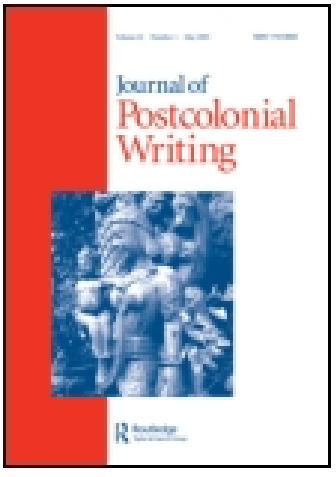

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Andrukhovych's *Secret*: The return of colonial resignation

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Since the period of glasnost in the USSR and, after 1991, the emergence of independent nation states on its former territory, the Ukrainian poet, prose writer and essayist Yuri Andrukhovych (b. 1960) has attended in the majority of his writings to geography and its relationship to geopolitics, to the persistence in central and eastern Europe of old colonial power structures, and to the nature of the relationship between his homeland and various conceptions of "Europe": central and eastern Europe, and Europe as "the west". Andrukhovych's novel-length text *Taiemnytsia* [2007; Secret], subtitled "instead of a novel" and structured like a series of interviews, adopts a position of pessimism with regard to the likely emergence of a humane and just state of affairs in a Europe where western prosperity, coupled with indifference toward the east European Other, confront material want and an enduring deficit of liberty. The book constructs a world-model where the exercise of colonial or neocolonial power (economic, political and cultural) is so ubiquitous that even the colonized are not innocent of exercising it.

Keywords: Yuri Andrukhovych; Ukrainian literature; postcolonialism; cultural geography

After achieving fame and notoriety in the late 1980s through his leading role in the literary and performance grouping Bu-Ba-Bu, the Ukrainian poet, prose writer and essayist Yuri Andrukhovych (b. 1960) brought out a series of novels of ever-increasing length and complexity: *Rekreatsii* (1992; *Recreations*, 1998), *Moskoviiada* (1993; *The Moscoviad*, 2008), *Perverziia* (1997; *Perverzion*, 2005), *Dvanadtsiat' obruchiv* (2003; Twelve Rings) and *Taiemnytsia* (2007; Secret). Each of these texts has invited interpretation as representative of a stage in the evolution of a world view attentive, above all, to the interplay of culture, geography and power. The almost 500-page-long text of *Taiemnytsia*, subtitled "zamist' romanu" ("instead of a novel"), is structured as a series of interviews conducted over seven days by a German journalist named Egon Alt with a Ukrainian writer whose life story corresponds in almost all of its details to the verifiable biography of Yuri Andrukhovych. To remain clear about the distinction between the Yuri Andrukhovych whose reality is attested by such conventional sources as the public media, and the Andrukhovych-like character who is the central figure of *Taiemnytsia*, I shall refer to the latter as "A.", reserving "Andrukhovych" as the name of the former. *Taiemnytsia* presents an especially dense concentration of the themes and arguments that have pervaded Andrukhovych's fictional and non-fictional writing. I intend in the present

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inquiry to examine the politics of *Taiemnytsia* and explore the ways in which it maintains or modifies the stances of Andrukhovych's earlier work.

It is convenient to begin with an analysis of the first interview, where, having assured his interlocutor that he will start "at the very beginning" (13), A. begins neither with his birth, nor a biography of his parents, nor a sketch of the socio-historical context, as one might expect of an autobiography or memoir, but with the account of an occurrence in the autumn of 2003. The scene is a tavern called Drugstore in the Old City in Heidelberg, where A. is filling in time before his poetry reading. His companion Stefa Ptashnyk tells him that the pub has a connection to the events of 1968, which pleases him, for he has been translating the American poets of the Beat generation. During a visit to the gents the writer has an epiphany:

> suddenly I thought that this was a film with me in it – here I am in Heidelberg, in a café with an American name, I'm walking about, performing actions of some sort, thinking about my heart suddenly stopping, walking into the WC etc. and at the same time I'm watching all this – not quite from the side, apparently, but also not entirely from within. (14)[1]

The scene ends here; with his next question the interviewer guides A. to the more conventional material of childhood memories.

