

beyond the normative coordinates of selfhood lies an orgy of connection that no regime can regulate.

Tim Dean
University at Buffalo

WORKS CITED

Bersani, Leo. *Homos*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995.

———. "Is the Rectum a Grave?" *AIDS: Cultural Analysis / Cultural Activism*. Ed. Douglas Crimp. Cambridge: MIT P, 1988. 197–222.

Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004.

Hocquenghem, Guy. *Homosexual Desire*. Trans. Daniella Dangoor. Durham: Duke UP, 1993.

Snediker, Michael. *Queer Optimism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, forthcoming.

Are We Postcolonial? Post-Soviet Space

Annual Meeting of the American Association of Teachers of
Slavic and East European Languages
29 December 2005, Washington, DC

Are You Postcolonial? To the Teachers of Slavic and Eastern European Literatures

You have involved yourselves in the rethinking of Soviet studies as not only post-Soviet studies but also postcolonial studies. The first wave of postcolonial studies was based on the British empire. We have a lot to learn as that model travels out of its first contained sphere into the aftermath of old multicultural empires. Does postcolonialism lead to nationalism? Is postcolonialism appropriated by the metropolitan diaspora? Is "scientific socialism" comparable to "civilizing mission"? Is the "Other Europe" movement—in Poland, Hungary, Bohemia, the Balkans, and elsewhere—manageable within a specifically postcolonial framework? Must the post-Soviet world be thought of as a new Eurasia in order for the postcolonial viewpoint to stick, as Mark von Hagen has suggested? The argument about women as the surrogate proletariat in central Asia traveled out of Soviet studies. How will that figure?

This rethinking implies that the most emancipatory vision of the Enlightenment could not withstand the weight of the objective and subjective history of older, precapitalist empires. Our current and so-called emancipatory programs do not engage with this. There might be some use, then, in rethinking postcolonialism for this new task. But it must unmoor itself from its provisional

beginnings in monopoly capitalist or mercantile colonialisms and transform itself in the process. Every postcoloniality is situated, and therefore different. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* was provoked by Kant's use of the western Australian Aborigine. How will this travel to the "European" imagination of "the Other Europe" today? How will you displace our modern notions of hybrid diasporas when you think of the restlessness of, say, Armenia?

In response to students in the Slavic department at Columbia University, I wrote as follows:

When an alien nation-state establishes itself as ruler, impressing its own laws and systems of education and rearranging the mode of production for its own economic benefit, "colonizer" and "colonized" can be used. The consequences of applying them to a wide array of political and geographic entities would be dire if colonialism had only one model. On the other hand, if we notice how different kinds of adventures and projects turn into something that fits the bare-bones description given above, we will have a powerful analysis of the politics of progressivism, of one sort or another. How do political philosophies of social justice relate to the overdeterminations of practical politics? This venerable question receives interesting answers if we

consider the irreducibility of the colonial in a situation-specific and flexible way. Additionally, if we cast our glance at the place(s) colonized (according to the rarefied formula), we encounter great heterogeneity. This provides us an opportunity to study the politics of cultural and epistemic transformation.

The problem with applying these terms to the area you cover would be merely to follow the three most powerful models of colonial discourse theory currently available, belonging to the Middle East, South Asia, and Latin America. These refer to colonial adventures undertaken by single nations as exploration and conquest nourished mercantile capitalism—followed by the expanding market needs of industrial capital. Your area displaced the political lines of old multiethnic imperial formations, Ottoman, Hapsburg, Russian. The eastern edge pushes into terrain that is even further from the single-nation model. Another great difference is the presence of an articulated ideal—versions of “scientific socialism”—which gave a seemingly greater specificity to the epistemic change. The single-nation model was accompanied by “civilizing missions” that were relatively autonomous from political and economic structures.

