

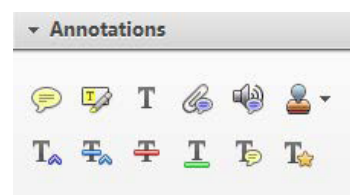
Smart Proof System Instructions

It is recommended that you read all instructions below; even if you are familiar with online review practices.

Using the Smart Proof system, proof reviewers can easily review the PDF proof, annotate corrections, respond to queries directly from the locally saved PDF proof, all of which are automatically submitted directly to **our database** without having to upload the annotated PDF.

- ✓ **Login into Smart Proof** anywhere you are connected to the internet.
- ✓ **Review the proof** on the following pages and mark corrections, changes, and query responses using the **Annotation Tools**.

Note: Editing done by replacing the text on this PDF is not permitted with this application.



- ✓ **Save your proof corrections** by clicking the "Publish Comments" button.
Corrections don't have to be marked in one sitting. You can publish comments and log back in at a later time to add and publish more comments before you click the "Complete Proof Review" button below.
- ✓ **Complete your review** after all corrections have been published to the server by clicking the "Complete Proof Review" button below.

Before completing your review.....

Did you reply to all author queries found in your proof?

Did you click the "Publish Comments" button to save all your corrections?
Any unpublished comments will be lost.

Note: Once you click "Complete Proof Review" you will not be able to add or publish additional corrections.

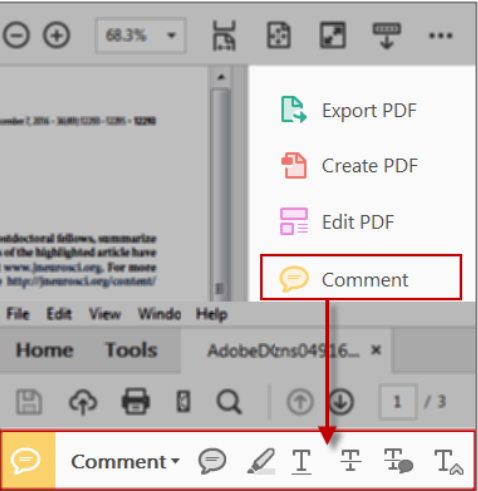
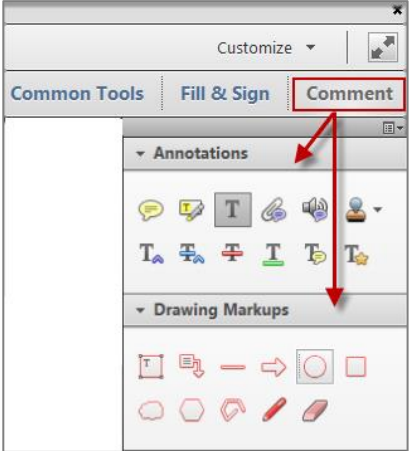
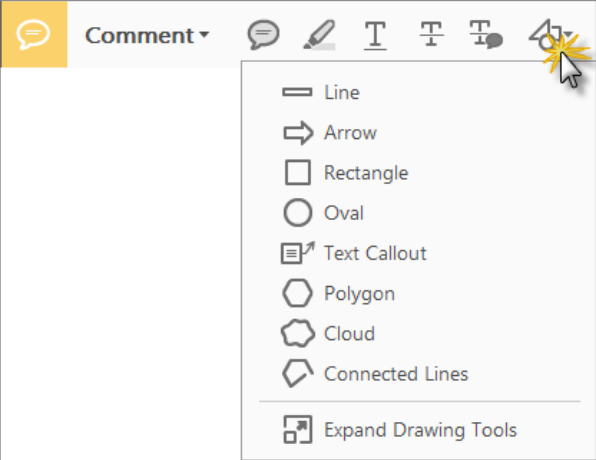
Annotating Your PDF

To facilitate electronic transmittal of corrections, we encourage authors to use the Comment tools available in Adobe Acrobat™ or the free Adobe Reader™ software (see note below regarding acceptable versions). The PDF provided is password protected and does not allow text of the PDF to be changed. However, it does allow for the use of the comment tools available in the Adobe applications.



NOTE: To use the **Comment and Drawing Markup** tools, you will need Adobe Reader™, Version 10 or higher. This program is free and available for download from <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>.



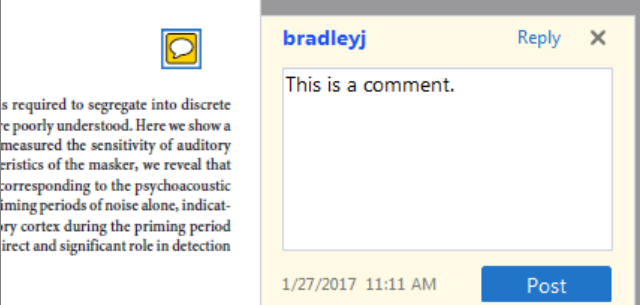
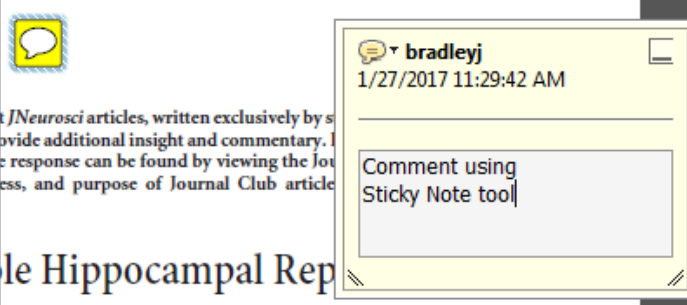
Open the PDF using Adobe Acrobat™ or Adobe Reader™ and enable the commenting tools. Depending on the Adobe product, the location to activate the tools may vary slightly (see table below for location). To display the tools, select **Comment** located near the top of the Adobe window. (Screenshot examples are provided below for both Adobe products).

Open Comment Tools



Adobe Reader™	Adobe Acrobat™
<p>Click the Comment button to display tools</p>  <p>The screenshot shows the Adobe Reader interface. At the top, there is a toolbar with various icons. A red box highlights the 'Comment' icon, which is a speech bubble with a checkmark. Below the toolbar, there is a menu with options: 'Export PDF', 'Create PDF', 'Edit PDF', and 'Comment'. The 'Comment' option is also highlighted with a red box. A red arrow points from the 'Comment' option in the menu to the 'Comment' icon in the toolbar.</p>	<p>Click the Comment button to display Annotations and Drawing Markups tools</p>  <p>The screenshot shows the Adobe Acrobat interface. At the top, there is a toolbar with various icons. A red box highlights the 'Comment' icon, which is a speech bubble with a checkmark. Below the toolbar, there is a menu with options: 'Annotations' and 'Drawing Markups'. The 'Annotations' and 'Drawing Markups' options are also highlighted with red boxes. A red arrow points from the 'Comment' icon in the toolbar to the 'Annotations' and 'Drawing Markups' options in the menu.</p>
<p>Click the Drawing icon to drop-down the Drawing tools.</p>  <p>The screenshot shows the Drawing tools dropdown menu. The menu is open, showing a list of drawing tools: Line, Arrow, Rectangle, Oval, Text Callout, Polygon, Cloud, Connected Lines, and Expand Drawing Tools. A red arrow points from the 'Drawing' icon in the toolbar to the 'Drawing' tools dropdown menu.</p>	

