The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

Department of French

TRANSLATING RUSSIA FOR THE FRENCH IMAGINATION, 1856-1894

A Thesis in

French

by

Nanci Christine Brookes

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December 2004
The thesis of Nanci Christine Brookes has been reviewed and approved* by the following:

Willa Z. Silverman  
Associate Professor of French and Jewish Studies  
Thesis Advisor  
Chair of Committee

Vera Mark  
Assistant Professor of French and Linguistics

Allan Stockl  
Professor of French and Comparative Literature

Adrian J. Wanner  
Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and Comparative Literature

Bénédicte Monicat  
Associate Professor of French and Women's Studies  
Special Signatory

Thomas A. Hale  
Liberal Arts Professor of African, French, and Comparative Literature  
Head of the Department of French

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.
ABSTRACT

Franco-Russian relations in the nineteenth century have been the subject of many studies on both sides of the Atlantic. Though the periods surrounding Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 and the Crimean War have been studied in detail, the period between the end of the Crimean War (1856) and the beginning of the Franco-Russian alliance (1894) is rarely or summarily treated. This time span, however, marked a critical transition in Franco-Russian relations, as well as changes in French national identity as France passed from the Second Empire to the Third Republic.

This dissertation is a study of France’s print culture representations of Russia—with Russia functioning as a prism of sorts through which to see France—that bring to light aspects of France’s construction of itself. This study aims therefore to define how France constructed various notions of itself by examining evidence of cultural relationships between France and Russia during a crucial period for the development of French national identity, the second half of the nineteenth century. Overarching concepts in the study are the notions of cultural translation, both literal and figurative, as the French encountered Russian culture and attempted to “translate” it into a more comprehensible French idiom in words or images, as well as the idea of Russia as a borderland.

Among the types of representations the study considers are Russian literature in translation, French travel literature, French children’s literature set in Russia, advertisements, and caricature. To explore the varied and changing French perspectives on Russia during the second half of the nineteenth century, I rely on approaches and methods in cultural history and cultural studies (border studies in particular), but also turn to sociology of culture and semiotics.
The study’s importance lies primarily in its examination of French constructions of national identity, manifested in a pseudo-colonial discourse that emerged from some French representations of Russia. The French made assessments about Russia similar to those France formulated about its own colonies. During a period of rapid expansion of the French colonial empire, this treatment of Russia by the French points to a globalizing colonialist attitude that was not restricted to its colonies, but which pervaded French opinions about other countries with which it came into contact, Russia among them. However, as France moved towards its alliance with Russia in 1894, this discourse was modified. After the Second Empire, France looked at Russia increasingly as its partner against a unified Germany and softened its past positions, concentrating on the exotic and enchanting aspects of the country. The French attitudes towards Russia revealed in print culture elucidate the tensions within France over its own unstable identity at home and in an increasingly divided Europe.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank first my advisor, Willa Z. Silverman, for her faith in my work at Penn State and for her gentle nudging and support throughout this project. I would also like to thank my committee members—Vera Mark, Bénédicte Monicat, Allan Stoekl, Adrian J. Wanner—for their valuable counsel and careful consideration of my ideas during the dissertation years and even before.

I want to recognize as well several professors in the Department of French and elsewhere who have also helped shape my ideas and this project over the years: Barbara Bullock, Kathryn Grossman, Thomas Hale, Julia Simon, Jean-Claude Vuillemin, and Catherine Wanner. I am indebted furthermore to Penn State’s College of Liberal Arts Research and Graduate Studies Office for a dissertation support grant and travel grants from the Department of French that enabled me to travel to Paris to do research. In addition, a special word of thanks goes to the archivists, magasiniers, and photographers at the Archives de Paris, the Institut Mémoires de l’édition contemporaine, and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France for their help and excellent reproductions of materials I requested.

Thanks to the following advice-givers, supporters, and friends at Penn State and beyond who indulged and even encouraged my quirks while writing: Ruth Alonso, Aaron Bonsall, Dr. Matthieu Dalle, Dr. Gelio Ferreira, Michel Flores, Dr. Rachel Fuchs, Dr. Jean Goetinck, Claudia Gotea, Christian Hommel, Janae Huber, Jennifer Kavaney, Colleen Keys, Dr. Bernie Koloski, Laura Mier, Dr. Coco Mann-Morlet, Amelia May, Deirdre McAnally, Mary McLaughlin, Miroslav Micic, Nikola Milutinovic, Kory Olsen, Veronica Ostertag, Dr. Monique Oyallon, Jenny Oyallon-Koloski, Dr. Lynn Palermo, Ana de Prada, Fleur Prade,

Though so many are due thanks, the following deserve special words of gratitude: Kathleen Anderson—for fostering physical and mental well-being in both France and State College; Emilie Coltat—for friendship without limits; Dr. Roselyn Costantino and Carlos Ruiz—for welcoming me (and my work) into their home; Gustavo Godoy—for reminding me of little beauties and adventures beyond my desk; Hélène Gresso—for rooting me on, even at a distance; Dr. Andrew Liken—for advice over the telephone; Audra Merfeld—for giggles; Dr. David J. Proctor—for culinary adventures and quiet company in the final stretches of writing; Amanda Shoaf—for her quick wit and late-night musings; Dr. Monique Yaari—for endless hours of guidance; Mike the Mailman, Don the Mail Guy, and Holly—for practical jokes and smiles; Greg, Ken, and Tyler at City Lights Records—for providing musical inspiration; and, the Gephart and Schnucker families—for encouragement and warm welcomes, as always.

For my dear family—Mum, Dad, Jim, Max, Chelle, Lisa, and Paul—my efforts to thank you at best can barely express what I feel. Your love from warmer climes, as well as all your cheering on for these many years—I have cherished. For my niece, Kelsee, I thank you for understanding my work habits, especially when they cut into our time together.

Finally—to Richard—I thank you for your constant support and love, from Tucson to Moscow, from State College to Paris, and wherever else my work may lead me.
Chapter 1
Introduction: France and the Russian Enigma

“The tsar Pierre, au lieu de s’amuser à habiller des ours en singes, si Catherine II, au lieu de faire de la philosophie, si tous les souverains de la Russie enfin eussent voulu civiliser leur nation par elle-même, en cultivant lentement les admirables germes que Dieu avait déposés dans le cœur de ces peuples, les derniers venues de l’Asie, ils auraient moins ébloui l’Europe, mais ils eussent acquis une gloire plus durable et plus universelle. . . . Mais à présent que cette nation a déraillé sur la grande voie de la civilisation, nul homme ne peut lui faire reprendre sa ligne. Dieu seul sait où il l’attend: voilà ce que je pressentais à Pétersbourg, et ce que je vois clairement à Moscou’’ (qtd. in De Grève 1221-22).

The Marquis de Custine, La Russie en 1839 (1843)

In 2002, acclaimed Russian director Alexander Sokurov released Russian Ark, an official selection for the Cannes Film Festival 2002. Though primarily an artful eulogy to Saint Petersburg’s Hermitage and its history, the film’s main character, “Stranger,” spends much of the film contemplating Russia’s relationship to Europe, discussing its rulers, its art, and its history. The “Stranger,” as attentive viewers later learn, is in fact the Marquis de Custine, one of France’s most famous nineteenth-century visitors to Russia. Custine’s travel account, La Russie en 1839, was a tremendous success with French and European readers after its publication in 1843. The account, a description of the marquis’ time in Russia, is filled with judgments about the nature of Russia and Russian civilization.¹ With his

¹ Jacques Chupeau gives an excellent summary of Custine’s work: “Custine fait partager à ses lecteurs un sentiment grandissant de malaise à mesure que se découvre le vrai visage de la Russie: une société sous surveillance, où la défiance et la crainte ont détruit le naturel et la sincérité; un peuple exposé aux coups et subissant avec une résignation une brutalité dont personne ne s’émeut; une administration taillonnée et corrompue; une religion dépendante du pouvoir, qui enseigne à s’incliner devant la force et contribue moins à
account’s succès de scandale, as one prominent scholar of nineteenth-century Franco-Russian cultural relations put it, “toute l’Europe se mit à réfléchir sur lénigme russe” (Cadot, La Russie dans la vie intellectuelle 257).

What precisely was the nineteenth-century “Russian enigma?” France’s relationship to distant Russia during the nineteenth century had—at best—been tenuous before the publication of La Russie en 1839. Napoleon’s megalomaniacal dreams of empire began to end during his catastrophic 1812 march on Moscow from which approximately only 10,000 of 610,000 soldiers of his Grande Armée returned home. The harsh winter conditions, as well as a systematic scorched earth policy practiced by the Russians, devastated Napoleon’s forces. 1812 left a lasting impression on the French: memories of an unforgiving winter, tens of thousands dead, and the downfall of Europe’s strongest military power.

This experience was the beginning of the articulation of Russia’s puzzling status within the French imagination. By 1814 the Russian and Austrian armies invaded France, with Russian troops stationed in post-Napoleonic Paris, an event that further added to France’s ideas about Russia. A far cry from the extraordinary climatological and military forces unleashed in Russia on the Grande Armée, the Russian occupation of Paris—a city that had not been occupied by foreign soldiers for over four centuries—proved quite the opposite. The Russian soldiers’ behavior was “so exemplary, and the charm and European cultivation of their officers so compelling, that they soon could claim an undeniable popularity in the capital of their former foes” (Malia 87). From the violence of 1812 to the

l’élévation des âmes qu’à l’asservissement des esprits; un pouvoir tyrannique enfin, qui a fait de l’exil en Sibérie le plus sûr moyen de juguler les veilléités d’indépendance, notamment dans les territoires polonais. . . .” (10).
respectable comportment of Russia’s Cossack armies on the Champs-Elysées in 1814, the Russian enigma was posed for the nineteenth century.

Russia’s status within Europe and in relation to France changed significantly with the 1814-1815 Congress of Vienna. To create a balance of power within Europe, Europe’s strongest nations (Britain, France, Russia, Prussia, and Austria) determined territorial divisions within the continent to establish an intra-European equilibrium. Russia’s geographic position within Europe was officially established after the declaration of the Ural Mountains as the boundary between Europe and Asia. Geographically, Russia, or at least part of it, was European. While Western Russia was included in the Congress of Vienna’s geographical definition of Europe, it is important to note that during much of the nineteenth century the Russian Empire stretched from today’s Baltic States, to Central Asia and Siberia, out to the Pacific, and across to Alaska. Russia was more than just European.

Even with this official inclusion in a geographic Europe, Russia’s revered status within Western Europe eroded after the Congress of Vienna, due in part to its post-1815 military status, uprisings at home, and its relationship with Poland. By quashing Napoleon, Russian military power, with an army of approximately one million soldiers, was “potentially [the] most aggressive power on the European continent” (Malia 89). Henceforth, Russia assumed the title “gendarme of Europe,” policing, and frightening, the newly configured continent until its defeat in 1856 during the Crimean War. In addition, an 1825 rebellion by Russian army officers in Saint Petersburg contributed to Russia’s menacing stance as viewed by Europe. The officers, dissatisfied with Alexander I’s rule after 1812, took advantage of

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2 Russian geographers had suggested this boundary for the Asia-Europe border already in the eighteenth century (Malia 89).
the tsar’s unexpected death in December of 1825 to wrest power from the monarchy. After initial attempts at peaceful negotiations, the new tsar Nicolas I brought troops to fire on the protesters, killing sixty to seventy on Senate Square (Riazanovsky 319-22). The insurgents, or “Decembrists,” were past heroes of the Napoleonic Wars. Their death at the hands of Nicolas I’s troops only underlined the Russian monarchy’s autocratic and unforgiving nature (Malia 92). Finally, the brutal clampdown by the Russian empire on Poland—unwillingly a part of Russia since the Congress of Vienna—contributed to a deepening feeling within Western Europe that Russia was a hazard for the entire continent. Inspired by the revolutionary events in France, Polish troops in Warsaw were able to defeat the Russians stationed in Poland. Russia fought back, won, and established harsh retaliatory policies against Poland by secularizing the Catholic Church, limiting the freedom of Polish universities, revoking the political and military autonomy established in 1815, and sending the rebels to labor camps in Siberia (Malia 92; Riazanovsky 331-32). With these actions, Poland—a Roman Catholic country—was seen with sympathy in France with Russia looking more like “an ignoble executioner” (Malia 93). By the time of the publication of Custine’s book in 1843, Russia’s status as a full-fledged member of Europe was consistently under question. Had Russia, as Custine put it, “derailed on the path to civilization?”
“Civilization?”

Such a question, indeed, leads only to more thorny ones: What is Europe? What is or is not European? What is civilization? What is Russia? These highly problematic questions about Russia and Europe’s so-called natures reveal, however, more about the nations that pose them. If French representations of Russia designated Russia as “civilized,” “barbarian,” or somewhere in between, what do those perspectives divulge about France’s posture in relation to Russia? In judging Russia, the French take positions about France’s own relationship to questions of civilization. An examination of French perspectives of Russia, in short, is at the same time inherently a study on the formulation of French—not just Russian—national identity. The construction of a French national identity after 1789 was necessary after the erosion of the Old Regime’s social and political values. As Benedict Anderson has suggested, this process of imagining a nation-state was facilitated by the development of print capitalism and vernacular languages of state: “the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation” (46). The creation of such an identity was formed in a print culture that debated national identity, as with the debate over the French Revolution:

[O]nce [the French Revolution] had occurred, it entered the accumulating memory of print. The overwhelming and bewildering concatenation of

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3 It is important to note here that the concept “Russia” itself is problematic as an object. Which Russia? European Russia? Asian Russia? The area where only ethnic Russians live? For the purposes of this study, “Russia” is defined here by the way in which the objects have defined it. It is therefore more or less the geographical Russian Empire during the second half of the nineteenth century—including representations of Russia from Gautier’s Saint Petersburg in the west, Madame Ujfalvy-Bourdon’s Tomsk, and Jules Verne’s Irkutsk in Siberia.
events experienced by its makers and its victims became a “thing”—and with its own name: The French Revolution. Like a vast shapeless rock worn to a rounded boulder by countless drops of water, the experience was shaped by millions of printed words into a “concept” on the printed page, and, in due course, into a model. Why “it” broke out, what “it” aimed for, why “it” succeeded or failed, became subjects for endless polemics on the part of friends and foe: but of its “it-ness,” as it were, no one ever after had much doubt. (80-81)

Part of French identity was thus explored and formed in the imagined space created around the history of the events surrounding 1789. The printed word allowed for the discussion, debate, and imagination surrounding the impact of the French Revolution, one of the founding events in the establishment of France as a modern nation. Likewise, print culture also aided in constructing images of foreign nations’ identities that often also reflected more about the culture producing images of foreign nations. Therefore, a study of France’s representations of Russia—with Russia functioning as a prism of sorts through which to see France—brings to light aspects of France’s construction of itself. This study aims therefore to define how France imagined itself by examining evidence of the cultural relationship between France and Russia during a period that was crucial for the development of French national identity, the second half of the nineteenth century.
Russia in French Print Culture, 1856-1894

To examine these phenomena, I study changes in French print culture representations of Russia and Russians from the end of the Crimean War in 1856 to the Franco-Russian alliance in 1894 as a means of assessing the evolution of both public and private perceptions of Russia in France, and, ultimately, of France's image of itself and its role internationally in the second half of the nineteenth century. Overarching concepts in my study are the notions of cultural translation, both literal and figurative, as the French encountered Russian culture and attempted to “translate” it into a more comprehensible French idiom in words or images, as well as the idea of Russia as a borderland. Among the types of representations my study will consider are Russian literature in translation, French travel literature, French children’s literature set in Russia, advertisements, and caricature.

Though many researchers have examined nineteenth-century Franco-Russian relations, the period between the end of the Crimean War and the beginning of the Franco-Russian alliance is rarely or summarily treated. The few studies of this period have tended to focus on diplomatic relations and well-known writers. Yet this period marks a critical transition in Franco-Russian relations, as well as changes in French national identity as France passed from the Second Empire to the Third Republic. After 1856, the French began to reevaluate a former redoubtable military opponent. With the end of the war, and, consequently, of Russia’s role as Europe’s major military force, the West was better able to have “the serenity of spirit to understand [Russia] more” (Malia 167). After 1856, some French travelers like Alexandre Dumas and Théophile Gautier explored Russia under its new progressive tsar, Alexander II. However, even with Alexander II’s 1861 abolition of serfdom, in 1863 more tensions with Russia (and Prussia) over the question of Poland began.
to sour Franco-Russian relations again. This period was marked by a “refroidissement, entre peuples et entre gouvernements, après le mouvement de sympathie qui avait suivi la guerre de Crimée” (De Grève xxxiv). Despite relatively little French interest in Russia between the end of the Crimean War and 1870, after the humiliation of 1870, France turned to Russia as an ally in the face of a united Germany. From this point onward, French interest in Russia solidified. This had grown so much during the decade after the Franco-Prussian War that by the 1880s French readers went wild over publications of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, as well as Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu’s three-volume history of Russia, *L’Empire des tsars* (1881-1889). It is certain that by 1894, the French had reformulated their opinions about Russia. The period between 1856 and the Franco-Russian alliance clearly merits closer scrutiny to understand the significant change in relations between the two countries.

This inquiry builds on several previous studies by Michel Cadot, Charles Corbet, and Martin Malia. Malia’s recent historical study, *Russia Under Western Eyes: From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum* (1999), treats Western Europe’s relationship to Russia from Peter the Great to Boris Yeltsin (1682-1999). Though Malia does not examine Franco-Russian relations exclusively in his book, he does make some important suggestions about Western Europe’s changing relationship to Russia. Tracing three centuries of Russian international relations, he asserts that as Russia began to follow in Western Europe’s political and cultural paths, it was more readily accepted by Western Europe as “European” instead of “Asian.” For example, Malia states that when Russia, formerly the “gendarme” of Europe, lost its international military strength at the end of the Crimean War and as

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4 Marie-Pierre Rey’s study on Franco-Russian relations, *Le Dilemme russe: La Russie et l’Europe occidentale d’Ivan le Terrible à Boris Eltsine* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002) is the most recent study to examine perceptions of Russia in Western Europe. Her work summarizes major events in both Western Europe and Russia, and the interaction between the two entities.
Alexander II began to make the Great Reforms (including the abolition of serfdom and the restructuring of the Russian legal system), Russia left behind its troubled reputation and moved towards a more respected status in Western Europe. Malia summarizes the consequences of Russia’s defeat in the Crimean War and the impact of the reforms in the following manner: “To the majority of Westerners, therefore, Russia appeared no longer as an alien world but rather as an extension of their own civilization, though still in an immature stage of development. Consequently, just as the decline of Russia’s military power after the Crimean War permitted increased understanding, so too the liberalization of her internal order further diminished fear” (175). Therefore, as Russia moved into the twentieth century, it was seen as more closely in step with Western European ideals, and for that reason, more “civilized.”

While I agree with many of Malia’s interpretations of Western-European and Russian relations, I broaden the scope of objects and explore more thoroughly Russia under French eyes during the second half of the nineteenth century. Malia does briefly survey major figures in Franco-Russian literary relations (Ivan Turgenev, Alexandre Dumas père, Prosper Mérimée, Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé), but given the scope of his study, he is not able to examine fully their roles in helping to bring Russian literature to French readers during the last half of the nineteenth century. Additionally, he does not take into account the range of non-literary representations of Russia within French culture (advertisement, caricature, press) that help elucidate French attitudes towards Russia. Finally, in contrast to this study’s generalized and comparative approach to Western European relations with Russia, my research considers France’s unique vision of Russia and its import for France’s self-construction.
Michel Cadot’s 1967 *La Russie dans la vie intellectuelle française (1839-56)* is the most in-depth study of Franco-Russian relations during the nineteenth century and has motivated much of my study. Combining approaches from comparative literature, intellectual history, history of the book, cultural history, and sociology of culture, Cadot expertly examines the complex Franco-Russian relations during the fifteen year period between the writing of the Marquis de Custine’s *La Russie en 1839* and the end of the Crimean War. A cultural and intellectual history of relations between the two countries, *La Russie dans la vie intellectuelle française* is “[une] histoire de la perception de la Russie, de celle des médiateurs entre les deux pays et de celle des publications sur cette grande nation slave” (Liechtenhan, *L’Ours et le coq* 9). Cadot’s study takes into account Russians in Paris, French travelers in Russia, Custine’s *La Russie en 1839*, and, French understanding of contemporary Russia both at home and the country’s policies abroad. Though my research is limited to verbal and visual representations of Russia in French print culture, I expand upon Cadot’s work by demonstrating through different objects the multi-faceted and often conflicted French images of Russia during the last half of the nineteenth century, in the period after the one examined in his exceptional study.

Charles Corbet’s 1967 book, *À l’ère des nationalismes: L’opinion française face à l’inconnue russe (1799-1894)*, is a comprehensive study of nineteenth-century Franco-Russian relations. Corbet examines political history, intellectual exchanges, diplomatic and military relationships, some French travelers (the Marquis de Custine), and more briefly, Russian literature in translation. The study focuses on the opinions of a group of elites within France (politicians and other government functionaries, military specialists and well-known writers) and neglects other important elements of French culture (travel literature, children’s
literature, advertisement) that significantly helped define attitudes about Russia within France. My study questions some of Corbet’s interpretations of the relationships between the two countries, specifically his conclusion that Russian literature in translation was not popular after the Crimean War.

The study’s importance lies primarily in its examination of French constructions of national identity during the second half of the nineteenth century. As Claude Digeon has demonstrated in *La crise allemande de la pensée française* (1959), one country’s representations of another (in this last case, French representations of Germany following the Franco-Prussian War) can serve as an important barometer of changes within the country where such representations are produced. Since Russia sits on the edge of two worlds, Europe and Asia, its French representations often allude to distinctions between East and West, accompanied by judgments about civilization and culture, that are unstable and paradoxical. These frequently contradictory, cross-cultural discourses about Russia encountered in various forms of print culture produced in France and by the French demonstrate in part France’s transforming domestic and international situation. The concepts of nation in a wide range of texts dealing with Franco-Russian relations illuminate many social, political, cultural and intellectual matters critical to a more global understanding of France’s evolution between the Second Empire and the Third Republic. These include ideas of cultural superiority in everyday practices (food preparation, cleanliness, sleeping arrangements), government policies, and artistic production.

Additionally, in regard to the history of book/print culture, an analysis of the reception of Russia as a literary object and of Russian authors in translation reveals important changes in the French literary field during the second half of the nineteenth
century, including the changing roles of editor and author, new printing techniques, and the demand for new and varied literary products (travel literature, literature in translation, caricature, press) to satisfy a rapidly expanding readership.

Concerning Franco-Russian studies, there is currently no detailed analysis of how France and Russia conceived of one another during the period between the Crimean War and the beginning of the Franco-Russian alliance. This period, however, is a time of transition in Franco-Russian cultural relations. I trace this transition from France’s ignorance, even disdain, for Russian culture to its increasing, though wavering, fascination with the country, demonstrating a fundamental change in French perceptions of Russian culture, one rooted in the shifting political, social and economic climates of the two countries.

This study also offers new perspectives in its venture into contemporary cultural studies in the areas of post-colonial and global studies, Orientalism, and border studies. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* serves as the starting point of my discussion of Russia and Orientalism. Said contends that the West constructed the idea of the Orient in its quest for more territorial, economic, and cultural power, thereby creating discourses of “a collective notion identifying ‘us’ Europeans against all ‘those’ non-Europeans,” and “the idea of a European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures” (7). Relying on this discourse and its subsequent impact on the West, Westerners were able to fix “things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline, or governing” (41). Following Said, I explore notions of the Orient and the discourse of Orientalism beyond the Middle and Far East, beyond the West’s former colonies. Though Said does recognize at times Russia’s position as estranged from the West
(most notably under Soviet rule), he does not integrate into his work examples of Western constructions of Russia, though clearly—as seen already in the Custine epigraph at the beginning of this introduction—the nation was (and still is, on occasion) identified as being “Asian” or “Oriental.” Following Lisa Lowe’s excellent challenge to Said and other researchers in *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (1994), I therefore expand Said’s definition of the Orient and Orientalism.

Lowe tests Said’s postulation that Orientalism “monolithically constructs the Orient as the Other of the Occident” (iv). She pursues instead another version of Orientalism that is “heterogeneous and contradictory,” “an uneven matrix of orientalist situations across different cultural and historical sites” where “each of these orientalisms is internally complex and unstable” (5). By undoing the idea of a homogeneous, singular discourse belonging to Orientalism, scholars can appreciate the phenomenon’s lack of heterogeneity in that Orientalisms serve to “reflect a range of national issues: at one time the race for colonies, at others class conflicts and workers’ revolts, changes in sexual roles during a time of rapid urbanization and industrialization, or postcolonial crises of national identity” (8). In a study that examines France’s visions of Russia during the second half of the nineteenth century, this expanded definition helps not only to elucidate a deeper understanding of Orientalism’s multivalent nature, but also to further expose how and why French conceptions about Russia were often contradictory and vague.

In examining French representations of Russia, I also rethink the pairings East/West, Asia/Europe, and civilized/barbarian. Here again, Lowe’s critique of Said proves useful. Her ultimate goal in the study is “to challenge and resist the binary logic of otherness by historicizing the critical strategy of identifying otherness as a discursive mode
of production itself” (29). Lowe’s study questions the very idea of alterity with its subsequent epistemological divisions between an “us” and a “them.” Her perspectives offer a new way to grasp Russia’s unstable otherness in French representations. Given that Russia does not fit within the simple distinctions of East versus West, of Europe versus Asia, of a clear-cut otherness tout court, this is an essential cautionary note. By avoiding the temptation to “uphold the logic of the dualism as the means of explaining how a discourse expresses domination and subordination,” this study will better be able to explore the subtleties of French-Russian relations and constructions of national identity by endeavoring to avoid the limitations presented by the potentially polarizing terms often used in studies on alterity (7).

Since the representations of Russia in my study escape easy definition and containment within set geographical or cultural definitions, the field of border studies provides a critical lens through which to theorize. Though concerned primarily with the border regions between the United States and Mexico, its notions of “borderlands,” “the border individual,” and “cultural translation” are key to this study as well. Gloria Anzaldúa’s definition of the notion of “borderland” makes clear the relationship between border studies and a study of French-Russian or Western-Eastern European cultural relations:

The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower,

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5 Even by avoiding the limits of reductionary classifications, I am constrained to use these terms in my discussion of the topic at hand, in part because many of the objects examined use this terminology, but also because there is no other terminology with which to account for the irregularity of these terms without employing other words, like “Eurasia,” that in turn refer back to a polar dyad.
middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy. (n.p.)

Though current-day United States-Mexico and nineteenth-century French-Russian power relations are inherently different, Anzaldúa’s argument is still useful. Since borderlands exist “wherever two or more cultures edge other,” the field of border studies lends another entry point for a discussion of Franco-Russian relations. Since Russia, as well as many other nations, can be viewed as one large borderland—a country in which many cultures share the same nation and where geographical distinctions are blurred into one nation— theories from border studies indeed can help to further define Russia’s problematic identity in France.

When the “nature of Russia” is discussed by other nations in comparison to their own, their discussions are often framed by arbitrary divisions: “[b]orders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. . . . A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition” (Anzaldúa 3). Between 1856 and 1894, Russia is most certainly a “vague and undetermined place” in the eyes of those in France who describe it. In this study, Russia is represented as belonging to an “us” (France, Europe, or Western civilization), as well as belonging entirely to a “them” (the Orient, Asia, non-Western civilizations). If an area like Russia is indeed transitory and ambiguous in the eyes of those portraying it, how in fact do the French apprehend it? Or, as James Clifford also asks in regards to the idea of a borderland: “How translatable is this place/metaphor of crossing?” (37). Since I will designate Russia as a borderland in this study, as well as examine the role of individuals who cross the borders (literal or figurative) between France and Russia in
attempts to translate Russian culture to their compatriots, this study will hopefully broaden the current notion of borderland.

To explore the varied and changing French perspectives on Russia during the second half of the nineteenth century, I rely on approaches and methods in cultural history and cultural studies (border studies in particular), but will also turn to sociology of culture and semiotics. The heterogeneous nature of the study’s questions, objects, and the field of cultural history itself calls, I believe, for such multifaceted approaches.

The study fits within the greater context of cultural history, primarily utilizing its formulations by Roger Chartier and Robert Darnton. First, though the definition of cultural history is fluid and includes studies of diverse objects, I endeavor, as Roger Chartier states in his introduction to *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, “to note how. . . a specific social reality was created, how people conceived of it and how it was interpreted to others” (4). In a study about one culture’s perceptions about and constructions of another culture, Chartier and Said’s notions of representation prove useful. Representation is, in part “the operation of classification and delineation that produces the multiple intellectual configurations by which reality is constructed in a contradictory way by various groups” (Chartier 9). Said explains his understanding of representations as well in *Orientalism*: “[I]t needs to be made clear about cultural discourse and exchange within a culture that what is commonly circulated by it is not ‘truth’ but representations. . . .” (21). A concretization of what Michel Foucault calls a discourse in *Archéologie du savoir*, Said goes on to explain that representations “rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for their effects” (22). The representations of Russia included serve as case studies of how French imaginations constructed and attempted to understand Russia.
Furthermore, since representations “are always a product of the interests of the group that forged them,” a study of French representations (whether word or image, produced in France or consumed in France) of Russia and Russians also will help expose French motivations and interests in producing certain discourses about Russia (Chartier 5).

I also turn to Darnton’s notions of the communications circuits and networks to define the means by which representations of Russian and Russians were produced, circulated and appropriated by the French in his chapter “What is the History of Books” in *The Kiss of Lamourette* (112). These circuits and networks are comprehensive models that detail how print matter is created and disseminated within a given society. Most importantly for this study, the models implicitly take into account intermediaries in publishing such as translators and editors. By examining various forms of print matter distributed about Russia within France, I scrutinize the role of intermediary figures (such as Ivan Turgenev) who were instrumental in disseminating ideas about Russia within France. This method provides a closer look at the notion of “translation,” both of literary works (i.e., the work of Ivan Turgenev and Louis Viardot) and, in a more figurative sense, of verbal and visual images constructed by those intermediary “translators” of images for the French imagination.

In addition to methods from cultural history, I will draw on concepts from sociology of culture such as Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of the “literary field,” defined as “[les] espaces sociaux dans lesquels se trouvent situés les agents qui contribuent à produire les œuvres culturelles . . . [où] les relations objectives qui sont constitutives de la structure du champ et qui orientent les luttes visent à la conserver ou à la transformer” (4). By examining the power dynamics within the field and how agents with the field (writers, publishers, editors) work to gain cultural recognition and to earn a living, I ascertain why “Russia” was an
appealing new printed product for the French readership during the second half of the
nineteenth century. This not only aids in the analysis of the complications and successes of
Russian literature in translation in France, but also enables me a clarification of the role of
other forms of print culture in producing and circulating ideas about Russia within France.

To better comprehend the diverse representations included in this study—both word
and image—I read texts closely and situate them in the context of their production. In so
doing, my analyses demonstrate the importance of individual texts (and, on occasion,
individual authors) in the construction and circulation of discourses about Russia within
France. To borrow a term from Said, I look at the “strategic location” and “strategic
formation” of the texts I use in this study:

[3] strategic location, which is a way of describing the author’s position is a text
with regard to the . . . material he writes about, and strategic formation,
which is a way of analyzing the relationship between texts and the way in
which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass,
density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture
at large. (20)

In short, I hope to answer the following questions relative to the discursive formation of the
idea of Russia in France in the last half of the nineteenth century: How is Russia as an
object approached and narrated by these texts? How are the representations structured?
How is the reader of these representations included in the text? How do the texts refer to
each other? What images are circulated, re-circulated, modified, or challenged? In the end,
what sort of knowledge do these texts create and reinforce about Russia within France?
Finally, I look at these objects as “cultural texts” to be deconstructed in the sense that Roland Barthes describes in *Mythologies* (1957). By picking apart the discourses behind the myths of Russia in France, I demonstrate how France was able to “translate” an unknown Russia into something more comprehensible. Do the myths about Russia involve the rhetorical figure of “privation d'Histoire,” denying any previous history or story to the idea of Russia represented in France (260)? Or do they belong to another rhetorical classification, “identification,” where Russia cannot be conceived of as “Other” and is instead transformed into something more recognizable (260-1)?

How precisely does one begin to examine all the above questions and objects during a time period so vast? First, the project cannot claim by any means to be a comprehensive study of all representations created and circulated in France during the time period in question. I have instead chosen to examine key moments, figures, and works to give broad perspectives. The choice of objects reflects my desire to offer a wide-ranging vision of the extent to which Russia was present in French society, as well as the realization that such a study cannot offer a discussion of the entirety of the objects available. I have not, for example, taken into account different representations of Russia in the French press between 1856 and 1894, nor have I looked—as does Cadot or Corbet—at political and diplomatic representations in detail. In place of an all-inclusive study, I have chosen instead a selection of objects to examine again (in the case of Russian literature in translation and Russia in French children’s literature) or to examine for the first time (advertisement, caricature, some travel literature) those objects that other studies have left out. I have aimed at balancing the objects that are the products of cultural translators like Turgenev or the French travel writers like Carla Serena with those that amplify ideas about Russia already circulating in nineteenth-
century France, as in the case of Russia in French literature, advertisement, and caricature. By adopting a broad, but not comprehensive, approach to the examination of representations about Russia, the study demonstrates the extent to which certain visions were circulating in France, as well as to how these visions changed or contradicted each other.

I have arranged the chapters of this study according to subject matter for several reasons. First, given the diversity of objects utilized, I have aimed at a coherent discussion of each set of objects that treats their historical and generic specificities. I have also tried to examine each grouping of representations in a relatively chronological order. For example, the production of Russian literature in translation preceded the many travel accounts written in the 1860s and 1870s, just as travel literature about Russia preceded the penchant for novels set in Russia later in the century, such as Jules Verne’s *Michel Strogoff*. Certainly, these periods overlap and intertwine, but giving primacy to the order in which these objects came into circulation in France displays the gradual shift and growth of Russia as a topic within France. Finally, the chapters proceed from objects that have more limited audiences (Turgenev’s translations) to a broader audience (advertisement and caricature). This organizational strategy also reflects the fact that Russia’s presence (imaginary or other) expanded in France between 1856 and 1894.

The first chapter, on Russian literature in translation, explores the notion of a “cultural translator,” a term Trinh T. Minh-Ha has defined in her work as a cross-cultural filmmaker:

Translation which is interpellated by ideology and can never be objective or neutral, should here be understood in the wider sense of the term—as a
politics of constructing meaning. Whether you translate one language into another language, whether you narrate in your own words what you have understood from the other person, or whether you use this person directly on screen as a piece of ‘oral testimony’ to serve the direction of your film, you are dealing with cultural translation. (128)

How do figures like Ivan Turgenev, as well as French travel writers, construct meaning for French audiences? Do cultural translators act as cultural intermediaries in addition to being linguistic translators? If so, how do they choose what to translate for a new reading public?

The chapter concerns primarily Turgenev’s work in France from 1856 to 1883, from the beginning of his self-imposed exile in France to his death in Bougival. Additionally, I examine other translators such as Prosper Mérimée, their status within the French literary field, and the strategies they used to publish their translations and their publications.

The following chapter continues with the notion of cultural translation, examining travel accounts composed by French citizens. The travel accounts, written during the last half of the nineteenth century, comprise a great variety of authors and types of accounts, including both male and female writers and well-known and little-known authors. What attitudes are expressed in the travel accounts about both France and Russia? Though the accounts vary greatly in style, geography, experience and opinions about Russia and the Russians, they all demonstrate a growing curiosity about France’s relationship with Russia. The travel accounts also present certain French notions of civilization and culture when confronted with Russian “otherness” in language, behavior and customs. Furthermore, I take into account important distinctions between voyageurs and voyageuses who write about their experiences, differences that impact the images of Russia presented to French readers.
Expanding upon the types of books published in France about Russia, I concentrate next on two novels set in Russia, both of which belong to “la littérature d’enfance” or “littérature de jeunesse,” la Comtesse de Ségur’s *Le Général Dourakine* (1863) and Jules Verne’s *Michel Strogoff* (1876). These texts are both insider (*Le Général Dourakine*) and outsider (*Michel Strogoff*) cultural translations, with Ségur as a Russian living and writing in France and Verne as a French citizen recycling with citations from previously published travel accounts and creating additional images of Russia for a French audience. I study how Russia is presented to French readers. What visions of Russia do the novels challenge, reinforce, or introduce? I examine as well what roles these representations play in a genre meant to instruct as much as to please young French readers.

My study then turns more fully to representations of outsiders (representations from France by the French), beginning with Russia as an object in French advertisement. With the advent of more liberal economic policies both at home and internationally under Alexander II (1855-1881) and Alexander III (1881-1894), Russia opened towards French investment and businesses within its borders at the end of the nineteenth century. Soon, many products (cigarette paper and soap) were available to French consumers. How did French trademarks draw attention to these new products? What images of Russia did they make use of in this process? By examining all trademarks registered at the Tribunal de Commerce de la Seine between 1858 and 1894, I demonstrate that the products sold in France exploited Russia’s mystique in the French imagination, presenting images of snowy landscapes, ornate architecture, *muzhiki*, and wild animals. Here again I examine the types of images produced, the products they were intended to sell, and the reasons for Russia’s growing exoticism (and marketability) for French consumers.
The final chapter seeks to answer similar questions about outsider cultural translations as the previous chapter on advertisement, but will feature as objects caricatures taken from such publications as *Le Grelot*, *Le Triboulet*, and *Le Charivari* surrounding the Franco-Russian alliance of 1893-1894. By examining caricature produced in France about the coming together of two previously estranged nations, I articulate the significance of the “typing” of Russia and Russians. What do those images reveal about French attitudes towards Russia, especially in light of the growing strength of Germany, at the close of the period examined in this study?

