

**Člověk a stroj v české kultuře 19. století.** Edited by TAŘÁNA PETRASOVÁ and PAVLA MACHALÍKOVÁ. English summaries by KATEŘINA MILLEROVÁ. Pp. 342. Prague: Academia. 2013. CZK 385. Paperback. ISBN: 9788020022325.

This volume, whose title can be translated as 'Man and Machine in Czech [or Bohemian] Culture in the Nineteenth Century', presents the conference proceedings of the Thirty-Second Annual Symposium of Nineteenth-Century Studies, which was held in Pilsen in February 2012. A visually attractive book, it includes not only many black-and-white and colour illustrations, but also an attached reproduction of an 1804 panorama of Prague by the graphic artist Karel Postl. It assembles twenty-nine brief studies that predominantly deal with specific machines or personalities, each followed by a short English summary. The topics covered include photography, panoramas, the railway, canals, automobiles, organs, typewriters, cinema, phonographs, cannons, printing presses, and others. Considering this breadth of contributions, an overarching synthesis is sorely lacking. While Jan Hozák's introductory essay is a helpful historical overview of industrialization in the Bohemian Lands, it appears to have originally served as an introduction to the conference as such and does not place the contributions in a larger context.

None the less, some of the contributions present fascinating detail of the role of technology in nineteenth-century Bohemia and Moravia. Milan Hlavačka's study of the railway, which he calls the 'super-machine of the nineteenth century' (p. 117), stands out. Drawing primarily on the conceptual framework developed by Wolfgang Schivelbusch in *The Railway Journey*, Hlavačka is to my knowledge the first scholar to chart the establishment of railway time in the Habsburg Empire. He describes how, in 1840, the increasing railway traffic on the *Kaiser Ferdinands-Nordbahn* between Vienna and Brno made it necessary to introduce exact railway timetables to prevent accidents on the single-track line. All station clocks were hence set according to a clock carried by the first morning train from Vienna, which gradually led to the disappearance of local time differences. Of course, machines by no means always elicited an unequivocal reaction of the kind suggested by the triumph of the railways (which, in any case, was never quite as unequivocal as it seems today). Hozák writes that 'on the one hand, the future seemed a straight line to universal prosperity and wealth, on the other hand machines were perceived as intruders into the natural world, disturbers of peace, and unwelcome accelerators of the pace of life' (p. 20). A more ambivalent approach to technology is suggested by the uprising of Prague printers in June 1844 against the introduction of machines, mentioned by Hozák and memorably depicted in Jiří Weil's 1958 novel *Harfeník*. However, the sociological dimension of industrialization foregrounded by Hlavačka and Hozák remains marginal in most other contributions, whose brevity often restricts them to factual accounts of specific technical innovations. Even for a topic with as far-reaching consequences as the Škoda armaments production, Vladimír Krátký deals mostly with cannon calibres and firepower and devotes little attention to their wartime utilization. At least an indication of their destructive power is given by a Czech soldier's acerbic comment about a Škoda-produced howitzer in the First World War, which Krátký quotes: 'An infernal machine for murdering people *en masse*. Hats off! That's what we're champions in' (p. 143).

The note also draws attention to something else: who is this 'we'? Is the volume about ethnic Czechs or geographically defined Bohemians? As it happens, this question is never resolved and the contributors allot only a marginal role to the Czech-German national conflict, the dominant political discussion in nineteenth-century Bohemia. The neglect of nationalism is unfortunate considering most contributions deal with the transnational spread of technological knowledge, which often had a direct bearing on national discourses within the Bohemian Lands. Kateřina Svatoňová's discussion of the Bohemian Jubilee Exhibition of 1891 and the much more ethnically nationalist 'Czecho-Slav' Exhibition of 1895 is one of the few contributions that pays close attention to the national tensions that preceded and characterized these events. She persuasively attributes the success of the 1895 fair to the fact that 'it presented the ideal vision of an independent Czech nation that had rid itself of German domination, or more precisely, German exhibitors' (p. 282). However, it becomes clear when reading the other contributions that the large world fairs of the nineteenth century were, at the same time, the primary sites of a transnational knowledge transfer, marking the beginning of a globalized 'knowledge economy'.

In general, the accomplishment of *Člověk a stroj* lies in its contribution to the knowledge of individual machines and the propagators of industrialization in the Bohemian Lands. However, the flipside of this impressive attention to detail is a lack of context and synthesis.

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