An internet search engine (*Taiemnytsia* is best read with such an aid) reveals that the scene alludes to real people and events. There exists a pub called Drugstore in Heidelberg's Kettengasse. Stefaniya Ptashnyk is a specialist in German linguistics who graduated from Lviv National University in 2003 and is the author of scholarly publications in German and English. A translation into Ukrainian of selected United States poets of the 1950s and 1960s, including several "Beat" poets, appeared in 2006 with Yuri Andrukhovych as the translator. The title of the collection, *Den' smerti Pani Den'* was a loose translation of the title of Frank O'Hara's "The Day Lady Died", a poem in which the lyrical subject recounts the experience of learning of the death in 1959 of the jazz singer Billie Holiday (Lady Day). The theme of O'Hara's poem, the sudden apprehension of mortality, and its setting, the bathroom of a drinking place, are both echoed in A.'s Heidelberg experience. What is added in *Taiemnytsia* is A.'s vision of himself as if from outside his body, a perception that announces a guiding structural principle of this interview-like text: the uncanny proximity, but not quite identity, of A. and Andrukhovych, and therefore the mysterious, doppelgänger-like existence of the "real" and the "imagined" and of "life" and "art".

But the scene also anticipates the political problematic of the novel. A. is a Ukrainian poet who promotes his work in "Europe", a geographical and symbolic location that enjoys prestige among westward-oriented Ukrainian intellectuals as a metaphor for political rights, the rule of law and cultural maturity. In more popular Ukrainian perceptions, Europe exists through images of people richly attired and perfectly groomed, of plentiful, high-quality and expensive goods, and of opulent and well-finished buildings and streetscapes. Yet in this Europe, in a site of local historical significance, a bar bears the name Drugstore in homage to an even more authoritative culture, that of the United States. A. has translated works from that authoritative culture, acknowledging its importance and making its products accessible.

The Internet further reveals that Yuri Andrukhovych worked on his translations of "The Beat" and their contemporaries as a recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship at Penn State University. From one perspective, then, he may be regarded as having been recruited by the metropolitan culture of the west to add to its glory. As for "the people of 1968" (14), it is clear that in this scene, for Stefa and A., two travellers along the east–west axis, the

signifier "1968" no longer refers in the first instance to the Prague Spring, but to the Student Revolution in France and Germany and, more generally, the protest movement in the west. Being against the system in the west has eclipsed being against the system in one's own (post)communist east. Much of what occurs in this scene draws attention to gradients of cultural power: western Europe outshines eastern Europe, attracting its gifted people; but even western Europe pays homage to the United States.

But at the same time the east–west axis is not entirely a one-way street. Whatever the power of the original text of the canonical culture, translators have a power of their own: the dominant may be presented to the subaltern only through the mediation of the subaltern's comprador. Thus, lest we think of A. as entirely engulfed by the power of the west, we should bear in mind the example of his doppelgänger Andrukhovych, whose rendering of United States poetry into Ukrainian appeared to at least one critic as an exercise of power in reverse: "We see here the America of Andrukhovych. […] *The Day Lady Died* is unquestionably the product of the inspired rethinking of a remarkable literary phenomenon by our own equally remarkable contemporary" (Stembkovs′ka, par. 7).

One could continue explicating this programmatic scene, but the point has been made: we are dealing here with cultural power and its unequal geographical distribution; with hierarchies of cultural visibility and perceived importance; with the transport of human and cultural resources away from the poorer to the richer parts of the planet; and with the affirmation of these cultural imbalances (not to say injustices) by such culturally advantaged (relative to their home society) personages as A. and Stefa. In short, we are in the very midst of the preferred territory of postcolonial studies. Here, as always when confronting Andrukhovych's work, one cannot avoid the questions: in what relationship to postcoloniality does this text stand? To what extent, if at all, does it posit a postcolonial condition as existing or *in spe*? To what extent, if at all, does it advocate strategies for achieving a postcolonial state of affairs? And, finally, is there any evolution, relative to earlier stations of Andrukhovych's writerly career, in his views concerning these questions?

