

2014 Heldt Prizes

We are proud to announce the Heldt Prize winners for 2014.

Best Book by a Woman in Slavic/East European/Eurasian Studies

Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

In her outstanding second monograph, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters*, Kate Brown advances a shockingly new understanding of the Cold War. Based on her deep research and detailed interviews with survivors and victims at two plutonium complexes: Ozersk in the southern Urals regions of the former Soviet Union, and Richland in eastern Washington state in the United States, Brown writes a transnational account about the nuclear age that challenges most of the conceptual foundations that undergird our field. At one level Brown recounts an exciting story of the nuclear establishments in the United States and the Soviet Union as they raced to produce nuclear grade weapons. While both commandeered labor and resources on a wartime footing, in the United States it led to the unprecedented collusion between state and corporations, and in the Soviet Union there was a belated recognition that the gulag economy had a limited shelf life. Both sides came to the conclusion that the modern consumer society was the best way to motivate people to work hard, without complaints or questions. Brown writes a deeper and counter-intuitive history of modernization where access to consumer goods, good schools, individual living space, and “safe” communities for some comes at the cost of relinquishing democratic rights of freedom of expression, accepting social inequality, and turning a blind eye to the horrific damage to the environment and public health. It is ironic that American economic “plenty” and Soviet “dearth” produced similar ecological and public health results, and not surprisingly, both governments tried to block Brown’s access to the records. Brown’s new paradigm of the Cold war will inspire debates among Russian and American historians, and scholars of globalization, world, transnational, and environmental history will benefit greatly from her morally compelling and elegantly framed arguments. The AWSS Committee is very proud to award the Heldt Prize in the category of Best Book by a Woman in Slavic/East European/Eurasian Studies to Dr. Kate Brown.

Honorable Mention in the category of Best Book by a Woman in Slavic/East European/Eurasian Studies

Madeleine Reeves, *Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014)

Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia is an extraordinary account of the relationship between the state and society. Its author, anthropologist Dr. Madeleine Reeves, understands the ethnographies of the people and their politicians well in the borderlands of the Ferghana Valley, the meeting place of three former Soviet republics, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan

and Tajikistan. Dr. Reeves successfully captures the messy history of territory and border construction during the twentieth-century in Soviet Central Asia. She also illustrates the urgent ways in which the current modes of governance have mutated and sustained in real life circumstances. Her account pays special attention to the intimate and intimidating “gaps” of the “chessboard” or sieve-like borders of the Ferghana Valley. *Border Work* exposes the complexities and contradictions of the post-Soviet drive for legitimate independence and undocumented realities of everyday labor, trade and movement. Dr. Reeves’s deep engagement with the people of these border towns, coupled with her sophisticated theoretical analyses of gendered lives demonstrates the previously unexplored capabilities of the people of this region. This remarkable book enriches the scholarship on the study of borders by engaging everyday practices of rural populations and their interactions with authority figures such as “a pair of conscript soldiers with Kalashnikov rifles, a paper ledger, and a stamp.” Dr. Reeves’ book has received Honorable Mention in the category of Best Book by a Woman in Slavic/East European/Eurasian Studies.

Best Book in Slavic/East European/Eurasian Women’s Studies

Jenny Kaminer, *Women with a Thirst for Destruction: The Bad Mother in Russian Culture* (Evanston, ILL: Northwestern University Press, 2013)

Lucid and accessible, *Women with a Thirst for Destruction: The Bad Mother in Russian Culture* differs from previous gender studies on the mother archetype in Russian culture not only in its detailed analysis of representations of the bad mother in three crucial periods of Russian and Soviet history, but also in posing two key questions about the multifaceted and intangible central maternal figure in Russian culture. By focusing on the three upheavals, the Emancipation of the serfs, the Russian Revolution, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, which intensely impacted the mother-discourse, and the decades after them, Jenny Kaminer asks whether the bad mother reasserts the centrality of the mother archetype or if it reveals the imperfection of this figure which can no longer sustain the same cultural power as it had in early times. Well worth reading, the perceptive gender analysis of contextualized literary works and its reflective quality build a captivating argument and present a major contribution to Russian gender and cultural studies. This rich, powerful, and thought-provoking account by Dr. Kaminer has been awarded the Heldt Prize in the category of Best Book in Slavic/East European/Eurasian Women’s Studies.

Honorable Mention the category of Best Book in Slavic/East European/Eurasian Women’s Studies

Paula Michaels, *Lamaze: An International History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Dr. Paula Michaels’ *Lamaze: An International History* offers a fascinating recounting of the history of the well-known method of relaxation that so commonly accompanies natural childbirth today in the United States. What is less known and offered in detail in this well-researched and beautifully written monograph is that the practice originated in the Soviet Union during the early years of the Cold War. With an innovative transnational approach, Michaels traces how French scientist, Ferdinand Lamaze visited the Soviet Union in 1951 and “discovered” the method, while witnessing its use in natural (drug-free) childbirth. This technique, psychoprophylaxis (conditioned response), grew largely out of the famous methods developed earlier by the famous Russian/Soviet scientist, Ivan Pavlov. Dr. Lamaze popularized the method in France in the 1950s, and “Lamaze” made its way to the US in the 1970s, where it has retained its popularity. Michaels tells this complex story through her adroit reading of a wide variety of sources, in a

history that addressed many of the concerns of social, political and intellectual history, as well as the history of science. Paula Michaels' monograph has received Honorable Mention for the Heldt Prize in the category of Best Book in Slavic/East European/Eurasian Women's Studies.

Best Article in Slavic/East European/Eurasian Women's Studies

Francesca Stella, "Queer Space, Pride, and Shame in Moscow" (*Slavic Review* 72, no. 3 [Fall 2013: 458-80])

In this nuanced and complex essay about the LGBT movement in Russia and its attempts to achieve inclusion and visibility within Russia as well as abroad, Stella examines the constraints that local movements face when they are endorsed by powerful global actors and transnational organizations in the face of government oppression at home. Based on extensive research in Moscow as well as in the provinces, the article demonstrates that the LGBT community has been able to claim neighborhoods, bars, and cultural spaces in Moscow as their own and has been accorded a level of tolerance as long as their members keep a low profile and do not openly advertise their lifestyle choices. Although Moscow aspires to be a multicultural and diverse global city, the avowed homophobia of the Kremlin and that of the Muscovite cultural and political authorities, prevents it endorsing the vociferous Gay Pride demonstrations that have become customary in cities around the world during the last decade. Stella deftly shows that the LGBT community in contemporary Russia has to navigate the rocky shoals of both local and transnational politics in order to create an authentic movement that is not a replica of global models, while warding off the unwarranted intrusions and violence against them that is covertly sanctioned by the Kremlin. The Committee awards Francesca Stella the prize for the Best Article in Slavic/East European/Eurasian Women's Studies.