ant writing style. It is a sympathetic history, focused on the people’s “quest for identity” in the face of centuries of foreign invasions, civil unrest, and the “tragic” struggles of modern state formation. The author traces an interesting dynamic: the interaction between weak native warlords, khans and elites and the formidable foreign interventions and occupations they have relied upon for sustenance.

Chapters 1 through 4 deal with Azerbaijan from “antiquity” to the Safavid and Ottoman periods, amounting to about half of the book’s length. This is a bit misleading since the Azerbaijani national movement only dates from the late nineteenth century, as the author well knows. These chapters locate the Azerbaijani nation in a distant and authoritative, if ever contentious, past. We read of its territory as a “kaleidoscopic” crossroads (p. 25) of perplexing demographic and cultural strains, as a “battlefield” (p. 59) between contending geopolitical forces, including the Arabs, Persians, Christians, Mongols and Turks.

Chapters 5 through 7 begin with a misstep. The author has the princes of Kiev “occupying” Baku in 1032, with Ivan the Terrible having already occupied Astrakhan ‘half a century earlier.” This strange formulation serves the purpose of introducing the traumas and suffering under Russian colonial rule – the centerpiece of these chapters – from the imperial interventions of Peter the Great through the economic deprivations of the Brezhnev regime. The author reviews such indigenous political parties and movements as the Hummet, Musavat, Difai, and Federalists without full definition and depth. But he offers some interesting impressions on the role of the oil industry, and European capitalism, in developing Azerbaijani resources and society.

The concluding chapters, 8 through 12, culminate with a survey of the sectarian and communal violence between Azerbaijanis and Armenians: beginning with the mob actions of 1905, through the conflicts of 1918-1919, and ending with the Karabagh war after 1988. This violence, the product of imperial manipulations rather than any inherent hatreds between these neighboring peoples, highlights how foreign interference has exacted harsh and deadly costs from both peoples (though the author’s leanings are with Azerbaijan), and how the Karabagh conflict served as a matrix for the collapse of empire and the internecine disputes and conflicts of the post-Soviet independence period. The author writes with understanding and intimate knowledge of these recent years. These chapters, supplemented by the author’s personal experiences and expanded to provide more detail and breadth, might very well have made for a more enduring book of their own.

Michael G. Smith


Julian Connolly’s Intimate Stranger is a welcome addition to the rich body of recent work on the role of the demonic in Russian literature. The past few years have witnessed an upsurge of interest in the topic, as evidenced by Pamela Davidson’s Russian Literature and its Demons, Christopher Putney’s Russian Devils and Diabolic
Conditionality in Nikolai Gogol’s Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka and Adam Weiner’s By Authors Possessed: The Demonic Novel in Russia. Connolly’s new monograph represents a fine contribution to the scholarly debate.

In the face of the daunting corpus of primary source material, Connolly has been, of necessity, selective in his choices. The texts he analyzes are “classics,” all of which are readily available in translation. He prefaces each analysis with a brief discussion of the author in question (Gogol’, Pushkin, Lermontov, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy), providing useful, if largely uncontroversial background material, and he then moves on to sophisticated close readings of texts. The Intimate Stranger will, accordingly, be helpful to several audiences, offering valuable insights both to comparativists and to specialists in Russian literature.

Particularly laudable is the discussion of the broader cultural context in which Russian demons are situated. In Connolly’s view, nineteenth-century Russian literary practice rests on a fusion of several notions of the demonic: the Christian (more specifically, Orthodox) view; folk beliefs (themselves a fusion of Christian and pagan traditions); and Western literary treatments (Milton’s majestic devil, Goethe’s mocking spirit). Connolly invokes Lotman and Uspenskii’s notion of the bipolar nature of Old Russian culture in order to account for the vitality of demonic impulses as well as for the particular fascination the demonic holds for Russians. He further posits that images of the demonic surface most frequently during periods of stress and change. The demonic, he avers, operates as a metaphor for the forces that threaten the reader’s well-being.

The guiding organizational principle of The Intimate Stranger is chronological, but Connolly sins against his own taxonomy by temporarily bypassing Pushkin and devoting his first two analytical chapters to Gogol’. His motivation quickly becomes apparent. In Connolly’s assessment, the theme of the demonic in Russian literature evolves over the course of the nineteenth century, from a primarily medieval, archaic notion of the devil as an external force – a manifestation of the “other” – to a more psychologized treatment in which the devil becomes “the evil within.” Connolly perceptively suggests that Gogol’s engagement with the theme serves as a paradigm for this broader evolution: in the Dikanka tales, the demonic is presented as a palpable, external force, threatening to disrupt or destroy the harmony of human life. In the Petersburg stories, by contrast, it is less tangible and becomes a projection of human conduct.

Succeeding chapters emphasize the distance between Pushkin’s and Lermontov’s visions of the demonic and Gogol’s. Both poets are heavily influenced by Western representations – in particular, Goethe’s “spirit of negation” – and both respond by creating demons who embody heroic types rather than mythic archfiends. Through a comparison of Pushkin’s “Demon” with multiple iterations of Lermontov’s “Demon,” Connolly shows how a “humanized” devil comes to function as a metaphor for the contradictions of the human spirit. Pushkin’s and Lermontov’s treatments ultimately pave the way for a convergence of the human and the demonic in Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.

Connolly’s discussion of Dostoevsky relies, not surprisingly, on readings of The Demons and The Brothers Karamazov. In both works Connolly discovers one charac-