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On the cover: "Poster for the Freedom Loan" by Boris Kustodiev, 1917.

Cover design by Benjamin H. Farrow VI
Phone #: (334) 3301-0918
Email Address: benjaminhenryfarrow@gmail.com
BVI Designs
Instagram: [@bvi_designs](https://www.instagram.com/bvi_designs)
Email Address: bvi.designs.contact@gmail.com



Face to Face With the Tsars' Capital: American Diplomats and Urban Spectatorship in Imperial St. Petersburg

Svetlana Paulson

For most of the 20th century historians viewed urban spectatorship as a narrow concept, essentially equating it to *flânerie*. They concentrated efforts on studying *flâneurs* – the individuals who enjoyed taking walks in the city at their leisure, and recorded their observations for posterity. In recent decades, however, there has been growing recognition that urban spectatorship deserves a more detailed analysis; that this phenomenon is very complex, and can manifest itself in various forms. If one proceeds from the assumption that the goal of urban spectator is to immerse himself in the atmosphere of the city, feel the heartbeat of its streets, parks, and avenues, and observe its people, then one must admit that strolling through the city is not the only way to achieve this. A person can successfully gather impressions while playing sports at a park or holiday-shopping at an outdoor market. His explorations do not have to be limited to his leisure time. For many individuals, their professional occupations make it imperative to pay attention to what is happening in the city, how its inhabitants interact, what they do, how they dress, etc. These observations can be used both for work and personal purposes. They can be recorded in letters and memoirs, and shared with others, providing them with snapshots of life in a certain metropolis.

The experiences of an urban spectator depend on whether he is a native of the cultural environment that he is exploring, or a foreigner, an outsider. Foreign spectators, especially those who stay abroad for extended periods of time, present great interest to researchers because, as a rule, they make excellent observers. Upon arrival in a foreign country they face numerous challenges. They find themselves on unfamiliar cultural terrain and have to learn how to navigate it. Anthropologists argue that one of the main difficulties for the new arrivals in a foreign land is venturing out into the street: the streets of a city constitute a public arena where a myriad daily transactions is conducted. Foreigners wishing to negotiate all these “transactions” successfully have to subject their surroundings and the behavior of the locals to constant analysis. As a result, they notice many important details in their environment that tend to be ignored by the city natives, and their memoirs offer a valuable source of information about lifestyles in past eras.

An historian of 19th-century St. Petersburg cannot ignore the phenomenon of foreign urban spectatorship. Some of the more interesting foreign observers in

the city on the Neva were Americans, or, more specifically, US diplomats. Unlike occasional travelers, diplomats spent extended periods of time in the capital of the Tsars, and had abundant opportunities to explore it and form impressions that were not superficial. Serving as representatives of a republic in an autocratic state, they encountered many traditions that were alien to them. They observed them carefully, both in order to discharge their duties successfully and to satisfy their own curiosity. What did they experience in the process? How do their exploration efforts relate to the new broad concept of urban spectatorship? How do their memoirs enrich the existing knowledge about 19th-century Petersburg?

Americans traveling to Russia in the 19th century, sailed to England. After a brief stay that helped them to get acclimatized to Europe, they resumed their journey by land or sea. Memoir writers recorded impressions of their first encounter with the capital of the Tsars. The moment when the majestic spires of St. Petersburg caught the sight of passengers arriving by boat, or when the bustling atmosphere of the railway station engulfed the newcomers, often received a brief mention. By contrast, the first Russians that Americans saw when disembarking were described in most vivid terms. Americans scrutinized their appearance and clothing with great curiosity.

New arrivals in a foreign land always seek clues that would allow them to negotiate the unfamiliar environment and communicate with the locals. The clothing that the locals wear provides information about their financial situation, occupations, and marital status. It reflects social hierarchy, traditions associated with rank, and even political atmosphere in society. US diplomats came to St. Petersburg as representatives of the power that was quickly rising in the international arena, and they needed to look the part. In order to be able to do that, they had to figure out how the Russians viewed dress, and what attire they considered appropriate for such high-ranking officials as the members of the diplomatic corps. It became imperative for them to observe the inhabitants of St. Petersburg. Their first attempt to watch people in the streets of the city confused Americans. Katherine Breckinridge, the wife of the US Ambassador in 1894-97, recalled her effort to “read” the Russian crowd, resulting in complete failure. She mistook a footman for a high-ranking General:

As we stepped from the train I beheld a gorgeous individual standing on the platform. He was rather tall and very straight. He wore a blue uniform with gold stripes down the side of his trousers, gold epaulettes, and a patent leather band from his right shoulder to his left side, edged with gilt. There was a stag’s head on his breast, with gilt chains hanging from the antlers, and a sword at his side. On his head was a hat pointed front and back, the sides turned up and edged with gold braid; a red, white and blue cockade of the left side, and an enormous bunch of the brightest of bright blue cock’s plums on the top, falling all around. I thought to myself, surely this must be

the General of all the Russias. Imagine my surprise when he opened our carriage door for us and then mounted the box! He is the “Chasseur” or official footman.¹

Looking at the Russians made US diplomats feel that they had severely miscalculated when packing for their trip to the capital of the Tsars. They usually purchased attire that, in their estimate, would make them look “presentable” both at the palace receptions and during their official appearances in town. Louisa Adams, the wife of US Minister John Quincy Adams, reported buying - in Copenhagen - “immense” beaver hats for herself and her sister. Unfortunately, her plan to impress the Russians did not work. When the family of John Quincy Adams entered the Admirals House at the port, “elegantly dressed Ladies and Gentlemen stared aghast at the figures just introduced.”² Louisa Adams thought that the locals were taken aback by the size of hats that she and her sister were wearing. More likely, the Russians puzzled over the incongruity of the Adams’ family social status and appearance. The Adams traveling with several servants, as well as assistants, and treated with enormous respect by Russian officials, were obviously of high rank. Yet, their patriarch John Quincy was wearing neither military nor a civilian uniform.

In the 19th century, the empire of the Tsars was “manically obsessed” with uniform. Premier historian of Russian dress Olga Khoroshilova suggested that the origins of this phenomenon lay in the autocratic nature of the Russian state.³ The monarch’s autocratic power rests upon strict hierarchy in society, upon its division into ranks. Subjects are supposed to fit like “cogs” into this mechanism, promoting discipline and obedience among them. In 1722, Peter the Great introduced The Table of Ranks that created fourteen grades in the military and civil service. The Table and the following legislation not only determined the responsibilities of each grade, but also assigned uniform designs - specific down to the last button. The uniform was not just a disciplining device. The glorious look of superior ranks inspired uniform envy, causing people in the lower ranks to seek promotions, and enticing commoners to earn the fourteenth rank that granted personal nobility.

To our contemporaries, imperial Petersburg would have looked like a war camp: military uniforms mixed in the street with those of office clerks. Even liveried lackeys, street cleaners (*dvorniki*), and cabbies wore clothing resembling military style. In the 19th century, uniform was so deeply entrenched in the Russian psyche, that it became ubiquitous:

¹ Katherine Breckinridge, “Letter to Susan Lees, October 29, 1894,” in: Katherine Breckinridge’s Papers, Private Collection, Magnolia, Arkansas, in the author’s possession. Heretofore cited as K.B. and the date when the letter was written.

² Louisa Catherine Adams “The Adventures of a Nobody,” in: Judith Graham et al, ed., *Diary and Autobiographical Writings of Louisa Catherine Adams. Vol. I, 1778-1815*. (Cambridge: Massachusetts, 2013), p. 291.

³ Olga Khoroshilova, *Kostium i moda Rossiiskoi Imperii. Epokha Aleksandra II i Aleksandra III* (Moscow: Eterna, 2015), p. 51.

Russia was born and died in a uniform. Fathers' service caps and grandfathers' tricorns were a part of boys' games. Later these boys stood, snuffling, at attention, on a stool at a tailor shop while the tailor... took measurements for their first real uniform. Boys turned into military cadets or students. At their school desk they learned to understand uniforms that they loved since childhood. And even those whose family lineage did not entitle them to wear uniform, received caftans... with engraved buttons as gifts from rulers. In Russia, there was not a single person without uniform. Even the paupers in state-sponsored shelters shuffled their feet through life dressed in darned soldier pants and a service cap with a cracked bill.⁴

In the USA, uniform represented service to the republic, and was not meant to support the institutions of autocratic hierarchy and aristocratic privilege. The State Department prided itself on republican austerity, and required that US diplomats on duty wear regular civilian clothes. Dispatched to St. Petersburg diplomats were not prepared to see a city of uniform-clad people. After initial surprise at their appearance, Americans realized that their own plain black attire was a disadvantage.

Americans discovered that the Russians started scrutinizing every detail of their dress well before they reached the palace, at the moment when diplomats stepped from their carriages onto the street. When royal receptions or balls happened in St. Petersburg, onlookers gathered in the street to catch a glimpse of the glamorous attendees. And from the palace windows, numerous eyes followed their progress from carriage to the entrance. Katherine Breckinridge overheard two Masters of Ceremony standing by the window discuss the arriving foreigners: "They were speaking in French, and I was amused at overhearing one of them say: "Who are they? English, of course. Look at the feet!"⁵ Edward Wright witnessed an identical situation. Maids of honor stationed at the palace entrance giggled at the appearance of a Scottish Duke, and the American saw "a smile creep over the sober faces of Alexander's veteran guard, and their grey moustaches twist, as they gazed on the man from the Highlands."⁶ US representatives hoped not to cause this kind of merriment.

The more enterprising among them resorted to the one exception in the State Department no-uniform rules. According to it, if a US diplomat had served in the army, he might wear the uniform of his last rank. Cassius Marcellus Clay who had fought in the Mexican war, for instance, dazzled the Russians with epaulets, and a bejeweled sword by Tiffany presented to him by the people of Kentucky.⁷

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ K.B., December 14, 1894.

⁶ Edward H. Wright, "Letters from St. Petersburg, 1850-1851," in *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, v. LXXX, No. 2, April 1964, p. 246.

⁷ Cassius Marcellus Clay, *Memoirs, Writings and Speeches*, V. I. (Cincinnati: J. Fletcher Brennan & Co., 1886), p. 329.

Andrew Gregg Curtin, who had been Commander-in-Chief of the military forces of Pennsylvania, considered a uniform, but decided against it for fear that the locals would ask “what battles he had fought in.” Not wishing to look like a waiter, though, he came up with an alternative plan, declaring: “I’ll get a blue swallow-tail coat and trousers, with gilt buttons with a big eagle on them, like the one on John Heilman’s certificate of bankruptcy.”⁸

The impression that diplomats produced was also based on their carriage. Upon their arrival in town, Americans learned to take notice of the conveyances passing them in the street. The most opulent ones belonged to the Tsar, but the ones used by the ambassadors were supposed to be grand as well – complete with embroidered draperies, national emblem on the doors, and magnificently dressed coachman and footman. Diplomats that ignored local expectations invited sarcastic comments. John Q. Adams learned this from the example of Austrian minister Count St. Julien. The eccentric elderly Count was a man of habit. Instead of getting himself a new equipage in a Russian-style, he brought his old one from Vienna. This oddly-designed phaeton, according to Adams, was “ludicrously fantastical.” St. Julien asked the Tsar for permission to ride around town in it. “Emperor Alexander answered... that he had not the slightest objection, but added, “If the children in the streets should throw stones at it, I hope, Monsieur le Comte, you will not be surprised.”⁹ Adams and his successors in the American mission made sure that their equipages complied with the local standards.¹⁰

Getting the right local coachman proved equally important, for he, just as much as the carriage, was an ambassador’s calling card in the streets of the imperial capital. Obsessed with rank and uniform, the Russians believed that a true VIP employed a coachman who was not only a good driver, but also looked imposing mounted on his box. Upon their first encounter with these colorful characters, Americans thought that they were enormously fat. To their surprise, it turned out that these Russians were of regular frame, and the imposing appearance was achieved by skillfully padded clothes.

Katherine Breckinridge saw her coachman get ready for a ride, transforming from an inconspicuous-looking person into a portly colossus. His wife “put the finishing touches to his elegance. When he was ready she helped him up, fastened

⁸ Cited in: William Egle, *Life and Times of Andrew Gregg Curtin* (Philadelphia: The Thompson Publishing Co., 1896), p. 118.

⁹ Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848*. Vol. II. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1874), p. 395-396. K.B., January 10, 1895.

¹⁰ One minister, however, dismissed this wise strategy. Arthur Bagby, in 1848-49 the chief US diplomat in Russia, was unwilling to tone down his hatred of monarchy. In rejection of aristocratic traditions, he chose not to hire liveried servants, and rode to the palace accompanied by an American valet in ugly trousers that were “too short.” Both Bagby’s subordinates and other Americans in town thought that he embarrassed himself and his country. The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler. Glasgow University Library. Anna Matilda Whistler – James McNeill Whistler, February 19, 1849. – http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/people/display/?rs-3&named-Bagby_Mr&sr-0&initial-b

the fur robe over him and handed him the reins and whip.”¹¹ Breckinridge found out that a coachman always required assistance when getting dressed. First, he donned a heavily-wadded vest that gave him bulk, and then one or two assistants helped him get into his coat and wrapped his sash.

Padded caftans and huge sashes of Russian coachmen amused US diplomats, but their driving horrified them. Each ride to court events was a suicidal “smoking dash” through the city streets including major thoroughfares like the Nevsky. Attempts to persuade the Russians drive slower failed. Minister Andrew Dickson White complained about his coachman Ivan: “This afternoon he raced, with me in the carriage, up and down the Nevsky, from end to end, with the carriages of grand dukes and ministers, and, do my best, I could not stop him. He simply looked back at me, grinned like an idiot, and drove on with all his might. It is the third time he has done this.”¹² White threatened to fire Ivan. It turned out, however, that in St. Petersburg coachmen employed by high-ranking officials and top aristocracy were expected to drive fast, forcing others to yield the road. These fast races asserted the rider’s high social status. Coachmen who drove the fastest and bellowed out “Make way!” with theatrical effect became celebrities. St. Petersburgers knew them by name.¹³ Ivan made sure that in the streets of the Tsarist capital the US minister’s carriage was received with all due respect.

The reminiscences describing what Americans observed in St. Petersburg upon arrival, how they noticed the nuances of the Russian dress, and what they learned about the traditions associated with carriage-riding, are very instructive for understanding the complexity of such a phenomenon as urban spectatorship. US diplomats first started exploring the city because, in order to perform their professional duties, they needed to understand its traditions. They took mental snapshots of the city and its inhabitants for work purposes. However, once recorded, these observations turned into a chronicle filled with fascinating details. They explained how dress correlated to the system of ranks in the Tsarist society, and how the unwritten traffic rules favored the rich. They presented vivid portraits of the city’s footmen and coachmen. The experience of US diplomats demonstrated that urban spectatorship must be defined in very broad terms. It is not associated only with leisure. One can productively engage in urban exploration both at work and at leisure.

Once Americans settled into their work routines, they began to explore St. Petersburg on their free time. It would be tempting to call this activity traditional *flânerie*. However, in recent years, researchers of urban spectatorship have questioned to what extent *flânerie*, in its classical sense, was possible in autocratic states. Charles Baudelaire who coined the term *flâneur*, referred to a person leisurely strolling through the city, taking in its atmosphere, and, at the same time, remaining free not to engage in the activities surrounding him. In the street in an

¹¹ K.B., January 10, 1895.

¹² Andrew Dickson White, *Autobiography of Andrew Dickson White*, V. II (New York: The Century CO), 1906), p. 462.

¹³ Aleksandr Benua, *Moi vospominaniia. V piati knigakh. Knigi pervaiia, vtoraiia, tret’ a* (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), p. 148.

autocratic state, however, a person could unintentionally get involved in public spectacles - displays of power organized by the authorities. The majority of the US diplomats who served in the capital of the Tsars took regular promenades. Their memoirs confirm that this experience was peculiar in many respects.

On a walk in any 19th-century city one had to remain alert: even in the famous Parisian Arcades there were pickpockets. On the posh Russian Nevsky, thieves were occasionally reported to steal fur hats with the help of long iron hooks. Americans learned that St. Petersburgers on promenade watched out not only for the thieves, but were equally vigilant regarding the appearance of the Tsar and his numerous relatives. Making a salutation was imperative. The Romanovs took notice when someone who should have recognized them in the street failed to do so. This was especially true in the first part of the 19th century. Nicholas I was known to play jokes – sometimes rather cruel ones - on those who ignored him. During his tenure in St. Petersburg, Minister George Mifflin Dallas heard about the misfortunes that allegedly befell Baron Meyendorff, a representative of a prominent family. The young baron and his friend, after spending a long time abroad, returned to St. Petersburg. They were taking a walk near the Boulevards when they saw the Tsar alone on horseback. Having been absent from Russia for years, the two men did not recognize him and did not bow. Nicholas dismounted, “reprimanded them sternly,” and ordered a sentinel to take them to prison. “They were extremely alarmed, wept bitterly, and were immured for some hours in a wretched cell. After the expiration of that time, a guard announced to them that the Emperor had ordered them to be escorted to the Anischkoff Palace. They went expecting little short of Siberia or decapitation.”¹⁴ At the palace, however, Nicholas scolded them again, and then... invited them to dinner.

Like any rumor, this story may not have been entirely accurate, but the message it conveyed was clear. Alerted as to how seriously the Romanovs took salutations, Dallas was always on a look out for them when taking walks in the city. Nonetheless, one February morning, he paid no attention to a lone sleigh rider muffled up in his cloak. At the next court function, the US Minister had an uncomfortable encounter with Grand Duke Michael. “The Grand Duke crossed one of the longest rooms, came directly up to me, and shook hands. He said he had met me the day before yesterday, while he was in a sledge..., and that I had not recognized him.”¹⁵ Profuse apologies on Dallas’ part seem to have pleased the Duke. He proudly declared that he preferred to move about town without an escort, and that his family were the only royals in Europe “who attempted it.”¹⁶

Duke Michael’s comment revealed his pride in *le tour imperial* - a tradition that was, indeed, unique to Russia. It was established and turned into a legend by Alexander I and Nicholas I. They took daily solitary walks in the streets of St.

¹⁴George Mifflin Dallas, *Diary of George Mifflin Dallas While United States Minister to Russia 1837-1839, and to England 1856-1861* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1892), p. 189. The Meyendorff family was large. There were numerous brothers and cousins. It is difficult to establish which Meyendorff Dallas mentioned.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 62.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

Petersburg, occasionally stopping to converse with an aristocrat or a commoner, ordering sentinels to fix some minor problem, or even joining funeral processions that passed by. The Romanov brothers believed that their personal presence in the midst of their subjects solidified their image as masters of the capital city and the country in general. The death of their father Paul I in a palace coup convinced them that the palace where assassins could lurk behind any curtain was more dangerous than city streets. Walking in the city helped the newly crowned Alexander gain popularity: St. Petersburgers saw that this charming Tsar presented a stark contrast to the repulsive – both in appearance and character – Paul I. On his promenades Alexander met courtiers, government officials, and foreign diplomats. He stopped to talk to them, establishing rapport, and turning them into his allies and admirers. For his ability to charm people, Mikhail Speransky nicknamed him a “seducer.”¹⁷ Lady-in-waiting Sophie de Choiseul-Gouffier recalled that the Tsar, raised by Catherine the Great, never discounted women’s ability for political intrigue, and sought allies among women as well as men.¹⁸

Louisa Adams’ memoir offers valuable insights on how Alexander I communicated with diplomats’ wives. She frequently met the Emperor on the Nevsky. Louisa and her younger sister Catherine enjoyed long walks on this magnificent avenue. A true Southern Belle, “Kitty” was noticed by the Russian sovereign, and he always stopped the two women for a conversation. At first, his attention seemed gallant. Gradually, however, it turned impertinent. It was not clear if the Tsar viewed Kitty as an object of an amorous adventure, or a potential ally in some palace intrigue. In either case, being seen in his presence could cause gossip, ruining Kitty’s marriage prospects. The sisters thought it wise to suspend their walks. When they returned to the Nevsky, Alexander spoke to them in a new, intimidating, tone. He demanded to know why the Americans had missed their usual walks, and “without waiting for an answer; turned to me [Louisa - S.P] and said ‘that it was good for my health and that he should expect to meet *us* every day looking at my Sister...’ This was a real Imperial command in its tone and manner.”¹⁹ The two women relayed what happened to the Legation’s men. The men were upset that the Tsar ordered citizens of the republic around as if they were his imperial subjects, and advised Kitty to quit her promenades. Louisa decided that the walks would continue - albeit with more caution. Once the Americans even escaped from Alexander in a carriage. Adams saw him “hastening on with great strides” from a distance, and assumed she and Kitty could drive off without being detected.²⁰ Their retreat was noticed, and the Tsar berated the two women again. Despite all his eloquence, however, Louisa did not give up on keeping her sister safe from his advances. Descriptions of her encounters with Alexander provide a remarkable example of how, in the streets of an autocratic

¹⁷ A.A. Kizevetter, “Predislovie” in: Sophie Choiseul-Gouffier, *Istoricheskie memuary ob Imperatore Aleksandre I ego dvore*, http://dugward.ru/library/alexandrI/shuazel_gufye_istoricheskie_memuary.html

¹⁸ Sophie Choiseul-Gouffier, *Istoricheskie memuary ob Imperatore Aleksandre I ego dvore*, http://dugward.ru/library/alexandrI/shuazel_gufye_istoricheskie_memuary.html

¹⁹ Louisa Adams, p. 316.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 331.

state, one could be manipulated and pressured by the Tsar in person. The Tsars turned *le tour imperial* into an instrument of power. Adams' observations are also important because they present a contrast to the memoir penned by Choiseul-Gouffier and often cited as the main source of information about women's views regarding Alexander I. Lady-in-waiting Gouffier was seduced by the glamour of his royal status. A republican, Adams did not succumb to it. Nor did she shy away from recording evidence that when Alexander failed to impress women, he did not hesitate to intimidate them.

Louisa's husband John Quincy Adams took daily strolls on the Nevsky, Fontanka, and the English Embankment, and his diaries mention a dozen instances when the monarch stopped him for a conversation. These records show how *le tour imperial* served to propagate the notion that the Tsar, while being above his subjects, was always in their midst, and that he watched and knew everything they were doing. Adams saw Alexander I put on theatrical shows. Aware of the location of sentinel posts, the autocrat stopped the American right in front of one, causing the guards to turn out under arms. The 19th-century St. Petersburg guards, with their resplendent uniforms and impeccable bearing, presented a formidable sight. They stayed motionless for the entire length of the Tsar's presence, and at the end he dismissed them with a wave of his hand. Adams noticed that Alexander was playing to the audience looking at him from a distance, and demonstrating his special status. The US diplomat found himself cast in the role of the Tsar's entourage. These autocratic displays produced an impression: "From the time when I left him [The Tsar – S.P.] until I had got beyond the distance where we could be seen together, the people gazed upon me as upon a very important personage; once past those boundaries, every mujik brushed by me with as little notice as if passing one of his fellows. Such is the magic of an Emperor's countenance."²¹ According to Adams, Alexander was also in the habit of peering at those whom he spotted in the street through his spyglass, letting them know that he was keeping an eye on them.

Unlike Alexander, Nicholas I was not a great actor or charmer. Having come to power in the midst of the Decembrist uprising, he strove to project the image of a strong ruler who knew how to instill order and discipline in his Empire. On his promenades in St. Petersburg, he acted like a landowner inspecting his estate, and if he saw something wrong, he hurried to fix it. The entire city heard the story about the Tsar attending the funeral of a modest office clerk. Strolling through the streets, the Sovereign of All Russias came upon a hearse followed by a lone woman. He joined the widow, reasoning that a man who had served his country and worn a uniform, deserved a better procession. Upon seeing the Tsar, passers-by joined the funeral procession as well, and it became very impressive.²² This, and other stories, circulating among St. Petersburgers, alerted the US diplomats as to what Nicholas considered appropriate or intolerable in his city. John S. Maxwell, for example, found out that it was never a good idea to smoke in the

²¹ Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs*, p. 261.

²² Igor Zimin, *Liudi Zimnego dvortsa. Monarshie osoby, ikh favority i slugi* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2015), p. 131.

street. Nicholas hated public smoking, prohibited it by a special ordinance, and showed no mercy to those who ignored the rule:

The Emperor, while walking one day, met a Frenchman smoking a cigar. He approached and asked him if he was not aware that it was contrary to the law to smoke in the street. The Gaul not knowing by whom he was addressed, replied that he had been in the habit of smoking in the streets of Paris, and did not know why he should not do so in the streets of any other city. The Emperor... proceeding to the *boutka* or station of a policeman near at hand, gave directions as to the disposition of the smoker. The latter was immediately placed in a... small wagon without springs of any kind, and bounced over a thousand miles of bad road to the Turkish frontier.²³

Diplomats learned that they had better observe city ordinances, lest they ire the Emperor.

