Christine Beresniova, *Holocaust Education in Lithuania. Community, Conflict, and the Making of Civil Society*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017. 189 p. ISBN 978-1-4985-3744-5

Christine Beresniova's *Holocaust Education in Lithuania. Community, Conflict, and the Making of Civil Society* is a useful contribution to the debate about Holocaust memory in Lithuania, though one that requires several caveats. As Beresniova states, her primary focus is not on the *technicalities* of Holocaust education (teaching programmes, textbooks), but rather on the *meaning* of Holocaust education for the people involved, both individually and in terms of the social dynamics of memory. A theoretically solid and richly referenced piece of research, the book leaves its flanks exposed to criticism, however, due to several issues with orientalisising misrepresentations of Lithuania and Eastern Europe.

Chapter 1 describes the changes in memory policies from Soviet to contemporary Lithuania, with a special focus on historical commissions. Through a solid theoretical framework on memory policies, it describes the role (and criticism) of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, it depicts rather well the infamous reluctance of Lithuanian institutions to face Holocaust-related issues, and it brilliantly analyses the interaction between memory, identity and discourse. Its main merit lies in its precise description of how stereotyping shapes the way Lithuanians see the Jews as a monolithic bloc, enabling 'collective responsibility' logic (Judeobolshevism) and misguided 'holistically-conceived interpretations' of the Second World War. The chapter's main shortcomings are its failure to discuss existing Holocaust-related debates in Lithuanian society (beyond a superficial description and a mere institutionally centred approach), and its reliance on a culturally essentialist idea of 'Lithuanian culture', treated without paying attention to internal diversity. As is discussed in more detail below, both are recurrent shortcomings throughout the book.

Chapter 2 discusses the actions of élites in promoting Holocaust education, and sets out the methodological foundations for the next chapters. Beresniova criticises 'Western' images of Lithuanians as 'a bunch of primitive antisemites' (p. 24), providing an excellent exposé of the dangers of stereotypical representations of 'Eastern Europe', especially based on a culturally essentialist idea of 'anti-Semitism' and 'backwardness'. Her interviews with US élites unmask patronising 'Western' attitudes towards Lithuanians, and the confused motivations for promoting Holocaust edu-

cation, behind the reiterated appeal of diplomats to universal values. The chapter also demonstrates the importance of *appeals to values* in shaping policies, and the fascinating interaction between policies and the universalising discourses justifying them. Beresniova proves how moralising attitudes serve to establish hierarchies in inter-state relationships, and highlights hypocrisy in US memory policies, backing up her argument with a broad range of theoretical approaches. Besides exposing stereotypes, the chapter's key contribution lies in the appreciation of the counterproductive-ness of the patronising attitudes of outsiders, which can trigger a rejection of moralising actions among the 'target'. Beresniova's argument that Western *failures* in protecting the Baltics from Soviet occupation undermine the effectiveness of patronising messages is particularly poignant: 'The independence of the East was won by those in the East, but their moral education is now seen as being under the auspices of the West' (p. 42). Subsequently, many Lithuanians now reject the moralistic attitude of US élites, with a detrimental effect on Holocaust education.

Yet Beresniova's focus on the action of US élites *reinforces* the very stereotypes she questions: by focusing overwhelmingly on them, Lithuanian *agency* disappears. While a convincing rationale for focusing on US rather than EU élites is provided, the case for not discussing *Lithuanian* ones is rushed and unconvincing. The book does not entirely disregard them; but when analysing them, it shows up a key methodological issue that weakens its argument. Whereas international élites are clearly defined, the identity of Lithuanian élites is not. The entire book never clarifies who belongs to them, opening the door to circular reasoning: Holocaust sensitivity is ascribed to élite actions, but it frequently seems that *being interested in the Holocaust*, holding 'Western' values, or being city-dwellers are criteria to be considered 'élite'. The role and the definition of Lithuanian élites therefore remain unclear, causing us to wonder whether this is the ideal focus. Beresniova overlooks Lithuanian élites who are not interested in Holocaust commemoration, and all the *non-élites* who are: her focus on an élites + educators 'bloc' ignores broad sections of Lithuanian society that challenge the mainstream ethno-nationalist narrative with inclusivist discourses and advocate for better Lithuanian-Jewish relations. The cases of the tens of thousands who support Šimašius' minorities-friendly platform, of those who brought Vanagaitė's *Mūsiškiai* to commercial success, of the 3,000 people who participated in the 2016 Molėtai commemorations,¹ or of the hundreds who attend name-reading events in Kaunas, Merkinė and Vilnius every year, may not prove that Lithuanian society generally is not nationalist, but they represent compelling examples of ideological

¹ E. Makhotina, 'We, They and Ours: On the Holocaust Debate in Lithuania', in: *Cultures of history forum* (2016). Available from <http://www.cultures-of-history.uni-jena.de/debates/lithuania/we-they-and-ours-on-the-holocaust-debate-in-lithuania/>

complexity, counter-discourse and *mass anti-hegemonic pressure* that Beresniova fails to consider, thereby reiterating the rhetoric that right-wing radicalism is the only ideology 'at home' in Eastern Europe.

