ESSAY

Cultural Brokerage: Japan as an Intermediary in the Journey of Russian Literature to China

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Russian literature had a prominent presence in twentieth-century China. Russia and China have been linked by geopolitical entanglements, which allowed mutually congenial literatures to spring from analogous social environments (Fokkema; Gamsa, *Chinese Translation* and *Reading*; Ng). Understood by Chinese audiences as a representative literature of the oppressed, Russian writing became a key source of inspiration for Chinese writers who were impressed by Russian authors' deep insight into social reality and human nature, as well as their humanitarian spirit and strong sense of social responsibility.[1] Beginning from these points of overlap, a more concrete connection was forged through Russian literature's global migrations, which brought it to China dressed in the traveler's garb of other languages. These intermediate translations were especially important in the first twenty years of the twentieth century, when China lacked Russian language specialists. An intermediary of a third language, often Japanese or English, and occasionally German or French, was necessary to introduce to Chinese readers the Russian literature that would play an important role in shaping China's self-perception.[2]

Recognizing Russian literature as a dynamic component of world literature—as one circulating in different ways through diverse cultures (Damrosch 5)—allows us to investigate how the mediation of a third culture complicates the traditional source/target, host/guest, and domestication/foreignization transcultural paradigms (Venuti; L. Liu).[3] This is a crucial question for the study of transculturation in twentieth-century East Asia, since it is generally acknowledged that Japan acted as an important "meeting ground" (Miner 270–71; Nitobe 12; Asada 48) "destined to be a bridge or mediator to bring

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together the two great civilizations [East and West]" (Asada 48). Despite Russia's ambiguous identity as a culture between East and West,[4] Russian literature relied on the conduit of Japan to enter East Asia.[5]

To gain a fuller picture of the transculturation process, it is vital to illuminate the role of Japan as a cultural broker in the Chinese adaptation and appropriation of Russian literature and culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Cultural brokers have been defined as individuals or agents that "act as bridges between cultures, facilitating cross-cultural interaction and conflict" (Martin and Nakayama 204).[6] Borrowing Paul Valéry's model of intellectual commerce as "spiritual economy," Pascale Casanova reminds us that literary economy is based on a market where the literary capital attached to certain languages is established based on criticism and translation (12–17). In such a system, the existence of a cultural broker like Japan, which intervenes in the exchange between different cultures, raises several questions: When is a cultural broker needed, and what conditions its selection when multiple options are available? How does a cultural broker affect the transaction, and does its existence increase, reduce, or otherwise alter the value ascribed to one culture by another in the exchange?

Japan's role as a cultural broker in the transcultural relationship between Russia and China involves the phenomenon of relay translation, a form of translation that occurs along "a chain of (at least) three texts, ending with a translation made from another translation" (Ringmar 141). Relay translation is often dismissed as a fatally flawed or adulterated form of translation, and this idea has led scholars to neglect its systematic study (Washbourne 608–09; Samoyault 243–45). But relay translation deserves attention, not only as a common practice throughout the history of translation across the world but also as an important cultural indicator that helps us better understand transcultural dynamics. In particular, this article investigates Japanese mediation, its role in conditioning Chinese reception of Russian works, and, specifically, the effect created by its evocation of the Chinese rhetorical and lyrical tradition. To this end, I investigate one illustrative case of relay translation: the Chinese translator Wu Tao's 1907 translation of Anton Chekhov's Чёрный монах ("Chernyi monakh"; "The Black Monk") from a Japanese translation by Usuda Zan'un. The literary critic A Ying (also known as Qian Xingcun) recognized Wu as one of the very few Chinese translators of his time who understood Russian literature (783). Wu was the first Chinese translator to introduce the works of Mikhail Lermontov, Maxim Gorky, and Chekhov to Chinese readers. Along with Chekhov's work, in 1907 Wu translated Gorky's Каин и Артём ("Cain and Artyom") from Futabatei Shimei's 猶太人の浮世 ("The Fleeting Life of the Jews") and Lermontov's Бела ("Bela"), the first part of Герой нашего времени (*A Hero of Our Time*), from Saganoya Omuro's 当代の露西亜人 ("A Contemporary Russian"). Wu was also the first to use vernacular language in translations of Russian literature. Yet Wu did not know Russian, and he therefore relied on Japanese translations as the sole sources for his interpretation of Russian literature.

A close examination of Wu's relay translation illuminates the central role of Japanese patronage as a source of both ideological guidance in Wu's selection and interpretation of Russian literature and financial support for his translations.[7] This case study also reveals the unique importance of Japan's cultural brokerage for China. Sino-Japanese intellectual contact and cross-fertilization throughout history have nurtured the development of both cultures and literatures.[8] This transcultural entanglement means that Japan's role as a cultural mediator goes beyond connecting Chinese audiences with Russian literature and culture: their shared cultural values draw China's own literary legacy into the relay translation process, sometimes in ways not fully visible to Chinese translators and readers. Japanese translations of Russian works invoked East Asian stylistic and semiotic traditions that the Chinese relay translators further explored. In particular, the Chinese language is abundant in sound-correlated (alliterative or rhyming) disyllabic and polysyllabic words that appear in groups to convey certain themes and scenarios in classical literature (Zheng Yuyu 38–39). By adopting the Chinese

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characters and compounds, the Japanese inherited such lyrical features, which were further enhanced in Chinese relay translations of Russian literature from Japanese texts. In the end, the importation of Russian literature through Japanese mediation became a process of self-reflection for Chinese readers.

Commenting on the invention of modern Chinese poetry, Stephen Owen has lamented that modern Chinese translation turned away from China's lyrical tradition, which he sees as "witty" and "highly nuanced" (29). Owen sees this turn as a manifestation of Western cultural hegemony. Yet, although Chinese translations making reference to European sources brought about enormous transformations in modern Chinese literature, often tending toward emulation of European literary styles, the influence of Japanese mediation in Chinese translations challenged the emerging Eurocentric hierarchy and the literary power differential of languages in the world of letters. It also suggested a unique path for East Asian cultural modernization beyond any straightforward trajectory of Westernization.

