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ABSTRACT

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Maxim Dobrushin

The Invention of Russia in America aims to break new ground by exploring an international phenomenon that was well-known in the nineteenth century but has since become an under-studied moment in U.S. literature and culture: the rise of Russian culture and politics at a time when the U.S. was considering new methods of literary representation, art-criticism, and language. My dissertation argues for the multi-directional influence at the turn-of-the-century of Russian realism and Russian revolutionary nihilism and anarchism in the U.S., shaping American literary realism, the popular novel, and translation theory. The project begins with the U.S.'s foremost Russian-to-English translators, Nathan Haskell Dole, Benjamin Tucker, Isabel Hapgood, and Constance Garnett, all of whom work with what I call "flexible translation." Flexible translation points to U.S. Russian translators' reliance on biogenetic pseudoscience, how racialized theories of climate zones and geography represented language as an extension of a nation's environmental and national development, as well as a stand-in for Russian writers, equating their greatness and universality with Russian literature. Such a theory of language influenced the reception of Russian aesthetic theory in the U.S. by writers across multiple zones, including the canonical (William Dean Howells), the 'ethnic' (Abraham Cahan), and Russian emigres (Petr Kropotkin). These writers argued for the sacrality of language through art-criticism, which sought to compensate for U.S. "immaturity" through

Russian figurations of the literary critic as a torch-bearer of intellectual progress. I argue that Howells, Cahan, and Kropotkin sought to use the theories of Russian art-criticism to develop democracy and inclusivity by drawing on altruistic forms of evolutionary discourse, derived from Herbert Spencer. Finally, the dissertation concludes by exploring what I call “narratives of failure,” realist novels that rely on nihilist themes and the principles of art-criticism to explore democracy and inclusivity. These novels include Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), Henry James’s *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), and Cahan’s *The White Terror and the Red* (1905). By exploring the ideals of art-criticism through novels that depict social change in the making, I seek to show how narratives of failure choose to ignore the fissures of the present by substituting narrative harmony into the future, resulting in the failure of democracy and inclusivity to take hold.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1941, Professor Robert Erskine Ely—praised by Eleanor Roosevelt, in 1941, as a man that “has known as many of the great figures in the world of art, music, politics, science, international affairs and literature as any other one person now living in this great city [New York][,]” (Roosevelt)—took the Russian anarchist, Petr Kropotkin, to call on the widow of the president of the Confederacy (Avrich 97). The widow of Jefferson Davis was expecting a call from Ely and Kropotkin, but instead encountered Booker T. Washington, who went in search of Ely only to end up in the same hotel lobby as Mrs. Davis (Avrich 97). Upon the request of Mrs. Davis, Washington was introduced to her, and “the anarchist prince, the black educator, and the widow of a slave-owning president” “conversed as if it were a most ordinary occasion” (Avrich 97).

What were the political and cultural conditions that placed the anarchist prince, the black educator, and the widow in dialogue with one another? The historical affiliation between Russia and America shows a cultural and political syncretism that simultaneously defines and redefines the perceptions of each nation: during various periods, the U.S. created its own version of Russia through translation, novels, art, and literary criticism while Russia had its own versions of the U.S. These affiliations have a deep history. In the case of this triadic, comical meeting, the political cause of Russian anarchism found a wide audience in America; anarchism reinforced a conception of democratic liberalism that challenged the Czarist autocracy in Russia while countering the contradictions and paradoxes in America’s form of

government—best represented, among other examples, by the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and the Dawes Act (1887), two acts that specifically went against democratic values because they excluded certain groups from representation and constitutional rights. A burgeoning cultural dialogue between these nations, furthermore, was created through genres and institutions that would come to define the cultural imaginary of Russia in America, an invention, I argue, that begins with the start of the Crimean War.

This historical conjuncture produced what I call (adapting Maurice Samuels's 2010 title *Inventing the Israelite: Jewish Fiction in Nineteenth-Century France*) the process of “inventing Russia” in nineteenth-century America (Samuels). The word “invent” stresses the unique version of Russia in the U.S. during this moment by studying its inventions through translation, literary criticism, and the realist novel; during other time periods, this invention—and hence version—will vary. This dissertation explores the intersections where these exchanges and mediations occurred, specifically the modes and genres that first reflected Russian aesthetic theory in America—from travel writing, to popular history, to historical fiction, and to literary criticism, genres that were popular in both the U.S. and Russia. Some inventions occur through the translation practice of Russian texts in America and through the politics and aesthetics that intertwined in the American culture of letters to simultaneously allow U.S. literature to develop its supposed immaturity and adhere to European realist principles while advocating for the uplifting of the working class.

Scholars Cindy Weinstein and Christopher Looby have attempted to historicize American literature's changing relationship to the aesthetic while paying attention to ideology, historicity, and politics, in what has been called the "aesthetic turn" (Weinstein and Looby). Critics working in this frame attempt to question the critical view that writing about the aesthetic produces a disregard for politics. My study of Russia and America during the nineteenth-century presents a case of intimately intertwined politics and aesthetics in the literary, cultural, and political scenes. Writers, critics, anarchists, and nihilists of multiple nationalities and linguistic allegiances attempted to transform the U.S. to their literary and philosophical vision of the ideal society. The canonical realist writer William Dean Howells adapted the criticism of Russian critics to investigate the newness of U.S. literature and the "immature" ("Editor's Study" August 1886) status of U.S. literary criticism in response to the accusation that American literature is imitative and that writers must "not imitate" other writers, as Ralph Waldo Emerson noted in his essay "Self-Reliance" (1841); the multilingual and multinational writer Abraham Cahan adapted the Russian historical novel to examine the politics of persecution and revolution; the Russian anarchist prince Kropotkin lectured in the United States about the value of Russian literature and criticism to propagate his alternative view of Social Darwinism; and Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, and Cahan used what I call, following Hawthorne, a "narrative of failure" to examine the legacy of nihilism and radical politics.

Scholars have also begun to stretch the boundaries of the international to redefine the importance of the later Soviet Union in cultural movements such as Black Modernism (Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line*). Yet few scholars have begun to uncover a cultural dialogue that would see a proliferation of Russia in American popular culture before the Soviet period. As this introduction and dissertation will show, various institutions and genres helped promulgate the invention of Russia that would come to shape political, economic, and cultural encounters between two rival, imperial powers. For every imperial encounter, to paraphrase Mary Louise Pratt, an equal and opposite reaction occurs.¹ In other words, while American culture was beginning to symbolically represent Russian political and cultural life in popular discourse, this identification in itself positioned and defined America.

This dissertation seeks to understand how these symbolic identifications occur in diaphanous and porous encounters, a phenomenon that Pratt terms an “imperial contact zone, a space “where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (Pratt 7). When cultures, nations, or people enter an imperial contact zone, these conditions and relations often involve “coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (Pratt 8). Pratt’s framework, however, useful as it is, focuses on cultural encounters that pit a dominant entity against an often indigenous culture that does not possess the resources to deflect and defend its sovereignty. This zone changes when imperial encounters occur between hegemony such as the United States and Russia. Political and cultural clashes against rival imperial powers require new and unique armory:

unique genres and institutions that promulgate and propagate a distinct symbolic image and a specific set of cultural relations that promote values not in the battlefield but in political and cultural territory. Here, the weapons are not cannons and guns, but liberal democratic ideals. The so-called weapons also include genres such as travel writings, popular novels, and literary criticism; a post-Civil War burgeoning magazine and periodical culture that upholds anti-autocratic slogans; and high-canonical, national literatures whose porous boundaries multi-directionally influence movements and periods; and political movements and ideologies such as Russian anarchism and nihilism.

Tracing the Invention of Russia in America

As early as the 1870s, U.S. newspaper periodicals associated nihilism and anarchism in Russia with terrorism. This moment all together fascinated the U.S. public who in turn wanted translations of Russian texts to access the life and thoughts of nihilist agents and to understand nihilism as new phenomenon of motivated terror. Indeed, Claudia Verhoeven argues that “terrorism...was invented in imperial Russia...in the late 1870s” (4). Whereas my use of the term “invent” indicates how the U.S. adapted a certain genre or practice and created its own version, for Verhoeven the term indicates the beginning, or creation, of political terrorism. *The New York Evangelist*, for example, defined Russia in the same manner, linking terrorism to assassinations and revolutionary plots: “If the old definition of Russia, as a despotism tempered by assassination, needed renovation, that need is supplied by the government reports of the great Nihilist trials that have been going on at St.

Petersburg” (“The Russian Conspiracy”). Other magazines, depending on their politics, either condemned or approved the tactics of the anarchists and nihilists. Commentators denounced the “tempered” brutality and despotism of the Czars while praising the nihilists for their fight; the other side condemned the nihilists as a scourge and “Russian heresy” (“Russian Nihilism”), as a writer in *Littell’s Living Age* states.

Though some translators started out by advocating for a wider readership of Russian writers, their relationship with Russian politics unintentionally sparked popularity in Russian literature. One of the early translators of Russian texts, George Kennan (the great uncle of George Frost Kennan), “wanted the great Russian authors to command the respect among American readers” (Travis 79). Kennan’s significant travel narrative, *Siberia and the Exile System* (1891), granted popular legitimacy to nihilist and anarchist translators of Russian texts that promoted Russia in the U.S. Ideologically, Kennan’s narrative of Russian culture and politics worked to translate Russia’s large land and customs into interpretable data. His motivation to explore Siberia and its exile system stemmed from the fact that “to the average American” Siberia “was almost as much a *terra incognita* as central Africa or Tibet” (Kennan iii). To explore meant to walk the earth (*terra*) and trace the unknown (*incognita*), and the feminine ending of the Latin word *incognita* indicates a type of knowing that associates Russia with the all too familiar “Mother Russia” paradigm. To know also meant an act of translation.

As these examples show, it's hard to pinpoint when Russia became a major staple in U.S. culture and politics. Other scholars tracing the inventions of Russia in other nations usually pinpoint their studies around the 1880s. Russian scholars Rebecca Beasley and Phillip Ross Bullock, for example, situate their study of Russia's influence in Britain to 1880 (1). In Mexico, though Russian interest stretched to the early nineteenth century, a marked resurgence occurred "during the last third of the [nineteenth] century" (Richardson 213). In the U.S. popular imagination, the presence of Russia can be traced to the start of the Crimean War (1853-1856), which stemmed from a religious dispute between the Ottoman and Russian empires. In the literary sphere, Mark Twain documented his trip to Crimea in 1867 with a veneration of the Russian soldiers that fought in the Crimean War, and he also wrote about British actions in the Crimean War in a less known short story entitled, "Luck" (1891). But it's even possible to stretch the U.S.'s ties to Russia back to the American Revolution when American diplomats vied for recognition of their nationhood from Catherine II (Usitalo and Whisenhunt 11).

As they make clear, Beasley's and Bullock's and Richardson's studies indicate that a defining moment took place in the 1880s that instantiated Russian art *and* politics in the U.S. sphere, and this moment has as much to do with the increased activities of anarchists and nihilists in Russia and the U.S. and increased translations of Russian texts. This "moment," which begins in the 1880s, captures a time when a flurry of translations by revolutionary nihilists and anarchists, Russian princes, and iconic literary figures spread the invention of Russia through their genres of choice,

each with varying politics, though it was specifically the “great” Russian novel that captured the complex and ambiguous relationship between Russia and U.S. translation. A significant portion of criticism of Russian literature centered on Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Gogol, with occasional nods to Dostoevsky and Pushkin. The French statesman, Eugenie Melchior de Voguë, in 1896, published his *Le Roman Russe (The Russian Novel)*, focusing on Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy. Melchior de Vogue’s work was translated by Colonel H. A. Sawyer in 1916, and it was a book that Howells and T.S. Perry both read in French (1886) and then later in English (Howells and Perry). *The Great Masters of Russian Literature* by Ernest Dupuy, translated by Nathan Haskell Dole, appeared in 1886, and it focused on Gogol, Turgenev, and Tolstoy. *What’s to be Done?* by Nikolai Chernyshevskii, a leading Russian literary critic, appeared in translation by Nathan Haskell Dole and S. S. Skidelsky in 1886. In 1897, Kropotkin delivered a wide-ranging lecture on Russian literature and surprisingly poetry that eventually led to his famous Lowell Lectures, in 1901, and then to the publication of those lectures in book form.

Historians, unlike literary scholars, have varying arguments about the unique presence of Russia in the Western world during the 1880s. Historian David Engerman argues that Russia’s push toward modernization and industrialization began around the 1870s, indicating a reciprocal need for the U.S. to understand its competitors and enemies, since the notion of Russian backwardness and difference had been internalized by the U.S. from European conceptions of Russia (Engerman 18). For this reason, the U.S. developed institutions of translation in order to understand

Russia's path of development. This would explain why the genres I explore—Russian literary narratives, political tracts and pamphlets, and literary criticism—appeared in the U.S. around the 1880s, and then later why Russia studies departments started in U.S. universities around the turn-of-the century. Larry Wolff, another historian, traces this U.S.-versus-them orientation back to the eighteenth century—the Age of Enlightenment. As Wolff explains, “The Enlightenment had to invent Western Europe and Eastern Europe together, as complementary concepts, defining each other by opposition and adjacency” (5). Wolff’s use of the term “invent” comes close to how I use Pratt’s framework to think of the U.S.’s version of Russia during this moment: one nation had to define itself by either adopting desirable cultural values, or by negating and opposing key values. Through the antithesis of opposition and identification, Russia exercised a popular hold on the U.S. public sphere because it represented the multiple antitheses between the Russia and the U.S., respectively: autocratic versus democratic.; “mature” literature versus “young” literature²; backward versus progressive.³ Opposition and identification most forcefully come up in the texts I explore because writers had to contextualize Russia to readers unfamiliar with its institutions.

Methodology and the Comparative Dimension Between Russian and the U.S.

In this dissertation I demonstrate how each genre, institution, and discourse overlaps, intersects, and imbricates another; to neatly separate the cultural and political layers reinforces a monologic and uni-directional model of investigation. I propose, instead, to study the conjunction of simultaneous noise, ambivalence, and

syncretic outpourings of two rival cultures. To this end, it is instructive to take Pratt's "imperial contact zone" and view it through Fernando Ortiz's and Ángel Rama's notion of transculturation, neoculturation, and deculturation. The problem with acculturation is the uni-directionality and uni-vocality of the term, wherein cultural change implies that one culture sheds its cultural identity and in place adopts a foreign identity. Implicit in this notion of cultural identity is a univocality that views one culture as "an empty vessel, immaculate of ideas and ready to receive enlightenment" (Frye xv). Yet for two powerful, rival imperial powers, a different dynamic begins to operate. A transcultural model, with its concomitant parts of neoculturation and deculturation, emphasizes a two-way street, where one culture exerts influence while simultaneously absorbing aspects of other cultures. Such a conception of culture reinforces a non-porous model of the nation-state, one that views cultural dialogue as uninhibited by arbitrary borders, and consequently reinforces a transnational view that is sensitive to the international context.

Perhaps the clearest example of a transnational encounter of this nature occurs in the context of Russia's feudal structure of serfdom and the United States system of slavery. During the American Civil War, Russia supported the Union and held pro-Western views in its decision to condemn slave-owning institutions. Russia's progressive policies stemmed from its push toward European models of standardization. In 1861, Russia abolished serfdom, but serfs nonetheless were burdened with "redemption payments" that sought to redress "landlords for their loss of property" (Engerman 44). Decades after the abolition of serfdom, the popular

journalist and Russophile Isabel Hapgood, a key figure in the sphere of translation that I explore, likened the days of Russian serfdom to an ideal state of being, a nostalgic moment used by Southern apologists to promote slavery in the Southern states (Engerman 42). Indeed, the South figures prominently in the works of both Russian and American writers: Kropotkin praised Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for its abolitionist stance against slavery (Avrich 80); Bakunin, the foremost anarchist made famous by his encounters with Marx and Proudhon, similarly devoted his sympathy to the North during the Civil War and widely condemned Southern planters for their amorality (Avrich 20). These comparisons reverberated in popular discourse in both cultural contexts and reinforced a transnational internationalism: in the case of the United States, a means to contain and silence the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Russian nobility in the interest of diminishing imperialist rivalry; and in the case of Russian anarchists, a means to promote the demise of an oppressive, autocratic government.

In the popular sphere, Russia came to be defined through its despotic, autocratic Czar, its severe penal institutions, and its bomb-throwing nihilists. We can examine how studying Russia in America allows us to study America itself. Some of these connections are made evident not only in the burgeoning genre of imperial romance novels, but in America's domestic and foreign policies during the post-Civil War period, partly because the question of the state was an important resource for imperial expansion. During Andrew Johnson's presidency (1865-1869), what has come under the label and now called American expansionism largely involved the

consolidation of state power (Zakaria 38). While political scientists debate the causes for the rise of state power, one conception has it that “strong states” must have access to material resources and must grow a strong centralized government to conduct its imperial goals and aims. In the process of state consolidation, imperialism supports a burgeoning state-strong system that must seek external material resources to grow the state. As Fareed Zakaria has it, “Without centralized decision making and without access to material resources, no state can be considered strong” (39). One has only to think of President James Polk and the Mexican War and his annexation of Texas to understand that America’s imperialist desires are paradoxical when we consider the nation’s appeals to American democracy and patriotism. In the imperial context, only when “Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States...[and] has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon American soil” does America appeal to a unitary and homogenous national identity to consolidate imperial expansionism (Zeisberg 59). In other words, the study of Russia and America involves a discussion of the discourse surrounding American patriotism and nationalism and how these discourses were legitimated and resisted.

Studying the invention of Russia in America during this moment helps explain why radical and subversive movements such as Russian anarchism found traction in the American public sphere. If anarchism is a political philosophy that argues for all human associations and governments to be fully voluntary, the American and Russian nation states come under direct scrutiny, since the state consolidates its power through social contractarian policies (Rousseau, Hobbes, and Locke) that bind

individuals to the collective without the consent of the governed people (Sartwell 10). Part of this phenomenon has to do with the nature of the state: it needs constant affirmation and legitimation by institutions and the people to affirm its existence (Sartwell 10). Given the nature of the state, law becomes important in understanding how legitimization requires juridical prescriptions to administer and enable the state to function. More importantly, the study of Russia and America requires viewing the nation and the state “symbiotically” (Sartwell 24). As Sartwell says of the state, “States use nations as means of asserting legitimacy, and hence encourage the identities that go with them [and] [n]ations enter into and leave states, extend across their borders and then are reincorporated, declare their independence and then enforce an account of their identity” (24). In other words, the nation and state reinforce various conceptions of the foreign and domestic. The nation is an “aesthetic” category because relies upon “symbol systems, songs, monuments, [and] literatures” to uphold its status and legitimacy (Sartwell 24). In the cultural sphere, the category of the aesthetic operated in literary criticism and realist novels to explore and undermine alternative politics that wanted to change the nation. To untangle the dense webs of these symbols requires studying the symbiotic relationship between the nation and the state. It is for this reason that anarchism posed such a danger to established democracies and autocracies: it challenged the conception and legitimacy of the state; it is also largely for this reason that the genres and institutions I discuss are part of the discourse upholding and legitimizing the state but also rebelling and criticizing its formation.

Thinking about the radical political invention of Russia during this moment, we can see how the term “radical” had different meanings in the U.S. and Russian contexts and how it attempted to challenge the nation and the state. In nineteenth-century Russia “radical” meant an overthrow of romantic idealism and sentimentalism passed down from Pushkin and a complete acceptance of realist aesthetics, which owed its intellectual roots to Hegelian and Feuerbachian philosophy, positivism, and English utilitarianism. In America, the nineteenth-century notion of the “radical” was often implicated in socialist and anarchist ideology, and suggestively was not part of a radical development in art as it was in Russia.⁴ Yet explicitly in Russia and implicitly in America, nihilism *and* anarchism were coterminous with realism because this movement, as reflected through the Russian context, was both a political and aesthetic translation of Russian nihilism and anarchism. This aesthetic movement fit well within the realm of politics because the Russian “radical” critics espoused the view that literature is life and that literature must inform our actions and behaviors. As the Russian scholar Irina Paperno says of Chernyshevskii, “Nihilism, or realism, in behavior paralleled realism in literature: both disparaged conventionality and proclaimed an ideal of direct reference to reality, a mode of expression that was candid and natural” (Paperno 1988).

Travel Narratives, Mark Twain, Genre, and Russia

Twain was the first prominent literary figure with a translational relationship with Russia before the U.S. became saturated with news reports about Russia’s nihilist and anarchist movements. During his voyage on the “Quaker City,” Twain

pleased Alexander II so much that the Russian Minister to the United States decided to make a “translation of the interview from *The Innocents Abroad*,” where Twain recounted his reception by the Czar (Twain 147). Twain signified the tendency to heroize the actions of the Czar, a feature that U.S. translators would adopt when translating Russian writers, associating text—or written discourse—with genius. Twain’s explorations of the world’s empires emerged in his travel narrative *The Innocents Abroad* (1869) and in an anti-autocratic journal, *Free Russia*, when he set sail on the *Quaker City* from New York and through many cities, including Athens, Constantinople, and Russia. Following the tradition of American writers writing as both journalists and novelists, Twain documented the details of his journey and sent them to periodicals such as the *New York Sun*, *Cleveland Herald*, *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, and *Woman’s Pilgrimage*. When he arrived in Yalta, Twain chaired a committee of five that was tasked with writing an appeal to Czar Alexander II. Like earlier writers, Twain associated Russia with the royal qualities of the Czar. “We are a handful of private citizens of America,” writes Twain, “traveling simply for recreation—and unostentatiously, as become our unofficial state—and, therefore, we have no excuse to tender for presenting ourselves before your Majesty, save the desire of offering our grateful acknowledgments to the lord of a realm, which through good and through evil report, has been the steadfast friend of the land we love so well” (quoted in Ganzel 193). Twain made sure to submit this entreaty to newspapers in America so that his American audience could keep well apace of his developing acquaintances with the rulers of foreign lands (Ganzel 194).⁵

As Twain's *Innocents Abroad* shows, travel writings were a defining genre that made available tropes of Russia's land and the excesses of the autocratic state; without these narratives it would be difficult to imagine how the U.S. came to know Russia. The exile system Twain refers to in his preface was popularized by several travel narratives that introduced American readers to "despotic" Russia. One prominent example that stands out of the many travel narratives is Kennan's travelogue, *Siberia and the Exile System* (1891). Similar to Twain, Kennan submitted his writing first to periodicals and only then published this material in book form. Indeed, Kennan's topic was so popular, that his lectures on the Siberian exile system was "once given two hundred weeknights in a row" (Budd 147). The public was quick to pick up colloquial tags that equated Russia with despotism and a mad autocracy. It was only fitting that ideological movements such as anarchism and nihilism were starting to circulate through Europe and Russia, and slowly making their move to the United States. What made periodicals so advantageous to advancing political and cultural views and travel writings such as Kennan's, were the efficacy and verity of the burgeoning journalistic trade that buttressed American exceptionalism, a feature of periodicals and travel writings that reinforced a sharp distinction between the foreign and domestic. Twain's essay "The American Press," for example, argues that newspapers have the obligation to ensure that its people are "in love with their country and its institutions, and shielded from the allurements of alien and inimical systems" (Twain, *The American Claimant and Other Stories and Sketches* 78). Though Twain would come to question patriotism and blind allegiance

to one's cause, his writings anticipated journalistic writing that would cover the Bolshevik Revolution and the Cold War. More so, Twain's writings demonstrate that a sensitive and nuanced audience has the ability to use propaganda in periodicals to influence and sway public opinion. Travel writings reinforced the hold that literary criticism written in periodicals would have in the U.S. sphere.

Travel writings evince a similar quality to journalism, mainly the verity and credibility that a foreigner establishes while on tour through a land. During the nineteenth-century, Russia's moving border with Ottoman Turkey drew an abundance of imperial attention (Ram 23). In the Russian context, Russia's south "assumed and reinforced a deeper east/west dichotomy" (Ram 23). Russia's contiguous landmass, as opposed to lands overseas, created a discourse that envisioned Russia's expanding empire on its borders: to expand an empire meant to be on the edges of one's nation. Coupled with Russia's impulse to position itself as a Western power, Russia had to constantly negotiate between its identification with Western Europe and its Eastern neighbors (Lim). As the literary critic Harsha Ram says, "imperial power in Russia became rhetoricized or aestheticized by certain poets within specific genres," and this led Russian poets to negotiate the perimeters and definition of its empire, contingent upon how poets and writers envisioned their identification with the East and the West (Lim 27). In the U.S. context, the travel writer Kennan imposed his order of knowledge and observations on Russia to create an imperial taxonomy, which made the land and people objects of a categorical system of observation. This allowed for opportune moments to exploit the land and to document potential sources of

economic profit. As Pratt says, “empires create in the imperial center of power an obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its other continually to itself” (Pratt 4). In other words, the empire becomes reliant on its expansions to define and re-define itself. Said differently, the state at large must constantly find new ways to legitimize its function. In American travel writings of the period, Russia provided a means not only to define the state, but also to redefine and expand on an emergent U.S. imperialism, one that would become a key imaginary in redefining the American transliterary arena.⁶ While Kennan was presenting Russia as a beautiful land he unintentionally legitimized the struggle of the nihilists and hence popularized the translation of Russian literature.

One of the key figures who influenced America’s literary landscape was Ivan Turgenev. His work *Fathers and Sons* (1862) made widely popular the figure of the nihilist, represented through the figure Bazarov. The figure of the nihilist, devoted to an impassioned cause that required absolute abandonment of personal and material relations, stretched the definition and capabilities of American realism and naturalism. Critics are eager to find literary precedent for American realism and naturalism in Zola and Balzac.⁷ Yet one has only to turn to the criticism of Howells and Henry James to witness the impact of Russian realism on American letters. Americanists have upheld a one-way model that seeks to reinforce a French-American connection. This also extends to the New-Historicist work on the impact of Social Darwinism on American writers, which has often been confined to Lester Ward, Herbert Spencer, and Darwin. Yet acknowledging the anarchist Kropotkin and

his book *Mutual Aid* (1902) that argues for an altruistic model of Darwinian thought has the ability to invite antagonistic discourse that can provide a wider and more comprehensive view of the intellectual thought of the period. Situating Russian realism alongside American realism and naturalism allows for the possibility of examining a transamerican literary history that takes into account translations and alterations that influence this history. No one has said this better than Anna Brickhouse: “Situating each text and each set of literary relations within and across a range of multilingual and often antagonistic strands of cultural production rather than affiliating them solely with a single national tradition or dominant public sphere...[allows for the study of] literary appropriations of historical genealogies that oppose the assumptions of nationalist historiography; and, most crucially, authorial practices of affiliation and contestation that determine the shape of literary genealogies, of textual inheritance and tradition” (Brickhouse 34). Though Brickhouse’s work focuses on the U.S. imperial context and its subsumption of the wider Americas’s literary history and genealogy, this context applies to Russia as well. Reclaiming and identifying the transnational routing of Russia in America allows for a reopening of American letters that was made accessible through Russian writers and poets.

Chapter Overviews

The first chapter of this dissertation explores the invention of Russia through the sphere of translation. This chapter establishes how land, soil, and climate created the view that Russian language and its people possess flexible and expressive

qualities. I call this phenomenon a “climate of flexibility,” which denotes the practice of associating topography and climate with biological characteristics. In line with this practice, U.S. translators Nathan Haskell Dole, Constance Garnett, Benjamin Tucker, and Hapgood viewed language as an expression of a nation and its people. Since Russian was a “flexible” language, one that developed because of Russia’s long winters, U.S. translators understood the language to have vast morphological capabilities. Russian could be paraphrased, re-styled, and even redacted because of its flexible characteristics. The U.S. translator Tucker, for example, mistranslated, removed, and neglected to translate several chapters of Chernyshevskii’s novel, *What’s to be Done? A Romance* (1886); the translators Dole and Hapgood removed sections of Tolstoy’s “The Kreutzer Sonata” (1899) because they thought the story would offend the U.S. public. The phrase “a climate of flexibility” explores the nineteenth century translation practice of linguistic and ethical transgression. Though nineteenth-century translators do not use this phrase, I demonstrate how French ethnographers, biblical scholars, and U.S. translators used climate, soil, and biology to develop a translation philosophy of flexibility unique to this period.

