Chapter 10

Footsteps through the City

Encounters with Social Justice in Czech Urban Landscapes

Susanna Trnka

This chapter follows the footsteps of residents of three Czech cities, examining how history and social justice come to be experienced as embedded in urban landscapes.[1] It develops a phenomenological examination of perspectives and sensibilities of time, national identity, and state politics, examining how Czechs both create a sense of collective belonging and exercise powers of exclusion in order to enact their visions of a "just society." We start by walking through the streets of Prague, following along with pilgrims and city dwellers alike as they celebrate the religious holiday of Saint Václav, with a view to understanding how the Czech Republic, the country known for having the largest number of atheists and agonistics in the world, is revitalizing its "Christian heritage." We then consider the legacies of visions of social justice that emerged during World War II and in the Communist period through the lens of both the industrial landscape of Ostrava and the UNESCO heritage site of Český Krumlov.

In all three cases, my analysis focuses on how urban landscapes are experienced as imbued with a deeply historicized national identity that is increasingly being employed by the contemporary state to energize dividing lines between "Czechs" and "others." Utilizing Heideigger's conceptualization of "thrownness" alongside Czech phenomenologist Jan Patočka's work on perception and movement, I explore how Czechs actively create and deconstruct history, contemporary notions of how social justice might be achieved, and how these dynamics come to underpin the positioning of Muslim refugees and other "outsiders," including the Roma, as "alien" or undesirable by both nation and state.

The 28th of September is a public holiday in the Czech Republic, honoring the life and death of the tenth-century political and religious leader,

Saint Václav. Public processions, Christian masses, and historical reenactments of the saint's life are held in cities and towns across the nation. Pilgrims from around the country congregate in Prague before embarking on a thirty-kilometer procession to attend mass in the town of Stará Boleslav, where Saint Václav died. Simultaneously, the nation celebrates "Czech Statehood Day" as, since 2000, 28 September doubles as the commemoration of the founding of the Czech state.

In 2016, the Czech president, Miloš Zeman, originally an outspoken critic of moves to couple Czech Statehood Day with a major religious holiday, made his first-ever appearance at Stará Boleslav's mass. In his speech, he cited the Biblical verses "God is love" and "[if I do not have] love, I am nothing," before declaring: "Remember these words in a time when all of Europe is looking again for its cultural roots in the fight against Islamic fundamentalism. We must do all we can to make sure we truly return to these roots" ("Den" 2016).

What was the president suggesting? Was he advocating for greater tolerance and love towards others, or for closing the doors to those deemed as threatening Europe's "cultural roots"? Given Zeman's well-known antipathy toward refugees, summoning the nation's Christian roots was part of an ongoing effort to bolster antipathy toward Muslims. But as the possible double meaning of Zeman's use of Biblical verses demonstrates, his invocation of the nation's history could lend itself to various moral framings. As I suggest in this chapter, walking through towns and cities, be it as part of a pilgrimage or simply traversing from one place to another, highlights the multiplicity of ways that morality and social justice can be constituted with respect to historical events and the contemporary. What *we must do*, to echo Zeman, and how we must do it are radically contested issues that draw upon a range of historical narratives that we meet up with as we move through urban spaces.

As Barbara Bender asserts, landscapes—including urban ones—are always inherently subjective, "historically particular, imbricated in social relations and deeply political" (2002: S104). Tim Ingold adds to this the understanding that landscapes not only become a part of us, but we become a part of them as "each component enfolds within its essence the totality of its relations with each and every other" (2000: 191).

One way of examining how we politicize and historicize landscapes—and ourselves—is to walk our way through them. While much has been said of how narrative imbues landscapes with significance (Cruikshank 2001), so too do movement and sensory engagement (Anzoise 2017; Di Giminiani 2018; Ingold 2000). Landscapes are not only interpreted or "read" as cultural texts but evoke and provide different ways of being in the world (Brown 2019; Descola 2013). Many Czech urban spaces were in-

tentionally constructed to convey nationalist visions (Bažant 2017), but to be effective, they must be experienced in particular ways. Contemporary activation and resignification of nationalist imaginaries of urban spaces is, as I examine here, accomplished via both discourse and movement, from pilgrimages to shopping expeditions. As Julie Cruikshank notes, sentient landscapes do not stand alone, ready to be discovered, but are created via interrelations with people; our engagements with landscapes are both referential and constitutive, with "the power to create or to establish what they signify" (2001: 391).

In the Czech case, urban landscapes were, at times, consciously constructed to "speak" very particular nationalist narratives. Today these messages often come to be embodied in ways that tend to reinforce exclusionist and racist ideologies of white, "traditionally" Christian, Slavic identity as ostensibly inherently in opposition to other national, ethnic, or "racial" and religious categories. In this chapter I draw together phenomenological theory and walking ethnographies of three cities to probe how this has come to be so, how and why such narratives are naturalized, and what means there may be to overturn or at least disrupt such claims.

Walking through Prague, Walking through Time

At the top of Prague's Wenceslaus Square stands a massive statue of Saint Václav on horseback. Legend has it that should the Czech lands be under threat, the statue of the Good King and his steed will spring to life, hurtling down the boulevard and assembling his many hidden knights, before leading Czechs to victory.