Japan as Cultural Broker

Japan's importance as a cultural broker between Russia and China results from a long-standing interest in Russian culture on the part of Japanese intellectuals. Both China and Japan had undergone a period of seclusion when the two governments halted almost all foreign contact, but the Japanese sought the benefits of European modernization and opened their gates earlier than China did. This difference in chronology is reflected in the reception of Russian literature.

In the 1880s, Russian writers including Aleksandr Pushkin, Leo Tolstoy, Ivan Turgenev, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Nikolai Gogol were introduced to Japanese readers. Although most early translators focused on short stories or novellas, Japanese translations of novels such as Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* also appeared. At the turn of the twentieth century, Japanese enthusiasm for translating Russian literature continued to grow; Futabatei and Sōma Gyofū in particular consistently produced high-quality translations. By the early twentieth century, Russian literature enjoyed as much acclaim in Japan as that of any other Western culture (Haishima; Fukuda et al.; Kawato and Sakakibara). In contrast to this Japanese enthusiasm, China saw very little translation of Russian literature before 1900.[9] Of the few Chinese translations that appeared in the 1900s and 1910s, most were indirect translations from other languages.

This context makes it unsurprising that Japanese translations became an important source for Chinese readers wishing to learn about Russia. At the turn of the twentieth century, the number of Chinese students in Japan was higher than the sum total of Chinese students sent to all other countries combined (Sanetō, *Chūgokujin*; Li Xisuo; Futami and Satō). Moreover, geographic proximity made Japan an ideal destination for Chinese intellectuals in exile, including leading cultural reformists such as Liang Qichao. These intellectuals were well known for their political commentary and activities in China; while in Japan, their influence remained strong as they reported back to Chinese audiences about their experiences and ideas. The joint efforts of Chinese students and revolutionaries in Japan fostered the Chinese absorption of foreign knowledge through the mediation of Japan.

Until the end of the Qing dynasty in 1912, Japanese translations remained the primary source for translators seeking to render Russian literature into Chinese. The works of many world-renowned Russian writers were introduced to China through Japan, including those of Pushkin, Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Gorky.[10] Chinese translators generally had limited knowledge of Russian literature and sought to produce translations quickly. The early Chinese translations were therefore mostly short stories. More significantly, the selection of texts was largely decided by the Chinese book market, which demanded adventures with an exotic flavor. It is not difficult to spot misconceptions and displacements. None of the early Chinese translators were Russian specialists, and their heavy reliance on intermediary sources greatly affected Russian literature's debut in China. For example, because the

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Japanese translator had decided to render only one section, "Bela," of Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*, Wu—who relied solely on the Japanese translation—also presented an incomplete version. Partly as a result of this decontextualization, Wu's portrayal of the originally Byronic hero Pechorin emphasizes his callousness and cynicism, while attenuating his sentimentality.

Just as longer Russian novels were initially ignored, Russian verse was largely neglected by Chinese translators. Although Pushkin and Lermontov were known in Russia first and foremost as poets, their fiction was translated into Chinese long before their poetry.[11] This absence can be attributed not only to the difficulty involved in the translation of poetry but also to a similar absence in Japan. Russian fiction was a major force behind the realism that was central to so many national literatures in the twentieth century; consequently, fiction outshone Russian romantic verse in its global circulation, including in East Asia. Meanwhile, Japanese and Chinese readers' belief in the transformative social function of fiction, especially political novels, also bolstered their preference for fiction over poetry.

In its role as cultural broker, Japan produced the image of Russia that the Chinese adopted. In addition to producing relay translations of Russian literature from Japanese, Chinese writers also translated original Japanese fiction about Russia. In 1904, for instance, Fu Kuofu translated Shinrin Kokuen's 露国の宮廷 (*Russian Royal Court*), renaming it 俄宮怨 (*The Resentment of the Russian Royal Court*). This Japanese story fictionalizes Nicholas II's visit to Japan in 1891 as the czarevitch of Russia, as well as his reign as an indecisive leader after his father's death. It was published in 1904 during the Russo-Japanese War and was immediately translated into Chinese. Similarly, Japanese writers helped form Chinese impressions of revolutionary elements in Russian society—particularly radical populist movements of the 1860s and 1870s, stories of which circulated widely in China through Japanese intermediaries (Tsu). The Chinese term 虛無黨 (*xuwudang*; "nihilist"), primarily used to describe Russian populists, was a direct loanword from Japanese (虚無党; *kyomutō*) with the same characters.

Finally, Japan's influence also inspired Chinese writers to conduct a process of modernizing language reform (Shin, *Kindai* and *Jindai*; Zheng Kuangmin; Fogel, *Between China*). When the Chinese began translating Russian literature from Japanese in the 1900s, the Japanese had already been practicing translation from Russian for over twenty years, during which time the Japanese writing style had undergone significant changes thanks to the *genbun itchi* ("language modernization") movement. This movement, which promoted writing derived from natural speech patterns, was initiated by writers like Futabatei, whose translations of Russian literature were used extensively by Chinese translators (Cockerill). While early Japanese translations retained more traditional *kanbun* ("Chinese writing") features, which were familiar to Chinese intellectuals, the later translations influenced by *genbun itchi* adopted Japanese vernacular elements from various social strata, creating a new challenge for Chinese translators. The change in Japanese literary styles was reflected in Chinese translations of Russian literature from Japanese as translators like Wu worked to incorporate vernacular Chinese in their renderings. The leading Chinese modernist writer Lu Xun's experiment with *yingyi* (hard translation), in which Lu Xun attempted to reimagine Chinese grammar based largely on modern Japanese, can also be attributed to his broad reading of Japanese translations of Russian literature (Tak-hung Chan; P. Wang).

