

**CZECHOSLOVAK
STUDIES
ASSOCIATION**

**Newsletter of the Czechoslovak Studies
Association**

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See Inside:

**Prize Announcements
Conferences, CFPs, and More
Recent Book Reviews & Interviews
Articles
News of the Membership**



Vosecká bouda, hostel in Krkonoše
photo by user Pudelek, via Wikipedia

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“The Newsletter of the Czechoslovak Studies Association exists to express interests in the history of Czechoslovakia, its predecessor and successor states, and all its peoples within and without its historic boundaries.”

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Greetings from the President

Our field is always changing, but something is different about this moment. In the United States, the future of area studies – and its associated funding, which has supported the training so many of today’s scholars – is uncertain, to use the parlance of the time. For those without US passports, immigration checks at the airport create understandable anxieties, and our international students, teachers, and researchers face challenging, at times insulting, hurdles apparently intended to diminish us all. At the same time, the “internationalization” of the CSA continues. From its origins as a Cold War community of support for mostly North American scholars, many of them emigres, who studied the lands of Communist Czechoslovakia, the CSA has become a vibrant, transnational organization whose members are affiliated with universities around the world. Those of us based in the US, I venture to say, value our connections with colleagues in Europe, Canada, and the United Kingdom as never before. Their support, inspiration, and collaborative work with us point the way forward.

The internationalization of the CSA is perhaps nowhere more apparent than a glance at our recent elections. Many congratulations to our incoming Vice President, Michaela Appeltová, and our four new board members: Jiří Hutečka, Marta Filipová, Rosamund Johnston, and Rebekah Klein-Pejsova. Many thanks, too, to our outgoing board members, Hugh Agnew,

Kateřina Čapková, Cathleen M. Giustino, and Jindřich Toman for their many years of service. The CSA owe an enormous debt of gratitude to our outgoing vice-president, Jacob Labendz, who has worn many hats – adviser, web guru, membership dues fixer – all while approaching difficult issues with a humor and seriousness. Many thanks as well to our secretary-treasurer, Zachary Doleshal, who keeps the operation running in so many ways, and Karla Huebner, who put together this newsletter, part of a many-years-long dedication to the CSA.

In the pages that follow, you will find self-reflection by former CSA president Cynthia Paces, author of the recently published *Praque: The Heart of Europe* and a celebration of this year’s prize winners, Jonathan Parker (Emerging Scholars Prize) and Rosamund Johnston and Claire Morelon (co-winners of the book prize). In addition to book reviews, interviews and member news, please note information regarding this year’s general meeting on Friday, December 5 at 10:00 A.M. Eastern Standard Time and the call for papers for next year’s Czech and Slovak Studies workshop, which is being hosted at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln thanks to the leadership of Hana Waisserová. Enjoy reading the newsletter, and thank you for being a member of the Czechoslovak Studies Association.

--Chad Bryant
President



Election Results

Elections took place for president, vice president, and four officer-at-large positions. These positions are for three-year terms, and begin at our annual meeting in November.

Chad Bryant will continue as president. Michaela Appeltová succeeds Jacob Labendz as vice president. The new at-large

board members are Marta Filipová, Jiří Hutečka, Rosamund Johnston, and Rebekah Klein-Pejšová. We would like to welcome all new board members and to thank everyone who agreed to run for office.



2025 Annual Social and General Meeting

The Czechoslovak Studies Association (CSA) and the Slovak Studies Association (SSA) will be co-hosting an **ASEEES conference reception** on Friday, November 21 from 7:00-9:00 pm at Madam's Organ.

The bar/restaurant/music venue is located at 2461 18th Street NW, which is about a 15-minute walk from the conference hotel. We have reserved a private space on the top floor. When you arrive, you'll be asked to pay a cover, as there will be music on the other floors.

Appetizers and other light food options will be provided. We will announce the winners of this year's book prize and the Emerging Scholars award around 8:00 P.M. Partners, friends, and good colleagues are welcome to join – especially if they are potential CSA and/or SSA members!

The event is sponsored by the CSA and SSA and is only possible thanks to your dues and generous donations. Support has also been provided by the Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East European Studies and the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.

The **annual membership meeting** of the Czechoslovak Studies Association will take place via Zoom on December 5 at 10:00 A.M. Eastern Standard Time at <https://unc.zoom.us/j/92524159034>.

Members are automatically enrolled in the Google Group listserve, which will be our primary means of quick communication within the CSA. People may opt out of the listserve, but the hope is that it will prove useful for communication among members rather than being a top-down method of making announcements. While members are added automatically, non-members can email CSA to be added to the group.

The CSA's twitter handle is:

@CzechoslovakSA

The CSA has two Facebook pages:

Our institutional information page:

<https://www.facebook.com/czechoslovakstudies>

Our community group, for news/discussion:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/561860507278186>

CSA Prizes

Stanley Z. Pech Prize

The next competition for the Stanley Z. Pech Prize will be in 2026. The biennial prize honors a peer-reviewed article or book chapter dealing with the history of Czechoslovakia, its predecessor and successor states or provinces, or any of its peoples within and without its historic boundaries. To be eligible for consideration in this cycle, the publication must have appeared in English in print or online in calendar years 2024 and 2025.

The Pech Prize Committee accepts submissions from all academic disciplines, if they contain a substantial historical component. Authors should be members of the Czechoslovak Studies Association when they submit their publications. The current award is \$300.

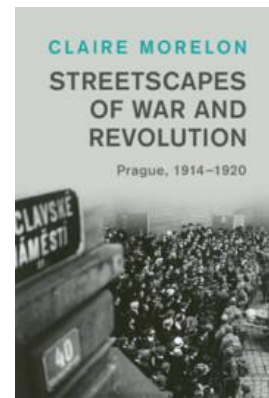
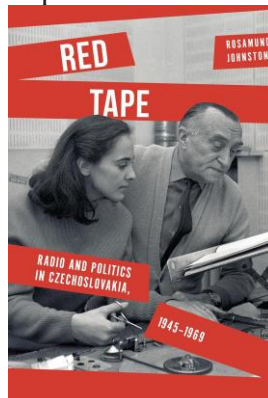
CSA Book Prize

This year saw many submissions of high quality. After careful consideration, the committee has decided to award a joint prize for the best book in Czechoslovak Studies 2023-2024 to Rosamund Johnston's *Red Tape: Radio and Politics in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1969*, and Claire Morelon's *Streetscapes of War and Revolution. Prague, 1914-1920*.

Rosamund Johnston, University of Vienna
Red Tape: Radio and Politics in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1969 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2024)

This groundbreaking exploration of Czechoslovak Radio before 1969 offers valuable insight into the lives and thoughts not only of Czechoslovakia's radio journalists but also into the listening habits of Czechoslo-

vakia's citizens. Utilizing rarely accessed archival records at Czech Radio, Johnston demonstrates how radio journalists brought sincere and complex ideological beliefs to their reporting while also serving as interlocutors between government superiors, the listening public, and the wider world. Johnston successfully demonstrates how journalists and their public related to propaganda and "truth," shaping the politics in Cold War Czechoslovakia. By exploring previously unknown material, the book is a crucial contribution to understanding the role of media in pre-normalisation Czechoslovakia.



Claire Morelon, University of Manchester
Streetscapes of War and Revolution. Prague, 1914-1920 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024)

This fascinating study upends traditional Czechoslovak state mythology and paints a sophisticated picture of patriotism in everyday life during and beyond World War I. Focusing on the lived experience in Prague's streets, Morelon casts a society concerned about material and psychological well-being, interacting with temporary signage, government offices, cafes, and outdoor public spaces, seen through the lens of police records. In connecting the beginning of World War I through the riots and disruptions of the early republic, Morelon reveals a consistent logic of political well-being re-

moved from national politics and political symbols, instead concentrated on relationships among the public and the authorities. Going beyond traditional periodisation and prioritising of nation-building, the book is an innovative contribution to the scholarship on the late Habsburg Empire and interwar Czechoslovakia.

The next, biennial, Czechoslovak Studies Association Prize for the Best Book in the Field of Czechoslovak Historical Studies will be given in 2027. To be eligible for consideration, books must be primarily concerned with the history of Czechoslovakia, its predecessor and successor states, or any of its peoples within and without its historical boundaries. The field of historical studies will be broadly construed, with books in all fields considered for the prize if they are substantially historical in nature. The prize committee will decide whether a book matches these criteria. Books under consideration must be new works by a single author written originally in the English language. Books published in 2025 and 2026 are eligible for the 2027 competition.

To be eligible, you must be a member of the CSA. If you are uncertain about your membership status, please contact CSA Treasurer Zachary Doleshal at zad007@SHSU.EDU. Authors are responsible for providing the committee with the book they wish to enter the competition. Books for consideration should be submitted to committee chair no later than June 30, 2027. The current award is \$400.

Many thanks to the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the University of Texas, Austin, which has sponsored this prize.

2025 Committee Members

Dr Marta Filipová (chair), Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University

Dr Felix Jeschke, Historisches Seminar der LMU München

Jesse Siegel, Department of History, Rutgers University

Emerging Scholar Prize

Jonathan Parker's dissertation chapter, "Recruitment, Manpower, and the Nationality Issue in Slovakia," examines the difficulties faced by state authorities in establishing state-wide institutions such as security services in Czechoslovakia between 1918 and 1924. He notes, "Czechoslovakia differed within its borders not only in terms of putative ethnicity and language, but also in its infrastructure, economic development, and state structures. The security services in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia could rely on an already existing body of trained and experienced men to police the republic and an industrial economy to supply and transport them. However, in Slovakia the apparatus of the state had to be rebuilt virtually from scratch by importing personnel and materiel from the Bohemian lands. This posed numerous challenges and made it easy for some to charge the authorities with Czech colonialism and domination over Slovaks." (31) He shows, however, how these charges were rooted in the state's response to material differences in infrastructure and labor power in the Czech and Slovak regions rather than from an *a priori* belief in Czech superiority. The author moves productively and seamlessly between the perspectives of central police authorities to those of the men serving as gendarmes in Slovakia. Indeed, Parker's rich archival work and insightful analysis shows that the line between empire and nation state frequently blurred after

WWI less for ideological reasons than for pragmatic ones.

The Czechoslovak Studies Association Emerging Scholars Essay Prize is awarded annually to the author of a distinguished article, essay, or chapter on a topic related to the history and culture of Czechoslovakia, its predecessor and successor states, and its peoples. Papers that place these topics in a comparative or transnational context are welcome. Submissions for the 2026 prize should be an essay, journal article, book chapter, or chapter of a recently completed dissertation or master's thesis from 2023, 2024, or 2025 (they may not also be submitted for the Pech Prize).

They must be no more than 10,000 words in length inclusive of references/footnotes, and written originally in English. Dissertation or thesis chapters can be edited to meet the maximum word count. Applicants must be current Ph.D. students or have earned a

Ph.D. or master's degree in or after 2021. The competition is open to members and non-members of the CSA, and the prize committee will not be provided information about an applicant's membership status. We encourage non-members, however, to see this as an opportunity to join the CSA. Please use [this page](#) to apply for membership. If you are uncertain about your membership status, please contact CSA Treasurer Zachary Doleshal at zad007@SHSU.EDU. Prize value: \$200

2025 Committee Members

Tatjana Lichtenstein (chair), University of Texas at Austin

Philip Howe, Adrian College

Julia Mead, University of Chicago

Many thanks to the Center for Slavic, East European, and Slavic Studies and the Center for European Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, which have sponsored this prize.



