

patterns in late nineteenth-century Laibach/Ljubljana; Aleksandra Vuletić analyzes marriage and family structure in Serbia, with an eye to broader social dynamics; Anita Berecz looks at the kinship ties of local council members in Eger, Hungary; while Judit Pál and Vlad Popovici consider the links between family ties and parliamentary elections in Transylvania. In Part III, Jonathan Kwan provides a new analysis on the formation of the Constitutional Party in Austria; Oliver Panichi on Catholic Serbs in Austrian Dubrovnik; and Dobrinka Parusheva on power networks in turn-of-the-century Bulgaria. Svetlana Suveica's chapter concludes this part with an analysis of Bessarabian Russian networks in post-Versailles Europe.

All the contributions are based on thorough research, often using new archival sources, and many are original reconstructions of elite circles, parties and networks hitherto little known to scholars. Of particular interest is the relation between the parts—for example, how emerging urban social hierarchies relate to kinship practices and strategies, and how in turn this affected the formation of political groupings.

The volume is to be admired for its regional diversity. The reader is left genuinely impressed with the various and detailed reconstructions of elite activity in different municipalities, principalities, and provinces. In general, the focus is on middle-ranking elites at the province or city level: we do not encounter too many archdukes, generals, or archbishops. This is true of locations too: there is hardly anything on the big cities of the region, whether Vienna, Budapest, or Istanbul. I would have been interested to read more about the dissemination of models of politics, administration, and family structures across the different spaces covered in this book. The opening study by Jesner gives a good understanding of center-periphery power relations in the early eighteenth-century Habsburg Banat; and the closing one by Suveica shows a transnational network of Bessarabian elites making a case for their province in Versailles and elsewhere in 1919 and after. But I wondered in other cases whether there was a similar dynamic at play, or whether the various case studies do not lend themselves to generalization on this point. It could also have been useful to include some analysis of smaller spaces, be they distribution of elites in urban or rural districts or even organization of domestic space within elite households, at a time when the public/private divide was configured differently and had consequences for access to power and class relations. Gender issues receive strong attention in the chapter by Selišnik and Paradiž, but are not really taken into consideration elsewhere. Otherwise, the volume is a fine example of painstaking research clearly expounded, and shows well the links between social history and political dynamics in modern central and eastern Europe.

## **Ed. Reima Välimäki. *Medievalism in Finland and Russia: Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Aspects.***

**New Directions in Medieval Studies. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. xxiv, 238 pp. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$85.00, hard bound.**

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The book *Medievalism in Finland and Russia* aims to contribute to international medievalist studies with less researched national cases to help establish medievalist studies in these

two countries. The relevance of this book is not limited to the selected regional focus, since amateur historians exploring lost unique greatness in their national roots, often enabled by the Web 2.0, and politically motivated, is a global phenomenon. Moreover, a historical empire and its small neighbor, with national narratives about itself “as a borderland between the East and the West,” is relatable elsewhere as well. Case examples from both countries present an interesting mix of originalities and universalities in manifestations of medievalism while demonstrating how contemporary societal issues reflect on representations of the Middle Ages.

Composed of eight chapters, an introduction, and preface by twelve authors, this volume has three Finnish-centric and Russian-centric chapters, with the other three with a more ambiguous or wider regional focus in the global north. Despite the relatively small number of chapters, the volume provides a comprehensive representation of interdisciplinary medievalism studies through contributing scholars from the fields of archaeology, history, gender, media, and cultural and language studies. This interdisciplinarity reflects the number of used academic styles, lengths, and methodologies, but they are all written in a generally understandable form.

This mixture is brought together in Reima Välimäki’s preface and particularly in Andrew B. R. Elliott’s introductory chapter, which articulates the main theoretical contribution of this book in “metamedievalism,” a concept that is referred to and further explored through the volume. Accordingly, metamedievalism refers to the discussion about the Middle Ages where a new layer of medievalist manifestations refers to the earlier, more direct and banal form of medievalism. This is highlighted, but not limited to the historical Web 2.0 context. Based on Cultural Studies of Birmingham and Stuart Hall in particular, metamedievalism relates to epistemic inclusions and exclusions in institutions of knowledge, participatory culture and historicism. Elliott himself demonstrates this through reflections on previous research, reflections on this volume, and three example cases from the global north.

