

**Title:** Cultural Colonization: The Case of Marquis de Custine and the Orientalizing of Russia  
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The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that Russia has functioned as both a military colonizer as well as having been culturally colonized on the part of the West, namely France. As Frantz Fanon and postcolonial critics such as Bill Ashcroft have written, the privileged sectors of most colonized societies internalized narratives of their own inferiority and attempted to amend them by adopting the colonizers' languages, and exhibiting a marked preoccupation with national identity.

I maintain that postcolonial theories regarding this phenomenon also apply to Russian elites for much of the country's history. Many Westerners also denigrated Russia, whose educated stratum sought an alternate model of conduct via France; but unlike other colonized societies, educated Russians did so not as a result of foreign-imposed military and economic policies, but were reacting to what Westerners wrote about them. In effect, the method of Russia's colonization was textual rather than tactile, created rather than coerced. I claim that of the various narratives of superiority and taxonomical authority that established hierarchies of relative cultural value, the Orientalizing of another society was chief among them. Western publicists also defined Russia in terms of a barbaric, pernicious Asian presence on the borders of Occidental progress. To illustrate this, I will discuss Astolph Marquis de Custine's travelogue, *Russia in 1839*, as an Orientalist text that was intended to discredit Russian culture for ideological purposes. I will also analyze various Russian reactions to Custine's book in which officials like Sergei Uvarov and Leontii DuBelt defended Russia from charges of Asian backwardness, but did so in the French language and whose defensive rejoinders were essentially recycled Enlightenment arguments borrowed from French intellectuals. Both the form and content of their arguments—the French language and French philosophy—reveal important elements of cultural colonization.