In the U.S., translation and translational practices operated on ideological and practical levels, much like an imperial contact zone with transcultural elements, though in this study genres function as contact zones that spur on political and aesthetic activity. The socialist Utopian novel, for example, allowed translators to abandon fidelity and insert their politics more forcefully into the text. The translated genres that I explore, ranging from the socialist Utopian novel to the Russian

revolutionary novel, carry out their ideological aims without cognizance of their function: no one translator uses the term “flexible,” but their practices do denote a practice of viewing the Russian language through the discourse of flexibility. The Russian novel allowed translators to engage their politics under their often ambiguous and changing translation philosophies, though speeches, the popular novel, and literary essays were also used by various translators to promote Russian politics and art. Dole and Hapgood, for example, demonstrated their tendency for moralistic redactions in their translations of Tolstoy because they did not believe in sex and violence. Russian texts in the U.S. worked through the antithesis of opposition and identification. For some, translation operated under the banner of heroizing Russian political figures and writers for their anti-authoritarianism in politics and literature while their translation philosophy espoused a politics of betrayal and political silence, as Tucker’s example shows.

Unlike U.S. translators, British translators of Russian texts operated from a Russophobic angle (with a strong emphasis on Russian backwardness, as defined by the Western Europe and Eastern Europe dichotomy), starting what Rachel May calls “informational translation,” a practice that “disregarded the artistic qualities of the works...in favor of the content, which, in turn they often distorted with stereotypes of Russian villainy and backwardness” (14). In the U.S. sphere translation and translational politics were what I call heroic, as translators emphasized the radicalism of the writer—or their politics—or favored the artistic qualities of the work. Depending on their translational politics, translators showed their informational bias

when they did not agree with the social politics of the writer; when the writer's literary representations were viewed as crude, the translators would redact all erotic scenes from their translations. To varying extents, translators heroized a Russian writer when they either praised their politics, or viewed their translational endeavors as radical and liberating, particularly when they translated what they thought were radical works. Most U.S. translations were greatly influenced by the French translations that they used as their models. Tucker's translation of Chernyshevskii's *What's to be Done?* (1886) espoused anarchist-hero politics, as stated in an advertisement for his newspaper, *Liberty*, that "insists on the sovereignty of the individual and the just reward of labor; on the abolition of the State and the abolition of usury" (Spooner 48). And fittingly his sympathetic politics toward anarchism led him to translate Mikhail Bakunin's—described as the "founder of nihilism and apostle of anarchy"—*God and the State* (1883), translating this work from the French and maintaining French idiolect in his translation.

My second chapter explores literary criticism in connection to U.S. and Russian aesthetic theory. During this period literature held a didactic purpose; "literary truth" equates to "spiritual truth," as Howells said, because it could instruct and develop social consciousness ("Editor's Study" August 1886, 810). Literary criticism and realist novels worked in tandem to demonstrate how art could depict life. In the American literary context, Cahan and Howells promoted the precepts of Russian aesthetic theory via the writings of Nikolay Chernyshevskii, Nikolay Dobrolyubov, Vissarion Belinsky, and Dmitry Pisarev with several aims: to debate

and define the limits of Jewish ethnic belonging in American life; to create the great realist novel that would place the United States on a world literary stage; to accurately depict the dialect of the new immigrants populating city centers; and to promote a literary criticism that defined art as both a medium for social criticism and as a medium that reflected life. Cahan, the Jewish immigrant writer, and Howells, “dean” of American letters, are among my case studies exploring these transnational, translingual, and intertextual modes linking Russian realism and American realism. While Howells was drawn to the idea that the literary critic serves as an enlightened consciousness who can instill “literary consciousness” into readers, Cahan viewed the critic simultaneously as a social critic and intellectual leader in line with the Russian tradition of literary criticism (“Editor’s Study” August 1886).

Literary criticism on the merits of realism and the novel written by Cahan, Howells, and James promoted Russian realist “truth” as a political and aesthetic standard in America. Literary criticism, or what Kropotkin calls “art-criticism,” was mainly written in magazines and periodicals both in Russia and the U.S. Similar to Emerson’s call for literary “truth” in “The American Scholar” (1837), U.S. critics sought to champion aesthetic and political criticism that would openly discuss working-class politics and social problems. Using Russian writers as their models, American writers championed character-driven fiction and a style of narration that placed the narrator in the background. This type of fiction had a political and aesthetic purpose for the reason that Russian realism viewed literature as “a work of education” (Howells, “Editor’s Study” August 1886). Education came with a

particular political purpose while the mode to convey this “education” was aesthetic in its tone. Literary reviews and criticism and James’s prefaces to his novels became the American equivalent of Russian literary criticism because Russian critics debated their views in periodicals; American debates on realism were discussed in *The Atlantic* and *The North American Review*, in immigrant Russian-English newspapers, and in working class journals such as the *Workmen’s Advocate*.

Howells’s knowledge of the history of Russia’s literary criticism—dating back to 1836— helps explain how he culturally translated the role of Russian aesthetic theory into America. In his 1886 “Editor’s Study,” Howells argues for what he and other writers saw as America’s much needed push away from romance and into realism. Echoing James’s stance on the abundance of romance from his biography of Hawthorne, Howells envisioned Russian realism as a way to draw upon European history and culture to dispel “the coldness, the thinness, [and] the blankness” of American culture, which offered too many creative possibilities for the romancer to imagine harmful idealizations (James, *Hawthorne* 42). By drawing upon Russia’s literary tradition, Howells inserted himself into a Russian debate between the “men of the 40s,” who debated whether Russia should look toward the West (Westernizers, as they were called) or toward its own roots (Slavophiles), and the “men of the 60s,” who were the radical, “nihilist” literary critics (“Editor’s Study” April 1896). The “radical” critics espoused utilitarian views that elevated the sciences because they viewed such disciplines as capable of improving the human condition. The Russian critics grounded theory in the sphere of realist aesthetics, arguing that

literature must in some way be didactic because art had the ability to improve social and civic life. “The Russians who have followed Gogol and learned from him, as now the whole world must learn from them,” writes Howells in his 1886 article, “have not heeded those childish demands, and they form a group from which one can hardly turn to other literatures without feeling that he enters an atmosphere of feigning, of insincere performance and ignoble ideals” (“Editor’s Study” April 1896). Howells encourages writers to “learn” Russian aesthetic theory and consequently to strive for a style of writing that promotes sincerity and “truth” because art can improve social and civic life: a position that Howells embraced in the context of the socialist principles of Tolstoy. Howells and others read most frequently the readily available translations and works of Chernyshevskii by Dole and S.S. Skidelsky; of Sidney Jerrold’s translation of Turgenev’s *First Love* and *Púnin and Babúrin*, a translation that includes a detailed history of Turgenev’s and Belinsky’s epistolary exchanges; and of works by anarchist Victor Yarros who discussed Russian literary critics in American periodicals.

Cahan and other American writers read the Russian literary critics to write about class, populism, race, and capitalism through realist aesthetics to depict all strata of society, from the working class to the bourgeois to the nouveau riche. In his dissertation, “The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality” (1853), Chernyshevskii expanded Kant’s notion of the disinterestedness of the aesthetic to stand for an aesthetic that spans judgment, morality, and insight into the human condition (Chernyshevskii). Critic Charles Moser concludes, “the implicit thrust of

[Chernyshevskii's] argument is that in the ideal society of the future art would merely describe reality much as history does" (Moser, *Esthetics as Nightmare* 9). These Russian critics aimed to revolutionize Russia by advocating an art that would depict "real" life in order to educate a growing literate population made up of various classes. It was the function of art, the critics said, to analyze society and hence contribute to the social consciousness of the nation and to aesthetically and politically demonstrate that "the interests of the individual were overridden...by those of larger groups or social classes" (Offord 130).

Despite providing a historical, cultural, and political exploration of art-criticism, I explore the disjunction between theory and practice. In this dissertation, I use Kant's definition of antinomy to demonstrate how two arguments lead to two different conclusions. Fredric Jameson argues that realism functions as a "hybrid concept, in which an epistemological claim (for knowledge and truth) masquerades as an aesthetic ideal" (5-6). Whereas the discourse of Russian art criticism promoted the democratization of reading with a reliance on an authority (an epistemological claim), narrative representations of radical nihilist philosophy demonstrate a containment of any radical impulse or politics (the aesthetic ideal), and this hybridity demonstrates the paradox inherent to realism. Wolfgang Funk argues that realism resides in a "contradictory" and tension-filled space where there's an "incommensurability" between reality and its representation:

"The longevity of this debate...can be traced back to the unbridgeable gap between ideas and appearances as described by Parmenides and Plato. In book X of *The Republic*, Plato himself takes this incommensurability of reality and representation as proof of art's structural insignificance and falsity (see 2003:

335–53). Aristotle, in contrast, turns the argument on its head by assigning to art an access to a higher, abstract kind of truth. Precisely due to its disconnection from reality, so he argues in the *Poetics*, art need not concern itself with petty assumptions about what is right or wrong in a particular situation but can aim at more fundamental issues that transcend the mundaneness of everyday life (see 1987: 1–43)” (68).

As my second chapter explores, contradictions abound at the intersection between realism and its ideals and realism as it was actually practiced. Though Howells, for example, advocated for literature to serve as a didactic and guiding source of instruction for people, this instruction could only occur through a mediating, literary critic. Cahan, on the other hand, reworked Herbert Spencer’s aesthetic theory that was antithetical to art and realism in order to elevate realism and its merits. In the sphere of narratives, the novels I explore propose forward-thinking political alternatives to the present order, but all these proposed solutions end in failure.

While the second chapter traces literary criticism of Howells, Cahan, and Kropotkin, my third chapter explores Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), James’s *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), and Cahan’s *The White Terror and the Red* (1905) to demonstrate how realist novels that imagine alternative, utopian futures always seem to end in failure. Though Hawthorne chronologically falls outside the scope of my study, his novel *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) allows me to contextualize Hawthorne’s engagement with Russian politics and James’s later continuation of these politics in his novel *The Princess Casamassima* (1886).⁸ By beginning my discussion with Hawthorne’s use of a Russian nihilist to inflect his narrative, I draw a connection from Hawthorne to James to study what I call the aesthetics of realist love through the emancipatory political aim in each novel, though

the political project always ends in failure in the realist novel. Perhaps the genre of the realist novel limits the possibility of political emancipation, as the political end could never attain reality in life. The structure of repetition of thwarted love in these novels is channeled into the political project of revolution and anarchy. The aesthetic representation of love in these novels requires that we read the failure of the political projects as a failure of everlasting love: Priscilla does not return the love of Coverdale; Hyacinth's disenchanted love for the Princess Casamassima leads to his death; and Cahan's aristocrat-revolutionary Pavel communicates with his love through chinks in his jail cell in the Peter and Paul Fortress. Thwarted love aesthetically substitutes the failed project of utopia or anarchy, and the aesthetic repetition of desire also initiates each character into a process of radicalization and revolution. The aesthetics of love dampens the disenchantment with the failed politics of emancipation, and this phenomenon I call the "narrative of failure."

Though chapters two and three are separate, they should be viewed as exploring two genres that relied on each other. Theoretically, I consider how the aesthetic distorts utopian promise by obscuring divisions in the present moment. Several critics and theorists have established this point, though I do explore exceptions to some of their examples. Terry Eagleton, for example, argues that the aesthetic "offers a generous utopian image of reconciliation between men and women at present divided from one another...[while] block[ing] and mystif[y]ing the real political movement towards such historical community" (9). What Amy Kaplan calls "willed amnesia" is a phenomenon whereby "[r]ealistic novels often share an impulse

with their utopian counterparts to project into the narrative present a harmonic vision of community that can paradoxically put an end to social change” (12). Similar to Kaplan, Jameson argues that “all genuinely historical novels must have a revolutionary moment as their occasion: a moment of radical change, which lifts their content out of the placid continuities of mere custom and of the picturesque daily life of this or that exotic moment of the past” (266). Each theorist and critic demonstrate how the aesthetic and the realist novel work with temporal elements to examine social conflict while exploring forward-moving political movements. While literary criticism worked to produce social change, realist novels narratively depicted how social change may run up against various forms of resistance. These barriers usually stem from the inability of the present moment to work through social fissures that are rooted in the past. Though art-criticism promised and wanted to develop social consciousness, democracy, and freedom, novels depicting political struggle for these ideas demonstrate a failure to deliver these ideals.

A transnational approach to Russian and American literature redefines the boundaries of American literature and views the trans-American literary sphere as a site of intellectual activity. This sphere of activity is sensitive to traveling and exiled writers that continually move between borders and challenge the boundaries of nation and language. As the anecdote at the beginning of the chapter demonstrated, the meeting between Davis, Kropotkin, Ely, and Washington shows how figures representing different ideologies and views come together in unexpected ways. This dissertation seeks to explore the fascinating invention of Russia in America, but it

leaves several questions unanswered: How can we more expansively include Russians that emigrated to Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico in the trans-American literary sphere? How do we challenge the borders, the literary history, and the disciplinary insularity of what it means to write within—and participate in—American literature? Though my dissertation considers what it means to democratically belong in the U.S. by looking at Du Bois's aesthetic theory, it is still vital to ask: how does the participation of W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, and Claude McKay in the Soviet Union to fight for black civil rights open up and expose silenced cultural anxieties that change the literary landscape of American letters? How do issues of translation become inflected in the imperial imaginary between two rivals? Though my dissertation answers some of these questions, and though other scholars have worked and are working to answer others, there is still much work left to do to understand the hold Russia has had—and still has—on the U.S. imagination.

Notes

1. One way helpful way to view these antitheses is through Mary Louis Pratt's conception of an "imperial contact zone." Pratt uses the term "imperial contact zone" to denote a space "where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (8). Pratt's framework focuses on cultural encounters that pit a hegemonic entity against an often indigenous culture that does not possess the resources to deflect and defend its sovereignty. During the 1880s, however, the encounters I study between Russia and the U.S. occurred in a more political and cultural environment, rather than a strictly bureaucratic or governmental sphere. Russian culture, from its politics and aesthetics, had more to say in the arenas of U.S. politics and arts. This is why I find Fernando Ortiz's and Ángel Rama's notion of transculturation, neoculturation, and deculturation helpful to discuss the U.S. and Russian exchange because it emphasizes a two-way street, where one culture exerts influence while simultaneously absorbing aspects of the other culture, particularly through practices of translation.
2. The youthful quality of American literature is a staple in U.S. literary history. The canonical realist writer William Dean Howells adapted the criticism of Russian critics to investigate the newness of US literature and the "immature" status of US literary criticism in response to the accusation that American literature is imitative and that writers must "not imitate" other writers, as Ralph Waldo Emerson noted in his essay "Self-Reliance" (1841).
3. Russian backwardness is a staple of Russian history, signifying economic and racial/national impediments to progress. As Engerman says, "The dichotomies between politics and culture, civilized and uncivilized, were frequently mapped onto Russian society itself" (21).
4. As Howard Brick and Christopher Phelps say, "So characteristic of the radical experience is this duality that it dates to American radicalism's formative phase, prior to the Civil War, when to advocate immediate freedom for all slaves was a *radical* idea embraced by a prophetic minority, an idea that made one a pariah....The decades before the Civil War saw abolitionism spill over...[and] [c]ommunal experiments in socialism mushroomed" (Brick and Phelps 8).
5. Among the imperial powers Twain documents, he had particular interest in using Russia to influence his conception of democratic liberalism. It was the perfect despotic country that would provide a refraction of America's ideal, national virtues. The extent to which Twain's

involvement with Russia is tied up with his anti-imperialist activities, most scholars have a thorough knowledge of these relations; however, Twain's specific involvement with Russia and the concomitant influence of Russia on his work remains underdeveloped. Few scholars have explored Twain's involvement in the anti-autocratic journal *Free Russia*, where there exist exchanges between the editor of the journal and Twain about publishing a hoax reply to Alexander III (Budd 147). More so, in the original preface to Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Twain describes how "Russia had to be left out because exile to Siberia remains" (Paine 1656-57). Twain's purpose was "to show a great and genuine progress in Christendom" and with the existence "of torture and despair," there will remain "one country in Christendom where no advance has been made toward modifying the medieval penalties for offenses against society and the State" (Paine 1656-57). Again, Twain reinforces conceptions of the state that would guide and dominate American popular discourse.

6. I borrow the phrase "transliterary arena" from Anna Brickhouse. See Anna Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations and Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere*, Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture 145 (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
7. See Christophe Den Tandt, "American Literary Naturalism" and Winfried Fluck, "Morality, Modernity, and 'Malarial Restlessness': American Realism in Its Anglo-European Contexts," in *A Companion to American Fiction, 1865-1914*, ed. Robert Paul Lamb and Gary Richard Thompson, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub, 2005).
8. The lines between James and Hawthorne are well known, allowing me to deepen their engagement with Russian politics. In his biography of Hawthorne, James says that the political ideal in *The Blithedale Romance* was to examine how "each individual concerned in it [the commune] should do a part of the work necessary for keeping the whole machine going." James's *The Princess Casamassima* explores the opposite: how individuals can destroy the whole machine. See page 79 in James's *Hawthorne* (1879).

CHAPTER ONE

A Climate of Flexibility: Russian Translation Philosophy and Practice in the Nineteenth-Century U.S.

In a footnote to his translation of Nikolai Chernyshevskii's work, *What's to be Done? A Romance* (1886), Benjamin R. Tucker, the U.S.'s foremost anarchist-popularizer of Russian texts, said that "[t]he few pages which follow, in conclusion of the story, the translator does not pretend to understand" (Tucker 317). Tucker leaves it to the "reader...[to] determine himself" whether the "few pages" "conceal some moral," or "whether the mystery is a device" meant to keep the reader in suspense (Tucker 317). What Tucker fails to realize—and translate—is Vera Pavlovna's fourth dream, a vision that unfolds Chernyshevskii's ideas of a socialist Utopia with progressive gender and sexual relationships between men and women. It's the most famous chapter of Chernyshevskii's work, and Tucker meant to capture the revolutionary potential of the work in his heroizing preface, going so far as to call Chernyshevskii "the martyr-hero of the modern Revolution [sic]" (Tucker 3). Tucker mentions that the "Russian Nihilists regard the present work as a *faithful* portraiture of themselves and their movement" (Tucker 3, my emphasis), yet Tucker's committed politics and translational promise of fidelity turn this work into a betraying marketing stint for his periodical *Liberty* (1881-1908), since this work was meant to correct what Tucker saw as the erroneous representation of nihilists from Ivan Turgenev's novel, *Fathers and Sons* (1862). As the advertisement for Tucker's translation in *The Radical Review* says, "This remarkable novel, now translated into

English for the first time, will appear serially, beginning May 17, in the fortnightly Anarchistic journal, *Liberty*” (“Announcements”). What were the conditions that made Tucker so receptive to committing this faulty translation?

Tucker captures a tension at the nexus of Russian translation with his preface, one that unambiguously heroizes Chernyshevskii in the name of anarchist politics while highlighting the flexibility of his approach with language. It’s clear that Tucker uses translation as a means to further his U.S. anarchist politics, and in the U.S., translation turns out to be as varied and contradictory as the translators’ own translation philosophies. Chernyshevskii’s and Turgenev’s novels provide a test case to show how various translators relied on the aesthetic and political merits of a work to further their aims. Translators, in the nineteenth century case studies I explore, often chose style over fidelity or equivalence, and though readers wanted a close approximation to the original, they preferred stylistic flexibility, which ensured that language remained under a “regime of fluency” (Venuti 1). Lawrence Venuti highlights the operations by which the translator remains invisible in a translated text by means of style. As in the nineteenth century, style in the twentieth century indicated fluency and gauged how well a translator managed to stay invisible and hide behind “recognizable and intelligible” English (Venuti 5). However much fluent translations have grown in tandem with the “instrumental use of language” and “economic cycles” in the twentieth century, in the nineteenth century style was linked to racial affinity and universal cognition, as this chapter will explore (Venuti 5). Yet style according to various reviewers and translators often held different meanings,

and this chapter will seek to clarify how these varying meanings contributed to the invention¹ of Russia in America in translational practices, a moment that saw the popularity of Russian art and politics rise in the U.S.

Friedrich Schleiermacher best represents the nineteenth-century translation philosophy of these U.S. translators when he calls stylistic awkwardness in one's native language a product of "alien, unnatural contortions," since awkward style came from closely adhering to the foreign language of the original text, resulting in "less lightness" and "grace" in one's native language (53). Some translators pledged allegiance to the original source text; others favored creative improvisation and interpretational maneuverability on the part of the translator—a model that one nineteenth-century reviewer called "dexterity of paraphrase" (Winter) and a translation model that Schleiermacher would propose once a nation reached a certain level of educational and linguistic development. Undergirding the "dexterity of paraphrase" model of translation was a broad theory of cognition, one that posited a cultural equivalence between Russian and English thought. Through metaphors of plasticity, malleability, and flexibility, nineteenth-century writers and translators argued that Russians and Anglo-Saxons shared similar tendencies of cognitive maneuverability. It followed that stylistic equivalence was crucial in translation because expression, an emotive and intellectual property, linked the cognition of Russians and Anglo-Saxons, making fidelity and equivalence in translation irrelevant.

The nineteenth-century U.S. translators, whether knowingly or not, subscribed to the Romantic notion that language reflected the development of a nation. As John

Goldsmith and Bernard Laks write of historical linguistics during the heyday of German romanticism, thinkers like Johann Gottfried Herder “saw language as a human creation and as the repository of the particular culture of each people—as that which made it unique, what he called its *Volksgeist*” (58). Herder, Schleiermacher, and other thinkers of this period viewed each language as having its own set of unique properties. Schleiermacher in particular uses metaphors of linguistic flexibility to describe language in a way that French ethnographers and geographers and then U.S. translators will later adopt to describe the Russian language. Though Schleiermacher’s first method of translation was meant for “a nation [that] still has, on the whole, no experience of a deeper knowledge of foreign tongues,” he says that this method is suitable for languages that “are not confined within the narrow bounds of a classical style” (Schleiermacher 54). The first method must be left “to the freer languages in which deviations and innovations are more readily tolerated, such that these deviations may, in the end, combine to produce a new characteristic mode of expression” (Schleiermacher 54). Schleiermacher’s discussion of “freer” and “bounded” languages were ways to describe the morphological capabilities of language. “Freer” languages allowed for affixes or other units of words to be moved around, thus accommodating the foreign language into the translated text; “bounded” or “classical” languages resist morphology, and make the first method of translation difficult.

Each model of language varies according to the translator, and this chapter explores what I call ‘a climate of flexibility’ in the sphere of this nineteenth-century

translational moment. In this chapter, I define three categories of translators working in the U.S. that represent the practice and spectrum of translation: (1) professional translators, or translators with an interest in Russia who made a living translating Russian works; (2) nihilist and anarchist translators, or translators that heroized the politics of Russian anarchists and nihilists to bring about political change; (3) literary translators, or translators working in elite circles that popularized Russian aesthetics to bring about political development. Each group of translators held at times steadfast and at other times malleable views from their counterparts; their politics and translation philosophies merged and overlapped while at times they were completely antithetical. Each translator, however, operated under a climate of flexibility, a mode of thought that used climate and soil to argue for a racial and biogenetic makeup of a group of people and their language. Flexibility of mind—and hence language—was also connected, as I will later show, to national and linguistic colonization and domination. Each translator approached flexibility by different means. Tucker, for example, by way of his botched translation of Chernyshevskii, employed a violent approach toward language, demonstrating flexibility by way of his carefree and malleable attempt to translate—or mistranslate—key chapters of Chernyshevskii's novel. Other translators relied on flexibility to argue for Anglo-Saxon and Russian racial affinities, which allowed translators to disregard style in language, since both races had flexible and plastic cognition. The case studies I explore present varying models of flexibility. Flexibility operated by means of excision and redaction, where translators would remove portions that they saw as immoral; it meant the practice of

paraphrase, of viewing language as unbounded, rather than confined. At the core of a climate of flexibility is idea that translation is a violent endeavor, and despite the aim of these translators to make Russian texts available to an English-reading public, their approaches toward translation—and their theories of language undergirding their methods—show that translation at this nexus was a remnant of a racial and colonial legacy of the Romantic past.

French Historians and Climate

The discussion of freer, or flexible, languages in the course of the nineteenth century undergo a change in the hands of French historians, who studied a nation's language and people by way of ethnography, geography, and climate. Alfred Rambaud, Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, and Ernest Dupuy were French historians whose writings on Russia influenced U.S. translation. Indeed, Nathan Haskell Dole, a prolific nineteenth-century translator of Russian works, edited Rambaud's monumental *A Popular History of Russia: From the Earliest Times to 1880* (1880) and Dole translated Dupuy's *The Great Masters of Russian Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (1885). The French historians argued that a nation's particular "topography and climate" influenced the characteristics of a people, their language, customs, and overall thought (Engerman 18). Leroy-Beaulieu in his *The Empire of the Tsars and the Russians, Volume 1* (1893)² argues that Russian flexibility stems from the "vicissitudes of seasons [and] makes itself felt especially in the temperament and the character of the nation" (187). It's to the seasons that "the Russian owes [their] flexibility, the elasticity of organs which have been fashioned by the alternations of

winter and summer, so as to adapt themselves to any climate” (Leroy-Beaulieu 187). Connecting the influence of climate to Russians’s biogenetic development, Leroy-Beaulieu says that it is to climate that the Russian is “indebted for his intellectual plasticity, the ease with which he passes from one idea to another” (188). Most importantly, Leroy-Beaulieu connects lack of “originality” in thought to “a great deal” of “character, mind, and expression” (188). Expression here is confined to the category of linguistics, but also to “feelings, taste, and habits” (Leroy-Beaulieu 188), concepts that nineteenth-century readers identified as “poetic” qualities. In all, Leroy-Beaulieu connects “flexibility” to “national originality” and “Russian nature” and to “language for the clearest test of a race’s intelligence” (73), where Russian certainly occupied a high place, despite its “lack of originality” (188).

Climate discourse itself is not new to the French historians; it goes back to Hippocrates whose *On Airs, Waters, and Places* (400 BCE) argued that certain “inhabitants...differ far more from one another than those I have treated of above, owing to the differences of the seasons and the nature of the soil” (Hippocrates Part 13). As I will show, Leroy-Beaulieu and Rambaud use the variations of “seasons” to connect the “flexibility” of Russian nature to colonization, and this striking connection particularly emphasizes the linguistic and racial affinities between Russians and Anglo-Saxons that would become a sticking point for U.S. translators (Leroy-Beaulieu 187; Rambaud 20). Hippocrates demonstrates one of the first examples of linking seasons and climate to bodily dispositions and of comparing nations (“Asia and Europe”) to see how they “differ from one another” (Hippocrates

Part 12), differences that would become important for Leroy-Beaulieu and Rambaud as they sought to elevate one race above another. Although Hippocrates does not extend the effects of climate to language, he connects seasons and soil to the disposition of people, saying that “[w]hen the country is bare, not fenced, and rugged, blasted by the winter and scorched by the sun, there you may see the hardy [people]...slender, with well-shaped joints, well-braced, and shaggy; sharp, industry and vigilance accompany such a constitution; in morals and passions they are haughty and opinionative, inclining rather to the fierce than to the mild” (Hippocrates Part 24). Here, Hippocrates establishes the moral and physical constitution of “winter” people, arguing that the “fierce” winter causes certain people to “undergo dangers in order to promote the power of another” (Hippocrates Part 23). While colonization is not explicitly mentioned in Hippocrates’s text, climate and geography offer the possibility that certain groups are more prone to colonizing or to colonization than others. The “Asiatic race,” for example, is “feeble,” and because of their “pusillanimity” and “cowardice,” they are “unwarlike” and “gentler” than their Scythian counterparts (Hippocrates Part 16). Since the seasons influence behaviors that may condition one group to be “masters” while another to be “slaves,” it’s implicit in Hippocrates’s text that certain groups hold advantages over others (Hippocrates Part 16).

