

# Transnational Romance, Terror, and Heroism: Russia in American Popular Fiction, 1860–1917

CHOI CHATTERJEE

*California State University, Los Angeles*

No one should open a history of Russia with the hope that he will get from it that gratification which most fields of modern history afford. . . . The growth of Russia has been the growth of all that we detest. . . . We learn in these pages that human progress is not universal, that the eddies which turn back are strong and deep.

—W. D. Foulke<sup>1</sup>

Scholars of Russian-American relations in the late nineteenth century have long been concerned with the personalities and writings of university-based experts, journalists, diplomats, and political activists. We are well acquainted with the observations of various American commentators on the backward state of Russian state, society, economy, and politics. While the activities of prominent men such as George Kennan have effortlessly dominated the historical agenda, the negative discourses that they produced about Russia have subsumed other important American representations of the country.<sup>2</sup> Since the period of early

Acknowledgments: I thank the *Huntington Library and Research Collections* for a Mayer Fellowship in 2005, which allowed me to complete much of the research for and writing of this article. Thanks also go to Andrew Shryock and the *CSSH* reviewers for their valuable suggestions and criticisms that have improved the essay. I would also like to thank David Akin whose masterly editing made the essay much more readable. Finally, I thank Lynn Hudson, Chris Endy, David Engerman, Beth Holmgren, Lynn Mally, Karen Petrone, David Ransel, Barbara Walker, Ping Yao, and Mary Zirin for commenting extensively on the manuscript.

<sup>1</sup> W. D. Foulke, *Slav or Saxon: A Study of the Growth and Tendencies of Russian Civilization* (New York: Putnam's, 1887), 61–62.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Lasch, *American Liberals and the Russian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962); Martin Malia, *Under Western Eyes: From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); James Scanlan, *Revolutionary Lives: Anna Strunsky and William English Walling* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998); Frederick F. Travis, *George Kennan and the American-Russian Relationship, 1865–1924* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990); Robert C. Williams, *Russian Art and American Money, 1900–1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980); William Appleman Williams, *American Russian Relations, 1781–1947* (New York: Rinehart, 1952). For Russian perspectives, see A. V. Golubev et al., eds., *Rossiia i zapad: Formirovanie vneshnepoliticheskikh stereotipov v soznanii rossiiskogo*

modern history, European travelers had seen Russia as a barbarous land of slave-like people, responsive only to the persuasions of the whip and the knout wielded by an autocratic tsar. Subsequently, Larry Wolff has shown that Voltaire and other Enlightenment philosophers created images of a despotic and backward Eastern Europe in order to validate the idea of a progressive, enlightened, and civilized Western Europe.<sup>3</sup>

While the American intelligentsia had always formed a peripheral wing of the European Republic of Letters, members disagreed with the overt denunciations of Russia that were popular in nineteenth-century Europe.<sup>4</sup> America for its part was grateful to Russia for the diplomatic support it had tendered during the Civil War, and untroubled by the obvious ideological discrepancies in the political orientation of the two empires. Russian-American relations seemed to be on solid ground, especially as they were based on growing commercial and business ties.<sup>5</sup>

But by the late nineteenth century, as Russians and Americans developed competing imperial interests in East Asia and the Pacific, American journalists, diplomats, and professors began to echo many of the European diatribes against the oppressive autocracy, the backward status of the peasantry, and the lack of commercial and industrial development in Russia. They were supported in their dismal assessments by Jewish immigrant groups from Russia, and by progressive American liberals and radicals appalled at the treatment of the Russian intelligentsia and minorities. David Engerman in his recently published monograph argues American analysts of the Russian empire used Victorian racial categories to represent the Russian people as slavish, backward, and unenterprising. According to these experts, a pervasive Asiatic legacy of passivity and sloth prevented Russia from joining the ranks of the civilized peoples, and they prescribed rapid modernization as the only cure for this malaise.<sup>6</sup>

---

*obshchestva pervoi poloviny XX veka* (Moscow: RAN, 1998); V. I. Fokin, *Mezhdunarodnyi kul'turnyi obmen i SSSR v 20–30 gody* (St. Petersburg: Izd-vo St. Peterburgskogo universiteta, 1999); Aleksandr Nikolaevich Nikoliukin, *Literaturnye sviazii Rossii i SSHA: Turgenev, Tolstoi, Dostoevskiy i Amerika* (Moscow: Nauka, 1981); O. E. Tuganova et al., eds., *Vzaimodeistvie kul'tur SSSR i SSHA, xviii–xxv* (Moscow: Nauka, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Marshall, T. Poe, "A People Born to Slavery": *Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476–1748* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> See Astolphe Custine's classic text, *Empire of the Tsar: Journey through Eternal Russia* (New York: Doubleday 1989); Irena Grudzinska Gross, "The Tangled Tradition: Custine, Herberstein, Karamzin, and the Critique of Russia," *Slavic Review* 50, 4 (1991): 990–98.

<sup>5</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Russia, the Soviet Union and the United States: An Interpretive History* (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., 1990).

<sup>6</sup> David Charles Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

By training our lenses primarily on elite and expert characterizations, we have overlooked many other, more nuanced and ambivalent representations of Russia that were in circulation in the late-nineteenth-century press and literature.<sup>7</sup> More importantly, we have ignored to a certain extent the role Russians themselves played in shaping American perceptions of their history, politics, and culture. In the American popular imagination, Russia was more than a case of arrested development and terminal backwardness; Russia meant imperial romance, the glamorous lifestyle of exotic and privileged nobility, and the possibilities of political adventure in a diverse geographical locale. Although St. Petersburg and Moscow were never included as obligatory destinations in the Grand Tour of Europe, by the latter half of the nineteenth century affluent American men and women traveled to Russia for leisure and tourism. Americans explored the grand palaces and museums of St. Petersburg, admired the forty-times-forty churches in Moscow, sailed down the Volga, and, from the beginning of the twentieth century, traveled east on the Trans-Siberian Railway. An anonymous Russian nihilist lamented, "I have had occasion to meet several Americans in St. Petersburg, who charmed by the pleasant intercourse with representatives of the Russian court and high life, were rather inclined to consider the Russian government a sort of paternal and comfortable arrangement. . . ."<sup>8</sup>

Russia was more than an exotic playground for the wealthier class of Americans who traveled to Europe and Russia in increasing numbers.<sup>9</sup> To many progressive Americans, the Russian political system appeared unbearably repressive, and they were attracted to the innovative Russian ideologies such as anarchism, nihilism, and populism that offered radical alternatives to the progress of liberalism and capitalism in the West.<sup>10</sup> American intellectuals

<sup>7</sup> Some excellent exceptions to this general trend are Anna M. Babey, *Americans in Russia 1776–1917: A Study of the American Travelers in Russia from the American Revolution to the Russian Revolution* (New York: Comet Press, 1938); Louise McReynolds, *Russia at Play: Leisure Activities at the End of the Tsarist Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 154–92; Norman Saul, *Concord and Conflict: The United States and Russia, 1867–1914* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> "Empire of the Discontented," *North American Review* (Feb. 1879): 175.

<sup>9</sup> Dulles, Foster Rhea, *Americans Abroad: Two Centuries of European Travel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964); Harvey Levenstein, *Seductive Journey: American Tourists in France from Jefferson to the Jazz Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Mary Suzanne Schriber, *Writing Home: American Women Abroad, 1830–1920* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997); William W. Stowe, *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> There is a huge literature on the history of Russian intellectual thought. Here are a few important references: Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (New York: Viking Press, 1978); Leopold Haimson, *The Russian Marxists and the Origins of Bolshevism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955); Aileen Kelly, *Towards another Shore: Russian Thinkers between Necessity and Chance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Martin Malia, *Aleksander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism, 1812–1855* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961); Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution: A History of Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (New York: Knopf, 1960); Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979).

were drawn also to the romantic fervor of exemplary Russian revolutionaries, and were deeply impressed by their capacity for self-sacrifice in pursuit of their cause. As Americans read Russian memoirs and literature both in the original and translation, and met notable Russian émigrés, they formed enduring images of Russia that wielded considerable influence both in the academy and in the popular consciousness.

