3 Trust, Anxiety, and Power in the Yukon Backcountry: Reading Zagoskin's Expedition Journal, 1842–1844

Luise Fast

Abstract The expedition journal of Lavrentiy Alexeyevich Zagoskin from the early 1840s introduces a number of interpreters and intermediaries who, in one way or another, partook in the Russian American Company's push into the Yukon backcountry. Mapping the relationship between explorer and interpreter as a function of fluctuating economies of trust and mistrust, this paper investigates interaction histories that often remain hidden on account of the ephemeral nature of interpreting. They reveal how literacy and experience (or the lack thereof) impacted the emotional regime of the exploration party, and challenge, rather than confirm, the power dynamic between empire and colony on the periphery, opening up spaces for negotiation, strategic action, and creative adaptation for the Native intermediary.

Keywords Alaska, fur trade, intermediaries, Indigenous

In a paper titled "The Empire Talks Back," Michael Cronin describes a phenomenon widely overlooked in studies concerned with imperial exploration of border regions. "The central problem," he writes,

> of translation in general and interpretation in particular is the problem of control. […] Proximity is both desirable and dreaded. The desire is to manipulate and the dread comes from the fear of being misled, either by the native interpreter, or by the nonnative interpreter going native. The difficulty for the imperial agent is dealing with this monstrous doubleness, the potential duplicity of interpreters.[1]

1 Cronin, "The Empire Talks Back," 55.

Fast, Luise. 2025. "3 Trust, Anxiety, and Power in the Yukon Backcountry: Reading Zagoskin's Expedition Journal, 1842–1844" In *Environments, Resources, and Infrastructures Between Russia and the Asia-Pacific*, edited by Benjamin Beuerle, Sandra Dahlke, Anna Mazanik and Andreas Renner, 47–72. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing. https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.1589.c23566

Cronin's reflections on power, control, and interpreting in colonial settings point to the orality of the encounter in the imperial borderlands, which by its very nature is difficult to study. Cronin's title references the seminal "The Empire Writes Back," a theoretical conceptualisation of postcolonial literature penned by Bill Ashcroft, Garth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in 1989.[2] But before the empire *wrote* back, it first *talked*—and from a practical standpoint, the talking was first and foremost done by Native interpreters, who, on account of their function as "conduits for privileged 'inside' information on the society and culture," were able to "confer authenticity and verisimilitude on the account," as Cronin notes elsewhere, but at the same time fundamentally challenged the power dynamics on the frontier.[3] Interpreters, he argues, in some sense became "monsters," combining both desirable and threatening attributes, creating anxiety and plaguing the imperial travellers' state of mind.[4]

There are many reasons why the case of the Russian Empire, as Andreas Kappeler has pointed out, does not fit models of imperialism that were developed with Western European constellations in mind.[5] It occupied a vast contiguous landmass that was home to a multitude of very heterogeneous ethnic groups with a long history of contact with the Russians. The interactions between the various ethnic groups and the Russians, governance strategies, and enforcement of rule also varied to large degree in measure and form, and were often guided by pragmatic rather than paternalistic considerations.[6] While, at certain times, much of the Russian Empire might resist an easy classification as a colonial empire, Russian America differed from the rest of the Russian Empire in significant ways. Not only was it the only overseas possession, it was also the only part of the Russian Empire explicitly defined as a colony and was held and kept more for its economic resources than for geopolitical reasons. Russian America, as Ilya Vinkovetsky argues, served as a site for experimentation for governance approaches that emulated those of Russia's Western European counterparts, creating a chartered company, the Russian American Company (RAC), tasked with the management of the colony's resources and territory.[7] This is also visible in how the Russian

2 Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back.*
3 Cronin, *Across the Lines*, 72.
4 Cronin, "The Empire Talks Back," 52–54.
5 Kappeler, *The Russian Empire*, 7, 161–162;
6 Kappeler, *The Russian Empire*, 161–171. Ilya Vinkovetsky therefore applies Frederick Cooper's concept of the empire-state to Russian America: Vinkovetsky, *Russian America*, 9–13.
7 Vinkovetsky, *Russian America*, 6–10.

colonisers related to the Natives of Russian America. Feelings of Eurocentric superiority towards non-European groups, patterned after Western European attitudes, grew more pronounced in many parts of the Russian Empire throughout the nineteenth century, Kappeler has shown.[8] In Russian America at the middle of the century, they had found their way into the modes of interaction between the colonisers and the Natives as well as into the discourse on Native intermediaries.

For the Russian exploration of the Alaskan interior in the nineteenth century, the report of Lieutenant Lavrentiy Alekseyevich Zagoskin provides a rare and detailed account of terrain, ethnography, and—the primary interest of the Russians—the condition of fur-bearing animals in the Yukon river drainage. Like colonial explorers elsewhere, Zagoskin had to rely significantly on the services of local intermediaries, who were often recruited as guides and acted as interpreters of language, culture, and geography. His report introduces us to a number of interpreters that served different functions in his colonial exploration, providing us with a glimpse into the oral and experiential dimension of his interactions with these intermediaries. In this paper, I want to revisit Zagoskin's writing, which is usually used as an important source for the Russian American Company's attempts to expand its knowledge about and its realm of influence into the interior of the American colony. I am going to read it for its accounts of Zagoskin's relationship with the intermediaries who played a crucial role in these attempts. A closer look at the dynamics that unfold between the lines of his writing reveals interaction histories that often remain hidden on account of the ephemeral orality of interpreting. They interrupt the sonority of conventional colonial exploration narratives, offering insight into how the talking of Native interpreters fundamentally challenged colonial power dynamics, shaping the explorer's state of mind through shifting economies of trust and mistrust. The appearance of Cronin's "monster," although derived from examples of Western European colonial empires, also suggests that the anxiety it was able to create was a shared experience in the colonial peripheries of the Russian and Western European empires.

8 Kappeler, *The Russian Empire*, 205–207.

Zagoskin's Expedition into the Yukon Backcountry

As one of the remaining white spots on Western maps, the interior of Alaska became a site of intensified cultural encounter between foreigners and Alaska Natives beginning in the early 1830s. The hunting parties of the RAC had decimated the Alaskan sea-otter population, the primary object of desire for the fur hunters, to a point of virtual extinction.[9] Faced with an overall decline in fur prices, the RAC decided in 1828 to expand its operations into the interior in order to make up for the declining revenues by trading other fur-bearing animals from the inland, mainly beavers and land otters.[10] Attempts to access the interior date back as far as Korsakovkii's 1818 expedition on the Nushagak, when the RAC likely first learned of the rich hunting grounds that lay beyond in the river valleys of the Kuskokwim and the Yukon rivers.[11] Now the RAC planned to open up the Alaskan interior to their trans-Pacific fur trade, using the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers as their main access routes.[12] In 1833, Mikhailovski Redoubt was established on the shore of Norton Sound as a hub for Native traders to sell their furs from the Yukon, as well as serving as a base for expeditions and attempts to establish more trading posts in the interior.