Other Prizes of Interest

Slovak Studies Association Lifetime Achievement Award

The Slovak Studies Association annually presents a deceased or living SSA member with the Slovak Studies Association Lifetime Achievement Award. Any member may nominate an individual for the award and present a brief rationale explaining the nominee's eligibility at least one month before the annual SSA meeting. The SSA Executive Committee (the president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and newsletter

editor) evaluate the nomination. Approval requires a majority of all members attending the annual meeting. The SSA shall present those receiving an SSA Lifetime Achievement Award with a plaque and shall update the SSA website with the names of the winners. Send nominations or inquiries to slovakstudies@gmail.com.



*Center for Austrian Studies
Biennial Book Prize*

The Center for Austrian Studies holds a biennial book prize competition. This year, books published between January 1st, 2023 and December 31st, 2024 were eligible for submission. Eligible works may be from any discipline in the humanities, social sciences, or fine arts.

The subject matter may deal with the past, present, and/or future of Central Europe, including topics pertaining to Austria and any regions historically part of the former Habsburg Empire.

The language of the publication must be English. Multi-authored studies or multi-author collections of essays are not eligible for this competition. This award is not restricted to U.S. citizens or permanent residents, but is meant to promote scholarly works published in North America. Please contact the Center with eligibility questions.

Deadline for submissions: was Friday, May 2nd, 2025. The winners will be announced by October 2025. For additional questions, please contact Dr. Meyer Weinshel at casahy@umn.edu.

The CAS Book Prize has been made possible thanks to a generous donation from David and Rosemary Good.

BASEES Book Proposal Prize

A Prize for Best First Book Proposal in Minority History, launched by the BASEES Study Group for Minority History (SGMH), recognizes scholarly excellence among early career academics seeking to publish their original research with a major English-language academic press.

The biennial prize is offered by the SGMH for a book proposal of high quality dealing with any aspect of minority history (broadly defined) relating to Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

The deadline for the next cycle is anticipated to be in January 2027. For more information about the prize, see:

<https://studygroupforminorityhistory.com/sgmh-first-book-proposal-prize/>

Please send any queries to:
sgmh.basees@gmail.com

The BASEES Study Group for Minority History (SGMH) is a forum devoted to the study of minority groups in the national and regional histories of Central, Eastern and Southeastern European from the Napoleonic Wars to the contemporary past.



Josef Gočár, the Legiobanka, Prague, 1921-23,
photo Thomas Ledl, via Wikipedia

Twenty-fifth Annual Czech & Slovak Studies Workshop University of Nebraska

The Twenty-Sixth Annual Czech and Slovak Studies Workshop, to be held at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln on April 23-25, 2026, welcomes papers on Czech and Slovak topics, broadly defined, in all disciplines. In the past, our interdisciplinary conference has drawn participants from colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. Areas of interest have been anthropology, architecture, art, economics, education, film, geography, history, Jewish studies, literature, music, philosophy, politics, religion, society, sociology, and theater. Work in progress is an appropriate format for our workshop. Junior faculty and advanced graduate students are particularly encouraged to apply. Hotel accommodation will be provided for participants presenting at the workshop, and some travel assistance will be provided to those in financial need.

This year's program will feature a keynote by Jindřich Toman (University of Michigan): "Bohemia's Jews and Their Nineteenth Century" plus roundtable "Bohemian Jewishness: From Poetics to Politics" with Jindřich Toman, Veronika Tuckeroová (Harvard University; author of *Reading Kafka in Prague*, 2025) and Jacques Rupnik (Sciences Po; author of *The Fates of Central Europe Between Hitler and Stalin - in the writings of Josef Guttman*, 2026).

Participants will also have the opportunity to discuss documentary film *The Art of Dissent* with filmmaker James D. Le Sueur and to attend a reading from Josef Váchal's *Krvavý roman* with Stephen Lahey, as well

as to visit Wilber, the "Czech Capital of the USA."

The deadline for submitting proposals is December 18, 2025. The steering committee will review the proposals and contact the applicants in early January 2026.

Applications should include:

- Paper abstract of approximately 250 words that includes your name and the paper title
- Curriculum vitae
- Please also indicate if you have attended a Czech and Slovak Studies Workshop in the past.

Application materials, as well as any questions, should be emailed to **Hana Waisserova** at hwaisserova2@unl.edu with the subject heading "Czech and Slovak Studies Workshop."

We look forward to your proposals!

-Hana Waisserova, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures and Harris Center for Judaic Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

-Ari Kohen, Political Science and Harris Center for Judaic Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

-Stephen Lahey, Department of Classics and Religious Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

-James D. Le Sueur, History, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

-Gerald Steinacher, History, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

The Workshop is sponsored by the Czech Studies, Department of Modern Language and Literature, History Department, the Harris Center for Judaic Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, as well as the Czech Language Foundation, the Czechoslovak Studies Association and the Slovak Studies Association.

Summer Meetup in Prague

Our summer Prague social meeting took place on Letna in June. We hope to do this again next year.



A Photo-Journal, For the Edification of Gentlemen and Ladies who might attend the Czech and Slovak Studies Workshop in Nebraska. Compiled by Hana Waissierova

Opportunities

The Michael Kopanic PhD Fund Scholarship

Students currently studying Slovak courses in the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures are invited to apply for the Michael Kopanic PhD Fund Scholarship. Recipients must be in good academic standing, currently enrolled in a Slovak course, and have committed to taking Slovak course(s) within the next academic year.

For more information, see:

<https://www.slavic.pitt.edu/michael-kopanic-phd-fund-scholarship>

Calls for Papers

Central Europe Yearbook, an open-access journal for undergraduates working on Central European topics, provides an opportunity for them to publish their scholarship and work in tandem with professors, independent scholars, graduate students, and other undergraduates. The Yearbook's online platform provides an outlet for a wide array of

scholarly projects. Please encourage students to submit projects and proposals. Submissions can include academic articles, GIS maps, interactive resources, games, VLOGs, or any other compelling union of technology and research.

More information about the journal can be found on the journal's website:

<https://pubs.lib.umn.edu/index.php/cey/>.

If you have any questions, please contact the editors at ceuy@umn.edu.

Canadian Slavonic Papers welcomes submissions from anyone in the world and from any disciplinary perspective on the Slavic area. Editor James Krapfl is particularly keen to revitalize the book review section, so anyone (including graduate students) who might like to write a review should get in touch with him.

James Krapfl, Editor, *Canadian Slavonic Papers* / *Revue canadienne des slavistes*

Dept. of History | McGill University | 855, rue Sherbrooke O. | Montréal (Québec) H3A 2T7 | Canada | tel. +1 514 769 8548 (home)



In Prague the Personal is Historical:
Cynthia Paces reflects on writing *Prague: The Heart of Europe*
(reprinted from the Pittsburgh Review of Books)

The other day someone asked me how long it took to write my new book, *Prague: The Heart of Europe*. “Six years, but really my whole life,” I answered without hesitation. For Prague has been a part of my life for as far back as I can remember.

I was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1970, and my grandparents lived in a magical land we called “Upstate.” I found out sometime in elementary school that Upstate referred to anywhere north of Yonkers, but to me it named the place my sister and I went sledding, made up stories about the garden gnomes and plaster deer our grandfather placed around the garden, and heard our dad speak a strange language with his parents and their neighbors. Their rural neighborhood in Dutchess County had a surprising number of Czech speakers. My grandparents and their fellow-immigrant friends purchased parcels of land in the 1960s for weekend homes where they eventually retired. There was always a project going on: installing a roof on the garage, tending the garden, foraging for mushrooms, or baking an apple strudel. My grandfather filled glasses with beer or ginger ale, depending on the age of the “customer” at his built-in bar. Peanuts came in their shells, but apple slices were peeled. In the living room, a needlepoint of a castle on a hill above a river hung on wood-paneled walls.

Prague.

I can’t remember a time in my life when I didn’t want to know more about the city where my father was born. One day, in

1979, my grandmother began to cry while we watched the evening news. The story of the Iran Hostage Crisis had set her off, and I asked my father why. “She is remembering when she was in jail in Czechoslovakia.” This was information my nine-year-old brain could not reconcile. Jail was for criminals, and my grandmother—who learned to bake chocolate-chip cookies to placate her American grandchildren—was certainly not a criminal.

Over the years, I learned more about my own family’s history in Prague. My grandparents had owned a small liquor manufactory that produced sweet after-dinner drinks. My grandfather patented his chocolate-hazelnut concoction, which must have tasted like a melted chocolate bar with a kick. As a kid, I imagined their “factory” in the style of a textile mill with smokestacks and a huge workroom, but actually it occupied the basement and garage of their Prague family home. In Marxist terms, their small enterprise resembled pre-alienation artisan labor rather than exploitative capitalism. Still, in 1948, the Czechoslovak Communist Party nationalized the company and other small businesses. After a brief imprisonment, my grandfather joined an anti-communist group and eventually fled Prague. He crossed the border into Bavaria, leaving behind my grandmother and their three sons—ages twelve, six, and four months. She was arrested in January 1950 and spent several months in prison. Following her release, the family escaped to Germany, where they reunited with my grandfather. Not every family was so lucky. The man who led my grand-

mother's party across the border was shot on his next trip. His wife and daughter waited for him at a Displaced Persons Camp near Munich, but he did not return. At the same camp, my grandfather knew the husband of executed Czechoslovak Socialist politician Milada Horáková.

In fifth grade, I wrote the short story "The Road to Freedom," a romanticized account of my family's escape from Prague when my dad was seven years old. I must have watched too many crime-show reruns, because my introduction indicated that "names had been changed to protect the innocent." After that undertaking, I took a break from my obsession with Prague. My sixth-grade teacher assigned me to write a country report on Czechoslovakia, and I asked to change to the United Kingdom. I think I carried some of the family trauma even at a young age. My Dad's stories about eating Eintopf (a bland lentil soup) every day at the refugee camp, getting seasick on the Atlantic crossing, and his litany of missed opportunities had burned me out by age twelve. In high school, I embraced American history. Family trips to Boston, Hartford, and Providence and visits to historic homes along the Hudson River whet my appetite for local history. I remember talking to the minister who gave a tour of the Old South Meeting House in Boston, and I was awed by the idea that Phyllis Wheatley and a young Benjamin Franklin had sat in that very room.

In my sophomore year at the University of Richmond, in Fall 1989, I gravitated back to European history. I enrolled in a course called the History of Communist and Socialist Thought taught by Martin Ryle, an expert

on the Soviet Union and European intellectual history. We read Marx, Engels, Lenin, Charles Fourier, John Stuart Mill, Robert Owen, Rosa Luxembourg, Clara Zetkin, Karl Kautsky, and Eduard Bernstein. The predominant Cold War ideology no longer served me as I learned to think about the past—and Communism—in a nuanced way. Primary sources and historical context propelled me to complicate my thinking about the "left." I realized that state socialism in East Central Europe was only one outcome of hundreds of forms of socialist thought.

Nonetheless, I can still recall my euphoria when my German language professor bounded into our classroom on November 10, 1989, shouting, "Die Mauer ist weg!" (the Wall is gone). Dr. Ryle, however, told me not to hold my breath for changes in Czechoslovakia or Romania: the hardliners would not let go in those countries as they were doing in Poland, Hungary, and Germany.

A few weeks later, I was home for Thanksgiving break working on a term paper on Václav Havel. Dr. Ryle had originally dissuaded me from this topic. He was unfamiliar with the obscure Czech dissident and playwright, he said, and could offer me little guidance. By the time I returned to school in late November, Havel had emerged as the leader of the Velvet Revolution and the future president of post-Communist Czechoslovakia. "Now do you know who he is?" I asked my professor. A few years later, when I was living in Prague, Dr. Ryle and other Richmond professors visited with their Dixieland band and performed with local musicians on the Charles Bridge.

