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## **NOTES ON RUSSIAN ORIENTALISM AS A PHENOMENON OF CULTURAL TRANSFERS<sup>1</sup>**

*Russian Orientalism as a phenomenon of cultural transfer based on the material of the Russian literature of the 19th century is considered in this article. The author offers to look at the processes of invention the East in Russia not only as a complex of various transformations of European ideas, texts, ideologies, and symbolic structures planted to the Russian soil, but also as an important process of convergence and mixing of Russian, American, and European methodology for studying the Eastern "Otherness".*

*Keywords: Russian Orientalism, East, self-Orientalization, the other, national identity, Russian literature.*

Over the past four decades, the Orientalist approach to literature has been supplied by a great deal of factual content: thousands of texts in dozens of languages have been analyzed in terms of their ability to reflect the colonial and postcolonial processes of the invention of an imaginary division of the world into the West and the East. This approach integrated regional varieties that are not always directly in line with Edward Said's description of an opposition between European oriental knowledge and European imperial power. Among the numerous followers and opponents of Said's book [1; 2; 3] we find works on German and French Orientalism, on Orientalism in Asian literature in America [4; 5; 6; 7], on the peculiarities of China's Orientalism (namely the problematic relationship between the imperial center and the periphery, also the formation of the images of external and internal Others in imperial China [8]), etc. It is clear that each national scientific discourse is associated with different colonial experiences, has generated its own type of Orientalism, and is associated with peculiar interactions with internal and external Others, but the methods used to analyze this phenomenon also differ from each other. This article offers some reflections on Russian Orientalism and the Russian position in Orientalist discourse, it is therefore useful to all scholars working in this field in the wake of the famous works of Susan Layton, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, and others [9; 10].

**1. In a broad sense, Orientalism is a way of speaking about the East as some typological unity opposite to the West, but, at the same time, Oriental-**

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**ism is a conglomerate of different concepts, different ideas, and discourses, each of them with their own history, their own evolution, their own successes, and difficulties.** For example, on the one hand, European and American Orientalist discourse is centered around the ideas of nationalism, sexism, racism, demonization of the Other, the justification of slavery and colonial conquests, the formation of different types of identity (racial, national, territorial, etc.), the opposition between civilized and barbaric peoples, Eurocentrism, Westernization. On the other hand, we find the ideas of decolonization, humanization, abolitionism, the struggle for the independence of the oppressed peoples. If for some Western authors Orientalism is a way to assert their superiority over the so-called backward peoples of the East, for others it is a way to expand the narrow framework of the white man's world in order to reach the origins of world civilization (as Goethe's poem "Hijra" from *West-Eastern Diwan*). How can such different phenomena be part of the same process? What do they have in common? What is the status of the Russian variant of Orientalism?

In our study of the reflection made by Western art of all these kinds of Eastern representations made, we must understand that Said's *Orientalism* (1978) proposed only one of the many possible ways by which we can explain the proximity, interdependence, and mutual permeability of all these phenomena. Indeed, we can well admit that it is no accident if cultural and civilizational distinctions between the West and the East appeared within the European languages in the 18th and 19th centuries. National identity also emerges to replace religious identity as European imperialism reached its apogee. And it is quite natural that during this period the Russian Empire appeared on the map of European imagination as a new ambitious player claiming an exceptional position and exceptional dividends.

At the same time, nationalism, racism, and the justification of slavery and colonization can all be thematized without involving the concept of Orientalism if the material allows it. Nonetheless, Orientalism is very often the best explanation for most Eastern depictions and subjects in literature. Essentially, there is a unifying feature that ensures such diverse discourses work together—it is the East or the Eastern Other (it can be imagined as a sexual Egyptian odalisque, or something quite specific and threatening, like Turks, Arabs, or Circassians). Frequently, this Eastern Other indeed arises precisely in the colonial context. Thus, Orientalism is a convenient way to describe the mindset of the people who created these discourses in that period of human history when European people felt themselves to be dominant against all the others, and when they have invented many semiotic methods to fixate and propagate this status of superiority. When we feel that a European civilizational idea is hidden behind depictions of savages, we realize that neither the Soviet model of "friendship of peoples" nor the approaches of traditional comparative studies are able to provide us with all the necessary tools to analyze it.