The Russian fur trade had changed the subsistence character of the Native economy on the Yukon long before the Natives of the Yukon backcountry ever came into direct contact with the colonisers. European trade goods such as metal pots, knives, tobacco, and other items that were traded at posts in the Russian Far East had found their way into Alaska via Chukchi and Iñupiat middle men, who traded them in return for Alaskan furs that could then be sold to the Russians.[13] Arvid Adolf Etholen, the RAC's chief administrator (*glavnyi pravitel'*) from 1840 to 1845, had travelled the Bering Straits in the 1820s, noticing how Native Alaskan traders sold furs from the lower and middle Yukon directly to Chukchi traders at the seasonal trading fairs on the shores of Kotzebue Sound. The Chukchis then went on to trade the Alaskan furs to Siberian fur companies.[14] This trade network was firmly established by the 1830s. The Russian outpost on Norton Sound was not able

9 Jones, "A 'Havock Made Among Them'," 585–609.
10 Records of the Russian-American Company 1802–1866, *Correspondence of the Governors General.* For the decline of the fur trade, see Vinkovetsky, *Russian America*, 68–72.
11 VanStone, *Ingalik Contact Ecology*, 47.
12 Arndt, *Dynamics of the Fur Trade*, 27–30; Black, *Russians in Alaska*, 200–207.
13 Demuth, *Floating Coast*, 38–39, 51–56; Bockstoce, *Furs and Frontiers in the Far North*; VanStone, *Ingalik Contact Ecology*, 63–64, 98.
14 VanStone, "Athapaskan–Eskimo Relations in West-Central Alaska," 152–154.

to interrupt this trade by diverting the Native traders, who were avoiding the company's posts, as the Chukchi were able to trade in commodities that the RAC could or would not provide for them, such as iron and copper utensils.[15]

The furs still entered the Russian market, but the RAC was losing considerable profits to their Siberian competitors at a time when they could really have used the additional legitimacy. In the early 1840s, the company was in a difficult position. The RAC's charter to manage the territory and its resources was coming up for renegotiation in 1844, and the company needed to prove itself profitable to decision-makers in St. Petersburg.[16] But the fur business was not going well. The use of Russian or Siberian employees in the American colony had turned out to be expensive, and a smallpox epidemic had devastated the Native villages on the coast to the point where, in some settlements, up to half of the population died, killing the base of the RAC's local workforce.[17] As fur-bearing animals on the coast were almost extinct, it was clear that in order to stay profitable, the company had to diversify. In the coming years, the RAC tried to get a foothold in the Chinese ports importing tea to Russia, but for the time being, they depended on buying furs from Native traders from the interior.[18]

From the perspective of the RAC, the Native traders were undercutting their business. Chief administrator Etholen made this problem one of his priorities and tasked young and eager Lieutenant Lavrentiy Alekseyevich Zagoskin with exploring the Native trade routes from the middle Yukon to the shore in 1842. His goal was to find ways to intercept the trade from the interior and divert the furs to the Russian posts in order to gain control over the fur trade on the Yukon, putting an end to the Native trans-Beringian trade.[19]

15 Vinkovetsky, *Russian America*, 70. James VanStone's reconstruction of Native trade routes in Western Alaska, although an older publication, provides a detailed analysis of the Native trans-Beringian trade network: VanStone, *Ingalik Contact Ecology*, 63–75. See also VanStone, "Athapaskan–Eskimo Relations in West-Central Alaska," 152–154.

16 Vinkovetsky, *Russian America*, 66–67.

17 Bockstoce, *Furs and Frontiers in the Far North*, 193.

18 Vinkovetsky, *Russian America*, 69–71.

19 At around the same time as this happened, the Hudson's Bay Company employed similar tactics on the northwest coast in an attempt to cut out its competitors—mostly the RAC and the American traders, but also Native groups, who were to be enticed to sell to the HBC rather than to the Russians or the Americans. James R. Gibson documents these efforts in a recent volume: Gibson, *Opposition on the Coast.*

Talking across Boundaries

By the time Etholen became chief administrator in 1840, the colonisers had gained a certain familiarity with several of the coastal languages. Under the leadership of Ioann Veniaminov, priest of the Orthodox Church (and, since late 1840, archbishop in Russian America), and with the notable contribution of Native and Creole informants and interpreters such as Ivan Pan'kov and Iakov Netsvetov, liturgical texts were translated into the Unangan (Aleut) and Tlingit languages. He also published an Aleut primer in 1840 and a study of Aleut grammar.[20]

Zagoskin's situation, however, was particular. The area he was about to explore was inhabited by Natives who belonged to three different linguistic groups that were still largely unfamiliar to the Russian American Company: the Yupi'k on the eastern shores of Norton Sound, the Iñupiat dialect spoken by the Malemiut people of the Seward Peninsula, and the Athabascan dialects of the interior Natives. While the terrain certainly was exceedingly difficult to traverse, navigating this linguistic and cultural borderland proved to be the primary challenge for the expedition, as it required a set of skills no one in the RAC possessed. Upon the express wish of chief administrator Etholen, the men that the RAC attached to Zagoskin's expedition were Creoles, as he assumed them to be better adapted to backcountry life and to have a natural talent for bushcraft.[21] The term "Creole" encompassed the offspring of Russian–Native alliances,[22] but while it might suggest a racial hierarchisation, it rather seems to have been used to designate a social estate that incorporated this group the Russian estate system.[23] Since the Russian Empire had no intention of populating their American colony with Russian-born settlers, and the RAC had to keep the number of Russian employees low, the Creole offspring of the *promyshlenniki* provided the company with reliable, skilled local labour. The RAC's second charter of 1821 made special provisions for the Creole estate and put it under legal protection comparable to town residents in the Russian Empire. In contrast to the taxable Russian peasants in

20 On Veniaminov in Alaska, see Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 98–107; Pierce, "Introduction."

21 Only one expedition member, Iakov Makhov, was a Russian sailor who was attached to Zagoskin as an orderly. Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America,* 84–85.

22 Although there were considerable exceptions. Pavel Akliayuk might be one—he was the son of a Sugpiaq man and a California Indian woman, who had grown up at Fort Ross. Several sources refer to him as Creole. Arndt, "Transplanted to a Northern Clime," 10.

