

Relayed Revolutionary Sentiment: Chinese Appropriation of Russian Nihilism in Popular Literature

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This article examines the relay translation of William Tufnell Le Queux's (1864–1927) *Strange Tales of a Nihilist*, which the prominent Chinese translator of nihilist fiction, Chen Jinghan 陳景韓 (1878–1965), completed based on Matsui Shōyō's 松居松葉 (1870–1933) Japanese rendering. By exploring the transcultural process through which a story of Russian nihilism traveled from Europe to East Asia, I test the translatability of the revolutionary structure of feeling across different cultures. I reveal how English and Japanese media and literature inspired Chinese interpretations of Russian nihilism, and how a key Chinese translator channeled his own revolutionary commitments through intensive borrowing of traditional Chinese literary motifs and narrative devices. As a result, the Chinese vision of nihilism diverged from nihilism's Russian political connotations and was assimilated into a thrilling cultural topos of vengeful assassination plots in Chinese popular culture. Ultimately this transculturation of revolutionary sentiment, which aroused sinicized emotions of love and revenge, not only generated public sympathy for nihilists in China but also motivated Chinese revolutionary actions.