Inevitably, these queries bring us to the problem of definitions, for the heritage of postcolonial studies does not include stable terminological distinctions.[2] Let me, then, be brief, and for longer expositions direct the reader to earlier discussions (Pavlyshyn, "Post-Colonial Features" 42–46; "Shcho peretvoriuiet′sia" 115–17). In the economic sphere those actions and structures are "colonial" that tend to subject the economic activity of a territory to the interests of an external entity; in culture, the colonial is that which tends to subject the cultural interests of the colonized entity to those of the colonizer. Strategies of cultural colonialism include the exploitation of the cultural resources of the colonized (people, institutions, cultural artefacts, historical memories); the control of cultural value so that prestige and the mystique of universalism attach to the metropolis, while the colony figures as marginal and parochial, graduating to significance only through the mediation of the metropolis; and the regulation of cultural activity in the colony in such a way that competition for visibility and prestige with metropolitan cultural output is minimized. The attribute "colonial" may be applied to cultural texts and other cultural phenomena if they advance the abovementioned goal and employ any of the abovementioned strategies. "Anticolonial" are those phenomena, texts or aspects of texts that pursue the contrary goal (asserting the autonomy, dignity and value of the colonized) and resist the strategies of cultural colonialism. "Postcolonial" is that which, eschewing the claims to power explicit and implicit in colonial and anticolonial stances, advances a state of affairs in which the antagonisms and competitive intentions of colonizer and colonized are suspended; where mutual understanding supersedes grievance as the dominant affect in relations between the former colonizer and the former colonized; where the

abuses of the past are acknowledged, but recognized as history, rather than as determinants of present behaviour; and where former colonizer and colonized find a modus vivendi that corresponds to the interests of both.

Does *Taiemnytsia*, then, produce an "intersection of the aesthetic and political domains" that does not "confirm existing schemata", colonial and anticolonial, but works at "defamiliarizing them and delivering us into a view beyond them" (Quayson 44)? To state at once what the remainder of these reflections will show: yes and no. Yes, because Andrukhovych in *Taiemnytsia* continues the work that he started in *Recreations*: defamiliarizing maximalist politions, anticolonial as much as colonial, and disclosing the violence and injustice inherent in them. Yes, because the Utopia of a world free of the exercise of colonial power remains as desirable as ever. No, because, unlike the early and optimistic *Recreations*, and even unlike the later, cautious, but nonetheless hopeful, *Dvanadtsiat' obruchiv*, Andrukhovych's *Taiemnytsia* adopts a position of resignation, conceding that the colonial is the ineluctable predicament of the contemporary globalized world. If one wishes to connect Andrukhovych's growing geopolitical pessimism to a particular temporal context, one may look to the aftermath of the Orange Revolution. Many in Ukraine apprehended the mass demonstrations of protest against electoral fraud in November 2004 as a profession by ordinary Ukrainians of their commitment to the principles, or at least symbols, of European-style electoral democracy. But their hopes of being rewarded by an improvement in Ukraine's prospects of joining the European Union were disappointed. Andrukhovych at first publicly called upon the EU to signal support for Ukraine ("Vriatuvaty 'prokliatu' Ukrainu"), and then expressed dismay that none was forthcoming (Andruchowytsch, "Europa: Meine Neurosen"). *Taiemnytsia* may be read as articulating such a withdrawal of hope in Europe. It does so by demonstrating the pervasiveness of cultural dominion, including that of Europe and the west; the suffering, injustice and humiliation that the neocolonial condition bring upon ordinary people; and the unreality of the postcolonial dream.

None of these arguments, of course, is naively or unambivalently proclaimed. For every position that the text enunciates, it offers perspectives that qualify it. This inbuilt ambivalence is presented as corresponding both to the intangible psyche of A. himself (already as a schoolboy he claims, "I accustomed myself to elusiveness, to being everywhere and nowhere at the same time, so that nobody in the world could claim really to know me" [71]), and to the uncertain relationship between A. and Andrukhovych. Thus, the colonial evils of the old regime are transparent – and yet even for A. the Empire has a curious seductiveness.

The motifs demonstrating the evils of empire are many; below I name three. First among them is A.'s service in the army, an institution symbolic of what both A. and his interviewer term "the System". Only incidentally is the army represented as a vehicle of the geopolitical power of the Soviet Union; more emphatically, it is figured as a structure for pointless but also systematic and hierarchically structured humiliation of and cruelty toward its members. "The pyramid of evil", A. explains, "was topped by some Comrade Andropov or other in the far-off Kremlin" (169). The System also institutionalized a colonial power imbalance between the indigenous population – in this instance, the denizens of A.'s native city, Ivano-Frankivs'k – and the post-war newcomers, administrators of the new Soviet authority in western Ukraine. The definition of this power constitutes the most considered statement of the nature of colonial dominion in *Taiemnytsia*:

> [Egon Alt:] How did they oppress you?
>
> [A.:] Let me think. They held us in a state of suspension. That's to say, on the surface there didn't appear to be any discrimination at all. But…