23 Smith-Peter, "'A Class of People Admitted to the Better Ranks'," 363–84.

the employ of the company, the Creole estate was exempt from taxes and military service, and Creoles were given access to whatever education and health care the RAC could provide.[24] In return, they were required to work for the RAC, usually for around fifteen years. After that period, they could become free Creoles if they had no debts with the company—which often resulted in a sort of debtor's serfdom.[25]

In some cases, Creole sons of high-level fathers had the chance to receive a considerable education; some were sent to Russia and were able to have important careers in the imperial navy or the RAC.[26] With proper education and exposure to Russian culture (usually through their living arrangements), as Vinkovetsky argues, the Creoles were supposed to bridge the cultural gap between Russians and Natives, binding their loyalty to the Russians while preserving their Native expertise, thereby making the company more independent in its operations on the frontier.[27]

The Novo-Arkhangel'sk Creoles in Zagoskin's team were officially signed on as hunters, but they were expected to be multitaskers in order to support Zagoskin's traverse across difficult terrain in any way that was necessary. While Etholen assumed the Creoles to possess an intrinsic cultural and practical affinity to backcountry life on account of their bi-cultural heritage, Zagoskin did not agree. He accredited adaptability to the rigours of expeditions to their upbringing rather than to an assumed inherent quality:

> […] there is a vast difference between the Creoles at Novoarkhangelsk and those who grow up in the outlying areas. The latter, with the easygoing quality common to all Creoles, bear any type of hardship and take the pleasure in whatever comes along; with the courage which is also common to all Creoles they combine the experience which they have been acquiring since childhood. A Creole from an outlying district knows how to sew his own clothing, boots, how to track and bag game, make nets, set a dragnet, etc. The Creoles who have grown up in a colonial metropolis, receiving everything ready-made from their fathers or from the Company, turn into fine dock-workers or sailors aboard ship, but are absolutely devoid of the

24 Smith-Peter, "'A Class of People Admitted to the Better Ranks'," 363–84; Easley, "Demographic Borderlands," 73–91. For a critical analysis of the Creole status, see Grinëv, "Social Mobility of the Creoles in Russian America," 20–38.

25 Grinëv, "Social Mobility of the Creoles in Russian America," 27–29.

26 Smith-Peter, "'A Class of People Admitted to the Better Ranks'," 376–77.

27 Vinkovetsky, *Russian America*, 143–145.

> skills necessary for maintaining and feeding themselves. Not one of the Novoarkhangelsk Creoles knew how to paddle a kayak, much less build one; not one had the notion of how to make himself a harpoon, a dog sled or snowshoes; not one had ever seen a dragnet or a fishnet in use, or anything of the kind.[28]

As the Creoles in the "colonial metropolis" were raised as children of Russians, many of them, especially those that were Creoles in the second generation, spoke Russian as their primary language and might not have been fluent in Native languages. They could not be expected to be of much help in the encounters with the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of the interior. When Zagoskin reached the Russian post at Mikhailovskii, he took on one of the Creoles on staff there to act as official interpreter. Grigoriy Kurochkin, a Creole from Kodiak, was likely to be somewhat familiar with the Central Alaskan Yupi'k language.[29] It is possible that more men on the team who were able to communicate in several languages—we know for sure that one of the hunters, Pavel Akliayuk, later on served as interpreter on other expeditions.[30] Grigoriy Kurochkin, the designated interpreter, however, fit the bill of the "Creole from an outlying district" while at the same time being sufficiently Russianised: raised in Kodiak—outside of the "colonial metropolis"—Kurochkin had received an education from the Orthodox Church, learned how to read and write, and served as a deacon at the Kodiak church. To Zagoskin, he appeared to have one foot in—however generalised—"Native" culture and the other in Russian culture. He fondly writes about Kurochkin:

> [Kurochkin] as a literate interpreter, combined a rare gaiety of temperament with an astonishing capacity for imitation. As soon as he arrived in a native village he made himself at home, fraternized with the inhabitants, took note of their peculiarities, learned their songs and their dances, and then performed them in the kazhim in front of an audience.[31]

28 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America,* 84–85.
29 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 85.
30 Pavel Akliayuk played a pivotal role during Kellett's rescue attempt in search of the ill-fated Franklin expedition in the early 1850s. Maguire, *The Journal of Rochfort Maguire*.
31 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 202.

By explicitly mentioning his literacy in this context, Zagoskin connects Kurochkin's ability to read and write to his reliability as an interpreter. In a footnote, he further reflects on literacy and reliability:

> My interpreter, Grigoriy Kurchkin from Kadyak, was a Creole who could read and write. For six years before he took this assignment he had served as a deacon in the Kadyak church. I mention this because I think that one must judge by the education of the interpreter the reliability of the information he imparts.[32]

As Zagoskin was a member of a literate culture, his reasoning that someone is more reliable because he has received some education may seem more or less expected and self-evident. In her discussion on interpreting in Alaska, Elena Filonova argues that interpreters who were non-literate were less likely to find enough common ground to draw from for their mediation. Being able to tap into both literate as well as non-literate modes of thought was a substantial advantage when interpreting in the encounter between those (somewhat) socialised in Russian literate culture and Native oral cultures. It suggested a higher reliability in the interaction and provided the Russian explorers with reassurance in the face of a puzzling confrontation with a way of seeing the world that often did not have corresponding concepts in their own modes of thought, leaving entire categories of reference inaccessible to them.[33] To be sure, this experience certainly was not entirely novel to Russian empire-building, as centuries of interaction with the multitude of Native groups in Siberia and the Far East certainly provided a lot of lessons and practices to be drawn in this respect as well. The importance of reliable intermediaries was surely one of them.

The value of a bi-cultural interpreter whose loyalty could be ensured went far beyond faithful translation between systems of meaning. Filonova credits Kurochkin with fostering Zagoskin's interest in and understanding of Native creative culture that resulted in the considerable ethnographic descriptions provided in his expedition report.[34] In most instances described by Zagoskin, however, it is not possible to assess who actually interpreted and explained during Zagoskin's interactions with various Native groups. While Kurochkin seemed to have possessed a significant ability to understand what

32 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 291.
33 Filonova, "Between Literacy and Non-Literacy," 211–231.
34 Filonova, "Between Literacy and Non-Literacy," 226.

was going on, as well as the capacity to explain it to Zagoskin, his ability to actually interpret what was being said had to be by definition limited to the dialects he understood. It would be unreasonable to assume that Kurochkin, raised in a Russian settlement far away from the Yukon, would be able to interpret across the multiplicity of languages encountered in an inaccessible region he had never visited before. Even when Kurochkin could not literally interpret conversations in the interior, however, his value lay in his ability to ease Zagoskin's mind, who could be sure of his loyalty as well as his ability to participate in both Russian and Native modes of thought, providing necessary reassurance and trust in the face of the uneasiness of encounter. As Cronin puts it, the "interpreter [was] valuable not only because of what they do but because of who they are."[35]

Kurochkin, the literate Creole in the employ of the RAC, was only one piece in the chain of intermediaries that enabled Zagoskin to travel, which also highlights another common practice of backcountry interpreting. Once Zagoskin reached Mikhailovskii Redoubt, he attempted to hire an additional interpreter who would be able to guide him and mediate the encounters expected further inland. A Yup'ik man from a settlement close to Mikhailovskii Redoubt, Feofan Utuktak, had served as interpreter and guide for Aleksandr Filippovich Kashevarov's coastal expedition in 1839 and was familiar with the area between Norton Sound and the Yukon.[36] It is likely that Utuktak, living close to the linguistic boundary between the Yup'ik and Iñupiat languages, was able to understand both.[37] While Zagoskin trusted and valued Kurochkin for his literacy, education, and position as Creole in the employ of the RAC, Utuktak, the independent Native, was recommended by his previous experience on a Russian expedition, which increased his trustworthiness. But when Zagoskin asked Utuktak to accompany him, he flat out refused: "He declared," Zagoskin writes, "that he had formerly been a bachelor, but that he now had two beautiful wives, and because of them his wants were fulfilled."[38] Since Utuktak was no employee of the RAC and fell under the category of "independent Native," he could not be compelled to join the expedition. Zagoskin spend hours with him at the fort, questioning him about topography and the Native communications routes. He even had Utuktak draw a

35 Cronin, *Across the Lines*, 72.
36 Kashevarov, *A. F. Kashevarov's Coastal Explorations in Northwest Alaska*, 30.
37 Kashevarov, *A. F. Kashevarov's Coastal Explorations in Northwest Alaska*, 66, editor's footnote 5.
38 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 89.

map of the area between the Yukon and Kotzebue Sound, and compiled a list of Native settlements and their positions based on Utuktak's information.[39]

Utuktak's refusal to go with Zagoskin not only demonstrated his own independence and agency with regard to requests from the RAC, it also put Zagoskin in a position where he had to hire additional interpreters and guides every time he reached an area with a new dialect. These new expedition members had little to no confirmed reputation among the Russians, and there was no satisfying way for Zagoskin to make sure their loyalties were with him.

