

GENETIC REVOLUTIONARIES:

AMERICAN SOCIALISM, THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION, AND THE INVENTION
OF THE RADICAL IMMIGRANT, 1886-1920

by

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Abstract

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by

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Adviser: Professor Peter Hitchcock

This dissertation examines the American response to socialist politics in general and the Russian Revolution in particular during the titular period. I argue that Gilded-Age anti-radicalism followed by Progressive-Era anti-communism act as a discursive crucible that irrevocably links the two figures of the radical and the immigrant, manufacturing a forced association between particular ethnicities and specific political forms. While immigrants to the US had long been blamed as carriers of *biological* contagions, socialism in the late nineteenth century would soon be characterized as a *social* disease in the American imaginary, one that “naturally” infected lesser minds from Central and Eastern Europe, and could then be transmitted to “native” constitutions that betrayed their own weakness simply by the act of adopting radical views. Through readings of contemporaneous literature from authors such as William Dean Howells, Jack London, and John Reed, as well as analyses of concordant reportage and jurisprudential decisions, this study argues that conceptions of a “politics in the blood” not only offered ballast to harsh anti-immigration policies but also generated a contradictory population of “indigenous foreigners” alongside the immigrants themselves, a “counterpublic” rendered un-American purely for their political views. Aided by post-bellum racial categories, new

forms of political representation, unprecedented waves of immigration, and the helixing of legislation with the new sciences of anthropometrics, the frightening figure of this “radical immigrant” would abet an increasingly centralized American government in the transition from a discourse of empire in the late nineteenth century to one of anti-communism in the early twentieth, producing contours of contact that still obtain.

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I discovered early on as a graduate student that English professors greedily devour the acknowledgements of the books they read. While searching first for their own names, they are also (trained as we all are as close readers) attempting to divine the industry politics hidden within the genealogies, among the obligatory mentions, between the foregrounded, the merely listed, and the explicitly praised. I am still waiting for a marvelous dissertation to be written about acknowledgements, and here I humbly submit to the archive:

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However, it was my parents—educators both—who first instilled in me a belief that working over the summer was for suckers. Many was the afternoon that I decided to skip tenth grade halfway through the day, only to arrive at home with my gang of latch-key homunculi, and find my father “working” on the couch, a stack of student papers by his side, and either *Braveheart* or *Dances With Wolves* playing on the TV. I soon realized he was getting paid to do what I had to sneak around for, and thus my dedication to education was born. My mother, who is probably worrying about my health coverage as I type this, has been a model of maternal support—financial as well as emotional—and I think I would’ve gotten scurvy from the grad-school diet had she not been so generous with a fridge always stocked with lightly dressed whole-wheat pasta and seasonal greens. The Fozness has been a perfect kid sister—and by that I mean irritating, obnoxious, loving, and fun. The only person in the world who fully understands the nuance of dysfunction our family possesses, and who tells me to grow up when I need it. To my stepmonster, I can’t thank her enough for never calling the police. And, as my youngest sister teeters on the ledge of pubescence, I see too much of myself in her at that age. I can’t wait to see what surprises she has in store for Holly and Paul!

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American Socialism, the Russian Revolution, and the Invention of the Radical
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INTRODUCTION

Radical Russia and Political Racialization

In 2005, at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, Vladimir Putin himself attended the opening night of the exclamatorily entitled “Russia!” exhibit, adding a certain political heft to the already impressive list of guests. Across town in a decidedly less posh affair, Marat Guelman, a dissident gallery owner from Moscow, curated an ideological counterpoint to the Guggenheim show with his own exhibit, “Russia 2.” Remarking on his show’s subtitle, “Bad News From Russia,” to a critic from the *New York Times*, Guelman quipped: “Americans want bad news from Russia. It means that everything is right in the world.”¹ Four years later, in the town of Lebanon, Pennsylvania, then-Senator Arlen Specter was hosting a riotous “town hall” meeting at a local community college. As one of the many incensed participants approached the microphone, she proclaimed that the anger of the crowd was not really a response to President Obama’s healthcare plan, but rather, she claimed, “about the systematic dismantling of this country. I don’t want this country turning into Russia, turning into a socialized country.”²

The following project, in its broadest terms, seeks to consider the substance of this peculiar relationship, to interrogate the historical events and ideological structures that rendered Russia as the cultural inverse of the United States. To take the protester at her word, why does the dismantling of America, in her imagination, necessarily result not

¹ Guelman’s title, he explained, was a response against the Russian state, or what he simply refers to as “Russia 1.” See Steven Lee Myers, “Moscow Show Pits Church Against State,” *New York Times* 26 Nov. 2005. Online. One year later, Guelman would be beaten in his Moscow gallery while a number of works were either stolen or destroyed by a group of ten “skinheads” he charges the Kremlin with sending. See Sophia Kishkovsky, “Attackers Pillage Moscow Art Gallery and Beat Activist Owner,” *New York Times* 22 Oct. 2006. Online.

² See Philip Rucker, “Specter Faces Raucous Crowd at Town Hall Meeting,” *Washington Post*, 11 Aug. 2009. Online.

only in Russia, but in socialism as well—even twenty years after the official dissolution of “actually existing socialism?” Perhaps most compellingly, to return to Guelman, why does bad news from Russia automatically mean that everything is right with the world—ostensibly, of course, a world that is “right” for Americans? What are the qualities of this “worldliness” that bad news from Russia invokes?

Specifically, *Genetic Revolutionaries: American Socialism, the Russian Revolution, and the Invention of the Radical Immigrant, 1886-1920*, examines the American response to socialist politics in general and the Russian Revolution in particular from the Haymarket bombing to just after the First World War. I argue that Gilded-Age anti-radicalism followed by Progressive-Era anti-communism acted as a discursive crucible that irrevocably linked the two figures of the radical and the immigrant, manufacturing a specious and harmful association between particular ethnicities and specific political forms. While immigrants to the US had long been blamed as carriers of *biological* contagions, the growing popularity of socialism in the late nineteenth century would soon be characterized as a *social* disease in the American imaginary, one that “naturally” infected lesser minds from Central and Eastern Europe, and could then be transmitted to deficient “native” constitutions that betrayed their own weaknesses simply through the act of adopting radical views. This conception of a “politics in the blood” not only offered ballast to harsh anti-immigration policies but also generated a contradictory population of “homegrown foreigners”: US citizens rendered un-American wholly for their political views. Aided by post-bellum racial categories, new forms of political representation, unprecedented waves of immigration, and the helixing of legislation with the new sciences of anthropometrics, the frightening figure of

this “radical immigrant” would abet an increasingly centralized American government in the transition from a discourse of empire in the late nineteenth century to one of anti-communism in the early twentieth, producing contours of contact that still obtain.

My research, then, is concerned less with the Russian Revolution as a historical occasion than as a rhetorical opportunity for the continued formation of the American state, wherein, to borrow methodologically from Priscilla Wald, “jurists, politicians, and journalists all, in their fashion, competed to forge narratives that would instantiate their visions of the Union...” while the literary class “participated in the imagining of a community and transformed that imagining into a contemplation of the consequences and ambiguities of their own participation” (*Constituting* 2-3). In the service of producing this historical scene, the dissertation calls upon not only “traditional” literary texts, but also, in the words of Donald E. Pease, other “legitimate sites of contestation, exclusion, and repression”: reportage, court transcripts, acts of legislation, works of anthropometrics, and federal reports. The intention is to analyze the conditions that gave birth to a vast field of discourse, mapping its genealogy, distribution, remnants and effects. Contrary to much historiography of the period, I believe the Russian Revolution deserves treatment as a fulcrum rather than a commencement, a point of transformation rather than an outset. As Shu-mei Shih argues in her introduction to the methodology of comparative racialization, “Racial triangulation... is an effective heuristic device to bring into view relationalities that conventional binary models obscure or displace. If one places three related terms under the pressure of triangulation, new insights emerge” (Shih 1351). While perhaps the most generative bodies of scholarship in the fields of race studies today have been produced in this vein, opening up the black/white binary to marvelously

productive triangulations with various hyphenated-American ethnicities and queer comparisons, I would argue that much can be revealed about the process of racialization in the US through the introduction of “radical politics” as the necessary third term between whiteness and its other. Without an understanding of the cultural receptions of early American socialism and its transformations after 1917, the connective tissue between strands of political repression, specious human typology, immigration restriction and the persecution of a variety of radical forms remains obscured. As Daniel Bell has argued, socialism in America was an “unbounded dream.” So too was its antithesis. Tracing this anti-radical impulse from the Gilded Age to the Progressive Era, *Genetic Revolutionaries* contends that there was a cold war well before Yalta and, in the guise of a violent domestic battle against anti-radicalism, a warmer contest well before Red October.

In chapter one, I examine the representations of politically active foreigners in the Gilded Age by examining trial testimony of the infamous “Haymarket Affair.” I pay particular attention to the ways in which scientific rhetoric was used to justify a “blood” connection between ethnicity and character traits, which built upon antebellum ideas on race and intellect. I also reexamine William Dean Howells’ famous and somewhat uncharacteristic defense of these “anarchists” through the lens of the trial itself, and argue that, by examining the full implications of the prosecution’s deployment of “constructive crime,” we can read the unlikely defender’s response as a reckoning with the racialized conception of affective rhetoric that the trial adjudicated—and its dire consequences for writers of the period that could be tarred by either the mark of radicalism or foreign

heritage. Howells' response to this experience was perhaps his greatest work, *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, and my reading of the novel will illustrate how the author attempted to navigate through the constricting parameters of the legal verdict and exculpate his own "audacious social views." In the end, he would accomplish this task only by fusing radical politics to German heritage, undergirding his maneuver through a biologism that renders Teutonic blood more susceptible to extreme political forms, and banishing these vulnerable "non-white" ethnicities from the polity altogether.

In chapter two, I place Jack London's neglected *The Assassination Bureau, Ltd.* at the center of an argument about the formation of what I call "racial socialism"—the process by which radical American politics are rendered in starkly non-white terms. As Cedric Robinson argues in his magisterial *Black Marxism*, "the development, organization and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions, and so too did social ideology. As a material force then, it could be expected that racialism would inevitably permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism" (2). This "permeation" is everywhere evident in the racist science of the period, an anthropometrics through which London himself will conceive of his own hierarchy of races. At the center of the novel lies the radical Russian, a liberatory device attempting to create a "socialism with American characteristics." Yet London relies upon scientific discourse to prove the inherently "restive" nature of the Russian people and, hence, their susceptibility to revolutionary fervor. This racialization of socialism will result in his eventual abandonment of the novel itself, unwilling to imagine the adoption of a political system in the US that would simultaneously manifest his stated political desires while also eradicating his status as a self-described white man. Through a reading of the novel

that treats his racism and socialism as dialectical rather than distinct, we can gesture toward an alternative yet no less troubled history of American socialism itself—one that places racialism at the heart of its reception, dismisses certain strains of radicalism as the consequence of anemic ethnicities, and circumscribes the adherents to these doctrines as qualitatively “un-American” through the conflation of immigrant races with radical ideas.

Chapter three focuses on the life and work of John Reed, the most famous American chronicler of the Russian Revolution, and explores how even avowedly socialist writers often still relied upon a crude and coopted biologism while attempting to portray freedom struggles sympathetically. While Reed’s journalistic sojourns down the Bowery, into Mexico, and approaching the Eastern Front during World War I disclosed an explicit ideological alliance with the oppressed subjects he wrote about, the identificatory practices he drew from often produced pathos only by reinscribing difference. However, Reed’s approach went through a “revolution” of its own after witnessing the events in Red Russia during 1917. In light of his earlier body of work, I read his monumental *Ten Days That Shook The World* as the first serious attempt at a revolutionary aesthetic in the socialist vein. The inclusion of material objects; reproductions of placards, passes, and decrees; obsessive use of ellipses and the present tense; and focus on the bureaucratization of power renders *Ten Days* a strikingly Modernist text, and yet one mostly ignored by literary critics due to its canonical categorization in the degraded genre of journalism.

The final chapter will show how these disparate discursive threads concerning the increased criminalization of political dissent and its attachment to particular ethnic types cohere around the Russian Revolution and are then disseminated by popular media

outlets. By tracing the transformation of the radical immigrant from a hodge-podge of German Socialists, union members, and sympathetic members of the bourgeoisie, to a violent and uncompromisingly revolutionary Bolshevik, I argue that the Russian Revolution acts as a discursive fulcrum that allows an anxious US to conflate, critique, elide and justify domestic concerns over immigration, urbanization, and labor unrest. By analyzing numerous articles and stories in the *Saturday Evening Post* between 1917 and 1920, I catalog a range of cacophonous and contradictory discourses that nevertheless congeal within the figure of the genetic revolutionary. What had previously been a threat solely from foreign radicals imported to the US and predisposed to socialist tendencies due to inferior blood suddenly also included white “native” Americans that betrayed similar sympathies—sympathies that simultaneously rendered them un-American and non-white, organizing and disciplining the horizon of political possibilities in contradistinction to the Bolshevik threat.

Genetic Revolutionaries, however, is also a humble attempt at disciplinary redress. In Amy Kaplan’s introduction to her and Donald E. Pease’s landmark 1993 collection of essays, *Cultures of U.S. Imperialism*, Kaplan notes: “If the importance of culture has gone unrecognized in historical studies of American imperialism, the role of empire has been equally ignored in the study of American culture” (14). Since that indictment nearly twenty years ago, works from such notables as John Carlos Rowe, Eric Cheyfitz and Tzvetan Todorov, among others, continue to heed her call that “imperialism as a political or economic process abroad is inseparable from the social relations and cultural discourses of race, gender, ethnicity and class at home” (16). Questions about the relationship between empire and culture—far from being ignored—are now at the center

of American Studies, read backward often as far as the colonial period, and providing fruitful and exciting new scholarship that regularly reaches across disciplinary boundaries in an attempt to connect foreign policy with social relations through the lens of culture.

However, while connecting such seemingly disparate objects as US prostitution and the annexation of the Philippines, “Indian removal” and the Mexican-American War, or *Tarzan* and Teddy Roosevelt, much work on US imperialism appears to have studiously avoided the Russian Revolution and its effects on American culture. This aporia may be caused at least in part by the understandable desire of these critics to read the imperial impulse *backwards* into US history precisely to move away from Cold War conceptions of a global framework that are “always already” stained with the notion of American exceptionalism. In addition, much of the research concerning the Russian Revolution in literary studies has apotheosized the 1930s, seen as the high-water mark of the so-called “radical novel,” and, consequently, congealed around a certain body of texts. Though a few recent canon revisions and reappraisals by Barbara Foley, Cary Nelson, and Paula Rabinowitz, among others, have attempted to breathe new life into a somewhat obdurate field, the parameters set by the deservedly landmark works of Daniel Aaron and Walter Rideout still corral most thinking around these questions through the novels and journalism of the “great men” of American socialism.

Genetic Revolutionaries seeks to connect these two branches of scholarship, arguing that the avoidance of the Russian Revolution and the cultural discourses that surrounded it—rather than obviate a somewhat calcified historiography—in fact leaves undertheorized *the* formative political challenge to the American Experiment. I contend that the Russian Revolution was the signal event for American state formation as well as

an endless rationale for power projection abroad. For it is through the production and dissemination of popular domestic discourses concerning the Russian Revolution that such earlier and divergent strands of racist imperialist rhetoric cohere and transform into the behemoth of anti-communism, finally offering the emergent United States a World-Historical foil worthy of its global designs. Moreover, as the narrative of American exceptionalism became increasingly unsustainable beneath the contradictions of overt imperial expansion, the implicit ontological critique provided by the Russian Revolution would allow the US to subsume disparate sites of resistance within the phrase of “un-American behavior,” not only producing a highly particularized conception of “American” behavior in the first order (at the expense of “radical immigrants” and “homegrown foreigners” alike) but also providing a rationale for expansion abroad and a the suspension of civil liberties at home—a discourse of power projection and domestic security that continues to underwrite its imperial adventures today.

CHAPTER ONE
"Dynamite Talk":

William Dean Howells, Transnational Radicals, and a Legal Theory of Literary Affect

Isabel March is unhappy. Recently of Boston, she has just uprooted her family to Gilded Age New York so that her husband, Basil—hitherto an aging insurance functionary (as well as the protagonist of William Dean Howells' *A Hazard of New Fortunes*¹)—can finally indulge his artistic pretensions as the editor of a yet-to-be-published literary magazine. As their mutual friend and newly minted publisher of the budding concern, Fulkerson, would say, "There's only one city that belongs to the whole country, and that's New York" (12).² But for Isabel, this democratic inclusion is precisely the problem: "I'm terribly limited," she admits. "I couldn't make my sympathies go round two million people" (28). Boston may have its own immigrant neighborhoods and picturesque poverty but, for her, New York engenders a particular sort of ferment, a mixing of character and class that brings with it a threatening potential for encounter. Or as the eminently quotable Fulkerson would have it: "If you ever saw anybody in your life; you're sure to meet him in Broadway again, sooner or later."

In fact, mere minutes after this quip, Basil March is reunited with his childhood German teacher, Berthold Lindau, and Isabel certainly cannot make her sympathies go round *him*. While Lindau and Basil may have shared many fond years together—as well as a mutual admiration for Schiller, Goethe, and Uhland—back in her husband's native Midwest, Lindau is an ardent socialist, and Isabel worries that somehow the old German will turn her middle-aged ingénue intellectual into a fire-breathing radical. "He will get you into trouble somehow, Basil," she portends. In fairness to Mrs. March, Lindau

¹ First printed as a novel in 1889.

² All citations are from the Modern Library Edition unless otherwise noted.

certainly seems to find it: We're soon told he emigrated from Germany to fight "the anti-slavery battle just as naturally at Indianapolis in 1858 as he fought behind the barricades at Berlin in 1848" (95), and that his empty sleeve below the elbow is due to an injury sustained on the battlefield for the Union cause. "I wanted to gife you the other handt too," he says in his thickly accented English, as he and March warmly shake hands during their improbable reunion, "but I gafe it to your gountry a goodt while ago" (94). March, troubled by his old mentor's national dispossession asks: "Your country too, Lindau?" The old man replies coldly, "What gountry hass a poor man got, Mr. Marge?" While March might cheekily disregard the German's critique as the idiosyncratic beliefs of "a political economist of the unusual type" (294), his wife remains less jocose: "Well, Basil," she chides, "I hope you won't get infected with Lindau's ideas of rich people" (79).

Isabel's warning of contagion provides an apposite heuristic for the novel: The threat of socialist rhetoric and, more specifically, its ability to "infect" the minds of others lies at the center of both Howells' text and the mind of its author. For while Howells, the "Dean of American Letters,"³ gives Lindau ample opportunity to indulge in socialist rants within the safety of fiction, the writer himself was still suffering from his very public defense of some other infamous German socialists, the Haymarket radicals.⁴ As Howells firmly believed that the mandate of his literary realism was to create "a democracy in literature," the New York he sketched for Lindau and the Marches serves as a fitting corrective for the strikingly undemocratic trial suffered by the Haymarketers. The novel

³ The precise genesis of this appellation is under dispute. Its widespread use is not. See John William Cowley, *The Dean Of American Letters: The Late Career of William Dean Howells* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1999), 54-5.

⁴ I label the Haymarket defendants "radicals" rather than commonly applied "anarchists" for reasons that will be discussed below.

rapidly expands into an exaggerated encyclopedia of symptomatic Gilded Age personas: Southerners, Westerners, Northerners, narcissistic artists, the nouveau riche, rampant capitalists, unrehabilitated believers in the peculiar institution, and even German socialists are all allowed a home in the "largest canvas" the author had hitherto allowed himself (3).⁵ Or, as March pithily says, echoing his partner, "Everybody belongs more or less in New York; nobody has to belong here altogether." However, by the novel's close, it would seem that there are certain characters even New York cannot embrace. While March may have found it easy to inhabit the trappings and behaviors of the East Coast bourgeoisie, the text is populated with those unable—or unwilling—to adopt these conventions, and the felicity of their fates is usually contingent upon the varying genius of their mimicry. By rendering the characters of German heritage as outside the possibility for assimilation, the novel illustrates a common ideological strategy for the containment of the socialist impulse in literature: A racializing maneuver that tacitly produces a circumscribed and specifically "American" form of political behavior by assembling an ethnic population incapable of performing it.⁶ More importantly, in *Hazard*, these radical politics become discursively fused to a *particular* ethnic composition, binding specific bloodlines to certain political forms.⁷

Howells' text is also a shrewd examination of the linkages between literature and action. "Words, words, words!" he lamented (cribbing from Hamlet⁸) in an 1888 letter to

⁵ The lack of African-American characters is also unfortunately symptomatic of Gilded Age novels, especially those set in Northern urban centers.

⁶ While the mechanism itself may be as American as the "Founding Fathers" (I am thinking here most specifically about the exclusionary tactics targeting Native Americans and African Americans from the very beginning), I am interested in these historically unorthodox "ethnic" targets as well as the conflation between European ethnicity and the impossibility of self-government.

⁷ It is not surprising, then, as Sophia Forster argues, that what she calls "historicist social science" developed at the same time as Howellsian realism. *Modern Fiction Studies* (Summer 2009), 217.

⁸ From "Hamlet" Act II, Scene ii, Line 192.

friend and fellow author Edward Everett Hale. "How to make them things, deeds... with me they only breed more words."⁹ By appropriating the language of literature's most famous procrastinator, Howells exemplified his own literary impotency in what he viewed as an increasingly unbridgeable gulf not only between the classes, but between writing and affect.¹⁰ However, rather than simply bemoaning the powerlessness of his own literary production, a reassessment of Howells' involvement in the Haymarket Affair will demonstrate that the author had already been forced to reckon with a frightening resolution to the divide between word and deed in the prosecutorial approach used to sentence some of the Haymarketers to death. Howells would also come to find his social theory of "complicity" (the natural bonds among the classes, as revealed by literature) frighteningly reworked by the judicial alchemy of the trial, and his subsequent novel would interrogate the consequences of this legal collapse between effective and affective writing. Isabel March, it turns out, was not mistaken about the contagious qualities of Lindau's language. She had merely confused the mark.

Haymarket in History

To understand Howells' preoccupation with Germans and socialists, we should first revisit the circumstances surrounding the Haymarket Affair in general,¹¹ and, more specifically, the subsequent trial.¹² Indeed, *Hazard* is in part a direct response to the

⁹ William Dean Howells, *Life in Letters* I, 418-9.

¹⁰ By affect," I invoke the Deleuzian sense helpfully defined by Brian Massumi in his "Notes" to *A Thousand Plateaus*. Affect "is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act" (xvii).

¹¹ The events at Haymarket Square are often described as either a "riot" or a "massacre," depending on political perspective. I have chosen to use the term "affair" in the spirit of moderation.

¹² The dearth of scholarship about the Haymarket Affair is surprising on its face. For years, Paul Avrich's 1984 *The Haymarket Tragedy* was the only sustained investigation since Henry David's *The History of the*

“shedding of blood which is for the remission of sins [that] had been symbolized by the bombs and scaffolds of Chicago,” as the author freely admits in a “Bibliographical” note written for the library edition of the novel twenty years after its initial publication (4). This “shedding of blood” in the Haymarket is calcified for Howells—as well as for a great deal of American historiography—as the apogee of a period of spectacularly strained relations between labor and capital in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

In short, the years following the Civil War saw an unprecedented boom in railroad construction and, necessarily, the speculative capital to finance it. When this bubble collapsed in the Panic of 1873, a ferment of class unrest culminated in the “Great Railroad Strike” of 1877.¹³ In June of that year, police powers succeeded in breaking the stranglehold on the nation’s distribution system only after killing between twenty-five and fifty civilians, and seriously injuring another two hundred.¹⁴ While most conservative media outlets blamed this “first national strike” on the common bogeymen of labor activism, such as German radicals, socialists and unionized workers (all of a piece), historian Paul Avrich argues that this event shattered a number of these cherished illusions. Foremost was the idea, “so precious to native Americans, that violence in the American labor movement stemmed from European radicalism and that foreign agitators

Haymarket Affair from nearly half a century earlier. Since then, James R. Green’s 2007 *Death in the Haymarket* is the only book-length study to emerge. But what is even more curious is the mostly superficial and anecdotal treatment given to the trial itself, preferring to view the court’s proceedings merely as a *fait accompli* (perhaps fairly enough in light of the transcript) without also analyzing the prosecution’s heterodox approach.

¹³ For more complete treatments of labor relations and the cycles of economic uncertainty and crisis in America, the literature is vast and often first-rate. A small but productive sample includes David Montgomery’s *The Fall of the House of Labor* and Sidney Lens’ *The Labor Wars*.

¹⁴ Not a single policeman or soldier is known to have been killed.

were responsible for social disorders in general" (35).¹⁵ For while many immigrants certainly took part, "they played no distinctive role.... Like the native, by whom they were greatly outnumbered, they were motivated by no revolutionary doctrine, but by hunger and privation" (36). So, as Avrich argues, the labor crisis was caused less by some threatening radical program than by physical demands. For much of the American public, the very fact of such a sustained strike on a national level implied a depth of malcontent that had spread much further than the minds of recent arrivals. Perhaps most damaging to a nation just celebrating its centennial with much pomp and attention paid to its supposed singularity on the world stage, the events of 1877 challenged the idea that:

in contrast to Europe, the United States was a place of unlimited opportunity, and that the high standard of living, the absence of sharp class divisions, the informal and egalitarian tone of American life, not to mention the essentially democratic character of the country, with its constitutional rights and guarantees, rendered it immune from the blandishments of socialism and the dangers of social upheaval. (36)

In the words of labor leader George Schilling, before 1877 the "large mass of our people contented themselves with the belief that in this great and free Republic there was no real room for complaint" (36). Within the vernacular of American labor movements, the magnitude of these strikes was unmatched. However, despite many US citizens becoming aware for the first time of "labor" as a nascent yet very "native" and increasingly organized force in the American social landscape, the specter of foreign influence was

¹⁵ Indeed, since the 1871 coup in Paris, Chicago had been haunted by the specter of an "American Commune." In his 1878 book *Strikers, Communists, Tramps and Detectives*, Allan Pinkerton, the founder of the eponymous agency, blamed the unrest on a combination of Paris Commune proponents and the high degree of transiency of the American working class at the time (87).

still often invoked as an explanation. Indeed, it *needed* to be in order to absolve the fantasy of the truly "American" worker able to stoically navigate the twin foils of endless toil and low wages. The decade of unrest between the railroad strike and Haymarket, therefore, would lay great strain upon a recumbent view of labor, of a class structure certainly discordant at times but always amenably reworked within the equitable parameters of a proud Republic.

The pressure on this national myth would only become more obvious after two employees striking for an eight-hour workday at the McCormick Harvesting Machine plant were shot to death by police on May 3rd, 1886. The strike had been planned nearly eighteen months earlier, part of a national program of work stoppages organized at a convention of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions that had unanimously set May 1st as the day when an eight-hour limit would be established. After days of nationwide demonstrating, the death of these two strikers enraged the local labor community. Radical factions quickly printed and distributed leaflets for a rally the next day at the Haymarket, a busy commercial center of Chicago. It is not without some irony, then, considering the historical flashpoint this rally would soon become, that the crowd gathering to protest the shooting was reportedly so calm that Mayor Altgeld himself left before it ended, certain of its peaceful conclusion.

The assembled speakers, while not advocating specific acts of violence, certainly spoke with a fiery eloquence and illuminated their screeds with unrestrained imagery. As Samuel Fielden, the last speaker, uttered the words, "You have nothing more to do with the law except to lay hands on it and throttle it until it makes its last kick," two detectives left the rally to inform Inspector John Bonfield, the director of the operation, of the

incendiary language. The mass of nearly two hundred officers stationed nearby was deployed immediately. After issuing an order to disperse that was ignored, a dynamite bomb exploded and the police began firing into the crowd. The result was the bloodiest single incident of its kind in US history. Policeman Mathias H. Degan was killed almost instantly while another seven officers would die within the next few weeks from their wounds.¹⁶ Though sixty-seven police casualties in total would have been a heady number for any confrontation, the Haymarket Affair was able to focus the public's attention for a much more precise and frightening reason. As Avrich explains: "Violent speech had resulted in violent deeds. Here at last was the dynamite that had been threatened. For the first time in America the deadly substance had been used for the destruction of human life" (215). The first "Red Scare" had begun.¹⁷

If the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 and the labor unrest to follow placed the American worker at the center of the struggle and portrayed the country as little different than Old Europe in terms of social relations, the Haymarket Affair certainly offered an opportunity to place the foreign radical back at the center of the blame. Of the eight suspects charged with Degan's murder, five were German, one was German-American and another was British. Only one of the accused was a "native" American. All of the accused described themselves as adhering to some configuration of anarchism and

¹⁶ The number of civilian dead is unknown. While the number is most likely higher than the police, many of the wounded from Haymarket reported an unwillingness to seek out professional medical attention due to fear of reprisal.

¹⁷ While the Red Scare is, of course, traditionally reserved for the events of 1919 (the Palmer Raids, the rise of the young J. Edgar Hoover, etc.), much of my project is concerned with tracing this antipathy toward radical socialism much earlier into the American imaginary. Though, of course, bouts of more general nativism have a rich history in the US. See, for example, John Higham, *Strangers in the Land*; T. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*, and Robert Wiebe's *The Search for Order*. For a more theoretically nuanced argument on the necessary role racism plays in modern state formation, see Etienne Balibar's and Immanuel Wallerstein's *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*.

socialism, and the *redness* of this event—the attention paid and attachment to a particular political scene—is crucial. It is perhaps difficult today, more than two decades after the Soviet collapse, to imagine the conspicuous expansion of socialism in America during the Gilded Age, and in the Midwest in particular. Formed in 1874, the California Workingmen's Party (a precursor to the Socialist Labor Party) elected nearly one-third of the delegates to the state's 1878 constitutional convention. That same year, in Illinois alone, the SLP succeeded in electing three state assemblymen and one state senator. While the socialist mayoral candidate for Chicago was defeated in 1879, he received over a fifth of the votes¹⁸ (thirty years later, Milwaukee's contender won).¹⁹ And while there are of course massive programmatic distinctions to be made both between and among the socialist and anarchist camps of the period—which a proper history of political forms would not so blithely gloss over—the nuances of the groups had become so blurred in the mind of the popular imagination as to be virtually indistinguishable. Indeed, Chicago Police Captain Michael J. Schaak, a key participant in the Haymarket Affair and the writer of its first comprehensive (if wildly partisan) account, sums up this conflation in the very (lengthy) title of that work: *Anarchy and Anarchists. A History Of The Red Terror And The Social Revolution In America And Europe. Communism, Socialism, And Nihilism In Doctrine And Deed. The Chicago Haymarket Conspiracy, And The Detection And Trial Of The Conspirators*. Not only a panoply of confused and conflated terms, this gradation from broad theory and geopolitical import to specific local events clearly places the Haymarket Affair as the American culmination of a dangerous and damning history

¹⁸ For a discussion of Socialist candidate Ernst Schmidt and the political context of the Haymarket Affair, see Richard Schneirov, *Labor and Urban Politics: Class Conflict and the Origins of Modern Liberalism in Chicago, 1864-97*, 143-4.

¹⁹ They would actually elect two: Emil Seidel, the first Socialist mayor of a major American city, served from 1910-1912; and Daniel Hoan, elected in 1916, served for *twenty-four years*.

of leftist politics imported from Europe.²⁰ Schaak would make this elision of difference explicit when discussing the results of Otto von Bismarck’s *Ausnahme Gesetz*, or “Exception Law,” of 1878: “The result was an exodus of Socialists, or rather Anarchists, to America—by this time the two terms, wide apart as they may seem, had become one...” (25).²¹ Newspapers reporting on the crime deployed a parade of confounded terminology: “Communists,” “anarchists,” and “socialists” all seemed part of an amorphous cabal bent on rending the foundations of American society.²² But this confusion was by no means the province of reactionary forces alone. Howells himself placed the word “anarchist” in scare quotes in his own writings to stress the ill-fitting nature of the term. And Albert Parsons, one of the most notorious Haymarket defendants, used his final speech in court to conflate the political platforms in the following manner: “What is Socialism, or Anarchism? Briefly stated, it is the right of the toilers to the free and equal use of the tools of production, and the right of the producers to their product. That is Socialism” (Parsons 134). In the spirit of simplicity, therefore, as this chapter is concerned primarily with an analysis of the popular understanding of the threat of the politically active foreigner, I will instead make use of the blanket term “radical” to

²⁰ Schaak also spends a great deal of time dwelling upon the assassination of the Russian Czar Alexander II in 1881, further collapsing Haymarket into a broader panorama of transnational radicalism that spanned from St. Petersburg to Berlin, Paris to London, New York, and finally Chicago. Schaak himself was an immigrant and native German speaker from Luxembourg, and was no doubt eager to distance himself from his ethnic and linguistic kin. While achieving no small amount of fame and respect from his role in the Haymarket Affair, he and Haymarket co-participant Captain John Bonfield were implicated in a corruption racket soon after. After Bonfield tried to have the *Chicago Times* shut down to kill the story, both men were forced to resign. It would seem that the same press that “convicted” the radicals would also serve as the policemen’s undoing (see Marco D’Eramo, *The Pig and the Skyscraper: Chicago, A History of our Future*).

²¹ Bismarck’s *Ausnahme Gesetz* was the first law explicitly prohibiting socialism—though it would by no means be the last time an “exception” of this kind would be made. Though, to be fair, Bismarck was not only trying to consolidate power, but was also responding to the very real attempts made on the lives of a number of Prussian politicians by so-called “socialist” assailants.

²² These were only the political stripes. Also used were such phrases as the “outscourings of Europe,” “atheists,” and “foreign savages” as well as much animal imagery, including “ungrateful hyenas” “serpents” and “disease germs.”

describe an individual or group whose politics are referred to as either “socialist,” “communist” or “anarchist,” when those beliefs stem from a Marxist-collectivist schema.

Howells and Haymarket

At least as important as the ethnicity and political convictions of the “Haymarket Eight” was this first use of dynamite on American soil in connection with radical political violence. As Jeffory A. Clymer observes, “dynamite exponentially increased the scale and magnitude of violence while also offering anonymity to the bomb thrower.”²³ The terror gripping the public in the wake of the explosion was also magnified considerably by “the increased prominence and geographic reach of print media in the late nineteenth century [that] helped to make events instantly available for a widely dispersed audience that did not directly witness them” (6-7). Dynamite greatly increased the level of fear usually attendant to labor struggles, because the explosive compound now allowed unknown individuals to murder others indiscriminately—and with an object that could be easily hidden inside a light coat. Or, as Albert Parsons himself proudly explained to the jury: “Dynamite is the diffusion of power. It is democratic; it makes everybody equal.... The Pinkertons, the police, the militia are all absolutely worthless in the presence of dynamite.”²⁴ Perhaps this weaponization of dynamite also congealed much public discomfort about the accoutrements of industrialization more broadly.²⁵ Conspiracy theories abounded, aided by a press industry eager to capitalize on the sensational

²³ *America's Culture of Terrorism: Violence, Capitalism, and the Written Word*. The U of North Carolina P: Chapel Hill, 2002.

²⁴ The entire proceedings of the trial are reprinted in John Lawson’s *American State Trials*.

²⁵ The same substance that so easily tore through mountains and allowed the locomotives to penetrate even the most inclement locations could also just as easily eradicate bodies. But while nearly all industrial explosions occurred far from city centers, the Haymarket bombing brought the awesome power of explosives to an urban audience.

material,²⁶ and the trial that followed became the greatest cause célèbre since the murder of President Lincoln.²⁷ In the immediate aftermath of the explosion, a number of local radicals were rounded up and indicted, and the public rapidly congealed around a guilty verdict. Regardless of political stripe, business leaders, former abolitionists, men and women of letters, politicians, progressives, newspaper editors—nearly all prominent members of society (what Howells would brand in his own fiction “grammatical characters”)—demanded capital retribution or at least tacitly approved the bloodlust through their own quiescence. Emblematic of this call for vengeance was a letter from Teddy Roosevelt, then a mayoral candidate for New York,²⁸ sent to his sister from his North Dakota ranch: “My men here are hard-working, laboring men, who work longer hours for no greater wages than most of the strikers. But they are Americans through and through. I believe nothing would give them greater pleasure than a chance with rifles at one of the mobs” (*Letters*, TR to ARC, May 15 1886). Roosevelt, like George Schilling above, equates truly “American” labor with a stoic disregard of exacting work for little pay. But he also makes explicit that “real” laborers should naturally be moved toward violence in the service of muzzling the restive portion of their colleagues.

