

### **Passage to Europe: Dostoevskii in the St. Petersburg Arcade**

KATIA DIANINA

The St. Petersburg Passage—a shopping arcade and recreation complex, comprising restaurants, exhibitions, amateur theater, and the Literary Fund—was a remarkable center of public life in imperial Russia. Contemporary journalists wrote incessantly about the Passage, celebrating the various forms of popular entertainment that it offered. In his strange unfinished story “The Crocodile,” which also takes place in the Russian arcade, Fedor Dostoevskii parodies this trivial discourse of the daily press. Urban spectacles and their refraction in the mass-circulation media are the main targets of his caricature of westernized popular culture in Russia. The writer’s response to Russian modernity, as it was taking shape in the age of the Great Reforms, is expressly negative. Dostoevskii believed that in a decade defined by the rise of civic consciousness, the Russian press should address vital social concerns at home instead of celebrating ephemeral cultural imports, such as the arcade and the newspaper feuilleton.

### **The Paradox of Melancholy Insight: Reading the Medical Subtext in Chekhov’s “A Boring Story”**

JEFFERSON J. A. GATRALL

Nearing death, Nikolai Stepanovich of Anton Chekhov’s “A Boring Story” struggles with the question of whether his newfound pessimism results from recent illness or belated insight. While the novella’s physiologist-protagonist never reveals his self-diagnosis, it can be surmised from a careful reading of his scattered symptoms in light of contemporary medical intertexts that he fears he is suffering from a diabetes of nervous origin, the etiology of which was first hypothesized by his real-life colleague, Claude Bernard. The search for a historical disease concept, however, far from resolving Nikolai Stepanovich’s crisis of identity, opens onto an expanse of further problems, including the reduction of mind to body in post-Griesinger psychiatry as well as the social pathology of fin-de-siècle “neurasthenia.” Caught between the options of illness and insight, Nikolai Stepanovich follows the course of his own spiraling thoughts, which—in a paradox typical of a tradition of melancholia extending from Aristotle to Sigmund Freud—seem to grow more penetrating the more his marasmus advances, yet unearth less meaning from his life the deeper they penetrate.

### **Explaining Electoral Competition across Russia’s Regions**

BRYON J. MORASKI and WILLIAM M. REISINGER

Russia can only be considered an electoral democracy to the extent that its constituent parts also fit this classification. In this article, Bryon J. Moraski and William M. Reisinger assess how well competing theories

drawn from the literature on democratization explain the variation across Russia's regions in their progress toward competitive electoral politics. Their analysis reveals that distinctions among the regions in their social structure, arising from developments in the decades before 1991, help explain political competition in a manner unanticipated not only by existing literature on democratization but also by existing studies of Russian democracy at the national and individual levels. Moreover, they find that the divergent experiences of the regions during the 1990s—in their economies and levels of crime, for example—and variations in party development also help us discern which regions have moved furthest along the path toward electoral democracy.

**“Whose Wife Will She Be at the Resurrection?”  
Marriage and Remarriage in Early Modern Russia**

DANIEL H. KAISER

Although historians and publicists have frequently criticized the Orthodox Church for its failure to implant in parishioners much religious sensibility, Daniel H. Kaiser argues that the seventeenth-century church was much more successful than critics have contended. Examining litigation over bigamy and remarriage from the Russian north, Kaiser argues that clerics largely succeeded in articulating and enforcing a doctrine that affirmed the sacramental primacy of first marriage. In prosecuting bigamists and tracking down fugitives, church courts showed themselves fully competent to ascertain the facts surrounding marital disputes and then impose decisions upon the principals, many of whom, even while resisting the church's directives, betrayed knowledge of and appreciation for the church's view. Therefore, Kaiser concludes, we need to revise our estimate of the church's effectiveness in regulating domestic life in early modern Russia.

**Exporting Soviet Culture: The Case of Agitprop Theater**

LYNN MALLY

In this article Lynn Mally examines the efforts of a Comintern affiliate called MORT (Mezhdunarodnoe ob"edinenie revoliutsionnykh teatrov) to export models of Soviet theatrical performance outside the Soviet Union. Beginning with the first Five-Year Plan, MORT was initially very successful in promoting Soviet agitprop techniques abroad. But once agitprop methods fell into disgrace in the Soviet Union, MORT abruptly changed its tactics. It suddenly encouraged leftist theater groups to move toward the new methods of socialist realism. Nonetheless, many leftist theater circles continued to produce agitprop works, as shown by performances at the Moscow Olympiad for Revolutionary Theater in 1933. The unusual tenacity of this theatrical form offers an opportunity to question the global influence of the Soviet cultural policies promoted by the Comintern. From 1932 until 1935, many foreign theater groups ignored

MORT's cultural directives. Once the Popular Front began, national communist parties saw artistic work as an important tool for building alliances outside the working class. This decisive shift in political strategy finally undermined the ethos and methods of agitprop theater.

### ***Tropos Logikos: Gustav Shpet's Philosophy of History***

PETER STEINER

Gustav G. Shpet (1879–1937) is one of those formidable Russian thinkers who, in the early years of the last century, orchestrated a revolutionary paradigm shift across a broad swath of the humanities and social sciences that is still reverberating today. But we lack a comprehensive view of the manifold heterogeneity of Shpet's intellectual endeavors. This article focuses on one prominent lacuna in our knowledge of Shpet: the theory of history that he advanced in the 1910s. In many respects Shpet's theory anticipated the "linguistic turn" that occurred in western historiography during the last quarter of the twentieth century and that is most often identified with Hayden White's name. But while White analyzes the historian's discourse in terms of *tropology* and *narratology*, for Shpet *predication* is the key logical mechanism that generates production of texts about the past. The divergence of these two approaches can be explained through the hidden Kantian underpinnings of White's thought that contrasts sharply with the explicit Hegelianism of Shpet's theorizing.