**A Word on Cultural Translators....**

One final note regarding my own relationship to the study at hand, as it surely colors my conclusions. As the daughter of an American mother and a Canadian father who has lived in both the United States and Canada, as the product of Canada’s bilingual immersion program, as a long-time resident of Arizona in the borderlands of the Southwest, and, finally, as a professional in French culture studies who examines cross-cultural questions in the classroom as well as in research, I have been and remain a cultural translator of sorts myself. In many ways, thus, this research echoes many of my own struggles with functioning in the borderlands between nations, languages, and academic disciplines where frontier lines do indeed seem arbitrary, cumbersome, and restrictive. The positions I have taken in relation to this study are without a doubt influenced by my own perspectives, but I have hoped to be able—from many of my own experiences functioning in the “third nation” between the here
and there, between this language and that language, between one discipline and another—to better grasp the complexity and heterogeneity of a topic that resists borders and limits itself.\textsuperscript{6}

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\textsuperscript{6} I borrow the term “third nation” from the website of the creative cooperative Nortec Collective based out of Tijuana, Mexico. It is most known for its mixes of techno music (as filtered through the United States) and traditional forms of music of Northern Mexico designated as “música tejana,” “conunto,” or “música norteña.” “Tijuana, La Tercera Nación” is a term that the group uses to refer to Tijuana, the Mexican border city south of San Diego, and the topic for a large-scale, and cross-cultural creative project in Tijuana in June 2004. A description of “La Tercera Nación” sums up well the scope of any contemplation of borderlands, whatever they may be, and is a term that is apropos for the study at hand: “Búsqueda y encuentro de la riqueza, diversidad y síntesis creativa de la frontera”—“the search for and encounter with the risk, diversity and creative synthesis of the border” (par. 1).
Chapter 2

Translating Russian Literature and Culture: The Case of Ivan Turgenev

“Tourgénef était venu chez nous comme un missionnaire du génie russe; il prouvait, par son exemple, la haute valeur artistique de ce génie; le public d’Occident demeurait sceptique. Nos opinions sur la Russie était déterminées par une de ces formules faciles qu’on affectionne en France et sous lesquelles on écrase un pays comme un individu: ‘Nation pourrie avant d’être mûre,’ disions-nous, et cela répondait à tout” (xliii).

Eugène Melchior de Vogüé, Le Roman russe (1886)

From menacing, slave-like savages portrayed in the Marquis de Custine’s La Russie en 1839 (1843) to the artistic visionaries praised in Eugène Melchior de Vogüé’s Le Roman russe (1886), French representations of Russians changed dramatically during the second half of the nineteenth century. Though these representations of Russia varied often during this period, there was a growth in benevolent, though not altogether uncritical, characterizations of the Russian empire. What led to this change?

As noted in the introduction, many studies have proposed political explanations for this evolution on national and international levels. Others cite the influence of social, economic, and cultural factors such as the growth of transportation and tourism that facilitated the exchange of ideas and populations. The transition cannot be explained in terms of one single factor. Yet it is evident that the bi-lateral cultural contacts between the two countries grew in importance during the last half of the nineteenth century, most notably with the increased dialogue about Russian literature within France. Though these studies differ in the extent to which they explore cultural exchanges, common to all is the
recognition of the important role Ivan Turgenev—one of Russia’s major nineteenth-century writers—played in disseminating Russian literature in France through his work as a translator.

This chapter proposes to examine Turgenev’s presence within the French field of literary production and, more significantly, the extent to which his presence and translations contributed to a change in the way Russia was perceived in France—an influence other recent studies have not yet explored sufficiently. To understand the import of his role in this transition, the study takes into account the French visions of Russia that preceded Turgenev’s French publications. How did these previous representations impact Turgenev’s ability to enter into the French literary market? How did Turgenev begin and continue to publish in France’s then competitive publishing field, especially in light of his status as a non-Francophone foreigner? His work as a translator brings up other questions related most explicitly to the field of book history, but also to issues of representation and identity construction. What was he able to publish? What works did he (or others) choose to translate, and why? What impact did his work have on his readers? In short, how did Turgenev translate Russian literature and how did French readers respond to it? After exploring the circumstances surrounding the production and reception of Turgenev’s translations, the larger matter of the shifting representations of Russia in France that followed in the wake of Turgenev’s work will be considered. Finally, the importance of figures like Turgenev will be emphasized, both as linguistic intermediaries between two (or more) countries, but also as cultural translators—human filters through which various notions of a certain culture are (re)presented to another.
Custine’s Legacy

When Turgenev began publishing his translations in France, Russia was not entirely unknown to French readers. In fact, other works published in France treated France’s relationship to Russia. The ideas expressed about Russia in these works—in memoirs of Napoleon’s 1812 Russian campaign, Russia’s heavy-handed treatment of a rebellious Poland in the 1830s, or in the Marquis de Custine’s travelogue, *La Russie en 1839*—most often depicted a vision of a progressive, enlightened France, in contrast to a backwards Russia. To grasp the full complexity of Turgenev’s impact on cultural knowledge of Russia in France, it is important to explore representations about Russia circulating in France prior to his translations of Russian works.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Russia’s lot as Europe’s aberrant cousin was unenviable. After Napoleon’s disastrous 1812 Russian campaign, the Russians were left with a bad reputation, one that postulated that Russia’s origins were more likely found in the “barbaric” East than in the “civilized” West. A curt assessment attributed to Napoleon sums up the French attitude vis-à-vis Russia at the time: “Grattez le Russe et vous trouverez un Tartare” (qtd. in Gross 55). At the same time, Madame de Staël expressed her disquietude about the nation while echoing an earlier statement by Denis Diderot in *Dix années d’exil*: “Les Russes sont pourris avant d’être mûrs” (201). In the early nineteenth century, Russia was perceived as “rotting,” unable to benefit from its own resources. However, with the 1843 publication of the Marquis de Custine’s *La Russie en 1839*, Russia’s image in France became even more problematic when the fears France harbored about Russia in 1812 or in the 1830s were reinforced by the exiled aristocrat’s travelogue.
Much like Joseph de Maistre earlier in the century, Astolphe de Custine, an almost-orphan of the Terror (his father was guillotined, while his mother barely escaped the same end), traveled to Russia in 1839 originally believing—and rightly so—that it was one of the few safe havens in Europe for members of the aristocracy. Under Tsar Nicolas I, defender of legitimism and gendarme of Europe, this was certainly true. Custine changed his mind, however, during his three-month stay in Russia. He was shocked by Russian daily life. It is precisely his disappointment in Russia that he expressed in his travel narrative.

What exactly made Custine’s observations so mordant? As he noted, the ancien régime remained strong in Russia, but it was maintained by the iron hand of a capricious ruler whose passive subjects were powerless. For Custine, Russia was a land of extremes where the middle ground in any matter was never found:

Au physique le climat, au moral le gouvernement de ce pays dévorent en germe ce qui est faible, tout ce qui n’est pas robuste ou stupide succombe en naissant; il ne reste debout que les brutes et que les natures fortes dans le bien comme le mal. La Russie est la patrie des passions éffrénées ou des caractères débiles, des révoltes ou des automates, des conspirateurs ou des machines; ici point d’intermédiaire entre le tyran et l’esclave, entre le fou et l’animal; le juste milieu y est inconnue, la nature n’en veut pas; l’excès du froid comme celui du chaud pousse l’homme dans les extrêmes. (qtd. in De Grève 1206)

Of course, the implication here is that France, though not an ideal atmosphere for the aristocrat Custine, is a nation where the middle ground does exist—a remarkable statement for someone who was the son and grandson of victims of the Terror. Nevertheless, Russia
was unmistakably something quite “other” in relation to France. Russia had very little to do, in Custine’s eyes, with the rest of a more moderate Europe.\(^7\)

Unfortunately for Russia’s image abroad, Custine’s travel account was not a private travelogue. His critique was extremely popular, a European best seller with nineteen editions (printed in French, English, German, and Danish) between the initial publication of the book in 1843 and 1855 (Tarn 532). *La Russie en 1839* was effectively an all-out blitz of negative exposure. The descriptions the marquis related were shocking, but not altogether unreal given Russia’s recent internal and external battles. The bloody confrontation during the 1825 Decembrist uprising in Russia, coupled with the suppression of Poland’s insurrection in 1830-31, reinforced French fears of Russia’s military might. Napoleon’s *Grande Armée* was no longer the only victim of Russia’s military force—France’s Catholic ally Poland and Russia’s own citizens had also encountered its devastation. With these two events, the West’s vision of Russia had reached a dreadful apex: Russia was “the continental bastion of inveterate, militant reaction” (Malia 93). Custine’s *Russie* served only to reinforce fears of Russia. With Western Europe’s justified anxieties of a reckless military and government expressed most stridently in Custine’s work, it would be difficult to foresee the approaching changes in attitudes about Russia in which Turgenev played a central role.

\(^7\) It is important to note that the view that Russia was different from Western Europe was not held exclusively by those living outside Russia. Peter Chadaev, a vocal member of the Russian intelligentsia under Nicolas I, expressed many of the same sentiments about Russia’s status in regards to Western Europe. Russia, “situated between the great divisions of the world, between the Orient and the Occident, one elbow learning on China and the other one on Germany,” was unique (qtd. in Riha 305). This singular nature, however, did not translate into a superior or more advanced culture. Chadaev felt that without the civilizing impetus of Rome and the Catholic Church, Russia was lagging behind the rest of Europe historically and culturally. Though less forcefully expressed than in Custine’s analysis, Chadaev does acknowledge the “Oriental” nature of Russia, an extremism in its history and in the treatment of its citizens: “The sad history of...[Russia’s] youth consists of a brutal barbarism, then a coarse superstition, and after that a foreign, savage, and degrading domination of the spirit which was later inherited by the national power” (qtd. in Riha 304).
Nouvelles de Russie

Tradutore, traditore. Is the translator a traitor? How much—and more importantly, what—does a translator change in transforming a literary work from one language to another? Does the translator purposefully change or hide elements of the original work for the new, foreign audience? More an ambassador than a traitor, Ivan Turgenev’s translations introduced French readers to the then unfamiliar Russian literature. This process began in 1845 when the Parisian publishing house Paulin issued Louis Viardot and Turgenev’s Nouvelles russes, a collection of short stories originally written by Nikolai Gogol. The collection was a first for French readers.

Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, the well-known literary critic of the Revue des Deux Mondes, expressed his surprise in a review of the translation: “Quant à la Russie, nous n’avons jamais eu le loisir (et c’est notre tort) d’en être très informés, même lorsqu’elle possédait ses poètes Pouchkine et Lermontoff. . . . Avant la traduction que publie M. Viardot, il est douteux qu’aucun Français eût jamais lu quelqu’une des productions originales de M. Gogol. . . .” (883).8 The fact that few French readers had had the opportunity to read Gogol, much less any other Russian writer, changed with the publication of Nouvelles russes. After this publication Turgenev continued translating Russian literature (including his own work) for his new reading public until 1877, leaving over twenty French language translations before his death in 1883 (see Appendix). It is not a surprise then that many of Turgenev’s French contemporaries pointed to his translations and presence in the French

8 Viardot was the only translator listed on the title page of Nouvelles russes, though he served only as a proof-reader for Turgenev’s near-native French. I explore the implications of the publisher’s choice to do this later in the chapter.
literary scene as an important precursor to the explosive successes of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky’s works in France after 1880. As Eugène Melchior de Vogüé—a noted French critic, historian and novelist—remarked in the first in-depth look at Russian literature published in France, *Le Roman russe* (1886): “Tourguénef était venu chez nous comme un missionnaire du génie russe: Il prouvait, par son exemple, la haute valeur artistique de ce génie” (xliii). Clearly then, Turgenev as a translator was never a traitor to Russia; he was instead a linguistic and cultural translator, carefully interpreting Russia’s idioms and cultural idiosyncrasies to French readers.

But Turgenev needed help to enter into a new literary field as a writer for whom French was a second language. This help came in part from French writers and co-translators who reinforced (or in some cases, replaced) his name and credibility in a literary field not his own. To understand how this proved possible, it is useful to examine the network of agents associated with the translations’ production and reception—writers, translators, publishers, booksellers, literary critics, and readers. These suggested considerations help elucidate the significance of the foreign writer within the field of national book production—a reflection that hopefully will stimulate more critical analyses of the role of the translator and of the foreigner, often forgotten or marginal agents, in such production.

*Translations in Exile*

Before Turgenev became a translator abroad, his experiences in Russian defined in many ways his subsequent path in the French literary field. Turgenev belonged to the *dvorianstvo*, the Russian gentry. His social status, however, would not assure him his only
financial means to live in France. The dvorianstvo underwent a substantial decline in its financial and social role throughout the nineteenth century. Turgenev’s parents’ financial state bore witness to this phenomenon. His mother, Varvara Petrovna, while rich, married a destitute calvary officer dvorianin six years her junior. He could only bring 130 serfs to his wife’s 5000-serf estate at Spasskoe south of Moscow. As such, the family fortune declined for the rest of Turgenev’s life (Pritchett 3-34). Turgenev was not able to rely solely on his family’s wealth in France.

Even with financial instabilities, the young Russian’s education helped him forge links within the Russian literary field that shaped choices he made later in France about editors and works translated. Turgenev pursued his studies—as did most young members of the gentry—in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and finally Berlin. His literary studies at home and outside Russia brought him into contact with well-known Russian writers and thinkers—Nikolai Stankevich, Mikhail Lermontov, Alexandr Herzen, Ivan Goncharov, Vissarion Belinsky, and Mikhail Bakunin. Belinsky, a seminal Russian literary critic advocating a littérature engagée, and Bakunin, the well-known political activist and anarchist, influenced Turgenev’s work profoundly. Known for his realist novels and short stories, his art was characterized by a concern for the aesthetic, but was also fused with political commentary, critique, or satire. In 1843, his first major Russian language publication, Parasha, marked

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9 Nicholas V. Riazanovsky notes the following about the mid-nineteenth century Russian dvorianstvo: “[T]he upper class, the gentry, retained its dominant social and economic position and its leadership in most phases of Russian life. Yet . . . its problems and difficulties increased. Most landlords failed to adjust effectively to the changing economic conditions, sank gradually deeper into debt, and often slid further toward poverty” (346).

10 Whether dealing with the character of a “superfluous man” (“a solitary, socially alienated male who lacks an established social position as well as traditional emotion connections to home and family”) in Roudin or The Diary of a Superfluous Man, the nihilism of the character Bazarov and generational conflict in Fathers and Sons, or the life of Russian peasants in Sportsman’s Sketches, Turgenev’s realism painted a broad picture of different social classes and practices of life in Russia during the nineteenth century (Allen xxiv).
the beginning of his literary renown. Soon Turgenev took his place among the Russian literary elite, a consecrated status due in large part to a favorable review of *Parasha* by Belinsky, the most respected literary critic of nineteenth-century Russia.

With critical success as a writer in the Russian literary tradition, Turgenev took his role as *écrivain engagé* seriously, often expressing dissatisfaction with the Russian autocracy, a political stance that would influence his later decision to move to France. Thus when the Ukrainian Russophone writer Nikolai Gogol (in disfavor with the Russian autocracy for his portrayal of the Russian institution of serfdom) died unexpectedly in 1852, Turgenev was unable to keep silent during the government censors’ tacit ban on obituaries written about Gogol. He was determined to pay homage to one of his literary idols by writing a public letter in praise of Gogol, as well as his bitterly critical satires of modern Russian life. The act was condemned by Tsar Nicolas I, who sentenced the well-known author to a two-year home exile on his Spasskoe estate. Turgenev, for the moment, was silenced. However, with the death of the tsar in 1855 and the end of the Crimean War in 1856, he was finally given permission for a long-desired emigration to France. As a “Westernizer” who praised the influence of the West in Russia, Turgenev looked at Western Europe as a more progressive land in comparison to Russia. This move would permit him to write as he pleased, free from the constraints of the Russian imperial censors and a powerful tsar. Turgenev’s relocation to France provided the liberty lacking in Russia, but it entailed the loss of a substantial literary and cultural capital acquired as a writer and social critic at home. He continued to write for his compatriots in Russia, but his own country was too far away to earn a viable living.

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11 For more on Russian literature of this period, see Riasanovsky’s chapter “Russian Culture in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century” (348-67).
abroad. Further, he could not rely on money from his family. From then on, Turgenev would need to explore other avenues of literary production in a foreign literary field.

His entrance to publishing in the French literary field was facilitated by Louis Viardot. In 1843 Turgenev met Pauline and Louis Viardot for the first time in Russia. Pauline Viardot, a celebrated opera singer, was on tour in Saint Petersburg. Turgenev was fascinated by Pauline and befriended the couple after a performance (Pritchett 35-53). Immediately thereafter, Turgenev began corresponding with both Viardots, though the bulk of his letters were addressed to Pauline. The couple remained a consistent part of Turgenev’s life until his death, the three living together (or in very close proximity) and traveling together in France or abroad. Turgenev never married and had few relationships with other women, preferring instead the company of Pauline Viardot and her family. While the Turgenev/Viardot ménage à trois has been fertile ground for biographical speculation, Turgenev’s known relationship to Pauline’s husband has been accepted as one of companionship and literary collaboration.

How Turgenev and Viardot’s partnership as translators began is not clear, yet it does seem that the activity was a pastime for the two writers. Nothing in Turgenev’s letters to Viardot indicates that this work was taken initially as a serious enterprise. In a letter dated 8 August 1849, Turgenev writes about a translation project involving Gogol’s *Le Manteau* during a stay in France: “Je vais faire l’un de ces quatre matins un petit voyage à Paris pour en rapporter mon fusil et autres choses indispensables, ainsi que le Gogol, pour nos heures de loisir. Nous traduirons ‘Le Manteau’ si vous voulez” (330).12 Louis Viardot’s knowledge of Russian was limited at best. In a candid letter to Pierre-Jules Hetzel (later Turgenev’s

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12 A note in this letter indicates that the translation of “Le Manteau” was never completed (533).
publisher of choice), Viardot declines to work as a Russian translator: “[N]e m’envoyez aucun livre, je ne sais pas un mot de russe. J’ai eu soin d’annoncer, à deux reprises, comment mes traductions du russe étaient faites: un ami me dicte le mot à mot, et j’écris le français, voilà tout” (qtd. in Parmenie et al. 397). Since Viardot knew “not a word of Russian,” Turgenev (with near native French) served as the principle translator, though he was never credited for his role in their partnership. With translations designated a literary hobby, it is difficult to point to any real ambition on Turgenev’s part to enter the French literary market. Strangely, he continued to translate even though Viardot spoke “not a word of Russian.” His motivations for translating Russian works were most likely related to his friendship with the Viardots, but there is no clear indication at this point of his plan to become a translator or writer in France.

Does the absence of serious ambition in translating reveal anything about Turgenev’s position vis-à-vis gaining work initially as a writer in France? In “Le champ littéraire,” Pierre Bourdieu notes that désintéressement—a trait that appears to characterize Turgenev’s first work as a translator in France—is typical of those wishing to enter a literary field whose own autonomy is subject to that of the dominant political field. This désintéressement is most often found in the avant-garde that searches for little capital gain in its work, looking instead to the cultural capital and prestige that comes with being this sort of writer. Clearly, however, with recurring discussions of Russian politics and social classes in works like Sportman’s Sketches (1852), Rudin (1856), and Fathers and Sons (1862), Turgenev’s writing cannot be classified in any way as l’art pour l’art, but instead as a sort of littérature engagée. Again, Bourdieu’s analysis of the literary field illuminates this contradiction around the issue of désintéressement. He notes the ambiguity that l’art social has in relation to the avant-garde: “Le statut de l’art
social’ est, sous ce rapport, tout à fait ambigu, bien qu’il réfère la production artistique ou littéraire à des fonctions externes. . . il a en commun avec ‘l’art pour l’art’ de récuser radicalement le succès mondain et ‘l’art bourgeois’ qui le reconnait, au mépris des valeurs de ‘désintéressement”’ (5). As a writer who had been reprimanded by his own government, Turgenev was an integral player within the field of Russian “social art.” Along with Gogol and literary critic Belinsky, he belonged to a Russian literary tradition in which writers publicly criticized Russian imperial policies and social anachronisms such as serfdom. He did not completely abandon this position while writing outside of Russia. Turgenev’s seeming lack of interest in translating Russian literature was not in conjunction with a position in the avant-garde, but, rather, stemmed from a desire to maintain his aesthetic and political integrity, apparently indifferent to financial success at the outset of his time, in order to be a force for political and social change. It is necessary, however, to modulate Bourdieu’s notion with Turgenev’s status as a writer in France, as the Russian’s own disintéressement changed once he settled in France. As he continued to live abroad, he was forced to search for financial gain as a writer in the French literary market. Though his distance from Russia and his government’s reach permitted him to remain an engaged writer at home, he benefited financially from his position as a writer in France. Since his art social did not criticize regularly the French government, he remained free to write as he pleased, but still able to earn a good living because of his status as a foreigner.

Nevertheless, Turgenev’s seemingly lackadaisical translation work with Viardot was an important entry point for the Russian writer into a new market. Later on, Viardot’s participation (and name) helped introduce Turgenev to the French literary field. Without Viardot’s signature on Turgenev’s translations, it is improbable that he would have been able
to publish in France prior to 1850. Viardot’s literary credibility and recognition both as translator of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* and as an art critic was precisely what Turgenev needed to enter a literary field in which he had never participated. This feat would have been difficult without a French literary intermediary.

Turgenev’s friend was no stranger to publishing in France. Viardot had written and published both literary and art critiques, his own memoirs and translations. He published his work with various Parisian houses, but Paulin produced the majority of his work prior to 1852. Paulin, one of several publishing houses specializing in the production of illustrated *beaux livres* before 1848, was a logical choice for the publication of Viardot’s art criticism (Mollier 424). With already established connections, it was natural for him to go to Paulin when he hoped to publish *Nouvelles russes*, his first collaborative translation with Turgenev. The house accepted the translation, but Turgenev’s indispensable participation as the only translator was not acknowledged. With Viardot’s limited knowledge of Russian, why was Turgenev not listed at least as a partner in his very own translation?

**Writers & Publishers**

A closer look at the dynamics of the French literary field provides some answers to this question. Although the field experienced sweeping changes during the nineteenth century, publishing before the Second Empire was not the large-scale enterprise it became in the decades to follow. Before the Second Empire, political instability, a limited readership, and economic crises translated into slow growth in the publishing industry. The French literary market had not yet fully opened to the frenetic production brought on by a growing
reading public and advances in printing technologies and production (Lough 289-91). In such an atmosphere, it is plausible that Nouvelles russes proved risky to publish. The work was doubly foreign—foreign in literary origin and in name. The curious fact that Turgenev’s name appeared nowhere in Nouvelles russes now seems less puzzling. Turgenev’s name did not appear because his name was wholly unrecognizable. Without any sort of name recognition, his prestige as a venerated and critical writer within Russia was non-existent in France. As Michel Foucault affirms, an author’s name (or here, a translator’s name) serves as much more than a simple indication—it serves in many cases as a description or as a classification of the qualities of the work to which it is assigned (81-83). Since Turgenev’s name did not have any connotations yet in France, Paulin used Viardot’s name, a name that perhaps provided a form of publishing collateral. Viardot’s literary credibility and recognition as a translator of Don Quixote was precisely the sort of clout Paulin would want associated with an unknown work. Turgenev needed Viardot’s name as much as Paulin did in order to both begin publishing at Paulin and to enter a literary field in which he had never participated. Viardot, the so-called translator, was a necessary fiction for both the publisher and the true translator. As such, the man who served as a mere proofreader to Turgenev’s translations came to have his name on the title page of book for which he had done little work.

Things soon changed in Turgenev and Viardot’s relationship with Paulin. At the end of the July Monarchy, book prices began declining, a trend partially brought on by advances in paper-making (Lough 289). This, of course, had severe ramifications on the veteran

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13 Cadot advances several reasons for the disappearance of Turgenev’s name from the translations, but terminates his discussion of this problem inconclusively: “Seule la découverte d’autres lettres permettrait d’éclaircir sûrement cette question assez délicate” (La Russie dans la vie intellectuelle 429).
publishers that had dominated the market since the end of Napoleon’s empire. Previously having established a secure position as a producer of high-quality, expensive books, Paulin’s ascendancy in the publishing field was threatened by less-costly papermaking and by the ensuing shift in book prices. His position was further destabilized by the growth of newspaper and feuilleton readership (Martin and Martin 181). Suddenly, Paulin and his peers—the group that “brillait des mille feux” between 1820 and 1840—were forced to grapple with the ramifications of lower book prices that made the beaux livres costly and time-consuming production problematic (Mollier 425). Under these new dynamics, many veteran publishing houses were unable to make the needed adjustments and either suffered greatly or failed financially. Some publishers fared this upheaval better, however, such as the pioneering Louis Hachette. Hachette proved savvy in the new aspects of literary production, most notably with the development of scholastic publishing. As a rising publishing star in France, Hachette stood to profit from this crisis within his field.

Indeed, Hachette was well poised during the crisis to help authors who were also affected by the downturn in the market. The difficulties encountered by publishers led some authors to explore the possibility of working for other houses better prepared to deal with a changing market. This appears to be the case for Turgenev and Viardot. Though there are no indications in Turgenev’s letters or in Hachette’s biographies about the beginning of this relationship, the two friends began publishing with Hachette’s firm in 1852.

The switch from Paulin to Hachette did not alter the two friends’ translation habits. Viardot was again responsible for negotiating the financial and contractual details of their translations, in part because Turgenev was still living in exile in Russia on his Spasskoe estate and later due to travel complications posed by the Crimean War (Schapiro 79-123). Still,
Turgenev would not be acknowledged as a translator of his own works. With subsequent publications of Turgenev’s collaborative translations with Viardot at Hachette (La Fille du Capitaine, 1853; Scènes de la vie russe [2 volumes], and Nouvelles russes, 1858), the firm chose to print only the names of the two native French proof-readers of the work—Louis Viardot and Xavier Marmier. It was not until the publication of Poèmes dramatiques d’Alexandre Pouchkine in 1862—almost twenty years after Turgenev’s first appearance on the French literary scene—that his name was included on the title page of his translations. Following in the steps of a cautious Paulin, Hachette most likely was not willing to wager the success of a publication on a yet unfamiliar name. The French names of Viardot and Marmier, therefore, likely served again as a sort of guarantee for the work produced by the French-language publisher.

If the name of a foreign writer were such a risk—even in the role of translator—then why in fact did Paulin and later Hachette choose to publish translations of an equally unknown literature? Until Turgenev’s arrival in France, Russian literature in translation (unlike its English or German equivalents) was a rarity (Cadot La Russie dans la vie intellectuelle 405). But with an ever-increasing reading public, French publishers were looking to find new products to meet growing demands.

_Terra Incognita_

To understand why Russian literature was sought after during the Second Empire, one must again look at the dramatically changing literary market. The changes in the field of literary production were due in part to an increase in the reading public—from 25% of the
French population at the beginning of the century to almost 95% by the end of the century. This was also due to a gradual liberalization of press and publishing culminating in the 29 July 1881 law on the freedom of the press, and to an amelioration in the technology and production of books.\textsuperscript{14} The number of titles published in France between 1830 and 1860 almost doubled, from 6,739 titles in 1830 to an astonishing 11,905 titles in 1860 (Crubellier 39). To survive and establish a niche in a field undergoing a phase of exponential growth, a competitive publisher either had to find new literary products or—alternatively—to specialize in one type of literature to offer a growing and diversifying reading clientele (Charle 127). This rapidly growing market encouraged publishers to propose a variety of new literary products to French readers. Russian literature was one such unexplored territory. Not surprisingly, Hachette, clearly one of the most innovative publishers in nineteenth-century France, was the first to explore the developing market by, in 1852, choosing to publish Turgenev’s translations.

Louis Hachette understood the new dynamics of the market. Not only did he recognize the need for novelties within this market, but he was also able to capitalize on another growing market: tourism. Within France especially, tourism grew rapidly during the nineteenth century for two main reasons: larger percentages of the population had the time and money to travel and the railroad was developed extensively within France and Europe. According to Alfred Fierro, the French, relatively inexperienced and curious travelers, began

\textsuperscript{14} See the bibliography for contributions to volume 3 of the multivolume work \textit{Histoire de l’édition française} by Jean Hébrard (“Les nouveaux lecteurs”) and Maurice Crubellier (“L’élargissement du public”) for more information on the politics and rhetoric of encouraging reading in France, as well as for a discussion of the various reading practices that developed during the nineteenth century in France. For information on freedom of the press and publishing, see the contribution by Pierre Casselle (“Le régime législatif”).
to demonstrate an insatiable interest in *guides de voyage*, especially after 1841 (193). Travel—and with that the experience of something novel, something “other”—was in vogue.

Hachette tapped directly into this developing passion with the creation of the Bibliothèque des chemins de fer, a network of small bookstore kiosks located in the increasingly bustling French train stations. A special series of books was created for the Bibliothèque, including collections of scientific treatises, children’s literature, travel guides, and, appropriately, foreign literature in translation. For ease of recognition, each series was identified by a different color, *littératures étrangères* designated by a yellow cover. One of the first titles released in the collection *à la couverture jaune* was, along with works by Charles Dickens, the Turgenev-Viardot translation of Gogol’s *Nouvelles choisies*, a short format that proved ideal for distracted travelers reading en route. The collection was wildly successful for Hachette, so much so that there were legal proceedings instigated by other publishers who felt threatened by a Hachette monopoly not just in train stations, but also extending into other areas of general literary production. Nevertheless, with this new means of exposure to readers under Hachette, Turgenev truly gained access to a larger French reading public.

**Turgenev’s Strategies**

At this point, Turgenev was still far from the “missionary of Russian genius” as Vogüé would describe him in 1886. However, with a definitive “in” to the French literary field through the Hachette publications, the Russian writer’s production increased in 1856

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15 See Jean Mistler’s chapter, “Les Bibliothèques des chemins de fer,” for more on Hachette’s railroad creation and the ensuing squabbles over a potential train station bookstore monopoly (121-36).
with a move to France. After the death of Tsar Nicolas I in 1855 and the end of the Crimean War in 1856, Turgenev was finally given permission to go abroad in a self-imposed exile, a move that would permit him to write as he pleased without the interference of the Russian censors. The relocation from Russia to France provided Turgenev the liberty he had been lacking in Russia. This, however, entailed substantial loss of cultural capital he had acquired as a writer and social critic at home. Indeed, since Turgenev was far from his family estate and could not easily transfer money from one country to another, he needed a new source of income. To regain both cultural and financial capital, he would further develop the recognition of Russian literature in France by multiplying his strategies within the French literary field.

Turgenev’s follow-up to publishing with Hachette was a strategy he shared with many other French writers of the time: working as a journalist. According to Christophe Charle, only ten percent of French writers were able to live “by their pen” alone after 1850 (151). Many writers often took other jobs to earn a living wage while waiting for literary and financial success. Fortunately for these writers looking for a second income, the competitive French literary field was expanding (129). Here again, his connections to the Viardot family proved invaluable as their Parisian friendships and connections would help provide him a job as a writer and translator for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Turgenev’s short story “Moumounia” first appeared on 1 March 1856. Until 1868, he continued to publish with the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, a prestigious political publication and literary review known for its promotion of major nineteenth-century authors like Hugo and Dumas in the 1830s, and for its moderately left political positions (Jeune 412; Bellanger 109).
A writer’s work for a newspaper or review often resulted in more visibility in the literary field. Turgenev used this practice with the short story “Annouchka. Souvenirs du bords du Rhin” (published in 1858 in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*). The pre-publication of a translation in a newspaper or a journal was a common strategy for French writers and publishers at the time, following the example of a *feuilleton* in the newspapers, a way of testing the story’s commercial viability before a publisher would take it on. The *feuilleton* was a means of publication that guaranteed a writer wider circulation among the French reading public because of its portable and inexpensive qualities. It also served as publicity for the writer by exposing his works to a larger readership through the *Rèvue* than he had with the publication of his translated works in book form (Lough 294-5). This was indeed the case, as only three of Turgenev’s own works (*La Fille du Capitaine*, 1853; *Memoires d’un seigneur russe*, 1854; *Mœurs et superstitions russes*, 1855) were published in France prior to his relocation there.

In addition to benefiting from financial gains and the high visibility afforded by the review, Turgenev also stood to gain social and cultural capital once in the orbit of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. As both a writer and translator, Turgenev was able to expose his work to the literary elite, including Théophile Gautier, the Goncourt brothers, and Sainte-Beuve. To his good fortune, those who wrote for the *Revue des Deux Mondes* often were already or were about to become well-known within France (Jeune 412). The case was no different for Turgenev. With his work at the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, he gained more autonomy within this French literary field and was no longer automatically linked in name with his friend Louis Viardot. However, his work for the review did not lead to dominance (or to the reinforcement of a dominant position) in literary production and prestige that Charle
describes for well-known authors (144). In the case of a foreign writer, it is necessary to nuance Charle’s statement for it is indeed extraordinary that Turgenev would ever achieve a dominant position within the French literary field. Russia and Russian writers were simply too unfamiliar to the French reading public to enable this.

Nonetheless, a form of dominance within this field did emerge for Turgenev in the form of his literary sociability. Though French readers were not well acquainted with Turgenev’s work, French writers and critics adored him. He joined the Parisian literary elite at dinner parties and in cafés. He regularly corresponded with George Sand, Gustave Flaubert, and Prosper Mérimée. Within this circle, Turgenev received attention and praise. Writing about a dinner hosted by Flaubert in 1872, Edmond de Goncourt described Turgenev’s magnetism, while also reinforcing some common stereotypes about Russians:

“Tourguéneff, le doux géant, l’aimable barbare. . . dès la soupe nous charme, nous enguirlande, selon l’expression russe, par le mélange de naïveté et de finesse, --la séduction de la race slave, relevée chez lui par l’originalité d’un esprit supérieur, par un savoir immense et cosmopolite” (qtd. in Corbet 368). Though Turgenev was charming, he was by no means a major force within the French literary field. He perhaps benefited, however, from his French writer friends’ knowledge of his renown within Russian literary circles. His Russian cultural capital was of some use within this small but important group of French writers, as his outsider status was part of his charm with these insiders. His recognition by France’s literary best and his work at the Revue des Deux Mondes helped increase his own status as a

16 “Seuls les auteurs connus bénéficient d’articles dans tous les journaux, ce qui renforce encore leur domination” (144).
writer within France, permitting him more autonomy in making decisions regarding publishing his own works.

*Turgenev & Hetzel*

In the years following his first translation in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Turgenev continued publishing with Hachette. However, like many other authors, he began publishing elsewhere. In 1857 he chose to publish his work *Récits d’un chasseur* (with the phrase “seule édition autorisée par l’auteur” on the title page) with the translator Henri Delaveau at Dentu publishing house. Though there are no indications in Turgenev’s letters about his relationship with Delaveau, Delaveau is listed as the first person at the *Revue des Deux Mondes* to have written an article on the subject of Russia. Turgenev and Delaveau perhaps met and worked together because of their common subject at the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

At the same time, tensions began to emerge between Turgenev and Hachette’s Emile Templier, director of the “littérature générale” section, as well as Hachette’s son-in-law. In 1854 a translation by Ernest Charrière of Turgenev’s *Mémoires d’un seigneur russe* was published for Hachette’s Bibliothèque des chemins de fer without Turgenev’s explicit authorization. As it turned out, Turgenev’s story in Charrière’s translation was full of errors. In a letter to a

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17 Regarding general publishing practices in France at this time, Charle notes that for authors “la mono-édition est l’exception,” “la pluri-édition la règle” to maximize exposure to different readerships, as well as providing several sources of income (136).

18 Edouard Dentu was a bookseller at Port-Royal and director of *La Revue Européenne* (Caffier 56). Christophe Charle notes that he was a royalist publisher (131). It is worth noting, however, that Dentu helped republican Pierre-Jules Hetzel publish in France during his exile in Belgium under the Second Empire (Martin and Martin 197).

19 See “L’Epopée nationale des Russie, le Poème d’Igor” in the journal’s 15 December 1854 issue.
French newspaper based in Russia, *Le Journal de Saint Pétersbourg* (19 August 1854) in which Charrière’s translation was first published, Turgenev wrote a scathing reproach of the translation, itemizing at length the translator’s mistakes. He expressed his disappointment clearly in the letter: “Quant à la traduction de M. E. Charrière, d’après laquelle on m’a jugé, je ne crois pas qu’il y ait beaucoup d’exemples d’une pareille mystification littéraire” (293). This sort of response was not uncommon for Turgenev. The writer never let a bad translation of his work escape his reproaches, evidence that Turgenev was striving to protect and maintain his integrity as a writer.²⁰ Later, in another letter addressed to Louis Viardot (14 December 1857), Turgenev states that he had just received a letter from Templier about the preface to the Turgenev-Delaveau translation (published as a corrective to the Charrière translation), a preface that supposedly “wounded” Templier and Charrière. Turgenev panics about Dentu’s “broken promise” to remove the injurious preface. He asks Viardot to prove that he would like to keep his “good relationship” with Templier and Hachette by offering to reissue a revised version of Charrière’s translation with the Russian writer’s printed approval of the work (279-80). Without any copyright protection provided by French or international law, Turgenev was in a difficult position when it came to guarding his name’s good standing.

