Toronto, London, New York? #EVENTS

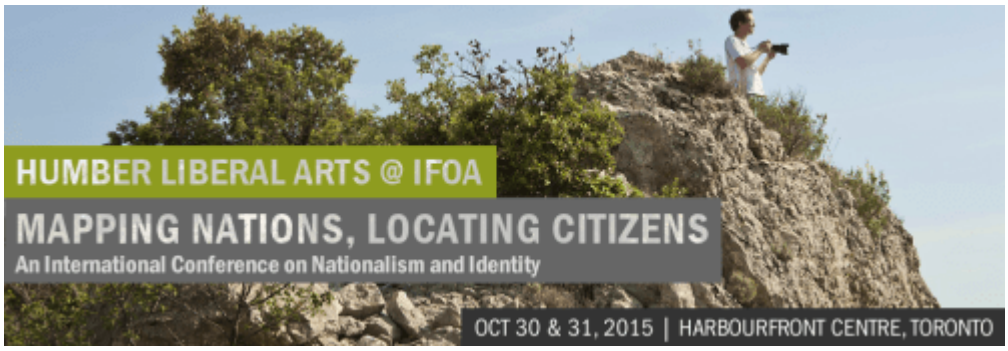
Allegra
April, 2015

A lot of exciting things are happening in our beloved discipline around the globe. We selected, once again, a number of inspiring events that should not be missed. Remember to contact Andrea @ andreak@allegralaboratory.net if you would like your event to be featured on our monthly list or simply to appear on our home page calendar. Short reports on symposiums, workshops, panels and conferences are also warmly welcome!

REMINDER: [14th RAI International Festival of Ethnographic Film]

16 – 19 June 2015, Bristol, UK

[Registration is open now]. Early Bird registration fees until 15 May!



[Mapping Nations, Locating Citizens – An interdisciplinary conference on nationalism and identity]

30 – 31 October 2015, Harbourfront Centre, Toronto, Canada

The conference aims to facilitate cross-disciplinary discussion among scholars and researchers who study the topics of nationalism and identity. Some emergent themes to be explored include, but are not limited to: performing citizenship, emerging nationhood, subaltern studies, statelessness, diaspora studies, racism and nationalism, post-nationalism, memory and nation-building, neo-medieval, religo-ethno-nationalism, cosmopolitanism, exploding mythologies, consumerism, sexuality and citizenship, and disability/identity. [more]

Deadline for submission of proposals: 10 May 2015

International Urban Photography Summer School

17 – 29 August 2015, Goldsmiths, University of London, UK

Designed for photographers, artists and ethnographers whose work address notions of urban space and culture, the international Urban Photography Summer School provides a highly intensive two-week practical and theoretical training in key aspects of urban visual practice. The course aims to offer participants a wide range of relevant skills resulting in the production of a photography portfolio drawn from London's urban environments along with a collective final exhibition.

The programme has been developed in collaboration with the Centre for Urban

and Community Research (CUCR), Urban Photo Fest and the international Association of Visual Urbanists (iAVU). The course will be taught by tutors from Goldsmiths' Sociology Department and the international MA in Photography and Urban Cultures. The programme draws on the advanced theoretical, research and practical image-making specialisms of key practitioners in the field. [more]

Deadline for applications: 15 May 2015

2015 NGOs and Nonprofits Conference: "NGO-graphies"

17 – 18 November 2015, Denver, USA

The purpose of this second NGOs and Nonprofits conference is to engage one another in thinking broadly about the patterns of NGO practices as they point to the role of coordination within networks and the factors that direct global flows of resources and knowledge. Together, we will examine how these networks are constituted through the personal interactions, cultural practices, and shifting discourses that give them meaning. Considering the power relations that shape and create NGO-graphies also allows us to problematize the ever-present methodological question of how researchers and practitioners can and should interact with NGOs, which become sources of information about local communities, points of entry, sources of income, and fieldsites themselves. We invite proposals for panels from anthropologists, related interdisciplinary scholars, and practitioners on topics including but not limited to the following

questions:

How do we think beyond a “case-based” approach to conceive of broader geographies of NGO intervention?

- How do NGOs’ particular requirements in providing services create landscapes of need?
- Where do resources and knowledge originate geographically and how do they travel?
- Where are the “centers” of international NGOs and how do they interact with the “peripheries”? [more]

Deadline for submission of session proposals: 15 May 2015

I·I·L·J INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW AND JUSTICE
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Conference: Indicators and the Ecology of Governance

6 – 7 July 2015, NYU Law School, USA

This conference has three objectives: to take stock and analyze key ideas from very recent work in the field; to bring together interested scholars and celebrate the launch of several recent books on indicators in global governance; and above all to explore promising directions in current and future research, with a particular focus on the dynamics or ecology of governance in which indicators are one of several competing technologies.

The Call for Papers seeks to bring forward new work, whether case studies or

theoretical in any relevant discipline, and to put authors (whether senior or junior, and academics or practitioners) in dialogue with scholars who have been involved in some of the recent publications listed below. The starting point is that indicators are simply one technology of governance among many. Individual indicators exist in increasingly dense and fast-moving environments in which they interact with numerous other indicators and other technologies and modes of governance. These dynamic ecological features have not been studied sufficiently, nor have their implications for institutions, law, resistance, and power-knowledge frameworks been very fully considered. [more]

Deadline for submission of draft papers: 15 May 2015

Conference: Language, Power and Identity in Asia: Creating and Crossing Language Boundaries

14 – 16 March 2016, Leiden, The Netherlands

The conference explores how linguistic differences, practices, texts and performances are of critical importance to political, social and intellectual power structures among communities in the past and in the present, especially through processes of identity formation. How do (and how did) languages shape borders – social, ethnic, religious, or "national"? Likewise, how do languages and linguistic communities move across these limits? In what ways do processes of hybridisation and multilingualism affect the formation of transnational or translocal identities, and how have they done so in the past? How have policies of

language standardisation impacted on the political and intellectual spheres? What is the power of orality and performance vis-à-vis a variety of textual productions, through manuscript culture, epigraphical practices, print media, and the Internet? [more]

Deadline for submission of proposals: 15 May 2015

International Summer School: "Cultures, Migrations, Borders"

6 – 18 July 2015, Plomari, Lesvos, Greece

The broader socioeconomic and political transformations in Africa and Asia have recently resulted in increased migration flows to Greece and, more generally, to Europe. Being at the crossroads of populations and cultures the islands of Eastern Aegean have served as one of the entry "gates" to Europe. In this context, and especially in connection to the current crisis, border crossings have become the focus of intense debates as they are intertwined with issues of culture and identity formation, the European Union and state policy, and constructions of 'otherness'. By drawing on an increasing interest in the study of cultures,

migrations and borders, the Summer School examines how migrations shape and are shaped by processes of boundary formation in a variety of cultural encounters. [more]

Deadline for applications: 18 May 2015

The Sound of Discord #AnthroIslam

Julie Billaud
April, 2015

https://soundcloud.com/allegra_lab/east-london-mosque-call-to-prayer

The sound file you're listening to is a recording of the muezzin's evening call to prayer at the East London Mosque in Whitechapel. The prayer-call competes with the sound of heavy traffic passing along Whitechapel Road. The East London Mosque is one of the few mosques in Britain permitted to broadcast calls to prayer (*azan*). Built in the early 1980s, the mosque soon found itself at the center of a public debate about "noise pollution" when local non-Muslim residents began to protest against this daily broadcast.

According to John Eade*

> *The controversy about "noise pollution" entailed issues of what was culturally acceptable (...). Since the East London Mosque was located on a busy main*

> *road linking the City of London to the vast metropolitan eastern sprawl, the azan made only a brief, if novel, contribution to the buzz of inner city life (…) Of course, what the clergy considered "reasonable"—two calls to prayer during the working day—fell far short of the demand by the Muslim correspondent for the complete cycle of azan both day and night (…). The borough council, the source of permission to the East London Mosque, had not extended that right to the other mosques in Tower Hamlets. Now, in response to the public furor over the broadcasts, it proved unmoved by arguments favoring the azan and neither extended the right to the other mosques nor allowed the East London Mosque to implement the full daily sequence of calls to prayer.*

In spite of this controversy, the permission to broadcast the *azan* was never withdrawn from the East London Mosque, which remains one of the very few mosques in Europe authorised to do so. Ironically, the call has become a distinctive feature of Tower Hamlets to the extent that it is not rare to find tourists who especially come in the proximity of the mosque to listen to it in the evening, as the rythm of the city gradually slows down.

* John Eade. 1996. "Nationalism, Community, and the Islamization of Space in London". In *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe.* Barbara Daly Metcalf (eds). Berkeley. University of California Press.