Replacing Japanese with Western European Intermediaries

It is fair to say that Japan as a cultural broker determined the values ascribed to Russian literature in the Chinese literary world during the late Qing dynasty. However, Japan's sway faced challenges from Western European rivals in the 1910s. In the early days of the Republic of China, before the 1919 May Fourth Movement, indirect translations of Russian literature still appeared on the Chinese book market, but most were from English rather than Japanese translations. Apart from Bao Tianxiao, who translated Tolstoy's Много ли человеку земли

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нужно? ("How Much Land Does a Man Need?") in 1914 from Japanese—most likely for lack of other language skills—the pioneering translators who had relied on Japanese, such as Wu and Chen Jinghan (under the pen name Lengxue), had stopped translating Russian literature entirely by the 1910s. Those who remained active in translating Russian literature into the 1910s, including Zhou Shoujuan and Lin Shu, primarily used English sources.

In the 1920s, this trend became even more pronounced. Although some writers translated Russian literature from Japanese (Xia Yan), German (Lu Xun; Guo Moruo), French (Ye Junjian; Luo Shu), and Esperanto (Hu Yuzhi; Lu Yan), most new translations of Russian literature were based on English versions. The Russian Revolution in 1917 caused a significant upsurge in Chinese translation of Russian literature, which many Chinese readers saw as a model for revolutionary literature. Beginning in 1919, Russian specialists in China such as Geng Jizhi and Qu Qiubai began publishing translations directly from Russian, and from the early 1920s onward, Chinese writers rarely used Japanese versions as sources for translating Russian literature.

Among Chinese translators working in the early twentieth century, Lu Xun (the pen name of Zhou Shuren) and his brother Zhou Zuoren probably had the most distinctive taste. While other translators focused on Russian writers of the nineteenth century, the Zhou brothers dove into contemporary Russian literature, and the majority of their early translations were not based on Japanese sources. As Zhou Zuoren explains, although Japanese was originally more convenient, many of the Japanese translators took significant liberties that "日本化" ("Japanized") their versions ("Xue" 377).

The Zhou brothers' choices speak to the declining importance of Japanese mediation for Chinese translation of Russian literature in the early Republic. The Zhou brothers were in Japan in the 1900s and had easy access to Japanese translations, but their translations of Russian literature in the 1910s and the early 1920s were mainly based on English and German translations.[12] They represented a new generation of Chinese translators who spoke multiple languages and were no longer limited to Japanese sources for exploring Russian literature. Others emerged as well: in translations of Russian literature in 新青年 (*New Youth*), a leading magazine during the Chinese New Culture Movement, Chen Gu also switched from Japanese to English sources around this time (Ma). By comparing various sources, these translators inferred the relative unreliability of Japanese sources and consequently shifted to European ones.

Chinese scholars continued to follow the Japanese study of Russian literature into the 1910s, but it was no longer the major source for their reception of this literature.[13] When Zheng Zhenduo included a bibliography of reference books in his 俄國文學史略 ("Eguo wenxue shilüe"; "A Brief History of Russian Literature"), the twenty-nine books on Russian literary history and literary criticism included only two Japanese books: Nobori Shomu's 露国現代の思潮及文学 (*Ideological Trends and Literature in Modern Russia*), published in 1915, and 露國近代文藝思想史 (*Theory of Literature and Art in Modern Russia*), published in 1918. The majority were works of Western scholarship either written in or translated into English. When commenting on Nobori's books, Zheng mentions that Nobori's importance derived from the fact that his research complemented English-language studies (537). Such cases make evident that by the 1910s, English books had replaced Japanese books as the primary medium for Chinese readers to learn about Russian literature.

At the same time, credit is due to Japanese schools for guiding Chinese students to other foreign languages. Guo Moruo recollected learning foreign languages in Japan, remarking that Japanese high school students spent half their time on foreign languages; even medical students had to learn Latin as a third foreign language (in addition to German and English as their first and second foreign languages, respectively). Moreover, the high school foreign language instructors were largely humanities graduates from the Imperial University, who always selected literary masterpieces as study texts. A common pedagogical exercise was to have students read a paragraph of the original text and then translate it into Japanese (51).

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Regardless of the subjects Chinese students chose to study in Japan, anyone with a high school experience similar to Guo's would have acquired foreign language skills decent enough to pass the college entrance examinations. As a result, Chinese students in Japan learned not only Japanese but also other foreign languages, and they acquired at least a basic knowledge of foreign literatures through translation exercises. Students were also encouraged to use Western European sources as much as possible. To a certain extent, Japanese universities facilitated Chinese students' preference for Western European sources and even provided them with the tools to bypass Japan as an intermediary. Meanwhile, some of the Chinese students who did not manage to master their scientific subjects instead became translators and writers thanks to the education in foreign languages they received in Japan. Hence, it is not surprising that Western European languages replaced Japanese as the central mediators by which Chinese readers gained knowledge of Russian literature.

The vicissitudes of Japan's role as a cultural broker reveal how changing cultural prestige may affect the trajectory of texts across cultures in a competitive literary world. To better understand Japan's role in relay translation both as a site of institutional patronage and as a source of inspiration for linguistic and rhetorical transformation at the textual level, I offer a case study below that details the nuances and complications in this triangular process of transculturation.

Relaying "The Black Monk"

The history of Chinese translations of Chekhov's "The Black Monk" epitomizes the introduction of Russian literature into China in the first half of the twentieth century. After its first Chinese translation from Japanese by Wu in 1907, it was retranslated in 1930 by Zhao Jingshen from Constance Garnett's English translation and appeared in the eight-volume 柴霍甫短篇傑作集 (*A Collection of Chekhov's Short Story Masterpieces*). The story was subsequently translated directly from Russian in 1952 by Mei Xi (Shi Qinan).[14]

To a certain extent, the three translations can be regarded as responses to the literary trends of their respective eras, each of which called for fresh presentations of Russian literature. In 1907, when the first translation of "The Black Monk" appeared, it reflected growing Chinese curiosity about Russia after the 1904–05 Russo-Japanese War. In the 1930s, the publication of *A Collection of Chekhov's Short Story Masterpieces* demonstrated Chinese translators' growing preference for English sources. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Mei Xi's direct translation of "The Black Monk" was printed facing the Russian original as part of a Sino-Russian bilingual book series intended to meet the growing demand of Russian language learners in China (Mei 2). As Russian became the leading foreign language for Chinese students in the 1950s, the collective effort of China's language experts to offer readers authentic renditions of Russian literature resulted in a flourishing of such publications.[15] Since my goal is to illuminate the intermediary role of Japan in early Russo-Chinese transculturation, I focus on the first Chinese translation of "The Black Monk" and draw on the two later translations largely for context and comparison.