Chapter 3 is the most interesting and engaging: its few problems (discussed later) do not invalidate Beresniova's enlightening conclusions and thought-provoking engagement with theories. Here, she skilfully connects stereotyping, international power structures and appeals to moral values: her depiction of how 'Western' élites essentialise Lithuanians will resonate among scholars studying the issue of representations of Eastern Europe, orientalism, and discourses of Europeanisation/Westernisation. She explains how 'amalgamating individual memories with broader ideologies, values, and historical facts' produces *collective* memories, resulting in a 'coherent (even if not entirely accurate) narrative that resonates with a wide majority of people' (p. 45). This applies both to Lithuanian narratives and to those of Western élites: seeing Lithuanians as 'stuck in the past' leads to their primitivisation, and to the idea that Westerners need to 'teach' them, reproducing the 1990s stereotype that East Europeans are agency-less people waiting for the West's salvation or *mission civilisatrice*.

Beresniova then describes how *Chronopolitics* creates power imbalances between Lithuania and Western élites: the 'denial of modernity' of a group, and the use of Time to classify the 'Other' as inferior, based on its development stage, support colonial-like power discourses. Even if her argument partly dismisses the agency of East Europeans, many of whom seek 'Westernisation' voluntarily, the concept of *Chronopolitics* helps us understand how *Western* actors look at (and relate to) their East European counterparts. Beresniova's argument that deep power imbalances characterise the relationship between EU/Nato and Eastern Europe is questionable,² but her use of *Chronopolitics* as a critical tool to judge the actions of 'Western' élites is undeniably compelling. Her contribution exposes the cultural-psychological mechanisms behind the actions of 'Western' élites who 'operate' in Lithuania, believing that only *their* arrival is finally shaking things up: 'it seems that each new diplomat discovers Lithuanians "discovering" the Holocaust' (p. 53). Therefore, the learning process is unidirectionally conceived: Lithuanians learn from 'Westerners', but 'The countervailing view that the west could also learn something from the populations in post-Soviet states is rarely espoused' (p. 56). Holocaust education advocacy thus loses its effectiveness, as it appears to be externally imposed, and establishes a 'hierarchy' of events worth remembering, which disregards

² Examples of the far from subordinate roles of East European countries within EU/NATO include many of NATO's post-Ukraine-crisis policies, which rushed to address the concerns of Eastern members vis-à-vis Russia, much to the disappointment of pro-Russian Western members, and Brussels' failure to meaningfully address the severe violations by Warsaw and Budapest of EU values, while keeping to its financial obligations towards its poorer members.

Lithuanian sensitivity to Soviet crimes. As Beresniova brilliantly puts it, ‘little attention is given to the fact that the cultural shifts that led to the development of the Holocaust as an international “idea” developed over seven decades. Similar allotments of cathartic time for narratives to adopt and grow is not being given to post-Soviet states.’ Hence, ‘post-Soviet states are being asked to remember and to forget at the same time, a directive based on forgetting their most immediate state of suffering under Soviet rule to “remember” a Holocaust history that they never learned under the Soviets’ (p. 59).

Chapter 4 is among the more strictly anthropological (and interesting) ones, and analyses the motivation of individual teachers to carry out Holocaust education, illustrating in a thought-provoking way the interaction of identity, social status, and personal motivation. It also discusses why people *refrain* from engaging in Holocaust education, providing badly needed constructive criticism that should help international actors improve their Holocaust-related programmes. Unfortunately, however, Beresniova discusses teachers as isolated monads in society: while she laments the lack of studies that ‘envisage teachers as encapsulating social debates and contestations’, (p. 73), it becomes clear once again that her own discussion does not sufficiently consider Lithuanian intellectual debates about the Holocaust. She describes the ‘society’ that teachers interact with in broad strokes, without looking at the hotly contested debates in Lithuanian society.

