BOOK REVIEWS

European Memory in Populism: Representations of Self and Other, by Chiara De Cesari and Ayhan Kaya (Eds.). New York: Routledge, 2020, pp. xviii+302.

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The 2008 economic crisis triggered socio-political upheaval, bringing forth widespread disillusion against the mainstream political classes. Populism prominently entered the public vocabulary, and so-called populist forces have since been on the rise. In recent years, growing anti-EU rhetoric has attempted to normalise the idea of nation-states and to halt the European integration process. The differentiation in the construction of memories and nation-building processes has deeply affected the overall unit of Europe, as its fractured reaction to the Covid19 pandemic has further shown. The representation of the past, for the traditional values it brings along, plays a crucial role in populist discourses.

This relationship between memories of the past and populism is at the core of the collective volume *European Memory in Populism: Representations of Self and Other,* edited by Chiara De Cesari and Ayhan Kaya. They emphasise the intertwined role of memory and cultural heritage in the far-right populist discourse, and their significance in the enduring construction of the nation. As the editors explain, the volume

critically examines the populist meaning of "Europeanism", whereby European culture and heritage is problematically framed according to specific territorial boundaries and thus associates Europeans with Christianity and, implicitly, whiteness. Constructed like this, European heritage erases the reality of multiculturalism as well as its colonial past.

Remarkably, it might be the case of the acceptance of both a common European history and a common European culture, as De Cesari, Bosilkov and Piacentini present us. Drawing on an unusual grounded theory approach in political science and history, they interview the supporters of eight populist parties and find out an increasingly imagined construction of Europe.

Gal Kirn's contribution focuses on anti-totalitarian monuments in Ljubljana and Brussels. Moving from the similarities between these two cities, Kirn indicates a shift in the EU's anti-totalitarian memory, omitting its anti-fascist legacy, in favour of its anti-communist legacy. Thus, we are in front of a new pan-European, revisionist trend, namely one memorial for all the victims of totalitarianism.

In Italy, Gabriele Proglio looks at how Matteo Salvini – leader of the Lega and then-deputy prime minister – has adopted the symbols and vocabulary of the colonialist propaganda into his anti-migrant populist rhetoric. Patterns as the defence of national frontiers from non-Italian people and Salvini's transformation as the "father of the nation", can be better understood through the author's two-dimensional model: from the colonial legacies (the ghost) to the recognition of the self in a national imagined community (the mirror).

Luiza Bialasiewicz's and Lora Sariaslan's chapter deals with the geopolitics of the 'oriental rug'. By illustrating the shift of oriental rugs from being markers of status to fearful objects, the authors focus on how the emotions created by the pub-

lic reactions on materials, frame the politics of resentment constructed in contemporary Europe against Islam.

The volume also explores the religious side of populism. In his chapter on the Netherlands, Ernst van den Hemel examines the Party for Freedom′s tweets to map the party's references to religious and cultural traditions and shows how social media construct a given heritage as well. Later on, Markus Balkenhol and Wayne Modest explore the links between the postcolonial melancholia, the right-wing populism and the narratives of caring for the nation. Susannah Eckersley follows a darker path of the European heritage, as she examines the firebombing of Dresden in 1945 by the Allies. Notably, Eckersley brings to light the manipulation taking place in the management of heritage and memory, both from a victim/perpetrator narrative and the politics of fear and pity. By identifying two axes - the appropriation of the past and the appropriateness in the present - she creates an analytical framework that can be used to analyse similar phenomena elsewhere.

The instrumentalisation of the past by the Finns Party through four core discourses represents the content of Tuuli Lahdesmaki's chapter. Those are the naturalisation of a nationalist Europe; the past in the meaning-making of the EU; Europe's cultural-religious-moral entity; and the defence of Europe′s liberal heritage against "Islamisation".

In Poland, as Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski argues, memory is a form of symbolic power. The politics of "lustration" has covered an essential part of the political discourse, stigmatising political opponents and creating a populist division in the Polish society between the "true people" and the "traitors".

Although *European Memory* is the main focus of the volume, it also goes beyond Europe's conventional borders and covers Turkey and Israel. Ayhan Kaya and Ayse Tecmen's discourse analysis of the Justice and Development Party (AKP)'s

statements on the past illustrate how populism, Islamism, and neo-Ottomanism have been instrumentalised in the party's political discourses. Likewise, Gonul Bozoglu examines how the AKP attempted to replace Ataturk and the First Republic's secularist memories with neo-Ottomanism's Islamism through the case of the Panorama 1453 Museum in Istanbul. Israel is another case in point to show how memory plays a crucial role in the state-formation process. Through a typical populist dichotomy, between "the people" (Askenazi Israelites of the diaspora) and "the elites" (Jews of the Middle East), similarities can be found between Israel's repressions against its non-European people: first the Jews of the Middle East and then the Palestinian people.

Lastly, Ruth Wodak highlights the complex process from the construction of history to its share and general acceptance from the people's majority, whereas Astrid Erll takes collective identity as a crucial characteristic of the constructed nature of memories.

To conclude, De Cesari and Kaya meritoriously highlight the interplay between populism and memory, and the ways the latter is (re)constructed, instrumentalised and exploited to the benefit of the former. The variety of disciplines through which these themes are explored interestingly enriches the volume and truly contributes to the literature on populism. At the same time, the dominant qualitative approach allows the reader to delve deeply into the complex construction and public acceptance of memories. Nevertheless, adding some quantitative analyses could have further strengthened this contribution by making it even more innovative. Although a more coherent organisation of the chapters according to geographic, thematic or disciplinary clusters would make reading the book more straightforward, it nonetheless remains a crucial research study. Also, the absence of a chapter drawing a general conclusion of the collective volume is quite surprising and disappointing

in the end. The book shall certainly inspire additional analyses not only on the rest of Europe but also on non-European countries to shed further light on the complexity of memory studies and their significance in the study of the rising populism trends.

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