

Title: The Periphery and its Cultures: Liudmila Ulitskaia's Imagined South
Edith Clowes, University of Kansas

In the discourse about national identity that has arisen since the appearance of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, the north-south geo-cultural axis has become essential to defining self and stranger, "home" and "foreign land." Attendant to those spaces is a crucial debate in post-Soviet public discourse about the definition of a "Russian" and an "outsider," and between a narrowly Russian-oriented nationalist outlook and a tolerant, multinational position. It is even possible now in the post-Soviet period to argue that the north-south axis of identity has overtaken in importance the east-west axis of the modern era. Certainly among the most visible of those propounding a multinational point of view is Liudmila Ulitskaia, winner of the 2001 Booker Prize and author of numerous bestselling stories and novels. Two striking aspects of what could be called her "humanist" literary project are her effort to find value in a large number of "spaces of being" and ways of being, disparate voices, and points of view, as well as her sustained argument against Russian chauvinism. Russian nationalists typically imagine their cultural space as being the North and East, while Ulitskaia's imagination tends toward the South. It will be the South and its symbolic meanings in Ulitskaia's major novel, *Medea and Her Children* (*Medeia i ee deti*, 1996) that we will examine in this presentation.