Soon after the astonishing events in 1989, I enrolled in a Czech summer school to study the language my father thought I would never need. On my first evening in Prague, in the summer of 1990, a graduate student took me to a restaurant overlooking Wenceslas Square. I pictured the crowds that had filled that space only months earlier and felt like I had at Boston's Old South Meeting House. I was standing somewhere I could touch the past.

I devoted the rest of my undergraduate career to understanding Prague and the broader region of East-Central Europe. I studied Czech and German, wrote a senior thesis on the nineteenth-century writer Božena Němcová, and studied abroad in Prague twice. However, when I entered graduate school in 1992, I was unprepared for the challenges that historical thinking would pose for a scholar with personal ties to her region of focus. I had inherited a romantic view of "Czech" history in which an oppressed people emerged from the Habsburg era known as *temno* (darkness) and formed a democracy, only to be conquered again by Nazis and then Communists. Not only was this my family's perception, but traditional historiography also emphasized this Czech national narrative. At Columbia, my advisor István Deák, a Hungarian by birth and a Habsburgist by profession, disabused me of those oversimplifications. Yet, even he sometimes fell into his own national-narrative trap. He loved to remind me that his grandfather had "smashed his Bohemian crystal in the fireplace" following the Treaty of Trianon that ceded Slovakia (or Northern Hungary) to Czechoslovakia.

Writing Prague: The Heart of Europe enabled me to embrace the history of that city in all its contradictions. In my first book, *Prague Panoramas: Sacred Space and National Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Pittsburgh, 2009), I argued that Czech nationalism was more complex than the Czech historical narrative that emerged in the nineteenth century. I recounted the religious rivalries among Roman Catholics, Protestants, and secular nationalists who embraced the fifteenth-century proto-Reformation led by Jan Hus and his followers. Still, my analysis stayed safely inside the Czech community to expose fissures within it, rather than delving into the diversity that defined most of Prague's past.

My new book, *Prague: The Heart of Europe*, compelled me to write about the city in a new way. Composing a *longue-durée* history taught me how much the singular Czech narrative still affected my thinking. The French historian Lynn Hunt's inspiring essay "How Writing Leads to Thinking" advises authors: "You can only really figure out what you think if you first put it on paper and then develop some distance from it. It has to be a part of yourself, but a part that you are willing to release from yourself." Indeed, having to breathe life into eleven centuries of history forced me to think and rethink how I look at the past, particularly a past that affected both my personal history and my professional work. Writing *Prague* strengthened my resolve to question every conclusion I drew, which in turn enabled me to experience the city's complexity and diversity in a way I never had before. As Hunt wrote, "Writing crystallizes previously half-formulated or unformulated

thoughts, gives them form, and extends chains of thoughts in new directions.”

The five “lessons” that follow are not new ideas for me, but they are concepts I frequently reminded myself about as I composed my book. I hope that my readers will come to love the city I call my second home, but that they will also learn to appreciate the complex and contradictory history of the heart of Europe.

1. We can never really know the past. The further back you go in history, the truer that statement is. In early drafts, I found myself reproducing some of the national narratives about the foundation of Prague that medievalists and archeologists now reject. Medieval sources are scarce and were produced for specific purposes—to promote a certain family’s prominence in a region, to legitimize new Christian beliefs and saints, and perhaps even just to tell stories.
2. Prague was never the Czech capital (at least not until 1993, when it became the political capital of the newly founded Czech Republic). In fact, the way we understand “Czechness” did not emerge until the nineteenth century. Prague was diverse and multilingual from its establishment of the Bohemian Duchy in the tenth century. In subsequent centuries, speakers of Old Czech and Middle High German, polyglot Jews, and merchants and artisans from all over Europe all called Prague home. The Slavic “Czech” Přemyslid family ruled medieval Prague only into the fourteenth century. “Foreign” kings

from Poland or Austria held power there from 1471 to 1918.

3. Jewish history cannot be separated from Prague’s history. The first mention of Jews living in Prague occurs in a tenth-century travel narrative, and by 1700 the city had the largest Jewish population in Europe. The Jewish community’s intellectual and financial contributions to the city cannot be overstated. Medieval Torah studies shaped Ashkenazi daily life throughout Europe; the educational philosophy of Rabbi Loew and the financial prowess of Mordechai Maisel in the sixteenth century contributed to Prague’s “Golden Age.” Franz Kafka’s experiences in a rapidly changing fin-de-siècle Prague launched a modern form of literature that still brings visitors to his birthplace.
4. You can love your family but question its narrative. Although *Prague: The Heart of Europe* does not tell my own family’s story, I acknowledge that my relatives were in Prague when thousands of Jews were sent to their deaths and when thousands of Germans were violently expelled from the country. While not directly involved in either atrocity, my family members—like most Prague Christians—likely kept their heads down and tried to live normal lives. While members of my Czech-American family may cling to a black-and-white narrative of the Cold War, I painted a nuanced picture of life under Communism. The brutality my grandparents experienced in the early

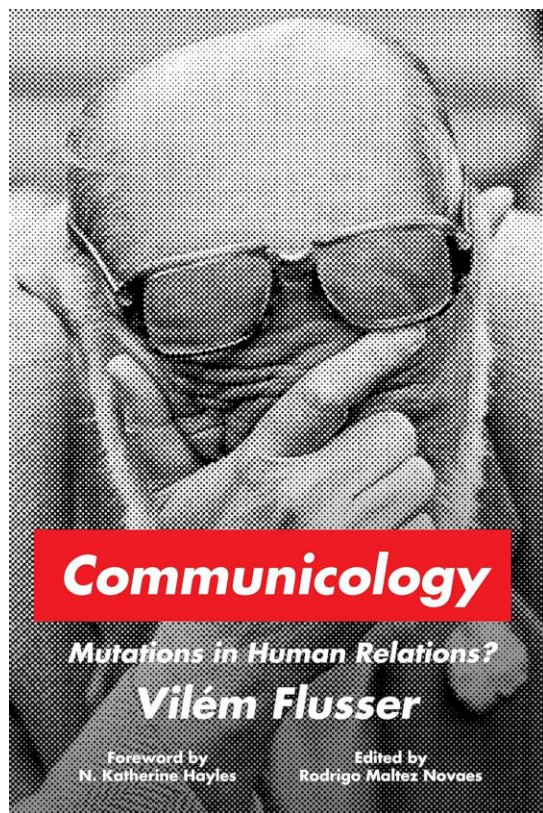
1950s did not characterize the whole communist era, but for immigrants, history of the homeland often becomes frozen in time.

5. You can love a place and still see its cruelties and weaknesses. Without acknowledging how anti-Semitism and nationalism shaped Prague, we will never have a full understanding of the city's—and Europe's—past. Seeing Prague as a Czech-German-

Jewish place (with Italian, Dutch, English, French, and other influences), enables us to grasp Prague's unique blend of cultural practices, creative contributions, and architectural styles. We can also come closer to understanding how human societies descend into violence and intolerance.



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Vilém Flusser. *Communicology: Mutations in Human Relations?* Edited by Rodrigo Maltez Novaes. Sensing Media: Aesthetics, Philosophy, and Cultures of Media Series. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2023. xxiv + 208 pp. \$90.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-5036-3326-1; \$26.85 (paper), ISBN 978-1-5036-3448-0.

Reviewed by Andrew J. Kettler (University of South Carolina)

Published on Jhistory (January, 2025)

Commissioned by Zef Segal (Media Studies School, College of Management Academic Studies // Bates College)

Communicology, the Technical Image, and the Threat of Authoritarian Impulses

The work of Vilém Flusser (1920-91) has tempted scholars for nearly half a century with questions of phenomenological experience, manipulatable codes of everyday communication, and beliefs concerning textual sacrality. Before his tragic death in 1991, Flusser, of Czech birth and Jewish ancestry, proposed complex theories related to understanding human interaction that presses of his lifetime often found difficult to publish for a wide readership within the United States. Many of these ideas were collected by Flusser in the work under review, posthumously overseen and translated by Rodrigo Maltez Novaes under the title of *Communicology: Mutations in Human Relations?* The book includes a preface by N. Katherine Hayles that situates the work directly in the field of recent posthuman analysis, even as much of the written work relayed centers on Flusser's analyses of communication, dissemination, culture, memory, media theory, and influences on consciousness in the public sphere from an earlier 1970s and 1980s dialogue with post-structuralists and continental philosophers of deconstruction.

There had long been a dearth of Flusser's writings in English, a topic lamented on within Hayles's preface. As a result, when *Into the Universe of Technical Images* was released in English in 2010, it was

noticed by scholars of deconstruction and media theory who had been missing a leading analyst for debating commonly accepted readings of modern media, consciousness, and poststructuralism. That work, now widely read and contributing to diverse forms of posthumanist thinking, actor-network theory, and new materialism, came from much more foundational and earlier thinking within Flusser's remarkable oeuvre. The collection of writings that came together to create the basis for this edition for Flusser in the winter of 1977-78, through the introductory frames provided by Novaes within translations of the posthumously published German edition that was first titled *Communicology*, is currently released with the aim of also bringing even more earlier writings to the fore, including a desired promotion of Flusser's *Post-History* (1979), *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (1982), and *The Universe of Technical Images* (1983).

For many scholars, Flusser's work currently points to the linguistic confusion now prominent within daily life in diverse public spheres. This confusion rises, for many current scholars who follow communication theories and analyses of semiotics, due to the tension growing between an earlier alphabetic programming of the human mind, which is now decaying, and the prominence of the modern technical image. As Flusser generally argued, the rise of images as more prominent than the written word in daily life creates tension, as the domination of concepts relayed through technical images, those created by machines or for operations rather than aesthetics, manifest forms of static unconscious reactions much different from the critical thinking of reading minds

that work through dialogic forms of understanding.

The danger of this current communicative moment is then of a complete threat, in that humanity can completely lose its former alphabetic consciousness, as well as its free will, because it does not understand the power of unconscious programming of the technical image due to remnant power of earlier alphabetic coding on conscious relations within networks of communication. That is, the technical image invades human consciousness because human consciousness cannot see the external arrival of the influence of the technical image due to reliance on earlier ways of knowing the world. Populations cannot understand the power of the external arrival of this force of the technical image, in advertisements, television, films, and other imagic communication, because the human mind remains under the belief that the dominant way knowledge is diffused is through the written word.

Flusser's often convoluted though prominent theses as a scholar of communication theory also center on the idea that technology is not the primary driving force for social change. Rather, primarily, humans are social beings who initially drive change to increase communication over time. Communications media, through transmission using external technology, is secondary in these processes that work to create communication between humans within increasingly complex social organizations. For Flusser, it did not generally matter for theoretical analysis if these forms of communication involve individual aspects of communication between persons or cultural aspects as part of more theatrical or amphitheatrical forms of communication, as communication is always composed of a

collective of information that is brought to the fore through individuals' ability to access specifics of the collective unconscious. This general form of the process of communication, involving the formation of knowledge as coming from a collective memory bank, in many ways, is the map of the superstructure of mass communication, although Flusser did not use such Marxist language, and involves interlinkages of codes that often render the modern masses nearly unconscious and almost completely manipulatable due to the power of diverse aspects of mass culture.

The desire for communication, at nearly all cost, amounts to a force akin to Sigmund Freud's death drive in Flusser's thinking about communication apparatuses and the memory bank of alphabetic culture, as humans search for faster and more fluid communication as a way to reach out toward meanings of life and death. In the current age, for Flusser of the 1970s and 1980s, discourse (the power of the collective memory to keep society static) dominates over dialogue (communication leading to possible synthesis). In this modeling of communication, which posthumanists and digital media scholars also find potent today, synchronic coding dominates over the possibilities for the radical reach of the diachronic with earlier ages of human communication through the alphabetic power of language and semantics. Technical images circulate concepts that keep mass culture static in the current world, programming consciousness to not search out diachronic dialogue but, rather, accept static concepts within flattening contemporary discourse. This occurs because images, in Flusser's analysis in *Communicology*, map semiotic

codes in a spatial manner rather than through the left to right, passing of time, manner of Western alphabetic knowledge transmission.