In the nineteenth-century, Leroy-Beaulieu and Rambaud advanced Hippocrates’s thinking, explicitly connecting climate and geography to the propensity to influence and colonize language and other people. Rambaud, as David Engerman

explains, sought “to promote an alliance between Russia and France,” so Rambaud’s attempts to equate linguistic and physiological similarities between the Russian and the French should not come as a surprise (26). What’s unique to Rambaud and Leroy-Beaulieu, however, is the glorification of “flexibility” and its peculiar connection to colonization and aesthetic and political dominance. Indeed, climate and geography are the precondition for the colonial assimilation of language to take place. Because “flexibility remains one of the most marked features of the Russian nature,” as Leroy-Beaulieu explains, this helps explain “the success of the Great-Russian in colonizing the vast plains of his continent, spreading northward and southward with an almost equal facility of acclimatization under every or any sky” (192). Most importantly, Leroy-Beaulieu connects flexible temperament to art and politics because the “faculty of adaptation” can move from the “arts and sciences” into “novel spheres”: “such as government, institutions, and public liberties” (192). Rambaud, similarly, urges readers to “recognize that the Russian, almost as much as the Anglo-Saxon, has the instinct which drives men to emigrate and found colonies” (48). Indeed, “[t]he Russians do in the far East of Europe what the Anglo-Saxons do in the Far West of America” (Rambaud 48). Rambaud drives a clear connection between empire, colonization, and language, connecting the ability of the Russians to colonize the “basin of Volga” to how in “North America,” “Red-skins...have learnt English and embraced Protestantism” (48). To this end, Rambaud discusses how the “Russian race” has the “faculty of absorbing certain aboriginal stocks” on account of their

flexibility, and perhaps owing to the fact that they “belong to one of the great races of pioneers and backwoodsmen” (48).

The drive to connect Anglo-Saxons and Russians through the frontier spirit hinged on the idea that the U.S., for example, had vast amounts of unexplored land, which was similar to Russian geography. As an anonymous nineteenth-century “member of the New York Bar” argued, U.S. settlers were the first people who first braved the “deprivations of a wilderness” and sought out “new soil,” which “would have alone brought rapid advancement” (*Reconstruction in America* 118). Baron Rosen, a Russian Ambassador residing in Washington who also communicated with Isabel Hapgood, a prolific translator of Russian texts, argued that “[t]he Slav nature is, psychologically, nearer to the Anglo-Saxon than is the Latin. It is shown in both language and literature” (“The Peace of Portsmouth”). The Baron’s theory uses race to structure dominant and non-dominant hierarchies, and though labor is not discussed explicitly, it’s telling that the Baron discusses the wilderness and soil, important natural resources that do require capital and labor (Quijano and Wallerstein). Rosen’s theory of language takes on an additional political nuance because he was propounding this theory following the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth, which formally ended the Russo-Japanese War through the negotiating efforts of Theodore Roosevelt. The Baron uses “language and literature” to establish a link between national and linguistic identity, arguing, “An Englishman thinks he understands a Frenchman...but as a matter of fact, he understands him only so far and no farther” (“The Peace of Portsmouth”). To overcome this obstacle, one must “first

think in French” in order to “speak or write French” (Abbott). According to the Baron, French language “is a fixed quantity” (“The Peace of Portsmouth”); “the Russian and English languages are pliable, flexible” (“The Peace of Portsmouth”). In line with this model, one can only write—or translate—from English to French when “your English thought has become precise and defined, as is the French language” (“The Peace of Portsmouth”). “Then, and not till then,” the Baron says, “can you fully express it in that language” (“The Peace of Portsmouth”). Linking the outcome of the peace conference to “a better Russo-American racial understanding,” the Baron makes the claim that this conference “has...also contributed to a better understanding, by each of the three nations represented here, Russia, Japan, America, [to] the modes of self-expression characteristic of others” (“The Peace of Portsmouth”). To this end, relying on what historian George Fredrickson calls “romantic racialism” (114), Rosen argues “[t]he Russian, brilliant and masterful, relies on inspiration; the Oriental, slower but apparently more permanently powerful, relies on exactness of knowledge and preparation” (“The Peace of Portsmouth”). Fredrickson mentions that “romantic racialism...resembled Herder’s relativism” (101), and with this idea in mind, it’s striking to consider that the Baron was linking race, linguistics, and cognition between Anglo-Saxons and Russians on the basis of “expression.”

Once expression becomes racialized and equated with the “brilliant,” “inspirational,” and “masterful” Russian nation, the Baron easily extends this logic to a homogenized theory of language. What I want to suggest is that underlying a climate of flexibility is the idea of the implicit linguistic violence and appropriation

inherent to this philosophy of translation. This theory posits that since English and Russian “thought is often elastic, incompressible,” these languages need not “the crystallized French...as a medium of expression...but the uncrystallized English or Russian language” (“The Peace of Portsmouth”). Baron Rosen essentially posits a direct translational equivalent between Russian and English not on the basis of syntactical similarities between the languages, but on the shared identity of “elastic” and “flexible” racial similarities, one that extends to the acquisition of language. Since “flexible” thought corresponds to morphological freedom between English and Russian, translation becomes a mode of approximation and equivalence, a creative *bonhomie* that should hit a somewhat equivalent mark between languages but one that does not have to come close to the original. One can “flex” language in any direction to accommodate meaning, as long as style aided clear expression. Each translator made use of flexible translation in different ways; some favored excision and redaction, others paraphrase. The thinking went that any Russian thought can be translated into English, and the opposite holds as well, since what’s translated is essentially sense, or “elastic” thought. For Baron Rosen, this theory meant that the “Slav is socially nearer to the Anglo-Saxon” (“The Peace of Portsmouth”). And by extension, this provides the rationale for why so many “admirable translations [exist] in Russian” (“The Peace of Portsmouth”)—it is easy to translate what is already equivalent. The Baron understands that it is for this reason that “[t]o Mr. Howells, Russian authors, like Ivan Turgénev and Lyof Tolstoy, with their elastic altruism, are not really higher types, but are far closer to your Anglo-Saxon nature” (“The Peace of

Portsmouth”). The “elastic” quality of their language, in this instance, corresponds to a shared ethno-racial identity, and the repetition of the words “elastic” and “flexible” spells out a linguistic theory that equates Anglo-Saxon and Russian identity; it also provides a justification for the many translations between the English and Russian languages. In other words, it’s easy to translate a quality that’s shared individually by two languages, of two nations, both universally conjoined.

Other nineteenth-century works defined flexibility in terms of grammatical properties, and not so much by shared cognitive similarities, as the Baron Rosen’s theory of language demonstrated. In the ethnographic work, *The Bible of Every Land: A History of the Sacred Scriptures in Every Language and Dialect Into Which Translations Have Been Made* (1860), the writers explain that the “Russian tongue...is one of the most flexible of languages and possesses in a remarkable degree the property of assimilating foreign words” (296). The note of colonial appropriation and assimilation here is perhaps minor, but it closely mimics the violence of actual colonization that Leroy-Beaulieu and Rambaud discuss, as shown earlier. Calling attention to the idea that Russian has the property to take foreign roots and use them as prefixes or suffixes, the writers of this work explain that “in proportion to the increasing civilisation [sic] of the people, the stores of the language are being increased by continual accessions from foreign sources” (*The Bible of Every Land* 296). The developmental model of language expressed in the growing civilization of the people reflects Herder’s thought of the *Volk*. The writers of *The Bible of Every Land* also point out that “Russian exceeds even the Italian in its

immense stock of diminutives and augmentatives...[even though] the number of conjunctions is extremely limited” (296). The conjunctive “deficiency” however lends itself to “clearness of expression,” a category that is implicated in the climate of flexibility to the extent that expression is a property of the shared ethno-racial identity between Anglo-Saxons and Russians; it’s also a property connected to style, which must act as the most efficient purveyor of expression (*The Bible of Every Land* 296). J.R. McCulloch, in his *Dictionary, Geographical, Statistical, and Historical, of The Various Countries, Places, and Principal Natural Objects in the World* (1854), also defines the Russian language as “rich, sonorous, flexible, natural, and elegant,” despite its “exceedingly irregular” conjugations” (620). Like *The Bible of Every Land*, McCulloch links the appropriation of new words into the Russian as a sign of the “extraordinary advances that were then made in civilization” (620). “The influence of Christianity” that occasioned the “number of Greek words” into the Russian, which in turn influenced its “ascendancy in religion and science,” indicate to McCulloch the high status of Russian (McCulloch 620).

The 1870s: Nihilism, Terror, and Translation

While the drive for a “a better Russo-American racial understanding” (“The Peace of Portsmouth”) drove the politics of the U.S., Russian nihilism was becoming a hot topic in its own right during this period. While the French ethnographers argued for their conceptions of Russia in higher levels of government, the phenomenon of nihilism made its presence known more in the popular imagination. Russian nihilism provides one other explanation as to why translations of Russian texts started to gain

popularity in the U.S. As early as the 1870s, U.S. newspaper periodicals associated nihilism and anarchism in Russia with terrorism. Historian Claudia Verhoeven argues that “terrorism...was invented in imperial Russia...in the late 1870s” (4). This moment altogether fascinated the U.S. public, who in turn wanted translations of Russian texts to access the life and thoughts of nihilist agents and to understand nihilism as a new phenomenon of motivated terror. *The New York Evangelist*, for example, defined Russia by linking terrorism to assassinations and revolutionary plots: “If the old definition of Russia, as a despotism tempered by assassination, needed renovation, that need is supplied by the government reports of the great Nihilist trials that have been going on at St. Petersburg” (“The Russian Conspiracy”). Other magazines, depending on their politics, either condemned or approved the tactics of the anarchists and nihilists. Pro-worker commentators denounced the “tempered” brutality and despotism of the Czars while praising the nihilists for their fight; the other side condemned the nihilists as a scourge and “Russian heresy” (“Russian Nihilism”). Public demand for Russian translations, whatever its aesthetics and politics, grew in tandem with conflicting reactions to news of anarchist and nihilist plots.

As the nihilists and anarchists gained legitimacy in the eyes of the U.S. public, their association with literature, political ideals, and social progress won over some U.S. intellectuals and public commentators. In the 1870s, U.S. writers began to praise the unique “character” of Russian writers made available in the U.S. by a thriving translation market, bearing a striking affinity to the “character” of flexibility of the

Russian language. Henry James, writing in *The North American Review* in 1874, introduces a translated Russian work to the U.S. public. He calls Ivan Turgenev “an eminent Russian novelist” (“ART. IV.”), adding: “all his tales...have now been translated into French,” in addition to “an excellent German version of the best is being published by the author himself, and several very fair English versions have appeared in England and America” (“ART. IV.”). Of course, James’s use of the word “fair” implies that English translations were subpar compared to the German and French, particularly since Turgenev supervised the translation of his work into French. James may have been implicitly endorsing direct authorial intervention in the process of translation, and though some translators started out by advocating for a wider readership of Russian writers, one of the early translators of Russian texts, George Kennan, “wanted the great Russian authors to command the respect among American readers” (Travis 79). Kennan’s travel narrative, *Siberia and the Exile System* (1891), granted popular legitimacy to nihilist and anarchist translators of Russian texts that promoted Russia in the U.S. Ideologically, Kennan’s narrative of Russian culture and politics worked to translate Russia’s large land and customs into interpretable data. His motivation to explore Siberia and its exile system stemmed from the fact that “to the average American” Siberia “was almost as much a *terra incognita* as central Africa or Tibet” (Kennan iii). To explore meant to walk the earth (*terra*) and trace the unknown (*incognita*), and the feminine Latin phrase indicates a typing of knowing that associates Russia with the all too familiar “Mother Russia” paradigm.

Kennan's *Siberia and the Exile System* was partly written to out-translate the initial translators of Russian revolutionary politics in the U.S. by arguing against their negative assessment of the Russian Czar. Kennan followed a rich history of travel writers, like Astolphe de Custine who wrote *Letters from Russia* (1843), to criticize and explore Russia. Kennan was more interested in the Siberian "tribes" of Russia, studying "Cossacks," "Koraks," and "Tunguse" people (Kennan). Though Kennan says Russian is "the most difficult of all modern languages," even though "[i]ts words are all spelled phonetically, and have only a few sounds which are foreign to English," he argues that "[w]hat the ancestors of the Russians did at the Tower of Babel to have been afflicted with such a complicated, contorted, mixed up, utterly incomprehensible language, I can hardly conjecture" (39). Kennan thought that Russian was "closely related to the ancient Sanskrit," "like all the Indo-European languages," though Russian seems to have retained words "a thousand years before the Christian era" (Kennan 41). Since Kennan viewed Russia inflexibly, a mode that posited difference between land, nation, and customs, language was foreign, distancing, and other. For Kennan, to out-translate meant to discursively rewrite the narrative of Russian revolutionary politics in the U.S. Kennan worked from an anthropological model of cultural translation, a model that was meant to spread his idea of Russian politics to the wider U.S. public over and above the nihilist and anarchist translators. This agenda placed him in dialogue with Sergei Kravchinsky (known as Stepniak), author of the popular novels, *Underground Russia* (1883) and *Career of a Nihilist* (1889), and Prince Petr Kropotkin, a famous anarchist. Stepniak

and Kropotkin were two of the most prominent Russian cultural translators in the U.S. sphere, portraying Russia as a despotic and tyrannical government while espousing their theories of anarchism and socialism. Part of Kennan's initial task was to dispel the misrepresentations spread by Stepniak and Prince Kropotkin to show "that Siberia was not so terrible a country as Americans had always supposed it to be" (Kennan iv). By the end of his trip, however, Kennan realized that the government of Russia "was worse than [he] anticipated" (Kennan v). Kennan's cultural translation of Russia's exile system added popular and official legitimacy to the representations offered by the anarchists, nihilists, and literary figures, but this was, symptomatically, only after Russian nihilists were first labeled as terrorists.³ By cultural translation, I don't mean to separate language from culture. Stepniak and Kropotkin lectured on Russian art and culture and wrote texts that explained Russian culture to the U.S. To do so required a certain translation, one that had linguistic elements, since they had to translate Russian concepts into English, and one that had cultural elements, since they had to translate customs, practices, and laws into English. As Talal Asad says, "society is not a text that communicates itself to the skilled reader. It is people who speak. And the ultimate meaning of what they say does not reside in society—society is the cultural condition in which speakers act and are acted upon" (155). By this I take Asad to mean that it's vital to understand how Kropotkin and Stepniak were translating *their* version of Russian culture into the U.S., and how their positions of prominence and power allowed them to translate *their* Russian culture.

The Early “Puritan” Translators: Nathan Haskell Dole and Isabel Hapgood

Nathan Haskell Dole and Isabel Hapgood, both highly regarded Russian translators, spread Russian texts in the U.S. through a flexible model of translation, one that was filtered by their moral beliefs. As a writer for *The Yale Review* states, in 1915, “Two Americans ought to be held in grateful esteem by a million readers: Nathan Haskell Dole and Isabel Hapgood...and if there were such a thing as the history of Russian translations into English, Mr. Dole and Miss Hapgood would stand eminent” (Phelps 418). Hapgood and Dole believed some of the more luridly violent and sexual qualities of Russian realist fiction had a deleterious effect on readers. As Dole says, “realism is too intense for our Puritan taste,” and Dole exercises his flexibility by redacting scenes that may offend this “Puritan” sensibility (Dole 1886 vi). Their flexibility entailed a form of translation that omitted, excised, and paraphrased entire sections. Hapgood even refused to translate Tolstoy’s *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), a novella about sex and violence: “I have never read anything like it in my life...and I hope I never shall again” (Stead). W.T. Stead defends Tolstoy’s work, saying that as an author he “is a Puritan of the Puritans,” since he is a “fanatical believer in marriage, and absolutely opposed to all divorce” (Stead 428). In an 1890 article written for *The Nation*, Hapgood makes the concession that “translation, even with copious excisions, is impossible” (Hapgood 315), since, in her view, “[t]he whole book is a violent and a roughly worded attack upon the evils of animal passion” (Hapgood 313). Hapgood particularly focuses on the “ordinary freedom of speech” in Tolstoy’s novel, a type of speech that “has greater latitude in

Russia...than is customary in America” (Hapgood 315). “Freedom of speech” and “greater latitude” cryptically use flexibility in the category of expression, since the work is “excessive in candor” and may harm “uncontaminated minds” (Hapgood 315). Since flexibility posited a directness of expression that connected English to Russian, Hapgood and Dole feared what they saw as the expressive power of language in Tolstoy’s novel. Almost all of their words indicate a fearful expression of openness and flexibility. The question that Hapgood asks, “What are the legitimate bounds of realism?” is a telling one because at its root is the ultimate fear of flexibility and its influence on cognition (Hapgood 313). The remedy for Hapgood is to keep language bounded—to not translate the novel and to not allow the flexibility of language to influence minds.

The professional translators made their politics well known through their flexible translations of Tolstoy’s works by curtailing the “bounds of realism” and language by excision and paraphrase, even though at first they resisted this practice (Hapgood 313). Dole translated, in his first edition, Lev Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* in 1886. Mediating what was acceptable to the U.S. public, Dole’s ethics were at cross purposes with nihilist and anarchist translators who spread Russia’s most political texts in the U.S. “For the most part,” Dole says, “the translation follows the original” (Dole 1886 vi); in the other parts, Dole says—similar to Hapgood—that the “realism is too intense for our Puritan taste; and, perforce, several of these scenes have been more or less modified in the present translation” (Dole 1886 vi). Dole also retains the original Russian words in his translation—to intensify “the Russian flavor of the

story” (Dole 1886 vi)—and accompanies these words with their definition. Needless to say, Dole took many liberties with his 1886 translation, ones that he would revise in the second edition of *Anna Karenina*, published in 1889, where he restored the omitted passages that had been removed to satisfy the “Puritan taste” (Dole 1886 vi). As he says, “All passages formerly omitted have been restored, and the occasional temptation to embroider by paraphrase on what the author left purposely simple, plain, and direct, has been resisted” (Dole 1899 ix). Dole’s example clearly shows that flexibility operated on a continuum, at one point adhering to the original, at another departing so deeply as to approach a kind of altered, sanitized version by way of additions and excisions. Similar to Hapgood’s drive to control the “bounds of realism” (Hapgood 313), Dole seems to fear the “simple, plain, and direct” expressive qualities of the Russian language, so much so that he has to curtail his “temptation to embroider” the language (Dole 1899 ix). Dole’s approach, similar to Winter’s “dexterity of paraphrase,” demonstrates how paraphrase is integral to the climate of flexibility, mediating what was acceptable to the U.S. public by means of sanitizing fiction. Hapgood even speculated that “public executions, far from inspiring horror of the deeds which led to them... actually give rise to crimes copied after those which are thus brought to general attention” (313). Both Hapgood and Dole were horrified by the unboundedness and openness of flexibility; their examples show that realism was a threat that needed containment, and Hapgood and Dole ventured to extremes to bound language, to keep it from spawning further iterations of these “crimes” (Hapgood 313).

Chernyshevskii and the Case of In-Fidelity

Perhaps the most striking translational chain appears with Chernyshevskii at its center. Chernyshevskii's controversial utopian novel, *What's to be Done?* (1863), demonstrates how professional translators downplayed radical gender politics while emphasizing class struggle, revolutionary politics, and social liberation. Scholars to this day still debate whether this novel qualifies as political propaganda in the name of Utopianism or if the novel can be regarded as a work with individual artistic merit.⁴ The translators of Chernyshevskii's novel, S.S. Skidelsky and Nathan Haskell Dole, side with the former. In Dole's and Skidelsky's preface to their translation, they argue that "Tchernuishevsky's [Chernushevskii's] style is often exceedingly awkward [and that he] sometimes strove after originality, at the expense of wisdom" (Dole and Skidelsky ix). "Style" and "originality" are aesthetic categories that suggest artistic merit, and it's specifically these categories that closely involve the climate of flexibility. These categories affect the novel's "wisdom," by which Dole and Skidelsky mean a political category, one that provides "the general theory of the equality of women, the development of which makes the real greatness of the book" (Dole and Skidelsky v). The import of the novel "lies with the women themselves to determine their treatment by men, and the terrible social state from which so many unfortunate creatures, both married and single, are suffering" (Dole and Skidelsky v). Despite their motivation, Dole and Skidelsky flexibly undercut this intention and rather emphasize socialist politics over progressive gender relations, as this section will demonstrate. While Dole held "Puritan" views on marriage and divorce, it's not

clear what motivated Skidelsky to flexibly translate Chernyshevskii's work, since Skidelsky's motivation was to become a trade journalist in floriculture. In his 1916 autobiography, Skidelsky ironically reflects on a speaker at the "The Commons" who "promises elixir for all human ills in the form of Socialism" (Skidelsky 95). Skidelsky was "a native of Russia" who was most famous in the Philadelphian Jewish community and was known for his "descriptions of life and residence in the land of the Tsars, of Jewish characteristics noticed in that country of oppression" and known for "his remarkable skill in handling a language comparatively new to him" (Morais 353).

A comparison of Dole's and Skidelsky's translation of Chernyshevskii's novel *A Vital Question* (1886) to Tucker's translation, *What's to be Done? A Romance* (1886), highlights a translational difference between professional and anarchist translators, as well as demonstrates how these two groups used flexibility in their approaches. Dole's and Skidelsky's translation of Chernyshevskii's novel was meant to acquaint the American public with what "the paternal Russian government regards as revolutionary literature" (Dole and Skidelsky iii). Dole and Skidelsky underscore that Chernyshevskii's arguments and solutions may be at odds with many readers's personal politics, but these doubts should be dismissed because of the "intense moral purpose of the author" (v). Their translation sketches a biography of Chernyshevskii in their preface, establishing his intellectual achievement and his political stand against the Russian government. With their change in title from *What's to be Done?* to *A Vital Question*, Dole and Skidelsky minimize the political import of

Chernyshevskii's work, removing the political call to action implied by the question. Apart from altering "Kirsásonf's [sic] character" to "better suit the American ideal of man" in their translation, Dole and Skidelsky translate a radical novel as a means to demonstrate "the heel of oppression" in the land of Russia (Dole and Skidelsky v); this purpose closely aligns the intent of the translation with Skidelsky's personal experience while living in Russia. While Tolstoy falls into a different category, allowing Dole to alter his translation of *Anna Karenina* to satisfy "Puritan taste" (Dole 1886 vi), Dole's and Skidelsky's translation of Chernyshevskii's work places this novel in political context, allowing them to depict progressive gender relations and radical revolutionary politics without censoring the content.

Dole and Skidelsky and Tucker closely align their translations with flexibility by way of a shared Anglo-Saxon affinity between language, nihilists, and religion. Tucker's translation of Chernyshevskii's work, as one reviewer mentions, has been "regarded by the Nihilists as their *The Uncle Tom's Cabin*" ("Literary Notices" 281). Associating Russian nihilists as stand-ins for Uncle Tom, this reviewer was using "romantic racialism" to link the flexible quality of expression to a shared racial identity between nihilists (who fought against the autocracy) with Anglo-Saxons (Fredrickson). Keeping in mind Fredrickson's distinction between "late-nineteenth century" Anglo-Saxon identity and its antebellum variety, which was defined by its "lack of exclusiveness," it's possible to see that nineteenth century readers saw this novel as tracing a flexibly racial affinity between Anglo-Saxons and Russian nihilists (Fredrickson 99). Tucker, like Dole and Skidelsky, offers Chernyshevskii's

translation as a protest against the “cruel Czar” (Tucker 3). Unlike Dole and Skidelsky, Tucker emphasizes that “[t]he Russian Nihilists regard the present work as a faithful portraiture of themselves and their movement, and as such they contrast it with the celebrated *Fathers and Sons* of Tourguéneff, which they consider rather as a caricature” (3). Tucker’s “faithful portraiture” aligns Chernyshevskii’s novel with the aesthetics of realism by calling the novel “romance” and by alluding to the novel’s depictions—its “faithful portraiture”—of actual nihilists. More so, Tucker emphasizes the novel’s artistic qualities, saying, “As a work of art [the novel]...speaks for itself” (3). Quoting a “European writer,” Tucker demonstrates that as “art,” the novel “does not...embellish and idealize nature, but...reproduce[s] her interesting phases” (4), suggesting that the writer must simply translate the original with equivalency, a flexible measure. In contrast, Dole and Skidelsky, unlike Tucker, play more intrusive roles as translators, massaging the novel’s “awkward” style to match the “wisdom” of the political message (Dole and Skidelsky ix). And like Dole and Skidelsky, Tucker portrays Chernyshevskii, a radical political, intellectual, and literary figure in Russia, as a hero. While Tucker calls Chernyshevskii a “martyr-hero” (3), Dole and Skidelsky go so far as to say that Chernyshevskii’s “virtue is Spartan; it is as heroic as though it were ideally Christian,” linking Chernyshevskii closely with ideal Anglo-Saxons (v). Tucker similarly positions himself as a translator-hero who takes up Chernyshevskii’s work “to enlighten our New World” (4)—a clearly Anglo-Saxon world.

Both Dole and Skidelsky and Tucker viewed their translational practices as correctives to prevailing notions: Tucker’s translation offers a corrective to

Turgenev's depiction of nihilists in *Fathers and Sons* (1862), while Dole's and Skidelsky's offers the U.S. literary market a testament to Russian brutality. Yet comparing Dole's and Tucker's translations with Chernyshevskii's original reveals a different picture, particularly in the most famous chapter, "Vera Pavlovna's Fourth Dream." As the anecdote at the beginning of the chapter has shown, the anomaly of Tucker's translation is that he fails to translate—and even comprehend—that the fourth dream occurs in Chernyshevskii's novel. Michael R. Katz, a contemporary translator of Chernyshevskii's work, and William G. Wagner say that Tucker's omission occurred because he "knew no Russian" and modeled "his translation on a French version" (Katz and Wagner 35).⁵ Fragments and portions of the fourth dream appear in Tucker's translated titled as, "New Characters and the Conclusion." Tucker's promise of portraying Chernyshevskii's "glad tidings to the poor and oppressed" becomes a failed promise, a remarkable example of a flexible translation philosophy, one that aimed to do justice to the representation of nihilists that Turgenev caricatured and to spread Chernyshevskii's notion of liberty to the "New World" (Tucker 4). While in some ways falling short of this mark, Tucker's translational flexibility can best be described as an honest one, since he makes it a point to say that "[t]he few pages which follow... the translator does not pretend to understand" (317). The translator "cannot identify... new characters," cannot "connect them with the story," and cannot "fathom the purpose of their introduction" (317). The solution, as Tucker has it, remains for "the reader... to determine himself" the import of the work, which ranges from discerning whether the fragments of the fourth

dream “conceal some moral” to “whether the mystery is a device on his part to carry over the interest of the reader to the sequel which he undoubtedly intended to write” (317). In other words, the task is flexible; the reader is free to make up his mind.

Dole and Skidelsky, on the other hand, become enmeshed in a different form of flexibility far greater than Tucker’s. Perhaps a carryover from Dole’s earlier translation philosophy is his censorship of erotic passages from his translation of Tolstoy’s novel, though these are minor compared to Dole’s alteration of Vera Pavlovna’s fourth dream. In their translation Dole and Skidelsky praise “Tchernishevskii...as a prophet” for his ability to envision “electric light” before it became “a fact” (385), but this praise comes at the price of elevating Chernyshevskii’s political ideas of cooperative socialism to a place in the text where they don’t exist. In a scene where Vera Pavlovna describes her political ideas to her sister when she worked for a sewing company, the sister says, “Конечно, нет. Вспомни же свою мастерскую, разве у вас было много средств” [Of course not. Remember your sewing shop: did you not have many means at your disposal?] (Chernyshevskii, my translation). The flexibility of interpretation comes down to the word “мастерскую,” which is a place where skilled craftsmen make specialized items, or in Vera Pavlovna’s dream, where skilled workers sew. In Chernyshevskii’s original work, it’s clear that this section has more to do with the goddess Vera Pavlovna converses with than with a literal example of cooperative socialism; the goddess “represents dispassionate wisdom, omniscience, and virtue, and leads Vera Pavlovna through a process of self-discovery and self-realization toward ultimate

emancipation” (Katz and Wagner 29). This scene is pivotal to the transfiguration of Vera Pavlovna’s “consciousness both as a human being and as a woman” (Katz and Wagner 29). Dole and Skidelsky translate “мастерскую” as union, thus transforming the sewing shop into a sewing union.