Historically, it has always been the powerful who have spoken or been spoken of. I don’t know enough about the area under study to go into detail here, but, as a feminist and a subalternist, I am used to looking at the pores of elite texts to tease out excluded itineraries. As we move eastward, the nature of the texts changes. Here my disciplinary commitments kick in. I want us to use the literary imagination to read sagas and chronicles. I spoke with women from inner Asia ten years ago and with folks from former Soviet Armenia more recently. They spoke of the difficulty of communication with their mothers—and, for sure, their grandmothers—because Russian gets in the way. The fracturing of gender is somewhat different from the nationalist insistence on native-language politics in the “new” nations bordering on the Russian Federation. However one approaches this, it seems to me a fertile field for real language-

based comparative literature, much more like cultural studies than like the older model of eastern European comp lit—where the discipline began. Colonial discourse and postcolonial studies have not been good with languages. The areas you study can turn this around. Your field can offer spectacular opportunities for history to join hands with literary criticism in search of the ethical as it interrupts the epistemological.

Postcolonial theory will engage analytic representations of positions other than the colonizers’ (old and new) in the model of the organic intellectual (“permanent persuaders”—Gramsci). But it is the theory that must be made to engage with this, not ourselves as academic narcissists. The gendered approach is particularly effective in postcolonial work because it often seeks to expose the patriarchal collaboration between colonizer and colonized. Feminism and postcolonial theory have a certain concern for social justice. I would like to think that this is the case for all humanities and social science work, perhaps for all work. But too narrow a definition of political commitment leads to work with the same dull litany of foregone conclusions. I have always found such “research” tedious. These are warnings from a battle-scarred veteran on the eve of your new departure.

They were students. You are colleagues. I will let you add the pinch of salt.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak
Columbia University

***The Anti-imperialist Empire and After:
In Dialogue with Gayatri Spivak’s “Are
You Postcolonial?”***

Debates within Slavic studies are increasingly fueled by this question: are we now also postcolonial—“we” being some unstable combination of postsocialist citizenry, their diasporas, and the research communities that study them. How is it best to get at this question? Can we point to Soviet colonizers who have withdrawn—either physically or in terms of a systemic failure of power and

knowledge—leaving behind some distinct group to engage in the cultural reclamation project of nation building (linguistic, educational, and legal reforms; reconstructed institutions of the media and the electoral process; the emergence of autonomous civic associations)? A reasoned answer, whatever it is, will respond to this line of questioning. Let us bracket culture for the moment and address the question in geographic terms, from the outside—that is to say, external empire—in.

If we are speaking of Central Europe, the countries that—some would argue—had a status analogous in certain respects to that of Britain’s white colonies, the answer initially, of course, is yes, we are postcolonial. That affirmative is tempered, however, by an awareness that “postcolonial” might be an unlikely choice by, for example, most Czech citizens. First of all, their post-Soviet reclamation is surely aimed as much at a reintegration into post-cold war Europe as it is toward the building of the nation-state. Whether this re-Europeanization is in fact integration into an emergent empire of the European Union I will leave unaddressed.¹ Second, a descriptor more familiar than *Soviet colonialism*—given the geographic, historical, and conceptual proximity to Nazism—has been *Soviet occupation*. The insistence on this term—indeed, its naturalization—raises an interesting question. Is it correct to say that the Czechs, for example, were occupied but the Uzbeks colonized? If so, then for the Czechs was it the period’s brevity, the absence of a tsarist legacy, their relative technological parity with the Soviet Union, their mastery of the discourse of occupation, or our unacknowledged racialization of language that drives this distinction? Indeed, the absence from 1946 to 1967 of an alien, occupying military or governance on Czech soil further problematizes the vocabulary. These habits of thought—in the northwest sector of the Soviet empire, “occupation”; in its southeast sector, “colonialism”—suggest that the Soviet case (Eurasia, after all) is an important crossroads for postcolonialist debates, a site where familiar terms encounter each other anew. Is it worth asking, How white must one be to be occupied? And, conversely, does the vocabulary of postcolonialist debates orientalize those whom it sets out to emancipate conceptually from cold war categories of Soviet occupation?

In terms, therefore, of the question as it is posed—Are we postcolonial?—we are left as yet with an affirmative, but still deeply unsatisfying, answer.