Humanity has been socially programmed, from earlier ages in Flusser's reading, to be attuned to imagination and diachronic dialogue through prominent codes of stored memory within alphabetic culture. As a result, the modern age of the synchronizing technical image creates incredible tension within our bodies and minds against the earlier alphabetic creativity of dialogic thinking. For Flusser, the only way out of this tension is to accept the communication method of the technical image enough that humans can come to understand where that programming is arriving from—enough to then comprehend the meaning of the social controls and programming arriving from possible external and unnatural forces. To understand the system of the technical image as a goal of modern becoming, Flusser introduced the idea of the apparatus-operator, the human, zombie, or nonhuman forces that move the mass of cultural memory from textual pasts of alphabetic culture into technical images that relay information spatially and instantaneously rather than across time and space through critical thinking.

Communicology argues that the drive for communication leads societies to create media that then program cultures and consciousness, as a pattern of all human history. Humans generally choose to understand these communicative worlds through the mystifying pseudo-magic of different forms of knowledge transmission, rather than through the exploration of the deeper categories of historical change and cultural makeup, which leads to the ability for the

programmers to complete the programming of knowledge transmission in the first place. The governing dynamics of a society arrive, consequently, from a search for meaning of life and death through attempting to understand the self through the mechanism of communicating with the other, but that search nearly always fails, leading to the need for new communication machines to try out new ways of searching. Like Marshall McLuhan, then, Flusser understood that rationality and linear temporality became focal in modern life through the rise of a new communication apparatus of printed text and alphabetic thinking. This form of media altered forms of consciousness through greater accentuations on the visual and the aural, as McLuhan made clear in *Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962), focusing on the alphabetic mindset and sensory ratios.[1]

Critically, Flusser jumped off from that point, and from others on technical influences on consciousness, to map the effects of modern media, born of the desire to communicate within ancient human societies, feeding back on the social system in place through transmission, cultural change, and deeper aspects of social memory tied to discourse. A highly visual analyst, Flusser looked often at photography and cinematography as the primary technical images of modern life, which appear through film and television, and in his work included many images that map clear guidelines for understanding patterns within communication networks. These maps all work throughout the text of *Communicology* to show how the alphabetic mind, understood by McLuhan and framed by Flusser, keeps humanity in a rational state that is increasingly pushing

against modern generations that deny the value of the alphabetic and dialogue in general as they unconsciously accept more and more of the conceptual force of the technical image.

For Flusser, unlike other scholars of technology, the shift from one era of human communication to the next, does not arrive from a new technic, like the radio, the television, or the internet driving the change. Rather, the transition occurs due to the death of an old technic, or the decline of an existing technic that cannot correctly define concepts and meaning for a culture always searching to define life and death. The death of the old technic creates a significant threat as humans will be forced into either pseudo-magical acceptance of the discursive power of the new technic to supposedly improve consciousness leading to the authoritarian impulses of fascism or an unleashed power of new human imagination in this new frame of communication through the technical image. Flusser, consequently, wanted humans to notice the threat of the technical image and then be able to become masters of the coming, and now current, mutation of how humans communicate with each other, a process most people currently fail at each passing day through the blind acceptance of the technical image linked with instant conceptual formulations of messaging that displace the alphabetic mode of critical thought which moves across a sentence diachronically.

Within *Communicology*, historical contingencies are vital for understanding social relations and the overemphasis on transmission within media theory among the post-structuralists. Rather than inventing and using the printing press to bring humanity

into a brighter future, new technologies, for Flusser, often acted initially as conservative constructs, meant to keep social order in a present setting, even as that order was shifting beneath the feet of the powers that be through the uncontrollable power of the technic to change consciousness. As a result, Flusser critiqued the deconstructionists who generally ignored his works by offering their emphasis on the text and its sacrality as a representative death knell to the coming age of technical images, where photographs and other digital forms can more easily convey vast concepts with a single glance than what can be described in the same amount of linear time with words on a page.

That is, looking at an image on a scroll or a television program relays much more semiotic content in a single image in the same amount of time that one could read that much semiotic content semantically. The power of that semiotic potential in a single image can be manipulated much more by those in power because the mind has been attuned for centuries to the pace of knowledge transmission from reading in an alphabetic culture. What Flusser's work consequently portrays for later scholars is that digital expertise comes, often, from moving beyond the written word, and even written code, to be able to read images quickly and conceptually at a speed well beyond any transmission from prose, poems, or plays. Modern generations flow through images at an incredible pace, in meme culture especially, with codes deep in cultural memory pouring out to the eyes that recognize concepts too fast for critical thinking. As these messages, tied to discursive concepts, enter the mind, the mind reacts with either acceptance or dismissal, with the code

of 1 or 0, rather than with the dialogic negotiation of earlier forms of consciousness.

What *Communicology* offers for understanding communication in the modern world depends on how one interprets the rise of algorithmic influences on society. Communication between generations becomes difficult due to these growing links between human and machine, as younger populations, educated and raised by algorithms, communicate in simpler and meeker terminologies, with algorithmic coding moving into the very expressions of human existence. The generational rift prevents connections between the aging and the young, as the semiotics of the young become much more dependent on technical images due to the additions of applications on smartphones. The intellectual force of the public sphere decays even more because of these generational distances that did not exist in similar forms in previous generational changes. This generational rift is therefore much different than earlier rifts, caused by change in the very devices that create knowledge and consciousness, from books to computers to machinic and algorithmic coded smartphones that spew the ambergris of technical images.

Flusser, unlike the deconstructionists he often critiqued, often focused too much on the mind at the expense of the thinking body. Consequently, pairing a reading here with scholars of the thinking body, as foundational within the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By*, 2008), and even within Jacques Derrida from roots in Edmund Husserl, or Michel Foucault with roots in Georges Bataille, would be of primary importance for anyone engaging at an advanced level with these theories of technical objects and their effects

on consciousness. As well, one should be guided to the expansion on Flusser's work within the technically masterful and carefully written work of Bernard Stiegler on technics, memory, and communication theory (*The Fault of Epimetheus*, volume 1 of *Technics and Time*, 1998, and *The Hyperindustrial Epoch*, volume 1 of *Symbolic Misery*, 2014), which also understands a considerable loss of spirit and extreme anti-natalism within modern life due to the failures of secondary forms of retention within textual mediums to define enough meaning to protect society from authoritarian impulses to gather new technologies.[2]

In addition, it is relatively clear that Flusser rarely nodded to cybernetics, a field that would put much more emphasis on the powers that be in the making of human consciousness than on the often falsely conscious social changes discussed in *Communicology*. A clearer analysis of the power of the ruling *archons* (archive builders) and *kybernetes* (ship steerers) is always needed when reading through Flusser, although part of the power of Flusser's language is often the lack of reliance on earlier critics of power, like Karl Marx and the intellectual progeny of Friedrich Nietzsche, who claimed to know the exact source of oppression. Rather than point to the exact oppressors, Flusser found the oppressors to always be changing and becoming something new that must be rooted out through much more of a constant search than found within a manifesto. Consequently, rarely did Flusser engage with questions of praxis or revolt when thinking in the frames of consciousness discussed.[3]

Do we take this knowledge that Flusser provided in *Communicology* and push back on

the power of technology? Do we attempt to stop the bourgeois programmers who are attempting to maintain their power over society while also sowing the seeds of human destruction? What steps can humans take to involve themselves in the making of social influences on consciousness? As Hayles skillfully offers in the preface through taking Flusser into this age of generative pre-trained transformers, words on a page have been entered from many stages of human history into the machines of the current world that transform these semiotic paths into conceptualizations that are coded into technical images on television, in film, and in the bastardized networks of the internet. Bourgeois forces try to maintain the mass of alphabetic culture that birthed their power through feeding the images back to the population as a way to retain control but, in doing so, also code the movement to the next epoch of technological communication, where minds communicate with concepts in images in synchronic spaces rather than with semantic knowledge of words in diachronic understandings. And, as Flusser consistently pointed out in *Communicology*, these changes are rarely consciously accepted, existing in many ways as a swarm of change that has much to do with the malaise of modern life concerning the inability of existing technologies to define the meaning of life in new and interesting ways.

General apathy abounds in modern life, to the extent that fascists rise and the dream of the American spirit faces the threats of a totalitarian regime tied to producing ignorance at its conceptualized core. If there are no steps to be taken to change this dying society of nihilism and authoritarianism born of the technical image in a purposeful

manner, *Communicology* is a wonderfully depressing read for understanding more mechanisms that prevent humans from experiencing true free will in the age of Trumpism and Elon Musk's disinformation campaigns that deploy technical images to code the regressive mind with more and more false discursive concepts that entrench a hatred for critical thought. If there are some choices that can be made in the face of such oppression, they better be taken soon, as rightward turns map the political landscape with a coding made to accept coming austerity and the powers that be choose artificial intelligence at the expense of human thinking nearly everywhere that such digital accelerations are understood to be profitable. As we come to read technical images in digital space as the most prominent form of modern communication, altering consciousness to be more synchronic, conceptual, operative, and callous and less diachronic, symbolic, causal, and radical, what will become of the dream of liberating the masses? What will become of critical thinking through alphabetic inspirations of rationality when minds dull themselves into oblivion through the consciousness inspired by the technical image?[4]

Notes

[1]. See also Sigfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (1948; repr., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); and Michael Chanan, *From Printing to Streaming: Cultural Production Under Capitalism* (London: Pluto, 2022).

[2]. For even earlier work on issues of technics and cultural change through the idea of "organ-projection" and prosthesis, see Ernst

Kapp, *Elements of a Philosophy of Technology: On the Evolutionary History of Culture*, ed. Jeffrey West Kirkwood and Leif Weatherby, trans. Lauren Wolfe (1877; repr., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2018).

[3]. Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics; or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (New York: MIT, 1961). For more on nonhuman and structural agency in the sciences and technology, see the early posthuman analysis of the mangled relationships between practice and scientific discourse in Andrew Pickering, *The Mangle of Practice: Time, Agency, and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995).

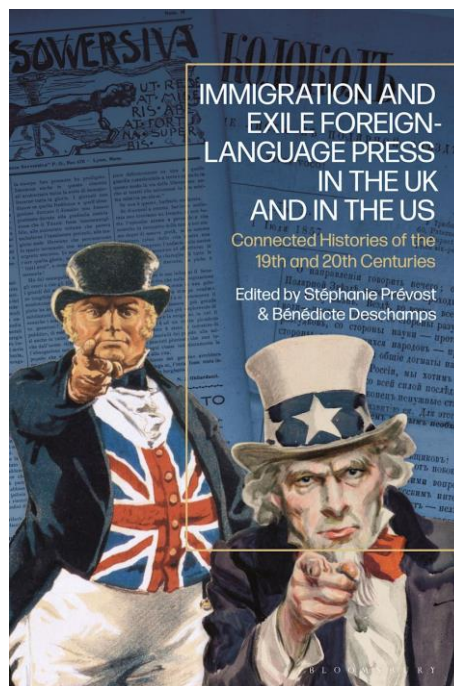
[4]. On how Stiegler has come to conceptualize the technics of digital media in these discussions of alienation and the meanings of power within, see Bernard Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption: Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism* (London: Polity, 2019); and on original formulations of the rhizomes related to technics and altered psychologies caused by accelerative capitalism within, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1983).