A comparison to Katz’s translation exposes the flaw. Katz’s contemporary translation of *What’s to be Done?* translates the word “мастерскую” as a “dressmaking establishment” (375). By choosing the word “union” over the word “shop,” or even “establishment,” Dole and Skidelsky move the focus of Vera Pavlovna’s fourth dream away from a critique of patriarchy and instead position the dream around ideas of cooperative socialism. Doing this, Dole and Skidelsky betray the political ideology of Chernyshevskii who first and foremost saw that “if...revolution was to succeed, it would need to overturn the patriarchal relations that existed within the family as well as between social groups and between the state and society” (Katz and Wagner 14). This is not to say that Dole and Skidelsky completely alter the political import of Chernyshevskii’s work; it’s to say that they completely alter the import of Vera Pavlovna’s fourth dream, which is a dream where the “spirit reveals that she possesses none other than Vera Pavlovna’s own face and form” (Katz and Wagner 29), indicating that Vera Pavlovna is a capable actor and the highest figure “for emulation” who can achieve all the personal ideals needed for a successful revolution. In other words, Dole and Skidelsky bypass Vera Pavlovna’s transfiguring moment to conclude that the saving moment of the dream occurs when the workers in the sewing shop organize, which then leads to “tenfold more conveniences” and to

“twenty-fold more happiness in life” (Tchernuishevsky 384). Dole’s and Skidelsky’s footnote to this section emphasizes that though “[c]omment on this epic vision is hardly necessary,” it’s written primarily to “those who object to idealized socialism as presented by Tchernuishevsky,” and these people “must be both enchained by selfishness and [be] the slaves of Antichrist” (Tchernuishevsky 388). What follows is a moralistic exhortation on the follies one must commit if “the best that he wishes for should not be shared by all the world” (Tchernuishevsky 384), a critique that fuses Christian morality with a condemnation of materialist selfishness. The solution, according to Dole and Skidelsky, is to recognize that a “systematic union” will solve all these problems by stressing the cooperative potential of political organization and unification, exposing “how many millions and billions of dollars, how many lives of labor and sadness, are wasted every year because each family and each man and woman is trying vainly by himself to do what might be done better, more easily, and more happily by systematic union” (Tchernuishevsky 384). Cooperative socialism would defeat the “great corporations which pour useless wealth into the hands of the few monopolists who control them” (Tchernuishevsky 384). Dole and Skidelsky end their footnote by asking two rhetorical questions that neutralize Chernyshevskii’s “radical” reputation and ideas: “But is Tchernuishevsky after all such a rabid radical? Is not his ideal what all men want when they pray for the coming kingdom of Heaven?” (Tchernuishevsky 384). In this gesture, Dole and Skidelsky dismiss “the intelligent and independent” (Katz and Wagner 23) Vera Pavlovna and symbolically undermine the first step in Chernyshevskii’s ideological vision of a Utopian

revolution. More so, this example demonstrates that a flexible theory of the Russian language allows such a translation to occur: the politics of socialism can be grafted onto a Utopian and feminist novel.

In contrast to their flexible betrayal of Chernyshevskii's work, Dole and Skidelsky use their translation as an attempt to neutralize Chernyshevskii's "radical" reputation, thus mainstreaming his ideas to a U.S. public while bracketing the political ideals of Chernyshevskii himself (Tchernuishevsky 388); however, while the approach was flexible in terms of its political message, their translation was not stylistically flexible. Their attempt to portray Chernyshevskii in Christian theological and moralistic terms is disingenuous, since he actually abandoned his "faith in God" (Katz and Wagner 10) during his time at St. Petersburg University. Dole's and Skidelsky's flexible translation philosophy prevented the translators from convincing the U.S. public of the novel's political import. While Dole and Skidelsky specifically attempted to radicalize Chernyshevskii's politics in his novel, they censored the erotic scenes, and consequently the explicitly radical elements of the novel—overtly narrated erotic acts—were lost in translation. Propagating their socialist politics through their translation of Chernyshevskii's novel and, more widely, through Chernyshevskii's U.S. reputation, Dole and Skidelsky wanted to convince the U.S. public that socialist politics were moral and signified the "coming of the kingdom of heaven" (Tchernuishevsky 384). To this end, Dole's and Skidelsky's qualms with Chernyshevskii's style prevented their translation from reaching a wider U.S. audience, as many reviewers of Dole's and Skidelsky's translation noted. Since they

did not follow flexibility of style—in essence, fluency—reviewers criticized Chernyshevskii’s awkward and irregular prose because Dole and Skidelsky translated word-for-word the unusual stylistics of Chernyshevskii’s writing. In this manner, reviewers dismissed the politics of the novel by way of criticizing the aesthetics of the work. One reviewer, writing in *The Art Amateur*, states that “Tchernuishevsky’s style is often exceedingly awkward” (“Literary Notes”). “Awkward” for most reviewers involved a style that was “full of digressions,” “given to soliloquies and to wearisome appeals to the ‘sapient reader’” (“Two Russian Novels”); in other words, reviewers viewed narratorial digressions as deviations and intrusions on the forward-moving plot. Because of the translator’s equivalence model of translation, “[t]heir English is sometimes so, and it does not help the reader much that they [Dole and Skidelsky] have thought it necessary to imitate the bad [or “awkward”] Russian...by a farrago of English and American vulgarisms” (“Literary Notes”). A reviewer for *The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature* mentions that “[w]e cannot commend this book as a novel...[because] [i]t is loosely, carelessly, inartistically composed” (“Review 2”). The reviewer “can hardly understand how the Nihilist party in Russia [can] look on this as an *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*” (“Review 2”).

To some degree, reviewers used *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as a diversionary tactic to distract readers from socialist politics; more closely, since flexibility entailed an equivalence of expression that was tied to a shared racial identity between Anglo-Saxons and Russians, the reviewer was calling out the translators for deviating away from this flexibility and for using an awkward style that disrupted this flexibility. An

anonymous reviewer for *The Literary World* captures these complexities, conceding that the “excellent corps of translators who are fast exploring the domain of contemporary Russian literature...[are] bringing some of its most noteworthy fruits to the attention of American readers” (“Two Russian Novels”). While the reviewer prefers Dole’s and Skidelsky’s translation over Tucker’s, he notes that their translation is “marred by verbal, grammatical, and syntactical forms which are not at all in harmony with established English usages, however *faithfully* they may agree with the author’s idiosyncrasies in his own tongue” (“Two Russian Novels,” my emphasis). The flexibility model of expression and fluent style, interpreted through value judgments as well as standards of accuracy, dictated that the novel would be read primarily for its aesthetics, rather than for its political promise of Utopian socialism. Calling attention to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, however, the reviewer points out that Dole and Skidelsky have betrayed the philosophy of flexibility, since they have allowed awkward stylistics to destroy the affinity between Russian and English. Since [t]he Slav nature is,” as Baron Rosen explains, “nearer to the Anglo-Saxon,” it follows that language must express this flexibility, otherwise any shared affinity falls apart (“The Peace of Portsmouth”). The language, in another aspect, no longer resembles the ideal its meant to uphold.

The Paradox of Style: Serge Stepniak and Constance Garnett

As the previous section has shown, style in flexible translation entailed a form of betrayal, as well as a sense of affinity between race and language. This section in particular seeks to revise one common twentieth- and twenty first-century century

account of nineteenth-century translation practices. Critic Rachel May, as an example, considers Garnett's "more serious flaw" to occur when she would "smooth over the stylistic differences" to make language fit a model of "good English" (40).⁶ Yet from the reviewer of *The Literary World*, we know that nineteenth-century reviewers paid careful attention to awkward or rough style, and the next example considers style and its relation to a flexible model of translation that entailed an association with style and to a translation's success in the U.S. market. This example involves Turgenev and the translator of his work, Constance Garnett, as well as her relationship to Serge Stepniak, a nihilist translator. Stepniak has been hailed by scholars as the first American writer of a Russian revolutionary novel—the "first work of literature...to explore the experience of being a revolutionary in Russian society and the first to show how nihilism had transformed itself from negation in the name of reform to terrorism in the name of revolution" (Freeborn 31).⁷ Garnett's contribution to Russian translation during the turn of the century is hard to understate: the Russian scholar Charles Moser declares that "when we think of English translators of Russian literature, we remember Isabel Hapgood primarily as a historical figure...[while] we recall Constance Garnett...not only for her historical contributions to the field, but as a translator whose work remains relevant to U.S. in a way in which that of Isabel Hapgood is not" (431). Garnett was first aided in her study of Russian by Stepniak, and it was Stepniak who "guided her in her choice of works for translation" (Moser 432). Stepniak "encouraged" Garnett to translate Russian realist works by Goncharov, Tolstoy, and Turgenev (Moser 432). Indeed,

Stepniak wrote introductions to the early works translated by Garnett, providing a note of native validation. Moser notes that Garnett “dedicated...one of the Turgenev novels” to Stepniak shortly after his passing (432). More than memorialization, however, Stepniak offered Garnett an opportunity to spread Russian realist aesthetics through a political project devoted to the revolutionist cause, though at an early point in her career Garnett worried that Stepniak’s prefaces might damage her sales (Davison-Pegon).

Stepniak’s introduction to Garnett’s translation uncovers the double standard—a paradox even—that he assigned to translation: although translation by its very nature, he argues, fails to truly reflect the poetic qualities of the original, the translated text was actually responsible for making a text “great” (Stepniak xii). What Stepniak saw in the Russian writers was a deep romanticist notion that the writer embodies the feeling and thinking of an entire nation. The paradox here emerges in the striking internationalism of the great Russian author. “Turgenev is an author who no longer belongs to Russia only,” Stepniak says (v), in his introduction to Garnett’s translation of Turgenev’s *Rudin* (1906). A writer of international scope, Turgenev “was certainly able to paint all classes and conditions of Russian people,” though he specialized in depicting “educated Russia, or rather the more advanced thinking part of it” (Stepniak x). Stepniak defined the internationalism of Turgenev and other Russian writers through their aesthetic ideals, which specifically represented class difference and class struggle. For Stepniak, aesthetic and stylistic complexity meant that prose crossed national boundaries and had the potential to develop “artistic taste

and understanding” (Stepniak xii). Stepniak’s idea that “great art is international” in fact reflected the movement of flexibility: since Russian was a flexible language, its spread underscores its ability to be readily translated (Stepniak xii). Stepniak’s formula of artistic success inhered in the idea that “great art is international” because Turgenev has “won such fame among foreigners, and [since]...the number of readers is widening every year, [this] proves that great art” crosses national boundaries (Stepniak xii).

Elsewhere Stepniak also mentions that the stylistic artistry of a work made art great and acquired international stature because Turgenev’s “love of liberty, and such radical views”—essentially all flexible products of the Russian mind and nation—morphed into his prose, merging his political identity with his “artist’s individuality” (Stepniak xvii). “He would have been a poor artist,” Stepniak says, “had he inflicted upon himself such a mutilation, because freedom of the artist’s individuality, is the life and soul of all true art” (xvii). By equating politics with identity, and subsequently defining aesthetics as capable of representing a writer’s “individuality” (Stepniak xvii), Stepniak was arguing that language conveyed a writer’s essential identity because language had the ability to express a writer’s judgements, beliefs, and ideals—all components of an artist’s “individuality.” The logic follows that if language somehow broke down or subsequently altered a writer’s artistry, then the breakdown would essentially distort the writer’s art, politics, and—most importantly—flexibility. For Stepniak a breakdown in translation occurs when a writer’s identity is “unavoidably lost in translation” (Stepniak xxix), as he says of Turgenev’s prose at

the conclusion of his introduction to Garnett's translation (Stepniak xxix). Though Stepniak concedes "that the present [translation] is as near an approach to the elegance and poetry of the original as I have ever come across" (xxix), his comment reinforces the "near" equivalence of Garnett's translation to Turgenev's "splendid" prose, thus highlighting the elusive lost-in-translation flexibility that undergirds the entire undertaking of translating aesthetically-inclined Russian prose. An anonymous reviewer, writing in *The Nation*, in 1904, shares much the same belief as Stepniak's about Turgenev's aesthetic style: "No harsh, discordant note offends us in his simple yet poetic prose" ("Turgeneff and His Translators" 93); while Turgenev's Russian style "uses few baffling popular idioms, little slang, [and] little 'dialect' [in Russian]... a translator of Turgenev should be a master of English style" ("Turgeneff and His Translators" 93). The reviewer regrets that "[t]he special grace of Turgeneff... rarely appears in either of his recent translators [Hapgood and Garnett]" ("Turgeneff and His Translators" 93). From awkward and outdated uses of personal pronouns to "mistranslations" of entire words altogether ("Turgeneff and His Translators" 94), Garnett's translation, as the reviewer notes, "seems to rise more often than Miss Hapgood to the possibilities of her subject, reproducing in English something of the simple eloquence of the original" ("Turgeneff and His Translators" 94). To the reviewer, "possibilities" indicated an ideal to be achieved—"something" to be attained—but ultimately falling short of the mark.

The anonymous reviewer and Stepniak are not alone in their beliefs about the elusive translatability of Turgenev's prose. Henry James's 1874 article on Turgenev

discusses the poetic quality of Turgenev's writing that fixated Stepniak and others. "M. Turgéniew gives U.S. a peculiar sense of being out of harmony with his native land," says James, "of his having a what one may call a poet's quarrel with it" ("ART. IV."). James shares Stepniak's appreciation for Turgenev's eye for class struggle and for his ability to depict "Russian character": "Our author *feels* [sic] the Russian character intensely, and cherishes, in fancy, all its old manifestations" ("ART. IV."). Echoing Stepniak and the anonymous reviewer on the range of linguistic values associated with different translations, James evaluates, perhaps a bit more positively: "an excellent German version of the best is being published under his own supervision, and several very fair English versions have appeared in England and America" ("ART. IV."). Contrasting James's appreciation for the "best" German version with "very fair" translations in English suggests that he accords a higher standard to the German than the English versions. Like Stepniak and the reviewer, James detects some sort of inadequacy, not well articulated, with the English translations of Turgenev's works. Rachel May, in her study of Russian translation, notes the same peculiarity, citing Maurice Baring, who "acknowledged [that] the poetry of Turgenev's style (three quarters of which, he said, was lost in translation)" attracted readers to his work (May 30).

The case of Turgenev's prose paradoxically underscores a prevailing conundrum: style makes a work original, but how can style, if diminished through the lost-in-translation practice, adequately convey originality or poetry? Style, after all, was the *par excellence* mode of ensuring flexible translation. From Stepniak to James,

reading Russian literature provided an opportunity to study a nation and a culture through flexible translation and “great” Russian style—these, after all, were the ideals promised by Howells, Tucker, Dole, and almost all the translators. Professor Emil Blum, writing in *The Arena*, in 1891, best captured this fascination for Russia: “It is the young life of this newly awakened nation [Russia] which fascinates the observer and attracts the attention of the outside world” (Blum 658). As a result, “[t]ranslations of great Russian works are appearing at short intervals” (Blum 658). Yet a stylistic slip in translation meant that the link to the original text was severed and even signaled language’s fundamental instability in this translational sphere, and it provides a clue as to how flexibility was a defining component that maybe lost in translation. All the Turgenev commentators see a literary betrayal that occurs in the process of translation, acknowledging that Turgenev’s elegance (Stepniak), poetry (James, Stepniak, and Baring), and grace (anonymous reviewer) disappear, but these terms in themselves do not communicate what exactly goes missing from one language to the next. For these commentators, though, elegance, poetry, and grace pertained to style, and style was best communicated through a model of flexibility, with its unwavering relationship to freedom: too equivalent, and the style came off feigned; too liberal, and the style seemed un-Turgenev like.

While flexibility meant originality and credibility to the U.S. public, inflexibility shaded into awkward expression and the intrusion of the translator into the foreign text. The problem of “lost in translation” occurred when a translator occupied the Russian original, a foreign presence indicated by stylistic inflexibility on

the part of the translator. The result is that commentators from the nineteenth century to the twentieth have either favored Garnett for this intrusion or completely disavowed her translations. Rachel May notes that “a more serious flaw” in Garnett’s writing occurred when she would “smooth over the stylistic differences among the various authors she translated,” and made language fit a model of “good English” (40)—in other words, Garnett used flexible translation practices in her endeavors. However, Garnett, as few scholars have noticed, was following the nineteenth-century model of flexible translation, one so prevalent that it was expected of all translators; it was a model of translation that was encapsulated in the rhetoric of the word “style.” Calvin Winter, writing in *The Bookman*, in 1911, best captures the philosophy of style underlying this philosophy of translation. As he says, “It is something of a paradox to speak of the Best Translations [sic] in English of the big foreign novelists of the nineteenth-century...[because] some masterly rendering of a great original stands out conspicuously like a beacon of light; but for the most part the best translations resolve themselves into a choice between evils” (Winter). Winter emphasizes that one “evil” is the “[s]low and careful workmanship by a writer capable at least of making the translation approximate to the quality of style in the original,” though this capability is “the most rudimentary qualification for the successful translator” (Winter). The “best translation,” though, may be achieved by “dexterity of paraphrase”—the “key to the whole question” (Winter). According to Winter, “rank and file” translators, “even of the better class,” “are writers who are known for their translations and nothing more—interpreters only, and not creators”

(Winter). Most importantly, “ultimate dexterity of paraphrase”—the most important element of translation—“belongs to the creative art” (Winter). Winter essentially advocates for a translator who follows a flexible approach, plumbing the fine boundary between equivalence and “paraphrase,” which denoted a practice of using different words to achieve clarity, grace, and elegance—all flexible categories in the Russian language.

Winter assigns an expansive and notable role to the translator, essentially allowing the translator to act as a mediator, creator, and purveyor of information, approximating the model of a translator that Lawrence Venuti calls “invisible translation” (1). It is the translator who, with “inborn genius,” is “to decide precisely the extent to which peculiarities of style, especially such peculiarities as are blemishes rather than qualities, should be preserved” (Winter). If the original text has “the fault of ambiguity,” Winter reasons, “it is not a merit but a grave mistake to irritate a foreign reader by passing this ambiguity on to him” (Winter). The translator, in this sense, must have an eye for style, as Winter explains via a rebuke of Dole’s philosophy: if the “crisp, sharp, staccato is characteristic of Tolstoy, and therefore something noticeable to the Russian reader, it should be retained” (Winter); if, on the other hand, “any other peculiarity of style is common to the bulk of Russian literature, its imitation in English is a mistake and a blemish” (Winter). Winter wanted the translator to serve as a double-agent of style, parsing Russian and English for “local slang, patois, dialect” to ensure comprehensibility and ease of reading. In other words, what Winter really wanted was little intrusion from the translator, since

awkward style—or prose—indicated a “rank and file” translator (Winter). Winter implicitly identifies “dexterity of paraphrase” as the defining measure of a translator. When discussing Russian translations in his article “The Best Russian Translators,” Winter mentions the anonymous reviewer who compared Constance Garnett’s and Isabel Hapgood’s translations in *The Nation*. Though Hapgood’s and Garnett’s translations “could hope to equal the superb French version made under Tourguenieff’s own supervision,” their translations are “admittedly faithful, written in simple and idiomatic English” (Winter). In other words, their style is accessible and clear, and because “Mrs. Garnett’s work was shown to lie in her closer adherence to the English idiom, in other words, to her dexterity of paraphrase,” her work possesses “distinct superiority” over Hapgood’s (Winter). Even Winter’s translation philosophy is contradictory, however, since he advocates for “dexterity of paraphrase” while offering Turgenev’s “supervision” of his translation as a model of a “superb translation,” effectively calling for a close correspondence to the original text by way of the original author. Nonetheless, “dexterity of paraphrase” was another code name for flexible translation.

What’s puzzling about the Garnett and Stepniak translation example is the positive rallying cry behind “good English.” In the nineteenth century, “good English” at times meant stylistic erasure, or innovative stylistic blending. Echoing later critics of Garnett, Rachel May, as previously noted, states that Garnett’s “serious flaw” occurred when she would “smooth over the stylistic differences among the various authors she translated,” and make language fit a model of “good English”

(40). In other words, when Garnett would favor “dexterity of paraphrase” (Winter), in May’s view her stylistic erasure signaled a failure in translation. But for nineteenth-century readers and critics, “dexterity of paraphrase” ensured literary and commercial success in the form of a growing reading public. For Winter and the anonymous reviewer writing in the *The Nation*, Turgenev’s Russian style should be translated by “a master of English style” (“Turgeneff and His Translators” 93), and Garnett, according to both reviewers, most closely hit the mark. Stepniak, in a roundabout way, isolates the effect from the cause, but in essence echoes Winter and the anonymous reviewer in their view of the translator’s paradox. It’s because of the “good English” model of translation that Turgenev’s “readers [are] widening every year” (Stepniak xii), counter-intuitively making Turgenev’s art international. Whether the translation philosophies go by the name of “dexterity of paraphrase” or “good English,” both models were directly connected to flexibility. When critics bemoaned some kind of stylistic erasure or awkwardness, they were complaining that the absence of flexibility indicated a slippage in the text—an equivalence between the Anglo-Saxon and Slav minds could not function because either style or expression had disrupted that link.

As with Noble, Baron Rosen, Blum, and Winter, Stepniak relies on the same theory of language in his preface to Garnett’s translation of Turgenev’s *Rudin*, accounting for why Russian literary translations prospered, even when the translational philosophy was at odds with U.S. commentators. Stepniak evokes the same metaphor of adaptation and flexibility to discuss Turgenev’s “mastery” of the

Russian language, calling it “rich, flexible, and musical language” (Stepniak xxviii). Though Stepniak views this “flexible” component of language as relating to Russian specifically, his theory follows the same form of thought as U.S. commentators, mirroring their sentiments about the ability of the Russian and English languages as universal repositories of shared meaning. It’s for this reason that the word “style” remains conspicuously absent from his preface. Instead, Stepniak emphasizes the style-less correspondence between Russian and English by reference to the emotive quality of Turgenev’s prose, which is “brisk” and demonstrates “his unique command over the sympathies and emotions of his readers” (Stepniak xxviii). The writer functions as a musician, “who works upon the nerves and the souls of his audience without the intermediary of the mind” (Stepniak xxviii). As he finally says, “One does not read his novels; one lives in them” (Stepniak xxviii). Stepniak emphasizes the visceral, pre-cognitive effect Turgenev’s prose achieves in the mind of the reader. Since the effect of his prose does not require “the intermediary of mind,” equivalency between Russian and English is achieved through the “nerves” and “souls” of readers, corresponding to flexible capacity of language and mind described by Baron Rosen.

Stepniak defines one other crucial component of translation philosophy that not only spelled the success of Garnett’s translations but also shows how and why nineteenth-century translation was broadly responsible for the invention of Russia in the U.S. This second component deepens the contradictory nature of translation philosophies of this period. Stepniak’s preface to Turgenev examines language through physiology and lyric, applying terms related to those fields to explore a pre-

lingual state of language—formed only in the mind—that posited an equivalence between English and Russian thought. This type of thinking was the direct opposite of the later, infamous Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which viewed language as structuring thought and behavior in a given culture. Stepniak’s model of language closely resembles Baron Rosen’s “Russo-American racial understanding” (“The Peace of Portsmouth”), one that underscores the physiologically flexible characteristics of the mind that both nations share because of their race. The nineteenth-century model of translation I explore in Stepniak and other commentators argued that thought structures the expression of language—a flexible property. For some this model of language became a way to associate ethnicity and nationality with language acculturation. Proponents of this view saw style and form as a trivial way to value translation; they argued, to the contrary, that once style was removed as a metric of value for translation, then expression and representation of thought would become the ultimate measure of a translated text.

Stepniak’s connection to U.S. language theory does not end with these flexible effects. Whereas Winter viewed translators as both creative writers *and* translators by way of their “dexterity of paraphrase,” Stepniak views writers in the same light. Since Turgenev “is a realist in the sense that he keeps close to reality, truth, and nature...in the pursuit of photographic faithfulness to life,” he does not allow his representations to be “overburdened with wearisome details” (Stepniak xxvii). He keeps his “action...rabid”; “the events are never to be foreseen a hundred pages beforehand...[and] he keeps his readers in constant suspense” (Stepniak xxvii).

This tendency allows Turgenev to represent “himself [as] a better realist than the gifted representatives of...orthodox realism” (Stepniak xxvii). Turgenev shows that “life is not dull [and that] life is full of the unforeseen, full of suspense” (Stepniak xxvii). These tendencies allow for creative improvisation—or “dexterity of paraphrase”—since the “novelist” must create “suspense” “if he is not to sacrifice the soul of art for the merest show of fidelity” (Stepniak xxvii). Fidelity, following Winter’s logic, would mean that translators are “interpreters only, and not creators” (Winter). Stepniak argues that the creator—the writer—must create by taking the quotidian and adding poetic effects, by showing that life “is full of suspense” (Stepniak xxvii). Through this language theory Stepniak implies that translators and writers share the same language philosophies. He breaks down the strict delineation between an original and translated text, positing (similar to Walter Benjamin’s notion of the originality of the translated text) that the translation is as original as the source. As Daniel Selden says of Late Antique writing, particularly in Augustine’s *de doctrina Christiana*, “no variant...signifies positively in isolation, but only insofar as it constitutes part of a larger textual field” in which text reinforced text, regardless of its originality (3). In this sense, Stepniak argues that the translated text is as primary as the first, one that is needed for the world to partake in Turgenev’s brilliance.

Conclusion

Translation practices and philosophies during this period were often ambiguous and contradictory, both courting and refusing consistent formal measures and socio-political values. Tucker’s example shows that translation held out the

promise for social liberation, particularly the translation of Chernyshevskii's text. Indeed, Dole and Skidelsky also understood the promise of Chernyshevskii's text, but their motivation to spread his ideas were so strong that it led them to mistranslate Chernyshevskii. Tucker wanted the same, and his philosophy promotes the promise of fidelity to the original, though in the end his endeavor stops just short of delivering the full text of Chernyshevskii. It's clear that all these translators, though promising fidelity to the original, actually worked from deeply fragmented conceptions of their flexible translation philosophies. They showed that translation was capable of promoting some sort of change, but this vision was always mediated through the translator's ideology of language and politics. To this end, the case studies explored in this chapter also dramatize how often the translator's philosophy of language was at odds with U.S. reviewers and commentators, and how this conflict allowed implicit language theories to rise to the surface. Chernyshevskii's work, even in Russia, was known for its stylistic awkwardness, especially when compared to a stylist such as Turgenev. Though Tucker, Dole, and Skidelsky prized Chernyshevskii for his politics and social promise, U.S. reviewers were wont to ignore the politics and instead critique the language of the translations. What hindered the politics from emerging, in their view, was the awkward equivalence from Russian to English style. These reviewers argued that they wanted stylistic fluidity in the translated text, and since Chernyshevskii's translators failed to deliver this promise, the translated text consequently fails to deliver its political project.

As with reviewers commenting on the translated texts of Chernyshevskii, the translational relationship between Stepniak and Garnett revealed that reviewers wanted “good English.” This model was at its root a conception of language that favored stylistic innovation on the part of the translator; it asked that the translator act as both interpreter and creator, as Winter eloquently argued. Surrounding this theory of language was a universal philosophy of language that posited an equivalence between Russian and English thought, and was actually related to the “good English” model. Since Russian and English were both “flexible” and “elastic,” a translator did not have to follow an equivalence model. The translator was encouraged to improvise, to make English flow more smoothly—in other words, make the English “good” by way of style—and since both languages are universal and flexible in their expression, translators could justify their deviation from, if not “betrayal” of, the original text. As scholar Charles Moser indicated, Garnett has become a major figure in the translation history of both Russia and the U.S. As with any translation and its translator, criticism is inherent to the practice. While Moser praises Garnett, Rachel May and many others critique Garnett for her stylistic reductionism and equivalence to a “good English” model—all qualities that nineteenth-century reviewers wanted from good translations. Even Stepniak’s lost-in-translation philosophy shows that his thought resembles that of Winter, Blum, Baron Rosen, and Noble—critics who attributed a universal racial and linguistic identity to Russians and Americans. In effect, what’s lost in translation, according to these theories, is the idea of loss itself.

There was nothing to lose, since there was a direct equivalence between languages and style.