It is here, in the face of such widespread and often unrestrained public denunciation, that the portly and middle-aged William Dean Howells, the editor of the prestigious and somewhat conservative *Harper’s Weekly* “emerged after the bombing as the *only* major literary figure to publicly condemn the sham legal proceedings accorded

²⁶ Indeed, by his own admission, the prominent newspaper publisher Melville E. Stone convinced a hesitant prosecution to bring the case to trial because the radicals “had advocated over and over again the use of violence” and so “their culpability was clear.” Aside from justice, he also wanted higher paper sales. Quoted in James Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, 215.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

²⁸ Against Henry George, no less.

the Haymarket Anarchists" (Clymer 1).²⁹ In what was received as quite a shock, he publicly excoriated the proceedings as a gross miscarriage of justice, declaring that "[t]he trial was for Socialism, not for murder" and that "these men are doomed to suffer for their opinion's sake." While Howells may have been in the extreme minority, his disquiet, in retrospect, appears justified. Although the eight men were on trial for the *murder* of Officer Degan, the prosecution made a stunning admission from the outset: State's Attorney Julius Grinnell argued in his opening statement that "it is not necessary in a case of this kind, nor in any case of murder, or any other kind, that the individual who commits the exact and particular offence—for instance, the man who threw the bomb—should be in court at all. He need not even be indicted." The question for the jury, therefore, was to determine whether "although perhaps none of these men personally threw that bomb, they each and all abetted, encouraged and advised the throwing of it, and therefore are as guilty as the individual who in fact threw it. They are accessories" (Schaak 403). Murder, then, was not the result of killing Officer Degan, but in the abetting, encouragement and advice to do so. Grinnell attempted to diminish the anomaly of the approach by portraying his method as entirely in line with standards of US jurisprudence. Yet Illinois Governor John P. Altgeld (mayor at the time of the Affair), who would acquit the three still-extant Haymarket prisoners six years after their conviction, disagreed rather strongly in the language of his pardon when it came to the typicality of this prosecutorial sleight:

The prosecution could not discover who had thrown the bomb and could not bring the really guilty men to justice, and, as some of the men were not

²⁹ For more on Howells' reaction to Haymarket, see Cady's *The Realist At War*; Sender Garlin, *William Dean Howells*; and Howard A. Wilson, "William Dean Howells's Unpublished Letters About The Haymarket Affair."

at the Haymarket meeting, it was forced to proceed on the theory that the men indicted were guilty of murder because it was claimed they had at various times in the past uttered and printed incendiary and seditious language, practically advising the killing of policemen, of Pinkerton men and others acting in that capacity and were therefore responsible for the murder of Matthias Degan. (Parsons 286)

In order to prove that the defendants were accomplices, the prosecution would not attempt the customary procedure for their charge, which would mandate that they uncover a direct conspiracy linking the accused to a determined plot to kill Matthias Degan. Rather, as Altgeld explained, Grinnell wanted to connect the radicals’ utterances and documents calling for violence against the state to the intentions of the unknown bomber. To find the defendants guilty, then, when none of them actually threw the dynamite—indeed, when some of the accused *were not even present at the rally*—demanded an innovative deployment of a “constructive” production of guilt. In the eminent American jurist Henry Campbell Black’s 1891 dictionary of law, the term “constructive” is defined as:

That which is established by the mind of the law in its act of *construing* facts, conduct, circumstances, or instruments; that which has not the character assigned to it in its own essential nature, but acquires such character in consequence of the way in which it is regarded by a rule or policy of law; hence, inferred, implied, made out by legal interpretation.” (Black 255. Emphasis original)

A "constructive" approach, then, is necessarily a task of legal supposition, presuming a gap between the evidence and the production of reasonable doubt by manufacturing a narrative that relieves the breach through Black's "*construing*." It is not the facts themselves that produce guilt or innocence, but the interpretive action that must occur within "the mind of the law" between the known actions and the expanded plot. This movement is not an *analysis* of the facts, in the sense of a reduction of a situation to its component parts. Rather more like a deadly literary endeavor,³⁰ Grinnell traces back a condemnable fabula from a manufactured syuzhet, demonstrating that the *actual* hands which threw the bomb were immaterial because the anarchists' "writings and speeches had allegedly incited some person or persons unknown to commit the outrage." In a substantiation of Isabel March's warning, the bomb thrower had clearly become "infected" by the words of the radicals. The guilt was theirs.

The presiding judge, Joseph E. Gary, eagerly agreed, explaining to the jury that "if they believed these articles and speeches had led to the throwing of the bomb, they had to find the defendants guilty of murder" (Garlin 105, 132). The Haymarket radicals, then, are not on trial for a particular conspiracy, but for the affective potential of their language, and the trial becomes an attempt to measure the level of culpability transmitted through text and speech. Though never calling precisely for the murder of Matthias Degan, the *potential* for this man's death—in "the mind of the law"—is always carried within the radicals' speech. For the full implications of this legal stratagem of constructive crime to be understood, it should also be read as an extension of the fundamental criteria for the production of criminal liability, wherein the *actus reus*

³⁰ Indeed, the courtroom was described by some as "an editor's table," where the prosecution frantically cut and pasted incendiary bits of the radicals' writing together on large panels of cardboard, creating an evidential *bricolage*.

(guilty act) must correspond to a *mens rea* (guilty mind).³¹ The prolific American jurist, Joel Prentiss Bishop, declared in 1858 that it "is therefore a principle of our legal system, as probably of every other, that the essence of an offense is the wrongful intent, without which it cannot exist" (260).³² However, attempts to define the parameters of this "essence" in judicial practice have been proximate at best. Or, as Francis Bowes Sayre—Harvard law professor, diplomat and son-in-law to Woodrow Wilson—would admit, even though the concept is the foundation of all American criminal law, "when it comes to attaching a precise meaning to *mens rea*, courts and writers are in hopeless disagreement."³³ The logic of Grinnell's approach, then, attributes a disturbingly capacious linkage between the *mens* and the *actus*, one wherein the transgression of the radicals' political beliefs is first stored within their texts and speeches, distributed as a chrestomathy of potential, and then legally activated by anyone whose actions could be tracked back and blamed on the original authors. In short, the Haymarket defendants are "always already" guilty of the offense of their political views. The *actus reus* becomes a conspiracy to commit radicalism rather than murder, and the trial itself operates upon a definition of political activism that circumscribes the entirety of the enterprise as an *actus reus* forever in *potentia*. Howells is right, then, when he says the "trial was for Socialism and not for murder" and that the men were tried "for their opinions' sake." But the significance goes well beyond the criminalization of dissent: The Haymarket trial becomes, through the parallax of Howells' position, a legal theory of affective literature, an attempt to juridically quantify a rhetorical influence that transmits a revolutionary

³¹ Or in the colloquial words of Oliver Wendell Holmes, "even a dog distinguishes between being stumbled over and being kicked." See: "Early Forms of Liability," Lecture I from *The Common Law*, (3).

³² Bishop, "Maxim 227," *Commentaries on the Criminal Law*, 1858.

³³ Brody, *Criminal Law*, 162.

feeling capable of exhorting a reader to kill. If the Haymarketers' guilt is found to reside in the affects of their tracts and speeches, the prosecution is submitting that no legal distance lay between these eight men and the bomb that took the life of young Degan. Their language, in this equation, is no different qualitatively than the absent hands that threw the charge. The fact that the screeds and speeches were circulated before the bomb went off and that some of the accused were not even at the rally has little relevance for this maneuver. Within this contraction of both space and time, the words of the Haymarketers, in the strict legal sense, have quite literally become bombs. It would seem, then, that the Chicago radicals had not only untangled Howells' dilemma of turning "words! Words! Words!" into deeds, but that they were now the victims of a new theory of legal causation that allowed the state to hold an individual guilty for the affect of these "dynamite words."³⁴

Howells and Literary History: A Reappraisal

Ever since Howells sent his infamous 1887 open letter to the *New York Tribune*³⁵ defending the accused, decrying the method of the trial and appealing for clemency, there has been much deserved consternation and debate concerning Howells' involvement in the Affair, as well as on the extent and substance of his "radicalism" more broadly.³⁶ He was clearly aware of the professional risk, and the uncompromising fervor of his new convictions made his public solitude near absolute, placing Howells, in the words of

³⁴ The title of this chapter as well as this quotation comes from a phrase Fulkerson uses to characterize Lindau's speeches.

³⁵ *NY Tribune*. Nov. 6th, 1887. For more on Howells' epistolary defense, see: *Williams Dean Howells: The Letters*.

³⁶ The scholarship often seems to rehearse a more common argument about what Raymond Williams would call "commitment." This trend has continued relatively unchanged since the time of the Affair to today. For example, Deak Nabors' otherwise excellent 2009 article about *Hazard*, "The Novel and the Police Power" still never moves past this liberal-vs.-radical bind.

Timothy L. Parrish, on a "committee of one."³⁷ Indeed, in the vacuum of civic support, Howells' appeals grew so numerous, fervent and coeval with the political cause of the Haymarket radicals that he received a letter of gratitude and support from no less a socialist luminary than Karl Marx's daughter herself—a small respite from the relentless "coast-to-coast abuse."³⁸ Everett Carter, one of the most able chroniclers of both the author and his theory of literary realism,³⁹ framed the confusion best in 1950 by describing Howells as "a most unlikely candidate for martyrdom, past editor of the *Atlantic*, [and] under contract to a conservative publishing house at ten thousand dollars a year."⁴⁰ The author's vigorous condemnation of the Affair is usually treated as an odd spark of activism in the otherwise successful bourgeois life of a writer whose preferred métier for criticism was from within the relative safety of his prose. Indeed, the figure of Howells himself would become rather indistinguishable from his literary philosophy. When Frank Norris pilloried the "reality" of realism as the "drama of a broken teacup, the tragedy of a walk down the block, the excitement of an afternoon call, the adventure of an invitation to dinner,"⁴¹ he also seemed to be taking to task much of the action in Howells' novels (as well as perhaps the author's own daily appointments). Ambrose Bierce would be even less forgiving in one of his damning definitions, dismissing "realism" as "the art of depicting nature as it is seen by toads. The charm suffusing a landscape painted by a

³⁷ *Haymarket and Hazard: The Lonely Politics of William Dean Howells*. *Journal of American Culture*. Vol. 17, No. 4. Dec 1994.

³⁸ Kenneth Lynn, *William Dean Howells: An American Life*, 291.

³⁹ For a broad introduction to Howells and his realism, see Jay Martin, *Harvests of Change: American Literature, 1865-1914* (New York, 1967), and Werner Berthoff's *The Ferment of Realism: American Literature 1884-1919* (New York, 1965). For more contemporary reappraisals see: Michael Davitt Bell, *The Problem of American Realism: Studies in the Cultural History of a Literary Idea* (Chicago, 1993), Walter Benn Michaels, *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism: American Literature at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley, 1987), and Amy Kaplan's field-redefining *The Social Construction of American Realism* (Chicago, 1988).

⁴⁰ Carter, *Haymarket Affair in Literature*, 273.

⁴¹ "A Plea for Romantic Fiction," *Boston Evening Transcript*, December 18th, 1901, 14.

mole, or a story written by a measuring-worm."⁴² And H.L. Mencken would remember Howells sardonically as "an urbane and highly respectable old gentleman, a sitter on committees, an intimate of professors and the prophets of movements, a worthy vouched for by both the *Atlantic Monthly* and Alexander Harvey, a placid conformist" (52).⁴³

But we cannot fault Norris, Bierce or Mencken, among others, for criticizing the horizons of a writer who, before his devotion to the Haymarketers, called on his fellow artists to be simultaneously "true to the facts" as well as "our well-to-do actualities" during a period of the most dramatic labor unrest in US history. Indeed, this rather naive declaration was most likely set to paper for the first time between May and June of 1886—just as the labor upheavals were reaching their peak (the bomb exploded on May 4th)—in Howells' now-infamous "smiling aspects of life" essay for his "Editor's Study."⁴⁴ While the events of Haymarket were unsettling the nation and providing a disturbing ligature between the disorder in the US and that of Europe, Howells made quite the opposite argument in the pages of *Harper's*. Lauding the power of Dostoyevsky's fiction and discussing the Russian writer's emblematically tragic life to an American audience, Howells also averred that while *Crime and Punishment* "may be read with the deepest sympathy and interest... it is to be praised only in its place." A work so clearly the result of the "social and political circumstances in which it was conceived" had little to do with America, where:

there were so few shadows and inequalities in our broad level of
prosperity... that whoever struck a note so profoundly tragic in American

⁴² Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*.

⁴³ *Prejudices: First Series*. Knopf, 1919.

⁴⁴ While the column itself was published in the September 1886 issue of *Harper's*, the lag between writing and publication was about three to four months. For further explanation, see Kenneth S. Lynn's biography, *The Dean of American Letters*, pg 112, n. 5.

fiction would do a false and mistaken thing....Whatever their desserts, very few American novelists have been led out to be shot, or finally exiled to the rigors of a winter at Duluth.... And in a land where journeymen carpenters and plumbers strike for four dollars a day the sum of hunger and cold is certainly very small, and the wrong from class to class is almost inappreciable. We invite our novelists, therefore, to concern themselves with the more smiling aspects of life, which are the more American, and to seek the universal in the individual rather than the social interests.⁴⁵ (641)

Howells waggishly invokes the censorship, imprisonment and even execution of Russian dissidents (a practice much increased after the successful 1881 assassination of Czar Alexander II by a radical group that also employed dynamite bombs) in an attempt to distance Siberia from Minnesota. Referring to the enmity between classes as nearly "inappreciable," Howells then asks American novelists to eviscerate the socialist program through a desire to connect people as individuals rather than as social classes. His woefully insensitive conclusion that what is "peculiarly American" is "the large, cheerful average of health and success and happy life" would certainly have been news to the strikers. With the Haymarket deaths as a backdrop for such a philosophy, it is not difficult to understand why Howells has been condemned for well over a century for the blindness of this pronouncement, and also why his activism is so difficult to alloy with his previous behavior. I would argue that scholars' confusion around Howells and Haymarket is due in large part to a failure to separate the bombing itself from the subsequent trial, and, most importantly, the prosecution's cunning procedure. Indeed, a

⁴⁵ *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, September 1886 (639-644).

crucial detail that is often elided in discussions of Howells' radical conversion is that, as shown above, the author published his blameworthy column only *after* the Haymarket bomb had exploded, and was most likely writing about the "smiling aspects" as the very event unfolded in the press. In an age that saw no lack of violence against striking workers at the hands of police, critics are right to ponder the cause of his putative volte-face. Yet Carter's assertion that the "the exact occasion of the transformation of Howells from conservative to radical, the exact moment of his sudden anguish cannot be determined" is less of a mystery if we examine Howells' own reading list in light of the trial. We should remember that Howells went public with his infamous letter fifteen months after the Affair itself, and, while he seems to have been little moved by the explosion at the Haymarket, the author had become, by some reports, somewhat obsessed by what he called the "judicial murder" of a handful of radical writers and speakers. An examination of his numerous letters about the Affair reveals a focus much more on the legality and implications of the proceedings than on the lives of the men. He became well-versed in all particulars of the case—from the media treatment, to jury selection, to the freedoms granted the prosecution, and, most particularly, to the "reasonable doubt" which should have been made to favor the accused. But Howells himself admitted, as Clara and Rudolf Kirk argue, that whatever was actively producing his vigorous sense of obligation toward explicit political engagement came "through reading their trial."⁴⁶ More specifically, this was accomplished through two pamphlets in particular: *August Spies' Autobiography* (a necessarily hastily written affair, as he was one of the condemned) and Dyer Lum's sympathetic "history" of the trial, which was primarily a collection of speeches reproduced verbatim from the proceedings of the court.

⁴⁶ See Everett Carter, *Howells And The Age Of Reason*, 179-185.

In his book, Spies expanded upon the already impressive eloquence he delivered in the courtroom. Rather than an attempt at exculpation, Spies reclaims each label his critics attached to him in the wake of the bombing, calling attention to the array of imbricated predispositions that color the public's understanding of his cause:

"Barbarians, savages, illiterate, ignorant Anarchists from Central Europe, men who cannot comprehend the spirit of our free American institutions,'—of these I am one" (1). However, Spies points to a denunciation even more fundamental than his political beliefs. His "fatal mistake," as he sees it, was that he "ought not to have been born a *foreigner*" and he sarcastically finds "no fault with such wise and intelligent men as Mr. Grinnell, and His jury, for hanging miscreants who have shown so little judgment in the selection of their birthplace" (1-2. Italics in original). Rather than attempting to explain his political position, Spies knows he is already guilty before the fact, implicating the racism that underpins the judicial system and suggesting that the venomous scorn piled atop the Haymarketters is as much about ethnic cast as it is political beliefs.⁴⁷ His opinions, then, are that much more condemnable because of his heritage. Socialism, it seems, has an ethnicity. And it needs to, if Gilded Age America is to be able to codify a form of "American" labor unsusceptible to the unreasonable demands of a living wage, a limited workday, and a more equitable share in the fruits of production.

But the trial, we remember, is explicitly concerned about language even if, in Spies' appraisal, it is implicitly focused on race. Considering that the Haymarketters were tried and convicted for the affective qualities of their rhetoric, it is interesting to note that both texts in Howells' possession faithfully reproduce the very discourse that caused the

⁴⁷ For an understanding of the concept of "race" in the period discussed, see, for example, Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness Of A Different Color*.

jurors to levy the guilty verdict in the first place. If the Kirks are correct, and Howells truly did undergo a "transformation" while reading the texts in question, then perhaps he too was a victim of the transmission of affect from the words of the radicals. The very rhetoric that moved Howells to defend the Haymarketers would then justify the logic if not the probity of the prosecution. Howells, it seems, might be the victim of a terrible irony: Through decrying the prosecution's deployment of a greatly expanded definition of complicity that ties the radicals to the bomb, the author himself seems to have been moved to defend their cause only through a means that would actually lend credence to the State Attorney's contention of the affective qualities of their writing. Howells, in undergoing his "transformation" to a radical, ends up at least in part substantiating the legal maneuvering he is seeking to overturn.

In the light of this radical reworking of the concept of complicity and its relationship to the written word, we should pause to examine Howells' own social philosophy, also given the name "complicity," in a manner previously ignored by critics but difficult to overlook when placed in dialogue with the Haymarket trial.⁴⁸ It is important first to note, in a period obsessed with foreign political infiltration, that it was the author's "discovery of Tolstoy in the fall of 1885 [that] probably led Howells to give the 'notion' [of complicity] greater prominence than he had originally planned" (*Hazard* xv). While the famed Russian author never explicitly called himself either an anarchist or a socialist and traced his political beliefs back to the words of Jesus, Tolstoy certainly supported the movements against the czar and openly advocated certain radical tenets

⁴⁸ There have been a number of works that tackle Howells' theory, but none that reckon either with the fact that he chose a legal term to describe it or with the effects of the Haymarket trial upon his literary formulations.

such as the abolition of private property and the general need to lift the burden placed on the poor by the monied classes. Howells, who had become an adherent to this "Christian socialism," first articulated his "complete philosophy of life" as one of "complicity" in a notebook sometime in 1884 or early 1885,⁴⁹ and used it in print for the first time in the novel, *The Minister's Charge*, released the same year as the explosion in Chicago.

Disseminated by a preacher from the pulpit, the sermon on "complicity" is rendered in explicit class terminology, striking "one of those popular moods of intelligent sympathy when the failure of a large class of underpaid and worthy workers to assert their right to a living wage against a powerful monopoly had sent a thrill of respectful pity through every generous heart of the country" (341). Presaging the issues to be raised in the trial, Reverend Sewall sought in his rhetoric "to produce a personal rather than a general effect," and his message—while certainly stirring the members of the congregation—"had a more lasting effect as enlarged from the newspaper reports, and reprinted in pamphlet form. . . . and made him the topic of editorials in the Sunday editions of leading newspapers as far off as Chicago" (340-1).

Wai-Chee Dimock has compellingly argued that one of the major concerns of the nineteenth-century American novel is "with the bounds of pertinent time and pertinent space, with the range of human connectedness, and with the scope of assumable responsibility."⁵⁰ She points to Howells himself as the prime literary philosopher of this interconnectivity, and notes that his theory of the social is most succinctly explained by the Reverend Sewall as a state wherein "Everybody's mixed up with everyone else." Elsa

⁴⁹ *The Minister's Charge*, xv.

⁵⁰ *Residues of Justice* 168. This shift in the post-bellum period, charting the rise of Trachtenberg's "age of incorporation," reflects what Brooks Thomas would call "the shift from a society of status to one of contract."

Nettels describes the model as "the unity through which all people are bound to each other, the whole of society affected by the sin or the suffering of any member" (161). These "ethical entanglements," as Dimock calls them, where "the question of pertinence is almost always linked to the question of responsibility" are "an inescapable fact in Howells and virtually all realist fiction" (170).⁵¹ Dimock's definition dovetails nicely with Howells' more general desire for the role of realist fiction "to widen the bounds of sympathy" (170) through transmitting the recognition of this complicity by asking his readers to focus on those characteristics "which unite rather than sever humanity"—imagining that this ideational recognition could bridge the gap between the classes. Indeed, Howells allows himself to be borne so far by this fantasy that he declared his own thinking about "realism" had laid himself "merely a working man" and that other writers should also attempt "to feel the tie that binds us to all the toilers of the shop and field, not as a galling chain, but as a mystic bond" (170).

State's Attorney Grinnell, though, had used a similar affective theory of literature to prove a complicity of an altogether different form. The prosecution's argument would sever the possibility of such a guileless approach to the science of society by using these "mystic bonds" to commit, in Howells' own phrase, a "judicial murder." Even the author's choice of the term itself reveals much about what this mysticism might be concealing: "Complicity" had been used almost exclusively since the mid-seventeenth century as a negative legal expression to describe "being an accomplice; partnership in an

⁵¹ Dimock attributes Howells' response to the Haymarket as a result of these "mystical bonds," "whose trial and conviction he protested not as an abstract problem of justice but as a matter deeply affecting to himself" (170). While suggestive, this definition follows the similar explanatory path of previous critics. I aim to show that Howells' notions of justice and those matters "deeply affecting" are one and the same.

evil action.”⁵² It was not until two centuries later that the word could be deployed in English without this negative or juristic valence, as merely a “state of being complex or involved.” While this latter definition is more innocently wrought for Howells’ needs, it also betrays the process of mystification wherein the circumscriptions of law become naturalized and subsumed within the bonds of culture. The history of the term, then, tracks its own transformation from one of legal culpability into a broader state of social complexity, a juristic instrument enlarged to encompass the an entire population. In complicity, we find a term where the traces of the law’s hypostatization are obliterated as it is expanded to the broadest level of society, and legitimized—sometimes through judicial murder—by the very branch of state power it obscures.⁵³

The mystery, then, of Howells’ “transformation” to a radical, when rendered in a dialogue between his concept of complicity and the prosecution’s use of constructive crime, offers us a way to negotiate past much of the older scholarship whose limits are merely the validity and extent of his political involvement. Howells, it would seem, had little choice in the direction of his politics once he realized the frighteningly expansive definition of liability implicit in Grinnell’s approach. The legal maneuver placed all writers in a culpability of scale.

An oft-recounted 1885 anecdote about Howells, usually retold as an example of the profound paranoia of the period concerning radical violence, also demands a reinterpretation when rendered next to what the State’s Attorney would ordain in court the very next year: In an earlier draft of Howells’ now-canonical *The Rise of Silas*

⁵² *OED Online*. June 2004. Oxford University Press. 30 April 2012 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/>>.

⁵³ As we discuss literary affect more generally, it is also interesting to speculate, as Howells was writing the text during the trial itself, how the language of law insinuated itself into his prose.

Lapham, Bronfield Corey, one of the main characters, wonders aloud during a sweltering summer why the resentful lower classes do not simply enact revenge on the wealthy vacationing Bostonians by "applying dynamite" to their empty mansions. When Howells' editor at the *Century*, Richard Watson Gilder, read this in the April installment submitted for publication, he became so disturbed by the mere mention of the substance that he pleaded with the author to reconsider. "It is the very word, *dynamite*," he argued, "that is now so dangerous, for any of us to use, except in condemnation" (Lynn 280, emphasis in original). As Jeffery A. Clymer explains, "Gilder then worried that Howells's fiction might yoke Howells himself to 'the crank who does the deed,' as if writing about dynamite and throwing dynamite are two version of the same action" (Clymer 1). Howells, not yet moved into his radical sphere, quickly acquiesced, substituting "personal violence" for "dynamite" in the final draft. But, cast in the glare of the trial, his editor's considerable anxiety no longer seems so deluded. The terminus of the Haymarket Affair would indeed demonstrate that both writing about and throwing dynamite are acts so mortally linked in "the mind of the law" as to lose distinction, and that the parameters of "personal violence" were now more than ever a matter for the courts to decide. Complicity itself was revealed to be not only the bourgeois dream it always was, but in fact an effective legal strategy in the service of maintaining the very social relations Howells was attempting to criticize. Indeed, the Howells who had once smiled so broadly in his column now complained glumly after the Haymarket Affair in a famous letter to his dear friend Henry James:

I'm not in a very good mood with 'America' myself. It seems to be the most grotesquely illogical thing under the sun; and I suppose I love it less

because it won't let me love it more. I should hardly like to trust pen and ink with all the audacity of my social ideas; but after fifty years of optimistic content with "civilization" and its ability to come out all right in the end, I now abhor it, and feel that it is coming out all wrong in the end, unless it bases itself anew on a real equality. Meantime I wear a fur-lined overcoat, and live in all the luxury my money can buy. (*Letters*, Oct. 10, 1888)

In the aftermath of Howells' transformation, the gulf between the classes is now all too appreciable, and the bitter writer finally locates himself firmly among the exploiting classes. The noble dream of the Republic has become repugnant to him in its illogic—though, dressed in its finery he ultimately must admit that he only adds to this incoherence. Most importantly, the extent of his anger no longer has any secure outlet. The legacy of the prosecution's bold reinterpretation of complicity is that the act of writing itself can no longer be "trusted," for Howells now knows that while setting audacious "social ideas" to paper can result in the material comforts brought about by a large readership, another possible consequence now summons the hangman's noose.

Howells, *Hazard* and Heritage

Our beleaguered author would attempt to grapple with all these disparate strands—labor unrest, class striation, Germans, radicals, judicial murder, the recondite power of the state, the role of literature—in his next and arguably greatest novel, *A Hazard of New Fortunes*. Most importantly, in the wake of Haymarket, Howells would interrogate this connection between radical speech and radical acts through the conflation

of ethnic heritage with certain political forms. Indeed, so urgent was his desire to "do justice" to the "irreparably wronged" Haymarketers that the novel, in his own words, would "prescribe its own dimensions" and "began to find its way to issues nobler and larger" than he originally intended (*Hazard* xxii).⁵⁴ However, if, in Amy Kaplan's words, the "major work of the realistic narrative is to construct a homogenous and coherent social reality by conquering the fictional qualities of middle-class life and by controlling the specter of class conflict which threatens to puncture this vision of a unified social order," *Hazard* achieves this end only through allowing that specter to be made fully manifest, and then exorcising it completely through the deployment of political compromises that stand in stark contrast to the author's earlier belief in the suturing qualities of social fiction. If, as Howells himself averred in more hopeful times, realism is to be "democracy in literature," then an analysis of *Hazard* will ignobly reveal the very excesses, contradictions, inequalities and iniquities that Howells so strenuously criticized to Henry James. In reproducing the injustices of Haymarket, the novel becomes a passive record of the limits on political freedoms and an illustration of the consequences of transgression. Yet, in offering a "coherent" hypothesis for the actions of the court—one we will see is based on a racist argument of genetic susceptibility to radical ideas that will produce Kaplan's elusive homogeneity only through violent exclusion—Howells actively manifests the subject of his critique while simultaneously writing himself free from blame.

⁵⁴ It is tempting, considering the fates of the Haymarket radicals, to consider this evacuation of agency as a strategy of exculpation rather than a literary fancy. But the description of his process comes from an introduction the author added to the novel more than two decades after its publication. Though perhaps this gesture also points to the normalization of a cultural shift that was still in contention twenty years before.

Hazard is most commonly understood through its polarities.⁵⁵ Scholars have long endeavored to explain the tensions in the text by identifying characters with their foils, and then moving such critiques along through the *frisson* of difference. Though the particular adversarial arrangements may differ, the contenders are almost always from a small male sampling of the rather capacious cast: Basil March, Howells' "aging alter ego"⁵⁶ and the precociously moderate paragon of middle-class respectability; Jacob Dryfoos, a former farmer from Indiana made rich by land speculation, and the embodiment of rampant finance capital; Lindau, the fiery German immigrant with uncompromising and incorruptible socialist views; Fulkerson, "the man of letters as a man of business"⁵⁷ as well as a Midwestern transplant like March; and Colonel Woodburn, the unreconstructed yet terribly well-mannered Southern gentleman who advocates a kindler, gentler form of slavery.

By far the most common pairing is also the most obvious, setting Lindau and Dryfoos at a fiery distance, with March as the contemplative mediator attempting to forge a more temperate path. However, while the scholarship focusing on such pronounced difference is vast and the approach revealing, I would first like to focus on a striking *similarity* between these two characters, and one that has gone either unnoticed or undertheorized (a rather surprising critical oversight given Howells' involvement in the Haymarket Affair): Both Lindau and Dryfoos, regardless of their position on the political

⁵⁵ This reflects the scholarship on realism more broadly, and Howells' radicalism in particular. In Amy Kaplan's words, "[f]rom a progressive force exposing the conditions of industrial society, realism has turned into a conservative force whose very act of exposure reveals its complicity with structures of power" (Kaplan 1). Her 1988 text, *The Social Construction of American Realism*, would mark what Alan Trachtenberg would call "a turn toward historicism and social criticism in the study of post-Civil War literary realism" (259), where this lineage arguably remains today.

⁵⁶ The phrase comes from Susan Goodman's biography, *William Dean Howells, A Writer's Life*, pg. 419, but is a common assessment of March's character among critics.

⁵⁷ I am referencing here, of course, Howells' famous essay on the imbrication of art and the economy.

continuum, share a German heritage that is clearly and repeatedly marked throughout the novel.

Indeed, this political and ethnic entanglement of Dryfoos and Lindau is evident from the start, with the reader introduced to both halves of this passionate pair in the same scene. March and Fulkerson are dining in Maroni's, a splendidly neglected Italian restaurant known for its bohemian clientele and democratic door policy. As Fulkerson explains, "You get a pretty good slice of New York here... all except the frosting on top" (82). But Fulkerson brings tales of his own "frosting," off-handedly revealing that the wealthy Dryfoos is the financial "Angel" behind the literary magazine and, therefore, March's new boss. Dryfoos, luckily for Basil, has no interest in the day-to-day workings of the magazine. In fact, he has no artistic pretensions at all. In Fulkerson's estimation, Dryfoos has become so synonymous with the production of capital that the mere mention of his name sends Fulkerson first on a reverie about the history of the natural-gas boom around Moffitt, Indiana, and then on to the wonders of industrialization more generally. The small town's expansion due to drilling has been so miraculous that "the first thing that strikes you when you come to Moffitt is the notion that there has been a good warm, growing rain, and the town's come up overnight" (84). Despite Fulkerson's protestation that "the smell isn't bad—about as bad as the finest kind of benzene," his charming effacements and naturalization of the material conditions of resource extraction will soon be displaced by the more socially conscious results the boom has had on the town:

Why, there were some things about it that made you think what a nice kind of world this would be if people ever took hold together, instead of each fellow fighting it out on his own hook, and devil take the hindmost.

They made up their minds at Moffitt that if they wanted their town to grow they'd got to keep their gas public property. So... the city took possession of every well that was put down, and held it for the common good.

Anybody that's a mind to come to Moffitt and start any kind of manufacture can have all the gas he wants free.... The people hold on to it for themselves, and, as I say, it's a grand sight to see a whole community hanging together and working for the good of all, instead of splitting up into as many different cut-throats as there are able-bodied citizens. (85)

A simple attempt to explain Dryfoos' identity pulls Fulkerson first toward a panegyric on the marvels of industrial capital and then quickly retrenches a socialist sensibility by lauding the harmony of cooperative ownership and a state-administered program of profit sharing. Recognizing the danger of what he is beginning to preach, Fulkerson swiftly makes sure his narrative "broke off" as he opportunely "notices" a patron at another table and points out "a short, dark, foreign-looking man" to March: "They say that fellow's a Socialist," he claims. "I think it's a shame they're allowed to come here. If they don't like the way we manage our affairs let 'em stay at home.... I believe in free speech and all that; but I'd like to see these fellows shut up in jail and left to jaw one another to death" (85). The specter of Fulkerson's own socialism immediately (and conveniently) conjures another, and the text's inaugural socialist is marked first as foreign before his views are even identified as outside any political mainstream. Fulkerson's logic of withholding citizenship *a priori* from all socialists then allows him to distance them from the freedoms accorded by law. While Fulkerson's liberalism demands that he "believe in free speech and all that," the socialists, by being foreign, open themselves to the casual

violence of being "shut up." Through conjuring this radical immigrant, Fulkerson is able to nonchalantly suggest a remedy as extreme as incarceration, implying "free speech and all that" may not apply in equal measure to all ethnicities or beliefs. It also absolves him of his earlier verbal missteps by invoking the American system of rights and liberties only to suspend them for the discursive figure he has called into being. The meaning of this identity through negation is clear: Americans, then, are not socialists, and socialists are not American—and, therefore, not entitled to the same rights and protections. These freedoms, like the radical immigrant itself, are invoked only to be silenced. Also of note is the mode of containment he suggests. Fulkerson would never hazard anything as uncosmopolitan as a lynching. Reactionary mobs, in the minds of these literary men, are for the towns and territories they came from, not the New York they now inhabit. The power of the state and its prisons are a much more serviceable and covert tool for stifling dissent, and draw much less attention. Or, as Deak Nabors has provocatively pointed out, "while the police are not exactly conspicuous in *A Hazard*, their obscurity is more Howell's (sic) subject than one of his novel's effects" (77). Most importantly, even if the streetcar strike paralyzing the city is a constant source of conversation and sympathy, neither March nor Fulkerson can allow the socialist critique to give voice to the protesters. As State's Attorney Grinnell proved with his complicity, their language is simply too dangerous, too infectious—which is why, in prison, they could literally "jaw one another to death."

The foreigner, then, is useful precisely for his silence, a stage ghost to further the plot. We might also call this figure overdetermined by a number of late-nineteenth-century concerns, such as immigration, restive labor and unfamiliar political forms. But

the actual identity of the foreigner and the presumed criminality of his beliefs are unimportant. What *is* critical is Fulkerson's ability to redact his treasonous mutualist figuration of Moffitt by first connecting a foreign figure to dangerous political beliefs, and then emphasizing the contrast between Fulkerson's own capitalist-communal fantasies and impressive level of assimilation with the putatively delinquent convictions of the foreigner. This "American" performance demands at least two actors. And Fulkerson's fealty to the flag is only possible through the radical immigrant's mute presence. The change in Fulkerson's tone is not at all for March, who doesn't even notice the "vanishing socialist" heading out the door: In the movement of a Western man to the East, from a boy on the farm to a successful New York intellectual, this "vanishing socialist" and Fulkerson's own vanishing socialism is what makes the "American" appear.

As if to banish this specter for good, Fulkerson goes on to offer the opposite of the socialist's complaint: A stock rags-to-riches success story that documents the transformation of Conrad Dryfoos, a man who has sloughed off generations of yeoman farmerhood to become a rabid land speculator, earning nearly half a million dollars before moving his family to New York and engaging with the higher ranks of society—a serious and distinctly "American" rejoinder to the imagined biography of the dark and vanishing socialist. Indeed, Dryfoos' rise to wealth *is* the tale of his assimilation. If Fulkerson uses his invocation of the socialist to perform his own "American" behavior, Dryfoos takes this status for granted due to his ability to amass capital. And if wealth is one of the only ways to jettison a humble past, Fulkerson seems hopeful about Dryfoos'

chances: "They're not social leaders yet," he says of the relocated clan. "But it's only a question of time—generation or two—especially if time's money."

"Old" Dryfoos, though, is not merely advanced in aspect and years. His character harkens back to an earlier pastoral fantasy connected directly to his heritage. Dryfoos is from German stock—Pennsylvania Dutch—and, in Fulkerson's words, "He hung on to the doctrines as well as the dollars of the dads; it was a real thing with him" (87). His father was one of the "first settlers" in the area and the two of them put together the "largest and handsomest farm anywhere around there." No natural capitalist, "when the boom began to come [Dryfoos] hated it awfully, and he fought it." But "something happened" when his children induced him to sell his farm to Standard Oil for a tidy six-figure sum, and the text renders this transformation through capital accumulation in no equivocal moral terms. As March harshly evaluates (even as he allows the man to continue paying him):

I don't believe a man's any better for having made money so easily and rapidly as Dryfoos has done, and I doubt if he's any wiser. I don't know just the point he's reached in his evolution from grub to beetle, but I do know that so far as it's gone the process must have involved a bewildering change of ideals and criterions. I guess he's come to despise a great many things that he once respected, and that intellectual ability is among them—what we call intellectual ability. He must have undergone a moral deterioration, an atrophy of the generous instincts, and I don't see why it shouldn't have reached his mental make-up. (238)

Even though the text is populated with affluent characters and loudly celebrates the comforts of high society, Old Dryfoos is both the wealthiest and, as shown in the quote above, the only one who somehow got it wrong getting rich. While both March and Fulkerson are allowed to move from Indiana and make the transition into East Coast society seamlessly even without an attendant fortune, there is something about Dryfoos' wealth that precludes the possibility of his betterment through success. The cruelty in March's insect terminology also rehearses Dryfoos' genesis as a man "closer" to nature than the rest of the characters—and apparently he is unable to slough off the past in the same manner afforded the others.

Unfortunately for Old Dryfoos, moral turpitude is not the only problem his new life as a speculator has caused: The man has become terribly bored without his farm, so he turns the production of capital into its own form of entertainment. Dryfoos, who once complained that "I hain't got anything to do from sun-up to sun-down" now spends "two or three hours watching a favorite stock of his go up and go down" in the lobby of the Stock Exchange, the movement of the money now as natural to him as the solar arc he once used to work his crops. And the man who was so recently suspicious of speculation now "had only pity and contempt" for "money that had been earned painfully, slowly, and in little amounts." With nothing left to do in Moffitt (and perhaps just in time: Fulkerson has already intimated that the great gas bubble there might soon pop), Dryfoos moved to New York to "spend his money and get his daughters into the old

Knickerbocker society," opines Fulkerson. "Maybe he thought they were all the same kind of Dutch" (89).⁵⁸

Fulkerson's elitist comic sally on the matter and its focus on ethnic difference and linguistic confusion points us toward an understanding of why Dryfoos' success is figured as so "unnatural," and it also calls attention to a well-known misprision of the time: The Pennsylvania Dutch were not "Dutch" at all but ethnically German, and, after Haymarket, it is important for us to examine the popular understanding of this "native" yet ethnically German enclave in Howells' day. During the period captured by the novel (and into our own time as well), the Pennsylvania Dutch were known first for their myriad forms of communal living and the retention for over a century of their particular language.⁵⁹ Indeed, what the Pennsylvania Dutch were distinctively *not* known for was assimilation into a broader American public that was rapidly gaining definition in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. An emblematic *New York Times* article from 1874 points out that, "[u]ntil within a few years past, the Pennsylvania Germans were a singularly isolated class of an American population," a sort of foreign specter within the domestic. The *Times* piece also mentions what Howells himself will repeat through Dryfoos' creation myth: That the Pennsylvania Dutch "are seldom given to speculating, and are apt to prefer hard work to a prospective rise in values...." This article is by no means an isolated incident: Felicity with finance was often linked to heritage (as, of course, was the lack of it).⁶⁰ Fulkerson reflects this belief in his inimitable style: "It's

⁵⁸ Indeed, in a rather macabre detail, the only Dryfooses left behind in Indiana are the corpses of his twins, soon to be exhumed from their plots on the family farm before Standard Oil begins drilling beneath what is now their graves.

⁵⁹ Indeed, their longest running and by far most successful experiment in communal living in America, the Amish, continue to exist, though they are perhaps not the best example of a "socialistic" community on American soil for either Howells' purposes or mine.

