instrument of state propaganda, RT's "double-voicedness" can be connected with the (self)-satirical discourse known as *stiob*. To their credit, and unlike most other contributors, both Doak and Hutchings explicitly link their discussion to issues raised in other chapters of the volume.

In the meantime, Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, which is still ongoing at the time of this writing, has fundamentally transformed Russia's transnational entanglements with its neighbors and the rest of the world. It also forces one to read some of these essays with new eyes. The Russian-Ukrainian relations addressed in Amelia Glaser's essay about Nikolai Gogol′ as a writer from a transnational "contact zone" will never be the same again, and it is doubtful whether the cultural bonds between Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus through their common use of the Russian language, as argued in Julie Curtis' essay on "The Politics of Theatre," will remain intact. Other observations in the book show that the Russian imperialist rhetoric justifying military aggression as a settling of old grievances has not changed since the nineteenth century. Olga Maiorova, in a chapter dealing with the Russian colonization of Central Asia, mentions that the forceful annexation of non-Russian territories was presented "as a 'return' of 'our own' native lands, which had been taken from helpless Russia in the remote past when it was suffering from multiple invasions" (70). Tatiana Filimonova's discussion of Vladimir Sorokin's dystopian novels provides glimpses of a future dominated by the paranoid Eurasianist fantasies of Aleksandr Dugin. Already back in 2007, Sorokin "expressed his concern about the darkest pages of Russian history entering contemporary reality" (97). Whether Sorokin's prophecy in the novel *Telluria* (2013) that the forceful revival of the empire will lead to "tumultuous changes, political instability, and its eventual disintegration" (103) remains to be seen. In any event, with the Russian Federation having become an international pariah and the worldwide Russian diaspora turning into an exilic community, there will be a continued need to reassess Russia's position in the contemporary world.

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Haunted Empire: Gothic and the Russian Imperial Uncanny. By Valeria Sobol. Ithaca: Northern Illinois University Press, Imprint of Cornell University Press, 2020. xvi, 216 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Maps. $49.95, hard bound.

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Six months before he was murdered in the shadow of the Kremlin, Boris Nemtsov warned that the beginning of Russia's war against Ukraine in 2014 was a descent into "lies, violence, obscurantism, and imperial hysteria" (137). In her timely, concise, and brilliant *Haunted Empire*, Valeria Sobol explores how such "imperial hysteria" manifested itself in the literature of the Russian empire at times of conquest and expansion—as a Gothic nightmare.

Sobol sees the Gothic as much more than a literary fashion in the Russian empire in the first half of the nineteenth century. In her reading, the Gothic is a mode that channeled and expressed the strange, erratic energies of a vast contiguous land empire, where the boundaries between colonizer and colonized, between home and not-home, were profoundly unstable. Her major contribution in the book is not only interpreting the Russian Gothic through a colonial frame, but revealing how disorientating and even fearful anxieties accompanied the march of empire in Russia, sparing neither center nor periphery.

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Using the term "the imperial uncanny," she explores these energies in literary expression along a north-south axis, with very welcome attention to imaginative geography. Part I of her project focuses on constructions in Russian literature of a wild and lawless "Baltic north," with captivating close readings of Nikolai Karamzin's "The Island of Bornholm" (1793), the Livonian tales of the 1820s by such Decembrist writers as Aleksandr Bestuzhev, and Vladimir Odoevsky's *The Salamander* (1844). Part II concentrates on constructions of a duplicitous and hybrid "Ukrainian south," with close readings of Nikolai Gogolʹ's Dikanka tales (1832), Antonii Pogorelʹsky's *The Convent Graduate* (1830–33), and Panteleimon Kulish's *Mikhailo Charnyshenko* (1843). The selection of these texts—some well known, others less so—never feels forced, and Sobol's lucid and fluid prose ably traverses a host of conceptual frames and disciplinary fields, from memory studies to theories of empire. Her book is necessary reading for Slavists, comparatists, and historians alike.

The two parts of the book are balanced in terms of the amount of content, but there is a key asymmetry in their perspectives, as Sobol admits in her introduction (18). Put simply, Part I features voices from Russia representing northern Baltic Others; Part II features voices from Ukraine representing Ukrainian selves. A result of this asymmetry is silence about writers from the Baltic North—about Zachris Topelius (1818–1898), for instance, whose tale *The Green Room at Linnais Manor* (1859) employs Gothic tropes to reflect on the past of the Finnish nation and the future of its elite in the Russian Empire.

One of the Ukrainian voices in Part II is Panteleimon Kulish, whose first historical novel *Mikhailo Charnyshenko* (1843) is set in the twilight of the Cossack Hetmanate, when "Little Russia," as Kulish puts it, "still lived its own distinct life" (*zhila eshche sobstvennoiu zhiznʹiu*, 115). With blistering insight, Sobol shows how Kulish inflects this life with Gothic flourishes—with "ghosts and apparitions, folkloric motifs and infernal forces" (118)—in order to document the Ukrainian Cossack past while also distancing himself from it. Kulish was famously ambivalent about Cossack history, at once fascinated by its achievements but frustrated by its infighting, and Sobol persuasively demonstrates how the Gothic allowed him to mobilize this ambivalence as a creative strategy.

She also recounts how such ambivalence from the perspective of the periphery unsettled and disturbed the center. In an episode with sad relevance to our present day, a review of *Mikhailo Charnyshenko* in the "thick" journal *Library for Reading* not only panned the novel as a linguistic mess—for being written in Russian with Ukrainian and Serbian moments—but also mocked the very historical premise of the "distinct life" of "Little Russia." In Sobol's words, the review reduced Ukraine to "a dark realm of chaos, statelessness, and barbarism" (133), a realm that demanded, according to what would become the standard chauvinist imperial rhetoric vis-à-vis Ukraine, an autocratic overlord to sort it all out. The echoes today in the corridors of the Kremlin are clear.

Indeed, as Putin's propagandists conjure monsters ("Nazis" and "Banderites") and doubles ("Little Russians" and even "New Russians") in Ukraine to fuel a brutal war of aggression, reading Sobol's book now is akin to finding a brittle old map of the Russian imperial consciousness. It points us toward Gothic imaginings of the northern and southern peripheries of empire that seem to have metastasized and grown to overtake the center itself, where ghouls sanction violence under the uncanny banner of a white letter Z cast against a void of black. As a compelling study of nineteenth-century literature with striking twenty-first century resonance, Valeria Sobol's *Haunted Empire* demands our attention.

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