

Still, the picture remained somewhat one-sided due to the chosen approach to investigate the Cold War as a *conflict*.

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Young Men, Time, and Boredom in the Republic of Georgia. By Martin Demant Frederiksen. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013. x, 210 pp. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. \$29.95, paper.
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A book about young people in seaside Batumi “can only be boring” (53), an intoxicated informant complains, during an outing to a seedy and dangerous city district. This illustrates the paradox at the book’s heart—the legacy of insecurity and criminality (the “transitional” past of pre-Saakashvili Georgia), set against the stultifying and stagnating present (a “groundhog day” for many, 80).

Martin Frederiksen, in a sensitive and wide-ranging study, summons the spirits of bored and frustrated young men in a society suspended between the past and an illusory bright future, post-Rose Revolution. Batumi’s *déclassé* and infantilized youth drink, quaff ersatz “drugs,” masturbate in claustrophobic parental homes, and half-heartedly learn English. They walk the city endlessly for lack of other occupation.

Transition “lingers”: poverty, unrealized opportunities, violence, unavoidable petty crime, and the “narco-baron” (54) Alsan Abashidze (Ajarian leader, 1991–2004). From the future loom unrealistic personal fantasies of fame and fortune. Mikheil Saakashvili’s promises ring hollow in empty lives. “Overwriting” of the Soviet past and of transition is mainly visible in the pointless urban fountains built by “King Fountain the First”—a local moniker for Saakashvili (166).

The book has four sections. The first section examines youth’s public roaming—punctuated by ruin, superficial renewal, and seasonal lassitude (in winter Batumi is “lazy town,” 92)—their social networks and imbrications with criminality. The second section explores youth’s longing for an unobtainable future, their present saturated with dreams and nightmares and an imaginative layer of the present. The third section explores youth’s “neither being nor becoming” (133)—how unwanted expectations of the future haunt the present. The final section argues for the importance of the ongoing temporal marginality in post-socialism, and against “posting” transition just yet.

The book examines friendship relations among men as *dzmak’atsebi* (“brothermen”), these compensate emasculating marginalization that is more than just the result of unemployment. *Dzmak’atsebi* is characterized by “honor”-friendship, appropriate masculinity, and mutual moral regard. Yet, like so many other practices: drug-use, language learning, this involves “mimicry” (of the “thieves-in-law” tradition). Frederiksen shows that like the veneer of toughness encountered, Georgian society as a whole suffers from the “Potemkin village” syndrome: Saakashvili’s reforms are a case of the more things change, the more they stay the same.

The chief merit of the book lies in its balanced rhythm: evocative ethnographic moments of immediacy in field-note style (printed in italics) contrast with more reflective and contextualizing material. This co-presence comes with original application of theoretical literature from cultural and area studies, and anthropology. However, the very evocativeness of place and person sometimes sets up a barrier between reader

and subject (the young men). The elegance of Frederiksen's writing and impressive theoretical tool box threatens to crowd out informants' inner life. Something of a distance remains between the researcher and researched. This is highlighted by some of the narrative language used. There is a lot of third person in the past, such as, "he suggested that we go down to the beach . . . [and] explained that he was feeling increasingly lonely" (50). This reportage style is perhaps because, as Frederiksen notes, at the time of the fieldwork he was developing his language skills as he went along (there are a few mistakes in Russian that illustrate this). As a result, a kind of hazy veil intervenes between readers and the dispossessed young men like Emil. On the other hand, this distance becomes emblematic of one of the main points of the book—the feeling of being "out of joint" with space and time as an uncommunicable experience. "Marginalization" is performed in the very ethnography itself—these men's inner workings and tumultuous emotional lives are often inaccessible even to the sympathetic researcher who endlessly hangs around with them, drinking beer, sweating in airless apartments, mindlessly throwing stones into the sea. What we do learn—about the men's drug use, borderline mental disorders, endless illness, and extremely precarious lives—makes this kind of study all the more remarkable and impressive as a research achievement. In this sense, Frederiksen makes a contribution to the global youth studies of the marginalized and sets down a marker to area studies practitioners to engage much more closely with the second generation of the "losers" of transition. How does one research a generation and group living a "social afterlife" (15), characterized by boredom and inertia?

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Moscow under Construction: City Building, Place-Based Protest, and Civil Society.

By Robert Argenbright. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016. xv, 201 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. Maps. Photographs. \$85.00, hard bound.

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There are some books that one knows, almost from the very first page, one will enjoy. For the present writer this is such a book. Its value is in the refreshing light it throws on the Russia that has emerged since 1991. In contrast to the picture which is painted by so many journalists, politicians, and Cold War publicists of Russia as a dreary, monolithic and authoritarian land verging on totalitarianism, a perspective based essentially on Kremlinology, this book looks at Russia from "below," from the perspective of ordinary people (or at least ordinary Muscovites). What emerges is a picture which is much more interesting, colorful and, in a way, more optimistic than the mass media and its informants will commonly allow. The focus is the way in which Moscow has been constructed and reconstructed (specifically in the post-communist era)—superficially a rather dry topic. What makes this book so interesting is its emphasis on how Muscovites have responded to official attempts to rebuild the city, often to the detriment of its historical character and of its residents. According to the author, in resisting such projects by various means, Muscovites have been transforming themselves from subjects into citizens, into participants in a civil society. This is a claim that will surprise many Russia watchers.

The author is an historical geographer by provenance and this gives him a particular perspective on his topic. As an historical scholar, he is acutely conscious of Moscow, and indeed of Russia, as the product of history, not something that began