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# *Citizen Havel* and the Construction of Czech Presidentiality

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### ***Citizen Havel and the Construction of Czech Presidency***

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*Václav Havel had two eventful terms as the first democratic president of the Czech Republic. The documentary Citizen Havel is one rhetorical artifact that captures the way a new democracy and its attendant executive power is constructed consciously in real-time in a political culture where such a tradition has largely not existed. Culled from ten years of fly-on-the-wall-style footage, Citizen Havel captures the tensions between the constitutional expectations of the Czech presidency and Havel's own extraconstitutional interpretations of executive power. Ultimately, this essay argues that Citizen Havel is one influential representation of how Czech "presidentiality" during the post-communist transition was built from the inventional resources of a range of rhetorical and historical materials, such as the Czechoslovakian interwar period, the long influence of totalitarianism and the dissident culture that challenged it, the examples of "Western" presidential rhetoric, and even European monarchical traditions.*

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In Pavel Koutecký's 2008 documentary *Citizen Havel*, a fly-on-the-wall chronology of Václav Havel's two presidential terms across ten years in the Czech Republic, one climactic 1993 scene has Havel and his team nervously preparing for a major state visit from the new American president.<sup>1</sup> An aide delivers a new Czech-made saxophone for Havel to inspect before presenting it to President Bill Clinton.<sup>2</sup> Once they arrive, the Clintons silently wander through the enormous, frescoed Prague Castle, eat a ceremonial dinner with various state ministers, and watch Havel show off memorabilia from both his dissident days and his three years in Prague Castle. Havel, also accompanied by his friend, the Czech-born Madeleine Albright (newly tapped as Clinton's Ambassador to the UN), comes off as particularly eager to impress his peer with how he transformed the site of an old monarchy into a bohemian center for Czech democracy through hip architectural details and artistic flair.<sup>3</sup> Clinton goes on to lay a wreath at a nearby monument to those who lost their lives in the November 17, 1989 demonstrations, before finishing the evening at the famous Reduta Jazz Club, where Clinton rewards Havel's hospitality with a live performance using his new gift.<sup>4</sup>

The pageantry of Clinton's visit to Prague is more than just a minor anecdote of 1990s global diplomacy, or even just the crossing paths of two post-Cold War symbols.<sup>5</sup> In a compelling way, *Citizen Havel's* treatment of this episode, and indeed those of Havel's

presidency in general, speaks to a broader set of concerns about the ways we understand image politics and, perhaps, presidential rhetoric as a whole.<sup>6</sup> In their discussion, for example, of the Clinton campaign documentary, *The War Room*, Shawn Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles persuasively label the film as an exercise where the melding of front-stage and back-stage perspectives creates a highly managed rhetoric of authenticity that attempts to convince its audiences that they are getting the “real” Clinton.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in *Citizen Havel*, viewers are made to sense they are getting an honest Havel, as the filmmakers labor to edit a coherent narrative of a reluctant but moral leader who wisely navigates the presidency. In the process of bridging front and back stage perspectives of Havel, *Citizen Havel* invites important questions: how does an executive leader build a presidency in a fraught political culture and nascent democracy where such a tradition does not exist? And what materials do such leaders draw on to craft the rhetorical parameters of the presidency? Havel faced a conundrum, where a democratic presidency was essentially without precedent, as he shaped a Czech national democratic identity forged out of rupture rather than evolution.<sup>8</sup> *Citizen Havel*, as it sprawls through triumphs, mini-scandals, diplomatic scuffles, sicknesses and death over an eventful period in Czech history, provides a lens to see the fits and starts of a presidential tradition as it is built out of the fragments of a tumultuous history.

Chronicling this new era, *Citizen Havel*'s cinematic portrayal of what *Variety* called Havel's “seat-of-the-pants governance” tells us more than merely that Havel was a savvy stage manager of political aesthetics.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps more importantly, I argue that *Citizen Havel* articulates the ideological dimensions of post-communist politics and opens up the prospects of critiquing a specifically *Czech presidentiality*, built on both national and transnational materials.<sup>10</sup>

Presidentiality, according to Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles, is:

a discourse that demarcates the cultural and ideological meaning of the presidency for the general public” where “the presidency’s meaning emerges from the many different voices and divergent texts that use as a referent the office of president....A given presidentiality is thus responsive to context and collective memory, and it defines, in part, the national community by offering a vision of this vital office.<sup>11</sup>

Through the combination of both the constitutional prescriptions of the Czech presidency and the artistic portrayals of the office in, say, documentary films like *Citizen Havel*, amongst other texts, Havel’s rhetoric of presidentiality reminds us that his attempt to define his office is also an attempt to define, in large part, the Czech community.

Havel saw his presidential meaning as providing a symbolic “guarantee” of democratic reform during the nation’s challenging transition. In a small nation looking to “return to Europe” and to engage with the global community once again, the presidency served as an important symbolic platform, by which Havel adapted a host of fragments to “invent” a legacy both for his own presidency and for succeeding Czech presidents, all under the scrutinizing lens of a democratizing press and a burgeoning multiparty system.<sup>12</sup> Havel arguably drew on intentional resources of presidential decorum, image strategy, and rhetorical style from the U.S. presidency, but also from homegrown collective Czech memories of presidential politics and power throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as transnational examples of other nations emerging democratically out of communism.<sup>13</sup> As Havel wrote in his 2007 autobiography,

There weren’t many traditions in our country that could be drawn upon; we had to invent everything for ourselves. What we inherited from the communists was for the most part unusable. And so we had to apply our creativity to all kinds of things: from the state honor rolls to the ceremonies at which the decorations would be awarded...from flags,

standards, flagpoles, and dishes, to the decoration of halls and offices with sculptures and pictures.<sup>14</sup>

In the process, Havel might borrow the celebrity cachet of Clinton or the cosmopolitan Europeanism of his friend and Germany's president, Richard von Weizsacker, just as he might invoke the historic glories of Tomas Masaryk's First Republic, and even the fabled Czech monarchy.<sup>15</sup> In such appropriations, Havel had to navigate between his status as a transnational symbol for human rights and pan-European integration, and as a *national* Czech figure, activated (and limited) by specific national institutions grounded in constitutional power. As Havel's presidency wore on and his status as Velvet hero was in the rearview, public opinion continued to appreciate his role as moral spokesperson but resented his inability to change the material lives of Czechs. In fact, his presidency was constituted by such tensions. As affirmed by Havel's case, presidentiality comprises a complex and contentious amalgam of inventional resources, connected through both national and transnational contexts, and through constitutional and extraconstitutional traditions.

Following David Zarefsky's call, rhetorical scholars can and should more deeply analyze the rhetoric in "today's emerging democracies to explore similarities and differences between newer and older democracies," and build on the notion of "global public address—the discourses of commerce, diplomacy, and politics that transcend national and cultural boundaries."<sup>16</sup> I would argue that Havel remains compelling because of how his presidency was forged out of his national responsibilities to stabilize Czech democracy as well as his status as an international symbol for post-communist political culture as a whole. *Citizen Havel* reveals an entire presidential life spent reflecting on and critiquing political power, and the centrality of Havel's personality to the development of the office was especially striking after a long era of post-Stalinist communism in which personality politics were outré. As such, Havel made the

presidency itself a cultural touchstone in the Czech Republic for contestation and revision, invigorating the institution as a kind of referendum on image politics in a burgeoning democracy. Garth Pauley has written of how documentary film marks an “ideological performance” that upholds particular conventions of authenticity corresponding to “audiences’ intertextual expectations.”<sup>17</sup>

*Citizen Havel* plays out this performance by suggesting that we are getting the real Havel, as if there were a “real” Havel to find. However, through the use of the notion of presidentiality, this documentary becomes part of an ideological construction of the stability of the Czech presidency in a nascent democracy. As the film affirms a perspective of the viability of the Czech presidency that Havel authorized, both Havel’s presidency and the film itself are sharing in a constructed coherence around post-communist politics needed to create stable meaning for national and international audiences in a tumultuous era. Through his willing participation and “performance” in *Citizen Havel*, Havel is constructing his own vision of his presidency, while at the very same time, the documentary is *constructing* Havel for us. That dual role of Havel’s own constitution of his presidential role in the film and *Citizen Havel*’s overlapping but distinct presentation of Havel forms an important tension between the impact of the film itself and the legacy of the presidency that it is a part of. The film does not merely capture Havel’s presidential rhetoric, but it also constructs it simultaneously.

To make these arguments, I begin by sketching both the constitutional and extra-constitutional requirements of the Czech presidency, exploring the relationship between the constraints of the office, the momentous context of the post-communist transition, and Havel’s own consolidation of his intellectual and moral position through his presidential rhetoric. I then build on this relationship by situating *Citizen Havel* as an important component of Havel’s presidentiality in two ways: 1) through the images and vocabulary of theatre, spectacle, and

aesthetic performance; and 2) through the tensions of Havel's position as both transcendent moral conscience and professional politician. These strands show the inventional resources that Havel drew upon to create his own image of the Czech presidency as his terms in office unfolded; they also articulate more broadly the ideological conundrums facing presidents in the postcommunist era.

