CHAPTER 8

Translating China into *International Literature*: Stalin-Era World Literature Beyond the West

Edward Tyerman

The career of the journal *International Literature* offers a succinct history of the attempt by Soviet literary institutions in the Stalinist period to create a restructured world literature, centred in Moscow and mediated through the prestigious form of the literary journal.[1] The journal's first incarnation was the *Herald of Foreign Literature* (*Vestnik inostrannoi literatury*), founded by its chief editor Anatoly Lunacharsky in 1928. Officially the organ of the Comintern's International Bureau of Revolutionary Literature (*Mezhdunarodnoe biuro revoliutsionnoi literatury*—MBRL), the *Herald* published a broad range of authors, from proletarian writers to socialist sympathizers to more neutral figures. At the 1930 Second Conference of Revolutionary and Proletarian Writers in Kharkiv, an event dominated by the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) and its particular vision of a global proletarian literature, MBRL was reorganized as the International Organization of Revolutionary Writers

1 On the Soviet investment in world literature as a project see Maria Khotimsky, "World Literature, Soviet Style: A Forgotten Episode in the History of the Idea," *Ab Imperio* 3 (2013): 119–54; Katerina Clark, *Moscow, The Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 169–209. For a classic account of the Soviet cultural bureaucracy's investment in maintaining the medium of the literary journal inherited from the nineteenth century, see Robert A. Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

(*Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia revoluitsionnykh pisatelei*—MORP). The *Herald* became *Literature of the World Revolution* (*Literatura mirovoi revoluitsii*), a multi-lingual journal issued in Russian, French, English and German that focused more strictly on proletarian literature. *Literature of the World Revolution* lasted only two years, under the chief editorship of the Polish writer Bruno Jasieński. After RAPP's disbanding in 1932, the journal changed names again, appearing from 1933 as *International Literature* (*Internatsional'naia literatura*). Sergei Dinamov became chief editor; Sergei Tretyakov served as editor of the Russian edition from 1933 to 1936. *International Literature* appeared in Russian, French, English, German, Spanish (from 1942), and briefly Chinese. From 1935, with the disbanding of MORP and the creation of the United Front, *International Literature* became an organ of the Union of Soviet Writers. It ceased publication in 1943, the same year that the Comintern was dissolved.[2]

Discussions of the Russian edition of *International Literature* tend to emphasize its role as a conduit for Western literature into the USSR, including a significant number of modernist writers. In the mid-1930s, at a time when the establishment of Socialist Realism as state-approved literary doctrine coincided with increasing attacks on modernist experimentation, *International Literature* under the editorship of Dinamov and Tretyakov published Ernest Hemingway, Aldous Huxley, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Alfred Döblin and, most notoriously, James Joyce's *Ulysses*.[3] (These catholic tendencies found themselves curtailed in the late 1930s, when the Purges claimed the lives of Dinamov, Tretyakov, and Jasieński.) Less attention has been paid, however, to the journal's coverage of literatures outside the West. This chapter focuses on the example of China, a country that during the 1920s and 1930s remained constantly at the centre of what we might call the Soviet state-sponsored internationalist imagination. Beginning in the late 1920s, *International Literature* and its predecessors hosted the first large-scale translation of modern Chinese literature into Russian. Close attention to this corpus can illuminate how *International Literature* situated a

2 For the journal's history, see E. E. Zemskova, "Istoriia zhurnala 'Internatsional'naia literatura': perspektivy issledovatel'skogo proekta," *Novye rossiiskie gumanitarnye issledovaniia* 9 (2014), accessed online on April 22, 2021, DOI: http://www.nrgumis.ru/articles/239/; Nailya Safiullina and Rachel Platonov, "Literary Translation and Soviet Cultural Politics in the 1930s: The Role of the Journal Internacional'naja Literatura," *Russian Literature* 72, no. 2 (2012): 248–53. For a remarkable digital project to map the contexts of the journal across its multiple languages of publication, organized by Elena Ostrovskaya and Elena Zemskova at Moscow's Higher School of Economics, see http://www.interlit.online/index.php.

3 Safiullina and Platonov, "Literary Translation and Soviet Cultural Politics," 253–55; Samantha Sherry, *Discourses of Regulation and Resistance: Censoring Translation in the Stalin and Khrushchev Era Soviet Union*, 67–101.

major non-Western country and its contemporary literary production within the map of world literature that the journal produced for its readers.

This chapter begins by tracing the historical conditions that led to the appearance of contemporary Chinese literature on the pages of *International Literature*. Next, I focus on two case studies that illuminate the translation strategies employed by the journal. Early Soviet debates on translation, in line with the broader history of European translation theory, oscillated between the two poles of "literalist" fidelity to the original and a "free" or "artistic" practice that privileged the smoothness of the translated text in the target language. By the end of the thirties, the latter approach had established itself as orthodoxy.[4] My two case studies offer different resolutions of this basic tension: the Russian poems of the Chinese poet Xiao San (known in Russian as Emi Siao), and Nikolai Fedorenko's translations of Lu Xun, the most iconic of twentieth-century Chinese writers. Though the translation strategies deployed in both cases differ radically, they both serve to affirm the fundamental principle of *translatability* on which rested the journal's model of a Soviet-centric world literature. Texts produced in diverse global spaces entered the pages of the journal as commensurable specimens of "international literature," rendered legible through translation and accompanying paratexual materials (introductions, critical essays, photographs, etc.).[5] Modern Chinese literature emerged from a literary tradition and a cultural context that remained less familiar, even exotic, for Russophone readers. At the same time, Soviet state media sought to present contemporary China as a crucial and recognizable site of revolutionary struggle. Tracking the translation of modern Chinese literature into *International Literature* thus offers an important case study for understanding how the Soviet world literature project negotiated the tensions between difference and commensurability within its literary map of the globe.

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4 Maurice Friedberg, *Literary Translation in Russia: A Cultural History* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 69–108; Susanna Witt, "Arts of Accommodation: The First All-Union Conference of Translators, Moscow, 1936," in *The Art of Accommodation: Literary Translation in Russia*, ed. Leon Burnett and Emily Lygo (London: Peter Lang, 2013), 141–84.

5 My discussion here moves in the shadow of Emily Apter's polemical critique, made in a different historical context, of a model of world literature grounded in notions of translatability and commensurability. See Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013).

China in Early Soviet Culture and *International Literature*

The period immediately before the founding of the *Herald of World Literature* witnessed an intense moment of Soviet political and cultural engagement with China. During the 1920s, the Soviet-dominated Comintern formed an alliance with China's Nationalist Party (Guomindang), in line with the Leninist strategy of supporting nationalist parties in order to stoke anti-imperial revolutions in colonized and semi-colonized countries. China's last imperial dynasty, the Qing, had fallen in 1911, but the Chinese Republic founded in its place soon descended into civil war between rival military factions. Meanwhile, foreign powers including Britain, France, the USA and Japan retained the sizeable economic, legal and territorial concessions they had won from China since the First Opium War (1839–42), a process of "semi-colonization" that found its most visible expressions in the treaty ports of Shanghai and Tianjin.[6] Seeking to foster a national revolution in China that would overthrow the influence of the capitalist powers and pave the way for a socialist revolution, the Comintern sponsored a united front between the Nationalists and the recently formed Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This strategy ended in disaster: in April 1927, after capturing Shanghai, the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek turned violently against their erstwhile allies, executed and imprisoned large numbers of workers and Communists, and expelled all Comintern advisers from the country. The Comintern's "loss" of China became a central point of dispute in the struggle for power between Stalin and the Left Opposition, which led by late 1927 to Lev Trotsky's expulsion from the Party and Joseph Stalin's elevation to unquestioned primacy.[7]

While Comintern advisers led by Mikhail Borodin were working with the Guomindang in Guangzhou, the USSR also dispatched a steady stream of cultural emissaries to China in the mid-1920s. Most prominent among them was the avant-garde writer and theorist Sergei Tretyakov, the future editor of

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6 The term "semi-colony" was coined by Lenin to describe China, Turkey and Persia; see V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1996), 81. From the late 1920s, Mao Zedong and other Chinese Marxists adopted the term to describe China's economic and political status. See Tani Barlow, "Semifeudalism, Semicolonialism," in *Afterlives of Chinese Communism: Political Concepts from Mao to Xi*, ed. Christian Sorace, Ivan Franceschini, Nicholas Loubere (Acton: ANU Press, 2019), 237–41.

