Americans "Away Off to the East": George Barr McCutcheon's *Graustark* and the American Ruritanian Romance, 1901-1924

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Abstract
George Barr McCutcheon's *Graustark* series was a popular American take on the "Ruritanian" genre. By comparing *Graustark* (1901), the first novel in the series, with *East of the Setting Sun* (1924), the second to last Graustark novel and the first to be written after World War I, we can see how a growing consciousness of America's relationship to Europe on the world stage shaped the fate of an imaginary jewel-box principality somewhere on the Balkan peninsula. By examining these novels in relation to Maria Todorova's theory of "balkanism," we can see how the Southeastern European setting allowed McCutcheon to cultivate an image of American masculinity that aligned with an evolving vision of American influence abroad.

Introduction

Is there anywhere left in the world where princes and princesses still reign benevolently over small pastoral countries, free from the pressures of industrialization and the banality of modern life? More importantly, is there any such country where the prince or princess might be looking for love in unexpected places? These were the questions that the reading public seemed to be asking in the 1890's and early 1900's in Britain and America, when a new genre was born and voraciously consumed. When the British barrister Anthony Hope wrote his fabulously successful novel *The Prisoner of Zenda* in 1894, he imagined a small German principality called Ruritania, which was similar enough to Britain that the novel's aristocratic hero Rudolf Rassendyll could be mistaken for a Ruritanian sovereign, but different enough that some serious swashbuckling could ensue.[1] Other novels, plays, musicals, and eventually films followed suit, until the name of Hope's imaginary pocket kingdom become shorthand for both a genre and a part of the world. Ruritanian romances, as these works are called, take place in small monarchies somewhere in the mists of Central and Eastern Europe, where time seems to move differently and love is in the air, especially if you are a plucky British or American traveller.

The American answer to Hope's Ruritania was an enormously popular series of six novels set in a little Balkan principality called Graustark. Written by George Barr McCutcheon during the first two decades of the twentieth century, the story of Graustark evolved during a critical period for international perception of the Balkans. How did this light fantasy genre contend with images of Southeastern Europe before and after World War I, and what can that tell us about the uses of the Balkans in the American imagination? By comparing *Graustark* (1901), the first novel in the series,

[1] Nicholas Daly, *Ruritania: A Cultural History, From the Prisoner of Zenda to the Princess Diaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 13.

with *East of the Setting Sun* (1924), the second to last Graustark novel and the first to be written after World War I, we can see how a an enormously popular romance constructed Southeastern Europe for American audiences at a decisive moment in time. In these works the Balkans function as an imaginative testing ground for the "civilizing" power of American masculinity, first by operating as a relatively blank slate with semi-medieval trappings, and then by utilizing racial and cultural ambiguity to accommodate the intruding realities of World War I.

The first major work on the history of Ruritanian romances, Vesna Goldsworthy's *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (1998), describes the genre as western literary exploitation of the Balkans. Goldsworthy argues that the British entertainment industry engaged in an "imaginative colonization" of Southeastern Europe by figuratively mining the region for narrative material.[2] This process created stereotypes which "have determined the outside world's reflex responses to the Balkans."[3] Her argument recalls Larry Wolff's exhaustive study of the western invention of Eastern Europe during the eighteenth century. In Wolff's account, travelogues, philosophical treatises, and fantasias about Eastern Europe allowed Western Europeans to craft a myth of progress by describing lands of "primitive backwardness" against which to measure themselves and their cultures.[4] While Wolff argues that the Enlightenment re-drew the map of Europe along an East to West (rather than North to South) axis, Goldsworthy argues that a new act of imaginative cartography occurred in the late nineteenth century when the rising popularity of Ruritanian fiction coincided with and reinforced an image of the Balkans as a distinct European region struggling against Ottoman control.[5] For the British creators of Balkan-themed entertainment, the newly imagined Balkans represented the opposite end of a spectrum of European-ness in which Britain was the most highly evolved ideal. The classic Ruritanian story, in which an English subject stumbles into the throne of a small Balkan principality, reinforced a British-centered world order.[6] Goldsworthy suggests that "the most indelible images of the Balkans" were, and continue to be, fictional.[7] As a result, the British response to crises in the region is informed by purely fictional ideas to a greater extent, Goldsworthy argues, than in areas of the world that the British Empire actually colonized.[8] By providing compelling evidence for the uses and abuses of Balkan signifiers in British popular culture, Goldsworthy makes the case for serious scholarly consideration of this seemingly light fiction.

Graustark, as the premier example of Ruritanian fiction in the United States, deserves study for the reasons Goldsworthy outlines, but it has received relatively little scholarly attention. Goldsworthy's focus on British literature prevents her from investigating how the genre translated to the United States during the same formative period for Balkan history. The only significant historical study of

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[2] Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 2-3.

[3] Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania,* 208.

[4] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 42.

[5] Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania,*11.

[6] Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania,* 69.

[7] Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania,* 10.

[8] Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania,* 211.

Graustark is contained in Nicholas Daly's *Ruritania: A Cultural History from The Prisoner of Zenda to the Princess Diaries* (2020). Whereas Goldsworthy's Ruritania is always framed as an exploitation of the Balkans, Daly sees Ruritanias as "heterotopias" of the societies that produce them; places where "everything is different and yet the same."[9] As a result, he is not interested in how McCutcheon's relationship to the Balkans evolved during a period in which Balkan stereotypes calcified. Instead, Daly sees Graustark functioning as "an inverted image of America."[10] This, he argues, is particularly true in later *Graustark* novels, in which the tone darkens and McCutcheon's fears of social movements at home manifest in the picturesque hills of Graustark.[11] While the United States was indeed in the throes of its first Red Scare when McCutcheon was writing *East of the Setting Sun*, and this is undoubtedly reflected in the novel, the advent of the Balkan Wars and World War I coincided with the *Graustark* series' period of publication, and as such the novels should also be considered within that context. How might *Graustark* both reflect developments in American culture, and also function as imaginative imperialism in the Balkans, as Goldsworthy suggests such fiction always must? We need a theoretical framework for understanding how the Western gaze falls on Southeastern Europe in order to answer this question.