#### CONSTITUTIONAL AND EXTRACONSTITUTIONAL TENSIONS IN HAVEL'S PRESIDENCY

Fully encompassing the constitutional nuances of the Czech presidency is difficult, but a discussion of the office's enumerated powers can help frame the ways Havel's unique interpretation of his presidential power existed in tension with what was spelled out explicitly in the Czech constitution. By the end of December 1989, Havel found himself in the extraordinary position of being elected president by a parliament still constituted by a majority communist party, the very same faction responsible for his three imprisonments, including one stint a mere six months earlier.<sup>18</sup> Befitting the ironies of the time, the communist-era 1960 constitution was still in place, and limited Havel's powers to mostly ceremonial functions. The Czech president was to be elected by parliament for a five-year term, but was not considered the head of the executive branch—that job was for the Prime Minister, with most presidential actions requiring co-signature with the PM or other officials. The president could appoint and recall the PM and other members of government, call for new elections, and initiate legislation, although without the power to veto or return laws to the legislature. The president could only dissolve parliament under extremely limited circumstances. Where the president was designed to have more influence was as a head of state representing the nation abroad, as head of the armed forces, and conferring state honors and amnesties.<sup>19</sup>

Articles 62, 63, and 64 of the new 1993 Czech constitution actually reduced the office's powers further, with many commentators pointing out that the framers may have limited the

office with Havel specifically in mind, given the perception that he may have outstripped the office's intended influence.<sup>20</sup> For example, while the president was still considered the main representative abroad for the nation, the constitution declared the PM's government as the "highest organ of executive power," thus ensuring future conflicts over responsibilities for foreign affairs.<sup>21</sup> While Havel's office was given the power to name the PM and the cabinet, this power was merely ceremonial in that parliament could vote "no confidence," making the occupant of the presidency merely a confirmer of legislative election results. The new constitution also stripped the president of the right to initiate legislation; while the president could now invoke the veto and return laws for parliament's reconsideration, a majority of the Chamber of Deputies was all that was required to override the veto. As Sharon Wolchik has noted, the Czech presidency ranks as one of the least powerful presidencies, at least constitutionally, of post-communist nations.<sup>22</sup>

The construction of presidentiality, then, becomes even more important in what is, essentially, a non-presidential system. Such a construct serves as an alternative way to create ideological meaning for Czechs around their post-communist executive leadership outside of constitutional power. For his part, Havel tried to convert the limitations of the system into advantages, and whether or not he succeeded, the attempt resulted in a unique enactment of the office's powers. For Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles, "Specific extra-constitutional requirements of the presidency and its occupant have emerged...such that presidents and presidential candidates must possess certain character qualities, have particular life histories, or share specific occupations," requirements that result in a particular presidentiality.<sup>23</sup> As he attempted to define his office, Havel's presidentiality was shaped by his own performance of civility, his moral conception of politics, and his self-conscious management of Czech national symbols and history.

For one, Havel would consistently emphasize the presidency as a model for civility, writing that “What I would like to accentuate in every possible way in my practice of politics is culture.”<sup>24</sup> Havel goes on to define culture “not just as one among many human activities, but in the broadest sense—the ‘culture of everything’, the general level of public manners.”<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, Havel defined a Czech president as the “guardian of the political culture” who “should guarantee or mediate the continuity of state power” as a “permanent certainty amidst the dynamics of democratic evolution.”<sup>26</sup> With the constitution establishing the presidency for five-year terms outside of the four year party elections, Havel took advantage of the potential to “transcend” traditional politicking.<sup>27</sup> He saw this “guarantor” role not as an intrinsically derived from constitutional law, writing that “emphasis on the moral aspect of citizenship, the moral source of politics, the spiritual and intellectual dimension of social coexistence, the role of the state as public servant...appeals to responsibility, to tolerance, to mutual understanding—all of this will be, I am firmly convinced, a permanent and important responsibility of the president, flowing directly from his political position as defined in the constitution.”<sup>28</sup> In this way, Peter Russell has expressed Havel’s conception of the president as being a sort of “ombudsman” that could connect the Czech people to its government, and bring together diverse interests.<sup>29</sup> While his critics certainly did not agree that the president should be a moral arbiter, it is important to understand that Havel fashioned his presidency from what he saw as a constitutional duty, *not* as an idiosyncratic revision of that constitution.<sup>30</sup>

With this conflation of the civic with the civil, Havel’s rhetoric exemplifies what Robert Hariman calls a “republican style,” or a kind of political artistry that “blends personal experiences and public interests within the individual’s composition of herself as a public figure.”<sup>31</sup> Havel built a rhetorical style of governing that fused the personal and political into a self-conscious performance, a man who, as anthropologist Ladislav Holy notes, “could be best

seen as embodying Czech national traditions.”<sup>32</sup> For better or for worse, Havel would draw on the Czech nation’s “relatively strong tendency to emphasize the authority of the leading political personality over the formal political structures.”<sup>33</sup> The historical tumult of the transition was never lost on him, and it infused his approach to the office from the beginning. Writing in 1992, he reflected that

[W]hen I took office, I had the intense feeling that, in our country, the president was burdened with an inappropriate number of powers. I was astonished at what I could do. My conclusion was that when the Communist Party was in power it was of no consequence *what* the president’s powers were, and that this was the only reason they were so broad. Over time, I came to understand that this feeling of mine was deceptive. It derived from the fact that in those first post-revolutionary weeks I had a great deal of influence and could not always distinguish clearly how much of that influence derived from my personal authority and how much from my powers as president.<sup>34</sup>

Within his limited power, Havel referred to the office’s most important quality as being that of “good taste,” which in his definition was “largely a matter of form: knowing how long to speak, when to begin and when to finish; how to say something politely that your opposite number may not want to hear....But more than that, it means having a certain instinct for the time, the atmosphere of the time, the mood of the people, the nature of their worries, their frame of mind.”<sup>35</sup> Presidential style itself was a moral obligation—not only was rhetoric a resource to be used strategically, but it was a way of *living*, and thus *performing* the duties of the office.<sup>36</sup>

“History” itself served a kind of school for the presidency and was tied in with Havel’s embodiment of a moral, even spiritual, president.<sup>37</sup> His central concern was to provide a kind of steady voice in the political wilderness that was attuned to the flow of Czech past, present, and future.<sup>38</sup> He thought of his official rhetoric as a body of work, a kind of presidential oeuvre that

was meant to have a consistent voice. Writing later of his speeches, Havel noted that “anyone who reads them through will notice that they were not occasional shouts provoked by a particular situation and that together they make up a single unified whole, continuing and developing my view of the world, of politics, of the position of our country, and so on.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, Havel’s presidency was always guided by the special contextual circumstances of transition, with the office designed to stabilize the painful ruptures in Czech identity and create a “legacy.”<sup>40</sup>

Being the first post-communist president in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic required Havel to pick and choose the kinds of rhetorical actions that he would associate with the presidency. Some of these derived directly from the constitution: for example, as Havlik, Hrubes, and Pecina point out, Havel actually converted his relatively powerless veto, and the messages he attached to them, into one of his most important rhetorical forms, which would become “one of the means of presentation for the president’s consistent positions on the functioning of a democratic society.”<sup>41</sup> The constitution also allowed Havel to present speeches to parliament, a key genre that permitted Havel to become the “critic-in-chief,” a role uniquely suited to both the constitutional limitations on the presidency and Havel’s own extraconstitutional ethos.<sup>42</sup> After Havel made his historic first speech on New Year’s Day, 1990, he transferred that symbolism onto a New Year’s presidential address every year, fashioning it as a time to reflect on the progress of transition and renew national commitment to that progress.<sup>43</sup> He also instituted regular radio addresses consciously modeled on an FDR-style fireside chat; even his private meetings with the Prime Minister every Wednesday became, through press coverage, a kind of ritual of the continuity of power. Havel’s revival of the Castle as a symbolic seat of power and the televised inaugurations and other ceremonies at St. Vitus Cathedral saw him even invoking monarchical traditions. Vojtech Cepl and Mark Gillis note that each of these symbolic initiatives would “become important quasi-constitutional institutions that enhance the role and position of

the president.”<sup>44</sup> Such rituals, according to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, “provide presidents with a symbolic repertoire through which to reassert the fundamental continuity of the presidency.”<sup>45</sup> Havel established that sense of continuity where there was none, thus his inventive capacities as president became especially scrutinized.<sup>46</sup>

Arguably, film itself became a kind of usable rhetorical medium for Havel in constructing his presidentiality, given his prescience in allowing camera crews to follow his presidency. *Citizen Havel* is an artifact that, if nothing else, captures President Havel constructing his office out of that tense relationship between continuity and change. Havel’s assumption of his office now required him to be the ultimate guarantor of stability in an unstable time and a symbol of state power, a marked change from his years being its critic. This transition marked the birth of the postmodern, post-communist presidency in the Czech Republic, and it took the particular rhetorical power of documentary to articulate the new democracy’s growing pains.

#### DOCUMENTING CZECH PRESIDENTIALITY ON FILM

*Citizen Havel* has been branded the most successful Czech documentary of all time.<sup>47</sup> The film, originally shown as a special on Czech TV, was awarded a Czech Lion, the nation’s highest honor for film, and received significant accolades in its premieres abroad.<sup>48</sup> *Variety* called it a “remarkably intimate cinema vérité portrait” while *TimeOut* called it a “real-life version of the ‘West Wing’, and just as gripping.”<sup>49</sup> Based on over 120 hours of footage, *Citizen Havel* was shot expensively on film, rather than video, thus giving it a cinematic scope that proves important to its overall effect, and the film team had unprecedented access to Havel and his inner circle.<sup>50</sup> Director Pavel Koutecký labeled his approach the “observational method” of documentary where a small crew “lies in wait for something to happen” and goes on to “film it with the time-lapse method, store the material, not make it public, and only after a certain period make a coherent picture of the man and his times.”<sup>51</sup>