Sticky Note



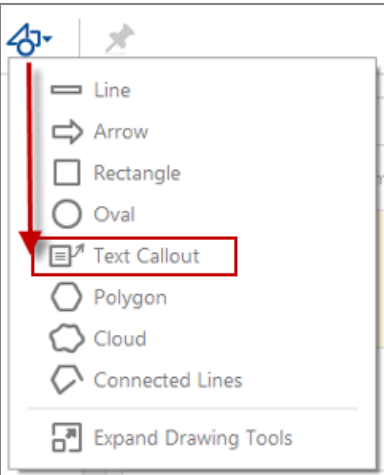
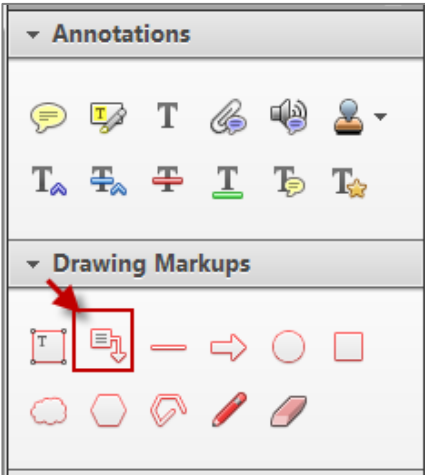
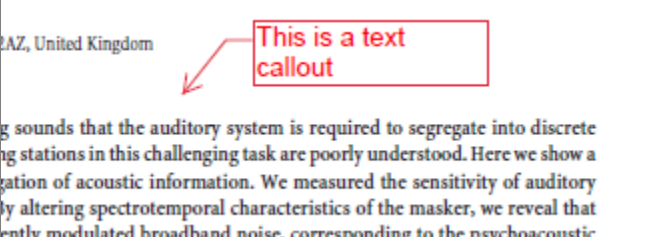
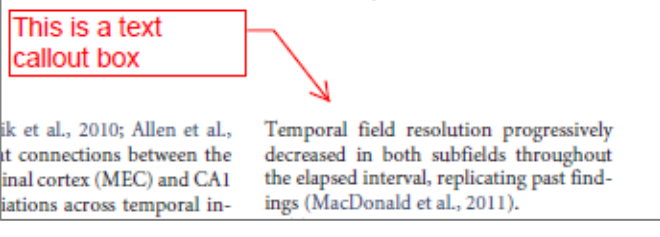
Use the **Sticky Note** tool ( or ) to describe changes that need to be made. For example, change to font style, bold, italic, or use of capitalization, altering or replacing a figure; or any other general comments. Likewise, to answer a question or approve a change that was posed by the editor.

Adobe Reader™	Adobe Acrobat™
 Add Sticky Note	 Add Sticky Note
	



Callout Tool

Use the **Callout** tool ( or ) to point directly to changes that need to be made.




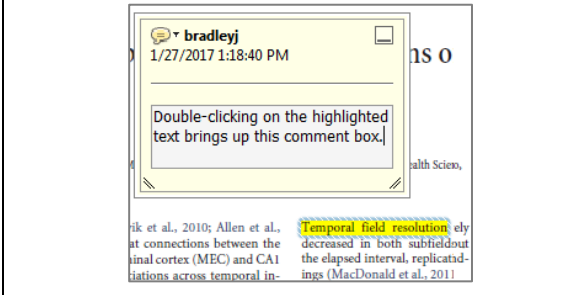
TIP: Place the callout box in an area of white space on the page so that you do not obscure the text.

Adobe Reader™	Adobe Acrobat™
 Add Text Callout	 Add Text Callout
	
	

Highlight Tool

Use the **Highlight** tool ( or ) to indicate font problems, bad breaks, and other textual inconsistencies. Describe the problem with the **Callout** tool or use the **Sticky Note** tool.



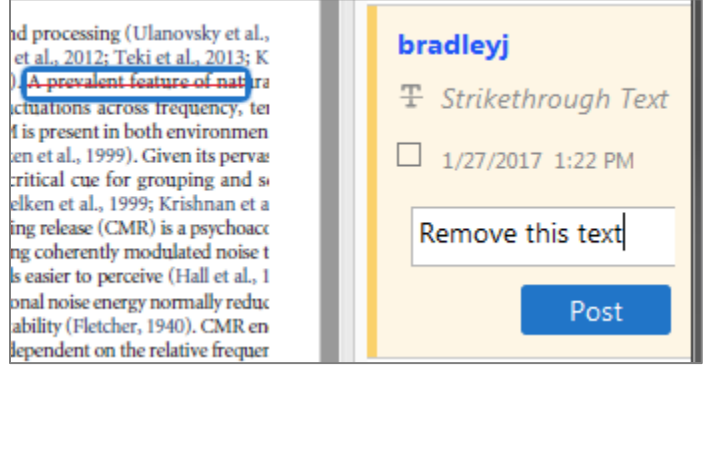
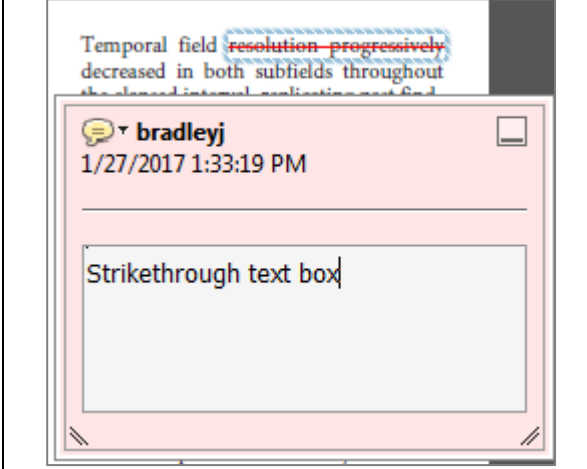
TIP: Double-clicking on the highlighted text pops up a window where comments may be added.

Adobe Reader™	Adobe Acrobat™
 Highlight Text	 Highlight Text
 <p>The screenshot shows a document with a yellow highlight on the text "auditory system is required". A comment box is open over the highlight, containing the text "Highlight text tool used in conjunction with Comment tool". The comment box includes a "Post" button and a timestamp of "1/27/2017".</p>	 <p>The screenshot shows a document with a yellow highlight on the text "Temporal field resolution". A comment box is open over the highlight, containing the text "Double-clicking on the highlighted text brings up this comment box.". The comment box includes a "Post" button and a timestamp of "1/27/2017 1:18:40 PM".</p>





Strikethrough Text Tool

Use the **Strikethrough** tool ( or ) to indicate text for removal.

TIP: Double-clicking on the stricken text opens a box where comments may be entered.

Adobe Reader™	Adobe Acrobat™
 Strikethrough Text	 Strikethrough Text
 <p>The screenshot shows a document with a red strikethrough over the text "A prevalent feature of natural". A comment box is open over the strikethrough, containing the text "Strikethrough Text". The comment box includes a "Post" button and a timestamp of "1/27/2017 1:22 PM".</p>	 <p>The screenshot shows a document with a red strikethrough over the text "resolution progressively". A comment box is open over the strikethrough, containing the text "Strikethrough text box". The comment box includes a "Post" button and a timestamp of "1/27/2017 1:33:19 PM".</p>

Additional Tools

Adobe DC	Adobe Reader	Tool
		Add Note to Replace Text
		Underline Text

From Anticapitalist Polemic to Novel of Success

Reader Reception of Theodore Dreiser's *The Financier* in Soviet Successor States

L. Ashley Squires

New Economic School, Moscow, Russia

“Русский Драйзер” - явление значительное и важное в нашем духовном мире. Книги великого американца читаются у нас по-прежнему с неослабным интересом, помогая нам понять Америку, мир, человека и доставляя высокое художественное наслаждение. Если попытаться выразить одним словом наше представление о Драйзере-художнике, то, пожалуй, трудно подобрать что-нибудь более удачное, чем название одного из его романов.



2 ● From Anticapitalist Polemic to Novel of Success

[“Russian Dreiser” is a considerable phenomenon and important to our inner world. The books of the great American are read by us as in the past with unabated interest, helping us to understand America, the world, humanity, and granting lofty artistic pleasures. If one tries to express with one word our presentation of Dreiser the artist, then it would likely be difficult to select something more apt than the title of one of his novels.]

—“Titan” (Kovalev 1987, 542–43)¹

When Theodore Dreiser visited the Soviet Union for three months in 1927 and 1928, he met Soviet futurist poet Vladimir Mayakovsky at a dinner for distinguished writers. In his diary, Dreiser reports that Mayakovsky “remarked that I was the first American who admitted, after a short stay in Russia, that he did not have any definite impressions and conclusions; he said that usually after a few days in Moscow, they write whole books about the country, and seem to have learned everything” (1996, 112). It does seem to be expected that any American coming to Russia must walk away with a set of strong opinions. And by the end of his journey, Dreiser certainly had some. *Dreiser Looks at Russia*, the hastily compiled account of his observations on the “Great Experiment,” was criticized by Soviet writers for its bourgeois naivete and by American scholars for its bad writing.² Nevertheless, Dreiser remained connected to the Soviet cause, joining the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) in 1945, long after it was fashionable to do so, for the remainder of his lifetime. And readers in Soviet successor states have remained connected to his work.

