

worlds beyond human reach. It was for this reason a somewhat inherently experimental idiom, premised on the potential of as yet untested artistic methods to reveal as yet unapprehended truths. The *Symphonies* embody this paradoxical approach and the utopian energies of their author at the beginning of his career; they can be understood as a series of explorations into the proposition (which would remain fundamental to Belyi's understanding of symbolism) that there are separate realms of existence and meaningful links between them. Belyi's *Symphonies* test whether something is to be gained by casting "ordinary" experience in terms of centaurs and dragons; by relating the psychological experience of alienation to the gap between appearance and reality in science or in mystical practice; by trying to illuminate the cycles of human feelings and experiences with the patterns of artistic composition; and, most obviously, by applying some of the principles of music to literature.

The peculiar challenge of translating this sort of work is to preserve the text's clarity and its elusiveness, its elegance and its awkwardness. Belyi's *Symphonies* can be a thrilling pleasure to read; part of the thrill and the pleasure involve imagining not only the worlds sketched out in the texts, but also the ideas and aims of the author as he arranged his material in this unusual way. For works like these, even the plainest, most matter-of-fact sort of reading requires a hefty load of conjecture. Words, sentences, and larger sections cannot be assumed to function as they do in ordinary language or in any existing literary form (and this is by design) so the text's potential meanings and reverberations lack the guiderails that might insure against gross misunderstanding in reading—or translating—less aggressively innovative texts. Jonathan Stone's achievement is impressive: re-enacting Belyi's lexical repetitions without allowing them to become more (or less) obtrusive than they are in the original, and judiciously evoking some of Belyi's word play without turning the work into a distracting English-language game. He reproduces the distinctive combination of over- and under-determination that is so striking in the original.

Another challenge is to know how much introducing to do in the introduction and how much information to provide in the endnotes. Too little, and all that comes through is the strangeness of the work. Too much, and one risks preconditioning the reader's experience of works that were clearly and perhaps above all meant to be capable not only of inspiring many different readers' responses but also in some sense of "being" many different things. To my mind, Stone gets this just right as well: enough background and ground-level interpretation to give the reader a start (and a reason to start), not enough to make the texts feel like a set of homework assignments with an answer key.

Belyi's particular aspirations entailed the harmonization of empirical, rational, evocative, and mystical aspects of symbolization, and in this respect the work of translation is similar: the demands of denotation and suggestion, content and form, idea and feeling, and presence and potential bear simultaneously on the project and must all be coordinated with minimal loss and maximal effect. With this daunting task, on these challenging texts, Stone succeeds brilliantly.

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***Is Russia Fascist? Unraveling Propaganda East and West.*** By Marlene Laruelle. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021. vii, 256 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. \$39.95, hard bound.  
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One of the features of the new cold war between the west and Russia is the notion, propagated by some western journalists, scholars, and politicians, that the regime of

Vladimir Putin represents a Russian version of fascism both in its political character and in its foreign policy. Prof. Marlene Laruelle, a prominent American expert on Russia, Director of the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at George Washington University, offers a critical examination of this thesis.

After a review of existing knowledge on the nature and history of fascism, the author proceeds to a detailed study of those aspects of post-communist Russia that are cited in support of the claim that Russia is a fascist state. The results of her study can be summarized in two main points. First, Russia is definitely *not* fascist: “The Russian regime has authoritarian features, but authoritarianism is not a synonym of fascism” (27). Second, we are witnessing a “terminological inflation of *fascism*” (10): “The tendency to accuse everyone who challenges liberalism of being a new fascist has dramatically obscured our understanding of today’s Russia as well as the current transformations of the world order and Western domestic scenes. . . Controlling the labeling of political opponents and assassinating a country’s brand through the accusation of fascism is inscribed into a broader trend: the rise of character assassination in world politics. It vilifies the enemy by identifying it with the most murderous ideology, and it identifies the attacker with those who fought against Nazism or were its victims, thus using a very powerful historical reference to establish the attacker’s moral superiority” (20).

According to Laruelle, the term “illiberal” is more applicable to Russia’s political regime, as well as to many other similar regimes existing in the contemporary world. Laruelle defines illiberalism “as a new, postliberal political paradigm that reasserts the rights of a supposed silent majority by promoting sovereignty in the spheres of politics (rejection of supranational and multilateral institutions, reassertion of the nation-state), the economy (protectionism), and culture (rejection of multiculturalism and minority rights, essentialist definition of who is part of the nation and what the nation’s genuine cultural features should be)” (22).

