

New Perspectives

Interdisciplinary Journal of Central & East European Politics and International Relations

Vol. 24, No. 2/2016

ÚSTAV
MEZINÁRODNÍCH VZTAHŮ
PRAHA  INSTITUTE
OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
PRAGUE

Contents

Editorial

- To Be “More Alert and Less Deceived.” 7
“To Marvel At All There Is to Be Marvelled At.”
Benjamin Tallis

Tribute

- Visuality and Creativity in Global Politics: In Memory of Alex Danchev 13
Roland Bleiker

Research Articles

- Detering Things With Words: Deterrence as a Speech Act 23
Juha A. Vuori
- ‘Like Us’ or ‘One of Us’: Tensions between Liberal and Communitarian Values in EU-Ukraine Relations 51
Molly Krasnodębska

Review Essay

- Great Arches Viewed from the Coasts of Bohemia: Reflections Inspired by Tables of Kings 73
Derek Sayer

Cultural Cut

- The Combinations: An Excerpt* 91
Louis Armand

- Notes on Contributors 113

Visuality and Creativity in Global Politics: In Memory of Alex Danchev

ROLAND BLEIKER

University of Queensland

I

I have never had a harder time beginning a text. I mould and remould my words, I mix and remix them, I discard them and search for new ones, again and again, but no matter what I do, it all sounds wrong.

Alex Danchev is dead.

Where to start? With lamenting that his death, in August 2016, was unexpected and untimely and impossible to understand and accept? With noting that he will be dearly missed – by his family, by his friends, by his colleagues; by his students, by his readers, by me? Or with highlighting the key moments of his career, from his education and his time in the army to his professorships at the universities of Keele, Nottingham and, most recently, St Andrews? This is not my task. Numerous obituaries have already done so in detail.¹

I would, instead, like to offer a personal appreciation of Alex as a person and as an international relations academic. He was one of the most generous, genuine and creative scholars I have ever met – a true role model in every sense of the word.

I want to reflect on what we can learn from the legacy that Alex leaves behind. I am fully aware that my reflections are partial. There were many Alexes. We all have multiple identities. The Alex I knew was the one of the past decade, a time during which we collaborated on research projects, co-presented at conference panels, commented on each other's article and book drafts, and made – now thwarted – plans for reciprocal visits to and collaborative links between the Universities of St Andrews and Queensland.

When I think of Alex and his legacy I think of at least four key contributions from which we can learn for years to come: his life as a generous and genuine scholar; his pursuit of innovative interdisciplinary work; the importance he placed on an experimental but accessible writing style; and his contribution to bringing visuality and creativity to the study of politics and international relations. I reflect briefly on each of these realms, hoping that they would inspire and guide others to follow in Alex's scholarly footsteps.

II

Soon after receiving news of Alex's passing I posted a short notice in his honour on social media. Responses came immediately and in great number, and the phrase

that kept coming back was “gentleman and scholar.” This is who he was. This is why he was admired and appreciated.

Although Alex took on administrative roles at times, for instance as Head of Department and Dean at Keele University, he always remained a scholar-teacher both in heart and in practice. He resisted the temptation of rising up the ranks of neo-liberal university management, which these days is associated with more prestige and money than the life of a ‘normal’ academic. Alex followed his passions, and his passions lay in creative research and writing and in exploring ever new ways of understanding the political. Neither was Alex the type of professor who would raise funds and then employ and direct an army of research assistants to gather the ‘data’ for him. Alex got his hands dirty. He did the nitty-gritty work himself. He did it in archives, in libraries, in museums, and he did it wherever his research took him. I met up with Alex and his wife Dee during several trips they made to Zürich, where he conducted archival work in museums for his biographies of Braque, Cézanne and, most recently, Magritte. These biographies are not just fascinating and insightful reads, but also monumental volumes – each spanning over 500 pages – of meticulously conducted research and documentation.² There is no short-cut to writing these types of books. They require dedication, persistence, passion. They are the hallmark of a committed scholar.