⁶⁰ See Matthew Frye Jacobson's *Whiteness of a Different Color* and David Roediger's *Wages of Whiteness*.

astonishing how much lumber those Germans can carry around in their heads all their lives, and never work it up into anything. It's a pity they couldn't do the acquiring, and let out the use of their learning to a few bright Americans. We could make things hum, if we could arrange 'em that way" (96). In Fulkerson's comic invocation of the Protestant work ethic, the Pennsylvania Dutch are so typically industrious that even their very *thoughts* are characterized as hard labor. His only lament is that "Americans"—from which the Dutch are clearly distinct—cannot produce capital from their raw goods. Dryfoos, though, is "American" because he *has* made things hum. His attempt to infiltrate those respectable classes, captured so well by Howells' good friend, Henry James, is possible only because of his speculative success. But he is still attempting to play against type, which is why the form and manner of Dryfoos' success are preyed upon while the substance of his wealth is left alone. He is, in a sense, hurrying evolution, and though the move from grub to beetle may be quite an accomplishment, neither has any place in a fashionable salon. But at least it has company: As we will also see with both Lindau and Dryfoos' son, Conrad, all of the characters of German extraction are unable to navigate the demands of Gilded Age urban life—whether it is by becoming rich "incorrectly" or because of an inability to safely differentiate between socialist and American principles.

If Fulkerson's story details a sort of loss of Dryfoos' German heritage through financial success, March has manifested his own Teuton in the character of Berthold Lindau. Again, it is no accident that the first time we are apprised of socialists, Germans, and Dryfoos in the novel that we meet Lindau as well: Fulkerson's vanishing socialist may have gone out the door, but in his place we meet another political radical that

Howells will try much more vigorously to make disappear, and one that will also tragically connect Dryfoos back to his "communal ancestry." Born in Europe, Lindau has seemingly found his way into all the great political struggles of his time, a transnational radical unwaveringly committed—as he says in his thickly accented English—to his socialist "brinciples." As mentioned earlier, the first detail March offers us is that Lindau fought "the anti-slavery battle just as naturally at Indianapolis in 1858 as he fought behind the barricades at Berlin in 1848" (95). And he also "naturally" finds himself embroiled in the labor dispute as well. In March's estimation, "He was a man predestined to adversity," his political beliefs figured less as a conviction than as a material aspect of his constitution. While Dryfoos' characterization by critics has been remarkably consistent, this "other" German has occupied a broad and incompatible spectrum of scholarly interpretation, which, in Jonathan Bauch's convenient categorization, "has fallen along three distinct lines of inquiry: Those who see him as a spokesman for Howells' socialism, those who view him as a source of parody, and others who see him as an advocate of violence" (Bauch 15). Yet while so much of the criticism on Lindau seems determined to bring to light what monsters he is hiding (revolutionary violence, restive labor, the terrifying unfamiliarity of immigrants, the constant threat of socialism) or who it is hiding behind him (the newly socialist Howells), it makes little of perhaps his most obvious trait: His German ethnicity. Literary critics have, of course, focused often enough on the textual or receptive aspects of his thick accent,⁶¹ but for the moment I want to focus on its most obvious effect, ignored perhaps because of its location in plain sight:

⁶¹ Most recently and compellingly, Jonathan Arac discussed Lindau in light of realist vernacular. See his article in *boundary 2* 34:2 (2007).

A pronounced and rather "eggonomigal" reminder of his heritage (188).⁶² Lindau's exhibition of the foreign is also remarkably elastic, and Howells makes broad use of this character's fungible alien qualities. When March and the old German first reunite, Lindau has been offering "the use of his grand old head" as an artist's model. And a coveted one that can apparently be painted in any light: "Arab sheiks and Christian elders," "Judas," Semitic, Mediterranean and Central European. Mr. Wetmore, a local artistic doyen says "there isn't anybody in the Bible" that Lindau has not been painted as (108), as long as the figure retains an exotic flavor. In keeping with this focus on foreignness, after his warm reunion with March, Lindau, "a perfect Babel of strange tongues" (150), begins working for the magazine as a translator, rendering foreign texts legible to its bourgeois audience.⁶³ Whether being used to embody foreign peoples in oil paint, or representing foreign languages into English, Lindau's varied means of income uniformly highlight his employers' desire to evince the alien on their own recognizable terms.

The characteristic most difficult to adequately render is Lindau's military service. Lindau, it seems, has always been a fighting man. From the "barracks at Berlin," his trajectory to the New World explicitly connects the German struggles of 1848 not only with abolition and the Civil War, but with the current labor conflict as well—inserting the demands of the workers into an ethical continuum that the novel attempts to appraise for validity. The political implications would be profound indeed if the rectitude of the Gilded Age labor struggle were to be inserted alongside the already crowded company of

⁶² The question of ethnicity and fitness for self-government is not limited to Germans. March questions a number of nationalities during his ethnographic jaunts the slums. For instance, the Neapolitans, with the "jargon of their intelligible dialect" made him wonder "what notion these poor animals formed of a free republic from their experience of life under its conditions" of being "worked and fed and housed like beasts" (182).

⁶³ Echoing the furor around the "smiling aspects," Howells has Lindau edit "a bit of vivid Russian realism," a "fragment of Dostoyevski".

the US’s other self-congratulatory battles. As we have already seen, the text is committed to portraying socialism as a foreign problem, and much conventional American wisdom of the late nineteenth century looked back in horror at the chaos of mid-century Europe.⁶⁴ While Lindau sided with the radicals in 1848, Dryfoos we can be sure, would have no truck with such politics. Indeed, Fulkerson even likens the capitalist to Bismarck himself a few times, the very same German leader responsible for banishing so many of the German socialists to US shores in the first place.⁶⁵ Yet, like the Iron Chancellor, Dryfoos also never actually served in the military.

Ironically, then, the character most marked as foreign in the novel is the only one who has ever seen combat in the US—and in the most “American” of wars, no less. In fact, though never mentioned explicitly in the text, Lindau most likely *became* a naturalized American citizen during his time as a soldier for the Union cause, due to the fact that “an immediate economic and social benefit to the foreign-born enlisted in the Union Army was the automatic grant of citizenship” (Blanck 42). Dryfoos, whose mobility and level of assimilation are a direct result of the capital accumulation only possible in the American economic system produced by the Civil War, used this nascent wealth to extricate himself from the fighting altogether—paying a substitute \$300 to go in his stead, and providing for the remaining family after the man was killed. Though he would never admit it, to March it seems that Dryfoos still has “an old rankling shame in his heart for not having gone to war” (335). Once again, Dryfoos and Lindau are positioned as polarities, one who used his wealth to avoid service in an American war he blithely declares “...was worth it—the country we've got now,” (335) while the other

⁶⁴ See Eric Hobsbaum, *The Age of Revolution*.

⁶⁵ He believed that old Dryfoos “could step into Bismarck’s shoes, and run the German empire at ten days’ notice” (215).

gained his citizenship but left a forearm back on the battlefield during a war he now denounces:

Do you think I knowingly gave my hand to save this oligarchy of traders and tricksters, this aristocracy of railroad wreckers and stock gamblers and mine-slave drivers and mill-serf owners? No; I gave it to the slave; the slave—ha! ha! ha!—whom I helped to unshackle to the common liberty of hunger and cold. (347)

As this passage displays, Lindau is only rendered clearly in English when speaking to March in his native German, which he does at a laughably opulent dinner organized by Dryfoos to celebrate the first issue of the magazine. As the group discusses the war, the old veteran's participation launches a problematic for the rest of the characters by reducing the conflict to a single if admittedly signal moment in an extensive and far broader campaign for equality among races and classes in general. March and his ilk, as the text explains, "had been nurtured in the faith of Bunker Hill and Appomattox, as the beginning and the end of all possible progress in human rights" (292).⁶⁶ By connecting mill and mine owners to slave and serf owners, and by referring to the American "oligarchy" as an aristocracy, Lindau places the language of the American labor struggle back onto European soil, impugning March's progressive politics, and revealing this narrative to be a far less isolated or established tale than his former student would like to believe. This is one of the reasons that socialist rhetoric—especially in the mouths of labor—is so dangerous: It produces a startling cohesion between two battles that are celebrated in qualitatively different terms within American historiography. *Hazard* is

⁶⁶ The magazine itself is sold by Fulkerson as "something in literature as radical as the American Revolution in politics: it was the idea of self-government in the arts" (213).

attempting to decide where the labor struggle should fall on the spectrum between the chaotic socialist upheavals of 1848 and the bold and irrefutably moral victory of the Civil War. In the 1880s, as George M. Fredrickson has pointed out, the “meaning” of the Civil War had not yet been ossified in the American imaginary. Or, as Fulkerson, ever keen to spot a literary absence not yet capitalized upon, admits, “the war has never really panned out in fiction yet” (335). *Hazard* returns again and again to this question of the labor struggle, puzzling over its rightful inclusion in the spectrum of struggle between 1848 and Abolition. As Nina Silber has argued, after the Civil War, the literature of the 1880s and ‘90s was a “conciliatory culture” for a North that “felt their society had lost its moral center and sense of purpose” and was predominantly concerned with “increasing numbers of strikes, growing waves of immigration, and further revelations of economic corruption” (Silber 95).⁶⁷ Lindau’s desire to rewrite the result of the war in negative terms severely hinders this attempt at national recovery, and may also explain why the novel takes place in New York, the city that “belongs to everyone.” Howells goes to great lengths to include Southerners, Northerners, Westerners and, of course, Europeans, in order to highlight the transience and mobility of the post-bellum period. While not a single main character was actually born in the city, they are all willing to converge there in the spirit of cooperation and accord. Only one figure prevents the conclusion of this national romance, and this is why Lindau’s ethnicity is as important as his politics: While glimpses of the foreigner haunt the text repeatedly—in the slums, digging through trash cans, as March stares at their “bestial” nature on the elevated train—Lindau is the only

⁶⁷ In Amy Kaplan’s *The Anarchy of Empire*, she discusses at length how the Spanish-American War was an opportunity for the North and South to expunge their lingering rancor through acts of violence against a shared—and racialized—foe. She notes that this solidarity was also produced at the expense of the African-American soldier. I believe that the threat of domestic radical politics played a similar role in attempts to suture a particular “Americanism.”

character not born within the confines of the United States who is allowed a voice, and he uses it to show us exactly why his speech refuses to be assimilated and must be expunged. Like Spies in his autobiography, Lindau's "fatal mistake" is to have been born a foreigner. Or, as Lindau himself says, "What gountry hass a poor man got?" His politics deny the possibility of national reconciliation because they mark an oversight crucial for national reconciliation: The volume of labor's appeals is no longer possible to ignore. This socialist critique places an impossible strain upon the narrative closure of the Civil War by placing the conflict back onto an unfinished transnational footing.

Hazard, Heritage, and History

A Hazard Of New Fortunes will obviate the seemingly impassable divide between capital and labor through the deployment of a theory of affective literature not unlike that used by the Haymarket prosecution. More importantly, this complex arbitrage will inoculate American labor from the threat of socialist rhetoric only by irrevocably conflating radical politics with German heritage, and then annulling that voice completely. As in Fulkerson's earlier performance, the socialist is invoked—and then banished—only to make the American appear. The risk of contagion from Lindau, however, is no mean literary device. As I argued above, in the mind of the law, six police officers were murdered and four radicals "rightfully" put to death for the communicable affect of their words.⁶⁸ Or, as March muses at the close of the tale: "Does anything from without change us?... We're brought up to think so by the novelists, who really have the charge of people's thinking, nowadays" (485).

⁶⁸ In one of Žižek's recent opuses, he remarks that the proper way to understand Marx's famous injunction to change the world in the "Theses on Feuerbach" is the "test" of the "truth-effect Marxist thought unleashes" in "transforming" the proletariat into "revolutionary subjects" (*End Times* xiii).

The text examines a number of characters to test for their susceptibility to Lindau's words, so reminiscent of the speeches by the Haymarketers. March's wife, we remember, was worried that March would somehow become "infected" with Lindau's views. But her husband is so confident in his impregnability that he even hires Lindau to teach German to his son, Tom. Isabel can only repeat the warning: "I am afraid for the effect on the children," she says. "Such perfectly distorted ideas—Tom will be ruined by them" (293). Isabel's fanciful prose is not far from the mark: The perfect distortion of Lindau's opinions bears a logic that enables them to be much harder to dispel than the neo-slavery suggested by the Southern apologist Colonel Woodburn (who, incidentally, blames the excesses of the peculiar institution on "the spirit of commercialism from the North—and from Europe"). March explicitly conceives of Tom's exposure to Lindau's views as a necessary experiment: "Oh, let Tom find out where they're false. It will be good exercise for his faculties of research. At any rate, those things are getting said nowadays; he'll have to hear them sooner or later" (293). As March makes clear, better to hear them at home than on the streets where the angry streetcar drivers gather. As a tutor, Lindau's ideas can be domesticated, rendered scholastic, more amenable to the "faculties of research" to which they will be surrendered. For a fleeting moment it seems as if March's son might have been swayed by the German's distorted theories after all. While father and son are engaged in a leisurely ethnographic Sunday stroll through Greenwich Village, the tableau that confronts them "implied a life as alien to the American manner as anything in continental Europe" (299). March *père* surveys the motley garbage of a particularly squalid street and whimsically inverts the logic of class antagonism by remarking with a shrug, "It's curious, isn't it, how fond the poor people are of these

unpleasant thoroughfares? You always find them living in the worst streets" (300).

Rather than amusement, Tom replies at first with a scorn so mechanical that it smacks of indoctrination: "The burden of all the wrong in the world comes on the poor," he says. "Every sort of fraud and swindling hurts them the worst. The city wastes the money it's paid to clean the streets with, and the poor have to suffer, for they can't afford to pay twice, like the rich" (300). Instead of adding to his father's droll observation about poverty, Tom responds with an outline of systematic disenfranchisement brought about by inequalities of distribution. March is understandably moved: "Hallo, Tom!" he asks. "Is that your wisdom?" he asks. "It's what Mr. Lindau says," is the reply.

Tom, trapped in eager youth, is not yet immune from Lindau's harangues. And the instant that this real possibility of infection is entertained, March's veneer of geniality disappears as he admonishes his son: "And you didn't tell him that the poor lived in dirty streets because they liked them, and were too lazy and worthless to have them cleaned?" All of March's vaunted sensitivity to others, his oft-invoked and much-touted humanity, vanishes in the face of his son's miseducation. Luckily, Tom's faculties of research prove resilient enough. When pressed about Lindau's views more generally, he finally acquits himself:

Well, sir, I don't like the way he talks about some things. I don't suppose this country is perfect, but I think it's about the best there is, and it don't do any good to look at its drawbacks all the time.... He says there's no need of failures or frauds or hard times. It's ridiculous. There always have been and there always will be. (300)

Tom's "faculties of research," it turns out, are nothing more than the standard bourgeois rationalizations and self-perpetuating ahistorical theories of political economy that perpetuate the inequity under review. March is so satisfied with his son's answers that he even mentions the talk to his wife: "I'm glad to know that Tom can see through such ravings. He has lots of good common sense" (301). Little Tom, like his father, has proven immune.

If only all offspring were so lucky. March is not the only one with a son struggling to make sense of life in New York, and it may not turn out to be only Tom's "sense" that is so common. If merely being relocated from Boston is enough to make March's well-bred boy flirt with radical socialism, we can only imagine what an uprooting to Manhattan from an Indiana farm will do to Dryfoos' son, Conrad. A spiritual young man, unlikely scion, and "gentle spirit" (219) "who's always had these theories of co-operation" (283), Conrad has dedicated himself, much to the chagrin of his ruthless father who wants "to make a regular New York business man out that fellow" (218), to charity work in the tenements downtown. In Conrad's terms, "I think the city itself is preaching the best sermon all the time" (158). With his dream of becoming a preacher flouted by the elder Dryfoos, Conrad takes pains to follow his beloved scripture the best he can, devoting every free moment to helping the poor that March finds so picturesque and that Old Dryfoos notices with repugnance, if at all.

Dryfoos, like March, also has a test for his son to pass: "I want him to get the business training, and then if he wants to go into something else, he knows what the world is, anyway" (219). For Dryfoos, business training is knowledge of the world itself. Without it, "he knows about as much as a girl.... You be a man first, and then you be a

preacher, if you want to" (219). Like Tom's controlled exposure to radical ideas, Dryfoos also understands the opportunity that life in New York has offered his son: "You know already what work and saving and steady habits and sense will bring a man to; you don't want to go round among the rich; you want to go among the poor, and see what laziness, and drink, and dishonesty, and foolishness will bring men to" (219). But Conrad is not spending time with the poor to substantiate preconceptions of their lassitude. His encounters with the downtrodden have turned him into a true believer, and the extent of his views is revealed after the aforementioned dinner party. Lindau, who has been invited to celebrate the success of the journal in the company of the more refined—or at least more moneyed—participants, is unable to control his vitriol once the conversation moves toward the streetcar strike, and then on to the labor question more broadly. Old Dryfoos proudly recounts a union-busting tale of his own that occurred after one of his foremen back in Indiana "got some of those ideas into his head, and they turned it" (341). As the wily speculator recounts importing fifty new men under Pinkerton guard, Lindau can no longer swallow his bile and rises to leave, telling March, in German, that Dryfoos is "an infamous traitor" and "has the heart of a tyrant" (342-3). Unbeknownst to them both, however, Dryfoos can understand enough German—thanks to his upbringing—to discern the unforgivable insults being hurled at him at his own table. The next day, a furious Dryfoos demands that March fire the radical:

He's a red-mouthed labor-agitator. He's one of those foreigners that come from places where they've never had a decent meal's victuals in their lives, and as soon as they get their stomachs full they begin to make trouble between our people and their hands. There's where the strikes

come from, and the unions, and the secret societies. They come here and break our Sabbath, and teach their atheism. They ought to be hung! Let 'em go back if they don't like it over here. They want to ruin the country.

(347)

Despite the fact that Dryfoos had just shared a tale of strike-breaking involving his own native-born men, he once again locates the genesis of the labor struggles with outside agitators. Everything from labor unrest to unions to secret societies is blamed on foreigners, and it is precisely the bounty of the US that gives these protesters the strength to cause trouble. Like Fulkerson, he also casually suggests violence as the answer to their appeals. March, however, no matter how wealthy his boss may be, "is not used to being spoken to as if I were the foreman of a shop." Once again, Dryfoos' actions are figured as less civilized than his money should assure. If March merely chuckled during Fulkerson's earlier tirade about socialists, he seems to have less patience when Dryfoos attempts the same, making the reason for this distinction clear in his indicting reply: "I don't know whom you mean by *they*." (347, emphasis in original). Even though March, Dryfoos, and Fulkerson all hail from west of the Alleghenies, March is revoking Dryfoos' ability to criticize the radicals by cruelly calling attention to a connection that Lindau and Dryfoos share, and one that runs at least as deep as their politics. For, while the two Germans may occupy the very opposite poles of the debate, both are framed by the moderate March as examples of forms of extremism regardless of their particular views, and as ethnic Germans no matter where they were born. If Dryfoos' money is able to penetrate the thick veil of respectable Knickerbocker society, it has not done anything to alleviate his more atavistic traits and—from his provincial clothes to the embarrassing ostentation of

the dinner party—the old man's performance has never been very convincing. March's accusative "they" draws attention to the fact that, money or not, Dryfoos is still not quite as "American" as he may like to believe—and that his invective against Lindau may be unable to create the ethnic and national distance Fulkerson so easily summoned.

This irrevocable fatalism in the blood, of character traits inassimilable regardless of birthplace or bankroll, and of troublesome heritage ineluctably handed down, is made tragically clear through the subsequent actions of Conrad. While March's son was able to examine Lindau's views and come to his own conclusions about their falsity, Conrad admits a certain fealty to the radical German's "perfectly distorted" ideas. Once the elder Dryfoos leaves March's office after giving stern orders to fire Lindau, Conrad appears in the doorway, apologizing for his father's behavior. March, in turn, excuses the old man, explaining that it is Lindau's principles "to denounce the rich, in season and out of season.... Lindau has got hold of one of those partial truths that hurt worse than the whole truth, and—" (350). Conrad cuts him off quickly, likening Lindau's theories to the philosophy of Christ Himself: "Partial truth!... Didn't the Saviour himself say, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?'" March is astonished: "Why, bless my soul!" he cries. "Do you *agree* with Lindau?" "I agree with the Lord Jesus Christ," said the young man, solemnly, and a strange light, of exaltation, of fanaticism, came into his wide blue eyes" (350, emphasis in original).

Fanaticism, as we have already seen, is a common characteristic of the German in the logic of *Hazard*. Whether it comes in the form of capital speculation (Dryfoos watching stocks go up and down for fun), radical politics (Lindau's unwavering assaults on "gabidal"), or dressed up in the irrefutable finery of religious doctrine as Conrad's

Christian socialism, the characters of German descent are seemingly unable to exist within the moderate strictures that the novel frames at the center of its social theory.

These three extremes might be read as coincidences if Howells had not gone to great lengths to extend this extreme behavior to the rest of the Dryfoos clan, drawing attention not to what separates the three men, but to the ethnic heritage that binds them. Of course, the characteristic that the Dryfooses embody most clearly is a painful provincialism, filled with all the "learnun'" and other vernacular remnants the Marches expect from a family raised on a farm. Or, as Fulkerson sums it up: "My! oh my! there was the native earth for you." Yet through all the rampant colloquialisms and grammatical errors the reader is also reminded of Lindau's phrasings, and to make sure we do not miss this connection, we are offered explicit reminders. Mrs. Dryfoos' "grey hair had a memory of blondness in it like Lindau's" (157) and her very presence inspires images that hark back to her true home: "Something like the Sabbath quiet of a little wooden meeting-house in thick Western woods expressed itself to him from her presence" (157). Once again, their ethnic origins are invoked as she explains her childhood being raised by Dunkards and "Beardy Men." "It's a Pennsylvania German sect," March explains to his wife. "Something like the Quakers. I used to see them when I was a boy" (157). Conrad's sister, Christine, only perpetuates this distance. The perfect age for trouble, she also reflects a predisposition to her genetic extremism but without any of her brother's benevolent focus. As Fulkerson quipped: "Ever see that black leopard they got up there in the Central Park? That was Christine" (165). Her face contains a certain "fierceness," (153), and she is often regarded in other animal terms as well: A leopard, a cat, a shrew (299). Unfortunately, she has also fallen hard for the

magazine's art editor and resident louche, Angus Beaton, "who probably hasn't a moral fibre in his composition" (149). Broke, arrogant and bored, he toys with the young woman, and almost convinces himself to marry her for her money—but even this cad, luckily from Scottish stock, is able to redeem himself somewhat by ultimately choosing honesty. However, as Beaton's expected proposal never arrives and he prepares to leave, Christine lets loose with the first physical violence in the novel. She feels "a dizzying whirl in her brain" that "possessed her lawless soul" and takes a clawed feline swipe at the face Beaton bends toward her. "Well, Christine Dryfoos!" cries her simplistic sister, "Sprang at him like a wild-cat!" (325).

This initial violent assault functions as a foreboding bookend with the only other character that willfully draws blood in the novel. After being harangued by his daughter for the situation with Beaton, Old Dryfoos decides to vent his anger on his son. As he purposefully goads Conrad into discussing the strike, he echoes nicely the dénouement of the Haymarket Affair (as well as the tragic deaths that *Hazard* soon enacts): "If I had my way," he screams. "I'd have the lot of those vagabonds hung.... They ought to call out the militia, and fire into 'em. Clubbing is too good for them" (416). When Conrad admits to pitying the strikers instead, his father explodes with rage and strikes the boy in the face, drawing blood from his temple. Sadly, this is the just the first blow his son will endure. The full weight of the repressive machinery of antiradicalism will soon come to bear on the young Dryfoos. In fact, in the logic of the text, it will turn out to be Conrad who has exhibited the most extreme behavior. His sister may be wild—but she is at least still engaged in the prosaic pastimes of the idle rich. And while his father may bear the same tendencies toward immoderation, at least he turned his focus toward amassing

capital. Even the fiery Lindau can blame a birth abroad for his distorted views. But Conrad—born into yeoman farmerhood, raised by the discipline of hard labor, plucked from middling obscurity and set down again by fate (in the form of natural-gas exploration) into the very heart of American civilization and offered all the access and privilege his father's money can buy—commits an unforgiveable trespass by choosing to adopt radical politics and an unsettling regard for the welfare of others. Conrad embodies both the very essence of Howells' complicity and the author's faith in transmitting these mystical bonds through literature: "If you can make the comfortable people understand how the uncomfortable people live, it will be a very good thing, Mr. March," Conrad says in respect to the former's sketches of "colorful" New York life. "Sometimes it seems to me that the only trouble is that we don't know one another well enough; and that the first thing is to do this" (195).

Perhaps more frightening, Conrad, in his fanaticism, has also become *convincing* in a way Lindau never achieved. March, despite "his temperance in everything," soon eerily reiterates the young man's edict above, explaining that "some aspects of the strike, whose importance, as a great social convulsion, he felt people did not recognize." And March will continue to experience a sort of uncharacteristic possession as the novel reaches its climax. Even though he "had promised his wife solemnly that he would keep away from [the strike], and he had a natural inclination to keep his promise" March still finds himself ferreting out the spectacle of the struggle (410). Indeed, even his enduring status as spectator is threatened. Trying to make conversation about the strike with a policeman, the officer's silence and "surlly glance" "gave [March] a fine sense of the ferocity which he had read of the French troops putting on toward the populace just

before the coup d'état; he began to feel like a populace; but he struggled with himself and regained his character of philosophical observer" (411-412). March's much-vaunted temperance is banished momentarily by a single interpellation as a possible troublemaker, and this *méconnaissance* sends the imagination of the middle-aged moderate toward that ultimate Gilded Age symbol of unchecked radicalism, the Paris Commune. This encounter obliterates his intellectual distance through the transmission of a feeling of fraternity with the working classes that he had hitherto only admired for their picturesque qualities. While the text argues for the swift reappearance of this distance, as "his character of philosophical observer" returned, March still "remained in the car and let it carry him by the corner where he ought to have got out and gone home, and let it keep on with him to one of the furthest tracks westward, where so much of the fighting was reported to have taken place" (412). These passages, while attempting to reinstate March's bourgeois status of disinterested observer, also evacuate his agency, a literary excuse that allows him to be dragged by a seemingly mystical compulsion toward the site of the struggle.

This transformation of March's disposition will also cause him to collide with Conrad at a most inauspicious time. The young man, still reeling from the violence his father has committed against him, "started out, he hardly knew where" (418) but ends up moving closer to the scenes of battle. As he walks toward the west side of the city, his resolve reasserts itself from aimlessness to "the longing to do something to save those mistaken men from themselves, forming itself into a purpose" (421). Whereas March's approach to the scene of the battle is figured as a lessening of agency—the consequences of inaction (*not* getting off the bus, *not* keeping himself from moving in its direction)—

Conrad's movement is the opposite, an increase of will, an intensification of resolve. Quickly delivered into the scene of the battle, the young man sees "a street car, and around the car a tumult of shouting, cursing, struggling men.... stones, clubs, brick-bats hailed up the car, the horses, the men trying to move them. The mob closed around them in a body...." (421). As the melee spreads, Conrad notices an old man with a thick accent rushing to the aid of the strikers while berating the police. Faithful to his fast-approaching end, we find Lindau adhering to his "brinciples" one last time, and raising his mutilated arm to shield his head from a policeman's baton while screaming a final virtuous reproach: "Ah yes! Glup the strikers—gif it to them! Why don't you co and glup the bresidents that insoalt your laws...? Glup the strikers—they cot no friends! They cot no money to pribe you, to dreat you!" (422). It is during this thickly accented diatribe that Conrad "heard a shot in that turmoil beside the car, and something seemed to strike him in the breast" (422). Falling to the ground with a bullet in his heart, the last thing he sees is the face of the policeman whose club is about to shatter the remainder of Lindau's left arm, a face that "was not bad, not cruel; it was like the face of a statue, fixed, perdurable; a mere image of irresponsible and involuntary authority" (422). The policeman is like both the bullet and March's decision to continue riding the car: Devoid of agency, the mere utensil of an authority that extends beyond the actions of its agents. While Old Dryfoos' attack and Christine's rake across Beaton's face is rendered in incriminating clarity, the shooter of the gun is never identified—the bullet is merely "heard" and then strikes him. The police are exculpated as a necessary manifestation of an abstract authority that is ordained beforehand as appropriate. Or, as March remarks on the disorder with world-weary pith a few days later: "It's the policeman's business, I

suppose, to club the ideal when he finds it inciting a riot. . . . I don't blame the policeman; he was as much a mere instrument as his club was" (430). With Conrad now dead, however, the power that caused both the bullet and the policeman to strike is not at all immaterial for its mystification. Yet this covert rendering allows it to remain beyond question, outside the boundaries of reproach. If the power of the state is the only force sanctioned and able to dispel the threat of the distorted ideas, it is a state rendered as a mystical authority that must obscure the very police power that subtends it. We might once again recall Deak Nabors' earlier observation, that the police's obscurity "is more Howell's (sic) subject than one of his novel's effects" (77). March only perpetuates this effacement of causes:

It's terrible to think how unnecessary even the best and wisest of us is to the purposes of Providence. When I looked at that poor young fellow's face sometimes—so gentle and true and pure—I used to think the world was appreciably richer for his being in it. But are we appreciably poorer for his being out of it now? (442)

In death, March is able to forgive Conrad's fervor—but only because the former moves first to lay the cause at the feet of an inscrutable and transcendent power. The state itself vanishes and is only visible through the mortal work of its instruments—the bullet, the policeman, the shot. Conrad's death is figured as overly Christianized, hopelessly naïve, unfit for waging war in the complex times he inhabited, the certainly tragic but only logical end for "a singular creature; a kind of survival; an exile in our time and place" (470). Conrad might have had the good fortune to be born within the confines of the US (albeit on the wrong side of the Alleghenies), but the text now renders him a fugitive in

both space *and* time. Thus doubly banished, Conrad's wishes to tend to the downtrodden are figured as archaic, an atavism of an earlier simpler Christianity—with no truck in Howells' reviled and relentless "economic chance world." Apotheosized to sainthood, having pursued the "holiest" cause of "peace," his sacrifice is removed from the muck of the labor protests and placed into the antiseptic category of religious conviction (470).

The only non-metaphysical force blamed for Conrad's death is, of course, Lindau, who is now lying unconscious in a crowded hospital. As Mr. March wishes him the same "peace and pardon" that death has offered the young Dryfoos, his wife retorts, "Ah, Lindau! He has done harm enough.... I hope he will be careful after this" (424). Lindau, having provoked Conrad's end, deserves no forgiveness, even though the rest of his arm was "[s]mashed all to pieces from the clubbing" (424). The old radical, we find out, had his already mutilated arm removed completely below the elbow. With this, Lindau's body finally renders the novel's verdict on the labor struggles. The wound that marked him as a patriot will now end his life as a traitor, inflicted by the same forces he putatively protected in the Civil War. This adjudication has also evinced a more important lesson beyond the probity of labor's demands: Regardless of the issue, violence is to be the sole province of the state, and it alone has the power to expunge its challengers. American labor, however, is not to be blamed in total even if its struggle is now closed off from the apotheosis offered to the Civil War. This is why the body of the ethnic German—whether foreign or domestic—plays such a pivotal role: It not only places the blame of these ideas on an international footing, but it generates a rationale as to why some domestic workers may be more susceptible than others to such un-American behavior, a racist mechanism that binds forms of politics to blood and exculpates the mass of labor. That is why

Conrad must die at the scene itself—the only murder in the entire novel—and absolve, Christ-like, the rest of the strikers with his sacrifice. This is also why Lindau's body must have the legacy of his sanctioned suffering in the Civil War erased by a greater and ignominious injury, and then finally die penniless and alone in a hospital rather than in noble battle.

As if the bond between Lindau and Conrad had not already been drawn thickly enough, the two are remembered at a joint funeral service, where March further aestheticizes the power that took their lives, finding "a poetry that appealed to him in this reconciliation through death of men, of ideas, of conditions, that could only have gone warring on in life" (455). If March truly believes, as he wryly remarks in the wake of the tragedies, "people that have convictions are difficult. Fortunately, they're rare," he might want to inquire—beyond the will of Providence—why this rarity might have recently become so prevalent. It will be March's son who, at the close of his own little bourgeois bildungsroman, will sum up the dismissal of Lindau's distorted views best: "What's the use of our ever fighting about anything in America? I always thought we could vote for anything we wanted" (451).

Yet even with the deaths of the two overt radicals, the work of expulsion is not complete. Latent ethnic predispositions have already shown a susceptibility to radical language, and any non-Anglo-Saxon left in the novel could erupt at any time. Helpfully, the remainders of the Dryfoos clan have new plans. "I am going to Europe, to take my family there," says Old Dryfoos, devastated by the loss of his son. One of the last scenes, in a bitter inversion of the immigrant tale, has Fulkerson and the Marches waving farewell to the remaining Dryfooses as they board a ship bound for Europe. Tying off the

knot between domestic and European bloodlines for good, the Dryfooses are bound for the site of the Paris Commune itself. "There the Dryfooses met with the success denied them in New York; many American plutocrats must await their apotheosis in Europe, where society has them, as it were, in a translation" (495). Finally, as émigrés, the coveted status of "American" is achieved—but solely as a representation of the original. The text can confer this citizenship only within the safety of their exile. As if by magic, the death of both Conrad and Lindau, coupled with the embarkation of the Dryfooses, has made the labor struggle disappear, never to be mentioned again in the text. Howells, in the palpable fear that the new expanded definition of complicity manifested for writers who might set audacious social ideas to paper, has finally provided the trial with both its subtext and rationale: A schematic apologia that explains why certain people and certain politics are—inherently, dispositionally, *biologically*—unAmerican. Not only has Howells skillfully excluded himself from these ethnic sanctions, and thus from the reach of this new complicity, but Isabel's sympathy can finally cover all of New York—now that a few notable exceptions have been made.

CHAPTER TWO
White Logic:
Jack London, Russian Radicals, and Racial Socialism

In an angry 1896 letter to the editor of the *Oakland Times*, a not-quite-twenty-one year-old Jack London complained that “as an assiduous reader of the many communications published in your columns, I have failed to see the Socialist represented.”¹ Already known as the Bay Area’s “Kid Socialist,” London would wait in vain to be satisfied by the jaundiced coverage offered to his political party—and embarked instead upon a literary career that represented plenty of socialists on his own. For while the author rather famously suffered from any number of ailments and afflictions during his brief and eventful life, writer’s block was certainly not among them. Dying just shy of his forty-first birthday, London had already completed twenty novels, nearly two hundred short stories, three plays, and enough lectures, reportage, and correspondence to fill several volumes. Leaving almost no unfinished works behind when he died, London explained this dedication to closure in a letter to the writer Elwyn Hoffman. In characteristic bravado, London made light of his friend’s “stacks of unfinished MSS. Let me tell you how I write. In the first place, I never begin a thing, but what I finish *before* I begin anything else.... And *on* the day I finish the MS. I fold it up and send it off without once going back to see what all the previous pages were like.”² While this approach may not have inspired the world’s most melodious prose, it certainly abetted his bank account. Uncharacteristically for such a celebrated author, London viewed his literary output in a strikingly unromantic light, a form of labor qualitatively indistinct from the many dehumanizing means of employment he had endured as a

¹ *Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 4; reprinted from *Oakland Times*, July 29, 1896.

² *Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 194. Emphasis in original.

younger man and so often chronicled in his writing. Indeed, a somewhat crude psychologizing could read his obsessive productivity as a mechanism to stave off the itinerant poverty that characterized his youth as a dreaded “work-beast,”³ toiling away in various factories when other kids were at school.

Finishing stories as quickly as possible, he reaped the greatest possible returns from an ever-larger number of magazines eager to publish his bold tales of exotic adventure. In fact, he stuck to this dictum to “never revise, never rewrite” so assiduously that, at the time of his death, only two works remained incomplete. One, the novel *Cherry*, had been his focus the day before he died, and there is no reason to suspect that he would not have finished it if his kidneys had held out.⁴ This leaves *The Assassination Bureau, Ltd.*, then, as the only text London ever willingly abandoned, and his compulsion toward completion renders this story all the more extraordinary for the problems it caused him. While the novel remains mostly ignored in a critical oeuvre that, admittedly, has much ground to choose from, I will argue that an analysis of *The Assassination Bureau* allows us to move beyond one of the paralyzing poles of London scholarship, a body of criticism that often remains trapped within a forced distinction between his racism and radicalism. More importantly, a reading of the novel will also gesture toward an alternative cultural history of socialism during its watershed years in the US, providing necessary emphasis on the racialization of its reception and the social stakes its adherents risked in the wake of adoption.

³ This term, his own, was first used in the novel *John Barleycorn*.

⁴ London’s death has been the cause of much angry consternation in scholarly circles. Whether it was from alcohol, morphine, a chronic renal condition, a combination of all three, or something else entirely is not at all important for my argument, so I will not presume to rely on any particular cause.

London and his Critics

The Assassination Bureau had begun its peripatetic patrimony well before London had written its first line. It was one of several story plots the author purchased for \$70 in March of 1910 from his friend, admirer, and fellow socialist Sinclair Lewis⁵—with the younger, destitute, and somewhat star-struck Lewis very enthusiastic about providing story ideas to one of America’s most popular living writers.⁶ London struggled sometimes to generate original plots, yet once he had the idea then “of course, it was easy to just write them down. Expression, you see—with me—is far easier than invention.”⁷

Unfortunately, however, this boast would run firmly, completely—and for the first time terminally—aground with *The Assassination Bureau*. Writing to Lewis on October 4th of 1910 after buying several more plots, London felt the need to disburden his troubles: “I have 20,000 words done on the Assassination Bureau, and for the first time in my life am stuck and disgusted. I haven’t done my best by it, and cannot make up my mind whether or not to go ahead with it.”⁸ The story was then abandoned,⁹ and, in the words of literary scholar Jeffery A. Clymer, “[d]espite, or perhaps because of, this position in the corpus of a writer who notoriously tried to sell everything he could and who measured his output in the terms of sheer quantity... *The Assassination Bureau* has been almost completely ignored by London’s critics and biographers.”¹⁰ Indeed, beside Clymer’s own attentions, Donald E. Pease’s introduction to the Penguin edition, and a

⁵ The story itself would demand the efforts of no less than four separate people for its completion. It was finished over a half-century later in 1963 by mystery writer Robert L. Fish from notes left behind by London as well as an outline drafted by his wife Charmian.

⁶ See Frank Walker: “Jack London’s Use of Sinclair Lewis Plots, Together with a Printing of Three of the Plots.” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 17.1 (1953), pp. 59-74.

⁷ *Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 195

⁸ *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 933.

⁹ *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 938.