Tensions between Turgenev and Hachette’s firm were inevitable. First, Louis Hachette no longer kept in direct, personal contact with his authors. The publisher let others in his company take over as the structure of the company was reorganized, a trend

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²⁰ It is worth noting that though Charrière’s translation was not palatable to Turgenev, Charrière and Turgenev’s French readership would not have been able necessarily to distinguish a good translation from bad.
that developed throughout the nineteenth century.\footnote{Elizabeth Parinet and Valérie Tesnière point out that the reorganization consisted of a “définition plus nette des tâches et... une spécialisation progressive des collaborateurs” (146).} With these administrative changes, there was quite possibly a growing detachment between Hachette and his spokespeople on the one hand, and his authors on the other. According to Jean-Yves Mollier, Hachette seemed most supportive as a publisher for those authors whose financial means did not depend on sizeable book sales, authors like the Comtesse de Ségur and Louis Viardot (329). Turgenev did not fit within the same category as these authors, but rather encountered increasing financial difficulties with both his Russian estate’s finances and the abolition of serfdom by the tsar in 1861 (Knowles 5).

With these strains on Hachette and Turgenev’s relationship, it is probable that the Russian writer began looking for another publisher with whom he had more affinities. Certainly, as Charle underlines, the relationships between authors and their publishers were marriages of sorts, based on a “solidarity” between publishing couples within a legal or financial arrangement (142). Turgenev’s “marriage” to Hachette, a relationship in which the partners had increasingly divergent political and literary opinions, was on the rocks. With the advent of Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte’s government and severe censorship, Hachette, though unfavorable to the régime, made clear that he did not wish to upset the status quo. Hachette’s strategy was one of outward political neutrality. All books capable of, in Hachette’s words, “exciter ou entretenir les passions politiques” or that went against public sensibilities in his Bibliothèque des chemins de fer were banned (Mollier 305).
Was a politically neutral publisher something Turgenev desired? For these publisher-author couples led to a sort of brand-marking of publication in France (Charle 140). Since Turgenev was a writer in self-imposed exile already sensitive to the issue of censorship, he most likely felt a growing ideological tension (in addition to the other problems he had already encountered) in his relationship with the Hachette house. In short, Hachette was not the sort of publisher for whom Turgenev wished to work. No longer dependent on his relationship with Viardot and able to use his connections with the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, he was now obliged to look on his own for a new publisher.

Turgenev’s relationship with Pierre-Jules Hetzel began with the help of Louis Viardot. In 1859 Hetzel, looking for a reputable translator, asked for Viardot’s assistance. Admitting his poor skills in Russian, Viardot responded to Hetzel that Turgenev was in fact the translator of their work and gave Hetzel the writer’s address (Parmenie et al. 397). In 1861, Turgenev published *Une nichée de gentilshommes: Mœurs de la vie de province en Russie* jointly through Hetzel and Dentu. Turgenev published with Hetzel until 1877, submitting more manuscripts to him than to any previous publishers. Hetzel, a fervent republican, became a politician for France’s Second Republic, going into exile in 1852 for his political activity against Louis-Napoléon’s empire. Turgenev also had republican sympathies and disliked living under Napoleon III’s new rule. He left France with the Viardots in 1863 to live in Baden Baden to escape a political atmosphere he detested (Knowles 7). France’s change in political régimes underlined Hetzel and Turgenev’s similarities. Both men experienced

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22 Regarding this branding of authors and the publishing houses they choose to work with, Charle states, “le choix d’un éditeur à la fin du XIXe siècle est pour un débutant plus qu’un choix financier. Il engage aussi peu ou prou sa stratégie littéraire ultérieure. Réciproquement l’éditeur, du fait de l’intensification de la concurrence, peut trier ses auteurs en fonction de critères littéraires ou idéologiques, c’est-à-dire en fonction de sa propre stratégie d’édition ou de l’image de marque qu’il entend donner à sa maison” (151).
persecution for their politics in their home countries—Turgenev by Nicolas I and Hetzel by Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte—and were sent into exile. Furthermore, Hetzel’s literary circle often included exiles, such as Victor Hugo, who published *Les Contemplations* with Hetzel while in exile. It was thus understandable that he would identify and maintain a relationship with Turgenev. The two men’s similar interests and experiences brought them together. To borrow from Bourdieu, they were indeed “homologues” (19).

Not only was the Turgenev-Hetzel publishing marriage happy in terms of literary production, but the two men were also close friends. In the many letters Turgenev wrote to Hetzel, the most common greeting to the publisher was “mon cher ami.” He rarely addressed Hachette or Dentu in this same tone or with the same frequency. He inquired often when Hetzel would plan to visit the Viardot-Turgenev household in Baden Baden or Paris. He recounted to his other correspondents’ stories about meals or conversations shared with Hetzel. Unlike Hachette, Hetzel was clearly a close friend to the Russian writer. Turgenev’s choice of Hetzel as a publisher was advantageous both personally and professionally. Their strong relationship allowed for frankness in their professional interactions, an important quality when making decisions about what Turgenev would translate and publish through Hetzel.

**Turgenev & Mérimée**

A similar working relationship developed between Turgenev and Prosper Mérimée. Attention to precise detail perhaps first drew Turgenev and Prosper Mérimée together as co-translators of Russian literature, a second pairing in the French market that further impacted
and influenced Turgenev’s work in France. The two writers initially met in 1857, though they did not begin to correspond and meet regularly until 1860, discussing Russian literature together. Mérimée had begun his Russian language studies in 1848—urged on by his friend, the Russian poet Serge Sobolevski—because of a fascination with Pushkin’s works. In an 1860 letter Mérimée wrote to Turgenev, he inquires about Pushkin’s style and use of language, and asks for verification on precise translations of Russian expressions into French. He continued this sort of epistolary discussion with Turgenev for the rest of his life, meticulously examining Russian history, current events, and questions about Russian and “Cossack” languages and their translations into French.

Perhaps because of these initial discussions about Pushkin and his own work, Turgenev soon sent Mérimée his new novel, *Fathers and Sons*, for review. Mérimée read the original in Russian, saying he enjoyed it, while also mildly criticizing the Russian’s writer’s fidelity to realism in the work (Parturier 77). In 1862, however, he offered to correct the translation of *Fathers and Sons* prepared by Delaveau and Turgenev, and accepted Turgenev’s invitation to write the translation’s preface (Parturier 25). From then on, Mérimée often served as a proofreader of Turgenev’s translations with other writers or as translator himself of Turgenev’s works.

Mérimée, like Turgenev, was rigorous in his expectations of the translations, aiming to fine-tune work that was already well-written. Regarding the 1861 translation of Turgenev’s *Le Juif*, Mérimée says in a letter to the Russian writer: “Nous relirons la nouvelle la plume à la main et nous ferions un certain nombre de petits changements fins comme pointes d’aiguilles” (qtd. in Parturier 74). In subsequent translations on which Turgenev had worked, Mérimée suggested that there were “des mots à changer” or that he “discretely”
took out “quelques adjectifs et quelques adverbes dont notre langue exige que l’on soit sobre” (qtd. in Parturier 87; 13: 126). Clearly, he was satisfied with Turgenev’s own translations, though he often asked to see the manuscripts before they were put to press to “sharpen” the quality of the French.

However, when Mérimée encountered translations of Russian literature that he deemed poor, he was unforgiving. In July 1867 he wrote to Prince Auguste Galitzin about a proposed translation of Turgenev’s Dym or Fumée: “Je félicite M. Turguenef de vous avoir pour traducteur . . . . Jusqu’à présent M. T. n’a eu pour traducteur que des personnes qui savaient médiocrement le russe et en encore plus médiocrement le français” (13: 546-47). Mérimée here seems to relish the opportunity to work with a skilled translator who supposedly is fluent in both languages. Nevertheless, Mérimée was soon disappointed by Galitzin’s prudish translation of risqué passages, as well as his apparent linguistic bumbling in Russian and French. After reviewing Galitzin’s translation, he wrote to Turgenev that the translation was “très et trop abrégée, même pour moi” and that “[l]e Prince, qui, dites-vous, ne sait pas le russe, ne se doute pas de nos prétérits, il les confond sans cesse avec nos imparfaits” (qtd. in Parturier 164, 167). Mérimée shows little tolerance here for Galitzin’s ineptitude as a translator.

In choosing how to translate from Russian to French, the two writers were thorough and exacting. They did not stand for shoddy translations. For Turgenev, this exactitude suggests his dedication to the quality of his work no matter what language, and perhaps as well his fear of making a bad impression on his French reading public. Far from being able to rely on the status he had as a writer in Russia, he had to be cautious not to fall out of favor in France for having missed the mot juste or for a poor translation. Mérimée’s careful
proofing, as well as the guarantee of his name on a publication and the symbolic capital associated with it, served to bolster Turgenev’s reputation in the French literary field.

*Cultural Translators?*

This sort of precision in translation for the writer-translators was not limited simply to how Russian language was rendered in French, but encompassed as well how Russian culture was translated for the French public. Here, what mattered was not the “how” of the translation, but the “what.” Turgenev’s favored publisher and editor Hetzel trusted Turgenev’s exactitude and intuition, often asking his opinion about which works should be translated. On 21 August 1875 Hetzel inquired about a translated adaptation of the Ukrainian tale *Maroussia* by Madame Markowitch for which he asked Turgenev’s opinion on two matters.

[J]e vous envoie... le texte même de Mme Markowitch... Il ne s’agit pas... d’établir une comparaison entre le livre russe... et ce que j’en fais, mais de me dire si ce que j’en ai fait au point de vue français, dans la seule idée de prendre à une légende ukrainienne ce que la France pouvait en garder, vous paraît passable, 1° au point de vue principal pour moi—le point de vue français, 2° ne contient pas malgré cela des choses absolument révoltantes au point de vue russe ou ukrainien? (qtd. in Parmenie et al. 602)

Hetzel looked to Turgenev’s point of view for two matters. First, he asks him if the translation’s content was suitable for French readers, the most important consideration for the publisher. He was also concerned, however, that the translation did not deform the tale
too much from the point of view of its culture of origin. Turgenev, by now a cultural chameleon, could judge both aspects of translation, something that Hetzel did not trust himself to do. The Russian writer, in Hetzel’s eyes, was capable of judging what was essential for both audiences.

The affirmation of Turgenev’s qualities as a cultural translator is most clearly stated in a cordial letter from Hetzel to Madame Markowitch:

Sans doute, cela n’est pas adaptable en général à notre pays, comme l’ont été la plupart des œuvres de Tourguéneff, parce que vous n’avez pas, comme lui, pensé à nous et aux nations étrangères autant qu’à votre pays en les écrivant. . . . La France aime la littérature russe et les Russes eux-mêmes, quand on lui retrace la partie de vos mœurs qui ne s’éloigne pas absolument des nôtres ou qui lui fait comprendre ce qui s’en éloigne, de façon que cela ne soit pas pour nous énigmes ou rébus. (qtd. in Parmenie et al. 639)

In Hetzel’s eyes, Madame Markowitch would not have had the success that Turgenev enjoyed because she was not capable of operating as a cultural go-between. Like Turgenev, she would need to be both a linguistic and cultural translator, expressing moral parallels between two cultures or choosing those cultural aspects that helped explain the two cultures’ differences. That is what had made Turgenev “adaptable” to French readers—a recognition of the ways in which French and Russian cultures were alike and an explanation for the ways in which they diverged.

Plainly, then, Turgenev was a conscientious linguistic and cultural translator of Russian literature. This precision, however, was lacking from previous translators with whom he had worked who had little or no knowledge of the Russian language, much less so
of Russian culture. As already shown, Mérimée, though far from an expert in Russian, was careful enough in his translations from Russian to French that he gained Turgenev’s confidence for consultations and proofing. In addition to this attribute, Mérimée also was sensitive and thorough in translating aspects of Russian culture to French readers. Even prior to meeting Turgenev, Mérimée had worked not only as a Russian literature translator, but also as a historian of Russia, writing *Épisode de l’histoire de Russie. Les Faux Démétrius* (1853) before the Crimean War. He later went on to write *Les Cosaques d’Ukraine et leurs derniers atamans* (1854) and *Jeunesse de Pierre le Grand*, (1867-1868). Though Mérimée’s Russian histories are not beyond criticism, they do demonstrate an in-depth and continued interest in Russian history and culture. Further, Mérimée was thoughtful about how the cultural content of Russian literature would translate in France. In a September 1866 letter to Turgenev, Mérimée expresses doubt about a potential translation of *Le Juif*, a work that takes issue with stereotypical representations of Russian Jews: “Je crains un peu que *Le Juif* n’effraye les mamans et les néo-catholiques. . . .” (qtd. in Parturier 141). Here, Mérimée frets not about how the work is translated, but rather about what is translated and how it will be received among those who are accustomed to reading, as Mérimée scholar Maurice Parturier notes in his introduction to *Nouvelles moscovites*, the Catholic and royalist writer Victor de Laprade (xxi). This sort of reflection, in which Mérimée questions consistently Russian culture’s translatability into French culture, reappeared throughout his correspondence with Turgenev.

In spite of potential cultural misunderstandings, what mattered to Mérimée was again the fidelity with which Russian culture was translated. Mérimée affirmed that Turgenev as a cultural translator offered a faithful image of his native country: “Un patriotisme ne
l’empêche pas d’apercevoir les vices et les malheurs des institutions de son pays. . . .” (qtd. in Cessole et al. 122). This accurate depiction of Russia had more bearing finally for Mérimée than worries about offending the French readers’ mores or about how Russia would be perceived in France. Ultimately, Mérimée was convinced that Russian culture was translatable to certain French readers. In a February 1870 letter to Turgenev, he writes: “Un M. Bibikof . . . a lu votre nouvelle [Etranges histoires]. Il la trouve tellement russe qu’il m’a demandé si elle serait comprise en France. Il n’y a rien de plus grec que l’Odysée, et cependant il y a des Français que la comprennent” (qtd. in Parturier 245).

With rigorous standards for linguistic and cultural translations, as well as an abiding enthusiasm and faith in the value and comprehensibility of Russian literature and culture in France, Mérimée gained the respect and confidence of Turgenev. The discussion surrounding the publication of Le Chien in collaborative translation of Nouvelles moscovites prior to Mérimée’s death illustrates the extent to which Turgenev valued this relationship. Though the journal Le Nord had published “une excellentissime traduction” (Turgenev’s words) by another translator, Turgenev wrote to Hetzel in 1869 indicating that he did not want to “faire de peine à Mérimée” and deciding that he would like to keep Mérimée’s less-than-perfect translation (qtd. in Parturier 45). Turgenev changed his mind several times, requesting the Le Nord translation, but in the end returned to Mérimée’s because of the latter’s failing health (Parturier 47). Turgenev valued Mérimée’s work as a translator and friend here—in direct contradiction to past behaviors regarding his translated works. Clearly, he put his relationship with Mérimée ahead of the quality of the translations.

With Mérimée’s 1870 death, Turgenev lost a partner who had been invaluable to him. Superficially, they were an odd couple in both their literary and political aspirations.
Mérimée disdained Gogol’s work, but Turgenev took Gogol’s side publicly in Russia though it landed him in political hot water. Mérimée was an intime of the Imperial family, whereas Tsar Nicholas I exiled Turgenev for his unrelenting and thinly veiled criticisms of Russian autocracy. As the author of *Colomba* and *Carmen*, Mérimée had held an established position in the French literary field long before his interactions with Turgenev. Alternately, Turgenev was trying to carve a niche for himself in a foreign market all throughout his friendship with Mérimée. However, connecting with similar views and interests regarding Russian translations, the two were both able to profit from the unusual matching. Mérimée was able to continue to produce in an increasingly competitive field under the Second Empire, multiplying his strategies in the field by adding a specialization in Russian translations and history. Turgenev, without any cultural capital in France to begin, was able to enter the field in part by utilizing Mérimée’s name and connections.

**France’s Russian Missionary**

From his first translations with Louis Viardot at Paulin and Hachette to his regular publication of Russian literature in translation with Hetzel, Turgenev had overcome several obstacles. Thanks to his work at the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, he went from being an unknown writer to a well-known and well-loved member of a French literary circle. Having gained some autonomy in publishing his own works, he was also no longer obliged to stay with simply any publisher that would accept his works. With gains of prestige and independence

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23 Mérimée’s interest in Russia echoed his interest in other alterities. Mérimée’s interest in Corsican (*Mateo Falcone, Colomba*) and Spanish (*Clara Gazul*) identity is an integral part of his fiction. It should be noted, however, that Mérimée rarely used Russia as a subject in his fiction. His publications on Russia and the Slavs were largely translations and histories, with the exception of *La Guzla* (1827) and *Lokis* (1869).
within French publishing, he was able to ally himself with a publisher and a translator with whom he shared many opinions and experiences. As Turgenev’s strategies multiplied and succeeded, his translations were distributed in various formats (Hachette’s pocket book-like foreign literature collection, the novellas in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the volumes of short stories put together by Hachette and Hetzel), even though they were printed in relatively small amounts compared to other authors’ publications. With the resulting cultural capital he gained, Turgenev was better able to introduce French readership to Russian literature, winning its approval by maintaining a careful balance between French and Russian culture.

Thus, between 1845 and 1877, French readers had growing access to Turgenev’s work, no doubt aided by the writers, poets, and critics with whom Turgenev associated after moving to Paris. His relationships with the Viardot family and his work at the *Revue des Deux Mondes* eventually brought him into contact with George Sand, the Goncourt brothers, Théophile Gautier, Gustave Flaubert, Prosper Mérimée, Guy de Maupassant, and Emile Zola. “L’aimable barbare” was a star in this circle, charming his friends with his foreign mannerisms and wit. The paradox of Russia, long held to be at once both civilized and primitive, was incarnate in Turgenev’s own person, the gentle giant and loveable barbarian. France’s literary elite was enamored with Turgenev and Russian literature, increasing his prestige and symbolic worth as a transcultural writer. Almost a decade after Edmond de Goncourt’s statements about Turgenev, the rest of France would be mesmerized by new translations of Russian literature.

The familiar, yet vaguely exotic in Turgenev’s translations and his own personality (something he manipulated with ease in his writing and in social settings) made him well poised to help increase French interest in Russian literature. His role as an intermediary
between two cultures was essential to a shift in French perceptions of Russia during the last half of the nineteenth century. His role combined with changes within Russia’s borders helped allay France’s fears of his native country. First, Russia’s role as \textit{gendarme} of Europe began to dissipate after its defeat in the Crimean War. In addition, drastic social and judicial reforms undertaken by Tsar Alexander II in the 1860s brought Russia’s government closer to those of Western Europe. These events helped calm French fears of “tsarism,” thus stimulating a new French cultural curiosity about Russia (Malia 158-9; 165). Russia was now a more familiar cousin, while still remaining an unfamiliar Other.

Turgenev’s work ushered into France a new vision of Russia. The initial problems of publishing in France as a foreigner resolved, he served as linguistic and cultural translator for his French audience, helping to better define the two cultures’ similarities and differences. At the same time, the French readers opened up to all things Russian. Many French writers (such as Alexandre Dumas and Théophile Gautier) traveled to Russia and many readers learned about Russia through travel accounts in newspapers and journals. Publishers began producing not only Russian literature in translation (Tolstoy and Dostoevsky), but also historical novels set in Russia like Jules Verne’s \textit{Michel Strogoff} (1876) and Russian histories such as Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu’s three volume \textit{L’Empire des tsars} (1881-89). From Sainte-Beuve’s review of an unknown Russian author to the cult of the \textit{âme russe} in the 1880s, Russia’s image in France had greatly changed from the middle of the century. Though Turgenev cannot be credited solely for this transition, he did function as an influential intermediary, disseminating his vision of Russia within France’s literary circles. As some of France’s writers had fallen in love with Turgenev, the rest of the country was later enamored
with Russian literature. The legacy of 1812 and the Marquis de Custine had been replaced with Turgenev’s realistic, though still unfamiliar, portraits of his homeland.

**The Role of the Cultural Translator?**

While Turgenev’s particular path to gaining prestige and autonomy is unique, it draws attention as well to the importance of certain elements of literary production, including the importance of a name, literary sociability, and the search for financial and cultural capital. The most intriguing questions elicited by Turgenev’s example relate to differences between native and foreign writers. For example, to what extent is the writer able to draw from cultural capital from his or her own country and convert it to something useful in another country’s field of literary production? Is literary prestige translatable? Also, what sorts of strategies does a writer use when choosing a translator and/or the material that gets translated? What defines the author-translator relationship? How much control does the writer have over the translations once translated? Lastly, does the foreign writer/translator act as a cultural intermediary, a cultural translator, as well as a linguistic one? All of these questions lead to further inquiries about how any foreign culture is relayed to French readers at home, a task that was increasingly pursued by French travel and fiction writers alike beginning in the 1860s.
Chapter 3

Translations of the Imagined: French Travel Writers in Russia

“A des plus vifs plaisirs du voyageur, c’est cette première course à travers une ville inconnue pour lui, qui détruit ou qui réalise l’imagination qu’il s’en était faite. Les différences de formes, les particularités caractéristiques, les idiotismes de l’architecture saissent l’œil vierge encore de toute habitude et dont jamais la perception n’est plus nette” (34).

Théophile Gautier, *Le Voyage en Russie* (1867)

“Avant de venir en Russie, un Russe m’avait fait peur de son pays. . . . Après six mois dans sa patrie, un Russe encore m’en effrayait. Pourquoi donc, avant, pendant et après, voulait-on m’inspirer ces craintes? J’avais vu de la Russie le bon côté, et de cela même on voulait me faire mal penser. . . . Malgré ce qu’on m’a dit avant, pendant et après mon séjour en Russie, je le répète, j’y fus fort bien accueillie” (31).

Carla Serena, *De la Baltique à la mer Caspienne* (1880)

*A Post-Custine Russia?*

As Théophile Gautier wrote in his 1867 *Voyage en Russie*, and as Carla Serena affirmed later in 1880, travel within another country as a foreigner is colored by pre-journey visions of an imagined or experienced land, images that will meet or disappoint the traveler abroad. With his “virgin eye,” if not imagination, Gautier took in the country, noting these disappointments or surprises in his travel account for readers in France. His experiences and perspectives in Russia were novel for his readership; it was still rare for the French to travel to and within Russia. In his introduction to the anthology *Le Voyage en Russie*, Claude De Grève underlines the fact that it was not a simple task for the French to travel to Russia, not
just because of limitations of distance and transportation until the middle of the nineteenth century (France and Russia both did not begin to develop main railroads until 1837). It was limited as well by other factors: “Le temps et l’argent à dépenser pour pareille expédition, le mystère qui enveloppait le pays n’incitèrent pas au ‘grand tour’ avant longtemps. . . .” (i-ii).

Before the eighteenth century, French visitors to Russia were primarily limited to diplomats, members of the clergy, and scholars who rarely wrote of their experiences. In the eighteenth-century, the trend began to vary. Travelers now also included advisors to the Russian royal family or delegations from the West, as well as entrepreneurs, actors, hairdressers, soldiers, cooks, and tutors. They too rarely wrote of their time in Russia (ii-iii).

The nineteenth century, however, brought different groups of French to Russia: scientists (anthropologists, geographers, engineers), merchants, journalists, and exiles from France’s turbulent political climate (iv-v). It was during this time that the figure of the “voyageur-écrivain” emerged (the Marquis de Custine), as well as the French tourist in Russia who traveled for his or her own interests instead of political or commercial ones (v). After Custine’s *La Russie en 1839* was published, the *voyage en Russie* as a literary subject would become more prevalent. Still, the French were not traveling to Russia in large numbers. De Grève notes an important point regarding European interest in traveling to Russia: it was not until 1883 that the first guide book on Russia was published in German by Karl Baedeker, *West-und-Mittel Russland* (v).

French readers, however, had been able to explore Russia through published travel accounts and other publications on Russia. In the eighteenth century, tsarinas Elizabeth (1741-1762), and Catherine II (1762-1796) cultivated relationships with the *philosophes* Diderot (who visited Russia in 1773) and Voltaire (who never traveled to Russia). They later
wrote about their experiences and understandings of the country’s politics and history, Voltaire in *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand* (1763), Diderot in *Mémoires pour Cathérine II* (1773) and *Observations sur le Nakaz* (1774). After the French Revolution, many French aristocrats forced into exile wrote of their time in Russia, where the aristocracy was still firmly rooted. In addition, the French experience during the disastrous Russian campaign of 1812 drove many to record their experiences. Together these accounts ranged from, in De Grève’s words, “general indifference” toward Russia (Madame de Staël’s *Dix années d'exil*; Joseph de Maistre’s *Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg, ou, Entretiens sur le gouvernement temporel de la Providence*; Louis-Philippe de Ségur’s *Mémoires, ou, Souvenirs et anecdotes*) to scathingly critical assessments like the very successful account of 1812 by Philippe-Paul de Ségur, *Histoire de Napoléon et de la Grande Armée pendant l’année 1812* (De Grève xxviii). The final major work produced prior to the time period examined in this study is the Marquis de Custine’s *La Russie en 1839*, a “brûlot:”

> Non sans vérités sur un régime militaire, sur le despotisme, même “éclairé”
> puisqu’il démolit à maintes reprises “le mythe de Pierre le Grand” comme “la légende de Catherine,” . . . le livre s’empêtre dans les contradictions—et son auteur le reconnaît—chaque fois qu’il s’agit de l’histoire russe sous son aspect national. Cet aspect est en effet tantôt objet d’éloges, tantôt relégué dans une Asie barbare: c’était méconnaître l’appartenance déjà prépétrovienne de la Russie à l’Europe. (De Grève xxx)

Because of its controversial and contradictory nature, this work’s success greatly impacted subsequent travel accounts about Russia. In a chapter on the impact of Custine’s work on Europe, Michel Cadot concludes: “Souvent irritant, même pour les Français, discutable, le
livre de Custine n’en a pas moins été un événement considérable au milieu du siècle dernier: toute l’Europe se mit à réfléchir sur l’énigme russe” (La Russie dans la vie intellectuelle 257).

Clearly, those who would write after the publication of *La Russie en 1839* were not be ignorant of the book’s representation of Russia, often entering into dialogue with this landmark work.

The nineteenth-century travel accounts mentioned above, in marked contrast to those written between 1856 and 1894 (travelogues by Alexandre Dumas, Théophile Gautier, Carla Serena, Olympe Audouard, Marie de Ujfalvy-Bourdon), experienced tsarist Russia largely in light of the events in France after 1789 and French-Russian relations after the Congress of Vienna. The French travel writers who went to and wrote about Russia after the publication of Custine’s influential work and after the end of the Crimean War were sometimes frustrated by the differences they found in Russia (lack of quality accommodations, heavy-handed autocracy, passivity of the masses). However, they also viewed Russia and its colonies as an agreeable surprise, sometimes even as a delight, as they navigated a relatively unknown territory. They relished the idiosyncrasies in architecture, food, weather, clothing, and social behaviors. They marveled at various modes of transportation, hectic markets, and alien landscapes. All of this is in striking dissimilarity to the previous highly critical accounts. Their experience is not just of a tyrannical, vodka-soaked Russia. The country held wonders of landscapes, architecture, and encounters of different peoples. How did these writers, presenting their own experience of a foreign
culture to those from home, capture these different facets of Russia for a readership with little knowledge of them?²⁴

France and Russia through the Eyes of Voyageurs & Voyageuses

In cross-cultural exchanges, the role of a transcultural writer—interpreter of his or her own experience of one culture for readers of another—contributes perspectives generally otherwise inaccessible to his or her audience. In France, Ivan Turgenev as a translator presented new versions of Russia to French readers that countered previous reports about Russia from French travel writings earlier in the century. At the same time, many French voyageurs and voyageuses who wrote Russian travel accounts offered additional nuances to the changing perceptions of that country in France. To further explore the notion of cultural translation, this chapter examines French travel writings about Russia published between 1856 and 1894. How did French travel writers convey their experiences in Russia for readers at home? How did they envision their work? Was there a specifically French experience of Russia? Was the experience uniform for each French travel writer? And finally, how did the travel accounts also present certain French notions of civilization and culture when confronted by Russian “otherness” in language, behavior and customs? What did these writings say about France itself?

²⁴ When speaking of these writers, I am speaking of three different identities that Philippe Lejeune has pointed out in *Le Pacte autobiographique*: “Pour qu’il y ait autobiographie (et plus généralement littérature intime), il faut qu’il y ait identité de l’auteur, du narrateur et du personnage” (15). The writer who lends a name and a literary lineage to a work is necessarily someone other than both the narrator and the character, all of the same name. However, in travel writing, there is an added identity where the self disappears behind the eye and the pen as their work is not just an autobiographical genre.
A sampling of French travel accounts, examined through close readings, will serve to answer these questions. Though only a cross-section of works produced on Russian travels during the time period will be considered, the travelogues include examples from writers of the literary elite (Théophile Gautier’s 1867 *Voyage en Russie*), the popular (Alexandre Dumas’ 1858 *Le Voyage en Russie*), and the lesser-known today (Carla Serena’s 1880 *De la Baltique à la mer Caspienne*). They also encompass works written by male and female travelers of social classes and political affiliations. The accounts vary greatly in style, object, experience and opinions about Russia and the Russians, but all demonstrate the growing openness and fascination of French travelers in Russia, despite lingering suspicions about the nature of Russian civilization and culture. The study will examine each author’s work, beginning with Dumas and Gautier. It will then proceed to accounts by travel writers who, because of their position as women both at home and abroad, offer experiences and observations that stand in contrast to those of their fellow *voyageurs*.

Regarding the selection of texts, the study begins with Dumas and Gautier, who went to Russia during an initial cooling-down period in French Russian relations after the Crimean War. These two writers wrote notable travelogues: “Grâce à ces deux écrivains, bien connus du public, la Russie se rapprochait des lecteurs français” (De Grève xxxiv). However, after this period, relatively little was written about Russia. De Grève cites the following events as contributing to the effective halt in Russian travel accounts in France: the lack of interest in the abolition of serfdom (1861); resistance to the Russian government’s violent response to another Polish uprising (1863); a Prussian treaty signed

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25 An exception to this was the collection of Gautier’s travel *feuilletons* published together as *Voyage en Russie* in 1866.
with Russia over the issue of Poland (1863); and Russia’s entente with Prussia in 1870 against France’s interests (xxxiv). However, as France was weakened within Europe after 1870 and the Commune, it looked for an ally against an all-powerful Germany—Russia. As France began to build its relations with a distant Russia, publications of travel accounts also resumed. To examine this second period, the study turns to the voyageuses’ accounts, written between 1876 and 1880. Not included are several works by other voyageurs Jean de Beauregard’s _Chez nos amis de Russie_ (1893); Jacques Boucher de Crèveceur de Perthes’ _Voyage en Russie, retour par la Lituanie, la Pologne, la Sibérie, la Saxe et le duché de Nassau, séjour à Wiesbade, en 1856_ (1859); Dick de Lonlay’s _De Paris à Moscou. Souvenirs du couronnement de S.M. Alexandre III_ (1887); Armand Silvestre’s _La Russie. Impressions. Portraits. Paysages._ (1892); or, Marius Vachon’s _La Russie au soleil_ (1886). I have chosen not to include these travelogues in the interest of concentrating more fully on the voyageuses-écrivaines, often overlooked in major descriptions of Russian travelogues of the period. Taking as a point of departure an initial exploration of influential voyageurs’ accounts as male counterpoints to the women travel writers, this chapter explores the little-known travelogues (albeit successful in their own time) written by women during the period under question and the ways in which they contrast with the works of literary giants such as Dumas.

_Alexandre Dumas (père): “Grattez un Russe et vous trouverez un Tartare”_\(^{26}\)

Alexandre Dumas père explored the theme of Russian civilization and culture in his _Voyage en Russie_, an account of his travels in Russia between 1858 and 1859. He had long

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\(^{26}\) This quote is often attributed to Napoleon (Gross 55).
been interested in Russia (a country in which his work was known), dedicating the 1839 play he wrote with Gérard Nerval, *L'Alchimiste*, to Tsar Nicolas I. His 1840-1841 novel *Le Maître d'armes* was inspired by the 1825 Decembrist uprisings in Saint Petersburg. Because of his portrayal of the Tsar's repression of the Decembrists, the Russian government prohibited Dumas from visiting Russia until after the death of Nicolas I in 1855.

Even if he was unable initially to visit Russia, Dumas maintained his interest in traveling and published the series *Impressions de voyage* based in North Africa, Spain, France and Italy. By the late 1850s, his successes as a novelist and playwright seemed exhausted; he turned again to *feuilletons* about his travel in his weekly publication *Le Monte-Cristo* to help with the expenses of his personal and professional debts. At first, he had envisioned a trip around the Mediterranean. Yet after meeting a young Russian noble couple, the Kushalev-Bezborodkos, at a party in Paris, arrangements were made for him to accompany them on a trip back to Saint Petersburg. He left Paris in mid-June 1858 and arrived in Saint Petersburg almost a week later. He spent the next nine months touring northern and southern Russia (Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, Kazan, Astrakhan, the Caucasus) before returning to France in 1859, collecting stories from the Tsar's Empire for publication in France. Dumas' *Voyage en Russie* is a compilation published in 1860 by the Parisian publishing house Hermann of several smaller texts that had also appeared separately as *feuilletons* in *Le Monte-Cristo* and *Le Constitutionnel: Impressions de voyage en Russie* (Michel Lévy, 1865-66) and *Impressions de voyage dans le Caucase* (Michel Lévy, 1865).
Dumas’ “Historically Truthful” Peter the Great

Dumas visited diverse areas within the country, from Saint Petersburg to Moscow, from Kazan to Astrakhan. The story of his Russian adventures is in fact a collection of many stories from his experiences while there. The narrative wanders from accounts of politics to stories about transportation. One of the most revealing passages about his style in this account, as well as his perceptions and portrayals of Russia, is the description of the Romanov family and Peter the Great, the most celebrated tsar of this dynasty who reigned between 1682 and 1725. Known above all for his work to “Westernize” Russia, Peter the Great is a focal point for Dumas.

In a description of Peter the Great, Dumas associates the tsar with the West: “Ces souvenirs, ces traditions, ces légendes, nous les relèverons nous-même avec le respect que nous inspire l’homme de génie, que cet homme se nomme César ou Charlemagne, Saint Louis ou Pierre le Grand, Gustave-Adolphe ou Napoléon” (Voyage en Russie 131). Dumas clearly places the tsar alongside famous leaders of great European or French empires. He also discusses Peter the Great’s chef d’œuvre, Saint Petersburg, citing Alexander Pushkin’s famous poem, “Mednyi vsadnik” or “The Bronze Horseman,” about Peter the Great: “Tu dois, à coups de hache, ouvrir sur l’Occident/La fenêtre par où, dans ton œuvre grossière,/Du soleil de l’Europe entrera la lumière” (92). Without a doubt, Peter the Great becomes a representative of the West (something that for Dumas represents the greatness of empire and of light) as he investigates a paradoxical Russia. Dumas thus spends a significant

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27 Dumas version of “Mednyi vsadnik” takes a significant departure from Pushkin’s original poem. Furthermore, he does not cite whose translation he uses.
part of his travel account exploring the tsar’s birth, family life, studies, and the successes and complications during his rule.

Dumas devotes several chapters to the revolt of the *streltsy*. Sophina, the half-sister of the tsar, led a rebellion against Peter after the death of their father, Alexei I, designed to usurp power from young Peter. The uprising lasted for several years until Peter condemned all the *streltsy* to death. According to the myths surrounding this episode of Russian history, Peter himself was instrumental in the execution of his opposition, either as an enthused eyewitness or as a executioner. This legend of thousands executed at the hands of Russia’s greatest leader captivated the storyteller Dumas. It is precisely in this story where his ideas about a civilized or uncivilized Russia become clear.

To begin his account of the *streltsy*, the narrator criticizes Voltaire for his *Histoire de l’empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand*, a work “farci d’erreurs,” which explores the reign of Peter the Great (De Grève 1270). For him, Voltaire’s version of the tsar’s rule is “arranged” because Voltaire omits the tsar’s decision to condemn his son Alexei, an “éternel conspirateur,” to death. Voltaire, as told here, does this so as to not tarnish the ruler’s image as an enlightened despot so dear to the *philosophe*’s heart. The narrator disapproves of this omission because he only accepts the truthful version of history. “Il n’y a rien à arranger là-dedans, à notre avis, il n’y a que raconter purement et simplement. L’auteur qui arrange un événement quelconque est tout simplement un faussaire historique. Ecrivez ce qui est vrai, ou ce que vous croyez être vrai, ou n’écrivez pas” (89). Thus, Dumas the narrator intends in

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28 The *streltsy* were a specialized military group formed in the sixteenth century. The Russian verb *strelit’* translates in English as “to shoot.”
re-writing the history of Peter the Great and the *streltsy* to tell a story that is not fabricated.

Dumas wants his readers to believe that he will be a teller of truth.

When explaining why events happened, the writer goes on to propose not only a truthful history, but also one that piques the reader’s interest: “Nous voulons, aujourd’hui, lire non seulement les événements d’un règne, connaître non seulement les catastrophes d’un empire, mais encore les causes de ces événements, les raisons des catastrophes. Là, en effet, est la philosophie de l’histoire, son enseignement, son intérêt” (90). The preliminary goal then is to offer history that is complete, instructional and appealing. He very clearly goes on to underline this in a metahistorical comment about the proper role of historians:

Quant aux événements, si terribles qu’ils soient, nous ne vous demanderons pas le temps de les arranger: nous vous les raconterons tels qu’ils se sont accomplis. C’est l’affaire de ceux qui font les événements, et non de ceux qui les écrivent. Consignons les actes bons ou mauvais des tyrans des nations ou des pasteurs des peuples, et que ceux-là qui ont déjà rendu compte à Dieu, qui les avait envoyés sur cette terre, s’arrangent comme ils pourront avec la postérité. (90)

To ensure again that his readers understand, Dumas repeats his aim to tell the truth very plainly, while criticizing those historians who do not. With this lengthy, almost pedantic reflection to convince readers of his account’s historical truthfulness, Dumas makes sure to point out that he will not be a judge, but rather the messenger of events surrounding Peter’s involvement with the *streltsy* revolt and punishment.
Of the East or the West?

