Macht und die ewige Wiederkehr* [*Nietzsche. The Dynamics of the Wills to Power and the Eternal Recurrence*] (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), p. 39.

27. C.f. Stephen J. Gould, *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory* (Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 59n; S. 93n.

Darwin's constitutes a decisive simplification: Lamarck traced the origin of the species to an inherent, vital drive and found in the external environment, another, secondary power, which deflects the primary one, makes it branching out and so allows the taxonomic diversity of life to be produced.²⁸ Now, Darwin afforded this supposed merely secondary factor, under the name of natural selection, the status of the only creative force of evolutionary change, which takes place in the smallest of steps and at the lowest level of the organic life, and in the course of Earth's history brings about the evolution from "worm to human."

When now Nietzsche, for his part, allows his Zarathustra to take up this idea and insists that man is a type of animal "unadorned and in the plain sense of the word" among others, he is also an adherent of a biological naturalism which is entirely comparable to that of Darwin.²⁹ It is obvious, however, that the thinker of the eternal recurrence of the same, and of the will to power cannot at the same time be a Darwinist. Two things characterise Nietzsche's opposition to Darwinism: firstly, Nietzsche attributes to all living beings – and in so doing, he revisits in a certain sense, a Lamarckian point of view – an *inner* strive, "infinitely superior", to all external influences, a strive *not* towards self-preservation, but rather towards self-*improvement*, a desire to increase and grow and go beyond themselves.³⁰ Only because absolutely every, once attained state, carries within itself the capacity to "not want to preserve itself", it can be explained, why everything does not just come to a halt, but is in the grip of a perpetual becoming.³¹ On the other hand, Nietzsche insisted that the selection of the fittest is in no way any "advance" in the sense of a progression towards perfection. Nietzsche therefore, asked himself after the "death of God", whom man has always seen as the pinnacle of creation, the quite different question: whether the human being, now left to his

28. C.f. *ibid*, pp. 170n.

29. C.f. Karl Löwith, *Sämtliche Schriften 6 – Nietzsche [Collected Writings 6 - Nietzsche]* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1987), pp. 331n.

30. C.f. Abel, *Nietzsche [...]*, pp. 39n, esp. p. 42 – 43.

31. C.f. *ibid*, S. 42.

own devices and threatened by nihilism, still possesses the strength to project his goals beyond himself, to raise himself up to the “Übermensch” or instead the “will to power” of the *species*, i.e. the *herd* instinct of the *mediocre* and of the most *adapted*, wins out and he sinks to the level of a herd animal. For in contrast to the progressivist evolutionists, Nietzsche was by no means convinced that “nature only chooses those who have command of the highest abilities”³²:

“*Anti-Darwin*. – What on inspection of the greater fate of man surprises the most, is always seeing the opposite before one’s eyes of that which Darwin with his school sees or *wants* to see; the selection in favour of the stronger, those who came off better than the rest, the advancement of the species. Just the opposite becomes obvious: the randomness of luck, the uselessness of the more evolved types, the unavoidable power of the mediocre, even of the *below-average* types. Granted as man does not demonstrate the reason to us, why man is an exception among creatures, I incline towards the bias that that the Darwinian school has deceived itself everywhere. That will towards power in which I recognise the reason and character of all transformations, gives us the means to hand, why precisely the selection in favour of the exceptions and the lucky does not take place: the strongest and most fortunate are weak, when they have the majority, with the organised herd instinct and the timidity of the weak, against them [...] I find the “cruelty of Nature”, about which so much is spoken, in another place: it is cruel to it’s fortunate ones but spares and protects *les humbles*. *In summa*: the growth of power of a species is through the predominance of it’s fortunate ones, whose strengths are perhaps less guaranteed than through the predominance of the average inferior types [...] With the latter is the great fertility, the permanence; with the first, grows the danger, the rapid devastation, the fast reduction in numbers.”³³

Nietzsche’s anti-Darwinist critique therefore consists at its core of

32. C.f. Löwith, *Sämtliche Schriften 6 – Nietzsche*, S. 331f.

the objection that self-preservation in the sense of mere temporal persistence of an individual, or of a species does not already mean an elevation of its “strength and splendour.” Quite the opposite: adaptation is never an “elevation of the type.” But it is these which concern Nietzsche, the “exceptions” and “fortunate ones” whose strengthening, at the expense of the mediocre, could even be fatal to the preservation of the species. Humankind, a culture, a political system, is not justified by the fact that they safeguard and assert themselves, but only when they succeed in *overcoming* their inclinations, in casting their goal *beyond themselves*, and in procreating the “higher type.”³⁴ Nietzsche wants that higher type, that great individual, that *Übermensch*, for his own sake, and not just for his social usefulness – and when Lu Xun comments above: “it would therefore be better to sacrifice the mediocre, in order to assist society, through one or two geniuses, to flower”, so he is evidently, with reference to Nietzsche, driving at the exact opposite of that which Nietzsche wants. Nietzsche’s main concern is that the human being mobilises its creative and self-elevating powers and becomes an individual, who deserves this name, and that is precisely what his humanism consists of. For Lu Xun on the other hand, the great, creative individual is ultimately just the means to an end, that is the renewal of the existing society.

