

the “external lie.”

Similar responses could be provided to all of Rosen's statements. As for Dmitrii's innocence, I refer our readers to the detailed arguments presented in my article, and I must emphasize again that, contrary to Rosen's assertion, miracle is most exuberantly celebrated throughout Dostoevskii's great novel, and nowhere more powerfully than at its very heart: the key moment when Dmitrii Karamazov does not murder his father.

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To the Editor:

I read with interest Nathaniel Knight's “Grigor'ev in Orenburg, 1851–1862: Russian Orientalism in the Service of Empire?” (*Slavic Review* 59, no. 1). Knight's initial thesis appears to be that, unlike western orientalism, Russian orientalism was not bent on “appropriating the history of [Russia's] eastern subjects and neighbors to build a narrative underpinning Russia's cultural domination and colonial expansion” (81); rather, it was bent on investing in orientalist discourse for the sake of building Russia's prestige in Europe, for the sake of scholarship, and, last but not least, “to protect subject peoples, increase their material prosperity, and create conditions that would make possible their cultural advancement” (90).

Knight goes on to emphasize that Vasilii Vasil'evich Grigor'ev's objective was to educate the natives (whom Russians considered educable, in alleged contrast to western orientalists who considered the natives hopelessly inferior). Knight concludes that “[Grigor'ev's] practices as an administrator and the model of orientalism offered by [Edward] Said” (98) are in fundamental conflict. He argues that in Said's model the natives are seen (by western orientalists) as unable to absorb western education, while in Russia's colonies this situation did not occur. On the basis of his interpretation of Grigor'ev's case, Knight suggests that the notion of orientalism articulated in western discourse may be useless in regard to Russian colonial behavior in the Caspian Basin, in Central Asia, and, one might surmise, elsewhere as well.

I note incommensurability between goals and data in Knight's article: on the basis of only one case study, he questions the appropriateness of introducing into Russian cultural space the vast discursive formation generated by Edward Said's analyses of western orientalism. And even this one case study does not warrant the conclusions Knight draws, in my opinion. Here is why.

It seems to me that Knight's understanding of Said and of the postcolonial studies that have followed is inaccurate. As Gayatri Spivak observed in *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990), the Indians under British rule were “brought up in an education system . . . where the name of the hero . . . was the universal human being, and we were taught that if we could begin to approach an internationalization of that human being, then we could be human” (7). The deformity Said and other anticolonialists have fought was not simply military force and coercion but the privilege of “educating” and shaping the minds, the economy, social interactions, and social structures. The colonialist enjoyed all of these with obvious benefits for the empire. It was Moscow and St. Petersburg that went to Central Asia and to the Caucasus, and not the other way round. The privilege of this one-directional movement, exertion, influence, and dissemination is at the core of orientalist attitudes and therefore of anticolonialist discourse, notwithstanding the mutual give-and-take that naturally occurs during societal encounters.

Said once remarked that orientalism is a textual privilege of representing the subjugated Other. The issue in orientalism and in postcolonial discourse is not whether the colonialist was benign and bent on educating and studying the natives, or whether he attacked them with his armies and his businessmen, or whether the natives lived separately or were scattered and intermixed with the colonialists (as was the case with Russian territory). The privilege of representing the colonized Other is what Russians have availed themselves of, and abundantly.

There is one issue where Said was wrong, it seems to me, but Knight does not mention that issue. For Said, world discourse is roughly divided into western and nonwestern: the first being dominant and taxonomizing, the second, impotent and incapable of im-

posing its own terms of discourse. Because so many postcolonial theorists hail from India, Pakistan, the Middle East, and northern Africa (all colonized by European whites at some point), postcolonial theorists forgot about Russia's transformation from "the barbarous kingdom" of Muscovy (subject to early orientalist discourse by Giles Fletcher) into the orientalizing and discourse-generating Russian empire. In this last stage, Russia imposed its discourse on the west without the west noticing it, as it were. Winston Churchill's famous quip that Russia is an enigma wrapped up in a mystery is a form of western discourse capitulating before the Russian one; it cedes to Russia the authority to decide who Russia is or should be: a privilege no other nonwestern culture has enjoyed.

It is within such contexts that Russia's orientalism has to be viewed, and not within the "educational" perspective that, in Knight's view, exonerates Russian culture from its entanglements with power. Obviously, each orientalism is different; the French did it differently than the English, and the Russians even more so. Terminological confusion between *russkii* and *rossiiskii* further obfuscated issues in Russian orientalism. The fact that Russians were partially successful in dominating world discourse about areas which, as August von Haxthausen had already noted, were culturally more advanced than Russia, was another peculiarity of Russian orientalism (*Studies on the Interior of Russia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr, 1972). It is in making these distinctions that studies in Russian orientalism might find fruitful fulfillment. Discounting a discourse-generating concept at an early stage of its application, as Knight seems to be doing, appears to be premature.

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Professor Knight replies:

Ewa Thompson asserts that the goals I pursue in my article on V. V. Grigor'ev are incommensurate with my data. She has defined my goals in a way that bears little resemblance to my original intent, however. Let me clarify. It was never my purpose to advance a universal definition of Russian orientalism. On the contrary, I deliberately focused on the subjective views of one particular individual. "Representativeness" was not the issue here. Rather, my discussion was designed to call into question a universalizing tendency that seems to me to dominate Edward Said's conception of orientalism as discourse—the idea that scholarly knowledge of the east, by its very nature, cannot be anything but a vehicle of oppression, permeated with notions of racial superiority and inextricably embedded in the power structures of the colonial domination. This is a model that purports to deduce, through the medium of discourse, what orientalism must be. For my purposes, it was sufficient to show, using Grigor'ev as a test case, that orientalism does not necessarily have to follow this pattern. My goal, in other words, was to prove the exception rather than the rule, and I believe I provided ample evidence to do just that.

Thompson, I should note in passing, provides a rather misleading characterization of my supposed definition of Russian orientalism. The passage she refers to on page 90 ("to protect subject peoples . . .") is taken completely out of context. These phrases do not refer to Russian orientalism as a whole, or even to Grigor'ev's individual vision of orientalism. Rather they characterize Grigor'ev's personal understanding of the task of Russian administration in the borderlands, something quite distinct from a generalized definition of orientalism as a scholarly pursuit.

It was not my contention that we should reject the entire "vast discursive formation" of postcolonial studies. My criticisms were directed specifically at Said's *Orientalism*. And while Said has certainly been influential it would be an exaggeration to suggest that all of postcolonial studies marches to his tune. Even scholars who are sympathetic with Said's anti-imperialist stance have taken issue with his interpretations in a variety of ways—probing theoretical inconsistencies, questioning the applicability of Said's model in specific contexts, or simply developing points that Said does not address. I see my discussion of Russian orientalism very much within the context of this body of literature. Far from seeking to stifle discussion, my aim was, at least in part, to stimulate consideration of the ways in which the issues posed by Said's *Orientalism* are played out in the Russian imperial context. What I am against is the mechanistic and uncritical transposition of theoretical models into contexts substantially different from those in which they were conceived.