Consciously invoking such legends is one way of explicitly conjuring up historical narratives and placing oneself among them. Such gestures to the past can be fleeting, as when walking up Prague's Petřín Hill my friends wave toward the Hunger Wall, reminding everyone assembled that during the fourteenth century famine King Charles IV ordered the wall's construction to provide employment for the poor and relieve their hunger.

Others are self-consciously elaborate, as when my friends Jarda and Veronika, both in their early sixties, took me on a five-hour historical walking tour of Prague. Each step was punctuated with multiple, crisscrossing historical legends. At Vyšehrad we stood on the fortress ramparts overlooking the river as they narrated the story of Libuše, the prophet and female founder of the ruling Přemyslid dynasty, who in the eighth century had a vision of where to build the city of Prague. "Look at the curve of the river and how the landscape opens up before you," Jarda prompted, "you can

see why this particular spot would be most advantageous for building a fortification." Crossing Charles Bridge provoked accounts of the exploits of King Charles IV, who initiated its construction, just as Prague Castle's Saint Vitus Cathedral spurred stories about how Saint Václav oversaw the building of the first church there. So it went, the account of one legendary leader following another. Each of these leaders not only helped make the city into what it is today, but, as their stories attest, were thought to be endowed with extraordinary physical, mystical, or intellectual abilities and with a deep sense of justice and a willingness to work for the collective good.

While I was fascinated by how our journey made the historical landscape come alive, this feeling was not new to them. Our footsteps retraced a walk that Jarda and Veronika used to do annually with their children. Each child was tasked with learning a new story or legend to share when they reached a particular spot, be it at one of the thirty-one statues of saints and historical personages who line Charles Bridge (or, in the case of Prince Bruncvík's statue, stand on the bridge's pier) or at the cannonball embedded in Vyšehrad's eleventh-century rotunda. The walk became not just a history lesson but a process of linking stories and legends to the material realities in their midst, enabling an old building, statue, or monument to rise to new significance while remaining part of the contemporary landscape.

How we come to commemorate events and connect them to a specific place is as much about the present as it is about any given place's actual past. Places are always imbued with history, whether we recognize it or not. History resides in the buildings, the turns of the street, the cobblestones we slip on in the rain. Prague's Old Town, inhabited since the nineth century, reflects more than a millennium of urban development. Malá Strana (the Lesser Town) is the setting for movies needing an eighteenth-century backdrop while also the space of buses, commuters, playgrounds, bars, and ice cream shops. How then do these streets and buildings convey history? In addition to commemorative rituals, how do we actively encounter history in specific places, coming to embody historical narratives through more mundane movements such as our daily traversing through time and space? Here the work of Martin Heidegger and Czech philosopher Jan Patočka on thrownness, movement, and perception is helpful.

One way Heidegger described the work of history was through the concept of thrownness, or how as human beings we are thrown into a particular time and place and that is where we must enact our lives. Thrownness, according to Heidegger, is at the heart of the human struggle as it results in inevitable feelings of guilt. We are never at the beginning of an event but are instead thrust into a time and place already constituted.

As such, we enter a situation ripe with choices, paths, options—not only those we opt to embrace, but also those we cannot take. We make choices, we feel guilt. The truly knowledgeable self is the one who can reconcile this tension, accepting their place in history while shaping their destiny. Heidegger thus viewed our existence as historically and spatially prescribed, but he also emphasized how grasping our sense of place in history vests us with the ability to choose our responses to the exigencies of space and time.

One of Heidegger's key points is that the spaces in which we dwell are always marked by time. Technology—buildings, bridges, agricultural divisions of land—is a part of these histories, reconfiguring the landscape, the world in which we live, and thus reconfiguring who we are and can be. Heidegger's image of the bridge that actively gathers both sides of the river to create a meaningful space is a good example:

> The bridge swings over the stream "with ease and power." It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other. . . . It brings stream and bank and land into each other's neighborhood. ([1971] 2001a: 150)

Part of dwelling in the spaces created by buildings or bridges is moving through them. As Patočka (1998) (and Husserl before him) emphasized, our perception of the world and thus ultimately our understanding of it, is dependent on acts of movement. Walking can be a central facet of this. Whether a formal procession or a pragmatic means of getting from one place to another, walking is a way of dwelling and finding one's footing in the world. In the cities we live in or in foreign locales, walking is a means of dynamically creating a sense of place (de Certeau 1984), while also opening up to the possibilities of incorporating it within us. Like other forms of movement, walking enacts and throws into relief our passage through space and time, simultaneously constituting our presence and absence through a series of spaces (Lepecki 2004).

Walking is interrelational, a means of bringing us into, or out of, pace with others. As Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst suggest:

> That walking is social may seem obvious. . . . However to hold . . . that social life is walked is to make a far stronger claim, namely for the rooting of the social in the actual ground of lived experience, where the earth we tread interfaces with the air we breathe. It is along this ground, and not in some ethereal realm of discursively constructed significance, over and above the material world, that lives are paced on in their mutual relations. (2008: 2)

Walking is also a means of embodying culture. Marcel Mauss noted how English soldiers had a different gait from French ones, remarking,

"You all know that the British infantry marches with a different step from our own: with a different frequency and a different stride" ([1935] 2007: 52). Through an examination of what he called our "techniques du corps," Mauss highlighted how our bodily enactments are marked by our social and cultural milieu, so that any movement, be it dancing, skipping, walking, or digging a ditch, not only carries cultural meaning but is culturally mediated.