Like Alexander, Nicholas stopped to speak to ambassadors in the street. He did not use his brother's manipulative tactics to dominate conversation. Nonetheless, those who observed his encounters with foreigners were left in awe of the authority that he projected. According to Andrew Dixon White, a key element in this was the Emperor's impressive stature. White, who met Nicholas numerous times, called him "the most majestic being ever created."²⁴ Over six feet tall and athletically built, he towered over his interlocutors and looked every bit a man destined to reign supreme. Russian memoirs confirm that the Tsar's appearances in the company of foreigners worked as pro-Romanov propaganda. St. Petersburgers compared ambassadors to the Colossus-monarch, and found him far superior. St. Petersburg native L.I. King recalled talking to a merchant aboard a passenger boat on the Neva. As the boat sailed by the Tsar and a group of diplomats, the merchant noticed them, became entranced for a moment, and then declared: "What a fine fellow our Russian Father-Tsar is! All these foreign ambassadors around him look unbelievably plain. In their midst our Tsar is a beautiful falcon."²⁵

US diplomats realized that, when venturing for a walk, they could become involuntary actors in Russian political theater – in the autocratic power displays. However, there were other ways to explore the city, ones that gave them more freedom to choose what they wanted to do, see, and experience. Americans attended holiday fairs, enjoyed amusements and sporting adventures in the parks, and took sightseeing sleigh rides. A researcher reconstructing the complexity of

²³ John S. Maxwell, *The Czar, His Court and People: including a Tour of Norway and Sweden* (Whitefish (MT): 2006), p. 136.

²⁴ White, p. 470.

²⁵ L.I. King, "Rasskazy ob imperatore Nikolae Pavloviche," in: *Nikolai I: Pro et Contra* (Sankt-Petersburg: Nauchno-obrazovatel'noe kul'turologicheskoe obshchestvo, 2013), p. 209.

their urban spectatorship in St. Petersburg, must not overlook these activities.

A very popular pastime among Americans was watching holiday festivities. Remarkably, this activity proved to bear a closer semblance to Baudelairian *flânerie* than walks in the city. A person strolling in the street attracted attention, but in a holiday crowd, he could “disappear,” become anonymous, and watch people’s behavior without being obvious or annoying. He could observe others from a distance, or approach them closer. He could also volunteer to interact with them in some way. US diplomats wisely utilized the opportunities that crowd-watching offered, and their memoirs provide rare insights into what they felt and sensed on their exploration adventure; what surprised, shocked, pleased, or irritated them.

The holiday festivities that truly surprised them took place on Easter. In celebration of Resurrection, huge crowds spilled into the streets and avenues of St. Petersburg. The Russians kissed friends, relatives, and even complete strangers, joyfully uttering “Christ has risen!” and in response receiving “Indeed he has!” Not having been raised in the Orthodox tradition, Americans saw this phenomenon for the first time. Its massive scale amazed and fascinated them. One morning US Minister Charles S. Todd encountered, in his estimate, “five hundred men kissing each other.” He thought that witnessing something like this, a sight uniquely “belonging to Eastern manners,” was worth the trip across the Atlantic.²⁶

Not everything that Americans experienced amid the Russian crowd was positive or pleasant. On the days of *grand fêtes* they came across a large number of drunks. The US diplomats had known about the common Russian addiction to alcohol since their first days in the capital. The servants they hired for the Legation were usually local, and from time to time they excused themselves from work due to *zapoi*, or a drinking binge. When they were not on *zapoi*, they still drank frequently. The local majordomes assured the ambassadors that firing these individuals was pointless as the replacements would be exactly the same. As a result, Americans dealt with violent behavior from inebriated employees. Dallas’ coachman once beat a postilion so cruelly that his “life was despaired of.”²⁷ Dallas had to speak to the police and make sure that a physician be procured for the injured servant. It stands to reason that, after such experiences, US diplomats would fear drunks in the Russian holiday crowds. However, they did not encounter drunken violence on holidays or weekends. Edward Wright reported that whilst “many a ludicrous sight was enjoyed as the poor creatures... went reeling along to their homes,” “no quarrelling was ever seen.”²⁸ Herbert J. Hagerman similarly observed that during *grand fêtes* the Russians who had imbibed still acted orderly. This could be attributed to the fact that downtown festival areas were under strict police supervision. Hagerman, though, thought there was an additional explanation: the inebriated men were “almost always

²⁶ G.W. Griffin, *Memoir of Col. Chas S. Todd* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Hafflefinger, 1873), p. 93.

²⁷ Dallas, p. 199.

²⁸ Wright, p. 168.

accompanied by someone who could take care of them, often by a sweetheart or a wife who seemed to take the situation as a matter of course.²⁹

Feeling confident in the multitude of people that filled St. Petersburg's downtown on holidays, Americans went shopping. Members of the US Legation quickly discovered that holiday, and for that matter, everyday shopping required some ingenuity. Shop owners or clerks usually watched the street in front of the entrance and tried to estimate the size of the guests' wallets before they even entered the store. Having discovered that she was overcharged a few times, Katherine Breckinridge started dressing modestly for her shopping expeditions, and became a virtuoso incognito shopper. Instead of visiting glittering galleries such as Gostinyi Dvor, Breckinridge often headed to the open-air markets and holiday fairs where one could find interesting antique items or china that made perfect gifts.

Diplomats who brought families to St. Petersburg could not ignore Gostinyi because a fantastic toy store - Doinikov and Sokolova - was located there, and it attracted children like a magnet. In addition, on Palm Sunday and Christmas the streets surrounding the Gallery turned into the best outdoor shopping area in the city. Vendors in brightly colored temporary tents offered various knick-knacks, and a large selection of toys.³⁰ Children all over St. Petersburg eagerly awaited the fair, begging parents to take them shopping. Young Americans were no exception. Dora Allen, the wife of the US naval attaché Henry T. Allen, took her son and daughter to the "doll bazaar" in December. They spent a great amount of time browsing toys.³¹

It is important to note that in St. Petersburg outdoor events like this bazaar were often held in the winter, the coldest season, when venturing outside could present a big challenge. Modern scholarship recognizes that urban spectatorship involves more than taking mental snapshots of the city's ambiance and experiencing pleasant or shocking encounters with its inhabitants. How one experiences and perceives a city is also shaped by the ways in which he adapts to climate and weather changes: by his ability to face the challenges and irritants to his various senses. For the Americans wanting to explore the Russian capital the biggest sensory trial turned out to be winter cold.

Getting through the cold months in St. Petersburg was difficult even for its natives. The arrival of winter, according to Mstislav Dobuzhinsky, gave everyone the blues, inducing the feeling that "something gloomy, awesomely devastating, and scary" was about to happen. But life had to go on, and, to their credit, the Russians learned "to outsmart mother-nature."³² Layers of clothing and warm *shubas* allowed them to bravely step outside in the freezing temperatures. They

²⁹ Herbert J. Hagerman, *Letters of a Young Diplomat* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: The Rydal Press, 1937), p. 41.

³⁰ K. Zhukov and P. Klubkov, *Peterburg bez mundira* (Moscow: Olma Media Group, 2008), p. 46-47.

³¹ Henry T. Allen Papers Collection, The Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Box 1, 1893-95, *Dora Allen Diary, 1894*, December 28, 1894.

³² M.V. Dobuzhinsky, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1987), p. 10-11.

brightened their days by enjoying winter park amusements and sports, as well as sleigh rides on the Neva ice.

Local friends of the US diplomats encouraged them not to stay cooped up in their apartments, but to venture outside and see the magic of St. Petersburg covered with snow. In order to do so, the Americans first needed to purchase fur coats. The Russian coats, covered with velvet on the outside and lined with fur, were practical and well-designed. The dense velvet prevented them from getting wet, while their lining kept cold air out. Such marvelous creations of Russian tailors were quite expensive. Prices remained high throughout the century, and almost all US diplomats complained about them. In 1841, secretary of the Legation John Lothrop Motley lamented: "I have been obliged to spend for furs... and although I tried to keep as near the bottom of the ladder of prices (up which you may go for a single wrapper to \$10,000 or \$12,000) as was consistent with decency, yet the price was tremendous and would have clothed me for a year in Boston and three in Dedham."³³ Choosing the right furs caused Americans much anxiety. Black fox was stricken from the list right away as it was the costliest. US ministers and their wives usually decided on blue fox and beaver.³⁴ The price tag on these was still far from reasonable, but the high status of the Legation's first couple required such a splurge. Junior diplomats were free to select from a wider range of furs and could even happily settle on coon.

The new *shuba* owners were ready for the cold, if not, perhaps, for all the surprises that wearing *shuba* offered. When Edward Wright stepped outdoors, he was astounded by what he observed:

No human creatures are to be seen; but coons, bears, foxes, beavers and all sorts of animals are perambulating about, dressed up, if one might judge from their hats and boots, in the latest Parisian fashion. Walking out the other day with the animals for a little fresh air, I was astonished to see an odd looking *coon* draw up before me, and to hear my name pronounced with a chuckle. On examination I found it was Stoeckle, laughing away at my red nose...³⁵

It turned out that, in the freezing temperatures, Russian layered clothing and fur coats could sometimes hide their owners' identity, and give urban spectators a moment of anonymity that they craved.

Moreover, the arrival of freezing temperatures provided new opportunities for exploring the city. As soon as the ice of the Neva River got strong enough, Americans noticed small sleighs on it. Decorated with bells and bright ribbons, these festive sleighs belonged to the Laplanders who came to St. Petersburg from Finland to earn some seasonal cash. For mere pennies, they offered fast,

³³ John Lothrop Motley, *The Correspondence of John Lothrop Motley*. Vol. I. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1900), p. 99.

³⁴ K.B., March 10, 1895.

³⁵ Wright, p. 88.

thrilling rides on the ice roads or through the city downtown. A few US diplomats succumbed to this temptation.

Another type of rides interested them as well – the legendary St. Petersburg ice mountains, a very popular and “dangerous sport.” The riders reached the summit of these structures by staircase, and then slid down a “steep concave of planking” coated with ice in a sled.³⁶ The taller the hill was, the faster and more abrupt was the descent. This entertainment was not for the faint-hearted. Bayard Taylor’s first experience at the ice hills proved petrifying. He discovered that the sleds accommodated two, one passenger, and one driver who guided the descent by slightly touching the ice with a gloved hand. Being a novice, Taylor rented a sled and hired a pilot:

I engaged one of the mujiks in attendance to pilot me on my first voyage. The man having taken his position well forward on the little sled, I knelt upon the rear end, where there was barely space enough for my knees, placed my hands upon his shoulders, and awaited the result. He shoved the sled with his hands, very gently and carefully, to the brink of the icy steep; then there was a moment’s adjusting; then a poise; then – sinking of the heart, cessation of breath, giddy roaring and whistling of the air, and I found myself scudding along the level with the speed of an express train. I never happened to fall out of a fourth-story window, but I immediately understood the sensations of the unfortunate persons who do. It was so frightful that I shuddered when we reached the end of it.³⁷

While Taylor found the ice mountains frightening, the younger members of the US Legation became addicted to them. Young bachelor Edward Wright purchased a fancy sled with “the softest of cushions,” and, every day, spent an hour at the amusement. He turned into an expert pilot and successfully used this fact to flirt with the ladies.³⁸

Americans believed that, despite the harsh St. Petersburg climate, children had to spend time in the fresh air and engage in outdoor activities. Parents taught their offspring not to fear the cold, taking them on sleigh rides and even to the ice hills. However, children’s favorite outdoor amusement was ice skating. As soon as the ice froze, skating rinks appeared everywhere in the city, ranging from small ones in people’s backyards to the large ones on the ponds and the Moika River. Families of US diplomats received invitations to skate in the Taurida Park, a prestigious place reserved for the royal family and top aristocracy. They also participated in private skating parties. Minister John W. Foster recalled that his children looked forward to such parties:

³⁶ Bayard Taylor, *By-Ways of Europe* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Son, 1869), p. 93.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Wright, p. 242.

The younger members of our family found much enjoyment in the skating parties in the private parks reserved for the nobility and the Diplomatic Corps, the grounds beautifully illuminated, and the skaters moving to the melody of a band of music detailed for the purpose while hot tea and sandwiches were served from adjacent booths.³⁹

Mary Breckinridge, daughter of the US Minister, described skating trips in St. Petersburg fondly, emphasizing that such outdoor activities gave her and her sister Lees an opportunity to socialize with young St. Petersburgers, and develop friendships with Russian children of their own age. Fifty years after her return from the city on the Neva, she still remembered the names of her best Russian friends, the “three charming... sisters (Annie, Dina, and Magda).”⁴⁰ Outdoor adventures in the Empire of the Tsars became some of the more interesting moments in her early life.

Examination of the US diplomats’ efforts to explore St. Petersburg offers insights into the general nature of urban spectatorship, and into its specific manifestations in an autocratic state such as the Russian Empire. The experiences of Americans provide evidence supporting the thesis that urban spectatorship is a phenomenon expressed in many forms, and that one can engage in it not only at leisure, but at work as well. US representatives successfully observed the locals and their traditions while attending various diplomatic functions, and even while making “mad dashes” through the city in the Legation’s carriage. They combined this on-duty observation with exploration of the city in their free time, and their reminiscences about their walks in St. Petersburg proved to be fascinating. These records revealed that, in an autocratic state, a person intending to take promenade and to enjoy some anonymous social botanizing could instead be forced to participate in theatrical displays of power staged by the monarch. Meanwhile, anonymous experience close to classical *flânerie*, with most likelihood, could be obtained by joining crowds of people at holiday festivities or going to the parks for sports and amusements. Having figured out these peculiarities of urban spectatorship in the capital of the Tsars, Americans managed to gather a large volume of unique information about St. Petersburg. Although they did not necessarily like encountering the Romanovs on the Nevsky, they still took care to record conversations with them for posterity. Their memoirs offered historians new details describing personalities of the Russian autocrats, as well as their methods of rule. After trips to the parks, ice hills, and skating rinks Americans did not hesitate to discuss the sensations and emotions that they had felt. They mentioned feeling exhilaration on a sleigh ride, dying from fear while descending

³⁹ J. W. Foster, *Diplomatic Memoirs* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), p. 169.

⁴⁰ Mary Breckinridge, *Wide Neighborhoods: A Story of the Frontier Nursing Service* (The Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1981), p. 10.

ice mountain, or enjoying the warmth and comfort of a new *shuba*. For native St. Petersburgers these emotions and sensations were not new, and as their novelty had passed, Russian memoir writers rarely brought them up. By adding these details to the descriptions of life in the city on the Neva, American urban spectators made it possible to imagine 19th-century Petersburg in more vivid terms. Specialists in urban studies and history of St. Petersburg should view memoirs and diaries penned by US diplomats as a valuable resource.

About the Author

Svetlana E. Paulson is Professor of History at Southern Arkansas University in Magnolia, Arkansas. She has authored a series of articles about the experiences of US diplomats in Imperial St. Petersburg. These articles appeared in the journals of the Russian Academy of Sciences such as *Novaiia and Noveishaiia Istoriiia* and *Amerikanskii Ezhegodnik*. Svetlana Paulson received her Ph.D. in Russian history from Ohio University.

An American Inspection Tour of the Soviet First Five Year Plan, 1931

John M. Carmody
Edited by Norman Saul

Introduction

The following 11-page typed manuscript was found in box 39 of the Carmody Papers in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park, New York. John Michael Carmody (1881-1963) was a major figure in President Roosevelt's "New Deal" administration (which explains the location of his papers), serving as a member of the National Labor Relation Board (1935), chief engineer of the Civil Works Administration (1933), administrator of the Rural Electrification Administration (1937), and head of the Federal Works Agency (1939), as well as a number of important war time posts, such as a member of the United States Maritime Commission (1941-46).

After attending Elmira College and the Lewis Institute in Chicago, Carmody was involved for a number of years in the manufacturing of women's coats, and then with factory inspections for the coal and steel industries in the United States. Just before his Russia trip he was editor of *Factory and Industrial Management* magazine. The manuscript has a penciled note, "prepared by John M. Carmody, 6/6/58." Additional information may be found in the Carmody oral history at Columbia University, which I was unable to consult, because of lockdowns due to the virus pandemic.

RUSSIAN TRIP -1931 **EXPERIENCES WITH JOHN K. CALDER** **By John M. Carmody**

Of all the American engineers who went to Russia during the 'First Five Year Plan - 1928-1932 - to make American techniques available in the early days of building Russia's industrial plant, only two of them, Hugh Cooper¹ and John K.

¹ Hugh Lincoln Cooper (1865-1937) was a major figure in American assistance to Russia during the First Five-Year Plan. Obtaining a reputation in the United States for construction of the Keokuk dam across the Mississippi River and the Muscle Shoals Dam in Alabama. He was hired by a Soviet delegation to the U. S to design and construct a dam on the Dnepr River in Ukraine as part of the plan to provide power for a steel complex and affiliated industries.

Calder really caught the imagination of the Russian people or received frequent laudatory acclaim of the Moscow correspondents of American newspapers or itinerant writers. Others, doing equally important work in oil, steel, coal, tractors, power, food, etc. - Austin,² McKee,³ Polakor? Szpasi, Stuart, James, Freyn - got scant notice in the American press, and seemed to be known in Russia only to local directors of the plants they served.

It was different with Cooper and Calder. It was Hugh Cooper who participated with Russian engineers in the design of the huge Dneiperstroï dam and in the supervision of its construction largely through a considerable staff housed in an attractive village it had built for itself at the site. The huge dam, the first of a series built on many rivers, furnishes power for a huge complex of Metallurgical industries that were under construction when I was there in 1931.

Calder, unlike Cooper and others, who supervised their American staffs in Russia largely from their home offices in New York or Pittsburgh or Cleveland or Chicago, remained in Russia and worked alone, except for a Russian interpreter and one or two American assistants. For a couple of years before I went to Russia before in 1931, I had seen his name in newspapers, as I had seen Cooper's, especially in the *New York Times*. Walter Duranty,⁴ *New York Times* correspondent in Moscow, frequently mentioned Calder in connection with some special construction achievement. This was especially true of the Stalingrad Tractor plant, the first of the big new Five-Year Plan plants to be finished ahead of schedule and ready to house production machinery. I was to learn later that Calder had been a steel erector in the employ of a Detroit contractor whose firm built the Dearborn plant of the Ford Co. This was at the time one of the largest industrial plants in the world.

When the first Five-Year Plan was under consideration the USSR sent several missions (usually consisting of from five to ten engineers and economists) to the United States to study plants in various industries. The mission that devoted

² Much more is now known about the activities in Russia of the Austin Company from research in the company records, preserved in the Western Historical Society Archives in Cleveland, Ohio. Founded by Samuel Austin, an English immigrant, in 1878, the Austin Company became noted for its planning "method" of designing a construction project in engineering offices down to the last bolt before proceeding to the site. Approached first by Henry Ford, the Soviet delegation to the United States for building a factory, he recommended Austin. For more, see my book: *Friends or Foes?: The United States & Russia, 1921-1941* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 229-38. The Austin Company project also included the construction of a model city for workers at the site outside Nizhny Novgorod, supervised by Allan Austin, a son of the company president.

³ Also, in Cleveland, the Alexander McKee Company was contracted to build the large steel complex at Magnitogorsk in the Urals. Ibid. 223-229. See also, John Scott, *Behind the Urals: An American Worker in Russia's City of Steel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

⁴ Walter Duranty (1884-1957). British-born journalist, as Moscow Bureau Chief for the *New York Times* for fourteen years, Duranty was known for his coverage of 'the great leap forward of the First Five-Year Plan' though he was later accused of minimizing the costs, such as the famine in Ukraine and his glossing over the extent of the purges. Many of his articles were also published in book form.

its time to study of manufacturing automobiles, trucks, tractors, etc., was deeply impressed by what they saw at Dearborn - buildings, equipment, methods. The buildings had been designed by Albert Kahn and Company,⁵ well known industrial architects who were able to incorporate in it, with the aid of Ford's production managers, the best techniques that had been evolved during some twenty years of dynamic experiences at the very center of auto Detroit manufacturing. This intrigued the Russian mission.

Result? Albert Kahn Company was engaged to design the new plant at Stalingrad fashioned after Dearborn. American machinery was purchased to install in the plant when the buildings were ready. Actual construction of the buildings in Russia was done under the supervision of dynamic Commissar Orzenikidsie [Ordzhonikidze].⁶ The Russians had asked Kahn to recommend a man to erect the steel frame, and at which the Russians had not yet learned. Kahn recommended John K. Calder, who had supervised the erection of the steel frames for various buildings, that make up the plant complex at Dearborn. Calder accepted, taking with him a couple of young, recently graduated engineers who were then working with him on another contract, the Hudson store building in Detroit, Jim McElroy and Spencer. Under Ordzhonikidze's drive, plus the party's Russia-wide push to get a big start with the first big plant under the Five-Year Plan, materials were rushed to Stalingrad, fabricated steel in huge quantities was supplied, and the buildings were complete and ready for equipment installation three months ahead of schedule.

All Russia was thrilled. Newspapers, all Party controlled, carried feature stories; loud speakers everywhere acclaimed the feat. Calder shared in the acclaim. It was here he won recognition for accomplishment. The Russian newspapers carried his name; foreign correspondents like Walter Duranty and H. R. Knickerbocker⁷ brought his name and achievements brought his name and achievements to the attention to the attention of the American people. When I

⁵ Albert Kahn (1865-1942), a German immigrant, was a well-known as an industrial designer for the construction of the Ford River Rouge plant in Dearborn, Michigan, and many other large factories. He also designed a number of public buildings and private residences, such as the mansion of Edsel and Eleanor Ford, near Detroit, now a museum open to the public. Soviet visitors were impressed with his work.

⁶ Grigory (Sergo) Ordzhonikidze (1886-1937), as Chairman of the Supreme Council of National Economy (VSENKHA) in 1930, he was a major figure in the development of the First Five-Year Plan. He can be considered an early victim of the Great Purge. He had a shouting match argument with Stalin in February of 1937, both in person and on the phone, after which he committed suicide. Martin McCauley, *Who's Who in Russia Since 1900* (London: Routledge, 1997), 153. Ordzhonikidze was an unusual character, as the following description indicates: "an old friend of Lenin, and an even older friend of Stalin [they first met in Tiflis in 1906], . . . he was torn between the two 'faiths'. He chose his countryman, Stalin. . . . Sergo was impetuous, brutal, disorganized and effervescent, quick with his laugh as with his temper." Georges Haupt and Jean-Jacques Marie, *Makers of the Russian Revolution* (Ithaca; Cornell University Press, 1974), 178.

⁷ Hubert Renfro Knickerbocker (1898-1949) Duranty's younger rival as a reporter of the same scene in Russia in the 1930's and continuing to cover the war time and post war Europe for the *New York Evening Post* until he died in a plane crash in India near Bombay.

called on Valery Mezhlauk,⁸ the head of Gosplan (the whole Five-Year complex) before I made the more extensive part of my trip, he volunteered the statement that “Calder is the best engineer we have had from America.” He advised me to see him when I stopped at Chelyabinsk on my way to Magnitogorsk. I did. I flew to Sverdlovsk the next day and went by auto to Chelyabinsk over “wagon-trail” roads not unlike early trails across our own western prairies in pioneer days. It was nearly midnight when we arrived, my interpreter Helen, myself, our driver and the young secretary of the local Komsomol, whom we had picked up in Sverdlovsk. I didn’t seem him again. My interpreter took me to the apartment of some Americans whom she knew. They “did not know we were coming but I’m sure we will be welcome.”

Late as it was, when Helen knocked on the door, a young man in a dressing gown opened it, exclaiming, “why Helen!” as she showed equal delight. They embraced like long lost brother and sister. The young man was James McElroy. The apartment was John Calder’s. He had gone to a nearby lake resort for the night. Another occupant, Spencer, who, like McElroy, was an assistant to Calder, was convalescing at the Black Sea resort, Sochi. McElroy was alone. He had not seen an American, except for his two associates, in many months. Yes, we were welcome. Helen, the interpreter who had brought previous American visitors, found a place to sleep and Jim McElroy, a graduate of Michigan State College, talked to me long into the night. He had worked Calder on construction in Detroit, had gone to Stalingrad⁹ with him and for a whole year had been with him in Chelyabinsk. He spoke Russian so well he did not require an interpreter, rare among Americans I met in Russia. Knickerbocker had visited this project in 1930 and written about it in his book, “The Red Trade Menace.” He had mentioned McElroy as he wrote more extensively about Calder and his achievements. Of Calder he had said (page 82). “Tall, mustached tight-lipped, handsome, Calder is the sort of figure of an American that springs to mind when one thinks of picturesque feats of engineering in far corners of the earth. One of the first American engineers to come to the Soviet Union to work under the Five-Year Plan, he brought with him rich experience in industrial construction in America. His first job was the Stalingrad Tractor plant. He completed it in six and a half months, far ahead of schedule. This accomplishment, his candor and fearlessness were factors that won him the distinction, etc.”