> [Egon Alt:] You're thinking?
>
> [A.:] Just a moment. I'm circling around and I can't find words that are sufficiently precise. OK. They kept us in a state of suspension, because they sensed perfectly well our secret dislike of the System. The System was theirs alone; it didn't belong to us jointly. Their career opportunities were much better than ours. Admittedly, from time to time they would open them up to one of us, but only to those who had prostituted themselves entirely.
>
> [Egon Alt:] What was it like, this state of suspension?
>
> [A.:] It was like *we'll be nice to you as long as you sit still and don't snivel, but if you so much as make a move we'll show you who's boss here*. In any case, they were never *nice*. They just thought they were. (228–29; emphases in the original)

Second is the motif of the invisibility imposed by the colonizer upon the colony. Speaking about Ukrainian avant-garde culture in the 1920s, a subject new and surprising even to the well-informed German interviewer, A. remarks: "We always had something going on that was interesting – and invisible to the world" (272). The companion utopian motif of full postcolonial visibility is introduced by A.'s quotation from Andrukhovych's parodic encyclopaedia entry "Ukraine" that appeared in the early 1990s in the journal *Chetver*: "Ukraine: the largest objective given in Europe, which for that very reason is incapable of being accommodated there" (335). The actual political exclusion of Ukraine from Europe in the 21st century is balanced by this nostalgic episode from a time when it was possible to dream of the country as possessing not only reality, but significance.

The third motif in the "evil of empire" cycle is that of the pleasure that A. derives from minor and almost inconsequential anticolonial affects or gestures: the wry presentation of a football fan's resentment over the victory of Moscow's "Spartak" over Kyiv's "Dynamo" as an analogy of nationalist grief (45); the rendering of the non-standard Russian speech of low-life characters in Ukrainian letters to suggest that such linguistic behaviour is an aberration from *Ukrainian* cultural norms (thus inverting the conventional hierarchy that, in the Soviet Union, positioned Ukrainian as merely a "national" language and Russian as the "language of international communication"); and the coining of occasional anticolonial bon mots and aphorisms. Central Europe, A. quips, is "the Europe they tried to transform into Russia", proceeding then to characterize Russia as an intrinsically colonizing entity:

> For such an organism as Russia it generally has no significance whether it is communist or monarchical or dominated by oligarchs and the police. What is of essence to it is something else: the desire to be an empire. To be big, bigger still, biggest of all. (406)

The colonial is presented in *Taiemnytsia* as a state of affairs that spontaneously arouses opposition. Experiencing the real Soviet Lviv, with the featureless concrete buildings on its outskirts, stimulates A. to live in a parallel Lviv, imagined with the help of Baroque music and old engravings (112). But more profoundly alien to A. is the constraint and limitation that he experiences as fundamental to the System. Its antithesis, he knows without prior reflection, is freedom. Even as a child, A. senses the contrast between the variety and relative freedom of Prague, where he spends a few holidays with his family, and his homeland. Czechoslovakia is within the Soviet bloc, but in comparison with the USSR A. finds it to be a haven of liberty. Crossing the Soviet border confers a sense of joyous lightness (28). Toward the end of the book it is the pursuit, both metaphorical and literal, of liberty that A. names as the essential component of his iden-

tity: "Who am I, you ask? […] I am he who yearns for the freedom to move in quest of freedom" (410).

And yet, even if A.'s sense of liberty upon leaving Soviet soil is exhilarating, the text warns its reader not to absolutize the freedom that A. at first associates with the west. A. couches the description of this first encounter with the west in a revealing metaphor: "One could say that the west bought me, entrails and all, that summer" (21). A. was not "convinced", nor "moved", but "bought": he entered into an arrangement with the west that had a mercantile, contractual dimension: in exchange for the pleasure (aesthetic, cultural, intellectual, and sensual) that the west released within him, he gave it his loyalty and entered its rhetorical service. The colonialism of the east had been primitive and brutal, but the neocolonialism of the west, though seductive, also involved A. in a Faustian contract.

But even the Soviet empire had its allure. Moscow as the centre of empire is for A. a place of both horror and fascination. It is the place where unconventional thought and behaviour are least likely to be noticed:

> Moscow is a kind of Dragon's Maw. There was a time when innumerable wandering souls found refuge there. This became a flood in the 1970s – if they cut off your oxygen in Ukraine, you could dissolve into Moscow and find at least some kind of new beginning. (306)

For A., Moscow is a place of endless experience and, therefore, inspiration; the place where even the rarest resources of the empire are least lacking: "In the Moscow of those times was concentrated the greatest amount of freedom or, let me use this compromised word, *democracy*" (309; emphasis in the original). For all of A.'s *ressentiment* against the empire, he finds himself implicated in its aggressive enterprises. However much he despises compulsory military service, he submits to the call-up rather than face the alternative – prison (145); however involuntarily, he ends up as part of the USSR's strategic nuclear weapons force. The issue of such passive co-guilt comes up repeatedly for A. It concerns him that his father took part in the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. He often feels the need to distance himself from responsibility for the Soviet Union's more oppressive actions. À propos of the death of the poet Vasyl′ Stus in a prison camp in 1985 he remarks, "you should not make me a participant in this murder" (252). Nor does he want to be thought of as taking part in the Cold War's division of the world into mutually antagonistic camps (399).

