

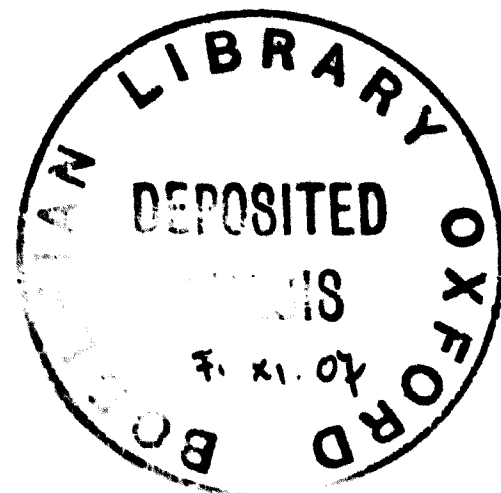
**Reading Revolution:
Russian Émigrés and the Reception of
Russian Literature in England,
c. 1890–1905**

by

Carol L. Peaker, Wolfson College, University of Oxford

Submitted for the Degree of D.Phil. in English Language and Literature

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Part I: Emigration and Propaganda	
Russian Émigrés and their Reception in England.....	31
Émigrés and their Propaganda	42
Stepniak – Man of the Steppe	43
Kropotkin – the Anarchist Prince	53
Volkhovsky – a Second Herzen.....	56
Reaction	59
Prelooker – God-fearing Revolutionist.....	64
Chertkov – Tolstoy’s Amenuensis.....	70
Part II: Literature and Propaganda	
The Influx of Russian Literature.....	78
Motivations	82
Early Glimmers: The Walter Scott Publishing Company.....	91
Sergei Stepniak	94
Literary Lectures.....	96
‘Hidden Meanings’ in Russian Literature.....	102
Stepniak and Translations: Fashioning the Vogue	109
Ethel Lillian Voynich (<i>née</i> Boole).....	116
<i>Free Russia</i> , 1899–1905	121
Stepniak, Volkhovsky and the Making of Constance Garnett	124
Stepniak’s Selection of Russian Literature.....	130
Felix Volkhovsky.....	133
The Awakening Nation: <i>Free Russia</i> and Russian Fiction, 1899–1905.....	133
The Revolutionists’ View of Tolstoy	143
A Prophecy Fulfilled.....	148
Jaakoff Prelooker	151
Cultivation and Sympathy: <i>The Anglo-Russian</i> and Russian Fiction, 1897–1905..	151
Russian Candour and the Problem of British Propriety.....	155
Russian Literature and the Psychology of the Nation	159
Russifying Tolstoy’s <i>Resurrection</i>	161
Peter Kropotkin.....	166
Anarchist Aesthetics	166
Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature (1905).....	173
Vladimir Chertkov	183

Part III: Case Study: Turgenev

Introduction.....	203
Phase One: c. 1847-1878: The Aristocrat.....	205
Phase Two: 1878–1883: A Critic of Nihilism and Russia’s Liberal Movements ...	209
Phase Three: 1883–: “The Novelists’ Novelist”.....	211
Phase Four: 1895–: The Nihilists’ Novelist.....	222
Edward Garnett as a Russian Critic	235
Conclusion	244
Implications for Anglo-Russian Relations.....	244
Pantheon of Russian Literature.....	246
Implications for English Literature and Future Lines of Enquiry	250
Appendix	255
Lecture Notes for “Count Tolstoy as a Novelist and Social Reformer”, by Stepniak	255
Count Tolstoy as a Novelist and Social Reformer.....	256
Bibliography	265

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Abstract

This thesis explores the involvement of Russian émigrés in disseminating and informing the reception of Russian literature in England. It examines their use of translations and literary commentary as vehicles for propaganda, and considers the impact of their unique approach to literature on both Anglo-Russian relations and English letters.

Part One describes the arrival of Russian émigrés in England and their mixed reception: as victims of a brutal regime, mysterious sages, exotic outcasts, Slavic barbarians, or at worst, as dangerous ‘incendiarists’ to be feared and reviled. It reflects on the welcome and assistance offered them by socialists, feminists, literati and Nonconformists, as well as the dangers they faced from Russian government agents and their English confreres. It then introduces, in turn, each of the five Russian exiles featured in this thesis, providing biographical details, outlining their work in Britain as propagandists and political agitators, and mapping out their political and literary affiliations.

Part Two opens with an analysis of the motives – financial, political, cultural, and personal – which compelled Russian exiles to promulgate Russian literature in England. A chapter is then devoted to each of the five émigrés, chronicling their work disseminating the Russian canon, and outlining the circumstances surrounding their translations, lectures, books, journal articles, and publishing activities. Interspersed within these five narratives are discourses on each propagandist’s aesthetic vision.

Part Three is a case study of the émigré impact on Turgenev’s English reputation. It starts by tracing the author’s early reception, showing how he was initially regarded in England as a European novelist whose artistry took precedence over his politics, and whose exquisite writing revealed universal truths through its careful selection and presentation of minute details. It then shows how émigré commentary altered perceptions of the author, transforming him from a disinterested artist dealing only in universal themes into a radical critic of various epochs of Russian national life, whose novels revealed important inner truths about the state of Russian society and politics.

The conclusion examines what may be termed the ‘collateral’ effects of émigré commentary on Russian literature and their involvement in translation projects in England. Firstly, it looks at the political impact of their criticism: how the émigré presentation of Russian literature affected Anglo-Russian relations and attitudes towards the first Russian revolution in 1905. It then considers how émigrés helped or hindered reputations of writers according to their own politically and aesthetically motivated preferences. Finally, it looks at the possible ramifications of émigré literary theory on English approaches to literature and criticism, and suggests further avenues of inquiry.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about the connection between two major events in Britain, occurring between the years 1885 and 1905. One was the arrival into Britain of about 60,000 Russians. The other was the advent of a tremendous vogue for Russian literature which, in the course of twenty years, would leave an indelible imprint on English letters. No study of the conjunction between these two phenomena exists. Indeed, no commentator has remarked on the relationship between them more than passingly. One would think, given the lack of interest from literary historians, that the appearance in Britain of 60,000 Russian émigrés and several hundred first translations of Russian literature at almost precisely the same time, was mere coincidence – the result of unmediated chance.

This thesis argues otherwise. In so doing, it uncovers the story of the tremendous émigré industry lying behind the sudden irruption of Russian fiction into the stream of English literature. It also argues that, in addition to helping to generate a vogue for Russian fiction, émigrés transmitted into England a peculiarly Russian manner of reading – that in the commentary of its newly arrived exiles, England encountered a vocabulary of interpretation for the first time: the language of Russian realist critics.

I first became interested in the subject of émigrés and the reception of Russian literature in England while writing a paper for Prof. Warwick Gould's History of the Book MA course at the School of Advanced Study, University of London. The paper was on Constance Garnett's seminal translations of the great nineteenth-century masterpieces of Russian literature: Tolstoy's panoramic tomes, Dostoevsky's "baggy monsters", Turgenev's slender novels, the works of Gogol and Chekhov. Garnett's volumes helped change the complexion of Russian translation in England, transforming it from a undertaking performed, more often than not, by anonymous amateurs, into a serious profession, marked by precision, immense linguistic skill, and cultural sensitivity. They also spanned the beginning, middle, and end of an age during which Russian literature became what Galsworthy called "the great vivifying current in the sea of modern letters".¹ During the course of my research, I was struck by Constance Garnett's close associations with two Russian exiles, Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii and Felix Volkhovsky. Kravchinskii, who

¹ Quoted in Gilbert Phelps, *The Russian Novel in English Fiction* (London: Hutchinson's University Library) 11. This quotation is unreferenced in Phelps and I have been unable to find its original source.

went by his *nom de plume*, Stepniak, was a Nihilist and assassin-turned-revolutionary propagandist who lived in exile in London and was a popular figure in socialist and literary circles. Volkhovsky was his lesser-known comrade-in-arms. The two had tutored Constance Garnett in Russian, giving the sort of sustained encouragement which transformed her from an amateur whiling away the dull hours of pregnancy, into the most accomplished Russian translator of her own era and beyond. Stepniak also wrote introductions to two of her Turgenev volumes. When I completed my MA, two questions lingered in my mind. Firstly, why a pair of exiles whose professed aim was “To conquer the world for the Russian revolution” would devote so much energy to the promotion of Russian fiction in the west. Surely, whether or not the English had access to Russian literature was of less moment to them than their political objectives. Could it be simple cultural pride, or was there an underlying motive? Secondly, I wondered whether Stepniak and Volkhovsky’s contribution to the development of Constance Garnett as a translator was an isolated case, or whether these and other émigrés acted as viaducts for the flow of Russian literature into England in other, larger ways.

The sheer mass of evidence I have been able to assemble in the course of answering the second of these questions continues to excite me. Looking through memoirs, letters, biographies and archives, I have discovered that a small number of educated exiles practised their influence upon almost all the major and minor translators of Russian literature in England, as well as upon the principal English commentators on the newly arrived canon. They also executed their own translations, wrote essays or books on Russian writers, and toured up and down Britain, delivering lectures on Tolstoy, Turgenev, Chernyshevsky and the like in church halls, political clubs, ‘Lit. and Phil.’ societies, drawing rooms, and sea-side resorts. One exile, Vladimir Chertkov, opened his own press, which became a major source of first translations of Tolstoy – not only in Britain but internationally. Others printed translations in the revolutionary news-sheets they hawked at political rallies in Hyde Park. Nor was the émigrés’ advocacy of Russian literature confined exclusively to the public realm. Enjoying intimate relations with the *crème de la crème* of English literary and cultural society, England’s most charismatic Russian politicians espoused their native fiction in private conversation with figures as diverse as Bernard Shaw, Henry Irving, Max Beerbohm, Hesba Stretton and Ford Madox Ford. In virtually every corner of British

cultural life at the *fin de siècle* Russians made their presence known – and an erudite presence it was.

Who were these cultivated, well-read and aesthetically sensitive émigrés? Without exception, all of them were radicals. Several, including Stepniak, were deemed by the Russian secret service to be “the most formidable revolutionary threat in Europe” for their talent as propagandists.² Others, who escaped such official notice, waged tireless campaigns to win English support for an overthrow of the Tsarist regime. The biographer of one émigré testifies to his fervour: “[at his talks he] gave vent to his long accumulated indignation and hatred of Russian despotism with such a fiery eloquence that the audience... was electrified by his enthusiasm, many literally trembling under his thunderous tones as if in the presence of a bursting volcano!”.³

Such politically geared vehemence leads back to my first question: Why would Russian propagandists whose main aim was to persuade their hosts to back a Russian revolution concern themselves with fictional literature in the first place?

A partial answer can be found in Stepniak’s aforementioned prefaces to Constance Garnett’s Turgenev volumes. These are, in effect, thinly-veiled pro-revolutionary tracts, casting Turgenev’s domestic novels – *Rudin* and *Home of the Gentry* (or as Garnett’s title reads, *A Nest of Gentlefolk*) – as covert messages of support for Russia’s newly awakened revolutionary tendencies. They are criticism in the service of propaganda. The same can be said for virtually all of the books, articles and prefaces émigrés wrote on Russian literature. For these Russians, it seems, fiction and its criticism presented a natural medium for reiterating and disseminating their anti-Tsarist creed. The Russian government was right: the émigrés were dangerous – not because they were smuggling bombs or orchestrating insurrections from abroad (though this was often the case too), but because they understood the psychology of their English hosts (who disliked being told what to think directly). They understood the power of fiction to hold the reader captive in the passions of its protagonists, to sweep him off his intellectual feet. And they understood the power of criticism to guide the interpretative mechanism involved in reading in specific directions.

² Donald Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii: The London Years* (Newtonville, Mass.: Oriental Research Partners, 1987) 98. Copies of the dispatches of Rachkovsky, head of the secret service, are in the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, *Paris Okhrana File*, Index No. XIII (b) 1.

³ Helena Frank, “Jaakoff Prelooker”, in Jaakoff Prelooker, *Russian Flashlights* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1911) 18.

At the same time, however, the question of why émigrés occupied themselves with literary commentary is more complex, more riddled, than first meets the eye. For while the essays, introductions and lectures they penned constitute propaganda, most of them simultaneously evince a fairly acute aesthetic sense on the part of their author. They are not simply one-dimensional revolutionary tracts, but rather suggest an alternative perspective of observation. To these Russians, fiction was not merely a site upon which to construct edifices of para-textual propaganda. It occupied an imaginative realm which was on almost equal footing with the facts of reality in its importance in shaping their nation's identity and future destiny.

All this had an important significance for English letters. This thesis argues that in the course of introducing their native literature into Britain for political purposes, Russian émigrés also breathed into the nation a new critical spirit.

The Critical Backdrop: Politics and Literature in Nineteenth-century Russia and England

The argument of this dissertation rests upon the premise that nineteenth-century Russian literature and its criticism were more heavily charged with political meaning than their English or European counterparts. In a century where Dickens was named one of the “three great social agencies” working for reform (alongside the London City Mission and the cholera epidemic),⁴ and where Gaskell's novels helped shape the discourse for social reform, this may seem a far-fetched proposition. More so when one considers that it was from writers such as Dickens, George Sand, Balzac, and George Eliot, that Russian writers, in large part, learned their trade. It seems likewise hard to argue that Russian critics had a more pronounced role in awakening social sensibilities than, say, George Eliot who wrote, “The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies”.⁵ Yet the idea that literature and criticism of nineteenth-century Russia generated an aesthetic ethos quite distinct from the West's is a familiar one to any scholar of Russian literature. Reflecting on the pre-revolutionary canon, for example, Rufus Mathewson writes: “In the West, partisan claims on literature from all species... [were]

⁴ Quoted in G.M. Young, *Victorian England, Portrait of an Age* (London; New York; Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1953) 55.

⁵ George Eliot, “The Natural History of German Life”, *Westminster Review* n.s. 10 (July 1856) 54.

somehow... resisted.... But in Russia the claims were so urgent, backed, as it often seemed to the guilt-ridden intellectuals and writers, by the massive grievances of the Russian populace; and the habits of thought resisting them were so precariously grounded, that the eventual victory of the utilitarians seems foreordained.”⁶ Andrew Field in his Foreword to *The Completion of Russian Literature* notes a concordant movement in criticism: “In a country in which direct political commentary was simply impossible and where even philosophy was banned from university instruction for the greater part of the nineteenth century, no wonder so much discourse that was essentially political was hidden in literary criticism.”⁷

Notwithstanding the testimonies of Russian scholars, some comparison of the two traditions is instructive. Not least because it gives some foundation to the idea, which I hope to develop throughout this thesis, that Russia’s peculiar adaptation of German romantic theories about art (particularly their emphasis on literature as an expression of ‘national’ life) gave rise to a critical approach very different from the one Russian émigrés encountered when they arrived in England.

Russia

Russian literature’s singular development can be linked to the country’s distinctive historical trajectory from the year 1703, when Peter the Great founded St. Petersburg, his “window on the west”, and began Europeanising Russia. Peter believed that if he wished to expand his empire – to become a full member of the European assembly of powers – he needed to furnish it with an educated society versed in western skills of technology, diplomacy and administration. In St. Petersburg and elsewhere, he erected secondary schools, public libraries, museums, and printing presses, all based on European models. He also shipped in British teachers to tutor children in everything from fortification to social etiquette, and dispatched Russian youths to study in Germany and France. To enforce his reforms, he even forbade members of the nobility to marry without first earning a diploma.⁸ During his reign, most education was aimed at establishing basic literacy and numeracy – the sorts of skill

⁶ Rufus W. Mathewson Jr., *The Positive Hero in Russian Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958) 9.

⁷ Andrew Field, *The Completion of Russian Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973) ix.

which would enable Russians to become adept at shipbuilding, navigation and war administration. And his efforts to introduce European social graces probably had more to do with the need for a diplomatic class that could hold its own when in contact with Europeans, than with any deep seated appreciation of culture *per se*. Nonetheless, the educational reforms paved the way for the future transmission of western philosophy and Enlightenment ideals. His purpose, as his apologists phrased it, was to drag Russia's backward feudal society from "darkness to light" – all in the course of a generation.⁹

Peter's reforms had a long-range effect on the development of Russia's literature, because they launched what had formerly been an isolated, feudal country with no indigenous literature except for Annals and Church texts on a course of cultural imitation which was to last decades. At court, in salons, and in country estates, men and women (who were formerly barred from social occasions) chatted in French, now the preferred language of the aristocracy. European notions of civility were paraded in the drawing room. Nobles shaved their beards, wore English-style breeches, and read texts based on rationalist and empiricist thinking. Prominent writers, meanwhile, penned extensive tracts on versification: "The main feature of these early theories", says the commentator Silbajoris, "was the attempt to work out an exact imitation of Greek and Latin versification patterns."¹⁰ If the forms literature adopted were derivative, so was its subject matter. Poets turned their quills to Neo-classical themes: bucolic poems, solemn odes (a form suitable for celebrating the strengths and virtues of their patron, the Tsar), or epics, regarded as "the highest of the genres".¹¹

In time, all this mimicry was to trigger Russia's famous nineteenth-century crisis of identity and self-seeking, the most obvious manifestation of which was the divide between Slavophiles and Westernisers: those who sought a return to an almost mythic Slavic realm

⁸ For a description of Peter's decree of 20 January 1714, see Evgenii V. Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great, Progress through Coercion in Russia*, translated by John T. Alexander (Armonk, NY, London: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 187–8.

⁹ Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia and the Russians, A History* (London; New York; Ringwood; Toronto; New Delhi; Auckland; Johannesburg: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2001) 195.

¹⁰ Rimvydas Silbajoris, *Russian Versification, The Theories of Trediakovskij, Lomonosov, and Kantemir* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968), 2. Between 1735 and 1752, Vasily Trediakovsky, Mihaelo Lomonosov and Antiokh Kantemir exchanged treatises on such subjects as "A New and Brief Method for Composing Verse" (Trediakovsky, 1735) and "Letter on the Rules of Russian versification" (Lomonosov, 1739). Translations of these tracts can be found in Silbajoris, *Russian Versification*.

¹¹ Russia possessed her own folk epics in oral form. However, these were ignored by official poets who tended to look down upon folk traditions in favour of western forms. C.L. Drage, *Russian Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (London: C.L. Drage, 1978) 33.

and those who saw the way forward for Russia in the further assumption of European ways. In the domain of literature, the identity crisis was particularly acute. Here the common question of “what constitutes Russianness?” was re-framed as “How do we create a uniquely Russian literature?”, a problem which was debated with astonishing fervour in salons and journals. It was thus, even before Russia’s great nineteenth-century canon was born, that the institution of Russian literature became obsessed with how native fiction might express national identity.

As the earlier quotes from Mathewson and Field suggest, however, another factor also galvanised Russian literature’s exceptional role as a means of political and national expression. This was political oppression. Russia was a paradox: it had been ‘westernised’, but it lacked all the west’s political freedoms, humanist institutions, and democratic forms of government. If anything, Peter the Great’s reforms – which included dismantling the old ruling Boyar families and introducing a fourteen-rung “Table of Ranks” by which every male member of society was judged – had made the Tsarist government more autocratic, and society more rigidly hierarchical. As the French commentator, the Marquis de Custine, observed in 1839, “Czar Peter inoculated all his people with the fever of ambition in order to make them more pliable and to govern them as he liked”.¹² Despite her European-style odes and epics, professed enlightenment values, and immense progress in technology and industry, politically Russia remained in the stranglehold of an archaic form of feudal absolutism. Under the rule of Catherine the Great (1762-1796), French thought was encouraged. The ruler herself declared that “Philosophy was now seated on the throne”, and carried on a lively correspondence with the Encyclopaedists.¹³ But the same “enlightened Monarch” also allowed vassalage to degenerate into out-and-out slavery. In 1765, she passed a law which forbade serfs to press complaints against their masters, and permitted masters to send troublesome serfs to Siberia as punishment. For those individuals in whom more humane ideals had taken root, the situation was well nigh intolerable. As David Marshall Lang notes, “it was necessary to keep up an appearance of Western ‘enlightenment’ and modern views; on the other [hand], one had to fit in with the backward

¹² Astolphe Marquis de Custine, *Journey for Our Time, the Journals of the Marquis de Custine*, edited and translated by Phyllis Penn Kohle Custine, introduced by Simon Sebag Montefiore (London: Phoenix Press, 1953) 135.

¹³ Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought, From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, translated from the Polish by Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) 4.

norms of Russian social conditions. This dichotomy sometimes produced intolerable psychological stresses.”¹⁴

Eventually, the autocracy’s moratorium on enlightenment views in the sphere of action fostered the need for their expression in other spheres. In the early nineteenth century, Russia’s population of disenfranchised intellectuals began to discover a place of self-affirmation in the sphere of literature. In part, this discovery came from German romantic philosophers such as Hegel and Schelling, from whom they derived the flattering notion that the artist-poet had a vital role as a guide to the nation. Another influence was Byron, who instilled in them the idea of the rebel-poet. Literature also subverted the Tsar’s dreaded ‘Table of Ranks’, by offering an alternative avenue of social mobility. As the fashion for literary salons and societies grew, shared interests in literature gave rise to a new class dynamics: “Literature with us serves as the connecting link between people who are in all other respects *inwardly* divided. ...”, wrote the critic Belinsky in 1846, “And in our days it is no longer a rarity to meet to meet a friendly coterie in which you will find a titled gentleman and a commoner, a merchant and a tradesman” all entertaining “a mutual regard for each other simply as men. Here is the true beginning of educated society which literature has established!”¹⁵ The almanacs of the 1820s, and later “thick journals”, which replaced the literary societies in the 1830s, offered yet another vehicle for intellectual idealism. The latter, in particular, provided writers with an income and a profession, releasing them from ideological servitude to a wealthy patron. Importantly, in both literary societies and journals, preoccupations with language reform and the need for a national literature meant that discussions of literature often became assertions of ideological tendency. Rival camps conducted a war of words, reinforcing literature’s spirit of faction. Literature became, in its own right, an institution, a locus for political and ideological debate which was beyond the aegis of the Tsar.

Literature might not have become quite so politicised, however, had it not been for the abortive Decembrist Uprising in 1825, when three thousand members of the militia marched on Senate Square demanding (among other things) a constitution. In the revolt’s

¹⁴ David Marshall Lang *The First Russian Radical, Alexander Radishchev, 1749-1802* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1959), 31–32.

¹⁵ V. G. Belinsky, “Thoughts and Notes On Russian Literature”, *Selected Philosophical Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1948), 339. “Thoughts and Notes” was first published in N. Nekrasov’s *Peterburgsky Sbornik* (St. Petersburg, 1846).

ugly aftermath, many poets and writers with liberal beliefs were exiled and the “chief instigator”, the poet Ryleev, was hanged. The government also set up a spyglass organisation, called the Third Section, to prevent future conspiracies. This sent informers to infiltrate “suspicious gatherings” taking place in student garrets, the homes of Decembrist wives, literary societies and even court circles. Equally oppressive was the system of draconian censorship which was instituted. Banned were “metaphysical discussion of natural, civic or judicial rights”, historical works reporting on challenges to authority in any land, and any mention of Christian dissent. Infringement of these laws could lead to punishment for the author, censor, and publisher alike.¹⁶ The most famous example of the repression that befell the intelligentsia is Dostoevsky’s mock execution, followed by his imprisonment in Siberia in 1849. For four years the novelist wore shackles in the company of murderers, an experience which left him with epilepsy for the rest of his life. His crime was to have attended a meeting of Petrashevsky’s illicit discussion circle at which Belinsky’s celebrated open letter to Gogol – an eloquent onslaught on the Tsarist regime – was read aloud.¹⁷

Rather than purging literature of its political function, the Sword of Damocles held over the intelligentsia by the Third Section only served to re-enforce writers’ estimation of themselves as rebels. It also forced them to resort to fiction as their principal weapon against the state. Proscribed from writing political or even historical texts, intellectuals had nowhere to voice their ideological and social concerns except in fiction or aesthetic commentary, which was harder to police. Writers learned surreptitiously to encode their work with political meaning, adopting arcane language and the sort of euphemisms known at the time as “the language of Aesop”. Many resorted to the advice in the popular folk-saying, “Use the

¹⁶ For a full description of censorship during this period, see Charles A. Ruud, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 52–57. Nicholas’ statute was replaced with a less rigid one in 1828. Still, it banned “whatever endangered the faith, the throne, or the good morals and personal honour of the citizenry”. Furthermore, Nicholas maintained “secret police powers over the press”, and the Holy Synod was given the authority to ban “irreligious” books, “no matter where published or by whom.” Ruud, *Fighting Words*, 55, 57.

¹⁷ A comparison of Russia’s censorship laws with those of other countries underscores the extent to which her institution of literature was in a state of siege. Out of all European nations Russia was the only country in which it was necessary to submit all writing to the censor prior to publication. England dropped preliminary censorship in 1695, and France in 1789. In France it was reintroduced by Napoleon but then dropped again in 1814. Russia kept preliminary censorship until 1905, that is, an astonishing 210 years after it had been abolished in England. Donald Thomas, *A Long Time Burning, The History of Literary Censorship in England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969) 8.

same word, but say it differently”.¹⁸ At the same time, readers became adept at reading between the lines at finding within seemingly ‘innocent’ texts hidden political nuances.

One consequence of this was that between the 1840s and 1870s, literary criticism became the dominant *modus operandi* for the radical voice. The man who spearheaded this movement was Belinsky, known by Herzen as “raging Vissarion”, and considered well into the twentieth century as one of the forefathers of the Russian revolution. More recently, Belinsky’s dual role as literary critic and revolutionary has been remembered in Tom Stoppard’s trilogy, *The Coast of Utopia*, where Bakunin’s father exclaims, “If Mr Belinsky is a literary critic, so was Robespierre”.²⁰ Belinsky can be credited with teaching Russia to have a national literature: fiction, he wrote “must necessarily be the expression, the symbol of a nation’s inner life”.²¹ Early in his career he encouraged naturalism and ethnographical studies – literature which, by depicting poverty and social inequality, conveyed implicit criticisms of Russia’s social structure. He also challenged writers to discover means of conveying “the truth” of contemporary Russian reality, rather than reproducing Western themes, or restricting themselves to the prettified realms of neo-classicism and romanticism. Russian literature was to embrace the vulgar, average and topical in order to make possible the candid exploration of the lives of common men. It was to express boldly its national genius, shedding its “childish veneration” of European authorities.²² In its fidelity to the “truth” and freedom from servile imitation, it would reproduce modes of thinking and feeling peculiar to Russia. Belinsky’s greatest achievement occurred when he realised that literature need not concern itself with “bast sandals, corn brandy and sour cabbage” in order to be “national”, and began successfully promoting a literature about the intelligentsia, a subject which would form the basis for the great bulk of Russian realist novels. In the flawed heroes and heroines of Pushkin and Lermontov, no less Russian for their European dress, the critic discovered portraits of national import.²³ Through Belinsky’s mediation, the realist novel became a means of national self-acquaintance and self-cognition; a locus where

¹⁸ Quoted in I.P. Foote, “Counter-Censorship: Authors v. Censors in Nineteenth-Century Russia”, *Oxford Slavonic Papers* n.s. 27 (1994) 69.

²⁰ Tom Stoppard, *Voyage, The Coast of Utopia Part I* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002) 41.

²¹ V.G. Belinsky, “Literary Reveries”, in *Selected Philosophical Works* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1948) 13.

²² Belinsky, “Literary Reveries”, 28.

²³ Belinsky, “Articles on the Works of Alexander Pushkin: Article Eight, *Eugene Onegin*” [1844], *Selected Philosophical Works*, 201..

educated society might converse with itself, uncover its ills, and consider its best means to recovery. In the critic's estimation, each great work of literature in Russia was a necessary cog in the wheel of progress: "an act of consciousness for Russian society ... a great step forward...".²⁴ Writers who were encouraged or discovered by this father of Russian social criticism included Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Nekrasov and Herzen.

Belinsky's theories were paradoxical.²⁵ They insisted on literature's social function, but simultaneously insisted on its freedom from ideological bias or dogma. Echoing the demands British realists would make for literature, the critic required that fiction portray life truthfully; that it be based on experiential reality. Indicating his indebtedness to German romantic theorists, he wrote, "Art is the *immediate* contemplation of truth or a thinking in *images*".²⁶ But implicit in his later criticism is the belief that a realistic portrayal of Russian life and society would, by its very truthfulness, expose the weaknesses and corruption of the Russian system, and lead readers to the same conclusions as himself regarding the need for radical social reform. The link he made between realism and idealism presupposed that there was an obviously 'natural' order of things (as opposed to an artificially imposed one) which was commensurate with his own radical way of viewing reality. Belinsky's worldview excluded the competing claims of metaphysics and theology, and championed honesty over the "hypocritical" niceties of social conventions. Furthermore, it was heavily coloured by a deterministic outlook which saw character (whether fictional or real) as being formed largely by a complex of social conditions and concepts. This gave scope for elaborate diatribes against the pernicious state of society as he saw it: one "in which fresh forces are seething and struggling for expression, but weighed down by heavy oppression".²⁷ The consequence of Belinsky's method, to quote one Soviet commentator, was that "[one] of the most real and effective weapons in the fight against the system of autocracy and serfdom, and against the ideology which sanctified it, was literature, primarily publicist literature and literary criticism".²⁸

²⁴ Quoted in Mathewson, *The Positive Hero*, 35.

²⁵ Belinsky's theories went through several stages and were rarely cohesive. I have focused only on those constants which are of relevance to this thesis and which constituted his legacy to Russian criticism. A good account of his development can be found in René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750–1950, The Age of Transition* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966) 243–64.

²⁶ Belinsky, "The Idea of Art", in *Selected Philosophical Works*, 168.

²⁷ Belinsky, "Letter to N.V. Gogol", in *Selected Philosophical Works*, 509.

²⁸ Introduction, Belinsky, *Selected Philosophical Works*, ix.

Belinsky died in 1848, the year of revolution in Europe and the beginning of a decade of obscurantism and intellectual purging in Russia. But his critical method created a critical and revolutionary ethos which lived and spread throughout Russia. His most immediate disciple was Dobrolyubov, who also married literary criticism to the European ideals of positivism, scientism, materialism and utilitarianism. Dobrolyubov distilled his master's tenets, eliminating their ambiguities in order to make Russian criticism a yet more incisive means of attacking the mechanisms of state and society.²⁹ Despite placing the same emphasis as Belinsky on the importance of the artist's fidelity to truth or reality, he was more tendentious, materialist, and single-minded in his analysis, and often ran rough-shod over an author's own intentions. His approach was to sum up and analyse the data of a piece of literature "as phenomena of life" and to discuss "what the [author] *said*, even unintentionally, simply in the process of truthfully reproducing the facts of life".³⁰ 'What the author said' typically amounted to Dobrolyubov's opinions about the development of the average Russian intellectual at the time the novel or story was produced: whether he was equal to making "heroic deeds and actions"; to what extent his "soul is filled with a passionate desire to liberate his country".³¹ If a hero or heroine lacked will or resolve (even if only on a strictly personal level), the critic blamed their indolence on the irresistible forces of their "hostile environment" – ie. the Tsarist regime.³² But he also interpreted these famously 'superfluous' types as calls to society to shrug off its crushing blanket of passivity and awaken to Russia's intolerable situation. Active heroes he put forth as examples for the intelligentsia to model themselves on – and as positive indications that Russia might yet achieve her social revolution. Whether or not a literary production seemed outwardly political, Dobrolyubov used it "as a basis for the discussion of the milieu, the epoch" that prompted it.³³ In his hands, Russian literature became a cohesive realm where works and their heroes could be seen in relation both to one another and to the living history of the nation. As each new 'type', or character, arrived on the scene, Dobrolyubov interpreted it as the latest word on Russia's dialectical progress towards revolution.

²⁹ Mathewson, *The Positive Hero*, 59.

³⁰ Dobrolyubov, "When Will the Real Day Come?", *On the Eve*, A Novel by I.S. Turgenev" *Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov, Selected Criticism*, edited and with an introduction by Ralph E. Matlaw. (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1976) 177.

³¹ Dobrolyubov, "When Will the Real Day Come?", 198.

³² Dobrolyubov uses this term, for example, in "What is Oblomovitis?", *Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov, Selected Criticism*, 159.

Critics like Belinsky, and Dobrolyubov – as well as others like Chernyshevsky and Pisarev, whose criticism was yet more utilitarian in tendency – had a far-reaching and long-lasting effect. In part, this was because the “thick journals” containing their diatribes were also the principal source of Russian novels (published in serialised form). The conjunction of criticism and fiction emphasised the political ambit of literature, providing readers with on-hand guidance in how to interpret texts. Readers learned to understand depictions of any form of oppression (whether it occurred in the domestic realm, or between landowner and peasant) as a comment on the oppression generated by Tsarist absolutism. Fiction which gave an unflattering picture of Russian provincial life was seen as a comment on a society gone stale from lack of freedom. The links between character and nation became embedded in Russia’s literary ethos.

As far as fiction was concerned, the influence of the radical critics meant that in the 1840s, Naturalism, ethnographic sketches of the peasantry and the urban “little man”, and a literature of exposure proliferated. In later decades it meant that realist writers, whether they liked it or not, were forced to be ever cognisant of the way each one of their works – and characters – would be seen with respect to the nation’s current political and social condition. Such cultural production had a very real impact on society, even when it appeared to have emerged from artistic, rather than didactic, impulses. Turgenev’s *Sportsman’s Sketches* (1852), to give an early example, helped bring about the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, merely by depicting them as humans, flawed as they were, and not chattel. Yet, the imperative writers were working under – to create a literary epoch which would, in turn, lead to a great development in Russia herself – frequently placed the institution of literature under functional overload.³⁴ Nekrasov’s advice to the young Tolstoy was typical: “You will do still more when you understand that *in our country* the role of a writer is above all the role of a teacher and, as far as possible, an intercessor for the mute and oppressed.”³⁵

Needlesstosay, there was not always a consensus amongst writers and critics about the solutions to Russia’s ills or the function of literature. Internal tensions within the institution were rife. This was especially the case in the intemperate 1860s, when the blind

³³ Dobrolyubov, “When Will the Real Day Come?”, 178.

³⁴ See, for example, Ivan Turgenev’s analysis of Belinsky’s aims in *Literary Reminiscences and Autobiographical Fragments*, translated with an introduction by David Magarshack, and an essay on Turgenev by Edmund Wilson (New York: Grove Press, 1959) 130.

fanaticism of what were known as ‘civic’ critics appalled writers with any claim to artistry. Mindful that literature remained the foremost realm of autonomous expression in Russia, many novelists and poets came to resent the imperatives of civic critics almost as much as they resented the interference of the censors. Some responded by propounding a theory of ‘pure art’; others reacted by writing pamphleteering novels aimed at antagonising the radical left. But whether a novel was, like Chernyshevsky’s *What to Do?*, a utopian tract intended as a blueprint for social reform, or Dostoevsky’s *The Possessed*, a masterpiece of psychological realism (though written with the explicit purpose of defaming socialist revolutionaries), literature, for the most part, engaged in the political and social debates of the day. Indeed, given the political turmoil Russia was undergoing, even so-called ‘pure art’ assumed a deeply political dimension: as Isaiah Berlin notes, in Russia’s totalitarian context, “the controversy between supporters of the theory of pure art and those who believed it had a social function...grew into a major moral and political issue, of progress against reaction, enlightenment versus obscurantism, moral decency, social responsibility, and human feeling against autocracy, piety, tradition, conformity, and obedience to established authority.”³⁶

One thing common to critics and writers of every tendency, however, was their method of deriving “from a few fictional figures” representative Russian social types pertaining to each new generation. Indeed, so prevalent was the practice of drawing links between literary ‘types’ and the nation (a practice which owed its origins, in part, to Biblical typology), it can be said to be *the* dominant feature of nineteenth-century Russian literature and literary criticism. A famous example is the eponymous protagonist of Goncharov’s *Oblomov*, a nobleman who yearns for action but who for much of the book is unable to muster the will to get out of bed. Oblomov’s lethargy was accounted for by the conditions created for nobles by serfdom. Other examples can be found in Turgenev’s succession of flawed heroes, who were seen as typical educated progressives of different eras; collectively they were used to map the spiritual and political progression of the national psyche. Like Turgenev’s protagonists, many of the novels and characters produced during the nineteenth century were either extensions or refutations of earlier creations. Dostoevsky’s irrational anti-hero in *Notes from Underground*, for example, was his answer to Chernyshevsky’s

³⁵ My emphasis. Quoted in Malcolm V. Jones, “Politics”, in Malcolm V. Jones and Robin Feuer Miller, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to The Classic Russian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 64.

³⁶ Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers*, edited by H. Hardy and A. Kelly (London: The Hogarth Press, 1978) 265–7.

idealised utilitarians in *What to Do?* The predecessor to all these ‘types’ was, of course, Pushkin’s eponymous Eugene Onegin, a character whose national significance was first explained by Belinsky. Onegin inspired decades of ideologically motivated analysis, and, as Dostoevsky professed, reams of fictional updates: “[Pushkin] exhibited and set in relief before us our negative type, the disturbed and unsatisfied man, who can believe neither in his own country nor in its powers,...Aleko and Onyegin were the fathers of a host of their similars in our literature. After them came the Pechorins, Tchichikovs, Rudins, and Lavrezkys, Bolkonskys (in Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*) and many others”.³⁷ After Onegin, fictional characters became the principal mouthpieces in Russia’s dialogue with herself.

Literature outside of the realist realm also performed a didactic utilitarian role. In the 1880s, awareness of literature’s consciousness-raising properties led writers like Tolstoy to begin writing instructive chapbook tales to ‘awaken’ the peasant masses. At the other end of the spectrum was Saltykov-Shchedrin, who used allegorical fairy tales to attack the injustices of Russian society. While the thrust of Tolstoy’s allegories was overt, many of Saltykov-Shchedrin’s tales were only accessible to an audience sophisticated enough to decipher their allusions. The disenchanted Populist, Gleb Uspensky, meanwhile, excused the state of the peasants by describing their conditions in the journalistic sketchbook *The Power of the Soil* (1882). There was a sense that literature had a revolutionary and edifying function, whether it take the form of satire, fable or ethnography, as long as it was written in the spirit of sympathy.

In sum, the unavoidable primacy of political and national concerns in Russian literature and criticism gave the institution of literature a status in relation to the state which was unique in Europe. Although the institution had absorbed western models and theories, it developed them in a very different climate: one where writers continued to be persecuted; where even young schoolboys were involved in the dangerous act of copying out banned texts (an act which invested literature with extra meaning); where there was an understanding that the dynamics of society had to undergo a complete transformation in order to effect Russia’s political, economic and spiritual salvation; where the disenfranchisement of the entire educated class meant that the typically lonely figure of the romantic hero was transformed in the realist novel into a metaphor for the dysfunction of

³⁷ Dostoevsky, “A Word of Explanation Concerning the Speech on Pushkin Published Below” [August 1880], *The Dream of a Queer Fellow and The Pushkin Speech* (London: Unwin Books, 1960) 33.

Russian society as a whole. In the process of adapting itself to and addressing the many challenges faced by the country, literature became not merely a subsidiary means, but the *prime* means of stirring up public consciousness and debate about Russia's body politic.

England

Despite such compelling evidence on the Russian side, a principal challenge to my premise that the Russian institution of literature was more politicised than the English is implicit in the works of critics like Louis Cazamian, Arnold Kettle, Georg Lukács, Nancy Armstrong and Joseph Kestner. Common to all these critics is the idea that nineteenth-century English prose was a literature of rebellion, a bourgeois undermining of traditional power structures. Arnold Kettle, for example, writes, "After Jane Austen, the great novels of the nineteenth century are all, in their differing ways, novels of revolt".³⁸ Kestner argues that writing social novels allowed disenfranchised women "to participate in the legislative process".³⁹ Cazamian sees the English social novel as a psychological response to conflicting historical forces, principally the industrial revolution and the idealist reaction against it.

However (and as most critics would themselves admit), twentieth-century interpretations are not always representative of how literature was actually *read* by the majority of reviewers, readers and even writers in the nineteenth century. Nancy Armstrong, in *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, for example, contends that the domestic novel of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries served a covert political agenda, disrupting old lines of power by focusing on the moral qualities of the woman (rather than her wealth or family status) as the best measure of her value. In so doing, the domestic novel and its female ideal authorised the hegemony of the middle classes. Armstrong writes, "[My book] links the history of British fiction to the empowering of the middle classes in England through the dissemination of a new female ideal..."⁴⁰ Such insights into the connection between desire, the domestic realm and broader power structures make logical sense in a late twentieth century world view, but the nineteenth-century British reader would have been hard-pressed to read the trials of Richardson's *Pamela*, or Lizzy Bennett's triumph in *Pride and Prejudice*

³⁸ Arnold Kettle, *An Introduction to the English Novel, Vol. I, To George Eliot* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1967) 84.

³⁹ Joseph Kestner, *Protest and Reform, The British Social Narrative by Women, 1827–1867* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press; London: Methuen & Co, 1985) 13.

as examples of how “competing class interests” are “represented as a struggle between the sexes that can be completely resolved in terms of the sexual contract.”⁴¹ Russians, on the other hand, were fully conscious of using domestic subjects as metaphors for political ones. Russian fiction is littered with wholesome, high-minded women – Pushkin’s Tatiana (*Eugene Onegin*), Goncharov’s Olga (*Oblomov*), Turgenev’s Natalia (*Rudin*) to name three of many – who declare themselves to men who are unequal to them. Russian critics of the day filled countless pages proclaiming these spirited women to be representatives of their country’s remarkable potential and casting their impotent or superfluous male counterparts as metaphors for Russia’s disease of inertia.

In England, even literature which was more overtly reforming than the domestic novel seldom gave rise to social and political analysis. A survey of contemporary commentary on Dickens, for example, shows that few critics used his novels as a launching pad for a detailed discussion of the connection between the state machinery and the social conditions he describes. Debate instead focused on the art of his writing: on whether his characters were “drawn from life” or “grotesque impossibilities”. Noticeably absent from these reviews is the use of interpretation as a polemical tool. Nor is there much discussion of what his novels say about the national psyche, except insofar as his characters are seen as being typically English.⁴² This lack of political engagement on the part of the critic can in part be attributed to the fact that most reviewers tended to be conservative players in society, interested in maintaining bourgeois power structures. As Kettle points out, it served their purpose to portray Dickens as “a creator of juicy ‘characters’, *Wuthering Heights* a romantic love idyll”.⁴³ But the difference in emphasis between the average English review of Dickens or Gaskell or Disraeli and the average Russian analysis of Pushkin or Turgenev also stems from the vast differences between the political conditions of the two countries. In England, unlike Russia, the nineteenth-century middle-class writer was enfranchised and enjoyed freedom of speech. He had access to plenty of outlets for political energy and vehicles for idealistic expression. If he did choose to write a so-called “novel with a purpose”, he could

⁴⁰ Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction, A Political History of the Novel* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 9.

⁴¹ Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, 49.

⁴² These assumptions about Dickens are supported by the wide selection of excerpts from his reviews in *Dickensiana, A Bibliography of the Literature relating to Charles Dickens and His Writings*, compiled by Fred. G. Kitton (London: George Redway, 1886).

⁴³ Kettle, *An Introduction*, 84.

make its purpose explicit. Unlike the Russian novel, the English novel did not end up double-coded (once by the author dodging censors, and again by critics imputing to it their own prescriptions for Russia's cure). So while English critics readily acknowledged it when novelists acted as reformers or "moral teachers" (the ethics in question usually being middle-class constructs),⁴⁴ they did not feel any pressing need to look outside of, say, *Oliver Twist* to see what it said about the workhouse and the oppressive state.

In support of my premise, many scholars note that conditions in England after 1850 meant that the institution of literature began to perform a much more normative than radical function. Whilst a lingering romantic radicalism infused the realist agenda before this decade, the optimism and prosperity between 1850 and 1880 ensured that the novel (to quote Cazamian's translator) "trailed off into attacking specific social disorders" rather than dealing with the bigger picture of a diseased society. There was a prevailing confidence that while parts of society might need improving, the organism as a whole was healthy.⁴⁵ Novels of this era were mostly about love, character, and human relationships; none of these topics was used by writers or reviewers to explain specifically national ills or to prescribe future treatments. If the novel had any attachment to the nation, it was in its duty to uphold and promote the Victorian middle-class virtues essential to the maintenance of its existing power-structures: chastity, honour and integrity. To Trollope the novel was a substitute for the sermon, only more efficacious because of its popular form. It was "the former of our morals, the code by which we rule ourselves, the mirror in which we dress ourselves, the *index expurgatorius* of things held to be allowable in the ordinary affairs of life."⁴⁶

Such confidence in "the ordinary affairs of life" lingered even into the last decades of the century when Victorian assumptions came under attack from decadence, socialism, the suffragette movement, and continental anarchism. Despite the upheaval of these heady years (and, some claim, because of it), mainstream literary criticism remained largely apolitical. Firm in their commitment to English institutions and values, late Victorian critics either deliberately ignored or felt untroubled by challenges to the status quo. How important, or rather *unimportant*, political and social issues were to their criticism can be seen in the

⁴⁴ See, for example, James Fitzjames Stephen, "The License of Modern Novelists", *Edinburgh Review* 106 (July 1857) 124–56.

⁴⁵ Martin Fido, Foreword to Louis Cazamian, *The Social Novel in England 1830–1850: Dickens, Disraeli, Mrs. Gaskell, Kingsley*, translated by Martin Fido (London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) xi.

⁴⁶ Anthony Trollope, "Novel Reading", *Nineteenth Century* 2, 23 (January 1879) 26.

English surveys of Victorian literature popular in the second half of the century. These were much more concerned with problems of canonicity, hierarchy, technique, and the formal perfection (or unity) of literature, than with literature's role in exploring the complex dynamics of society. Encyclopaedic in their range, "[their] guiding motto was breadth over depth".⁴⁷ The main criteria for judging novels adopted by surveyors from Saintsbury – in works like *A Short History of English Literature* (1898) – to Mrs. Oliphant in *The Victorian Age of English Literature* (1892) were form, beauty of composition, proximity to real life, and not least, the critic's own taste. The criterion of 'morality' also loomed large – how well a given work adhered to and promoted high Victorian virtues like chastity and honesty – but there was little questioning of how social injustices might encourage so-called immoral behaviour, or whether accepted notions of morality were not claustrophobic or punitive. Aesthetic critics differed, of course, in their defiant rejection of art's role as a moral guide, but in other respects they too fell into certain prescribed English patterns when discussing literature. Swinburne, for example, engaged heavily in the game of ranking artists, scattering superlatives throughout his reviews with little analysis and no standard outside of his own obvious preference for literature which contained powerful visual imagery and a musical use of language.⁴⁸ His generalised and largely unsubstantiated praise of Victor Hugo was typical of the English critical tradition and its pre-occupation with canon-building: "[Hugo was] the greatest tragic and dramatic poet born since the age of Shakespeare"; "incomparably and immeasurably the greatest poet of his age and one great among the greatest of all time..."⁴⁹ The fact that Hugo was a political icon and Swinburne was himself regarded as a political figure makes the example all the more striking. Rarely do we find Victorian critics operating in the manner of Russian critics, who judged a work on how well it yielded to an analysis of realities external to itself, and on whether or not its partisan or ideological tenor agreed with their own.

Notwithstanding the self-assurance of late Victorian critics, the fact remains that towards the end of the century sizeable fractures were appearing in the Victorian edifice. In the literary realm, signs of these fractures could be seen in the reactionary measures used to

⁴⁷ Francis O'Gorman, ed., *The Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002) 22.

⁴⁸ René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750–1950, The Later Nineteenth Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966) 374.

⁴⁹ Swinburne, *The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne* vol. 13, edited by Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise (London: William Heinemann; New York: Gabriel Wells, 1926) 4; 8.

address them. In 1888 the National Vigilance Association charged Vizetelly for publishing the 'obscene' literature of Zola. The following decade witnessed public outcries over the publication of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Meanwhile, Victorian publishers conducted an unofficial censorship, directing young writers to excise 'extravagant scenes' from their texts.⁵⁰ In part, they were motivated by the fear of offending the circulating libraries which refused to buy so-called prurient fiction and upon which their trade depended. But with the status quo and long-received values under threat, many Victorians looked to the novel to act as a conservative bulwark.

Against this reactionary trend, some writers (particularly those with liberal tendencies) began to assert for literature a new role. Many expressed frustration at the stasis of the English novel, with its attachment to contrived incidents demonstrating the foreclosed victory of virtue over vice. There was a backlash against the hegemony of the circulating libraries, 'Mrs. Grundy', and the hated spectre of 'Popular Opinion', who insisted relentlessly on a literature which would safeguard the pure minds of England's adolescent daughters. Some writers took practical measures: George Moore, joining forces with his publisher Vizetelly, circumvented the circulating libraries by abandoning the triple-decker format and making his novels affordable to a broad public.⁵¹ George Gissing wrote a battle-cry in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, calling upon "literary men with power and courage to produce original books".⁵² Oscar Wilde took the issue further, declaring in the epigraph to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891): "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all."⁵³ Writers called for more freedom in treatment and subject matter, less of the evangelical didacticism which, they believed, had brought English letters to a creative standstill.

While the aesthetic revolt against morality in literature led some writers away from realism, there was also a sociological strand within the realist tradition. This was a movement away from the false imaginings of reality which characterised the Victorian tradition, towards a literature with an organic relationship to real life (including its political aspects). In their rejection of conventional moral writing, some writers began exploring the

⁵⁰ For the censorship of George Gissing and Thomas Hardy, see Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study, A Social History of the English Novel 1875–1914* (London: Fontana Press, 1991) 254–9.

⁵¹ Clarence R. Decker, *The Victorian Conscience* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1952) 82.

⁵² *Pall Mall Gazette* (15 December 1884) 2.

connections between social systems, ideology and the individual in new ways. An important text here is Gissing's *Charles Dickens, A Critical Study* (1898) which reflects England's changing literary ethos. For one, in a radical departure from traditional English readings of the author, Gissing locates both Dickens and his characters within their socio-political and historical contexts. Dickens is the product of a "time of suffering, of conflict, of expansion, of progress"; he is witness to an age when "rioting workmen" and "hungry multitudes have no chance against steam and capital".⁵⁴ His characters are similarly "the children of a certain country, of a certain time, of a certain rank".⁵⁵ A second feature in Gissing's book is his pronouncement that "a great a change has come over the theory and practice of fiction in the England of our times": "a school of strict veracity, or realism...has directed fiction into a path it is likely to pursue for many a year to come". Yet while Gissing's modern realist would on no account "tamper with truth of circumstance, that his readers may have joy rather than sorrow", he is not entirely without moral purpose: "Novelists of to-day desire above everything to be recognized as sincere in their picturing of life."⁵⁶ Thus, if to some the *fin de siècle* is a period of transition, marking a movement away from realism and the external world, it is also true that the era simultaneously witnessed the rise of a new transformed realism aimed at revealing truthfully the dynamics of history and society. We see writers like Gissing, Moore, Ford Madox Ford, and Galsworthy launching their careers.

The concurrence of this shift in English letters with the influx of both Russian émigrés and Russian literature into England might seem to represent a case of elective affinity. As English realism looked for a passage between Victorian sentimentality and the 'scientific' documentation of French Naturalism, it chanced upon the Russian novel as a beacon to light the way. And it was at the precise moment that the Russians – fleeing from Tsarism, keen to put their case before the English public – drew on their critical heritage and began espousing the "correct" way to read their native literature. Their 'typological' method, historical and sociological analysis of character and plot, the materialist stance they took, the way they almost obscured fictional texts with discussions of para-textual context – all these

⁵³ Oscar Wilde, "The Preface" to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in *Collins Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 2003) 17.

⁵⁴ George Gissing, *Charles Dickens, A Critical Study* (London: The Gresham Publishing Company, 1902) 3.

⁵⁵ Gissing, *Charles Dickens*, 13.

⁵⁶ Gissing, *Charles Dickens*, 70–71.

were to influence the way Russian literature was received in English literary society, and what sort of model it became.

The relevance of émigré literary activities to the British scene is the focus of the present study. Questions of where the nation was politically, socially, and artistically; what sorts of convulsions were going on in its literary marketplace; and what ideological and aesthetic issues dominated people's thoughts – all these are kept in the forefront. The thesis shows, first of all, how émigrés responded to English attitudes and conditions in their choices of texts for translation and in their manner of presenting Russian literature in lectures and articles. It also shows how émigrés, in turn, helped mould and redirect England's own literary and ideological priorities, in particular fuelling the radical responses of writers and readers against the hegemony of 'moral' fiction writing and criticism.

Sources

Russian emigration at the English *fin de siècle* has been treated broadly in several books though few are devoted exclusively to the subject. John Slatter's edited volume, *From the Other Shore: Russian Political Emigrants in Britain 1880–1917* (1984) contains chapters on principal émigrés.⁵⁷ Other helpful studies include Bernard Gainer's *The Alien Invasion: The Origins of the Aliens Act of 1905* (1972),⁵⁸ and Lloyd P. Gartner's, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870–1914* (1960), the latter of which contains valuable statistics and census returns.⁵⁹ The first chapter of F.G. Clarke's *Will-o'-the-Wisp, Peter the Painter and the anti-Tsarist Terrorists in Britain and Australia* (1983) gives an introduction to the radical dimension of the emigration.⁶⁰ There are also many articles, usually appearing in Slavic Studies journals, which deal with specific dimensions of the exile experience. Studies of the relationships existing between Russian radicals and their English contemporaries include Ron Grant's "The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom (1890–1917): A Case Study in Internationalism" (1970),⁶¹ and Barry Hollingsworth's "The Society of Friends of Russian

⁵⁷ John Slatter, editor, *From the Other Shore: Russian Political Emigrants in Britain 1880–1917* (London: Frank Cass, 1984).

⁵⁸ Bernard Gainer, *The Alien Invasion: The Origins of the Aliens Act of 1905* (London: Heinemann, 1972).

⁵⁹ Lloyd P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870–1914* (London; Portland, Oregon: Valentine Mitchell, 1960).

⁶⁰ F.G. Clarke, *Will-o'-the-wisp, Peter the Painter and the Anti-Tsarist Terrorists in Britain and Australia* (Melbourne, Oxford, Auckland, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

⁶¹ Ron Grant, "The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom (1890–1917): A Case Study in Internationalism", *Journal of the Scottish Labour Historical Society*. No. 3 (Nov. 1970) 3–24.

Freedom: English Liberals and Russian Socialists, 1890-1917” (1970).⁶² As the titles of these suggest, émigrés made a splash in English socialist and internationalist circles. Hence, as well, Walter Kendall’s article “Russian Emigration and British Marxist Socialism” (1963).⁶³ A fascinating glimpse into émigré life can be found in Robert Henderson’s “Russian Political Emigrés and the British Museum Library” (1991), which tells of the favourite meeting place of exiles and the Russian spies who used this venue to infiltrate their radical circles.⁶⁴ As Henderson’s study shows, life for political exiles was not without problems. Alan Kimball provides another picture of the challenges they faced in “The Harassment of Russian Revolutionaries Abroad: The London Trial of Vladimir Burtsev in 1898” (1973).⁶⁵ A somewhat weedy overview, but one which sketches out some major aspects of the British response to Russians is S.G. Pushkarev’s “Russia and the West: Ideological and Personal Contacts before 1917” (1965).⁶⁶ The more prominent émigrés enjoy their own studies or biographies. One of the earliest of these is James Hulse’s *Revolutionists in London: A Study of Five Unorthodox Socialists* (1970), which contains chapters on Stepniak and the well-known anarchist-philosopher, Peter Kropotkin.⁶⁷ The most useful English biography of Stepniak is Donald Senese’s *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii: The London Years* (1987). Woodcock and Avakumovic’s biography, *The Anarchist Prince: A Biographical Study of Peter Kropotkin* (1950) provides evidence of Kropotkin’s London exile, as does the anarchist’s own *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (1899).⁶⁸ Biographies of émigrés, like Rudolph Rocker’s *The London Years* (1956) contain material on the emigration in general.⁶⁹

⁶² Barry Hollingsworth, “The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom: English Liberals and Russian Socialists, 1890-1917”, *Oxford Slavonic Papers*. New Series. III (1970) 73–97.

⁶³ Walter Kendall, “Russian Emigration and British Marxist Socialism”, *International Review of Social History* 8 (1963) 351–88.

⁶⁴ Robert Henderson “Russian Political Emigrés and the British Museum Library”, *Library History* 9, 1 and 2 (1991) 59–68.

⁶⁵ Alan Kimball, “The Harassment of Russian Revolutionaries Abroad: The London Trial of Vladimir Burtsev in 1898”, *Oxford Slavonic Papers* n.s. 6 (1973) 48–65.

⁶⁶ S.G. Pushkarev, “Russia and the West: Ideological and Personal Contacts before 1917”, *Russian Review* 24, 2 (April 1965) 138–64.

⁶⁷ James W. Hulse, *Revolutionists in London: A Study of Five Unorthodox Socialists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

⁶⁸ G. Woodcock, and I. Avakumovic, *The Anarchist Prince: A Biographical Study of Peter Kropotkin* (London; New York: T.V. Boardman & Co., 1950); Peter Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (London: Swan Sonnonschein & Co, 1906).

⁶⁹ Rudolph Rocker, *The London Years*, translated by Joseph Leftwich (London: Robert Anscombe & Co., 1956).

What is missing from virtually every English study of émigrés, however, is any discussion of their contribution to English letters. Most gloss over the literary interests of émigrés, focussing on their overtly political endeavours. This is true even in discussions of émigré journals, which were a rich source of literature and commentary. Hollingsworth's meticulous account of the journal *Free Russia* in "The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom", chronicles the journal's political campaigns and credits it with preparing the ground for the non-party Parliamentary Russian Committee, founded in 1908 "to cultivate friendly relations with all Russians who are working for the social and political amelioration of their country".⁷⁰ But the journal's ambassadorial use of fiction is outside the article's remit. Another journal, *The Anglo-Russian*, is treated in a chapter by Slatter called "Jaakoff Prelooker and *The Anglo-Russian*" in *From the Other Shore*. Slatter reflects momentarily on the journal's "great play of local colour" as evidence of its editor's ability "to adapt his 'pitch' to the demands of his audience"; but beyond this makes scant mention of *The Anglo-Russian*'s coverage of literary topics.⁷¹ The subject of émigré journals (of which there were at least five in late Victorian England) has not yet found a place in the field of periodical studies.

One émigré whose literary work has attracted attention (though mainly in Russia) is Vladimir Chertkov, the exile who acted as Tolstoy's literary agent in England. Outside Russia, the principal commentator on Chertkov's role in popularising Tolstoy in England is Michael Holman, whose articles are listed in my bibliography. The question of how Chertkov's publishing activities affected English letters, however, remains, to quote Holman, "a story still waiting to be told!"⁷² Similarly, some attention has been afforded Stepniak. A rare summary of Stepniak's literary activities can be found in John Elliot Bachman's PhD thesis, *Sergei Mikhailovich Stepniak-Kravchinskii: A Biography from the Russian Revolutionary Movement on Native and Foreign Soil* (1971). But Bachman's failure to notice the implications of Stepniak's work for the reception of Russian literature in England in general represents a lost opportunity.⁷³ Russian studies of Stepniak fare somewhat better on this front. A two-volume Russian edition of Stepniak's works (1958),

⁷⁰ Hollingsworth, "The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom", 64.

⁷¹ John Slatter, "Jaakoff Prelooker and *The Anglo-Russian*" in *From the Other Shore*, 59, 61.

⁷² Email from Michael Holman to author (13 August 2004).

for example, bears witness to his role as a literary critic by providing an analysis of his Turgenev prefaces. Unfortunately, like much Soviet criticism, it is dogmatic and incoherent.⁷⁴ One Russian scholar, Evgeniia Taratuta, however, has devoted real energy to Stepniak's literary work and connections. Her volume, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravshinskii v londonskoi emigratsii* (1968), which contains Russian translations of Stepniak's correspondence with literary, political and scientific figures in England, provides important background material for this thesis.⁷⁵ (The English originals of these letters are in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), Moscow.) Less immediately relevant to the present study, but useful for its illustration of the politics of literary transmission, is Taratuta's *Istoriia dvukh knig, "Podpol'naia Rossiia" S.M. Stepniaka-Kravchinskogo i "Ovod" Etel' Lilian Voinich* (*The History of Two Books, Underground Russia by S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii and The Gadfly by Ethel Lillian Voinich*).⁷⁶

Beyond émigré studies, there exist many disparate sources from which one can piece together a narrative of the intersection of émigrés such as Stepniak, Kropotkin and Felix Volkhovsky with the English literati. Some essential groundwork has been laid in the two volumes of *The Bloomsbury Diary of Olive Garnett* (1989, 1993) beautifully edited by Barry C. Johnson, and in Richard Garnett's biography, *Constance Garnett, A Heroic Life* (1991), which draws upon material in the Garnett archive.⁷⁷ Both sources supply the sort of telling anecdotes useful for scholarly analysis; both were crucial to this thesis. Biographies and autobiographies of Shaw, Chesterton, Morris, Ford and other more marginal literary figures also provide insights into the involvement of émigrés in London literary life. And a better understanding of how émigrés were regarded by English writers can be gleaned from studies of the importance of émigrés as models in English novels with Russian or revolutionary themes. Thomas C. Moser, for example, sees links between the émigré community and

⁷³ John Elliot Bachman, *Serge Mikhailovich Stepniak-Kravchinskii: A Biography from the Russian Revolutionary Movement on Native and Foreign Soil*. Ph.D. Thesis. (Washington, D.C.: American University, 1971).

⁷⁴ S. Stepniak-Kravshinskii, *Sochineniia v dvykh tomakh* (Moskva: gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1958) 601–602.

⁷⁵ Evgeniia A. Taratuta, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravshinskii v londonskoi emigratsii* (Moskva: Nauka, 1968).

⁷⁶ Evgeniia A. Taratuta, *Istoriia dvukh knig, "Podpol'naia Rossiia" S.M. Stepniaka-Kravchinskogo i "Ovod" Etel' Lilian Voinich* (Moskva: khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1987).

⁷⁷ Barry C. Johnston, editor, *Tea and Anarchy!: The Bloomsbury Diary of Olive Garnett, 1890-1893* (Birmingham: Bartletts Press, 1989); Barry C. Johnston, editor, *Olive and Stepniak: The Bloomsbury Diary of Olive Garnett, 1893-1895* (Birmingham: Bartletts Press, 1993); Richard Garnett, *Constance Garnett: A Heroic Life* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991).

Conrad in “An English Context for Conrad's Russian Characters: Sergey Stepniak and the Diary of Olive Garnett” (1984).⁷⁸ A more generalised survey is John Slatter’s “Bears in the Lion's Den: The Figure of the Russian Revolutionary Emigrant in English Fiction, 1880–1914” (1999), though this misses out many important texts.⁷⁹ Similarly, Anthony Cross’s bibliography, *The Russian Theme in English Literature From the Sixteenth Century to 1980*, provides a guide (again, by no means exhaustive) to the proliferation of Russian figures in English-language fiction. One of the best places to unearth information on émigré activities, both political and literary, is in archives. An excellent guide to archival material for this period is John Slatter’s “Material on Russian Political Emigrants in British Archives 1850–1917” (1986), though, as archival collections do change hands, this is already slightly out of date.⁸⁰ Archival search engines are thus invaluable tools for this type of research.

As with émigré studies, reception studies to date have virtually ignored émigré influence and commentary when exploring the impact of Russian literature on British letters. Nonetheless, in mapping England’s reception of Russian literature they have otherwise covered a substantial and impressive terrain, and without such predecessors this thesis would not have been possible. The real classics in the field were written in the 1950s when scholars began taking stock of Russian literature’s rich contribution to English fiction. Of these, the best are Gilbert Phelps’ *The Russian Novel in English Fiction* (1956) and Dorothy Brewster’s *East-West Passage: A Study in Literary Relationships* (1954).⁸¹ Phelps’s book is a sweeping overview – though his emphasis is on Turgenev over Tolstoy – and contains a seminal study of Turgenev’s influence on early twentieth-century English novelists. Brewster’s evaluation, meanwhile, is one of the few to consider the paramount importance of political factors in determining England’s attitudes towards Russian fiction. Harold Orel, another scholar interested in the subject, acknowledged the importance of Russian fiction to Anglo-Russian relations in his essays “The Forgotten Ambassadors: Russian Fiction in

⁷⁸ Thomas C. Moser, “An English Context for Conrad's Russian Characters: Sergey Stepniak and the Diary of Olive Garnett”, *Journal of Modern Literature* 11, 1 (March 1984) 3–44.

⁷⁹ John Slatter, “Bears in the Lion's Den: The Figure of the Russian Revolutionary Emigrant in English Fiction, 1880–1914”, *Slavonic and East European Review* 77, 1 (January 1999) 30–55.

⁸⁰ John Slatter, “Material on Russian Political Emigrants in British Archives 1850–1917”, *The Study of Russian History from British Archival Sources*, edited by Janet M. Hartley (London: Mansell Publishing, 1986).

⁸¹ Dorothy Brewster, *East-West Passage: A Study in Literary Relationships* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954).

Victorian England” (1953),⁸² and “English Critics and the Russian Novel: 1850-1917” (1954–5).⁸³ An even earlier study is Clarence Decker’s “Victorian Comment on Russian Realism” (1937), which contrasts England’s derisive response to French Naturalism with the warm welcome it offered the Russian realist tradition.⁸⁴ Here and in a chapter of his book *The Victorian Conscience* (1952) called “The Russians in England” Decker makes the grave mistake of discounting the central place held by Turgenev in forming England’s response to Russian literature: “He spent so much of his life in France, he was so intimately associated with the Naturalists..., and his ideas and writings came into England so directly through the French that a study of his literary reputation in Victorian society would add little to [our] conclusions...”⁸⁵ The fact that Dostoevsky’s reputation relied far more on French translations than did Turgenev’s seems lost on Decker. A final study belonging to this period is Royal A. Gettmann’s *Turgenev in England and America* (1941), an exhaustive survey of critical responses to Turgenev from 1855-1937.⁸⁶

Since the 1950s, it seems that most critics have assumed that the major themes of this subject have already been mapped out. The majority of more recent studies have thus focussed more narrowly on the reception of specific Russian authors in the west. Supplementing Gettman’s contribution, relatively thorough treatment has been afforded the novelist Turgenev in Glyn Turton’s *Turgenev in the Context of English Literature 1850–1900* (1992),⁸⁷ a collection of essays, *Ivan Turgenev and Britain* (1995) edited by Patrick Waddington,⁸⁸ and Waddington’s *Turgenev and England* (1980).⁸⁹ Turton’s insights into Henry James’s failure to detect the national thread in Turgenev’s fiction provide impetus for the argument I make in Part 3; however, he overlooks the revision of Turgenev’s English reputation by émigrés. Waddington’s *Turgenev and England*, written in the style of a biography, is a vivid and thorough dramatisation (291 pages) of Turgenev’s visits, meetings and personal connections with English literati, in particular, with William Ralston, his

⁸² Harold Orel, “The Forgotten Ambassadors: Russian Fiction in Victorian England”, *American Slavic and East European Review* 12, 3 (October 1953), 371–77.

⁸³ Harold Orel, “English Critics and the Russian Novel: 1850–1917”, *The Slavonic Review* 33 (1954–55) 458–69.

⁸⁴ Clarence Decker, “Victorian Comment on Russian Realism”, *PMLA* 52, 2 (June 1937) 542–49.

⁸⁵ Decker, *The Victorian Conscience*, 132.

⁸⁶ Royal A. Gettmann, *Turgenev in England and America* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1974).

⁸⁷ Glyn Turton, *Turgenev in the Context of English Literature 1850–1900* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992).

⁸⁸ Patrick Waddington, editor, *Ivan Turgenev and Britain* (Oxford; Providence, USA: Berg, 1995).

⁸⁹ Patrick Waddington, *Turgenev and England* (London; Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980).

champion on English soil. However, for the scholar interested in Turgenev's English reputation, its use is limited. As the author himself admits in his final paragraph, during Turgenev's lifetime his impact was negligible: "Only fifteen years [after his death], when Constance Garnett had succeeded in establishing him as an official classic, did the common reader pay him anything but lip-service".⁹⁰ *Turgenev and Britain* is a collection of extracts from English criticism on Turgenev, alongside several essays concerning his English reputation.

The influence of Tolstoy's literature and thought on English fiction has received less generalised treatment. This lacuna may, in part, be accounted for by the fact that his reputation as a spiritual leader or prophet at the *fin de siècle* eclipsed his reputation as a novelist. Gareth Jones' edited collection of essays, *Tolstoi and Britain* (1995) pays tribute to the diversity of Tolstoy's English reputation, containing chapters on England's Tolstoyan communities, pilgrimages to Tolstoy's estate Yasnaya Polyana, and late-Victorian commentary on his fictional literature. It also supplies reprints of reviews by Shaw and Rebecca West.⁹¹ However, its lack of a single focus means it is little more than a sketch of Tolstoy's English reputation. Strangely, despite the proliferation of bibliographies of English sources on Tolstoy – the most exhaustive being David R. Egan's *Leo Tolstoy: An Annotated Bibliography of English Language Sources to 1978* (1979) – a thorough examination of the genesis of his English reputation has yet to be undertaken.⁹³

Three very different studies cover Dostoevsky's reputation in England at the *fin de siècle*. Helen Muchnic's *Dostoevsky's English Reputation 1881–1936* (1939) gives a rambling and exhaustive, though inadequately referenced, survey of press and book-coverage of the writer.⁹⁴ Its one drawback is that it attributes the period of neglect he entered after 1888 to English aestheticism, ignoring the political factors which delayed his reception until Constance Garnett's first translation of his work in 1912. *Dostoevskii and Britain* (1995), a collection of essays edited by W.J. Leatherbarrow, is, like *Tolstoi and Britain* and *Ivan Turgenev and Britain*, part of the Berg Cultural Affinities Series. Its essays draw

⁹⁰ Waddington, *Turgenev and England*, 291.

⁹¹ Gareth Jones, editor, *Tolstoi and Britain* (Oxford; Washington D.C.: Berg, 1995).

⁹³ David R. Egan, *Leo Tolstoy: An Annotated Bibliography of English Language Sources to 1978* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1979).

⁹⁴ Helen Muchnic, *Dostoevsky's English Reputation 1881–1936* (Smith College Studies in Modern Languages 20, 3–4. Northampton, 1939).

attention to the cultural, political and religious affinities between Dostoevsky and English phenomena from Chartism to Shakespeare, Radstockism to Joseph Conrad, but again is silent on émigrés' objections to the author's "slave morality" and their deliberate quest to stifle interest in him.⁹⁵ Peter Kaye's recent contribution, *Dostoevsky and English Modernism 1900–1930* (1999), which examines the importance of the novelist to English writers from Bennett to Woolf, is one of the first studies of its kind on the "important role" of "Russia's cultural emissaries" in "promoting and interpreting their country's literary heritage".⁹⁶ Kaye's brief descriptions of Kropotkin and Stepniak's relations with Constance and Edward Garnett bear testimony to how *The Bloomsbury Diary of Olive Garnett* and *Constance Garnett: A Heroic Life* have brought to light a hitherto neglected aspect of England's literary landscape.

As Kaye's book attests, the other angle from which the reception of Russian literature has been considered is its influence on specific English authors. The books and articles treating such subjects are too numerous to list here. Framing the spectrum, chronologically, are: Daniel Lerner's "The Influence of Turgenev on Henry James" (1941)⁹⁷ and Mark Knight's more recent, "Chesterton, Dostoevsky, and Freedom" (2000).⁹⁸ Conrad's debt to Dostoevsky and Henry James's to Turgenev are the most common subjects for such papers.

Notwithstanding Kaye's respectful nods to Stepniak and Kropotkin, in all of the reception studies mentioned, the role of Russian émigrés in disseminating Russian literature in England and in informing the way it was read has been sidelined. At best, commentators on Russian literature in England pay lip service to the émigré contribution. Royal A. Gettman, for example, notes that Edward Garnett "probably because of his acquaintance with Russian refugees, was eager to relate Turgenev's novels to the political puzzles of Russia", but this is the extent of his analysis.⁹⁹ Gilbert Phelps, meanwhile, whose *The Russian Novel in English Fiction* remains unsurpassed as a general study, virtually ignores the émigrés who helped publicise the canon. Dorothy Brewster comes right to the point

⁹⁵ This topic is treated in the conclusion of this thesis.

⁹⁶ Peter Kaye, *Dostoevsky and English Modernism 1900–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 14–15, 128–9.

⁹⁷ Daniel Lerner, "The Influence of Turgenev on Henry James", *Slavonic Year-Book, American Series* 1 (1941) 28–54.

⁹⁸ Mark Knight, "Chesterton, Dostoevsky, and Freedom", *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920* 43, 1 (2000).

when she declares that “As part of the political stimulation of interest in Russian literature, the role of Russian exiles in England must not be overlooked”; however she then only affords this subject a single paragraph.¹⁰⁰

The absence of any academic book or journal articles bridging the subjects of émigrés and the entrance of Russian fiction and critical thought into the stream of English literature has meant that most of my conclusions are drawn from primary sources: letters, reminiscences, émigré prefaces and articles, reviews, and the translations themselves. In part, this dissertation is the result of visits to, or correspondence with fifteen archives in America, Russia and England. It has also involved correspondence with regional libraries and private individuals. A great deal of research was undertaken at the Colindale Newspaper Library, searching for reviews of translations and émigré lectures in national and provincial newspapers. A principal source, also to be found in Colindale, was émigré journals, which printed translations and articles giving clues to the sort of aesthetic theories émigrés were promulgating amongst their British colleagues.

One of the objects of this thesis is to provide material for further reconsideration of the contribution of Russian literature to a transitional period in English letters. My findings constitute the essential ground-work for such a reconsideration. They chronicle émigré criticism and translations against the backdrop of *fin de siècle* England, and simultaneously map out connections and collaborations between émigrés and the English literati, providing fresh material for understanding their cultural and theoretical exchanges. Since this is an interdisciplinary project, showing the links between, for example, translation, Anglo-Russian relations, English socialism, and the literary marketplace, I have adopted an interdisciplinary approach, combining the scholarly genres of biography, book and cultural history, and literary analysis.

⁹⁹ Royal A., Gettman, “England: 1885–1900”, *Turgenev in England and America*, 136.

¹⁰⁰ Dorothy Brewster, *East-West Passage*, 140.

Part I: EMIGRATION AND PROPAGANDA

Russian Émigrés and their Reception in England

In 1876, the anarchist geographer Prince Peter Kropotkin found himself waiting on the docks of Oslo, then known as Christiania, for a steamer to take him to Hull. He had just escaped two years of imprisonment in St. Petersburg for his involvement in the Chaikovsky Circle, an immense network for the dissemination of socialist ideas among Russian workers and peasants spanning forty of Russia's fifty European provinces.¹ In Christiania, Kropotkin fortified himself against boredom by gathering information about the Norwegian peasant movement, until at last his transport arrived. "As I went to the steamer", he writes in his *Memoirs*, "I asked myself with anxiety, 'Under which flag does she sail, – Norwegian, German, English?' Then I saw floating above the stern the Union Jack, – the flag under which so many refugees, Russian, Italian, French, Hungarian, and of all nations, have found an asylum. I greeted that flag from the depth of my heart."²

Kropotkin's relief upon setting out for England would be shared in the next few decades by scores of Russians seeking a sanctuary of the oppressed. Between 1881 and 1901, the Russian population of England and Wales climbed from 3,789 to 61,789.³ With impressive numbers also settling in Scotland, and more transmigrants travelling via England before reaching their final destinations in America or Europe, Russians became Britain's greatest body of foreigners.⁴ England's tradition of political sanctuary had long made it an attractive destination for exiles.⁵ The Italian émigré Count Pecchio had described 1823 London, swarming with the malcontents of Europe, as the "Venice of our times" and the Elysium "of illustrious men and would-be heroes."⁶ In the 1850s and 1860s, Herzen had printed his revolutionary journal *Kolokol* in London, safe from the Russian gendarmerie. The open friendships he enjoyed with fellow exile Garibaldi and leading English freethinker Charles Bradlaugh would have been a treacherous undertaking in Russia. The Russian

¹ Peter Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* 2 (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1899) 124.

² Kropotkin, *Memoirs* 2, 180.

³ Census Returns of Aliens in England and Wales between 1871 and 1911, can be found in Lloyd P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England: 1870–1914* (London, Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001) 283.

⁴ Bernard Gainer, *The Alien Invasion: The Origins of the Aliens Act of 1905* (London: Heinemann, 1972) 2–3.

⁵ For examples, see Barry Hollingsworth, "The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom: English Liberals and Russian Socialists 1880–1917", *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, n.s. 3 (1970) 45–64.

⁶ Count Giuseppe Pecchio, *Semi-Serious Observations of an Italian Exile During his Residence in England* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1833) 148, 151.

emigration began in earnest in 1881, after the assassination of Alexander II and the succession of a new Tsar who was firmly dedicated to the principle of autocracy. Alexander III rejected all proposals to introduce dialogue with the liberal intelligentsia, fearing such measures might lead to a constitution. On the contrary, he instituted reactionary measures – pogroms, arbitrary arrests, imprisonment without trial, and censorship – which amounted to a complete suspension of civil liberties. In 1892, Russian Jews were forcibly expelled from Moscow; thousands of others fled pogroms. Political dissidents likewise fled from the threat or reality of internal exile in Siberia or engineered elaborate prison escapes. To these educated Russians, England was a natural destination: the land of Shakespeare (who had inspired writers from Pushkin to Karamzin to Turgenev) and the birthplace of civil liberties. The émigré Jaakoff Prelooker echoed Kropotkin in 1891 as he approached “the much-dreamed-of and longed-for free banks of the Thames”, with two pounds in his pocket:

The land of the just and the free! I had heard of her, I saw her, I dreamed of her, I knew her! I wanted to be one of her own, unfettered, unchained, just and free myself. And lo! she is now near, that fairy land of freedom, not in a dream and imagination, but in all reality, in her own form, flesh, and blood.... I stood on the deck of the steamer, my eyes eagerly directed westward, watching as the dim outlines of the English coast began first to loom on the horizon. Various conflicting emotions crowded themselves into my breast, but there was a calm in the depth of my soul, like the majestic surface of the water around me; I felt a tide of new strength filling all my being, calling out fresh powers for the brethren left far, far away behind.⁷

In the 1880s and 1890s, émigrés who actively sought to propagandise their opposition to the Tsarist regime found a congenial niche amongst the ranks of England’s nascent, and as yet ill-defined, socialist movement.⁸ British liberals and radicals exhibited their sympathy through very real aid. Joseph Cowen, a radical MP, provided Nicholas V. Chaikovsky, the founder of the Chaikovsky Circle, with a temporary bed. Later he secured Kropotkin a voice in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, so that the anarchist could elucidate “the true state of Russia”.⁹ In the 1890s,

⁷ Jaakoff Prelooker, *Under the Czar and Queen Victoria: The Experiences of a Russian Reformer* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1895) 45–7.

⁸ While some East-end Jews and workers provided recruits for England’s incipient anarchist movement, for most the struggle of existence precluded any involvement in English political life. Walter Kendall, “Russian Emigration and British Marxist Socialism”, *International Review of Social History* 8 (1963) 352.