I had read this and many other references to Calder’s achievements in Russia. I had heard Meshlauk praise him as the “best American engineer who had come

⁸ Valery Mezhlauk (1893-1938) was born in Kharkiv, Ukraine, and a graduate of the university there in 1917. He was known for his skill in economic organization and planning as first deputy chairman of GOSPLAN in 1931-34. He served as a member of an economic delegation to the United States in 1929 that met with Henry Ford. (The Library of Congress has a photograph of the meeting.) He was executed in 1938, a victim of the great purge. See Archie Brown, ed. *The Soviet Union: A Biographical Dictionary*, (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 249.

⁹ The Stalingrad tractor plant was leased to International Harvester, a leading American company, heralding its return to Russia, where it had been a major presence before the revolution.

to Russia from America.” Helen, my interpreter, a clever, sharp girl who had taken interested visitors to many projects, sang Calder’s praises. Now I was in his apartment in Russia talking to one of his assistants.

In all of this, reading, talking, listening, it never once dawned on me that I never had seen Calder or heard of him in any other connection.

Again, Knickerbocker had written, “The first spadeful of earth was turned on the Chelyabinsk plant July 20, 1930, at a ceremony where Calder was called upon to speak, from a platform red with slogans of revolution, between members of the young Communists having drawn sabers symbolic of the war for industrialization.”¹⁰

As McElroy and I walked out to the site early next morning a man emerged from a construction shanty a couple of hundred yards away and walked toward me. As we shook hands, he said quietly, “How is Him, how is Art? The “Jim” is my brother James, the “Art” was Arthur Grimes. The man was Jack Calder. So, this was the man I had been reading about, the man who had won distinction in Russia for accomplishment in construction and quite rightly so!! Strange that I had not once connected his name with the Jack Calder I had known many years earlier in Chicago and Detroit.

Jack Calder had a secret. He knew that “Jim” and “Art” knew it. He knew I knew it. I do not know what went through his mind. My own mind flashed back to an experience with Jack Calder twenty years earlier that reflected no credit on him, but I had no intention of referring to it. He had been a member of a secret service or spy or espionage system of the United States Steel Corporation while he was a steel inspector for Robert W. Hunt and Company, an independent engineering inspection firm. I don’t recall how precisely how Arthur Grimes, a Hunt Company inspector in Detroit in 1910-11, where American Bridge Company, a U. S. Steel Corporation subsidiary had a fabricating plant, came by his knowledge. It may only be observation and deduction, My brother’s case was different. He too was a Hunt and Company inspector stationed at Ambridge, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in charge of several Hunt stationed there. Ambridge was then Ambridge Bridge Company’s largest plant, tonnage-wise and employee-wise.

Calder, whom my brother had never met and whose status he was unaware of, came to Ambridge and introduced himself as a friend of mine in Chicago, where I was at the time superintendent of Joseph T. Ryerson and Son fabricating shops. Calder proposed to my brother that he make some money “on the side” by entering the U. S. Steel Corporation espionage or spy system while at the same time remaining on the Hunt and Company payroll. My brother immediately wrote to me in Chicago and asked, “What kind of friends are you making in Chicago?” Nothing more - name and facts later.

Meantime, recalling occasional rumors that so and so, sometimes an inspector, was a member of this rumored spy system, my brother, James decided to get the facts. He got in touch with Calder. Calder introduced him to Cherry, Chief of U.

¹⁰ H.R. Knickerbocker, *Red Trade Menace: Progress of the Soviet Trade Five-Year Plan* (New York: Dodd, Mead Publishers, 1931), 128.

S. Steel espionage at their headquarters in Pittsburgh - Carnegie or Frick building - who explained what his duties would be, and his salary, and gave him report forms and the number he would be known by.

When my brother had got all this information and appeared to be ready to sign he said "Mr. Cherry, I've heard about this system. I've heard from time to time that some inspectors were participating in it. I thought they were rumors. Now I know the system exists, how it works and that inspectors actually are enticed into it." He left the office, went back to Ambridge and wrote me in detail. Later he told me the story orally. He had been at Ambridge three years. Two of his sons were born there. He was well established in the community, much respected and popular in the plant. These were good qualities for a spy to have, I suppose, especially one who, by the terms of the contracts covering the various bridges and building materials he inspected, provided that he enter and remain in the plant at any and all hours of the night.

Net result? Robert W. Hunt and Company was notified by U. S. Steel Corporation that James was persona non grata on Steel Company property. He was transferred to Buffalo, New York where the steel mills and shops were owned by others. He was upset but got used to it.

I spent the evening with Calder and McElroy alone in their apartment (the interpreter resented being left out of these conversations). My acquaintance with Calder, apart from what my brother and Art Grimes had told me, was limited to one or two brief visits he made to our Ryerson shop in Chicago to inspect some bridge material for a client. I told him I had once been a Hunt and Company inspector and treated him as I knew any inspector liked to be treated - courteously (spreading material to save his time, etc.).

That evening in Chelyabinsk Calder was worried and looked it. No steel had arrived, no progress had been made for months. He was "sitting it out." It was not until I told him that Mezhlauk had said ("best American engineer in Russia") that he really came alive. He asked me to repeat it. I did. His face lit up, he began complaining about the November 10, the Director, Levin, whom I had seen briefly a few days earlier in Moscow and Sverdlovsk, and who, incidentally, had not mentioned Calder when he talked about the plant. Calder then said, "I'll get that so-and-so. I'm going to Moscow tomorrow and see Mezhlauk. I'll get another assignment." McElroy told me privately Calder was different man. When he, McElroy, and Spencer (another assistant away at the time) complained, Calder had told them, "sit tight, take it easy," etc. how he was fixed up. He wanted another assignment. I went on to Magnitogorsk in Western Siberia; Calder went to Moscow.

I am near the end of the story. When I got back to Moscow after my trip to Magnitogorsk, Siberia, ten days later, Calder was there in the Grand Hotel where I stayed when I was in Moscow. His faithful interpreter, Anna, had joined him. He had befriended her when her husband had been hustled off one midnight by the G. P. U. She was interpreter, nurse, provider of food, companion, advisor, and what have you. Very competent. McElroy, also, had resigned at Chelyabinsk. He decided to go home to Michigan. Ray Stack, who had been so kind and helpful to

me at Magnitogorsk a few days earlier, arrived. He was acting chief for McKee, of Cleveland, and in charge of the McKee staff. He, too, was “fed up;” He was going home to Duluth. The hotel was crowded. I finally found him a place to sleep, but he insisted on staying with me in my single room. He wouldn’t go to bed. He sat up all night, drank a fifth of Scotch and woke me up every little while to talk to me. As the strock oar on the first eight-oared shell that Wisconsin University had entered in the Hudson River regatta, he was rugged enough to blow off that kind of steam.

About the author

Norman E. Saul is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Kansas. Author of many works on Russian-American relations, he is also co-founding editor of *Journal of Russian American Studies (JRAS)*.

John Cournos Among the Imagists: Prelude to Petrograd

Marilyn Schwinn Smith

1. Introduction

On 2 February 1918, poet H. D. (1886-1961) wrote from London to her fellow American John Cournos (1881-1966) in response to the packet he had sent from revolutionary Petrograd: "I read the poems with great joy—the one to A.A. touched me deeply."¹ Neither the poem nor the identity of its addressee has appeared in either H. D. or Anglophone scholarship. Locating the poem and identifying its addressee has been the province of scholars in Russia. The poem "To A. A." invites us to take a deeper look into the working relationship between Cournos and H. D. In doing so, the Anglophone reader comes to a broader understanding of John Cournos's overlooked position of among the Anglo-American Imagists, of the role he played in bridging English-language and Russian literary relations, and of England's wartime activity in Russia.

From among his several vocations, John Cournos is remembered certainly not as a poet but as a translator. Born in what today is Ukraine, Cournos was fluent in Russian and began translating into English in 1908, when living in Philadelphia. In London at the time of the Great War, he worked for the British War Department, translating military cables from Russia at Marconi House. Cournos was then recruited to serve on the British government's Anglo-Russian Commission in Petrograd. His official duties involved writing articles for Russian periodicals designed to sustain public sentiment for remaining in the war. Arriving in Petrograd 14 October 1917, mere weeks before the Bolshevik coup, Cournos was subject to the dire conditions of a city stricken first by the war and now by revolutionary disorder and violence. Yet he was writing poems and mailing them to his close friend in England. The poem that touched H. D. deeply reads:

O lily,
Frail white flower,
A joy to behold!

The hurricane blows,
Felling huge trees,

1. Donna Krolig Hollenberg, "Art and Ardor in World War One: Selected Letters from H. D. to John Cournos," *Iowa Review* v. 16, no. 3 (fall 1986): 126-155, 141.

The beech and the oak,
And the tall sycamore.

O lily sweet,
Dear and frail,
Will you still stand
When the winds cease to blow?
Will you still hold high
Your fair proud head?
Will you look with pity
On the beech and the oak
And the tall sycamore
That lie stretched on the ground
When the winds cease to blow?
(*To A.A.* – November 1917)²

The fair proud head held high is an eloquent evocation of Cournos's addressee, the Russian poet Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966), depicting her as she was at the time and as she was to remain across the cruel span of her life in Soviet Russia. Cournos identified Russian literature as a literature of pity. Asking whether the lily will look with pity on the trees laid low after the winds of revolution have ceased to blow, Cournos uncannily forecasts Akhmatova's future position in Russian poetry.³ Cournos had long hoped to become Akhmatova's authorized translator. Residence in Petrograd availed him the opportunity to meet her.

Aside from the poem's beauty, H. D. would have been inclined to appreciate the poem for its resonance with her own poetry. Compare "To A. A." with H. D.'s poem "Sea Lily," written the previous year.

REED,
Slashed and torn
but doubly rich—
such great heads as yours
drift upon temple-steps,
but you are shattered
in the wind.

2. First published: M. B. Meilakh, "Al'bom Anny Akhmatovy. 1910—nachala 1930-kh godov," *Pamiatniki kul'tury. Novye otkrytiia. Ezhegodnik 1991* (Moscow: Nauka, 1997), 46. I gratefully acknowledge Boris Dralyuk for locating this publication on my behalf. Roman Timenchik dates the poem to November 1917. "'Zapisnye knizhki' Anny Akhmatovoi," *Etkindovskie chteniia: sbornik statei v. 2-3* (St. Petersburg: Evropeiskii universitet v Sankt-Peterburge, 2006), 238. Timenchik's entry for Cournos includes several little noted documents, 238-42.

3. Cournos, familiar with contemporary Russian literary culture, may well have known of Akhmatova's reputation among Russian poets as a "Cassandra." On Akhmatova's early reputation, see Roberta Reeder, *Anna Akhmatova: Poet and Prophet* (Los Angeles, CA: Figueroa Press, 2006), chapters 2 and 3 *passim*.

Myrtle-bark
 is flecked from you,
 scales are dashed
 from your stem,
 sand cuts your petal,
 furrows it with hard edge,
 like flint
 on a bright stone.

Yet though the whole wind
 slash at your bark,
 you are lifted up,
 aye—though it hiss
 to cover you with froth.
 (“Sea Lily” 1916)⁴

“To A.A.” and “Sea Lily” share the motif of survival in the face of environmental devastation. The sea lily not only survives but is “lifted up.”

Yet though the whole wind
 slash at your bark,
 you are lifted up
 Cournos appropriates and transmutes these lines in his query:
 O lily sweet,
 Dear and frail,
 Will you still stand
 When the winds cease to blow?
 Will you still hold high
 Your fair proud head?

Cournos’s poem translates H. D.’s aesthetics to another realm, extending her personal aesthetic—the survival of the artist’s integrity—to encompass the social survival of a people racked by war and revolution. His frail lily grows not at the sea-coast, but at the verge of Russia’s great forests of beech, oak, and sycamore. Huge trees, not relatively fragile reeds, are stricken by the gale. Whether the lily will survive the devastation, as does H. D.’s flower, remains an open question: “Will you still stand/When the winds cease to blow?” And if so, “Will you still hold high/Your fair proud head?” Notably, where H. D.’s lily is “lifted up,” Cournos suggests that his lily, if surviving the hurricane, will not require lifting up, but will “hold high” of its own strength.

4. H. D., *Sea Garden* (London: Constable, 1916), 21. Cournos implies that he was involved in the search for a publisher for *Sea Garden* in his roman à clef devoted to these years, *Miranda Masters* (1926), 142.

The women poets H. D. and Akhmatova share the distinction of epitomizing poetic movements otherwise characterized as masculine – the Anglo-American Imagists and the Russian Acmeists. Parallels between the two movements and two poets have intrigued scholars for decades.⁵ John Cournos possessed the rare distinction of serving as a living link between these two poets. This essay charts the path toward his poem, “To A. A.,” detailing the people, events and circumstances which led a Russian-Jewish immigrant to Philadelphia to meet H. D. in London, preparing him to compose “To A. A.” once he arrived in Petrograd, 1917.

2 John Cournos Among the Anglo-Americans: “Come, my Philadelphians!”⁶

In 1912, Ezra Pound brought together fellow Philadelphians as they arrived in London including Hilda Doolittle, soon to acquire the sobriquet “H. D.” by which she is commonly known, and John Cournos, prolific translator from the Russian. None were born in Philadelphia and none chose to return.

Ezra Pound (30 October 1885, Hailey, ID – 1 November 1972, Venice, Italy) was raised in the Philadelphia suburb of Wyncote when his father obtained work at the Philadelphia Mint. Ezra met Hilda Doolittle in 1901, during his first semester at the University of Pennsylvania. After transferring to Hamilton College where he earned his BPhil, Pound returned to Penn for an M.A. granted in 1906, then began, but did not complete, his doctorate. Landing in London, August 1908, Ezra quickly found his way into the city’s nascent modernist art communities laying the groundwork for the Anglo-Americans.

Hilda Doolittle (10 September 1886, Bethlehem, PA – 27 September 1961, Zurich, Switzerland) moved with her family in 1895 to the Philadelphia suburb of Upper Darby when her father assumed the position of Professor of Astronomy at the University of Pennsylvania. Having met Ezra through her brother Gilbert, she maintained an ambiguously intimate relationship with him throughout her life. She arrived in London, October 1911, where Pound quickly introduced her to his British friends.

John Cournos (6 March 1881, Zhitomir, Ukraine – 27 August 1966, New York City) immigrated to Philadelphia’s Jewish Quarter together with his mother and some siblings in 1891. During grammar school, Cournos sold newspapers on the streets of Center City before school hours. He was later hired by the Philadelphia *Record*, where he rose to the position of Sunday art editor before leaving the city in 1912. With the dream of becoming an author, he abandoned financial security

5. An extensive bibliography of this scholarship in Kirsten Blythe Painter, *Flint on a Bright Stone: A Revolution of Precision and Restraint in American, Russian, and German Modernism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2006).

6. I draw this quotation from Peter Brooker’s chapter “Nights at the Cave of the Golden Calf (72-92) in his *Bohemia in London* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). It appears in a subsection consisting of extracts from Ford Madox Ford’s *Marsden Case* (1923) into which Brooker interpolates imagined conversations at the Cave of the Golden Calf. I quote such an interpolation, words spoken by Ezra Pound addressed to H. D., whose “head bent to catch the earnest words of Cournos,” 79.

and sailed for the Continent, arriving in London at the end of June.

Varying experiences of the city and its culture created a lasting bond among these three.

Fellow Americans, especially Philadelphians, arriving in London were drawn into the growing community of American and British artists. When Philadelphians James Whitall and George Wolfe Plank arrived in London in 1914, Cournos introduced them to H. D. and her British husband, Richard Aldington. Richard Aldington [Edward Godfree Aldington] (8 July 1892, Portsmouth, England – 27 July 1962, Sury-en-Vaux, Cher, France) was a novelist, memoirist, critic, biographer and one of the first Imagist poets. On the advice of Pound, Aldington was made literary editor of the *Egoist*, where he ensured the publication of Cournos's and H. D.'s work. Aldington had met H. D. in 1911, and they married in 1913. The still birth of their child in 1914, his deployment during the Great War, and his extra-marital affairs strained the marriage, and they separated in 1919. His 1929 semi-autobiographical war novel, *Death of a Hero*, was lionized in Russia, leading to his visit to that country late in his life. Whitall was to produce the fifth number of the couple's "Poets' Translation Series"; Plank illustrated numerous of H. D.'s works. Once centered around Ezra Pound, they participated in what has come to be known as the Anglo-Americans. The term Anglo-American refers most broadly to English-language cultural phenomena across the centuries. The narrowly defined term "Anglo-American Imagists" came into usage with scholarship on the "school" of Imagist poetry propagated by Ezra Pound. I use the term "Anglo-American" not specifically in reference to the Imagist poets, but to encompass the network of associations among British and American artists set in motion by Pound's energetic proselytizing.

When Cournos arrived in London, he brought with him two skills with which to make his way – journalism and translation. As a free-lance journalist, Cournos gravitated to venues frequented by London's artists from many fields, whether painting, or theatre, or sculpture, or writing, commingling across genres, gathering informally in a variety of venues. Prominent among them were the Café Tour d'Eiffel in Percy Street off Tottenham Court Road, Café Royal in Regent Street, Vienna Café in New Oxford Street, The Cave of the Golden Calf at 3 to 9 Heddon Street, and the ABC and Lyons tea shops scattered throughout the city. (During his time in wartime Petrograd, he was to frequent what remained of that city's cabaret life, where poets, painters and actors mingled.) There were also fortuitous encounters in the British Museum reading room. More formally, Cournos was soon attending several of the city's "salons": Monday evenings at W. B. Yeats's 18 Woburn Buildings, T. E. Hulme's Tuesday evening gatherings at 67 Frith Street, the regular readings and lectures at Harold Munro's Poetry Bookshop at 35 Devonshire Street, Theobald Road. The habitués of these venues overlapped to a considerable degree. From among them, Cournos gained entry to a broad cross-section of London's art world.

Journalism proved the path by which Cournos met Pound. *En route* to London, he had interviewed for *The New York Times* the theatre director Edward Gordon Craig, about whom there was considerable interest in New York's avant-

garde theater circles.⁷ When Craig himself arrived in London, he invited Cournos to join the committee for his proposed School for the Art of the Theatre. Cournos suggested that his Philadelphia friend, Henry Slonimsky, newly arrived in London, be invited to join the committee.⁸ Henry Slonimsky (9 October 1884, Minsk [Liachowitch], Russia – 12 November 1970, New York City) immigrated with his family to Philadelphia, graduating from the city's premier Central High School. In a reverse of Pound's academic trajectory, Slonimsky spent his first collegiate year at a small college on the outskirts of Philadelphia (Haverford) before transferring to the University of Pennsylvania. Cournos's friend in Philadelphia since at least 1904, Slonimsky arrived in London August 1912, after completing his doctoral degree under Hermann Cohen at the University of Marburg.⁹

As chance would have it, Slonimsky had a passing acquaintance with Pound. Charles Norman reports that Slonimsky first met Pound when they acted as "voluntary ushers" at Penn football games.¹⁰ Cournos recounts: "At one of the later meetings held in John Street, Adelphi, Ezra Pound turned up. [. . .] After the meeting, the three of us [Pound, Slonimsky, and Cournos], accompanied by [Ralph] Hodgson, went to the basement of a public house in the Strand, and talked."¹¹ Cournos promptly interviewed Pound for his former Philadelphia paper.¹² Slonimsky, like H. D. and Cournos before him, was introduced into Pound's London circles. Best documented of these was Pound's introduction of Slonimsky to T. E. Hulme's Tuesday evening salons at 67 Frith Street. Memoirs of the period memorialize their sparring. Richard Aldington recalls being "impressed by [Slonimsky's] skill and eloquence in refuting the arguments of the English Bergsonian, T. E. Hulme."¹³ The afterlife of Pound's and Slonimsky's

7. John Cournos, "Gordon Craig," 30 June 1912. New York Times Book Review (New York Times Archive. Viewed 17 Jan. 2012). Cournos lists the New York Times Book Review, the Boston Transcript, the Philadelphia Record, the Independent, and Craftsman as "open to suitable material from me." The initial material consisted of interviews with as many internationally known figures "as interested the American public." John Cournos, *Autobiography* (New York: Putnam, 1935), 223.

8. Arnold Rood lists Cournos and Henry Slonimsky among the committee's members, dating the committee's meetings from 19 September 1912 until 3 June 1913. "E. Gordon Craig, Director, School For the Art of the Theatre," *Theatre Research International*, v. 8, no. 1: 1-17, 6. Slonimsky served as secretary for "The Society of the Theatre." See his 19 October 1912 letter to the editor published in London's "The Academy. A (Monthly) Record of Literature, Learning, Science, and Art," 526. I thank Dr. Jonathan W. Malino for bringing this letter to my attention.

9. Slonimsky appears as Julius Strogovsky in Cournos's romans à clef: *The Mask* (1919), *The Wall* (1921) and *Babel* (1922).

10. Charles Norman, *Ezra Pound* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 3-4. J. J. Wilhelm also recounts the Pound-Slonimsky relationship in *The American Roots of Ezra Pound* (New York: Garland, 1985), 114-15.

11. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 234.

12. [John Cournos] "Native Poet Stirs London. Ezra Pound wins Critics' Praise." *Special Correspondence of "The Record."* London, Dec. 29. *The Philadelphia Record* (Jan. 1913), People section.

13. Richard Aldington, *Life for Life's Sake; A Book of Reminiscences*. (New York: Viking, 1941), 118.

re-acquaintance during 1912 is memorialized in two lines appearing in Canto LXXVII of Pound's *Pisan Cantos*:

‘Haff you gno bolidigal basshunts? . . .
Demokritoos. Heragleitios’ exclaimed Doktor Slonimsky 1912—¹⁴

Thus, these two Russian-Jewish immigrants to Philadelphia entered Pound's expansive circle of London friends, notably H. D. and Aldington.

John Cournos met H. D. and Aldington in 1912. They all attended T. E. Hulme's salon and shared friendships with Ezra Pound. In July 1913, Aldington and H. D. re-encountered Slonimsky in the Luxembourg Gardens of Paris.¹⁵ H. D. was particularly taken with Slonimsky, corresponding with him after this visit.¹⁶ Slonimsky remained on cordial terms with Aldington through 1959, long after Aldington's break with Cournos. Cournos took over Pound's room in Kensington in March 1914, “not many yards” from the Aldingtons' flat in Holland Place Chambers, where the newly-wed Pound soon moved. The Philadelphians were still socially intimate. H. D.'s and Cournos's friendship deepened through proximity of dwellings and Cournos's growing friendship with Aldington. Their closeness continued into Aldington's war service, until Cournos's return to England after his 1917-1918 sojourn in Petrograd. By 1915, they dispersed: Cournos to Bloomsbury and the Aldingtons to Hampstead Heath, later joining Cournos at 44 Mecklenburgh Square.

2.1 The Anglo-Americans and Translation

Translation was a major component of the trio's--Pound, H. D./Aldington, and Cournos-- shared interests. Their translation practice was intimately bound with an emerging modernism, regardless of language of origin or age of original text.¹⁷ Pound was translating from Provençal, Italian and Latin; Aldington from

14. See unpublished paper by Jonathan W. Malino, “Haff you gno bolidigal basshunts?...” (Canto 77/152-3): Ezra Pound and “Doktor” Slonimsky. 21st Ezra Pound International Conference,” Rapallo, Italy. Slonimsky's dissertation, titled “Heraklit und Parmenides,” appeared in *Philosophische Arbeiten*, a series edited by Hermann Cohen and his colleague, Paul Natorp.

15. Aldington's encomium of that Paris meeting [Aldington, *Life for Life's Sake*, 118-19] is noted in numerous H. D. biographies. H. D.'s biographers have relied on Aldington's faulty dating of the Paris meeting (May 1912). In her biography of Aldington, Vivien Whelpton, *Poet, Soldier and Lover: 1911-1929* (Cambridge, U.K.: Lutterworth Press, 2014), correctly dates the meeting as July 1913, a date confirmed by my own and Dr. Malino's research.