In the city, walking has its own rhythms, movements, and possibilities for engagement. Walking in the footsteps of those who came before us, traversing along their pathways, moving between the buildings they erected, our bodies respond. We may no longer need to leap out of the way of horse-drawn carriages but instead move aside for Segways and motor scooters. As we move through life, what the city requires from us changes. Cobblestones and high heels have their own ways of accommodating one another, requiring a new sense of balance. Pushing a baby pram along city streets requires yet another kind of attentiveness to the existence (or not) of sidewalks and curbs. For some of the elderly, spaces seem to shift, making new demands on old bodies. My friend Anežka, who is eighty and walks at a brisk pace, jokingly complained, "I go to the graveyard every year, and it seems to me the path and the steps are changing—every year they get steeper and wider!" The city lives through our bodies and we are continually relearning how to accommodate it.

Nor are we alone on these streets. Buildings have plaques reminding us of the lives of noteworthy occupants—"in this house lived, and on December 31, 1958, died, opera singer in the National Theatre of Prague, Milada Ševcovicová." Even more imposingly, statues that are life-size (or larger) seemingly prop up architectural facades—strong men with barrel chests, semiclad women, or fat, bucolic infants—staring down at us as we walk along. One feels their presence, as our feet find themselves tracing down paths well worn by those who came before us, seeing some similar vistas, feeling a similar sense of cold or warmth, a simulacrum of the past, necessarily incomplete, conjured up by the sedimentation of time under our feet. This kind of walking is an act of tethering, of getting to know the ground beneath our feet and, in doing so, recognizing how it anchors us to a particular space and time, interlinking a moment in the life of a city with a moment in our lifespan, interconnecting a progression of lives and generations that are always flux but never interchangeable.

For Heidegger ([1959] 1966), such reflective activity necessarily leads to embracing a particular kind of belonging, known as autochthony. The logical slippage between feeling anchored in a specific time and place and the privileging of autochthony is, however, not self-evident and is worth considering in detail.

Heidegger opened his *Discourse on Thinking* by suggesting that we need to make a distinction between calculative thinking—the thinking of planning or organizing for future profit—and meditative thinking or reflecting on "the meaning which reigns in everything that is" ([1959] 1966: 46). He then recounted that anyone can follow the path of meditative thinking in his own manner and within his own limits: "It is enough if we dwell on what lies close and meditate on what is closest; upon that which concerns us, each one of us, here and now; here, on this patch of home ground; now, in the present hour of history. . . . We grow thoughtful and ask: does not the flourishing of any genuine work depend upon its roots in a native soil?" ([1959] 1966: 47).

Heidegger's next step was to suggest that "the rootedness, the autochthony, of man is threatened today at its core!" ([1959] 1966: 48–49). Invoking his interpretation of the work of the poet Johann Peter Hebel, Heidegger asserted we should heed Hebel's message that "[f]or a truly joyous and salutary human work to flourish, man must be able to mount from the depth of his home ground up into the ether" ([1959] 1966: 47). As is well known, for Heidegger the search for and valorization of soil, ground, and rootedness led to his embrace of the Nazi Party, deploring those whom he, and the Nazis, viewed as "rootless," namely Jews (Lapidot and Brumlik 2017). While there is much controversy over just how involved Heidegger was in Nazi politics, many have convincingly argued that his philosophical writing promotes views of German nationalism that align with Nazi Party rhetoric (e.g., Smith 1995).

Contra Heidegger, as anthropologists have long demonstrated, autochthony or being the "first people" of the land (sometimes conceptualized as being born out of the earth) is, however, never just about finding the soil under one's feet. Autochthony is actively constructed, and as Zeman's invocation of belonging in the Czech Republic and, more broadly, in Europe as a decidedly Christian endeavor demonstrates, it is a selective enterprise that includes inclusion of those who see and feel the soil between their feet but also exclusion of those who do not. Autochtony reflects, only for some, the feeling that "here, on this patch of home ground; now, in the present hour of history." There are other ways to cut these histories, and, as Heidegger himself elsewhere highlighted, the end point to which any given path may lead is never guaranteed ([1971] 2001b: 181–84).

The historical accounts that are articulated by pointing out architectural features or undertaking pilgrimages, reenactments, or historical walking tours offer a select slice of the past, asserting very specific linkages between time, space, ethnicity, and national identity (cf. Alonso 1994). Such selectiveness can be quite obvious: despite professing to have "no religion" like the majority of Czechs, Jarda and Veronika's tour of the city

reflects a distinctively Christian perspective. Notably, their passion for history did not extend to Josefov, the city's large, renowned Jewish Quarter, about which they said they know little.

