

to Hesse, change in his later years to refer to “Germany”? But perhaps most importantly, how did he reconcile his deep dedication to a national cause with his long-term service to Prussia? In other words, what becomes of Austria and the German-speaking parts of Bohemia and Moravia in his commitment to unifying a philologically defined German nation? Or was he simply silent on the matter of the so-called *kleindeutsche Lösung*? Finally, Norberg presents substantial evidence that Jacob Grimm believed that philological knowledge qualified him to influence the future of Germany, but did this idea catch on? We read that Theodor Fontane viewed one of his speeches as vacuous; it would be interesting to hear more about contemporary opinions from within the broader nationalist movement about the Grimms’ faith in the authority of the philologist.

In sum, this well-written and carefully researched book offers much food for thought for historians of Central Europe. The Grimms’ scholarship addressed the history of language, legal traditions, literature, myth, and folk culture. Jakob Norberg’s detailed examination of their published work provides new insights into its implications for nationalist thinking in nineteenth-century Central Europe. It also raises important questions that are worth pursuing further. In the process, it challenges us to reflect on the role and contribution of scholarly work from a range of historical disciplines in the project of defining the nation and advocating for its political consequences.

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Prague: Belonging in the Modern City

By Chad Bryant. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2021. Pp. 332. Cloth \$29.95. ISBN: 978-0674048652.

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Chad Bryant’s new book is a creative and informative walk through modern Central European history. Using the theme of belonging and the biographies of five diverse Prague residents, he presents a history of the Bohemian capital and western Czechoslovakia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries against a constantly changing social, political, and cultural backdrop. Drawing from a wealth of new scholarly studies and less known but revealing primary sources, he departs from standard narratives of nationalism as the driving force of Bohemian and Czech history, usefully and insightfully appreciating the appeal of leftist parties among Prague residents well before the February 1948 communist coup. Along the way, varieties of opportunities and strategies for satisfying the human need for belonging appear, including, above all, live and remote spaces that Prague offered for socializing and connecting with others, and engaging in community.

Chapter 1, “German City,” is set in the first half of the nineteenth century, when Czech patriots were asserting themselves in the face of German predominance in Prague. Through the life story of Karel Vladislav Zap, author of *A Guide to Prague* (1847), Bryant introduces his readers to Prague’s rich architectural and ethnic makeup and shows how early middle-class institutions of sociability and the city’s visage offered opportunities for belonging in the growing city. Bryant deftly employs Zap’s story to present the now-familiar narrative of nineteenth-century Czech nation-building. But as subsequent chapters show, this work is no mere retelling of that old story dressed in urban garb.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Czechs had managed to capture control over Prague's City Hall, and Germans were then struggling to maintain their old social status. Chapter 2, "Czech City," unfolds against this background. Bryant uses the life-story of German-Jewish journalist, Egon Erwin Kisch, to introduce growing middle-class concern for the fates of Prague's working poor and also shed light on everyday life in the city prior to the First World War. To underline the lack of belonging that many German Jews experienced in turn-of-the-century Prague, Bryant quotes Pavel Eisner, who wrote, "The life of the German Jew in Prague became fundamentally pathological because he belonged to a sociologically abnormal minority which hung like a mote in the air" (83-84). Through his journalistic investigations, which often found him socializing in working-class pubs and wandering in poor neighborhoods, Kisch was able to integrate himself into Prague's less-privileged urban communities, although due to a dense line dividing the middle and working classes, he was never able to fully belong among the city's more destitute residents.

Vojtěch Berger is the central figure of Chapter 3, "Revolution City," which is set in Prague during the First World War and the interwar period. Here, Bryant combines urban landscape and biography to show the power of leftist politics in the hearts and minds of Prague residents during the First World War and the early years of independent Czechoslovak statehood. Berger, a carpenter by trade, left a rich set of diaries, which Bryant insightfully analyzes, revealing much about Social Democratic and Communist Party politics and activities. Ultimately, it was among communist clubs, rallies, and parades, where "Berger found a home" (107) and experienced belonging. Bryant gives some attention to Berger's experiences during the Second World War, when the Nazis occupied western Czechoslovakia. Still, the experiences of Prague's Jews during that devastating time are not substantively discussed in the book, despite the enormous relevance of those experiences for the theme of belonging.

Chapter 4, "Communist City," is set in the Cold War era. Bryant does an excellent job of detailing Czechoslovak history in the nearly fifty years after 1945, convincingly breaking with old, tired arguments about monolithic, unchallenged totalitarian state control over society. The central figure in this chapter is Hana Frejková, a Czech actress whose father was tortured and then executed along with ten other Communist Party members as part of the terrifying 1953 Slanský show trial. Following her father's murder, the party forced Frejková and her mother to leave Prague and live in impoverished circumstances, where enjoying community and belonging was impossible. During the 1960s, when "socialism with a human face" emerged, the women were allowed to return to Prague. When discussing this time in Frejková's life, Bryant insightfully reminds readers that "the Communist regime's reach into society, into the lives of its inhabitants, was never total" (169). There were worlds in which "Praguers and others could create their own notions of community and place as well as a sense of belonging" (170). For Frejková, the theatre was that world.

"Global City" is the title of Chapter 5. This last chapter treats Prague in the post-socialist period following the opening of the Berlin Wall. Here, Bryant follows Duong Nguyen, a Czech citizen who, after being born in Vietnam, emigrated with her parents to the Czech Republic in 1995. She was one of numerous young people with Vietnamese heritage in Prague after 1989, who felt that they lived "in two worlds, two cultures" (203). Belonging was and remains a challenge due to persistent racism in Czech society but, as Bryant shows, Nguyen and other "banana children," as they called themselves, learned to use social media as a means of meaningfully connecting and building community virtually and, at times, face-to-face.

Chad Bryant has produced a fun, engagingly written book that guides readers through modern Prague, as well as providing an innovative way of looking at history from below and considering the history of emotions at one of Central Europe's richest crossroads.

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