IMPERIAL KNOWLEDGE

Russian Literature and Colonialism

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Contributions to the Study of World Literature, Number 99

Greenwood Press
Westport, Connecticut • London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Thompson, Ewa M. (Ewa Majewska), date.
Imperial knowledge : Russian literature and colonialism / Ewa M. Thompson.
p. cm.—(Contributions to the study of world literature, ISSN 0738–9345 ; no. 99)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0–313–31311–3 (alk. paper)
1. Russian literature—19th century—History and criticism. 2. Russian literature—20th century—History and criticism. 3. Imperialism in literature. 4. Nationalism in literature. I. Title. II. Series.
PG3011.T447 2000
891.709'358—dc21 99–045567

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 99–045567
ISBN: 0–313–31311–3
ISSN: 0738–9345

First published in 2000

Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881
An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.
www.greenwood.com

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48–1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Introduction: Nationalism, Colonialism, Identity

To introduce the subject of colonialism in Russian literature, a clarification of terminology is in order. This book argues that in contrast to Western colonialism, in which national concerns were often subsumed by those of race and overseas conquest, Russian colonialism leaned heavily on national identity and contiguous expansion. The book further argues that a distinction should be maintained between defensive nationalism, which is poised to defend identity, and aggressive nationalism, which strives to export identity and acquire land on which Others live. Russian nationalism is both aggressive and defensive, and in its aggressive mode it has transformed itself into an imperial appetite for colonial possessions contiguous to ethnic Russia. We may assume that to become a colony of another political and national power, a territory need not sign treaties acknowledging dominion status, as was the case with many British possessions. In the Russian case, territorial conquests were followed by incorporation into Russia or imposition of governments subservient to Russian interests. Russian literature mediated this process by imposing on the conquered territories a narrative of Russian presence that elbowed out native concerns and the native story.

Not only Central Asia and Central and Eastern Europe have been subjected to Russian colonialism but also Siberia, the Caucasus, and the Far East. While the collapse of communism brought sovereignty to Russia's European possessions and to Central Asia, in Siberia, the Caucasus and the Far East there is an increasingly uneasy relationship with Moscow. From the point of view of territory and population, Siberia and the Caucasus are distinct entities, comparable to the "white colonies" of the British, such as Canada or Australia. A devolution of power in Siberia and the Far East need not involve total separation from Moscow, and the book makes no recommendations as to how the process of decentralization should develop. What it tries to show is how Russian writers abetted the power of the center so as to prevent the periphery from speaking in its own

voice and conveying its own experience as narrative subject rather than as attachment to the center.

The introduction provides a survey of approaches to nationalism in the twentieth century. Chapter 1 attempts to position the problem of Russian colonial self-assertion within the context of textual politics in Russia and abroad. It points out differences between Western and Russian colonialism, and it attempts to show that within the agreed-upon conceptual framework of literary scholarship on Russia, Russian colonialism faded from view. The standards, conventions, and expectations of English-language scholarship on Russian literature do not accommodate the aggressive search for self-assertion that is conveyed in Russian literary masterpieces. The subsequent chapters show how Russian writers used their privileged positions as spokespersons for the growing empire to overshadow other discourses, and how they imposed their foremeaning (to use Hans-Georg Gadamer's term)[1] on readers of Russian literature at home and abroad. My goal is to draw attention to that textual victory rather than to write an encyclopedic survey of Russian literature. The final chapter of this book is an attempt to show that a reversal of this centuries-long process may be in sight. While the reversal is minuscule and can easily be suppressed, it is nevertheless real and confidence inspiring. Naturally, my analysis is not meant to replace earlier studies but to supplement them: it is not a reduction of meaning but its enrichment that I have tried to bring about.

I am aware that no single interpretation can effect a radical change in the structures of attitude and reference regarding Russia. The discursive formation called Russia is an intellectual reality whose metamorphosis will naturally be slow. The English-language readings of Russian literature that turn a blind eye to the problem of Russian colonialism or aggressive nationalism will not disappear overnight, as no compelling political or cultural interests work toward that purpose. Unlike the postcolonial territories of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, which have produced numerous personalities and arguments exposing the obverse side of the colonialist medal, the former Russian dominions have produced few such voices. When the Red Army left Central Europe, the liberated countries turned their attention away from Russia, while the former Soviet republics are too busy picking up the pieces of their economies and societies to afford investment in postcolonial discourse. While the Russian Far East has displayed stirrings toward independence, the discursive presence of such happenings is so far minimal.[2] In the Russian Federation in the late 1990s, neither laws nor societal habits nor language itself can easily accommodate anticolonialist voices. The situation still resembles the heyday of Western imperialism, when hardly anyone seriously questioned the domination of one ethnic or territorial group by another. I therefore cannot avail myself, as can postcolonial critics who deal with the West's colonies, of a plethora of scholarly studies describing the Russian colonial enterprise in Asia and Europe.[3] Nor can I count on a massive recognition of the problem, so alien it may appear to those not used to the idea of treating Russian literary texts as resources and auxiliaries for garnering imperial possessions. While the voices of a George Vernadsky or a Nicholas Riasanovsky have been internalized as representative of early American

discourse on Russian history, a mention of their contemporary, Jan Kucharzewski, is likely to be shrugged off as irrelevant in crafting an image of that history.[4] The study of Russian literature from the standpoint of its colonial context is at an even more elementary stage. So far, virtually all scholars who have made any headway in dealing with Russian colonialism have been political scientists.[5]

In 1988, a Ukrainian American scholar, Roman Szporluk, published *Communism and Nationalism: Karl Marx versus Friedrich List*.[6] There he argued that the intellectuals' fascination with socialism had elevated Marx to the status of a major thinker, whereas Marx's contemporary Friedrich List should more appropriately have been so elevated, because his formulations corresponded better to twentieth-century obsessions than did Marx's theses about the stateless and nationless proletariat. "Between the individual and humanity stands the nation," thundered Friedrich List, as he developed the theory of national economic egoism that the Germans and others have so radically implemented.

However selective List's and Szporluk's suggestions about nationalism may appear, they touch upon problems of continuing importance. Over the last hundred years in Europe and elsewhere, many territorial empires transformed themselves into nation-states under the influence of the idea of nationalism, shedding off their minorities in the process. The minorities themselves formed new states or returned to their earlier sovereign status.[7] The fall of the Soviet Union, fueled as it was by the dual powers of economy and nationalism, has exacerbated ethnic tensions within the fragmenting empire of the Russians.[8]

The community of interpretation that existed at American universities in the late 1990s has not treated the national question with the epistemological subtlety so often encountered in the discussions of society and its ills. Within that community, nationhood is largely defined as citizenship. Emile Durkheim formulated a thesis that there is at the basis of social order in any state a set of commonly held values and norms, and that it accounts for social cohesiveness. This Enlightenment-based interpretation has been widely accepted in academic discourse dealing with such dissimilar political entities as nation-states and empires. Indeed, the English language barely distinguishes between *state* and *nation,* or citizenship and nationality. But in Asia, Latin America, and continental Europe it is assumed that nationality has to do with cultural habits and memories of a person, whereas citizenship indicates the civic condition (or choice, in case of naturalization) of being a citizen of this or that political entity. While the two generally coincide, an assumption that they *always* coincide leads to such amusing statements by American journalists (who take their cues from academic specialists) as that in Chechnya Russians were fighting other Russians, or that twenty million "Russians" died in World War II. Consider the following note, which appeared in the *Houston Chronicle* on 6 September 1998:

> Five armed Russian sailors were arrested Saturday, hours after they allegedly killed a guard and seized 47 hostages in a remote northern region, a Russian news agency reported. All the hostages were released unharmed and no hostage-takers were hurt when they were

> overpowered by special troops of the Federal Security Service, or FSB, Interfax reported. The sailors had demanded a plane to take them to the southern Russian region of Dagestan, a troubled area in the Caucasus mountains, according to the report, citing FSB director Vladimir Putin. The hostage crisis apparently stemmed from a suspected car-bomb explosion that killed at least 17 people in the capital of Dagestan on Friday. One of the sailors said a relative may have died in the blast. The others were described as participating out of solidarity.

Within the semantics of nationalism current in American academia, the note is unremarkable. A second look, however, reveals the confusion that went into this text—owing to Russian colonial politics, to the way TASS formulates its messages, and to the American editor's insensitivity to problems of nationalism. The gist of the story, as gleaned from another source, was as follows. The sailors were stationed on Novaia Zemlia, an Arctic island polluted by nuclear waste to which the Soviet Union *and* the Russian Federation have been dispatching their most intransigent adversaries (it has been rumored that Raoul Wallenberg died on Novaia Zemlia).[9] After a few months of exposure to radiation from nuclear devices and other radioactive debris, the victims are well on their way to painful deaths. The rebellious soldiers on Novaia Zemlia were not Russians but Dagestanis, relatives and neighbors of the rebellious Chechens. Dagestan is inhabited by a non-Slavic Muslim population and by Russian colonial settlers. The Russians conquered Dagestan in the nineteenth century but did not succeed in Russifying the area. Dagestan is one of the territories of the Russian [*Rossiiskaia*] Federation most likely to secede from it in the foreseeable future. Clashes between the Moscow-installed authorities and Dagestani partisans have been frequent in the 1990s. Several areas in Dagestan tried to join Ichkeriia, or the Chechen Republic. The explosion to which the note refers was part of the armed struggle that the Dagestanis have mounted against Russians and, occasionally, against each other (the Dagestani population is divided into clans, and the conditions of colonial dependency have exacerbated local animosities). The soldiers in question were indeed driven to desperation by the thought of their relatives perishing in an explosion some two thousand miles away, but in registering this message a casual reader is likely to miss the more significant fact that the Russian military had sent members of an ethnic group from southerly (and rebellious) Dagestan to the arctic and health-destroying nuclear cemetery of Novaia Zemlia.[10] Unaware of these semantic nuances, the American journalist who wrote the note contributed to a misreading in America of Russian discourse and Russian politics.

With regard to nationalism, Enlightenment-generated concepts fail to accommodate the distinction between imperialistic nationalism, reaching out aggressively to subjugate and exploit potential colonies, and defensive nationalism, poised to preserve traditions and identities. Within the matrix of "nationalism" *tout court,* the imperial powers that controlled much of the world during the last two centuries often appear to be innocent of aggressive appropriations, whereas

representatives of the colonized nations (including the mid-sized and small European nations) are assigned blame for the historical processes of which they are merely tail ends. All too often, the two world wars are attributed to the "powder keg" of Eastern Europe rather than to the voracious imperialism of the great European empires. It is standard today to link the French Revolution with nationalism (the Revolution made an appeal to a kingless people, thus invoking nationalist sentiments instead of subject loyalty);[11] still, J. E. E. Dalberg-Acton has traced the rise of modern nationalism to the partitions of Poland, pointing out the pernicious results of "this famous measure, the most revolutionary act of the old absolutism [which] deprived an entire people of its right to constitute an independent community." He has put the blame for the rise of nationalism on empires rather than on revolutions, an observation that deserves more credit than it has received.[12] In direct opposition to Acton's view, Elie Kedourie and E. J. Hobsbawn have argued that the multinational European empires need not have been broken into nation-states, since the "historical consciousness" of the nations they encompassed was far from certifiable.[13] Characteristically, they fail to acknowledge that within these multinational states, one nationality invariably prevailed and forced others into a relationship of colonial dependency. Kedourie's argument in particular is typically dismissive of all but the best-armed nationalisms of the world. It also is ahistorical, in its invocation of a static historicity of nations, and it tends to exonerate colonialism at the expense of nationalism. Kedourie represents that Western dislike of nonwestern cultural and political identities that, as Leela Gandhi put it, echoes a conviction of an organic inadequacy of nonwestern peoples.[14] Western scholars sometimes look with a disapproving eye at the rising sense of postcolonial nationhood in Asia, Africa, as well as in Central and Eastern Europe, implying that self-identification based on nationality is a kind of shameful disease, of which the guilty party should get rid as soon as possible, unless possessed of the army and rhetorical wit needed to argue its case worldwide. In *Orientalism,* Edward Said identifies numerous scholars who argued in this manner.[15] Needless to say, the smaller and struggling nations cannot compete with the hundreds and thousands of books that etch condemnation of their identities onto the memory of the educated in first-world countries.[16] Implicit in such rhetoric is the assumption that while the powerless national groups are culpable by virtue of their separate identities, the taxonomer himself or herself is wonderfully impartial and free of any national attachments whatsoever. Yet as Margaret Canovan has pointed out in a seminal book, "The modern liberal democratic ideals depend for the plausibility on the collective power generated by national loyalties that are inconsistent with the ideals themselves. . . . General humanitarian principles and projects presuppose a power base sustained by particular solidarity, while the maintenance of that power base contradicts the very principles it renders plausible."[17] In other words, while Western democracies preach and support universalist ideals in the rest of the world, their ability to do so is predicated on attachments to, and preferential treatment of, particular languages and cultures of Western provenance. Professor

Canovan argues that this inconsistency has been disregarded or papered over by Western political scientists.

In her discussion of nationalism and feminism, Leela Gandhi argues that the Enlightenment-influenced interpretation of nationalism is related to masculinity and manliness, which the proud Europeans were all too eager to deny to those whom they colonized. The British were fond of speaking of effeminate Bengali males, thus rhetorically belittling Bengali nationalism.[18] More broadly, the trivialization of national identity of the colonized peoples has been one of the ways of subjugating them, classifying them as lacking something, as not quite as good as those who wielded power over them, as bearing similarities to the weaker sex, whose destiny was to remain under male tutelage. Within this kind of discourse, small nations were not entitled to national identity, because being small clashes with that sense of male virility that is part of aggressive nationalism's self-definition.

This book is based on the assumption that there are different nationalisms, just as there are different countries, ethnicities, traditions, and histories, and that routinely to use the word in a generic sense serves the ideological interests of those who favor the uprooting of all but the strongest nationalisms of the world. The nationalism of the confident and stable ethnicities that have been beneficiaries of centuries of secure accumulation of wealth is different in its aims and methods from the nationalism of those struggling to survive in a geographical territory whose sovereignty is being contested. The group identity of ethnic elites differs from the identity of the unlettered masses, who share only some elements of the complex mythology that is part of the nationalistic ideal. The manipulative and aggressive nationalisms that strive to colonize others are quite different from the weak, defensive, and reactive nationalisms that easily fall victim to the military and rhetorical appropriation of their adversaries, thus contributing to the situation mentioned earlier—namely, the imposition of "nationalistic guilt" on the politically weak nations while exonerating the power plays initiated by the strong. Colonialism is usually the next stage of aggressive nationalism, and its rooting in traditional male hegemony is too obvious to argue.

What is needed is a taxonomy distinguishing between on one hand the efforts to know and cultivate one's history and idealized traditions, and on the other the efforts at self-assertion through conquest and suppression of other traditions, a self-assertion that characterizes nationalisms that are merely expressions of the hegemonies of unyieldingly male cultures. The fear of essentialism, which acts against the development of a new taxonomy of nationalism, has to be overcome.[19] The functionalists make some useful distinctions but miss the mythology of nationalism. Karl Deutsch strips nationalism of its shared history and memories, treating it as a phenomenon of social exchange. Thus a nation is "a community of communication" operating in an everlasting present.[20] Benedict Anderson seeks the roots of nationalism in literacy, positing that literacy made possible "imagined communities" that did not exist in earlier times.[21] This is in contrast to the nineteenth and early twentieth-century nationality theorists, from the German Romantics and the Central European patriots to President Woodrow

Wilson. They invoked religion, geography, custom, and history in their discourse.[22] Germany produced many of these theorists (as well as quite a few pathologies of nationalism, from J. G. Fichte to the National Socialists). Adam Mickiewicz and Lajos Kossuth were two Central European voices arguing against the pathologies of nationalism called empires; they advocated nation-states at a time when empires were thriving, colonialism was at its peak, and national self-assertion of small and mid-sized nations seemed irrevocably suppressed in Europe. They were dismissed and excluded from the standard intellectual histories of Europe, even though their mediatory role was huge, and much bloodshed could have been avoided had they been listened to.[23] Adam Mickiewicz's and Juliusz Słowacki's writings on Russian colonialism are particularly valuable, but they reside in the archives of Central European thought, which the American community of interpretation has ignored, privileging instead the Russian and German interpretive hegemony.[24] A popular and nonbelligerent formulation of such democratic views appears in the various pronouncements of the United Nations and in publications of such international bodies as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. One such publication holds that a *nation* is a group of people who share the same history, customs, loyalties, and language (but not necessarily the same blood lines, an important distinction that rightly dissociates nationalism from racism) and that nationalism consists in an awareness of this situation. This view of nationalism assumes that "humanity is naturally divided into nations, which are distinguishable from one another by their historically conditioned traits." National self-government is thus the natural and legitimate form of government, and the nation-state is the most natural form of organization for human groups.[25] Prominently featured here is a Wilsonian approach that accepts the identity and continuity of nations.

