

of Wojciech Marczewski's *Escape from the "Liberty" Cinema* and Witold Leszczyński's *Siekierzada* to demonstrate the "threats and challenges faced by artists in the new political reality" (145). Vita Gruodytė concludes the section with a lengthy chapter on independent Lithuanian music festivals in the 1980s and 1990s, positing that "no revolution in music took place in the year 1990; however, music did take part in the revolution" (167). Such music was often experimental or conceptual art, making it a "period of rapid change and strong emotional experiences" (214).

The final section, "Music and Politics Before and After the Fall," is the most convincing. Kevin C. Karnes explores the concept of "Disco" in the Soviet 1980s, though it quickly emerges that the term hardly applies to western-style music for dancing, but instead for alternative spaces of sonic performance. After a discussion of journeying and belonging, Karnes summarizes the truly utopian ideal of this late Soviet Disco space through "the creation and maintenance of social venues—at least one social venue—that were open and accessible to everyone who wished to join" (250). Peter J. Schmelz's chapter examines the 1980s US-Soviet Cultural Exchanges in the sphere of Jazz by focusing on the experiences of the Ganelin Trio and the Rova Saxophone Quartet. Schmelz traces the different journeys of both ensembles and also relates them to differing views of "freedom" in the US and the USSR (264). He concludes that the experiences of these musicians in the 1980s were disillusioning: "when glasnost equals jazz and jazz equals glasnost, for some the importance of the music was soon lost" (290).

Andrzej Mądro writes on Polish alternative Jazz (or "yass") and the band Miłość to present a "microhistory" of Poland since 1994. Mądro argues "yass openly and radically opposed the musical canons and hierarchies of art and pop culture" (301) through its opposition to just about all preconceptions, creating a "living myth of an idealistic artistic movement striving for the true and final liberation of sounds and words" (304). The collection concludes with Olga Manulkina's chapter on composer Leonid Desyatnikov and his critical reception, especially the numerous commotions and scandals that have followed his work since the 1990s. Manulkina deftly describes the post-Soviet effect on contemporary music: "freedom from censorship in the period was accompanied by economic crises . . . the system of state concerts was destroyed, composers lost royalties, and festivals had to limit themselves to chamber ensembles" (318).

The resulting collection is a persuasive set of commentaries on the unique role of cultural exchange and creation in the eastern Baltics in the late Soviet era and years immediately after the collapse. While some authors present such detailed case studies that we struggle to see wider commentary, the volume as a whole provides a compelling overview of this body of work that will serve as a valuable roadmap to readers and listeners.

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Paradoxes of Nostalgia: Cold War Triumphalism and Global Disorder Since 1989.

By Penny von Eschen. American Encounters, Global Interactions. Durham: Duke University Press, 2022. xii, 382 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. \$29.95, paper.

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In *Paradoxes of Nostalgia*, Penny von Eschen addresses the vital question of how authoritarian nationalism has come to flourish around the world in the post-Cold War

era, in an assault on the democratic values whose protection was generally understood to be the motive for western pursuit of the Cold War. Broadly, she argues that the triumphalist implementation by the United States of neoliberal values and of military might following the collapse of the Soviet Union is responsible for this development. In more detail, and as reflected in her title, she also argues that western, especially US, Cold War triumphalism led to the rise of nationalist nostalgia in both countries. In a keystone paragraph she writes:

... by the end of the 1990s, there was a convergence between US and post-Soviet societies. Both sides evolved a shared, popular sense of conservative nostalgia. Building on grievances based on perceptions of the West's humiliation of Russia, Vladimir Putin cultivated a conservative Russian nostalgia largely based on the traditional values of the Russian Orthodox Church ... In the United States, a conservative version of nostalgia congealed in the 1999–2000 George W. Bush campaign. Both elections were preoccupied with the nationalist enterprise of identifying new enemies and internal and external threats. Neither the United States nor Russia entered the new century with a reaffirmation of the social good that had shaped cold war competition, and that might have checked the disruptive privatization that upended so many lives in the 1990s (134).