Instead, "history," as they describe it and which we came to embody during our five-hour journey, focuses closely on the activities of legendary leaders, patrons, and saints recognized for bringing Christianity to Eastern and Central Europe, but even more so for their contributions to developing the Czech state, in terms of its political power and its cultural and educational foundations. Saint Václav united Christians and overturned the rule of his (baptized, but at heart still pagan) mother; he is most highly regarded, however, for his generous and just treatment of the poor. King Charles IV is similarly noted for being the Holy Roman Emperor, but more importantly for expanding Prague, making Bohemia a center of European political power, founding Charles University, and taking care of his starving people by building the Hunger Wall. Both rulers are most valued for their development of a just, generous, and inclusive monarchist politics, propelling the development of a nation whose inhabitants prospered and stayed on par with, or led, the rest of Europe.

In popular discourse, the development of such a just society is often depicted as a teleological progression: the city founded by the prophet Libuše became the capital of the state developed by Saint Václav, which was further refined by King Charles IV. Each step in this process is portrayed as part of a natural evolution of society toward being more just and fair. As sites of commerce, politics, higher education, and cosmopolitan exchange, cities are often viewed as embodying the ongoing refinement of knowledge and, therefore, moral development. They are thus linked with a vision of social justice as it will one day be achieved if only history keeps unfolding.

At the same time, many narratives include historical interruptions that derailed the momentum toward ever-increasing progress and social justice. These include such moments as the imposition of Austro-Hungarian rule, placing Czechs under foreign domination, the Nazi occupation during World War II when social justice morphed into dogged survival, and the period of state socialism, when moral progress was stalled by silence, fear, and collaboration with Communist authorities. As my sixty-year-old friend Kryštof once explained, "The country's morality was left undeveloped because we were stifled by forty years of Communism. So, while the West was moving forward [morally], we were stagnant and that is why there is all this corruption here now."

Jarda and Veronika are undoubtedly aware of such counterpoints to the narrative arc of national development and social justice they espouse. But neither alternative perspectives nor major moments of breakage dominate

how they experience and narrate (their place in) their city's history. They may have trouble recounting Jewish histories of Prague, though I suspect they know more than they think they do, but they could have capably traced Communist or Nazi pasts in the landscapes before us. Instead, they offer a particular framing—of kings and saints and (a certain kind of) social justice—that feels to them as indisputable as the cobblestones under our feet. Indeed, it is this intertwining of history and the sensory, embodied realities of moving through the place where specific events once happened that makes other possibilities challenging to recognize. Nonetheless, other narrators and other cities foreground different kinds of historical consciousness.

Walking through Dust, Christianity, and Totalitarianism in Ostrava

Ostrava, in the eastern part of Moravia, represents a different kind of urbanity. Home to approximately 294,000 inhabitants, Ostrava was founded in the mid-thirteenth century and rose to prominence with the development of mining and steelworks in the early 1800s. Under state socialism, these industries rapidly expanded. Post-1989, however, the mines and many of the steelworks began to close and jobs became increasingly insecure.

Everywhere one goes, the city is marked by its industrial past and present. The Czech Republic's largest steelworks, Liberty Ostrava—previously ArcelorMittal Ostrava—dominates local employment and the city's skyline. As part of an official tour of what was then ArcelorMittal Ostrava, I was led around the steelworks' premises by Viktor, a retired foreman, rehired as a company tour guide. I was the only visitor that day and Viktor was delighted to give the tour in Czech. About an hour into it, he began to deviate from the company-approved script. Standing outside the main production buildings, he drew attention to the haze in the air, explaining it was composed of dust that hadn't been caught by the plant's de-dusters. He had already informed me about the company's ecological awareness and the plant's advanced de-dusting procedures, following which he noted that the Human Resources department always checked afterward to make sure that he did not forget to include that part. "The part they don't tell me to show you is the black stuff coating the ground," he now murmured. We both stared at the thick layer of dust. "The company cleans it up all the time," he stated, "otherwise it would be worse." "But without dust," he added wryly, "it wouldn't be Ostrava."

We continued walking until we came to a large, empty warehouse. Viktor took a quick look inside and then pulled me in, shutting the door

behind us. "I looked you up on the Internet," he asserted. "You wrote about Christianity in Fiji?" I nodded, feeling confused. It took me a while to realize he wanted to know my stance on "believers" before recounting to me his life story.

Hidden away in the warehouse together, Viktor told me he was born in 1946 so had effectively spent half his life under Communism (that is, after 1948) and the other half (after 1989) living under democracy, and so he could attest that both have their good and bad aspects. Under Communism the state took care of the people, he said. The steelworks' premises once included a bank, a health center, a post office, and a dormitory. The company even organized holidays for its employees.

But under Communism, life was difficult for Catholics, and as a believer, Viktor ran into trouble when he wanted to go to university, being instead forced to work as a laborer. He asked if I had read George Orwell's novels, explaining his fascination with how Orwell captured the Communist mindset so well. "That is because totalitarianism is the same wherever it is," he asserted, "[whether] it is in the police force that Orwell worked for, in the Communist state, or under Nazism." He added:

> Communism could happen again. The Bible tells us where all these things come from. It tells us it's human nature and human nature hasn't changed over time. . . . People don't remember how bad it was and it is possible it will come again. Look, even Auschwitz is not so far from here—only eighty kilometers or so from Ostrava. Who is to say that won't happen again?