⁹ Nigel Todd, *The Militant Democracy: Joseph Cowen and Victorian Radicalism* (Tyne and Wear: Bewick Press, 1991) 147. See also notice of Kropotkin’s speech at Newcastle’s Nelson Street Lecture Room to expose the evils of the Tsar in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (8 July 1882) 7.

the guild socialist S.G. Hobson provided the revolutionary Felix Volkhovsky with English passports to assist political prisoners in Siberia in escaping; and in 1904 he helped Chaikovsky smuggle to Russia 6,000 Browning revolvers. (The guns were packed in barrels of lard and shipped through Riga.)¹⁰ As a member of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), Hobson no doubt believed that Russian revolutionaries shared his party's objective of establishing a Socialist Commonwealth and overthrowing capitalism. The internecine quarrels that created divisions within English socialist circles in no way seemed to affect these affiliations with émigrés. Fabians and members of the Social Democrat Federation (SDF) also embraced the ideologies of Russian exiles as a corollary to their own socialist creeds. And in 1884, when Charlotte Wilson broke with traditional Fabianism to begin penning what was England's first contribution to anarchist theory, her ideas were largely borrowed from Kropotkin.¹¹ Later she would collaborate with the Russian to produce *Freedom*, England's first anarchist newspaper. Meanwhile, William Morris, who announced hot-headedly that the lot of a Russian *mujik* and that of an English "sweating tailor's wage slave" were not all that dissimilar,¹² invited émigrés to share the podium with English social reformers at his Coach House Thursdays. Other sources of sympathy came from Quakers and Nonconformists, who recoiled against the hegemony of Russia's Orthodox Church and identified with Russia's persecuted sects. 'Advanced' women were also receptive to émigrés, especially to those who expounded liberal attitudes towards women's intellectual and political enfranchisement. Prelooker, who lectured on "Russian Women" and "Women in the Five Great Religious Systems of the World" to women's suffrage societies, was patronised by two elderly supporters of advanced causes, the sisters Emily and Elizabeth Reid. They even purchased him his first home in 1895. The charismatic Nihilist Sergei Stepniak (Kravchinsky), who published books glorifying female terrorists like Jessy Helfman and Vera Zassulich and argued for female emancipation, was also popular with English women. Annie Besant offered him "and his comrades-in-arms" the use of her home after his arrival in the country. Several

¹⁰ S.G. Hobson, *Pilgrim to the Left: Memoirs of a Modern Revolutionist* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1938) 126, 127.

¹¹ Haia Shpayer-Makov, "The Reception of Peter Kropotkin in Britain 1886–1917", *Albion* 19, 3 (Fall 1987) 375. Wilson's ideas also derive from the French anarchist, Elisée Reclus.

¹² Morris expresses this view in a letter to C.E. Maurice, 1 July 1883, and in "Art and Socialism", a lecture he first gave in early 1884, both quoted in Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994) 469–71.

years later, the translators Constance Garnett and Lillian Voinich (the future author of *The Gadfly* (1897)) would each travel to Russia bearing revolutionary correspondence on his behalf.¹³

Russian revolutionary intrigue and its exiled participants also held England in thrall on a more superficial level – a fact attested to in the number of sensational novels that were published on such topics.¹⁴ Many of these were erotic – like Joseph Hatton’s *By Order of the Czar: the Tragic Story of Anna Klosstock, Queen of the Ghetto* (1890), which featured a beautiful Jewish heroine who converted to Nihilism after being brutally flogged. She wore her allegiance to the cause in the form of scars on her otherwise perfect body. The writer Frank Whishaw produced, among his novels for boys, *My Terrible Twin* (1884), a story of Nihilist adventure set partially in London. A popular subject was Siberian exile, and émigrés who had been fortunate enough to escape this fate often found themselves besieged by English would-be novelists. Olive Garnett remembers a conversation with her escapee friends: “Volkhovsky...told how people wrote saying ‘Will you help me, as I want to write a novel about Russia, & I don’t know anything about it,’ and Stepniak came back & said how Mrs. T.P. O’Connor had asked him to help her with a play about Siberian life...”¹⁵

The unlikely mixture of social earnestness and decadence which was the prevailing climate at the English *fin de siècle* also made the Russian Nihilist an exotic feature in the salons of upper middle-class socialists. Oscar Wilde parodied the vogue in *Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime* (1887), in which the outlandish and fashionable hostess, Lady Windermere, complains after having invited a conspirator to dinner – “a man who had blown up ever so many people” – and he arrives looking “just like a nice old clergyman”.¹⁶ Notwithstanding Lady Windermere’s disappointment at her guest’s lack of social mystique, Russian Nihilists often *did* have a seductive quality. The diaries of the young novelist, Olive Garnett, record her anguished infatuation for the married Stepniak, brought on in part by his confusing remarks about ‘free love’, and her belief that her moderating influence was rescuing him

¹³ Annie Besant to Stepniak (15 August 1885), Evgeniia A. Taratuta, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravshinskii v londonskoi emigratsii* (Moskva: Nauka, 1968) 195. I have translated Besant’s phrasing back into English.

¹⁴ A list of novels with Russian revolutionary themes can be found in Anthony Cross’s exceedingly helpful bibliography, *The Russian Theme in English Literature From the Sixteenth Century to 1980: An Introductory Survey and a Bibliography* (Oxford: Willen A. Meeuws, 1985). See also John Slatter, “Bears in the Lion’s Den: The Figure of the Russian Revolutionary Emigrant in English Fiction 1880–1914”, *Slavonic and East European Review* 77, 1 (January 1999) 30–55.

¹⁵ Olive Garnett, diary entry, 10 November 1894, *Olive and Stepniak: The Bloomsbury Diary of Olive Garnett, 1893–1895* (Birmingham: Bartletts Press, 1993) 129.

¹⁶ Oscar Wilde, *Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime and Other Stories* (London: Methuen, 1909) 7.

from the error of anarchist terrorism.¹⁷ But love affairs rarely blossomed: part of the revolutionary's sex-appeal was his single-minded marriage to the cause.

Russianness also keyed into a host of English obsessions with spirituality and socialist utopianism. To many, Russians appeared as almost messianic figures, holding the secrets to spiritual or social renewal. Madame Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society, was Russian, the grand-daughter of a princess. Oscar Wilde described Kropotkin as "a man with a soul of that beautiful white Christ that seems coming out of Russia".¹⁸ The socialite Madame Novikov, who numbered Matthew Arnold and Gladstone among her dearest friends, was thought to have "a visible Russian soul", and in her features, "that unfamiliar gleam ... the Russian genius".¹⁹ In their own writing about Russia, political refugees made the most of the reputation of the Russian peasant as a primitive and soulful creature, whose innate tendency towards communal living could serve as an example and inspiration for the west. The tremendous impact of Tolstoy as a spiritual leader from the 1890s onwards, and the establishment in England of Tolstoyan communities based on his blend of Christianity and anarchism, perhaps best typify the mysterious and powerful hold Russians had over the *fin de siècle* imagination.

This was the happy aspect of the émigré reception in England. But there was another side to the equation which made émigré life in England tenuous and, at times, downright uncomfortable. Lloyd Gartner, an historian of the Jewish emigration to England, relates a story in which Rev. Price Hughes, a leading Dissenter and advocate of imperialism, denounced Russian oppression while observing that it brought to England "a great number of Jews to take the bread out of our citizens' mouths".²⁰ In a late Victorian London characterised by vile work-houses, slums and predatory street life, such concerns, no doubt, seemed justified. More threatening than the appetites of émigrés, however, were their politics of expropriation and what was seen as their advocacy of violence, which Middle England feared might help whip up a working-class insurrection at home. Despite its relative affluence and climate of optimism, a mood celebrated in the 1887 Jubilee, England was feeling the unpleasant stress of social transformation: the 1880s were a decade of militant trade-

¹⁷ Johnston, *Olive and Stepniak*.

¹⁸ *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*. Edited by Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Fourth Estate, 2000) 754

¹⁹ Stephen Graham, introduction to Olga Novikoff, *Russian Memories* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1917) 3.

²⁰ Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England*, 275.

unionism, the Dock Strike of 1889 and “Bloody Sunday” (1887) – the socialist demonstration in Trafalgar Square which was attacked by police and in which two protesters died. The Russian revolutionary movement was suspiciously regarded in some quarters as anarchism’s twin brother, a first cousin to Fenian terrorism, part of a fin-de-siècle generation of ‘dynamitards’ threatening the very foundations of European civilisation. The legacy of the Russian terrorism of the late 1870s, and the assassination of Tsar Alexander I in 1881, did little to assuage Middle England’s jumpy conviction that émigrés were a dangerous and incendiary lot. Notwithstanding émigré efforts to convince people that the unique situation in Russia justified measures that would be unacceptable in a western context, most English people, including many radicals, felt distinctly ill at ease with their refusal to condemn terrorist violence outright.

England’s own happier tradition of monarchism also worked against émigré claims of ill-use by the Tsarist regime. In press accounts of the Russian court, much was made of the Tsar’s blood-relationship with the English royal family. Some journalists even looked hopefully to the Tsar to civilise Russia’s Asiatic hordes. Visitors to Russia who returned to publish their impressions of the country tended to diminish the evils behind the pomp and splendour of the Tsar’s court in their enthusiasm for its charms. A scene in John A. Logan’s suggestively titled travelogue *In Joyful Russia* (1897) was characteristic in the way it belied the tragedy lurking behind the jewelled splendour of Tsar Nicholas II’s coronation:

A blaze of glory! Jewels without number and without price bedecking women as fair as poet’s dream could paint them! A constant stream of brilliant uniforms, flashing with decorations, and putting the rainbow to shame for variety and splendour of colour. A city scintillating by night with millions of minute illuminations in such a combination of colour and form as to baffle description and defy the imagination; by day gay with innumerable flags, bannerets, and picturesque designs ... From every corner of his Empire, men, women, and little babes even, had come – many of them travelling hundreds of miles afoot – to be present at the crowning of the Great White Tsar! What devotion! ... The order was superb. *I could scarcely realize that I was in the land of which so many exaggerations had been published*, as I looked upon the quiet, orderly, and enthusiastic throngs which lined the streets on our way to the function which should enthrone the Tsar.²²

²² My emphasis. John A. Logan, *In Joyful Russia* (London; New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1897) 113–5.

To English readers wearied, and perhaps bored, by the pessimistic reports of Siberian prisons, floggings and famines which flowed endlessly from correspondents in Russia, such accounts were welcome. A reviewer in the *Academy* found it “refreshing” to read Logan’s “brighter picture” of the nation, and recommended the book for its “amiable” intentions.²³

No more helpful to radical émigrés was the long-entrenched belief that Russians as a race were barbaric and retrograde. One book reprinted in England many times was the Marquis de Custine’s famous travelogue, *La Russie en 1839*, translated as *The Empire of the Czar*, and later, simply as *Russia*.²⁴ The French Marquis made a scathing case against Russia’s system of tyranny, but his generalisations did little to engender confidence in Russian society at large. “The morals...of the Russians, despite all the pretensions of these half-savages, are cruel and will remain so for a long time yet”; and “Russian civilisation ... is masked barbarism, nothing more” are typical examples.²⁵ As one scholar points out, it mattered not to de Custine that at this time Russia had already produced “Pushkin, Lermontov and Gogol in literature, Belinsky in literary criticism, Lobachevsky in mathematics, Glinka in music, Briullov in painting, and a very intensive intellectual life in and around Moscow University”.²⁶ Towards the end of the century, the idea that Russians were a backward race grew alongside theories of degeneration and atavism. Mary Hawker (pseudonym, Lanoe Falconer) gives a humorous depiction of typical English attitudes in her best-seller, *Mademoiselle Ixe* (1891). Here an English socialite gushes about a Russian she has just met – a man with “long Eastern eyes and a protruding animal jaw”:

Oh he is such a darling, and so hideous. Frightful! Do you know, the first time I saw him ... I thought he was the missing link. It was at a dance at Lady Dunmere’s.... I said, ‘Why Lady Dunmere, it is a gorilla, isn’t it?’ and she said, quite gravely, ‘On no, dear; he is a Russian Count.’²⁷

²³ “Travel Books”, *Academy* 52 (30 October 1897) 347.

²⁴ Since 1951, this has been published as *Journey for Our Time*. It was first published in English in 1943, and went into several editions during and immediately after the Crimean War.

²⁵ Marquis Astolphe de Custine, *Journey for Our Time: The Journals of the Marquis de Custine*, edited and translated by Phyllis Penn Kohler, introduced by Simon Sebag Montefiore (London: Phoenix Press, 2001) 123, 124.

²⁶ S.G. Pushkarev, “Russia and the West: Ideological and Personal Contacts before 1917”, *Russian Review* 24, 2 (April 1965) 139.

²⁷ Lanoe Falconer, *Mademoiselle Ixe* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1924) 51–2.

Such insouciance aside, the savage Russian was a deeply-rooted stereotype, as seen in Harold Frederic's tome, *The New Exodus: A Study of Israel in Russia* (1892), published the following year. Frederic was responding with justifiable anger to the pogroms of the late nineteenth-century, but his sweeping application of the term 'Barbarian' to the entire Russian race (peasant and master alike) ignored the role of the Tsar's policies in inciting anti-Jewish discrimination. His Russia was a place "of dark and hopeless ignorance, of drunken incompetency, of frank and even smiling contempt for everything of thought and word and deed that we call honesty." For two hundred years, German Tsars (with not one drop of Russian blood in them), had whipped the reluctant and shuffling Russians along the road to civilisation to no avail. "The Russian is captivated with the thought of ceasing to pretend to be civilised. His is the longing of the young Indian brave at the missionary-school to get back again into the breech-clout – to exchange the school-desk and books for forest glades and the chase". Frederic's comparison of the Russian mentality with the state of childhood was typical of how primitive races were discussed in the late nineteenth century: "The Slavic brain is nothing if not juvenile. It is invincibly optimistic; it rushes headlong into enthusiastic beliefs founded upon the merest hearsay or imagining; it invents lies and excuses with incredible swiftness and an entire disregard for probabilities, or for cause and effect; it has no conception of responsibility, of duty, or any other abstract virtue."²⁸ To the exile urging revolution, this was not a pleasant light in which to be viewed.

Moreover, the stereotype of the barbarian peasant weighed against their arguments for a Russian revolution. After all, if even the most cultivated Russian was a merely a savage in European dress, surely the race was not ready for the freedoms and democratic institutions of the West. In his journal the *Review of Reviews*, William Stead opined that exiles were mistaken in hoping that the great Russian mass was equal to self-government: "not one man in a hundred can read, and not one man in a hundred would have the remotest idea what to do with his vote if he had one." Russians were more in need of more prisons than of a constitution. If the revolutionaries took power, they would find themselves applying "many more pounds pressure per square inch in the shape of autocratic authority in order to get the Russians to march their way than what the Tsar needs to apply to keep his people jogging along in their ancient ruts."²⁹ Stead's belief that the Tsar was doing the best

²⁸ Harold Frederic, *The New Exodus: A Study of Israel in Russia* (London: Heinemann, 1892) 2, 43, 6, 13–4.

²⁹ William Stead, "Alexander III, Tsar of all the Russias", *Review of Reviews* 5 (15 January 1892) 15, 16.

he could with an Asiatic, “yellow” race was a commonly held one. The alternative could only be anarchy.

Admittedly, such Russophobia was just as often levelled against the nation's government and its autocratic head. Since the Crimean war, Russia had been viewed as a traditional enemy, engaged in global imperial rivalry and interfering with England's valuable trade relations with China.³⁰ Some believed (with reason) that Russia had a greedy eye on the territories of India, Afghanistan and the Middle East.³¹

Such fears reached a climax in 1878, when Russia began fighting the Turks over purported Turkish atrocities against Bulgarian Christians. At one end of the social spectrum, Queen Victoria declared she could not remain “the sovereign of a country that was letting itself down to kiss the feet of the great barbarians”.³² At the other end, Britons expressed their patriotic contempt by singing the popular music hall hit, MacDermott's War Song: “The 'Dogs of War' are loose and the rugged Russian Bear, /Full bent on blood and robbery, has crawled out of his lair”.³³ Following the advice of his monarch and the will of her subjects, Lord Beaconsfield sent a cautionary fleet to Constantinople, and the Russians backed down. Jingoistic attitudes were provoked further by the second Anglo-Afghan War (1878–1880), which took place when Afghanistan – seen as an essential buffer zone between Russia and British territory in India – made rival trade agreements with Russia and refused entry to a British envoy. Oscar Wilde's half-patriotic poem *Ave Imperatrix* (1881), gave voice to the current mood of fear and horror with its “treacherous Russian”, images of eastern savagery (“yellow leopards, strained and lean...with gaping blackened jaws”), and allusion to the Tsar's gift of a young virgin to the Afghan Khan.³⁴ For their part, the émigrés were more than willing to concede that Russia's bellicose government was an international liability that had nothing to do with the will of the Russian people. Britons however, made no distinction between the policies of the Russian government and the

³⁰ Pascal Venier, “The diplomatic context: Britain and International Relations around 1904” in *Global Geostrategy, Mackinder and the Defence of the West*, edited by Brian W. Blouet (London: Frank Cass, 2004) 57.

³¹ See, for example, An Indian Officer, *Russia's March Towards India* 2 vols (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1894). For more on English suspicion over Russia's designs in Afghanistan, see J.A.R. Marriott, *Anglo-Russian Relations 1689–1943* (London: Methuen, 1944) 130–9.

³² Lytton Strachey, *Queen Victoria* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1921) 264, 266.

³³ The words and music of the song were by G.W. Hunt. Maurice Willson Disher, *Victorian Song: From Dive to Drawing Room* (London: Phoenix House, 1955) 165.

³⁴ I am indebted to John Sloan for this observation, see Sloan, *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 101.

character of the race, and fears of Russian imperialism did not, on the whole, make them more receptive to the arguments of radical émigrés against the Tsarist regime. 1878, the year of the second Anglo-Afghan War, was, after all, the same year the notorious female ‘Nihilist’, Vera Zasulich, stunned Europe by shooting the Governor General of St. Petersburg in broad daylight. Journal articles paired Nihilism with state-sponsored pan-Slavonic expansionism as just another ugly aspect of Eastern barbarism, known as the “Slavonic Menace”, oozing forth from Russia.³⁵

The experience of Russian exiles in England, then, was both reassuring and precarious. On the one hand, they luxuriated in Britain’s liberal climate, which came as a welcome relief after the stresses of Siberian exile, religious persecution, or life underground. On the other hand, they lived in fear of a turn in the tide of public or governmental opinion with respect to the legitimacy of their claims as refugees. Such fears were well founded. For while Britain remained reluctant to co-operate with foreign agents for the extradition of exiles with a chequered past, the examples of other countries were alarming. In France, the Okhrana, Russia’s official security department, enjoyed close co-operation with the Paris police and government authorities, setting up a widespread network of spies and spreading damaging rumours about innocent émigrés.³⁶ In 1890, Russian students in Paris were rounded up and arrested merely on suspicion of holding anti-Tsarist views.³⁷ In 1893, the US was persuaded to conclude an extradition treaty with Russia aimed at those accused of revolutionary terrorist acts. And Germany, Austria and Switzerland ratified similar treaties. According to Stepniak, the Russian government spent “hundreds of thousands, if not millions of roubles ...to buy over [European] officials, judges and ministers”, its aim being “to put its claws upon some two or three extra ‘nihilists,’ and have a chance to boast before the Russian people of the solidarity and support of its great western neighbours.”³⁸ The case of Vasili Zhook, who was kicked out of Serbia and Bulgaria (thanks to representations made by the Russian Government) before eventually settling in England, was not unusual.³⁹ It is understandable that in Britain, radical exiles watched apprehensively as gathering political

³⁵ One of the most trenchant portrayals of the perceived Russian threat was in “The Slavonic Menace to Europe”, *Quarterly Review* 149 (April 1880) 518–48.

³⁶ Alan Kimball, “The Harassment of Russian Revolutionaries Abroad: The London Trial of Vladimir Burtsev in 1898”, *Oxford Slavonic Papers* n.s. 6 (1973) 51, 53.

³⁷ “The Franco-Russian Alliance”, *Freedom* (July 1890) 29.

³⁸ Stepniak, *Nihilism As It Is*, trans. by E.L. Voynich (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1895) 72.

incentives encouraged the British government to develop a closer rapport with Russian officials: German-Russian relations had more or less disintegrated, and Western European governments, Britain included, were exploring ways of improving their relations with Russia as a means of maintaining Europe's balance of power. In the 1890s, as the Russian government put increasing pressure on London authorities to deal harshly with radical émigrés, the need for English understanding of their plight and their movement became integral to their security in exile.

³⁹ Editor's note to Vasily Pavlovich Zhook, "A Nation Rendered Dumb, Martyrology of the Press in Russia", *Anglo-Russian* 2, 1 (July 1898) 145.

Émigrés and their Propaganda

The growth of a western-based anti-Tsarist propaganda campaign arose, in part, out of the need for beleaguered exiles to justify to local populations both their attitudes towards Tsarist Russia and their presence in Western Europe. But there was also another impetus: the belief, held by most émigrés, that international opinion could exert a transforming influence upon Russian affairs. As one unidentified exile wrote to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, “[It is] upon the sympathy of a powerful part of the English public [that] the Russians have always been, and still remain, dependent for the success of many of their most important political enterprises”.⁴⁰ A similar view was held among comrades on the continent: in November 1880, the Executive Committee of the People’s Will (the violent arm of the revolutionary party) determined that their “task would be considerably easier if the unaffected sympathies of the free peoples were on our side, and for this, only a knowledge of the real situation in Russia is required.”⁴¹ The same year, the revolutionary Lev Hartman moved to England, where he developed a blueprint for the *Nihilist*, an English-language journal that was intended to expose Tsarist atrocities. The main thing, he wrote “is that the tone and character of the articles conform to the English spirit”.⁴² Hartman never succeeded in publishing the *Nihilist*, but some of its objectives were met the following year when Chaikovsky arrived and founded the English arm of the “Red Cross of the People’s Will”. This was first of many such organisations dedicated to helping political prisoners and exiles within Russia from without.⁴³ Its success relied heavily on English sympathy and donations for Russia’s prisoners.

In the 1880s and 1890s, Hartman and Chaikovsky’s efforts to damage the Tsarist regime and assist its victims would be augmented by the work of many new additions to Britain’s Russian community: émigrés like David Soskice, a journalist and campaigner for freedom in Russia; Vasili Zhook, who took it upon himself to become a populariser in England of Russia’s oppressed writers; and F.A. Rothstein – “the only real Marxist among the ... émigrés” – who divided his time between writing a monumental history of the Roman

⁴⁰ D.F.S., “Correspondence; Jew-baiting in Russia” *Pall Mall Gazette* 35, no. 5262 (12 January 1882) 2. It is clear from its content that the letter was written by a Russian émigré.

⁴¹ Letter from Executive Committee of People’s Will to Karl Marx (November 1880), quoted in Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 24. See below for a description of the People’s Will.

⁴² Letter of Hartman to Kliachko (5 May 1880). Quoted in Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 24.

⁴³ The organisation was founded in 1881 by I.N. Bogdanovich. Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 25.

Empire in the British Library and working for the London Group of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP).⁴⁴

But the most charismatic and influential exiles of the period were the five upon whom this thesis focuses: Sergei Stepniak (Kravchinsky) who arrived with his wife Fanny in 1884 and immediately drummed up interest in the revolutionary cause; the much-loved anarchist and geographer, Prince Peter Kropotkin; the enigmatic Felix Volkhovsky, described by Constance Garnett as a “fanatical, almost Puritanical revolutionary”, as well as “a tremendous ‘ladies’ man”;⁴⁵ the self-described ‘pacifist’ Russian Jew, Jaakoff Prelooker; and Tolstoy’s aristocratic friend and agent, Vladimir Chertkov. In the diverse mediums and content of their propaganda, these five, perhaps more than any other émigrés, galvanised British support for the Russian revolution.

Stepniak – Man of the Steppe

By far the most powerful, notorious and magnetic Russian propagandist in England in the late-nineteenth century was Sergei Mikhailovitch Kravchinsky, who went by his *nom de plume* Stepniak, meaning man of the steppe. Something of the revolutionary’s primitive yet brilliant allure can be gauged by Edward Garnett’s fantastical dinner table joke: “A goddess fell in love with a bear – & so was born Stepniak”.⁴⁶

Stepniak’s life story was no less romantic than his reputation and could easily have formed the prototype for one of the Nihilist adventure novels that became popular during his time in the west. In the early 1870s, as a member of Chaikovsky’s main circle, he had been one of the first *Narodniki* – propagandisers of socialism to the peasantry – to “go to the people”. Dressed as a woodcutter in birch-bark shoes, he distributed socialist leaflets from a knapsack. When (like 800 other members of the movement) he was denounced to the police by the peasants, he convinced his guard to help him escape. He then spent a winter hiding among the Molokoni, one of Russia’s persecuted Christian sects. Soon after, he appeared in Italy in the company of the followers of Bakunin, Malatesta and Caffiero. Caught bearing arms during an uprising in the province of Benevento, he was imprisoned, and expected to

⁴⁴ Reginald Frank Christian, *Alexis Aladin, The Tragedy of Exile* (New York; Ottawa; Toronto: Legas, 1999) 41–2.

⁴⁵ Constance Garnett, Unpublished Memoir, 58, Garnett Family Archive, Hilton Hall.

⁴⁶ Constance Garnett, Unpublished Memoir, 80.

be executed at any moment, but was released after nine months in a general amnesty of political prisoners. His lucky escapes earned him the nick-name “Fortune’s Favourite”. The most dramatic escape in his revolutionary career, however, was yet to come. Back in St. Petersburg, in August 1879, as Adjutant General N.V. Mezentsev, Chief of Gendarmes was taking his daily stroll through Mikhailovskii square, Stepniak stabbed him with a stiletto. He then leapt into a *droshky* pulled by the famous pacer Varvar (brought from Moscow especially for the purpose) and was spirited away.⁴⁷ No traces of the culprit were found, despite a reward offered of 50,000 roubles. For a while, Stepniak lived under false papers in the name of a Georgian prince. He then departed for the greater anonymity of Europe.

In Switzerland, having already been an urban propagandist, *narodnik*, militant revolutionary, and terrorist, Stepniak began the transformation which was eventually to turn him into the most successful revolutionary propagandist in the West. In part, his metamorphosis resulted from his disillusionment with the attitudes and methods of the revolution itself. Arriving in Geneva in 1879, he discovered the movement’s principal party, then known as “Land and Liberty”, split down the middle. The majority of its members had formed a new group called the People’s Will, which threatened the Russian government with escalating violence until such a time as it introduced a constitution. The rest had formed a less violent arm, known as the Black Repartition, which rejected terrorism, advocating instead a socialist propaganda campaign among workers and peasants. It also steadfastly refused on ideological grounds to co-operate with liberal opponents of Tsardom. Stepniak sided with neither group, expressing fears that the People’s Will might descend into Jacobinism and indiscriminate terrorism,⁴⁸ and that the propaganda of “scientific socialism” advocated by the Black Repartition would alienate potential liberal supporters. He also felt that factional disputes could only undermine the movement. For a time, he withdrew from the internecine bickering, and concentrated on supporting himself by

⁴⁷ This is Donald Senese’s version of the assassination. Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 4. Different accounts can be found in David Garnett’s *The Golden Echo* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1953) 12–3, Richard Garnett’s *Constance Garnett, A Heroic Life* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991) 85, and in Evgeniia A. Taratuta, *S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii: revoliutsioner i pisatel’* (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1973)..

⁴⁸ In his pamphlet “Smert’ za smert’” (*A Death for a Death*) Stepniak argued that assassination was justified as a means of defence against officials who persecuted political activists – but he stopped short of condoning indiscriminate terrorism aimed at innocent members of the public. S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii, “Smert’ za smert’”, in *Grozovaia tucha Rossii* (Moskva: Novyi Kliuch, 2001) 13–22..

translating Spanish and Italian fiction for the St. Petersburg monthly, *Delo*. His revolutionary comrades decided that “Fortune’s Favourite” was losing his edge.⁴⁹

Stepniak was, in fact, in the process of discovering his true *métier* as an ambassador of the Russian revolution, and developing a programme of propaganda aimed at members of any and every political persuasion. His experiences as a *narodnik* had persuaded him that theoretical socialist propaganda “bounces off the peasants like peas off a wall”; that the theorists needed to take their ideas to the people “in popular form, under popular guise ...”.⁵⁰ They had also led him to doubt the efficacy of propagandising to peasants at all. As his biographer, Donald Senese, points out, Stepniak subscribed, deep down, to the “heroic” mode of revolution, which depends upon an intelligent elite rather than the masses to bring about revolution.⁵¹ An unlikely mixture of these two features – Stepniak’s insistence upon “popular” forms of propaganda and his preference for an educated middle-class audience – “the heart of the nation” – would form the parameters of all of his future propaganda. In 1881, he moved to Italy, where he added another dimension to his project: the decision to aim his non-polemical, non-theoretical form of propaganda at the West:

It is necessary to reconcile Europe to the bloody measures of the Russian revolutionaries, to show on the one hand their inevitability in Russian conditions, on the other to depict the terrorists themselves as they are in reality, i.e. not as cannibals, but as humane people, highly moral, having a deep aversion to all violence, to which they are only forced by governmental measures.⁵²

The same year, Stepniak’s ideas took shape in a series of romanticised sketches of revolutionary heroes and heroines which he published in a Milan newspaper. In addition to figures like his friend Kropotkin, many of Stepniak’s subjects were women. He wrote of the beautiful Sophia Perovskaia, a gentle nurse with the laughter of a sixteen year old girl, who engineered attempts on the life of the Tsar, and remained “full of true courage and endless abnegation” when her life ended on the scaffold. He described the range of expressions in

⁴⁹ Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 8.

⁵⁰ “Iz perepiski S.M. Kravchinskogo”, *Krasnyi Arkhiv* 19 (1926) 196–7..

⁵¹ Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 2. Kropotkin took the same view: “[Stepniak] believed that [the popular movement] should be met by a similar movement among educated people;...a sympathetic one, and he exhorted the educated class to make an active stand against oppression”. Peter Kropotkin, letter in “In Memoriam”, *Free Russia* 7, 2 (February 1896) 16.

the large well-shaped eyes of the assassin Vera Zasulich: “Ordinarily thoughtful and somewhat sad”, they “sparkle when she jests”.⁵³ In 1882, the *feuilletons* were gathered together and published under the title *La Russia Sotterranea*.

While many of Stepniak’s comrades charged him with being an intellectual lightweight in his avoidance of theory, the book was an overnight international success. In England, where it appeared in translation in 1883 under the title *Underground Russia*, it went into three printings before the year was out. Mark Twain, Turgenev, Daudet, and Zola wrote commendations. And to William Morris, it was something of an epiphany: “Read *Underground Russia* if you want your blood to boil”, he wrote to Frederick Startridge Ellis. (Morris subsequently became dedicated to spreading socialist propaganda.)⁵⁴ The *Academy* asserted that the book bore “the stamp of truth”.⁵⁵ The *Athenaeum* called it “a true and faithful reflection of ... perhaps, the most tremendous political movement in history”.⁵⁶ The reactionary *Saturday Review* even suggested that Stepniak’s portraits of revolutionaries marked him as a successor to the novelist Turgenev.⁵⁷

One significant corollary of Stepniak’s best-seller was that it ensured that Europeans continued using the out-moded word ‘Nihilism’ to refer to the Russian revolutionary movement. Nihilism proper was, in fact, a philosophical and ethical, rather than a political movement, whose main spokesman had been Pisarev until his death in 1868. Pisarev and his followers had cast aside idealist philosophy, science, religion and metaphysics, denigrated the “moral despotism” of the family, rejected social customs as insincere, and violently denied aesthetic standards. Theirs was “a demand for nakedness, for the stripping from oneself of all the trappings of culture, for the annihilation of all historical traditions, for the setting free of the natural man, upon whom there will no longer be fetters of any sort.”⁵⁸ Nihilism in this form was very different from the populist movement Stepniak had joined in the 1870s and the philosophy of the revolutionaries he described in *Underground Russia*.

⁵² Quoted from an archival source by Evgeniia A. Taratuta in “S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii” in Stepniak, *Rossia pod vlast’iu tsarei* (Moskva: Izdatel’svo sotsial’no-ekonomicheskoi literatury mysl’, 1964) 10.

⁵³ Sergei Stepniak, *Underground Russia: Revolutionary Profiles and Sketches from Life*, first English ed. (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1883) 117.

⁵⁴ William Morris to Frederick Startridge Ellis, 23 May 1883, *The Collected Letters of William Morris* 2, edited by Norman Kelvin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 195.

⁵⁵ “La Russia Sotterranea”, *Academy* 22 (28 October 1882) 310.

⁵⁶ “Underground Russia”, *Athenaeum*, No. 2893 (7 April 1883) 442.

⁵⁷ “Subterranean Russia”, *Saturday Review* 54, 1398 (12 August 1882) 214.

⁵⁸ Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism*, translated by R.M. French (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1937) 49.

These latter radicals lived according to a rigid moral code, and many of them professed a deep love of art and culture. In search of a name for his collection of revolutionaries, Stepniak had conferred upon them the term “Nihilist” because it aroused curiosity among westerners familiar with it from recent translations of Turgenev’s *Fathers and Children*.⁵⁹ For better or for worse, he and his revolutionary colleagues would be saddled with the name Nihilist and all its nuances for years to come.

The success of *Underground Russia* in England persuaded Stepniak of the efficacy of a propaganda that avoided economic theorising in favour of a presentation of carefully-selected facts. It also convinced him that his manner of writing was particularly suited to the English. He wrote to Chaikovsky:

[John Bull] is a strong person, very strong, and I confess I like him very much for just that reason. When I approach him, I first take into account that this is what distinguishes him: like all strong and arrogant people, he does not like anyone to try to convince him of anything: this is equivalent to an attempt at moral coercion... Therefore in my first book I completely avoided apologetics on anything or anybody... I even tried to show my own sympathy with them as little as possible in order to give the book a character of impartiality. When I read it in English – I was astonished myself. I simply tell the reader: look, and see and judge for yourself – I don’t want to force any conclusion on you. This is the best way – in fact the only way of making someone believe what you want him to... The reviews of the reactionary *Saturday Review* and several German journals testify to the fact that I have achieved my aims to a significant degree.⁶⁰

On 15 July, 1884, Stepniak moved to London, where he carried on targeting his propaganda at England’s influential middle classes – her publishers, politicians, clergymen, journalists, novelists, and businessmen. Several years later he reflected on his intentions: “To conquer the world for the Russian revolution; to throw upon the scales the huge weight of the public opinion of civilized nations; to bring to those whose struggle is so hard that unexpected help; to find without, a lever to move the minds of the Russians themselves within – this was the dream which glistened before me.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ The idea of using the word ‘Nihilist’ seems to have been floating around revolutionary circles. Lev Hartman expressed the idea to Kliachko (5 May 1880), quoted in Senese *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 23.

⁶⁰ Evgeniia A. Taratuta, *Podpol’naia Rossiia: Sud’ba knigi S.M. Stepniaka-Kravchinskogo (k tridtsatiletiiu so dnia smerti)* (Moskva: Kniga 1967) 31–3, 44. Translation is borrowed from Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 27.

⁶¹ Stepniak, “What Americans Can Do for Russia”, *North American Review* 153 (November 1891) 600.

In London's Belsize Park, Stepniak's home became a meeting point for local Russian exiles, visiting revolutionaries and England's own unorthodox literary and artistic intelligentsia. His British associates derived mainly from Fabian, SDF and literary circles. A staunch ally was the first secretary of the Fabian Society, Edward Pease, who, from his tranquil candle-lit sitting room, guided him through the bewildering complexities of English socialist politics. Other friends included the first atheist MP in England, Charles Bradlaugh; Annie Besant; Olive, Constance and Edward Garnett; and the Newcastle solicitor, Robert Spence Watson, who was President of the National Liberal Federation. Many acquaintances were literary: he dined frequently with G.B. Shaw: "[Stepniak and I] used to talk about books (as far as I, who never read any, could talk to him, who seemed to read everything), or about the theatre, or about his young friend Max Hambourg the pianist, or about national characteristics, or human nature, or people whom he knew, or about Duse and the Russian actresses, or what you please on that plane."⁶² In 1892, Stepniak met Bram Stoker at a rather star-studded dinner party given by the actor Henry Irving (Sarah Bernhardt was also there). He later undertook a correspondence on theatrical matters with Stoker which astonished the novelist: "And this was the man who stood for wiping tyrants from the face of the earth, who aided in the task, if *Underground Russia* be even based on truth. This gentle, appreciative, keenly critical, sympathetic man!"⁶³ By all accounts, Stepniak's culture and "encyclopaedic knowledge" assured him influence and admiration. Bernard Shaw wrote that he carried an air of "natural superiority" which meant that no one "ever dreamt of questioning his right to do as he pleased, or expected him to wear a prescribed set of opinions".⁶⁴ Keir Hardy said, admiringly, that "he had the heart of a Lion, the nature of a child."⁶⁵ For William Morris, who "loved" and "respected" Stepniak, the Nihilist's appeal was tinged with revolutionary romanticism: they shared "a quality of insurrectionist innocence and a sense of great events arising from small clandestine meetings in insalubrious corners."⁶⁶

⁶² G. B. Shaw, "A Word About Stepniak", *To-Morrow* 1, 2 (February 1896) 103.

⁶³ Bram Stoker, *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* 2 (London: Heinemann, 1906) 57. See also letters from Stepniak to Bram Stoker (2 September 1892; 12 June 1894) Brotherton Collection, Leeds University, MS 19c Stoker.

⁶⁴ Shaw, "A Word about Stepniak", 103.

⁶⁵ "Funeral of Stepniak", *Times* (30 December 1895) 9.

⁶⁶ Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 522.

As England's most visible and charismatic Nihilist, he was a natural model for characters in Nihilist novels. An ironic mention of his frightful creed can be found in Edna Lyall's *The Autobiography of a Slander* (1887): "I have just been reading a review of that book by Stepniak. Their [Nihilists'] social and religious views are terrible; free-love, atheism, everything that could bring ruin on the human race."⁶⁷ Posthumously, Stepniak was resurrected in Olive Garnett's novel, *In Russia's Night* as "Muromsky", (1918), the editor of a revolutionary news-sheet in London and New York. Muromsky's chief aim and desire was to hold "the ear of that vast freedom-loving public to refute our enemies' lies."⁶⁸ Thomas C. Moser suggests Stepniak's legacy provided fodder for Razumov, the fictive émigré in Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* (1911), while Cedric Watts, more convincingly, argues that he served as the model for the minor character, Julius Laspara, of the same book.⁶⁹ But Stepniak appears in all his magnificence as "Necrovitch" in *A Girl Among the Anarchists* (1903), by Isabel Meredith (the pen name of Helen and Olive Rossetti):

[He] was essentially a great man; one of those men whom to know was to admire and to love; a man of strong intellect, and of the strong personal magnetism which is so frequently an adjunct of genius. Physically he was a huge powerful man, so massive and striking in appearance that he suggested comparison rather with some fact of nature – a rock, a vigorous forest tree – than with another man. He was one of those rare men who, like mountains in a landscape, suffice in themselves to relieve their environments, whatever these may be, from all taint of meanness. He stood out from among his guests at the centre of conversation, of feeling, and of interest. He was almost invariably engaged in eager conversation, pitched in a loud tone of voice, broken at intervals when he listened to the other disputants, while puffing the cigarettes which he was constantly rolling, and looking intently out of his deep-set penetrating eyes.⁷⁰

A "vigorous forest tree" with an "immense intellect", Stepniak seemed to bridge the gap between the primitive, earthbound *mujik*, and the cultivated European man of letters.

⁶⁷ Edna Lyall, *The Autobiography of a Slander* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1887) 47.

⁶⁸ Olivia Rayne Garnett, *In Russia's Night* (London: W. Collins, 1918) 152. Muromsky's exchanges with the novel's heroine closely resemble the words of Stepniak, recorded on many occasions in Olive Garnett's diary, *Olive and Stepniak*.

⁶⁹ Thomas C. Moser, "An English Context for Conrad's Russian Characters: Sergey Stepniak and the Diary of Olive Garnett", *Journal of Modern Literature* 11, 1 (March 1984) 3–44; Cedric Watts, "Stepniak and *Under Western Eyes*", *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 13, 11 (November 1966) 410–11, and introduction to Joseph Conrad *Under Western Eyes* (London: Everyman's Library, 1991) xix–xx. Watts sees elements of Razumov, in Andrey, the hero of Stepniak's novel, *The Career of a Nihilist*.

⁷⁰ Isabel Meredith, *A Girl Among Nihilists* (London: Duckworth, 1903) 22–3.

As a propagandist, Stepniak was prolific. He wrote several widely-read books on the condition of Russia,⁷¹ a play, two novels, and articles which appeared in the *Times*, the *Fortnightly Review*, the *New Review*, the *Contemporary Review*, *Cornhill Magazine*, William Morris's *Commonweal*, and Hubert Bland's magazine, *To-Day*. He also proved an indefatigable, if not always comprehensible lecturer, speaking in places such as Milton Hall, Liberal Clubs from Cambridge to Houndslow to Newcastle, venues across London and even in private middle-class drawing rooms.⁷² His analysis of Russia relied on factual evidence, but it also drew heavily on anecdote to evoke sympathy, often blurring journalism with fiction. Several chapters of his volume *Under the Tsar and Queen Victoria*, for example, describe the allegedly representative tribulations of a fictional, female prisoner, 'Number 39', consigned to a dungeon despite her innocence of all political intrigue. The technique worked: Number 39's tale was evidence enough to convince one reviewer in the *Times* that "the Czar's justice does not take nice account between guilt and innocence", but rather makes "numerous" accusations "for the immediate purposes of inspiring terror".⁷³

As a suspected assassin with anarchist links, Stepniak was aware his position in England was tenuous; he was also aware that proselytising an international Socialist Revolution would alienate large segments of middle-class England. He thus skirted tactical and theoretical issues that would keep the English from supporting the cause. His main aim was to create a common voice of opposition in the west against the Tsarist regime – a voice that would carry *across* political parties. As Shaw noted, the enthusiasm with which Stepniak was first greeted by Socialist factions, "instead of gratifying him...came to him as the first check to his plans".⁷⁴ Olive Garnett's diaries shore up this view: Stepniak, she remembers, "was very careful not to offend English prejudice."⁷⁵ At a public meeting for Russian freedom where William Morris proposed linking the Russian movement with the

⁷¹ These included: *Russia Under the Tzars* (1885); *The Russian Storm-Cloud; or, Russia in her Relations to Neighbouring Countries* (1886); *The Russian Peasantry: Their Agrarian Condition, Social Life, and Religion* (1888); *King Stork and King Log, a Study of Modern Russia* (1895); *Nihilism As It Is* (1895).

⁷² Robert Spence Watson describes a meeting at which Stepniak spoke: "no man living, but the speaker, could tell what it was all about". "Sergius Stepniak", *Free Russia* 7, 2 (February 1896) 10–1. His propaganda occupied itself with three basic topics: Russia's socio-economic state; her political culture, and her place in Europe. John Elliot Bachman, *Serge Mikhailovich Stepniak-Kravchinskii: A Biography from the Russian Revolutionary Movement on Native and Foreign Soil*, Ph.D. Thesis (Washington, D.C.: American University, 1971) 265.

⁷³ "Stepniak's New Book", *Times* (24 April 1885) 10.

⁷⁴ Shaw, "A Word About Stepniak", 103.

⁷⁵ Olive Garnett, diary entry, 15 December 1891, *Tea and Anarchy!: The Bloomsbury Diary of Olive Garnett, 1890–1893*, edited by Barry C. Johnson (London: Bartlett's Press, 1989) 59.

cause of English socialism, he was probably among the exiles who chorused: “Don’t introduce English politics, no socialism. You’ll do the Cause more harm than good”.⁷⁶ When he was addressing working-class circles, Stepniak’s behaviour was not so circumspect: “he played an extraordinary part for a foreigner in the agitations which accompanied the great dock strike of the nineties”.⁷⁷ But his published propaganda was aimed at educated England, and here he confined himself to painting the manifold evils of the Tsar’s regime – its ill-treatment of innocent citizens and the danger it posed for Europe – knowing that outrage and fear were emotions that could traverse political and class boundaries. The Nihilists he sketched were, like the best of the English, moderate, modest, and noble-minded, demanding nothing more than a constitution and the political liberties enjoyed in Britain. At least one exiled revolutionary on the continent accused him of falsifying the revolution’s goal, which was *economic*, not political freedom.⁷⁸

Yet Stepniak’s somewhat disingenuous strategy succeeded in marshalling sympathy in camps normally antipathetic to the movement. The *Times* gave him such friendly notices that Russian officials considered prohibiting the circulation of the newspaper in their country.⁷⁹ And that “Conservative and Courtly organ” the *Morning Post* printed a sympathetic interview with the assassin.⁸⁰ In 1886, Stepniak even appeared in a pamphlet, “A Night with a Nihilist”, written by the avowed Tory and staunch monarchist, W. Earl Hodgson. After spending a single evening with Stepniak, the essayist proclaimed:

The Nihilists are aglow with the same spirit that would send the British Tories into rebellion were our fatherland suddenly to come under the absolute rule of the soulless and self-seeking caucus that lives to do the behests of Mr. Chamberlain. Let me, then conclude with the hope that no one in these Isles will cast a slur on Victoria’s reign by denouncing Nihilism under the impression that the British Monarchy and the Russian Autocracy are akin.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Olive Garnett, diary entry, 2 December 1891, *Tea and Anarchy!*, 59.

⁷⁷ Constance Garnett, unpublished “Tribute to Stepniak”, 3, Garnett Family Archive, Hilton Hall.

⁷⁸ E. Livena expressed these views in a letter to Lavrov in March 1890. Taratuta, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravshinskii v londonskoi emigratsii*, 424, note 149A.

⁷⁹ “News in Brief: Russia”, *Times* (5 September 1885) 5.

⁸⁰ This was reported by Stead in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (3 March 1886). Raymond L. Schultz, *Crusader in Babylon*, *W.T. Stead and the Pall Mall Gazette* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972) 194.

⁸¹ W. Earl Hodgson, *A Night With a Nihilist* (Cupar-Fife: Fifeshire Journal, 1886) 19. Joseph Chamberlain was a powerful advocate of the policy of New Imperialism.

Two years after his arrival in the country, Stepniak himself boasted of his success in buying English sympathy: “‘Were I a Russian I should be a Nihilist myself.’ That is a phrase which I can testify to have very often heard from all classes in England.”⁸²

One result of Stepniak’s magnetic personality and persuasive writings was the formation of the Society of Friends for Russian Freedom (SFRF) in December 1889, “with the object of helping forward the cause of Russian emancipation by all means legitimate for foreigners”. The Society was created at a meeting of just four persons, including Stepniak and Kropotkin, at the instigation of Robert Spence Watson, who had been inspired by Stepniak’s writings.⁸³ “[In] little more than two months, dozens of the most respected names in England were written down in the list of members of the new society”.⁸⁴ By December 1891, branches of the society had been formed in Edinburgh, Perth, and Leicester, and one was planned for Cardiff. Its General Committee had grown to include eleven MP’s, four clergymen, the editors of the *Contemporary Review*, and the publisher T. Fisher Unwin.⁸⁵ In June 1890, the first issue of the SFRF’s organ *Free Russia* appeared with Stepniak as chief editor. Besides providing commentary on topical issues related to Russia, the monthly nourished what in England was a growing fetish for stories of Tsarist persecution and Nihilist intrigue. Almost pornographic in its depiction of pain, its pages were filled with graphic tales of the massacres of dissidents, public floggings, deplorable prisons, the persecution of religious minorities, and the starvation of peasants deprived of their crops by corrupt bureaucrats. Within months *Free Russia* could claim a readership of 5,000 – but it also became a weapon for continual influence on newspapers which were read, as Stepniak said, “not by thousands, but by millions”.⁸⁶ For the next two decades *Free Russia* and the SFRF would be the principal agents through which Russian émigrés communicated their message to the rest of the Western world.

In December 1895 Stepniak was crossing a railway track near his home in Bedford Park, when he was hit and dragged along by a commuter train. The inquest returned a

⁸² Stepniak, *The Russian Storm-Cloud; or, Russia in Her Relations to Neighbouring Countries* (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1886) 4.

⁸³ *Free Russia* (1 December 1891) 3. For more details of the SFRF’s inception see Barry Hollingsworth, “The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom”.

⁸⁴ Stepniak, “The Agitation Abroad”, in *Nihilism As It Is*, 52.

⁸⁵ Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 48.

⁸⁶ Readership statistics can be found in *Free Russia* 2, 5 (December 1891) 3. Stepniak, “The Agitation Abroad”, in *Nihilism As It Is*, 71.

verdict of “Accidental Death”.⁸⁷ By now a household name, he was honoured with a lengthy obituary in the *Times* and spoken of widely in the press.⁸⁸ The *Academy* published a poem in memory of the man who “ignored a tyrant’s will”.⁸⁹ His funeral was attended by John Burns, Thomas Mann, William Morris, G.B. Shaw, Keir Hardie, and the Garnetts as well as hundreds of Russian emigrants. The death of their most persuasive voice marked a set-back for anti-Tsarist exiles in England. Outside of George Kennan, whose lurid depictions of Russia’s prison and exile system in Siberia had tapped with great effect into the Victorian capacity for indignation, Stepniak had done more than any other figure to convince the English of the need for a Russian revolution, and to justify its bloody means. But the movement bravely attempted to turn the loss to good effect. As his fellow exile Volkhovsky wrote in *Free Russia*: “Let us not offend...[Stepniak’s] memory with even one moment of despair. On the contrary, let us rally closer together, Friends of Russian Freedom, let us double our efforts in our righteous cause, and victory will be ours.”⁹⁰

Kropotkin – the Anarchist Prince

Despite his early enthusiasm for his steamship’s Union Jack, Kropotkin’s initial stay in England was brief. In the late 1870s, he moved to Switzerland to be a part of the Jura Federation – the anarchist breakaway group of the International Workingmen’s Association. Here he confirmed his belief in federalism and the free commune, and his repugnance for the Marxist alternative of centralisation and state socialism.⁹¹ He also spent time in Paris attempting to revive the Paris Commune. Returning to London in late 1881, he found England’s socialist movement “dull and vegetating” – very unlike the animated scene that would emerge in the mid-1880s: “Burns, Champion, Hardie, and the other labor leaders were not yet heard of; the Fabians did not exist; Morris had not declared himself a socialist; and the trade unions, limited in London to a few privileged trades only, were hostile to socialism”.⁹² Adopting the motto, “Better a French prison than this grave”,⁹³ Kropotkin

⁸⁷ “Death of M. Stepniak”, *Times* (27 December 1895) 7. Some scholars have since considered whether Stepniak committed suicide, but there is no conclusive evidence.

⁸⁸ “Death of M. Sergius Stepniak”, *Times* (24 December 1895) 5. The *Times* also reported extensively on the inquest into his death and gave a long account of his funeral. See, respectively, “The Fatal Accident to Stepniak”, *Times* (27 December 1895) 10; “Funeral of Stepniak”, *Times* (30 December 1895) 9.

⁸⁹ Percy Addleshaw, “Stepniak”, *Academy* 49 (4 January 1896) 12.

⁹⁰ Felix Volkhovsky, “The Russian Bayard”, *Free Russia* 7, 2 (1 February 1896) 15.

⁹¹ Kropotkin’s powerful disdain for the Marxists can be seen in his *Memoirs* 2, 195.

⁹² Kropotkin, *Memoirs* 2, 252.

moved to Switzerland, where he was expelled, and then to France, where he was indeed locked in Lyon Gaol for spreading anarchist views.

Besides gaining notoriety as an anarchist, however, Kropotkin had by this time secured a reputation in England as an eminent scientist and geographer. For several years he had contributed articles to the *Times* about geographical explorations in Russia, and written book reviews and articles for *Nature*. In circles that cared about such things, the groundbreaking work he had undertaken before his exile – on glacial formations in Finland and Central Russia – was regarded with considerable esteem. While in prison, his reputation as a scholar came to his aid. A petition was circulated, stressing “the importance of his contribution to science” and asking for “his early release [from prison] so that he might continue his work”.⁹⁴ Its signatories included fifteen professors from Cambridge, London, Edinburgh, and St. Andrews; Oxford fellows; leading officials of the British Museum and the Royal School of Mines; the secretary of the Geographical Society; the editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; and nine editors of influential journals, including the *Athenaeum* and the *Cornhill*.⁹⁵ In 1886, the French government finally buckled under the international pressure and released the anarchist, whereupon he moved back to London. There he stayed until the Russian revolution of 1917, constructing a scholarly scientific backdrop for his ideal of communist-anarchism, and becoming a figure-head for Britain’s anarchist movement.

Despite Kropotkin’s desire for an anarchist revolution which was patently international in scope, many of his articles and books revolved around specific Russian questions. His articles in the *Times* and the *Nineteenth Century*, which resembled the propaganda of Stepniak, gave chilling descriptions of “The Fortress Prison of St Petersburg” and “Exile in Siberia”.⁹⁶ And his 1887 study *In Russian and French Prisons* further contributed anti-Tsarist material to the debate. After the hoped-for English revolution failed to materialise and his friend Stepniak passed away, Kropotkin’s thoughts returned

⁹³ Kropotkin, *Memoirs* 2, 254.

⁹⁴ G. Woodcock and I. Avakumovic, *The Anarchist Prince: A Biographical Study of Peter Kropotkin* (London, New York: T.V. Boardman & Co., 1950) 193.

⁹⁵ Woodcock, *The Anarchist Prince*, 194.

⁹⁶ “Russian Prisons”, *Nineteenth Century* 13 (January 1883) 27–44; “The Fortress Prisons of St. Petersburg”, *Nineteenth Century* 13 (June 1883) 928–49; “the Exile in Siberia” *Nineteenth Century* 15 (March 1884) 475–93. Kropotkin’s articles for the *Times* included “On Siberian Atrocities” (24 March 1890) 7; and “The Jews in Russia” (16 April 1895) 11.

increasingly to the reform movement of his homeland.⁹⁷ His preoccupations were expressed in a 1895 article in *The Nineteenth Century*, in which he described the role of the Russian state in perpetuating the poverty of the Russian peasant,⁹⁸ and in his autobiography, which he was commissioned to write in the late 1890s for the *Atlantic Monthly*. The latter, a powerful indictment of the Russian regime, was published in book form as *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (1899). Meanwhile, Kropotkin's other books, such as *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, while not directly concerned with Russia, were peppered with multiple allusions to the nation's strengths and problems, as well as references to her philosophers, scientists and political figures. In the case London's émigré propagandists were constructing against the Tsar, Kropotkin's works constituted a central pillar.

Yet having an anarchist in their camp created an awkward situation for the anti-Tsarist émigrés. In the popular mind, anarchism was more associated with half-crazed bomb-throwers and frowsy east-end villains than with Kropotkin's high-minded philosophy. And nothing was a greater handicap to Russian exiles than the widespread belief that they were connected with dynamite plots. Sensitive to the damage that links between anarchism and Nihilism might make to his efforts to engage respectable middle-class support, Stepniak declared against the movement. On October 21, 1893 he delivered to the Fabians one of many lectures on the impracticability of Anarchism and the Nihilists' belief in the need for "political machinery", stressing that "in Russia there are no Anarchists whatever".⁹⁹ Earlier he made similar disclaimers in Charlotte Wilson's journal *Freedom*, and during a lecture tour in America.¹⁰⁰ Unlike Kropotkin who optimistically greeted bloody uprisings on the continent as indications of the coming social revolution,¹⁰¹ both Stepniak and Volkhovsky publicly denounced them as "anarchist atrocities".¹⁰²

For the most part, however, the discomfort Kropotkin's anarchism created for the anti-Tsarist lobby was more than compensated for by his prestige as a Prince and as a

⁹⁷ Hulse, *Revolutionists in London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) 71.

⁹⁸ Prince Kropotkin, "The Present Condition of Russia", *Nineteenth Century* 38, 223 (September 1895) 519–35.

⁹⁹ "Anarchism According to Stepniak", *Freedom* (January – February 1893) 7.

¹⁰⁰ Stepniak, "Anarchism According to Stepniak", *Freedom* 7, 73 (January-February 1893) 7–8; Jane E. Good, "America and the Russian Revolutionary Movement, 1888–1905) 277.

¹⁰¹ Woodcock, *The Anarchist Prince*, 359.

¹⁰² See for example, Stepniak's denial of such associations in *Nihilism As It Is*, 5.

reputable scholar.¹⁰³ Indeed, these qualities, combined with his puritanical manner of life and his sensible reluctance to explicitly condone violence (though he never explicitly condemned it) won him much respect. An article in the *Contemporary Review* even declared him to be the Britain's "Most Distinguished Refugee".¹⁰⁴ To many, Kropotkin's particular version of the anarchist ideology, which included an exquisite theory of altruism (elaborated in *Mutual Aid*), seemed more a beautiful, if naïve, form of Utopianism, than an incitement to terror and revolution.¹⁰⁵ It keyed into the late Victorian nostalgia for an uncorrupted and organic society as evinced in the writings of Ruskin and William Morris. As the top-hatted stock-broker and leader of SDF, Henry Hyndman, one of Anarchism's most virulent detractors, was to write in the SDF organ *Justice*: it was "impossible to be angry with Kropotkin, or to help liking him".¹⁰⁶ Bernard Shaw, likewise no fan of anarchist philosophy, wrote that he was "amiable to the point of saintliness, and with his full red beard and loveable expression might have been a shepherd from the Delectable Mountains."¹⁰⁷

Volkhovsky – a Second Herzen

Kropotkin's years of freedom and acclaim in the west owed much to Stepniak, who had engineered the anarchist's successful escape from a prison hospital in St. Petersburg in 1878. Another comrade from the Chaikovsky Circle days, Felix Volkhovsky, had not been so lucky. Between 1868 and 1878 he had spent a total of seven years in prison for spreading socialist propaganda to the masses, much of this time in solitary confinement.¹⁰⁸ Stepniak gallantly attempted to free him from the Moscow provincial gaol in 1876, but the escape was abortive.¹⁰⁹ By the age of twenty-five, Volkhovsky was a broken man: white-haired, deaf and suffering from splitting headaches, all induced by the conditions of prison life.¹¹⁰ In 1878 he was sentenced to life exile in Siberia for "having been a member of a secret society

¹⁰³ Despite the fact that he never used the title himself, the journals he wrote for were happy to list him as "Prince" Kropotkin on their contents pages.

¹⁰⁴ Edith Sellers, "Our Most Distinguished Refugee", *Contemporary Review* 66 (October 1896) 537–549.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Ford Madox Ford's fond remarks on Kropotkin's beliefs in *Reminiscences 1894–1914: Return to Yesterday* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1931) 69–71.

¹⁰⁶ *Justice* (19 March 1904), quoted in Haia Shpayer-Makov, "The Reception of Peter Kropotkin in Britain", 376.

¹⁰⁷ Shaw expressed this to "one of the authors of this book", Woodcock, *The Anarchist Prince*, 225.

¹⁰⁸ A detailed account of Volkhovsky's propagandistic activities can be found in Donald Senese, "Felix Volkhovsky in London, 1890–1914", in John Slatter, ed., *From the Other Shore: Russian Political Emigrants in Britain, 1880–1917* (London: Frank Cass, 1984) 68–9.

¹⁰⁹ Felix Volkhovsky, "The Russian Bayard", 13.

¹¹⁰ N. V. Chaikovskii, "F.V. Volkhovskii", *Golos minuvshogo* (October 1914) 233–4.

aiming at the overthrow of the then gov[ernment] in some more or less distant future and in having taken part in Pol[itical] and soc[ial] agitation by means of speech and printed matter”.¹¹¹ The harsh conditions of Siberia lost him his wife (to suicide), and his youngest daughter (to pneumonia). In 1890 he made a remarkable escape across 2800 miles of Siberian terrain to Vladistock, and then across the Pacific to Vancouver via Japan.¹¹² He settled in England at the urgent invitation of Stepniak, and began relieving him of the burden of publishing *Free Russia*. In 1894 he assumed joint editorship of the journal with the English socialist J. Frederick Green.

Besides evoking outrage amongst *Free Russia*’s readership with stories of Tsarist cruelty, Volkhovsky was behind many campaigns to channel material support to the regime’s victims. In 1896–7, he made a successful appeal through the SFRF and *Free Russia* to raise funds for workers involved in St Petersburg textile strikes.¹¹³ In 1891 he started up, along with Chaikovsky, Stepniak, Shisko, and the Polish émigré Michael Voinich, the Russian Free Press Fund (*Fond vol’noi russkoi pressy*) a sort of underground railway for smuggling banned books and pamphlets into Russia. His many lectures – at public meetings called by the SFRF, at literary, scientific, and philosophical societies, religious, mainly non-conformist clubs, church and town halls, and in private homes – were designed to heighten awareness of the regime’s brutality. English sympathy towards Volkhovsky was roused by George Kennan’s limelight lectures on Russian exiles and his heart-rending descriptions of Volkhovsky’s tribulations in *Siberia and the Exile System* (1891).¹¹⁴ This may account for the warmth with which Volkhovsky’s own account of his escape from Siberia was received in London and in the North – in Newcastle, Edinburgh and Glasgow. After one of his talks, the author Hesba Stretton remarked that it had attracted “a thoroughly sympathetic audience who listened with the deepest attention to Volkhovsky’s narrative” and who were impressed by the “moderation of his tone when speaking of his wrongs, and his avoidance of extravagant or inflammatory statements.”¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ “Felix Volkhovsky’s Notes of his Life, 2 Feb. 1894” (dictated to Ada Radford). Wallas Collection, Newnham College Library, University of Cambridge.

¹¹² For details of the escape, see George Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System* 1 (London: J.R. Osgood, McIlvaine & Co., 1891) 338–44.

¹¹³ Donald Senese, “Felix Volkhovsky in London”, in Slatter, ed., *From the Other Shore*, 73.

¹¹⁴ For a description of one Kennan’s lectures, see Olive Garnett, diary entry, 12 February 1894, *Olive and Stepniak*, 35.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in “F. Volkhovsky’s Lectures”, *Free Russia* 1, 8 (March 1891) 4.

Like Stepniak, Volkhovsky was afraid to trust England's at times lukewarm offer of hospitality. Years of fear and persecution had made him a live wire – responding jumpily to every inflection in the public's mood. Until he gained more confidence, his propaganda would be cautious. As Stretton's comment attests (and despite the fact that he generally delivered his lectures wearing convict's garb), he took care not to attract the reproach of sensationalism. Far from being a moderate, he was keen to appear as one. At one point he took issue with "the ignorant sensational literature represented by such works as 'Called Back,' and an American novel by Miss O'Meara" which contributed to the general impression of Siberia as:

a gigantic block of ice, covered with snow the whole year round, and inhabited by only three classes: Polar bears, officials, and exiles. The officials neither eat, drink, sleep, nor spend their time in anything except ferocity and oppression, and the exiles also neither eat nor drink, nor ever laugh, but only suffer, and walk about with faces on which can be read in capital letters, *I suffer*.

Such "frivolous" accounts, he said, only fuelled a reactionary literature which misled readers by portraying the happier side of Siberian life.¹¹⁶

Volkhovsky's own propaganda, like Stepniak's, relied mostly on facts and anecdote to incite English outrage against Russia's government. He avoided engaging in economic theory and the dogmatic application of socialism, professing optimistically that by means of "freedom & self-government & a solution of the land question favourable to the Russian peasant ...the socialistic principle [would] be introduced legitimately into [Russian] life."¹¹⁷ He was also critical of followers of Marx who tried to apply their "panacea formulas" to Russia, "where the *proletariat*, in its literal sense, forms only a small minority".¹¹⁸ While he gestured toward the need for violence in Russia by subtle means, he loudly and expressly condemned its use by anarchists in England.¹¹⁹ When his fellow exile Vladimir Burtsev produced a Russian language journal which "openly defended the political programme and terrorist tactics of the old 'People's Will' party of 1879–81", Volkhovsky urged him to cease

¹¹⁶ Felix Volkhovsky, "The Real Siberia", *Contemporary Review* 61 (Jan/June 1892) 533–4. Kathleen O'Meara wrote *Narka* (London: Bentley, 1888), published in America as *Narka the Nihilist*.

¹¹⁷ "Felix Volkhovsky's Notes of his Life, 2 Feb. 1894", (dictated to Ada Radford). Wallas Collection, Newnham College, Cambridge.

¹¹⁸ Volkhovsky, "A French 'Free Russia'", *Free Russia* 15, 2 (February 1904) 16.

¹¹⁹ See, for example, "The Walsall Bombs", *Free Russia* (1 May 1892) 12.

publication.¹²⁰ Volkhovsky's own insistence on cloaking the wolf-like revolutionary movement in the more woolly raiment of the liberals in order to appeal to England's respectable middle class distanced him from other radical exiles. But, following his friend Stepniak, he succeeded in winning a great deal of support within England. Perris, for whose volume, *Leo Tolstoy: The Grand Mujik* (1898) Volkhovsky wrote the introduction, likened him to Alexander Herzen, the exile of a previous generation whose acute observations on Europe and Russia had been so admired by the English. Volkhovsky was, said Perris, "an unpaid ambassador who, at a difficult juncture, not unworthily represented to the outer world the great soul of his people".¹²¹

Reaction

By the mid-1890s, the balance of public opinion in Britain tended in favour of her revolutionary émigrés, and against the Tsarist regime. As early as 1885, the *Westminster Review* gave its "absolute internal assent and consent to S. M. Stepniak's statement: 'only the destruction of Russian autocracy can constitute Russia a guarantee of peace, and free Europe from external danger'; and to his appeal to 'all who are for progress, for peace and humanity, to unite in a moral crusade against Russian despotism.'"¹²² The SFRF's lectures, publications and agitation spread this sentiment to many arms of the popular press.

It was thus that between 1891 and 1897, the head of the Okhrana (Russia's foreign secret service), Rachkovsky, identified Volkhovsky, Kropoktin, Chaikovsky and Stepniak as the "most formidable revolutionary threat in Europe",¹²³ and decided to escalate efforts to discredit them. By 1902, "the funds employed by the Okhrana's London operation were three times greater than disbursements devoted to operations in all of Switzerland."¹²⁴

Although identifying the Okhrana's activities in London remains a muddy undertaking, it is certain that the agency did succeed in unsettling the émigrés through propaganda, diplomatic interference and personal harassment. In February 1895, Volkhovsky complained to Olive Garnett about a supposed spy in the British Museum

¹²⁰ Allan Kimball, "The Harassment of Russian Revolutionaries Abroad", 55.

¹²¹ George Herbert Perris, *Russia in Revolution* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1905) 226.

¹²² [Review of *Russia Under the Tsars*], "Art. VII.—The Weakness of Russia", *Westminster Review* 68 (July 1885) 160.

¹²³ Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 98. Copies of Rachkovsky's dispatches are in the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, *Paris Okhrana File*, Index No. XIII (b) 1.

¹²⁴ Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 91.

Reading Room who was harassing émigrés operating under false names.¹²⁵ Ford Madox Ford remembers that Stepniak and Volkhovsky routinely paid the spies who trailed them the price of a pint, whereupon they presumably repaired to the nearest pub.¹²⁶ A more tangible instance of the pressure exerted by the Tsarist police on British officials occurred in 1890, when the Russian Department of Police prepared a “Russian Memorandum”. The document alleged that the Russians who were involved with the SFRF and *Free Russia* were desperate criminals, planning a monstrous attack upon the Tsar and his family, and identified Stepniak in particular as a common murderer. It also accused the Englishmen belonging to the SFRF of advocating terrorism, and facilitating actions that would be indictable under English law if performed at home. The Memorandum was forwarded to the Russian ambassador in London, de Staal, and given wide circulation.¹²⁷

In 1894, Stepniak’s circle received another damaging blow from the Head of the Russian foreign service in the form of an article in the January number of the *New Review*, entitled “Anarchists: Their Methods and Organisation”.¹²⁸ The article attacked Great Britain’s right of asylum, and sought to discredit the Russian Nihilists who had begun, “as far back as 1885, to publish sensational paragraphs in English papers directed against the Russian Government, and representing Russia before Europe in the most unfavourable light”. It named Prince Kropotkin, Chaikovsky, Volkhovsky, and several other revolutionaries outright, and alluded to Stepniak as “the murderer of General Mezentsev, who publishes his revolutionary lucubrations under an assumed name.”¹²⁹ Appealing to Britons’ worst impulses of xenophobia, the article called upon the British Government to cease extending hospitality to foreigners who were in fact miscreants “aspiring to terrorise the world: the very dregs of the population, the riff-raff of rascaldom, professional thieves, bullies who batten upon the shameful earnings of the weaker sex, cut-throats”, not to mention “reckless ruffians”, and “fugitives from foreign justice”.¹³⁰ Part II of the article, signed by one ‘Ivanoff’, described Stepniak’s assassination of Mezentzev, and depicted Nihilists as spreaders of Anarchism: “Who can deny that behind every group of Anarchists

¹²⁵ Olive Garnett, diary entry, 9 February 1895, *Olive and Stepniak*, 151.

¹²⁶ Ford Madox Ford, *Reminiscences*, 133.

¹²⁷ Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 95–96.

¹²⁸ “Anarchists: Their Methods and Organisation”, *New Review* 56 (January 1894) 1–16. Taratuta identified the source of this article. Evgeniia Taratuta, *Istoriia dvukh knig*, “Podpol’naia Rossiia” *S.M. Stepniaka-Kravchinskogo i “Ovod” Etel’ Lilian Voinich* (Moskva: khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1987) 109.

¹²⁹ “Anarchists: Their Methods and Organisation”, 11, 10.

in London stand some of the Nihilist teachers? An Anarchist has always Nihilism at his elbow!”¹³¹

“Anarchists: Their Methods and Organisation” caused a stir even in socialist circles, undoing a lot of the gains émigrés had made in persuading John Bull of their legitimacy and disassociating themselves from Anarchism. Stepniak published a confident rebuttal in the following issue of the *New Review*, declaring that the Nihilists desired only one thing in Russia: “Political Freedom” in the form of a constitution.¹³² Nonetheless, the SFRF suffered a set-back in subscriptions and the émigrés suffered a loss of confidence.¹³³ In December 1897, the Russian secret police scored another success when the revolutionary Vladimir Burtsev was arrested in the British Museum Reading Room.¹³⁴ Burtsev, who had been named in the *New Review* piece, was charged with publishing a Russian-language journal which counselled regicide if the Russian Government refused to make concessions to certain political demands. Yet support for exiles in high places carried on apace: after his release from eighteen months’ hard labour, Burtsev’s application to be readmitted to the British Museum Reading Rooms was supported by the MPs the Right Hon. John Morley and Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke.¹³⁵

The most visible enemy of political refugees in London was another émigré. Madame Novikov, a loyal champion of the Tsar, Russian Orthodoxy and the Slavic race, had established a reputation as Russia’s principal spokesperson well before the onslaught of political refugees in the 1880s. In the days of Russia’s conflict with Turkey, when England’s estimation of Russia was at a particularly low ebb, Disraeli had described her as “the MP for Russia in England” for her role as an *éminence grise* in Anglo-Russian relations. The war-loving Prime Minister had proffered the title disparagingly, but it had stuck and years later Novikov remained an influential figure, agitating ceaselessly against enemies of the Russian government.¹³⁶ She was aided, if not by beauty, by a fascinating charm. Gladstone

¹³⁰ “Anarchists: Their Methods and Organisation”, 6, 3

¹³¹ “Anarchists: Their Methods and Organisation”, 16.

¹³² Stepniak, “Nihilism As It Is: A Reply”, *New Review* 57 (February 1894) 218–9.

¹³³ Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 99.

¹³⁴ According to Kimball, the British government turned its attention to Burtsev at the behest of the Russian Embassy. Kimball, “Harassment of Russian Revolutionaries Abroad”, 56.

¹³⁵ Robert Henderson, “Russian Political Émigrés and the British Museum Library” *Library History* 9, 1 and 2 (1991) 65.

¹³⁶ Kropotkin complained in 1881 that the English press was merely “an echo of the opinions of Madame Novikóff,— that is, of Katkóff and the Russian state police”. Kropotkin, *Memoirs* 2, 248. Novikov’s nickname

purportedly exalted her as his “Beatrice”, and figures such as Anthony Froude, Kinglake and Carlyle were among those said to “worship at her altar”.¹³⁷

In the mid-1880s, with the Russo-Turkish war out of the way, Madame Novikov turned her attention towards undermining London’s new émigrés and their supporters. In 1893, noticing that two members of Gladstone’s ministry were listed on *Free Russia*’s title-page as committee members of the SFRF, she remonstrated with the Prime Minister at a reception, informing him that the journal was “an organ of the Nihilists and all the bitterest enemies of Russia.”¹³⁸ Correspondence ensued, and Gladstone agreed to ask the members to withdraw their names from the society.¹³⁹ Novikov also had a bewitching effect on William Stead, the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, who attended her influential ‘salon’ at the fashionable Claridge’s Hotel.¹⁴⁰ In a diary entry in 1879, Stead, who was married, wrote of his infatuation with her, and the “shipwreck” this had made of what he had “passionately hoped would be a Christian home”.¹⁴¹ As a highly respected journalist with fast left-wing credentials, Stead’s dedication to Novikov’s political programme was a great loss for the radical émigrés. In 1888, he was granted an interview with the Tsar, and returned to write articles and his best-known book, *The Truth about Russia* (1888), in which he laid out in glowing terms the Tsar’s personal charms and his benevolent politics. Stead was not afraid to criticise the Russian government, but his relentless championing of the Tsar and the Russian Church rankled political exiles, who saw the holy alliance between Autocracy and Orthodoxy as the main source of Russia’s problems. Equally annoying was his abuse of the Nihilists. Jaakoff Prelooker described him disparagingly as the Tsar’s “unofficial ambassador to the People of Great Britain”.¹⁴²

In the battle over perceptions of Russia, there were many players with diverse interests. Englishmen and women also took a part in “propaganda”, often to promote improved Anglo-Russian relations for the betterment of trade. They may have been

was adopted sympathetically by William Stead as the title of the volume he edited: *The M.P. for Russia: Reminiscences & Correspondence of Madame Olga Novikoff* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1909).

¹³⁷ Stephen Graham, introduction to Olga Novikoff, *Russian Memories*, 2–3.

¹³⁸ Stead, ed., *The M.P. for Russia*, 316.

¹³⁹ Gladstone to Novikov, 8 December 1883, Stead, ed., *The M.P. for Russia* 2, 318. The two MPs were Lefevre and Acland.

¹⁴⁰ Frederic Whyte, *The Life of W.T. Stead*, 1 (London: Jonathan Cape; New York, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925) 47.

¹⁴¹ January 5, 1879. This diary entry is reproduced in J.W. Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper* (London: Methuen & Co., 1952) 107–8.

¹⁴² “Journalist and Tsar”, *Anglo-Russian* 2, 7 (January 1899) 203.

encouraged in this by Russia's Minister of Finance Sergei Witte, who was convinced that "the influx of foreign capital" into Russia was the best way "to speed up the accumulation of native capital".¹⁴³ In the 1890s, Witte fought tooth and nail against his fellow bureaucrats in Russia to reduce the sort of red tape and protectionism that had long discouraged foreign investment. By 1900, foreign capital had risen at an astonishing rate, and comprised nearly one-half of all company capital.¹⁴⁴

It was with trade relations in mind, that Edward A. Cazalet, the son of St. Petersburg brewers and secretary of the Russian Steam Navigation and Trading Company of Odessa, founded the Anglo-Russian Literary Society (ARLS) at the Imperial Institute in London in 1893. The Society's main objective was "To promote friendly relations between Great Britain and Russia" through the study of Russian language and literature.¹⁴⁵ In his opening address, Cazalet announced, "Politics will not be admitted in our debates", and stressed the damaging loss of trade inflicted upon both Britain and Russia by their mutual prejudices: "Too much has been said and written in this country about Russian bribery and corruption, and too little, far too little, about the good nature and unselfishness, especially of the lower classes, who probably form nine-tenths of the population of Russia."¹⁴⁶ Yet the presence on the membership list of Baron de Staal, the Russian Ambassador, and prominent Russian Princes and Ministers, as well as the patronage of the society by HHH the Tsarevitch (later Nicholas II) pointed to where the ARLS's political affinities lay. English members of the society, including a number of military men, expressed an admiring view of Russia's "rule from above", comparing it with English rule in India.¹⁴⁷ And throughout its activities, the society sent warm letters of condolence or congratulation on occasions of deaths and births in the Russian royal family. Radical Russians seem to have been discouraged from joining the ARLS: in 1904, Cazalet closed the society's reading room because it attracted "stray

¹⁴³ Theodore H. Von Laue. *Sergei Witte and the Industrialization of Russia* (London: Columbia University Press, 1963) 181.

¹⁴⁴ Lionel Kochan, *The Making of Modern Russia* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967) 200.

¹⁴⁵ The Anglo-Russian Literary Society, *Office Bearers, Rules, Opening Address, Dr. John Pollen's Paper on The Russian Language and Literature, and List of Members* (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Company, 1893).

¹⁴⁶ *Office Bearers, Rules, Opening Address*, 6.

¹⁴⁷ See for example, "Extracts of Captain W. Cyprian Bridge's Remarks About Russia", *The Anglo-Russian Literary Society, Proceedings* (August, September, October 1894) 47. Bridge, later an Admiral in the British navy, also said: "If it be admitted that devotion to a ruler, implicit obedience and strict discipline are the main elements of greatness, as the history of the world surely proves to be the case, we must certainly admit that Russia is at the present moment greater than any other European power". "Extracts", 46.

visitors from Russia who imported an undesirable element of political and social intrigue into this society".¹⁴⁸ Perhaps the best evidence of the Society's pro-Tsarist stance was a laudatory mention of the society in *Nineteenth Century*, in 1895, penned by the ever-vigilant Madame Novikov.¹⁴⁹

Prelooker – God-fearing revolutionist

If abstemious Church-goers, pacifists and the slum officers of the Salvation Army¹⁵⁰ found a propaganda served up by seditious fugitives hard to swallow, after 1891, these segments of English society were offered a more palatable message from an alternative émigré voice. Jaakoff Prelooker was vehemently anti-Tsarist, but proposed a peaceful solution to Russia's ills. He believed optimistically that with enough education and propaganda, the masses of Russia themselves would create an irresistible impetus for reform: "when the partisans of a constitution have become formidable enough in numbers and influence in Russia itself, and strongly supported outside it, the Czar and his advisers will find it better to yield to the just demands of the people than run the risk of general bloodshed."¹⁵¹ In substance, Prelooker's programme was little different from that of the SFRF émigrés, who likewise packed their cannons with books, not bombs. But he could proclaim what they, with sincerity, could not: a commitment to pacifism and the Protestant ideal. Furthermore, he sugar-coated his message for financiers and capitalists, promising a vast market for English commodities in Russia, if only "the whole rotten system of absolute autocracy and tyranny" were swept out of the way.¹⁵² From the mid-1890s, Prelooker was to become one of the most popular lecturers on Russia in Britain, delivering his tales of Tsarist oppression, censorship, down-trodden peasants, and brutalised protestant sects to eager audiences at "The Established, Free, and United Presbyterian Churches all over Scotland; Congregational and Baptist Churches, Wesleyan Chapels, Meeting Houses of the Friends, Salvation Army Halls,

¹⁴⁸ Dorothy Galton, "The Anglo-Russian Literary Society", Dorothy Galton Archive, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, GAL/3, 4.