7 For the history of Soviet and Comintern engagement with China in the 1920s see C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How, *Missionaries of Revolution: Soviet Advisers and Nationalist China, 1920–1927* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Alexander Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution, 1919–1927* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000).

International Literature, who spent 18 months teaching Russian at Beijing University in 1924–25. During his time in Beijing, Tretyakov served as a correspondent for *Pravda* and a host of other Soviet periodicals, dispatching a steady stream of articles on contemporary China that combined anti-imperialist political sentiment with a sustained attack on the aesthetics of exoticism. After his return to Moscow, Tretyakov continued to write about China: his most famous piece was the hit play *Roar, China!* (*Rychi, Kitai!*), first performed at the Meyerhold Theatre in January 1926 and subsequently staged across the world, including in Germany, Britain, New York, Japan and China.[8] Other cultural visitors to China in this period included the writer Boris Pilnyak, who visited Shanghai in the summer of 1926; the director Vladimir Shneiderov, one of the pioneers of the Soviet expedition film, whose debut film, *The Great Flight* (*Velikii perelet*, 1926) tracked the progress of an aviation expedition from Moscow to Beijing; and the director Iakov Bliokh, who shot the documentary *Shanghai Document* (*Shankhaiskii document*, 1928), a remarkable application of Soviet parallel montage to China's most important semi-colonial city, in the summer of 1927. Taken together, these exercises in cultural mediation represented a sustained attempt to inscribe China into the Soviet internationalist imaginary as the site of the next major revolution.[9]

In the wake of the Comintern's defeat in 1927, the Sino-Soviet relationship shifted. Soviet emissaries political and cultural were no longer welcome in a Republican China dominated by the Nationalists (though this would alter a little in the later 1930s, as the rising Japanese encroachment on Chinese territory led to a form of rapprochement under the umbrella of the anti-fascist United Front). The 1930s saw no major Soviet-authored works on China that achieved the social impact of *Roar, China!*, or the experiment in Soviet-internationalist *chinoiserie* that was the 1927 hit ballet *The Red Poppy*.[10] Instead, China's position in the Soviet state-sponsored internationalist imaginary migrated into the field of translated literature.

Translations of Chinese literature into Russian had hitherto focused on texts written prior to the twentieth century, before the vernacularization campaigns, critical reassessment of traditional culture, and intense engagement

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8 Mark Gamsa, "Sergei Tret'iakov's *Roar, China!* between Moscow and China," *Itinerario* 36, no. 2 (August 2012): 91–108.

9 For an extensive discussion see Edward Tyerman, *Internationalist Aesthetics: China and Early Soviet Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).

10 See Edward Tyerman, "Resignifying *The Red Poppy*: Internationalism and Symbolic Power in the Sino-Soviet Encounter," *Slavic and East European Journal* 61, No. 3 (Autumn 2017): 445–66.

with foreign literary models that shaped China's New Culture and May Fourth movements in the 1910s and 1920s.[11] By the 1920s, these early translations from the Chinese literary canon would find themselves drawn into ongoing debates over literalist versus artistic translation. Russia's modernists shared in a broader European fascination with classical Chinese poetry at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1914, two members of the *Soiuz molodezhi* art group, V. Egor'ev and Vladimir Markov (Voldemars Matveis), published *Svirel' Kitaia* (*The Chinese Flute*), the first anthology in Russian devoted entirely to Chinese poetry. (Euro-American modernism's most famous engagement with Chinese poetry, Ezra Pound's *Cathay*, appeared a year later.) Egor'ev and Markov did not work directly with the Chinese texts of their poems, which ranged from the *Shijing* (*Classic of Poetry*, eleventh to seventh centuries BC) to the nineteenth century. Instead, they drew mainly on the German poet Hans Bethge's anthology *Die Chinesische Flöte* (1907), itself based on an earlier German translation from Judith Gautier's popular 1867 volume *Le livre de jade*.[12] A few years later, Nikolai Gumilev's renderings of Chinese verse in *Farforovyi pavil'on* (*The Porcelain Pavilion*, 1918) would also draw their source material from Gautier, a non-Sinologist who composed her highly liberal translations in collaboration with her Chinese tutor.[13] In the early Soviet period, the short-lived *Vsemirnaia literatura* (World Literature) publishing house—founded by Maksim Gorky in 1918, and the first experiment in a Soviet world literature—included pre-twentieth century Chinese texts within its ambitious project to make the literary heritage of the world available to Soviet readers through translation.[14] Vasilii Mikhailovich Alekseev, the pre-eminent Russian Sinologist of the period, published his own literalist translations from the Tang poet Li Bai (along with copious explanatory footnotes) in the *Vsemirnaia literatura* journal *Vostok* (*The*

11 For an overview see Kirk Denton, ed., *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893–1945* (Stanford University Press, 1996), 1–61. For the origins of New Culture and May Fourth cosmopolitanism in late Qing literature, see Theodor Huters, *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).

12 V. Egor'ev and V. Markov, eds., *Svirel' Kitaia* (Saint Petersburg: Soiuz molodezhi, 1914); E. A. Os'minina, "Kul'tura Kitaia v predstavlenii russkogo futurizma (na primere antologii 'Svirel' Kitaia')," *Vestnik Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo lingvisticheskogo universiteta* 6 (2020): 234–44.

13 Jinyi Chu, "Patterns of the World: Chinese Fashion and Cosmopolitan Ideas in Late Imperial Russia" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 2019), 156–58; Pauline Yu, "Your Alabaster in This Porcelain": Judith Gautier's *Le livre de jade*," *PMLA* 122., no. 2 (2007): 467–69.

14 For the history of the *Vsemirnaia literatura* publishing house, see Khotimsky, "World Literature, Soviet Style."

East) in 1923 and 1925.[15] Alekseev attacked the creative license of Gautier and her epigones in the foreword to his pupil Iulian Shchutskii's *Anthology of Chinese Poetry from the Seventh to Ninth Centuries AD*, a *Vsemirnaia literatura* volume from 1923 that sought a balance between accuracy and poetic form.[16] In the realm of prose, Alekseev's translations from Pu Songling's seventeenth-century story collection *Liaozhai zhiyi* (*Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*) also appeared under the *Vsemirnaia literatura* imprint from 1922.[17] Alekseev's renderings of Pu's tales of the fantastic exerted a significant impact on contemporary readers, from Aleksei Remizov to Vasilii Tikhomirov, choreographer of *The Red Poppy*.[18]

Between the closing of *Vsemirnaia literatura* in 1924 and the appearance of the *Herald of World Literature* from 1928, the heightened contact between Soviet and Chinese intellectuals generated by the Comintern's engagement in China created the conditions for contemporary Chinese literature to appear in the Soviet literary system.[19] Beginning in 1928, the *Herald of World Literature, Literature of the World Revolution* and *International Literature* introduced their readers to an impressive cross-section of the contemporary Chinese literary scene, publishing works by Lu Xun, Mao Dun, Ding Ling, Ye Shengtao, Xiao Jun, Rou Shi, Hu Lanqi, Tai Jingnong, and Zhang Yiping.[20] Operating broadly

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15 Li Bo, "Drevnee," trans. V. M. Alekseev, *Vostok* 2 (1923): 35–41; Li Bo, "Iz chetverostishii," trans. V. M. Alekseev, *Vostok* 5 (1925): 87–102.

