

Geography Matters: Discerning the Importance of Local Context

BETH MITCHNECK

Basic geographical considerations like distance and resource location do influence political and economic processes; yet, focusing on additional geographical concepts such as relative location, relational space, and embedded sociospatial relationships strengthens and deepens analysis to reveal easily overlooked factors and implications of transition. Beth Mitchneck uses the example of survey research on Russia's transition, now prevalent in study of the region, to show that identifying spatial and regional variation is not always a simple or straightforward process and that incorporating nuanced geographical concepts into both the construction and analysis of a survey instrument about local politics reveals regions as settings for social practice. By shifting from a paradigm where regions are containers in physical space to one where regions are settings in which social behavior and action is situated, she suggests that inconsistent experience of transition processes are related to regional or spatial variation.

The Impossible Peasant Voice in Russian Culture: Stylization and Mimicry

J. ALEXANDER OGDEN

Unlike the English term "stylization," Russian *stilizatsiia* figures prominently in literary theory. Emerging out of debates around Vsevolod Meierkhol'd's theatrical innovations and subsequently elaborated by "Silver Age" writers (Valerii Briusov, Viacheslav Ivanov, Mikhail Kuzmin), formalists (Iurii Tynianov, Boris Eikhenbaum, Viktor Gofman), and Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian concept must be distinguished from cognate terms in other languages—something missing from both Russian and non-Russian discussions. In Russian, *stilizatsiia* is invoked in two distinct senses: as a critical value judgment (dismissing works considered artificial or "lifeless"), and as a complex and well-developed strategy of borrowing another's style (thus a sense related to parody and *skaz*). Works accepted as representing the "voice of the people" have often been exempted from analysis as *stilizatsiia*; J. Alexander Ogden argues, however, that "peasant poets" (Nikolai Kliuev, Aleksei Kol'tsov, Robert Burns) can best be understood precisely as stylizers in the sense elaborated by Bakhtin and others.

How Tolstoevskii Pleased Readers and Rewrote a Russian Myth

JEFFREY BROOKS

Jeffrey Brooks argues that Fedor Dostoevskii and Lev Tolstoi drew on and recast a particularly Russian mythology of doomed rebellion in order to explore issues of free will, self-fulfillment, and redemption. The literary giants employed narrative structures similar to popular formulas. They

imagined their work and even their lives in terms of an opposition between freedom and order, echoing themes of Aleksandr Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol'. By linking Tolstoi and Dostoevskii to mythologies of banditry, Brooks illuminates the interaction between high and low cultures. He locates their work in the context of social and cultural transformations of the liberal postreform era, showing how readers' expectations changed in a fluid society. Readers increasingly wanted freedom to triumph over the myth's earlier doom, but censors remained vigilant. He shows how Tolstoi and Dostoevskii satisfied both censors and readers by framing tales of adventure and romance with moralistic beginnings and endings conforming to the format of the long serial novel. The formulaic sandwich that frustrated the censors was used with similar effect by N. I. Pastukhov, author of Russia's first modern popular novel, *The Bandit Churkin*, which was serialized in *Moskovskii listok* in the early 1880s. Brooks affirms the mastery of Tolstoi and Dostoevskii that transcends time and place, but shows the roots of their work in Russian preoccupations with freedom and order.

**Isaac Babel's Tales of Collectivization:
Rites of Transition in the New Soviet Village**

CAROL J. AVINS

Isaac Babel's two stories depicting the 1930 collectivization campaign must be placed beside his other story cycles in any effort to understand the writer and his time. The resistance to authority displayed in "Kolyvushka" and the reconciliation reached for in "Gapa Guzvha" have in common an important and hitherto unnoted feature: the implicit adaptation of Orthodox religious ritual to new functions. In both stories the climactic encounter with officialdom shows how vestiges of religious ritual become improvised rites of transition, religious in form but political in content. Placing Babel's stories in the context of the surrounding cultural and political discourse (including Iosif Stalin's "Dizzy with Success" article, but focusing on the pages of *Novyi mir*, where one of the stories appeared), this article explores links between Babel's dark depiction of the countryside in crisis and contemporary treatments of collectivization, religion, and literary *engagement*.

**Contesting the Paradigms of De-Stalinization: Readers'
Responses to *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich***

MIRIAM DOBSON

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's novella *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was published in the literary journal *Novyi mir* in November 1962 and provoked excited debate across the Soviet press in subsequent months. In this article, Miriam Dobson uses unpublished letters to the editor to examine readers' responses to this work of literature and as a means to explore attitudes towards the process of de-Stalinization more broadly. While many

historians have tended to see the Nikita Khrushchev period as a battleground between liberals and conservatives, these letters suggest a rather more complex dialogue over the legacies of Stalinism. They show that even those readers who embraced the de-Stalinizing rhetoric of the Twenty-Second Party Congress found Solzhenitsyn's text highly disturbing. Distressed by the appearance of camp slang and "vulgar" language within a literary work, readers took the opportunity to express their concerns over the large numbers of criminals released from the gulag, rising crime levels, and the perceived threat they presented to "respectable" Soviet culture.

The Cable Car at Kasprowy Wierch: An Environmental Debate in Interwar Poland

DANIEL STONE

The construction of a cable car in 1935 by Minister Aleksander Bobkowski halted the proclamation of a Polish National Park in the Tatra Mountains near Zakopane. A press and letter-writing campaign organized by Polish environmentalists, headed by Professor Władysław Szafer and the Tatra Society, subsequently convinced the government to create a park. This debate also concerned the architectural aesthetics of the cable car buildings. The episode sheds light on the development of environmentalism in Poland during the partition era and in interwar Poland, as well as related discussions on the role of technology in modern life and aesthetics. Overall, the episode reveals the existence of two competing views of modern society.