"Balkanism," as defined by Maria Todorova in *Imagining the Balkans* (1995), traces the unique contours of western images of Southeastern Europe. Todorova defined balkanism as a western gaze looking at an unsettlingly different, definitely eastern and yet not quite opposite, variation within the white European type.[12] Todorova explicitly offers balkanism as an antidote to the misapplication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* to the Balkan context. For Todorova, orientalism is fundamentally about "opposition," whereas balkanism is fundamentally "a discourse about an imputed ambiguity."[13] Goldsworthy often remarks on the ambiguities of Balkan identity as seen through Ruritanian fiction, but she invokes Said by describing the British image of the Balkans as "a sequence of 'nesting orientalisms.'"[14] As K.E. Fleming points out, by relying on orientalism to frame her argument, Goldsworthy elides imaginative colonization and real colonization, when in fact the process of imaginative colonization is most interesting when viewed on its own, unique terms.[15] Although it appears useful at first glance, Fleming argues that it is inappropriate to apply orientalism to the Balkan context because the history of the Balkans is vastly different from that of the lands discussed in *Orientalism*.[16] Perhaps even more importantly, Said's work explicitly addresses a longstanding Western academic tradition, whereas a defining trait of balkanism is the lack of any real academic tradition, or even pretense of expertise.[17] Todorova, for her part, does not address Ruritanian romances, despite the fact that their themes of mistaken identity and love provide compelling examples of the balkanist relationship between self and not-quite-other. Todorova's concept, which

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[9] Daly, *Ruritania,* 6.
[10] Daly, *Ruritania,* 81.
[11] Daly, *Ruritania,* 78.
[12] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 17.
[13] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans,* 17.
[14] Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania,* 9.
[15] K.E. Fleming, "Orientalism, The Balkans, and Balkan Historiography," *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 4 (October 2000): 1223.
[16] Fleming, "Orientalism, The Balkans, and Balkan Historiography," 1222.
[17] Fleming, "Orientalism, The Balkans, and Balkan Historiography," 1224.

neither Daly nor Goldsworthy utilize, is thus an essential frame for reading *Graustark* in context, and *Graustark*, in turn, provides an excellent example of how balkanism unfolded in the United States for popular (rather than academic or political) audiences.

A fascination with masculinity is a key point of intersection between balkanism, turn of the century United States culture, and the *Graustark* series. In Todorova's formulation, masculinity is one of the dominant textures of balkanism. "Unlike the standard orientalist discourse, which resorts to metaphors of its object of study as female," she argues, "the balkanist discourse is singularly male."[18] Balkan men, often depicted as unkempt brigands, seem to exhibit an older, more "medieval" form of masculinity in balkanist texts, whereas Western European and American men, by contrast, embody civilization.[19] This motif is particularly relevant to McCutcheon's work because *Graustark* entered popular culture during a formative time for the development of American ideals of masculinity. Scholars such as Kristin Hoganson and Carol Bederman have argued that new images of masculinity dominated American culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that these images had a profound effect on the United States' international policy. Indeed, according to Bederman, "masculinity" as term for describing the aggregate display of male power was rarely used until after 1890.[20] A key figure in this process, of course, was Theodore Roosevelt, who Bederman discusses as an avatar of turn-of-the-century American manhood. Roosevelt advocated new forays into militaristic imperialism as the only way for the United States to prove its "virility" and advance the cause of civilization.[21] In Hoganson's argument, gender anxiety, what she calls "the renegotiation of male and female roles in the late nineteenth century," was so profound in this period that it helped to push the United States into the Spanish-American and Philippine-American wars.[22] Balkanism as a discourse of masculinity thus has particular resonance for the early twentieth century United States. If visions of masculinity were informing the American public's relationship to international affairs, then the representation of American versus Southeastern European masculinity in *Graustark* can provide insight into the role of balkanism in America's self-image.

Any discussion of balkanism and American masculinity is also necessarily a discussion about race. For turn of the century Americans, gendered ideals were linked to evolution, the frame through which many understood race. For imperialists like Roosevelt, asserting American masculinity overseas was the key to an evolutionary imperative that placed their version of white manhood at the pinnacle of civilization.[23] At the same time, racist fears of devolution and miscegenation contributed to the decline of overt military imperialism after the Philippine-American war. Hoganson argues that anti-imperialists successfully made the case that by having sexual encounters in the Philippines, American soldiers were endangering the purity of American bloodlines rather

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[18] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans,* 15.

[19] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans,* 15.

[20] Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 18.

[21] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization,* 171.

[22] Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 14.

[23] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization,* 195.

than furthering white supremacy.[24] In this intertwining discourse of race, masculinity, and international relations, images of Southeastern Europe occupied a unique space. Miglena Todorova argues that the popular press was actively litigating the whiteness of Southern and Eastern Europeans as the United States adjusted to a dramatic shift in immigration patterns between 1890 and 1920.[25] While nativists and eugenicists sought to bar these new immigrants, *National Geographic* saw Southeastern Europeans as capable of assimilation, thereby participating in the balkanist discourse of ambiguity by effectively classifying them as "in-between" people.[26] According to Maria Todorova, the core of balkanism's "ambiguity," and the most obvious characteristic that distinguishes it from orientalism, is the fact that it "treats the differences within one type."[27] In other words, balkanism is a discourse about otherness within whiteness. For a culture obsessed with evolution and race, the "in-between peoples" of the Balkans could provide a comparatively uncontroversial imaginary test for the civilizing influence of American manhood.

