

subsequent chapters, leading the reader in analysis from interwar beginnings through the post-WWII period of the socialist regime, up to the ethnographical present.

Ch. 3 enters substantive ethnographical analysis focusing on the virtue of love. Loustau scrutinizes the impact of Hungarian volunteers from Hungary who engage in activities within Catholic orphanages, present day successors to the dormitories Catholic theologians envisioned during the interwar period. This examination revolves around the orphanages' influence on the ethnic identities of both the orphans and the benefactors involved.

Moving to Ch. 4, the ethnography is drawn from the author's personal involvement in a volunteer choir at the Csíksomlyó shrine. Under the heading of the virtue of composition, this chapter highlights the local understanding of liturgical performance as virtuous singing. Ch. 5 delves into the intricate relationship between courtliness and the Knighthood Order of the Holy Crown. This particular order is dedicated to the reverence of King Stephen (975–1038), a Hungarian saint celebrated as founder of the Hungarian Kingdom and for converting his subjects to Christianity.

Finally, Ch. 6 shifts its attention to penitence. It undertakes an investigation into a priest's labor of moral recovery following his suspension from priesthood after two decades of service and institution building to set up an independent network of orphanages.

Each chapter adds fresh details to the intricacies of the field: it explores the endeavors of local Catholic intellectuals striving for the educational and moral enhancement of rural communities, as well as the broader engagement of middle-class spiritual enthusiasts from Hungary in the education of children from underprivileged families. While an overarching ethno-national context is distinctly outlined, a detail that is somewhat underemphasized in the otherwise comprehensive ethnographic portrayal is that a significant number of these children come from Romani backgrounds. Additionally, certain instances seem to place excessive emphasis on the theoretical and theological coherence and historical continuity of social practices, whereas a more pronounced critique of the social structures would enhance the overall analysis.

In the concluding chapter the author does not shy away from raising a critical voice. We are offered an account of his public intervention, including the subsequent repercussions, in an American Catholic journal on the eve of papal visit to Csíksomlyó in 2019. He criticized the involvement of religion in increasingly right-wing political practices and challenged fellow anthropologists to engage with mainstream audiences, since unless they do so an academic critique of Christian populist nationalism remains “a riskless and solipsistic endeavor” (203).

Andrey Makarychev. *Popular Biopolitics and Populism at Europe's Eastern Margins.*

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In his monograph, Andrey Makarychev proposes “an experimental extension of the concept of popular biopolitics to a non-Western region” (2), basing his study on Estonia, Ukraine, and Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union. In discussing Michel Foucault's notion of pastoral

power and Giorgio Agamben's concept of bare life, the author focuses primarily on both philosophers' interest in language as an instrument of (bio)power. Consequently, the goal of the study is to examine how popular culture and imagination are translated into populist political slogans, agendas, and claims, and how this union of popular imaginary and political representation affects or seeks to affect human lives.

The exploration of the specific linkage between performative utterances in a broader sense (mass media shows, patriotic rituals, or ironic mottos in public protests) and what Makarychev calls popular biopolitics—with reference to Judith Butler and Guy Debord—reinforces the image of eastern Europe as a region oscillating between civilized and barbaric, cultured and natured (40). The centuries-old stereotypical concept of the region is unfortunately largely reproduced but not reflected on or scrutinized in the first chapter, so that the reference to postcolonial analytical tools that the author intends to employ in the book (43) remains rather imbalanced.

The starting example of Estonia manifests a peculiar situation that already has been analyzed in some aspects within the framework of postcolonial studies as applied to eastern Europe. While being “an object of western Orientalizing discourses” as “post-Soviet” (104), Estonia simultaneously becomes a place in which processes of Othering constitute patterns of collective belonging, namely, the place of reciprocal projections between the Estonian national majority and the Russian-speaking minority. Both groups draw their identities from the historical past and collective imaginaries of the former relationships of domination and oppression.

In a revealing analysis of Volodymyr Zelensky's trajectory from comedian and fictional Ukrainian president in the sitcom “Servant of the People” to the real presidency in 2019, Makarychev demonstrates how political populism arose out of the mass entertainment industry in Ukraine and how popular comedy forged a counter-elite discourse by depicting Vasyl Holoborodko as a true representative of the people in triumphant victory over corrupted oligarchs. Not the idea of politics as professional knowledge but rather a fantasy about the ruling politician as a modest and kind person who seeks the truth, resists the alleged arrogance of the west, and distances himself from governing circles, nourished the popular imagination and paradoxically supported the “political emptiness” of Holoborodko's political agenda (124). The sitcom ultimately created certain expectations and boosted election success for Zelensky, whose political agenda mirrored the fiction. With this insightful diagnosis of Ukraine's popular aspirations and the subsequent analysis of the street protests against Zelensky's government in autumn 2019, popular biopolitics is understood very broadly, thus losing its transparent link to the concept of biopower, citizen's bodies and lives, and therefore turning into a somewhat elusive total of political performative gestures.

In the final example, Putin's Russia, the central category of popular biopolitics, incorporating the notion of “somatic sovereignty” (Allison Hayes-Conroy, “Somatic Sovereignty: Body as Territory in Columbia's *Legión del Afecto*,” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 108, no. 5: 1298–1312) becomes more plausible again, with direct reference here to performative rituals such as the officially supported commemorative walks that strive to include families' dead relatives as an indispensable part of the present; images of patriarchal masculinity (exemplified by the militant bikers *Night Wolves* shows); or Russian propaganda, in which sacrificing human lives in the war is declared as necessary (life thus becoming “a thanatopolitical resource,” 163) or television doctors deny the severity of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite some conceptual generalizations that prevent a more accurate and specific definition of “popular biopolitics,” the monograph provides a comprehensive and insightful analysis of populist power anchored in the collective imaginary of three post-Soviet countries. The case of Russia is particularly convincing, not least due to the meticulous historical contextualization of current politics in earlier utopian traditions, such as the nineteenth-century idea of *sobornost'* or the secularly transformed Soviet idea of human immortality and resurrection. This complex of historically (re)appropriated influential ideas might be seen as a radicalized, universalist version of Michel Foucault's concept, in which the symbiosis of state and citizens epitomizes the collective *body* of a nation.