Alex was not just a genuine intellectual; he also was a generous one. Even though he was on a busy research and teaching schedule, he always had time to interact with others and to comment on their work. His comments were the comments of a scholar who cared about scholarship and the people conducting it. He was both respectful and merciless. He engaged with all aspects of a text – content as well as style – and he would be as critical and as meticulous in this as with his own work. Here, just as a random sample, is a comment I received from Alex recently on a co-authored essay about indigenous art and cultural diplomacy.³ He was, in this instance, taking issue with how we traced the political nature of art to its ‘ambivalent’ nature:

Forgive another word on ‘ambivalent’, which has been nagging at me. On further reflection, I think part of the reason it doesn’t work, for me, is that it is as if in the wrong voice, grammatically speaking. To say that works of art are ambivalent is to suggest that they have a point of view, or at any rate an attitude: that they are ambivalent about something (which also begs the question: what are they ambivalent about?). In other words, it suggests something active – inappropriately, in this instance, I believe. What I think is required in the context of your argument is something passive, grammatically, such as ‘ambiguous’. To say that works of art are ambiguous, for example, is

to suggest that they have that characteristic or property, for us – the onus being on us.

Our essay ended up being much better and stronger thanks to Alex. Or so I hope. And I know that many others too profited from Alex's intellect and generosity. A gentleman and scholar indeed.

III

I remember how decades ago, my supervisor at the University of British Columbia, Kal Holsti, told us how the formidable Susan Strange juxtaposed scholars who work like farmers and those who work like rangers. The former dutifully plough their well-defined fields and do not dare to move beyond them. Rangers, Strange is said to have said, are those who branch out and venture beyond delineated fields into the dangerous but rewarding unknown.

Alex was neither a farmer nor a ranger: he was an astronaut. He went further than anyone else. He completely disregarded – and in doing so, dismantled – disciplinary boundaries. He was traditional but had no time for narrow intellectual traditions. He defied all expectations of what an international relations professor is meant to be and do.

Alex wrote extensively on the Anglo-American alliance. He wrote biographies of military figures and moral philosophers, such as Oliver Franks and Basil Liddell Hart. He wrote on a range of international relations topics, from war to terrorism and foreign policy. And then, at some point, he started to branch out into other realms, most notably by exploring links between art and politics. He wrote two fascinating books on that topic.⁴ But he went much further than that. He started to write biographies of artists – first a short one on Picasso and then two massive and very well received and widely discussed volumes on Braque and Cézanne.⁵

The very idea that an international relations professor would write artist biographies is heretic. But that he has become very successful and highly respected in both of these fields is truly remarkable. Add to this that he regularly wrote commentaries on a wide range of topics for more popular outlets, most notably, but not only, for the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, where he had been a regular commentator for over two decades. In an obituary, Matthew Reisz called him a “polymath who was happy to stray well beyond the expected boundaries of his day job.”⁶ And so he did. Alex wrote on an incredibly wide range of topics, from politics to art and society. In a piece about the jazz musician Charles Lloyd's innovative late period, Alex found the very model for his own compulsion to branch out and explore ever new worlds: “The elders mix freely, regardless of tribe. Lloyd plays tenor and alto saxophone, bass and alto

flutes, and a modern ecstatic tarogato, a Hungarian folk instrument.”⁷ And so did Alex.

IV

An issue that was very close to Alex’s heart – and an issue I passionately share with him – is the one of writing style. Alex hated academic jargon. He did not write of norm entrepreneurs, of biopolitics, of ontologies, of empty signifiers or of dependent and independent variables. Alex wrote straight from the heart, in clear and compelling sentences. His language was music: it was infused with rhythm and sound, and it encapsulated his passion for art and the political. The editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, Ann Mroz, called him “the best writer I ever commissioned; I suspect he always will be.”⁸

The only way to appreciate Alex’s appreciation for language and his ability to mould words and ideas is to read him. His biography of Cézanne is a recent and good example. Go and read it. But for now, just a short illustration, taken from a passage in which Alex discusses George Braque’s *The Guitar Player*, painted in 1914:

An entire tradition of visual representation was overthrown, as if a hand grenade had been tossed into the placid world of the reclining nude, the wedding feast and the woman reading a letter. Everything was shattered, discomposed, only to be remade anew, askew, back-to-front, inside-out, all around. Space itself was reconceived and reconstructed. Instead of receding tidily into the background, as prescribed by traditional perspective, the forms in Cubist paintings advance towards the spectator. Landscapes become landslips. Still life pushed forward, begging to be touched, or sampled, or played. We see into things, round things, through things, without prejudice; we see the component part of things; we see things become things.⁹