Many more recordings from the London Sound Survey at www.soundsurvey.org.uk

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‘EcoCentrix: Indigenous Arts, Sustainable Acts’ – The Making Of

Genner Llanes-Ortiz
April, 2015

https://vimeo.com/118874838

Alive to the power of performance, Indigenous artists and communities communicate alternative ways of living on earth. Not better, nor worse, just different. Indigeneity seen through a prism of sophisticated art forms is what “Ecocentrix – Indigenous Arts, Sustainable Acts” showcased during three weeks on Autumn 2013 in London. The exhibition was curated by a transnational and multidisciplinary team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, led by performance scholar Prof. Helen Gilbert. A Stö:lō musicologist, a British film researcher, a Zimbabwean musical theatre scholar, a Peruvian historian, a Canadian theatre producer, and myself, a Maya anthropologist; all of us came together to decide what practices and practitioners best represented the radical

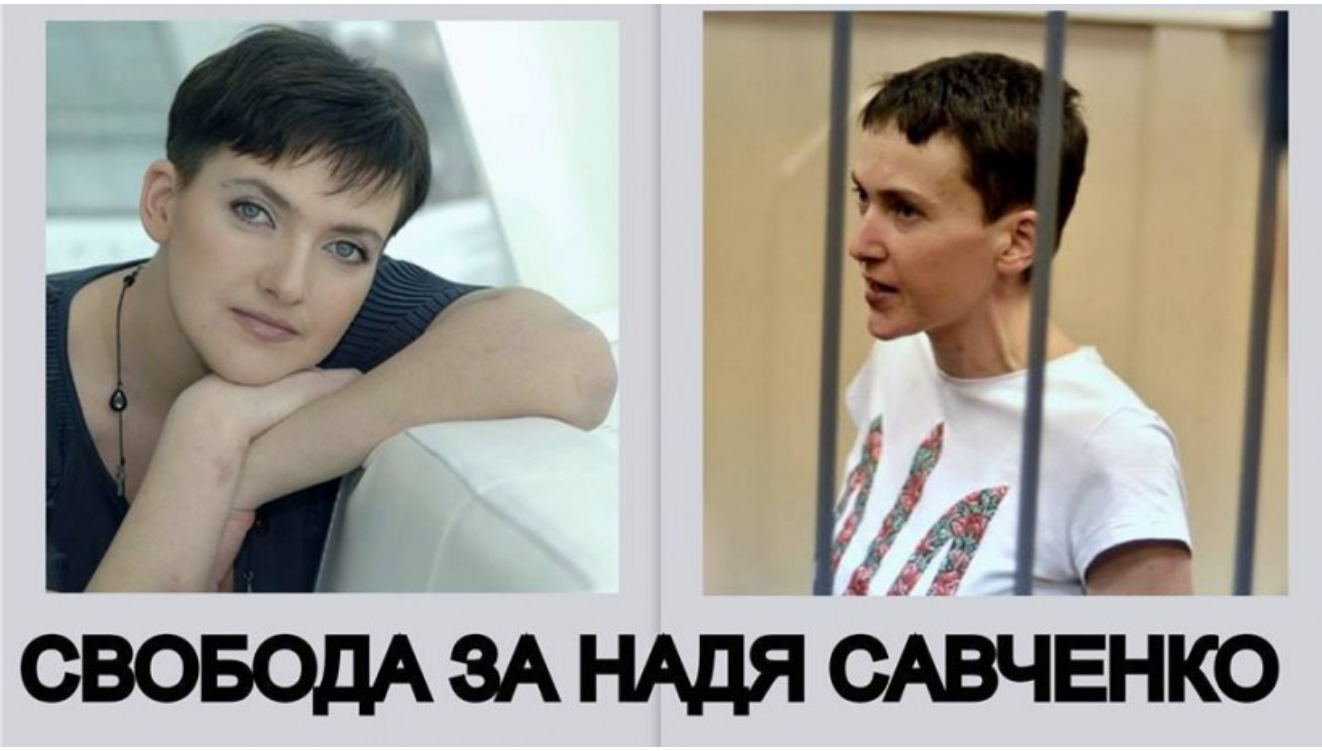
contemporaneousness of Indigenous art. This video aptly captures some of the best moments of an experiment in curating performance. It is not so much about anthropologising indigeneity, but rather about indigenising global preoccupations – environment, memory, water, identity, landscape, rights, and decolonisation, among others. Welcome to Ecocentrix!

Sostenidos en el poder de la animación corpórea, las comunidades y los artistas indígenas comunican formas alternativas de habitar el planeta. Ni mejores, ni peores, sino simplemente distintas. La indigeneidad vista a través de un prisma de sofisticadas obras de arte es lo que "Ecocentrix – Artes Indígenas, Actos Sostenibles" ofreció al público londinense durante tres semanas en el otoño de 2013. Esta exposición fue curada por un equipo transnacional y multidisciplinario de investigadores, indígenas y no-indígenas, liderado por la Prof. Helen Gilbert, especialista en estudios del performance. Un musicólogo stö:lō (indígena canadiense), una investigadora británica de cine, un especialista zimbabuense en teatro musical, un historiador peruano, una productora canadiense de teatro, y un servidor, antropólogo maya yucateco, conjuntamos nuestras perspectivas para seleccionar aquellas prácticas y creadores que mejor representaran la radical contemporaneidad del arte indígena. Este video captura eficazmente los mejores momentos de un experimento de curaduría del 'performance'. Aquí no se intentó tanto antropologizar la indigeneidad sino más bien indigenisar temas globales fundamentales – el ambiente, la memoria, el agua, la identidad, el paisaje, los derechos y la descolonización, entre otros. ¡Bienvenidos a Ecocentrix!

Read Allegra's interview with Genner on the ECOCENTRIX exhibition here.

REDUX: Is 2015 1934 All Over Again?

Helen Faller
April, 2015



This is a story best told by images. Though it requires some words. Extended captions, if you will.

On Sunday, March 1, 2015, I attended a demonstration in support of Nadia Savchenko, a Ukrainian helicopter pilot who had been on a hunger strike in a Russian prison for nearly three months. Savchenko was days away from death. (She has since agreed to drink broth, after being denied her appeal for release in a Russian court on March 3, and having lost twenty-five kilograms.) Captured in eastern Ukraine by Russian separatists in June 2014, Savchenko was later accused of killing two Russian journalists during a mortar attack, spirited over the border from Ukraine into Russia, and incarcerated.

The demonstration took place outside the Russia Embassy in Berlin, a huge, fortified mansion on the formerly East German, now-posh tourist-central Unter den Linden Avenue. It was a small affair and infinitely sad. Around twenty people draped in Ukrainian and German flags sang songs in Ukrainian and flung the chant, in German, “Russia out of Ukraine!” in the direction of the impassive Russian Embassy. There was no sign that anyone was paying us the slightest attention. I imagined that, on the other side of the windows, our photographs were being taken for our FSB files and embassy employees were laughing at our futility.

After a few minutes, I had to leave. Unable to sing in Ukrainian and unwilling to shout in German, all I could do was stand there, crying and stroking my five-year-old daughter’s beautiful head. It reminded me of what I’d read about demonstrations during the Soviet period—a few brave souls shouting into the wind. The only difference was that we wouldn’t be arrested, just ignored.

Two days earlier, one of the main leaders of Russia's opposition, a fearless man named Boris Nemtsov, had been murdered in Moscow. Four bullets in the back as he strolled outside the Kremlin. A driveby shooting. For anyone who has studied Soviet history, the parallels with the 1934 murder of Sergei Kirov were, at first, glaringly obvious. (Indeed, political scientist Karen Dawisha, who recently published a book on how Russian President Vladimir Putin has been robbing Russia, immediately wrote a piece on this topic for CNN.)

In 1934, Kirov was Joseph Stalin's right-hand man and the first secretary of the Communist Party in Leningrad. He was also charismatic and popular, Stalin's main rival. Stalin handled the investigation into Kirov's murder personally. Up to a million Soviet people died, accused of involvement in a plot to de-stabilize the USSR by killing Kirov. Years later it emerged that, in all likelihood, Stalin himself ordered Kirov's assassination. Nemtsov's death could provide similar grounds to Vladimir Putin to fabricate charges against anyone who dissents from the regime's stance of extreme Russian nationalism and make sure that those people's lives were cut short, in one way or another. In an eerie echo, Russian state media is accusing the US of killing Nemtsov in an effort to de-stabilize Russia.

At the same time, there are obvious ways in which the analogy doesn't hold water. Kirov was a high-ranking Communist Party member and Stalin's supporter. Nemtstov may have been slated to become President Boris Yeltsin's successor in the 1990s, but had actively worked to oppose Russia's police state since. In 1934, no one would have suspected Stalin of a political assassination. In 2015, accusations against Putin run rampant.