In his report, Zagoskin recounts an episode that reveals the unease of his inability to put trust in local intermediaries. Throughout the 1830s, several RAC expeditions under the leadership of Andrei Glazunov attempted to reach the Yukon from Norton Sound by following the Unalakleet River to its headwaters and then crossing the portage to reach the Yukon. It was an important route used by Native traders, who transported considerable amounts of furs from the interior to the Native trading fairs at the coast.[40] It provided a relatively short passage through otherwise unforgiving terrain, connecting the Bering Sea with the Middle Yukon where the river was closer to the shore than anywhere else. The headwaters of the Unalakleet River, which drains directly into Norton Sound, were only 32 km away from the Yukon—a significant shortcut for traders, saving them a river passage through of over 560 km, including the treacherous sloughs of the Yukon delta.[41] Guided by Ulukagmiut traders, Glazunov found the portage to be decidedly difficult, leading him across jagged terrain where the travellers had to lower their sleds on ropes into ravines and haul them back up again on the other side. While Glazunov succeeded in reaching the Yukon, the difficulty of the crossing prevented him from establishing a permanent post on the river, as this difficult supply route did not seem feasible at the time. Only in 1838 did an expedition led by Petr Malakhov succeed in finding a much easier crossing, enabling him to establish the *odinochka* at Nulato on the Middle Yukon.[42]

The narrative of the previous attempts to find a manageable portage to the Yukon as we find it in Zagoskins report reflects his suspicion of and lack of trust in the Native intermediaries. He suspected that the Ulukagmiut guides to the previous expeditions had deliberately misled the Russians in

39 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 124–126.

40 Arndt, *Dynamics of the Fur Trade*, 41–42.

41 Pratt, "Reconstructing 19th-Century Eskimo-Athabascan Boundaries," 95–96.

42 Detailed reconstructions of the expeditions that led to the establishment of the post at Nulato are provided by Arndt, *Dynamics of the Fur Trade,* and VanStone, *Ingalik Contact Ecology*.

an attempt to sabotage the RAC's efforts to get their foot in the door to the Yukon trade. The Ulukagmiut, who lived along the Unalakleet River right on the linguistic boundary between the Athabaskan, Iñupiat, and Yup'ik languages, had long acted as middlemen in the Native fur trade. The Yup'ik regarded them as Athabascan, whereas Athabascans considered them to be Yup'ik. As Kenneth Pratt notes, researchers tend to consider them to be of mixed Athabascan–Yup'ik ancestry.[43] Due to their strategic location on the Unalakleet River, the Ulukagmiut effectively controlled Native trade relations in the region and, according to Zagoskin, guarded the portage jealously. In a "recourse to Machiavellian diplomacy," Zagoskin writes, "these shrewd native traders, who gauged the strength of the Russians and foresaw losses to themselves, [offered] their services as guides […] concealing the easiest and shortest route to Nulato. Finally, an inexperienced boy betrayed the location of the real portage to Malakhov in 1838."[44]

Being forced to hire Ulukagmiut intermediaries as interpreter-guides while being aware that they were the RAC's direct competitors for control of the fur trade naturally fed into Zagoskin's mistrust toward his guides. It was a feeling shared among colonial explorers in many places. Depending on the mediation of indigenous intermediaries felt unnerving to many imperial travellers, creating frustration and insecurity on the imperial peripheries. We find traces of this well-documented phenomenon all across the globe, from the writings of Spanish explorers in the Americas to nineteenth-century travel journals from the Holy Land to reports by settlers in Australia.[45] Was this anxiety a universal state of mind at the edges of empires? While the practices and governance strategies of the Russian Empire toward its peripheries differed from those of the British Empire, the crucial challenge to the power dynamic between colonisers and the colonised experienced by Zagoskin in the Alaskan backcountry shows how similarly the lived realities in contact zones played out in situations where mediation was required. The lack of familiarity with language, customs, and terrain exposed the weakness of the coloniser. It forced Zagoskin to acknowledge that the RAC was not capable of reaching its goal without the guidance of those it was attempting to exploit—whether through negotiation, coercion, or plain force. It had to be disconcerting to know

43 Pratt, "Reconstructing 19th-Century Eskimo-Athabascan Boundaries," 97.

44 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 136–137.

45 Cronin, "The Empire Talks Back," 55–56. See also Valdeón, *Translation and the Spanish Empire*, 40–41; Driessen, "Mediterranean Divides and Connections," 25–38; Schaffer, *The Brokered World*; Karttunen, *Between Worlds*; Shellam, *Brokers and Boundaries*.

that the RAC was forced to put its trust into the hands of someone whose own interests did not necessarily align with its own. Elliott Colla describes this phenomenon as "the terror of knowing that there is no such thing as neutral mediation."[46] The presence of an intermediary—be it an interpreter, a guide, or in many cases both at once—embodied a deep fear of not being in control and fortified the conviction that knowledge was, indeed, power. Those who were in the position to distribute knowledge and control the flow of information were in possession of this power, capable of challenging the arrangements of colonial rule in Russian America.

The Traveller and the Intermediary

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that it was feelings of mistrust and unease that guided Zagoskin's interactions with the intermediaries he had to rely upon from this point onward. Throughout his report, Zagoskin describes how he had to rely on an increasing number of Native intermediaries the further he advanced up the Yukon. He was aware that, even if they were reliable—which he had little means of confirming—there was always meaning lost in translation. Everything he learned came to him filtered through several stages of interpretation and depended on each link to both understand correctly as well as convert faithfully what was being said into different modes of understanding and communication. Translation, Peter Burke points out, was always a messy compromise, a negotiation involving distortions of meaning, misunderstandings, and adjustments.[47] The interpretation chain made this very tangible, creating an element of insecurity and adding to the anxiety of colonial exploration.

Retracing this interpretation chain offers insight into the dynamics that challenged the explorer's state of mind. It also reveals Zagoskin's way of dealing with the uneasiness that came with this loss of power. Zagoskin devoted the summer of 1843 to an attempt to travel upstream on the Yukon on an *umiak* up to the Canadian border, making it as far as Nowitna River, about 500 miles upstream.[48] While it is not possible to identify specific individuals who interpreted for him in every interaction, Zagoskin's report introduces us

46 Colla, "Dragomen and Checkpoints," 145.
47 Burke, "Cultures of Translation," 9.
48 De Laguna, *Travels among the Dena*.

to three intermediaries he hired on this trip in order to communicate with the locals and gather information on hunting grounds and trade networks.