Wu's translation of "The Black Monk" in 1907 was unquestionably one of the most notable early translations of Russian literature into Chinese. A Ying characterizes Chekhov's appearance on the Chinese book market as resembling a black monk slowly traveling eastward, showing up at the beachhead of the Huangpu River and waiting for his days of glory (790). In Chekhov's story, the black monk is a legendary figure about whom the protagonist, Andrei Kovrin, hallucinates. However, Chinese readers like A Ying identified the debut of Chekhov in China with the black monk's visitation—dark, captivating, and full of mystery. Thanks to Wu's translation, Chekhov was first introduced into China at roughly the same time as Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy, and Gorky, and the passion for his work among Chinese readers has persisted. Following Wu, many other translators, including Bao Tianxiao, Chen Jinghan, and Zhou Zuoren, also began introducing Chekhov's works into China. Of

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all the Russian authors whose works were translated and published in China from 1903 to 1987, Chekhov ranked as the second most widely translated author, surpassed only by Tolstoy (Liu Yan 7).

After its publication in 1907, Wu's "The Black Monk" was reprinted several times in the 1900s and 1910s, attesting to its popularity.[16] The combination of the realistic and the fantastic in Chekhov's short story seized the attention of Chinese readers.[17] When it was first introduced to China, it was advertised as an instance of 神怪小說 (*shenguai xiaoshuo*; "gods-and-monsters fiction"; Tarumoto, *Shinmatsu* 1756–57), connecting Chekhov's work with a traditional Chinese literary genre of fantasy fiction. This association faded as the modern Chinese world of letters became more firmly Westernized; when "The Black Monk" was retranslated in 1930, no such similarity to traditional genres was mentioned.

Despite the story's significance and popularity, it is worth noting that the production of this translation was partly the result of historical serendipity. Wu produced his rendering based on Usuda Zan'un's 1904 translation 黑衣僧 ("Kokui sō"). Neither of these translators were Russian experts, nor did they make a living as professional translators. Wu was a prominent figure in the early stages of Russo-Chinese transcultural interaction. However, he was known among his contemporaries mostly as a calligrapher and artist (Sawamoto). Moreover, although he is primarily remembered as one of the earliest translators of Russian literature, he translated only three Russian short stories. The twenty-four translations he completed from 1903 to 1913 covered literature from seven countries: Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, Russia, Poland, and France (Cui 92–94). The genres ranged from social and historical novels to adventure fiction and love stories. Wu relied on Japanese translations from the journal 太陽 (*Taiyō*; *Sun*) as his main source for foreign literature, and he chose Russian literature for translation during a period when the Russo-Japanese War had sparked Japanese readers' curiosity about their enemy, prompting Japanese journals such as *Taiyō* to introduce Russian literature to Japan. Decisions made by the Japanese editors of *Taiyō*, then, more or less determined Wu's selection of foreign literature to translate. With little access to foreign literature and limited language skills, Wu translated "The Black Monk" largely because of its immediate availability.

Wu's source for his translation of "The Black Monk" was also somewhat haphazard in its origin. When he translated the other two Russian stories, Wu used Japanese versions created by the prominent Russian experts Futabatei and Saganoya. By contrast, the Japanese translator of "The Black Monk"—Usuda—was a writer and journalist whose major translations were of English books such as *The Japanese Invasion* by Jesse Frederick Steiner and *The Psychology of Relaxation* by George T. W. Patrick, which had nothing to do with Russia or literature. In fact, compared with other contemporary translators such as Senuma Kayō—who was a Russian expert and made her fame translating Chekhov's works—Usuda was an amateur when it came to Russian literature. As a graduate of Waseda University, Usuda was probably influenced by the enthusiasm for Chekhov that turned Waseda's English department into the main force behind the early introduction of Chekhov to Japan (Fukuda et al. 106). Usuda's translation of "The Black Monk" was itself possibly a relay translation based on R. E. C. Long's 1903 English translation,[18] and it was far from perfect: certain mistakes of English comprehension such as confusing "snipe" for "snake" (Long 4; Usuda [no. 13] 115) or "glass" for "grass" (2; 116) reveal Usuda's inexperience.

Overall, this haphazard quality was common in early East Asian translations of Russian literature. Many of the Chinese translators who were later recognized as trailblazers in fact stumbled across Russian literature by accident. Some, like Lu Xun, became fascinated by Russian culture and continued translating Russian literature throughout their lives; others, like Wu, moved on after briefly dabbling in the field. The situation was similar in Japan, where experts and amateurs both contributed to the introduction of Russian literature.

Apart from the Russo-Japanese War, the wealth of opportunities for engaging with Russian literature

in East Asia can be attributed to the early twentieth century's booming publishing industry, which nurtured a new generation of East Asian readers who demanded energetic reflections on recent developments in world literature. Indeed, a key factor that made Wu's translation possible was the collaboration between the Japanese and Chinese publishing industries. Wu was invited by Cai Yuanpei, the founder of Aiguo Xueshe (the Patriotic School), where Wu served as a history and geography instructor,[19] to participate in editing and translation work at Shangwu Yinshuguan (the Commercial Press) in 1903 (Wen 212; Cui 95). Most of Wu's translations in later years, including "The Black Monk," were published by this press.