The film picks up at the end of 1992, after Havel's first two years as president and on the eve of the split of Czechoslovakia; the filmmakers had no guarantee that Havel would continue as president and were gambling that they would have a viable film on their hands. Koutecký and his team thus wanted the experience of the audience to match that of the filmmakers, watching a flurry of events as they unfold and as the political actors respond and adapt. Koutecký actually died during a tragic accident at the tail end of the filming process, and the charge of a "coherent picture" was given to editor Mirsolav Janek. The editing and structure serves as especially important rhetorical tools in *Citizen Havel*. Janek was drawn to Koutecký's style because it had "none of the usual documentary things" like talking head interviews, narration, music etc.: "Even the scenes in which Havel and his group of advisers are sitting down to have some soup, and debating about something, are conceived as exciting events."<sup>52</sup> The film does intercut with traditional news footage of particular landmark political events in the Czech Republic to set the context, although often cleverly with Havel or advisers *watching* that footage, as a kind of doubling, meta-comment on the spectacle of politics.<sup>53</sup> The careful editing of these events into a dramatic arc, though, is ultimately underwritten by Havel's personality itself. Koutecký became impressed at Havel's ability to ignore a camera in the room, noting that "every ordinary, conventional politician would probably have had second thoughts about being filmed."<sup>54</sup> The apolitical Janek also found himself intoxicated by Havel's hyperreal image as he was editing, noting that "He gets under your skin. It's like a daily dose, which you almost get addicted to. You know his gestures, facial expressions, perhaps even his way of thinking. You almost have to resist adopting his gestures. He becomes your old friend."<sup>55</sup>

That disarming quality of open access, Havel's own willingness to open his mistakes and anxieties to the public record, and the fact of the film's release during Havel's post-presidential campaign to consolidate his political legacy, all drive the documentary's construction of its own

credibility. As Thomas Benson and Brian Snee have written, there is “a lingering rhetorical aura about documentary as an idea that does suggest a sort of seriousness, a special claim on truth-telling, however tenuous.”<sup>56</sup> *Citizen Havel* certainly traffics in that kind of seriousness, even as it is playful with the form, creating a sense that we are getting Havel’s presidency in *whole*—that even though it cannot possibly cover all of Havel’s presidential life and events, the documentary assures viewers that it is capturing the essence. In the process, the documentary cultivates the acceptance of Havel’s vision for the Czech presidency by the viewer, in what Pauley has referred to as the “privileged perspective” and “self-validation” of cinema vérité documentary.<sup>57</sup> The viewer ages with Havel during the time-lapsed film and begins to take on his worldview, similar to how Janek himself fell into a kind of friendship with the mediated image of Havel. Yet despite the deep immersion into his image and persona, *Citizen Havel* is certainly no hagiography of Havel, who at various times is principled, fussy, reflective, childlike, poetic, petty, nostalgic, and cunning. But therein lies an important point: documentary discourse in the hyperreal era is resolutely self-aware about Joshua Meyrowitz’s distinction between the televisual front stage and backstage, and their “middling” together in presidential politics.<sup>58</sup> The use of this mode does not change the fact that the documentary still exists to heighten a sense of Havel’s importance, and he emerges as virtuous for being complicit in a warts-and-all portrayal of his own presidency.

The opening sequences of the documentary well represent this idea: the audience sees grainy home footage of a baby Václav in 1937, mere months before the fateful Munich Agreement altered Czech history. Havel’s upbringing in a well-known Czech bourgeois family is evidenced by the fine trappings around the baby, with what looks like Havel’s well-dressed father “crowning” him with flowers. Of course, the juxtaposition of that regal image immediately with the next scene of a chain-smoking and potbellied Havel in a holey sweater, joking in self-deprecation with his advisors (many former dissidents), shows the documentary’s self-awareness.

At the same time, there still lingers a sense of the inevitability of Havel's "rise to power" that follows a narrative trajectory towards (and through) the presidency. Joanne Morreale has noted the use of biographical childhood and birthplace images as archetypes in U.S. presidential campaign films, and *Citizen Havel* certainly draws on that kind of power in its opening scene. In American campaign films, humble beginnings through images of farms and small towns become the guarantors of presidential strength.<sup>59</sup> *Citizen Havel* inverts this trope—after the imposition of communism, this image seems to argue that *uncommon* origins are needed in a president, even through a nod to the Czech monarchy. The shots also bridge a continuity with the era of Masaryk's Czechoslovakian republic in the 1930s, idealized as a cradle of democracy, before the infamous sellout to Hitler. That anchoring footage establishes Havel's personality as central to the establishment of Czech presidentiality, and supports Havel's own argument that he was merely acting in accordance with history's dictates, sweeping him into duty.

The form of the documentary, then, matches the presidential content that its title character created during his time in office. In his analysis of Frederick Wiseman's cinema verité classic, *High School*, Thomas Benson notes that "In film, the formal is always at war with the material, and it is in the filmmaker's resolution of the relation of form and matter that particular meanings emerge."<sup>60</sup> Just as Wiseman created a "rhetorical structure about a rhetorical structure," (in that case, using a film's structural elements to observe the power dynamics of high school) the makers of *Citizen Havel* used a unique foregrounding of "back stage" events to argue that the prestige of presidential politics is needed in the new Czech democracy. This was their resolution of form and content.<sup>61</sup> Via *Citizen Havel*, Havel participated in the crafting of his own image very carefully around the notion of authenticity, which he seemed to believe was the key ideological difference between the communist era and the post-communist era. Now was a chance to live a "life in truth" that was stripped from Czechs before. The filmmakers then match

Havel's crafting of the presidency by foregrounding their own crafting of the film itself.

Meyrowitz claimed that, due to the foregrounding of the back stage in televisual politics, the "aura" was diminishing around public leaders, with a resulting de-mystification of the political process.<sup>62</sup> Arguably, though, *Citizen Havel* is both part of an unmasking and a re-mystification of Czech politics. By revealing the painstaking detail of "orchestrating" a democratic presidency through the form and structure of cinema verité, *Citizen Havel* creates a multi-mediated Havel who elevates that very office with symbolic meaning that it might not otherwise have.

#### *Castle Corridors: The Aesthetics of the Presidency in Citizen Havel*

Theatre has long been a metaphorical vehicle for the craft of politics, but Havel's status as an icon of the international stage deepened the sense of his presidency being a "play" in process. *Citizen Havel* reveals this play as a particularly chaotic and self-referential one, as if the audience is watching a frantic troupe trying to put on a great comedy and drama at the same time. When asked how he decided what to film, Koutecký reported that he wanted to depict "Havel as a dramatist, man of the theatre, director, who with this experience continues to 'direct' things around himself. And also he perceives the world of politics at a distance, as a piece of theatre of the absurd in which he himself is acting."<sup>63</sup> Worried that his hero may have been becoming too caught up in pageantry, Timothy Garton Ash wrote in 1993 that "I do not believe that Václav Havel has been poisoned by power in any normal sense. If mildly infected at all, it is in the rather unusual form of being, so to speak, aesthetically enamored of the theater of high politics—which, as he is the first to point out, is even more the theater of the absurd than the most absurdist of his own plays."<sup>64</sup> It is no wonder then that *Citizen Havel* shows Havel continually obsessing over aesthetic matters. The film is a testament to his self-conscious association of politics with art, where he becomes the actor of the Czech presidency, its dramaturge, and its critic all at once.<sup>65</sup>

The dramatic context of the transition to democracy required him to enact the duties of office but also to theorize the parameters of, and even critique, that office as well.

For one, the flow and structure of *Citizen Havel* itself becomes central to displaying the theatricality of Havel's presidency.<sup>66</sup> *Citizen Havel* melds the personal dramas of his first wife Olga's death, his marriage to Dagmar Veskrnova shortly after, his multiple hospitalizations with the official pomp of state visits and international summits as all being part of the *whole* presidency.<sup>67</sup> However, the documentary is edited in such a way as to erase the peaks and valleys around the mundane and the highly charged moments. The film smooths them together in Meyrowitz's "middle-stage" politics where the audience never quite sees the deep private life of Havel, but also never stays long in the traditional front-stage of the speeches and public meetings.<sup>68</sup> Rather, the documentary lurks in the interstitial spaces in-between.

Part of *Citizen Havel*'s approach to displaying Havel's presidentiality is often the inversion of climaxes. Many times the viewer does not see the big "reveal" of the speech or event, but only its orchestration, planning, or aftermath. Havel's team of staffers and its constant deliberation over symbolic matters becomes an important part of this process, themselves a collection of artists, writers, and intellectuals attuned to aesthetics. As Stephen Schiff once wrote, "Where but in Czechoslovakia would you find a presidential spokesman who is also the author of his country's only major study of Woody Allen?"<sup>69</sup> This focus on presidential stage management routinizes the pageantry of politics, and takes on a rhythmic and episodic movement in the film. Before the NATO induction ceremony of the Czech Republic in Prague, Havel sends back a gavel because it doesn't sound right ("it sounds like someone tripping over a chair!"). The film depicts ladders and brooms, musicians tuning, and a shot of tuxedoed waiters practicing for the lavish dinner with heads of state, but not the actual dinner. And as the event begins, President Bush and Havel are shown at a podium, but the shot cuts before they begin

talking. The traditionally “political” is sidestepped in order to show the painstaking craft underneath. At the 1993 inaugural, a scene lingers on Havel, Olga, and advisors chatting. The camera then follows Havel and Olga from behind dramatically as they walk out onto the balcony and wave to tens of thousands in the Square below to chants of “Long Live Havel!” Jon Elster writes of how critics bristled that Havel lived in ‘dramatic time,’ not understanding that parliamentary politics takes place in ‘epic time.’ He wanted long periods to be condensed into short, dramatic moments” and thus could not be constrained by so-called “normal politics.”<sup>70</sup> The abrupt juxtapositions of the film tend to bear this out: the almost monarchical adoration given Havel on the balcony is punctured by a shot of Havel distractedly trying to work at his desk, fidgeting around, and looking for cigarettes. He appears lost without the theatrical flourishes, more at ease “directing” the next presidential event.