Weigelin-Schwiedrzik has brought attention to the “parallels of elements of European evolutionary theory with Nietzsche’s philosophy of the *Übermensch*” in Lu Xun, and she has also pointed out already that Lu Xun and Nietzsche have different aims.³⁵ The word “parallels”, however, implies a peaceful coexistence of Huxley and Nietzsche in Lu Xun, where I can only sense divergence and struggle. I think that in trying to combine two *entirely opposite* concepts, Lu Xun, indeed, infected himself with a flagrant self-contradiction: at one end of this

33. Nietzsche, “Aus dem Nachlass der 80er Jahre” [From the Unpublished Works from the 80s], NW, vol III, pp. 748n; c.f. also pp. 741n.

34. C.f. Rüdiger. Safranski, *Nietzsche. Biographie eines Denkens* [*Nietzsche. Biography of a Way of Thinking*], (München, Wien: 2000), p. 67.

35. Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, “Lu Xun und das Prinzip [...]”, p.422f: “Whereas for Nietzsche the *Übermensch* is not a means, but the purpose [...]”

contradiction we still see his evolutionist agenda for the “renewal of the national character”, through the force of the strongest and ablest, an agenda, which indeed harmonizes with Lu Xun’s rather traditional self-image of the socially responsible intellectual; at the other end however, and *there* Nietzsche’s influence actually manifests itself, we find Lu Xun, the “demonic” “genius of culture”³⁶ (Nietzsche), recognizing his own kinship with Nietzsche’s exceptional creative individual, who is uplifted above the too powerful herd of the average ordinary peoples, that mass, which permanently makes all efforts to erase the exceptions, and which trivializes and stultifies each and everything. Compare, what Lu Xun sais about this “vulgar breed”, for example, in “Wenhua pianzhi lun.”³⁷

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“I never found a homeland anywhere [...]”, as Zarathustra sais, “and I was expelled from all father and mother countries.”³⁸ The claim on Zarathustra does not remain without consequence for Lu Xun. It has a price, namely the experience of the absence of companionship, a substantial side effect which had already been presaged in Lu Xun’s essays, when he spoke, for example of the “lonely, great figures”, whose voices are ignored and whose messages are not appreciated:³⁹ the burden of loneliness, which afflicts the genius, necessarily misunderstood by his contemporaries and despairing both of himself and of the world, the loneliness, which is the Genius’ burden and at the same time his redemption: “Oh loneliness! You my homeland loneliness”⁴⁰, says Zarathustra, and in *Ecce homo* Nietzsche points out: “my whole *Zarathustra* is a dithyramb to loneliness.”⁴¹ Lu Xun has both the book and the loneliness in his luggage when he returns from Japan to China

36. Nietzsche, “Genius der Kultur” [Genius of Culture], in: *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* [*Human, Far too Human*], NW, vol. I, p. 595.

37. Lu Xun., “Wenhua pianzhi lun”, LXQ, vol. I, p. 24.

38. Vgl. Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, Werke, Bd.II, S. 377.

39. Vgl. Lu, X., “Moluoshili shuo”, a.a.O., S. 32., siehe Werke, Bd.V, S. 100f.

in 1909. In 1918, with the publication of his “Diary of a Madman”, the fictive diary of a man, who is convinced to live in a society of “cannibals”, who are after him, this loneliness is breaking to the fore.

Frederic Jameson cites this “first masterpiece of the greatest Chinese author, Lu Xun” as outstanding evidence for his theory that literature from the third world always “pursues a certain political goal in the form of a traditional allegory” and that stories about individual fates are allegories on the attacks of society against the individual.⁴² Lu Xun’s opposition to his society is indeed adequately expressed with the word “cannibals.” But the *diary* is more than “political satire” and “social criticism.” Wolfgang Bauer writes:

“The function of the lonely caller in the desert, the apparent madman, who in reality is the only non-insane one amongst all the insane – a [...] very old parable in China⁴³ – was most certainly made use of by Lu Xun, who often spoke of his loneliness. In this respect the madman of the diary could well be considered as a self portrait of Lu Xun himself.”⁴⁴