¹⁰ *America’s Culture of Terrorism*, Jeffery A. Clymor, p. 158.

few remarks in an article by Elvira Osipova, a Russian Americanist based in St. Petersburg, there is no other sustained treatment of the work. And while Pease, Clymer, and Osipova all make compelling arguments around the questions of violence, terrorism, and law at the heart of the book, the reasons behind its abandonment are at best untheorized, if not ignored altogether. Yet London's dereliction here betrays a conflict at the center of his thinking that this novel and its neglect ask us to acknowledge—and that the corpus of London scholarship in its current polarized state might find it difficult to recognize.¹¹ Critics have long argued over two main strands in London's writing: 1. The existence, quality, and extent of his racism; and 2. The existence, quality, and extent of his socialism. The former has been used to castigate his work, dismiss his thinking altogether, and even portray him as unworthy of discussion altogether. The latter has been similarly deployed to render him in turn as a dangerous radical, hypocritical bourgeois writer, or, at best, a sloppy reader of philosophy—one who publicly genuflected before socialist principles while also maintaining a precocious strain of individualism that was both rugged and, in his estimation, also rather “American” as well. All of this is then further troubled and constricted by a near-impossibility to read his work on its own terms rather than through the lens of London's larger-than-life and mostly self-fashioned biography as a radical hyper-masculine swashbuckler of vast seas, open warfare, and exotic locales.¹² In the face of such formidable critical challenges, it is no surprise that the contemporary trend in London scholarship has been to move beyond the biographical altogether. However, I would contrarily insist upon a reinvigoration of

¹¹ London's relationship to the canon as a whole has been fraught with both unnecessary celebration and unwarranted disavowal. While the popularity of *White Fang* and *The Call of the Wild* has clouded much of his popular reception, it is only in the past thirty years or so that London has been regarded as a serious author, and not merely a man who “wrote books about dogs.”

¹² Auerbach, *Male Call*, p 4-5

this approach—with the vital understanding that London’s racism and socialism have been so impossible to move beyond because these topics have hitherto been viewed as incommensurable in his writing rather than mutually constitutive. When we decipher London’s abjuration of *The Assassination Bureau* as his own absolute limit for the combination of these two threads, we not only constitute a method for analyzing the author that can place us beyond this important yet paralyzing divide, but, through a reading of the novel that treats his racism and socialism as dialectical rather than distinct, we can gesture toward an alternative yet no less troubled history of American socialism itself—one that places racialization at the heart of its reception, dismisses certain strains of radicalism as the consequence of anemic ethnicities, and circumscribes the adherents to these doctrines as qualitatively “un-American” through the conflation of immigrant “races” with radical ideas. In this context can we can better understand *The Assassination Bureau* to be an attempt to conceive of a particularly *American* form of socialism—which London will ultimately find literally unimaginable for reasons that have as much to do with race as politics. While critics of socialism at the time often decried its tenets as the ungainly beliefs of foreign types, London’s novel helps us understand that the fate of socialism in the US was hampered from the outset through an ideational twinning of un-American characters with un-American ideas—underwriting both its disavowal as well as the ethnic reprisals it spawned.

***The Assassination Bureau* and “Americanized Bolshevism”¹³**

Written in 1910 and set in what would have been the very near future of 1911, *The Assassination Bureau* concerns the machinations of Ivan Dragomiloff, a refugee

¹³ The phrase is from C.L.R. James’ *American Civilization*.

from Czarist Russia who is forced to flee after playing a “minor role” in the spate of assassinations that convulsed the autocratic empire in the first few years of the twentieth century, culminating with the failed revolution of 1905 and the ruthless retaliations that followed. Landing in New York, where “Russian spies are more prevalent than you imagine” (45), Ivan discovers a quiet war already being waged there between anarchists and reactionary forces. Founding the titular bureau with the same ethos that characterized his revolutionary activities back home, Ivan and his cohort carry out assassinations in America that, while certainly illegal, are vigorously defended as ethically necessary in the service of the “greater good”—just as the Russian revolutionary violence was rationalized as a valid response to state-sanctioned “terrorism.” However, perhaps to defend against some of the more obvious criticisms of this justification, London goes to great lengths to demonstrate that Ivan’s assassinations are not the capricious expression of some omnipotent and mercurial leader. As Dragomiloff explains to a potential client in the very first scene, the bureau never kills indiscriminately: His “executioners” “demand a moral sanction for all our transactions” to ensure that the killing is “socially justifiable” (7). This crucial metric is met through exhaustive philosophical debates to determine culpability, and the extra-judicial killings are intended only to end the lives of those individuals whom the law is either incapable of reaching or wrongfully protects: Labor leaders guilty of graft, corrupt police officials in the pocket of politicians, captains of industry blameworthy of any number of crimes. No one, however, is unassailable from the studied force of the bureau once guilt has been assessed. After that, it is a mere matter of planning and price. “A king, say of England,” muses Ivan, “would cost half a million” (5).

Both Russian radicals and the ethics of revolutionary violence were at the center of London's thinking about international solidarity within the socialist movement as well as the tactics and strategies necessary for gaining legitimate political power for the party inside the US. Having joined the Socialist Labor Party in 1896—and soon famous as a twenty-year-old orator who gave nightly anti-capitalist speeches in Oakland's City Hall Park¹⁴—London was an active member of organized party politics. In 1901 and 1905 he ran on the Socialist ticket as mayor of Oakland (losing both times by a wide margin), and spent the better part of a decade touring the country to deliver rousing and often incendiary speeches to audiences as varied as Yale University and Hawaiian Union Halls. In 1905, London himself unequivocally endorsed revolutionary violence—and received much subsequent abuse for it in the press—in his lucidly titled essay, “Revolution.” “In Russia,” he argues, “there is no suffrage. The government executes the revolutionists. The revolutionists kill the officers of the government. The revolutionists meet legal murder with assassination” (*Revolution* 10). By deploying the phrase “legal murder,” London calls attention to the state's monopoly on violence and then somewhat casually promotes assassination as the logical response to state powers unfairly sanctioned to kill. Whether we find this logical progression amenable or not, his comments echo very closely the sentiment of one of the accused Russian assassins, Balmashov, who declared at his trial that:

My only accomplice in this act... was the Russian government. I was always against terrorism and violence. I was in favor of law and the constitution; it was the Russian minister who converted me to the belief

¹⁴ London would become so synonymous with Oakland that an entire district would be named after him. Ironically, or perhaps prophetically, it became a beachhead for gentrification.

that there is no law and order in Russia, but instead only unpunished lawlessness and violence that can be resisted only by force. (Walling 378)

While London had advocated at times for the power of the ballot box as the best means to effect change in the US, the events in Russia provoked “serious reservations about the oligarchy’s surrendering power to the proletariat even if they won electoral victory” and forced London to admit “that in some cases violence was necessary” (Johnston 119-120).

Seeing Russia as the vanguard of the struggle, socialists of all stripes in the US continued to devour the latest news of clashes there, and London was well placed among them to receive accurate and early reports. Indeed, his most passionate affair before his marriage to “mate woman” Charmian in 1905 was with Anna Strunsky, an active supporter of the Russian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries. She spent much time in Russia with her husband, William Walling, a well-known socialist journalist, as he reported the events from St. Petersburg and Moscow for a number of American papers. But the words flowed in both directions: London’s own writing was extremely popular in the czardom—or, as Abraham Yarmolinsky opined in a 1916 issue of *The Bookman* as to what was being read of the banks of the Neva: “It is Jack London, christened ‘the American Gorky.’” His books are being published by at least three publishing houses at once, and all of Russia reads Jack London.... a worthy representative of the country, where man is spiritually a chimpanzee and materially a demiurge.”¹⁵ London had also helped organize Gorky’s own 1906 visit to the US,¹⁶ and often entertained other European radicals who made the trek to California. This movement of both radical people

¹⁵ “The Russian View Of American Literature,” *The Bookman: A Magazine of Literature and Life*, Sept. 1916, pp. 48.

¹⁶ This visit led to Gorky writing *American Sketches*, where he criticized the gross inequalities in American society. In one article he wrote that if anyone “wanted to become a socialist in a hurry, he should come to the United States.”

and ideas between Russia and the US is a history often occluded by a vast swath of Cold War historiography generated in the 1950s, much of which attempts to draw a rather firm line between the two nations and then defend this boundary through the seemingly intractable differences of “national character.”¹⁷ But audiences in 1910 would have been much less surprised or scandalized to read a novel set around a Russian revolutionary who opens shop in New York.¹⁸ In fact, rather than particularly paranoid, Dragomiloff seems very much at home in the New World, opportunistically adopting many of the trappings of American business methods, which he points out early in the novel by drawing a terse boundary between his own Bureau and the actions of other American radicals. With the very public assassinations in Russia fresh on his mind, Dragomiloff excoriates a young anarchist—a potential client—for preferring “sensational and spectacular” forms of killing over expedience and efficiency. It would seem that assimilation for Dragomiloff has enabled a peculiar business merger as well: The ethos and targets that inspired the revolutionary Russians with the quiet and ruthless efficacy of American corporate practice. Ivan himself embodies this symbiosis, adopting by day the persona of Sergius Constantine, successful head of his “eponymous” import-export business, and providing necessary cover for the wealth that stemmed from his actual means of employment.

These questions surrounding assimilation in general and “passing” as a capitalist in particular are foregrounded in the very first scene, where the unnamed American

¹⁷ In fact, “national character studies” as a discipline arose from a set of anthropological studies conducted during and directly after WWII. Indeed, some historians of the human sciences trace the demise of this approach to a particular work focused precisely on Russians. In Geoffrey Gorer’s 1949 *The People of Great Russia: A Psychological Study*, he argues that the Russian practice of swaddling infants so tightly produced a nation of cold and detached personalities. See *Perspectives on Culture: A Critical Introduction to Theory in Cultural Anthropology*.

¹⁸ Contemporaneous fiction from Abraham Caham and Upton Sinclair, just to name a few, often overlaid tales of urban immigrants with overt socialist activities and themes.

anarchist waits for Ivan in the latter's office. The novel candidly guides us through an itemized rendering of Dragomiloff's bookshelf, with works, in the original Russian, of course, by Tolstoy, Gorky, Turgenev, Andreyev, Goncharov, and Dostoyevsky—the authors here representing a wide range of political sentiment in Russia. Ivan's study, however, also contains far more leading titles, such as “Lafargue's *Evolution of Property*, *The Student's Marx*, *Fabian Essays*, Brooks' *Economic Supremacy*, Dawson's *Bismarck and State Socialism*, Engels' *Origin of the Family*, Conant's *The United States in the Orient*, and John Mitchell's *Organized Labor*” (2). Ivan, as this collection implies, is no idle philosopher. The admixture of economic, political, and philosophical theories produces pronounced material effects in the world of the story, and this point is highlighted when the hapless visitor to Ivan's study removes a single volume for inspection. Made curious by its bright red spine, he pulls out “*Four Weeks: A Loud Book*. As he opened it, a slight but sharp explosion occurred within its pages, accompanied by a flash of light and a puff of smoke” (2). The guest has unwittingly stumbled across the prototype of a bomb, underscoring the fact that this little red book may soon be called upon to do the literal damage many of Ivan's other works merely conspire to theorize, and highlighting the discrepancy between appearance and fact that characterizes Ivan's location, employment, and history.

As a rather obvious contrast to Ivan's successful subterfuge, the young anarchist graciously fulfills readers' expectations of what a European revolutionist should look like: “large liquid-black eyes, an olive complexion... with a mop of curly black hair that invited fondling.... He was lean-waisted, muscular, and broad-shouldered, and about him was a certain bold, masculine swagger....” (1). London, the great bard of hyperbolic

masculinity, provides us with a radical immigrant in all his stereotypical and seductive grandeur: Dark of both skin and mien, imbued with a sensuality often accompanying the foreign, and carefully fingering all the racist notes that constantly characterized the politically active foreigner in the popular press. Dragomiloff by comparison:

was a striking contrast to his visitor. So blond was he that it might well be described as washed-out blond. His eyes, veiled by the finest and most silken of lashes that were almost like an albino's, were the palest of pale blue. His head, partly bald, was thinly covered by a similar growth of fine and silky hair, almost snow-white so fairly white it was, yet untinged by time. (3)

The disparity between colors in the belabored description is instantly clear. While Ivan may be the leader of a radical assassination bureau, he is particularly—almost transcendently—*white*, and rendered even more so in juxtaposition with his visitor. What's more, his "English was painfully correct, the total and colorless absence of any accent almost constituting an accent in itself" (3). While his speech itself may be "colorless" to match his lashes, Ivan's whiteness renders him meticulously unremarkable, though the labor of the description leaves the impression that this countenance takes great pressure to perform. The invocation of albinism also draws attention to the fact that even whiteness itself is a spectrum, and too much of it might relocate the veil of privilege into the realm of pathology—though the qualified "almost" assures us that Ivan's phenotype has not yet progressed, so to speak, beyond the pale. Nonetheless, these qualities of colorlessness are a fitting match for the structure of his Bureau. Taking the passionate young anarchist to task for his love of "such a stupid, gross way of killing," Ivan touts the

Bureau's "customary smoothness," committing radical violence with all the emotion of tellers behind a bank window. Rather than duplicate the tactics he had learned as a young radical in Russia, Dragomiloff clearly prefers to adapt the business protocols of his adopted land in the service of slowly undoing the very system that has allowed him to flourish, with his pervasive whiteness providing necessary cover.

London's businessman-radical evinces a particularly haunting American specter during the Progressive Era: A political infiltrator hiding in plain sight. Yet Dragomiloff, no matter how convincingly contrived his trappings, has not relinquished all the accoutrements of his pedigree. Once he steps out from "the great Russian importing house of S. Constantine and Co." on Fifth Avenue he takes a taxi to his home in the "teeming" and "most noisome East Side slums" (9), where he is greeted by his niece, Grunya, whose English "was as without accent as his own" (10). A former radical herself, Grunya is playfully chided by her uncle for having once protested that she was "going to become a full-fledged Red, breathing death and destruction to all upholders of the social order" and now, with her settlement work, is content to be "patching up the poor wrecks of the system you despised" (13-14). Grunya admits that her days on the furthest Left may in fact be behind her: "I'm not so revolutionary, Uncle, dear. I'm growing up. Social development is slow and painful.... Oh, I'm still a philosophic anarchist. Every intelligent socialist is. But it seems more clear to me every day that the ideal freedom of a state of anarchy can only be obtained by going through the intervening stage of socialism" (14). Having sloughed off the youthful excitement that usually attends the possibility of rapid political change, Grunya has adopted a much more moderate and rather American adherence to a scientific socialism—measured, gradual

and assessable. Yet, while the young woman, who has no idea her uncle is anyone but the importer, certainly takes the playful critique in good faith, she quickly levies her own cutting evaluation at the living symbol of assimilation standing before her: “You have read and studied, and yet you have done nothing for social betterment. You have never raised your hand” (13). While we as readers understand the dramatic irony of this scene, Grunya has her own theories about what restrains her beloved uncle: “It’s the Russian character,” she complains. “Study, microscopic inspection and introspection, everything but deeds and action.” For Grunya, the Russians are far too cerebral to move beyond theory to praxis. She offers herself as a fitting contrast:

“But I—.... I am of the new generation, the first American generation—.”

“You were Russian born,” he interpolated dryly.

“But American bred. I was only a babe. I have known no other land than this land of action. And yet, Uncle Sergius, you could have been such a power, if you’d only let business alone.” (14)

We are delivered here into the conundrum of the existential status of “American bred.” While on the one hand, having been socialized in the United States—a “land of action”—has rendered Grunya a “person of action” as well, it would seem that the only actions pragmatically acceptable to her are the ameliorative terms of Progressive settlement work instead of the more hot-headed means beloved by the radicals in her homeland. While she may still be a “philosophic anarchist,” her philosophy does not extend itself to its concordant actions. Europe, in the combined estimation of both Grunya and Ivan, is a dyad of failure between inert scholars and spectacularly inefficacious anarchists. Meanwhile, America offers a “third way” of amelioration, an incremental approach to

piecemeal justice. Her uncle, however, stages a different problematic through the existence of his Bureau—or, perhaps, a different configuration of the same compromise: While on the one hand he has clearly retained his belief in swift and violent action in the service of social betterment, he has also clearly adopted the rigorous strictures of corporate and bureaucratic management. In essence, he has transmuted both his theory and his praxis through the prism of American business, and has found the result both effectual and remunerative. In contradiction to Grunya's teasing, Dragomiloff is in fact a "power" only because he did *not* choose to leave business—particularly *American* business—alone. While Grunya represents a far more common and often compromised path available for would-be American radicals of the period, Dragomiloff proposes a more frightening potential: The expansion of radical possibilities through the adoption of American corporate practice. We are also apprised here with the beginnings of London's own theory of ethnic essentialism that both enumerates and critiques prevailing conceptions of its day. While it was a common convention of scholarly anthropometrics in the early twentieth century that a person's "biology"—which in this case we might translate as encompassing both race and ethnicity—was in fact destiny, it was also a firmly held belief that the restorative effects of life on America soil could in fact erase most if not all traces of previous "blood" in the service of producing bonafide "Americans." While Ivan may remind his niece that Russian blood still flows inside her, she counters categorically that breeding is more explicative than birth, a disagreement that underscores one of the many contradictions at the heart of the US cultural acceptance of immigrants: New arrivals could be either foreign radicals determined to spread their seditious views, or would-be American laborers ready to be newly forged in the cauldron

of assimilation. The trick, of course, was to know the difference. Indeed, Dragomiloff's character is especially threatening in this regard. Rather than possessing the olive skin and dark curls of a stereotypical anarchist, our translucent-white contract killer bears all the hallmarks of a successful white businessman. To the untrained eye, it appears Ivan has sloughed off his backwards heritage completely, yet the disguise is only in order to preserve his penchant for political violence in the interest of participating in what for him is a literally murderous American economic sphere.

The Progressive Era and The Reinvention of Race

While Jack London's racism is unquestionably repugnant, it also serves as an apposite heuristic for understanding the theories and processes of racialization during the Progressive Era that helped produce his views. Previously, the concept of race as such in the US had historically and somewhat logically been framed most often in the firmly binaristic terms of black and white. After the Civil War, however, the growing social acknowledgement of mixed-race individuals often demanded an understanding of the race-concept so gracelessly finessed as to appear laughable to a contemporary eye, revealing in its excesses and elisions the purely social construction of what was veiled and policed as a scientific category. These empirically disquieting individuals, literally living life "on the color line" itself, were abetted in the definitional problems they caused by the increasingly conspicuous arrival of European immigrants, whose status as whites—though seemingly self-evident to themselves—was often denied out of hand by a ruling class possessing any number of popular theories through which to buttress racism with science.

Toward that end, Darwin's 1859 publication of *On the Origin of the Species* seemed to solve the debate between monogenesis and polygenesis for good in favor of the former. Yet the idea of a linear progression among and even within species provided a strong foundation for a racist methodology to place disparate peoples upon a rigid hierarchy of civilization, often amending itself with a disturbing plasticity through which to incorporate new arrivals.¹⁹ In the words of Matthew Frye Jacobson, "'savage' and 'barbaric' societies can be used to reconstruct the historical sweep of human time" as "the evolutionist argument rested squarely on the unproven assumption that ethnological phenomena develop everywhere in the same manner—that the path toward 'civilization' is inexorable and unilinear, that there is one way and one way only for a people, a trait, a custom to develop" (Jacobson 145, 149).²⁰ Of course, as the sheer numbers of disparate peoples massed upon US shores, scientific concerns took a more urgent and practical turn: Gregor Mendel's work on the hybridization of sweet peas was rediscovered in the service of warning against in-breeding by "proving" that, in the case of a "mixed" child, it was the qualities of the "lower" race that prevailed. Or, as Madison Grant unequivocally warned in his influential *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916): "The cross between a white man and an Indian is an Indian; the cross between a white man and a negro is a negro; the cross between a white man and a Hindu is a Hindu; and the cross between any of the three European races and a Jew is a Jew."

¹⁹ For instance, Germans were originally conceived as hard-working kin of the Anglo-Saxons until the exigencies of World War I demanded a reappraisal that cast Germans as relatives of earlier Teutonic barbarians.

²⁰ This does not mean, of course, that there were not dissenting voices: As early as 1911, the well-respected anthropologist Franz Boas critiqued this posture by stating baldly that "a race is commonly described as lower, the more fundamentally it differs from our own."

This conception of a blood inheritance—“germ plasm”²¹ in the parlance of the times—was immediately used to reinforce an alarm targeting the influx at New York Harbor. In 1912, Henry Herbert Goddard, the prevailing expert on “feeble-mindedness,” was invited to Ellis Island by the United States Public Health Service in order to assess the latest arrivals. His report for the future of the nation was grim, concluding “that 83 percent of Jews disembarking at Ellis Island were feeble-minded; 80 percent of Hungarians; 79 percent of Italians; and 87 percent of Russians (Jacobson 166).²² Herbert Spencer, whose ideas are often mistaken for those of Darwin himself, was the man most responsible for applying Darwin’s theories directly to sociological inquiry.²³ And his concordant sociology came in part from a liberal interpretation of French anthropologist Jean Lamarck’s idea of “acquired physical characteristics” through the mechanism of “use inheritance.” If “evolution” as a general structure of biological progress was widely adopted by both scientists and the popular press within mere decades of its publication, it is important to note that the particular understanding of the concept favored by both natural and social scientists at the time—as well as by the legion of popular interpretations of the theory—were not necessarily of Darwin’s own design. Indeed, whereas Darwin argued that “species change as mutation or natural variation results in ‘sports’ whose differences are favorable to survival,” many scientists and social philosophers were made uneasy by the apparently aleatory motivations of the process.

²¹ From August Weismann’s 1885 “The Germ-Plasm: A Theory of Heredity.” Jack London would use this term in his own piece of evolutionary fiction, *Before Adam*, a novel set in a prehistoric community that charted the conflicts between the tree people (least advanced), fire people (most advanced) and the cave people (middlingly advanced)

²² Not all of these men, women and children, in Goddard’s estimation, deserved to be sent back: Goddard charitably inserted the term “moron” into a classification system that originally only deployed “idiots” and imbeciles. “Morons,” by contrast, as “high-grade defectives,” could presumably master very basic tasks.

²³ Indeed, the phrase “survival of the fittest” was his creation, and was only adopted by Darwin in the fifth edition of *Origin*.

Rather than rely on capricious chance for something as crucial as the future progress of the species, “the vast majority of scientific thinkers in the late nineteenth century believed evolution was a Lamarckian process... whereby traits acquired during the individual life span could be passed on” (Boeckmann 20).

The idea that an individual could strive in life to rise above its racial predispositions; better itself through hard work and education; and then pass on these improvements in character to its progeny sat understandably well with a nation of scientists and policy advocates often called upon by the federal government for advice on how to “Americanize” the incoming hordes. In the Lamarckian evolutionary mechanism, “the individual willfully drives the forward motion of evolution”—providing a broad justification for intrusive state and federal policies while also allowing blame to accrue to classes and races deemed “hopeless cases.” Through the work of Herbert Spencer and his ilk, as John S. Haller explains, “both the physiological or purely biological structure of man and the aspects of his social life became part of the same cosmic development.... Explanations of biological and social evolution became synonymous in meaning” (98). The behaviors and dispositions acculturated in an individual could be internalized in their “germ-plasm” and passed on to future generations. Intellectual and moral capital was now an inheritance as much as it was a possession—and the sins or salvations of the fathers could be literally suffered upon the sons.

While there was much reshuffling within the hierarchy of races, “white” Anglo-Saxons, of course, were always placed on top. Yet the challenge posed by mixed-race men and women for visual recognitions of difference was unendurably increased by

European immigrants. As the constant influx of peoples from farther-flung locales destabilized the binary between black and white beyond any possibility of what was known as the “common sense” assessment, new techniques of anthropometry were needed in order to classify and rank them. One of the prime maneuvers away from visual perception, infused with the rationales of Spencer and Lamarck, was the concept of character. As character became a stand-in for the seemingly more obvious “race,” the science of physiognomy was developed as a way to scientifically graph correspondences between inner character and outer characteristics, or, in the words of Cathy Boeckmann, “Physiognomy promised to make the invisible aspects of character visible and allow persons trained in physiognomic principles to make predictions about behavior that would allow them some edge” (Boeckmann 45). What had once been a profoundly internal quality that could be clearly indicated by external cues was now flipped on its head: Seemingly “white” and “civilized” individuals bore within them the unmistakable and inherently atavistic germ-plasms that told a deeper and more important truth no matter how presentable a person might appear. It is through this line of thinking that terms such as “nation” and “race” become indistinguishably entangled “since any population that was assumed to have inherited the same characteristic behavior was eligible to be called a race in a biological sense. In Spencer’s day, race was less a matter of shared physical characteristics than one of shared mental peculiarities” (Boeckmann 37). The discovery of these peculiarities was by no means socially inert, and the science of “characterology” became, in the words of Daniel Garrison Brinton—a celebrated American ethnologist and archaeologist of the period—“a branch of anthropology... which offers a positive basis for legislation, politics and education, as applied to a given

ethnic group” (Brinton 249). By explicitly imbricating science and politics, it was not a particularly distant logical maneuver to then declare, as Brinton did, that some groups of people are “of a nature to disqualify them for the atmosphere of the modern enlightenment” (249) by possessing “an inborn tendency, constitutionally recreant to the codes of civilization, and therefore technically criminal.” Suddenly—or, rather, scientifically—the “Rights of Man” were to apply only to those groups deemed by the science of characterology to be capable of performing particular forms of self-governance. Indeed, as behaviors and tendencies could now be inherited and passed down, the very exercise of self-determination itself could become a self-improvement mechanism—and its lack could also be viewed as a dangerous ferment in the blood.

With phenotype increasingly supplanted by the more mercurial and interpretive mechanism of “character,” one of the most prolific forums for experimentation with these newly defined “characters” was literature, a fitting home for the art of representation. Literary characters, despite the pleas of the realists and naturalists for the verisimilitude of fiction, were rarely distinct individuals. As Sander Gilman argues, “the representation of individuals implies the creation of some greater class or classes to which the individual is seen to belong. These classes are in turn characterized by the use of a model which synthesizes our perception of the uniformity of the groups into a convincing homogenous image” (204). Or, as Boeckmann clarifies, “The representation of the individual is iconic because it implicitly seeks to establish the individual as representative of a type” due to the fact that “all artistic representation relies on the icon, or ideologically charged *representation*, rather than mimetic *presentation*” (50). It is in this way that “literary

characters became one of the most promising vehicles for the representation of character, and characterization became a direct link between theories of character and the characters of fiction” (59).

It is also through this theoretical ferment that Jack London both wrote and faltered in his attempt to probe the literary limits of Americanized Bolshevism and radicalized Americans. If London’s socialism might today be simplistically dismissed as incompatible with his racism, his comrades were often no more accommodating to foreign ethnicities. Even a radical luminary as apotheosized as Eugene Debs wrote in 1891 that the “Dago works for small pay and lives far more like a savage or wild beast, than the Chinese,” adding that because the Italian “fattens on garbage,” he is “able to underbid the American workingman.” In 1911, Victor Berger, himself the socialist mayor of Milwaukee, dismissed “Slovenians, Italians, Greeks, Russians, and Armenians” as “modern white coolies” (Jacobson 86). Even scientific racism was not the province of reactionary forces alone. In fact, many of the Marxists and other socialists of the period clung with at least equal vigor to the tenets of evolution. Indeed, as historian David Pittenger explains, evolutionary science seemed to sanction almost perfectly what many American radicals viewed as Marx’s developmental science of society and the utopian future to come. A position reserved for Marxists at the pinnacle of the racial hierarchy could be easily reconfigured to justify the need for a revolutionary avant-garde skillfully leading the masses to a more “evolved” moment in the history of humanity. As Pittenger argued, “the socialist literary imagination, like the movement itself, often showed greater faith in science than in the working masses” (207). Jack London had given this concept of revolutionary managerial figures much literary life before *The Assassination Bureau*. In

1908 he wrote “Goliah,” a short story about a mysterious scientist who arranges the murders of a number of American business leaders and politicians until the elite is frightened enough to agree to his demands. Set in the future of 1924, the title character is not at all interested in money. Rather, he insists that society be reconfigured to conform to his “scientific principles” of social justice—banning child labor, nationalizing property, and introducing the eight-hour workday. This “superman scientist” is able to benignly reset the parameters of social reproduction through coercive force that London never once remarks upon with disapproval. Indeed, the violence is justified explicitly *through* the cold objective rationales of science: “Remember,” Goliah tells world leaders, “I am a scientist and one life or one million lives are nothing in comparison with billions of lives of future generations” (Goliah 80). Yet the utopia created is only possible after Goliah segregates all “extreme hereditary inefficients” as well as those who remain atavistically “long of teeth and savage of claw.” This necessary exile of “inefficients” underscores a socialist imaginary that treated those outside the “reach” of evolution with much the same tenderness offered by the nativist societies railing against “bestial” foreigners. The story also, in Pittenger’s estimation, “set a kind of pattern: Science produces socialism and gradually enables the workers to move beyond their bestiality, but no genuine synthesis of selection with socialism—no ‘new law of development’—is achieved and the problem of ethics is bypassed” (208).

This “bypassed ethics” of murder and exclusion would be invoked again in London’s most famous novel of radicals and revolution in America, *The Iron Heel* (1907). Set in the 23rd century, in the era of “the brotherhood of man,” the story is also told from the perspective of “a look backwards from the future,” and chronicles the life of

one of London's most exaggeratedly masculine and American heroes, the aptly named Ernest Everhard. An uncompromising revolutionary, it is Ernest who sets the stage for a revolution in London's present of 1907, which leads to three hundred years of underground warfare and finally results in the halcyon cooperative future of the story's present. Echoing the critiques above, the masses themselves are portrayed in a less than flattering light when it comes to their prospects for self-determination. In fact they become mere cannon fodder that allows the professional revolutionaries to complete their task:

The unorganized people of the abyss... were to be loosed on palaces and cities of the masters, never mind the destruction of life and property. Let the abysmal brute roar and the police mercenaries slay.... In the meantime we would be doing our own work, largely unhampered, and gaining control of all the machinery of society. (*Iron Heel* 249-50)

The staggering violence soon unleashed by this “abysmal brute”—transformed by London's depiction into a singular object due to the slavish single-mindedness of mob mentality—is often anthologized as a perfect example of naturalist fatalism, the bruising waves of crowds losing all individuation within the horde, and leaving nothing behind but blood and broken glass. It is here that the working classes are figured in much the same way that many Spencerites scorned the lower “races”—mere drudges to be manipulated in the service of a greater good that was always conveniently “to come.”

If the question of ethics is either ignored or taken for granted by London in both “Goliath” and *The Iron Heel*, it is certainly staged at the center of *The Assassination*

Bureau. Yet this is not the most obvious contrast. While the other two stories remain in the province of speculative fiction, *The Assassination Bureau* is the only one of London's sustained revolutionary fantasies to have been set in a recognizable *present*. More importantly, *The Assassination Bureau* is also the only text to contain a revolutionary main character bearing a distinctly foreign heritage. It is this alien peculiarity that allows the figure of Dragomiloff to inform, amend, and exceed London's entwined ideas about race and radicalism. Indeed, the novel's plot turns upon an extensive philosophical debate between the two main characters, Ivan Dragomiloff and his precociously American foil, Winter Hall. As if to prepare an experiment of comparison with his translucently white Russian foil, this "actual" white man enters the novel early, having figured out both the existence of the Bureau as well as Ivan's real identity.²⁴ Winter Hall, whose name is as telling in its cold and colorless economy and ease of pronunciation as Dragomiloff's is in hearkening back to Czarist Russia, stands as a sort of twin with Ivan, a dialectical partner in an attempt to interrogate the parameters of ethical action in the service of the greater good. Even his description bears upon that of the older Russian: A "well-built man of thirty-two, with the brow of a thinker and all the facial insignia of a doer," Hall is "blue-eyed and blond, in the bronzed American way of those that live much in the sun" (18). With the same genetic coloring as his soon-to-be foil, Dragomiloff could be Winter's uncle as easily as Grunya's. Yet Hall possesses a "bronzed" glow that London figures as peculiarly American, a rude health that distinguishes him from his pale Slavic partner. From his brow to his chin, Hall also possesses an admixture of theory and praxis literally built into his visage. Yet while the young American comes from old monied American

²⁴ Speaking of real identities, Winter Hall was apparently based in large part on William Walling, the man London made a cuckold of during his affair with Anna Strunsky.

stock—Grunya states quite plainly that he’s “rich”—and places his faith in settlement work, both men are in the “social-betterment business” in ways that almost comically highlight the variations of approach (15). In a willfully perverse aping of the romantic genre, which likewise attends the fears of racial mixing discussed above, Hall is also the young Progressive with whom Grunya has fallen in love—and it is his influence rather than her simply “growing up” to which Ivan attributes the abatement of his niece’s radicalism. Yet Hall is in no way a Progressive from mere fancy or fashion: He studied sociology and economics at school, joined a university settlement that was “a hotbed of radicalism,” then spent a year wandering the country as “the companion of tramps and yegg men,” spending two years laboring for poverty wages. He also “attended all the national and international conventions of organized labor, and spent a year in Russia during the impending crisis of the 1905 Revolution” (18). It was only after this extensive involvement that “he had developed into a socialist—a ‘millionaire socialist,’ as he was labeled by the press” (19). Though born into money and raised in a democratic society, it seems that Winter shares a number of experiences and predilections with Ivan, though Winter has chosen charity work while Ivan, due to the “inherently” restive Russian character, has dedicated himself to more extreme measures. Once again, the transnational solidarity that links American settlement work to international revolutionary struggle is foregrounded: When we first meet Hall, he’s talking to Grunya about “Gorky’s last book and the latest news of the Russian Revolution to Hull House and the shirtwaist-makers’ strike” (16). However, if Ivan already adheres to a violent and clandestine program of social betterment clothed in all the accoutrements of a particularly American bureaucratic corporatism, Winter Hall is rapidly losing faith in the ability of the more socially

acceptable practices—what he calls “ameliorative devices”—to foment any lasting change. Using Chicago’s Hull House and the campaign against New York’s “inside rooms” as negative examples, he complains that despite these efforts, “the slum wilderness has grown, vastly grown.... You can’t save a leaky boat with a bailer that throws out less water than rushes in” (16).

Hall’s discovery of the Bureau seems to offer him a much-needed distraction from his failing social activism, and he becomes devoted “to running down what I believe to be the most terrible organization for assassination that has ever flourished in the United States, or anywhere else” (20). Having pieced together the existence of the group through analyzing the preponderance of “suicides” and “accidents” of the wealthy and powerful chronicled in the papers, Hall is also certain that the work “was no mere Black Hand affair”—for, like Ivan, Hall finds the anarchists to be “so impractical. They dreamed dreams and spun theories and raged against police persecution, and that was all. They never got anywhere” (21). Dragomiloff reiterates this sentiment when Hall, acting as the proxy of a friend with reason to hire an assassin, arranges a meeting at Ivan’s office: “The anarchists mean well,” explains the mysterious Russian, “but I do well. Of what use is philosophy that cannot be applied?” (29). As with his critique of Grunya, Ivan once again demands that the conclusions of philosophy be made manifest through concordant behavior—or, more simply, the Russian demands an ethics. This inextricability of philosophy and action resounds through the crux of the tale. While Hall is astonished at the mere quantity of thought that has been invested into the Bureau, both ethically and structurally, he is still intent on disbanding the cabal for what he considers morally indefensible behavior. A philosopher himself, he decides to unhinge Ivan’s certainty at

his own disputational game. When asked whom it is that Hall wants murdered, the young man replies coolly: "Ivan Dragomiloff." Rather than dismiss or kill Winter outright, though, Ivan is tickled by the surprise, and explains that if Hall can indeed express "the ethical sanction for my own removal from this world," he would have no choice but to carry out the order. Gesturing "knowingly to his book covered walls," Ivan settles in for a long debate: "There are plenty of authorities, you see, and we can always send out to the branch Carnegie library around the corner for more" (35). As intimated with the exploding red book earlier, these texts and the resulting philosophies have once again become a matter of life and death.

Despite the preponderance of violence in the novel and the nonchalance with which it is carried out, the confrontation between the executioner and the Progressive bent on his destruction is strikingly fraternal. The two spend "long days and nights" locked in contention over whether "the time had come in the evolution of society when society, as a whole, must work out its own salvation" or if, by way of such organizations as the Bureau, society still needed "the part of the man on horseback, who thought for society, decided for society, and drove society" (36, 37). Ivan "did deny, and emphatically, that society as a whole was able to manage itself" and "this was the crux of the question, to settle which they ransacked history and traced the social evolution of man up from the minutest of known details of primitive groupings to the highest civilization" (37). Departing from this hierarchy of cultures, the two scholars were "so unmetaphysical... they accepted social expediency as the determining factor and agreed that it was in the highest way ethical" (37). Only by this measure does Winter Hall "win." "I see, now," admits Ivan, "that I failed to lay sufficient stress on the social factors. The

assassinations have not been so much intrinsically wrong as socially wrong.... As between individuals, they have not been wrong at all. But individuals are not individuals alone. They are part of complexes of individuals (37).” While Ivan’s clients had very good cause to want their enemies murdered, Ivan acknowledges that clandestine violence without sanction cannot, in fact, move society beyond its present condition. Indeed, by killing off its most egregious transgressors, the Russian may in fact be “patching up the poor wrecks of the system” for which he so churlishly criticized Grunya.

Basking in the glow of his hard-won victory, Hall is aghast at the fact that Ivan immediately initiates a contract on his own life. Hall tries to convince him otherwise: “Your Assassination Bureau was anti-social. You believed in it. Therefore you were sick. Your belief in assassination constituted your sickness. But now you no longer believe. You are cured. Your tendency is no longer anti-social” (39). In Hall’s rendering, Dragomiloff’s sense of ethics was not only socially wrong, but a physically problem—an illness. This recourse to the language of mental health is no accident: The contours of national characters were replete with assertions about both the talents and susceptibilities of various races. Indeed, this rhetoric of disease—of contagious philosophies—is used explicitly to describe Ivan’s own conversion to radicalism as he relates his personal history to Hall: “At university I became *inoculated* with radical ideas and joined the Young Russians” (44-45, emphasis mine). Dragomiloff offers us an ethnic ethics, an inquiry into the nature of ethnicity and its congruent sensitivities to certain political forms. While Ivan has certainly become “Americanized” in that he has adopted American business practices, such as corporatism and scientific management, for his own ends, he has also retrofitted these technologies for the same types of anti-state violence he had

practiced back home. While this could be read as a comment upon the violences that subtend American business practices more broadly, Ivan's arrangement of US commercialism with Russian revolutionary violence also exposes the limits of the recuperative effects that assimilation can have in transcending race. Ivan only solidifies this by being unwilling to rescind the new order made upon his own life, refusing to renounce the violence that Hall has just supposedly convinced him against. The rhetoric of illness once again returns in Hall's criticism of his opponent's intractability: "A monster! A stubborn, stiff-necked monster of absurd and lunatic righteousness. You are a scholar's mind degraded, you are ethics gone mad..." (47). Here Hall finally arrives at the central tenet of his argument: Ivan is not *unethical* at all; rather, his system of right conduct may in fact be founded on defensible reasons, though, by its mediation through the Russian mind, these conclusions have been taken to a lunatic extravagance. Ivan's formidable power of perseveration has been degraded by a "lunatic righteousness," an unwavering adherence to certain modes of conduct that the conclusions of his philosophy might demand, but that have no place in the American social sphere. As discussed above, this madness is merely a logical manifestation of a national character that will out. While Hall and Dragomiloff have read the same books, declared the culpability upon the same the ruling classes, and committed themselves to the same social justice, Hall has his passion comfortably couched in an always moderate biological whiteness while Ivan's Russian heritage cannot help but bring political beliefs to extremes.