16 *Antologiia kitaiskoi liriki VII-IX v. v. po R. Khr.*, trans. Iu. K. Shutskii, ed. V. M. Alekseev (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, Vsemirnaia literatura, 1923).

17 Pu Songling, *Lis'i chary: iz sbornika strannykh rasskazov Pu Sunlina (Liao chzhai chzhi i)*, trans. V. M. Alekseev (Petrograd: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1922). Alekseev's translations from *Liaozhai zhiyi* also appeared in *Vostok*: see Liao Chzhai, "Talanty kitaiskogo sud'i," trans. V. M. Alekseev, Vostok 5, 1925, 103–26.

18 Chu, "Patterns of the World," 207–14; Tyerman, "Resignifying *The Red Poppy*," 451.

19 Book-length literary translations of modern Chinese literature also began to appear at around the same time: see for example the collected volume *Pravdivoe zhizneopisanie: povesti i rasskazy Li-Tszi-Min, Lu-Siun', Chzhan-Tszy-Pin [i dr.]*, translated and edited by A. Kharkhatov (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1929). The Sinologist Vsevolod Kolokolov wrote an afterword for this volume.

20 In chronological order: Chzhan I-Pin [Zhang Yiping 章衣萍], "A-Lian'," trans. S. Polevoi, *Vestnik inostrannoi literatury* 11 (1928): 66–74; Ye Shao-tsziun' [Ye Shaojun, a.k.a Ye Shengtao 葉聖陶], "Zolotaia ser'ga," trans. Zoia Kazakevich, ed. B. Vasil'ev, *Vestnik inostrannoi literatury* 4 (1930): 99–107; Tai Tszin-nun [Tai Jingnong 臺靜農], "My stroim" and "Vchera noch'iu," trans. A. Ivin, *Literatura mirovoi revoliutsii* 7 (1931): 70–76; Mao Dun [茅盾], "Vesennii shelk," trans. N. Nekrasov, *Internatsional'naia literatura* 3–4 (1934): 310–20; Khu Lan-chi [Hu Lanqi 胡蘭畦], "Konets Van Bo-pi," trans. Ia. Neiman, *Internatsional'naia literatura* 10 (1935): 74–84; Chzhou Shi [Rou Shi 柔石], "Mat'," tr. E. Kalashnikova, *Internatsional'naia literatura* 5 (1937): 96–106; Lu Sin' [Lu Xun 魯迅], "Blagoslovenie," trans. E. K., *Internatsional'naia literatura* 10 (1937): Tin Lin [Ding Ling 丁

on the left of the political spectrum, these writers all participated in a post-May Fourth turn towards literary realism, developed in close dialogue with European (and especially Russian) models. At a time shaped by a semi-colonial entry into modernity and the radical re-evaluation of traditional culture, realism offered a literary mode that promised to represent and potentially resolve China's political and cultural crises.[21] The social concerns of the Chinese realist texts translated for *International Literature* and its predecessors, with their focus on inequality and the pernicious nature of traditional gender and class relations, fitted neatly into these journals' broader project of materializing a transnational leftist realist literature.[22] These literary texts were supplemented by a steady stream of articles on contemporary Chinese culture, the history of Chinese literature, and cultural politics in contemporary China. In 1937, with Japan's invasion of China underway, *International Literature* published Mao Zedong's autobiography as recounted to the American journalist Edgar Snow, and a series of pieces on Mao's close ally Zhu De.[23]

The appearance of Chinese literature in *International Literature* was, in an important sense, the reverse ripple effect of the much larger and more transformative impact made by the reception of Russian and Soviet literature in the Chinese literary world. As Mark Gamsa has shown, Russian and Soviet literature in translation, often mediated through Japanese or another third language, exerted an enormous influence on the post-May Fourth generation of Chinese writers and their search for modern forms of vernacular writing.[24] By the late 1920s, as members of this generation turned increasingly towards Marxism in the wake of the Nationalist coup in 1927, translations of Soviet literature began to increase. A vigorous debate in the late 1920s over the question of "revolutionary

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玲], "Podarok," trans. A. Ivin, *Internatsional'naia literatura* 11 (1937): 112–17; Tian' Tsziun' [Tian Jun, a.k.a Xiao Jun 蕭軍], "Derevnia v avguste," trans. M. Ukhanskii, *Internatsional'naia literatura* 6 (1938): 3–40; Lu Sin' [Lu Xun], "Lekarstvo," "Neznachitel'nyi sluchai," trans. N. Fedorenko, *Internatsional'naia literatura* 11 (1939): 80–85.

21 See, e.g., Roy Bing Chan, *The Edge of Knowing: Dreams, History, and Realism in Modern Chinese Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 25–34.

22 Few of these stories focused on proletarian experience; an exception is Yan Tsin-zhen [Yang Qingren], "Slepoi Li" [Blind Li], trans. Emi Siao, *Internatsional'naia literatura* 11–12 (1931): 84–88.

23 Mao Tsze-dun [Mao Zedong], "Moia zhizn'," trans. N. Sh., *Internatsional'naia literatura* 11 (1937): 101–111; idem, "Moia zhizn' (prodolzhenie)," *Internatsional'naia literatura* 12 (1937): 95–101; Emi Siao, "Chzhu De," Anna Louise Strong, "V gostiakh u Chzhu De," *Internatsional'naia literatura* 11 (1938): 140–51.

24 Mark Gamsa, *The Chinese Translation of Russian Literature: Three Studies* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2008); idem, *The Reading of Russian Literature in China: A Moral Example and Manual of Practice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

literature" (*geming wenxue*) led in the early 1930s to the formation of the League of Left-Wing Writers (*Zhongguo zuoyi zuojia lianmeng*), an organization that actively sought to ally itself with Soviet-controlled bodies such as MORP. (Several of the Chinese writers published in *International Literature*, including Lu Xun, Mao Dun, Ding Ling, and Rou Shi, were affiliated with the League.) The debates and polemics of the Shanghai literary left absorbed the influence of the literary theories of Trotsky, Georgii Plekhanov, and Lunarcharsky, often mediated through the proletarian literature movement in Japan.[25] Chinese and Russian literatures thus found themselves already intertwined through a certain East Asian experience of world literature, one that Heekyoung Cho reads as a challenge to the Eurocentric models of world literature put forward by Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova. In place of a center-periphery relationship where forms of aesthetic innovation compete for the validation of the center, Cho finds a relationship between two semi-peripheries in which Russian realist texts modelled for East Asian intellectuals a literature of social commitment.[26]

Returnees from Soviet educational institutions in Moscow—specifically the Communist University for the Workers of the East (KUTV, f. 1921) and the Sun Yat-sen University for the Workers of China (f. 1925)—played a key role in mediating Russian literature for Chinese leftist intellectual circles.[27] Figures such as the journalist, philosopher and briefly CCP leader Qu Qiubai, the writer Jiang Guangi, and the translator and scholar Cao Jinghua all drew on their time in the USSR to become important mediators of Soviet literature for a Chinese audience.[28] *International Literature*, in turn, enlisted a different set of intermediaries: Russian and Soviet Sinologists who combined literary specialization with some kind of

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25 Wang-chi Wong, *Politics and Literature in Shanghai: the Chinese League of Left-Wing Writers, 1930–1936* (Manchester University Press, 1991); Leo Ou-Fan Lee, "Literature on the Eve of Revolution: Reflections on Lu Xun's Leftist Years, 1927–1936," *Modern China*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1976): 295, 300–308. Soviet films and film theory also exerted an important influence on a developing Chinese left-wing cinema in the early 1930s: see Pang Laikwan, *Building a New China in Cinema: The Chinese Left-Wing Cinema Movement, 1932–1937* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 41, 144–48; Weihong Bao, *Fiery Cinema: The Emergence of an Affective Medium in China, 1915–1945* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 242–50.