Even as the System appears to impose upon its victims joint responsibility for its misdemeanours, it blocks the capacity of individuals to take responsibility for their own fate. Their interests are subordinated to the interests of the colonizer; the indigenous are not free to act in their own name. The exhilaration of taking responsibility for the first time for policies and actions is among the pre-eminent sensations that A. experiences as glasnost gathers momentum and the independence referendum approaches (333).

The colonial condition, then, makes itself manifest not only in the grand power-plays of economics and politics, but also in the private sphere. It rules out the possibility of clear demarcation lines between beneficiary and victim of colonialism, generating what Spivak called the "complicity of the two poles of [the] opposition" of colonizer and colonized (McRobbie 9). A similar ethical mist envelops the west, even as it appears to A., especially in his youthful years, as the benevolent opposite of the colonialism of the east. A. pays homage to western counterculture, popular culture and high culture as they presented themselves to him when the Soviet system seemed forever entrenched. He

assembles a personal iconostasis of cultural saints that includes Elton John and Jethro Tull, Robert Duncan and Thomas Wolfe, Cervantes and E.T.A. Hoffmann, Corelli and Pachelbel, the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe. These are not items in carnivalesque comic lists thrown together for incongruity's sake, so characteristic of Andrukhovych's early prose. They are stars that together form the constellations of western culture – lights that shine across the unimaginable void between east and west and illuminate what otherwise would be the unrelieved darkness of the Soviet night. Or so it appears, until the unimaginable void shrinks to the distance between Kyiv's Boryspil airport and Frankfurt am Main, enabling a different picture of the west to heave into view. In the aeroplane carrying A. to Germany his neighbour, a youthful economic adviser to the president of Kazakhstan, paints a western landscape whose main features are the supermarket Plus and the department stores Woolworth and C & A. Frankfurt airport then becomes the object of a typical Andrukhovychian amplification, where the juxtaposition of the unlike creates a satirical, grotesque image of the west-as-consumer-capitalism:

> I do not know why there is so much of everything, of these machines dispensing soft drink, popcorn and condoms, these dispensers of everything in the world, of cigarettes, these phone booths, these automatic teller machines, why so many signs, pissoirs, foreigners, so much women's lingerie? Or maybe this is a certain kind of paradise in which at some stage I'll be incarcerated, this time forever, wandering eternally in quest of an exit […] ? (332)

Taiemnytsia, then, dissents from the idea of the west, or of Europe, as a space free of colonialism, suggesting instead that colonialism abhors a vacuum: that A.'s biographical trajectory propels him not out of colonialism and into liberty, but out of a familiar and onerous colonialism into an alluring neocolonialism that is in its own way disempowering. The very structure of the novel points in this direction. The introduction to *Taiemnytsia* gives a fictional reason why the reader receives five hundred pages of interview "instead of" a novel: A.'s original intention of writing a text of his own has been displaced by another project: A. has subjected himself to the plans of the German journalist Egon Alt. The six days of world-creating interviews and one day's rest are ordained not by A., but by Egon Alt; the resulting testimony is not the consequence of A.'s aesthetic urges, but of the inquiring German's determination to slake his intellectual curiosity. Like a colonizer of a more traditional, economic, kind, he "mines" A.'s mind for narratives revelatory of A. himself and of his world. It is Egon Alt who compels A. to descend into the bowels of the abandoned NATO listening station on Teufelsberg, the Devil's Hill, whatever the meaning of that uncanny descent. If, together with the majority of reviewers of and commentators upon *Taiemnytsia*, we note that the name "Egon Alt" is a partial anagram of alter ego,[3] then we can hardly avoid the conclusion that A.'s other self has internalized the role of the colonizing, dominating foreigner. Furthermore, in the introduction A. appears to set out in plain text his belief that it is the encounter with the foreigner (or the self-as-foreigner, the comprador) that leads him into a state of mind that he is willing to identify as self-understanding. At the end of each day of dialogue, A. confesses, "conclusive understanding of everything that had really happened to me in those near and far years came upon me like inebriation" (8). Translated into the language of postcolonial studies, this is a surrender of the colonial subject to orientalism – to the imperial knowledge monopoly.