#### REPRESENTATIONS AND SELF-PRESENTATIONS

In this essay I look at the role American popular fiction played both in creating these alluring visions of aristocratic lifestyles in Russia, and in representing the revolutionary figures, terrorist plots against autocracy, and radical philosophies that emanated from the country. Popular fiction was created and consumed at the intersection of various elite and popular discourses about Russia, and Russian émigrés, revolutionaries, and writers such as Turgenev and Tolstoy played a powerful role in shaping these transnational conversations. Since popular literature exists mostly because of the generic expectations of the reading public rather than exceptional talents of individual authors,<sup>11</sup> formulaic fiction can offer us an interpretive window into the cultural patterns and fantasies of a particular period.<sup>12</sup> These novels offered little historical information about Russia, but they reified notions of imperious nobles, exquisite women, ubiquitous secret police, and reckless but brave revolutionaries. Through repetition and reiteration in the pages of fiction and the press, Russia began to be associated with a powerful set of evocative and sedimentary images that seamlessly linked the possession of high culture and noble bearing with the capacity for violence and radicalism.<sup>13</sup>

When examining the cultural representations of other societies, one has to perforce engage with the theories of orientalism advanced initially by Edward Said, and subsequently elaborated with great subtlety by Mary Louise Pratt.<sup>14</sup> Both Said and Pratt, influenced crucially by Foucault's theories of the interlocking nature of power and knowledge, see the various Western knowledge systems that have been developed about the rest of the world as masking the real intent of colonial classification, possession, and exploitation. According to Said, the various Western representations of the Orient, both scholarly and popular, were so pervasive and all encompassing that they

<sup>11</sup> M. O. Grenby, "The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Fiction, British Conservatism and the Revolution in France," *History* 83, 271 (1998): 445–71.

<sup>12</sup> John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); Michael Denning, *Dime Novels and Working Class Culture in America* (London: Verso, 1987).

<sup>13</sup> James Smith Allen, "History and the Novel: *Mentalité* in Modern Popular Fiction," *History and Theory* 22, 3 (1983): 233–52; Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge 1992); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

prevented the Orient from describing itself. Moreover, Said fundamentally agrees with Foucault that systems of representations are deeply influenced by the systems of power within which they originate.<sup>15</sup>

Although Said's model of colonial knowledge production has been subject to a variety of critiques, from both the left and the right, it continues to hold considerable sway in the academy.<sup>16</sup> New research from the field of colonial and post-colonial scholarship has significantly revised our understanding of cultural transmission between the metropole and the colony, and historians have uncovered means through which these distinctive hierarchies were constructed in the first place. Not only did products, ideas, and people circulate both within and across empires; Western ideas were also deconstructed through the processes of native reception and often fundamentally transformed through local practice.<sup>17</sup> Despite these revisionist trajectories, there continues to be much consensus that Western understandings about the rest of the world were gained primarily through investigations conducted by Western scholars, bureaucrats, journalists, colonists, and travelers.<sup>18</sup>

However, if we examine the process through which these systems of knowledge are constructed, we find they are often based on the building blocks of native self-representations in various genres and formats. If the country in question possesses a sophisticated intelligentsia who are able to produce authoritative forms of self-presentations that find purchase in transnational intellectual circuits, this can contaminate the original nature of Western knowledge and influence the tropes of representation. In the case of American-Russian relations, the powerful explanatory model of Orientalism, in which scholars, media experts, and literary figures produce the Orient through processes of narrative intertextuality and the proliferation of discourse, fails to capture the entire truth. In what follows, I first unpack the processes through which groups of Russian intelligentsia circulated cultural mythologies about their country, and

<sup>15</sup> For the complicated nexus between Said and Foucault, see James Clifford, "On Orientalism," in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 225–76; Valerie Kennedy, *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> Nicholas Dirks, "Edward Said and Anthropology," *Journal of Palestinian Studies* 33, 3 (2004): 38–54; Andrew Rotter, "Saidism without Said: Orientalism and U.S. Diplomatic History," *American Historical Review* 105, 4 (2000): 1205–17.

<sup>17</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Fredrick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Ann Laura Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American and (Post) Colonial Studies," *Journal of American History* 88, 3 (2001): 829–65.

<sup>18</sup> Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues* (New York: Hill and Wang 2000); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

then examine the relational and hybrid forms of knowledge subsequently created on these bases.

While American experts and scholars sought to comprehensively represent Russia through hegemonic discourses from within the academy, and by means of print media, American cultural imperialism was particularly effective because it refused to be monologic. Instead, it allowed a variety of Russian émigré voices to speak with authority from within American universities, write in elite journals, and publish a variety of fiction both in English and in translation from Russian. Popular literature emerged as a powerful site for and a location of various contestatory practices. Within this multitude of texts and cacophony of voices, certain groups of Russians played a significant part in creating models of themselves for American consumption, and in perpetuating myths about their own history and culture that subsequently captured the American imagination.

Amy Kaplan, in her fascinating study on fiction and the legitimization of American imperialism in the late nineteenth century, shows that many of the popular romances of the period, including George Barr McCutcheon's, *Graustark* (1901) and Richard Harding Davis's *Soldier of Fortune* (1897), plotted a narrative of the Spanish-American War as "chivalric rescue mission that in turn rejuvenates the liberator."<sup>19</sup> In Kaplan's reading of the novels, the manly American hero, fleeing the constraints of feminization and industrialization at home, liberates a primitive land from a barbarous oppressor. He then returns home revitalized with his trophy wife whose admiring gaze legitimizes his imperial adventure. But the popular romances set in Russia, while they echoed some of these imperial fantasies, contained a more complicated narrative in which the American hero or heroine has to penetrate a glamorous imperial society, romance a hero or heroine of unmatched beauty and sophistication, match wits with a ruthless secret police, and redeem violent revolutionaries.<sup>20</sup>

If Westerners thought Russia was backward, they never considered it a primitive society like those found in the colonies of Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America.<sup>21</sup> While it had certain exotic qualities of an older civilization such as China or even of Egypt, Russia was itself a major European power with vast imperial interests. Russia also had an established court society that very few Americans had penetrated with any degree of success. In the late nineteenth

<sup>19</sup> Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 100.

<sup>20</sup> On American fiction and imperialism see, John Carlos Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Anna Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); See also *American Literary History* 8, 3 (Fall 2006), an issue devoted entirely to the theme of American literature and transnationalism.

<sup>21</sup> Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

century, Russian salons were creating great works of art, music, and literature, and scholarship equaled only in Paris and to a lesser degree, in London.<sup>22</sup> Finally, Russian left-wing political thought constituted one of the major ideological challenges to the sweeping triumph of liberalism in the world.

In Kaplan's reading of the romances, the imperial context is usually flat and generic, and there is little to differentiate a Cuba, a Puerto Rico, or a Hawai'i except as sites of imperial intervention. The natives rarely play a meaningful role in the texts except as repositories of racial inferiority. Finally, Kaplan agrees with Michael Kammen's assertion that historical romances of the period de-revolutionize the American Revolution to such an extent that it cannot serve as a model for other uprisings in the Third World.<sup>23</sup> As Kaplan says, "the novels render the revolution on the part of non-white people as anarchy in need of imperial salvation."<sup>24</sup> In the romances about Russia, to the contrary, the context played a very important role in shaping and constraining the activities of the American hero and heroine. Russia, embodied in the figure of the aristocratic Russian, became the object of American desire since he or she both possessed an enviable mastery of high culture and was engaged in a revolutionary fight against tyranny. Popular American fiction created a powerful exemplar of a Russian revolution that would soon eclipse the American model in much of the colonized world. Finally, as I will show, Russian émigrés (native informants), aided by Russian literature in translation that prepared the ground for their favorable reception in the West, materially created and manipulated the American discourses about Russia.

#### BACKGROUND TO THE NOVELS

From the mid-nineteenth century until the onset of the Russian Revolution in 1917, Russia proved to be a popular locale for the staging of various genres of Western fiction such as melodrama, romance, murder mysteries, and political thrillers. Perhaps the best-known Western literary works that used Russia as a backdrop were Oscar Wilde's play, *Vera the Nihilist* (1881), and Joseph Conrad's novels *The Secret Agent* (1907) and *Under Western Eyes* (1911).<sup>25</sup> Some of the authors of these texts were native-born Americans while others

<sup>22</sup> Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Michael Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 214–15.

<sup>24</sup> Amy Kaplan, *Anarchy of Empire*, 117.

<sup>25</sup> Steven G. Marks, *How Russia Shaped the Modern World: From Art to Anti-Semitism, Ballet to Bolshevism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2003), 22; Julie A. Buckler, "Melodramatizing Russia: Nineteenth-Century Views from the West," in Louise McReynolds and Joan Neuberger, eds., *Imitations of Life: Two Centuries of Melodrama in Russia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 55–78; For a comprehensive bibliography on Western fiction see Anthony G. Cross, *The Russian Theme in English Literature from the Sixteenth Century to 1980: An Introductory Survey and a Bibliography* (Oxford: W. A. Meeuws, 1985).

were Russian émigrés to the United States writing for a Western audience, and this literature was part of a larger transatlantic popular literature about Russia produced simultaneously in England and France.