From 1903 to 1913, the period when Wu was most active as a translator, the Commercial Press operated as a joint venture with the Japanese publishing house Kinkōdō (Tarumoto, *Shoki* and "Shōmu"). Japanese involvement with the Commercial Press was not only financial; Japanese advisers also participated in its editorial and printing decisions (Hong). Moreover, 東方雜誌 (*Dongfang zazhi*; *The Eastern Miscellany*)—the flagship journal of the Commercial Press and the journal where Wu would publish his translation of Gorky's "Cain and Artyom"—was established in 1904 modeled on *Taiyō*. Hence, Japan's intermediary role clearly extended beyond providing the source for his translation. Japan served as an active patron, preparing Wu as a translator and inspiring Wu with a passion for Russian literature. The first issue of *Dongfang zazhi* declares its aim of enlightening the Chinese people and connecting the East Asian nations ("Xinchu *Dongfang zazhi*" 1). In these ways, Wu's translation work epitomizes Sino-Japanese friendship.

Despite the contingency of the manner in which "The Black Monk" made its debut in China, we should acknowledge the particular merit of Chekhov's story. After all, Wu chose "The Black Monk" from among the many Russian stories in *Taiyō* as the source text for the first Chinese translation of Chekhov. It was a pivotal decision, which shaped Chinese readers' initial impressions of Chekhov, presenting him as a short story writer of a talent similar to Guy de Maupassant's: observant, concise, and psychologically astute.

Usuda's postscript to his Japanese version, which Wu also translated, contributed to this first impression. "The Black Monk" ends with a gripping scene in which Kovrin dies of tuberculosis—the disease that also killed Chekhov—on his way to a health resort after having received a letter from his wife, Tania Pesotskaia, cursing him and blaming him for her father's death. Following this unsettling conclusion, Usuda adds a postscript explaining that Chekhov—like Kovrin—had recognized the incurability of human beings' shortcomings and had observed Russian society with extreme detachment. He mentions that Chekhov himself died at a sanatorium in Germany in mid-July of 1904, at the age of forty-four (132).[20]

By drawing out similarities between Chekhov's and Kovrin's worldviews and emphasizing the striking parallel in their deaths, the postscript hints at autobiographical features in "The Black Monk," something that Chekhov himself strove to deny. In personal letters to his friends Chekhov insists that he was not suffering from insanity or hallucinations like Kovrin and saw the black monk only in a dream, which inspired him to write the story (Gitovich et al. 490–91). At the same time, Chekhov's denials suggest that his friends had speculated about potential connections. By adding the postscript, Usuda and Wu allowed similar speculations to circulate among readers in East Asia. In this way, the Asian translators shaped their readers' vision of the author-protagonist dynamic: Chekhov's seemingly objective observations are given a tinge of something more personal, and his authorial role as a kind of doctor offering a psychological and social diagnosis shifts toward that of a patient reporting symptoms.

Usuda's translation also influenced how Wu construed the story's characters, sometimes in unexpected ways. To give an example, Wu's translation repeatedly characterizes Kovrin's wife as 處女 ("a virgin"). By calling Tania 清潔無瑕的處女 ("a flawless virgin"), Wu makes this quality a virtue and a source of attraction for Kovrin (8).[21] While this attribute does not appear in the Russian original or in Long's English translation, Usuda's Japanese version emphasizes Tania's innocence by calling her 浮世に染まぬ處女 ("a little girl untainted by

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the present world"; 117). Perhaps this phrase prompted Wu to refer to Tania as a "virgin." The word Usuda uses—*otome*—is used in Japanese to refer to girls between fifteen and nineteen years old, without necessarily involving any sexual implications. But because *otome* shares the same Chinese characters as *chunü* ("virgin"), Wu may have misunderstood the term.

This linguistic nuance alters the story in a significant way. In the original story, Kovrin enters into marriage with Tania passively. He is persuaded that Tania is a good match and that he is in love with her. Usuda's Japanese translation emphasizes Tania's ignorance of worldly affairs, which is in keeping with Chekhov's original text. However, Wu's accentuation of her chastity adds an element that is absent in the original story. This addition transforms the story's gender dynamics, strengthening the element of desire focused through the male gaze. In this way, Japan and China's shared linguistic history—along with subtle divergences—leads to a revised reading of the relationship between Kovrin and Tania that alludes to Chinese tradition under the disguise of Russian culture.

In addition to shaping Chinese readers' interpretation of the story and Chekhov's relationship to it, the Japanese translation also inspired Wu to carry out his own linguistic experimentation. Unlike his peers—such as Lin Shu—who often sinicized or domesticated foreign literature to cater to Chinese readers whose tastes had been nurtured by traditional Chinese fiction (Hill), Wu was among the first writers to draw on Japanese translations composed in the modernized style (*wabun*) and translate them into vernacular Chinese (*baihua*). Moreover, instead of resorting to paraphrase for ease of reading where a construction in the source text did not lend itself to a direct translation, Wu strove to reproduce the Japanese translation at the sentence level, introducing syntactic elements that would strike a Chinese reader as foreign.

Wu did not have the level of proficiency in Japanese that later translators such as Lu Xun had, and he clearly struggled to manage two literary languages both undergoing processes of reform and modernization. Wu had to first comprehend Usuda's translation in modernized Japanese and then translate it into vernacular Chinese, at a time when neither of these two styles had been established. As Wu's contemporary Bao puts it, translators of their generation tended to prefer Japanese translations in the traditional *kanbun* style, because *kanbun* was closer to the Chinese classical style and therefore more comprehensible to them than the modernized *wabun* (173–74). Yet Wu's three translations of Russian literature were all based on modernized Japanese—this was an unorthodox decision for his time.

Whereas Japanese scholars today generally praise Wu's faithfulness (Tarumoto, "Go Tō no kan'yaku Chēhofu" and "Go Tō no kan'yaku Gōrikī"), Chinese and Russian scholars question the overall reliability and quality of his translation (Guo Yanli 213; Chen Pingyuan 49; Chen Jianhua 47; Serebriakov 6). Mistranslations scattered throughout Wu's translation of "The Black Monk" expose his imperfect understanding of his sources: Wu mistakes Usuda's transliteration of "magister" (マデスター; *madjisutā*) for a location name (Usuda 115; Wu 1), and he reads 天然 (*ten'nen*; "nature") as the subject of mockery where it is in fact its object (116; 4), to name just a couple of instances. Despite these obvious mistranslations, though, in a book market filled with foreign literature translated into the classical Chinese (*guwen*) style, his translation into vernacular Chinese arrived in 1907 as a breath of fresh air.

