



FROM THE EDITORS

Albert Baiburin

European University at St Petersburg
6/1A Gagarinskaya Str., St Petersburg, Russia
Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera),
Russian Academy of Sciences
3 Universitetskaya Emb., St Petersburg, Russia
abaiburin@yandex.ru

Catriona Kelly

New College, University of Oxford
Holywell Str., Oxford, UK
catriona.kelly@new.ox.ac.uk

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Work on this number of *Forum for Anthropology and Culture* coincided with the peak of the COVID-19 epidemic in both the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation. With the borders closed, and air travel suspended but for exceptional circumstances, face-to-face editorial meetings, of the kind that we normally hold from time to time in St Petersburg, were suddenly impossible. One of us was stranded in Britain without a Russian visa; the other confined to St Petersburg for the duration. However, most of the editing has always been done electronically, through a to-and-fro of emails and attachments between editors, authors, and technical staff. Hence, disruption to the schedule was minimal (indeed, the relative lack of other calls on some people's time meant that progress was in some respects speeded up). A bigger question is how the extraordinary disruption — political, social, and economic — of this peculiar year will impact on academic life generally, and whether the international events, and foreign travel, that we have all taken for granted will suddenly become more difficult. No doubt these developments will preoccupy us significantly in the course of the next year; at the moment, reading through the material of this number returns us, in some respects, to a more peaceful time.

Only in some respects, however, since the focus of the issue on children's subjectivity is directly related to the issues of identity politics that have resonated across the world during early summer 2020 with the Black Lives Matter protests (and echoing events, not least Russian Lives Matter).

And with their focus on the immediately prerevolutionary and early Soviet period, many of the contributors who adopt a historical perspective have turned their scrutiny on eras that make the uncertainties of today seem relatively manageable. It is perhaps with particular sympathy, however, that we can respond now to questions about whether ‘shared experience’ across generations (and within generations) can be meaningful, and the extent to which representatives of one group can seek to understand and analyse another. These traditional preoccupations of anthropology now have a vivid topical edge.

Apart from the ‘Forum’ and cluster dedicated to children’s subjectivity — a relatively new area of interest in Russia, but one that is growing energetically, and particularly among younger researchers — the issue contains material that supplements the discussion of religious practices in *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, no. 15, including a publication of documents from the archives of the Ukrainian KGB, and two reviews of recent Western books in the area.

Given that this issue is substantially devoted to questions of children’s culture in Russia and beyond, it is particularly sad to record the sudden death on 14 November 2019 of Vitaly Bezrogov, Russia’s leading scholar in the subject, responsible not only for important publications on the history of education, but for creating an entire school of childhood studies, as embodied in a centre at the Russian State University for the Humanities, in countless conferences and workshops, in anthologies of pedagogical texts and children’s own writings, and unstinting support of colleagues working in the field at home and abroad. We deeply regret that he did not live to see the publication of this special number of *Forum*, and dedicate it to his memory.

We are particularly grateful to our authors, to our translator, Ralph Cleminson, and to the editorial and technical staffs of the journal, for their admirable efforts to keep things on track during what has been a period of significant dislocation for all concerned. We look forward to a stage when the response to COVID-19 can become the subject of our academic work, rather than the circumstances with which we are faced when trying to do it. Good cheer and good health to all our readers!

Albert Baiburin
Catriona Kelly