Chapter 5 analyses the key issue of the ‘Missing Jew’ in Lithuanian Holocaust education and commemoration, i.e. the over-focus on Jewish annihilation and resulting failure to teach about centuries of Jewish *life* in Lithuania. Beresniova’s summary of Litvak history shows serious mistakes (e.g. locating the Lithuanian national revival in the wrong century, or failing to mention the mass execution of Jews *before* the Wehrmacht’s arrival in 1941), but it portrays well enough the diversity of Jewish experience, and reveals the failure of contemporary programmes to do justice to such diversity. Beresniova has an excellent point: teaching about Jewish life in Lithuania is hard, due to the ‘common discursive habit of separating histories according to ethnicity’, which explains why most people feel distant from Jewish *lives*: this compartmentalisation ‘has the pragmatic effect of making one [history] seem less relevant than another’ (p. 96), causing people to fail to feel compassion for Jewish *death*, too. The use of practices and beliefs that turn Jews into ‘symbols’, stereotypes and archetypes makes things even worse: as ‘Jews become symbols known only through their oppression’ (p. 103), and educational practices strengthen the Holocaust-centred focus, failing to bring humanity (and, therefore, empathy) into the equation.

Chapter 6 is severely problematic: the chapter seeks to discuss ‘discourses and counter-discourses about the state of Lithuania’, but it does so in an over-simplistic way, focusing overwhelmingly on the issue of

Skinhead marches, with little attention to other views. Beresniová's very assessment of the influence of Skinheads is problematic: the experience of recent years contradicts her statements that their appeal among Lithuanian youth is growing, and that municipalities tolerate them. While the 2012 march saw 900-something participants,³ the 2013 Kaunas march gathered around 300,⁴ while the Vilnius one saw around 3,000 participants, and also significant institutional opposition.⁵ The 2015 Kaunas march garnered 200 participants,⁶ and the Vilnius one 'only a few hundred people'.⁷ Two to three hundred individuals marched in Vilnius in 2016, and in 2018 the Vilnius municipality denied permission. A separate demonstration was allowed, but the municipality exerted pressure to prevent embarrassing slogans, while the unauthorised Skinhead gathering saw again 200 to 300 participants.⁸ Beresniová says attendance in recent years has 'increased from hundreds to thousands of marchers, many who [sic] are young people'. This is factually incorrect. Far-right discourses in Lithuania are strong, but focusing overwhelmingly on the Skinheads instead of the more ambiguous and far more influential far-right figures in mainstream political parties reinforces the narrative that Eastern Europe's relevance lies only in its displays of 'radicalism', which makes it something 'Other' from Western Europe.

The chapter has another questionable argument: Beresniová connects the erosion of the 'solid bedrock of human rights governance etched out of the devastation of the Holocaust' (p. 117) with anti-refugee attitudes, intolerance and anti-Semitism in Lithuania and Eastern Europe. This, however,

³ 'Sostinėje Kovo 11-osios eitynių nebus, nusprendė teismas', in: *Kauno Diena*, 4 March 2016. Available from: <http://kauno.diena.lt/naujienos/miesto-pulsas/sostineje-kovo-11-osios-eityniu-nebus-nusprende-teismas-201073>

⁴ N. Povilaitis, 'Nacionalistų eitynės Kaune baigėsi be incidentų (papildyta)', in: *Lrytas.lt*, 16 February 2013. Available from: <https://lietuvsdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/2013/02/16/news/nacionalistu-eitynes-kaune-baigesi-be-incidentu-papildyta--5104341/>

⁵ 'Sostinėje Kovo 11-osios eitynių nebus, nusprendė teismas', in: *Kauno Diena*, 4 March 2016. Available from: <http://kauno.diena.lt/naujienos/miesto-pulsas/sostineje-kovo-11-osios-eityniu-nebus-nusprende-teismas-201073>

⁶ 'Vasario 16-oji Kaune: nacionalistų eitynės', in: *Kauno Žinios*, 16 February 2015. Available from: http://kaunožinios.lt/miestas/vasario-16-oji-kaune-nacionalistu-eitynes_84023.html

⁷ 'Prieš nacionalistų eitynes Gedimino prospekte – rusų žiniasklaidos provokacija', in: *15min.lt*, 11 March 2015. Available from: <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/nacionalistai-isejo-i-tradicine-eisena-gedimino-prospekte-56-490162>