Though the 1920s and 1930s would give way to a hostile and antagonistic U.S. view of Russia and later the Soviet Union, the translation philosophies of the late-nineteenth century show that there was always an attempt to find a shared identity. It's tempting to consider Leroy-Beaulieu and Rambaud and their thinking on colonization and linguistic hegemony to the views of the 1920s and 1930s. As Leroy-Beaulieu argued, "flexibility remains one of the most marked features of the Russian nature," and this helps explain "the success of the Great-Russian in colonizing the vast plains of his continent, spreading northward and southward with an almost equal facility of acclimatization under every or any sky" (192). Seeking to unite the Russian and the French to favor their politics alliances, Leroy-Beaulieu sought, through language and nation, to argue for racial and linguistic affinities between the two nations. Decades later, perhaps echoing some of Kennan's discordant views of the Russian autocracy and its people, U.S. policy toward Russia and later the Soviet Union changed dramatically. What was once similar now became foreign. Indeed, Kennan's nephew, George Frost Kennan, who would go on to become a pivotal player in U.S. policies toward the Soviet Union, published a work entitled, *The Marquis de Custine and His Russia in 1839* (1972), in one view resurrecting Custine's antipathy toward Russia of the mid-nineteenth century. In the nineteenth-century U.S., a linked linguistic and racial likeness allowed for the translation of Russian texts to soar. For Dole and Tucker, this identity operated in the linguistic

realm; for Stepniak and others, this shared correspondence could be found in the universalized and racialized conception of nationality. This search for a shared identity had as much to do with translation as it did with language. It's for this reason that Professor Blum called Russia "a mystery" and "a sealed book" (Blum). The book metaphor implied that Russia could be opened, translated, and made known, and it's for this reason, as Blum says, that "[t]ranslations of great Russian works are appearing at short intervals" (Blum).

Notes

1. Adapting Maurice Samuels's 2010 title, *Inventing the Israelite: Jewish Fiction in Nineteenth-Century France* (2009), I use the word "invention" to signify the representation of Russian art and politics that were constructed and presented to the nineteenth-century U.S. public.
2. There are many editions of Leroy-Beaulieu's text. Most of the U.S. editions are translated from the "Third French Edition" by Zénaïde A. Ragozin who was a "Member of the 'Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,' of the 'American Oriental Society,' of the 'Anglo-Russian Literary Society,' London, etc." See the title page to the 1893 English translation for more information on Ragozin, who very much embodies Anglo-Saxon racialism and flexibility. For example, Ragozin wrote *Beowulf: The Hero of the Anglo-Saxons* (1900), where he discusses various races and the great deeds of the "Danes" (213).
3. It's also fitting that Kennan became friends with Stepniak and Kropotkin through their participation in the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom, which also included members such as Mark Twain, Feliks Volkhovsky, Julia Ward Howe, and James Russell Lowell.
4. Andrew M. Drozd in *Chernyshevskii's What Is to Be Done? A Reevaluation* argues that the novel should be viewed for its ideological premises but should also be considered as a work of art. It's also important to consider Drozd's argument that Chernyshevskii's fondness for Fourier's utopian socialism "is far from certain" (141), although a large body of scholars tend to argue otherwise. For sake of clarity, this chapter calls the political vision of the fourth dream cooperative socialism and Utopian socialism interchangeably.
5. The reliance on French translations has a rich history in this nineteenth-century moment. Baron Rosen posited a theory of equivalence between English and Russian while saying the French disrupts this similarity. Nonetheless, Tucker relied on a French translation for Chernyshevskii's work. Isabel Hapgood, in a correspondence dated to January 10, 1913, accused the prolific translator Nathan Haskell Dole of using a French source for his translation of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. As Hapgood says, "From the very first page of Mr. Dole's translation I realized that his work had NOT been directly done from the Russian. I armed myself with a Russian copy, and a copy of the French translation. In my review I asserted (and proved) that Mr. Dole had translated through the French; where the French was out, his version was out; where the French translator had blundered, he had blundered in precisely the same manner—and he had thrown in a lot of original mistakes, of his own, for good measure" (NYPL Manuscripts).
6. As a relatively recent *New Yorker* article explores, Nabokov thought that one of Garnett's translation was a "complete disaster." Joseph Brodsky echoes a similar

sentiment, though it shares a remarkable similarity to the “good English” model: ‘The reason English-speaking readers can barely tell the difference between Tolstoy and Dostoevsky is that they aren’t reading the prose of either one. They’re reading Constance Garnett’ (Remnick).

7. Another scholar states that Garnett “owed her career as a translator to Stepniak” (Anemone 123). Anemone also says that his promotion of Garnett “may have been Stepniak’s most important contribution to Russian literature” (Anemone 123).

CHAPTER TWO

America's "Immaturity": Russian Aesthetic "Truth" in the US.

"Русская газета на Американской почве" (A Russian Newspaper on American Soil) is one slogan written for the newspaper, *Прогресс* (*Progress*, 1891-1894). Within this New York 1890s newspaper, billed as "the only Russian paper without the dominions of the Czar," editors and writers advocated for "классовые интересы" (class interests) and "духовная солидарность" (heartfelt solidarity) for the Russian-Jewish population of the U.S. Though the newspaper billed itself as a Russian newspaper written for Russian speakers, almost all Russian newspapers in the U.S. "announced themselves as Russian but were in reality published by and written for Russian-speaking Jewish intellectuals" (Cassedy 70). Nonetheless, the newspaper at least in its ideal aimed to be cosmopolitan, democratic, and multilingual in scope. Within the same section of the article for *Progress*, the writer asks, "What can these Americans do for Russia?" (quoted in Cassedy 69). The answer: "The parallel between American-Russians and American-Irish has been set in place: class interests and heartfelt solidarity encloses the local, Russian-Jewish population with the struggling masses of Russia" ("Russkaia gazeta na amerikanskoj pochve"). Class politics and the fight for more democratic, and even socialist, ideals united "Americans" with the "American-Russians" and the "American-Irish"—in other words, the newspaper established a link to identity based on politico-nationalism and an awareness of shared marginalization within a nation suspicious of these political affiliations. All are Americans, the newspaper argued, fighting for a political cause,

which consequently unified these members into citizens of one nation. But the *Progress* extends belonging a bit further, adding, “and we would hope that our attempt, for those who value the printed word, free from Russian censorship, establishes an urgent demand [for the newspaper]” (“Russkaia Gazeta Na Amerikanskoi Pochve”). The demand for an uncensored press uniquely qualifies this U.S. based newspaper as a textual artifact that cannot be read apart from its Russian roots.

Underlying the idea of a press “free from Russian censorship,” the newspaper also included the idea that the “printed word” was a way to tell the truth, one associated with the ideals of nineteenth century Russian literary criticism and aestheticism. In fact, the *Progress* called itself a “литературно-политическая газета,” or a literary-political newspaper, clearly associating itself in the Russian tradition of periodicals that attempted to evade censorship by discussing political topics through art-criticism.¹ The limits and possibilities of censorship are what Prince Petr Kropotkin explores in his 1901 Lowell Lecture, “Russian Literature,” which would then be published in book form under the title, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature* (1905). In this book, Kropotkin mentions that “everything that is printed in Russia, even up to the present time, is submitted to censorship” (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature* 263). “Under such conditions,” Kropotkin continues, “political thought had continually to find new channels for its expression...[and] a special language was developed...in reviews and papers” (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature* 265). These political

conditions in Russia gave way to a “special language,” which in “a few words,” “conveyed quite a world of ideas” (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature* 265). Literature in Russia adopted this “special language”—a type of coded language meant to evade Russian censors—followed by the “literary and philosophical circles” debating these ideas, and finally by “art-criticism” (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature* 285). Indeed, like the sacrality of the “printed word” in the *Progress*, language under autocratic Russian censorship developed a nuance and subtlety that fostered a form of expression that required a reader who could “read between the lines” in varying forms: “novels, humorous sketches, or veiled comments on West European events” (Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* 146). For this reason, leading art-critics of nineteenth-century Russia all shared various forms of the idea “that art cannot be its own aim; that life is superior to art; and that the aim of art is to explain life, to comment upon it, and to express an opinion about it” (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature* 290). The art-critic consequently became the expert who could decode the “special language” of the “printed word.” In this chapter, I use Kropotkin’s name for literary criticism—art-criticism—to explore how U.S. literary critics used the foundational tenet of Russian art-criticism (that art reflected reality) to investigate their own society and to ultimately argue for a socially engaged literature.

Realism and Its Contradictions

The vogue of Russian art-criticism in the public sphere was clearly debated with a passionate appeal to ideas of development and progress. While Russian

nihilists were associated in varying degrees with Russian literature and Russian art-criticism, the representation of radical politics by U.S. practitioners of the novel demonstrated that the ideals of this vogue were destined to failure. The antinomy of Russian aesthetic discourse, as it was debated in U.S. periodicals, combined with literary representations of radical politics, shows how the truth value of realist aesthetics became problematized. My goal is not to position realism against its multiple binaries and consequently show how each participates in the definition and negation of the other; rather, following Fredric Jameson, I use Kant's definition of antinomy to demonstrate how two arguments lead to two mutually contradictory conclusions. Jameson fittingly draws attention to realism as a "hybrid concept, in which an epistemological claim (for knowledge and truth) masquerades as an aesthetic ideal" (Jameson 5-6). Whereas the discourse of Russian art criticism promoted the democratization of reading with a reliance on an authority (an epistemological claim), narrative representations of radical nihilist philosophy demonstrate a containment of any radical impulse or politics (the aesthetic ideal), and this hybridity demonstrates the paradox inherent to realism. It's helpful here to think of Wolfgang Funk's point that realism resides in a "contradictory" and tension-filled space where there's an "incommensurability" between reality and its representation.² Of course, the word "radical" signified many definitions, and a brief discussion of this term will indicate that the use of this term by Cahan, Kropotkin, and Howells involved an embrace of realism and its variant as represented by Russian realism. Whereas Russian art-criticism, despite its association with progressive politics,

represented the metaphysical concepts of truth, democracy, and enlightenment, literary representations of nihilist politics dispossessed progressive movements of their imagined emancipatory potential. “Radical” in literary representations by Henry James, Cahan, and Hawthorne demonstrate representations of nihilist and anarchist philosophies that sought to topple the state and promote revolution. Literary representations of radical politics—all works that make explicit and more often implicit references to nihilism—doom their emancipatory projects to failure because they narratively represent the discourse of immaturity and lack of inclusivity that art-criticism was attempting to dispel.

The two sides of Russian aesthetic theory—art-criticism and novelistic narratives—show the spectrum of Russian art in the U.S, and the word “include”—inclusivity—is fitting because in its Latin roots it means to let in (*in*) and to obstruct or to shut (*cludere*). In other words, Russian aesthetic theory meant to let in while to some degree shutting out, or even shutting within. It’s helpful to consider the inclusivity and contradictions of art-criticism in the midst of a time when rampant race, immigration, and assimilation threatened non-dominant groups in the U.S. This was the time of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) where U.S. citizens “set fire to the settlements of the Chinese” while pushing anti-immigration initiatives (Bean 78). This was the time of the Moro Massacre (1906) where U.S. troops killed “600 human beings [Filipinos]...without mercy” (Storey quoted in Bean 94). During this period the Dawes Act (1887) was passed, an act which effectively committed “the U.S. government to...[a] policy of assimilation” (Bean 95), erasing the cultural

particularity of Native Americans and other immigrant groups. This period also witnessed the Plessy v. Ferguson case (1896), which upheld segregation and the “separate but equal” clause (Bean 111). Russian aesthetic theory in the hands of Cahan, Howells, and Kropotkin offered the public a chance to belong and to join, to start theorizing a state of immaturity in society, and to provide a model of development, which in their view would eventually lead to inclusivity of all races and nations.

That’s why W.E.B. Du Bois’s ideas in *Reconstruction in America* (1935), where he examines the U.S. between 1860-1880, call attention to the “splendid failure” of Reconstruction, which led to the “killing [of] democracy, art, and religion” (Du Bois 707). Because of the oppression of non-dominant groups, “Negroes themselves are seldom recognized as interpreters of art, and white artists must work under severe social limitations and at second hand; they thus lack necessary sincerity, depth, and frankness” (Du Bois 706). It’s not a coincidence that Du Bois and Kropotkin both attended the Universal Races Congress to discuss “backwards people” and the “American Negro” (Lewis 293): both Du Bois and Kropotkin were interested in human freedom, social progress, and social justice. Perhaps Howells advocated a different type of inclusivity than Kropotkin or Cahan, but all these writers and critics wanted a socially and politically engaged literature that could comment on society and in the process develop and grow society. Howells, during his socialist period, wanted to bring “low life” in to the public sphere while pushing literature away from drawing-rooms toward all of society. Cahan spread inclusivity for the working class

and later for Yiddish speakers and Yiddish culture. Kropotkin, despite his aristocratic origins, wanted, like Cahan, to advocate art for all classes through altruism and democracy.

The contradiction inherent to realism operates in a similar manner in late-nineteenth-century American literature. “In a period known for discovering contemporary social reality,” as Amy Kaplan says of the novel during this period, “writers were equally obsessed with the past, or multiple pasts, largely of their own invention” (“Nation, Region, Empire” 242). Whether the past worked to reflect the present to aid in a “willed amnesia” in order to build national solidarity and community in some novels, American art-critics influenced by Russian aesthetic principles surprisingly did not look to the past for a sustained discussion of “contemporary social reality” (Kaplan “Nation, Region, Empire” 242); rather, because American art-critics viewed literature as a corrective for society’s immaturity, the only way to move the nation from childishness to maturity was through sustained attention to the present moment while maintaining the keen hope that in the future progress would occur. While Kaplan sees some “late nineteenth-century novels...reimagining the shifting spatial contours of the nation,” this chapter suggests that American art-critics who were inspired by Russian realism saw the future as a means to imagine community (Kaplan “Nation, Region, Empire” 242). Yet the means were similar to how the past operated in the present: while some used the past to “reinvent” and “claim...the shared origin of national identity” while replaying “founding conflicts” (Kaplan “Nation, Region, Empire” 242), the Russian art-critics

used the future to refract the contradictions of the present moment while enacting a form of amnesia of the past. As Leo Wiener writes in his book, *An Interpretation of the Russian People* (1915), “Realism demands that one should not blindly follow the past” (86). Wiener suggests that realism is a worthy mode in its own right, capable of disregarding the “primitive masters” and erecting itself as a mode that can “teach the truth” (86). Indeed, artists must participate in “willed amnesia” and forget the past while beginning to trust themselves and their own subjective interpretations of truth (Kaplan “Nation, Region, Empire” 242). Kaplan is precise, in this regard, about almost all novels of the period: they must “imagine a community through exclusion as much as inclusion” (“Nation, Region, Empire” 242).

The art-critics that I explore in this chapter enact the contradictions of realist principles in various forms. Howells, Cahan, and Kropotkin were all educated and to some extent upper class, “genteel” critics, yet they all wanted to democratize and popularize Russian realism—and more largely, realist novels—rather than confine knowledge and culture to upper-class spheres. Though Russian intellectuals were often seen as the “torch-bearers of Russian progress” (Forman), Howells, Cahan, and Kropotkin were promoting progress through the masses. While this was one aim of their art-criticism, it’s hard to overlook the idea that while they advocated for the appreciation of what Howells calls “literary truth” (an epistemological claim) in “fiction” (an aesthetic medium), this “truth” could be divined only through a reliance on a “genteel critic” (Davidson 76). To this end, while the aim of realism was to awaken people to the predicaments of their current social reality and to vitalize

intellectual consciousness, these critics directly and indirectly implied that this can occur only through a mediating mind capable of interpreting this “special language” in its American context. It’s helpful to visualize the contradictions of realism through Cahan’s reworking of Spencer’s sociological discourse, which was resistant to the didacticism of art-criticism and realist fiction. Since Spencer viewed aesthetic enjoyment as separate from life-serving functions, art occupied a minor presence in the development of mind and consciousness. In order to counter this conflict, Cahan critiqued and reworked Spencer’s theory into his own version of art-criticism, creating a practice where fiction and art-criticism were the precondition for maturation and development. In connection to Cahan, it seems appropriate to consider Kropotkin and his intellectual endeavors to bring altruism to the forefront of intellectual development. “Higher intelligence and knowledge,” Kropotkin suggests in *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902), help curb “the harshness of the struggle for life between men” (Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* ix). In other words, Kropotkin, too, reworked Darwinian theory into a mode that can accommodate cooperation and aesthetic enjoyment.

The sociological context further deepens the question of why Howells became associated with Russian—and, by extension, American literature in the nineteenth century—and why American art-critics started writing and publishing periodicals based on the principles of Russian art criticism. Answering this question offers a partial—and missing from the long realism-romance debates—explanation as to why Howells shored up his realist resources against the U.S. romance genre and why

Russian-language periodicals as well as Russian emigre writers participated in the cult of the “special word” (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature* 265).³ The relationship between Howells and Cahan deserves further exploration because, as Cahan says, “Howells wrote as a realist before he had a conception of the great Russian literature” (Kirk and Kirk 55). Nonetheless, under the influence of Russian literature and art-criticism, Howells sought to foster political participation and aesthetic emancipation through the politically mediated literary forms of Russian literature; this participation is certainly the impetus behind the proclamation of the newspaper, *Progress*. Because Russian censorship created a politically sterile press, art critics turned to literature to argue for their didactic aesthetics and engaged politics, and in the process an aesthetically inclined reading public developed.⁴ As this chapter will show, Russian art-criticism, and the literary critics associated with this form, was used and discussed in impromptu and often sporadic ways. Whereas Howells and Cahan were explicit in their commentaries on the uses of Russian art-criticism, Leo Wiener’s translation of Russian literary criticism in 1903 was relatively unknown despite its scattered mentions in U.S. periodicals. U.S. realism influenced by Russian art and criticism became a contradiction of its own. Howells represents the genteel, Anglo-American critic while Cahan represents a marginalized Russian-Jewish figure of U.S. culture. Together, they embody the spectrum of Russian art theory in the U.S.

Particularly Howells’s knowledge of the history and aim of Russia’s literary criticism—dating back to 1836—helps explain how he culturally translated the role of

Russian aesthetic theory into the U.S. In his April 1886 “Editor’s Study,” Howells argues for what he and other writers saw as America’s much needed push away from romance and into realism. Echoing Henry James’s stance from his biography of Hawthorne on the abundance of romance in U.S. culture, Howells envisioned Russian realism as a way to draw upon European history and culture to dispel “the coldness, the thinness, [and] the blankness” of American culture, which offered too many creative possibilities for the romancer to imagine harmful idealizations (James, *Hawthorne* 42). By drawing upon Russia’s literary tradition, Howells inserted himself into a Russian debate between the “men of the 40s,” who debated whether Russia should look toward the West (Westernizers, as they were called) or toward its own roots (Slavophiles), and the “men of the 60s,” who were the radical, “nihilist” literary critics and were the “more radical variant of Westernism” (Offord 130). The “radical” critics, whom Kropotkin identifies as Western critics, including “[Vissarion] Bylínskiy, [Alexander] Hérzen, Turguéneff, [and] Tchernyshévskiy” (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature* 257), espoused utilitarian views that elevated the sciences, in addition to art-criticism, because they viewed such disciplines as capable of improving the human condition. The Western critics in particular grounded theory in the sphere of realist aesthetics, arguing that literature must in some way be didactic because art had the ability to improve social and civic life. “The Russians who have followed Gogol and learned from him, as now the whole world must learn from them,” writes Howells in his 1886 article, “have not heeded those childish demands, and they form a group from which one can hardly

turn to other literatures without feeling that he enters an atmosphere of feigning, of insincere performance and ignoble ideals” (Howells, “Editor’s Study”). Howells connects reading Gogol (“learning”) to didacticism, implying that the printed word has the potential to lead the world from immaturity, associated with disingenuous feelings, to maturity, which implied a receptiveness to the sordid conditions of life.

The last commitment of this chapter is to establish a connection between Russian and American art-critics, and this connection occurs most clearly through social criticism and the drive for defining national literatures against the backdrop of imitating European literature. One of the more indirect connections is how Russian art-critics embraced U.S. sentimental literature as “social analysis” during the nineteenth century (MacKay 33). Stowe’s novel may have fallen under Russian censorship in Russia during its time, since a “noticeable toughening of...censorship...may have deemed a reappearance...undesirable” (MacKay 33), but her novel was read by Turgenev, Tolstoy, and other writers and critics. Chernyshevskii said that in Stowe’s novel nothing is more “offensive to the sense of justice as slavery in the southern United States” (quoted in MacKay 33). I.A. Ivanchenko explains that in “1825 Russian critics began to realize the importance of the national literature of America,” beginning with the writers Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper (Ivanchenko 85). Since Russia and America sought to grow their literature, they constantly had to reflect on the supposed imitative and original qualities of their artistic productions. Gregory Jusdanis makes clear that “the Russian critic Vissarion Belinsky” argued for the Romantic notion that literature expresses the

“national spirit” (quoted in Jusdanis 47), and since critics and writers regarded Russia as “copying European models,” its literature went ignored. Belinsky’s Romantic nationalism most closely resonates with Du Bois’s insistence that there’s relatively little representation in African-American art and literature, and Belinsky’s imitative idea perhaps comes closest to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s notion that American literature is immature and hence derivative. Jusdanis similarly points out that literature aids in the development of “cultural identities,” which to smaller or larger degrees connects others to “national groups” (47); one of his more striking connections discusses Henry Louis Gates’s point that “African-American literature...arose in part as a reaction to charges that its authors could not create literature” (47). Gates speaks to Du Bois’s point that, as I will later explore, African Americans are “seldom recognized as interpreters of art” (706), but Gates also evokes the call of Howells, who complained that America’s literature is steeped in immaturity. In one way or another, all these art-critics shared the goal of inclusivity, and art-criticism and the novel were the means to develop toward this end, despite the contradictions.

Art-Criticism and its Russian Roots

What Kropotkin calls the ideals of “art-criticism,” Isaiah Berlin calls the ideals of “Russian populism,” which included the “goals...[of] social justice and social equality” (Berlin 241). Russian populism involved the leading critic, Nikolai Chernyshevskii, and at the root of Russian populism was the idea of “[f]aith in human freedom” (Berlin 256). In contrast to populism, contemporary scholars of Russian

literature and art have a much stricter delineation of the term, art-criticism. To these scholars, art-criticism refers to the critical field of analyzing visual art. Alexey Makhrov, for example, says that “Vissarion Belinskii”—whom Kropotkin called a prominent critic “in the thirties and forties” (286)—“promoted literary criticism, but not art criticism, as an advanced ideological discourse” (Makhrov 632). Kropotkin, however, views the literary critic and the art critic interchangeably. As he says, “[t]he real soul of a Russian monthly review is its art-critic”; “[t]he critic of a leading review is the intellectual leader of the younger generation” (285). Kropotkin goes on to name the art-critics who practiced “literary criticism” (286): “Bylinskiy in the thirties and forties, Tchernyshévskiy and Dobrolúboff of the fifties and the early sixties, and Písareff in the later sixties and seventies, who were respectively the rulers of thoughts in their generation of educated youth” (286). Russian art-critics, according to Kropotkin, favored realist novels, and their functions as literary critics were multi-faceted: they asked “important questions, which are raised in the thoughtful mind by every work of really good art” (286). Above all, the critic would notice in a “good work...what they would have been under similar conditions in reality” (286). To this end, these critics viewed criticism as a way to engage with art and society through the novel. Kropotkin was aware that Russian literary critics held varying and at times opposing views, but he reinforced the point that, despite their differences, Russian art-critics viewed literature and their criticism as an analysis of social life, with realist works operating as a reflection of that society. As Irina Paperno says of Russian realism, “the intention of realism...was the direct and

precise representation of social reality...[and] realism clearly had a didactic intent and wished to have a direct impact on reality” (8-9).

Some, but not all, U.S. literary critics and writers saw the mission of the Russian art-critic not only as a worthy cause but also as a fitting occupation in the age of a growing professionalized newspaper business. Howells saw art-criticism written in the newspaper as an ideal way to argue for class interests through the lessons of realist fiction while staying true to his roots as a “son of a small-town newspaper editor and printer” (Davidson 35). Howells’s 1886 “Editor’s Study” serves as the paradigmatic example of the influence of Russian aesthetic “truth” in America, one of just a few of his articles that explicitly connects the ideas of the Russian literary critics to American literary criticism. Howells compares “the Russian criticism of 1836” to the “American criticism of 1886” and praises the Russians for moving away from romance and various idealizations in their writing and instead writing about “truth” (Howells, August 1886 “Editor’s Study”). Comparing Russia’s immature “criticism of 1836” to the immature “American criticism of 1886,” Howells uses the criteria of narrational faithfulness to “things as they are” to advocate for a literary form that would view people in relation to their material conditions, hoping to rival Russia’s more mature criticism: “It is a long step to descend from them to American fiction; one holds one’s breath and looks anxiously to see if there is really any footing down there” (Howells, August 1886 “Editor’s Study”). America’s immaturity is a consistent staple in Howells’s criticism, and European models frequently serve as placeholders in his criticism on American novels. The one remedy to this immaturity

and childishness, according to Howells, is to pay attention to the “truth” of life: the lower classes, the degradation of city centers, and, most of all, to “low life”—all categories that are implicated in aesthetics as well as politics.

Henry James offers another example of a literary critic who often compared European models to American ones. While this chapter focuses on the art-criticism of Howells and Cahan, it’s fair to say that Henry James was also interested in a criticism that promoted aesthetics and a certain politics, though James was much more interested in extending Matthew Arnold’s and Oscar Wilde’s exclusive and “aristocratic” criticism to understand that an America “steeped in the history and culture of Europe might have something to gain from its resources” (Livesey 288). As Ruth Livesey points out, “James turns Arnold and Wilde’s perception of the cultural void...on its head to make the far-reaching consequences of democracy a matter of critical aesthetic interest in itself” (287). Yet James, unlike Howells and Cahan, was more closely associated with British aestheticism, one that saw glory and riches in the past, rather than in the present or future moment (Livesey 292). And thus American art-critics, including James, sought to individualize and grow American literature into a nationally-recognized symbol.

The “Real” in the U.S. Sphere

Howells, Cahan, and Kropotkin, though with different ideas in mind, all saw Russian literature as “a rich mine of original poetic thought” (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature* v).⁵ Cultural and intellectual distinction, at least in theory, became irrelevant with the Russian realist novel because its aim was to

democratize reading so that all could enjoy reading: “It has a freshness and youthfulness,” as Kropotkin says, “a sincerity and simplicity of expression which render it all the more attractive to the mind that has grown sick of literary artificiality” (v). Drawing on the “expressive” quality, a cognitive similarity between Anglo-Saxons and Russians discussed in Chapter One, Kropotkin uses the same idea as a way to eliminate cultural superiority in the reading public. And lastly, as Kropotkin says, “it has this distinctive feature, that brings within the domain of art—the poem, the novel, the drama—nearly all those questions, social and political, which in Western Europe and America, at least in our present generation, are discussed chiefly in the political writings of the day, but seldom in literature” (v). Kropotkin’s views, shared by Cahan and Howells, stress the growing awareness of the association between the realist novel and the commitment to uniting politics and aesthetics while eschewing “artificiality.” These writers envisioned the Russian realist novel as a way to democratize reading and to raise cultural capital for all, rather than for an educated elite. Indeed, it was specifically art-criticism that critics such as Howells reserved for the shoring up of “cultural capital” (Barrish 17).

Howells has a lively and privileged relation to Russian and American literary criticism. His privilege entails the association between elite East Coast literary capitals like Boston and New York and his influential periodical podiums, *Harper’s* and the *Atlantic*, as the only major loci of U.S. literary history.⁶ Nonetheless, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century U.S. readers considered that Howells popularized and even institutionalized Russian literature in the U.S. As an anonymous

writer explains in an article titled, “Russian in American Universities” (1913), “Boston was the gateway through which Russian entered America. It was W. D. Howells who first made Russian literature popular in the United States. It was Harvard that first introduced the Russian language into the curriculum” (“Russian in American Universities”). Indeed, the elite East Coast literary capital Boston and the critic Howells are two contextual factors inherent to the invention of Russia in America first and foremost, but more importantly, to the use of Russian aesthetic theory in the U.S. Without either the story of U.S. realism changes. Each context does not necessarily erode alternative literary histories that are better told from different perspectives. When Howells is said to have popularized Russian literature in the U.S., the context requires focus not on the types of Russian literature Howells promoted, but on the literary forms by which he promoted the “truth” of this literature.