Despite the winking appreciation of the theatrical absurdity around him, the documentary ensures viewers that Havel takes his cultural role as president quite seriously, a function that helps lay the ideological ground for a specifically Czech presidentiality. Any theatrical performance requires a compelling scene, and thus the documentary draws especially on the symbolism of Prague Castle that is embedded deep in Czech political culture. As Havel wrote later, “Now, if this Castle or palace environment is also the seat of the presidential office, then obviously this fact must somehow be reflected in how that office is run. It’s not as if the Office of the President were located on the second floor of some nondescript high-rise out in the housing projects. Just think of those long corridors! They actually seduce one into a kind of life in the corridors of power, invite one to invent and spread rumors, to weave intrigues. Democracy or not, the Prague Castle is a real court, with all that that entails.”<sup>71</sup> In *Citizen Havel*, the camera takes wide shots of the grand setting of the large halls, as politicians walk and talk through them, providing the aesthetic backdrop for the new Czech democracy. For Murray Edelman, “widely

known buildings, spaces, and public figures” embody the polity in an artistic sense, writing that “It is as if the beliefs that are undemonstrable and doubtful have to be objectified in an entity or concept that then confronts people as reality, repressing the tentativeness and the search for validation that are otherwise characteristic of the play of the human mind.”<sup>72</sup> The transitional period compressed in *Citizen Havel* marks a search for validation in the Czech social order, and Havel’s Castle as a symbolic space adds texture to such a search.

Perhaps Havel’s most poignant bit of Castle management comes with the death of his wife Olga from cancer, which is portrayed as a sudden, dramatic event in the film.<sup>73</sup> With little audio beyond the noises of his and his team’s rustling to prepare for the wake, Havel makes sure the casket is properly adorned, stepping away and silently nodding at one point as if the “staging” was correct, and then watching as a spectator at those passing through to pay respects. The next shot after the wake shows Havel silently smoking behind a white curtain as he gazes at the funeral cars arriving below at the Castle, an aide dusting him off from behind while trying not to disturb his grieving. While the sad scene is certainly not “routine,” that shot, from Havel’s point-of-view, of the motorcade outside the Castle’s entrance assures the security and continuity of power and pageantry even in the case of rupture and loss.

Havel, at the same time, was conscious that while the symbolically charged Castle obviously has to contend with some non-democratic traditions in Czech history. Havel traffics in both a kind of guilty dismissal of those traditions and a pride well-rooted in the national identity. For example, in preparation for a visit by Boris Yeltsin, Havel’s advisors want him to greet Yeltsin in the grand Habsburg Hall in the Castle, while Havel protests that his own office would be a better place to receive him: “I wanted to show him my office to demonstrate our close relations....The Kremlin has a million rooms like that. He won’t be impressed.” Havel calibrates democratic decorum, simultaneously wanting to give guests a “royal” treatment, but cognizant of

the different audiences he has to manage in a democratic polity. When demanding that his aide get him a Borek Sipek vase for his office (Sipek being the avant-garde Czech designer that Havel hired for “de-communicization” of the Castle after the revolution), Havel explains that “It’s subliminal. People should get used to the fact that presidents have styles of their own.”<sup>74</sup> Havel accepts the majesty of the Castle, but sees his countercultural reputation as needing to “post-modernize” the political culture around him. Joking with his chancellor, Ivan Medek, Havel laments: “Why is there a red carpet leading to your office, when I get the puke-colored communist carpet that I’ve been fighting for seven years to have removed?” Havel’s version of presidentiality on display in *Citizen Havel* conceives the shift out of communism as more important in an aesthetic/cultural sense than it was for everyday politics.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, within and outside the Castle setting, the documentary constantly toggles between “official” politics and Havel’s more cultural brand of politicking. In 1994, the Rolling Stones’ visit to the Castle made headlines, and *Citizen Havel* captures the almost absurd proceedings of Havel proudly escorting the likes of Mick Jagger and Keith Richards through the grand halls. In a surreal scene of political comedy, guitarist Ron Wood even takes Havel aside to ask him if he knows of a good pub nearby, with Havel not skipping a beat in naming his favorite. In this way, Havel becomes president as “cultural concierge.” Of course, Havel’s embrace of that role tended to madden his critics and was seen by some as evidence of a starstruck leader using the prestige of the office to hobnob with Western cultural idols at the expense of “real” political issues in the country. Havel, however, believed he was invested with the responsibility of being a kind of curator for Czech culture, and that included cultures both high and low.

That melding of the edgy dissident culture with the “higher” Czech nation consistently marks *Citizen Havel*. One of the poignant last scenes sees Havel bringing in internationally renowned Slovakian opera star, Gabriela Benackova, to his farewell party, who fights tears as

Havel tells a story of her inspiring him in his darkest days: “You were so important to me in prison; as a reward for good behavior, we could watch TV on Sundays and on New Year’s Day, but there had to be ten of us. *The Bartered Bride* was on. And I was the only one who wanted to watch it, so I had to buy nine prisoners with cigarettes to watch it with me.” He then thanks her for being “one of us revolutionaries.” *Citizen Havel* argues that part of the president’s extra-constitutional power is to bring disparate strands of Czech culture into the processes of democratization, fusing older Czech traditions like opera and the newer, countercultural contributions of the dissidents. And particularly as the documentary intercuts scenes from the TV production of *The Bartered Bride* with Havel saying goodbye to his staffers, *Citizen Havel* comes full circle in presenting the Czech presidency as a meticulously staged piece of theatre. In this important moment, the film’s depiction of theatricality melded into one Havel’s own vision of the presidency’s theatricality.

Another part of politics aesthetics is the fetishization of the “presidential body,” which Diane Rubenstein has noted as a staple of postmodern politics.<sup>76</sup> *Citizen Havel*, for its part, obsesses with the theatrical preparation of Havel’s physical person for the enactment of the presidency. In one scene, Havel is told by handlers to “stand up straight and pull your tummy in,” like a child being schooled in the ways of mediated, presidential decorum. In a near-tantrum to staffers in one scene, he snaps, “Where are my medals...I hate it! I’m not a model. I can’t take it!” The rumpled Havel is fashioned into a figure who cares about how he arranges his medals on his sash at a black-tie event. For critics, this shift may have been a sign that he had lost his way and become swept up by power. Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11* famously had shots of President George W. Bush and chief administrators like Paul Wolfowitz and Donald Rumsfeld in vulnerable moments before big events or press interviews, combing hair and adjusting make-up, as if to ridicule these figures for their concern with image.<sup>77</sup> In *Citizen Havel*, however, the

president seems to invite this kind of ridicule on himself, both participating in the image craft, while commenting on it at the same time. This approach allows the audience to appreciate the absurdity of presidential power *with* Havel, thus in a sense reinforcing that power.

This absurdity can be seen through more serious concerns over the president's body, particularly in the film's sequence following his hospitalization over a lung tumor in 1997. Right before going to the hospital for the second time, Havel tells the filmmaker Koutecký in a rare conversation given directly to the camera that "There's nothing visually interesting about me going to hospital" but then admits that "I suppose if I die on the operating table then this last footage of me might have a certain value." This gallows humor is intercut with urgent newscasts and press conferences about Havel's cigarette habits and the prognosis of his medical team—his physical person becomes part of the guarantee of democratic stability, and thus its increasing frailty becomes an important part of public discourse.<sup>78</sup> In the process, the documentary puts Havel on display to perform the presidency, and to suffer through it, embodying the struggles of democratization so that the nation does not have to.<sup>79</sup>

Altogether, the theatrical management of the president's role in a changing Czech culture in *Citizen Havel* equates democracy with the idea of "putting on a show." The tendency to "go meta" is central to the documentary's rhetorical power, just as it is central to Havel's presidency as a whole. In one memorable shot in *Citizen Havel*, Havel poses and smiles next to a life-size, cardboard stand up cut-out of himself at one of his birthday parties, as his staffers laugh with delight. That self-referential absurdist humor makes Havel a kind of hyperreal image in the film. Yet, these images do not serve to "deconstruct" the presidency in a truly postmodern fashion. Rather, those images help to add a mystification to the Czech presidency, as they make Havel more of a "character" that will assure the narrative continuity of the office. The rhythms in the film of preparing for an election night, watching the returns, seeing the crowds with pro-Havel

signs, walking to the chamber, celebrating afterwards, evaluating with advisors in the aftermath. What originally seems like an improvised performance starts to become an episodic routine by the end of the documentary, as a sense of stability is transferred to the office of the presidency itself. Viewers are assured that *any* complex, mediated presidency would face these kind of routines, and thus the Czech entry to the world democratic community is normalized.

*The Intellectual Cincinnatus: Dissidence and Presidentiality in Citizen Havel*

While the theatrical tropes and aesthetic routines of the new Czech democracy in action constitute one of the most important ways the film constructs Havel's image as president, *Citizen Havel's* definition of the actual "character" that Havel played during the presidency—particularly, the role of the moral, transcendent intellectual amidst the rancor and combat of democratic politics—is critical as well to the film's articulated presidentiality.<sup>80</sup> In a scene at his cottage, with strategic shots of Velvet Revolution memorabilia on the walls, Havel reflects on his new presidency in a more private moment for the filmmakers:

It's hard to find the right balance. We have this strange tradition. The President should always wear a kind of halo. And to some extent it's a legitimate need because it demonstrates people's loyalty to the country, their respect for its institutions. You must accept that, not mock it. On the other hand, someone who has never been a puppet can't pretend that he is one, right? He wouldn't be himself....Whatever I do, some will say, 'it's not the same old Havel. He used to be this happy fellow in a sweater. Others say: he doesn't behave like a president....He's still like an eternal little boy.

Fellow dissident (in Poland) Adam Michnik referred to Havel's dilemma as what happened when "Socrates became Pericles," where the outside critic assuming power finds themselves in the "tension between the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility."<sup>81</sup> In almost every scene, the viewer sees a self-searching Havel commenting on the responsibilities of his power

and sometimes even resisting it. Havel thus was considering how to best *model* democratic behavior and civility in the new era, and he relied on certain Czech traditions and some of his own from his status as a dissident to create such models.