But there are also much larger differences between the two assassinations. In

1934, Stalin was just starting to cement his control over the USSR. The country's outlying regions were coming, finally, under the centralized government's rule. In 2015, Putin may be losing control over the Russian Federation, at least in the Far East, which is rapidly filling up with illegal Chinese immigrants. In fact, Russia may be at the end of existence as a state. The war with Ukraine, the nationalist fervor that has reached a fever pitch since the US imposed sanctions on Russia—these are masks to cover up what is happening on the ground.

> *I could introduce statistics--the falling price of oil, a murder rate fives times higher than America's, the lagging economy, the fact that Russian men's life expectancy is the same as their age at retirement--but I'd rather tell a couple stories.*

While I was living in Kazakhstan, one of Russia's former colonies, two years ago, I met a businessman who frequently flew to Moscow for work. He told me that on a recent plane trip, he had sat next to a man who managed a potato farm in Siberia. The man was at his wits end because the farm laborers he oversaw were too drunk too work. They drank from sunup until they passed out. The only time that they got out into the fields and broke a semi-sober sweat was when there were potatoes to be harvested, and turned into moonshine.

These days in Russia, there is an ever-increasing need to bribe doctors, teachers, and university professors. Medical treatment at public clinics and hospitals is officially free. But doctors earn miserably small salaries, just like police officers and university professors, who likewise seek to supplement their meager incomes with private donations. As one woman told me, if you have an operation and your family doesn't make an appropriate gift to the surgeon, he might not sew you up all the way. Similarly, university students often have to buy good grades from their teachers. And if you can or must buy grades—not all teachers take bribes, of course—why study? Since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, this has come full circle.

> *Now, when you go to the doctor, as a Russian friend living in Berlin told me a*

> *few weeks ago, you hope the receptionist is kind and lets you know when the real doctor is receiving patients. Because all those students who bought their way into universities and paid for their degrees are now practicing medicine.*

One more thing. Kirov was murdered by a single ne'er-do-well assassin named Nikolaev, either directly employed by the Soviet secret police or encouraged by them. (Apparently, Nikolaev was detained outside Kirov's office while carrying a firearm and, subsequently, Kirov's guard was removed, leaving the first secretary exposed.) Though there is no confirmation, Nemtsov was apparently murdered by Russian patriots. A few days before the assassination, according to a piece by Masha Lipman in the *New Yorker*, during a pro-Kremlin rally, one of the speakers said, addressing Putin, "Vladimir Vladimirovich, we are waiting for your order to get the traitors!" And on March 3, a group calling itself Novorossia claimed responsibility for Nemtsov's death.

On March first, shortly before I attended the small demonstration outside the Russian Embassy in Berlin, people in Moscow and St. Petersburg and elsewhere marched to commemorate their fallen hero. In a city where any "traitor" can be shot for speaking out against Putin, some fifty thousand people risked their lives. These images illustrate better than any scholarly argument exactly how 2015 isn't 1934.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ГЕРОИ НЕ УМИРАЮТ / ЭТИ ПУЛИ - В КАЖДОГО ИЗ НАС
PHILIPP KIRDEV | PHILL.RU

REDUX: Who is afraid of

#HumanRights in Russia?

Freek Van der Vet
April, 2015

Russian politics fare well in keeping conflicting stories alive. Sir Winston Churchill famously said that the Soviet Union is a "*riddle* wrapped in a *mystery* inside an *enigma*." In the Soviet Union the riddles, mysteries, and enigmas might have been wrapped together as a single mind boggling story. Nowadays, the enigma, the mystery, and the riddle exist side by side. Not only do state authorities cause confusion in the civil society sector with contradictory policies, Russian news agencies add to the problem by spreading conflicting stories such as those concerned with the downing of flight MH17 and, more recently, the assassination of former vice prime minister and opposition leader, Boris Nemtsov

on the Bolshoy Moskvoretsky Bridge next to the Kremlin. Considering how small the opposition and civil society is, one cannot help but wonder: who needs to be afraid of human rights defenders in Russia?

Confusion and Control

Few optimists remain. After the introduction of laws banning propaganda on "non-traditional" relations, the Pussy Riot trial, the annexation of the Crimean peninsula, the crash of Malaysian flight MH17, the lingering conflict in East Ukraine, and the killing of former vice Prime Minister and opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, there is little left to be hopeful about and, even when a shred of optimism is retained, it is increasingly difficult to stay neutral.

> *The playing field has changed fast over the last year, especially for Russian human rights organizations.*

Since the mid-2000s the Russian Federation has taken a harsher stance on human rights organizations out of fear of a popular "colored revolution" as had happened in Ukraine, Georgia, and Serbia, in all of which foreign funders had sponsored parts of the opposition, while youth groups helped to diffuse popular protest from country to country (Bunce and Wolchik 2006). Out of fear that the revolutions abroad would spark protests in Russian streets, the authorities decided to cut the financial links between the opposition and foreign funders (Carothers 2006), and the Russian Parliament, the State Duma, passed laws in 2005 and 2006 to monitor the activities and finances of nongovernmental organizations, drafting legislation against "extremist" activities.

After Vladimir Putin returned to the presidency in 2012 after the liberal Medvedev regime, Human Rights Watch (2013) reported that, "[t]he authorities have introduced a series of restrictive laws, [they have] harassed, intimidated, and in several cases imprisoned political activists, interfered in the work of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and sought to cast government critics as

clandestine enemies, thereby threatening the viability of Russia's civil society."

> *In rapid succession the Duma passed laws to recriminalize defamation and install higher fines for people participating in unauthorized demonstrations.*

For instance, after a demonstration against Vladimir Putin's inauguration as president on Bolotnaya Square on 6 May 2012, hundreds of demonstrators were arrested and prosecuted. In the "Bolotnaya 6 case" ten had been sentenced to 2.5 to 4.5 years of imprisonment by February 2014.

The "foreign agent law", passed in July 2012, confused the rules of human rights activism further. The law stipulates that every organization that receives funding from a foreign sponsor and is active in so-called "political activities" should register as a foreign agent (*inostrannyi agent*) with the Ministry of Justice. Two years ago, one optimistic lawyer still joked that: "there are no foreign agents in Russia", as all human rights organizations refused registration. In February 2013, eleven NGOs, among which were Memorial and the Moscow Helsinki Group, filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France, to fight the law outside Russia's borders. Nevertheless, since March 2013 prosecutors have started inspections into the activities of organizations and have begun to prepare administrative and civil lawsuits against a selection of those who have refused to register. From May 2014 onwards, the Ministry of Justice was given the authority to register NGOs as foreign agents on its own initiative.

The effects of the policy on NGOs have been ambiguous. Some organizations received a warning to register within one month; some faced a civil lawsuit *as their failure to register "harmed the public interest"*; some leaders faced personal administrative charges but four out of six of these won their cases in court (Human Rights Watch 2015). In the administrative cases against the organizations themselves, six out of twelve organizations won their court cases (Human Rights Watch 2015). Some organizations chose to shut themselves down, such as the Anti-Discrimination Center (ADC) Memorial in Saint-Petersburg, two Golos election watchdogs (Golos Association and Regional Golos), JURIX (Lawyers

for Constitutional Rights and Freedoms) (Human Rights Watch 2015). In some regions, outside of the major city areas, NGOs have successfully won their appeals before domestic courts. In St. Petersburg, the Anti-Discrimination Center Memorial, which worked to counter discrimination against Roma and other minorities, shut down after it had faced civil and administrative lawsuits (ADCM 2014).

At the same time, however, the state authorities have offered grants to those organizations that register with the Ministry of Justice as foreign agents, for instance through the Presidential Grant system.

> *By vilifying those that receive foreign funding and yet concurrently offering them state funds the Russian Duma and the Presidential administration have created a confusing environment.*

The duality of the policy puts organizations in the difficult position of choosing between cooperation with the government or opposition to it (Daucé 2015). Each organization has to negotiate its individual relation to the state, which obstructs cooperation between them (Daucé 2015).

Control breeds Creativity

Despite the increased control and sometimes real physical danger, human rights workers, NGOs and journalists have had to find ways to reinvent their work and maintain their livelihoods. As a result they might renegotiate their relationship with local authorities, give in and register as a foreign agent, appeal court decisions, or reformulate their own strategies.