Indeed, it appears that people from this region read Dreiser quite a bit more than Americans do. This became apparent to me during my second year of teaching in a liberal arts program in Moscow, run jointly between the New Economic School and the Higher School of Economics, two of the most prestigious institutions of higher education in Russia. During the fall semester of 2014, I gave students in my first-year writing course an assignment to analyze a creative work that had something to say about banking or finance. When I was going through proposals for this assignment, I came to one student who proposed to write about Dreiser’s *Financier* (1911), the first book of his Trilogy of Desire, a fictionalized account of the life of post-

Civil War financial mogul Charles Yerkes. I was excited about this but surprised, so I asked the student if he had ever read this book before, and he said, “Of course. I’m reading the third book in the trilogy right now.” I thought this achievement, representing over 1,500 pages of rather dense reading about financial malfeasance, was remarkable, and I congratulated myself on having such an extraordinary student. After all, I don’t think I can name a single US acquaintance outside of the International Dreiser Society³ who has read *The Financier*, much less the entire trilogy. But I kept looking through the paper proposals and found that three *additional* students wanted to write about *The Financier*. This led to a series of conversations with Russian friends and colleagues, who informed me that this is just “one of those books you read.” Members of various generations have told me about picking Dreiser’s books up off their parents’ bookshelves or getting a recommendation from a friend or family member. Reflecting, perhaps, the differences in reading culture between Russia and the United States, one of my students described picking up *An American Tragedy*, weighing in at nearly 1,000 pages all by itself, at the age of 15 for some “light summer reading.” My friend Oxana, who grew up and went to university during the Soviet period, speaks fondly of reading Dreiser along with John Steinbeck and Jack London—“basically all the guys who wrote how cruel is America and how people suffer.”

Dreiser’s politics—his lifelong anticapitalism and late membership in the CPUSA—help explain why he was a widely published author in the Soviet Union. It is less apparent, however, why he should still be so in its successor nations. Using novel digital research methods, this essay sheds light on the contemporary reception of *The Financier* in Soviet successor nations. After establishing a critical framework for the project in transnational literary studies and reception studies, I will offer a very brief overview of Dreiser’s translation and reception history in the Soviet Union. I will then investigate the post-Soviet reputation of Dreiser in the former USSR using data on Internet searches and online reviews. These show that reader interactions with Dreiser’s work are complex, though largely depoliticized. While a vague anti-American animus occasionally comes through, readers largely point to basic thematic and formal elements like the style of the

4 • From Anticapitalist Polemic to Novel of Success

writing, the strength of the characters, and the interesting turns of the plot to explain their love of the book. What is more, for some readers, interest in *The Financier* appears to be connected to a broader interest in finance itself in ways that suggest that this novel's conventional interpretation as a polemic against finance capitalism has essentially been inverted. If it is true that Dreiser remains an important author for helping readers in former Soviet countries understand America, his lingering popularity there is important for understanding this region's uneasy transition to market capitalism as well as its current problems with inequality and corruption. The Cowperwood trilogy in particular seems to provide an imaginative context in which individual readers attempt to cope with the vicissitudes of success and develop a set of personal ethics in a capitalist system.

CRITICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This article is both an interpretive and a methodological intervention, aimed at reorienting the frame of transnational literary studies toward interest in popular reception. Using unconventional online tools, including search engine data and online book reviews, I seek to better understand the place of Dreiser in the Russophone canon of American literature—and the place of naturalism in the world canon—while inviting a reconsideration of what counts as literary criticism and even what counts as world literature.

When David Damrosch (2003) defined world literature as any text that is “actively present within a literary system beyond that of its original culture,” he was referring not only to the fact of a book's circulation beyond its place and language of production but to the role of readers in making it a living part of the receiving culture (4). More recently, scholars working from outside of the United States have argued for a reorientation of the disciplines of English studies away from sites of production and toward sites of reception. As Suman Gupta (2009) argues, “English studies will become a site where the local perspective can be foregrounded by frames of reference provided by the discipline, and local perspectives will be structured and globalized as much by reference to as at the expense of those frames” (135). Examining the inadequacy of models for teaching Anglophone literature

outside of the “Anglosphere,” Myles Chilton (2016) also suggests that “Focusing on receptions de-couples the English language and the teaching of Anglophone literatures from their cultures of origin in a way that takes that term, cultures of origin, not as given but as the analytical site of an interrogation into the border crossings and mixings that literary texts invite as they circulate” (98). As I shall demonstrate, Dreiser’s *Financier* is an example of a novel that is best understood as a product of circulation, a text that would seem to be predominantly encountered by readers in a language other than English whose responses and interpretations are best understood in a local/regional context rather than with reference to the Anglophone center.

This everyday reader has traditionally been invisible to scholars, unlike the impressions of elite readers whose thoughts are available to be discovered in libraries and archives. Where histories of reception are attempted, they tend to be histories of elite reception. For example, Eleonory Gilburd’s study of the reception of Western art and culture during the Khrushchev Thaw in *To See Paris and Die* (2018) gestures to archived letters from readers of Hemingway, Remarque, and Salinger but focuses overwhelmingly on the work of translators and literary critics. Researchers interested in everyday readers have therefore tended to focus on the present and on very small samples, primarily using the tools of ethnography. This method was, of course, pioneered by Janice Radway in *Reading the Romance* (1984), who conducted interviews to study the reading practices of romance novel enthusiasts. Likewise, Dana Heller’s essay “Salesman in Moscow,” appearing in Pease and Wiegman’s 2002 collection *The Future of American Studies*, examines the reactions of undergraduate students at Moscow State University (where Heller was teaching on a Fulbright grant) to Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* based on essays and class discussion. A study like this can be quite illuminating but is nevertheless limited by the fact that an instructor cannot help but shape the perceptions of her students even as she seeks to understand them. Furthermore, such interventions can only capture an impression of a specific slice of a population at a specific place in time.

6 • From Anticapitalist Polemic to Novel of Success

The Internet, however, has opened up new possibilities. The rise and proliferation of websites where individuals go to discuss the culture they consume offers two important affordances: First, it allows the researcher access to the reading practices and impressions of everyday readers, and second, it instantiates an archive that allows the researcher to capture those impressions over a longer span of time and at something of a distance. Paul Gutjahr anticipated the value of reader reviews for research purposes early on in 2002, using Amazon reviews for the *Left Behind* novels as a way of examining the fraught relationship between evangelical Protestants and fiction (Gutjahr 2002). Since the writing of that article, scholars have looked not only to Amazon but to social cataloging sites like Goodreads, which allow users not just to write reviews for other consumers but to engage in a broader community of fellow readers as well (Angemeer 2012; Allington 2016; Driscoll and Rehberg Sedo 2018; Rowberry 2016; and Murray 2018).

Additionally, the intervening years have given researchers greater access to search engine data, which can help test my subjective impression that readers in the former Soviet Union are more interested in Dreiser than Americans. Google Trends, which provides data on Google keyword searches, is a useful index of relative interest in a topic over time and by geographic region. It not only tracks specific keyword searches but also “topics,” which are aggregates of related searches across various languages.

F1 Fig. 1 shows that from 2004 to the writing of this article, the former Soviet Union utterly dominated searches for Theodore Dreiser. Indeed, the US is about 2 percent as likely to search for the author as Armenia.

F2 As is shown in Fig. 2, the same is true of *The Financier*, which is searched for in a narrower portion of the globe (17 vs. 42 countries) and for which the United States is only 1 percent as likely to search as Kazakhstan.

Indeed, my broader research on the circulation of Anglophone texts shows through search engine data that Theodore Dreiser and many of his novels are part of a set of authors and books that remain canonical in some part of the world after largely having been abandoned by the author’s home country. *Sister Carrie* (1900) appears to be the most popular Dreiser novel in the United States, but Google users there are still only 17 percent as

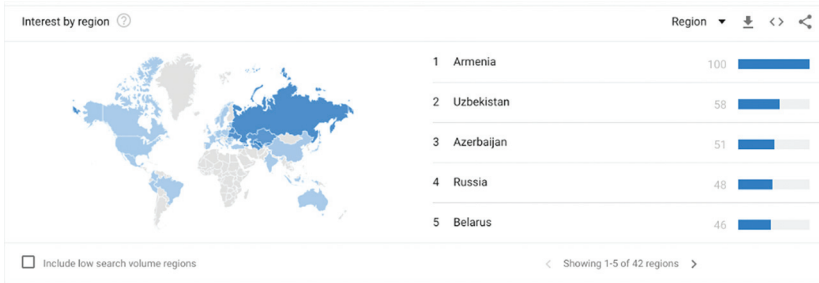


Fig. 1. Google Trends data for topic “Theodore Dreiser—Author,” January 2004–November 2019.

likely to search for it as Uzbek users. This forces us to reevaluate the “American-ness” of Dreiser and his novels. What does it mean, ~~then~~, that today this author is likely more often read in Russian than in English, with the post-Soviet experience of capitalism as its cultural context?