Paying attention to “truth” meant reading the “printed word,” or for Howells, the refined and printed word—ideas that are implied in Howells’s “Editor’s Study.” For Howells, the concept of reading is inherent to the act of criticism. Indeed, art-criticism makes one aware of intertextuality and tradition. As he says, “That which criticism seems most certainly to have done is to have put a literary consciousness into books unfelt in the early masterpieces, but unfelt now only in the books of men whose lives have been passed in activities, who have been used to employing language as they would have employed any implement, to effect an object, who have regarded a thing to be said as in no wise different from a thing to be done” (Howells, “Editor’s Study” August 1886). In this passage, Howells bemoans the idea that “more

thinking, more feeling certainly, goes to the creation of a poor novel than to the production of a brilliant criticism,” which is an “art” in itself (Howells, “Editor’s Study” August 1886). To employ language as an “implement” involves using language as a tool—its use is merely instrumental and its end is to convey meaning without subtlety. In effect, Howells seems to advocate for nuance (a move away from instrumentality) and indirect representation (to “put a literary consciousness into books unfelt”), features of Russian literature that were produced under Russian censorship, or, as Kropotkin says, “special language” that “conveyed quite a world of ideas” (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature*). Howells also promotes moving cultural and intellectual capital away from readers whose reading has “been passed in activities” to readers willing to get something “done” (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature*). If writers regard “a thing to be said” as no different “from a thing to be done,” then the “sacred word” simply becomes practical and quotidian, incapable of conveying “a world of ideas” (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature*), or as a reviewer of Kropotkin’s *Ideals and Idealities* says in a different way, “everybody in Russia is always seeking between the lines of books for political theories, for programmes of action, for advice and appeals to the ‘youth’” (Forman). Howells ultimately views the printed word as sacred because it offers a roadmap to unify readers—an aim of the *Progress*—and to guide readers to viewing art as a way to explain life. And so, the “real” for the Russian-inclined Howells involved an appreciation for language that extended beyond its mere instrumentality: language extended into the daily conduct of life.

Historicizing Immaturity

Howells's "real" stems from the need to develop individuality and connects directly to immaturity. The discourse of immaturity has a long literary and cultural history in U.S. literature. Comte de Buffon's 1777 designation of the U.S. as a degenerate nation "in a state of nondevelopment" (Jehlen 119) signaled, as Myra Jehlen explains, that immaturity implied progress and a lasting connection to Europe and the "Old World" (120). Emerson, in his essay "Self Reliance" (1841), continues the discourse of immaturity and underdevelopment by noting the "imitative" qualities of American literature, "deriv[ing] his notion of immaturity from an engagement with Kant, and more immediately, with Coleridge" (Posnock 145). It's clear that the discourse of immaturity in American literature draws its roots from European thinkers, and this body of ideas had contradictory ideas: immaturity implied development, since one could grow from one state into a more experienced one; immaturity also meant a reliance on an authority, and "all one need do is rely on the panoply of authorities that surrounds one—starting with the books one reads," as Ross Posnock paraphrases Kant's thought (145). Yet to grow and develop from a state of immaturity, it follows that writers and thinkers must first rely on authorities to move along the path toward experience. For this reason, Howells stressed that the "whole world must learn" from Gogol and, more largely, Russian realism, in order to move away from "feigning, insincere performance and ignoble ideas" (Howells, August 1886 "Editor's Study"). Though Howells bypasses imitation, he does imply that U.S. readers are immature since they must "learn" and move away from

melodramatic literary conventions. As one reviewer of Kropotkin's *Ideals and Idealities* says, learning meant a direct engagement with art as well as copious amounts of discussion: "If art is a school of life—the more so are such works [critical writings]" (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature* 287). Art-criticism had a defining role in the overall development of the population, implying a direct preparatory education with "a school of life," which would eventually lead to maturity.

Despite Howells's belief in the promise of art criticism as a way to instill a "literary consciousness" into U.S. culture, the Kantian roots of Enlightenment as a move from immaturity into a state of freedom actually underscore some of the limits and possibilities of Howells's endeavor. As Kant says in his famous dictum, "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity" (54). The word "self-incurred" has certainly fostered debate, and in its relation to "immaturity," Kant suggests that freedom lies in the decision—meaning a choice—to remain in a childish state, one characterized by "lack of resolution and courage" (Kant 54). Kant explains, "This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another" (54). In his "What is Enlightenment?" Kant does not explain how "understanding" is developed—as Hegel does in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807)—but he does imply that "man" already has the capacity of "understanding." Enlightenment starts to emerge when "man" individuates, leaving the "guidance of another" behind (Kant 54). For Howells, however, the role of art-criticism was in fact to guide and direct—

to instill, as he says, a “literary consciousness” in a reader (Howells, “Editor’s Study” August 1886). It’s also telling that Kant links enlightenment to “courage,” a key word that Howells and Cahan will take up in their discussion of Russian realism. In some of his earliest criticism, dating back to 1866, Howells envisioned that only critics of “accomplished mind” perform their “labor” “for the benefit of all” (Davidson 76). The unarticulated class consciousness in Howells’s mission was directly at odds with the Kantian notion of enlightenment. Whereas Kant evokes immaturity as a cause of dependence on authorities, Howells advocates for enlightenment through a reliance on an “autocratic vision of the genteel critic” (Davidson 76). As Howells’s case demonstrates, the cultural and intellectual roots of U.S. “immature” literature were caught in a double bind between immaturity and development, reinforcing the necessity of enlightened art-critics in the U.S. literary sphere. On the other hand, Howells locates the primacy of intellectual progress in the form of art-criticism—the premier form, as Kropotkin explained, of Russian art and politics.

Though unstated in Howells’s writings, the “accomplished mind” can only lead readers so far, and to some degree there’s more value in “literary truth” that the reader can gain from reading realistic works (Howells, “Editor’s Study” August 1886). Howells most closely echoes Belinsky’s call that “a clever and energetic critic” leads “society” (quoted in Paperno 11). In this spirit, Howells advocated for a Kropotkin-like “special language” that could convey development and “a world of ideas” (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature*). Howells believed that the “accomplished mind” could lead readers through a work of literature in order to

foster greater literary appreciation, but he complicates his own assertion when he places faith in the “special language” of literary works, which had the power to affect the “heart and conscience” of the reader (Howells, “Editor’s Study” April 1886). Nonetheless, readers must rely on art-critics to lead the way. “It is the might of this literary truth,” Howells says, “which is also spiritual truth, that has made the Russians so great in fiction, so potent to move the heart and the conscience” (Howells, “Editor’s Study” April 1886). Though “literary truth” maybe accessible to all, it was clear that only a special reader could divine Russian literature’s truths. For this reason, U.S. critics often associated Russian literature with Russian intellectuals, as Howells did. As Henry James Forman says in *The Critic*, “the intellectuals are the torch-bearers of Russian progress” (Forman). Forman continues his discourse on the role of intellectuals, saying, “small minority though they be, it is they to whom works of art mean most” (Forman). Though Forman was discussing a popular view of the revolutionary Russian intellectual—people who “usually come to grief, go into exile, or die young” (Forman)—it’s easy to connect this image to Howells, who compared, as quoted earlier, “America’s [immature] criticism of 1886” to “Russian criticism of 1836” (Howells, “Editor’s Study” April 1886). By this point U.S. culture associated Russian intellectuals with youth and revolution, but these were qualities that Howells specifically bemoaned in the “American criticism of 1886.” As Howells says, “the critics...when they are not elders ossified in tradition, are apt to be young people, and young people are necessarily conservative in their tastes and theories” (Howells, “Editor’s Study” February 1886). The “accomplished mind” for Howells took on

further qualifications because “immaturity” in U.S. criticism now meant that “young” critics did not see the “literary truth” of Russian literature, thus allowing Howells to articulate his vision of the “American critic” (Howells, “Editor’s Study” June 1887). The seasoned, genteel critic functioned as a gatekeeper of tradition while promoting growth and development.

The popular nineteenth-century U.S. conception of Russian art-criticism helps put into perspective Howells’s elitist view of the role of the U.S. art-critic. Writing in *The Critic*, Victor S. Yarros, a self-proclaimed Boston anarchist who worked with Clarence Darrow, states that “periodical literature in Russia boasts a noble, useful, heroic, and interesting past, and is hopeful of a bright future” (Yarros). The form of “serious periodical literature” discusses “living problems and the application of first principles to current topics,” and the “discussion may be didactic or indirect” (Yarros). The Russian critics “were leaders and inspirers”; “faithful upholders of tradition”; and did “their duty patiently, bravely, and not without ability” (Yarros). All the Russian critics—“Bielinsky, Chernishevsky, Dobrolyubov, [and] Pisarev”—“called in to being” their intellectual views “to which no enemy, no traitor, no time-server, could gain admission” (Yarros). Finally, as Yarros says, “the Russian publicist looks upon his social function as scarcely less sacred than that of the priest” (Yarros). Yarros’s comparison of the “function” of the critic to a “priest” immediately brings to mind the goal behind the newspaper *Progress*, where the “printed word” (“Russkaia Gazeta Na Amerikanskoi Pochve”) gave way to a sacral type of language—Kropotkin’s “special language” (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealties in Russian*

Literature). The critic as priest must then go into battle, as Yarros's metaphor for the critic demonstrates: "He must teach the truth as he sees it, combat error, and regard every opponent as foe, who is, indeed, entitled to fair treatment in accordance with the rules of literary warfare, but with whom association is impossible" (Yarros). Yarros implies that "truth" is relative, since a critic must convey truth "as he sees it," and he also places the critic in an adversarial and dialectical role, since "warfare" implies debate and discussion—precisely the goal that Kropotkin saw in "literary and philosophical circles," which debate these various "truths" (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Idealities in Russian Literature*). Yarros connects Russian art-criticism, despite its youthful associations, to intellectual guardians, who operate as "priests" in order to lead and "inspire" (Yarros). Though Howells agreed that enlightenment must occur on a dynamic spectrum where critic and reader come together to develop and grow, other critics turned away from Yarros's view of the critic as a priest, embracing a more biological view of the critic's role. Howells emerges as a cultural balancing point that translates the language and figures of speech of Russian art-criticism in the U.S.

Cahan and Spencerian Realism

Perhaps the next most influential proponent of Russian art criticism and aesthetic theory in the U.S. was Cahan, whose blend of American realism and naturalism with Russian aesthetic theory helps contextualize Howells's. Whereas Howells confined the bulk of his Russian realist teachings to his editor's podium, Cahan, in tune with Kropotkin's democratic spirit, popularized art-criticism in

working class journals and Chatauqua-style public lectures. Cahan's brand of Russian art theory is tangled in a biological-Darwinian framework whereby the language of realism mimetically reflects the movements and representations of the mind.⁷ "The blood vessels of the social organism," Cahan says in his 1899 labor lyceum lecture, "are full of the poison of capitalism" (Cahan, "Realism"). It follows that the "battle for existence tightens the ties of society," leading to mimetic reverberations that the artist captures via his innate imitative qualities, though Cahan goes on to complicate the question of whether art is imitative (Cahan, "Realism"). Cahan forges a direct link between representation and society as a way to shore up cultural capital and argue through innate biological drives for the necessity of art. Since the "artistic tendencies of man" relate to an "inborn and growing proneness to imitate," translating "sensation into impression," then "art supplies a natural want, one of the necessities of life" (Cahan, "Realism"). Quoting Spencer's second volume of *The Principles of Psychology* (1894), Cahan critiques Spencer's surplus theory of aesthetic sentiment where art is a leisurely gratification in itself, devoid of any meaningful life content. By critiquing Spencer's bourgeois definition of art, Cahan defined the basis of his socialist theory of art through the principle that all classes need "mental food" to satisfy a "natural want" while introducing a new conception of how art-criticism and realism may lead workers out of immaturity and toward enlightenment (Cahan, "Realism").

Armed with this bio-cultural definition of artistry, Cahan argues for a Kaplan-like proto-social control thesis of art. He distinguishes between working class readers

and bourgeois appropriators, who hoard cultural capital in order to enjoy art as a delicacy from their position of power. The upper-class audience savors the joys of aesthetic enjoyment that art has to offer while working class readers use art to diagnose and “throw [their] eye[s] into reality” (Cahan, “Realism”). Aligning realism with “low-life” and sordid conditions, Cahan asks, “Why should the sensation of the beautiful be possessed of a greater reflective capacity than, for example, the emotions excited by the piteous [sic] or the provoking?” (Cahan, “Realism”). Positioning the teachings of Russian realism with his theory of democratized art, Cahan views the “beautiful” as components of romance, arguing instead for the “piteous” and the “provoking,” both common ways to represent the real, or conditions of social life. If art focuses on the mundane and the quotidian while representing class conflict and social struggle, then art is as much personal and social as it is beautiful and gratifying. Since the “artistic tendencies of man” are tied to an “inborn and growing proneness to imitate,” then all classes of people are “artists as well as philosophers to a greater or smaller degree” (Cahan, “Realism”). Cahan’s theory of democratized art for all classes cannot be read without its Darwinian backbone, which Cahan saw as a vital link that “tightens the ties of society” in the face of decaying religions that “slacken with the growth of society” (Cahan, “Realism”). If society starts to develop, then the “battle for existence...widens his thinking powers and along with them the limits of art” (Cahan, “Realism”). The “battle for existence” has only begun, Cahan explains, and society must still “widen,” highlighting his Spencerian thinking on the evolution of society and people’s capacity to think.

As Cahan's exploration of art shows, his democratized theory of art drew on Spencerian aesthetics and evolution, socialism, and Darwinian struggle. Spencer's thought demonstrates why Russian realism for Cahan became so ingrained in his conception of the art-critic: it offered the chance to integrate the necessity of aesthetics into the growing fiber of America's evolving society. From Cahan's point of view, Spencer's shortcoming inhered in his relegation of art to a minor role. Spencer's sociological discourse, therefore, was very much misaligned with and resistant to the didactic quality of art-criticism and the possibilities that reading fiction provided. Cahan's critique and then further reworking of Spencer's theory into working-class politics allowed him to elevate the primacy of art and art-criticism. Spencer's theory of degeneration in his sociological works provides the most comprehensive account of his views of intellectual development and aesthetic enjoyment, both categories that directly and indirectly feed into the discourse of immaturity in U.S. culture that Cahan wanted to reconceptualize in his theory. Spencer fueled his degeneration theory based on phrenological literature written in the 1830s (Tomlinson 29). According to this theory, the physiological and intellectual capacity of humans functioned like a pulley system, or a give-and-take system: overtax one mental component, and nature corrects this imbalance by withdrawing resources from a separate mental compartment. "Excessive expenditure of vital energy to strengthen growth in one sphere," as Stephen Tomlinson explains, "only served to underfund development in another" (29). Spencer was not against education and intellectual attainment; rather, he advocated for a form of education that sought to

instill personal ethics without which the “individuation of immature minds” would not occur. His copious writings on education, in works such as *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical* (1861), guided how U.S. education theorists thought about the role of the state and religion in the developing minds of children with the aim, as he describes in his *Principles of Sociology* (1896), that the “immature” [children] develop into “mature life” (*Principles of Psychology* 1896, 53).

Since Cahan viewed art as a necessary component of life, he had to critique and then extend Spencer’s view that art leads to degeneracy and that art is antithetical to the daily events of life. In Spencer’s second volume of the *Principles of Psychology*, it’s possible to trace his theory of degeneracy in what he calls the “aesthetics sentiments” of humans (*The Principles of Psychology* 1894, 627). Cahan relied on this chapter to critique Spencer’s thought on the superfluous quality of the aesthetic in human physiology, and in its place Cahan articulates an aesthetic theory that veered away from degeneracy. Spencer’s theory of aesthetic sentiment relies on a similar give-and-take logic that’s inherent to some of his thought on the mental capacities of humans. Since aesthetic sentiments are to a large degree activities and “processes [not] conducive to life” because they exist mainly for “play” and serve no “ulterior benefit” that furthers life, Spencer calls these sentiments merely “proximate ends” that are “only ends” (*The Principles of Psychology* 1894, 628). Like a kitten “running after a cotton-ball, making it roll and again catching it, crouching as though in ambush” in order to create an “ideal satisfaction for the destructive instincts in the absence of real satisfaction for them,” so too aesthetic sentiments mirror the absence

of the “accompanying satisfaction of certain egoistic feelings which find for the moment no other sphere” (*The Principles of Psychology* 1894, 631). Following this logic, “the aesthetic character of a feeling is habitually associated with separateness from [the] life-serving function” (*The Principles of Psychology* 1894, 632). It’s telling that Spencer places aesthetic sentiments in antithesis to the life-serving functions that carry out their aim in the “guidance in the business of life” (*The Principles of Psychology* 1894, 631) because it places the faculties of the mind in a similar guidance-orientated framework that Cahan and Howells advocate in their art-criticism. For Spencer all aesthetic objects “are nothing else than particular modes of excitement of the faculties” that stimulate the actual and more important life-serving functions in humans.

When Cahan takes up Spencer’s thought in his “Realism” lecture to the New York Labor Lyceum on the merits of the realist novel, he attempts to connect the need for community and “sociality” to the “instinct of self-preservation” because they are hereditary traits rooted in the “survival of the fittest” (Cahan, “Realism”). Humans, according to Cahan, rely on their innate “imitative” quality because sensations, which act on the mind, and impressions, which act on the body, are “counterpart[s] of nature” (Cahan, “Realism”). The stronger the sensation, “the nearer the copy to the original, the greater is the propensity to reproduce the latter” (Cahan, “Realism”). Finally, since sensations are rooted in one’s everyday interactions with life, “the imitating impulse finds ample support in the sociality of man” (Cahan, “Realism”). The natural human tendency stems from the inborn need to imitate, by which Cahan

means, “translate sensation into impression” (Cahan, “Realism”). The aesthetic faculty functions to take mental refinements (sensations) and program them into bodily states (impressions). By heightening one’s impressions, a feeling of sociality develops, and this rooted collective feeling “tightens the ties of society” (Cahan, “Realism”). Cahan’s reworking of Spencer demonstrates how crucial art and literature were to his Darwinian conception of man and society. Art and literature did have the task of dispelling “the poison of capitalism” from society and of strengthening “the battle for existence” (Cahan, “Realism”). That is why the “opponents of Realism [sic]” perform such an awful function; like the bourgeois appropriators, the opponents, who are the “privileged” consumers that promote the “pleasurable class of art,” “monopolize our pleasures and leave all the woes to the rest of the brethren” (Cahan, “Realism”). Since Cahan’s Spencerian realism contained a close physiological link to the sense of the human body, connecting sensations and impressions, his conception of realism placed a heavy antithesis against the “misty altitude of the upreal [sic]” (Cahan, “Realism”). Realism, for Cahan, literally signified how the impressions and sensations of human beings and their bodies connected them to existence and communal sociality.

Despite the promise of Cahan’s Spencerian realism and the potential for art to democratize and enlighten the reading public, Cahan—at this time—saw society as lacking enlightenment and still attempting to attain the “age of reason” (Cahan, “Realism”). The step from immaturity to maturity inhered in the process of letting go of “fear” and in place promoting belief in oneself—a key aspect of Kant’s notion of

“courage.” “Society has not yet reached the age of manhood,” Cahan says, “the inquiring activity of man meets with a barrier in the shape of a ghost of supernatural power” (Cahan, “Realism”). Since “man” “distrusts himself, his thoughts soar away to the misty altitudes of the upreal [sic]” (Cahan, “Realism”). This idealized and romanticized realm must, by way of embracing “truth” and the “real,” clear away the “clouds,” revealing that man “has nothing to revere”—that “he is merely so much matter and force, so much nerve, bone, muscle, etc., so combined as to assume certain functions at the bidding of the same laws that rule supreme over all” (Cahan, “Realism”). This imagined and vague deity that rules over society allows one to see that “[n]othing but the real can attract his attention,” which is the “true age of reason” (Cahan, “Realism”). Cahan’s plea ends with the socialist call to abolish “class,” and this overt call resonates with Cahan’s immaturity of “manhood” principle in his writing. Cahan’s immaturity thesis ultimately seeks to dethrone the fear of God in society because the “appall[ing]...surroundings” force people to create a God, which is inherently associated with the unreal and idealizations. Religion holds an influence so strong that it directs ethics and art, and the true sign of progress occurs when “religious ties slacken with the growth of society,” since a reliance on an authority becomes useless when society sees the real in everyday life (Cahan, “Realism”); reworking Kant’s notion that courage leads to understanding and later enlightenment, Cahan suggests that the “real” is the “true age of reason,” capable of leading people toward enlightenment. Whereas Howells argued for a similar conception of the real while rooting the role of the art-critic in the function of a “priest,” Cahan’s

Spencerian realism was much more individualized and spiritual, since people must first rid themselves of fear and religion in order to attain enlightenment—a process that they can achieve more through the realist novel than through art-criticism.

Spencer offered a paradigm within which to reimagine the altruistic possibilities of literary realism based on his evolutionary model of society, one that Cahan clearly adopts in his theory of realism. Yet Kropotkin and Howells also held Spencer's view that art reflects the development of society. It's suggestive that Kropotkin, during this time, wrote *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902), which promoted altruism and argued that "higher intelligence and knowledge...*may* [sic] mitigate the harshness of the struggle for life between men" (Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* ix). Like Cahan's notion of altruistic realism, Kropotkin's work suggests that the "real" is more than capable of guiding others toward enlightenment and toward cooperation. Many critics have connected the logic of literary realism to the logic of late capitalism, or to other derivative forms that focus on philanthropy and economy in U.S. literary realism, in order to argue, as Walter Benn Michaels does, that "the dream of realism is the end of desire" (48). If desire is viewed as an "anticapitalist" impulse that finds its "moral expression" in realism for Howells (Michaels 48), it's possible to say that all practitioners, critics, and writers of realism shared the desire for a distinctly real—and hence moral—expression in their writings. Of the sociologists that were emerging during the nineteenth century, Spencer embodies this theory of progressive and enlightening realism as a byproduct of the intellectual development of society. As Spencer says, "Fine Arts of all kinds takes

form more and more...when a long discipline of social life, decreasingly predatory and increasingly peaceful, has allowed...altruistic sentiments to develop” (*The Principles of Sociology* 1894, 648). As society develops and the concomitant energy in the mind makes the need for “predatory” behavior disappear, then there’s more room for more mental activity to partake in “superfluous activity,” by which Spencer means the Fine Arts (*The Principles of Sociology* 1894, 648). “Especially in the literature of the imagination,” as he says, “we may now see how much less appeal there is to the egoistic and ego-altruistic sentiments, and how much more to the altruistic sentiments—a trait likely to go on growing” (*The Principles of Sociology* 1894, 648). Indeed, the more that society is in harmony, the more the arts flourish, according to Spencer—and, by extension, Cahan, Howells, and Kropotkin. Spencer does not distinguish between romantic or realistic literature, but his progressive art hypothesis extends to all forms of art, and when Cahan extends this theory of realism to his own, he clearly imagined that the “aesthetic activities” will “play an increasing part in human life as evolution advances” (*The Principles of Sociology* 1894, 648). The logic of altruistic realism implied a physiological conception of maturation, one that coincidentally for Cahan and Howells could only occur through reading realist works of art, whereas for Spencer maturation was the precondition for the development and enjoyment of art. To this end, despite their seeming commitments to elitist views that position the critic at the head of society, Howells, Cahan, and Kropotkin saw the potential for democracy in art and art-criticism.

Conclusion

While the contradictions abound in various forms of art-criticism imported by Cahan, Howells, and Kropotkin, it's precisely in these contradictions that adaptation and invention occurred. Howells used the idea of the genteel critic to foster his own version of the intellectual as a torch-bearer of progress while advocating for a wider, more enlightened readership. Cahan reworked Spencer's theory into one that viewed art as integral to the development of mind and society, despite some of the antithetical qualities of Spencer's work to art-criticism. Kropotkin, embodying Cahan's views, ultimately viewed "higher intelligence and knowledge" (Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* ix) as the preconditions for altruism and a cohesive social body. Though Du Bois is not associated with the debate over immaturity in art-criticism, he can usefully be approached through that lens. Du Bois's presence in this chapter, though surprising as it is improbable, helps contextualize how the absence of art and art-criticism destroy the potential for representation, democracy, and intelligence, even though the tensions and contradictions of realism and art-criticism complicate the ideas of representation and inclusivity. Because Du Bois's version of art-criticism was so closely aligned to the principles of Russian art criticism, the connection appears all the more clearly when we juxtapose Reconstruction's failed promise of democracy against realism's aim for clarity, democracy, and progress. With the absence of art, the inability to reach maturity reenacted the "killing [of] democracy, art, and religion" (Du Bois 707), W.E.B Du Bois draws a clear lineage between the

regional “Southern attitude” and its pernicious influence in a wider national framework.

Du Bois’s focus in *Reconstruction in America* identifies the legacy of America’s identity and democracy and “[t]he...transplanting millions of Africans” to the development of the “new world [sic],” and it’s for this reason that I call his framework for democracy both regional and transregional. Contrasting “modern civilization” (Du Bois xliii) with Reconstruction, Du Bois says, “[d]emocracy in the South and in the United States is hampered by the Southern attitude” (706). Echoing the discourse of immaturity in U.S. art-criticism, Du Bois notes that the “Southern attitude” has contributed to the “human fiction[s]” that “condemns most men to eternal degradation,” which is “a cheap inheritance of the world’s infancy, unworthy of grown folk” (706). Du Bois connects the “wide distortion of facts” that occurred in presidential elections and generally in the “white South” to a youthful ignorance that has robbed “men” of “love born of knowledge” (706). Indeed, this discourse of immaturity extends to literary representation where “Negroes themselves are seldom recognized as interpreters of art, and white artists must work under severe social limitations and at second hand; they thus lack necessary sincerity, depth, and frankness” (Du Bois 706). Du Bois traces the discourse of immaturity in art and in the New World to the ideals of “sincerity,” “frankness,” and “freedom” in order to highlight the failed promise of self-referentiality in realist aesthetics, which sought, in the words of Cahan, to pay “attention...to the tillers of the soil and poor, ignorant, weak, and defenseless common people generally” (Cahan, “The Spirit of Russian

Literature”). Cahan’s attention to the downtrodden signals the transnational relativism of realism: in the Russian context, realism sought to critique the autocracy and show the plight of the Russian serfs, or “penitent nobility,” as Cahan called them; in the U.S. context, realism championed working class politics and liberal democracy, and when it did, it did so for only a few. The contradictions in realism enacted both its possibilities and its limitations, and the next chapter examines how literary representations of nihilist politics doom their projects to failure because they represent the discourse of immaturity that art-criticism was working dispel.

Notes

1. I do not explore all types of censorship that existed in Russia. Charles A. Ruud, in his study of Imperial Russian censorship, claims that it took “many forms,” but confines his definition of censorship to a “main one”: “the governmental system which screened written works before or after publication to determine their acceptability” (3). Charles Ruud explains that the motivation for censorship stemmed from the need to keep the “state and government [of Russia]” free from “injurious words, whether spoken or written” (Ruud 167). As Hugh Seton-Watson explains, “Ideas that could not be expressed in the form of straightforward political commentary could appear disguised and diluted in the form of characters in novels and in essays of literary criticism” (64).
2. As Funk says, “The longevity of this debate... can be traced back to the unbridgeable gap between ideas and appearances as described by Parmenides and Plato. In book X of *The Republic*, Plato himself takes this incommensurability of reality and representation as proof of art’s structural insignificance and falsity (see 2003: 335–53). Aristotle, in contrast, turns the argument on its head by assigning to art an access to a higher, abstract kind of truth. Precisely due to its disconnection from reality, so he argues in the *Poetics*, art need not concern itself with petty assumptions about what is right or wrong in a particular situation but can aim at more fundamental issues that transcend the mundaneness of everyday life (see 1987: 1–43)” (68).
3. The works that I explore by Howells are his writers in his “Editor’s Study” works. As Rob Davidson points out, “no full-length study of Howells’s career as a literary critic exists, despite the fact that nearly all scholars of nineteenth-century American literature grant that Howells was the preeminent theoretical voice of American realism in his day” (4). Davidson wrote his scholarly work in 2005, and I think this chapter makes a gesture at situating one side of Howells’s theoretical and critical orientation through the lens of Russian art-criticism.
4. Interestingly, the U.S. had its own censorship practices. Janice Ruth Wood writes that “anti-Comstock rhetoric” during this period reached new heights. Though it did not have bearing on Russian periodicals, Comstock’s censorship laws were often ridiculed and condemned by reference to his “Russian methods” and his “Russian spy system” (73). Wood quotes articles from *Dr. Foote’s Healthy Monthly*, which described Comstock’s laws as “the most meddlesome and restrictive decree of an Emperor or Czar” (Wood 73).
5. Critics have defined the “real” in various ways. Phillip Barrish, for example, defines “realist taste” as “a discriminating appreciation for literary

representations of the nitty-gritty real, including vernacular speech” (17). Barrish suggests that elite readers sensitive to dialect distinguished their intellectual prestige by virtue of their ability shore up “cultural capital” through “specialized forms of taste and cultivation” (17). Amy Kaplan’s well-known thesis that realism functioned as a means to dominate and hence contain social change also demonstrates how proponents of realism sought to elevate critical expertise and the realist novel to the exclusion of other genres and forms (Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism* 1992).

