

Citation style

Zunneberg, Christel: Rezension über: Mischa Gabowitsch (ed.), Replicating Atonement. Foreign Models in the Commemoration of Atrocities, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, in: Comparative Southeast European Studies, 66 (2018), 3, S. 444-446, <https://recensio-stag.lorax.syslab.com/r/dc915fbffbc549da82b1703d668fa1dd>



copyright

This article may be downloaded and/or used within the private copying exemption. Any further use without permission of the rights owner shall be subject to legal licences (§§ 44a-63a UrhG / German Copyright Act).

successor state) and the 'Serbian question' and 'Albanian question', both at issue in the named wars. Another parallel is the common conflict situation: in 1914, Serbia was attacked by Austria-Hungary, and in 1999 by the NATO intervention with air strikes executed by a coalition of European states led by the USA. In both conflicts Russia, allied with Serbia, was against the interventions. Nevertheless, when some hundred Russian parachutists suddenly occupied Prishtina airport on 11 June 1999, the situation did not escalate into a Third World War (260).

The study concludes by summarising mechanisms for sustained peace protection and defence in Europe and with suggestions for the European institutions to address present day conflicts more effectively.

One explanation for maintaining the conflict as regional at the end of the twentieth century was the fact that the security interests of the neighbouring states were not generally affected by the Yugoslav wars. None of the European countries wanted to expand their state borders. They succeeded in confining themselves to their geostrategic interests in the Balkans. Germany, in particular, was now an integral part of the European Union (EU) and NATO, both of which acted on a common agenda. Furthermore, this also did not enable Serbia to engage individual states, e.g. France, Serbia's historical ally, in objecting to the military intervention; also, Russia and its president Boris Yeltsin were at that time more interested in cooperation with the West than in conflict. As the Russian-European contacts have cooled down after 2008, this issue will merit further and deeper observation, especially after 'the Crimea crisis'—a crisis for the EU, but a (regional) war for Ukraine in Crimea and in the Eastern part of Ukraine and a 'hybrid' war for Russia. The concluding remarks thus are devoted to an appeal

for common and effective European foreign, security and defence policies.

From a historian's point of view, the book is stimulating. It shows in many aspects how historical politology may explain political failures in the past and help in avoiding replicating them in future—ideally, with the thought in mind that history never exactly repeats itself.

Katrin Boeckh (Munich/Regensburg)

Mischa Gabowitsch, ed, *Replicating Atonement. Foreign Models in the Commemoration of Atrocities*, London: Palgrave Macmillan 2017. 353 pp., ISBN 978-3-319-65026-5, €124.79 (Hardback)

Learning from (coming to terms with) history—that is what the edited volume *Replicating atonement. Foreign models in the commemoration of atrocities* (2017) is about. Gabowitsch et al. critically engage with the rationale of 'atonement by analogy'. It examines how seven postconflict countries—Argentina, Canada, Japan, Lebanon, Russia, Rwanda, Turkey as well as former Yugoslavia and the US state of Mississippi—have used other countries' records of *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung* as a point of reference for their own efforts in dealing with a dark past. A concise summary of *Replicating atonement* would be that postconflict societies have instrumentalized foreign models of dealing with a dark past in all kinds of ways—from counterproductive replication to creative adaptation, with everything else in between.

Replicating atonement makes for a very significant academic endeavour for three reasons. First, while the subject of study is not new, Gabowitsch's edited volume is one of the few case-study collections since the so-called 'memory-boom', with

one central question, running through and connecting all the component case studies. Trivial as it may seem, such a coordinated, combined effort of no fewer than a dozen authors is an achievement in itself. Joint, interdisciplinary ventures are very promising in the face of the near exhaustion of collective memory studies two decades after its 'boom'. Second, Gabowitsch's book is a bold academic attempt to differentiate between the uses of atonement models. As is referred to in the title, he distinguishes between four archetypical 'foreign models in the commemoration of atrocities'. A collection of case studies is aimed at demonstrating that foreign-atonement methods and records have typically served as a 'yardstick' (an unreachable point of contrast), a 'foil' (a role model without any knowledge of, or interest in, that exemplary country), a 'screen' (a substitute memory) and a 'springboard' (a source of inspiration). This intellectual, theoretical distinction is certainly persuasive; however, a few critical remarks as to the accuracy of these models are in place. Defining models automatically (a) raises the question as to what they are modelled on—and it does not go without saying that West Germany is meant every time Germany is referred to as 'the master atoner'. Furthermore (b), if the case studies supporting the respective models had been grouped accordingly—rather than scattered through the book—some expressions of reproduction would have been more convincingly established as an actual model than others. Collectively, the country-studies in which foreign atonement was a 'yardstick' (Japan, Turkey and former Yugoslavia) and a 'springboard' (Canada, Mississippi and Lebanon) might establish these as a true model. The use of foreign-atonement records as a 'foil' and 'screen', for that matter, hardly make for real paradigms, with