Going forward, this study will use two social cataloging websites to draw some conclusions about the nature of Dreiser’s post-Soviet reception: Goodreads and Livelib. Goodreads (launched in 2006 and purchased by Amazon in 2013), with 90 million users reviewing books in a variety of languages, has the advantage of allowing us to compare reviews written by people in former Soviet countries to reviews written in the United States. Livelib, based in Russia with only 200,000 daily users, is far smaller on the whole but holds many more Russian-language reviews, allowing me to expand the dataset considerably.

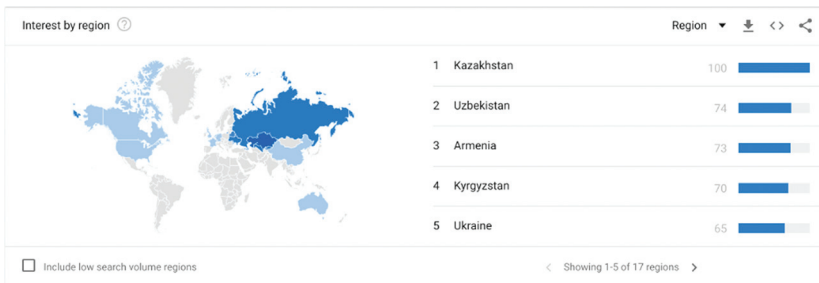


Fig. 2. Google Trends data for topic “The Financier—Novel by Theodore Dreiser,” January 2004–November 2019.

8 ● From Anticapitalist Polemic to Novel of Success



Fig. 3. Reported locations of Goodreads reviewers.

On Goodreads, *The Financier* has been reviewed 190 times; 147 reviews were written in English, 30 in Russian, 8 in Ukrainian, 3 in Mongolian, and 2 in Spanish. In addition to the text of the reviews, I collected data on the reviewers’ locations based on what they provided in their public profiles. Of the English-language reviewers, 109 made their location public; 59 of these users were located in the United States and 26 in countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the multinational alliance that succeeded the Soviet Union.⁴ Of the 30 Russian reviews, 25 made their location public, and 22 of these were based in the CIS. Six of the Ukrainian reviewers were in Ukraine (two did not report their location). In short, for a total of 65 US-based users who reviewed *The Financier* on Goodreads (one of whom reviewed the book in Russian), there are 54 CIS-based users, which is somewhat remarkable given that the website itself is US-based and only translated into Spanish, French, German, and Italian (see Fig. 3).⁵

CIS readers on Goodreads also seem to like *The Financier* considerably more than US readers. The mean rating out of 5 for CIS readers is 4.68 and the mean for US readers is 3.83. Readers who review the book in Russian and Ukrainian also give it higher average ratings (4.59 and 4.38, respectively) than readers who review it in English (3.99).

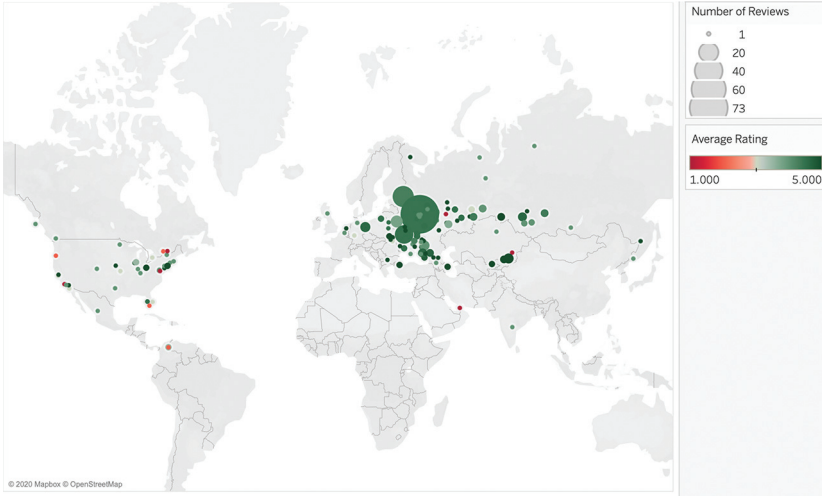


Fig. 4. Reported locations of Livelib reviewers.

On Livelib, the book has been reviewed 298 times, all in Russian. On this site, *The Financier* is designated as a best-seller and has been voted the 25th best book of the twentieth century with an average of 4.38 out of 5 stars. Public data was also gathered from Livelib user profiles, including (where provided) name, year of birth, location, and occupation. The 140 users who provided their year of birth had an average age of 29.5. Of users, 251 identified as female and 69 as male. Of the 231 who provided their location, the vast majority were from Russia (182), followed by Ukraine (30), Belarus (9), Kazakhstan (4), Germany (3), Estonia (1), Georgia (1), and Kyrgyzstan (1). The capitals were the most heavily represented: Moscow (62), Saint Petersburg (19), Kiev (11), and Minsk (6). However, reviewers hail from all over the region, from Crimea to Chechnya to Norilsk, a former gulag and nickel mining city above the Arctic Circle, inaccessible except by air and currently still closed to foreigners (Fig. 4).

Reviews from both of these websites were collected, analyzed, and finally coded according to the consistent themes that emerged. The three most significant of these themes will be addressed in separate sections following a brief overview of the history of Dreiser’s novels in the Soviet Union. These themes are as follows: responses to the style of the writing

10 • From Anticapitalist Polemic to Novel of Success

and the quality of the translation, affective responses to Frank Cowperwood as a character, and responses to the financial dealings described in the book.

DREISER IN THE SOVIET UNION

Translation and established traditions of reading inform the ways in which CIS readers engage with this text. Thus, before proceeding to the online reviews, it may help to establish some basic details about Dreiser's publication history in the Soviet Union and the role that translation played in making his novels unique artifacts of Russophone/Soviet culture and not just Western imports.

The first translations of Dreiser's work reached a Russian audience in 1925, when the publisher Seyatel released a collection of stories translated by Mark Volosov. Volosov went on to supply translations of Dreiser's stories and essays to Misl and Gosizdat from 1926 to 1927. By 1927, word of these unauthorized Russian editions reached Dreiser, who contacted Sergei Dinamov, an editor for Gosizdat and member of the communist academy. According to Olga Panova and Sergei Panov (2015), Dinamov belonged to a group of "westernists" formed as part of a commission "for the study of proletarian and revolutionary literature in the West." Included in this group were two other individuals who would have a decided impact on Dreiser's reception in the Soviet Union: Ruth Kennell, who would become his amanuensis during his trip to the USSR later in 1927, and Soviet literary critic Ivan Anisimov. During his Soviet journey, Dreiser negotiated the publication of a new, multivolume edition of his works, which would be published in increments throughout the 1930s (Panova and Panov 2015). Since the Second World War, Dreiser's works have remained constantly in print, and new editions continue to be produced by regional commercial publishers.

Unlike some other foreign writers, Dreiser enjoyed the benefit of a good translator from the beginning. Volosov's original translations of *Sister Carrie*, *The Financier*, *The "Genius,"* and many shorter works remain the gold standard. Translation may indeed have removed an important barrier to Dreiser's attainment of canonical status—a problem he faced in the

United States, where his style was sometimes thought to be crude. In fact, Soviet critics were aware of Dreiser's controversial status in the US literary world—epitomized in the debates between F. O. Matthiessen and Lionel Trilling—and sometimes used it to claim Dreiser as their own on the basis that his countrymen did not adequately appreciate him.⁶ Later in the essay quoted in the epigraph, Kovalev (1987) says,

Появление каждого из романов Драйзера вызывало целую бурю в американской литературной критике. Писатель отказывался следовать "правилам игры", нарушал все общепринятые "нормы" литературного творчества. Он писал о том, что полагалось запретным для искусства, писал с откровенностью, приводившей в содрогание благопристойных критиков, позволял себе вскрывать истинное содержание нравственных ценностей, аксиоматически принятых в буржуазном обществе. Он высказывал суждения и оценки, повергавшие почтенную публику в состояние шока. Драйзер не щадил никого и ничего. Он утверждал принципиальную трагичность судьбы каждого рядового американца и обвинял в этом социальную систему. В поисках решения кардинальных проблем национальной жизни писатель сближался с идеологией пролетариата, что привело его логически к вступлению в Коммунистическую партию США - шаг, которого и сегодня американская критика не может ему простить.