For one, Havel chose to model reluctance when it came to the assumption of the presidency. In a 1993 scene, he tells Olga after winning his first election, “Yet another misfortune for us, my dear.” Olga then asks, “Do you have the nerves for it?” Havel laughs: “I don’t.” Later, Havel’s reaction to his second electoral victory in 1997 was “I am president again. Shit.” Through rhetorical artifacts like *Citizen Havel*, Havel prescribes for the office of the Czech presidency a kind of ritual expectation to demur the trappings of the office, worrying aloud that a full embrace of power would not only be in “bad taste,” but could be tantamount to embracing a totalitarian past. Havel’s rhetoric in the film is a variant on the age-old Cincinnatus myth, which many U.S. presidents have used in their presidential and campaign rhetoric, of the patriot who “reluctantly and selflessly responded to the call of duty.”<sup>82</sup> Havel’s revision of the Cincinnatus image, though, is that rather than the farmer called away from the soil or the soldier called away from the field, he is the solitary artist and outside critic who sacrifices a life of the mind to set the example of civic service and take up the cause of the nation.<sup>83</sup> At one point, Havel is challenged at a press conference, where a reporter comments that “Most people in the West see your presidency not as a sacrifice or a challenge but as an inability to resist temptation.” Havel replies: “Some people will suspect me of craving the perks of power....Every day the papers attack me as a romantic dreamer, an idealist, a loudmouth who doesn’t understand how politics actually works in democracies...I read these things everyday and I take them as a challenge to return to politics.” The key to the fulfillment of the Cincinnatus myth is that, despite reluctance, the leader finally lays down the plow and makes the civic sacrifice.

The film makes a productive use of the irony in Havel's uneasiness around power while still assuming the very trappings of that power. Kenneth Zagacki has written of the "rhetoric of folly" where "Havel claimed that power was obtained through weakness, strength through vulnerability, wisdom through ignorance," and thus used "irony as a means of easing the passage to an uncertain geopolitical future."<sup>84</sup> In a roundtable with advisors about preparing to announce his new run for president, Havel says that "The papers have been full of articles about my mistakes lately. I'm happy to speak about them and say the mistakes I made were different from the media myths. Then I'd mention my real mistakes." These kinds of comments in the film were often accompanied by protests from his advisors to stop publicly discussing his mistakes. As Hariman has noted, the republican style of a leader like Havel is marked by a focus on personal fame and an almost obsessive self-doubt.<sup>85</sup> In one scene before his election in 1993, Havel's secretary Vladimir Hanzel points out to Havel that "They once asked what a Czech president's main aim should be and you gave a great answer—you said: 'to contribute to political stability and gain international respect for the new country. Period. You could have written pages, but that was exactly right.' "That was a huge compromise with who I am. I was ashamed. I blushed when I wrote that answer," Havel replies. The tense relationship between the ideals of modern democratic politics and the realities are often resolved through irony in *Citizen Havel*.

The documentary, thus, also serves a therapeutic function for the audience as they get to watch Havel acting out the trepidation of a nation undergoing a rocky transition, an important part of the complex presidentiality of Czech transitional politics. Throughout *Citizen Havel*, for example, Havel and advisors often watch news reports attacking the president's office. During one report in 1993, Republican representative Miroslav Sladek calls Havel a "phantom autocrat" and a "megalomaniac," responsible for turning the Czech Republic into a "rubbish pit" for the "rest of Europe to dump its gypsies into." The filmic technique is important in the camera

editing: the sheer brutality of Sladek's language is intercut with shots of Havel's team watching the television, powerless against attacks, with Havel saying "Gypsies?!" to Olga in dismay. Sladek also refers to Havel's "sleazy, oddball advisors" while the camera spans his earnest and overworked staffers looking dejected. The technique of having Havel watch his own critiques is subtle and important—the viewer sees the human hurt and defensiveness, but is also made to admire his ability to brush it off. *Citizen Havel* situates the audience on Havel's side: *he* has more noble intentions, while *they* are down in the gutter of modern politics. Again, this model of democratic civility reinforces the power of the Cincinnatus myth, as if he accepts that leadership will involve unpleasant work but that the nation demands it.

Havel's testy relationship with Václav Klaus, who was Prime Minister for a large portion of Havel's presidency, is portrayed in *Citizen Havel* as part of this same democratic ritual. Klaus becomes an important character in the film, often as *the* contrasting symbol of the petty, partisan politician. Havel laments to his advisors in the film that Klaus and his government have replaced communism with simply another ideology, equally as damaging, summarized by the idea that "the key to prosperity is to let things run themselves....It's analogous to communism. They thought the same thing. The clever ones—themselves—would run everything." The divide between two types of post-communist intellectuals was simplified and personified into the story of Havel and Klaus' rivalry, which the press often drew on as a narrative resource.<sup>86</sup> Klaus would excoriate the likes of Havel for prizing impractical leftwing ideals, while Havel would rail against an unchecked capitalism bereft of a guiding moral vision.<sup>87</sup> Havel's vision is largely adopted by the filmmakers, particularly by vindicating his model of political civility. During a political tussle in 1996 when Klaus' party lost their majority status, Havel had a rare chance to do some political maneuvering and call for a new government. In one scene, he waffles over whether to phone his old nemesis, while Klaus' rival party leaders urge him to move ahead

without consulting Klaus. Milos Zeman (the representative of the new majority party, the Czech Social Democrats) made a strong appeal: “You can’t let Václav Klaus approve of everything you say....If you ask them for permission to invite them, it will only show that presidential authority has been reduced.” Havel ultimately involves Klaus in the approval process, thus choosing a sense of decorum over the display of presidential authority. While in essence a kind of political defeat, the audience is assured that Havel’s impulse to do the “right thing” should always prevail.

As seen in the film and in much of his discourse, Havel’s presidential model of moral and civil sacrifice went back to the First Republic of 1918, which he constructed as an ideal of Czech democracy and humanism.<sup>88</sup> Masaryk, too, was an intellectual (professor of philosophy), and Havel drew on this same dormant Czech mythos around the veneration of the intellectual as leader, with the communist oppression of those intellectuals fresh in memory and personified by Havel himself as the suffering prisoner.<sup>89</sup> In the film, during the aforementioned negotiations over the change in party power in 1996, Milos Zeman appealed to Havel by saying that, “President Masaryk once said that democracy is discussion. It might be inspiring for you to listen without prejudice to the four party leaders talking in front of you....Masaryk would have done it, Mr. President.”<sup>90</sup> Zeman’s appeal understood that Havel’s model for the presidency involved creating a bridge back to these interwar days. Masaryk’s democracy was, of course, a mythic one. His “quasi-presidentialism,” according to Ladislav Holy, drew attention away from the almost oligarchic elite running the country at the time and its weak parliament.<sup>91</sup> Havel did not have that same freedom in his approach to the office, and thus whatever power he did derive had to come even more so from the cultivation of a unique political personality. As Holy writes, “to venerate the collective ideal, the nation which imagines itself to have a strong democratic tradition must, paradoxically, venerate an individual hero and thus create its specific political culture.”<sup>92</sup> This kind of paradox of the democratic “hero” is one that would both help and hurt Havel, as it

frequently required a kind of fusion of the postmodern international celebrity image with a moral, almost preacher-like mode of discourse that often incensed critics.<sup>93</sup>

Especially as the country ran into the serious growing pains of democratization with economic stagnation, privatization's corruption, and deep discord over the status of former communists, Havel could be seen as aloof through his abstract lectures about "responsibility" and "being." During a short, highly publicized presidential tour of the country, Havel sat down with workers, including a farmer who tells him, "Help us—we're just little farts down here. We all supported the revolution but it's getting out of hand. We put you where you are so please help us." Havel's reply warned that "we're entering an era of stable democracy with a certain separation of powers. I'm not an all-powerful leader who controls everything, right?" The farmer's entreaties represent the Czech people's perception that *they*, not the constitution, are investing Havel with his presidential power, and thus have high expectations that the force of his personality would translate into traditional political power. Havel would often refer back to his constitutional limitations and would remind Czechs that democratic change is slow. And, yet still, the symbolic requirements of the nascent presidency place him out on a listening tour with the accompanying photo ops and fanfare. As Keith Erickson has noted, modern U.S. presidents engage in public image events as "presidential performance fragments," and Havel is no different in his willingness to participate in and even orchestrate such events, especially given his remarkable knack for aesthetic politics.<sup>94</sup>

In *Citizen Havel*, as the president walks the street and gazes in bemusement at the new influx of capitalist goods (one entrepreneur tries to convince him to buy an anti-static brush), the viewers see Havel's difficult balance of the celebrity president and the countercultural intellectual.<sup>95</sup> It is notable, for example, in *Citizen Havel* that significantly less time is spent on Havel in his final term, which many critics found to be a distracted affair. Christopher Hitchens

returned disillusioned from a trip to Havel's palace, fearing that the "castle has claimed another long-term prisoner," while a *New York Times* headline declared "The Philosopher-King is Mortal."<sup>96</sup> The circumstances of Havel's marriage to the actress Dagmar (Dasa), nine months after the death of Olga, the universally loved "first lady" and important dissident in her own right, became a feast for the tabloid press (a new fixture in transitioning democracies).<sup>97</sup> After a quick wedding at the town hall captured by Koutecký, Havel was careful to explain to reporters about Olga: "She advised me to remarry. I rejected the idea and was determined to remain single.... I did not marry Dasa to replace Olga but because we realized we love each other and want to live together." Here, Havel acknowledges his duty as president to assure a kind of continuity of the office, as he sought to guarantee that Olga's memory was properly reconciled with the public. Dasa's image is depicted as always impeccable and carefully crafted, polished and dutiful to the ceremonial expectations of a modern "first lady," along with problematic gender implications. Discussing an important state dinner for NATO negotiations, Havel joked that "They always seat [Dasa] next to Chirac and he flirts with her; he's French after all—and forgets to bitch about America." Throughout the film, Dasa is made to represent Havel's ascent from the chain-smoking writer into the international statesman, as well as the female "supporting role" for the main actor, a role his first wife did not typically play.