Russia, Race, Contagion

Ivan, by dramatically declaring his flight a “hegira” before fleeing New York, is not merely demonstrating his vast and worldly knowledge. The “hijra”—as its Anglicized version is now more commonly known—is the account of the journey of Mohammed from Mecca to Medina. With the growing persecution of the prophet’s followers and the suppression of his ideas, Mohammed decided to flee likely assassination by relocating to a city more receptive to his beliefs. The invocation of an Islamic religious exile serves not only to highlight the fact that Ivan himself must now flee New York due in a sense to philosophical persecution, but also to increase the attendant exoticism of the Russian himself, highlighting his homeland’s confused racial typology in the world of international affairs. Considering the extent of Russia’s landmass and the stunning variety of peoples it enveloped throughout its history of imperial expansion, the czardom was rhetorically ostracized as an “Oriental despotism” as often as it was considered part of Europe.²⁵ The violence of the upheavals of 1905 only served to further underscore the unruly nature of the Russian character, and cast even greater doubts about the possibility of assimilating large groups of Eastern European workers into the New World—especially ones who carried with them “Oriental” views on government.

The Assassination Bureau invokes this national concern of importing “contagious” political behaviors from Russia by emphasizing the previously moderate lives of the Bureau’s other agents before Ivan recruited them. Concertedly less motley than one might expect for a clutch of contract killers, the agents, like Ivan, also enjoy the cover provided by respectably bourgeois trappings. Indeed, meeting them in a

²⁵ For extensive historical and theoretical treatments of Russia’s figuration by various nations in Western Europe and the US, see Larry Wolff’s *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*; Martin Malia’s *Russia Under Western Eyes: From The Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum*; and Marshall T. Poe’s *A People Born To Slavery: Russian in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476-1748*.

“comfortable suburban bungalow,” Winter can “not bring himself to realize” that these men who had all the “appearance of middle-aged, middle-class, scholarly gentlemen” “were cold-blooded murderers, assassins for hire” (60, 72). What’s more, nearly all the agents had been left-leaning academics before joining the Bureau—a somewhat different approach to the inefficacy of ameliorative social programs than the murderous route preferred by Ivan, and a distinction that further underscores the Russian’s ability to coerce others to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Staying true to their roots as philosophers (and also echoing the negotiation first uttered in “Goliath”), the agents discuss the murders themselves as an ancillary affair to the cold and rigorous business of determining the ethical sanction to commit them in the first place. Firmly wedded to Ivan’s conception of social agents as “the part of the man on horseback, who thought for society, decided for society, and drove society” (37), Winter Hall makes no progress appealing to the agents’ sense of right and wrong as defined by US legal statutes. Lucoville, the leader of the New Orleans branch, draws clear lines between their two philosophies:

I have nothing derogatory to say about [Winter Hall’s] work in the world. I have read his books with interest, and, I may add, profit. His contributions to sociology have been distinct and distinctive. On the other hand, though, he is a socialist. He is called the ‘Millionaire Socialist.’ What does that mean? It means he is out of touch with us and our principles of conduct. It means that he is a blind creature of the Law. Law is his fetish. He grovels in the mire of ignorance and worships Law. To him, we, who are above the Law, are arch-offenders against the Law. ...

He is bound to destroy us for the sake of his fetish. This is only in the nature of things. This is in the dictate of both his personal and his philosophical temperament. (69-70)

While Winter and Lucoville may both be scientific socialists, Hall is unable to prescribe effective ethical remedies because of his inability to look beyond legal strictures. To regard Law as a fetish, in Lucoville's judgment, is to claim devotion to a myth, a set of beliefs and behaviors that result in precisely the inequities and iniquities that the Bureau is attempting to resolve. It is this corrupt Law that must be circumvented in order to provide a new "law"—the lower case here implying a set of regulations stripped of the ideology that imbues Law with its ability to appear impartial while ensuring bias. But it is Lucoville's final distinction that is most important, and one that drives a distinction between Hall's "personal" and "philosophical" temperament. Lucoville here implies that Hall arrived at his convictions not merely through scholarship and contemplation, but by having an inherent tendency—a personal temperament—that would preclude Hall's ability to arrive at more radical conclusions. Fealty to the Law is not only his philosophical conviction but his birthright as well—his "character" in the sense described above. Despite the time Hall might have spent in the company of tramps, thieves, and other outcasts, he is still unable to shirk the strictures of the Law in his production of a more "ethical" society. Hall, as a wealthy man ethnically inscribed as white, is physically predisposed to his philosophical suppositions. Biology, in this case, is an ethical destiny as well, leaving Ivan's character as temperamentally close to violence as Hall is to restraint.

Ivan's agents also evince the stark rationality demanded by their respective social sciences, and detail the emotive vacuum this approach maintains. Scientific thinking, in fact, is signaled as a *cure* to the "modern" bias against murder rather than its rationale. One agent, Murgweather, was so troubled by his first kill that he responded in the only way that made sense to him: "I have written a monograph upon the subject, not for publication, of course, but it is a very interesting field of study" (77). Through his research in human history, Murgweather has been able to dismiss the moratorium against killing as a purely social concept, allowing him to proceed with his work buttressed by a rationale produced through the human sciences. But he is still unable to discern whether the bias against killing is an evolutionary acquisition or a purely social one:

The sacredness of human life is a social concept. The primitive natural man never had any qualms about killing his fellow man. Theoretically, I should have none. Yet I do have. The question is: how do they arise? Has the long evolution to civilization impressed this concept into the cerebral cells of the race? Or is it due to my training in childhood and adolescence, before I became an emancipated thinker? Or may it not be due to both causes? It is very curious. (74)

Doing away entirely with metaphysics where killing is concerned, Murgweather contrasts a violent primordial past with his own squeamish present. And whether the answer is in fact a substantiation of Lamarckian beliefs in biologically transforming the race through behavior or merely an aversion caused by youthful indoctrination, being an "emancipated thinker" can free one from all previous restraints. However, this emancipated thinking would have kept him safely within the confines of academia—where such radical thought

is both commonly espoused and carefully contained—until Ivan provided the requisite bridge to join Murgweather’s beliefs to his actions. While Murgweather, Hass, Lucoville and the others were able to convince themselves of the rightness of their beliefs through philosophical thinking and friendly disputation, Ivan alone contains both the vital racial characteristics and the necessary theoretical exposure to be able to “activate” these US citizens who might have otherwise rejected violent acts. Grunya’s earlier critique of her uncle (who has by now been revealed as her father) is then doubly incorrect: Not only is Ivan ethnically unable to separate his thoughts from action, but he also provides a conduit for others whose biology might predispose them to moderation.

Whether or not this scientific conception of the social is defensible, it is certainly contagious. Or, as Grunya asks Hall: “May you not be inoculated with uncle’s madness?” (88). Indeed, it is through our most precociously and overtly “American” character that we enjoy the full potential of the contagious threat staged by the politically active foreigner and his ability to engender ethical transformations in whites. As Hall becomes more and more embedded in the “madly tangled path” of the Bureau, the young man assesses the total “transvaluation” of his circumstances:

Starting out with the intention of running down the Assassination Bureau and destroying it, he had fallen in love with the daughter of its organizer, become Temporary Secretary of the Bureau, and was now being sought by the police for the murder of one of its members who had been killed by the Chief of the Bureau. “No more practical sociology for me,” he said to himself. “When I get out of this I shall confine myself to theory. Closet sociology from now on.” (78)

For Hall, merely entering into Dragomiloff's world is to adopt his protocols. While the other agents may have chosen this path willingly, Winter reflects upon the miraculous renovation of behaviors enveloping him. Intent on disbanding the Bureau, he now acts as its nerve center and oversees the most extensive and violent contract it has ever endorsed. Hall, now trapped within the machinations of the Bureau, makes his desire and its implications clear: No more applicable social science with practicable ends. From now on, he will "confine" himself to a theoretical practice that ensures the system he criticizes remains relatively intact—thus also ensuring his ability to continue with less frightening ameliorative work. Hall, when faced with the actuality of violence, prefers scholasticism. Yet, judging from his current position as the acting head of the Bureau, these wishes may have arisen far too late to reverse the tide of his exposure.

Hall and Grunya, who by now are engaged, enjoy one last opportunity to disabuse these "ethical madmen" of their convictions. Those agents not yet killed by Dragomiloff have been invited by him to a lovely suburban home in San Francisco, and the young couple arrive to find the men already engaged in a furious but good-natured debate between idealism and materialism. Appalled by how calm the agents seem even though half their number has already been murdered by the very Chief they await, the agents dismiss Winter and Grunya's concerns with an unwavering dedication to their philosophy:

Why, our lives are mere pawns in the game of social evolution. The rule of right! The worship of right! Does it not make one hope? Think of it! It proves that the future is ours; that the future belongs to the right-thinking,

right-acting man and woman; that such fierce, feeble stirrings and animal yearnings of the beastly clay, love of self and love of kindred flesh and blood, vanish away as mist before the sun of righteousness! Reason—and, mark me, *right* reason—triumphs. All the human world, some day, will comport itself, not according to the flesh and the abysmal mire, but according to high right reason! (93)

We are delivered here into what can best be described as a comedy of ideology, a hyperbolic depiction of scientific socialists—or, in Grunya’s words, an “ethics gone mad,” with the Chief at its center as organizer and radicalizer. After Ivan finally arrives and addresses his former colleagues, the tableau proves an apt reference back to the first scene in his office and its literally charged literature. Before any of his agents can attempt to kill him, Dragomiloff calmly explains that his hand is resting upon the spine of a book connected to a “magazine of dynamite” that has been wired around the house. Knowing they have arrived at a standstill, the entire band jovially agrees to a temporary truce in order to enjoy a “comradely and affectionate” meal together before returning to the business of murdering one other (102). In the midst of this lunatic scene, Ivan calmly answers Grunya’s accusation of ethical madness: “Is it not a beautiful insanity—if you prefer the misnomer? Here thought rules and right rules. It would seem to me the highest rationality and control” (100). Here, also, is the logic of a text driven to its illogical conclusion, the impossibility of a life based upon a philosophically determined system of socialist ethics—and, concordantly, the inevitable failure of social programs that demand such rigorous belief. The group is paralyzed, unable to continue, surrounded by explosives and able to justify the death of everyone in the room, save Hall and Grunya.

Or, as Ivan blithely points out, if anyone should move “we’ll all go up along with our theories” (101). Grunya, however, may have been born in Russia but she was reared in the comfortable continent of North America, and is not at all convinced by these “ethical monsters.” Attempting to pierce the veil of their philosophical charade she manages only to get tangled in its recursion: “You do violence with your logic,” she cries. “I will prove it to you—”. “By logic?” counters one of the agents, and even Grunya herself cannot help but join in the group laugh over what an impenetrable philosophical edifice has been constructed.

Grunya, however, is not the only one stymied by how to proceed. A frustrated Jack London abandoned this tale just a few lines later. While the murderous dinner continues agreeably, one of the agents admits that his watch is also an explosive device, and, for the sake of the Bureau’s last “commission,” cordially asks everyone but himself and the Chief to leave the room. Grunya cries for Hall to “do something,” and London’s final clause places the entire weight of this entreaty on the young American, as “he rested one hand on the table” (109). Breaking off here in *media res*, London then wrote an exasperated letter to Sinclair Lewis that “for the first time in my life am stuck and disgusted. I haven’t done my best by it, and cannot make up my mind whether or not to go ahead with it.” To return to our earlier problem, then, why did Jack London—who gleefully measured the quality of his writing in terms of crude output—abandon 20,000 words rather than merely tacking on an ending and sending the work off to eager publishers? Why also, in the mind of many critics, does London’s body of work supposedly diminish after 1910, just after this text was abandoned? The author’s letter of

resignation from the Socialist Labor Party in early 1916 may gesture toward an answer, and bears repeating at length:

I was originally a member of the old, revolutionary, up-on-its-hind-legs, fighting, Socialist Labor Party. Since then, and to the present time, I have been a fighting member of the Socialist Party. My fighting record in the Cause is not, even at this late date, already entirely forgotten. Trained in the class struggle, as taught and practiced by the Socialist Labor Party, my own highest judgment concurring, I believe that the working class, by fighting, by never fusing, by never making terms with the enemy, could emancipate itself. Since the whole trend of socialism in the United States of recent years has been one of peaceableness and compromise, I find that my mind refuses further sanction of my remaining a party member.

My final word is that liberty, freedom, and independence, are royal things that cannot be presented to, nor thrust upon, races or classes. If races or classes cannot rise up and by their own strength of brain and brawn wrest from the world liberty, freedom, and independence, they never, in time, can come to these royal possessions—and if such royal things are kindly presented to them by superior individuals, on silver platters, they will know not what to do with them, will fail to make use of them, and will be what they have always been in the past—inferior races and classes.

Yours for the Revolution,

Jack London

(Letters III 1538-9)

London begins this missive with the same critique that Ivan adhered to before Hall bested him in debate. Both the writer and his character refuse to believe in a middle term between violence and cooptation. London places the blame for his beliefs at the feet of the Party itself: Rather than the writer as apostate, it is the SLP who has forgotten its training. Oddly, however, London's letter ends with a disavowal of Ivan's original position. There is apparently no more room for the "man on horseback" to guide the masses toward their social-scientific future. London may have spent the better part of two decades fighting for the cause, but the struggle means nothing if "inferior" races and classes cannot lift themselves out of their position. In making sense of the failures of the movements around him, London returns to a biological fealty that exculpates the "training" by blaming race itself. Indeed, London had practiced this maneuver before. The 1901 assassination of President William McKinley provided yet another rhetorical occasion to fuse the Eastern European immigrant with a biological predisposition toward restive politics. Even though the assailant, Leon Czolgosz, was a native Michigander, his consonant-rich surname helped make anti-immigrant sentiment after the attack nearly indistinguishable from the related rhetoric of anti-radicalism. Even in sympathy, London betrayed his racialist tendencies in his defense of the young anarchist:

It must indeed be a small philosophy which cannot accept the assassination of McKinley as a very natural sociological phenomenon.... I wonder by the way, if society takes into sufficient account these Wolves

of Europe and Wolves of America it is breeding, and if it would forget blood-lust for a moment to speculate upon the reasons for such a breed.

As for Czolgosz, I am sorry for him. He has been so bred. He is the fruit of society, and for society he suffers.... Blood? Who clamors for blood the loudest? the poor devil of an anarchist, or the decent, law-abiding, law-upholding Americans who would subvert law and order that they might have their hands in his blood? (*Letters*, "Sept. 18, 1901," 252)

While London tries—as would any good naturalist—to explain away Czolgosz's actions as the result of a much larger and irresistible panoply of social forces, he relies once again on a discourse of evolution as conspiring to produce traits that naturally lead to spectacular violence. The distance between Europe and the US is collapsed here beneath the similarity of fierce "breeds" produced in the ferment of class struggle. However, as illustrated by London's text above, while the "native" American breeds may certainly emulate and adopt a European taste for violent radicalism, it remains necessary for a foreign example to provide the model. London's simultaneous racism and socialism, then, proved to render him doubly stymied by the character of Dragomiloff. On the one hand, it is necessary for Ivan to be Russian in order to be capable of true revolutionary violence necessary for social change. On the other hand, the results of this violence would be doomed to inevitable failure due to the inability of "American" radicals to adopt such philosophies to their fullest ethical conclusions. An American Bolshevism, then, is only possible to imagine and simultaneously impossible to implement through the character of the radical Russian. London, finally recognizing socialism as a racialized political form in the US, is paralyzed by the divergent wills of his political desires on the

one hand and his fealty to whiteness on the other. His friend and fellow socialist, Cloudesley Johns, criticized the author for this combination of racialism and socialism, and London's many rebuffs leave little room for misinterpretation. One reply, dated June 23, 1899, contains a rather succinct definition of his socialism:

Socialism is not an ideal system, devised by man for the happiness of a life; nor for the happiness of all men; but it is devised for the happiness of certain kindred races. It is devised so as to give more strength to those certain kindred favored races so that they may survive and inherit the earth to the extinction of the lesser weaker races. The very men who advocate socialism may tell you of the brotherhood of all men, and I know they are sincere, but that does not alter the law. (642)

London here reinvokes the specter of the law in a manner akin to the Bureau's agents: Law is a biological foundation, ineffable, whose strictures have been revealed through experiment. But if London's conception of socialism is the answer to this "law," it is only for the hardier races to adopt. London's race-pride was only further enflamed after his return from the Russo-Japanese War. While the Russians of *The Assassination Bureau* are rendered on the line between "Oriental" and white, the Japanese were certainly not afforded this liminal space. London's coverage of the war provided him a front-row seat for watching the Japanese humiliate what, by comparison, became a "white" race.²⁶ An oft-told anecdote frequently offered as a brief summation of London's hierarchy of beliefs occurred as he delivered a scathing invective against the "Orientals" at an address to the Oakland chapter of the Socialist Party. The Portuguese socialist, Edmundo Peluso,

²⁶ For an introduction to the process of "comparative racialization," see Shu-Mei Shih's aptly titled, "Comparative Racialization: An Introduction," in *PMLA* 123.5 (2008), 1347-1362.

remembered the author's "evident pleasure" with which "he described the wiliness of these 'human burnt candles,' as he called the officers of the Japanese General Staff, and used stronger expressions with regard to them." One of the comrades in the room was certain there had been a misunderstanding, and began talking to London about class striation in Japan. Another mentioned Marx's most famous slogan: "Workers of the world, unite!" Rather than relenting, Jack London pounded the table with his fist, and famously cried, "What the devil! I am first of all a white man and only then a Socialist!"²⁷

This anecdote, like the dénouement of *The Assassination Bureau* itself, breaks off with the white American's hand on the table. Indeed, in the final scene of *The Assassination Bureau*, the threatening watch-bomb is itself a design from Nakatodaka, a great Japanese chemist, whose formula was presumed lost before a "revolutionist" stole it from the Japanese War Office (107). Ivan, the Russian, stands minutes away from being obliterated by a Japanese bomb. Dragomilloff, then, evinces the insurmountable divergence at the heart of London's formula: Socialism, as the only way forward for America, cannot possibly be American. Its racialization through the figure of radical Russians renders it both infectious and ultimately doomed, as white laborers inevitably bear the spirit of moderation not in their philosophy but in their blood.

²⁷ Alex Kershaw, *Jack London: A Life*, 143.

CHAPTER THREE
Reporting The Revolution:
John Reed, Red Russia, and a Revolutionary Aesthetic

As the only US citizen to be interred within the Kremlin Wall Necropolis, John Reed quite literally embodied the Russian Revolution for many American readers.¹ His *Ten Days That Shook The World*—written over a two-month fugue in a cramped Greenwich Village apartment during the closing months of 1918—is still perhaps the most famous record of the birth of Soviet Russia, and bears the imprimatur of a forward by Lenin himself. Reed’s radical glory came at a price, however: Having been both well-known and well-paid during most of the preceding decade for his coverage of domestic labor struggles, the Mexican Revolution, and the Eastern Front during World War I, the young journalist had already lost the support of nearly all the magazines he usually published in, and was even facing federal indictments for sedition by the time he sat down to write his opus. It seems his unwavering and very vocal championing of the Bolsheviks ran afoul of both President Woodrow Wilson’s policies and public opinion, deracinating his career as surely as Lenin upended Russia’s *ancien régime*.

Like many writers with a heroic life, Reed’s dramatic biography often overshadows the writing he produced while living it. A number of readable and scholarly biographies understandably argue over the minutiae of his political engagement, numerous affairs, and the substance of his beliefs more generally. However, even though Reed thought of himself as a writer first and a revolutionist second, his works often get

¹ Another American whose ashes, following the instructions in his will, are entombed in the Kremlin Wall is Charles Ruthenberg, a founder and leader of the American Communist Party. The ashes of a third American, “Big” Bill Haywood, who formed the Industrial Workers of the World, are there, too. The confusion over the number of Americans “buried” in the Necropolis is caused by the distinction between ashes interred there and those with individual plots on the grounds. John Reed has one of twelve original plots.

short shrift next to the melodramatic events he endured. Indeed, Reed's life is probably best known due to Warren Beatty's epic and rather successful vanity project, *Reds* (1981).² And yet this man who was at the center of so many artistic and political circles in New York during the pinnacle of the bohemian movement has had his work almost totally neglected by scholars.³ As Daniel W. Lehman, a literary scholar of nonfiction, avers in the only book-length study of Reed's writing, *John Reed and the Writing of Revolution* (2002), this scholarly neglect "stems from holdover genre politics within the literary criticism establishment. Even after several decades of canon reformulation, the chief manner by which a nonfiction writer is read seriously today is if he or she has published some measure of acclaimed fiction" (Lehman 24).⁴

This critique is leveled at least in part at one of the dominant literary-historical narratives for the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries that frames journalism as a novice genre gesturing toward later fictional apotheosis. An apprenticeship in journalism, argues Shelley Fisher Fishkin in her excellent study, *From Fact to Fiction: Journalism and Imaginative Writing in America*, forced Theodore Dreiser, among others, to "become a precise observer, nurtured in him a respect for fact, and taught him lessons about style that would shape his greatest literary creation" (4). Lehman nevertheless typifies Fishkin's central argument as both troubling and reminiscent of the larger field, wherein:

² *Reds* garnered 12 Oscar nominations, and won three, including "Best Director" for Beatty. Indeed, it is impressive that a 194-minute epic on the Bolshevik Revolution released in the first year of the Reagan Administration could be nominated for anything. In fact, Reagan himself invited Beatty to the White House for a private screening and reportedly "liked" the film.

³ As is so often the case, Reed's swashbuckling image and adventurous demeanor cast a long shadow over his prose in a way reminiscent of Jack London the latter's admittance into the canon a generation ago.

⁴ Lehman colorfully defends the relevance of his field by pointing out that a "comparable absurdity would emerge if, say, novelists were ranked by their ability to write poetry or if scholars felt free to dismiss Wallace Stevens or Walt Whitman because they had never written a great novel" (24).

conventional nonfiction narratives [the authors] wrote as journalists were designed to be taken at face value by passive readers who would trust what they read. The self-effacing, open-ended, fiction-blasting fictions they wrote as poets or novelists were designed to construct active readers capable of questioning everything they read and constructing new patterns of meaning on their own.”⁵ (Lehman 64)

The earlier journalistic writings are treated as important but inherently gestational works that proleptically betray a future of more accomplished art to come. Most importantly, the genre itself is circumscribed by a sense of veracity as well as a relationship between reader and writer that theorizes an inert and unidirectional exchange. Reed, ever the iconoclast, exemplifies the obverse, suggesting a “fascinating antidote to dominant prose criticism in that Reed started his career by writing poetry and short stories and developed it toward the publication of three books of literary nonfiction” (Lehman 65). While Lehman is keen to rehabilitate Reed’s literary reputation regardless of the writer’s genre, he also churlishly points out that Reed’s continued snubbing by critics is doubly surprising for a discipline in which contemporary literary scholars writ large “generally have turned from formal studies of artistic technique to more socially implicated critique” (24). Reed, with his vast body of work and dedication to radical politics would seem a natural hero to be rehabilitated by a new generation of humanist scholars. Lehman, for his part, is more concerned with “how Reed puts together a sentence, how he revises and edits his sentences, the rhythms he constructs for his passages, and the imagery he

⁵ For more on the literary relationship between journalists and their audience, see, for example, James C. Wilson’s *Stephen Crane, Journalism, and the Making of Modern America*.

invokes” (5).⁶ In Lehman’s rendering, Reed’s life is a bildungsroman wherein Russia is the site not only of socialism’s apotheosis, but of Reed’s artistry as well. While the following chapter would have been impossible without Lehman’s fine command of Reed’s oeuvre as well as his extensive archival research at the John Reed Papers Collection at Harvard University, I am of course more interested in the “socially implicated critique” he mentions—in particular, the techniques Reed deployed to represent for American audiences arguably the most important political event of the twentieth century. The Russian Revolution, I argue, will demand a drastic reevaluation of Reed’s previous representational techniques—in particular, a fundamental transformation of Reed’s previous deployment of racialized knowledge in the service of producing identification. What’s more, Reed’s work on the Revolution not only betrays a metatextual method beloved by Modernists and usually attributed to other and more “experimental” writers of the period,⁷ but it also chronicles the birth of a new form, the revolutionary aesthetics of the “bureaucratic epic.”

Reed Before Russia

John Reed was born to wealthy parents in Portland, Oregon, and, like so many well-born men of his day, he came east to Harvard for a full immersion into the protocols of his class. Starting alongside fellow classmates T.S. Eliot and Walter Lippmann, Reed found it difficult to assimilate his hearty Western charms within the more refined

⁶ Despite the vast distance in both approach and focus, I engage at such length with Lehman’s argument due to the near-complete absence of other critical writing on Reed. While working on an author as canonical as, say, William Dean Howells, can be vertiginous in the face of the mountain of criticism that needs to be covered, writing on a figure such as John Reed can be unsettling for entirely the opposite reason.

⁷ This authorial oversight, I would argue, drawing from Lehman, is most likely a difficulty in viewing a work of journalism as a work of “art.”

dispositions of New England elites. Admirably embracing every possible means for integration, Reed joined the track team, became an avid cheerleader, and wrote for various school publications. Yet he continued to find Harvard life stifling. Summing up his estimation of Ivy League pedagogy in a brief autobiographical essay, “Almost 30,” the young writer satirically dismissed Harvard as a place that finds “young soaring imaginations, consumed with curiosity about the life they see all around, and feed[s] them with dead technique” (129).

Reed, however, would also encounter the two major intellectual figures of his life while in Cambridge, whose respective influences would in many regards define the contours of his future. Due to his literary talent, Reed was quickly initiated into the inner circle of Charles Townsend Copley, a legendary Harvard professor who trained such luminaries as John Dos Passos, Malcolm Cowley, and Van Wyck Brooks. While his writing at the time might have been wildly uneven, it already displayed Reed’s penchant for vernacular, his interest in the “lower sorts,” and his gift for constructing localized scenes with national implications. In his friendship with the muckraker Lincoln Steffens, Reed saw first-hand that covering social inequities could be a source of both political change and personal employment, and he admired the journalist’s manner of “reading and thinking and talking about politics and economics, not as dry theoretical studies, but as live forces acting on the world” (“Almost 30” 136). Indeed, it was first at Harvard that Reed became interested with politics, eventually advocating the Harvard administration to teach a course on socialism (unsurprisingly, it never ran).

Like many politically minded writers before him, Reed came to find magazine journalism a natural outlet for his blend of dramatic prose and political commentary.

Covering a story for a college paper, he turned a simple assignment to attend a free Christmas dinner offered by New York politicians into a trenchant catalog of pathetic Bowery types and the Tammany bosses who fed them for votes. Moving to New York permanently as soon as he could escape the orbit of Harvard, Reed found a city where “I first loved, and I first wrote of the things I saw, with a fierce joy of creation—and at last I knew that I could write” (“Almost 30” 139-40). While his sympathies could already be divined throughout the Tammany piece, his devotion to issues of social justice and radical politics would be rather explicit in the pages of his next big story on the Paterson Silk Worker’s strike. But Reed turned his coverage of the event—and his arrest there—into much more than a newspaper piece. Drawing on his Harvard experiences by combining his love for politics, art *and* cheerleading, Reed organized a massive “strike pageant” at Madison Square Garden with over 12,000 people in attendance—including activist heavyweights such as Helen Gurley Flynn and Big Bill Haywood. The pageant solidified Reed as one of the rising figures of Greenwich Village bohemianism, and cemented his reputation with two magazines that would become crucial for his future output: *The Masses*, a radical monthly published by Max Eastman, and the more moderate and art-focused yet notionally socialist *Metropolitan Magazine*. His rise from this point was as impressive as it was rapid. “Over the next three years,” in Lehman’s terms, “Reed was to become one of the most famous writers in the United States and a virtual specialist in the literature of foreign and labor conflict” (15). Or, as his friend Walter Lippman more succinctly and dramatically declared, “I say that with Jack Reed reporting begins” (Lehman 24).

As Phyllis Frus has noted, reportage consistently ranks behind other genres due to “the elevation of literature to a transcendent category... and the concomitant linking of nonfiction forms like journalism with the mundane world of actuality, thereby defining them as only of temporal interest” (54). This claim would seem to be justified in the light of the relative neglect Reed’s writing suffered when compared to his other *Metropolitan Magazine* contributors, such as Joseph Conrad, Susan Glaspell, D.H. Lawrence, Rudyard Kipling, and George Bernard Shaw. Indeed, while Frus’s critique may characterize a common conception of the production of non-fictional writing—especially in the minds of critics and the news-reading public—analyses of the works of a number of well-known writers of journalism, especially in the Progressive Era, evince little regard for the “actuality” that Frus explains. Or, in Lehman’s terms, “today’s practice of customarily effacing the reporter’s point of view” would be unrecognizable for a journalist in Reed’s day (Lehman 45). Granville Hicks, in his biography of Reed, quotes an anecdote that illuminates the license Reed reserved when it came to the ethics of “factual” representation. While John Reed and the artist Boardman Robinson were covering the Eastern Front during World War I, Robinson challenged Reed’s accuracy: “But it didn’t happen that way,” he complained. “In reply, Reed seized some of his companion’s sketches and announced, ‘She didn’t have a bundle as big as that,’ and ‘He didn’t have a full beard.’” As Robinson explained that he was merely imparting “a feeling and impression” of the scene, Reed replied, “Exactly” (197-8). As Lehman puts it, in Reed’s mind, “events revealed their importance through their ability to evoke human and emotional response” (7), and Reed himself, in his autobiography, sneered at experts obsessed with “a dull round of dates, acts, half-truths and rules for style, without

questioning, without interpreting and without seeing how ridiculously unlike the world their teachings are” (129).

For Reed, imparting a “true” feeling was more important than preserving what he perceived to be slavish adherence to a moribund facticity, and these “feelings” could only be clearly transmitted through the mediation of the author performing the inseparable acts of analysis and interpretation. Lehman codifies the author’s result as follows: The “hallmarks of Reed’s literary style are shrewd character sketches drawn from social and speaking mannerisms; close, lyrical descriptions built on cascading details; a narrative voice capable of both interpretation and irony; and a sense of the textuality of history, which results in his willingness to reveals history’s constructedness to his readers” (Lehman 25). This combination of impression and analysis is evident in Reed’s first mainstream breakthrough, “Sheriff Radcliff’s Hotel,” published in *Metropolitan Magazine*, and chronicling his night in the Paterson Jail, after his arrest at the infamous silk strike. While Reed’s depiction is certainly sympathetic to the strikers, he achieves identification with the reader through deploying descriptions of characters that often echo in crude stride the descriptive techniques of the anthropometric sciences of his period.⁸ Habitually lavishing detail upon a character’s facial features, Reed is particularly attendant to an individual’s brow, nose, and mouth, activating a certain familiarity that many of his readers would have had with specific racial cues in literature. Reed would also take great pains to reproduce the character’s dialect and slang, further estranging his creations and creating a sympathetic pathos only through an imagined distance between his readers and his subjects.

⁸ For an extensive discussion of the conceptual imbrications of race, character, and the social science, see chapter two of this dissertation.

Lehman, who takes great pains to exculpate this racializing tendency—especially in Reed’s treatment of Jews—explains away this trend as merely a writer who “In each case... searches out the odd detail of appearance or speech that distinguishes the particular subject” (37). Yet Reed’s descriptions often linger with an attention that borders on the erotic while simultaneously displaying an understanding of how contemporaneous theories of racialization are subtended by socio-economic concerns. For instance, an unpublished work, “In Short,” written by Reed in El Paso in 1913, depicts the young journalist in the role of amateur ethnographer, constantly asking fellow Americans to characterize the traits of Mexicans they have encountered. However, their answers vary greatly based upon what profession in which they perceive Reed to be employed. Or, as Reed puts it: “Information for journalists: He is treacherous, untruthful, lazy and cruel. Information for investors: He is gentle, patient, a good worker when he wants to be, happy on very little and honest. You never lock your door in Mexico” (BMS Am 1091:1148, cited in Lehman 226).

While Reed was quite attuned to matters of representation—and, most specifically, to the ways in which the powerless were represented by others in the service of justifying exploitation—he had travelled extensively enough to learn that self-fashioning was not a province of the ruling classes alone. As Lehman avers, “[u]nlike the characters of fiction—who reside more or less in the universe of an author’s imagination—characters in nonfiction cast shadows and talk back” (51). In a piece also written in 1913, “Another Case of Ingratitude,” we meet a narrator experiencing the pride of charity after buying dinner for an out-of-work bricklayer. Expecting the laborer to reveal the sordid and stereotypical details of his life in exchange for the meal, the

unemployed bricklayer decides to criticize the narrator's unspoken voyeuristic desires: "You t'ought just because you give me a hand-out, I'd do a sob-story all over you.... I know you fellers. Just because you got money you t'ink you can buy me with a meal" (Lehman 68). In this encounter, the poor and powerless at least retain the power to refuse prostituting their history, while the bricklayer's response also rends the veil of power relations that occludes the common dynamic within many squalid tales of Skid Row. Reed's tale reveals the double mediation that occurs between the recorder and the revealer, and judges both to be complicit in providing stories that incite audiences through their studied wretchedness. Yet the fact that Reed seemed to understand the mechanics of the social production of race and class does not necessarily mean that the young author did not rely at least in part on these very characterizations to provoke his readership into the experience of "feeling" his "impressions."

Reed In Mexico

Covering the Mexican Revolution for *Metropolitan Magazine*, Reed would find himself entangled in a situation that demanded a deft and novel combination of his representational techniques: His style of interpreting localized events in a manner that registered their global import; his tacit understanding of the power dynamics that allowed for such coverage to take place in the first place; the ability of his "subjects" to speak back to his pen; and the complex interplay of racializing tropes that both energized and troubled the identificatory power of his prose. Between the violent labor struggles at home and the political upheavals brewing just south of the border, Reed became an exemplary revolutionary tourist, documenting thrilling events that sated both literary

appetites and class anxieties for the American public. Conflicted about providing coverage of radical political movements in a magazine bankrolled by oligarchs for a bourgeois readership, Reed was able to harness this dialectical tension in the service of producing literary journalism that both engaged with and broke “from the ruling notion of how to cover alien culture and armed conflict that was established by Stephen Crane and Richard Harding Davis,” the reigning standards of the genre (Lehman 94).

In Pancho Villa, the rebel leader dedicated to overthrowing the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz, Reed would discover a subject whose penchant for self-fashioning would overrun the young journalist’s attempts to portray the Mexican people as ancient and outside of historical time. As Lehman demonstrates through archival comparisons between Reed’s notes and the finished text, Reed “thus leaves, wittingly or unwittingly, unacknowledged ‘traces’ of his manipulating presence throughout the text, most notably in the liberties he takes with the historical record and, ultimately, in his construction of the morality play that makes up the book’s final scene” (Lehman 96). The resultant travelogue, *Insurgent Mexico*, was manipulated from the outset, a handpicked collection of various published articles that Reed purposefully chose not to arrange chronologically in order to maximize effect. Indeed, according to Christopher P. Wilson, temporality itself is one of the key themes, as the work “is by and large a movement *back* in actual and mythic time, away from geopolitics and literally into the hills” (Wilson 353, emphasis in original). By framing the Mexican Revolution as an event occurring in an ancient pastoral land, Reed defangs both its politics and proximity—an endeavor common enough for journalists of the period who were sympathetic to Roosevelt’s muscular Americanism or Wilson’s gentle globality. By placing the Mexican subjects out

of time, Reed also renders the force of the revolution outside of contemporary geopolitical concerns and into a battle for land that has convulsed Mexico since time immemorial due to its citizens' inability to reckon with basic conceptions of property. It is confusing, then, why such an avowed socialist and champion of unpopular causes might make stylistic choices that render it impossible to imagine the revolution crossing the border. However, an examination of Reed's text in light of his understandings of national character renders this verdict more legible. Even the hero at the center of his story bears the brunt of the racializing tropes common to non-whites: While Pancho Villa may have been a noble savage, he was a savage nonetheless, and Reed's notes betray the timeless quality of the primal Mexican that Wilson gestured toward above. In hastily written notes to himself, Reed finds the revolutionary leader's "actions and movements were like those of a wild animal.... he moved with the conscious swiftness of a coyote. His mouth hung open, and when it did not smile, his face looked good-natured, almost simple. His eyes, dark, perfectly round, blood-shot, shallow, were really the desperate things about him," (Lehman 100, BMS Am 1091:316). Villa here is both mythic villain and animalized persona, a man whose looks and manner of movement imply a nature wholly unfamiliar to the temperaments of Reed's readers. Both simple and savage, Villa betrayed the worst tendencies of both, and failed wholly to deserve the trappings of modernity. Or, as Reed wrote to his editor, "[Villa] is the most natural human being I ever saw—natural in the sense of being nearest a wild animal" (Lehman 135).

