Title
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Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/88c8n3gh

Journal
Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review, 1(28)

Author
Tyerman, Edward

Publication Date
2018-09-01

Afterword: Mapping Socialism Across Eurasia

Edward Tyerman, University of California, Berkeley

The title of this special issue of *Cross-Currents*, "Writing Revolution Across Northeast Asia," announces a compelling confluence of text and map. The articles presented here share a common concern with tracing the textual circulation of leftist culture in the early twentieth century across a circuit that linked Russia and the Soviet Union to Japan, Korea, and China. At the root of these investigations lies the question of what happens when transnational and internationalist ideologies (such as Marxism and anarchism) move from the political into the cultural sphere. Can we speak of "cultural internationalism," and how should we speak about it? How do ideas claiming a certain universality travel across different cultural regions with different historical legacies?[1] How can we describe socialist culture of the early twentieth century in its transnational complexity and internationalist ambition while remaining true to the concrete dynamics of its embodiment in situated texts, discourses, and practices?

This attempt to trace socialist culture as a transnational and transregional phenomenon perhaps inevitably encounters the question of how to think about space. The articles in this special issue share a common concern with exploring and interrogating a series of spatial models operative in the fields of social and cultural theory: bounded nation-state, region, center-periphery, and network. These models appear here not only as descriptions of political power and social formations but also as forms that shape the circulation, translation, and transculturation of texts. Center-periphery dynamics describe hierarchies of global, imperial, and transregional relations, counterbalanced in various ways by the logics of networks, regions, and nations. On the evidence of these articles, tracing the histories of socialist culture across Northeast Asia would seem to require a "multi-scalar" approach that can hold these spatial models in dynamic interaction.[2] In this afterword, I will attempt to draw out the spatial concerns that unite these articles and assess their implications. This interrogation of spatial models no doubt suits a special issue that itself works to disrupt boundaries, both disciplinary and regional. Merging world literature and close reading with intellectual

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[1] I borrow the term "historical legacy" from Maria Todorova (2005).
[2] On multi-scalar and cross-scalar analysis of transnational culture, see Ram (2016).

and social history, this collection of articles brings together two regions—Russia/Eurasia and East Asia—traditionally held apart by the spatial divisions of area studies. In so doing, it offers productive insights into how these two spaces and their interactions might de-center hegemonic models of global space, global history, and world literature in the early twentieth century.

Heekyoung Cho's article makes a case for studying the relationship between Russian and East Asian literatures as a way of de-centering Europe from the core of two canonical models of world literature, those of Franco Moretti (2000) and Pascale Casanova (2004). Cho contests the center-periphery dynamics in these models, which understand world literature as always emitting from or mediated through a European center. Cho argues that both Moretti and Casanova fail to consider modes of relationality and exchange that do not travel from center to periphery. Networks of literary exchange between Russia and East Asia, Cho suggests, offer an instance of exchange between "semi-peripheries" that does not pass through the European center. A network of "entangled literary and cultural relations" steps forward here as a more egalitarian alternative to the center-periphery model. Cho also uses the Russia-East Asia case to contest Casanova's market-based model of a world republic of letters, in which works complete for an audience and for the cultural capital of approval by the center. The leftist political sympathies that undergird much of the networked transmission of literature from Russia to East Asia, Cho argues, replace market-based competition for readers with a literature based on social solidarity and social mission.

Cho's turn to the network as an alternative spatial model echoes David Damrosch's definition of world literature as "less a set of works than a network" (2003, 3), though tied in this case to a concrete sense of specific regional and transregional dynamics. At the same time, although Cho contests the diffusionist model of world literature that Moretti derived from world-systems theory, this account of Russian literature's reception in East Asia remains embedded within a world literary system. Indeed, a shared sense of semi-peripheral status seems central to Russian literature's appeal in East Asia. Writers and intellectuals in nineteenth-century Russia and early twentieth-century East Asia alike experienced modernization through the anxiety of belatedness, a temporal equivalent to the semi-peripheral position. As Cho emphasizes, Russian literature entered East Asia as part of a larger wave of translating "world" (that is, European) literature from the late nineteenth century. Within that wave, it occupied a typically ambiguous position. On the one hand, Cho points out that Russian literature found readers in East Asia in part because it had, by the late nineteenth century, been validated through European reception as a constituent member of world literature. On the other hand, Russian literature—more precisely, nineteenth-century Russian realism—was interpreted as foregrounding social commitment over the aesthetic innovation privileged by Casanova's Paris. Russian realism's appeal in East Asia, then, seems to rest on its ambiguous semi-peripheral position within the system. Both Western and not Western, both part of the center and part of the periphery, Russian

realism offered East Asia an alternative model of literary modernity because it could be seen to combine modern form with a critique of Western values.[3]