In *The Ethnic Origins of Nations,* Anthony D. Smith traces the development of modern awareness of national identity to *ethnie,* or the ethnic community predating modern nations, formed during military ventures and other significant undertakings of a group of people.[26] The *ethnie* shares a myth-symbol complex (*mythomoteur*). Nations are entities possessed of a common *ethnie* and a broadly developed *mythomoteur*. One might add that this *mythomoteur* may include narratives extolling masculinity and its ways of dealing with the world, such as wars, hunts, and explorations; or it may include feminine ways of self-defense, as for instance the Polish myth of Princess Wanda of Kraków, who was pursued by the German Prince Reitiger and, in order not to betray her identity (a marriage to a German would Germanize Kraków and Poland), committed suicide. After the funeral, her grateful subjects built for her a large mound, which can be seen until this day in the vicinity of Kraków. Wanda belongs to legendary times, and she might never have existed; however, like Princess Olga of Kiev, she became embedded in the Polish *mythomoteur*, as one of its key elements.

National identity tends to congeal into an androgynous form, as in the fatherland/motherland interchange. But while in German culture the masculine element prevails (there is no *Mutterland*, only *Vaterland*), in Russian culture one observes a proliferation of concepts that stress the feminine. "Russia" most often

enters a discourse as a feminine entity, as *matushka Rossiia* or *rodina*. This last word has no equivalent in other European languages, with the possible exception of the German *Heimat*. *Rodina* designates a place where one was born or to which one bears an allegiance that surpasses other allegiances. Interestingly, this feminine aspect of Russian identity has not toned down the aggressiveness of Russian nationalism. As Galina Starovoitova noted, Russian national identity is closely related to territoriality; all conquered land is soon redesignated as Russia. France has its *Marianne*, but that is an incomparably weaker concept than the *rodina*.

The formation of the mythological complexes of nations occurred at a time when literacy was a privilege of a few members of the upper classes. At first, only those few were conversant with the history and early formulations of the myth-symbol complex. Its broad distribution in modern societies has undoubtedly been assisted but not determined by mass literacy and technology. The national will-to-difference is a form of the will-to-be, and not merely a manifestation of *ressentiment*, or a futile attempt to confine the world within a single principle that purports to endow it with identity.[27] The collective flavor of each such myth-symbol complex is *sui generis*, hence the unique experience of feeling oneself part of a certain nation. The futility of forging instant nations, such as the Yugoslav, the Soviet, or the Czecho-Slovak, was due to the absence of a symbolic complex that members of these fake taxonomical groups might share. The failure of empires to generate loyalty of the colonized peoples stems from an absence, in states created by conquest of the already existing nations, of a common body of memories. David Cannadine, Eric Hobsbawn, and Hugh Trevor-Roper have rightly noted that leaders of empires exerted much effort to forge and reinforce such memories.[28]

For such a symbolic complex to arise, a large group of people has to have sufficient leisure over long periods of time, and that group has to produce writers who can articulate the national myth in literature. In preindustrial age, the lives of most people were too short and miserable to afford much psychological space for the creation of nations. This is one of the reasons why nationalism is a modern and postmodern phenomenon; why so many new nations have sprung up lately;[29] and why the remaining empires are probably doomed to instability as the "natives" advance in literacy and material well-being, generating a literature that mediates and reinforces their experience.

One can distinguish between two types of premodern *ethnie*, lateral and vertical. The lateral possesses a myth-symbol complex that is aristocratic and intensive, and it develops among members of the upper classes sharing a set of loyalties and memories that in some way contribute to their self-aggrandizement and a sense of mission. The vertical *ethnie* is one in which a single ethnic culture permeates in varying degrees most strata of the population. The lateral *ethnie* creates among the masses of people feelings of belonging and continuity, which are the scaffolding of national identity. The complex of myths, memories, and symbols that nations bring into being shapes their constitutive political myth, which in turn weighs heavily on their political culture.[30]

Literature is a crucial building block and also an expression of national identity. Attitudes toward victory and defeat vary greatly from nation to nation, based partly on patterns commemorated in literature. Past wars seem to be crucial to the forging of national identity, regardless of whether they were won or lost. The memory of these wars is rhetorically refined by ethnic elites. These reworkings contribute to the lateral and vertical *ethnie* and thus to the sense of nationhood, but the patterns of behavior that they produce are vastly different. Those ethnic communities that have waged aggressive wars almost continuously throughout their history and that have celebrated victories and defeats with equal vigor (e.g., the Russians), have an exceptionally well-developed senses of nationhood. The German sense of nationhood likewise seems to be traceable to the pugnacious history of the Teutons and their victorious self-assertion in the heart of the European continent. But a great many lost wars seem to have a similarly sustaining effect on nationhood. The Poles lost all wars they fought since the eighteenth century (with the exception of the Polish-Soviet war of 1920–21), but this continuous chain of national disasters did not make the Polish nationality reconvert itself into ethnicity. The Ukrainian national identity has been greatly strengthened by the memory of the Soviet-engineered famine of 1932–33, during which up to ten million Ukrainians lost their lives. In September 1993, the Ukrainian government organized famine celebrations to uplift hearts—paradoxically, for the celebration was one of defeat. The Ukrainian mythological complex is obviously very different from those prevailing in first-world countries. It is still in the process of formation, as Ukrainians regain the self-assurance that their Russian and, earlier, Polish colonial masters tried to take away from them.

Defensive nationalism characterizes those memory communities that perceive themselves as being at risk, either because of their smallness (Lithuanians, Georgians, Chechens) or because their expansionist neighbors threaten them. Those affected by it tend to look inward rather than outward, and consequently they fail to develop successful ways of dealing with the outside world. Defensive nationalism is a means of resisting the encroachment of the hostile Other upon one's identity, yet it is all too often interpreted as xenophobia or antisocial behavior. Such interpretations are themselves manifestations of colonial proclivities, as they force the Other into the Procrustean bed of discursive space staked out by mediators representing major political powers.

Expansive nationalism looks outward rather than toward itself and as a result is less aware of its own chauvinism and its colonial desire. Somewhere in that privileged space created by an awareness of present glories and successes in imposing on Others one's own self-perception lies a proclivity to taking away the land of Others and establishing there institutions and activities of one's own. At various times in modern history, nations have been subjected to strictures of colonialism that impeded their development and sapped much of the energy that would otherwise have been spent on society-building activities and on individual cultivation. Colonialism can develop, and has developed, in diverse areas of the world, and its subjects have not been limited to nonwhite non-Europeans.

Rapid population growth in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries coincided with the growth of nationalism and added to its vitality. The growth of population density facilitated dissemination of the constitutive political myths and of other myths necessary for the "imagined communities" to arise. The nation-as-people (as opposed to the nation-as-empire or nation-as-state) absorbed some religious identities of the past. Lacking the enabling mode of a supportive state, individuals belonging to stateless nations, of whom there were many in the nineteenth century and who continued to clamor for attention at the turn of the twentieth century, dedicated their creative energies to the cultivation and celebration of nationhood in literature and in discursive writing, and sometimes in war.

The development of identity requires a measure of societal freedom. Thus representatives of defensive nationalisms spend their resources on resistance to the dominating imperial powers, at the expense of many other activities. The numerous nationalistic risings in nineteenth-century Europe and in the tsarist Russian Empire drained the resources of smaller nations, while their cost to the empires was easily absorbed. This has been well stated by Romuald Traugutt, leader of the 1863 Polish rising against the tsars. Asked why he had joined the rising even though he was a bookish and timid man of a weak physical constitution, Traugutt answered: "God requires virtue of man, and virtue is so much harder to attain in conditions of slavery than in liberty." Implied in Traugutt's answer is the thought that in order to attain liberty, one first has to have political sovereignty.

This perceived need for freedom makes for an uneasy relationship between postcolonial theory, dependent as it is on Michel Foucault's and Jacques Derrida's insights into discourse, and the actual struggle of colonial peripheries for self-assertion. The tension is particularly visible in the discourse about the former Soviet Union and the Russian Empire. From Chechnya to Czechoslovakia, the mobilizing power of a call to freedom has prevailed over considerations of race, economy, and discourse. Within the Russian colonial sphere, the struggle was not against the Western ways of knowing or the cultural nationalism of the English or the French but against Russian priorities and Russian "little knowledge." While postmodernism offered itself as a welcome replacement for Western metaphysics to such postcolonial theorists as Gayatri Spivak, it offered little to the subaltern peoples of the Soviet bloc. Spivak remarks:

> When I was first brought up—when I first read Derrida I didn't know who he was, I was very interested to see that he was actually dismantling the philosophical tradition from inside rather than from outside, because of course we were brought up in an education system in India where the name of the hero of that philosophical system was the universal human being, and we were taught that if we could begin to approach an internationalisation of that human being, then we could be human.[31]

Within the context to which Spivak belongs, her remark expresses anger at the universalizing taxonomy of the Enlightenment, which imposed inadequacy

on subaltern peoples. But within the Soviet/Russian Empire, this ideological cause of disagreement did not exist; the Western model, however flawed, was not the enemy. At stake was rather the imposition of cultural identity by an empire alien to the perceived defensive identities of the colonized peoples, hence the perceived need for "freedom" from the confining imperial power.

Anderson was right in linking nationalism and literacy; nationalism is a by-product of literacy in the special circumstances of secular society and demographic growth—but it is much more than that. The spread of literacy put the aristocratic *ethnie* within reach of the lettered masses. What used to be an exclusive tradition of aristocrats became the property of shopkeepers, small farmers, and factory workers. Reinterpretations of that body of memories do, of course, proceed apace in any society, but that process is unlikely to destroy the myths inscribed in literature, social habits, and institutions. The real or imagined heroes of the past, who once inhabited only the memory of the small elites, now inhabit the minds of people for whom family, religion, and political authority used to be the only social realities. They blend with or replace these other loyalties, formatting each individual identity and enabling it to forge its way through the thickets of postmodernity.

As mentioned before, the postcolonial theorists in the West are in disagreement concerning nationalism. Edward Said has argued, albeit somewhat ambivalently, against nationalism's deceptive charms. However, in *The Wretched of the Earth* Frantz Fanon treats nationalism as a remedy necessary for curing the disease of colonialism. Elleke Boehmer also grants to nationalists a place in anticolonial struggle.[32] Leela Gandhi makes a case for nationalism as "the only form of political organization which is appropriate for the social and intellectual conditions of the modern world." She vigorously argues that the antinationalist phobias of first-world thinkers and their readiness to attribute chauvinism to the assertions of nationhood by stateless or empire-dominated nations are echoes of a Hegelian perception of a "lack" characterizing all but the strongest nationalisms of Europe. Hegel considered the Prussian state the pinnacle of historical development in his time, a view containing the germ of the colonial prejudice that postcolonial theory exposes. The colonial and imperial nations characteristically *universalize* themselves and declare any insurgency against them (such as nationalism) illegitimate, says Gandhi. In doing so, they invoke their own modern societal structures, while suggesting that the insurgency is rural, backward, or uncivilized. Under such circumstances, rhetorical appropriation of a militarily weak enemy is an easy feat. In Gandhi's view, the "paranoid antipathy" toward nationalism is a form of retreat to the set of attitudes and ways of knowing that generated, among others, Orientalism.

Thus I would argue that the choice is not between a *Völkisch* concept of a nation, of the kind the Germans have developed, and the Enlightenment-based citizenship concept. There are other choices. One is tempted to state, somewhat facetiously, that the nationalism of the weak may be human nature's revenge on the postmodern philosophical framework, which denies the possibility of continuity and tends to see past and present as fragmented and discontinuous. While

postmodernity trivialized history and colonialism denied the subalterns access to it, nationalism demonstrates that human beings crave history and that history cannot be engineered out of their consciousnesses. Ignoring nationalism will not make it go away, while understanding it better may contribute to the elimination or weakening of its disorders. More research into the variety of nationalistic experience could help refine and civilize that universal drive for identity and continuity, while at the same time curbing its imperialistic pathology. This book is mostly concerned with that pathology. It does however acknowledge the legitimacy of nationalism as a way of self-assertion and an instrument shaping individual identities in modern and postmodern times.

NOTES

1. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury, 1975), 238.

2. Paul Goble, "Can Russian Diplomacy Hold Russia Together?" Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 23 September 1998.

3. One exception is the Hoover Institution Series "Studies of Nationalities in the USSR." It includes Edward A. Allworth's *The Modern Uzbeks* (1990), Alan Fisher's *The Crimean Tatars* (1978), Martha B. Olcott's *The Kazakhs* (1987), Azade-Ayse Rorlich's *The Volga Tatars* (1986), Andrejs Plakans' *The Latvians* (1995), Audrey L. Altstadt's *The Azerbaijani Turks* (1992), and such related works as Rodger Swearingen's *Siberia and the Soviet Far East* (1987). Also Hafeez Malik, ed., *Central Asia: Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994); and Islam Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998).

4. Jan Kucharzewski, *The Origins of Modern Russia* (New York: Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences, 1948).

5. Uri Ra'anan, Richard Pipes, Hélène Carrère-d'Encausse, Alain Besançon.

6. Roman Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism: Karl Marx versus Friedrich List* (Oxford and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988).

7. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981).

8. Hélène Carrère-d'Encausse, *The End of the Soviet Empire: The Triumph of Nations* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

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17. Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 1996), 137.

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25. *Minority Rights: Problems, Parameters, and Patterns in the CSCE* [Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe] Context (Washington, DC: CSCE, 1992), 1–2.

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27. Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, translated by W. Holdheim (New York: Free Press, 1960); Leszek Kołakowski's critique of Theodore Adorno in Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, vol. 3, translated by P. S. Falla (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 358–9.

28. In *The Invention of Tradition*, they argued that nineteenth-century Germany and Great Britain supervised and encouraged the rise of nationalistic rituals of allegedly ancient origin—rituals that they had in fact invented, with a view to raising the prestige of the German and British empires, heightening the emotional attachment to them of their citizens, and making citizens subservient to the empire's political

goals. *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), 15–42, 101–164 and 263–308.

29. In 1978, there were 149 nations represented in the United Nations; by 1998, the number had grown to 185. *Economist*, 19 December 1998.

30. Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 58.

31. Gayatri Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (London: Routledge, 1990), 7.

32. Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995).

2

Engendering Empire

The first archive of cultural descriptions that begin to define the Russians as successful imperialists consists of Russian Romantic writings about the Caucasus. Literary representations of Caucasus natives contained in these writings entered the canon of Russian literature, contributed to Russian self-perception, and influenced attitudes toward the Caucasus dwellers. The Romanticizing of colonialism in the works of Pushkin and Lermontov had its parallels in Orientalist literature of Western Europe. However, while Western Orientalism relied largely on expository writings, in Russia the role of poets and novelists was preeminent. Orientalist-style expository writings were limited to secret papers and memoranda prepared by Russian diplomats for the benefit of the crown.[1]

That this literary archive was created relatively late in Russian imperial history was due to the specificity of Russian cultural development that lagged behind territorial development. Before Pushkin and Lermontov appeared on the literary scene, Russia was not sufficiently literate to transform imperial experience into textual authority. In sixteenth and seventeenth-century Muscovy, secular literature had been meager, and cultural records had been largely religious, written in a language and an alphabet accessible to only a few hundred people in the realm. One of the few secular works of that period, a book of household rules titled *Domostroi,* focused on individual households rather than on society or politics.[2] The first part of *Domostroi* instructs the reader in how to believe in God and how to honor the tsar, but the remainder is devoted to family relations and household chores, such as pickling cucumbers for winter.[3] Side by side with this nonhegemonic view of the world, however, there existed secrecy, maintained under several tsars, about the conquest of Siberia: the Dutch traveler Isaac Massa speaks about it in his book on Russia.[4] Partly due to that secrecy, the conquest of Siberia in the seventeenth century generated no great literary lore, and writers' visions of their country continued to be isolationist, introverted, and timid.