Dumas begins his exploration of the history of the Russian insurrection, with the first episode, one in which Peter was the streltzy’s target. Peter’s sister Sophie led the rebels in an effort to usurp power. Dumas paints the streltzy as blood-thirsty villains: they throw victims out the window, kill congregants in the middle of a mass, and torture with “le supplice chinois” where the victim is cut into “dix mille morceaux,” “les pieds, les mains et la tête des suppliciés sur les piques de fer de la balustrade” (94-95). With this description of the massacres, Dumas sets up Peter’s role in restoring order. “Pierre a hérité d’un empire tout de terre, où prisonnier et sans issue, il se trouve comme un dompteur de lions, enfermé avec la barbarie, la sédition et la violence” (98). In this description of the Russian empire, Dumas positions Peter, the great Westernizer of Russia, as a leader, as a “lion tamer,” who must rid Russia of these barbaric elements.

As Edward Said notes in Orientalism, the distinction between Western civilization and Eastern barbarism that Dumas explores in the story of Peter the Great and the streltzy is a common trait of Western European writing. According to Said, the West defines itself as the opposite of the East, the concept of which is also defined by the West. “On the one hand there are Westerners, and on the other there are the Arab-Orientals; the former are (in no particular order) rational, peaceful, liberal, logical capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion; the latter are none of these things” (49). There can be no question: the East is the “not West.” Though Said does not include Russia in his own definition of the Orient, Dumas’ description of Peter’s role in Russia and his descriptions of the streltzy places a Russia without peace, reason, logic, freedom or moral certitude outside of what Said defines as Western. In order to Westernize Russia, Peter must make radical changes in his
empire. He must “le fer et le feu à la main, mettre de l’ordre dans ces différentes couches
d’esclaves, étendues les uns sur les autres” in a country where “tous se cramponneront à
cette barbarie antique, à ces mœurs grossières, à ces ténèbres qui font de la Russie... bien
plus une forêt qu’un royaume” (99). Wild, barbaric and dark Russia will be put in order
through Peter’s Westernization.

“A coups de hache . . . .”

With this, the narrator proceeds to a description of Peter’s first executions.

Les coupables furent mis à la question, non point pour qu’ils avouassent, le
crime était déjà patent, mais qu’ils souffrissent tout ce qu’ils pouvaient souffrir
[sic]; puis on les mutila en leur arrachant chaque membre; puis la mort vint à
son tour, mais seulement lorsqu’il ne restait plus aux patients assez de sang et
de vie pour la douleur. Enfin, leurs têtes furent exposées au sommet d’une
colonne, et leurs membres rangés en manière d’ornement. (100)

The gruesome manner by which the streltsy are put to death—a death that comes only
because there is no more blood or life left in them—is shocking given Peter’s participation
in the executions. This description differs little from the description of the massacres of the
streltsy who also practiced torture, dismemberment and other horrifying acts. Is this how
Peter, as an enlightened, European despot would proceed to civilize Russia?

The story does not end with this description. After the initial executions, there are
still seventeen thousand streltsy left in Russia. In this version of the story, Peter would not
rest until all the rebels were exterminated from his empire. The Tsar thus arranges a massive stage for execution on Red Square, all of which he will orchestrate.

As the scene begins, Dumas recounts that Peter was at the center of the events. “Le tzar était assis sur son trône, et sur les degrés du trône, étaient assis tous les princes, seigneurs et officiers de sa cour” (103). Gathered around are those sentenced to death: “On enferma les sept mille condamnés dans une enceinte palisadée autour de laquelle on dressa deux cents gibets. A chaque gibet on pouvait pendre dix hommes” (103). On a spatial plane, Peter is at the center. He will also be the focal point of the events on Red Square. First, the readers learn that Peter counts out two thousand condemned one by one who, in groups of ten, are led to the scaffold to be hanged. Here Peter takes on more power, acting as the executioner himself. Peter is so efficient at this task, Dumas notes, that he is able to finish the first stage in the large-scale capital punishment by just eleven o’clock in the morning.

The following events reinforce the macabre scene. Red Square becomes much like the spectacle of a Roman amphitheater with organized mass killing for the entertainment of those gathered to watch, as well as for Dumas’ readers who become spectacular voyeurs: “Les préparatifs en avaient été faits avec autant de soin que pour la pendaison, et le plus habile metteur en scène n’aurait rien à y reprendre” (103). Peter the Great is the highly capable metteur en scène of a horrendous play. His positional and organizational power is obvious, but Dumas goes on to underline his physical strength as well. “Le tzar fit sortir les cents premiers strélitz. A ces premiers strélitz, il coupa la tête de sa propre main. Dans son apprentissage de charpentier, il avait appris à manier la hache” (104). The Tsar, known for his skills as a carpenter and for building Saint Petersburg “à coups de hache,” now chops off
heads! Peter is the incarnation of the sacred couple king-executioner that Joseph de Maîstre describes in *Les Soirées de Saint Pétersbourg*. The ruler is at once the source of the law as tsar and the action of the law as executioner. His role in the execution is one in which an absolute power is manifest.

If this demonstration of power were not enough, Peter next turns to the Russian nobles in attendance and asks them to also decapitate the criminals. “[I]l fit distribuer cent haches à ceux qui l’accompagnaient. ‘A votre tour’, dit-il; ‘j’ai fait ma besogne, faites la vôtre’. Lorsque chacun d’eux eut abattu ses dix ou douze têtes, le tsar les tint quittes, et leur permit de passer la hache aux soldats, qui achevèrent la besogne, mais sous les yeux du tsar et de ses courtisans” (104). His “besogne,” as if he had no choice in the matter, as well as that of the Russian nobles, was not to kill one criminal, but hundreds. The tsar makes his mark not only on those whose heads he severs with an ax, but also on the blood-stained hands of those in attendance. Furthermore, after their participation in the Red Square bloodbath, he requires them to stay and watch the remainder of the execution carried out by the imperial soldiers. No one in attendance will forget Peter’s lesson; nor will Dumas’ readers.

*Peter the Great’s “Surpouvoir”*

Dumas’ hideous story does not end here. After the hangings and decapitations, Peter turns to his conspiring sister Sophia. He locks her in a tower with a horrific view:

[T]rois strélitz furent pendus . . . en face de la fenêtre de la prison. Un des condamnés fut pendu l’adresse à la main. La potence de celui-ci était si près
Here again, Peter’s didactic acts are obvious. Using the tools of rotting arms and bodies, Peter instructs Sophia as to her possible end if she continues to foment uprisings. Like Damiens, the regicide Michel Foucault describes in *Surveiller et punir*, the strelits has in hand the source of his crime (the adresse calling for Sophia to rule). Thus the beginning of the crime and its end (the criminal’s rotting body) are summarized in front of Sophia’s eyes. The decomposing strelits serves as a corporeal text upon which Peter inscribes his imperial lesson.

The story closes with further revealing details. “Pour éterniser la mémoire de cette grande exécution, Pierre fit dresser sur les grandes routes des pyramides où l’on consigna à la fois le crime et le châtiment des coupables” (105). The tsar instructs the entire Russian empire as well in the crime and the consequences of treason against him. Those who rise up against him will die an excruciating death.

Dumas’ narrative of this episode of Russian history underlines Peter’s absolute, autocratic power in the many roles he plays. He is the source of the law as the tsar. He is the victim of this law that has been broken when his sister aims to usurp his power. He is also the judge or executor of the law, proscribing the punishment to be met for the offenders. He is finally, as well, the action of the law as the executioner. With this many roles in the figure of one person, Peter the Great’s power appears without limits. Foucault defines this excess power: “le ‘surpouvoir’ monarchique... identifie le droit de punir, avec le pouvoir personnel du souverain. Identification théorique qui fait du roi la fons justitiae; mais dont les conséquences pratiques sont déchiffrables jusque dans ce qui paraît s’opposer à lui
et limiter son absolutisme” (95). Dumas’ description of the massive streltsy execution demonstrates Peter’s own surpouvoir. However, this story seems to push Peter’s power as more than even a surpouvoir. The tsar who kills his subjects with his own hands is a demonstration of another power entirely, one that instills not just respect and obedience, but also fear, in his subjects.

What does this representation of Peter’s power reveal about Dumas’ vision of Russia in light of the announced impartial account of events? On the political level, there are echoes in Montesquieu’s political philosophy. His *Esprit des lois* examines precisely this sort of power associated with a monarch. Whereas a monarchy is constructed on the notion of honor, the despotic state bases itself on its subjects’ fear. The examples given of despotic rulers are of “pachas,” “vizirs,” or “sophis,” all of whom oversee governments in the East. Thus, for Montesquieu, surpouvoir as expressed in a ruler is a power that is associated purely with the East.

Dumas’ depiction of Peter the Westernizer begins to disintegrate. How does he conclude his opinions of this great Russian ruler? After describing the tsar’s final acts with the streltsy, the writer notes that “l’exemple fut suivi plus tard par Mahmoud, à l’endroit des janissaires, et par Méhémet-Ali, à l’endroit des mamelouks” (105). Mahmoud, an Ottoman sultan, massacred a group of rebellious subjects in 1826, only to be defeated later by Méhémit-Ali, viceroy of Egypt. The former had brutally eradicated the Mamelouks in 1811 while striving to aid the Ottoman empire. The two leaders are clearly not Europeans, but belong to the Muslim world.

Readers of Dumas’ travelogue might be surprised by this unexpected reversal of roles. At first, Peter is compared to Cesar and Charlemagne, great leaders of the West.
Dumas finishes however by comparing the tsar to autocrats of an Eastern empire. The tsar’s actions are barbaric and excessive, contradicting his association with the civilizing process of an untamed Russia. Peter appears more Eastern, finally, than Western.

**Théophile Gautier: The Art of Travel Writing**

Théophile Gautier’s 1867 *Voyage en Russie* was published not long after Alexandre Dumas’ Russian travel accounts, the two writers traveling in the same country at approximately the same time, but never meeting abroad. Like Dumas, Gautier was struggling to earn his living as a writer. He, like Dumas, turned to a genre that was becoming more lucrative, travel literature (Liechtenhan, “Introduction” 12). However, the two French travel writers’ similarities end here. Gautier’s *Voyage en Russie* offers a radically different perspective of Russia, based on both the writer’s financial needs and aesthetic vision.

Though Gautier’s impetus for writing his travelogue was similar to Dumas’, the financial support for the project was meant to come from the Russian government: Gautier’s account was proposed as a sort of optimistic answer to the Marquis de Custine’s *La Russie en 1839*. Originally, the travelogue-as-antidote or travelogue-as-propaganda had been proposed to Balzac in 1844, but his *Lettre sur Kiew* was never published. Instead, in

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29 Gautier was clearly in much the same position as his peer Dumas: “Théophile Gautier, en cette fin des années 50, vivait modiquement de ses critiques d’art et de théâtre, voire de ses chroniques de voyage données au Moniteur universel; il attendait non sans angoisse l’occasion de trouver des ressources complémentaires” (Liechtenhan, “Préface” 12).

30 *Lettre sur Kiew*, initially proposed for publication in *Le Journal des débats* in 1847, was not published until the twentieth century (1927). Balzac did not publish the work for the Russian government because he had difficulty mincing his words about his disappointment in Russia. He also wished to maintain the possibility of
1857, the proposition came to Gautier, proponent of *l'art pour l'art*, in the form of a book explaining Russia’s artistic merits, *Les Trésors d’art de la Russie ancienne et moderne*, with *héliogravures* by Pierre-Ambroise Richebourg, a student of Louis Daguerre. The Russian government had hired the Dutch publisher Carolus van Raay to produce the final work. Moved by both financial constraints and a predilection for travel, Gautier accepted. The Russians wanted to make sure, however, that they would be able to control what *Les Trésors* would present to readers abroad: the Russian censors would examine Gautier’s work to avoid another public relations disaster for the country like *La Russie en 1839*. Gautier agreed to these terms. The project was supported in France as well by the imperial government and was even facilitated by the same Russians, the Kushalev-Bezborodkos, who had encouraged Dumas’ visit to Russia (Liechtenhan, “Introduction” 12-13).

The writer did not travel to Russia by himself. He was joined by his son Théo and an unknown *bailleur de fonds*. They arrived in Saint Petersburg in October 1858, traveled to Moscow in January 1859, returning to the capital a month later. Gautier and his entourage left Russia at the end of March 1859. Though representatives of both French and Russian...
governments guaranteed Gautier’s *Trésors* project, Gautier saw very little of the original money promised and struggled to make ends meet for himself and his family at home during his time in Russia. In the end, Gautier’s proposed payment for *Les Trésors* fell through, forcing him to turn instead to publishing his accounts as *feuilletons*, primarily in the *Moniteur universel*, but also in *Le Monde illustré*, *Le Journal de Saint-Pétersbourg* and *Revue nationale et étrangère* (26). With the *Moniteur universel*, an official government publication with a pro-Russia stance, as an outlet for his travel account, Gautier finally revived his doomed project and was able to earn some more money for his trips to Russia (17). The text of *Voyage en Russie* (published as a whole by Charpentier in 1866) was assembled primarily from the *feuilletons* published in the *Moniteur universel* (27). Gautier returned again to Russia in 1861 in an effort to sort out delays with the *Trésors* and his payment to no avail. He traveled instead to Nizhny Novgorod between August and October 1861, accounts of which also appear in *Voyage en Russie* (17).

Though set during the same period in which Dumas was in the country, Gautier’s project to write about his travels in Russia was inherently different in scope and tone given parameters imposed for a work sponsored by the Russian government, as well as the financial difficulties encountered during his travels and the would-be publication of *Les Trésors*. Moreover, the two writers’ approaches to writing travel accounts in Russia were radically different:

Dumas est omniprésent dans son texte et il lui arrive les aventures les plus incroyables. Gautier se révèle d’une discrétion remarquable; il cherche

32 Liechtenhan notes that publications like the *Moniteur universel* were long adept at cultivating a certain vision of Russia, even in light of tensions in France’s relationship to Russia: “La Russie depuis Pierre 1er jouissait de la renommée d’un pays des merveilles où il était envisageable de faire fortune; les incidents belliqueux successifs n’avaient pu altérer ce mythe savamment entretenu par une partie de la presse française, par ces journaux conservateurs russophiles comme par exemple *Le Moniteur universel*” (“Préface” 12).

Dumas, as described above, does deal with the political aspects of Russia’s past and present directly. Indeed, his approach is historical. His long meditation on Peter the Great’s participation in the execution of the streltsy serves as evidence of this. Conversely, Gautier’s vision of Russia is one that is apolitical, in part due to his subjection to Russian censors, but also related to his own aesthetic approach to writing his experiences in another country. Gautier’s *Voyage en Russie* chronicles several facets of Russian life as seen through the eyes of the writer best known for his credo of *l’art pour l’art*: art, language, inhabitants, architecture, and weather.33 Unlike Dumas, Gautier avoids direct political commentary. Instead, he is

33See Anne Ubersfeld for a similar examination of Gautier’s aesthetic in *Voyage en Russie* (Théophile Gautier, 349-51).
“[p]eintre puis poète, plutôt que philosophe ou journaliste” who presents to the reader “ses visions fugitives de la Russie dans une suite d’eaux-fortes de tailles doubes et de pastels” (Liechtenhan, “Introduction” 18). The “poet-painter”’s *Voyage en Russie* offers a captivating depiction of Russia through his experiences in Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Sergeiyev Posad, and Nizhny Novgorod. Through detailed descriptions of art, architecture, clothing, and landscapes, Gautier’s painterly vision of the otherness of Russia is gradually revealed.

**Enchanting Surfaces**

In Saint Petersburg, Gautier immediately notices (with his “virgin eye”) the striking differences between Russia and France. Upon his first outing in the city, he states: “Tout cela, confusément entrevu dans la rapidité de la course et l’étonnement de la nouveauté, formait un ensemble magnifique et babylonien” (*Voyage en Russie* [1997] 91). Here, at the beginning of his travels, Gautier is stunned by the “Babylonian” whole of Saint Petersburg, placing his experience thus far in Russia somewhere within the mythical Middle East, and certainly outside Europe. Even while he is living in this city, it maintains its dreamlike, otherly qualities: “Cette première sortie au hasard à travers une ville inconnue et longtemps rêvée est une des plus vives jouissances du voyageur et le paye avec usure des fatigues de la route” (93). It is clear with these passages that Gautier’s Russia has been, up to this point, an imagined flight of fancy. His expectations, once there, are high. He wants to be compensated for his road weariness. He positions himself—as well as his readers—as a receptive beneficiary, not a critic, of what Russia has to offer him. He does not expect to be let down.
One of the most immediately noticeable aspects of Gautier’s magical Russian reverie is the cityscape. Gautier was fascinated by Russian architecture. He devoted one chapter to the descriptions of Saint Isaac’s Cathedral in Saint Petersburg, another to the Kremlin. Here, in the first sentences of Chapter 15, “Saint-Isaac” (describing one of Saint Petersburg’s well-known churches), he delights in the structure before him:

Quand le voyageur, entré dans le golfe de Finlande, approche de Saint-Pétersbourg, ce qui d’abord préoccupe son regard, c’est le dôme de Saint-Isaac, posé sur la silhouette de la ville comme une mitre d’or. Si le ciel est pur et qu’un rayon descend, l’effet devient magique: cette impression première est juste et l’on doit s’y abandonner. L’église de Saint-Isaac brille au premier rang parmi les édifices religieux qui ornent la capitale de toutes les Russies. (193)

With the magnificent Saint Isaac, the traveler (and Gautier’s reader) “must let himself go” to enjoy its magical effects. Though this cathedral is presented as “one of the most beautiful” to belong to any Russian capital, Gautier is careful to note in this passage, however, that the architect, Auguste Ricard de Montferrand, was French.

In Moscow, he experiences the same sort of dreamy architecture. However, in the old capital, the writer is initially at a loss for how to describe Saint Basil’s church on Red Square:

[É]trange comme l’architecture du rêve, se dresse chimériquement l’impossible église de Vassili-Blajennoi, qui fait douter la raison du témoignage des yeux. On la voit avec toute l’apparence de la réalité, et l’on se demande si ce n’est pas un mirage fantastique, un édifice de nuées
bizarrement coloré par le soleil et que le tremblement de l'air va déformer ou évanouir. C'est sans aucun doute le monument le plus original du monde, il ne rappelle rien de ce qu'on a vu et ne se rattache à aucun style. . . . Mais ne cherchons pas de comparaisons pour donner l'idée d'une chose qui n'a ni prototype, ni similaire. Essayons plutôt de décrire Vassili-Blajennnoi, si toutefois il existe un vocabulaire pour parler de ce qui n'a pas été prévu.

(252-253)

Saint Basil’s Cathedral defies Gautier’s architectural vocabulary: its originality and striking colors cause him to even doubt its reality. He describes it as ephemeral, not concrete: “a bizarrely colored edifice of clouds” or as a “fantastic mirage.” Here again, with doubts he will be able to portray Saint Basil’s, Gautier does concretize in words finally a very real architectural structure in categories of the imagined or fleeting. Despite his amazement, Gautier’s task as the narrator is to convey his experiences, however ephemeral they may be to him, while also establishing the preeminence of a poetics of travelogue.

Nevertheless, as he continues his description, he draws comparisons. The cathedral’s roof can be likened to “une pagode indoue, chinoise ou thibétane” (253). Some of the exterior designs recall “des châles de l’Inde, et, ainsi posés sur le toit de l’église, ils ressemblent à des kiosques de sultans” (254). Overall, the writer, in his struggle to describe what he has suggested is difficult to capture, and associates Saint Basil’s Cathedral with Asian and Middle Eastern architecture. Though he briefly compares the mosaics of Venice’s Saint Mark with the interior of Saint Basil’s, the overall presentation of the cathedral remains steeped in his ideas about its fantastical nature, something foreign to Europeans (254). The next chapter describes the Kremlin as “byzantin” (though linked to Europe through Greece,
Byzantine was also the capital of Eastern Christianity) and “quelque chose de plus oriental que l’Alhambra” (260-61). For this narrator Saint Basil’s is like nothing found in the West. As Liechtenhan notes, “La deuxième ville du pays ne subit pas d’analyse méthodique; elle se fond dans un tableau orientaliste aux teintes vives, mais aux contours flous” (“Introduction” 17). Russia’s admirable architecture is almost Eastern.

Russian architecture stands out as one of the main objects that Gautier tries to evoke for his readers. This is not surprising since the trip to Russia was initially planned for the *Trésors* project. His tone towards the structures he encounters is usually one of amazement and admiration. Yet even with this, hecuttingly remarks,

> [o]n se figure volontiers le Kremlin noirci par le temps, enfumé de ce ton sombre qui chez nous revêt les vieux monuments et contribue à leur beauté en la rendant vénérable. Il faut être arrivé à une civilisation extrême pour comprendre ce sentiment et attacher du prix aux traces que les siècles ont laissées de leur passage sur l’épiderme des temples, des palais ou des forteresses. Comme les peuple encore naïfs, les Russes aiment ce qui est neuf ou du moins ce qui en a l’air, et ils croient prouver leur respect pour un monument en renouvelant sa robe de peinture aussitôt qu’elle s’effrange ou s’éraillle. (260).

Here, Gautier belittles the “naive” Russians, those who are not part of an “extreme” or more advanced civilization—namely France. He intimates that somewhere else others have a better way of maintaining monuments by not violating their traces of the past, by not renewing paint on buildings and monuments. For him, the Russians lack taste as opposed to societies he deems more fully “civilized.” Though certainly enraptured by Russian
architecture, Gautier demeans the Russians’ treatment of their own architectural treasures by suggesting that the Russians have yet to attain a certain high level of architectural appreciation.

The writer’s aesthetic criticism of Russia’s architectural surfaces is echoed in his depiction of its inhabitants. He is taken, above all, with the male peasants or *muzhiki*:

La plupart de ces moujiks avaient la chemise rose par-dessus le pantalon, en forme de jaquette, les grègues larges les bottes à mi-jambe; d’autres étaient affublés déjà de la touloupe ou tunique en peau de mouton. . . .

Ces hommes. . . préoccupent. . . l’imagination de l’étranger. . . . Ne vous représentez cependant rien de farouche ou d’alarmant; ces moujiks ont la physionomie douce, intelligente, et leurs manières polies feraient honte à la brutalité de nos portefaix. (89)

Peculiarly, even after several encounters with these men, Gautier never mentions anything about their personalities except their good manners. Unlike the description of architecture, however, he does compliment the comportment of Russia’s *muzhiki* that would shame the French *portefaix*. The passage once again focuses on Russia’s exteriors, this time in human form, figures capable of captivating his imagination. He concentrates on their dress: their pants, hats, and shirts. The Russians’ clothes are described in detail—colors, materials, and display. By Gautier’s account, each only has the countenance of a “nice” and “intelligent” person. Appearance seems to be all that matters.\(^{34}\)

\(^{34}\)For explorations of views on Gautier’s aesthetic, see Barthélemy (408), Cadot (“Les voyages” 24) and Ubersfeld (“Théophile Gautier et la beauté virile”). For similar passages in *Voyage en Russie*, see 58, 100, 290, 307, 342, 353, 354, 357, and 370. Though by no means an exhaustive list of such descriptions, these passages reinforce the fact that Gautier concentrates solely on the facade of those he encounters. He describes skin, hair, jewels, clothing, and mannerisms.
descriptions of Russians he encounters. During a ball held at the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg, he describes the attendees’ dress, the color of the fabrics, jewelry, and make-up (58). While visiting the tomb of Saint Sergei in Sergeiyev Posad, he meets a young nun whose hair, clothes, gestures, and eyes are meticulously described. Gautier never describes her personality, or what she substantially represents, but rather her humble appearance (290).

Thus, in searching for the human side of Russia, Gautier looks to the surface of the people he encounters, both men and women, poor and rich. In the end, Russia’s architecture and citizens become stereotyped surfaces. Russia is a picturesque country for Gautier, filled with beautiful, though strange buildings and captivating people. As the traveler, he only notes the surface, not attempting at all to understand what lies behind the differences. Constance Gosselin Schick remarks that in Gautier’s travel descriptions “art serves as such a powerful pretext . . . that reality becomes a pretext for art” (360). Liechtenhan affirms this as well:

L’homme des feuilletons ne songe donc pas à quitter ses préoccupations habituelles. . . . Est-ce alors étonnant que les Russes soient décrits par quelques costumes qui sentent l’imagerie d’épinal? Il est enchanté par les physionomies, la tenue pittoresque du muzhik tout de rose et de bleu vêtu, enveloppé d’une douillette touloupe, reluisant de propreté. Personnages de théâtre magistralement esquissés. (22)

Whether it is theater or paintings that Gautier encounters, his representation of Russia is of that which is externally beautiful and captivating, but which goes barely beyond stereotypes as what matters is the poetic re-creation of his experiences.

His tendency to concentrate only on the exterior of his Russian experiences extends
to other objects as well, including language. Language plays an important role in Gautier’s travel account in which thoughts on this subject often preoccupy the frustrated traveler:

“Quand on est en pays étranger, réduit à l’état de sourd-muet, on ne peut s’empêcher de maudire celui qui eut l’idée la tour de Babel. . . . ” (51). Without a command of Russian, Gautier feels reduced to being deaf and dumb. Occasionally he uses some Russian words he has picked up, but they are haphazardly chosen and awkwardly placed at best. His knowledge of Russian remains at the simplest level. As a solution to his linguistic difficulties, he suggests a universal language, French or English, to facilitate mutual understanding, no matter where one is found in the world. With this thought, he concludes hastily: “[F]élicitons-nous de ce que la noble langue de notre patrie soit parlée. . . en quelque endroit qu’on se trouve, par quiconque se pique d’être bien élevé, instruit et intelligent” (51).

In light of this attitude, it is clear that Gautier never intends to go beyond the barriers or surfaces of a foreign language. Even more, he implies that those who do not care enough to learn French are not “well-raised, instructed, and intelligent,” thereby reducing the majority of Russians to a linguistically ignorant people. Gautier, once a “sourd-muet,” applies a puzzling logic to relegate the natives to a linguistic status considerably lower than his own in Russia.

Aside from this critique of his trip, Gautier paints a portrait of an enchanting land. Surprisingly enough, the Russian climate seduces him. Much of his travel-as-translated-into-aesthetics is expressed in the following quote:

De temps en temps, les féeries, dont le Nord console la longueur de ses nuits glacées, déploient leur magnificences. . . . L’aurore boréale. . . [avec]. . . [l]e bouquet de fusées, d’effluves, d’irradiation, de bandes phosphorescentes,
Gautier imagines a spectacular northern climate, where the night sky turns into a show of spellbinding fireworks.\footnote{Another example repeats the above description: “La neige glacé d’argent . . . change tous les rapports de tons par des transpositions magiques” (208). Both passages recall Gautier’s poems with similar imagery, such as “Symphonie en blanc majeur.”} He believes that “rien n’est plus joli que . . . ces arabesques et ces filigranes de glace . . . contournés par le doigt de l’Hiver. C’est une des poésies du Nord . . .” (241). Here, “Hiver” is capitalized, transforming the season into one of mythic proportions. Any discomfort felt in this country is far outweighed by the “poetry” and magic revealed to visitors of the fabled north. Yet with the change of seasons, the winter leaves with its beguiling magnificence: “La saison s’avancait . . . Les dégâts de l’hiver, masqués longtemps par la blanche couche, apparaissaient à nu” (325). Russia is a land whose ugliness is “masked” by the virginal, white snow of winter. When the country removes her mystical mask of northern beauty, Gautier resolves to return home to Paris.

**Northern Fairytales**

Russia as portrayed by Gautier is the one he had chosen to see. It was, for him, a charming land: people in unusual dress, unfamiliar architecture and monuments, a strange language, and a beautiful, undefiled land. However, in his search for Russia the narrator does not display an in-depth knowledge of the country. He is ignorant of the language and the poor living conditions that surround him. There is little political commentary. Rarely does he exit from his Russia of colors, structures, textures, and sensations. Russia is a land
of dreams, an idyllic, orientalized land. Paris is far removed from the fairy tale of the
Russian other that Gautier creates. Anything from home, anything familiar would be unexpected. Thus, it is logical that when Gautier encountered a white marble statue of Napoleon in the Kremlin (a reminder of Napoleon’s disastrous winter in Moscow during the 1812 Russian campaign), he says, “nous ne nous attendions pas à cette rencontre,” and terminates his chapter abruptly. After all, Gautier was searching for something other than what he could experience in France or Western Europe. The reminder of home and the historical relationship between France and Russia was clearly not what he wished to contemplate.

While in Moscow, Gautier summarizes the goal of his travels: “Nous venions d’éprouver cette sensation si rare dont la recherche pousse le voyageur aux extrémités du monde; nous avons vu quelque chose qui n’existe pas ailleurs” (256). By traveling to the “extremities,” Gautier does indeed get to experience “rare” sensations in seeing something completely removed from his own knowledge. At this same time, his travel fantasy must remain foreign and “elsewhere,” even after several months of living in another land. If the enchanting became commonplace, the mysterious land of the North would lose all intrigue.

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36Indeed at one point, Gautier imagines Defoe’s fictional character, Robinson Crusoe, traveling through “les plaines couvertes de neige de la Sibérie” (279).
37An illustration of Gautier’s inability to synthesize and understand Russia occurs when he begins describing his second trip there—this time to Nizhny Novgorod, a name whose linguistic qualities he finds fascinating. Here he explores his linguistic otherness:

Nijni-Novgorod exerçait depuis longtemps déjà cette inéluctable influence sur nous. Aucune mélodie ne résonnait plus délicieusement à notre ouïe que ce nom vague et lointain; nous le répétions comme une litanie . . . . Le rapprochement de l’i et du j, l’allitération produite par l’i final, les trois points qui piquent le mot comme ces notes sur lesquelles il faut appuyer, nous charmaient d’une façon à la fois puérile et cabalistique. Le v et le g du second mot possédaient aussi leur attraction, mais l’od avait quelque chose d’impérieux, de décisif et de concluant, à quoi il nous était impossible de rien objecter. --Aussi après quelques mois de luttes, nous fallut-il partir. (346)
His Russian dream would end.

Gautier’s Russia is a land of appearances, of surfaces. He does not struggle to comprehend the people, the history, the economics, or the politics of Russia. For what he does not understand or for what is beautiful, he creates a fairytale-like dream in place of knowledge. Emile Bergerat, Gautier’s son-in-law, relates the writer’s words on travel in his 1876 biography of Gautier:

Je voyage pour voyager, c’est à dire pour voir et jouir des aspects nouveaux, pour me déplacer, sortir de moi-même et des autres. Je voyage pour réaliser un rêve tout bêtement, pour changer de peau, si tu veux. [Je suis allé] en Russie pour la neige, le caviar et l’art byzantin. . . . Ils me disent: Dans votre Russie, il n’y a pas de ‘Russes!’ Parbleu! pourquoi faire? Est-ce que je les ai vus, les Russes? J’étais Russe moi-même à Saint-Pétersbourg, comme je suis Parisien sur les boulevards! Ces usages russes qui vous intéressent tant, je les pratiquais journellement et ils me semblaient tout naturels. . . . [L’]homme est partout l’homme, et sous toutes les latitudes, il mange avec la bouche et prend avec les doigts. . . . L’homme est laid, partout et toujours, et il me gâte la création. Il ne vaut que par son intelligence. Mais comme cette intelligence ne se manifeste que par ses productions, je m’en tiens à ses productions et je ne cherche point ailleurs le secret de ses destinées. De même une ville ne m’intéresse que par ses monuments; pourquoi? Parce qu’ils sont le résultat collectif de sa population. (124-127)

Even after visiting Russia, Gautier maintains his fantasy of this other land. Here, he seems to say that the sound of the name Nizhny Novgorod (not the history, not the people) is what attracted him.
Russia is, above all, a land of splendor and brilliance for him, as well as a place where he can “change his skin.” He delights in its people, its architecture, its language, and its winter. Gautier turns his journey into a poetic depiction of a mystic land, not a factual account of his days in another land. This is not his aim. Lyrical descriptions infuse his *tableaux* of Russia. Russia captures his imagination, quickly becoming his muse. Just as Gautier’s credo of *l’art pour l’art* imbues his poetry, his prose and his criticism, his travel literature becomes another medium for the eternal aesthete. The Russia that Gautier presents is clearly then not history of the country, but a sought-after poetic fantasy.

*Voyageurs & Voyageuses*

While writing ostensibly for the same financial reasons, both Dumas and Gautier, offer unmistakably distinct representations of Russia. Both, however, do offer an Orientalized vision of this country: one in which Russians are portrayed only as exaggerated characters or types set against frozen, pristine landscapes dotted with bizarre Byzantine and Oriental architecture. Russia according to these narrator-travelers was their own creation, one that captured the imagination of readers in France, much like the Orient constructed by Europeans described by Said: “The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (1). Both writers seem ambivalent towards Russia’s position within Europe, often pointing out Russia’s inferiority or perplexing actions in relation to Western European civilizations and cultural practices. In so doing, the West as constructed in these two works is presented, except on rare occasion, as superior in relation to Russia. Here
again, Said’s notion about discourses on the Orient proves useful: “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (3). Though at times taken in by Russia’s Otherness (strange language, types, landscapes), Russia serves as a grand illustration and reverse portrait of their ideas about the West and France.

Yet the two well-known writers were not the only ones to visit and write about Russia between the end of the Crimean War and the Franco-Russian alliance. There were other voyageurs and voyageuses who wished to discover and write about Russia. While the voyageuses’ accounts at times repeat many of the same themes seen in the voyageurs’ works (architecture, manners, landscape), there is as well an approach to the Russians by these women that is distinctive. Is there a specifically female experience, writing or representation of Russia? How might these travel narratives differ from contemporary male travel narratives? If so, do these differences offer any new perspectives on how Russia was portrayed during France’s own domestic and international reformulations of itself?

**Other Travelers**

To answer this next series of questions, the study turns to Russian travel narratives written between 1870 and 1880 by three French voyageuses-écrivaines: Olympe Audouard (*Les nuits russes* [1876] and *Voyage au pays des boyards: étude sur la Russie actuelle* [1880]), Carla Serena (*De la Baltique à la mer Caspienne* [1880] and *Seule dans les steppes: épisodes de mon voyage aux pays des Kalmoucks et Kirghiz* [1883]), and Marie de Ujfalvy-Bourdon (*De Paris à Samarkand: Le Ferghana, Le Koudja et la Sibérie occidentale. Impressions de voyage d’une Parisienne.* [1880]). It does
not include several works published between the end of the Crimean War and the alliance either because the travel took place prior to the period in question (Adèle Hommaire de Hell, who published a revised edition of an earlier expedition to Russia with her husband, *Voyage dans les steppes de la mer Caspienne et dans la Russie méridionale* [1860]) or because the work was limited to a geographical territory outside of Russia proper (Mme Chantre’s *Le tour du monde. A travers l’Arménie russe [Karabagh, vallée de l’Araxe, massif de l’Ararat]* [1892]). Despite having been successful in their own time, many of these travel accounts have been forgotten in large part by anthologies and analyses of nineteenth-century Franco-Russian relations.\(^{38}\)

However, these accounts, published between the Marquis de Custine’s damaging travel narrative and before the 1880s French fascination with “Slavic soul” after the first translations of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, offer unique visions of Russia during a watershed moment in Franco-Russian relations that differ from travel narratives written by their contemporary French male counterparts.

Women writers in the nineteenth century were by no means uncommon. Anne Sauvy affirms that while there had been a long tradition of women writers in France (from Christine de Pisan in the Middle Ages to Madame Riccoboni in the eighteenth century), there was “une explosion du phénomène” in the nineteenth century (449). There were diverse reasons for women to write, many of whom responded to the desire to write for financial reasons (to bring in extra money for the household or for loved ones, to support themselves) (450). Women writers, however, were not readily accepted in France, eliciting sometimes virulent critiques from other male writers like Barbey d’Aurevilly for participating

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\(^{38}\) Claude De Grève, for one, does not include or mention the travel accounts by Carla Serena and Marie de Ujfály-Bourdon in his anthology of eighteenth and nineteenth-century French travel literature about Russia.
in a profession not suited to their gender. They also had to struggle to have control over the money they made: la Comtesse de Ségur, for example, had to receive written permission from her husband in order to have access to the money she earned from publishing with Hachette. Despite the factors that impeded women from writing in the nineteenth century, there were indeed many who chose to write children’s literature, novels, articles for journals, and travel literature.