The Joint Mobile Group is one example. The group of lawyers from the Committee Against Torture, under the leadership of Igor Kalyapin, wanted to continue to give legal aid in the North Caucasus while simultaneously protecting themselves from harm. After the killing of Memorial activist Natalia Estemirova in July 2009, Memorial – one of Russia's oldest human rights organizations—had to scale down

its monitoring activities in Chechnya because of the threats against its staff (Daucé 2012). Memorial, together with the British European Human Rights Advocacy Centre has also been active in lodging, and winning, applications with the European Court of Human Rights on behalf of relatives of victims of enforced disappearance, torture, and indiscriminate bombings (van der Vet 2012). In general, the level of threats against human rights activists in the North Caucasus are many times higher than in other parts of the country (Kogan 2013). Nonetheless, the Joint Mobile Groups continued to give legal aid to victims of grave atrocities after the second conflict in Chechnya ended, when Ramzan Kadyrov became president of the republic, though members differ on every visit to the region to minimize targeted pressure on individual jurists, and they do not stay for longer than two to three months at a time. While only one of the members has the power of attorney, they also try to maintain a horizontal hierarchy in the team to minimize targeted threats. In 2013 the group won the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders; in December 2014 their office was set on fire in Grozny.

Another such creative initiative is the recently launched Meduza Project; an aggregator of news from Russia, with a rather gloomy Interface. The site boasts the slogan "the real Russia, today". A small group of these journalists were at first involved in the website lenta.ru, but resigned after Galina Timchenko was fired from her position as editor-in-chief, allegedly over a conflict about the reporting on the Ukrainian crisis. They rent their office and also use servers in Riga, Latvia, to collect news items, some translated into English, from trusted sources in Russia, supplementing them with their own articles. The project, for instance, recently published material reporting on how Russian citizens are prosecuted in court for online behavior such as posting selfies. The Meduza Project will also diffuse news through an app in the Russian Federation, as there is no effective legislation to ban apps at present.

Despite the small-scale of opposition and restricted active civil society sector, the professional lawyers and journalists who comprise it continue to develop creative projects or seek their offices elsewhere, though given the number of

organizations that have shut down during the past year, there is less to be optimistic about. But it is also unlikely that these lawyers will stop doing their jobs.

> *Human rights present a clear story and perhaps it is story to be afraid of, as it may very well trump the various enigmas, mysteries, and the riddles that are sent around inside Russia.*

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Bears and the Russian Body Politic. Watching Vladimir Putin’s Press Conference on 18 December 2014

Judith Beyer
April, 2015

Sitting at an empty table, occasionally sipping from a large white cup, the Russian President Vladimir Putin seemed to be enjoying himself about one hour into the press conference. While he had appeared uneasy and was repeatedly clearing his throat during the first sixty minutes, he became increasingly confident and started joking three hours into the event. With the eyes of the world on Russia, what did he tell his audiences, both global and bodily present?

Leaving aside his placating words on the dramatic decline of the economy, a central point were Putin’s statements to the journalists that it is not Russia that is aggressive, but the West. Conjuring the image of the “Russian bear,” his analogy went as follows:

"I gave an example of our most recognisable symbol. It is a bear protecting his taiga. You see, if we continue the analogy, sometimes I think that maybe it would be best if our bear just sat still. Maybe he should stop chasing pigs and boars around the taiga but start picking berries and eating honey. Maybe then he will be left alone. But no, he won't be! Because someone will always try to chain him up. As soon as he's chained they will tear out his teeth and claws. In this analogy, I am referring to the power of nuclear deterrence. As soon as – God forbid – it happens and they no longer need the bear, the taiga will be taken over…"

> *"And then, when all the teeth and claws are torn out, the bear will be of no use at all. Perhaps they'll stuff it and that's all."*

Speaking of stuffed animals: Putin has earned quite a reputation of posing with and domesticating wild animals that led, among others, to Internet memes seeing him riding a large bear. Maybe this was the reason why Russian journalists at the press conference renewed their already established technique of raising not only cardboard signs with the name of their news agency to get their President's attention, but also plush animals. Next to a crocodile and a pink bunny, bears were among the most visible species in the room. Putin seems to like bears. Exactly a year ago during another major press conference, he interrupted his answer to one journalist's question in order to take a question from a young woman holding up a gigantic stuffed Yeti: "I want to take a question from the girl with the bear. That looks more interesting."

The Russian bear has been employed in political rhetoric, folk stories and satire within Russia as well as abroad from the 17th century onwards. It is one of the most well-known and recognizable symbols of Russian nationalism imbued with positive attributes by Russian authors (as civilized, authentic, strong, and loyal) and with negative features by foreign voices (as savage, cruel, and aggressive). The bear embodies the divided perspective between the “East” and the “West.” While the bear in Russian folk stories had been an “old acquaintance” of the people, with magical powers and charisma, but also easily fooled, it was assigned an aggressive character in the 19th century during the time of the so-called Great Game. There, “the Russian Bear” fought against “the English Lion” over Central Asia.

The imagery remained popular throughout the 20th century, and has since then been particularly associated with the Crimean peninsula over which the White and later the Red Army, and now contemporary Russia exercised influence.

Putin's comment about the bear getting his claws defanged has had precursors in German World War II cartoons like "Sewastopol," dated from 1942, in which the bear's "left paw" had been cut off, symbolizing the capturing of Russian-held Sewastopol by the Wehrmacht on 4 July 1942.

Trying to shed the iconic bear's negative aspect of aggressiveness, which had been bestowed by "the West", the USSR tried to domesticate the creature itself in 1980, in an effort to redefine the country's image. The prime example is brown-furried Mishka, from the 1980 Olympic Winter Games held in Moscow. He was the first broadly advertised Olympic mascot and even got his own animated TV series. Mishka is the diminutive of Mikhail, the name of the bear in the Russian folk tale, while the proper name of the bear is Medved' (lit. "honey-eater").

> *When the Cold War ended, the Russian bear "died", too. For Ronald Reagan, it had been "sick" for a long time. However, by the late 1990s, the rhetoric of the bear's "aggressiveness" returned on the occasion of the wars in Chechnya. It has since then remained a part of international public discourse and – in response – provoked the reaction of Russian officials.*

Looking at the bear is looking at the body politic of Russia. This has become even more so with the entry of Dmitri Medvedev, the current prime minister. His name

being a derivative of “bear,” numerous puns and anecdotes circulate in Russia, particularly about how Putin tamed Medvedev to show that politics is nothing but a circus.

When a polar bear became the mascot of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games, the artist who had designed the Mishka for the 1980 games claimed fraud: “It’s exactly the same as mine: the eyes, the nose, the mouth, the smile, though it’s askew,” he said. “I don’t like it when people steal, the author always feels it especially painfully.” However, the 2014 bear never reached the 1980s’ popularity anyway. It was rather mocked in social media as #nightmarebear with #sochibearproblems. The bear, apparently, was in a state of crisis.

In March 2014, British UKIP leader Nigel Farage warned: “If you poke the Russian bear with a stick he will respond. And if you have neither the means nor the political will to face him down that is very obviously not a good idea.” While in media presentations and political proclamations of “the West” the Russian Bear has remained an aggressive creature, ready to attack once provoked, the image conjured in yesterday’s press conference by both Putin and the journalists attending him was a very different one. At the end of his bear analogy, Putin clarified “So, it is not about Crimea but about us protecting our independence, our sovereignty and our right to exist. That is what we should all realise.” According to Putin, all the bear wants is to be left alone, roam the taiga freely and eat berries and honey.

> *“Piglets? Taiga? Bears? Berries? What?” asked Nadya Tolokonnikova in a Facebook post on 18 December, not the only one wondering about Putin’s analogy, which, by the evening, had made it already into a YouTube rap version*

A founding member of Pussy Riot, Tolokonnikova served a 2-year prison sentence in various labor camps throughout Russia until last year and has since her pardoning by Putin on the occasion of Constitution Day become an even fiercer critic of the President. She thinks the current situation is best understood as a psychological one: “my conclusions are purely formal, my interest – medical: I

wonder about his [Putin's] psychiatric drug treatment or diagnosis."

> *Whether one wonders about Putin or Russia in general, perspective is of importance. While the bear has remained, as Putin himself said, "our most recognisable symbol," what it has come to symbolize is increasingly unclear. Not only Russian activists like Tolokonnikova but also Western observers were bewildered by Putin's choice of words.*

If we stop for a moment, however, and take the analogy serious, what are we seeing? In my view, Putin's analogy presents an attempt to redefine a country's image by providing a counter-interpretation of the inevitable bear. If the bear could, Putin said, it would enjoy bees and honey. But immediately, a Western news outlets turned these words around, paraphrasing Putin as having said that the bear "isn't about to sit back", thereby again returning to the comfortable image of Russian aggressiveness.

The Russian Bear continues to be different things to different people, and Putin's attempts to reconfigure this metaphor will not be the end of this perpetual interpretive exercise. The bear won't go away, either.

> *But it serves us well to realize that possible alternative frames exist when we talk about what "Russia" wants or needs: both Olympic bears of 1980 and 2014 were seen crying when the Games were over.*

Judith Beyer is Reviews Editor at Allegra – follow her on Twitter.