For example, as the English traveler Lucy Atkinson is describing the Siberian Kalmuks in her *Recollections of Tartar Steppes and Their Inhabitants* (1848), she relied on the rich experience of English colonial prose in which savages are children, full of anger and cruelty, and share a naive view of life:

...we had a visit from some ferocious-looking fellows, although they were only Kalmuks. It was night when they arrived; there were about twenty, and, when seated around the blazing fires, - with their arms slipped out of their fur coats, which were hanging loosely around them, leaving the upper part of their greasy muscular and brawny bodies perfectly naked, and nearly black from exposure to the air and sun, and with pigtails, like those of the Chinese, - their aspect was most fierce; and still more so, when they all commenced quarreling about a few ribbons and pieces of silk I had given to our men. They had tied strips of red around their necks; but I satisfied all parties, as I thought, by giving some to the new comers; it did appear very ridiculous to see these great strong men taking delight in things which would only have given pleasure to a child at home. And yet I do not know whether we ought to look upon their doing this with contempt; how many men in a civilised country take pride in adorning their persons with the view of looking fine, and these simple creatures were doing the same, only in a ruder manner! Still the quarreling continued, and then it turned out that the fellows were drunk. [11. P. 68-69].

Despite the generally friendly intentions of the traveler, and the ironic and warmhearted tone of the descriptions, it is impossible not to notice that the intent behind Mrs. Atkinson's description is to depict an orientalized dangerous place inhabited by savages, where an English lady must educate to the superiority of European civilization over the barbaric way of life. According to Steve Clark, "the strong model of travel writing and empire would insist that their texts promote, confirm and lament the exercise of imperial power; and that this ideology pervades their representational practices at every level" [12. P. 3]. Furthermore, in Mrs. Atkinson's case, the label of Orientalism becomes more than appropriate when we also consider its views in relation to gender and race. Discriminated against by European society, it is only surrounded by savages that the European woman feels overwhelmingly superior, and it is our understanding that savages are needed just for that in any colonial narrative.

**2. The conceptual complex of Russian Orientalism is structured by the ideological problem of self-identification of Russia as West, East, or Eurasia (in the early 20th century), but it is the same Orientalist problem of identifying the dominant and the subaltern.** The principle of dominance in the discourse of Orientalism is sometimes explicit, as in Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws* (1748), sometimes it is hidden behind friendly phrases about the closeness of cultures. For example, in the preface to *The Citizen of the World, or Letters of a Chinese Philosopher Living in London, to His Friends in the East* (1762), the author portrays his work as a metaphor for gentle friendship between a knight and his horse: "The horse most usually bore the knight; but in cases of extraordinary dispatch, the knight returned the favour, and carried his horse" [13. P. ii-iii]. Despite the fact that Goldsmith refers here to the style and eloquence of the book, and that he before confidently proclaimed that Europeans were very similar to Chinese people, Orientalist overtones of this metaphor are obvious. The partners in love and friendship that Goldsmith initially chose are not equal: the task of a horse (contextual metaphor of Chinese people), as defined by its nature, is to be under the saddle and not to be free to ride on a European knight's back.

Incidentally, in the context of Russian Orientalism, the use of the depiction of a horse is a very interesting case in which the dominant status of a European is fixed in relation to an Eastern girl. In Lermontov's *The Hero of Our Time* (1839), the protagonist, a Russian officer and a participant in the colonial seizure of the Caucasus, organizes the abduction of a Circassian girl. The ransom for the girl is revealed to be the best horse in the whole district. Later, Pechorin domesticates a savage as if she was a horse. In Nikolai Leskov's *The Enchanted Wanderer* (1873), Russian noblemen are attempting the same kind of domestication with a Gypsy girl with the help of a horse specialist named Ivan Flyagin. Both cases end with tragic outcomes—both savages die.

The fact is: the Russian officer himself does not know why he is doing this and is also unable to clearly establish the status of his object—is it a sexual slave or wife? After the complete domestication of the wild beauty, the Russian officer does not know what to do next, he gets bored, and he searches for new avenues. As an Orientalist case, these stories could be described as a reflection of Russia's colonial policy. If Britain conquered and plundered its colonies, everyone understood that these territories were thereafter the land of Britain, but they were not Britain itself (as in the subaltern status of a sexual slave). In another way, as Russia seized its colonies, it convinced everyone that they were not colonies but the growing Russia. However, what to do with these new lands, and why so many of them were acquired—no one could tell.

