

Everyday Belonging in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: Russian Speakers in Estonia and Kazakhstan, by Alina Jašina-Schäfer, Lexington Books, 2021, 190 pp., \$95.00 (hardcover), ISBN 9781793631381, \$39.99 (paperback), ISBN 9781793631404.

Alina Jašina-Schäfer states, “Little attention was paid to the micro-practices of Russian speakers themselves and their everyday attitudes, feelings, and experiences” (21). In Estonian, we have a proverb: “*Kus viga näed laita, seal tule ja aita*” (“Wherever you see fault, come and help”). So, Alina Jašina-Schäfer has come and, walking with her interlocutors in the post-Soviet borderland, Narva and Petropavlovsk, explored “how Russian speakers sense, read, and narrate their surrounding landscapes and negotiate their belonging” (69). Every scholar, from beginning students to established researchers in the field, will find something different in this book, whether it be unique methodology, fascinating discourse results, or debating discussions.

The book consists of seven chapters. The Introduction explains that, guided first by personal experience, the author “attempts to better understand the complex meanings of everyday belonging” (2). The reader is introduced to the issues that prompted the author to write this book: “How do minorities ... practice belonging? ... respond to political and sociocultural exclusions? ... reconcile claims of being excluded?” (2). The author was more interested in the regular walks her respondents took on their own initiative than in organizing groups for purposeful walks and shared storytelling.

Chapter 2, “Cities of Enduring Dislocation,” explores the influence of political projects of national revival on everyday life in the border towns of Narva and Petropavlovsk, Estonia and Kazakhstan accordingly, one of which is part of the European Union and the other part of the Eurasian Economic Union. The author poses the question: “Is Narva a forgotten periphery?” (25). However, in relation to Petropavlovsk, the metaphor of the “Northern gates of Kazakhstan” is used (34).

Chapter 3, “Transgressing Exclusion,” discusses “what interiority means for Russian speakers” (47) in two cities, what alternative meanings the study participants attach to their places of residence, and how interiority, in turn, is created and achieved from exteriority.

Chapter 4, “Landscapes of Belonging,” looks at the dialectic of inclusion and exclusion through the prism of specific locations and explores “the symbolic connotations that both natural and built sites” (70) create for Russian speakers as they walk and traverse various trails.

Chapter 5, “Relationship with the External Space of Russia,” examines the ways in which post-Soviet Russia attempts “to reconstruct itself as an inclusive space for the Russophone community outside of its territory” (97) with its influence on the individual affiliation and positioning of native Russian speakers.

Chapter 6, “Defining Rodina for Russian Speakers,” answers the question of what home means to Russian-speaking residents of Narva and Petropavlovsk, and how these denotations are used to give meaning to their “own exteriority or interiority” (119).

The author carefully examines the ways of narrating, feeling, and practicing everyday life and concludes that Russian speakers in both countries are rather stuck in their past, but at the same time belong to something modern, though they are not fully integrated into it. Trying to understand the essence of this “in-betweenness,” the author describes it as a constant spiral of inclusion and exclusion and identifies Russian speakers as those who believed they were on a path that would lead them to integration into a new group; those who are in transition with constant identification difficulties somewhere in between; and those who sort of feel disconnected from the larger collective. This in-betweenness presents an opportunity for “cultural hybridity.”

The author emphasizes that what is considered foreign or external and what is meant by internal and interior are constantly changing. Through memories, traditions, and narratives, speakers of Russian position themselves differently in everyday life, reconstructing their lives at the local level.

In addition to individual approaches to “in-betweenness,” cities such as Narva and Petropavlovsk can experience both negative and positive effects of government nationalization policies. For

example, the introduction of new cultural symbols into urban landscapes and the removal of Soviet/Russian symbols led to the exteriorization of Russian speakers due to the emergence of a new spatial and temporal ordering.

On the contrary, numerous alternative heterogeneous representations of oneself and the meanings of one's belonging have arisen through the same politics that bridge different histories, cultural styles, scales, and versions of Estonianness/Kazakhness, Europeanness/Cosmopolitanism, and Russianness. Different approaches in the countries lead to dissimilar conditions, which consequently lead to different exclusive conceptions of these practices of belonging and the concept of inclusion or exclusion.

Given that internal self-perception and repositioning efforts differ from region to region at different times, Estonia and Kazakhstan have experienced Soviet rule and socialism differently, and they have significantly different relationships with the Soviet profile. On the one hand, Estonia makes a clear distinction between the Soviet period and the present, and tries to separate both economically and politically from Russia and its integrationist plans and participate in the policies of the European Union. On the other hand, Kazakhstan seeks to preserve the cultural and political boundaries between the two eras and works closely with Russia within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union. Moreover, this policy affects the concept of "Russianness," which is "today a 'core' of a broader concept of Kazakhstan, in Estonia, ... a symbol of the traumatic past and a potential threat in the present" (143).

Dislocation and estrangement are not fixed indefinitely; it is not a situation that should be permanent. It can be further negotiated, with each side seeking to refocus and learn to coexist. That is because one cannot talk about separation if there was not anything connected before that. Narva and the rest of Estonia and Petropavlovsk and the rest of Kazakhstan actually have a lot in common, much more than they are willing to accept, and there could be positive changes in their relationship in the future, if they were willing and open to them.

For further research, the author considers it necessary to pay more attention to the positioning of Russian speakers in socioeconomic networks of power, their experiences and practices of belonging, as well as their normative value systems.

This book, although sounding utopian in some sections, because of the radical changes that took place in Narva in 2022–2023, is an important testimony to understanding the borderlands in the context of the current security situation in Europe. At the same time, in light of this, the author's call for more research in this area should not remain a voice crying in the wilderness.

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The Blood of Others: Stalin's Crimean Atrocity and the Poetics of Solidarity, by Rory Finnin, University of Toronto Press, 2022, 334 pp., \$80.00, (hardcover), ISBN 9781487507817.

In light of today's heated debates on the role of literature in political projects, Rory Finnin's groundbreaking book *The Blood of Others: Stalin's Crimean Atrocity and the Poetics of Solidarity* provides a forceful answer. Yes, literature can be weaponized by states to create the desired narrative or "co-opt readers in the legitimation of imperial conquest," yet it can also be a source to generate solidarities and spur empathy with the Other.

To demonstrate the power of literature to forge solidarities, Finnin embarks on an ambitious project to write a cultural history of Crimea in the Black Sea region that too long has been sidelined to the peripheral position in several area specializations. Bringing Crimea to the fore, the author also