Alex’s passion for scholarship and writing went so far that it became his second nature. Or, rather, it became his true nature. A conference presentation would be like a musical performance. I still remember a panel we were on together at the University of Glasgow. Alex talked about Paul Klee’s painting *Angelus Novus* and it was as if he was singing his presentation. I got the same feeling when in conversations with him: language would lift us up and drift us to places new and unexpected. Even simple e-mail messages were a delight. His sentences were always carefully crafted, no matter what he said or how annoyed he might have been about what preoccupied him. Here is a sample, taken from the last e-mail I received from him, a couple of weeks before his death:

Brexit is a calamity. The whole process was – is – a disgrace. And then the almost farcical proceedings that continue to unfold – the abdication of responsibility, the hypocrisy, the utter shambles. I was in Brussels recently (on the trail of Magritte). I got the impression that people thought we had taken leave of our senses. And who can blame them?

V

There is not enough space here to engage the substance of Alex's work. But I would like to flag one key issue: his passion for and contribution to visuality and creativity in the study of global politics.

Alex was never one to play it safe. He took risks in his research by crossing taboo disciplinary boundaries. He ignored academic conventions and wrote about what mattered to him – and to many others – in real life.

Creativity was at the heart of what Alex did, and he combined it with visuality. He pioneered the study of art and politics. He did so because he had a deep conviction that, as he once put it, “contrary to popular belief, it is given to artists, not politicians, to create a new world order.”¹⁰ He was convinced that works of art – as works of the imagination – can help us address some of the most pressing political themes of our times. And he convincingly showed us so, covering topics that ranged from terrorism and torture to memory and identity, and through aesthetic fields as diverse as photography, painting, film, novels and poetry. Alex forced us to see the world anew, to notice things that were not there before, to challenge assumptions that we had taken for granted. There were no limits to his curiosity. In his own words, he wanted to “put the imagination to work in the service of historical, political and ethical inquiry.”¹¹ Photography – just to pick one of the many aesthetic and visual realms he engaged – was for Alex an “instrument of the imagination.” War photography, which was traditionally shot in black-and-white, was for Alex the new war poetry: “Men-at-arms are shot and shot again, shot in black-and-white. [...] The dead and the wounded bleed black blood; the young bleed into the old.”¹²

In view of Alex's passion to combine words and images and the imagination, I offer two Magritte-like photographs here. I took them on the train home after a conference in Bordeaux a couple of years ago. Alex and I were presenting together on panels about “Art and Politics.” The photographs depict the very same village, just outside of Champagne. There is only one difference: an alteration in shutter-speed and aperture. It is the kind of subversive and playful visual exploration Alex would have liked. Or so I hope, for I would like the photographs to remind us that we always frame the world in particular ways and, in doing so, reveal as much about us and our choices as about the actual world out there.



I hope to organize a symposium on visuality and creativity in honour of Alex at the University of Queensland sometime in the next two years. In the spirit of Alex I will do it carefully and deliberately, with a focus on creativity and quality, and not speed. I already feel the words Alex inscribed into my copy of his Braque biography a decade ago: “Souvenirs d’anticipation,’ as Braque once said to Picasso.”

VI

I can’t say for sure, of course, but my sense is that all these issues were in Alex’s mind when he died. I know he was working hard to complete his third artist biography, another massive volume, this time on Magritte. I know he was close to finishing a draft, and his wife Dee says that there is hope that the book will come out posthumously.

He was also preoccupied with exploring how artists serve as moral witnesses of our time – or of times past.¹³ He did so at the last panel we were on together, in Glasgow. And he died just a few days before he was meant to speak on this topic at the Edinburgh Book Festival.

Alex. We miss you. But you will live on through your work. You will continue to pose difficult questions to us, and you will give us the courage to take risks and be creative. You will be our witness on this journey.