In the mid-seventeenth century, there occurred a considerable influx into Moscow of writers from the Kiev Academy who were fluent in Polish, Russian, and Ruthenian (Ukrainian) and who introduced into Russian the Western European literary genres. Until that time, Polish and Latin had been the only "Western" tongues known to the Muscovites. The idea of claiming leadership among East Slavs, let alone among all Slavs, seemed alien to the Muscovite mentality.[5] In 1672, the Kiev-educated Lazar Baranovich dedicated two of his Polish works to the sons of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich. In a letter to the tsar he said, "I wrote these works in Polish because I know that your son Fëdor Alekseevich can read not only our native tongue but also Polish. . . . I dedicated [my other book] to your son Ivan Alekseevich because I know that members of your State Council. . . . also read Polish books with pleasure."[6] At that time, Polish secular literature was abundant and sophisticated by comparison to the Russian, although it was by no means as developed as Western European literatures; it formed the first and significant bridge between Muscovite writings and those of Western Europe. In an effort to erase the memory of that dependency, Russian literary historians later reinterpreted the seventeenth-century transition period, overemphasizing eighteenth-century contacts with Western Europe and suppressing Ruthenian-Muscovite and Polish-Muscovite contacts that occurred earlier.[7]

Peter the Great and his wars were conducive to the appearance of imperial literature, but there was little time in Peter's Russia for things intellectual, as Russian energies were spent on gaining access to the Baltic and on weakening Sweden and Poland. Under Catherine the Great, when another push westward occurred, the insecure voices of Russia's spokespersons asserted the country's imperial status with a grace less than that befitting a successful state-building venture. It was under Catherine and her successors that the articulation of Empire began to take place, in various reports and memoranda written by her ministers and envoys.[8] It was assisted by visible signs of a thriving political enterprise. The wealth plundered from the newly annexed western territories and extracted from the Siberian mines helped to refashion St. Petersburg into a "northern Venice." In the 1760s and 1770s, Catherine the Great began to assemble the first collections of European drawings and paintings that later would become the cornerstone of the Hermitage Museum. Thousands of European works of art made their home in Russia (the first collection bought by Catherine, that of Count Cobenzl, had more than four thousand master drawings by Western European artists);[9] Petersburg architecture acquired the features of European styles. Court writers appropriately sought a new identity, even though neither the Russian language nor the atmosphere of the imperial court was particularly hospitable to that development: Catherine once quipped that half of her court could not read and two-thirds could not write. The empire's successes created an enabling atmosphere, in which the court writers tried to assume a tone new to Russian discourse.

How did the culture that produced *Domostroi* and borrowed its first scribes and experts on literacy from the Jesuit-run Polish schools in Ukraine and from the

Greek Orthodox hierarchy acquire the consciousness of being an empire within just a few generations? Between the Muscovite cultural happenings and Nikolai Karamzin's magisterial yet fanciful *History of the Russian State* [*Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskogo*] (1818–20) stand the eighteenth-century versifiers and plodders, who are duly mentioned in the histories of Russian literature but whose rough-hewn language and intellectual imitativeness made them a miserable army. However, in their attempts to graft Western European literary genres onto the Russian language, they struck a radically new note, as if the Muscovite past did not exist and Russian literature was naturally seeking its proper voice as a companion and comrade in arms to the ancient European traditions that produced French Classicism and German Romanticism. Sumarokov's elegies, Kheraskov's epic poems and Derzhavin's odes would have fallen into oblivion as works of art, but they were uplifted by the current of success that lifts all imperial ships. A studious amnesia concerning the ways of old Muscovy and the Ruthenian-Muscovite contacts began to manifest itself in Russian literature at that time. Muscovite religious and folk poetry went out of fashion, and never-before-utilized forms of expression made their appearance. Yet Derzhavin's crude flattery toward Catherine in the "Felitsa" ode echoed Muscovite worship of the despot, and it later resonated in Petia Rostov's worship of the emperor in *War and Peace* and in the obsequiousness of the lower classes in Andrej Belyi's *St. Petersburg* (1913). These occasional eruptions of old traditions, however, had to do with the content rather than form of literary texts. The absence in eighteenth and nineteenth-century works of formal links with the Muscovite literary tradition is remarkable, and it indicates a conscious effort to deliver a new literature. This is where the articulation of Empire begins: in the bold attempt to strike a new tone appropriate for Russia's magnificent new capital and its enormous territorial possessions.

Nikolai Karamzin's *History* was the first major step in the direction of what might be called the textual empire. Its underlying concern was Russia's resplendent destiny. The work was commissioned by Tsar Alexander I. Upon completing the first eight volumes, Karamzin received from the tsar a promotion to the rank of State Councillor (*statskii sovetnik*), a medal, and sixty thousand rubles to cover the cost of publication.[10] The tsar liked the work so much that Karamzin was released from the obligation of submitting his *History* to the state censor, a rare exception in the Russian political system, where even Pushkin had to submit to censorship.

Unlike the minor poets associated with Catherine who, as befitted nouveau riches, stressed their connection to European literacy rather than to the style of writing produced by their own culture, Karamzin confidently undertook the task of linking Muscovy to the Russian empire. In fact, his *History* did not progress beyond the period of *smuta* in the early seventeenth century, thus failing to explain Muscovy's giant leap toward *imperium*. Karamzin heaped praise on the tsars who enlarged the borders of the state by all means possible, an indication that he understood well the connection between the empire's military victories

and its growing prestige in Europe. He was the first Russian intellectual to lay his considerable talent entirely on the altar of the state, articulating Russia's territorial aspirations and providing a blueprint for the defense of Russian acquisitiveness. In that regard, he played a role that his contemporary, G. W. F. Hegel, played in the Prussian state. Karamzin rehearsed his praise of Russian history in the biweekly he founded, *The Messenger of Europe* [*Vestnik Evropy*], even before he set out to write his *History*. In 1802, he wrote, "Unlike the Greeks and the Romans, we [the Russians] do not need to make up stories and fables to elevate our background: glory was the cradle of the Russian nation, and victory was its messenger. The Roman Empire learned our Slavic might, as we went there and destroyed the Roman legions. The Byzantine historians present our ancestors as wonderful people to whom everyone surrendered and who possessed extraordinary courage and knightly gentle-heartedness."[11]

The first edition of Karamzin's *History* was published in three thousand copies. The market included Alexander I's courtiers and some thousand Russian landowners who could afford and were interested in a work of many volumes. Karamzin was also read by the alien nobility of the subjugated societies, and a certain number of copies were sent as gifts to foreign notables. His work came out at a crucial moment of Russian history: during his lifetime and for the first time in history, Russia was admitted to the concert of European powers. Its major-player status was confirmed during the Napoleonic wars. More perhaps than any other European empire, Russia basked in the glory of the Congress of Vienna. The friendship of the tsar and the authority of Russian accomplishments contributed to the certainty of tone that Karamzin assumed in his work, and hence to the appearance of a Russocentrism that characterizes that work. In defiance of available evidence, Karamzin proclaimed the existence of a common culture within the empire. Other historians followed suit and provided crucial ideological support, saturating the literary market with a body of self-contained discourse that left no room for uncertainty, let alone dissent. Nikolai Polevoi published *History of the Russian Nation* [*Istoriia russkogo naroda*] in 1829–33, while Nikolai Ustrialov came out with *Russian History* [*Russkaia istoriia*] in 1837–40. Mikhail Pogodin edited, as a supplement to his monthly *Moskvitianin,* a series of works on Russian history and letters (1841–56). Ustrialov's work eventually became the official, government-approved textbook of Russian history, and it had many editions.[12] Over the years, the historians' contribution to the invention of a unified imperial culture was taken for granted by other writers, and it played a role in the development of the so-called Slavophile (actually, Russophile) movement. It percolated through the school system and through the works of literature, and it is still alive in the textbooks of history and other political writings of the post-Soviet period, even though, significantly, imaginative literature has begun to withdraw its support from it. The innumerable appeals to the community of interests of the empire's inhabitants that issued from the Moscow politicians at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as attempts to keep the Commonwealth of Independent States alive, go back to the imperial

vision first articulated in Karamzin's work. To use Hobsbawn's term, he was truly the inventor of tradition.

The invocations of imperial greatness such as Karamzin's have to be classified as direct textual expressions of aggressive nationalism. As argued in the introduction, the priorities of this kind of nationalism are different from those manifested by the defensive variety. Aggressive nationalism does not boast of democratic institutions but of manifest destiny. It stresses the enormousness of the state it represents, its diverse geography and history, its labors to discover lands that were previously unknown, unoccupied, and unproductive. Words such as *mnogonarodnyi* (multinational) are among the favorites of aggressive nationalism, for they emphasize the scope of its colonial enterprise while also suggesting a broad-mindedness of the conqueror who allows all those diverse possessions to exist within the empire. However, even such passionate expressions of devotion to the state as those of Karamzin seemed insufficient to some Russians of his generation. During his retirement years, General Aleksei Ermolov was engaged in a search for "an ardent pen to describe the progress of the Russian people from insignificance to glory; in his view, Karamzin's *History* was not patriotic enough."[13] Ermolov's search for the ever more grandiose inventors of tradition illustrates the continuing need for new designs ensuring social cohesion within a polity where Russia and Russians constituted a territorial minority and a demographic plurality.

Karamzin's *History* and its progeny would have had limited impact, however, had the topic of Russia's magnificence been not reinforced in *belles letters*. It is here that the conclusive battle for the empire took place. The narratives of military prowess, danger, and adventure in exotic locales that subsequently "joined" Russia made their appearance in large numbers in the early nineteenth century. The conquest of the Caucasus, with its largely Muslim population and relative proximity to the center of the empire, generated a large corpus of writings and, with it, stereotypes of the subjugated peoples and of what it meant to be a Russian: traveling to primitive lands and claiming them for the enlightened Russian crown. As if to make up for the tardiness with which the Russian imperial consciousness emerged in literature, the cultural appropriation of the Caucasus was accompanied by frequent outbursts of prideful annoyance at those who questioned the civilizational advantages of Russian expansion. The moral judgment passed on the defeated was epitomized in Lermontov's description of the Chechens as "evil" and in Pushkin's haughty tone in dealing with the "defeated currents" (*pobezhdënnaia stikhiia*). A moral condemnation of those who lost is frequent in the literatures of nascent empires, and Russian literature was no exception.

NARRATING THE CAUCASUS

Russian writings about the alien geography of the Caucasus reinforced one another and in time generated other texts in which certain taxonomies of the Caucasus were already taken for granted. V. G. Kiernan observed that all modern empires imitated one another;[14] among Russians, Aleksandr Pushkin in particu-

lar was an eager student of the Orientalist ways of approaching the Other. Like French and British imperial expeditionists describing their voyages to remote parts of the world, he applied the high-handed approach of a civilized European observer visiting savage lands that had never attained to a written culture or nationhood. He assumed the posture of a universalizing agent, and his articulation of what he had seen would give rise to the idea of a mute Asia that had never achieved self-knowledge (while the Caucasus separates Asia from Europe, Pushkin never bothered to adhere to geographical names: for him, the Caucasus was Asia, period). Neither he nor Mikhail Lermontov had any doubts about the righteousness of their enterprise, even if on occasion they divided the Russian spokespersons into the worthy (Maksim Maksimych, Sukhorukov, Burtsov) and the unworthy (Pechorin). They had no doubts that the lands they visited would be better off as part of a civilization wearing the uniform of the Russian Cossacks. They invoked the authority of French and English writers, citing their remarks and adopting their rhetorical techniques.

In Russian Romantic literature, the Caucasus is seen from the perspective of the Russian soldier or officer enduring the hardships of a journey into a dangerous and ungrateful land. The strictly military goal of these adventures distinguishes them from the writings of Western Orientalists, who usually went to the Orient as scholars or businessmen. Seen from this military perspective, the natives are invariably primitive, even when, as was the case with Armenians and Georgians, even a casual student of history might have reflected on the scope of their recorded memory. The Caucasus women are passive and sensual, while the men combine fierceness with cowardice. The admissions of political and economic gains accruing to Russia as a result of the conquest are absent in Russian texts, but a sense of Russia's civilizing mission is omnipresent.

Russian articulation of the Caucasus took the form of travelogues, poems, short stories, novels, and histories. These texts abound in strategies to "contain" the natives within the categories of discourse supplied by a superior outsider. Comments about the land being wild and exotic loom large, particularly in prose narratives. "Wild" landscapes naturally contain "wild" people: the writers foreground those elements of foreign realities that they wish to affix in the memory of readers innocent of a prior encounter with the area. They savor stories about the lack of hygiene of the inhabitants and the childlike quality of their thinking. Just as Giles Fletcher presented naked and crazy-looking beggars in the streets of Moscow in the sixteenth century as beings profoundly alien and inferior, so does Pushkin regale his readers with lurid details in his description of beggars in Tiflis's (Tbilisi's) open markets. The first description was penned in 1588, the second in 1835; in two and a half centuries, Russia had transformed itself from an object of a proto-Orientalist description to a subject generating Orientalist descriptions.

Before the Russians gathered enough strength to launch the conquest of the Caucasus, the area had been inhabited by peoples of mostly Turkic stock. Kingdoms rose and fell there in the Middle Ages, and a throng of rulers of both sexes

remained in the memory of nations and tribes, upholding an awareness of their ancient history and fostering aspirations to independent statehood. This last goal was thwarted many times by religious differences and the linguistic fragmentation typical of mountainous and isolated areas. Difficult to cross even in summer, the rugged peaks of the Caucasus do not encourage communication and good-neighborliness.

The Russian adventure in the Caucasus began with Peter the Great, who took advantage of the Christian-Muslim mix of the population. He and his successors established coalitions with other Christian rulers in the region, only to betray them to the Muslims whenever expedient. Encouraged by the victorious war with Sweden and Poland, Peter decided to try his luck in the South and invaded Persia, then in decline. In 1722, he launched a southern campaign, capturing in the same year the city of Derbent, and in 1723 Baku. In the course of the campaign, one of the Christian kings of the region, Wakhtang VI, supported Peter, but Peter gave him no help when the Turks overran his kingdom. The peace concluded with Turkey in 1724 left Baku in Russian hands, while Wakhtang's kingdom was ceded to Turkey.

A similar sequence of events occurred under Catherine II who used Herkules II, king of Georgia, as an ally in her war with Turkey in 1768–74, to abandon him when the newly powerful Persian ruler, Aga Mohammed Shah, attacked Georgia, then a Russian protectorate, massacred the population of Tiflis, and reconquered the country for Persia. The Georgians found themselves in a no-win situation. Their southern neighbors were Muslims, and their northern neighbor were Russians, who had betrayed them in the past. To go it alone meant taking risks too large for a small nation. In the late eighteenth century, Georgians decided to seek another alliance with Russia. This time, they sought guarantees from the Russians that the Georgian royal family would retain the throne. But Paul I abandoned the Caucasus temporarily and exposed Georgia once more to Persian rage. Alexander I offered incorporation into the Russian empire rather than the protectorate status that the Georgians desired. They accepted it as a lesser evil, and incorporation was proclaimed in a manifesto issued in 1801. The Georgian king abdicated the throne, but rival claims to the Georgian throne, coupled with a strong national self-awareness, necessitated frequent pacifications of the population by Russian troops. In 1802, General Tsitsianov was dispatched to calm down the Georgians. He was assassinated in 1806.[15]

The annexation of Georgia marks the beginning of a thirty years' war launched by a huge empire against small mountain principalities, the war the empire was bound to win. The Caucasus hostilities were not interrupted by the Napoleonic invasion, a circumstance that points to how little damage was inflicted by Napoleon on the Russian polity. While one group of Russian generals conducted a defensive war all the way to Moscow and then pursued Napoleon back to France, another group conducted an offensive in the south and signed the treaty of Gulistan (1813). The treaty ceded to the empire most of today's Azerbaijan, all the

way to the Persian border.[16] Bit by bit and treaty after treaty, those thirty years delivered to the empire the entire Caucasus range and much of Transcaucasia.