Indeed what we can mainly see in Lu Xun’s diary is evidence of Lu Xun’s reflection on the process of his own isolation and alienation after his return from Japan. Yue Daiyun rightly concluded: “What went on under Lu Xun’s paintbrush between the isolated and the masses is extremely obscure and confusing, a relationship full of contradictions”, which is therefore not consistent with “the simple entity,

40. Vgl. Nietzsche, F., *Zarathustra*, Werke, Bd.II, S. 432.

41. Vgl. Nietzsche, F., *Ecce homo*, Werke, Bd.II, S. 1080.

42. Frederic Jameson, “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism”, in *Social Text*, No. 15, 1986., quoted from Yue Daiyun, “Die Lu-Xun-Forschung, ein Phänomen der Weltkultur” [Lu Xun research: A Phenomenon of World Culture], in Findeisen, *Lu Xun [...]*, S. 147f. English mine.

43. C.f. Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, NW, vol. II, p. 277.

44. Wolfgang Bauer, *Das Antlitz Chinas. Die autobiographische Selbstdarstellung in der chinesischen Literatur von ihren Anfängen bis heute* [The Face of China. Autobiographical Self-Depiction in Chinese Literature from its Beginning until the Present Day], (Munich, Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1990), p. 579.

which Jameson obviously imagines.”⁴⁵ It only remains to be said that both this obscurity and this inconsistency is the result of Lu Xun doing the splits between evolutionary theory and Nietzsche.

The diary is ultimately not about society, but about the suffering of the individual, which like Nietzsche’s “crazy man”, or like Zarathustra is being laughed at and “cancelled” out by the mediocre ones, in short: Lu Xun speaks about the loneliness of the *Zarathustrian* individual. He *identifies himself* with this figure for which the in any case vague “social criticism” only constitutes the blurred background. In the twilight of this reading of the “Diary”, indeed, the luminance of the “social revolutionary” may fade somewhat. In its place, however, an even more complex and problematic Lu Xun appears, and thus his literature too gains more iridescent and interesting colours. It seems as if the vector Lu Xun’s concern fundamentally aimed at society is ultimately bent back towards Lu Xun himself, and with his “Diary” he tries to tackle this tension in a literary manner. In comparison with the writings done in Japan Lu Xun’s handling of Nietzsche is less simplistic and transparent, but more subliminal, more subtle, *more literary*. In a word: for Lu Xun, Nietzsche has become the object of a *productive* adaptation, a stimulus, and a source of his literary inspiration. His “Diary” is actually bursting of literary borrowings from *Zarathustra*.

Lu Xun himself left no doubt as to where his literary models are to be sought. His “Diary”, he wrote, can be “compared in depth and width of its pain and anger to Gogol, but it certainly does not reach Nietzsche’s immensity.”⁴⁶ In the same year of the publication of his “Diary”, Lu Xun published a partial translation of the preface of *Zarathustra*, and in the following years Nietzsche remained a fundamental point of reference to Lu Xun. In 1920 he published a complete translation of the preface and as his brother remembered later, there was always a copy of *Zarathustra* lying ready on his desk.⁴⁷ Furthermore, in 1925 Lu Xun admitted that he hardly needed any

45. Yue Daiyun, “Die Lu-Xun-Forschung [...]”, in: Findeisen, *Lu Xun [...]*, p. 149.

46. Lu Xun, “*Zhongguo xinwenxue daxi xiaoshuo erji xu*” [Introduction to the Series *New Chinese Literature*], LXQ, vol. II, S. 680.

time for writing his short-stories “Hesitation” (Panghuang), and “Dynamite” (Zhayao), because he was still able to profit from the after-effects of reading *Zarathustra* and only had to “squeeze” these stories out of himself.⁴⁸ How much Lu Xun profited from Nietzsche also in his glosses and aphorisms is obvious to everyone who has eyes to see; and throughout all of Lu Xun’s writings runs like a red thread the suffering from the rift between the crowd of the small and ordinary peoples and the tragic greatness of the hero sacrificing himself for the sake of this crowd – that dialectics, which makes him more and more lonely and the ordinary peoples more and more “like flies.”⁴⁹ “The polarity of the lonely and the mass” according to Yue Daiyun,

“[...] is a continuous pattern in the works of Lu Xun. The loner is designated to devote his life to the mass and simultaneously he is sentenced to lead a constant fight with the mass for the sake of progress [...] the loner runs after the mass which is detrimental to him and he dies.”⁵⁰

But again, it was only with the ideas of Nietzsche, with which Lu Xun’s evolutionist agenda had become infected, that the stimulating conflict could ignite and the dichotomy could brake open between the desire for the cultural renewal of China and the enlightenment of the crowd on the one hand, and the painful experience of ostracism and estrangement of the one who knows simply because he knows and from just that crowd on the other hand.⁵¹ The desire for company and the experience of loneliness: these are the two poles between which the fictional literature of Lu Xun unfolded itself since the publication of his “Diary.” Its full and final bloom his literary production eventu-

47. Zhou Zuoren, “Guanyu Lu Xun (er)” [About Lu Xun (2)], in: *1913 – 1983 Lu Xun yanjiu xueshu wenzhao ziliao buihen* [Collection of all Existing Academic Writings on Lu Xun 1913 – 1983], (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 1986), pp 90 – 94.

