George Orwell and the Spanish Civil War: Notes from the Barcelona Archives

by Jonathan Sherry, PhD Candidate
Department of History, University of Pittsburgh

Over 75 years ago, George Orwell arrived in Barcelona and began writing what would become Homage to Catalonia, his memoir about the Spanish Civil War. He observed: “It was the first time I had ever been in a town where the working class was in the saddle. Practically every building of any size had been seized by the workers and was draped with red flags or the red and black flag of the Anarchists; every wall was scrawled with the hammer and sickle and with the initials of the revolutionary parties.” Today, the Spanish are in the streets clamoring for an end to imposed austerity and a 56.1% youth unemployment rate, as well as for a systemic change in politics. Although the demands and conditions are different, the symbolism and historical imagination of current protestors harken back to Spain’s lost revolution of 1936-1937. Its historical legacy is hotly debated at demonstrations in Barcelona at Plaça Cataluña, and the flag of the 1930s Spanish Republic flies alongside those of the revolutionary parties of Civil War Spain that Orwell described in his book. Today’s protestors range from students to seniors, and many of them look to the past in search of lessons for the future.

With the generous support of a EUCE/ESC summer pre-dissertation fellowship, I conducted archival research in original sources from the Civil War period, participated in grassroots movements in Barcelona, and discussed Spanish...
A Visit from the EU Ambassador to the US

On March 6, European Union Ambassador to the United States João Vale de Almeida visited the EUCE/ESC at the University of Pittsburgh. His Excellency was introduced to everyone involved with the Center and shown a presentation detailing each person’s roles. Pictured above (from left to right): Jennifer Creamer, Associate Director of UCIS, Zachary Riddle, EUCE/ESC Technology GSA, Sarah Cormack Patton, Political Science PhD candidate, Eleni Vallient, EUCE/ESC Administrative Assistant, Lauren Perez, Political Science PhD candidate, Allyson Delnore, EUCE/ESC Associate Director, Andrea Aldrich, Political Science PhD candidate, Ron Linden, EUCE/ESC Director, Kate Bowersox, EUCE/ESC Assistant Director for External Affairs, Ambassador João Vale de Almeida, Rebecca Young, EUCE/ESC Pittsburgh Papers GSA, Stephen Lund, EUCE/ESC Assistant Director, Political Science undergraduates Harry Clapiss, Peter Gallagher, Jane Buchholz, and Kaitlyn Douglass, and Randall Halle, Klaus W. Jonas Professor of German Film and Cultural Studies at Pitt.

Conversations on Europe

On Feb. 18, the EUCE/ESC continued its monthly virtual roundtable series, Conversations on Europe, with a videoconference devoted to, “Spy Games: Technology and Trust in the Transatlantic Relationship.” Panelists included Ami Pedahzur, Professor of Government at the University of Texas-Austin, Annegret Bendiek, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Anthony Glees, Professor of Politics and Director of the Centre for Security and Intelligence Studies at the University of Buckingham, Pia Bürgarten, Friedrich Ebert Foundation Representative to the U.S. and Canada, and David Harris, from the School of Law at the University of Pittsburgh. The Conversation was moderated by Ron Linden, Director of the EUCE/ESC.
A Trip to the Renaissance Society of America Conference
by Saskia Beranek, History of Art & Architecture
University of Pittsburgh

Last April, I presented part of my dissertation at the annual Renaissance Society of America (RSA) conference in San Diego. My trip was funded by a small grant from the EUCE/ESC. If I had to pick a favorite scholarly conference, the RSA would win. The conference is interdisciplinary, drawing together visual arts, music, history, politics, literature, philosophy, and science. I have attended several times, and it consistently inspires me because of this intersection of disciplines, but also because of the collegiality and collaboration demonstrated by those in attendance. As an art historian who is concerned about where politics, identity, and gender meet, a scholarly environment that reaches beyond disciplinary boundaries pushes my thinking in new directions.

My dissertation, defended last spring, focused on how portraits were displayed in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century. I am interested less in the intrinsic, formal qualities of the image and more in issues extrinsic to it: the social and political work the image can do. How did portraits function? Did patrons commission different types of portraits for display in different parts of their houses, intended for different audiences? How does the space in which we encounter an art object such as a portrait shape our experience of it?

My research has focused on one particular site commissioned by Amalia van Solms called Huis ten Bosch. Initially intended as a small summer palace, the site became a monument to her husband and continues to this day to be the residence of the Dutch monarchy. Though the paintings that decorate the building have been the focus of scholarship for many years, the ways in which they correspond to their setting have attracted less interest. In a paper entitled “Oranje Triumphans: The Fireplace as Locus of Design,” I discussed specific elements of architecture that were not only functional, but also symbolic. I explored how a viewer, moving through the building, would see these paintings within certain architectural frameworks. The setting, the framing, and the decorative stucco work in the building shaped the impact of the images in subtle but significant ways. This research has formed the basis of an ongoing project about space, image, and experience that will form the core of my first book.

