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Elena Pedigo Clark. *Trauma and Truth: Teaching Russian Literature on the Chechen Wars.*

Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2023. 260 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$199.00, hard bound.

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The Caucasus is my main area of research, so it was with great interest that I accepted an offer from the editors of *Slavic Review* to write a review of the book *Trauma and Truth: Teaching Russian Literature on the Chechen Wars* by Elena Pedigo Clark. Upon reading the work, any reader expecting a scientific approach to the issue may feel quite disappointed. Nowhere does the author present a research hypothesis, nor does she present any research questions that she hopes to answer in her text. In some sections, it is evident that the author wanted to write an academic book, but in reality, we get a summary of four works by the individuals treated by the author: *A Dirty War* by Anna Politkovskaya, *The Sky Wept Fire* by Mikail Eldin, *One Soldier's War* by Arkadiy Babchenko, and *Patalogii: Roman* by Zakhar Prilepin—along with a surface discussion of each work.

I have significant doubts regarding the inclusion of Mikail Eldin's work, *The Sky Wept Fire*, in the category of Russian literature. Clark justifies this and refers, for example, to the fact that Eldin received his education in Russian and that he used Russian in his writing (6, 59). I, however, remain unconvinced. Mikail Eldin has lived outside of Russia for twenty years and, to the degree that he can, distances himself from this country, stating publicly that he is not a Russian, among other things. With that being the case, the fact of his using the Russian language does not imply that he feels himself to be a Russian author or a part of Russian culture. We ought to respect his identity, given that he positions himself so explicitly and unambiguously. The fact that the work in question is written in Russian is, in my view, an insufficient reason to classify it as Russian literature. Not every work written in the English language is treated as if belonging to English literature. We have, after all, Indian English literature, thus by analogy, I would classify Eldin's work as Chechen Russian literature.

The Conclusion disappoints with its shallow insights. Ascertainments like "For all four of the writers . . . the wars in Chechnya were Hell" (243) are hardly revelatory. In the history of literature, there are few examples of writers who had experienced war and reveled in it, considering it some sort of Paradise. The book's title I also find problematic, the first part of which reads "Trauma and Truth." Trauma is treated in one minuscule chapter, spanning a mere four pages. Further on, said "trauma" appears only incidentally. With "truth" the matter is even worse, given that it appears practically nowhere aside from the title. This is puzzling treatment, considering that the question of truth in literature is the subject of thorough studies by literary scholars. What "truth" is the author alluding to? Where does Clark see the boundary between it and interpretation? This, unfortunately, the book leaves unanswered.

It is apparent that Clark has problems navigating both the history of the Caucasus and its present day. She notes that the Caucasus is a region inhabited by a “diverse group of non-Slavic peoples” (17). In this manner of presentation, excluded are, for example, the Greben Cossacks, who formed mainly out of Slavs coming to Chechnya and Dagestan in the sixteenth century. The author’s claim that Chechens were the most numerous and warlike among those Caucasian peoples fighting the Russian army in the nineteenth century (17) must also be rejected. Much more numerous were the Circassians. In Imam Shamil’s forces, too, the majority were Avars, which we know from the account of one of Shamil’s naibs, Iusuf-Khadzhi Safarov. As for the weak grasp of Chechnya’s contemporary situation, this can be seen in Clark calling Urus-Martan a “village” (79), when it is a town of 60,000 inhabitants, or by using the term “current president of Chechnya” (20) for Ramzan Kadyrov, when no such office has existed since 2011. Kadyrov is instead Head of the Chechen Republic.

The topic of Russian literature towards the war in Chechnya is a fascinating one. It can be analyzed from a multitude of perspectives. One such perspective seems to be offered by studies under the umbrella of Comparative Literature. It would assist one in analyzing, for example, the analogies and differences within Russian literature between the late twentieth-century wars in Chechnya and the nineteenth-century Caucasian conquests, or between American literature in the context of the invasion of Afghanistan. The possibilities within this scope are many, and it is to be hoped that research in this field will develop and produce interesting pieces in the future.

Dmitry Gromov. *AUE: Kriminalizatsiia molodezhi i moral'naia panika.*

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Russian criminal culture has always been a propitious research topic. It works as a time machine for understanding primitive societies; it is a titillating continuation of the gothic novels about a forbidden world of violence, tragic heroes, and raging passions; and it is used as props for statements about Russia in general, as well as its history and current political structure. A number of pro-Kremlin ideologists, such as Vladimir Medinsky and Vladimir Iakunin, who attack “Russophobic stereotypes” about special connections between Russia and prison, indirectly confirm the importance of the topic. The book by anthropologist Dmitry Gromov provides an empirically rich examination of the latest fashion in Russian criminal culture, mysteriously abbreviated as “AUE.”

The author delves into the history of the term, arguing that it first emerged quite recently, around 2007, and since then has absorbed several different interpretations, from a battle cry to the deciphered slogan “the criminal way of life is one” to the self-name of the organized