48. Lu Xun, “Wo he *Yusi* de shizhong” [About Me and My Ties to the Journal *Yusi*], LXQ, vol. II, S. 77.

49. C.f. Lu Xun, “Zhanshi he cangying” [The fighter and the Flies], LXQ, vol. II, pp. 570n. Compare this with Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, NW, vol. II, pp. 317f

50. Yue Daiyun, “Die Lu-Xun-Forschung [...]”, nach Findeisen, R.D., *Lu Xun [...]*, S. 149.

ally reaches with the *poeme en prose* of the collection, *Yecao*, created between 1924 and 1926. At the same time his attitude towards Nietzsche underwent a decisive transformation.

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Indeed, attempts were made to interpret the *Yecao* politically. Compare, for example, the famous skirmish between Loi and Ryckmans.⁵² Lu Xun himself had suggested such interpretation, for example, in the preface to his first unpublished English translation of the collection, by citing certain political events as the reason for the origin of some of the texts in *Yecao*.⁵³ I too, as I mentioned at the beginning, do not by any means, deny the political side of Lu Xun's literature. But I do not believe Lu Xun that "politics" especially here is any more than just the ostensible motive for a much more interesting confrontation of Lu Xun with his own disappointed hopes – and that also unavoidably means: with Nietzsche! It is no coincidence that in the *Yecao* allusions and references to the *Zarathustra*-Text are omnipresent. And even the title of the collection – amongst others, the translation "Weeds" has been suggested – gives good cause to attribute

51. Leo O.-f. Lee in this context speaks of a "tragic paradox", but also fails to identify as the source of this paradox Lu Xun's peculiar stance between Huxley and Nietzsche: "The very process of gaining an acute consciousness dooms the enlightened individual to alianation – to rejection by the very people he wishes to enlighten and change." Quoted from "Tradition and Modernity in the Writings of Lu Xun", in: Lee, *The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles: 1985), p. 7, 8. See also Lee, *Voices from the Iron House. A Study of Lu Xun*, (Bloomington, Indianapolis: 1987), p. 69n.

52. Pierre Ryckmans (alias: Simon Leys), *La mauvaise herbe [Weeds]* (Paris: 1975); Michelle Loi *Pour Lu Xun (Lu Sin). Réponse à Pierre Ryckmans (Simon Leys)* [For Lu Xun. A Reply to Pierre Ryckmans (Simon Leys)], (Lausanne: 1975).

53. This translation by Feng Yusheng got lost sometime in 1932, but Lu Xun's preface from the 5.11.1931 does still exist; c.f. Lutz Bieg, "Unkraut oder vom verzweifelten Widerstand gegen das Nichts. Vorläufige Bemerkungen zu Lu Xun's Prosadichtung *Yecao*" [Weeds, or he 'Desperate Resistance' against Nothingness. Preliminary Remarks Concerning Lu Xun's Poemes en Prose, *Yecao*], in: Wolfgang Kubin (ed.), *Aus dem Garten der Wildniss. Studien zu Lu Xun (1881 - 1936)* [From the Garden of Wilderness. Studies on Lu Xun (1881 - 1936)], (Bonn: 1989), p. 151.

it to *Zarathustra*.

Some authors have brought attention also to Buddhist elements in the *Yecao* texts,⁵⁴ and with good reason. It is pivotal here though, how Nietzsche and Buddhism go together, and the insight in the order of precedence in both: Buddhism and everything else is just secondary, Lu Xun's struggle with Nietzsche and with himself is paramount and first. I believe that the *Yecao* are above all a protocol of Lu Xun's conflict with nihilism as the prerequisite also of Nietzsche's philosophy. That is the pending confrontation which had been looming from the very beginning and which Lu Xun had until then evaded. This confrontation of Lu Xun with Nietzsche is what I would like to nail down. This is possible, as I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere, with any text of the collection. Here, however, I will do this with the help of a single example, that of the text "The Rambler" (Guoke),⁵⁵ the title of which immediately makes Nietzsche spring to mind: "The Rambler" is also the title of the first section in the third part of *Zarathustra*.

