

Macat



Library

A MACAT ANALYSIS

TIMOTHY SNYDER'S

# BLOODLANDS

EUROPE BETWEEN HITLER AND STALIN





An Analysis of

**Timothy Snyder's**

---

**Bloodlands:  
Europe Between  
Hitler and Stalin**

Helen Roche



Copyright © 2017 by Macat International Ltd  
24:13 Coda Centre, 189 Munster Road, London SW6 6AW.

Macat International has asserted its right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the copyright holder of this work.

The print publication is protected by copyright. Prior to any prohibited reproduction, storage in a retrieval system, distribution or transmission in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, permission should be obtained from the publisher or where applicable a license permitting restricted copying in the United Kingdom should be obtained from the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, Barnard's Inn, 86 Fetter Lane, London EC4A 1EN, UK.

The ePublication is protected by copyright and must not be copied, reproduced, transferred, distributed, leased, licensed or publicly performed or used in any way except as specifically permitted in writing by the publishers, as allowed under the terms and conditions under which it was purchased, or as strictly permitted by applicable copyright law. Any unauthorised distribution or use of this text may be a direct infringement of the authors and the publishers' rights and those responsible may be liable in law accordingly.

[www.makat.com](http://www.makat.com)  
[info@makat.com](mailto:info@makat.com)

Cover illustration: Kim Thompson

#### *Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.  
Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data is available upon request.

ISBN 978-1-912302-76-5 (hardback)  
ISBN 978-1-912128-97-6 (paperback)  
ISBN 978-1-912281-64-0 (e-book)

#### **Notice**

The information in this book is designed to orientate readers of the work under analysis, to elucidate and contextualise its key ideas and themes, and to aid in the development of critical thinking skills. It is not meant to be used, nor should it be used, as a substitute for original thinking or in place of original writing or research. References and notes are provided for informational purposes and their presence does not constitute endorsement of the information or opinions therein. This book is presented solely for educational purposes. It is sold on the understanding that the publisher is not engaged to provide any scholarly advice. The publisher has made every effort to ensure that this book is accurate and up-to-date, but makes no warranties or representations with regard to the completeness or reliability of the information it contains. The information and the opinions provided herein are not guaranteed or warranted to produce particular results and may not be suitable for students of every ability. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, damage or disruption arising from any errors or omissions, or from the use of this book, including, but not limited to, special, incidental, consequential or other damages caused, or alleged to have been caused, directly or indirectly, by the information contained within.

## CONTENTS

### WAYS IN TO THE TEXT

Who Is Timothy Snyder?	9
What Does <i>Bloodlands</i> Say?	10
Why Does <i>Bloodlands</i> Matter?	12

### SECTION 1: INFLUENCES

Module 1: The Author and the Historical Context	16
Module 2: Academic Context	22
Module 3: The Problem	28
Module 4: The Author's Contribution	33

### SECTION 2: IDEAS

Module 5: Main Ideas	40
Module 6: Secondary Ideas	45
Module 7: Achievement	50
Module 8: Place in the Author's Work	56

### SECTION 3: IMPACT

Module 9: The First Responses	64
Module 10: The Evolving Debate	71
Module 11: Impact and Influence Today	77
Module 12: Where Next?	83
Glossary of Terms	89
People Mentioned in the Text	96
Works Cited	107

## THE MACAT LIBRARY

The Macat Library is a series of unique academic explorations of seminal works in the humanities and social sciences – books and papers that have had a significant and widely recognised impact on their disciplines. It has been created to serve as much more than just a summary of what lies between the covers of a great book. It illuminates and explores the influences on, ideas of, and impact of that book. Our goal is to offer a learning resource that encourages critical thinking and fosters a better, deeper understanding of important ideas.

Each publication is divided into three Sections: Influences, Ideas, and Impact. Each Section has four Modules. These explore every important facet of the work, and the responses to it.

This Section-Module structure makes a Macat Library book easy to use, but it has another important feature. Because each Macat book is written to the same format, it is possible (and encouraged!) to cross-reference multiple Macat books along the same lines of inquiry or research. This allows the reader to open up interesting interdisciplinary pathways.

To further aid your reading, lists of glossary terms and people mentioned are included at the end of this book (these are indicated by an asterisk [\*] throughout) – as well as a list of works cited.

Macat has worked with the University of Cambridge to identify the elements of critical thinking and understand the ways in which six different skills combine to enable effective thinking.

Three allow us to fully understand a problem; three more give us the tools to solve it. Together, these six skills make up the

**PACIER** model of critical thinking. They are:

**ANALYSIS** – understanding how an argument is built

**EVALUATION** – exploring the strengths and weaknesses of an argument

**INTERPRETATION** – understanding issues of meaning

**CREATIVE THINKING** – coming up with new ideas and fresh connections

**PROBLEM-SOLVING** – producing strong solutions

**REASONING** – creating strong arguments

To find out more, visit **[WWW.MACAT.COM](http://WWW.MACAT.COM)**.