It has been repeatedly noted that, in pursuit for self-knowledge, every nation should have an ontological Other in relation to whom it will develop the criteria and aspects of its self-determination. In the case of Russian literature, this statement is true and instrumentally applicable only if both the West and the East are considered as the Other. The invention of the Russian image of the East is a process leading to dual directions: to the internal and to the external Other. The internal Other of the classical literary period is not only the space of the colonial frontiers (Crimea, Caucasus, Siberia, Central Asia) but also the culture of the Russian peasantry, which was opposed to the culture of westernized Russian nobility. The external Other can be identified according to the locations of traditional colonial and cultural interests of the Russian Empire: the countries of the Balkans, the Mediterranean Basin, China, India, etc. Any space, any people, any aesthetic or natural object can be orientalized.

Consequently, Russian literary Orientalism must be defined as a style of thinking based on such distinction between the West, Russia and the East in colonial and postcolonial discourses. In such discourses, the Russian image of the East is artistically depicted as opposed to civilized entities (both the West and Russia). For a systematic interdisciplinary study of its genesis in the area of Russian literature, these three major temporal layers are significant. The first stage can be identified as the preparatory period, or the pre-oriental discourse, which is characterized by the accumulation of oriental material in the genres of travel, mythological (dogmatic and apocryphal), and diplomatic narrative (15th–18th centuries). The second stage consists in the development of close ties with Western European literature (18th century) without which the birth of the Rus-

sian Orientalist discourse would in principle be impossible. The third stage is the most important. Within it were generated the main conceptual and genre-thematic laws of Russian Orientalism which still determine the specificity of Russian culture today. The first half of the 19th century was the time of an extremely increasing influence of the concept of the East in Russian culture and politics. Based on the research of Mark Bassin, Vera Tolz rightly points out that “in the 1840s the idea of Russia’s civilizing mission in the East became a central feature of Russian national ideology” [14. P. 27].

The West and the East are fundamental concepts in the identification processes of the 19th-century Russian literature. Acting as the East for the West and the West for the East, Russian culture formed a special discourse of self-understanding reflected in numerous literary genres. Within this discourse, the question of national identity, specifics of Russian literature and of the “Russian soul”, and the three centuries-old world significance of Russian culture have all always been considered, and continue to be considered, in this imaginary geography which divides the world map into the developed West on the one hand and the barbaric East on the other. The West and the East are two categories of deep roots of Russian culture, and none of them can subsist without the other. Because of the imperial past of Russia, this symbolic opposition represents both a colonizing and a colonized type of consciousness. Speaking about the conceptual sphere of Russian Orientalism, I wish to signify a living and dynamic system composed of all textual manifestations of the Russian invention of the East: each concept is necessarily associated with another in a multi-level grid of relationships that are continuously transformed, creating more and more new connections while maintaining the basic contours. Within this system, each concept acquires new content, and this content can be reconstructed only by identifying links between individual concepts and the total system.

Since the formation of the Russian centralized state at the end of the 15th century, the countries of Europe and of the Ottoman Empire acted as key images of the ontological Others in the Russian mind. The development of diplomatic relations, military clashes, and trade promoted intercultural exchange, the formation of language, and cultural bilingualism in the frontiers (as contact zones of cultural transfer). Meanwhile, in the central zone, the national narrative was developed in relation to two fundamentally different cultural poles: the simultaneous rejection and interest in the Catholic and Muslim worlds, and the forming of the system of relations with the East as an object of close geopolitical and cultural interest. The term “contact zone” is quite clearly defined in the work of Mary Louise Pratt as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths” [15. P. 4].

After Peter the Great proclaimed the Russian Empire in 1721, and the state was modeled in the trend of the European colonial powers with the pathos of constant expansion, the national narrative underwent significant changes. For the successful imperial construction there emerged the concept of civilization, which implied compulsory knowledge of European languages and awareness of

Russian superiority over the less developed nations located to the south and east of the metropolis. In the 18th century, through translations, Russian literature was first involved in Orientalist discourse as a new ideology based on this distinction between the West and the East. Within the Russian mind, the West, as well as Russia, became a small island of civilization in the boundless ocean of the East where the barbarian populations should certainly be organized by the conquest and the imposition of foundations for morality and culture.