This post was first published on 19 December 2014.

Eating Right in America, Part 3 of 3

Lauren Renée Moore
April, 2015

This post marks the third part of our special review section on ***Eating Right in America: The Cultural Politics of Food and Health***. Check out the first part here and the second part here.

In 2013, a town in Texas unfurled an advertising campaign to attract food stamp recipients to local farmers markets. The brightly colored posters featured fruits

and vegetables creatively arranged to resemble an ice cream cone, a fast food hamburger, french fries, and a bag of Skittles (Reitz 2013).

Appearing the same year as Charlotte Biltekoff's new book *Eating Right in America: The Cultural Politics of Food and Health*, these ads seem tailor-made examples of her critique of modern dietary reform.

> *Biltekoff's book gives readers the tools to see these ads not as clever marketing, but as the product of a century of dietary reform that has maintained social class boundaries through portrayals of the "unhealthy other" – the poor person who chooses fast food because of sheer unwillingness to "eat right," or who must be tricked through visual gimmicks to desire fresh foods.*

The posters reinforce popular linkages between poverty and preference for unhealthy foods, and subtly reinforce a neoliberal model of citizenship that reifies personal choice and responsibility in health.

Eating Right in America analyses these contemporary messages as they appear in four distinct dietary reform movements from American history: the domestic science movement at the end of the 19th century, the WWII-era national nutrition program and, more recently, anti-obesity campaigns and the alternative food movement. For each movement, Biltekoff examines underlying messages that teach Americans how to "eat right", taking as her premise that "despite seemingly scientific origins, dietary ideals are cultural, subjective, political" (p. 4). The book focuses on reformers' messages and the discourse of dietary guidance – readers should note that Biltekoff does not examine how American eaters responded to reformers' lessons. The notable exception is her discussion of contemporary anti-obesity campaigns, for which she relies on robust evidence that Americans harbor significant anti-fat attitudes. Here, studies showing that survey respondents would rather shorten their lives or lose a limb than be fat suggest how deeply dietary reform messages can permeate popular consciousness. Ethnographic studies showing how individuals negotiate dietary reform discourse would be an excellent complement to Biltekoff's discursive focus in this work.

One of the strengths of Eating Right is how Biltekoff deftly weaves together common threads from distinct reform movements in American history.

Often, food scholars hone in on the construction of one movement: early home economics, anti-obesity, or local and organic. On the surface these movements appear quite different: anti-obesity campaigns, for example, might emphasise low fat foods while alternative food advocates celebrate "real" fats like butter or lard. Despite the movements' differences, Biltekoff's work demonstrates clear consistency in their message and aims. In particular, this review will highlight how she does this with two key themes: first, how dietary reforms naturalise social class boundaries and are a tool of middle class self-making; and second, how they shape citizen-subjects through historically contingent notions of appropriate citizenship.

Social Class

Biltekoff argues that dietary reform has been part of "middle class self-making through the ongoing production of an 'unhealthy other'" for more than a century (p. 65). Beginning with early reformers in the 1890s, she shows how dietary guidance was a tool to maintain class boundaries for those unsettled by blurring class boundaries of industrial society. To do this, reformers emphasised biological differences between the social classes and insisted that "eating right" was a matter of eating according to one's income and, importantly, occupation.

Food suitable for a middle-class person was a moral failing in the kitchen of a poor worker – it was a sign that one was ignoring their class-linked biological needs and failing to economise appropriately.

The home economics movement of the 1890s further naturalised class boundaries by focusing on "dietary reform among the middle class in the name of race betterment" (p. 28). The upper and middle classes were validated as biologically and morally superior when dietary guidance pitted the "incorrigible poor" against

the fundamentally different “intelligent classes.”

Biltekoff argues that contemporary reformers a century later ignore structural constraints on food choice and continue to teach that “poor” eating is a sign of poor moral character. Popular figures in the contemporary alternative foods movement, such as Alice Waters or Michael Pollan, draw distinctions between “slow food eaters [who were] connecting with a noble past and making thoughtful, conscious choices that enhanced both personal fulfillment and social well-being” and fast food eaters, who “were portrayed as just the opposite: unthinking dupes, whose lack of ‘consciousness’ kept them trapped in irresponsible habits and drawn to immoral pleasures” (p. 105). Like reformers a century earlier, these distinctions solidify middle class identity through contrast with its perceived opposite – and because alternative food reformers pay only lip service to structural constraints on the lower classes, middle class Americans are able to view their class positions as merited and natural.

Creating Citizen-Subjects

Biltekoff demonstrates how, in each historical period, dietary advice teaches eaters how to be good citizens. For example, when early reformers taught middle-class housewives that they needed to rely on scientific guidance to eat well, they were teaching more than a way of eating: dietary reform was part of a larger project to teach Americans to cede liberty to governmental management. World War II-era nutritional interventions were even more explicitly nationalist, with diet posters asking, “Worker: Are you helping Hitler?” and “Worker: Are you helping Uncle Sam?” (p. 71-2). More recently, Alice Waters has declared “Cooking is good citizenship,” and contrasted slow food (achieved through cooking) with fast food, saying, “when you buy fast food, you get fast food values” (p. 104).

The anti-obesity movement also offers lessons in good citizenship, and inscribes fitness for citizenship onto visible markers of physical fitness. Because anti-obesity campaigns believe in “an irrefutable equivalence between thinness and self-control” and self-control is concept “fundamental to the western system of

values" (p. 125), fatness is a sign one is a bad American.

While Biltekoff's analysis of citizen-shaping is insightful, readers may note the absence of critical bodies of literature that have tread the same ground: for example, studies of expertise and the professionalisation of medicine, or a large governmentality literature examining how citizens are shaped. Biltekoff instead provides an empirically rich argument that other scholars may fruitfully link to larger studies of governance and subject-making.

Conclusion

We see in *Eating Right* how dietary reform has long been used as a tool of discrimination. The various "others" created through dietary beliefs – the poor, or the obese – are used as negative examples for good eaters to avoid.

> *The poor and obese (categories that often overlap) are unfit – for citizenship, for middle class lives, or for sympathy and respect.*

Such determinations of unfitness are made possible by the importance Americans ascribe to diet and shifting notions of "eating right."

Biltekoff prompts readers to go beyond questions of how to get 'good' food to the unhealthy other, to ask: *whose* definition of 'good' are we privileging while foisting 'good' food on others, whilst insisting that the pleasure derived from that food is morally superior to the pleasure derived from 'inappropriate' foods? Biltekoff does not deny her audience the choice to engage in alternative foods values – as a long-time chef for the vegetarian restaurant *Greens* in San Francisco, she is also immersed in that world. What she calls for instead is that scholars, dietary reformers, or eaters, "be reflexive about the cultural content of the ideals they promote, cautious about the moral implications of their discourse, and strategic about the values their lessons in eating right express" (p. 151).

> *Biltekoff has written a well-argued and thoroughly enjoyable book that should*

be on the reading lists of dietary reformers and food scholars alike. The work would be a strong addition to middle or upper-level undergraduate classes examining cultural politics of food and health in the United States, as it challenges readers to think deeply about what we mean when we talk about good food.

Biltekoff, Charlotte. 2013. *Eating Right in America: The Cultural Politics of Food and Health*. Durham: Duke University Press. 224 pp. Pb: £14.99. ISBN: 9780822355595

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How Worried Should We Be About Russia?

Joseph Pearson
April, 2015

From Berlin, Russia is a 7-hour drive. The Ukraine is only a little farther by car. And sometimes I feel, when staring out my windows to the East, over the Spree, that I can feel Putin breathing. You don't need to be a historian for that to make you nervous.

Writing in the Washington Post on Friday, Anne Applebaum provided the most alarmist version of European security I've come across recently. Her piece 'War in Europe is not a Hysterical Idea' makes extreme historical comparisons, evoking the atmosphere of Poland in the summer of 1939 and the chaos and destruction of WW2. She asks whether Central Europeans need to be worried about events in the Ukraine as if it were Hitler's invasion of Poland. She favors quotes from extreme right-wing Russian nationalists like Alexander Dugin and Vladimir Zhirinovsky (who earlier this month talked about the 'total annihilation' of

Eastern European states). She evokes Hitler and Stalin in her analysis of Putin, and asks whether it is ‘naïve’ not ‘to prepare for total war’.

War in the Ukraine is not a hysterical idea. But it is, so far, hysterical to say that Putin will bring about WW3 on continental Europe. For one thing, Ukraine does not have the guarantees that Poland had from Western powers at the beginning of WW2. It is not a member of NATO.