[The appearance of each of the novels of Dreiser caused a storm in the world of American literary criticism. The writer refused to follow "the rules of the game," breaking all the generally accepted norms of literary composition. He wrote about things that were supposed to be forbidden for art. He wrote with frankness, making decorous critics shudder. He allowed himself to disclose the real content of moral values, axiomatically accepted by bourgeois society. He expressed opinions and values that put the respectable public in a state of shock. Dreiser played tricks on no one and nothing. He confirmed the fundamental tragedy of the fate of every common American and indicted the social system. In search of solutions to the cardinal problems of the life of the nation the writer came close to the ideology of the proletariat, which brought him

12 ● From Anticapitalist Polemic to Novel of Success

logically to joining the Communist Party of the USA, a step which today's American critics cannot excuse.]

Referring to more recent studies of Dreiser, he says,

Сегодня изучение Драйзера в США идет в основном по двум направлениям - биографическому и эстетическому. Теперь уже ясно, что в массе своей американские критики успеха не достигли. Можно назвать два-три удачных исследования, подобных монографии Фрэнсиса Матиссена, и это все.

[Today the study of Dreiser in the United States has gone in two directions—biographical and aesthetic. Now it is already clear that the mass of American critics were without success. It's possible to name two to three successful research projects, like the monograph of Francis Matthiessen, and that's it.]
(544-45)⁷

Kovalev's Dreiser is a somewhat simplified figure to be sure. His account completely glosses over the tension that existed between the author and the Soviet Union, despite the fact that he was a prominent fellow traveler throughout the 1930s and 1940s and joined the American Communist Party just before he died. Soviet critics were quick enough to denounce *Dreiser Looks at Russia* for its criticism of, among other things, Soviet jurisprudence and the hygiene of the average Soviet citizen. The original diary of the trip reveals how truly mixed his reactions to the communist experiment were. Michael David-Fox (2011) reads it as an example of "Dreiser's peculiar mix of Social Darwinism and progressive social conscience, determinism and rugged individualism," which "formed a layered *mélange* that, as is often the case, was neither fully 'Left' or 'Right' politically." This tension is also quite apparent in Dreiser's novels. *The Financier*, for instance, depicts the ethical nightmare of finance capitalism, which grinds people into the ground as readily as it builds them up. But it also encourages us to empathize with—even admire—its protagonist, who contrives a scheme to use city funds for speculation. Dreiser's novels, in short, are torn between

the romance of capitalism and its horrors. Soviet publishers and critics, however “tended to see only the ‘progressive’ side of the two Dreisers” (David-Fox 2011, 145).

A less complicated version of Dreiser was thus harnessed to the ideological apparatus of the Soviet Union, and through the process of translation, his works were transformed into artifacts of Soviet culture. In her study of cultural importation in the USSR, Gilburd (2018) finds that Soviet translators exercised considerable power over the presentation and interpretation of a foreign work. “Written elsewhere,” she argues, “these books were *made* in the Soviet Union” (emphasis mine) with translators occupying a place of authority on par with authors themselves. Some translated texts became “extraordinarily authoritative,” establishing “normative literary and lexical models as only canonical originals do” (154). Volosov’s quite early translation of *The Financier* seems to have achieved such a status and remains the definitive translation.

Indeed, one could say that like Donald Trump, Theodore Dreiser sounds better in Russian. Though Volosov struggled to render a lot of the financial language for which there was no clear Russian equivalent at the time, that Russophone readers seem to prefer *The Financier* more than American readers may have something to do with the elegance of the translation. For American literary critics—especially in the early and middle part of the twentieth century—Dreiser’s ungainly prose was a serious problem. And reviews from US-based readers do indeed have a much higher propensity to complain about the style. Says one three-star reviewer in 2011, “Dreiser’s words wear hobnailed boots, often with the laces untied. He has good ideas but expresses them with a battering ram. He also has a strangely detached, condescending outlook on his characters, which seems a shame, since he comes up with some damned good ones.”⁸ A two-star reviewer from 2018 says, “Ponderous, tortuous writing style made it impossible for me to enjoy this book. There is a great story in there somewhere but it needed to be told by someone else.”

Even English-language reviewers who enjoy the book seem to feel compelled to make allowances for Dreiser’s style. One five-star reviewer, ~~Jenny~~, cautions that “This book is not for everyone. Dreiser as an author is not for

14 • From Anticapitalist Polemic to Novel of Success

everyone. His language is muddy and harsh, you can see the roots of his writing as a journalist.” Another consists entirely of a quote from Edward Abbey: “Dreiser the Magnificent: Prose like a glacier of truth, massive, powerful and beautiful; shall not slide easily, oilily, oozily down the tender gullets of twiddling aesthetes, no; but rather, hammers on the door of the mind like Beethoven knocking, thunders, silences with glory, soaked in awe.”⁹

Russian-language reviewers seem to have far less trouble. Often conflating the prose of Volosov with Dreiser himself, they praise the writing and insert favorite quotations from the Russian translation. Says one five-star reviewer following a long passage on family life, “Какие правильные слова! Никто не смог бы сказать лучше, чем Драйзер!” [What true words! No one could say it better than Dreiser!]. Some readers—usually multilingual ones—are a bit more sophisticated. One Kiev-based reviewer on Goodreads with reviews in Russian, Ukrainian, and English begins her critique of *The Financier* by specifying that she opted to read Dreiser in Russian and mentions a key difference between the Russian and English versions: “Мои желания - прежде всего, -говорил он. Интересно, что в оригинале фраза звучит ‘I satisfy myself,’ что звучит куда менее возмутительно.” (“My desires are first,” he said. It’s interesting that the original phrase is, “I satisfy myself,” which sounds much less outrageous.)

Indeed, there are a few points where Volosov opts for translations that are more intense or emotionally charged than the English text. For example, as one of my students pointed out, in the critical opening episode in which the young Frank Cowperwood sees a lobster slowly feeding on a squid in a tank in front of a store, the translator makes choices that highlight the status of the squid as victim and the lobster as aggressor. For the squid, Volosov chooses a feminine noun—*каракатница*, which actually means “cuttlefish”—rather than the masculine *каракатица*. The lobster, on the other hand, is translated using the masculine *омар*. This leverages gender stereotypes to render the squid the weaker, more vulnerable party. The translator also uses diminutives when referring to things associated with the squid: *чёрный мешочек* (“little ink-bag”) or *серпильное облачко* (“a little cloud of ink”). At the moment when Dreiser says that the squid

“was not quick enough,” the translator says, “Каракатице не хватало изворотливости,” which means, “The cuttlefish didn’t have enough shrewdness,” which imparts human qualities on these creatures (Dreiser 1986, 6). These choices seem to blunt and simplify the moral stakes of this scene. Whereas Dreiser renders the encounter like a nature documentary, applying no particular judgment to the natural processes he depicts, Volosov seems to lean more in the direction of presenting the squid as the hapless victim and the lobster as powerful exploiter. At the very least, we can say that the translator takes meaning that is implicit in Dreiser’s wording and intensifies it, rendering a stronger, more poignant impression. This may at least in part account for the difference in the way Russophones and Anglophones experience the novel.

FRANK COWPERWOOD AS MODEL OF SUCCESS

These different experiences are documented in the online reviews. In fact, attitudes toward the novel’s style and subject matter are so distinct that after some time, I could identify post-Soviet writers of English-language reviews based on way they described Frank Cowperwood. As a representative example, I quote this five-star review from a reader in Chisinau, Moldova in full:

This book has changed my view about the political and financial world. Based on history facts (like Civil war of that time), the plot truly impressed me, with detailed descriptions and well built personage’s archetypes. Also I was inspired of the protagonist Frank Cowperwood, that was always self-confident and open minded. His methods of acting, helped me to understand that I must fight for my interests in life, despite all the impediments and barriers, in order to accomplish goals, dreams and success. I recommend this book to everyone who wants to have an idea about the financial world and is interested to know a story about a successful man.

