Second, the book provides a theoretical justification of ego narratives and their contribution. Aleksov has tirelessly combed dozens of archives, excavated hundreds of interviews, unpublished manuscripts, published memoirs and accounts, most of them collected in the 1980s. This is all the more valuable, as many had been earlier dismissed as lacking in literary merit and were not treated as important historical sources. Uniquely, many were written by women, offering an unprecedented glimpse into their experience and perceptions. Aware of the shortcomings of ego-literature, Aleksov carefully weighs the reliability of each material. While recognizing the fissures between experiencing an event and remembering it in representation, he insists that "by acknowledging the right of survivors to enrich our historical knowledge about the Holocaust we are reversing the obliteration to which they were sentenced" (xlii).

Third, this is a serious, successful (and deserved) effort to restore the subjectivity and agency of Holocaust survivors. It is not quite microhistory, as it does not lead to unexpected conclusions, but it complicates and enriches the overall narrative with minute details of everyday life, illegal border crossings, support networks, fictive marriages, vivid cultural life in adverse circumstances, help from local Jewish and Gentile communities, but also instances of corruption, greed, and ethnic prejudice. It provides abundant material for comparative transnational perspectives on diaspora identity, memory, and commemoration.

The book is organized in eight chronological chapters, following the consecutive waves of refugees, who were first welcomed, then, with the increase in numbers after the Anschluss, met with restrictions, and after the German invasion in the spring of 1941, subjected to brutal annihilation. As a survivor put it: "Spring was cancelled in 1941" (111). Two chapters offer case studies: one on the obliteration of Jews in the town of Ruma by the Germans; the other, the more humane treatment of the Italian occupation on the island of Korčula, juxtaposed to the former. Two chapters specifically address the Italian rescue, and the survival of Jews in Albania.

Most interesting and uplifting is the last chapter on resistance. Of the 4,572 Yugoslav Jews who joined the Partisans, one third lost their lives. Aleksov does not spare the clashes of mentality between cultivated intellectuals and rough peasants but shows the adjustment and mutual appreciation. Jews dominated the medical roles. As he laments the lack of photographs and other visual materials, Aleksov compensates with vivid descriptions worthy of a cinematographic shot: "Doctor Maria Schlesinger (1895–1943) was dying in the midst of the biggest Nazi offensive. She asked her comrades to bury her at the top of an earth den where the wounded Partisans were hiding . . . The Nazis discovered her grave but did not dig further, establishing one of the famous Partisan stories about how doctor Maria, even in her death, protected her patients" (306).

Till Hilmar. *Deserved: Economic Memories After the Fall of the Iron Curtain.*

New York: Columbia University Press, 2023. 263 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Tables. $140.00, hard bound. $35.00, paper.

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In his interview-based study "Deserved: Economic Memories After the Fall of the Iron Curtain," Till Hilmar compares memories of the post-socialist economic transition among

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East German and Czech engineers and health workers. He makes the following intertwined arguments. First, that "people's" evaluation of social change is guided by the problem of social inclusion, where inclusion means chiefly recognition of people's value as contributors to economy and society. Second, he reasons that recognition has to come from others, especially intimate others, and is thus closely connected to the development of people's social networks. Third, he drives home the point that looking for and giving such recognition is driven by cultural understandings about who deserves the given actors' choices. Fourth, summarizing the previous three points, he contends that "structural changes" such as eastern Europe's post socialist transition are, perhaps surprisingly, fully compatible with peoples' individualist accounts of success and failure.

Hilmar develops these arguments across five chapters and a brief epilogue. The introductory chapter outlines the theoretical influences that have informed his work. He condenses these influences into what he calls "the moral framework," which he deploys throughout the book against a utilitarian or instrumentalist theory of how people evaluate themselves and others. In Ch. 1 Hilmar motivates the logic of comparison between East Germany and the Czech Republic by pointing to the similarity of both regions' economic and political development before and during socialism. He also sketches the radically different trajectories of transition to a capitalist economy in both regions. The former GDR was literally taken over by the west, which simply imposed its institutional fabric on the east. As a consequence, most East Germans were found wanting in their preparedness to operate satisfactorily within these western institutions, leading to their systematic exclusion from many positions. Moreover, the eastern economy was literally dismantled as hopelessly outdated in every conceivable way. The Czech Republic could, by contrast, chart its own path of voucher privatization. While flawed by oligarchization, it still led to a cultivation of an entrepreneurial spirit.