But the use of the adverb "really" (*naspravdi*) in a context where all of Andrukhovych's prose hitherto had underscored the contingency and unfinalizability of knowledge signals that the utterance is at least potentially ironic. Perhaps A. does not

genuinely abrogate his hermeneutic rights. Perhaps it is the idea that the encounter with Egon Alt produces "conclusive understanding" that calls for an amused smile.

In the end, *Taiemnytsia* remains ambivalent on the question of the extent to which A.'s identity is beholden to the definition of it that the German (or the secret German inside A.) is willing to confer. Equally, the text does not permit a conclusive view of the degree to which A. should be seen as the colonial victim of the colonizing, orientalizing Egon Alt. Certainly, A. is not without his anticolonial strategies and wiles. If Egon Alt possesses the power of the interviewer to set the questions that establish the parameters of A.'s permissible self-definition and self-interpretation, then A., who has translated the interviews from the German, is endowed with the powers of the translator. These powers, as we know, were obliquely hinted at in the very first reminiscence that A. shared with his interlocutor. The interviewer has guided the conversation, but A. as translator-editor has reappropriated it by "to a significant extent imposing artifice (or literariness?) on the spoken word" (11). Does this mean that in this intercultural power-game A. is figured as the final victor? Perhaps this is true of A., but it is not certain that it is true of Andrukhovych. It is difficult to imagine that the Yuri Andrukhovych of flesh and blood wrote *Taiemnytsia* without an eye to a possible future German translation (such as the one by Sabine Stöhr, *Geheimnis: Sieben Tage mit Egon Alt*, which did in fact appear in 2008). If the work was written in part with the German reader-as-consumer in mind, then it is impossible to exclude from a discussion of the rhetoric and politics of the book the observation that it possesses the dimension of an exotic neocolonial ware produced for a metropolitan market, or of tourist art produced, at least in part, with the expectations of the well-heeled visitor-as-buyer in mind.

The structure of the novel, then, proposes that it is difficult and perhaps impossible to have clarity about who at any moment is dominating or exploiting whom, and to what degree. The novel's overarching argument is that colonialism is so ubiquitous that it flows in all directions, complicating the task of distinguishing between oppressor and victim. *Taiemnytsia* offers a parable illustrating this uncertainty. Observing a "respectable lady" partnered by a young African man, A., who is convinced that they are lovers, muses, "What should we call this – neocolonialism? The second enslavement of Africa? Or is it the other way around – the enslavement of Europe? Somebody is obviously enslaving somebody else – but who is doing it to whom [*khto koho*]?" (430). "*Kto kogo*" (*khto koho* in Ukrainian) is Lenin's well-known phrase from a 1921 speech in which, discussing the New Economic Policy, he anticipated the struggle between the nascent power of the proletarian state and the resuscitated small-scale capitalism that this state would temporarily tolerate (161). Just as, in Lenin's speech, *kto kogo* encapsulated the notion of the ineluctable antagonism between productive principles that prevails even though its outcome is uncertain, so for A. *khto koho* summarizes the inescapable power disequilibrium that characterizes a fatally colonized world – even if it is not always clear who has the dominant role in any particular instance of the power imbalance.

Just as the overall structure of *Taiemnytsia* asserts the melancholy ubiquity of the colonial, so the text reworks in a minor key some of the familiar motifs of Andrukhovych's fictional and essayistic prose to the same purpose. This is especially true of the motif of the train, elsewhere in Andrukhovych a joyful symbol of the interconnectedness of the central and east European cultural space. Andrukhovych had written nostalgically of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a place where one could travel from Galicia to Trieste without crossing a state border (*Dezorientatsiia* 8); *Potiah 76* [Train 76] was the name he gave to an Internet almanac of central and east European verse that he edited.

In *Taiemnytsia* the train appears in two ways, both new to the Andrukhovych oeuvre. One is realistic, the other phantasmagorical.