Just how nervous we need to be – with Russian troops’ incursion into the Ukraine, their repeated violation of Finnish airspace, Kiev talking about a ‘point of no return’, the EU putting a one-week deadline on Russia before it will face consequences (can the EU possibly unite in these efforts?), the Lithuanian leader saying Russia is basically at war with Europe, and Putin reminding everyone in a press conference about the strength of Russia’s nuclear arsenal, all in advance of a major NATO meeting next week – depends on a few determining factors which are not yet entirely clear.

Will a conflict between Russia and the Ukraine remain within the borders of the Ukraine? And within the area of Russian domination in the Ukraine? If the conflict were to involve a NATO state like one of the Baltics, we are in trouble. This depends on just how crazy Vladimir Putin might be (‘living in another world’ was

Merkel's appraisal). Is he bent on making himself into a historic figure who wages war with the West, exposes the hollowness of NATO, and reunites Russians under a reinvigorated empire to overturn the Western victory at the end of the Cold War? Certainly, Stalin and Hitler had millennial perspectives on their historical roles, and scant concern for the immediate loss of human life. And Putin is boosted by his already booming public approval in Russia (supposedly over 80%).

Or is Putin rather more pragmatic? Do we see a limited, regional, operation, in which Russia has a few clearly delineated goals: to prevent the inclusion of the Ukraine in NATO, to extend its annexation from Crimea to Eastern Ukraine. Putin knows that if his goals are limited, Europe and America are likely to react only with strong words and economic sanctions.

One would do well to keep one's eye on such factors rather than falling into axiomatic historical comparisons. Putin compared Ukrainian military movements in Eastern Ukraine to the Nazis last week; he is reminded of 'the events of the Second World War, when the Nazi occupiers, the troops, surrounded our cities — for example, Leningrad — and point-blank shot at these settlements and their

inhabitants'. The irony, of course, is that Putin's aggressive testing of Europe's balance of power in the East is rather more reminiscent of Hitler, and his violation of sovereign states starting in 1938. Putin's chauvinism – his nationalistic, heteronormative agenda – can broadly be compared to the Nazis' as well. The World War Two analogies, which are entering into the press discussion in force, might have some limited use after all.

The West must, in light of these aggressions, contend too with the legacy of appeasement. Neville Chamberlain was made foolish by the history books for not standing up to Hitler. And yet, perhaps, we have a little more understanding for him now when faced with our own tough choices, and our own memories of a catastrophic European war. Chamberlain lived under the shadow of WW1. Our inheritance is even less enviable: the greater brutality of WW2 and the re-emergence of old patterns in European history in the nuclear age. Will we find ourselves following Chamberlain in placating our enemy for fear of horrific consequences? For what is the alternative? Angela Merkel has already said there is no military solution to the Ukrainian conflict – a position unsurprising for the European country that has done the most reflection on WW2. Or do we have methods unavailable to our diplomatic predecessors: the arm of financial consequences in a much more interconnected world economy?

No one in the West is going to take big risks for Ukraine. I wish I were so sure about Putin. He did say: 'Thank God, I think no one is thinking of unleashing a large-scale conflict with Russia'. But he followed these words with the warning: 'I want to remind you that Russia is one of the leading nuclear powers'.

We see the re-emergence of military tensions on the European continent between the superpowers – fought over a territory, Ukraine, that finds itself at the intersection of their spheres of influence – and the real question is whether Russia, the EU and America have clear ideas of where a balance of power might be established. Will there be any room for compromise, or will this smack too much of appeasement, or might it embolden Putin and lead us down the road to real conflict? Or is this pattern expected precisely because we have overly axiomatic ideas about how European conflict occurs, from our historical examples? Right now, we are all waiting to find out how much the powers on both sides are willing to lose to defend their spheres of influence, and I expect Europe and America will eventually make larger concessions to Russia, than vice versa, because they care more about a broader peace on the Continent. They will likely turn to a policy of containment, backed by economic sanctions, like that which isolated the Yugoslav conflict from European life for four bloody years.

Meanwhile, within Ukraine, a tragedy looms that might make Yugoslavia look like child's play.

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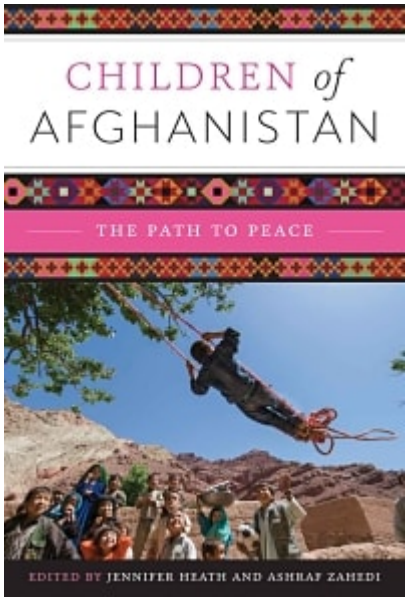
It's a boy! Recent publications on #children

Allegra
April, 2015

Allegra is celebrating the arrival of a tiny Allie with a short but sweet list of publications on #children! Welcome to this crazy world! We hope you will love books as much as we do!

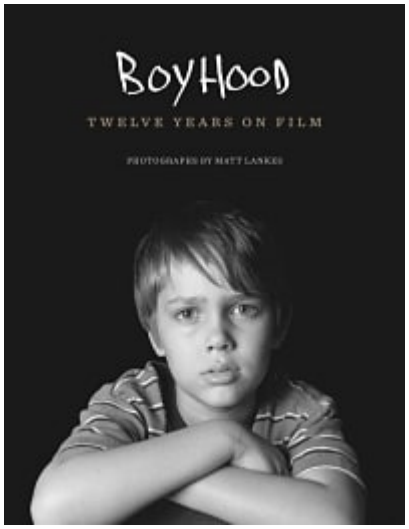


Heath, Jennifer and Zahedi, Ashraf (eds.). 2014. *Children of Afghanistan: The Path to Peace*. Texas: University of Texas Press. 362 pp. Hb: $55.00. ISBN: 9780292759312.

The first comprehensive look at youth living in a country attempting to rebuild itself after three decades of civil conflict, *Children of Afghanistan* relies on the research and fieldwork of twenty-one experts to cover an incredible range of topics. Focusing on the full scope of childhood, from birth through young adulthood, this edited volume examines a myriad of issues: early childhood socialization in war and peace; education, literacy, vocational training, and apprenticeship; refugee life; mental and physical health, including disabilities and nutrition; children's songs, folktales, and art; sports and play; orphans; life on the streets; child labor and children as family breadwinners; child soldiers and militarization; sexual exploitation; growing up in prison; marriage; family violence; and other issues vital to understanding, empowerment, and transformation.

Kuan, Teresa. 2015. *Love's Uncertainty: The Politics and Ethics of Child Rearing in Contemporary China*. California: University of California Press. 272 pp. PB: $29.95. ISBN: 9780520283503.

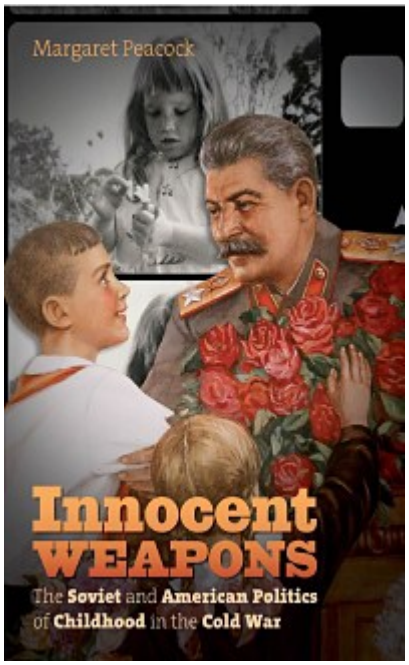
Love's Uncertainty explores the hopes and anxieties of urban, middle-class parents in contemporary China. Combining long-term ethnographic research with analyses of popular child-rearing manuals, television dramas, and government documents, Teresa Kuan bears witness to the dilemmas of ordinary Chinese parents, who struggle to reconcile new definitions of good parenting with the reality of limited resources. Situating these parents' experiences in the historical context of state efforts to improve "population quality," *Love's Uncertainty* reveals how global transformations are expressed in the most intimate of human experiences. Ultimately, the book offers a meditation on the nature of moral agency, examining how people discern, amid the myriad contingencies of life, the boundary between what can and cannot be controlled.



Lankes, Matt [photography]. *Boyhood: Twelve Years on Film*. Texas: University of Texas Press. 200 pp. HB: $50.00. ISBN: 978-1-4773-0541-6.