⁸ D. Pikūnė, M. Andrukaitytė, 'Nacionalistų eitynės su deglais sutraukė kelis šimtus žmonių', in: *Delfi*, 16 February 2018. Available from: <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/nacionalistu-eitynes-su-deglais-sutrauke-kelis-simtus-zmoniui.d?id=77193041>

is an oversimplification: not only because the idea that Eastern Europe is more racist than Western Europe has been vigorously questioned,⁹ but more importantly, because anti-refugee attitudes in Lithuania are not the appanage of the far-right and anti-Semites. The LSDP-led government in 2015 was far from welcoming to refugees; the centre-left Jewish-Lithuanian thinker Arkadijus Vinokuras wrote in openly racist terms against them;¹⁰ while for all his pro-minorities rhetoric and actions to improve Jewish-Lithuanian relations, the Vilnius mayor Šimašius posted anti-refugee memes, accusing Syrian men of cowardice, similar to those circulated on neo-fascist pages,¹¹ and caused an uproar when he picked Daniel Lupshitz, controversial for his anti-Arab racism and incendiary incitements to violence, as an advisor.¹² Vinokuras, Šimašius and thousands of similarly oriented Lithuanians prove that human rights awareness, Holocaust-sensitivity, and pro-Jewish attitudes *can* coexist with other types of intolerance and prejudice. The book's spotlight on the far-right neglects these complexities, as it does not engage with enough discursive battlefields in Lithuanian society.¹³ Moreover, Beresniova's constant reference to specifically East European discursive patterns, while it is interesting, forgets that today's Lithuanian far-right is part of a *global* information dynamic, and employs arguments from the 'Western' far-right just as much as from local nationalism.

Another issue is Beresniova's thinly stretched connection between Holocaust education, tolerance and emigration. Her interesting discussion of concepts like 'patriots', 'provocateurs' and 'traitors' morphs into the unconvincing argument that *values incompatibility* is a major motive for emigration: while many Lithuanians do leave the country to escape suffocating nationalist discourses, this is not a major cause for mass

⁹ K. Malik, 'Is Eastern Europe Really More Racist Than the West?', in: *The New York Times*, 3 November 2015. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/04/opinion/who-invented-fortress-europe.html>; M. Edwards, 'Rethinking "eastern European racism"', in: *Open Democracy*, 23 March 2016. Available from: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/maxim-edwards/rethinking-eastern-european-racism>

¹⁰ A. Vinokuras, 'Atviras laiškas bėgliams iš Artimųjų Rytų', in: *Lrytas.lt*, 25 September 2015. Available from: <https://lietuvsodiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/atviras-laiskas-begliams-is-artimuju-rytu.htm>

¹¹ Compare Šimašius' Facebook post from 16 September 2015 with the neo-fascist English Defence League's one of 7 September 2015.

¹² M. Jackeivičius, 'Feisbuke plinta peticija: sukilo prieš „ginkluotą mero patarėją“', in: *Delfi*, 7 September 2015. Available from: <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/feisbuke-plinta-peticija-sukilo-pries-ginkluota-mero-patareja.d?id=68934084>

¹³ In fact, even within the Lithuanian right, the attitude towards the Skinhead marches is more complex, as recent disputes between Pro Patria and TS-LKD's leadership on this topic demonstrated. Pro Patria (2018). 'TS-LKD perspēja narius nedalyvauti nacionalistinėse eitynėse', in: *Pro Patria*, 6 September 2018. Available from: <http://www.propatria.lt/2018/03/ts-lkd-perspeja-narius-nedalyvauti.html>

emigration. Existing analyses accuse social anomy, loneliness, hopelessness deriving from incommunicability between individuals and with the political leadership,¹⁴ or point at socio-economic reasons, without mentioning values incompatibility among the factors.¹⁵ Other analyses overwhelmingly blame socio-economic causes, and report that only 7.9% of Lithuanians emigrate for (unspecified) reasons relating to the political system.¹⁶ Beresniova's picture of Lithuanians leaving the country trying to escape nationalism, and becoming victims of the 'traitor' rhetoric,¹⁷ lacks statistical evidence, and rests on her doubtful generalisation that emigrants are, by default, 'citizens who espoused the more tolerant (and mobile) virtues of the European Union' (p. 121). Yet any interaction with Lithuanian emigrants would show that many are, actually, very racist, as is often lamented about East European migrants.¹⁸ Associating East European migration with a sympathy for 'Western values' also conflicts with recent findings about the Polish far right, which revealed that exposure to the 'West' is a key reason for *joining* ultranationalist groups.¹⁹ Moreover, criticism of emigrants is not a right-wing exclusive, as many progressive-minded Lithuanians also partake in the migrant-bashing rhetoric. And while right-wingers see emigrants who escape due to value incompatibility as 'traitors', they certainly do not reserve the moniker for 'value-based migrants' only. Furthermore, the discourse that value-based emigration is a 'betrayal of the fatherland' is probably not as widely supported as Beresniova assumes.²⁰