While I have found American plays and novels on Russia written as early as the 1850s, the bulk of the fiction emerged in the 1890s and into the early 1910s.<sup>26</sup> A reviewer in the journal *The Nation* in 1892 bemoaned, “The popularity of everything Russian has called into existence a mass of worthless books which profess to enlighten and amuse the public.”<sup>27</sup> While this was an apt description for many of the books, they were nonetheless extremely popular. Richard Savage’s 1891 novel *My Official Wife* received glowing reviews in all the notable American journals, such as *The New York Tribune*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Boston Advertiser*, *The Chicago Times*, and *The New York World*, and was even turned into a play with the help of another popular novelist, Archibald Clavering Gunter.<sup>28</sup> Other well-known writers of the genre included Marriott Crittenden, Walker Kennedy, Amelia Barr, Mary J. Holmes, John K. Leys, Kathleen O’Meara, Julien Gordon, Ruth Kedzie Wood, and Olive Gilbreath. Periodicals such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper’s Magazine* serialized many of these works. Russian émigré writers who contributed to this body of work included the well-known revolutionary S. M. Kravchinsky (who wrote under the pseudonym Stepniak), notable writer about American-Jewish life Abraham Cahan,<sup>29</sup> Barbara MacGahan, the widow of the well-known American reporter Januarius MacGahan and a journalist in her own right,<sup>30</sup> and Lydia Pimenov Noble.

The American writers, while more sober in their assessments of Russian revolutionaries, were nonetheless influenced by the translated works of French authors such as Jules Verne, Ernest Lavigne, and Louise Gagneur. Russia-based thrillers by popular British writers such as William Le Queux and George Alfred Henty proved equally influential.<sup>31</sup> During the late

<sup>26</sup> Sylvanus Cobb, *Ivan the Serf, or, The Russian and Circassian: A Tale of Russia, Turkey and Circassia* / by Austin C. Burdick (New York: S. French, 1850–1859); Charles Gayarre, *Dr. Bluff in Russia, or The Emperor Nicholas and the American Doctor: A Comedy in Two Acts* (New Orleans: Bronze Pen Print, 1865).

<sup>27</sup> *The Nation* (15 Dec. 1892): 461.

<sup>28</sup> A. C. Gunter, *My Official Wife* (New York: The Home Publishing Co., 1891). Denise Youngblood recently informed me the novel was made into a Hollywood film twice, in 1914 and 1926. Savage also had a considerable following in England and was frequently reviewed in the English periodical *The Saturday Review*. Another popular novel by H. Grattan Donnelly was turned into a play: *Darkest Russia* (New York: Street and Smith, 1896).

<sup>29</sup> See Bernard G. Richards’ introduction to Abraham Cahan’s *Yekl and the Imported Bridegroom and other Stories of the New York Ghetto* (New York: Dover, 1970).

<sup>30</sup> Mary F. Zirin, “Meeting the Challenge: Russian Women Reporters and the Balkan Crises of the late 1870s,” in Barbara Norton and Jehanne Gheith, eds., *An Improper Profession: Women, Gender, and Journalism in Late Imperial Russia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 140–66.

<sup>31</sup> Keith Neilson, “Tsars and Commissars: W. Somerset Maugham, Ashenden and Images of Russia in British Adventure Fiction, 1890–1930,” *Canadian Journal of History* 27, 3 (1992): 475–500; Louise Mignerot Gagneur, *A Nihilist Princess* (New York: Brentano’s, 1886); George



nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, romances enjoyed a special revival, which also included historical fiction, supernatural tales, mysteries, and works of science fiction.<sup>32</sup> Richard Henry Savage was the most prolific of all the American writers who employed a Russian theme. He had been, in turn, a soldier, lawyer, and novelist, and had traveled widely in Russia, Siberia, the Middle East, and the Far East.<sup>33</sup> A man of conservative political interests and a fervent admirer of the natural aristocracy of Europe, Savage had served in the American army, especially in the war against Spain in 1898. In his works, he brought together the glamour and romance of imperial adventure as exemplified in the books by Rudyard Kipling, Rider Haggard, and Anthony Hope.

The taste for aristocratic Russia had been assiduously cultivated by the substantial literature of travel and exploration popular among the American reading public during earlier decades. There were genteel accounts published by Victorian lady travelers, as well as more masculine tales of exploration of the unknown Russian empire.<sup>34</sup> George Kennan's travelogue, *Tent Life in Siberia* (1870), a dashing tale of romantic adventure, sold extremely well. His work was ably seconded by writings of the intrepid American journalist Januarius MacGahan, who was present at the Russian military advance on Khiva in Central Asia in 1873.<sup>35</sup> Popular fiction located itself in an immediately recognizable landscape of the endless steppes dotted by noble estates, and few writers ventured beyond the most commonplace descriptions of the desolate

---

Alfred Henty, *Condemned as a Nihilist: A Story of Escape from Siberia* (London: Blackie and Son Ltd., 1893); Ernest Lavigne, *A Female Nihilist* (New York, 1881); William Le Queux, *A Secret Service: Being Strange Tales of a Nihilist* (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1896). See also Jules Verne, *Michael Strogoff: Courier of the Tsar* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927 [1875]); see also the review in *Scribner's Magazine* (Apr. 1877): 873.

<sup>32</sup> James D. Hart, *The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 199; William J. Scheick, *The Ethos of Romance at the Turn of the Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 1–2.

<sup>33</sup> *Who was Who in America*, vol. 1 (Chicago: A. N. Marquis Co., 1943), 1082.

<sup>34</sup> Poultney Bigelow, *The Borderland of Czar and Kaiser: Notes from Both Sides of the Russian Frontier* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1895); Elizabeth W. Champney, *Three Vassar Girls in Russia and Turkey* (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1889); George Kennan, *Tent Life in Siberia: A New Account of an Old Undertaking* (New York: Arno Press, 1970); David Ker, *Hudson to the Neva* (Boston: D. Lothrop and Co., 1883); Elizabeth Wormeley Latimer, *Russia and Turkey in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg 1894); T. Michell, *Handbook for Travellers in Russia, Poland and Finland* (London: John Murray, 1893); Oliver Optic, *Northern Lands; or Young America in Russia and Prussia* (Boston: Lee and Shepherd, 1890); Edna Dean Proctor, *A Russian Journey* (Boston: J. R. Osgood and Co., 1872); Thomas Stevens, *Through Russia on a Mustang* (New York: Cassell Publishing Co., 1891).

<sup>35</sup> Januarius A. MacGahan, *Campaigning on the Oxus, and the Fall of Khiva* (New York: Arno Press, 1970); Dale L. Walker, *Januarius Macgahan: The Life and Campaigns of an American War Correspondent* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1988); Ernest Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Bukhara, Khokhand, and Kuldja in Two Volumes* (New York: Armstrong and Co., 1877).

Russian countryside, the long winters, and the dense forests. Most authors chose St. Petersburg as the favored locale for the action, which moved from Nevsky Prospekt (the Piccadilly Circus or the Champs Elysées of St. Petersburg), to the gypsy parties in the islands on the river Neva, to the exclusive Yacht Club and the English Club, and dinners at the ultrafashionable Donon's restaurant (often compared to the exclusive Delmonico's of New York). Events usually culminated in a ball at the Winter Palace.

These novels brought together two major images of Russia, namely, an aristocratic Russia, and Russia, the land of revolutionaries. There was little American interest in the peasants, the Russian Orthodox Church, or the merchants, and Russian imperial advances in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Siberia held only limited popular appeal. There was a reason for the selection of this particular set of images about Russian aristocrats. Beginning in 1867 with the appearance of the first translations of Turgenev's works in English, the transatlantic English-speaking world was gripped by a Russia-fever that was only exacerbated by the appearance of works by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky in subsequent decades.<sup>36</sup> As Harriet Waters observed in a review of Russian literature in *The Atlantic Monthly*, "Suddenly it has come to pass that these books are everywhere. The selfsame volumes, wearing that glaringly democratic badge, the stamp of the circulating library, make their way into the houses of high and low."<sup>37</sup>

Turgenev's good looks, courtly manners, and command of English, French, and German did much to project the image of the Westernized Russian nobleman at ease in European salons.<sup>38</sup> Tolstoy's influence spread far beyond the confines of a literary-minded public, and his philosophical and political writings were greatly admired by a range of American intellectuals including Mark Twain and William Dean Howells.<sup>39</sup> Many famous Americans such as Jane Addams, George Kennan, Eugene Schuyler, and Isabel Hapgood visited Tolstoy at his spacious country estate near Moscow.<sup>40</sup> While Turgenev commiserated with the lot of the Russian peasant, and Tolstoy idolized the peasant as the savior of a corrupt and degenerate Russia, it was Anna Karenina,

<sup>36</sup> Dorothy Brewster, *East West Passages. A Study in Literary Relationships* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1954); Royal A. Gettmann, *Turgenev in England and America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1941).