In 2002, director Richard Linklater and a crew began filming the "Untitled 12-Year Project." He cast four actors (Patricia Arquette, Ethan Hawke, Ellar Coltrane, and Lorelei Linklater) in the role of a family and filmed them each year over the next dozen years. Supported by IFC Productions, Linklater, cast, and crew began the commitment of a lifetime that became the film, *Boyhood*. Seen through the eyes of a young boy in Texas, *Boyhood* unfolds as the characters — and actors — age and evolve, the boy growing from a soft-faced child into a young man on the brink of his adult life, finding himself as an artist. Photographer Matt Lankes captured the progression of the film and the actors through the lens of a 4×5 camera, creating a series of arresting portraits and behind-the-scenes photographs. His work documents Linklater's unprecedented narrative that used the real-life passage of years as a key element to the storytelling.

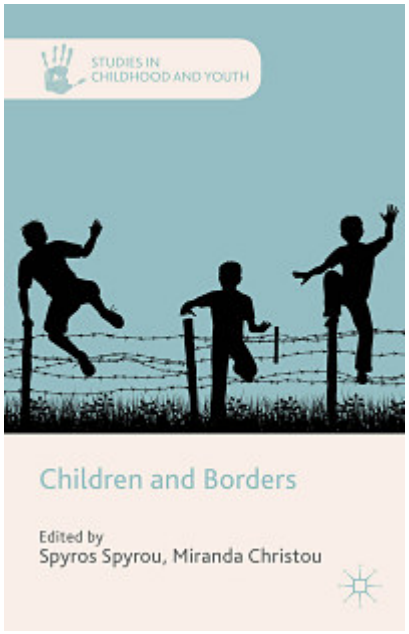
Just as *Boyhood* the film calls forth memories of childhood and lures one into a place of self-reflection, *Boyhood: Twelve Years on Film* presents an honest collection of faces, placed side-by-side, that chronicles the passage of time as the camera connects with the cast and crew on an intimate level. Revealing, personal recollections by the actors and filmmakers accompany the photographs.



Peacock, Margaret. 2014. *Innocent Weapons: The Soviet and American Politics of Childhood in the Cold War*. University of North Carolina Press. 304 pp. Hb: $34.95. ISBN: 9781469618579.

In the 1950s and 1960s, images of children appeared everywhere, from movies to milk cartons, their smiling faces used to sell everything, including war. In this provocative book, Margaret Peacock offers an original account of how Soviet and American leaders used emotionally charged images of children in an attempt to create popular support for their policies at home and abroad.

Groups on either side of the Iron Curtain pushed visions of endangered, abandoned, and segregated children to indict the enemy's state and its policies. Though the Cold War is often characterized as an ideological divide between the capitalist West and the communist East, Peacock demonstrates a deep symmetry in how Soviet and American propagandists mobilized similar images to similar ends, despite their differences. Based on extensive research spanning fourteen archives and three countries, Peacock tells a new story of the Cold War, seeing the conflict not simply as a divide between East and West, but as a struggle between the producers of culture and their target audiences.



Spyrou, Spyros and Christou, Miranda (eds.) 2014. *Children and Borders*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. pp 320. Hb £65. ISBN: 978113732630.

This edited collection brings together scholars whose work explores the entangled relationship between children and borders with richly-documented ethnographic studies from around the world. The book provides a penetrating account of how borders affect children's lives and how in turn children play a constitutive role in the social life of borders. Providing situated accounts which offer critical perspectives on children's engagements with borders, contributors explore both the institutional power of borders as well as children's ability to impact borders through their own activity and agency. They show how borders and the borderlands surrounding them are active zones of engagement where notions of identity, citizenship and belonging are negotiated in ways that empower or disempower children, offer them possibilities and hope or alternatively deprive them of both. With innovative cross-fertilization between Border Studies and Childhood Studies, this volume illustrates the value of bringing children and borders together.

Ukraine Roundtable with Anthropoliteia (Part 1)

Allegra
April, 2015

Last week Allegra shared some ‘jewels’ from our archives by revisiting the crises of Ukraine. This week we continue our journey down memory lane by focussing on Russia with posts published at Allegra last fall and this spring. We set things off tomorrow with Joseph Pearson who asks us, again, just how afraid of Russia we

should be. On Wednesday we continue with Judith Beyer's analysis of Bears and Russian body politics, and follow-up on Thursday with Freek van der Vet who asks who is afraid of human rights in Russia. We conclude this week by revisiting a *mildly* pessimistic post by Helen Faller who asks: is 2015 1934 all over again? To contextualise these posts, today we share our two-part collaboration from last spring, namely our virtual round tables done in collaboration with fellow blog Anthropoliteia, which like us was busy last week to cover the political developments in Ukraine and Crimea. Our round-tables focused around the question: **"What has struck you the most, or been most noteworthy, about the developments in Ukraine—from EuroMaidan to Crimea—so far?"**

"What I find most interesting about Crimea is the performative nature of the incursion. At first, soldiers operated without insignia and, ipso facto, unofficially. Yet after they have been unsurprisingly unmasked as Russian forces, their presence enables the new Crimean authorities to perform the constituent actions of any sovereign. This phenomenon points to an increasingly large gap between de jure and de facto sovereignty, though international law holds that recognition by other sovereigns is purely declaratory. These entities exist, they fight wars, and their constituents embrace them despite their many visible failings. Most discussions about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of Russia's intervention in Crimea obscure a particularly salient point that must be addressed: these de facto polities are artifacts of war. Their residents and citizens are inadvertent combatants who have been conditioned to see the stakes of acceding to the de jure sovereign as capitulation to enemies at best, and to fascists at worst. Renouncing their tentative independence is equated with a liquidation of the region's distinguishing features and peoples. " *-Michael Bobick*

"Ukraine's EuroMaidan revolution has, among its many other noteworthy outcomes, set new marching orders for the use, study, and development of digital

media. We have seen in action what E. Gabriella Coleman calls "the prosaics of digital media…how digital media feed[s] into, reflect[s], and shape[s] other kinds of social practices." This past winter, I and countless other residents in Kyiv would paw our way through informal media networks each morning to see not only the latest headlines, but also updates on the current locations of police, which streets were safe to pass through, and what material goods were being requested by the EuroMaidan hospital sites and kitchens. The Facebook pages of prominent activists, such as Journalist Mustafa Nayyem and radical MP Oleh Lyashko, are serving as primary news outlets. Web-based journalist collectives such as Hromadske.tv and Spilno.tv have streamed video from the protest sites in the center of Kyiv, 24-7, for months on end. Activist organizations, both long-standing and emergent, are making heavy use of social media for sharing calls to action and promoting participation. The depth and breadth of the entanglement between digital media and the everyday has been extraordinary. It signals an impressive shift in the location of moral authority and the power to establish truth through expertise. It also, however, threatens to bring the consequences of an ever-growing digital divide into the forefront of our politics, as the lived experiences of those who do and those who do not have access to this digital world diverge to greater and greater degrees. " *-Jennifer Carroll*

"It is the phenomenon of "reaction" that I have found most interesting. Unlike the post-Soviet aphasia that Sergei Oushakine described in Russia and that I observed in Ukraine in the mid-90s, Ukrainians have not been rendered speechless by the surprises, disappointments, or outrages of the last month. Reaction, instead, has become a matter of creativity and performance. Rather than taken as journalistic reports or as truth claims, recordings of performance circulate in announcements, cell phone videos, recollections, twice-told tales. They are part of a proliferation of discourse that is itself a notable phenomenon. In place of aphasia, a vocabulary of gestures has achieved eloquence. What is most noteworthy, of course, is the initiation of a major war, one in which 1.7 million citizens and a sizeable chunk of territory and strategic coastline have already been lost. And even there, the

reaction — not shooting back, not aggressing the aggressors — is the most interesting thing. The capacity to keep a war bloodless, 3+ weeks in, might actually be the most noteworthy thing for all of us. ” *-Monica Eppinger*

“It seems to us that over the course of the past four month the rapid and unexpected social mobilization of Euromaidan, violent clashes

with the police, fall of the political regime, and, finally, the Crimean crisis, have constantly forced people in Ukraine to re-imagine their identities, sense of personal and collective agency, and re-shape their plans in light of the emerging images of the future. Even now, the unpredictable unfolding of the events in Ukraine keeps challenging perceptions of the possible. We think that to understand how people’s strategies and cultural vocabularies adapt to this is an interesting ethnographic puzzle.” *-Diana Vonnak & Taras Ferirko*

Participants:

Michael Bobick (@naturaporia) is a UCIS Postdoctoral Fellow in the Center for Russian and Eastern European Studies and Anthropology Department at the University of Pittsburgh. His research focuses on the legitimate and illegitimate forms of political and legal authority that emerged in Eurasia after the fall of the USSR. He is currently writing a book about his field research in Transnistria, a separatist state located in Eastern Moldova.