Let us look first at Lu Xun's rambler: In the evening twilight a weary traveller reaches a house inhabited by an old man (the past, wise to the world, his *own resignation*) and by a young girl (that which is still to come, youth, his *own hope*). The rambler asks for a cup of water and is told to stay since night is nigh and so he could allow some rest to his worn out feet. But the traveller does not want to rest: "You can't shake off the feeling that it would be better to be on your way?" asks the old man. "Yes", replies the rambler, "I had better be on my way." Lu Xun's traveller is a kind of Ahasver, who knows neither the place of his origins nor the destination of his travels and who follows a voice which the old man too, had once heard, when he was young. The rambler, however, rejects the advice to interrupt his aimless journey and to turn back. "No! I have to continue, I cannot rest" he repeats over and

54. C.f. for example, Huang Jichi, "Lu Xun yu fojiao" [Lu Xun and Buddhism], in: Song Qinglin jijinhui (ed.), *Lu Xun yanjiu nianhan* [*Yearbook of Lu Xun Research*] (Beijing: Zhonghua renmin chubanshe, 1990), pp. 216 – 222; or Mo Yufu, Sun Lianqi, "Lu Xun yu foxue" [Lu Xun and Buddhism], in: *Lu Xun yanjiu* [*Lu Xun yanjiu*], no. 3, 1984, pp. 46 – 56.

55. For the following to paragraphs compare Lu Xun, LXQ, vol. I, pp. 247n.

over again, and “As long as I can remember I have been rambling.”⁵⁶

Zarathustra does not think any differently in his midnight ponderings of his “many lonely ramblings since his youth” and says to his heart: “I am a Rambler, [...] and it seems that I can’t sit still for long./ And whatever now comes my way as fate or experience - rambling will be within it and mountain climbing. [...]”⁵⁷ Zarathustra too hears the call of a voice, it is the voice of the “hour” that speaks to him:

“You go your way of greatness; here no-one can creep up on you!
Your foot itself rubbed out the path behind you and above it is written: impossibility./ And when eventually all the ladders have gone, then you have to know how to climb on top of your own head: [...] on top your own head and past your own heart!”⁵⁸

Just as for Lu Xun’s Rambler, there is no way back for Zarathustra and only an eternal, disquieting rambling and going beyond himself. But there is one striking difference between the two rambles: the lofty and solemn aura of Zarathustra is completely missing in Lu Xun’s Ahasver. Zarathustra is of course lamenting that he has got a “sore heart”⁵⁹ but by no means that he has got sore *feet* as well like the pathetic Rambler of Lu Xun, whose wretchedness makes him look just like a *caricature* of Zarathustra. The latter will at the end stand in the light of “midday” and have redeemed himself. We know of Lu Yun’s Ahasver, on the other hand: he will never see the light of the sun, he is not walking any “way of greatness”, but “the Rambler barges off stumbling into the wilderness with the night on his back”⁶⁰ and chasing the setting sun: that is how Lu Xun’s story ends! And this unmistakable reversal and *re-evaluation* of Zarathustra’s comparison of himself with the sun right in the first section of his “preface”⁶¹ as well as at the very end of the whole text, finally allows for only one interpretation, namely that of the aimless, hopeless Ahasver of Lu Xun as a bitter parody of

56. Lu Xun, *Guoke*, LXQ, vol. I, pp. 248-250.

57. C.f. Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, NW, vol. II, p. 403.

58. C.f. *ibid.*, p. 404.

59. *Ibid.*

Zarathustra – and therefore also as a ruthless caricature of the caricaturist himself.

Cheung, who disputes a distancing of Lu Xun from Nietzsche, offers another interpretation. In the voice which pushes the “rambler” forward, he hears “an alluring hope”, and “a different expression of his same experience of ‘eternal recurrence’”:

“Although Lu Xun kept reminding himself that it was just an illusion and told himself to rest, he could not resist the call to continue to struggle with the ‘darkness and nothingness’. He went ahead and therefore accepted his fate (*amor fati*). The passer-by also shows the characteristic of a Nietzschean lonely fighter [...]”⁶²

It is without a doubt correct that in “The Rambler” Lu Xun’s struggle against “darkness and nothingness” and another experience of “eternal recurrence” is reflected. But at the very most as a mistake Cheung touches Lu Xun’s sore point, when in Cheung’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s “*amor fati*”, the “unconditional ‘yes!’ to the world”, takes on the bland aftertaste of a mere *die-hard slogan*. Precisely *that* is the reason for Lu Xun’s “despair.” Unlike Zarathustra he is not able “to reconcile with life”, he had to accept that Nietzsche’s path into the light, is too steep and at least for him, is not viable. Thus darkness threatens to catch up with him and swallow him up. The self-portrait of Lu Xun as a hunted “rambler” stumbling away from the night falling, in blackened, torn, nihilistic garments – “his demeanour gloomy, black beard, messy hair, black jacket and trousers, both in rags, bare feet sticking out of his shoes [...]”⁶³ – is not that of a “Nietzschean fighter.” It is in fact a copy of the “shadow” of Zarathustra, and an excellent example of that type of art practised by Lu Xun, of lampooning and “dissecting himself”, which he mentions in the epilogue to his collection of essays, *The Tomb (Fen)*.⁶⁴