The RSA conference was a particularly beneficial venue for me precisely because of the inter-disciplinarity of my own work. Over the last several years, a growing cohort of specialists has been organizing conference panels at RSA, which deal explicitly with issues of the domestic interior. These panels enrich traditional art historical approaches with further examinations of space, movement, etiquette, and identity. To be able to both present my research within this sub-community and to meet other scholars working on related issues was inspiring. As a direct result of my involvement with the panel last year, this year I have organized and am chairing a follow-up panel on Performative Identity in the Domestic Interior for the RSA meeting in New York. The support of EUCE/ESC enabled me to not only further my own research, but also to engage with and contribute to the scholarly community more broadly, and for that I am grateful.
**Upcoming Grant and Fellowship Deadlines**

**EUCE/ESC Travel Grants for Graduate Students**
The EUCE/ESC has funds available to graduate students to help defray costs involved in traveling to and participating in regional, national, or international scholarly conferences. In order to be eligible, graduate students must 1) be presenting a paper (not acting as discussant or chair) and be on the program of the conference; 2) Be presenting a paper that has some aspect of European life, historical or contemporary, domestic or international, or European integration as its main focus. (Topics in the humanities as well as in the social sciences and those dealing with the countries of Europe and/or the European Union are eligible. For contemporary East European countries, topics must deal with links to or impact of the European Union.) Find other requirements and application procedures at www.ucis.pitt.edu/euce. **No Deadline.**

**International Faculty Development Seminars - Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE)**
Offered in a wide variety of locations, at a range of different times, and encompassing a diverse group of topics, these development seminars are aimed at enriching and internationalizing faculty and administrative experiences. For more information, visit www.ciee.org. **Deadline varies.**

**Study Abroad Scholarships**
Committed to education through cultural exchange, the University of Pittsburgh is dedicated to helping students fund their international education. The Study Abroad Office maintains a list of scholarships for undergraduate and graduate students who plan to study abroad. Information detailing requirements can be found on Pitt’s Study Abroad Website. **Deadline varies.**

Continued from Page 1

politics, past and present, with protestors. Interestingly, Orwell’s name always seemed to sprout up in conversations and debates as a reference. Bookstores are packed with copies of *Homage to Catalonia*, as well as Orwell’s collected letters and articles on Spain, and biographies of the English writer. One is hard-pressed to find a piece published on Spain’s civil war that does not mention Orwell’s experience in revolutionary Barcelona, or to its ‘Stalinist’ suppression in 1937-1938. Barcelona offers ‘George Orwell tours’ for foreigners passing through, and one could easily get lost on the narrow, winding, cobblestone streets of the Gothic Quarter and end up in Plaça George Orwell, a quiet plaza dedicated in his honor.

Why does Orwell’s work function as an introduction to the Spanish Civil War? In my dissertation, I hypothesize that the answer lies, in part, in the Cold War context in which Orwell’s work became famous and on account of its anti-Soviet subtext. The closed archives and rigid official narratives of General Francisco Franco’s post-civil war dictatorship left the history of the Spanish Civil War to be written by exiles and foreigners, many of whom worked with Orwell in the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM) in Barcelona. The *poumista* Julián Gorokin and others published accounts in exile with covert financial support from the CIA, channeled through the Congress of Cultural Freedom, an anti-communist advocacy group founded in 1950. These anti-Soviet *poumista* narratives complemented Orwell’s work and went on to inform a generation of western historians in need of primary sources and first-hand accounts. This often took

Continued on Page 6
EUCe/eSC Spotlight:
Sally Stadelman

This month, EUCe/ESC newsletter editor Gavin Jenkins interviewed alumnus Sally Stadelman, who graduated in December, 2012, with a political science degree, a Spanish minor, and a European Union certificate. Stadelman works for Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto as an assistant to the executive team, and she also helps with constituent services. While at Pitt, Stadelman was awarded the Mark Nordenberg Internship Abroad Scholarship to assist with a European Parliament internship. She also studied at Germany’s Freiburg University as part of the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES). She is from Washington, PA.

Q: How did you end up working for Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto?

A: I first came to know Mayor Peduto through an internship in his City Council office. This internship was part of a class I was taking through the Institute of Politics, which is a program at Pitt that teaches students how Pennsylvania’s state and local government works while pairing them with a local elected official for a semester-long internship. It just so happened that I was lucky enough to end up in the office of an elected official who was planning on running for mayor. When I graduated early at the end of that semester, they were impressed enough with my work in the council office that I was asked to join his campaign for mayor as the volunteer coordinator.