Speaking of these ideas, we must determine the genre model of Russian Orientalism, or, in other words, raise the question about what genres of Russian Orientalism emerged as important parts of the national literature and what genres will continue to influence the development of Russian national identity. The ideas of Orientalism were articulated in most genres of Russian literature, but we can distinguish those that make up the source: small prose, poetry, travelogues, and journalism. From the translated oriental stories of the 18th century to Osip Senkovsky's and Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's Eastern and Caucasian stories, Russian literature mastered narrative ways of reflecting on the East. In Pushkin's and Lermontov's poetry, the East was legitimized as an important concept in which the ideas of the personal and the national intersected. An incredible number of travelogues describing world travel, the history of Turkish prisoners, travels to the Balkan peninsula, China, Steppe, Crimea, and Siberia enriched the Russian imaginary geography. In the period of international tension and of Westernizers and Slavophiles' disputes, both the philosophical essays by Vladimir Solovyov and Dostoevsky's *The Writer's Diary* reflected the principal means of including the East in a variety of contexts of the national discourse about the fate of Russia and Russian culture.

**3. Not every Otherness should be identified as Orientalism, and not every oriental motif should be studied with an Orientalist approach.** French descriptions of the Egyptians, English descriptions of the Indian and Russian descriptions of the Caucasus are all typologically and structurally similar to the beliefs of the Chinese and the ancient Greeks about the surrounding barbarians. In scientific literature, we may come across terms such as "Orientalism of the Orientals" to describe the Chinese invention of its Western domains (西域, Xi-yu) [16; 17]. We may come across the term "double colonization" to describe the case of an Eastern woman who is subject to double discrimination by colonizers and by local patriarchal communities. We can also find the term "secondary orientalization" to describe the process of inventing images of Siberian aborigines in the missionary practice of the Russian Church. However, neither Chinese nor ancient Greek discourses can be identified as Orientalism, because Orientalism is a discourse specifically about the invention of the East originating during the colonialist period by Europeans and only for Europeans.

Every time we begin to study a particular literary text, we consider that Orientalism is only a tool for its understanding. Discerning that the East is anything that is described as the East we sort out contradictory phenomena on different shelves, and explain all this with the complex idea of imaginary geography: here we put the West, which began to describe itself as a systemic unity, here we put the East,

which was invented by the West, and here is Russia, which itself does not know what it is: the West or the East. The irony of this situation is that the very formulation of the question “what is Russia?”—the West or the East—suggests that Russian culture selflessly joined the discourse in which it was not a subject, but an object of European colonial imagination. The reason is that throughout the nineteenth century, despite the status of the empire, Russia was “the East” for European travelers, writers, and politicians. In various completely different genres, ranging from fairy tales of Rudolf Raspe’s *Baron Munchausen’s Travels* to Marquis de Custine’s *Description of Russia in 1839* and Rudyard Kipling’s stories, we can uncover thousands of examples of the orientalization of Russia.

However, at the same time, the Orientalist approach will not be able to offer anything to other literary problems. We can mention the questions concerning the author’s psychology, the questions surrounding the transfer of Eastern ideas into the Russian cultural environment (for more information about this term and its application in relation to Russian culture, see [18; 19; 20; 21]), as well as interrogations on the development of the artistic language. For example, we cannot consider a postcolonial problem the study of the “poet-prophet” concept as it was formed in the mind of Alexander Pushkin during his work with the French and Russian translations of the Koran. Similarly, postcolonial is neither the problem of fatalism and its Muslim roots in Mikhail Lermontov’s mind nor the study of the receptive history of Persian, Japanese, or Chinese poetry, its genre forms and conventional language.

Sometimes, the Russian feeling of domination over Asia (or over the Asian part of Russia) is not only correlated with the transference of Western European Orientalism. In the story *On the Edge of the World* (1875), Leskov described a case that at first glance may seem like a typical example of the arrogant attitude of a colonial official towards natives. However, it is not so simple. We read that the Irkutsk bishop, while sitting on a sleigh deftly ruled by a Siberian aborigine who did not want to be baptized into the Orthodox faith, pondered over this “child of nature” and reasoned:

*Nothing could be done for him—either with Massillon or Bourdaloue, or Eckartshausen. There he was poking his stick into the snow or cracking it—his face like a lump of soapsuds—there was no expression in his peep-holes (it would be a shame to call them eyes); there was not a spark of the soul’s fire; even the sound of the words that issued from his throat seemed somehow dead: in grief or in joy there was always the same intonation—slow and passionless—half the words were swallowed in his gullet, half were squeezed by his teeth. How was he with these means to seek for abstract truths, and what could he do with them? They would be a burden to him: he must only die out with his whole race as the Aztecs have died, or the Red Indians are dying. — A terrible law!” [22].*

Orthodox missionaries among foreigners also saw themselves as the dominant force, and foreigners themselves as savages. However, this was not directly related to English or French colonial arrogance, it was due to the peculiarities of Christian mythology in Russia. The missionaries imagined that they were en-

gaged in an enlightenment, but this enlightenment had a completely different meaning which was the opposite of secular ideas (for example, comparing the concept of enlightenment between on one side Voltaire and D. Diderot, and on the other side the late N. Gogol and F. Dostoevsky during the period of his *A Writer's Diary*). In part, this problem was examined in an article by Oxana Karnaukhova, who suggests using the term “secondary Orientalism” to describe the missionary strategies of the Orthodox Church within the empire [23].

Typologically, these arguments made by the bishop herein above are comparable with descriptions of Eastern savages found in numerous Russian and European travelogues, but one should be aware that Russian arrogance towards wild peoples has its own origins dating back to the pre-imperial period. This is especially true during the 15th and 16th centuries when the Moscow kingdom was strengthening and establishing its strong contacts with the Eastern peoples, while the idea of a Third Rome was emerging, and when Siberia was seized. As an example, we can recall the 15th-century descriptions of the aborigines in *A Journey Beyond the Three Seas* by Afanasy Nikitin or the early 17th-century Persian travelogue of Fedot Kotov. Consequently, it must be remembered that the discourse of Russian Orientalism existed along (in parallel or intersecting) with other forms of Russian-aboriginal interaction and other constitutions of images of the Other.

**4. The question *What is Russia?* has deep Orientalist roots and is a cultural transfer fact.** In Kipling's heritage, we find a story titled *The Man who Was* (1890), which is not very affectionate towards Russian nationalists. It is attested at the very beginning of the story, where the main receptive dilemma of the 19th-century Russian civilizational paradox is formulated:

*It should be clearly understood that the Russian is a delightful person till he tucks in his shirt [he means, until the Russian begins to imagine that he is a European and begins to imitate European behavior]. As an Oriental he is charming. It is only when he insists upon being treated as the most easterly of western peoples instead of the most westerly of easterns that he becomes a racial anomaly extremely difficult to handle. The host never knows which side of his nature is going to turn up next [24. P. 166].*

Thus, is Russia an Eastern barbarian (or wild bear) in a European suit or maybe a European with the bad manners of a barbarian? This ideological problem is that the Ghost of Russian military power (and its manic desire to expand its borders in all directions) is present in European eyes every time they picture these contradictory images. These European ideas are the basis for descriptions of the post-Petrine Russian state, and, ironically, they also formed the basis for Russian self-knowledge in its progressive overcoming of Eastern roots and competition with the West to take a worthy place in the European family of Nations. That is why Russian Orientalism has this remarkable peculiarity that the depictions of the Eastern Others and the methods of their scientific interpretations are both largely related to the transfer of ideas, words, texts, cultural practice, etc. originating from Europe and, later, from North America.



Likely, in Russian political consciousness, the actual very popular representation of Russia as a bear belongs as well to both Europeans and Russians: just look at political cartoons during periods of aggravation of Russian-European relations (especially during the Crimean war, the Balkan crisis, the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878, the period of the First World War, etc.) in which Russia is depicted as a ridiculous or fierce Bear, Octopus, or Cossack: *Neueste Komische Karte Von Europa* (1870), *A Humorous Diplomatic Atlas of Europe and Asia* (1904), *European Revue. Kill That Eagle* (1914) and others [25].

While analyzing Russian Orientalism as a phenomenon of cultural transfer, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that cultural transfer is possible only if there is a readiness for it in the receiving culture. Such readiness can be exemplified by the creation of zones of cultural contact and contexts where numerous agents of cultural influence are able to bring and adapt new cultural information. It is also extremely important to note that the formation of depictions of an Eastern Other took place in Russia and Western Europe nearly simultaneously. While each culture had its reasons for this formation, the leading cultural and political role of Western Europe, however, predetermined who the donor culture and the recipient culture would be.