In certain ways the historical connection between Japanese and Chinese literary traditions infuses Wu's translation of "The Black Monk" with a vitality that does not exist in the two later Chinese translations of the story, from Long's English translation and the Russian original. This vibrancy arises partly from the rich kanji compounds used in written Japanese. When Chinese translators of the period worked with Western European or Russian materials, many relied heavily on dictionaries to establish correspondences between the two languages' vocabularies. By contrast, when translating from Japanese, Chinese translators did not always need to search for a corresponding Chinese term, because Chinese characters are widely used in

Japanese writing. To a certain extent, the task of the Japanese-Chinese translator was then elaboration and expansion: the translator could simply keep the Chinese characters and replace the Japanese syllabary characters (kana) based on literary intuition.

This approach is especially relevant when it comes to the translation of landscape descriptions. Chinese translators of Wu's generation were familiar with classical Chinese literature, which used landscapes as metaphors that alluded to delicate sentiments. The Japanese translations of landscape imagery, especially those incorporating kanji compounds, readily spurred Chinese translators' poetic imagination. In "The Black Monk," for example, 嶮しい斷壁 ("precipitous cliff") in Japanese is rendered by Wu as 嶔巉的斷壁 ("steeply peaked cliff"), while a Japanese phrase that can be read as "a lonely and sparkling stream converged and ran down" (一條の淋しい流れがきらきらと溶り走り) is translated as 一條清澈見底的溪水潺潺溶溶的瀉出 ("a stream so clean that you could see its bottom rushed out as if it were gurgling and melting"; 115; 3). Wu evidently saw an opportunity for elaborating on the imagery in a way that would be familiar to readers accustomed to reading traditional Chinese literature.

As a point of contrast, Zhao Jingshen, in his Chinese translation of Garnett's English translation, renders these passages more curtly and plainly: 峻峭的土邱 ("a charming earth mound") and 水在下面發光 ("the water was glowing beneath"; 2). Even Zhao's source text describes these features in greater detail: "a steep, precipitous clay bank" and "the water shone below with an unfriendly gleam" (Garnett 104). These phrases in Mei Xi's translation, 險峻壁陡的黏土河岸 ("precipitous and steep clay bank") and 河水冷清清地在發亮 ("the river glistened coldly"; 5) are the closest to the original Russian: обрывистым, крутым глинистым берегом ("steep, precipitous clay bank") and нелюдимо блестела вода ("the water glistened indifferently"; Chekhov 226). However, in attempting to adhere to Chekhov's succinct style, Mei Xi's translation lacks the lushness of Wu's, which maintains strong ties with a Chinese lyrical tradition that prizes ornate expression.

Wu thus stands out as an unconventional modernizer mediating between the traditional and the modern. The terms that Wu employs in working from the Japanese translation—such as 嶔巉 (*qinyan*; "steep peak") and 潺潺溶溶 (*chanchanrongrong*; "gurgling and melting")—are recognizable elements of the classical Chinese tradition. *Qinyan* is a disyllabic compound composed of two Chinese characters with the same radical signifying "mountain." It is used as a modifier for the word 斷壁 (*duanbi*; "cliff"), which shares the same character in the two languages (*danpeki* in Japanese). *Qinyan* appears in classical descriptions of peaks, such as the thirteenth-century poet Wang Bai's line: 山路倍嶔巉 ("Shanlu bei qinyan"; "The mountain roads constantly rise in steep peaks"). The two characters that compose the compound *qinyan* are rarely used in modern Chinese, but they appear in canonical Chinese texts such as 詩經 (*The Book of Songs* [eleventh to seventh centuries BCE]). *Chanchanrongrong* is even more common in classical Chinese literature; this onomatopoeic word is used to depict the sound and movement of water in works such as Shi Nai'an's 水滸傳 (*Shui hu zhuan*; *Water Margin* [1524?]; 629). Wu's usage is an expansion of the character 溶 (*une* in Japanese; *rong* in Chinese) from Usuda's Japanese rendering. In general, these terms are loaded with associations from traditional Chinese lyric landscape descriptions spanning thousands of years.

Such phono-semantic compounds, some of which are onomatopoeic, are an important feature in traditional Chinese rhetoric (Zheng Yuyu 127–41). These compounds initially appeared together to construct certain ideas. Later, as they became a recognizable part of Chinese literature, co-occurrence became less necessary, because even an isolated term—despite its possible ambiguity when presented alone—could prompt a Chinese reader to re-create the intended scene, complete with complex sensations. When Chinese translators encountered Japanese texts that incorporated Chinese words from this rhetorical tradition, the shared characters in Chinese and Japanese served as a bridge to facilitate their passage into the modern era. There is no European equivalent for these terms, with their

specific evocations within the Chinese lyrical tradition. As Chinese language reform developed over the course of the early twentieth century, translators gradually stopped using such traditional phrases as equivalents to Western terms; they disappeared from modern Chinese writing almost entirely around mid-century.

The later English and Russian sources and the earlier Japanese source invited competing approaches to translation and modern literature in China. On the one hand, Chinese translators could easily achieve a quite literal translation when translating from English or Russian with the help of a dictionary. On the other hand, Japanese cultural brokerage aroused Chinese translators' memory of the Chinese lyrical tradition, offering possibilities for language reform that did not necessarily demand a complete split from the Chinese rhetorical tradition. In the end, Chinese translators seeking a modernized style forsook the latter path; the Chinese language modernization movement ultimately reflected the Europeanized style.

This trajectory may be understood as an active choice. As Chinese writers rebelled against their cultural past and sought to move toward Western European or Russian models, Chinese translators increasingly rejected Japanese renderings, which were closely connected with traditional Chinese rhetoric, as source texts. This shift in preferences pushed China further away from its lyrical tradition. The resulting translations—represented by the two later Chinese translations of "The Black Monk," from English and Russian, with their succinct style—in turn influenced an iconoclastic generation of Chinese authors who participated energetically in the development of modern Chinese literature.