26 Heekyoung Cho, "Rethinking World Literature through the Relations between Russian and East Asian Literatures," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 28 (2018): 7–26.

27 On the history of Chinese students at these institutions see Elizabeth McGuire, *Red at Heart: How Chinese Communists Fell in Love with the Russian Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2018); L. Yu Min-ling, "Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow, 1925–1930," Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1995.

28 Gamsa, *Reading of Russian Literature*, 70–71, 76–78.

political work in contemporary China. For example, the February 1929 issue of the *Herald of World Literature* included an article by the Russian Sinologist Sergei Aleksandrovich Polevoi on recent Chinese translations of Russian books. A classical scholar and cultural liaison for the Third International who assisted Chinese students travelling in secret to Russia, Polevoi was involved in the establishment of Beijing University's Russian Department after 1918 (where Tretyakov was briefly his colleague).[29] Polevoi had already translated the first Chinese literary text to appear in the *Herald:* a short story by Zhang Yiping titled "A Liang," which told of the abusive treatment of a slave girl by the narrator's uncle.[30] In his article, Polevoi offered an overview of recent debates in the Chinese literary world on the theme of "literature and revolution," citing the influence of Li Jiye's translation of Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution*, a volume Polevoi had edited. Polevoi praised Jiang Guangci's recent volume on Russian literature after 1917, calling Jiang the "first Chinese revolutionary poet." He went on to list a broad range of Russian writers recently translated into Chinese, including Pilnyak, Vsevolod Ivanov, Ehrenburg, Zoshchenko, Andreev, Gorky, Turgenev, Artsybashev, Chekhov, and Tolstoy. Polevoi's article offered Soviet readers a clear picture of Chinese revolutionary literature developing under the tutelage of Russian and Soviet example.[31]

Polevoi was just one of several Soviet Sinologists who played this role of a mediating figure between the Chinese and Russian literary worlds on the pages of the journal. In 1930, the *Herald* published an article on "Chinese Literature" by Boris Aleksandrovich Vasiliev, a student of Alekseev who had served as a Comintern translator in China and published the first Russian translation of Lu Xun's *True Story of Ah Q* (*A Q zheng zhuan*) in 1929.[32] Vasiliev offered a nine-stage history of Chinese literature through the prism of class relations from its origins to the present. His account of contemporary literature as shaped by an opposition between pure aestheticism and a realism responsive to "social command" (*sotsial'nyi zakaz*) would not have sounded too unfamiliar to Soviet readers.[33]

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29 Polevoi eventually fled the Japanese occupation in 1939 for the USA and Harvard University. For a hostile account of Polevoi by a former colleague at Beijing University, see Zhang Ximan 張西曼, "Bei dai Ewen xi eyun," in *Huiyi Zhang Ximan* (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chuban-she, 2017), 305; cf. Gao Xingya 高興亞, "Wusi qianhou de Beijing daxue eyu xi," in *Wenshi ziliao xuanji* 135 (1999): 181–85.

30 See note 20 above.

31 Sergei Polevoi, "Kitai: 'Rossica' v 1928 g.," in *Vestnik inostrannoi literatury* 2 (1929): 234–37.

32 Lu Sin' (Lu Xun), *Pravdivaia istoriia Ah–Keia*, trans. and ed. Boris Vasil'ev (Leningrad: Priboi, 1929).

33 B. Vasil'ev, "Kitaiskaia literatura," *Vestnik inostrannoi literatury* 1 (1930): 149–64.

Among the social realists Vasiliev named Ye Shaojun (Ye Shengtao), whose story "The Gold Earring" (Zolotaia ser'ga) appeared in the *Herald's* April 1930 issue. This tale of a poor peasant turned soldier who dies clutching his fetishized object of desire, a gold earring, fitted the script for China as the site of an emerging social realism.[34] Other Sinologists involved in the journal included Aleksei Ivin, who had studied classical Chinese in Paris before moving to China to teach in Beijing University's Russian Department, and Nikolai Fedorenko, another student of Alekseev (whose translations of Lu Xun will be discussed below).[35] These men had been trained as Sinologists focused on the classical language: Vasiliev only became interested in modern, vernacular Chinese literature after an encounter with the translator Cao Jinghua in Kaifeng led him to the work of Lu Xun. Cao, in turn, had learned his Russian both in Moscow and with Tretyakov, Polevoi and Ivin in Beijing.[36] Thus the networks established by Comintern internationalism, which drew Chinese students to Moscow and dispatched Soviet Sinologists to China, made possible the emergence of modern Chinese literature in the Soviet literary system, most prominently on the pages of *International Literature*.

Xiao San (Emi Siao) in Translation

The most important mediator for Chinese literature's position in *International Literature*, however, was the poet Xiao San, known in the pages of the journal by his Europeanized name of Emi Siao (1896–1983). Born in Xiangxiang, Hunan province, Xiao shared a classroom as a child with Mao Zedong. He adopted the name Emi, in tribute to Émile Zola, while a student in Paris in the early twenties. Recent accounts of Xiao's life by Katerina Clark and Elizabeth McGuire emphasize his profound enmeshment in Soviet cultural institutions and his remarkably active career as a mediator between those institutions and the Chinese leftist literary world. After studying at Moscow's Communist

34 See note 20 above.

35 For Ivin's translations of Tai Jingnong and Ding Ling, see note 20 above. See also Liu-chzhi-tsin (Chao-iu-shi), "Na 1-oi konferentsii kitaiskikh sovetov," trans. Ivin, *Literatura mirovoi revoliutsii* 5–6 (1931): 157–60. Ivin, whose real name was Aleksei Alekseevich Ivanov, studied in Paris with the prominent French Sinologist Édouard Chavannes. For biographical details see A. Saran, "Livny–Parizh–Pekin. Zhizn' Alekseia Ivanova," *Na beregakh bystroi Sosny*, Almanac of the Livenskii kraevedchesvkii muzei, no. 9 (2001): 75–85.

36 Ge Baoquan, "Tan 'A Q zheng zhuan' de e wen yi ben," *Nankai daxue xuebao: zhexue shehui kexue ban* 2 (1978): 78–82; Charles J. Alber, "Soviet Criticism of Lu Xun," Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1971, 26–32; Gamsa, *Reading of Russian Literature*, 76–78. Vasiliev was executed in November 1937, during the Purges; see Gamsa, *Reading of Russian Literature*, 88.

University for the Workers of the East from 1922–24, Xiao found his way back to the USSR after the Nationalist coup against the Chinese Communists in 1927. In 1930 Xiao, though not at that time a practising writer, attended the Conference of Revolutionary and Proletarian Writers in Kharkiv as a representative of the Chinese League of Left-Wing Writers.[37] This initiation into the Soviet literary system would position Xiao to become the key intermediary for contemporary Chinese literature and cultural politics in this period.

