

Wilson Bell's fine book is a good example of careful empirical research. He went where his sources took him and lets readers make up their own minds rather than prosecuting an a priori theoretical case.

J. ARCH GETTY
UCLA

Posle Stalina: Pozdnesovetskaia sub"ektivnost', 1953–1985. Ed. Anatolii Pinskiĭ. St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Evropeiskogo universiteta v Sankt Peterburge, 2018. 454 pp. Notes. Illustrations. Photographs. ₴460, paper. doi: 10.1017/slr.2019.293

In my experience, at least, few scholarly debates trouble graduate students studying the Soviet Union quite like those about subjectivity as a category of analysis. This volume would have eased some of those anxieties. A multidisciplinary group, the contributors to *Posle Stalina* represent Russian, European, and North American institutions. Their chapters comprise a selection of the papers given at a 2014 conference, "After Stalin: Subjectivity in the Late Soviet Union, 1953–1985," at the European University in St. Petersburg.

Penned by the volume's editor, Anatolii Pinskiĭ, the introduction defines three conceptions of subjectivity (11–14). Drawing particularly on Michel Foucault's theory, Stephen Kotkin's model situated subjects in a discourse sanctioned by the party and state, a condition forcing individuals either to adapt to it or to engage in small-scale resistance by utilizing the language to their own ends. Jochen Hellbeck and Igal Halfin countered that Kotkin's proposition, in which subjects learned to "speak Bolshevik," missed important implications of Foucault's concept. In subsequent work, Hellbeck in particular emphasized that rather than whole and constant, subjects actively created themselves through a process rendering the individual "I" variable and decentered (14). The third, broadest usage of subjectivity questions "who a person is, what they think, how they conceive of the world . . . and how they see their place among others" (14).

Kotkin, Hellbeck, and Halfin analyzed the interwar period, which was characterized by vertical bonds between relatively isolated subjects and the state. *Posle Stalina* explores changes after Iosif Stalin died, when Nikita Khrushchev disavowed terror and prioritized subtler forms of control. Expanded horizontal relationships among fellow subjects simultaneously increased Soviet citizens' autonomy and emphasized communal, work, and family relationships. These were the focus of Oleg Kharkhordin (*The Collective and the Individual in Russia*, 1999), who concluded that as individuals became constrained by social surveillance that was neither as distant nor as random as the Stalinist police state, they experienced everyday life under this communal self-regulation as more repressive. Complicating Kharkhordin's view, *Posle Stalina* reveals the productive sides of these relationships.

The volume is divided in two, with the initial six chapters analyzing large-scale phenomena and subsequent five zooming in on specific groups or movements. Each section contains examples of all three of Pinskiĭ's categories referenced above.

Cynthia Hooper's opening chapter inquires into cultural elites' efforts to define the ideal subject, beginning with the familiar idea of "the New Soviet Person." Everyday life served as a site for inculcating socialist values, she argues, challenging the common conjecture that subjects used personal spaces to escape from forced public performance of belief in official ideals. Maria Maiofis then describes how state-sponsored but autonomous amateur children's choirs socialized individuals. Sites for

learning self-discipline and peer regulation, the choirs instilled the culture, aesthetics, responsibility, and work ethic considered requirements for the builders of the communist future.

The subsequent four chapters hinge on changes in the form and function of different kinds of texts. Mikhail Rozhanskii argues that in film of the late 1950s Siberia emerged as a scene for finding the self. Experiencing new uncertainties, the “Soviet idealist” found the region’s expanses an ideal site for determining how to live authentically. Pinskiĭ’s contribution explores a turn from the macro-narratives characteristic of Socialist Realism to diaries and other documentary genres that offered the reader new opportunities for autonomous interpretation. Il’ia Kukul’in then considers prominent literary figures’ travelogues as evidence that exposure to foreign societies influenced both ideal and actual processes of self-definition. By contrast, Aleksei Golubev describes how Khrushchev-era citizens, freed from Stalin-era isolation, imagined that they were under the gaze of foreign observers and correspondingly reshaped ideas about the self.

The volume’s second section features the two chapters that most directly examine intersections of subjectivity and social origins. Oleg Leibovich studies how the state-security personnel in Molotov (Perm’) oblast experienced post-1953 changes in institutions and repressive practices as a crisis. Having previously reduced private life to a self-contained community of other functionaries in the repressive apparatus, they found themselves adrift in the new era and therefore fell back on principles of order and hierarchy, values that Leibovich argues reflected their social origins (270). Tapping the potential of oral history, Reid concludes those of intelligentsia origins inherited cultural capital, which prompted them to be most likely to define the self by embracing the modernist interior design officially deemed tasteful.

Capturing both the optimism and limitations of the Khrushchev era, Daria Bocharnikova dissects the telling, if obscure, vision of a group of young architects imagining a new urbanism. Intriguingly, they designed for ideal subjects requiring both collective spaces fostering relations among individuals and personal spaces for the maintenance of the self. Bella Ostromoukhova explores a specific case of just these sorts of horizontal relations: student drama collectives.

Leibovich, Reid, Bocharnikova, and Ostromoukhova each argue based on sources other than the personal narratives, or ego-documents, typically favored when studying subjectivity. By contrast, Benjamin Nathans examines dissident autobiographies, emphasizing the social context. Doubting that they would find mass audiences at home, dissidents wrote for their own circles, but also for the foreign reader. Unsurprisingly, they therefore constructed selves who resisted dominant discourses. Once those discourses lost their power as the Soviet Union dissolved, former dissidents adapted to the changing context and to speak to a domestic readership.

Posle Stalina investigates many uses of subjectivity as a category of analysis and a variety of potential sources, especially for the Khrushchev years, but much work remains. Its acknowledged orientation toward urban citizens leaves unexamined questions about rural and non-Russian regions. In the former case, the research of Maya Haber on expert conceptions of the peasant subject (“Socialist Realism and the Study of Rural Life, 1945–1958,” *Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 2014) may provide a starting point. Rather than pronouncing the last word, *Posle Stalina* provides a valuable primer on subjectivity and indicates directions in this field. A boon to students and scholars in many disciplines, it will no doubt serve as a catalyst for further research, interpretation, and debate.

AARON HALE-DORRELL
Independent Scholar, Warren, RI