It is during the 18th century that the systemic interest of Western European authors (e.g., William Jones, Voltaire, Montesquieu, William Beckford, and others) originates in *The Koran*, *Arabian Nights*, the pre-Islamic poetry of *The Mu'allaqat* and Persian Sufi thought as a consequence of the colonial presence of Europeans in the countries of the East. During this period, Russian thought acquired skills of orientalizing. This is mainly due to the influence of French fiction and non-fiction literature (it is impossible not to mention d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale*) on the Russian one, in addition to depictions of Mohammed as a dervish, as a caliph and many other wonderful oriental attributes in the context of paradoxical ancient wisdom and sociopolitical problems in terms of Eastern savage. Relying on information from the Orient, authors of literary texts, travelogues, and journalism all helped to consolidate the idea of their cultural superiority over other nations in the collective consciousness of Europeans (without any doubt, Pushkin as a Westernizer and Dostoevsky as a nationalist both positioned themselves as Europeans in the process of the invention the East).

The myths of the Third Rome and the “Greek” and “Oriental” projects of Catherine the Great both grew in the Russian culture which adopted such successful models of colonial thinking. Of course, this “Oriental project” perfectly illustrates the connection between the concepts of the Russian Empire and the East: Layton rightly notes that Catherine's project of 1796 “called for full-scale invasion of the Caucasus and Persia, the seizure of trade stations between Turkey and Tibet, the consequent opening of a direct route to India and the isolation of Constantinople from the East” [26. P. 5]. According to Harsha Ram, there was “a specifically Russian tradition of relating poetics, rhetoric, and politics” which can be called “the imperial sublime”, he rightly believes that it “was a melding of the Baroque traditions of late Muscovy with the newer literary codes

and cultural fashions imported from France and Germany under the monarchs Peter, Anna, and Elizabeth” [27. P. 5].

Depictions of the East in Russia in a process of cultural assimilation of European fiction and non-fiction literature fall into contradictory conditions: the mechanisms of image formation go back to European tradition, and the tasks they serve fundamentally contradict it. Western European Orientalism has developed a scale for civilization on which, as the enlightened West, it is initially located. From this position, the West believes in its right to interpret and legalize violence at various distances—including towards the Eastern peoples who have no such rights. Russia was in the list of these orientalized countries. There were more than enough objective reasons behind this: the obvious underdevelopment of state and cultural institutions, the lag in scientific advancement, the Byzantine roots of Russian religion, absolutism, the powerlessness of the population, the serf system, etc. But the main reason was a purely geographical one. The development or underdevelopment of St. Petersburg had no decisive signification when the main part of the imperial body was located in Asia, this boundless, little-known ocean of anthropologically and confessionally alien tribes. In theory, authors should have repudiated this rather offensive way of working with Eastern images and should have challenged and strongly rejected it. However, the post-Petrine culture of the Russian Empire did not know any other way to become equal to the West, except to become the West for the East.

Thus, the main message of Orientalism is significantly transformed on Russian soil and in time inevitably takes the most bizarre forms based on the already existing dense nationalism and religious messianism, based on the geopolitical ambitions of the establishment, in the context of the Westernizers and Slavophiles’ dispute and, later, in the complex of Eurasian ideas. So far, any conversation about a particular Russian specificity in artistic or public discourse, despite a completely different geopolitical and cultural alignment in the world, is inevitably associated with the vocabulary and mythology of Russian Orientalism.

**5. The cultural transfer fact is not only the emergence, but also the methodology of Orientalism studies after 2006 when Said’s book was translated into Russian. Like any transferred idea, the Orientalist approach was strongly transformed on the rich soil of Russian studies of literary representations of space and Eastern cultures.** In the 2000s, numerous translations of works based on theories of post-colonial criticism and nationalism poured into Russia, for example, the new *Ab Imperio* journal established in Kazan, the Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie publisher launching the “Historia Rossica” series, etc. From the point of view of the cultural transfers theory, these transfer agents contributed to a reorientation of domestic literary critics from the problems of poetic enthusiasm for the exotic Eastern towards numerous problems: national identity; national narrative; constructivist perception of internal and external orientalized Others; various interconnections between the individual take on Orientalism of individual authors and the general Orientalist discourse of the educated strata of Russian society; national myth-making; and finally the problems of literary manifestations of the so-called Eastern Question.

