cases," being "narrators of the self . . . [who] all lived by the word; they were not average folk. Telling stories was how they defined themselves in both professional and personal terms." (p. 9) At their best, however, these essays should cause us to ask whether "average folk" too do not engage in this process of self-fashioning at some level, if not as obsessively or consciously as the individuals in these studies. Indeed, the editors appear to concede this at least for the pre-Soviet period: "Despite the low level of literacy in the villages and factory districts in late imperial Russia, the culture of self-expression in fact reached well down the social scale." (p. 19) The final two essays in this collection argue precisely that. Ransel's study of a rare eighteenth-century diary by a Moscow merchant reads an individual's meticulous chronicling of his social and business contacts as an effort to construct a "social personality, a cultivated individual." In fact, as the merchant's fortunes decline, his diary remains for him as a validation of his former standing and identity. In the final essay, self and story come together again in the self-fashionings of the skoptsy (self-castrators), a sect that spanned the late eighteenth through the twentieth centuries. As Engelstein shows, the members of this recalcitrant sect narrated themselves through stories which, cut to changing times, reasserted the integrity of their beliefs and assured the survival of their sect well into the Soviet period.

Several of these essays have appeared in some form elsewhere, and their arguments will already be familiar to readers. Still, the real strength of this collection lies in the fact that, organized around a coherent focus, it tells a story about the processes of self-definition throughout modern Russian history that is greater than the sum of its parts. Through these essays, Soviet Man, that collective entity ostensibly at odds with the very notion of individuality, becomes as accessible to scrutiny as Petrine Man, the archetype of the old Russian elite's symbolic rupture with their past and forced embrace of a Western model of self.

Frederick C. Corney


The subject of Imperial Knowledge is the dominance of Russia's great-power status within Russian cultural discourse. The main tools of investigation are postcolonial and, to a lesser extent, feminist theory. A major premise of the book is that Westerners in general and Western scholars in particular have largely failed to notice the colonial nature of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. The author attributes this oversight to a definition of colonialism, apparently perpetuated by Edward Said, that includes distance and separation of the colony from the metropolis. Never mind that the "saltwater fallacy" was a staple of international relations courses when I was an undergraduate in the mid-1960s. A supporting premise is that Russian literature has generated a discourse that has preserved it from postcolonial scrutiny; in particular, Russia has avoided a "terminological appropriation" by the West through the influence of its art and literature. This, too, is a doubtful assertion.
Terms such as "backward," "autocratic," "totalitarian," "enemy of the free world" and, much to the present point, "jailer of nations" have regularly been applied by Westerners to Russia. In fact, there is a large literature on imperial relations in the region of Russia that dates at least to the early 1970s. The author could also have learned a lot about "terminological appropriation" from Larry Wolff's intriguing work, *Inventing Eastern Europe*.

Once past this postcolonial reinventing of the wheel, however, readers will gain much from Thompson's book. She correctly points out that English and other West European languages fail to distinguish between russkii (a Russian) and rossiskii (a Russian subject of any nationality). Western journalists and many academics routinely use Russia when they mean the Empire or the Soviet Union and refer to the multinational Russian Federation as Russia. Headline writers too often name the protagonists of news stories from Kiev or Minsk Russians when they are really Ukrainians or Belarusians. Russians take advantage of the two words for their own purposes. Most Russians have been and remain woefully and willfully indifferent, if not oblivious, to the havoc they have wreaked on their neighbors in the name of the rodina. Many define their national identity primarily in terms of Russia's regional dominance. A postcolonial scrutiny of Russian literature in search of the roots of Russians' insensibility about the Other seems appropriate.

Thompson finds the first strong expressions of Russian attitudes to the Other in the period following the War of 1812. Russians simultaneously experienced a defensive nationalism in the face of Western challenges to their self-consciousness and an aggressive nationalism toward near neighbors that bolstered their defense against the West. The war on the Caucasus was accompanied by the appearance of literary tropes that stereotyped and rendered the Other morally inferior. "Privileging the point of view of the imperial observer," Thompson points out, "is a common strategy of textual imperialism: the pen of the conqueror describes customs and ways of the silent subalterm." (p. 63). Pushkin and Lermontov portrayed a dirty, ignorant, cowardly and sensual people whose sole role was to be killed or transformed by benevolent and humble Russians, motivated by duty and self-sacrifice. The Caucasian setting is entirely coincidental to the Russian dramas that take place in it. She discerns no trace in Pushkin of awareness of the humanity of the Other. Though Lermontov adopts a mildly ironic stance to the imperial process, Thompson notes that Pechorin of *The Hero of Our Time*, who rapes and abandons a Circassian princess, is condemned by critics not for his act but for his lack of a goal in life. The image of the "superfluous man" erased in Russian and Western criticism the colonial aggressor.

In "The Bronze Horseman" and "To the Slanderers of Russia," Pushkin presented a grand and threatening picture of the power of the empire, which he fully equated with Russia. Pushkin's bluster, Thompson argues, concealed uneasiness about Russians' real status in the world. In Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, they acquired a much more self-confident image of nationhood. In Thompson's postcolonial reading, *War and Peace* both expressed Russia's self confidence as a colonial power and suppressed the narratives of the defeated peoples. Tolstoy depicts Russians as a humble and gentle people, the innocent victims of French aggression. The novel leaves no doubt that Eastern Europe is rightly Russia's or that the Empire is a unity. Tolstoy