The voyageuses examined here bear witness to the diverse reasons for and conditions under which women wrote in the nineteenth century. Audouard is known primarily for her role as a feminist in France. She married into a bourgeois family, but was legally separated from her husband. The rest of her life was devoted to fighting for women’s rights, most notably for divorce and women’s suffrage. After her separation in 1860, she founded two reviews, Le Papillon and La Revue cosmopolite, and engaged in a public debate with Barbey d’Aurevilly, about the “Bas-bleus,” or women writers. She also spent much time traveling, then writing about her experiences abroad in the United States, Turkey, Egypt, and Russia. A committed feminist at home and abroad, she traveled to Russia in 1870, simply to travel and then write about it, and lived primarily in Saint Petersburg during her stay in Russia. As James F. McMillan notes, the lens through which she saw Russia reflected more her feelings about women in France than about Russia’s women (McMillan 128). About the other voyageuses, Serena and Ujfalvy-Bourdon, very little is known. (Monicat 44). Serena went to Russia twice, spending most of her time in the Crimea and the Caucasus. To the difference of Audouard, she insists in her travelogue that she was always “fort bien accueillie” from Saint Petersburg to Moscow, from Georgia to the Caucasus (31). Ujfalvy-Bourdon accompanied her husband—a Hungarian anthropologist commissioned to explore Central
Asia by the French government—on his expeditions. In her account, she affirms her role as a traveling wife: “M. de Ujfalvy marche, et il faut bien que je marche avec lui, puisque la femme doit suivre son mari” (3). Her narrative turns around the adventures and curiosities she and her husband encounter in European Russia, Central Asia, and Siberia. Like the other *voyageuses*, Ujfalvy-Bourdon realizes her own powerlessness as a woman abroad once the veneer of “Western” civilization wears off, fearing for her own life at times.

**Civilizing Missionaries**

At first glance, the women travel writers appear to echo Custine’s vision of a “barbaric” Russia in their accounts. In her *Voyage au pays des boyards*, for example, Audouard criticizes Moscow’s architectural aesthetic. To answer her own question “Is [Moscow’s architecture] beautiful?,” she replies, “Non, c’est original et bizarre.” Moscow’s homes, she continues, are “laides” and “sans art et sans goût” (267). Even at the core of centuries-old Russian culture in Moscow, her version of “civilization” as expressed by the architectural object does not exist in Russia. The lone cosmopolitan traveler Serena, restrained in her judgments, makes clear that when she leaves France, she is leaving the “centre suprême de la civilisation” to go to a less refined land (358). Ujfalvy-Bourdon regrets as well the lack of familiar practices: hotel accomodations in a Orenburg (“Où-étiez vous, draps, oreillers, traversins mèlleux, attirail des couchers civilisés? Ce second étage de l’hôtel d’Orenbourg me fit entrevoir tout un monde de barbarie, et mon sommeil ressembla un peu à celui du vagabond qui couche sur la dure”) and architecture at a mosque in Turkestan (“Nous quittons à regret ce beau monument et je fais malgré moi des réflexions sur les temps passés,
sur cette civilisation d’un jour qui a pu produire de si beaux chefs-d’œuvre d’architecture, sur l’indolence avec laquelle une race dégénérée les a laissés tomber en ruines, morceau par morceau, sans faire un seul effort pour conjurer les ravages du temps”), as well as criticizing Muslim religious practices and treatment of women (49, 124).

In addition to the assertions of French civility over Russian backwardness, the women also contemplate the role of different ethnic groups they encounter. At a market in Orenburg (a city close to the border of Europe in Asia), Ujfalvy-Bourdon comments about the influence of groups from the Russia’s east:

Mais si banal qu’il soit, le spectacle devient grandiose dans cette ville frontière, marché européen et asiatique à la fois, où l’on a comme le préssentiment d’un monde rajeuni qui fermente pour une nouvelle existence. Quels sont les instincts dominants de cette foule? Quelle idée commune s’agit dans ces têtes? Un sentiment général fait-il battre ces coeurs? Cette avant-garde, derrière laquelle on devine des hordes immenses, descendra-t-elle encore un jour vers l’Occident? (52)

Audouard goes so far as to link the country’s problems to the Muscovite or Russian “race.” She makes severe judgments in the introduction to *Les Nuits russes* by establishing links between France’s disturbing “civilizing mission” and Peter the Great’s Westernizing project in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While contemplating Peter the Great as a remarkable historical figure who brought European progress to Russia, she makes the following comparison:

[Il] me rappelle un homme fort intelligent que j’ai connu il y a quelques années, c’est Geffrand, l’ex-président de la république de Haïti; il me disait
Audouard’s statements are shocking on two accounts. First, Haiti, a former French colony, is equated with Russia, a major European power. Second, her suggestion is that the Russian populace’s “ferocious instincts” can be tamed by mixing blood with a more sophisticated gene pool. She even continues on saying that the Russian aristocracy had effectively lost its “wild” Russian blood, but that “le vieux Russie,” le “pur Slave” had not yet lost its brute and primitive qualities. With these opinions regarding notions of “civilization” and even racial supremacy, it is evident that Audouard blatantly set Western Europe (with France at its center) apart from a dubious, uncouth Russia. Russia’s potential, for her, lies precisely in an “purification” of everyone in Russia except its cosmopolite few! In spite of this, is this representation of Russia as simple as distinctions drawn between “civilized” and “barbaric,” the well-mannered and the “hordes” from the East?

Simply put, no. These women’s accounts are wholly distinct from travel narratives like those of Custine, Alexandre Dumas and Théophile Gautier. Unlike the male travel writers, they are fundamentally conflicted in their role as women, as writers, as French citizens traveling abroad, and in their choice of literary genre. Because of this, their writing
is riddled with contradictions instead of offering largely coherent descriptions of their travels, a phenomenon typical with male travel writers.

**The Other Facing the Other**

The typical contradiction is the idea of a traveling woman—the opposite of an idealized woman of the time period, *la femme au foyer*. Whether traveling alone or under the protection of a husband, the act of traveling as a woman, instead of staying at home, puts her own gender identity into question. Michelle Perrot underlines the quandry of traveling women: “D’une manière ou d’une autre, en le payant souvent très cher, [les voyageuses] ont brisé le cercle de l’enfermement et fait reculer la frontière du sexe” (484). In itself, the act of traveling as a woman already has immense consequences. By adding yet another paradox, the act of writing as a woman, women travel writers doubly traverse pre-established boundaries. Not only do they abandon their society’s expectations about domesticity, but they also defy notions of acceptable occupations for women.

These conflicts find a particularly well-suited articulation in the genre of travel writing. Travel literature is a hybrid form, comprised of autobiography, ethnographic descriptions, tall tales, scientific analyses, and personal diary. Like the women who choose to travel and write, this sort of literature resists easy classification.

A final conflict is that the figure of the female traveler writer is not in the same position as her male equivalent. In their studies on nineteenth-century English and French female travel writers, Sara Mills and Bénédicte Monicat affirm that these women have several paradoxical functions. First, as traveling representatives of their own country, the women
embody the values of their own country and Europe. They become messengers of its established morals and attitudes. Given this position, it is not surprising to find these women judging Russians for their lack of civilization as do the male travel writers. However, this stance becomes highly problematic. As women coming from Europe, but also as a *female* Europeans, women travel writers participate as superiors in a discourse about civilization; at the same time, they are subject to male authority within their own society. They are simultaneously dominating and dominated, a position that calls into question representations of power within their own literary discourses. For Mills, this problematic situation affirms the existence of specifically feminine travel writing:

> [W]omen’s travel texts are produced and received within a context which shares similarities with the discursive construction and reception of male texts, whilst at the same time, because of the discursive frameworks which exert pressure on female writers, there may be negotiations in women’s texts which result in differences which seem to be due to gender. (6)

Because the women are at once operating as subject and object of a dominant discourse, it is not surprising that their narratives show many inherent tensions.

With the recurring internal and external instability that defines the *voyageuses-écrivaines*’ identities and work, they are in a unique position to offer new perspectives on Russia. Gone from home, these women leave for Russia—a new context with another set of rules—where they voice opinions about accepted notions of civilization from a position of power as a Western European. However, as Western European women, they are better poised to understand the power relations in which Russia and the Russians are situated in relation to France. Monicat describes this complicated situation:
The women travel writers included in this study produce certain discourses about Russia and Russians from a different position of authority in their travels. This position offers also offer an understanding of Russians that male travel writers do not, while making visible the power dynamics at work in these encounters.

In opposition to the women’s discourses on civilization and race, their personal interactions demonstrate a partial breakdown in the distinction between “civilized” and “uncivilized,” emphasizing instead intimate knowledge of those they visit, especially women. While visiting Abkhazia, Serena notes a woman’s fascination with her European clothing. To the Abkhaz woman’s surprise, Serena offers to have her dress copied immediately as a gift to her new acquaintance. At the end of the exchange, “[c]elle-ci, radieuse de se voir transformée en Européenne m’embrassait, trépignant de joie” (120). Without a doubt, Serena assumes a position of dominance over the Abkhaz woman by offering her “European-ness” to the non-European. Yet she also recounts her personal relationship with this woman as a highlight of her visit. Audouard, too, discusses the status of Russian women. She remarks that Russian women are better educated than Russian men and that they “do wonders” taking care of the homeless (76). She proclaims, “[à] ce point de vue, il y aurait beaucoup de choses excellentes à copier en Russie” (77). Like Audouard, Ujfalvy Bourdon praises Russian women’s education: “Mon Dieu ! que les femmes russes sont
instruites et quelle honte pour une Parisienne, à qui l’on veut bien attribuer la fine fleur de l’élegance, de se voir réduite à écouter” (347). She does not, however, offer praise for what she encounters in the harems of Muslim areas of Russia’s empire. The dominant theme in her account is that of her role as an anthropologist entering a world forbidden to men. In Turkestan, she meets three women in a harem at the request of her husband. She comments on their physical attributes, as well as their clothing. Her conclusion? “En vérité, Messieurs de l’Occident, murmurai-je en me retirant, vous n’êtes pas trop à plaindre ; vos femmes sont bien préférables ; si parfois la beauté leur manque, elles ont la grâce et l’esprit ; je comprends maintenant que le harem soit cloîtré ; sans cette claustration, il perdrait tout son prestige” (125-126). While she does make judgments about how women are treated in the West, here and in other passages, this voyageuse laments and sympathizes with her Muslim counterpart. Her unique status as a woman permits her to unveil the secrets of other women, a hidden “truth,” as well as to her readers, potentially both male and female.

From suggesting Russian racial purification to recommending Russian women’s lives as a model for French women, Audouard’s account is decidedly ambiguous about Russia’s culture. Tensions also ripple throughout the other texts. Mills confirms this phenomenon:

[W]omen writers tended to concentrate on description of people as individuals, rather than on statements about the race as a whole. It is in their struggle with the discourses of imperialism and femininity, neither of which they could wholeheartedly adopt, and which pulled in different textual

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39 Ujfalvy-Bourdon’s fascination with the women in harems she encounters is by no means a rarity. The harem scene is an often repeated motif in the European literature, but also specifically in the voyageuses’ narratives that add yet another dimension to the theme: “Le caractère exceptionnel de leur position permet aux femmes de s’écarter licitement du texte central. Maîtresses de l’évocation du harem, les voyageuses avides de révélations et de découvertes qui leur appartiennent en propre insistent sur le point de vue unique et nouveau qu’elles apportent...” (Monicat 96)
directions, that their writing exposes the unsteady foundations on which it is based. (3)

Indeed, the voyagenses-écritaines seem stuck between conflicting opinions, not only when the women meet or discuss other women living in Russia, but also with regard to their own authorial status as opposed to male travel writers. Even in this often paradoxical position, however, it is also here that the women travel writers display an understanding of Russians that the French male travel writers rarely achieve.

**Female Janus?**

In examining the work of both male and female travel narratives, Mills and Monicat’s now well-accepted assertion that two different types of travel literature exist is confirmed. Dumas’ travel account is amusing and comical, but only consists of shallow anecdotes drawn largely from distant Russian history. He rarely leaves the company of his aristocratic Russian friends from Paris. If he happens to encounter other Russians, he does not examine them in any nuanced way. Théophile Gautier’s *Voyage en Russie* is unquestionably more descriptive than Dumas’ account, yet Gautier rejects the utility of historical analyses, preferring instead to concentrate on Russia’s beauty that he finds in its art, architecture, Northern lights, and white blankets of snow. Characteristically for Gautier, Russia is nothing but a marvelous country of beautiful surfaces.

The travel literature written by men and women shares common subjects: obstinate Russian customs officers, first arrivals in Saint Petersburg, the Russian climate, muzhiki, the nature of the Russian aristocracy, and the beauty of Russian women. Even with these shared
topics, however, the travel accounts written by French men and women differ. The voyageurs-écritains create narratives packed with ideas about Russia’s cultural backwardness, at once fascinated and revolted by the Russian other. Unlike the women travel writers, this discourse remains stable because the men are able to maintain a clear distance between themselves and the people and country they describe. The women, conversely, have texts beset by many obvious inconsistencies. This is precisely because of the malaise they feel in the juxtaposition to their own ambiguous status with those of their female peers they encounter in Russia, as well as in relation to their status at home.

As shown, these women who travel automatically modify their own role as women by rejecting the ideal of staying at home. They also break established rules by writing. Not yet in Russia, their identity is already in question. Once in Russia, however, the women now may adopt a status in regards to Russia as Western Europeans. This is where their travels pose significant problems. Consciously or not, there is an echo of their own dominated image in the Russian women they meet, while all the while producing distinctions between their position of power and often of the Russian women’s lack thereof. These tensions are incorporated and justified in a travel narrative, itself an ambiguous literary form. The end result gives the impression of chaos. No identity—sexual, professional, or literary—is stable. The multiple layers of instability in the voyageuses-écritaines’ Russian travel narratives are unsettling. These ambiguities find a parallel in Russia itself.

After the initial fallout of Custine’s Russie during the 1840s, the menacing “gendarme” of the continent began to change in the eyes of many Western Europeans. With the end of the Crimean War in 1856 and Alexander II’s Great Reforms (like the abolition of serfdom in 1861), the despotic specter of Russia was dissipating. Russia began
Russia’s Great Reforms appeared to part of European opinion as a harbinger of her “convergence” with universal civilization, whereas to those disillusioned with that civilization, her archaic rural society seemed an oasis of primal “Slavic soul,” a spiritual quality rapidly disappearing in the industrial, urban world of the West. . . . Russia, even as she was regained for Europe, continued, Janus-like, to be emblazoned with her two-headed eagle: observed from the Left, she signified convergence, and from the Right she betokened soul. (165)

Like the voyageuses-écrivaines, Russia defied strict categorization. It was at once Eastern and Western, Asiatic and European, barbaric and civilized. When represented by French women travel writers who chose Russia as their object, the result was a mixed, multiple, and contradictory identities, revealingly communicated through a hybrid literary form. The repeated conflicts in gender roles, geography, and literary genres—all echo each other.

A new understanding and representation of Russia are offered by the travel narratives of these French women. The voyageuses-écrivaines, articulating more about Russia’s paradoxical identity than the voyageurs from their own constrained, yet transformative position. Their accounts reflect a land rife with contradictions of its own. They often explored the enigmatic country by the means most accessible to them—Russian women. The portraits of Russia that resulted are complicated and inconsistent, but more fully reflect
the reality of the Russian enigma than travel accounts written by males. The recurring instabilities of the women's narratives ingeniously offer a more coherent translation of a seemingly indecipherable and puzzling Russia than do those of their male counterparts. Gender does impact Russia's representation in French travel narratives. Other factors, however, influenced the country’s representation in the period’s French fiction written for children.
Chapter 4

Russia on the French East-West Cultural Gradient: La Comtesse de Ségur’s Le Général Dourakine & Jules Verne’s Michel Strogoff

Elfy to Moutier: “Je crains qu’il ne leur soit arrivé malheur. On peut s’attendre à tout dans un pays comme la Russie” (206).

La Comtesse de Ségur, Le Général Dourakine (1863)

“—‘Eh bien, moi vivant, la Sibérie est et sera un pays dont on reviendra!’
Le czar avait le droit de prononcer ces paroles avec une véritable fierté, car il a souvent montré, par sa clémence, que la justice russe savait pardonner” (19).

Jules Verne, Michel Strogoff (1876)

The Comtesse de Ségur (née Rostopchine) and Jules Verne—these names stand out above all others in nineteenth-century children’s literature. Both Ségur and Verne were leading authors for their respective publishers—Ségur for Louis Hachette (and Hachette’s son-in-law Emile Templier) and Verne for Pierre-Jules Hetzel. Between 1850 and 1870, both Hachette and Hetzel made their mark on the French market for children’s literature, a market previously dominated by Catholic publishers located outside of Paris, like Alfred Mame in Tours. They owed their success to two collections of books. Hachette’s collection was the Bibliothèque rose illustrée (the sixth in a series of Hachette’s Bibliothèque des chemins de fer) to which Ségur contributed over twenty titles between 1856 and 1869. Hetzel collaborated with Verne on Voyages extraordinaires (first appearing as feuilletons in Hetzel’s family-oriented bi-monthly Magasin d’éducation et de récréation) between 1863 and 1883 (Glénisson 468-480). With the Hetzel-Verne Voyages extraordinaires and Hachette’s collaboration with Ségur as part
of the *Bibliothèque rose illustrée*, the market for children’s literature opened up, challenging and surpassing the success of the Catholic press.

Ségur and Verne, for as much as they are noted for impacting French children’s publishing during the second half of the century and working closely with the century’s biggest publishers, were in fact very different authors. Ségur was at the forefront of an important literary genre of the time period, *le roman des mœurs enfantines*. The genre was socially and morally conservative, searching for “une recherche de paisibilité, dont le triple ancrage dans la féminité, l’aristocratie et la religion” (Marcoin 88). Ségur’s works were largely set at home, in the context of the family. Verne’s *Voyages extraordinaires*, however, circled the globe, often with loner characters who encountered various cultures far from Ségur’s Catholic well-off French families. Ségur was in many ways the opposite of Verne: “A l’opposé du mouvement vernien et de ses obus lancés dans le ciel et vers la lune,” with Ségur, “c’est l’ailleurs qui vient ici vers nous. . . .” (Marcoin 8). In one instance, however, both authors set the plots of their novels in Russia: Ségur's *Le Général Dourakine* (1863) in Hachette’s *Bibliothèque rose illustrée* and Jules Verne's *Michel Strogoff* (1876) in the collection *Voyages extraordinaires*. These texts provide new perspectives on images of Russia in a genre that circulated widely and was expressly intended for a younger audience, in contrast with Ivan Turgenev’s translation work or French travel narratives. These novels offer an opportunity to examine representations of Russia aimed at a different audience, as well as the highly divergent nature of the authors’ views on Russia. Their contradictory visions underscore the precarious establishment of what Martin Malia terms “*das West-östliche Kulturgefähle* (sic),” or the West-East cultural gradient, “with Russia at the bottom of the slope
What position do their texts take in relation to Russia? What representations of both France and Russia, as well as other regions of the world, are inscribed into their texts? Of particular interest in the matter as shown later is Ségur’s position as a Russian native: not merely “Comtesse de Ségur,” she is “Comtesse de Ségur, née Rostopchine, as indicated on her books title pages.

**Children’s Literature According to Hachette and Hetzel**

With the growth of more secular, Parisian-published children’s literature between 1855 and 1870 authors like Verne and Ségur were poised to respond to needs in a growing, dynamic market. This change in the market occurred for several reasons. First, the French reading public grew throughout the nineteenth century. The Guizot (1833) and Falloux (1850) laws under the July Monarchy and the Second Republic legally provided for national primary education. In the wake of this growing French youth readership, publishers like Hachette stood to profit from publishing books destined for use in the classroom and for use by beginner readers (Glénisson 462). The Church, connected with public education to varying degrees up until the 1880s, also supported moral instruction of France’s youth. In response to this, a literature of “pious edification” proliferated with publishers like Mame (Glénisson 462). Advances were made as well in book production. The “industrialization”

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40 Martin Malia borrows this term from German historians who study post-1989 Germany.
41 Jean Glénisson notes the following about the secular children’s literature authors: “Le moment de grâce de la littérature de jeunesse en France n’a duré que quinze ans, de 1855 à 1870: de la comtesse de Ségur à Jules Verne, à Erckmann et Chatrian et à Hector Malot. Il n’y eut ensuite qu’épigones; l’invention se tarit; les grands donnent de beaux livres, sans se renouveler” (477).
of book making produced greater quantities of books than in the past. As a strategy to entice new readers, publishers utilized in varying manners new techniques in illustration and binding to differentiate themselves within an increasingly competitive market. With the growth and the resources made possible by the century’s industrialization and new technologies, the expanding market forced publishers to stake out new territory in order to turn a profit.

By 1870, the secular branch of children’s literature had firmly established itself in France by answering the publishing field’s changing dynamics:

Dans la paix civile forcée du Second Empire finissant, deux familles de publications coexistent. La famille catholique [et]... [l]a famille que l’on peut déjà qualifier de “laïque.” C’est celle de la nouvelle littérature. Nouvelle parce qu’elle donne aux jeunes gens des livres conçus pour eux, écrits pour eux. Nouvelle par le regard qu’elle jette sur le monde contemporaine, par l’image qu’elleannonce du futur, par la séduction du récit qui fait appel à l’imaginaire, à l’exotisme et à l’aventure. Moderne par la typographie, l’illustration, le format, par le soutien que lui assure une presse spécialisée.

(Glénisson 473-74)

Newcomers like Hetzel and Hachette in the literary field breathed new life into the long-established traditions of Catholic publishers from the provinces. Illustrations attracted new readers whether used in Verne’s eye-catching *cartonnages* in his *Voyages extraordinaires* or Ségur’s illustrations by Gustave Doré and Emile Bayard. There were new collections of

42 Frédéric Barbier notes production of books (measured by titles published) in France doubled between 1840 and 1890 (104-5).
books specifically aimed towards France’s youth like the Bibliothèque rose illustrée as part of Hachette’s new train station book kiosks. Children’s literature periodicals, such as Hetzel’s Magasin d’éducation et de récréation (begun in 1864), published in different formats allowed readers to get early installments of works in feuilleton format from their favorite authors. With all of these innovations, the literary market was irrevocably changed prior to the establishment of the Third Republic.

Both Hetzel and Hachette had a new approach to publishing for their young markets. Hetzel’s publishing goals were summed up by his embracing of the ideals of “éducation and recréation,” whereby young readers would learn while also enjoying the text before them. For example, Verne’s consistent inclusion of maps illustrating the journeys taken by characters in his Voyages extraordinaires are indicative of this (see fig. Figure 4-1). He also responded to young readers’ penchant for illustrations that conformed to their expectations of contemporary topics (Glénisson 471). His goal was to draw in readers by a promise of amusement, but also to teach them about geography, new scientific developments, and the current-day world. The attractive, educative books ultimately led, then, to an intended moral growth that would come with the accumulation of knowledge: “mélange subtil de l’utile à l’agréable, dosage sans défaut du merveilleux et des formules mathématiques, art de porter jusqu’aux astres et de plonger dans le fond des mers les engins inventés pas les hommes du grand siècle qui achève l’exploration du monde (Glénisson 472).

43 The idea of an instructive and entertaining literature for children was not a new one. Fénélon spoke about the importance of this education in his 1687 treatise on education, De l’Éducation des filles. Hetzel and Hachette’s use of this philosophy, then, was not innovative, but their execution of those ideas was. 44 “Hetzel veut éduquer au sense large du mot et surtout enseigner une morale. Son Magasin fournille de petits textes, contes, récits, leçons, ‘sermons du coin du feu [qui] n’ont d’autre but que celui d’aider mes jeunes
Hachette’s vision of children’s literature was similar to Hetzel’s. To the difference of Hetzel, however, Hachette emphasized the pedagogical and didactic goals of his publications for children that would later give way to his ascendancy in scholastic publication (Glénisson 472). In spite of their varying approaches to children’s literature, Hachette also used many of the same strategies as Hetzel in the children’s market, most of which he had actually initiated and refined while Hetzel was in exile in Belgium during the initial years of the Second Empire: the feuilleton format (in his La Semaine des enfants launched in 1857), illustrations (by Gustave Doré, most notably), and ornate, yet affordable covers like those used in the Bibliothèque rose illustrée, “rouge vif et son plat supérieur... frappé d’une architecture dorée du style classique qui fait oublier les cathédrales romantiques” (Glénisson 473).

Though both publishers had marked out distinct subfields in the market for lecteurs à se dire avec plus de netteté ce qu’ils pensent soit d’eux-mêmes, soit des autres et de développer ce qui ne se trouve encore qu’à l’état de germe dans leur cœur’. A l’origine de cette ambition encyclopédique, se profile l’idée que la connaissance est source de progrès moral” (Compère, Jules Verne: Écrivain 18).
children’s literature, the overall formula to educate readers while amusing them, though clichéd, proved the most successful.

Littératures Enfantines?

Hetzel and Hachette both used a panoply of techniques to attract and amuse young readers. Similarly Séguir and Verne drew from varied literary genres in their articulation of a secular children’s literature. In *Le Général Dourakine*, la Comtesse de Séguir developed her story in the likenesses of travel accounts, morality tales, and even draws from current day reports of escapees from Siberian banishment (Marcoin 18). Inserted into the chapter where Romane reveals his true identity as a Polish prince condemned to exile in Siberia for his anti-Russian sentiments, Séguir notes the following: “Les passages les plus intéressants du récit qu’on va lire sont pris dans un livre historique plein de vérité et d’intérêt émouvant: *Souvenirs d’un Sibérien*” (169). She was in fact citing a text that Hachette had previously published in the collection of the *Bibliothèque des chemins de fer, Mémoires d’un Sibérien*, republished by images served to reinforce the verbal text, while guiding more directly the reader’s comprehension of it. Michel Melot notes the following:

En France aussi, l’image envahit les livres pour la jeunesse dès que la production industrielle des livres le permit et fit la fortune des grands éditeurs comme Hachette ou Hetzel. Au milieu du XIXe siècle, La “Bibliothèque rose” publiait la Comtesse de Séguir illustrée par Gustave Doré, Bertall ou Castelli, tandis que Hetzel publiait Jules Verne (*Magasin d’éducation et de récréation*) illustré par Férat, Bennet ou Riou. Ces premières illustrations de fiction pour enfants ont laissé de telles traces dans les imaginations que, spontanément, lorsqu’il est question “d’illustration,” on pense à ces scènes à la fois exactes et fantastiques qui donnaient au texte un écho d’autant plus merveilleux qu’elles en suivaient plus fidèlement la formulation. Le propre de ces images est en effet leur sérieux : gravité de la gravure sur bois, au trait, en noir et blanc, sous-titrée d’une sobre légende volée au texte. (*L’Illustration* 219-220)

In addition to the use of illustration within the text, highly decorative covers also were also used to appeal to the senses of the potential readership. For further information about the evolution of decorative bindings, see Sophie Malavieille’s article (“La mécanisation de la reliure”) in *Histoire de l’édition française* (64-65).
Hachette from an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Written by Rufin Piotrowski in 1862, *Mémoires d'un Sibérien* was a true story of a Polish prince who served time in Siberia for his criticisms of the Russian government, a borrowing discussed later in this chapter.

Likewise, Verne—well-known for his generic mixtures of travel literature, historical accounts, scientific treatises, and fantasy—also drew from and dialogued with current-day travel account texts. It is not surprising that he would do so given his creation of *Histoire des grands voyages et de grands voyageurs* for Hetzel between 1870 and 1878. His knowledge of travel literature was vast, since he had read a great majority of travel accounts published in France, including contemporary works (Guyon 344). For example, in *Michel Strogoff*, Verne mentions two contemporary travel accounts of Western Europeans in Russia: Catherine de Bourboulon’s *L’Asie cavalière: De Shang-Hai à Moscou (1860-1862)* and Henry Russell-Killough’s *Seize mille lieues à travers l’Asie et l’Océanie: Voyage exécuté pendant les années 1858-1861*, writers whom he includes in his discussion of the Siberian city Tomsk. He compares

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46 I have included the full text of Verne’s discussion of the city of Tomsk to show the extent to which Verne turns to contemporary accounts in his writing. Verne’s use of these accounts gives his text an added element of reality in the middle of a fantastic adventure. Here, Verne—not having traveled to Russia, much less Siberia—defers to those travelers who most recently have explored the lands his character Michel Strogoff travels clandestinely. Unable to translate directly experiences that are not his, Verne turns to these travel writers for their “expertise:”

Tomsk est-elle une jolie ville ? Il faut convenir que les voyageurs ne sont pas d’accord à cet égard. Mme de Bourboulon, qui y a demeuré quelques jours pendant son voyage de Shang-Hai à Moscou, en fait une localité peu pittoresque. À s’en rapporter à sa description, ce n’est qu’une ville insignifiante, avec de vieilles maisons de pierre et de brique, des rues fort étroites et bien différentes de celles qui percut ordinairement les grandes cités sibériennes, de sales quartiers où s’entassent plus particulièrement les Tartares, et dans laquelle pullulent de tranquilles ivrognes, “dont l’ivresse elle-même est apathique, comme chez tous les peuples du Nord!”

Le voyageur Henri Russel-Killough, lui, est absolument affirmatif dans son admiration pour Tomsk. Cela tient-il à ce qu’il a vu en plein hiver, sous son manteau de neige, cette ville, que Mme de Bourboulon n’a visitée que pendant l’été ? Cela est possible et confirmerait cette opinion que certains pays froids ne peuvent être appréciés que dans la saison froide, comme certains pays chauds dans la saison chaude.

Quoi qu’il en soit, M. Russel-Killough dit positivement que Tomsk est non seulement la plus jolie ville de la Sibérie, mais encore une des plus jolies villes du monde, avec ses maisons à colonnades et à péristyles, ses trottoirs en bois, ses rues larges et
Bourboulon’s work to Russell-Killough’s, arriving at the conclusion that “la vérité est entre les deux opinions” (262). His younger audience, thus, is exposed in this instance to the most current travel accounts available to Western European adult readers, just as Ségur’s young readers are also exposed to world current events. These examples of a generic patchwork underline the fact that the children’s literature as written by Ségur and Verne sought to expose younger readers to modern printed texts usually limited to adult readership. In borrowing from “adult” texts, this new children’s genre educated the readers for whom the texts were designated—in these cases by providing current-day accounts experiences in Russia. Further, the use of these interspersed texts speaks to the way in which authors like Verne and Ségur viewed their readers. Though their readers were young, both authors clearly trusted that they would understand (and perhaps be attracted to) and be interested or educated by genres destined for adults.47 Though both these works are clearly identifiable as belonging to littérature enfantine, their intertextual dialogues and borrowing from readings outside the domain of children’s literature underline the fact that authors and publishers shied away from anything infantile—a trait common to nineteenth-century children’s literature overall, but most artfully and compellingly displayed in these cases.

“Née Rostopchine”

Much like Ivan Turgenev, Ségur was a well-known Russian living in France. Born in

47 Verne’s Voyage extraordinaires and Ségur’s novels were intended to be read by youth. However, this does not exclude an adult readership.
1799, Sophie Feodorovna Rostopchine was raised on her family’s estate Voronovo (after which Général Dourakine’s Gromiline is modeled) not far from the city of Smolensk in Western Russia. Her father, Fyodor Rostopchine, was a minister for Tsar Paul I and was named governor of Moscow in 1812 as Napoleon’s Grande Armée marched towards the Niemen river. He is also known, rightly or wrongly, for having set fire to Moscow as Napoleon’s armies were advancing. This infamy took its toll on the Rostopchine family. Due to the increasing pressures the family felt within Russia because of Rostopchine’s ambiguous role in the 1812 fire, as well as mounting pressure against Sophie’s mother, a convert to Catholicism, the family left Russia in 1817 for France. Sophie never returned to her native Russia.

Two years later, twenty year-old Sophie married the Comte Eugène de Ségur, the nephew of Philippe de Ségur who had served under Napoleon during the 1812 Russian campaign. The couple would soon marry. Sophie would from then be known as la Comtesse de Ségur, née Rostopchine—identifying herself with both her French and Russian aristocratic familial ties.

With Eugène, she had eight children. She spent most of her time on her estate, Noailles (in the region of Aube), with her children and later her grandchildren. During this time, she refined her skills as a storyteller in her role as mother and grandmother. It was not until 1855, however, that the Comtesse de Ségur began her career as a writer.

The creation of Hachette’s Bibliothèque des chemins de fer in 1852 was facilitated by Ségur’s husband, then president of the Compagnie des Chemins de Fer de l’Est, who guaranteed Hachette’s sole presence in train stations. It was through this relationship that Ségur made Hachette’s acquaintance (Marcoin 113). Three years later, Ségur signed a
contract with the Hachette publishing company. She published over twenty works, most for
the Bibliothèque rose illustrée, before her death in 1874 (Dufour 474). Even with what Hortense
Dufour describes as very stormy relationships between Ségur and both Hachette and
Templier (as well as bookbinders and illustrators), she wrested control of her revenues from
her novels from her husband to provide for herself and her children and grandchildren. She
also proved to be one of Hachette’s most successful writers (Dufour 470-471; 473).

In her new career as a writer, Ségur insisted on signing her works as “La Comtesse
de Ségur, née Rostopchine.” At once Russian and French, Ségur (née Rostopchine) identified
with both her Russian roots and her second home, France: “Prise entre les contradictions de
la sainte Russie et de la culture française, elle-même dépositaire du talent paternel et du
mysticisme maternel, elle ne pourra jamais renier ses origines ardentes, entretenues par la
vaste et hurlante terre de Russie” (Audiberti 27). Though she maintained her Russian
identity (and her ill-famed family name in Russia and France both), she only wrote one work
set in Russia, Le Général Dourakine (1863). Dourakine, a Russian general previously
introduced to young French readers in L’Auberge de l’Ange Gardien (1863), returns to his
estate Gromiline, near Smolensk, after the end of the Crimean War. In a book that barely
masks autobiographical references, how does Ségur paint Dourakine’s Russia, a Russia to
which she has not returned in over forty years? Is it true, as Remy Saudray maintains, that
“[b]ien que la comtesse de Ségur soit née Rostopchine, elle n’est guère russe” (201)?

Return to Gromiline

The prodigal writer’s effort at revisiting home invites the reader to a “découverte


réfléchie d’un empire qui intrigue, inquiète et divise l’opinion” (Chupeau 7). Scholars are indeed divided on what this return home meant ultimately in relation to Ségur’s own opinions on her homeland. By exploring the characters, their actions, and other textual elements, however, it is evident that Ségur’s Russia is without question a land from which her civilized French characters, as well as the Westernized Russian characters, flee as soon as possible. “Gromiline-Voronovo” is “la terre de la terreur, un monde inquiétant où naîtrait un romanesque excessif” (Marcoin 245).

The story begins by informing the reader that Dourakine is returning to Russia along with M. Dérigny, his “intendant français,” and Dérigny’s family. No motive is given for the return home, though the reader is expected to have known the previous story of L’Auberge de l’Ange Gardien, published the same year, the other book in which Dourakine is a character. The group is traveling from France to Russia to Dourakine’s estate Gromiline. The narrator says very little about the trip itself—a marked difference from the travel accounts seen previously. Saint Petersburg and Moscow are mentioned only briefly: “On s’arrêta . . . une semaine seulement à Saint-Pétersbourg, dont l’aspect majestueux, régulier et sévère ne plut à aucun des compagnons de route du vieux général; deux jours à Moscou, qui excita leur curiosité et leur admiration” (9). The narrator makes no mention of Saint Petersburg’s association with Peter the Great’s Westernization of Russia, nor is there any other association with Western Europe here. It is a city that makes an impression for these travelers, but it cannot retain their attention. Moscow, on the other hand, draws them in. Echoing statements made by travel accounts examined earlier, Moscow is “curious,” often defying strict categorization and drawing the French tourists and travelers in through its “bizarre” or “oriental” architecture. Though this passage does not equate Moscow with the
East or the exotic, the wording that elicits the characters’ curiosity and admiration repeats other French statements made about Russia’s old capital. The country’s two main capitals, however, are not where the interest of this narrative lies. As Marcoin notes, Ségur’s narrative indeed avoids the topsy-turvy world of foreign travel. Instead, her characters quickly move to regain the stability of the rural, family environment (8). They hurry to reach Gromiline, Dourakine’s estate of truly Russian proportions: “[V]ingt mille hectares de bois, dix mille de terre à labour, vingt mille de prairie. . . . [Q]uatre mille paysans, deux cents chevaux, trois cents vaches, vingt mille moutons et une foule d’autres bêtes” (22). The unwieldy size of Gromiline—as described by the equally ungainly Dourakine—forecasts Dérigny’s family’s experience in a very foreign Russia: larger-than-life, difficult to grasp or to control.

**The Russian Fool**

On the way to Gromiline, readers are quickly reintroduced to the immense personality of the Général Dourakine. Awakened from a nap by Dérigny childrens’ noise, Dourakine asks Madame Dérigny why she has hushed her children. His anger mounts in the ensuing discussion, so much so that the children are truly afraid of him. Paul pleads of Dourakine, “Monsieur le général, je vous en prie, ne soyez pas rouge. . . .” (12). Dourakine’s reaction to the French family’s efforts at allowing him to sleep are exaggerated—he gets so upset that he turns red and frightens the children. Dourakine’s temper is quick and without bounds. This passage introduces the readers immediately to the de trop character Dourakine. His actions and reactions are exaggerated, a behavior that is only underlined by his French friends’ responses to him.
Ségur’s young readers do not have much longer to discover a clue to this character’s nature. In a hurry to reach Gromiline and again mad at a slow driver, Dourakine instructs Dérigny to command a faster pace: “Sac à papier! ces drôles-là! Dites-leur dourak, skatina, skareï!” (13). Dérigny, who will miraculously begin to manipulate the Russian language while in Russia, repeats these words to the desired effect of the general. Ségur, however, footnotes these Russian words for the reader: “Imbécile, animal, plus vite!” (13). One of the few Russian words that are explained so clearly in the text, dourak is unmistakably the root of Dourakine’s name. As he has already demonstrated, Dourakine is an overblown (though mostly harmless) imbecile. The illustrations by Emile Bayard highlight this (see fig. 4-2).48 Extremely corpulent with slightly tattered clothing, often times with unkempt hair on a balding head, Dourakine’s extreme behavior is consistently reinforced both in the written and visual texts of Ségur’s work.