## **CRITICAL THINKING AND *BLOODLANDS***

**Primary critical thinking skill: EVALUATION**

**Secondary critical thinking skill: REASONING**

A flagbearer for the increasingly fashionable genre of “transnational history,” Timothy Snyder’s *Bloodlands* is, first and foremost, a stunning example of the critical thinking skill of evaluation. Snyder’s linguistic precocity allows him to cite evidence in 10 languages, putting fresh twists on the familiar story of World War II fighting on the Eastern Front from 1941–45. In doing so, he works to humanize the estimated 14 million people who lost their lives as their lands were fought over repeatedly by the Nazis and their Soviet opponents.

Snyder also works to link more closely the atrocities committed by Hitler and Stalin, which he insists are far too often viewed in isolation. He focuses heavily on the adequacy and relevance of his evidence, but he also uses the materials he has culled from so many different archives as fuel for an exemplary work of reasoning, forcing readers to confront the grim realities that lie behind terms such as ‘cannibalism’ and ‘liquidation.’ In consequence, *Bloodlands* has emerged, only a few years after its publication, as one of the seminal works of its era, one that is key to Holocaust studies, genocide studies and area studies, and to sociology as well as to history. A masterly work of literature as well as of history, *Bloodlands* will continue to be read for decades.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE ORIGINAL WORK**

US historian **Timothy Snyder** is recognized as one of the world's leading experts on Eastern European history.

Born in 1969 in Dayton, Ohio, Snyder wrote his doctoral thesis at Oxford University in England, learning a number of Eastern and Central European languages at the same time. Snyder's writing career soon took off, and it was *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (2010) that really sealed his reputation as an historian. Currently a professor at Yale University, Snyder is often called on to air his views as a political pundit. His views remain controversial – with some accusing him of anti-Russian bias – but he works with various institutions that foster international understanding, such as the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Regimes in Lithuania.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE ANALYSIS**

**Dr Helen Roche** teaches history at the University of Cambridge, where her work focuses on education and the uses of classicism in Nazi Germany. Her second monograph, *The Third Reich's Elite Schools: A History of the Napolas*, is forthcoming from the Oxford University Press.

## **ABOUT MACAT**

### **GREAT WORKS FOR CRITICAL THINKING**

Macat is focused on making the ideas of the world's great thinkers accessible and comprehensible to everybody, everywhere, in ways that promote the development of enhanced critical thinking skills.

It works with leading academics from the world's top universities to produce new analyses that focus on the ideas and the impact of the most influential works ever written across a wide variety of academic disciplines. Each of the works that sit at the heart of its growing library is an enduring example of great thinking. But by setting them in context – and looking at the influences that shaped their authors, as well as the responses they provoked – Macat encourages readers to look at these classics and game-changers with fresh eyes. Readers learn to think, engage and challenge their ideas, rather than simply accepting them.

‘Macat offers an amazing first-of-its-kind tool for interdisciplinary learning and research. Its focus on works that transformed their disciplines and its rigorous approach, drawing on the world’s leading experts and educational institutions, opens up a world-class education to anyone.’

**Andreas Schleicher,**  
Director for Education and Skills, Organisation for Economic  
Co-operation and Development

‘Macat is taking on some of the major challenges in university education ... They have drawn together a strong team of active academics who are producing teaching materials that are novel in the breadth of their approach.’

**Prof Lord Broers,**  
former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge

‘The Macat vision is exceptionally exciting. It focuses upon new modes of learning which analyse and explain seminal texts which have profoundly influenced world thinking and so social and economic development. It promotes the kind of critical thinking which is essential for any society and economy.

This is the learning of the future.’

**Rt Hon Charles Clarke, former UK Secretary of State for Education**

‘The Macat analyses provide immediate access to the critical conversation surrounding the books that have shaped their respective discipline, which will make them an invaluable resource to all of those, students and teachers, working in the field.’

**Professor William Tronzo, University of California at San Diego**





Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# WAYS IN TO THE TEXT

---

## KEY POINTS

- Timothy Snyder, one of the world's leading experts on Eastern European history, is currently a professor at Yale University.\*
- His book *Bloodlands* argues that we need to treat all the mass killing that occurred in Eastern Europe between 1933 and 1945 in one single narrative that takes account of all the victims.
- The work's insights can help us to understand the global tragedy of World War II\* (1939–45) and the Holocaust\* —the mass-murder of at least six million European Jews\* committed in the years of the war.

## Who Is Timothy Snyder

Timothy Snyder, the author of *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (2010), was born in 1969 in Dayton, Ohio.\* He studied at Brown University\* and Oxford University,\* where he wrote his doctoral thesis. During his time at Oxford, Snyder was able to learn several Eastern and Central European languages that would prove crucial for his research.<sup>1</sup>

After he gained his doctorate, Snyder soon began to make his name as a historian of Eastern Europe. He wrote a series of biographies and a book on Central European nationalism\* (a belief in the

superiority of one's own country over others). Many of these were well reviewed, and some won prizes. In 2001, he was appointed Bird White Housum Professor of History at Yale University.<sup>2</sup> But it was *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* that really made his name.