If train travel from east to west in *Taiemnytsia* symbolizes anticolonial *Fernweh* (Romantic yearning for the distant), then travel from west to east is an expression of anti-neocolonial *Heimweh* (Romantic yearning for home). The train that bears A. by the cheapest path from Bavaria to Ukraine traverses the Czech Republic and Slovakia, making visible the gradient of increasing poverty and human desperation as A. moves from west to east. At the bottom of the gradient are migrant workers from Ukraine, "cheated and robbed a hundred times" (364), whose social plight A. reports with a sorrow and anger rare in Andrukhovych's prose.

Whereas the west–east train demonstrates the dim social realities that flow from the subjection of the labour force of A.'s homeland to the demands of western capitalism as it trickles down to Europe's eastern borderlands, A.'s circular journey with Egon Alt on the Berlin S-Bahn serves as the culmination of the argument concerning the hopelessness of attempts to negotiate the east-west divide in quest of a postcolonial Utopia. Linear time, the companion of progress, gives way to cyclical time, as Vladymyrova has observed (par. 11); arrival at a condition different from the status quo is impossible. The endpoint of A.'s journey is a Gogolian haunted place, the Teufelsberg (Devil's Hill) near the Teufelssee (Devil's Lake). The Teufelsberg is, in A.'s account as well as in the non-fictional world outside the text, a mound built up after the Second World War from the rubble of Berlin's bombed buildings. A. refers to the Cold War electronic surveillance station erected there by the Western Alliance to listen to its Soviet adversary, but is silent about the other notable feature of the Teufelsberg: it is located over the top of an unfinished building designed by Albert Speer for the Nazi regime – the military technology department of the Berlin Technical University (Adams 460). The meaning of A.'s descent into this structure is obscure, or at least subject to multiple exegeses. Is this a passage by A.-as-Orpheus into the Underworld, the Artist's risking all to recapture the lost object of desire and inspiration, and is this Eurydice-object the Europe that seemed so enticing in *Recreations* and its uncanny festival city, Chortopil' (Devilsburg)? In that case, while the yearning for Eurydice-Europe may be real enough, the mission, like that of Orpheus, will fail. Devil's Hill and Devil's Lake will have put an end to the carnivalesque Devilsburg dream. Or is this a descent into the dark underside of Europe, its tradition of genocidal horror that cannot be obliterated and finds its contemporary echoes in the multiple petty oppressions and miseries that the capitalist Europe of the European Union inflicts upon humanity at its eastern borders? Is it an echo of Dante's passage into the Inferno or, in the east Slavic tradition, of the 12th-century apocryph of the Descent of the Virgin into Hell? If the latter, then it is to be borne in mind that the entreaties of the Virgin and all the angels and saints to the Lord result not in the release of the damned from their sufferings, but in a minor concession – an annual period of respite (*Khozhdeniie*, par. 20). All potential decodings of the descent, however, imply that A.'s journey ends in gloom: suffering prevails as the human condition, and certainly the condition of A.'s colonial compatriots.

The motifs of east–west and west–east travel remind us of A.'s early attachment to an idealized east, mostly filtered through Europe and the west: the fiction of Hermann Hesse, the "Hindu-Brahmanic world-model" (127) in the stories of E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Yogi Ramacharaka's *Foundations of the Worldview of the Indian Yogis*, a text written by an American.[4] But a more mature A. admits to himself that he is too attached to the European principle of individuation to be able to find solace in the thought-systems of the

east: "This seemed to me the worst: to stop becoming, to lose oneself *as one is*, to lose this individual *I*, to lose the self in every mirror (393; emphasis in the original).

For A., the east proves to be a chimera. He is fated to seek the west – indeed, Europe. But whereas the celebration of the civilizational glory of Europe had been the mission of many of Yuri Andrukhovych's essays in the 1990s, A. in *Taiemnytsia* contradicts some of these paeans. Europe as the *locus amoenus* – the pleasant place – is ironically deflated by the image of a young woman reposing in the shade of the trees at Stuttgarter Platz in Berlin; this is no idyll, however, because she is homeless, in rags, and all of her possessions fit into a shopping trolley (395). Civilized, Old-World Europe as represented by nostalgic memories of Austria-Hungary in, for example, Andrukhovych's essay "Erts – Herts – Perts" (1994) is challenged by a description of the contemporary Viennese as burdened by "a thousand mutually contradictory complexes, and so to this day they don't know who they are – Austrians or Nazis. As though this wasn't really the same thing – in eighty per cent of cases, anyhow" (383). Europe as the opposite of the totalitarian tedium of the steppe, the place where, as Andrukhovych once thought, the forests and mountains in their "discreteness, variety and completeness of form" (*Dezoriientatsiia* 36) created the European person, is called into question by the very absence of that person: "around us are forests, forests and mountains […], this is the very landscape that is supposed long ago to have given birth to the European person, but where is it, where is this European person, dammit?" (373).

