admits, speaking of their "subversive potential" (252) merely postpones the question. The strong point of the approach is that it helps distinguish between generalized anti-regime sentiment and structured oppositional activity, while also embedding "subversion" into international networks—Hamersky shows convincingly that maintaining unofficial culture inside Czechoslovakia required a constant exchange of information and documents with exiles and supporters in other countries. The focus on subversion also reminds us that photographing dissidents was often complicated and sometimes dangerous. The book is rich in detail about Kyncl's tradecraft—we discover that he hid rolls of film in a half-body cast he had to wear after a skiing accident, for example, or that portraits of Chartists were pre-emptively sent to western exile organizations, so they would be ready for press releases in case of arrest.

Many of Kyncl's "dissident photos" have their artistic flaws. Hamersky, unfortunately only in a few words in the conclusion mentions quite rightly that "often, his photographs are deliberately too dark, too indistinct, too coarse-grained" (250). This may be the price of subversion: photos must be taken quickly and secretly, at dangerous moments, from inopportune angles. But Hamersky analyzes quite nicely the resulting effect of "counter-surveillance" (a dissident photographer furtively observing his furtive observers), nor does she flinch from saying that Kyncl's "surveillance photos" of the secret police sometimes end up looking similar to those taken by the police themselves, even as the very messiness of the photos creates a sense of spontaneity and authenticity.

In an aside, Hamersky mentions that Kyncl left over a *million* photos taken in his second (and brilliant) career as a theater photographer in Great Britain (102); she does not treat this portion of his output, nor does she consider the "non-dissent" photos from Czechoslovakia, which included photos of dance contests, Romani children, May Day parades, and recording sessions of his childhood friend, the singer Václav Neckář—among many other subjects (34n111). Looking at his whole career, then, we must surely see his Charter photographs as a bounded (minor?) part of his output, and a mere prelude to what became his life's calling. Hamersky's close attention to a relatively small number of dissident photos does raise the question of how they fit into Kyncl's larger work; a sense of possible continuities and discontinuities across his life would have cast much additional light on his Charter 77 photographs.

Hamersky's book skillfully draws our attention to the visualization of dissent and the role of photography in shaping western images of dissidents. She sees the main achievements of dissident photography as creating a counter-image of communist reality, turning the regime's surveillance techniques against itself, and enforcing dissidents' "right to their own image" (*Recht auf ein eigenes Bild*, 258). Like Kyncl himself, Hamersky focuses in on an exceptional group of individuals and captures them in their individuality, their weakness and their strength, without worrying about their heroism, influence, or political credentials. The result is a fine account of Kyncl's work and a compelling group portrait of Czech dissent.

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Love Letter in Cuneiform. By Tomáš Zmeškal. Trans. Alex Zucker. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016. x, 315 pp. $20.00, paper.
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After much struggle to conclusively compose a study of Kafka, Borges revealed his failure in a short essay titled "Kafka and His Precursors." Curiously, the essay begins

with an apparent defense: "I once premeditated making a study of Kafka's precursors" (Borges, *Selected Non-Fictions*, 2000 [363]), and goes on to deliver a brilliantly original means of considering Kafka by considering aspects of those who preceded him, not by searching through Kafka's diaries and papers to discover "influences," but instead by finding moments, phenotypical, of what can be found in Kafka. The reviewer of Tomáš Zmeškal's debut novel *Milostný dopis klínovým písmem* (2008), translated into English by the prolific and gifted Alex Zucker as *Love Letter in Cuneifom* (2016), finds herself in a position to consider the *sui generis* quality of Zmeškal as Borges did Kafka, but without, sadly, the same mental instrument as Borges possessed. Be that as it may, approaching this magically demanding rhizome of a novel, I find myself moved to imitate Borges' "review" of Kafka.

Despite the many studies that have argued for an intimate national complexion to Czech culture, I prefer to see the artistic "miracles" and *nové volny* of Czech modernity to have in common, paradoxically, their *sui generis* nature. That particularity attends all the great novels of Czech modernism: Kundera is Kundera, Hrabal Hrabal, Hašek Hašek, Kafka Kafka and, yes, Zmeškal Zmeškal. This should not mean that Zmeškal has no precursors, *pace* Borges. He does indeed.

From Hašek there is a gut busting and gutsy humor, from Hrabal a beautifully bittersweet impossibility that can only be given orality, from Kundera trouble and love swathed in a required irony. And whosoever might desire to possess Kafka nationally, from Kafka the pulsating wound of being alive. If there is something that does bind all these precursors one to the other and all to Zmeškal in some form or figure, there is the healthy care not to cover or suture the wound by writing it away: "If the book we're reading doesn't wake us up with a blow to the head, what are we reading for? So that it will make us happy . . . we would be happy precisely if we had no books, and the kind of books that make us happy are the kind we could write ourselves if we had to" (Kafka, *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors*, 2016 [16]). I invoke these predecessors to Zmeškal and his laud-worthy *Love Letter in Cuneiform* even as I could have added aspects from David Foster Wallace, Viktor Pelevin, Gabriel García Márquez, Jáchym Topol, Pliny the Elder, Laurence Sterne, and the Macrobius and Betrand Russell invoked in Zmeškal's epigraphs.