¹⁴⁹ Olga Novikoff, "The Eastern Question. II. The Religious Basis of Russian Policy", *Nineteenth Century* 38, 226 (December 1895) 1007.

¹⁵⁰ The Salvation Army leader, General William Booth, believed that the "Army of Revolution is recruited by the Soldiers of Despair" and counselled a more immediate, charitable approach to ameliorating social ills. William Booth, *In Darkest England, and the Way Out* (Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1890) 81.

¹⁵¹ Jaakoff Prelooker, *Under the Czar and Queen Victoria*, 177.

¹⁵² Jaakoff Prelooker, *Under the Czar and Queen Victoria*, 168.

Unitarian Churches, Secular Societies, Philosophical and Literary Societies, Y.M. and Y.W.C.A., Temperance Societies, Peace and Arbitration meetings, ...”.¹⁵³

Born into a strictly Orthodox Jewish family in Pinsk, Western Russia, Prelooker was raised speaking Yiddish and educated at a Rabbinical Seminary at Slonim.¹⁵⁴ While still a child, he learned Russian from friends who attended the special schools set up by Alexander II to force the assimilation of Jews.¹⁵⁵ In 1877, he enrolled himself in a government school in Zhi, where he gained contact with the city's liberal elements, and read widely in Russian and European literature. He also encountered the New Testament. In the 1880s he decided to seek a rapprochement between Christianity and Judaism, founding a sect, which he called “New Israel”. Its programme was the abolition of Judaism’s “antiquated” ritual practises, which, he believed, obscured its affinity with other monotheistic religions. In fundamentals, ‘New Israel’ resembled both Russian Christian sects and Protestant churches: Prelooker counselled a reliance on the Bible, including the New Testament, as the sole source of authority, “interpreted in the light of common sense and modern knowledge”.¹⁵⁶

For a while, Prelooker was given free reign by officials to espouse his new religion. Alexander III’s policy on the “Jewish Problem” was that one third of Jews were to die out, one third were to convert to Christianity, and one third were to leave the country.¹⁵⁷ As long as it was aimed principally at Jews, Prelooker’s project seemed to accord with the second of these objectives. However, when Prelooker’s sermons and meetings began attracting Molokans and Stundists – Christian dissenters who rejected the rites and authority of the Orthodox Church – official neutrality turned into hostility. Despite efforts to work with the consent of Russian officialdom, he suffered eight years of police harassment and censorship. He chose to exile himself to England in 1891.

In England, Prelooker directed his efforts more at “stirring up people’s interest and sympathies with their enslaved brethren in a foreign land”, than proselytising ‘New Israel’.¹⁵⁸ And thanks to the interest in Russia already generated by Stepniak, Kropotkin and

¹⁵³ Jaakoff Prelooker, *Under the Czar and Queen Victoria*, 164n.

¹⁵⁴ Helena Frank, “Jaakoff Prelooker”, 3.

¹⁵⁵ Jaakoff Prelooker, *Under the Czar and Queen Victoria*, 5.

¹⁵⁶ These and other views relating to the sect were first published in Prelooker’s book *Evrei-reformatory: ‘Novyi Izrail’ i ‘Dikhovno-bibleiskoe bravstvo’ (Jewish Reformers)*, published in St. Petersburg in 1882. Prelooker outlines them in *Under the Czar and Queen Victoria*, 26–7, 38–9.

¹⁵⁷ I. Michael Aronson, “The Attitudes of Russian Officials in the 1880s toward Jewish Assimilation and Emigration”, *Slavic Review* 34 (1975).

¹⁵⁸ Prelooker, *Under the Czar and Queen Victoria*, 164.

George Kennan, he discovered a receptive audience. In the first four years after arriving, he spoke at hundreds of open-air gatherings, addressing Churches and institutions in Ireland and England, and delivering over 250 talks in Scotland alone.¹⁵⁹ He also organised Russian pageants, bazaars and markets in provincial towns and villages – events intended to help overcome English prejudice against Russia’s people (as opposed to her government). His most ambitious project was the wildly successful “Moscow in Eastbourne”, at which was reproduced “as accurately as possible the Moscow Kremlin, the famous Winter Palace, a Russian Village, ... and such minor Russia views as would be quite a novelty in this country.” The fashionable holidaymakers who visited the month-long fair were treated to a full Russian choir, “Siberian convict parties” and “marriage ceremonies” enacted by volunteers in authentic dress.¹⁶⁰ In 1895, Prelooker pushed his “pro-Russia movement” a step further with a politically motivated autobiography, *Under the Czar and Queen Victoria*. The book informed readers of the merits of “New Israel” (he hadn’t abandoned preaching) but it also dwelt upon the “barbarous persecution” of the Stundists,¹⁶¹ the treatment of Jews, censorship, and Prelooker’s own experience of Russian officialdom. Both the title and content of this account of living in Russia and Britain drew attention to the differences between regimes of the malevolent Czar and the benevolent Queen of England, a contrast he would later espouse in his children’s story, “The Lion and the Bear”.¹⁶² In 1895, Prelooker set up a Russian Reformation Society, whose purpose was to print and smuggle censored texts to Russia to enable “the spread of enlightenment”.

Perhaps Prelooker’s greatest undertaking was his monthly anti-Tsarist organ, the *Anglo-Russian*, the first issue of which was published in July 1897. The journal’s stated aims were similar to those of *Free Russia*: “to advocate freedom of conscience and a representative form of government in Russia... and generally stimulate a better

¹⁵⁹ Prelooker, *Under the Czar and Queen Victoria*, 165. For a complete list of his lecture topics, see *Under the Czar and Queen Victoria*, 255–6.

¹⁶⁰ Jaakoff Prelooker, “Moscow in Eastbourne”, *Anglo-Russian* 2, 12 (June 1899) 262. As was reported in a subsequent issue of the *Anglo-Russian*: “day after day, numbers of people attended the lectures, tableaux, etc., which aim to impress upon the mind and imagination the sufferings of millions from unparalleled despotism, also the ways in which their deliverance could be hastened. ... Conservatives and Liberals, Churchmen and Nonconformists, alike listened earnestly to the information conveyed, expressing hearty sympathy with the cause advocated, and acquiring a new interest in the pro-Russian movement to which many were totally indifferent but a day before.” “The Russian Exhibition in Eastbourne: A Great Demonstration for Right and Liberty”, *Anglo-Russian* 3, 4–5 (October and November 1899) 293.

¹⁶¹ Prelooker, *Russian Under the Czar and Queen Victoria* 106–7.

¹⁶² Jaakoff Prelooker, “The Lion and the Bear: A Russian Christmas Story for Children”, *Anglo-Russian* 1, 6 (December 1897) 61–3.

understanding and greater harmony between the two nations”.¹⁶³ In contrast to *Free Russia*, however, Prelooker lured English interest in Russian matters with the carrot of economic and financial gain. The journal printed the requisite tales of suffering and tyranny to evoke sympathy for the victims of Tsarist oppression, but its main emphasis was the importance of reforming the Russian state to expedite mutually beneficial trade between Russia and Britain. Prelooker sent copies of the journal gratis every month to leading newspapers and magazines in Great Britain, America, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, India, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, as well as to libraries, members of Parliament, and people with influence.¹⁶⁴

Notwithstanding Prelooker’s tremendous reach as an anti-Tsarist speaker from the late 1890s onwards, the émigré was to find that his popularity came at the cost of friendly relations with other exiles. By some counts, Prelooker was the most sought-after speaker on Russian affairs in Britain, a fact which historians tend to ignore in their enthusiasm for more colourful émigrés such as Stepniak. Yet to endear himself to the crowds of law-abiding church-goers he addressed at open-air meetings on the greens of middle England, he advertised his differences with the radical exiles, deriding their advocacy of violence, drawing around himself a halo of Christianity, and giving socialism a wide berth: “The *Anglo-Russian* cannot identify itself with the socialist movement”.¹⁶⁵ Prelooker even looked different: smooth-chinned, impeccably groomed, and turned out in exquisite Russian costumes.

Hostility between Prelooker and Volkhovsky began with the first issue of the *Anglo-Russian*, in which Prelooker described the latter’s circle as “avowedly antagonistic to any religious creed, Orthodox or Protestant”. By contrast to *Free Russia*, he presented his new journal as an advocate of Russia’s persecuted Nonconformists, Protestants, Catholics and Jews.¹⁶⁶ Besides reeking of opportunism, Prelooker’s put-down was patently untrue, since it failed to acknowledge the great efforts Stepniak, Volkhovsky and the SFRF had already made to publicise the plight of persecuted religious minorities. The number of Jewish

¹⁶³ This journal was anticipated in Prelooker, *Under the Czar and Queen Victoria*, 176.

¹⁶⁴ Frank, in Prelooker, *Russian Flashlights* 31.

¹⁶⁵ Jaakoff Prelooker, “Editorial”, *Anglo-Russian* 1, 4 (October 1897) 42.

¹⁶⁶ “Russian Societies in England” *Anglo-Russian* 1, 1 (July 1897) 5. This was unsigned, but probably was written by Prelooker. The rivalry between the *Anglo-Russian* and *Free Russia* makes for an interesting study. John Slatter provides a starting point in “Jaakoff Prelooker and *The Anglo-Russian*”, in Slatter, *From the Other Shore*, 54–5.

Russians who paid tribute to Stepniak at his funeral was just one proof of this. Prelooker's accusation, and his emphasis on the persecution of various bodies of Christians, showed him to be targeting his message at a wide demographic which fell outside of *Free Russia's* traditional support base. Despite the best intentions of the radical émigrés to garner sympathy across party, class and religious divides, they relied heavily on figures associated with socialist, internationalist and Labour movements, groups less sympathetic to organised religion.¹⁶⁷ Prelooker's charge, then, designed to further his own journal's interests, endangered what precarious support *Free Russia* émigrés had among religious elements in British society. SFRF executive committee members Spence Watson and J.F. Green responded to Prelooker's accusations with a letter, printed in the second issue of the *Anglo-Russian*, in which they drew attention to *Free Russia's* fund raising activities for persecuted Stundists and Dukhobors. Volkhovsky, however, remained incensed with Prelooker for many years.

The editor of the *Anglo-Russian* further alienated his fellow émigrés with his repeated denunciations of the "foolish" and violent schemes of Russian Revolutionists.¹⁶⁸ Once again, to the *Free Russia* circle, such attacks were potentially very damaging, since some of their core British support came from the peace camp. Spence Watson, George Herbert Perris, and J.F. Green, for example, were all leading lights in the International Arbitration and Peace Association.¹⁶⁹ Rivalry between Prelooker and Volkhovsky reached a high pitch in 1898, when they freely exchanged criticism in their respective journals. Strangely, in the heat of the battle, the Russian Reformation Society made a gesture of reconciliation towards the SFRF, apparently with the intention of working more closely with the group. Volkhovsky firmly resisted, writing to his friend and then assistant, Ada Radford: "we consider Prel. to be a man without steady principles, who strives only for success (be it even not his personal success, but that of his organisation, it is no good if it serves no

¹⁶⁷ An excellent analysis of British class, ethnographic and religious divides and their corresponding allegiances with different parties and movements can be found in E. Spencer Wellhofer, "'Two Nations': Class and Periphery in Late Victorian Britain, 1885–1910", *American Political Science Review* 79, 4 (December 1985) 977–93.

¹⁶⁸ Jaakoff Prelooker, "Foolish Schemes of Russian Revolutionists", *Anglo-Russian* 1, 7 (January 1897) 79.

¹⁶⁹ For the involvement of Green, Perris and Pease in the International Arbitration and Peace Association, see Paul Laity, *The British Peace Movement 1870–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001) 133–4.

definite principle!), and that therefore we cannot trust Prel. and in no case can we allow him to represent the cause & our Society”.¹⁷⁰

Over time Prelooker came to see that divisions within the anti-Tsarist movement failed to serve its greater purpose. Much as he repeatedly stated his opposition to the violent methods of Russian revolutionaries, based on the Biblical precept “Thou shalt not kill”, he also came to advocate tolerance of their methods and unity with their aims. In 1898, the *Anglo-Russian* joined *Free Russia* in its defence on behalf of Vladimir Burtsev, and attacked Tsar Nicholas II’s spurious Peace manifesto.¹⁷¹ The following year Prelooker justified to Britons his call for less division amongst the anti-Tsarist forces: “A Christian stands in exactly the same relation to a Nihilist, as a Quaker to a military man. ... Can not both be members of the same associations, political or humanitarian? Of course they can”.¹⁷² In 1901 he grudgingly admitted, “the policy of peaceable agitation carried on by the Russian opposition during the last twenty years has proved a failure, oppression and tyranny having only increased in that time.”¹⁷³ Prelooker never went so far as to preach violence. But he did resolutely refrain from criticising the Nihilists in his own books like the sensationally titled, *Russia, What She Was and What She Is: An Excursion into a Land of Seething Volcanoes* (1904).¹⁷⁴ In 1908, he even penned a volume eulogising revolutionaries – including political assassins – in *Heroes and Heroines of Russia... Builders of a New Commonwealth*. He justified himself to his audience by writing: “It is ... the spirit of altruism and self-abnegation and not the particular methods and acts of the Russian Heroes and Heroines, that is of an invigorating and uplifting influence and therefore of educational and moral value.”¹⁷⁵ Despite his disclaimer, the volume was radical enough to have been adopted as a key text by the English pro-revolutionary movement in the years leading up to the October revolution.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ Felix Volkhovsky to Ada Radford (17 July 1898) Wallas Collection, Newnham College, Cambridge.

¹⁷¹ See, for example, “Bourtzev’s Case Again”, in which excerpts from *Free Russia* are reproduced, *Anglo-Russian* 1, 10 (April 1898) 112.

¹⁷² Prelooker, “Join Hands All Round”, 265.

¹⁷³ “Revival of Revolutionary Activity in Russia”, *Anglo-Russian* 4, 10 (April 1901) 477.

¹⁷⁴ Jaakoff Prelooker, *Russia, What She Was and What She Is, An Excursion into a Land of Seething Volcanoes* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1904).

¹⁷⁵ Jaakoff Prelooker, *Heroes and Heroines of Russia ... Builders of a New Commonwealth* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1908) viii.

¹⁷⁶ See, for example, Tom Bell, *Pioneering Days* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1941) 148.

Despite his alienation from other exiles fighting against Tsarism, and the occasionally mixed message he relayed, Prelooker was more effective than the radicals in persuading religious and conservative elements of English society of the need for a Russian revolution. In 1911, a review in the *Academy* testified to the power of anti-Tsarist propaganda when voiced by someone who simultaneously preached both Christianity and pacifism.

The fact that a man like Mr. Prelooker, with his humane – one might almost say Christlike – ideals, should be a revolutionist, or entertain profound sympathy for the revolutionary cause, speaks volumes for the terrible state of the Russian Empire, since peaceful, Godfearing, cultured, and refined men of the type of the author do not become revolutionists without good cause.¹⁷⁷

Chertkov – Tolstoy's Amanuensis

One crucial weapon employed by both pacifist and revolutionary anti-Tsarist camps at the English *fin de siècle* was the literature and reputation of Count Leo Tolstoy. Today Tolstoy is remembered as a great nineteenth-century novelist. In the late 1890s, he was regarded in equal parts as novelist and prophet. He first made waves in England in the 1880s when both Vizetelly and the Newcastle publisher Walter Scott began issuing his novels and his later religious tracts more or less simultaneously. (Walter Scott, for example, first published *War and Peace* (1865-69) in 1889, the same year it produced *What to Do?* (1882-6) and *Where Love is, there God is Also* (1885), tracts written well after Tolstoy's famous religious crisis.) At this point, few people were aware of what Edmund Gosse called Tolstoy's "complete change of dress" – his religious transformation and eventual repudiation of literary art.¹⁷⁸ In the main, however, it was Tolstoy the religious leader – the Tolstoy that had relinquished his property, wore peasant's sandals and preached an anarchist Christianity based on Christ's Sermon on the Mount – who acquired in England, and indeed internationally, a cult-like status. In 1896, John Coleman Kenworthy, England's most fervent Tolstoyan, wrote, without exaggeration: "at the present time there is not living a more commanding personality and profounder spiritual influence than Leo Tolstoy".¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ W.J.B.S. "Present Day Russia" [Review of *Russian Flashlights*, by Jaakoff Prelooker] *Academy* 80 (29 July 1911) 513.

¹⁷⁸ Edmund Gosse, "Count Lyof Tolstoi", *Critical Kit-Kats* (London: Heinemann, 1896) 115.

¹⁷⁹ John Coleman Kenworthy, "Tolstoy's Teaching and Influence in England", in Kenworthy, *Tolstoy: His Life and Works* (London, Newcastle-on-Tyne: The Walter Scott Publishing Co., 1902) 19. The essay was first

Tolstoy's message might have been tailor-made for late-Victorian England. As Garth Jones has pointed out, his moral fervour, incisive analysis of the ills of society, and solutions for a simpler mode of life, provided a "single focus" for the country's myriad restless anti-establishment groups, all seeking answers to social inequalities "in new patterns of social and religious order."¹⁸⁰ Despite his antipathy towards science, Tolstoy rejected all beliefs in miracles and superstitions. In so doing, he harmonised the claims of religion with the equally powerful claims of more 'rationally'-minded intellectuals. Therein lay his appeal. Matthew Arnold wrote appreciatively of Tolstoy's rejection of the supernatural paraphernalia surrounding the Church: "questions about the Trinity, about the godhead of Christ, about the procession of the Holy Ghost, are not vital; what is vital is the doctrine of access to the spirit of life through Jesus".¹⁸¹ Early converts to the creed included Theosophists, Fabians, Socialists, anarchists, vegetarians, a Positivist and Congregationalists.¹⁸² Kenworthy, himself a disciple of Ruskin, noted that the affinities in England with Tolstoy's views ran deep: "Tolstoy touches the same springs that were reached by Wicklif [sic], Fox, Bunyan, and Wesley". He and others saw links between the Tolstoyan movement and Quakerism, Nonconformism, Puritanism and Salvationism.¹⁸³ More serious advocates of Tolstoyanism gave up all their worldly possessions to join the Tolstoyan communities (not unlike the utopian communities formerly established by Robert Owen, or the industrial societies proposed by Ruskin) which cropped up in the late 1890s "to redeem... 'corrupt civilization'".¹⁸⁴ To many religiously-minded socialists, Tolstoy proffered a new and tenable Christian order. But the great Russian also spoke to England's less-than-earnest aesthetes. G.K. Chesterton, remembering the louche mood of the artistic and vaguely anarchistic clubs of the early 1900s, remarks that alongside Ibsen, Tolstoy was seen as the most important thinker of the age: "there was a pleasant atmosphere of discussing...[his ideas], without any particular sense of responsibility for coming to any conclusion on

presented before the Anglo-Russian Literary Society in 1896, but was not published in the Society's proceedings.

¹⁸⁰ W. Gareth Jones, introduction to *Tolstoi and Britain* (Oxford: Washington, D.C.: Berg, 1995) 11.

¹⁸¹ Matthew Arnold, "Count Leo Tolstoi", *The Last Word*, edited by R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977) 297. The essay was first published in *Fortnightly Review* n.s. 42 (December 1887) 783–799.

¹⁸² W.H.G. Armytage, *Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England 1560–1960* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961) 342, 345.

¹⁸³ John Coleman Kenworthy, "Tolstoy's Teaching and Influence", *Tolstoy: His Life and Works*, 39–40, 37.

¹⁸⁴ Armytage, *Heavens Below*, 347.

them”.¹⁸⁵ While many sober-minded and moderate Britons rejected aspects of Tolstoy’s programme as impracticable, conservatives, aesthetes and radicals alike admitted respect for his ideals and intentions. As one Christian Communist group publicly declared in August 1899: “We circulate Tolstoy because his conception of the ideal life is nearest to ours.”¹⁸⁶

Tolstoy’s words about Russia’s ills both helped and hindered the message of radical émigré propagandists. While he was vehemently critical of the Russian government, one of the fundamental pillars of his philosophy was his doctrine of non-resistance to evil. Violence used even in self-defence was impermissible, and revolutionary violence deplorable. In Russia, Tolstoy’s propaganda – which called for an inner-spiritual, and not a political revolution – had been successfully used to defuse Nihilist unrest, an effect which William Stead gloated over in *The Truth About Russia*: “As a prophylactic to Nihilism [Tolstoy’s] propaganda is said to have proved very useful. It affords an outlet for the spirit of divine discontent, which was infinitely nobler than that offered by the party of dynamite – nobler, and at the same time deeper.... the new spirit had borne notable fruits in the shape of heroic self-abnegation”.¹⁸⁷ In England the dissemination of Tolstoy’s pacifist writings would similarly argue in favour of a non-violent solution to the problem of Tsarist despotism.

On the other hand, Tolstoy’s unmistakable hostility towards Russia’s autocracy spoke as loudly as his pacificism. As Prelooker wrote:

however strongly Tolstoy may argue against the ethics and expediency of using violent revolutionary methods for the overthrow of the unbearable yoke of Czarism, and however eloquently and persuasively he may prove the only rational way of salvation to be by everyone perfecting himself individually and simply desisting passively from participation in military service and other evils of the existing *régime*, no other Russian now or before has so much exposed before the world at large the iniquities of the Russian State system.¹⁸⁸

The ambiguity of Tolstoy’s message created a curious situation in England whereby pacifist Tolstoyans rubbed elbows with bloody-minded anarchists, both sharing Tolstoy’s opposition

¹⁸⁵ G.K. Chesterton, *Autobiography*, introduction by William Oddie (Sevenoaks, Kent: Fisher Press, 1992) 158, 289.

¹⁸⁶ *New Order* (August 1899), quoted in Armytage, *Heavens Below*, 350.

¹⁸⁷ W.T. Stead, *The Truth about Russia* (London: Cassell, 1888) 407.

¹⁸⁸ Prelooker, *Russia: What She Was and What She Is*, 117.

to private property and all forms of government.¹⁸⁹ When, in 1906, Kropotkin founded the Anarchist Club on Jubilee Street in East London, its walls would carry a picture of Tolstoy alongside portraits of Karl Marx, William Morris and Kropotkin himself. Anti-Tsarist anarchists made the most of the visionary's opposition to Russia's autocracy, even to the extent of ascribing his precept of "Resist not evil" to his old age. Appropriating the prophet to his own creed, Kropotkin likened him to the young Russian revolutionaries of the 1870s: "If Tolstoy had been in his twenties, he might possibly have joined the movement".¹⁹⁰ Even the ostensibly pacifist Prelooker dismissed Tolstoy's "heroic self-abnegation": "I am inclined to [the opinion]... that Tolstoy's preaching never to use force against force and to content oneself with the moral effect of passive resistance, must not be taken as meant seriously."¹⁹¹ Prelooker was one of the first émigrés to write and lecture extensively on Tolstoy, using him to legitimise his own anti-Tsarist invective.¹⁹²

Although almost every émigré propagandist was eventually to jump on the Tolstoyan bandwagon (either as a detractor or a flag-waver), in the early 1890s the most avid proselytiser of Tolstoy was still an Englishman. John Coleman Kenworthy founded the Brotherhood Publishing Company in 1895 for the purpose of disseminating Tolstoy's pamphlets and similarly-minded literature. He also produced *The New Order*, a newsletter devoted to the many Tolstoyan communitarian experiments springing up internationally. In February 1897, he helped start up a small colony in Essex with "five earnest souls, a house, two small cottages, workshops and an incubator" which soon grew and became a breeding ground for offshoot colonies.¹⁹³ But it was the arrival in March 1897 of the charismatic émigré, Vladimir Chertkov, which confirmed England as *the* international hub of Tolstoyism outside Russia.¹⁹⁴

Chertkov (1854–1936) had a similar background to Tolstoy: his father, a wealthy general, had been an aide-de-camp to Nicholas I, and Adjutant General to Alexander II;¹⁹⁵ his aristocratic mother socialised in the highest circles of the Russian court. Like Tolstoy,

¹⁸⁹ Armytage writes that in 1896, "Kenworthy was wallowing in anarchist activity", *Heavens Below*, 346.

¹⁹⁰ Peter Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature* (London: Duckworth and Co., 1905) 135.

¹⁹¹ Prelooker, *Russia: What She Was and What She Is*, 118.

¹⁹² See, for example, Jakoff Prelooker's commentary to Leo Tolstoy, "Count Tolstoy, On Flogged and Floggers", *Russian Reformation Society*, 1 (January 1899) 1.

¹⁹³ Armytage, *Heavens Below*, 347.

¹⁹⁴ Michael J. de K. Holman, "Translating Tolstoy for the Free Age Press: Vladimir Chertkov and His English Manager Arthur Fifield", *Slavonic and East European Review* 66, 2 (April 1988) 185.

Chertkov had the legacy of a dissipated youth to regret and consequently developed a fierce antipathy towards the empty lifestyle of his own privileged class. After meeting the author in 1883, he soon became his closest friend, confidant, and most industrious advocate. The earliest tangible result of his activity on behalf of the novelist was his involvement in the publication in St. Petersburg of a serial known as the *Intermediary*. This took the popular form of a peasant chapbook, and was devoted to printing morally edifying tales by Tolstoy (and other popular writers such as Garshin, Korolenko, and Leskov) for mass distribution in the provinces. During this time Chertkov encouraged Tolstoy to tailor his ideological views into short didactic stories for the uneducated classes – and regularly sent him examples of semi-literate ‘plebeian’ fiction to spur him to improve the genre. It was largely thanks to Chertkov that Tolstoy became “the ‘proclaimed’ writer for the masses”.¹⁹⁶ Within four years, the *Intermediary* had sold an astonishing 12,000,000 copies, notwithstanding increasing harassment from the censors. It was considered to be a revolution in publishing.¹⁹⁷

In 1896 Chertkov and Tolstoy became aware of the plight of the Dukhobors, a sect of dissenters who accepted no higher authority than their own consciences, and like Tolstoy, were staunch pacifists. During a revival of the sect in 1895, the group had expressed their opposition to military service by burning all their weapons.¹⁹⁸ The authorities responded by flogging them, and evicting them from their homes and properties. Those who had deserted the Imperial Army were thrown into prison.¹⁹⁹ The following December, Chertkov co-authored a passionately-worded pamphlet entitled *Pomogite! (Help!)* describing their ordeals..He was promptly exiled, not to Siberia, but rather, owing to his mother’s high connections, to England, a country he knew from earlier visits as a young evangelical convert of Lord Radstock’s. He came laden with Tolstoy’s private papers and manuscripts to

¹⁹⁵ Alexander Fodor, *The Quest for a Non-Violent Russia: The Partnership of Leo Tolstoy and Vladimir Chertkov* (Lantham, Md; London: University Press of America, 1989) 41.

¹⁹⁶ Thais S. Lindstrom, “From Chapbooks to Classics: The Story of the *Intermediary*”, *American Slavic and East European Review* 16, issue 2 (April 1957) 194.

¹⁹⁷ Thais S. Lindstrom, “From Chapbooks to Classics”, 193.

¹⁹⁸ Fodor, *The Quest for a Non-Violent Russia*, 84.

¹⁹⁹ Vladimir Tchertkoff, ed., *Christian Martyrdom in Russia: Persecution of the Spirit-Wrestlers (or Doukhobortsi) in the Caucasus*, with a concluding chapter by Leo Tolstoy (London: Brotherhood Publishing Co., 1897) 10.

save them from the Russian secret police.²⁰⁰ He was to remain as a permanent resident in England until July 1908.²⁰¹

Chertkov initially settled near Kenworthy's cooperative community in Purleigh, Essex, where he drew on the enthusiastic support of its members to publish and publicise Tolstoy's post-conversion writings. His first English translations of Tolstoy's work were published either under the imprint of the Brotherhood Publishing Company or in Kenworthy's paper, *The New Order*. He also published Tolstoy's censored works in Russian with the Free Russian Press Fund (run by Volkhovsky's fraternity in London), which had a Cyrillic press and a network for smuggling illicit texts into Russia for circulation. Within a few years Chertkov tightened his control over Tolstoyan publishing in England, establishing a Russian language publishing house known as the Free Word Press in 1899. The following year, with capital from Alexander Konshin, a wealthy Russian spinner, he created an offshoot of the Brotherhood Publishing Company called the Free Age Press, which published English translations of Tolstoy's work. By this time, Chertkov had moved to the graceful twenty-room, red-brick 'Tuckton House' (purchased by his mother) near Bournemouth. The nearby Christchurch waterworks served as a publishing house, and a strongroom was built to house Tolstoy's manuscripts.²⁰² Besides operating as the centre of Tolstoyan publishing in England, Tuckton House became an international Tolstoyan colony whose members adhered strictly to a vegetarian diet and Tolstoy's guidelines for a simple life.²⁰³ Englishmen and Russian émigrés joined the colony and lent their efforts to the work of the press.

By any measure, the output of the English-language Free Age Press was prodigious. According to its English manager Arthur Fifield, during its first three years of existence, it "put before the English-speaking world no less than 424 million pages of Tolstoy's writings, on a self-supporting basis, with no personal profit; besides permitting very extensive reproduction of the articles and stories in magazines and newspapers."²⁰⁴ Like its Russian prototype, the *Intermediary*, it took lessons from the example of the Russian chap book industry, mass producing material (sometimes of dubious quality) at the lowest possible

²⁰⁰ A.N. Wilson, *Tolstoy* (London: Penguin, 2001) 406.

²⁰¹ *Help! (Pomogite!)* was issued in Russia on 12 December 1896. Its other authors were Pavel Biryukov (1860–1931) and Ivan Tregubov (1858–1931). Biryukov and Tregubov were exiled to the Balkans.

²⁰² A.N. Wilson, *Tolstoy*, 434.

²⁰³ Fodor, *The Quest for a Non-Violent Russia*, 94–5.

price: sometimes as low as a half-penny. Some of the booklets it issued were compiled out of extracts from Tolstoy's private diaries and unpublished letters (kept in Chertkov's barred and bolted archive). These were translated (awkwardly) by Chertkov and assembled under titles such as *Thoughts on God*; *Letters on War*; and *Some Social Remedies*.²⁰⁵ Chertkov also put his editorial stamp on longer works such as *My Confession*. In addition, the Press published leaflets purposely written by Tolstoy: books like *The Slavery of Our Times*, and famously, Tolstoy's novel, *Resurrection*. Among its best sellers were two eighty-page booklets, *Popular Stories* and *Legends by Leo Tolstoy*. In accordance with Tolstoy's wish and principles, all of the publications were printed without copyright, a fact which facilitated their further dissemination by other publishers.

Chertkov's commitment to spreading Tolstoy's message both in England and in Russia has been attributed to a panoply of motives. Alexander Fodor, an unsympathetic biographer, argues that Chertkov promoted Tolstoy's pacifism because he wished to save his aristocratic set back home from violence and havoc.²⁰⁶ Fodor suggests that the aristocrat was in secret collusion with the Russian bureaucracy: as evidence, he instances the unusually light treatment Chertkov received at the hands of Russian authorities when he was exiled for writing *Help!*, and the fact that once in England, he was spared the constant harassment suffered by other radical émigrés. Some of Chertkov's contemporaries saw him as a jealous zealot clinging onto Tolstoy's charmed peasant garb for his own self-aggrandisement. Aylmer Maude, Tolstoy's principal English translator, depicted him as a despot who forced English Tolstoyans to abide strictly by the letter of Tolstoy's impracticable precepts even when this led to their ruin. Kenworthy, he notes, was just one of the Tolstoyans under his spell who ended up in a mental hospital.²⁰⁷ Many joined Maude in complaining about the obsessive desire Chertkov had to control every aspect of Tolstoy's English reputation, despite the fact that Tolstoy offered his work for publication without fee to all who asked. Prelooker, meanwhile, ascribed Chertkov's faults to the "intolerant and narrow-minded anti-dogmatic dogmatism" which "is unhappily a feature of all...even the most advanced

²⁰⁴ Fifield, *Statement* 23. Quoted in Holman, "Translating Tolstoy for the Free Age Press", 196.

²⁰⁵ Holman, "Translating Tolstoy for the Free Age Press", 189.

²⁰⁶ Much of Alexander Fodor, *The Quest for a Non-Violent Russia*, is devoted to proving this thesis. See in particular pages 33, 71–2, 102n, 107,

²⁰⁷ Aylmer Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: II. The Later Years* (London: Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1930) 192.

political or religious reformers whose zeal seems to carry them away”.²⁰⁸ If he were operating today, however, Chertkov’s behaviour would probably be attributed to a ‘personality disorder’: in all relationships, his pattern was to charm his followers and then to browbeat them, as one intimate remembered, with “the force of a most volcanic and titanic nature”.²⁰⁹ He thrived on being radical, vitriolic and provocative.

Whatever the ambiguity surrounding Chertkov’s motives, his work as a propagandist sent a strong message throughout England about all that was wrong with Russia’s government. Unsurprisingly, Britons had often agitated over what Tolstoy had to say about marriage, education, money and non-resistance to authority – over his *universal* precepts. He was seen as a world prophet, a sage in the order of “Moses, Jesus” Sakya Muni”.²¹⁰ Those (like Edmund Gosse) who eschewed Tolstoy’s reforming mode, meanwhile, clothed him in the garb of a pure artist, a disinterested writer of novels.²¹¹ Chertkov’s contribution was to make Tolstoy’s position with respect to the Russian and the Tsar a central feature of his reputation. In itself, the very existence and necessity of a printing press in England dedicated to getting Tolstoy’s literature disseminated *in Russia* underscored his perceived threat to the Tsarist regime. Moreover, the material Chertkov published emphasised Tolstoy’s position in this regard. In addition to publishing the prophet’s purpose-written tracts defaming official Russia, Chertkov translated and even adapted extracts from Tolstoy’s note-books and private letters in order to produce pamphlets which attacked the Russian government and drew attention to its official enmity towards religious minorities – pamphlets like *A Great Iniquity*, *The End of the Age*, and *The Crisis in Russia*. When Chertkov published *Resurrection*, he made certain to publicise broadly the fact that its profits were being used to help the beleaguered Dukhobors to relocate to Canada, a fact which further placed Tolstoy in opposition to the Russian government. To Tolstoy’s own anti-Tsarist propaganda, Chertkov added his own. His book, *Christian Martyrdom in Russia* (1897), for example, opened with the shocking revelation: “More than four thousand people are suffering and dying from hunger, disease, exhaustion, blows, tortures, and other persecutions at the hands of the Russian authorities”.²¹² In both its methods of production and in the matter it

²⁰⁸ Prelooker, *Russia: What She Was and What She Is*, 120.

²⁰⁹ A.C. Fifield, *The Free Age Press, A Brief Statement of its Work*, (1933) 21.

²¹⁰ G.H. Perris, *The Life and Teaching of Tolstoy* (London: Grant Richards, 1901) 1.

²¹¹ Edmund Gosse, “Count Lyof Tolstoi”, *Critical Kit-Kats*, 115–131.

²¹² Tchertkoff, ed., *Christian Martyrdom in Russia*, 1.

produced, Chertkov's Free Age Press was a powerful revolutionary tool, a centre for raising anti-Tsarist sentiments in the west whose principle lever was Leo Tolstoy.

Part II: LITERATURE AS PROPAGANDA

The Influx of Russian Literature

If England weathered an onslaught of Russian émigrés from the 1880s until the second decade of the 1900s, it is also true that it experienced a more triumphal invasion: that of Russian literature. In the 1860s and 1870s, barely an English copy of Gogol or Pushkin, Turgenev, Dostoevsky or Tolstoy could be purchased. Those that did find a publisher came in bowdlerised translations, often from the French. In 1872, for example, Turgenev's *Smoke; or, Life at Baden* derived from a French version so dreadful that, according to one scholar, Turgenev himself had felt "bound to protest against its being supposed to convey a just idea of his work".¹ The contrast between the year 1880 and the year 1910 is thus astonishing. Within three decades almost all the best works of Dostoevsky, Gogol, Tolstoy, Turgenev and Gorky had been translated, as well as many works by less-remembered populist writers: Saltykov-Shchedrin, Korolenko, Potapenko and Nekrasov.² In less than thirty years, Russian literature in translation had become standard stock in libraries, bookshops and family bookshelves.

Vera Zasulich, the tenacious "Eastern Problem", and the revolutionary storm-clouds which seemed blowing from Russia all undoubtedly contributed to the increasing demand for fiction about Russia. In 1880 few reliable sources on the nation were available, a situation which led Mrs. Oliphant to recommend Turgenev's "careful pictures" for "a just conception of the country which alone of all the great modern empires still remains unknown to ordinary travellers".³ And in 1887, Gogol's *Dead Souls* and the writings of Turgenev provided the basis for an article in *Nineteenth Century* on the state of the Russian peasantry.⁴ Beyond the curiosity about Russia's internal affairs, interest in Russian literature was piqued by the frenzy with which it was being read elsewhere in Europe and indeed in

¹ William Ralston, "Turgeunief's Novels", *North British Review* 50, n.s. 11 (March 1869) 24.

² The influx of Russian literature into England in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been mapped with great precision in numerous bibliographies. For Tolstoy, see Leo Wiener's "Bibliography of Works and Articles on Tolstoy in English and German", *The Complete Works of Count Tolstoy* 24 (London: Dent, 1905) 403-35; for Turgenev, see Patrick Waddington, ed., *Ivan Turgenev and Britain* (Oxford, Providence, USA: Berg, 1995) 213-252; for a general overview, see Maurice B. Line's *A Bibliography of Russian Literature in English Translation* (London: The Library Association, 1963).

³ Margaret Oliphant, "Russia and Nihilism in the Novels of M Tourgénéief", *Blackwood's Magazine* 127 (May 1880) 624.

⁴ F.P. Verney, "Rural Life in Russia", *Nineteenth Century*. no. 119 (January 1887) 133-147.

some circles in America. During visits to the continent, educated English men and women came across good translations of Turgenev, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Back home, they read tantalising notices of French or German renderings of the canon in magazines like *Blackwood's* and the *Athenaeum*. It was only a matter of time before publishers caught wind of a marketable vogue. Meanwhile, *littérateurs*, weary of what they saw to be the sentimental and thickly-plotted English novel and French fiction's obsession with the gutter, wondered whether the Russian novel might lead the way out of the novel's current *impasse*. As early as 1887, Matthew Arnold pushed the Russian novel's "sensitiveness, subtlety, and finesse" as an alternative to the French novel's "spirit of observation" and "touch of hardness". In the same essay he made his well-known prophecy: "If fresh literary productions maintain this vogue [for Russian literature] and enhance it, we shall all be learning Russian."⁵

However, as Arnold's prophecy suggested, there was, as yet, a great barrier to the transmission of Russia's canon into England: the dearth of able translators. Despite a growing interest in Russia in academia – Oxford instituted its annual Ilchester Lectures on Russian subjects in 1870, and in 1889 William Morfill was appointed to an Oxford readership in Russian and Slavonic – in the late nineteenth century, universities across the board failed to provide resources for learning Slavic languages. Russian would not be officially taught at Oxford until 1904, and no School of Russian Studies existed at any British university until 1907, when Bernard Pares founded one at Liverpool. Typical was Edinburgh University, which did not begin teaching elementary Russian until the 1916–17 session, and only introduced examination courses in the subject in 1919–20.⁶ For the most part, English translators of Russian literature (and these were few and far between) were either self-taught, like William Ralston (who translated Russian folk-tales and a novel by Turgenev)⁷ or the poetic scions of families which had been long engaged in Anglo-Russian trade. The latter knew the language strictly by virtue of childhoods spent amongst the English mercantile set in Russia, not because there was any culture of Russian study back at

⁵ Matthew Arnold, "Count Leo Tolstoi", 284, 282.

⁶ I am indebted to Tricia Boyd, Senior Library Assistant, Special Collections Department, Edinburgh University Library, for this information.

⁷ M.P. Alexeyev, "William Ralston and Russian Writers of the Later Nineteenth Century", *Oxford Slavonic Papers* 11 (1964) 89.

home.⁸ Commensurate with the lack of translators, there was – as Morfill frequently complained to his friends and correspondents – widespread ignorance of Russian literature and the conditions in which it was produced.⁹

It was all very well for Morfill to complain, but when it came to England's ignorance of Russia's nineteenth-century realist canon, it was partly he, and other scholarly types, who were to blame. The few Ilchester lectures which actually dealt with literature were of ethnographic or historical interest: "On the Songs and Stories of the Russian People" (1871); "The Native Literature of Bohemia in the fourteenth century" (1877); and "On Greeko-Slavonic Literature [sic]" (1886).¹⁰ Morfill's own output contributed to this trend. He busily published on peasant poets; and his 1883 volume *Slavonic Literature* would have been better titled, *Early Slavonic Literature*, containing as it did, nary a mention of Gogol, Tolstoy or any of Russia's nineteenth-century greats.¹¹ William Ralston, despite championing his friend Turgenev, similarly specialised in Russian songs, folk-tales, and mythology. In short, academic interest in Russian literature resembled, in focus and intent, the current fascination with Icelandic and Norse sagas or Gypsy lore. It was dominated by anthropological forays into the unsophisticated cultural products of a more primitive race and society. It was not until 1889, a whole nineteen years after they began, that the first Ilchester lectures on "Modern Russian Novelists" were announced.¹² The man brought in to deliver these talks, Charles Edward Turner, had lived in St. Petersburg for thirty years (working as lector in English language at the Imperial University). In England such expertise was unprocurable.

It was the exiled Russian intelligentsia who filled the vacuum, as translators, language-tutors, and proud propagandists of their country's literature. Between 1890 and 1905, the majority of seminal translations of nineteenth-century Russian fiction produced in the country would be undertaken either by Russian émigrés or by Englishmen and women

⁸ Dostoevsky translator Frederick Whishaw – a strapping tenor and novelist who found commerce "distasteful" – hailed from a family which had been connected with Russia since the 1770s and had grown up in St. Petersburg. Tolstoy translator Louisa Maude (née Shanks) was, similarly, the daughter of a British businessman in Moscow. M.S. Leight, ed., *A History of the Whishaw Family* (London: Methuen & Co., 1953) 131; William Baker, "Maude, Aylmer (1858–1938), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/article/34944>.

⁹ A.G. Cross, "Konstantin Bal'mont in Oxford in 1897", *Oxford Slavonic Papers* n.s. 12 (1979) 105.

¹⁰ For a list of Ilchester Lectures delivered between 1870 and 1979, see J.S.G. Simmons, "Slavonic Studies at Oxford 1844–1909", *Oxford Slavonic Papers* n.s. 13 (1980) 1–27.

¹¹ To be fair, this was published in a series called "The Dawn of European Literature", W.R. Morfill, *Slavonic Literature* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1883).

¹² J.S.G. Simmons, "Slavonic Studies at Oxford 1844–1909", 23.

closely connected with the émigré circle. The same would be true for essays, lectures, books, and articles about Russian literature. In 1903, Prelooker's journal the *Anglo-Russian* reported, "the demand for the loan and purchase of Russian fiction has more than doubled itself within the last five years. This is partly accounted for by the fact that of recent years an educated Russian community – as distinct altogether from the East-end immigrant – has come into existence in London."¹³ If, indeed, conditions in England made a flood of Russian literature into the country inevitable, it was the émigrés who opened the floodgates and manned the dykes. Popular attitudes towards both Russia and her literature would be determined to large extent by the tastes, ideologies and aesthetic values of its bands of exiled Tolstoyans, Siberian escapees and conspirators against the Tsar.

¹³ "English Demand for Russian Literature", *Anglo-Russian* 7, 5 (November 1903) 760.

Motivations

One incentive for an émigré to peddle Russian literature was financial. When Prelooker arrived in England with two pounds, he depended upon his success and versatility on the lecture circuit for both his own livelihood and the future of his movement.¹⁴ It made sense to add to his repertoire lectures pandering to middle-class England's growing taste for Russian fiction. Stepniak made quick cash from his translations of Korolenko, 'Englished' by the *Times* correspondent William Westall. He also received twenty percent of Constance Garnett's royalties for checking over her Turgenev translations.¹⁵ The lesser-known radical, Vasilii Zhook, meanwhile, made a "modest subsistence" writing on Russian literary topics in the late 1890s.¹⁶ Chertkov, with his wealthy mother and twenty-room Tuckton house, hardly needed any money for himself. But the revenue he made on sales of Tolstoy's stories in England was channelled towards the cost of printing clandestine propaganda and shipping it to Russia.¹⁷ Some of the profits from the English translation of Tolstoy's last novel, *Resurrection* (1899) also helped the persecuted Doukhobours relocate to the Canadian West.

However, the émigrés were also genuinely drawn to cultural pursuits. In London the easiest place to find an ex-*narodnik* was the British Library Reading Room in Bloomsbury, where under a false name, he would be obsessively compiling notes on anything from Carlyle to Greek philosophy.¹⁸ Vladimir Burtsev, the Russian journalist charged with proselytising Tsaricide, spent his time in the library compiling a useful guide to the library's holdings of Russian manuscripts.¹⁹ And Stepniak shocked Constance Garnett by smuggling books out of the Reading Room during lunch hour (always returning them).²⁰ It was there that he developed informed opinions about George Meredith, Thomas Carlyle, Jane Austen, William Dean Howells, George Eliot, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman and John Greanleaf Whittier.²¹ Kropotkin, another British Library habitué, was likewise passionately

¹⁴ Jaakoff Prelooker, *Russian Flashlights* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1911) 25.

¹⁵ Constance Garnett to Sergei Stepniak (11 October 1893) Stepniak-Kravchinskii archive, RGALI, fond 1158, op 1, ed khr, no. 3.

¹⁶ Aylmer Maude to G.H. Perris (26 June 1901) Leeds Russian Archive, Leeds University, MS. 1380.

¹⁷ Michael J. de K. Holman, "Translating Tolstoy for the Free Age Press: Vladimir Chertkov and His English Manager Arthur Fifield", *Slavonic and East European Review* 66, 2 (April 1988) 187.

¹⁸ See for example, Reginald Frank Christian, *Alexis Aladin, The Tragedy of Exile* (New York, Ottawa, Toronto: Legas, 1999) 42.

¹⁹ Robert Henderson, "Russian Political Emigrés and the British Museum Library", *Library History* 9, 1 and 2 (1991) 64.

²⁰ Constance Garnett, unpublished memoir, 79, Garnett Family Archive, Hilton Hall.

²¹ Harriet Stanton Blatch, "Stepniak at Home", *Boston Evening Transcript* (9 May 1889) 5.

devoted to the arts; beside his literary interests, he enjoyed music and opera and was an amateur painter. For his part, Volkhovsky loved to dabble in literary pursuits of his own – his output included a published volume of poetry and another of crafted children’s stories.²² To the Fabian S.G. Hobson, his cultivation disrupted stereotypes: “If the audience expected to meet the fearsome revolutionary of romance, ‘ready on the draw’, they must have been sadly disappointed....here was a man steeped in European culture”.²³ Like Stepniak and Volkhovsky, Prelooker wrote fiction, both short stories and novels which he serialised in the *Anglo-Russian*. His novel, *The New Israelite; or, Rabbi Shalom on the Shores of the Black Sea* (1903)²⁴ was acclaimed by the *Daily Express* as “a phenomenally comprehensive dedication” to the doctrine of reconciliation between Judaism and Christianity as well as Russian reform.²⁵ Brilliant, well-educated and cultured, it was only natural that these émigrés brought their love and knowledge of Russian literature to England, for literature’s sake.

And yet, there was another reason for promulgating Russian literature. In her novel *In Russia’s Night*, Olive Garnett described her hero Muromsky as a Russian exile who “seemed thoroughly to understand the power and scope of creative art, wishing to turn it to the service of his cause, as one might wish to harness a leaping cataract to a dynamo”.²⁶ It was Stepniak that provided the model for her fictional exile, but she could have applied a similar metaphor to Prelooker or Volkhovsky’s designs for literature. In the back of every mention of Russian literature was the question of how to persuade the English to support the Russian revolutionary cause (be it pacifist or paramilitary).

To the exiles, weaned on the literary criticism of Belinsky, Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky and Pisarev the idea of using fiction and its criticism to do small but lasting damage to the Tsar’s regime was a part of their received wisdom. Indoctrination into literary propaganda had begun at a young age. As a child in Russia, Kropotkin had copied out by hand the second book of Gogol’s *Dead Souls* for illicit circulation. As an adolescent, he had submitted “unoriginally realistic sketches of peasant life” (written with a view to vilifying

²² The volume of poetry, *Siberian Echoes*, was written and published in Siberia. The children’s book was *A China Cup and Other Stories for Children*, illustrated by Malischeff (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892).

²³ S.G. Hobson, *Pilgrim to the Left: Memoirs of a Modern Revolutionist* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1938) 123.

²⁴ Jaakoff Prelooker, *Rabbi Shalom on the Shores of the Black Sea* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1903).

²⁵ Quoted in “Goodwill Heartily Reciprocated”, *Anglo-Russian* 6, 6 (December 1902) 667.

landlords and idealising serfs) to St. Petersburg literary reviews.²⁷ Prelooker's youthful involvement in subversive literature went even deeper, and was more dangerous. At seventeen, he had joined his classmates in secretly copying out Chernyshevsky's novel *What to Do?* on his school desk during lessons: "Should the police have discovered [such] interdicted literature in the college, imprisonment and banishment to Siberia would surely have befallen, not only the culpable but the innocent, and perhaps the whole college might have been shut up, as had been done in several other instances."²⁸ Stepniak first combined fiction and propaganda during his years as a *narodnik*, when he enjoyed success writing 'transcendental fictions' for the peasants.²⁹

In England, the émigrés carried on writing seditious literature. Prelooker's "The Lion and the Bear: A Russian Christmas Story for English Children" calls upon England to liberate the Russian masses, and compares Tsar Nicholas unfavourably with benevolent Queen Victoria. The Bear, representing the Russian people, is caged and sorely abused by his keeper, while the Lion roams freely. "And soon, the Bear working from the inside [of his cage] and the Lion working from the outside, the confining bars were bent and broken and wrenched asunder, and the poor ill-used Bear was once more free: and great was the joy of the two old friends as they fell on each other's necks in a fond and fraternal embrace."³⁰ Stepniak's best-selling novel, *The Career of a Nihilist* (1889), pays considerably less heed to England's gentler sensibilities, portraying a Russia whose only solution is regicide. His hero's prescription for good propaganda hinted at his own rationale for adopting fiction as a weapon of persuasion: "erudition is not the chief quality in a good propagandist. It is nothing compared with...the power to move hearts and to infuse them with your own devotion."³¹ With passages capturing the exultation of revolutionary martyrdom, *The Career of a Nihilist* aspired to infuse hearts in just this way. As Stepniak wrote to Spence Watson, a

²⁶ Olive Garnett, *In Russia's Night* (London: W. Collins, 1918) 189.

²⁷ The stories were never published, but were described in letters. G Woodcock and I. Avakumovic, *The Anarchist Prince: A Biographical Study of Peter Kropotkin* (London, New York: T.V. Boardman & Co., 1950) 37.

²⁸ Jaakoff Prelooker, *Under the Czar and Queen Victoria: The Experiences of a Russian Reformer* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1895) 11.

²⁹ Donald Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii: The London Years* (Newtonville, Mass: Oriental Research Partners, 1987) 6. See also "Iz perepiski S.M. Kravchinskogo", *Krasnyi Arkhiv* 19 (1926) 196–7.

³⁰ Jaakoff Prelooker, "The Lion and the Bear", *Anglo-Russian* 1, no. 6 (December 1892) 63. In the preceding issue readers were encouraged to order copies of the December magazine in advance to give to children as Christmas gifts.

³¹ Sergei M. Stepniak, *The Career of a Nihilist* (London: Walter Scott, 1889) 192.

founder of the SFRF, he considered that his novel “‘could do more for our cause’ than serious scientific works”.³² Volkhovsky’s collection of stories set in Russia, *A China Cup* (1892), aimed at rooting revolutionary ideas in the very young. It was full of the machinations of loathsome landlords and the hideous squalor of the Russian poor – details to make “‘little folk breathe with indignation’”.³³

The business of translating ‘great’ Russian novels and artistic stories by established writers amounted to a more circumspect form of propaganda than either Stepniak’s hot-blooded fiction or the scathing notes on the Russian autocracy which appeared in journals like *Free Russia* or the *Anglo-Russian*. The common charge against émigrés that their complaints should be taken with a grain of salt did not after all apply to the fiction they translated.³⁴ In their lectures and prefaces, émigrés played up the artist’s so-called disinterestedness, emphasising the veracity of fictional renderings of the Russian environment recorded for art’s sake, rather than for the sake of any political programme. Stepniak described Korolenko, an author who had suffered arrest and exile three times for his political convictions, as “‘a born artist, a man whose impressions of life are too keen and vivid to allow him to see it distorted by any preconceived political or philosophical theory.’”³⁵ Kropotkin repeatedly asserted the ethnographic “‘truthfulness” of his favourite writers’ artistic visions: “‘Every peasant, every chanter is taken from real life’”.³⁶ As Russian governmental agents issued their own propaganda to discredit émigré reports, the pictures of Russia given by ‘disinterested’ fiction writers became increasingly important. A case in point was the debate over the Russian penal system, which received wide coverage in the press in the 1890s. In 1890, Harry de Windt’s *Siberia As It Is* had been commissioned by the Russian government and “‘carefully vetted” and introduced by Mme Novikov to counteract George Kennan’s hugely damaging *Siberia and the Exile System* (1891, but first published as articles in the late 1880s in *Century*). The latter, it was noted, was partly written by

³² Stepniak to Robert Spence Watson (14 April 1890), quoted in Richard Freeborn, *The Russian Revolutionary Novel: Turgenev to Pasternak* (Cambridge, London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 263–4.

³³ Felix Volkhovsky, *A China Cup*, 174.

³⁴ Typical, for example, was W.H. Wilkins’s scepticism of émigré complaints: “‘We can scarcely be expected to credit without adequate proof all the hearsay tales of Russian oppression.” W.H. Wilkins, *The Alien Invasion*, introductory Note by the Right Reverend Bishop of Bedford (London: Methuen & Co., 1892) 11.

³⁵ Stepniak, introduction to Vladimir G. Korolenko, *The Blind Musician* (London: Ward and Downey, 1890) viii.

³⁶ Peter Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature* (London: Duckworth and Co., 1905) 69.

Volkhovsky.³⁷ It was also the result of months of interviewing disaffected Russian émigrés in London. With both de Windt and Kennan giving lecture tours to discredit one another, the English public found itself caught between the former's endorsements of the system and the latter's crushing indictments. In such a climate, semi-fictionalised accounts of Siberian prisons could be taken as a less biased source of information: "The great dispute between the two classes of writers who discuss the Russian exile system", wrote Volkhovsky in *Free Russia*, "still remains unsettled in the minds of many people....The following sketch gives a good picture of the everyday life of the common culprit-gangs on their way across Siberia from *étape* to *étape*... [The author's] literary talent enabled him to choose only such material as was typical, and also to abstain from exaggeration in either direction."³⁸

Ever sensitive to what Stepniak termed John Bull's fear of moral coercion, émigrés found translations and their attendant prefaces to be a means of circumnavigating the defenses guarding the mind of an unbeliever. Literature, for many a source of light relief and pleasure, offered a vehicle for delivering a message to an unsuspecting audience. A High Churchman, after all, who would have no truck with an émigré magazine dedicated to painting monstrous Russian bureaucrats and a blood-thirsty Tsar, might easily consider reading Turgenev's elegant novel, *Home of the Gentry*, recommended by Henry James for its "lovely aroma of purity".³⁹ Opening Heinemann's 1894 edition of the novel, he would find an introduction by Stepniak surrounding Turgenev's ostensible 'love story' with political whirlwinds and undercurrents and casting the cultivated novelist as one of Russia's most radical proponents of revolution. Notwithstanding her efforts to whitewash the Tsarist regime and discredit émigré rhetoric about Russia, even Madame Novikov could not prevent the overwhelming sense of despair seeping through Russian life from infiltrating England in stories like Potapenko's short novel *A Russian Priest* (1891), or the unattributed short sketch, *The Famine Year*.⁴⁰

Fiction, in other words, lent emotional leverage to the rhetoric of propagandists. Volkhovsky found that printing stories in *Free Russia* about Siberia, peasants and exiles, breathed life and meaning into the statistics. Take the story of Misha "a delicate, nervous

³⁷ Barry Hollingsworth, "The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom: English Liberals and Russian Socialists 1890–1917", *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, n.s. 3 (1970) 52.

³⁸ "On the *Etape*", *Free Russia* 7, 7 (July 1895) 62.

³⁹ Henry James, "Ivan Turgénieff", *French Poets and Novelists* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1878) 293.

⁴⁰ "The Famine Year", *Free Russia* 3, 2 (September 1892) 13–15.

child, with fair skin, yellow hair, and great blue eyes”, who draws a knife across his throat to escape his mistress’s flogging. It was easier for readers to experience the sensation of horror when engaging in the fate of this sweet if fictional serf-boy than when reading the estimated number of people dead in a bureaucratically-induced famine.⁴¹ On one level, the conversion of rational arguments into fiction allowed propaganda to lose its narrower logical dimension and enter the more potent realm of myth. On another, fiction established a basis for a direct emotional congruence between propagandist and audience in a way that logical arguments could not. It bridged the boundaries of ‘otherness’ – of differences in idelect, nationhood and race. The artist had the power to compel the reader to connect and sympathise unwittingly.

In themselves, literary endeavours carried an aura of respectability and civilisation not typically associated with Nihilists, or for that matter, with any Russian. The French critic, De Vogüé, whose study *Le Roman Russe* was a ‘must read’ in the late 1880s, had depicted the Nihilist as a “savage” and a “wolf” suffering a “want of *human* feeling”. He compared that most famous of fictional Nihilists, Turgenev’s Bazarov, to Cooper’s Red Indian: “a redskin fuddled with the doctrines of Hegel and Buchner, instead of with ‘fire and water,’ and who stalks the world with a lancet instead of rushing about with a tomahawk.”⁴² The Russian government compounded such impressions by making out that “the revolutionists, as a class, are despicable in point of intellectual ability, or morally depraved.”⁴³ In an age obsessed with Morel’s notions of primitivism and racial decay, De Vogüé’s imputation was that revolutionaries were a lower form of human not yet evolved enough to handle European civilisation; whereas the Russian government’s was that revolutionaries were degenerate or atavistic. Either interpretation left them at the level of Barbarians, a charge the English were only too willing to embrace. It was through literature that Stepniak persuaded the English that unlike Bazarov, whose naïve, unformed intellect left him renouncing culture and dissecting frogs in the pursuit of truth, present day Nihilists were “more often than not, well-educated, refined, and belonging to the best society”.⁴⁴ A

⁴¹ Saltykov-Shchedrin, “Misha and Vania: A Forgotten Story”, *Free Russia* 3, 6–7 (1 January 1893) 13–15; and 3, 8 (1 February 1893) 28–31.

⁴² Le Vicomte E.-M. de Vogüé, *The Russian Novel*, trans. from 11th French edition by H.A. Sawyer (London: Chapman and Hall, 1913) 180–181.

⁴³ Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System* 1, 448.

⁴⁴ Sergei M. Stepniak, *The Russian Storm-Cloud; or, Russia in Her Relations to Neighbouring Countries* (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1886) 179.

Nihilist himself, his translations of populist and the more artistically-sensitive 'revolutionary' writers, as well as his own literary criticism, were motivated by a desire not only to showcase Russia's dissident talent, but to rehabilitate his own beleaguered reputation. Even before the reputation-bruising incident in 1894, when 'Ivanoff's' damning article portrayed him as a cold-blooded assassin appeared in the *New Review*, he could already see the need to redefine himself as a literary figure.⁴⁵ In December 1893, when asked by Vera Zasulich to collaborate on a new revolutionary journal, he replied that his contribution could only take the form of *belles lettres*.⁴⁶ Around the same time he made the declaration to Dr. Charles Sarolea (French scholar, political journalist and writer on Russian subjects), "I am not an Anarchist, I am an artist."⁴⁷

As a self-described pacifist, Prelooker had little interest in rehabilitating the reputations of assassins, but he joined in their use of Russian literature as an ambassador for the Russian people. In the *Anglo-Russian*, he printed poetry by Pushkin and Lermontov as well as measured and scholarly articles about Russia's painting, sculpture and music – hoping thereby to demonstrate that Russia was not a nation of primitives. Like Stepniak, he pictured Russia as a land where high-minded, cultivated reformers such as himself were continually foiled by bureaucrats either seeking self-aggrandisement or bound by blind loyalty, ignorance or apathy to a diseased regime. Introducing England to Russia's culture was Prelooker's way of assuring his hosts that as a nation capable of producing great art, Russia was as deserving of democracy and freedom as the West.

The importance of guiding English interpretations of Russian literature became more urgent as competing, pro-Tsarist groups began harnessing Russia's creative energy to their own political programmes. As we have seen, the Anglo-Russian Literary Society (ARLS) used fiction to build understanding and friendships between England and imperial Russia; its main aim was to bolster confidence in Russia's government to promote trade. A short-lived pro-Tsarist journal called *Russia: An Illustrated Weekly Journal* (1902) adopted a similar tack. Alongside its analysis of "The Petroleum and Chemical Products Industry", happy accounts of the Coronation and reports on the healthy and mutually satisfying state of

⁴⁵ "Anarchists: Their Methods and Organisation", *New Review* 56 (January 1894) 1-16.

⁴⁶ John Elliot Bachman, *Serge Mikhailovich Stepniak-Kravchinskii: A Biography from the Russian Revolutionary Movement on Native and Foreign Soil*, Ph.D. Thesis, (Washington, D.C.: American University, 1971) 412.

⁴⁷ Olive Garnett, diary entry, 16 December 1893, *Tea and Anarchy!*, 237.

Russia's trade relationships with France and Italy, the journal printed notes on Tolstoy's work-day, a story by Gorky, and Rosa Newmarch's series on "Popular Poets of Russia". The journal, established by Nicholas Notovitch (a man better known for his theory that Jesus visited India) bore all the signs of official sanction. Not least, it buoyed up Russian finance minister De Witte's own projects to encourage Anglo-Russian trade.⁴⁸ While the reach of *Russia: An Illustrated Weekly Journal* was negligible (it only ran for four issues), the ARLS exercised considerable influence over the dissemination and reception of Russian literature in England. Its numbers included military men, society ladies, industrialists and journalists: figures with connections and political clout. One member, Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, was director of the Intelligence department at the Admiralty and an important negotiator during the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty in 1902. Another, Edward Hodgetts, worked as a correspondent for *Reuters*, the *Daily Express*, and the *Standard*, and wrote his own books on Russia, including *In the Track of the Russian Famine* (1892), and *The Court of Russia in the Nineteenth Century* (1908). The former book, written at the heat of émigré propaganda attaching responsibility for the famine to the regime, showed Hodgetts' political colours: "I have little sympathy for, and less faith in the political agitators of Russia. They are all faddists more or less and have very few sound and practical ideas."⁴⁹ In addition to creating an atmosphere in which like-minded conservatives could read Russian literature with the express object of promoting genial relations between England and the Russian government, the ARLS was an important source of first translations. When the American scholar Leo Wiener collated his two-volume anthology of Russian literature in 1901-2, he drew heavily from the society's *Proceedings* for material.⁵⁰

With the ARLS offering Dostoevsky's "strenuous" support of the Russian regime as evidence of the "salutory effect" of hard labour and Siberian prisons,⁵¹ and the journal *Russia* using the property-rejecting Tolstoy for its money-generating ends, émigrés had good reason to try to gain domination over the dissemination and interpretation of Russian

⁴⁸ Although it was printed in London by Andrew Melrose Ltd (the publisher of "Boys of the Empire" magazine and other imperialist publications), none of the issues names an editor. I have traced only four issues of *Russia, An Illustrated Weekly Journal*. These appeared July 19, 26 and August 2, 9, 1902.

⁴⁹ E.A. Brayley Hodgetts, *In the Track of the Russian Famine: The Personal Narrative of a Journey through the Famine Districts of Russia* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892) 5-6.

⁵⁰ See, in particular, Leo Wiener, *Anthology of Russian Literature, from the Earliest Period to the Present Time 2. The Nineteenth Century* (London, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1903).

literature. If Britons were going to seek information about Russia through her fiction then it was essential to have a hand in how it was being read. Chertkov's obsessive tactics to control Tolstoy's reputation; Stepniak's masterful appropriation of certain moderate authors to the revolutionary cause; and Kropotkin's ranking of Russian writers according, largely, to their political ideologies in his 1905 tome *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature* – all these suggest that for émigrés gaining influence over readings of Russia's canon was a vital front in the battle between Tsarist and radical for Britain's sympathy.

Considerations of a more practical nature also led émigrés to resort to fiction and criticism as forms of persuasion. While some Britons would willingly buy or borrow a book of overt anti-Tsarist propaganda, the genius of the Okhrana might thwart them. Kropotkin's *In Russian and French Prisons* (1887), for example, disappeared from the market almost instantly, the whole edition having been bought up and destroyed by the Russian government's undercover agents. Even its author was thoroughly confounded in his search for a copy.⁵² A translation of Stepniak's *Russia Under the Tsars* suffered a similar fate in France.⁵³ In 1899, Kropotkin wrote to Edward Garnett, who acted as his unofficial literary advisor, "I learned lately for sure that there is here in London an agency, at the embassy, to buy out of the trade the books hostile to the Russian Government. I guessed it was so when your father asked me about it. Now I know for sure."⁵⁴ In Russia, writers had been using fiction and literary criticism to slip their denunciations of the government past the censor for decades. Why not use these forms in England to evade the notice of the Okhrana?

⁵¹ Mr. Havelock, "Dostoëvski", *Proceedings of the Anglo-Russian Literary Society* 8 (August, September, October, 1894) 14. Havelock is referring to the four years of hard labour in Siberia that Dostoevsky served before becoming a monarchist.

⁵² It was eventually reissued by another publisher, and sufficient precautions were taken this time to prevent a recurrence of the previous incident. Woodcock, *The Anarchist Prince*, 198.

⁵³ Letter from Peter Kropotkin to Edward Garnett (6 January 1899) Garnett Family Archive, Hilton Hall.

⁵⁴ Peter Kropotkin to Edward Garnett (8 June 1899) Garnett Family Archive, Hilton Hall. For more on the relations between Kropotkin and Edward Garnett, see John Slatter, "Peter Kropotkin's Literary Adviser: The Letters to Edward Garnett 1897–1916", *Solanus* n.s. 12 (1988) 33–56.

Early Glimmers: The Walter Scott Publishing Company

While émigrés did not begin promoting Russian literature in earnest until the 1890s, their growing presence and propaganda began to make an impact on British publishing as much as a decade earlier. Not only did they pepper their more straightforward propaganda with educative references to Russian writers, their ideas and personal contacts stirred interest in Russian literature amongst publishers.

A case in point is the Walter Scott Publishing Company which announced a Tolstoy series on 15 October 1888 and rapidly began issuing dozens of his stories, novels and tracts the following year. No archive exists for Walter Scott, and a superficial glance suggests little reason to surmise a connection between the publishing house and Russian émigrés. Research, however, provides evidence showing that the links between its editors and the émigré set were manifold.

The location of Walter Scott Publishing in Newcastle-upon-Tyne explains some of its receptivity to émigrés and their concerns. By the 1870s, the local MP, Joseph Cowen, had established “a Newcastle school of radicalism” of national pre-eminence, giving the region a “reputation for radicalism tinged with republicanism”.⁵⁵ It was Cowen who had befriended Herten, provided Kropotkin with a bed, and helped turn the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* into a voice against Tsarist oppression. The combination of miners, colliers, Irish Fenians, and Polish refugees in the area made it particularly sympathetic to the plights of foreigners who had been manhandled by unscrupulous governments. As early as July 1882, speaking in the radical stamping ground known as Newcastle’s Nelson Street Lecture Room, Kropotkin had testified to the city’s openness to the radical Russian cause:

It is in Newcastle that a Russian revolutionary writer has, for the first time, found the means of disclosing in an English daily paper, the true state of Russia; and it is, again, in Newcastle that I have found for the first time the honour of addressing a large English audience, to relate, in plain words, the true state of Russia.⁵⁶

Robert Spence Watson, one of the creators of the SFRF, was also an influential townsman: honorary secretary of the city’s Literary and Philosophical Society, a founder of the

⁵⁵ F.W. Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley* 2 (Macmillan, 1927) 139. See also, “‘Echo’ Portrait Gallery, Mr. Joseph Cowen”, *Echo* (3 February 1891) 1.

⁵⁶ *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (8 July 1882) 7.

Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society, and President of the Newcastle Liberal Association.⁵⁷ At his home in Bensham Grove, local members of the community encountered such oddities as recent escapees from Siberia who showed the manacles on their hands and feet. Elizabeth Gibson, a future ‘Englischer’ of verse for *Free Russia*, may well have first learned sympathy with the revolutionary cause at the local Gateshead High School, where her sixth-form headmistress was Spence Watson’s daughter.⁵⁸ By 1895, the Russian influence was so strong in the region, that a colony was established outside Newcastle in Clousden Hill, inspired by the anarchist-communism of Tolstoy and Kropotkin.

In the 1880s, Walter Scott Publishing shared Newcastle’s radical ethos, publishing books authored or prepared by the Russians’ British socialist friends, including Fabian Society tracts, George Bernard Shaw’s boxing novel *Cashel Byron’s Profession* (1886), and Havelock Ellis’s first English edition of Ibsen (1888).⁵⁹ Links between the publishing house and the émigrés became more tangible when Edward Pease orchestrated the deal which saw Walter Scott publishing Stepniak’s *The Career of a Nihilist* in 1889 – the same year the publisher started issuing Tolstoy in super-abundance. Between 1886 and 1888, Pease had lived in Newcastle, founding a branch of the National Labour Federation and becoming personal friends with William H. Dircks, one of Walter Scott’s representatives.⁶⁰ Thanks to Pease, both Dircks and another Walter Scott editor, Ernest Rhys, became Fabians, a move which brought them into the same orbit as Stepniak.⁶¹ Another of the firm’s editors, Francis Riddell Henderson, most certainly had early connections with émigrés, though few records of his life in the 1880s exist. In 1887 Henderson became Walter Scott’s representative in London, where he intersected with the capital’s non-conformist, vegetarian and utopian elements. According to his son-in-law, he resigned from the company and started up his own imprint because Walter Scott refused to publish Tolstoy’s novel *Resurrection* with the

⁵⁷ F.W.D. Mander, *A History of Gateshead* (Gateshead: Gateshead Corporation, 1973) 330.

⁵⁸ This was Mabel Spence Watson. Olive Carter, *History of Gateshead High School, 1876–1907* (Newcastle: Girls’ Public Day School Trust, 1955) 16.

⁵⁹ Havelock Ellis was also connected with Walter Scott as editor of the Contemporary Science series, which he proposed to the publisher in 1889.

⁶⁰ Bachman, *Serge Mikhailovich Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 292. Stepniak mentions Dircks in a letter to Pease dated 13 March 1889, reproduced in Charles A. Moser, “A Nihilist’s Career: S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskij”, *American Slavic and East European Review* 20, issue 1 (February 1961) 63.

⁶¹ On at least one occasion, Stepniak crossed paths with them at the home of Percival Chubb. *Bernard Shaw, The Diaries, 1885–1897* 1, edited and annotated by Stanley Weintraub (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1896) 481.

legend “no rights reserved”.⁶² By this time Henderson was already an avid Tolstoyan, and a close associate of Chertkov. In 1909, he would set up “The Bomb Shop” at 66 Charing Cross Road: an anarchist bookshop which sold Kropotkin’s youthful rabble-rousing volumes alongside plays by Ibsen and pamphlets by Tolstoy.

So while Walter Scott’s Tolstoy translations themselves were sourced from the New York publisher T.Y. Crowell, the impetus to hunt them out and publish them may well have derived energy from the exiles milling amongst Newcastle SFRF supporters, in Joseph Cowen’s sitting room, or at Morris’s bough-laden pre-Raphaelite dinner table, debating Tolstoy’s astonishing impact on Russian affairs.

Much as their tangential influence deserves acknowledgement, émigrés were soon to make a more concrete and very deliberate contribution to the passage of Russian literature into England. On the following pages, I map out the literary activities of Stepniak, Volkhovsky, Prelooker, Kropotkin and Chertkov, showing how political and personal motives were transmuted into translations and criticism, which in turn, formed a mythopoeic landscape of Russia’s political and social condition. I also show how they made use of peculiarly Russian and often materialist forms of literary criticism to promote readings which supported their political views. Running through my analysis is the implicit sense that in doing so, they transmitted to England not only a new literature, but a fresh manner of reading.

⁶² Diana Burfield, *The Background to the Bomb Shop*, unpublished manuscript (May 2004) 6. Manuscript kindly provided by the author.

Sergei Stepniak

In early 1887, Stepniak was clearly weary of writing propaganda based on ‘facts’, even if these facts were anecdotal and conveyed in narrative prose. In February he complained to Edward Pease that his book on peasants and his commitments to the *Fortnightly* were interfering with his literary activities, in this case finishing *The Career of a Nihilist*.⁶³ Three months later he added that writing *The Russian Peasantry* had put his mind in a state of “constant friction”.⁶⁴ All the while, his passion for literary subjects was waxing stronger. In 1885 he skipped an important Socialist League meeting in favour of an argument about Victor Hugo with the poet Pakenham Beatty, their voices rising “above the din of London traffic”.⁶⁵ Four years later, in 1889, an interview with an American correspondent shows him devoting much of his time to the study of fiction.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, he was in the process of adding more notable names to his already impressive stable of literary friendships, trading books with Bram Stoker, and discussing how to draw women with George Meredith (who told him “My heart is a large joint of sympathy, from which I carve slices”).⁶⁷ With F. York Powell, the Regius Professor of History at the University of Oxford, his long conversations always dwelled upon “the great books and the great writers of the past and present”.⁶⁸ Soon he would be mentoring the budding fiction writer Olive Garnett, and advising surprised audiences at political meetings to read Russian literature.

One outcome of his passion for fiction was the publication of his first novel, *The Career of a Nihilist* (1889), which he hoped would free him from his precarious living as a journalist. According to James Mavor, he believed “his real destiny, if it could have worked out, was to have taken his place alongside of Turgenev as an interpreter, through works of the imagination, of the spirit of the Russian youth of his time”.⁶⁹ He was thus delighted by a

⁶³ Stepniak to Edward Pease, 7 February 1887, Evgeniia A. Taratuta, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravshinskii v londonskoi emigratsii* (Moskva: Nauka, 1968) 208.

⁶⁴ Stepniak to Pease, 14 May 1887, Taratuta, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravshinskii v londonskoi emigratsii*, 211.

⁶⁵ Letter from G.B. Shaw to Mrs. Pakenham Beatty (22 September 1885), George Bernard Shaw, *Collected Letters: 1874–1897* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1965) 140.

⁶⁶ Blatch, “Stepniak at Home”, 5.

⁶⁷ See Stepniak’s correspondence with Bram Stoker (2 September 1892), and (12 June 1894), Brotherton Collection, Leeds University, MS 19c Stoker; Olive Garnett, diary entry, 28 February 1894, *Olive and Stepniak: The Bloomsbury Diary of Olive Garnett, 1893–1895* (Birmingham: Bartletts Press, 1993) 45.

⁶⁸ F. York Power, “In Memorandum”, *Free Russia* (1896) 15.

⁶⁹ James Mavor, *My Windows on the Street of the World* (London, Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons; New York: E.F. Dutton & Co., 1923) 252.

letter from Karl Pearson comparing *The Career* with Turgenev.⁷⁰ But if he had hoped the novel would help him join the ranks of great fiction writers, he was disappointed. It was not the unmitigated success that *Underground Russia* had been. His friend, G.B. Shaw, was happy to unload the task of reviewing the book on Henry Massingham at the *Star*.⁷¹ And the notoriously opinionated W.E. Henley, newly appointed as the editor to the *Scots Observer*, told him flatly that it was badly written.⁷² Looking back, Stepniak's wife, Fanny, would agree. Her husband should have followed Shaw's advice and had it translated from Russian.⁷³ Respecting Stepniak's artistic faculties the *Cambridge Review* was damning: "Stepniak may be an excellent Nihilist, but he is not a Novelist".⁷⁴

Though it sold well, going into a second edition before the year was out, as propaganda the novel was also a failure. The English were largely immune to the charms of the Nihilist hero's noble-hearted, self-sacrificing devotion to terrorism. Englishmen who cheered Stepniak for fighting with words, not bombs, showed themselves oblivious to the entire point of the novel's argument.⁷⁵ Henry Massingham, perhaps his most enthusiastic reviewer, concluded from *The Career of a Nihilist* that "Russian reformers do not know really where to begin", and that "popular Russian politics seem now to have got into the mere savage brutal state of blind retaliation".⁷⁶ Some commentators feared the book's pernicious effect. No doubt the smouldering bomb Walter Scott had placed on the front cover did little to recommend it as serious high-minded literature.

Despite the mixed success of *The Career of a Nihilist*, Stepniak remained undefeated in his conviction that propaganda mixed with literary matters carried more weight than mere journalism. A couple of years earlier, in 1888, an alternative to the onerous task of writing propaganda about peasants and corrupt bureaucrats (and one which did not involve writing novels) had suggested itself in a letter from Plekhanov, the main founder of Russian Marxism. Writing from the continent, Plekhanov had proposed that he and Stepniak co-

⁷⁰ Karl Pearson to Stepniak (24 Nov. 1889), Taratuta, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravshinskii v londonskoi emigratsii*, 240.

⁷¹ Shaw to Stepniak (17 November 1889), *Bernard Shaw, Collected letters*, 142.

⁷² Mavor, *My Windows on the Street of the World*, 252.

⁷³ Evgeniia A. Taratuta, *S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii: revoliutsioner i pisatel'* (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1973) 393.

⁷⁴ "The Paper-Knife, *The Career of a Nihilist: Stepniak*", *Cambridge Review* 11, 280 (22 May 1890) 344.

⁷⁵ Thomas Solmen to Stepniak (23 March 1890), Evgeniia A. Taratuta, *Istoriia dvukh knig*, "Podpol'naia Rossiia" *S.M. Stepniaka-Kravchinskogo i "Ovod" Etel' Lilian Voinich* (Moskva: khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1987) 281.

⁷⁶ Henry Massingham, review of *The Career of a Nihilist* by Sergei Stepniak, *Star* (6 December 1889) 4.

author “a martyrology” of Russian literature. Its title, “The Government and Litterature [sic] in Russia”, was to underscore Russian literature’s political engagement:

Europe is enraptured right now with Russian fiction, but has no idea in what terrible conditions it exists. It's our duty to show them that despotism has always been [literature's] most furious and implacable enemy....

What do you think? Once we wrote it, you and I would make some money from it.⁷⁷

At the time, Stepniak had dismissed the project, perhaps feeling that the English were unprepared for a volume about writers whose works they had never read. But shortly afterwards he took up literary criticism, making an arrangement in 1889 to produce a book on Turgenev for Walter Scott’s Great Author series. His next letter to Pease was upbeat: “I very gladly take up this work, for I think I can do it well....Here opens for me a new field, in which I have not yet trod”.⁷⁸ His optimism proved well-founded: over the next half-decade he would become England’s most influential advocate of the Russian literary canon.

