

“times of stagnation,” a choice that dilutes a very specific reference to the period of the 1970s under Brezhnev, known as the era of stagnation. In the poem “Not Everyone Has Returned,” *mordovski bolota* becomes “Moldovia’s mud” instead of “Mordovia’s mud,” a republic in Russia known for its forced labor Gulags. In the cycle “Allergy,” Bilotserkivets’s reference to Washington, the first president of the United States is mistakenly taken as a reference to the capital city. These very few mistranslations do not mar an otherwise excellent rendition of the important poetic voice of Nataalka Bilotserkivets. The book includes a perceptive introduction by Kinsella outlining the poet’s biographical and literary details, a Translator’s Note by Orłowsky commenting on her personal connection to Nataalka’s poetry, as well as a thoughtful Afterword by the L’viv poet and literary critic Iryna Starovoit.

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**Configuring Memory in Czech Family Sagas: The Art of Forgetting in Generic Tradition.** By Marcin Filipowicz. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021. 210 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$100.00, hard bound.  
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For decades, the genre of family novels has been a favorite reading of the general public. It has never stood out for its innovative methods, but the basic narrative formula, working with the continuity of several generations of one family, provided an attractive theme of private destinies unfolding against the backdrop of big history. The reader knows the historical direction, while remaining curious with regard to the private life paths of fictional characters.

The family novel is certainly not one of the main themes of contemporary literary criticism. It is therefore sympathetic that its Czech version, situated in the context of the European tradition, is the subject of a book monograph. It offers an analysis of selected novels with an attempt to abstract from the material more general conclusions regarding its typology and the arrangement of the story world. The inspiration, the author claims, came from his participation in a sociological project exploring the role of family memory in processes of intergenerational transformation. Thus, in the book he also confronts literary images with insights drawn from empirical material standing outside fictional worlds. The theme also opens up the field of memory studies, which has proved highly productive in the past decade.

Filipowicz draws on previous works that have dealt with the genre. He confronts his conclusions mainly with Yi-ling Ru’s monograph *The Family Novel* (1989) and Heide Lutosch’s book *Ende der Familie—Ende der Geschichte* (2007) along with several journal studies. However, the relation to the existing literature is rather confrontational, as if the main aim were to target conclusions of his predecessors that do not correspond to how the sample he has assembled manifests itself typologically.

It is precisely the sample of family novels Filipowicz is working with that seems to be the main problem of the whole book. After a general opening chapter on “Literature, Memory, Genre,” we find ourselves in a turmoil of references to books such as: Anna Maria Tilschová: *Stará rodina* (1916); Jan Vrba: *Soumrak Hadlasuc rodu* (1929); Helena Dvořáková: *Pád rodiny Bryknarů* (1943–1948); Helena Šmahelová: *Pelantovi* (1944); Vladimír Neff: *Sňatky z rozumu* (1957–1963); Vlasta Javořícká: *U Dvořáků* (1992); Alena Mornštajnová: *Slepá mapa* (2013) a Kateřina Dubská: *Dcery* (2015). Next to them, there are: Thomas Mann: *Buddenbrooks* (1901); John Galsworthy: *The Forsyte Saga* (1906–1921); Roger Martin du Gard: *Les Thibault* (1922–1940); Georges Duhamel: *Chronique*

*des Pasquier* (1933–1945); Virginia Woolf: *The Years* (1937); Monika Maron: *Pawels Briefe: Eine Familiengeschichte* (1999); and Anne Tyler: *A Spool of Blue Thread* (2015). The novels enter and leave the analysis rather haphazardly, without any introduction, contextualization, or chronological concern.

The analysis primarily focuses on Czech family novels. In order to capture at least some developmental dynamics, Filipowicz constructs the categories “older sagas” and “contemporary sagas.” The latter includes only two Czech and two foreign novels. The former lacks any historical perspective: family novels from the beginning of the century are treated as one coherent type with novels published during World War II.

The unclear aim and purpose of the analysis is thus the biggest problem of the monograph. As the book is not oriented in a direction of literary history, it leaves aside the gradual transformations of the family novel genre in their social or cultural contexts. Neither is its aim primarily narratological. The sociological point of view, which continuously brings back the aspect of family memory and other phenomena in the actual world, results in Filipowicz being more interested in the content of the works analyzed than in their narrative forms and patterns. Chapters devoted to the memory of the house, the memory of family rituals, the memory hidden in family narratives, and family memory and narrative logic follow mainly the thematic aspects that hardly submit any generalizations as each novel is unique in one way or other.

There is no English translation of any of the Czech novels under analysis. With the absence of such a reference, the interpretation needs to be very descriptive. But in the flood of conveyed information, it is difficult to get an idea of how each narrative is structured and what distinguishes it. Reading the book is thus more of an incentive to look for more sustaining approaches, rather than getting answers to relevant questions about the typology and meaning of the family novel, whether in the Czech or international context.

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***Jewish Primitivism.*** By Samuel J. Spinner. Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2021. xiii, 251 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. \$65.00, hard bound.  
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Drawing on traditional ethnography and primitivist theories, Samuel Spinner’s book unfolds the primitivist strands of Jewish Europeanness, the fluidity of what, in conventional ethnography, has been seen as clearly binary: the (primitive) savage and the (European) civilized, the “other” and the “self,” the object (of ethnographic or aesthetic investigation), and the (modern) subject. Given its self-directed alignment, Jewish primitivism blurs the boundaries between these notions. As a part of a modern Jewish identity and politics, built on Herderian and Romantic ideas of national culture, Jewish primitivism challenges, even undermines, this very European modernity and its binarisms. This productive paradox forms the heart of the analysis. Through the examples of Franz Kafka, Alfred Döblin, Joseph Roth, Else Lasker-Schüler, Sh. An-ski, Y. L. Perets, Der Nister, Uri Zvi Grinberg, and Moshe Vorobeichic, the study demonstrates how, in German, Hebrew, and Yiddish, these players were engaged in the project of Jewish primitivism. Considering literary and visual manifestations alike, Spinner explores literature (and visibility in literature), graphic art, and photography