If we have in mind the internal Soviet empire—the former fifteen republics—then the initial answer, again, is yes. But, of course, as soon as things begin to seem simple, the empire’s radical internal diversity makes this monosyllabic answer problematic, and not only for the reasons cited above. How productive is a consistent vocabulary for a radically inconsistent expansionism? This last question concerns not merely the diversity of colonized territory but also the profoundly different modes of metropolitan expansion: if, for example, in the Baltics Russo-Soviet appropriation of an already existing German elite provided one—in some respects, anglophile—model, then in the Far East Russo-Soviet missionary and mercantile expansionism provided another, more Spanish, model, which produced very different cultural symptoms. Our colleagues in other disciplines have debated this heterogeneity at length, while the humanities have been slower to address these issues.²

If we turn our attention to the Russian Federation today, a curious paradox obtains, since the federation’s internal relations with Chechnya, Bashkortostan, and elsewhere show little trace of decolonization; in fact, the historical contradictions of its disciplinary systems find themselves in crisis between the dead empire and the newly emergent one. Only the greatest optimist would claim that Russia’s civil associations—independent election monitoring, the media, veterans’ associations, environmental and public-health advocacy groups, policy research institutes, and so forth—have continued to develop. Instead (in a clumsy paraphrase of Monk Filofei),³ a dynastic empire fell, a socialist one followed, and a third is now consolidating its institutions along familiar trajectories. The collapse of the Soviet Union—internally imperialist but (in its declared animosity to First World predation) externally anti-imperialist—resolved one core contradiction, but substituted another: Russia, recovering gradually from its postimperial fatigue, remains (though reconfigured) an empire nevertheless. Does that repetition, like a stubborn habit renounced again and again, nullify change? An adequate account of the current conjuncture must address the simultaneity of Soviet postcolo-

nality and Russian colonialism, their contradictions and yet their intense compatibilities.

A discussion of post-Soviet culture must proceed within these parameters, taking into account the differences between the symptoms of the contiguous empire and those of the more familiar thalassocratic model of British postcoloniality. Russia differs in its markers of modernity; the relative impoverishment of its center in contrast to its Western borders; its constructions of ethnicity, nationality, and race; its state-driven, highly centralized structure; and—as Geoffrey Hosking has eloquently argued—the relative weakness of its own national formations. Yet these conditions provide only the merest guide to the complex tasks of cultural analysis, for Russian contiguity produces not cultural homology but rather, at times, its opposite: a libidinal engagement, under certain conditions, with the great overseas empire, as is surely suggested, for example, in Aivazovsky's evocative seascapes. In a similarly contradictory fashion, the cultural tropes of landscape in cinema, literature, oil painting, and mass song—figuring, on the one hand, Russia's "unencompassability" (необъятность) and, on the other, the need for constant vigilance at the borders—share a common anxiety about the outer reaches of Russia's expanding drive, a response to its shifting boundaries as encoded cultural wish and fear. We must read these marks against the grain in two distinct fashions: first, against a postcolonialism that fits uneasily with our subject of study and, second, against our own discipline, which has understood these debates as occurring between the First and Third Worlds, with little resonance for Russia. The largest country in the world, still very much in possession of its imperial holdings, Russia remains a challenge to scholars of the First and Third Worlds who would see modernity as inextricably intertwined with capitalism, the nation-state, and liberal democracy.

Nancy Condee

University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh

NOTES

1. Habermas's writings on the postnational constellation and coordination of sovereign discourses might invite such a polemical response from those who have weathered the twentieth-century "friendship of peoples," with all its federalist claims. Here work by Terry Martin and Ronald

Suny has been at the center of the debates on the legacy of Austro-Hungary and the emergence of what Martin has dubbed the Soviet Union's "affirmative-action empire."

2. I refer to work by Mark Beissinger, Geoffrey Hosking, Dominic Lieven, Terry Martin, Ilya Prizel, Ronald Suny, and Mark von Hagen, among others.

3. Filofei (Philotheus), an early-sixteenth-century hegumen of Pskov's Eleazarov Monastery, is said to have written a letter containing the admonition that after the fall of Rome and Constantinople, Muscovy had inherited the burden of preserving the true faith: "Two Romes have fallen. The Third stands. A fourth there shall not be" (qtd. in Malinin, app. 54–55).

WORK CITED

Malinin, Vasilii N. *Starets Eleazarova Monastyria Filofei i ego poslanie*. Kiev: Tip. Kievo-Pecherskoi Uspenskoi Lavry, 1901.

Between 1917 and 1947: Postcoloniality and Russia-Eurasia

Has the postcolonial become a new universal, one capable of subsuming under one conceptual rubric such very different historical experiences as the emergence of New World states out of the legacy of white-settler colonialism, the decolonizations of Africa and Asia, and the much more recent disintegration of the Soviet bloc? If so, what is gained and what is lost by such a way of viewing history?