Literary Lectures

Despite serious misgivings about his accent and his ability to perform as a public speaker,⁷⁹ one of Stepniak’s first outings as a critic took the form of a lecture. The occasion was the Fabian Society’s 1890 “Socialism in Contemporary Literature” series, whose starry cast of speakers included Sydney Olivier, who spoke on “Zola”; William Morris, who expounded “Gothic Architecture”; Hubert Bland, who spoke on “Socialist Novels”; and Bernard Shaw, who provided a “somewhat brilliant” lecture on “Ibsen”.⁸⁰ Stepniak’s address, delivered at St. James’ restaurant on 6 June, was “Tolstoi, Tchernytchevsky and the Russian School”.⁸¹ The next month he inaugurated what would become a well-worn lecture on “Tolstoy as

⁷⁷ My translation. This was undated, but is thought to have been written at the end of 1888. G.V. Plekhanov, *Literatura i Estetika 2* (Moskva: Gosydarstvenoe Izdatelstvo, 1958) 7–8.

⁷⁸ The letter was written when Stepniak was contracted by Walter Scott Publishing to write a volume on Turgenev. Stepniak to Edward Pease (6 March, 1889), Taratuta, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravshinskii v londonskoi emigratsii*, 240. I have translated this letter back into English.

⁷⁹ He expressed these misgivings in a 9 May interview with H.S. Blatch, “Stepniak at Home”, 5.

⁸⁰ Edward R. Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society* (London: A.C. Fifield, 1916) 94.

⁸¹ According to Shaw’s diaries, this took place 6 June 1890. *Bernard Shaw, The Diaries, 1885-1897* 1, 624.

Novelist and Social Reformer” at the spacious Portman Rooms in London’s Baker Street, sending the proceeds to Paris for the relief of Russian refugees.⁸²

Stepniak’s exposure to other approaches to the subject of socialism and literature at the Fabian talks, combined with his increasing proficiency in English, galvanised his resolve to give further lectures on Russian fiction. That autumn he began honing his oratorical skills for a tour of America. The purpose of the tour was to mobilise “all possible public opinion in the West to exert pressure on the Russian government in favour of liberalization of the regime,”⁸³ and to set up an American branch of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom. Stepniak also hoped to stuff the coffers of the Free Russia Fund by charging \$50 apiece for a total of fifty lectures. On New Year’s Eve 1890, the arrival of “the famous Russian revolutionist, exile, and writer” was announced in the *New York Times*.⁸⁴ Early the next month, Stepniak’s debut lecture was billed for 9 January, 1891: a talk on “Count Tolstoi as Novelist and as Social Reformer” at New York’s Metropolitan Opera House.

Stepniak’s choice of a literary topic to open a tour aimed at gaining support for Russia’s ‘liberalization’ tells us a lot about his faith in the power of criticism to effect political change, as well as about his own interests. At the eleventh hour he changed his mind about the suitability of the subject, deeming it “expedient to speak on ‘Nihilism: or, the Revolutionary Movement in Russia’ instead.”⁸⁵ Nonetheless, he delivered his Tolstoy lecture a few days later at New York’s First Baptist Church,⁸⁶ and again in Boston, where his joint reputation as Nihilist and *littérateur* won him entrance to the highest literary circles. William Dean Howells, who was impressed with the Nihilist’s insights into Tolstoy, took him to his club for dinner, where he “talked for an hour or two about conditions in Russia, with a moderation and lucidity that enchanted everybody.”⁸⁷ On 17 April, he went to Hartford to visit Mark Twain, who was embarrassed to admit that he “had read neither Balzac not Thackeray”.⁸⁸ After touring the East coast and inland, Stepniak returned to Boston for three farewell “Stepniak Matinees” on April 20, 22, and 24. His choice of

⁸² This took place 16 July, 1890.

⁸³ Moser, “A Nihilist’s Career”, 67. Stepniak explained his aims in an article, “What Americans Can Do for Russia”, *North American Review* (November 1891) 596-609.

⁸⁴ “Nihilist Stepniak Here”, *New York Times* (31 December 1890) 8.

⁸⁵ “Stepniak as a Lecturer”, *New York Times* (9 January 1891) 8.

⁸⁶ “Stepniak in Brooklyn”, *New York Times* (13 January 1891) 8.

⁸⁷ Letter from William Dean Howells to William Cooper Howells, in Mildred Howells, ed., *Life in Letters of William Dean Howells* (Garden City: Doubleday Doran and Co., Inc., 1928) 12.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Anthony Anemone Jr., “Mark Twain’s Russian Visitor”, *Bancroftiana*, no. 81 (August 1982) 8.

subjects for these – Tolstoy, Turgenev and Marie Bashkirtseff, a well-known diarist and painter – suggests his leaping confidence as a commentator on literary concerns.⁸⁹ Indeed, his image of himself is perhaps best gleaned from a letter he wrote to Olivia Clemens after sending a signed copy of *Underground Russia* to Mark Twain: “...I hope he will not object to my treating him with certain familiarity in my dedicatory lines: I wrote them as a *literary critic*, and literary critics are people entitled to recognise no distinction of age or anything else.”⁹⁰

Stepniak’s unpublished lecture “Count Tolstoy as a Novelist and Social Reformer” (several rough manuscripts of which were discovered by the present writer in the RGALI archive in Moscow) provides a good point of departure for understanding his aesthetic theory, and how this theory served his propagandistic aims.⁹¹ While the burden of Stepniak’s argument surrounds Tolstoy’s ‘orientalism’, what is of interest here is his secondary argument about the nature of art. Like the critics Belinsky and Dobrolyubov, Stepniak argued, vehemently and persuasively, that good art could be equated with the “truth”, and conversely, that dogma could not be rendered artistically. To his mind, the main requisite for true art or great art (the terms are interchangeable) was that it provide a ‘truthful’ representation of nature and man’s position in it. There was nothing stopping the artist from attempting to project his own vision or ethical outlook onto his work. However, if his art was great, it would reveal patterns of life, complexes belonging to ontology, which conveyed an objective truth or “natural law” greater than his own prejudices and limitations. On the other hand, if the writer imposed too heavily on his work a conception of the world which was clouded and erroneous, then, as art, it would fail. According to Stepniak’s formulation, all great literature (being ontologically sound) could be analysed by the reader or critic just as one would analyse the phenomenon of life: scientifically. This meant (usefully for a propagandist) that it could be analysed without consideration of the author’s own intentions.

⁸⁹ *Boston Evening Transcript* (24 April 1891); *Boston Post* (21 April 1891).

⁹⁰ Stepniak’s emphasis. Quoted in Anthony Anemone Jr., “Mark Twain’s Russian Visitor”, *Bancroftiana*, no. 81 (August 1982) 8. The original letter is in the Mark Twain Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

⁹¹ See Appendix A for my transcription of Stepniak’s lecture notes for “Count Tolstoy as a Novelist and Social Reformer” (1890–1). The originals of these can be found in the Stepniak-Kravchinskii archive, RGALI, fond 1158, op 1, ed khr 871.

This 'trust the tale, not the author' formula comes across in Stepniak's treatment of Tolstoy's religious crisis and subsequent renunciation of art. Stepniak claims that Tolstoy 'the Preacher' was forced to abandon art because the truths it revealed kept disproving his religious convictions. In other words, the patterns and mechanisms of natural law manifested through his novels argued against his moral claims. Using *Anna Karenina* as an example, Stepniak shows how Tolstoy's art turns his philosophy on its head. Tolstoy, says the critic, intended the grisly fate of his adulterous heroine (under a train) to act as a "moral warning": an illustration of "the absolute indissolubility of marriage". But "Tolstoi's enormous artistic talent could not be curbed under the yoke of some sectarian doctrine. It rebelled, taking for [its] guide truth and nature and the result was that Tolstoi proved by his novel the very reverse of what he intended to prove." Notwithstanding the book's final chapter, "in which the moral of the story is intruded upon the reader in forcible and unmistakable language of dry and dull prose" (note that Tolstoy's dogma here destroys his art), as an artistic whole, the novel revealed a law more powerful and universal than the author's own ethical code:

Anna is a victim not of her weakness but of social laws which did not permit her to legalise what was imposed upon her by the law of nature she had no share in making. Thus the novel is a plea in favour of the necessity of divorce and of woman's enfranchisement, the very idea of which is hateful to Count Tolstoi.⁹²

The Nihilist posits a world in which nature, not hallowed beliefs, should be the first principle in constructing a social morality. He also suggests that the study of nature provides scientific (rather than religious) grounds for the exercise of compassion. Nature is what literature reveals, in all its laws and in defiance of all time-worn prejudices, including those of the artist himself. At one level, Stepniak's commentary clearly shows him to be using Tolstoy's work to address the social issues then preoccupying middle-class society on both sides of the Atlantic: in this case, the timeless question of marriage. But he does not lose sight of his principal goal which is to purvey certain attitudes about Russia's local and historically specific problems.

This is most visible in his discussion of Tolstoy's pacifism: that thorn in the side of any true Russian terrorist. Stepniak cleverly blunts Tolstoy's doctrine of non-resistance by

locating its origins in Russia's social and cultural history. Russia's psychology, he argues, is made up of two strains: western materialism, and an oriental fatalism (read pacifism) born of endless battles waged (and lost) against nature. In tandem they work for good: "Engrafted upon the solid vigorous stem of strongly materialistic Greco-Roman culture this oriental principle has been a stimulant of a new life and progress and has given to our civilisation that variety and depth which it could not have attained without it." But when divorced of the active western element, the oriental principle is "powerless", unable to create anything "but desolation and dead stagnancy." Of all Russian authors, Tolstoy is "the most thorough representative" of his country's 'oriental' side. In *War and Peace*, his hero Pierre finds consolation in "complete oriental quietism, the indifference to outward conditions both moral and physical" when he is taken prisoner during the French occupation of Moscow. In *Anna Karenina*, Levin similarly resolves his spiritual crisis in peasant-like submission to the cycle of life. Tolstoy's orientalism had its widest expression after his religious conversion when it took the form of his pacifist philosophy. Once again, however, Tolstoy's art shows the error of his ideology: *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889) "worked great good in that with one stroke it...shattered the entire system of Oriental philosophy that Tolstoi had preached all his life".⁹³

Stepniak's use of Tolstoy 'the artist' to debunk Tolstoy 'the preacher' and his subtle denigration of Tolstoy's philosophical orientalism show him to be a propagandist with a good understanding of his audience. His attack on the Asiatic aspect of Tolstoy, in particular, played to western prejudice, bringing his audience on side with Russia's active, "western" revolutionary movement. As Howells noted in his correspondence, Stepniak's lecture was "unsympathetic and it had the revolutionist's grudge for the non-resistant in it." But "its intellectual grasp was wonderful.... Simply as a study it was large, bold and massive to an extraordinary degree". It was no small matter that Howells, perhaps America's most influential literary critic, judged it, "one of the most important things I ever heard".⁹⁴

Back in England, Stepniak carried on using lectures on Russian literature to "appeal to all opponents of the Russian autocracy without distinction of party – to socialists and

⁹² All quotations of Stepniak's lecture on Tolstoy, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from my transcription of his lecture in Appendix A.

⁹³ Stepniak "defended the work from a moral standpoint, saying that we must take Tolstoi as we would a professor or anatomy". This passage is not contained in Appendix A. It was reported in "Stepniak in Brooklyn, He Talks of Tolstoi as a Novelist and Social Reformer", *New York Times* (13 January 1891) 8.

Liberals alike.”⁹⁵ At the time, the SFRF had begun a campaign to win over Britons by procuring nationwide speaking engagements. Each lecture was to be cast “in such a form as to make the speaker and his cause appear most reasonable and the Russian regime downright ignominious”.⁹⁶ Stepniak’s method of foregrounding the social aspect of literature was perfect for this scheme. Under the auspices of the SFRF, he addressed audiences ranging from the ‘Cemented Bricks’ – a bohemian coterie of poets, journalists and *litterateurs* who met at the Anderson Hotel on London’s Fleet Street –⁹⁷ to curious townsmen and women at Cardiff’s Public Hall.⁹⁸ In the course of his talks, he showed his talent for adapting, chameleon-like, to his audience. One week he addressed the very socialist Fabian society, having agreed with Pease to speak “on some literary [sic] topic: say, the three Russian novelists”.⁹⁹ The next, he lampooned Tolstoy’s socialism before a well-dressed audience in the provinces. A newspaper synopsis of a lecture he delivered 22 October 1894 at the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society shows him winning over an audience of down-to-earth Britons who put little store by Tolstoy’s impractical and outlandish lifestyle suggestions:

Tolstoy did not believe in property, He gave up all his, and his family took it – (laughter) – and now he lived with his family as an honoured guest. In the summer he worked in the fields, and in the winter carted wood for his wife in return for his “keep”. (Laughter.) He was now a vegetarian. He dressed like a peasant, despising “the artificial dress of civilisation,” and sat down at the family dinner table in a peasant’s dress, and was waited upon by waiters in evening dress. (Laughter.)¹⁰⁰

Stepniak did not confine himself to SFRF events. In January 1894, he opened J.T. Grein’s *Sunday Popular Debates* at the Opéra Comique with a talk on “The Russian Drama” and an extensive reading from Ostrovsky’s play *The Storm*. A report in the London

⁹⁴ Letter to J.B. Pond, in Mildred Howells, ed., *Life in the Letters of William Dean Howells*, 13–14.

⁹⁵ This objective was reported in Stepniak, *Nihilism As It Is*, translated by E.L. Voynich (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1895) 78.

⁹⁶ Bachman, *Serge Mikhailovich Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 372.

⁹⁷ G.H. Perris, *Russia in Revolution* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1905) 245. For a description of the ‘Cemented Bricks’ see Maurice Baring, *Puppet Show of Memory* (London: William Heinemann, 1922) 151.

⁹⁸ The lecture in Cardiff was delivered 25 October 1895. Society of Friends of Russian Freedom, *Fifth Annual Report of the Executive Committee, 1895-6*. BLPES, COLL MISC 1028.75173.

⁹⁹ Letter from Stepniak to Pease, 6 September 1893, BLPES A 9/1 136; and letter from Stepniak to Pease (n.d.) BLPES A 9/1 141.

¹⁰⁰ “Stepniak on ‘Tolstoi’”, *Newcastle Chronicle* (23 October 1894) 5.

newspaper the *Echo* gives evidence of Stepniak's reach: "The theatre was fairly filled, mainly of those people one is accustomed to associate with advanced crotchets in art and politics being present."¹⁰¹ Leila Crackanthorpe was there, dressed in a man's coat and holding an ostrich feather fan, along with her husband, Herbert, a contributor to the *Yellow Book*.¹⁰² A dramatic critic and impresario, Grein believed in theatre as "a link between the nations" – a function to which Stepniak readily subscribed. A more intimate London setting was the drawing room at 11 Airlie Gardens in up-market Campden Hill, Kensington, where in early 1894 Stepniak gave "A Course of Four Lectures on Russian Literature", mainly to women, on Wednesday afternoons. The large room (100 square metres) belonged to one Miss Chadwick, possibly a relation of Spencer Chadwick, the architect of the residence, and seated about thirty people.¹⁰³ Members of the smartly dressed crowd each paid an astonishing one guinea to hear Stepniak provide what was billed as "the first systematic course of lectures upon the subject delivered in this country."¹⁰⁴

By the mid-1890s, translations from Russian were lighting up the English literary firmament, with the publishers Heinemann, Walter Scott, T. Fisher Unwin, Duckworth, and Ward and Downey providing the brightest stars. Stepniak, meanwhile, was busily disseminating his views on Russian literature in print. By the year of his Ostrovsky lecture, he had already written two prefaces to Constance Garnett's Turgenev series, another two prefaces to works by Korolenko, and an introduction to *Stories from Garshin* (1883). The following year he provided an introduction to the anthology of short stories, *The Humour of Russia* (1895). It was clear that Stepniak had found his niche. It is "a grievance", Olive Garnett noted in March 1893, "that people will insist on regarding him as a political character & not as a literary critic".¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ "Theatrical Gossip", *Echo* (15 January 1894) 1.

¹⁰² Olive Garnett, diary entry, 14 January 1894, *Olive and Stepniak*, 30.

¹⁰³ I am indebted to Anthea Harrison, resident of 11 Airlie Gardens, who sent me information about the room by email, 23 January 2004.

¹⁰⁴ For the cost of tickets see, Fanny Stepniak to Olive Garnett (19 February 1894), *Olive and Stepniak*, 36. The course was so described in a leaflet advertising the lecture series, "A Course of Four Lectures on Russian Literature", Garnett Family Archive, Hilton Hall.

¹⁰⁵ Olive Garnett, diary entry, 18 March 1893, quoted in Thomas C. Moser, "An English Context for Conrad's Russian Characters: Sergey Stepniak and the Diary of Olive Garnett", *Journal of Modern Literature* 11, 1 (March 1984) 8. This quote does not appear in Olive Garnett's published diaries.

‘Hidden Meanings’ in Russian Literature

A theme common to most British accounts of Russia, from the eighteenth century through to the Victorian age, was the impenetrability of the Russian nature to westerners. In the 1890s, this view of the Russian nation as a weird, incomprehensible mystery persisted: as Edward Garnett wrote in 1898, “in any chance record we may pick up, from the reports of a seventeenth century embassy down to the narrative of an early nineteenth century traveller, the note always insisted on is that of all the outlandish civilizations, queer manners and customs of Europeans, the Russians’ were the queerest and those which stood furthest removed from the other nations’. *And this sentiment has prevailed today*”.¹⁰⁶

Olive Garnett’s fictional description of the Airlie Gardens lectures in her novel *In Russia’s Night* shows how Stepniak capitalised on Russia’s shroud of mystery (as well as his own tantalisingly chequered reputation) to incorporate politically-charged messages into his seemingly innocuous lectures about Russian literature. One of Garnett’s characters, Muromsky, we remember turned “creative art ... to the service of his cause, as one might wish to harness a leaping cataract to a dynamo”.¹⁰⁷ The leaflets he circulates advertising his drawing room course on Russian dramatists and novelists, lure audiences with the promise of disclosure. “Hidden Meanings in Russian Literature” reads the title of the course.¹⁰⁸ Like his fictional counterpart, Stepniak cast himself as a revolutionary versed in Russia’s dark secrets, specially qualified to interpret and decode the great enigma of Russian fiction to the English public.

Stepniak enhanced and legitimised his published criticism by recourse to Russian mystique in the same way he did his lectures. He emphasised the need for a Russian to expatiate on a text in order that the English might understand it better. He hammered home the idea that Russians used an obscure language in order to hoodwink the censor; besides which, their society was remote, so the deeper meaning of vital passages could escape the notice of the uninitiated. “[The] circumstances in which the story was written and published, required on the part of the author considerable reticence and divers veiled allusions”, he writes of Korolenko’s *In Two Moods* and *In Bad Society* (1892), continuing, “the reader must in many instances read between the lines... But for the Russians, who understand the

¹⁰⁶ My emphasis. Edward Garnett, introduction to Aleksandr Nikolaevich Ostrovsky, *The Storm*, translated by Constance Garnett (London: Duckworth, 1899) v.

¹⁰⁷ Olive Garnett, *In Russia’s Night*, 189.

¹⁰⁸ Olive Garnett, *In Russia’s Night*, 158.

language of allusions, there can be no doubt as to the significance of these scenes.”¹⁰⁹ In his Turgenev prefaces, Stepniak contrasts the “unsophisticated English reader” with the Russian, who is “used to the reticence which considerations impose upon their writers when speaking on certain subjects”.¹¹⁰

Having confirmed himself as a genial guide, he sets about pointing out signifiers in a literary terrain whose features swirled with mysterious life. On the simplest level, he introduces his own explanatory asides into texts, decoding landscape and language, investing seemingly innocuous scenes with “revolutionary significance”. In Korolenko’s *The Blind Musician* (1890), for example, a friendly encounter amongst young people becomes a case of revolutionary evangelism:

The two young men – the Stavrunchenkos – who come to pay a visit to Petrik’s family and try to make her swerve from the path she has traced for herself, are revolutionists – “Nihilists,” to use the popular term – who are on the point of starting upon revolutionary propaganda among the peasants. What they propose to her is to join hands with them in the common work for the liberation of their country. This is not put quite clearly in the story. Russian authors are not allowed to speak plainly of such matters, and we could not do more in the text than give the plain meaning to some purposely vague expressions of the original.¹¹¹

A footnote in Korolenko’s *In Two Moods* (1892) similarly turns a member of the Samoyed tribe (the reindeer-breeding tribe of Northern Siberia), into “a Revolutionist, a ‘Nihilist,’ a Russian patriot, in a word”. The word Samoyed, Stepniak tells us, was used “simply to mislead the censorship.”¹¹² In Turgenev’s *A House of Gentlefolk* (1894), Stepniak enlists Russia’s language of allusion to appropriate one of the most gentlemanly and ostensibly moderate of Turgenev’s characters as an early populist:

Lavretsky has evidently some lofty object in life ... ‘to cultivate the land’. [Russians] understand quite clearly that for Lavretsky ‘tilling the land’ means to live with the people, to become one of them, as much as it is possible for a

¹⁰⁹ Stepniak, introduction to Vladimir Korolenko, *In Two Moods* [and *In Bad Society*], translated by Sergei Stepniak and William Westall (London: Ward & Downey, 1892) iii-iv.

¹¹⁰ Stepniak, preface to Ivan Turgenev, *A House of Gentlefolk*, translated by Constance Garnett (London: Heinemann, 1894) x-xi.

¹¹¹ Stepniak, introduction to Korolenko, *In Two Moods*, vii-viii.

¹¹² Korolenko, *In Two Moods*, 14. While it might be suggested that “Samoyed”, which in Russian derives from self-eater (cannibal), might be an ironic reference to a revolutionary, this is unlikely. Like Stepniak, Korolenko regarded revolutionaries as defenders of the Russian people, not as individuals turning against their own.

man of another class, to win their confidence, and to bridge over – be it in one small locality – the abyss, which divides in Russia the educated classes from the masses. Lavretsky is a reformer, a missionary of the democratic idea. We may call him, without straining much the term, *a revolutionist of a sober and reasonable type*.¹¹³

On a deeper level, Stepniak assumed the role of historian, sociologist and psychologist, using literature to plumb Russia's inner psyche. In his lecture on Tolstoy, the religious conversions of Pierre in *War and Peace* and Levin in *Anna Karenina* had represented the predominance of the fatalistic or Oriental side of Russia over the active, Western side. In Stepniak's prefaces, characters represent national movements, critical moments in Russia's ideological evolution, formed by and giving evidence of a history which is only implicitly stated. His Turgenev introductions are a case in point, with each love story illustrating something larger about the forces at work in the Russian nation, each character representing the Russian man of his era: "Lavretsky is living and concrete because embodying a great movement which passed before Turgenev's eyes, leaving a profound mark upon the growth of democratic ideas in our country."¹¹⁴ Turgenev's famously superfluous Rudin typifies the man of the repressive age of Nicholas I, when the western-educated members of "progressive Russia", finding no outlet for their spiritual and reforming energies, were forced to create for themselves "artificial life, artificial pursuits and interests".¹¹⁵ Characters in Stepniak's readings are not merely assemblages of manners, weaknesses, tastes and lifestyles; they are not to be gauged by the rigorous standards of English morality. They are living images of the material force of society and nation on the making of the individual.

Despite Stepniak's incontrovertible allure, his use of the "hidden meanings" ruse to attach mysterious political messages to Russian fiction occasionally provoked severe antagonism. One instance was at his Opera Comique reading of Ostrovsky's play *The Storm*, during which he paused "now and again to explain some racial or national peculiarity necessary to the understanding of the drama,"¹¹⁶ The lecture was attacked both at the time and later in the press by playwright and critic Austin Fryers, who was incensed with

¹¹³ My italics. Stepniak, preface to Turgenev, *A House of Gentlefolk*, x-xi.

¹¹⁴ Stepniak, introduction to Turgenev, *A House of Gentlefolk*, xii.

¹¹⁵ Stepniak, introduction to Ivan Turgenev, *Rudin*, translated by Constance Garnett (London: Heinemann, 1894) xix.

¹¹⁶ "Theatrical Gossip", 1.

Stepniak's political reading of the text.¹¹⁷ The heckler embarrassed most of the audience with his assault – there were boos – but he also elicited a smattering of applause. Stepniak's wife Fanny “grew almost mahogany coloured & almost melted”; Olive Garnett found herself quelling “a desperate desire to knock [Fryers] down”.¹¹⁸

No transcript of Stepniak's talk survives, but an earlier article on Ostrovsky's play which he wrote for the *Art Review* in 1890 provides a key to his interpretation..¹¹⁹ *The Storm* is about an attractive woman called Catherine who is married to Tikhon, a man very much under the thumb of his despotic and needy mother. Desperately jealous of her son's affections for his wife, the mother relentlessly abuses Catherine with false accusations and bullies Tikhon into serving his wife with constant threats, insults and injunctions. In this oppressive atmosphere, Tikhon resorts more and more to the escapism of vodka, oblivious to the fact that Catherine is struggling against a fatal attraction to Boris, the educated nephew of a local landowner. When Tikhon goes to Moscow, his conniving sister Varvara engineers a meeting between Catherine and Boris, despite Catherine's anguished appeals not to put her in the way of temptation. Meetings between Catherine and Boris carry on for ten days until her odious husband returns, whereupon Catherine confesses all. Later, she drowns herself in the river Volga.

Stepniak takes this family saga of betrayal, weak characters and suicide, and turns it not only into an exposé of the flawed institution of marriage (a theme universal in the 1890s), but into a specific attack on Russia's national flaws, and a call for western-style reform. Despite the fact that Ostrovsky scarcely makes reference to any world outside the narrow provincial region in which the action of his play takes place, Stepniak presents his crude saga as a lesson in the psychological constitution of Russia as a nation. The play's tyrannical matriarch is evidence of the despotism of the triumvirate of Tsar, state and church, whose oppressive spirit filters down to and pervades Russia's traditional family life. The matriarch's adulterous daughter-in-law provides a hopeful sign of Russia's unconscious, yet slowly awakening, revolutionary spirit. In Stepniak's hands, the play is more than an allegory, and its characters are more than symbols – they are living, breathing manifestations

¹¹⁷ “Theatrical Gossip”, 1.

¹¹⁸ Olive Garnett, diary entry, 14 January 1894, *Olive and Stepniak*, 30.

¹¹⁹ Stepniak, “Alexander Nikolaevich Ostrovsky”, *Art Review* 1 (April 1890) 122-125.

of the spirits of despotism and rebellion which can be found at all levels of Russian society. He writes of the daughter-in-law:

With the insight of genius, Ostrovsky has given us in Catherine a type of these Russian women, the glory of our race, who have already done so much for the political redemption of our country, and who will do still more in the future for her social and moral regeneration.¹²⁰

And yet, all Catherine does in the story is to succumb, through weakness and despair, to the romantic attentions of a man not much better than her husband. Stepniak's contextualisation of the play gave it a larger political dimension than any straightforward reading would suggest. The *Echo* correspondent deemed the play "an extremely powerful work", and noted that "the lecturer had a monopoly of the knowledge of his subject, the irrelevant remarks of the one speaker [Fryers] who ventured to address the meeting not being remarkable either for their courtesy or taste."¹²¹

Fryers defended his rant against Stepniak's interpolation of 'foreign values' two days later in the *Echo*.

I protested, and do protest, against accepting any and every foreign absurdity presented to us as something entirely above our comprehension, something to be marvelled at and worshipped.

There is a criterion in matters of dramatic art...and it is by this we should judge all dramatic literature, native and foreign. Your correspondent admits his ignorance of Russian drama, beyond the examples given by Mr. Stepniak and as he is willing to believe that it conveys a subtle meaning to the Russian intelligence which we are incapable of comprehending, he pronounces the play 'extremely powerful.' Let him, or anyone interested to defend the position, publish Mr. Stepniak's extracts, with their almost barbarian crudities..."

The critic concluded by protesting "with all my heart against the un-English policy to which your contributor is lending himself."¹²²

In effect, Fryers' response gestures at a profound difference between Russian and mainstream (as opposed to avant garde) English aesthetic sensibilities. Fryers was a critic

¹²⁰ Stepniak, "Alexander Nikolaevich Ostrovsky", 122.

¹²¹ "Theatrical Gossip", 1.

¹²² [Austin Fryers], "Mr. Grein's Sunday Lectures", *Echo* (17 January 1894) 6.

who saw drama as a force of moral rescue; Stepniak saw it as a political act. In an article on “The Moral Influence of the Stage”, the former would write:

[T]he most brutal costermonger could be purged of his brutality by a course of playgoing specially arranged to foster, strengthen and confirm his latent moral instincts. Witnessing the performance of “Drink” is to strongly recommend the observance of temperance; while the ever-green “East Lynne” might decide a wavering woman to be true to her duties as a wife and mother. It would certainly not have a contrary influence....In a word, the drama is a moral influence, because it enlarges our knowledge, fosters our innate sympathy with virtue, and deepens our innate detestation of vice.¹²³

Stepniak would have preached that the costermonger was brutal because of social inequalities or forces. And if his interpretation of *Anna Karenina* is anything to go by, he would have undercut Fryers’ conventional reading of Mrs. Henry Wood’s *East Lynne* by pointing to its heroine’s passionate temperament and vulnerable financial situation as arguments for a less rigid approach to female sexual digressions and women’s emancipation.¹²⁴ But the discrepancy in views had deeper significance. Stepniak’s critique of Ostrovsky’s *The Storm* injected a materialist conception of history into the analysis. He inserted the condition of the ‘Nation’ as a hidden factor in the formulation of character and manipulation of plot. Typical of Russia’s nineteenth-century radical critical tradition, Stepniak was concerned with the unity of personal morality with larger political and locally specific social structures. To him the moral agency of the individual was inextricably bound up with the historico-political forces acting upon him. To Fryers, this framework was threateningly “un-English”.¹²⁵

Fryers wasn’t the only literary figure appalled by the Nihilist’s readings of literature. In late 1895, Ford Madox Ford and Olive Garnett nearly broke off their friendship after she relayed to him Stepniak’s interpretation of a Russian story she was translating for her friend

¹²³ Austin Fryers, *A Guide to the Stage*, introduction by Herbert Beerbohm Tree (London: R.A. Everett & Co., 1904) 6.

¹²⁴ It has been convincingly argued that Tolstoy borrowed much of the plot and theme for *Anna Karenina* from Mrs. Henry Wood’s novel *East Lynne*. See Denis Goubert, “Did Tolstoy Read *East Lynne*?”, *Slavonic and East European Review* 58, 1 (January 1980) 22-39.

¹²⁵ [Fryers], “Mr. Grein’s Sunday Lectures”, 6.

Madame Bervi, the wife of an exiled philosopher.¹²⁶ Sadly, the tale was never published and eludes identification, but Olive Garnett had clearly swallowed the revolutionary's spin on its meaning. Ford "threw back his head & in his slowest & most tempered tones inveighed bitterly against Stepniak", Olive and her family:

You are all alike[;] the simplest, most sacred indisputable altruism is twisted & turned by you to suit your own worldly convenience. Give up all & follow Christ. Could anything be plainer. Fomin does here in this story & here Stepniak puts in his own wretched, philistine, bourgeois note to explain forsooth, to explain it away, & you agree, you would publish it.¹²⁷

Other critics couched their rejection in terms of disingenuous befuddlement. A review of *A House of Gentlefolk* in the *Times* read: "Stepniak, again, does his best to set forth the inner meaning – that is, the revolutionary meaning – of Lavretsky's love story, as he did that of Rudin's. It may be obtuseness, but we confess to some difficulty in following the allegory which is so clear to Stepniak."¹²⁸ The *Athenaeum* grumbled against Stepniak's habit of giving everything "a cryptic political signification".¹²⁹

Yet, just as many were persuaded. Arnold Bennett accepted Stepniak's views, because, as a Nihilist, he "should be an authority".¹³⁰ And Saintsbury admitted in a review of Korolenko that Stepniak was "a practical man at Russian subjects".¹³¹ In the admiring eyes of Constance Garnett he had no equal: "no one else can give the facts about [Russia's] epoch making novels as he can," she is quoted as saying in late 1893. Her assessment of his abilities sums up his particular contribution to the reception of the canon, but it also suggests that he was introducing a new manner of criticism to England: "Other writers" can write "critical introductions," she insisted, but only Stepniak has the knowledge to provide his unique "critical-historical" approach.¹³²

¹²⁶ The story was to be included in a translated volume of Madame Bervi's *Life*. Madame Bervi was the wife of the exiled philosopher Vasily Bervi. Unfortunately, the memoir never was published. Olive Garnett, *Olive and Stepniak*, 220.

¹²⁷ Olive Garnett, diary entry, 22 November 1895, *Olive and Stepniak*, 220–1.

¹²⁸ Review of *A House of Gentlefolk*, *Times* (29 December 1894) 6.

¹²⁹ Review of *A House of Gentlefolk*, "Translations from the Russian", *Athenaeum* 799, no. 3501 (1 December, 1894) 751.

¹³⁰ [Arnold Bennett] E.A.B., "Ivan Turgenev. An Enquiry", *Academy* 57 (4 November 1899) 514.

¹³¹ George Saintsbury, review of *In Two Moods* by Korolenko, *Academy* 41 (19 March 1892) 274.

¹³² Olive Garnett, diary entry, 7 December 1893, *Tea and Anarchy!*, 236.

Stepniak and Translations: Fashioning the Vogue

As I mentioned at the outset of Part II, émigrés like Stepniak were not only responsible for harnessing their cause to the vogue for Russian literature in the form of ‘politicised’ lectures, prefaces and articles. They were also responsible for stimulating the fashion, growing rapidly among literary circles of the 1890s, for Russian study. Stepniak and later Fanny Stepniak tutored and collaborated with that greatest translator of the age, Constance Garnett. Stepniak also instructed Ethel Lillian Voynich (née Boole) in the language. Volkhovsky fervidly urged study of the language: emotionally fragile, half deaf, and twice a widower, he was notoriously needy around women, and may well have offered his services as a tutor in order to satisfy his longing for their company. Olive Garnett, who caught her enthusiasm for studying Russian from the radical émigré set, passed it on to her friends: “Olive [Rossetti] came to luncheon, she wants to learn Russian with me.”¹³³ In the late 1890s, these lessons were provided by David Soskice, a Russian lawyer who had spent three years in solitary confinement in the Peter and Paul Fortress. Soskice also gave enough Russian to his English wife, Juliet Hueffer (sister to Ford Madox Ford) for her to publish whimsical translations of Nekrasov.¹³⁴ Meanwhile, Jaakoff Prelooker, who circulated in social spheres far removed from those of his Nihilist comrades, established ‘Russian Reading Circles’ in places like Eastbourne (though it is unclear whether any of his pupils ever got past learning the Cyrillic alphabet).¹³⁵ In 1901, he opened the Russian Residential Institute in Upper Norwood, London, where student lodgers were instructed in an environment “thoroughly Russian in style, even to the wall-paper, with native cook and servants, Russian library, and little museum of various Russian collections, with evening entertainments, lecturettes, and other performances – all proceedings to be in the Russian language”. (Sadly, the advent of the Boer war – which deprived the institute of its main source of students, the British officer class – meant the project soon sank under the burden of its expense.)¹³⁶

The fruits of the fashion for studying Russian, of course, were the very translations to which émigrés attached their critical commentary. And if not all the émigrés’ acolytes proved able linguists, many volunteered their services as ‘Englishers’ of the Russians’ crude translations in their eagerness to assist their cause in any way.

¹³³ Olive Garnett, diary entry, 2 December 1891, *Tea and Anarchy!*, 58.

¹³⁴ See, for example, N.A. Nekrasov, *Poems*, translated by Juliet M. Soskice (London: H. Milford, 1929).

¹³⁵ “Russian Reading Circles”, *Anglo-Russian* 3, 9 (March 1900) 351.

¹³⁶ Helena Frank, “Jaakoff Prelooker”, in Jaakoff Prelooker, *Russian Flashlights*, 37–8.

Stepniak's first translations were his own, 'Englished' by William Westall, whom he had met in Geneva in the early 1880s. A Swiss correspondent for the *Times* and the *Daily News*, Westall had secured Stepniak a voice in the *Times* and "advised and induced" him to relocate to London "when the Continent became too hot" for so-called Nihilists. Around the time of Stepniak's move, the Englishman himself pitched camp on the borders of Epping Forest, where he began churning out popular second-rate novels, some with revolutionary themes.¹³⁷ The acquaintance continued apace, and Westall could often be found in Stepniak's 'headquarters', where he met other radical émigrés, as well as English 'conspirators' like William Morris and the future novelist, Ethel Voynich. In 1885, he 'Englished' Stepniak's *Russia Under the Tzars* (he himself did not know Russian). He must have helped with Stepniak's translations of fiction in the same way, guiding the Russian's awkward phrases into English literary prose.

Their first translation was of Korolenko's *The Blind Musician* (1890), a choice of text which may, in part, have been inspired by Charles Turner's recent course of six Ilchester lectures on Russian literature at the Tylorian Institute in Oxford. Turner had extolled Korolenko, rating him second only to Tolstoy, and in early 1890 when the talks were published, he had honoured him with a generous half chapter.¹³⁸ But as Edward Garnett noted in a review of the published lectures, Turner's "sympathetic account" of an author "all but unknown in England" would "send his readers, all too fruitlessly, in search of French translations".¹³⁹ Evidently, the time was ripe to introduce Korolenko into England.

Even so, Stepniak's choice of *The Blind Musician* at first glance appears strange, so unpolemical is the novel, so seemingly detached from Russia's pressing political or social concerns. It delves into the inner life of a blind boy who finds in music a substitute for visual experience. Apart from its sympathetic portrayal of the musician's wise and kindly uncle – a man who once fought with Garibaldi and commits the 'sin' of reading Voltaire – it wears its political nuances lightly. One description of it as "a tale in which a blind youth overcomes his absorption to become a sensitive performer whose music takes on a universal

¹³⁷ "William Westall", *T.P.'s Weekly* 2, no. 45 (18 September 1903) 484.

¹³⁸ Charles Edward Turner, "Vsevolod Garschine and Vladimir Korolenko", in *The Modern Novelists of Russia* (London: Trubner & Co., 1890).

¹³⁹ Edward Garnett, "The Russian Novel", [Review of *The Modern Novelists of Russia* by Charles Edward Turner], *Speaker* 1, no. 9 (1 March 1890) 241.

resonance,” gives clue to its larger humanistic message.¹⁴⁰ But its strength lies in its tale of interiority, in Korolenko’s impressionistic prose, and in its exquisite portrayal of Russian rural life – whose spirit the boy learns to express through his music.

To regard Stepniak’s decision to translate the novel as one based exclusively on aesthetic criteria, however, would be to misjudge him as a propagandist. For a start, he published it the year after *The Career of a Nihilist*, whose mixed reception had affirmed his status as a dangerous revolutionary but had done little for his reputation as a man of cultivation. *The Career of a Nihilist*, if anything, was a set-back in his ongoing campaign to promote the image of revolutionaries (including himself) as artistically sensitive. We remember that to Massingham, the novel’s most enthusiastic champion, Stepniak’s revolutionaries inhabited a “savage brutal state of blind retaliation”.¹⁴¹ In contrast, Korolenko’s novel showed the spirit of the Russian race at its most gentle and lyrical, enchanting in its newness and variety. Korolenko’s Russia had an authenticity and immediacy which were missing in the West. It was the Russia of primordial potential. At one point in the story, the protagonist’s mother purchases a grand piano to draw her son from his fixation with a peasant groom who plays a Ruthenian flute. But the blind musician recoils from his mother’s “foreign music” with its complex airs, preferring instead the rustic sounds issuing from the groom’s crude instrument: simple melodies wrought from “the rustling of the forest, the soft whisperings of the grass on the steppes and the airs of the pathetic Ruthenian ballads, which had been sung over his very cradle”.¹⁴² We can imagine the appeal of the tale to people like William Morris, who despised what he considered the Victorian age’s artificial musical productions, was bored by opera, “the most degraded of all forms of art”, and “could not endure the clatter of the pianoforte”, preferring instead early music, plain-song and the melodies of “rooks and blackbirds”. Morris and Shaw alike hoped for a musical “revolution” which spelt a return to sincerity and simplicity.¹⁴³ Always attuned to the English *fin de siècle* ethos, Stepniak would have foreseen how *The Blind Musician*’s sensuous prose and themes of cultural renewal would supplant English accusations of

¹⁴⁰ Julian Connolly, “The Nineteenth Century: 1880–95”, in Charles A. Moser, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, revised edition (Cambridge; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 358.

¹⁴¹ Henry Massingham, review of *The Career of a Nihilist*, 4.

¹⁴² Korolenko, *The Blind Musician*, 51.

¹⁴³ Andrew Heywood, “William Morris and Music: Craftsman’s Art?”, *Musical Times* 139, 1864 (Autumn 1998) 33–8.

Russian barbarism with a sense of the unaffected honesty and undegraded possibilities of the Russian soul. To add to this, Korolenko was a bona-fide dissident: a populist with excellent credentials as a persecuted comrade, who had spent a few years “as a political exile” in Siberia.¹⁴⁴ In every sense, he was an ideal representative of the liberal, politically astute and cultivated intelligentsia which (Stepniak hoped to prove), deserved to take power in Russia – an example of the sort of sympathetic spirit whom the Russian government rewarded with exile, imprisonment and censorship.

The welcome reception enjoyed by *The Blind Musician* encouraged Stepniak and Westall to embark on a more obviously political work by Korolenko, one that could provide a fictional counterpart to the pro-Nihilist rhetoric of Stepniak’s propaganda. *In Two Moods* (1892) is the story of a young Russian student who overcomes his depressing conviction that everything is pre-determined according to some hidden scientific law when he falls in love with “the pure-hearted, high-minded” Tonia, and the two idealists decide to “wander freely over the world”, a euphemism, Stepniak tells us, for going “among the people as preachers of socialism”. The protagonist’s inward journey resembles a gradual awakening to the world around him – his is an odyssey of personal betterment. In his preface, Stepniak locates the work in a meaningful historical context. Korolenko’s band of bright, educated innocents striving to repay their debt to the labouring classes, he says, are typical of the generation of the so-called revolutionaries of the years 1873–5. Their “official description” is that they are “engaged in an ‘actual conspiracy against existing institutions’” (a charge that must have seemed absurd in an England where socialist party-building was a respectable middle-class pastime).¹⁴⁵

Critical responses confirmed Stepniak’s predictions for the volumes: Korolenko’s organic synthesis of romanticism and realism appealed even to those segments of the population which remained doggedly resistant to ‘political’ fiction. The manner of his art measured up to the aesthetic priorities of an age which had been formed by the theories and principles of people like Pater, Matthew Arnold and Swinburne. William Sharp in the *Academy* praised *The Blind Musician* as “a perfect work of art”: “even Gogol’s *Taras Bulba*, picturesque and impressive though it be, is not so well-proportioned, so complete, in a word,

¹⁴⁴ Stepniak, introduction to Korolenko, *The Blind Musician*, v.

¹⁴⁵ Stepniak, introduction to Korolenko, *In Two Moods*, v.

so masterly as this remarkable psychological romance.”¹⁴⁶ Equally telling was George Saintsbury’s endorsement of *In Two Moods*. The novel, he said, was free of “that cheap dreariness of pessimism” and “the dull cloud of helpless oppression and obsession which broods over so much Russian work.” He carried on, “We are not very fond of young revolutionary anything – it has, we confess, a specific power of boring us almost unequalled by any other bore. But Korolenko’s handling is good, and his work abounds in touches of nature.”¹⁴⁷ As an extreme advocate of “art for art’s sake”, Saintsbury disliked literature which had palpable designs on its readers. And like many followers of the aesthetic creed, he also regarded good style as “an essentially aristocratic thing”, the aesthetic quality of a work being a reflection of the author’s noble sensibilities.¹⁴⁸ His identification of a known Russian dissident as a good stylist was thus important in spite of his characteristic divestment of Korolenko’s art of any local or historically specific significance. It showed, albeit indirectly, that a Russian radical and his topic of revolution could be free of the vulgarity that the English so readily associated with “anarchism” and working class revolt.

In the summer of 1893, Korolenko stopped in London *en route* to America. Stepniak offered him a bed in his Blandford Road house and acted as his official host. On 29 July, the Nihilist threw a party to show off “the first of the novelists of our generation” to his English literary friends.¹⁴⁹ Guests included Constance, Edward and Olive Garnett; John Todhunter; the Webbs; George Herbert Perris; John William Mackail, a prolific writer on classical and biblical subjects and Morris’s official biographer; and Margaret Mackail, daughter of Sir Edward Burne-Jones. Korolenko was trailed by spies during his stay, but he left with fond memories of his host: “although he is himself a political person, he protected me from any political activity, which truly touched me”.¹⁵⁰

Stepniak may not have involved Korolenko in any intrigue or conspiracy, but it is unlikely that he passed up the chance to exploit his guest’s newly-forged English reputation in “the advancement of the revolutionary cause”. Chances are he was behind “Vladimir Korolenko”, an article “permeated with anti-Tsarist sentiment”, which appeared in the

¹⁴⁶ William Sharp, review of *The Blind Musician* by Korolenko, *Academy* 38 (21 July 1980) 28.

¹⁴⁷ Saintsbury, review of *In Two Moods*, 275.

¹⁴⁸ George Saintsbury, “Modern English Prose”, in *Collected Essays* 3 (London, Toronto: J.M Dent & Sons; New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1923) 73. The essay was originally published in 1876.

¹⁴⁹ So described by Stepniak in a letter to Olive Garnett (29 July 1893) Garnett Family Archive, Hilton Hall. Olive Garnett, *Tea and Anarchy!* 220.

Speaker, a newspaper where SFRF founder, Perris, was on the editorial board.¹⁵¹ The piece pulled no punches. It devoted a long paragraph to Russian literature's "roll of martyrdom": from the whipping of Lermontov, to the entombment of Chernyshevsky in a fortress prison, to the casting of Dostoevsky into "the filthy cauldron of Siberian prison-life" where he was "flogged while suffering from an epileptic attack, and otherwise tortured".¹⁵² Korolenko's own experiences of Siberian exile formed the gruesome topic of another paragraph.

Like his own novel *The Career of a Nihilist*, his early ground-breaking study *Underground Russia*, and to a lesser extent, Korolenko's *In Two Moods* (with its blossoming, generous-hearted *narodniki*), Stepniak's next collaboration with William Westall evoked the revolutionary movement of his youth in its most splendid, ennobling light. Earlier, in his preface to *The Career of a Nihilist*, Stepniak had written of his nostalgic attachment to this idealistic era:

Having been witness of and participator in a movement, which struck even its enemies by its spirit of boundless self-sacrifice, I wanted to show in the full light of fiction the inmost heart and soul of those humanitarian enthusiasts, with whom devotion to a cause has attained the fervour of a religion, without being a religion.

Sophia Kovalevsky's *Vera Barantzova* (1895) similarly glorified the religion of revolutionary martyrdom. Its heroine is the youngest and most beautiful of three princesses who is persuaded by her tutor to substitute her childhood dream of performing missionary work in China for the better causes of socialism and the Russian revolution. Her opportunity for self-sacrifice arises when she witnesses the trial of seventy-five so-called Nihilists, where a Jew called Pavlenkov is given the worst of all sentences: solitary confinement. Since such living deaths are reserved for single convicts, Vera marries the stranger. In the closing scene, she accompanies Pavlenkov to Siberia "to live among the exiles, comfort, console and help them, minister to their needs, and become the intermediary of their correspondence." "Are you weeping for me?" she says to her husband with a cheerful smile,

¹⁵⁰ Letter from Korolenko to his mother (24 July 1893) quoted in A. Khrabrovitskii, "V.G. Korolenko, Konstantsiia Garnet i S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii", *Russkaia literatura*, 4 (1962) 167–71.

¹⁵¹ Charles A. Moser. "Korolenko and America", *Russian Review* 28, 3 (July 1969) 305.

¹⁵² "Vladimir Korolenko", *Speaker* (12 August 1893) 157.

“If only you knew how I pity those who remain behind.”¹⁵³ Lest the notion of a princess devoting herself to the cause seem unlikely, Stepniak reminds the reader that this inspiring account of revolutionary terrorism was written by an “aristocratic” and intelligent revolutionary, a famous mathematician whose own family could claim “kingly descent”.¹⁵⁴

Yet the nobility of the protagonist and the idealism of her Nihilist comrades were no obstruction to the novel’s function as a sexual thriller. Its early pages abound with erotically charged encounters between the princess and her tutor. Later scenes show the chaste beauty alone and vulnerable walking through prison corridors where she is subjected to the sexual taunts of prison guards. It is easy to see where this novel fits into England’s own *fin de siècle* battle between Mrs. Grundy and ‘the spirit of revolt’: if the translation offended the proverbial British Matron upholding traditional notions of ‘common decency’, it contained plenty to feed the public’s insatiable thirst for new sensations. The heroine’s eschewing of traditional female roles also marked it as a New Woman novel. The novel held undoubtable appeal to readers of romantic and sensation fiction, but it failed to persuade a critic in the *Athenaeum* who panned its “new philosophy”: “[It is not] easy to see any particular merit or usefulness in a spasmodic young woman marrying a Jewish political prisoner, whom she does not know and who is not said to be in love with her, that she may accompany him to Siberia. This is, indeed, altruism with a vengeance.”¹⁵⁵ For all its high-minded posturing, *Vera Barantzova* fulfilled the objective Stepniak had outlined to Zasulich in 1878, of bringing revolutionary ideas to the people “in popular form, under popular guise”.¹⁵⁶

Ethel Lillian Voynich (née Boole)

If William Westall was motivated to help Stepniak with his translations principally by money,¹⁵⁷ the same could not be said for Ethel Voynich, one of the more prolific translators known to have been tutored by Stepniak. As a fiercely idealistic fifteen year-old Voynich had read a book about the Italian republican Giuseppe Mazzini and had subsequently worn

¹⁵³ Sophia Kovalevsky, *Vera Barantzova*, translated by Sergius Stepniak and W. Westall (London: Ward and Downey, 1895) 281.

¹⁵⁴ Stepniak, introduction to Kovalevsky, *Vera Barantzova*, xi.

¹⁵⁵ Review of *Vera Barantzova* by Sophia Kovalevsky, *Athenaeum* (25 May 1895) 672.

¹⁵⁶ Taratuta, “S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii” in Stepniak, *Rossiia pod vlast’iu tsarei* (Moskva: Izdatel’stvo sotsial’no-ekonomicheskoi literatury mysl’, 1964) 17.

¹⁵⁷ William Westall to Stepniak (n.d.) Stepniak-Kravchinskii archive, RGALI f 1158, op 1, ed khr 564.

black until her marriage “in mourning for a world that was not yet free”.¹⁵⁸ Stepniak’s *Underground Russia*, which she read while studying music in Berlin, had made a similar impression on her and upon returning to London in 1886, she asked the anarchist Charlotte Wilson to introduce her to its author. The two quickly began to enjoy “a deep sincere intimacy”.¹⁵⁹ According to Stepniak’s biographer, she was “stern and humorless woman...a great favorite of [Stepniak] who nicknamed her ‘Bulochka’ [little bread-roll]”. Under Stepniak’s instruction, Voynich picked up Russian “in an astonishingly short time”;¹⁶⁰ and after the formation of the SFRF, she became the society’s resident translator. Some of the tracts she translated into English were published in *Nihilism As It Is* (1895). In 1892, she married Mikhail Babdank-Woynicz (anglicised to Wilfred Michael Voynich), a Polish nationalist who had been imprisoned in Warsaw for his political activism and later exiled to Siberia. After Stepniak’s death in 1895, the Voyniches withdrew from active participation in the movement. Michael Voynich became known internationally as a dealer in extremely rare antiquarian books. But as one commentator has pointed out, “it is possible that his business was, at first, designed to conceal the smuggling of anti-czarist books”.¹⁶¹ In 1897, Ethel Voynich wrote *The Gadfly*, a revolutionary novel set in the Italy of the Risorgimento, which injected into the professedly bourgeois and hackneyed English tradition a dash of the spirit and energy of émigré radicalism. In translation, it became a best-seller in pre-revolutionary Russia and compulsory reading in the Soviet Union. In England it reached eight impressions in four years and remained a popular read in the labour movement until the 1920s. In 1898, Shaw adapted it for stage. One commentator points out: “Almost the whole interest of her work can be traced back very obviously to this one factor: the impact of the values and experiences of a powerful and heroic revolutionary movement upon a sensitive and aspiring young woman of the professional middle class of late-Victorian England.”¹⁶²

Well before her own forays into fiction writing, Voynich was sharpening her writing skills by making translations of Russian stories carefully selected by Stepniak. Their main purpose was to promote sympathy with the revolutionary movement, but they also brought some little-known writers to England for the first time.

¹⁵⁸ Soshana Milgram Knapp, “E.L. Voynich”, *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 197, edited by George M. Johnson (Detroit, Washington, London: Gale Research, 1999) 293.

¹⁵⁹ Taratuta, *Istoriia dvukh knig*, 166.

¹⁶⁰ Senese, *S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 59.

¹⁶¹ Knapp, “E.L. Voynich”, 293.

For a start, she was probably responsible for the unattributed translations of fables and sketches by Saltykov-Shchedrin, which appeared in *Free Russia* in the early 1890s.¹⁶³ These were satires of corrupt Russian bureaucrats and greedy entrepreneurs whose presence within the pages of *Free Russia* gave their topicality extra resonance. “How a Peasant Fed Two Generals” pictures two officials stranded on an uninhabited island. Unable to make a fire, catch a fish, or pick fruit from a tree, the two almost die of hunger. They are rescued by a peasant who attends to all their needs. As they grow fat and merry on his labour, they upbraid their deliverer for his laziness and stupidity. Finally the peasant builds a boat and sails them to St. Petersburg, whereupon the generals send him a glass of vodka and 6d.: “Enjoy yourself, my good man!”¹⁶⁴ Another sketch, “Misha and Vania: A Forgotten Story” was nightmarish, depicting a suicide pact between two ill-treated serf boys.¹⁶⁵ Serfdom had been abolished for thirty years when *Free Russia* printed this tale, but the story’s subject chimed well with the journal’s relentless themes of Russian suffering and oppression. Both Stepniak and Volkhovsy deeply admired Saltykov-Shchedrin’s methods as a propagandist. The former considered him to be “the greatest satirist the Slavonic race has produced” as well as “the moral leader of liberal Russia, having devoted his life to the awakening of the national conscience by all the ways and methods which his incomparable genius could suggest.”¹⁶⁶ Volkhovsky ranked him with “Erasmus, Rabelais and Swift”.¹⁶⁷ For over two decades, whatever tiny reputation Saltykov-Shchedrin had, depended almost exclusively on the translations in *Free Russia*. The author’s most famous novel *The Golovlyov Family* was not published in English until 1916.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶² Arnold Kettle, “E.L. Voynich: A Forgotten English Novelist”, *Essays in Criticism* 7, 2 (1957) 164.

¹⁶³ These included: “The Deceitful Editor and the Credulous Reader” *Free Russia* 1, 9 (April 1891) 13–14; “The Fool” *Free Russia* 1, 5 (1 December 1890); “Misha and Vania: A Forgotten Story”, *Free Russia* 3, 6–7 (1 January 1893) 13–5; and 3, 8 (1 February 1893) 28–31; and “The Story of How One Peasant Saved Two Generals”, *Free Russia* 2, 6 (1 January 1892) 13–15. Under Volkhovsky’s editorship, more stories by Saltykov-Shchedrin appeared, including, “Conscience”, commentary by F. Volkhovsky, *Free Russia* 13, 10 (1 November, 1902) 98–100.

¹⁶⁴ Saltykov-Shchedrin, “Story of How One Peasant Saved Two Generals”, *Free Russia* 2, 6 (1 January 1892) 13–15.

¹⁶⁵ Saltykov-Shchedrin, “Misha and Vania: A Forgotten Story”, *Free Russia* 3, 6–7 (1 January 1893) 13–5; and 3, 8 (1 February 1893) 28–31.

¹⁶⁶ Stepniak, introduction to *The Humour of Russia*, translated by Ethel Lillian Voynich (London: Walter Scott, 1895) xiii.

¹⁶⁷ Editor’s note to Saltykov-Shchedrin, “Conscience”, *Free Russia* (1 November, 1902) 98.

¹⁶⁸ See I.P. Foote, “M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin in English: A Bibliography”, *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, n.s. 22 (1989) 89–114.

Voynich made a more substantial contribution to the translated canon with her volumes *Stories from Garshin* (1893) and *The Humour of Russia* (1895). Both collections were introduced by Stepniak, and given his close contact with Voynich we can surmise that he also selected the stories in these volumes. In 1911, she translated *Six Lyrics from the Ruthenian of T. Shevchénko, also The Song of the Merchant Kaláshnikov from the Russian of M. Lérmontov* (1911). The book of poems was a tribute to her late mentor: Shevchenko was a poet Stepniak had advocated and loved.

Although Garshin had been translated into French and Polish as early as 1882, and appeared soon after in Czech, German, Danish and Swedish, Voynich's was the first volume dedicated to Garshin in the English language, and only the third translation to be published in England. The first had been the story "Four Days after the Battle", appearing in 1888 in a journal for British army and naval officers called the *United Service Magazine*, and translated in such a way as to whitewash its anti-war sentiment.¹⁶⁹ The second, similarly mauled, and possibly translated from German or French, had been issued in Fisher Unwin's Pseudonym Library in 1892, alongside stories by other Russian authors.¹⁷⁰ Voynich's 'flawlessly rendered' volume, in contrast, exhibited a sensitivity to Russian idiom which reflected both Stepniak's talent as a tutor and his involvement in the translation. The Nihilist's preface, meanwhile (a revised version of an earlier article he had written for *Time, A Monthly Magazine* in 1890), constituted one of the seminal critical and biographical studies of the author to appear in England.¹⁷¹ Together, Stepniak and Voynich can be deemed largely responsible for bringing Garshin to England. Indeed, no other volume of collected works would be published until 1912.¹⁷² Their contribution was recognised a century later when the centenary anniversary of *Stories from Garshin* provided the

¹⁶⁹ Vselovod Garshin, "Four Days after the Battle", translated by Charles J. Cooke, *United Service Magazine* 119, 715 (June, 1888) 154-64. For a discussion of Cooke's translation see Peter Henry, "Garshin in English (1888-1920)", in Peter Henry, Vladimir Porudominsky, Mikhail Girshman, eds, *Vsevolod Garshin at the Turn of the Century 2*, (Oxford: Northgate Press, 1999) 193-4.

¹⁷⁰ This was "Wounded in Battle", in *Russian Stories 2, The Saghalien Convict and Other Stories* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1892-93). For a discussion of the translation, see Peter Henry, "Garshin in English (1888-1920)", in Henry, Porudominsky, Girshman, eds, *Vsevolod Garshin at the Turn of the Century 2*, 194-5.

¹⁷¹ Stepniak, "Vsevolod Garshin", *Time, A Monthly Magazine* n.s. 6 (June 1890) 610-17. The only other critical study of Garshin to appear in 1890 was in Charles Turner, *The Modern Novelists of Russia*. London: Trubner & Co., 1890.

¹⁷² This was V.M. Garshin, *The Signal and Other Stories*, translated by Rowland Smith (London: Duckworth, 1912).

inspiration and pretext for a large international symposium dedicated to Garshin's *fin de siècle* reputation.¹⁷³

Importantly for England's understanding of Russia, the sketches and tales in *Stories from Garshin* helped perpetuate Stepniak's recurrent formulation of Russia's social pathology: its disease of slavish submissiveness in the face of oppression. While generally panegyrical in his preface, Stepniak attributes Garshin's "From the Reminiscences of Private Ivanov" to "the immaturity of his talent", linking immaturity with "that truly Oriental incapacity of some Russians to realise that love and sympathy are not everything, and that ideas of honour and human dignity must also have some room in the making of human character". Stepniak's censure was a response to a character in the story, an officer by the name of Wentzel, who routinely beats his soldiers, and yet is pictured at the end of the tale sobbing for men lost in battle. "To idealise such a brute, and make allowances for him on account of his 'hidden sympathy' with the soldiers whom he so brutally maltreats, is the same as to idealise an executioner or slave-driver who would torture children and prostitute women in the name of some 'idea' which has entered into his wooden head."¹⁷⁴ George Cotterell in the *Academy* gave credence to Stepniak's two-sided analysis: "Through...all [the stories] breathes an unquestioning acceptance of things as they are, and silent obedience and submission under suffering, ill-usage and insult. Over each brood the spirit of absolute unrelieved tragedy; yet one can imagine Garshin to be, in his own tongue, as M. Stepniak describes him, 'this subtle, poetic, merciless, yet irresistibly sympathetic author'".¹⁷⁵

Whether or not he felt some faint revulsion at the submissive philosophy inherent in Garshin's stories, writing the introduction to the volume gave Stepniak another opportunity to respond, belatedly, to Plekhanov's 1888 call to present the west with a "martyrology" of Russian writers. He writes of how Garshin had sought audiences with high officials to beg them to inaugurate a policy of pacification with Nihilists, but was ignored. Of how the hopelessness of the situation in Russia made him roam the provinces in a state of melancholy insanity, and later, fling himself to his death from the fourth story of his house. Stepniak attributes the author's descent into madness and suicide to "the moral suffering resulting

¹⁷³ The conference was cancelled due to Ukraine's economic difficulties, but three volumes of proceedings were published in Henry, Porudominsky, Girshman, eds, *Vsevolod Garshin at the Turn of the Century*.

¹⁷⁴ Stepniak, introduction to E.L. Voynich, trans., *Stories from Garshin* (London : Unwin, 1893) 10–11.

¹⁷⁵ George Cotterell, review of *Stories from Garshin*, *Academy* 44 (23 December 1893) 565.

from the conditions which [Russian] despotism has created”.¹⁷⁶ This loss of talent, this check to the blossoming of Russia’s literary culture, is a chronic feature of Russia’s latest phase of despotism: “When the flower of a generation is decimated, the best, the most ardent spirits, finding an early grave in the mines of Siberia, or in the gloomy subterranean cells of the fortresses, there is little scope for the development of national genius”.¹⁷⁷ As one Stepniak scholar notes, such descriptions of the crushing of the intellectual awakening in nineteenth-century Russia, were bound to turn “the stomachs of English liberals or anyone who held faith in education as a key to human progress and self-fulfilment”.¹⁷⁸ The *Cambridge Review* took up Stepniak’s theme of tragedy: “At the head of [Russia’s] modern authors stands Vsevolod Garshin, a lyrical prose-writer, whose adverse fate alone prevented him from reaching the summit of art”.¹⁷⁹

The Humour of Russia contained moral allegories and satires of segments of Russian society: including two pieces by Saltykov-Shchedrin, and Stepniak’s own didactic tale, *The Story of a Kopeck*. In his introduction to the volume, Stepniak provided the context necessary to regard the bulk of the stories as anti-Tsarist tracts. In Saltykov-Shchedrin’s fable, *The Self-Sacrificing Rabbit*, he tells us “the satirist boldly ridicules nothing less than *the feeling of loyalty under a régime which consists of brutal violence erected into a system*”.¹⁸⁰ Ostrovsky’s drama *The Domestic Picture*, likewise exposes Russia’s psychological constitution: “[it] is anything but a picture of Russian domestic life. It is a bitter and merciless satire, exposing...the shocking immorality nestling secretly in those families where despotism has destroyed all natural ties of affection and uprooted all sense of humour”.¹⁸¹

Free Russia, 1899–1905

During Stepniak’s lifetime, he and Volkhovsky, with the help of many unnamed English friends, turned *Free Russia* into a venue for translations of short works. Besides Saltykov-Shchedrin’s tales, most of these were sketches, chosen with the aim of creating a vivid backdrop of fictional images to accompany the journal’s polemics. Korolenko’s “Easter

¹⁷⁶ Stepniak, introduction to *Stories from Garshin*, 5.

¹⁷⁷ Stepniak, introduction to *Stories from Garshin*, 4.

¹⁷⁸ Bachman, *Serge Mikhailovich Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 278.

¹⁷⁹ R.B.J., review of *Stories from Garshin*, *Cambridge Review* 15, 378 (8 March 1894) 279.

¹⁸⁰ Stepniak’s emphasis. Stepniak, introduction to Voynich, trans., *The Humour of Russia*, xiv

Eve”, a powerful indictment of state-sponsored violence, for example, echoed émigré propaganda which tried to attribute Russia’s bellicosity to its government, not to its people: “we respect and appreciate patriotic feeling in so far as it is a manifestation of love to one’s own race, not an expression of rapacious instincts towards other races.”¹⁸² The tragedy tells of a reluctant young army recruit whose indoctrination into the system compels him to shoot a homesick tramp attempting to break out of prison for one last glimpse of his native village:

“Stop! Stop! Oh stop for pity’s sake!” cries the soldier, raising his rifle in horror....All that he has feared and trembled at rushes upon him, formless, terrible, at the sight of this grey, running figure. “The service – responsible!” flashes through the soldier’s brain, and he lifts his rifle and aims at the running figure. Before pulling the trigger, he shuts his eyes with a piteous look....”¹⁸³

There were also sympathetic sketches of ‘inciters’ or *narodniki* attempting to enlighten the masses, and stories of peasants. The unattributed “God’s Field”, painting the horrors of rural famine, was printed at the height of *Free Russia’s* campaign to raise money for famine victims.

Stepniak’s use of stories treating the subject of peasant education in *Free Russia* can be considered in the context of England’s own education Act of 1871 and the attendant panic it inspired among some intellectuals. In *Confessions of a Young Man* (1888) George Moore bleats, “The spectre of famine, of the plague, of the plague, of war, etc., are mild and gracious symbols compared with that menacing figure, Universal Education...”.¹⁸⁴ Moore’s fears that an educated mass would result in an irreversible debasement of culture are reiterated in Gustave Le Bon’s study *The Crowd* (1895) a popular read in England at the turn of the century. Le Bon sees the half-educated masses as a threat to a civilisation that had been created by a “small intellectual aristocracy”.¹⁸⁵ And as John Carey argues in *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, this view was widespread amongst the educated elite.¹⁸⁶ The

¹⁸¹ Stepniak, introduction to *The Humour of Russia*, xiii.

¹⁸² Stepniak, “The Agitation Abroad”, in *Nihilism as It Is*, 62.

¹⁸³ V. Korolenko, “Easter Eve”, *Free Russia* 3, 9 (1 April 1893) 63.

¹⁸⁴ George Moore, *Confessions of a Young Man*, edited and with an introduction by Susan Dick (Montreal, London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1972) 140.

¹⁸⁵ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd*, introduction by Robert A. Nye (New Brunswick, NJ; London: Transaction Publishers, 1997) 38.

¹⁸⁶ John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880–1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992).

consequences of educating the crowd are given sinister expression in George Gissing's *Demos* (1886), the story of a working-class socialist with a small bookcase of cheap reprints of Malthus, Robert Owen, Thomas Paine, and sundry works of Voltaire. Absent from Gissing's semi-enlightened hero Mutimer are the aesthetic impulses which come so naturally to the elite classes: he is incapable of appreciating the imaginative value of natural beauty, religion, or Andersen's fairy stories. When he unexpectedly finds himself heir to a fortune, his half-education and lack of breeding make him susceptible to the temptations of capitalism, individualism and industrialisation. His newly-endowed sister, meanwhile, idles away in bed reading novels from Mudie's. She becomes slovenly and vulgar, stuffing her mind with unedifying fancies. It would have been better if they had remained uneducated, unambitious, simple, hard-working and honest, like other less-informed figures in the novel. Universal education dangerously unfits the working man for his station.

If education was dangerous for the English workingman, so much more so was it dangerous amongst a race of barbarians. In the press, romanticised pictures of bucolic *mujiks* were matched only by fearful depictions of half-educated/ half-wild Bazarovs (like de Vogue's) bludgeoning civilisation with their ill-considered belief-systems – though some conceded that Russia's intelligentsia was a breed apart from the Russian peasant. Then there was the hard-to-budge notion that the peasant breed was beyond redemption: a race of "besotted savages utterly unfit for civilisation".¹⁸⁷ As a revolutionary of the heroic school, Stepniak was happy to convey the idea that the reforming intelligentsia represented a core educated elite distinct from Russia's hordes. But in order to justify removing the Tsar, it was necessary to prove the receptivity of peasants to education and self-betterment.

Free Russia carried assurances that the education of the masses would effect their humanisation. It would awaken their innate nobility. The sketch, "On Easter Day", by "a teacher in a Russian peasant school" shows peasant schoolboys reading out Tolstoi's didactic short stories to circles of illiterate family members: "The good words, the ideas of truth and justice, find their way into the hears and minds of the listeners. Those miseries which originate in their own faults, stand before them in striking pictures. They might live better. Their intelligence is awakened. A tear is seen creeping down a wrinkled, weather

¹⁸⁷ S. Stepniak, "The Russian Peasants and their Detractors & Panegyrists", *Free Russia* 3, 5 (1 December 1892) 9.

beaten face.”¹⁸⁸ Such tales testified to the elevating consequences of peasant literacy. Stepniak also wrote a hefty article on the phenomenal growth in mass literacy and the emergence of a new popular literature in Russia. He ascribes this development to the educated classes in Russia, who approach popular education with the same philanthropic and democratic feeling that characterises missionary work in England. In one short generation, the tillers of the soil themselves are now “founders of libraries, public readers, authors of books for the peasants, and even popular lecturers upon scientific subjects”. Education in no way strips the peasant of his one virtue, simplicity. Samuel Xenofontov, for example, tills the land in the summer and makes wooden spades in the winter. His spare time he devotes to reading and to writing short plain stories from life. “What Samuel Xenofontov wishes books to do is to bring about more union, more fraternal feeling as a remedy for the dissevering effect of modern industrialism and its natural consequence - individualism.”¹⁸⁹ Rather than raising the ugly spectre of degeneration, the educated peasant offers hope of cultural and social renewal.

Stepniak, Volkhovsky, and the Making of Constance Garnett

The passage of events culminating in Stepniak and Volkhovsky’s abiding friendship with Constance Garnett, perhaps the most prolific translator of Russian literature into English to date, contains in itself a story of how émigrés and their propaganda were affecting literary and publishing interests in the 1890s. In early 1890, a young writer by the name of Marie Hawker was deeply impressed both upon hearing a tragic Russian air played upon a zither, and upon reading Stepniak’s accounts of the brutal ill-treatment, flogging and suicides of prisoners in Russia. To Hawker, the sad melody contained the essence of what Stepniak had described as Russia’s fatalistic hopelessness; it seemed borne of years of relentless oppression. As a consequence of these joint influences, she was compelled to write *Mademoiselle Ixe* (1891), a novel giving a sympathetic account of a deep and enterprising young female Nihilist posing as a governess in an English household. Hawker’s description of the assassin’s piano-playing echoes some of Stepniak’s sentiments about the tragic psychological make-up of Russia:

¹⁸⁸ Mikhaylov [A teacher in a Russian peasant school], “On Easter Day”, *Free Russia* 5, 4 (1 April 1894) 35.

¹⁸⁹ Stepniak, “The Russian Peasants as Readers and Writers”, *Free Russia* 2, 12 (1 July 1892) 10.

The spirit thus revealed was anguish that cannot rest, torment that sees no outlet on earth, no comfort in heaven, the shadow of an unrighteous and pitiless dominion in which the hope of generations had faded and their faith had waxed dim.¹⁹⁰

Notwithstanding its topicality, being a short work, *Mademoiselle Ixe* initially languished in a sea of rejections. Publishers were still emerging from the monopoly of the three-volume novel, and if single-volume novels were newly enjoying a vogue, they were still substantial tomes. Finally, T. Fisher Unwin, recognising “the intense vitality of its character-drawing”, decided to use it to spearhead the *Pseudonym Library*, a series devoted to books which were too short to be marketed individually but were eminently publishable.¹⁹¹ His concession to conventional formatting was well-rewarded: thanks in part to an endorsement by Gladstone, *Mademoiselle Ixe* sold “By the cartload”, was reviewed in Egypt, Russia and France, and went into many editions. Even the socially alert Madame Novikoff was forced to affect appreciation for the book.¹⁹² Stepniak and Volkhovsky, for their part, offered the author heartfelt gratitude both for “the services she had rendered to the cause of revolutionary Russia”, and for the ten pounds she sent them for the benefit of Russian exiles.¹⁹³

The popularity of *Mademoiselle Ixe*, as well as English society’s growing preoccupation with Nihilism, encouraged Unwin to publish more stories dealing with the darker, revolutionary side of Russia. Among these were translations: Korolenko’s tales appeared alongside stories by Garshin, Volkhovsky and Machtet in two of *The Pseudonym Library* volumes – *Makár’s Dream and other Stories* (1892), and *The Saghalien Convict and Other Stories* (1892).¹⁹⁴ Another Russian author featured prominently was Potapenko, whose novel *A Russian Priest* (1891), about a clergyman assisting in a famine despite the indifference of the Orthodox Church, went into five editions.¹⁹⁵ The series gave the over-all impression of being, as Ford Madox Ford

¹⁹⁰ Evelyn March-Phillips, *Lanoe Falconer* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1915) 114–5.

¹⁹¹ T. Fisher Unwin. “My First Success”, *Mainly About People* 24 (2 April 1910) 438.

¹⁹² March-Phillips, *Lanoe Falconer*, 173.

¹⁹³ March-Phillips, *Lanoe Falconer*, 172, 120.

¹⁹⁴ The origin of the Korolenko translations in these volumes remains a mystery.

¹⁹⁵ The book historian George Jefferson states that ten titles (of a total of fifty-five) are translations from Russian. See Jefferson, “The Pseudonym Library”, *The Private Library*, 4th series, 1, 1 (Spring 1988) 15. I can only identify six Russian titles beyond a shadow of a doubt. These are: vol. 7, I.N. Potapenko, *A Russian Priest* (1891); vol. 14, V.G. Korolenko and F. Volkovsky, *Russian Stories 1, Makár’s Dream, and Other Stories* (1892); vol. 17, I.N. Potapenko, *The General’s Daughter* (1892); vol. 18, V.G. Korolenko, G.A. Machtet and V.M. Garshin, *Russian Stories 2, The Saghalien Convict, and Other Stories* (1892); vol. 26, I.N. Potapenko, *A Father of Six and An Occasional Holiday* (1893); and vol. 35, V. Mikoulitch, *Mimi’s Marriage, A Sketch* (1893). Other volumes, however, are Slavic in origin and content, with themes similar to the Russian works.

remembered, “largely Slav in tone – with stories of Russia or translations from the Russian.” Ford ascribed the library’s “meteoric success” to the fact that “English Left opinion heartily espoused the cause of Nihilism”.¹⁹⁶ But while it may have been engendered by the press’s love-affair with Russian revolutionaries, the series in turn helped publicise the cause. T. Fisher Unwin, for example, would be influenced by his own publishing list. When he sent out review copies of *Mademoiselle Ixe* to Russian papers, they were “returned with pages heavily marked by the censor’s pencil and the word *defendu* stamped on the covers”, which, for Unwin, confirmed the story’s truth.¹⁹⁷ He became a committed member of the SFRF, chairing at least one of the society’s crowded meetings at the National Liberal Club,¹⁹⁸ and subsequently attended Stepniak’s literary lectures. In 1893, he published Voynich’s volume of translations, *Stories from Garshin*, along with Stepniak’s politically motivated preface. Radical émigrés and their sympathisers came to regard Unwin as a first call when seeking publishers for their books about Russia.

More importantly, *The Pseudonym Library* created the initial premise for the fated meeting between the émigré set and the Garnett family. At the time, Unwin’s publisher’s reader – the man responsible for selecting many of the manuscripts which appeared the *Pseudonym Library* – was the young Edward Garnett, the son of Richard Garnett, Keeper of Books for the British Library. In 1891, Volkovsky crossed Garnett’s path when the Russian, attracted by the series’ Slavic bent, submitted a short fable inspired by Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*. (“The ‘New Life’” was published in 1892 in a volume with stories by Korolenko.)¹⁹⁹ In her unpublished memoir Constance Garnett remembered the meeting and its immediate consequence:

In [June or July] 1891, Edward on coming back from London told me ‘I have met a man after your heart – a Russian exile – and I have asked him down for a weekend.’ This was Felix Volkhovsky, who had recently escaped from Siberia and he soon became a great friend. He had no home and (I forget whether at his suggestion or ours) it was arranged that he should make our cottage his headquarters.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Ford Madox Ford, *Reminiscences 1894–1914: Return to Yesterday* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1931) 129.

¹⁹⁷ Unwin, “My First Success”, 438.

¹⁹⁸ Olive Garnett, diary entry, 15 December 1891, *Tea and Anarchy!*, 59.

¹⁹⁹ *Russian Stories* 1, V.G. Korolenko and F. Volkovsky.

In addition to safe sanctuary, Volkhovsky found in the Garnett home a captive audience for his descriptions of Russian life and politics. Edward and Constance Garnett were both open-minded, harbouring none of middle-England's conventional prejudices about émigrés. Edward Garnett had come from a family with a long tradition of friendship with political refugees: his father had brought home many such figures, including Garibaldi.²⁰¹ A close friend of the elder Garnett was the anarchist William Rossetti, a member the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Rossetti's children published the anarchist news-sheet, the *Torch*, in a room painted red, and kept their doors open to both cultivated émigrés and more disreputable and frowsy dissidents hearkening from London's East End who ate them out of bread and butter.²⁰² Constance Garnett was yet more liberal-minded than her husband.²⁰³ Previous to her marriage she had read Latin and Greek at Newnham, the women's college in Cambridge, where she subscribed to the bundle of ideologies – atheism, socialism, the desire for a career and income – which went with being a fin-de-siècle new woman. She later worked as librarian at the People's Palace in Whitechapel – a centre which provided cheap amusements, health care, legal advice, public readings and reading rooms for the poor – and joined the Fabian Society. Like her husband, she came from a less-than-conventional and left-leaning family: her sister, Clementina Black, was a founder of the Women's Trade Union Association and friends with Eleanor Marx. The Garnetts' sympathies and political views thus chimed well with those of their new tenant. Within months, Volkhovsky was an insider at the cottage, spending afternoons discussing social issues, Russian literature and the contents of *Free Russia* while Edward Garnett's sister-in-law, Olive mended his socks. "When Volkhovsky is here", Olive Garnett noted in her diary, "we live in a quite a little Russian world. It is so curious to awake from Siberia to a Surrey Lane."²⁰⁴

Volkhovsky, wrote Constance Garnett, "did me two great services – for which I shall always be grateful. He made me go out for long walks [during pregnancy] ... and he suggested my learning Russian & gave me a grammar & a dictionary & the first story I

²⁰⁰ Constance Garnett, unpublished memoir, 58.

²⁰¹ Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *The Garnett Family* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961) 177.

²⁰² Their experience of the émigré set was given fictional expression in Isabel Meredith [Helen and Olive Rossetti], *A Girl among the Anarchists* (London: Duckworth, 1903).

²⁰³ Edward Garnett refused to take socialism as seriously as his wife. Richard Garnett, *Constance Garnett, A Heroic Life* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991) 55.