Due to its wild popularity, the *Graustark* series deserves to be considered as an important contributor to balkanist discourse in the United States. Nicholas Daly notes that *Graustark* was once so ubiquitous in the United States that "Graustarkian" could be used in place of "Ruritanian" to describe the entire genre of novels and plays that dabbled in imaginary Eastern European kingdoms.[28] Due to *Graustark*'s setting, which was more overtly Southeastern European than Hope's Ruritania, "Graustarkian" also specifically implied "Balkan." Even as late as 1931, a *New York Times* review of a similar novel declared, "Every book list must have its quota of Graustarkian novels," the formula for which had to include a "beautiful princess of a Balkan kingdom," a "youthful American who loves her," and, of course, "a happy ending."[29] Film versions of *Graustark* (1915 and 1925), *The Prince of Graustark* (1914) and *Beverly of Graustark* (1914 and 1926) helped Americans visualize the gold braid bedecked uniforms and flowing gowns of McCutcheon's invention, while encouraging continued sales of his books.[30] Although McCutcheon's first post World War I entry, *East of the Setting Sun* (1924), did not sell as well as his previous works, Daly notes that it was serialized in *The Saturday Evening Post* so it likely still enjoyed a sizable audience.[31] McCutcheon's obituary in 1928 reflected how important his work had been in representing the Balkans for an unfamiliar audience, noting that that McCutcheon's "mail had been flooded by readers who wanted to know how to reach the wholly imaginary place."[32] Although they are barely remembered today, the popularity of these works in their time suggests that they can offer important clues to the ways in which Americans imagined Southeastern Europe, and themselves in relation to it, in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Graustark (1901)

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[24] Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood,* 189.

[25] Miglena Todorova, "Imagining 'In-between' Peoples Across the Atlantic," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 19, no. 4 (December 2006): 398.

[26] Todorova, "Imagining 'In-between' Peoples," 401-402.

[27] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans,* 19.

[28] Daly, *Ruritania,* 3.

[29] "More Graustark," *New York Times*, July 12, 1931, BR4.

[30] Daly, *Ruritania,* 78.

[31] Daly*, Ruritania,* 95.

[32] "Geo. B. M'Cutcheon Dies at Luncheon," *New York Times,* October 24, 1928, 1.

Graustark (1901) introduced readers to a picturesque mountain country, where McCutcheon established plot beats that he would continue to access. The hero of *Graustark* is a handsome but directionless young American named Grenfall Lorry. On a train ride in the United States, Lorry becomes infatuated with a beautiful young woman who charms and puzzles him with her otherworldly air. She tells him that she is preparing to sail for her home country of Graustark, but she gives no other details. Unable to stop thinking about her, Lorry decides to journey to Europe where he reconnects with his jovial ex-pat friend Harry Anguish, and the two of them journey to Graustark together. Upon arrival they discover that the woman is none other than Yetive, Graustark's princess. She has often dreamed of Lorry, but she must marry the Prince of Axphain, a neighboring kingdom, in order to settle her country's debts. Lorry and Anguish gain her trust and that of the entire populace when they foil a plot to kidnap her by the Prince of Dawsbergen (yet another neighboring realm) who, like Lorry, yearns for Yetive's love. Unfortunately, things turn sour when the Prince of Dawsbergen frames Lorry for the murder of the Prince of Axphain. These trials end in happiness, however, when Anguish identifies the real murderer and Yetive decides to defy tradition by declaring her love for Lorry. At first the people are aghast at this potential change to the royal lineage, until one by one they succumb to the same logic: "Why not the bold, progressive, rich American?"[33] This break with tradition begins a pattern that McCutcheon sustained over *Graustark*'s sequels, nearly all of which see intermarriage between Americans and royal Graustarkians or Dawsbergians. The themes of love, mistaken identity, and the heroic acts of Americans in the face of regional conflicts were all common to the Graustarkian formula that audiences devoured.

The first entry in the *Graustark* series had a purely imaginary sense of place. When Lorry and Anguish arrive in Graustark, they discover a fairytale land that is untainted by any association with contemporary life in Southeastern Europe. There is no poverty, and peasants appear only in the background in brightly colored costumes. "The strange people, the queer buildings, the odd costumes and the air of antiquity" in Graustark fascinates McCutcheon's travelers.[34] Notably, there is little acknowledgement of the Ottoman legacy in the text, aside from an observation that the dining hall of the hotel where they are lodging was "a mixture of the oriental and the mediaeval."[35] This suggests that orientalism was not a major driver of McCutcheon's vision, and that future versus past was a more important axis for his initial approach to mild exoticism than east versus west. Throughout the book, medieval textures dominate over other signifiers. Maria Todorova notes that travel writers often associated the Balkans with the Middle Ages, but as McCutcheon himself had never traveled he may simply have been mapping common fantasy tropes on to a conveniently unknown region.[36] The threat of violence in Graustark also comes primarily from the world of medieval courtly romance, rather than ethnic, religious, or national conflict. Lorry and Anguish's greatest concern is the willingness of men from the region to engage in a duel for love. Anguish warns Lorry that they should be scrupulously respectful towards the women lest they "hatch up a duel or two" with local men who "seem to be fire-eaters."[37] Yetive herself functions as a

[33] George Barr McCutcheon, *Graustark* (Chicago: Herbert S. Stone and Company, 1901; Project Gutenberg, 2004), Epub edition, 549.
[34] McCutcheon, *Graustark,* 146.
[35] McCutcheon, *Graustark,* 152.
[36] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans,* 14.
[37] McCutcheon, *Graustark,* 170.

quintessential fairytale princess. As Goldsworthy notes, the princesses of these narratives generally follow a familiar pattern, in which they "add the glamour of monarchy to otherwise simple love stories, while, paradoxically, being able to behave like any ordinary person."[38] Yetive is "imperial" in a way that "forbid[s] the faintest thought of familiarity" when Lorry first sees her, and yet by the end she declares: "I love as a woman, not as a Princess."[39] This setting, with its detachment from time and its formulaic princess, provided a blank canvas for fantasies of American masculinity.