Almost from the moment Havel entered presidential life, his specific ethos as an outside critic of power would assure that he would be bedeviled by charges of "sellout." Jacques Rupnik has attributed this irony to the fact that "The dissident intellectual catapulted to power also presides over the demise of the intellectual and the declining status of culture in democratic societies."<sup>98</sup> Timothy Garton Ash saw disappointment on the horizon after the breathless success of Havel's first couple of years at the Castle, questioning "whether the ex-president of Czechoslovakia might not actually have a greater influence in Europe and the world today were

he again able to speak with his own unique voice as an independent intellectual. But the die is cast. For another few years, at least, he will go on in the Castle, suffering up there for us; a living exemplar of the dilemmas of the intellectual in politics; condemned, like the central character in one of his own plays, to play out a role that he feels is not truly his own.”<sup>99</sup> Havel would later reflect similarly on the constitutional and extraconstitutional tensions facing his position: “I found myself often watching in embarrassment as something happened that I might have prevented; not by making better use of my constitutional authority, but better deploying my informal, personal authority....Think of how many critical and yet highly constructive speeches I have given; the politicians always clapped politely, and some of them even patted me on the back when no one was looking, but none of them took any of my words to heart.”<sup>100</sup> Freedom fundamentally changed Central Europe’s intelligentsia, and Havel’s presidency itself, and his very choices on how to communicate both his role and what he saw as the state of the Czech nation, was forged out of those changes.<sup>101</sup> While *Citizen Havel* captures much of these complexities, the film still ultimately attempts to provide Havel’s presidency with a narrative arc that assures audiences of his moral authority and the wisdom of his political style.

## CONCLUSION

Fitting to its aesthetic portrayal of Havel’s presidency, *Citizen Havel* gives audiences a chance to see the pageantry of the president’s exit from office. Behind the scenes, Václav and Dasa are packing up the presidential office in the Castle. These scenes, like many earlier ones, invariably focus on the materiality of his presidency—the hard, symbolic tokens of the office. Havel considers a vase’s relevance, a staffer dismantles a large Czech flag arrangement, and Dasa rolls up posters; they all discuss the nuances of what belongs to the *president* and what belongs to the *person*. The viewer ponders with Havel the routinization of presidential power in the country, and even the small choices that have to be made to maintain it. At one of his last

lunches with staff, he shares that “I asked Milan Kucan [Slovenian ex-president] where he holds meetings now and he said ‘in a café.’ ...I’ll just go from pub to pub—my pockets full of well-thumbed photos of people I used to know; a photo of me and Stallone and Schwarzenegger.”

While the joke draws on Havel’s carefully crafted persona as the bewildered “little Czech” who suddenly becomes president, it also makes an important comment on the passage of power and the celebrification of politics. While he wistfully worries that the only things he’ll hang onto of his presidency are these tokens of memory, he implicitly acknowledges that in a healthy, modern democracy, the rhythms of democratic change should give way to a new interpretation of the office. After one last gala celebrating Havel’s farewell, the final shots show Havel and his entourage standing outside watching the military march. As the troops march away from Havel and the Castle, the maintenance of national order, stability, and decorum is guaranteed.

Above all, *Citizen Havel* captures the ritualization of a new political institution in Czech culture—a democratic presidency—by constructing a presidentiality that offers an assurance of the office’s security for the future. The documentary suggests that sense of stability had to be invented quickly in real time with discursive materials ranging from the Czech constitution itself; the language and images of the theatre; Czechoslovakian democratic, monarchic, and totalitarian traditions; Central European intellectual philosophy; the dissident counterculture; and even the transnational discursive conversations between different presidencies all over the region and the rest of the world. *Citizen Havel*’s use of documentary’s rhetoric of authenticity suggests that the audience is privileged to see Havel in a somehow “real” way. Thus, the documentary reinforces a mystification of politics, rather than an unmasking of it; the film creates an “aura” around the presidency consonant with the kind of aura that Havel believed the office needed for its future stability. Havel wrote in his autobiography:

One of the interesting things I realized in that period was how deeply people in our country need to have a head of state and how uneasy they are when the presidential standard is not flying above the Prague Castle....It's a slightly mystical thing. Even if the president did nothing, I think people would still be more at ease than if he simply did not exist at all. But there's more: it would even seem that people expect their head of state to declare the importance of certain moral norms. It doesn't automatically mean that these norms will be more respected by anyone. It only means that that's how people think it ought to be: the standard should fly, and someone should set the standard.<sup>102</sup>

This statement eloquently articulates why a presidential artifact like *Citizen Havel* might choose to focus on the *act* of being president, while often eschewing the political particulars. As long as *someone* trustworthy is performing the duties, the petty successes and failures of day-to-day politicking do not matter as much as the rhythms and rituals of the job being put on display. For Thomas Benson, the ultimate strength and weakness of film is “that it can create an experience, and an attitude toward that experience, but that it would be likely to diminish the felt response to the experience and the attitude if it were to provide a clearly stated, linear explanation of its point of view.”<sup>103</sup> This function of filmic persuasion matches the experience of presidentiality itself—a complex set of intertextual discourses that create an ideology around the way a nascent presidency and democracy should be built and sustained. *Citizen Havel* is an apt vehicle for enveloping viewers in an experience of a presidential tradition being constructed in seemingly real time.

While *Citizen Havel* tends to present a virtuous and moral political figure, there was no shortage of critiques against Havel's reliance on aesthetics and image. Critics like Aviezer Tucker wrote that “Havel's visions of existential revolution focused his attention on the person as opposed to the institutional level and prevented him from proposing institutional mechanisms

that would have minimized the damage that people who did not quite yet ‘live in truth’ were able to inflict on society.”<sup>104</sup> Similarly, Havel’s biographer John Keane saw Havel as a tragic figure who, upon assuming the presidency, did not live up to a “life in truth,” but instead was “using truth cautiously, as a means of repairing and oiling the machinery of state power, and his seat within it.”<sup>105</sup> Havel’s old friend Jan Urban put it even more succinctly: “Havel thought that simply staging a marketing event would shake up people’s minds and everything would move. This is not the way democracies work.”<sup>106</sup> According to such attacks, Havel’s adaptation of his philosophies to the actual rough-and-tumble of politics almost automatically discredits him because it involved necessary revisions upon its application to a living democratic system.

Whether fair or not, these critiques are important because they accentuate the normative standards by which post-revolutionary presidents would be judged: not just on their ability to navigate democratic pluralities but also on their adherence to revolutionary ideals. Not only is Havel held responsible for strict fidelity to his dissident-era “life in truth” philosophy, but he is also held responsible for setting a standard (or cautionary tale) for the future institution of the presidency. These critiques also reveal that the perceived purity of those revolutionary ideals tended to make critics problematically place “truth” and “morality” on one side, and “politics” and “images” on the other, thus repeating and reinforcing the problematic dichotomies between image and issue that Trevor Parry-Giles has highlighted in U.S. political discourse.<sup>107</sup> What *Citizen Havel* demonstrates is that, for Havel, there *is* no distinction between issue and image, style and substance, politics and truth. Havel’s reliance on tropes of performance, his belief that he had to embody the office artfully, his use of documentary film to contribute meaningfully to his constructed presidentiality, all combined with the actual constitutional restrictions of his office, ensured that image *would be* the issue.

In terms of the legacy of the institution of the Czech presidency that Havel fashioned, it still remains a young and evolving one. What is perhaps most revealing is that his two successors, Václav Klaus (2003-2012) and Milos Zeman (2013-present), were both highly partisan political careerists who came out of the Velvet Revolution like Havel but became his antagonists in the government from both the right and the left.<sup>108</sup> With the advent of the more traditionally political leaders like Klaus and Zeman, there may never be another figure like Havel who could at least attempt to transcend the party system, and it is likely that the first presidency after communism required a very specific type of leader that cannot be replicated. Still, Havel's specific presidentiality now becomes a kind of origin point for future Czech presidents, for better or for worse, and his precedence will always be that notion of the "guarantee of stability" during transition. He remains the defining symbol of 1989, the Velvet Revolution, and its aftermath in the Czech Republic. Legacy projects like *Citizen Havel* ensure that Havel himself will now become an inventional resource for leadership in the Czech nation, to be used or discarded, but always providing an important touchstone of that national and transnational storehouse of political myths in the same way Masaryk provided that resource to him. Future occupants of the Czech presidency will not have to directly face Havel's predicament of upholding revolutionary promises, but the office and its rhetorical expectations will continue to be marked by the collective memory of the transition out of communism.

The expansion of the concept of presidentiality into the global realm involves immersion into both the national and transnational contexts surrounding the presidency under analysis, and the complex histories, collective memories, and political styles that those presidents draw upon. What makes *Citizen Havel* compelling is that it presents the invention of the postcommunist presidency as an institution in a fledgling, fragile democracy, where that institution is constantly being negotiated through word and image. Havel thought, wrote, and talked often about the ways

he was bringing these fragments together into a unique interpretation of the office. Thus, this expansion also calls for the weighing of a presidency's constitutional requirements against its extraconstitutional ones *within* the political and cultural context, careful to draw on contested histories of executive leadership within the culture, while keeping an eye toward a broader, more global sense of what it means to articulate presidential power.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Občan Havel (Citizen Havel)*, DVD, dir. Pavel Koutecký and Miroslav Janek (Sony BMG, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> For more on the Clinton visit, see also Timothy Garton Ash, "Prague: Intellectuals and Politicians," in *Critical Essays on Václav Havel*, eds. Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz and Phyllis Carey (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1999), 67; Václav Havel, *To the Castle and Back*, trans. Paul Wilson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 9–11.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Begala, "Paul Begala Asks Bill Clinton and Madeleine Albright About Václav Havel," *The Daily Beast*, December 20, 2011, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/12/20/paul-begala-asks-bill-clinton-and-madeleine-albright-about-vaclav-havel.html>

<sup>4</sup> Begala, "Paul Begala Asks Bill Clinton."