²⁰⁴ Olive Garnett, diary entry, 17 November 1891, *Tea and Anarchy!* 55.

attempted to read – one of Stankeivitch’s”.²⁰⁵ When she showed a remarkable aptitude for the language, he set her the task of translating Goncharov’s *A Common Story* – a coming of age tale critical of both the western values of St. Petersburg and the passive semi-Asiatic tendencies found in Russia’s backwaters. Garnett’s career trajectory is well known: for decades she reigned as England’s most prolific translator of Russian, producing over seventy principal texts by Turgenev, Tolstoy, Herten, Dostoevsky, Gorky, and Chekhov. Despite her incontrovertible talent, her sense of indebtedness to Volkhovsky for helping to fashion her life occupation ran deep. In a letter dated 1 January, 1898 she wrote:

All this work I owe in a way to you - for had I not met you, I should never have been interested in Russian, & should never have troubled myself to learn the language which has opened quite another universe to me. Gratitude, I know, is not a favourite Russian virtue, but still I think you may be glad to know that I remember with pleasure that it is to you I am indebted primarily for so much that I value.²⁰⁶

Garnett’s development as a translator owed still more to Stepniak. She met the Nihilist in the summer of 1892, when Volkhovsky took her and her husband to his home in Bedford Park. It was, she would remember, “one of the most important events of my life”.²⁰⁷ Even at this early stage, the topic of translation seems to have dominated their conversation: “Stepniak asked to see my Goncharov [translation], undertook to go all through it with me, & said I ought to get it published.”²⁰⁸ To her immense delight, Heinemann, a publisher with “a sense of Continental life and Continental literature”²⁰⁹ gave her forty pounds for it and “an immediate commission to translate Tolstoy’s *The Kingdom of God is Within You*”.²¹⁰ Stepniak initiated further meetings, often to discuss her translation work. For her part, she felt gratitude for his encouragement, which gave her not only an occupation, but allowed her to work as his co-worker in diminishing the historical enmity between Russia and perfidious Albion:

²⁰⁵ Constance Garnett, unpublished memoir, 58–9.

²⁰⁶ Constance Garnett to Felix Volkhovsky (1 January 1898) Garnett Family Archive, Hilton Hall.

²⁰⁷ Constance Garnett, unpublished memoir, 78.

²⁰⁸ Constance Garnett, unpublished memoir, 60.

²⁰⁹ Frank Swinnerton, *The Bookman’s London*, introduction by John Baker (London: John Baker, 1951) 70.

²¹⁰ Constance Garnett, unpublished memoir, 60.

his warm heart enabled him to understand all kinds of people, and to set them on the road they should follow. He showed this understanding both of me and my husband and it is thanks to his encouragement that I myself made the translations of Russian literature my vocation, and was able in that way to play my part in helping to bring about an understanding between the two peoples.²¹¹

Before long, Stepniak became her guide in the confusing terrain of Russian literature, furnishing her not only with books, but with the sort of insider's knowledge of Russian idiom and life which could not be found in a dictionary. By mid-October 1892, they were reading Russian together once a week.²¹² When Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God* had been translated, she engaged him as an official assistant:

I have just received my first proofs of the Tolstoi & I should be very grateful if you could look through them for me. Now that I have a prospect of permanent work as a translator, it is absolutely necessary I should have help I could reckon upon in correcting my work. I should like to make a definite *business* arrangement (paying a certain percentage of what I receive to my coadjutor.) Could you undertake to do this for me? ... (Edward says, 5 percent but I think that's too little!)²¹³

It was later agreed that Stepniak would take twenty percent of her royalties. Several months before his death, he and his wife Fanny moved to a cottage across from the Garnett cottage near the Chart Woods, where collaboration and consultation could become a feature of their daily life.²¹⁴

Stepniak's contribution to Constance Garnett's development as a translator went beyond his work as an tutor and careful editor. He also apprehended how important it was for the Englishwoman to have a fuller understanding of the culture whose words, life and deeds she was attempting to transmit through the medium of her own language. In 1893, he persuaded her to visit Russia, partly to smuggle letters to revolutionary friends and deliver money collected for famine relief, but also because it would expose her to features of Russian life.²¹⁵ At New Year, she travelled to St. Petersburg, where her émigré connections opened to her a cultivated and literary world. One new acquaintance was Aleksandra

²¹¹ Constance Garnett, typescript tribute to Stepniak (1944) 2, Hilton Hall.

²¹² Thomas C. Moser, "An English Context for Conrad's Russian Characters", 7.

²¹³ Constance Garnett to Stepniak, Stepniak-Kravchinskii archive, RGALI, f 1158, op 1, ed khr 238, no. 3.

²¹⁴ Richard Garnett, *Constance Garnett*, 109, 149.

²¹⁵ Richard Garnett, *Constance Garnett*, 106.

Shteven, a baroness and educational reformer who took her deep into the Arzamas district (seventy miles from Nizhni Novgorod), to witness “the underbelly of Russian provincial village life”.²¹⁶ Garnett found herself horrified by a system in which, for example, a mother could lie ill for months and die for lack of a visit by a doctor. Korolenko (who met Garnett in Nizhni Novgorod) summed up the importance of such experiences in a newspaper article he wrote during her stay: “So as to [translate and propagandise Russian literature] more conscientiously, Mrs. Garnett has taken this short journey to Russia, with the purpose of seeing with her own eyes, the people, lifestyle and mores with which she must acquaint the English public.” It is notable that Korolenko viewed Constance Garnett’s translating as a corollary to her so-called “philanthropic” socialism. Having described her early work for the People’s Palace, he wrote: “these aspirations which many would call romantic, are connected with some sort of sympathetic attraction to Russian literature. It seems to me that it is not a chance circumstance that Mrs. Garnett learned the Russian language and became an active translator and propagandist in England of the best works of our classics.”²¹⁷

Stepniak’s fatal accident did not bring Constance Garnett’s reliance on émigré assistance to an end. He was replaced as Garnett’s coadjutor by his wife: “Yesterday and today I was at the Cearne”, the widow wrote to Olive Garnett in 1902, “[Constance and I] started working again with great hopes and expectations to get *War and Peace* to translate. That means bread and butter to me for a year, that would be grand.”²¹⁸ Herself a cultivated woman, Fanny gave the Garnetts guidance as they explored Russian literature and criticism: “I have got a glorious provision of new Russian books – 10 volumes – of Dobrolubov & Pissarev”, Constance Garnett wrote enthusiastically to her sister-in-law, “They are the great critics who according to Fanny formed her generation”.²¹⁹

The efficacy of Constance Garnett’s collaborative work with Volkhovsky, Stepniak and Fanny Stepniak was proved by the quality of her early translations, many of which remain in print today. Her tremendous achievement in rendering in perfect English Turgenev’s complete works are treated in Part Three (alongside Stepniak’s influential introductions to the first two volumes). It suffices to say that it was Stepniak who advised her to translate Turgenev – an author whom he was keen to have ‘on side’ both for his

²¹⁶ Khrabrovitskii, “V.G. Korolenko, Konstantsiia Garnet i S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii”, 169. My translation.

²¹⁷ Khrabrovitskii, “V.G. Korolenko, Konstantsiia Garnet i S.M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii”, 168.

²¹⁸ Fanny Stepniak to Olive Garnett (9 June 1901) Garnett Family Archive, Hilton Hall.

²¹⁹ Constance Garnett to Olive Garnett (7 September 1898) Garnett Family Archive, Hilton Hall.

exquisite prose and his popularisation of the term ‘Nihilist’ in *Fathers and Children*. Turgenev’s work would alter the complexion of English literature, influencing writers as diverse as Conrad, Galsworthy and Ford Madox Ford. As Galsworthy wrote to his literary mentor, Edward Garnett, “What a blessed chance that made [Constance] learn Russian and gave her the wonderful energy, sympathy and insight necessary for what she is doing”.²²⁰

Stepniak’s Selection of Russian Literature

When looking over Stepniak’s body of translations and the subjects of his criticism, it becomes clear that nostalgia, combined with an anxiety to win over England’s middle classes, led him to both select for translation and comment upon works which portrayed a stage of Russia’s revolutionary movement which had long passed. This was the period in which he had himself been involved, when thousands of idealistic and middle-class young *narodniki* had gone out to spread their high-minded ideals amongst the peasants. His preference for fables about peasants and corrupt bureaucrats paralleled the populist movement’s commitment to Russia’s peasants – to their edification, education and the alleviation of their suffering. Nowhere do we see tales that would disturb England’s propertied middle classes with pictures of urban workers, empowering themselves through knowledge and unions. This absence of material dealing with ‘modern scientific socialism’ would project him as in disagreement with Marxism and Plekhanov, clinging to a faded revolutionary ideal. However, in large part, this was a tactical move: as Shaw remembered, Stepniak stood shy of socialists, regarding the enthusiasm with which they greeted him as a “check to his plans”.²²¹ While in no way alienating his socialist supporters, Stepniak’s emphasis on the Russian peasantry appealed to a romantic, anti-industrialist movement in *fin de siècle* England which traversed the political spectrum. But Stepniak was not quite the unthreatening upholder of popular middle-class values he appeared to be: privately, he printed and sent to Russia works by Plekhanov and Russian translations of the literature of Marx and Engels.²²²

Stepniak’s translation work and criticism also misled Britons as to the “western” nature of Russia’s revolutionary movement. In his lectures, he relentlessly divided Russia

²²⁰ John Galsworthy to Edward Garnett, *Letters From John Galsworthy, 1900–1932*, Edited and with an introduction by Edward Garnett (London: Jonathan Cape; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1934) 39.

²²¹ Shaw, “A Word about Stepniak”, 102.

²²² Knapp, “E.L. Voynich”, 293.

into two sides: the fatalist oriental one, typified by Tolstoy, and the “energetic, creative, critical occidental one” typified by Chernyshevsky or Turgenev. To Shaw, “Stepniak belonged emphatically to Turgénieff’s part. He was a man of life, action, change, as against resignation, contemplation, passive beauty of character”.²²³ But Stepniak’s simplification of Russia’s make-up into passive/oriental and active/western elements, while flattering his western audience, gave an implausible picture of the ‘active’ revolutionary movement as it existed in the 1890s. During this time, the Slavophiles – who saw Russia as the key to world salvation and rejected the bourgeois materialism of the west – remained a powerful component in the movement. Nor did Stepniak’s criticism accommodate the relaxation of the Russian government’s tight control over publishing and other affairs in the 1890s. His literary “roll of martyrdom” gave the impression of a static Russia; a nation incapable of reform. He made no mention of the fact that although once exiled, Korolenko now openly published a radical newspaper. He presented the regime’s past sins as current evils. As with his conventional propaganda work, his main intention was to propagate a picture of the “absolute unrelieved tragedy” effectuated by the Russian regime.

Notwithstanding the subtle inaccuracies about Russia and the revolutionary movement which Stepniak promoted through his presentation of Russian literature (and perhaps because of these inaccuracies), he contributed to a transformation in British attitudes towards Russia. It was a change which is best testified to in the words of Stepniak himself, written shortly before his death:

Russia has ceased to be ‘The Gendarme of Europe’; she has become the land of Siberian exiles, the land of tyranny and of the hopeless misery of the masses; she has become the true Russia which we have known and over which we have mourned.

This change of feeling has come about gradually during the last fifteen or twenty years. ... the principal forces at work in the accomplishment of this decided transformation were undoubtedly the Russian novel on the one hand and the Russian revolutionary movement on the other: the poetry of form and the poetry of action; the fascination of the genius of creation and of the genius of self-sacrifice.

The immense success of the Russian novel abroad is known to all educated people. It is a fact not only of literary importance, but of the gravest political significance; it marks an epoch for the Russian cause abroad. Our great novelists have been the propagandists of the Russian idea; they have

²²³ Shaw, “A Word about Stepniak”, 105.

been the first to convince other nations that the Russian people is not a horde of barbarians, but a great and civilised nation, with boundless potentialities of future development. Reflecting, with the completeness and universality of genius, all sides of Russian life, they have opened to foreigners a whole new world, amazing in its depth and enchanting in its wealth and variety; they first have shown to outsiders the real Russia which had lain hidden behind a forest of bayonets. And there is now no corner of the earth to which the Russian novel has not penetrated, or where it has not won for the Russian people friends and possible partisans of liberty.²²⁴

²²⁴ Stepniak, *Nihilism As It Is*, 65–6

Felix Volkhovsky

The Awakening Nation: Free Russia and Russian fiction, 1899–1905

In 1899, its tenth calendar year, *Free Russia* appeared with a new masthead drawn by Walter Crane. From the left – the west, as it were – a torch-bearing angel of mercy reaches out eagerly with a heart. From the east, a bearded Russian mujik stretches his arm to receive the angel's offering. The Russian is bound with rope, his torso pierced by the claws of an enormous double-headed eagle wearing a crown on each head. As an Annual Report of the SFRF claimed, the new masthead was designed to lend an "artistic appearance to our paper". But it also functioned as a 'cartoon for the cause'. Crane's drawing conveyed a message of insufferable Tsar/Church-inflicted oppression and the hope engendered by the sympathy and enlightened views of the west.

The pairing of art and propaganda was typical of a shift in Volkhovsky's editorship of *Free Russia* after 1899. Since Stepniak's death in December 1895, literary subjects had all but vanished from the pages of the journal. For three years, it had dryly reported facts and statistics, news and events. The "8th Annual Report" of the SFRF, announced art and literature's return:

[Since the February No. of 1899, *Free Russia*] has... become more varied in its contents: while never slackening the exposure of the misrule of the Tzar's Government and the publication of information on the activity of Russian liberative forces, more stress has been laid on showing the capabilities and genius of the Russian race, thus bringing home this truth, that if the Russians enjoyed political liberty and personal security, their social literary, artistic and scientific development would be an enormous spiritual gain to mankind. With this view, translations some of the best specimens of Russian fiction and poetry, as well as articles dealing with Russian music, art industries, social work, etc., have been introduced.²²⁶

Volkhovsky's reflection on the "enormous" contribution to art Russia would make if despotism were to end carries with it the suggestion that Russians are an uncorrupted race with an potential to vivify and regenerate the western world. It also shows him thinking along the lines of socialists like William Morris, Walter Crane and other pre-Raphaelites,

²²⁶ The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom, *Eighth Annual Report of the Executive Committee, 1898–99*, 7–8, BLPES, COLL MISC 1028.

figures who similarly sermonised about the interdependence of aesthetic and socio-economic conditions. Crane and Morris both argued that art could not flourish in a world where wealth was unfairly distributed.²²⁷ Volkhovsky's angle was thus fashionable and effective. If English socialists complained about conditions for artists in the socially divisive conditions of commercial England, how much more receptive would they be to the claims of artists living in the straightjacket of Tsarist military and bureaucratic control?

To expedite translations, the editor assembled a raft of translators and 'englishers', including "three writers of verse": "Mrs. A. Sidgwick, Mrs. E. Walker and Miss E. Gibson".²²⁸ The latter were earnest literary women who conscientiously fashioned passable verse from Volkhovsky's crude translations of Russian poetry. The most prolific 'engliher' was Charlotte Sidgwick, an author of books on Norway and Denmark, and sister-in-law to the well-known philosopher and advocate for women's education, Henry Sidgwick. The Newcastle-based Elizabeth Gibson was a non-conformist and New Woman (she cropped her hair), whose own slender volumes of aphorisms and high-minded poetry were issued by Elkin Matthews and Grant Richards.²²⁹ A self-effacing and compassionate woman,²³⁰ Gibson was typical of the many literati who felt 'honoured' and almost duty-bound to offer assistance to the Russian cause. "I hope that we may meet someday", she wrote Volkhovsky in 1900, "then I should be very proud and glad of so great an honour as of being in the presence of one who has suffered so much in a great cause, & who has done so much for the welfare of others." She longed, she said, to collaborate with Volkhovsky on a volume of Russian translations.²³¹ Translations of the longer prose-works were executed by émigrés: Dora Zhook (née Weiss) the wife of Vasily Zhook (a friend of William Rossetti and the late Stepniak); Volkhovsky's now teenage daughter, Vera, who had been smuggled out of Siberia soon after her father's own escape; A. V. Finkenstein; and F.A. Rothstein, an active

²²⁷ See for example, Walter Crane, "The Prospects of Art under Socialism", in *The Claims of Decorative Art* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1892).

²²⁸ The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom, *Eighth Annual Report of the Executive Committee 1898–99*, 8.

²²⁹ Gibson's interest in the SFRF may have been inspired by Mrs. Spence Watson, wife of the founder of the Society, who had been secretary at Gateshead High School outside Newcastle when Gibson was studying there. Alternatively, she may have encountered the Russian set through her friend Sidney Cockerell, whose own network of friends included George Bernard Shaw and Kropotkin. For more on Gibson and these connections, see Judy Greenway, "Shoulder to Shoulder: Elizabeth and Wilfred Gibson", *Dymock Poets and Friends* 2 (2004) 23–33.

²³⁰ I make this conjecture about Gibson's character after reading both her correspondence with Volkhovsky and her volume of aphorisms, *The Evangel of Joy* (London: Grant Richards, 1899).

²³¹ Elizabeth Gibson to Volkhovsky (3 June 1900), Feliks Vadimovich Volkhovskii Correspondence, Houghton Library, Harvard University, bMS Kilgour Rus 51, series 2, item 258.

member of Hyndman's British Social Democratic Federation (and later the London Group of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP)), who arrived in London in 1891.²³²

The new prominence of art and literature in *Free Russia* satisfied many needs. On one level, as Volkhovsky explained, "fiction... like Dostoyevsky's 'Memoirs of the Dead House,' gives a more complete and more correct picture of actuality than volumes of statistics."²³³ Yet, it was obvious that Volkhovsky did not merely intend the fiction he printed to add flesh and bones to reports of state-created suffering in Russia. Yes, he published a tale of the despair induced in an exiled "tender youth" by the bleak Siberian landscape, and dreadful sketches of famine.²³⁴ He also made and printed manifold references to the "befouled temple" of Russian literature, references which fanned Liberal outrage against the dreadful persecution of Russian writers. But balancing these were short stories selected to familiarise the British with Russian life, its folklore and its national character. "[M]y conviction" wrote one reviewer (possibly Volkhovsky), "[is] that the more nations learn to know one another the stronger grows their mutual affection".²³⁵ One such tale, "Mahmoudka's Children", is set during the heady days of the Russo-Turkish war, and tells of a kindly Cossack Major and a captured Turk who is frantic with worry about fate of his dispossessed wife and children. Sympathetic to his prisoner's plight, the Cossack engineers his escape. The story showed the Russian people to be generous and civil – fighting on behalf of their bellicose government only because, as the Major says, "I have no other means but my salary".²³⁶ Other stories aimed at ameliorating Russia's growing reputation as a nation of endlessly moaning sufferers. "Some people have come to the conclusion," explained Volkhovsky, "...that not only are the social and political circumstances of Russia sad and tragic, but that the people are incapable of any mirth and joviality".²³⁷ The editor's

²³² Rothstein is listed as a translator in the SFRF's "Eight Annual Report", though his name does not actually appear in *Free Russia*. He may, nevertheless, have been responsible for some of the unattributed translations. For more on F.A. Rothstein, see Christian, *Alexis Aladin*, 41–2.

²³³ Volkhovsky, commentary to S. Yelpatievsky, "The Dirge of the Tayga", translated by A. Val Finkenstein, *Free Russia* 11, 2 (February 1900) 19.

²³⁴ These are, respectively, S. Yelpatievsky, "The Dirge of the Tayga"; and V. Korolenko, "In the Famine Year", *Free Russia* 10, 2 (February 1899) and 10, 3 (March 1899).

²³⁵ "A Russian View of Tolstoi", *Free Russia* 9, 10 (November 1898) 64.

²³⁶ V.I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, "Mahmoudka's Children", translated by 'A. Val.' Finkenstein, *Free Russia* 11, 1 (January 1900) 8.

²³⁷ Volkhovsky, commentary to "On Christmas Eve", by Gogol, translated by Felix Volkhovsky, *Free Russia* 10, 12 (1 December 1899) 92.

abridged version of Gogol's vignette, "On Christmas Eve", with its colourful devils and rural flavour, added touches of the surreal and comic to the British conception of the nation. *Free Russia* also published a less-than-didactic fairy tale by Garshin, in honour of the late Stepniak: "Stepniak expressed his strong desire that [Garshin's fairy tales] should be made known in this country 'to give to the English reader a full idea of this subtle, poetic, merciless, yet irresistibly sympathetic author.'"²³⁸ In May 1900, the journal claimed to be publishing the first English translation of any story by Chekhov.²³⁹ In the category of short fiction, Volkhovsky's selections reveal a catholic taste – ranging from the comic to tragic, taking forms as diverse as allegory, folk-tales, fairy-tales and realist sketches. They are stories whose success in spreading a better understanding of Russian psychology would have been assured.

More deliberate, however, were the editor's selections of poetry. By no means an avant-garde connoisseur of literature, Volkhovsky was the product of an age where fictional prose had by not yet toppled poetry off its pedestal as the acknowledged voice of nationhood. Under his direction, *Free Russia* became a venue for copious stanzas about liberty, lines to unknown female martyrs languishing in the stale darkness of prison,²⁴⁰ prayers asking God to deliver Russia from her debilitating burden of history and long legacy of hopelessness. The populist struggle against the inertia of fatalism was the most common strand:

My head sank down, and soon a-sleeping
I lay, and lo! my strength seemed flown
O storm of God! around me sweeping
Afar let all my sloth be blown.²⁴¹

Often, verses complemented adjoining articles. In February 1901, a leader about the Decembrist Uprising was accompanied by three poems by the Decembrist rebels or their

²³⁸ Volkhovsky, commentary to "The Story of the Toad and the Rose", by Vsevolod Garshin, translated by Dora Zhook, *Free Russia* 11, 6 (1 June 1900) 68.

²³⁹ Anton Chekhov, "Sharp Beyond My Years", translated by Vera Volkhovsky, *Free Russia* 11, 5 (May 1900) 55-57. This was not, in fact the earliest translation of Chekhov in English. An earlier one was "Two Tales from the Russian of Anton Tschechow: The Biter Bit and Sorrow", translated by Elaine A. Swire [Mrs. Henry Swire], *Temple Bar* 111 (May 1897) 104-3.

²⁴⁰ See Yakov Polonsky, "A Vision", translated by Charlotte Sidgwick, *Free Russia* 12, 11 (November 1901) 90.

²⁴¹ Alexis Tolstoy, "A Prayer", translated by Elizabeth Gibson, *Free Russia* 11, 3 (March 1900) 26.

sympathisers.²⁴² Most of the poems echoed the theme of Walter Crane's illustration. They dramatised a Russia stymied and exhausted from centuries of tyranny (Volkhovsky elaborated the tragic history of the Russians in editorial asides),²⁴³ but whose relentless thirst for freedom and liberty was a "life-tide" giving justification for hope.²⁴⁴ In his own poetic contribution, the editor attempted to raise this theme of tenuous hope to the level of heroic optimism. "A New Year Song" was an epilogue to despair:

Although so many in the strife have perished,
Our ranks are none the thinner by their loss;
Our grandest aims unflaggingly are cherished,
Our banner floats on high, and many a cross
Of suffering, death and treason are we bearing
With valiant front and dauntless forward cry.²⁴⁵

Perhaps most characteristic of the message of *Free Russia* was "To Fellow-Sufferers" (by "a Russian workman") calling for Russia's "meek and trampled sons of pain ... who pray for happiness in vain" to "Cease this depraved humility!" To Volkhovsky, these lines aptly expressed "the feelings of those workmen whose eyes have been finally opened to the hopelessness of expecting any improvement of their lot from the goodwill of the Tzar's Government, and who now place all their hopes in their own bold action".²⁴⁶ A letter from Elizabeth Gibson to Volkhovsky suggests he invested poetry with special "aims".²⁴⁷ The verses that appear in *Free Russia* confirm this supposition. They are poems of awakening, lines to inspire beleaguered victims of the regime, rallying calls for revolution.

Alongside his occasional articles and prefaces on Russian authors, Volkhovsky's lengthy commentaries on the translations in *Free Russia* provide material for piecing together the aesthetic outlook he propagated, in his small way, among England's *intelligentsia*. A recurring theme in his writing is the connection between the ideology of the

²⁴² These were K. Ryléyev, "The Citizen", Pushkin, "A Message", and [A Decembrist] "The Reply", all translated by Elizabeth Gibson, *Free Russia* 12, 2 (February 1901) 16.

²⁴³ See, for example, Volkhovsky's commentary to "The Sorrows of Ages Departed" by Count Alexis Tolstoy, translated by Elizabeth Gibson, *Free Russia* 11, 6 (June 1900) 62.

²⁴⁴ The compound noun "life-tide" appears in Mary Grace Walker's translation of M. Lermontov, "My Neighbour" *Free Russia* 11, 1 (January 1900) 2.

²⁴⁵ Volkhovsky, "A New Year Song", translated by Elizabeth Gibson, *Free Russia* 12, 1 (January 1901) 2.

²⁴⁶ [A Russian Workman], "To Fellow-Sufferers", commentary by Volkhovsky *Free Russia* 13, 12 (December 1902) 105.

²⁴⁷ Elizabeth Gibson to Volkhovsky (3 June 1900), Felix Volkhovskii Correspondence, bMS Kilgour Rus 51, series 2, item 258.

artist and his productions, in other words, the importance of the writer's dual role as both citizen and creative genius. This is a departure from Stepniak, who (in his Tolstoy lecture, for example) sees art transcending the personality and narrow outlook of the artist. For Volkhovsky, deliberate thought and a clear understanding of issues are essential elements of good artistic production. Without this, even genius cannot succeed. A prime example is Chekhov. Despite his talent (noted by Tolstoy) for "drawing on but a few pages the whole pictures of extraordinary vividness, and depicting on these pages the complete psychology of the state of mind of this or that type", Chekhov fails as a "writer of fiction of the first class." Volkhovsky explains:

To attain to this rank [the writer] must in addition [to his talent as an artist] clearly understand the weight to be attached to the incidents depicted, and unfortunately this cannot always be said of Chekhov. Not unfrequently [sic] he seems to have no definite opinion of the value of what he sees and paints in words, the result being that he produces a perplexing or a jarring effect by misplaced pathos, irony or jocularity.²⁴⁸

The political propensities of an artist affect and elevate his product. Nekrasov, for example, does not have the musical talent of Puskin or Lermontov, but is "the poet-citizen *par excellence*". His devotion to "the beauty of the peasant's soul" and "the sinister energy with which he flung his curses and invectives at the historical iniquities under which his people smarted" give him "the energy of expression, the power of feeling... of a real poet".²⁴⁹ In his "Prefatory Notes" to G.H. Perris's *Tolstoi: the Grand Moujik* (1898), Volkhovsky quotes the famous historian of literature, S. Venguerov, in a typically Russian statement about the function of literature: "the writer must be, in the first place, one of deep conviction."²⁵⁰ His agreement with such sentiments marks Volkhovsky as a critic following in the footsteps of the Russian radical school, calling for the intervention of utility and radical impulses in the production of art.

Volkhovsky's indebtedness to Russian critics also shows itself in the links he draws between literature and the nation. Beside reflecting the personality of its creator, literature

²⁴⁸ Volkhovsky, commentary to Chekhov, "Sharp Beyond My Years", 55.

²⁴⁹ Volkhovsky, commentary to "From N.A. Nekrassov [A Free Translation]", translated by Charlotte Sidgwick, *Free Russia* 10, 8–10 (August – October 1899) 61–2.

²⁵⁰ Volkhovsky, "Prefatory Note", in G.H. Perris, *Leo Tolstoy, The Grand Mujik: A Study in Personal Evolution* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898) viii.

both reflects and informs the collective experience of the nation. It is a mirror in which the nation sees itself as it is, and yet, in doing so, finds itself transformed. The authorial voice in Russian literature is simultaneously the voice of Russia and an impetus to greater national self-realisation. In Volkhovsky's 'Prefatory Notes' to Perris's volume, Tolstoy is more than "a representative" of Russia, he is, rather, the "grandest and fullest expression" of the nation's principal feature: "the thoroughgoing, passionate, almost painful craving for consistence of life, combined with intense and broadest human love [sic]." Tolstoy's is not the only voice in which Russia's special capacity for intense love reverberates: "I am glad to testify," the critic writes proudly, "that the whole of Russian literature and art is one grand expression of that feature as *the* feature of the Russian nation".²⁵¹ Volkhovsky's comments recall the long legacy of German romantic philosophy on the development of Russian aesthetics. Like the Transcendental idealists, he sees the work of art as a manifestation of the nation, and the nation, in turn, as a unique and particular manifestation of universal principles.

In his editorial commentary in *Free Russia*, Volkhovsky likewise describes the authorial voices he publishes as reverberations of the Russian psyche. This time, however, they are expressing the collective outlook of a nation at the cross-roads. A short story by Saltykov-Shchedrin called "Conscience" encapsulates his view of Russia's changing mood. An old forgotten rag called Conscience, is torn, spat upon and trodden on until a wretched drunk discovers it in the street. 'Conscience' then gets passed from hand to hand, wanted by nobody. Finally, it beseeches an unsuccessful merchant (with no property or money to lose by the exercise of conscience) to bury it in the heart of a Russian baby: "And the baby will become a full grown man, and there will be a full grown conscience within him. And all the iniquities and artifices and violence will then disappear, because Conscience will no longer be timid but will command everything."²⁵² As Volkhovsky notes: "[The story] may be read at the present moment as a topic of the time, although written years ago, since Saltykov's prediction that popular conscience will grow to its full age and will no longer be timid seems to have been fulfilled."²⁵³ Here, Volkhovsky is very much in tune with Stepniak. He sees literature dramatising, prophesying and instigating the development of Russia. Its localised

²⁵¹ Volkhovsky, "Prefatory Note", vii–viii.

²⁵² M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, "Conscience", *Free Russia* 13, 11 (November 1902) 100.

²⁵³ Volkhovsky, commentary to Saltykov-Shchedrin, "Conscience", 98.

images are symbols of larger movements – in this case the popular awakening of the nation. Of course, in “Conscience”, which is an allegory, the symbolism is explicit – the infant is a *Russian* baby – and British readers could easily have reached the same understanding of the tale as Volkhovsky without the aid of his editorial aside.

The editor’s manner of interpreting realist fiction perhaps illuminates better the Russian critical method Volkhovsky shared with Stepniak. Both examined character forensically, extrapolating from ostensibly flimsy evidence to make conjectures about the nature and needs of Russia’s national, political and social life. In a lengthy article on Gorky published in *Free Russia* in April 1902, Volkhovsky reads Gorky’s sketches as calls to action and revelations about the condition of the national psyche. Describing Gorky as the “Poet of the Awakening Personality”, he sees the author’s “unyielding”, “unmerciful” and often “cruel” scoundrel-heroes as new and welcome contrasts to the slavish, self-sacrificing, ineffectual protagonists which traditionally have stocked Russian fiction. Gorky’s characters are often morally depraved, even “absolutely devoid of any altruistic impulse”, yet their defiance of “society with its conventional morality”, can only inspire admiration in those “weeping secret tears of blood at the impotence of the oppressed to shake off oppression”. Such vigorously self-asserting personalities are an antidote to Tolstoy’s creed of non-resistance and Russia’s native submissiveness. They have been created not with the purpose of countenancing egoism and selfishness, but to show how strength must be used in the face of “unjustified, tyrannical interference”:

It is not so much the advantage of inborn strength over weakness that Gorky wants to portray as the criminal lack of self-assertion in the good people which makes the wicked, the immoral, the rapacious, strong... ‘Why are you so weak in attacking the tyrants and scoundrels?’ he seems to exclaim passionately, addressing the good and the oppressed; ‘look how successful the merciless are, – so do not you show mercy in your righteous battle either; do not permit your best feelings to deprive you of the righteous ferocity when you are attacking those who want to rob you of your personality, your happiness and your welfare!’

To Volkhovsky, Gorky’s ideals make him the “spokesman of the popular spirit of the moment in Russia”, more in sync with the present mood of the nation than Tolstoy, Chekhov and even the émigrés beloved Korolenko. His writing coincides with a new movement in the national character, a rejection of its dominant feature of self-sacrifice: “...it is being felt at

present, when the Russians have outgrown the insupportable misgovernment and absurd tutelage exercised on them. Their patience is nearly exhausted and they begin to feel that if one does not want to be trampled upon by brutes, one must – before being a Christian towards others – be a personality himself, and defend that personality at any price.”²⁵⁴

Such implications in Gorky were *not* explicit and certainly not so to English readers. Volkhovsky had, in effect, taken Gorky’s localised pictures of uneducated tramps from Russia’s backwaters and inferred that the author was calling upon Russians to draw upon the same vital energy found in these characters to fight Tsardom. In the long tradition of Russian critics who saw in each generation of literary ‘types’ representatives of the particular age, he held Gorky’s curious figures to be the embodiments of a new, more active, revolutionary spirit pervading the country. Yet, as the editor of *Free Russia* noted, the English were thoroughly oblivious to Gorky’s peculiar method of “impressing his ideals on the reader”. They merely charged Gorky with a “love of ugliness” and “lack of idealism”. Reacting against this view of the author, Volkhovsky argues that he is both rational and highly idealistic. In a veiled attack on the didactically idealising strain in English literature, he asserts that Gorky “prefers ‘art that analyses human nature’ to the ‘art which falsifies human nature to suit a moral purpose’”.²⁵⁵ But the ramifications of Volkhovsky’s analysis of Gorky’s ‘types’ – being the imperative, “do not spare the scoundrels [ie. the Tsar’s henchmen], because they won’t spare you!” – must have been hard for less down-trodden Britons to digest. The comment opened a window on Volkhovsky’s revolutionary soul.

In his efforts to turn *Free Russia* into a literary as well as a political concern, Volkhovsky was assisted by Vasily Zhook. A spry-looking, erudite young exile who spent a great deal of time at the British Library reading about Russian history,²⁵⁶ Zhook also had a scholar’s interest in literary biography, Russian literature and the art of translation. Aylmer Maude, who met him in the Tolstoyan colony in Purleigh, thought him “very well informed”

²⁵⁴ Volkhovsky, “The Poet of the Awakening Personality”, *Free Russia* 13, 4 (April 1902) 42.

²⁵⁵ Volkhovsky, “The Poet of the Awakening Personality”, 43. The internal quotation marks show where Volkhovsky is quoting Edward Garnett, Introduction to Maxim Gorky, *Twenty-Six Men and a Girl*, translated by Emily Jakowleff and Dora B. Montefiore (London: Duckworth & Co., 1902) xii. Garnett wrote, “...the art that analyses human nature is immeasurably superior to the art which falsifies human nature to suit a moral purpose”.

²⁵⁶ Robert Henderson erroneously states in “Russian Political Emigrés and the British Museum Library” that William Rossetti wrote Zhook a testimonial so that he might get a reader’s ticket for the British Museum Library. In fact, Stepniak wrote Zhook’s testimonial. See Stepniak’s letter to the British Museum (11 January 1895) British Museum Archive.

and tried, though without success, to get him a voice in *Crampton's Magazine*.²⁵⁷ In *Free Russia*, Zhook's province was a literary niche called "Bibliography" or, sometimes, "Rossica": a compilation of notices of translations and books about Russia, fleshed out with lengthier reviews. The latter were generally more occupied with minutiae than politics. With an armoury of encyclopaedic knowledge and a copy-editor's eye, he criticised anthologies for their oversights, literary biographies for wrongly-cited dates and place names, and recent translations for inaccuracies and clumsy prose. Beautifully rendered works of scholarship, on the other hand, drew melodious praise from his pen. In their small way, Zhook's reviews enhanced the exiles' reputation for high-culture and civilised values.

Occasionally however, the critic's jeremiads *did* bear testimony to the battle over the reception of Russian literature that surged beneath the seemingly innocuous novels, biographies and literary anthologies newly crowding libraries and bookstalls. Such an example was his two and a half page sparring match with K. Waliszewski over the latter's *A History of Russian Literature* (1900). Waliszewski was a French Pole, and in common with many Poles at the *fin de siècle*, his grudge against Russia was not just levelled against Tsarist zealots but against the Russian people, whom he regarded collectively as his oppressors. Zhook battered Waliszewski for painting the Russian canon as a 'hideous caricature' of western literature; of playing up its indebtedness to external influences in order deny it any value at all. His criticisms were, in fact, justified. In Waliszewski's warped 'history', the death of Pushkin, "did not rob Russia of a great poet"; Tolstoy dresses up the west's "old tattered garments" in whimsical and "occasionally absurd" disguise; and Turgenev has no historical significance or lasting merit.²⁵⁸ As Zhook's review made clear, *A History of Russian Literature* was a political and nationally motivated assault, designed to undermine western admiration of the Russian canon:

M. Waliszewski's' production is not at all a history of Russian literature; it is an unfair nationalist attack in disguise – and in very bad disguise – aimed at Russian literature instead of the Russian Government. The number of translations of Russian classics (Poushkin, Gogol, Tourguenev, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, etc.), into English is, however, steadily growing, and this fact inspires us with confidence that British readers will appreciate their merits

²⁵⁷ Aylmer Maude to George Herbert Perris (26 July 1901) Letters of Aylmer Maude, Leeds University Library, Special Collections MS 553.

²⁵⁸ V. Zhook, "An Unfair Attack", *Free Russia* 11, 12 (December 1900) 105.

notwithstanding the mis-statements and insinuations of M. Waliszewski, who does not scruple to permeate with national hatred and personal unfairness a work which requires in the first place impartiality and conscientious study.²⁵⁹

Yet unscrupulous attacks such as Waliszewski's were infrequent, and more than balanced by the careful efforts of radical émigrés to turn Russian literature to the advantage of their cause.

The Revolutionists' View of Tolstoy

By 1899, Tolstoy's international popularity as a spiritual leader had reached such stupendous proportions he could be almost be regarded as the age's answer to the second coming. In England, local movements betrayed a national obsession. Businessmen, army officers, journalists, university lecturers, bank clerks and tradesmen alike heeded Tolstoy's call, abandoning their careers to pursue the harsh challenges of agricultural toil and co-operative living. New Tolstoyan communities sprang up in Wickford, Clousden Hill (near Newcastle), Leeds and Blackburn.²⁶⁰ A steady flow of 'pilgrims' travelled to Yasnaya Polyana, the estate of the 'Grand Old Mouzhik, and reported their experiences in the British and international press.²⁶¹ Unsurprisingly, Tolstoy's writings were published at a furious pace. At Tuckton House near Christchurch, Vladimir Chertkov and his *Free Age Press* churned out translations of his collection of Tolstoy's letters, essays and tracts in the tens of thousands. Aylmer and Louise Maude, the American Isabel Hapgood, Constance Garnett, and other less able translators (and englishers) also fuelled the storm. A 1903 report on the global consumption of Tolstoy's works confirms his reputation both as the world's most famous *fin de siècle* prophet, and as an international publishing phenomenon. By this date, notes the Russian bibliographer, P. Dragonov, his tracts and books had been translated into every Slavic and European language, as well as Persian, Siamese, Rumanian and Esperanto: "The number of Czech translations is reported at 130, the Bulgarian at 80, and the Servian [sic] at about 100".²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Zhook, "An Unfair Attack", 106.

²⁶⁰ W.H.G. Armytage, *Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England 1560–1960* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961) 141.

²⁶¹ See for example, W.B. Steveni, "A Visit to Count Tolstoi", *Cornhill Magazine* 65, n.s. 18 (June 1892) 597–610.

²⁶² "Rossica", *Free Russia* 14, 12 (December 1903) 112.

To the revolutionary – always ambivalent about Tolstoy – it was necessary to build bulwarks against Tolstoy's influence as a pacifist, while harnessing some of his anti-Tsarist energy. As editor of *Free Russia*, Volkhovsky found it expedient both to promote Tolstoy and to wage a heavy campaign against those aspects of his creed which were damaging to the pro-revolutionary cause. A review of G.H. Perris's *Leo Tolstoi: the Grand Moujik* (1898) characterises the journal's coverage of the writer. The reviewer (probably Volkhovsky) sets out two sides to Tolstoy's philosophy: the critical or destructive side, and the positive side. Tolstoy the "destroyer" is as good as Swift. His rabble-rousing attacks on Russian society and the church, "[his] description of the flogging of starving peasants ... makes the reader clench his fist in fury with a wish to crush at once that heinous vermin called the Russian government." The positive Tolstoy, who preaches pacifism and self-perfection, however, beggars belief: "[Tolstoy says] 'Do not oppose evil with violence; first of all perfect yourself,'" yet, "How can a Russian think egotistically of self-perfection while suffering is surging around him like the sea?"²⁶³ The article admits that as a fiction writer, Tolstoy is "the greatest novelist who ever lived", his *War and Peace* being "the *Iliad* of the nineteenth century".²⁶⁴ But this by no means insignificant fact is entirely occluded by the reviewer's impassioned arguments over Tolstoy's political philosophy.

This two-sided treatment of Tolstoy (and its attendant neglect of him as a fiction writer) was played out again and again in the pages of *Free Russia*. The journal conceded that within Russia the circulation of Tolstoyan tracts had produced "a beneficial effect in circles where politics must begin with religion".²⁶⁵ It also noted happily that Tolstoy's relentless message about putting "the authority of one's own conscience ... above the authority of the order of the Tzar and his delegates, either lay or ecclesiastical", was helping to undermine successfully "the very basis" of the Russian regime.²⁶⁶ Notice was given to George Herbert Perris's Tolstoy lecture before the Fabian Society, which framed Tolstoy's message in terms of the incompatibility of the quest for self-perfection and the desire for social respectability.²⁶⁷ (Volkhovsky must have delighted in the indirect jab at those Britons too preoccupied with the requirements of 'good society' to countenance Russian exiles,

²⁶³ "A Russian View of Tolstoi", 65.

²⁶⁴ "A Russian View of Tolstoi", 64.

²⁶⁵ "The 'Over-the-Border' Literature", *Free Russia* 13, 8–10 (August – October 1902) 89.

²⁶⁶ "Leo Tolstoy in Danger", *Free Russia* 10, 1 (January 1899) 2.

²⁶⁷ "Meetings and Lectures", *Free Russia* 10, 2 (February 1899) 16.

never-mind support their cause.) As a messenger of the evils of Tsardom and the Orthodox Church Tolstoy was lauded. For his persecution by the Russian government, he was given a martyr's crown akin to the laurels Volkhovsky and Stepniak used to dignify the poor *narodniki* banished to Siberia, the censored poets, the beleaguered peasants and the would-be 'reformers'. His excommunication by the Holy Synod in 1901 was reported in *Free Russia* with relished outrage.²⁶⁸ Completing the connection between Tolstoy and their cause, the SFRF exiles even sold portraits of the famous pacifist at their Russian events and by mail-order in *Free Russia*, alongside best-selling pictures of the late assassin Stepniak.

These accolades were matched by *Free Russia*'s ruthless and vitriolic derision of the "positive" Tolstoy; its relentless debunking of the author's status as a didactic moralist. Zhook was especially iconoclastic, and his reviews of Tolstoy invariably drew out the anecdotes least flattering to the author:

[Eugene Schuyler] gives in full detail the story of the highly characteristic quarrel between Tourguénev and Tolstoy, which arose over some trifling matter ... the sympathies of all those intimately acquainted with that painful incident will undoubtedly lean towards Tourguénev, whose remarkable good nature and sweetness of temper stand out with particular prominence when compared with the egotistically conceited conduct of the Tolstoy of that time...²⁶⁹

Zhook took pleasure in recalling Tolstoy's early life of debauchery, cards, drinking and dandyism, when the so-called prophet "taxed his peasants heavily".²⁷⁰ (This was not altogether fair, since Tolstoy himself had made known these charges against himself as a point of conscience in his book *My Confession* (published in English by Walter Scott in 1889)). The critic also shared his friend Aylmer Maude's contempt of "that self-confident dogmatism, bordering on sectarianism, and with that sentimental worshipping of Tolstoy's personality, which unfortunately characterise many ... [a] so-called "Tolstoyist".²⁷¹ Other

²⁶⁸ "The Excommunication of Leo Tolstoy", *Free Russia* 11, 8–10 (August – October 1900) 75.

²⁶⁹ V. Zhook, review *Selected Essays* by Eugene Schuyler, *Free Russia* 12, 11 (November 1901) 98–99.

²⁷⁰ V. Zhook, review *Leo Tolstoy: Sevastopol and Other Military Tales* translated by Aylmer Maude, *Free Russia* 13, 2 (February 1902) 26.

²⁷¹ V. Zhook, review of *Tolstoy and His Problems* by Aylmer Maude, *Free Russia* 12, 8–10 (August – October 1901) 85. At the time, Zhook was living in Purleigh, the site of an early Tolstoyan community which disintegrated in 1900 due to mental illness and fanaticism among its members. His vitriolic attack on Tolstoyism was thus motivated by first-hand experience. A letter from Aylmer Maude to George Herbert Perris gives Zhook's address (26 July 1901). Letters of Aylmer Maude, Leeds University Library, Special Collections MS 553.

condemnatory voices joined Zhook's to form a chorus against the prophet. Coverage was given to G.K. Chesterton's attack on Tolstoy's "false simplicity" in the *Daily News*.²⁷² Aylmer Maude was quoted criticising the Christian anarchist's use of postage stamps issued by "a government which collects taxes by force". And an article in *Woman's Journal* (Boston) was cited, deriding the prophet's lack of logic and consistency on the subject of procreation.²⁷³ Volkhovsky himself attacked Tolstoy's doctrines of self-perfection and non-resistance in his article on Gorky.

Volkhovsky's deprecation of Tolstoy's pacifism predated the artistic renewal of *Free Russia*. His 'Prefatory Notes' to the SFRF committee member G.H. Perris's *Leo Tolstoy: the Grand Mujik* (1898), contain a diplomatically-phrased explication of what was, essentially, the revolutionists' view of Tolstoy:

We Russians may have our own views about many points of Leo Tolstoy's teaching. We may perhaps feel that in the face of an unfortunate historical past, which has brought so much oppression in the present, too much love and striving after personal perfection becomes in us almost a vice....[The Englishman's] heart cannot ache so intensely at the sight of Leo Tolstoy preaching to the starving Russian peasant that his starvation is bliss while his employer's opulence is misfortune.²⁷⁴

That Perris – who was still in the throes of an early infatuation with Tolstoy's pacifism – allowed Volkhovsky to affix such a preface in the first place, shows just how well-placed the latter's influence was. Perris was soon to establish the Literary Agency of London, where (in his capacity as an agent and advisor to the translator Aylmer Maude) he would help manipulate the dissemination of Tolstoy's literature in England. His own books and articles simultaneously established him as a major authority on the author. In 1901, he diligently defended the creed of non-resistance, even when the 'Grand Mujik' applied his denunciation of violence equally to state militarism and revolutionary action: "For the first time in the modern world, adequate expression has been given... to the enormous possibilities of resisting tyranny and cruelty without blood-guiltiness".²⁷⁵ Three years earlier, he manifested his commitment to pacifism by becoming chairman of the press

²⁷² "Our Diary", *Free Russia* 12, 12 (December 1901) 110.

²⁷³ [Quotations about Tolstoy], *Free Russia* 13, 1 (January 1902) 11.

²⁷⁴ Volkhovsky, "Prefatory Note", in Perris, *Leo Tolstoy, The Grand Mujik*, viii.

committee of William Stead's Peace Crusade – a tour of European capitals in support of the Tsar's 1898 Peace Manifesto calling for a slowing of the international arms race. Most émigrés looked upon both crusade and the manifesto with deep-felt suspicion.²⁷⁶

But as a central figure in the SFRF who counted Volkhovsky as one of his closest friends,²⁷⁷ Perris was eventually swayed by the rhetoric of the émigré circle. After a visit to Tolstoy in 1904, he finally broke with the author's blanket proscription against assassination. When "An Open Letter to Tolstoy", by this well-known pacifist and Tolstoyan, was published in *Free Russia's* July-October issue, it was the crowning feather in the journal's campaign against Tolstoy's non-resistance principles:

...I write this letter as one who has given proof enough of sympathy with your ideas, chiefly to say that they fail to convince me of the absolute principle of non-resistance.... is it not a fact that J.S. Mill said in his essay on Liberty 'the act of a private citizen in striking down a criminal who by raising himself above the law has placed himself beyond the reach of legal punishment or control has been accounted by whole nations, and by some of the best and wisest of men, not a crime, but an act of exalted virtue'? ...

I loathe violence as much as you do; I should always refuse military service; and I agree that 'spiritual activity is the greatest and most powerful force'. But I also loathe a passive acquiescence in established evil;...

The fact is that we move between two poles of responsibility; the evil of violence has its antithesis in the no less horrid evil of evasion. To shirk the question ... to remain passive, is assuredly to share the guilt of every evil against which we might strive.²⁷⁸

When it came to how Tolstoy's novels were perceived in England, Volkhovsky and Zhook's commentary on the author was probably not of great moment. Just as most press coverage of Tolstoy in the late 1980s and early 1900s focussed on his person and philosophy rather than his art, these émigrés' preoccupation with the prophet's politics eclipsed his tremendous achievements in fiction. However, the proximity of radical exiles like Zhook

²⁷⁵ G.H. Perris, *The Life and Teaching of Leo Tolstoy: A Book of Extracts* (London: Grant Richards, 1901) 24–5.

²⁷⁶ See for example, Jaakoff Prelooker, "The Tsar's Peace Manifesto", *Anglo-Russian* 2, 5 (November 1898) 177–8.

²⁷⁷ Perris christened his son 'Noel Felix' as a token of his esteem for Felix Volkhovsky. Robert Gomme, *George Herbert Perris, 1866–1920: The Life and Times of a Radical* (Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Brussels, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Vienna: Peter Lang, 2003) 64.

and Volkhovsky, and earlier, Stepniak, to English proponents of Tolstoy's cause did contribute to an over-all shift in the complexion of Tolstoyanism *per se*. For Britons, Tolstoy's message had seemed a universal one. The problems he discussed – private property, marriage, the state and the military – were problems debated hotly across the globe, equally applicable in America, the continent, Scandinavia, even India. In England, at least, SFRF's little band of émigrés helped resurrect 'Russia' as the central feature in the Tolstoy debate – the pivot on which any aspect of his creed, character or art should be weighed. If Volkhovsky and Zhook did not contribute directly to discussions of Tolstoy's aesthetic theory, they did draw attention to the importance of regarding Tolstoy as a Russian, of viewing both his fiction and his philosophy in the context of Russia's dual legacy of submissiveness and horrendous oppression.

A Prophecy Fulfilled

Free Russia's systematic promotion of Russian fiction was short-lived. In late 1903, the number of translations in the magazine began to drop off. The following June, the absence became more marked as Volkhovsky's editorship was taken over by David Soskice, a political exile with "a literal mind and no imagination" (according to David Garnett).²⁷⁹ Zhook's pedantic diatribes against books on Russian authors and imprecise translations carried on under the new editor – but *Free Russia's* pages were relieved by few living specimens of poetry and fiction. In part, this was due to Soskice's politics. For him the Russian revolution was part of a vast international class struggle:²⁸⁰ there was no reason to use literature to imbue it with the values of the English bourgeoisie. But it was also because in 1905 *Free Russia* was confronted with a new set of editorial priorities. This was the year of Father Gapon and January's Bloody Sunday; general strikes and popular uprisings, mutinies, and revolutionary disorders in the Baltic States. The suppression of revolt with a veritable white terror, and the Tsar's apparent capitulation – the fraudulent October Manifesto – gave the journal as much fodder as it needed. Frank reality eclipsed the need for realistic fiction. Publishing poetic calls to revolution became pointless in the clash and fury

²⁷⁸ G.H. Perris, "An Open Letter to Tolstoy", *Free Russia* 15, 7–9 (July – October 1904) 74–5. Perris was responding directly to an essay by Tolstoy on "Revolution" which appeared in the *Daily News* (7 September 1904) 7.

²⁷⁹ David Garnett, *The Golden Echo* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1953) 37.

of a real uprising. Within Russia, revolutionary fiction had already achieved its objective: the people had read their destiny in novels and stories as if in a mirror which could show, simultaneously, past, present and future. Proselytising Russia's literary culture was no longer of moment. If *Free Russia* mentioned writers at all – such as Gorky – it was thus to record their views on Russia's first revolution.²⁸¹

Volkhovsky's editorial activities from 1899 to early 1904 had, however, unleashed a small but substantial body of first translations of Russian literature and introduced some unheard-of Russian writers to the journal's small but well-connected audience. Poems and stories published under his direction were reprinted elsewhere – not least in the second volume of Leo Wiener's ground-breaking *Anthology of Russian Literature* (1903). Furthermore, the editor's commitment to the project suggests an enthusiasm for literary discourse which carried over into his personal life. He may be counted as one of the educated Russian émigrés transporting to England a critical literary ethos which infiltrated the outlooks of Edward Garnett and, by extension, Garnett's literary wards. Garnett's introduction to Gorky's *Twenty-Six Men and a Girl* (1902) predates Volkhovsky's *Free Russia* article on the author. But his comprehension of the vast gulf between the Russian and British views of literature was conditioned by close contact with Volkhovsky and the cultivated émigré community:

... to the Russian mind, it is immoral to conceal or falsify the seamy facts in a world so constantly dominated by ugliness, while, to the English mind, it is immoral not to let fine character and conscience have the final word "in the battle of life."²⁸²

It was partly by witnessing the pyrotechnic displays of rhetoric in émigré criticism that Garnett acquired his feel for the unique political function of literature in Russia: "the result of a recent Government *surveillance* of the author is to double his popularity, and place him, as an artist, in a rather false position. The Russian public, in fact, is trying to *utilize* Gorky's pictures of life, and make them serve a special end."²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Ron Grant, "The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom (1890–1917) – A Case Study in Internationalism", *Scottish Labour History Society Journal*, no. 3 (November 1970) 16.

²⁸¹ For Gorky's comments on the revolution see *Free Russia* 16, 8–10 (August – October 1905) 99.

²⁸² Edward Garnett, introduction to Gorky, *Twenty-Six Men and a Girl*, xii.

²⁸³ Garnett, introduction, *Twenty-Six Men and a Girl*, viii–ix.

Free Russia's little troop of 'Englishers' were also touched by Volkhovsky's efforts. Elizabeth Gibson's biographer, Judy Greenway, remarks that Gibson's translation work for *Free Russia* helped shape her fledgling career as a poet, and possibly that of her better-known brother, the poet Wilfrid William Gibson.²⁸⁴ Her own poems began to look towards politics, and Wilfred Gibson, having turned away from an earlier commitment to 'art for art's sake', remarked "It is the poet's business to make poetry out of the life of his day, and it is already more than a year and a half since I wrote any piece of verse which did not spring from modern circumstances".²⁸⁵ In 1900 he contributed a poem to *Free Russia*, calling on the Briton who "Dost roam untrammelled over land and sea" to "Take Russia to thy heart ... For thou art slave till all the world is free!"²⁸⁶

It is in his literary criticism, his biographies of Russian authors, but most of all, in his selections of Russian poetry that we see Volkhovsky at his most radical. All these persuasively argue against the evils of pacifism and subservience; they are bold statements of the need for violent resistance. Literature is used by Volkhovsky as a stage, a place in which to dramatise the culture, colours, and political complexion of the Russian nation before the eyes of a British audience. It forms a key part of his educative mission to illuminate Russia for England – and to argue in favour of revolution as a natural and necessary stage in the evolution of the Russian national character. G.H. Perris's twin estimation of the exile's talents rings true: Volkhovsky was "at once the poet and the statesman of the revolutionary propaganda".²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴ This reflection was made by Judy Greenway during a conversation with the author.

²⁸⁵ Letter from Wildred Gibson to Sydney Cockerell (10 September 1907). Courtesy Judy Greenway.

²⁸⁶ Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, "The Slave", *Free Russia* 11, 4 (April 1900) 38.

²⁸⁷ G.H. Perris, *Russia in Revolution*, 225.

Jaakoff Prelooker

Cultivation and Sympathy: The Anglo-Russian and Russian Fiction, 1897–1905

If Jaakoff Prelooker has been forgotten both as a propagandist and as a contributor to the reception and dissemination of Russian literature in Britain, this is, in part, because of the company he kept. Where Stepniak, Kropotkin and Volkhovsky shared a common heartbeat with London's *literati*, the Odessa-born émigré's mainstays were the church hall and front parlour audiences that he found in Eastbourne, Inverness, Sheffield, Hastings, or the quaint village of Painswick, Gloucestershire. Those of his admirers who enjoyed some claim to fame, occupied, at best, its second or third rungs. For the most part, their names have been lost to posterity: the two elderly feminists, Emily and Elizabeth Reid,²⁸⁸ the Scottish academic, Professor J.S. Blackie; James Robertson, a scholar of Semitic philology at the University of Glasgow; the Eastbourne novelist, Edna Lyall; the now-forgotten writer, Annabel Gray.²⁸⁹ As an outspoken advocate of women's rights, Prelooker was popular amongst Suffragists (a departure with conservatism which cost him a great deal of support).²⁹⁰ The feminist activist and writer, (Rosa) Frances Emily Swiney, contributed to the *Anglo-Russian* a regular column titled, "Woman among the Nations", and the Pankhursts invited him to speak at their meetings. But for the most part, Prelooker's orbit was unfashionable: his name received little mention in the *Times*, and he achieved nothing like Stepniak and Kropotkin's sway over Members of Parliament, publishers, newspaper editors, and Britain's Liberal elements.

Yet from 1895 on, it was Prelooker, more than any of the radical émigrés, who brought Russia's culture and her literature to both the far corners of Scotland and the byways of middle England. His "Evenings with the Russians, Lecture Entertainments" amounted to something of an industry, drawing audiences in their hundreds and inspiring eulogistic write-ups in newspapers such as the *Christian World* and the *Paisley Daily*

²⁸⁸ John Slatter, "Jaakoff Prelooker and *The Anglo-Russian*", in John Slatter, ed., *From the Other Shore: Russian Political Emigrants in Britain 1880–1917*, (London: Frank Cass, 1984)

²⁸⁹ Prelooker's acquaintance with Edna Lyall is described in "The Late 'Edna Lyall'", *Anglo-Russian* 6, 8 (February 1903) 680. Prelooker collaborated with Annabel Gray on a novel about Stundists which was published serially in the *Anglo-Russian*. "Literature and Art", *Anglo-Russian* 1, 2 (August 1897) 18.

²⁹⁰ Frank, "Jaakoff Prelooker", 40.

Express.²⁹¹ A brochure issued by Prelooker's Edinburgh office shows him offering talks on subjects from Russian women, music, militarism, and secret sects to Slavic mythology and "[H]ow the Russians drink tea", all enlivened, for a small fee, by lantern-slides, costumes, samovars, or even a whole cast of Russian choristers.²⁹² Delivering his talks in Cossack boots, and a Kyrgyz hat (what Volkhovsky disparaged as "the mongrel dress which he calls the Russian national dress, but which really is not"),²⁹³ Prelooker provided Scotland and England with stimulus for both the eye and the intellect. His quarrel with other well-connected emigrants may have isolated him from avenues of influence in liberal circles, but his genius for using cultural subjects and theatrical effects gave his propaganda popular reach.

Two of his principal lectures were literary: "Count Tolstoy, as a Novelist, and Social Reformer", and "Russian Literature in its Representatives". No details or transcripts of these seem to exist, but abstracts of the Tolstoy talk suggest the propagandist used the author as a peg on which to hang discussions of "the Land of the Poet", comparisons of Russia's civilisation with England's own, and vivid descriptions of the Russian government's persecution of its native writers and free-thinking intelligentsia. Hearing the lecture delivered in an orthodox Scottish kirk before a crowded congregation, Prof. Blackie found it to be "full of interest and with a fine moral contagion".²⁹⁴ Prelooker's lecture on "Russian Literature in its Representatives", favoured populist writers: Nekrasov, "the People's Friend and Poet"; Goncharov; Turgenev; Herzen; Chernyshevsky; Saltykov-Shchedrin, "the Weeper through Smiles"; and the critics Pisarev and Dobrolubov.²⁹⁵

Prelooker's main objective in serving up attractive doses of Russian culture was to provide an antidote to Britain's still lingering russophobia. As we saw in Part I, Russians were still widely described as 'Barbarians', and feared for their savage bellicosity. The propagandist was well aware of these prejudices. In *Autobiography of a Slander* (1887), his acquaintance, Edna Lyall gave witness to English racial snobbery in exactly the realms in which Prelooker himself circulated. The novel tells of how a kind, well-meaning Russian

²⁹¹ The scale of his operations is suggested by reports of his lecture tours in the *Anglo-Russian*, and in the illustrated brochure which he circulated from the Edinburgh office of the Russian Reformation Society.

²⁹² "Evenings with Russians, Lecture Entertainments by Jaakoff Prelooker", BLPES, COLL MISC 1028.

²⁹³ *Free Russia* 8, 9 (September 1897) 68–9.

²⁹⁴ Frank, "Jaakoff Prelooker", 22.

²⁹⁵ Summaries of all his talks are provided in the pamphlet, "Evenings with Russians, Lecture Entertainments by Jaakoff Prelooker"..

émigré who speaks about his country's government in terms of disgust is gossiped about as a Nihilist in parsonage and on the village green. Eventually slanderous rumours linking him with the assassination of the Tsar reach Russia. The hero, called back to St. Petersburg on business, is incarcerated and dies in prison. Underlying the loose talk which brings him to this grisly fate, however, is a fear of racial contamination: the Russian, with his foreign visage and slightly 'off' mannerisms is rumoured to be engaged to an English rose. Gissing's novel, *Demos* (1886), meanwhile, shed light on the shortcomings of England's working class, showing them to be intellectually, culturally, temperamentally, and indeed, genetically, unfit to share political power with England's elect. Yet even Gissing's working-class socialists see themselves as a superior breed to the revolutionaries of other countries: "We are Englishmen – and women – not flighty, frothy foreigners." It is notable that only the most extreme and unscrupulous of English radicals in the book, Comrade Roodhouse, compares himself with Russia's opponents of tyranny.²⁹⁶ If English workers were unable to rule themselves, how much less so were the malodorous Russians struggling to unseat the Tsar.

When Prelooker founded the *Anglo-Russian* in the summer of 1897, the idea of perpetuating the image of a cultivated, none-too-foreign Russia was central to his design. The journal resembled a hybrid English magazine, appealing to middle-class values and tastes. Interspersed with the requisite stories about Russia's religious persecution, famines, and bureaucratic horrors, were articles on Russian composers, book reviews, translations of the poetry of Lermontov and Pushkin, articles on such topics as 'Russian Tea and Tea à L'anglaise', and the editor's own allegories and lightweight serialised novels. Taking its cue from magazines like *Tid-bits*, a 'Russian Wit and Humour' column quoted amusing lines from unacknowledged Russian magazines, and there was an abundance of excerpts on the Russian question from the English press. Prelooker also appealed to the women's market with a series titled, 'Heroines of Russia'. In 1897, he capitalised on the fashion for interviews, publishing an account of 'A Visit to George Meredith'.²⁹⁷ In 1900, Prelooker started printing translations of poetry – particularly by Lermontov and Pushkin, the "Kings of Russian Lyrist".²⁹⁸ Drawing a course between the *Free Russia's* earnest denunciation of

²⁹⁶ George Gissing, *Demos: A Story of English Socialism*, edited with an introduction by Pierre Coustillas (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1971) 236, 226.

²⁹⁷ Jaakoff Prelooker, 'A Visit to George Meredith', *Anglo-Russian* 1, 4 (October 1897) 37–9.

²⁹⁸ "Evenings with Russians, Lecture Entertainments by Jaakoff Prelooker".

Tsarist despotism and the chatty language of popular English magazines, *The Anglo-Russian* proved Prelooker's boast that he could adapt 'to the ways of an orthodox English audience, which will not exert itself to strain their nerves in listening to foreign half-Dutch English, unless some special attractions were offered to them'.²⁹⁹ English regional newspapers, which received the journal *gratis*, warmed to its kaleidoscopic format. "The *Anglo-Russian* has made a bold bid for sympathy," reflected a reporter in the *Durham Chronicle*, "...few people...will quarrel with the aim it has set before it. We wish the new paper well. It chats about many interesting things – Russian wit and humour, art, literature, &c."³⁰⁰

One regular feature of the magazine was the column "Literature and Art", made up of news snippets about 'cultivated' Russia. Here, English readers learned of events like Tolstoy's literary jubilee; Pushkin's hundreth anniversary; the translation into Russian of Kipling, the Talmud, or John S. Mill's "Principles of Political Economy"; and the opening in Moscow of yet another literary and philosophical society. In March 1900, half a page was devoted to "The New Russian Academy of Belle-Lettres" a recent arm of the Imperial Academy of Science, whose new "Honorary Academicians" were to include Tolstoy and Korolenko, alongside literary personae more closely associated with the Russian bureaucracy.³⁰¹ Another issue reported how the Tsar had given his consent to open up a subscription list for a monument to Turgenev.³⁰² An article celebrating the brilliant literary career of Nikolai Konstantinovich Mikhailovsky, meanwhile, showed Russia to be the home of advanced and measured theoretical debate.³⁰³ In the pages of Prelooker's journal, Russian society was made to appear as rich and familiar as its English or European counterparts: a tapestry of publishing ventures, scholarly projects, literary clubs, museums, and institutions capable of legitimising and acknowledging the nation's artists and writers. Certainly, it was not a culture which could be described (to quote one oft-read commentator on Russia) as "masked barbarism... nothing more."

Yet promoting such a positive picture of Russia's cultural scene carried with it the risk of undermining the magazine's anti-Tsarist stance. After all, if culture could flourish – if there existed societies and institutions capable of legitimising the nation's artists and

²⁹⁹ Jaakoff Prelooker, 'Our Seventh Anniversary', *Anglo-Russian* 7, 12 (June – July 1904) 844.

³⁰⁰ Quoted in "Opinions on the *Anglo-Russian*", *Anglo-Russian* 1, 2 (August 1897) 20.

³⁰¹ "The New Russian Academicians", *Anglo-Russian* 3, 9 (March 1900) 347.

³⁰² "Monument to Tourgeneff", *Anglo-Russian* 1, 1 (July 1897) 10.

³⁰³ "Nikolai Konstantinovich Mikhailovsky", *Anglo-Russian* 6, 7 (January 1901) 437–8.

writers – perhaps claims of Tsarist despotism were exaggerated. Prelooker thus tempered his portrait with manifold references to the “real madness” of the Russian Censorship,³⁰⁴ a blood-curdling account of Dostoevsky’s mock-execution,³⁰⁵ and eulogistic reminiscences of poets and pressmen who were, invariably, staunch defenders of “the noble causes of progress and reform”.³⁰⁶ Further tipping the balance against any beneficent view of the Russian government were *The Anglo-Russian*’s pieces on populist authors – Korolenko, Gorky, Nekrasov, and Grigorovitch – focusing on their extraordinary revelations about peasant suffering and brutal officialdom: “[Korolenko’s story] presents a picture of the humiliated and outraged of even greater precision and vividness than that of Dostoievsky. A nobody, a species of a Government worm, a sort of policeman, a brute, officially invested with a fraction of power, in a word simply a scoundrel can dare to cruelly insult and outrage a fellow man without himself running the slightest risk of any punishment. Here is the question in full light”³⁰⁷ In 1898, Prelooker published articles by *Free Russia*’s Vasily Zhook describing the ‘Martyrology of the Press in Russia’.³⁰⁸

The overall message in the *Anglo-Russian* was that Russia was home to a mature, highly civilised literary scene where marvellous indigenous talent and industry were constantly thwarted by a childish despotism bureaucracy. It was the old dichotomy of the ‘real’ Russia and the ‘official’ Russia: ‘Russia the Friend and Russia the foe of England’.³⁰⁹ The British conception of Russia as a nation of unruly savages kept in line by a necessarily brutal Tsar was turned on its head. Russia’s oppressed were ‘cultivated’. The Tsar, to quote Prelooker, was “an eternal foe of human progress”.³¹⁰

Russian Candour and the Problem of English Propriety

Prelooker’s own comments on Russian literature in the *Anglo-Russian* suggest that he was conversant with the great battle between ‘Candour’ and moral righteousness being waged in

³⁰⁴ See for example, the “Literature and Art” columns in the *Anglo-Russian* 1, 8 (February 1898) 92; and 1, 12 (June 1898) 140.

³⁰⁵ Prelooker’s commentary to John M. Robertson, “Feodore Michaelovich Dostoevsky”, *Anglo-Russian* 2, 7 (January 1899) 207.

³⁰⁶ See, for example, “Literature and Art”, *Anglo-Russian* 1, 3 (September 1897) 31.

³⁰⁷ G. Savitch, “Vladimir Korolenko”, *Anglo-Russian* 7, 3–4 (September – October 1903) 740.

³⁰⁸ Vasily Zhook, “Martyrology of the Press in Russia”, *Anglo-Russian* 2, 1 (July 1898) 145–6; 2, 2 (August 1898) 154–5.

³⁰⁹ The title of an article in the *Anglo Russian* 1, 9 (March 1898) 97–8.

³¹⁰ Prelooker, commentary to Leo Tolstoy, “Count Tolstoy, On Flogged and Floggers”, *Russian Reformation Society* 1 (January 1899), 1

England's literary arena. This debate was fought mainly between those writers calling for greater artistic freedom on the one side (their motives varied) and the puritanical Mrs. Grundy (otherwise known as Popular Opinion or Respectability) on the other. The latter insisted upon a literature which relentlessly depicted the victory of virtue over vice, seeing art as a sort of sanctified enclave which needed to be protected from certain pernicious influences. Mudie and the circulating libraries had long ago joined the camp of the moral nannies, refusing to purchase books examining the seamier side of life lest they exercise a contaminating effect on society, particularly on adolescent girls. In the 1890s, Mudie's grip over the literary market was loosening: the production of affordable one-volume novels and the proliferation of magazines which published fiction serially meant that writers could make a living without catering wholesale to the outdated morals of what Wilde, for one, deemed a "monstrous and ignorant" public.³¹¹ Nonetheless, beyond the more enterprising publishing houses and the avant-garde realms served by journals like the *Yellow Book*, respectability still prevailed. Indeed, in 1895, the public outrage accompanying the publication of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* was so vehement that its shocked author never dared to pick up his fictional pen again.

Émigrés were already presenting a challenge to this dichotomy. Stepniak's celebration of Tolstoy's ontological truths, and Volkhovsky's discovery of a lofty idealism in Gorky's ugly pictures of contemporary life, suggested that Russian fiction could serve as a model for a candid literature which, through its very truthfulness, promoted an ethical approach to life. As we have seen, Edward Garnett summed up the Russian challenge to English literary conventions by distinguishing between a Russian literary morality – which amounted to frankness – and the English one – which insisted that "fine character must have the final word".³¹²

Notwithstanding his efforts to appeal to the more conservative elements of middle England, Prelooker was true to his Russian roots. He preached that realism and idealism need not be antagonistic notions, while railing against the insincerity and impediments to social progress arising from Mrs. Grundy's worship of that false god, propriety. His objections to English 'Public Opinion' first surfaced in early 1900, after he received a slew

³¹¹ Oscar Wilde, "The Soul of Man Under Socialism", *The Artist as Critic, Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, edited by Richard Ellmann (New York: Random House, 1969) 275.

³¹² Edward Garnett, introduction to Gorky, *Twenty-Six Men and a Girl*, xii.

of complaints from readers who objected to the portrayal of likeable Nihilists in his own serialised novel, *From the Stage to the Cross*. In the February issue of the *Anglo-Russian*, he made his case against those who would manipulate reality for the sake of morality:

anyone portraying events and characters in... popular narratives, is *bound* first of all to be true to reality, and to depict his heroes as they are. Nihilists there have been and still are in Russia....In a story dealing with the great struggle for liberty in Russia, they must come to the front and to dismiss them unheard would be both absurd and unfair. To depict them as simply villains and blood-thirsty criminals we cannot, because we know them not to be such; on the contrary, we know them to be amongst the noblest and most cultured of the Russian people. Anyhow, an author of a novel cannot be responsible for the sayings and doings of his heroes, and we shall certainly continue to portray them as to our knowledge they are, though at the risk of shocking those who would like them to be otherwise.³¹³

The following month, Prelooker used a similar argument to defend Tolstoy's last novel, *Resurrection* (1899), against charges of prurience. This time, however, his attack was aimed more directly at what he regarded as the hypocritical social and literary conventions of the English nation as a whole. *Resurrection* tells the story of young social lion who unthinkingly seduces the innocent daughter of a swineherd, leaving her to her ruin. The prince carries on his life of selfish indulgence until, years later, he is called to serve on a jury at the trial of a wretched streetwalker charged with murder. Discovering that the accused is the same innocent he had deflowered and abandoned, he is horror-stricken. He accepts his culpability for her grim fate, and at once decides to abandon his morally bankrupt social milieu in order to accompany the fallen women to Siberia. The rest, and major part, of the novel is occupied with the injustices and brutalities of the Russian penal system. Written after his famous religious conversion, *Resurrection* is undoubtedly Tolstoy's most preachy novel, full of exposés of "covert hypocrisy and inflated egoism".³¹⁴ But despite Tolstoy's high moral aims, many Britons were offended by his references to undergarments and "the lively naturalism of [his] description of vice" which they felt "would do more mischief than

³¹³ [Prelooker], "Our Serial Story", *Anglo-Russian* 3, 8 (February 1900) 333.

³¹⁴ Julian Connolly, "The Nineteenth Century: Between Realism and Modernism, 1880-95", in *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, revised edition, edited by Charles A. Moser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 345.

all the preaching of virtue would do good”.³¹⁵ John Bellows, the clerk of the Quaker Society of Friends, even returned to the novel’s publisher the £150 it had raised from sales of *Resurrection* and presented to a committee the Society had set up to help with the emigration of persecuted Doukhobours to Canada. His reasoning was that the Society of Friends ought not to accept proceeds from “a smutty book”.³¹⁶

To Prelooker all this reeked of “preconceived English conventional motives of *moral* writing and literary expediency”. Appealing to differences in national spirit, he advises: “The mistake of the adverse critics, and no doubt of the general *English* reader of ‘Resurrection,’ is that they approach a work of a Russian author...forgetting that characters and language on the banks of the Neva are totally different from those on the banks of the Thames”. The distinctions become clearer as he carries on:

We know that certain words to be found in all English dictionaries and frequently conspicuously exposed at tailor’s shop-windows ... are no longer used in good English society.... [But] we could never reconcile [this] with the fact that crowds of Britons of both sexes flock to public bathing places to gaze for hours at those who are altogether stripped of their “unmentionables.” In Russian society “briuki,” the English “unmentionables,” *are* mentioned without any remorse of conscience, but at the same time Russians would consider it an immodest proceeding to watch and behold their absence in public places.³¹⁷

Such conflicting social norms find their counterpart in the countries’ respective approaches to literature: Russians have a “code of social and literary conventions different from that of Western Europe”.³¹⁸ They are more frank than the British, less likely to adopt “a higher tone of speech...in the discussion of morality”. In their literature they have fewer qualms about inquiring honestly and deeply into the nature of certain realities – everyday realities that the British with their notions of delicacy are yet prevented from addressing. Regarding the seduction scene for which Tolstoy was so admonished by British readers, Prelooker writes:

³¹⁵ *Newcastle Chronicle*, quoted in Prelooker, “Russia in Tolstoy’s Latest, Reflections on ‘Resurrection’”, *Anglo-Russian* 3, 12 (June 1900) 377.

³¹⁶ Richenda Scott, *The Quakers in Russia* (London: Michael Joseph, 1964) 137–9. See also, [Bellows, Mr. John, and Tolstoy’s *Resurrection*], *Academy and Literature* 62 (18 January 1902) 44.

³¹⁷ Prelooker, “Russia in Tolstoy’s Latest”, 377–8.

³¹⁸ “‘Resurrection’, the Book and the Play, Ethics and Aesthetics”, *Anglo-Russian* 6, 9–10 (March – April 1903) 688.

...where to draw the line in depicting the psychology of character and action is a matter for the author's own judgment, and personally, reading "Resurrection" with a Russian's eyes, we could not naturally feel those "shocks" which certain passages give to the English reader. Alas! the pictures are too painfully familiar...³¹⁹

When one considers that Prelooker's favoured audiences included many English Nonconformists, the principal demographic behind the National Vigilance Association, his remarks on Tolstoy appear all the more bold. It was the National Vigilance Association after all, which in 1889 had successfully charged the publisher Vizetelly with obscene libel for issuing translations of Zola.³²⁰ Yet Prelooker's defence of Tolstoy's policy of candour did not align him with either Decadents, aesthetes or any over-provocative naturalist camp. His favourable references to Russia's superior versions of social propriety show him clearly to be addressing Public Opinion on its own territory and in its own language, not in the spirit of revolt. Similarly, the complaints he received for depicting Nihilists in a "noble" light, in his own novel, said much more about the conservative nature of readers of the *Anglo-Russian* than about the journal's radical politics. *Free Russia* expected and received no such complaints; Nihilism (or Stepniak's version of it) was what it represented. Throughout Prelooker's arguments there was an aura of conservative piety, making him, in many respects, among the more successfully subversive guests to find welcome in Mrs. Grundy's front parlour.

Russian Literature and the Psychology of the Nation

Readers of the *Anglo-Russian* received another infusion of the Russian critical ethos in the articles of G. Savitch, a radical Siberian critic whom Prelooker commissioned to write for the magazine in 1903. Savitch was already well known as a critic of Russian literature in France, where he was living in exile. His two pieces in the *Anglo-Russian*, one on the radical poet Nekrasov and another on Korolenko, were typical examples of Russian populist criticism with their emphasis on the necessary dual function of the writer as both "social

³¹⁹ Prelooker, "Russia in Tolstoy's Latest", 378.

³²⁰ This was the first time the obscene libel law had been used against serious literature. D.W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics 1870-1914* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982) 44.

combatant” and “consummate artist”,³²¹ their blending of literary and national analysis, and their use of ‘typology’ to derive extra-textual meaning from depictions of character .

It is in his Korolenko article that Savitch best displays his critical heritage. Korolenko, he says, is a writer who “embodies” social questions and ideas in characters. A case in point is “At Davem”, a story about a provincial station-master who is assaulted and humiliated by a petty local officer when he demands payment for the loan of horses. At its simplest level, “At Davem” is a straightforward *éxposé* of the sort of iniquities common in Russia. It is a microcosm of a nation where “a Government worm,[can]... insult and outrage a fellow man” with impunity; where “[t]he whole life of the citizen is at the mercy of irresponsible and violent officialdom.”³²² On another level, however, “At Davem” is much more than an anecdote about Russian corruption. According to Savitch’s Russian reading, the story’s simple exterior belies a complex interweaving of historical and paratextual meaning: “At Davem” masterfully portrays “the psychology of the ‘humiliated and outraged’ in Russia”. In the single character of a humiliated station-master, Korolenko shows a Russia that “has hardly yet emerged from her historically developed habits of servitude and submission”. The story proves that Russia’s “politically resigned humility” is a “secret malady”, a “slow internal poison” typified by Tolstoy’s “creed of non-resistance”.³²³ Just as in Stepniak’s discussions of Tolstoy, Savitch uses Korolenko’s tale to expound the historical genesis of Russia, considering the whole nation as a single organism. On the basis of one short narrative, he makes a sweeping analysis of the entire country’s psychological development.

In the second instalment of the same article, Savitch takes a story by Korolenko about Judea under the rule of the Romans. His treatment is yet another reminder that conditions within Russia mean that stories need to be interpreted according to different rules from those guiding readings of Western literature:

[T]o plead the cause of freedom and to show the means of obtaining it, [Korolenko] goes further afield and chooses his scenes and heroes from other climes and times, as if the moral of a story with non-Russian names is more

³²¹ G. Savitch, “N.A. Nekrasoff, The Career of a Russian Poet and Publicist”, *Anglo-Russian* 6, 8 (February 1903) 678; and G. Savitch, “Vladimir Korolenko”, *Anglo-Russian* 7, 3–4 (September – October 1903) 739.