We were heading back to the company headquarters when Viktor grabbed me by the shoulders, declaring:

> Stand here and look at the building just next to the headquarters, the scientific research building. Look at the top floor and you'll see another floor, set back under the roof, almost hidden. Can you see the two small windows, just at the end, facing the main road and the entryway? And on the other side, there are another two, just in the same place but facing the other direction. Do you know what they are?

They looked like gun slots to me, but I let him answer.

> They are for shooting. This building was built in the 1960s, fifteen years after the end of the war. Yet they still built gun holes so that if an enemy came down the street and tried to enter the premises, they could gun them down. . . . I don't show that to everyone.

It was supposed to be a company tour highlighting ArcelorMittal's productivity and environmental sensitivity. But Viktor read the landscape differently. His was a conflicted story of the steelworks for which he'd worked for decades, which he held complicit in the violence of socialism, still visible through the research building's gun slots, and in the environ-

mental destruction of capitalism, evident in the layers of dust. Rather than a teleological movement towards social justice (from Libuše to Saint Václav to King Charles IV), his account focused on coming to terms with the Communist and Nazi pasts—and perhaps even their potential futures—through an understanding of the Bible's reflections on the immutable nature of good and evil.

Viktor was one of many persecuted by the socialist regime due to their religion. While not illegal, Christianity was frowned upon and strictly regulated by state socialist authorities, with numerous crackdowns on priests and other religious authorities for their purported anti-Communist sentiments. Most believers hid their religious affiliation as much as possible to protect their education and employment opportunities.

Christianity is no longer targeted. The Czech Republic has, however, never been a particularly religious nation—according to a Pew Research Center (2017) poll, 72 percent of the population describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or believing in "nothing in particular." Another 26 percent describes themselves as "Christians," mostly Catholics. Some parts of the country, including Moravia where Ostrava is located, are considered more religious than others (Willoughby 2003). That said, religious rites once conducted in hushed tones now openly take place throughout the country, and plenty of those who believe "nothing in particular" ally with Christianity as part of their national tradition.

But when it comes to debating political morality, apart from the very faithful such as Viktor, people generally do not invoke the Bible to determine what is or is not socially just. Rather, ideas about what makes a fair society tend to draw on a multiplicity of framings, among which (teleological) narratives of national development, socialist ideals, and free-market rhetoric figure prominently. Implicit throughout these is a more diffuse sense that it is the role of society to promote the greater good and enable, or at least not hinder, individuals' opportunities to live a good life, while requiring of citizens some level of responsibility either directly for one another or back towards the state (Trnka 2017a, 2017b). Such views on social justice may be crystallized in the platforms of political parties, but they also emerge in public discourse as loosely framed historical reminiscences about the "good leaders" of the past or in shared notions of how reciprocal relations between citizens and states should (but may not) operate.

Today, public discourse has largely been overtaken by a singular vision of the state socialist past as politically, economically, and morally damaging. The socialist regime is often referred to by the same term—*totalita*, or totalitarianism—used to describe the Nazi protectorate. But not everyone shares this predominantly negative view.

Like Viktor, many Czechs recount positive aspects of the previous regime, including free healthcare, subsidized housing, and secure employment. This is not to dilute the impact of the 1989 revolution, which is widely viewed as indeed a revolutionary step forward in granting citizens' increased freedom and the potential to have a real role in governance and civil society. But while state socialism as a mode of governance is widely, but not entirely, rejected, the economic ideals of state socialism reverberate through social discourse. As one working-class man in Prague stated to me, "the country is full of corruption as 30 percent of the people own all the wealth." He stated this disparity as if it is an obvious, fundamental injustice. For him, and many others on the left end of the political spectrum, the socialist promise of equal distribution of resources holds strong.

For others on the right, injustice isn't manifest through the existence of class difference per se but rather through the unequal opportunities that are thought to enable some to rise to the top while others flounder in the new economy. Their disquiet is often voiced through complaints about corruption, an idiom used to suggest a broader lack of equal opportunities.

In either iteration, left or right, efforts to create a just society are depicted as thwarted by the government's lack of interest in fostering society's evolution toward an increasingly moral and just community. Unlike the rulers of the past—Libuše, Saint Václav, and King Charles IV—who focused on building a great and just society, the leaders in this political system, many contend, are out to line their pockets.

If, however, social justice is widely viewed as promoting equality, either in terms of resources or opportunity, and having one's wellbeing protected by the state, there are those, such as Muslim migrants and the Roma (otherwise known as "Gypsies")—both depicted as decidedly "Other" in public discourse—for whom the possibility of social justice seems far off.

Building Boundaries in Český Krumlov

Just as my Prague friends enjoy historical walking tours, so do many of the people I know in the historic southern city of Český Krumlov. A small city of about thirteen thousand people, Český Krumlov is famous for its historic thirteenth-century castle. On one of my visits there, I arrived just as a newly restored part of the castle garden was opened to the public. My friends, sixty-year-old Martina and her husband, seventy-year-old Ladislav, were eager to tour the garden, as were many locals. As we walked, we met a small crowd of people engaged in lively discussion about the course of the path that ran through the newly reconstructed area. "How much of this path is merely restored and how much is brand new?"