60. C.f. Lu Xun, *Guoke*, LXQ, vol. I, p. 251.

61. C.f. Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, NW, vol. II, p. 277.

62. Cheung, *Lu Xun: The Chinese ‘Gentle’ Nietzsche* [...], p. 158.

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Lu Xun is tired of the endless searching and dabbling in the shadow of Zarathustra, and of *being* Zarathustra's "shadow." The restless rambling and iconoclasm is, to speak in Nietzsche's language, "no longer to his taste." The Yecao text "Farewell of the Shadow" (*Ying de gaobie*) also bears witness to this change of mind. Here too, as already in "The Rambler", the reference to Nietzsche is evident ("The Rambler and his Shadow" is the title of the whole second section of *Human, Far too Human*, and "The Shadow" is moreover the name of the title of a chapter in the fourth part of *Zarathustra*). Just as the texts "Snow" and "Preface" (compare the images of the "withered grass" and the "weeds") all the other texts in the collection as well are "tied, threaded, in love" (Nietzsche) and create an entity, which is, whether directly or indirectly, intertwined with Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. Also "in their visions of icy worlds Nietzsche / Zarathustra and Lu Xun meet each other", as Kubin observes in his epilogue to the German edition of Lu Xun's Works.⁶⁵ Other "deserts", such as in the text "Revenge" (Fuchou), which together with "Revenge II" (Fuchou, qi er) and the figure of the saviour crucified by the gaffing mob strikes a chord with the Zarathustrian thematic complex of disgust – hate – retaliation,⁶⁶ are likewise variations of those ice worlds. The same applies to the dust desert, in which the "Beggars" (*Qiuqizhe*) as direct descendants of Lu Xun's lonely "rambler" lose their goal and orientation.⁶⁷ All of these visions are nightmarish and over and over again one gets the feeling that the dreamer fell asleep while reading *Zarathustra*, many

63. Lu Xun, *Guoke*, LXQ, vol. I, p. 248.

64. C.f. Lu Xun, "Xiezai Fen houmian" [Postscript to the Collection *The Tomb*], LXQ, vol. I, p. 132.

65. Kubin, W., "Die Verzweiflung trägt wie die Hoffnung [...]", in: Werke, Bd.VI, S. 215.

66. The spirit of revenge is opposed the idea of "*amor fati*": C.f. Abel, G., *Nietzsche*, pp. 341n. Compare also Martin Heidegger, "Wer ist Nietzsches Zarathustra" [Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra], *Vorträge und Aufsätze* [Lectures and Essays], part I, pp. 102n.

parts and passages of which are, indeed, also labelled reports on dreams. This is how it seems also in “A Dog’s Reproach” (Gou de bojie), in which the dreamer runs away from the contestations of a speaking stray dog, a setting, which obviously is a “reversal” of that scene in which a fearless Zarathustra travels to hell to take the “Firedog” to task:⁶⁸ The dreamer’s bed finally stands at the edge of hell, of which the “Antichrist” reports in “The Lost Hell Which Had Been Nice” (Shidiao de hao diyu), to then finally admit to the dreamer: “Dear friend, you bear a grudge against me. Yes, you are a human! But I am searching for wild animals and evil spirits”⁶⁹ In the text “A Human’s Shivering” (Tuibaixian de zhandong), which begins with the sentence “I dreamed that I am dreaming”, the landscape of Zarathustra’s “riddle dream” reappears – a hut in a bleak moonlit wilderness under an empty sky – in front of the backdrop of which the Übermensch-like laughter of Nietzsche’s shepherd turns into the “mute scream of a human, of an animal.”⁷⁰ When, for a change, the lyrical self dreams of “A pleasant Event” (*Hao de gushi*) such as a Dionysian boat trip with all things flowing into each other, promising the unification of self and the world,⁷¹ then the dreamer finally wakes up in the dim light of his notorious “lamp”, the only flickering real source of light in the overall murk of Lu Xun’s collection (compare also “Autumn Night”, and also the end of the whole collection).