³²² Savitch, “Vladimir Korolenko”, 720.

³²³ Savitch, “Vladimir Korolenko”, 741, 740.

likely to be countenanced by the vigilant but none too subtle Russian Press censor.³²⁴

Decoding the moral of this tale of ancients debating the pros and cons of passive versus active resistance, Savitch gives it a topical turn, casting it as a call to violent revolution in Russia: “resistance is a necessity, not from any intrinsic good, but as the only means of obtaining justice”.³²⁵

What is of interest here is not that Savitch was exaggerating the relevance of Korolenko’s stories to Russia’s national and social problems. He certainly was not. Rather, his interpretations were significant insofar as, like other émigré critics, he provided Western readers with the tools and historical context with which to read the literature of a country whose censorship permitted portraiture but not comment. His article was quoted in the London *Echo* and at length in the *Evening News*.³²⁶

Russifying Tolstoy’s Resurrection

As a “reformer” who purported to advocate a bloodless solution to Russia’s ills, Prelooker took a more uniformly positive position towards Tolstoy in the *Anglo-Russian* than did the revolutionary émigrés and Englishmen and women behind *Free Russia*. He nodded approvingly at the prophet’s Christianity, and moreover, found him a useful spokesman on the subject of the persecution of Russian non-Orthodox sects (what Prelooker shrewdly referred to as ‘Protestants’, or ‘Nonconformists’) to have on side. As someone promoting Russia on the grounds of its potential for trade and commerce with Britain, the editor of the *Anglo-Russian* disagreed with the great novelist’s attitudes towards private property. But he expressed polite admiration for the earnest and valiant efforts English Tolstoyans were making to break with convention and commerce and live in communities “kept together not by the bonds of authority and law, but by the inner spiritual ties of love and sympathy”.³²⁷ In 1903 he toured the Tolstoyan community at Whiteway, and after reporting their tribulations in the *Anglo-Russian* concluded regretfully: “after all we are not and cannot be the free

³²⁴ Savitch, “Vladimir Korolenko”, *Anglo-Russian* 7, 5 (November 1903) 757.

³²⁵ Savitch, “Vladimir Korolenko”, 758.

³²⁶ The fact that the articles were quoted in the English press was noted in the *Anglo-Russian* 7, 5 (November 1903) 758.

³²⁷ Prelooker, “Russia in Painswick, and a Visit to the Tolstoy Colony at Whiteway”, *Anglo-Russian* 7, 3 (November 1903) 752.

agents of our wills and destinies as dreamt by Tolstoy and other ancient or modern prophets”.³²⁸ Despite his cautions against the impracticalities of extreme Tolstoyanism, Prelooker was one of the prophet’s chief Russian advocates in Britain. In addition to his 1900 defence of *Resurrection* in the *Anglo-Russian* he published a wide spectrum of Tolstoy miscellanea: reviews of his books, anecdotes, biographical notes, and, not least, his views on flogging, oppression and the Tsar.

In 1903, Prelooker’s involvement in Herbert Beerbohm Tree’s staging of Tolstoy’s *Resurrection* at His Majesty’s Theatre in London, gave him further scope for championing Tolstoy’s art and values. Beerbohm Tree, who had found the cost of transporting a choir from Russia to be too great, had commissioned Prelooker to hunt one up in England. As a result, the Russian attended every rehearsal.³²⁹ The performance itself was anticipated as one of the season’s major theatrical events. Since 1900, when Tolstoy’s novel was first published, it had already sold in ten separate editions. And accounts of an earlier French dramatisation by Henri Bataille, which riveted Parisian audiences, had primed English theatre-goers to expect sensational theatre. They were not disappointed. Beerbohm Tree’s biographer, Madeleine Bingham, describes the London performance, which was based on Michael Morton’s English version of Bataille’s play:

Tree played the Prince Nehludof whose betrayal of the peasant girl Katushka sets the tragedy in motion. The action moved against the rich background of nineteenth-century Russia – a Moscow palace (a set much resembling the Grand Hotel of the period), singing peasants welcoming the Great Prince back to his estates with a rousing chorus of ‘Christ is Risen’ and a kiss of peace, and a final scene where, against a background lit by camp fires amidst the gold glitter of stars and snow, the erstwhile lovers part forever.³³⁰

To Prelooker’s undoubted delight, the ‘singing peasants’ elicited “the unanimous highest eulogy of the Press” for lending the production authentic Russian flavour.³³¹

Despite his enthusiasm, Prelooker did take exception to what he considered to be Beerbohm Tree’s all-too-English staging of the play, as well as its press coverage. The director, he felt, emphasised *Resurrection*’s message of venal sin and redemption, while

³²⁸ Prelooker, “Russia in Painswick”, 753.

³²⁹ Prelooker, “‘Resurrection’, The Book and the Play”, 688–9.

³³⁰ Madeleine Bingham, ‘The Great Lover’, *The Life and Art of Herbert Beerbohm Tree* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978) 130.

ignoring Tolstoy's equally important message about the evils of the Siberian prison-system. Reviews of the play amplified this bias, considering the universal problems confronted by Tolstoy: his dragging aside of "the make-believe of modern civilisation", and his brutal attack on conventional notions of propriety. Rather than seeing it as a fundamentally Russian story, many drew links between *Resurrection* and the timeless Faust. The *Daily Express* typified the English response: "In this play you may see how *our* code of honour is a sham, far removed from Christ's religion; you see the Nemesis of sin, the Furies that drag the woman down until she leaves her hope and youth and purity behind, that haunt the man until he makes atonement... It is the story of Faust and Marguerite once again". In the furore over *Resurrection*'s statement on sexual mores, the play's other message – about the injustices and horrors of Siberian prison life – was obscured. Insofar as Beerbohm Tree had given the story its slant, of course, the press was not to blame. But only a handful of savvy reviewers picked up his lack of fidelity to some of Tolstoy's intentions. One wrote in the *Athenaeum*: "Details of prison life, intended in the novel to serve a political purpose, are subordinated in the play to a story which, not wholly without justification, has been compared to 'Faust'." ³³²

In March 1903, Prelooker decided to use the play to draw attention to Tolstoy's other, *Russian* message. This month saw a transformed issue of the *Anglo-Russian*, together with the headline, "Special 'Resurrection' Number". Creating a sort of unofficial programme to the production, Prelooker filled his magazine with discussions of Tolstoy's "Ethics and Aesthetics", six pages of excerpts from press reviews, and an act-by-act dissection of the play. The latter was a list of the editor's corrections and adjustments to the play's direction, accompanied with the disclaimer that as a Russian he was a more qualified interpreter of the work than any Englishman. Notwithstanding the thinly-veiled criticism of Beerbohm Tree, the management of the theatre "found it advantageous to order large numbers of the Journal" which it spread in advance in the provincial towns which the touring company was planning to visit. ³³³

Prelooker's aim of harnessing the play's popularity, to reinfuse *Resurrection* with its message about Russia and its system of tyranny, was clear in his analysis. He admitted that

³³¹ Frank, "Jaakoff Prelooker", 38.

³³² Both reviews were quoted at length in "The English Press on 'Resurrection', a Babel of Contradictory Opinions", *Anglo-Russian* 6, 9–10 (March – April 1903) 695.

³³³ Frank, "Jaakoff Prelooker", 38.

Nekhludoff the seducer and Maslova his victim were common enough characters, and theirs a common story: “In numberless variations they fill the literatures of all countries.” But he insisted that *Reurrection*’s greatest merit – a merit overlooked by Beerbohm – was its Russian backdrop and the political purpose it served:

[T]ake away from ‘Resurrection’ the background, on which the numerous elements of the Russian community are placed as accessories – the Nobility, the Military, Officialdom, Priesthood, Judges, Jurors, Prison population, convicts, the town, the village, the sage sectarian, etc. – and you will deprive the book of its peculiarly Russian characteristics, in our personal estimation its chief worth....if you do not care to read simply a story of sin and how to redeem it, still read ‘Resurrection’ for the pictures it gives of a country so full of interest and so little known to you. For there she is before you in her naked reality. Russia unveiled, Russia who eats, drinks and plays, and Russia who weeps, plays and starves, Russia the flogger and Russia the flogged. Russia around the throne and at the theatre, and Russia in chains falling dead on the road from fatigue and sunstroke, Russia crying for God’s vengeance upon the blood-stained despots holding in their hands the life and death of her millions.

In Prelooker’s treatment, *Resurrection* became not merely a story of sin and redemption – equally applicable to England as to Russia – but “a mighty plea on behalf of a whole degraded and enslaved nation”.³³⁴ His ‘Rusurrection’ Number filled in the political context so lacking in Beerbohm’s production.

Thanks to Beerbohm Tree’s production, Prelooker got another chance to put a spin on *Resurrection* in April 1903, when he was invited to participate in a debate with the popular travel writer, John Foster Fraser, chaired by the play’s lead, Miss Lena Ashwell. As a boy, Fraser had been drawn to Siberia after reading the “gruesome romance” of George Kennan’s accounts in *Siberia and the Exile System*. He subsequently wrote about his own visit to the Irkutsk prison. Yet his conclusions about Russia’s penal system diverged wildly from those of Kennan and Prelooker. His Siberia was filled with happy convicts enjoying absurd amounts of liberty, tasty food, clean barracks, and jolly banter with their guards. The debate, titled “The Stage Siberia and the Real”, was held at the Hotel Cecil before the fashionable Playgoer’s Club, drawing “a very large and cultured audience”. According to

³³⁴ Prelooker, “‘Resurrection’, The Book and the Play”, 688.

the *Anglo-Russian*, at least, Prelooker, who attacked Fraser's picture of Siberia, was not dismissed as a Nihilist crank, but awarded with applause.³³⁵

On the whole, Prelooker's measured coverage of Russia's cultural scene checked any ill-effects of his occasionally flagrant use of revolutionary language. His examples of Russian modesty, his use of Savitch's historically-contextualised interpretations of Russian literature, and his references to the benevolent cultural institutions which, despite the horrors of tyranny, still had some pre-eminence in Russian society – all these positioned his magazine as an organ not altogether antithetical to the values of Britain's establishment and conservative elements. Framed in this way, Prelooker's version of Russian society seemed a familiar entity, far removed from Gissing's "flighty, frothy foreigners", or the hot-headed Nihilists who daily caused the Russian throne to tremble in trepidation. In substance and tone, the magazine's cultural coverage provided a corollary to its emphasis on the potential for Anglo-Russian trade, and its avoidance of socialist principles. Beneath its outward signs of moderation, however, a revolutionary message lurked, unchecked in its influence by the calls to arms and polemical diatribes which circumscribed the reach of the *Anglo-Russian's* more overtly Nihilist rival, *Free Russia*.

³³⁵ "The Stage Siberia and the Real, Lively Proceedings at the Hotel Cecil", *Anglo-Russian* 6, 11 (May 1903) 704-5. The author is not aware of any other accounts of this debate.

Peter Kropotkin

Anarchist Aesthetics

As a literary or aesthetic theorist, Kropotkin has but little reputation. He is remembered better as a Russian aristocrat who relinquished privilege and fortune to become Europe's leading anarchist theorist; the successor to Proudhon and Bakunin; and "one of the fiercest opponents of all governments and national states" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³³⁶ To a lesser extent he is remembered for his articles on geology, his book on evolution, *Mutual Aid*, and his indictments of Tsarism. Considering the range of his interests and subjects, it is easy to understand why his many references to the interplay between art and society in his books on anarchism and science have been overlooked. Yet his contribution to the artistic debates of his day were not insubstantial. The critic Donald D. Egbert even holds him alongside William Morris and Ruskin as one of the three leading radical aesthetic thinkers of the late Victorian period.³³⁷

Positioning Kropotkin's aesthetic theory among the various strains of aesthetic discourse at the *fin de siècle* is aided by comparison. Scholars like Pierre Aubery, Donald D. Egbert, and Robert and Eugenia Herbert identify Kropotkin as an influence on the French Symbolists.³³⁸ But it is probable that the Symbolists were more directly inspired by the anti-statist, anti-authority anarchism of his French disciple Jean Graves, than by Kropotkin's explicit comments on art.³³⁹ The Symbolists transmuted anarchism's revolt against social discipline into a rejection of "traditional prosody, rhetoric, and philosophy", not to mention the nineteenth-century standbys of naturalism and realism.³⁴⁰ Kropotkin, on the other hand, always saw realism and naturalism as important revolutionary tools, so long as they were

³³⁶ Martin A. Miller, *Kropotkin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 3; David Morland, *Demanding the Impossible?: Human Nature and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Social Anarchism* (London: Cassell, 1977) 125-172.

³³⁷ Donald D. Egbert, "English Art Critics and Modern Social Radicalism", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 26, 1 (Autumn 1967) 29.

³³⁸ Pierre Aubery, "The Anarchism of the Literati of the Symbolist Period", *French Review* 42, 1 (October 1968) 41; Egbert, "English Art Critics and Modern Social Radicalism", 30; Robert L. Herbert, Eugenia W. Herbert, "Artists and Anarchism: Unpublished letters of Pissarro, Signac and others. I", *Burlington Magazine* 102, 692 (November 1960) 474.

³³⁹ It was Graves who moved Kropotkin's weekly *Le Révolté* to Paris from Geneva, renaming it *La Révolte* in 1887; it was retitled *Les Temps Nouveaux* in 1895. Under Grave's direction *La Révolte* began publishing a regular literary supplement which featured avant-garde literature, and particularly Symbolist writing. Kropotkin was by this time living in London. Herbert and Herbert, "Artists and Anarchism", 474.

³⁴⁰ Aubery, "The Anarchism of the Literati of the Symbolist Period", 44.

guided by the ideal of revivifying society and not just by a lust for the gutter. He disparaged ‘photographic’ writing and painting if it had no purpose except to impress, just as he was repelled by Zola’s self-gratifying use of naturalism. But he was nonetheless a keen proponent of naturalist or realist exposé. In an early rabble-rousing tract, “To the Young” (1880) he writes, “you, poets, painters, sculptors, ...show the people what is ugly in present-day life, and put your finger on the causes of that ugliness; tell us what a rational life might be if it did not have to stumble at every pace because of the ineptitude and the ignominies of the present social order.”³⁴¹ Throughout his career, Kropotkin’s was a populist vision of art, concerned far more with its positive function of enlarging social awareness, than with any destructive or esoteric rejection of established forms.

Much more verifiable are correspondences between Kropotkin’s aesthetics and those of his friend, William Morris. And indeed there are so many affinities that one is compelled to wonder why – beyond Ruth Kinna’s valuable study – their counter-exchange of aesthetic ideas has been considered so little.³⁴² Both followed Marx, Ruskin and Carlyle in drawing connections between socio-economic conditions and the production of art. And both complained that capitalist industrialism had deprived workers of the joys of creative labour and turned beauty into a luxury available only to the rich (though Morris, in part, blamed machinery, while Kropotkin did not). In *The Conquest of Bread* (1892), Kropotkin echoes Morris’s despair with the age’s art: “From all sides we hear lamentations about the decadence of art”; today “art seems to fly from civilisation!” and “inspiration frequents artists’ studios less than ever”.³⁴³ The explanation he gives for this resembles Morris’s view that art was only likely to flourish in a society organised so as to facilitate fraternity and collaboration.³⁴⁴ In the centralised capitalist state, says Kropotkin, “The town is a chance agglomeration of people who do not know one another, who have no common interest, save

³⁴¹ Kropotkin, “To the Young”, in *Words of a Rebel*, translated by George Woodcock (Montreal, New York: Black Rose Books, 1992) 58; first published in *Le Révolté* (1880).

³⁴² Kinna suggests that they came by their ideas independently. However, their comments begin to resemble each others more and more after Kropotkin’s move to England. Ruth Kinna, “Morris, Anti-Statism and Anarchy”, in *William Morris: Centenary Essays*, edited by Peter Faulkner and Peter Preston (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999) 225.

³⁴³ Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* (London: The Knickerbocker Press, 1907) 138. The book was first published in 1892

³⁴⁴ Morris expresses this view in “Art under Plutocracy” [1883], *The Collected Works of William Morris* 23, with introductions by May Morris (London; New York; Bombay; Calcutta: Longmans Green and Company, 1915) 164–191.

that of enriching themselves at the expense of one another.”³⁴⁵ Art is produced not for use and appreciation by the public, but for the self-aggrandizement of the artist, whose highest hope is to have one of his canvasses hung in a gilded frame in “a museum, a sort of old curiosity shop.”³⁴⁶ The problem with art in Kropotkin’s day is that it is motivated by competition, not cooperation. It is no longer a vivifying ideal, but a commodity.

Kropotkin’s near obsession with the Medieval period, in particular, bears many similarities to Morris’s. In his book on altruism in evolution, *Mutual Aid, a Factor of Evolution* (1902), he devotes two celebratory chapters to the guilds, fraternities and cojurations of Medieval cities, showing how these self-organising bodies led to the creative realisation of the communal genius in architecture and art:

Mediaeval architecture attained its grandeur...[because] it sprang out of a conception of brotherhood and unity fostered by the city... A cathedral or communal house symbolized the grandeur of an organism of which every mason and stone-cutter was the builder, and a mediaeval building appears – not as a solitary effort to which thousands of slaves would have contributed the share assigned them by one man’s imagination; all the city contributed to it. The lofty bell-tower rose upon a structure, grand in itself, in which the life of the city was throbbing...

The anarchist emphasises that such “grand results” found their inspiration “not in the genius of individual heroes, not in the mighty organization of huge States or the political capacities of their rulers” but in guilds – ‘mutual aid’ institutions of common aspiration and shared labour.³⁴⁷ Morris’s voice can almost be heard in the background, praising the art of the Middle Ages, “wherein the harmonious co-operation of free intelligence was carried to the furthest point which has yet been attained”.³⁴⁸

Finally, Kropotkin shared Morris’s vision of a future post-revolutionary society in which all art would express the communality of labour, art and ideals. It may have been the profit-sharing, collaborative values inspiring Morris’s firm – as well as his own ventures in co-operative publishing in Geneva – which led Kropotkin to picture this utopia as a place where even the production of literature would be a collective endeavour, no longer

³⁴⁵ Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*, 140.

³⁴⁶ Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*, 139.

³⁴⁷ Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid, A Factor of Evolution*, revised edition (London, William Heinemann, 1907) 163–4.

³⁴⁸ Morris, “Art Under Plutocracy”, 177.

compromised by the crass dictates of the marketplace. Poets would be compositors and typesetters, and printers would know how to write: “all having become producers, all having received an education that enables them to cultivate science or art, and all having leisure to do so – men would combine to publish the works of their choice, by contributing each his share of manual work’.³⁴⁹ In this collective society, where art and industry would be linked “by a thousand intermediate degrees”, “the works of...artists who will have lived the life of the people, like the great artists of the past will not be destined for sale. They will be an integrant [sic] part of a living whole that would not be complete without them, any more than they would be complete without it.”³⁵⁰

The differences between Kropotkin and Morris, however, are as instructive as the similarities. Morris was a political activist, a writer, and an artist. Kropotkin meanwhile, was a political activist, a writer, and a scientist, as likely to be found writing articles on chemistry, espousing metaphysics or refuting Thomas Huxley’s Malthusian concept of the natural world, as he was to be found preaching anarcho-communism at workers’ meetings in East London. And while each thinker created a synthetic philosophy reflecting his own vision of the world, where Morris’s was everywhere affected by his acute aesthetic sensibilities, Kropotkin’s bore the mark of his scientific pursuits.

To Morris, a ‘genuine’, healthy art which expressed the society in which it existed would have to wait until after the revolution.³⁵¹ So demoralised was society that any art that addressed itself to contemporary life could not help but be hollow and ugly – and beauty was always to Morris the essential aim of good art.³⁵² This opinion comes across in many of Morris’s essays on art and socialism, but nowhere is it more evident than in his treatment of literature. In his own fiction, Morris eschewed the present, tending instead towards escapism and medievalism. His romance, *News From Nowhere* (1890) is an idealised fantasy, an attempt to build a future utopia from the substance of the past. Likewise, a list of his favourite works of literature (printed in the *Pall Mall Gazette*) was dominated by the distant past: Homer, Norse folk-tales, the Hebrew Bible, traditional poems, Greek (but not Latin) classics, and a great deal of Mediaeval poetry: literature which was “in no sense the work of

³⁴⁹ Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*, 131.

³⁵⁰ Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*, 142, 141.

³⁵¹ Morris writes, “so long as the system of competition in the production and exchange of the means of life goes on, the degradation of the arts will go on”. “Art under Plutocracy”, 172.

³⁵² William Morris, *The Aims of Art* (London: Office of “The Commonweal”, 1887) 11, 10.

individuals, but has grown up from the very hearts of the *people*".³⁵³ Literature which did engage with contemporary life, like social realism, appalled him with its sordid air. Henry James – despite his useful social criticism – was a writer whose bourgeois productions Morris deplored.³⁵⁴ Morris failed to see that despite its ugly subject matter, some social realism might engender beautiful feelings of compassion or suggest, through its analysis, hopeful alternatives to grim realities.

Kropotkin, on the other hand, believed that true art could and did exist even in eras of repression, as long as it expressed the fraternal ideal or what he referred to as the principle of 'mutual aid'.³⁵⁵ Like Morris, he hoped that a new art would appear after the revolution had obliterated competition: "a truly great Art ... notwithstanding its depth and its lofty flight, will penetrate into every peasant's hut and inspire everyone with higher conceptions of thought and life".³⁵⁶ But in the absence of this harmonious utopia, art could serve man in another way. It could work alongside science as a means of ever broadening the communal-anarchist ideal:

The question ...which Anarchism puts to itself may be stated thus: "What forms of social life assure to a given society, and then to mankind generally, the greatest amount of happiness, and hence also of vitality?" "What forms of social life allow this amount of happiness to grow and to develop, quantitatively as well as qualitatively,--that is, to become more complete and more varied?"The desire to promote evolution in this direction determines the scientific *as well as the social and artistic activity of the Anarchist*.³⁵⁷

Kropotkin makes the connection between art and meaningful social analysis more explicit in his literary criticism: "in the last analysis every economical and social question is a question of psychology of both the individual and the social aggregation. It cannot be solved by arithmetic alone. Therefore, in social science, as in human psychology, the poet often sees

³⁵³ "The Best Hundred Books. V. Mr William Morris", *Pall Mall Gazette* (2 February 1886) 2.

³⁵⁴ *Commonweal* (15 December 1888). For a broader look at Morris's views on literature, see Paul Thompson, *The Work of William Morris* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 166–71.

³⁵⁵ For more on the connections Kropotkin made between the instinct to revolution and the instinct of "mutual aid", see Carol Peaker, "Mutual Aid, a Factor of Kropotkin's Literary Criticism", *Evolving Networks: Biology, Literature and Culture in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Anne-Julia Zwierlein (London: Anthem Press, 2005) 81–94.

³⁵⁶ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 299.

³⁵⁷ My emphasis. Peter Kropotkin, *Modern Science and Anarchism*, translated by David A. Modell (Philadelphia: The Social Science Club of Philadelphia, 1903) 58–9.

his way better than the physiologist.”³⁵⁸ When applied in the right spirit, “True science and true art are not hostile to each other, but always work in harmony.” The principal difference between Morris and Kropotkin resided in their respective criteria for good and beautiful art. For Kropotkin, ‘true’ and beautiful art did not have to arise from an organic co-operative society. What was important was that it helped to promote such a society and in so doing expressed a beautiful ideal. The social realism from which Morris so recoiled fulfilled this criterion.

As counterparts to his scientific programme, Kropotkin's aesthetic theories were also angry answers to the prevailing scientific trends of his day. In February 1888, he read an article in the *Nineteenth Century* by Thomas Huxley entitled “The Struggle for Existence: a Programme”. Responding to the overpopulation and squalor of 1880s England, Huxley had put forward the case for a Malthusian concept of the natural world as a ceaseless competition among too many animals for too few resources. In this struggle only the fittest survive. “From the point of view of the moralist,” Huxley writes, “the animal is on about the same level as a gladiator’s show. The creatures are fairly well treated, and set to fight – whereby the strongest, the swiftest, and the cunningest live to fight another day.”³⁵⁹ To Kropotkin, Huxley’s understanding of evolutionary processes was “atrocious”, not least because, by arguing that in the “struggle for life” one must either fight or perish, it created a biological underpinning for the ideologies behind the capitalist state and imperialism.³⁶⁰ As he comments in his *Memoirs*, “There is no infamy in civilized society or in the relations of the whites towards the so-called lower races, or of the ‘strong’ towards the ‘weak,’ which would not have found its excuse in this formula.”³⁶¹ Clearly, if Huxley’s doctrine were true, his own anarchist conception of a society based on voluntary agreement was jeopardised. Over the next six years, Kropotkin developed a countervailing evolutionary narrative in a series of articles which appeared in the journal *Nineteenth Century*. These were expanded to form his 1902 book *Mutual Aid, a Factor of Evolution*.

Mutual Aid, as some of quotations used earlier testify, speaks a great deal about the production of art. To Kropotkin, not only does the insidious mis-application of science

³⁵⁸ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 244–5.

³⁵⁹ Thomas Huxley, “The Struggle for Existence: A Programme”, *Nineteenth Century* 23, 132 (February 1888) 163.

³⁶⁰ Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 4.

³⁶¹ Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co, 1899) 317.

justify the ideology of the capitalist state, it feeds a legitimising myth which pervades many of the nineteenth-century's cultural artifacts: history books, annals, poetry and fiction. This is the myth of individualism (or heroism) and the glorification of struggle. The deadly tomes infected with this myth – with their “predilection for the most dramatic aspects of history” – contain but a one-sided view of reality: “They hand down to posterity the most minute descriptions of every war, every battle and skirmish, every contest and act of violence... but they hardly bear any trace of the countless acts of mutual support and devotion which ...makes the very essence of our daily life – our social instincts and manners.”³⁶² The painters and poets whose minds have been colonised by this spirit direct their attention not to their fellow man, but towards “the sort of heroism which promotes the idea of the State”:

they admire the Roman hero, or the soldier in the battle, while they pass by the fisherman's heroism, hardly paying attention to it. The poet and the painter might, of course, be taken by the beauty of the human heart in itself; but both seldom know the life of the poorer classes, and while they can sing or paint the Roman or the military hero in conventional surroundings, they can neither sing nor paint impressively the hero who acts in those modest surroundings which they ignore. If they venture to do so, they produce a mere piece of rhetoric.³⁶³

‘Heroic’ art and literature do not strike one as being central features of the nineteenth-century canon and Kropotkin does not furnish any examples. He may have been referring to French Neo-classicism or state-sponsored poetry: Tennyson's *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* comes to mind. In any event, it is clear that to Kropotkin, art about wars and heroes feeds the same elitist myth, the same cult of individualism, as Huxley's interpretation of the ‘survival of the fittest’. It strengthens the notion of progress as a perpetual struggle, glorifies the conqueror, and reinforces the idea of the exceptional individual as the true and necessary agent in human history. What Kropotkin called for, then, was a literature about the common man, in the language of the common man, and, preferably, by the common man.

Kropotkin's aesthetic ideas may have fitted in with discourses in England and on the Continent. But his holistic understanding of literature, science and society was also informed by his Russian heritage: the theory of ‘social command’ in art as elaborated by the critics Belinsky, Dobrolyubov and Chernyshevsky; his experience as a youth in Russia when every

³⁶² Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 116–17.

novel was heralded as a political statement; and the period of the 1870s, when science dominated *Narodnik* thinking. It may also have drawn inspiration from Tolstoy's tract, *What then Shall we Do?* (1887) in which the great novelist made similar connections between art, ideology and the scientific theory of struggle. It was Kropotkin's unique combination of European and Russian priorities which distinguished his outlook from those of groups as disparate as the French Symbolists, the Arts and Crafts Movement, English romancers, Decadents and Aesthetes. His voice adds another strand to the debate. For the anarchist, the best art incorporated elevated scientific and social inquiry, a faith in nature, the anarcho-communist ideal, and populist forms. Moreover, he was to argue, this art was most easily found in Russia.

Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature (1905)

In many ways, Kropotkin's differences from Morris over the value of socialist exposure in art underscore the differences between English and Russian aesthetics in the late nineteenth century. English (and indeed, Continental) letters were in a state of conflict and upheaval. In one corner of the arena, Mrs. Grundy tried to silence both the Decadents and Naturalists for their indecency. In another, defenders of 'truth' in literature pelted Mrs. Grundy with words like "Philistine!" and "hypocrite", while moaning volubly about the English novel's deplorable decline. The aesthetes stood posturing, pausing only to evince distaste for both the vulgar French realists and the didactic Victorians. Amongst this upheaval sat Andrew Lang, exalting romance – of the swashbuckling, adventurous kind – only because (as he himself gaily admitted) stark realism, the "analysis of character and motive", upset his constitution.³⁶⁴ The debates of the day reflected a lively if agonised pluralism, in which the tastes and sensibilities of ostensibly opposing camps often over-lapped. English aesthetes defended the Naturalists' freedom to write about whatever they liked, for example, but abused them if their work seemed artless, didactic, or treated 'ugly' subjects. The Decadents rejected nature for artifice, but revelled in the latter's perverse or sensual possibilities, while Morris rejected naturalism because romance seemed a less tired, more spontaneous genre, a lively sign of social health and energy. The ideological divides fitted into many loose categories, none exclusive: "Art for Art's sake" versus utilitarian art; romance versus

³⁶³ Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 278.

³⁶⁴ Andrew Lang, "Realism and Romance", *Contemporary Review* 52 (November 1887) 684.

realism; “candour” versus propriety; prurience versus prudery; the laws of nature versus the laws of society; primitivism versus civilisation.

In spite of the appalling disorder of Russia’s internal affairs, the institution of Russian literature could declare no such state of turmoil. Debates about ‘pure’ art and social utility in art had been hammered out decades before by critics like Dobrolyubov and Belinsky. And as Kropotkin noted, those critics in Russia who “preached that the criterium [sic] of art is ‘The Beautiful’ and clung to the theories of the German aesthetical writers...have had no hold upon Russian thought”.³⁶⁵ The debates which took place in Russian journals tended to focus on writers’ political affiliations, not their techniques. The Russian Futurist revolt against nineteenth-century forms would be several years in the making. As yet, Russians had found little reason to question the fundamentals of their nineteenth-century legacy.³⁶⁶ To them, it seemed obvious that neither nature and ethics, nor realism and romance, need be at odds with one another. They believed a painter or writer could take as his raw stuff the ugliest reality and turn it into a beautiful picture (without relinquishing any of its truth) as long as he was infused with the object of ennobling society, or making “latent consciousness manifest”.³⁶⁷ Some western admirers cast this special feature of Russian literature as a sort of “sympathy” divested of sentimentality.

Of all Russian émigrés, it was Kropotkin who was the most assertive both in claiming this innovation in the literary arts as Russia’s own, and in putting it forward as the best model, to date, for revolutionary or progressive art. In 1901, he was invited by the Lowell Institute in Boston to deliver a series of lectures on Russian literature.³⁶⁸ In 1905, these lectures were expanded and published as *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature*. The title of the volume underscored what Kropotkin understood to be Russian literature’s special contribution to the art of fiction: what he called, “Idealist Realism”: “*realism* in the service of an *ideal*”.³⁶⁹ In the book’s Preface he describes why the position of Russian fiction in world literature is unique:

³⁶⁵ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 295.

³⁶⁶ Evelyn Bristol, “Turn of a Century: 1895–1925”, in Moser, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, 394.

³⁶⁷ Kinna, “Morris, Anti-Statism and Anarchy”, 227.

³⁶⁸ For a description of Kropotkin’s lecture tour in America, see Paul Avrich, “Kropotkin in America”, *International Review of Social History* 25 (1980) 1–34.

[Russian literature] has a freshness and youthfulness which is not found to the same extent in older literatures. It has, moreover, a sincerity and simplicity of expression which render it all the more attractive to the mind that has grown sick of literary artificiality. And it has this distinctive feature, that it 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.

In no other country does literature occupy so influential a position as it does in Russia. Nowhere else does it exercise so profound and so direct an influence upon the intellectual development of the younger generation. ...

The reason why literature exercises such an influence in Russia is self-evident. There is no open political life, and with the exception of a few years at the time of the abolition of serfdom, the Russian people have never been called upon to take an active part in the framing of their country's institutions.

The consequence has been that the best minds of country have chosen the poem, the novel, the satire, or literary criticism as the medium for expressing their aspirations, their conceptions of national life, or their ideals.³⁷⁰

It is easy to see how Kropotkin's presentation of Russian literature answered England's *fin de siècle* pessimism about the state of art. Issuing from a younger and more vital race, yet specially formed under the affliction of censorship, Russian literature is both the most genuine and the most nationally relevant literature of Europe.

In *Ideals and Realities*, it is possible to detect two main strands. The first, occupying chapter one, is historical, and reflects prevailing ideas about art and historicity – especially those held by Morris and Ruskin. In sketching out the pre-nineteenth-century period of Russian literature, Kropotkin shows how the early native art of Russia was expressive of the communal spirit, but was stultified by oppressive regimes. The folk-lore of Russia, its *byliny* or epic sagas (“which correspond to the Icelandic *sagas*”), grew out of a bardic tradition.³⁷¹ The actions of their heroes “are not dictated by personal aims, but are imbued with a communal spirit, which is characteristic of Russian popular life.”³⁷² In the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, this lovely tradition was disrupted by the Russian Church, which inflicted penalties upon bards, and “pitilessly proscribed” the singing of epic songs.³⁷³ A

³⁶⁹ Kropotkin, “Leo Tolstoy: His Art, His Personality”, published in D. Novak, “An Unpublished Essay on Leo Tolstoy by Peter Kropotkin”, *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 3 (1958) 12.

³⁷⁰ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, v–vi.

³⁷¹ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 8

³⁷² Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 10.

³⁷³ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 13.

similar fate awaited the Annals of the tenth to twelfth centuries, a poetical and imaginative collection born of small independent republics (“similar to the mediaeval city-republics of Western Europe”) and “imbued with a democratic spirit”.³⁷⁴ After the Mongol invasion, a military State grew up around Moscow, supported by the Church. Russia’s independent republics were absorbed; and “State ideals were substituted for those of local autonomy and federation”.³⁷⁵ Learning meanwhile concentrated in monasteries, where it became dogmatic. Thus, the Annals “lost their animated character and became dry enumerations of the successes of the rising State”.³⁷⁶ For the next five centuries, Russian literature contained very little of interest. Kropotkin’s reading of the early history of Russian literature substantiated his own and Morris’s claims that art could only exist in free, communal societies.

The second strand, which occupies the bulk of the volume, concerns itself with nineteenth-century literature, and the methods by which Russian writers were able to expand the ideals of brotherhood, sympathy and cooperation *despite* oppression. At first glance, this would seem to refute Kropotkin’s conception of art and history as outlined in the first chapter of *Ideals and Realities*. What it really does, however, is emphasise his claim that nineteenth-century Russian realism constitutes a new art, revolutionary in its potential, and capable of spreading the ideals of brotherhood and community even in the most hostile conditions.

According to Kropotkin, Russian realism expresses, and in so doing extends, the principle of mutual aid by engaging in social inquiry: the investigation of all realms of Russian social life and the pressing political questions of the day. The Russian realist addresses subjects like “The evils of serfdom...the struggle between the tiller of the soil and growing commercialism; the effects of factories upon village life, the great cooperative fisheries,...slum life and tramp life”.³⁷⁷ In the course of his investigations, he attempts to penetrate the fabric of society, to expose the underlying relations between classes, and to reveal the impact of social conditions upon man, and of man upon his social environment.

³⁷⁴ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 15, 14.

³⁷⁵ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 16.

³⁷⁶ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 17.

³⁷⁷ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 222.

“A good work of art”, Kropotkin affirms, “gives material for discussing nearly the whole of mutual relations in a society of a given type”.³⁷⁸

Such investigation promotes the ideals of equality and community on all sorts of levels. For one, it uplifts writers by bringing them into contact with people who are not part of their inherited social milieu – like the novelist Uspensky, who grew up in a large industrial town in the family of a small functionary, but realised, after making an ethnographical study of the villagers of Northern Russia, the “moral forces of land cultivation and communal life, and of what free labour on a free soil might be.”³⁷⁹ The incorporation of fisherman, peasant, factory worker, or slum dweller into mainstream literature also constructs a bond of sympathy between the privileged reader and the downtrodden. It provides a form of sociability if only in the abstract. In short, it lays the psychological foundations for future social cohesion. In practical terms it can accomplish a great deal. As Kropotkin writes, “the novels of Grigorovitch exercised a profound influence on a whole generation. They made us love the peasants and feel how heavy was the indebtedness towards them which weighed upon us – the educated part of society. They powerfully contributed towards creating a general feeling in favour of the serfs, without which the abolition of serfdom would have certainly been delayed for many years to come”.³⁸⁰

Russian literature’s special manner of social inquiry also challenges the legitimising State ideology of class inequality. By investigating the common man, authors re-adjust the public’s understanding of the forces behind history, shifting the focus away from the hero or military general as history’s principal mover and empowering “the shapeless crowd”. In a chapter on folk-novelists, Kropotkin extols the merits of the writer Ryeshetnikov, whose fiction contains no heroes whatsoever: no “demoniacal characters”, no “Richard III, in a fustian jacket”; no Cordelia, not “even a Dickens’ ‘Nell’”. Ryeshetnikov’s men and women are exactly like thousands of other poor men and women. But by virtue of their astonishing feats of endurance in the course of their daily struggle for the next crust of bread, Ryeshetnikov maintains that they are *all* Titans in their own right.³⁸¹ In his discussion of *War and Peace*, Kropotkin praises Tolstoy for portraying Napoleon as an “ordinary” man,

³⁷⁸ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 244–5.

³⁷⁹ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 245.

³⁸⁰ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 226.

³⁸¹ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 237–9.

and showing that “the success of an army depends infinitely more upon its number of [brave artillery officers] than upon the genius of its higher commanders.”³⁸² Kropotkin, above all, exalts Gorky for his sketches, not of heroes, but of “the most ordinary tramps or slum-dwellers”; men and women who are truly “submerged” and who yet exhibit the most extraordinary individuality, strength and spirit.³⁸³ The sort of lowly heroes Kropotkin finds in Russian literature are no mere losers in the evolutionary arena, but future citizens of an anarchist utopia. Neither are they degenerate proletarians, and or regressive ‘primitive’ races living on the outskirts of Christian civilisation in need of governmental policing. Kropotkin’s workers, soldiers, peasantry, and mountain Cossacks are a vitalizing and moral force, dreaming of the day when “we, once ‘the poor,’ shall vanish, after having enriched the Croesuses with the richness of the spirit and the power of life.”³⁸⁴

In pleading a special role for Russian literature, Kropotkin argues that its method of social examination is not at all like the ‘anatomical’ works of French Naturalists such as Zola. Russian authors dispel illusions, whereas the French Naturalists merely produce a skewed vision of reality, limiting their “observations to the lowest aspects of life only”. “Degeneracy”, writes Kropotkin, “is not the sole nor dominant feature of modern society, if we look at it as a whole. Consequently, the artist who limits his observations to the lowest and most degenerate aspects only, and not for a special purpose, does not make us understand that he explores only one small corner of life.”³⁸⁵ Nor do Russian writers confine their realism to exacting pictorial reproductions of the world around them. In his early tract *To the Young* (1880), Kropotkin derides those artists (again presumably French) who “strive to represent a drop of dew on a leaf like a photograph but in colour, or to imitate the muscles of a cow’s rump, or to represent meticulously...the suffocating mud of a sewer or the boudoir of a lady of love”, thinking all the while that they have realised a new art form.³⁸⁶ Russian writers, in contrast, employ the same inductive-deductive method which Kropotkin sees in *Modern Science and Anarchism* (1901) as engendering a “universal awakening of thought”.³⁸⁷ They look *below* the surface of reality to reveal ontological truths about

³⁸² Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 125.

³⁸³ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 250.

³⁸⁴ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 253.

³⁸⁵ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 86.

³⁸⁶ Kropotkin, “To the Young”, in *Words of a Rebel*, 53–4.

³⁸⁷ Kropotkin, *Modern Science and Anarchism*, 12.

society's inner structure and dynamic. Zola is to Tolstoy what a photo album is to *The Origin of the Species*.

What allows Russian authors to promote higher ideals, while remaining true to scientific reasoning, is their concern for the well-being of humanity. We remember that in *Modern Science and Anarchism*, Kropotkin stated that the anarchist-scientist must always have in mind the question: "What social forms best guarantee in such and such societies, and in humanity at large, the greatest amount of happiness, and therefore the greatest sum of vitality?"³⁸⁸ In *Ideals and Realities* he finds this concern everywhere: "for us," he writes, "realism must have a more elevated back-cloth"; the Russian poet must always have in mind, "[a] higher aspiration, [and] noble ideas which can help to make us better." Kropotkin points to Gogol as an early practitioner of this form of idealistic realism: "Art, in Gogol's conception, is a torch-bearer which indicates a higher ideal". "His art was pure realism, but it was imbued with the desire of making for mankind something good and great".³⁸⁹

If the practice of this realism with higher aims promotes social reform in real life, it also has had a snow-ball effect within the literary canon. Much of Kropotkin's book traces the ever-increasing presence of sympathy and concern for fellow man in Russian literature and, correspondingly, the progressive evolution of Russian novelistic and dramatic forms. Pushkin, by adopting the language of the people, frees Russian literature from its Classical tethers and gives it a popular form; Gogol introduces the social element into the canon; early folk-novelists bring educated society into direct intercourse with the toiling masses; the later folk-novelists introduce a higher conception concerning the duties of art in the representation of the poor; Tolstoy and Gorky reveal the artificialities of so-called civilised life. At each stage of Russian realism's development, more and more holes are pierced in the ideological fabric of the State.

Towards the end of *Ideals and Realities* Kropotkin states that despite its co-operative impulse, the Russian canon is only a half-trodden pathway to a much higher ideal for art. The literature of Russia, he suggests, is not yet equivalent to the Bible or the mediaeval spires of Nuremberg so admired in *Mutual Aid*. Despite its high-minded social aims, it cannot shake off its bourgeois roots. It was written largely by the rich for the rich. "Take the mass of excellent works that have been mentioned in this book," he writes, "How very few

³⁸⁸ Kropotkin, *Modern Science and Anarchism*, 58.

³⁸⁹ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 85.

of them will ever become accessible to a large public!” Kropotkin calls for a new art: an art grounded in common assent and positive faith, an art which will be “as deep in conception” as the highest philosophical work of art, “but which everyone, including the humblest minor or peasant, will be able to understand and enjoy”.³⁹⁰ A last minute concession to William Morris? Not especially; in this case Kropotkin is responding to Tolstoy’s calls for universal art forms in *What is Art?* (1898) Yet Kropotkin cannot, as yet, picture this art – it exists somewhere between Beethoven and a folk song; it belongs to some remote future. In the meantime, the example of Russian literature remains the next best thing, and an expression of the self-same ideal:

for the last eighty years,... Russian art-critics have worked to establish the idea that art has a *raison d’être* only when it is ‘in the service of society’ and contributes towards raising society to higher humanitarian conceptions....What struck us in [*What is Art?*] was not its leading idea, which was quite familiar to us, but the fact that the great artist also made it his own.³⁹¹

Unsurprisingly, *Ideals and Realities* fails as disinterested literary criticism. Kropotkin’s insistence, that only that art which only puts itself in the service of social reform can be *good* art, means that his judgements ignore other criteria. He extols Pushkin’s genius but finds him lacking social impulses: “And what we look for in poetry is always the higher inspiration, the novel ideas which can help to make us better”.³⁹² On the other hand, the radical populist poet Nekrasov – about whom Turgenev once wrote “there is no poetry in his verse” – he elevates to Pushkin’s level because of the superior tenor of his ideas.³⁹³ The same single-mindedness characterises his judgement of Tolstoy, whose conscience-raising novel *Resurrection* he places on par with the author’s panoramic masterpiece *War and Peace*.

Its absolute artistic qualities are so high that if Tolstoy had written nothing else but *Resurrection* he would have been recognised as one of the great writers. All those parts of the novel which deal with Society ... are of the

³⁹⁰ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 299.

³⁹¹ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 295–6.

³⁹² Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 30.

³⁹³ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 174.

same high standard as the best pages of the first volume of *War and Peace*.
...³⁹⁴

Dostoevsky is another victim of the anarchist's focus on political intention rather than on achievement. Kropotkin disparages the reactionary and supporter of the Orthodox Church as a formless and sensational writer, deeming his popularity to be the consequence of "hysterical exaggeration".³⁹⁵ The only truly "artistic" work Dostoevsky produced was [Notes from] *The House of the Dead* (1861), his exposé of the horrors of prison life.³⁹⁶ Kropotkin's errors do not only lie in his ranking of writers and their works. In his eagerness to cast undeniably gifted artists as active proponents of Russian reform, he not only misuses them, but misses the opportunity to expound their stylistic innovations, lyrical use of language or ways of seeing the world outside the socio-political realm. This is apparent in his discussion of Chekhov, an author who, as Evelyn Bristol has pointed out, "undermined any belief in inevitable progress."³⁹⁷ Notwithstanding Chekhov's relentless depictions of "the rottenness of a whole civilisation", the bankruptcy of the intelligentsia, and the inevitability of human meanness, Kropotkin searches out and then amplifies the faintest sign of optimism in his work: "the last words of [*The Cherry Orchard*]" he wilfully insists, "sound a note full of hope in a better future".³⁹⁸

Ideals and Realities, with its attendant ideas, was hailed in England as the irrefutable work of an expert: "Prince Kropotkin is well known in this country as an author, a scholar, a patriot whose knowledge of Russia is unequalled"; "his knowledge of the ethnology of the Russian Empire is...complete".³⁹⁹ It was welcomed by the *Athenaeum* as the first "'genuine platform' of Russian literature" in English, and a necessary antidote to Walizewski's earlier unsympathetic account of the canon.⁴⁰⁰ Reviewers cast back to themes introduced by Stepniak over a decade earlier. It was accepted, for example, that only a Russian like Kropotkin could have "decoded" the "hints and cabalistic signs" which characterise Russian fictional writing. The *Academy* harped on the tyrannous conditions leading Russian

³⁹⁴ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 146–7.

³⁹⁵ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 169.

³⁹⁶ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 165.

³⁹⁷ Evelyn Bristol, "Turn of a Century: 1895–1925", in Moser, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, 390.

³⁹⁸ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities* 316.

³⁹⁹ "Recent Literature", *London Quarterly Review* 2, no. 208 (October 1905) 391; *Athenaeum* no. 4055 (15 July 1905) 71.

⁴⁰⁰ Review of *Ideals and Realities* by Peter Kropotkin, *Athenaeum* no. 4055 (15 July 1905) 70–1.

literature to become a means of covert political expression.⁴⁰¹ The *London Quarterly Review* focussed on the tradition's noble idealism, and the rich "note of hope" at its heart.⁴⁰² *Ideals and Realities* helped entrench the notion of Russian literature as both a deeply political canon, and a counter-balance to Europe's own sickened tradition. It was a study of how single works of fiction could wed the seemingly opposing impulses of pure idealism and stark realism.

⁴⁰¹ Review of *Ideals and Realities* by Peter Kropotkin, *Academy* 68 (24 June 1905) 656.

⁴⁰² "Recent Literature", *London Quarterly Review* 2, no. 208 (October 1905) 391–2.

Vladimir Chertkov

“[Chertkov’s wife] would not have the telephone at Tuckton House”, remembers Arnold Fifield, one-time manager of Chertkov’s Free Age Press, “because in another house which possessed one [Chertkov] had one morning rung up seven of his best friends and quarrelled with them all in succession, just because he had a toothache”. Fifield adds, “being Russian, they all forgave him; and probably enjoyed it”.⁴⁰³ Anna Chertkova apparently laughed when she related this story, but for many sober-minded Britons her husband’s headstrong ‘Russian’ temperament was an unrelenting source of misery and frustration. Only two and a half years after Fifield began building the FAP into an international publishing concern, Chertkov’s imperious and argumentative personality led the talented manager to flee Christchurch for a position at Harmsworth Press.⁴⁰⁴ The FAP’s best translators, Aylmer and Louise Maude, likewise fell out with Chertkov, and subsequently spent three frustrating decades battling with him over access to Tolstoy’s works. The effects of Chertkov’s personality on both Tolstoy’s reputation and his printed works in England, are the concern of the present chapter. .

As we’ve seen in Part I, Vladimir Chertkov can be celebrated for spreading Tolstoy’s message throughout the Western world. His confidence and unconventional publishing practises were the generators transforming Tolstoy into the world’s most famous living prophet, its most omnipotent voice. Chertkov’s “volcanic and titanic nature” alienated people, but he equally had a genius for bending them to his will.⁴⁰⁵ “As long as he desired their help and would exert himself to retain their allegiance, they were his willing slaves”, wrote Fifield’s wife in her ‘fictional’ rendition of Chertkov’s colony, *Belinda the Backward* (1905).⁴⁰⁶ The colony that supported Chertkov’s Free Age Press in Tuckton near Christchurch, Hampshire, was a hive of activity: Russian revolutionaries of every hue (not to mention the odd posing spy) toiled as compositors and typesetters; idealistic English men and women offered their services as editors, translators and proof-readers for free. Tolstoy’s ‘propaganda’ was printed on Chertkov’s cyrillic press and bundled off to Russia for covert distribution. Meanwhile, the English-language branch, the FAP, funded the Russian venture

⁴⁰³ Arnold, C. Fifield, *The Free Age Press (English Branch), A Brief Statement of its Work*, 22, unpublished manuscript, Leeds Russian Archive, Leeds University, MS. 1381/1238a.

⁴⁰⁴ Fifield, *The Free Age Press*, 20.

⁴⁰⁵ Fifield, *The Free Age Press*, 21.

with proceeds from the cheap pamphlets, books, and leaflets it sold in tens of thousands at British railway station bookstalls, in bookshops and by mail-order.⁴⁰⁷ So successful was Chertkov's operation, that in early 1902 the FAP was "able to announce that [since July 1900] we had reached a circulation of two hundred thousand pamphlets and booklets and a quarter of a million leaflets", not to mention the reprints in "innumerable newspapers and magazines".⁴⁰⁸ By this time as well, "four hundred newspapers throughout the English-speaking world ... had given friendly reviews and notices without a penny piece spent on their advertising columns".⁴⁰⁹ Chertkov's astonishing industry had confirmed Tolstoyanism as England's fastest-growing spiritual movement.

To Alymer Maude, however, Chertkov's unfortunate disposition damaged the chances of Tolstoyanism taking root. Maude's judgement, expressed in his *Life of Tolstoy*, was that "[Chertkov's] lack of consideration for others ... dried up the fountains Tolstoy's magic caused to gush forth".⁴¹⁰ Born in 1858, Maude moved to Russia in 1874 in order to study, and then teach, at the Moscow Lyceum. Remaining in Russia, he later entered the carpet business, working his way up from salesman to director of the Anglo-Russian Carpet Company. In 1884 he married Louise Shanks, the Russian-born daughter of a Moscow-based English businessman.⁴¹¹ His first of many meetings with Tolstoy was in 1888, but it was only several years later that he became keenly interested in his teachings. In 1897, he retired from business and returned to England to live more in accordance with Tolstoy's precepts; over the next three decades he and his wife established themselves as Britain's foremost translators of Tolstoy. Maude also became a leading commentator on his life and work. As member of the Fabian national executive (1907–1912), and a "lucid, confident, instructive, persuasive" speaker,⁴¹² Maude's views on Tolstoy's form of anarchist Christianity were respected in influential circles. During a visit to Russia in 1902, he was authorised by Tolstoy to write his biography. Nearly a century later, the biographer A.N.

⁴⁰⁶ Salome Hocking, *Belinda the Backward, A Romance of Modern Idealism* (London: Arthur C. Fifield, 1905) 58.

⁴⁰⁷ The English-language pamphlets were not printed in-house, and this reduced expenses considerably. Fifield, *The Free Age Press*, 2.

⁴⁰⁸ Fifield, *The Free Age Press*, 15, 6.

⁴⁰⁹ Fifield, *The Free Age Press*, 3.

⁴¹⁰ Alymer Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years* (London: Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1930) 267.

⁴¹¹ William Baker, "Maude, Alymer (1858–1938), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/article/34944>.

⁴¹² Mr. W. Loftus Hare, "Mr. Alymer Maude", *The Times* (27 August 1938), 12.

Wilson wrote, “Not only does every biographer of Tolstoy stand on the Maudes’ shoulders, but it was they who gave the bulk of Tolstoy’s work to the English-speaking world.”⁴¹³

Maude’s disagreements with Chertkov began soon after he and his wife moved to live near the Purleigh colony in March 1897, on Tolstoy’s advice. At the time, Chertkov was occupied with the collection of money for the migration of the Dukhobors to Canada. Like everyone else on the colony, Maude became involved in this project. In 1898, he spent three months in Canada, mediating with the Canadian government and rail companies on the Dukhobors’ behalf. Despite his central role in the resettlement of the sect, Maude disagreed with Chertkov’s sentimentalised portrayal of the Dukhobors in *Christian Martyrdom in Russia*. The impression formed by Maude was that they were a superstitious people – “self-centred, self-righteous, and intolerant” – convinced of the divine power of their exiled leader, Peter Verigin.⁴¹⁴ They had no notion how to organise themselves, looked upon the Canadian government with suspicion, and resisted any form of regulation. What bothered Maude most, however, was the fact that many of the problems the sect created for themselves arose from what he regarded as Chertkov’s mischief-making. Early in the migration, Chertkov had published and distributed amongst the Dukhobors letters by Verigin (without his consent) containing radical ideas. These the sect had received “as a divine revelation”. They subsequently “set their cattle free”, and started a pilgrimage westward, following what they believed were Verigin’s instructions. As Maude reported, their behaviour was provocative: “On entering any Canadian town or village they discarded their clothes, and these ‘Nudity Parades’ did much to antagonize the Canadians”.⁴¹⁵ Chertkov also supplied them with a *Handbook*, advising them against co-operating with Canadian authorities, even to the extent of refusing to register marriages, births and deaths. His reasoning: “All governments are based on violence”.⁴¹⁶ As the Canadian government had given tremendous aid to the Dukhobors, such instructions were ill-advised, and, to Maude’s mind, only promoted “distrust and strife”.⁴¹⁷ In 1901, Maude criticised the “advisors of the Doukhobórs” in his volume *Tolstoy and His Problems*.⁴¹⁸ When Chertkov

⁴¹³ A.N. Wilson, *Tolstoy* (London: Penguin, 2001) 540.

⁴¹⁴ Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years*, 383.

⁴¹⁵ Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years*, 384.

⁴¹⁶ Quoted by Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years*, 386.

⁴¹⁷ Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years*, 386–7

⁴¹⁸ Maude, *Tolstoy and His Problems* (London: Grant Richards, 1901) 324.

demanded that four paragraphs be excised from the book, Maude flatly refused. He was then “excommunicated” by Tolstoy’s “lieutenant”. They would have little further contact.⁴¹⁹

Maude had other bones to pick with Chertkov – “Chertkov’s peculiarities”, he wrote in *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years*, “complicated and embittered” disagreements at the Purleigh colony. He was too much a “zealous [partisan] of the movement...reluctant to admit that there was a flaw somewhere in [Tolstoy’s] teaching”. He encouraged others to follow Tolstoy’s precepts to the extreme, while “avoiding involving [himself] in such undertakings”.⁴²⁰ Maude believed the colony failed because of “the confusion which resulted from trying to combine a gospel of poverty, self-abnegation, and brotherhood, with an autocratic administration of large affairs and the irresponsible power of one man.”⁴²¹ Chertkov’s mistakes often involved collecting money and then disposing of it arbitrarily, usually citing Tolstoy’s principles as an excuse for leaving someone gravely out of pocket. Giving half of the colony’s income to the Dukhobors, for example, he brought about the colony’s demise and the destitution of some of its members. If anything, Chertkov’s “great service” to the world, wrote Maude, “was the thoroughness of the practical demonstration he gave of the unworkability of Tolstoyan methods”.⁴²²

No less than Chertkov’s mishandling of the Dukhobors and his fanatical leadership of the colony, was his work as Tolstoy’s amanuensis which antagonised Maude. Indeed, his relentless battles with Chertkov and the Free Age Press over publishing Tolstoy fuel some of Maude’s most burning criticisms against Tolstoy’s Christian anarchism.

As mentioned in Part I, Tolstoy’s opposition to the concept of money had led him to repudiate all profit-making. Thus, in September 1891, he announced in *The Russian Gazette* that he had relinquished copyright – and therefore royalties – on everything he had written since 1881. Any one who desired was free to publish anything he wrote. It was his hope that such disinterestedness on his part would promote similar selflessness amongst publishers and help expedite the dissemination of his Christian anarchist message. In England and elsewhere, however, this breach of ordinary conventions created havoc and ill-feeling. No matter how well-meaning a publisher was, there was still the problem of meeting costs. If a translation was issued without copyright, any other publisher could, in effect, legally pirate

⁴¹⁹ Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years*, 388.

⁴²⁰ Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years*, 379.

⁴²¹ Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years*, 381.

⁴²² Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years*, 391-2.

it, thus saving themselves the cost of making corrections or paying translators and editors. The only means by which publishers could hope to profit or break even by publishing Tolstoy was through having first publication, or by claiming that their translation was “authorised” by the author and therefore superior to other versions.

The situation was confused by Tolstoy who granted special authority to virtually anyone who asked. In February 1896, he wrote to Kenworthy, “Sympathising with all my heart with the aims of your Brotherhood Publishing Co., I intend to put at your disposition the first translation of all my writings as yet unpublished, as well as forthcoming.”⁴²³ When Chertkov moved to the England the following year, Tolstoy spontaneously transferred such privileges to him, forgetting his earlier promise to Kenworthy. Alymer and Louise Maude, Constance Garnett, and the American, Nathan Haskell Dole (whose translations were published by Walter Scott) also received letters authorising their translations. In both personal and financial terms, the costs of Tolstoy’s precepts were dear. Heinemann’s loss on Constance Garnett’s “unfortunate Tolstoy translations”— thanks to the simultaneous appearance of other versions – meant that he grossly underpaid her for her subsequent translations of Dostoevsky.⁴²⁴ For his part, Kenworthy went mad largely due to Tolstoy’s intransigence over the issue of publishing rights.⁴²⁵ The Maudes, likewise imagining Tolstoy’s authorisation afforded them special privileges, endured years of frustration defending what they believed to be their exclusive patch. In one instance, Alymer Maude informed his literary agent, “of the translation of *Resurrection* Tolstoy wrote: ‘This English version is published by my authority.’ ...if Dents are going to pirate, I shall not scruple to do what I can to stop them.”⁴²⁶

Chertkov, by means of charisma and manipulation, trumped the small gains made by other publishers and translators in the competitive arena of Tolstoyan publishing. On 25 February, 1898, Tolstoy wrote a letter to foreign publishers and translators introducing Chertkov as his sole representative and intermediary:

⁴²³ Tolstoy to John Kenworthy (4 February 1896), *Tolstoy’s Letters. II. 1880–1910*, selected, edited and translated by R.F. Christian (London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1978) 534.

⁴²⁴ William Heinemann to Constance Garnett (10 September 1913) Garnett Family Archive, Hilton Hall.

⁴²⁵ R.F. Christian, *Tolstoy’s Letters. II. 1880–1910*, 534.

⁴²⁶ Maude to G.H. Perris (12 November 1904) Letters of Alymer Maude, Leeds University Library, Special Collections MS 553..

Now that my friend Vladimir Tchertkoff is living in England, it is into his hands that I desire to transmit all arrangements in connection with the first publication of my writings in foreign countries and therefore to him that I would refer all translators and publishers interested in the matter.⁴²⁷

As Chertkov well knew, Tolstoy felt indebted to him for the work he had done disseminating his ideas in Russia: “[A]fter all the labour expended by him I can’t disappoint his expectations ...” Tolstoy once explained apologetically to Maude, “My help in his work is limited to the fact that all my new writings (if there are any more) I distribute first of all through him...”.⁴²⁸ Capitalising on this gratitude, Chertkov persuaded Tolstoy to put his signature to a carefully drafted letter, which he attached to many of the FAP’s editions of Tolstoy’s tracts. The letter confirmed that the FAP enjoyed first privilege to all of Tolstoy’s works:

I...warmly sympathize with the announcement on your translations that no rights are reserved. Being well aware of all the extra sacrifices and practical difficulties that this involves for a publishing concern at the present day, I particularly desire to express my heartfelt gratitude...

Should I write anything more which I think worthy of publication, I will with greatest pleasure forward it to you without delay.⁴²⁹

Chertkov also persuaded Tolstoy to interject on his behalf whenever other publishers or translators threatened his own monopoly over first publication. Further evidence of his unwholesome influence over the master were the various wills he drafted for Tolstoy, a man who believed that private property was the origin of violence. After his death, these effectively siphoned control over Tolstoy’s manuscripts away from his wife.⁴³⁰ Despite upholding Tolstoy’s principled abandonment of copyright, Chertkov thus managed to keep Tolstoy’s intellectual property almost entirely under his own rigid control.

Had Chertkov been a reasonable man, his role as Tolstoy’s agent might not have been a problem. Indeed, in Russia, it was Chertkov’s industry which made possible the 100

⁴²⁷ This was written in English. Quoted in M.J. de K. Holman, “Half a Life’s Work, Aylmer Maude Brings Tolstoy to Britain”, *Scottish Slavonic Review* 4 (Spring 1985) 42.

⁴²⁸ Tolstoy to Aylmer Maude (19 February 1901), *Tolstoy’s Letters. II. 1880–1910*, 590.

⁴²⁹ The letter was dated 24 December 1900.

⁴³⁰ See, for example, Tolstoy’s second will in his letter to Chertkov (13 May 1904) in which Tolstoy, in response to handwritten prompts by Chertkov, writes, “I wish that V.G. Chertkov alone should handle the publication and translation of my works abroad even after my death”. *Tolstoy’s Letters. II. 1880–1910*, 642. See note on this page for a brief history of the wills.

volume edition of Tolstoy's works though this was built partly on the back of Sonya Tolstoy's earlier edition. In England, however, Tolstoy's works met a less glorious fate. In his haste to trump competitors, Chertkov frequently rushed out second rate translations, even at times resorting to versions taken from the French. Those that were translated by Chertkov or other émigrés from the original, were corrected by Englishmen and women with no knowledge of Russian. These inferior versions, remembers Maude, "hindered the publication of better ones when they were ready".⁴³¹ Translators and publishers hoping to do business with Chertkov, meanwhile, found him wilful, contrary and resistant to negotiation. Definite arrangements and contracts he eschewed as organs of institutionalised authority. Promises, he regarded as "oaths", forbidden by Christ: "A man must be free" he wrote, "...[even] in little things".⁴³² Ironically, the very precepts which had been born in Tolstoy as a response to the coercion and injustices endemic to Russia's totalitarian regime were used by his foreign representative to justify behaviour that can only be described as autocratic.

Maude had his first taste of Chertkov's arbitrary ways even before the establishment of the FAP. This was over the publication of Tolstoy's novel, *Resurrection*, written (apparently on Chertkov's advice), to fund the immigration of the Dukhobors. In July 1898 Tolstoy wrote to Chertkov telling him to publish *The Devil*, *Resurrection* and *Father Sergey* "on the most profitable terms to English or American newspapers" to raise money for the committee for resettling the Dukhobors.⁴³³ In December of the same year, however, Tolstoy asked Aylmer Maude to take over the translation and publication of *Resurrection*. He explained: "Chertkov writes that he doesn't want to, and is unable to deal any longer with the Dukhobor business, part of which consists of the publication and sale of the translations of my story"⁴³⁴. Having too many obligations of his own at the time, Maude passed the translation work to his wife, while maintaining responsibility for the business side of the arrangement, including finding a publisher.⁴³⁵ Here he was impeded. Despite having relinquished responsibility over the novel's publication, Chertkov was still insisting that the novel be published, "No rights reserved". This created two obstacles. First, it was an

⁴³¹ Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Year*, 393.

⁴³² Quoted in Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years*, 387.

⁴³³ Tolstoy to Chertkov (14 July 1898) *Tolstoy's Letters. II. 1880–1910*, 573.

⁴³⁴ Tolstoy to Aylmer Maude (12 December 1898) *Tolstoy's Letters. II. 1880–1910*, 579.

immense deterrent to most well-respected publishers. Secondly, even if a first publisher could be found, the absence of copyright meant that anyone who ‘pirated’ the translation thereafter would be under no obligation to pay any royalties whatsoever. And royalties were what were needed to fund the Dukhobors.⁴³⁶ Maude blamed the awkwardness of the situation on Chertkov: “Tolstoy, after repudiating money-collecting and money-getting as a means of doing good, had been persuaded (largely by Tchertkóff) to write and sell a novel to help the Doukhobórs. But now, having put aside the larger principle for the sake of expediency, Tchertkóff was concerned to impose on me, and on others, a rigid rule which baffled the purpose for which the work was being done.”⁴³⁷

Eventually, *Resurrection* found serial publication in England in the *Clarion*, which paid nothing for the privilege. In the meantime, Chertkov, wearied by his efforts to find a US publisher and unwilling to be seen breaking his principles, asked Louise Maude to arrange the American edition. Not sharing Chertkov’s scruples, she immediately gave the publisher Messrs. Dodd, Mead & Co. permission to publish the novel with copyright. She also decided to take in hand the novel’s publication in Britain. The *Clarion* was informed that future instalments of her translation of *Resurrection* must be headed, “All rights reserved”.⁴³⁸

It was at this time that the Maudes learned that Chertkov had already made an arrangement to publish Louise Maude’s translation *Resurrection* as a volume and with “No Rights Reserved” with F.R. Henderson. Outwardly a “bluff and hearty” fellow, Henderson had worked with Walter Scott and Co. before moving to south to live with the Tolstoyans.⁴³⁹ According to his son-in-law, he stepped down from Walter Scott in order ensure *Resurrection*’s publication in England.⁴⁴⁰ But it is clear Henderson already had his own agenda. In January 1898, he took over the ‘philanthropic’ Brotherhood Publishing Company from Kenworthy (whose mental health was failing), using its profits as well as donations to the press to fund his own imprints.⁴⁴¹ Maude had already had reason to complain about

⁴³⁵ Aylmer Maude, *A Report and Account of the Resurrection Fund and of Difficulties Encountered in Administering it* (Great Baddow, Chelmsford: Aylmer Maude, 1901) 3.

⁴³⁶ Maude, *A Report and Account*, 3–5.

⁴³⁷ Maude, *A Report and Account*, 4.

⁴³⁸ Maude, *A Report and Account*, 6.

⁴³⁹ Maude, *A Report and Account*, 8.

⁴⁴⁰ Diana Burfield, *The Background to the Bomb Shop*, Unpublished Manuscript (May 2005) 6.

⁴⁴¹ Maude, *A Report and Account*, 10. This allegation is supported by evidence provided in Diana Burfield, *The Background to the Bomb Shop*, 6.

Henderson's refusal to render accounts to those (like Maude) who had supplied loans to the company. He would later charge Henderson with making fantastic profits out of his translation of *What is Art?* without paying him a penny.⁴⁴² Henderson generally justified his poor business practices by invoking Tolstoy's injunction against submitting to any authority but one's own conscience.⁴⁴³ By promising *Resurrection* to Henderson, Chertkov had exacerbated the difficulty of the Maudes' situation yet further. Tolstoy had charged them with the responsibility for raising money for the Dukhobors; but Chertkov, in effect, was denying them control over the very product – *Resurrection* – intended to produce this money.

Louise Maude was aware that Chertkov's influence over Tolstoy was unassailable. In July 1900, she consequently gave F.R. Henderson her consent to issue his cheap edition of her translation with royalties of 15% of its published price going to the Dukhobor Fund. As it turned out, her and her husband's fears were realised. Henderson failed to render accounts and paid very few royalties, claiming that he was living "hand to mouth". The migration of the Dukhobors had to be achieved largely with US royalties and a private loan of £1500 from Aylmer Maude.⁴⁴⁴ It was only after two years of wrangling with Henderson for unpaid royalties, that Louise Maude had *Resurrection* entered in her name at Stationers's Hall, and made plans for it to be issued by the firm of Grant Richards. Foiled, Henderson ceased printing the translation. Under Grant Richards' imprint, *Resurrection* would subsequently go to multiple editions of 50,000 a piece. In 1904, Maude could write that it was going into its sixth edition of 50,000, and "still sells about 3000 copies per month". Ironically, one of the uses Louise Maude made of further proceeds from the novel was "To assist people in distress who have suffered loss by taking part in what has been called the 'Tolstoy movement'".⁴⁴⁵

Aylmer Maude's dissatisfaction with Chertkov and Henderson acquired such intensity that in 1901 he penned an article describing his experiences. At the time, his

⁴⁴² In January 1904, Maude wrote to Perris, "Owing to Henderson's swindles *What is Art?* drifted into Walter Scott's hands. Henderson got over £90 from them for use of plates. I never had 1.- from Scotts or from the Brotherhood P. Co." (13 January 1904), Letters of Aylmer Maude, Leeds University Library, Special Collections MS 553..

⁴⁴³ See for example, his notes on a letter sent to him by Louise Maude, reprinted in Maude, *A Report and Account*, 11–13.

⁴⁴⁴ Maude, *A Report and Account*, 16.

⁴⁴⁵ Louise Maude to George Herbert Perris and Henry Stephens Salt (28 March 1903), Letters of Aylmer Maude, Leeds University Library, Special Collections, MS 553..

literary agent was Volkhovsky's friend George Herbert Perris, the journalist and well-known peace activist, then deeply in thrall to Tolstoy's principle of non-resistance. In 1899, Perris had founded the Literary Agency of London. He would subsequently take great interest in the challenges the Maudes faced in securing good translations of Tolstoy in Britain. Perris advised Maude to print his article in pamphlet form, and to have a version of it published in the papers. As Maude confided to Perris, his motive for publishing the article was didactic: "it is just as well that one should see the difficulties resulting from certain developments of Tolstoyism. They enable one to discern, all the more clearly, what is, & what is not, the essential truth of the matter."⁴⁴⁶ Besides including a damning account of Henderson's and Chertkov's actions, Maude's *Report and Account* dilated for two and a half pages on the dangers of religious fanaticism, closing with a passage on the dangers of "moral coercion":

"No copyright" may be good, and "No money principles" may be excellent. But true progress and healthy growth consist not in these nor any other *externalities*. The essential condition of progress towards perfection is a wish to improve, and we can help others more by leaving their spirits scope to move in, than by the most rigid rules or the fiercest denunciations. Though we give all our goods to feed the poor and our bodies to be burnt, without love it profiteth us nothing. We cannot set the pace for others. ...Before we devise this or that fresh rule and brand new precept and urge them strenuously on others, let us see where we really stand: whether these things are inevitable indications of the growth within us of a true and loving spirit, or whether there is not something arbitrary and wilful about them...⁴⁴⁷

While Maude's finger was not directly pointed at Chertkov here, his criticism of the Russian's *modus operandi* was implicit. Tolstoy, who always hoped for a reconciliation between Maude and Chertkov, chastised Maude, "I'm very sorry that you wrote [the article]. You caused pain by it, and not only did not strengthen the feeling of love – and this is the main concern of life – in the heart of a person close to you, Chertkov, but on the contrary aroused unkind feelings in him, not expressed in any way, but involuntarily experienced by him."⁴⁴⁸

The *Resurrection* fiasco would continue for two more years. In 1903, Henderson published his own pamphlet titled "Threatened Legal Proceedings", answering both

⁴⁴⁶ Aylmer Maude to George Herbert Perris (23 October 1901), Letters of Aylmer Maude, Leeds University Library, Special Collections, MS 553.

⁴⁴⁷ Maude, "Report and Account", 17

Maude's *Report and Account*, and Grant Richard's subsequent service to him of a writ demanding unpaid royalties and unsold copies of his edition of *Resurrection*. In his self-defence, Henderson reasonably claimed that he had published Louise Maude's translation of *Resurrection* in book-form as "non-copyright" in accordance with her agreement with Chertkov.⁴⁴⁹ He also accused Maude of damaging his reputation and business by going "up and down the country making by voice and pen the wildest statements" about him.⁴⁵⁰ That Henderson enjoyed the full backing of Chertkov in the matter is clear: Chertkov's handwritten, initialised marginalia can be found on Henderson's copy of the pamphlet.⁴⁵¹ Ultimately, Grant Richards and the Maudes dropped the charges against Henderson. As their solicitor, E.A. Bicknell, advised, on both moral and legal grounds there was a case against him, but the proceedings would be costly, and Mr. Henderson had no money to make good his debts. The experience had already done much to confirm Aylmer Maude's lack of faith in Tolstoy's non-authoritarian precepts.

While Henderson's shenanigans eventually came to an end, Chertkov's tightening grip over Tolstoyan publishing created new frustrations for Maude. 1900 was the year Chertkov had turned the Brotherhood Publishing Company into the Free Age Press and begun churning out dirt-cheap translations of Tolstoy's tracts simultaneously with the Russian versions he sent to Russia.⁴⁵² The manuscripts, private letters and diaries from which Chertkov pieced together pamphlets were guarded with the utmost secrecy.⁴⁵³ According to A.N. Wilson, "he constructed a special strongroom for the purpose, lined with steel and fireproof bricks."⁴⁵⁴ Beside offering Tolstoy's work first to the public, and at the lowest possible price, thanks to its no rights reserved policy, the FAP could take the moral high ground. As long as Maude was on speaking terms with Chertkov, this was not a problem, and he succeeded in translating a substantial proportion of Tolstoyan texts published by the FAP. But after his disagreement with Chertkov in 1901, he and Louise

⁴⁴⁸ Tolstoy to Maude (23 December 1901), *Tolstoy's Letters*, II, 607.

⁴⁴⁹ Francis Riddell Henderson, "Threatened Legal Proceedings", Private Collection, Diana Burfield, 4-5.

⁴⁵⁰ Henderson, "Threatened Legal Proceedings", 8.

⁴⁵¹ Henderson, "Threatened Legal Proceedings", 5.

⁴⁵² For a detailed history of the origins of the Free Age Press, see Michael J Holman, "Translating Tolstoy for the Free Age Press: Vladimir Chertkov and His English Manager Arthur Fifield", *Slavonic and East European Review* 66, 2 (April 1988) 184-97.

⁴⁵³ Holman, "Translating Tolstoy for the Free Age Press", 189.

⁴⁵⁴ A.N. Wilson, *Tolstoy*, 436.

Maude were effectively barred from the FAP.⁴⁵⁵ Against Chertkov's goal of making Tolstoy's loudest denunciations of society available to even the poorest charwoman, Maude had his own ambition to see proper translations of Tolstoy published in quality editions. The monopoly held by the FAP made this virtually impossible. As Michael Holman reports, "while Chertkov's Free Age Press continued to publish its own edition of Tolstoy's works with 'no rights reserved' (twenty-nine volumes appeared in 1901 and 1902 alone), Maude's hopes of producing a collected edition himself stood little chance of realisation."⁴⁵⁶ The first four volumes of Maude's Centenary Edition of Tolstoy would not be published until 1928.

An example of Chertkov's obstructive manner and its effects can be seen in the fate of a volume of stories titled *Esarhaddon and Other Stories*. In October 1903, Maude wrote to Perris informing him of the existence of some new stories by Tolstoy. Unusually, Tolstoy had not given the tales to Chertkov, but to a Russian Jewish artist: "[He] has written 3 short tales (allegories ca. 4000 words in all) & presented them to Rabinovitch ... to be used for the benefit of the Jews who have suffered in Kishinjof". Rabinovitch, in turn, had approached Maude with the object of having them translated. As Maude advised Perris, it was important to publish the stories before Chertkov, who was already "vexed with being bound by L.T.'s give to Rabinovitch", had the chance to deliver a pre-emptive strike. "One does not want Tchertkoff in [sic] the war-path prematurely" he wrote Perris, "...If you go to the 'Daily News' who are in some touch with Tchertkoff – it [may] be necessary to ask them not to write to him about the matter."⁴⁵⁷ Despite their precautions, two weeks later Perris received a rushed wire from Tolstoy. "asking one not to publish the new stories".⁴⁵⁸ It was obvious that Chertkov had intervened. After negotiations, Chertkov's new English manager, Thomas Laurie, agreed to allow Maude's translation to be published by Grant Richards on the same day Chertkov's version was being issued. But a sense of competition and ill-feeling remained. Chertkov's preface reiterated Tolstoy's gift to the Free Age Press of "the right of first publication", and boasted that the press upheld Tolstoy's renunciation of copyright.

⁴⁵⁵ Maude's contribution to the Free Age Press, was significant despite his falling out with Chertkov. According to A. Sirnis, he translated 148,800 words for the press out of a total of 832,740 words. Letter from Alexander Sirnis to C.Hagberg Wright (30 September 1915), Tuckton House, Leeds Russian Archive, Leeds University, MS 1381.

⁴⁵⁶ M.J. de K. Holman, "Half a Life's Work, Aylmer A.N. Wilson, *Tolstoy* (London: Penguin, 2001) Maude brings Tolstoy to Britain", *Scottish Slavonic Review* 4 (Spring 1985) 42.

⁴⁵⁷ Maude to Perris (6 October 1903), Letters of Aylmer Maude, Leeds University Library, Special Collections MS 553..

More importantly, it claimed to offer the public “Tolstoy’s very latest corrections and interpolations, communicated by him direct to us, and some of which there has not been time to transmit to the publishers of other editions in the English and foreign languages.”⁴⁵⁹ This declaration, combined with the cheaper price of Chertkov’s edition, meant that Maude’s superior translation failed to thrive. “[Of] *Esarhaddon* only 400 are sold, & 1,300 have gone to Smiths on ‘Sale or return’”, he wrote to Perris in January 1904, “It looks as if we shall hardly clear the cost!”⁴⁶⁰

Years later, after his return to Russia, Chertkov carried on exerting his authority, successfully frustrating Maude’s efforts to publish Tolstoy, even to the detriment of the FAP itself. In 1915, during negotiations to publish a twenty volume edition of Tolstoy with the FAP, Chertkov stipulated to his agent in England that Maude was not to be involved, as he believed Maude would “try to work in his personal views” into prefaces and introductions. Even when the salaried head of the Free Age Press managed to secure from Maude “important concessions”, including a promise to fall in line with the prefaces, Chertkov stubbornly dug in his heels.⁴⁶¹ “I send you Chertkoff’s letter”, wrote a benefactor to the FAP’s manager, “One thing is settled Maude is not to be employed. We had better not go forward at present.”⁴⁶²

Chertkov’s break with the FAP’s first manager, Arnold Fifield, was similarly self-destructive. Chertkov first met Fifield in 1897, soon after his exile to England. At the time Fifield was working for James Bowden, a large publishing house. He was soon to prove his muscle in the business, proposing and marketing penny editions of Charles Sheldon’s religious novels which sold three million copies in six months. In early 1900, Chertkov invited him to help establish the FAP, writing, “It is not a question of whether you will accept, but whether you dare refuse”. Wishing to live as a “good Tolstoyan”, “to take little

⁴⁵⁸ Letter from Perris to Maude (23 October 1903), Letters of Aylmer Maude, Leeds University Library, Special Collections MS 553. .

