previous scholars' descriptions of other Petrashevtsy as atheists: did they emulate the "merchants," or does she dispute their atheism, as she does Herzen's?

The final section, "Two Modes of Living without God," concludes with Dmitrii Pisarev, whose thorough critique of religion in the early 1860s led to an atheism beyond doubt. A nihilist, Pisarev urged readers to accept life's meaninglessness and to live without ideals, which he deemed uniformly illusory. But shortly before his premature death, Frede writes, Pisarev, as the result of falling in love, "came to embrace 'doubt' as the only legitimate stance a person can take" (182). Here one would infer that he retreated from atheism to agnosticism, but soon we learn that although Pisarev now espoused a number of ideals, "the only question about which he never expressed any hesitation was the non-existence of God" (183). Moreover, Frede adopts Herzen's view that Pisarev's doubt strongly resembled his own in the 1830s and 1840s. For Herzen, the observation resembles his claim to have been an atheist early on. But for Frede, who argues that he hadn't, doesn't agreeing with him amount to questioning the centrality of the God question for radicals' worldviews?

By the conclusion, Frede has softened her assertion of this centrality, arguing only that religious questions were always intertwined with social and political ones. Still, this claim seems exaggerated. Historians usually portray the radicals' concerns as less abstract and essentially secular: Russia's identity, its historical role, and its future; who is to blame for injustice, and what is to be done about it; and so on. Under autocracy, their positions on these issues may have required doubt and even godlessness, but few historians claim that theology itself was a central concern. Frede herself writes that atheism "was less a statement about the status of God than it was a commentary on the status of educated people in an authoritarian state that sought ever more forcefully to regulate the opinions and beliefs of its subjects" (15). This seems at odds with her desire to emphasize the inherent anguish of intellectuals' turning against belief and resolving to live without God.

It would be unfair to say that Frede is entirely unconvincing in her interpretation of Russian radicals' intellectual journey and the role of doubt and unbelief in it, however. Frequently, her sources are compelling and moving, her arguments insightful, and her narrative fascinating. But the book would have benefitted from more theoretical, methodological, and comparative discussions of atheism, the challenge of identifying it in history (especially in heavily censored societies), and its relationship to the broader phenomenon of secularization, which recent scholars are careful to distinguish from unbelief. Most importantly, to win readers over to what seem such highly revisionist views demands more direct engagement with competing interpretations than Frede provides.

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Murder Most Russian: True Crime and Punishment in Late Imperial Russia. By Louise McReynolds. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013. xiv, 274 pp. Notes. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. $35.00 hard bound.

Louise McReynolds's latest work reinforces her position as an important voice in scholarship on late imperial Russian culture and society. *Murder Most Russian* explores the relationships between crime fiction, sensational real-life murder trials, and justice in the context of the transition to modernity after the Great Reforms. Presenting Fedor Dostoevskii's *Crime and Punishment* and Lev Tolstoi's "The Kreutzer Sonata" as a foundation for understanding the Russian outlook on crime, McReynolds

explores how such ideas shaped and were shaped by jury trials, addressing attitudes toward the autocracy, gender roles, and concepts of guilt and justice. She argues that ideas of justice developed in a uniquely Russian manner, whereby arrest and conviction were unnecessary measures of punishment, and that sensational trials provided a forum in which to challenge autocratic rule and subvert tsarist authority. Exploring the multiple discourses that surrounded these fin-de-siècle murder trials as well as the public's reactions to them, McReynolds emphasizes the turbulence of the Russian experience of modernity.

Murder Most Russian describes the postreform development of the jury system and its various participants—police, investigators, professional experts, procurators, defense lawyers (*zashchitniki*), the accused (*neschastnye*), and the jury itself—providing the context for understanding the significance of such sensational trials. McReynolds finds that defense lawyers increasingly separated action from intent, focusing on the internal conditions (psychological or physiological) of the criminal, and juries frequently acquitted defendants who, although admittedly guilty of having committed the crime, could not be held responsible for it. In this way, juries asserted their own sense of right and wrong, which often diverged from basic liberal concepts of guilt and innocence. McReynolds highlights the importance of legal professionals—criminologists, psychiatrists, and forensic specialists—in shifting the focus of criminal trials from the crime to the criminal. She argues that this development echoed the era's larger debates about volunteerism and determinism, and that through their acquittals juries critiqued the autocracy for creating conditions in which individuals were unable to exercise free will and thus take personal responsibility. The jury trial also seems like a potential avenue of discussion regarding the development of Russian civil society, though the book does not engage in this debate.

