

I was more caught up by Davis' critical response to Rancière's somewhat disparaging take on 'identity politics'. Davis uses the example of queer theory and activism (he examines the relationship between Rancière and Queer Theory in more detail elsewhere: see Davis, 2009) to illustrate his argument that the limitations Rancière imposes on achieving political intervention may cause him to miss out on some of the powerful work of interruption and reconfiguration carried out by political 'identity' based projects.

In the brief but poetic Afterword, Davis (as he promised the reader in his Preface) gives reign to his personal enthusiasm for Rancière's intellectual project, configuring it in terms of its 'exemplary singularity: it voices a radically enabling and egalitarian call to intellectual, political and aesthetic exploration... it is an incitement to all – to anyone, to everyone – to pursue with application their own autonomous intellectual-aesthetic-political path' (p. 161). Anyone so incited, no matter in what direction or through which (inter)disciplinary landscape(s) their path takes them, will find this book highly engaging and thought-provoking. Overall, it provides both novices and experts with a clear exposition of Rancière's philosophical lexicon and methodological principles, combined with careful attention to (sometimes unusual) detail and thoughtful critique. The dedicated thematic chapters mean that the book offers something for those with a focused interest on one aspect of Rancière's work who may wish to dip into selected chapters or sections, but crucially the text as a whole emphasises that although Rancière's interventions are famously wide-ranging, they are far from disparate and inform and provoke each other, and have developed (and continue to develop) in the context of a specific biographical and intellectual trajectory. In short, this is an important and welcome book which is likely to add further momentum to the already growing appeal of Jacques Rancière.

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References

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The Spectacular State: Culture and National Identity in Uzbekistan

Laura L. Adams, Duke University Press, Durham, NC and London, 2010, £60.00, paper £14.99, 242pp.

The Spectacular State is a rich and ethnographically nuanced study of cultural production in Uzbekistan's first decade of independence. It provides a

sophisticated account of the place of mass spectacle in the articulation of national ideology and the ambivalent role of cultural elites in sustaining and reproducing a myth of popular participation. The text is lucid and the ethnography engaging. As such, *The Spectacular State* makes a significant contribution to a comparative sociology of cultural production in authoritarian regimes and deserves to be widely read by students of Central Asia.

The focus of the study is on the logistically complex and politically fraught production of mass outdoor spectacles that accompany two of Uzbekistan's national holidays: *Navro'z*, (Spring New Year) and Independence Day. Adams' primary interlocutors are the cultural producers charged with coordinating and executing these events: theatre and music directors, choreographers from the capital and regional centres, as well as managers and politicians from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Adams draws upon extensive interviews with these elites, as well as observations of planning meetings and rehearsals to reveal the tensions at stake in putting the state, its history and its diverse regional identities on display.

Over the course of four substantive chapters, Adams makes several contributions to our understanding of the politics of cultural production in contemporary Uzbekistan: the importance of attending to the form as well as the content of mass spectacle; the importance of internationalism and universalism to the articulation of Uzbekistan's place in a world order; the desire of cultural elites to communicate with other elites around the world by drawing upon 'universal' forms such as the Olympics for inspiration; and the reliance upon discourses of nationhood and modes of representation inherited from the Soviet past.

It is in the detail of the negotiations over cultural production that the text is ethnographically most rich. Adams conducted months of ethnography between 1995 and 2002, with access to meetings, rehearsals and heated discussions between politicians and cultural practitioners that would be difficult to conceive in today's Uzbekistan. This gives a valuable insight into the everyday work of articulating an ideology of national independence at a crucial period in Uzbekistan's history: in the discussion of decisions over what to include and what to cut from a given performance; in the debates over whether particular historical episodes should be properly included in the national narrative; or in disagreements over the appropriate portrayal of Amir Timur, whose bloody reign is central to the articulation of post-Soviet Uzbek presidentialism.

What emerges from these debates is a picture neither of blind conformism on the part of cultural producers, nor of resistance (the intellectuals 'against' the regime), but of ambivalence, complicity and the constraints that institutions place upon those who work within them. The cultural elites appear from this study as people at once committed and compromised: they work under enormous constraints (with few opportunities to refuse invitations to participate in planning events that may take up as much as a third of their time) and yet they are also complicit in reproducing a myth of the spectacle as a form both participatory and authentic. Although we gain only a few glimpses in the

text into how these spectacles were watched, debated and understood by ordinary people, Adams clearly sees the Independence Day and Navro'z celebrations as neither participatory nor authentic. Indeed, they emerge in the text as something of a contemporary opium of the people, with the cultural producers living in the (pleasurable) illusion of providing something that 'the people' want to see: 'Power was exercised by the state in the desires of the cultural elites to please their leaders and, even more so, to please themselves' (p. 188).