To date, there has been an accumulation of many interesting works on Russian imperial myth-making in relation to the aspects of the invention of the East and the West. Plenty of works have been published on the various connections between the colonial policy of the Russian empire beyond the Urals and the achievements of Oriental studies. There are also plenty of works on the Orientalist deconstruction of classical texts [14; 26; 27; 28; 29]. At the same time, a new methodology began to take form within the new Russian literary scholarship, which already had a complex network of local texts (mythological representations of space in literature). The local texts of St. Petersburg, Moscow, Siberia, Crimea, and many others were initially based on the problematic principle of the opposition between the European and the Asian, between center and periphery, between overt and covert, and between progressive and barbaric. This means that Orientalism penetrates Russia to find a preexisting rich Russian analytical tradition, and, confronted with it, begins to transform into an interdisciplinary Orientalist approach that, in near future, will remain the leading role in studies of Eastern images.

The relevance of such an approach to the Eastern content of Russian literature is due to the general interest of Russian scholars in the questions of imagology, comparative studies, and intercultural communication in the context of the “post-colonial explosion” in Western humanitarian thought. The key concepts of Russian Orientalism were repeatedly considered in works of Soviet and post-Soviet scholars within the framework of the West-Eastern influences in Russian literature. However, in the past decade, these concepts were applied to new content and became involved in a completely new actualization of the imperial experience of Russia and the problematic complex of its literary reflection.

An important result of this methodological transference is an understanding of the constructivist nature of the East: this culturological and civilizational concept was invented in Western Europe as a response to the geopolitical challenges of the active colonial era. Because of the successes of the colonial empires, the principles and mechanisms they developed for submission, management, description, and classification of the peoples of the world became viral: despite significant differences in the development of non-European territories, similar principles and mechanisms were used by countries that were not empires like the United States, or continental empires like Russia.

When analyzing Eastern images, another important point to understand is that it is more correct to refer not to Eastern influence, but to the fact that Russian culture invented the image of the East because it is needed for the development of national, civic, and cultural identity. Thus, Russian Orientalism is not only a certain grouping of eastern images, but it is also a manner of describing any object as an Eastern, like Lermontov’s Caucasians, Leskov’s Russian peasants, or Pushkin’s Arabs. Moreover, many of these images are connected not so much with each other individually, but are rather united with a single referent discourse which provides them a collective and impersonal instance of interpretation.

**6. The main difference between Russian Orientalism and its European and American related discourses is the role that the idea of the East plays in**

**the formation of national identity.** During the 19th century, the dual status of the Russian Empire as the subject and object of European Orientalism led to the supplementation, in Russian culture, of orientalization as the main tool for the creation of the East by another important idea called *self-orientalization*. This applies when the Russian state, its people and its culture can be described as a kind of East by Russian thinkers. Arif Dirlik calls this case “Orientalism of Orientals” [8. P. 99]. Unfortunately, notwithstanding all the perspective of the term, it is little used by Russian humanities, in contrast to Western humanities.

The piquancy of the theory of Russian Orientalism lies in the fact that the process of Europeanization of Russia was based on the idea that Russia was originally a non-European country and that in order to become one it needed to overcome its Asian backwardness (Asian laziness, aggressiveness, despotism, servility, voluptuousness, inability to enlightenment, deaf religiosity, etc.). Alexander Griboyedov, Alexander Pushkin, Vissarion Belinsky, Nikolay Nekrasov, and others understood this perfectly well, but the Slavophiles and Dostoevsky already turned the question in such a way that pre-Petrine Russia was not a triumph of the Asiatic, but a storehouse of national culture and true faith. The apotheosis of the development of Russian Orientalism was the emergence of the ideology and mythology of Eurasianism in the 1920s, which is still actively involved in national self-determination and state-building. For Western European Orientalism and European identity, Eurasianism is unthinkable because their only task was and remains limited to the civilizational opposition of the West and the East.