<sup>37</sup> "The Spell of Russian Writers," *Atlantic Monthly* (Aug. 1887): 201.

<sup>38</sup> Patrick Waddington, *Turgenev and England* (New York: New York University Press, 1981).

<sup>39</sup> Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House with Autobiographical Notes* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1923); I. P. Dementev, "Leo Tolstoy and Social Critics in the United States at the Turn of the Century," in Norman Saul and Richard McKinzie, eds., *Russian-American Dialogue on Cultural Relations, 1776–1914* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 170–91; Alexander Fodor, "The Acceptance of Leo Tolstoy in United States," *Research Studies* 45, 2 (1977): 73–81; *Literaturnoe nasledstvo: Tolstoi i zarubezhnyi mir*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1965).

<sup>40</sup> Robert Whittaker, "Tolstoy's American Translator: Letter's to Isabel Hapgood, 1888–1903," *Triquarterly* 102 (Spring/Summer, 1998): 7–65; V.A. Aleksandrov, "Izabella Khepgud i deiateli russkoi kul'tury," *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 9, 10 (1993): 70–83.

the ultrafashionable and adulterous countess of Tolstoy's creation, who seized the American imagination.<sup>41</sup>

Interest in aristocratic Russian lifestyles was also fueled by the writings of American travelers and translators such as Isabel Hapgood and Eugene Schuyler.<sup>42</sup> Hapgood, at the risk of being branded a tsarist sympathizer,<sup>43</sup> wrote widely in American periodicals about various aspects of noble life in Russia, in order to counter more sensational narratives about Russian censorship and oppression circulated by American journalists such as George Kennan, and other émigré revolutionaries.<sup>44</sup> Interest in the Russian court and ways of the nobility was also fed by well-orchestrated visits to America by the latter.<sup>45</sup> The coronations of Alexander III in 1883 and Nicholas II in 1894 were well attended by wealthy Americans and journalists.<sup>46</sup> Finally, the marriage of Julia Dent, granddaughter of American President Ulysses Grant, to the Russian Prince Cantacuzène-Speransky in 1899 sparked a media extravaganza. The American press heavily covered their lavish wedding in Newport, Rhode Island, which the aristocratic Speransky family considered vulgar and inappropriate.<sup>47</sup>

#### RUSSIAN NOBILITY AND AN AMERICAN ARISTOCRACY?

I will analyze representations of three pairs of stock characters featured in most of the novels: the Russian nobleman and noblewoman, the American hero and heroine in Russia, and the male and female Russian anarchist. In the novels, the Russian nobility possessed vast estates and participated in a brilliant social life replete with dangerous liaisons centered on the imperial court in St. Petersburg.

<sup>41</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Bestsellers in the U.S.* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1947), 182–83.

<sup>42</sup> Marina Ledkovsky, "A Linguistic Bridge to Orthodoxy: In Memoriam Isabel Florence Hapgood," lecture delivered at the Twelfth Annual Russian Orthodox Musicians Conference, 7–11 Oct. 1988, Washington, D.C.; Eugene Schuyler, *Selected Essays* (New York: Scribner's 1901), 207, first pub. in *Scribner's Magazine* (May 1889); and "Elopement in Moscow," in *Scribner's Magazine* (Dec. 1871): 231–34.

<sup>43</sup> Papers of I. F. Hapgood, box, 5, New York Public Library, Division of Rare Books and Manuscripts; a clipping of an article from the *New York Recorder* (7 Aug. 1892), alleges she received money from the tsarist government.

<sup>44</sup> Isabel Hapgood, *Russian Rambles* (New York: Arno Press, 1970). See also her, "Theater Going in St. Petersburg," *Living Age* (9 Jan. 1897): 124–29; "Russian Breakfast Dishes," *The Independent* (13 Sept. 1900).

<sup>45</sup> Norman Saul, *Concord and Conflict*, 374–77.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Harding Davis, *A Year from a Correspondent's Notebook* (New York: Arno Press, 1970); John A. Logan, *In Joyful Russia* (New York: D. Appleton and Co. 1897); William Prall, ed., *The Court of Alexander III: Letters of Mrs. Lothrop* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co., 1910).

<sup>47</sup> Michel Cantacuzène's memoir, *The Cantacuzène-Speransky Saga* (Westerly, 1991), 109–14; Princess Cantacuzène, *Revolutionary Days: Recollections of Romanoffs and Bolsheviks 1914–1917* (New York: Arno Press, 1970); Countess Nostitz, *Countess from Iowa* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1936). As Maureen Montgomery has shown, wealthy American families sought noble European spouses to fortify their own social ascendancy. *'Gilded Prostitution': Status, Money, and Transatlantic Marriages, 1870–1914* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

The American interest in the Russian nobility was a part of the ongoing American fascination with the high society of London and Paris, and the general Europhilia of American elites. As both Lawrence Levine and Sven Beckert have demonstrated, the new bourgeoisie of the Gilded Age self-consciously appropriated parts of European high culture and institutionalized them in museums, concert halls, and art galleries.<sup>48</sup> Access to this culture both cemented their status and marked their exclusivity within American society. Moreover, information about the society life of London and Paris facilitated the acceptance of an American aristocracy, one whose conduct was patterned by social rituals that stressed social decorum, exclusivity, consumerism, and mannered socialization.<sup>49</sup>

Accordingly, American characters in the pulp fiction were more than a match for their aristocratic counterparts in Russia. The American hero or heroine, always of upper class origin,<sup>50</sup> possesses all the social graces and accomplishments of the Russian nobility, including the requisite wardrobe tailored in Paris. These protagonists effortlessly penetrate the St. Petersburg social scene, gamble at the exclusive clubs, and waltz elegantly at the balls in the Winter Palace. The list of American heroes includes a cosmopolitan and rich landowner from Kentucky who is intimately acquainted with Paris, London, and Berlin, and can shoot and fence with the best marksman that Russia has to offer.<sup>51</sup> American heroines, in turn, dazzle St. Petersburg with their Parisian wardrobes, aristocratic manners, and romantic sensitivity to imperial society.<sup>52</sup> When their radical friends fall into the clutches of the Russian secret police, American heroes and heroines swing into action. Like their counterparts in the contemporary British imperial fiction of the era, American heroes save the day, rescue victims from the jaws of the Russian secret police, or plot ingenious escapes across the Polish border or through Siberia. American heroes and heroines usually marry their aristocratic and revolutionary Russian lovers and bring them home to live happily ever after in the United States.

<sup>48</sup> Sven Beckert, *Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850–1896* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

<sup>49</sup> Eric Homburger, *Mrs. Astor's New York: Money and Social Power in a Gilded Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 5; Matthew Schneirov, *The Dream of a New Social Order: Popular Magazines in America 1893–1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 186.

<sup>50</sup> There were very few African-American travelers to Russia during this period, although after 1917 many, including Langston Hughes and Paul Robeson, traveled to the Soviet Union. See *A Black Woman's Odyssey through Russia and Jamaica: The Narrative of Nancy Prince*. Introduction by Ronald G. Walters (New York: M. Weiner, 1990); Kate A. Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922–1963* (Durham: Duke University Press 2002).

<sup>51</sup> *In the Dwellings of Silence: A Romance of Russia* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1893).

<sup>52</sup> Julien Gordon, *Diplomat's Diary* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1890); Olive Gilbreath, *Miss Amerikanka* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1918).

The novels, like etiquette manuals, contained detailed instructions on how to enter a noble society, and once there, how to comport oneself with due decorum. At the same time, they problematized the notion of a natural American aristocrat. The American heroes, while sharing the social graces of their Russian counterparts, differed from them in their capacity for hearty republican action. They also possessed the ability to redeem the Russian revolutionary and neutralize the threat of violence. In the late nineteenth century, as the major capitals of Europe were rocked by a series of spectacular assassinations and bombings, and especially in the aftermath of Chicago's 1886 Haymarket riots, the word "anarchist" began to carry connotations similar to "terrorist" today. American fiction on Russia dwelt at length on the character of the revolutionary, the sinister male nihilist (Russian anarchist), and the equally sinister but infinitely more beautiful female *nihilistka*. Yet, even as they sought to demonize the revolutionaries, fiction provided space for the metaphorical victory of liberalism over nihilism. Also, by narrating the activities of the revolutionaries, fiction turned the dreaded anarchists into human beings who often possessed rational motives for their violent actions.