Reed's mongrel characterization would be easier to dismiss as merely reflective of common tropes of Mexicans if not for another incriminating substitution. As Lehman discovers, Reed not only animalizes his Mexican main character, but he also disappears a

distasteful fellow American. It seems that Reed himself had only managed to meet up with Villa's rebel group, El Tropa, through the help of a racist and misogynist gun-runner and war profiteer known only as "MacDonald." While Reed writes numerous journal entries about MacDonald's unsavory character, the war-profiteer vanishes completely from the published dispatches—but not before Reed attaches MacDonald's disagreeable characteristics to a *Mexican* soldier named Montoya (an officer who travels with a muleteer named, tellingly enough, Primitivo). While Lehman sees this conjuration of a Latin figure in the white man's place as evidence that Reed was merely "aware that portions of his North American audience enjoy reading about simple, sleepy Mexicans,"⁹ I would argue that this transformation is doubly indicting. On the one hand, a vanishing MacDonald erases his role in Reed's access to the rebels and helps maintain the somewhat hermetic figuration of Mexico as a land outside of both time and space, hopelessly distant, and well protected from the machinations of the North; on the other hand, this disappearing act preserves the fantasy of a Mexican national character often nasty, certainly brutish, and statistically short, while it also removes evidence to the contrary of Northerners as civilized observers. In short, what Lehman interprets to be a savvy if somewhat crude manipulation of Reed's marketplace, I interpret as a manifestation of the reporter's political unconscious concerning race that had already manifested itself in similar instances mentioned above. Rather than the opportunistic and Machiavellian MacDonald, filled with scorn and cynicism, we are offered the eager and infantilized Montoya, delightedly inspecting Reed's wristwatch with "parted lips and absorbed attention ... as a child watches the operation of some new mechanical toy"

⁹ Lehman's quote either recapitulates the same racialization or betrays his awareness of it. Either way, the scholar is concerned only with questions of Reed's credibility.

(Lehman 108). We continue to find in the body of Reed's work on Mexico a collection of texts that produce a range of sympathetic portrayals of struggle and revolution while also generating this sympathy through the manipulation of common racialized narrative tropes. It is these ideological conceptions of his Mexican "comrades" that allow Reed to dismiss their desires for self-determination entirely, scribbling in his notebook that Mexicans are "natural anarchists.... Generous, impulsive, they will do anything for you if you pour out yourself to them in any way. Law, justice, government are incomprehensible to the Mexican" (Lehman 109). The phrase "natural anarchist" here is doubly compelling for its twinning of biological predispositions with alternative political forms, and his unflattering depiction of a "Mexican" loyalty is perhaps merely a way to deflect his long-running concern with the power differential that characterizes his employment. Finally, his trinity of law, justice, and government are withheld from the possibilities of the Mexican purely on cognitive terms. Centralized authority, a standard of codified ethics, and even the bare sense of right and wrong—the very foundation for cultural determinations of justice—elude the Mexican subject no doubt due to its "natural" penchant for anarchy.

It is important to pause here to make a distinction between Reed and his work. On the one hand, his vocal support of the unpopular political movements he covered is inspiring. In fact, in the very same issue in which his profile of Villa appeared, Reed was allowed a full-page editorial in which he argued stridently against US intervention in Mexico. His vigorous defense of their right to self-determination betrays a tension at the center of Reed's ideological positions between his fierce belief in the universal equality espoused by socialism and his capture within frameworks of US state formation that

consolidated his racial thinking within certain parameters. Through this bind, Reed is able to enlarge his critique of intervention based on the production of difference itself. As he argues, “We do not realize that the Latin temperament is far different from our own—and that their ideal of liberty is much broader than ours. We want to debauch the Mexican people and turn them into little brown copies of American businessmen and laborers” (Lehman 136). Reed critiques the prevailing class divide in his own nation while also estranging his “little brown” neighbors, who, in this characterization, lack even the ability for the mimicry Reed is arguing to protect.

Mimicry, of course, was not solely the province of the Mexicans. The advertising copy used to publicize Reed’s exploits there was combined with photos of the journalist in “brownface,” outfitted with pistols and topped by a sombrero, with a caption that promised: “Word pictures of war by an American Kipling... What Stephen Crane and Richard Harding Davis did for the Spanish-American War in 1898, John Reed, 26 years old, has done for Mexico” (Rosenstone 166).¹⁰ This explicit connection between war and writing would echo again during one of El Tropa’s ill-fated assaults where Reed observed, “I suddenly discovered that I had been hearing shooting for some time. It sounded immensely far away—like nothing so much as a clicking typewriter” (Reed 73). Waging revolution and capturing “word pictures” are, in Reed’s estimation, not so far apart.

Despite all its compelling drama, the Mexican adventure ends with a calm domestic scene. A small rural village watches a morality play in the center of their town. Interpreted by critic David C. Duke as representing “the vitality and symbiosis of

¹⁰ Rudyard Kipling would be quoted in an ad saying that Reed’s pieces had helped him “see” Mexico for the first time (Lehman 138).

Mexican village life” (90) and explained away by biographer Robert Rosenstone as the place where “beyond the reach of the government, peons live without politics in a world where no such word as war or revolution is spoken” (168), both critics recapitulate Reed’s tendency to place Mexico on a footing outside of a modern geopolitical order—keeping the revolution near enough for American audiences to excitedly consume but sufficiently far so as not to trouble their sleep. But Reed’s lullaby of a conclusion bears with it a warning, as he explains that “already around the narrow shores of the Mexican Middle Ages beat the great seas of modern life—machinery, scientific thought, and political theory. Mexico will have to skip for a time her Golden Age of Drama” (266). While Mexico may still be removed from history, its entry into the threatening modern conveniences of technology, science, and rational politics will soon overtake its idyll. By placing the capacity of the Mexican people into an immemorial past but also predicting that timelessness’ imminent demise, Reed unfortunately subtends forthcoming US intervention that both avers the right of Mexico to enter the twentieth century while also maintaining the nation’s inability to do so alone.

Reed In Eastern Europe

Reed’s unique blend of romance, racialization, and reportage would be offered a continent-sized canvas for its fullest expression and greatest theoretical complications as he sailed from New York to Naples in 1914. If the young reporter’s dispatches from Mexico revealed an uneasiness about the power differential between his typewriter and the subjects they catalogued, his first-class ticket on a *Metropolitan Magazine* expense account provided a quite literal perch from which to analyze his position. From a top

berth peopled by minor nobility and eager industrialists, Reed could peer over the railing into a steerage section teeming with over 3,000 poor immigrants—many travelling back to Europe in order to provide cannon fodder for the men and women Reed was rubbing shoulders with above. Reed had already begun writing about the lower classes of Europe while covering the Ludlow Massacre, when the Colorado National Guard along with thugs from the Colorado Fuel & Iron Co. invaded a tent colony of striking miners, killing around two dozen people—half of them women and children.¹¹ The tent city, in Reed's retelling, forged a kind of solidarity through proximity among the various ethnicities, where "native" American laborers engaged numerous neighbors fresh from Europe. While the camp was no utopia, it was a place of strategic affinities where, Reed said, "Americans began to find out that the Slavs and Italians and Poles were as kind-hearted, as cheerful, as loving and as brave as they were" (Lehman 139).

Reed's work, from New York to Mexico to Colorado and now to Europe, highlights his understanding of the international and interrelated scope of these seemingly disparate struggles. Yet his desire for what Reed considered to be irrevocable political change was often frustrated by what he saw as appeasement by certain socialist camps in America, who, as he saw it, delayed the collapse of capitalism by making "Immediate Demands" rather than simply allowing the system to cannibalize itself. For the young Reed, the First World War was the event the Left had been waiting for, the "great, final clash of the capitalist powers. Hence, all socialist parties could only have been committed to an uncompromising hostility toward all the wars except the class war" (Lehman 142). In a brief essay for *The Masses*, Reed dismissed all questions of patriotism and rectitude

¹¹ As is common with the details of state reprisals against labor, reports vary between 19 and 25 people killed, but nearly all reports include two women and eleven children.

when it came to the prosecution of “The Traders’ War” in a simple explanation of hostilities: “German capitalists want more profits. English and French capitalists want it all” (Lehman 143). For Reed, then, his posting to Europe would provide him with a front-row seat to capitalism’s collapse, and the hope that “out of the horror of bloodshed and dire destruction will come far-reaching social changes—and a long step forward towards our goal of peace among men. But we must not be duped by this editorial buncombe about Liberalism going forth to Holy War against Tyranny. This is not our war” (Lehman 144). Reed’s politics were clear, even if the final collapse of capitalism was still very much in doubt.

Disembarking in Italy, Reed published four articles from the Western Front for *Metropolitan*, yet he had to content himself with viewing the war from the safety of its bases, unoccupied cities, and temporary garrisons. The French censors, it seems, were rather adept at keeping the correspondents far from the actual fighting. As Lehman points out, “Standard criticism of Reed’s reporting from Western Europe terms it flat and unexciting because Reed could not get close enough to the battles to write with the sort of flair and vividness that marked his best work from Mexico” (Lehman 146). Yet his distance from the front may not have been the only cause for a lack of flair. As Lehman adds compellingly, in contrast with his work from Mexico, Reed is “less anxious to glamorize war, more ready to see it in a larger political context, more able to focus on its mechanism and death. If those tactics fail to excite the romantic expectations of his consumers or critics, perhaps that is precisely Reed’s point” (147). The result of this aesthetic negotiation is *The War In Eastern Europe*, a travelogue of Reed’s journey from Greece to Russia and Constantinople, and then back to modern-day Thessaloniki just as

British ships steam into harbor. Accompanying Reed was the artist Boardman Robinson, who provided numerous illustrations of the local flora and fauna, as well as scenes of the darker imprints of war. While I agree with Lehman about Reed's desire to deprive war of its jingoistic glamor, I believe Lehman's earlier dismissal of Reed's reliance on racialization as merely a strategy to provide "local color" occludes his analysis of Reed's European work as well. Asserting that Reed was merely "entranced by the exoticism of Eastern Europe's many ethnic groups" (Lehman 157), Lehman discharges even Reed's frequent and harsh depiction of Jews as a "vivid" mixing of "stereotype and sympathy" (162) and exculpates the animal-like frenzy of a Constantinopolitan market as the result of a boyhood fascination with "the orientalism of alien commerce" (162). Yet, as discussed in the context of Reed's Mexican reporting, the author's entrancement is not the objective appreciation of a curator's eye, but an active engagement in the deployment and production of racial knowledge in the service of literary representation. Indeed, perhaps to frame his book as outside the realm of war reporting due to the fact that Reed never actually saw the war, the author relies from the outset on the language of ethnography to explain the interest his book may possess for readers. The entire war, as it might seem from his preface, is merely a helpful scientific backdrop for unearthing a peoples' true character: "In time of peace, many human qualities are covered up which come to the surface in a sharp crisis; but on the other hand, much of personal and racial quality is submerged in times of great public stress" (*Eastern Europe* v). Reed opines further on this effect of war in a publisher's note written after his return. War, in his estimation, renders individuals more legible while also simultaneously obscuring specific racial characteristics. The reason, he concludes, is that "racial flavor" is lost as distinct

characteristics “become alike in the mad democracy of battle” (vii). Luckily, then, for Reed and his readers, he and his illustrator are perfectly situated by arriving during war but not in battle, able to excavate a more accurate “word picture” of the many and motley peoples of Europe. The stated “single purpose of the series” is “to enable the reader to realize the character of the countries represented and of their peoples and purposes in war” (viii). This induction from specific encounters to generalized diagnoses is defended as a common maneuver for the pursuit of literary truth, for “just as the novelist or the biographer presents the personality of a character so do they present the personality of a nation” (v). In a reversal from Mexico, what is mistaken from afar for the rat-a-tat-tat of machine gun fire is merely a subject captured by the typewriter’s keys.

With the inaugural chapter entitled “The Country Of Death,” the reader already anticipates a monstrous tableau as the curtain lifts on our narrator bound for Serbia from the Greek border. Yet the first characters we meet are not Europeans at all, but a handful of “Americans from the Standard Oil office in Salonika” who, after hearing of Reed and Robinson’s itinerary, blithely wonder if our two hapless travelers “want the remains shipped home, or shall we have you buried up there?” (3). Indeed, any time we interact with Americans other than our correspondent-narrators, they are always emissaries of corporations looking to turn a profit from the war—not unlike MacDonald’s previous gun-running designs, though this time the men come equipped with a corporate sanction that sterilizes their enterprise. With the impending danger of their journey framed by such casual ease, Reed goes through great lengths to figure the movement from Greece to Serbia as a clear line from health to illness, “the country of the typhus—abdominal

typhus, recurrent fever, and the mysterious and violent spotted fever, which kills fifty per cent of its victims and whose bacillus no man had then discovered” (3-4). To equate Serbia directly with its sickness, and then to make an already formidable disease even more “mysterious and violent” will continue to characterize the movement for Reed and Robinson from a land peopled by Mediterraneans to one populated by Slavs. In Reed’s macabre depiction, crossing the narrow gorge from “Greek Macedonia” to Serbia is akin to lowering one’s self into Dante’s catalog of horrors:

Smallpox, scarlet fever, scarlatina, diphtheria raged all along the great roads and in far villages, and already there were cases of cholera, which was sure to spread with the coming of the summer in that devastated land; where battle-fields, villages, and roads stank with the lightly buried dead, and the streams were polluted with the bodies of men and horses. (5)

While this rendering may be a bit hyperbolic, Slavic lands had long been a European imaginary for vice and chaos, a sort of anti-Modern mirror to be held up against a civilized Europe. In the words of historian Larry Wolff, the “invention of Eastern Europe was a subtly self-promoting and sometimes overtly self-congratulatory event in intellectual history, whereby Western Europe also identified itself and affirmed its own precedence” (Wolff 360). This ideological structure rendered Eastern Europe in a position of “emphatic subordination” and the “crucial binary opposition between civilization and barbarism assigned Eastern Europe to an ambiguous space, in a condition of backwardness, on a relative scale of development” (360). For Reed, the Serbians themselves certainly fulfill this figurational edict. In a celebration of manhood more at home in the Age of Arthur, the locals willfully choose not to take any medical

precautions in order to combat the cornucopia of mortal illness surrounding them. To the Serbians, “the taking of preventive measures was a proof of timidity. They regarded the immense ravages of the epidemic with a sort of gloomy pride—as medieval Europe regarded the Black Death” (6-7). Like the archaic Mexicans in *Insurgent Mexico*, the Serbians here are figured as romantic masculinized atavisms from Europe’s barbaric past, suffering through illness with manly stoicism and a resigned feudal sense of fate—and setting them far apart from the English corporal they label a “coward” for threatening to retreat in the face of infestation. Indeed, the lines between West and East literally lead to a cliff here at the “gorge of the Vardar, as if it were a sterile frontier between Greek Macedonia and the high valleys of New Serbia” (7). Yet the border itself, as Reed passes through by train, belies the messiness effaced from his fantasy of a sterile frontier. The landscape that passes his window—rather than represent a firm line between distinct nations—is an ethnic miscellany of Greek churches, Turkish fashions, and ribald gypsy caravans, welcoming the young Americans to Serbia through a cavalcade of colorful difference.¹² Passing endless meadows dotted with thousands of small crosses—the graves of those stricken with typhus—an entrance into Serbia both exceeds and extinguishes life, a riotous calamity of raucous peoples who live beneath the yoke of uncertain yet imminent death.

Once firmly landed on Slavic ground, Reed delivers his analysis:

At first there seemed no difference between this country and Greek Macedonia. The same villages, a little more unkempt—tiles gone from the roofs, white paint chipped from the walls; the same people, but fewer of

¹² Echoing his earlier experiments with foreign representation, Reed cannot help but notice that the Serbian soldiers equip themselves “like Mexican revolutionists” (11).

them, and those mostly women, old men, and children. But soon things began to strike one. The mulberry-trees were neglected, the tobacco-plants were last year's, rotting yellow; corn-stalks stood spikily in weedy fields unturned for twelve months or more. In Greek Macedonia, every foot of arable land was worked; here only one field out of ten showed signs of cultivation. (12)

Reed here is torn between history and science, between his knowledge of current events and his reliance on a discipline of racial difference that both troubles and supplements his understanding of the decimation Serbia experienced during the war. Even though the soldiers have been at war for a ceaseless three years, Reed's observations seem to imply a difference between the Greeks and the Serbs more fundamental than current geopolitics. A certain shabbiness accompanies the latter, specifically an inability to keep house, to maintain agricultural fecundity—indeed, the very domesticity and forms of productivity that characterize even a reasonably pre-modern existence. Yet contrary examples to this antiquated rendering soon speak back. Once in Serbia, we quickly meet “Lazar Obichan,” a young native who has just returned from America after studying contemporary methods of farming that might help restore his decimated homeland. As a counterbalance to Reed's previously untroubled representations of the outmoded Serb, Lazar chooses to exhibit his “new science” of determining “what can be grown in any soil” upon the very body of Reed's unsuspecting illustrator:

“Listen! You give me the humidity—I put her *there*.” He poked Robinson stiffly in the shoulder-blade. “Then you give me the mean temperatoor—I put him there.” A jab near Robinson's kidney. “From humidity I draw a

vertical line straight down, isn't it? From mean temperatoor I draw
horizontal line straight across." He suited the action to the word,
furlowing the artist's diaphragm. (17)

What reads at first like an opportunity for light comic relief also reveals a Serb unwilling to be passively represented. As Reed uses the crude trappings of observational detail to provoke broad outlines of an entire people, Lazar not only insists upon his own agency through travel, but also transforms Robinson's body into the Serb's manipulated scientific object. In an inverted and amusing riposte to Reed's denigration of Serbia's agricultural prowess through which he makes broad assumptions about their physical bequest, this Serbian agriculturalist uses the American's body to display scientific conclusions about agriculture! By staging the white body as the field of inquiry and explanation, Reed shatters the seeming objectivity of his earlier investigations and reveals them to be only a matter of position. The surprise that this reversal creates is so great that it is only resolvable through a comic scene—a rarity in a chronicle of such prolonged abjection.

Lazar ends his scene with the discussion of a deal between American and Serbian banks to rehabilitate his country—and also make himself a fortune on the side. This venality, which Reed usually reserves for American characters, seems to imply that Lazar has been Westernized at least in part from his trip to the States. Reed's travelogue allows room for this kind of racial "advancement" through exposure—and no more so than in his encounter with the wartime Serbian Press Bureau. A literary artist by training but rendered a bureaucratic functionary due to the hostilities, "Johnson" (they take great pains to render his name legible in their own speech), "was saturated with European

culture, European smartness, cynicism, modernism.” Yet, due to his genetic inheritance, the education necessarily remains incomplete. While Johnson whistles Beethoven incorrectly, Reed assures himself that, no matter how fine the appearance, “scratch the surface and you [find] the Serb; the strong virile stock of a young race not far removed from the half-savagery of a mountain peasantry, intensely patriotic and intensely independent” (36).

No clearer or more forced distinction among races is asserted than that between the invading Austrians and the rapidly dying Serbs. While the Austrians may have committed numerous and indisputably barbaric atrocities—catalogued with unnerving frequency and monstrous relish by Reed¹³—the perpetrators of the Empire themselves are always figured in tight regimental ranks of orderly and well-dressed soldiers. Indeed, when Reed finally passes through Serbia and approaches the Russian Front, the comparison is a reenactment writ large of the gorge between Greece and Serbia: “On the Austrian side, far away, were visible white winding roads, dazzling villas set in green, an occasional shining town—order and prosperity; on the Russian side, the wet tin roofs of a clump of wooden shacks, thatched huts the color of dirt, a wandering muddy track which served as a road—the very reverse” (99). Reed certainly guides our reception between these two behemoths, evaporating the Austrian atrocities with the same dexterity he brought to MacDonald’s vanishing act. Even though the two sides are engaged in mortal battle, somehow the Austrians have managed to transform their patch of ground into a vista befitting a tourist brochure. The Russian side, by contrast, imparts a dank medieval

¹³ As one example, while stuffing a barn full of civilians before setting it on fire, the Austrian soldiers run out of room *inside* the structure, so they tie the remaining prisoners to the barn with rope before striking a match.

scene, the very inversion of the Teutonic Front. The entrance into the Russian world is treated like the culmination of a vast journey into the unknown, a regular and striking gradation from Greece and Austria into the measureless expanse of “Russia, Holy Russia—sombre, magnificent, immense, incoherent, unknown even to herself” (100).¹⁴ However, as Lehman discovers through a comparison of Reed’s actual European itinerary with the organizational strategy of the travelogue itself, Reed—as with his Mexican adventure—arranged the final work with little regard for chronology, positioning the Russian chapters at the very center, which “adds a measure of impact to the Russian material and unifies the overall work” (157). This depiction of Russia as incomprehensible even to its own subjects while also deploying the nation at the center of the text to anchor and unify his perambulations around war-torn Europe highlight the ability for “Russia” as a figure to be impressed into various forms of ideological service. In his book-length study of this phenomenon, the historian Martin Malia argues that figuring Russia as a mysterious backwater founded on inscrutable contradictions bears a long provenance. Indeed, its very absence from the discussion of civilizations was its value, or, as Malia puts it, “one of the most striking characteristics of liberal and rationalistic thought after 1815 was its deafening silence regarding Russia” (132). As Wolff argued above, the various projects of European state formation gained an ideological fulcrum with which to propel their own modernity by rendering Russia as hopelessly left behind. Comparing the vast history of Russia written by Voltaire and the “lyrical and empathetic chapters” penned on the country by Herder, Malia points out that

¹⁴ Churchill, of course, famously used a similar conception of Russia as “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma,” though the full quote ends on a more helpful note: “but perhaps there is a key.” No one knows if he ever found it.

Hegel's entire *Philosophy of History*, his veritable love poem to the exceptionalism of the European state, reserves only a single paragraph for the entire Slavic race—and one that is not at all flattering. Admitting at least that these “people did indeed found kingdoms and sustain spirited conflicts with the various nations that came across their path,” Hegel must nevertheless exclude “this entire body of peoples... from consideration, because hitherto it has not appeared as an independent phase in the series of configurations of Reason in the world” (133).¹⁵ To be cast from the storehouse of Reason by Hegel himself was emblematic, then, not only of Reed's depictions but for a host of the West's most formidable writers and thinkers.

If “Russia,” as Malia and Wolff both argue, has so often played the role of ideological parallax for the West, Reed unsurprisingly uses his entrance into Russian territory as an examination of ethnic difference. The “incoherence” he assigns in his initial description seems to stem from the seemingly impossible array of peoples that the vast landmass contains. In the first scene on Russian soil, Reed encounters a group of Russian soldiers and, when compared with the Austrians, is surprised to find:

flat-faced, swarthy men squatted, Eastern fashion, between their knees—
men with Chinese eyes and cheek-bones polished like teak, robed in long
caftans and crowned with towering shaggy hats of fur....Turcomans from
beyond the Caspian, from the steppes of Asia—the boiling geyser that
deluged Europe with the great Mongolian invasions—the mysterious
cradle of humankind. The fathers of these warriors followed Genghis

¹⁵ Malia goes on to explain that, while Hegel could easily dismiss a number of Slavic groups due to their lack of an independent polity (they had all been subsumed into various other empires, kingdoms and states), Russia herself was rejected due to the “common German opinion” that the Russians had not built their state themselves. It had “been imposed upon them by Scandinavian Varangians” and of course was “perfected in modern times only by imported Teutonic talent” (133).

Khan and Tamerlane and Attila. Their cousins were Sultans in Constantinople, and sat upon the Dragon Throne in Peking. One glimpse we had of them, a tiny handful in the mighty hordes that Russia is pouring down on the West.... (102-3)

If their fashions and manners did not prove contrast enough, Reed places these men in a lineage that leads directly back to some of Europe's fiercest conquerors. These "teak-cheeked" geysers that poured in from Central Asia are a force as ineluctable as nature, and resistance to this deluge would be just as futile. Through the use of this natural language, Reed exculpates Europe's defeat at the hand of its Eastern "inferiors" by depicting these aggressors as more akin to a natural catastrophe than an invading army. The use of natural imagery also has the benefit of rendering Central Asians as immemorial as the steppe itself—and thus outside the workings of Reason that Hegel so categorically deprived from the Slavs. Russia for Reed is not so much a nation but a territorial bulwark between Europe and Asia—failing in its duty to hold back all the various people from Turkey to China as they "pour" upon the West, tramping as far as Hungary, "the rich land where the scourges of God from Asia had finally come to rest" (122). Russia, it appears, is both far too capacious and frighteningly porous.

Indeed, in much of Reed's travelogue, the country seems to be well-stocked by every population *but* the "pure" Slavs of the Kievan Rus. In addition to these initial "Turcomans," Reed comes across an officer at Cholm who bears his "oval, half-Semitic face [that] might have been copied from an Assyrian wall-painting—he said he was a Georgian from the Caucasus" (171), and the land abounds with Turks, Mongols, and Asians of various heritage. However, if Russia is indeed about to pour its hordes upon

Europe, no group has so fully infiltrated Russia—or serves as more of a distinction to Western peoples—than the Jews. It is on Reed’s treatment of the Jews that Lehman’s apologia wears thinnest, dismissing it first as Reed’s entrancement “by the exoticism of Eastern Europe’s many ethnic groups” (157) and then later on merely cherry-picking one of Reed’s less damning depictions in order to dismiss his indicting generalizations as a blend of “stereotype and sympathy” (162). Reed, in the passage Lehman cites, does betray a modicum of historical understanding when he explains that this “hateful people” was “made hateful by extortion and abuse” and that “a race inbred and poisoned with its narrow learning” has been forced to interbreed and remain ignorant “because it has been ‘persecuted for righteousness sake.’ And butchered in the streets by men whose banner was the Cross” (Lehman 162). This recognition of the social conditions that produced Reed’s subjects does little to defang the venomous anti-Semitism to which it is attached, and disappears completely during his other numerous remarks on Jews that retain the racialization but evacuate the history. Jews at best are construed as opportunists, such as “fat Jewish army contractors hobnob[ing] with political hangers-on over maculate cafe tables” or as a “stout, dirty man with the look of a Jewish politician (57).” Often they display an air of distrust, such as “the Jew smirking and rubbing his hands” (115), or in “the crouching figures of the Jews, stealing furtively along the tottering walls (129). But most often Jews are rendered simply as “hairy degenerates” from “a pale, stooping, inbred race, refined to the point of idiocy” (176, 177) whose filth negatively affects their surroundings, as “shabby Jewish quarters encroached on the smart streets, littered with filth and populous with noisy Hebrews” (162). These unmistakably cruel depictions are somewhat curious for a writer whose stated goals were defined by the broadest

parameters of social justice and whose political platform ostensibly recognized no variations of worth among and between identity groups. However, a few of his anti-Semitic harangues make curious but illuminating analogies, perhaps meant to serve as a warning against the imminent Russian hordes he mentioned earlier on. While strolling through a particularly picaresque Semitic street, he notices the “tiny Jewish shops, swarming with squealing, whining, bargaining people, and emitting that stale stench that we know on New York’s Lower East Side” (104). Rather than remain safely within the frightening but far-removed heterogeneity of Reed’s Russia, this lurid neighborhood has already recreated a bulwark in its own likeness on American ground. Unlike the Mexico that was just beyond the border but characterized as infinitely remote, Reed terrorizes his readers with scenes of Semitic abjection, and then locates that very monstrosity at home.

The closer Reed gets to the seats of power in Petrograd and Moscow, the more frequently he encounters whiter and more recognizably Western Russians. Yet, as the well-trained Serbian bureau apparatchik demonstrated earlier on, a mere “scratch” upon these Westernized Russians will uncover the Slavic soul. Quite literally, in fact: “In Russia,” Reed argues, “every one talks about his soul. Almost any conversation might have been taken from the pages of a Dostoievsky novel” (186). Much like the characters invented by the famously grim Russian novelist, Reed typifies the Russian mien as one obsessed with philosophical rumination and painful introspection. In the czar-decreed absence of liquor, Russians “get drunk on their talk; voices ring, eyes flash, they are exalted with a passion of self-revelation. In Petrograd I have seen a crowded cafe at two o’clock in the morning—of course no liquor was to be had—shouting and singing and

pounding on the tables, quite intoxicated with ideas” (186). This penchant for philosophical intoxication and passionate disputation will, according to Reed, render this public difficult to govern. “Russians,” Reed hedges, “are not patriotic like other races, I think.... The government itself—the bureaucracy—commands no loyalty from the masses; it is like a separate nation imposed upon the Russian people.” This lack of fealty to a central authority stems precisely, in Reed’s appraisal, from the vast collection of ethnicities housed uncomfortably together beneath the same national mantle. According to a bald man with the countenance of a “mystic” who sits next to Reed on a train, what Russia lacks is an imagined community: “We Russians do not know how great we are,” he said. “We cannot grasp the idea of so many millions of people to communicate with. And no Russian realizes how many races are embraced in this nation; I myself know only thirty-nine” (190). The sheer mass of Russia and its ethnic diversity make the possibility of spreading a particular culture from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok impossible. Yet Reed divines something in the chaos, something that will not make itself manifest until he covers the Revolution—and something his bald mystic has overlooked. “This vast agglomeration of barbarian races,” Reed argues, “brutalized and tyrannized over for centuries, with only the barest means of intercommunication, without consciousness of any one ideal, has developed a profound national unity of feeling and thought and an original civilization that spreads by its own power” (191). While bereft of the forms of media and technology that suture a nation, Russia has nevertheless emerged as a “feeling” among its populace, an immanent sense of itself that is wholly its own.

This sense of a particular “Russianness,” however, is not only something shared by countrymen indebted to the soil. “Loose and easy and strong,” this felt culture is

spreading in all directions, as “it invades the life of the far-flung savage tribes of Asia; it crosses the frontiers into Romania, Galicia, East Prussia—in spite of organized efforts to stop it” (191). But, and most importantly, it can invade even the most famously intransigent Western demeanors. As Reed argues:

Even the English, who usually cling stubbornly to their way of living in all countries and under all conditions, are overpowered by Russia; the English colonies in Moscow and Petrograd are half Russian. And it takes hold of the minds of men because it is the most comfortable, the most liberal way of life. Russian ideas are the most exhilarating, Russian thought the freest, Russian art the most exuberant.... (314)

A combination of activist optimism and an understanding of culture heavily influenced by Lamarckian discourse, Reed positions the Russian character as an immanent and superlative power, strong enough to transform even the stoic British into cultural half-Slavs. Reed locates this potential for infiltration not in the usual ex-patriot redoubts such as loose women and natural resources, but in philosophy itself, in the ability for these seductive Russians—drunk on their words—to intoxicate their guests. Reed’s choice of language is instructive here: Exhilaration, freedom, and exuberance produce above all a sense of movement, a dynamism, of ideas so perfectly rendered as to be able to literally “take hold of minds” and transform all participants—regardless of ethnic cast—into willing mimics of Russian culture.

This Russian cultural superlativity is produced through a logical foil, and one also endowed with a landmass nearly as immense. “In America,” Reed argues, “we are the possessors of a great empire—but we live as if this were a crowded island like England,

where our civilization came from.... We live in houses crushed up against on another... each family a little shut-in cell, self-centered and narrowly private.” Whereas in Russia “houses are always open; people are always visiting each other at all hours of the day and night....To most people a Dostoevsky novel reads like a chronicle of an insane asylum; but that, I think, is because the Russians are not restrained by the traditions and conventions that rule the social conduct of the rest of the world” (192-3).

America, in Reed’s view, is already lost to a national culture enfeebled and isolated due to capitalism’s structural atomization. Russia, meanwhile, depends on more proximate, engaged, and communal forms of sociality. What may appear like madness to denizens of the West is merely the truest expression of a Russian culture unrestrained, a culture not bound to the stultifying protocols of a system whose sole engine is the pursuit of profit. In Russia, even before the socialist takeover, Reed has found a powerful—and contagious—antidote to Western capitalist culture.

Ten Days That Shook John Reed

Most accounts of Reed’s biography portray his peripatetic life as a classic bildungsroman wherein Russia is not only the site of international socialism’s apotheosis, but of Reed’s artistry as well. It is important to dwell at length upon Reed’s earlier work to illustrate the profound transformation in representational strategies that the Bolshevik Revolution demanded. As Reed points out, many Russians had surmounted this representational problem by simply “ignoring the Revolution as much as possible. The poets made verses—but not about the Revolution. The realistic painters painted scenes from medieval Russian history—anything but the Revolution” (13). While Reed was able

to draw upon a host of recognizable tropes and genres with which to cover both the Mexican Revolution and World War I, the perceived singularity of the Bolshevik takeover demanded from Reed a profound reevaluation of the relation between writing and politics, forcing him to develop innovative strategies for portraying a historical occasion exceeding aesthetic techniques already codified by dominant codes of representation.

It is nearly impossible to overstate the importance—the sense of arrival, of support, of substantiation—that the Bolshevik Revolution provided for much of the American Left, and for artists in particular. As Adam McKible states about the radical writers of the period:

Prior to Bolshevik victories in Petrograd, Moscow, and elsewhere in Russia, American writers from across a broad spectrum of socio-political and artistic perspectives considered themselves lost and ineffectual inside a culture they despised but could not change. The Russian Revolution offered them a concrete example of national transformation on the grandest possible scale; they followed its events, philosophies, and policies with keen interest, because the Revolution offered a tangible vision of realized political and aesthetic desire. (McKible 17)

At last, a concrete location had been produced that promised to expand a philosophical vision in an actual site, and collapse the distance between aesthetic and political desires. For many American readers, John Reed stood at the very center of this confluence of event, philosophy, and policy, with his chronicle, *Ten Days That Shook The World*. An avowed socialist, Reed unapologetically supported the uncompromising revolutionary

positions of the Bolsheviks, and often scorned the reformist approach characterized by the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary parties.¹⁶ For this loyalty, Reed gained unprecedented access to the highest Bolshevik cadres during the turmoil, interviewing luminaries such as Trotsky, and publishing his book bearing Lenin's preface. For Reed's itinerant career, the Russian Revolution seemed a natural and fittingly grand culmination that connected Mexico, the Bowery, Ludlow, and Paterson to the crescendo of Petrograd.

If Reed had attempted to trouble the hidden dynamics of power in his earlier reportage and place stress on the entire genre through his skillful reworking of conventions, in *Ten Days* Reed would transform the category altogether. In the first line of the preface, he called his coverage of the Revolution a work of "intensified history—history as I saw it" (xxxiii), and his preemptive avowal of his own subject position will return again and again, producing a history of the present that willfully calls attention to its particular mediation. While his earlier works were so often characterized by flights of romance undergirded by a reliance on racialization, *Ten Days* at first glance seems notable precisely for the absence of these strategies.¹⁷ Indeed, after the sonorous epic prose of his previous writing, what is perhaps most interesting about *Ten Days* is its seeming artlessness, as well as the constant use of the present tense and trails of ellipses to ground a dynamic sense of a protean and endlessly emergent "new" that relentlessly confounds attempts to freeze it into prose. What should also be noted—considering the

¹⁶ The vast list of parties, loyalties, and platforms before, during, and after the Russian Revolution is labyrinthine in its complexity. For a quick primer, Reed helpfully provides a "Notes" section at the beginning of his account that provide short and pithy if not admittedly biased depictions of the factions as he understood them.

¹⁷ The Revolution, in Reed's rendering, also bears the striking absence of women—though he does direct readers in a footnote to the work of Louise Bryant, his lover and fellow participant in the Revolution.

material itself and the author's obvious enthusiasm for the adventure of the Revolution—is that the text itself is rather remarkable for the precocious tedium with which so many of its events are recorded. If, in Lehman's words, *The War In Eastern Europe* is “a war book in which war rarely appears yet is everywhere apparent,” then *Ten Days* is a book about revolution that often reads like a slog through bureaucratic paperwork, the pitched battles eschewed in favor of tiresome decrees. Yet it is precisely this monotonous focus on the proclamations from the Bolsheviks that reveals one of *Ten Days*' greatest literary and most strikingly Modern strengths: In conceiving of a proper revolutionary aesthetic with which to characterize the Revolution, Reed produced a new literary form I call the “bureaucratic epic.” In developing this format, Reed would deploy a number of techniques that could only have become clearer to literary scholars in retrospect, a blending of genres, streams of consciousness, attention to subjectivity, pastiche of previous literary forms, and use of meta-textual objects—a Modernism *avant la lettre*. Reed's innovations, however, are not purely formal. His work also catalogs insights into the representation of revolutionary crowds, and the bureaucratic and textual means through which to manipulate mass sentiment, a strategy for depicting mass movements that is both a literary technique and a theoretical assessment. His work also limns questions of affective literature through the literal deployment of foreign languages in a way that both makes use of and critiques contemporaneous fears of radical immigrants in the US.

A reader encountering *Ten Days* for the first time is first disciplined into a highly structured regime of labor before gaining entry to the narrative. Rather than dreamy vistas

of Pancho Villa's heroic conquests or monstrous tableaux such as fields of recently killed Serbian soldiers, Reed's text begins with a confession. "I am aware," he admits, that his first "two chapters make difficult reading" (xxxiii). What follows are a dozen pages cataloging in dizzying array the range of parties and personages that contributed to the making of the revolution. While Reed swears that the density and coverage of this chapter is necessary, it is hard not to wonder why the Mexican Revolution or the Eastern Theater of World War I—both surely events of equally confounding detail—were not accorded the same generosity of nuance. For Reed, however, all previous historical moments seem to be merely dress rehearsals for the Bolshevik Revolution, an event so singular that it demands an intellectual gauntlet to be run from the outset. As we know from his earlier books, Reed was an active strategist when it came to the arrangement of chapters to produce his desired effect. Therefore, his decision to locate this dizzying panoply of political operatives at the outset rather than as an appendix (which is already pressed into service as over one-hundred pages of proclamatory transcriptions) stages a demand at the entrance to the text, a provocation toward a less casual understanding of the events in Russia than his previous books might have allowed. For Reed, his "impressions" of Mexico and the Eastern Front can be grasped through the more pleausurably recognizable tropes of romance and exoticism, but the Revolution demands a pass through the eye of a needle armed with the arid yet focused eye of academic pursuits. Though he had once mocked the "dry and dead" wisdom of his stultifying instructors at Harvard, now Reed would rely on their rhetorical style to guide the inauguration of his greatest work.

As Reed himself had argued while in Eastern Europe, “a sharp crisis” brings to the surface the “character of the countries,” a character he then so eagerly categorized in his previous works. But from the outset of *Ten Days*’s narrative, this social-scientific method is complicated through a profound understanding of the untenable yet inescapable positionality of the scientific gaze itself. After the ordeal of the first two chapters, *Ten Days* begins its tale with an “alien Professor of Sociology visiting Russia” who made a house call to Reed in Petrograd at the end of September, 1917 (1). Told by businessmen and intellectuals alike “that the Revolution was slowing down,” the professor “then travelled around the country, visiting factory towns and peasant communities—where, to his astonishment, the Revolution seemed to be speeding up” (1). To make sense of this confusion, the sociologist, as befits his occupation, “wrote an article about it” and then discussed this seemingly impossible contradiction with Reed. As our helpful narrator explains, “the Professor was puzzled, but he need not have been; both observations were correct. The property-owning classes were becoming more conservative, the masses of the people more radical” (1). The reactionaries and moderates were not lying when they told the researcher that the revolution was slowing down, and their inability to reckon with or even acknowledge the perspective from below highlights many of the causes of the conflict in the first place. The empirical method of the sociologists is not entirely disavowed—after all, both side are “true”—but they are rendered visible as a wholly contextual apparatus. The very fact of noting that the truth of the masses would soon overwhelm the other half of the revolutionary dialectic implies that a new fount of valid knowledge has emerged. Reed, then, still maintains the eye of a

social scientist, but his time in Russia has demanded that the “truth” of his newest study be read from below.