I understand the movement which Lu Xun’s lyrical self carries out in the last part of “Autumn Night” and throughout the other nightmares of Zarathustrian visitations and wintry deserts as a great, congenial parallel movement to the “recovery” (Genesung) of which Zarathustra talks about throughout. Karl Löwith suggested to read *Zarathustra*:

“[...] as a series of dreamlike ascending pictures, which – psychologi-

67. C.f. LXQ, Bd.I, S. 237.

68. C.f. LXQ, Bd.I, S.

69. C.f. LXQ, Bd.I, S. 255.

70. C.f. LXQ, Bd.I, S. 257.

71. C.f. LXQ, Bd.I, S. 246f.

cally analysed – result in the hidden history of the suffering of a person who imagines the problem of his existence in bleak and Halkyonic landscapes, sinister situations and mysterious figures, in which he both reveals and bares himself and at the same time disguises and masks himself [...] In all of these [...] figures Nietzsche speaks both about and to himself [...] He himself is the tightrope walker [...] he himself is the clown [...] he himself is the rambler and also the rambling and visiting shadow that is sick from the futility of his searching; he himself is the shepherd retched by the revulsion of being human [...] because as Nietzsche-Zarathustra he is actually spread out in multiple roles and in his innermost being is ambiguous to the border-line of schizophrenia.”⁷²

The same applies to Lu Xun: the smoker, the rambler, the shadow, the warrior, the frozen Buddha, or the crucified saviour – all of these figures of *Yecao* are alters of himself. And so, as Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* overall tells of the “overcoming of nihilism”, Lu Xun also tells of the overcoming of his nihilism – but with the decisive punchline point that in his case, the overcoming of nihilism actually means the overcoming of Nietzsche/Zarathustra. That is the meaning of the flickering “enlightenment” of the *Yecao*’s lyrical self: Lu Xun had finally recognised where he “got the cold”, who had led him into “loneliness”, who had driven the wedge between him and the “masses”, from whom he had brought the agonizing dichotomy “between humanism and individualism” upon himself. And while Zarathustra finally releases himself by casting off his being human, Lu Xun casts off his “super-humanism” and returns to the “world of humans.” That is the reason why for Zarathustra’s ears his own laughter, that announces his “recovery”, sounds euphoric and promising, whilst to Lu Xun’s ears it sounds restrained and he closes his heart to it: because “recovery” means *victory* to Zarathustra but to Lu Xun it is connected to the admittance of his own *defeat*. He failed on himself, on his own “contradiction.”

72. Karl Löwith, “Nietzsches Philosophie [...]”, pp. 329; 333.

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Takeuchi Yoshimi has said that Lu Xun once wanted to create his own Übermensch; his deceased remains lie scattered in *Yecao*.⁷³ After the *Yecao* Lu Xun published only rather journalist essays and polemical articles on the numerous controversies which were being performed on China's literary stage. Findeisen comments that Lu Xun "increasingly aims his rhetoric virtuosity at individual people", he wages countless pen wars with individual cultural and political opponents, in which "the terminology class-struggle from 1929 onwards almost seamlessly blends in", and acknowledges that many of his "miscellanea" (*zawen*) may have been "partly inspired" by "personal revenge, hurt vanity, cantankerousness and persecution paranoia"⁷⁴ Takeuchi this change of the author and his literary production so drastically, that he consequently spoke of "Lu Xun's decision to die as a writer [of literature]."⁷⁵ This change of Lu Xun's mode of literary production was accompanied by his leaning towards Marxism and an increasing activity in organisations controlled by the KPCh and since 1930 in the league of leftist authors. Findeisen believes that the latter Lu Xun "integrates" his Nietzschean idea of the genius of culture easily "into the utopia of communism" and had "expanded it with social components" in accordance with his conviction that "even the strong [...] are dependent on the public" in order "to be of any effect."⁷⁶ There can be no discussion, as Findeisen states, of an avoidance of Nietzsche considering Lu Xun's persistent interest in the philosopher even after 1927. Cheung too claims that Lu Xun held on to his Nietschian agenda even after his, due to the political development from 1927 onwards, unavoidable leaning towards Marxism.