<sup>5</sup> See also Huffington's comparison of Havel and Clinton during the Lewinsky scandal in Arianna Huffington, "Does the Personal Character of Our Leaders Really Matter?," Josephson Institute, 2004, [http://josephsoninstitute.org/public/resources/poc\\_huffington\\_character-of-leaders.html](http://josephsoninstitute.org/public/resources/poc_huffington_character-of-leaders.html); and Kaufman's notes on Havel's support of Clinton during that period in Michael T. Kaufman, "Havel, Repaying Favor to Friend, Stands in Solidarity With One of His Own," *New*

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*York Times*, September 17, 1998, <http://partners.nytimes.com/library/politics/091798clinton-havel.html>

<sup>6</sup> See Sanford F. Schram, “The Post-Modern Presidency and the Grammar of Electronic Electioneering,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 8, no. 2 (1991): 210–16.

<sup>7</sup> Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles, “Meta-Imaging, *The War Room*, and the Hyperreality of U.S. Politics,” *Journal of Communication* 49, no. 1 (1999): 29. On the politics of “front-stage” and “back-stage” behavior, see Joshua Meyrowitz, “New Sense of Politics: How Television Changes the Political Drama,” *Research in Political Sociology* 7 (1995): 117–38.

<sup>8</sup> For this concept of rupture and “return” in Czech culture, see Ladislav Holy, *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 138–39. In terms of the concept of the presidency and its relationship to national identity, the U.S. model is outlined well in Mary E. Stuckey, *Defining Americans: The Presidency and National Identity* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Eddie Cockrell, “Review: ‘Citizen Havel,’” *Variety*, February 12, 2008, <http://variety.com/2008/film/reviews/citizen-havel-1200548116/>

<sup>10</sup> Through a feminist lens, Jennifer Suchland opens up the idea of the “transnational” to include the experiences of the so-called “second world” and offers an important discussion of how the discourse of “difference” has been defined and critiqued in the study of postsocialism. See Jennifer Suchland, “Is Postsocialism Transnational?,” *Signs* 36, no. 4 (2011): 837–62.

<sup>11</sup> Trevor Parry-Giles and Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *The Prime-Time Presidency: The West Wing and U.S. Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 2.

<sup>12</sup> See Steve Saxonberg, *The Czech Republic Before the New Millennium: Politics, Parties and Gender*, East European Monographs Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

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<sup>13</sup> While there has not been a coordinated move to specifically apply the idea of presidential rhetoric to international cases, there nonetheless are excellent examples out there of studies of international presidential discourse. See especially Peggy Simpson, “The Troubled Reign of Lech Walesa in Poland,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (1996): 317–36; Catherine Conaghan and Carlos de la Torre, “The Permanent Campaign of Rafael Correa: Making Ecuador’s Plebiscitary Presidency,” *Press/Politics* 13, no. 2 (2008): 267–84; Karen Richman, “A *Lavalas* at Home/A *Lavalas* for Home: Inflections of Transnationalism in the Discourse of Haitian President Aristide,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 645 (1992): 189–200. Other studies of the American presidency make admirable leaps into its global and transnational impact—see G. Thomas Goodnight and Kathryn M. Olson, “Shared Power, Foreign Policy, and Haiti, 1994: Public Memories of War and Race,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 4 (2006): 601–34; Marouf Hasian, Jr., “The Philippine-American War and the American Debates about the Necessity and Legality of the ‘Water Cure,’ 1901-1903,” *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 5, no. 2 (2012): 106–23.

<sup>14</sup> Havel, *To the Castle and Back*, 278-9.

<sup>15</sup> Havel’s *To the Castle and Back* is the best source capturing the kinds of “materials” Havel was using to build his presidency, as it intercuts his reflections with staff memos from the period, which frequently refer self-consciously to models from other international presidencies and Czech leaders. See also his treatise on presidential politics written after his first two years in office and before the split of Czechoslovakia and his two terms as president of the Czech Republic: Václav Havel, *Summer Meditations*, trans. Paul Wilson (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

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<sup>16</sup> David Zarefsky, “Public Address Scholarship in the New Century,” in *The Handbook of Rhetoric & Public Address*, eds. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 76.

<sup>17</sup> Garth E. Pauley, “Documentary Desegregation: A Rhetorical Analysis of *Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment*,” *The Southern Communication Journal* 64, no. 2 (1999): 125.

<sup>18</sup> For an excellent contemporary review of the difficult political context facing the new leaders immediately after the Revolution and its constitutional nuance, see, *After the Velvet Revolution: Václav Havel and the New Leaders of Czechoslovakia Speak Out*, ed. Tim D. Whipple (New York: Freedom House, 1991).

<sup>19</sup> For a basic breakdown of the office from both a political science and constitutional law perspective see Sharon L. Wolchik, “The Czech Republic: Havel and the Evolution of the Presidency Since 1989,” in *Postcommunist Presidents*, ed. Ray Taras (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 168–91; and Vojtech Cepl and Mark Gillis, “A Forum on Presidential Powers: Czech Republic,” *East European Constitutional Review* 2, nos. 3/4 (1993/1994): 64–8.

<sup>20</sup> Wolchik, “The Czech Republic”; Cepl and Gillis, “A Forum on Presidential Powers: Czech Republic.” Also, an important source on the drafting of the constitution and the ensuing breakdown of Czechoslovakia as a federation is Eric Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia: Ethnic Conflict, Constitutional Fissure, Negotiated Breakup* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

<sup>21</sup> Cepl and Gillis, “A Forum on Presidential Powers: Czech Republic,” 64.

<sup>22</sup> Wolchik, “The Czech Republic,” 171.

<sup>23</sup> Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles, *Constructing Clinton*, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Havel, *Summer Meditations*, 12.

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<sup>25</sup> Havel, *Summer Meditations*, 14.

<sup>26</sup> Václav Havel, “The Role of the Czech President,” in *Critical Essays on Václav Havel*, eds. Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz and Phyllis Carey, trans. Paul Wilson (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1999), 262.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Holmes, “A Forum on Presidential Powers: The Postcommunist Presidency,” *East European Constitutional Review* 2, nos. 3/4 (1993/1994): 39.

<sup>28</sup> Havel, “The Role of the Czech President,” 263.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Russell, “(Mis)Interpreting Václav Havel: Conviction and Responsibility in Post-Communist Politics,” *Australian and New Zealand Journal of European Studies* 4, no. 1 (2012); 1 (2013): 55.

<sup>30</sup> Wolchik, “The Czech Presidents,” 169; Slavoj Žižek, “Attempts to Escape the Logic of Capitalism,” *London Review of Books*, 28 October 1999, 3–6, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v21/n21/slavoj-zizek/attempts-to-escape-the-logic-of-capitalism>

<sup>31</sup> Robert Hariman, *Political Style: The Artistry of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 121.

<sup>32</sup> Holy, *The Little Czech*, 163–64.

<sup>33</sup> Holy, *The Little Czech*, 166.

<sup>34</sup> Havel, *Summer Meditations*, 50.

<sup>35</sup> Havel, *Summer Meditations*, 11.

<sup>36</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, “Afterword: The Ways of Rhetoric,” in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, 219.

<sup>37</sup> A good source on the roots of Havel’s spiritual rhetoric can be found in Martin C. Putna, “The Spirituality of Václav Havel in its Czech and American Contexts: Between Unitarianism and New Age, T.G. Masaryk and Kampademia,” *East European Politics and*

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*Societies* 24, no. 3 (2010): 353–78; Edward F. Findlay, “Classical Ethics and Postmodern Critique: Political Philosophy in Václav Havel and Jan Patočka,” *Review of Politics* 61, no. 3 (1999): 403–38.

<sup>38</sup> See Peter C. Newman, “Saluting the Playwright Who Became President,” *Maclean’s* 111, no. 33 (August 17, 1998): 52.

<sup>39</sup> Havel, *To the Castle and Back*, 207.

<sup>40</sup> Noemi Marin, “The Other Side(s) of History: The Return of Rhetoric,” *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 9, no. 1 (2006): 214–15.

<sup>41</sup> Vlastimil Havlik, Milan Hruše, and Marek Pecina, “For Rule of Law, Political Plurality, and a Just Society: Use of the Legislative Veto by President Václav Havel,” *East European Politics and Societies* 28, no. 2 (2014): 457.

<sup>42</sup> *Občan Havel*, 2008.

<sup>43</sup> Václav Havel, “New Year’s Address to the Nation, Prague, January 1, 1990,” in *The Art of the Impossible*, 3–9.

<sup>44</sup> Cepl and Gillis, “A Forum on Presidential Powers: Czech Republic,” 67.

<sup>45</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 339.

<sup>46</sup> Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, 344.

<sup>47</sup> Jon Silver, “Film Reviews: Citizen Havel (2008),” *Film & History* 39, no. 2 (2009): 68.