"Wasn't there once a gate at that end of the garden, where there is now a cement wall, which the path used to pass through?" Ladislav eagerly joined in, all the while carefully calculating the distance from his house of the various features under discussion, murmuring that the missing gate was so many kilometers from his house, the original start of the path was so far off from his front door.

The group, which we had now joined, kept walking. At an overlook that afforded excellent views of the city, the loose collection of people began to recount how the landscape had changed over the years. The most vocal, perhaps because of his seniority, was a man who had settled in Český Krumlov during the 1950s. "This street used to have houses that stood facing that direction, not like the way they are now. And that building that is now a gallery used to be the old brewery," he proclaimed. Ladislav and Martina drew my attention to other landmarks, pointing out a synagogue visible in the distance. People in the crowd who overhead them joined in, speaking sympathetically about the fate of the Jews who had been sent to concentration camps during the war.

The conversation turned to a collective lamentation over the "destruction of the city." To my surprise, it was neither Germans nor Communists but the Roma who were singled out for blame. In the 1950s, said the stranger who had moved to Český Krumlov at that time, "there were so many Gypsies living in the center of town, they took over the buildings." Martina interjected, explaining to me that, predominantly inhabited by Germans before the war, the city had been a Nazi stronghold. When the Nazis left, Roma from other cities who had survived the Nazis' anti-Roma purges moved in.

The man then related how, in the 1950s, if you walked into the city at night, "You could see Gypsies who weren't wearing any pants, just shirts, so when they ran around their naked buttocks were visible." He recounted seeing an Austrian visitor "reach into his pocket, pull out a handful of chocolate candies, and throw them into the center of a group of Gypsies, and the Gypsies ran around like chickens, picking them all up." He laughed and I was struck by the animosity of portraying the Roma as akin to animals, in contrast to the civilized Czech, Jew, or German.

Nothing more was said of "Gypsies" until the next day when we were walking to Ladislav and Martina's church for Sunday services. Ladislav told me,

> The Gypsies got used to not working during Communism. They were given money by the state and got used to that. At the same time, the Communists put up the Iron Curtain so the Gypsies could not go anywhere. They were used to traveling in their caravans, but the Communists forced them to live in *paneláky* (state-run, prefabricated apartments). So they broke down the

> walls and threw everything out and generally made a mess. Nobody else in the panelák could sleep when the Gypsies were up all night singing! It's fine for the Gypsies to sleep all day because they don't work, but they keep everyone else up too! . . . The Gypsies should be removed from the cities. They destroy everything and should be gotten rid of.

Later that evening Ladislav, Martina, and I took another walk through the city, on our way to a documentary film premiere. We arrived early so they pointed out more of the city's sights, including the castle library where Martina's grandfather had worked and a nearby Communist memorial to the proletariat where Martina used to dance at May Day. But in the midst of all the remembrances, there were also histories to be forgotten.

The film we saw that evening was the biography of a local photographer, Josef Seidel. It briefly mentioned how his son, František, who took numerous photos around the Šumava Mountains during World War II, had about five thousand of his negatives seized by the Communists after the war.

It was a minor moment in the film but it dominated the Q&A session that followed, as a young man in the audience wanted to know why the photographs had been seized. Our host, the museum curator, suggested there might be two possible reasons, the first being that new censorship laws that had just been passed meant that all publications needed to be cleared by the government authorities—thus the seizure. He briefly paused and the young man hurried to supply the second reason: "The other possibility was that there were photos of people who had collaborated with the Germans on the negatives." Not exactly, the curator shrugged, it was more likely the photos contained information about various settlements in the district and could have been used as a record of where the Germans had lived before their villages were wiped out. (The Sudetenland expulsions following World War II led to the removal of approximately three million Germans. The death toll is widely disputed, with estimates ranging from 30,000 to 250,000) (Cordell and Wolff 2005).

The film focused on Josef and František Seidel's photography, but in doing so, it had referred to the often uncomfortable and elided history of the Germans expelled from this territory. But most of the audience was not interested in this narrative thread. At the end of the Q&A, they wandered around the gallery, gazing at the accompanying exhibition of Seidel's photos and drawing the images of the past captured by the photographs into their own knowledge of Český Krumlov. Around the room, I could hear exclamations of "Look, that picture was taken from just over there!" and "That used to be such-and-such place, but it isn't there anymore." Ladislav had another history in mind and rushed up to the curator, declar-

ing, "Seidel photographed our wedding!" He thus inserted himself and Martina into the Seidels' story, much the same way as he had calculated the distance from his house to each of the castle garden's features.

Ladislav had, however, yet another connection with the film, which remained private until the next morning when I found him pouring over an old map. I asked him what he was looking at and he pointed to the Sudetenland, tracing his finger over the sites of the nearly invisible, not-to-be-remembered, predominantly German villages. "Have you ever been there?" I asked. "Sure, I grew up in a house there, taken from the Germans," he laughed. "It was really big."

He refused, however, to say more on this subject, despite my encouragement. It was a momentary breakthrough of a history not often openly articulated. In fact, when Václav Havel in December 1989, just before taking up the post of president, suggested that Czechs apologize for the Sudetenland expulsions, the idea was met with hostility and derision.

