David Kissane (ed.). 2015. After Civil War. Division, Reconstruction, and Reconciliation in Contemporary Europe, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 299 pp.

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To a large degree, the history of contemporary times is also the history of how the concept of civil war has been redefined. During the twentieth century, with the Marxist-Leninist position that civil war be integrated into the revolutionary model, the term acquired multiple definitions. A noun phrase full of semantic content, 'civil war' has been stretched to denote what others have analysed as wars of liberation, of religion, of independence or of revolution. It has also served to stimulate retroactive comparison among European post-fascist thinkers. As such, civil internal conflict can be located among the processes most commonly subjected to re-naming or decontextualisation. It is at once the type of war that most resists being named, and the name that has been subjected to greatest misuse. The ubiquitous nature of the term makes its assignation a historical mechanism, but also a political, cultural and identitary one involving more usage for evaluation than analysis at times.

Civil wars are always complex processes with layers of overlapping elements that may simultaneously include national, class, religious, internal and international conflict. Like interstate wars, they articulate mechanisms to resolve political, cultural and identitary issues as well as those involving multiple or shared sovereignty, but also geostrategic, energy or military disputes. All of them centre on expelling a portion of the national community, the *civitas*, and generally affect the non-combatant civil population. In Spain and Italy, for example, this involved half of the victims of the respective 1936–39 or 1943–45 conflicts, and two-thirds of the victims in Finland. However, though many develop under the cover of international wars, civil wars have strongly specific elements and are particular to state-building processes.

Civil wars have claimed 20 million lives and displaced 67 million people since the Second World War, giving this form of armed conflict undisputed pre-eminence in the world, at least from the perspective of the social sciences. However, these fields of study generally do not provide a deeper analysis of European civil wars in the twentieth century: beginning with Russia in 1918 and including the better-known cases of Finland, Ireland, Spain, Italy and Greece up until 1949 (the most readily-identifiable era), followed by the post-communist former Yugoslavia. To these – depending on the definition of 'civil war' one adopts – we can add Poland or France in the final stages of the Second World War and the cases of Cyprus, Turkey and Kurdistan, which have (correctly, in my opinion) been included in this book. Here the debates over the definition, limits and characteristics of these internal conflicts are directly determined by their nature, the degree of fracture, mobilisation and exclusion they generated and their indices of violence against combatants

and non-combatants.

However, memories and narratives of a war are not only determined by how conflicts develop, but by how they end and how the end is managed. In fact, the post-war period is equally or even more important than the conflict itself for shaping the memory of a war. This observation informs the emphasis given in this work to reconstructions of the national community and how subsequent accounts of the war are ‘administrated’. Civil wars constitute a privileged place for the production of memory, as is abundantly evident in the great and enduring narrative stereotypes that originate from the conflicts themselves (class wars, struggles for independence, the Crusades, the *Liberazione*). Contemporary warfare is a powerful mnemonic generator, and its physical, symbolic and narrative reconstruction, far from being aproblematic, seems to serve as a mechanism for potential or real exclusion.