Postcolonial theory has a specific political history and intellectual genealogy that are distinct, but not entirely divorced, from Soviet history. Postcolonial theory became possible with the postwar decolonizations of Africa and Asia and the related ascendancy of various national intelligentsias. The success of secular nationalism enabled these intelligentsias to reexamine the recent past, just as the subsequent crisis of secular nationalism enabled them to critique the failures of the postcolonial state and its complicities with older and newer imperialisms. The resulting proliferation of revisionist historiography and theoretical critique was further empowered by the increasingly transnational location of its practitioners, manifested most visibly by the emergence of postcolonial diasporas active in the American academy and by related shifts in student demographics.

Although Nasser, Sukarno, and Nehru clearly looked in part to the Soviet state for inspiration, the twentieth-century encounter between the

Second and Third Worlds can no longer be read as one of inspired continuity. The gap between the two emblematic dates 1917, the year of the Russian Revolution, and 1947, the year of Indian independence, seems far greater today than during the heyday of nonalignment, formulated at the Bandung Conference of 1955. Taking place some thirty years before the South Asian and African decolonizations, the first decolonization of the Russian empire was proclaimed in the name of a revolutionary socialism that would crucially equivocate on what was called the national question. The Soviet Union was expressly internationalist yet zealously territorial and expansionist, denying the autonomy of its constitutive peoples while retaining a federal structure that would nonetheless permit an elaborate discourse of local specificity. This equivocation led to the paradoxical emergence of what Nancy Condee recently called an anti-imperialist empire. If the Soviet Union was an empire, it was one that combined an exceptionally violent and coercive centralism with a paternalistic internationalism whose relation to the peripheries of the USSR was by no means purely exploitative. The subsidizing of republican economies, the indigenizing of regional party structures, and the fostering of national cultures from the Uzbek to the Armenian were pursued in tandem with the ostensibly homogenizing vision of “Soviet man.” It was surely the sustained, official Soviet cultivation of national republican elites, as much as the efforts of local nationalisms, that permitted the rapid emergence of a plethora of post-Soviet nation-states.

The distinctness of Soviet experience finds an inverted corollary in the evolution of Russian studies in the United States. A child of the cold war, Russian studies combined historical investigations that largely reproduced a centralist or metropolitan vision of Eurasian history with a study of literature that fashioned a canon out of the Russian nineteenth-century classics, the modernists, and the postwar dissidents. The influx of Russian émigrés did little to upset these assumptions, since one of their primary intellectual and existential reflexes was to counterpose politics and culture. The underrepresentation of other Soviet ethnicities in American universities and in America at large, not to mention their regional isolation from

global intellectual debates, is probably as much responsible for the underdevelopment of Eurasian postcolonial studies as the purely methodological question of postcolonialism’s applicability to the post-Soviet region.

So where does the question stand today, in our field?

In Russian literary studies, a small body of works examines the correlation of literature and empire. I will confine myself to noting two serious limitations of these works. First, they tend to read Edward Said’s *Orientalism* as a synecdoche for postcolonial criticism as a whole, in order to assert its qualified applicability to Russian studies and to make a case for Russia’s quasi-European, quasi-Asiatic particularism. This is combined with strategies of reading that largely focus on mimetic-representational categories at the expense of formal or rhetorical modes. All of this ignores a much larger body of literary criticism and historiography (e.g., from South Asia or Latin America) whose meditations on the distortions or mutations produced by the importation of Eurocentric modernizing and developmentalist models to the non-West might throw a useful light on the Russian-Eurasian region. More serious still has been our neglect of the non-Russian literary and intellectual traditions of the former Soviet Union. We remain trapped in the Petrine paradigm of Russia’s eternally anxious opening to the West; where we look to the East, we remain content with Russian representations of it.