Monica Eppinger is an Assistant Professor at the Saint Louis University College of Law. She has extensive experience in diplomacy, serving nine years as a diplomat in the U.S. Foreign Service with tours of duty at the U.S. Consulate General in Kaduna, Nigeria; U.S. Embassy, Kiev, Ukraine; and at the State Department in Washington, D.C. where her responsibilities included policy in the

former Soviet Union, Caspian basin energy development, and West African security. Her research concentrates on sovereignty and selfhood. Her main areas of expertise include property, national security, and international law.

Jennifer Carroll is a doctoral candidate at the University of Washington, earning dual degrees in anthropology and epidemiology. She has just completed fourteen months of data collection for her dissertation project, which explores patient perspectives on methadone replacement therapy in Ukraine. More broadly, her work focuses on current global health paradigms and critically-engaged public health policy. Her writings on Ukraine's EuroMaidan protests have appeared in The Seattle Times, Anthropology News, and the Yale Journal of International Affairs.

Taras Fedirko (@annoyingpaesant)is a PhD student in social anthropology at Durham University researching anti-corruption investigations in Ukraine and London. He also co-edits a Kyiv-based literary magazine Prostory.

Diana Vonnak (@diavonnak) holds an MA in social anthropology from Durham University and will start her PhD in social anthropology on material politics of heritage in West Ukraine next October. In the meantime she is an intern at Hungarian Literature Online.

Eating Right in America, Part 2 of 3

Isabel Fletcher
April, 2015

This post represents the second installment in our Special Review Section on ***Eating Right in America: The Cultural Politics of Food and Health***. Check out the first one here.

Nutrition researchers and their allies – home economists, health promotion agencies, wholefood advocates and anti-obesity campaigners – have been trying to persuade us, the general public, to improve our diets for more than a hundred years. Dietary reform has become a normal, if contested, aspect of contemporary life. The great strength of Charlotte Biltekoff's *Eating Right in America* is that it undermines this normality. Biltekoff analyses four episodes of US dietary reform: early 20th century home economists; nutrition education campaigns in the WW2 home-front; the alternative food movement of the 1960s and 1970s; and the contemporary campaign against obesity. Using an approach that combines archival research, cultural studies and food studies, she tells the story of 'dietary ideals and the people who have dedicated themselves to promoting "eating right" as a biological and social good' (p.4). As well as promoting health, she argues that such activities also produce certain kinds of subjects, and reinforce particular identities and social boundaries, especially those of the American middle class (*ibid*).

> *Biltekoff is particularly good in explaining the fit between the 1960s and 1970s food reform movement – what Belasco (1989) has labelled the 'countercuisine' – and neo-liberal discourses of individual responsibility.*

In Chapter 4, she outlines very clearly how a movement that began as part of a critique of industrial food production came to focus largely on individual behaviour as the solution to problems in the food system. Of all the four reform movements, the alternative food movement had the least contact with orthodox nutrition research, and, partly because of that, initially had the least policy traction. It became influential – taken up by Michelle Obama, for example – only after it merged with the campaign against obesity. The alternative food movement

ideal of ‘eating right’ involved ‘refusing the cheap convenience of mass-produced foods and spending more money on ingredients and more time preparing and enjoying them’ (p.100). As Biltekoff points out, alternative food movement supporters rarely acknowledge how much their ideal of ‘responsible eating’ relies on class-based privilege (p.105-7).

She also argues that the merging of the alternative food movement and the public health campaign against the obesity epidemic has created a vastly expanded discourse of responsible eating (p.10). This new model seeks to solve a much greater number of contemporary problems through the processes of dietary reform. In light of this expansion it is interesting to consider her very brief point that after WW2 nutrition researchers were worried about their discipline and that it ‘was rescued by obesity’ (p.115). In my own doctoral research, I traced the evolution of the framing of obesity as an epidemic in post-War British nutrition research. I was, and remain, puzzled by an apparent switch in research focus from under-nutrition – which was prominent in British research until the early 1960s – to over-nutrition, which from the 1970s onwards rapidly became a major research focus. As other have shown, this was less than 20 years after the food shortages of WW2, and in the absence of large-scale studies to demonstrate that obesity was a population, rather than an individual, problem (Oddy et al., 2009). Obviously the wider growth of research into chronic disease is part of this shift, but I have yet to read an acknowledgement of it. Biltekoff’s citation may provide the starting point for an answer.

> *The involvement of dietary reformers in government policy is an aspect that might have been given more attention. There are important differences between the four different episodes in how acceptable their reforms were to government.*

As it is closely related to levels of wages and welfare benefits, nutrition advice is politically contentious. Wilbur Atwater was one of the first to make use of scientific evidence in this context, when in the 1880s he tried to assess the

adequacy of working class diets and thus rebut union arguments for wage increases (Aronson, 1982). This was a politically unthreatening use of nutrition research, and Biltekoff describes how early 20th century home economists 'reiterated Atwater's principles of nutritional efficiency and taught women how to provide good diets at…various income levels' (p.38). Poor housewives were supposed to learn how to feed their families on a limited income and not to waste money on expensive 'luxuries'. Debates about the nutritional adequacy of poor people's diets have recurred regularly since then, particularly during periods of economic stagnation. A prominent element of these debates has usually been to assign the blame for their inadequate diets onto poor people themselves. In 1933, E.P. Cathcart, a member of the UK government Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, stated that 'bad cooking, bad marketing [shopping], bad household economy plays a bigger part than shortage of cash in the majority of cases of malnutrition' (cited in Mayhew, 1988: 450). The persistence of these discourses is, at least partly, due to their political palatability unlike the more radical demands of the early alternative food movement.

As a former vegetarian chef and food activist turned scholar, Biltekoff seems particularly well-placed to tell this story and she does it very well. Although *Eating Right* is a relatively short book, it is engaging and intellectually nutrient-rich. It contains a substantial amount of archival research, and its central arguments make new and fruitful links between the four different periods. Given the close links between British and American researchers and policy-makers throughout the period, much of Biltekoff's analysis is also relevant to understanding the ideas of British dietary reformers. I recommend it to food studies scholars, health sociologists, and historians of food and nutrition.

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Kazakh Delights #AVMoFA

Allegra
April, 2015

"It has become a fashion to regard any vestige of the USSR through the framework of nostalgia. The sentiment is –there could not have been anything

> *valuable about socialism, and anybody who remembers it in a positive light is clearly engaged in self-indulgent idealization of the past. Another off-shoot of this attitude is to regard the artifacts from the socialist life in terms of kitsch — as an amusing and ironic extension of capitalist consumerism. The Rakhat candies from Kazakhstan exemplify an artifact that disrupts this perception. It is neither a nostalgic or kitschy legacy from the Soviet past. Rather, it is one of the real continuities that survived despite the vagaries of the economic collapse of the 1990s. Produced by the joint stock company "Rakhat" in Almaty that took over from the Alma-Ata Candy Plant (Alma-atinskaya Konditerskaia Fabrika) in the first decade after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, these candies represent the best chocolates from the Soviet period."*

In contrast to mundane American Nestle or Cadbury chocolates that routinely assault customers at the check-out lines at the supermarkets and drugstores, the Soviet chocolate candies (Mishka na Severe, Krasnaya Shapochka, Belochka, and Gril'yazh) had been prized and displayed on the tables only for most celebrated feasts. Children got to know these candies as the treasured New Year gifts that they received from the Father Frost during their celebrations in schools and kindergartens.

The post-Soviet privatization brought havoc into production of these candies. One of the trickiest issues, I learned in Almaty, was to solve was to how to divide the ownership over the copyright and intellectual rights over these candies. In the Soviet Union, there had been several plants manufacturing these same candies (including in Russia, the Ukraine, and Kazakhstan), and after the privatization of these plants, the challenge was to decide who inherits what. Whereas the Moscow factory claimed the name of these candies, the Almaty factory inherited the Soviet design of the candy wrappers.

However, the company continued not only with the design but also with the flavor of the candies. Despite the access to proliferating brands of new exotic candies in

post-Soviet period, most people in Kazakhstan still preferred the familiar Soviet candies produced with the same unchanging flavor by the Rakhat factory. When I tried these candies, I was not surprised – the middle of candy was a crispy waffle layered with cream and surrounded by chocolate where one could taste the high content of cacao. Every time I leave Kazakhstan, I am handed kilograms of these candies to take home to America with me – not because of any nostalgic or political sentiments but because the candies are genuinely good and my hosts want me to take the best.

These findings have come to me during my time spent in Kazakhstan as part of the Artpologist art collective. The collective created several projects engaging the everyday life in Central Asia. Ethnographic attention to the mundane lives of people making a living in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union has provided us with an insight into many unexpected discoveries about socialism on the ground. As Americans brace the challenges of consumerism, the environmental effects of capitalism, and neoliberalism, I believe that there is still much to learn from exploring the legacies of socialism on the grass-roots level.

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