No doubt this operation involved some simplifications. For example, Lu Xun— who read Henrik Ibsen and Friedrich Nietzsche, as well as Russian modernists like Leonid Andreev and Mikhail Artsybashev—reduces European literature to "stories of detectives, adventurers, English ladies and African savages" in order to extol Russian literature as a "literature of the oppressed." Such assessments echo the priorities of Soviet criticism as well as the investment in literary realism as a force for social change made by nineteenth-century Russian critics like Vissarion Belinsky, Nicolay Chernyshevsky, and Nicolay Dobrolyubov.[4] This notion of Russian literature as indifferent to aesthetics and concerned chiefly with social mission would have surprised, say, a Russian modernist like Andrei Bely. But symbolism and modernism remain largely peripheral to this account. Whether or not we call this selective appropriation a case of "misreading Russia" (as Lin Jinghua claims in his 2005 book with that title), Cho compellingly presents the reception and translation of Russian literature in East Asia as shaped by local concerns—above all, the desire for a literature of social responsibility.

Cho takes East Asian literatures as a single category of analysis, insisting that their shared investment in Russian realism as a model for socially committed literature emerges only if examined as a region. Jeehyun Choi's article, which also aims to complicate Moretti's model of center-periphery literary relations, does so precisely by exploring the complex and idiosyncratic center-periphery relations *within* the region of Northeast Asia. Japan's response to the threat of Western power was to set itself up as a regional center that could counterbalance and resist the global center. In tandem with this bid for political hegemony, Japan mediated what Sowon Park (2013, 8) describes as the refraction of European cultural values into East Asia, which included playing the role of a center and mediator for leftist activity and leftist textual circulation. Thus, Korean socialists seeking to overturn Japanese colonial rule read leftist discourse as mediated by Japanese socialists' reading of French socialists. At the same time, the region experienced the pull of the Soviet Union as an alternative center for literary and political modernity.

In the space of Manchuria and the writings of Kang Kyŏngae, the dynamics and center and periphery become even more complex. Manchuria, Choi suggests, should be seen as a "strange and atypical kind of periphery," one that was intended to become part of the core of the rising Japanese Empire. For China, Manchuria was also a periphery, albeit one that served as the homeland of China's last imperial dynasty, the Qing. For left-wing groups in Japan, China, and Korea, Manchuria became a center for anti-imperial resistance. Spatial models of center-periphery designed to describe Europe

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[3] This characterization of Russian realism is made inter alia by Moretti (1998, 32, 196), who identifies the Russian novel of ideas as one of the two major innovations in novelistic form to come from the semi-periphery, alongside Latin American magical realism.
[4] On the influence of Belinsky, Chernyshesky, and Dobroliubov in early twentieth-century China, see Gamsa (2010, 29).

and its colonies become too rigid when applied to other spaces with other histories. Within this complex periphery, Kang was herself peripheral: a female writer of rural origin who could not afford to study in Japan and thus was less connected to transnational networks of socialism and anti-Japanese resistance than the members of the Korea Artista Proleta Federacio (KAPF, 1925–1935). And Kang's literary focus was on the marginal—specifically, "colonized, impoverished, migrant Korean female subjects." For Choi, Kang's 1934 novella *Sogŭm* (Salt) exemplifies a peripheral realism whose commitment to a specific local vantage point can reveal the social dynamics of a particular experience of modernization. In particular, Choi outlines a combination of oppression, exploitation, and utopian hope that declines to resolve into a confident vision of Communist liberation.