Exclusion

Ladislav and Martina's awareness of geography and its historical linkages is almost overwhelming. "Look, our house is over here in relation to the castle garden over there." "Look, there used to be a gate here; it isn't here anymore but you can just see its outline." It is as if they are constantly trying to locate themselves in relation to places and times in history. It is as if they are saying "Look, we are here, and this is where this here is in relation to everything else that has happened in this space." It is as if their lives are preoccupied with the fact of thrownness and the need to determine exactly where and when they are living.

Ladislav, Martina, and many others derive a sense of solidarity through remembered and forgotten aspects of the Christian, nationalist, state socialist and World War II pasts as manifest in local, historical connections—one's precise geographic, temporal, and kinship relation to the castle in Český Krumlov, for example. But this solidarity is also created out of exclusions (as Heidegger's own politics so clearly attests). Some exclusions are represented with sadness, such as remembrances of the destruction of Český Krumlov's Jewish community. Others are hidden, such as the ejection of Sudetenland Germans, relegated to the quiet edges of family histories. Yet others are pointed critiques directed at those viewed as not participating fairly in social and economic life.

Martina and Ladislav's rejection of the Roma as just and equitable partners in the Czech nation echo a much broader discourse. Repeatedly,

Czechs tell me "the problem with Gypsies" is that "they don't know how to work." Or: "They want all the rights, but no responsibilities. They have twelve children so that they can take social welfare all their lives." Or: "They are prone to violence—they beat up people and steal. The good ones are the exceptions." When a friend of mine laments that her seven-year-old son forgot his lunch box at school that day and it might get stolen overnight, her son attempts to console her by stating that "it won't get stolen as there aren't any Gypsies at my school."

Elsewhere, I have described how Czech racism toward the Roma tends to focus on issues of labor (Trnka 2017b). Following classic models of state-citizen social contracts, many Czechs envision themselves as taking part in a reciprocal relationship with the state, whereby their labor contributes to the economic vitality of the nation, and in return, they are guaranteed rights to healthcare, housing, and education. In contrast, they view the Roma as largely taking from the state while being not only unproductive but disruptive of others' abilities to work. The social contract is, however, seen as encompassing only those who have appropriate relations with the state—who give enough and do not take too much—thus casting the Roma as necessarily outside of the nation. The public voicing of such sentiments, as well as their explicit invocation in right-wing politics, erupted after the 1989 revolution (Hockenos 1993).

While the Roma have been an ongoing focus of racial animosity, in recent years Muslim refugees are increasingly sharing this role. The reasoning behind their exclusion is different but garners a similar level of intense racial prejudice. This need not surprise us. As Fredrik Barth ([1969] 1998) argued long ago, ethnic and racial prejudice does not stem from one's response to a particular objective characteristic of the Other (such as skin color, diet, or language) but from the desire to draw firm boundaries between who is "us" and who is not. The point of focusing on differences in skin color or food practices is to use these facets to construct a racial or ethnic boundary rather than any intrinsic meaningfulness these characteristics may contain. Arguments about place-based attachments—"belonging" to a certain piece of land or soil, for example—are, however, particularly difficult to dislodge as landscapes that come to be invested with nationalist characteristics are not only thought of as historically having been built by a particular group or groups of people but are experientially seen and felt as linking some people into a historical, present, and future collectivity of resemblance, i.e., "a people," whilst necessarily excluding those deemed different (Herzfeld 2005, ch. 4). The embodied sensoriality of such experiences of inclusion/exclusion makes them much harder to argue against (Trnka, Dureau, and Park 2013).

"We Will Make Them Sick"

Public sentiments against Muslims were galvanized in September 2015 when thousands of Syrian refugees began walking across Europe and Czechs braced themselves against an imagined onslaught. Since then, the othering of Muslims has become ubiquitous in public and private discourse. One Czech after another told me that they do not like the idea of refugees from the Middle East. Unlike refugees from Slavic countries, "who are fine because we can talk with them," Syrian refugees would never be understood. "Who of us can learn Arabic?"

Fears are expressed in classic clichés: "They are another civilization." "They will never fit in." "They are dirty and will make us sick." Occasionally, a new concern is raised: "We will make them sick." In discussing the refugee crisis with friends over dinner, my fifty-five-year-old friend Matěj revealed that he supports the Czech government's refusal to accept European refugee quotas because "these people don't want to be here. They want to go to Germany." "It seems very organized," his twenty-four-year-old son Alexandr added. "They don't seem like war-torn people."

"The main reason these people don't want to stay here is because they don't like our food," Běta, Matěj's wife, explained. "We put špek [a Czech version of prosciutto] in everything, and even if they don't know it, they end up eating it! They stay away from [consuming] pork but inadvertently eat something with špek, and suddenly it makes them feel sick."

Alexandr joked, "So we should have a quota and just give them 'enzyme therapy' so they can eat our food!"

Such assertions of corporeal difference inevitably lead to paranoia over possible embodied breakdowns between self and other. In 2015, Zeman went on record telling academics who criticized his antirefugee rhetoric that if they wanted to welcome refugees into the country, they should open the doors of their own homes to them (Tománek 2015). Some Czechs responded willingly. For others, it was an invitation to scaremonger.