The postcolonial question has certainly been better articulated in related fields such as Russian history and post-Soviet anthropology. In a review essay-cum-manifesto on these developments, Mark von Hagen recently claimed the term “Eurasia” as an “anti-paradigm for the post-Soviet era” that “signals a decentering of historical narratives from the powerful perspectives of the former capitals, whether imperial St. Petersburg or tsarist-Soviet Moscow” (par. 2). Von Hagen takes strategic advantage of the toponymic crisis caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union and claims for a counterhegemonic intellectual initiative a term—Eurasia—that has in fact had a relatively muddied intellectual history. Far more than other toponyms (such as those for nations and continents), Eurasia remains to this day an indeterminate category with

an uneven history of discursive elaboration, and it had a weak institutional legitimacy until its recent, rapid adoption by area studies institutes and centers in the United States. Conceived of originally in the West to describe the landmass of Europe and Asia combined, the term has been used in Russia as part of attempts to rethink the relation between the European and Asiatic regions of the Russian empire, with a focus on the central Asian steppe as Eurasia's newly designated core. This conceptual history has been marked by a rich paradox: while serving to highlight the ethnically diverse nature of the former Soviet Union, to the point of displacing the Eurocentrism of received accounts of the region, the term Eurasia has also been marked by a strong totalizing impulse, a desire for spatial unity and for a principle to guarantee this unity. To be sure, von Hagen explicitly repudiates the "faith [of classical Eurasianists such as Trubetzkoy] in the Russian Empire's self-sufficiency, its 'exceptional path,' and their understanding of Eurasia as a closed system of interrelationships" (26).

Von Hagen necessarily limits himself to the work of Western and Russian professional historians of Eurasia who have been enriched by the insights of newer methodologies. This framework neglects one vital element that could become the legitimate object of Russian-Eurasian literary studies: the intellectual or creative interventions of writers, poets, philologists, and political activists of the Eurasian peripheries, whose work constitutes a set of alternative trajectories that seldom, if ever, coincided completely with the directives emanating from Moscow. The cultural production of the reformist as well as revolutionary national intelligentsias of central Asia and the Caucasus during the late tsarist and early Soviet periods is immensely rich, ranging from the aesthetic vanguardism of the Georgian modernists to the national communism of the Tatar Sultan Galiev, whose critique of Leninist internationalism casts a more contradictory light on Comintern debates on the nationality question. This varied body of work might allow us spatially to reconfigure the convergence between politics and aesthetics that Neil Larsen has suggestively found in Lenin's critique of imperialism and the synchronous emergence of the artistic avant-garde as a new "internationale of form." Finally, let us not forget that the most imaginative critique of Russocentric

epistemology was generated by the Kazakh poet-philologist Olzhas Suleimenov, whose book *Az i Ia* (1975) influenced Soviet culture as Fanon's or Said's work did other parts of the world.

What I am proposing, then, is a renewed focus on the regions of the Eurasian periphery, a commitment to the local archive that requires careful study of languages and sources outside Russian and an ability to contemplate cultural phenomena that exceed the Petrine paradigm of Russia and the West. This project must be complemented by an openness to the kinds of questions already being posed in other parts of the globe by transnational methodologies such as postcolonial studies. Such work might point to a convergence among Slavic studies, comparative literature, and work now pursued in various area studies institutes. For the past few years, I have been learning Georgian and studying revolutionary Tbilisi as a cultural site—a site far from the storming of the Winter Palace, to be sure, but also one of multiple languages and ethnicities, where anticolonial nationalism competed with both Menshevism and Bolshevism, where fin de siècle aestheticism coexisted with the futurist avant-garde and Near Eastern forms of bardic recitation, and where perhaps more modernities, local and imported, were imagined than in Paris or Saint Petersburg.

Harsha Ram

University of California, Berkeley

WORKS CITED

- Larsen, Neil. "Imperialism, Colonialism, Postcolonialism." *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*. Ed. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray. Blackwell Companions to Lit. and Culture. Malden: Blackwell, 2000. 23–52.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon, 1978.
- Suleimenov, Olzhas. *Az i Ia. Kniga blagonamerennogo chitatelia*. Alma-Ata: Zhazushy, 1975.
- von Hagen, Mark. "Empires, Borderlands, and Diasporas: Eurasia as Anti-paradigm for the Post-Soviet Era." *American Historical Review* 109.2 (2004): 40 pars. 10 July 2006 <<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/109.2/hagen.html>>.

