

pogrom through anthropological, social, and psychological theories of violence. The text is richly documented and expertly crafted, effectively conveying the escalating horror of the pogrom. It represents a scholarly work of the highest caliber, essential reading for anyone interested in Polish-Jewish history, while specialists in the field would benefit from consulting the original Polish version.

## **Brian K. Goodman, *The Nonconformists: American and Czech Writers across the Iron Curtain.***

**Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2023. X, 352 pp. Notes. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. \$45.00, hard bound.**

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Brian Goodman's book is clever, elegantly written and meticulously documented. The study is convincingly framed as an important contribution to American Cold War studies: "Despite increased attention to the so-called 'Third World', the socialist 'Second World' has largely remained a 'terra incognita' for Americanists, especially outside the borders of the former Soviet Union" (19). The detailed analyses combine thorough historical contextualization with inventive use of archival sources and fine close readings of literary texts. The announced theme is "the surprising continuities between American and Czech literary cultures during the Cold War" (11). The main merit of this work is its emphasis on the reciprocity of cultural transfers between Czech and American 'dissident' literary circles. The comparative method is thematized in the introduction, which stages the interaction of the writings of Václav Havel and Arthur Miller in the pages of the American magazine *Cross Currents* in 1983. The issue published the first excerpts in English from Havel's most famous political essay, "The Power of the Powerless" (1978), alongside Miller's monologue dedicated to Havel, in which the American playwright affirms: "In some indescribable way we are each other's continuation" (11). The book consists of a prologue: "Ginsberg's File", Introduction: "A Novel Fusion": on American-Czech literary transfers, six interpretive chapters ("The Man Who Disappeared": American and Czech reception of Kafka, "Behind the Gold Curtain": F. O. Matthiessen in Prague in 1947, "The Coward's Guide to World Literature": Josef Škvorecký's translations of American literature as the creation of a "dissenting" canon in the 1950s, "The Kingdom of May": Ginsberg's visit to Prague in 1965, "The Tourist": Philip Roth's trips to Prague and his contacts with Czech dissent in the 1970s and 1980s, "Across the Gray Zone": the activities of the semi-official Jazz Section and the trial of its members in the 1980s) and an epilogue ("Everything goes": on cultural and political developments after 1989).

Although the book focuses mainly on the Cold War period, from the late 1940s to the 1980s, Goodman takes us back to 1930s America and guides us through the reshaping of left-wing New York intellectual circles, especially around the cultural magazine *Partisan Review*. By following the intellectual trajectory of one of the book's key figures, the leftist Harvard professor of American literature F. O. Matthiessen, the book reaches back to the 19th century and the "American dissenting literary tradition", as formulated in Matthiessen's key work, *The American Renaissance* (1941).

The chapter on the American and Czech reception of Kafka highlights the author's approach. Kafka's writing "would provide Cold War writers and intellectuals in the United States with a literary vocabulary for imagining life behind the Iron Curtain" (27). At the same time, Kafka would serve as a catalyst for a "dissenting" position on the part of both American left-wing intellectuals and Czech writers and critics. The chapter devoted to Matthiessen's visiting professorship at Charles University in the autumn of 1947 offers the best of Goodman's method, as he carefully traces the trajectories and shifting political and aesthetic positions of both American and Czech writers and intellectuals. The chapters on better-known figures and events, such as Škvorecký, Alan Ginsberg, Roth, or Arthur Miller's involvement with Czech dissent, offer valuable detail and innovative readings and interpretations. The epilogue provides a platform for the post-1989 controversies and ambivalent trajectories of key figures in the book, including the discussions on Karel Šrám's (one of the leaders of the Jazz Section) collaboration with the secret police, or Václav Havel's support for the Iraq War.

Goodman manages to capture the complex processes of cultural transfer as a form of translation (of both literary texts and cultural paradigms). As the author argues, the texts analyzed were not only translated into another language, but also into a new form of dissent. Since translation plays such a key role in the book, we can regret that important figures of translators such as Rita Klímová or Dagmar Eisnerová are mentioned only briefly, without playing a more central role in the narrative. This could have been an opportunity to explore the role of female dissidents more thoroughly, a task that is long overdue.

Goodman's book is an important stepping stone for further research into the interconnectedness of literary circles and their ideas: "Cold War-era literary dissent was yet another form of 'novel fusion' between East and West" (20). It demonstrates the vitality of the subject, provides methodological tools and answers important questions, while leaving ample space for further research.

**Ed. Mária Csanádi, Márton Gerő, Miklós Hajdu, Imre Kovách, Mihály Laki, and István János Tóth. *Dynamics of an Authoritarian System: Hungary, 2010–2021*.**

**Budapest: Central European University Press, 2022. vi. 351pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. \$105.00, hard bound.**

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Although difficult to prove statistically, there is good reason to assume that what is often called "democratic backlash" generated by the Viktor Orbán regime since 2010 has already sparked more interpretive concepts and social science theories in Hungary than the historic regime change, in 1989. Deemed a departure from the principles of humanist rationality, commonly recognized today as the values of the European Union, the regime has been characterized in relevant academic literature with descriptors including illiberal state, autocracy, semi-hybrid regime, state-capitalism, developmental state, party-state, predatory authoritarian state, dependent state, accumulating state, competitive