His coverage itself begins in *medias res*: The czar has been overthrown and the Provisional Government installed,¹⁸ but the propertied classes and much of the intelligentsia had already decided that “the Revolution had gone far enough, and lasted too long; that things should settle down” (1). The Bolsheviks, of course, disagreed rather strongly with this estimation, and worried that counterrevolutionary forces might seize control in the vacuum by promising a representational democracy that would in fact be merely a tool for the bourgeoisie. Immediately, Reed would face one of the most daunting aspects for rendering a vast political movement into narrative form: The challenge of crowds. While *Ten Days* is ostensibly a chronicle of popular revolt, the proletarians themselves are rarely equipped with individual agency. Rather, Reed stresses the marvel of a solidarity that has consolidated factory workers, peasants, and soldiers from myriad ethnic backgrounds and vastly different urban and rural locations. What could be read productively as an inverted heteroglossia—a collapse of difference into a single “voice”—the components of the revolutionary crowd emerge less as individuated subjects than protean aspects of an amorphous whole, whose univocality rises, submerges, and resurfaces according to a single yet ceaselessly negotiated will. In the many scenes where revolutionary, moderate, and reactionary leaders address congregations in the hope of winning support for their factions, disembodied voices emerge from the crowd with no attention paid to the origin of their utterance—responses that are mere reflections of the range of political desires in an uneasy agglomeration of

¹⁸ There are a number of brief yet informative introductions to the Russian Revolution. One of the best (and shortest) is Sheila Fitzpatrick’s *The Russian Revolution*.

divergent but strategically solidified thought. Relying on the language of stagecraft to produce this effect, Reed's portrayal of the endless congressional assemblies produces the effect of an unbroken fungibility concluded only by an unseen stage director. His constant use of ellipses adds to the sense that each act of speech merely produces another layer to an accretionist discourse through which yet more speech—rather than conclusions—will emerge. Lenin himself averred that communism was bringing “soviets plus electricity” to Russia. The crowd, in Reed's figuration, is the true location of these electrified politics, of an endless cauldron of desires that makes demands, assesses the response, and reforms new demands according to pure contingency. At an early meeting of the Constituent Assembly, while the Bolsheviki are deciding how to wrest power from what they see as a compromised revolutionary government, the crowd is emblematic of this approach:

“All Power to the Soviets—that means death! Robbers and thieves are waiting for the moment to loot and burn.... When you have such slogans put before you, ‘Enter the houses, take away the shoes and clothes from the bourgeoisie—’” (Tumult. Cries, “No such slogan! A lie! A lie!”)... Immense continued uproar, in which his voice could not be heard screaming, as he pounded the desk, “Those who are urging this are committing a crime!”

Voice: “You committed a crime long ago, when you captured the power and turned it over to the bourgeoisie!” (70).

As Corporal Dan, a Tsay-ee-kah politician with moderate sympathies, attempts to address the crowd, the mass responds both unintelligibly (tumult, cries), and as a single voice

capable of momentarily escaping the frenetic dynamism unleashed by the Revolution to voice a specific rejoinder. The “voice” is merely that: A voice that emerges momentarily to register a complaint and then vanishes quickly back into what Reed called the “gigantic hive” that characterizes revolutionary energy (73). It is as if the individuated characters given specific dialogue in the crowd scenes account as lesser entities precisely because of their individuation. Or, in the words of the crowd: ““Who are you speaking for? What do you represent?’ They cried” (91).

This demand for authentic representation, a political desire formally at the heart of the Russian Revolution, is necessarily at the heart of Reed’s depiction as well. Authenticity, for the mind of the crowd, is reserved solely for the proletariat. During a speech by a young soldier who contradicts reports that the army is marching back on Petrograd to crush the Bolsheviks, he explains his necessary credentials for speech:

“Comrades!” He cried and there was a hush. “My *familia* is Peterson—I speak for the Second Lettish Rifles. You have heard statements of two representatives of the Army committees; these statements would have some value if their authors had been representatives of the army.” Wild applause. “But they do not represent the soldiers!” Shaking his fist. (92)

The crowd is instantly able to recognize one of its own and, thus, the information is irrefutable. “This clear-eyed soldier had spoken, and in a flash they knew it for the truth.... This was the voice of the soldiers—the stirring millions of uniformed workers and peasants were men like them, and their thoughts and feeling were the same” (92). This form of instant democratic legitimation, here rendered as an unmediated representation, is both excessive of and always lacking in coherence—resembling

nothing so much as the fog of revolutionary battle, where, as Reed witnesses, the same disembodied “voices began to give commands, and in the thick gloom we made out a dark mass moving forward, silent but for the shuffle of feet and the clinking of arms” (99). The similarity between the bodies on the streets and those on the floor of the Constituent Assembly evince a connection between theory and practice, political discourse and battle, or, more simply, speech and power. There is no clear general theory attendant to the movement, just desire, response, and reconfiguration. As the Bolsheviks take power, it is against any preconceived schema. Or, as Reed avers, “it had not come as they expected it would come, nor as the intelligentsia desired it; but it had come—rough, strong, impatient of formulas, contemptuous of sentimentalism; real...” (133). The revolutionary crowd exceeds all attempts to render its voice as individuals or anything other than an expression of momentarily consolidated desire. As Reed marvels in his sociological register, “Nothing is so astounding as the vitality of the social organism—how it persists, feeding itself, clothing itself, amusing itself, in the face of the worst calamities” (112).

As the “Russian Rockefeller,” Stepan Georgevitch Lianozov, characterized the Bolshevik upheavals in 1917, “Revolution is a sickness. Sooner or later the foreign powers must intervene here—as one would intervene to cure a sick child.... the nations must realize the danger of Bolshevism in their own countries—such contagious ideas as ‘proletarian dictatorship,’ and ‘world social revolution’...” (7). Here Reed, through the mouth of a Russian industrialist, deploys a veritable bestiary of common tropes against the socialist menace. Revolutionary fervor and socialist ideals had long been

characterized in the rhetoric of illness, and their adherents dismissed as simpletons in need of guidance. It is important also to note that these ideas were construed in the language of communicability: A “stabs-capitan” in the Russian Army explained away the chaos in his ranks merely as the result of the “many who are contaminated by the Revolution” (80). Reed’s own text both deploys and complicates this concept of susceptibility through text and speech. While *Ten Days* begins with a number of epitextual documents¹⁹—Reed’s translations and explanations of various passes, proclamations, and decrees—the book becomes decidedly more paratextual as he moves toward the climax of the revolution. By this I mean Reed moves from direct translations of documents—rendering them safely into English—to the inclusion of actual reprints of the proclamations themselves, with all their dramatic and estranging potential made even more exotic and impenetrable due to the enigmatic Cyrillic script. This attendance to the visual through a focus on print objects is a deft means to impart the foreign qualities of the Revolution itself for Western audiences. The alienating potential of unfamiliar alphabets is profound, rendering not only the new script esoteric but also infusing a well-known alphabet with a certain menace in its now-unmasked contextuality. Cyrillic, for the Westerner, can be doubly distressing in this regard, as half of the alphabet includes wholly unrecognizable ideographs while the others feign acquaintance but actually represent foreign sounds. Indeed, when unschooled English speakers gaze upon, say, Sanskrit, the fantasies of penetration are entirely futile. However, when an American

¹⁹ I use Gerard Genette’s definition of “epitext” here as denoting “elements ‘outside’ the bound volume—public or private elements such as interviews, reviews, correspondence, diaries etc” (8). Paratexts, by contrast, are characterized as “a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc.; marginal, infrapaginal, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals” (2, 3).

gazes upon a backwards R, a “Я” or “ya” in Russian, the letter is both wholly recognizable and irrevocably distant, reproducing the idea of Russia as simultaneously European and Asiatic, familiar while inscrutable. Reed’s text begins rather humbly when incorporating these objects—an opportunity for local color, perhaps—but he soon includes these characters with greater frequency as the contagion of revolution grows more acute. Cyrillic, the popular script of socialism after 1917, literally begins to infect his text first through translation and then by reproductions of the documents themselves, playing upon American concerns regarding the contagious qualities of revolutionary speech.

While the proliferation of foreign speech is captured in *Ten Days* through the increasing frequency of the reproduction of Cyrillic objects, the language of these objects themselves all share a common origin from the various “bureaus” of the warring factions. Devoid of an aristocratic locus of political power since the deposing of the czar, the language of bureaucracy fills a necessary gap of authority and provides a sense of legitimacy to a nascent political movement, what management theorist Frank Fischer calls “managerial authority.” A government proclamation on the night of the full Bolshevik takeover identifies a surprising third party in its list of targets: “Soldiers, Workers, Clerical employees! The destiny of the Revolution and democratic peace is in your hands” (110). This unexpected third term in the revolutionary trinity indexes a bureaucratic proliferation as the answer to a vacuum of established clout. A staunch Bolshevik sympathizer, Reed nevertheless is unable to portray the construction of these new political institutions without at least a few Kafka-esque satires of government life,

wherein committees are appointed to appoint committees to determine which new committees should be brought into existence. Indeed, Reed seems to indict the “committee form” itself as a necessary but always deficient organizational strategy that represents the impossibility of an unmediated democratic process. Even a simple train-ride becomes an opportunity for the endless complexity of inclusive politics. As Reed assures us, “before we reached Moscow almost every car had organized a Committee to secure and distribute food, and these Committees became divided into political factions, who wrangled over fundamental principles....” (248) The colorless rhetoric of bureaucracy so pervades both sides of the Revolution that even what Reed finally understands to be “the Duma’s declaration of war against the Bolsheviks” posted all over the city was at first impossible to recognize due to its subdued style of speech, blandly decreeing that “The Municipal Duma informs the citizens that in the extraordinary meeting of November 6th the Duma formed a Committee of Public Safety, composed of members of the Central and Ward Dumas, and representatives of the following revolutionary democratic organizations...” (74-5). Rousing, indeed!

When the Bolsheviks, headquartered at the Smolny Institute, finally seize full control, the repurposed school becomes a prolific factory for the production of bureaucratic rhetoric, “pour[ing] out proclamation after proclamation” (291). Indeed, while on a tour of the building, Reed pokes fun at this confusing fungibility of power. Anyone, it seems, with access to a typewriter can now produce authority during this new effulgence of the democratic spirit. Yet this leveling of clout makes even the minutest tasks more complex. Merely moving from one area to the next can require a new set of papers. ““Wait,”” says an officer before Reed departs to the new headquarters. ““I will

write you credentials.’ He went to the typewriter and slowly picked out the letters” (233). This sclerosis of paperwork bears a dark side as well: Reed is nearly killed because he is unable to locate his papers fast enough, surrounded by guards about to fire, their faces “thundering. Faces full of hate.” Only by crying “Committee! Committee!” is an officer able to stop them, giving the reporter a moment to locate his credentials. Once found, the captain “smiled and handed me the pass. ‘Comrades, this is an American comrade. I am Chairman of the Committee, and I welcome you to the regiment.’” At the sight of authentication, the soldiers’ faces, previously filled with hate, “grew into a roar of greeting, and they pressed forward to shake my hand” (238). Even in a less lethal vein, the motor of government is already stymied by the protocols of bureaucracy (a subject that would become a target for decades of Soviet humor). When it is necessary to advance the army “with all speed,” Reed witnesses the process of Soviet expedience:

Rapidly tracing lines with a blue pencil, he gave his orders, while a sergeant made shorthand notes. The sergeant then withdrew, and ten minutes later returned with the orders typewritten, and one carbon copy. The Chairman of the Committee studied the map with a copy of the orders before him.

“All right,” he said, rising. Folding the carbon copy, he put it in his pocket. Then he signed the other, stamped it with a round seal taken from his pocket, and presented it to the Colonel....

Here was the Revolution! (240)

This mockery of the common bureaucratic practices of transcription, reproduction, and official sanction begin to transform Reed’s text into a work of bureaucracy itself. Along

with his inclusion of Cyrillic objects, *Ten Days* grows ever more clogged with duplicates of proclamations and passes. This highly modern style of government, in Reed's rendering, can only breathe through the reproduction and cataloging of documents, filling a vacuum of authority with a proliferation of new speech so boundless that dispute is rendered so exhausting as to be futile. It is no surprise, then, that Reed ends his chronicle of the Revolution in a marriage plot of sorts ordained by bureaucracy and concluded by decree:

The joint session of the Tsay-ee-kah and Peasants' Congress expresses its firm conviction that the union of workers, soldiers and peasant, this fraternal union of all the workers and all the exploited, will consolidate the power conquered by them, that it will take all revolutionary measures to hasten the passing of the power into the hands of the working-class in other countries, and that it will assure in this manner the lasting accomplishment of a just peace and the victory of Socialism. (312-313)

Thus the greatest story ever told culminates with a catalog of proud accomplishments and also ensures the Revolution's commitment to spreading socialism across all other industrial nations. But, as Reed indexes so exhaustively earlier on with the endless production of bureaucratic language, his story of the Revolution ends not exactly with a whimper, but certainly not with the radical explosion we might expect.

CHAPTER FOUR
“Anti-American As Well As Anti Almost Everything Else”:
The Saturday Evening Post, Red Russia, and the Racialization of Radical Politics

On December 21st, 1919, the USAT *Buford* set sail from New York Harbor with an extraordinary cargo: 249 purported “radicals,” convicted for their political views under the recently passed Espionage Act, were being deported to Russia. Dubbed the “Soviet Ark” in the press, its passengers included such eminent activists as Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman, along with 199 other “undesirables” seized during the first of the Palmer Raids.¹ On February 7th, 1920, the *Saturday Evening Post* launched a particularly strident set of editorials against both US immigration policy and radical politics, churlishly invoking the *Buford* as a fitting bookend for another famous voyage:

Two ships, the *Mayflower* and the *Buford*, mark epochs in the history of America. The *Mayflower* brought the first builders to this country; the *Buford* has taken away her first destroyers. In the wake of the *Mayflower* came many ships bringing desirables to these shores. Many ships must follow the *Buford*, taking back undesirables to the lands from which they came, there to stay. We have no room in America for a Society of *Buford* Descendants. (28)

By reaching back to the *Mayflower*, the editorial raises a foundational event in the history of white settlement in the colonial United States, and portrays the expulsion of foreign radicals as a moment of similar achievement. If the *Mayflower* brought the first

¹ Under the aegis of a threat from a network of German spies within American territory, federal intelligence agencies experienced unprecedented growth during the World War I. As these threats of foreign agents proved illusory, the security apparatus adjusted its focus toward antiwar and radical labor groups, culminating in a series of spectacular raids led by Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, and his newly appointed head of the General Intelligence Division of the Bureau of Investigation, J. Edgar Hoover, fresh from library school.

“builders” to US shores (effacing, of course, the *longue durée* of Native American habitation and construction), then the success of this event can only be logically sustained by the exclusion of later destroyers. While neither the ethnic cast nor political bent of these destroyers are mentioned specifically in the piece, immigrants from Eastern Europe had become so synonymous by this time with radical politics that such details were already unnecessary. In the next paragraph, the *Post* warns its readers that rather than continuing “to be the world lunatic asylum,” this “menacing fact” of radical immigrants demands that “sooner or later everyone must line up on one side or the other and take an active part in deciding whether this country shall remain America or become Russia” (28). Russia, in this figuration, is not merely a nation but a condition—and one that is, in the *Post*’s dire thinking, contagious as well.

The most widely circulated magazine in America under the editorship of the influential George Horace Lorimer, the *Saturday Evening Post*, in the words of Jan Cohn, would shape what became “our contemporary world of mass communications and mass entertainment.” Lorimer himself labored for decades to craft “an image, an idea, a construct of America for his readers to share, a model against which they could shape their lives” (Cohn 4, 5). A weekly amalgam of conflicting discourses, while its editorials and stories about radical politics in general and the Bolshevik Revolution in particular became comprehensively negative, it still championed the work of a number of moderate and radical socialist writers, such as Sinclair Lewis, H.G. Wells, and Jack London, achieving between 1899 and 1936 what Cohn argues “was the fullest expression of a broad American consensual view” (5).

As Lorimer took the *Post*'s circulation from a few thousand to over a million during his reign as editor, the magazine became *the* key arbiter in what Stuart Hall would describe as a media complex “actively ruling in and ruling out certain realities, offering maps and codes which mark out territories and assign problematic events and relations to explanatory contexts, helping us not simply to know more about ‘the world’ but to make sense of it” (Hall 325). With Lorimer’s deft and opinionated editorial hand, the “set of attitudes and beliefs” promoted by the *Post* would craft an “American ideology” that lasted “at least until the time of the New Deal” (Cohn 5). As the most popular magazine in America, containing a range of genres, from satire, cartoons, editorials, essays, investigative reports, and fiction, the *Post* provides an ideal site to excavate the range of contrasting opinions about radical politics, tracking their calcification over time into the boundaries of a discourse about both politics and immigration—and losing sight of the distinction between the two.

From Potential To Catastrophe

The Russian Revolution was not always an infernal pit of chaos and anarchy in the pages of the *Post*. Just a few weeks before the Bolshevik ascent to power but more than six months after the enforced abdication of the czar, the *Post*'s editorial page positively gushed about the Revolution’s potential. In its opinion, the events in Petrograd were truly *sui generis*: “The Russian Revolution is the only big movement of that sort which—by what seems the best evidence available—was mainly directed, from the beginning, by people at the social base; the only revolution which was thoroughly democratic from the beginning” (10/13/1917: 26). Comparing this transformation

favorably to an “American Revolution [that] was largely inspired and directed by persons whose social circumstances were of an advantageous sort” and its French counterpart wherein the “middle class, assisted by the lesser nobility, launched a revolution that was far along before it came into control of the sans-culottes,” the Russian upheaval was the only modern revolutionary movement not already compromised at its commencement. By stark contrast, the democratic base that the *Post* perceived to be lacking in the American quest for independence was absent by design: “When something like the democratic ideal of real, direct rule by the mass of the people developed” in the US, “it got into difficulties; the conservative class then intervened and shaped the present conservative Constitution” (26). Swelling the hearts of sympathetic onlookers everywhere, Russia, by overthrowing the czar and undoing the shackles of a medieval society, bore the potential to fulfill an edict undelivered by the previous epoch-making moments in the history of freedom. Evident here from its very beginning, the Russian Revolution not only provided an opportunity to watch a true democratic movement unfold, but also an occasion for American self-reflection, a tacit demand to compare the perceived failings in the US system with the limitless potential observed in Russia. The editorial’s critique of the American Revolution heralds this occasion for Revolutionary Russia to provide a rhetorical engine capable of mirroring, critiquing and obscuring the domestic American problems already enumerated, and to create a vast discursive field wherein for Americans to speak of Russia was also for them to speak of their own political desires and fears.

In the years between 1917 and 1920, the writers and editors of the *Saturday Evening Post* would submit a range of comic, hostile, curious, and wholly contradictory

pieces on the subjects of immigration, radical politics in the US, and the Russian Revolution, which would, over time, not only merge into a broadly shared albeit relatively elastic consensus but one that would also lose much distinction between the strands. Crucially, one of the discourses that allowed for this consolidation between radical politics and immigration was a racialized conception of an inherent Russian character.² An analysis of these early pieces reveals a *Post* staff to have been always already “contaminated” (to use one of their own favorite terms) by this Progressive conception of character, and its direct, inescapable, and revelatory bearing on Slavic genetic inheritance. Indeed, the 1917 editorial that so loudly lauded the revolution as the only true experiment in participatory democracy was followed only three weeks later by an extensive analysis of the Russian situation from a “man on the scene.” In the “The Russian State Of Mind,” (Nov. 3, 1917: 22) by Hamilton Fyfe, a prominent British journalist for the *Daily Mail*, Fyfe does not seem to be star-struck at all by the beauty of a grassroots political movement. The Revolution, he opines, regardless of the purity of its provenance, will necessarily be a failure due to the fact that “what is the matter with Russia” is “not that they are feeling about for a government which shall fit in with their character; but that they distrust all forms of government and all governing people. They do not want any. Democracy to them means getting rid of governments altogether” (22). This aversion to all forms of organized rule, avers Fyfe, “is a view that suits, nay, springs from the Russian temperament” (22). Fyfe deploys a logic of reflexive immanence to characterize this configuration, arguing that an aversion to organized rule is not a *result* of the Russian temperament, but the very first cause from which this temperament

² By racialization, I cull my definition from Michael Omi’s and Howard Winant’s *Racial Formation in the United States* to imply processes of the discursive production of racial identities.

springs. A reprint of this story in *Popular Opinion* bears a headline that makes the implications even clearer: “The Natural Anarchy of the Russian Temperament” (*Current Opinion*, 64.1, 41). Portraying the Russian subject as naturally predisposed to anarchy renders the Revolution itself less a collective agential movement for self-determination and more a physiological propensity toward restive sociality. Far from realizing the unsatisfied guarantees of the French and American revolutions, here the events in Russia are produced as distant not only in geographical but racial terms as well. “The Russian,” argues Fyfe, “does not so much love liberty as he finds it necessary to his existence. He must have it, just as he must have air to breathe” (22). While our contemporary moment explains away the enduring popularity of Vladimir Putin as an inherent desire Russians maintain for the strong hand of a czar, Fyfe levees the opposite diagnosis: The average Russian suffers from an alarming surfeit of the impulse toward liberty, a freedom that vastly exceeds what any “normal” society could encompass. This extreme freedom, while making Russia “a pleasanter country of residence for people of—shall we say—highly developed individuality,” also collapses the ethical foundation necessary for cohesion, and leaves a vacuum of decorum where “a hard-and-fast line drawn between permissible and unpermissible actions—does not exist. There are no binding standards of right and wrong” (22).

This article highlights a central and recurring locus in the constellation of American sentiment toward Russian culture, that of a restive tendency antagonistic to any form of rule and caused by a nature inimical to all but the most extreme freedom. After the Bolsheviks ascended to power, this worrying “nature” threatened to have global designs as well: If, as George Lichtheim argued, Russia, before 1917, was an “East

European country which happened to extend into Asia," after October it appeared rather "as an Asiatic country which extended ominously into Europe" (Malia 292). This assessment, however, while prevalent, was by no means rigid or enduring. Characteristic of the shifting ideological conceptions of Russia in the American view, Malia explains that:

after 1917 the West oscillated between a number of different and often incompatible representations of Soviet Russia. Nor did these images fall into any simple pattern. Although various images tended to predominate at different times, they also frequently coexisted within the same period and on occasion merged one into another. Soviet Russia never came into stable focus under Western eyes, as imperial Russia had done earlier, but presented a kaleidoscope of conflicting perceptions. (293)

A parallax against which the West could positively evaluate their own contrasting patterns of state formation, "the Bolshevik regime after 1917 was seen successively as enlightened despotism and as oriental despotism," a "barbaric yet vital soul" (293). Too vital, perhaps, for a Western World dealing with their own increasingly uncooperative peasant and labor populations. By placing the Russian, then, nearer to a state of nature, wherein the popular uprisings reveal not a critique of bourgeois exploitation but something fundamental about the Russian "race" itself removes the Revolution from the desire of self-determination and neuters the force of its critique. Of particular interest, considering Fyfe's attempt to produce a Russian "race" out of an analysis of historical events, is his complete evacuation of racism itself from the Russian character. "I know of no people" he declares, "who are so international as the Russians; so free from prejudices

against race or color; so ready to make friends and mix with all their fellow men" (22). While even these superlatively ecumenical people necessarily remain suspicious of "officials, policemen, Jews,"—the first two as figures of authority hated by all Russians, and the latter as, in Etienne Balibar's description, the stateless people *par excellence* and thus "an internally excluded element common to all nations" (206)—Fyfe nevertheless maintains that the Russians' "wide and willing acceptance of the brotherhood of man as a fact, not as a theory is part of the Russian character and marks off the Russians from the other peoples of the West" (22). In his racialization of the Russian as inherently ungovernable coupled with his refusal to anoint Russians with the taint of racism itself, Fyfe levels an indictment disguised as a compliment. It is in part this very lack of a sense of "race-feeling" that removes the Russians as candidates for European culture. Racism, in Fyfe's estimation, is a "natural" part of Western state formation, and the Russians' lack of it, their belief in "the fact of brotherhood" is precisely why "as far back as we meet him in history we find the Slav addicted to communism" (22). While above Fyfe invoked the Russian as anarchistic, wildly individualistic, and unsubduable, here he levees the other half of his analysis to portray the Russian as inherently collectivist—thereby ensuring any form of political system they adopt would be wholly alien to the American mien. Expanded now to include an entire "race" of people from the Danube to the Urals, and extended as far back as the historical register allows, the Russians have manifested a Bolshevik Revolution not as an answer to centuries of cruel czarist oppression but due to an "addiction" to communism, a physiological need for a communal style of living arising from their predisposition toward anarchy.

These twin and contradictory identifications of Slavs as both ungovernable and particularly susceptible to a particular style of communal sociality guides much of the ideological tension in the mass of texts from the *Post* that brings the Russian into focus. And a mass it truly is: Perhaps the most striking feature of this weekly magazine in the years at issue is the sheer multitude of texts about Russia and its nascent government. As evidenced by Fyfe's description above, framing the Revolution not as a result of historical forces but as a consequence of inherent biological predispositions was the most popular diagnosis adopted by the magazine when attempting to define the Slav. In a piece from January 26, 1918, Ernest Poole, a American novelist who was himself rather sympathetic to the socialist cause in the US,³ declared in his exposé, "Will Democracy Work in Russia?" that the answer to his titular query was most likely in the negative due to the vast disparity between the way Americans and Russians understood the term. Democracy for the Slavs, Poole argues, is not a political system at all but merely the word they use to describe the absence of one. Poole skillfully places his own critique of the new system into the mouth of an educated Russian desperate to keep the revolutionary dream alive. His problem, this Russian admits, is that "I myself am a socialist; but in the last few months I have found this is not a socialist country. Our people are not made like that. Each one is greedy for his own and thinks very little of the state....We had clothed the people with ideals, and now we found them naked" (13). As a contrast to Fyfe, who finally dismissed the Russians as "addicted" to communism, Poole discovers a nation whose revolution is under threat for precisely the opposite concern: A self-centered mode of existence wherein the ascension of socialism is prevented because

³ He was known at the time for his novel, *The Harbor* (1915), which was one of the first to offer a positive depiction of unions.

the larger needs of the revolutionary society are ignored due to a focus on individual needs. Rather than an addiction to communism, Poole depicts the tragedy of a nation already far within the throes of transformation, and discovering all too late that the fine words and theories of the revolutionaries slip too easily from the masses they were intended to entice. This selfishness, of course, should not be confused with the forms of greed associated with capitalism, but with a nearer proximity to the instant gratification found in the animal kingdom. As the nostalgic and educated Russian—animated through Poole—laments: “The layer of civilization here is about one-thousandth of an inch thick” (85). In a later section of Poole’s story entitled, “Russia’s Dangerous Illness,” these biological predispositions have gone airborne. Written from the perspective of a wealthy manufacturer once of the “peasant class” himself, the author declares that the current “madness” gripping Russia is not a result of any particular disposition of the Russian character but of the physical effects of the theories themselves, though the nouveau riche industrialist remains hopeful that such “a people cannot be spoiled by a short debauch of wild ideas. It is a dangerous illness, but Russia will recover” (86).

However, Poole himself quickly corrects the positivity of his marionette by dashing any potential the Russians might have to textual self-determination, fast returning the fault not to the ideas themselves, but to a racially Russian basis for Bolshevism: “The Slavs” he argues “are not like the Germans. By instinct they are opposed to any strong centralized government, and take rather to the idea that the industries should be owned and run cooperatively, by the workers themselves” (89-90). By comparing the Russians to Teutons wherein the latter stolid race revels in being led by the stern and stable hand of

the Kaiser, the Russians no longer suffer from an illness with the potential for a cure but from a genetic marker that responds instinctually to the call of communism.

William T. Ellis, a former confederate soldier turned Kentucky congressman, uses a similar comparison between the Germans and Russians to complicate the previous distinctions between illness and instinct. In his piece, “Liberty À La Russe” (February 13th, 1918), Ellis asks: “Will Fritz catch the Russian fever and in his delirium abolish the Kaiser and his clique, thus bringing the war to an end?” (13).⁴ This question does not merely concern an imminent armistice, however, but the future of Western civilization itself: “If revolution spreads from Russia to Germany then extreme socialism is bound to sweep the world. It will be a new force stronger than armies or laws or traditions or patriotism” (13). In Ellis’ depiction, German susceptibility to the “Russian fever” will inaugurate a worldwide sweep of “extreme socialism,” and therefore it is crucial to divine once and for all if the Russian fever is an exportable disease or if it needs its natural Slavic habitat in order to grow. Luckily for his readers, as his analysis hinges upon a distinction between the mental composition of these races, Ellis concludes that the Russian Revolution will not cross the Danube: The “practical mind of the Teuton,” no matter what they suffer beneath the yoke of “intensified Prussianism” cannot help but be repelled by “Russia’s crowning proof of ineffectiveness” (82). As Ellis assures his American audiences, “Fritz may be slow-witted, but he is no fool.... He is for the thing that works.... Intellectually he has long inclined to theoretical socialism. But if this Russian chaos be socialism, then he is for absolutism, with the Kaiser and God on a joint throne.” Using a racial comparison between Teutons and Slavs, Ellis determines that if

⁴ “Fritz” was a mildly derogatory colloquial term for German soldiers used by American troops.

the Russian revolution is indeed a fever, the Germans may flirt with a cold or two, but only the Slavic minds is truly susceptible.

The very next week after Ellis used this racial comparativism to placate an American readership anxious about the potential for the worldwide spread of Bolshevism, the Confederate veteran repackaged the events in Russia as a rationale for the immediate institution of emergency immigration policies in "The Overflowing Melting Pot: Why the Americanization of America Must Begin." If the provocative headline of Ellis' piece was not impetus enough, the first line certainly makes the immediacy of the stakes clear: "This," he begins, "is a fire-alarm article" (March 2, 1918, p. 21). Both the imminence and immanence of his alarm's weight stem from his location: "It is being written in Russia for and about America." Ellis' whereabouts allow him to claim both gravity and authority, while he rides between Kieff and Moscow, on the first train north for days." Our intrepid narrator is hopefully "headed out of Russia, but whether I shall ever be able to pass the barriers of fanaticism and fire and rifle and mob rule and transportation breakdowns remains to be seen" (21). Ellis begins his brief on American immigration within the breathless melodrama of a wartime escape, admitting of his fervid style, but demanding its necessity: "Though this message is sensational, it is not hasty or superficial. It is no casual second-hand impression transmitted from professional and interested Russian 'leaders' at Petrograd. What I have to say is right from the raw of Russia" (21). Indeed, it is precisely this location in Russia's "raw" that has hastened him to his frightening conclusion, one bearing great significance for his American readers. Ellis' exposure to "the atmosphere of far Tartary and of the strange peoples of the Caucasus, of the Caspian basin, of the fat fields of the Don and of beautiful Bessarabia"

has produced an unnerving conclusion that "one does not have to scratch the Russian to find the Tartar. Russia is predominantly Oriental" (21). While this observation is assumed to contain enough gravitas in itself, Ellis uses this racialized deduction to make an important contrast beyond a mere categorizing of the peoples of Russia. "America," he says, "is farther away from mid-Russia in comprehension than she is miles" (21). In a piece ostensibly concerned with US policies of assimilation and immigration, Ellis spends half his pages first constructing the vast chasm of differences between the US and Russia in manner, government, and people. The real problem, as Ellis sees it, is that "the average Russian thinks that *svoboda*, or 'liberty,' as it is expounded to him by radical agitators, is synonymous with Americanism" (21). This *méconnaissance* prods scores of Russian masses toward American shores, expecting to both discover and enact their profoundly alien conception of "Americanism" upon arrival. While the US may be rightfully trumpeted for its welcoming policies, these gates must now be immediately closed after the war. For, as Ellis warns, an "America imbued with the Russian spirit, would not be the America that is now staking her very life upon the service of democracy and humanity. To Russianize America would be only to multiply mankind's misery" (22). In the opening anecdote about the Buford, Russia became not only a location but a condition as well. Here, "Russianness" bears the threat of miscegenation, a poisoning of "the American strain" that is already evident, especially in our cities, where "America has been toying with what may be termed the Russian spirit." Led chiefly by expatriate Russians, this "large group of unconventional thinkers and agitators, who call themselves progressives," have "scoffed at the conventional in art and drama and music and morals. They have given an erotic cast to much contemporary literature.... and nothing is good

that is not new." Indeed, under the baleful influence of the Russian spirit, not even the proud foundations of American history are safe. In these neophiles' faddish estimation, "the Pilgrim Fathers were bigots and narrow-minded fools.... Our democracy is a farce and a failure, and we are in the grip of a foul-hearted capitalistic class" (22). For Ellis, Russians are not merely enemies of American political institutions but of its very culture. In his estimation, Modernism is merely a disguised imported Russianism, and any "newness" in art seems to bear an alarming relationship to the "newness" surrounding him on the frightful Soviet train. Ellis, in the very heart of revolutionary Russia, is convinced that "further absorption at the present time" of Russians "would denature America" (22). His answer to this threat of denaturing is to undertake "a cult of patriotism." Not of course in the bloody jingoism of the Prussians or the diabolical nihilism of the Bolsheviks, but what Ellis calls an "intelligent patriotism." If the finer points of this program remain unclear, any lingering confusion is quickly silenced by his following disciplinary statement that "all this"—his views on Russia, on immigration, on the need for a patriotic cult—"is obvious to a normal American" (37). Ellis then makes plain what had already been implicit in so much American writing both from and about Russia: That discourse about Revolutionary Russia is always already both about and intended for the United States. Or, in Ellis' terms, "every aspect of the disorder in Russia cries aloud for a new cult of patriotism in America." The Russian revolution in this rendering literally speaks, and its appeals demand America's own introspection. Of course, this introspection might imply the need to temporarily curtail precisely those freedoms that make the US so attractive, as Ellis inculcates us in "our latitude of criticism [that] we may make an idol of free speech. Shall men with an alien lisp to their tongues

be permitted to stand at our doors and cry that our fathers were rogues and our mothers unchaste?” (37). Much as his assessment “is obvious to a normal American,” his remedies also “naturally suggest themselves.” Writing from the train outside of Kiev, this threat from Russia demands a complete reinvigoration of ideological practice through “a rereading of our country’s great history, by an intensification of the national spirit in our schoolbooks, by pageants and plays of patriotism, by pictures and mottoes and songs, by pilgrimages to our national shrines, and by a dissemination, through pulpit and press, of the news of what our country stands for” (37). In Ellis’ estimation of the threat, revolutionary Russia demands no less than the creation of an entire national culture defined in contradistinction to Bolshevism, the mobilization of every ideological apparatus in the service of producing an Americanism that stands distinctly apart from the events in Eastern Europe. After all, this complete mobilization of domestic “soft power” is not to chafe against Russia but to help it, as “the best service that America can render poor Russia to-day is to be herself” (37). As Ellis has so helpfully shown, the contours of this new American self could not have been so distinctly brought into view without the grand new foil in Petrograd.

The various tropes discussed above—of a Russian nature trapped between inherent selfishness and instinctual communalism, of a contagious “Russian-mindedness” infecting the various American adherents of newness, of an emergent sense of Americanism defined in stark contrast to Red Russia—continue to be deployed in numerous forms between 1917 and 1920. To recount them all would be a study in repetition, but one lengthy article bears discussion, as it shows how an extensive and

surprisingly fair assessment of Marx’s life and thought can be simultaneously used to present Marxism as irredeemably foreign. *The Socialist’s Koran* (1/25/1919 pg. 11) begins by Orientalizing Marxism from the very title, as Will Payne, a frequent contributor of both fiction and journalism to the *Post*, attempts a digest of Marx’s work for casual readers. His opening lines continue to estrange the philosopher: “During our Civil War a stout, swarthy, heavily whiskered German Jew was living in London,” he begins, first addressing the reader as part of a national collective, and then mentioning Marx’s triply alienated provenance not only as a Jew and a German, but also an exile in a foreign city—complete with the details of dark skin and facial hair attendant to portrayals of foreign radicals. While the discussion takes the expected and rather easy potshots at Marx’s birth into a bourgeois family, Payne characterizes the central tenets of what he sees as comprising the doctrine of Marxism in fairer terms than one might expect. Placing *Capital* in a trinity of “outstanding books on political economy,” which include Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* and Henry George’s *Progress and Poverty*, Payne nonetheless retreats into a more defensive sensibility as soon as he connects Marx’s writings with the Bolshevik Revolution itself. Marx, he complains, disguised the foundation of his philosophy with abstraction: “He might have simplified it, leaving out the long, dry discussion of abstract economic theory and the economic formulas he is so fond of using—putting it this way: ‘If you are ill off and your neighbor is well off, his good fortune is the cause of your ill fortune; therefore, oust him’” (121). By reframing Marxism first into an individualist lens and therefore eliding the structural critique contained in *Capital*, Payne relegates Marxism to a simplistic *ressentiment*. For Payne, the Russians have all too eagerly birthed a new moral economy from nothing more than a

sense of inferiority. Even though “you could never discourage a socialist with a fact,” Marxism has armed the Bolsheviks of a number of them—all of which cloak a reality wherein the entire body of thought itself is merely “a doctrine of hate and division” that obscures itself in abstraction while feeding off discontent.

This vampiric rendering of a doctrine of hate is a fitting introduction to George Kibbe Turner’s serialized novella, *Red Friday*, that appeared throughout the *Post* from April 5th, 1919, to April 26th of the same year. In Benedict Anderson’s formulation, “the formation of collective subjectivities in the modern world” can be usefully approached through an analysis of the “two profoundly contrasting types of seriality” they produce: A “bound” seriality, “which has its origins in governmentality,” exemplified by such institutional forms as the census; and an “unbound” seriality, “which has its origins in the print market, especially in newspapers” (117). In *The Long Space*, Peter Hitchcock argues that, through Anderson’s coronation of the newspaper, “it is never clear if the logic of seriality is the only or even a primary condition of nation”—helpfully suggesting that this logic might “be more persuasive in another register, one that did not claim causality so insistently but was imbued with the same ambivalence as its object” (25). This, Hitchcock contends, is “the terrain and time of the serial novel.... If Anderson is right that the newspaper facilitates an experience of unbound seriality in nation discourse, serial fiction participates in this expansive simultaneity, but this does not secure identification in the name of a nation” (25). The very form of fiction, in Hitchcock’s estimation, demands a more nuanced register in the tone of state formation, and one that necessarily exceeds dominant discourses about the nation-form.