The closest related term is “internal colonization”, used in the works of Alexander Etkind [30]. According to Dirk Uffelman, the terms “self-orientalization” and “internal colonization” form a single formula for the destructive development of national identity. Uffelman explains it this way: the external orientalization of culture can trigger self-colonization. In this case, inevitably, separation from one’s own culture occurs and internal Orientalism arises involving the “Others” within this culture. This internal Orientalism can remain at a negative distance, or take a distantly reformatory attitude, that is the colonialist attitude, towards “regrettable Others”, which will result in internal colonization [31. P. 64]. It should be noted that the case described by Uffelman does not quite suit Russian Orientalism. Self-orientalization in Russia does not arise as a result of external colonization but as a result of the thrill of “cultural inferiority” in the face of more developed Western cultures and state institutions. Equally important is the process of understanding and rethinking the role of Russia in the intrigues and provocations of the Eastern Question and the colonial policy of Russia in Siberia and the North Caucasus.

However, the self-orientalization described by Uffelman was a kind of a common place in the disputes of the Westernizers and Slavophiles, but Dostoevsky added a special meaning to this problem. Ewa Thomson rightly noted that Dostoevsky never felt the irony in the fact that he wrote novels about moral dilemmas while his readers were involved in violence abroad [32. P. 54]. In many years of reasoning about the “Russian world” (*Russky mir*) and its place in world

culture, Dostoevsky did not attach negative values to some parameters described as “Eastern” and backward in the Orientalism discourse. For example, with his conscious and experienced affiliation to the Eastern Church (Orthodoxy), for Dostoevsky, the readiness to sacrifice European freedoms and values for the sake of the monarchical structure established by God was equivalent to the concept of “Russianness”. On the contrary, for Russian Westernizers like Belinsky, it was a sign of “Asianness” (see the famous Zaltsbrunn letter of Belinsky to Gogol in 1847, for the reading of which Dostoevsky, in fact, went in Siberian exile). Apparently, in Russian culture, the controversial idea of the East is and will remain a chronic disease that cannot be cured without the appearance of new ideas of post-nation states and destroying of the imaginary separation of the world into the West and the East.

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## **РУССКИЙ ОРИЕНТАЛИЗМ КАК ФЕНОМЕН КУЛЬТУРНОГО ТРАНСФЕРА** **Алексеев П.В.**

В статье ставится вопрос о русском ориентализме как феномене культурного трансфера на материале русской литературы XIX в. Автор предлагает взглянуть на процессы изобретения и освоения Востока в России не только как на комплекс разнообразных трансформаций европейских идей, текстов, идеологий и символических структур на русской почве, но как на важный процесс сближения и смешения русской, американской и европейской методологии изучения восточного «Другого». Актуальность статьи определяется тем, что несмотря на ряд влиятельных публикаций отечественных и западных русистов, в настоящее время требуется уточнение дефиниции и содержания термина «русский ориентализм» в связи с компаративистской теорией культурного трансфера. В статье последовательно рассматриваются шесть основных аспектов проблемы. Во-первых, автор предлагает определить русский ориентализм не только как дискурс о Востоке как некоем типе цивилизации, противоположном Западу и России. Главная мысль заключается в том, что русский ориентализм – это не одна идея, а комплекс различных идей и дискурсов гетерогенного происхождения. Именно

это объясняет как внутреннюю противоречивость русской идеи Востока, так и ее способность существовать независимо от политических и культурных конъюнктур в имперский и постимперский периоды. Во-вторых, автор обращает внимание на важнейшую особенность русского ориентализма: этот дискурс возник и до сих пор существует для решения главной задачи – самоопределения культуры, сгенерированной и развивающейся в буферной зоне Запада и Востока. В-третьих, автор ставит вопрос о том, что ориенталистская методология имеет очевидные пределы: не всякую идею «Другого» в России следует отождествлять с ориентализмом и не каждый восточный мотив нужно изучать при помощи ориенталистского подхода. Четвертый блок статьи, наоборот, ставит вопрос о том, что главный вопрос русской идентичности «Что такое Россия?» восходит к дискурсам европейских ориентализмов и на материале русской словесности не только может, но и должен изучаться при помощи ориенталистского подхода. Пятый и шестой блоки посвящены рассмотрению базовых отличий ориентализма и методологии его изучения в России от европейских и американских вариантов. Таким образом в статье доказывается мысль, что комплекс идей, объединяемый дефиницией «русский ориентализм», а также способы его изучения, основанные на постколониальном подходе, должны учитывать специфику их русской адаптации.

Ключевые слова: *русский ориентализм, Восток, Другой, национальная идентичность.*