16. See Slonimsky – H. D. correspondence included in the Henry Slonimsky collection of Richard Aldington papers, 1913-1959 at Southern Illinois University Special Collections Research Center.

17. For discussion of modernist translations by Pound, H. D. and Aldington, see *The Classics in Modernist Translation*. Eds. Miranda Hickman and Lynn Kozak (London: Bloomsbury, 2019). On H. D. specifically, see Caroline Zilboorg, “H. D.'s Influence on Richard Aldington,” *Richard Aldington: Reappraisals*. Ed. Charles Doyle. (Victoria, B.C.: English Literary Studies, 1990), 26-44; on the Poets' Translation Series see Caroline Zilboorg, “Joint Venture: Richard Aldington, H. D. and the Poets' Translation Series,”

Greek, Latin and French; H. D. from Greek; Cournos from Russian. Cournos's translation practice ("foreignizing rather than domesticating," to use Venuti's terms) was already established in Philadelphia and probably altered only to the extent his command of English and familiarity with the literature increased. However, Pound's efforts to bring Cournos's work to the attention of publishers, paralleled by the efforts of both H. D. and Aldington, cannot be overestimated. The trio supported each other professionally through introductions and helping each other get their works into print.

Before relocating from Philadelphia to London, Cournos had begun what became a lifelong vocation of translating Russian literature. Translation was always more than a much-needed source of income for Cournos. Given his lack of proper schooling, translation would enhance the language skills he was acquiring as a journalist, particularly in view of his desire to become a writer. More importantly, translation figured as a species of "cultural work," an intervention into a dominant culture. Cournos's translation work must be viewed in conjunction with those sentiments which drew him to explore political responses to immigrant life in a rapidly industrializing American city. At the turn of the century, American literary critics were lamenting the decline of American literature, citing industrialization as a significant cause. They contrasted the state of American literature to the popularity of literature emanating from Russia during America's "Russian Craze", attributing Russian literature's better qualities to its roots in a predominantly agricultural society. Against the backdrop of increasing nativist activity in the United States, Cournos wrote in "Literature and Industrialism" (1903) of the potentially salutary effect of immigrants on American literature.¹⁸

[I]t can be readily seen that the characters of the American and the Russian are so strikingly different that it would be utterly impossible for each to produce the same literature, [. . .]. The writer, though an enthusiastic admirer of the literature of Russia, which is the literature of human feeling, is of the opinion that the prospects for the future of American literature are unusually bright. With the blending of the many homogenous forces present, because of steady immigration, there should come also the blending of the different natures of literature.

Once in England, Cournos continued to seek out new authors for translation, authors whose writing might contribute to the kind of transnational cultural work he had espoused in 1903.

Philological Quarterly v. 70, no. 1: 67-99; and Elizabeth Vandiver, "'Seeking Buried Beauty': The Poets' Translation Series," *The Classics in Modernist Translation*, 7-18. For a discussion of Cournos's modernist translation, see Rebecca Beaseley "Modernism's Translations," *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernism*. Ed. Mark Wollaeger, with Matt Eatough. (New York: Oxford UP, 2012), 551-70.

18. John Cournos, "Literature and Industrialism," *The Era: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Literature and of General Interest* (Philadelphia: Henry T. Coates, 1903), v. 12, 371-3, 373. [Era Magazine][continuation of *The Literary Era: A Monthly Repository of Literary and Miscellaneous Information*, Porter & Coates] <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104244698;view=lup;seq=379>

As journalism brought Cournos together with Pound, his art criticism (another species of journalism) facilitated his first translations published in England. Through a series of introductions initiated by his friend, the English etcher William P. Robins, Cournos met J. C. Squire, newly appointed literary editor of the *New Statesman*. By May 1913 his translations of Anton Chekhov and Maxim Gorky, authors whom he had already translated in Philadelphia, began appearing in the *New Statesman*. Bashir Abu-Manneh notes that under Squire, the *New Statesman* engaged extensively with Russian fiction through literary-critical studies of Russian authors, essays and reviews of translated works: “The NS, in fact, responded to the growing public interest in Russian literature by publishing some itself. The year 1913 stands out as a particularly good year for Russian fiction, when the NS published no less than six Russian short stories that were specially translated for the journal by John Cournos” (145).¹⁹

Cournos held a unique position among these Anglo-Americans, a stature he derived from the Anglophone world’s growing familiarity with and interest in Russian literature during the Great War. The “Russian Boom” in England facilitated publication of his translations from the Russian, expanding his work with modernist authors, exemplified by his translations of Leonid Andreev while still in Philadelphia. Cournos’s translations of Fedor Sologub (1863-1927) were his major literary accomplishment of the war years.²⁰ *The Little Demon* by Sologub was the most significant of these translations. Aldington assisted Cournos with *The Little Demon* between late 1915 and early 1916. Though credited as co-translator of *The Little Demon*, Aldington probably did little more than review the manuscript for the quality of its English. Aldington may have checked *The Created Legend* as well for its English. Norman Gates suggested that Aldington’s task was probably “to rewrite Cournos’s literal rendering,”²¹ a premature judgement that influenced later critics.

19. Bashir Abu-Manneh, *Fiction of the New Statesman, 1913-1939* (Newark: U of DelawareP, 2011). Among the translations are: “The Lottery Ticket” by Anton Tchekhov, v. 1, no. 4: 115-16; “It is Done, Father” by Maxim Gorki, v. 1, no. 9: 272-4, “authorized translation”; “The Student” by Anton Tchekhov, v. 1, no. 19: 594-5; “The White Dog” by Feodor Sologub, v. 2, no. 37: 339-40; “The Hoop” by Feodor Sologub, v. 3, no. 64: 371-2.

20. Aside from short Sologub pieces published in the *Egoist*, are: *The Old House, and Other Tales* by Sologub. London, M. Secker, 1915, 1928 [New Adelphi Library, v. 44]; *The Old House, and Other Stories* New York: A Knopf, 1916. [E. M. Forster reviewed Cournos’s translation of *The Old House, and Other Tales* by Sologub in “Short Stories from Russia,” *New Statesman* (24 July 1915): 373-4.] “Feodor Sologub” *Fortnightly Review* (1 Sept. 1915); *The Little Demon* by Sologub. Translated by John Cournos and Richard Aldington. (London: Secker, 1916; New York: Knopf, 1916); *The Created Legend* by Sologub. Translated by John Cournos. (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co, 1916; London: Secker, 1916); “Feodor Sologub as a Dramatist” by John Cournos. *The Drama. A Quarterly Review of Dramatic Literature* 6:23 (329-45), *The Triumph of Death. A Tragedy in Three Acts with a Prologue*. By Sologub, translated by John Cournos. *The Drama*, v. 6, no. 23: 346-84, (Chicago: Dramatic Publishing Co., 1916).

21. Norman Gates, *A Checklist of the Letters of Richard Aldington*. (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1977), 44.

The story of Cournos's final Sologub publication before leaving for Russia offers a portrait of continuing mutual assistance among these erstwhile friends. 6 June 1916, Aldington wrote from Devon to Charles Clinch Bubb of Cleveland, Ohio, acknowledging receipt of Bubb's subscription to the Poets' Translation Series and agreeing to Bubb's proposal to print some of these translations as booklets on his small hand-press at his private The Clerk's Press.²² Aldington immediately recommended H. D.'s *Choruses from Iphigeneia in Aulis*. Over the course of 1916-1917, The Clerk's Press printed eleven booklets by participants of Pound's original Imagist circle. Aldington's letters to Bubb make clear that H. D. was in frequent communication with the printer, managing in this matter, as in so many other of Aldington's literary affairs.²³

Bubb next contacted Pound in respect to printing some of Pound's translations. Aldington had endorsed the printing of Pound's translations of troubadour Arnaut Daniel's Canzoni, writing 14 October 1917, "So far as I know it [the Canzoni] has never been printed anywhere, except in various periodicals" and offering to speak with Pound.²⁴ Bubb then contacted Cournos. 23 January 1917, Cournos responded to Bubb's solicitation, agreeing to the printing of short Sologub pieces already published in the *Egoist* and enclosing the two pieces recently published in *The Welsh Outlook*. On the 29th, he sent along another three Sologub pieces previously published in London's *Nation*. Bubb printed *Little Tales by Feodor Sologub. An Authorized Translation from the Russian by John Cournos* on 24 July 1917.²⁵ 30 August 1917 Cournos wrote that he had received his copies of the booklet, adding:

At the present moment, I have nothing suitable for you, though I hope to have something later. Indeed, just now, I am busy preparing for a journey

22. H. D. and Aldington, whose relationship had been enmeshed with the practice of translation from the beginning, initiated their Poets' Translation Series in 1915. In her biographical entry for Cournos, Carolyn Zilboorg writes: "Although he did not contribute to either of the Poets' Translation Series, Aldington kept Cournos in mind as a potential translator of Russian and Hebrew authors." Carolyn Zilboorg, Richard Aldington and H.D.: Their Lives in Letters, 1918-1961 (Manchester; New York: Manchester UP, 2003), 84.

On knowing Hebrew, learning poetry and memorizing Isaiah while growing up, Cournos wrote: "I was too young to understand the significance of the words, but the sound captivated, as the sound of English was to captivate me later, as one is captivated by an infusion of a rich red wine." *Autobiography*, 40.

23. See 'Bubb Booklets': Letters of Richard Aldington to Charles Clinch Bubb. Ed. Dean H. Keller (Francetown, NH: Typographeum, 1988).

24. 'Bubb Booklets,' 39. See also, Pound to Bubb – The Arnaut Daniel Letters. Introductions by John T. Bailey and Hugh J. Brown (Cleveland, OH: The Rowfant Club, 2003). Four canzoni had appeared in *The New Age* (1911 and 1912); one appeared in *Hesternae Rosae* (1913). Pound published two collections containing Daniel's canzoni in 1920: *Umbra* (London: Elkin Mathews) and *Instigations* (New York: Boni & Liveright).

25. John Cournos, [Translator](#). *Little Tales by Sologub*. ["The typography and presswork done by Charles Clinch Bubb, clerk in Holy Orders, at his Private Press in Cleveland this twenty-fourth day of July, mdcccxcvii." "Forty copies only printed upon Tuscany hand made paper"], (Cleveland, OH: Printed at the Clerk's Private Press, 1917).

to Russia, where I am to do some semi-official Anglo-Russian work, I do not know for how long. I hope to be able to send you some translations from there.²⁶

The journey to Russia was to disrupt his relations with the Aldingtons. But it enabled him to meet authors and artists related to his work, including Sologub, Aleksei Remizov, Kornei Chukovsky, Konstantin Somov, and Akhmatova.

Unlike Cournos, H. D. was translating from an ancient language, in a field with a long (though newly contested) tradition, in a field whose barriers were rarely breached by women practitioners. Like Cournos, who was translating several authors while focusing on Sologub, H. D. drew on a number of Greek poets while elevating Euripides to a central position. Pound's involvement with H. D.'s translation practice differed vastly from his with Cournos. Pound sent three of H. D.'s earliest poems -- "Hermes of the Ways", "Priapus" "(From the 'Anthology')", "Epigram", "(After the Greek)" -- to Harriet Monroe in Chicago.²⁷ They appeared in the January 1913 issue of *Poetry*. Cournos is remembered as a translator rather than as a poet; the reverse is true for H. D. Yet the relationship between translation and poetry is more complicated in her case.

Eileen Gregory writes: "The idea and practice of translation is central to H. D.'s writing and self-conception throughout her career [. . .] H. D. clearly imagined herself as translator, perhaps as much as poet," writing further: "Though H. D.'s first poems published in *Poetry* were named translations, strictly speaking they are poems that embed the translation of an epigram, and, even more accurately, they are amalgams of epigrams."²⁸ Where two poems in *Poetry* are signed "H. D.," "Epigram" is signed "H. D., 'Imagiste.'" The five-line poem, "Epigram", reads:

The golden one is gone from the banquets;
She, beloved of Antimetetus,
The swallow, the bright Homonoea:
Gone the dear chatterer;
Death succeeds Antimetetus.
Poetry 1.4 (122)

"Epigram" occupies a fabled position in the history of early modernist poetry. Numerous accounts, with minor variations, exist of a meeting, some set in the British Museum, among Pound, H. D., and Aldington, during which Pound read

26. Letter held by The Morgan Library and Museum: Call #: Unbound Ray Cournos MA.

27. These three verses are among the seven H. D. poems later published in the collection assembled by Pound and published as *Des Imagistes* (1914): *Sitalkas*, *Hermes of the Ways I*, *Hermes of the Ways II*, *Priapus* (Orchard), *Acon*, *Hermonax*, *Epigram*. Pound had been hired by Monroe in August 1912 as a regular contributor to *Poetry*.

28. Eileen Gregory, "H. D. and Translation," *Cambridge Companion to H. D.* Eds. Nephie J. Christodoulis and Polina Mackay. (New York: Cambridge UP, 2012), 143-57, 143, 146.

this poem, penciled in emendations, and applied the signature – H. D., *Imagiste*. In H. D.'s poem, Pound saw the embodiment of T. E. Hulme's notion of the role that the image and *vers libre* could play in renovating English-language verse.

2.2 Anglo-American Imagist Verse

In the Foreword to his publication of Cournos's prose translations of Sologub, Charles Bubb wrote: "Mr. Cournos says, 'Sologub's little fables are interesting not only as showing the author's satiric trend, but also because the same ideas are reiterated more elaborately in his plays, stories and novels, and more exquisitely in his poems. Russia may have produced greater poets, but surely not a finer one'."²⁹ Cournos specialized in prose translation, yet read widely in Russian verse and, under the influence of his new Imagist friends, began writing his own verse. His first published verse, a translation from the Russian, appeared through Pound's intervention in Harriet Monroe's Chicago-based magazine, *Poetry*.³⁰ A month later, Pound included Cournos's translation in the first imagist anthology, *Des Imagistes*. Cournos had been instrumental in the publication, having referred Pound to his New York based friend, Alfred Kreymborg, editor of *The Glebe*, which published the first edition of the collection.³¹

During the years of his greatest intimacy with H. D., 1915 and 1916, Cournos took a greater interest in writing original verse. "Among the Rodins at South Kensington (With Buddha in the Background), *January, 1915*" is the earliest dated poem in Cournos's first collection of verse (*In Exile*, 1923) and bears traces of the Kensington neighborhood where they had all lived, of the Latin classical world of Aldington, of the Biblical world of Cournos's upbringing, and of the Japanese aesthetics of Pound.³² "Over Devon Hills," dated "*Devon, April, 1916*," belongs to the period when Cournos shared the cottage in Devon that he had helped secure for the Aldingtons, where they remained from February through

29. Cournos, *Little Tales*, 6.

30. "The Rose" by K. Tetmajer. *Poetry*, v. 3, no. 4: 132 (Jan. 1914). Cournos's translation was probably made from a Russian translation of the poem by the Polish poet, Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer. A Russian translation appeared a 1907 edition of Tetmajer's collected works published by Moscow's V. M. Sablin in a section titled "Verse in Prose". [http://az.lib.ru/t/tetmajer_k/text_stihi_v_proze_oldorfo.shtml]

31. *The Glebe*, v. 1, no. 5: 54 (February 1914). Edited Alfred Kreymborg (December 10, 1883 – August 14, 1966) and Man Ray (August 27, 1890 - November 18, 1976), *The Glebe*, produced ten issues in 1913 and 1914. The anthology was subsequently published by independent publishers with whom Cournos also had connections: *Des Imagistes*. New York: Albert and Charles Boni; London: Poetry Bookshop, 1914.

The Glebe featured non-traditional works by authors whom Cournos knew during his time in Philadelphia and NYC, e. g. Charles Demuth's play in *The Glebe*. See also, Cournos, *Autobiography*, 269-70 and Alfred Kreymborg, *Troubadour* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925), 134.

32. *Poetry*, v. 10, no. 6 (Sept. 1917); John Cournos, *In Exile*, (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923), 40. The poem's title references the 18 sculptures gifted to the South Kensington Museum, currently the Victoria and Albert Museum, by Rodin in 1914, supplementing the Museum's acquisition of St John the Baptist in 1902.

the end of July 1916.³³ Cournos joined them in March, remaining there until early August.³⁴ H. D. would have been writing many of the poems to appear in her first collection of verse, *Sea Garden* (1916), while continuing work on translations from Euripides.

“Over Devon Hills” is dominated by the recurrent theme of Cournos’s life—difficulty, which it shares with motifs in H. D.’s “The Cliff Temple” (*Sea Garden*). The speaker of “The Cliff Temple,” ascending toward “the world-edge,/pillar for the sky arch,” is situated mid-way, beneath the sea-hawks and gulls yet above the booming wind. Cournos’s speaker is likewise mid-way, between the valley and the height:

“Higher up, on the hills,
A gale blows,
The storm god is astride.
[. . .]
Above my head the flying sea-mist,
The hovering sea gull—
No larger than a butterfly.”

The poems of *Sea Garden* are noted for the commingling, to the point of identity, of beauty and fragility with sharpness and hardness. And pain. The ascent toward the cliff temple is torturous: “I was splintered and torn:/the hill-path mounted/swifter than my feet.”

Mounting the Devon hills, Cournos’s speaker drags himself upwards:
Step by step—panting,
Retarded by stones, mud,
And my own clothes—shackles.
Straining toward the wind, the mist, the gulls.

Despite the poems’ manifold differences, shared motifs when combined with a dominant motif of aspiration reflect the influence of H. D.’s images, if not her poetics. H. D.’s influence on Cournos’s poetry is most visible in the poems they each submitted to *The Little Review*’s “Vers Libre contest.” Submissions were due 15 August 1916. Both poems were likely written in Devon, before H. D. and Cournos departed from Devon. More than any of his other poems, this poem by Cournos adheres most closely H. D.’s early, short verse. Compare:

The Assault (by John Cournos, 1916)
You come –
Black of wind,
Black of beak,

33. Cournos, “Over Devon Hills,” In Exile, 18-20.

34. Additionally, there was the companionship of his friends John Mills Whitham and Carl R. Fallas. A visit from his London friends Elena and Evgenii Somoff resulted in financial support enabling Cournos to begin writing his first novel, begun 1 April 1916.

Flock on flock –
Ravenous, cawing.

Your cries – arrows –
Shrill, clamorous, strident,
Pierce the heart.

O wounded reverie
On still water,
White in faint mist,
You spurt red drops.

O white swan,
Shape of magnificent sadness,
Spread out your wings,
Flutter white through the air,
Disperse the black, the raucous.³⁵

Sea Poppies (by H. D. 1916)

Amber husk
fluted with gold,
fruit on the sand
marked with a rich grain,

treasure
spilled near the shrub-pines
to bleach on the boulders:

your stalk has caught root
among wet pebbles
and drift flung by the sea
and grated shells
and split conch-shells.

Beautiful, wide-spread,
fire upon leaf,
what meadow yields
so fragrant a leaf
as your bright leaf?³⁶

35. Cournos, "The Assault," *The Little Review*, v. 3, no. 10 (April 1917): 21; In Exile, 38.

36. H. D., "Sea Poppies" *Sea Garden*, 20; *The Little Review*, 11.

The opening strophes share short lines, marked by strong initial and end stress; the initial “B” of Cournos’s lines two and three correspond to the initial “F” of H. D.’s lines two and three, while his “Flock on flock” echoes H. D.’s “fluted” and “fruit.” Their strongest similarity lies in the austerity of depiction.

You come –
 Black of wind,
 Black of beak,
 Flock on flock –
 Ravenous, cawing. (Cournos)

Amber husk
 fluted with gold,
 fruit on the sand
 marked with a rich grain (H. D.)

Having noted that “Sea Poppies” and Maxwell Bodenheim’s “Images of Friendship” were the only two poems to have received more than one vote and were, therefore, the “winners” of the contest, Margaret Anderson printed on the following pages ‘honorable mentions’, interspersing her own opinion of the poems. Cournos’s poem appears first after the following comment: “The following four were not mentioned by any of the judges, but in my judgment they are better than many of the ‘honorable mentions’.”³⁷

“Sea Poppies,” like “Sea Lily,” appeared in *Sea Garden*, which contains five “sea flower” poems. The poems’ five flowers – rose, poppies, violet, iris, and lily – are, in most cases, reeds: the coastal flora of Devon. H. D.’s land- and sea-scapes are generally evocative of the Attic coastline or New England coastline of her youth. Days spent at the Devon coast would have kept this sea and its coastal flora foremost in her consciousness. It is probable that “Sea Lily” was written during H. D.’s stay in Devon in 1916; the lily of “To A. A.” echoes the title of H. D.’s poem. Key words of the sea flower poems are harsh, marred, meagre, stunted, flung, torn, stained, slashed, and shattered. Summarizing the essence of H. D.’s sea flowers, Kirsten Painter sees their fight for survival as the source of their beauty.

Although frail, the flowers are hard as rock, and, although rent by the gale, they are ultimately more enduring than other flowers, because their travails have endowed them with a pungent, unique smell and the ability, like flint, to make fire.³⁸

37 The Little Review, 20.

38 Painter, *Flint on a Bright Stone*, 193. For Painter’s analysis of the sea flower poems, see pp. 190-194, esp. 191-2 for “Sea Lily.”

3 Cournos and London's Russians

When John Cournos left Philadelphia for London in 1912, his intention was to become an author in the English tradition. His embrace by the Anglo-Americans provided him with a financial lifeline by supporting his work as a translator. A further consequence was his ensuing friendship with H. D., who strongly influenced the development of his own poetic style. This influence is seen most clearly in the poems they submitted to the *vers libre* contest and when comparing H. D.'s "Sea Lily" with his poem addressed to Akhmatova.

Equally important in laying the groundwork for Cournos's meeting with Akhmatova were the connections he made with Russians in London. The city was home to numerous Russian émigrés, political emigrants no less significant than literary figures. Association with émigré communities facilitated access to the latest literary works coming out in Russia, works not yet in circulation in the West. Among these émigrés were recent arrivals from Russia and others who travelled between the two countries or maintained connections with the artists of St. Petersburg. Through acquaintance with these Russians, Cournos was kept apprised of St. Petersburg's vibrant literary scene, discovering contemporary authors for translation. Renewing his U.S. passport in January 1917, Cournos listed two foreign countries for travel: England for residence and Russia to study. The intention to travel to Russia listed on his passport application could only have reflected a desire to further his promising translation work, a desire confirmed in his 30 August 1917 letter to C. C. Bubb, quoted above. Residence in Petrograd would expand his literary connections.

Among Cournos's literary connections in London, three stand out: Zinaida Afanas'evna Vengerova (1867-1941), Elena Kontantinovna Somoff (1888-1969) and her husband Eugene Ivanovich Somoff (1881-1962). A professional literary figure, Vengerova traveled widely throughout western Europe, returning frequently to Russia.³⁹ Often in London, Vengerova lived at 54 Bloomsbury Street in September 1914, across from the British Museum. Cournos may well have met her around this time in the museum's Reading Room, which he frequented. Or at one of the Russian émigré salons, such as that of Vengerova's friend Fanny Stepniak, which Cournos also attended.⁴⁰ He was certainly acquainted with Vengerova by the autumn of 1914.

It is probable that Cournos introduced Pound and Vengerova. The 2 November 1914 number of the *Egoist* (I:21) carried a "Preliminary Announcement of the

39. On Vengerova, see also: Rachel Polonsky, *English Literature and the Russian Aesthetic Renaissance* (Cambridge, Eng., New York: Cambridge UP, 1998), 26-7, 29; "Zinaida Vengerova and Her Unpublished Correspondence," edited by Rosina Neginsky. *Revue des Etudes Slaves* (1995) v. 62: 1-4; Rosina Neginsky, "Zinaida Vengerova," *Russian Women Writers*, v. 2. Ed. Christine D. Tomei. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1999); Charlotte Rosenthal, "Zinaida Vengerova: Modernism and Women's Liberation," *Irish Slavonic Studies* (1987) v. 8: 97-105.

Interestingly, Vengerova was distantly related by marriage to Cournos's friend, Henry Slonimsky.

40. Fanny Markovna Stepniak (1855-1945), widow of Sergei Stepniak-Kravchinsky (1851-1895), political assassin and author of *Underground Russia*.