What, however – apart from diverse "Nietzschian attitudes" and

73. C.f. Takeuchi Yoshimi, *Rojin*, TYZ, Bd.I, pp. 93; 107.

74. C.f. Raul D.Findeisen, *Lu Xun [...]*, p. 670f.

75. C.f. Takeuchi, Y., *Rojin*, TYZ, Bd.I, p. 8.

76. C.f. Findeisen, "Die Last der Kultur [...]", part II, p. 36f.

“affinities” – can be put forward *concretely* in order to substantiate the assertion of the continuity of Lu Xun’s attitude towards Nietzsche? An entry in a diary: Lu Xun confirmed on 10.8.1929 the acquisition of an “elucidation and critique of *Zarathustra*”;⁷⁷ Lu Xun’s support for translation projects: he edited the manuscript of the Chinese translation published in 1935 of *Ecce Homo* by his protégé Xu Shiquan; he asked Xu to send him his translation of *Zarathustra*; according to his diary entry on 14.11.1935 he received Xu’s translation of *Morgenröte* and praised him as an essayist, who “writes in the style of Nietzsche.” Finally the remark made by Xu, that Lu Xun payed respect to Nietzsche in his latter years too.⁷⁸ There is no reason not to believe Xu. Lu Xun did not become a dispraiser of Nietzsche overnight. The examples – they should be complete – however, also show: Lu Xun’s latter relationship with Nietzsche is qualitatively different from before 1927. It is of a more distanced, one may say “academic nature.” With this refrainment, as it appears to me, Lu Xun withdrew the thorn from his flesh, that had once spurred on his production of fictional literature. After the publication of *Yecao* one can hardly find evidence for any *literary* utilization of Nietzsche’s texts (apart perhaps from *Old Stories, Retold (Gushi Xinbian)*, published in 1936, a collection of short-stories, most of which have been penned or first published, however, already in the 1920s). When Lu Xun now speaks of Nietzsche at all, then he speaks, just as he once did during his years in Japan, again *about* Nietzsche, *theoretically*, and – that is new – *critically*:

“Nietzsche taught the people to prepare themselves for the ascent of the ‘*Übermensch*’. If he were never to appear then this preparation would have to prove to be empty and futile. But for himself, Nietzsche knew of a way how get away: madness and death. Otherwise he would have had to put up with the emptiness or would have had to fight against this vacuum. He would have lived in soli-

77. C.f. Onoe Kanehide, a.a.O., S. 90.

78. C.f. Findeisen, “Die Last der Kultur [...]”, Teil. II, S. 35f.

tude, just like the “last man” with a heart without warmth, would have been contemptuous of all authority, would have withdrawn himself and would have become a nihilist.”⁷⁹

Needless to say that these lines are expression rather of Lu Xun’s own suffering and failure. Lu Yun wrote the text, from which these lines are quoted, it in 1935. He dedicated the time remaining to him, already seriously ill with tuberculosis, to his translation Gogol’s *The Dead Souls* and threw himself into a final bitter battle over the communist cultural politics and the anti-Japanese resistance. On 5. September 1936 he penned his last writing with the laconic title “The Death” (Si). It concludes with the words: “If this is what dying is, in any case it does not cause any pain. Right at the end it might be different; but at least, since it happens only once in life, I can endure it.”⁸⁰

“Was *that* - life? Well then! Once more!” – *this* is how Zarathustra wanted to speak to death.⁸¹ Lu Yun though had long since descended from Nietzsche’s lofty peaks when he wrote his final words. Two weeks later, on the 19. September 1936, Lu Xun died at the age of 56 in Shanghai.

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Lu Xun’s above quoted critical, final remark on Nietzsche is interesting for a couple of reasons. It contains a moralistic reproach against Nietzsche, who stole out of the responsibility for “the people”, a reproach which illuminates the fact that for Lu Xun the conflict between “individualism” and “humanism” is, in the first place, an ethical issue. Moreover, the remark as a whole is a critique of Nietzsche from an evolutionist viewpoint: his path to “progress” has turned out to be a dead end street. This critique which is probably in accordance with that kind of Marxist “progressivism” which was prevailing in the

79. Lu Xun, “*Zhongguo xinwenxue daxi xiaoshuo erji xu*”, LXQ, Bd.2, S. 691.

80. C.f. Lu, X., “Si” [The Death], LXQ, vol. III, pp. 70n.

81. Nietzsche, Zarathustra, NW, vol. II, pp. 408; 552.

1930s, at least implicitly extends the ethical dimension of the problem of “humanism” and “individualism” into the dimension of history and time, where, if we follow a hint by Wang Hui, Lu Xun’s dilemma reappears in form of two oppositional visions of history as “advance”, and as “nothing but a continuous repetition [...] of individual events.”⁸² At this point, indeed, a discussion would be required of the historical condition of the possibility of what Takeuchi Yoshimi has called elsewhere the “aporias of modernity.”⁸³ However, this discussion, which in my view would have to make use of Marx’ concept of the commodity form as an analytical key, would certainly explode the framework of this footnote. For the time being, therefore, I confine myself to concluding that Lu Xun has failed in his struggle with the “aporias of modernity.” Fail, however, he only could because he struggled. In his life and literature this struggle has manifested itself in the most striking and moving way: that is Lu Xun’s significance, and his actuality.

82. Wang Hui, “Lu Xun de beilun”, in: *Sihuo chongwen*, (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2000), p. 423.

83. Takeuchi Yoshimi, “Kindai no chōkoku” [The Overcoming of Modernity], TYZ, vol. VIII, p. 65.