48 Emile Bayard was a well-known illustrator of the time. He is most recognized for his depictions of the character Cosette in Victor Hugo’s Les Misérables.
As the primary Russian character to whom readers are introduced, Dourakine—more droll than dangerous—represents the large and rich, yet unrefined and violent character of Russia. Other Russian characters give more clues as to the way Russia is portrayed by Ségur. Two sisters—Madame Papofski (in her own words, “une pauvre femme séparée d’un mari qui l’abandonne, sans protection, et sans fortune”) and the widow Madame Dabrovine—arrive at their uncle’s estate for a visit (37). They could not be more different. Madame Papofski comes to Gromiline with eight children who will later terrorize
Paul and Jacques. She speaks often of beating her children (“Alors j’ai seulement fouetté Yégor”) and is shown to be a woman who is actively grubbing for her uncle’s money, though she has plenty of her own. Bayard’s accompanying illustrations are no more flattering (see fig. 4-3). In one, which depicts her arrival at Gromiline, she is surrounded by her unruly children (some of whom are face down on the ground). She then threatens one of her domestic servants (“Tais-toi, insolent, imbécile! Tu vas voir ce que mon oncle va faire. Il te fera mettre en pièces!”). Throughout the book, Madame Papofski clashes with her uncle (who sees through her financial motivations and feigned displays of affection). She is jealous of her sister’s attention from Dourakine. She petrifies her children with threats of corporal punishment. She even plots to denounce the whole family (most notably the Polish fugitive, Romane). She is, as Jacques Chupeau has noted, the “image noire de la Russie, faite d’avidité, de violence et de ruse” (12).

To escape this black sheep and her plotting, Dourakine comes up with a plan to escape the country with Romane, Madame Dabrovine and her children, and the Dérigny family. He tells Madame Papofski that she will be completely in charge of his estate (and his money) for one or two years. Without her knowing, he has, in fact sold his land to “un général aide de camp de l’empereur” and she will soon be without a fortune and without a home at Gromiline (111). In an attempt to bribe the government to undo the legal actions her uncle has taken against her, she is brutally beaten and ends up dying. The narrator’s conclusion about her death shows little grief: “Mme Papofski ne fut regretée de personne; sa mort fut l’heure de la délivrance pour ses enfants comme pour ses malheureux domestiques et paysans” (169). Madame Papofski, the Russian bad seed, will not be missed by a single character in the book.
Madame Dabrovine (whose name recalls the Russian adjective _dobró_ or “good”) is the doppelgänger of Madame Papofski, her sister. She hesitates to accept her uncle’s offers of money, her angelic daughter Natasha is a model of good behavior (especially juxtaposed with her eight disruptive cousins), and she has impeccable manners. Madame Dabrovine is, as Dourakine notes, “bonne et aimante,” a person he describes as “le très rare, mais très vrai type russe” (62). We learn later, though a Russian, however, that she belongs to a religious minority: she is a Catholic. She consistently laments the plight of the Polish Catholics under
often bloody Russian rule. Speaking to Romane sympathetically, she underlines her Catholic bias:

[Les souffrances de la malheureuse Pologne me navrent; et le malheur a ouvert mon cœur aux consolations chrétiennes d’un bon et saint prêtre catholique qui vivait dans mon voisinage, et qui m’a appris à souffrir avec résignation et à espérer. . . . Tous comme moi, mon cher monsieur, et tous désirant ardemment pouvoir pratiquer leur religion, seule proscrite et maudite en Russie, parce qu’elle est seule vraie. (119)

Like Ségur and her mother, Madame Dabrovine is a Catholic convert, something frowned upon in Russia by the Orthodox monarchy. Catholicism, certainly a “maudite” religion in Russia, marks her as separate from her home country. She therefore has no trouble leaving Russia for France along with her other relatives and friends, also Catholics. If Madame Papofski is the “black image of Russia,” then Madame Dabrovine is the opposite: humble, gentle, intelligent, well mannered, a believer in the only “true” religion. Though Dourakine says she is truly a Russian, this epitome of good “Russian-ness” must leave the country to be happy and to live a life where she is free to practice her Catholic beliefs. The good that Madame Dabrovine has to offer cannot stay within the nineteenth-century Russia in which Le Général Dourakine is set.

Romane

Romane is yet another character whose experiences are marked by Russian intolerance and despotism. The Polish Romane, as his name indicates, is a Catholic. He has
escaped forced labor in Siberia and arrives as a famished, beaten stranger on the vast lands of Gromiline. He fears being denounced. By chance, he is found completely exhausted and without provisions on the property of Dourakine, a good friend. Dourakine gives Dérigny an explanation of their relationship later on: “[I]l lui raconta que, quelques années auparavant, dans une campagne en Circassie, il avait eu pour aide de camp un jeune Polonais, le prince Pojarski, un des plus grands noms de la Pologne, et possédant une immense fortune; il s’y était beaucoup attaché; il lui avait rendu et en avait reçu de grands services” (108). Dourakine’s attachment to the Polish prince is clear. He vows to help Romane, putting his family and friends in danger of persecution by the Russian government.

To avoid being found out by the government as well as by the traitorous Madame Papofski, Romane adopts the identity of M. Jackson who serves as a “gouverneur anglais” to Madame Dabrovine’s two sons, Alexandre and Michel. Madame Papofski, however, has her suspicions and it is clear that she will soon turn in the whole group for her own profit. Dourakine makes plans with Dérigny to leave Russia with the Dérigny family, Madame Dobrovine’s family, and Romane. It is during their flight that readers learn of Romane’s travails. The account as told by Romane demonstrates the brutal tactics of the Russian government against the Polish during the nineteenth century.

Ségur’s inclusion of this account resonated with political and military events of 1862 and 1863 when tensions between Russia and Poland were high. Long under the thumb of Russian rule, the Polish experience of Russian domination had already been arduous in the 1830s and again in 1846 (Riasanovsky 332; Saudray 200). In 1862, having gained some concessions from the Russian government, the Polish nobility pushed for further liberalization of Russia’s control of Poland. These demands were met with a brutal
response: invasions of Catholic churches, deportations to Siberia, and forced conscription of young Polish men in the Russian army. Romane’s story is one that is based clearly on recent Russo-Polish relations.

The chapters “Récit du prince forçat” and “Evasion du prince” (169-184) trace Romane’s difficulties in Russia. His account is based on Souvenirs d’un Sibérien, the account of the Polish noble Rufin Piotrowski’s 1846 return from exile in Siberia for his subversive actions against the Russian government. Like Romane, Piotrowski was a member of the Polish nobility and Catholic. Piotrowski’s account serves as the basis for much of Romane’s story: twelve pages of Ségur’s account follow faithfully the thirty pages of the original account (Saudray 199). Ségur sticks closely to his text, but adds critical details. Her modifications to the text—notably concerning the “compagnon de chaîne du prince, un jeune homme ‘fils unique, adoré par ses parents,’ ‘fervent catholique’ knouté à mort après une tentative d’évasion”—amplify the readers’ fear of an inhuman Russia (Saudray 200). In short, Le Général Dourakine is an attempt by the Francophile and Catholic Ségur at criticizing her home country’s recent and past actions in Catholic Poland:

Si l’on peut lire Le Général Dourakine comme un moment de nostalgie où la comtesse évoque son enfance à Voronovo, on doit le lire également—ou davantage—comme une féroce satire d’une Russie barbare (les Souvenirs d’un Sibérien apportant la pièce à conviction maîtresse), que l’on doit, comme Dourakine, fuir au plus vite. Comme Dourakine liquide ses affaires en Russie, la comtesse liquide ses affaires avec la Russie. Fin du journal d’un retour au pays natal. (Saudray 203)

Her novel, then, is return to home, but is exceedingly bitter. She paints her native Russia as
“barbaric.” Violence abounds. Her Russian characters display an incompetence in comparison to those characters formed by the West (France and the Catholic Church). But is this novel, in fact a “liquidation” of Ségur’s ties to her native country?

“Mes... enf...ants,” les Français

A response can be found in an examination of the Dérigny family’s perspectives on Russia, and their behavior in this foreign land. Dérigny, Dourakine’s “intendant français,” is a man of impeccable manners. He never oversteps his role as servant to Dourakine (who outranks him socially). However, his gentle suggestions and actions clearly have a civilizing impact on Dourakine and Gromiline. Throughout the novel, the Dérigny family serves as a model of calm, intelligence, obedience, and good upbringing. They are horrified by the environment in which they have found themselves, yet they make do with less-than-French accommodations in Russian inns and also at Gromiline. Dérigny amazes the servants at Gromiline, as well as Dourakine, for his ability to furnish a room (even with comfortable beds) “à la française” (29).

Dérigny and his family not only handle gracefully the physical environment into which they are thrust by little modifications “à la française.” Dérigny is also shown on several occasions to try to sway morally Dourakine’s Russian moral reflexes, especially the idea of physical punishment. Upon a threat from Dourakine to beat one of his servants,

49 The narrator’s description here is similar to those found in the travel accounts by French authors in which they complain of sparse and uncomfortable lodging: “Pendant que le général retenait Dérigny, Mme Dérigny, après avoir couché les enfants, examina le mobilier, et vit avec consternation qu’il lui manquait des choses de la plus absolue nécessité. Pas une cuvette, pas une terrine, pas une cruche, pas un verre, aucun ustensile de ménage, sauf un vieux sceau oublié dans un coin” (21).
Dérigny tries to reason calmly with the enraged general, questioning his use of beatings as a means to maintain order.

GENERAL: C’est comme ça que nous menons nos domestiques russes.

DERIGNY: Et... permettez-moi de vous demander, mon général, en êtes-vous mieux servis?

LE GENERAL: Très mal, mon cher; horriblement! On ne les tient qu’avec coups de bâton!

DERIGNY: Il me semble, mon général, si j’ose vous dire ma pensée, qu’ils servent mal parce qu’ils n’aiment pas, et ils ne s’attachent pas à cause des mauvais traitements.

LE GENERAL: Bah! bah! Ce sont des bêtes brutes qui ne comprennent rien.

DERIGNY: Il me semble, mon général, qu’ils comprennent bien la menace et la punition.

LE GENERAL: Certainement, c’est parce qu’ils ont peur.

DERIGNY: Il comprendraient aussi bien les bonnes paroles et les bons traitements, et ils aieraient leur maître comme je vous aime, mon général.

LE GENERAL: Mon bon Dérigny, vous êtes si différent de ces Russes grossiers!

DERIGNY: A l’apparence, mon général, mais pas au fond. (15)

In this dialogue, Dérigny calms the heated Dourakine. Dérigny is always respectful (“Permettez-moi de vous demander, mon général”), but suggests a more humane treatment of the servants at Gromiline. Dourakine hesitates because he thinks that the French are of a
different nature than the Russians (“Mon bon Dérigny, vous êtes si différent de ces Russes grossiers!”) and concludes that a gentler treatment would not work. However, Dérigny’s insistence that the French and Russians are essentially the same strengthens his position on humane treatment. Later, Dérigny’s subtle exhortations convince the Russian: “Ce qui lui avait dit Dérigny lui revenait à la mémoire, et son bon cœur lui faisait entrevoir la vérité” (16). The Frenchman’s calm and reasoning prevail.

Even the French children are aware of the differences between the French and the Russians. The Dérigny children, Jacques and Paul, discuss the nature of Russia and Russians. Apart from a discussion that concedes that the Russian peasants dress well, the two children express their concerns about actually being Russian.50 A group of Russian children on Gromiline is delighted when they see the two young French boys outside in Russian garb.

A la grande surprise de Paul, ils vinrent l’un après l’autre leur baiser la main.

Les petits Français, protégés et grandis par la faveur du général, leur semblaient des êtres supérieurs, et ils éprouvaient de la reconnaissance de l’abandon de l’habit français pour le caftane national russe.

PAUL: Pourquoi donc nous baisent-ils les mains?

50 In this passage, Jacques concedes that the Russian peasants are more picturesque than French peasants. It is one of the rare instances where Russians in Le Général Dourakine are said to superior than the French.

C’est drôle, dit Paul à Jacques, que tous les hommes ici soient des sapeurs!
JACQUES: Ce ne sont pas des sapeurs: ce sont les paysans du général.
PAUL: Mais pourquoi sont-ils tous en robe de chambre?
JACQUES: C’est leur manière de s’habiller; tu en as vu tous le long de la route; ils étaient tous en robe de chambre de drap bleu avec des ceintures rouges. C’est très joli, bien plus joli que les blouses chez nous. (18)

Théophile Gautier’s Voyage en Russie echoes the same fascination with peasant dress, as do many other travelogues.
JACQUES: Pour nous remercier d’être habillés comme eux et d’avoir l’air de
nous faire Russes.

PAUL, vivement: Mais je ne veux pas être Russe, moi; je veux être Français
comme papa, maman, tante Elfy et mon ami Moutier.

JACQUES: Sois tranquille, tu resteras Français. Avec nos habits russes nous
avons l’air d’être Russes, mais seulement l’air. (25)

The commentary here by both Paul and Jacques—to the contrary of Dérigny’s comments in
the passage above—expresses doubt about the Russian and the French intrinsic similarities.
Paul vocalizes his worries about becoming entirely Russian. He wants to retain his French
identity. Though Jacques and Paul may dress like Russians, Jacques assures Paul that they
are “Russian” only on the surface. Unlike Dourakine and Madame Dabrovine’s family who
flee their homeland to adopt a new identity and residence, never to return to Russia, the
Dérigny boys affirm their desire to remain what they already are: French.

The bumbling yet strong Dourakine asserts the value of being French. Due to the
tensions and skirmishes between Madame Papofski’s children and the Dérigny children, the
adults are drawn in. Refusing to see that her children have been in the wrong over the latest
scuffle, Madame Papofski threatens to beat Paul and Jacques. Dourakine, however
intervenes with the following threat to Yégor, one of Madame Papofski’s children: “Dis à
ta mère que si elle s’avise de toucher à un seul de mes Français, qui sont mes amis, mes
enfants, ... entend-tu? mes... en...fants!: je la ferai fouetter elle-même devant moi, jusqu’à ce
qu’elle n’ait plus de peau sur le dos. Va petit gredin, petit menteur, va rejoindre tes scélérats
de frères et sœurs” (46). Dourakine’s words deliver a double blow. First, he emphasizes the
value of the young French children who are both his “friends” and even “children.” Though
not blood relations, Dourakine verbally adopts these young French boys, defending them against Madame Papofski’s potential physical retributions. Madame Papofski, a true blood relative to Dourakine, risks death if she attacks his adopted family members. His final words to Yégor impart the second strike against his view of these Russians. Dourakine dismisses Yégor and his siblings, calling them “scélérats.” Dourakine shows little sympathy to these small Russians, identified by the narrator as victims of Madame Papofski’s bad childrearing skills. The implication of Dourakine’s statement here is unmistakable. His efforts are an attempt to restore order, but perhaps not peace with his threats to Madame Papofski and his statements about her children. With these actions, Dourakine rejects his true Russian family for as newly adopted French family, revealing his bias for that which is French, not Russian. Dourakine, who will soon de-Russify himself upon leaving the country, distances himself from his Russian roots to settle in France with his new-found French family.

The discussions in the text about France and Russia, Catholicism, and morality, make clear that though the Russians may have some good qualities (as simple as their dress or the inherent goodness of some Russians as embodied in Madame Dabrovine), the French are superior in most matters, from household management to moral decisions. Even with the assertion that the Russians do indeed have merit, those who are of value cannot survive there amidst the bad Russians. Dourakine and Madame Dabrovine—the good Russians of this text—must flee, just as Romane does, in order to be able to retain these traits and live as good human beings, most notably practicing Catholicism. If there were any doubts about this, Romane’s statements about his escape and hopes to arrive in France leave no question: “Je ne perdis pourtant pas courage; j’invoquai Dieu et la sainte Vierge, qui me procureraient sans doute quelque travail, quelque moyen de gagner ma vie pour arriver jusqu’en France,
seul pays au monde qui ait été comptatissant et généreux pour les pauvres Polonais” (182).

France, the “only country in the world” that has supported Poland’s struggles against Russia, is the Eldorado for a character meant to evoke the readers’ sympathy and compassion. Though there is some good in Russia, more so in Poland, France in this text is demonstrably at the summit. The good Russians who leave their homeland are eager exiles.

Like Dourakine and Madame Dabrovine, Ségur, née Rostopchine also seems an eager exile. What then are readers of Le Général Dourakine to make of the fact that the author of the text is of Russian origin and clearly identifies herself as Russian by the inclusion of her maiden name on the signature page? Unlike Turgenev’s name in his initial ventures in the French literary field, Ségur’s name was not a hindrance to her abilities to publish with Hachette. It was instead a badge of honor for her. Ségur can identify with her characters Dourakine and Madame Dabrovine, good Russians who take up permanent residence in France to live out the rest of their days. Like them also, Ségur is Catholic and had a mother who suffered for her religious convictions. For the writer and her characters, France stands out as the best place for them to be: “La Russie et le château de Gromiline fournissent un contre-modèle, une terre de violence et de tyrannie” (Marcoin 311). Furthermore, the French “epitomize culture, refinement, reason, intelligence, and Catholic values” (Israël-Pelletier 3). Ségur’s novel affirms France’s general superiority in regards to Russia.

Chupeau’s statement gets to the core of the author’s own conflicted identity:

Le Général Dourakine traduit un attachement profond de la comtesse de Ségur à une identité russe qu’elle n’a cessé d’affirmer avec fierté: nul ne peut ignorer qu’elle est ‘née Rostopchine.’ Mais cette fidélité à ses origines, parce qu’elle est aussi fidélité à soi-même et à ses convictions, lui interdit de
reconnaître sa vraie patrie dans une Russie privée de liberté, où la violence et
la peur ont instauré le règne du mensonge et du masque. Au regard de la
romancière, ce triomphe de l’oppression et de l’hypocrisie a perverti l’âme
russe et détruit les valeurs idéales qui en faisaient la noblesse. (14)

This cultural translator’s message about Russia is clear. In the country’s current-day state,
the vast majority of its citizens should not be role models for young French children. Ségur
espouses France’s ascendancy in the realm of the “civilized” world. “Frenchness,” as
delineated in the novel, is without a doubt what young readers should strive to emulate.

**Verne’s Quest**

The quest for a French home and a family, even if it is foreign, dominates Ségur’s
*Général Dourakine*. Verne, however, was an author known for adventures, exoticism, and
fantasy worlds. The adventures are led by a solitary protagonist like Michel Strogoff or by
Captain Nemo who thrives in chaos.\(^{51}\) It is precisely this formula in his *Voyages extraordinaires*
that guaranteed his successes with Hetzel.

Verne’s remarkable relationship with Hetzel, not atypical of the general pairing of
French authors and publishers according to aesthetic and political affinities during the
second half of the nineteenth century, is well recognized (Chesneaux 208). Like Turgenev,
Verne was a close friend of Hetzel. Their correspondence is often filled with amicable
exchanges (*Compère,* *Jules Verne: Parcours d’une Œuvre* 17). Daniel Compère describes this

\(^{51}\) “Les héros verniens ressemblent parfois au chevalier errant, sans lien familial, voire asocial, en quête d’un
inaccessible but, but dont la réalisation éloît le récit. Ils manifestent une soif de surprise, de changement,
d’ailleurs” (*Compère,* *Jules Verne: Parcours d’une Œuvre* 41).
relationship and its impact on the French literary market:

Ayant compris que l'édition devait se transformer pour répondre à l’attente d’un public de plus en plus important, il a contribué à faire évoluer le métier d'éditeur. Il ne souhaitait publier que des auteurs qu’il aimait. Avec eux, il ne cessait d’avoirdes rapports qui, bien souvent, devenaient amicaux. Il les conseillait, attirait leur attention sur les besoins du public, participait parfois à la conception de leur œuvre, voire à leur rédaction. (Jules Verne: Parcours d’une Œuvre 15)

The close relationships Hetzel maintained with “only the authors he liked” and the manner in which he worked to conceptualize, edit, and even contribute to their writing defines exactly the sort of relationship that Hetzel had with Verne.

Born in 1828 in Nantes to a family that fostered his creativity to grow (his father dabbled in fiction and his mother came from a family of shipowners), Verne began writing at an early age though he father had picked a career for him in law. At twenty, he went to Paris to study law, but began as well to cultivate connections with Paris’ literary world. He is believed to have worked as a writer for Alexandre Dumas (père). He also had a play produced in Paris by 1850. He continued to write for theatre for the next two years, but was soon dissatisfied with the genre. From this point, he was inspired by new discoveries in science. He strove to emulate Edgar Poe’s literary inventiveness, as well as books like Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, in his search for a form of writing that would please him.

During this process, Verne met Honorine Devianne, the woman he later married in 1857. He became an agent de change to assure a stable financial situation for the couple and their child, Michel, born in 1861. Even with these ancillary revenues, Verne strove to
become a recognized writer. Inspired by Poe, Defoe, Balzac’s *Comédie humaine*, and his interest in science and discovery, he wrote *Voyage en l’air*. After Hetzel read the manuscript, he enthusiastically signed Verne to a contract in 1862 and publishing *Voyage en l’air* as *Cinq semaines en ballon* the following year. Contracts between the two men were modified several times, but they were both equally satisfied with the relationship, described by one critic as a “perfect symbiosis” (Lotmann 95). Verne worked with Hetzel until the former’s death in 1886 in a successful relationship that allowed him to realize his dream of becoming and earning a living as a writer.

**Journeys to the Center of Russia (and Beyond)**

Not long after his first publication with Hetzel, Verne began to work on the *Voyages extraordinaires* for publication in Hetzel’s *Magasin d’éducation et de récréation*. For this series, Verne published *Voyage au centre de la Terre* (1864), *De la Terre à la Lune* (1865), *20 000 lieues sous les mers* (1870), and *Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingt jours* (1873). *Michel Strogoff*, published in 1876, was a part of this collection (see fig. 4-4). The novel is set in the Russian Empire, under a tsar who—based on his depiction as progressive at the beginning of the story—is most likely Alexander II, the tsar under whom serfdom was abolished in 1861. Upon news of a Tartar revolt in Siberia led by a Russian traitor, Ivan Ogareff, the tsar ponders how to quell the increasingly problematic and violent uprising. Unable to communicate with his brother in Irkutsk in far away Siberia, the tsar requests that a *courrier* be sent undercover to

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52 Daniel Compère describes *Cinq semaines en ballon* as a mixture of all Verne’s favorite genres: “Roman scientifique et même géographique, cet ouvrage comporte aussi, de manière discrète il est vrai, une certaine satire sociale” (*Jules Verne: Parcours d’une Œuvre* 15). Hetzel discouraged Verne’s social commentary as their relationship grew closer, but he encouraged Verne’s affection for science and travel.
inform his brother of Ogareff’s escape and probable plan for the Duke’s murder in Irkutsk. Michel Strogoff, a native of Siberia (though ethnically Russian) is named to the task. The novel thus follows Strogoff over the Ural Mountains from Moscow and through the steppes of Siberia to Irkutsk where he escapes attacks by bears, Tartars, and his nemesis Ogareff. His journey is successful: having escaped being blinded by the Tartar Khan and Ogareff and meeting his future wife Nadia along the way, he saves the Duke and accomplishes the mission the tsar sent him on many months earlier.

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**Figure 4-4:** Jules Verne’s *Michel Strogoff*

In writing this epic set in Russia, Verne was meticulous about researching foreign words included in his text, as well as the history and cultures of areas explored like Siberia. But this was not entirely the case for *Michel Strogoff*. Though much of the novel is accurate linguistically, historically, and culturally in its details, the event around which the narrative is
centered—the Tartar invasion of Western Russia from the East—is patently false. There was no nineteenth-century threat on Western Russia from its colonial lands in Central Asia (Bongie 239). The appeal of such an event, however, drew upon one of the most well-known invasions of Russian history—that of Genghis Khan and his Mongolian armies in the thirteenth century.

Verne’s historical embellishment, though certainly a means to create the story’s main intrigue, was cause for worry, however, for Hetzel. In addition, the publisher worried about the work’s original title, *Le Courrier du Czar*, thinking of “his subscribers in Russia, whom he wished to please, and feared to offend” (Lotmann 193). Worse yet, after the downfall of the Second Empire and France’s position in Europe after its defeat by Bismarck, Hetzel wondered if the story would risk offending Russians during a time in which the French government was working towards closer relations with that country (Jules-Verne 115). He decided to consult the Franco-Russian “experts” Turgenev and a Russian ambassador in Paris, Prince Orlov (Lotmann 193; Jules-Verne 115). Hetzel’s consultation of these cultural translators proved useful. Both Orlov and Turgenev agreed that, even though the title posed little risk it should be changed. Turgenev, however, went further, expressing his clear disapproval to Hetzel of the fictional Tartar invasion. Like the Verne and Hetzel, Turgenev and Hetzel were also close. Hetzel heeded Turgenev’s advice: he requested that the title be changed—to which Verne agreed reluctantly—and that Verne include an introduction in which he explained that the events surrounding the invasion were fictitious and that the Eastern threat was not real. Verne rejected this last suggestion outright for the story’s incarnation in book format for good reason, explored later in this chapter. He did, however,
accept this disclaimer for the work’s *feuilleton* publication and in Russian editions (Lotmann 194).

The writing and publication of *Michel Strogoff* demonstrates the extent to which Hetzel and Verne negotiated their relationship as a writer-editor couple, weighing each other’s advice carefully, but also feeling secure enough in their relationship to risk rejecting the other’s corrections or changes. The novel’s genesis also demonstrates Verne’s meticulousness in constructing his works, even when they strayed from the historical truth. Furthermore, the controversy surrounding both the title and the depiction of the Tartar invasion alludes to a critical period in Franco-Russian relations. Unlike *Le Général Dourakine*, *Michel Strogoff* was not published during a period of tension between the two nations, but rather at the beginning of a rapprochement. How then does Verne’s Russia appeal to French readers? How is his portrayal of Russia different from Ségur’s?

*Russia’s East and West*

Verne’s message about Russia is evident from the beginning. The story opens at a ball in Moscow where the Muscovite *beau monde* is at the height of elegance:

> Le grand maréchal de la cour était, d’ailleurs, bien secondé dans ses délicates fonctions. Les grands-ducs et leurs aides de camp, les chambellans de service, les officiers du palais présidaient eux-mêmes à l’organisation des danses. Les grandes-duchesses, couvertes de diamants, les dames d’atour, revêtues de leurs costumes de gala, donnaient vaillamment l’exemple aux femmes des hauts fonctionnaires militaires et civils de l’ancienne ‘ville aux
blanches pierres’. Aussi, lorsque le signal de la “polonaise” retentit, quand les invités de tout rang prirent part à cette promenade cadencée, qui, dans les solennités de ce genre, a toute l’importance d’une danse nationale, le mélange des longues robes étagées de dentelles et des uniformes chamarrés de décorations offrit-il un coup d’œil indescriptible, sous la lumière de cent lustres que décuplait la réverbération des glaces.

Ce fut un éblouissement. (5)

The description of court life in the Kremlin is a picture of order and elegance. The presence of high-ranking nobility and military men, along with their exquisitely dressed wives, in an orchestrated, formal dance setting emphasizes the civility of the Russian court and upper echelons of society. This differs markedly from the Russians’ chaotic, vicious, and slovenly behavior at Ségur’s Gromiline. In comparison, the ballroom dance is “dazzling.” Soon after this description, readers learn about the tsar’s thoughts on forced labor and exile to Siberia cited above, where the narrator affirms that Russian justice was clement under the current tsar. From the outset of this novel, Russia—or at least Russia’s West—is a place where society is orderly and graceful and where an enlightened ruler watches carefully over his kingdom, painstakingly assuring both justice and peace. In short, this Russia is civilized.

Or is it? The initial description of Michel Strogoff gives rise to this question.

Michel Strogoff était haut de taille, vigoureux, épaules larges, poitrine vaste. . . . Ses membres, bien attachés, étaient autant de leviers, disposés mécaniquement pour le meilleur accomplissement des ouvrages de force. Ce beau et solide garçon, bien campé, bien planté, n’eût pas été facile
à déplacer malgré lui, car, lorsqu’il avait posé ses deux pieds sur le sol, il semblait qu’ils s’y fussent enracinés. Sur sa tête, carrée du haut, large de front, se crépelaient une chevelure abondante, qui s’échappait en boucles, quand il la coiffait de la casquette moscovite. Lorsque sa face, ordinairement pâle, venait à se modifier, c’était uniquement sous un battement plus rapide du cœur, sous l’influence d’une circulation plus vive qui lui envoyait la rougeur artérielle. Ses yeux étaient d’un bleu foncé, avec un regard droit, franc, inaltérable, et ils brillaient sous une arcade dont les muscles sourciliers, contractés faiblement, témoignaient d’un courage élevé, “ce courage sans colère des héros”, suivant l’expression des physiologistes. Son nez puissant, large de narines, dominait une bouche symétrique avec les lèvres un peu saillantes de l’être généreux et bon. (30)

This Russian is more machine than man, more sheer power than simple warm-blooded being. “Ses membres, bien attachés. . . autant de leviers, disposés mécaniquement pour le meilleur accomplissement des ouvrages de force,” “circulation plus vive qui lui envoyait la rougeur artérielle,” “une bouche symétrique”—all these descriptions impart machine-like qualities to the Siberian hero. He is certainly exceptional, but not quite human.

Strogoff’s actions also underline his superior qualities:

[V]êtu d’un simple costume russe, tunique serrée à la taille, ceinture traditionnelle du moujik, larges culottes, bottes sanglées à la jarretière, Michel Strogoff se rendit à la gare pour y prendre le premier train. Il ne portait point d’armes, ostensiblement du moins; mais sous sa ceinture se dissimulait un revolver, et, dans sa poche, un de ces larges coutelas qui tiennent du couteau
et du yatagan, avec lesquels un chasseur sibérien sait éventrer proprement un ours, sans détériorer sa précieuse fourrure. (39)

Strogoff, dressed here in the proverbial image of the muzhik or Russian peasant, sets off on his secret mission. The description often is not surprising, except for the details about his ability to kill a bear with a simple knife without, of course, hurting its “precious coat!” The readers are not disappointed to learn later that this Russian strongman does in fact kill a bear who threatens Nadia’s life. This Russian is indeed superhuman.

What are readers to make of Strogoff? He is doubtless an icon of Russian strength and honorability. However, his mechanistic qualities and ability to wrestle with a wild creature of Russia’s forest belie some other qualities. Externally regimented and machine-like, internally Strogoff is a brute animal, capable of coming—quite literally—to hand-to-paw combat with a Russian bear. Strogoff, then, may possess “civilized” qualities, but there is also something savage about him.

The text is punctuated with these ambiguous judgments about Russia. In a dialogue between the two visitors from Western Europe who chronicle the uprising, Alcide Jolivet (a carefree optimist) and Harry Blount (an English journalist with a sour outlook on life), the disorganized, inefficient qualities of the Russian justice system are the subject of a joke:

– Un procès, en Russie! s’écria Alcide Jolivet. Mais si les choses n’ont pas changé, confrère, vous n’en verriez pas la fin! Vous ne savez donc pas l’histoire de cette nourrice russe qui réclamait douze mois d’allaitement à la famille de son nourrisson?

– Je ne la sais pas, répondit Harry Blount.
– Alors, vous ne savez pas non plus ce qu’était devenu ce nourrisson, quand
fut rendu le jugement qui lui donnait gain de cause?
– Et qu’était-il, s’il vous plaît?
– Colonel des hussards de la garde! (137)

From the mouth of a Western European, then, Russia’s justice system is seen as not up to
par and laughable because of its inefficiencies. Later, when the narrator discusses popular
Russians, the simple muzhik Nicolas, a traveling companion to Strogoff and Nadia, is labeled
“superstitious” “comme le sont la plupart des Russes” (316). Thus, Verne’s Russia is
portrayed as a society that has established traditions of refined and organized procedures and
civilities. Nevertheless, there are some qualities in the country and its inhabitants that
undermine the stability of these features. The narrator casually acknowledges this in an
introductory statement about Russia: “En effet, ce vaste empire, qui compte douze millions
de kilomètres carrés, ne peut pas avoir l’homogénéité des États de l’Europe occidentale.
Entre les divers peuples qui le comosent, il existe forcément plus que des nuances” (46). In
effect, the narrator excuses Russia’s lack of homogeneity (and therefore order?) because of
its vast size and its diverse population:

On y compte plus de soixante dix millions d’habitants. On y parle trente
langues différentes. La race slave y domine sans doute, mais elle comprend,
avec les Russes, des Polonais, des Lithuaniens, des Courlandais. Que l’on y
ajoute les Finnois, les Estoniens, les Lapons, les Tchérémisses, les
Tchouvaches, les Permiaks, les Allemands, les Grecs, les Tartares, les tribus
caucasiennes, les hordes mongoles, kalmoukes, samoyèdes, kamtschadales,
aléoutes, et l’on comprendra que l’unité d’un aussi vaste État ait été difficile à
maintenir et qu’elle n’ait pu être que l’œuvre du temps, aidée par la sagesse des gouvernements. (46-47)

Like Strogoff himself, Russia’s composition does not seem to be ordinary: it is territorially vast, populated with peoples as different as Lithuanians and Mongols. Its diversity and gargantuan proportions have been “difficult to manage,” difficult to tame. Under a barely containable national order, there lies potential chaos.

**Russia’s Civilizing Mission**

As Strogoff moves towards Irkutsk in Eastern Siberia, however, the Russian government is contrasted with Féofar Khan and his Tartar armies. The Tartars are described as having a “barbarie naturelle” and a “raffinement de barbarie” (323). They bury Nicolas up to his neck in soil (“suivant l’atroce coutume tartare”) so that he will die of hunger and thirst and “peut-être sous la dent des loups ou le bec des oiseaux de proie” (337). The scene in which Michel Strogoff is temporarily blinded echoes the bloody drama in which Peter the Great participates in Dumas’ *Voyage en Russie*. The Tartars set fire systematically to any village they come across. They even use a tactic during the attack on Irkutsk and the tsar’s brother that consists of spilling oil on the river and then setting it afire. The narrator poses the following question: “Ceux-ci voulaient-ils porter l’incendie jusque dans Irkoutsk par des moyens que les droits de la guerre ne justifient jamais entre nations civilisées?” (356). The Tartars are unmistakably violent, extreme, destructive, and “uncivilized.” The Russians in the text, including members of the Russian army, Nadia, and Strogoff, are aghast at the Tartars’ “barbaric” tactics. The type of war against which the
Russians are fighting is “uncivilized,” placing them, by contrast, in with the groups of “civilized nations.” The Tartars’ behavior only accentuates the Russians’ good behavior.

In *Michel Strogoff*, the Russian Empire is threatened from the East, but the Russians triumph over the Tartars. The event shakes the nation’s armies and leadership. With communications from the West impossible because of Tartar sabotage of telegraph lines, the East—left to its own (and to its own populations) cannot be maintained: “the failure of a telegraph line is potentially catastrophic since the electric wire is the thin metallic line shielding civilization from barbarism” (Andrew Martin 117-18). Yet Russia’s potential undoing is part and parcel of the country’s very being. As a critic argues, “[t]he whole trouble with the Russian Empire (*mutatis mutandis*, with any empire) is that it is so big that there is nothing outside it, everything is inside (Russia is Europe *and* Asia). Invasion becomes impossible. . . . [B]y the same token, revolt is almost inevitable, since all potential enemies are now in the inside, threatening to cause divisions within the Empire” (Andrew Martin 125). The Russian Empire contains both what will make it excel as a world power, and also what can destroy it.

Why does Verne portray Russia so ambiguously? Certainly, his text maintains that the West (including Western Russia) is superior to the East. In matters of civilization, the West (whether Western Europe in relation to Russia, or Russia in relation to its Eastern colonized lands) always asserts its superiority. At the same time critics argue that Verne was aware of problems of empire and colonialism in his works, including *Michel Strogoff*. The struggle within Russia was not simply a question of the “good” West versus a “barbaric” East for Verne: his novel also deals with notions of empire.
For Verne, tsarist Russian Empire was far from perfect. Beneath a veneer of sophistication (as seen in the ball in Moscow) lurked destruction. On the relative East-West cultural gradient, Russia symbolized progress in comparison to the Far East. While sympathetic to the domination of indigent peoples, Verne also saw a positive effect of colonization: “Political domination by a Western Power is the commonest form of such ‘colonial relationship,’ but it does not constitute the essential element. The essential thing is to take possession of nature, to exploit new territories in the interests of economic and technical progress” (Chesneaux 126). Though relatively quiet on the question of France’s own colonial project in his works, Verne’s outright criticisms of British colonialism, as well as Russia’s status as a colonizer in *Michel Strogoff*, demonstrate his own grappling with these issues (Chesneaux 120). He was, in short, ambiguous about questions of colonialism—at once chastising some colonizers, but elsewhere praising them.

As contemplated by Verne in his novel, Russia underscores the author’s ambiguous positions on questions of the civilizing mission and colonization. Chris Bongie questions this. Why does Verne, critical of Russia in *Vingt mille lieues sous les mers*, portray the same country in such a positive light as a civilizing force (245)? What is his answer? “An attenuated version of the despotic Other stands in for the enlightened Same; autocratic Russia is thus opened up by the text, at some point in the not-so-distant future, to the sort of political system that, as far as Verne was concerned, had already slipped back into Europe’s past” (248). The Russia in this story is on its way to becoming like France, like the West, but it has not yet reached the same heights of progress. It is still somewhat backwards, but far ahead of its Eastern, Asian populations. In the name of progress and an eventual democracy, Verne’s text condones Russia’s civilizing mission in its own Siberia. In
light of this, it becomes clear why he had to use the fiction of the Tartar invasion. To justify his own country’s increasing cultivation of ties with Russia, the tsar’s country had to be painted in a more positive light (Bongie 248). Since Russia was, as Malia asserts, on the bottom end of the East-West cultural gradient, the invented Tartar invasion recalibrates the reference points for East and West, civilization and barbarism.

