

of precisely the position Bockman misattributes to Foucault, and that these lectures proposed an alternative that broke with his analysis of disciplinary power. Bockman questions the conclusions I draw from the supposedly “unique” case of infrastructure and calls for a broader approach. But she has not one word to say about my argument that we have far too many overly broad and underspecified analyses of neoliberalism. And she ignores my rationale for focusing on infrastructure and budgetary reforms: they provide insight into the largely neglected question of how neoliberals have understood the positive purposes of government. In sum, Bockman’s proposals for modifying my analysis entail reintroducing the tenets of the critical conventional wisdom that my book sets out to reject! One is left with the impression that Bockman has either misunderstood or simply missed the core of my intellectual project in *Post-Soviet Social*.

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Professor Bockman responds:

In his letter, Stephen Collier rejects my suggestion that the literature on neoliberalism, which he dismisses as “critical conventional wisdom” and as focused only on “radical marketization,” might contribute to his argument. In his words, his book “sets out to reject” this “critical conventional wisdom.” In my review, I sought to demonstrate what might be gained by engaging with this literature.

Since he does not engage with this literature, Collier, for example, assumes that the Russian state in its new liberal form would become separate from society, rather than perceiving the heterogeneous forms of global governance that link states, state agencies, corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and new entrepreneurial individuals. Collier examines negative, “illiberal” Soviet biopolitics, which, in his view, shares this negative illiberalism with “social welfare,” international development, and “twentieth century socialism” (20, 61). Yet, he does not recognize the ways that monopolistic, corporatized markets might also dominate society, thus creating an “illiberal” neoliberalism by his definition. Most scholars of neoliberalism have long recognized the apparent humanitarianism of neoliberalism, especially of the post-Washington Consensus, while simultaneously recognizing that it brings new exclusions and inequalities.

Collier does not acknowledge neoliberalism’s contribution to “new exclusions from state redistribution” and to “growing global inequalities” because he fundamentally redefines neoliberalism. According to his idiosyncratic definition of neoliberalism, these exclusions and inequalities happened *before* neoliberalism began. Collier restricts neoliberalism to the late 1990s and the 2000s, cleansing it of early 1990s marketization, deregulation, privatization, and the consequences of these structural adjustment policies (132–37), including increasing inequalities in his neoliberal period.

Collier bases his definition of neoliberalism on Michel Foucault’s understanding of neoliberalism as “critical reflections on government practice” developed primarily by economists in the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, Collier does not engage with the many other neoliberalisms identified by scholars since Foucault’s death. Furthermore, Collier does not disagree with me that he transforms Foucault’s critique of liberalism into a positive description. In his letter, Collier refers to claims that in the late 1970s Foucault made a fundamental break with his critique of liberalism in *Discipline and Punish* and came to embrace neoliberalism and thus liberalism. Collier wants me to endorse this positive description. It is quite problematic to assume that Foucault somehow today, three decades after his death, would advocate neoliberal

programming of individualistic “calculating actors, whether firms, interest groups, or individual citizens” (23–25) and the resulting subjectivity.

The fact that neoliberal economists accepted the “positive purposes of government,” as Collier writes, likely resulted more from the demands of individual subjects forged by disciplinary power and subpopulations forged by biopolitics—or, in Foucault’s later terminology, the self-care, care for others, and resistance of these forged subjects—than from independent thinking of neoliberal economists, as Collier seems to argue. The Soviet Union witnessed an explosion of “critical reflections on government practice” not captured by the narrow neoliberal ideas of these economists.

I encourage readers to examine Collier’s book and my review and to make their own assessment.

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To the Editor:

Upon reading Inessa Medzhibovskaya’s review of my book *Understanding Tolstoy* (vol. 71, no. 4), I was newly struck by the capacity of some Slavic specialists to render the field of Tolstoy studies unnecessarily opaque and irrelevant. Medzhibovskaya seems to think that the only readers of books on Tolstoy—or at least, the only readers worth writing for—are those 150 or so English-speaking Tolstoy specialists whose job it is to write books for, well, 150 or so English-speaking Tolstoy specialists. But what of the much larger audience of readers, among whom are faculty in other fields, undergraduate and graduate students, not to mention many other serious readers, who might benefit from a broad, accessible, and thought-provoking book like *Understanding Tolstoy*? Silent on that subject, Medzhibovskaya instead accuses me of creating a work whose contents “would be all too familiar to specialists and scholars who keep their thinking and reading about Tolstoy serious and current.”

Of course, Medzhibovskaya knows that she must deal with the fact that, among those who have found something “serious and current” in *Understanding Tolstoy* are prominent American and Russian scholars whose mentorship and contributions to my thinking I acknowledge in the book. That inconvenient truth she artfully handles by arguing that my “limpid” and “fetching, even sly” writing style is a tool employed to seek the approval of those very scholars, whom she identifies as the surviving representatives of the Old Criticism.

I suspect that her strong negative reaction to my book might have something to do with her own (largely unacknowledged) theoretical assumptions. Medzhibovskaya might have conceded that *Understanding Tolstoy* does, in fact, have a clearly articulated interpretive framework, whose main shortcoming, alas, is that it is not hers. As I say on p. 3 of the introduction: “I wanted to write a book that reconstructs, rather than deconstructs Tolstoy—a book that mirrors the very internal unity of Tolstoy’s trajectory as a man and artist.”

I am well aware that in the contemporary intellectual climate, such an approach to literary criticism is bound to strike some scholars as rather passé, even naïve. All right, then, let us have *that* debate, openly and honestly, rather than using one another’s books as convenient objects for our own scholarly axe-grinding, which not only grates on the ears; it makes the important work we are all engaged in seem irrelevant to all but a tiny cadre of fellow specialists.

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