McCutcheon's portrayal of Lorry as an archetypal American man helps him to establish the balkanist cultural hierarchy of the Graustarkian world. When Yetive first spies Lorry on the train, she is interested in him because he "came nearest [her] ideal of what an American should be."[40] McCutcheon repeats this refrain often throughout the book; Lorry is the "ideal American" in Yetive's, and thus the reader's eyes. Anguish, as Lorry's sidekick, also represents an "ideal American." When his love interest, a countess, tells him about Yetive's feelings for Lorry, she does it because she "could not resist the desire to pour into the ears of this strong and resourceful man the secrets of the Princess, as if trusting him, the child of a powerful race, to provide relief. It was the old story of the weak appealing to the strong."[41] Lorry and Anguish show themselves to be strong among the weak when they easily defeat Yetive's kidnappers, an act that not only establishes their good-natured American heroism, but also places them in opposition to men from the surrounding region. Prince Gabriel of Dawsbergen, the foiled kidnapper, "shakes like a leaf" when Anguish reveals his lascivious plot before the Graustarkian court.[42] Similarly, the prince of Axphain has "an air of dissipation that suggested depravity in its advanced stage" and Lorry defeats him with one punch after he makes lewd jokes about Yetive at a local pub.[43] This contrast in masculinities aligns with Maria Todorova's argument that the western gaze focuses on and abhors Balkan masculinity.[44]

That the "strong" character in this novel is American, rather than British, speaks to the emerging American imperial project in 1901. Amy Kaplan argues that *Graustark* was part of a growing body of literature at the turn of the century that replaced European characters, such as Hope's Rudolf Rassendyl, with adventurous Americans in order to assert American dominance.[45] Kaplan argues that novels like *Graustark* served a geopolitical purpose in this period because they allowed Americans to imagine "the shift from continental conquest to overseas empire."[46] Perhaps most tellingly, Lorry's heroism ultimately allows him to enact an American imperial fantasy by changing the longstanding traditions of a monarchical court to fit with American political ideals. As he explains whilst making his successful case for Yetive's hand in marriage, "Every born American may become ruler of the greatest nation in the world - the United States…the woman I love is a Princess. Had she been the lowliest maid in all that great land of ours, she would have been my queen, I her

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[38] Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania,* 64.
[39] McCutcheon, *Graustark,* 23, 545.
[40] McCutcheon, *Graustark,* 83.
[41] McCutcheon, *Graustark,* 271.
[42] McCutcheon, *Graustark,* 424.
[43] McCutcheon, *Graustark,* 328-332.
[44] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans,* 14.
[45] Amy Kaplan, "Romancing the Empire: The Embodiment of American Masculinity in the Popular Historical Novel of the 1890s," *American Literary History* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 666.
[46] Kaplan, "Romancing the Empire," 661.

king."[47] He is thus the equal of any monarch simply because he is an American. This is a parallel (and also a notable challenge to) Goldsworthy's observation that British writers of Ruritanian fiction placed Englishmen on Balkan thrones to demonstrate the natural superiority of the English.[48] Lorry does not need to become a king to prove his superiority, because as an American he is already sovereign. Andrew Hebard notes that this resolution in *Graustark* was a recognizable turn-of-the-century romantic trope, in which old forms of governance had to adapt to American ideals in order to survive.[49] *Graustark* thus encourages "imaginative colonization" (to use Goldsworthy's formulation) not merely of Southeastern Europe, but of the world.

Lorry's ability to represent ideal American masculinity is dependent on the Graustarkian context. Supporters of United States imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries argued that men needed overseas adventure, commerce, and combat in order to hone their manliness and keep their homeland healthy.[50] This is certainly true of McCutcheon's creation. Kaplan notes that Graustark does not simply benefit from Lorry's heroic masculinity; it also allows him to discover it in the first place. When we first meet Lorry in America he is directionless and nervous, but after arriving in Graustark he finds that he is taller, braver, and more honorable than all of the men in this European frontier, which empowers him and makes him all the more attractive to his beloved.[51] By finding his swashbuckling legs in a romantic but stunted Europe, Grenfall Lorry represented the idealized turn of the century image of the American abroad, who had not only the right, but also the duty to assert himself and his desires. But where exactly was he?

Graustark and the Balkans

Ruritania's (or Graustark's) location on the map is both an essential part of its appeal and also an exceedingly difficult spot to pinpoint. Goldsworthy maintains that a Ruritania should be understood as Balkan, even when the location appears to be more Central European or even, as in *The Prisoner of Zenda,* a mere hour's train ride from Dresden.[52] In Goldsworthy's argument, the setting within *The Prisoner of Zenda* itself is secondary to the way in which Ruritania was quickly misremembered as a Balkan territory in the popular imagination. Even Hope seemed to recognize this, setting one of his follow-up novels, *Sophy of Kravonia,* in a more explicitly Balkan environment.[53] Daly, on the other hand, argues that Ruritania can be located nearly anywhere, and that Goldsworthy's argument too conveniently dismisses *Zenda's* German setting. In order to be considered a Ruritania in Daly's argument, this imaginary realm must merely be "a small, politically unstable monarchy," and its location can move according to the fears and desires of the culture producing the fiction.[54] Both scholars agree that a Ruritania must be just familiar enough to assuage fears of racial or religious difference, but unfamiliar enough to play host to a traveler's fantasies.[55] As Daly puts it, a Ruritania

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[47] McCutcheon, *Graustark,* 534

[48] Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania,* 69.