respectively Russia and Rwanda as the only supporting case study and without references to similar cases. Moreover, (c) assembling and subsequently contrasting the case studies would have clarified how every model is merely an archetype. Turkey's process of sorting out the Armenian Genocide is interpreted in two case studies from different perspectives: while von Bieberstein points out how Germany's exemplary memorial regime has been used by political representatives of the Armenian community in Germany as a 'yardstick', Kaya emphasizes how it inspired Turkish democratization efforts—hinting at a hybrid combination with the 'springboard' model. Another, more specific, remark would be that (d) lining-up the 'yardstick' cases would lead one to suggest redefining it, renaming it the 'carrot-and-stick' model, in order to do justice to its two purposes. For one thing, Seraphim illuminates how German atonement has served as a 'stick' with which to beat a Japan that is unable 'to say sorry'. For another, von Bieberstein, Kaya and David point out how the European Union in accession negotiations used membership as a 'carrot' to impose Western Holocaust remembrance on Turkey, Croatia and Serbia. That all now having been said (a–d), more important than determining the accuracy of Gabowitsch's models is acknowledgement of the novelty of his international, comparative meta-analysis. The wealth of studies on the processes of coming to terms with the dark World-War-Two past commonly discusses case studies in isolation. If of a comparative character at all, they tend to read heterogeneity and national particularities out of them, not general patterns, recurrent dilemmas and trends in commemorative practices.

Third, Gabowitsch's edited volume is a highly relevant response to an arguably unsatisfactory current state of affairs: local

ownership (over the process of coming to terms with the past) is jeopardized in an era of globalization. This book is not only an analytical exercise to differentiate between archetypes of atonement, but also a passionate plea for more creative, tailor-made processes of translating atonement. The author draws the conclusion that collective atonement requires '[...] both a local impulse, which is likely to produce distinctive cultural and institutional forms of atonement [...] but might also draw on foreign models for inspiration and leverage, and outside pressures [...]'] (16, 17). Illustrative in this regard is Susan Haugbolle's study of how Lebanon sorted out its civil war past (1975-1990). Local forces aiming to produce a critical historical debate about the Lebanese past received outside funding and were inspired by the 'Memory for the Future' conference (2001), bringing together in the United Nations building intellectuals and representatives from other countries with contested memories (61). Hence, it comes as no surprise that Gabowitsch explicitly endorses the 'springboard' model—in which the postconflict society in question turns to foreign experiences for inspiration and creatively adapts foreign practices to its own context. Taking this stance, he inexplicitly defines two key ingredients for productive replication: it appears that Gabowitsch's core concern is (i) the balance between the local and the international, rather than the analytical difference between the models and (ii) he seems to advocate the blurring of the established categories in memory studies, 'memory consumers' and 'memory producers'. In the 'springboard' model, a postconflict society consumes foreign-atonement experiences to subsequently produce distinctive cultural and institutional forms of atonement.

To conclude, *Replicating atonement* should also be judged by its twofold pur-

pose (p. 3). It remains to be seen, for one thing, whether its academic 'recipe' for productive replication will contribute to attuning the process of translating atonement to the needs of different societies in praxis. After all, the required balance between the local and the global is precarious: too much outside interference might cause a nationalist reaction; too little, and local avant-gardists are hung out to dry (17). For another, Gabowitsch et al. aim to shed new light on global (or transnational, cosmopolitan, multidirectional) memory. How did the exercise of differentiating between different atonement models in fact enhance our understanding of global memory? It confirms that, even in the high tide of globalization, the field of memory studies 'has gone international'—with memory scholars being increasingly occupied with international 'memory wars'—atonement is still bound to the nation-state. However, *Replicating atonement* attests to the global diffusion of transitional justice schemes in postconflict societies and the importance of transnational 'memory makers'. In light of its aim to understand global memory, this edited volume could have included more country-studies in which international actors play a significant role (Lebanon, Turkey and former Yugoslavia) or in which domestic actors refer to a cosmopolitan remembrance such as Argentina. Ralph Buchenhorst demonstrates how Argentinian atonement practices were shaped, not by one single, national atonement record, but by a discourse that had already transcended ethnic and national boundaries and has given rise to a transnational memory culture (210). To study cases that are located between the global and the local—Gabowitsch's core concern in *Replicating atonement*—might be a fruitful avenue for further research.

Christel Zunneberg (Berlin)