

It deserves to be read by anyone interested in the modern trials and tribulations of nation building in eastern Europe and the former republics of the USSR.

DAVID BRANDENBERGER
University of Richmond

Army Film and the Avant Garde: Cinema and Experiment in the Czechoslovak Military. By Alice Lovejoy. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. xiii, 305 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Chronology. Index. Illustrations. Plates. Companion DVD. \$35.00, paper.

Many of the most prominent male directors and cinematographers of the celebrated Czech New Wave (1962–69) worked for Czechoslovak Army Film in the 1950s and 1960s. Through a meticulous gathering and analysis of materials from many archives (including those of Czech National Film, the Military History Institute, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), press sources, interviews, and a wealth of interrelated scholarship on media, culture and politics, Alice Lovejoy reveals the factors which led to this unit's significant role in promoting the stylistic experimentation and sociopolitical critique which characterized the Czech New Wave. She explores the institutional structures and political arrangements which made this possible and the dynamic personalities who drove developments, beginning with Jiří Jeníček, put in charge of Army Film in 1929. Jeníček was a career soldier, but also a well-known amateur photographer and a prolific advocate of documentary film and the importance of technique. Lovejoy details how he promoted an expansive delineation of Army Film's role, going beyond military training and reportage of activities to include the political education not only of soldiers but of the population as a whole. He was committed to training young filmmakers as military recruits as well as to reflecting Czechoslovakia's democratic and multinational character. As Lovejoy convincingly argues, his fictionalized documentaries about border guards and military preparedness were part of the Edvard Beneš regime's propaganda efforts in the face of threats from Nazi Germany.

After World War II, when the Czechoslovak government and its army were reconstituted under Beneš, Jeníček returned to his position. Army Film remained an independent unit, while the rest of the Czechoslovak film industry was nationalized. Although Jeníček was removed after the Communist coup in 1948, the ambitious new Defense Minister, Alexej Čepička, a confirmed Stalinist, invested heavily in Army Film, determined to make it a rival to Czechoslovak State Film (the main producer of theatrical narrative films) in terms of prestige and cultural influence. Although the ideological and political functions of these two entities were similar, in that both were now expected to adhere to the principles of Soviet socialist realism, Lovejoy details how they became institutional rivals in a battle for resources. Čepička continued Jeníček's policy of recruiting young talent, particularly recent graduates of the State's Film School (FAMU), and expanded the distribution of its films. Ladislav Helge, Zbyněk Brynych, František Vlácil, Vojtěch Jasný, and Karel Kachyna all worked in Army Film in the 1950s and became major narrative filmmakers after they left for State Film's Barrandov studio, launching the thematic emphases and stylistic strategies that became the Czech New Wave. Čepička's dream of turning Army Film into a major force in feature-length film ended when he was removed from his position in 1956, but the studio's pioneering experiments in non-fictional short documentary genres continued.

Lovejoy insightfully analyzes some of the best short documentary films made at the end of the 1950s. While ostensibly serving the thematic aim of promoting Soviet military standards of correct behavior and comportment by criticizing negative examples, these films visually exhibited the attractiveness and even the potential legitimacy of romantic priorities. The ambiguities and paradoxes of personal and socio-political behavior were to become a prevalent theme in Czech New Wave films. In spite of party hard-liners' attempts to suppress liberalizing tendencies in the early 1960s, Army Film recruited a new generation of FAMU graduates, including Jan Schmidt, Pavel Juráček, Jiří Menzel, Jan Němec, and Karel Vachek—filmmakers who also moved on to attract international attention and awards for their feature-length films later in that decade.

By the mid-1960s, leadership of Army Film had passed on to people of a more reformist bent, with Bedřich Benda as head and Roman Hlaváč as chief dramaturge; as Lovejoy shows, they advanced the idea that Army Film had to deal with soldiers' civilian as well as military lives and more broadly with the challenges faced by young people. When thematic possibilities were expanded as a result of the growing reform spirit within the party, the future New Wave directors began producing documentaries which critiqued the stagnant neo-Stalinist system by visually conveying alienation and conformity, with their films getting expanded exposure on Czechoslovak television. Lovejoy analyzes the clever approaches and techniques the filmmakers used and shows how the unit's leadership was able to influence the more direct censorship process within the military to get these films approved. Of course, after the Soviet-led invasion of August 1968, the purges of reformers began. Nonetheless, several stunning films were still produced by Army Film in 1969, recording the despair, dismay and resignation of the population. The DVD that accompanies Lovejoy's well-researched, analytically perceptive, and engagingly written book contains eleven of the films which she treats in detail, including four banned shortly after they were made in 1969 and seven other earlier films exhibiting the best work from the 1930s, the 1950s, and the Prague Spring period.

HERBERT J. EAGLE
University of Michigan

Taking Liberties: Gender, Transgressive Patriotism, and Polish Drama 1786–1989.

By Halina Filipowicz. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014. xvi, 361 pp. Notes. Index. \$90.00, hard bound. \$35.00, paper.

In this interdisciplinary study, Halina Filipowicz combines historical breadth, detailed research, and complex critical and theoretical lenses with startling results. She covers a wide variety of neglected theatrical “peripheries” in Polish drama since the late eighteenth century—apparently marginal theatrical works that nevertheless consistently address the central fault lines of Poland's tumultuous political history. In content, the works Filipowicz considers actually cover over a thousand years of Polish history, reaching back to the legendary pagan Queen Wanda. The book ends with examples dating from the Soviet and Nazi occupations and the transition out of communist rule in 1989. Filipowicz's use of feminist and gender theory to interpret both the historical subjects and their translation into dramatic form provides an essential and insightful filter to the sheer volume of archival material she has uncovered. It also proves highly generative to her high-risk project of moving beyond the canon of Polish drama and established categories of Polish theater history.