[49] Andrew Hebard, "Romantic Sovereignty: Popular Romances and the American Imperial State in the Philippines," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (September 2005): 813.

[50] Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood,* 9.

[51] Kaplan, "Romancing the Empire," 676.

[52] Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania,* x, 46.

[53] Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania,* 46-47.

[54] Daly, *Ruritania,* 5-6.

[55] Daly, *Ruritania*, 6; Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania,* 68.

must hit the perfect note of being "very mildly exotic."[56] This is another way of expressing the sense of cultural and racial liminality that Maria Todorova ascribes to balkanism. Daly and Goldsworthy's scholarship suggests that late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ruritanian romances had a distinctly eastward drift, beginning with ostensibly German trappings and ending somewhere to the East. If the location of a Ruritania is dependent on the fears and desires of the author's culture (as Daly suggests), then the increasing Balkan specificity that McCutcheon would develop over his next six novels must indicate the growing importance of the Balkans in the American imagination in this period.

When George McCutcheon published *Graustark* in 1901, both he and his audience were working with a relationship to European geography and history that was vastly different from Anthony Hope's. In the late nineteenth century, the establishment of new kingdoms in Southeast Europe attracted the interest of the British public, who became fascinated by an emerging cast of royal characters who might have ties to the British monarchy, but whose exploits and manner of dress evoked a more "exotic" image. In this context, British readers could easily fantasize about discovering a familial tie to a fanciful minor kingdom.[57] George McCutcheon, on the other hand, had never been to Europe and relied purely on popular novels for inspiration.[58] In the first Graustark novel, McCutcheon playfully contends with his American audience's confusion about European geography. Grenfall Lorry functions as an avatar for all readers whose "ideas of geography were jumbled and vague – as if he had got them by studying the labels on his hat-box."[59] Graustark, as envisioned in 1901, is full of vague Germanic signifiers in a principality no American can find on a map. As Harry Anguish exclaims, "There are so many infernal little kingdoms and principalities over here that it would take a lifetime to get 'em all straightened out in one's head."[60] However, what we do know, and in this first novel the only thing we know with any certainty, is that Graustark is "away off to the east."[61]

As the first two decades of the twentieth century progressed, Graustark evolved into a clearer American vision of the Balkans. The word "Balkan" is never mentioned in *Graustark,* but by his first sequel, *Beverly of Graustark* (1904), McCutcheon plays with this geographic uncertainty and his readers' expectations. Although he describes Graustark as vaguely "far off in the mountain lands, somewhere east of the setting sun," McCutcheon allows his characters to search for greater geographic clarity. Beverly Calhoun, a new American friend of Princess Yetive's, anxiously asks her Graustarkian host: "Father says the United States papers are full of awful war scares from the Balkans. Are we in the Balkans, Yetive?" Before letting Yetive get a word in edgewise Beverly concludes that she will just tell her father, "They never fight in the Balkans. Just scare each other," and that furthermore "we're not in the Balkans, anyway."[62] Here, McCutcheon seems to be playing

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[56] Daly, *Ruritania,* 4.
[57] Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania,* 44-45.
[58] Daly, *Ruritania,* 81.
[59] McCutcheon, *Graustark,* 23.
[60] McCutcheon, *Graustark,* 132.
[61] McCutcheon, *Graustark,* 137.
[62] George Barr McCutcheon, *Beverly of Graustark* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1904; Project Gutenberg, 2004), 505-506.

both with the idea that Graustark exists outside of any real world conflicts, and also that his audience might imagine it to be somewhere in "the Balkans" whether or not he explicitly placed it there. As Goldsworthy points out, even Germanic Ruritania in *The Prisoner of Zenda* came to be misinterpreted as "Balkan" because the popular press at the time was filled with gossip about the various Balkan dynasties.[63] Ruritanian (or Graustarkian) fiction was thus in a discursive relationship with a public in both Britain and America that was only beginning to form concrete ideas about the Balkans.

The Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 and World War I created new context for the Graustark series, to which McCutcheon had to respond. It was during this period that Maria Todorova argues the term "Balkan" began to take on the pejorative associations it carries today.[64] In 1914 the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace issued a report on the Balkan Wars. While the first Balkan War was largely seen as an inspirational war of independence fought against the Ottomans, the Carnegie report warned that the second war revealed both international complicity and vulnerability.[65] By the time he published *The Prince of Graustark* (1914) McCutcheon was willing to nod towards a new (but still vague) geopolitical awareness by having his prince, the son of Yetive and Grenfall Lorry, arrive in America hoping for a loan to help his little country deal with the aftermath of "this historic war between the Balkan allies and the Turks in 1912 and 1913."[66] However, McCutcheon avoids portraying strife and suffering by setting most of the action of his novel in the United States itself. In fact, Daly notes that contemporary reviewers reassured readers that it was still a light, romantic read because it was written before the official start of the First World War.[67] As Maria Todorova notes, although the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 began to harden western perspectives on the region, "the great crime of the Balkans, indeed, their original sin" was the fact that Gavrilo Princip's gunfire catalyzed World War I.[68] Thus, when McCutcheon published his first postwar entry in the series he could no longer afford to be so coy.

Interwar images of the Balkans were not necessarily more accurate than earlier depictions, because they operated as a foil for new western anxieties. As Brian Newsome argues, in the wake of a devastating war that, for some, signaled the decline of Western civilization, Eastern Europe could absorb the blame, and thus free the West to continue on the path of progress.[69] Eugene Michail observes that the difference between Southeastern Europe's reputation and its reality may have been most stark during the interwar years, when its reputation for violence and chaos obscured the fact

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[63] Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania,* 47.

[64] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans,* 1.