College of Arts,” authored by Pound.⁴¹ It listed among its instructors “Zinaida Vangerova [sic], to offer a course on “Russian Contemporary Thought”; her qualifications: “Published works: Seven volumes of essays in Russian. Contributor to ‘The Fortnightly Review,’ etc.” Pound, himself, was listed among the College’s instructors, to offer a course in Comparative Poetry; his translations of Arnaut Daniel’s ‘Canzoni’ were cited among his qualifications. Also listed among the instructors was “Ivan Korshune (John Cournos),” translator “of various tales by Gogol, Korolenko, Dostoyevsky, Gorky, Turgenev, Chekov, Andreyev, Sologub, Remizov, etc.” to offer a course on “Russian Novelists.” All but the last two of these authors had been translated before Cournos’s arrival in England. His first translation of Sologub, “The White Dog,” appeared on 20 December 1913 in London’s *New Statesman*.⁴² Cournos’s first published translation of Remizov did not appear until he included a short section of Remizov’s “The Betrothed” in “Kultur and the Russian Conscience,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 24 July 1915. It is notable that Pound knew of Cournos’s work on Remizov as early as 1914.⁴³

Pound’s College of Arts never materialized, but his announcement in the *Egoist* contains a number of interesting details. That Cournos is listed under his birth name, Ivan Korshune, marks Cournos’s ambivalence about his departure from Russia as a child and the subsequent adoption of his stepfather’s surname. It also marks the exotic appeal for the Anglo-Americans of his biography. H. D. regularly addressed him in her correspondence as Korshune and signed herself with a Russian diminutive, “Hildushka.”

Vengerova established the connection between Cournos and Sologub, initiating their correspondence, praising Cournos’s translations and conveying texts between London and St. Petersburg.⁴⁴ Sologub responded positively. In a letter to Alexander Izmaylov, Sologub expressed his preference for Cournos’s *The Old House* over Stephen Graham’s *Sweet-Scented Name*, adding: “John Cournos’s Russian is excellent — he was born in Russia, but ended up in America as a child, and in terms of his upbringing and life, he is an American. He is a very

41. Pound had proposed in May 1913 “A College of the Arts,” in the *New Age*. Titled “America: Chances and Remedies. V,” subtitled “Proposition III—The College of the Arts,” Pound’s article muses on national subsidies for the arts in European nations, wondering why in America there existed only private patronage for individuals. Suggesting New York or Chicago as attractive sites, he proposed that America was ripe for much broader support for the arts than existed in Europe. (*New Age* v. 13, no. 5: 115-16.) It is reasonable to presume that Pound was partially inspired by his participation in Craig’s committee in late 1912.

42. Cournos, translator of “White Dog” by Sologub, *New Statesman*, v. 2, no. 37: 339-40.

43. Writing to Remizov 30 May 1924 in reference to the forthcoming publication of his translation of *The Clock*, Cournos says: “I had wished to tell you that there is a good prospect of my finding for my translation of “Часы” which I made in 1916 and which I had told you about when I was in Petrograd during 1917-18.” (Remizov Papers. Amherst College Center for Russian Culture. Box 1, folder 10. Digital page 152-4.)

44. See Teternikova- Vengerova, Sologub – Vengerova, and Sologub – Cournos correspondence: Harvard University, Houghton Library, Russian MS 61 (2-4, 6).

literary, sensitive person, and he writes artfully. He wrote an essay about me for the *Fortnightly*, which will appear (if it hasn't yet) in the next issue."⁴⁵

Another consequence of Cournos's introducing Vengerova and Pound was her interview of Pound for an article on the Vorticists, whom she labelled "The English Futurists," published in the first issue of Russian almanac, *Strelets* in January or February 1915.⁴⁶ While dismissive of Vorticist theorizing, she is generally appreciative of Pound's verse. At the conclusion of her article, Vengerova names a number of Imagist poets, including Aldington, and quotes a poem by H. D. Should Akhmatova have read the article, which well she might have, she would have known of H. D. and her poetry at least since 1915.⁴⁷

Unremarked in the historical or critical literature of the period is Elena Somoff. Introducing his translation of Andrei Bely's novel, *Petersburg* (1959), Cournos acknowledges Elena's and Eugene's gift to him of the book's first edition during the early years of the Great War.⁴⁸ In 1916, Elena and her husband Eugene visited Cournos in Devon, where he was staying with the Aldingtons. In view of his evident poverty, they decided to contribute a pound per week to allow him the freedom to work on what would be his first novel, *The Mask* (1919).⁴⁹ Elena [Helen] Konstantinovna Odinets was born 21 January 1888 in St. Petersburg. She married Evgenii Ivanovich Somov [Eugene Somoff], born 24 April 1881 Kiev, on 20 October 1915 in Brentford, just north of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew. Their place of residence at that time was 48 Esmond Road, Bedford Park, located between Brentford and Kensington in London. Cournos wrote of her, "she was a spirited Georgian, who had a keen intellect, and was personally acquainted with the best writers and artists in Petrograd and Moscow."⁵⁰ As Vengerova connected Cournos with Sologub, the Somoffs may have been his conduit to Anna Akhmatova, whose early poetry had appeared in Russian literary journals since 1911. Like Vengerova, through their connections in Petrograd's art world,

45. <https://lucas-v-leyden.livejournal.com/204098.html>. I thank Boris Dralyuk for bringing this to my attention.

Vengerova, as a regular contributor to the *The Fortnightly*, may have secured Cournos's entrée to the journal.

46. See Julia Trubikhina, "Imagists Rejected: 'Vengerova, Pound and A Few Do's and Don'ts of Russian Imagism.'" "Appendix: Zinaida Vengerova 'English Futurists' (1915): Translation." *Paideuma. A Journal Devoted to Ezra Pound Scholarship* v. 27, nos. 2&3: 129-51.

47. I thank Michael Lavery for inspiring me to re-read Vengerova's article.

48. "The translator owes a great debt to Eugene Somoff and his wife Elena Konstantinovna for first introducing him to Biely, and in particular for presenting him early during the First World War with a copy of the first Russian edition." Andrey Biely, *St. Petersburg*, translated by John Cournos, (New York: Grove Press, 1959), xviii. First Russian edition, *St. Petersburg*: M. M. Stasiulevich, 1913.

The history of Cournos's *Petersburg* translation is a tale in itself. See Marilyn Schwinn Smith, "Immigrant Bookshop, Establishment Magazine: Publishers of John Cournos's Andreev Translation." Unpublished conference paper, ASEEES Annual Convention, virtual, November 5, 2020.

49. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 288. Part I of *The Mask*, "Russia," was dedicated to Elena; Part II, "America," was dedicated "To H. D."

50. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 288.

the Somoffs were in a position to provide Cournos with the latest literary texts, possibly obtaining Akhmatova's poetry for Cournos as early as 1915.

Cournos was translating Akhmatova's verse during the Great War. In 1957, Richard Aldington recalled reading, during the war, translations of a Russian poetess whose work bore striking similarities with the verse he and his friends were writing.⁵¹ Russian scholars presume that the poet Aldington referred to was Akhmatova and that Cournos was the translator. Roman Timenchik cites an interview with Akhmatova undertaken by P. N. Luknitskii during the 1920s as further evidence of Cournos's familiarity with Akhmatova mid-1910s. Luknitskii had inquired whether much had been written about her in England in earlier years. Akhmatova replied that a lot had been written in the summer of 1916.⁵²

When Cournos left for Petrograd in October 1917, he had already been in communication with Akhmatova. Among the Cournos papers at Harvard's Houghton Library is a copy of Akhmatova's second collection of verse, *Chetki* (1915, first published in 1914), inscribed to him and dated June 1917.⁵³ The volume may have come into his hands through Akhmatova's husband, fellow poet Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev (1886-1921), who visited London, also in June 1917. However, Gumilev's military postings as part of the Russian Expeditionary Force in France make it unlikely that he obtained the book directly from his wife. The book may have arrived through the post. Or it may have been delivered by an intermediary, perhaps the Somoffs. Or, Vengerova.

Gumilev did meet Cournos during his June visit. Elaine Rusinko, in reconstructing much of Gumilev's activity in London, places him in the city between 14 and 21 June 1917.⁵⁴ In addition to Gumilev's compatriots living in London, Rusinko identifies figures, notably those affiliated with *The New Age* and Harold Munro's *Poetry Bookshop*, most responsible for Gumilev's English connections. Cournos was to varying degrees associated with a number of these figures, though his primary associations were among the less established. 20 June 1917, Gumilev wrote to his wife reporting on Cournos. His less than

51. "Была — около 1914 года — русская поэтесса, чье творчество, на-сколько я мог судить по переводам, имело нечто общее со стиха-ми, которые пытались писать мои друзья и я. Помнится, ее произведения отличались оригинальностью и тонкостью чувств." *Inostrannaia literature*, (1963), no. 8: 228. Quoted by Roman Timenchik on page 240 in "'Zapisnye knizhki' Anny Akhmatovoi" op cit and page 335 in his *Poslednyi poet. Anna Akhmatova v 1960-e gody*. Tom 1. 2nd corrected and expanded edition. (Jerusalem: Gesharim; Moscow: Mosty Kul'tury, 2014).

Aldington's memory of dates is fallible and the year 1914 is probably incorrect.

52. Timenchik speculates that Akhmatova had in mind things written by Cournos. "Курнос был одним из первых вкладчиков в английскую ахматовиану. В 1920-е годы на вопрос П. Н. Лукницкого <<О Бас много писали в Англии? Раньше--в прежние годы?>>--Ахматова ответила: <<Писали... Много... В 1916 году летом>> (Лукницкий, П. Н. Асумиана "Встречи с Анной Ахматовой, 1924-1926". Париж, 1991. Т. 1. С. 79). Возможно, имелись в виду какие-нибудь печатные сообщения Джона Курноса." Timenchik, "'Zapisnye knizhki' Anny Akhmatovoi," op cit, 240.

53. Given the differing calendars, June Old Style would range between June 14 and July 13 on the British calendar.

54. Elaine Rusinko, "Gumilev in London: An Unknown Interview," *Russian Literature Triquarterly*, 1979, (Twentieth Century Criticism), no. 16: 73-85.

complimentary descriptive term, “obscure graphomaniac,” together with his remark that there were other good translators among the British who will do poetry, suggests that Gumilev was not recommending him as translator.⁵⁵

Rusinko identifies C. E. Bechhofer (1894-1949) as Gumilev’s principal contact at *The New Age*. Bechhofer had met Gumilev in Petrograd during his 1915 stay in the city.⁵⁶ If Akhmatova had intended Gumilev to assess Cournos as translator, Bechhofer’s friendship with Gumilev would likely have been prejudicial. In 1916, at age 22 and based on his brief time in Russia, Bechhofer published *Russia at the Cross-Roads*, presuming to explain to the British and the Russians alike what they collectively misapprehended about the geo-political status of Russia. The same year, he published *Five Russian Plays*, “translated [by himself] from the originals with an introduction”.⁵⁷ The introduction stated that the texts were selected for their greater reflection of European, rather than purely Russian qualities. In characterizing the not altogether Russian qualities of Chekhov, Bechhofer wrote: “Chéhov is not a great writer; he is really a journalist, and his work has no permanent importance. A French critic has compared his work with the cinematograph, he himself called it ‘sweet lemonade.’ It was not vodka—there lies its significance. He was an embryo European . . .”⁵⁸

In a review titled “Not Vodka,” Cournos expressed displeasure with the quality of Bechhofer’s translations.⁵⁹ But it was Bechhofer’s presumption to term the character of Russian literature as “vodka” that drew his ire. He cast Bechhofer’s unfortunate word choice in terms of the then current British obsession with the “Russian Soul,” that is, another example of the seemingly ceaseless Western “othering” of Russians.⁶⁰ No less offensive to Cournos, if not mentioned, must have been Bechhofer’s explicit rejection of the very authors Cournos was translating, authors Cournos would have categorized among the ranks of European modernists. Bechhofer wrote: “The decadence of such modern writers as Andréyev, Górkí, and Sólogub lies in their refusal to recognize this fact [that is, now that Chekhov had “led Russian literature out of its purely Russian groove, the natural step was for it to become more and more European, without losing its national impulse”]; they continue to write in a narrow style, dwarfed in that by the genius of their forerunners, uninspired by the Renaissance of European solidarity

55. “Курнос просто безызвестный графоман, но есть другие хорошие переводчики, которые займутся русской поэзией.” (Гумилев, Н. Соч. в 3 т. М. Т. 3. С. 245). Quoted by Roman Timenchik on page 240 in “‘Zapisnye knizhki’ Anny Akhmatovoi” op cit.

56. Carl Earl Bechhofer Roberts (1894-1949). Wikipedia lists Bechhofer as a trooper with the 9th Lancers during the Great War; Rusinko indicates that he was a foreign correspondent in Petrograd at the time he met Gumilev, early 1915.

57. C. E. Bechhofer, *Russia at the Cross-Roads*. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd.; New York: Dutton, 1916). *Five Russian Plays*. (New York: Dutton; London: Kegan Paul, 1916).

58. Bechhofer, “Introduction” ix-xvi, *Five Russian Plays*, xiv.

59. Cournos, “Not Vodka.” *Egoist*, (Sept. 1916), v. 3, no. 9: 134.

60. See Michael Hughes, “Searching for the Soul of Russia.” *Twentieth-Century British History*, v. 20, no. 2: 198-226.

that the war has revealed . . .”⁶¹ Compounding the situation were the number of competing voices jostling to offer themselves as best qualified to represent Russia, its culture and its literature, to the British public. Cournos entered the fray with enthusiasm, not least with his choice and defense of Sologub texts.⁶²

Had he been asked, Bechhofer surely would not have recommended Cournos to Gumilev as translator for Akhmatova. Furthermore, Gumilev’s interest in poetic translation may have been primarily for his own poetry. Bechhofer continued a discussion of translating Gumilev’s verse after the poet returned to Paris from London. Bechhofer and his fellow contributor to *The New Age*, Paul Selver, both published collections from the Russian in 1917. In his own collection, Bechhofer reprinted both his own and Selver’s translations previously printed in *The New Age*.⁶³ Selver published exclusively his own translations of modern Russian verse.⁶⁴ Bechhofer was interested in Gumilev’s recent poem, “Pantum” (“Goncharova i Larionov. Pantum”) and his latest book of verse, *Kolchan (Quiver)*.⁶⁵ He requests that Gumilev send him these works; he will take them to Selver, and they will commence work right away on the “Anthology.”⁶⁶ In the end, Gumilev appears in neither book, and Cournos did not become Akhmatova’s authorized translator. His

61. Bechhofer, “Introduction,” xiv.

62. Cournos’s 1914 contentious exchange of letters to the editor with Huntly Carter in the pages of the *Egoist* had devolved into a series of mutual insults. Carter, “Art and Drama: The War and Some Survivals,” (*Egoist*, v. 1, no. 19: 376-8; Cournos, “Carter, Craig, Reinhardt, Wagner and Blake,” *Egoist*, v. 1, no. 20: 398 (15 Oct. 1914); Carter, “Scene 2: Enter J. C.,” *Egoist*, v. 1, no. 21: 416 (2 Nov. 1914); Cournos, “More Light for Mr. Carter” *Egoist*, v. 1, no. 22: 431 (16 Nov. 1914); Carter, “A Small Helping of Truth, Mr. Cournos!” and Cournos, “Exit Mr. Huntly Carter,” *Egoist* v. 2, no.1: 15 (1 Jan. 1915).

63. *A Russian Anthology in English*. Edited by C. E. Bechhofer. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1917). Bechhofer’s selections are primarily prose. With the exception of an extract from Akim Volynsky’s book on Dostoevsky, translated by Bechhofer, all the selections had previously appeared in English by various translators. The collection includes 25 named authors, a final section titled “Ballads and Songs,” and, as an Appendix, and an extract from Pushkin’s Mozart and Salieri translated by Bechhofer.

64. Paul Selver (1888-1970), novelist, poet, translator; best known for his translations from the Czech. *Modern Russian Poetry. Texts and Translations. Selected and translated with an Introduction by Paul Selver* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1917).

65. “Pantum” refers to a genre of Malay oral poetic. “Goncharova i Larionov. Pantum” (1917) appears in volume 2, page 167 of Gumilev’s 4 volume collected works, published by Kamkin in 1962.

66. Bechhofer’s letters to Gumilev, dated 27 & 29 June 1917, are held in the Amherst College Center for Russian Culture: Jacob K. Bikerman Collection on Nikolai Gumilev. Series 1, Sub-Series 2: Correspondence to N. Gumilev.

As Bechhofer uses the term “Anthology,” it is possible that he had in mind his own collection, rather than Selver’s collection of verse. Evidently Gumilev wrote both a short story and a poem designated with the term “pantum”. See, *Volia Rossii*, 1931, No 1-2 (53-58). Bechhofer may have intended to include a piece of Gumilev’s prose.

only known translation did not appear until 1923.⁶⁷ But he did travel to Petrograd, befriend Akhmatova, and compose his poem to her.

At the request of the British ambassador to Russia, Sir George Buchanan, the Foreign Office asked novelist Sir Hugh Seymour Walpole (1884-1941) to engage in propaganda work in Petrograd to counter the successful German efforts. (Literary figures featured prominently among British propagandists.)⁶⁸ Walpole, who had been in Russia intermittently as a journalist since 1914, set up the new headquarters upon arriving in Petrograd on February 14, 1916, where he was “quickly installed in a small office on the Morskaya with Harold Williams and Major C. J. M. Thornhill. There was no other staff and scarcely any money. [. . .] By the end of September [1916] he was back in Petrograd, and within a few weeks he was the proud occupant of large offices on the Admiralty Quay, with a staff of twelve. His writing-paper was boldly headed ANGLO-RUSSIAN BUREAU, and one of the first requisites of the original scheme, that it should remain modest and under cover, had disappeared. Henceforth it was popularly known as the ‘British Propaganda Office,’ and whatever use it might have had was neutralized by the bright light of publicity.”⁶⁹

Appointment to the Anglo-Russian Commission by Walpole enabled Cournos to live in Petrograd from October 1917 to the beginning of March 1918. Cournos reports that, when soliciting him for the Commission, Walpole said “he had heard about me from friends we had in common in Petrograd; he was also familiar with my articles.”⁷⁰ Walpole, who knew Sologub socially,⁷¹ may have been referencing Cournos’s article on Sologub published in the *Fortnightly Review* on 1 September 1915. Cournos’s and Walpole’s common acquaintances included Vengerova. Beyond Vengerova, we can speculate that Cournos’s friends in England, Elena and Eugene Somoff, may have established for Cournos correspondence with their Petrograd acquaintances. As Cournos wrote, Elena “was personally acquainted with the best writers and artists in Petrograd and Moscow.”⁷² Further, Eugene Somoff was on good terms with his father’s cousin, Konstantin Somov, a painter

67. Anna Akhmatova, “Зачем притворяешься ты,” (1915) *Белая стая*, (Петроград: Гиперборей, (сентябрь) 1917). Translated by John Cournos as “The Call,” *In Exile*, 64. In a letter to Gumilev dated 15 August, Akhmatova indicates that *Белая стая* (White Flock) had been printed, though she had not yet received her copy. Amherst College Center for Russian Culture: Jacob K. Bikerman Collection on Nikolai Gumilev. Series 1, Sub-Series 2: Correspondence to N. Gumilev.

68. The commission was originally called the Anglo-Russian Propaganda Bureau or Anglo-Russian Bureau. See Rebecca Beasley, chapter 4.3 “The Russian Revolutions and The Anglo-Russian Commission” *Russomania: Russian Culture and the Creation of British Modernism, 1881-1922* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2020), 374-97. On the evolution of the commission, see especially pp. 377-86.

69. Rupert Hart-Davis, *Hugh Walpole: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 151, 156.

70. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 294.

71. Writing to Henry James, 15 March 1915, Walpole wrote: “My evenings are spent with quite the most interesting set in Russia just now—all the chief writers, artists and musicians—Merejkowsky, Sologub, Glazounov, Scriabine, Somoff . . .” (Hart-Davis 135).

72. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 288.

and major figure in the city's art world.⁷³ Walpole lived with Konstantin from March 1915 until his final departure from the city in November 1917.

Walpole was in England numerous times after moving in with Konstantin: 22 October 1915 - February 1916, four more times in 1916, as well as January and June - October 1917. He may have met with Eugene on these occasions at Konstantin's suggestion. After his appointment as head of the Anglo-Russian Commission in January 1916, Walpole may even have discussed with Eugene the possibility of recruiting Cournos for his Commission before Eugene, himself, travelled to Russia during the summer of 1917. Walpole contacted Cournos in August 1917.

Cournos possessed numerous credentials to recommend him for a semi-official government position in wartime Petrograd. Beginning 1916 or 1917, he worked for the Wireless Press in Marconi House, translating Russian government cables. Cournos's characterization of his work: "It was in its way a responsible position requiring accuracy; it was also a position of confidence, for the news sent by the Russian Government wireless had to go to the censor first before being released for the press."⁷⁴ The security clearance which came with this work, together with his familiarity with government concerns, would have constituted a strong recommendation for a position with the Commission. Cournos's engagement in British cultural life as art critic, polemicist and poet, combined with his familiarity with Russian literary culture, further recommended him as an ideal candidate to bridge the two cultures. Cultural propaganda, the public face of Cournos's work, was directed at Russia's literate classes. He was to contribute articles on English life to Russian magazines designed to cultivate fellow feeling between the two allies, thereby encouraging popular support for Russia's commitment to the Allied war effort.⁷⁵

When Cournos was invited to join the Anglo-Russian Commission, there were compelling reasons not to accept the position. Though his financial condition was precarious, he was engaged in a number of projects and at work on his first novel. Further, the disastrous conduct of the war had been a significant factor in the revolt three months previously (the February/March revolution) that had resulted in the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and the establishment of a provisional government. The war continued to go badly on the Russian front, anti-war sentiment was high,

73. Konstantin Andreevich Somov (1869-1939), co-founder with Alexandre Benois, Sergei Diaghilev and Leon Bakst of *Mir Iskusstvo* (The World of Art), influential arts magazine and arts movement. On Walpole's relationship with K. Somov, see Hart-Davis, *passim*.

74. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 290. The passage in Cournos's autobiography describing this work refers to the period beginning August 1916 but does not make explicit the date he began work at Marconi House. Richard Jaschke may have been the person responsible for bringing Cournos to the attention of Marconi House. A publisher, Jaschke's address appears in Cournos's address book from the relevant time period.

75. Citing Foreign Office papers, Beasley states that Cournos was employed as an "assistant for journalist work," 378.

living conditions were poor and the streets not altogether safe, to which Walpole conscientiously alerted Cournos.

There were, however, personal factors to induce acceptance of this potentially dangerous assignment that would take him away from London—the city he had made his home in 1912 and was to remain his favorite domicile for decades. Cournos experienced a high degree of ambivalence about his departure from Russia, referring across his life to his childhood spent outside Kiev as an idyll. Further, he felt animosity toward his stepfather, Bernard Cournos, and may well have hoped to meet his father and family remaining in Russia. Shortly after arriving in London, Cournos made contact with his older brother through relatives in Petersburg. Leon Korshun subsequently visited Cournos in London for three days in the autumn of 1912, putting him in communication with their father, then living in Odessa.⁷⁶ Yet prospects for furthering his literary goals were the strongest inducement to accept the position. The years in London had set the stage for all that he was to experience during his brief sojourn in revolutionary Petrograd. And for the composition of the poem “To A. A.”.

About the Author

Marilyn Schwinn Smith, an independent researcher affiliated with Amherst College, has presented and published internationally across a varied range of subjects. She has written on the city of Holyoke’s community farm, Nuestras Raices and on the Northampton Silk Project. Among English-language writers, she has dealt with memoirist Anne Morrow Lindbergh, photo-journalist Ruth Gruber, novelist Virginia Woolf, classical scholar and Russophile Jane Ellen Harrison, and poet H. D. The Russian-language authors about whom she has published include Aleksei Remizov and Marina Tsvetaeva. The career of John Cournos is the current focus of her work.

76. See Cournos, *Autobiography*, 220-22.

Keeping to the Sober Truth: A Jewish Lutheran White Russian in San Francisco¹

Nina Bogdan

Nadia Shapiro arrived in the United States in August of 1922, one of approximately 500 prospective students assisted by a committee rendering aid to Russian young people residing in Harbin, China, where many had fled as a consequence of the Russian Civil War (1918-1922). A substantial Russian community had existed in the city of Harbin since its construction in 1899 but the Civil War forced hundreds of thousands of Russians to cross the border into China, many settling temporarily in Harbin while others fanned out to other locations in China and the Far East. The students who applied to come to America did so for the purposes of obtaining or completing a university education in order to help rebuild their Russian homeland, destroyed by years of war and revolution.² In any case, that was the common narrative. Whether communicating with Americans or amongst themselves, students consistently referenced a return to their Russian homeland at some future nebulous point in time, reinforcing the notion that they were sojourners in America.³

Shapiro, like virtually all the students who came to San Francisco, never returned to Russia, however, and her life as a “White” Russian in the United States informed her work as a journalist.⁴ Critically, despite the fact that she was

1. “As a newspaper gal, I had the d--dest time keeping to the sober truth”: Nadia Shapiro in letter to George Putnam, November 11, 1940: Nadia L. Shapiro papers, Box 3:29, Hoover Institution Archives (HIA).