Xiao served on the editorial board for the Russian edition of *International Literature*, and briefly edited a Chinese edition of the journal, which only appeared for two issues.[38] As well as offering the journal a direct connection to the Chinese literary world through his links to the League of Left-Wing Writers, Xiao also translated texts, wrote prefaces, and produced a steady stream of articles on leftist literature in China and the oppressive cultural policies of the Nationalist government.[39] Beginning in 1931, Xiao started to publish his own poems in *Literature of the World Revolution* and later *International Literature*, meeting the journals' demand for a Chinese revolutionary literature with pieces such as "A Letter in Blood," "Hoist Higher the Banner of the Comintern," "Song of the Manchurian Partisans," and "Red Square."[40] Xiao's poetic career prior to joining the journal extended no further than a few pieces of juvenilia.[41] This, then, was not simply contemporary Chinese literature translated into Russian; rather, this was a form of "international literature" that emerged directly from the experience of a Chinese writer working with a Soviet journal in Moscow.

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37 For biographical information on Xiao see McGuire, *Red at Heart*, 19–30, 82–88, 184–87; Katerina Clark, "Translation and Transnationalism: Non-European Writers and Soviet Power in the 1920s and 1930s," in Brian James Baer and Susanna Witt, eds., *Translation in Russian Contexts: Culture, Politics, Identity* London: Routledge, 2018), 146–48.

38 Clark, "Translation and Transnationalism," 147; Gao Tao, *Xiao San yi shi yi pin* (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2010), 3.

39 Clark, "Translation and Transnationalism," 147. For translations see Yan, "Slepoi Li"; Se-Bin-Iue, "Vstuplenie v otriad (iz avtobiografii soldata)," trans. Emi Siao and M. Borisova, *Internatsional'naia literatura* 10 (1937), 137–39; Khe Din, "Vozvrashchenie (rasskaz)," trans. Emi Siao, *Internatsional'naia literatura* 11 (1937): 117–24. For articles, see, e.g., E. Siao, "Dvizhenie proletliteratury v Kitae," *Vestnik inostrannoi literatury* 6 (1930): 162–68; idem, "Kitai: godovshchina rasstrela kitaiskikh revoliutsionnykh rabochikh," *Literatura mirovoi revoliutsii* 5 (1932): 93–94; idem, "Literatura kitaiskoi revoliutsii," *Internatsional'naia literatura* 3–4 (1934), 323–33.

40 E. Siao, "Krovavoe pis'mo," *Literatura mirovoi revoliutsii* 1 (1932): 29–30; idem, "Vyshe znamia Kominterna," *Internatsional'naia literatura* 3–4 (1934): 309; idem, "Pesnia manchzhurskikh partizan," *Internatsional'naia literatura* 11 (1937): 125–26; idem, "Krasnaia ploshchad'," *Internatsional'naia literatura* 3–4 (1940): 17.

41 Xiao's collected works include three early poems from 1919, 1920, and 1923. Xiao San, *Shi wen ji*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1996), 1–3.

The process that produced Xiao's Russian poems offers a compelling microcosm of the ways in which individual agency combined with the forces exerted by Soviet literary institutions to produce a transparent, *translatable* form of international literature. By the time Xiao made his poetic debut, Joseph Stalin had issued his definitive response to the question of how to handle the diversity of national cultures within the USSR: Soviet culture should be "national in form, socialist in content."[42] Stalin's maxim relies on a certain understanding of translatability: socialist *content* serves here as a stable, fixed meaning that can transfer between national *forms* without distortion or remainder. Xiao's Russian poems offer a variation on this formula, showcasing a dynamic blend of national form, revolutionary form, and socialist content. They also emerged through a process of collaborative translation that complicated questions of agency and authority. Xiao collaborated on these poems with Aleksandr Il'ich Romm, a poet and philologist whose extensive translation credits include the first Russian translation of Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique generale*.[43] Romm knew no Chinese, whereas Xiao's Russian was strong enough for him to produce his own translations of Chinese literature for the journal. Thus the poet came to play a central role in the translation of his own texts. Sometimes, according to Xiao's own memoirs, he would recite a poem aloud to Romm and provide a rough translation into Russian on the spot. Xiao and Romm also used interlinear cribs or *podstrochniki*, a device used frequently for literary translation between the languages of the Soviet Union that enabled writers to translate from languages they did not know.[44] Unusually, however, Xiao provided interlinear translations for his own poems.[45]

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42 Stalin's original formulation, made in a speech at KUTV in 1925, stressed *proletarian* content: "Proletarian in content, national in form—such is the common human culture towards which socialism is heading." See I. V. Stalin, "O politicheskikh zadachakh universiteta narodov Vostoka: Rech' na sobranii studentov KUTV 18 maia 1925 g.," accessed online on September 2, 2019. The switch to "socialist in content and national in form" was made at the Sixteenth Party Congress in 1930. See *XVI s"ezd VKP(b). Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Ogiz, 1930), 55–56.

43 McGuire, *Red at Heart*, 188; A. L. Beglov and N. L. Vasil'ev, "Nenapisannaia retsenziia A. I. Romma na knigu M. M. Bakhtina i V. N. Voloshinova 'Marksizm i filosofiia iazyka'," *Philologica 2* (1995): 199.

44 Clark, "Translation and Transnationalism," 147, 156n16. On the practice of *podstrochniki*, see Susanna Witt, "Between the Lines: Totalitarianism and Translation in the USSR," *Contexts, Subtexts and Pretexts: Literary Translation in Eastern Europe and Russia*, ed. Brian James Baer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011), 149–70.

45 Xiao was in this respect unusual but not unique: for example, the Georgian poet Titsian Tabidze supplied his own cribs for Boris Pasternak's translations. See Harsha Ram, "Towards a Cross-Cultural Poetics of the Contact Zone: Romantic, Modernist, and Soviet

The series of Russian-language poems published under the name of "E. Siao" in *International Literature* thus emerged from a complex process of interlinguistic exchange and institutional negotiation. Nonetheless, their most striking quality is their legibility. Themes of violent self-sacrifice ("Nanjing Road," "A Letter in Blood") and female liberation ("Auntie Chzhan-u-sao's Decision") certainly fitted the established Soviet repertoire. More strikingly, the translation strategies deployed by Romm shuttle dynamically between the poles of "literalist" and "free" approaches, guided above all by the imperative of clarity. Sometimes he domesticates: thus while Xiao, like many modern Chinese poets, alternates between rhyme and free verse, Romm, in line with Russian poetic conventions, consistently imposes his own rhyme schemes. Yet Romm's translations also attempt to register the effect of the greater concision of Chinese poetry, in which a line of five or seven syllables is common. In this attempt to capture in Russian some echo of the form of the original, however, Romm inevitably sacrifices some of its content.

Let us look briefly at a representative example. In "Nanjing Road," published in *Literature of the World Revolution* in 1931, Xiao describes the beating of activists by police for pasting revolutionary posters on colonial Shanghai's main drag. For the poem's opening sextain, Xiao uses a line structure inherited from classical Chinese poetry: seven syllables that divide into semantic clusters of two-plus-two and three syllables apiece, with a caesura before the final cluster of three syllables. The rhyme scheme is a neat AABBCC. Romm's translation is structurally looser, alternating a six-syllable line (dactyl, trochee, trochee) with an eight-syllable line (amphibrach, amphibrach, iamb), held together by a rhyme scheme of ABABCC. Each Russian line contains only three or four words, giving a strong sense of compression:

Nanjing lushang lengqingqing,	Tikho na Nankin Rod,
Wuli jiedeng ban an ming.	V tumane goriat fonari.
Xiyu feifei bei feng jin,	Kholodno, dozhd' idet,
Leng tou chefu gu he jin.	Do kostei probiraia riksh.
Simian shi qiang zhi faliang.	Mokrye steny blestiat.
Taitai laoye hao meng chang.	Dzhentl'meny i ledi spiat.[46]

Intertextualities in Boris Pasternak's Translations of T'itsian T'abidze," *Comparative Literature* 59, no. 1 (2007): 75–77.