Indeed, perhaps no writing in the *Post* during this period better captures the contention that Americans write about Russians to think about Americans than Turner’s novella about Russian infiltration and economic apocalypse in the US. Detailing the machinations of Plangonev, a Russian radical who strikes a deal with a Wall St. tycoon to bring about the destruction of American capitalism, the New York we enter is one from the very near future, December 1919, a place and time roiled with foreign agents and labor strife. As our narrator, the Reverend J. Appleton Todd, warns: “That the Russian Bolsheviki, so called, were close students of [our economy] as of others, I knew well; that they had their agents constantly among us was in a sense common knowledge, even then” (4/5/1919, p. 57). This era of paranoia and subversion is begun proleptically, to impart a simultaneous sense of warning and safety to its readers: “Since the killing of Plangonev,” it begins, already rendering its readership safe—for now. Before his death, we find out that Plangonev, who has a great mastery of economics, was nearly able to destroy capitalism through his carefully constructed “plan of debt.” In a tale unmistakably prescient for our twenty-first century economic conjuncture, Plangonev seeks to unhinge the financial system by laying unbearable stress at its weakest points of indebtedness, made even more vulnerable by the First World War. As a physical and intellectual doppelganger of Lenin (whose frequent mentions in the *Post* were synonymous with infernal schemes of terrifying efficacy), Plangonev possessed a “great grey head... too thinly clad” and had been sent for hard labor “in the Siberian quarry” (4/5/1919, p.4). His revolutionary credentials are beyond reproach, as “the brain of the proletariat, the one great secret mind, such as exists behind all movements, within the social revolutions of the east of Europe; wise with the wisdom of a catastrophic era, and as secret and pitiless

in his movements as he was wise" 4/5/1919, 3-4). While the revolution is engaging all of Europe, Plangonev's heritage as a Russian is alluded to with condemning frequency. His speech in particular broadcasts a cold cruelty in its vulgarly ethnic pronunciations: "hard, uncouth, northern consonants" intertwine with the "harsh sibilants and dentals in his speech" (4/5/1919, 3). Our narrator, the Reverend Todd, immediately sets a binarism between himself and Plangonev, though the two of them are both nominally of the same spectrum of beliefs: "He was the supposed Doctrinaire of Russia at one pole, I the Christian Socialist of America at the other" (4.5.1919, 4). As a Christian Socialist, Todd places himself firmly in the moderate camp of social justice, one that believes in the work of charity and other ameliorative social devices rather than full revolution. Above all, he declares, our narrator eschews violence, undergirded by a staunch distinction between national accepted standards of conduct: No matter what, he asserts, "Human life must be sacred. Violence would not be countenanced here in the United States as in Russia" (4/5/1919, 4).

While Todd seems surprised to find a man of such revolutionary esteem in New York, Plangonev shrugs it off. "Why not?" he says. "It is but a step. Trotsky was just here" (4/5/1919, 4).⁵ Plangonev's plan for America, we soon find out, is one of pure negation. His mission is not to spread socialism but to destroy capitalism. When pressed about the events in Europe, Plangonev states casually that "Russia, for example, was not ten per cent socialist.... Capitalism is dead, that is all—in Europe" (4/5/1919, 4). Rather than concern himself with bringing about "the social millennium upon earth," Plangonev

⁵ Invoking Trotsky's recent visit to New York is a simple mechanism for playing upon the fears of the *Post*'s readership of the simple movements between Russia and the US, and of the rather thin protections America possessed to prevent radicals from arriving.

is bent solely upon destruction—“the day then so generally looked forward to by socialists throughout the world—the day when the capitalist system would break down of its own weight” (4/5/1919, 4). If Payne’s rendering of Marx’s “Koran” echoed a Nietzschean sense of resentment, Turner extends this critique to enfold the entirety of the oppressed classes, with Plangonev “the personification of the new power in the world—the bitter voice of the proletariat come to judgment, cursing their old master” (4/5/1919, 4). Indeed, Plangonev is so motivated by hate and destruction that the mere thought of this coming annihilation manifests “his blood rising to his lifelong hate” and outbursts of pure venom: ““The damned bourgeois,’ he cried, and spat scorn from his mouth it almost seemed with those hated words; ‘they saw it coming, from their accounts, their ledgers, their banks’” (4/5/1919, 4). This release of pure negation allows Todd to fully categorize his Russian guest for the first time, Plangonev’s hatred rendering his “nature” more visible to a civilized audience. As Todd explains, “I sat and studied him—his fire of hatred, his harsh and antagonistic voice, his striking head, his peasant hands, the pits of peasant smallpox in his face; and the long gray faded overcoat, thrown open now and hanging down—that dingy mantle of the proletariat, as one might call it, worn in every crowded city slum in Europe, and America, and the world” (4/5/1919, 4). Turner has animated a golem of animus, and clothed him in all the particulars of the radical immigrant in America. Plangonev’s hatred of capitalism is not a conclusion arrived at after calm and careful consideration, but the fundament of his being itself, a nature of negation, dressed to match the radicalized *shtetl* refugees, and marked physically by poverty, labor, and disease. However, Turner also takes care to mention that Plangonev is

no singularity but an endlessly replicated figure found at all sites of industrial exploitation, and building vast networks between Old Europe and the New World.

In response to Todd’s concerns, Plangonev assures the Reverend that the American coup will be bloodless due to the “debt-making power” that the American proletariat already “hold in their hands.... The power [of] creating public debt—of destroying and confiscating private property by popular vote” (4/5/1919, 4). Plangonev intends to create a literal “State of the Debt” (borrowing from a Derridean subtitle) through which to expropriate the expropriators. Democracy, for Plangonev, is the ultimate mechanism through which the weak can shackle the strong. Indeed, it is through the very process of the ballot that part of the “plot of debt” is enacted. But Plangonev first needs some elite assistance and we find that he has sought Todd out solely for the latter’s rolodex: The Russian wants to be introduced to Stephen Black, finance’s greatest insider, the “most secret of all men, that mysterious secret influence which capital itself knew only as a misty menacing power always over Wall Street” (4/5/1919, 58). Capital, embodied by Black, is not so much a system as a mystical force at the strategic heart of the nation’s finances. In fact, so little is known about Black himself that he was “more a name than a man—a myth, an unknown and menacing power, working in the dark, coming and going and taking his profits with him, from great stealthy unseen forays upon the stock market, known only through their results” (4/5/1919, 62). With a flourish of naturalist imagery, Turner produces a character who embodies the esoteric workings of the system Black controls, a man so uncontestedly at the pinnacle of financial power that his persona mimics the qualities of capital he commands. Black’s position is elite even among the elite, and in comparison with this small circle, “of all these men—this group

of, let us say, twenty-five great bourgeois at the center of the wealth of the continent—none, as has been amply shown since, practiced or required absolute secrecy of plan and movement to the same extent as Stephen Black” (4/5/1919, 61).

Plangonev, oddly enough, has a business proposition for the mogul, and one that enticingly comprises “the greatest stake yet offered to a great bourgeois plunderer in the world” (4/5/1919, 57). When Todd and Plangonev call on the financier, Black’s physical body, bound in a wheelchair, is the antithesis of the power he signifies. In fact, it is exactly his financial power that has so enervated the flesh, his life of secrecy having taken on “some said, almost the proportions of a disease” (4/5/1919, 62). As with Plangonev earlier, Todd is able to read Black’s nature in his very physicality: “An oaken purpose, burned a little into the ashes of life; cheeks cross-hatched with the lines of those who plan and plot; a type of the great bourgeois—the soft-bodied, cold-handed men in the swivel chairs who ruled America at that time by the force of thought and eye strain” (4/5/1919, 62). Black and Plangonev together, “those two secret masters of capital and labor—those two great manipulators of the main simple wires which set the puppet man to dancing” (4/5/1919, 62), rather self-consciously embody the antagonists of Marx’s historical engine. After listening to Plangonev’s plot, Black recognizes the offer as an obvious trap and sums it up for the readers:

“Those pincers! Do you think we do not see that pair of pincers? On the one hand you put the spending of the money in government hands. You pay labor more than it can earn. You raise the wages, you raise the prices of material; and keep them raised. Every corporation also pays your price.”

“Precisely so,” said Plangonev.

“That raises the costs of every corporation in the country above what it earns,” said Black. “There is the one side of the thing. On the other side you gouge every dollar you spend and waste for the Government out of the corporations themselves—or the men who run them—by these damned things—these new war taxes.”

“Precisely,” said the Russian.

“If we let go,” said Black, his eyes now almost protruding in his excitement, “if this thing grows—this waste, this public debt—as it is now growing since this war, in ten years there won’t be a private corporation left standing in this country. Nor a dollar for the owner of a stock.”

(4/5/1919, 65)

The federal government, by increasing taxes during the war and paying higher union wages, has in fact unleashed a monstrous precedent capitalized upon by Russian agents. This government expansion—with a little incitement and direction from agitators—cannot help but thrust itself outward through the logic of its own propulsion, imprisoning the entire financial apparatus of the nation between a crushing helix of increased taxes and higher union wages. As Black apoplectically explains: “On the one hand the cost of every private corporation raised in every last particular—by government competition for labor and materials....And on the other hand making the corporations pay that cost a second time—the Government’s costs—by their taxes, at every possible point” (4/5/1919, 65). But Black’s role is simple and impossible for a capitalist to refuse. As Plangonev passionately explains, “you and I... by joining forces can make more money than any two

men since the world began.... You, with your financial and legislative machinery; I and my associates to excite labor.” As the Russian sums it up simply, the two of them together will provide “pressure on either end—from capital and labor. No concession absolutely from either side” (4/5/1919, 65). Black, then, has merely to sit back and “sell the market short on everything” while using his political power to ensure that Congress votes to nationalize industries as they fall into debt, such as the railroads have already done. Meanwhile, Plangonev will make sure labor continues to strike for higher wages while wasting as much time as possible on the job.

The legions of labor, in Turner’s rendering, are cooperative not only because it is desirable to strike for higher wages but because labor itself, “quite often of foreign origin,” is both inherently pliable and always under the sway of unctuous and corrupted leaders (4/5/1919, 65). The local organizer in this case, Honest John Hodman, has a “rough handshake and alcoholic warmth” (4/5/1919, 66), and comes “from an aristocracy of labor; a peculiarly American class” (4/5/1919, 66). As we meet a number of American labor leaders, Plangonev is repeatedly differentiated from them not only by the sibilant sounds of Slavic language mentioned above, but by explicit ethnic differences, whether in his “slow, scornful, fatalistic Asiatic smile” as befits “the eyes of a law-free plunderer of cities (4/12/1919, 16)” or one of his Semitic colloquialisms. “We have a saying in Russia,” says Plangonev, explaining how sometimes the weak can conquer the mighty: “When the Cossack meets the Jew it is not always the Jew who suffers” (4/5/1919, 66).

It takes little more than a year for Plangonev’s plan to bear fruit, and the “whole movement—the first great plutocrats’ panic of 1921—was, in fact, too successful” (4/5/1919, 66). The fall in the economy was progressing too quickly for “the leading by

degrees of the American people—without their own knowledge, but through their natural tendencies—into the general rule of the proletariat” (4/5/1919, 66). According to Plangonev, and in distinction to Russia, “The American people... must be handled very carefully in his plan of debt, because they were altogether the least socialistic and most bourgeois people on the earth,” driven “most of all by the great general impulses of the bourgeois—by what he termed the emotions of property” (4/12/1919, 16). As the Russians, cast here with Asiatic blood, are figured as predisposed to both anarchy and socialism, Plangonev’s own inquiries into character have determined that “the American people were especially susceptible” to what he called the “emotions of property of possession” (4/12/1919, 16). Symptoms of this disease of property include “the instinct for saving—for small private investment; and such was the strong desire for the personal possession of land” (4/12/1919, 16). These instinctual emotions of property allow the American public to be singularly manipulated by a “bourgeois Government” in an Althusserian litany of ideological apparatuses: “in school, in the theater, in politics, in the press, and even in the moving pictures; by these emotions—derived primarily from the fact of personal possession, then emotionalized and idealized under symbols for the national god, for the national flag, for the home, for the possession of one woman of your own in marriage” (4/12/1919, 16). Plangonev’s history of the American public and the nation-form it inhabits all stem from an inherent and instinctual disposition toward the bourgeois customs of saving and investment. From this originary strand of biological economics has grown an entire culture—complete with politicians able to capitalize upon these very “emotions of property” that reflexively perpetuate themselves. Indeed, Plangonev’s list leaves few arenas of life, whether public or private, unindicted as

purposefully manufactured to manipulate propertied emotions in the service of political ends. It is this disposition toward bourgeois customs that causes the first friction between Reverend Todd and his Russian foil after the latter explains the form of society he wants to create after the collapse of capitalism. The image is repugnant to our man of the cloth: "It may be logic," Todd concedes about Plangonev's particulars, "but it is not the habit of the race, you cannot change our oldest, deepest emotions by enactment or even by logic" (4/12/1919, 16). In the battle between socialist theory and biology, Todd asserts, nature will always win out.

Plangonev's logic, however, has certainly proven correct in terms of the market, and his plan is progressing exactly as he had foreseen. By the fall of 1921, "Congress and other governmental bodies, stimulated and indeed compelled by the weakened and distressed condition of private industry, had extended the realm of public operation into still larger territories" (4/12/1919, 16). While the railways were the first to be taken over, the government now controlled streetcars and street lighting, and had just taken command of the telegraph and telephone systems as well. It is in the midst of this gloomy scenario that Turner provides his readers with a little necessary comic relief while the American economy is ground down. From scenes almost exclusively conducted in the apartments of either Black or Todd, the narrator visits a fashionable salon of effete bourgeois adherents to socialism. These "parlor Bolsheviks," as the *Post's* opinion pieces so often characterized them, are dismissed by Plangonev as at best "Amateur Saviours" but perhaps more accurately, he declares, as "the emotionally unemployed" (4/12/1919, 17). By contrasting Plangonev's earlier theories on the American "emotions of property" with his use of the echoing obverse of "emotionally unemployed," Plangonev then relegates

these American socialists—sons and daughters of moguls in “real estate or mines, packers of food, investors in securities”—as quite literally lacking in precisely those American qualities of desire that typify a “normal” citizen. Indeed, all the men in the salon are characterized as deficient, a “female element.” For example, the host, “the god is spats,” as Plangonev derides him, was “a tall, handsome, rather effeminate man, who smoked Russian cigarettes in a long holder, of which he had a great collection” (4/12/1919, 57)—doubly wanting as the man both affects a Russian posture and remains feminized.

The comic scene is forced to a close as 1922 arrives, the plot of debt well into its “second phase,” and the foreign laborers in Honest John’s command thoroughly “touched by the kindling flames of the successes of the proletariat in Europe” (4/12/1919, 58). “Russia” is no longer merely a nation, but a beacon of broadcast possibility for alternative social organization. Black has grown wealthy beyond measure by betting on the destruction of the same system that had provided his original investment capital, and it seems nothing can stand in the way of the culmination of Plangonev’s scheme. Which is why his attraction to Black’s daughter, Charlotte, provides a fitting *deus ex machina* to prevent fruition. “White, slender, delicate, beautiful with every accessory of calculated beauty” (4/12/1919, 60), Charlotte is indeed her father’s girl, and one who is also superlative at managing investments, though with attraction rather than cash. As the text had already made clear the pronounced instinctual differential between Americans and Russian “Asiatics,” it is no wonder that Plangonev’s wooing of Charlotte invokes a rather famous literary contrast of both color and mien, as Charlotte “played above him that night—consciously, it seemed to me—Ariel to Caliban—taunting this monster from the

slums, secure always in her power to escape" (4/12/1919, 60). The reference to Shakespeare's spirits is doubly instructive: Not only is Plangonev, through his comparison with Caliban, both racialized as a potential Asiatic and mongrelized as the construction of a number of lesser animals, but Ariel and Caliban also represent different potential responses to political oppression. While Ariel can be seen as negotiating a more moderate relationship between authority and freedom in "The Tempest," Caliban prefers to plot and sabotage for personal sovereignty. Indeed, this connection between the literal monstrosity of Caliban's heritage and Plangonev's Russian provenance is made more explicit as the Russian inflections in his speech take on a staunchly reptilian cast. Once his desire for Charlotte is ignited, the Russian's thin veil of civilization has been thoroughly scratched: "'Yes-s-s,' said Plangonev," answering a question from Todd, who "marked again how the Russian sibilants hissed in his speech with his restrained emotion" (4/12/1919, 63), smiling with his stained broken wolfish teeth" and then figured as a very mongrel himself, with "the spirit of the half Oriental in his blood" (4/12/1919, 63). Turner also begins to refer to Plangonev less by name and more frequently simply as "the Russian," the increased regularity of this ethnic descriptor bearing the weight of a collective identity rather than an individual actor. By contrast, the only time the term "American" is mobilized to describe a particular character is to increase the distance between the financier and the revolutionary. When the two unlikely business partners have a disagreement, Plangonev alludes to sabotage: "'Suppose the government should come to know of you?' asked the Russian. 'Or of you?' returned the American" (4/12/1919, 63).

Plangonev, who, as a Socialist, has "a theory for everything," opines upon this textual ineluctability of biology with a particular Marxist cast. In his estimation, we are all miniature dialectics that "contains within himself always—each living thing—the germs of its own self-destruction." The financier Black, by slowly dying from Graves' disease—an illness caused, in the diagnosis of his personal physician, "to men under constant nervous strain, as this one has been under all his life" (4/12/1919, 65)—literally embodies Plangonev's conception of nature as immanent demise. There is little distinction between Black's mode of employment and the inner life of his cells, wherein fear and secrecy have had "too long a career of unopposed imperialism in his nervous system" (4/12/1919, 65). This existential dialectic, though revealed as true in Black's case, is also dismissed as a "dreadful Oriental fatalistic faith... that all organic things bear in themselves the germs of self-destruction." Once this philosophy is marked as insidiously foreign, it is explicitly linked to Marxism itself. This Asian fatalism, this religion of self-destruction is, according to Todd, "but the great underlying principle of Marxian socialism, which we were now applying to America, the inevitable drift of the civilization in which we lived toward disintegration and collapse" (4/19, 1919, 22). Marxism here is a decidedly non-white conception of human society. Plangonev's philosophy, earlier dismissed not as a form of socialism but as a purely negative force, draws its negativity from his Asiatic cast, which is why Marxism also bears the force of truth for him. In fact, it is only when Todd recognizes Marxism's symmetry with Plangonev's half-Asian fatalism that he finally loses faith in their undertaking. By now, even the simplest gestures mark not only the Russian as foreign but also point toward the imbrication between Marxist thought and Asian culture, as Plangonev held "out his hand

in that expressive Oriental gesture by which all things at last reduce themselves to their own negation” (4/19/1919, 23). This inexorability of heritage is the basis for Marxist thought itself, an Oriental fatalism applied to the science of society, an affront to the freedoms of self-determination in the American system, and a subduing of potential to the ethnically preordained. The Reverend is finally forced to admit that even his own moderate Christian socialism perches on the same scale as Plangonev’s thought, a difference of degree rather than kind, and all leading to “this inevitable logical process of the formula of self-elimination, of the suicide of a society by this inescapable law of Karl Marx” (4/19/1919, 78). With Red Friday fast approaching, Reverend Todd tries to figure out a way to stop this relentless machine. As Plangonev informs him, the Russian intends on the titular day to sell off the hundreds of millions of bonds he has amassed in order to wipe out all market liquidity and levy the final death blow to American capitalism. He also informs Todd that Charlotte has agreed to marry him. The latter fact, more noxious to Todd than Red Friday itself, is received with fully unqualified language. Todd is “appalled, humiliated and horrified” and emits “a groan—of horror and disgust” (4/19/1919, 85). Considering the catalog of earlier trespasses conceived by Plangonev and carried out with the help of Todd, it is a surprise that the intermarriage would bother him the most, yet it affects

me with strange and unaccountable poignancy—what I had just heard... this arraignment of his of the faith of our women. This sneering half jest of his upon the negation of the inexorable law of Marx of all our established and treasured instincts. It was a shock unlike anything that had come to me—not so much pain and horror as the sense of nausea; the sense which,

I have been told, those passing through the experience of an earthquake
feel at the undreamed-of terror of the giving way of the solid world
beneath them. (4/19/1919, 85)

To lightly invoke Marshall Berman, Plangonev's interracial engagement has melted all that is solid into air, leaving the Reverend staggering through a bout of Sartrean nausea at the reality of the unlikely pair. If Turner has already overtly placed Todd and Black at different moments as opposite poles to Plangonev, Charlotte's dichotomy with the Russian will be the final and necessary third equation. Indeed, she is rendered as a foil even more extreme than her father: "Never had they seemed so antipodal in the world—the height of frailty, inutility and protected beauty on one side; of strength and directness and common fiber upon the other" (4/19/1919, 81) For Plangonev, Charlotte's decision to marry him only further justifies the limitless application of the Marxist analytic. Women, after all, are merely "the most attractive form of property [the bourgeoisie] possess" (4/5/1919, 61). Charlotte is a creature "who spends all her life, who concentrates all the modern arts on what it wanted—physical elegance and beauty. Is any organic thing in more abject slavery and uselessness...?" (4/5/1919, 61). Plangonev, the merciless scientist of society, utters his pronouncements upon her decision to marry him "as a biologist upon a butterfly." The logic is simple: "Like the house serfs before our Russian emancipation or your Civil War," bourgeois woman are "least of all adaptable to economic freedom, because [they are] most domesticated for their present use" (4/5/1919, 61). After Red Friday, Plangonev will be the wealthiest man left on Earth. Thus, "the instinct of self-preservation is still a very strong one everywhere; even with the female" (4/19/1919, 85).

The marriage, like the plan of debt itself, is merely one more instance of Marx’s ineluctable law.

Mere days before Red Friday is to fall, American corporations have nearly collapsed, the government owns almost all of industry, and labor has so paralyzed the nation’s basic services with strategic sloth that it now can “take a week to send a letter or express package, where formerly it took a day!” (4/19/1919, 86). There is a silver lining, however, to all of this trouble. Reverend Todd, as the only one who knows the full extent of Plangonev’s designs, recovers his feminized lack of agency merely by attempting to thwart the plan of debt. Admittedly “the least executive of men” (4/26/1919, 18), the Reverend is now possessed by a focus previously reserved for either Plangonev or Mr. Black. First attempting to raise the alarm with his emotionally unemployed amateur saviors, he is surprised to find the usual luxury of the salon moved now into a rather cramped apartment in Greenwich Village. The saviors, it seems, have had much of their inherited fortunes either reduced or vanished completely during the economic tailspin. Todd enters the room just as a “young observer of Russia with his horn glasses” is extolling the “potentialities, a possibility of fundamentals” of the communal Russian village system known as the “mir”—a perfect contrast, the man asserts, to “our hurried, thoughtless, rapacious Western civilization.” Todd, outfitted now with his new muscular concern for American values, interrupts the Russophilic monologue to tell his tale. The parlor Bolsheviks, however, cannot possibly coalesce what it is they know of Marx’s theories with the story Todd has just related. As one of the attendees explains, “you have been deceived, imposed upon.... The formula of Marx would certainly not work in that way, I am sure of it. I know Kautsky well; I have spoken with Bebel, I have seen

Friedrich Engels and I believe I understand Marx’s expectations, as well as any man—in this country at least” (4/26/1919, 18). Todd’s simple rejoinder is rather more materialist: “Possibly,” he admits, “but I am telling you now of what actually happened.”

Rebuffed by the saviors due to their current financial impotence, the dreaded Red Friday actually falls in August of 1922. Though few socialists come out to greet its arrival, some from New York’s East Side do emerge to celebrate, bearing red insignias “under the high empty arches of the huge bridge whose shadows had marked the unpassed outer boundaries of this section—not more than a short mile away, but more unfamiliar to most of them, both physically and mentally, than the deep interior of Russia” (4/26/1919, 19). Red Friday, for the foreign contingent already in the US, acts as a heraldic contraction of space, allowing the dispossessed to move out from their ghettos and claim full stock in the new American experiment. While having suffered previously from both a physical and mental barrier beneath the bridge, the collapse of Wall Street has allowed these masses from the darkest heart of Russia to emerge bearing their Oriental oriflamme upon Manhattan. The distance between the US and the Soviet Union has finally been erased. These players upon the stage of Asiatic fatalism demonstrate that “the formula of Marx had come to its inevitable conclusion in America; and now, as well, the end of capitalism was to pass at once into an equally inevitable violence” (4/26/1919, 103).

As this rising red tide seems just about to crest, Todd notices a headline in the newspaper that details “the first story of the death of Plangonev at the hands of Charlotte Black” (4/26/1919, 103). From this point on, the narrative is mediated through the rhetoric of court testimony—the climax of *Red Friday* placing previously helpless state

institutions safely back as the adjudicators of the tale, and reminding readers that no matter how fragile things may have previously appeared, no conclusion is possible without the juridical imprimatur of the state. The story Charlotte tells the court is a dramatic one: After the sudden death of her father due to the stress that his involvement with the Russian had caused, she invited Plangonev to her home as a guest. Receiving him while dressed for grief, Charlotte bears the color of her race more proudly than ever before, “her wonderful face and hands the whiter for it—a beauty which made a festival of mourning” (4/26/1919, 103). Inviting Plangonev to peruse her father’s private art collection with her—all the better, no doubt, for consigning Marxism to a museum piece—Charlotte pockets a small pistol while questioning her fiancé about the full dimensions of his plan. A prideful Plangonev cannot help but brag. Yet, as he offers the details, his very presence in the sumptuously appointed room is jarring, “a figure rough, uncouth, coarsely dressed, a spectacle not unlike a stained and muddy officer of an invading force taking his sprawling ease in a house—the palace of some highbred woman of the enemy” (4/26/1919, 103). Taking note of everything Plangonev reveals “in that remarkable memory of hers, an inheritance no doubt from her father,” Charlotte challenges Plangonev’s fatalism through an argument that relies upon ethnic difference as the barrier to a blanket application of Marx’s law. Plangonev relegates character as less meaningful than the “general, unavoidable laws in the chemistry of nations” (4/26/1919, 103). “This is not Russia,” Charlotte retorts. “This is the United States.... How can you be sure... that your chemistry—your expectation of violence and anarchy—must come here?” (4/26/1919, 107). The smug Russian contends that not only is it already foreordained by Marx’s formula, but that the strength of the emotions of property in the

US ensure that the violence here will be even more spectacular than in Russia. At this point Charlotte pulls her pistol while attempting to flee with notes on Plangonev’s strategic particulars. Much like the Reverend Todd’s executive awakening in the face of the Russian’s plan, Charlotte’s reaction to Marxist thought also awakens a power within her, one that celebrates bourgeois ideology:

“According to your theory I myself am that amusing thing, a woman, a compound... of the bourgeois emotions, of the emotions of property, of the exploded beliefs in home and country and religion. Yes,” she said, facing him, remembering all the happenings of that day, “I am all that—all you have described me. I had no idea before what I actually was (4/26/1919, 107).

For both the effeminate pacifist Todd and the beautiful and bourgeois-enslaved Charlotte, Plangonev does indeed provoke a liberation—but not one that adheres at all to the schema of Marx. Indeed, both characters awaken only to the folly of their previous positions as well as to a renewed sense of national—and racial—pride. It takes an abyss as proximal as Red Friday and a threat as foreign as Plangonev to finally evince the American. In fact, in Charlotte’s case, it was through suffering the death of her father, “hurried by you, and my watching it helpless,” that raised in her “that last extreme emotion, that love of country, that you social chemists all so logically detest” (4/26/1919, 107). It is after this confession, in her father’s private museum, that all vestiges of humanity bleed quickly from the furious Russian, who begins “falling toward her, in an unclean agony of haste—the face of a man in absolute savagery and hate” (4/26/1919, 107). Befitting this savagery, he arms himself with a primitive spear, an “ancient missal

with metal edges," while Charlotte tries to fire off a shot. The two become locked in a battle melodramatically figured as a contest for cultural supremacy between:

those two most opposite creatures, those two personifications of different ideals and civilization, a woman of our time and a Bolshevik—struggled on in that great dark room with the strangely mingled symbols of past civilizations and ideals round them, the fauns and satyrs on the standards; the Christs and saints and pain-crooked martyrs upon the wall, and overshadowing all the huge tapestry of the hunting nobles. She gave herself up almost for lost. She could not free her elbow from his grasp; but then by a great final effort she transferred her weapon to her other hand. And then at last the second shot was fired, and Plangonev sank finally before her, a dingy figure, stretched out at last, face downward, upon the new brighter stain, which grew against the old and faded pink of the priceless rug of the Six Hunters. (4/26/1919, 107)

If Turner's point had not been plain enough, the obligatory climactic pontification makes the meaning clear: Whereas both Black Sr. and Plangonev, "the two prime movers in the plot of debt" now "lay dead together under the same roof, each from the unseen powers that he had himself evoked" (4/26/1919, 107), America had finally been rescued from the brink not by bold social theories or deft financial innovation but "a nation and a civilization were released by the weak hand of a woman" (4/26/1919, 107). Whereas Todd and Mr. Black had both been pitted as dialectical foils to Plangonev—and both had subsequently been either coopted or ruined by their dealings with him—only Charlotte was able to successfully harness a "sudden general emotional impulse.... just this outburst

of Plangonev’s detested and, I believe, always feared emotions of property—the emotions of family and nation and religion—which finally overthrew the Russian and his plans” (4/26/1919, 107). What the Red Friday conspiracy reveals is the truth beneath the American blood fealty toward possession and property—absent in the half-Oriental—that allowed Charlotte to draw from a wellspring of ethnic heritage and best her Asiatic assailant. Once again, Turner substitutes Plangonev for the broader “Russian” here, making both the contrast and Charlotte’s superiority plain. The story of her bravery only unlocks the same ethnic pride in others, becoming “a great appeal to the traditional emotions of the people, driving them to action.... Man and wife and family grew closer to one, in farm and city, as they locked their door upon their homes that night,” producing a reinvigorated form of community against the newly defined threat that the deadbolts aim to exclude. Even “the press of the proletariat... ran up the national flag at the head of their columns and kept it there for days and days.... the whole country was swept, in fact, by a wildfire of old racial, tribal, national emotions,” a desire “to get together in any way possible and avoid the threatened chaos—the certain anarchy that had ruled in Russia” (4/19/1919: 107, 110). Here, this bold and comprehensive national rebirth is rendered purely a response to the Soviet menace, a regeneration through anti-radicalism. As Turner concludes, the United States embarks upon a plan to rebuild itself entirely as a contradistinction to Petrograd, and invokes the imagined past of an American idyll before the great divisions between capital and labor were formed:

The labor leaders, even the most extreme, counseled now the greatest moderation and conciliation; the most rigid of bureaucrats at Washington were willing to concede possible faults in governmental operation; and the

present universal moratorium and state of concessions on all sides were established, which are now expected to bring about before long a modified return to old conditions in the United States. (4/26/1919, 110)

With the extirpation of the Russian, the flames of radicalism in the US are immediately extinguished. And over his dead body emerges the promised and long-hoped for myth of a more equitable and inclusive United States, wedded to moderation, and solidified in the shared peril of foreign political bodies and forms. Violence, when necessary, is celebrated, and even Todd's foolishly feminine aversion is mocked by Charlotte in court: "What woman," she asks, "would go for aid to a pacifist" (4/26/1919, 110).

The didactic ending is only complete after a newly masculinized Todd drops in for one final visit upon the emotionally unemployed. The salon's quarters have become even more cramped, and the new lack of national sympathy toward the views espoused there has left the attendants to speak only among themselves. The man with the horn glasses, however, is still talking of revolt when Todd arrives, and the Reverend cannot help but scream his rehabilitated views on the anthropology of common property at the foolish youth. Communism and socialism are only new, argues Todd, "to the college sophomore in his winter term... to the dilettante mind, permanently arrested in a sophomoric stage of growth; new to the newly-read laboring man! And historically the oldest thing on man's earth!" (4/26/1919, 110). Equality, for Todd, is an atavism "older than Stonehenge, older than the kitchen maidens of Europe, when savage men lived in level equality with their dogs; old as the beginnings of the race!" (4/26/1919, 110). This fetish for socialist utopias is not only archaic but non-white as well—for why else, asks Todd, "did Western Europe discard this herd life and leave it to Eastern Europe and the

Amazon Valley and the Congo?” (4/26/1919, 110) Here *Red Friday* delivers its full verdict in its plainest terms: Socialism is a vestigial system of primitive races and not at all a progressive theory for contemporary times. The only inexorable logic of Marx is one of collapse: “Inevitable, yes,” Todd assures us, “as all degradation to those who do not care to guard their possessions, as individual liberty always must be guarded.” But the amateur saviors do not take this critique lying down, accusing Todd of being a renegade socialist. No, the Reverend assures them, “I am an American—the most extreme individualist of all” (4/26, 1919, 110). This previously meek man of the cloth now celebrates the very impulses of humanity he previously wanted to mollify. The immoderations of capitalism are not the excesses of an economic system but an ethnicity itself: “Individualists,” he explains to the aghast audience, “came West, conquering the world. And here we are! The communists remained always in the rear—in the East” (4/26/1919, 110). The war between the two ideologies is a proxy for the battle between races, and the capitalists will always win out over their Asiatic collectivists. Before Todd leaves, he offers a stern warning that echoes the opening editorial about the *Buford*. “If you like them,” he asks the emotionally unemployed, referencing the half-Orientals they so admire, “why not go back there—to Russia?” This whiff of threat is clear: An American is not just a citizen but a dedication to a particular form of political economy. Foreign Marxists are doubly rejected from inclusion. And a mere scratch upon the “native” socialist reveals the radical immigrant within.

AFTERWORD

In 1782, Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, in his *Letters From An American Farmer*, posed a famous question that still remains at the heart of American Studies. “What, then,” he asks, “is the American, this new man?” Scholars, especially in the past thirty years, have rightfully pointed out the Enlightenment subject that inhabits the center of this inquiry: A white, straight, and property-owning male figure lording it over those who fall outside these exclusive categories. It should come as no surprise to readers of *Genetic Revolutionaries* that Crevecoeur himself, seven years before the ratification of the US constitution, attempted to answer this question at least in part by comparing America to another vast empire across the sea: “Who knows what revolutions Russia and America may one day bring about,” he opines. “We are perhaps nearer neighbours than we imagine” (262).

Just over half a century later, Alexis de Toqueville, the great sociologist of America *avant la lettre*, perceived so many similarities between the two nations that he chose to end the first volume of his famous treatise on American democracy with a multi-page comparison: “There are today two great peoples on earth, who, though they started from different points, seem to be advancing toward the same goal: the Russians and the Anglo-Americans” (475). While attending to their different historical and geographical circumstances, de Toqueville—eerily predicting the Cold War more than a century before Pearl Harbor—envisioned a future world trapped between these behemoths: “Their points of departure are different, their ways diverse. Yet each seems called by a secret design of Providence someday to sway the destinies of half the globe” (476).

While the ideational twinning in particular specter of comparison obviously bears a deep and complicated history demanding further study, this project has focused exclusively upon the discursive reception of radicals and the Russian Revolution in the US during a far more contracted span of time. By analyzing the constellation and mutual constitution of nativism, racism, anti-radicalism, and nationalism through the prism of the American imaginary's reception of radical immigrants in this period, it has been my contention that particular forms of political repression and ethnic exclusion bear numerous descendants whose voices can often loudly echo in our current moment, as evidenced in the Introduction as the woman at Senator Specter's town hall meeting railed "about the systematic dismantling of this country. I don't want this country turning into Russia, turning into a socialized country."¹

This fear that the dissolution of the US necessarily results in not only socialism but Russia as well has been traced throughout the preceding chapters. William Dean Howells helped us understand the mechanism through which democracy itself became a form of government foreclosed to both politically active foreigners and ethnically German Americans due to discourses that forged extreme political expression to foreign blood. Jack London helped excavate the consequences of this collapse between ethnicity and political forms, and his novel founders upon the contention that to gain socialism as a political platform is to lose the privileges of whiteness. John Reed revealed the racializing tropes intrinsic to journalistic coverage of labor and freedom struggles—though his transformation while attempting to cover the Russian Revolution offers a moment of optimism in a relatively critical body of research. And the analysis of the *Saturday*

¹ See Philip Rucker, "Specter Faces Raucous Crowd at Town Hall Meeting," *Washington Post*, 11 Aug. 2009. Online.

Evening Post tracked the adoption by mass-media outlets of this conflation between the radical and the immigrant, concretizing a rhetorical figure for the mass of the American reading public that still haunts contemporary discourse.

The “genetic revolutionary” of my title, then, is not only a figure but a process wherein a number of varying ideological apparatuses contribute to the marking of particular groups as dangerous to the prevailing social order. By using “radical politics” as the third term in the triangulated method of comparative racialization, this project gestures toward future research dedicated to unearthing the imbrication between race, state formation, and political forms. One future direction is clear: As I have analyzed the birth of both a mass and official discourse, this project was corralled in its focus primarily by the work of white men, and in the future I hope to complicate the claims of this study through the introduction of so-called marginalized voices into this triangulated equation. While critics such as Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick Ferguson² have already moved in this direction, much work remains for uncovering the hidden historical moments that fused race with politics, and it is through the mapping of these genealogies that we may come to understand how the sign of “socialism” became so thoroughly anathematized in the United States.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent declassification of a number of CIA documents, “we now know” that the USSR was a mostly defanged beast during much of the Cold War, a repository less for ICBMs than the trumped up tales of Quantico spooks. And though my argument is by no means an attempt to equate the monstrous excesses of “actually existing socialism” with the twenty-first-century United

² See their *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization*.

States, my project also hopes to provide a historical window upon the contemporary American moment—one that blithely celebrates its “end-of-History” victory over Soviet-style communism, yet ironically (and due in part to the very discourses examined here), encompasses its citizens within vast agencies of security, ubiquitous surveillance, heavily proscribed political behavior and a number of other institutions and practices so vilified by our own critics of the former Soviet Union. In *The Anarchy of Empire*, Amy Kaplan calls anarchy the “haunting specter” of imperialism. This project hopes to reintroduce another well-known specter into the study of the racialization of politics.

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