2. From 1920 to 1925, Russian organizations in Harbin and the last Russian ambassador to the United States, Boris Bakhmeteff, with some involvement of the Y.M.C.A., worked to assist Russian refugees in Harbin to go to the United States and enroll in universities, primarily on the West Coast. See Maria Sakovich, “Angel Island Immigration Station Reconsidered: Non-Asian Encounters with the Immigration Laws, 1910-1940” (master’s thesis, Sonoma State University, 2002), Chapter VI; Erika Lee and Judy Yung, *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 231; Boris Raymond and David R. Jones, *The Russian Diaspora: 1917-1941*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2000), 77; detailed information in Nikolay V. Borzov Papers, particularly Boxes 4,5,9,10, 11, HIA.

Note: All translations of Russian language sources into English by author. This article is an excerpt from Chapter 2 of author’s dissertation: “Between Dreams and Reality: The Russian Diaspora in San Francisco, 1917-1957” (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2021).

3. Correspondence and Russian National Student Association Bulletins, Borzov Papers, particularly Boxes 10-11, HIA.

4. “White” Russian in this context is a strictly political term as the group in the Russian Civil War who opposed the communist “Reds.” As such “White” Russian is capitalized in

not Russian Orthodox, as were most émigrés who left Russia in the interwar period, her nostalgic reminiscences of her homeland informed her identity. Shapiro's family was Lutheran: her grandfather, likely living in the Jewish Pale in what is now Belarus, had converted from Judaism some time in the nineteenth century. Though the Russian Orthodox Church played a critical part in White Russian émigré identity, particularly as the forming community coalesced in a politically hostile and nativist environment in the interwar United States, Russian émigrés of other confessions, like Shapiro, who shared experiences of trauma and loss upon fleeing their homeland, felt themselves no less White Russians. Both Shapiro's activities and her own self-identification as part of that specific group highlighted the fluidity of ethnic identity and the importance of culture in creating connections between people. The experience of Russian émigrés, in the process of acculturating to the American way of life in the interwar period, highlighted the fact that American spaces, both urban (San Francisco) and somewhat more remote (Alaska), though multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multi-cultural, nevertheless functioned under a hierarchical racial paradigm that reinforced division by implicitly and sometimes explicitly insisting that immigrants select some gradation of whiteness in order to fully incorporate into society. Shapiro's explorations of aspects of both American and Russian history and culture in her role as a reporter for an American newspaper demonstrated the shift in thinking about culture, race, and ethnicity among newcomers to the United States as they sought acceptance into American society.

Shapiro, at the age of 24, had been a likely student candidate—she was close to student age (some “students” were in their late 30s and a few in their 40s); she already spoke English, though she admitted the English she knew little resembled what she heard in America upon arrival; and was well-traveled. By her own account, she had crossed the entire country of Russia at least seven times on the Trans-Siberian Railway, spent time in Western Europe in childhood, and lived in China and Japan after fleeing Russia in the period of its Civil War.⁵ Nevertheless, U.S. authorities detained Shapiro, as they did all passengers traveling in steerage (third class), for questioning upon arrival. In fact, at the behest of a Bureau of Investigation agent, immigration officers detained Shapiro's entire group upon entry at Angel Island Immigration Station for examination due to suspicions about the “so-called” students attempting to enter the United States. Forced to act both as a subject of an interrogation and as an interpreter given the lack of Russian-speaking U.S. officials, Shapiro focused on the scholarly nature of the student group's intentions to the agent who, suspicious of their purposes, described them in his report as “not of a particularly intelligent type or kind.”⁶ To reporters

this discussion while the terms “white” and “whiteness” as a constructed racial category are not.

5. According to Shapiro's U.S. naturalization papers she was born October 20, 1897. “God's own country pleases Nadia but let her tell it,” *San Francisco Examiner*, April 1, 1923: Shapiro Papers, Box 5:10, HIA.

6. Report “In Re: ‘Harbin Committee Rendering Aid to Russian Students,’” by H.W. Hess, September 12, 1922: File 55605/130 INS Central Office Subject Correspondence

meeting the ship on the dock (who referred to her patronizingly as “little Nadia Shapiro”), Shapiro declared that she hoped to study journalism in the United States, emphasizing the temporary nature of the group’s stay, after which they would, in her words, “go back to Russia with our knowledge: there we shall teach our people how America does it.”⁷

Thousands of other White Russian émigrés arriving in San Francisco, by and large from the Far East in the 1920s and 1930s, shared, to a certain extent, the experiences of Asian immigrants arriving at Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco. They encountered a certain suspicion on the part of American immigration authorities, leading to detention, medical examinations, and, for the Russians, very occasionally, exclusion.⁸ Given that Russians were nominally “Europeans,” authorities were less likely to try to keep them out of the United States but established quotas in 1921 and reductions in those quotas after the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act in 1924 severely limited Eastern European immigration.⁹ The legalization of exclusion based both on race (with respect to Asian migrants) and what is now referred to as ethnicity (with respect to southern and eastern Europeans) played a major role in reinforcing the hierarchical racial paradigm in the United States, which affected both the process of immigration and the process of acculturation of migrants in America.¹⁰

Shapiro and her group were soon allowed to enter as they held valid visas and authorities had no basis to exclude them. Most of the arriving Russian students actually had to work at jobs as laborers or domestics initially as they did not speak English well enough to enroll in universities. The majority, however, were literate in Russian, thus making up a specific subset of immigrants to America who were educated in their own language and likely learned to read and understand

and Case Files, Entry 9, Records of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, RG 85, NARA, Washington, D.C.

7. “25 Students Held Here from Russia,” *San Francisco Daily News*, August 30, 1922.

8. See Lee and Yung, Chapter 6, and Sakovich, Ch. VI, for detailed discussion of procedures facing Asian and Russian immigrants at Angel Island in the interwar period. Taisiia Bazhenova, an émigré in San Francisco who worked as a correspondent for émigré newspapers, described the process of arrival for third class passengers most of whom spend time in detention on Angel Island (first and second class passengers were generally allowed to disembark in San Francisco after document inspection): upon arrival, the detained travelers were not allowed to speak to relatives who came to meet them; authorities led them past as if they were “prisoners under escort.” Men and women were separated and locked into their rooms at night; sleeping was difficult as guards constantly checked on them, shining lights into the rooms: “Notes,” Taisiia Bazhenova Papers, Box 2:2, HIA.

9. See Mae M. Ngai and John Gjerde, *Major Problems in American Immigration History* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2013), Chapters 9-11, on Asian exclusion, nativism, and legislation establishing quotas in the 1920s; on the process of identity formation for Eastern Europeans in the period see, for example, “Becoming American and Becoming White” by James R. Barrett and David Roediger, 324-346, in the above-referenced volume.

10. Eugenicists both prior to and after World War I regularly referred to immigrants of the “Slavic race” as an “invading” group, e.g. Frank Julian Warne: *The Slav Invasion and the Mine Workers: A Study in Immigration* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1904).

English more quickly than immigrants who were less educated. Though Shapiro was an exception and did speak English, she spent little time as a student in San Francisco, taking a few journalism courses while getting her bearings, holding a variety of menial jobs, and soon coming to the end of the \$200 she had brought with her. Down to her last \$5 bill and “desperate for a job,” she made a pitch to the editor of the *San Francisco Examiner* newspaper in March of 1923 and he hired her, initially as a clerk/secretary and later as one of only two female reporters at that newspaper.¹¹ Shapiro was not hesitant to utilize her position as an American journalist to advocate for her countrymen and countrywomen, immediately grasping the complicated context of being Russian in America. In her roles as both a reporter and a spokeswoman, covering the contemporary Russian refugee/émigré experience as well as the historical connection, largely through the Russian Orthodox Church, between California and Alaska, Shapiro was instrumental in raising certain questions about the meaning of ethnicity, the importance of culture, and “being” Russian in what historian Marc Raeff called “Russia Abroad”—the result of the worldwide wave of up to three million Russians who initially landed in Europe and Asia, with many migrating to America during and after the Russian Civil War.¹²

Shapiro’s goal was to become an American novelist and, as such, she left behind substantial writings, both auto-biographical and fictional, along with her reporting, which illustrated the experiences of Russians in America, particularly in the interwar period. Shapiro’s self-identification as a White Russian, combined with her unique position as an American reporter of Russian background, provides insight into the fluidity of ethnic identity in the critical period under discussion when Russians émigrés, as eastern Europeans in both a post-Red Scare (1918-1920) and nativist environment, were newcomers in America. As somewhat undesirable foreigners in the eyes of dominant culture proponents, they were just

11. The first female reporter at the *Examiner* was Eunice Waite who wrote about the California wine industry, among other subjects: Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 154.

12. “How I came to Write in English” and “Journey through Time”: Shapiro Papers, Box 4:14 and 7:10, HIA. See Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Susan Wiley Hardwick, *Russian Refuge: Religion, Migration, and Settlement on the North American Pacific Rim* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); James E. Hassell, “Russian Refugees in France and the United States between the World Wars,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 81, no. 7 (1991): i-vii+1-96; Robert H. Johnson, *New Mecca, New Babylon: Paris and the Russian Exiles 1920-1945* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988); Robert C. Williams, *Culture in Exile: Russian Émigrés in Germany, 1881-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), among others, for discussions about various manifestations of the worldwide interwar Russian diaspora. Scholars disagree about the appropriateness of the term “émigré” with respect to referencing Russian refugees in the interwar period. For the purposes of this work, the author has chosen to utilize the term to distinguish the interwar diaspora from immigrants from the Russian Empire who came to the United States prior to 1917.

embarking on the process of attaining what some scholars refer to as a “state of whiteness.”¹³

Family Background

In her reminiscences, Shapiro specifically stressed her family’s “middle-class” status in Russia, in part, perhaps, to counter the widespread view common among Americans that Russian émigrés fleeing the Bolshevik Revolution all belonged to Russian royalty, aristocracy, or the nobility.¹⁴ In one of her earliest columns, which touched on that particular stereotype, Shapiro related the story of her friend “Tatiana” who, after fruitlessly searching for a job, finally got hired because the company’s personnel manager noticed her application out of hundreds of others: Tatiana’s name was the same as one of the murdered daughters of the last Russian Czar, Nicholas II.¹⁵ During the job interview, Tatiana neither confirmed nor denied her identity and, apparently leaving her interviewer with the impression that she was hiring royalty, Tatiana ended up with \$100 a month clerical position. Shapiro, alluding to the American affinity for blonde women and the general outlook that Americans found Russians enigmatic, titled the article: “Mystery is better than peroxide when you’re looking for a job.”¹⁶ Even in her own situation, despite her insistence regarding her middle class origins, one of her acquaintances, Barrett Willoughby, an American writer, effusively wrote in a recommendation about Shapiro’s writing talents, that “[s]he is an aristocrat to the tips of her little fingers,” thus insisting with a peculiar American intransigence that even those Russians who denied being aristocrats nevertheless had to be to conform to American-generated stereotypes.¹⁷

Shapiro also consistently referred to herself as a White Russian to emphasize her opposition to the Bolshevik regime, though she, unlike the vast majority of those who identified as White Russians, was not Russian Orthodox. Her family background, similar to most émigrés in San Francisco in many ways, indisputably contained some anomalous aspects, particularly, and importantly, with respect to religion. Her father, Lazar Solomonovich Shapiro, whose own father had converted to Lutheranism from Judaism, raised his two daughters, Nadia and Maria, as Lutherans. Nadia, however, was intimately familiar with the rituals,

13. Phrase from Barrett and Roediger in Ngai and Gjerde, 328.

14. A few examples of articles running in San Francisco’s newspapers during the period of exodus of Russians, focusing particularly on royalty or aristocracy: “From Royal Robes to Rags,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 16, 1920. “Finding Odd Jobs for Exiled Aristocrats,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 21, 1921: “Does a General Wait on Your Table or a Countess Mend Your Clothes?” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 28, 1922.

15. The Bolsheviks shot and bayoneted Nicholas II, his wife Alexandra, and children (daughters Olga, Tatiana, Maria, Anastasia and son Aleksey), and several other people in a basement in the city of Yekaterinburg, in Siberia, in July of 1918.

16. Notes for autobiography; “Mystery is better than peroxide when you’re looking for a job,” *San Francisco Examiner*, April 22, 1923: Shapiro Papers, Box 5:11, HIA.

17. Barrett Willoughby to Merle Crowell, editor of *American* magazine in New York, February 24, 1927, Shapiro Papers, Box 3:50, HIA. Barrett Willoughby was the pen name of Florence Barrett.

customs, and history of Russian Orthodoxy and maintained relationships with almost all Russian émigré groups in San Francisco, including the clergy, as she embarked on her writing career in America.

Born in Yelisavetgrad (now Kropyvnytskyi, Ukraine), Shapiro spent her early childhood in the Siberian city of Irkutsk where her father, who had graduated from Moscow Imperial University in 1889, worked as the city attorney. As such, for the rest of her life, Shapiro considered Siberia her home, wrote nostalgically about growing up there, and explored Siberian-Alaskan-Californian connections in her writings.¹⁸ Lazar Shapiro had been born in Minsk and Fanny, her mother, in Kiev. Educated in France, Fanny took her daughters to Europe when they were children for the specific purpose of learning foreign languages. Nadia went to school in Paris for two years as a child and spoke fluent French. She also learned German and English, both through extended stays in Austria and Switzerland (Fanny eschewed Germany) and through lessons with governesses. Though Russian nobility often traveled abroad, Russian “middle classes” did not necessarily have such resources but, according to Nadia, Lazar, who later moved the family to Blagoveshchensk-on-the-Amur (also in Siberia) and worked there as the attorney for the State Bank, adored his wife and daughters and failed to amass any wealth because he spent all of his money on their “education and recreation.”¹⁹

Shapiro, particularly through her work for the *San Francisco Examiner*, where she was employed as a reporter until 1932, became somewhat of a bridge between San Francisco society and the Russian community. She cultivated an enormous coterie of friends, acquaintances, and professional contacts both among Americans and Russians. Her narrative about Russia in her professional writing and correspondence with Americans paralleled the general White Russian émigré narrative—the Bolshevik seizure of power was a disaster for Russia and the Reds showed their true brutal colors in the Civil War. The personal experience of her family, who fled Blagoveshchensk “on foot across the ice-bound Amur” River into China when Bolshevik forces seized the city in February of 1918 was not untypical of the violent and horrific experiences of many Russian refugees. Red Guards, after a house-to-house battle, took “strategic positions” and fired their machine guns at civilians leaving the city. Despite the terror of the experience, and perhaps indicative of her risk-taking nature, Shapiro described the flight to China as “exciting.”²⁰ Shapiro also recalled happier times in her youth in Siberia:

18. Personal notes and reminiscences, Shapiro Papers, Box 1:1, HIA. With respect to the Siberian-Alaskan-Californian connections, Shapiro, for example, wrote to “Sasha” (Alexander Dolgopoloff), an émigré who lived in Los Angeles and pursued his own study of Russian America, about visiting Grigory Shelekhov’s grave in Irkutsk in childhood at the Znamensky Monastery. Shelekhov was one of the first Russian merchant voyagers to sail to Alaska in the eighteenth century. Shapiro was likely one of the few Russian émigrés who had explored the history of Russian America (in Alaska and Northern California) prior to coming to the United States : Shapiro to Sasha, January 23, 1973: Shapiro papers, Box 2:15, HIA.

19. Personal notes and reminiscences, Shapiro Papers, Box 1:1, HIA.

20. “Chronicle of revolutionary events in the city of Blagoveshchensk on the Amur,” undated; biography dated December 2, 1924 in letter draft dated December 12, 1933: Shapiro Papers, Boxes 4:7, 4:16, and 3:29, HIA.

the “[g]lorious butterflies [that] danced among yellow poppies, blue bells and orange lilies” and “the masses of...fragrant white flowers I used to pick on Siberian meadows,” her heart suffering “a little secret twinge” of melancholic nostalgia for her home.²¹ Positive recollections of home among Russian émigrés often included nostalgia for Russian landscapes and natural settings, memories of spaces of tranquility and calm prior to the war and violence that followed.

Once in Harbin, Lazar was able to obtain a job as city attorney which he held until 1926, while Shapiro, realizing the futility of attempting to build a life in Harbin, and already working as a writer and reporter for Russian-language newspapers, made the decision to go to the “country of the future,” as she called the United States. Upon coming to San Francisco and working at the *San Francisco Examiner*, she utilized her knowledge of the situation in Russia to further her journalistic career but also actively worked to highlight the critical situation of Russian refugees in China in the 1920s. Although she was able to bring her mother to live with her in 1929, she never saw her father or sister again. Her family circumstances, then, paralleled those of the majority of Russian émigrés who were often separated from family at some point during the war or the process of emigration and, in many cases, never reunited. Shapiro’s father died in Harbin in 1934 while, her sister, Maria, a prolific writer in her own right, and a legal scholar, was arrested in 1945 by Soviet authorities when the Red Army invaded northern China, deported to the Soviet Union, and sent to KarLag, a labor camp in Karaganda (present-day Kazakhstan). Maria survived in the labor camp for ten years after which authorities sent her to a “home for invalids” in a remote area near the Volga River. From there she was able to get word to Nadia and her mother in the San Francisco Bay Area that she was alive and they began to send her parcels and money, though efforts to get her out of the Soviet Union were unsuccessful. Despite ill health, Maria survived another 16 years, passing away at the home for invalids in 1971.²²

In her autobiographical writings and correspondence Shapiro made it clear that she had never been a monarchist, and that her family’s political views were “liberal” but her identity as a White Russian complicated those liberal views when it came to Russian nationalism. Describing the people and groups with whom she associated in San Francisco’s Russian émigré community, she wrote to a Library of Congress librarian: “[w]e are all “Whites” – that goes without saying, but we are liberals.”²³ In a response to an American would-be author who had inquired about the particulars of Russian profanity through the *Writer’s Digest*, she wrote, “Yes, I’m a thoroughgoing Liberal but I draw the line [at] Marxism and abhor

21. “How I came to write in English,” and “Chronicle of revolutionary events in the city of Blagoveshchensk on the Amur”; biography December 2, 1924, Shapiro Papers, Boxes 4:14 and 4:7, 4:16, 3:29, HIA; Nadia Lavrova, “My Home Town,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 1933 in Boris N. Volkov Papers, Box 17:13 and Shapiro Papers, Box 6:8, HIA.

22. Biographical documents, letters, and accounts, Shapiro Papers, Box 1:1-7, HIA.

23. Shapiro to Mikhail Zinovievich Vinokuroff, November 18, 1934, Shapiro Papers, Box 3:47, HIA.

communism: I have seen enough of them...during the first years of the revolution in Russia."²⁴ Though firmly and incontrovertibly anti-Bolshevik, however, in an example of the contradictions inherent to Russian identity abroad, in 1945, as the Second World War ended and the United States and Soviet Union began to divide up Europe, she wrote in response to an article by William Chamberlin that "[Byelorussia] should go to Russia, commies or no commies."²⁵ Rather than support independence and self-determination of peoples as a "liberal," she insisted on the inviolable connection of Byelorussia to Russia even in the hated form of the Soviet Union.

The Shapiro/Kashevaroff/Willoughby Triad

By 1924, Shapiro was an established reporter for the *San Francisco Examiner*, writing under the pseudonym of Nadia Lavrova and, as much as she was able given the constraints on her by her editors, she focused her writing substantially on human interest stories having to do with the Russian émigrés, their struggles in Harbin, the growing émigré community in San Francisco, and the history of the Russian presence in San Francisco, northern California and Alaska.²⁶ In November of 1924 she spotlighted the life of the "Fighting Priest," Father Andrew Kashevaroff, when he came to San Francisco from his home in Alaska in connection with "the biggest fight of his life...defying the Moscow government that is trying to get possession of the Russian churches on American soil."²⁷ The actual battle was a serious one as the value of Russian Orthodox Church property amounted to many thousands of dollars and the Soviet government sent the

24. Shapiro to Mr. W.H. Mack, Whitmore Lake, Michigan, January 7, 1936, Shapiro Papers, Box 3:16, HIA.

25. Shapiro to Sonya Chamberlin, May 19, 1945, Shapiro Papers, Box 2:9, HIA. "Byelorussia" is today's Belarus and was commonly translated as "White Russia" in the time period in question although it has absolutely no relationship to the term "White" Russian as used to describe anti-Communist émigrés. This distinction remains unclear to the present day in U.S. government narratives, which incorrectly identify "White Russian" anti-Communist groups with the geographic and political space of Belarus, e.g.: "Vonsiatsky Espionage,"

<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/vonsiatsky-espionage>, accessed April 5, 2020. The text in the noted article refers to the leader of the Russian Fascist Party in the interwar period, Anastase Vonsiatsky, as a "White Russian," and subsequently identifies the geographic space of "White Russia" (Belarus) in terms that imply that the "White Russian" movement both originated there and only included people of ethnically "White Russian" (Belarusian) origins, which is incorrect. As noted previously, the "White Russians," White Guard, and White Armies in the Russian Civil War included people and groups from the entire Russian Empire, who adopted the color identification as a strictly political, not ethnic, delineation to indicate their opposition to the Red Guard, Communists, and Bolsheviks.

26. According to Shapiro, her editors at the *San Francisco Examiner* allowed her to write about "Russian topics" only once a month: Shapiro to "Sasha" (Alexander Dolgopolofov), November 24, 1973: Shapiro Papers, Box 2:15, HIA.

27. Nadia Lavrova, "Alaska's Fighting Russian Priest Helps Win from Reds," *San Francisco Examiner*, November 2, 1924: Andrew P. Kashevaroff (APK) Scrapbook, 1906-1939, Alaska State Museum (ASM) archives.

representative of the Soviet “Living Church,” “Red” Archbishop Ivan Kedrovsky, to New York to seize such property. His efforts unsuccessful, Kedrovsky and other church representatives filed lawsuits to gain title to properties, including in Alaska.²⁸

Shapiro’s prose about Alaska evoked the romanticized view of the Russian imperial project in Alaska and Northern California that became an integral part of the San Francisco Russian Orthodox community’s narrative about their Russian-American identity. This narrative encompassed the spatial and spiritual foundation of an imagined Russia that intersected with their Russian Orthodox faith and with a sense of identity through place:

Alaska...the land of...distant creole villages, that in every tradition perpetuate eighteenth century Russia...Alaska that has received gifts from Katherine (sic) the Great...Alaska, where eighty years ago the Russian Governor used to give balls for officers of visiting Russian warships; Alaska, where Russian church bells were cast over a hundred years ago at Sitka, one of which hangs in an orange grove at Ramona, California; Alaska, where early in the nineteenth century Russian mills ground flour and Russian workmen built ships for Spaniards of California.²⁹

The language of Shapiro’s description was evocative of what came to be the nostalgic narrative of Russian émigrés in San Francisco as they sought to make connections between the Russian Empire, of which they were, in their perspective, the last remaining representatives; their own history; the Russian cultural legacy in Alaska; and the relics of the Empire that remained in northern California. Over

28. The Bolshevik government, under the auspices of reform, encouraged a schism in the Orthodox Church in the 1920s. The result was a “modern Living Church,” under the control of the Soviet government. Kedrovsky ultimately won control of St. Nicholas Cathedral in New York: Hassell, 54.

29. Nadia Lavrova, “Alaska’s Fighting Russian Priest Helps Win from Reds,” *San Francisco Examiner*, November 2, 1924: APK Scrapbook, 1906-1939, ASLM. “Creole,” in the context of the Russian Imperial project, referred to people of mixed Native Alaskan and Russian heritage. Scholars do not agree about the exact definition of “creole” as the Russian Empire utilized the term. Generally it was a social category (estate) in the Russian Empire that may have specifically referred to people of mixed Russian and Native Alaskan/American heritage, thus specifying particular rights and obligations under Russian law. Author and Orthodox Church historian Father Michael Oleksa made the case that being “creole” was more a “state of mind” than an actual definition of specific ethnicity. According to him, any Native Alaskan who pledged loyalty to the czar and thus became a subject of the Russian Empire after 1821 gained the classification of “creole”: See “The Creoles and their Contributions to the Development of Alaska” by Archpriest Michael J. Oleksa in *Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier*, ed. by Barbara Sweetland Smith and Redmond J. Barnett (Tacoma: Washington State Historical Society, 1990), 185. Further, in Russian Alaska, “all tradesmen, merchants, or company foremen were also Creole, regardless of race”: Michael Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska: A Theology of Mission* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992), 150.

time, the narrative informed the evolution of Russian identity from émigré and, as such, sojourner, into Russian-American, and therefore “citizen,” with a direct connection to the physical spaces they now inhabited in California. Shapiro effectively touched on every aspect of what would soon be a mytho-poetic collective memory informing Russian-American identity—the “creole villages” perpetuating eighteenth-century Russia (villages Shapiro herself had not actually seen), the gifts of the Russian Empress Catherine the Great providing a connection to the Romanov dynasty (the martyrdom of the last czar and his family playing a critical part in the émigré narrative of traumatic loss); the church bells, essential to Orthodox worship, and a concrete artifact critical to Russian religious ritual, which were (arguably) cast in Sitka and sent to California.