We will leave the last word for you. This passage is from the chapter on “Witnessing” that you recently wrote for my book on *Visual Global Politics*. The book features over fifty chapters. Your chapter was one of the very first ones that came in – you were professional and reliable as always – and it was picture-perfect: no word needed shifting or moulding. The book will be dedicated to you, Alex. You wanted witnessing to be a process that makes us see the world anew, that “rubs it red raw.”¹⁴ You always tried to resist all forms of finalities and the sense of complacency that comes with them.¹⁵ You always wanted to pose new questions – questions that would help us re-think, re-view and re-feel the world around us. You were a moral witness of your time. May your writings live on and may they continue to rub us red raw:

The witness spares nothing and nobody, not even the witness. That is the idea – to prick the conscience, to lodge in the memory, or stick in the throat. In this sense, the witness is more akin to an agitator than a bystander, but also more purposive, more principled, more pure. If the bystander is a deeply compromised figure, the witness is a profoundly elevated one. Put differently, the witness is an historical agent with a moral purpose and a militant faith.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Elizabeth Crowling (2016), "Alex Danchev Obituary," *The Guardian*, 12/09/2016. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/sep/11/alex-danchev-biography?CMP=share_btn_fbl; Matthew Reisz (2016), "In Praise of Alex Danchev," *Times Higher Education*, 13/08/2016. Available at <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/praise-alex-danchev-1955-2016>; Anne Keleny (2016), "Obituary: Alex Danchev, Historian, Teacher and Author," *The Scotsman*, 16/08/2016. Available at <http://www.scotsman.com/news/obituaries/obituary-alex-danchev-historian-teacher-and-author-1-4204788>; Garry Taylor (2016), "Sudden Death of a Cultural Polymath," University of St Andrews, 11/08/2016. Available at <http://slippedisc.com/2016/08/sudden-death-of-a-cultural-polymath-60/>.
- ² See the following: Alex Danchev (2005), *Georges Braque: A Life*; Alex Danchev (2012), *Cézanne: A Life*. The Magritte biography is hopefully forthcoming and set to be published posthumously.
- ³ See Roland Bleiker and Sally Butler (2016), "Radical Dreaming: Indigenous Art and Cultural Diplomacy," *International Political Sociology*, 10(1): 56–74.
- ⁴ Alex Danchev (2009), *On Art and War and Terror*; Alex Danchev (2016), *On Good and Evil and the Grey Zone*. See also Alex Danchev and Debbie Lisle (eds.) (2009), "Forum on 'Art and War'" in *Review of International Studies*, 35(4).
- ⁵ Alex Danchev (2008), *Picasso Furioso*; Alex Danchev (2005), *Georges Braque: A Life*; Alex Danchev (2012), *Cézanne: A Life*.
- ⁶ From Reisz (2016), "In Praise of Alex Danchev."
- ⁷ Alex Danchev (2008), "Off Piste: Never out of the Groove," *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 05/06/2008. Available at <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/off-piste/off-piste-never-out-of-the-groove/402226.article>.
- ⁸ Ann Mroz, cited in Reisz (2016), "In Praise of Alex Danchev."
- ⁹ Danchev (2009), *Of Art and War and Terror*, p. 58.
- ¹⁰ Danchev (2016), *On Good and Evil and the Grey Zone*, p. 91.
- ¹¹ Danchev (2009), *On Art and War and Terror*, p. 2. See also Danchev (2016), *On Good and Evil and the Grey Zone*, p. 1. See also Alex Danchev (2014), "Anselm Kiefer at the Royal Academy," *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 02/10/2014. Available at <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/culture/anselm-kiefer-at-the-royal-academy-cataclysmic-transformational-stupendous/2016079.article>.
- ¹² Danchev (2009), *Of Art and War and Terror*, p. 33.
- ¹³ See Danchev (2016), *On Good and Evil and the Grey Zone*, p. 28.
- ¹⁴ Alex Danchev (forthcoming 2017), "Witnessing," in Roland Bleiker (forthcoming 2017), *Visual Global Politics*.
- ¹⁵ See Taylor (2016), "Sudden Death of a Cultural Polymath."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bleiker, Roland (forthcoming 2017), *Visual Global Politics*, London: Routledge.
- Bleiker, Roland and Sally Butler (2016), 'Radical Dreaming: Indigenous Art and Cultural Diplomacy', *International Political Sociology*, 10(1): 56–74.