Tatlek was a young Koyukon, one of the few Natives from his village at Nulato who had survived the devastating smallpox epidemic that reached the middle Yukon in 1839 via the trade networks.[49] Due to his long hair, the Russians liked to call him "Volosaty" (Russian for "hairy").[50] Tatlek was familiar with some of the coastal dialects and had picked up some Russian while helping out Deriabin, the Creole manager of the Nulato post. But he did not know any of the dialects spoken on the middle and upper Yukon—in fact, he seemed to have never travelled beyond the Koyukuk River.[51] Zagoskin hired Tatlek in addition to another interpreter, Nikifor Talizhuk from the Nulato post staff. Talizhuk was a Creole from Fort Ross in California. He was fluent in the coastal dialects and Russian, and seems to have displayed a certain talent at picking up languages.[52] There was enough expertise between him and Tatlek to interpret as long as the expedition was close to the coast. Continuing up the Yukon, however, they hired another Native they met while passing through a hunting camp. In a Robinson-Crusoe-esque manner, he was dubbed "Vtornik"—Russian for "Tuesday," the day they met. We don't learn a lot about Vtornik, not even his real name. From Zagoskin's account, we can assume he was a hunter from further up the river, and he offered himself as a guide and interpreter to the expedition. Tatlek was able to communicate with him, while Vtornik was supposedly more proficient in the dialects spoken along the Yukon. But, as it turned out, he understood very little as they advanced further into the interior.[53] In order to communicate with the population along the Yukon, information passed through these interpreters before it reached Zagoskin, who had no other choice than to rely on it. Conversations were held in a mixture of several Native languages and Russian.[54] Although Zagoskin recorded what information he gained from these conversations in his official report to the RAC, he did not consider it

49 This epidemic coincided with the Great Plains smallpox epidemic of 1837–1840 but might have had a different origin. For the impact of the smallpox epidemic on Native communities in the Northern Pacific, see Gibson, "Smallpox on the Northwest Coast," 61–81.

50 De Laguna, *Travels among the Dena*, 166–167, 181.

51 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 146–147, 163.

52 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 160–161.

53 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 163, 175.

54 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 167.

entirely credible—if not because of deliberate deception or inaccuracy, then due to the effects of chain interpretation. At one point, he adds a disclaimer:

> However, to avoid future criticism I feel that it is my duty to explain that all the information I collected here from the Tlëgon-khotana [Upper Innoko] natives, as well as from those I met later on, came to me through the following system: every answer to my questions was given to Vtornik, who passed it on to Tatlek, who told it to the Creole interpreter from our California colony [Nikifor Talizhuk], who told it to me. Thus even a perfectly accurate piece of information could be distorted through the oral transfer between interpreters who barely understood each other.[55]

Not being able to trust the intermediary, and not being able to do anything about it, seems to have been an integral part of the explorer's state of mind. It meant living with the insecurity of not knowing what was going on or who had other interests at heart, without having the opportunity to confirm, forcing Zagoskin to make decisions based on incomplete or inaccurate information, with potentially harmful consequences.

An additional crucial challenge to the relationship between Zagoskin and his intermediaries arose from differing interpretations of what this relationship entailed. At this point, I believe a brief reflection is in order on the terminology I have been using to describe the people who interpreted for Zagoskin: the "interpreter" and the "intermediary." Both terms imply translational activities between two or more languages, but they reflect different types of relationships between the medium and the target of the translation. While I use "interpreter" whenever the source material directly refers to the oral translation of words and meanings from one language into another, the term suggests a level of professionalisation that did not exist in the Yukon backcountry. For Creole employees of the RAC—such as Grigoriy Kurochkin—who were specifically tasked with interpreting and received payment for it, "interpreter" might be an adequate descriptor, especially when taking into consideration that the Orthodox Church, who trained Kurochkin, made a conscious effort to educate Creoles in order to use them as translators. In fact, multilingual Creoles played a crucial role in the development of the

55 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 168.

Aleut and Tlingit alphabets and translated scriptures into Native languages, introducing literacy to the Alaska Natives.[56]

Exploration interpreting, however, was largely a situational practice. The Creole interpreters were merely the last link in the interpretation chain. They had to rely themselves on what was relayed to them by non-literate members of the Native groups they encountered and who acted as intermediaries, which encompassed more than translating words from one language into another. They usually were taken on as guides who also possessed at least some degree of multi-lingual and intercultural experience, which enabled them to explain the geography and culture the explorers were encountering. The intermediary filled a pivotal role, but this did not necessarily have to come with a conscious self-conception as "man in the middle," occupying the best position to mediate between worlds. The priorities and focus of backcountry intermediaries could lie entirely elsewhere than what their colonial employers might require.

We see the understanding of the intermediary's place and duty diverge between Zagoskin and his intermediaries. Both Tatlek and Vtornik seemed to have regarded their engagement with the expedition in terms of an opportunity to engage in trading with the Natives they encountered and, at times, prioritised their trading activities over their commitment to the expedition. Shortly after Vtornik joined the expedition, he decided to leave the group and returned to his own settlement to get beads that he intended to barter with along the way, leaving the expedition stranded for a few days.[57] He joined the expedition voluntarily and of his own accord but was not bound to it by loyalty, and Zagoskin gives us no hint as to whether and how Vtornik was compensated for his services as guide and interpreter. It is likely that the opportunity to use the expedition as a means of conducting trade was the reason Vtornik decided to join in the first place. As Zagoskin depended on his guidance, there was not much he could do to prohibit Vtornik's trading activities and any time delays they may have caused in the short northern summer. Vtornik also brought traders to the expedition camp who, in Zagoskin's opinion, charged them too high a price for the dried beaver and fish they sold them.[58]

56 Black, *Russians in Alaska*, 239–247; Murray, "Together and Apart," 31–110. Lydia Black also notes that Aleut headmen were also directly involved in the creation of the Fox Aleut alphabet: Black, "Ivan Pan'kov," 94–107.

57 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 165–166.

58 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 166.

Although not explicitly described in the expedition report, the differing interpretations of the relationship between Zagoskin and his intermediary are noticeable in the accounts of these interactions. For Zagoskin, the presence of a local guide was crucial to the success of the mission. Guiding and interpreting, therefore, were what he was expecting of them. For the Native intermediary, however, guiding and interpreting for the Russians could be primarily an opportunity to engage in trade with other Natives as well as the Russians and, therefore, might well have come second to other concerns. The actual guiding and interpreting happened situationally as a matter of circumstance.