¹⁴ V. Mitė, 'Psichologas: emigruoti į „kietas šalis“ žmonės renkasi ne dėl pinigų'. *LRT*, 22 April 2017. Available from: <http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/kalba-vilnius/32/169403/psichologas-emigruoti-i-kietas-salis-zmones-renkasi-ne-del-pinigu>

¹⁵ 'Lietuvos gyventojų migracija'. *SMP2014ge*. Available from: https://smp2014ge.ugdome.lt/mo/9kl_visuomenine_geografija/GE_DE_28/teorine_medziaga_3_1.html

¹⁶ R. Rudžinskienė, L. Paulauskaitė, 'Lietuvos gyventojų emigracijos priežastys ir padariniai šalies ekonomikai', in: *Socialinė teorija, empirija, politika ir praktika*, 2014(8), p. 72

¹⁷ In Beresniova's words: 'In the face of mounting emigration [...] true patriots were framed as those who fought the capitalistic temptations to leave [...] The siren song of western cultural values was also lamented as leading to intermarriage and the abandonment of "true" Lithuanian values' (p. 128).

¹⁸ A. Asthana, M. Fitzgerald, 'Multiracial Britain confuses Poles', in: *The Guardian*, 15 April 2007. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2007/apr/15/asylum.raceintheuk>

¹⁹ C. Davies, '"More girls, fewer skinheads": Poland's far-right wrestles with a changing image', in: *The Guardian*, 18 November 2017. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/18/more-girls-fewer-skinheads-polands-far-right-wrestles-with-changing-image>

²⁰ A recent event in Vilnius where this discourse was on vociferous display attracted just a few dozen elderly participants (Personal observation of Pro Patria's 'šventinė eiseną su trispalvėmis' event in Vilnius, 25 April 2018).

Even Degutienė's criticism of migrant 'traitors', mentioned by Beresniová, referred to those who choose *economic comfort* over ethno-linguistic identity, rather than those who leave for value incompatibility.²¹ Besides, Degutienė's remarks were far from popular, and she was widely criticised for them.²² Beresniová correctly describes the discursive *mechanisms* behind words like 'traitor' and 'provocateur', but she applies her analysis to too many socio-political aspects, observed over far too long a timeframe. The chapter therefore conflates a wide range of scarcely related events and discourses, compressing them within a coherent but inaccurate narrative. Not everything in Lithuania is just a clash between pro-Western tolerant people and ethno-nationalist anti-Semites.

Chapter 7 is an interesting anthropological analysis of how Holocaust education produces a sense of community among teachers. The chapter further elaborates on the motivation of individual teachers, and despite some questionable culturally essentialist statements (discussed below), it is a valid explanation of how a community of practice arises around Holocaust education, fostering a process of *identity formation* among educators. The most enlightening part of the chapter is its discussion of the *drawbacks* caused by the creation of a sense of community, such as the feeling of exclusion it can cause to those who feel left out of the community, leading them to lose interest in the topic altogether. This is invaluable constructive criticism for people involved in Holocaust education.

The book's main shortcoming is that even though it deals with 'community, conflict, and the making of civil society', the latter is insufficiently discussed. Paradoxically, a book that so poignantly criticises how 'Western' stereotypes distort analyses of Lithuanian society also routinely describes social processes surrounding Holocaust education by giving a voice to very few actors: 'Western' pressure produces half-hearted *institutional* responses from Lithuanian governments, with *some* Lithuanian civil society actors reacting in response. Beresniová's conclusions about the influence of Euro-Atlantic organisations in promoting Holocaust education are not new, as Kucia reached similar conclusions when analysing the Europeanisation of

²¹ E. Samoškaitė, 'I. Degutienė: nesuprantu, kaip žmonės palieka savo kraštą dėl gero gyvenimo', in: *Delfi*, 27 October 2011. Available from: <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/emigrants/idegutiene-nesuprantu-kaip-zmones-palieka-savo-krasta-del-gero-gyvenimo.d?id=51137063>; M. Jackevičius, 'Užsienio lietuvių užgavo I. Degutienės pasisakymai', in: *Delfi*, 7 November 2011. Available from: <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/emigrants/uzsienio-lietuviu-uzgavo-idegutienes-pasisakymai.d?id=51504089>; BNS, in: *Lrytas.lt* (2011). 'I. Degutienė atsiprašė užsienio lietuvių dėl savo žodžių apie emigraciją', in: *Lrytas*, 9 November 2011. Available from: <https://lietuvisdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/2011/11/09/news/i-degutiene-atsiprase-uzsienio-lietuviu-del-savo-zodziu-apie-emigracija-5446746/>.