- Crowling, Elizabeth (2016), 'Alex Danchev Obituary,' *The Guardian*, 12/09/2016. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/sep/11/alex-danchev-biography?CMP=share_btn_fbl.
- Danchev, Alex (2005), *Georges Braque: A Life*, London: Penguin Books.
- Danchev, Alex (2008a), 'Off Piste: Never out of the Groove,' *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 5/06/2008. Available at <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/off-piste/off-piste-never-out-of-the-groove/402226.article>.
- Danchev, Alex (2008b), *Picasso Furioso*, Paris: Editions Dilecata.
- Danchev, Alex (2009), *On Art and War and Terror*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Danchev, Alex (2012), *Cézanne: A Life*, London: Profile Books.
- Danchev, Alex (2014), 'Anselm Kiefer at the Royal Academy,' *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 02/10/2014. Available at <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/culture/anselm-kiefer-at-the-royal-academy-cataclysmic-transformational-stupendous/2016079.article>.
- Danchev, Alex (2016), *On Good and Evil and the Grey Zone*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Danchev, Alex (forthcoming 2017), 'Witnessing,' in Roland Bleiker, *Visual Global Politics*, London: Routledge.
- Danchev, Alex and Debbie Lisle (2009), 'Forum on "Art and War"', *Review of International Studies*, 35(4).
- Keleny, Anne (2016), 'Obituary: Alex Danchev, Historian, Teacher and Author,' *The Scotsman*, 16/08/2016. Available at <http://www.scotsman.com/news/obituaries/obituary-alex-danchev-historian-teacher-and-author-1-4204788>.
- Reisz, Matthew (2016), 'In Praise of Alex Danchev,' *Times Higher Education*, 13/08/2016. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/praise-alex-danchev-1955-2016>.
- Taylor, Garry (2016), 'Sudden Death of a Cultural Polymath,' University of St Andrews, 11/08/2016. Available at <http://slippedisc.com/2016/08/sudden-death-of-a-cultural-polymath-60/>.

Notes on Contributors

LOUIS ARMAND is a Sydney-born writer who has lived in Prague since 1994. He is the author of eight novels, including *Breakfast at Midnight* (2012) and *The Combinations* (2016). His work has been included in the *Penguin Anthology of Australian Poetry* and *Best Australian Poems*. His critical writings include *The Organ-Grinder's Monkey: Culture After the Avant-Garde* (2013) and *Videology* (2015). He directs the Centre for Critical and Cultural Theory in the Philosophy Faculty of Charles University, where he also edits the international arts magazine *VLAK*.

Correspondence email: itteraria@gmail.com

ROLAND BLEIKER is Professor of International Relations at the University of Queensland, where he coordinates an interdisciplinary research program on Visual Politics. Recent publications include *Divided Korea: Toward a Culture of Reconciliation* (2005/2008), *Aesthetics and World Politics* (2009/2012) and, as co-editor with Emma Hutchison, a forum on "Emotions and World Politics" in *International Theory* (Vol 3/2014). Bleiker's new book *Visual Global Politics* is forthcoming in 2017.

Correspondence email: bleiker@uq.edu.au

MOLLY KRASNODEBSKA is a PhD candidate at POLIS, University of Cambridge. She has interned at the European Parliament and the Polish Embassy in Kiev. Her research interests are European integration, the transformation of the former Eastern bloc and the relationship between identity politics and security in Europe. Krasnodebska's current work concerns the role of former Soviet bloc states in the EU and NATO. Her dissertation focuses on Poland's foreign policy during its membership in the EU.

Correspondence email: Krasnode@gmail.com

DEREK SAYER is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Sociology at the University of Alberta, Canada. His most recent book is *Prague, Capital of the Twentieth Century: A Surrealist History* (2013), winner of the George L. Mosse Prize for the best work on European cultural history post-1500. Sayer's previous publications include *Coasts of Bohemia* (1998) and he is a co-founder of the multidisciplinary *Journal of Historical Sociology* (1988). Sayer is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and a senior editor of *New Perspectives*.

Correspondence email: dsayer@ualberta.ca

JUHA A. VUORI is Acting Professor of World Politics at the University of Helsinki, and Adjunct Professor of International Politics at the University of Tampere, both in Finland. His main research focus has been on the critical development of securiti-

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

zation theory through illocutionary logic and semiotics, and the application of the approach to the People's Republic of China. He is the author of *Critical Security and Chinese Politics: The Anti-Falungong Campaign* (2014) and a co-author of *A Contemporary History of the People's Republic of China* (in Finnish, 2012). He has edited a number of books and published in journals such as the *European Journal of International Relations*, *Security Dialogue*, *Surveillance & Society*, *Critical Studies on Security*, the *Asian Journal of Political Science*, *Issues & Studies*, and *Politologiske Studier*. He is a former president of the Finnish International Studies Association and a former editor-in-chief of *Kosmopolis*.

Correspondence email: juha.vuori@utu.fi