On the other hand, some of Andrukhovych's earlier works had also referred to a demonic Europe – the Europe of revenants from the Habsburg monarchy in *Recreations* and of vampires in *Dvanadtsiat' obruchiv*. This same Europe lurks in *Taiemnytsia*, not only on Devil's Hill, but in the seemingly innocuous world of children's word games and tongue twisters. The last chapter of *Taiemnytsia* is titled "Hottentottenpotentatentantenattentatentäter" – a word that A. had been taught as, allegedly, the longest word in German or in any language by his grandmother Irena, a lady who had lived under six political regimes and in her childhood had seen the Archduke Franz Ferdinand (39). This word, which means "a person who has carried out an attempt to assassinate the aunt of a Hottentot potentate", not only signifies the killer or attempted killer of a human being, but also alludes to the early-20th-century genocide in German South-West Africa of the Nama and Herero people, called "Hottentots" by colonizing Europeans (Omer-Cooper 266; Zimmerer 46–50, 58). There is no direct mention in the text of *Taiemnytsia* of this sinister chapter of Europe's colonial history, but it is this history that makes "Hottentottenpotentatentantenattentatentäter" a title suitable for a chapter replete with polemical answers to the Europhile enthusiasms once voiced by Yuri Andrukhovych. Irena did not teach her grandson the word conventionally regarded as the longest natural German word, *Donaudampfschiffahrtsgesellschaftskapitän* (captain of the Danube Steamship Company). This noun, alluding as it does to the times of the Habsburg monarchy and to the notion of east-west travel, would have suited the benign image of Europe that Andrukhovych had once painted. But the innocuous Danube steamship would scarcely have been a suitable vessel for an expedition into the Heart of Darkness that, ultimately, A., and with him Andrukhovych, discover at the centre of Europe, a place that lies, as A. claims, "wherever its boundaries are. Where Europe thinks that it ends – that is where its centre is" (428). The colonial crimes and miseries inflicted by Europe, seemingly out of sight of its civilized metropolis, this paradoxical formulation suggests, are not peripheral to Europe. They are of its essence.

For all the undiminished sparkle of Andrukhovych's style, *Taiemnytsia* is a dark book. Long gone is the carnivalesque optimism of *Recreations*, that in the death of the old

regime had seen the seeds of new life. *Dvanadtsiat' obruchiv*, saw no prospects for postcolonial reconciliation but, while hedging itself about with all proper poststructuralist reservations as to positively asserted values, suggested the possibility of discovering in the human sphere – in the affect of love and in the idea of home – psychic fixed points that were free of domination and might be affirmed. *Taiemnytsia* continued Andrukhovych's exploration of the world, but dared not affirm grounds for hope. Love, the possibility of its affirmation so carefully constructed in *Dvanadtsiat' obruchiv*, bifurcates in *Taiemnytsia* into the components of mechanical sex and passionless fidelity. Hope for a point of stability and contentment able to be called "home" is abandoned. The quest for the freedom that was inspired, *ex negativo*, by the experience of Soviet unfreedom, leads only to the resigned conclusion that there is no space free of domination. The postcolonial subject – the subject of political freedom, sovereign over the self, cognizant of its traumatic past but empowered freely to choose its present and future, the beneficiary, in Benita Parry's words, of "a transfigured social condition" and the "radical hope of a realized humanism" (54) – has not come into being.

Notes

1. Unless specified otherwise, all translations are mine. Transliteration of the Ukrainian follows the Library of Congress system, except for the name of Yuri Andrukhovych which, in the main text only, appears with the spelling that has become conventional in English.
2. Nine years after the publication of their frequently cited *Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, in their *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, did not seek to regulate the meaning of the terms "colonial", "anticolonial", "neocolonial" or "postcolonial" when used attributively. Their glossary proposed, rather, histories of the (unstandardized) usage of the nominal correspondents of these terms (respectively, 45–51, 14–17, 162–63 and 186–92).
3. See for instance Böttiger, par. 8; Leister, par. 2; Straszecka, par. 3; and Vladymyrova, par. 4.
4. A. uses a Ukrainian translation of the title under which the book appeared in Russian (Ramacharaka, *Osnovy mirosozertsaniia*). The name under which William Walker Atkinson published the book was *Fourteen Lessons in Yogi Philosophy and Oriental Occultism*.

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