Through it all, Russia remained politically and culturally unique to Chinese observers. While Western European and Russian texts may have had a similar linguistic impact on Chinese translation practices, these regions were far from interchangeable to Chinese readers; Russia continued to exert a singularly important influence. The Chinese modernization movement commonly referenced the East-West divide. Within this divide, Russia held an unusual position, not only because of its ambiguous cultural identity but also because it faced political and social challenges analogous to China's. At the turn of the twentieth century, as the Qing dynasty came to an end, many Chinese came to regard Russia's political situation as akin to China's. This sentiment became crucial to the development of modern Chinese identity. As Chen Duxiu, a founder of the Chinese Communist Party, wrote in his 1904 novel, Russia was also governed by a dictatorial regime whose monarch and aristocrats arrogated all powers to themselves and bullied their people (San'ai 23). Taking Russian literature as a representative literature of the oppressed, Chinese readers were eager to learn from its techniques in the hope of addressing similar issues in China.

In the same vein, when Chekhov was first introduced to East Asia, his philosophy of nonaction was quickly embraced as reminiscent of the Taoist tradition (Fukuda et al. 91–92). The seemingly familiar features embedded in Chekhov's work—including this philosophical orientation as well as its categorization as *shenguai xiaoshuo* ("gods-and-monsters fiction")—resonated with Chinese readers, who therefore found it easier to learn from his vision of Russian society and the human soul. Chinese readers also admired his profound love for ordinary people, a theme that greatly interested modern Chinese writers (Liu Yan 2–7). While the twentieth-century Chinese view of the West tended to posit a struggle of hegemonic Western systems against Eastern tradition, Russian literature and culture offered a third way that prompted self-reflection in Chinese readers.

This self-reflective experience was fortified by Japanese cultural brokerage in the early twentieth century. Amid the geopolitical conflicts that led to the Russo-Japanese War, Japanese curiosity about their opponent helped spark an initial collective Chinese interest in Russia. As the first major—and sometimes only—cultural mediator in this transcultural process, Japan provided a contact space that gave China the opportunity not only to negotiate with Russian culture but also to confront its own past, as aspects of Chinese tradition completed a

circular journey back to China via Japan in unexpected and fresh forms. By evoking semiotic and rhetorical paradigms embedded in traditional East Asian culture, Japanese cultural brokers offered Chinese readers a distinctive path of cultural transmutations. As they looked through the cultural prism of Japan, the Chinese held conversations with Russian culture as a distinct self, just as Kovrin converses with the black monk to gain a better understanding of himself. The conversations might at times be misleading or disorienting, but they pointed the way by which the Chinese established their collective modern subjectivity.

Notes

1. At the beginning of the twentieth century, one category of world literature attracted Chinese readers' special attention: that of humiliated and oppressed nations. This category included Russian, Polish, and Czech literatures, as well as literatures of other Eastern European nations (Song; Gamsa, *Chinese Translation* 179–80).

2. While critics have addressed Russo-Chinese interactions from many different angles and some have acknowledged the existence of intermediaries (Chen et al.; Ge; Lin; Shneider; Wang Jianzhao; Wang Jiezhi, *Huiwang* and *Xuanze*; Zhi; Chen Jianhua), few studies have considered the distinct roles played by different cultural intermediaries at various historical moments or the effects that shifting preferences for one or another of these intermediaries have had on the Russian literary legacy in China. In addition to the relative neglect of triangular transcultural exchanges, research on Sino-Japanese transculturation is generally centered on the intra–East Asian literary contact space, treating the West as a monolithic entity (Dong; Gen; Higashiyama; Jin, *Zhongguo xiandai zuojia* and *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue*; Keaveney; Pollack; Sanetō, *Kindai*; Tan; Thornber; Wang Xiangyuan).

3. This article adopts Thornber's definition of *transculturation* as the "many different processes of assimilation, adaptation, rejection, parody, resistance, loss, and ultimately transformation" that cultural material can undergo (1).

4. Russian intellectuals have long sought to understand their own national character in relation to their peculiar geographic position and historical development, and this questioning has led to debates between Slavophiles and Westernizers in nineteenth-century Russia (see Bassin et al.; Kingston-Mann; Riasanovsky; Walicki). In East Asia, the issue of Russian cultural identity remained perplexing into the twentieth century as well. Whereas some people considered Russia part of the West, others differentiated it from those Western European countries that represent the traditional core of Western culture.

5. Cho examines Japan's mediation in the triangular literary and cultural relations among Russia, Japan, and colonial Korea. I argue that Japan performed a similar role in the literary and cultural triangle formed by Russia, Japan, and China.

6. The concept of cultural brokering originated in anthropological studies of the 1920s. In the 1950s and 1960s, cultural anthropologists such as Redfield, Wolf, and Geertz contributed to discussions that generated the idea of cultural brokers between a local community and greater national institutions or between social strata. From this concept of a cultural broker as mediating between different groups within a society, Paine branched out in 1971 to address the issue of cross-cultural communication.

7. Lefevere proposes the idea of "patronage" as a positive force in translation. He understands the role of patronage (by persons or institutions, such as religious bodies, political parties, social classes, royal courts, publishers, or the media) in terms of a Foucauldian "power" that "traverses and produces things, . . . induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (12).

8. It is widely acknowledged that the profound historical connections between Japan and China have left a strong imprint on both cultures (Keaveney; Sanetō, *Kindai*; Pollack; Thornber; Fogel, *Cultural Dimension* and *Between China*; Steininger; Denecke; William).