Political groups and figures that can be regarded as fascist do exist in Russia, as everywhere, but their potential of influencing the Russian political mainstream is negligible: “The fascist tree constitutes a very small percentage of Russia’s ideological forest, and an excessive focus on peripheral characteristics obscures other ideologies that are available for consumption and that celebrate Russia’s uniqueness in more traditional ways by emphasizing national history and culture, Orthodoxy, or some form of Soviet nostalgia” (152).

Laruelle takes issue with the notion that Russia is behind the rise of illiberal political forces in the west, allegedly driven by a determination to destroy democracy. The rise of new forms of right-wing populism in western societies is rooted in internal problems of those societies, including discontent over globalization and loss of state sovereignty. Russia is not the originator of western illiberalism, but it does from time to time make common cause with it when it may suit Russian national interests, while it pragmatically interacts with other foreign political forces and regimes, from left to right.

Chapter 4 is devoted to “international memory wars” between Russia and the west. Until the 2000s, the questions of responsibility for World War II did not generate major ideological frictions between the two sides: after all, the communist Soviet Union and western democracies had been wartime allies against fascism. Later, under the influence of eastern Europe’s post-communist regimes, official European discourse moved to a position that communism was just as evil as fascism and that the Soviet Union shared with Nazi Germany responsibility for World War II. This shift in western opinion generates strong protests in Russia, where the memory of the enormous losses suffered by the Soviet Union as a result of the Nazi invasion—and the sense of national pride in playing the main role in defeating fascism—are important and strongly felt elements of the national identity. Laruelle takes note of this new

ideological rift and views it in instrumentalist terms, pointing to both sides' political goals behind it, while refraining from judgment on the substance of the politicized dispute over twentieth-century history.

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***Memory Politics and the Russian Civil War: Reds versus Whites.*** By Marlene Laruelle and Margarita Karnysheva. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. vii, 155 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. \$17.95, paper.  
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Despite its modest size this book is remarkably detailed, replete with extensive citations from a variety of rich literary and publicist sources. It presents a compact yet insightful picture of the role of political memory in shaping and reshaping the narrative of the 1918–1921 Red versus White Civil War in Russia.

The authors' discussion is divided into four overlapping chapters: 1. "The White Officer: Historical Romanticism in Soviet Culture"; 2. "White Renaissance: Cultural Rediscovery without Judicial Rehabilitation"; 3. "White Memory Activism around the Russian Orthodox Church"; 4. "The Russian State's Search for National Reconciliation," and a brief conclusion.

Drawing on numerous examples—both from high and popular culture—the authors contend that for a growing segment of "influencers" during the post-Soviet period, "the Whites represent the myth of an antebellum Russia, [with] its old-fashioned way of life, nobility, chivalry, and patriotic sense of duties. . ." (2). Among exponents of this rehabilitation of the Whites as authentic expressions of Russian national identity were the group known as the "Russian Party," as well as prominent writers, activists, artists, and academics, including Ivan Ilyin, Vadim Kozhinov, Vladimir Soloukhin, Ilia Glazunov, Valerii Ganichev, Vasilii Shulgin, Sergei Melgunov, Nikita Mikhalkov, Ivan Kovalchenko and notably Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Several of these individuals also promoted anti-Semitic tropes in combination with rejection of the west, especially its "degenerate" liberalism. Solzhenitsyn believed in a Pan-Slavic state centered around Russia, encompassing Belarus, Ukraine and northern Kazakhstan—an eerie preview of what we are currently witnessing.

The problem of reconciling the more distant White past with the recent Red (Soviet) period posed ideological problems for both the Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin administrations. How to celebrate the patriotism of Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak and General Anton Denikin without validating their "reactionary" politics? And what were the implications for the subsequent Soviet period? The authors' answer is that "the White past can be a source of nostalgia, but not a political project for the country" (107).

There have been numerous calls (some from high places) for Kolchak's Soviet death sentence to be annulled or amnestied. Statues have been erected in his honor in Siberia and elsewhere. Denikin's remains have been returned to Russia and reburied at the Donskoi Monastery in Moscow. In the present context, it is worth noting that the general was adamantly opposed to the separation of Ukraine from Russia. Moreover, Nicholas II and his immediate family have all been canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church as martyrs to the faith.

The last emperor is celebrated for his modesty, faithfulness, and benign paternalism—all seen as distinct virtues of tsarism and the "natural" form of government for Russia. The tragic demise of his rule, in this view, was not so much the fault of