The history of Alaska was important in another way with respect to defining Russian identity in America: the American view after the purchase of Alaska by the United States in 1867 was that Russians were foreigners, which made their descendants, who, in Alaska, were almost all of Russian and indigenous Alaskan descent, “foreign” as well. Nadia’s portrayal of Kashevaroff was the basis for how Barrett Willoughby, who billed herself as an “Alaskan” novelist, portrayed him in her “nonfiction” book about Alaska and its Russian history published in 1930 and titled *Sitka: Portal to Romance*.³⁰ It is worthwhile to note that Willoughby’s friendship with Shapiro, which began soon after Shapiro’s arrival in San Francisco, greatly benefited her in that Shapiro, who wrote about Russian Alaska for newspapers well before Willoughby’s book about Sitka was published, was a reliable source for Willoughby when it came to learning about Russian customs, language, and tradition, a subject about which Willoughby was generally uninformed.³¹ A critical difference in the overall description of Kashevaroff, however, was that Shapiro focused on the fact that he was an American of Russian descent while Willoughby highlighted his foreignness—it is indicative that the latter described Sitka as “the quaint old Russian capital” and the first Russian American Company manager, Alexander Baranov (1747-1819), as a “dare-devil little Iron Governor” just as she insisted on addressing Shapiro in virtually all of her letters to her as “little Nadia.”³² Infantilizing Shapiro, under

30. Barrett Willoughby (Florence Barrett) spent many years in Alaska but was actually born in Wisconsin: Nancy Warren Ferrell, *Barrett Willoughby: Alaska’s Forgotten Lady* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1994).

31. In later correspondence with Willoughby, Shapiro noted, for example, that the film version of Willoughby’s book, *Rocking Moon*, a romance taking place in a “creole” village in Alaska, showed an icon hanging “flat against the wall,” which would never happen in an Orthodox house – icons are hung in the corner: Shapiro to “Billie,” December 24, 1939; in other correspondence, Shapiro described houses in the Siberian city of Irkutsk and provided commentary on societal structure there (e.g. the “wealthy merchant class in Siberia assumed the role of nonexistent nobility”): Shapiro to “Billie,” September 3, 1943: Shapiro Papers, Box 3:50, HIA.

32. The Russian American Company functioned in Alaska and California as part of the Russian Imperial colonial project. See, for example, Lydia T. Black, *Russians in Alaska, 1732-1867* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2004).

Though Russians use diminutives when addressing very close friends or children, Willoughby’s adoption of this practice in English was patronizing.

the guise of praise or affection, established a dominant/subordinate relationship, something Willoughby consciously promulgated in her correspondence with Shapiro, as part of a generally patronizing attitude towards Russians as people with “quaint” customs and traditions, which placed them at a disadvantage to “modern” Americans.³³

In her own article about Kashevaroff, on the other hand, Shapiro described him as someone who was trilingual, “preaching in slow solemn Russian, or precise English, or guttural Aleut,” and as a Russian Orthodox priest who was conscious of the importance of maintaining indigenous culture and Native Alaskan identity, insisting that native youths not “neglect their ceremonies and tribal traditions.”³⁴ Kashevaroff was descended from the son of a Russian serf, Filipp Artamonovich, who came to Alaska in 1793 as a teenager with his father at the behest of his father’s owner, the merchant Ivan L. Golikov. Filipp served in various capacities during his life in Alaska including as a ship’s commander. He married an Alutiiq woman, Aleksandra Rysev, and their descendants made up an “enormous” and very prominent family in Alaska, who were designated creole by the Russian government due to Rysev’s heritage.³⁵ That designation acknowledged indigenous heritage, important in the Imperial Russian classification of people into social estates.

After the American purchase of Alaska, however, Father Kashevaroff (as did other people of Russian/indigenous background) consciously downplayed that heritage, insisting that his family was “of pure Russian blood” even though his own mother was also creole.³⁶ That effort to highlight Russian (European) background over indigenous ancestry spoke directly to American legal and social racial discrimination when Alaska became a U.S. territory in 1867.³⁷ The subterfuge

33. Correspondence between Shapiro and Willoughby dating from 1925 to the 1950s: Shapiro Papers, Box 3:49-50, HIA.

34. Nadia Lavrova, “Alaska’s Fighting Russian Priest Helps Win from Reds,” *San Francisco Examiner*, November 2, 1924: APK Scrapbook, 1905-1939, ASM archives. Kashevaroff likely spoke Alutiiq, not Aleut, but Russian colonial authorities referred to all Native Alaskans they initially encountered as Aleuts and were not informed about actual group, tribal, or clan affiliation.

35. Richard Pierce on Kashevaroff family history: *Russian America: A Biographical Dictionary* (Kingston, Ontario: Limestone Press, 1990), 215-221. Information about Aleksandra Petrovna Ryseva from Kashevarov/Rysev family trees at Geni.com, <https://www.geni.com/people/Aleksandra-Petrovna-Kashevarov-Rysev>. In other sources Ryseva is described as creole. Kashevaroff is variously spelled Kashevarov/Kashevarof.

36. Father Andrew P. Kashevaroff objected to Hubert Howe Bancroft’s description of his uncle (to whom he referred to as his great uncle) as creole, noting that “our family was of pure Russian blood and came to Alaska about 1820”: letters between Kashevaroff and E.O. Essig: Andrew P. Kashevaroff Papers ca 1901-1935, f. 4, ASM archives.

37. According to Sergei Kan, in Russian Alaska, “the category of Creole was a sociocultural rather than a racial one” though scholars have provided evidence of racial prejudice particularly among Russian American Company elites. Kan also notes that “Creole definitely became much more of a racial than sociocultural category” after the American occupation in 1867: “Guest Editor’s Introduction: Individuals and Groups of Mixed Russian-Native Parentage in Siberia, Russian America, and Alaska”: in *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 3 (Summer 2013): 351-361.

was so complete however, that Shapiro wrote in her article that Kashevaroff was “one of only ten full-blooded Russians in Alaska, the great majority of Russian Orthodox parishioners being creoles, some with only a tinge of Aleut blood.” Notwithstanding this privileging of Russian heritage, she also specifically pointed out that “with *Russian freedom from race prejudice* he tries to bridge for... [his parishioners]...the gap between their own secluded villages and modern America” concluding that in the far future, Russian scholars would come and find “the true Russian spirit of old times” in Alaska.³⁸ Shapiro’s focus was that connection to Russia, so important to the Russian diaspora about whom (and often to whom) she wrote. Kashevaroff’s lack of “race prejudice” she attributed to his “Russianness” while the reality was that Kashevaroff himself was of Native Alaskan origins but chose to obscure that fact, perhaps to protect his children—five daughters and a son, some of whom went to school and lived in the continental United States. Nevertheless, just as important, Kashevaroff (and others of the same background) was an American of Russian descent in her telling who, largely because he was a Russian Orthodox priest, maintained Russian cultural and linguistic heritage, critical to the Russian émigré community in San Francisco, in the process of selectively acculturating to American society.³⁹

Willoughby, in her book about Sitka, devoted an entire chapter to Kashevaroff and emphasized continually and repeatedly his foreignness (Russianness), despite labeling him a “connecting link between the Russian past and the American present”: when meeting, he bowed over her hand in “his charming foreign manner”; Kashevaroff’s “English was delivered with Russian vividness and a faint accent that made interesting his most commonplace utterances”; he used American slang in a “naïve and delightful” manner.⁴⁰ Kashevaroff, however, was born in Kodiak in 1863, attended school in San Francisco, and was an American citizen, as he related later in their discussion when describing how white Americans accused him of preaching allegiance to the Czar when he foiled their attempts to take advantage of the “Indians.” Just as in Kashevaroff’s conversation with Shapiro, he focused on his family’s Russianness, distancing himself culturally from his Native Alaskan congregants, stressing his loyalty to the United States of America, but also making it clear that the “white riff-raff” invading Alaska from the time of the Yukon gold rush were people with whom he warred perpetually due to their constant incursions into Native Alaskan life and attempts to profit from selling alcohol-based drinks to indigenous people.⁴¹

The triad of Nadia Shapiro/Lavrova, Father Andrew Kashevaroff and Barrett Willoughby illustrated aspects of the complicated nature of being Russian in America. Willoughby insisted on characterizing Shapiro as a Russian aristocrat despite Shapiro’s own explanation of her background. The relationship was also

38. Lavrova, “Alaska’s Fighting Russian Priest Helps Win from Reds,” (my emphasis).

39. Lavrova, “Alaska’s Fighting Russian Priest Helps Win from Reds.”

40. Barret Willoughby, *Sitka: Portal to Romance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), Chapter 6. Willoughby was so enthralled with Kashevaroff that she also dedicated her novel, *Rocking Moon*, to him: Ferrell, 141.

41. Willoughby, Chapter 6. Also, Pierce about Kashevaroff, 215-6.

one-sided and exploitive. Willoughby was a fairly successful author in that time and although she used Shapiro's knowledge of Russian customs and culture to authenticate her own writing, her support of Shapiro's efforts was questionable. "Little" Nadia was Willoughby's own personal Russian, giving Willoughby an air of legitimacy when writing about Russians that she otherwise would not have, but, in their correspondence, Willoughby pointed to Shapiro's foreignness and therefore inability to understand America or Americans. As a descendant of Russian colonizers, Kashevaroff was also a curiosity to Willoughby, who framed him as such in her writing about the "romantic" period of Russian colonization of Alaska. Yet Kashevaroff was not simply a Russian-American but a person of Native heritage as well. Shapiro, who had to have some understanding of the social and sexual history of Alaska, i.e. a large number of Russian and/or Siberian men arriving without families cohabited with or married Native Alaskan women, nevertheless chose to follow along with Kashevaroff's insistence of his "pure" Russianness but felt the need to stress Russian "lack of race prejudice." A critical factor in this subterfuge was the erasure of the heritage of women in the Kashevaroff family, all of whom, including Kashevaroff's wife, were descended from Russians and Native Alaskans. The purpose of Kashevaroff's subterfuge, however, was not to emphasize his "pure" Russianness to Russians but to Americans, who, as much as they considered Russians exotic, mysterious, and foreign nevertheless did selectively grant them "whiteness," something a Native Alaskan heritage would complicate given the racism Americans brought with them when they occupied Alaska after the 1867 purchase.⁴²

42. In an example of excluding Russians from whiteness, the Executive Committee Chairman of the Diamond Jubilee, an event celebrating the 75th anniversary of California's admission to the Union in September of 1925, Lewis F. Byington, in his "official" history of California for the booklet about the event, excluded the Russians in his paeans to the "white men" (Western Europeans) who explored and settled California from 1542 on – his history made no mention of any Russian presence: *California's Diamond Jubilee Celebrated at San Francisco, September 5 to 12, 1925* (San Francisco: E.C. Brown Publisher, 1927), 9. Alternatively, according to William C. White, Russians were unsuccessful at being white as they were the culprits in "lowering the prestige of the white man in China" due to the fact that "White" Russians had to take on menial jobs in exile: "White Russians: Flotsam of Revolution," *New York Times*, June 5, 1932.

With respect to immigrants and perspectives of "whiteness" see, for example, Thomas Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago 1890-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) and Arnold R. Hirsch, "E Pluribus Duo? Thoughts on 'Whiteness' and Chicago's 'New' Immigration as a Transient Third Tier," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 23, no. 4 (2004): 7-44, regarding Italian and Polish immigrants' changing perspectives regarding race and identity in interwar Chicago as they acculturated to American society.

For racialization of social status, legal and social construction of race, gradations of whiteness, and development of the hierarchical racial paradigm in the United States, see, among others, Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race: Racial Oppression and Social Control*, Vol. 1 (London: Verso, 1994) and *The Invention of the White Race: The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America*, Vol. 2 (London: Verso, 1997); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and*

Shapiro's and Willoughby's relationship lasted until Willoughby's death in 1959 and in that time period they did have conversations in their correspondence about culture, race, and ethnocentricity. Shapiro certainly became aware of Willoughby's patronizing attitude, noting how the latter depicted Russian creoles "in a condescending manner" in her writing and considered Russian characters that Shapiro created authentic only if they were "vulgar" and "picturesque" with no "redeeming" features. Shapiro chided Willoughby for her "subconscious objections" to Shapiro's "Russian viewpoint," which in Willoughby's eyes did not understand or sufficiently respect American culture, accusing Willoughby of living in "your little ivory tower" on Hillcrest (in the suburban community of San Carlos south of San Francisco) and not coming into contact with the Americans Shapiro encountered daily on her streetcar rides to work, at her job, in her neighborhood, and about whom she wrote. Shapiro's earnings over the years, until she acquired a steady U.S. government job after World War II, were such that she lived very modestly (and was also supporting her mother) unlike Willoughby whose books were quite successful. Thus Shapiro noted that her social milieu included people that Willoughby never encountered: Shapiro ate lunch in cafeterias on the waterfront, "even" speaking to longshoremen she met there "without being introduced"; over the years, she and Constance Dixon, daughter of Maynard Dixon, also went to speakeasies in San Francisco without male escorts, places that Willoughby apparently considered beneath her. In this particular letter, written in 1941, Shapiro noted that the situation, in which Willoughby was "consciously or unconsciously...attempting to create an inferiority complex" in Nadia's mind had gone on for many years and she felt it necessary finally to "stop and clarify it."⁴³

the Alchemy of Race (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 19-44; Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 11-12; Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 195-8; Ian Haney-López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 20, 83; Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2013), 137-8; David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 2007), 22-3; 133-4; 148-150 and *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 93-94 and Chapter 4; Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 152; Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 89, 141; and Natalie Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014) .

43. Shapiro to "Billie" (Barrett Willoughby), October 27 1941, Shapiro Papers, Box 3:50, HIA. Nadia likely met Constance at the *San Francisco Examiner* newspaper office and the latter might have then been the third female reporter to work there, hired "after she turned 19," therefore 1929 or after: www.maynarddixon.org/timeline/ accessed June 2019; Constance noted she was fired from the newspaper in a letter to Nadia dated June 25, 1932: Shapiro Papers, Box 2:14, HIA.

Willoughby also objected to Shapiro's mention of the "Amos and Andy Show" in the chapter of a novel Shapiro was writing that took place in the 1920s. To Willoughby the show (on the radio in the 1920s and voiced by white actors) was an embarrassment and an "insult to Americans" and her objection appeared to be that Shapiro, a foreigner (despite the fact that Shapiro had become a U.S. citizen in 1928), selected a show that depicted African American rather than Euro-American culture (her objection did not appear to be that there was an inherent racism in white actors profiting from their racialized depiction of African American culture but that this was "low" culture). Shapiro, apparently bowing to Willoughby's authoritative knowledge of what was or was not proper, acquiesced to changing the reference to the Fred Allen or Jack Benny shows though she defended "Amos and Andy" as a show that she had listened to upon arrival in America as did, she insisted, many Americans.⁴⁴

As she acculturated, Shapiro was quick to pick up the American language of race, using the word "white" in a way that, at the time, was not common to Russian expression. In her auto-biographical writings she first quoted "a friend" and then simply began to write in her (English-language) recollections that she was "the first and only white girl who ever worked on a Japanese paper" when she lived for a year in Japan with her sister in 1919-1920.⁴⁵ In an article she wrote describing the desperate situation of Russian refugees and residents of Harbin in 1923, who were stateless, she wrote of the "200,000 white people...placed in a position practically unknown until now to international law," as the identification documents they legally had to carry were issued in the Chinese language, which Shapiro described as "a string of incomprehensible hieroglyphs." She concluded that the situation was likely "the first and only case when white men and women have Chinese passports for all purposes of international relations."⁴⁶ In this article, which highlighted a period in Harbin when Chinese authorities began to replace

44. Shapiro to "Billie" (Barrett Willoughby), October 27, 1941: Shapiro Papers, Box 3:50, HIA. Shapiro wrote that she would "of course" change the reference for "the story," which seemed to mean that she planned to publish the chapter as a story initially. Regarding citizenship: Shapiro Papers, Box 1, HIA.

45. "How I came to write in English," Shapiro Papers, Boxes 4:14 and 7:10, HIA. The term "white" was not one Russians used to describe race or ethnicity in the time period in question when speaking Russian (at least prior to coming to the United States): discussions in broad terms about race/ethnicity utilized terminology such as "European" and "Asian."

46. "200,000 Russians in Harbin Face Helplessness under Chinese Rule," *San Francisco Examiner*, June 3, 1923; Shapiro Papers, Box 5:14, HIA. In a 1925 article, Shapiro (writing under her pseudonym Lavrova) described how 300 Russian refugees, including "admirals," lawyers, doctors, actors, newspaperman, army officers, and "graduates of engineering colleges" replaced the Chinese crew of Canadian Pacific steamer in Hong Kong when the Chinese crew walked off as part of a general strike. "The Orient is not a comfortable place for a stranded white man, who cannot possibly compete with coolie labor," Shapiro wrote. The shipping line manager sent a boat to Nagasaki, Japan, where his agents recruited the Russians for a round-trip sailing between Hong Kong and Vancouver, Canada: "Admirals of Russia Swab Deck Gladly," *San Francisco Examiner*, August 2, 1925.

Russian employees in the court and other systems with ethnic Chinese personnel, Shapiro was clearly aiming for sympathy for the “white” people (the word “white” here clearly indicative of race, not the usual “White” Russian political affiliation) because she had likely encountered the prevailing views in San Francisco about Asian, and specifically Chinese immigrants or residents, who, though long-present in the American West, continued to suffer routine discrimination and often violent attack. Therefore, her deliberate use of the term “white” to describe Russians in China played directly to American sympathies and fears of “yellow peril,” focusing on race as opposed to culture.⁴⁷

Conclusion

Shapiro had hoped to find success as an American novelist but that dream did not come to fruition. After working for the Works Projects Administration from 1937 to 1942, she acquired a position at the Office of Censorship, then later at the Office of War Information and, in 1945, worked as a translator at the United Nations Conference in San Francisco. After World War II, she worked as a foreign broadcast monitor, first under the Department of the Army, and, beginning in 1947, for the Central Intelligence Agency, relocating first to Portland, Oregon, then Los Angeles. Her last place of employment was a covert location in Sonoma County and, upon retirement in 1953, she remained in Santa Rosa, California. She never married and had no children, making a concerted effort to pass along her research to other émigrés exploring the history of Russian America, as well as to the Hoover Institution Archives.⁴⁸

Shapiro’s somewhat unique role as both a bridge between the Russian émigré and American communities and a writer who documented the process, at least in part, of attaining “a state of whiteness” in interwar America, highlighted the choices that immigrant groups in the United States may have consciously and unconsciously made over time in the process of Americanization. The importance of the specificities of their culture to the Russian community, which largely informed the identity of émigrés—literature, music, art, language, religion and history—gradually receded in the face of implicit demands to select “whiteness,” i.e. identification with a generalized constructed racial category dominating social relationships in the United States. Culturally, “whiteness” as an identity held no meaning for Russian newcomers to America. The process of beginning to identify as white was a function of exposure to the dominant culture narrative, which

47. Barbara Berglund, for example, discusses the developing racial hierarchy in San Francisco in the late nineteenth century that placed Chinese people at the bottom, configuring a racial divide between “Chinese” and “white” rather than “black” and “white” as existed in much of the United States, particularly the eastern and southern areas: *Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846-1906* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 97-8. The Chinese population in San Francisco in 1920 was only 7,744 having dropped precipitously from a high of 25,833 in 1890. San Francisco’s Chinese population more than doubled by 1930 though still only 2.6% of the total: www.sfgenealogy.org. Accessed 11/7/2019.

48. Documents and correspondence, Shapiro papers, Boxes 1-4, HIA. Shapiro died in 1989.

both explicitly and implicitly promoted the criticality of maintaining the existing hierarchal racial paradigm.

About the author

Nina Bogdan is a PhD Candidate at the Department of History, University of Arizona, and is completing her doctorate in May of 2021. She also holds M.A.s in Political Science (University of California, Davis, 1990) and U.S. History (University of Arizona, 2016). Nina worked as a translator for many years in both the public and private sectors and is certified by the American Translators Association in the Russian to English language pair. Current areas of study include twentieth-century Eastern European immigration to the American West and North American Pacific Rim, in the context of American nativism and the over-arching Soviet-American political relationship.

Book Reviews

Ben Macintyre. *The Spy and the Traitor: The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War*. New York: Crown Publishing, 2018. 330 pp. plus illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. Hardback \$28.00.

Ben Macintyre's newest book, *The Spy and the Traitor: The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War*, is indeed a page-turning account of one man's journey from KGB agent to British spy, and all of the cloak and dagger accoutrement that went with this significant and dangerous conversion. Oleg Gordievsky came from a family of KGB agents – both his father and brother worked for the KGB – but from early in his career, he recognized that he was doubtful about the mission of his employer and the Soviet Union in general. He joined the infamous Soviet secret police agency in 1962, and within a few short years, he received a coveted post in Copenhagen at the Soviet Embassy, tasked with managing a network of undercover agents in Denmark. His heart was never truly in his work, however, and the construction of the Berlin Wall and the military crushing of Prague Spring only further disillusioned him. When he returned to Russia after three years, it appeared to him more depressing, paranoid, and oppressive than when he had left. He soon was reposted to Denmark and it was during this second stay that he was recruited by the British spy organization, MI6, to be a double agent. In 1982, after several years spying for the Brits, he obtained a position in the Soviet Embassy in London.

Gordievsky's story is interesting enough on its own, but it is enriched by Macintyre's dive into the craft of espionage and spying, as well as the motivation of those decide to betray their own countries. While money, ego, and romance drive many individuals to become spies, Macintyre believes that Gordievsky was moved by political and ideological causes, a rejection of the Soviet system and all it stood for. Another well-known spy, the American CIA agent Aldrich Ames, chose to spy for the Soviets for monetary gain, and would ultimately blow Gordievsky's cover and endanger his life. Macintyre explores this incredibly secret and dangerous world of dead drops, secret meetings, and exfiltration plans with a deft hand and a tone of suspense. He concludes his book with the tale of Gordievsky's risky and breathtaking escape from the Soviet Union into

Finland with the help of British diplomats and the high price he paid leaving his family behind the Iron Curtain. Though many in the West will not be familiar with Gordievsky's name, he was enormously important, offering an insider's view of the Soviet mindset as he advised Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan on how to best approach the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev.

The Spy and the Traitor is engaging and well-written, and anyone who enjoys the history of espionage (and who doesn't?) will want to read this book. Macintyre interviewed Gordievsky and other relevant persons in the KGB, CIA, and MI6 for hours, and his reliance on this type of source material is reflected in the tone and flow of the book. But Macintyre is also simply a good writer with a great story to tell, and deserves praise for bring the story of Oleg Gordievsky to a board audience.

Lee A. Farrow
Auburn University at Montgomery

Victoria Phillips, *Martha Graham's Cold War: The Dance of American Diplomacy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. 458 pp.

In this massive, exhaustively researched book, Victoria Phillips, an adjunct lecturer at Columbia University, details how the innovative dancer and choreographer Martha Graham took her dance company to more than twenty-five countries between 1955 and 1987. During those Cold War decades, Phillips shows, United States government officials supported and promoted the Graham company tours in the hope that they would enhance the appeal of American culture to foreign nations. According to Phillips, "government representatives understood that dance – particularly modern dance – was second only to music in its effectiveness and impact in foreign markets" (p. 16). *Martha Graham's Cold War* thus complements earlier studies of the cultural dimension of the Cold War such as Penny Von Eschen's book, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (2004). Yet where Von Eschen and others have highlighted how America's cultural representatives abroad advanced their own agendas and at times departed from U.S. officials' intentions, Phillips emphasizes how Graham and her company served U.S. government objectives. The multiracial troupe served as an implicit counter to communist propaganda about American racism and the celebration of individualism in Graham's dance technique harmonized with U.S. global messaging about freedom. Even more interesting is the way Graham adapted her work *Frontier* to what Phillips calls the "cowboy nationalism" of the Ronald Reagan administration in the 1980s (p. 268).