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Stéphanie Prévost, Bénédicte Deschamps, eds. *Immigration and Exile Foreign-Language Press in the UK and in the US: Connected Histories of the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2024. xiv + 340 pp. \$39.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-350-32525-8.

Reviewed by Jon Bekken (Albright College)
Published on Jhistory (July, 2025)
Commissioned by Zef Segal (Media Studies School, College of Management Academic Studies // Bates College)

This edited collection is both broader and less comprehensive than the title suggests. The editors' useful introduction offers an overview of the historiography of the foreign-language press and of the varied functions it serves, but the sixteen chapters that

follow are case studies of single titles, authors, or language groups—and are often limited to their treatment of a particular subject, such as with Robert Zecker's important chapter on support for Black civil rights in radical newspapers serving the Polish and Slovak communities. The chapters are evenly balanced between the US and UK, with two touching on both countries. At the same time, the immigrant press was never limited to the confines of the nation-state, and so the authors also address papers published in Amsterdam, Calais, Geneva, Jerusalem, The Hague, Lyon, Mainz, Marseilles, Montréal, Paris, Rotterdam, Sydney, Zurich, and other cities. Many publications moved from place to place, and sometimes editors fled persecution or sought to relocate to more vibrant immigrant communities.

The introduction opens with a short overview of contemporary immigrant publications, both in print and some that have migrated to online platforms. The United Kingdom and the United States each have a long history of foreign-language publications serving diverse communities and interests. This press is variously referred to as immigrant, ethnic, minority, and foreign-language—each term problematic in its own way. *Immigrant* is commonly used to refer only to the first generation (although until a few decades ago the US Census also collected data on the second generation), and excludes populations absorbed through conquest (such as Welsh or Spanish). *Ethnic* has a broader sweep, but encompasses populations (such as Blacks, Native Americans, and Scots) with very different historical experiences than immigrants. *Foreign-language* assumes a single language (in both the home and host countries), cannot easily

accommodate publications that incorporate English-language material, and ill fits the substantial number of media that circulate transnationally. Consider, for example, Chinese-based media circulated throughout the United States or the many Spanish-language television channels and programs available on cable, satellite, or streaming services. Another complicating factor is the malleable character of ethnic or national identity. There were heated debates in the US Polish-language press over whether Jews and other non-Catholics were Polish, with the largest organization (the Polish National Alliance) adopting a sweeping conception that also included Lithuanians.

The editors note that a comprehensive history of immigrant media in the UK has yet to be attempted; there are at least four books covering the United States, dating back as early as the 1920s, though none are fully satisfactory. There is a much richer tradition of studies (mostly articles, but also including books) of particular language groups (including books on the Finnish, German, Russia, Slovak, Spanish, and Yiddish press in the United States), media serving particular class or political movements, and histories of individual newspapers or editors. Aside from a brief discussion of press freedom regimes, the introduction gives little attention to the differing press environments.

Further complicating this picture are the diverse purposes publications served. Many were explicitly exile publications, oriented toward the home country (and often trying to influence events there, including by smuggling copies for distribution); others sought to build community and preserve culture in immigrants' new country. Often, these missions overlapped. The Polish Na-

tional Alliance was officially established to press for the (re)establishment of an independent, united Poland, but also operated a mutual aid association and a host of cultural activities that helped Polish immigrants survive and build vibrant communities in an often hostile US environment. Many papers were transnational operations, retaining close ties to the homeland, and embedded in generally informal networks of correspondence and solidarity—networks visible in many chapters, but most fully developed by Constance Bantman in her discussion of the French-language anarchist press. And although this is not fully reflected in the present volume, in the US many of these papers were deeply embedded in their communities, with much of their content written by community activists, many publications owned by cooperatives or other community institutions, and editors expected to report to (and often subject to election by) their readers. Often—as several chapters attest—these newspapers also served as interlocutors to English-language media and the broader society. Some included English-language material to reach across language barriers while several mainstream English-language newspapers had staff whose duties included monitoring the foreign-language press.

The chapters are loosely grouped in sections. The first focuses on newspapers and editors who wandered the globe, fleeing persecution and seeking new opportunities. Gideon Kouts's "The Hebrew 'Wandering Press' in Europe" examines the travels of *Ha-Levanon* and its editor from Jerusalem to Paris, Mainz, and London, embodying the experience of the diaspora it sought to serve. In "A Transnational Radical Print Culture" Constance Bantman examines French-

language newspapers that constituted a transnational anarchist print culture and brought together papers grounded in local communities but which also forged a shared culture and politics. But readers, too, were uprooted, as Isabelle Felici notes in her chapter on Gigi Damiani and the Italian-language anarchist press. Damiani wrote for several US-based newspapers between 1909 and 1945 from Italy, Brazil, and, finally, Tunisia (he seems never to have set foot in the United States). A regular contributor to Italian-language papers around the world (some of which had very different approaches to organization and to strategies for combating emerging fascism), Damiani (despite editing short-lived papers in France, Italy, and Tunisia in his final years) might be better conceptualized as an example of the blurred lines between readers and writers that characterized so many immigrant newspapers.

Section 2 examines the press's role in community building, with chapters ranging from Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink's discussion of early French-language almanacs to Alberto Pena-Rodriguez's discussion of the Portuguese-language press in the United States (though with only glancing attention to the more recent media serving Brazilian immigrants) and its role in sustaining a sense of Portuguese identity. Robert Zecker examines coverage of the struggle for Black civil rights in two US newspapers serving radical Slovak and Polish communities, while making it clear that other publications took a very different stance. The section ends with Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska's analysis of Polish-language online media in the UK following Brexit. Susan Reed's chapter on the Anglo-German press is in many ways

reminiscent of how an earlier generation of scholars focused on documenting immigrant culture and institutions, laying the groundwork for more analytical studies. She chronicles the diverse range of German-language publications in the long nineteenth century. Reed's focus is on German-language papers published in Britain (mostly London), serving an immigrant community much smaller than that in the United States (indeed, there were more Germans living in Chicago than in the entire British Isles). Some were exile publications, others promoted an emerging German nationalism, and a few were intended as commercial operations. Probably the best-remembered today is Johann Most's *Freiheit*, which receives but a single paragraph (and is also discussed in the editor's introduction). While Most's political career began in Germany, he fled to London to escape prison, where he launched *Freiheit* in 1879. After the British authorities imprisoned him for celebrating the assassination of the Russian czar, Most moved to New York City in 1882, where he continued publishing *Freiheit* (claiming both London and New York in the masthead) until his death in 1906. Reed cites a police report that 4,500 of the paper's 5,000 copies were circulated in Europe (p. 97) in 1885; this claim is certainly exaggerated, but *Freiheit* was widely read on both sides of the Atlantic. Reed concludes that Britain's German-language press struggled to build an audience, in large part due to assimilation. But although she cites Wittke's history of the German-language press in America in support, that press was much more prolific and long-lived—this is an instance where the comparative approach the title promises might have been particularly useful.

The third section examines the intersection of local and home country politics, and how extraterritorial media sought to shape political developments. In "Betwixt Spain and England" María José Ruiz Acosta documents the connections between the exiled Spanish Liberals and British reformers, as well as discussing publications created for distribution in Latin America (simultaneously a commercial enterprise and an educational effort). The next two chapters make it clear that immigrant communities were hardly monolithic, with competing newspapers offering radically different visions both of the homeland and of their readers' place in America. In "The *Megali Idea* in New York's Greek-Language Press" Nicolas Pitsos looks at two rival newspapers which both supported Greek expansionism but were aligned with competing royalist and progressive factions and sought to influence US policy in their behalf. Lorenzo Bendadusi's "Barzini Overseas: The *Corriere d'America*, from Promoting Italianità to Fascist Propaganda" discusses Luigi Bartini's efforts to differentiate his new paper. Already well known when he arrived in New York after two decades of foreign correspondence for the Italian press, his intense nationalism, the economic challenges facing his new paper in a competitive market, and mounting debt led him to embrace the fascist regime. Antifascist papers accused Barzini of prostituting himself, while his paper said they were treasonous and anti-Italian. Most immigrant communities were similarly diverse. Zecker's chapter (in part 2) explores how Polish and Slovak immigrants navigated racism in the United States. While many were complicit, the two papers he focuses on explicitly challenged racism and segregation, calling on their readers to make

common cause with their Black fellow workers. This was a minority position, to be sure, but hardly a fringe one—the papers were published for decades and had significant readership.

The book's final section is titled "Monolingualism, Plurilingualism and Rivalling Languages: Language Choice and Identity Framing." Valentina Gosetti explores French-language periodicals' efforts to preserve the language in Australia and Britain, arguing that most sought not only to serve French immigrants but also a larger cosmopolitan readership. Stéphanie Prévost discusses language choice as exiled Armenians asserted their language (and script) in diasporic publications. One of the papers discussed was bilingual, with material in French and Armenian, edited in Paris, and printed in London. A competing paper was published in London in English and French editions, in part to reach the international community and build support for Armenian rights. A third, explicitly revolutionary paper published in Armenian moved from Geneva to Athens to London to Paris between 1887 and 1914, dodging the authorities and trying to conceal both their contributors and the place of publication. Christophe Declercq discusses Belgian refugee publications scattered across France, the Netherlands, and the UK and their efforts to maintain their communities and build support during World War I. Particularly interesting is Kelley Kreitz's discussion of a short-lived women's weekly, *La Revista de Cuba Libre*, published in Tampa, Florida, in the 1890s. The paper foregrounded women's contributions to the independence movement, promising in their final issue to revive the paper in newly liberated Cuba (where

one of the editors launched *Cuba Libre* in 1899). This section, too, foregrounds diversity, as in Robert Henderson's discussion of two Russian-language publications launched in London in 1897—one published by a veteran revolutionary from the Peoples Will party who had escaped a Siberian prison camp, the other by an exiled educator seeking reconciliation (between Jews and Russians, but also with the English—and so initially published in English—later adding a few pages in Russian). Despite these different approaches, both continued to suffer surveillance and harassment by the Russian regime, ultimately leading to cooperation after the editor of *Narodovolets* was imprisoned for allegedly advocating the assassination of the czar and upon his release entered a second exile in France.

The book concludes with a twenty-five-page "selected bibliography," including archives consulted, a list of publications discussed in the text (organized by language), and several pages of secondary sources that should provide a useful starting point for anyone seeking to build on this work.

Editors Prévost and Deschamps suggest that while each chapter is devoted to a particular case study, taken as a whole "the volume functions as a kaleidoscopic whole that interrogates the foreign-language press ... as a distinct press category, one that is inherently dynamic and at many intercrossings (especially of different States, of different press cultures, or networks" (pp. 11-12) They note extensive similarities between the two countries, from long histories of hosting foreign political exiles and immigrants to active surveillance (both by the regimes they had fled and by local authorities) despite the relatively more open societies—although in

the United States the First Amendment “guarantees” granted far less protection than the editors suggest, with editors of foreign language papers facing imprisonment, exclusion from the mails, deportation, and even execution, as befell the editors of the *Chicagoer Arbeiter-Zeitung*.

Despite the high quality of the individual chapters, I am not convinced that this larger picture ever comes together. And though this is much more difficult to study, I think more attention to the relationships between these editors and publications and the communities that sustained them would deepen and enrich our understanding of the immigrant press. Just as immigrant communities were far from monolithic, so were their publications. Some modeled themselves on the commercial press of their day; others were organizationally accountable to their communities. They covered the home country, but also their local communities; sought to preserve their language and culture, but also to help readers navigate the new world they found themselves in. They reflected different currents in their communities, as well as the varied temperaments of their founders. And many were explicitly transnational in their circulation as well as their staff. All of this complicates the task of comparative history. And so while *Immigration and Exile Foreign-Language Press* ultimately does not accomplish its declared mission (and likely no one could), it is nonetheless a useful volume sure to influence future scholarship in the field.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at: <https://networks.h-net.org/jhistory>.