Choi places all four spatial models into dynamic interaction: we have a global system that contains multiple peripheries, shaped in turn by the dynamics of their various regions, where the anticolonial imperatives of the nation intersect with transnational networks of textual circulation and political activity. The relationship between the general and the particular here is strikingly dialectical. On the one hand, Manchukuo is presented as a place whose specific peripheral being cannot be reduced to a homogenous model of the periphery. Kang, according to Choi, refused to portray Manchukuo as "anything other than what it is"—a radical rejection of comparability and abstraction. Yet, on the other hand, the literary refractions of Manchukuo's historical experience can be understood through the framework of peripheral realisms, which finds significant commonalities in the modes of realism that develop in spaces on the peripheries of the capitalist world-system. A further comparative move by Choi borrows the concept of "derangement" from Sanjay Krishnan's reading of V. S. Naipaul, arguing that Kang's refusal to rationalize the confusion and chaos of Manchukuo expresses the psychological disorientation that colonial modernity enacts on peripheral societies (Krishnan 2012). What Choi offers, then, is an alternative, de-centered model of world literature whereby certain forms find different yet commensurable embodiments across the disparate spaces of the global periphery. The local perspective, by grounding itself in that local reality, can still tell us something about a global system made whole by capitalism.

Katerina Clark describes a tension between the center-periphery and network models in her account of Sergei Tretiakov and Boris Pilniak as traveling writers and traveling agents of Comintern internationalism. The context of this tension was a political project of internationalism that sought to de-center the European imperialist world-system and create new networks of affiliation and alliance between Soviet Russia and the colonized and semi-colonized world. At the same time, Soviet domination of the Comintern produced a trend toward recentering the new global system around the Soviet Union. This drive finds a corresponding move in the realm of culture. From the Soviet perspective, the plan was not simply to create de-centered networks between peripheries: it was to "reposition international literature and create a new center, Moscow." Indeed, in terms of regional dynamics, Clark makes the important point that

Soviet institutional interventions in East Asia were intended to de-center Tokyo as the regional center for leftist activity. Clark warns against utopian postulations of a de-centered internationalist network in the interwar period, when the gravitational institutional power of the Soviet center and its institutions was not counterbalanced by other socialist states, and the efficacy of the network was limited by the lack of a "common language." Instead, we see a kind of tension between the two models, as institutional drives to shape global leftist culture from Moscow become entangled in the complexity of "networks of encounter and cross-fertilization."

To illustrate this tension, Clark offers a compelling double reading of Tretiakov and Pilniak as "agents" working within the constraints of multiple "structures." Their activities as cultural diplomats were shaped, though not always constrained, by the institutional structures of Soviet-Comintern internationalism. Their textual output, meanwhile, took shape in tension with the literary structures of an inherited exoticism they ostensibly rejected and the rising standardization of Soviet revolutionary biographical narrative. Indeed, these texts strike me as consistently preoccupied with their own limitations as a medium for internationalist knowledge. In their very form, they lament the lack of a "common language" that Clark's conclusion describes. Pilniak's travelogues flaunt their own epistemological unreliability, swinging wildly between claims of knowledge and lamentations of ignorance, embracing and rejecting generic form, fact and fiction. (The Shanghai trade union leader Liu Hua, mentioned in *Chinese Tale*, was a real, historical person; his beloved, Miss Brighton, is Pilniak's own invention.)[5] Tretiakov's *Dėn Shi-khua* ends by openly acknowledging the limitations of its own method: Tretiakov proves unable to complete Dėn's life story, and the possibility is raised that not all of what Dėn/Gao told Tretiakov was entirely true. This "bio-interview" presents itself as an aspiring horizontal model for internationalist collaboration and joint Sino-Soviet authorship undermined by its historical constraints: the institutional balance of power in favor of Tretiakov, the requirement that Gao narrate his life in Russian, Tretiakov's own ignorance of Chinese.[6] The ideal of internationalism as global network founders against the centripetal urges of Soviet power and the complexities of a largely irretrievable process of translation.

Vladimir Tikhonov's article refocuses our attention on the question of the nation, combining a sense of the urgency of national discourse in the context of Korean colonization with a consistent awareness of the ways in which the discourse around *minjok* (ethno-nation) was connected to transnational processes of circulation. Tikhonov shows how *minjok*, as a term identifying the ethnic nation, arrived in Korea borrowed from Japanese *minzoku* in the years immediately before colonization. Moreover, its arrival in an article discussing the social-competition theories of Herbert Spencer indicates its imbrication in the wider context of the refraction of European thought into

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[5] On Liu Hua, see Smith (2002, 161).

