

and the Catholic Church. The manner in which government-backed sex experts in Socialist Poland had to navigate censorship and pressure exerted by power centers mirrored the struggles of Catholic authors under the control of Catholic bishops. In both cases, ideology trumped the fair-minded pursuit of knowledge and honest communication with the public.

Interestingly, K. traces how, throughout the twentieth century, the language of Catholic sex experts shifted away from ethical and spiritual arguments towards medicalization. Consequently, in its form, it began to resemble the discourse of the left while remaining ideologically defined by the pope's teachings. Finally, K. debunks the common claims of Catholic sex educators about the negative influence of the West on Poles' sexual morality. She demonstrates that the conservative radicalization of these authors is, in fact, significantly indebted to Western, particularly American, Christian extremists.

K. closes her book with Part III, shifting her focus from the nation's elites and Warsaw towards its lower, rural classes. Here, she relies heavily on ethnographic material, such as folk songs, to argue that until very recently, most of Poland's inhabitants, even if attached to Catholic institutions, remained rather lukewarm about the Church's preaching on sexuality. In some parts of Poland, pre-marital sexual relations were commonly accepted and approved, as were various traditional methods of birth control. By turning to the countryside and rural classes of a nation often perceived as the periphery of the West, K. addresses an important aspect of the global history of sexuality. While some Western observers have seen Poland as inherently backward, Polish intelligentsia has long viewed the Polish rural classes in a strikingly similar manner. The book demonstrates that it has been the intelligentsia, with their paternalistic and ignorant view of the countryside, who have often destructively interfered with the sex-positivity, tolerance, and traditionally liberal sexual cultures of Polish rural classes.

To See a Moose will be a valuable addition to any course on European history and the history of sexuality. What is more, the book provides an opportunity for Western historians to include Poland in these fields' narratives. It also suggests avenues for future research, particularly the need for more transnational and comparative studies in the history of sexuality. In closing, it is important to recognize that K.'s work delves far deeper than the title—taken from one of her sources and intended to provoke the reader to uncover its ironic meaning—may suggest. By focusing on Polish sex education, she tells a story of century-long arguments among Poles over the subject of sex, particularly over what kind of sex makes one a modern and "civilized" citizen.

London

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Věra Sokolová: Queer Encounters with Communist Power. Non-Heterosexual Lives and the State in Czechoslovakia, 1948–1989. Karolinum Press. Prague 2021. 242 S. ISBN 978-80-246-4266-6. (Kč 380,–.)

While for a long time many scholars of history and sexuality have accepted a persistent Cold War driven narrative of persecution of queer people and diminished possibilities to express queerness in state socialist states, recent scholarship has begun to challenge such premises. Among the newest research debunking the myth of queerness and state socialism is the volume under review here by Věra Sokolová, a Czech historian, cultural anthropologist, and chair of the Department of Gender Studies at Charles University in Prague. Her ground-breaking book on queer history in state socialist Czechoslovakia interlinks a queer oral history project with detailed discourse analyses of scientific sexologist knowledge, legal history and political transitions in views on homosexuality and transsexuality in Czechoslovakia from 1948 to 1989. The author dives deep into identity policy and the realization and construction of a person's non-heterosexual sexuality in the repressive context of East Central European state socialist regimes.

The book is a valuable contribution to the under-researched subjects of non-heterosexual sexuality in post-war Europe, and the social history of the Eastern bloc (Czechoslo-

vakia in particular). While S. does not underestimate the brutality of the state socialist regimes, she shows that in Czechoslovakia the state carried out no crusade against homosexual and non-heterosexual people. Her findings suggest the essential importance of Czechoslovak sexology in forming the position of the state, changes in politics, and the attitudes of the heterosexual majority towards non-heterosexual minority, as well as indicating that it helped to form a person's own non-heterosexual identity, and support challenges of queer people in state socialist Czechoslovakia.

The book has seven chapters. The first is an introduction, where S. guides the reader through the main argument, terminology, and structure of the study. The second chapter offers a deep dive into the scholarship of the history of sexuality and the study of women and gender, particularly in Eastern Europe. Most importantly, S. introduces the Queer Oral History Project conducted in Czech Republic, collecting biographical interviews with queer people since the 2000s. At this point she identifies the chosen 30 biographical narratives of the book, representing broadly defined non-heterosexual Czech women born between 1929 and 1952 (lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, intersexual, and transgender). While male narrators are not excluded, S. chooses the less common subjects of queer history research—women—rather than the more dominant research subject—queer men. This focus then uniquely incorporates women's voices into the research of a male-dominant gay past, and ensures visibility of non-heterosexual women.

The third chapter, which could be considered as the first chapter where findings are presented, introduces the Czechoslovak sexological discourse. Investigating over one hundred scientific articles and books published by Czech and Slovak sexologists, medical specialists, and other scientists focusing on sexuality between 1947 and 1989, the chapter outlines professional and societal attitudes towards questions related to hetero and non-hetero sexuality, intersexuality and transsexuality. Through this, S. uncovers how sexologists in particular played a role in changing the attitudes of the majority, and enabling queer people to live more fulfilled lives.

