

Title: Tainted Love: Empire in Turgenev's "First Love"
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This paper will illuminate the theme of empire that appears on the narrative margins of Turgenev's "First Love." The paper will argue that the problem of empire is integrally linked to the story's key preoccupations with power, violence, and identity and thus structures the story in fundamental ways. Jane Costlow has showed that the political and the sexual enable each other's structures of domination in "First Love" (see Costlow's article in *Engendering Slavic Literatures*). I will extend Costlow's notion of "the political" to include imperial politics, which has so far eluded critical attention. The textual evidence in support of this argument will come from an analysis of Vladimir's dream, in which the figure of bloodstained Caucasian soldier Belovzorov connects the sexual violence of Vladimir's father to the bloodshed of the colonial war in the Caucasus. The ethnically marked throng of Zinaida's suitors also engages, as I will show, the theme of empire. Finally, I will explore the rich blanket of literary allusions to both the Western Orientalist literature and the Russian literary treatments of empire. Among the latter are Pushkin's "southern" poems and Khomiakov's immensely popular tragedy *Ermak* (1825–26). The paper's theoretical framework will be informed by the work of post-colonial theorists Edward Said and Simon Gikandi.