46 Xiao, "Nanjing lushang," *Shi wen ji*, vol. 1, 18. Original text: "南京路上冷清清，雾里街灯半暗明。细雨霏霏北风紧，冷透车夫骨和筋。四面湿墙只发亮。太太老爷好

[Nanjing Road is deserted, / Streetlamps shine half dark in the fog. / A light rain falls, the north wind presses, / The cold pierces the bone and muscle of the rickshaw driver. / On all sides the damp walls glisten. / Mistress and master are dreaming soundly.]

Several elements of Xiao's scene fall away in the process of transferral into Romm's Russian form, sacrificed to the attempt to keep the line short in a language with a higher per-word syllable count. The phrase "xiyu feifei," with its sonic repetition and its invocation of a light, misty drizzle, becomes the more meteorologically direct "dozhd' idet" (it is raining). Xiao's north wind disappears, replaced by the less dynamic "kholodno"—"it is cold"—and Romm's rickshaw man has bones but not muscles. The effect is to remove some of the poetic qualities of the original, replaced in the Russian poem with a sparse, almost blunt clarity.

At other moments, however, original and translation suddenly click into seamless alignment. Notably, these are the moments when Xiao's original switches into a more modern idiom, with irregular line lengths and rhymes.[47] Here Romm deploys greater literalism, producing a translation that matches the original almost word for word. Towards the end of "Nanjing Road," Xiao describes the beating of the agitators by colonial police:

"Da!" "Bei!"
Qiang bazi… Priklad…
Cidao… Shtyk…
"Zhao ba, "— Nu, govori,
zhe ni xiaozi!" ty!"[48]
["Beat!" / Rifle butt… / Bayonet… / "OK, talk, / kid!"]

Instead of the classical Chinese canon, Xiao draws here on the formal resources of Soviet literature, borrowing from Vladimir Mayakovsky the device of "step construction" to fragment the moment of attack into a sequence of

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梦长。" For Romm's translation, see E. Siao, "Nankin-rod," *Literatura mirovoi revoliutsii* 4 (1931): 67. My literal English translation of the Chinese text follows below.

47 On the formal innovations of modern Chinese poetry see Bonnie S. McDougall, "Modern Chinese Poetry (1900–1937)," *Modern Chinese Literature* 8, no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 1994), 127–70; Michelle Yeh, "Modern Poetry in Chinese: Challenges and Contingencies," in *A Companion to Modern Chinese Literature*, ed. Yingjin Zhang (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 151–66.

48 Xiao, "Nanjing lushang," 20; Siao, "Nankin-rod," 69. Original text: "打！枪坝子…刺刀…'召吧，这你小子!'"

blows and shouts. Romm commits even more than Xiao to the Mayakovskian form, which became a transnational visual signifier for revolutionary poetry in this period.[49] The Russian version even achieves greater compression than the original, reducing Xiao's two six-syllable lines to four and five syllables respectively. In this moment of sharp violence and barked colloquial language, the equivalents are precise: the modal particles "nu" and "ba" perform similar functions, while the second-person singular "ty" captures the condescension of *xiaozi* (boy, kid).

"Nanjing Road" dynamizes the rigid formula of "national in form, socialist in content," just as it complicates the opposition of "literalist" and "free" tendencies in Soviet translation practice. Xiao's original is already both "national" and "socialist" in form, and Romm's translations dilute the national form while doubling down on the echoes of existing Soviet poetic idioms. The language of "domesticating" and "foreignizing" deployed in contemporary translation studies, which depends on the assumption of two discrete linguistic and cultural contexts, does not fully capture this situation.[50] Instead, in its textual form and its collaborative history, "Nanjing Road" performs in miniature the claim of *International Literature* as a whole to mediate a world literature in which the specificities of local contexts merge within a shared context of international socialist revolution. Yet at the same time, Xiao's poems offered a vision of China itself as a space of incomplete revolution and ongoing violent struggle. At the level of both translational form and historical content, these poems positioned China within *International Literature* through a dynamic interplay of commensurability and difference, mapping a revolutionary world literature that reflected a single yet uneven world revolution.

Translating Lu Xun: Between Realism and Symbolism

For a different example of the translation of Chinese literature in *International Literature*, we might turn to Lu Xun (pen name of Zhou Shuren), the most celebrated Chinese writer of the period. A dedicated reader and translator of Russian literature, Lu Xun turned increasingly to Marxism in the wake of the

49 See for example the discussion of Langston Hughes' adoption of Mayakovsky's broken line in Steven S. Lee, *The Ethnic Avant-Garde: Minority Cultures and World Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 78–80.

50 One influential formulation of these terms can be found in Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London: Routledge, 1998).

Nationalist triumph in 1927. He was closely involved in the founding of the League of Left-Wing Writers and the debates around revolutionary literature, and also translated key works of Soviet literature into Chinese (most notably Aleksandr Fadeev's *The Rout/Razgrom*).[51] He was also one of the first modern Chinese writers to be translated into Russian, with the appearance in 1929 of Vasiliev's translation of *The True Story of Ah Q*, perhaps Lu Xun's most famous text. However, it took a while for *International Literature* to get round to actually publishing any of Lu Xun's fiction. Lu Xun's name featured prominently in Xiao's articles on the Left League for *Literature of the World Revolution*.[52] When *Literature of the World Revolution* became *International Literature* in 1933, Lu Xun's name appeared on the back cover, listed alongside the poet Guo Moruo as a member of the journal's "International Revolutionary Council" (*Mezhdunarodnyi revoliutsionnyi sovet*).[53] From the third issue for that year, *International Literature* began to include Lu Xun within an extended list of Chinese writers (including Ding Ling, Mao Dun, and Tian Han) as one of the "Permanent Collaborators of Our Journal."[54] That same issue also included a lengthy quote from Lu Xun's 1932 essay "Celebrating the Ties between Russian and Chinese Literatures" ("Zhu Zhong E wenzi zhi jiao"), advocating for ever greater engagement with Soviet literature in China.[55] Lu Xun could not attend the 1934 First Congress of Soviet Writers (where Xiao spoke), but *International Literature* published his message to the Congress in its bumper issue to celebrate the event. An explanatory note described Lu Xun as "one of the most important Chinese revolutionary writers."[56]

However, despite the journal's acknowledgement of Lu Xun as a central figure for its map of Chinese revolutionary literature, *International Literature* only published his fiction after his death. The journal marked his death in 1936 with great solemnity. Issue Eleven for that year began with full-page image of Lu Xun, framed within a mournful black border, accompanied by a eulogistic text that praised the writer in classically Stalinist language, as an "ardent friend of the Soviet Union". The next issue featured an extensive tribute from Xiao, "In Memory of the Great Chinese Writer Lu Xun," including photographs of

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51 Wong, *Politics and Literature in Shanghai*; Gamsa, *Reading Russian Literature in China*, 76–78.
52 Siao, "Dvizhenie proletliteratury v Kitae," 164.
53 *Internatsional'naia literatura* 1 (1933): back cover.
54 *Internatsional'naia literatura* 3 (1933): back cover, inside.
55 "O Sovetskom Soiuze: Kitai," *Internatsional'naia literatura* 3 (1933): 151.
56 Lu Sin', "Kitai i Oktiabr'," *Internatsional'naia literatura* 3–4 (1934): 322. (Mao Dun's message is printed on the same page.) Lu Xun's message was also printed on the front page of *Pravda*, July 5, 1934.

