

The volume can therefore serve to promote and inspire further research.

The lack of mutual recognition mentioned by Olga Briukhovetska in the case of Ukrainian and Belarusian cinematic representations of the past seems to be a much more general problem in the Central and Eastern European region. Further research with a view to bridging this gap would be very welcome. Ideally, this would include methodological work aimed at leveling out the proportion between film studies and other research fields, including history, political science, and media studies.

Perceiving screen as a battlefield, as this book's title suggests, is not the only option. Cinema may also become a contact zone and a way to overcome traumatic experience (as Mariëlle W. Wijermars argues in her chapter). Not just feature films, but also testimonies used in documentaries can serve this purpose. The question of whether cinematic representations will be used for reconciliation and not only as tools in memory wars remains open. This volume is certainly a valuable contribution to this debate and helps us to understand the processes whereby different narratives about the past are being established in the region.

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Shaun Walker, *The Long Hangover: Putin's New Russia and the Ghosts of the Past*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 278 pp.

In this monograph, Moscow correspondent for the *Guardian* Shaun Walker examines the relationship between Russian national identity, as constituted in the Putin years, and recent political developments in the post-Soviet space. The author argues that a resurgent national idea, focusing on Victory in the Great Patriotic War, has promoted social unity and the return of Russia to the ranks of major world players. However, Walker condemns the problematic

collateral effects of this narrative: its facilitation of hostility towards the West, of aggression and domination in Russia's periphery and "near abroad," and of illiberal politics and corruption domestically.

The book is primarily a journalistic account (supplemented by some academic literature) and is based on Walker's extensive reporting experience in the region. His argument can be schematized as follows. In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the myth of the Great Patriotic War remains the only historical narrative in Russia able to generate a high degree of social consensus. This narrative relates the Victory of good over evil, a triumph dearly bought by individual self-sacrifice and steadfast national unity. Putin recognized the nation-building potential of this myth and elevated it to unprecedented dimensions, but also overlaid it with an emphasis on statehood, sovereignty, and military might. This triumphal narrative, however, requires whitewashing the negative aspects of the war: its inglorious, horrific violence, the extent of collaborationism, and the criminal nature of the Stalinist regime which prosecuted it. Putin sanitizes the memory of the War through the education system, media, and legal-administrative pressures, with the result that its objectionable aspects, as well as the crimes of the Stalinist leadership, remain largely unknown to the Russian public.

In Russia's peripheries, the wider history of oppression (of which the Stalinist period was often a highpoint) is also subject to enforced amnesia. In Chechnya, the memory of tsarist colonization, wartime deportations, and the bloodbath of the two Chechen wars is silenced, to construe Russia as a liberator and benefactor of the republic. In recently-annexed Crimea, the history of the Crimean Tatars (also deported on Stalin's orders) is similarly airbrushed, clashing with both the narrative of a Russian Crimea and of a glorious War. In both cases, as in Russia proper, memory of the War and amnesia of its unpalatable aspects function to legitimate corrupt regimes brutally intolerant of opposition, and hostile to the West.

At the same time, in Ukraine, an opposite, incompatible narrative of the Soviet period and of the events of the Great Patriotic War took root, achieving dominance following the Euromaidan revolution in 2014. In the ensuing confrontations in Crimea and the Donbas, Russian aggression and pro-Russian secessionism were

galvanized by the War narrative, which framed the conflict as a new struggle with Western expansionism and fascism. This was seemingly “confirmed” by the symbolism and rhetoric espoused in some Ukrainian quarters. “Ingesting a daily diet of war and fascists and heroic last stands” made men more likely “to pick up a gun and go and fight for real” (227). The turn to Russia in Crimea and the Donbas was further eased by nostalgia for the Soviet Union, although hopes for justice and social renewal were ultimately disappointed. All in all, Walker concludes, “Russia’s glorious past has become a national obsession, but a prosperous future still seems a long way off” (253).

Although Walker’s arguments will be familiar to students of Russian collective memory, the book is valuable in bringing together a series of exclusive interviews with major players in post-Soviet memory politics. These include the ideologist Aleksandr Dugin, the one-time Donbas rebel leader Igor’ Strelkov, the current head and Prime Minister of the Republic of Crimea Sergei Aksenov, Iurii Shukhevich, the deputy behind Ukraine’s decommunization laws, and others. Equally importantly, Walker’s account integrates the stories of ordinary individuals; the argument is evidenced as much through their voice as through the author’s own commentary. Walker goes beyond the all-too-common portrayal of Russians zombified by Kremlin-controlled television, exploring why official narratives fall on fertile ground, a line-of-inquiry both more empathetic and analytically productive. Walker also takes care to maintain balance in his condemnation of the Russian memory regime: he notes both the imperfections of Western memory of the crimes of colonialism, for instance, and the inappropriateness of the Baltic and Ukrainian attempts to deal with the Soviet legacy.

Nonetheless, Walker’s balanced approach is not upheld consistently. Alongside its negative effects, the contributions of the War myth to fostering national unity, social solidarity, and meaningful collectivist values are acknowledged in passing but not factored into the assessment. Similarly, Walker does not address the question of why the War myth was “weaponized” in the first place. NATO expansion, Western intervention in the Middle East, the unilateral recognition of Kosovo, appear only as Kremlin excuses

justifying its own aggression. The idea that Russia may be acting in defense and in response to these developments, for which the War myth is mobilized, is dismissed out-of-hand. In my opinion, Walker also overstates Putin's personal involvement, and the overall political salience of memory, as in the following assessment of the causes of Crimean annexation: "Putin, in addition to his strategic concerns, could not countenance a Ukraine in which the Soviet period was viewed as an occupation, and the glorious Russian war narrative was turned on its head" (131). There are also some minor imprecisions in the text: "the Soviet Ukrainian republic was expanded" in 1939 (as Walker himself indicates elsewhere), not "after the war" (117). Viktor Yanukovich was not "a petty criminal in the 1970s," but was, as a teenager, convicted in 1967 and 1970 (respectively, of theft and battery) (191).

The book offers an insightful analysis of the new Russian historical narrative, which filled the ideological vacuum left in the wake of the Soviet collapse. A well-written and well-researched account, this book will be a useful introduction to those unfamiliar with the contours of contemporary Russian collective memory.

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