6. As Nancy Glazener directly says, “To begin with a sample of elite, effectively canonical magazines such as the *Atlantic* group and to allow them to represent late nineteenth-century literary history would also be to memorialize the values of canon-makers” (7). This is certainly true, though for nineteenth century readers Howells did indeed embody the birth of Russian literature in the U.S., however misleading this statement.
7. There’s a rich scholarly field that examines the intersection between science and literature, particularly as a “subspecialty in Victorian studies” (Wilhelm 88). George Levine, in his study of Victorian literature, argues that the “practice of Victorian realism ran parallel to the dominant practices of the science that was transforming the world all around it” (9). In different contexts, art and science either ran parallel or perpendicular to each other. Max Nordau in his famous work, *Degeneration* (1895), sees the “degenerate Tolstoi...moving away from science [and consequently] the renunciation of reason” (162). Citing E.M. de Vogüé’s *Le Roman ruses* (1888), Nordau connects “Tolstoism” to a “conception of life,” rather than to an “aesthetic theory” (145), but he ultimately sees Tolstoy’s degeneracy as a move away from social reform. Among some of the Russian literary critics, though “[t]here were deep divisions among the populists” (249), they “maintained that the application of scientific truths and methods to social and individual problems...[could] lead to the growth of capitalism...[but] without this fatal sacrifice” (242). The multiple and varying intersections between art and science, despite their differences, demonstrate that they were all concerned with some sort of “growth” (Berlin 242) or with “transforming the world” (Levine 8). In this chapter, I examine maturity and growth through the Kantian roots of Enlightenment, since I begin my exploration of American notions of immaturity with Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was in conversation with Kant. Cahan and Howells similarly engage with Kant’s notion of immaturity, though Cahan does critique and extend Herbert Spencer’s theory of aesthetic sentiments, as I will later show.

CHAPTER THREE

Narratives of Failure: The Politics of Realism in the U.S. Novel

In the popular 1891 novel, *My Official Wife*, Colonel Richard Henry Savage depicts an American soldier traveling to Russia. Arthur Bainbridge Lenox, the main character of Savage's novel, goes to Russia to handle the juridical affairs of his daughter, who recently married a Russian aristocrat with connections to the Czar. As Colonel Lenox crosses the border into Russia, a woman by the name of H el ene coaxes the Colonel into helping her enter Russia illegally. Once inside, H el ene assumes the name of the Colonel's wife, Mrs. Arthur Lenox. H el ene manages to ingratiate herself with the Colonel to the degree that the entirety of Russian society believes H el ene to be the Colonel's wife. Since Russia maintains a strict entry-and-exit system through the use of passports, any falsification would result in the Colonel's and H el ene's deportation to Siberia. In the course of the novel, H el ene reveals that she's a nihilist attempting to assassinate the Czar for the wrongs done to her family because her "mother was condemned to Siberia" while her father "was butchered in a burning village" (Savage 226-27). After revealing her plan, Lenox decides to step in and disrupt the assassination. As Choi Chatterjee says of the novel, "Lenox the good republican saves both the tsar and the Russian empire by his quick-witted actions" (92) The radical and political ideology of the nihilists, embodied in H el ene, is temporarily disrupted and ends in failure.

H el ene's political ideology represents an attempt to abolish an old order, a preoccupation of realist novels exploring nihilism. Her attempt to assassinate the Czar

Alexander, “the head of the system” (227), finds a correlate in Colonel Lenox’s goal, which involves stifling a political project that hopes to usher in radical change. Yet the beginning of the novel reads like a standard travelogue—a character penetrates the nonporous and highly contained border of another country to document and naturalize a different social order. The Colonel’s “preparations for the invasion of Russia” include a “a few French romances” and “some Tauchnitz volumes” (8). Where invasion is imagined alongside romance, a strict taxonomy of various foreigners requires “the American hero in Russia...[to] combine an anthropological knowledge of elite social mores with a capacity for individual republic action” (Chatterjee 767). In such fashion, the Colonel carefully catalogues various types of characters with their racial and ethnic characteristics: the chief of the Russian Secret Police—“of German not of Slavic descent” (10); Captain Gregory Shevitch of the Russian Imperial Guard—“has the money-grabbing instinct of a cunning Slav” (10) and a “Tartar face” (11); and of the people at the train station, the Colonel notices “Countesses in furs and velvets, pert French maids, substantial looking burghers, ‘impossible’ dudes, filthy Polish Jews with curls and greasy gabardines, money-changers, peasants, soldiers, and tourists” (14-15). The interracialized faux-romance between Colonel Lenox and H el ene culminates in a final escape strategy to leave the country for good. What at one point appears as fascination for the splendor of Russia, inevitably turns into a mere representation of the “barbaric East,” and contrasts with “the civilized West, though it united the glories of both Asia and Europe” (195) The land of Russia, a land that includes people of numerous ethnic origins, numerous

languages with multiple signifiers, and numerous accents, accentuations, and dialects, overwhelms the Colonel to the point of making him averse to ever returning to Russia. “Lenox,” as Baron Friedrich says to the Colonel, “Russia is not the proper country for you” (270). Savage’s narrative demonstrates the failure of the new political order to get rid of the old.

While Savage’s novel depicts the politics of failure and the accompanying cultural paranoia of nihilist actors in the sphere of popular novels, his novel also provides a fitting description of how forward-looking political endeavors in novels of this period tend to end in failure. Although “American protagonists [in popular novels] sometimes recoil from some of the violent tactics advocated by their Russian counterparts, they are equally critical of the brutal measures enforced by...the evil tsarist regime” (Chatterjee and Holmgren 92), and this varying conservatism and the stifling of radical political movements have their place in both American popular novels of this period and in more canonical realist novels that I explore in this chapter such as Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), James’s *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), and Cahan’s *The White Terror and the Red* (1905). The novels in this chapter do not have “moment[s] of radical change,” as Fredric Jameson says of historical novels, but Hawthorne, James, and Cahan depict, in varying degrees, *attempted* “moment[s] of radical change” (266). Though Jameson confines the possibility of radical alterity to what he calls “genuinely historical novels,” I think his formulations aptly describe the fascination of the novels I explore in this chapter with temporal continuities and disruptions. Historical novels have a “revolutionary

moment” of change that lifts “their content out of the placid continuities of mere custom,” or from some past, idealized moment (Jameson 266). Since these revolutionary moments tend to disrupt custom and since these narratives depict this moment as harming the social order, “[t]he implication is then that all great historical novelists must in one way or another harbor conservative sympathies” (Jameson 266). Historical novels—and realist novels exploring historical moments—tend to sympathize with the old order that is destroyed by the new order (Jameson 266).

Narratives of Immaturity and Failure

The novels that I explore in this chapter—Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), James’s *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), and Cahan’s *The White Terror and the Red* (1905)—depict various failures that expose how the new order fails to overtake the old. Though Hawthorne falls outside the nominal period of my study, Hawthorne remains the inspiration for the narrative of failure and for James’s later exploration of this theme in his novel. By beginning my discussion with Hawthorne’s use of a Russian nihilist to inflect his narrative, I draw a connection from Hawthorne to James to examine how a utopian experiment gives way, decades later, to a literary representation of a failed nihilist plot to assassinate a figure of power. Hawthorne establishes a direct link between nihilist politics and their representation through unrequited love, a representation that James would later rework in *The Princess Casamassima*. Among plots of failure, the novels I explore all represent the “real” through unrequited love, “sordid struggle,” and “meaner conditions,” and perhaps here is where the “real” attempts to define itself against

romance: whereas requited love represents reconciliation, brotherhood, and union, unrequited love represents a titillation with the “romantic curiosity” of “low-life” and the “arcana” of alternative politics and a lack of inclusivity (James 9). The structure of repetition of thwarted love in these novels is mimetically channeled and reflected in the failure of the novel’s main characters to form inclusive bonds with society, and these novels, vice versa, require that we read the failure of their political projects as failures of democratic participation: Hawthorne’s Priscilla does not return the love of Coverdale; Hyacinth’s disenchanted love for the Princess Casamassima leads to his death in James’s narrative; and Cahan’s aristocrat-revolutionary Pavel communicates with his loved one through chinks in his jail cell in the Peter and Paul Fortress. To this end, I think these novels also require that we read them with an unapologetic anti-reconciliatory attitude in order, as James says, to retain the “power to be finely aware and richly responsible” for how these narratives work with their present moment (9).

Narrative failure in these realistic novels projects disharmony and dystopian thinking into the present moment. Since “[r]ealistic novels often share an impulse with their utopian counterparts to project into the narrative present a harmonic vision of community that can paradoxically put an end to social change,” the novels of James and Cahan, for example, investigate society from a narrative of disharmony and disjunction between the present order and a future vision of society (Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism* 12). While the first instance of Kaplan’s discussion of realist novels is not true of the novels in this chapter, her claim that realist novels “have utopian moments that imagine resolutions to contemporary social

conflicts” by reconfiguring society into an ideal vision holds true, since the word “imagine” signals an ideal circumstance that is more theoretical than practical, more ideal than concrete (*The Social Construction of American Realism* 12). Though the novels of James and Cahan envision uprising and secret plots to fix or, in some instances, exterminate certain social conflicts, their plots end in unideal circumstances: Hyacinth fails to carry out the secret nihilist plot; Pavel and his revolutionary associates end up in prison. Perhaps Kaplan’s thesis can best be understood by Terry Eagleton’s notion of the aesthetic, whereby the aesthetic “offers a generous utopian image of reconciliation between men and women at present divided from one another...[while] block[ing] and mystif[ying] the real political movement towards such historical community” (9). For Eagleton, the aesthetic should not reduce language to the sphere of observable data or experience; as he says, the contradictory logic of the aesthetic works by linking the subject “in its unique particularity” to “social harmony” while “inserting social power more deeply into the very bodies it subjugates” (28). In other words, the ways of the old order inscribe themselves more powerfully into the bodies of the actors attempting to welcome the new order. Bodily control can be most clearly seen in the case of Hyacinth whose “attinctura”—his stain of blood—signals the failure of social harmony due to a circumstance of the past.

Each narrative of failure imagines a political alternative to the established autocratic or bourgeois order, and despite the radical means used to topple that order, the political project ends with unrequited love and political failure. This deterrent to

change—in any form—has its antecedents buried, among other places, in the legacy of Reconstruction where “the South in the main is ranged against liberalism”; “will have nothing to do with a peace movement”; “has no sympathy for the oppressed”; is “against unions and the labor movement”; and has “no class-consciousness” (Du Bois 704). It’s helpful to reimagine Du Bois’s “Southern attitude” through Cahan’s Spencerian realism, where the “battle for existence” is tied to the “bloodvessels of the social organism” and where “man’s” innate fear drives him to the “misty altitudes of the upreal [sic]” (Cahan, “Realism”); it’s also helpful here to recall Kaplan’s notion of “willed amnesia” and Jameson’s notion of the fissures of the present moment—concepts that signal the inability to confront the cracks in the present moment and that signal an unhealthy preoccupation with the past and present. Du Bois’s example demonstrates that the dark side of realism and its promise of liberalism and democracy is precisely similar to the legacy of Reconstruction, whereby “the unending tragedy of Reconstruction is the utter inability of the American mind to grasp its real significance, its national and world-wide implications” (Du Bois 708).

Using Du Bois’s and Cahan’s idea that the present moment is one that contains many political fissures and issues, it’s possible to see how the aesthetic functions in narratives to obscure or embellish these fissures, or how it depletes any radical movement that attempts to change the present state of affairs. As discussed in the previous chapter, Jameson draws attention to realism as a “hybrid concept, in which an epistemological claim (for knowledge and truth) masquerades as an aesthetic ideal” (5-6). Whereas the discourse of Russian art criticism promoted the

democratization of reading with a reliance on an authority (an epistemological claim), narrative representations of radical nihilist philosophy demonstrate a containment of any radical impulse or politics (the aesthetic ideal), and this hybridity demonstrates the paradox inherent to realism. It's helpful to recall Funk's point that realism resides in a "contradictory" and tension-filled space where there's an "incommensurability" between reality and its representation. By exploring the fiction of Hawthorne, James, and Cahan, I attempt to show how a lack of development, hence a lack of inclusivity, leads these forward-moving, progressive narratives toward failure. It's important to read this novels in the light of the contradictory nature of the realist novel, the aesthetic, and the art-criticism discussed in the previous chapter. I call these novels "narratives of failure" to signify how a lack of inclusivity destroys, as Du Bois says, "democracy, art, and religion" (707). Whereas Russian art-criticism, despite its association with progressive politics, represented the metaphysical concepts of truth, democracy, and enlightenment, literary representations of nihilist politics dispossessed progressive movements of their imagined emancipatory potential. The underbelly of the novels that I explore, doom their emancipatory projects to failure because they narratively represent the discourse of immaturity and lack of inclusivity that art-criticism was attempting to dispel.

Whereas Chapter Two focused on theoretical manifestos and the critical writings of key art-critics during this period, Chapter Three exclusively focuses on the novels of Hawthorne, James, and Cahan. These canonical novels illustrate a defining moment in novelistic narratives of this period, and these narratives can be

read against the many popular novels that depict nihilist themes that were also published during this time. It's helpful to imagine how popular novels worked in tandem with canonical, realist works because hundreds of romance novels during this period emerged, part of the burgeoning post-Civil War boom of romance novels published, including Edna Dean Proctor's *A Russian Journey* (1872), Louise Gagneur's *A Nihilist Princess* (1881), and Charles Morris's *Moscow to Siberia, or a Yankee Boy to the Rescue* (1883).¹ Imperial romance novels were one popular genre that mediated between the foreign and domestic and the old order and the new. The imperial romance genre, a distinctly popular genre, blends romance and realism, and plays with the high/low distinction that categorizes naturalists and realists that often define these movements.² Savage's novel, for example, relegates the daily issues of life to comic narration, and objects that define the objective reality of an environment are often mediated through stereotypical tropes and inaccurate characterizations. Artificiality in imperial romance novels, which directly challenges the precepts of realism advocated by Howells and James, often parallels what Nina Silber calls "a romantic and sentimental culture of conciliation" (Silber 2). Conciliation in the imperial romance seeks to build sentiment with marginalized cultures in the attempt to demolish new orders that want to emerge or destroy anti-democratic forms of government. Sentimental reunion in Savage's novel is not so much reconciliation for recuperation as it is reconciliation for the sake of imperial gain and economic expansion. Characters in imperial romance novels cross overseas to Russia, a contiguous landmass defined and configured by its own southern peripheries. U.S.

romance novels function like European travel narratives of the period; that is, they function as precursors of American expansionism, and they follow the logic of American expansionism by elevating the superiority of their Euro-American knowledge. For Savage's imperialist and capitalist protagonist, coercion and conflict manifest in juridical lawlessness and a racialized romance that triggers implicit racial prejudices in the land of Russia.

Similar to the realist novels explored in this chapter, imperial romance novels paradoxically enact a reverse form of anarchism: the characters of these books attempt to dissolve an "oppressive" autocracy in the name of promoting imperial expansionism; in other words, they attempt to dissolve involuntary forms of government in order to contain and control Oriental excess. Yet like canonical, realist novels, imperial romance narratives depict the failure of American heroes to kill the Czar and bring about a new order; temporary love affairs that drive these narratives also tend to end in disharmony or failure. Mimicking the failure of these narratives, Hawthorne, James, and Cahan use failure to explore political ideologies through the aesthetic failure of love. Perhaps the genre of the realist novel limits the possibility of political emancipation. Since the repetition of thwarted love in these novels is channeled into the political project of revolution and anarchy, the aesthetic representation of love in these novels requires that we read the failure of the political projects as failures of everlasting love: Priscilla does not return the love of Coverdale; Hyacinth's disenchanted love for the Princess Casamassima leads to his death; and

Cahan's aristocrat-revolutionary Pavel communicates with his love through chinks in his jail cell in the Peter and Paul Fortress.

Thwarted love aesthetically substitutes the failed project of utopia or anarchy, and the aesthetic repetition of desire also initiates each character into a process of radicalization and revolution. The aesthetics of love dampens the disenchantment with the failed politics of emancipation. Eagleton calls this phenomenon the "aestheticization of knowledge" (228), and though Eagleton discusses this concept in the context of Karl Marx's stance toward morality and his "anti-aesthetic" reworking of Kant, for my purposes in this chapter I'd like to highlight how Eagleton addresses the "tragic lesson of Marxism" as an analogy for failure in the novels I explore. Eagleton reminds us that "[r]adicals are those who seek to preserve in some way a compact with failure, to remain faithful to it; but there is then always a dangerous temptation to fetishize it, forgetting that it is not in that, but in human plentitude and affirmation, that the end of political action lies" (229). But radicals must realize that a successful change may only occur in the "long-term," and any failure to "attend to those forces or faultiness *within* [sic] the present" might lead to a "utopianism [that] is in danger of persuading us to desire uselessly rather than feasibly" (Eagleton 229). Perhaps the fissure seeks out love since it cannot heal the political reality on its own terms; it must seek the aesthetic and then aestheticize the political struggle in order to mend that which it cannot do politically. Either way, while the novels in this chapter highlight the failure of love to mend fissure, and though these novels do not necessarily fetishize failure, I'd like to read the failure of love in these novels as a

contradiction between personal fulfillment and future political utopias; in other words, the inability to “attend to those forces...within the present” are largely responsible for the failure of love in these novels.

At the same time, the novels in this chapter push back against the ideology of the aesthetic and the realist novel. To some extent, these novels are anti-realist realist novels, since they refuse to represent utopian reconciliation and refuse to limit the nihilist actors by subduing them with social power. Building off the second chapter, this chapter explores immaturity as a mechanism that suspends “a harmonic vision of community” (Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism* 12). The failure of these novels inheres in their inability to imagine a narrative beyond immaturity, where immaturity signifies a lack of democracy and inclusion. As the previous chapter highlighted, inclusion can mean to let in and to obstruct, or shut. For Kaplan the idea of inclusion functions at the level of “willed amnesia” where writers concerned with “contemporary social reality...were equally obsessed with the past, or multiple pasts, largely of their own invention” (Kaplan, “Nation, Region, Empire” 242). “Willed amnesia” can be viewed alongside Eagleton’s explanation of the “forces” and “faultiness” in the “present” that preclude the possibility of development (229). So while these novels hold up a mirror to utopian promises that may solve contemporary social conflicts, these novels are very much invested in a past that at times is fictional and realistic—but a past, nonetheless, that refuses to narratively resolve any conflict. For this reason the novels that I explore in the chapter attempt to evade the question of the future by focusing on the burden of the past. For Hyacinth,

the past is his blood relation to his mother that literally stains his present moment; Cahan's novel, however, narratively details how the limitations of the realist novel—and realist representation—signal a failure of utopian promise and social cohesion. With this in mind, we can view the word inclusion as both a promise and a sign of impossibility—a defining contradiction in the sphere of art-criticism and in narrative.

Art-criticism must be viewed alongside the realist novel because the two worked in tandem to promote social progress and to develop a social conscience, though art-criticism of the nineteenth century contained similar contradictions as the realist novel. Since Russian intellectuals were often seen as the “torch-bearers of Russian progress” (Forman), in the case of Cahan, it's vital to keep this connection in mind, as his historical novel depicts a character enthralled with the principle of Russian art-criticism. While this was one aim of the critics's art-criticism, it's hard to overlook the idea that while they advocated for the appreciation of what Howells calls “literary truth” (an epistemological claim) in “fiction” (an aesthetic medium), this “truth” could only be divined through a reliance on a “genteel critic” (Davidson 76). To this end, while the aim of realism was to awaken people to the predicaments of their current social reality and to vitalize intellectual consciousness, these critics directly and indirectly implied that this can only occur through a mediating mind capable of interpreting the “special language” of fiction in its American context. Though each art-critic hoped to use their practice toward various social and political goals, they all relied on realist fiction to show the truth of the contemporary social moment. As Howells said, “literary truth” equates to “spiritual truth,” since fiction

can develop the moral qualities of people “to move the heart and the conscience” (Howells “Editor’s Study” 1886). But the contradiction of Howells’s statement inheres in the inability of the reader to understand the truths without an appropriate mediating mind. The “failure” in the narratives of failure I explore are also the troubled and complex ideals that proponents of art-criticism argued can be achieved by reading realist works, though the disjunction between theory and practice complicates this process of reading.

The interchangeability of reading for the promised ideal of art-criticism in narrative representations of radical politics is not a far reach; the two were so intimately intertwined in the Russian context and later in its many radical variants in the U.S. context. Reading Reconstruction’s failed promise of democracy against realism’s aim for clarity, democracy, and progress, reveals that narratives of failure reenact the “killing [of] democracy, art, and religion” (Du Bois 707). W.E.B Du Bois draws a clear lineage between the regional “Southern attitude” and its pernicious influence in a wider national framework. Du Bois’s focus in *Reconstruction in America*, though seemingly regional in scope, identifies the legacy of America’s identity and democracy and “[t]he...transplanting millions of Africans” to the development of the “new world [sic],” and it’s for this reason that I call his framework for democracy transregional. Contrasting “modern civilization” (Du Bois xliii) with Reconstruction, Du Bois says, “[d]emocracy in the South and in the United States is hampered by the Southern attitude” (706). Echoing the discourse of immaturity in U.S. art-criticism, Du Bois notes that the “Southern attitude” has

contributed to the “human fiction[s]” that “condemns most men to eternal degradation,” which is “a cheap inheritance of the world’s infancy, unworthy of grown folk” (706). Du Bois connects the “wide distortion of facts” that occurred in presidential elections and generally in the “white South” to a youthful ignorance that has robbed “men” of “love born of knowledge” (706). Indeed, this discourse of immaturity extends to literary representation where “Negroes themselves are seldom recognized as interpreters of art, and white artists must work under severe social limitations and at second hand; they thus lack necessary sincerity, depth, and frankness” (Du Bois 706). Du Bois traces the discourse of immaturity in art and in the New World to the ideals of “sincerity,” “frankness,” and “freedom” in order to highlight the failed promise of self-referentiality in realist aesthetics, which sought, in the words of Cahan, to pay “attention...to the tillers of the soil and poor, ignorant, weak, and defenseless common people generally” (Cahan, “The Spirit of Russian Literature”). Cahan’s attention to the downtrodden signals the transnational relativism of realism: in the Russian context, realism sought to critique the autocracy and show the plight of the Russian serfs, or “penitent nobility,” as Cahan called them; in the U.S. context, realism championed working class politics and liberal democracy, and when it did, it did so for only a few.

There’s something to be said about the status of representation as it’s described by Du Bois. For him, literary representation suffers a deeper wound than the inadequacies that Cahan and Howells highlight in their cultural and social milieus. Du Bois gets at the much more pernicious problem where African Americans are

“seldom recognized as interpreters of art,” highlighting the lack of a literary authority who is needed to reveal the ambiguities and problems of society in the nineteenth century manner of a Tolstoy or Turgenev—the banner men of Russian realism in the U.S. Perhaps critics with Howells’s “enlightened mind” may lead others to an appreciation of literary tradition in works of fiction, but Du Bois’s point highlights the relative lack of any referent from which to divine any “sincerity, depth, and frankness” (Du Bois 706) because the promise of America has democratically and institutionally failed to live up to its promise of freedom. Keeping in mind Du Bois’s insistence that the “Southern attitude”—and more largely, the New World—is a transregional phenomenon that dampers any notion of democracy in the U.S., it’s possible to see how narratives of failure always enact their politics with the destined endpoint of failure because freedom, in its universal sense, keeps people in their “infancy” rather than achieving growth, or “mankind,” as Du Bois calls it.

Hawthorne and The Limits of the Possible

Though James wrote that Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) contained “no reproduction of strange types of radicalism,” his most insightful observation was that the “human background [in the novel] is left vague” (James, *Hawthorne* 85). It’s notable that James categorizes the “vague” human element of the novel because it’s hard to pinpoint the novel as barren of people and their ideas. The tension seems to lie as much in the form of the novel as it does in its narrator. James calls Miles Coverdale “a spectator” and an “observer”—someone whose “chief identity lies in his success in looking at things objectively”—yet he’s a narrator

whose “spinning” leads to “uncommunicated fancies about” people at Blithedale (Hawthorne 85). To spin a yarn involves telling a story, one that produces imaginative illusions and tricks of the senses, and James positions objectivity and fancy against the idea that Hawthorne never “heard of Realism,” though he does “none the less [sic]” relish “thoroughly of the local soil...[and] the social system in which he had his being” (James, *Hawthorne* 5). James’s curious fascination with the tension that he highlights in Hawthorne’s novel reverberates with, as Hawthorne says, what “many readers will probably suspect [to be] a very faint and not very faithful shadowing of Brook Farm,” “occupied and cultivated by a company of socialists” (Hawthorne 1). Hawthorne indeed plays with the “conventional privilege” afforded to a “romancer,” though he claims license to explore the “real world” and what’s offered as an “available foothold between fiction and reality” (Hawthorne 2). “This atmosphere,” located somewhere between romance and realism, allows Hawthorne to embellish his connection to Brook Farm while still allowing room to ground the story in reality and “in good keeping with the personages whom he desired to introduce” (Hawthorne 2). It’s precisely because the novel’s mode of narration resides between fancy and reality that Miles Coverdale can expose his “uncommunicated fancies about” people. In this process Hawthorne uses a nihilist and anarchist context to define a human background that negotiates a space between flights of fancy and yarns and a space committed to reality.

As Miles Coverdale wanders into a Lyceum hall, a venue that would become associated with progressive thinking and democratic education, he notices “a pale

man in blue spectacles” who tells stories “stranger...than were ever written in a romance” (Hawthorne 198).³ To nineteenth-century readers, “blue glasses” were associated with nihilists and popular fiction from this period, and popular novels capitalized on this symbolic marker by portraying the nihilists of their novels wearing blue spectacles. As an anonymous “Russian Nihilist” wrote in *The North American Review*, in 1879, “General Odinzoff...issued an order prohibiting all ladies from wearing short black woolen dresses, blue spectacles, and short hair—the being, as the order expressly stated, the sure emblems of Nihilism” (A Russian Nihilist). Blue spectacles in the U.S. context, however, were not confined to a single gender, and this perhaps indicates Hawthorne’s imaginative license to place the nihilist look in opposition between fancy and reality. Similar to James’s observation of the novel’s oscillation between the categories of romance and realism, the pale nihilist told stories “stranger...than ever written in a romance,” but told in such a way that Coverdale receives them “into the category of established facts” (Hawthorne 198), highlighting the close and often-made resemblance between Coverdale the narrator and Hawthorne the author. In the Lyceum—where a “knot of people” gathered “who might be considered as representing the mysticism, or, rather, the mystic sensuality, of this singular age”—the pale nihilist functions as a synecdoche to underscore the larger political experiment of the novel in a realistic mode, going so far as to step outside the bounds of romance (and more implicitly showing how even in Hawthorne’s time nihilism was already becoming associated with “reality”). What at first appears as a minor character or minor detail actually inflects the socialist politics

of the novel and indeed underscores its success rather than failure in the Blithedale experiment.