As is typical of readers from this region, the reviewer seems to view Cowperwood as a kind of role model. As I show in this section, CIS

16 • From Anticapitalist Polemic to Novel of Success

reviewers are far more likely than US-based reviewers to express sincere admiration for the hero, specifically citing—as this reader does—his self-confidence and penchant for overcoming obstacles to achieve his goals. US-based readers tend to regard him somewhat more cynically.

Indicative of this trend is the way that references to Cowperwood's confidence and resilience come up again and again in Russian-language reviews. One Livelib reviewer says aptly, “Фрэнк Купервуд не человек, а железо.” (Frank Cowperwood is not a man, but iron.) And like many other readers in this sample, what she especially admires is that despite all of his setbacks, he maintains his optimism and drive to succeed: “И он верит в то, что всё у него получится. И делает всё для этого. Такой уверенности в себе...стоит только позавидовать.” (And he believes that everything will work out for him. And it does. Such self-confidence. . .one can only envy.) Envy and a desire to emulate the character are other frequent themes. Another Goodreads user says that the reader cannot help but fall in love with Frank, that he shows “Насколько важно быть стойким и хладнокровным, уметь держать себя и жить в соответствии со своими идеалами и принципами.” (How important it is to be persistent and calm, to be able to behave oneself and live in accordance with one's ideals and principles.)

Knowing the character—who is jailed at the end of the novel for abusing public funds in a financial scheme and abandons his wife and children to pursue an affair with a much younger woman—this praise for Cowperwood might seem somewhat disturbing, suggesting the sort of toxic fandom one sees for certain pop culture figures like Tony Soprano. But I think there are two important things one needs to understand to place these reactions into their proper context. The first is that the practice of looking at a literary text as a guide to life and to literary characters as role models is deeply embedded in Russophone—and therefore post-Soviet—culture. As Gilburd (2018) notes: “People [in the Soviet Union] were encouraged to shape their lives according to fictional exemplars—a key dictum of socialist realism and a time-honored practice since the nineteenth century, when readers had indeed lived and loved as creative literature dictated” (103). Of course, most American literature teachers are accustomed to

having students who look for a kind of “lesson” in every assigned novel, and we tend to think of this as a naive, uncritical attitude. But in Russia and countries that share its literary inheritance, it appears to be one of the ways in which individuals are socialized to experience literature.

The other important piece of context is highlighted in the next sentence in the Goodreads review just quoted: “Советскому человеку сложно понять кредо: «Мои желания превыше всего». Является ли это нездоровым эгоизмом или целью каждого уверенного и целеустремленного человека?” (It is difficult for a Soviet person to understand the creed, “My desires are above all.” Is this an unhealthy egotism or the goal of every confident and goal-driven person?) This reviewer, it should be noted, reports his age as 27 as of December 2019, too young to have had any personal experience with the Soviet system. Nevertheless, it speaks to a hunger in the post-Soviet space for models of individualism even in the presence of moral ambiguity. CIS-based reviewers sometimes compare Cowperwood to the characters of Ayn Rand (US-based reviewers tend to refer to Nietzsche). A Goodreads reviewer who does not report his location but who goes by a Slavic name says, “Fantastic. This is where Ayn Rand ideas started.” A Livelib reviewer also mentions Rand and her “разумно-эгоистичных героев” (enlightened egoist heroes). Of course, it is not uncommon to find young Americans who harbor a naive infatuation with objectivism and libertarianism, but in Rand’s own home country, it has a somewhat different character. I am reminded of a conversation I had with one student who described Ayn Rand as a revelation for him, a gay teenager in a small village where he was constantly bullied and told by his family that leaving the village to pursue education was a selfish choice. You also hear this from young women who are under considerable familial pressure to set aside a career for the sake of having children. In a context in which certain adolescent desires coded as normal and healthy in the US or Western Europe are instead coded as “egoism,” a philosophy that celebrates self-gratification has an understandable appeal. It is with this in mind that I read the earlier comment that Cowperwood helped a young reviewer understand that “I must fight for my interests in life.” This may not be about emulating Cowperwood’s antisocial tendencies but about being true to oneself in the face of social pressure.

18 • From Anticapitalist Polemic to Novel of Success

It is not as if these readers do not understand the nature of Frank's crimes. Rather, they appreciate him in all his moral ambiguity and are able to recognize the ways in which he goes wrong. A 2014 Goodreads reviewer says of the novel: "Прекрасная история волевого и сильного человека. Хотя погоня за богатством, это погоня за ветром, поэтому мудрым Фрэнка Каупервуда я назвать не могу, а умным он безусловно является!" (A beautiful story about a willful and strong man. However, the pursuit of wealth is the pursuit of the wind, so I can't call Frank Cowperwood wise, but he certainly is smart.) Meanwhile, another writer enumerates the protagonist's misdeeds—appropriating government funds, "при этом позабыв о морали, о сострадании, простой человеческой доброте" (while forgetting about morality, compassion and simple human kindness)—but at the same time admiring his "стойкость духа и вера в хорошее и прекрасное будущее, что позволяло ему не падать духом и приспосабливало его к любым жизненным ситуациям и трудностям, умение их преодолеть" (perseverance of spirit and faith in a good and beautiful future, which allowed him not to fall in spirit and enabled him to overcome any life situations and difficulties). What is important to many readers is that Cowperwood makes them feel something, be it love, hate, or both. Says one Livelib reviewer,

Вот умеет Драйзер так расписать героя, что равнодушным остаться просто нельзя. Можешь его сначала любить, но потом вся грязь, все пороки и недостатки выйдут наружу и уже смотришь, а герой тот еще молодец. Фрэнк Алджернон Каупервуд как раз из этой басни. Он - олицетворение американской мечты, сводившей с ума миллионы.

[Dreiser knows how to write heroes about whom it is impossible to be indifferent. You can love him from the beginning, but then all the filth, vice, and insufficiency appear and you see it, but the hero is still a fine fellow. Frank Algernon Cowperwood is exactly like someone from a fable. He is the embodiment of the American dream, the crazed millionaire.]

And even this qualified praise is not universal. Though negative reviews of the book are rarer among the CIS readers, the few among them will cite

either the mind-numbing financial details or Frank himself, particularly the way he treats women, as reasons for disliking it. One two-star Goodreads review comments that “когда он попал в тюрьму, я не испытала ни капли жалости” (I didn’t feel a drop of pity when he went to prison) and doubts whether Cowperwood really loved Aileen Butler, his youthful paramour. Meanwhile, a Livelib reviewer says, “Каупервуд из-за своего отношения к жене сразу опустил в моих глазах, и даже после понесённого наказания так и остался для меня ‘не хорошим человеком.’” (Cowperwood has diminished in my eyes because of his attitudes toward women, and even after the incurred punishment, he remained for me a “bad man.”) Even some positive reviewers have serious problems with the gender relations of the novel, whether they attribute them to the character or to the author. Says one Goodreads user, “Но, блин, это уже четвёртый роман, который я читаю у Драйзера. Неужели все 12 томов творчества ТД завязаны на деньгах, внебрачных связях и супружеской измене?” (But damn, this is the fourth novel I have read by Dreiser. Is it possible that all 12 volumes of TD’s work are connected to money, extramarital affairs and adultery?) Yes, it is possible indeed.

THE BIBLE OF CAPITALISM

Some readers of *The Financier* merely tolerate the abundance of financial details in the novel, while for others, it is the entire point. This is true to some degree of both US and CIS-based readers; however, readers in the United States are the ones who are most likely to connect Cowperwood’s financial machinations to contemporary politics. As Illinois-based reviewer *Jen* says, “It was interesting to me to note how often the descriptions of financial shenanigans sounded sadly current. It seems that Frank Cowperwood would feel pretty comfortable hanging out with today’s bankers.” A reader from New York makes the explicit connection to the 2008 financial crisis: “It [the novel] burns even brighter for an America that has suffered the terrible financial collapse of 2008.” Another user from Chicago makes the same connection: “I keep reflecting on how like Frank Cowperwood mainstream America acted in the run-up to the 2008 real

20 • From Anticapitalist Polemic to Novel of Success

estate bubble.” And while users all over refer to the portrayals of capitalism in this novel, I have only found American reviewers who seem to appreciate it first and foremost as a critique of it. Another US-based reviewer considers the book to be “as damning an indictment of capitalism as anyone in the capitalism-damning racket could possibly want.”