Tatlek's position in the group differed from Vtornik's. He came from the village close to the Russian post at Nulato, which, by proximity, put him in closer dependence on the RAC, which had the means to ensure Tatlek's services. Zagoskin's entry for June 23, 1843 recounts how Tatlek disappeared one morning. Zagoskin suspected that Tatlek had decided to leave and join a group of Native traders who had passed by the previous night. Tatlek returned after a relative talked him into re-joining the expedition for fear of the impact his "desertion" might have upon his future dealings with the Russians. Zagoskin's reaction to Tatlek's attempt to leave, as recorded in this entry, further reveals his unease in the face of his dependence on Native interpreters. On the one hand, he plays down the importance and capability of his guide:

> I was not concerned by the fact that in losing Tatlek, we lost the only man capable of communicating some necessary piece of information; we were already convinced that in order to collect factual information about a country we must be able to understand its inhabitants, if not ourselves, then at least through a man capable of grasping the significance of our questions and the answers to them. […] But I was concerned lest Tatlek's action unfavorably affect the trading operations of our post.[59]

When Tatlek returned, however, Zagoskin told him "that he would have made a great mistake to show up at Nulato without us, because he would have been kept in custody with his family, and if we had not returned he would have been sent off to the fort [Mikhailovskiy Redoubt] in the fall."[60] He also ordered both Native guides to be watched to prevent any other attempts to

59 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 172.
60 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 171–172.

leave. Although it is hard to gauge how useful Tatlek's services as guide actually were to Zagoskin, he still needed him to play his role as a subordinate in the expedition team. His reaction reveals the discomfort of the expedition leader as he struggled for control in this situation. With Tatlek living close to a Russian post, Zagoskin had the opportunity to enforce his compliance by using his family as a bargaining chip. Tatlek had to have been quite young, and Zagoskin notes that he had lost his siblings and parents just a few years earlier in the smallpox epidemic. But he was recently married to a Koyukon woman, who could be used by Zagoskin to pressure Tatlek whenever his intentions seemed to diverge from the expedition's best interests.

We see Zagoskin using this strategy in another instance as well. While he was surveying possible portage routes from the Koyukuk River to the Buckland River to the north, he suspected this to be a major Native trade route to the seasonal fairs on Kotzebue Sound. As before, Zagoskin suspected that the local population was trying to hinder the advance of the expedition. With Tatlek's interpreting, nuances, tone, and meanings were bound to get distorted in the translation process, which led Zagoskin to fear that the Natives were influencing his guide to sabotage the Russians:

> Some of the inhabitants […] had visited Nulato during the past two winters for the purpose of trading and had become fairly well acquainted with the Russians. As they were good traders, they easily understood the aims of our expedition, and as they did not wish to let us pass through to the tribes on the upper river, they decided to turn Tatlek, our interpreter, against the idea, and to frighten us off. Later on we were to hear from all the natives living along this river about the unfriendliness of the Maleygmyut and their antagonism towards us. But hearing this for the first time was strange. The guide began to waver.[61]

Again, we see Zagoskin struggling for control over the interpreter, diminishing the extent to which he depended on Tatlek while at the same time implying consequences for his family:

> Seeing a beaten trail leading up the river, I explained to him that we really did not need him very much and could find our own way, but that if he went back to Nulato without us, he would not have the

61 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 150.

> pay we had agreed upon, nor would the head of the post allow him access to his wife before we returned. Tatlek was worried about the pay and the wife, and we proceeded, after we had given some trifles to the natives.[62]

Zagoskin's power struggle followed a pattern that ultimately aimed at establishing authority and enforcing compliance and loyalty in the absence of trust. By denying his reliance on the Native guide and downplaying his competence and contribution to the mission, he was reaffirming his own position, independence, self-sufficiency, and, ultimately, power while enforcing the guide's obligation to the expedition by watching him and basically using his family as hostages. *Amanatstvo*, the taking of hostages as a way of ensuring loyalty, had been a common practice in Russian frontier politics for a long time. It had been used widely as a guarantee against any violations of treaties between the Russians and the peoples living on the peripheries of the Empire. It also prevented Natives from moving further away out of the reach of Russian influence during the expansion across Asia, keeping the indigenous peoples under the control of the Empire, where they were subject to the system of tribute payments (*iasak*) which kept them in an increasingly dependent relationship with the Russian centre.[63]

A version of this practice was brought to Alaska in the eighteenth century by the *promyshlenniki*, yet while the practice of hostage-taking was abolished by Catherine II in 1788, the RAC's system of procuring furs based on the Aleutian Islands and Kodiak Island was practically built on it: the men were compelled to gather at company posts every year, where they received provisions, tools, and kayaks, and sent on long hunting expeditions, while their families had to stay in the vicinity of the posts, producing clothes and utensils, digging roots, gathering berries, and doing other chores in order to contribute to the new economy forced upon them by the company.[64] While there are certainly important distinctions, Andrei Grinëv points out that the way the RAC ensured control over the families of their hunters displayed similarities to the *amanatstvo* system used in Siberia, suggesting it was employed in order to prevent desertions by the Natives, who were practically enserfed to

62 Zagoskin, *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America*, 150.
63 Khodarkovsky, "From Frontier to Empire," 115–128.
64 Gibson, "Russian Dependence on the Natives of Alaska," 21–42; Liapunova, "Relations with the Natives of North America," 105–143.

the company.[65] The way Zagoskin pressured Tatlek by leveraging the RAC's power over his family fits into this Russian mode of colonial rule, albeit in a more improvisational manner. It also reveals the increasing insecurity that corresponds to the vulnerability and loss of control experienced by the explorer the further he ventured into areas that did not have direct experience with Russian colonial power.

Reflections on Talking, Power, and the State of Mind at the Frontier

Reading Zagoskin's expedition journal for instances of mediation, we can observe different relationships between explorer and intermediaries that serve as a function of differing levels of trust and mistrust. The desire to establish a certain degree of trust was crucial to the colonial explorer. The ability to create trust was fundamentally tied to the proximity the intermediary had to Russian culture and the RAC. Literacy and an upbringing in the Orthodox Church were important factors that enabled Zagoskin to put trust into the mediatory efficiency and loyalty of his Creole interpreter Grigoryi Kurochkin. Once the Creole's linguistic expertise approached its limits, seeking the assistance of Feofan Utuktak, a Native with established rapport with the RAC and proven experience on a previous expedition, was the next best thing. But trust was a fickle resource. When literacy and experience were unavailable as facilitators of trust, Zagoskin took to coercion and force in ensuring the compliance of the Native intermediary Tatlek, whose priorities did not necessary align with the expedition's, but whose proximity to the RAC in the form of his family's residence near an outpost enabled Zagoskin to do so; while with Vtornik, the Native with no connection to the RAC whatsoever, coercion as a means of enforcing cooperation in the absence of trust was not a possibility. An ever-fluctuating economy of mistrust and suspicion consequently guided the relationship between Zagoskin and his intermediaries, creating a mindset of insecurity and lack of control.

The concealment of the Unalakleet portage by Ulukagmiut intermediaries, as well as Zagoskin's accounts of his interactions with Tatlek and Vtornik, are indicative of the anxiety of not being in control, subliminally present in many colonial contact zones of the nineteenth century. The RAC might formally have been in "possession" of the entirety of the Alaskan territory, but

65 Grinev and Bland, "Deserters and Fugitives in Russian America," 139.

the interior was never under colonial control. While the devastating effects of the Russian presence in North America were ultimately felt by most interior Native Alaskan communities—for example, through the introduction of diseases or the social and economic changes the fur trade brought along—direct interactions between Russians and interior Native Alaskans remained very limited. The power dynamics of these encounters were up for negotiation on a day-to-day basis, calling into question what supposedly established colonial rule entailed in a country this vast and inaccessible. Being the newcomers to indigenous landscapes and unfamiliar with local knowledge, the Russian colonialists relied on intermediaries teaching them how to survive, travel, and interact with the land and its inhabitants.