Most devastating for the mountain peoples was the campaign of General Aleksei Ermolov.[17] It was launched in 1816, lasted until 1827, and resulted in genocidal massacres of several ethnic groups. Ermolov was famed for destroying food, seed grain, cattle fodder, and forests.[18] He subjugated the Avars and the Chechens, and secured for Russia the entire length of the Terek River. The exploits of Ermolov's army of fifty thousand survived in Russian memory, untouched by reflexive knowledge and second thoughts, as an awe-inspiring but essentially noble achievement. Unlike the conquest of Siberia or the slaughter of some twenty thousand civilians in the Warsaw suburb of Praga in 1794 (one of General Aleksandr Suvorov's accomplishments), the Caucasus exploits were boldly advertised in imaginative literature.

In a letter permeated with uncharacteristic humility, Aleksandr Pushkin offered to become General Ermolov's secretary, editor, and publisher. He told the general that while Napoleon's campaign in Russia received much attention from writers even though it had ended in failure, the spectacularly successful campaign of General Ermolov in the Caucasus had not been sufficiently recognized. Pushkin went on to beg the general to allow him to edit his memoirs about the Caucasus victory: "Your glory belongs to all of Russia, and you have no right to conceal it."[19] The compliment was later extended, in reverse, to Pushkin, by Ermolov's successor in the Caucasus, Field Marshal I. F. Paskevich. After allowing the poet to experience briefly the pleasures of participating in a war against the mountain peoples, Paskevich invoked the good of the motherland and forbade Pushkin to remain in active service. "Mr. Pushkin," he said, "Your life is precious to Russia, and you have no place here; I therefore advise you to leave the army immediately."[20] Pushkin left the army, but he was already sufficiently enriched by memories to produce the magisterial vision of the Caucasus that congealed into *the* Russian (and then Western—since Western interpretations of Russian Romantic literature followed the cues of Russian writers and critics) literary image of the Caucasus.

From his early poem "The Prisoner of the Caucasus" to the mature *Journey to Arzrum during the 1829 Campaign* [*Puteshestvie v Arzrum vo vremia pokhoda 1829 goda*], Pushkin set out to create a mute and intellectually deficient Caucasus, recklessly brave in its pointless struggle and ripe for Russian governance.[21] Pushkin and Lermontov manufactured for the Russian textual memory the image of Russia as a stern but just mistress of the area. Pushkin in particular can be credited with the first fully successful artistic formulation of Russian imperial consciousness. He gave a voice to those who felt invigorated by Russia's military achievements. Through Pushkin's poetry and prose, it rapidly became clear that Russian imperialism did not need a coarse and brutal visage, that Russians were not Mongols, and that they could convert into beauty what their rifles and swords destroyed. The gracefulness with which Pushkin created the consolidating vision of Russian imperialism has served the nation well. He conjured up an

image that had never before existed in Russian literature: a proud Russia destined to rule over the "miserable Finns" and other races it had conquered; a Russia replete with humble and admirable patriots who discharged their duty faithfully in the faraway Caucasus; a Russia whose upper classes equaled in sophistication and education the most refined circles in the West.

Pushkin's *Journey to Arzrum* presents the military venture of Field Marshal Paskevich as a kind of merry and unending hunt, where the game is always abundant and the "enemy" ("*l'ennemi,*" in the French-language conversation between Pushkin and Paskevich) is always there to be pursued in a light-hearted way. The naturalness of this pursuit, like getting up and taking a bath and having breakfast, is particularly prominent in the commentary sections of the travelogue. The Other is familiar, a part of our lives, but he or she is there to be pursued, maimed, taken prisoner, killed. The eye-catching similarity to the hunt, and the atmosphere of male distraction, in Pushkin's account—a total absence of reflection on the humanity of the "enemy" and even a dubious justification for using the "hunt" as a background for the comments of the superior observer—set the tone for the later Russian writings about the wars of conquest.[22]

The only available English translation diverts the meaning of Pushkin's journey from military venture to exotic tourism; it does so by toning down the pugnacious tone of the text and by failing to translate the title in full. In Russian, the title adds to "Journey to Arzrum" the phrase "during the military campaign of 1829," an addition that places this work squarely within the tradition of military memoirs of the epoch. Unlike Pierre Bezukhov in *War and Peace,* who wanders disoriented about the battlefield of Borodino, Pushkin was not an observer but a participant in war, and the refreshment course he took at Arzrum clearly met with his approval. A self-portrait in charcoal that he drew at that time shows him on horseback with his spear [*sic*] at the ready.[23] But the translation emphasizes instead the traditional *readings* of Russian literature, which elbow out the military aspect of Russian texts.

The reality of total war seeps through Pushkin's patronizing images. There was hardly a civilian community of Russians in the Caucasus in Pushkin's time. In towns such as Piatigorsk, Kislovodsk, and Tiflis there lived, of course, Russian colonial administrators with their wives and households, and that made for a beginning of a local "society," but social gatherings were mostly attended by the largest and most visible group of Russians in situ: ensigns, lieutenants, captains, and colonels, with an occasional general as a focus of attention. These social gatherings were a subset of Russian military life, a fact that the readers of Russian literature have consistently disregarded, just as the readers of English literature have ignored the implications of Sir Thomas Bertram's plantation in the West Indies, or Messrs. Micawber's and Peggotty's good fortunes in Australia. While the Russian parties and conversations are thus foregrounded, an impenetrable silence surrounds the lives of native inhabitants. Probably very few readers of Pushkin's charming description of a trip to Tiflis have noted that the massive presence of beggars in the streets of that city might have been related to

the continuous state of war that had existed in the Caucasus ever since the Russian Empire decided that it would be in its interest to conquer the area.

Pushkin's *Journey* is replete with imperial pedagogy suggesting that Russia is a benevolent agent bestowing order and identity on primeval chaos. At some point, a detachment of soldiers goes to the forest to "cleanse it."[24] The cleansing metaphor recurs in Orientalist literature dealing with the colonies; one could mention Rudyard Kipling's poem "A Song of the White Men" (1899), where the said men "go to clean the land." (If Pushkin had been a contemporary of Kipling, he could well have repeated after him: "Oh, well for the world when the White Men tread / Their highway side by side!")[25] Some five hundred "Turkish" prisoners wait nearby showing no signs of fear, even though within sight the Cossacks are finishing off some of the wounded: it is suggested, however, that this is not so much courage as silent indifference. Circassian bodies lie everywhere. A brave Russian colonel smokes "their" pipe "in a friendly way" (*druzheliubno*). The inferior nature of the Turks is suggested by the mention of a "hermaphrodite" among them: we are told that such monsters appear frequently among nomads. Before departing for Russia, the poet visits a bazaar and is confronted by "a horrible beggar. He was as pale as death; from his red festered eyes tears were streaming." The poet "pushes the beggar away with a feeling of repugnance that is impossible to describe" and returns home. One is reminded here of Gustave Flaubert's graphic descriptions of the revolting medical conditions he witnessed in the Near East.[26]

This unattractive picture is contrasted with the healthy and merry Cossacks who, pressing forward after the battle, encounter villages entirely devoid of the Turks, who have, well, disappeared. The Turks who do appear in the story are either humble servants of the Russians or have just been defeated and wait sullenly for the inevitable. A few crazy fellows shoot at the Russians but do not cause much damage. Their undignified and cowardly behavior in the streets contrasts with the "wise and cordial" (Sukhorukov) or "brave" (Burtsov) demeanor of the victors.[27] Pushkin quotes a Turkish poem comparing the pious (and therefore presumably invincible) Arzrum to Istanbul, which is doomed to fall because it does not observe the strictures of the Qu'ran. The author of that poem turns out to be wrong: Arzrum falls to the Russians. The upcoming attack on Arzrum is announced by the commander in chief of the Russian army, General Paskevich, at a dinner for his senior officers. The Muslim stronghold is taken almost casually, with little planning and small expenditure of military force. The tag of invincibility, tossed out casually by Pushkin in a quotation from a hostile poem, returns to the colonial power in full glory.

After the conquest, Arzrum is silent; in this city of one hundred thousand, no one complains about the ten thousand Cossacks who are now in charge. The pasha's palace is looted thoroughly: sofas are torn, and there are no carpets. Pushkin suggests that the fleeing Turks themselves had caused the damage. The harem wives praise the Russians when ordered to confront them in person. This

bucolic image is marred by the news that the plague had made its appearance in Arzrum.

On his way back to Russia proper, Pushkin encounters friends who take advantage of the local hot springs to treat wounds incurred during the campaign; they carry with them some Russian magazines with inept articles about Pushkin's poetry. The last event described in the *Journey* is an outburst of laughter over these poor samples of literary criticism. The close of Pushkin's travelogue rehearses the key elements of colonial superiority: abundant literacy, revulsion at the sight of the primitives whose customs are inferior, an ability to use the resources of the conquered lands for a good purpose (the healing of wounds, the building of new houses and parks), an ability to produce texts that would create a memory of the Arzrum campaign for the descendants of those who conquered it, and, finally, an ability to experience the joy of life as befits young Russian officers on leave.

Privileging the point of view of the imperial observer is a common strategy of textual imperialism: the pen of the conqueror describes customs and ways of the silent subalterns. Even when a member of the conquering race himself becomes a prisoner of the "primitives," the situation does not change. In "Prisoner of the Caucasus," a nameless Russian (called "a European" by the poet) is taken prisoner by the Circassians. He "watches their beliefs and customs" very much as an Orientalist engaged in the business of increasing the Western body of knowledge might have done.[28] He likes their simplicity, hospitality, and nimble movements; he even likes their inclination to quarrel and their psychological strength. Their colorful clothing attracts his attention. The Circassians are "born for war," and during their warlike games they often cut off the heads of prisoners to the intense joy of Circassian infants [*sic*]. The Russian looks at these occupations with the dignity of a superior man, an attitude that evokes the fearful admiration of his jailers.

It is characteristic of Russian colonial literature to emphasize the real or alleged brutalities the conquered once imposed on the Russians. Past injustices are celebrated in literary and other texts, giving birth to justifications of like treatment meted out by the Russians. Pushkin's "Prisoner of the Caucasus" reminds the reader that the unruly tribes of the Caucasus constituted a grave danger to the empire and that many Russians had perished in their raids on imperial territory. In September 1998, three years after the end of a war that leveled the tiny republic of Chechnya and killed tens of thousands of Chechens, the Russian Presidential Commission on Prisoners of War declared in a press release that 794 Russians who had participated in that war were still missing; it demanded an accounting from the devastated republic. Shortly afterwards, Russian foreign ministry announced that Russia would never allow Chechnya to secede from the Russian Federation.[29]

Pushkin's narrowly focused and judgmental writings differ in a profound way from Joseph Conrad's polyphonic descriptions of black Africa and from Jane Austen's suppressed criticism of colonial advantage.[30] Unlike the Britons, Push-

kin has no doubts. He speaks for an empire in the making, one that relies on Cossack sabers rather than on textual superiority, an empire that is still fearful of being enveloped in the Other's discourse. In Pushkin's time it was not yet certain that Russia would succeed in overcoming the West's taxonomizing gaze. Powerful voices, such as those of Jules Michelet, were still ready to treat Russia in ways not dissimilar from those adopted by Pushkin in regard to the Caucasus. The danger was real: long after Pushkin went to his grave, Ivan Turgenev could not avoid the patronizing tone of the Goncourt brothers who commemorated him in their *Journal* as an exotic and quaint Slavic figure. The rubbing-in of the Caucasus' inferiority in *Journey to Arzrum,* the shrill proclamations of superiority of the Russian Cossacks, and the belittling of the "Turks" said to withdraw without fighting at the slightest provocation were Pushkin's ways of responding to the high-handedness with which some European intellectuals treated Russians in Pushkin's time.

Several generations later, Lev Tolstoi's "Hadji Murad" (1904), written from the perspective of a much more secure Russian state, deconstructed the empire's Romantic propagandists. Tolstoi recorded for the first time the scorched-earth policy that had been the foundation of Ermolov's and Paskevich's successes. Even though "Hadji Murad" was written at a time when the Caucasus was firmly anchored in the empire, Tolstoi's work was published only posthumously. Tolstoi was too anticolonial not to present a danger to the Russian establishment. His treatment of Tsar Nicholas I, under whose rule the conquest of the Caucasus was completed, is so devastating that it cannot be compared to any work of Russian literature before or after. "Hadji Murad" contains macabre vignettes of the war of conquest. The narrator outlines the destruction of a Chechen village in the following way:

> [Sado] found his *saklya* in ruins—the roof fallen in, the door and the posts supporting the penthouse burned, and the interior filthy. . . . The two stacks of hay there had been burnt, the apricot and cherry trees he had planted and reared were broken and scorched, and worse still all the beehives and bees had been burnt. . . . The fountain was polluted, evidently on purpose, so that the water could not be used. The mosque was polluted in the same way.[31]

Tolstoi's translator, Aylmer Maude, described Ermolov's doings thus: "[A] campaign of 'pacification' of Chechnya and Dagestan . . . consisted of the destruction of villages, theft of cattle and goods, clear-cutting of forests, and the resettlement of the people."[32] Such assessments stand in stark contrast to the lighthearted tone of *Journey to Arzrum* and even to the murkier narratives of Mikhail Lermontov. Pushkin did, of course, know of the true state of affairs during his Arzrum adventure. "The Circassians hate us," he admitted, "We have forced them out of their free and spacious pasturelands; their auls are in ruins, whole tribes have been annihilated."[33] In contrast to Tolstoi, however, he was not pleading the Circassian case but rather warning the Russians of Circassian danger. Like

all too many colonialists, Pushkin treated the Other as an alien species whose needs and rights were fundamentally different from those of the conquering tribe.

Foremost among the strategies of subjugation and "cutting down to size" is the creation of a dichotomy between the uncouth and disorderly savagery of the Caucasus before the conquest and the improved social and material practices afterwards. Pushkin painted a rosy picture of the advantages that Russian civilization had bestowed on the Caucasus in just a few years. Comparing the hot springs near Georgievsk to what he had seen a few years earlier, he noted a striking change for the better:

> In my time the baths were in hastily built shacks. . . . Now magnificent baths and buildings have been erected. A boulevard lined by young lindens runs along the slope of Mount Mashuk. Everywhere there are neatly kept pathways, green benches, rectangular flowerbeds, little bridges, pavilions. The springs have been refined, lined with stone; nailed up on the walls of the bathhouses are lists of instructions from the police; everything is orderly, neat, prettified.[34]

The "Turks" are not capable of providing creature comforts; it took the Russians to bring them in. "Asian poverty" has appropriately become a set expression, remarks Pushkin.[35] Mikhail Lermontov, Pushkin's junior by fifteen years and a Caucasus habitué, makes the Russian characters in *The Hero of Our Time* (1840) call the "Asiatics" (*aziaty*) "beasts" (*bestii*), "exceedingly stupid" (*preglupye*), "pitiful" (*zhalkie*), "swindlers" (*pluty*), and creatures who are unable to take care of themselves.[36] They are also treacherous and greedy: Bela's brother betrays her for a horse (whom Pechorin would steal from Kazbich, an action that is presented as disquieting but at the same time indicative of Pechorin's courage and prowess). Native poverty is described in such a way as to suggest the natives' inability ever to rise above the subsistence level: they hunt, they plant some grain, they quarrel with each other and steal horses. Characteristically, Maksim Maksimych, himself no intellectual giant, makes a particularly harsh pronouncement about the mental limitations of "natives."