When the European Union refugee quota system was introduced in 2015, the Czech Republic stood apart with Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia (the Vysegrád Four) for refusing to accept their allotted number of Syrian asylum seekers. It became a fraught political issue as the former socialist states opposed the demands of their EU counterparts, who responded with allegations of racism and xenophobia. Neither wanting to relent nor wanting to be seen as kowtowing to Europe, especially to Germany, the Czechs turned the humanitarian crisis into a political assertion of national self-determination. At the time, a ministry of foreign trade official explained to me that, "like everyone else," she thought the refugee crisis

was terrible, but surely Czechs have the right to protect their borders "and the way the Vysegrád Four are being represented in the foreign press is appalling." Referring back to Soviet rule, she added, "Having a foreign power telling you what to do—it's like state socialism all over again." Two years on, as the quota system was due to expire, even left-leaning newspapers lauded how, in 2015, the "rebels" from Central and Eastern Europe stood up against a system that "today no-one [in Europe] wants to see continued" (Hruška 2017: 1).

We now have a clearer sense of the significance of Zeman's 2016 involvement in Saint Václav's pilgrimage as well as his invocations that "God is love." Zeman's participation was intended to shore up the image of the Czech nation as united against infidels; new boundary lines between the Czech state and the EU were being drawn through the employment of old religious divisions. The pilgrimage became not just an invocation of Christian tradition but an attempt to, however briefly, Christianize contemporary politics, employing the vision of the Czech Republic as a Christian nation to stand strong against asylum seekers and thus, it was presumed, to keep the Czech economy buoyant. Having previously fought against the Christianization of "Czech Statehood Day," Zeman made a U-turn, promoting the image of a Christian heritage uniting Europe against the tide of Islam as a politically expedient way of bolstering state autonomy. Moreover, while representing himself primarily as a leader striving for the greater good of the Czech people, he also tried to take on the mantle of speaking on behalf of "Europe," suggesting his position was backed by European-wide, Christian tradition.

But despite its Christian heritage, the Czech Republic is not a Christian state. Notwithstanding the Catholic Church's willingness to get involved in state politics, the country is unlikely to head in this direction, though ultimately it is up to its citizens to decide. It is also up to them to determine how they envision social justice, as there are multiple, competing, and complementary histories of this concept that can be invoked, be they of legendary leaders, the economic and social equalities promised by state socialism, companies as providers, or biblical depictions of good and evil. It is, moreover, largely up to the nation how porous and malleable it wants the boundary lines to be between those who "belong" and those who do not, or if such boundary lines are even salient.

In turning to Christianity to shut the door on asylum seekers, Zeman courted and received support from sympathetic members of the church. Indeed, the state and church appeared firmly on the same page, with Czech Cardinal Dominik Duka proclaiming in February 2017, "The current situation in the countries of Western Europe is a warning to us. . . . The whole history of humanity shows how uncontrolled migration causes vi-

olence and conflict, as well as economic and cultural collapse" (Luxmore 2017). Nonetheless, even before the first refugees crossed into the Czech Republic, there were those in the church, such as priest and theologian Tomáš Halík, who decried the rise of Islamophobia and called on Czech Christians to consider their "moral obligation" to offer refugees sanctuary ("Přijímat" 2014). One could, moreover, easily reinterpret Zeman's invocations of God's love in the spirit of welcoming refugees rather than rejecting them, suggesting two competing responses—both drawing on Christianity for their historical underpinnings. As Heidegger reminds us, we must necessarily make choices as to how to respond to our historical conditions.

Autochthony is an active endeavor. Heidegger recognized this when he suggested we look at the soil under our feet and meditate upon its meaning. However, Heidegger's invitation in *Discourse on Thinking* is precisely to think. And as thinking can never be predetermined, it opens up multiple directions where it might lead. Heidegger's mistake lay in the steps he took in pondering the meaning of the soil of his homeland, as well as in his attempt to lead his readers along the path of his own thinking about autochthony in relation to German nationalism. But the choice of whether or not to follow in his, or in Zeman's, footsteps is implicitly ours to take.

As anthropologists and geographers have long pointed out, our relation with (sentient or nonsentient) landscapes is not some atemporal, unchanging bedrock (Li 2013; Howitt 2001); rather, there is a multiplicity of ways of doing and being in history within a single place (Bacigalupo 2018). Electing whether to accept the dominant modes in which "belonging" is constituted in our societies, or to listen to the more minor chords that are being played in the background, is our moment of taking charge of thrownness and determining which direction we walk in.

Susanna Trnka is Professor of Social Anthropology and director of the Health and Society major at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. Her primary research areas are the body, state-citizen relations, and subjectivity. She has conducted research in the Czech Republic and New Zealand, and she has in the past worked in Fiji. She is currently the Editor-in-Chief of *American Ethnologist*.

Note

1. This chapter is a revised version of chapter 1 of *Traversing: Embodied Lifeworlds in the Czech Republic* (Cornell University Press, 2020). Reprinted with permission of Cornell University Press.

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