Citation: Jon Bekken. Review of Prevost, Stephanie; Deschamps, Benedicte, eds., *Immigration and Exile Foreign-Language Press in the UK and in the US: Connected Histories of the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Jhistory, H-Net Reviews. July, 2025.

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David Ayers, Margarida Brito Alves, Joana Cunha Leal, Benedikt Hjartarson, eds. *Globalizing the Avant-Garde*. Walter de Gruyter, 2025. 499 pp. \$153.99 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-11-131753-3.

Reviewed by Tania Arcimovich (Erfurt University)

Published on H-SHERA (August, 2025)

Commissioned by Hanna Chuchvaha (University of Calgary)

Globalizing the Avant-Garde, edited by David Ayers, Margarida Brito Alves, Joana Cunha Leal, and Benedikt Hjartarson, continues the European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies series, featuring the most current and diverse research in the field. This volume, the eighth in the series, comprises essays, primarily in English, but also in German and French, that were presented at the biennial conference of the European Network for Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies (EAM) in 2022 in Lisbon, the leading platform in Europe for the subject.[1] By collecting recent theoretical insights, *Globalizing the Avant-Garde* affirms EAM's leading position in avant-garde studies on the continent, presenting the field not merely as plural but also as contested and contradictory.

Centered on the concept of globalization, the volume consists of several sections that, according to their meanings, refer either to theoretical issues ("Theory," "Travel and Ethnography," "Translation and Appropriation," "Going Global," and "Modalities and Localities") or to regions ("Japan" and "Oceanic"). In the introduction, Ayers explains the framework of globalization, which the editors consider not in terms of "transportation and technology" but as a lens to understand the processes of exchange and impact within avant-garde movements in a multiplex way (p. 3). On one hand, the development of this concept is significant, as "avant-garde artists and their ideas travelled quickly and fluently between centres." On the other hand, it challenges the Western model of the avant-gardes, often Paris-oriented, by asserting "the rhizomatic nature of the avant-garde across and outside Europe," which is "inhabiting global space" (p.

6). Notions of the global, mobility, networking, and exchange are central to the volume.

In addition to the concept of "horizontal geography," Piotr Piotrowski's idea of geographical inclusion, referenced by several authors, the temporality of the avant-gardes is also presented as diffused and contextualized.[2] The avant-garde, as a global phenomenon, is not confined to the time frame of the "historical avant-garde" developed by Peter Bürger (*Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 1984) that is focused solely on Eurocentric art history. Consequently, the essays unfold the narratives about avant-gardes from the mid-1800s to the early 2000s, liberating the avant-gardes from existing theoretical constraints. This contextual flexibility supports the overarching claim of the series: "to embrace the wide linguistic, terminological and methodological variety" in the studies (p. ix).

Globalizing the Avant-Garde opens with "Pluriversal Avant-Gardisms: Deworlding, Reworlding, and Worlding the Avant-Garde," by Ming Tiampo, which might be considered a programmatic text, not only for this collection. Over the past few decades, scholars have asserted the necessity of reassessing the phenomenon of the avant-garde beyond the Eurocentric tradition that has determined its canon for years. This claim became central to the first issue of the *Journal of Avant-Garde Studies* (2020), which opened with a transcription of the roundtable "The Future of Avant-Garde Studies: A European Round Table," held in 2010, centered on the question of how to approach the avant-garde theoretically while keeping its multilayered dimensions in mind.[3] Tiampo summarizes recent theoretical interventions on decolonizing and de-

centering the avant-gardes and art history in general, coherently articulating the shift in methodologies that has occurred in recent years.[4] Relying on examples of artists from India, Japan, Korea, Latin America, and Nigeria, she discloses that anticolonial/decolonial struggle belongs to avant-garde history, which is why Western-oriented models do not work in its disclosure. Tiampo problematizes such concepts as *radicality* and *temporality*, particularly *futurity*, which she describes as the “privileged side of modernity” (p. 15). The author demonstrates how the approach of *multidirectionality*, characterized as a free choice of direction, along with *worlding*, *deworlding*, and *re-worlding*, which are “both spatial and temporal,” signifies “the possibility of other epistemologies to emerge” (pp. 14, 19). She identifies this alternative approach as pluriversal avant-gardisms—a model “where those plural worlds interest, entangle, run parallel to, conflict, and question each other” (p. 20).

The following essay, “The Globalization of The Avant-Garde: A User’s Handbook,” by Paul Wood, continues to argue for the necessity of a methodological shift in the comprehension of avant-garde and modernism terminology. Wood presents his essay as “a series of reflections about approaches and methods,” examining various aspects of modernity—such as contemporaneity, capitalism, colonialism, and identity politics—that influence the avant-garde drastically (p. 35). However, despite efforts to revise the long-held Western perspective presented as universal, the essay may still come across as conventional. Wood’s approach is limited by Eurocentrism, as he continues to rely on Western classical theories and their linear

narratives (from Henri de Saint-Simon to Bürger). Additionally, like Bürger, Wood considers the avant-garde primarily in terms of its critical potential within capitalist (bourgeois) societies, which, as Tiampo and others argue, reasoned in excluding non-Western and noncapitalist cultures from the avant-garde discourse. Nonetheless, this contradiction at the beginning of *Globalizing the Avant-Garde* does not seem to be accidental, and these essays open the book not merely because both authors were keynote speakers at the 2022 Biennale in Lisbon. The tension between these two theoretical positions is the essence of the volume’s dramaturgy, where “old” (primarily still based on the Eurocentric model shaped by Bürger’s and Renato Poggioli’s theories) and “new” (deconstructing the Western canon) approaches meet and intertwine.

Indeed, some essays present a more descriptive and linear perspective on the avant-gardes, particularly regarding how art history is approached through periods and styles, in the forms of life stories, relying on the avant-garde as a (West) European idea (see, in this collection, Mika Iwama on art in Japan, Sara Bangert on epistemology in surrealism, Ann Stephen on the oceanic avant-garde, Éva Forgács on the Russian avant-garde in the West, Zuzana Říhová on T. S. Eliot’s poetry in Czech translation, Karin Müller-Kelwing on the Fluxus Collection in Dresden, and Tilman Schumacher on film manifestos). Concurrently, some authors offer reflections that contextualize avant-gardism, deliberately avoiding Western-oriented criteria, such as radicality or a specific vision of politicality (see, Lev Kreft on the multitude of avant-gardes in Yugoslavia; Michiko Oki on the *Ee ja nai ka* tradition in

Japan; Ekaterina Lazareva on ethno-futurism; and Joanna Orska on neo- and post-avant-garde artistic groups in the United States, Yugoslavia, and Poland). This heterogeneity and frequent inconsistency signify dynamic processes within the field, which are a necessary condition for what Tiampo calls “pluriversal avant-gardisms.”

Several essays focus on solving methodological issues, aiming not only to raise questions but also to reveal the existing gaps that provoke these questions, while simultaneously allowing for the discovery of solutions. For instance, Olga Isaeva’s piece, “Is It Possible to Leave the ‘Original’ vs. ‘Copy’ Dichotomy Finally Behind? Pre-War Japanese Modern Art Movements and Avant-Gardes,” centers on the discourse of imitation and explores the tension between originality and copying. This tension is epitomized in the contradiction between metropolises, seen as places of authenticity, and peripheries, associated with imitation. Isaeva approaches imitation as “a dialogical practice for dealing with the ‘other,’” which allows for an analysis of the complex relationships not only between empires and colonies—where the imitation of imperial styles represented more than mere oppression and corruption “because within the colonial matrix of power it is never possible to achieve the status of the ‘original’” (pp. 83, 69). But imitation also “served as a tool for emancipation and independence” (p. 68). By drawing on examples from imperial Japan, which was not a colony, the author presents a different facet of Eurocentric colonization through art, where the West is associated with modernity and progress in contrast to the “always-already” belated (to modernity) “rest” (p. 24).

The controversial and artificial nature of the original/copy discourse is an issue addressed in various essays, by authors focusing on European or non-European contexts (Michiko Oki on the *Ee ja nai ka* tradition in Japan, Ignacio Bajter on case studies from South America, and Ferdinand Klüsener on Schizoradio). These differing approaches highlight the contested nature of the discourse, particularly concerning Western artists who traveled to non-Western cultures for inspiration through ethnography. Consequently, their works are often viewed as beyond the realm of imitation. As Burkhard Meltzer argues in “Breathe In, Breathe Out: Johannes Itten and East Asia,” Western artists did not merely copy; instead, they envisioned an idealized future of modernity (p. 188). Simultaneously, Meltzer questions whether these Western artists truly met Eastern cultures. This same inquiry can be applied to European art, which, paradoxically, may also be perceived as “ethnography,” as Jelena Stojković discusses in her contribution, “Abe Nobuya in the Balkans: Ethnography, Travel, and the Japanese Avant-Garde.”

Another motive behind the volume’s contributions is the concept of otherness, including the imaginative “Other.” Beyond its cultural contexts—stemming from the interaction between “the West” and “the rest”—this concept is also explored through a gender lens. For instance, Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe’s “From Scandinavia to the Maghrib and Back” examines the stories of artists from Scandinavia—referred to as “close Others”—and their experiences in North African countries, where they encountered the “real Others” (p. 126). Despite this dual framing of otherness and exploring the

tension between “close” and “real,” the author pays special attention to the gender aspect of mobility, highlighting two stories that focus on the experiences of female artists. This introduces an additional dimension of otherness that arises from “gendered and geo-political marginality” (p. 131). The negotiation between gender and the perception of cultural “otherness” is central in Sol Izquierdo de la Viña’s “A Modern Woman Artist in Asia: Lene Schneider-Kainer’s Journey (1926-1928) in the Age of German Orientalism.” The author argues that despite belonging to the dominant (Western) culture, Schneider-Kainer’s “depictions still reproduce the Orientalist imaginary” (pp. 224-25). The artist’s marginal positionality from a gender perspective resulted in a particular empathy. She did not merely portray Asian women; instead, she made the “lack of women’s rights in Asia” a focal point of her public activities (p. 222). In this context, de la Viña’s study contributes to promoting a gender perspective in avant-garde studies, helping to illuminate the complexities of how marginality and privilege can be intertwined.

As mentioned, *Globalizing the Avant-Garde* is divided into sections; however, this division appears formal and sometimes confusing, as it does not fully align with the essays’ common motives. As demonstrated, various theoretical and methodological issues form the basis for nearly all contributions, which either succeed in their aims (of decentering or globalizing) or fall short. For instance, the approach to *otherness* in terms of appropriation, exoticism, and primitivism reproduces Eurocentric imperial logic in some contributions. This underscores the necessity to revise existing vocabulary and

seek more inclusive words. Additionally, in terms of genres, the presented avant-garde case studies refer either to visual arts or literary works, almost ignoring the performative-based approach to the phenomenon.[5]

One more aspect to consider is the reference to such figures as Leon Trotsky and especially Joseph Stalin, as well as the discourse surrounding the Russian avant-garde in some essays. This reference lacks a deconstruction and critical perspective on the phenomenon, which, alongside the Eurocentric canon, plays a crucial role in the dominance and neglect of avant-gardes in other non-Russian Soviet republics.[6] On one hand, the volume includes materials compiled by the editors, for which they are not responsible for the absence of specific discussions or forms (such as performative-based genres mentioned above). On the other hand, it would have been beneficial to address this in the introduction, as the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine significantly affects regional avant-garde studies, including the vocabulary related to decolonization and decentralization.[7]

Nonetheless, despite all the possible points for discussion, *Globalizing the Avant-Garde* succeeds in its aim by provoking thought and illustrating the evolving nature of these debates. The volume makes a significant contribution to the field by introducing new narratives and motives—such as Black diasporic poetry (Lauri Scheyer), ethno-futurism (Ekaterina Lazareva), and mail art (Cristian Nae). Additionally, it offers solutions to existing obstacles through alternative vocabularies, concepts, and approaches that not only assist in uncovering these stories but also propose new ways to tell them (e.g., aesthetics of pleasure by An-

dreas Michel and global parataxis by Barrett Watten). Indeed, *Globalizing the Avant-Garde* is essential for art historians; however, it may also be valuable for students and scholars in cultural studies, literary studies, (post)colonial studies, and feminist theory.