The topic is one of urgent concern for anyone trying to understand why, if one central western goal in the Cold War was to bring political and economic stability and respect for human rights to the former Soviet Union, that war has been utterly lost. The global disaster of a Russian population so easily swayed to support Putin's so-called "military operation" in Ukraine, and the boundless brutality of that "operation," reflects the total failure of that aspiration. Why it was lost is one of the most important questions to be asked in the twenty-first century for those engaged in the history of this region. While von Eschen's book came out just after the invasion itself took place, she is to no small extent addressing the underlying trends that led to it; *Paradoxes of Nostalgia* is thus a heroic endeavor to tackle an existential historical problem in its full global dimensionality. Yet the answers she offers are too simple, as reflected in the vast blanket comparison she offers in the lines quoted above, conflating political events that took place in two very different societies.

For one thing, she seeks answers largely in the policies and actions of the US, without giving a great deal of agency to other national populations and cultures, including those in the former Warsaw Pact. This has the effect of clouding the importance of historically rooted regional complexities and developments. In part this is due to the privileged explanatory role she gives the concept of "neo-liberalism," without a great deal of examination. It assumes a degree of US and western power to control the wildly complex evolving economic forces of the region after the collapse of the Soviet Union, in a kind of mirror reflection of the triumphalism that von Eschen so decries. It obviates the need to examine those regional economic forces, and their social and cultural impacts, more deeply. Above all she does not account for the drive to improve living standards by any possible means in the region—including through the wide-spread theft of state property following the collapse of the Soviet state and its satellite governments. It also obviates the need to consider possible alternative actions that western governments might have taken to assume greater control, and what the unintended consequences of such actions might have been. Finally, it also obviates the need to consider what efforts were indeed made by western governments to influence regional developments, such as the campaign to support "civil society," and the impacts—or lack thereof—of those efforts.

What about the role of popular nostalgia in eastern Europe and the post-Soviet states in leading to nationalist authoritarianism? Von Eschen's efforts to draw in an immense variety of primary cultural historical sources are fruitful in the sense

of offering a partial explanation. Her analysis is sensitive and often compelling, drawing occasional gasps of intuitive recognition and heartfelt agreement from this reviewer. Yet the primary sources she chooses to analyze are all too often the products of elite rather than popular culture: films, novels, television shows, video games, and nostalgia restaurants. That many of them were broadly consumed does not mean that they entirely reflected popular sentiments. While she also draws on journalism (a complex and problematic historical source as journalists, too, are selective), primarily for historical context, it is noteworthy that she does not touch the work of journalist Svetlana Aleksievich. Her wide-ranging, probing interviews offer profound and essential insights into the complexity of post-Soviet popular malaise. Also missing is any reflection on the journalistic work of Peter Pomerantsev, whose book *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia* offers a specific glimpse into how Putin's populist propaganda state launched itself as an answer to that malaise through a world of fantasy capitalism deeply rooted in Russian imperial and Soviet cultural history. Both of these authors greatly enrich our understanding of the rising populist authoritarianism in this region in the post-Cold War era. Washington Post journalist Catherine Belton in her book *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and then Took on the West* offers a very concrete analysis of KGB/FSB networks and finances in the 1980s and 1990s that is essential to our grasp of indigenous economic developments that led to Putin's rise.

Like an early swallow, Dr. von Eschen offers us one overview of an existential historical problem. Now let's follow in her wake, and start digging deeper.

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Popular Dictatorships: Crises, Mass Opinion, and the Rise of Electoral Authoritarianism. By Aleksandar Matovski. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2021. xvi, 316 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Figures. Tables. \$39.99, hard bound.

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Electoral authoritarian regimes (EARs)—autocracies that imitate democratic elections—are the most widespread type of contemporary non-democracies. Among the many puzzles surrounding the proliferation of these regimes in countries as different as Turkey, Venezuela, Nigeria, and Russia, the core puzzle lies in the genuine popular support that these regimes seem to enjoy. While some scholars emphasize the fruitlessness of studying sincere public opinion in countries with limited space for expressing dissent, others believe that autocrats in hybrid regimes are backed up by widespread approval.

In *Popular Dictatorships*, Aleksandar Matovski (Naval Postgraduate School) advances the latter view by suggesting that the principal catalysts behind the genuine popularity of EARs are poorly managed political crises. Traumatized societies prefer EARs to military rule and liberal democracies because EARs “combine the best and avoid the worst of both democracy and authoritarianism” (4): they use democratic elections to project mass support, and secure authoritarian control by framing their leaders as emergency-managing, strong-armed rulers.

The opening chapters introduce the crisis origins of EARs. A crisis can give rise to a strongman offering a solution to the collective trauma behind it. To rationalize a popularly mandated emergency rule, autocrats use a universal rhetorical narrative