9. The appearance of Russian literature in China can be dated back to the late Qing period, when 中西聞見錄 (*The Peking Magazine*) published an anonymous Russian fable edited by the American Presbyterian missionary William Alexander Parsons Martin (also known as Ding Weiliang) in 1872. The story has the same plot as Tolstoy's Два товарища ("The Two Friends"), and its motifs echo those in Aesop's and La Fontaine's fables. The landscape described at the beginning of the story, though, gives readers a strong taste of Russia, making it distinctive among fables with the same theme. It was most likely translated from an English anthology of Russian fables (Chen Jianhua 9–18). The fable was the first genre of Russian literature introduced to China; the only other works of Russian literature translated into Chinese before the twentieth century were three fables by Ivan Krylov, published in 萬國公報 (*The Globe Magazine*) between 1899 and 1900 (18–19).

10. In 1903, Zhe Yihui translated Pushkin's Капитанская дочка (*The Captain's Daughter*) into Chinese from Takasu Jisuke's translation. Tolstoy's Рубка леса ("The Wood Felling") was translated in 1905, under the title 枕戈記 ("Lying on a Gun"), from Futabatei's translation, つゝを枕. There have been various other relay translations. Bao Tianxiao translated Chekhov's Альбом ("The Album") in 1909 from Senuma Kayō's translation, 写真帖. In 1910, Bao translated Chekhov's Палата № 6 ("Ward Number Six") from Senuma's translation, 六号室. In 1909 and 1910, Chen Jinghan translated Chekhov's Лишние люди ("Not Wanted"), under the title 生計 ("Livelihood"), from Senuma's translation 余計者 ("Unwanted People"); Chen Jinghan also translated Andreev's Мысль ("The Thought") in 1910 from Ueda Bin's translation, 心 ("Heart"). This list draws on the research of several scholars (Li Yanli 211–13; Zhang 143–57; Tarumoto, *Shinmatsu*). It is believed that in 1908, Tiantui translated Gorky's Песня о соколе ("Song of a Falcon") from

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Ueda's translation, 鷹の歌. However, Tiantui's translation lacks qualities typical of works translated from Japanese. It is more likely that Tiantui used Western-language—probably English—sources.

11. The earliest translation of Russian poetry in China can be dated to 1924, when Lu Shiyu published Lermontov's Казачья колыбельная песня ("Cossack Lullaby") in 晨報副刊 (*Supplement to the Morning News*). The first translation of Pushkin's poetry appeared only a year later—in 1925, the same translator published his translation of Pushkin's Брожу ли я вдоль улиц шумных ("When I wandered along bustling streets"), also in *Supplement to the Morning News* (Ping).

12. Lu Xun's translations in 域外小說集 (*A Collection of Foreign Short Stories*) have been shown to be based on German translations (Chen Hong). Zhou Zuoren claimed that his first translation from Japanese was in 1918 and that he had previously translated everything from English ("'Tanhua'" 405).

13. Chinese translations of Japanese criticism on Russian literature, especially that of Nobori Shomu, were published in Chinese journals and newspapers. For example, Zhuwei published Nobori's article 俄羅斯文學之社會意義 ("The Social Implications of Russian Literature") in 大中華 (*Greater China*) in 1916, and Weisheng translated Nobori's article 俄國文學上之代表的女性 ("The Representative Women of Russian Literature") in 婦女雜誌 (*The Ladies' Journal*) in 1922.

14. Several new translations of "The Black Monk" appeared starting in the 1980s, confirming the story's enduring popularity (T. Shi 27).

15. According to the recollections of one expert on Russia in China, Ge, in the 1950s the Chinese government emphasized the importance of translating foreign literature, especially Russian and Soviet literature. Apart from organizing national translation conferences and workshops on specific topics, China also established research institutions and corresponding academic journals on Russian and Soviet literature. The booming interest in this literature demanded that it be made accessible to the general readership. The works of many Russian writers, including Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, were retranslated and published in different formats, including collections of complete works and anthologies (26–27).

16. Wu's translation of "The Black Monk" was first published in June 1907, and a second edition came out in December of the same year. It went through at least two other editions in 1913 and 1914 (Li and Huang 100). This is a fairly significant record for a foreign translation. Even the later translations of Chekhov's stories by more renowned translators such as Zhou Zuoren and Bao could not compete with this success.

17. "The Black Monk" is one of Chekhov's most baffling stories. Conrad calls it Chekhov's "most romantic tale" (84), while Debreczeny associates it with the symbolist movement; other scholars, including Komaromi and Whitehead, underscore its gothic and fantastic elements.

18. Tarumoto's research suggests that Usuda used Long's *"The Black Monk" and Other Stories* as a reference ("Go Tō no kan'yaku Chēhofu" 40–41). According to Yanagi, Usuda's translation appeared during the first stage of Japanese translation of Chekhov, when Japanese translators used both Russian and English sources. The second stage (1916–22) began with the introduction of Garnett's English translation of Chekhov's complete works into Japan. Finally, the third stage is marked by the Japanese translation of Chekhov's complete works directly from Russian by Nakamura Hakuyō in 1933–36 (Yanagi 107). Although the earliest Japanese translations of Chekhov predate the first Chinese translations, the Japanese and Chinese translators' choices of source texts are interestingly congruent through each stage.

19. Little is known about Wu's political views, but one can draw inferences from his participation in the Patriotic School, which sought to inculcate anti-Manchu sentiment and democratic ideas in preparation for social revolution.

20. Usuda's characterization of Chekhov coincided with the views of contemporaneous Japanese critics, which tended to highlight Chekhov's pessimism. These Japanese readings generally deviated from English-language criticism (Fukuda et al. 93–94).

21. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

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Abstract: This article analyzes how Chinese writers in the early twentieth century translated and appropriated Russian literature through the intermediary of Japanese scholarly and creative writing. It traces how Japan began as the primary—and in some cases only—cultural broker in the Chinese reception of Russian literature during the late Qing dynasty and how its impact diminished as Western European sources became viable competitors. To illuminate Japan's unique mediating role in shaping Chinese understanding of both Russian literature and China's own literary and linguistic legacy, this article examines Wu Tao's 1907 relay translation of Chekhov's "The Black Monk" from Japanese. By probing the Sino-Japanese cultural connections that gave birth to this translation and comparing it with two later Chinese renderings from English and Russian versions, this article reflects on the factors that determine how intermediaries function in transcultural negotiations.

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