On Some Post-Soviet Postcolonialisms

The title "Are We Postcolonial?" begs several related questions. First, who is "we"? The residents

of the former Soviet Union and its former satellites in Eastern Europe and elsewhere? The intellectual communities in those countries? The diasporas with roots in those countries? The foreign-based (especially Western-based) scholars of the region's cultures? As a citizen of a former "white" colony of the Russian and Soviet empires and as an academic now based in the United States, I would argue that yes, definitely, I am postcolonial; however, my remarks here will not focus on autoethnography.

The questions outlined above are tangled up with another, related set of questions. How does one assert postcoloniality? Is it sufficient merely to claim it, as I just did? Should a legitimization of this claim proceed by way of argumentation, or does it require a sanction from some external disciplinary authority? (In a similar vein, when some fifteen years ago many Slavic and Eastern European intellectuals asserted the need to consider their countries' cultural conditions as part of postmodernism as a global phenomenon, many Western cultural theorists voiced their reservations, and at times even strong opposition, to the assertion.) Simultaneously, other questions arise: What kinds of uses or appropriations of the discourse on postcolonialism can be documented in the cultures of this region and in scholarship focusing on them? Is a representative of an imperial culture postcolonial too? Is postcolonialism indeed a category with global applicability, as David Chioni Moore argued in *PMLA* in 2001? Is postcolonialism an appropriate designation for empirical sociopolitical reality—the broad spectrum of cultural production—or only for academic discourse? Why is it that when representatives of academic communities studying non-Russian cultures in the region asserted the need to look at the ex-Soviet world through a postcolonial lens as early as 1992 (one of the earliest such attempts was made by the Ukrainian Australian scholar Marko Pavlyshyn), they were ignored or ridiculed by the overwhelming majority of Russian intellectuals and Western-trained specialists on Russian culture? Why, a dozen years later, did many of the same intellectuals and specialists, in Russia and the West, suddenly have a change of heart?

One possible explanation for this change lies in their strategic move to stake out disciplinary authority. In terms of disciplinary designations,

a distinction between colonial discourse analysis and the focus on postcolonialism needs to be borne in mind. If the former has a venerable history in the study of the Russian and Soviet empires (Walter Kolarz's 1952 study *Russia and Her Colonies* is an example from the West), the latter is a recent and contradictory phenomenon. The remainder of my remarks will focus on the strategic appropriation of some elements of the discourse on postcolonialism by Russian academics. Throughout the 1990s, postcolonialism was perhaps the only major contemporary theoretical discourse persistently ignored by Russian academics. As recently as 1998, for instance, a Russian survey of the Western discourse on postmodernism labeled Edward Said a "well-known literary scholar of a leftist-anarchist orientation" and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak a "socially engagé feminist deconstructionist" (Il'in 107–08, 125).¹ As it begins to register on the intellectual radar of some Russian scholars, postcolonialism is finding a somewhat unexpected application—in support of a view that Russia, starting with Peter the Great's reforms, developed as a self-colonizing state.

The roots of this argument have been traced to the writings of the nineteenth-century philosopher Petr Chaadaev, but its rediscovery in contemporary cultural discourse has been credited to a 1990 essay by Boris Groys. The reforms of Peter I, asserts Groys,

constitute a sui generis act of self-colonization by the Russian people: one of its parts, as it were, pretended to be foreigners, in their most frightening and threatening incarnation, and started consistently and radically persecuting everything Russian and imposing everything that by the standards of that time was considered modernized and Western. . . . [A]s a result of this cruel inoculation, Russia saved itself from real colonization by a West that surpassed it technically and militarily. (358)

Aleksandr Etkind has attempted to integrate Groys's thesis with the postcolonial paradigm. In the Russian historiographical tradition, he argues, Russian colonization is viewed as being of a settler type, "an expansion of the Russian people" as it created "its own territory," while Western coloni-

zation is seen as a product of geographic discoveries and military conquests. “The notions,” Etkind writes, “are used in a way that makes Russian colonization come across as a good deed and European as bad. In the case of Europe, colonization is defined in a manner that presupposes decolonization, while in that of Russia the definition makes decolonization logically impossible” (64–65).