⁴⁵⁹ Leo Tolstoy, *King Assarhadon and Other Stories*, translated by V. Tchertkoff and I.F.M. (London: Free Age Press, 1903) ix.

⁴⁶⁰ The letter from Maude to Perris is dated (by Maude) 11 January 1903, but given the publication date of *Esarhaddon* and earlier correspondence, the year must have been 1904. Letters of Aylmer Maude, Leeds University Library, Special Collections MS 553..

⁴⁶¹ A. Sirnis to C.H. Wright (30 September 1915), Tuckton House, Leeds Russian Archive, Leeds University, MS 1381..

⁴⁶² C.Hagberg Wright to A. Sirnis (9 December 1915), Tuckton House, Leeds Russian Archive, Leeds University, MS 1381.

and give much”, Fifield accepted.⁴⁶³ If we trust his account, he then became the FAP’s “publisher, manager, joint editor, joint translator, publicity agent, advertising expert, warehouseman, porter, packer, clerk, book-keeper, office boy and stamp licker”.⁴⁶⁴ After two fruitful years, during which Fifield witnessed numerous splits between Chertkov and his assistants, the inevitable happened. Chertkov and Fifield were in the midst of publishing the “New Uniform Edition of Tolstoy’s Later Works”, which was giving signs of becoming very successful. But on the last page of the volume *What is Religion?*, Chertkov insisted on printing the notice “The articles in this volume, WHAT IS RELIGION? and NOTES FOR SOLDIERS AND OFFICERS, are being prepared in separate editions for popular distribution at ONE PENNY EACH”. To Fifield, this was madness. It would be impossible to recoup losses on a 64-page penny edition. Furthermore, no one would purchase the 6d. and 1s. editions, if they knew they could buy the same material for a penny. Meanwhile, there was a worse problem: in a compromise with quality which Fifield could not abide, Chertkov was insisting on reprinting old, unauthoritative translations of Tolstoy’s work in future volumes of the Uniform Edition. On both issues, he was unbending. Fifield remembers,

That notice [of a Penny Edition], insisted on by Tchertkoff against my vehement opposition, and coupled with his definite refusal to make new translations direct from the Russian text of the other projected volumes of the new series, *On Life*, *What I Believe*, *The Kingdom of God*, *What Shall We Do?*, and *The Gospel in Brief*, or indeed of any of the older work, caused my resignation.⁴⁶⁵

As it happened, Chertkov never produced the advertised Penny Edition, possibly because he was unable to undertake such an ambitious venture without someone like Fifield managing the press. His personality had lost him the best manager the press would have. After Fifield’s departure, the FAP stumbled along, producing fewer translations on shoddy paper.⁴⁶⁶

Beside spoiling the market for better volumes by the Maudes and others, Chertkov’s monopoly over Tolstoy’s texts may have promoted a skewed impression of Tolstoy at the

⁴⁶³ Fifield, *The Free Age Press*, 1.

⁴⁶⁴ Fifield, *The Free Age Press*, 2.

⁴⁶⁵ Fifield, *The Free Age Press*, 19.

⁴⁶⁶ Fifield, *The Free Age Press*, 3.

time. Much of the material Chertkov published was compiled from Tolstoy's personal letters and diaries, and his choice of material emphasised the side of Tolstoy most akin to himself. His Tolstoy was rigid, denunciatory and dogmatic; moreover, it was not a Tolstoy occupied with artistic concerns. Maude would quote Chertkov as saying, "In our movement we consider principles, but not people".⁴⁶⁷ The real Tolstoy had another side: he was softer and more personal in his approach to the world's problems; and he routinely compromised his own harsh doctrines to spare the feelings of family and friends. When it came to his proselytisers, his desire, as he confessed to Aylmer Maude was that they "should use more energy on their own inner spiritual harmony, than on propaganda."⁴⁶⁸ If Tolstoy was indeed radical, Chertkov was more so. As Maude said, "whereas to most men Tolstoy's views appeared extreme, Cherkov always urged him to go yet further and apply his principles more rigidly".⁴⁶⁹ There is, of course, danger in relying too heavily on Maude's biased assessment of the relationship. But the evidence he supplies to substantiate his negative testimony cannot be ignored in assessing Chertkov's impact on Tolstoy's English reputation. One anecdote he relates tells of how Chertkov compelled him to spend the night hectographing a piece for Tolstoy, which Tolstoy knew nothing about and of which he later expressed disapproval. This was typical of how Chertkov conducted Tolstoyan publishing in Britain. He had carte-blanc to impute to the prophet stances which were, in fact, his own. To quote Maude, "Chertkov felt quite competent to try to make up Tolstoy's mind for him, and had no hesitation about using Tolstoy's name for his own purposes."⁴⁷⁰

Chertkov's control over the selection and translation of Tolstoy's texts was matched by his control over commentary on Tolstoy. We remember his argument with Maude grew out of Maude's refusal to change four paragraphs in a book which was not even published by the Free Age Press. Prior to their break, Chertkov's influence over Maude's words met with greater success. He had Maude alter a sentence in his preface to *The Slavery of Our Times*, in which he suggested that Tolstoy's injunction against the use of violence was, in some cases, impossible.⁴⁷¹ Yet Tolstoy was not always happy with the way he was projected

⁴⁶⁷ Aylmer Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: The Later Years* (London: Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1930) 267.

⁴⁶⁸ Letter from Tolstoy to Maude (3 August 1900) *Tolstoy's Letters. II. 1880–1910*, 589.

⁴⁶⁹ Aylmer Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: The Later Years* (London: Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1930) 147.

⁴⁷⁰ Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years*, 356.

⁴⁷¹ Fifield, *The Free Age Press*, 12.

by Chertkov, and was especially sensitive about how his family life was portrayed: “I’m rather disturbed by the fact that you write about my apparently exceptional situation. My situation is one I deserve, and it’s a very good situation ...in particular don’t communicate to anybody the contents of those letters of mine in which I express dissatisfaction that my life is not as I would like it to be.”⁴⁷² In plain disregard of such requests, Chertkov carried on apace, painting Tolstoy’s relation to his wife as Socrates to Xanthippe. “You must bear in mind”, Chertkov told *The Young Man*, “that Tolstoy was married before he formed his present opinions. His wife is rich, and she has... not the slightest sympathy with [his views]”. Tolstoy’s wife Sophia’s battle with Chertkov for control over Tolstoy’s work was a particularly sore issue:

Since changing his views... Tolstoi has renounced some of his earlier works, ...and he has, of course, refused to receive any payment for his literary work. ...His wife, however, declined to relinquish the interest in the works which he had given her, and she still receives money from these books, though she knows it is strongly against her husband’s wishes. That is the kind of treatment Tolstoi endures in his own home.

It can hardly be called a home, in fact; Tolstoi is simply a guest in his wife’s house.⁴⁷³

Increasingly, Chertkov’s extreme version of Tolstoy contributed to public ridicule – particularly for his views on sex, pacifism and the so-called “labour cure”. As Marc Slonim notes, many writers “considered Tolstoy’s search for divine truth an eccentricity of a Russian gentleman”.⁴⁷⁴ Given his exposure of the atrocities perpetrated by the Russian government, apologists attributed his fanaticism to the unique conditions of Russia: “Had the Count been born in England, it is likely that his views would have been much less pronounced against the existing order of things. Tolstoi is the product of the system of which he is so powerful a critic.”⁴⁷⁵ Tolstoy’s views became increasingly ‘oriental’, in Stepniak’s sense of the word. But whether they issued from an obstreperous old gentleman or an Eastern fakir, they were deemed as hardly appropriate for England.

If Maude was, at times, slightly off the mark in blaming the Russian exile, instead of Tolstoy, for creating a version of Tolstoyanism in England that could only fail by virtue of

⁴⁷² Tolstoy to Chertkov (21 January 1898), *Tolstoy’s Letters, II*, 565.

⁴⁷³ “A Talk About Tolstoi”, *The Young Man* 13, 147 (1899) 81.

⁴⁷⁴ Marc Slonim, “Four Western Writers on Tolstoy”, *Russian Review* 19, 2 (April 1960) 189.

its impracticability and lack of human concern, there can be no doubt, that for him, at least, Chertkov toppled the master from his pedestal. Chertkov's lack of diplomacy with Maude can be likened to a politician's spin-doctor insulting his best advocates in the press. Maude, along with Perris, Shaw and Edward Garnett, was one of the period's principal commentators on Tolstoy: Fabians, observers and intellectuals watched his experiences with Tolstoy's representative with fascination and took on board the Englishman's insights. Given the endless debacles with Chertkov over publishing rights, it is not surprising that Maude's writings on Tolstoy are tainted with his disillusionment. His *Life of Tolstoy* is full of anti-Chertkovian complaints, including an eight page diatribe blaming the failure of the Tolstoyan colony and the problems of the Dukhobor migration on "an autocratic administration of large affairs and the irresponsible administration of one man".⁴⁷⁶ Maude's *A Peculiar People, The Doukhobórs*, targets the criticism more directly in an entire chapter devoted to "A Criticism of Tolstoy". "Practical experience" he writes " ...ultimately obliged me to admit that there are some aspects of Tolstoy's teaching which are not morally commendable, and which it is a duty to challenge."⁴⁷⁷ Maude's pamphlets, tracts and prefaces advocate a sensibly watered-down Tolstoyanism with plenty of good evidence why. All in all, it is as much Chertkov as it is Tolstoy who informs Maude's vision of Tolstoyanism. However, as Maude himself admits,

in dealing with property or power the moral responsibility that clings to its acquisition, use, or retention, clings also to its transference, and one cannot help asking whether it was wisely transferred, and whether Tolstoy's great influence was used well, whether by himself or by another. Therefore the public activity of Chertkov must interest those interested in Tolstoy.⁴⁷⁸

And despite Maude's frequent asides, designed to defer the blame from Tolstoy to Chertkov, his message is loud and clear: in real life, Tolstoy's precepts cannot work. As a reviewer of his *Life of Tolstoy* in the *Academy* noted, when Maude's analysis fell short of damning Tolstoy, his anecdotes took up the slack.⁴⁷⁹ The *New Age* agreed: "We somehow gather that Mr. Maude is inclined to be over-anxious to apologise for Tolstoy. We are not concerned in

⁴⁷⁵ "A Talk About Tolstoi", 80.

⁴⁷⁶ Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years*, 381.

⁴⁷⁷ Maude, *A Peculiar People, The Doukhobórs* (London: Grant Richards, 1904) 279.

⁴⁷⁸ Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years*, 358.

⁴⁷⁹ Review of *The Life of Tolstoy: First Fifty Years* by Aylmer Maude, *Academy* 75 (3 October 1908) 318.

any such attempt; indeed the task would seem a rather heavy one. It is embarrassing to write an apologia for a friend who is continually giving the case away.” Basing his judgement on Maude’s evidence, the reviewer concluded that the key to understanding Tolstoy’s life was his “morbid and unhealthy conscience”.⁴⁸⁰

Bernard Shaw was one figure affected by Maude’s first hand experiences of Tolstoyanism. Shaw, of course, can be credited for thinking for himself – nor was he always fond of Maude, whose political manoeuvring in the Fabian Party he found irritating. But to him, Maude’s criticisms of Tolstoyanism seemed sound. In his rebuttal of Max Nordau’s attack on Tolstoy in *Degeneration*, he wrote, “I have appropriated [my views on why law is indispensable] from Mr Aylmer Maude’s criticism of Tolstoyan Anarchism, on which I am unable to improve.”⁴⁸¹ Much of his critique reflected Maude’s frustration with Chertkov’s business practices: “Most laws, in short, are not the expression of the ethical verdicts of the community, but pure etiquette [sic] and nothing else.” A ready-made code of conduct created a necessary climate of ease and certainty: “The wasp, who can be depended on absolutely to sting you if you squeeze him, is less of a nuisance than the man who tries to do business with you not according to the customs of business, but according to the sermon on the Mount”.⁴⁸² Years later, when Maude was struggling to produce a Centenary edition of Tolstoy for Oxford University Press, Shaw led a campaign to support the edition against the obstructions to its success created by Tolstoy and Chertkov’s ‘bad etiquette’ in publishing. Using his public status as a dramatist, Shaw circulated a letter calling “public attention” to “the lack of a complete edition of the works of Leo Tolstoy in the English language”. The letter made clear that Tolstoy’s “unfortunate” dismissal of property rights was to blame for this lacuna in England’s “national literary equipment”:

it led to the appearance of a great number of translations, including some very incompetent ones, of a few of his books which were considered specially interesting as stories, or were capable of being turned to account for propaganda. These few books have consequently become more or less well known; but the profits of their publication have been so divided that they have in no instance been able to carry a complete edition on their backs....

⁴⁸⁰ Review of *The Life of Tolstoy: First Fifty Years* by Aylmer Maude, *New Age Supplement*, no. 740 (12 November, 1908) 2-3.

⁴⁸¹ G. Bernard Shaw, 1907 Preface, “The Sanity of Art”, *Major Critical Essays*, with an introduction by Michael Holroyd (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986) 315.

⁴⁸² G. Bernard Shaw, *The Sanity of Art* 334-5.

One-hundred and twenty well-known figures in literary and public life joined Shaw in calling upon the public “to subscribe for complete sets and specifying for this edition in their purchase of separate volumes”, thereby “spontaneously giving it the privileges of a copyright edition”.⁴⁸³ Signatories included Arnold Bennett, H.G. Wells, Edward Carpenter, Mrs. Churchill, Nevill Forbes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and Graham Wallas.⁴⁸⁴

To some extent, Chertkov stands apart from the other émigrés in this thesis. Unlike Stepniak and Kropotkin he did not engage in literary criticism as a means of covert propaganda. Unlike Volkhovsky and Prelooker, in *Free Russia* and the *Anglo-Russian*, he did not rely upon Russia’s literary culture to persuade the English of Russia’s high level of civilisation. He fits into this thesis principally because, as an émigré disseminating Russian literature in England, his output was unmatched. Nonetheless, his contributions to readings of Tolstoy’s fiction, while indirect, cannot be ignored. Without Chertkov facilitating and indeed urging the project at every turn, Tolstoy the Pamphleteer would never have achieved the purchase he enjoyed both in England and internationally. Regardless of his own indifference to Tolstoy’s fiction, Chertkov’s foregrounding of Tolstoy’s radicalism changed the way his fiction was read. Many critics were disposed to regard his precepts as the offshoots of a primitive unsophisticated culture. The same critics sought in his novels signs of his earthy Russianness. Tolstoy’s dual nature as artist and prophet was repeatedly debated. Was he was a man divided? Did his artistic productions reveal early signs of his philosophical campaign? In the latter camp were Perris and Maude, who protested loudly against the notion that Tolstoy was two men. For Perris, his conversion was “only new in degree”; “He is the same Tolstoy all the time, before and after the salvationist episodes of twenty years ago”.⁴⁸⁵ Maude attempted to integrate Tolstoy’s artistic work into his didactic output: “only those who are attracted by *What Then Must We Do?* can really appreciate what there is in *War and Peace*”.⁴⁸⁶ Chesterton belonged to the camp which saw in Tolstoy a man hewn asunder into a great artist and an “almost venomous reformer”: “We know not what to do with this small and noisy moralist who is inhabiting one corner of a great and good

⁴⁸³ G. Bernard Shaw, “Tolstoy’s Works. Mr. Shaw’s Appeal”, *Times* (29 April 1922) 17. Only eighteen signatures appeared in the *Times*.

⁴⁸⁴ Aylmer Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy: First Fifty Years* (London: Oxford University Press) 468–73.

⁴⁸⁵ Perris, *The Life and Teaching of Leo Tolstoy*, 13, 17.

⁴⁸⁶ Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy, Later Years*, 140.

man.”⁴⁸⁷ Chertkov’s relentless presentation of what Maude called the “denunciatory side of Tolstoy” over his “humble, forbearing, patient, considerate, and enduring” side encouraged such debate.⁴⁸⁸

From the point of view of radical émigrés like Volkhovsky and Zhook the detractions of Tolstoy’s philosophy in the English press were welcome – they matched their own. As we have seen, Tolstoy’s pacifism was the revolutionists’ *bête noir*. If it could be discounted as some sort of defect borne of the conditions of despotism, so much the better. Tolstoy’s wrathful indictments of the Russian government, combined with his embarrassing fanaticism (which helped to undermine his pacifism), only aided rather than impeded English acceptance of the need for violent revolution in Russia.

⁴⁸⁷ G.K. Chesterton, “Tolstoy and the Cult of Simplicity” in *Twelve Types* (London: Arthur L. Humphreys, 1902) 149.

⁴⁸⁸ Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy, Later Years*, 358.

Part III: CASE STUDY: TURGENEV

Introduction

The numerous studies to date of Turgenev's reputation in England have afforded émigrés only a minimal formative role. Donald Davie, in his excellent, albeit whirlwind review of "Turgenev in England, 1850–1950", gestures towards Edward Garnett's attempt to make Turgenev a "burning question", but forgets the émigrés who inspired this effort.¹ While the early commentator Royal A. Gettman does note that Edward Garnett "probably because of his acquaintance with Russian refugees, was eager to relate Turgenev's novels to the political puzzles of Russia", he sees Garnett's preoccupation with politics as no more than a "defect" of his criticism which impeded rather than encouraged England's appreciation of the author.² Gilbert Phelps's *The Russian Novel in English Fiction* remains unsurpassed as an exhaustive study of Turgenev's reputation. Yet even Phelps virtually ignores the émigrés who helped publicise Turgenev's work. Of all surveys, Glyn Turton's *Turgenev and the Context of English Literature 1850-1900* gives the most space to the involvement of Russian revolutionaries in disseminating Russian literature, and is one of the few that credits Stepniak with initiating Constance Garnett's Turgenev series. However, Turton makes only scant mention of émigré literary criticism.³

This is a grave oversight – as Europe's most respected novelist in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Turgenev had a seminal influence on writers such as Stephen Crane, Henry James, Ford Madox Ford, Galsworthy, and George Moore. Arnold Bennett devoted years to unravelling Turgenev's tricks of literary composition, and Gissing struggled fruitlessly against his natural bent to achieve the Russian's qualities of grace and economy. In identifying the exact nature of Turgenev's influence in late nineteenth-century England, understanding how he was read is as important as knowing who read him. In this chapter, I argue that the émigré contribution to this question of how to read Turgenev was, in fact, pivotal.

Stepniak's first contribution to Turgenev's reception in England was his involvement in the first comprehensive translation of the author's works into English. In 1893, Constance

¹ Donald Davie, "Turgenev in England, 1850-1950", *Studies in Russian and Polish Literature*, edited by Z. Folejewski, F.J. Whitfield, and A. Kaspin (The Hague: Mouton, 1962) 175.

² Gettman, *Turgenev in England and America*, 136.

Garnett and Stepniak began corresponding about the practical details of translating the complete works of Turgenev. Judging from an entry in Olive Garnett's diary, the original impetus for the series came from Stepniak.⁴ Constance Garnett would also credit him with the idea, dedicating her translation of *The Jew and Other Stories* (1899), "To the memory of Stepniak whose love of Turgenev suggested this translation."⁵ From the outset, she was keen that Stepniak should write a "preface to each vol. for £4". He was the only person, she said, qualified to "give the facts about [Turgenev's] epoch making novels".⁶

Notwithstanding Constance Garnett's confidence in Stepniak's critical powers, the Nihilist's series of prefaces was soon curtailed by William Heinemann, who was, as Olive Garnett recorded, "afraid of [Stepniak's] politics" and "would rather get Bjørnsen, or Henry James to do the work." Edward Garnett made a bid to rescue the situation by suggesting that they omit the Nihilist's name from title-pages of the volumes and from any advertising.⁷ To Stepniak, however, it all too painfully brought home the social ostracism and mistrust which is the political exile's burden: he agreed to hand over his introduction to volume two only because Heinemann refused to dispense with prefaces and a second preface was needed in time for publication.⁸ A passage in Olive Garnett's diary describes his crushed feelings:

[I asked him] "Why do you not go on with the prefaces" and he said "because Heinemann had treated him so badly etc and I shall write a book" and I said Heinemann will die, but the prefaces will live" and he did not answer and I heard him go upstairs.⁹

After some discussion of commissioning Edmund Gosse or George Moore, Edward Garnett opted to write the remaining prefaces himself, a decision which was to establish him as *the* English authority on Turgenev and Russian literature in general. But for years Constance Garnett would smart from Heinemann's insult to her mentor.

Despite Heinemann's snub, Stepniak was able to circulate his ideas on Turgenev fairly widely amongst the English literati. Turgenev was featured in the talks he delivered at

³ Glyn Turton, *Turgenev and the Context of English Literature 1850-1900*.

⁴ Olive Garnett, diary entry, 7 December 1893, *Tea and Anarchy*, 236.

⁵ Constance Garnett, dedication to Stepniak in Ivan Turgenev, *The Jew and Other Stories*, translated by Constance Garnett (London: Heinemann, 1899).

⁶ Quoted in Olive Garnett, diary entry, 7 December 1893, *Tea and Anarchy*, 236.

⁷ Olive Garnett, diary entry, 7 December 1893, *Tea and Anarchy*, 236.

⁸ See letter from Constance Garnett to Edward Garnett (12 October 1894) Garnett Family Archive, Hilton Hall.

⁹ Olive Garnett, diary entry, 10 November 1894, *Olive and Stepniak*, 129.

Philosophical and Literary societies, the Cemented Bricks, the Ethical Society, and the drawing room of 11 Airline Gardens in Kensington. Stepniak also referred liberally to Turgenev in his books of propaganda, using the novelist's invention of the word 'Nihilist' as a 'peg' on which to hang broader discussions about the genesis of Russia's revolutionary movement. Had he not wandered in front of a passing train in late December, 1895, Stepniak, no doubt, would have secured his place in the many studies which examine Turgenev's English reputation. At the time, he was working on a biography of Turgenev for Walter Scott's Great Author series. His untimely death prevented its publication, but there is evidence of his industry. The Stepniak papers in The Moscow State Archives contain a 160 page notebook on Turgenev, as well as a nearly illegible 600 page manuscript of the biography in Russian.

Stepniak's very Russian contribution to Turgenev studies (it was reminiscent of Dobrolyubov and Russian populist criticism) was compounded by those of his émigré friends. Kropotkin challenged English conceptions of Turgenev in his autobiography, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (1899). In his subsequent lecture series in Boston, Turgenev featured prominently, and he devoted twenty pages to the author in *Ideals and Realities*. Volkhovsky added his voice to the corpus of Turgenev criticism in a long article in *Free Russia*, confronting the assumptions circulating after the publication in 1898 of *Tourguéneff and His French Circle*. From the opposite camp, Madame Novikov entered the scrum with an attack on the author in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

So what was Turgenev's reputation before the Russians came along and what did they hope to gain by remodelling it?

Phase One: c. 1847–1878: The Aristocrat

In the first instance, Turgenev was regarded as a scholar and a gentleman. When he was first noticed in the English press in 1854, his *Sportsman's Sketches* were seen as providing useful insights into the customs of a "semi-civilised" nation, particularly as they were observed by "a Russian aristocrat".¹⁰ When he visited England – which he did frequently between 1847 and his death in 1883 – Turgenev was talked about in select circles as a gentleman novelist with beautiful manners and a great mane of silver hair. One diarist records that he had a

¹⁰ "Photographs from Russian Life", *Fraser's Magazine* 50 (August, 1854), 209.

“look of power, and ...wonderful eyes, which flashed as he spoke”.¹¹ Turgenev occupied himself in gentlemanly ways: he went grouse and partridge hunting at the estates of a banker, a steel magnate, and a Lord, dined at the Athenaeum club, and attended meetings at the Royal Geographic Society. Occasionally he found his way into the dining rooms of Cambridge ex-apostles, literary lions, and politicians. During a visit in 1858, Monckton Milnes, the future Lord Houghton, gained for him an invitation to a Royal Literary Fund Banquet.¹²

As a resident of France whose friends included George Sand, Mérimée, Daudet, Maupassant, the Goncourt brothers, Zola, and Flaubert, Turgenev came well-armed with letters of introduction and entertaining gossip. His English acquaintances would include Matthew Arnold, Ford Madox Brown, Swinburne, Disraeli, and Thackeray (who was “greatly flattered and much moved” by his visit).¹³ Carlyle, who took walks with him in Hyde Park, thought him “a most copious and entertaining talker, – by far the best I have ever heard who talks so much.”¹⁴ Their conversation encompassed “our Brownings, Tennysons, Thackerays, Dickens, – nay our Byrons and Shelleys”.¹⁵ On one occasion, at a country house of Mr. Bullock Hall, Turgenev amused George Eliot, an MP, Oscar Browning and the editor of *Lucretius* with stories of Victor Hugo’s immeasurable “arrogance and ignorance”. His efforts were rewarded by George Henry Lewes, who toasted him as “the greatest living novelist”.¹⁶

Notwithstanding Lewes’s estimation of Turgenev, by the late 1870s few people had actually read his works. There had been a brief spate of interest during the Crimean war, with *Household Words* and *Chamber’s Journal* publishing extracts from *A Sportsman’s Sketches*,¹⁷ and a translation from a bowdlerised French version of the book circulating in

¹¹ This was Mrs. Warre Cornish’s account of Turgenev, related in Lady Anne Isabella Ritchie, *Blackstick Papers* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1908) 239-40.

¹² Turgenev, *Sobranie sochinenii* 11 (Moskva, 1956), 321-7, 524.

¹³ For an exhaustive study of Turgenev’s contacts with England, see Waddington, *Turgenev and England*.

¹⁴ Letter from Thomas Carlyle to Dr. John Carlyle (25 March 1871), *New Letters of Thomas Carlyle*, edited and annotated by Alexander Carlyle, vol. 2 (London; New York: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1904) 278.

¹⁵ Letter from Thomas Carlyle to Dr. John Carlyle (26 November 1860), *New Letters*, vol. 2, 272.

¹⁶ Oscar Browning. *Life of George Eliot* (Port Washington, NY; London: Kennikat Press 1972) 129. First published in 1890.

¹⁷ “The Children of the Czar”, *Household Words* 11, 258 (3 March 1855) 108–14; “More Children of the Czar”, *Household Words* 11, 263 (7 April 1855) 227–32; “Nothing like Russia-Leather”, *Household Words* 11, 265 (21 April 1855) 402–5; “A Russian Singing Match”, *Household Words* 12, 296 (24 November 1855) 402–5; “Old and Young Russia”, *Chambers Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts* 5, 117 (29 March 1856) 203–5.

1855.¹⁸ But the Treaty of Paris in 1856 diminished both Russia's status as a European power, and English interest in things Russian. In 1867 Eugene Schuyler's American translation of *Fathers and Children* was distributed in London; and the following year, a travesty of *Smoke* (1868) was translated from the French. But it was only in 1869 that the first reliable translation of one of his novels entered the English market. This was William Ralston's version of *A House of Gentlefolk*, which he renamed *Liza* (1869) in order to capitalise on its romantic appeal. He chose the book because novels like *Smoke* and *Fathers and Children* were too full of Russian politics.¹⁹ The book went into three editions. Ford Madox Ford remembers his mother, "her eyes red with tears as she read and re-read the book of the beautiful genius... She knew it as *Liza*."²⁰ *Liza* aside, Turgenev's work continued to suffer from poor translations. Charles Edward Turner's version of *On the Eve* in 1871 was deemed by Ralston "imperfect and loose".²¹ And, in 1872, *Smoke; or Life at Baden* was translated from an already ghastly French version.²² While Turgenev's stories and sketches occasionally appeared in journals (in translations good and bad), even as late as 1878 he was barely known.²³ Ashton Dilke's translation of *Virgin Soil* in this year sold very few copies. In 1871, when he spoke at the Centenary Celebrations for Walter Scott in Edinburgh, not a single newspaper correctly recorded his name.²⁴ Edmund Gosse's reminiscences of a literary party at Ford Madox Brown's house in Fitzroy Square attests to Turgenev's small readership even in cultured circles: "The company in general laboured painfully under the disadvantage of having never read any of the works of the eminent visitor".²⁵

Despite this, Turgenev's gorgeous manners and reputation as a nobleman charmed many influential hosts. In 1871, he went to stay with the steel magnate Edmund Benzon at

¹⁸ Ivan, Tourghenieff [of Moscow] *Russian Life in the Interior; or, The Experiences of a Sportsman* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1855).

¹⁹ W.R.S. Ralston, introduction to Ivan Turgenev, *Liza* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1869) xi, xiii.

²⁰ Ford Madox Ford, "Turgenev, the Beautiful Genius", *American Mercury*, 39 (September 1936) 42.

²¹ William Ralston, review of *On the Eve* by Ivan Turgenev, *Athenaeum* (4 February 1871) 135–6.

²² Ralston reports that the French from which this derived was itself "translated in so singular a manner that M. Turgenev felt himself bound to protest against its being supposed to convey a just idea of his work". Ralston, "Turgenev's Novels", *North British Review* 50, n.s. 11 (March 1869) 24.

²³ For an exhaustive bibliography of English translations from Turgenev, see Waddington, *Turgenev and England* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1980) 308–15.

²⁴ For a comparison of newspaper reviews of Turgenev's speech, see Nicholas G. Zekulin, "Turgenev in Scotland", *Slavonic and East European Review* 54, 3 (July 1976) 366–7.

²⁵ Edmund Gosse, "A Memory of Tourgenieff", *London Mercury* 17, 100 (February 1928) 403.

Allean House on the north bank of Loch Tummel for the opening of the hunting season.²⁶ Nearby the recently appointed Master of Balliol, Benjamin Jowett, was staying at Tummel Bridge with a reading party which included the young Swinburne. John Simmons suggests that Benson subsequently discussed Turgenev with Jowett at a dinner party at Allean house.²⁷ In October 1878, Turgenev visited Oxford with Lord Hall (formerly Bullock) and stayed with Benjamin Jowett at the Master's Lodgings in Balliol. Jowett, by one account, was both charmed and impressed.²⁸ A few months later, at a meeting of the Hebdomadal Council, he nominated Turgenev for a Honorary Doctorate of Civil Law (DCL). When it was conferred on 18 June 1879, Turgenev was "the first novelist of any nation to be so honoured".²⁹ The rumours linking *A Sportsman's Sketches* with the emancipation of 53 million serfs must have contributed to Jowett's decision. But given evidence from memoirs and reviews there can be little doubt that Turgenev's conversation, his cosmopolitanism, and his gentlemanly passion for hunting – mistakenly seen as "a rare taste for a Russian"³⁰ – did much to secure his English reception, distinguishing him from the uncultivated, half-barbaric Asiatics Russia seemed otherwise to produce.

In the 1880s, when Turgenev began receiving his due notice among the literati, writers would attribute his impeccable style to his birth and breeding. George Moore wrote "While reading him we are always conscious of being in the company of a gentleman and a scholar."³¹ Henry James said his manner arose from the "impalpable union of an aristocratic temperament with a diplomatic intellect."³² Georg Brandes insisted that Turgenev "inherited his intellectual refinement, and has always lived in the best society".³³

²⁶ Zekulin, "Turgenev in Scotland", 370.

²⁷ J.S.G. Simmons, "Turgenev and Oxford", *Oxoniensia* 31 (1966) 147; and Zekulin, "Turgenev in Scotland", 370.

²⁸ M.M. Kovalevskii, "Vospominaniia o I.S. Turgeneve", *Minuvshie gody* no. 8 (August 1908) 8–9.

²⁹ For more on Turgenev's Oxford connections, see J.S.G. Simmons, "Turgenev and Oxford", *Oxoniensia* 31 (1966) 146–51.

³⁰ A.R.R. Barker, "Obituary. Ivan Turgenev", *Academy* 24 (15 September 1883) 179.

³¹ George Moore, "Turgeneff" *Fortnightly Review* 49, n.s. 43 (February 1888) 240.

³² Henry James, "Ivan Turgénieff", *French Poets and Novelists* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1878) 308.

³³ Georg Brandes, *Impressions of Russia*, translated from the Danish by Samuel C. Eastman (London: Walter Scott, 1889) 279.

Phase Two: 1878–1883: A Critic of Nihilism and Russia’s Liberal Movements

When Turgenev attended Encaenia at Oxford he feared anti-Russian sentiment might lead to a rowdy scene: “because they still cannot stand Russians in England, an uproar was expected.” To his great relief he was “applauded even more than the others”, but his anxieties were not without foundation.³⁴ The year before, with Russia’s army standing poised to occupy Constantinople, Britain had sent fleets to the Mediterranean to prevent pan-Slavic expansionism. Russia’s internal affairs were also causing alarm. Only months before the Oxford ceremony, Vera Zasulich had made international headlines with her gun attack upon the governor-general of St. Petersburg. The episode inspired a spate of so-called acts of heroic immolation (including Stepniak’s murder of General Mezenstev), which ceased only in 1881 with the assassination of Tsar Alexander II. To many English observers, Russia’s expansionism and the revolutionary ferment were part of the same menace. Russophobia was rife.

As interest in Russia suddenly intensified, the need arose for someone to offer an authoritative account of the country. However, books on Russia were scant. There was Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace’s best-seller *Russia* (1877), but little else. Turgenev was thus pitched into the limelight as a crucial and impartial witness to his time. William Ralston, in an article called “Russian Revolutionary Literature” recommended the author of *Fathers and Children* to all “who may wish to know more about the ideas which are turning so many young heads in Russia.” Ashton Dilke’s preface to *Virgin Soil* likewise drew attention to Turgenev’s documentary value: “[Turgenev’s] last work possesses a special interest at this moment, arising from the fact that it treats of those secret societies of which we have heard so much and know so little.”³⁵ Following Dilke’s lead, *The Academy* described Turgenev as “an exceptionally shrewd and thoughtful observer of the political situation of Russia, so far as it is affected at present by the secret societies which ramify in every direction”. The reviewer affirmed that it was “only books like [*Virgin Soil*] that enable outsiders to guess at it with any approach to correctness.”³⁶ The same year, the *Contemporary Review* published a piece called “Contemporary Life and Thought in Russia” (by a Russian), devoted to unravelling the mysteries of Russia’s investment in Turkey, the mob response when

³⁴ Letter from Turgenev to Boris Aleksandrovich Chichelev, 12/24 June 1879, *Turgenev’s Letters, A Selection*, edited and translated by Edgar H. Lehrman (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1961) 321.

³⁵ Ashton W. Dilke, preface to I.S. Tourgénéief, *Virgin Soil* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1878) iv.

³⁶ Richard F. Littledale, review of *Virgin Soil*, by I.S. Tourgénéief, *Academy* (Sept 14, 1878) 263, 264.

Zasulich was acquitted, and other topical events. A quarter of the review used Turgenev's work to illustrate Russia's social conditions, past and present. The author noted that Turgenev's gallery of types would "serve as precious material to the future historian."³⁷ The titles of articles about Turgenev's work that appeared in the popular press in this era alone reveal much about the new mood of his reception: in 1880 *Blackwood's Magazine* published a piece by Mrs. Oliphant titled "Russia and Nihilism in the Novels of Tourgénéieff";³⁸ two years later *Macmillan's Magazine* printed Charles Edward Turner's "Tourgénéieff's Novels as Interpreting the Political Movement in Russia".³⁹ Mrs. Oliphant characterised Turgenev as a "social historian and prophet, whose revelations take the form of fiction", noting that his works had been received more as "studies" of an alien society, "than as works of genius worthy of the highest consideration on their own merits."⁴⁰ Turner affirmed that Turgenev's novels would be of interest to the "student of the social and political movements that have successively agitated the civilised society of Russia".⁴¹

Far from remembering Turgenev's friendship with Bakunin and Herzen, most commentators projected onto the author their own misgivings about the Russian revolutionaries. Mrs. Oliphant, for example, cast Turgenev as one of the Nihilist movement's principle detractors:

A dull and inscrutable web of conspiracy, coming to nothing – no one very well knowing what it is meant to come to; a tyranny of mysterious chiefs and aims; a despairing confusion and sense of failure on the part of the victims, – in short, all the usual consequences of hasty and half comprehended revolutionary schemes upon the innocent enthusiasts who pay the cost of them, make up the painful picture of Nihilism as M. Tourgénéieff represents it.⁴²

While such readings might be expected in a ultra-conservative, high Tory journal like *Blackwood's*, they were, in fact, typical. Alice and Helen Zimmern wrote that "*Fathers and Sons* was written against the doctrines of Nihilism and Materialism, then raging among the

³⁷ [Ye D. Bezobrazova], "Contemporary Life and Thought in Russia", *Contemporary Review* 32 (June 1878) 608.

³⁸ [Margaret Oliphant], "Russia and Nihilism in the Novels of M. Tourgénéieff", *Blackwood's Magazine* 127, no. 775 (May 1880) 623–47.

³⁹ Charles Edward Turner, "Tourgénéieff's Novels as Interpreting the Political Movement in Russia", *Macmillan's Magazine* 45, no. 270 (April, 1882) 471–86.

⁴⁰ [Oliphant], "Russia and Nihilism", 623, 624.

⁴¹ Turner, "Tourgénéieff's Novels", 471.

younger generation”.⁴³ And with Turgenev’s passing in 1883, an Obituary in the *Saturday Review* remembered him for his censure of Russia’s revolutionary intelligentsia. The article even went so far as to conclude that he advocated obedience to the Russian monarch:

He drew the windy revolutionary talkers and the fanatics whose ideal is apparently the gregarious ape, and then left his reader to judge for himself. ... He hated people who think about thinking, and despised their nostrums. If the Russians are indeed inspired by Tourguenieff, they will never hand their country over to be experimented on by theorizers, or drift into sterile revolutions, like the peoples of Southern Europe. They will make the best of the existing Monarchy, ...⁴⁴

Even Henry James, for whom Turgenev’s politics took a back seat to his novelist’s craft, noted that Turgenev satirised “the new intellectual fashions prevailing among his countrymen” by embodying them in “grotesque figures”.⁴⁵ The exception that proved the rule was Charles Turner’s article in *Macmillan’s Magazine*, which dwelled upon Turgenev’s “certain faith” in Russia’s intellectuals.⁴⁶ Yet Turner had lived amongst the university intelligentsia of Russia since 1859. He read Belinsky, Dobrolyubov and other Russian critics.⁴⁷ If anything his article is proof of the differences between the English and the Russian critical point of view.

Phase Three: 1883–: “The Novelists’ Novelist”

As Turgenev assumed a cult-status in the mid-1880s, his relevance to Russian current affairs was very soon overshadowed by an enthusiasm for his technique – particularly amongst English-language writers. For the next decade, Turgenev became what Henry James called

⁴² [Oliphant], “Russia and Nihilism”, 626.

⁴³ Helen and Alice Zimmern, *Half-hours with Foreign Novelists*, vol. 2 (London: Remington, 1880) 9.

⁴⁴ “The Funeral of Tourguenieff”, *Saturday Review* (20 October 1883) 490–1.

⁴⁵ Henry James, “Ivan Turgénieff”, 281.

⁴⁶ Turner, “Tourgenieff’s Novels”, 486.

⁴⁷ Turner reveals his familiarity with Russian criticism in his 1882 volume, *Studies in Russian Literature* (a volume which doesn’t deal with Turgenev), when he states: “I have not scrupled to avail myself freely of the labours of the more eminent Russian critics; since I think it were both unwise and presumptuous on the part of a foreigner to reject the aid offered by writers like Belinsky, Dobrolouboff, Grot, Galachoff, and others.” Charles Edward Turner, *Studies in Russian Literature* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1882) v.

“The Novelists’ Novelist”.⁴⁸ Writers felt that he had come up with a new grammar of art. He provided an alternative to the vulgar realism of the French novel with its “fornicating peasants” and “massacred Negroes”.⁴⁹ His concise style was a welcome break from the rambling Victorian three-decker novel with its didactic morality and overabundance of incidents. According to the critics of the time, unlike the French, he had a facility for observing life keenly and scientifically, but without compromising his characteristic lyricism. One reviewer in the *Academy* said he had “the rare talent of touching pitch without being defiled”. Oscar Wilde said he had “the essence of style”.⁵⁰ As for Turgenev’s politics, these were out of touch. It was noted in the *Saturday Review* that the new breed of Russian revolutionaries in Stepniak’s *Underground Russia* was very different from “the speculative philosophers” of Turgenev.⁵¹ Moritz Kaufman in the *London Quarterly Review* agreed, “Events have marched on so fast that the public now knows more of Nihilism and its aims than even Tourgenieff was able to tell us in 1877.”⁵²

In part, the new aesthetic appreciation of Turgenev came from abroad. In France, Turgenev had for some years been acquiring the reputation of a consummate artist whose work had something to teach the best French Naturalist. The French read him in good translations, in which he often assisted himself. Prosper Mérimée voiced the popular view that Turgenev’s novels were ennobled with qualities sorely lacking in French fiction: “He sees good alongside evil, and even in the uncouth and absurd figures he shows us, he is able to reveal some noble and touching quality”.⁵³ The Catholic critic Eugene Melchior de Vogüé added to the consensus in his 1886 literary manifesto *Roman russe*, crediting Turgenev (along with Dostoevsky and Tolstoy) with breathing into the realist model a universal and godlike spirit of “compassion”.⁵⁴ In the 1870s, Turgenev’s works had followed a similarly

⁴⁸ Henry James, “Turgenev and Tolstoy”, *The House of Fiction, Essays on the Novel*, edited with introduction by Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957) 170. This essay was first published in *The Library of the World’s Best Literature*, edited by Charles Dudley Warner (New York: International Society, 1897).

⁴⁹ Moore, “Turgeneff”, 238.

⁵⁰ [Oscar Wilde], “A Batch of Novels”, *Pall Mall Gazette* (2 May 1887) 11.

⁵¹ This review was of the Italian edition of *Underground Russia*, published in Milan the preceding year. “Subterranean Russia”, *Saturday Review* 54, no. 1398 (12 August 1882) 214. I am indebted to Donald Davie for this observation: “Turgenev in England 1850–1950”, 170–1.

⁵² Moritz Kaufmann, “Ivan Serguievitch Tourgenieff”, *London Quarterly Review* 63 (October 1884) 39.

⁵³ Prosper Mérimée, “La Littérature et le servage en Russie, *Memoires d’un chasseur russe*, par M.Ivan Tourghénief”, *Revue des Deux Mondes* (1 July 1854). Quoted in F.W.J. Hemmings, *The Russian Novel in France 1884–1914*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950) 6.

⁵⁴ Le Vicomte E.-M. de Vogüé, *The Russian Novel*, translated by Colonel H.A. Sawyer (London: Chapman and Hall, 1913) 10–11.

positive trajectory in America, where they received more reviews and translations than in England. In this decade, the Americans had been less inclined than the English to look to Turgenev for “unflattering details of Russian life to bolster their case against the Russian nation”. America liked Russia: her politicians approved of Russia’s Tsarist expansion in Asia; the countries shared a common history of slavery, and it was believed that they had similar geographical features.⁵⁵ “The American reviews did not go for information on the barbaric Slav”, observes Royal Gettman, “... On the contrary, ... they regarded Turgenev’s novel as a criticism of life, as a delineation of universal human character; and they appreciated good literary workmanship.”⁵⁶ A coterie of critics and writers living in New England – T.S. Perry, William Dean Howells, and Hjalmar Boyensen – claimed the Russian as a new golden mean between the French realist tradition and “the vapidness” of the English novel “of plot and incident”.⁵⁷ Turgenev was posited as a model for the American novel. Howells declared that the “dramatic” method of Turgenev was “as far as art can go”.⁵⁸

The view of Turgenev as an author who had a lesson to teach modern day novelists was impressed upon the English by Henry James, who, notably, was closely connected with both the New England coterie and Flaubert’s circle in Paris. James’s pioneering essay “Iwan Turgéniew”, first published in the *North American Review* in 1874, made its way into England in the volume *French Poets and Novelists* (1878). A second essay, “Ivan Turgénieff” was published in *Partial Portraits* (1888). In reprints of these two books the articles made at least ten outings in England between 1878 and 1917. In 1897, the novelist adjusted his approach in “Turgenev and Tolstoy”, which appeared in *The House of Fiction, Essays on the Novel*. James’s essays became landmarks in *fin de siècle* criticism, and their echoes can be found in almost every English article written about Turgenev in the 1880s and 1890s. As late as 1908, Lady Ritchie would write, “Perhaps no one has spoken or written of Tourguénieff with more charm and authority than Henry James”.⁶⁰

James argues that by wedding the scientific method of the French realists (with its meticulous note-taking and precise observations) to “a deeply intellectual” and indeed religious impulse, Turgenev brought to the genre of realism an unprecedented beauty and

⁵⁵ David Korn, “Turgenev in Nineteenth Century America”, *Russian Review* 27 no. 4 (October 1968) 461.

⁵⁶ Gettman, *Turgenev in England and America*, 41.

⁵⁷ Glyn Turton, *Turgenev and the Context of English Literature*, 31.

⁵⁸ Howells, *My Literary Passions* (1895) 229.

⁶⁰ Lady Ritchie, *Blackstick Papers* (London: Smith Elder, &Co., 1908) 244.

truth. Lacking the “absorbed inventiveness” of Dickens, Georges Sand, Walter Scott, or George Eliot, Turgenev qualifies as a “searching realist”.⁶¹ Unlike other realists, however, his “precision of method”, his concision, and his sensitivity to the impressions of life, ensure that his pictures of life are wrapped in “an exquisite envelope of poetry”.⁶² To James, Turgenev’s particular strength lies in portrait painting, in creating universal types out of minute details: “He notes down an idiosyncrasy of character, a fragment of talk, an attitude, a feature, a gesture, and keeps it, if need be, for twenty years, till just the moment for using it comes, just the spot for placing it”. These “vivid oddities” rescue his characters “from the limbo of the gracefully general”; they kindle life in them.⁶³ For much of his 1878 essay, James guides the reader around Turgenev’s gallery of portraits like an enthusiastic curator showing off his favourite physiognomies: Madame Polosoff with her “plebeian” beauty, low forehead, and thick nose; Dmitri Sanin, whose folly illustrates so well “the immeasurable blindness of youth”;⁶⁴ or the Princess R——, who by day “paid visits, laughed, chattered, rushed to meet everything that could give her the smallest diversion”, but passed her nights “praying and weeping, without finding a moment’s rest” remaining “till morning in her room stretching her arms in anguish ...”⁶⁵ But to James Turgenev is no ethnographer. The sparseness and deftness of his brush-strokes, and his compassion as an observer, bring to his realism beauty and universality.

To the English, casting about for an alternative to the long-winded English novel with its invention, moral-didacticism and sentimentalism, Turgenev à la James appeared as a revelation. The example of French Naturalism had failed to regenerate the English novel. It was regarded as being in a state of decay, serving up uncooked dishes of harlots and syphilitics. Even those critics who did not mind the Naturalists dealing with “exquisite” subjects took exception to their *reportage* and crude handling. “I have hinted before”, declared George Saintsbury in 1888, “that the objection to the new French morality or immorality is not so much that it is immoral as that it is so utterly unamusing and unpleasant.”⁶⁶ To Aesthetes such as John Addington Symonds and commentators like Andrew Lang the French novelists had merely descended into a new form of romanticism in

⁶¹ Henry James, “Ivan Turgénieff”, *French Poets and Novelists* (London: Macmillan, 1884) 212-216.

⁶² James, “Turgenev and Tolstoy”, 172.

⁶³ James, “Ivan Turgénieff”, 213.

⁶⁴ James, “Ivan Turgénieff”, 241.

⁶⁵ James, “Ivan Turgénieff”, 214.

which the altar of idealised love had been replaced by an altar of filth.⁶⁷ As Symonds said of Zola: “the ponderousness of his method, the tedium of his descriptions, and the indecencies in which he revels, do not justify his claim to stand outside the ranks of those who treat reality from an ideal point of view”.⁶⁸

At such a time, Turgenev seemed a “Russian lamp” to guide the English out of aesthetic debate. Turgenev’s work attained the highest art without sacrificing the truthfulness of realism; it combined soul and soil at the expense of neither, it evoked morals without being didactic. Unlike the typical English writer, Turgenev never intruded on his novels: one never heard him side-stage extemporising about how the reader should respond to a scene, nor did he ever deliberately point a moral. At the same time, he seemed consistently to hit the right moral pitch: as one reviewer noted, “Tourgenieff never directly preaches, but he always shows what is so wholly wanting in the best French novelists, a sense of the religious side of man’s nature”.⁶⁹ Turgenev represented a middle way between the French realism and Victorian Puritanism, what George Moore called: “a beautifully cultivated islet lying somewhere between the philosophic realism of Balzac and the maidenly realism of Miss Austen.”⁷⁰

The key to Turgenev’s style – and the problem of blending realism and idealism – was his method of reducing details until only those remained which revealed something about the inner life of a character. “To arrive at his quintessential style there would seem to have been an elimination of superfluities” wrote Allan Monkhouse in 1894.⁷¹ Moore showed how Turgenev achieved this effect by “thinking in images”: a technique of presenting “life as it is” – that is, objectively, and realistically – but life distilled through a careful selection process that used as its criteria the soundest philosophy. Moore, who described Bazarov as “the concrete image of pure thought”, differentiated between “thought mind” and “fact mind”; Zola, “a recorder of mere facts” typified the latter, while Turgenev who understood that “everything cannot be related”, typified “thought mind”: he related only such facts as

⁶⁶ George Saintsbury “The Present State of the Novel – II” *Fortnightly Review* 49 (January 1, 1888) 122.

⁶⁷ Clarence R. Decker, “The Aesthetic Revolt against Naturalism in Victorian Criticism”, *PMLA* 53, issue 3 (September, 1938) 845.

⁶⁸ John Addington Symonds, *The Key of Blue*, 111. Andrew Lang likewise wrote: “...the tendency of Realism in fiction is often to find the Unpleasant Real in character much more abundant than the Pleasant Real”. Andrew Lang, “Realism and Romance”, *Contemporary Review* 52 (November 1887) 687.

⁶⁹ Kaufmann, “Ivan Serguievitch Tourgenieff”, 52.

⁷⁰ Moore, “Turgeneff”, 250.

⁷¹ Allen Monkhouse, in “Tourgenieff”, *Books and Plays* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1894) 151.

expressed meaning.⁷² The effect was one of a beautiful concision, a crystallisation of reality which for Oscar Wilde made Turgenev by far the finest of “the three great Russian novelists of our time.... He has that spirit of exquisite selection... he can distil into a few pages of perfect prose the moods and passions of many lives”.⁷³

Approving of Turgenev’s decency, Decadents, Nonconformists and Tories alike declared the thought processes guiding Turgenev’s selection to be philosophically sound, objective, intelligent. The Methodist *London Quarterly Review* noted approvingly that Turgenev’s pictures were never distorted by a proliferation of “crude or glaring colours” or “a succession of horrors”.⁷⁴ He reflected the world in calm philosophical waters. If he occasionally stood in thrall to life’s storm clouds, he was equally capable of apprehending their dull shadows, life’s ascetic side. James saw this as a sign of moral objectivity: Turgenev took “a view of the great spectacle of human life more general, more impartial, more unreservedly intelligent than that of any novelist we know”.⁷⁵ When he did descend into the darker haunts of human reality, his polish protected both prudish clergymen and squeamish aesthetes from the hard edges of unsavoury topics.⁷⁶ As James wrote of the short story, “The Brigadier”: “Never did Romance stoop over a lower case of moral decomposition, but never did she gather more of the perfume of human truth”.⁷⁷ To a reviewer in the *Spectator*, Turgenev’s measured view of the world was more English than French: “[Turgenev had] special traits which particularly endear him to English readers ... For in spite of his personal intimacy with the founders and disciples of the so-called school of naturalism ... he never confused the standpoint of the realist with that of the student of morbid sociology”.⁷⁸

English appreciation of Turgenev’s women reveals more of his ability to traverse boundaries and to win sympathy in opposing camps. He offended neither the Decadents or Aesthetes with Mrs. Grundies nor the temperance league with Marie Corelli’s voluptuous libertines. Sober, idealistic and highly principled, Turgenev’s young heroines were seen as

⁷² Moore, “Turgeneff”, 238, 245.

⁷³ [Oscar Wilde] *Pall Mall Gazette* (2 May 1887) 11.

⁷⁴ Kaufmann, “Ivan Serguievitch Tourgenieff”, 39.

⁷⁵ A sentiment quoted by Monkhouse, in “Turgenieff”, 118.

⁷⁶ See for example, R.G. Burton, “An Appreciation of Russian Fictional Literature”, *Westminster Review* 144 no. 5 (November 1895) 539.

⁷⁷ Henry James, *French Poets*, 278.

⁷⁸ “Tourguéneff’s Last Stories” [review of I Tourguéneff, *Oeuvres Dernières* (Paris: Hetzel et Cie.)], *Spectator* 59 [Literary Supplement] (10 July 1886) 931.

“radiant with maidenly charm... addicted to none of those *chatteries* which French romancers consider the “adorable” thing in women”.⁷⁹ Yet it was a charm which, according to the *London Quarterly Review* had been “worked out without the least trace of mawkish sentiment”.⁸⁰ It is notable that, in their best traits, Turgenev’s heroines resemble the idealised woman worshipped at the height of the Victorian era. Fulfilling the criteria set out by Ruskin, they are helpmeets, “infallibly faithful and wise counsellors, – incorruptibly just and pure examples – strong always to sanctify, even when they cannot save.”⁸¹ Yet feminist critics equally delighted in them: “All the critics concur in finding Tourgenief’s heroines far superior to his male creations” gloated one JM (Julie Mitchell) in the *Temple Bar*. “They initiate and carry out of the boldest designs without faltering, without repenting, without repining.... we are proud to claim them as of our sex.”⁸²

In the 1880s and 1890s, Turgenev’s triumph of realism over vulgarity satisfied even the harshest critics, and his influence was felt in every quarter. George Moore damned his old master Zola with his endless irrelevant facts and apprenticed himself to the Russian.⁸³ Ford Madox Ford, Stephen Crane, and Conrad studied him devotedly. And as Ford asked himself “a hundred times”: “If there had been no Turgenev what would have become of Galsworthy? ... What would Galsworthy have become?”⁸⁴ Bennett hoped to benefit by unlocking the secrets of this “great master of the modern novel”. “[I]t occurs to me, is indeed forced on me, that I know practically nothing yet of *development* of character”, he wrote in his journal in 1897.

In drawing character, Turgenev generally begins by sketching the previous history of the person almost from birth, with piquant gossip detail. The reader, therefore, is made personally acquainted with the character to start with. A simple trick this, in essence. Yet what perfect art Turgenev puts into the composition of these little biographies!⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Henry James, *French Poets*, 275, 286–7.

⁸⁰ Kaufmann, “Ivan Serguievitch Tourgenieff”, 51.

⁸¹ John Ruskin, “Sesame and Lilies”, *The Works of John Ruskin* 18 (London: George Allen; New York: Longman’s, Green, and Co., 1905) 114.

⁸² JM, “Characteristics of Russian Literature”, *Temple Bar* (June 1890) 217–8. The Wellesley Index attributes this article to Julie Mitchell.

⁸³ Helmut E. Gerber, editor, *George Moore in Transition, Letters to T. Fisher Unwin and Lena Milman, 1894–1910* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968) 115–6, 123, 230. For Turgenev’s influence on Moore, see also, Gilbert Phelps, *The Russian Novel in English Fiction*, 96–109.

⁸⁴ Ford Madox Ford, *Mightier than the Sword* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938) 166.

⁸⁵ See for example, Arnold Bennett’s journal entry, 12 October 1897, *The Journals of Arnold Bennett*, vol. 1, edited by Newman Flower (London: Cassell and Company, 1932) 17–18.

Gissing's struggle to achieve Turgenev's concise method of "merely suggesting" is hinted at in his semi-autobiographical novel *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903) where his memoirist laments: "Oh, why has it not been granted to me in all my long years of pen-labour to write something small and perfect".⁸⁶ In 1897, Henry James could write: "Turgenev is in a peculiar degree what I may call the novelists' novelist – an artistic influence extraordinarily valuable and ineradicably established."⁸⁷

In this phase of Turgenev's reception, the widespread aesthetic appreciation of his novels occluded any discussion of the impact of Russia's political scene on their construction. Henry James even remarked that the very suggestion of any political bias occurring in Turgenev's works was far-fetched:

The Memoirs of a Sportsman ... were regarded, says one of the two French translators of the work, as much the same sort of contribution to the question of Russian serfdom as Mrs. Stowe's famous novel [*Uncle Tom's Cabin*]. This is perhaps forcing a point, for M. Turgenev's tales strike us much less as a passionate *pièce de circonstance* than as a disinterested work of art.⁸⁸

Other writers rhapsodised over the local colour in Turgenev's novels – they loved his Russian landscapes, his rural squirearchies, his decaying country-houses and their ineffectual Hamlet-like occupants – but ignored the relevance of these scenes to Russia as a nation. His pictures, based on the observation of minute (and indeed, very Russian) particulars, seemed to invite, as Henry James said, only "universal appreciation".⁸⁹ For Joseph Conrad, Turgenev's Russians were equivalent to Shakespeare's Italians: types generated from some universal and timeless design. As he wrote to Edward Garnett, "Russia is but a canvas on which the incomparable artist of humanity lays his colours and his forms in the great light and the free air of the world."⁹⁰

⁸⁶ I am indebted to Glyn Turton for this observation, Turton, *Turgenev and the Context of English Literature*, 109. The quote can be found in George Gissing, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Westminster: Archibald Constable Co, 1903).

⁸⁷ Henry James, "Turgenev and Tolstoy", *The House of Fiction, Essays on the Novel*. Edited with introduction by Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957) 168. This essay was first published by *The Library of the World's Best Literature* (New York, 1897).

⁸⁸ Henry James, *French Poets*, 281.

⁸⁹ Henry James, *French Poets*, 275.

⁹⁰ Joseph Conrad, Foreword to *Turgenev, A Study*, by Edward Garnett (London: W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1917) vii.

Yet there was a blindness in this vision. It meant that authors missed an essential component of Turgenev's method: his use of Russia's socio-political forces and precise historical moments as the raw material for building characters. A clear example of this blindness can be seen in Henry James's novel *The Princess Casamassima*. Much has been written about the influence of Turgenev, and particularly his novel *Virgin Soil*, upon the *Princess*. Daniel Lerner pioneered the study in "The Influence of Turgenev on Henry James", by drawing attention to the similarities between James' Hyacinth and Turgenev's hero, Nezhdanov.⁹¹ W.H. Tilley, in his monograph, *The Background of The Princess Casamassima*, adds parallels in plot: "both are natural sons of noblemen, become conspirators, attract aristocratic ladies and then lose them to revolutionary comrades, become disillusioned with socialism, and kill themselves rather than continue their careers as revolutionists."⁹² Lerner also shows how James developed Turgenev's method of dramatising information, using "vivid facts" rather than giving it to the reader in "a direct statement."

Yet the similarities between the novels underscore their differences. Turgenev's plot was born of his knowledge of the Populist movement in Russia – a movement both widespread and well-documented. His hero was a representative of the younger generation of the progressive movement to which he himself had belonged. The crisis Nezhdanov undergoes – his inability to narrow his outlook enough to accept the dogma of the revolutionary faith – was understandable in a country where the rise of radicalism took place alongside a broad cultural awakening. In England, meanwhile, bombing and assassination plots were limited to Fenians, and while secret intrigues took place in sensational novels and were hinted at in the *Times*, their existence was based upon rumour, not fact. As Glyn Turton has observed, England's social movements were mostly overt: "If James was trying to take the pulse of English political life in 1884–5, he was feeling in the wrong place. He would have done better to undertake the altogether more difficult task of dramatising the life of Bernard Shaw and the Webbs."⁹³ In borrowing the plot and theme from *Virgin Soil*, James transposes them to an environment in which they can only be alien. He furnishes the

⁹¹ Daniel Lerner, "The Influence of Turgenev on Henry James", *Slavonic Year-Book. American Series* 1 (1941) 47–53.

⁹² W.H. Tilley, *The Background of The Princess Casamassima*, *University of Florida Monographs, Humanities* No. 5 (Fall 1960) 3.

story with local details in order to give it ‘the breath of life’, but the plot itself remains little more than a frame on which to hang a series of impressions and vivid portraits. It is not real, not historically based, except insofar as it borrows details from reports of revolutionary conspiracies on the continent and in Russia. Even its protagonist, Hyacinth, like the reader and the author of the novel, remains ignorant of the revolution’s inner mechanisms.

James’s contrived setting nonetheless provided him with the opportunity to test his hero morally, and to study him psychologically. And Hyacinth’s responses to his situation have the air of truth insofar as they scan ontologically: the enormous appeal the Princess’s artful antics hold for his aesthetic side; his jealousy over the her interest in the more impressive conspirator Paul Muniment; the comfort he derives from the familiar company of his childhood friend Millicent Henning, notwithstanding her vulgarity; his bewilderment at the ability of Muniment to disengage ideology from the ties of friendship. These all belong to the category of ‘transcendent truths’, they tell us about typical human responses, no matter how far-fetched we find James’s London of seething widespread conspiracies to be. Turton points out: “while for Turgenev art was conditional upon life, for James it reigned supreme and transcendent over all other human issues, absolute in its importance and surpassing (because transmuting) even those ethical dilemmas and historical necessities that are its raw material.”⁹⁴

George Moore also overlooked the determining power of historical ‘brute fact’ on Turgenev’s work. What absorbed Moore were the subtle moments in Turgenev when the complex relations existing between characters revealed themselves: in *Spring Torrents*, for example, when the young coquette turns on her heel, and the young hero glimpses the back of her neck. Moore’s discussion of the young revolutionaries in *Virgin Soil* ignores the context of political unrest in which these characters operate, focusing only on Turgenev’s mastery of effect: “this writer’s special power seems to be in his skill in instantly laying bare not the body but rather the nerve of an emotion or passion, in indicating that which is most individual and constitutional in a character”.⁹⁵

If Turgenev’s aesthetic appeal drowned out interest in his political voice, it also diminished his reputation as a purveyor of wisdom about Russia. Gettman discusses at some

⁹³ Glyn Turton, *Turgenev and the Context of English Literature 1850–1900* (London, New York: Routledge, 1992) 85–6.

⁹⁴ Turton, *Turgenev*, 90.

⁹⁵ Moore, “Turgeneff”, 245.

length debates about Turgenev's Russianness in this period in *Turgenev in England and in America*, concluding, "the faith in Turgenev's national authenticity overweighed the doubt of it."⁹⁶ Yet a survey of even those critics who devoted paragraphs to re-establishing his Slavic credentials suggests that what they gave with one hand, they tended to take with the other. George Moore, for example, refutes the idea that "he is more western in form than his illustrious compeers Tolstoi and Dostoieffsky", but then goes on to credit his literary finish with preparing "the western mind for the immense bumpers or vats of admittedly *real* Russian home-brew which are now being consumed in every civilised country".⁹⁷ George Brandes, who insists Turgenev is "oriental", claims his manner, at least, is French: "if his long residence in France has not increased the stock of poetry which he brought with him from his home, yet he has plainly learned there the art of setting his pictures in frame and glass".⁹⁸ His reputation as a Russian also suffered comparison with his countrymen, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, whose less obvious craftsmanship and 'raw' flavour gave them an aura of greater Slavic authenticity.

Theirs is more the passionless realism of a faultless photographing camera, which may not choose, reject, harmonize, subdue; which must picture the wayside dungheap as faithfully as the lordly castle above it on the height ... This kind of faithfulness in portraying human life has been more steadily observed perhaps by Tolstoi and by Dostoieffsky than by Turgenieff, who, familiar with French models, conformed to them not unwillingly, and did not despise the motto of "Art for Art's sake."⁹⁹

Nor was the view of Turgenev as a Frenchman confined to England. In Annie Besant's journal *Our Corner*, there appeared an article on Russian literature, translated from French, blaming Turgenev's continental refinement for his poor estimation of his fellow Russians:

The qualities of Tourgueneff, racy, complex, ripe, refined, expanded under the rays of the older and luxurious countries, contrasted in truth too much with the robust and repressed youth of his own land, to avoid his feeling a shock at hearing his native accent ... perhaps this dainty artist was revolted

⁹⁶ Gettmann, *Turgenev in England and America*, 134.

⁹⁷ Moore, "Turgeneff", 240. My emphasis.

⁹⁸ Georg Brandes, *Impressions of Russia*, 273.

⁹⁹ "Two Russian Realists" *London Quarterly Review* 70 n.s. 10 (April 1888) 57. See also, *Temple Bar* (June 1890) 216: "Tourgenieff has caught something of the *Western spirit of harmony and proportion*. His work is, as we say, more artistic."

by coarseness.... Dostoïevski has better understood his fellow-countrymen, and all their soul has passed into his.¹⁰⁰

The idea that Turgenev's art undermined the credibility of his works as pictures of Russia, was suggested by Allan Monkhouse more subtly: "we may make the distinction that Tolstoi gives a direct transcript from Nature, so that 'what it loses in art it gains in reality,' while Turgenieff in the compromise between what is perceived and what is imagined, gives to imagination a larger share".¹⁰¹

On the whole, the excitement with which writers embraced Turgenev's dramatic method, his psychological realism, and his exquisite selection, eclipsed both interest in the political insights to be found in his novels, and their bearing on his artistic design. The preoccupation with *form* caused many writers to overlook the degree to which Russia's social *matter* impressed upon this form. It is not until Stepniak and other émigrés reconnect criticism of Turgenev with Russia's social and historical situation, that we see an apprehension of the organic relationship between Turgenev's heroes and Russian society beginning to emerge.

Phase Four: 1895–: The Nihilists' Novelist

It is worthwhile, at this point, to recap Turgenev's British reputation before the arrival of Stepniak and others on the literary-critical scene: Turgenev is seen as an aristocrat, an extremely cultured individual, and a wonderful stylist. Amongst those who *do* think about politics when they read his novels, he is seen as a critic of Russia's Nihilist movement. And amongst those who belong to the "art for arts sake" contingent, he is regarded as having no interest in politics at all.

Stepniak's motive in writing about Turgenev can be discovered in some of the words used to describe the author that were already in currency: "refined", "cultivated", and "aristocratic". These were not words that were often used to describe revolutionaries and Nihilists. The damaging article in the January 1894 issue of the *New Review* had depicted Nihilists as "reckless ruffians", and "criminals ... of the lowest and most determined

¹⁰⁰ Francis Nautet, "Russia and its Literature", *Our Corner* VIII, no. 4 (1 October 1886) 241.

¹⁰¹ Monkhouse, "Turgenieff", 148.

type”.¹⁰² In the *Temple Bar*, they were disparaged for their “crude ideas” and labelled, along with the rest of Russia, as “half-barbarous and plunged in utter ignorance”.¹⁰³ “Refined, cultivated, and aristocratic” were however attributes that Stepniak consistently applied to Russian Nihilists in his own propaganda. In *Underground Russia* he had typified the Russian revolutionary as “the slender and delicate descendant of a noble race”.¹⁰⁴ In a subsequent volume, *The Russian Stormcloud* (1886), he wrote “[Nihilists] are ... more often than not, well-educated, refined, and belonging to the best society”.¹⁰⁵ The statement mirrored Brandes’s view that Turgenev “inherited his intellectual refinement, and has always lived in the best society”. By appropriating Turgenev to the anti-Tsarist cause, Stepniak was hoping to replace some of the revolution’s stench of violence with Turgenev’s “aroma of purity”;¹⁰⁶ to draw links between the Nihilist movement and the ‘elevated’ society inhabited by the author, to dismantle the old stereotype of Nihilist as Barbarian.

This involved re-writing Turgenev’s existing English reputation. For one, Stepniak had to topple the notion – still lingering from the early 1880s – that Turgenev was a fierce critic of his Nihilist heroes. He also had to dislodge the prevailing belief among aesthetes that politics were not really integral to Turgenev’s novels at all.

Stepniak started this process in his early books of propaganda. As we have seen, in *Underground Russia* he named Russian revolutionaries ‘Nihilists’ in order to attract attention in Europe, where readers were already familiar with Turgenev’s fictional Nihilist, Bazarov. The obstacle he encountered in so doing was the negative accretions which had already grown up around Turgenev’s hero. In *Underground Russia*, Stepniak rewrites Bazarov’s reputation, providing what is only the second sympathetic reading of the hero to appear in England (the first being Charles Turner’s in *Macmillan’s Magazine*).¹⁰⁷ He explains that although Bazarov’s nihilism was ultimately antithetical to the Russian democratic spirit of self-sacrifice, it was an essential stage in Russia’s development. It marked a “breaking down of the despotic *régime* of Nicholas”. It was “an impassioned

¹⁰² “Anarchists: Their Methods and Organisation”, 3. The same article identified Stepniak as the assassin of the St. Petersburg Chief of Police.

¹⁰³ J.M. “Characteristics of Russian Literature”, 210.

¹⁰⁴ Sergei Stepniak, *Underground Russia, Revolutionary Profiles and Sketches from Life* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1883) 12.

¹⁰⁵ Sergei Stepniak, *The Russian Stormcloud; or, Russia in Her Relations to Neighbouring Countries* (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1886) 179.

¹⁰⁶ Henry James, *French Poets*, 293.

¹⁰⁷ Turner, “Tourgenieff’s Novels”, 474.

protest against the former annihilation of the individual.” The movement is made all the less threatening to the English because Stepniak confines its efficacy to Russia: “With all its exaggerations and mistakes it was a grand movement, for its basis was sound, and its effect most beneficial in a country like ours.” One of its great achievements, says Stepniak, flattering his western readers, was that it engrafted “upon Russia the proud Western conception of individuality which struck root, and will spread with every generation.”¹⁰⁸ Having captured his audience with Bazarov, Stepniak then launches into a description of the present day Nihilists, imputing to them some of the late Victorian virtues missing in Turgenev’s hero.

In *The Russian Stormcloud* (1886), a book aimed at dissociating the Nihilists from pan-Slavonic aggressiveness, Stepniak reproduced a short vignette by Turgenev which seemed to link the author more closely with the movement. “The Threshold” was one of a collection of eighty-three miniatures, written mostly from 1877 to 1879, comprising Turgenev’s last work, *Senilia*.¹⁰⁹ In the first Russian edition of these miniatures, entitled *Poems in Prose*, only fifty “poems” were published. “The Threshold” was not among them; it first appeared in print in 1883 in the revolutionary organ *The People’s Will*. This so-called “prose dream”, in which a young girl shows herself willing to commit a crime – suggestive of an assassination attempt – was omitted from an English edition of *Senilia*, published in 1890.¹¹⁰ After Stepniak’s translation in 1886, the passage would not appear in English again until Roger Rees’s translation of 1951.

At first sight, “The Threshold” is an ambiguous passage. A Russian girl stands before an open door, beyond which stretches “dismal darkness”. She is questioned by a voice which asks her if she is willing to suffer “cold, hunger, hatred, derision, contempt, insults, prison suffering, even death”. She replies in the affirmative. Darker questions follow. After she has answered that she is ready, even, if need be, “for a crime”, she passes through the symbolic “threshold”. As she does so, one voice gnashes, “A fool” and another answers, “A saint”. Turgenev’s use of the word “gnash” to describe the action of the voice calling out, “A fool”, puts his sympathies with the “saint” interpretation. Stepniak’s commentary reinforces this impression: to him the miniature illustrates “the deeply tragical

¹⁰⁸ James, *French Poets*, 101.

¹⁰⁹ A.V. Knowles, *Ivan Turgenev* (Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1988) 117.

position of Russians devoted to their country".¹¹¹ Stepniak's translation was reproduced under the title "The Russian Nihilist" in Annie Besant's collectivist socialist monthly, *Our Corner*. Its authenticity is validated in a post-script: "This vision is not to be found of course in the censured [sic] edition of Ivan Turgeneff's work. It appeared in the clandestine press, and Mr. P. Lavroff, to whom "The Threshold" was read by the author in the summer of 1882, at Baujiral [sic], bears testimony to its fidelity to the original."¹¹²

Stepniak's preface to *Rudin* appropriates Turgenev to the cause directly, painting him, more or less, as a Nihilist himself. He identifies the author as one of the most active contributors to Herzen's *Kolokol*, "a revolutionary, or rather radical paper", and as "one of the strongest ... and most clear-sighted political thinkers of his time". Turgenev's great "love of liberty" and "radical views", says Stepniak, meant that he naturally incorporated politics into his literary work, "no matter how great his devotion to pure art". He was "the standard-bearer and inspirer of the Liberal, the thinking Russia."¹¹³ Stepniak also connects the author with the intelligentsia about whom he writes: "In Turgenev's novels we see only educated Russia, or rather the more advanced thinking part of it, which he knew best, because he was a part of it himself":

Although small numerically, the section of Russian society which Turgenev represents is enormously interesting, because it is the brain of the nation, the living ferment which alone can leaven the huge unformed masses. It is upon them that depend the destinies of their country.¹¹⁴

As Richard Freeborn has noted in *The Russian Revolutionary Novel*, "such a 'brain of the nation' ... had a literariness to it in Stepniak's case that attributed to literature as mighty a role in causing revolution as the heroic act itself". Stepniak bears out Freeborn's view. To him, Turgenev was not merely "a poet and artist": "he was a teacher, a prophet of new ideas".¹¹⁵ His novels were "a powerful instrument of [Russia's] intellectual progress".¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Turgenev, *Senilia, Poems in Prose*, translated by S.J. Macmullan (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith; London: Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1890).

¹¹¹ Stepniak, *The Russian Stormcloud* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1886) 44.

¹¹² "The Russian Nihilist", *Our Corner* 8, 5 (1 November 1886) 306.

¹¹³ *Rudin*, xvi, xvii.

¹¹⁴ Stepniak, *Rudin*, xi.

¹¹⁵ Stepniak, *Rudin*, xvii.

¹¹⁶ Stepniak, *Rudin*, xviii.

Persuading the English that Turgenev had affinities with the Anti-Tsarist camp was one thing, but changing their estimation of Turgenev's characters and aesthetic intentions was quite another. The English had to be taught to read Turgenev like a Dobrolyubov. It was here that Stepniak's reputation as a well-known exile and Nihilist insider came to his aid. While the comparisons that had been made between him and Turgenev after the publication of *Underground Russia* and *The Career of a Nihilist* were not uniformly flattering, they did give him his views on the subjects of both Turgenev and Russia's Nihilists a certain authority. The politics Stepniak breathes into the novels that had been anaesthetised by James were the opposite to those propounded by Mrs. Oliphant and the *Saturday Review*. Capitalising on his cachet as an expert on Russian revolutionaries, he introduces details which are not explicitly there: details about things like political repression, censorship, Tsarist despotism, and the various epochs of Russia's own intellectual awakening. He strives to see Turgenev's works in their connection with the progressive ideological quest of the 1840s to 1870s and as one of the facts of this quest. In so doing, Stepniak brings to English criticism a very Russian way of understanding how the behaviour, complexes and actions of each of Turgenev's protagonists were moulded by the political and social forces of his age.

A case in point is *Rudin*'s eponymous hero – one of the feckless and windy phrase-mongers whose 'nostrums' were so derided in the English press. Rudin is the epitome of the man of words and no action. He seduces a Russian household with his education and eloquence; he captivates them with fiery poetic speeches on themes such as liberty and free thought, but he is incapable of becoming anything greater than a parasite on the society he entertains. Stepniak portrays Rudin as an enlightened progressive, whose inaction is a consequence of a regime in which he has no outlet for his talents. Rudin is weak, because in Russia there is no such thing as a constitution. He is both a "hero and a victim of his time" says Stepniak, rendered impotent by "the ferocious despotism of Nicholas I overweighing the country like the stone lid of a coffin, crush[ing] every thought, which did not fit with its narrow conceptions."¹¹⁷ In Stepniak's formulation, Rudin's very weakness legitimises the case against the Tsar. And by extension, Turgenev's creation of this half-man is a political message. Stepniak's technique of regarding the author's heroes as victims of their social and political epoch – of judging the regime by the protagonist – recalls Dobrolyubov. But how different was this *materialist*, almost Marxist, viewpoint from the English critical tradition,

borne in a century of Victorian reformism, where notions of individual responsibility, moral development and self-betterment held sway.

Stepniak's next preface was to Garnett's translation of *A House of Gentlefolk* (1894). Since Ralston's version, *Liza*, this had been Turgenev's best known work in England, and was regarded as a 'romantic' domestic novel. Stepniak uses the hero Lavretsky to expound a chapter in the genesis of Russia's democratic awakening, casting him as the "exponent of the [story's] idea", and Rudin's successor. To Stepniak, Lavretsky is the "living and concrete" embodiment of "a great movement which passed before Turgenev's eyes, leaving a profound mark on the growth of democratic ideas in our country". This was the Slavophile movement of the 1850s, when a segment of the intelligentsia which believed in Russia's superiority over the West decided that the regeneration of the world would come from "the humble cottages" of the uncorrupted peasants.¹¹⁸ Their programme was to "live amongst the people", both as missionaries of "the democratic idea", and in order to study their customs and social arrangements. While none of this is explicit in Turgenev's novel, Stepniak suggests that Lavretsky's resolution "to cultivate the land", is a clear marker to Russians – familiar with "the reticence which considerations of censorship impose upon their writers" – that the hero is a "reformer", indeed a "revolutionist".¹¹⁹ Stepniak even goes as far as to equate the gentle Lavretsky with Turgenev's later hero, Solomon, the frank revolutionary of *Virgin Soil*. The heroine, Lisa, meanwhile, represents the "earnest virgin soul" of Russia, upon which this movement had to work. She is capable of great medieval self-abnegation, but filled with immense potential: "there must always be hope for a country where men can count upon the support of such women".¹²⁰

Stepniak's essay, besides being a lesson in the complex history of Russia's progressive movement, puts Turgenev on side with his own views and prejudices. A staunch Westerner himself, Stepniak expresses disagreement with the fundamental premise of the Slavophile movement: its acceptance of both the autocracy and the orthodox church because of their appeal to the masses. But he accepts it as an essential stage in the movement towards revolution, when Rudin's impotent progressivism was infused with "the vivifying and invigorating national element". This mirrors the opinion he gave of orientalism in his

¹¹⁷ Stepniak, *Rudin*, xxi, xix.

¹¹⁸ Stepniak, *A House of Gentlefolk*, x, xii.

¹¹⁹ Stepniak, *A House of Gentlefolk*, xi.

¹²⁰ Stepniak, *A House of Gentlefolk*, ix.

Tolstoy lecture: “Engrafted upon the solid vigorous stem of strongly materialistic Greco-Roman culture this oriental principle has been a stimulant of a new life and progress”, but alone it creates nothing “but desolation and dead stagnancy”.¹²¹ Yet in his criticism of *The House of Gentlefolk*, Stepniak encounters a difficulty. In the novel, Turgenev has created a character called Panshin, a representative Westerner who operates as a foil to Lavretsky. The views Panshin expresses are close to Stepniak’s own: his belief, for example, that Russia is to be saved through the implementation of western-style democratic institutions. However, Panshin evokes the least sympathy of any of the novel’s characters; he is full of hollow pretensions, a handsome empty dandy who flaunts his western cosmopolitanism. In discourse with Lavretsky, it is the latter who, with his quiet, humble conservatism, his Victorian chastity, is the clear winner. He is, as Stepniak asserts, “a solid oak”.¹²² A reading of the novel according to traditional codes of interpretation would put Turgenev firmly on the side of the Slavophiles. Lest the English mistake Turgenev’s intentions, Stepniak gives evidence proving the author to be “an implacable enemy of Slavophilism”, entirely “free of from any influence of [Slavophile] aberrations”.¹²³ He then suggests Turgenev created a sort of ideologically hybrid hero, deliberately divesting him of the Slavophile movement’s more unpalatable tendencies, while retaining its reforming impetus: “It would not answer Turgenev’s purposes to ascribe to his hero all the hobbies of his co-religionists, because it would make him a comical figure”.¹²⁴ What is left is Lavretsky’s (and Turgenev’s) unidealised love for the Russian people and commitment to the revolution. The novel’s purpose becomes clear: *The House of Gentlefolk* “is the poem of the youth of the Russian democracy, the birth of which Turgenev has discovered and hailed in this fresh and pathetic story.”¹²⁵

With their focus on the intelligentsia, Turgenev’s novels lent themselves to Stepniak’s purposes well. In his own propaganda, Stepniak was prone to exaggerate the role of the intelligentsia. As one Soviet commentator remarked, he considered it “the most active social force and sought within it the embodiment of his positive ideal”.¹²⁶ His depiction of

¹²¹ See Appendix.