<sup>48</sup> See the film’s website for more information at Aerofilms, “Citizen Havel,” 2008, <http://www.aerofilms.cz/filmy/112-Obcan-Havel/>

<sup>49</sup> Tom Huddleston, “Review: Citizen Havel,” *Time Out*, 10 October 2008, <http://www.timeout.com/us/film/citizen-havel>; Eddie Cockrell, “Review: ‘Citizen Havel,’” *Variety*, 12 February 2008, <http://variety.com/2008/film/reviews/citizen-havel-1200548116/>

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- <sup>50</sup> Eddie Cockrell, "Review: 'Citizen Havel'," *Variety*, 12 February 2008, <http://variety.com/2008/film/reviews/citizen-havel-1200548116>; Jiří Peňás, "A Daily Dose of Havel," *Týden*, July 2007, 68–69, [http://www.obcanhavel.cz/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=29](http://www.obcanhavel.cz/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=29)
- <sup>51</sup> Jiří Peňás, "An Interview with Pavel Koutecký," *Týden*, July 2006, 84–85.
- <sup>52</sup> Peňás, "A Daily Dose of Havel," 68–69.
- <sup>53</sup> See Parry-Giles and Parry Giles, "Meta-Imaging," 28–46.
- <sup>54</sup> Peňás, "An Interview with Pavel Koutecký," 85.
- <sup>55</sup> Peňás, "A Daily Dose of Havel," 69.
- <sup>56</sup> Thomas W. Benson and Brian J. Snee, "New Political Documentary: Rhetoric, Propaganda, and the Civic Prospect," in *The Rhetoric of the New Political Documentary*, eds. Thomas W. Benson and Brian J. Snee (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2008), 14.
- <sup>57</sup> Pauley, "Documentary Desegregation," 126–28.
- <sup>58</sup> Joshua Meyrowitz, "New Sense of Politics," 124.
- <sup>59</sup> Joanne Morreale, *The Presidential Campaign Film: A Critical History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 6–12.
- <sup>60</sup> Thomas W. Benson, "The Rhetorical Structure of Frederick Wiseman's *High School*," *Communication Monographs* 47, no. 4 (1980): 234.
- <sup>61</sup> Benson, "The Rhetorical Structure," 234.
- <sup>62</sup> Meyrowitz, "New Sense of Politics," 126.
- <sup>63</sup> Peňás, "An Interview with Pavel Koutecký," 84–85.
- <sup>64</sup> Garton Ash, "Prague: Intellectuals and Politicians," 67.
- <sup>65</sup> For more on Havel's absurdism and use of political aesthetics, see: Anthony Kammass, "Václav Havel's Absurd Route to Democracy," *Critical Horizons* 9, no. 2 (2008): 215–38.

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<sup>66</sup> The politics of “display” and performance are articulated well in the collection by *Rhetorics of Display*, ed. Lawrence J. Prelli (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>67</sup> Rick Fawn, “Symbolism in the Diplomacy of Czech President Václav Havel,” *East European Quarterly*, 33, no. 1 (1999): 1–19.

<sup>68</sup> Meyrowitz, “New Sense of Politics,” 126. See also Joshua Meyrowitz, “Television and Interpersonal Behavior: Codes of Perception and Response,” in *Inter/Media: Interpersonal Communication in a Media World*, eds. Gary Gumpert and Robert Cathcart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979): 56–76.

<sup>69</sup> Stephen Schiff, “Havel’s Choice,” in *Critical Essays on Václav Havel*, edited by Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz and Phyllis Carey (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1999), 76.

<sup>70</sup> Jon Elster, “Afterword: The Making of Postcommunist Presidents,” in *Postcommunist Presidents*, edited by Ray Taras (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 235.

<sup>71</sup> Havel, *To the Castle*, 266.

<sup>72</sup> Murray Edelman, *From Art to Politics: How Artistic Creations Shape Political Conceptions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995): 74.

<sup>73</sup> See Timothy Garton Ash, “On Olga Havel (1933–1996),” *New York Review of Books*, March 21, 1996, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1996/mar/21/on-olga-havel-19331996/>

<sup>74</sup> For more on Havel’s use of Sipek, see Havel, *To the Castle*, 152, 188, 282–83.

<sup>75</sup> See Paul Wilson, “Václav Havel in Word and Deed,” in *Critical Essays on Václav Havel*, eds. Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz and Phyllis Carey (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1999), 25–26.

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<sup>76</sup> Rubenstein notes the bodily discourse around presidents from Reagan through George W. Bush, and presidential hopefuls like Hillary Clinton, but perhaps the best encapsulation of this fetishization comes in her coverage of Reagan during the Iran Contra crisis. See Diane Rubenstein, *This is Not a President: Sense, Nonsense, and the Political Imaginary* (New York: New York University Press, 2008): 50–72.

<sup>77</sup> See the critique of Moore’s film in Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles, “*Fahrenheit 9/11*—Virtual Reality and the Limitations of Commodified Dissent,” in *The New Political Documentary*, eds. Thomas W. Benson and Brian J. Snee (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 24–53.

<sup>78</sup> For a chronicle of this period, see especially Paul Berman, “Havel’s Burden: The Philosopher-King is Moral,” *New York Times Magazine*, May 11, 1997, <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/05/11/magazine/the-philosopher-king-is-mortal.html>

<sup>79</sup> This notion of Havel’s representative power is expressed well by J.P. Stern, “Havel’s Castle,” in *Critical Essays on Václav Havel*, eds. Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz and Phyllis Carey (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1999), 34.

<sup>80</sup> For an excellent review of Havel’s political thought in terms of its moral philosophy, and the difficulty of practicing an “apolitical politics,” see Delia Popescu, *Political Action in Vaclav Havel’s Thought* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 135–49.

<sup>81</sup> Adam Michnik, “When Socrates Became Pericles: Václav Havel’s ‘Great History,’ 1936-2011,” *Common Knowledge* 18, no. 3 (2012): 412.

<sup>82</sup> Shawn J. Parry-Giles, “Dwight D. Eisenhower, ‘Atoms for Peace’ (8 December 1953),” *Voices of Democracy* 1 (2006): 119.

<sup>83</sup> Morreale, *The Presidential Campaign Film*, 10.

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<sup>84</sup> Kenneth S. Zagacki, “Václav Havel and the Rhetoric of Folly,” in *Critical Essays on Václav Havel*, edited by Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz and Phyllis Carey (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1999), 129.

<sup>85</sup> Hariman, *Political Style*, 119–20.

<sup>86</sup> See the explanations for the divides in intellectual traditions in Carol Skalnik Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation Versus State* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 84; Jirina Siklova, “The ‘Gray Zone’ and the Future of Dissent in Czechoslovakia (1989),” in *Good-Bye Samizdat: Twenty Years of Czechoslovak Underground Writing*, ed. Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1992), 184.

<sup>87</sup> For more on the Klaus-Havel rivalry, see Václav Havel, Václav Klaus, and Petr Pithart, “Rival Visions,” *The Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 1 (1996): 12–23; Garton Ash, “Prague: Intellectuals and Politicians,” 57–71; and Gil Eyal, *The Origin of Postcommunist Elites: From Prague Spring to the Breakup of Czechoslovakia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

<sup>88</sup> Putna, “The Spirituality of Václav Havel”; Josette Baer, “Imagining Membership: The Conception of Europe in the Political Thought of Václav Havel,” *Studies in East European Thought* 52, no. 3 (2000): 203–26.

<sup>89</sup> Stories and images abound about Masaryk that reinforce a legend around the Czech president’s need to remain austere and “ordinary,” and to eschew the perks of high office for the sacrifice of the nation. Holy, *The Little Czech*, 161.

<sup>90</sup> See *Občan Havel (Citizen Havel)*.

<sup>91</sup> Holy, *The Little Czech*, 165.

<sup>92</sup> Holy, *The Little Czech*, 164.

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<sup>93</sup> See especially Edward E. Ericson, Jr., “Solzhenitsyn, Havel, and the Twenty-First Century,” *Modern Age* 41, no. 1 (1999): 3–18.

<sup>94</sup> Keith V. Erickson, “Presidential Rhetoric’s Visual Turn: Performance Fragments and the Politics of Illusionism,” *Communication Monographs* 67, no. 2 (2000): 139.

<sup>95</sup> Garton Ash, “Prague: Intellectuals and Politicians,” 66.

<sup>96</sup> Christopher Hitchens, “Havel in the Castle,” *Nation*, December 16, 1996. 8; Berman, “The Philosopher-King is Mortal.”

<sup>97</sup> See Huffington, “Does the Personal Character of Our Leaders Really Matter?”

<sup>98</sup> Jacques Rupnik, “In Praise of Václav Havel,” *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 3 (2010): 141.

<sup>99</sup> Garton Ash, “Prague: Intellectuals and Politicians,” 68.

<sup>100</sup> Havel, *To the Castle*, 275.

<sup>101</sup> Garton Ash, “Prague: Intellectuals and Politicians,” 69.

<sup>102</sup> Havel, *To the Castle*, 171.

<sup>103</sup> Benson, “The Rhetorical Structure,” 258.

<sup>104</sup> Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence From Patočka to Havel* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2000), 209.

<sup>105</sup> Keane, *Václav Havel*, 436.

<sup>106</sup> Justine Costanza, “Former Dissident: Recalling the Unexpected Revolution,” *Aktualne*, October 11, 2009, <http://zpravy.aktualne.cz/former-dissident-recalling-the-unexpected-revolution/r~i:article:652457/>

<sup>107</sup> Trevor Parry-Giles, “Resisting a ‘Traacherous Piety’: Issues, Images, and Public Deliberation in Presidential Campaigns,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 13, no. 1 (2010): 37–63.

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<sup>108</sup> See James Kirchick, “Bad King Klaus: The Failings of a Czech President,” *Der Spiegel*, Spiegel Online International, February 27, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/bad-king-klaus-the-failings-of-a-czech-president-a-885928.html>; and Caleb Crain, “Havel’s Specter: On Václav Havel,” *Nation*, March 21, 2012, <http://www.thenation.com/article/166949/havels-specter-vaclav-havel#>