Lu Xun's funeral in Shanghai. Lu Xun's central role in the search for a vernacular literary language—a key goal of China's New Culture Movement in the 1910s—enabled Xiao to produce a tribute that emphasized such key elements of the Stalinist paradigm of the Socialist Realist writer as mass accessibility and commitment to realism. "Lu Xun's language is simple, clear and strong" (*prostoi, iarkii i sil'nyi*), Xiao writes, a "language close to the people" (*iazyk, blizkii narodu*). Xiao's Lu Xun is both a "realist artist" and a "deeply national writer, with an excellent knowledge of the life of China and the Chinese people." At the close of his article, Xiao draws what would become a standard comparison between Lu Xun and Gorky.[57] Xiao's article frames Lu Xun for a Soviet reader within what had by 1936 become the standardized attributes of a Socialist Realist writer.

This drive to frame Lu Xun as a Chinese exemplar of a Soviet-style realism also shaped the translations of his short fiction that appeared in the journal after 1936. *International Literature* published three stories by Lu Xun. In 1937, a translation appeared of "New Year's Sacrifice" ("Zhufu," 1924),[58] followed in 1939 by "Medicine" ("Yao," 1919) and "An Incident" ("Yi jian xiaoshi," 1920).[59] I will focus my comments here on "Medicine," which, like "An Incident," was translated by the Sinologist, translator and diplomat Nikolai Fedorenko.[60] "Medicine" is one of Lu Xun's most famous stories: concise, dark, ambiguous and richly symbolic, it tells the story of two closely connected deaths. The Hua family run a tea shop, and have a single son who has contracted tuberculosis. Old Shuan, his father, arranges to buy a mantou (steamed bun) dipped in human blood, a folk remedy that an unpleasant acquaintance named Kang (the name means "health") has suggested will cure the boy's condition. The human blood comes from an executed prisoner, a young man from the Xia family who seems to have been sentenced to death for advocating the overthrow of the

57 E. Siao, "Pamiati velikogo pisatelia Lu Siunia," *Internatsional'naia literatura* 12 (1936): 184–89. The comparison with Gorky appears frequently, for example, in *Lu Sin', 1881–1936: Sbornik statei i perevodov posviashchennyi pamiati velikogo pisatelia sovremennogo Kitaia*, ed. K. I. Muratov (Moscow: Izd-vo akademii nauk SSSR, 1938).

58 Lu Sin', "Blagoslovenie," trans. E. K. [Kalashnikova?], *Internatsional'naia literatura* 10 (1937): 127–36.

59 Lu Sin', "Lekarstvo," "Neznachitel'nyi sluchai," trans. N. Fedorenko, *Internatsional'naia literature* 11 (1939): 80–85.

60 Fedorenko's career included extensive diplomatic work in China, a spell as deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and almost two decades as chief editor of the late-Soviet journal *Inostrannaia literatura* (*Foreign Literature*), a successor of sorts to *International Literature*. In 1949–1950 he served as an interpreter for the talks between Mao Zedong and Joseph Stalin that led to the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship in February 1950. See N. T. Fedorenko, "Stalin i Mao Tsedun," pt 1, *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* 5 (1992): 197–211; pt 2, *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* 6 (1992): 83–95.

Qing dynasty. Lu Xun shows us the execution from the masterfully estranged perspective of Old Shuan in the first of the story's four sections. (Certain details allude to the execution of the feminist and revolutionary Qiu Jin, a native of Lu Xun's hometown of Xiamen, who was executed in 1907 for attempting to organize an uprising.) The remedy fails, and the story's final section brings together two mothers, Hua and Xia, at the graves of their dead sons. As the mother of the executed revolutionary receives comfort from the mother of the child who ate his blood, they notice a circle of red and white flowers has appeared on the revolutionary's grave. Xia calls out to her dead son, asking him to show he is listening by compelling a crow perched on a desolate tree to fly onto his grave. Nothing happens, and the mothers trudge away together. As they leave, they hear a loud caw, and turn to see the crow fly off into the sky.

Even before its translation in *International Literature*, "Medicine" itself emerged from a particular experience of world literature. Crucially for our purposes, the story shows Lu Xun's debt to the Russian writers whom he read and translated in the earlier stage of his career, *before* his turn to Marxism and Soviet literature in the late 1920s. Specifically, "Medicine" displays the influence of the Russian decadent modernist Leonid Andreev, whose story "Silence" ("Molchanie") Lu Xun translated in 1909.[61] "Silence" begins, like "Medicine," with two parents anxiously discussing their child's health in the dead of night. After their daughter commits suicide, the father, a priest, pays an emotionally charged visit to a desolate graveyard in a futile attempt to commune with his lost child's spirit. Lu Xun himself commented that the ending to "Medicine" "clearly retains the somber chill one associates with Andreev."[62] In other words, "Medicine" points towards the debts that Lu Xun, a writer canonized as a paradigm of Chinese social realism in both the USSR and the PRC, owed to modernist writers less admissible to the Socialist Realist canon. The story shows the early Lu Xun balanced ambivalently between realism and symbolism, a combination that he himself found exemplified in the work of Andreev.[63] This taut

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61 Lu Xun's translation of "Silence" (默 Mo) appeared in the volume *Collected Stories from Abroad* (*Yuwai xiaoshuo ji*), which Lu Xun published with his brother Zhou Zuoren in Tokyo in 1909. For parallels between the stories see, e.g., Patrick Hanan, *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 222–26.

62 Quoted in Gamsa, *The Chinese Translation of Russian Literature*, 236–37.

63 "Andreev's works contain sober realism as well as depth and subtlety, creating a mutual harmony between symbolic impressionism and realism. <...> Although his writing has a symbolic flavor, it never loses its reality." Lu Xun, "'Andan de yan'ai li' yizhe fuji," in *Lu Xun quanji* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2005), vol. 10, 201.

and realistically narrated story teems with enigmatic symbols: the mantou dripping with blood; the red and white flowers whose provenance and significance is unclear; the black crow that obeys the order to fly, but not to the grave. What's more, as Zhang Lihua convincingly demonstrates, the specific relation between "Medicine" and "Silence" reveals how divergent translation practices shaped literary production in early twentieth-century China. Besides Lu Xun's fairly literalist translation of Andreev, Zhang also traces the influence of another, far more liberal Chinese translation by Liu Bannong, which inserted into Andreev's graveyard some red and white flowers and a symbolic bird. These images recur as ambivalent symbols at the close of "Medicine," a story whose genesis cannot be separated from the translation practices that rendered Russian literature available for modern Chinese writers.[64]

Fedorenko's translation of "Medicine" (back) into Russian distinguishes itself above all by the number of times its choices serve to downplay the richly suggestive figurative language of Lu Xun's story, and especially its ghoulish, Andreevian overtones. For example, when Old Shuan sees a crowd of people arriving to observe the execution, Lu Xun's text describes the face of one man as having a greedy look in his eyes, "like a person who hasn't eaten for a long time at the sight of food" (hen xiang jiu'e de ren jianle shiwu yiban).[65] Fedorenko simply omits this whole image, thus losing its premonition of the cannibalistic act of consuming the bloody mantou.[66] When the execution occurs, in an extraordinary image, Lu Xun has the crowd craning their necks "like many ducks pinched and lifted upwards by an invisible hand" (fangfu xuduo ya, bei wuxing de shou nie zhule, xiang shang tizhe).[67] Fedorenko keeps the invisible hand but drops the ducks (slovno ch'ia-to nezrimaia ruka dergala ikh kverkhu).[68] The organic metaphors connected with the mantou, which Shuan intends to "transplant" (yizhi) to his home in order to "reap" (shouhuo) much happiness, also disappear in Fedorenko, thereby sacrificing the connection with the rootless wreath of flowers at the story's end.[69]

Other omissions cut details directly related to the story's core symbolism. For example, when Lu Xun's Little Shuan picks up the mantou and prepares to eat it, he looks at it for a moment, "as if he were holding his own life" (sihu