Retracing the chain of interpretation that made up Zagoskin's interaction with interior Alaska offers an insight into the texture of these power dynamics. The cooperation of his intermediaries was frequently enforced through coercion and force, and the knowledge they relayed was often disregarded, disrespected, or misused by the RAC to further the economic demands of colonial exploitation. While the Native intermediaries found themselves in the middle of these developments, it is important to note that their motivations and rationales were complex and went beyond simple notions of cooperation and collaboration—in fact, it would be harmful to characterise them as collaborators in what would eventually lead to the near destruction of their own cultural and social life-worlds. It also does not do their role justice to regard them as passive victims of an unstoppable colonial force. Scholars engaging with the history of transculturation and cultural encounters have long noted that the necessity of mediation opened possibilities for strategic action and creative adaptation on the part of the intermediaries.[66] Tatlek and Vtornik were able to use their position as members of Zagoskin's expedition to engage in trade and gain a reputation as guides and intermediaries; others, such as Feofan Utuktak, were able to build notable careers and expand their own networks, which enabled them to accept and refuse assignments of their own accord.

Acting as an intermediary also could come in the form of subtle but skilful resistance and defence against the colonisers, as shown in the case of the Ulukagmiut, who protected their own interests as middlemen in the Native trade network while avoiding direct confrontation with the Russians. As guides and interpreters, they could use the power of mediation in many different ways—but in some sense it was not even that important if they

66 Mackenthun and Jobs, "Introduction," 14.

actually did use it to resist the RAC. For the Russians to know that they *could* was enough to add to the anxiety. Zagoskin's journal shows he understood that he was not entirely in control. His writing reflects the colonial discomfort caused by the possibility for power reversal in the contact zone. As gatekeepers to hidden knowledge, his Native intermediaries were in an exclusive position where they could protect Native interests and potentially sabotage the Russian efforts. And as Russia increasingly adopted Eurocentric attitudes of superiority throughout the nineteenth century and colonialist elements became more pronounced in the Russian Empire,[67] Zagoskin's Native intermediaries represented the limitations of colonial control and the RAC's dependence on their colonial subjects, questioning the "natural" authority of "civilised Europe" over "uncivilised savages."[68]

Examining Zagoskin's writing regarding his intermediaries leaves us speculating as to what these stories mean beyond the underlying imperial anxieties and power dynamics. There are only traces left that hint at what they would have looked like had they been told by the intermediaries instead of the explorer. Acknowledging the "agency" of Native intermediaries and the effects it had on Zagoskin only partially reflects the experiential dimension of these encounters. Intrinsically, finding "Native agency" is a pretty banal, if not patronising undertaking. As Walter Johnson argues, the term "agency" tends to be used as a function of subaltern humanity in the form of subversion against imperial power.[69] Of course Native intermediaries had "agency"—whether they used it in ways that could be read as self-interest, resistance and subversion, or diplomacy, or whether they did not choose to use it in any way that impacted their relationship with the Russians all that much. A conventional idea of "agency" of the Native intermediaries cannot be the epicentre of their story. Despite their "agency," Native intermediaries in contested border zones were in many ways in a precarious position. Scholars studying cultural brokers have shown how, due to their mediatory acts between competing interests, they often were subject to mistrust and suspicion on both ends.[70] The interpreter as traitor is a familiar trope in the archives of encounter.[71] Zagoskin's writing is no exception in that regard, suggesting

67 Kappeler, *The Russian Empire.*
68 Colla, "Dragomen and Checkpoints," 145–46.
69 Johnson, "On Agency," 113.
70 Hinderaker, "Translation and Cultural Brokerage," 357–78; Driessen, "Mediterranean Divides and Connections," 27; Bowen, "Interpreters and the Making of History," 247–82; Torikai, *Voices of the Invisible Presence*, 3.
71 Mairs, "Translator, Traditor," 64–81.

that by the mid-nineteenth century, the discourse on Native intermediaries in Russia's only overseas colony had somewhat converged with the way more "typical" Western European empires thought and wrote about their Native interlocutors. We find him questioning the integrity of his guides on multiple occasions, characterising them as self-interested, incompetent, or disloyal. Being expected to prioritise their employers' interests over those of their own people—particularly in cases where it came down to conflicts over resources, land, and access to trade networks—had to imply some rethinking of their own sense of belonging and allegiance. Navigating the uncharted waters between languages, cultures, and belonging required skill and courage; it also challenged old relationships and subjectivities. The act of manoeuvring and negotiating between colonisers and colonised left the intermediary susceptible to coercion and force, such as in the case of Tatlek, whose continuous and diligent service was ensured by the threat of separating him from his family. It is, therefore, important to acknowledge that, while the intermediaries' position "in between" did come with "agency," it also came with vulnerability and possible alienation on both sides of the encounter—and not only as far as their physical and economic well-being was concerned. Their mediation simultaneously utilised the tensions between the colonisers and the Native population and fed them, which made them suspicious to both sides alike and could call their own sense of identity into question.

When reading sources from the colonial frontier, it is crucial to keep in mind that the local knowledges Zagoskin conveys in his writing, such as ethnography and geography, were—more often than not—only borrowed. They come to us through a chain of interpretation of their own, passing through the scrutiny of imperial eyes but ultimately relayed and co-produced by intermediaries, who through their mediation and curation played an integral part in the transfer and production of knowledge about the interior of Alaska. A closer look at Cronin's "monsters"—horrible and wonderful, indispensable and dangerous, powerful and vulnerable at the same time—points toward the demons found inside the colonial explorer himself—the colonist's state of mind on the frontier: the colonial anxieties, the fluctuating dynamics of trust and mistrust, and the realisation that the multilingualism and the local expertise of Native middlemen had the potential to threaten the power asymmetry of the contact zone, serving as a destabilising factor for the establishment of colonial rule on the edges of the empire.

Bibliography

Arndt, Katherine Louise. *Dynamics of the Fur Trade on the Middle Yukon River, Alaska, 1839 to 1868.* Dissertation, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, 1996.

Arndt, Katherine Louise. "Transplanted to a Northern Clime: Californian Wives and Children in Russian America." *Alaska Journal of Anthropology* 13, no. 2 (2015): 1–20.

Ashcroft, Bill, Garth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature.* London: Routledge, 1989.

Black, Lydia. "Ivan Pan'kov: Architect of Aleut Literacy." *Arctic Anthropology* 14 (1977): 94–107.

Black, Lydia. *Russians in Alaska, 1732–1867.* Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2004.

Bockstoce, John R. *Furs and Frontiers in the Far North: The Contest among Native and Foreign Nations for the Bering Strait Fur Trade.* Yale University Press, 2009.