Q: What are your job responsibilities for the mayor?

A: Right now I am in constituent affairs and assist in scheduling for our executive team. Constituent affairs means I am the first person constituents talk to when they call the Mayor’s office. It is my job to be up to date on what’s going on in the city and have a working knowledge of the city departments so when constituents call I can answer their questions to the best of my knowledge or know who to connect them with in order to solve a problem they might be having. I also greet everyone who comes into the office and manage our meeting spaces. On busy days, I’ve had as many as 20 people in the lobby waiting for various meetings in the Mayor’s office, and I have to make sure everyone ends up where they need to be. In addition, I assist with the scheduling for Valerie Mcdonald Roberts, Chief Urban Affairs Officer, Dr. Curtiss Porter, Chief Education and Neighborhood Re-Investment Officer, Guy Costa, Chief Administration Officer, Debbie Lestitian, Chief Administration Officer, and Debra Lam, Chief Innovation and Performance Officer.

My favorite part about my job is that I have a front row seat of all of the new and exciting changes happening in city government, from the Land Bank Legislation, to Open Data, to community outreach and economic development. I am learning so much from such an incredibly talented and innovative group of people.

Continued on Page 6

NOTE TO EUCe/ESC ALUMNI:

Please keep in touch! We would love to hear about and celebrate your accomplishments. Send news of awards offered, grants received, books recently published, job appointments accepted, etc., to the Newsletter Editor at eucnews@pitt.edu.


**Q:** How did your internship with the European Parliament prepare you for this position?

**A:** My internship with the European Parliament gave me my first inside look at how government truly operates. The most important person in a government office is not necessarily the elected official but the staff that he surrounds himself with. The mayor or MEP has the vision, and his staff makes that vision a reality. My internship gave me my first exposure to working in a professional environment, and most importantly taught me how to network. I also think that working in a political office is especially unique because your office has to work as a team to manage the many moving parts of a government, and I learned how to operate in that environment at the European Parliament.

**Q:** What are the similarities between the European Parliament and the Mayor’s office?

**A:** Strong Female Role Models – I was lucky enough at the European Parliament to work under an extremely talented and driven woman who worked tirelessly to champion the causes she was passionate about. I see the same kind of strong female leadership in Mayor Peduto’s office and it’s truly inspiring. I get to work for women who are experts in their fields, run departments, and form a major part of the driving force that is bringing Pittsburgh into the 21st century. Having such strong role models inspires me to work hard and strive to succeed in my field.

The biggest difference between working in a local government and intergovernmental, international government is types of issues you address. In the European Parliament, we were writing letters and press releases condemning the political coup d’état that was happening in Paraguay at the time. The average issue I face at the city each day involves helping people figure out where to file their taxes, get a street dumpster permit, or have a vacant car towed off of their street. Although the issues I face at the city don’t sound as glamorous, they can be much more rewarding because filling a pothole has a faster turn around time than ending human rights abuse in Russia. In both cases, the work is very rewarding because you are helping to improve the quality of life for your fellow human beings, whether they be your next-door neighbor or they live half way around the world.
its revolutionary activity, its opposition to the formation of a regular Spanish Republican army, its criticism of the Spanish Republic’s de facto alliance with the Soviet Union, and its loud opposition to ‘Stalinism’ and the Moscow Show Trials taking place in the Soviet Union. Spanish police arrested the POUM leadership, outlawed the party organizations, virtually silenced its press organs, and put the leadership on trial in what was regarded by many as a ‘Moscow Trial in Barcelona’. In the process, the Soviet ‘secret police’ (NKVD) captured and assassinated the POUM’s head theoretician, Andreu Nin, former associate of Leon Trotsky. Orwell was witness to much of the political repression against the POUM, and this experience influenced his life profoundly. In fact, it was the primary inspiration for writing about Spain. In *Why I Write*, he stated about his time with the POUM: “Innocent men were being falsely accused. If I had not been angry about that, I should never have written [*Homage to Catalonia*].”

Orwell and his *poumista* comrades interpreted the war as the story of the Spanish Revolution and its repression by Soviet operatives. *The poumista* story of the Civil War is the quintessential tragedy, a victim narrative in which revolution is ‘betrayed’ by Stalinist agents carrying out a witch-hunt for Trotskyists and other political enemies, the POUM included. It is also a story of Soviet political violence and ‘Orwellian’ totalitarianism. Orwell’s conception of totalitarianism can be traced to his time in Spain. *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-four* are standard reading for today’s youth, and the two books together sold more copies than any other pair by a single author in the twentieth century. *With Homage to Catalonia*, the three works form part of a half-century-long response to totalitarianism, which also included academic work and cultural production.