These novels create a unique ecoscape of St. Petersburg composed of troikas careening down the snow-covered avenues, promenades on the fashionable Nevsky Prospekt, the opulent mansions of noblemen, and the balls at the Winter Palace. In the words of Walker Kennedy, "The Balls at the Winter Palace . . . were the most magnificent in the world. Rich American mammas, had they been very numerous in Russia, would doubtless have parted with some of the goldmines of their husbands for the privilege of lifting the veil and passing the threshold of the delicious *terra incognita*. Nothing in the way of social glory that France in the grasp of *le grand* monarque had celebrated, or England in her fabulously wealthy present has attempted, or Germany with the prestige of her powerful Kaiser, could be compared with the receptions of the Man who owned absolutely the people of half of Europe and half of Asia."<sup>53</sup> Kennedy goes on to describe the handsome Chevaliers, the dashing Lancers, the showy Cossacks, and, of course, the Hussars of the Guard without whom no American story could be complete.<sup>54</sup> But if their pedigrees were spotless, their conduct was less so. The novels describe a charming but feckless caste of Russian aristocrats who gamble

<sup>53</sup> *In the Dwellings of Silence*, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Many of the American novelists seemed to have borrowed the descriptions of the social life of the Russian nobility from an article written by a famous French critic, Vicomte Eugène Melchior de Vogüé, "Social Life in Russia," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (May 1889), 833–55. See also his, *The Tsar and His People, or Social Life in Russia* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1891), 1–100. For flattering descriptions of Russian aristocrats, see Théophile Gautier, *Russia*, Florence Macintyre Tyson, trans. (Philadelphia: J. C. Winston Co., 1905); Marquis de Custine, *Empire of the Czar: A Journey through Eternal Russia* (New York: Doubleday, 1989).

recklessly, sport beautiful mistresses, fight duels, drive around madly in their horse-drawn carriages, and spend their life in search of romantic intrigues.

Borrowing heavily from the models of charismatic heroines found in the works of Tolstoy and Turgenev, American novelists depicted the Russian noblewomen as fascinating, unbearably beautiful, and splendidly dressed.<sup>55</sup> A Murray guide to the Russian empire warned female visitors that the season in St. Petersburg was comparable to that of Paris and that Russian women dressed impeccably.<sup>56</sup> Walker Kennedy, in his description of Valerie Melnikoff, the exquisite heroine of *In the Dwellings of Silence*, wrote, "So elusive is the essential charm of beauty that words are pale and inadequate to picture it with its unheard harmony, its ghost of frail color, its indefinable and subtle graces."<sup>57</sup> Harriet Waters Preston, writing in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1887 observed ruefully, "those marvelous Russian women who dazzle and reduce to despair all the rest of the feminine world."<sup>58</sup>

Style and charisma aside, Russian noblemen and women are essentially undemocratic and treat their underlings with unjustified harshness. The aristocratic and beautiful Sibyl in *Narka the Nihilist* (1887) compares her servants to horses and believes that the knout is the best cure for most of Russia's problems.<sup>59</sup> Contrary to reality, in the novels the Russian nobility seem untouched by the social and economic problems that beset much of the European nobility in this period, and live in a feudal world of haughty aristocrats and obsequious peasants.<sup>60</sup> In the world of popular fiction, the Russian nobility seems

<sup>55</sup> For an interesting analysis of women in Russian fiction see, Barbara Heldt, *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Also see de Vogüé's admiring comments about Russian women, in *The Tsar and His People*, 30–31.

<sup>56</sup> T. Mitchell *Handbook for Travellers in Russia, Poland and Finland* (London: John Murray, 1893), 78.

<sup>57</sup> *In the Dwellings of Silence*, 18. See also the descriptions of Wanda in Louise Gagneur's *Nihilist Princess*, reviewed in *Atlantic Monthly* (Oct. 1881): 568–69. The novel was based loosely on the life of Sofia Perovskaia, one of the first Russian women to be executed for a political crime there. For an American version of this story, see Mary Lee Berry, *Philip Harum: The Nihilist Student* (New York: J. H. Brown Publishing Co., 1892); Danovitch: A Russian Romance. *Living Age* (Jan. 1892): 65–128.

<sup>58</sup> Harriet Preston Waters, "The Spell of Russian Writers," *Atlantic Monthly* (Aug. 1887): 200.

<sup>59</sup> Kathleen O'Meara, *Narka the Nihilist* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1887), and serialized in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1887. Amelia Barr, *Michael and Theodora: A Russian Story* (Boston: Bradley and Woodruff, 1892); John K. Leys, *The Black Terror: A Romance of Russia* (Boston: L. C. Page and Co., 1900); Mary J. Holmes, *Lucy Harding: A Romance of Russia* (New York: American News Co., 1905).

<sup>60</sup> Seymour Becker, *Nobility and Privilege in Late Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985); Gary Hamburg, *Politics of the Russian Nobility, 1881–1905* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984); Roberta Manning, *Crisis of the Old Order in Russia: Gentry and Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). Unfortunately Chekhov's reputation was established in the United States after World War I and thus American writers were unaffected by his unforgettable portraits of the declining Russian gentry. A. N. Nikoliukin, *Chekhov and America*, in Norman Saul and Richard Mckinzie, eds., *Russian-American Dialogue on Cultural Relations, 1776–1914* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 212–21.

impervious to the travails of history and the rigidly stratified court society appears frozen in a time capsule of ceremonious court ritual and elaborate spectacle. As T. J. Jackson Lears has shown, Americans in the late nineteenth century became obsessed with images of the medieval order, Catholicism, oriental mysticism, and other forms of anti-modernist art and ideologies as a means to adjust to the demands of modernity and secularism.<sup>61</sup> Imperial Russian society represented the antithesis of modern fragmentation and social dislocation as the place of each nobleman was preordained by rules of blood and honor and unscathed by destabilizing effects of bourgeois commerce, social mobility and peasant uprisings.

At the same time, the opulent life of the Russian nobles exists only at the sufferance of the tsar, who can denounce them at will to the ubiquitous secret police that surround them.<sup>62</sup> Often the tsar is ill advised by evil and conniving ministers, but the nobles exist at his caprice and the imperial anger can turn the highest nobleman of the realm into an outcast in Siberia.<sup>63</sup> These novels capture the personalized nature of power and position in an autocratic society. America and Americans, by contrast, are predictable, staid, and slightly bland. Savage, in his novel *For Her Life* (1897), repeatedly talks about the boring life of his upper class protagonist, Walter Grahame, a lawyer from Philadelphia. Grahame cannot help but compare his demure American fiancée unfavorably to the exotic Russian beauties who so effortlessly excite his passions. As it turns out, predictability is America's chief asset and selling point abroad. Russia, then, functions like the Western and imperial frontier where the American hero can be revitalized and regain his manliness.<sup>64</sup>

At the same time, Russia is not an escape from the restraints of civilization and modernity; in a way, it represents the apotheosis of an Old World civilization trapped in the new iron cage of bureaucratic politics. The American hero in Russia has to thereby combine an anthropological knowledge of elite social mores with a capacity for individual republican action. Savage more than any other writer exemplifies this tension in his work. His 1891 novel *My Official Wife* creates the portrait of a gruff and cosmopolitan American soldier. The hero, the middle-aged Arthur Bainbridge Lenox, is traveling to St. Petersburg to visit his daughter, who has married into an aristocratic Russian family. Lenox's susceptibility to beautiful young women leads him to befriend the

<sup>61</sup> *No Place of Grace: Anti-Modernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

<sup>62</sup> *Narka the Nihilist* (1887); *In the Dwellings of Silence* (1893); *Michael and Theodore* (1893).

<sup>63</sup> Gagneur, *Nihilist Princess*. See also Thomas Bailey Aldrich's, "Paulina Pavlovna," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (Dec. 1887): 50–56.

<sup>64</sup> Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization. A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American War and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

fascinating and mysterious adventuress, Helene Marie, and he takes this radical imposter to St. Petersburg as his wife. She claims to be a relation of the Vanderbilt-Astor family and Savage makes several overt comparisons between the Four Hundred families of New York and the noble society of St. Petersburg, and notes the easy social intercourse between the two. As the Russian Colonel Petroff observes, "Americans of your class always are great favorites on the Neva."<sup>65</sup> Likewise, Baron Friedrich, head of the dreaded Third Section of the secret police in St. Petersburg, treats Lenox with obsequious respect, and remarks, "Americans have the entrée everywhere in Europe."<sup>66</sup>

Indeed, Lenox is welcomed everywhere in St. Petersburg: at the soirees, the receptions, and even the Yacht Club where he gambles and carouses with the dissipated noblemen. Nonetheless, he is a reluctant hero, and throughout the novel, he is petrified about being in Russia and suffers repeated nightmares of arrest by the dreaded secret police immortalized in Stepniak's book, *Underground Russia* (1883). Only at the end, when Helene Marie, actually a nihilist in disguise, reveals her plans to assassinate the tsar, does Lenox spring into action. He laces Helene Marie's champagne with opium rendering her immobile and consequently saves the Russian tsar and his empire!