Lermontov's and Pushkin's natives are scattered around like annoying monkeys in an awe-inspiring landscape. They are there to keep the Russian soldiers busy and to cement the reader's solidarity with *Rus'*. Unlike Pushkin's and somewhat like Joseph Conrad's, however, Lermontov's comments contain a trace of irony; Lermontov had been born into an empire that could already afford some generosity. Still, a concatenation of belittling attributes reported by a broad range of personalities provide the Russian readers a suggestion that these primitives require and beseech domination. Then, wrapping it all together, are culture and war, morality and advice: "[W]here the sullen pasha used to smoke silently among his wives and shameless boys, his vanquisher was receiving reports on the victories of his generals, distributing pashalics, and discussing new novels."[37]

Like the works of Western colonialists, *Puteshestvie v Arzrum* displays an inability to entertain the thought that the natives were not necessarily wicked in their refusal to submit to the conquerors. Pushkin remarks that on several occasions he demanded accommodation or horses from the local inhabitants, taking it for granted that he should be served by the local population just because the Russian army was there to back him up. He extended these demands to officials and civilians in the towns and settlement he visited, and they were always met. What the local folk must have thought of him remains unsaid—and most likely unthought by the readers. In a classical imperialist description of the conquered lands, Pushkin wrote the following of Georgia and its inhabitants, "Georgia came under Emperor Alexander's sceptre in 1792. The Georgians are a warlike people. They have proved their bravery under our banners. Their intellectual capabilities await further development. On the whole they are of a happy and sociable disposition."[38]

The newly subjugated city of Arzrum did not offer enough creature comforts to satisfy Pushkin's taste. The goods that he wished to obtain were not readily available in shops. This became an occasion for boasting: "I know of no expression more nonsensical than the words: Asian luxury . . . Asian poverty, Asian swinishness, etc., but luxury is, of course, an attribute of Europe. In Arzrum you cannot buy for any money what you can find in a general store in any district town of the Pskov province."[39]

Pskov was a cleverly chosen example: it was close enough to the empire's Baltic rim, which was among the most prosperous of Russia's contiguous colonies. Pushkin's example conceals the state of affairs in the Russian heartland, so evocatively described by Gogol' at approximately the same time, while casually reinforcing Russia's image as just another refined European country. Such texts seared in Russian memory an image of the Caucasus as a land in need of tutelage, and they immunized Russians against the intrusion of sympathy and understanding toward its peoples. The expenditure of the energies of small nations to guard against Russian attacks, energy that could have been used instead for society building, became a nonproblem for the readers of Russian literature. Texts like Pushkin's *Journey* are not unrelated to the stupendous indifference and sense of hostile superiority with which the Muscovites in the post-Soviet period have treated the dark-skinned folk of the southern regions of the former USSR arriving in Moscow. The hostility showed in the opinion polls of the 1990s, polls that also revealed a popular conviction that the "Chechen mafia" robs the Muscovites of their well-deserved patrimony of security.[40] The foundation for such perceptions was laid in the presentation of "natives" in Russian Romantic literature.

Puteshestvie v Arzrum was prompted by a French account of another colonial journey. What spurred on the Russian writer was an allegation in the French travelogue that he, Pushkin, had satirized the Arzrum military campaign in his writings. Nothing could be farther from the truth, contended the poet, and indeed his work is replete with attempts to bestow benign meanings on Russia's military violence. Pushkin seemed to entertain no doubts about the moral legitimacy

of taking away land from those who were weaker, whether they were Caucasians or Central Europeans, as long as the land accrued to the Russians or their allies (he was opposed to Turkish imperialism, writing passionate poems in defense of the Serbs, who were victims of the Ottoman empire's greed for land). Of all the great Russian writers, Pushkin was probably the crudest jingoist.

In his early stories, Lev Tolstoi added to the Pushkinesque vision of the brave Cossacks fighting for the empire, but he was later much chastened by his own difficult life, and his late stories reflect a new understanding of Russian expansionism. The narrator in "Hadji Murad" says the following about the situation in a Chechen village after a Russian raid:

> No one spoke of hatred of the Russians. The feeling experienced by all the Chechens, from the youngest to the oldest, was stronger than hate. It was not hatred, for they did not regard those Russian dogs as human beings, but it was such repulsion, disgust, and perplexity at the senseless cruelty of these creatures, that the desire to exterminate them—like the desire to exterminate rats, poisonous spiders, or wolves—was as natural an instinct as that of self-preservation.[41]

However, it was not Tolstoi but a German aristocrat, Baron August von Haxthausen, who, traveling in Russia at the expense of Tsar Nicholas I, provided a blueprint for the subsequent foreign perceptions of Russia's "voyage in":

> Having maintained that Russia's policy with respect to Asia has been peaceful rather than aggressive, we would like to demonstrate this in detail. Let us begin at that point where Russia has continually waged war, namely, in the Caucasian provinces. The Caucasian mountain range in its entire length faces the Russian plains. The warlike and rapacious highlanders had always swooped down on the unprotected plains, pillaging and ravaging the countryside and then withdrawing unpunished to their safe mountain fortresses. It was nearly impossible to launch a frontal attack against them, because they had all of Asia behind them. Then Russia acquired Georgia. It was a great burden and embroiled Russia in sanguinary wars with Persia and Turkey, which led to the conquest of the entire region south of the Caucasus between the Black and Caspian seas.[42]

Haxthausen then adds defensively, "This conquest took place before the accession of the present emperor. He had to accept the inheritance." But he staunchly supports the idea of Russia's "civilizing mission" and appeals to the cultivated reader's sense of international law and order.

After such authority, reinforced by other authoritative texts and by journalistic discourse, is a correction possible? If one were to believe Angela Stent, Daniel Yergin, and Thane Gustafson, co-authors of *Russia 2010* (1995), probably not.

In a chapter titled "The Return of a Great Power," the authors admit imperial overreach only in regard to Afghanistan; they predict that "the north Caucasus will be a sore for years to come, while the central government in Moscow remains weak, but in the long run the region is likely to remain Russian."[43]

During these wars of conquest, the area's economic potential was intimated by the mysterious lights that erupted around the city of Baku at night. They were caused by gas from the oil and gas-rich fields around the city, escaping and then igniting. An early awareness of the possible use of these resources might have contributed to the readiness to expand in the direction of this mountainous region, whose inhabitants, divided among themselves by religion and ethnic background, did not constitute a serious threat to the empire. The decision to expand showed much foresight. In the early twentieth century, all Russian oil output came from two Caucasus colonies, Azerbaijan and Chechnya. In 1913, the Russian empire produced 561 million poods (ten million tons) of petroleum, four-fifths of which came from wells near Baku and one fifth from wells near the Chechen city of Groznyi.[44]

It was to a Caucasus pacified by Ermolov that the young Russian poet Lermontov was sent by a court order in 1837. Pardoned in 1838, he was arrested again for fighting a duel with a foreign diplomat's son and was dispatched back to the Caucasus. The empire's housekeeping system provided useful occupations to native sons who trespassed against the tsar's will. Lermontov's task was to help in yet another pacification.

The Hero of Our Time [*Geroi nashego vremeni*] (1840) was a fruit of Lermontov's two involuntary visits to the region. Owing to this circumstance and to his Romantic dislike of tsarist tyranny, Lermontov advanced somewhat beyond Pushkin's interpretation of the behavior of Russians, although he remained insensitive to the issue of subjugation. His tale revolves around a melancholy Russian ensign named Pechorin, a hapless victim of his own sadomasochistic proclivities, and an old fellow officer Maksim Maksimych, who had dedicated his life to the empire. The natives form a background of greed and treachery (Azamat), stupidity (the old Circassian prince), and untidiness (Kazbich). Their women are far from pretty, to Pechorin's taste; one exception is Bela. A princess by birth, she is never so called by the good Maksim Maksimych, however, and when she is taken prisoner her dignity and inviolability disappear in no time. The narrator presents her as an illiterate Circassian girl, almost asking to be captured, raped, kept for the amusement of her superior master Pechorin, and then cast aside. But the somber sequence of events is not obscured by the narrator's rhetoric, and readers are able to come to their own conclusions about the worthiness of the "hero of our time." While many Russian readers took a skeptical stance, their disapproval of Pechorin centered around his lack of goals in life rather than the more specific crime of having raped an underage, non-Russian girl and destroyed her family. As Lermontov put it, his goal was to write "the history of a human soul." He was not interested in the morality of rape and conquest but rather in the place Pechorin and his like occupied in Russian affairs.

Circassian society in the story is atomized by the defeat, but the authoritative voice of an outside observer suggests that the natives suffer from bad luck, partly in that they are unable to form significant social ties that would enable them to defend themselves better. They communicate poorly with one another. Kazbich kills the old prince in a mistaken belief that he had sold his daughter Bela to Pechorin. Compelled to lead the life of an outlaw, Kazbich fails to marry, start a family, or occupy a respectable place in the Circassian society, the place to which his skills would have entitled him had the Russians not plotted the destruction of his people. Bela dies as a result of a misunderstanding and of Kazbich's vengeful ways.

The thoughts of the natives are not presented directly but are always interpreted by a Russian character. Lermontov's attitude in that regard is a fascimile of Pushkin's. Let us return for a moment to *Journey to Arzrum*. It contains an episode in which Russian generals confront four captured pashas (Muslim princes), one of whom considers himself a poet. As seen by the Russian observer, the poetic pasha is garrulous and undignified, characteristics that put him several notches below a "real" Romantic poet such as Pushkin himself. The poet who, we are told, is an old man (and whose life—although we are not told that—hangs by a thread, at the whim of the Russian officers present) delivers a tragicomic oration: "Blessed be the hour when we meet a poet. The poet is brother to the dervish. He has neither a fatherland, nor earthly blessings; and while we, poor ones, worry about glory, about power, about treasures, he stands equal with the rulers of the earth and they bow to him."[45] The assembled company is amused. The Asians are allowed to wax poetic (of course they are not "real" poets, merely clowns), because this keeps them away from mischief, that is, from active struggle against Russia. But of course they cannot be allowed to frolic too much; having satisfied the company's need for entertainment, they have to clear out. The dervish who appears after the pasha's oration is brutally pushed away, and we hear no more about the pasha's fate.

It is this deep rift between the serious concern with which the Russians are portrayed and the bemused superiority characterizing sketches of "natives" that makes of Lermontov's and Pushkin's fine works examples of colonialist lore. The Russians are comprehensible and fully human, whereas the alien Circassians resemble the Snake Charmer in the famous portrait of Jean Léon Gérome that is featured on the cover page of the first edition of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. This technique belittles the conquered. The cunning garrulousness of the old pasha is taken to be an outburst of naive savagery rather than a calculated attempt to distract the captors, while Bela's behavior in captivity corresponds to the stereotype of tribal women swayed by colorful beads and sweet words.

In his essay "The Other Question," Homi Bhabha compares the dependence of the colonialist on stereotypes of the "natives" to Freud's conception of the role the fetish plays in regard to the fetishist.[46] Somehow the colonizer defines himself "in contrast to," and therefore "in dependence on," the "savages." He defines him or herself in terms of what he or she is not. Thus his identity proves more

fragile than might have been assumed. The repeated juxtapositions of natives and Russians in the "Caucasian" works of Pushkin and Lermontov suggest the presence of uncertainty and anxiety in colonialist discourse. Far from being sure of his standing vis-à-vis the conquered, the Russian writers display a pressing need to reassert their Russian identity and thus their power over the Other. But that identity amounts to a lack, a shortage, if and when the Other is absent, thus fracturing the ostensible self-assurance of the conqueror. Witold Gombrowicz hinted at a similar relationship in his novel *Ferdydurke* (1937), where he spoke of masters scrupulously observing table manners because servants were present—eating their dinner in effect *against* the servants as it were, in order to show them that they, the noble landowners, are better and more refined than peasants.[47] But, observed Gombrowicz, the very fact that they thus depended on servants for the construction of their identity undermined the identity they sought. It made the relationship between the masters' superiority and the servants' inferiority unstable, sordid, and easy to deconstruct. It appears that such an unstable relationship lies at the very heart of colonialist attitudes, whether the stage is British India or the Russian Caucasus.

A sign of trivialization of the Caucasus in Russian literature is the shallowness of attachments to itself that it engenders in the Russian characters. The Caucasus generates no vital ties and no loyalty to itself, so far as the Russians are concerned. It serves only as an ornament, like the conventional landscapes against which Renaissance painters placed their female models. It is disposable, like a vacation overseas. The psychological portrayal of the two Russian heroes in Lermontov's novel might have had St. Petersburg or Moscow for background: nothing in their inner development is significantly related to the area in which they live. It is as if the native peoples and histories did not exist, or existed only to create for the Russians the task of managing them. What really matters are the Russian lands to which Lermontov's and Pushkin's narrators return; they are the subject of Maksim Maksimych's fond dreams. Pechorin's habits and views derive from urban education and are unrelated to the Circassians and their concerns. He does not learn anything from them. Small wonder that Pechorin has been compartmentalized by literary historians with other urban Russian characters, Eugene Onegin and Aleksandr Chatskii, who have no relation to the Caucasus either and indeed belong to that small segment of Russian male society that did not participate in wars. As in other colonial literatures, the Russian heroes in the Caucasus speak to each other but not to the natives; they speak *about* the natives, but they do not conduct conversations *with* them, as Gayatri Spivak might have said.[48]

Lermontov's tale generated a great deal of commentary, and it occasioned some generalizations about the state of Russian literature, but it did not initiate any significant discussion about the history of the Caucasus or the problems of its native inhabitants. With a few exceptions, this dismissive attitude has been maintained until the present time. Not only Pechorin and Maksim Maksimych but also Grushnitskii, Princess Meri, and other Russian visitors to the area have

been analyzed and interpreted in countless ways, mostly as representatives of either of two opposing attitudes: that of alienation (the rootless Pechorin) and that of dedication to the *rodina* (Maksim Maksimych). It all started with Vissarion Belinskii's review of *The Hero of Our Time* written in the same year the novel was published.[49] Belinskii's began the tradition of removing the "natives" from that existential and literary space which is of interest to critics. Here is what he said about Bela's death:

> [The chapter titled] "Bela" leaves a deep impression. It makes you sad, but it is a light-hearted, bright and sweet sadness; your imagination flies away to the grave of this beauty, and the grave is not gloomy: the sun shines on it, a mountain stream cleanses it. The murmur of this stream, together with the rumbling of the wind in the local trees, speaks to you about something mysterious and boundless. Above the grave you see a wonderful apparition, her cheeks snow-white, her dark eyes expressing both reproach and forgiveness, her lips smiling sadly.[50]

For Belinskii, Bela's death provides an occasion to write about the feelings of Russian readers ripe for a philosophical reflection about the signals given to Russians by nature and the passing of events. The native woman is treated instrumentally; her death is seen as a blip on the Russian screen rather than as a major tear in the fabric of the society of which she had been part. She does, of course, forgive her Russian captors, even though she is a Muslim and is not under a religious obligation to forgive. As for Lermontov himself, Belinskii calls him a rebel without a cause, thus further deflecting the attention of Lermontov's readers from the Caucasus to the problems of Russia's educated and Westernized elite. The fact that Lermontov participated in an aggressive war is a nonproblem for the Russian critic, otherwise sensitive to social and political injustice. One of Belinskii's successors, N. A. Dobroliubov, wrote a famous essay on the Russian literary characters whom he dubbed "the superfluous men," after the title of Turgenev's story: at the beginning of this chain stand Pechorin and Onegin. Two recent American histories of Russian literature fully sever the already flimsy connection between Lermontov's work and the bloody conquest of the Caucasus, thus reconfirming the immunity of Russian literature to postcolonial critique.[51]

In line with the cluster of issues from which native problems have been excised, Lermontov tells us that there were good and bad Russians in the Caucasus. The gloomy Pechorin is contrasted with a lackluster but kind Maksim Maksimych, a man who can feel the needs of others even before they express them verbally. Maksimych is the predecessor of all the loving fathers and elders of Russian literature, from Bazarov Sr. in *Fathers and Sons* to Father Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*. But, of course, his empathy is second to his military duty: he is a devotee of Empire, and he never ponders why the Russians needed to subjugate the Caucasus in the first place. While Pechorin is secretive, Mak-

simych is open and talkative; while Pechorin seeks distraction from his ennui in the embraces of Circassian women, Maksimych thinks with occasional regret of the missed opportunity of a good Russian marriage. Pechorin is young and sophisticated, but Maksimych is old and rustic, a characteristic that has usually resonated positively in Russian literature. Pechorin goads on a silly Circassian teenager until the youngster commits a crime; he rapes Bela and indirectly causes her death, in addition to destroying the family of the already-subjugated and already-peaceful chieftain. Maksimych disapproves of all that: should we not extol him as a model of a "good" colonialist? After all, he is also a *bednyi starik,* a poor old man, whose attachment to Pechorin and Bela is not reciprocated. Perhaps we should; to a reader unaccustomed to postcolonial gaze, it may seem crude and in bad taste to note that Maksimych dedicated his life to killing the inhabitants of the Caucasus. He was a professional soldier, hired by the empire to kill human beings in foreign lands. For all his alienation from the Russian autocratic system, Lermontov lived within the Russian ethos, which was characterized by blindness to the problem of Russian imperialism; his critics and readers have followed suit.

