

While I did not specifically focus on students in an address to the members of the MLA, I applaud Douthwaite's efforts to engage students both in local community activities and in work abroad. My talk urges the members of the MLA to think of our work as a cosmopolitan practice: "I want to argue that what we, the teacher-scholars of the MLA, do in our many diverse ways is to exemplify and promote a cosmopolitan education and to engage in research and writing whose impulses and goals embody cosmopolitan thinking" (629). In particular, I cite Claire Kramsch's notion of learning a "foreign" language as a dialogic cultural practice, Anthony Appiah's model of conversation for both teaching and criticism, and Martha Nussbaum's ideal of a cosmopolitan education (629–32). I then try to refine David Damrosch's conception of world literature into a truly cosmopolitan practice based on knowledge of other languages.

I find one area of disagreement with Douthwaite, which involves what she believes are facts at the end of the eighteenth century and which I believe centers on the ways in which we read history. Douthwaite maintains that "the virile nationalism that developed in 1799 and on through the years of Napoleon's empire was for many people a travesty of the republican ideal" and insists that we should focus on the original intent of the revolution's "forebears." In my view, it is more important to gauge effects, what historians tell us happened in the 1790s, and not to invoke, in a way that would make Sartre cringe, what republican good intentions were. Indeed, what happened at the end of the eighteenth century bears great relevance for us today. That "a chauvinistic nationalism" (633) undermined cosmopolitanism and republicanism constitutes a crucial lesson for us in the republic of the United States, especially in the aftermath of 9/11 and amid the triumph of jingoistic discourses that pit "us" against "them" and menacingly proclaim, "You are either with us or against us."

Finally, Douthwaite invokes the idea of citizenship several times in her letter and claims that I oppose it to cosmopolitanism. I am surprised, since I do not discuss the connection between citizenship and cosmopolitanism, a complex issue that warrants a book in its own right. But since Douthwaite has raised the issue, I welcome the opportunity to underscore the critical importance of

(re)defining citizenship today in a world where, as I wrote, there are dislocations of people (citizens) "in masses that the world has never seen" moving from south to north and east to west looking for work to survive and enduring hostile conditions of noncitizenship (637); where anti-immigrationism has reared its ugly head in a host of countries, including in western European nations historically known for their tolerance (e.g., the Netherlands); and where we have seen on our TV screens (and looked away from) the appalling conditions of refugees in Darfur and on the rooftops and in the Superdome of New Orleans. Who gets to be a citizen in our globalized world? What rights, what human rights do noncitizens have that fail to be upheld by nation-states, and how do we force nation-states to comply with international treaties they have signed? Ultimately, what cosmopolitan vision can encompass the plight of "enemy combatants" at Guantánamo Bay, who exist in the black hole of nonpersonhood with no citizen or human rights? These are indeed questions that we teacher-scholars of the MLA should confront as citizens of the world after 9/11. To be sure, some of us face similar problems in classrooms filled with the children of seasonal workers and immigrants who can't even be called second-class citizens. These defining issues for our time and place should be the subject of many more conversations and reflections and, undeniably, should be the cause for concerted action locally and globally.

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Eurasia and Imperialism

TO THE EDITOR:

Many thanks for publishing the conference debate "Are We Postcolonial? Post-Soviet Space" (121 [2006]: 828–36). It is most significant that in this discussion on postcolonialism the term *Eurasia* was used. To many thinkers and politicians in Russia today, *Eurasia* does not merely serve as a synonym for *post-Soviet*, it also represents dreams of a renewed empire. The designation of the post-Soviet non-Russian countries as Eurasian would represent a political neocontainment leading to neocolonialism.

Simply put, *Eurasian* equates with neocolonial, thus negating the *postcolonial* in the above title.

Larissa Onyshkevych
Shevchenko Scientific Society

Reply:

From her letter, I have a feeling that Larissa Onyshkevych thinks that *Eurasia* means the forced integration of Ukraine into a Russian-led empire. My use of the expression was simply to acknowledge that the post-Soviet areas are not simply “Europe.” I hope this will satisfy her. As a long-standing worker in the field of postcoloniality, I have no interest in endorsing new imperialisms.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak
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Reply:

I appreciate Larissa Onyshkevych’s contribution to the conference debate “Are We Postcolonial? Post-Soviet Space,” in which she suggests that *postcolonial* and *Eurasia* are mutually canceling concepts. “*Eurasian*,” she suggests unequivocally, “equates with neocolonial.” In one sense, we are in agreement: my passing use of the term (830) invoked *Eurasia* and the Soviet space as more or less coterminous.

Here is where we differ: it makes urgent sense to distinguish among three spheres of meaning for *Eurasia*. As Onyshkevych knows, the early or classical *Eurasia* belongs to the Russian émigré community in Europe from the 1920s to the interwar period, whose leaders included the structural linguist Nikolai Trubetskoi (1890–1938), Petr Savitskii (1895–1968), and others. Their central concerns were less the continuity and preservation of the empire (the dynastic empire, after all, had fallen, and they were hardly supporters of the Soviet version) than its differentiation from (and resistance to) a doomed and waning Europe in favor of the contributions of Russia’s “Asian” expanses, not only Turkic-Mongol influences but also Finno-Ugric. The appeal and influence of classical Eurasianism can be discerned to this day in both elite and popularized forms, such as the state-sponsored Russian television serial *Death of the Empire*, which enjoys a similar Spenglerian and Nietzschean incandescence.

A second cluster of meaning around *Eurasia*—through such transitional, warring figures as the “ethnogeneticist” Lev Gumilev (1912–92) and the ethnographer Iuliian Bromlei—pertains more directly to Onyshkevych’s concerns. Arguing in favor of a cultural affinity between Russia and Central Asia, the political activist Aleksandr Dugin, founder in 2002 of the *Eurasia Party*, has advocated an “imperial conglomeration of the oriental nations, united round Russia” as its “heartland” (http://utenti.lycos.it/EurasianWebSite/dugin_mnb_eng.html). Attention paid to this concept by such political figures as Kyrgyzstan’s first president, Askar Akaev, and the current Kazakhstan president, Nursultan Nazarbaev, suggests that there is indeed much in this conservative—and, in some respects, racist—movement worthy of caution. Of course, it would be as much a mistake to ignore the differences between the classical and contemporary Eurasianists as it would be to conflate Dugin’s national-Bolshevik politics with Vladimir Putin’s rather consistent neoimperial tactics, yet a certain historical overlay and continuity of interests exists. It is to this potential vested interest in neocontainment that Onyshkevych presumably refers.

A third cluster, which I describe without advocacy, is the search within the academic community for ways to preserve shared research interests, data, and funding. In this context, the comparatist spirit signaled by *Eurasia* no more endorses neocontainment than the profession’s earlier study of communism endorsed Marxism-Leninism or the study of empire today endorses neoimperialism. Were we philosophers, I suppose we might describe this as the fact-value distinction.

If indeed (as the letter suggests) “*Eurasian* equates with neocolonial,” then by this logic neocolonialism has odd bedfellows. The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (State Department), the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies (Harvard), the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, and the *Eurasia Program* (Social Science Research Council), as well as the profession’s major journals, such as *Slavic Review* (“American quarterly of Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies”) and *Kritika* (“Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History”), would be advocates of neocolonialism—that is to say, a