Other American heroes and heroines appear more sensitive to the political ardor of the Russian revolutionaries and prove adept at devising exit strategies when political exigencies threaten their Russian idyll. They help revolutionaries outwit the secret police and smuggle them out of Russia in various disguises.<sup>67</sup> Frank Devereux, hero of the novel *In the Dwellings of Silence* (1894), rescues Valerie Melnikoff from the infamous gold mines of Kara, and after a chase through Siberia escapes with her on an American ship from Kamchatka.<sup>68</sup> "The presence of Devereux alone prevented her excitement from degenerating into absolute terror. . . . He was absolutely indifferent to the rigid laws and customs with which the country was encrusted. He bade defiance to them all. The Czar's holy powers had no authoritative terrors for him. Valerie could not deeply admire the American spirit, which was so free from all trammels save those imposed by liberty, conscience, and truth."<sup>69</sup> The adventures end with the safe return of the protagonists to America, where tempestuous beauties and charismatic nobles marry their American counterparts, part

<sup>65</sup> *My Official Wife*, 32.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 54

<sup>67</sup> Holmes, *Lucy Harding*; Ruth Kedzie Wood, *Honeymooning in Russia* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1911).

<sup>68</sup> A reviewer in *The Nation* observed that while Kennedy had used Kennan's volumes on Siberia, the book contained many inaccuracies on matters of diplomatic protocol and the geography of Russia and Siberia. *The Nation* (8 Mar. 1894): 58.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 199–200.



with their revolutionary ideals, and settle down to a placid and domesticated existence.<sup>70</sup>

#### THE NIHILIST IN FACT AND FICTION

The American protagonist in Russia is engaged on a dual quest, one in which he has to outwit the omniscient secret police in Russia, and more importantly, redeem the nihilist and neutralize the power of violent revolution. The ambiguity of the response to revolution is exemplified, once again, in Savage's work. In the preface to his well known 1894 book *The Anarchist: A Story of Today*, Savage says anarchism, socialism and communism are trying to destroy the fabric of society in France, Spain, Italy, and Russia, and calls for "organized cosmopolitan repression" on behalf of the civilized world to wipe out the menace.<sup>71</sup> In his novels set in Russia, however, Savage exhibits a far more complex response to nihilism and, more often than not, his American hero is terribly attracted to a beautiful and bewitching nihilist heroine. Imaginative geography in this instance displaced the threat of revolution and instead created the myth of redeeming the revolutionary. Different genres of transnational literature played a significant role in customizing Russian revolutionaries for Western consumption.

In this section, I will analyze counter-narratives by émigré Russian authors that introduced the self-representation of Russian revolutionaries as selfless and highly cultured individuals who turned reluctantly to violence, and then only to assuage the oppression of the masses. I will also plot the process through which the Russian revolutionaries used their mastery of high culture and literature to deflect attention away from their terrorist acts toward their infinitely more noble cause of revolution. The model of the cultured revolutionary was initially popularized in Russia, and subsequently introduced into the realm of nineteenth-century world politics through the prodigious output of Russian memoirs, autobiographies, and novels. We see the elaboration of this figure first in elite literary and political discourse, but later it was refracted throughout Europe and America through the means of popular literature, which played a significant role in whitewashing the violent activities of the revolutionaries.

Beginning in the late 1880s, anarchism was seen as a serious threat to the existence of a civilized world already encircled by the rise of an international labor movement. Anarchism was used interchangeably with nihilism, communism, and socialism, and few commentators bothered to distinguish the philosophical ideas from the ongoing violence.<sup>72</sup> The chosen methods of the

<sup>70</sup> Barbara MacGahan, a Russian émigré writer, also sends her characters, the idealistic Boris and Vera, to America when all their socialistic ventures fail in Russia. *Xenia Repina: A Story of Russia Today* (New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1890).

<sup>71</sup> *The Anarchist: A Story of Today* (Chicago: F. T. Neely, 1894), 4.

<sup>72</sup> James Joll, *The Anarchists* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

anarchists—the use of bombs and dynamite to kill prominent government officials—received wide coverage in the media. The decade of the 1890s was inaugurated by a series of anarchist bombings in Paris in 1892, followed by the 1894 assassination of President Lazar Carnot in France, and of many other European monarchs, prime ministers, and presidents. Anarchists detonated explosives in crowded public places, exacerbating public fear and hysteria. In the United States, the chronology followed a slightly different trajectory. The severity of the police repression following Chicago's Haymarket riots resulted in a cessation of anarchist violence except for Alexander Berkman's unsuccessful 1892 attempt to kill the manager of Carnegie Steel. President McKinley's 1901 assassination was an isolated act and not a grand conspiracy.

Scholars have shown that both the press and popular novelists on both sides of the Atlantic offered crude caricatures of the anarchists as essentially violent, criminal, degenerate, undesirable aliens who were more often than not of Jewish origin. Anarchism was linked to fears of the rise of organized labor and disorganized mob violence.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, parallel discourses about Russian revolutionaries played out in both the press and the pages of popular fiction.<sup>74</sup> While the Russian noblemen Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1866) and Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921) were publicly reviled in the Western press as the architects of a fiendish international conspiracy of terrorist cells with global reach, Russian revolutionaries sought to present a civilized face to the Western world through memoirs and both literary and popular fiction.<sup>75</sup>

The typical Russian nihilists of 1860s Russia were idealistic young men and women who advocated the use of science and education to civilize the Russian masses.<sup>76</sup> In the 1870s, Russia's major revolutionary party, Land and Freedom, was composed of the *narodniki* or populists, who believed propaganda would rouse the peasants to revolution. When the peasants proved deaf to populists' exhortations, a group of Russians formed the party People's Will (*Narodnaia*

<sup>73</sup> Nathaniel Hong, "Constructing the Anarchist Beast in American Periodical Literature, 1880–1903," *Cultural Studies in Mass Communication* 9, 1 (1992): 110–30; Wm. M. Phillips, *Nightmares of Anarchy: Language and Cultural Change, 1870–1914* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003); Haia Shpayer-Makov, "Anarchism in British Public Opinion 1880–1914," *Victorian Studies* 31, 4 (1988): 488–516. Also see her "A Traitor to His Class: The Anarchist in British Fiction," *Journal of European Studies* 26, 3 (1996): 299–325.

<sup>74</sup> Charles Johnston, "Nihilism and Anarchy," *North American Review* (Sept. 1900): 302–14.

<sup>75</sup> Paul Avrich, *Russian Anarchists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1967); Aileen Kelly, *Mikhail Bakunin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); P. A. Kropotkin's *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1899) was also serialized in *The Atlantic Monthly* from 1898–1899. For their influence abroad, see Steven Marks' *How Russia Shaped the Modern World*, 7–56.

<sup>76</sup> Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Peter C. Pozefsky, *The Nihilist Imagination: Dimitrii Pisarev and the Cultural Origins of Russian Radicalism, 1860–1868* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

*Volia*). Members believed that assassination of the Tsar Alexander II would unlock the revolutionary potential of the masses. People's Will was composed of dedicated and effective individuals, who assassinated the tsar on 1 March 1881. The government destroyed the organization by executing and jailing most of its members, but the Socialist Revolutionary Party formed thereafter and continued to assassinate key members of the Russian government as part of its revolutionary strategy.