Notes

[1]. Due to my linguistic limitations, the review does not cover Danièle Méaux's "Les Archives de la Planète: Entre visée encyclopédique et avant-garde," written in French.

[2]. Piotr Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde," in *Europa! Europa? The Avant-Garde, Modernism and the Fate of a Continent*, ed. Sascha Bru et al. (De Gruyter, 2009), 49-58.

[3]. Wolfgang Asholt et al., "The Future of Avant-Garde Studies: A European Round Table," *Journal of Avant-Garde Studies* 1, no. 1 (2020): 115-20.

[4]. For example, see Per Bäckström and Benedikt Hjartarson, eds., *Decentring the Avant-Garde* (Rodopi, 2014); James M. Harding and John Rouse, eds., *Not the Other Avant-Garde: The Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance* (University of Michigan Press, 2006); and Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History." See also Sanja Bahun-Radunovic and Pourgouris Marinos, eds., *The Avant-Garde and the Margin: New Territories of Modernism* (Cambridge Scholars, 2006); James M. Harding, *The Ghosts of the Avant-Garde(s): Exorcising Experimental Theater and Performance* (U of Michigan Press, 2013); and Rossella Ferrari, "On the Pluriversality of the Avant-Garde," *Journal of Avant-Garde Studies* 1, no. 1 (2020): 151-53.

[5]. Harding and Rouse, eds., *Not the Other Avant-Garde*.

[6]. Vera Faber, *Die ukrainische Avantgarde zwischen Ost und West: Intertextualität, Intermedialität und Polemik im ukrainischen Futurismus und Konstruktivismus der späten 1920er-Jahre* (transcript Verlag, 2019); Angela Harutyunyan, *The Political Aesthetics of the Armenian Avant-Garde: The Journey of the "Painterly Real", 1987-2004* (Manchester University Press, 2017); and Dariusz Kosiński, ed., *A Lexicon of the Central-Eastern European Interwar Theatre Avant-Garde* (The Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute in Warsaw; Performance Research Books, 2024).

[7]. "Futuromarennia: Ukraine and Avant-Garde," Kumu Art Museum, 2023, <https://kunstmuuseum.ekm.ee/en/syndmus/futuromarennia-ukraine-and-avant-garde/>; and Svitlana Biedarieva, ed., *Art in Ukraine Between Identity Construction and Anti-Colonial Resistance* (Routledge, 2024).

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at: <https://networks.h-net.org/h-shera>.

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URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=61743>

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Interviews on New Books Network

We point out some of the existing interviews on the New Books Network podcast that relate to our region. *Note that the site does not always make it easy to locate the full range of past interviews of interest. Searching by author or interviewer name provides the best results.*

Veronika Pehe, *Velvet Retro: Postsocialist Nostalgia and the Politics of Heroism in Czech Popular Culture*

Hosted by Jill Massino, Jun 21, 2021

Summary

Scholars of state socialism have frequently invoked “nostalgia” to identify an uncritical longing for the utopian ambitions and lived experience of the former Eastern Bloc. However, this concept seems insufficient to describe memory cultures in the Czech Republic and other contexts in which a “retro” fascination with the past has proven compatible with a steadfast critique of the state socialist era. Veronika Pehe's [*Velvet Retro: Postsocialist Nostalgia and the Politics of Heroism in Czech Popular Culture*](#) (Berghahn Books, 2020) locates a distinctively retro aesthetic in Czech literature, film, and other cultural forms, enriching our understanding of not only the nation's memory culture, but also the ways in which popular culture can structure collective memory.

Jill Massino is a scholar of modern Eastern Europe with a focus on Romania, gender, and everyday life.

Listen to the full interview at:
<https://newbooksnetwork.com/velvet-retro>



Keeping Czech Populism in Check

A Discussion with Petra Guasti

Hosted by International Horizons, Oct 18, 2021

International Horizons is a podcast of the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies that brings scholarly expertise to bear on our understanding of international issues. John Torpey, the host of the podcast and director of the Ralph Bunche Institute, holds conversations with prominent scholars and figures in state-of-the-art international issues in our weekly episodes.

Summary

In the recent Czech elections, a broad coalition edged out the populist ANO (YES) party and changed the political landscape. Meanwhile, the ailing Czech President must appoint the government from the intensive care unit in order to avoid a constitutional crisis. How relevant is the Czech election in the context of the current international wave of populist politicians? What lessons can be drawn about populism in Eastern Europe and beyond? Petra Guasti, Associate Professor of democratic theory at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University in Prague, talks to RBI Director John Torpey about the recent Czech elections, and what they may tell us about the fate of populism in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond.

Listen to the full interview at:
<https://newbooksnetwork.com/64-keeping-czech-populism-in-check>



Paul R. Magocsi and Yohanan Petrovskii-Shtern, *Jews and Ukrainians: A Millennium of Co-existence*

Hosted by Ari Barbalat, May 10, 2025

Ari Barbalat holds a PhD in International Relations from the University of California in Los Angeles. He lives in Toronto with his family.

Summary

There is much that ordinary Ukrainians do not know about Jews and that ordinary Jews do not know about Ukrainians. As a result, those Jews and Ukrainians who may care about their respective ancestral heritages usually view each other through distorted stereotypes, misperceptions, and biases. This book sheds new light on highly controversial moments of Ukrainian-Jewish relations and argues that the historical experience in Ukraine not only divided ethnic Ukrainians and Jews but also brought them together.

The story of Jews and Ukrainians is presented in an impartial manner through twelve thematic chapters. Among the themes discussed are geography, history, economic life, traditional culture, religion, language and publications, literature and theater, architecture and art, music, the diaspora, and contemporary Ukraine. The book's easy-to-read narrative is enhanced by 335 full-color illustrations, 29 maps, and several text inserts that explain specific phenomena or address controversial issues. *Jews and Ukrainians: A Millennium of Co-existence* (U Toronto Press, 2018) provides a wealth of information for anyone interested in learning more about the fascinating land of

Ukraine and two of its most historically significant peoples.

Listen to the full interview at:

<https://newbooksnetwork.com/jews-and-ukrainians>



Astrid von Schlachta, *Anabaptists: From the Reformation to the 21st Century*

Hosted by Caleb Zakarin, May 6, 2025

Caleb Zakarin is the Editor of the New Books Network.

Summary

The Anabaptists, alongside the Lutheran and Reformed churches, were the third major current in the sixteenth century Reformation movements. From their beginnings, the Anabaptists were highly diverse and yet they shared some central beliefs and practices for which they were quickly persecuted – for example, defenselessness and nonresistance, the refusal to swear oaths, and the separation of church and state. Ideal for both teachers and students, this book provides a comprehensive and scholarly account of the history and development of the Anabaptists, alongside the Mennonite, Hutterite, and Amish traditions that emerged from their movement.

Anabaptists: From the Reformation to the 21st Century (Pandora Press, 2024) shows the cultural diversity of the Anabaptists over five centuries as they moved between persecution and toleration, isolation and social integration, and traditionalization and renewal. Amidst these tensions, the Anabaptist story is told here anew based on the current state of the field on the eve of its 500-year

anniversary. Written by an established scholar of Anabaptist history, and expertly translated into English by Victor Thiessen, this comprehensive study appears in the Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies series, edited by Maxwell Kennel, and published by Pandora Press.

Maxwell Kennel is Senior Research Fellow with the Canadian Institute for Far-Right Studies (CIFRS), Director of Pandora Press, and Pastor at the Hamilton Mennonite Church.

Listen to the full interview at:

<https://newbooksnetwork.com/anabaptists>



Kimberly Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960*

Hosted by Marshall Poe, May 31, 2012

Marshall Poe is the founder and editor of the New Books Network. He can be reached at marshallpoe@newbooksnetwork.com.

Summary

When I first went to the Soviet Union (in all my ignorance), I was amazed that everyone in Moscow lived in what I called "housing projects." The Russians called them "houses" (*doma*), but they weren't houses as I understood them at all. They were huge, multi-story, cookie-cutter apartment blocks, one standing right next to the other for miles. "Why?" I asked myself. Kimberly Zarecor's wonderful [*Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960*](#) (Pittsburgh UP, 2011) goes a long way in providing an answer, and it's a surprising one. As she shows, socialism and architec-

tural modernism were tightly linked even before the Second World War. This was true in the Soviet Union, of course, but it was also true throughout much of Europe--especially in Czechoslovakia. The *avant guard* of Czech architects were enthralled with modernism, just as they were (with some exceptions) enthralled with the promise of communism. They believed modernism provided a template for a truly socialist architecture, particularly in the sphere of housing. Once the communists came to power after the war, the Czech architects were given the opportunity to realize the dream of building that truly socialist built environment. The result was the "panel house": pre-fab apartment blocks built in factories, transported to sites, and then assembled. They were strikingly modern in terms of design, construction techniques and materials. Over time, the panel-house vision was compromised: by Socialist Realism, by economic constraints, by corruption and politics. But if you travel to the Czech Republic today, you can still see excellent examples of modernist panel houses in more or less pure form. Let Kimberly Zarecor be your guide.

Listen to the full interview at:

<https://newbooksnetwork.com/kimberly-zarecor-manufacturing-a-socialist-modernity-housing-in-czechoslovakia-1945-1960-pittsburgh-up-2011-2>





Michal Kšíňan, *Milan Rastislav Štefánik: The Slovak National Hero and Co-Founder of Czechoslovakia*

Hosted by Leslie Waters, Jul 27, 2021

Summary

Michal Kšíňan's *Milan Rastislav Štefánik: The Slovak National Hero and Co-Founder of Czechoslovakia* is the first scientific biography of Milan Rastislav Štefánik (1880–1919) that is focused on analyzing the process of how he became the Slovak national hero.

Although he is relatively unknown internationally, his contemporaries compared him “to Choderlos de Laclos for the use of military tactics in love affairs, to Lawrence of Arabia for vision, to Bonaparte for ambition ... and to one of apostles for conviction.” He played a key role in founding an independent Czechoslovakia in 1918 through his relentless worldwide travels during the First World War in order to create the Czechoslovak Army: he visited Serbia and Romania on the eve of invasion by the Central Powers, Russia before the February revolution, the United States after it declared war on Germany, Italy dealing with the consequences of defeat in the Caporetto battle, and again when Russia plunged into Civil War.

Several historical methods are used to analyze the aforementioned central research question of this biography such as social capital to explain his rise in French society, the charismatic leader to understand how he convinced and won over a relatively large number of people; more traditional political,

military, and diplomatic history to show his contribution to the founding of Czechoslovakia, and memory studies to analyze his extraordinary popularity in Slovakia. By mapping his intriguing life, the book will be of interest to scholars in a broad range of areas including history of Central Europe, especially Czechoslovakia, international relations, social history, French society at the beginning of the 20th century and biographical research.

Michal Kšíňan is a senior researcher at the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Leslie Waters is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Texas at El Paso and author of *Borders on the Move: Territorial Change and Ethnic Cleansing in the Hungarian-Slovak Borderlands, 1938-1948* (University of Rochester, 2020). Email her at lwaters@utep.edu or tweet to [@leslie20s](https://twitter.com/leslie20s).