A critical tone barely registers in Etkind’s analysis of this model; even the conquest of the Caucasus was “not quite colonial” for Etkind, since “after the incorporation of Georgia it [the northern Caucasus] found itself inside the empire’s territory” (63). In other words, once a noncontiguous colony is appended to the Russian empire, the imperative is to naturalize it by conquering the territory in between and restoring contiguity. In effect, Etkind perpetuates aspects of Russian colonialist ideology, providing evidence of how far Russian culture still is from “find[ing] a positive, enlightened solution” to the enduring legacy of colonization, a solution Etkind calls for at the end of his essay.

Perhaps the most thought-provoking instance to date of Russian engagement with postcolonial theory can be found in Madina Tlostanova’s 2004 book *Postsovetskaia literatura i estetika transkul'turatsii* (“Post-Soviet Literature and the Aesthetics of Transculturation”). Her book, more conversant with theorizations of postcolonialism and globalization than any previous work in the Russian academy, carries a strong autobiographical investment and highlights the author’s intellectual position as a representative of russophone non-ethnically-Russian intelligentsia.

This volume’s primary trouble lies in its excessive privileging of the position of a postcolonial hybrid intellectual who is speaking to, and in the context of, the academic institutions of the former metropole and in its disdain toward all nationalist discourses of resistance. Tlostanova’s strategically difficult self-positioning as someone multiply colonized and “othered”—someone who rejects the humiliating positions of a “native informant” and of “a political activist who uses his otherness in his favor”—is productive when Tlostanova critiques the mainstream Russian intellectual discourse but is problematic in its rejection of the possibility of a meaningful politics of resistance.

Tlostanova’s interest in transnational writing in English prompts her to seek similar manifestations in post-Soviet Russia. She limits her results by solely examining conventional, plot-driven narrative fiction: the only “positive heroes” that emerge in her book are Andrei Volos, an ethnically Russian writer who grew up in Tajikistan and is best known for his novel *Khurramabad*, which allegorically portrays the collapse of the (imagined) multilingual and multicultural utopia of the Soviet project and its descent into ethnic hatred and the ruthless violence of civil war, and Afanasii Mamedov, a writer of Azeri Jewish background whose work focuses on the similar collapse of the multilingual and multiethnic city of his childhood and youth, Baku. Both writers are nostalgic for the purported multiculturalism of these colonial Soviet sites, and Tlostanova appears to find solidarity with them. Her approval of these texts contrasts with her scorn for the only non-Russian-language post-Soviet texts she considers: two Ukrainian novels, Yuri Andrukhovych’s *The Moskoviad* and Oksana Zabuzhko’s *Field Work in Ukrainian Sex* (270–81; 173–82). Published months before Ukraine’s Orange Revolution, Tlostanova’s book is a paradoxical combination of a call to rethink the Russian imperial legacy, a symptomatic representation of persisting imperialist prejudices, and a cautionary instance of a strategic discursive appropriation gone awry.

Although the works discussed above constitute a somewhat dispiriting instance of theoretical travel from the West into Russia, the fact that Russian scholars are beginning to engage with the discourse on postcolonialism can only be welcomed. One hopes that the recent cultural and geopolitical realignments within the former Soviet empire sometimes referred to as the “colored revolutions” will eventually prompt a more radical rethinking, and working through, of Russia’s imperial legacy, not only by scholars outside Russia but, crucially, by those participating in the country’s internal intellectual debate as well.

Vitaly Chernetsky
Harvard University

NOTE

1. All translations are mine.

WORKS CITED

- Etkind, Aleksandr. "Fuko i tezis vnutrennei kolonizatsii: Postkolonial'nyi vzgliad na sovetskoe proshloe." *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 49 (2001): 50–73.
- Groys, Boris. "Imena goroda." *Utopiia i obmen*. Moscow: Znak, 1993. 357–65.
- Il'in, Il'ia. *Postmodernizm ot istokov do kontsa stoletii*. Moscow: Intrada, 1998.
- Kolarz, Walter. *Russia and Her Colonies*. New York: Praeger, 1952.
- Moore, David Chioni. "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique." *PMLA* 116 (2001): 111–28.
- Pavlyshyn, Marko. "Post-colonial Features in Contemporary Ukrainian Culture." *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* 6.2 (1992): 41–55.
- Tlostanova, Madina. *Postsovetskaia literatura i estetika transkul'turatsii: Zhit' nikogda, pisat' niotkuda*. Moscow: Editorial URSS, 2004.