PART THREE

THE CHALLENGE OF TRANSFORMATION AND RATIONALIZATION
RUSSIAN PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE
NINETEENTH–EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES:
IMPERIAL RACE, COLONIAL OTHER, DEGENERATE
TYPES, AND THE RUSSIAN RACIAL BODY

Marina Mogilner

Russian history for decades has tempted historians with Sonderweg explanations.¹ Only relatively recently has the anti-Sonderweg, normalizing trend in historiography come to dominate the field. This major reconsideration of the Russian past as part of a European modernity that inspired scholars only a decade or two ago, today forms the background against which new historiographic battles unfold. One of them, and probably the most exciting, is evolving around different visions of Russia as an imperial state and imperial society, which has provided space for the clash of Sonderweg explanations, structural approaches, and typologies (especially in the comparative history of empires) with a new postcolonial agenda in its application to the Russian imperial context.² This chapter advances a contextualized and historical approach

¹ See the discussion of the implications of the Sonderweg paradigm for Russian history in Ab Imperio, no. 1 (2002): 15–101; contributions by Carl E. Schorske, Hans van der Loo, Gunilla-Friederike Budde, Jurgen Kocka, and Manfred Hildermeier.