In his chapter, Evgenii Rostovtsev reviews historical trends in references to the “pre-Petrine” era, that is, the Russian discourse of the Middle Ages. Rostovtsev examines references to personalities and events from an impressive range of empirical data from polls, historiography, Wikipedia entries, Russian language websites, and others collected in a long-term project on historical memory in Russian society. Rostovtsev concludes that medieval symbols function as consolidated consensus objects of national cultural memory despite the era’s otherwise peripheral cultural position. Similar conclusions are drawn from other case studies of this volume as well. Among them, Kati Parppei’s study provides a thorough analysis of presidential speeches to the Federal Assembly, pointing out several long-term developments and (dis-)continuities in Russian history and identity politics.

Evan Wallace takes another perspective on Vladimir Putin’s speeches, particularly the repetition of his medievalisms by western news media without contextualizing criticism. As a popular culture case from a similar issue, Wallace examines Reddit fan communities of the TV show *The Vikings*, where a historical narrative about Kyivan Rus’ being based on the pseudohistorical *New Chronology* went unnoticed. This chapter is the shortest of the volume, and it would have benefitted from further argumentative and theoretical discussion and the chapter’s self-explaining metatext. However, Wallace makes an important argument about the digital media ecology favoring the dissemination of propagandistic misinformation, whereas academic information is often behind paywalls and accessible only to the decreasing number of regional studies scholars.

Similarly, I would have hoped to get more conceptual and theoretical discussion in Jere Kyyrö’s research case of popular culture—the cultural and religious particularizations in the game *Crusader Kings II*. Still, Kyyrö’s chapter comes recommended due to its insights into the relevant (ludo)-narratives and technical affordances. Another interesting technology scrutinizing perspective on metamedievalism is in the article of Mila Oiva and Anna Ristilä,

where the authors utilize computational methods to examine hyperlink networks of the Russian language medievalist web. Oiva and Ristilä examine out-going hyperlinks of these websites as indication of intended cultural context among peers with similarly extreme claims and worldviews, and the out-going hyperlinks as indications of external recognition and interest. The authors also introduce a few related pseudohistorical theories circulated in these networks.

The chapters with Finnish case studies all utilize qualitative approaches. The chapters of Sirpa Aalto, Timo Ylimaunu, and Kendra Willson present regional and local peculiarities in Finnish and Swedish medievalisms outside the Web 2.0 context. Prior knowledge of the related contexts is not required from the reader here, but as usual with case studies, it helps to better understand many references. Aalto and Ylimaunu analyze the historical contexts where memorials of Finland's medieval past have been constructed and originally presented. Finns found the usability of the Middle Ages in promoting patriotism prior to independence and even during the post-WWII context, where expressions of patriotism were suppressed to appease the USSR. In a similar vein, Willson reviews discussions of the existence of runestones. Particularly interesting in Willson's chapter is the contextualization of prominent amateur historians.

Heta Aali's approach to "muscular medievalisms" in online discussions about past Finnish kings provides another relevant addition to the volume. Accordingly, the gender aspects of metamedievalism reveal several typical "manosphere" characteristics, including antifeminism, racism, and a general discussion atmosphere with mixed encouragement and discouragement among peers. Here, like in most of the book's chapters, the essentiality of national otherness and enemy images is highlighted. Instead of the most known Finnish national othering of Russians, however, this case demonstrates Swedish speakers as the other.

The rich mix of different perspectives on medievalism in this volume offers something for most scholars, albeit more advanced medievalist scholars might miss more methodological discussion in some of the chapters. I recommend this book particularly due to its conceptualization of metamedievalism, insightful case studies, and comprehensive perspective toward medievalist studies.

## **Volodymyr V. Kravchenko. *The Ukrainian-Russian Borderland: History Versus Geography.***

**Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022. 315 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Maps. \$90.00 CAD, hard bound.**

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Kharkiv regional identity runs deep. In the early 1800s, the city's renowned university was founded as part of empire- and nation-building plans among local Ukrainian, Russian, and Little Russian gentry to defend local privileges and educate the masses. The accomplishments were many: the "true capital" or "first capital" mythology (168–69) for Kharkiv became a part of Ukrainian modernization, the story of a place transformed and destroyed by Soviet violence and now Russian terror. Kharkiv once was an imperial center in its early modern period of "territory and institutions (Sloboda Cossack regiments), security concerns,