Void Pasts and Marginal Presents: On Nostalgia and Obsolete Futures in the Republic of Georgia

KATRINE BENDTSEN GOTFREDSEN

In contemporary Georgia and beyond, nostalgia for the Soviet past is often ridiculed and dismissed as a reactionary wish to turn back time. In this article, however, I explore generational nostalgia as temporal displacement of present political struggles. Drawing on life story interviews with middle-aged and elderly people in the provincial town of Gori, I argue that nostalgic longings may be understood as active attempts to presence personal pasts and futures that have publicly been rendered absent by an official rhetoric and practice that explicitly rejects the Soviet past. From this perspective, post-Soviet generational nostalgia temporally connects several dimensions of absence: the experience of one's personal past being publicly cast as void; a perceived lack of social security, influence, and significance in the present; and a dynamic whereby these two dimensions render former dreams and visions for the future obsolete.

Once Upon a Time, There Was Sex in Georgia

PAUL MANNING

Georgians have long found in the remote mountainous regions of Georgia, Pshavi and Khevsureti, a fragmentary ethnographic image of a romantic and exotic "once upon a time" version of Georgia. Georgians have been particularly tantalized by images of the strange sexual practices of these mountains (called *ts'ats'loba*), which represent a kind of paradoxical "sex without sex," a seeming inversion of normative Georgian sexuality, belonging at the same time to the most "Georgian" part of Georgia. Fragmentary images of this "Georgian ancestral sex" circulate in a complex, multigenred interdiscursive space of citationality, becoming, in this recirculation, a haunting absent presence, representations of a sexual alterity shot through with lacunae and absences, which become full of virtual potentiality as these gaps and absences are filled in with one's own imagination and desire. This article ethnographically traces the citational connections between these fragmentary images of sexuality.

Humanitarianism, Displacement, and the Politics of Nothing in Postwar Georgia

ELIZABETH CULLEN DUNN

After the 2008 war with Russia, many internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Republic of Georgia complained that they had nothing, despite the fact that international donors gave more than $450 million in humanitarian aid. What was nothing? How was it related to forced migration? Why did humanitarianism continually focus the IDPs' attention on what they had lost rather than the help they had been given? In this article, I use the work of existentialist philosopher Alain Badiou to argue that humanitarianism creates four forms

of absence: anti-artifacts, black holes, imaginary numbers, and absolute zero. These forms of nothingness force displaced people into having nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing, which in turn prevents them from reassembling the fragments of their previous lives into meaningful forms of existence in the present.

The Would-Be State: Reforms, NGOs, and Absent Presents in Postrevolutionary Georgia

MARTIN DEMANT FREDERIKSEN

In the wake of the 2003 revolution in Georgia, the speed of reform in the sphere of psychosocial aid meant that a range of international donors left the country, believing that the services provided by local NGOs, whom they had been supporting, were now taken over by the state. However, many of the reforms and institutional changes officially initiated during this period were never implemented. Hence, an array of present-day problems remained unresolved or untreated because they would be addressed by the state "in the future." In this article, I refer to this as a *would-be state*: the condition of that which will be in the future and a state that gains its legitimacy by promising a better tomorrow. By rendering certain issues as unproblematic in future, the Georgian state has managed to make them appear to be unproblematic (and thus absent) in the present. I use this framework to engage in a wider discussion of the measures of success in eastern Europe's new democracies.

Christian Hajjis—the Other Orthodox Pilgrims to Jerusalem

VALENTINA IZMIRLIEVA

In this article, I identify the Christian "hajj" to Jerusalem as an important Ottoman sociocultural phenomenon. I argue that by the nineteenth century the Balkan Eastern Orthodox communities in the Ottoman empire had restructured and reinterpreted their Holy Land pilgrimages to mirror the Muslim hajj to Mecca. As a result, the ritual trip to Jerusalem was transformed into a mechanism for upward social mobility and communal empowerment. By exploring the structural and functional similarities between the Muslim and the Christian hajj, this article contributes to studies of Muslim-Christian interactions outside "the clash of civilizations" paradigm. It also reveals striking distinctions between the Balkan Christian *hajjis* and the Russian *palomniki,* calling into question the influential scholarly assumption of Eastern Orthodox practices' homogeneity, an assumption that stands largely uncontested in the field of Slavic studies.

Reconstructing the Meaning of Being "Montenegrin"

JELENA DŽANKIĆ

Although there has been significant change in the content of the category of "Montenegrin" identity, the policies adopted by the government of Montenegro within its nation-building project have been only partly successful. This study examines popular support for the policies that have helped to recon-

struct Montenegrin identity in the decades following the disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia. The specific focus here is on the symbolic reconstruction of identity parameters in Montenegro after the split of the ruling party in 1997 and the start of political divisions in this tiny Balkan state. Relying on original quantitative and qualitative data, the analysis associates the divide related to the question of statehood with perceptions of identity and shows how the content of "Montenegrin" identity changed as a result of people's support for or opposition to independence.