



Call for Papers:

**International Conference “Postcolonial Slavic Literatures after Communism”,
Alfried Krupp Wissenschaftskolleg Greifswald, Germany, 15-18 October 2014**

Conference organisers: [Dr Klavdia Smola](#) (Greifswald), [Prof Dirk Uffelmann](#) (Passau)

Conference webpage: <http://www.phil.uni-passau.de/slavische-literaturen-und-kulturen/konferenzen/postcolonial-slavic-literatures.html>

The conference will discuss postcommunist Slavic literatures from a postcolonial perspective, with an emphasis on Russia, Ukraine and Poland. The main areas of focus will be:

- 1) the study of parallels between the postcommunist and postcolonial situation as negotiated on the symbolic level of literature;
- 2) the applicability of postcolonial scientific tools to postcommunist literature: Edward Said's concept of "travelling theory", or "the journey of terms in Eastern European contexts" (Sproede / Lecke, 2011), will be discussed in relation to this; and
- 3) the specific postcolonial dimensions of different branches of Russian, Ukrainian and Polish contemporary literature.

In 2001, almost concurrently with Ewa Thompson's monograph *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (2000), David Chioni Moore characterised the post-Soviet sphere as being postcolonial, and at the same time diagnosed the absence of a (post)colonial perspective in current Eastern European Studies. The debate that followed highlighted the transfer of (post)colonial models into the regions of contemporary Eastern Europe and gave rise to an awareness of the consequences of communist power and exclusion discourses for culture and literature. After the collapse of the "grand narratives," the legacy of the communist past is particularly palpable in the changed cultural constellations of the self and the other, i.e. the problem of cultural alterity: in the renegotiation of the cultural relationship between periphery and centre; in the oscillation between an attempted return to a stable self-definition (by means of national mythologies) and plural reorientations; and in the (de)construction of the historical past with the particular problematisation of its "colonial" patterns of interpretation.

The appropriation of postcolonial models is becoming more complex and productive due to the fact that Russia and Poland have been perceived both as colonisers (of marginal regions such as the former Polish borderlands (*kresy*), the Baltic countries, Ukraine or the Caucasus region) and as colonised (Russia in relationship to the West, or Poland in relationship to Russia, the Soviet Union or Germany). Thus, the postcolonial approach can highlight ambivalent and divergent perspectives on these areas. The perspectives of both the coloniser and the colonised are dealt with in literary texts and often overlap with controversies about perpetrators and victims. Literature thus approaches, on the one hand, national self-images as a possible consequence of heteronomy (Russia and Poland as *objects* of power and/or hegemony),

and, on the other hand, the Russian and Polish cultures' own attempts at suppression and indigenisation of others, whether with regard to Russification, Polonisation or the Sovietisation of minorities and neighbouring countries (Russia and Poland as *agents* of power). In this context, Ukraine's "imagined community" will be examined through the prism of literary texts as an external projection, ambivalent (self-)reflection and cultural construct of Polish and Russian hegemonic narratives.

Regardless of region, the focus of debate will be on the particular features of the Soviet-communist "affirmative action empire" (Martin, 2001), i.e. disguised colonial aims, and its repercussions for the crisis mentality of postcommunist intellectuals.

For more than 20 years, literature in contemporary Russia, Ukraine and Poland has placed itself in the context of postcolonial liberation, uncertainty and pluralisation and contributed impulses to these processes. As has been noted repeatedly in the wake of the postcolonial turn in Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Studies predominantly rely on literary texts for their own critical insight: it is literature in which "the most prominent forms of defiance, self-empowerment and 'agency' on the part of postcolonial nations and subjects have emerged". A common denominator of similar texts is their ability to make "displacements", "margins, border areas, contact zones and 'in-between-spaces' [...] culturally productive", i.e. effective as literature (Bachmann-Medick, 2006). The contact zones are projected onto the structure of fictional characters, as well as onto narrative structures: the marginality and dividedness of the figures is accompanied by various techniques of subversive "rewriting".

At this conference, special attention will be paid to phenomena of alterity, marginality, hybrid identity and language patterns, stereotyping, Orientalisation and mimicry as performed by literature. This opens up the possibility of both political and poetic readings of the works as well. Particular consideration will also be given to the literary poetics of (post)coloniality, with topics such as the fictional constitution of identities, the fictionalisation of the subject of speech (for example, the relationship between the authorial voice and that of the protagonists), linguistic hybridisation, stylistic mimicry, constructions of space and time etc.

The scope of the conference includes the problem of migratory literary identities. Due to the related questions of transculturality and multilingualism, we will consider texts by Slavic authors in non-Slavic languages. By the same token, contributions referring to authors writing in Russian from any of the (former) Soviet republics are also welcome.

Proposals shall consist of an abstract of 300-500 words and a short CV, including a list of those of the submitter's previous publications that are relevant to the conference topic. They should be sent to ksmola@uni-greifswald.de and uffelmann@uni-passau.de by 1 December 2013. Selection decisions will be announced by 10 January 2014.

The conference is generously funded by [Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung](#). The organisers will provide participants with accommodation in Greifswald. Some funding for reimbursement of travel expenses will be available. The reimbursement will be negotiated on an individual basis.

We plan to publish the papers presented at the conference in the book series [Postcolonial Perspectives on Eastern Europe](#).