²² A Delfi poll, embedded in an article about Degutienė's statements, showed that almost 90% of 9,257 readers disliked her remarks.

Holocaust memory.²³ However, Kucia recognised the importance of *domestic* actors (governments, NGOs, corporations, individuals and religious organisations), while Beresniová does not make any such caveat. Within civil society, the only groups analysed in detail are educators and Skinheads: other actors are usually described derivatively from ‘Western’ ones, based on unsubstantiated assumptions, or by referring to generic ‘East European’ dynamics. For all its institutional failures, ‘Lithuania’ is not just its government or ministerial staff. There is a dire need to describe the *public debates* of the last decades about Lithuania’s relation to the Holocaust: however, beyond a surprisingly brief reference in the introduction (‘Some argued history was better left in the past while others claimed the only way to move forward was through an honest reckoning. Some wanted to remember while others wanted to forget’, p. xvii), and other equally hasty mentions, mostly in Chapters 1 and 5, the topic is neglected.

Beresniová’s discussion of ‘the making of civil society’ largely ignores the heated Holocaust-related debates in the media and public opinion that have raged since the 1990s.²⁴ In fact, barely any source in Lithuanian is referred to throughout the book. One would expect at least to find mentions of figures like Venclova, who, arguably, opened the debate long before the ‘Westerners’ arrived,²⁵ or Donskis’ work, or his debates with other local intellectuals.²⁶ Beresniová aims to discuss educational policies *in relation to broader social dynamics*, but her failure to situate them within civil society’s debates and tensions produces a truncated narrative, with few Lithuanian voices. How did these debates affect electoral choices, the stances of politicians, and the adoption of policies, if at all? The identification of ‘Western’ influence as the *only* driver of policies overlooks other potentially very important explanatory factors. Chapter 5 provides a telling example: Beresniová praises the improvement in the quality of

²³ M. Kucia, ‘The Europeanisation of Holocaust Memory and Eastern Europe’, in: *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 30(1) (2016), pp. 97–119.

²⁴ G. Rossoliński-Liebe, ‘Conceptualisations of the Holocaust in Germany, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine since the 1990s. Historical Research and Public Debate, 5 December 2016 – 7 December 2016 Warschau’, in: *H-Soz-Kult*, 25 February 2016. Available from: www.hsozkult.de/event/id/termine-30313

²⁵ M.J. Drunga, ‘Kaltė ir gėda išpažinties kultūroje’, in: *Darbai ir dienos* 2014(62)

²⁶ See, for example, the debate with Girnius and others about the 1941 Interim Government: L. Donskis, *When Will the Truth Finally Set Us Free?* (Blog post, 1 September 2010). Available from: <http://www.holocaustinthebaltics.com/2010Sept1LeonidasDonskisWhenWillTheTruthSetUsFree.pdf>; K. Girnius, ‘K. Girnius. Dar apie 1941 m. – atsakymas L. Donskiui’, in: *Delfi*, 6 September 2010. Available from: <https://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/lit/kgirnius-dar-apie-1941-m-atsakymas-lidonskiui.d?id=36203695>; N. Vasiliauskaitė, ‘N.Vasiliauskaitė. Apie 1941-uosius, žydus ir „mus“’, in: *Delfi*, 14 September 2010 <https://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/lit/nvasiliauskaite-1941-uosius-zydus-ir-mus.d?id=36511961>

new textbooks, which now challenge nationalist mythologies of Lithuanian ‘innocence’. Yet previous chapters described how the withering of international pressure, following Lithuania’s EU/Nato accession, *decreased* the institutional incentive for Holocaust education. How can we then explain why a new discourse is appearing in textbooks? If institutional incentives are gone, what kind of *intellectual* and *social* pressures have led to this?

Discussing the debates within Lithuanian society is not a sterile exercise in literature review: Lithuanian ethno-nationalism may be powerful, but figures like Venclova and Donskis are far from marginal, subject as they are to quasi-veneration by thousands of Lithuanians. Local debates show far livelier and far more complex ideational front lines: discussing how these ‘fronts’ in society interact, clash, and influence policies is necessary, in order to understand how and why certain policies are adopted. Instead, Holocaust education policies are explained by referring to generic socio-political trends in Eastern Europe, which, while described in a thought-provoking way, leave the reader with the impression that since independence there has been just one ‘Lithuanian government’ in power, accountable to the same constituencies, and an identical approach to Holocaust memory. The effects of pressure from different constituencies, existing debates, ideological nuances, and budget constraints on each government’s actions are insufficiently analysed.