Zmeškal's novel is intersectional in every way, a Borromean knot of parallel narratives, chronologies, couples, mutual recognitions and misrecognitions, like the labyrinthine streets of enfolded and layered Prague, spoliated over time, over Events. The reader loses herself in a happy state of precarity with the warm voice of the author beyond the narrator(s), an author who bivouacs us, abode to abode, even as it tosses us quick-wittedly, heterochronously and heterotopically.

Zmeškal asks us to read carefully, intently, with a particular inquisitiveness akin to that which Vladimir Nabokov demands of his readers. As with the true manner in which time unfurls in memory rather than in History, the more passive reader, along with one of the narrators, George/Jiří, an Englishman of Czech origin, who puzzles over what has exactly happened in the story, is lost to the fulsome subtexts of what could more facilely be read monolithically, jumps to conclusions, and is affected by misunderstood moments. The reader then is not to be stalled by George's narrative, and can hardly be as voices layer one upon the other yet, if the reader is active, she can hear distinctly. Zucker renders all that formal paradox into an English that is thorny and desirous all at once (I think especially of how well delivered in English are the antinomies of Květa and Hynek's sexual relationship played out also in their repartee).

Couples, the inter-acts of his story (Alice-Maximilian, Alice-Josef, Josef-Kveta, Josef-Hynek, and onward), abound in *Love Letter in Cuneiform*. And the possibility of forgetting—the reader's forgetting, the characters' forgetting—is ever a present

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danger. How to keep hold of a character who is not in the narrative spotlight, and how strong is the need, the ethical need, to remember especially the traumas, moments of pain, or entire lives of loneliness and degradation. Such a magnificent curlicue of life with its loves lost, deferred, and foreclosed would pose a challenge to the best, most major, readers. And the Anglophone reader has been given a novel in Zucker's translation that matches the original with special verve. English cannot match the potential for pyrotechnic paronomasia in Czech nor its flavorful palaver, but Zucker makes decisions that please the English ear (and eye) in a manner that allows the English to yield respectfully to the Czech, even to Zmeškal's *sui generis* Czech. Zucker, in the translator's note reserved for the end of the novel in English, reads itself, aptly, like a love letter, "It was a genuine pleasure to find my way through the maze of Zmeškal's *Love Letter* . . ." (315). This reader hopes, along with Zucker, that he "will be able to translate another one of [Zmeškal's] books before long" (315), and eagerly awaits the ability to share the contemporary, and perhaps more important, precursive importance of Zmeškal's work.

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The Value of Labor: The Science of Commodification in Hungary, 1920–1956. By Martha Lampland. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016. xviii, 330 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. $40.00, paper.
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Following the demise of Communist regimes in 1989, the countries of eastern Europe embarked on a course of rapid political and economic change. Western advisers proffered plans that promised a quick transition to capitalist economies. Conventional wisdom held that since socialist economic systems had been artificially imposed, they could be easily dismantled, allowing free market capitalism to flourish. The wrenching economic and social dislocations that followed belied western economists' glib predictions. These experts had failed to grasp the degree to which socialist economies were intertwined with existing institutions, practices, and social structures. In her new book, Martha Lampland examines the previous transition—the one from capitalism to socialism in Hungary after World War II—to illustrate the complexities of labor valuation under the socialist economic order. Her findings shed light not only on the character of Hungary's socialist economy, but on the reasons it was not so easily disassembled.

Lampland wisely begins her study in the interwar period, where she finds important antecedents to the communist regime's approach to labor and wages. Already in the 1930s, the state role in the Hungarian economy was substantial. And contrary to many existing accounts, which depict the Hungarian Communist Party as importing wholesale the Soviet economic model, Party bureaucrats based attempts at agricultural modernization and scientific wage calculation on ideas from the pre-communist period. The means they used to calculate wages on collective farms derived not from the Soviet model but instead from the ideas of Hungarian economists and work scientists of the 1920s and 1930s. Inspired by German agricultural work science, these Hungarian specialists designed ways to measure all components of the labor process independently of market forces. While they did so as committed capitalists, their ideas ultimately shaped the communist government's system of wages on Hungarian collective farms.

Lampland goes on to show how these non-Party specialists played such an important role in formulating wage policy under the communist regime. As Party