[65] Carnegie Endowment for National Peace, *Report of the International Commission to Enquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars,* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment, 1914), 18. "Then the Greeks, the Turks, the Servians, the Bulgarians, the Montenegrins and the Albanians, armed to the teeth, provided with all the guns and all the dreadnoughts for which we have no further use, can kill each other once more and even drag into their quarrel the European governments."

[66] George Barr McCutcheon, *The Prince of Graustark* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1914; Project Gutenberg, 2004), 15.

[67] Daly, *Ruritania,* 94.

[68] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans,* 118.

[69] W. Brian Newsome, "'Dead Lands' or 'New Europe'? Reconstructing Europe, Reconfiguring Eastern Europe: 'Westerners' and the Aftermath of the World War," *East European Quarterly* XXXVI, no. 1 (March, 2002): 40.

that "The Balkan states were among the most compliant and supportive members of the League of Nations."[70] An important contributor to this unearned violent image was the concern among Western Europeans and Americans that any conflict in the Balkans was more likely to require Western intervention than strife in more distant, less European parts of the world.[71] Rather than being the fairytale land of *Graustark*, Southeastern Europe became a place that conceivably represented actual peril to Americans. In the United States, especially, immigration patterns created the sense of a more dangerously interconnected world. Sentiment against Southeastern Europeans hit a crescendo in the 1920's with the passage of the Johnson-Reed immigration act of 1924, which restricted immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe.[72] How does a land designed to fit the imagination because it is conveniently "away off east" deal with the intrusion of crystallizing international stereotypes about its once conveniently unknown region? This is the question that McCutcheon attempts to address in *East of the Setting Sun,* and in so doing he crafts a romantic vision of America's influence abroad that both expands upon the themes of American masculinity from his first novel and is specific to the intellectual processes of "balkanism."

East of the Setting Sun (1924)

In *East of the Setting Sun* (1924), Graustark is no longer a mysterious land wholly unknown to Americans. Not only have several Americans dallied with the royal families of Graustark and Dawsbergen, but the Great War has also rendered the map of Europe more visible to American eyes. The novel opens with characters we have never met, anonymous professional men enjoying coffee at a New York social club. These men converse about "the Europe question," and become particularly animated whilst musing about the fate of the Balkans, that region that is "full of little principalities with queer names" that had lately been "so mangled by the dogs of war." They wonder, in particular, about the fate of Graustark, which they assume has been "massacred" and "debased" by "the Bolsheviks."[73] McCutcheon seems to play upon the expectations of the Ruritanian genre, as well as his changing relationship with Graustark over the course of two decades. He notes the difference between the idealized Graustark and its probable fate in the new world order: "Their thoughts were of that far-off, tidy little land in the turbulent East," he writes of the anonymous Americans who want to know its fate, "and of the good old days when the very name of Graustark stirred the imagination and played upon the fancy of young and old alike – Graustark, gray and strong and serene among its everlasting hills."[74]

The "good old days when the very name of Graustark stirred the imagination" also described the height of McCutcheon's career. In addition to making McCutcheon one of the wealthiest writers of his time, the series touched the careers of major movie stars, producers and directors through multiple film adaptations. In the 1920's a new batch of films invited the public to revisit Graustark all over again and new editions of the books were released.[75] *East of the Setting Sun* was published

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[70] Eugene Michail, "Western Attitudes to War in the Balkans and the Shifting Meanings of Violence, 1912-91," *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 2 (April 2012): 230.

[71] Michail, "Western Attitudes to War in the Balkans," 239.

[72] Todorova, "Imagining 'In-between' Peoples," 399.

[73] George Barr McCutcheon, *East of the Setting Sun* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1924), 8-9.

[74] McCutcheon, *East of the Setting Sun,* 11.

[75] Daly, *Ruritania,* 78.

amid this renewed interest in "that far-off, tidy little land" with ads that invited readers to enjoy yet another story of "a bewitching princess of the old world and an intrepid young American."[76] A film adaptation of *East of the Setting Sun* was announced shortly after the book's publication, although it ultimately remained unmade.[77] Other books with Balkan settings were being evaluated against the Graustarkian standard in the 1920's; The New York Times called a book about Queen Marie of Romania "as entertaining as a Graustark novel."[78] The film industry also benefitted from Graustark beyond *Graustark*. As one film critic noted in 1924 "there have been a good many of these so-called Graustark stories."[79] The ubiquitous image of Graustark was also creating confusion between Balkan and Baltic, with one reporter breathlessly describing Latvia as "Graustark Discovered."[80] Although *East of the Setting Sun* did not climb the bestseller lists the way its predecessors did, it still appeared in top ten lists for fiction in 1925.[81] Just like the unnamed characters at the beginning of the novel, McCutcheon's public was clearly looking for news of Graustark in this period, and also using it as a frame of reference.

McCutcheon's fifth Graustark novel echoes many of the thematic and plot beats of the first, but it operates under the shadow of McCutcheon's post-World War I consciousness. By the opening of *East of the Setting Sun* thirty-five years have passed since Grenfall Lorry's adventure. The half-American Princess Virginia of Dawsbergen (who is also sister to the current Princess of Graustark) is in love with a reporter named Pendennis Yorke, who she married under a false identity in order to escape from an ill advised journey to Béla Kun's Hungary in 1919. This Hungarian backstory is just one example of multiple historically and geographically specific details that never would have intruded upon the original *Graustark*. Yorke has been dreaming of the wife he barely knew, and he is considerably more surprised than McCutcheon's reader to discover that she is, in fact, a princess. Yorke learns this fact only by chance, when his editor sends him to get the full story of Graustark's experience during the Great War. Graustark in the early 1920's is surrounded by chaos but maintains its timeless charm, and Yorke and Princess Virginia must navigate their feelings in the face of royal protocol, Bolshevik agitators, and invading forces from Axphain, which has always been a troublesome neighbor but is now a Russian puppet state that toppled its monarchy.[82] In the confusion following the Axphainian invasion an American socialist agitator named Michael Rodkin, who is, by chance, an old college chum of Pendennis Yorke's, kidnaps Princess Virginia, with whom he is desperately in love, and tries to spirit her away to Russia. Luckily Yorke stops him and rescues Virginia, and from this brush with disaster the two decide to declare their love publicly and turn their original sham marriage into a lasting union. After experimenting with new plot elements like a female adventurer (in *Beverly of Graustark*) or a sojourn in America (in *The Prince of Graustark*), McCutcheon returned home to the tale of a heroic young American man in a book that was

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[76] "East of the Setting Sun by George McCutcheon," *The Bookman* 60, no. 2 (October 1924)

[77] Daly, *Ruritania,* 107-108.