The following chapters largely work with the biographical narratives. Chapter 4 seeks to understand how it was to grow up as non-heterosexual in state socialist Czechoslovakia, and what the reference points were for queer identity creation. As the majority of the narrators are women, chapter 5 examines the gender dimension of a dissident potential of queer lives. Here, S. discusses queer family constellations. She challenges the myths of female sexual passivity or longing for monogamous relationships, thereby showing the solidarity between non-heterosexual men and women. Chapter 6 explores queer encounters with state power structures, and what strategies queer people employed in their dealings with the regime. The last chapter summarizes the book findings, but it is also an epilogue with an open ending. S. includes an article on homosexuality published in the newspaper *Rudé právo*, which was the last one of its kind in state socialist Czechoslovakia, and the analysis of a letter which arrived to the publisher's office of the newspaper. Rather than being simply a closure, the last part of her book also shows complicated and entangled queer encounters with the state socialist power.

Unfortunately, the author falls into the usual trap of writing about Czechoslovakia and overlooking the other part of the republic—Slovakia. Historical development and even current attitudes towards queerness have been diametrically different in Slovakia. Including non-heterosexual narrators from Slovakia (if there were any, it is not clear), and comparing attitudes of Slovak sexologists and other medical professionals to their Czech counterparts, would have broadened the author's perspective on the dynamics of queerness. Clearly, considering an intersectional approach to sexuality in combination with other identities (as S. does so well with the narrator who considers her religiosity even more dominant than her sexuality, or the narrator who considers Czech patriotism an important moment of decision-making regarding emigration and living with her partner in Austria), especially those of nationality and ethnicity (Hungarian, German, Roma, etc.) would have expanded her study of queer lives in Czechoslovakia.

Nevertheless, this study both enriches and challenges existing scholarship on queer history in state socialist countries, especially the perception of monolithic attitudes in the Eastern Bloc towards non-heterosexual people. The focus on oral history allows S. to examine individual experience which would otherwise be impossible to extract from institutional documents. By providing this space for non-heterosexual women, the book majorly contributes to visibility of queer experiences, beyond the dominant practice of studying the history of gay men. It shows the complexities of queerness during state socialism, manoeuvring between “normality” and “abnormality,” private and public, submission and confrontation with the regime. By recognizing what this queer history offers, S.’s book greatly contributes to a deeper understanding of the history of the state socialist societies.

Marburg

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Slawomir Jacek Żurek: Polish Jewish Re-Remembering. Studies – Sketches – Interpretations, Aus dem Poln. von Thomas Anessi. Academic Studies Press. Boston 2023. 426 S., ISBN 979-8-88719-280-2. (€ 123,40.)

In his monograph,¹ Slawomir Jacek Żurek, professor of Polish Jewish Literature Studies at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, presents a series of case studies examining dynamics of connectivity and exchange between Polish and Jewish literary cultures. He situates them within the context of the “post-1989, thirty-year-long process of steadily growing interest” in Polish Jewish relations (p. 1). Consisting of four sections comprising a total of nineteen chapters, *Polish Jewish Re-Remembering* offers avenues for further scholarly inquiry in memory studies and comparative literature.

Tying together all four sections is Ż.’s framework of ‘re-remembering,’ the process of building a post-memory narrative of Polish Jewish relations. After periods of silence about the Polish Jewish past both in Poland and in Israel, Ż. shows, more work remains to be done to excavate shared literary cultural practices with the goal of “attaining a common Polish-Jewish re-remembering” (p. 8). In particular, *Polish Jewish Re-Remembering* emphasizes the need to craft comparative narratives of the Holocaust “in both the Polish and Hebrew languages (and in other so-called Jewish languages)” to better understand the history and impact of the Holocaust on Polish, Israeli, and Jewish cultures and cultural connections (p. 382).

The author begins with an argument about the essential contribution of Jews to Polish literary culture. The first section, “Between Aria and Golus: Polish, Jewish, and Polish Jewish Literature,” deals broadly with Polish Jewish literature before World War II. In the first chapter, Ż. examines Jewish and Christian literary perspectives on pre-war Lublin in the poetry of Franciszka Arnsztajnowa and Józef Czechowicz. The second chapter looks at how Jewish and non-Jewish poets grappled with the ghosts of prewar Jewish Lublin in postwar poetry. The third chapter examines the positionality of Jewish soldiers during the Second Polish Republic as depicted in Adolf Rudnicki’s novel *Profile i drobiazgi żołnierzy* (Soldiers’ Profiles and Details), focusing on their experiences of antisemitism within the army and their responses to anti-Jewish stereotypes and discrimination. The fourth chapter focuses on Christian Jewish relations in Sholem Asch’s *Di kishefmacherin fun Kastilyen* (The Witch from Castile), a Yiddish-language short story about religious antisemitism and anti-Jewish violence in medieval Rome. The fifth chapter considers dilemmas of identity and the use of Polish, Yiddish, and Hebrew through a close reading of three poems from the 1930s, and the sixth chapter focuses on depictions of the *kresy*, or eastern borderlands, in interwar Polish Jewish literature. The last chapter of the first section looks at the figure of the child in interwar Poland as both participant in Jewish literary culture and as a symbol of modern Jewish values.

1 Original edition: *Odpamiętywanie polsko-żydowskie: Szkice—studia—interpretacje*, Lublin 2021.