Moreover, Beresniova’s research unfolded over eight years (2007 to 2015), during which the international environment changed drastically: analysing memory discourses in the Baltic region without studying the impact of Russia’s re-assertiveness under Putin is impossible, as the memory of events related to the Second World War is heavily affected by Russian neo-imperial behaviour and discourses that challenge the legitimacy of the Lithuanian state. In times of threat, Lithuanian memory policies tend to become very defensive.²⁷ Arguably, much of the ethno-national exclusivity and censoring of dissent that Beresniova describes is a *reaction* by Lithuanians to threats from Russia: this reaction may be strategically foolish, but Beresniova does not ask to what extent ‘nationalism’ can be explained by ‘defensiveness’, as opposed to a pure desire to exclude minorities.

Furthermore, in her account, ‘Lithuania’ is suspended in a timeless condition: virtually all the interviews, anecdotes, episodes and retelling of events are not dated, which makes it impossible to understand the framework within which statements were made, or to appreciate evolutions within Lithuanian society, or ‘anchor’ certain discursive patterns to

²⁷ See V. Davoliūtė’s review of memory policies surrounding the merits and crimes of the anti-Soviet resistance (including involvement in the Holocaust): ‘Heroes, Villains and Matters of State: The Partisan and Popular Memory in Lithuania’, in: *Cultures of History Forum*, 17 November 2017. Available from: <http://www.cultures-of-history.uni-jena.de/debates/lithuania/heroes-villains-and-matters-of-state-the-partisan-and-popular-memory-in-lithuania/>

the political climate of the time. Any sense of change in local attitudes, or even a basic sense of context, is therefore lost.

Beresniova's over-reliance on 'external pressures' as an explanatory factor reinforces orientalist stereotypes of non-Westerners' lack of agency and inability to engage in the same intellectual processes as Westerners. For example, Beresniová tells the story of a teacher who justifies turning an abandoned synagogue into a gymnasium, because it would otherwise have fallen down. Beresniová ascribes the teacher's justification to the need to defend the town's actions 'according to the standards of commemoration expected by western agencies' (p. xxiii). This statement, unsupported by evidence, excludes the possibility that a Lithuanian might be capable of recognising *even without the help of a 'Western' civiliser* that desecration is inappropriate. Another example is the otherwise excellent Chapter 3, which ascribes the adoption of 'Western' value-based discourses to the need to signal (or access) an élite position: 'The intersection of policy, population, and identity in Lithuanian Holocaust education show how the entrenchment of certain narratives is based [...] on the *enticement of belonging* [...] to certain groups. *The desire to access different groups* induces people to self-select into certain categories and *adopt particular discourses*' (p. 48, my italics). Therefore, supposedly, 'in Lithuania, espousing certain positive beliefs about the importance of Holocaust education, and distancing oneself from narratives about the Soviet occupation render you more acceptable to belong to groups in "modern time" (élites)' (pp. 48–49). Lithuanian élites therefore use Chronopolitics to establish hierarchies between groups based on discourses of civilisation/modernity and 'orientalise' others to 'appear western in a (formerly) non-western setting, thus according them status and prestige' (p. 61). The argument is not new: processes of self-orientalisation within East European countries²⁸ and between them²⁹ have been widely researched, but Beresniová's argument, while true for some, implies that the Holocaust sensitivity of Lithuanian élites only serves to 'appear modern':

²⁸ See A. Portnov, 'On Decommunisation, Identity, and Legislating History, From a Slightly Different Angle', in: *Krytyka* (May 2015); A. Portnov, 'The arithmetic of otherness. "Donbas" in the Ukrainian intellectual discourse', in: *Eurozine*, 1 June 2017; T. Zaharchenko, 'Polyphonic Dichotomies: Memory and Identity in Today's Ukraine', in: *Demokratyzatsiya*, 21 (2), pp. 241–269, and most prominently M. Buchowski, 'The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother', in: *Anthropological Quarterly*, 79 (3) (2006), pp. 463–482 and T. Zaricki, 'Orientalism and Images of Eastern Europe', in: *Endogenous factors in Development of the Eastern Poland*, M. Stefański, (ed.), (Lublin, 2010).