¹²² Stepniak, *A House of Gentlefolk*, xvi.

¹²³ Stepniak, *A House of Gentlefolk*, xv, xiv.

¹²⁴ Stepniak, *A House of Gentlefolk*, xv.

¹²⁵ Stepniak, *A House of Gentlefolk*, xvii.

¹²⁶ My translation. S. Stepniak-Kravchinsky. *Sochinenia*, 2 vols (Moskva: Gosydarstvenoye izdatelstvo hydoshestvenoi literatury, 1958) 602.

Turgenev's intelligent heroes as representative stages of a movement in the process of maturation allowed him to attribute their less commendable traits to historical exigencies, while extolling the movement as a whole. It was in acknowledging the limits of Turgenev's heroes (and anti-heroes) that Stepniak brought the author on side as a progressive witness of "unique sobriety".¹²⁷

Ironically, one of the first émigrés to publicise Turgenev's radical propensities was the reactionary, monarchist Madame Novikov. Novikov routinely disparaged Turgenev in society for his Nihilist sympathies: a woman who met her at Mrs. Ritchie's, recalled that she accused the novelist of having "no backbone".¹²⁸ Henry Sidgwick reported that "[Novikov] holds that not only Puschkin but Gogol should be ranked above Turgenieff."¹²⁹ In 1885, she would commit her views to print.

Novikov's article should be seen in its context. In 1884 there had been a series of bombings in London perpetrated by young Fenians: at Scotland Yard on 30 May, and, in December, a damaging explosion on London Bridge. In January 1885, Novikov would link Fenian terrorism with Russian émigré Nihilists in William Stead's *Pall Mall Gazette*. "The Russification of England" castigated the English for harbouring Russian revolutionaries: "Where was Hartmann sheltered and Krapotkin lionized, and Stepniak accepted as a great authority, all the while they plotted murder against us in Russia?". Such men, Novikov warns, have "converted Englishmen to Russian views on the subject of murder and assassination".¹³⁰

Novikov's article, "The Letters of Tourgenieff" appeared on 29 December 1884, not long after the London Bridge incident, and can be seen as part of her programmatic debunking of Russian Nihilists. Comparing the recent appearance of Turgenev's letters with the publication of last two volumes of the letters of Thomas Carlyle, she cautions against drawing favourable comparisons between the two authors. Carlyle "was an heroic character, a prophet of righteousness, lifting up his voice in a ceaseless protest against the favourite superstitions of his contemporaries, such as their fanatical faith in constitutionalism". Turgenev, in contrast, "was much greater as an author than as a man, and was conspicuously

¹²⁷ Stepniak, *A House of Gentlefolk*, xiv.

¹²⁸ Anonymous, *Echoes of the 'Eighties, Leaves from the Diary of a Victorian Lady* (London: Eveleigh Nash Company, 1921) 133.

¹²⁹ Henry Sidgwick, Diary entry for 6 August 1884, in Arthur Sidgwick and Eleanor M. Sidgwick, *Henry Sidgwick, A Memoir* (London: Macmilland and Co., 1906) 384.

weak where Carlyle was courageously strong". Novikov deplores Turgenev's financial support of Nihilist organs, and his friendly relations with Kropotkin and Lavrov. Bazarov she blames for producing scores of men who "have hesitated at no crime against their country and her best and first representative – the Emperor". To dispel any doubts about Turgenev's attachment to his Nihilist protagonist, she quotes him as saying: "he was my favourite hero". "Of course, this will not be regarded as offensive by many Englishmen", she asserts, "who only think the use of dynamite objectionable when it is employed on London Bridge or St. James's-square; but to Russians dynamitards are equally enemies of the human race, whether they are called Nihilists or Invincibles, and Tourgénéff's patronage of the assassins is a deplorable blot on the fame of our great author." Finally, she attempts to diminish England's estimation of the author by citing his abandonment of his country for Pauline Viardot, a "Jewish artist, who naturally was no friend of Russia"; by instancing his belief in England's hatred of Russia, which she casts as ingratitude and double-dealing; and by striking a blow at the very features for which Turgenev was most loved: "In spite of his fascinating charm, his culture, his manners, Tourgénéff was one of the weakest characters that we had."¹³¹ As Waddington points out, for Novikov, "Turgenev symbolised the slow decline of Russia into anarchy and self-destruction."¹³² Yet her description of his political sympathies, while typical of the Russian government's view of Turgenev in the 1880s, must have surprised English readers so recently instructed by critics to read in his novels an indictment of revolutionary aims.

In 1898, Volkhovsky added evidence of Turgenev's radicalism in a substantial article which appeared in *Free Russia*. The occasion for the article was the publication in English in 1898 of *Tourguéneff and His French Circle*, a volume of the author's French correspondence which made him appear to the English more as a Frenchman than a Russian. Volkhovsky writes sarcastically, saying he is "delighted" with the collection of letters, which show that English admiration for Turgenev has transformed itself into "devotion, almost adoration, of the personality of their creator", in which "any trifle associated with the great personality is of value because it is a relic."¹³³ Yet his essay betrays anxiety lest Turgenev's national affinities and political aspirations be misunderstood.

¹³⁰ Madame Novikoff, "The Russification of England", *Pall Mall Gazette* 41 (15 January 1885) 1–2.

¹³¹ Madame Olga de Novikoff, "The Letters of Tourgenieff", *Pall Mall Gazette* (29 December 1884) 5–6.

¹³² Patrick Waddington, *Turgenev and England*, 34.

¹³³ F. Volkhovsky, "Ivan S. Tourguenev", *Free Russia* 9,4 (1 April 1898) 26–29, 26.

Volkhovsky's anxiety makes sense when read in the light of the preface to the volume, penned by its translator, Ethel M. Arnold, Matthew Arnold's niece, and younger sister to the novelist and Somerville College co-founder Mrs. Humphry Ward. Arnold lived in Rome, in exile from an unsupportive Victorian family "which focused on her social status as spinster instead of her creative potential as author".¹³⁴ She makes two suggestions which did not accord with the typical radical portrait of Turgenev: firstly, that Turgenev felt alienated from the revolutionary movement; secondly, that he felt greater affinity with the French than with Russians. Arnold wonders, "if Tourguéneff was so full of sympathy with all the various manifestations of human feeling, why did he not show more active sympathy with the political aspirations and struggles of his fellow-countrymen?" She concludes that Turgenev's estrangement from the young Russia movement came about because his character was too "naturally sane, candid, and balanced" for him to "readily associate himself with a movement marked from the outset by a certain effervescence and extravagance". She looks to his novels for proof of this conviction. Turgenev, she says, was convinced of "the futility" of the Bazarov type. He painted his country men "mercilessly" so that they might "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" his lesson. As for Turgenev's Russianness, Arnolds opines, "[he] chose ... to fix his home among people with whom he felt a strong intellectual sympathy", and this is why he lived in France.¹³⁵

While Arnold's views on Turgenev may have reflected her own feelings of alienation from English society, Volkhovsky's objections to these views equally reflected his own feelings as an unwilling exile from a country he loved: "whatever the number of years spent by [Turgenev] in France," writes Volkhovsky, "his soul was certainly not in that country nor with his French friends", but far "away on the snowy plains, in green woods, in dingy peasant huts, or in the midst of ideal Russian youths discussing ... 'cursed questions'".¹³⁶ Volkhovsky reviles the superficial correspondence between Turgenev and his French acquaintance – they contain nothing passionate, soul-exploring, or political. Far more illuminating is "a small volume of Turgenev's letters to the Russian Alexander Herzen" published by Dragoman in 1891. Volkhovsky also takes issue with the notion that Turgenev distanced himself from the revolutionary movement. He paints Turgenev not only

¹³⁴ Phyllis Wachter, introduction to *Platonics, A Study* by Ethel M. Arnold (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995) x.

¹³⁵ Ethel M. Arnold, *Tourguéneff and His French Circle* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898) ix, xi, x, xi.

¹³⁶ F. Volkhovsky, "Ivan S. Tourguenev" 26.

as a sympathiser with revolutionaries, but as an active agent: Turgenev “watches Herzen’s activity... suggests articles [for the radical journal *Kolokol*], supplies him with all kinds of valuable information and documents, warns him against possible dangers and tries to arrange for the translation of Herzen’s writings into French.” He even draws upon his “extensive circle of friends in official circles” for Herzen’s benefit, “to keep in check the reactionary elements of the Government.” Ultimately, however, Turgenev fails abysmally to rise to his convictions. Like Novikov, Volkhovsky bemoans Turgenev’s innate weakness, but where Novikov damns Turgenev for pandering to the revolutionaries, Volkhovsky damns him for not standing by them enough:

...in 1882, when *Le Temps* called the famous revolutionist, P. Lavrov, “Tourguenev’s friend,” [he] inserted in that paper a letter, in which he treated Lavrov the same way in which St. Peter treated Christ after his capture. Later on he wrote to Lavrov asking him not to take this in bad part. Tourguenev being a man of an exceptionally broad mind, sublime humanitarianism and enormous creative powers, lacked the strong will which is so much tried in every Russian who takes any political line of action.¹³⁷

Notwithstanding Volkhovsky’s ambivalent take on Turgenev, his assignation to him of radical political views was one more factor contributing to his transformation from monarchist to revolutionary.

Kropotkin furthered this process in his *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*. Here he relates telling anecdotes about Turgenev, whom he met in Paris through a “common friend”— the same Lavrov mentioned by Volkhovsky. “One day,” writes Kropotkin “as we were returning in a carriage from a visit to Antokólsky’s studio, [Turgenev] asked me what I thought of Bazárov. I frankly replied, “Bazárov is an admirable painting of the Nihilist, but one feels that you did not love him as much as you did your other heroes.” To this, Turgenev replies “with unexpected vigor”: “On the contrary, I loved him, intensely loved him. ... When we get home I will show you my diary, in which I have noted how I wept when I had ended the novel with Bazárov’s death”. Kropotkin’s Turgenev “identified himself with the nihilist philosophy of his hero”, so much so, “that he even kept a diary in his name, appreciating the current events from Bazárov’s point of view”.¹³⁸ Another anecdote relating to the accession

¹³⁷ Volkhovsky, “Ivan S. Tourguenev” 29.

¹³⁸ Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1899) 220.

of Alexander III in 1881 provides evidence that Turgenev maintained his anti-Tsarist position until late in life:

I saw him for the last time in the autumn of 1881. He was very ill, and worried by the thought that it was his duty to write to Alexander III. – who had just come to the throne, and hesitated as to the policy he should follow – asking him to give Russia a constitution, and proving to him by solid arguments the necessity of that step. With evident grief he said to me: “I feel that I must do it, but I feel that I shall not be able to do it.” In fact, he was already suffering awful pains occasioned by a cancer in the spinal cord, and had the greatest difficulty even in sitting up and talking for a few moments. He did not write then, and a few weeks later it would have been useless. Alexander III. had announced in a manifesto his intention to remain the absolute ruler of Russia.

As for Turgenev’s novels, Kropotkin sees no conflict between their art and their depictions of “the leading ‘history-making’ types of the educated classes of Russia, which evolved in rapid succession after 1848; all sketched with a fullness of philosophical conception and humanitarian understanding and an artistic beauty which have no parallel in any other literature.”¹³⁹

In *Ideals and Realities*, Kropotkin develops at length this view of Turgenev’s novels as a series of historical windows. Each window looks onto a view in which the domestic landscape echoes the political. The heroes and heroines occupying this landscape are “leading” types, to be understood more as real historical figures than as fictional creations. Kropotkin invariably attributes the failings of such protagonists to Russia’s system of autocracy. Rudin represents the man of the “forties”, “nurtured upon Hegel’s philosophy, and developed under conditions which prevailed under Nicholas I, when there was no possibility whatever for a thinking man to apply his energy, unless he chose to become an obedient functionary of an autocratic, slave owning state.” He was necessary for progress, and despite his defects, much loved by the author. Lavretsky and Lisa, from *A House of Gentlefolk*, represent the movement’s “intermediate period”. Lavretsky tries his hands at practical activity, but his powers are “palsied” by “the mediocrity of his surroundings”. Helen, from *On the Eve*, is “the true type of the Russian woman who a few years later joined heart and soul in all movements for Russian freedom: the woman who conquered her right to knowledge, totally reformed the education of children, fought for liberation of toiling

masses, endured Siberia, died if necessary on the Scaffold.” Bazarov, of course, is the “son” of the man of the forties: “he takes a negative attitude towards all the institutions ... and throws overboard all the conventionalities and the petty lies of ordinary social life”. *Smoke* “represents the despair in the future of Russia after the wreck of that great reform movement which had given to us the abolition of serfdom”. Soon after this, however, Turgenev recovered from despair when he saw the “towards the people” movement, which he depicted in *Virgin Soil*. The last word in Turgenev’s testament is “On the Threshold” – an expression “in most poetical accents” of “his admiration of those women who gave their lives for the revolutionary movement and went on the scaffold, without being even understood at the time by those for whom they died.”¹⁴⁰

Like any criticism that challenges established views, émigré commentary had a chilly reception in some camps. The derision Stepniak received in the *Athenaeum*, which discounted the “cryptic political signification” he gave Turgenev’s work, preferring to “look upon it as merely as a work of art which is beautiful and precious in itself, dealing with life as it is found everywhere”,¹⁴¹ was matched several years later, by Virginia M. Crawford, in *Studies in Foreign Literature* (1899):

There are critics who treat Turgenev as a political pamphleteer, and extract his views on Nihilism and on the future of his country from the characters in his novels. So, too, there are distinguished critics of Dante who seem to overlook the fact that the Florentine was perhaps the greatest poet of all time, in the anxiety to establish his precise opinion concerning some unimportant political event of his day. In either case, the attempt is exceedingly futile. I venture to think Turgenev’s political views are a matter of small import ... What is essential is that he was an admirable artist and a most perfect tale-teller, ...¹⁴²

As the guilty party in a notorious and widely publicised divorce case, Mrs. Crawford was indebted to William Stead, the editor of the anti-Nihilist, *Pall Mall Gazette*, who had taken her on as a journalist. At the time of writing her Turgenev essay, she was also working as a research assistant for George Moore, who saw Turgenev as an aesthete. Moreover, Crawford had recently converted to Catholicism and was applying her talents translating works on

¹³⁹ Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 221–2, 219.

¹⁴⁰ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 97, 100, 102, 102, 107, 109.

¹⁴¹ “Translations from the Russian” *Athenaeum* 799, 3501 (1 December 1894) 751.

¹⁴² Virginia M. Crawford, *Studies in Foreign Literature* (London: Duckworth, 1899) 17–8.

hagiography. To her, the pamphleteers who took Turgenev on their side would have represented those same “opponents of religious dogma”, whom she argues against in introductions to books like *Studies of Saintship*.¹⁴³ Crawford puts Turgenev in the opposite camp; the reason no one reads him, she says, is that “he is too sane, too simple for public taste in a period of decadence.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Virginia M. Crawford, Introduction to *Studies in Saintship*, by Ernest Hello, translated by Virginia M. Crawford (London: Methuen & Co, 1903) i.

¹⁴⁴ Virginia M. Crawford. *Studies in Foreign Literature*, 18.

Edward Garnett as a Russian Critic

Nonetheless, the Russian approach took hold. The person most affected by the émigrés' critical method was Edward Garnett, whose introductions to his wife's series of Turgenev bear the imprint of fireside chats with their revolutionary friends.

In addition to a backdrop of intensive involvement in Russian issues, Edward Garnett's prefaces should be looked at in terms of his personal life. By many accounts, his wife was deeply in love with Stepniak – a situation which led Edward Garnett to experience dark moods, even though, according to her son, she did not “experiment” with the Russian.¹⁴⁵ Edward Garnett's ill-humour was exacerbated by Constance Garnett's “internal problems” which put an end to their physical relationship. His feelings of rejection surely must have reached a high pitch when Constance Garnett urged him *not* to undertake the Turgenev prefaces after Stepniak's arrangement with Heinemann fell through: “You want to keep all your energies for work you care for and really feel drawn to. ... I would rather have a foolish preface by Gosse than a slipshod one by you, or a good one that cost you time and trouble.”¹⁴⁶ Edward Garnett may well have felt a sense of competition with Stepniak; he may have been inclined to disprove his wife's greater faith in Stepniak's critical prowess.¹⁴⁷ Between 1885 and 1899, Edward Garnett would write a total of seven introductions to his wife's fifteen translations. In 1900, he penned “Tolstoy and Turgenieff” for the *Anglo-Saxon Review*, which can be regarded as an extension of the corpus.¹⁴⁸

Taken collectively, the essays present an exquisite synthesis of Henry James's aesthetic response to Turgenev, and Stepniak's view of the author as both a sympathetic chronicler of Russia's progressive movement of the 1840s to 1870s and a participant in this movement. Garnett extends and develops the understanding of Turgenev's dramatic method as formulated by James and Moore, showing how Turgenev's characters “reveal themselves by the most ordinary details of their every-day life ... by the same process, in fact, as nature creates for us a single strong impression out of a multitude of little details.”¹⁴⁹ He also dwells on the now familiar subject of Turgenev's “sympathy with women and his

¹⁴⁵ Richard Garnett, *Constance Garnett*, 86–7.

¹⁴⁶ Constance Garnett to Edward Garnett (12 August 1894) Garnett Family Archive, Hilton Hall.

¹⁴⁷ Quoted by Olive Garnett, diary entry, 7 December 1893, *Tea and Anarchy*, 236.

¹⁴⁸ Edward Garnett, “Tolstoy and Turgenieff” *Anglo-Saxon Review* 6 (September 1900) 150–65.

¹⁴⁹ Edward Garnett, introduction to *A Lear of the Steppes and other Stories* (London: Heinemann, 1898) xi.

unequalled power of drawing them”.¹⁵⁰ However, from the outset, Garnett suggests that there is another point of view. “To the English reader”, he writes in his first preface, “*On the Eve* is a charmingly drawn picture of a quiet Russian household, with a delicate analysis of a young girl’s soul; but to Russians it is also a deep and penetrating diagnosis of the destinies of the Russia of the fifties”.¹⁵¹ Guided by the insider’s knowledge afforded him through his friendship with Russian émigrés, Edward Garnett presents a special “Russian” reading of Turgenev.

Pre-empting Kropotkin, and following the nineteenth-century Russian critical tradition, Garnett casts the body of novels as an organic whole, each illustrating another epoch in the history of the Russian nation. “While *On the Eve* signalises the end of the Crimea Epoch and the break-up of the crushing, overwhelming régime of Nicholas, *Fathers and Children* is a forecast of the new Liberal movement which arose in the Russia of the sixties and an analysis of the formidable type appearing on the political horizon – the Nihilist.”¹⁵² *Virgin Soil*, meanwhile, treats “of the hurried and uncertain steps [the Nihilist party of the seventies] took preparatory to the serious Terrorist struggle”, and so on.¹⁵³ In “Tolstoy and Turgenieff” Garnett located Turgenev’s novels in a larger “chain of work”, encompassing all of Russian literature from Turgenev’s *Sportsman’s Sketches* (1847) to Tolstoy’s *Resurrection* (1900), with each link in the chain reflecting a new moment in the evolution of Russia’s national life. T.S. Eliot, reviewing Garnett’s volume of collected prefaces which was issued in 1917, praised his corpus as “perhaps the first serious study of [Turgenev] in English.” For Eliot, the volume’s special achievement was that “it enables the reader of Turgenev to see the novels in relation to each other, and the relation of the characters in different novels. It invites us ... to consider the work of Turgenev as a single work, the art of Turgenev as steady and laborious construction, not a series of scattered inspirations.”¹⁵⁴

When providing a contextual backdrop for Turgenev’s panorama of Russian history, Garnett’s bias is determined by his revolutionary associates. His early essays in particular abound with justifications of the Nihilist movement which sound almost as if lifted from the

¹⁵⁰ Garnett, *A Lear of the Steppes*, xi.

¹⁵¹ Garnett, *On the Eve*, v.

¹⁵² Garnett, *Fathers and Children*, v.

¹⁵³ Garnett, *Virgin Soil*, v.

¹⁵⁴ T.S. Eliot, “Turgenev”, *Egoist* iv (1917) 167.

pages of *Free Russia* or Stepniak's volumes of propaganda. In style and theme, for example, Garnett's eulogistic description of the Nihilist Marianna in *Virgin Soil* recalls Stepniak's idealising portraits of the real life revolutionaries such as Vera Zasulich in *Underground Russia*. Like Stepniak's female revolutionaries, Marianna is typified by purity, courage, self sacrifice, and passion:

The splendid qualities shown by the Nihilist women in the Terrorist campaign, a few years later than the publication of *Virgin Soil*, are a striking testimony to Turgenev's genius in psychology. ... Marianna is the incarnation of that Russian fight for progress, which, though half-hidden and obscure to foreign eyes, has thrilled the nerves of Europe. This pure girl with passionate, courageous soul is, in fact, the Liberty of Russia. Without experience or help, with eyes bandaged by her destiny, she calmly goes forward on the far journey whence there is no return. ... In her figure is personified the flower of Russian youth, those who cast off from their generation the stigma of inaction – that heart-eating inaction which is the vice of the Russian temperament....The lives of Marianna and her generation were spent in prison or in exile. But by the very recklessness of their protest against autocracy, by their very simplicity in 'going to the people,' by their self-immolation for their principles, Europe knew that there was no liberty in Russia save in its prisons, and that the bloody reprisals that followed were those of Marianna's brothers, who saw her helpless in the hands of a great gendarmerie – a gendarmerie that had long shamelessly abused the power it held, that had silenced brutally all who had protested, all, all the independent spirits, all their great writers, all their *men*.¹⁵⁵

Embedded throughout this passage is an endorsement of both the "to the people" movement depicted in *Virgin Soil*, and the Nihilists' subsequent recourse to revolutionary violence. Marianna's protest, while reckless, has had the positive effect of awakening Europe to the lack of freedom and abuses of justice in Russia. By injecting information about Marianna's real-life successors, the young women who spent their lives in prison, suffering helplessly at "at the hands of a great gendarmerie", Garnett even condones the bloody terrorist reprisals executed by "Marianna's brothers".

Garnett's treatment of Bazarov is also panegyric. Like Stepniak and Kropotkin, Garnett depicts the struggle waged by early Nihilists (epitomised by Bazarov) against the traditional institutions of art, the family, and social conventions as a necessary and "inevitable" precursor to their struggle against Russia's corrupt regime. And again, like the

¹⁵⁵ Garnett, *Virgin Soil*, x–xii.

émigrés, he rehabilitates Bazarov's reputation by speaking of Turgenev's love for his creation, and by apologising for Bazarov's faults. On this occasion, however, Garnett sees Bazarov not simply as a Russian fighting a mediaeval system, but as a representative of the "sceptical conscience of modern Science". Bazarov's struggle is both bound by, and larger than the rural Russian context in which we see him debating with local landowners, dissecting frogs and performing autopsies on deceased peasants: "he represents the roots of the modern Revolutionary movements in thoughts as well as in politics, rather than the branches springing from those roots." On an international level, he is related to "Proudhon, Bakunin, Karl Marx, the Internationalists, the Russian Terrorists, the Communists". On a more universal level, "He typifies Mind grappling with Nature, seeking out her inexorable laws, Mind in pure devotion to the What Is, in startling contrast to the minds that follow their self-created kingdom of What Appears, and Ought to Be." And finally Bazarov, "in whom the comfortable compromising English mind sees only a man of bad form, bad taste, bad manners, and overwhelming conceit; finally, Bazarov stands for Humanity awakened from century-old superstitions, and the long dragging oppressive dream of tradition."¹⁵⁶

While Garnett's treatment of Bazarov certainly reflects his own rebellious attitudes (and those of his set of liberal intelligentsia colleagues) at the time of writing, it also has relevance in our study of his formulation of Turgenev's poetics. Garnett's Turgenev clearly has many tiers: the accumulation of details which make up Turgenev's characters reveal the manifold relations between man's inner life and society, nature, his nation, and his age, and between past history and the present. The patterns thus revealed, while specific and local in terms of time and space, have universal significance.

In melding together the two angles from which Turgenev's work were regarded – the artistic and the political – Edward Garnett arrives at a conception of both the Russian author and the art of fiction which is new for England. In his first essay, prefacing *On the Eve* (1895), he gestures at "depths of meaning which at first sight lie veiled under the simplicity and harmony" of Turgenev's technique. Turgenev achieves this not through allegory, but by investing characters with the qualities and aspirations of their age. "Whenever he created an important figure in fiction" writes Garnett, "that figure is necessarily a revelation of the secrets of the fatherland, the soil, the race. Turgenev, in short, was a psychologist not merely

¹⁵⁶ Garnett, *Fathers and Children*, xii–xv.

of men but of nations.”¹⁵⁷ A case in point is Uvar Ivanovitch who “symbolises the ever-predominant type of Russian, the sleepy, slothful Slav of to-day. He is the Slav whose inherent force Europe is as ignorant of as he is himself.”¹⁵⁸ In his preface to *Virgin Soil*, Garnett returns to the same theme, exploring Turgenev’s characters as perfect representatives “of Russian political life”.¹⁵⁹

To Garnett, Turgenev’s feat of expressing the nation and its political concerns through the accumulated features of individual characters and their relations with one another signifies an important advance in the art of fiction. Remarkably, none of his literary antecedents were able to perform this feat. Jane Austen, for example, who “painted most admirably the English types she knew” falls short of Turgenev’s example, because she failed “to correlate them with the national life”

...while her men and women were acting and thinking, Trafalgar and Waterloo were being fought and won. But each of Turgenev’s novels in some subtle way suggests that the people he introduces are playing their little part in a great national drama everywhere around us, invisible, yet audible through the clamour of voices near us.¹⁶⁰

Austen is not the only writer to suffer from comparison with the Russian. From “Richardson and Fielding and Sterne in their turn” to “the days of Henry James the form of the novel has been adapted by European genius to the exact needs, outlook, and attitude to life of each successive generation.” Yet “the youngest of European literatures, the Russian school”, has broadened the horizons of literature. It has raised the novel “to being the absolute and triumphant expression by the national genius of the national soul”.¹⁶¹ For “where Fielding and Richardson speak for the country and the town, Turgenev speaks for the nation”.¹⁶² In “Tolstoy and Turgenieff” Garnett extends this comparison to include Turgenev on the one hand and the whole European tradition on the other:

We can only point out that no other European artist has contrived to convey, through the conversation and inter-influence of half a dozen characters

¹⁵⁷ Garnett, *On the Eve* xi.

¹⁵⁸ Garnett, *On the Eve*, xii

¹⁵⁹ Garnett, *Virgin Soil* vii.

¹⁶⁰ Garnett, *On the Eve* xiv.

¹⁶¹ Garnett, *The Jew and Other Stories*, xi.

¹⁶² Garnett, *The Jew and Other Stories*, xiii.

gathered together in the same country house, an idea of the whole nation's life, with the relation of the people to the soil and of their past environment to their mental outlook so clearly.¹⁶³

In his last introduction, to *The Jew and Other Stories*, Garnett stakes his claim for regarding novelistic form, as mastered by Turgenev, as a literary tool on a par with poetry:

Many men of letters to-day look on the novel as a mere story-book, as a series of light-coloured, amusing pictures for their 'idle hours,' and on memoirs, biographies, histories, criticism, and poetry as the age's *serious* contribution to literature. Whereas the reverse is the case. The most serious and significant of all literary forms the modern world has evolved is the novel; and brought to its highest development, the novel shares with poetry to-day the honour of being the supreme instrument of the great artist's literary skill.¹⁶⁴

For both James and Garnett, the idea of a Poetic mind is a Romantic one: the Poet takes inner reflection and expands it to the contemplation of the universe and the activities included in it. He has what Wordsworth called "a comprehensive soul". For Garnett, however, Turgenev's poetry resides not only in his ability to express impressionistically the "inner life" of a character with such fidelity as to reflect universal truths, but to show, as well, the congruence between man's inner life and the life of the nation. As he says of Uvar Ivanovitch, Turgenev's slothful estate owner in *On the Eve*: "This creation of an universal national type, out of the flesh and blood of a fat taciturn country gentleman, brings us to see that Turgenev was not merely an artist, but that he was a poet using fiction as his medium." In *The Jew and Other Stories*, Garnett speaks of how Turgenev filled the novel "with the breath of poetry" by mirroring reality on every level: the personal, the national and the universal:

The novel modelled by Turgenev's hands, the Russian novel, became *the* great modern instrument for showing 'the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.' To reproduce human life in all its subtlety as it moves and breathes before us, and at the same time to assess its values by the great poetic insight that reveals man's relations to the universe around him ...¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Garnett, "Tolstoy and Turgenieff" 161.

¹⁶⁴ Garnett, *The Jew and Other Stories*, ix.

¹⁶⁵ Garnett, *The Jew and Other Stories*, xi.

Having demonstrated the novel's ability to synthesise the aesthetic and political functions of literature, Garnett argues on behalf of its utility, naming it as "the chief method to-day of analysing the complexities of modern life". He concludes by recommending the novel's greatest practitioner: "If you love your art, if you would exalt it, treat it absolutely seriously. If you would study it in its highest form, the form the greatest artist of our time has perfected – remember Turgenev."¹⁶⁶

By the time Edward Garnett writes "Tolstoy and Turgenieff" in 1900, the political fervour which marks his earlier essays has exhausted itself. His assessment of Turgenev in this article recalls James more than it does Stepniak. He writes of Turgenev's "drawings of life"; his "exquisite discrimination" of "significant detail". Like James, he discusses the painterly and universal qualities of Turgenev's fiction, comparing his brush-strokes with those of Corot. Yet, there would remain a fundamental difference between James's and Garnett's formulations of Turgenev's genius, which would have bearing on how future writers would understand the Russian as a model. For James, Turgenev selected relevant details in order to reveal the inner life of his characters, and in doing so, he revealed great universal truths. For Edward Garnett, Turgenev's great achievement was that beside portraying the particular and the universal, he imaged the national. It is this which positions Turgenev "midway between the great novelists, satirists, and dramatists who have mirrored their age and the few supreme poets who have created the greatest types known to mankind, such as Don Quixote and Hamlet". His was the poetry of life and nature, revealing the intrinsic relations existing between modern life "and the past from which it had sprung", and "exhibiting society as a whole organism evolving under the pressure of new ideas".¹⁶⁷ The German Romantic view of art, in which art is an expression of the universal as manifest in the particulars of the nation (which had a profound impact on the genesis of Russian literature as a tool of national self-realisation) found its way into English literature via the works of Turgenev and their interpretation by Edward Garnett.

Yet the battle over Turgenev's reputation was not over. In 1900 Heinemann issued Waliszewski's *A History of Russian Literature*, the book which Vasily Zhook attacked with such relish in *Free Russia*.¹⁶⁸ With small but calculated gestures Waliszewski pulls

¹⁶⁶ Garnett, *The Jew and Other Stories*, xiv.

¹⁶⁷ Garnett, "Tolstoy and Turgenieff", 151.

¹⁶⁸ K. Waliszewski, *A History of Russian Literature* (London: Heinemann, 1900).

Turgenev down from his pedestal: compared with Dicken's descriptive masterpieces Tourguénev's pictures of nature "appear somewhat pale";¹⁶⁹ his style and philosophy are derivative from English and French writers; his fidelity to real Russian types is questionable. Waliszewski describes all the weaknesses of Turgenev's characters, but provides none of the apologies for these weaknesses offered by radical Russian commentators. "Tourguenev's work has not enshrined the historic moments and great events of modern life, even as it has not embodied, in the true sense of the word, any general, comprehensive, lasting type of character". Vasily Zhook, however, was confident that Waliszewski's view of Turgenev would perish: "the British public have now Tourguenev's standard works in the excellent artistic translation of Mrs. Garnett, and they will draw their own conclusions."¹⁷⁰

Zhook had reason to be optimistic: the Russian point of view drawn up by Edward Garnett, Stepniak and Kropotkin was quickly establishing Turgenev as a radical whose books were of historical relevance to Russia. Moreover, their portrayal of Turgenev's approbation of the revolutionary movement was helping to legitimise the movement in England. From the perspective of propaganda, the émigrés' rewriting of Turgenev was successful. In 1903, an article in the *New Review* claimed Nihilism was the enlightened creed of highly-educated and high-minded Russians justifiably dissatisfied with their government. Turgenev was listed alongside Tolstoy, Bakunin, and Kropotkin as a leading preacher of Nihilism.¹⁷¹ In 1898, in the wake of the assassination of the Empress of Austria, a Scottish divine, Rev. Walter Walsh, preached sympathetically on the subject of Russian Nihilism from the pulpit of the Gilfillan Memorial Church, Dundee. Walsh attributed the word Nihilist to Turgenev and expressed admiration for the early Nihilists: "a band of gifted young enthusiasts from Moscow" with "lofty humanitarian" and almost "religious" ideals. The reverend blamed governments for manufacturing panic and revolutionary violence with bloody repression.¹⁷² Perhaps the strongest instance of the success of radical émigrés in appropriating Turgenev was a 1907 article in the *Westminster Review* entitled, "Turgueneff's Novels and Russian Revolution", which used Turgenev's novels to batter the

¹⁶⁹ Waliszewski, *A History of Russian Literature*, 289.

¹⁷⁰ Vassily Zhook, "An Unfair Attack", [review of *A History of Russian Literature* by K. Waliszewski] *Free Russia* (1 December 1900) 105.

¹⁷¹ The article was quoted at length in *Anglo-Russian* 8, no. 8 (March 1903) 905.

¹⁷² "A Scottish Divine on Nihilism and Anarchy; Wise Council to Governments", *Anglo-Russian* 2, 5 (November 1898) 180.

autocracy in a manner worthy of the best revolutionist.¹⁷³ The essay, by one H. Crossfield, is a collage of excerpts from Kropotkin's *Memoirs* and his *Ideals and Realities*, as well as various works of Turgenev, set against a backdrop of Tsarist brutalities clearly gleaned from émigré propaganda. Themes described by Edward Garnett and émigrés make a familiar reappearance: the importance of the novel as the "chief medium for the assertion of [the Russian] spirit" in conditions of brutal censorship; Rudin as a symbol of the men whose liberal aspirations were quashed and whose spirits were broken by the insensate system existing in the closing years of Nicolas I; Turgenev's death-bed wish to appeal to Alexander III for a constitution. There is no ambiguity here, no casting of Turgenev as a sober-minded moderate who satirised Nihilist aspirations. This Turgenev was far removed from James's novelist who was "nobly disinterested" in politics.¹⁷⁴ Now when Turgenev was voiced in the same breath as the Nihilists, he was described as a supporter of their creed.

One sign of Turgenev's newly politicised reputation came from William Heinemann, the publisher who had slighted Stepniak. In 1905, the year of Russia's abortive revolution, Heinemann began an urgent and cordial correspondence with members of Stepniak's former émigré circle: in particular, with David Soskice, a propagandist and member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party (rumoured to have taken part in illicit gun-running); and Michael Voynich, a Polish Nationalist who had been exiled to Siberia for political activism before escaping to London. The point of the correspondence was a new illustrated edition of Constance Garnett's Turgenev translations, in which Heinemann hoped to include portraits of the heroes and heroines of Russia's early revolutionary movement. He wondered whether David Soskice could kindly lend him pictures of figures such as Vera Zasulich (Russia's first revolutionary terrorist), Jessie Helfman and Sophia Perovskaya [sic] (two women who had been involved in the assassination plot against the Tsar); the Marxist theorist, Lavrov; the literary critic Belinsky (whom Soviet critics described as a forefather of the revolution) and Stepniak himself!¹⁷⁵ One might argue that Heinemann was merely trying to harness some of the publicity generated by the 1905 revolution. Whatever his motive, such an

¹⁷³ H. Crossfield, "Turgeneff's Novels and the Russian Revolution", *Westminster Review* 168, No. 5 (November 1907) 523–36.

¹⁷⁴ Henry James, "Turgenev and Tolstoy", 175.

¹⁷⁵ This correspondence can be found in the Stow Hill Papers, House of Lords Records Office, STH/DS.

undertaking to completely re-contextualise Turgenev in the illustrated edition shows how deep the transformation of his reputation was.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Sadly, Heinemann's plan changed before the edition was out; perhaps the pictures he was after were hard to come by. When it was published, instead of showcasing revolutionaries, the illustrated edition contained images of the French and German authors and philosophers mentioned in the sitting rooms of Turgenev's fictional country estates.

CONCLUSION

Implications for Anglo-Russian Relations

In 1904, reflecting on his achievements as an ambassador of the Russian people, Prelooker noted a satisfying decrease in russophobia. Russia was no longer “a country where tallow candles and lamp-oil were still eaten and drunk in quantities,...where peasants hibernated eating and doing nothing during five months in the year, where...girls were taken as wives by lot or public auction...”. England now had “a fuller appreciation of the true inwardness of things Russian”, and “newspapers notorious hitherto for their strong anti-Russian sentiments now begin to explain that for the Russian people they cherish but the kindest feelings and best wishes, and that their russophobia is directed exclusively against the iniquitous system of Russian autocratic and bureaucratic Government”.¹ In 1905, his confidence in English attitudes showed itself to be justified, as the population responded to the news of the first Russian revolution with widespread (though not universal) sympathy. Winston Churchill compared the revolution “to the struggle for British liberty”, J. Bruce Glasier, a leading member of the ILP wrote a poem “To the Russian Revolutionary Martyrs” for the *Labour Leader*.² George Meredith set up a subscription to raise funds for the revolution. Support was strongest in avowedly liberal and socialist circles, but newspapers such as *The Times* and the conservative organ, *The Morning Post*, also evinced pro-Cadet (Constitutional Democrat) tendencies. Admittedly, public opinion would fluctuate after the Tsar’s dissolution of the first Duma. The English had been prepared by émigré propaganda to believe that the Russians as a whole were behind the revolution; they were surprised when Russians ignored the Cadets’ call to rise *en masse* to avenge the Duma.³ More disillusioning was the shocking resumption of terrorist activity in 1906, which undermined feelings of cultural affinity. But at the outset, at least, the English were mostly on the side of the uprising, and if accusations of barbarism were hurled, they were aimed at the autocracy and not the Russian people.⁴ Sir Arthur Nicolson, British Ambassador to St. Petersburg,

¹ Jaakoff Prelooker, “Our Seventh Anniversary”, *Anglo-Russian* 7, 12 (June – July 1904) 844–5.

² These examples were cited in W.S. Adams, “British Reactions to the 1905 Russian Revolution”, *Marxist Quarterly* 2, 3 (July 1955) 174.

³ W. Harrison, “The British Press and the Russian Revolution of 1905–1907”, *Oxford Slavonic Papers* n.s. 7 (1974) 86–87.

⁴ W. Harrison, “Mackenzie Wallace’s View of the Russian Revolution of 1905–1907”, *Oxford Slavonic Papers* n.s. 4 (1971) 78; and Harrison, “The British Press”, 86–7.

recalled, 'Russia was regarded as a ruthless and barbarous autocratic state, denying all liberties to her subjects and employing the most cruel methods of suppression of freedom of speech and indeed of thought.'⁵

As the example of Turgenev has shown, Russian fiction, giving "a fuller appreciation of the true inwardness of things Russian", had prepared the way for this generous mood. It is notable that Meredith's optimistic view of the Russian race was based on 'the sublime and self-sacrificing types of Russian womanhood as presented both in works of fiction and produced by real life'.⁶ Despite misgivings about Russians' performance in other spheres, *The Manchester Guardian* opined that 'their literature, their music, and their prophetic writings entitle[d] them to a place among the original forces of European civilization.'⁷ A singular example of the new mood can be seen in a speech given in Croydon by Britain's Secretary of War, Arnold Forster, announcing the government's position with respect to the 1905 revolution. Forster's confidence in Russia's new government was predicated on the country's artistic sensibilities:

The authors of Russia had made their mark even among the great cultivated and educated nations of Europe. The works of the great Russian artists showed that art was powerful in the Russian mind; and if they turned to science there was no nation with such small opportunities which had taken so great a position. 'The best message we could send them was a message of sympathy and hope that their aspirations might develop in such a manner that their institutions might bring to them the same good that our institutions had brought to us'.

His comment showed how far the dissemination of Russian art and literature in England had elevated Russia's status to that of a civilised, rather than barbaric nation. In stark contrast to 1878, when Queen Victoria's jingoistic call to arms against the 'great barbarians' was echoed in Music Halls throughout England, the Russian emperor and his downtrodden subjects were now seen as separate entities. Forster's appeal for sympathy was greeted with cheers.⁸

⁵ Quoted in Harrison, "The British Press", 82.

⁶ Prelooker, "A Visit to George Meredith", *Anglo-Russian* 1, 4 (October 1897) 37.

⁷ Quoted in "British Reactions to 1905", 175.

⁸ "British Opinion on the Russian Revolt, a Minister's Good Wishes", *Manchester Guardian* (25 January 1905) 8.

Pantheon of Russian Literature

And yet, England's exposure to Russia's literary treasures, informed as it was by émigrés, was biased. In November 1895, *Free Russia* published a list of the books belonging to Herbert M. Thompson, the secretary of the Cardiff Branch of the SFRF, who was opening up his collection as a lending library. The contents of this list are instructive. Beside histories of Russia which had been vetted in the pages of *Free Russia*, and were of the right political persuasion (all of Stepniak's books, for example, appear), there are translations of novels by Turgenev, Gogol, Tolstoy, and Korolenko. Potapenko's *The Russian Priest* (published in the pseudonym library) appears; as well as Stepniak's *The Career of a Nihilist*, and the stories he translated with Voynich, *The Humour of Russia*. Finally, there is a volume called *Queer Stories from Russia*, by Capel Chernillo (reviewed in *Free Russia*). It is noteworthy that Dostoevsky does not appear; nor do Pushkin, Lermontov, or Karamzin, for that matter. Yet, Korolenko and Potapenko – a populist writer with no lasting reputation – are side by side with Tolstoy.⁹

Thompson's library is a microcosm for a much larger trend in publishing and reading that can be attributed to the émigré influence. In turn of the century England the bulk of translations of Russian fiction available could be turned to the Russian radical cause. Reflected in publisher's lists was the émigrés' preference for novels and stories about the populist movement of the 1870s, didactic fables, satirical stories, apologies for the revolution, and exposés of Siberian horrors. Turgenev and Tolstoy, who occupied the highest echelons in Kropotkin's temple of Russian greats, were in greatest vogue.

An inevitable corollary to this trend was the exclusion of writers worthy of translation, but whose politics did not accord with those of the émigrés. Pushkin, admired by émigrés but having less topical significance, was sorely neglected. As Maurice Baring noted in 1914, "There is in England no complete translation of Pushkin. This is much the same as though there were in Russia no complete translation of Shakespeare or Milton".¹⁰ A yet more telling omission was Dostoevsky, whose works did not receive the benefit of Constance Garnett's skill as a translator until 1912.

⁹ *Free Russia* 6, 11 (November 1895) 94–95.

¹⁰ Maurice Baring, *An Outline of Russian Literature* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1914/15) v.

Commentators generally blame Dostoevsky's grotesque psychology, lack of form¹¹ and stylistic flaws for inhibiting his acceptance amongst the English mainstream. Phelps suggests that the English needed to be prepared for Dostoevsky by "Bergson, Freud, French Impressionism, Symbolist Poetry" and other influences, which broke up "the old water-tight concepts of human consciousness and human behaviour." Helen Muchnic attributes Dostoevsky's late vogue to the fact that "he was neglected in the 1890's when "realism" had given place in critical discussion to problems of 'aestheticism'".¹² Clarence Decker in *The Victorian Conscience* makes the same claim: "The neglect was due in part to the shift in critical interest from the problems of Realism to those of Aestheticism, but more important was the "strangeness" to the Victorian mind of Dostoevski's abnormal psychology."¹³ While such explanations shed some light on the virtual silence surrounding Dostoevsky in the 1890s and early twentieth century, there is much to suggest that émigrés had a role in deflating Dostoevsky's reputation. As a backdrop to the question, it is worth noting that in Germany, as early as 1885 (a full twenty-seven years before Constance Garnett's first translation of Dostoevsky), the author was considered "the superior even of Tourgénéieff".¹⁴ In the same decade his works became "the rage" in France. English critics reported this, and also acknowledged his renown in Russia.¹⁵ Furthermore, despite misgivings about his "grotesque" subjects, and notwithstanding Frank Whishaw's inaccurate translations for Vizetelly, Dostoevsky's initial reception in the 1880s showed promise. A reviewer in the *Spectator* was typical of the English response in that he warmed to the author's compassion: "Dostoyevsky describes sin in its most hideous shapes; yet he is full of tenderness and loving kindness for its victims, and shows us that even the most abandoned are not entirely bad, and that for all there is hope – hope of redemption and regeneration." Importantly, he was not "Zolaesque".¹⁶ In 1886, Robert Louis Stevenson wrote to John Addington Symonds: "*Raskolnikoff* [*Crime and Punishment*] is easily the greatest book I have read in ten years; I am glad you took to it....it is a room, a house of life..."¹⁷

¹¹ Phelps, *The Russian Novel*, 171.

¹² Muchnic, *Dostoevsky's English Reputation*, 5.

¹³ Clarence R. Decker, *The Victorian Conscience* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1952) 143.

¹⁴ H. Schütz Wilson, "The Russian Novelist Dostojewsky", *Academy* 28 (12 December 1885) 395.

¹⁵ William Sharp, Review of *Injury and Insult* by Dostoevsky, *Academy* 30 (30 October 1886) 289.

¹⁶ "A Russian Novelist", *Spectator* 59 (10 July 1886) 938.

¹⁷ Letter from Robert Louis Stevenson to John Addington Symonds (early March 1886), *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, vol. 5, edited by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1995) 200–1.

One reason Dostoevsky was late to receive acclaim in England was because, unlike Turgenev, Tolstoy and the populist writers, he did not have émigrés showering attention on the tender new shoots of his reputation. As Temira Pachmuss has pointed out, the Russian radical intelligentsia found Dostoevsky's politics "utterly unacceptable". Saltykov-Shchedrin, for example, objected to his "exaltation of submissiveness and humility, his idealization of suffering and his appeal to the Russian intelligentsia for 'unity with the people' by adjustment to the people's 'profoundly conservative' spirit".¹⁸ This was no less true of the radical Russians in England, and accordingly, they conducted a campaign of silence around the writer. *Free Russia* gives him virtually no mention aside from an advertisement billing *Crime and Punishment* as a "Realistic Novel". Stepniak spoke of him during his lectures on Russian literature, but only in passing. And while there is a tale, "The Crocodile" by Dostoevsky in *The Humour of Russia*, it is a satire of Russian bureaucracy and German avarice, containing no threat to the reputation of Russia's progressive elements. As the author of a volume treating all of Russian literature, Kropotkin was confronted more directly with the problem of how to treat Dostoevsky. He could hardly eliminate from his book the author who was then regarded in Russia as the third figure of a holy trinity whose other members were Tolstoy and Turgenev. Yet Kropotkin devotes a meagre seven and a half pages to the author, compared with Turgenev and Gogol, each of whom receive twenty pages, and Tolstoy, who is honoured with forty-six. Kropotkin finds some merit in Dostoevsky's sympathy "with the most down-trodden and down-cast products of the civilisation" which "exercises a most powerful impression in the right direction upon young readers". But on the whole, he encourages the view of Dostoevsky as a formless and "sensational" writer, and puts his momentary popularity down to "hysterical exaggeration". In particular, he finds the "unfathomable submission and servitude of [Dostoevsky's] heroes," "repulsive to a sound mind." His final verdict is that he is not worth our time: "a few good pages scattered here and there do not compensate the reader for the hard task of reading [him]".¹⁹

In the *Anglo-Russian*, meanwhile, Dostoevsky is given lip service as a great writer, but rarely discussed in any detail. Interestingly, one article on the author does appear in the

¹⁸ Temira Pachmuss, "Dostoevsky in the Criticism of the Russian Radical Intelligentsia", *Russian Review* 21, 1 (January 1962) 60.

¹⁹ Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities*, 169, 165, 169.

magazine, taken from a lecture delivered by one John M. Robertson before the Fabian Society on Dec 9, 1898.²⁰ Prelooker provides a short biography of the artist by way of an introduction to the article, in which he describes Dostoevsky's horrific experiences in prison and his Pushkin speech, but makes no mention of his reactionary novels. His two famous works, in Prelooker's estimation, are "Humiliated and Wronged" (the only work described by Kropotkin as "a great novel") and "The House of the Dead", a harrowing account of prison life which could be turned to propaganda.²¹ Prelooker remarks in his introduction that he doesn't agree with all the ideas of Robertson. Still, it is notable that Robertson does not stray too far from what was the typical revolutionary view of Dostoevsky in Russia at this time. In his depiction of Nihilism in *The Possessed*, Dostoevsky, he says, "is not at all to be trusted, save for some of the isolated portraits. Dostoevsky was no sociologist ..." We further learn that "When Dostoevsky ceases in his novels to be the artistic sensitive plate, and is fain for a moment to be the censor or the satirist, his work is instantly to that extent out of drawing or out of key."²²

When Constance Garnett finally did turn her hand to Dostoevsky, the impetus to do so did not come from her husband or her Russian friends. It came, circuitously, from Arnold Bennett after his discovery of a French translation of *The Brothers Karamazov* in 1909. In 1910, Bennett, as 'Jacob Tonson' in the *New Age*, famously issued Heinemann with a moral imperative to engage Constance Garnett to translate the works of Dostoevsky into English. He even suggested that Heinemann might go halves with an American publisher and thereby cut costs, an idea Heinemann happily adopted.²³ The well-known "cult of Dostoevsky" that followed lasted for well over a decade. By 1914, Maurice Baring could write, "Now when Dostoyevsky is one of the shibboleths of our *intelligentsia*, one can boldly say, without fear of being misunderstood, that, as a creator and a force in literature, Dostoyevsky is in another plane than that of Turgenev, and as far greater than him as Leonardo da Vinci is greater than Vandyke..."²⁴

²⁰ John M. Robertson, "Feodore Michaelovich Dostoevsky" with a biographical sketch by Prelooker, *Anglo-Russian* 2, 7 (January 1899) 207–209.

²¹ Prelooker, biographical sketch to Robertson, "Feodore Michaelovich Dostoyevsky", 207.

²² Robertson, "Feodore Michaelovich Dostoevsky", 208

²³ Arnold Bennett, "Books and Persons", *New Age* 6, no. 22 (31 March 1910).

²⁴ Maurice Baring, *An Outline of Russian Literature* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1914) 210.

Implications for English Literature and Future Lines of Inquiry

Notwithstanding, and perhaps because of, their omission of Dostoevsky, émigrés succeeded in presenting to England a vision of Russia's literature which promoted a sense of cultural affinity. The great diversity in their selections – from the surreal and comical to the realist and heroic – cut across cultural, class and political boundaries to appeal a wide and diverse readership. Revolutionary escapades and prison escapes carried the thrill of the Boy's Own adventure story, but with a subversive political edge. Pictures of earnest, high-minded Nihilists seeking an end to Tsarist persecution evoked the interest and sympathy of England's Nonconformist conscience. Korolenko's *The Blind Musician* with its synaesthetic effects, and Gogol's fairytales satisfied the staunchest aesthete. Meanwhile, Russian literature's own version of the Byronic hero – the 'superfluous man' – combined with the relentless anecdotes about Russia's persecuted artists appearing in articles and prefaces spoke to writers in England who had their own feelings of estrangement from society.

Russian realism in particular bridged many gaps and in so doing offered a lesson to both conservatives and proponents of aestheticism. As was implicit in the very title of Kropotkin's book on literature, ideals and realities – or idealism and realism – were not mutually exclusive. It was possible to be truthful without being immoral *or* ugly; and it was possible to write from a moral perspective without even a trace of sentimentality or didacticism. A few tales offended: Tolstoy's *Resurrection* and *The Kreutzer Sonata*, and stories by Gorky – but as seen in the articles by Volkhovsky and Prelooker, the response of émigrés to English prudery comprised an important contribution to the candour debate. Not only did it hit straight at the puritanical heart of the Nonconformist conscience, it also challenged those who argued that good art could not serve utilitarian interests such as social progress. The philosophical position implicit in Russian commentary ran a course right between these two stands without compromising either. It posited uncensored truth – a truth unmaimed by sentiment or didacticism – as both the responsibility of any ethical artist and a source of artistic beauty. In his preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835) a seminal influence on English aestheticism, Gautier wrote "art has its own internal laws". Yet, as Stepniak argued in his Tolstoy essay, by following its own internal law, art expressed the laws of nature – and in so doing it revealed what was out of balance in society. Kropotkin's 'scientific' literary criticism expressed a similar idea in a different way: truthful art was

beautiful because it brought one closer to understanding the means of achieving a society based on the beautiful principle of mutual aid.

Central to both their propagandist mission and their aesthetic vision was the idea of the fiction writer as a medium of truth, a poet whose unconscious adherence to the “internal laws” of nature revealed ontological patterns with a larger social significance. The literary artist could be believed when the voices of proselytisers and propagandists were called into doubt. As such, they were authentic mouthpieces of history, the nation, and the people. Here, as in the case of the Byronic hero or disenfranchised intellectual, we see western romantic currents doubling back into England transformed by their experiences of Russian despotism and censorship.

As Edward Garnett’s criticism of Turgenev and other Russian writers attests, one of the principal elements of this ‘literary departure’ was the introduction of a method whereby fiction could operate as a mechanism for analysing the historical and psychological state of the nation. As we have seen, Edward Garnett chastised the English novel for failing to correlate its characters with national life. In his preface to his wife’s translation of Goncharov’s *The Storm* (1899), he declared that the same defect applied to English drama: “‘The Storm’ will repay a minute examination by all who recognise that in England to-day we have a stage without art, truth to life, or *national significance*.”²⁵ Notwithstanding Conrad and others’ aversion to his political reading of Turgenev, Garnett’s insistence upon the profound political and historical truths revealed through the criss-cross of characters sitting in Turgenev’s fictional Russian provincial households contributed to a new spirit in English literature.

It is here that we can gesture at possible future lines of inquiry. One might be the influence of Garnett’s Russian style of literary criticism. As a principle figure in *fin de siècle* literary circles, Edward Garnett’s influence on English letters was broad. He presided over weekly literary lunches in Soho which were attended by figures such as Conrad, Ford, Hudson, Belloc, Masfield and Norman Douglas.²⁶ Ford Madox Ford was a tenant of his,²⁷ and in 1898 he introduced him to Joseph Conrad. Conrad and Ford, who “devoted much of their energy ...until 1908 ...to forging a modernist poetics for the novel”,²⁸ looked to

²⁵ Edward Garnett, introduction to Ostrovsky, *The Storm*, x.

²⁶ Philip Waller, *Writers, Readers and Reputations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 543.

²⁷ Jefferson, *Edward Garnett*, 36.

²⁸ Green, 9.

Garnett as an authority on Turgenev: in 1921 Ford would write "...we owe a very great debt to Mr. Garnett. ...almost alone, he gave us Turgenev."²⁹ Garnett was also a controversial figure. Despite his admiration, Ford also disparages him as being the *chef d'ecole*, of a school of writers who produced *tranche de vie*: "[they] had relatively little preoccupation with Literature as an Art", but had "in revenge, an immense desire to further the Social Revolution, to remove Social Injustices, and to point out that Life was an excruciatingly dull affair."³⁰ Galsworthy's engagement with Garnett, meanwhile, predated his 1900 meeting with the critic. As Edward Garnett writes in his introduction to *Letters from John Galsworthy*, "I did not know till later that Galsworthy had a great admiration for my wife's Turgenev translations and was then modelling *Villa Rubein* on Turgenev's method."³¹ In their subsequent correspondence Garnett helped prolong the influence, routinely pressing Turgenev upon Galsworthy as an example.

Parade's End, Ford's tetralogy dramatising the impact of historical forces on the life of Christopher Tietjens, bears witness to the lasting influence of the new spirit brought to English literature via Garnett's Russian criticism. Ford believed that the novelist should "appear in his really proud position as historian of his own time".³² He also developed a method of "impressionism" in which the narrator and his attitudes disappear behind details which speak for themselves. This impressionism was a close cousin of what Moore and others described as Turgenev's dramatic technique. In *Parade's End*, the inner life of each figure in the quartet breathes its nation and its age. While WWI and its concomitant social upheaval provide a backdrop to the drama, the effects of the age are played out in the attitudes and behaviour of the characters on a very personal level. Robert Green has perhaps best articulated the similarities between the tetralogy and Garnett's formulation of Turgenev's art:

What *Parade's End* does is demonstrate the artificiality of that division between 'historical' and 'private', especially during periods of enormous social convulsion. It reveals the congruence between history and the inner life; it 'dramatizes the impact of a historical crisis upon individuals – concretely realized persons who are representative of every level of English

²⁹ Ford, *Thus to Revisit*, 38-9.

³⁰ Ford, *Thus to Revisit*, 38.

³¹ Edward. Garnett, introduction to *Letters from John Galsworthy 1900-1932* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934) 5.

³² Ford, *It was the Nightingale* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1933) 208.

society; and the inner life which the author thereby reveals is always consonant with and reflective of the outer world'. The quartet is remarkable for the acuteness of Ford's insight into the political effects of disruption, the end of 'feudalism' and the beginning of the modern world, on his imagined characters. Characters and society continually complement and reinforce one another as historical event and common life are merged. In this respect at least, there is something almost 'Russian' about *Parade's End*, in the way it recalls, say, *On the Eve* and *Fathers and Sons*, or even, in its scale, *Anna Karenina*.³³

If there is indeed "something almost 'Russian'" about *Parade's End*, Green's comments also recall the German romantic philosophers that were so central in forming the Russian canon. We are reminded of the transcendental idealists, Hegel and Schelling, in whose monist system, history and the individual reinforce one another, and where the conscious and unconscious, object and subject, are equal partners in the formation of reality.

Other writers were similarly infused with the Russian ethos. The connections between Galsworthy's *Villa Rubein* and Turgenev have been explored in some detail by Gilbert Phelps, who notes similarities in characterisation and setting. More significant, however, is Phelps' view of Turgenev's influence on Galsworthy's entire corpus: "Turgenev", he writes, "helped Galsworthy to create a portrait gallery of contemporary types, who would illustrate the forces at work in society."³⁴ The work of Gissing can be described in much the same way. It is notable that during the 1880s, when he was reading German translations of Turgenev, he was most influenced by the author's brevity and his dramatic manner of suggestion – the same features of his work so admired in the 1880s by James and the English aesthetes.³⁵ Only in the 1890s, when Constance Garnett's translations and their Russian-style prefaces appear, did Gissing rid himself of the compulsion to condense, finding instead in his work a new ideological tendency.

H.G. Wells in his 1897 article in *The Contemporary Review*, "The Novels of Mr. George Gissing", perhaps best sums up the importance of both émigré-informed readings of Turgenev and Russian criticism *per se* in transforming English realism. Wells writes of a "new structural conception" in literature, based on "the grouping of characters and incidents,

³³ Robert Green, *Ford Madox Ford: Prose and Politics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 134.

³⁴ Gilbert Phelps, *The Russian Novel in English Fiction*, 119.

³⁵ *The Collected Letters of George Gissing* vol. 6, edited by Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, Pierre Coustillas (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990) 80.

³⁷ H.G. Wells, "The Novels of Mr. George Gissing, *Contemporary Review* 72 (1897: July/Dec) 193.

no longer about a lost will, a hidden murder, or a mislaid child, but about some social influence or some far-reaching movement of humanity.” Notably, this movement has its prototype in Russian literature.

This new and broader conception of the novel construction finds its most perfect expression in several of the works of Turgénév, in “Smoke”, and “Virgin Soil,” each displaying a group of typical individuals at the point of action of some great social force, the social force in question and not the “hero” and “heroine” being the real operative interest of the story.

Wells’ understanding of Turgenev could not have come about without an idea of how Russians read literature. His description of a new triad of English novelists is suggestive of the power of émigré commentary: “[They] have set themselves to write novels which are neither studies of character essentially, nor essentially series of incidents, but deliberate attempts to present in typical groupings distinct phases of our social order.”³⁷

In 1909, Saintsbury reflected on the impact of Russian literature on English letters at the *fin de siècle*: “Russian literature has, in the person of Count Tolstoi, completed the quartette of revolutionary agents who have acted on the literature of the last twenty or thirty years, to such an extent that the twentieth century may be said to have made its *début* with them for sponsors.”³⁸ One must not forget the émigrés whose positioning of Russian literature within the world of English fiction expedited this revolution.

³⁸ George Saintsbury, *The Later Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh; London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1907) 332.

APPENDIX

Lecture notes for “Count Tolstoy as a Novelist and Social Reformer”(1890–1), by Stepniak

The following is a transcript of what is legible in Stepniak’s lecture notes for his talk on “Count Tolstoy as a Novelist and Social Reformer”. In the RGALI archive there appear to be two versions of this talk, both incomplete. One of them appears at times to be a second draft. However, it is not always entirely clear which pages belong to which draft: some pages have as many as three page numbers and the order in which they were delivered from the RGALI archive does not always follow a logical sequence. Moreover, some material – possibly from an earlier draft – does not appear in the ‘second draft’, and to some degree contradicts the later material, as if Stepniak changed his opinion. This occurs, for example, in his discussion of Tolstoy’s characterisation.

I have attempted, as much as possible, to present Stepniak’s lecture in a coherent manner, collating material from both drafts of the talk, and including as much material is available. Some random phrases, which do not appear to fit anywhere, have been omitted. Stepniak crossed out many lines and replaced them with others, rephrasing the idea expressed in the crossed out section. I do not generally include crossed out lines except in cases where the passages intended to replace these sections do not exist or are too illegible to decipher. Phrases which Stepniak inserted into the text have been added without any indication that they were added later. It is notable that in these instances there is no sign of any other hand interfering with the text. Illegible or missing text has been indicated by bracketed ellipses.

As a non-native writer of English, Stepniak naturally makes many minor spelling errors. I have corrected these, except in those cases where the true meaning of the word might be called into question. Likewise, as these were drafts of a paper intended to be delivered orally, not published, Stepniak uses many abbreviations. When it is possible to gauge his meaning without reasonable doubt, I have inserted the whole word, rather than transcribing its abbreviation. I have retained Stepniak’s spellings of Tolstoi and Turgenev. Parentheses belong to Stepniak. Text in square brackets has been inserted by me.

Count Tolstoy as a Novelist and Social Reformer

Among the authors of all times there are few who have acquired in so short a time such a hold over the mind and heart of his contemporaries as Count Tolstoi. – Only five or six years ago he was almost unknown outside the boundaries of his country. It was another great novelist Turgheneff who had captivated the fancy of the nations which are our elders in civilisation and had won their sympathy for Russian people, by showing how different they were from what foreigners thought them to be.

Tolstoi's masterpiece "War and Peace" was published in French translation in [...]. But it did not go beyond a restricted circle of professional writers. It was in the quality of a prophet of a new religion that he first conquered the reverential attention of the whole reading world.

In the general rush after personal preferment, wealth, notoriety, there was something striking and moving (pathetic) in the fact that a novelist in the fullness of his literary powers should give up for the sake of some moral convictions on some moral ground his artistic career and begin making boots, ploughing land, bringing manure to the fields of his needy neighbours and writ[ing] in his leisure hours not his glorious novels, but religious tracts in the form of short stories for the use of peasants and of children.

People eagerly sought the explanation of these uncommon actions and Count Tolstoi's ethical and autobiographical books, which explained the inner evolution (?) of this deep introspective mind, met with a reception that rarely falls to the lot of any book.

Of course people who were impressed by the prophet wanted to know the novelist and it was easily discovered that the same ideas which had in his last days shaped the form of a religion were underlying all his works of fiction With [this] difference: that what seemed doubtful, one sided, fantastical in his religion was persuasive and complete when appearing under the magic hand of fiction. It seemed that the great, mysterious and strange form [of] collective being called the Russian nation [had] got now a living interpreter and spoke to reveal to the world what was hidden in its bosom.

Tolstoi was declared to be above all the national Russian novelist. As to Turgenev, who was so comprehensible to Western mind and so different in his general tendency from Tolstoi, the good people concluded that owing to his long residence in Paris, he must have become more of a Frenchman than a Russian.

In reality both our great novelists are national, for they represent the two great elements informing our national life. Turguenev represents the western or European element, which is strong enough in modern Russia and is gaining ground with every generation, spreading from the upper classes to the masses of the people. But Tolstoi is the most thorough representative of the opposite element: the oriental element. Although dying out [it] is for the present still the strongest with the millions of Russian peasants.

But what is the oriental element?

Its most striking, though outward characteristic seems to me to consist in passive submissiveness to the calamities of the outward world, in the absence of the desire to struggle against them which springs from the much abused term of fatalism. Fatalism is undoubtedly a trait of oriental character, and is not confined to any past race or religion, for it is common to Russian peasants as well as to the Arabs of the desert. It seems to me to spring from the peculiar form of dependency upon nature which exists in these huge uniform countries affording no variety of occupations, no division of labour, where wretchedly poor [people] live exclusively from the land are as much at the mercy of every inclemency of the sky as the caterpillars and gnats. In these conditions the sense of dependency upon something unknown and unfathomable can be expressed only in Fatalism – the belief in something impersonal hard, irresistible absolutely unhuman for it is equally insensible to supplication as to pity.

Then the human spirit in its wonderful resources turns upon itself and finds in its inmost depths a defence and protection in developing the sense of superiority and indifference to all possible calamities. A power of endurance is developed as gigantic as the power of active resistance which the possibility of an active struggle has created in better favoured lands. Having no chance of protecting the body from physical sufferings, privation, discomfort, the spirit divorces itself so to say from the body and taking wings soars upwards into regions where no sufferings, nor earthly calamity, not even death can disturb its imperturbable serenity.

This is the basis of oriental philosophy. It is a sort of artificial isolation of the spiritual from the corporeal, the creation of a sort of hothouse for the spirit, in which it could attain a development unattainable in the natural conditions of life.

Engrafted upon the solid vigorous stem of strongly materialistic Greco-Roman culture this oriental principle has been a stimulant of a new life and progress and has given

to our civilisation that variety and depth which it could not have attained without it. But in itself it has been powerless to create anything but desolation and dead stagnancy.

Now in Tolstoi we have an artist of surpassing power in whom the spirit of the great [sires] prophet of the orient seems revived, stern, unflinching, uncompromising. The whole of his literary career is a revendication [sic] of the Orient against the advancing western spirit.

I pass over his early works such as the Cossacks, Polikushka, Family Happiness and others. They are very striking as a revelation of creative genius. As far as artistic elegance, sense of measure, harmony of details, they are as perfect as Turgenev's masterpieces: not a word too much or too little, every stroke contributing to general effect of the whole. We will not find the same sobriety in his greatest works, which are not so perfect artistically, however superior they may be as to the creative poetical power.

There is no lack in his early works of this philosophy which came to the front later on. It is manifested in sulky discontent with civilisation in the yearning after something outside and beyond the satisfaction of men's intellectual aspirations. Yet the immediate [...] impression of life were too vivid as yet in the young artist to allow room for the gloomy note of death in life [of] oriental pessimism.

It is struck in full in Tolstoi's greatest novel *War and Peace*, upon which we must dwell for a while because the artist and the prophet appear side by side both in the fullness of their power neither intruding as yet upon the domain of the other.

War and Peace is a huge clumsy work in which we have at least three novels rolled into one with addition of much dry and tedious philosophy and military history, with description of manoeuvres and battles accompanied sometimes with regular maps. Yet with all these glaring defects in the construction the whole, as Turgenev said, [it] is perhaps the greatest work which [has] appeared in [the] Russian language since Gogol's time.

Tolstoi possesses in the highest degree what is the essential, the only essential quality of the great art: the gift of creating living things and living men. The pen in his hands is a true magic wand which gives life by one stroke, by one single touch.

Turgenev has surpassed Tolstoi in the subtle and varied shadowing of characters. Dostoevsky in the gift of inward portraiture. Tolstoi's psychology – I beg excuse from his admirers – is flat and ineffective, for it does not paint the individuals, but simply conveys the idea of the author.–

But the sculptural plasticity, in the wonderful power of importing to his creations that indefinable something which makes them for ever living, he has but a few equals among the greatest novelists and none superior to him.

Let us take the opening chapter of *War and Peace*, describing the evening party at AS, the maid of honour to the Emperor. Here in the space of the three first pages he introduces to us three of his principal characters: Anna S. the mistress of the house, Prince Vasily, the father to the beautiful Helen, and Pierre, afterwards Count Bezukhiy the hero of the novel. He gives not more than four five lines to each, yet they stand before us as clearly that we would recognise them if we had met them in the street.—

The broader the picture, the greater the number of figures which appear upon it and the shorter the time during which he can show us each of them, the more astonishing the general effect.

His war pictures are therefor something quite unique in literature. – It seems as if these dark enormous masses of men engaged in the awful work of mutual destruction had been suddenly lit with electric light and we see them just as they are – in fight or in repose, in warlike excitement or in defeat. It is the epopee of war divested of its tinsel: the anatomy as well as the psychology of war. Only after reading Tolstoi [do] we know what war actually is.

The picture of war is the most striking and original part of Tolstoi's great novel. But it is not the superior one artistically. However difficult the artistic reproduction of the outward action and inner psychology of a crowd the highest in art of all [...] is the reproduction of individual figures, individual face [sic] individual character.

In drawing his characters, especially his favourite [ones], Tolstoi is not always unimpeachable. The prophet and moralist often [guide] the hand of the artist and his heroes are so crammed with his own views, his philosophy and his moral that they lose their individuality and resemble these beasts of burden who are so overloaded one sees only their feet which move, the body of the animal disappearing under the mount of bark nay, fruits or other article they are carrying to the market. Such is Andrey in *War and Peace*, Levin in *Anna Karenina*, and his Ivan Ilych in the story of this name. [We might] speak of Pznisheff in Kreuzer S. in whom one can hardly discover any [...] of a living [...]

Then as a rule there is a certain uniformity in Tolstoi's characters – they are mostly made of one block. The inner world of military men – from leaders, emperors to ensign unites forming the body of the army are shown us as clear [...]

It is outside the battlefield, in Peace and not in war that Tolstoi's immortal creations are developed, such as Natasha, Pierre, Princess Mary, the Kuraghins and many others.

But we can not dwell upon them. We must hurry to Tolstoi's philosophy as it appears in the novel.

It stands out clearly marked in the mental evolution of the hero, Pierre, in whom the author has put so much of himself. His mind is the author's mind and his troubles the author's troubles. He appears at the outset as a thorough European, a man who has been even educated in Paris and in the liberal ideas of his time. He believes in the efficacy of [...] such things as liberty, good political form, good laws.

In the course of the novel he is gradually cured of these aberrations. Under the influence of a great personal misfortune [...] begins to seek happiness in [...] oriental quietism and introspection. He becomes a Free Mason. But this is only a stage in [his] development. There is too much of western element in Free Masonry and another shock effectuates the cure. This takes place in Moscow at the time of the French occupation. He is taken prisoner under the charge of incendiarism and he has to witness the shooting of five of his companions, poor wretch, whose guilt was as imaginary as his own. He is saved from the same fate almost by a miracle and is thrown once again in his prison. Whilst he sits there in the dark broken down, [...] brooding upon his awful recollections, his attention is attracted by [...] It was this man, who converted Pierre and shaped his soul. [...] Pierre learns from him the complete oriental quietism, the indifference to outward conditions both moral and physical.

His new state of mind is well illustrated in one little scene.

He is driven as a slave from home and is in the [clutch] of [the] French army, fed on carrion, ill treated, his bare feet bleeding from frost and made as miserable as man can [be made by] fellow man.

[...] He looks round upon the sky vault, upon the immense town. All this is harboured in his mind and soul and all this they want to lock up in a little wooden shed. The thing appeared so absurd, so ridiculous that he burst out laughing. Ha ha ha he roared. He he

he. An oriental fakir could not feel stronger [...]. The conversion is complete. Orient has won the battle and Pierre has reached perfection.

But Tolstoi makes concessions to life and his hero Pierre, recovers from his fit of acute orientalism and becomes once again a [...]

Tolstoi is satisfied with showing as ideal [...] quiet domestic happiness. A life for life's sake in which [the] modest joy of parent in children, perpetuates the life of the high flow [...] passage of youth.

Natasha, the bewitching heroine of the novel, whom nobody can help loving, [...] is the living embodiment of that view. Summed up in plain language she is a girl with exuberant maternal instincts seeking to become a mother. It sounds prosaic even vulgar. But you must remember that nature has [assisted?] the instinct of love with the highest and [most] sublime emotions men's souls are capable of.

The poet views with nature and has made his Natasha one of the most charming [...] creations ever [to come] by men's fancy. Women need not live exclusively for [the] maternal instinct. But these instincts play unquestionably a principal part in their life and Tolstoi's Natasha, with her fanciful early capriciousness, [...] and posterior quietening down appears to us as one of the [main types of Russian or Slavonic women], for everything bears the stamp of race and nation. A girl of the Anglosaxon race would [be] more patient, more persevering and less excitable, more like Sonia than Natasha.

Natasha finds her quiet harbour after many tempests in marriage with Pierre ... Tolstoi is fully satisfied with her as well as with Pierre to whom he allows a good share of spiritual enjoyment of a civilised ... and even permits him to relapse partially in the [side of western] for he takes part in the movement [...] which prepared the Decembrist insurrection.

The story ends with a glimpse of the couple [...]

Tolstoi is not so tolerant in his next great novel *Anna Karenina*.

This is a novel with a "purpose". At all events the author did his best to bring it down to that meretricious kind. The moral lesson is conveyed both in a positive way by Levin and in a negative one by the story of the illegitimate union of Anna and Vronsky.—

Levin, the author's mouthpiece, [is] a figure so overloaded with the author's philosophy that he loses his personality. Levin begins ... what Pierre and Natasha have ended: the foundation of a happy home with the pretty and [...] simpleton Kitty, who is

certainly as good a housekeeper and nurse as one could wish. But Levin is dissatisfied, restless and positively miserable, because this life of personal comfort gives to little for his soul/ to such a point, that he the happy husband and head of a prosperous family was contemplating at one time to end his days by suicide. This is a piece of Tolstoi's own biography, as he told it afterwards, and so was evidently the posterior solution to which his hero came.. He can find no pleasure in life as long as [...] Life seems to him an accident without any higher scope and without a future. What troubled Levin are the great mysteries of life and death the scope of men's existence.

The story winds up with Levin renouncing his doubt and a way to perfect happiness is shown to him. Fedor, a day labourer at his service, who plays toward him the part of Karafaev in *War and Peace*. [The solution] is a sort of dissolve of the [...] prod. individual in the mass of the peasants in the ways of their faith and naïve [...] and unthinking routine, in the drudgery of physical work as the [way to a] healthy spirit, with manual work for blunting the oper. for the pride of free mind.

Side by side with this model couple there is the story of another couple which not merely do not care for ... but disregard even the common code of morality [...] They are punished frightfully for their transgression and they are meant as a moral warning, just like the traditional villains of all the moral stories.

But here a curious thing occurred. Tolstoi's enormous artistic talent could not be cubed under the yoke of some sectarian doctrine. It rebelled, taking for [its] guide truth and nature and the result was that Tolstoi proved by his novel the very reverse of what he intended to prove.

The story of Anna and Vronsky is a plea in favour of the absolute indissolubility of marriage, which is one of Tolstoi's favourite ideas. He could not prove anything by taking a common profligate. He took therefore for his heroine upon whom the blow of retributive justice had to fall, a good, earnest and serious woman like Anna. But earnest and serious women do not break the pledged faith as long as they can help it.

This is the case with Anna.

Those who might be inclined to doubt that there is passionate love, which is irresistible – have only to read its story written in words of force by Tolstoi.

Anna is a victim not of her weakness but of social laws which did not permit her to legalise what was imposed upon her by the law of nature she had no share in making. Thus

the novel is a plea in favour of the necessity of divorce, and of woman's enfranchisement, the very idea of which is hateful to Count Tolstoi.

And the exuberant life, the fiery passions, the absorbing dramatising of that sinful union, rendered the reading public utterly incapable to pay any attention to the same moral Tolstoi had tried to embody in the story of the other couple.

The whole novel is a sermon every part of which [points at] some moral doctrine. But as the novel went on appearing serially in a monthly paper, and was devoured by the whole [of] reading Russia, a strange thing occurred. The public and the press [had] not so much as noticed that there was any purpose in the novel.

Now, owing to the peculiar political conditions of the country, novels with a purpose are much in vogue in Russia. The public and the critics divided into two camps [...] The one attacked Tolstoi vehemently for being simply a work of art without [...]

The other praised him for his artistic objectiveness.

A curious polemic went on in the press upon this subject.

Only when the novel appeared in book form with its dreadful Biblical quotations on the title page and the final chapter in which the moral of the story is intruded upon the reader in forcible and unmistakable language of dry and dull prose – people noticed their blunder. But of course it did not enhance [his message].

A curious tragic position for an author who cares so much about teaching and so little about delighting his fellow creatures. He must have been rendered very unhappy by the [...] face of his novels as novels. Since he could not make in him[self] the art[ist] subservient to the prophet, the natural solution was for him to drop artistic form altogether and to step forward as a plain unadorned preacher. This time the world listened with wonder and respect and thousands nay millions of people turn to him in hope of [...] He became the greatest moral power in the land, his estate Yasnaia Polyana became a sort of [...]

He told us the touching story of how the spirit called to him, of how on reading the gospels, the fifth chapter of Mark, the sermon on the Mount, [...] struck him as a revelation. He called it his conversion and the principle of how to resist evil [became] the basis of his doctrine. But if we remember his writing we will discover the gem of [the idea] before in that scene of Pierre.

Man's happiness is in his soul. Hence it is useless to strive after our comfort, security.

no state

no tribunals

no war

It seems impossible to go farther. Yet Tolstoi made another step farther and in the same oriental thought he [wrote] the Kreutzer Sonata.

It is needless to say, a work of art, and it is in that light that we must view it. Of its many defects and few beautifies I have no time to [discuss]. I will begin by telling that I do not share the [public's view of the story]. To me it seems a highly moral book, every line of which being inspired by purest desire. I have read the original edition. I will not say that I liked all of it. There are passages which are decidedly of bad taste. But prophets are too vehement to [...]. In ... this Tolstoi has merely completed the cycle of the evolution which has been performed before him. In his unflinching [...] he has opened his [...]

There is nothing new to learn from Tolstoi. He merely repeats what has been said before him in a more impressive way. He is a interesting phenomenon but not a new power in modern life. A few years hence all will be forgotten as to his religion.

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