64 Zhang Lihua, " 'Cuoyi' yu chuangzao: Lu Xun 'Yao' zhong 'hongbai de hua' yu 'wuya' de yulai," *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* 1 (2016): 64–78.
65 Lu Xun, "Yao," *Lu Xun quanji*, vol. 1, 464. "很像久饿的人见了食物一般."
66 Lu Sin', "Lekarstvo," 80.
67 Lu Xun, "Yao," 465.
68 Lu Sin', "Lekarstvo," 80. "仿佛许多鸭，被无形的手捏住了的，向上提着。"
69 Lu Xun, "Yao," 465; Lu Sin', "Lekarstvo," 81.

nazhe ziji de xingming yiban).[70] Fedorenko's Little Shuan has no such moment of reflection on the loaded symbolism of the blood-dipped roll. While Little Shuan eats, the Chinese text has his mother and father standing over him, "their eyes as if trying to pour something into him and draw something out of him" (liang ren de yanguang, dou fangfu yao zai ta shenshang zhu jin shenme you yao quchu shenme side).[71] Fedorenko erases this image, which succinctly expresses the combination of boundless parental love and superstitious attitude towards illness that drives the parent characters. Most strikingly of all, Fedorenko omits the colors of the flowers that appear unexpectedly on the revolutionary's grave: a major omission since their red and white color, beyond any revolutionary associations they may invoke, also combine with the black crow on the branch to parallel the color scheme of the story's central symbol of the mantou (white flour, red blood, blackened when cooked in the oven). Taken together, Fedorenko's omissions and alterations systematically downplay the original story's ambivalence over the presence or absence of supernatural forces, an ambivalence it shares with Andreev's "Silence." Both stories stage the impossibility of communication with the dead alongside an intense desire for such communication, charting the loss of a transcendent world in a literary style still pregnant with its possibility. Such epistemological ambiguities proved too risky for a Soviet realist paradigm suspicious of double meanings. "Medicine" perches its narrative between a world in which social suffering has material, immanent, political explanations, and a world in which coincidences of color and event (the flowers and the bun; the prayer and the sudden departure of the crow) point towards forms of pattern and order that exceed the material. Fedorenko's edits erase this ambivalence, and the corresponding ambiguity of the story's message, leaving a more smoothly realist tale of poverty and political injustice.

Conclusion

One question perhaps remains: the question of readership. Did anyone actually read the Chinese texts in *International Literature*? A recent survey of letters to the editors of *International Literature* finds readers responding in the main to texts by Western authors. One letter writer from 1938, a Bolshevik party

70 Lu Xun, "Yao," 466. "似乎拿着自己的性命一般."
71 Ibid. "两人的眼光，都仿佛要在他身上注进什么又要取出什么似的."

member, reports reading "with interest" Xiao Jun's *Village in August*, a classic account of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria published in *International Literature* that year. This correspondent insists that "the war in China, and the national rebirth of the Chinese people, elicit great interest in its literature."[72] At the same time, the letter calls for more translations of the American author Pearl Buck, whose best-selling novel about China, *The Good Earth*, had been excerpted in 1934. *The Good Earth* was ambivalently framed in *International Literature*: an accompanying article by the editor, Tretyakov, praised Buck's realism for escaping the strictures of romantic exoticism, but critiqued her lack of historical specificity and identified the novel's hero, Wang Lung, as a kulak.[73] Nonetheless, Buck's next two novels, *Sons* and *The Mother*, and her 1942 novel *Dragon Seed* were all excerpted in *International Literature*, far exceeding in sheer page numbers any Chinese writer besides Xiao.[74] Reviews and articles about Buck penned by Soviet critics (including Tretyakov and Karl Radek) made the case for the value of her realist writing as a source of knowledge about China despite the limitations of her political perspective.[75] The high level of attention given to Buck's work on the pages of *International Literature* may indicate that many Soviet readers were still receiving their knowledge of China as filtered through Western eyes.

Despite this abiding West-centrism in *International Literature* and among its readers, this chapter contends that the translation of non-Western literatures can shed useful light on our developing understanding of the Soviet project of world literature. From the time of *Vsemirnaia literatura* on, Chinese literature played a central role in debates about how the literatures of the "East" (i.e. the non-West) should be translated in order to introduce them into the common

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72 Nailya Safiullina, "Window to the West: From the Collection of Readers' Letters to the Journal *Internatsional'naia literature*," *Slavonica* 15, no. 2 (2009): 159.

73 Pearl Buck, "Zemlia (Otryvki iz romana)," *Internatsional'naia literatura* 2 (1934): 34–57; Sergei Tret'iakov, "O 'Zemle' Perl' Bak," *Internatsional'naia literatura* 2 (1934): 99–102. Buck's novel was published in full the same year, with Tretyakov's article as foreword: Pearl Buck, *Zemlia*, trans. N. L. Daruzes (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1934). On Buck's reception in China see So, *Transpacific Community: America, China, and the Rise and Fall of a Cultural Network* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 41–82.

74 Pearl Buck, "Synov'ia (otryvki iz romana)" trans. N. L. Daruzes, *Internatsional'naia literatura* 5 (1935): 9–52; Pearl Buck, "Mat' (otryvki iz romana)" trans. N. L. Daruzes, *Internatsional'naia literatura* 9 (1935): 3–34; idem, "Dragonovo plemia," trans. N. Daruzes and T. Ozerskaia, *Internatsional'naia literatura* 1 (1943): 27–60.

75 Karl Radek, "Pro Kitai, Iaponiiu i sotsialisticheskii realizm," *Internatsional'naia literatura* 5 (1934): 166–69; Galina Kolesnikova, "Propoved' vozvrashcheniia," *Internatsional'naia literatura* 1 (1936): 120–127; A. Elistratova, "Perl' Bak. Mat'," *Internatsional'naia literatura* 9 (1936): 158–60.

store of world literature available to Soviet readers. By the time of the *Herald of World Literature* and its successors, Alekseev's precisely literal translations of classic poetry had given way to an emphasis on the translatability of modern Chinese literature, overcoming any potential sense of foreignness by producing smooth and legible texts in Russian. Yet the examples of Xiao San and Lu Xun also show that any easy binary of "foreign" and "domestic" had already become unstable. Just as Xiao San's poems betray the influence of Mayakovsky even before his translational collaboration with Romm, so Lu Xun's writing developed in dialogue with Andreev and other Russian modernists. Other Chinese writers published in *International Literature*, such as Mao Dun and Ding Ling, shaped their models of literary realism through close engagement with Russian and Soviet realism.[76] Modern Chinese literature, in other words, already emerged from a particular configuration of world literature, shaped by the cosmopolitan cultural flows that structured Chinese modernity in the early twentieth century. *International Literature's* attempts to position this literature within its own mapping of the literary globe proved both generative and restrictive. The journal revealed to its readers the existing links between Russian/Soviet literature and the Chinese leftist literary world, and even created the revolutionary poet Emi Siao at the point of their intersection. At the same time, it downplayed those aspects of the relationship that could not be aligned with a stylistically smooth and ideologically legible mode of social realism. What we see here, then, is the "translation" of one experience of world literature into the framework of another, a process in which meaning is both lost and created.

76 For a reading of the Russian influence in Mao Dun's fiction see Mau-sang Ng, *The Russian Hero in Modern Chinese Fiction* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1988), 130–79. Keru Cai notes Ding Ling's engagement with Dostoevsky in Cai, "Looking, Reading, and Intertextuality in Ding Ling's "Shafei nüshi de riji" 莎菲女士的日記 (Miss Sophia's Diary)," *Prism: Theory and Modern Chinese Literature* 17, no. 2 (2020): 298–325.