

ing a new mode of encounter, which enables non-Jews, via music making, listening, dancing, and the like, to participate in Jewish culture,” it allows for “stepping into the other’s shoes and developing empathy” (272). There is no contesting that this can and does happen on the individual level. But the sentimental embrace of Jewishness on that level still has to be read more broadly against the backdrop of a Europe in which Jews find themselves increasingly in peril due to resurgent antisemitism, xenophobic nationalism, and extreme anti-Israel backlash. When the shoes in question belong not to today’s European Jews but their grandparents, the issue may not actually be as simple as the charge of appropriating Jewish culture or pacifying Holocaust memory. Rather, the old dualism—common to both antisemitism and philosemitism—of good Jews/bad Jews threatens to rear its head. The disjuncture between the virtual reality of Jewish culture and actual reality of Jewish life calls out for further explication. This is one case where the fine-grained method of ethnography misses the forest for the trees.

At different places in the book, Waligorska acknowledges the limits of her humanist anthropological interpretation. She notes how in Poland klezmer has been used to feed “the myth of prewar Poland as a multicultural arcadia” and “a counter-narrative to the accounts of Polish complicity in the Holocaust.” It also serves in both Poland and Germany as an “escapist” route for the avoidance of contemporary issues of antisemitism and nationalism (274). Waligorska concedes that klezmer is a “double-edged sword” (275). The music can be misused for official propaganda and guilt-displacement just as surely as it contains “the potential to breed empathy with victims of ethnic persecution” (277). She is well aware of the larger forces at play in the contemporary historical moment. Yet she maintains that the very conflicts engendered by debates about the politicization of klezmer ultimately have a curative effect on European society. This may be true, but it remains to be proven. What is certain is that klezmer’s afterlife cannot be fully separated from the lives of contemporary European Jewry.

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Crafting Democracy: Regional Politics in Post-Communist Europe. By Jennifer A. Yoder. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013. xiii, 233 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$79.00, hard bound.

Jennifer Yoder, who first made her mark with studies of postcommunist German elites, turns her attention in this book to central Europe more broadly, offering a comparative framework to investigate the development of regional institutions since the collapse of communism in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. As a political scientist taking on issues that have largely occupied public-administration specialists in academia and the European Union, she rightly notes that the study of democratization has tended to focus on the center. This is unfortunate, for the quality of democracy depends on its embeddedness in something more than periodic national elections and center politics. Here Yoder starts the discussion of the variables that promote or impede the development of robust regional institutions in a comparison bolstered by exhaustive examination of English-language sources and on-site interviewing of relevant actors in the regionalization debates.

The subtitle is not quite informative—the book deals not with regional politics so much as the politics of constructing regions, and the analysis is structured accordingly. An early theoretical chapter sets the framework for the chapters on each of the four central European cases, with the aim of accounting for the clear variation among

them in the politics of developing regional institutions and in their institutional capacity. She finds Poland to be the most regionally developed of the four and ties that to the decentralized structure of Solidarity, which created a voice for interests outside the capital from the early stages of the transition.

There is a rich palette of forces shaping regionalism laid out here. Although the central argument focuses on the center-driven politics of developing regional institutions (which Yoder contrasts with the grass-roots “new regionalism” of western Europe), her framework also encompasses legacy arguments—both the long-term impact of shifting ethnic and imperial configurations and the “overly centralized, bureaucratized decision-making and entrenched interests” (168) that formed the legacy of the communist period and afterward persisted to discourage regional identities and competences. She shows regionalization conceived theoretically as part of the democratic solution to the centralized communist system but as driven in practice by the configuration of conflicting issue and ideological coalitions generating some sub-optimal outcomes. A table summarizing the variable factors would have been a useful guidepost for tracking the discussion in the subsequent case study chapters.

Regional development has been viewed most often through the lens of Europeanization, but one of Yoder’s contributions is to persuasively demonstrate that the EU, while providing incentives to develop regional structures (as a conduit of funding, for example) does not account for the variations in the forms that regional politics has taken. The EU thus may have influenced the creation of regional governments per se (through financing and conditionality in the accession process) and certainly provides a framework for engagement in the EU Committee of the Regions, but EU influence cannot account for the contours of the structures created (number, size, boundaries) and their variant capabilities. The EU, indeed, may have fostered something of a shallow, “Potemkin” regionalism that is not deeply rooted in political demand or economic power (indeed, Yoder sees regional tasks as significantly underfunded).

This study is an invitation to a fruitful discussion about the parameters of regionalization elsewhere in postcommunist Europe and the current regional dynamics of the author’s own cases. Think, for example, of the power amassed by the regional “barons” in Romania, the Czech regional “godfathers,” or the implications of Albania’s north-south split—a power base and a source of conflict for the party system. But further analysis of the initial construction of regional political competencies could also build on the base provided here. For example, in the Czech case the slow development of regionalism in the 1990s might be framed by the political context of Prime Minister Václav Klaus’s extreme disinterest in enhancing any power center outside his own government base. The slow development of Czech regionalism in this sense matched his resistance to other institutions (delays in creating the senate and ombudsman) including civil society. In Poland, one of the interesting conflicts that may have deserved further scrutiny was the partisan struggle over not only the competencies of the regions but also their size and number, as politicians fought for a larger or smaller number of regions in terms of optimal partisan leverage.

Overall, one can count Yoder’s study as the vanguard of a productive research program that accords overdue attention to the regional bases of postcommunist politics.

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