[78] "Queen Marie in an Intimate Portrait," *New York Times,* December 26, 1926, BR3.

[79] Mordaunt Hall, "Appealing Touches in Film Directed by Mr. Lubitsch," *New York Times*, November 23, 1924, X5.

[80] Bella Cohen, "Latvia, Graustark Discovered," *New York Times,* April 15, 1923, SM5.

[81] "The Bookman's Monthly Score," *The Bookman* 60, no. 6 (February 1925), 784.

[82] While McCutcheon's sense of geography had improved somewhat in the wake of the war, he remained unconcerned about total accuracy. He never refers to the USSR, only "Russia."

advertised as "not a sequel, but a sparkling new story."[83] It was only new in that it recognized a changed world.

Graustark is able to retain its comparative serenity within this changed world because McCutcheon had always maintained that marriage and procreation between Americans and Balkan people was desirable and positive. In the timeline of the novels, Graustark has experienced thirty years of intermarriage with Americans, and McCutcheon continually demonstrates to his readers the redeeming power of American blood and ideals in the face of European decline. When Yorke first arrives in Graustark, he sees a principality that has somehow maintained its integrity and its fairytale perfection, especially in comparison with the surrounding region. While Graustark has remained "a land of plenty," its neighbor Axphain, "once a prosperous state," is "now a vast pig sty" where communism has become the law of the land and the people look hungrily towards Graustark.[84] Despite threats from the outside, nearly halfway through the novel Pendennis Yorke is still frustrated by his inability to carve an exciting story for his editor from the medieval stonework of Graustark's walls. "The only thing that distinguished Graustark from the rest of Eastern Europe," he complains, "was its disgusting serenity."[85] The primary difference between the royal house of Axphain and that of Graustark is the American influence. As a local dignitary explains to Yorke, "we are rather firmly attached to America. Connected, as you might say, by marriage."[86] Those marriages have also produced offspring, including Prince Robin, the current sovereign of Graustark, who Yorke pointedly notes "was not only a great admirer of Colonel Roosevelt but an emulator as well," thus emphasizing his rugged American masculinity.[87] The hearty Prince Robin helped to usher Graustark through the war, which they entered with the Allies "on the side of Serbia."[88] By seeing the potential for this pattern of procreation, McCutcheon himself both emulates and challenges Roosevelt. Bederman argues that between 1903 and 1910, Roosevelt helped to inaugurate a new era celebrating male sexuality as an antidote to "race suicide," or the fear that white Americans would fail to assert their evolutionary dominance through reproduction.[89] This exhortation to procreation applied to white native-born families in Roosevelt's speeches, but McCutcheon here suggests that our virile turn-of-the-century hero, Grenfall Lorry, successfully initiated evolution among Graustark's royalty.

The theme of redemption through marriage and reproduction is an important example of how balkanism functions in these novels, because it clarifies how this popular vision of the Balkans viewed the race of its protagonists. According to Maria Todorova, the balkanist lens positions the Balkans not as "an incomplete other," but rather as "an incomplete self."[90] For an early twentieth century audience in particular, this meant that marriage and procreation were possible for a very

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[83] "East of the Setting Sun by George Barr McCutcheon, Author of *Graustark," Scribners Magazine* 76, July-December 1924, 44.

[84] McCutcheon, *East of the Setting Sun,* 65-66.

[85] McCutcheon, *East of the Setting Sun,* 146-147.

[86] McCutcheon, *East of the Setting Sun,* 77.

[87] McCutcheon, *East of the Setting Sun,* 196.

[88] McCutcheon, *East of the Setting Sun,* 203.

[89] Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization,* 205.

[90] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans,* 18.

simple reason: the people were still white and largely Christian (although religion is never mentioned in the world of Graustark). McCutcheon underscores this point in *East of the Setting Sun* by having his hero, Pendennis Yorke, be a reporter who has also spent time in Africa. Unlike the happy marriages that close each novel in McCutcheon's series, Yorke refers to witnessing royal weddings in East Africa where, for example, "the king beheaded all his old wives and took on a new lot of twenty or thirty, all in a bunch."[91] Unlike those who are truly "other" elsewhere in the world, Balkan people (especially when they are imaginary) are positioned slightly behind Britons or Americans in the grand march of time, capable of being pulled up the evolutionary ladder by the right kind of westerner. This view of the Balkans is particularly notable in the context of the 1920's because, as Miglena Todorova argues, *National Geographic* was one of the few outlets suggesting that people from Southeastern Europe were good candidates for assimilation, even as it racialized them.[92] The ubiquitous romantic fantasy of Graustark, with its conclusion in *East of the Setting Sun*, might then also be considered a litigant in the debate over whiteness in interwar America.