McReynolds shines, however, in her discussions of the interrelationships between true crime and crime fiction. She illustrates effectively the ways that crime writers incorporated real trials into their narratives, revealing the grip these cases had on the popular imagination. She also highlights a unique element of Russian crime novels, namely that the guilty party did not necessarily have to answer to the law, as a point of overlap between truth and fiction. Indeed, she argues that the ambiguities in detective stories' outcomes revealed little enthusiasm for or commitment to the status quo, hinting that a revolutionary mentality was well developed in Russian popular culture before World War I. Furthermore, McReynolds situates her discussion in a broader European context, analyzing the Russian versions of popular detective fiction heroes, such as Sherlock Holmes and Nat Pinkerton. She draws on the sensational case of Mariia Tarnovskaia, who was tried for the murder of her fiancé in Italy, to illustrate the contrast between Russian and European views of justice. Here, McReynolds shows how the discourses of national identity surrounding the trial reveal European perceptions of Russians as racially inferior and barbaric. Moreover, McReynolds argues that the gendered dimension of sensational criminal cases suggests a repudiation of patriarchy along with autocracy: women became murder victims when they challenged the constraints of the patriarchal system by asserting their own desires, as the men who killed them had been unable to become strong patriarchs because the state hindered their individual development. Ultimately, then, true crime and crime fiction challenged the authority of the autocratic state and contributed to revolution.

Murder Most Russian seeks to explain popular culture's potential to subvert autocratic authority. Although she seems hesitant to state her arguments clearly, and the links between sensational trials and arguments are sometimes tenuous, McReynolds successfully exposes how the multiple discourses surrounding sensational trials contributed to social and cultural attitudes. Unfortunately, the footnotes are sparse

and abbreviated; moreover, the volume lacks a bibliography, and it contains multiple typographical errors and reveals poor editing of both the text and notes. Such cost-saving measures on the part of Cornell University Press do a disservice to the book and the profession. Despite these limitations, however, *Murder Most Russian* makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the development of the Russian legal system, the intersection of crime and culture, and the transition to modernity in late imperial Russia.

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Asie centrale: L'invention des frontières et l'héritage russo-soviétique. By Svetlana Gorshenina. Espaces et milieux. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2012. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Maps. €27.00, paper.

There seem to be as many definitions of "Central Asia" in the English language as there are countries that comprise the region. Part of the confusion comes from its relative isolation from the Atlantic world, not to mention the modern era's geopolitical upheavals. Indeed, the term itself is fairly recent, having originated with the Prussian geographer Alexander von Humboldt 150 years ago (as *Zentralasien*). While most demarcations include the five republics that constituted Soviet Central Asia, opinions differ widely about which other nations belong. What about Xinjiang? Afghanistan? Mongolia?

The area's imprecise geography is the subject of Svetlana Gorshenina's intriguing new book. As its subtitle suggests, the work focuses on the five newly independent "stans." Part *Ideengeschichte* and part political history, *Asie centrale* examines how Russians considered, conquered, and carved up their southern frontier colonies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While a substantial monograph, it is only part of a much broader inquiry that also addresses the history of the concept of Central Asia and its geographical representations, "from Tartary to Central Asia": "De la Tartarie à l'Asie centrale: La cœur d'un continent dans l'histoire des idées entre la cartographie et la géopolitique," her doctoral dissertation (Université Paris I and Université de Lausanne, 2007).

The book consists of three parts. The first substantial chapter, "Les projets russes de progression vers l'Asie," begins with a brief chronology of the tsarist absorption of Khiva, Bukhara, and Kokand. There are no surprises here, but Gorshenina then goes on to examine the ways various contemporaries thought about the area and, more important, how they explained and justified conquest. There were various reasons, from the "natural" and "spontaneous" to protection against hostile nomadic raids or beating Great Britain to the punch. She is careful to point out that there were dissenters, most notably the cautious foreign minister Prince Aleksandr Gorchakov.

Ultimately, Gorshenina suggests, there was something inevitable about the process: "Geography favors Russian expansion: Without any continental interruptions or major physical obstacles that might hamper the ambitions of the conquerors, Russian statesmen always think that they are expanding *their* borders rather than annexing the lands of *others*" (45). The fact that much of the area was inhabited by nomads whose notions of territory were very different from those of more settled polities greatly simplified the process. She concludes that imperial Russia was not so different in this respect from other large continental states facing less well-organized populations on their marches: "Without fail, the reasoning of military men on the frontier became a logic of the state [*une logique d'état*] in Russia in the same way that the British expanded in India or the Americans in their west" (186).

https://doi.org/10.5612/slavicreview.73.1.0196 Published online by Cambridge University Press