Listen to the full interview at:
<https://newbooksnetwork.com/milan-rastislav-estefaanik>



Daniela Richterová, *Watching the Jackals: Prague's Covert Liaisons with Cold War Terrorists and Revolutionaries*

Hosted by Stephen Satkiewicz, Mar 18, 2025

Summary

In the 1970s and 1980s, Prague became a favorite destination for the world's most prominent terrorists and revolutionaries. They arrived here to seek refuge, enjoy recreation, or hold secret meetings aimed at

securing training, arms, and other forms of support. While some were welcome with open arms, others were closely watched and were eventually ousted.

Daniela Richterova's *Watching the Jackals: Prague's Covert Liaisons with Cold War Terrorists and Revolutionaries* (Georgetown University Press, 2025) is the untold history of Czechoslovakia's complex relations with Middle Eastern terrorists and revolutionaries during the closing decades of the Cold War. Based on recently declassified intelligence files, Richterova unveils the story of Prague's engagement with various factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization, along with some of the era's most infamous terrorists, including Carlos the Jackal, the Munich Olympics massacre commander Abu Daoud, and the Abu Nidal Organization. In this gripping account, Richterova explains why "Cold War Jackals" gravitated toward Prague and how the country's leaders reacted to their visits, and she uncovers the role Czechoslovakia's security and intelligence apparatus – the StB (Státní bezpečnost) played in these, at times, dangerous liaisons.

Drawing on interviews and remarkably detailed records from the former Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic), Richterova offers readers interested in the intelligence world a fascinating account of how states use their spies to pursue covert policies with violent non-state actors. The book also introduces new evidence and nuances into old debates about whether the Communist Bloc supported terrorism.

Daniela Richterova is associate professor in the Department of War Studies at King's College London. She is a leading expert

among the new generation of intelligence and security scholars, and she specializes in the history of Cold War espionage and state relations with terrorists and revolutionaries. She regularly publishes in leading academic and media outlets, including *International Affairs* and *Foreign Policy*.

Stephen Satkiewicz is an independent scholar whose research areas are related to Civilizational Sciences, Social Complexity, Big History, Historical Sociology, military history, War studies, International Relations, Geopolitics, as well as Russian and East European history.

Listen to the full interview at:

<https://newbooksnetwork.com/watching-the-jackals>



Cynthia Paces, *Prague: The Heart of Europe*

Hosted by Caleb Zakarin, Sep 8, 2025

Summary

Prague: The Heart of Europe (Oxford University Press, 2025) traces Prague's origins in the ninth century through the end of the Cold War. Highlights include the golden ages of Charles IV and Rudolph II; the religious conflicts of the Hussite and Thirty Years Wars; the rich culture of Europe's largest Jewish community; the rivalry between the city's German and Czech speakers; the World Wars and Nazi occupation; and the Communist era. *Prague: The Heart of Europe* highlights the complex culture of the city where Mozart premiered his magnificent *Don Giovanni* and where Franz Kafka wrote his foreboding tales.

Cynthia Paces is Professor of History at the College of New Jersey.

Caleb Zakarin is editor of the New Books Network.

Listen to the full interview at:
<https://newbooksnetwork.com/prague-3>



Research spotlight: Spectral recycling

A Discussion with Karolina Ćwiek-Rogalska, Karina Hoření, and Michal Korhel

Hosted by [CEU Review of Books](#), Jul 22, 2024

Summary

In this episode of the CEU Review of Books podcast host, Andrea Talabér (Managing Editor) is joined by Karolina Ćwiek-Rogalska, Karina Hoření, and Michal Korhel to discuss their ERC-project, Recycling the German Ghost: Resettlement Cultures in Poland, Czechia and Slovakia after 1945. Spectral Recycling.

In the podcast we discuss objects that had been left behind following expulsions and resettlements in the border regions of Czechia, Poland, and Slovakia. These objects include everyday items, such as bowls and pictures; and also objects left behind in the landscape, such as villas and orchards.

To find out more about their project, visit the project website:

<https://spectralrecycling.ispan.edu.pl>

For the “Haunted Landscapes” click here: <https://spectralrecycling.ispan.edu.pl/haunted-landscapes/> In the podcast we discuss some of the objects that can be seen here.

The team also regularly updates the project blog, where you can read more about their findings:

<https://spectralrecycling.ispan.edu.pl/category/blog-en/>

For the publications of the team, click here: <https://spectralrecycling.ispan.edu.pl/publications/>

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Leslie Waters, *Borders on the Move: Territorial Change and Forced Migration in the Hungarian-Slovak Borderlands, 1938-1948*

Hosted by Steven Seegel, Dec 31, 2020

Summary

The movement of borders and people was a remarkably common experience for mid-twentieth-century Central and Eastern Europeans. Such was the case along the border between Czechoslovakia and Hungary, where territory changed hands in 1938 and

again in 1945. During the intervening period and beyond, residents of the borderland were caught in a nearly continuous onslaught of ethnic cleansing - expulsion of Czech and Slovak "colonists," Jewish deportations during the Holocaust, and postwar population exchanges - that was meant to reshape the territory first in the desired image of the Hungarian state and later on in that of Czechoslovakia.

Leslie Waters's book *Borders on the Move: Territorial Change and Forced Migration in the Hungarian-Slovak Borderlands, 1938-1948* (University of Rochester Press, 2020) examines the impact of border changes and migrations on this region between 1938 and 1948. It investigates the everyday consequences of geopolitical events that are well-known from the perspective of international

and national histories, but does so explicitly in the context of the borderland. Making skillful use of state and local archival sources in Hungary and Slovakia, author Leslie Waters illuminates the catastrophic effects of state action - including sweeping wealth redistribution and the expulsion of those perceived as enemies of the state - on individuals. This engagingly written and far-reaching work will be invaluable to scholars of the Holocaust and of East Central Europe as well as to those who study forced migration, population exchange, and inter-ethnic relations.

Leslie Waters is assistant professor of History at the University of Texas at El Paso.

Listen to the full interview at:
<https://newbooksnetwork.com/borders-on-the-move>



Pavel Janák (1881-1956), Trafika near Bolzanova ulice, Prague, via Wikipedia

Member News

Kate Densford

New Position:

Assistant Professor of Modern European History at the University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley.

Anna Hájková

Publications:

People without History are Dust: Queer Desire in the Holocaust. Translated by William Ross Jones. University of Toronto Press, 2025.

Michael Kopanic, Jr.

Honors

Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Recognition Award, University of Maryland Global Campus, 2025

Presentations:

Historical presentations on “Slovak and Czech Notes,” an online radio program that airs every two weeks at:
Slovak and Czech Notes
<https://slovakandczechnotes.com/listen-now>

Caitlin Murdock

Publications:

Caitlin E. Murdock “‘Lab Rats for Science’: Uranium mining, Expellees, Public Health, and Narratives of Radiation Danger in Cold War West Germany, 1955-1968,” *Contemporary European History* 34 (1) 2025: 181-198.

Cynthia Paces

Publications:

Prague: The Heart of Europe, Oxford University Press, 2025

Spotify playlist on the OUP blog, <https://blog.oup.com/?s=Prague>

Molly Pucci

Publications:

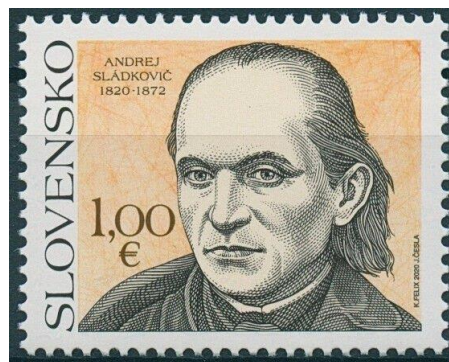
Marxism and the Interpretation of Dreams: Communism in Interwar Czechoslovakia and the Idea of Central Europe, Stanford University Press, coming February 2026.

Nick Sawicki

Publications:

“The Eye and the Hand in Kafka's Drawings,” *Modernism/modernity Print Plus* 10:1 (October 2025),
<https://modernismmodernity.org/articles/sawicki-eye-hand-kafka-drawings>

Through the Eyes of Franz Kafka: Between Image and Language (Prague: Kant, 2024), co-edited with Marie Rakušanová.



Julia Sutton-Mattocks

Publications:

Introduction “Free Love and Czech Nationalism: An Introduction to Božena Němcová’s *The Grandmother*,” in Božena Němcová, *The Grandmother* (Babička), translated by Susan Reynolds. Jantar, 2025

Presentations:

Virtually, for NYU’s Jordan Center on surgery in interwar Czech and Russian writing, December 1, 2025. Details:

<https://jordanrussiacenter.org/events/science-has-moved-on-a-bit-surgeons-and-modernity-in-interwar-russian-and-czech-writing>.

Hana Waisserová

Publications:

Hana Waisserova published together with Simona Fojtova and Patrice McMahon a comparative article: “From Grassroots Humanitarianism to Mutual Aid: Citizen Responses in Poland and the Czech Republic to Russia’s War in Ukraine” in *Czech Journal of International Relations* (2025).

Presentations:

“Writing was an island of freedom”: Brenda Flanagan and Hana Waisserová on women’s artistic dissent in Czechoslovakia, Radio Prague International, 17 November 2025, <https://english.radio.cz/writing-was-island-freedom-brenda-flanagan-and-hana-waisserova-womens-artistic-8868399>



New Members

Duncan MacLean Eaton

Duncan MacLean Eaton is a PhD candidate at Cornell University’s Department of History. Prior to this, he worked at Charles University’s Faculty of Arts helping to administer the East and Central European Studies program. He additionally holds an MA in History from the University of Toronto and a BA in History from SUNY New Paltz. His

research is concerned with the economic and political history of nineteenth and twentieth century Europe, with a particular focus on the economic challenges stemming from the dissolution of Austria-Hungary.

Garance Fromont

Garance Fromont is a PhD candidate at Université Paris Cité, affiliated with Cerilac

laboratory. Since 2021, she prepares a doctoral thesis about Czechoslovak cinema in the 1960s. She studies the role of the communist cultural policy in the sixties Czechoslovak film production and the conditions of emergence of a Cinematographic New Wave in a nationalised film industry. In 2024, she was awarded by the Barrande Fellowship Program for a short research stay at the Film Academy (FAMU) in Prague and she will be associated with the French Research Center in Humanities and Social Sciences (Cefres) in Prague for the year 2025-2026 in the frame of a doctoral fellowship.

Brian K. Goodman

Brian K. Goodman is a literary historian of the Cold War and its aftermath. His research explores how dissenting writers have shaped our ideas about human rights, censorship, and free expression. His first book, *The Nonconformists: American and Czech Writers across the Iron Curtain* (Harvard UP, 2023), received the Pamela Jensen Award from the American Political Science Association and Honorable Mention for the USC Book Prize in Literary and Cultural Studies

from the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies.

At Arizona State University, he is Associate Professor of English and a Faculty Affiliate of the Melikian Center for Russian, Eurasian, & East European Studies and the Center for Jewish Studies. In 2026, he will be a Budapest Open Society Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study at Central European University.

Mirela Ivanova

Mirela Ivanova works on the intellectual and social history of Byzantium and its northern neighbors in Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages. She is interested in how the nationalist projects of the nineteenth- and twentieth- century have shaped our understanding of mediaeval sources. She joined the Department of History in Sheffield in 2021. Her monograph, *Inventing Slavonic: Cultures of Writing between Rome and Constantinople* (Oxford University Press, 2024), examines the earliest texts concerned with the invention of the Slavonic alphabet.



Škoda 422 automobile (1929) in Prague, photo János Tamás, via Wikipedia