Reviews from the CIS are largely depoliticized, and where political themes are noted, they tend to be related to government corruption, an issue that is likely of greater salience to a contemporary audience in this region. In fact, the highest-rated review of *The Financier* on Livelib misattributes the censorship of Dreiser to his depiction of the malfeasance of city officials in Philadelphia: “И необычайная смелость писателя! Ведь описывать в книге, пусть даже и художественной, правительственные махинации - это очень рискованный поступок. Не зря же “Финансиста” какое-то время запрещали издавать в США.” (Oh the unusual courage of the writer! After all, to write in a book, even a work of art, about the machinations of the government is a very risky act. Not in vain was ‘The Financier’ forbidden to be published for some time in the USA.)¹⁰

When Russophone reviewers do speak of the financial intrigues, it is either with boredom or out of a sincere desire to learn. A few reviewers even mention reading this book out of their own interest in pursuing the study of economics and finance. One Livelib user, who read the book for the second time in an economic theory course, says the book “подробно описывается эпоха капитализма в США конца 19 века, так сказать, наглядный пример чистого рынка” (minutely describes the epoch of capitalism in the USA at the end of the nineteenth century, so to speak, a clear example of a pure market). A Goodreads reviewer from Tashkent recommends the novel (in English) as “remarkably good reading for anyone who possesses even a little interest in finance, stock marketing, and politics.” Meanwhile, another Livelib reader recommends the book to aspiring entrepreneurs and goes on to explain what lessons about the financial system it has to offer:

Есть подозрение, что основные составляющие делового успеха, а именно: наличие стартового капитала, связей во властных структурах, деловой

хватки, умение использовать существующие законы с выгодой для себя (а где-то и вовсе пренебрегать ими) - остались неизменными.

[There is a suspicion that the main components of business success have remained unchanged, namely: the availability of start-up capital, connections to the structures of power, business acumen, and the intelligence to use the existing laws and advantages for oneself (and in some places to neglect them).]

Going beyond reading the novel for its insights into an earlier stage of finance capitalism, some users go so far as to classify it as motivational literature. For example, one Livelib user explicitly compares this novel to a self-help book, saying

Задолго до того, как появились мотивирующие книги по саморазвитию и личностному росту, Теодор Драйзер написал отличный трактат по теме в форме художественного романа. Это такая классика жанра, Библия ищущих толчка в нужном направлении.

[Long before the appearance of motivational books about self-improvement and personal growth, Theodore Dreiser wrote an excellent treatise on the subject in the form of a belletristic novel. This is a classic of the genre, a Bible for those who seek to go in the right direction.]

Much as these users see Frank as a kind of ambiguous model for their own lives, they consider the novel itself a guide to being successful in business.

However, the way most readers engage with the world of finance as represented in the book is closely tied to the way in which they relate to Frank. Thus, while acknowledging the amorality of finance, they also revel in its many attractions. If, as David-Fox argues, Soviet critics tended to see only the more pro-communist half of the “Two Dreisers,” these modern readers would seem to appreciate the author’s ambivalence quite intuitively. In naming the three Cowperwood novels “The Trilogy of Desire,” Dreiser, of course, was explicitly connecting his protagonist’s lust for money and success with his sensualism and pursuit of young women. It therefore seems

22 • From Anticapitalist Polemic to Novel of Success

noteworthy that reviewers—the vast majority of them female—describe finance in terms of its sensual pleasures. As one Livelib reviewer says,

Как же я обожаю этот суматошный мир финансов ещё с ‘Волка с Уолл-стрит’. Невероятные амбиции, стук молоточков и удары гонга, возвещающие о крахе ещё одной фирмы и бесконечная бе лишь с одной целью-заработать побольше бабла из любого дела.

[Since *The Wolf of Wall Street*, I have adored this hectic world of finance. Incredible ambitions, the knock of hammers and the blows of a gong, announcing the collapse of yet another company, and the endless pursuit of one goal: to earn more dough by any means.]

This user reports that she is a female born in 2002, which makes this review read a bit differently than if it were written by man in his 30s. Indeed, the vaguely erotic appeal of finance may at least partially lie in the opportunity for a kind of literary cross-dressing, of getting to experience the world of finance from the perspective of an entitled male. A 25-year old woman on Livelib describes always thinking of the book as a “male” novel, but “Читая этот «мужской» роман мне очень хотелось бы походить на Фрэнка, и пусть его методы нечестные, пусть он пожирал, как акула других.” (Reading this “male” novel, I really want to be like Frank, even though his methods are dishonest, even though he devoured others like a shark.) Like Volosov’s gendered translation choices, there is a tendency here to equate masculinity with self-sufficiency as well as the aggression required to succeed in the market.

But just as readers wrestle with the contradictions of Frank’s character, so too they wrestle with the erotics and ethics of making money. For some, certainly, the appeal of business success is unambiguous. A female entrepreneur from Kiev describes Frank as the “воплощение моего представления о богатых, успешных людях” (the embodiment of my idea of rich successful people) and says that “Путь к миллионам может пройти только такой жесткий, эгоистичный, волевой, целеустремленный человек, как Каупервуд.” (The way to millions may only be walked by such

a tough, egotistical and strong-willed, purposeful person as Cowperwood. And I think he used absolutely normal ways to achieve his goals.) But for many others, this book provides a context in which to consider the many dangers that lie ahead for anyone embarking on a financial venture. Another female reader says, “На мой взгляд, книга о том, как легко потерять чувство меры и равновесия в результате относительно лёгкого успеха.” (In my view, this book is about how easy it is to lose one’s sense of proportion and balance as a result of relatively easy success.) Meanwhile, another user reads it less as a guide to becoming Cowperwood and more as a tutorial in how to deal with people like him: “Такой человек не будет другим” (Such a person will never be otherwise).

CONCLUSION: COMING TO TERMS WITH CAPITALIST RUSSIA

These reviews suggest that *The Financier*, imported in the 1920s and shared with Russophone readers for its anticapitalist themes, is now read in the former Soviet Union largely as a novel about personal success. Indeed, if anybody is reading this book as a screed against capitalism, they would seem to be situated in the United States. But the lessons modern-day Russophone readers take from this novel are varied, with some readers adoring Frank Cowperwood as the model of a self-made millionaire and others recognizing both his undesirable qualities and the moral dangers of the world in which he operates. While some look to him as a guide to their own behavior or as an opportunity to indulge in fantasy, others struggle with him along with their own ethical orientation toward the world of markets. The former economics institute student who read the book three times describes a fairly typical journey, adoring Frank Cowperwood upon her first youthful encounter with him, hating his egotism upon the second, and finally,

Прочитав третий раз, я поняла, что повзрослела, и теперь терпимее отношусь к Фрэнку, хотя и не считаю его примером для подражания. Это просто человек, живущий здесь, сейчас и только для себя... Что ж. Это его право. И это его выбор. Так же как у меня есть право сделать другой выбор. Но книгу читать стоит обязательно.

24 ● From Anticapitalist Polemic to Novel of Success

[Reading it for the third time, I realized that I have matured, and I am now more tolerant of Frank, even though I don't consider him an example for imitation. This is just a person living here, now, only for himself. . . Well, that's his right. That's his choice. And I have the right to make a different choice. But reading this book remains obligatory.]

It is tempting to map this reader's three encounters with Cowperwood onto the broader post-Soviet transition: from exuberance toward the market to disillusionment to nuance. The enduring popularity of *The Financier* in this region may therefore indeed be an outgrowth of the need for cultural resources to help people cope with new capitalist realities.

Having taught Russian economics students for almost seven years now, I have come to appreciate one important difference between the business cultures here and in the United States: American business is a mythology, saturated with stories, heroes, and supervillains. From Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* to Horatio Alger stories to Tony Robbins and the films of Martin Scorsese, stories about making money, about the vicissitudes of success, about the moral compromises involved and the dangers of losing one's humanity in pursuit of a fortune are deeply embedded in American culture and in the way young Americans structure their own aspirational fantasies. In the former Soviet Union, there is a decided lack of native cultural resources for dealing with the trials, and truthfully, traumas of the transition to market capitalism. And I would suggest that Dreiser's long history of travel and translation in this part of the world has helped fill that void. Though an import from the United States, it was thoroughly Sovietized during the twentieth century, enough to make it feel as much a part of Russophone culture as it is a part of American culture. One student has described *The Financier* to me as "the Bible of Capitalism," an appellation that might make the author turn in his grave. But the Bible is itself full of examples that we are not meant to emulate. Rather, like all mythologies, it is a way of discovering and explaining our place in a universe.