Since *Bloodlands* appeared, Snyder has become a political pundit as well as a scholar. He often comments on current affairs in the media, especially the *New York Review of Books*, in connection with Eastern Europe.<sup>3</sup> He is also involved with various institutions that foster international understanding, such as the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi\* and Soviet\* Regimes in Lithuania,\* a commission appointed by the president of Lithuania.<sup>4</sup> "Nazi" here refers to the extreme right-wing German Nazi Party, led by the dictator Adolf Hitler\* through the years of World War II; "Soviet" refers to the Soviet Union, a federation of communist states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia that existed from 1922 until 1991, led from the Russian capital, Moscow.

Snyder's political views have sometimes been considered controversial. Certain critics have accused his historical analysis of revealing a pro-Polish, pro-Ukrainian, and anti-Russian bias.<sup>5</sup> Others see *Bloodlands* as equating the crimes of Hitler's Germany and Joseph Stalin's\* Soviet Union<sup>6</sup> (Stalin was the leader of the Soviet Union in the years 1922–53). Snyder's latest book, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (2015), has also sparked much debate.<sup>7</sup> For the time being, then, his career as a global superstar historian looks set to continue.

### **What Does *Bloodlands* Say?**

*Bloodlands* argues that previous histories have kept Nazi and Soviet crimes unduly separate, focusing more on the Holocaust than on Stalin's crimes against humanity. They have emphasized Western Europe over Eastern Europe. They immortalize Auschwitz,\* the Polish site of a million murders in the latter years of World War II, but

not the killing fields of the East, where many millions were starved or executed on account of agricultural policy and political repression. Snyder claims that we need a history of World War II that depicts all victims' suffering. This includes the Holocaust—but it also includes the sufferings of Ukrainians in the famines that Stalin caused, and the sufferings of Poles and the Baltic peoples under both Hitler and Stalin.

The title of the book is a coinage, invented by Snyder himself. He defines the “bloodlands” as including Poland, the Baltic states\* (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), Ukraine, and the eastern edge of Soviet Russia. In the bloodlands, he states, 14 million people—not soldiers, but civilians—died during World War II.

Snyder argues that the peoples in the bloodlands suffered most because they were caught between the Soviet and Nazi regimes. They had to undergo not a single invasion, nor even a double invasion. Instead, they were subjected to three invasions, first by the Soviets, then by the Nazis, and then again by the Soviets. Each invasion brought more brutality and slaughter than the last. The two regimes reacted against each other in an escalating cycle of violence.

Snyder's book synthesizes a vast amount of scholarship. He has used archival documents and secondary literature in 10 different languages, bringing new sources and new interpretations to public attention for the very first time. In this way, *Bloodlands* has begun fundamentally to reframe the ways we think about World War II and the Holocaust. It has not only inspired academic debate—though there has been much of this—it has also been used by Eastern European nations to foster new forms of identity politics. For instance, translations of the book in the Eastern European nations of Ukraine and Georgia\* have been freely distributed to counter pro-Stalinist\* Russian narratives.<sup>8</sup>

*Bloodlands's* enduring importance can be shown by the fact that the book was translated into more than 30 languages between 2010 and 2014.<sup>9</sup> It has also been published in multiple editions, and won

numerous prizes, including the Hannah Arendt Prize, a German prize awarded by an international jury, and the Leipzig Prize for European Understanding. The book's arguments continue to shape historical debates about World War II and the Holocaust, as well as Eastern European memory politics in the present day. Finally, the term "bloodlands" has swiftly become a standard term in discussions of this period.

### **Why Does *Bloodlands* Matter?**

*Bloodlands* is a groundbreaking work of transnational\* history (that is, it analyzes the history shared by several nations). It encourages us to think outside traditional national frameworks, and to make new connections. It asks the reader to lay aside preconditioned assumptions—about the uniqueness of the Shoah\* (another name for the Holocaust) or the relative barbarity of Nazism and the aggressively dictatorial version of the social and economic system of communism\* practiced in the Soviet Union.

Above all, *Bloodlands* appeals to our humanity. Snyder shows us why history is a "humanities" discipline in the most meaningful sense. He is careful to portray the countless dead as individual people who lived, rather than meaningless strings of statistics. In order to understand how people can commit atrocities, he argues, we need to lay moral judgment to one side. But we must still have compassion for the victims.

*Bloodlands* also helps us to combat assumptions about the relative importance of Western Europe. Just because the "bloodlands" may be less familiar does not make them less significant. Such insights can help to foster a more enquiring mind-set. They encourage readers to leave their comfort zone.

This is also true of some of the brutalities that Snyder describes. By making readers confront the true horror of cannibalism or mass shooting, he forces them to reflect on what humanity is capable of. His