Russian critics speak of Maksim Maksimych in glowing terms. The tradition was set up by, again, Vissarion Belinskii, who declared Maksimych a great Russian hero. Maksimych remained so under tsars and commissars. The stereotyped images of poor and suffering Russians have been so powerfully and frequently supplied by Russian literature and reinforced by Russian literary criticism that they overshadowed the incomparably poorer and more grievously suffering subalterns. Perhaps the willingness of Western critics to follow Russian cues in this respect is generated not just by "the milk of human kindness," stirred by the images of Tiutchevian *bednye selen'ia* (poor villages) inhabited by *russkii narod* (the Russian nation), but also by the imperial splendor with which these rural schlemiels have been associated.

Russian colonial history was further elbowed out from the purview of literary criticism by the introduction of the "superfluous man" stereotype.[52] The concept of superfluity was imposed on literary characters of fundamentally different social backgrounds. It was applied to the civilian Oblomov, who spent most of his life as a couch potato, and to Pechorin, whose "scalp collection" was substantial. This mixing of apples and oranges had its own dynamics, which overshadowed the colonial process. Russian literary criticism remained immune to Russian expansionism, and it created a discourse within which raising that issue became difficult. A large number of authoritative works implicitly proclaim that a postcolonial perspective is inconceivable in regard to Russian letters.

To return, however, to Lermontov: Bela attracts the reader through the managed exoticism of her background, a frequent device of colonialist travel literature. A victim of abduction and rape by Pechorin, she also experiences the death of her father and her brother's disappearance. But Bela is no Judith or Jael. In Lermontov's rendition, she falls in love with her seducer and dies at the hand of her countryman. The stereotype of the Chechens as killers is highlighted in

Bela's murderer Kazbek. One recalls here that in Dostoevskii's *The Idiot,* a seduced Russian woman, Nastas'ia Filippovna, comes to hate her seducer and repays him handsomely for her humiliation. One of the convenient myths of the conquerors about the conquered is that native women, in contrast, are humble, obedient, and mindless. Bela is presented as innocent, silly, charming, and after some initial pouting, totally devoted to Pechorin. According to the pattern conceived in the minds of rapists, she loves to be seduced. Besides, she is a savage, as Lermontov amply demonstrates, and so she could not but admire her refined Russian master. One wonders whether Liudmila Petrushevskaia's story about a "Tatar" woman, raped by every Russian man she had ever encountered and irreversibly traumatized by these rapes, was in some way an ironic echo of the male fantasy that made Bela cooperate in the process of her humiliation and destruction.

Was Pechorin in any way typical of Russian society at that time, or did he owe his literary appearance to his creator's familiarity with Western Romantic literatures, especially with Lord Byron's poems? The Russian educational system under Tsars Alexander I and Nicholas I had few if any schools in which people like Pechorin could find sustenance. The Lyceum at Tsarskoe Selo, established in 1811 and famous for its ability to impart refined manners to its pupils, had a student body of only fifty students at any given time.[53] The two Russian universities produced few humanities graduates, and these generally chose civil rather than military service. Nor did the Russian military schools, whose size and quality far surpassed that of the Russian universities, have room for future officers who resembled Pechorin: individualistic, bookish, refined and ill adjusted to the realities of lengthy military campaigns (Pechorin's snow-white linen shirts belonged in Lermontov's dream life rather than in the Caucasus wars). During his own stay at the Petersburg Military Academy, Lermontov behaved in ways hardly resembling those of Pechorin. He wrote crude erotic verse and displayed little of Pechorin's sophisticated *ennui.* In Lermontov's Russia, where nonmilitary high school graduates numbered a few thousand and where the system of fourteen ranks was embedded in the social fabric, people like Pechorin had no place. In the provinces, and certainly on active military duty, the brutality of life was such that anyone of Pechorin's ilk, if he washed up in the Caucasus, would have had to metamorphose quickly to survive. Thus it appears that Pechorin was indeed a "superfluous" man, but not in the sense in which Dobroliubov conceived of his superfluity. It appears that the writer's instinct made Lermontov endow Pechorin with a sophistication ill suited to his occupation in order better to explain Bela's seduction. Pechorin's superiority facilitates the imposition of a stereotypical explanation of an inferior native surrendering to a refined master. Pechorin also issued from the author's refusal to see Russian society as a government-driven throng of nomads on the go whose resources were spent on war rather than on cultural pursuits. The Russians went to the Caucasus to conquer, not to reflect, and the struggle was too intense to allow a Pechorinesque type to function in a kill-or-be-killed milieu. In this sense, Pechorin is a fraudulent char-

acter, yet he, and certain other characters conjured up by Russian writers of the time, congealed into "history." In Russian and foreign memory, the Caucasus of the 1820s and 1830s is seen through the eyes of Pushkin and Lermontov rather than through the eyes of Chechens, Lezghins, Balkars, or Nogays. How incongruent that vision of history is with the memories and myths of the native peoples can be gauged by the number of uprisings that the Caucasus peoples have staged since Lermontov's time.[54]

THE RHETORICAL CONTAINMENT OF POLAND

Unlike the Caucasus, the acquisition of territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772, 1793, and 1795 generated no remarkable works of imaginative literature. There were several reasons for this. The wars with Poland occurred at the time when the transformation of Russian literature had just begun. In eighteenth-century Russia there were no remarkable periodicals and no writers of genius. Catherine's censorship was whimsical and seldom reminiscent of the Muscovite terror directed at writings that were deemed harmful to the state; nevertheless, it was pervasive enough to discourage originality, as Aleksandr Radishchev found out to his intense grief. Another reason was the nature of the acquisitions. Roman Szporluk has argued that from the Ukrainian standpoint, some parts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth exchanged one imperialist, Poland, for another, Russia. Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Belarusian territories had a Polish landowning class, a Jewish business class, and a "native" peasant class. But in Russian eyes, these territories were rightfully Russian, because the peasants who lived there were East Slavs who used the Cyrillic alphabet and followed the Byzantine liturgy (the Baltic provinces were an exception). Upon annexation to Russia, the so-called Eastern Rite Catholics (mostly Ruthenians), who joined the Catholic Church in 1596 but retained Byzantine liturgy and other religious customs, had to be reconverted to Eastern Orthodoxy by persuasion or force. Thus the acquisition of Ukrainian and Belarusian lands was not viewed as a conquest but merely as a return of the lands long lost. From that point of view, it would have been improper to view Belarusian peasants the way Lermontov and Pushkin viewed the Caucasus natives. That said, it should also be underscored that Ukraine and Belarus had never been part of Old Muscovy and thus could not be returned to the Russian state. The East Slavic lands west of Muscovy had been wrenched away from the Mongols by the Lithuanians, and they had became part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth when the Lithuanian prince Jogaila (Jagiello) married the Polish princess Jadwiga. Under Polish rule, Lithuania, western Belarus and western Ukraine had lost their upper classes to Polonization, and in this sense their nationhood had been weakened; nonetheless, they had also gained a chance to sustain an identity separate from the Russians.

Their four-hundred-years-long association with Poland did result from Polish colonialism, but it also nurtured the idea that Ukraine was neither Polish nor Russian. Thus the argument made by Catherine's public relations men, that the partitions of Poland constituted not a conquest but merely a dynastic rearrange-

ment, was tenuous.[55] The fraudulence of this official explanation resulted in a lack of encouragement on the part of the state to celebrate the rearrangements too loudly; also, the expropriation of Polish landowners and forcible conversions to Russian Orthodoxy were best kept under wraps.[56] Such were the reasons why hardly any literary works (except for some poetry rejoicing over the capitulation of Polish cities) were written to celebrate the cannibalization of the Polish-Lithuanian state.

Only when the disappearance of Poland from the map of Europe congealed into an accepted political reality did anti-Polish literature begin to appear, usually as a follow-up to Polish risings or other manifestations of Polish identity. The November 1830 rising occasioned a wave of sympathy in Europe and thus had to be countered by Russian voices asserting the illegitimacy of the rising and the righteousness of the empire. The finest representatives of Russian literature reacted angrily to Polish aspirations to independence, as well as to the suggestion expressed by such Polish writers as Adam Mickiewicz and Cyprian Kamil Norwid that Russia had more in common with its former Mongol masters than with its European partners in imperialism. Thus the Polish risings strengthened the Russian imperial consciousness and provided an opportunity for Russian writers to hone their polemical skills. In the 1830s, there appeared literary works that combined high artistic quality with the imperial arrogance that in other colonial societies manifested itself less indirectly, in musings about "the white man's burden." In Russia, it was rather a *noli me tangere*.

However much the Brahmins of India might have disliked or even hated the British, they did not despise them; the Russian colonizer, in contrast, faced the unusual situation of being patronized in some parts of the empire. Granted, some of this originated in the resentment of the defeated, but the scale and pervasiveness of this phenomenon indicate that there was more to it than psychological compensation.[57] The awareness of this unusual relation between the colonizer and the colonized was strong in the nineteenth century; writers such as Pushkin and Dostoevskii felt obliged to lash back at those who did not show enough respect for the Russian empire. This anger and pride were heard in the West, but the underlying causes were grossly misinterpreted. Ernest Simmons's commentary on Pushkin's poem "To the Slanderers of Russia" ["Klevetnikam Rossii"] set the tone for the next two generations of interpreters. Simmons saw in Pushkin's anger "a reactionary tendency" and "a flaming patriotism."[58] Note a total deflection of attention from a possible inferiority complex.

While the feeling of superiority over the Russians displayed by the Baltic and Polish elites escaped the West's attention, because it seemed too absurd to be taken seriously (or perhaps because the phenomenon was so alien to Western sensibilities), the Russians did take note of it, and they reciprocated with the particularly harsh measures against the defeated but cheeky subalterns. It must have been emotionally taxing for the colonizer to endure the manifestations of scorn in Russian-occupied Warsaw, where the best Polish families shunned social contact, let alone marriage, with the Russians. When Pushkin upbraided "the

slanderers of Russia" for questioning the empire's civilizational mission, he displayed imperial pride honeycombed with an inability of a nouveau-riche to take criticism in stride.

Pushkin's angry tone in such poems as "To the Slanderers of Russia," "The Borodino Anniversary" ["Borodinskaia godovshchina"] and *The Bronze Horseman* was thus generated by a set of circumstances that find no parallel in Western colonialism. There, attacks on imperial possessiveness from the point of view of the cultural superiority of the defeated did not occur on a large scale. In the nineteenth century, the West was conscious of, and confident in, its cultural and technological might, and there was no conceivable direction from which a questioning of its achievements could have come. Not so in Russia, where in spite of the unprecedented military, diplomatic, and cultural successes the imperial image was still fragile and wobbly.

Such was the background. The front of the stage featured pride and confidence, and that breathtaking eloquence often engendered by them. In his "colonialist" poems, the annoyed Pushkin insisted that Russia's destiny was to lord it over nations and tribes of lesser might. He realized that Poles in particular were beneficiaries of tea-and-sympathy support in the West after the insurrection of 1830, and his raw imperial nerve responded with an outburst of creativity. His anti-Polish poems first appeared in a brochure titled *The Taking of Warsaw,* published in September 1831, immediately after Warsaw fell to Field Marshal Paskevich's army. It was the same Paskevich who took over from Ermolov in the Caucasus.

"To the Slanderers of Russia" takes to task Western sympathizers of the Polish rising, such as the popular French poet Casimir Delavigne and the authors of the *Polenlieder* in Germany.[59] Haughtily, the speaker informs them that the contest between the two nations is over, and that Lithuania had lost (note the poet's unwillingness to mention Poland). Those who tried to change the verdict of history should be swept away. In a tone reminiscent of the introduction to *The Bronze Horseman,* Pushkin conjures up the empire's greatness. He informs the reader that Russians had "bought with their own blood Europe's freedom, honor and peace." He also threatens Europe ("Need we start to quarrel with Europe again? Have Russians become unaccustomed to victory? Or perhaps we are not numerous enough? . . . From Finland to Asia Minor, from the Kremlin to China, Russia will rise and its steel armor will shine."). Note the confusion between ethnic Russia and its colonies: Pushkin's poem threatens the West in a way reminiscent of Aleksandr Blok's "The Scythians," written almost a century later. By comparison to such poems, Kipling's self-confident verse appears to have been written by a paragon of modesty. Pushkin tauntingly invites Europe to attack Russia so that its armies may find their death in the vastness of the East, just as Napoleon's soldiers did ("among graves not entirely unfamiliar to them," *sredi nechuzhdykh im grobov*). Russian literature had known tsarist anger before, starting with Ivan the Terrible's *Letters* to Prince Kurbskii (their authenticity has been questioned, however), and adulatory invocations of Russia and her

tsars and tsarinas had appeared in the works of Denis Fonvizin, Gavriil Derzhavin, and other eighteenth-century literati. But the tone of a wrathful Russian lord threatening the European opponents of the Russian enterprise had not been heard before.

Pushkin's passion for the *imperium* resembles that of his contemporary, Mikhail Glinka, whose opera *Life for the Tsar* interprets history as a conspiracy of Poles and other Westerners to throttle Muscovite Russia.[60] The libretto, by Glinka's cousin, employs the device of accusing the conquered people of having plotted against Russia at a time when they were free, perhaps with a view to justifying the massacres of them during and after the conquest. In Shakespeare's words, "So full of artless jealousy is guilt / It spills itself in fearing to be spilt." Glinka's opera was first staged in 1836, four years after the Polish rising was over, and it was dusted off in the period of Soviet-Nazi friendship. Tiutchev's anti-Polish poetry was occasioned by the 1863 rising. Similar tendencies can be perceived in regard to other colonized nations. In 1939–41, campaigns of vilification of the Baltic peoples and of Romanians were undertaken in the Soviet Russian press just before and during the time when these nations were exposed to arrests and deportations by the NKVD.[61]

All empires resemble one another: "The Borodino Anniversary" rejoices over "the sweet hour of victory" over Europe, and it mocks the alleged desire of Warsaw "to dictate its proud laws" to the unidentified "slanderers of Russia." But "the fate of Poland has been sealed," asserts Pushkin. In this poem, Poland is ambiguously equated with the entire Europe ("The entire Europe [*vsia Evropa*] tried to conquer us," Pushkin alleges in the first stanza of the poem). Just as Glinka helped create in the minds of Russians the myth of a powerful and malignant Polish invasion, so did Pushkin provide the interpretation, which subsequently grew into certainty in the Russian popular consciousness, that the 1812 French invasion had almost crushed European civilization and that this had been reversed by Russia. This exaggerated notion of Russia's role in European affairs was a by-product of imperial consciousness as it developed during Pushkin's lifetime. It turned out to have a long half-life.[62] The Moscow historian P. M. Miliukov coined a sarcastic neologism, "Aziopa," with reference to such boasts as compared to the actual state of affairs in the Russian empire. The vagueness of distinction between ethnic Russia and the empire has plagued Russian literature and self-perception ever since Pushkin's introduction of semantic liberties, while the fear that *vsia Evropa* is out to destroy Russia has become a "default mode" into which Russian political consciousness locks itself in times of crisis.[63]

The most magnificent expression of Russian imperial pride is the prologue to *The Bronze Horseman* [*Mednyi Vsadnik*] (1833). The poem is so artistically successful that its colonialist tone and its gilding of history have largely escaped attention: critics might have considered it tactless to seize upon the poem's factual inaccuracies, in view of its resonant artistry. It is indeed one of the finest poems in the Russian language. But it also has a less attractive dimension. Pe-

ter's military prowess and ability to plan ahead (*i v dal' gladel*) are contrasted here with the "miserable Finns" (*ubogie chukhontsy*), who proved unable to generate long-term designs on other people's land and who languished in their "huts" until a powerful Russian hand wiped them out. The Finns's huts are squatty, whereas Peter stands erect; their "skiffs" are "solitary", whereas Peter has already created the Admiralty. What is juxtaposed here is, in fact, a lifestyle that minds its own business, builds "huts," and bears itself somewhat passively, with a lifestyle that is not satisfied with what *is,* or what it already possesses, and strives to acquire more at other people's expense. As Edward Said might say, this is imperialism at its purest: Peter's right to destroy the Finnish way of life is taken for granted. After the Finns, Peter wished to take on the Swedes (*otsel' grozit' my budem shvedu*). In Pushkin's rendition, Peter does not want to "construct" a window to Europe, he wants to "hack through" an opening: the Russian verb *prorubit'* connotes violent action.