The *wrong* kind of westerner also serves an important purpose in this work. American influence is not automatically positive; it must emulate Teddy Roosevelt's turn of the century manliness or else it too can become perverted by nefarious forces in the region. Despite the fortifying influence of American blood on Graustark's ideological defenses, American influence also functions as a threat through the character of Michael Rodkin. While Russia poses a threat to the whole region, the resident agitator in Graustark is Yorke's old college friend. America itself is not free from the ideology threatening Graustark and its neighbors, according to Yorke, who admits that "even in our own land the seeds of revolution are being sown – red seeds that would grow into poisonous weeds in a day if left unwatched."[93] Daly discusses McCutcheon's fears of communist sympathizers in America as a primary motivator behind this work.[94] However, to characterize this work only as a fable about American radicalism undercuts the very real impact of World War I, and with it newly hardened stereotypes about the Balkans. Instead of debating which of these two influences is ultimately more important to understanding this work, we should consider them in tandem as an example of how the Balkans functioned in the literary imagination of this period as a way to explore, as Maria Todorova puts it, "difference within one type," or the fact that western perceptions of the Balkans involve critiques not of an entirely alien other, but rather of the extremes within one broad racial or cultural category.[95] Notably, Rodkin's ultimate sin is not an act of ideology, but rather a failure of gallantry. Rodkin, seduced by communism, behaves not like the "ideal American" but in fact almost exactly like Prince Gabriel of Dawsbergen from the original *Graustark*, who attempts to kidnap a princess and is soundly foiled by the good-natured, heroic, capitalism-loving American who loves her. Thus, McCutcheon gave the United States an image of the Balkans in which Americans could either stay true to their values and act as saviors in their newly chaotic surroundings, or become as depraved as the lust-driven men who were native to the region.

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[91] McCutcheon, *East of the Setting Sun*, 26.
[92] Todorova, "In-Between People," 413-414.
[93]McCutcheon, *East of the Setting Sun,* 79.
[94] Daly, *Ruritania,* 96. Daly notes that the "Red Scare of 1919-1920 was probably the most intense until the McCarthyism of the 1950's."
[95] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans,* 19.

Ultimately, *East of the Setting Sun* suggests that the Balkans have no future, a message that aligned with western attitudes towards Southeastern Europe as the century progressed. The novel ends with Virginia giving up her Dawsbergian title and traveling with Yorke to live in "the Wild West" instead of "the Wild East."[96] This decision prompts a melancholic passage from the Duchess of Graustark, which initiates the book's denouement: "Civilization, my friends, goes forever towards the West. The strength of the world that used to be ours continues to slip away from us toward the setting sun…in our mind's eye we see the sun coming to rest for the night – in the land called America."[97] This elegiac acknowledgement is a far cry from Yetive's declaration at the very beginning of the original *Graustark* that "Graustark is small, but I am as proud of it as you are of this great broad country that stretches from ocean to ocean!"[98] Thus McCutcheon gave his readers another neatly packaged love story, but in this postwar setting the happy ending necessarily involves a full acknowledgement of America's greatness versus the tarnished glow of the old east. The story of Americans away off east had run its course. As Maria Todorova notes, images of the Balkans became so frozen in the early part of the twentieth century that the Carnegie Endowment reissued its report in the 1990's without revisions.[99] Graustark, Dawsbergen, and Axphain all remained frozen in time as well. McCutcheon never revisited a twentieth century Graustark. His last novel in the series, *The Inn of the Hawk and the Raven: A Tale of Old Graustark* (1927), is a prequel set in the nineteenth century. When he died in 1928 he was a wealthy man, rich, as Goldsworthy might suggest, off of the imaginative resources he had strip-mined from Southeastern Europe. His characters, like his audience, left Graustark behind in its time capsule. Goldsworthy argues that early British writers of Ruritanian romances used their imaginary kingdoms to enact visions of British power and justice through the easily digestible format of a love story.[100] McCutcheon's work shows that the Ruritanian format provided a similar opportunity for Americans. In the aftermath of World War I, the Balkans functioned not just as a conveniently distant setting for a duel or two, but also as a more fully developed foil for America's international self-image.

Conclusion

When George Barr McCutcheon began to write about Graustark, its vaguely Southeastern European setting primarily had resonance for him and for his audience in relation to other romantic stories like *The Prisoner of Zenda.* It was removed from time, unidentifiable on a map, and the perfect place for a directionless but handsome young American to discover his heroic western masculinity. The popularity of *Graustark* ultimately complicated this simple image, however, because it lead McCutcheon to continue writing sequels through the period in which stereotypes of Balkan disorder took hold in the western mind. In *East of the Setting Sun*, McCutcheon takes his readers back to an unchanged Graustark within a drastically changed region. Through World War I, the Balkans gained more specificity. The names of real places like Serbia appear beside the imaginary realms of Graustark, Axphain, and Dawsbergen. American characters in the opening of the book are musing about the fate of a place they supposedly never could have imagined twenty years prior. Unsavory

[96] McCutcheon, *East of the Setting Sun,* 331.
[97] McCutcheon, *East of the Setting Sun,* 337.
[98] McCutcheon, *Graustark,* 50.
[99] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans,* 4.
[100] Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania,* 72-73.

Americans like the nefarious Michael Rodkin are even haunting Graustark itself, having fallen under the sway of communism. McCutcheon's solution to this changed world order is an illustration of Maria Todorova's theory of balkanism, and particularly of her concept of "difference within one type." The freewheeling masculinity that Grenfall Lorry discovered in the first novel is now deeply embedded within the Graustarkian royal family through marriage, thus insulating it against the threat of communism. Balkanism allows McCutcheon to play with extremes within a single racial and religious category, so that his all-important theme of problem solving through intermarriage doesn't interfere with early twentieth century racial anxieties. What was once a pretty semi-medieval backdrop thus becomes a test of American ideals, and particularly the heroic individualist ideals that McCutcheon clearly favored, in the face of European decline in general, and Balkan chaos in particular. As Pendennis Yorke and Princess Virginia of Dawsbergen set off for the United States, they go with the sun, away from an Eastern European past and towards a resoundingly American future.