Bowen, Margareta. "Interpreters and the Making of History." In *Translators through History*, edited by Jean Delisle and Judith Woodsworth, 247–282. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012.

Burke, Peter. "Cultures of Translation in Early Modern Europe." In *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Peter Burke and Po-chia Hsia, 7–38. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Colla, Elliott. "Dragomen and Checkpoints." *The Translator* 21 (2015): 132–153.

Cronin, Michael. *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation.* Cork: Cork University Press, 2000.

Cronin, Michael. "The Empire Talks Back: Orality, Heteronomy, and the Cultural Turn in Interpretation Studies." In *Translation and Power*, edited by Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler, 45–62. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002.

De Laguna, Frederica. *Travels among the Dena: Exploring Alaska's Yukon Valley.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000.

Demuth, Bathsheba. *Floating Coast: An Environmental History of the Bering Straits.* New York: Norton, 2019.

Driessen, Henk. "Mediterranean Divides and Connections: The Role of Dragomans as Cultural Brokers," in *Agents of Transculturation: Border-Crossers, Mediators, Go-Betweens*, edited by Sebastian Jobs and Gesa Mackenthun, 25–38. Münster: Waxmann.

Dunn, Mark. "Aboriginal Guides in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales." In *Brokers and Boundaries: Colonial Exploration in Indigenous Territory,* edited by Tiffany Shellam et al., 61–83. Acton: ANU Press, 2016.

Easley, Roxanne. "Demographic Borderlands: People of Mixed Heritage in the Russian American Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670–1870." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 99, no. 2 (2008): 73–91.

Filonova, Elena. "Between Literacy and Non-Literacy: Interpreters in the Exploration and Colonization of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Alaska." *The Translator* 12, no. 2 (2006): 211–231.

Gibson, James R. "Smallpox on the Northwest Coast, 1835–1838." *BC Studies* 56 (1982): 61–81.

Gibson, James R. "Russian Dependence on the Natives of Alaska." In *An Alaska Anthology: Interpreting the Past,* edited by Stephen Haycox and Mary Childers Mangusso, 21–42. Seattle, 1996.

Gibson, James R. "*Opposition on the Coast": The Hudson's Bay Company, American Coasters, The Russian American Company and Native Traders on the Northwest Coast, 1825–1846.* Toronto: Champlain, 2019.

Grinëv, Andrei V. "Social Mobility of the Creoles in Russian America." *Alaska History* 26, no. 2 (2011): 20–38.

Grinëv, Andrei V., and Richard L. Bland. "Deserters and Fugitives in Russian America." *Arctic Anthropology* 55, no. 2 (2018): 134–151.

Hinderaker, Eric. "Translation and Cultural Brokerage." In *A Companion to American Indian History*, edited by Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury, 357–378. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.

Johnson, Walter. "On Agency." In *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 113–124.

Jones, Ryan Tucker. "A 'Havock Made among Them': Animals, Empire, and Extinction in the Russian North Pacific, 1741–1810." *Environmental History* 16, no. 4 (2011): 585–609.

Jones, Ryan Tucker. *Empire of Extinction: Russians and the North Pacific's Strange Beasts of the Sea, 1741–1867.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Kan, Sergei. *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries.* Seattle: UW Press, 1999.

Kappeler, Andreas. *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History.* New York: Routledge, 2013.

Karttunen, Frances. *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivors.* New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1994.

Kashevarov, Aleksandr Filippovich. *A. F. Kashevarov's Coastal Explorations in Northwest Alaska, 1838.* Edited by James W. VanStone and translated by David H. Kraus. Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1977.

Khodarkovsky, Michael. "From Frontier to Empire: The Concept of the Frontier in Russia, Sixteenth–Eighteenth Centuries." *Russian History* 19, no. 1–4 (1992): 115–128.

Liapunova, R. G. "Relations with the Natives of North America." In *Russia's American Colony*, edited by Frederick Starr, 105–143. Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 1987.

Mackenthun, Gesa, and Sebastian Jobs. "Introduction." In *Agents of Transculturation: Border-Crossers, Mediators, Go-Betweens*, *Cultural Encounters and the Discourses of Scholarship*, 7–22. Münster: Waxmann, 2013.

Maguire, Rochfort. *The Journal of Rochfort Maguire 1852–1854. Two Years at Point Barrow, Alaska, aboard the HMS Plover in the Search for Sir John Franklin,* Vol 1. Edited by John Bockstoce. London, 1988.

Mairs, Rachel. "Translator, Traditor: The Interpreter as Traitor in Classical Tradition." *Greece & Rome* 58 (2011): 64–81.

Murray, Jesse D. "Together and Apart: The Russian Orthodox Church, the Russian Empire, and Orthodox Missionaries in Alaska 1794–1917." *Russian History* 40 (2013): 31–110.

Pierce, Richard A. "Introduction." *Notes on the Islands of the Unalshka District by Ivan Veniaminov.* Fairbanks: UoA, 1984.

Pratt, Kenneth L. "Reconstructing 19th-Century Eskimo-Athabascan Boundaries in the Unalakleet River Drainage." *Artic Anthropology* 94, no. 2 (2012): 94–112.

Records of the Russian-American Company 1802–1866. *Correspondence of the Governors General, Communications Received*, Vol. 6, no. 346, f. 101–104, April 13, 1828.

Schaffer, Simon, Lissa Robers, Kapil Raj, and James Delbourgo, eds. *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence 1770–1800.* Sagamore Beach: Watson, 2009.

Shellam, Tiffany, Maria Nugent, Shino Konishi, and Allison Cadzow, eds. *Brokers and Boundaries: Colonial Exploration in Indigenous Territory.* Acton: ANU Press, 2016.

Smith-Peter, Susan. "'A Class of People Admitted to the Better Ranks': The First Generation of Creoles in Russian America, 1810s–1820s." *Ethnohistory* 60 (2013): 363–384.

Torikai, Kumiko. *Voices of the Invisible Presence: Diplomatic Interpreters in Post-World War II Japan.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009.

Turck, Thomas J., and Diane L. Lehman Turck. "Trading Posts along the Yukon River: Noochuloghoyet Trading Post in Historical Context." *Arctic* 45 (1992): 51–61.

VanStone, James W. *Ingalik Contact Ecology: An Ethnohistory of the Lower-Middle Yukon 1790–1935.* Fieldiana Anthropology 71. Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1979a.

VanStone, James W. "Athapaskan–Eskimo Relations in West-Central Alaska: An Ethnohistorical Perspective." *Arctic Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (1979b): 152–129.

Valdeón, Roberto A. *Translation and the Spanish Empire in the Americas.* Philadelphia: Benjamins, 2014.

Vinkovetsky, Ilya. *Native Americans and the Russian Empire, 1804–1867.* Berkeley 2002.

Vinkovetsky, Ilya. *Russian America: An Overseas Colony of a Continental Empire, 1804–1867.* Oxford University Press, 2011.

Zagoskin, Lavrentiĭ Alekseevich. *Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America, 1842–1844: The First Ethnographic and Geographic Investigations in the Yukon and Kuskokwim Valleys of Alaska.* Edited by Henry N. Michael. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967.