With Ch. 2 Hilmar gets to his "main theoretical proposition: that the way disruptive economic change is remembered is guided by the problem of social inclusion." While both countries underwent marketization, price liberalization, and privatization, the associated disruption took very different forms north and south of the Ore Mountains. The immediate and massive deindustrialization of East Germany led many of the engineers and health workers in Hilmar's sample to recurrent cycles of work, unemployment, and re-training. Unsurprisingly, most have experienced this period as deeply humiliating. Their coping strategies consisted of crafting a narrative of self and other that reemphasized the depth and detail of their education and skills of improvisation. They distanced themselves from what they saw as westerners' superficiality and relentless self-promotion. The Czechs fared better. Their national discourse emphasized new opportunities, the virtues of creativity, and risk taking. Thus, East Germans remember transition as an act of colonization while Czechs saw it as something of an Eldorado.

Relying on surveys, Hilmar shows in Ch. 3 that both East Germans and Czechs professed directly after 1989 a strong support for individualistic, market-centric values. By the mid-1990s they shifted (putatively: back) to supporting egalitarian ideals. At the same time, however, Hilmar's narrative data show that both Czechs and East Germans continued to subscribe to both individualizing understandings of personal economic success and to claims of profound post-transition injustices. By analyzing his narrative data with the help of four ideal-typical narrative strategies that account for both deserved and undeserved success, as well as deserved and undeserved failure, Hilmar can show how the apparent contradiction dissolves into a profound ambiguity.

In Ch. 4 Hilmar tracks what happens to social relations in the transition from socialism to liberal capitalism. This move is essential for his argument because any sense of inclusion, any sense of deservingness has to be recognized by others to become stable. Informed by network theory, he sets out to explore "weak ties" and "strong ties" while tracing the interactional logics of breaking and maintaining these ties. Given the prevalence of individualizing moral evaluations, it is not surprising that he finds that, divergent economic trajectories

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put enormous strain on social relations leading to isolation on the one hand and self-selective sorting on the other. Beyond sorting, it remains unclear, however, what precise work particular kinds of social relations do for recognizing specific moral understandings.

In the short epilogue, Hilmar makes plausible the relevance of his findings for understanding the rise of populism. He rightly points to the appeal that populist leaders and parties derive from their recognition of cultural insiders as deserving their skills and contributions they make to society.

In sum: *Deserved* offers a seldom undertaken comparison which generates genuine insight. And it is a good read at that.

Eduard Mühle. *Slavs in the Middle Ages between Idea and Reality.*

East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, vol. 89. Leiden: Brill, 2023. xvii, 610 pp. Bibliography. Index. Maps. $208.00, hard bound.

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Professor Eduard Mühle's synthesis offers not only a survey and analytical narrative of the Slavic-speaking cultures and polities emerging between central Europe and the Volga basin sometime after the western Roman empire's disintegration and the Eastern empire's impairment. He also examines notions of an overarching Slav identity, along with historical writing of the medieval era and more recent times, taking his story up to the demise of the USSR and beyond. This entails scrutiny of the linguistic and archaeological evidence for any distinctive grouping, notably the settlement-patterns and material culture—semi-underground houses and hand-modelled pottery—discernible between the Elbe and eastern Ukraine from the seventh and eighth centuries onwards. Mühle goes on to recount the formation of Slavic-speaking political structures at the hand of dynasts—themselves not Slavs in the cases of the Danubian Bulgars and the Rus'. The Rus' *Primary Chronicle* does envisage Slavic-speakers as a *iazyk*, a term meaning both "language" and "people." But this is not a recurrent theme in the *Chronicle*. Instead, it addresses such questions as how the Rus' land came into being and who first reigned in Kyiv, demonstrating the pivotal role of "Varangian" (Nordic) princes. And prominent among the *Chronicle*'s eleventh-century villains are fellow-Slavic-speakers, the *Liakhy* (Poles). For their part, the Poles showed no sense of solidarity with fellow-Slavs like the Pomeranians. Just one other medieval work envisages the South Slavs as having constituted an entity, the text from the Dalmatian coast known as the "Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja." But this, Mühle argues, was probably written by way of countering the ambitions of the Nemanjids in the later twelfth century.

The Nemanjids themselves exemplify the general *lack* of any sense of pan-Slav solidarity. Tsar Stefan Dušan drew on East Roman ideology and visual imagery by way of legitimizing his hold over miscellaneous Slavic- and Greek-speakers and Vlachs. Only Charles IV sought systematically to present himself as rightful emperor of Slavs as well as of German- and Romance-speakers. He furthered Slavic saints' cults and perhaps even contributed himself to a work recalling Slav unity, the *Chronicle* he commissioned from Pulkava of Radenin. Charles is, however, something of an exception proving the rule: this Prague-born son of John of

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