How effective was the Martha Graham company as an instrument of U.S. propaganda? In a more slender book, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (1998), Naima Prevots gave a simple answer: "Martha Graham went abroad and conquered," winning widespread applause and challenging negative

stereotypes about fat, materialistic Americans (pp. 46-51). Phillips offers a more complex and sophisticated analysis of foreign audiences' responses. On one hand, she highlights the successes of Graham and her company, especially in the first tour in 1955. Thus, in Japan in 1955 Graham's work triumphed over a Soviet ballet tour and "seduced the intelligentsia and political leaders into an imagined international community of modernist thinkers" (pp. 6, 9). Yet Phillips also argues that "the paradox of an individualistic American artistic construction promoted as a universally applicable approach consistently plagued Graham with critical international audiences" (p. 36). Moreover, responses to the troupe varied by country and over time. While the company won huge ovations in the Philippines in 1955, it received poor reviews in Berlin in 1957 and in Poland in 1962 the reviews were "decimating" (pp. 84, 32, 33). By the 1970s Graham's dance sometimes seemed "dated and ineffective as pro-democratic propaganda," yet even then "it often worked" (p. 24). Although the featured stories of the American frontier were intended to convey messages about the tearing down of walls and the bringing together of nations, a visit to East Berlin in 1987 did not seem to shake the Wall or offer any sense of hope for change. In assessing responses to that final tour Phillips skillfully contrasts glowing official notices to the memories of the dancers, who did not recall an effusive reception (pp. 280-1).

There are a few flaws in this exceedingly ambitious book. Phillips is not always sure-footed in her handling of U.S. foreign policy. For example, at one point she appears to confuse the National Security Agency and the National Security Council, while at another point she writes about how President William McKinley (who was assassinated in 1901) justified the U.S. annexation of the Philippines in 1903 (pp. 31, 79). A more rigorous copyediting might have eliminated some unnecessary repetition and revised some tangled sentences that are hard to unravel. For example, on page 36 the reader is confronted with the following sentence: "Remaining ever-contemporary, withering Graham-style diplomacy has been made relevant again – even just as a study – as Mr. Trump seemingly twists Cold War elements to make America 'great again' who tweeted nuclear threats, while improbably sidling up to a John le Carre leader of Russia and his cohort."

Despite such missteps, *Martha Graham's Cold War* is a major achievement. Phillips presents the fascinating story of a dynamic, creative figure who was both ostensibly apolitical and very political; an independent, successful woman who distanced herself from feminism; and a pioneering artist who degenerated into alcoholic unreliability yet retained her ability to cultivate connections to First Ladies and launch new initiatives almost to the very end of her long life.

David Foglesong
Rutgers University

Francine Hirsch, *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg: A New History of the International Military Tribunal after World War II*. Oxford University Press, 2020. Xvii, 536pp. Index. \$34.95. Hardcover.

Francine Hirsch's *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg* is a captivating account of the Soviet Union's contribution to and experience of the Nuremberg Trials. This 500-page volume combines several projects in one. It is part legal history, part courtroom spectacle, and part human drama starring the eccentric characters of the USSR's legal team. These narrative threads are woven together to illustrate how the trial's outcome stemmed from contingencies and personalities as much as from political powerplay and ideology. Hirsch unfolds her story without a sense of inevitability. Her account shifts between a ground-level view of closed-door negotiations—which are mostly riveting but sometimes overly detailed—and a high-level analysis of the trial's significance for the Cold War and the history of human rights.

Hirsch's main objective is to showcase Soviet contributions to proceedings, which the western Allies deliberately obscured. In the process, she makes three major arguments. First, the Soviets were key to the establishment of the International Military Tribunal, pushing for it as early as 1942 when some British and US officials proposed executing high-ranking Nazis without due process (17, 38). Second, Hirsch argues that Soviet legal experts—especially Aron Trainin—provided “the legal framework for the entire trial” by conceptualizing the notion of “crimes against peace” (8, 35). This criminalized aggressive, unprovoked wars of conquest to protect people from repressive states. The Soviets also helped develop the concept of “crimes against humanity” both conceptually and practically, through their presentation of evidence at the trial. These two “Nuremberg principles,” crimes against peace and against humanity, constituted a veritable “revolution in international law,” and Soviet lawyers deserve much of the credit for formulating them. The fact that they have not been credited leads Hirsch to her third argument: the western Allies—especially the US—downplayed Soviet contributions to Nuremberg and cast the trial as a triumph of liberal values and justice, whereby the defendants' individual rights, including the right to a fair trial, were paramount (6, 144). Hirsch dubs this the “Nuremberg myth,” and argues that, in fact, the illiberal USSR significantly shaped international understandings of justice and human rights after WWII (8).

Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg is somewhat ambivalent in its challenge to the “Nuremberg myth.” At times, Hirsch flatly refutes it, showcasing—for instance—the US government's ulterior, political motives at Nuremberg. At other times, she claims she is restoring a missing piece of the story, not rewriting it entirely. In the conclusion, Hirsch writes: “the myth of the Nuremberg moment celebrated the power of American leadership and Western liberal ideals. [...] But it only told part of the Nuremberg story.” She then asks: “What do we get by putting the Soviet Union back into the history of the Nuremberg Trials?” (415). In truth, *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg* does much more than restore a missing piece. Insofar as the west's “Nuremberg myth” rests on a negation of Soviet

contributions, Hirsch undercuts it on nearly every page. And she does not replace it with a pro-Soviet counter-myth. Indeed, Hirsch goes to great lengths to uncover the Soviets' falsification of evidence about the Katyn massacre, their intentions to make Nuremberg a show trial, and their blunders with everything from translation (82-83) to cross-examination. "The Soviet Union had won the war; at Nuremberg it lost the victory," (14) she observes. Still, without idealizing the Soviet side, Hirsch depicts the Soviet legal team with sensitivity, noting how the tribunal was an opportunity for bearing witness to unthinkable suffering, not just for vengeance or political grandstanding. Moreover, Hirsch argues, the USSR's lawyers "played a leading role in the organization of the I[n]ternational M[ilitary] T[ribunal] and developing its legal framework" (397). They helped to refute the "defense of superior orders" and eventually learned how to litigate in a system of adversarial justice, which was totally unfamiliar to them (391). Their presentation of the supposedly dead Field Marshal Friedrich Paulus, as well as Hirsch's description of it, were spellbinding. Ultimately, Hirsch tears down both eastern and western myths of Nuremberg, exposing "all of Nuremberg's contradictions" including the hazy line between victors and victims, liberators and perpetrators (415).

Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg is a massive achievement, grounded in original research from seventeen archives in three countries. The book is a bit long to assign to undergraduates, but it is an engaging read. Hirsch displays her skills as a storyteller, recounting late night drinks between American and Soviet journalists and absurd moments, such as when Soviet lawyers claimed their chief prosecutor had malaria to excuse his delayed replies. Hirsch also is a masterful analyst, tying these small moments to Nuremberg's geopolitical legacy. Most of all, she acts as able interpreter of the cultural differences that confounded the Allies. Without passing judgment, she explains how they defined democracy differently and how their understandings of a fair trial diverged. In short, *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg* takes us behind the myth-making and reveals the concepts, chaos, and compromises that ultimately defined the Nuremberg moment.

Alexis Peri
Boston University

Erika Haber, *Oz Behind the Iron Curtain: Aleksandr Volkov and His Magic Land Series*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017, xvii. 259pp. Bibliography. Index. \$30.00, Paper.

In the past two decades we have gained a greater understanding of the diverse experiences of children in the U.S.S.R., the evolution of Soviet children's literature, and the propagandistic representations of Soviet children in comparison to their U.S. Cold War counterparts. Erika Haber's study adds to this literature on the world of Soviet children by exploring Aleksandr Melent'evich Volkov's creation of the *Magic Land Series* of stories with which many young readers in the U.S.S.R. fell in love. Since Volkov's original 1939 children's book *Wizard of the*

Emerald City (*Volshebnik Izumrudnogo goroda*) – that inspired the popular series – was a reworking of American writer, L. Frank Baum’s 1900 *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Haber also provides readers with an alternative perspective on Soviet-American cultural relations. She emphasizes the significance in that children on both sides of the Iron Curtain shared a common captivation with the fantastical tales of Baum and Volkov. While a wide range of contemporary cultural expressions continue to pay homage to the Oz and Magic Land series (including merchandise, films, plays, and cartoons), Haber emphasizes that neither Baum nor Volkov command immediate name recognition that their Oz and Magic Land fairy tales do. The widespread popularity of these stories, Haber contends, at least partly explains scholars’ relative neglect of the two series and their creators.

Haber draws on Syracuse University’s extensive archival collections pertaining to Baum and Volkov’s papers at the Tomsk State Pedagogical University which also houses “A.M. Volkov’s Magic Land Museum” (216) to reveal how the authors’ personal backgrounds and the socio-cultural contexts in which they lived influenced the stories they created. The call of the 1934 Soviet Writers Congress for amateur writers to take on the important task of creating stories for young readers encouraged Volkov, who was a mathematician by training, to pursue writing children’s literature. Volkov aspired to use his personal experiences as a teacher and father to author works that would appeal to children while also meeting the shifting demands of Soviet censors. In addition to writing an original historical novel, Volkov observed how established writers like Kornei Chukovsky and Alexei Tolstoy successfully adapted foreign fairy tales for Soviet audiences. As Haber makes clear, the adaption “of foreign literature for domestic consumption” was not a Soviet innovation but had a long and well-respected history in Russia with the writers “often claiming authorship of the revised work” (144). Volkov, who acquired a copy of Baum’s *Wizard of Oz* from a colleague in 1934-1935 with the purpose of honing his English-language skills, claimed that his sons loved the tale when he shared it with them. After translating and reworking this definitive American fairy tale by adding a few chapters, changing characters’ names, and revising “the story in terms of logic, emotion, and motivation” (148), Volkov spent three years trying to get the Stalinist censors to support its publication. As Haber argues, by enhancing “the themes of collective spirit and bonds of friendship, Volkov could emphasize the book’s pedagogical qualities over Baum’s original focus on pure entertainment, and in this way, make it palatable for the Soviet censors” (137). When the Children’s State Publishing House finally approved its publication, Volkov was named as the author and only a brief statement on the first edition of the copyright page identified that the story was based on the U.S. author L. Frank Baum’s *Wizard of Oz*.

Nearly two decades later, in 1959, amidst Soviet leaders’ efforts to open the country to foreigners Volkov released a more thoroughly revised version of the *Wizard of Emerald City* tale with new color illustrations. A new generation of Soviet youth immediately became enchanted with the *Wizard of Emerald City*. In response to a multitude of letters from children and parents around the country urging him to write more about the Magic Land adventures, Volkov ultimately

wrote and published five sequels. Haber rejects Cold War interpretations of Volkov's rendering of Baum's Oz. She insists that with the exception of an overtly politicized statement inserted in the 1959 epilogue about capitalism's exploitation of the masses to benefit the rich, Volkov's revisions of Baum's tale (which she details at length) were not motivated by an ideological objective but "a pedagogical one, meant to create a better educational experience for children" (148). When Baum's original *Wizard of Oz* finally became widely available to Russian children's literature experts and readers by the early 1990s, it fostered a renewed appreciation for Volkov's stories. In the end, Haber stresses that the fantastical, whimsical aspects of Baum's original story – "the unique charm of the quirky characters and offbeat plot elements" (211) – inspired Volkov's fairy tales and explain its enduring transnational cultural appeal into the twenty-first century.

Meredith L. Roman
SUNY Brockport

Andrei Wal'terovich Grinev, *Russian Colonization of Alaska: Preconditions, Discovery, and Initial Development, 1741-1799*, trans. Richard L. Bland. (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2018). 328 pp., including an appendix of major Russian hunting expeditions, a short glossary of terms, extensive source notes, and an exhaustive bibliography.

Establishing a strong foundation for more recent in-depth examinations were the late Academician Nikolai Bolkhovitinov, who edited a three volume work, *Istoriia russkoi Ameriki* (1997-99), and the emphasis on that subject in his several books on the history of Russian-American relations; and the ethnographer-historian, Svetlana Fedorova, ground-breaking research on the native populations of Alaska and California, cited in its original Russian edition of 1971 in Grinev's bibliography, though failed to include the important English translation of the Fedorova book by Richard Pierce in his Limestone Press edition of 1973.

This book of Andrei Grinev's, who teaches at the Peter the Great Technical University of St Petersburg, follows his impressive study of the Tlingit native Americans who live along the southern coastal area around the future Russian capital of Sitka: *The Tlingit Indians in Russian America, 1741-1867* (2005), also translated by Bland, who is a research associate at a museum at the University of Oregon, and is published by the same university press. Both books were preceded by Russian editions published in 1991 and 2015, respectively. They join Alexander Petrov's comparable works on the early 19th century founding of the Russian-America Company.

Grinev's painstaking examination follows the course of Russian exploration and exploitation of the fur animal and human resources of the territory from its discovery by the Chirikov-Bering expedition of 1741 until the chartering of the Russian America Company in 1799 by the imperial government as a means of controlling its new-found empire. The details, derived from little known archival

sources throughout Russia in geographic and population is immense, but the author leaves the reader with little guidance in the way of maps. One can trust Grinev's claim that both the natives and their Russian intruders for many years persisted in the belief that a more hospitable land area existed somewhere south of Kodiak Island. It was at last found at some distance—the Hawaiian Islands.

Relations between Russian hunter artels (companies of *promyshlenniki*) and among the various natives, especially the Kodiak and Aleuts, who resented Russian intrusion, were never very good, mostly because of growing impoverishment and exploitation that was often reduced to mass killing and enslavement. Grinev is adept at describing the atrocities that occurred in the process of Russian extraction of fur-bearing riches from the area, especially the sea otter that found profitable markets in China and elsewhere. He records a number of specific expeditions and the impressive number of monetary rewards regardless of shipwrecks and regular loss of life involved with the competition finally settled down to a struggle between the “Lebedev men” and the “Shelikov men” in the quest to gain the favor of the far away St. Petersburg government's support for permanent Russian settlements in the territory.

To me, two terms stand out that Grinev uses in the text to help explain the economic, cultural, and social relationships among the native populations and between them and the *promyshlenniki*, which by the end of the century included other foreigners besides Russians, such as the Englishman James Shields. The first is the *baidarki*, which were oared vessels or longboats used especially by Aleuts for transport of people and cargoes between islands and along coasts and, of course, for hunting; the frames were covered with sealskins on the sides and even over the top for durability through the stormy seas often prevalent in the area, and were soon adopted by the Russians as more practical for the same purposes, as fragile sailing ships were used more often for exploration. The other term that even Grinev finds difficult to fully explain: *amanaty*, which is somehow of Arab origin. It is the taking of hostages or prisoners permanently, or for negotiated periods of time, to insure peace, exact bribes, or gain favors. This was also employed by the *promyshlenniki*, for example, to secure payments of tribute to the Russian crown.

In summary, Grinev provides new insights about a fascinating chapter in Russian-American Indian relations with Richard Bland's accurate, if stodgy translation in its support. Can we expect more to come? Let us hope so.

Norman Saul

Professor Emeritus of History University of Kansas

Field Notes

Museum of Russian Impressionism (Moscow), “Other Shores: Russian Art in New York, 1924”

The exhibition project “Other Shores: Russian Art in New York, 1924” will be held in the Museum of Russian Impressionism (Moscow) from September 16th, 2021 to January 16, 2022.

This exhibition will be a result of the research project dedicated to the Russian Art Exhibition in New York in 1924. That was an extraordinary event because of its scale: more than 100 Russian artists and more than 1,000 pieces of art were displayed there. In addition, it was an important historical occasion in the context of the USSR foreign policy and relations between USSR and USA. We would like to tell our visitors how this exhibition was organized and what kinds of art were exhibited and bought by collectors in the USA. By the opening of the exhibition, a bilingual catalogue will be published, which will include not only the articles of Russian and American scientists, but also lots of images and photos. <http://www.rusimp.su/en/about>

Hall Center for the Humanities – University of Kansas

The Hall Center for the Humanities and the Center for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Kansas will be sponsoring a series of lectures on “Cold War in the Heartland” in March and April. It includes a number of familiar speakers, and they will be available via Zoom. Please check by e-mail to crees@ku.edu.

It will be kicked off by Erik Scott (History KU) with “Cold War in the Heartland” on March 4 (3:30 - 5:00) and continue with Alexis Peri (Boston University) on March 18 3:30-5:00 with “From Russia (and Kansas) with Love: the Cold War Friendships of Soviet and American Women”, followed by the following: David Engerman (Yale University), April 1, same time; “In Search of the Global Cold War”; Victoria Zhuravleva (Russian State University for the Humanities), April 15 (12:00-1:30) “How Russia and America’s ‘Cold War of

Images' Ended and Began Again"; and Ivan Kurilla (European University of St. Petersburg), April 27 (12:00 - 1:30 "Necessary Rivals? The Cold War and its Aftermath in Russia and the United States."

IN MEMORIAM

Gennadii Petrovich Kuropiatnik (1924-2019)

We learned recently of the death in December of Gennady (Gennadii Petrovich) Kuropiatnik (1924-2019) one of the Russian Academy's pre-eminent scholars in American history and the history of Russian-American relations of the 19th century. He was a close friend and supporter of his younger colleague, Nikolai Bolkhovitinov (1930-2008) in leading the Center of North American Studies of the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences through *glasnost* and *perestroika* of the Gorbachev years. Both had Ukrainian connections, Bolkhovitinov's with Simferopol in Crimea, and Kuropiatnik was born and raised in the Poltava region. And both became distinguished scholars of American history and Russian-American relations in Moscow, despite obstacles. Unfortunately, Gennady suffered from diabetes in later life, lost both legs to the ailment, and had become understandably something of a recluse in recent years. Still, he managed to publish in 2009 a major book on the American Civil War.

He and his wife Vera (from St. Petersburg) had a very nice commodious apartment overlooking Sokolniki Park in Moscow: nothing but silver birches to be seen from it, and an invitation to dinner would usually be preceded by a "stroll in the park." This was followed by a multi-course meal. I know others who would echo the sentiment that "I have never eaten better in Russia than at the Kuropiatniks." Gennady and Vera were superb hosts and cooks.

A student of the English language, Kuropiatnik received a bump start as an Americanist by an assignment to the Soviet delegation to the United Nations, in the immediate post-World War II years, where he perfected his spoken English. More than most Soviet specialists, he was comfortable in speaking before university audiences on the American Civil War as the "Second American Revolution," the topic of an early book (1961). Actually his first book was the somewhat Cold Warish *The Seizure of the Hawaiian Islands by the USA (1958)*, but it was still interesting reading. One of his most important efforts, however, was in weaving together American foreign and domestic policies for the Reconstruction years, 1867-1881 (1981); this was later expanded to 1918 to cover the war and revolution (1997). He was also the contributor of many articles to *Amerikanskii Ezhegodnik* and other periodicals. At least one of them was published in English translation: "Russians in the United States: Social, Cultural, and Scientific Contacts in the 1870s" in *Russian-American Dialogue on Cultural Relations, 1776-1814* (University of Missouri Press, 1997).

Norman Saul

Vladimir Pozniakov (1945-2021)

We were saddened to learn of the death in early January of Vladimir Pozniakov, a dear friend of many American historians who knew him from their involvements in conferences, and research programs in Russia and the United States. Committed to the cause of friendship and cooperative study between the two countries, he aided the work of many scholars of both countries in their pursuits of common goals. Vladimir was born officially in Murmansk in the Russian far north, where his father (also Vladimir) was working as a mining engineer during the Second World War. Actually, his mother made the arduous trip south to war-torn Leningrad, where he was born in a foundling hospital on Vasilovskii Ostrov. He began his academic studies at Leningrad State University, but they were interrupted by his involvement in early “free speech” movements in the city.

Fortunately, Pozniakov was able to resume his studies at Moscow State University (GUM), where he benefitted from the guidance of historians of the Department of American history, under the leadership of Nikolai Sivachev (1934-1983), graduating in 1976. He then entered the kandidat program, which he completed in 1992. Meanwhile he gained much experience in shepherding delegations of American historians on the academic exchanges that were gaining momentum due to easing, and then the ending, of the Cold War. Fluent in English and respected for his skills at maneuvering through the restrictions presented visitors by Soviet and Russian bureaucracy and for the support he received from colleagues at the Institute of General History of the Academy of Sciences. He thus became a reliable guide for making foreign scholars feel at ease in the often hostile environment they faced in Russia. Pozniakov also taught and conducted research in the United States on a number of occasions, especially on his area of expertise: early Soviet intelligence operations in the United States. For example, in the spring of 2000 he taught a regular advance course in Russian history in Russian at the University of Kansas in a special program devoted to “language across the curriculum.”

Vladimir and his wife, Tatiana, who was a member of the Institute of Russian Literature of the Academy, and who preceded him in death by a few months, were gracious hosts at their apartment overlooking much of central Moscow—and abroad. He was fond of Samuel Adams beer, Kentucky bourbon, Weaver’s department store in downtown Lawrence, Kansas, and, especially, summertime cruises on many of Russian rivers with Tatiana. Besides many articles and conference papers, his major work was on his area of expertise, *Sovetskaia pazvedka v Amerike 1919-1941 [Soviet Intelligence in America]* (Moscow: mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2005), 505 pp.

Several of his close associates at the Center for North American Studies of the institute also preceded him in death: Grigory Sevostianov (1916-2013), Nikolai Bolkhovitinov (1930-2008), Gennady Kuropiatnik (1924-2019), and Robert Ivanov (1925-2003). The many Americans who came to appreciate his knowledge and skills are a who’s who of American-Russian studies and include, most of those, both Americans and Russians, affiliated with this journal.

A Polenov Mystery

Many of you I know have had similar experiences in that research finished and done with never quite goes away. A Charles R. Crane episode occurred with me recently. In late March I received an e-mail from a Russian art historian who was visiting New York in search of missing paintings by Vasily Polenov (1844-1927) of the *peredvizhniki* (wanderers) school. She had discovered evidence that Crane had purchased six large Polenov paintings of a series called “Life of Christ” at a Russian art auction in New York in 1924, and she had been referred to me and my book on Crane by the curator of the Bakhmeteff Archive at Columbia University, which was, of course, closed due to the pandemic. I had a vague idea of the importance of Polenov but had no knowledge of Crane’s connection with him or of the New York sale. I had not seen any references to these in the Crane papers in the Bakhmeteff archive. So I referred the art historian to Tom Crane, a grandson, who had often come up with Crane miscellanea from a closet or somewhere, while I was doing research for the book, *The Life and Times of Charles R. Crane, 1858-1939* (2013).

Tom was equally in the dark as to the whereabouts of the Polenov paintings but knew, as I did, that his grandfather was often haphazard about keeping records, but he also knew that his grandfather was quite interested in promoting Slavic artists such as Vasily Vereshchagin and Alphonse Mucha. But he passed the query on to other family members. And two of the Polenov paintings showed up. The art historian reported last week that it turned out that Crane and given these to his granddaughter, Bruce Crane, who had subsequently married a Fisher and her son Fred Fisher remembered that his mother, now deceased, had donated them to an Episcopal church in Richmond, Virginia, where they were currently displayed. Bruce Crane Fisher and her son were the heirs to Westover Plantation on the James River that Charles Crane had purchased for his son Richard after he completed his tour as the first American minister to Czechoslovakia. (It was also where Crane pastured his prize Arabian horses that King Ibn Saud had given him for Crane’s discovery of oil on his land—though he was really looking for water.)

It only took me a few minutes to discover the reason for this awakened interest in Crane’s Polenov paintings. A brief internet search revealed that two comparable Polenovs had sold not long ago in London for over \$5,000,000 each. A mystery remains: where are the other four paintings by Polenov that Crane purchased back in 1924?

Norman Saul

Americans in Revolutionary Russia

EDITORS

Norman E. Saul and William Benton Whisenhunt

Americans in Revolutionary Russia is an exciting new series of republications of books by American eyewitnesses in Russia during the turbulent Russian Revolutionary Era (1914–21). The men and women who wrote these accounts left a rich treasure of insights on a kaleidoscopic range of issues such as politics, ethnic identity, military, war, travel, and much more, offering readers a first-hand view of a tumultuous, complex, and controversial era. Providing a broad range of American perspectives, the series accompanies each account with an expert introduction and annotation by a leading scholar in order to make the work accessible to the modern reader.

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