However, I have found this interpretive paradigm inadequate for understanding the complex historical developments at work in those fateful years, though it is useful for explaining certain *poumista* understandings. The approach reduces the history of Civil War Spain to a function of Stalin’s orders, and in doing so neglects the interaction and agency of actors and political organizations, both Spanish and international. By the end of the twentieth century, this sort of approach was modified, and in some cases refuted, by historians of the Soviet Union and the Cold War, who were operating in a post-Cold War world in which access to archives forced a reconceptualization of old arguments. However, despite the seemingly obvious impact of the Spanish Civil War on the totalitarian concept, at least in its Orwellian formulation, contemporary work on the Spanish conflict continues to operate within this framework, with some recent exceptions.

My work builds on these exceptions, on this new body of scholarship on the Spanish Civil War that subjects the totalitarian framework to critical scrutiny. I trace Cold War-era scholarship through the twentieth century and through careful archival research and contextualization, offer a historiographical critique of prevailing conceptions of the Soviet role in the Spanish Civil War. I focus on the (self-declared) intellectual source of Orwell’s emerging totalitarian critique: the repression of the POUM by ‘Stalinism’ in 1937 and its ‘show trial’ in October 1938, the aforementioned ‘Moscow Trial in Barcelona’. I was fortunate enough to obtain access to the long paper trail generated by the POUM repression, prosecution, and trial. These materials include documents collected during investigations into the POUM leadership’s activities and the assassination of Andreu Nin, internal government correspondence, and the stenographic transcripts of the trial and other internal documents in the Special Tribunal for Espionage and High Treason. I also have had the time and resources to collect newspapers, telegrams, and various partisan materials from Spanish archives that provide a detailed picture of how participants of various political colors understood the POUM affair and imagined the Soviet Union’s presence in Spain through it.

In my dissertation, I hope to provide an exhaustive treatment of the available materials on the prosecution and fully understand the power struggle between Spanish and Soviet officials within the Espionage Tribunal and, ultimately, within the Spanish Republican government. Moreover, by tracing partisan discourse on the POUM repression and prosecution, I will provide a historical basis for understanding the origins and development of Cold War-era narratives of Soviet totalitarianism in Spain. Finally, studying the *poumistas* is an important step towards understanding how Orwell experienced the Spanish Revolution and Civil War and dedicated his life to attacking totalitarianism. As Orwell famously wrote, in *Why I Write*, “Thereafter, I knew where I stood… Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism.” The impact of his work is indisputable and still informs politics the world over.
Lecture Series a Success

by Emily Zazulia, Interim Director
Medieval & Renaissance Studies Program

The EUCE/ESC generously helped bring two speakers to the University of Pittsburgh as part of the Medieval and Renaissance Studies lecture series last fall. Both speakers also visited seminars related to their area of expertise.

The series kicked off with Julie Crawford, Associate Professor of English at Columbia University, who traced the history of feminist and gay and lesbian criticism of Shakespeare over the last three decades in a lecture entitled, “Shakespeare. Same Sex. Marriage.” Crawford argued that homosexuality is not the antithesis of marriage, and that the family of Shakespeare’s day was far less patriarchal and “nuclear” than we may assume. She proposed that the persistence of an overly conservative view of familial structures in Shakespeare has caused unnecessary antagonism between feminist and gay and lesbian criticism. In prominent writings from the 1980s, particularly those of Lawrence Stone, freedom and marriage were seen as antithetical—a married man relinquished his strong male friendships, and a woman married and “dwindled into a wife.” Marriage did not necessarily spell the end of either women’s independence or same-sex relationships; indeed it could even act as a conduit for their persistence.

In October, we welcomed Andrea Frisch, Associate Professor of French at the University of Maryland at College Park. Professor Frisch delivered a lecture entitled “Moving History: Affect and National Memory in Late Renaissance France,” which considered the moral role of historical writing in the late sixteenth century. Frisch identified two major trends in historical writing at the time: one that calls on the rhetoric of tragedy in order to imbue the account with a moral message for the present day, and another (found in royal histories of the period) operating under a politics of amnesia that sought to deny past events. The affective mode of historical writing sought to drum up feelings of patriotism rather than moving readers to political action. The discussion following her lecture considered historiography more generally and ways of understanding the different roles that historical writing can and has assumed. Thank you to the EUCE/ESC for helping to make these events possible.

University of Pittsburgh
University Center for International Studies
European Union Center of Excellence
European Studies Center
4200 Posvar Hall
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
Phone: 412-648-7405
Fax: 412-648-2199
E-mail: euce@pitt.edu
www.ucis.pitt.edu/euce/euce.html