Verne’s efforts to remodel Russia are perhaps an effort at justifying France’s newfound position internationally after 1870. His home country had to justify its warming relationship with Russia in order to gain it as a military ally against Germany. Russia was as well as a country into which France could expand industrially beginning in the 1880s. Though an affiliate and friend of well-known liberal republicans and democrats like Hetzel who supported fights for autonomy of indigenous or less-fortunate populations, Verne may also have had in mind France’s need for its Eastern (European?) cousin. As such, Verne’s position in *Michel Strogoff* prefigures the conflicted Third Republic which carried out anti-democratic policies in its colonies in the establishment of the ideals of its *mission civilisatrice*. The attitudes towards colonization were, however, seen as consistent with the ideals of the Third Republic. Verne seems equally as conflicted. Though Chesneau asserts that Verne was at heart anti-colonialist, *Michel Strogoff’s* Russia contradicts this position. Slightly imperfect, but civilizing Russia is a country that engenders justice, technological progress, and peace. It is also a country with whom France can partner, both militarily and economically, as it moves into a post-Second Empire world.
**Afterword: “Strogoff Craze”**

Michel Strogoff’s representation of Russia was very well received by the French. Four years after its publication, a play based on Verne’s novel of the same name was performed for the first time in Paris. Verne worked with Adolphe Philippe d’Ennery (Dennery) to adapt the novel, a writer with whom he earlier produced a script for *Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingt jours* (Lotmann 178-80). The play ran for almost a year, making large profits in ticket sales (Lotmann 229). The play *Michel Strogoff* also set off fashion trends in the early 1880s: *le tout Paris* donned Russian fur hats. Soon afterwards, translations of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy would satisfy the ever-hungry French appetite for all things Russian.53

**A Child’s Russia**

Between 1863 and 1876, France’s relationship to Russia changed greatly. The two novels examined here by Ségur and Verne demonstrate some of the changes in representations of and attitudes towards Russia. From an anti-Catholic, territory-grabbing Empire in the 1860s to a benevolent, progress-bearing Empire of the 1870s, Russia as represented in these works of littérature enfantine demonstrates not only France’s tactical change of position in regards to Russia, but also the increasing access that French readers, even the young, had to the country. Unlike Sainte-Beuve’s statement about Turgenev’s first translations that there had been no access to Russia’s writers or history, the French public was likely more familiar with Russia, its history, and its major writers by the mid-1870s than

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53 *Michel Strogoff* still attracts audiences in current-day France. In July 2004, a cartoon version of the story was released in French movie theaters.
it was in the 1850s. An example from *Michel Strogoff* demonstrates the extent to which France's familiarity with Russia had evolved. In a description of the *courrier*, the narrator makes a reference to Turgenev:

> Ce qui se sentait particulièrement dans sa démarche, dans sa physionomie, dans toute sa personne, et ce que le czar reconnut sans peine, c’est qu’il était “un exécuteur d’ordres.” Il possédait donc l’une des qualités les plus recommandables en Russie, suivant l’observation du célèbre romancier Tourgueniev, qualité qui conduit aux plus hautes positions de l’empire moscovite. (31)

It is remarkable to see that Verne references Turgenev in his text. Does he assume that his young readers (or his adult readers) know who Turgenev is, at this point a Russian who had lived in France for twenty years? This reference—like the ones made to other travel narratives written around the publication of *Michel Strogoff*—underscores that Verne himself was a reader of Turgenev. With these two textual clues, Verne shows himself to be a reader aware of the complexities, culture, and even language, of the Russian Empire during the second half of the nineteenth century. Incorporating the works of cultural translators, French and Russian, he cobbled together his own vision of Russia, further contributing images to France’s imagined Russia.

What is also evident is that both writers provided inventive texts in which younger French readers could have access to information (fictional or historical) about Russia. Other French publications—Russian literature in translation, travelogues, journal articles—all served as material for their work. As writers who sought to both entertain and educate their readers (like many other children’s writers of the time), they artfully used all resources
available, including personal experience, printed materials on Russia, and personal contacts in Paris. The Russia they portrayed was conflicted in its various representations, but further added to France’s ideas about the country, even in a genre intended for children. As Jacques Chupeau posits,

>Ségur n’a pas craint d’offrir aux enfants, sous la forme du roman, une peinture du monde russe dont les enseignements ne sont pas moins riches que ceux que peuvent apporter, à la même époque, les ouvrages destinés aux adultes. Osons dire que cette peinture vivante de la Russie, par sa précision et sa force suggestive, l'emporte en agrément et en intérêt sur bien des témoignages plus ambitieux. (14)

The decidedly mature nature of Ségur’s children’s novel that was not necessarily just for children is also echoed in Verne’s work. Ségur the insider and Verne the outsider both brought a varied, yet complex vision of the tsar’s empire to their young readers during a time in which France was reformulating its relationship to Russia in light of its own struggles within a new European context.
Chapter 5

Selling the East or the West? Russia in French Advertisement

"Nous sommes fort intrigués en voyant le long de la route des poteaux en bois reliés par des fils de fer. À première vue, ces appareils semblent offrir une certaine analogie avec des poteaux de télégraphie mais après avoir consulté les ouvrages de plusieurs voyages célèbres tels que: Hérodote, Pline, Marco Polo, et n’ayant trouvé nulle part chez eux la moindre mention d’un télégraphe électrique dans ces contrées barbares, nous continuons notre voyage en inscrivant sur notre carnet: Routes bordées de barrières en fil de fer, trop élevées à notre avis pour empêcher le bétail de traverser les voies” (23-24).

Nick Bénar, A la découverte de la Russie (mock travel narrative, 1889)

An 1886 trademark for a box of soaps from Parisian parfumier Sylvain Bloch shows fur-enveloped Russians in a sled sprinting away from a snowy village of onion-domed churches (see fig. 5-1). This trademark for the soap “Savon des Princesses du Nord” is one of several hundred registered at the Tribunal de Commerce de la Seine during the second half of the nineteenth century on which images of Russia appear in association with products sold to French consumers. These trademarks were the distinctive packaging of products registered with departmental tribunaux de commerce after 1857 to help protect the products’ manufacturers from counterfeiting and to increase sales, often with vibrant images and typography (Gasnault and Kisselev 91). How and why was this representation of Russia—and others—used to sell products to French consumers during the second half of the nineteenth century? Do the different representations of Russia draw more on its “Eastern” or “Western” qualities? What is the significance of these representations? How do these
images compare and contrast with images found in other media in this study? Is a certain version of Russia more “sellable” than another?

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**Figure 5-1:** 1886 trademark for “Savon des Princesses du Nord”

To answer these questions, this chapter examines over 600 trademarks registered at the Tribunal de Commerce de la Seine between 1858 and 1894 (and now housed at the Archives de Paris) for products such as perfume and shoe polish. Though a law providing for trademarks existed at the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was not until the law of 23 June 1857 that all trademarks produced or sold within a département had to be registered
with the clerk at the departmental *tribunal de commerce* (Gasnault and Kisselev 91). The trademarks, though they do not represent the totality of French advertising between 1856 and 1894, provide a well-delimited case study of representations of Russia because they were created for one geographical group of consumers (those in Paris) and had the same purposes (to officially mark the product as distinct from other similar products and to attract the attention of a potential consumer). Unlike newspapers ads or posters, customers only saw the trademark once inside the store. As such, a product’s trademark served as a reminder of the same product seen advertised elsewhere (if advertised at all), or simply as an eye-catching device for one shelved product among many others. The trademark’s role in advertisement worked in tandem with another purpose: protecting the manufacturer’s product from the growing problem of counterfeiting. An 1883 treatise on pharmaceuticals and industrial property defined the trademark in the following manner: “habilement choisie et de nature à frapper les yeux ou à faire impression sur les esprits, elle constitue une garantie bien plus efficace que celle du nom, avec laquelle d’ailleurs, elle peut parfaitement se combiner” (Allard no pag.). As the same treatise mentions, the trademark gives the product “une sorte de personnalité qui le recommande et l’impose à l’attention du consommateur” (no pag.). Thus the trademark served a triple role, at once an “eye-catcher” and a mark of “personality,” as well as a guarantee of product.

An examination of these attention-getting trademarks shows that French advertising increasingly relied on Russia’s alliance with France and its exoticism to appeal to French consumers. The images in the trademarks were therefore an uneasy negotiation between the historical and contemporary relations between the two countries (European royal families, military history and European political alliances, allegorical national figures) and the
“Orientalized” visions of Russia (Russian architecture, Cyrillic lettering, winter landscapes). Russia is presented in French ads to some extent as belonging to Europe. However, the most striking and foreign aspects of the country dominate the imagery of the trademarks. Those things that do not mark Russia as belonging to modern Europe or—much less—as a peer of a democratic France, are the images upon which advertisers rely in the trademarks. An unknown Russia, or a Russia that resembles a by-gone Old Regime France, serves as fodder for the French consumers.

**French Trademarks & Russia**

What is the importance of studying an imagined Russia through French advertisement? The visual representations of Russia in French print culture echo and expand upon verbal images found in French literature set in Russia and the travel literature of the period. *Muzhiki*, architecture, snowy landscapes, fascination with the Cyrillic alphabet are all images seen in other representations like Gautier and Dumas’ travel accounts, Verne’s *Michel Strogoff*. A study of advertisement—the print culture medium in this study with the largest potential audience—demonstrates the extent to which depictions of Russia were common in French consumers’ everyday life. From boxes of tea biscuits to packages of cigarette paper, images of Russia and Russians appeared on the shelves of the growing number of retail stores and in the homes of the new French consumer class.

As familiar objects in consumers’ lives, these trademarks constitute a medium with a wide audience, enabling a close reading of representations of Russia in French print culture, as opposed to other types of representations with a more limited circulation, like Turgenev’s
translations or the French travelogues. Additionally, in many ways the trademarks offer an ideal set of representations to scrutinize because of the very nature of the pictorial and verbal messages of advertisement: the trademarks are formed with the express purpose of communicating a clear message to the consumer. The intentionality and frankness of advertisements is a phenomenon Roland Barthes describes in his article “Rhétorique de l’image,” a semiotic analysis of a French advertisement for Panzani pasta. In seeking to understand and define how meaning is conveyed by an image, Barthes chooses to analyze advertisement because it is “intentional,” underlining that advertising is created for an ideal audience that will read the advertising message without any ambiguity (40). The advertisement—here a trademark—is thus “frank, or at least emphatic,” meticulously formed with the intent of transmitting the clearest message possible to the receiver (40). To follow Barthes’ logic for this study would imply that those involved in the trademarks’ production would have judiciously chosen to show a certain Russia—one with a clearly understandable message—to appeal to, to attract potential customers amidst an ever-growing array of other products.

Indeed, drawing from Roman Jakobson’s diagram of verbal communication in *Essais de linguistique générale*, Martine Joly places advertisement (as well as propaganda) within the “conative” function of any communication act, a function in communication that serves “à manifester l’implication du destinataire dans le discours. . . .” (47). In this light, the trademarks’ messages (both verbal and visual) are specifically formulated for ease of comprehension for the receiver rather than emphasizing, for example, the emotive function.

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84 “[E]n publicité, la signification de l’image est assurément intentionnelle: ce sont certains attributs du produit qui forment *a priori* les signifiés du message publicitaire et ces signifiés doivent être transmis aussi clairement que possible; si l’image contient des signes, on est donc certain qu’en publicité ces signes sont pleins, formés en vue de la meilleure lecture: l’image publicitaire est franchement, ou du moins emphatique” (40).
in a message which centers in on the addresser or subject of any message. The images of Russia presented in advertisement, above all other forms of print culture already treated, were therefore meticulously constructed for the consumer. The interest for this study is to look into the inner workings of these carefully assembled visions of Russia and to examine how they were constructed to pique consumers’ interest.

The documents examined in this chapter indeed present a complex depiction of Russia and Russians. Though this is not an exhaustive study of Russia in French advertisement, it analyzes, as one scholar of American advertising puts it, “the unintended consequences of advertisers’ efforts to vend their wares: the creation of a symbolic universe where certain cultural values were sanctioned and others rendered marginal or invisible” (Lears 3). By teasing apart the trademarks’ images and text used to sell products to French consumers, the examination elucidates the “symbolic universes” employed by French merchandisers, as well as the “cultural values” (both French and Russian) that were produced for potential consumers.

**New French Consumers, New Advertising Strategies**

The symbolic universes formed by French advertising expanded during the second half of the nineteenth century given the rapid growth of the French consumer market after the 1850s. According to Rosalind H. Williams, the discretionary income of the Parisian worker increased between 1850 and the beginning of World War I, along with an increased availability of consumer credit and falling food prices. This led to higher consumption rates of non-basic foodstuffs like wine, sugar, and coffee (9-10). Further, industrialization and
mass-production during the same period also provided consumers with more existing products, as well as entirely new goods, on which to spend their disposable income. With more money to spend on non-essential goods, luxury, in Williams’ view, was “democratiz[ed]” (94). The bourgeois or working-class consumer could take advantage of the new selection of imitation and inexpensive goods to which they had not had access previously (94). Such democratization of luxury fostered creativity, as advertisers were able to explore an alluring Russia in the trademarks created for the French consumers’ goods.

Russia was a popular subject in the trademarks registered at the Tribunal de Commerce de la Seine. Between 1858 and 1894, 632 references to or images of Russia appeared in seventy-eight registers. The largest product category in which Russian representations are used (comprising just under half the trademarks in this study) is that of beauty products—perfume, powders, soaps, shaving accessories, and hair oil. These products range from Louis Legrand’s Oriza perfumes and soaps labeled “fournisseurs des cours de France, de Russie et d’Italie” or “aux armes de France et de Russie” to Sylvain Bloch’s “Savon des Princesses du Nord,” a trademark set against a hyperborean landscape. The next major category referring to Russia is that of household products such as “Allume Feux Russe—Plus d’odeurs malsaines!,” “Eau de Javel de la cosaque,” and “Noir russe” for a shiny, black stove. Closely following household products in number are pharmaceuticals such as “Anisine Marc, anti-névralgique russe,” “Dépilatoire russe,” and “Coricide russe” prepared by Parisian pharmacists. The next two categories are those of alcoholic beverages and cigarette paper. “Zhitnaya [or “Grain”] Vodka” and “Kümmel russe” account for about fifty of the trademarks collected. In a smaller amount, packets of cigarette paper that use Cyrillic lettering or depictions of various moments of Franco-Russian political relations (like
Napoleon’s 1812 Russian campaign or the 1894 alliance) are common. The remaining products include foodstuffs (tea, coffee, cookies), textile-industry items (thread, leather, coats), as well as—in much smaller numbers—party supplies (confetti and streamers), bikes, and saddles (see fig. 5-2).

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Beauty products: 262  
Household products: 66  
Pharmaceuticals (human and animal): 60  
Alcoholic beverages: 55  
Cigarette paper: 36  
Garments and textiles (coats, thread): 31  
Foodstuffs (cookies, pâtes alimentaires): 33  
Tea: 17  
Writing accessories: 8  
Party supplies: 3  
Coffee: 2  
Print matter: 2  
Toys: 1  
Saddle: 1  
Glassware: 1  
Photography: 1

**Figure 5-2:** Types of products with verbal or visual images of Russia, 1858-1894

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**How Can One Be Russian?**

To better analyze the significance of trademarks’ representations, it is useful to categorize the types of images of Russia or Russians.\(^{55}\) Aside from the products that are only

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\(^{55}\) These categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, in many of trademarks in which a member of the Russian royal family appears, there are also accompanying national symbols such as the double-headed eagle. Thus, the subjective divisions within the trademarks are meant only to provide a framework within which to discuss the types of recurring images.
Russian in name (because of the use of the adjective “russe”—see fig. 5-3) and little else, several categories of representations may be designated.

**Figure 5-3**: 1865 trademark for “Poudre Russe”

The first category is comprised of images of or references to the Russian royal family: portraits of the Tsar and Tsarina; use of the words “empereur,” “impérial,” “tsar,” “tsarine,” “prince,” or “princesse,” imperial crests and heraldry, and the use of certain expressions (in French or Russian) related to the tsar. Louis Legrand’s perfume and cosmetic brand Oriza championed the use of references to Russian royalty, though other
parfumiers like Guerlain used similar imagery and wording in their trademarks (see figs. 5-4 and 5-5). No matter the product (anti-dandruff shampoo or violet-perfumed soap), phrases used often included “les Empereurs de France et de Russie” and “aux armes de France et de Russie.” Under the Second Empire, commonly found in the trademarks were the Napoleonic and the Romanov imperial crests along with border of flowers and scrollwork (often in Legrand’s products). This sort of trademark that relied on the appeal of an aristocratic cachet, not limited to the brand Oriza, logically was used often under the Second Empire during a second version of Napoleonic imperialism in France. After the Second Empire and at the beginning of an unstable Third Republic, the amount of imagery or script recalling imperialism of any sort diminishes in the trademarks.
Figure 5-4: 1858 trademark for Louis Legrand's “Eau tonique et antipelliculaire de quinine”
Figure 5-5: 1875 trademark for Guerlain’s “Véritable Eau de Cologne Impériale”

However, imperial representations increased in number again in the 1890s in such products as the sachets labeled “Violettes du Czar” at a moment when France began to establish closer military and political relations with the still imperial Russia (see fig. 5-6). Absent from the Oriza trademarks after 1890 are any references to French imperialism. Nevertheless, in another version of its soap “Violettes du Czar,” Oriza still maintains that the product is “dédié à l’empereur de Russie” (see fig. 5-7).
Figure 5-6: 1892 trademark for L. Legrand’s “Sachet Oriza solidifié Violette du Czar”
Though traces of French imperialism are gone, there is, however, a link in the trademarks between imperial Russia and republican France. Many of the trademarks in the 1890s negotiate in word and image the outwardly uneasy terrain of a newly-formed Franco-Russian alliance. For example, in the 1891 trademark for “Déjeuner Franco-Russe” chocolates, two medallions show the profiles of Tsar Alexander III and President Marie-François Sadi Carnot (see figs. 5-8 and 5-9).
Figure 5-8: Part 1 of 1891 trademark for “Dejeuner Franco-Russe”
What is more, some trademarks use the phrase “Pour Dieu, Pour le Czar, Pour la Patrie” in French or in Russian (see figs. 5-10 and 5-11). Though it is doubtful that many French consumers could have read the Russian phrase with its Cyrillic alphabet, the phrase did occasionally appear in French. In Russian, this phrase used was Za Veru, Tsarya i Otechestvo (in English, “For the Faith, for the Tsar, and for the Fatherland”), an expression that echoes a phrase coined in 1833 by Tsar Nicholas I’s minister of education, Count Uvarov, for the
doctrine of “Official Nationality:” Pravoslaviye, Samoderzhaviye i Narodnost, or, in English, “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality.”

Figure 5-10: 1889 trademark for Taganrock “pâtes alimentaires”
The expression sums up Nicholas I’s reactionary policies within his own country and towards the rest of the world both after recent uprisings in Russia (such as the 1825 Decembrist rebellion) and in a post-Napoleonic Europe. These policies were the basis of Russian politics until the twentieth century, even under more progressive tsars like Alexander II:
Autocracy meant the affirmation and maintenance of the absolute power of the sovereign, which was considered the indispensable foundation of the Russian state. Orthodoxy referred to the official Church and its important role in Russia, but also to the ultimate source of ethics and ideals that gave meaning to human life and society. Nationality—narodnost in Russian—referred to the particular nature of the Russian people, which, so the official doctrine asserted, made the people a mighty and dedicated supporter of its dynasty and government. (Riazanovsky 324)

Though this vision of Russia varied in interpretation, the country affirmed the ascendancy of the tsar, the Russian Orthodox church, and the growth of nationalism within Europe and elsewhere.

“Pour Dieu, Pour le Czar, Pour la Patrie” seems a curious phrase to use to market a product to French consumers, citizens of a secular nation with elected representatives, a nation whose principles stood to contradict Russian policies of a state religion and imperial autocracy. Though these trademarks awkwardly underscore the oppositions empire/republic, state-sanctioned official religion/sectarian state, and tsar/president, this alliance was in fact not as contradictory as it appears on the surface. Speaking of the Catholic ralliement to the secular Third Republic in the 1893 elections, Debora L. Silverman points out that this movement may be viewed as “a particular manifestation of a more general effort by bourgeois republicans to find a basis for unity with the older aristocratic forces, an ongoing quest to solidify the ranks of one elite” (51). The Franco-Russian alliance of the 1890s was in part a logical international extension of ralliement’s domestic cooperation:
Before 1889 French republicans refused to consider solving the problem of France’s diplomatic isolation by allying with an absolutist religious power, and Czar Alexander III was equally distrustful of the nation spawned by revolution and regicide. Between 1890 and 1898, the Third French Republic prepared and sealed an alliance with the czar that synchronized exactly with the internal esprit nouveau. Thus the welding with the aristocratic forces at home was replicated at the international level by the conciliation between the French Republic and the Russian autocracy. (49)

Once France and Russia joined in an alliance that served military, political, and economic purposes, the inherent differences between the two countries were put aside.66 Thus, these trademarks reflect the problematic, yet pragmatic relationship between France and Russia, as well as the draw of France’s not-so-distant aristocratic past.

In addition to the imperial imagery, the trademarks also rely on the use of national imagery such as flags, crests, or allegorical representations of both France and Russia. Prior to the Franco-Russian alliance, trademarks using national imagery are rare. The earliest example for “Liqueur des Pavillons,” an advertising prelude to the 1867 World’s Fair in Paris, simply includes the Imperial Russian flag indiscriminately with those from other European nations, as well as those of Asian, Latin American and Caribbean countries (see fig. 5-12). However, a similar trademark from 1879 for “Fil de l’Occident,” the trademark identifies Russia as Western, joining countries such as Turkey and Greece (see fig. 5-13).

66 Silverman gives the following reasons for the Franco-Russian alliance: “Several factors after 1890 facilitated new attitudes on both sides. First, Russia had become isolated internationally after the fall of Bismarck resulted in the nonrenewal of the reinsurance policy. Second, France and Russia were exposed to the menace of the Triple Alliance, from which both were excluded. Third, the French hoped to invest in Russian industrial development” (159). The development of this alliance will be explored more fully in the next chapter.
Figure 5-12: 1866 trademark for “Liqueur des Pavillons”
Clearly, Russia in this trademark becomes part of the most generous definition of Europe, with all of Europe categorized as “Western.” This trademark previews the eventual formalization of Russia's relationship with France with the Franco-Russian alliance. In yet another trademark for “Liqueur Européenne” registered during the initiation of the alliance, Russia is again designated as European, with Tsar Alexander III prominently appearing with President Sadi Carnot at the head of other European leaders (see fig. 5-14). Not surprisingly,
Russia, now a much needed ally in the face of the Triple Alliance, is included with France and with Western Europe as the countries moved towards the official 1894 agreement.

Figure 5-14: 1892 trademark for “Liqueur Européenne”

Beginning in 1889, the trademarks that underline the alliance burgeon within the registers of the Seine’s tribunal de commerce. For example, the trademark for “Papier Union” cigarette paper shows a Russian peasant whose flag mimics the French Marianne’s tricolore (fig. 5-15). The flags and the two figures are accompanied by symbols of Paris (the Eiffel
Tower and the city’s seal) and Moscow (the Kremlin walls and churches). The now real rapprochement between the two countries is emphasized visually in two ways: just as Marianne welcomes her Russian counterpart with a warm gesture (both holding each other’s left hand and Marianne with a gentle grasp on the Russian’s shoulder), the fantastic landscape of the Kremlin as next-door-neighbor to the Eiffel Tower demonstrates the concrete and figurative closeness that comes from the new alliance.

Figure 5-15: 1891 trademark for “Papier ‘Union’”
The trademarks for “L’Avenir” cigarette paper and “Plume des Deux Nations” underline similarly the union of the two countries, juxtaposing the symbols of France (Marianne, the tricolore) and Russia (the imperial double-headed eagle crest) (see figs. 5-16 and 5-17).

Additionally, many of these trademarks, as with “Plume des Deux Nations” and “Papier ‘Union’,” call attention to the similarity of the two blue, white, and red flags.

Figure 5-16: 1891 trademark for “L’Avenir”
Yet here again, as with the trademarks referencing the Tsar or his family, the trademarks’ incorporation of national imagery reflects the outward incongruity between the two countries now involved in the alliance by underscoring (visually or verbally) their awkward pairing. While at times appearing to belong to the “West” and to “Europe,” the Russia exposed in these trademarks, an imperial Russia, comes off as a backward—though welcome—cousin in comparison to its republican partner, France.
The trademarks that explore images of the military reflect similar ambiguities. Here again the imperial nature of Russia is highlighted, as well as other more ominous depictions. An 1881 trademark for “Le Drapeau National” cigarette paper (a series of trademarks issued that featured the flags and soldiers of different nations) displays a “faisceau de drapeaux” with the imperial crest, as well as an imperial crown (see fig. 5-18).

Figure 5-18: 1881 trademark for “Le Drapeau National”
The Russian soldier with sword drawn surges energetically forward in a battle, grasping the same flag. He looks consumed by the conflict at hand, ferociously pursuing his enemy. Four years later, a series of trademarks for Braunstein Frères cigarette paper further explore the notion of a savage Russia. The trademarks examine the relationship between Napoleon’s Grande Armée and Russia, specifically during 1812. Though the Russia army is not portrayed visually (only Napoleon’s forces appear in the images), the trademarks include written descriptions of the battle “La Moskowa,” “Incendie de Moscou,” “La Retraite de Russia,” and “Le Passage de la Bérésina.” The trademark “La Moskowa,” outlines Napoleon’s entrance into Russia (“une faute”), but then describes the Russians’ behavior: “[L]es Russes, incapables de se défendre, reculent sans cesse devant lui, brûlant tout, villes et récoltes, sur leur passage, pour réduire nos troupes à la disette” (see fig. 5-19). This same sort of destruction is echoed in the trademark for “Incendie de Moscou,” recalling the incident in which the governor Rostopchine allegedly had his “bandits” set fire to a city where “[l]es maisons regorgeaient de richesses; les caves étaient remplies de vivres” (see fig. 5-20). Without any hesitation, the Russians appear as willingly squandering their riches. The soldiers, along with Napoleon, stunned by this extreme defense, solemnly walk inside the Kremlin as the city burns in the background, its inhabitants running to the shelter of the Moskva river.
Figure 5-19: 1885 trademark for Braunstein Frères “La Moskowa”
The other trademarks offer more visions of destruction and chaos. The trademark for “La Retraite de Russie” shows the beginnings of the devastations the Grande Armée in the Russian winter (see fig. 5-21). The soldiers and horses push forward against the ominous snows. The text accompanying the image is clear about the hardship they endured:

L’hiver, nouvel ennemi beaucoup plus à craindre que les Russes, arrivait et s’annonçait terrible. . . . Le 9 novembre, tombent des torrents de neige que

**Figure 5-20**: 1885 trademark for Braunstein Frères “Incendie de Moscou”
pousse un vent violent. On marche, dès lors, sans savoir ni où l’on est ni où l’on va, et les malheureux soldats s’engouffrent dans les précipices. . . . Hommes et chevaux, gelés et affamés, périssent par milliers. . . . Chaque bivac est marqué par des cadavres; et cette armée, dévorée par le froid et la faim, est encore harcelée par les Russes, qui ne lui laissant pas un moment de répit.

Here, not only do the Russians appear barbaric as they “harass” the already downtrodden army, but the Russian landscape reinforces the cruelty of what the army is experiencing. The Russian landscape and its inhabitants emerge from this trademark as ruthless.

The same sentiments appear again in the trademark for “Passage de la Bérésina” (see fig. 5-22). The illustration shows soldiers who have perished on the banks of the Bérésina, some on horseback braving the glacial waters of the river, others crossing the bridges. The Bérésina appears to swallow up the soldiers in its icy waters. Here again the paragraph describing the event offers more insight:
Figure 5-21: 1885 trademark for Braunstein Frères “La Retraite de Russie”
Sans cesse harcelés par les Russes, nos malheureux soldats vont passer la Bérésina. L’heure du plus grand danger est arrivée: l’ennemi accourt nous assaillir. Des milliers de trainards, marchands, vivandiers, se précipitent, alors, à la suite des troupes. La confusion est effroyable. On est poussé, étouffé, écrasé sous les pieds des chevaux. On tombe à l’eau; on s’y jette; tous s’y noient. “Spectacle atroce, bien fait pour rendre odieuse et à jamais exécrable cette expédition insensée!” L’ennemi arrive; on met le feu aux

**Figure 5-22:** 1885 trademark for Braunstein Frères “Passage de la Bérésina”
ponts; et, de la rive abandonnée, s'élève un immense cri de désespoir: celui de 8,000 retardataires massacrés par les Cosaques.

Just as with the previous trademark, the Russians (though not pictured) and Russian weather are merciless with the battered army. For the “desperate” foreign troops, there is no escape from the violent massacre by the Cossacks and the harsh winter weather.\(^5\)

Without a doubt, many of the trademarks from the 1880s portray a Russia with savage inhabitants and climate. Yet a trademark from 1889 for “Le Drapeau National” cigarette paper, dating from just before the beginning of the Franco-Russian alliance, offers another version of the Russian soldier. This first soldier (on the center paper of the cigarette paper packaging)—much unlike his 1881 compatriot in the earlier version of “Le Drapeau National” trademark—stands calmly with the same imperial flag. He appears in front of a walled city, with onion-domed churches in the background. He is as dignified as the second soldier on the packaging, the former riding majestically in his saddle, sword in the air, in a similar landscape. The 1881 and 1889 trademarks, though sharing much of the same imagery (flags, official military wear, drawn swords), are decidedly different. The first trademark, created before the Franco-Russian alliance, presents the Russian as a fierce soldier in the middle of battle. However, the later trademark displays a representation of a noble, reserved figure that stands in opposition to the unruly fervor of the other soldier. To counter the earlier images of Russian soldiers and their relationship to the French armed

\(^5\) It is worth noting that these trademarks are highly didactic. They give precise dates, illustrations, and narrate one of the most significant campaigns undertaken by Napoleon. The trademarks, all created during the beginning of discussions about the Franco-Russian alliance, perhaps offer a revision of French and Russian political relations. This “history lesson” may have been utilized for the cachet of Franco-Russian relations, even bad ones. Though relations had changed drastically between 1812 and the 1880s, a detailed examination of the many events of Napoleon’s 1812 campaign allowed for a proliferation of labels that drew upon past stereotypes, appealing perhaps to French consumer curiosity about Russia.
forces, the trademark “Bougie de Cronstadt” commemorates the 1891 reception of the French squadron in Kronstadt, one of the events that marked the formation and celebration of the Franco-Russian alliance. The trademark presents a French sailor cordially shaking a Russian military official’s hand, with Kronstadt’s port in the background (see fig. 5-23). The friendly exchange pictured here starkly contrasts with the earlier trademarks dealing with the 1812 Russian campaign. These differences are predictable, of course, as France gains Russia as a partner in the alliance. Nevertheless, the divergent representations underline the drastic changes that occur at the end of the 1880s when France had to forget the past military clashes with Russia, the former “gendarme d’Europe” to stand together against the threat of the Triple Alliance.
To a certain extent, the categories just examined may be placed within a larger grouping that portrays a shared or familiar experience involving France and Russia: an imperial dynasty (less familiar to France at the end of the nineteenth century), flags and other symbols used to designate nations, and common military experiences. Between 1858 and 1894, the shift in Franco-Russian relations reveals itself yet again in these trademarks. Though in many instances Russia appears on equal footing with France as European or
Western, the above trademarks also reveal the tensions in this relationship: the oppositions between French republicanism and Russian autocracy and the contradictions between the awful memories of 1812 and the indispensable coalition forged in the 1890s. The next set of categories, however, does little to construct even unstable similarities between France and Russia. Instead, the following trademarks emphasize those traits of Russia that stirred the imagination of the French consumer.

The most immediately unfamiliar aspect is the use of the Cyrillic alphabet, either as part or whole of the trademark. Sometimes trademarks use Russian typography exclusively for bottles of vodka or kümmel. Such is the case with the trademark for a bottle of Zhitnaya vodka iz Rossii or “grain vodka from Russia” with the familiar emblem of the two-headed eagle (see fig. 5-24). The allure in this trademark was found in the mysterious Cyrillic lettering, made even more enigmatic by the lack of any French translation.
However, most often Cyrillic lettering is used as only a part of the trademark, with the rest in French. The Cyrillic may also serve as a basis for translation or transliteration from the Russian into French as with pharmaceutical products such as *Severnoe Maslo* (as translated into French, “Huile slave de Russie”) or for wine or spirits like *Moskvityanka* (or “La Moscovite”) (see figs. 5-25 and 5-26). Striking and manifestly foreign, the Cyrillic alphabet in the trademarks was used undoubtedly in part for its novelty next to Latin characters, with
some reassuring or informative familiar signs—the double-headed eagle indicating Russia or a French translation—for the French consumer. However, the alien Russian typography was also likely a further guarantee against counterfeits.

Figure 5-25: 1861 trademark for “Huile Slave de Russie”
Like the strange Cyrillic lettering, depictions of fantasy Russian landscapes were also common. The scenes often concentrate on northern pastoral landscapes with snowy plains, sleighs and troikas, and Russians wrapped in fur. The trademark for “Savon des Princesses du Nord” already examined displays the favored imagery: a horse-drawn sled or troika racing through the snow, the occupants sheltered from the wintry landscape by their fur coats, hats and blankets. In the background, there is frequently a forest and/or the customary onion-domed Russian orthodox churches pecking over the walls of a city (see fig.
6-1). Other trademarks such as “Le Moscovite” and two others without brand names have much the same imagery. The first shows a child in a sled superimposed over a map of European Russia, the other with a young letter carrier featured alongside various Russian stamps. These trademarks offer variations on the landscapes in “Savon des Princesses du Nord: more Cyrillic lettering, the double-headed eagle, a map of the country. (see fig. 5-27, 5-28, and 5-29). In three of these four trademarks, there are young, sometimes child-like characters, all of a diminutive size and with pink, frost-touched cheeks. Taken together, these images point towards the popularity of a representation of Russia as a pristine, hyperborean countryside peopled with young inhabitants. Here, “Russia” or “Russian” was defined as pure, innocent, and untouched. Like Ségur’s Gromiline and Gautier’s *Voyage en Russie*, this is an old Russia with youthful inhabitants, removed from urban centers and industrial growth of the nineteenth century.
Figure 5-27: 1891 trademark for “Le Moscovite”
Figure 5-28: 1881 trademark for unnamed label for a box of thread from La Société A. Grellois et Compagnie
Other trademarks focus on yet another Russian landscape—the city. These were especially popular on trademarks issued during Paris’ 1889 World’s Fair and Moscow’s 1891 Industrial Fair, during which time the trademark would center on the onion domes and walled cities (see fig. 5-30). Many illustrate famous examples of ornate, unique Russian architecture, like cathedrals, Red Square, or the Kremlin’s filigreed brickwork (see figs. 5-31 and 5-32). Moscow figures prominently as well. It is the quintessential Russian city as
opposed to Saint Petersburg’s grandiose European emulation. It is emptied of any signs of industry or its inhabitants as with the Russian countryside.

Figure 5-30: 1889 trademark for “Bouquet du Pavillon Russe”
Figure 5.31: 1891 trademark for “Bouquet des Résidences Impériales Russes—Place Rouge”
A final category of trademarks depicting Russians themselves, emphasizes representations of a rural and a well-to-do life. A common theme portrays warmly-wrapped Russians out for a sleigh ride in the snow-laden fields. Idyllic, but often absurd images of Russian “types,” like peasants (including this depiction of a woman cleaning her stove in traditional peasant garb) or a harvesting baby “moujik” with scythe in hand, appear often in the trademark registers (see figs. 5-33 and 5-34).
**Figure 5-33:** 1894 trademark for “Mine de Plomb ‘Noir Russe’”
The Russian royal family, seen earlier, figures prominently, too. In addition, there are
depictions of the well-off Russian upper classes. For example, these stocky aristocrats with
healthy lungs and intestines, pictures of robust health, strangely pose for the benefits of a
Parisian-made, though Russian in appellation, medicine (see figs. 5-35 and 5-36). As with
the images of the Russian landscape and architecture, these Russian types promote a certain
notion of the “Russian-ness” of Russia’s inhabitants for French consumers: mostly rural,
young and/or healthy examples of what a Russian might be or look like.

**Figure 5-34:** 1888 trademark for “Bébé Moujik”
Figure 5-35: 1884 trademark for “Pillules Russes”
The trademarks accentuate a pastoral, pre-industrial Russia, an exotically northern Russia, whether in word or image, to draw customers to goods often produced in France for French consumers. The appeal of an imagined Russia in relation to consumer goods exploited a certain exoticism: that of Russia’s rural, pastoral settings. Within the snowy
landscapes peopled with “traditional” Russian peasants or robust Russian aristocrats was a
nostalgia for what France had already begun to lose. For the French, Russia represented an
exotic past, exotic because a pre-industrial France no longer existed. A critic of the French
writer Victor Segalen’s *Essays on Exoticism* notes the following about this vision of the exotic
Other:

[Segalen] advised that [exoticism] “cannot be about such things as the tropics
or coconut trees, the colonies or Negro souls, nor about camels, ships, great
waves, scents, spices, or enchanted islands. It cannot be about
misunderstandings and native uprisings, nothingness and death, colored
tears, oriental thought, and various oddities, nor about any of the
preposterous things that the word ‘Exoticism’ commonly calls to mind.”
Rather, it is about time—“Going back: history. An escape from the
contemptible and petty present. The elsewhere and the bygone days.”