At the same time, Russian revolutionaries were extraordinarily adept at sanitizing their violent record and persuading large sections of the world of their sincerity. While other modern revolutionaries such as Mao and Gandhi depended on adept translators such as Edgar Snow, or on a Louis Fischer or Margaret Bourke-White to broadcast their ideologies, Russian revolutionaries were able to transmit their messages to influential centers of world opinion. This was because of their own consummate literary skills and familiarity with Western culture, and due to the good offices of outstanding Russian novelists who through their fiction prepared Western audiences to understand the 'noble' motives of Russian revolutionaries.<sup>77</sup> In their memoirs, revolutionaries of various persuasions created memorable self-portraits of sensitive, intellectual, self-sacrificing individuals who wanted to educate and enlighten the masses.<sup>78</sup> Only because they were caught in the throes of a vicious Russian despotism did they reluctantly turn to terror. Ultimately, they martyred themselves for the sake of the people and endured the horrors of prison, exile, and death.<sup>79</sup>

Alexander Herzen, the brilliant Russian thinker, in his memoirs written in exile, created the enduring image of the cultured and aristocratic intellectual who was also a revolutionary.<sup>80</sup> The well-known Russian socialist Leo Deutsch (Lev Deich) wrote that when packing in preparation for his exile in Siberia he gave away his watch, rings, and cigarette case, and kept only his volumes of Shakespeare, Goethe, Heine, Molière and Rousseau.<sup>81</sup> The paradigm had such power within the Russian context that it survived into the Bolshevik regime. Not only did Lenin and Trotsky stress their deep knowledge

<sup>77</sup> Tolstoy's famous novel, *Resurrection* (1899) deals with the inhumanity of the Siberian prison system.

<sup>78</sup> One of the foundational texts in this tradition is Vera Figner's abridged works, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991).

<sup>79</sup> See Sally Boniece's article on the female terrorist and myth of martyrdom in Russian culture, "Spiridonova Case, 1906: Terror, Myth, and Martyrdom," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 4, 3 (2003): 571–606. Barbara Walker, "On Reading Soviet Memoirs: A History of the 'Contemporaries' Genre as an Institution of Russian Intelligentsia Culture from the 1790s to the 1970s," *Russian Review* 59, 3 (2000): 327–52.

<sup>80</sup> *My Past and Thoughts: The Memoirs of Alexander Herzen* (New York: Knopf, 1968); N. Pirumova, *Russia and the West: Nineteenth Century* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1990); Lev Tikhomirov's, *La Russie politique et sociale* (Paris: E. Giraud and cie, 1886). Tikhomirov, founder of People's Will, helped shape the image of the populists in Europe.

<sup>81</sup> Helen Chisholm trans., *Sixteen Years in Siberia: Some Experiences of a Russian Revolutionist* (Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1977 [1903]), 94–95.

of literature, philosophy, and political economy, but even the more proletarian Stalin fancied himself as a literary critic of considerable discernment.<sup>82</sup>

Even Turgenev, who has been praised for advocating a gradual Westernization of Russian society, regarded the Russian nihilists primarily as ideologues rather than terrorists.<sup>83</sup> He was perpetuating a well-established Russian literary trope when in his novels such as *Rudin* (1855), *On the Eve* (1860), *Fathers and Sons* (1862), and *Virgin Soil* (1877) he presented the nihilist as a parlor revolutionary, more given to talk and debate than the bloody execution of the idea. Thus Bazarov, the doctor-turned-nihilist in Turgenev's immensely popular *Fathers and Sons*, is forever dissecting frogs while pontificating on philosophical materialism. Henry James, a devotee of Turgenev, in his novel *Princess Cassamasima*, modeled his protagonist Hyacinth very much in the manner of the superfluous man of Russian novels. Hyacinth is incapable of action, torn as he is between revolution and his commitment to art and culture.<sup>84</sup>

George Kennan, one of the main conduits of information between the Russian revolutionaries and the Western world, perpetuated the image of the cultured Russian revolutionary in his masterly expose on the tsarist penal system, *Siberia and the Exile System* (1891).<sup>85</sup> Kennan was tireless in his support of the revolutionary movement in Russia, and to that end gave hundreds of public lectures in various American cities, clad in the ragged costume and heavy chains of a Siberian convict. Kennan noted on numerous occasions that Russian political exiles were "refined and educated people, fully half of them spoke French, German or English."<sup>86</sup> He went on to say that they were versed in English and American culture, that some of them were scientists, and that they were for the most part exactly like his American friends.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Leon Trotsky, *My Life: Attempt at an Autobiography* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970); Robert Service, *Lenin: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 2000); Robert Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928–1941* (New York: Norton, 1990).

<sup>83</sup> William L. Kingsley, "Nihilism in Russia as It Appears in the Novels of Ivan Turgeneff," *New Englander and Yale Review* 37 (Sept. 1878): 553–73; Jacques Barzun, "Russian Politics in Russian Classics," *Commentary* 5, 91 (1991): 41–47.

<sup>84</sup> Christine Richards, "Occasional Criticism: Henry James on Ivan Turgenev," *Slavonic and East European Review* 78, 3 (2000): 463–86.

<sup>85</sup> Initially serialized in *Century Magazine* in 1888.

<sup>86</sup> Papers of George Kennan, box 4, p. 28, New York Public Library, Division of Rare Books and Manuscripts Division. See also an article by J. H. Rosny who reiterates a familiar theme of the cultured and poverty stricken Russian revolutionary: "Nihilists in Paris," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (Aug. 1891): 429–42; and see Willard Brown, "Socialists in a German University," *Atlantic Monthly* (Dec. 1881): 801–13.

<sup>87</sup> Alice Stone Blackwell, ed., *The Little Grandmother of the Russian Revolution: Reminiscences and Letters of Catherine Breshkovsky* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1917); Christopher Lasch, *The American Liberals*, 8–9. Shannon Smith, "From Relief to Revolution: American Women and the Russian-American Relationship, 1890–1917," *Diplomatic History* 19, 4 (1995): 601–16. Lillian Wald and Jane Addams were also close friends of the noted Russian revolutionary Ekaterina Breshkovskaia.

Kennan was aided in his endeavors by the prodigious literary talents of the Russian revolutionaries themselves. Thus in 1898 and 1899 *The Atlantic Monthly* serialized Kropotkin's memoir, *Autobiography of a Revoliutionist*. The most important publicist for the Russian revolutionary cause, however, was Sergei M. Kravchinsky, or Stepniak, as he called himself. Stepniak in his own persona embodied the American myth of redemption through immigration. A propagandist of formidable skills, he candidly said his dream was to "conquer the world for the Russian revolution; to throw upon the scales the huge weight of the public opinion of civilized nations."<sup>88</sup> Stepniak was originally a member of Land and Freedom, and the perpetrator of one of its first planned terrorist acts. In 1878, he executed General N. V. Menzenstsev, chief of the Gendarmes in St. Petersburg, and fled to England where he helped found the influential organization Society for the Friends of Russian Freedom. Free Russia.<sup>89</sup> He had considerable success in the United States, and prominent intellectuals such as George Kennan, Julia Ward Howe, William Lloyd Garrison, and William Dean Howells helped him in his international anti-tsarist crusade.<sup>90</sup>

Stepniak's extremely popular and essentially hagiographical account of the lives of famous Russian revolutionaries, *Underground Russia* (1883), played an important role in stirring world opinion against the Russian autocracy.<sup>91</sup> His friend Mark Twain was deeply impressed with the selfless martyrdom of the Russian nihilists after reading the book. In a letter to Stepniak dated 23 April 1891, Twain described their "superhuman heroism which fixes its eyes upon the gallows under the far horizon, years away, and marches steadily to it through the flames of hell without tremor of body or blanching of cheek or spirit, and proposes to itself to get for its personal share, only the gallows."<sup>92</sup> Stepniak himself said that two developments had changed international attitudes towards Russia: the creation of Russian literature, and the generations of self-sacrificing Russian revolutionaries.<sup>93</sup> He translated Vladimir's Korolenko's novella *In Two Moods* into English and claimed in the introduction that the

<sup>88</sup> Sergius Stepniak, "What Americans Can Do for Russians," *North American Review* (Nov. 1891): 600.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas C. Moser, "An English Context for Conrad's Russian Characters: Sergey Stepniak and the Diary of Olive Garnett," *Journal of Modern Literature* 11, 1 (1984): 3–42; Donald Senese, *S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii: The London Years* (Newtonville, Mass.: Oriental Research Partners, 1987).

<sup>90</sup> Jane E. Good, "America and the Russian Revolutionary Movement, 1888–1905," *Russian Review* 41, 3 (1982): 273–87. For Stepniak's correspondence with Edward Bellamy, Poultney Bigelow, and William Dean Howells, see Russian State Archives of Literature and Art, Moscow, S. M. Kravchinskii fond, 1158, op. 1, ed. khr. 196, l. 1; khr. 202, l. 2, 3; and khr. 495, l. 1, 4.

<sup>91</sup> Evgeniia Taratuta, *Podpol'naia Rossiia: Sud'ba knigi S. M. Stepniaka-Kravchinskogo* (Moscow: Kniga, 1967).

<sup>92</sup> Russian State Archives of Literature and Art, S. M. Kravchinskii fond, 1158, op. 1, ed. khr. 445, l. 2.