NOTES

1. I owe tremendous thanks to my colleagues and students at the New Economic School and the Higher School of Economics for their assistance with this project. In particular, I wish to thank the participants in the course Theodore Dreiser in International Perspective during the Spring of 2016, particularly Anastasia Gonotskaya, Ilya Markin, Kirill Ionov, Maxim Alekseev, Vladimir Mochalov, and Viktor Tronin, all of whom helped identify key issues in the English to Russian translation of *The Financier*. Natasha Sarana introduced me to the “Internationalnaya Literatura” project and facilitated meetings with Americanists in Moscow. I would also like to thank Stephanie Walton for her assistance with the data visualizations.
All translations are mine. The title of this essay by Yury Kovalev, “Теодор Драйзер «открывает Америку»” (Theodore Dreiser discovers America) is a reference to Vladimir Mayakovsky’s poem “Моё открытие Америки” (“My Discovery of America”), relating his own journey to the United States in 1925. The Russian verb открывать, however, also means to open, reveal, or uncover, so this title should be understood as a piece of wordplay.
2. On the “Great Experiment” and efforts to win over intellectuals like Dreiser, see David-Fox (2011). For examples of Soviet criticism, see chapter 12 of Baturin (1975) and Zaslurskiy (1977). David-Fox calls *Dreiser Looks at Russia* “a hastily written, poorly organized account, based partly on VOKS [Soviet] materials and highlighting political and social aspects of the Soviet system on which the writer was poorly equipped to comment” (2011, 143). Ruth Kennell, a young American Communist who served as Dreiser’s private secretary (at the behest of his hosts) and lover during his trip, describes their bitter falling out over her criticisms of his book in her own account of Dreiser’s journey (1969). The unexpurgated diary, published in a 2000 scholarly edition by Thomas Riggio and James L. West, is far more interesting and revealing.
3. The scholarly society devoted to Dreiser’s work.
4. Created in 1991, the CIS includes nine member states (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), two associate members (Turkmenistan and Ukraine), and one former member (Georgia, which exited following the war with Russia in 2008).
5. This summation does not account for the handful of users with Slavic usernames located in the United States. I do not attempt to deal with the ambiguity here because the number of cases is small, and it is impossible to determine based on public data the relationship of the user to the larger post-Soviet diaspora (time of immigration, connectedness to Eastern European/Central Asian culture, etc.). Suffice it to say, my analysis probably undercounts the CIS share of the reviews here.
6. For a cogent summary of Dreiser’s evolving critical reputation, see Pizer (2000). In a nutshell, Dreiser’s writing style and subject matter were rejected first by the “Genteel

26 • From Anticapitalist Polemic to Novel of Success

Tradition” of the early twentieth century and then by New Critics, with their prioritization of form and structure. Throughout his career, the author also had prominent defenders, including H. L. Mencken, Sherwood Anderson, and F. O. Matthiessen, who argued that the ungainliness of Dreiser’s prose was redeemed by his powerful depiction of social themes. In his essay “Reality in America,” Lionel Trilling (originally published in 1950) reframes the debate by identifying Dreiser with precisely the literary impulses his champions positioned him against: “If we are to talk of bookishness, it is Dreiser who is bookish; he is precisely literary in the bad sense; he is full of flowers of rhetoric and shines with paste gems; at a hundred points his diction is not only genteel but fancy” (2012, 15–16). In the intervening decades, literary critics have largely moved on from this question, but as we shall see, it is still not uncommon for readers to complain about Dreiser’s style.

7. Kovalev is referring to F. O. Matthiessen’s *Theodore Dreiser* (1951).
8. Ethical standards for citing online reviewers are still in the process of being formed. I follow the example of Driscoll and Rehberg Sedo (2018) in choosing to quote reviewers anonymously, the rationale being that in spite of the public nature of these reviews, the writers likely never envisioned their words being used for academic research.
9. The original quote is from Edward Abbey, *Confessions of a Barbarian: Selections from the Journals of Edward Abbey*.
10. In fact, *The Financier* was never suppressed. Rather, it was *The “Genius”* that fell afoul of the Comstock laws for its frank depictions of sex. *The Titan* was also dropped by its original publisher for similar reasons.

REFERENCES

- Allington, D. 2016. “Power to the Reader” or ‘Degradation of Literary Taste’? Professional Critics and Amazon Customers as Reviewers of *The Inheritance of Loss*. *Language and Literature: International Journal of Stylistics* 25, no. 3: 254–78.
- Angemeer, Alicia. 2012. Reading the Other and Ourselves: An Interpretive Study of Amazon.com Reviews on Bestsellers About Muslims. Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh.
- Baturin, S. S. 1975. *Dreiser*. Moscow: Molodaya Gvardia.
- Chilton, Myles. 2016. *English Studies Beyond the “Center”: Teaching Literature and the Future of Global English*. New York: Routledge.
- Damrosch, David. 2003. *What Is World Literature?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- David-Fox, Michael. 2011. *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–41*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dreiser, Theodore. 1986. *The Financier*, trans. Mark Volosov. Moscow: Leninizdat.
- . 1996. *Dreiser’s Russian Diary*, ed. James, L. W. West and P. Riggio Thomas. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Driscoll, Beth; and DeNel Rehberg Sedo. 2018. Faraway, So Close: Seeing the Intimacy in Goodreads Reviews. *Qualitative Inquiry* 25, no. 3: 248–59.

- Gilburd, Eleonory. 2018. *To See Paris and Die: The Soviet Lives of Western Culture*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Gupta, Suman. 2009. *Globalization and Literature*. London: Polity Press.
- Gutjahr, Paul C. 2002. No Longer Left Behind: Amazon.com, Reader Response, and the Changing Fortunes of the Christian Novel in America. *Book History* 5, no. 1: 209–36.
- Heller, Dana. 2002. Salesman in Moscow. In *The Futures of American Studies*, ed. Donald Pease and Robyn Wiegman, 183–210. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Kennell, Ruth. 1969. *Theodore Dreiser and the Soviet Union: 1927–45*. New York: International Publishers.
- Kovalev, Yury V. 1987. Теодор Драйзер открывает Америку [Theodore Dreiser Discovers America]. *Afterword to Финансист [The Financier]* by Theodore Dreiser, 542–57. Leningrad: Leninizdat.
- Murray, Simone. 2018. *The Digital Literary Sphere: Reading, Writing, and Selling Books in the Internet Era*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Panova, O. Y; and S. I. Panov. 2015. Послесловие к предисловию: материалы к истории (не) издания Т. Драйзера в СССР [Afterword and Foreword: Materials and History on the (Non)publication of T. Dreiser in the USSR]. *Новые российские гуманитарные исследования [New Russian Research in the Humanities]* 10. <http://www.nrgumis.ru/articles/1957/>.
- Pizer, Donald. 2000. “Dreiser’s Critical Reputation.” Penn Libraries Dreiser Web Source. <http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/dreiser/tdcr.cfm>.
- Radway, Janice. 1984. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Rowberry, Simon Peter. 2016. Commonplacing the Public Domain: Reading the Classics Socially on Kindle. *Language and Literature: International Journal of Stylistics* 25, no. 3: 211–25.
- Trilling, Lionel. 2012. *The Liberal Imagination*. New York: NYRB Classics.
- Zasurskiy, Y. N. 1977. Теодор Драйзер [Theodore Dreiser]. Moscow: Moscow Izdatelstvo.



L. ASHLEY SQUIRES holds a PhD from the University of Texas at Austin and serves as an Assistant Professor of Humanities and Languages at the New Economic School in Moscow, Russia. Her research and teaching interests include the intersections between fin de siècle American literature and religious history, the international reception of American literature, and the digital humanities. She is the author of *Healing the Nation: Literature, Progress, and Christian Science* (2017) as well as articles in such journals as *Book History*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, and *Studies in the Novel*.

