

Yet Smith's discussion of Duyckinck's efforts demonstrates that a significant New York-centered information infrastructure involving 168 far-flung booksellers antedated the so-called American Renaissance at mid-century. And Smith certainly sets forth a compelling circumstantial case that the entrepreneurial initiatives he considers in his earlier chapters *might* collectively have set a course for New York's future domination of the national market. But if "New York's publishers connected disparate American readers together," as Smith speculatively concludes, did they do so more than their counterparts in Boston or Philadelphia? That is a question Smith wisely leaves for others to answer. One can only hope that they will answer it with his diligence and perspicacity.

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TSIPURSKY, Gleb – *Socialist Fun: Youth, Consumption, and State-Sponsored Popular Culture in the Cold War Soviet Union, 1945-1970*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016. Pp. 366.

Historians of late Soviet socialism are challenged to answer the question of why the Soviet system, full of paradoxes and hardships for the population, survived for such a long time. Following Alexei Yurchak, Kristin Roth-Ey, and other scholars who started to take a closer look at Soviet life under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, Gleb Tsipursky points to the fact that the viability of the socialist state depended, not least, on its ability to mobilize young people in favor of the Soviet project. In this context, *Socialist Fun* highlights the key role of what the author calls "state-sponsored popular culture." The trade unions and the Komsomol managed a network of clubs all over the Soviet Union where youngsters were offered opportunities to develop their amateur artistic creativity (theater, dance, music), to practice sports, listen to lectures, make friends and "have fun." For the Soviet leadership, these clubs were a central venue for building the "New Soviet (Young) Person" (p. 7). Here, officially prescribed values and tastes could be promoted while convincing young people that the system was in line with their desires and interests.

The author scrutinizes the development of this club network from 1945 to 1970, focusing on the tension between the leadership's attempts to control young people, on the one hand, and to encourage grassroots initiatives, on the other. By contrasting the examples of Moscow and the provincial city of Saratov (which was closed to nonsocialist foreigners), the author analyzes how top-level youth policies were negotiated in the process of their implementation. He raises the question of autonomous agency for not only young urban club-goers, but also club managers who were supposed to both implement official cultural policies and offer an appealing program that entertained the audience and satisfied people's consumption desires, including that for elements of western popular culture.

The study draws on an impressive range of sources, such as documents from central and local archives, newspapers, memoirs, diaries and sixty interviews with former activists and functionaries conducted by the author himself. The eight chapters of the book follow a chronological order, showcasing shifts in Soviet cultural policies, significant influences (as manifested, for example, in the emergence of Soviet “Jazz enthusiasts”), or key events (such as the 1957 International Youth Festival in Moscow).

Within his investigation period, the author distinguishes between different regimes of official dealings with youth. During late Stalinism, club activities were strongly politicized, urging those who enjoyed them to express a high degree of “conformist agency” (p. 43). In contrast, post-Stalin authorities under Khrushchev put more emphasis on entertainment and encouraged young people to actively participate in shaping cultural life in the clubs. After the new sense of youth involvement and youth optimism had suffered setbacks already in several hardline turns since the late 1950s, the Brezhnev administration returned to stricter control and limited opportunities for grassroots initiatives. In doing so, it abandoned key aspects of the “Thaw-era model of socialist fun” (p. 223) and alienated the young generation from the system again. However, the authorities carried on with their attempts to satisfy popular desires, allowing even more western popular culture than under Khrushchev.

Based on his interest in “state-sponsored popular culture,” the author claims to make a number of innovative historiographic interventions. One of them is to disrupt the traditional fixation on intellectual elites and nonconformist youth. Instead, the under-researched cultural practices of average young Soviet citizens are the centre of attention. This focus makes evident that a majority of young people *did* have fun within the socialist structures and enjoyed themselves in official institutions, even if exposed to political propaganda. It also becomes clear that many young people did not perceive their consumption of officially disparaged western music or western-like fashion as opposed to their communist commitment. Following recent scholarship, Tsipursky sheds additional light on the fact that postwar Soviet lifestyles cannot be adequately captured in binary oppositions such as loyalty and resistance or public and private. “State-sponsored popular culture” in particular constituted a “liminal space” (p. 12) where such boundaries were blurred.

A second intervention relates to the author’s plea for paying more attention to the operating modes and inherent contradictions of the system. Conflicts between conservative and more liberal bureaucrats undermined the stipulation of a cohesive cultural policy, while the imperfect coordination between different state organizations made it easier for lower-rank officials and ordinary people to develop their own agency.

One of the author’s primary concerns is to highlight the importance of the Cold War as a formative context of Soviet culture after 1945. Competing with the West on many levels reinforced the Soviet leadership’s efforts to build a socialist version of modernity, one that could serve as an alternative to the dominant western capitalist model. Soviet modernity was supposed to appeal to all societies

that tried to resist the worldwide spread of American popular culture after the war. An attractive network of state-sponsored youth clubs strengthened Soviet cultural diplomacy on the domestic front of the Cold War. According to the author, one of the assets of the Soviet (Thaw-era) model of modernity was the active, joyful participation of young people in officially approved cultural activities. However, this advantage over a presumably more consumer-driven popular culture of “the West” was gambled away in the militant turn of the Brezhnev years.

For obvious reasons, one single book cannot explore all relevant aspects of this multifaceted topic with the same intensity. So, not surprisingly, *Socialist Fun* suffers from a certain imbalance, privileging for example western music and dance over other forms of popular culture, focusing primarily on the Thaw years and paying special attention to educated young urbanites. As a general tendency, Tsipursky accentuates the positive aspects of being young during the Thaw. He makes quite clear that he considers “state-sponsored popular culture” to be a positive accomplishment of Soviet socialism, to such a degree that even democratic societies can learn from it. This kind of comment may surprise. However, credit should be given to the author for making his convictions transparent.

Overall, *Socialist Fun* is an inspiring, well-researched book that opens up new perspectives on average young Soviet people who influenced Soviet cultural life after the war more directly than previously thought. Following Juliane Fürst’s study on *Stalin’s Last Generation* (2010), Tsipursky makes a valuable contribution towards a better understanding of the “post-Stalin generation” (p. 9). What is more, it is also a book about the Soviet project as a whole—a project whose success and failure largely depended on (young) people’s acceptance. In this sense, socialist fun was “serious business” (p. 234).

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WHITTLE, Jane, ed. – *Servants in Rural Europe: 1400-1900*. Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2017. Pp. 284.

After years of neglect in favour of “productive” labour, scholars have, over the past few decades, come to recognize the importance of service labour for understanding the economic, social, and cultural history of Europe and beyond. As the work of the Cambridge Group for the Study of Population and Social Structure showed in the 1960s, in preindustrial England servants made up a significant proportion of the population, and perhaps 60% of its youth. In the late 1970s, the group’s founder, Peter Laslett, identified live-in service as one of the three key characteristics of the Western family, and E. A. Wrigley described it as both an essential form of *de facto* family planning and a mechanism for redeploying surplus labour. Since then, scholars from Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos (*Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England*, 1994) to Sheila McIsaac Cooper and other contributors to the