<sup>93</sup> S. Stepniak, *Nihilism as It Is* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1894), 65–66.

writer had accurately portrayed the idealism and high-mindedness of the young revolutionaries.<sup>94</sup> Stepniak also wrote a semi-autobiographical novel, *Career of the Nihilist* (1889), in which he tried to bring together Russia's pre-eminent cultural exports: literature and revolutionary ideologies. Several reviewers compared the novel to Turgenev's *Father's and Sons*, and it enjoyed considerable popularity in Europe and America, as well as in Russia.<sup>95</sup>

Andrey Kozhukhov, the hero of *Career of a Nihilist*, is a far cry from a bloody terrorist. He is a sincere, slightly melancholic soul whose own love affair with the beautiful Tania accounts for a good half of the story. Other revolutionaries in the novel also fall in love, go on picnics, and sing innocent songs at woodland gatherings. For the most part Andrey is rather pathetic in his revolutionary attempts and the Russian police outwit and outflank him at every twist and turn of the novel. Nonetheless, he has a burning desire to save the masses and avenge the brutal oppression of the revolutionaries. In the end, he is put to death after he fails in his attempt to kill the tsar.

Others émigré Russian writers such as Abraham Cahan<sup>96</sup> and Lydia Pimenov Noble also used their novels to disseminate portraits of romantic and sensitive nihilists, caught in the vice of despotism and only resorting to terror when they have exhausted all other options of fostering change. While in their memoirs Russian revolutionaries were extremely taciturn and reserved about their private lives, émigré writers were quick to adopt the conventions of Western melodrama to propel their tales about revolutionaries. Thus in the novels of Stepniak, Abraham Cahan, and Lydia Pimenov Noble, the chaste love-affairs of the protagonists receive as much attention as their revolutionary activities.<sup>97</sup>

In American fiction, the Russian nihilist is less intellectual and more prone to action than philosophical debates. In Savage's novel *For Her Life* (1897), Hermione is feminine and yielding, but returns to Russia in the face of intense danger carrying ciphers crucial to sustaining the nihilist code. Although Savage refers to an established anarchist conspiracy that matches the secret police in organization, terror, and cruelty, he focuses on remaking Hermione,

<sup>94</sup> Vladimir Korolenko, *In Two Moods* (London: Ward and Downey, 1892).

<sup>95</sup> Stepniak (S. M. Kravchinsky), *The Career of a Nihilist: A Novel* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1889); "Sergius Stepniak," *Harper's Weekly* (17 Jan. 1891): 41–42; V. Voronov and V. Zemskov, "Angliiskaia pressa ob 'Andree Kozhukhove,'" *Novyi mir* 6 (1956): 273–74; Evgeniia Taratuta, *S. M. Stepnyak-Kravchinsky; revoliutsioner i pisatel'* (Moscow: Khudozh-lit, 1973), 341–56, 392–410; Richard Freeborn, *The Russian Revolutionary Novel: From Turgenev to Pasternak* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 30–38; See also Thomas B. Eyges' translation of Kravchinsky's play, *The New Convert: A Drama in Four Acts* (Boston: Stratford Co., 1917).

<sup>96</sup> Stepniak had a lasting influence on Cahan. Sanford E. Marovitz, *Abraham Cahan* (New York: Twayne, 1996), 121.

<sup>97</sup> Abraham Cahan, *The White Terror and the Red* (New York: Arno Press, 1975); Lydia Pimenov Noble, *Before the Dawn: A Story of Russian Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1901).

who soon realizes violence is not the answer. She falls in love with the American hero, who arranges to have her rescued from the prison island of Sakhalin. In most novels, the American hero or heroine redeems the Russian nihilist. While initially they defend their cause, they soon abjure propaganda by deed, and their subsequent immigration to the United States further mitigates the theme of violence.<sup>98</sup> The original model of the Russian revolutionary loses valence and potency as it travels west and becomes a pale, bourgeois version of its former self. Violent and exotic women lose their power to seduce and destroy. When they come to America, they are transformed into domesticated helpmeets because, as observed by Marie, the nihilist heroine of *Out of Russia* (1911), "The world has nothing to offer that is better than America and American husbands."<sup>99</sup> Like most imported products, Russians lose their flavor in transit, travel, and translation, but this facilitates their integration into American society.

#### RECONSIDERING SYSTEMS OF REPRESENTATIONS

Romances and mysteries grappled with philosophical problems of good and evil, democracy versus absolutism, republican equality and aristocratic distinction, violence and gradual change, and for the most part offered ambiguous resolutions to the ordering of society. If popular fiction reified the life of aristocrats, the writers were not entirely untouched by the revolutionary ardor of the nihilists that threatened to destroy the same society of nobles. While the novels demonized the nihilist to a certain extent and perpetuated stereotypes of the international brotherhood and ubiquitous anarchist cells, they also provided a space in which the abstract terrorist took on a series of recognizable forms and the putative threat became concretized through the means of narrative. American popular literature, shaped by transnational and émigré influences in the late nineteenth century, made the Russian revolutionary a living reality in the minds of millions. While it may have inflamed anti-anarchist feelings in the United States, it simultaneously humanized the Russian revolutionaries and gave their cause enduring legitimacy.

In this essay, rather than study American popular fiction about Russia as a series of static texts containing an American master narrative about Russia,

<sup>98</sup> See Richard Pipes' fascinating account of Sergei Degaev, a Russian revolutionary turned police informer, who, after his immigration to the United States in 1886, received his doctorate in mathematics from Johns Hopkins and became a respectable professor. *The Degaev Affair: Terror and Treason in Tsarist Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). I should add that during the decade of 1890s there was a considerable increase in immigration from Russia to the United States, especially from sections of the Russian Jewish population. Moses Rischin, *The Promised City, New York Jews, 1870–1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962); Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>99</sup> Marriott Crittenden, 257; Sylvanus Cobb, *Ivan the Serf*, 91.

I see them as a locus of dynamic activity that gave voice to many discourses, elite and popular, national and international, and native and immigrant. In turn, we can analyze popular fiction as a microcosm of the way American cultural hegemony functioned in the world. American discourses, unlike other national systems of representation, were distinctive because of their ability to absorb a variety of oppositional, subversive, and émigré texts, and to serve as a transnational space where ideas and myths fought for legitimacy.<sup>100</sup> While American experts continued to thunder from their academic and state-sponsored pulpits about Russian backwardness and the urgent need for economic modernization, popular fiction painted seductive images of aristocratic and revolutionary Russians who represented cultural modernity. The power and novelty of American knowledge of Russia lay both in its receptivity to Russian interpretations and its selective use of myths created by the Russian intelligentsia. Throughout the twentieth century, influential Russian émigrés such as Trotsky and Solzhenitsyn tried to sell their version of Russian history to the American academy and a larger American public. Influenced by their writings and politics, many of the American histories of Russia became organically enmeshed in concentric circles of Russian self-representations. This heteroglossia gave American discourses about Russia their aura of authenticity and deep expertise.

Because of the conflicting solutions contained within the pages, it is hard to imagine which particular messages readers selected out of the maelstrom of voices and events, but the practical effect of the literature is easier to discern. Access to and mastery of high culture sanitized both the aristocrat and the revolutionary, making it easier for select groups of Americans to continue their love affair with both Russian culture and radicalism through much of the twentieth century. I refer not only to committed American communists such as John Reed and Anna Louise Strong, who joined the Bolshevik Party, but rather to legions of fellow travelers and sympathizers who championed the Soviet revolution through the grim decades of Stalinist repression. Later, liberal opinion in the West was once again obsessed with the plight of the oppressed intellectuals in the Soviet Union.<sup>101</sup> The Western media helped publicize the voices of the Soviet dissident movements of the 1960s and 1970s and played a crucial role in toppling the communist regime. In the post-Soviet era, as American fascination with radicalism seems to be on the wane, we are witnessing a revival of interest in imperial Russian culture. Not only have there been a series of major

<sup>100</sup> Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); David Engerman, "American Knowledge and Global Power," *Diplomatic History* 31, 4 (2007): 599–622; Jessica Geinow-Hecht, "Shame on US? Academics, Cultural Transfer and the Cold War: A Critical Review," *Diplomatic History* 24, 3 (2000): 465–94.

<sup>101</sup> Liudmila Alexeyeva, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990).



exhibitions on Tsarist art, artifacts, and memorabilia in American museums over the last two decades; organizations such as the *American Friends of the Russian Country Estates* are helping to restore the Russian noble mansions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from decades of neglect and disrepair. The glamorous lifestyles of the Russian nobility continue to fascinate us from beyond the grave.