²⁹ See I.B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: 'the East' in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis, 1998); K. Andrijauskas, (2015b). 'Between the "Russian World" and "Yellow Peril": (Re-)Presentations of Russia's Non-Slavic Fighters in Eastern Ukraine', paper presented at the conference 'Orientalism, Colonial Thinking and the Former Soviet Periphery', Vilnius University, August 2015.

therefore, a *sincere belief* in such values and a Lithuanian *ownership* of them (and, therefore, *agency*) are dismissed. This discredits those very forces who care about this issue, and by inadvertently reinforcing the idea of a ‘nationalist/conservative authenticity’ in Lithuanian society, it delegitimises counter-discourses as ‘foreign’.³⁰

Beresniova also operates a process of Othering of ‘Eastern Europe’ by treating it as an internally undifferentiated entity with distinctive features not shared with the ‘West’: her tendency to find shared patterns disregards *both the region’s internal diversity, and its similarities with the West*. For example, she compares Lithuanian memory policies with those of any East European country, drawing numerous parallels with Estonia, even though the scale of the Holocaust and the history of Estonian Jewish communities were radically different from Lithuania’s; or with Hungary, despite the incomparably different political systems. Moreover, she often ascribes to a supposed ‘East European’ uniqueness phenomena that are actually *pan-European*. One example is the description in Chapter 7 of anomy, crisis and despair in Lithuanian society, which uses literature about Eastern Europe’s ‘post-communist syndrome’. However, much of this literature predates the explosion of populism in the ‘West’, which proved that identical processes have long existed there. Xenophobia, the widespread sense of conflict, crisis and despair with globalisation that contributed to Brexit, Trump’s victory, and far-right electoral successes in France, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands prove that ‘communities of despair’ and mistrust are not East European exclusives.³¹ We should also question whether Beresniová’s stark East/West differentiation, with reference to Holocaust memory policies, really helps, and whether we should not look instead at these dynamics in a pan-European perspective, something she rarely does.³² Only an essentialist

³⁰ Curiously, this unintentionally mirrors some East European conservative post-colonialists’ instrumental use of ‘authenticity’ to de-legitimise non-conservative and non-nationalist views. See S. Bill, ‘Seeking the Authentic: Polish Culture and the Nature of Postcolonial Theory’, in: *Nonsite – Issue #12: Contemporary Politics and Historical Representation*, 12 August 2014.

³¹ Recent EU-wide statistics show that mistrust in other people is widespread across Western Europe, too: Portugal, Italy, Malta and Spain fall below the European average, on a similar level as Latvia and Lithuania, but far below Estonia and Poland. France scores far lower than most East European countries, and the ‘podium’ of worst-performing countries includes two culturally Western ones (Greece and Cyprus), and only one Eastern country (Slovakia). European Union (2018). *Special Eurobarometer 471. Fairness, inequality and intergenerational mobility*, Brussels. pp. 30–34

³² For example, the convenient ‘forgetfulness’ of Lithuanian government(s) of collaboration with the Nazis by partially autonomous local institutions is better analysed comparing it with how the collaboration of functioning local institutions is obfuscated in Italy or France, rather than, say, Poland, where similar institutions were all but annihilated.

belief in 'East European' homogeneity can explain this over-reliance on comparisons with countries with drastically different histories.³³

In conclusion, Beresniova has produced a well-researched insight into Lithuanian Holocaust education circles and their interaction with 'Western' élites, and an excellent anthropological account of micro- and local-level phenomena. Her criticism of common misconceptions in 'Western' decision-making circles is extremely useful, as is her call for more sensitivity to the peculiarities of local histories and memory policies, in order to understand how these can be integrated into a better Holocaust education strategy, as well as her brilliant and much-needed criticism of stereotypical misrepresentations of East European societies. Yet in this latter area, the book also shows shortcomings: Beresniova remains anchored to orientalist misrepresentations, reiterating the view that Eastern Europe is a cultural-civilisational 'other', an undifferentiated, homogeneous whole, ontologically different from the 'West', governed by uniquely 'local' cultural phenomena, and devoid of internal diversity and social contestation (other than a misconstrued idea of the clash between 'nationalists' and 'migrants', built on an unjustifiable conflation of unrelated phenomena), and, ultimately, *passive*. Lithuanian agency on the level of intellectual debates is mostly neglected, which is surprising given Beresniova's own recognition of the problem in the 'West', as she points out in several passages. The book 'fluctuates' between criticisms of the misrepresentation of most Lithuanians as barbaric anti-Semites, and a paradoxical reiteration of that very idea due to a failure to engage with existing debates in Lithuania. This contradiction affects the whole volume, and especially the conclusions, which constantly alternate culturally essentialist statements with appeals to refrain from stereotypical thinking. Overall, the volume is well researched, and its contributions are more significant than its shortcomings; but the impact of analytical distorting lenses, which the author has failed to get rid of, cannot be overlooked.

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³³ Kucia (op. cit.), for example, analyses East European countries in a much more nuanced way, by grouping them in separate 'tiers' based on their Holocaust-awareness.