The prologue is Nietzschean *avant la lettre*. It dismisses the laborious building of civilization by a human community and extols quick change brought about by the will of superior men:

> I love you, Peter's creation,
> I love your severe, graceful appearance . . . .
> City of Peter, stand in all your magnificence,
> Be unshakeable as Russia!
> May the conquered currents, too,
> Make their peace with you;
> Let the Finnish waves
> Forget their ancient hostility,
> And not disturb with their vain rancor
> Peter's everlasting sleep! [64]

The poem itself promotes hero worship in the Carlylean sense, and it also makes clear that Peter's ultimate goal was not his own glory but Russia's. The glory of a nation is conceived here solely in terms of an ability to outshine and outpower others: Lenin's *kto kogo* (who whom) is perilously close to Pushkin's evocation of the might of Peter. Power is the ultimate subject matter of this poem; it is glorified here for its own sake.

Among the footnotes to the poem provided by Pushkin, there is one referring to the description of St. Petersburg by Adam Mickiewicz, Pushkin's onetime acquaintance. Aware perhaps that few readers would have an opportunity to read this Polish poet, Pushkin confidently suggests that Mickiewicz also wrote a description of the city, titled "Oleszkiewicz," that he supplied the details omitted by Pushkin, and that Mickiewicz had in turn borrowed his description from a minor eighteenth-century poet, V. G. Ruban.[65]

Pushkin here unwittingly or deliberately misled his readers. "Oleszkiewicz" is a fragment of a cycle of passionate poems about St. Petersburg that Mickiewicz wrote in 1832 and titled "Ustęp" ("A Digression"). There is no mention of Ru-

ban there, but there is a friendly comment about K. F. Ryleev, a leader of the Decembrists hanged by order of Tsar Nicholas I after their failed rising. In these poems, or rather jeremiads, Mickiewicz paints a devastating picture of St. Petersburg and its inhabitants. He compares the city to a Zoo filled with species of architecture alien to the culture that captured them. Everything in that city is borrowed or bought for the money Russians managed to steal from others nations, laments Mickiewicz, and the city is steeped in a chilling atmosphere of autocracy and fear. Peter

> with a chain closed up each Russian port.
> He formed a senate; he established spies,
> Passports, and ranks.
> . . . .
> so that Europe cried, surprised:
> "Tsar Peter has made Russia civilized!"
> All that remained for later tsars' desires
> Was to hint lies to venal cabinets,
> To succor despots with new bayonets,
> To enter foreign lands on plunder bent,
> To pay their foreign guests a stolen fee
> And win applause in France and Germany."[66]

As to Peter's monument, Mickiewicz compares it to the monuments of other prominent leaders of nations, and Peter does not look good by comparison. In contrast to such emperors as Marcus Aurelius, who extended his hand benevolently to the people whom he ruled and whose horse stood quietly with his legs on the ground, Peter is ready to charge forward, his horse maddened by pain inflicted by the rider; he is ready to trample on whatever is in front of him. A people ruled by this kind of emperor is afraid of him; he, not a foreign enemy, represents the danger—he can trample down on their lives and property. Mickiewicz's reflections here seem to prophesy the Khodynka, a field where several thousand people were to be trampled to death during the celebrations accompanying the coronation of Tsar Nicholas II. One of the poems in Mickiewicz's "Digression" ends with a stately metaphor of a gate, a moat, and a bridge leading to the "prison" of St. Petersburg. The ability of Poles to produce rejoinders of this kind helped generate a deep dislike of this nation among the Russian imperial elites.

Vissarion Belinskii's pigeonholing of the superfluous man proved lasting, and it crowded out other possible interpretations of the characters created by Pushkin and Lermontov, such as the ones suggested in this chapter. The theme of a man alienated from society and bitter in his disappointment was picked up by Dobroliubov, Chernyshevskii, Goncharov, and finally by Soviet Russian critics. The connection between the superfluous man and Empire faded away from view. The detour of Formalism that Soviet literary criticism took in the 1920s did not change the focus of attention in this respect. B. M. Eikhenbaum's study of Ler-

montov shows that Formalism did not introduce any corrections to this Empire-friendly interpretation.[67] Overshadowed by the superfluous man who was Pechorin, the Circassians and their fate remained invisible even to the radical Formalist critics. The Poles likewise faded from view, to be revived as enemies of the state during the period of Soviet-Nazi friendship. The colonialist aspect of the Russian assaults on others was dropped into the memory hole. Furthermore, while the Caucasus had been treated as "ours" (*nash*) in Russian literary history ever since the time of Pushkin, the bonding between the land and its conquerors was tenuous well into the Soviet times. In Russian politics and culture, the Caucasus remained a distraction, a place to which the recalcitrant subjects of the empire could be dispatched, an object of boastful assertions about "gigantic Russia," a place from which Russia could extract its oil and where it could manufacture its champagne, but not a place that had a voice or identity separate from that of the empire. A recent American study of the superfluous man in Russian literature confirms these stereotypes.[68] Similarly, the attitude to Poland and Poles in Russian literature has never been updated by Russian or Western academic industry. In the post-Soviet period, the occasional Russian outbursts accusing the inhabitants of the Caucasus and the Poles of monumental crimes against Russia testify how scarce in Russian discourse are reassessments of Russian attitudes toward the former colonial subjects.[69]

The unraveling of the Soviet Union and subsequent emergence of "new" states in the Caucasus carry a promise of change. Significantly, when the Soviet colossus fell apart, not even the pro-Russian Armenians opted for a union with Russia. Russia had clearly overextended itself in the Caucasus and in the western parts of the former empire. While Russian military resources and clever diplomacy had subjugated these areas and imposed a colonial dependency on them, the long-term prospects, including demographic ones, point to a drastically diminished Russian role in these areas and elsewhere in the twenty-first century.[70] As has been the case with other empires, the Russians may be victims of their own imperial overreach: to paraphrase Stalin, Russianness fitted the Caucasus like a saddle fits a cow. In the 1990s, the cow, however emaciated, shook the saddle off. However, the postcolonial legacy in the Caucasus left it rife with corruption, violence, and other intractable ills.[71]

In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," T. S. Eliot remarks that no text stands alone, that it is always perceived against the background of other texts that came from the same tradition. An ability to carry on in tandem with the tradition (even when ostensibly going against it) is a good measure of a poet's talent. Pushkin's and Lermontov's works resonated with the attitudes that later writers incorporated into their texts, taking these attitudes for granted as germane to Russian history and culture. Imperial aggressiveness was one such prominent attitude, so pervasive in subsequent writings as to become invisible to Russian eyes. The Russians did not begin to think of themselves as an imperial nation until their national consciousness internalized the Caucasus wars. The conquest

of the Caucasus provided them an opportunity to hone their colonial rhetoric and consciousness.

Colonial discourse, remarked Said, is a cultural privilege of representing the subjugated Other. As this imperial privilege percolated through foreign and domestic commentary on Russian literature (as well as through literature itself), the submerged history of the Caucasus and of other conquered lands faded away from scholarly and popular memory. While Poland and other western provinces of the empire have partially regained their voice in world discourse, the Caucasus has not. For generations now, a combination of great poetry and the distortive intervention of colonialism conspired to produce an image of the Caucasus as confused, divided, criminal, and poor, one of those incomprehensible and dangerous areas on the fringes of the Russian Federation.[72] This perception leads not-infrequently to a conclusion that the Russians might as well keep it.

NOTES

1. N. S. Kiniapina et al., *Kavkaz i Sredniaia Aziia vo vneshnei politike Rossii: Vtoraia polovina XVIII–80-e gody XIX v.* (Moscow, 1984).

2. In a paradoxical way, Liudmila Petrushevskaia's plays and stories, whose action takes place in the cramped space of Soviet apartment blocks, echo *Domostroi* in that regard, suggesting that future Russia might abandon its imperial pretensions and concentrate on building a citizen-oriented state.

3. *Domostroi: po spisku imperatorskogo obshchestva istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh* (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia M. Katkova, 1882), 1–17. Quoted from a Bradda Books reprint edited by W. F. Ryan (Letchworth and Hertfordshire, England: Bradda Books Ltd., 1971).

4. Isaac Massa de Harlem, *Breue Description des chemins qui menent et des fleuves qui passent de la Moscouie vers le Septentrion et l'Orient dans la Siberie* (1613), in M. Obolensky, ed., *Histoire des Guerres de la Moscovie* (Brussels: Fr. I. Olivier, 1866).

5. Edward L. Keenan, "Muscovite Perceptions of Other East Slavs before 1654: An Agenda for Historians," *Ukraine and Russia in Their Historical Encounter,* edited by P. J. Potichnyj et al. (Edmonton, Alberta: CIUS Press, 1992), 20–38.

6. Sergei Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (1851-1879), vol. 5 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Sotsial'no-Ekonomicheskoi Literatury, 1961), 182.

7. D. S. Likhachëv's writings on seventeenth-century Russian literature ignore the Polish connection. See chapter 6.

8. A detailed account of the memoranda of Russia's foreign ministers can be found in Jarosław Czubaty, *Rosja i świat* (Warsaw: Neriton, 1997).

9. John Russell, "Catherine, Also Great as a Collector," *New York Times,* 1 October 1998.

10. Ludwik Bazylow, *Historia nowożytnej kultury rosyjskiej* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1986), 196.

11. N. Karamzin, "O liubvi k otechestvu i narodnoi gordosti," *Sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 2 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1964), 283.

12. Bazylow, 198.

13. "On nedovolen Istoriei Karamzina; on zhelal by, chtoby plamennoe pero izobrazilo perekhod russkogo naroda iz nichtozhestva k slave i mogushchestvu." A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6 (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), 642.

14. V. G. Kiernan, *Marxism and Imperialism* (New York: St. Martin's, 1974), iii.

15. Seton-Watson.

16. Allen F. Chew, "The Caucasus and Transcaucasia, 1763–1914," *Atlas of Russian History*, 72–3.

17. Ibid., 183.

18. Aleksei Petrovich, "Kazaki i severnyi Kavkaz," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 4 June 1994. A defense of General Ermolov's campaign appeared during the October 1999 offensive against the Chechens, and the disproportionate use of force was defended as follows: "The principle of 'an eye for an eye' has a sound moral basis. . . . it is impossible to argue against it." Aleksandr Pronin, "Tragediia Generala Ermolova," *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, no. 40 (15-21 October 1999), 5.

19. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 10, 430.

20. Henri Troyat, *Pushkin*, translated by Nancy Amphous (New York: Minerva Press, 1975), 367.

21. *Journey to Arzrum*, translated by Birgitta Ingemanson. (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1974).

22. The same casual tone appears in Leo Tolstoi's early story "The Cossacks," which deals with a later stage of the conquest of the Caucasus.

23. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 685.

24. Ibid., vol. 4, 684.

25. Rudyard Kipling, *Verse* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1940), 280.

26. *Flaubert in Egypt: A Sensibility on Tour*, translated and edited by Francis Steegmuller (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), 65.

27. Ibid., 695.

28. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4, 114.

29. Agence France-Presse (Moscow), 21 September 1998 and 2 October 1998.

30. Pushkin, *Putechestvie v Arzrum*, in *Pss*, vol. 6, 683.

31. "Hadji Murad," *Great Short Works of Leo Tolstoy*, translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 629.

32. Leo Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata and Other Stories*, translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude (Oxford and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 472.

33. "Cherkesy nas nenavidiat. My vytesnili ikh iz privol'nykh pastbishch; auly ikh razoreny, tselye plemena unichtozheny." English translation, *Journey to Arzrum*, 23; original in *Pss*, vol. 6, 647.

34. Pushkin, *Pss*, vol. 6, 644.

35. Ibid., 693.

36. M. Iu. Lermontov, *Geroi nashego vremeni*, edited by B. M. Eikhenbaum (Moscow: Akad. Nauk, 1962), 8, 10.

37. *Journey to Arzrum*, 83.

38. Ibid., 40.

39. Ibid., 80.

40. A survey conducted by the Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in the Moscow schools asked the children to present drawings about how they see their future. One boy drew himself among bloody body parts, supplying the caption, "Had there been fewer Georgians and Negroes around, Moscow would have been cleaner." According to the survey organizers, this was not an untypical answer.

Vitali Vitaliev, "Projections: Remembering Galina Starovoitova," *Transitions* 6, no. 1 (January 1999), 22.

41. *Great Short Works of Leo Tolstoy,* translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 629.

42. August von Haxthausen, *Studies on the Interior of Russia,* edited by S. Frederick Starr (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972), 320.

43. Angela Stent, Daniel Yergin and Thane Gustafson, *Russia 2010 and What It Means for the World* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 250.

44. Seton-Watson, 658.

45. *Journey to Arzrum,* 76. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 6, 691. "Blagosloven chas, kogda vstrechaem poeta. Poet brat dervishu. On ne imeet ni otechestva, ni blag zemnykh; i mezhdu tem kak my, bednye, zabotimsia o slave, o vlasti, o sokrovishchakh, on stoit naravne s vlastelinami zemli i emu pokloniaiutsia."

46. Bhabha, *Location of Culture,* 69; also Moore-Gilbert, 117–118.

47. *Ferdydurke* (Warsaw: Rój, 1937); in English *Ferdydurke,* translated by Eric Mosbacher (New York: Grove, 1968).

48. Gayatri Spivak, "The Problem of Cultural Self-Representation," in *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues,* edited by S. Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990), 55–7.

49. V. G. Belinskii, "Geroi nashego vremeni–sochinenie M. Lermontova," *Sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 1 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennoi Literatury, 1948), 551–629.

50. "Glubokoe vpechatlenie ostavliaet posle sebia [Bela]: vam grustno, no grust' vasha legka, svetla i sladostna; vy letite mechtoiu na mogilu prekrasnoi, no eta mogila ne strashna: ee osveshchaet solnce, omyvaet bystryi ruchei, kotorogo ropot, vmeste s shelestom vetra v listakh buziiny i beloi akatsii, govorit vam o chem-to tainstvennom i beskonechnom, i nad neiu, v svetloi vyshine, letaet i nositsia kakoe-to prekrasnoe videnie, s blednymi lanitami, s vyrazheniem ukora i proshcheniia v chernykh ochakh, s grustnoi ulybkoi." Ibid., 578.

51. Victor Terras, *A History of Russian Literature* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1991); Charles A. Moser, ed. *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989).

52. Eikhenbaum, *Hero,* 125 ff.

53. Bazylow, 191.

54. Alexandre Bennigsen, "Soviet Minority Nationalism in Historical Perspective," in Robert Conquest, ed. *The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 131–150.

55. It recently reappeared in George Kennan's pronouncements on Eastern Europe. See the interview with David Gergen, chapter 1.

56. Norman Davies details some of these conversions, and he points out that on a single day Catherine distributed among her grandees and courtiers half a million peasants who had previously belonged to Polish landowners. The fate of these dispossessed landowners is shrouded in discreet silence. Norman Davies, *God's Playground,* vol. 2 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1984), 86–90.

57. In Polish literature, such attitudes were particularly prominent in the novels of Stefan Żeromski. In the first pages of *Przedwiośnie* (1925), both the narrator's patronizing tone and Mrs. Barykowa's complaint about Russian roads illustrate this persistent perception.

58. Ernest Simmons, *Pushkin* (New York: Vintage, 1964), 342.

59. *Oeuvres complètes de Casimir Delavigne* (Paris: F. Didot, 1880), vol. 4; St. Leonhard, *Der Novemberaufstand in den Polenliedern deutscher Dichter* (Krakau: W. Poturalski, 1911); also Davies, vol. 2, 328–30.

60. Renamed *Ivan Susanin* under the Soviets.

61. Davies, vol. 2, 328-30.

62. In *Posobie po istorii otechestva dla postupaiushchikh v vuzy* (Moscow: Prostor, 1994), 337, the authors speak of "liberation of the countries of Europe," suggesting that the Soviet Army took Berlin single-handedly and also played a decisive role in the Japanese surrender. See chapter 6.

63. Roman Szporluk, "The Ukraine and Russia," in Robert Conquest, editor, *The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 151-182.

64. "Liubliu tebia, Petra tvoren'e, / Liubliu tvoi strogii, stroiinyi vid. . . . Krasuisia, grad Petrov, i stoi / Nekolebimo, kak Rossiia! Da umiritsia zhe s toboi / I pobezhdennaia stikhiia." English translation in Dimitri Obolensky, ed., *The Penguin Book of Russian Verse* (1962), 113.

65. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4, 398.

66. George R. Noyes, ed., *Poems by Adam Mickiewicz* (New York: Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, 1944), 356. Original in Adam Mickiewicz, *Poezje*, vol. 3 (Lwów: Gubrynowicz i Syn, 1929), 146.

67. B. M. Eikhenbaum, "Roman M. Iu. Lermontova *Geroi nashego vremeni*," in M. Iu. Lermontov, *Geroi nashego vremeni*, edited by B. M. Eikhenbaum (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk, 1962), 125–162.

68. Jesse and Betty Clardy, *The Superfluous Man in Russian Letters* (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 1980).

69. In fall 1998, the Russian government sent the Polish government a note about the alleged murder of 80,000 Soviet soldiers taken prisoner during the Polish-Soviet war of 1919–1920.

70. R. Conquest, ed., 314–68; Robert Lyle, "World: Populations Shrinking in Eastern Europe, Russia," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 12 March 1999.

71. Jeffrey Goldberg, "Getting Crude in Baku," *New York Times Magazine*, 5 October 1998.

72. In the post-Soviet era, the principal inhabitants of the Caucasus are Christian Armenians and Georgians, and Muslim Azeris. Under the Soviets, they formed three "union republics" comprising the majority nationality and a number of smaller nations, in addition to the colonizing Russian presence. But many nations and ethnicities in the northern foothills of the Caucasus continue to reside within the Russian Federation. At least some of these Turkic peoples aspire to their own statehood, and they are mostly Muslim.

conquest of Khiva bring any tangible benefits to ordinary Russians. Gumilëv and others rejoiced over the surrender to the Russian army of cities far beyond Russia's ethnic borders. While the standard rhetoric of nationalism requires such expressions of joy, nations have usually moderated it by works and statements in which nationalism is prominently absent or the moral ambiguities of imperialistic enterprise are invoked. But in Gumilëv's writings about Russia's imperial drive into Central Asia and other parts of the world not a trace can be found of a suggestion that Russia's successful imperialism had taken the nation down a wrong road.

Gumilëv's victorious generals are predecessors of Solzhenitsyn's kind doctors and orderlies, who take care of the miserable natives even in conditions of universal privation and suffering. Solzhenitsyn's Russian colonialists are cultivated and refined, modest and gentle, somewhat like the Russian nationals in Pushkin's *Journey to Arzrum during the 1829 Campaign* who supplied the "Asiatic" wilderness with roads, parks, and bath buildings. In Russian literature generally, one observes a tendency to ascribe virtue rather than strength to military conquerers. In *Journey to Arzrum,* General Ermolov is described as a kind person who devoted his retirement years to the village in which he had lived, leaving it only to visit his elderly father, a simple and pious man. We further learn from Pushkin that this awe-inspiring general kept an open house for everyone except city officials, the implication being that ordinary peasants had access to him while the *chinovniki* (who have had a bad reputation in Russian letters) did not. Pushkin's Ermolov is a predecessor of Gumilëv's Turkestani generals, a paragon of righteousness who had brought enlightenment and civilization to the lesser races. One gets an impression that Pushkin's goal was to make him revered more for his alleged virtues than for his military successes.[11] This nationalist fantasy goes further back to Nikolai Karamzin, who in his *History* maintained that Muscovy had been able to enlarge its dominions because of its moral influence, and not because it knew how to use the sword effectively.

The myth of Russia's peaceful expansion has persisted in Russian literature in various forms, and the stereotype of the refined elderly general (or other military officer) is one of its most common manifestations. In *Eugene Onegin,* Tatiana ends up marrying an old general who, as she puts it, is favored by the court (*ego laskaet dvor*). What could be the reason for bestowing so many favors on the old man? As Allen Chew's *Atlas* shows, a variety of military ventures could have endeared Tatiana's husband to the court of Alexander I or Paul I, among them the pacification of the Caucasus, the suppression of Thaddeus Kosciuszko's rising in 1794, or the early ventures into Central Asia. But the general's past is obscured by his generous smile, his lack of vanity, his perfect manners, and the friendliness with which he greets Eugene and introduces him to his wife, in the mistaken belief that the two had never met. The old general is all probity and kindness, and he is rewarded with Tatiana's fidelity.[12] In Solzhenitsyn's *Cancer Ward,* the Russians likewise overflow with kindness toward the Uzbeks. It is as if Solzhenitsyn is arguing with imaginary adversaries, trying to prove to them that in such circumstances, any talk about colonial oppression is totally misdirected.

The waning of empires becomes evident when Others are pushed (or push themselves) to the center of the stage or when they emerge from the shadows, in which they were ignored or misread. By showing a devolution of Russian women from a potentially pro-imperial force into a group totally out of touch with the powerful state, Petrushevskaia is the first to begin to deconstruct what Robert Conquest has called the last empire.[14] In order to survive, empires need enthusiasm, optimism, self-assurance, and a belief in their own invincibility and permanence. A reader of Pushkin's poetry or Lev Tolstoi's prose absorbs such attitudes in large doses, a condition that shapes his or her perception of nineteenth-century Russia. Even the failed socialist-realist novels, which extolled Soviet greatness, provided the pabulum necessary for keeping acceptance of the Soviet state at a reasonably high level. But a reader of Petrushevskaia's miniature texts is taught to decouple Russianness from political power and to accept Russianness without power, a recipe no Russian writer had offered before her. Petrushevskaia's texts bring the Russian imperial adventure to an artistic closure. They adumbrate the distress and disappointment that tend to accompany decolonization.

In 1995, in an article attempting to deconstruct what he called "the Soviet discourse," the Russian semiotician S. Medvedev remarked that while the discourse of power has been characteristic of many cultures, in Russia the appropriation of language for political purposes has been all-inclusive and many-leveled. As Soviet power went into decline, the Russian language was left with a baggage of concepts and expressions that had lost all connection with reality. Now, a new way of speaking has to be invented on the ruins of the Soviet newspeak (*novoiaz*). The big words are crumbling through misuse; a return to very primitive and fundamental forms of speech is in order.[15] In her radical refusal to notice the make-believe world of Soviet discourse, Petrushevskaia seems to have followed Medvedev's prescription *avant la lettre*.

Valeriia Novodvorskaia dared to be even more explicit than Petrushevskaia in rejecting Russian imperial self-consciousness. Here is what she wrote in the Russian biweekly *Novoe vremia* in 1996:

> We have never understood them, and we will never understand them, because the full do not comprehend the hungry. . . . We have always had bushels of geography. . . . We have always had a surplus of people, land, fossil fuels, soldiers, special services, bureaucrats, police. . . . But they kept dreaming feverishly about their tiny shred of land. They dreamed that they would hoist a national flag there and would manage their own economy.[16]

They are the Chechens and others who have been part of the "Russian" Federation but would like *not* to remain a part of it. That a Russian writer would offer so generous and eloquent response to their claims is remarkable, given the fact that in the post-Soviet period quite a few Russian writers reverted to the nerv-

ousness of immature empires that Aleksandr Pushkin's generation displayed in such abundance. Like Petrushevskaia and Tolstaia, Novodvorskaia is a trailblazer. Like most trailblazers, she does not weigh her words carefully, opting instead for a flamboyant style that has occasioned many a headache among more sedate Russians. The essay quoted above is a call to imperial disengagement upon which the political establishment of any country would frown, and for which it would punish the writer in ways appropriate to its political culture. Novodvorskaia was not imprisoned, nor was her life endangered by that poetic essay. In 1996 in Moscow, a person with no economic clout was of little interest to the powers that be.

But like Petrushevskaia, Novodvorskaia is not a favored intellectual so far as the influential literary and political circles are concerned. In the late 1980s, she was arrested several times and served time in a psychiatric jail (*psikhushka*). Such imprisonment had been customary for dissidents in tsarist Russia and in the USSR. When Pëtr Chaadaev came out with his critique of Russian history, the tsar promptly declared him insane. When Lev Tolstoi began to preach unorthodox political messages, the state likewise tried to present him as insane. The Soviets built hospitals to incarcerate the *inakomysliashchie,* "those who thought differently." Within this "default mode" context, the fact that Novodvorskaia's punishment included a stay in the *psikhushka* indicates that the late Soviet state considered her brand of political deviation to be rare and dangerous. But in post-communist Russia, she is free to say what she wishes, as long as she does not try to implement her ideas.

In the 1990s, Novodvorskaia was the leader of one of the first political parties in post-Soviet Russia, *Demokraticheskii Soiuz*. Her book, *This Side of Despair* [*Po tu storonu otchaianiia*] (1993), is a political autobiography that, in addition to narrating the story of her own life records her participation in the struggle for political freedom in the Baltic republics, a rare instance of a native Russian helping others secure the right to sovereignty. It was her active and consistent advocacy of liberty for every nation that got Novodvorskaia in trouble with rank-and-file Russian democrats. Her book did not sell, and she remained on the margins of Russian political life. Her infrequent publications are markedly different from what mainstream Russian politicians routinely say. Her high-pitched tone enlivens the journal *Novoe vremia,* where she has published her essays. It also shows the desperation of Russia's democrats, who sometimes lose hope of improving their country.

Novodvorskaia's essay on the Caucasus is a passionate defense of the right of the peoples of the "Russian" Federation to secede. Novodvorskaia points out that "When the Soviet dissidents from the metropolis brought down communism (or perhaps just set it aside), they solved most of their problems. With a few exceptions, they deemed it madness for the dissidents from Russia's *colonies* [italics added] to start solving their own particular problems."[17]

No Russian before or after Novodvorskaia has dared to formulate so openly the key problem of the Federation: the fact that even after the fall of the USSR na-

tions and territories have been locked in the "Russian" Federation against their will, a situation that amounts to colonial captivity. Like certain writings of Pëtr Chaadaev and Aleksandr Gertsen, Novodvorskaia's essays are likely to be counted among the milestones that mark changes in Russian national consciousness.

Novodvorskaia displays a fine knowledge of the empire's dealings with its Caucasus subjects. She is respectful of Chechen mythology and of Chechnya's cultural icons and experiences, just as the world has learned to respect Russian cultural icons and experiences. She condemns Moscow for its devious dealings with Zviad Gamsachurdia, a Georgian patriot and the first president of free Georgia after the Soviet Union's downfall. She comes close to accusing the FSK (the KGB's successor) of murdering him. She points out that the Muslim leader of Chechnya and the Christian leader of Georgia were good friends, thus challenging the empire-generated view that religious hatreds prevail in the Caucasus. "In life and in death, Dzhokhar Dudaev and Zviad Gamsachurdia are the source of unbearable irritation for the Moscow intelligentsia, the KGB, the FSK, the FSB, for President Yeltsin's administration, and for other power structures," she writes. Their friendship flew in the face of Moscow propaganda that accused the Muslim nations of extremism, just as empire-induced privation and misery were driving these nations into the arms of the Muslim fundamentalists. Novodworskaia warns that those who have called the secessionists "bandits" run the danger of following Stalin's path: "It will become necessary to murder everyone, even women and children, so that, in Stalin's terms, no 'avengers for the fathers' grow up." She realizes that the Russian political culture cannot yet accommodate a radical reversal of state policy, and so she turns to poetry, to Vladimir Vysotskii's songs in particular, to make her point: "Throw everything overboard that smells of blood, / and know that the price is not too high." Galina Starovoitova, murdered in 1998, had added her political presence and her convictions to that weak chorus; she too believed that, to use Adam Michnik's words, "a nation that oppresses other nations couldn't be free."[18]

Novodvorskaia's story does not have a happy ending. In her zeal to effect change, and owing to hyperbole to which she has always been prone, she has crossed the line separating debate from extremism. Barely two years after her magnificent essay on Russia's minorities and within a few months of Russia's economic collapse in August 1998, she took a stance in disfavor of Vorkuta miners on strike in protest against nonpayment of wages and projected closings of unprofitable coal mines. Closings of money-losing pits have been part of the painful process of economic restructuring that Russia has had to undertake in order to start growing, but from the standpoint of workers, pit closings equaled starvation. There were no other jobs in subarctic Vorkuta, and resettlement of workers in the European mainland has not been seriously contemplated by the government. Lacking effective leadership, the Vorkuta miners have been all alone in their fight for survival.

In her *Novoe vremia* article on the subject, Novodvorskaia remarked that perhaps those who could not adapt themselves to new circumstances should be shot,

so that the remainder (if only a minority) could live in a new, splendid, and democratic Russia.[19] While it goes without saying that she did not literally advocate shooting workers, her rhetoric smacked of the old Russian extremism that goes back to Dmitrii Pisarev, Sergei Nechaev (especially the *Catechism of the Revolutionary,* written in 1869), and Lenin. This and other shrill texts have not endeared Novodvorskaia to any political group, and her political and intellectual future is uncertain.

Writers like Petrushevskaia and (with the above caveats) Novodvorskaia suggest that conquering and holding on to foreign lands for Moscow's benefit has to be abandoned. The Russian people cannot sustain it any longer. Indeed, they themselves have split into Russia proper and the "white colonies" of Siberia and the Far East. Straddling Europe and Asia, the Federation comprises too many ethnic and territorial groups, who are heirs to too many diverse histories, cultures, economies, memories, and interests. No male Russian writer has ever dared to say that the "Russian" Federation is too vast and diverse to be manageable under one government located in Moscow. Writing in opposition to the empire, undoing its imaginative command, as Petrushevskaia has done, is part of the slippage of confidence within a Federation that has never been entirely sure of its identity. The women writers' voices are too feeble to make an instant difference in a society that has been dominated by male voices, a society that does not yet fully want to discover its colonialist dimension. Postcolonial consciousness still has a long way to go in Russia. But permission to narrate has been obtained, or rather wrenched, from the literary establishment by "those quintessential Others," Russian women writers. By showing how the empire has failed women, Liudmila Petrushevskaia, in particular, deserves to be called the first postcolonial Russian writer.

NOTES

1. P. Barr, *The Memsahibs: The Women of Victorian India* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1976).

2. Catriona Kelly, *A History of Russian Women's Writing, 1820–1992* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

3. Helena Goscilo, "Paradigm Lost? Contemporary Women's Fiction," in *Women Writers in Russian Literature,* edited by Toby W. Clyman and Diana Greene (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1994), 220.

4. Valeriia Novodvorskaia, "Throw Everything Overboard That Smells of Blood," *Novoe vremia,* September 1996. Translated by Steven Clancy, *Sarmatian Review,* 17, no. 3 (September 1997), 480. Subsequent quotations are taken from this translation.

5. *Russia Today,* 28 July 1998.

6. Helena Goscilo, *The Explosive World of Tatyana N. Tolstaya's Fiction* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996).

7. "Teper' ona kak by dlia menia umerla, a mozhet byt', ona i na samom dele umerla, khotia za etot mesiats nikogo v nashem dome ne khoronili." Liudmila Petrushevskaia, *Sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 1 (Khar'kov and Moscow: Folio and TKO Ast, 1996), 7. Subsequent quotations are from this edition.

8. Agence France-Presse, 29 November 1998.

9. "Russia: A Country Study," Library of Congress site at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/rutoc.html#ru0064; *Statisticheskoe obozrenie: ezhekvartal'nyi zhurnal,* no. 1/28 (1999); and Paul Goble, "Democracy and Development," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2 August 1999.

10. Agence France-Presse, 29 November 1998.

11. W. E. Harkins, *Dictionary of Russian Literature* (Patterson, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1959), 385.

12. Petrushevskaia, *Sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 1, 338.

13. Goscilo, 219–21.

14. Robert Conquest, ed., *The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1986).

15. S. Medvedev, "SSSR: Dekonstruktsiia teksta (k 77-letiiu sovetskogo diskursa)," Chernyshev, *Inoe,* vol. 3, 321.

16. Novodvorskaia, "Throw Everything Overboard That Smells of Blood," 480–84; also V. Kaganskii, "Sovetskoe prostranstvo: konstruktsiia i destruktsiia," in Chernyshev, *Inoe,* vol. 1, 89-130.

17. Conquest.

18. *New York Review of Books,* 14 January 1999.

19. *Novoe vremia,* 30 November 1998. I thank my colleague Michael Bernstam of the Hoover Institution for pointing this out to me.