Hawthorne's main contribution to the narrative of failure, in its pre-Reconstruction context, involves connecting the spirituality of nihilism, and its concomitant negation of love, to its actualized potential for political revolution and social change. Saying that Hawthorne demonstrates the success of nihilism and connecting this movement to inclusivity and forward-movement is different than saying that dissolution of Blithedale represents the failure of this undertaking. Whereas James and Cahan represent nihilism and anarchism as a failure to achieve revolution, Hawthorne engages the romantic element of the "passions" that may—and will—lead to its success. Coverdale specifically explores "the miraculous power of one human being over the will and passions of another" and shows how these passions destroy the "strong love of years" (Hawthorne 198). These "wizards" bid others, especially those with their "lover's kiss still burning on [their] lips," to turn away from their liaisons with "icy indifference" (Hawthorne 198). The nihilists represent the obliteration of religion, the end of family connection, and the depiction of how the "individual soul was virtually annihilated" (Hawthorne 198) (198). "Man's eternal responsibility...and immortality" are made "impossible...and not worth acceptance" (Hawthorne 198). To Coverdale these ideas represent "an evil age" where the "soul of man is descending to a lower point," "pursuing a downward course" and "bring[ing] ourselves into the same range with beings whom death, in requital of their gross and evil lives, has degraded below humanity" (Hawthorne 199).

The “miraculous power of one human being” leads others toward the possibility of destruction and underscores the “spiritual” threat of nihilism, a threat that’s also positioned between the troubling binary of occurring in a sphere of degraded “humanity” but coming from the “miraculous power” of one “human” (Hawthorne 199). Hawthorne’s depiction of the spirituality of the “pale” nihilist hints at the fear of realistic representation and the limits of romance to contain this fancy. The nihilist becomes a larger, trans-literary representation that not only underscores the Blithedale narrative, but the “evil spirit” of Hawthorne’s “evil age” (Hawthorne 199). Since love has the ability to disappear in this nihilist framework, the radical possibility that this spirituality can lead to destruction, anarchy, and revolution seems to overpower Coverdale’s romantic wanderings—the narrative becomes “established fact[s]” (Hawthorne 198). As Coverdale muses, “Alas, my countrymen, methinks we have fallen on an evil age!” (Hawthorne 199). “At the bidding of one of these wizards,” as Coverdale explains, the potential for nihilism to lead to destruction, even “before the epoch of rapping spirits” has arrived, is greater than ever. Indeed, the “epoch of rapping spirits...have followed in their train,” highlighting the actualized potentiality for these politics to succeed. The failure of Blithedale remains an isolated event in the novel, and the nihilist of this novel proleptically establishes the future success of alternative movements in the real. The novel ends with the musings of the pale nihilist in the lecture as a kind of proleptic calling out and signal how the nihilist would become a figure of popular imagination in the last two decades of nineteenth century.

Henry James and the Imbrued Past

With the transition from Hawthorne to James and Cahan, the narrative of failure changes from actualized potentiality into nullified inadequacy. Failure in these new narratives signifies a choice between involvement with life, or an antipathy toward its established order. Following Hawthorne's 1852 novel, the narrators of James's and Cahan's post-Reconstruction novels substitute a mode of observing fancies (Hawthorne) for one of providing a "record," of "dramatically" and "objectively" recounting a failed story. Peter Brooks is right to remind us that "realist literature is attached to the visual...and [to] [t]he relative dominance and prestige given to the visual in the human grasp of the world" (3). In James's *The Princess Casamassima*, the all watching "eye" is omnipresent: Mr. Vetch catches Hyacinth's "speaking eye," which reveals to Mr. Vetch that "Any one can tell, to look at you, that you have become a nihilist, that you're a member of a secret society" (*The Princess Casamassima* 133). The "look" of Hyacinth and his "speaking eye" demonstrate the referentiality and intelligibility of a visual sign that can be read textually (and marks a contrast from Hawthorne), and the word "eye" occurs with startling regularity in the narrative (over one hundred times), indicating the non-verbal visual elements that are indeed intelligible to the reader and the characters in the novel. The novel carefully places blood in antithesis to eyes—to the visual generally—and blood functions as a non-visual marker to hide what was not meant to be visible. To this end, Hyacinth's lowly origins (what everyone sees and knows)—he's "the bastard of a murderess, spawned in a gutter, out of which he had been

picked up by a sewing-girl” (*The Princess Casamassima* 434)—is juxtaposed against the non-visual: blood, lineage, and civilization.⁴ It’s specifically blood that ties Hyacinth’s aversion to his involvement with nihilism and anarchism and to “the two currents that flowed in his nature, the blood of his passionate, plebeian mother and that of his long-descended, super civilised sire” (*The Princess Casamassima* 471). Whereas Hyacinth tries to reconstruct an image of his father as someone who possesses an “expression of honour, of tenderness and recognition, of unmerited suffering,” his “thought of his mother...filled him” with his first inclinations toward “social criticism” (*The Princess Casamassima* 471), and his mother’s past explains why he became a bookbinder, establishing a clear association between his occupation and the burgeoning Arts and Craft movement, which positioned itself against industrialism and promoted social reform. Hyacinth’s failure to fulfill his promise to the nihilists occurs when his hold and desire for love—failed love at that—lead him to recognize his lineage, or his “personal stain,” an association that his mother is responsible for.

The failure to carry out his nihilist plot has as much to do with the “imbrued hands of his mother” as it does with Hyacinth’s “personal stain,” a transcendental and genetic byproduct of his mother (*The Princess Casamassima* 587). It’s telling that the narrator juxtaposes Hyacinth’s occupation as an artisanal bookbinder against his “plebeian” roots and his “supercivilised” side, revealing that his “plebeian” mother, literally marked with “imbrued,” or stained hands, has a haunting and everlasting hold over his actions and destiny—so haunting that it functions as a “loathing of the idea

of a repetition” (*The Princess Casamassima* 587). The repetition of hands most closely evokes a call for a renewal of the dangerous action that Hyacinth was meant to undertake, but repetition also invokes the idea of a repayment or recovery for a deed, a transmutation, in this case, of Hyacinth’s mother in the presence of his own consciousness. For Hyacinth the deed of his nihilist plot becomes entangled in the blood lineage of his mother, so much so that “[i]t rose before him like a kind of backward accusation of his mother” (*The Princess Casamassima* 587). Since Hyacinth’s mother murdered an individual, the legacy of her “personal stain” reappears in Hyacinth’s contemplation about the “personal stain” he may carry out in London. Indeed, Hyacinth’s act—the repetition of his mother’s “personal stain” that he would unleash unto the world should he carry out his act—had the power “to start out in the life of her son...in a manner [that would]...place her own forgotten, redeemed solution again in the eye of the world” (*The Princess Casamassima* 587). Hyacinth’s act would redeem his mother’s “personal stain” and place her “forgotten” legacy in the “eye of the world,” thus sowing the potential for Hyacinth to succeed in his nihilist plot.

But there’s another more telling meaning implicated in the word “imbrued,” which defines the word variously as associated with “bleeding wounds” (“Imbrue, V”) and in its other form, as “stained with blood” (“Imbrued, Adj.”). In this sense, since Hyacinth’s mother “imbrues” him with her metaphysical and transcendental criminal legacy, she condemns Hyacinth to relive her “forgotten,” and if acted upon, “redeemed” legacy. Hyacinth’s present predicament would then become what

juridical discourse in the nineteenth century called an attainder, or *attinctura*, which was “[t]he taint, stain, or corruption of blood, which attaches to a criminal who is capitally condemned” (Holthouse 52). Holthouse’s 1847 *New Law Dictionary* explains that the criminal is “then called attaint, (*attinctus*) stained, or blackened, and is no longer of any credit or reputation, and is considered already dead in law, and incapable of performing the functions of another man” (52). According to this definition, the “personal stain” that Hyacinth then carries is a form of “corruption of blood,” a racially charged concept that connects to its other meanings as “stained” or “blackened” (Holthouse 52). When the U.S. Constitution was formed, James Madison and the Founders explicitly argued against bills of attainder in *The Federalist* number 44 because it was a radically authoritarian measure.⁵ Du Bois, in his discussion of Reconstruction, directly connects the legacy of the past to the present moment: “attainder” implies “*attinctus*—stained, blackened” and the attainder would go “backward to the time when” the act was committed (Du Bois 31). In Hyacinth’s case, his ability, in a metaphorical sense, to carry out the historical murder that his mother committed would directly go against a bill of attainder because Hyacinth, contrary to the law, would then inherit the legacy of his mother’s successful past and would disavow the attainder by performing the actions that were condemned by law. The fact that Madison viewed the attainder as “contrary to the first principles of the social compact” (Madison) only goes to show that social inclusivity is as much at stake here as is Hyacinth’s personal legacy.

Hyacinth's failure to fulfill his commitment resides in the infancy of his convictions, but more tellingly, his youthfulness explains why his immaturity prevents his success. Here, it's suggestive to consider the Arts and Crafts movement one more time, particularly since in "the arts and crafts era...workshop plans frequently contained references to bringing fathers and sons closer" (Gelber 276). Hyacinth is without a father, suggesting that this lack of a relationship leaves a gap in Hyacinth's maturational development. Hyacinth's immaturity by extension suggestively highlights the infancy—and perhaps the inadequacy—of the socialist movement, revealing that "his socialistic affiliations" at first exposed the movement as "vast" and "mature," but were in fact "circumscribed by the hideously papered walls of the little club-room" where all the nihilists and anarchists gathered to debate their politics (*The Princess Casamassima* 220). Similar to Cahan's pronouncement that "[s]ociety has not yet reached the age of manhood" because the "inquiring activity of man" is still reliant upon "a ghost of supernatural power," so too does socialism's progress in James's narrative reflect the intellectual—and in Hyacinth's case, his hereditary—stage of the individual, where the socialist movement is curtailed to the fancies and idealizations that occur in the nihilist drinking parlor. Hyacinth's hereditary legacy intersects with the failure of the political plot at the level of blood, the non-visual marker in the text that literally stains the forward-looking momentum of the novel. The "personal stain" of his mother holds such a strong sway on his future plans that Hyacinth "decided [h]e would never marry at all" because "he would never hand on to another the burden which had made his own young spirit so

intolerably sore” (*The Princess Casamassima* 60). Hyacinth’s “young spirit” attempts to counter the malicious carryover of his stained descent, refusing to marry and thus imposing on himself and his possible descendants a self-imposed attainder, or corruption of blood. His “young spirit” remains locked and “intolerably sore” because “the inheritance” of his mother’s past act “had darkened the whole threshold of his manhood” (*The Princess Casamassima* 60). Functioning as a mimetic reflection of the failed nihilist plot, Hyacinth’s stain—his attainder—confines him to the “threshold of his manhood” (*The Princess Casamassima* 60). He’s stuck in a liminal point just as the nihilist drinkers remain “circumscribed by the hideously papered walls of the little club-room” (*The Princess Casamassima* 220). Tellingly, the immaturity of Hyacinth, of the socialist movement, and of society generally evokes the sense that the promise of reform is chained to the bastardized legacy of the past, denying belonging to a person who is marked by the inability join society. In the manner that Hyacinth’s plebeian mother kills a “supercivilised” British lord, the corrupted present moment suggests that the legacy of the past will blunt its forward movement.⁶

Cahan and the Russian Nihilists

Whereas James’s narrative recounts the inability to incorporate a tainted nihilist figure, Cahan’s *The White Terror and the Red* tells the tale of a Russian aristocrat, Pavel, who joins the revolutionary cause to assassinate the Czar and falls in love with a Jewish revolutionary, Clara Yavner. Through his love for Clara and his disenchantment with the autocratic Czar, Pavel embarks on a journey that takes him

from a false sense of maturity to a radicalized and authentic maturity, albeit one weighed down by the irresolvable nature of the past. Pavel's story is one of disenchantment, of moving away from his aristocratic life—associated with manhood—toward a life of revolution and fighting for freedom for peasants and Jews in Czarist Russia. When Pavel arrives at “a great university” where he would be “bent upon drinking deep of the deepest mysteries of wisdom,” he appears set to enter into his noble lineage and assume the duties that his station requires. His education signals his educational maturity where “his gymnasium diploma” was his “certificate of maturity” (Cahan, *The White Terror and the Red* 40). The certificate communicates a “passage from boyhood to manhood” and distinguishes Pavel “in everything he did” (*The White Terror and the Red* 40). His educational attainment means that “[h]e ate maturely, talked maturely, [and] walked maturely” (*The White Terror and the Red* 40). Yet Pavel knows “that the university was the hotbed of the secret movement, of which he was now tempted to know something” (*The White Terror and the Red* 41). Isolation and disenchantment lead Pavel toward acquiring the literature of the “radicals” and of the “secret movement,” a group of people known for “bustling, whispering” and giving of the “effect of being the masters of the situation” (*The White Terror and the Red* 41). After acquiring the publications of the underground movement, publications clearly associated with nihilists, Pavel comes to the conclusion that “these publications” and “editorials” called upon the “nobility to pay the debt they owed to the peasantry by sacrificing themselves for their welfare” (*The White Terror and the Red* 42). These ideas intoxicate Pavel, and lead him on a

journey to acquire banned and secretive publications and editorials in order to learn about the movement, and, more importantly, to question his own sense of manhood while embarking on a journey toward acquiring a sense of “altruism”: “[i]t was the period of ‘going to the people,’ when hundreds of well-bred men and women, children of the nobility, would don peasant garb and go to share the life of the tillers of the soil, teaching them to read, talking to them of universal love, liberty and equality” (*The White Terror and the Red* 18). Maturity for Pavel means moving toward the peasants and the tillers of the soil—“the penitent nobility,” as the publications and Russian writers called them—but also moving toward raising class and social consciousness—aims Cahan explores in his labor lyceum lecture mentioned earlier.

Cahan connects the novel’s “tillers of the soil” not only to the radical call for revolution and nihilism but also to his art-criticism, which argues that one of the most “salient feature[s] of the best Russian literature” is “the sympathetic attention paid to the tillers of the soil and the poor, ignorant, weak, and defenseless common people generally” (Cahan, “The Mantle of Tolstoy”). Whereas Hawthorne the author closely resembles Miles Coverdale the narrator, in Cahan’s novel, the ideas of his art-criticism reenact one of the central aims of the underground publications in *The White Terror and the Red*. The two written forms highlight how Cahan’s diagnosis of immaturity reenact the target of his literary narrative, where Pavel is struck “by the spirit of that peasant worship... which was the spirit of the best unproscribed literature of the day as well as of the ‘underground movement’” (*The White Terror and the Red*

43). In his criticism on Russian literature, Cahan connects “[t]he typical Russian [who] does not regard those who whine” to the very aim of Russian literature, which strives to depict the “shiftlessness” of Russia’s modern heroes. The “typical Russian” scorns those who “have no turn for business as so many decayed planks for the stronger citizen to trample under foot” (Cahan, “The Mantle of Tolstoy”). Indeed, the modern diagnosis of “shiftlessness” occurs because of “an effeminating, enervating social system,” which produces “victims” and “weaklings,” and—most importantly—the “tillers of the soil” (Cahan, “Realism”). It’s fitting that Cahan’s criticism, “The Spirit of Russian Literature” (1903), published in *The Bookman*, aims to diagnose the same “spirit of that peasant worship” in his novel (even using the same terminology). For Cahan, Russian literature functions as an invisible metonym for realism at large. As he says, “the Russian reader of good literature considers himself a member of a downtrodden, languishing nation” (Cahan, “The Spirit of Russian Literature”), and it’s in the interest of “championing ‘the degraded and the insulted’” in realistic novels that leads the “novelist...to have something to say, and this then must have some social iniquity to accentuate” (Cahan, “The Spirit of Russian Literature”). Recalling Cahan’s stance on the immaturity of society as an effect of romantic inclinations and capitalism, it’s significant that his narrative reenactment of immaturity reverses his stance in his art-criticism to show that the “enervating social system” in the novel is indeed the cause of immaturity. In other words, “[s]ociety has not yet reached the age of manhood” not because people are floating in the “misty altitude[s] of the upreal [sic]” (Cahan, “Realism”)—as his art-criticism implies—but because the “enervating

social system” (Cahan, “Realism”) produces “the tillers of the soil” (Cahan, “The Spirit of Russian Literature”).

With such a strong focus on the “tillers of the soil” (the peasants of the novel), Cahan’s narrative of failure seems to enact the tautology of his explanation for immaturity—and rightly so. Pavel is so keen on viewing the peasants as the “penitent nobility” that in the end it’s the “tillers of the soil” that the novel inscribes as “weaklings” and “victims”—products of an immature, “effeminating, [and] enervating social system” (Cahan, “Realism”). The sequence of Pavel’s growing class consciousness is as important to understanding the “tillers of the soil” as it is to appreciating his growing love for Clara. As Pavel becomes aware of life in autocratic Russia and discerns that Russian writers “drew” the peasant as a “creature of flesh-and-blood reality” with a “golden halo of idealism,” his own growing realistic consciousness begins to see the limitations of the “idealism” associated with the peasants (*The White Terror and the Red* 43). Indeed, Cahan’s realist novel is a corrective to Russian realist novels that elevated the Gentiles and peasants over and above the Jews of Russia. Part of this idealism stems from the other ideal that the peasants were to form a bridge from serfdom into a form of communism, allowing Russia to “pass through capitalism” altogether (*The White Terror and the Red* 43). The peasants in the novel are a synecdoche for the entire idealistic enterprise of a future, cooperative movement that was “destined to become the basis of the country's economic and political salvation” (*The White Terror and the Red* 43). As the narrator of the novel says, “As to the living peasant he had no more knowledge of this

adoration of himself (nor capacity to grasp the meaning of the movement)...than a squirrel has of the presence of a 'q' in the spelling of its name" (*The White Terror and the Red* 44). Indeed, Cahan, through Pavel, seems to underscore the limitations of Russian realism and more largely realistic representation, since the ideal and hence illusion is that these glorified peasants would allow society to progress past capitalism into a functioning communism; if realism—the par excellence mode of erasing the “misty altitudes of the upreal [sic]” (Cahan, “Realism”)—fails to expose this idealization, then Cahan offers his historical novel as a corrective not only to history but also to the flawed representations of peasants that inform that history.

Cahan’s historical novel, which was read and understood as a historical novel by his critics and reviewers, asks us to consider “whether the past is knowable...[and] upon the extent to which the present is known” (Lukács 169). In this sense, Jameson argues that “genuinely historical novels must have a revolutionary moment as their occasion: a moment of radical change” (266). I’m not sure that Cahan, though, “harbor[s] conservative sympathies,” and in Jameson’s view this disqualifies it from being a “genuinely” historical novel, since “all great historical novelists must in one way or another harbor conservative sympathies” (266). But nineteenth-century reviewers thought differently: Hutchins Hapgood, reviewing Cahan’s book in 1905, wrote, “*The White Terror and the Red*, is, therefore, at once a genuine historical novel, dealing with the events which resulted in the assassination of the Czar, and a genuine realistic novel, a rare combination” (Hapgood). Cahan’s novel is a “genuine historical novel,” to use Hapgood’s phrase, because the over-idealized image of the

peasants shows why this “radical moment” (Jameson 266) ends in failure in the sense that the idealization of Russian realism in the novel—and the idealization of the peasant by Russian writers—exposes a society that marginalizes the agents of change—nihilists and, more precisely, Jewish nihilists.

It’s not a coincidence that Viacheslav Konstantinovich Plehve, “an intelligent bureaucrat with broad legal, police, and administrative experience” (Judge ix) in Imperial Russia, who later became Minister of the Interior, said that “any attempt” to control the “revolutionaries... would unleash ‘from the underground all the dangerous criminal elements with the Jews at their head’” (quoted in Ruud 210). The past is knowable because its failure can be identified: Pavel’s love for Clara reminds us that a member of the aristocratic Gentiles can fall in love with a Jewish girl to effect nihilist uprisings and change but these movements show that “[t]he attitude of the Nihilists toward the Jewish population in general was thus anything but sympathetic” (*The White Terror and the Red* 342). The “Jew of flesh and blood,” juxtaposed against the peasant as a “creature of flesh-and-blood reality” (*The White Terror and the Red* 43), suggests that the failure of the immature movement resided in its inability to integrate marginalized “flesh and blood” Jews with the “flesh-and-blood reality” (*The White Terror and the Red* 43) that was supposed to take the nation from its “effeminating, [and] enervating social system” into fully honed socialism (Cahan, “Realism”). As Hapgood explains, the novel shows “the methods of the revolutionists, their plots, gatherings, distribution of literature... the riots against the Jews, and the consequent cooling-off of some of the Jews engaged in the movement

for the political liberation of the ignorant and bloody peasants who were butchering their race” (Hapgood). “Political liberation” hinges on the failure to recognize that “[s]ociety has not yet reached the age of manhood” (Cahan, “Realism”) because the “ignorant”—immature—peasants are a product of a “enneverating social system” (Cahan, “Realism”) that produces “the tillers of the soil” (Cahan, “Realism”) but who lack the consciousness to be led out of their state.

Conclusion

This chapter traced what I call the discourse of immaturity through its manifestations in literary representations in novels. At the root of art-criticism, realism, the critic, and nihilism—all terms that had similar overlapping associations with truth and progress—was the idea that these concepts offered a corrective to what Howells, Cahan, and Kropotkin saw as states of under-development. To this end, Russian realism and its guiding attributes of didacticism and the critic as an enlightened “consciousness” (Howells) offered a means to escape this state of immaturity. As Leo Wiener writes in his book, *An Interpretation of the Russian People* (1915), “Realism demands that one should not blindly follow the past” (86). Wiener suggests that realism is a worthy mode in its own right, capable of disregarding the “primitive masters” and erecting itself as the *prima facie* mode that can “teach the truth” (86). Indeed, artists must let go of the past and begin to trust themselves and their own subjective interpretations of truth: “every honest artist [must] harmonize his conscience with his perception of the truth” (86). Here, Wiener closely echoes Cahan’s sentiments on the need for realism to dispel the “misty

altitude of the upreal [sic]" (Cahan, "Realism"). The urgency of Russian realism is appropriately expressed in Wiener's chapter on his interpretation of the Russian people, entitled, "Art for Life's Sake in Russia." Signaling the vital necessity of art in Russia, Wiener suggests that realism eschewed the past and its literary conventions, forming a sense of security in the present for writers to explore their own convictions and dilemmas. Howells and Cahan acquired this thinking precisely because they saw society in a state of immaturity. Howells in particular diagnosed all U.S. literature as immature, and here Russian realism offered the ultimate form of development: ignore the past and erect your own "great" literature that would place the U.S. on par with the world's best writers at the time. This, after all, was Belinsky's project with Russian literature and Du Bois's with African-American literature.

Each critic of course seized on what he saw were the different potentials of Russian art-criticism. Howells aligned himself closer to the Russian intellectuals that were seen as the torch-bearers of Russian progress. In his view, art-critics played a defining role in the public sphere because the public needed an "enlightened consciousness" to guide their understanding. As Yarros explains of Russian criticism, "serious periodical literature" discusses "living problems and the application of first principles to current topics," and the "discussion may be didactic or indirect" (Yarros). Howells held the same view for U.S. criticism: didacticism was a form that allowed the critic to work as a "priest," to use Yarros's term. The priest could lead others to the truth and toward enlightenment. To this end, realist novels, with their aim toward the "truth," offered a means of advancement and progress as well. Since

Howells viewed society as a mirror reflection of a nation's literary development, reading painfully truthful realist novels alerted readers to their political and societal conditions. If one could see, the thinking went, one could effect change. Cahan, on the other hand, saw a slightly different though similar role for the critic. Cahan did place himself in a role of explaining and defining Russian realism to working class readers, but he viewed the act of reading for the "truth" as a way to escape the "poison" of capitalism (Cahan, "Realism"). To Cahan, realism provided the opportunity to develop class consciousness and the ability for others to diagnose their reliance on "supernatural powers" (Cahan, "Realism"). Cahan and Howells, though, were not alone. Critics writing in the U.S. periodical presses saw the same potential for Russian realism: the intellectuals were the leaders of intellectual progress; realism represented truth; and realism held the potential to develop readers and consequently society. To each of the critics truth signified various potentials, but in the collective sense, truth meant development and maturity.

Literary representations of immaturity often complicated the ideals of art-criticism. Hawthorne, James, and Cahan explore immaturity through their narratives of failure. It seems that each of their attempts to imagine a forward-moving, progressive future always begins from a state of immaturity, one often rooted with a deep irresolution in the past. In its pre-Reconstruction moment, Hawthorne's novel comes closest to imagining the potential of radical politics, rooting its vision in a nihilist who spawns the proleptic moment of the "epoch of the rapping spirits" (Hawthorne 199). James and Cahan, however, imagine alternative politics (and their

radical moments) as shorn of any future potential. Hyacinth's past debt to his mother and Pavel's love for a marginalized figure go to show that moving toward democracy, or elevating the collective masses, ends in failure because society is still immature or because the past weighs down against any future development.

To this end, this chapter makes the case that Du Bois's idea of the "splendid failure" of Reconstruction offers a helpful lens through which to read wishful—perhaps utopian—aims for collective development. While Du Bois's framework appropriately applies to the Reconstruction South, it's helpful to see Du Bois's idea of failure in the context of the institutional and political factors that have produced the "American Negro," and by extension "backwards people"—two groups that Du Bois and Kropotkin discussed at the Universal Races Congress (Lewis 293). Both the "American Negro" and "backwards people"—one a product of the U.S. and the other the product of an economically underdeveloped Russia (Engerman 52)—were people affected by their society from moving toward advancement, whatever "advanced" meant. For Du Bois, growth meant a movement toward aesthetic autonomy and political selfhood, while for Kropotkin advancement included development intellectually and culturally through art, literature, and politics. As Kropotkin says in "An Appeal to the Young" (1880), "the dreams of your youth will become the firm convictions of your mature age. You will wish to have wide, human education for all, in school and out of school; and seeing that this is impossible in existing conditions, you will attack the very foundations of bourgeois society" (Kropotkin). Kropotkin speaks very much to the ideal promised by art-criticism and Russian realism while

underscoring the barriers to attaining those ideals, which literary representations of forward-moving narratives demonstrate. What's left, perhaps, is the ideal itself, but Kropotkin suggests that further action is necessary if the ideal falls apart.

The narratives explored in this chapter depict attempts to explore new orders that want new ideals in their respective societies, but since each novel remains indebted to the fissures in the present moment, failure is the end result. James's novel explores the immaturity of Hyacinth through a bastardized legacy tied to his blood, which stains and denies the nihilist plot to take place. Cahan's novel, which most overtly explores the relationship between the ideals of art-criticism and their enactment in narrative, demonstrates how the marginalization of one group prevents further development. In these novels, love functions as the next alternative to drive change, but it also represents the inability to *change*. The aesthetics of love refuse to reconcile the fissures of the present moment because these issues cannot be resolved through its medium—and perhaps rightly so. Reconciliation, these novels suggest, can take place only through a direct engagement with the present moment, rather than through idealizing a future vision and project.

Notes

1. I borrow the term “imperial romance novel” from Choi Chatterjee (Chatterjee).
2. High-brow naturalists include Edith Wharton, Theodore Dreiser, and Frank Norris, among others. Realists include Henry James and William Dean Howells, among others.
3. In the *Odd Man Karakazov: Imperial Russia, Modernity, and the Birth of Terrorism* (2009), by Claudia Verhoeven, she mentions that the imperial police in Russia had “an official crackdown on the nihilist look.” In a quote from a tract she mentions in her work, in an attempt to curb the nihilist threat, the police obtained “signed agreements from all female nihilists to stop cutting their hair, put on hairpieces and crinolines, and wear neither blue glasses, nor little round hats” (117).
4. There are also connections here between Hyacinth’s past and Social Darwinism, which suggest that, as Gil Richard Musolf explains in his work on social psychology, “If criminals are genetically determined, if heredity is the cause of male aggressiveness, well, then, we certainly should not blame these people for behavior they have absolutely no control over” (9). Nonetheless, there’s the case to be made that Hyacinth’s actions actually demonstrate a consciousness of choice to break with the hereditary binds of his past. After all, he makes the decision to commit suicide and to not carry out the criminal act.
5. “Bills of attainder, ex-post-facto laws, and laws impairing the obligation of contracts, are contrary to the first principles of the social compact” (Madison). “The bills of attainder were legislative acts,” as the Heritage Foundation explains, “that, without trial, condemned specifically designated persons or groups to death...[and] [b]ills of attainder also required the ‘corruption of blood’”: a process that “denied...the condemned’s heirs the right to inherit his estate” (“Can Congress Punish People? Why the Constitution Prohibits Bills of Attainder”).
6. For the connection between James’s “bewildered consciousness” and the sources of the novel’s “constant eruptions of formlessness,” Vesna Kuiken traces James’s influences to “Mikhail Bakunin’s anarchism,” William James, and Ivan Turgenev, who introduced James to Bakunin (Kuiken 113-114).

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