(Harootunian xiii-xiv)

It stands to reason then that a rural, pre-industrial Russia would help allay fears of a growing
modern, industrialized, and capitalist world. It is this Russia that appears in many
trademarks. At the same time, however, France stood much to gain from a pre-
industrialized Russia. As the two countries strengthened political and military ties in the
alliance, also at stake was a financial interest in developing Russian industry (Silverman 159).
Clearly then, the perception of a pre-industrialized Russia was mined—whether to calm
anxieties of a modern world or to incite dreams of capital gain in the yet-to-be-developed
Russian countryside—for the creation of these products’ trademarks.
These trademarks, then, call on some ways in which Russia could be imagined. Scholars such as Lisa Tiersten and Rosalind Williams note the growing importance during the second half of the nineteenth century of mass-market advertising of engaging consumers’ imaginations, a phenomenon seen clearly in the national displays at the Paris’ World Fairs and the products and packaging created for sale during these World Fairs (Tiersten 32; Williams 12). These displays at the World Fairs and the spin-off products marketed around them indicate that advertising was turning “into a largely visual culture that contrived to tap into and manipulate the consumer’s hidden, irrational desires” (Tiersten 32). French advertising drew not only on images of an exoticized, pre-industrial Russia, but also on those of an aristocratic Russia. Russia’s appeal was twofold. There was, as Whitney Walton affirms, a bourgeois desire to imitate aristocracy: “[C]onsumers in nineteenth-century France—essentially the bourgeoisie—favored the old styles associated with aristocratic and royal dominance, like Renaissance, Louis XIV, and Louis XV. They bought articles of clothing that looked rich, because of their extensive ornamentation, artistic qualities, or expensive raw materials” (223). For these trademarks, this desire to imitate aristocracy was transferred to the contemporary Russian aristocracy, not the French aristocracy of the past. Images of Russia also drew upon a nostalgia for a rural past found in the Russian peasants, Russia served as an unknown land where many imagined landscapes might draw in the French consumer.
Russia For Sale

These representations, then, range from the imperial to frosted panoramas of the Russian countryside. Whether drawn from France’s historical and contemporary relationships with Russia or from France’s imagined Russia, the representations of Russia in these documents play upon a certain mystique to appeal to the French consumer. Like Roland Barthes’ analysis of the “italianité” in the “Pâtes Panzani” ad, these images portray what could be called “russité,” a “russité” defined by imperialism, winter landscapes, Cyrillic lettering, Orthodox churches and youthful, healthy Russian types (45-51). The exotic charm of the trademarks is echoed in other images circulating in French print culture at the time. Many travel accounts written during the second half of the nineteenth century and Verne’s *Michel Strogoff* linger on the Russian autocracy, snow-covered landscapes, the figure of the peasant, and the Kremlin’s architecture. These representations are by no means rare. Pastoral winter lands with stately royalty, happy peasants, dachas, sleighs, and onion-domed architecture are all part of France’s Russian vocabulary.

Yet the initial question remains. Does Russia’s status within these depictions define it as belonging to the East or the West? What is the significance of both ways of representing Russia? Though some images place Russia within Europe and others clearly define Russia as “Western,” these representations are rare in the trademarks examined. Instead, the Russia portrayed in the trademarks is an exotic one, a symbol of an era gone-by in France: an Old Regime, pre-industrialized France. But is it Eastern? Though Edward Said rejects Russia in his definition of Orientalism, Russia does appear in these trademarks as an Oriental-like Other featuring rural lands removed from industrial progress; a stronghold for the Tsar's despotism; an eccentric world decorated with the Cyrillic alphabet and
“bizarre” architecture. Further, in some series of trademarks, Russia is often included with countries in Asia or countries in French colonial Africa. Though Russia as represented in these trademarks cannot be defined solely as belonging to an exotic, non-Western other, it does appear to have some convincing similarities to it. Even if Russia belongs in part to the West, its imagined “Eastern” qualities were often exploited in French advertisement.

It is precisely in this awkward rendering of Russia that some French judgments about civilization and culture, as well as France’s own national identity in relation to these concepts, begin to surface. Advertisement, not surprisingly, was part of a proving ground for ideas surrounding national identity. Discussion about France’s national identity were conflated with those about the market in France’s Third Republic, a market that, in Tiersten’s words, “became a forum for discussions about class boundaries, gender roles, and political ideology. . . .” (233). That Russia is presented in French advertisement as a country of autocracy, picturesque landscapes, well-groomed peasants, and striking architecture, subtly reveals a way in which French advertisers saw France in relation to other nations. French advertisers’ exoticization of Russia is in fact a by-product of attitudes derived from the burgeoning *mission civilisatrice*. The French treatment of Russia in these trademarks points to a broader French imperialist posture towards “non-Western” countries that was not restricted to its colonies, but which pervaded French opinions about other countries, even Russia.
Chapter 6

Marianne Woos the Bear of the North: The Franco-Russian Alliance in Caricature

“Bienveillantes ou hostiles, ce sont ici les images célébrant sur tous les tons l’alliance franco-russe; celles-ci françaises, celles-là étrangères; les unes à l’enthousiasme bien naturel du premier moment, à la joie que l’heureux événement a versée dans tous les cœurs, les autres, mettant en action tous les sentiments particuliers aux nations qui, toujours plus ou moins jalouses de la France, de la fertilité de son sol, de la stabilité de son crédit ne s’attendaient point à pareille conclusion et ne considérant pas sans une certaine satisfaction l’isolement actuel de celle qui, au XVIIIe siècle, donnait le ton au monde entier” (4).

John Grand-Carteret, Les Caricatures sur l’Alliance franco-russe (1893)

From the end of the Crimean War through the 1890s, Russia in its French representations had been “translated” in various, sometimes conflicting idioms, both in word and in image. Russia, through French eyes, was a land of contradictions: a corrupt, yet idyllically pastoral land; a country on occasion full of well-educated women, but plagued at the same time by the ignorance of its lower classes; a place in which corporeal punishment was pursued by both tsars and commoners, but also a place in which Alexander II passed his progressive reforms of the 1860s; and, finally, a nation that held both barbaric forces and civilizing missions within its borders. The cumulative depiction of Russia during this period, then, was highly ambiguous. Despite the contradictory nature of these representations, however, many of them do point to better relations between the two nations toward the end of the nineteenth century. France was moving undeniably towards a rapprochement with Russia after 1870. This movement is witnessed in various representations already examined from the Goncourt brothers’ adoration of Turgenev to Verne’s venerable depiction of the
tsar in *Michel Strogoff* and the French-Russian friendship as exemplified in advertisements of the 1880s and 1890s. However, nowhere is the warming of relations between the two nations more clearly depicted than in French caricatures surrounding the 1894 Franco-Russian alliance. How do these caricatures demonstrate France’s change in position towards Russia? What new vision of Russia do they offer in light of Russia’s changing status within France and Europe after 1870?

To answer these questions, a work printed as the alliance was being forged proves useful. In 1893, John Grand-Carteret penned *Les Caricatures sur l’Alliance franco-russe* (published in Paris by Librairies-Imprimeries Réunies), a compilation of 1893 caricatures—both French and foreign—on the newly-forming, but not yet official alliance between France and Russia. A great advocate of the communicative efficiency of images, Grand-Carteret assembled images from the French and foreign illustrated press on current events to promote their importance. These publications do not address the political leanings of the newspapers or caricature artists included (Gardes 55). Grand-Carteret, seduced by the images, included a brief written introduction to his caricature collections and left most pages of a publication to the reproduced caricatures he had selected. This is true for *Les Caricatures sur l’Alliance franco-russe*. Of eighty-six pages of text, only thirty-two are devoted to an introduction sprinkled with yet more images. Though this selection of caricatures is limited in time period (to the fall and winter of 1893) and does not encompass all caricature

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produced in France surrounding the alliance, it underlines the state of relations between France and Russia in the 1890s as expressed by diverse French papers in the illustrated press.

The Golden Age of the French Illustrated Press

These representations of the alliance, more overtly political than any other representations examined thus far, cannot be dismissed. The medium was growing in its importance as a form of print culture. The popular illustrated press entered into its golden age during the Second Empire, due in large part to the growing French reading public (Watelet 372). The Ferry laws passed in the 1880s guaranteeing free, secular, and compulsory education for all children between ages six and thirteen amplified this growth. A diversification of print matter ensued to attract new readerships. New techniques for reproduction of images by photomechanical printing allowed for more efficient reproduction of images than with past techniques like lithography. Finally, the freedom of the press laws passed in 1881 stimulated the unrestricted production of political satire and commentary previously censored by past regimes. By the 1880s, the French illustrated press, now increasingly diverse with papers from all political spectrums, had assumed an important role in the French literary market.

Many scholars have noted the importance of caricature as political commentary during the nineteenth century. The nineteenth-century French illustrated press was “one of the most effective vehicles for social and political propaganda” (Cate 62). Between 1860 and 1890, the French illustrated (often satirical) press was present in daily life and was a forum for current political debate:
Cantonée précédemment à l’étalage des marchands d’estampes, la caricature est désormais affichée dans les kiosques; elle sollicite l’attention de tous dans les cafés et les lieux de spectacles; ceux qui s’abonnent à telle ou telle feuille amusante la reçoivent à domicile. De plus, pour prendre part à la vie journalistique, centrée sur une actualité sans cesse renouvelée, le dessin humoristique se doit de réagir selon les événements et les personnalités du jour, de suivre pas à pas l’évolution d’une époque dans ses diverses manifestations quotidiennes” (Jones 5).

Caricature in the illustrated press was ever present in daily life—on the street and at home. Only four years after the conclusion of the Franco-Russian alliance, the Dreyfus Affair demonstrated the medium’s capital significance at the end of the nineteenth century. The illustrated press contributed as much to the debate as written polemics like Emile Zola’s “J’Accuse” published in L’Aurore (Cate 62).

**France within Bismarckian Europe**

The roots of the Franco-Russian Alliance of the 1890s can be found in France’s humiliating defeat by Prussia in 1870 and the end of Napoleon III’s Second Empire. Prussia’s invasion effectively eclipsed France’s power. France was devastated after the defeat: “her prestige shattered, her government shaky, her army and finances in a chaotic state, the vanquished nation was compelled for years to play a secondary rôle and to submit to the organization of Europe without her and against her” (Langer 5). France’s humiliating loss, compounded by the events surrounding the Paris Commune, significantly impacted the
nation’s stance in international affairs in subsequent years, including the move towards a closer relationship with Russia.

In post-1870 Europe, Bismarck’s work to unite and maintain peace (through military alliances) for Germany put his newly-proclaimed empire in a dominant position within Europe. Before the establishment of the Franco-Russian alliance, Germany had formed alliances with most of Europe’s key political and military players, not all of whom were allies with each other: Austria-Hungary, Russia, England, Spain, Italy, and even Serbia and Romania. While these alliances achieved a delicate peace for a Germany in an unenviable geographical position (with Russia and France on either side), it also instituted an effective isolation of France, a nation still reeling from a round defeat by the Prussians and, most significantly, a nation hoping to regain Alsace and Lorraine, annexed to Bismarck’s unified Germany after 1870. Also at play for France were colonial rivalries in Africa and the Far East. France had been paralyzed by Germany’s ability to isolate her from forming any alliances both within Europe and abroad.

A Franco-Russian alliance may have seemed logical given Russia’s tensions with Austria-Hungary in the Balkans. However, there were no circumstances under which France and Russia were likely to form an alliance between 1870 and 1890. Their only common interest was to be allied against a strong Germany, a country that had relations with each country’s respective rivals, but this would not be enough initially. Indeed, both countries opposed England—for France, it was primarily a question of colonial rivalry, but for Russia, it was a struggle over the Near and Middle East (concerning Turkey’s autonomy and control of the Balkans), and the Far East (India). Militarily, France was in no position to help Russia with its Austrian and English rivals in the Balkans, or in the Near and Far East. Likewise,
Russia could not aid France with its conflicts in the Mediterranean (Italy) or in its colonies (England) because of its ties to Germany. Their union was forged under different circumstances, after Germany broke ties with Russia that it had cultivated for almost twenty years.

Russia’s close relationship to Germany began soon after the 1870 Franco-Prussian War. Bismarck wanted to stabilize the new German state. To avoid a war into which Germany might be drawn because of its geographical position, Bismarck adopted policies to ensure his country’s safety. The first step towards this stability involved the Alliance of the Three Emperors in 1872-73, bringing together Europe’s three strongest military powers: Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary. To circumvent Russian isolation with a bi-lateral German-Austrian agreement, Russia was included in this alliance that aimed to “preserve the peace and the monarchical principle at a time when both alike were menaced” (Langer 13). In other words, Bismarck aimed at creating a delicate balance of power. Because of subsequent conflicts between England and France and between Russia and Austria-Hungary, this alliance began to erode in the mid-1870s. The erosion continued after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 when Russian interests conflicted with those of the Austro-Hungarians and English in Turkey. In yet another effort to normalize relations, Bismarck sought in 1881 to reunite the countries involved in the 1872-73 alliance, allowing for significant compromises and concessions made beneficial to all parties. Not long after this, Italy joined an alliance with former rival Austria and with Germany for support against France’s control of Tunis in North Africa in 1882. This was the Triple Alliance against which the Franco-Russian Alliance would be constructed a decade later.
The Three Emperors’ Alliance was renewed in 1884. However, in 1887, when the agreement came up for further renewal, Russia refused to reenter an accord with Austria-Hungary, a partner with whom tensions had not been eased by previous diplomatic efforts and compromises. Germany, fearful of losing Russia as an ally, offered instead a separate bilateral agreement with Russia, the Reinsurance Treaty of 1887. This diplomatic side-step, however, did not endure. When Wilhelm II encouraged Bismarck’s resignation, the Reinsurance Treaty—up for renewal in 1890—was dropped by Germany.

This left Russia isolated against its rivals Austria-Hungary, as well as against England. Motivated by fear of war with England or Austria that would bring in Germany as well, Russia pursued an alliance elsewhere since its ties to Germany had been severed, much to its dismay. It therefore looked to France. This alliance, however, was initially an unlikely one because the Russian imperial government had no desire to enter into a relationship with a country it “regarded as revolutionary, atheistic and corrupt” (Langer 10). However, France was Russia’s only hope and vice versa. Their mutual isolation within Europe as forged by Germany brought them together. At the beginning of the 1890s, what Bismarck had long sought to avoid was, by force of circumstance, now being constructed.

Both countries gained much through the new relationship, both politically and economically. When Germany had closed its markets to Russia in 1887, France offered the sole source of loans to the Russian government. Many French investors looked as well to invest directly in the Russian economy. The process of forming a new alliance began in 1891, celebrated with great fanfare with the French squadron’s anchoring at the Russian port of Kronstadt from 23 July through 7 August 1891. “[T]he world at large was stupefied by this outburst,” where the Tsar greeted the French sailors and even listened—with bared
head—to the *Marseillaise* (Langer 184). The initial basis for the agreement was a diplomatic and military understanding: the two countries promised mutual support to one another in light of any attacks by the countries’ rivals. The agreement was uneasily established because of France’s sentiments about the *revanche* for its lost Alsace-Lorraine, as well as because of Russian designs on Constantinople—both of which could draw the other country into a major European war. It was nonetheless concluded on 27 August 1891, shortly after the celebrations at Kronstadt. By the end of 1893 and the beginning 1894, the alliance was formalized with a military convention established on 2 December 1893 (with negotiations ending in January 1894), celebrated in advance by the Russian flotilla’s visit to the French Mediterranean port of Toulon (13-29 October 1893).

The rapprochement of Russia and France, therefore, was based on both countries’ exclusion from the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy), and on the possibility of mutual gain. With this alliance, a new European balance of power was achieved that lasted until 1914. France’s antipathy towards Russia based on the terrible Russian campaign of 1812, tsarist crackdowns on rebellions within Russia and in Poland throughout the nineteenth century, and the Crimean War, was all but gone with the establishment of the Franco-Russian Alliance. But what was left? And what was new?

*The Alliance Viewed from France*

The Franco-Russian alliance seemed necessary to many within France to fight Bismarck’s coalitions. Russia was seen as France’s solution to Bismarck’s diplomatic policies.

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of the last two decades. During the formation of this alliance, a torrent of pro-Russian ephemera was produced for the newly Russophile French. France’s growing nationalist tendencies, spurred on by the election of General Georges Boulanger to the French parliament in 1889, pushed for a Franco-Russian rapprochement. The boulangistes, a vocal minority, were enthusiastic about the potential alliance, to the extent that they publicly demonstrated in Paris over the death of a Russian crook in Africa at the hands of French officials. Journalists like Juliette Adam, director of the *Nouvelle Revue*, maintained a pro-Russian stance. A weekly periodical entitled *La Vie franco-russe*—a periodical featuring laudatory poetry about Russia, articles on Russian holidays such as *Maslenitsa* (celebrated before the beginning of the Lenten season), and Russian types like the *muzhik*—was founded in 1888, though it was only in existence for eleven issues. Some, however, did express reservations about the alliance, most notably the historian Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu who cited worries over France’s possible relationship with Russia in his 1888 book *La France, la Russie et l’Europe*. He was suspicious of Russia’s barbaric ways, and the costs of France’s participation in a potential war started by Russia. Leroy-Beaulieu’s critical book sparked much discussion within France, but the government, moved on by popular support, ultimately pushed for the alliance.

*The Alliance in French Caricature*

John Grand-Carteret’s work on the Franco-Russian Alliance in caricature opens in the following manner, providing a justification of the collection: “Quand un événement se

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60 Leroy-Beaulieu’s book was based on an article he first published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (15 February 1888).
produit en Europe, quand un fait attire sur lui l’attention publique, quand, de toutes parts, les regards se tournent vers un centre unique, l’habitude veut qu’on recherche et qu’on analyse l’impression générale, qu’on aille demander aux uns et aux autres ce qu’ils pensent de cet événement” (1). With a statement that “public attention” is “turned to a sole center,” Grand-Carteret’s words point to a sense of the monumentality of the advent of the alliance within French public opinion. His goal is to bring these images to the attention of the French public. He describes the various caricatures assembled, both French and foreign, but with very little analysis of the images, the caricaturists, or the journals that produced them. He lets his audience judge for themselves, keeping his comments to a minimum.

Grand-Carteret includes fifteen enlarged caricatures celebrating the “heureux événement” from *Le Livre et l’Image*, *Gil Blas*, *Le Grelot*, *La Silhouette*, *Le Triboulet*, *Le Pilori*, *Le Charivari*, and *Le Charivari oranias et algérien*, all published in 1893. According to Grand-Carteret, the caricatures, though from various sources with divergent political affiliations, all emphasize the peace derived from the Alliance, and not its potential for war:

Les images françaises porteront à penser. D’abord, malgré leur enthousiasme, elles sont nettement pacifiques, elles traduisent on ne peut mieux, à ce point de vue, je ne dirai pas les ambitions personnelles de certains politiciens, mais l’état d’âme particulier au pays. En ce mouvement tout spontané, il ne faudrait aller chercher aucune idée belliqueuse. . . . Quoi qu’il puisse advenir, l’impression première aura été purement pacifique; la griserie du moment une fois passée, ce qui restera, c’est la satisfaction d’une alliance assez puissante, assez intime en même temps, pour tenir en respect ceux qui pourraient avoir quelque pensée belliqueuse. (4)
Far from promoting war, Grand-Carteret believes such a “strong alliance” is able to temper the minority voices clamoring for war.

Images of a peaceful, even pastoral, relationship between the two countries is indeed a prevalent theme in the caricatures in his collection. French and Russian officials are shown sharing a drink, often with onlookers from the Triple Alliance (see figs. 6-1 and 6-2). In figure 6-1, a caricature from *Le Pilori*, a monarchist paper that began circulating during the furor over General Boulanger in the second half of the 1880s, shows a French and a Russian soldier heartily sharing a drink of wine (Bellanger 3: 386). One of the soliders warns the other, a “copain,” to be careful because “the walls have ears.” The “ears” are the oversized ears on the bug-eyed mugs of Franz Josef of Austria-Hungary (left), Umberto I of Italy (middle), and Wilhelm II of Germany, all of whom stick out conspicuously from within the wall. The Frenchman and the Russian sit casually, though the reader of this image cannot miss the large sword at one of the men’s side. The weapon is ready for quick access in case of an aggression, though it does not seem likely here.

A similar caricature, this time by Henri Pille for *Le Livre et l’Image*, a journal that Grand-Carteret edited, depicts again a scene in which two men, French and Russian (the Russian easily identifiable in his fur cap), amicably exchange conversation over food and a toast. Again, the same three nervous onlookers examine them. Observing the bountiful banquet and its jovial atmosphere, one of the men inquires of Wilhelm II if they should not reserve their own seats next year for the same banquet. The three are jealous witnesses to the Franco-Russian feast, a partnership that seems almost perfect. Though Grand-Carteret suggests that the caricatures avoid fanning pro-war sentiments, these two examples emphasize in fact that the possibility for war is not remote as the leaders retain weapons at
their sides. The European balance of power achieved is represented as a delicate one: the French and Russians are portrayed as a pacific couple sharing their union over a drink while the gun-toting and war-hungry Triple Alliance observes nervously (see fig. 6-3).  

Figure 6-1: Caricature by Vignola, *Le Pilori*, 15 October 1893

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61 *Le Grelot* was a pro-Republican paper that dealt primarily with chronicling current-day political controversies (Bellanger 3: 386).
Figure 6-2: Caricature by Henri Pille, *Le Livre et l’Image*, 10 November 1893
The comic three appear in other caricatures, where they uneasily watch France and Russia interact. In another selection from *Le Grelot*, observing a French soldier and a Russian sailor shaking hands at Toulon (an image often used in advertisement of the time period), the buffoons of Triple Alliance try to get a better look over a wall where they are being shooed away by a faceless character with a broom (see fig. 6-4). The German suggests that the Italian attract attention by whistling louder. The comically bare-bummed Italian
responds by saying that he not “dare” do so because there are two of them. Even though
the spying trio outnumbers the French and Russian couple they are observing, the solid
handshake of the heroic pair suggest their potential victory over the three clowns who are
portrayed as short, old, unstable, and even as grotesque idiots.

In another caricature by the same artist, the *Triplice* appears again, petrified of the
crowing *coq gaulois* and a roly-poly Russian bear (see fig. 6-5). The caption reads, “Guards!
Watch out for yourselves!,” as Wilhelm II and Umberto I flee the growling Russian bear.
Franz Josef of Austria-Hungary is shown cowardly fleeing the scene. The *coq gaulois* stands
defiantly on duty, bolstered by symbols of the Third Republic. One final example of the
humorous depiction of the Triple Alliance comes from monarchist *Triboulet* (Jones 8). The
caricature features them on bicycles having the following conversation:

--Humbert—Dis done, Guillaume, il était temps que nous apprenions à
monter à bicyclette, car l’alliance franco-russe me donne le trac.

--Guillaume—Tarteufel! Je te grois, ca bourra nous zervir bli tard à nous
gavaler—Qu’en pensez-vous, Choseph!

--Je promets de me tirer des pattes du côté du plus fort, quand le moment
sera venu, et vivement (see fig. 6-6).

The conversation—with the German Wilhelm II greatly stereotyped linguistically—implies
that the three men are afraid and that it is in their best interest to learn how to flee the nerve-
wracking Franco-Russian alliance. Their great plan of escape by bicycle implies a collective
dim-witted nature. On the whole, the three leaders of the Triple Alliance do not appear thus
as a real military threat. Instead, they are shown as comical, scared, and bumbling in the face
of the Franco-Russian union.
Figure 6-4: Caricature by Pépin, *Le Grelot*, 15 October 1893
Figure 6-5: Caricature of Pépin, *Le Grelot*, 24 September 1893
The military relationship between France and Russia, even in the absence of the members of the Triple Alliance is evidenced as well in these caricatures. The festivities surrounding the alliance in Toulon in a pro-Republican publication appears on several occasions. There are also caricatures in which French and Russian military men walk together (carrying “laternes moscovites”) giving alms to the street urchin (Italy) in order to
be rid of him. The partnership between the two nations is depicted as a friendly and stable (see figs. 6-7 and 6-8).

Figure 6-7: Caricature of Charvic, *La Silhouette*, 8 October 1893
The depiction of such a close union takes another form in this collection of caricatures, that of a female France pairing up with a male Russian partner. Some images offer a chaste depiction of the union. In once instance, Marianne, surrounded by symbols of the French Republic and balancing on the nautical symbol of France’s capital, is shown accepting an engagement ring from Admiral Avellane, also perched on a boat (with both symbols recalling the events at Kronstadt and Toulon) (see fig. 6-9). Others are sultry, as is
the case with Willette’s boudoir scene with Marianne, naked except for her *bonnet phrygien*, in bed with Russia depicted as a bear (see fig. 6-10). She “gives her heart” to the Russian bear, but in return she asks for protection against the winter cold provided by his pelt. More than “just friends,” France and Russia’s agreement is so intimate that it can be depicted as the union of two lovers. France’s character is always female, very often allegorized by Marianne. Russia is always male or masculine, as implied by the presence of the Admiral Avellane or the burly bear. The equation with the feminine for France stresses France’s vulnerability prior to the alliance, but also her desirability as a partner. Russia—the dominant military power in Eastern Europe—takes the hand of the lone, but striking France. The use of the images of Franco-Russian lovers as symbolic of the new French-Russian relationship—like the drinking friends elsewhere—is a representation of a well-made match where both parties can guarantee each other mutual satisfaction.

Finally, it is significant that Russia appears often in the character of a bear, a representation that belies the uneasy relationship between republican France and tsarist Russia (see fig. 6-11). In *Le Charivari*, the second newspaper devoted to caricature by Charles Philippon, long a thorn in the side of France’s July Monarchy, the bear is shown crying. The bear, representative of a still autocratic Russia, tries to approximate the decoration of a Republican *arbre de la liberté* by decorating tree branches with *lanternes moscovites* and the Russian imperial flag. As opposed to many of the above caricatures, this image underlines overtly the essence of the opportune, yet awkward union. Never is Tsar Alexander III paired with Marianne, the two symbolic figures of state in direct ideological opposition. Instead, a bear stands in as a representative of Russia, a more neutral figure that represents the country’s size and strength (as well as its stereotyped climate) instead of its political
make-up. Apart from this image from *La Caricature*, the two countries’ political differences are glossed over, their blissful (but ignorant?) pairing against the Triple Alliance celebrated instead.

**Figure 6-9:** Caricature of Charvic, *La Silhouette*, 13 October 1893
Figure 6-10: Caricature of Wilette, *Le Livre et l’Image*, 10 November 1893
Figure 6-11: Caricature of Draner, *Le Charivari*, 23 October 1893

**Sketching the Celebration**

“Qui donc devait célébrer ce résultat depuis longtemps espéré, si ce ne sont les crayons français?” (Grand-Carteret 7). Indeed, these caricatures bear witness to France’s joy over the end of its isolation, instigated by Bismarck. They also show the extent to which the
French illustrated press participated in and contributed to contemporary French political
debates as a public forum in which ideas about Russia were diffused and read by the entire
political spectrum, from ultra-conservative monarchists to fervent republicans (Jones 5).
The compiled caricatures by Grand-Carteret concretize the overwhelming relief and elation
in France over its new ties to Russia. Though France and Russia were not likely allies given
their conflicting regimes, the political circumstances brought about by Germany’s diplomatic
strategies beginning in the 1870s forced the two nations together. By 1893 it is evident, even
in caricature, that the happy alliance guaranteed stability for both countries, a coalition that
ensured “[l]a paix par la force” (Grand-Carteret 5).
Chapter 7

Conclusion: Enigma or Rapprochement?

“[L]a Russie d’Alexandre III n’est plus la Russie de Nicolas ler” (32).

John Grand-Carteret, Les Caricatures sur l’Alliance Franco-Russe (1893)

“[J]’ai la conviction que l’influence des grands écrivains russes sera salutaire pour notre art épuisé; elle l’aidera à reprendre du vol, à mieux observer le réel, tout en regardant plus loin, et surtout à retrouver de l’émotion” (liii).

Eugène Melchior de Vogüé, Le Roman russe (1886)

By 1894, Custine’s Russia was no more. Fin-de-siècle French representations of Russia were enthusiastic. They ranged from celebratory caricatures of the alliance to Vogüé’s opinion that Russian writers like Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy were able to revive a tired French literature. This change began almost forty years earlier in a war that pitted France against Russia. With the end of the Crimean War, as Russia lost its previous status as a military menace to Europe, the French, from a safer position, were able to grow curious about Russia. Later, after 1870, France’s solitary position within Europe led the country to seek support from Russia, severed from almost twenty years of coalitions with Germany. In this context, the representations examined in this study answer questions about how the French conceived of this new Russia. What were the implications of these varied expressions of the French imagination about Russia for notions of “civilization” and “culture”? How did France’s self-conception fluctuate in relation not only to Russia, but
also to the rest of the world? Did these representations change over time? Did they differ according to insider or outsider perspectives?

The first conclusion drawn from this study is that there was a move from an overt disdain for Russian culture to an enthusiastic approval of the country where *l’âme slave* was appreciated in the art, architecture, literature, landscape, and people of Russia. In contrast to the Marquis de Custine’s scathing account of his travels to Russia in mid-century, the newer French representations frequently gave preference to more serene images of Russia during the last half of the nineteenth century. The snow-blanketed Russia, complete with rosy-cheeked *muzhiki* and fur-enveloped nobles racing past Orthodox churches in a *tarentass* as portrayed in Gautier’s *Voyage en Russie*, Verne’s *Michel Strogoff*, or advertisements for French soap replace more hostile visions of an overtly ignorant, even violent Russia.

However, echoes of fears of the Russia of 1812 or even of Custine’s Russia do not completely disappear. Ségur’s *Général Dourakine* and Leroy-Beaulieu’s contemplation of an impending Franco-Russian alliance continued to voice fears of Russia’s “true” nature. On the whole, though, France readily accepted Russia as a partner on similar footing as the two countries moved towards 1894. Though the French appeared increasingly curious about Russia and willing to accept it as a partner, the images circulating between 1856 and 1894 were scarcely less shallow than the hostile images produced prior to the end of the Crimean War. Many depictions, as in Gautier’s travel narrative, rarely move beyond the surface of the country. Some, like Ujfalvy-Bourdon and Verne, grappled with the diverse ethnic, linguistic, geographical, and political makeup of the country. Nonetheless, the new visions of Russia were as highly stereotyped as the earlier ones. The discourses circulating in French print
culture after the Crimean War provided a new twist on the myth of a largely imagined Russia rather than an effort to understand the country’s complexities.

There was in fact little need to go beyond a superficial treatment of Russia. For French purposes, a pristine, harmless, exoticized, even orientalized Russia provided a blank slate in relation to heavily industrialized and increasingly urban France. These images fed financial and political ambitions of a struggling Third Republic. If Russia, recently shorn of its reputation as a “backwards” country in France, presented simply the possibility of development, reform, or geographical or industrial expansion, it reflected what France had overcome in the past century in its move into industrialization and a democratic government. If Russia, long held as the Other, was made more like France’s ideas of self, it became less foreign and more acceptable as a partner. Therefore, Russia, recast in the image of a past France, had potential. Yet the relationship between Republican France and tsarist Russia in 1894 was not seamlessly negotiated in image. This unease is palpable in representations in advertisement and the caricatures surrounding the alliance in which this pairing is glossed over or altogether ignored. However, given the threat of a Bismarckian Europe, France understandably worked to efface past tensions with Russia in order to gain economic, political, diplomatic, and, eventually, military alliances with this country. The changes in French representations of Russia helped legitimize France’s new collaborator.

The remodeling of Russia’s reputation, however, was not as straightforward as a political makeover. French representations of Russia circulating between 1856 and 1894 often conveyed a pseudo-colonial discourse, in which France—at the summit of the West-East cultural gradient—remained superior in its levels of “civilization.” From Serena’s travel accounts to Ségur’s depiction of Dourakine and Madame Papofski, the French clearly retain
the upper hand in matters of manners and refinement compared to Russians. In this light, paradoxically, the French made assessments about Russia, itself a colonizer of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Far East, recalling those France itself formulated about its own colonies. During a period of both rapid expansion of the French colonial empire and of instability within Europe, this treatment of Russia by the French points to a globalizing colonialist outlook within France not restricted to just its colonies. This attitude also pervaded French opinions about other countries with which it came into contact, including Russia.

It is thus not surprising that—as demonstrated in travel accounts, in advertisement, and even in children’s literature produced within France—Russians and Russia emerge as highly orientalized. The “orientalization” of Russia detectable in French images is not homogeneous. An imagined Russia served different purposes for the French. Some bolstered France’s sense of self and progress. Others provided potential for French dreams of economic and political growth. The discourses are often contradictory and internally conflicted. Representations of harems in Russian Central Asia or the blissfully happy yet one-dimensional Russian peasants that populate the unindustrialized Russian landscape emphasize this conflict. As France moved into the last half of the nineteenth century and underwent various transformations in its own national identity, these visions elucidate the tensions within France over its own identity at home and in an increasingly divided Europe.

Aside from outlining the changes in France’s relationship to Russia during the second half of the nineteenth century, there are also some important clues about the nature of print culture in the French public sphere. Opinions about Russia abounded during the second half of the nineteenth century. These ideas circulated in a great variety of French
printed materials, including literature in translation, articles in literary and political reviews, caricature, advertisement, children’s literature, and historical accounts. In many cases, as seen with Verne’s *Michel Strogoff* and Gautier’s avoidance of Custine’s political and social polemics in his own travel account, the texts referred to each other. These texts fostered a discussion that opened up an intertextual space for contemplation of positions taken on Russia, be they as small as a judgment on the beauty of the Siberian city Tomsk. Thus, it is evident that formulations of Russia’s relationship to France were not limited to the political and diplomatic spheres of the Second Empire and the Third Republic. Consumers, readers (who were sometimes producers themselves), and children alike consumed and participated in the creation of France’s imagined visions of Russia.

Furthermore, the study stresses the importance of cultural intermediaries or “translators,” both insiders (like Ségur and Turgenev) and outsiders (like the travel writers and Mérimée). These individuals produced representations of Russia for the French from a third space of an in-between or a place of “subversion of binarisms” between the two countries (Clifford 37). What perspectives can these border crossers—literal or figurative travelers between Russia and France—offer the French public? Do their “translations” “emerge as constitutive of cultural meanings” as in the case of Turgenev, or are they “simple transfer or extension[s]” of stereotypes as with so many of the advertisements that exoticize Russia (Henderson 3)? Does the position (inside or outside) from which one constructs a cultural interspace for unilateral or bilateral cross-cultural contemplation matter?

And what of Russia as a borderland, what of Russia’s position between East and West, between Europe and Asia? Throughout the examination of French perspectives on Russia, the West-East cultural gradient serves as an effective model for understanding
France’s perspectives on Russia. Truly a borderland from French perspectives, Russia’s position in relation to geographical polarities does not fit within traditional boundaries. It is a hybrid nation that holds within itself and challenges accepted geographical, cultural, and ethnic divisions. In this way, Russia is the embodiment of what border studies scholar Nestor García Canclini calls “hybridity:” “the ongoing condition of all human cultures, which contain no zones of purity because they undergo continuous processes of transcultural (two-way borrowing and lending between cultures),” a hybridity that challenges accepted notions of constructed notions of “cultural purity” (Rosaldo xv). Viewed from France, Russia is in flux. It is not pure. Still, Russia is one lens through which France examines the questions of “us” versus “them,” of “East” versus “West,” of “European” versus “other” during the period in which her mission civilisatrice was also being articulated. As shown, these distinctions are relative and flexible. This definitional pliability leads to an undermining of absolute notions of borders and of “civilization,” and, ultimately, for the France of the Third Republic, of the moral basis for the country’s colonial expansion.

Russia, then, serves as a balance of sorts in French representations, where Russia and France are weighed against each in matters of “culture” and “civilization.” The evolution of France’s depictions of Russia as it moved towards its Belle Époque does indeed seem to resolve the question—if momentarily—of Russia’s place within Europe. The evolution of France’s relationship to Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, however, only underscores more problematic concepts like a growing nationalism and the colonial project, questions that France would continue to puzzle over well into the next century.
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Appendix

Ivan Turgenev’s French Translations

1845:

1852:

1853:

1854:

1855:

1856:

1857-58:

1858:


1859:


1860:


1861:


1862:


1863:


1866:


1867:

1868:


• Ivan Turgenev, “Du messager russe” in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*. Tr. Louis Viardot and Ivan Turgenev. 1 April 1868.

1869:

1873:

1874:

1876:

1877:
CURRICULUM VITA

Nanci Christine Brookes

EDUCATION
Ph.D., French (civilization concentration), The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA (2004)


PUBLICATION

PRESENTATIONS
“Prosper Mérimée, Ivan Turgenev, and the Cultural Translation of Russia?,” 29th Nineteenth-Century French Studies Colloquium, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ (October 2003)

“Selling the East or the West? Russia in French Advertisement, 1856-1894,” 49th Annual Meeting of the Society for French Historical Studies, Milwaukee, WI (April 2003)

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