[6] For more on *Dėn Shi-khua* as a text that openly displays its own epistemological limitations, see Tyerman (2018).

East Asia through Japan. After the colonization of Korea by Japan, however, *minjok* took on the heightened force of an anticolonial statement. Furthermore, the adoption in Korea of a concept of ethno-nation traceable to German conceptions of *Volk* connected fruitfully to local traditions of patrilineal descent as a socially organizing characteristic and the myth of Tan'gun as the collective original ancestor.

Tikhonov shows Marxists in Korea experiencing in particularly acute form the paradoxical status of the nation in Marxism, particularly the Leninist variant pursued by the Comintern in the 1920s. On the one hand, the nation is to be thought of as a construct, a product of capitalist modernity that conceals the realities of class struggle. On the other hand, the nation offers the most viable form for anti-imperial revolution. Nationalism could be liberatory one moment and reactionary or regressive the next—as the Comintern discovered when the Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomindang) turned against the Soviet Union in 1927. Despite this inherited instrumentalism, however, Tikhonov demonstrates that Korean Marxists were able to develop sophisticated models of the Korean nation and its history that placed that history within a universal framework while also honoring its specificity. In particular, they insisted on linking the history of the Korean nation to wider regional dynamics, such as a literary tradition written in classical Chinese (Hong Kimun [1903–1992], one of North Korea's most celebrated experts on Korean traditional culture after the 1945 liberation) and the influence of Confucianism and Buddhism (Kim Myŏngsik [1891–1943], one of the pioneers of the Korean socialist movement). As with Choi's reflections on peripheral realisms, we see here a commitment to holding the general and the particular in dialectical tension.

Sunyoung Park's article places the history of anarchism in Korea within both national and transnational contexts. In contrast to other historical accounts, which reduce anarchism to a form of utopianism or a brand of violence deployed in the service of national resistance, Park seeks to highlight the important cultural impact of anarchist ideas in early twentieth-century Korea. The first form of leftist thought to reach Korea, anarchism also arrived through the complex mediation of regional and transregional networks—in this case, Chinese and Japanese translations of French and Russian anarchist texts. In Park's account, anarchism offered an alternative model of modernity, non-capitalist and inherently transnational, based on *minjung* (people's) revolution, mutual-aid cooperatism, and an ecological worldview derived from Piotr Kropotkin's ethical naturalism. For Park, anarchist modernity—a concept borrowed from Sho Konishi's (2013) account of anarchist links between Russia and Japan—implies a vision of multiple simultaneous forms of modernity without any hierarchical ordering. In other words, anarchist modernity posits the ideal triumph of the de-centered network over any center-periphery dynamic. Yet, it seems this anarchist cultural alternative fell victim to the centripetal forces shaping the international socialist field. After 1927, the KAPF turned toward more orthodox Marxism and expelled its anarchist members.

Park's article is committed to recovering the specificity of Korean anarchist culture alongside its investment in a radical transnationalism. Whereas Japanese

anarchism tended toward the radical individualism of Max Stirner, Park suggests that anarchism in colonial Korea gave pride of place to Kropotkin's cooperativism as a response to the social Darwinism that underpinned Japanese imperialism. At the same time, Kropotkin fitted an agrarian social ethic inherited from Daoism and Confucianism, and anarchist nature poems combined Kropotkin's eco-humanism with the inherited concerns of East Asian nature poetry. We also see the lines between anarchism and other trends of thought blurring in Korea's compressed modernity. Anarchism can sit alongside Marxism, nationalism, and Nietzsche; in the reading of New Tendency literature, anarchist sensibility is intertwined with nationalism and communism.

One of the messages of Park's article would seem to be a caution against reifying such "-isms," attempting instead the more complex work of tracing tendencies or currents within a larger cultural flow. I would say this resistance to reification is also the common achievement of the special issue as a whole. Mapping is never reduced to the map. The contributors to this special issue strategically deploy the various spatial models that might describe the movements of socialist culture across the territory of Northeast Eurasia, while remaining committed to the concrete historical dynamics that shaped these encounters between local and transnational perspectives. As such, the articles in this issue provide a compelling window into a historical moment when the possibilities of collective life were imagined across this region in new ways and with a new intensity.

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About the Author

Edward Tyerman is Assistant Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of California, Berkeley.