This is a story, then, of compromise, complicity and bricolage in the production of national narratives. In this the book is subtle and successful, perhaps especially in revealing how Soviet forms of cultural communication and categories of social classification are reappropriated in the very performances through which the Soviet experience is being officially silenced. Where the argument seems less convincing, however, is in articulating an account of the 'spectacular state' – that is, in interrogating the particular place of Olympic-style celebrations to a distinctive modality of post-Soviet power. This is an argument that Adams raises at the outset, but does not really follow through in the substantive ethnographic chapters, such that it is unclear quite how the rich ethnography of cultural production informs an account of the contemporary state in Central Asia.

A spectacular state, Adams argues in the introduction, is one where, 'more than in most countries, politics is conducted on a symbolic level, promoting the state's domination over the shared meaning of concepts such as heritage and progress' (p. 5). It is precisely this domination of the communicative sphere that enables us to comprehend the particular brand of authoritarianism that characterised 1990s Uzbekistan – one in which mobilization in mass spectacle was more important than rule through fear. Indeed, Adams argues that although Uzbekistan was among the least free states in the world, it was until 2005, 'not strongly characterised by the defining institutions of totalitarianism, and many authoritarian regimes: a highly elaborated and constraining ideology, a party-state and its attendant societal organizations, a widespread cult of the leader, and militarization or a reliance on widespread terror' (p. 5).

This characterisation of a rather benign participatory authoritarianism, in which the state ruled through a monopoly on the legitimate means of cultural communication, may be appropriate for understanding Uzbekistan of the early-mid 1990s. It fails to account, however, for the dramatic shift towards terror and fear that well pre-dated the Andijan massacre of 2005; nor the reasons why a political regime terrified of its population nonetheless continued in mounting pseudo-participatory mass spectacles that are ostensibly 'universal' in form. This in itself does not detract from the central core argument of the book concerning the role of cultural elites in the production of spectacular nationalism. But it does make the title more than a little misleading – especially since the 'spectacular state' in 2010 when the book was published is a very different beast from 1995 or even 2002. As a study of cultural

elites under authoritarianism, the work is exemplary. As an exploration of Uzbekistan as a 'spectacular state', Adams' book raises as many questions as it answers.

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Karl Polanyi. The Limits of the Market

Gareth Dale, Key Contemporary Thinkers, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2010, £55.00, paper £16.99, 309pp.

As we enter yet another crisis of capitalist political economies, we witness yet another revival of interest in the work of Karl Polanyi: the fashion for his work appears to be an integral accompaniment of a 'double movement' (his concept): periods of excessive marketisation and deregulation, followed by crisis and a counteraction by states to re-regulate and re-embed the economy in moral and social orders. Need more regulation, need more Polanyian thinking. Gareth Dale's timely, complex, and thought-provoking evaluation of Karl Polanyi's significance in contemporary thought powerfully contests this containment of a radical historical vision into the swings and roundabouts of enduring capitalism. Polanyi, in spite of many ambiguities, was about alternatives to capitalism, and alternative ways of thinking about the economy in society.

Spanning the first two thirds of the twentieth century, Polanyi's life (1896–1964) traversed the experience of socialist revolutions following the First World War, the Great Depression, the rise of fascism and then the Second World War. A refugee from Hungary and Austria (where he was involved in the politics of Red Vienna), Polanyi passed through the United Kingdom, before living across the borders of the USA and Canada. His work was disrupted, seminal and dispersed, rather than finished. He is primarily known for one work, written in wartime, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (1945) (*GT*). Other works are smaller scale, opening perspectives rather than reaching conclusions. Any account of his work therefore presents a major challenge, and Dale has successfully embraced the difficulty of dealing with an intellectual and political phenomenon, for all its conceptual inconsistencies and ambiguities, its empirical weaknesses and arbitrariness, that retains an undiminished significance.

After tracing the origins of Polanyi's thought in the cauldron of Vienna of the 1920s, his espousal of a bottom-up socialism akin to Guild Socialism combined with a Christian humanist morality, Dale provides an invaluable account of the *GT*. He provides historical and contextual accounts of the contemporary debates that then informed Polanyi's work – drawing on Tönnies, Weber and the German Historical School, as well as Marx, and the Austromarxists. The principal ideas of the double movement, fictitious commodities (adapted from Tönnies), and the free-market society of mid-19th