



**Hoi, Hallo, Nazdar, Cześć, Sholem Aleichem, and Szia!**

**Vol. 1/February 2024**

It's my pleasure to write you, dear friends of the **Austria Centre Leiden**, with the first edition of our semi-annual newsletter. My name is [Sarah A. Cramsey](#) and I am the Special Chair for Central European Studies and University Lecturer in Judaism and Diaspora Studies at Leiden University. I teach courses at the Leiden Institute History, the Leiden Institute for Area Studies, the Leiden University Centre for the Study of Religion and the program in International Studies. In addition to this, I am the Director of the **Austria Centre Leiden** which is one of nine Austria Centers around the world that are generously sponsored by the Austrian Government. We are also supported by the Austrian Studies Fund at the LUF, or [Leiden University Fund](#) (have you made your donation yet?!).

At the **Austria Centre Leiden**, we enjoy excellent relations with colleagues at the other Austria Centers in North America, Europe and the Middle East; we travel to annual meetings of our academic colleagues as well as our professional colleagues based at the Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung and the OEAD (Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation); we welcome colleagues to join us as Visiting Professors, for conferences, lectures, and visiting fellowships; and, we look forward to seeing our students, fellow professors and all of you, our wonderful array of "public" friends, at events throughout the year.

We have a very exciting program for the [spring 2024](#) semester! Keep reading to learn about all the events that you can expect over the next few months, the achievements of our Visiting Researcher and some other exciting things that we did in 2023! As always, I am here to receive RSVPs, take suggestions for events and find more ways to celebrate the unique culture and remember the complex history of the region we call "Central Europe." **Email me at [s.a.cramsey@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:s.a.cramsey@hum.leidenuniv.nl).**

Warm regards to all of you, Sarah



**Preliminary Schedule of Events | Spring 2024**  
**To RSVP email [s.a.cramsey@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:s.a.cramsey@hum.leidenuniv.nl)**  
**Check our [website](#) for additional events!**

**Monday, Feb. 5, 2024**

**Prof. dr. Sarah Cramsey**

“Rooted: Kafka and the Jewish Diaspora in Central Europe” | 19:15-20:45 at Utrecht University

**Thursday Feb. 8, 2024**

**Mr. Robert Menasse**, with NRC critic Michel Krielaars, on his new novel “The Enlargement”  
18:30-20:00, Leiden, The Hague Campus, Wijnhaven Building, 2.02

**Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2024 at 13:15**

**Dr. Vera Scepanovic** (Assistant Professor in International Relations and European Studies, Leiden)  
“Reindustrialization and its discontents: lessons from the Visegrad countries”  
Faculty Club, Leiden | Event co-sponsored by the CEES, Central and East European Studies Centre

**Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 13:15**

**Dr. Naomi Truan** (Assistant Professor in German Sociolinguistics, Leiden)  
“German Beyond Its Native Speakers: Pluricentric, Multilingual, and Globalized Perspectives”  
Faculty Club, Leiden | Event co-sponsored by the CEES, Central and East European Studies Centre

**Tuesday, April 16, 2024 at 16:15**

**His Excellency Mr. René Miko**, Ambassador of the Czech Republic to The Netherlands  
An event to mark the 20 years anniversary of the European Union’s expansion into Central Europe  
Faculty Club, Leiden

**Wednesday April 24, 2024 at 13:15**

**Dr. Dorine Schellens** (University Lecturer, Centre for the Arts in Society, Leiden)  
“Catching Kairos? Imagining Alternative Futures in Eastern German Literature”  
Faculty Club, Leiden | Event co-sponsored by the CEES, Central and East European Studies Centre

**Friday, June 7, 2024 at 16:15**

**Prof. dr. Sarah Cramsey**

Oratie: “Care, Children and the ‘Other’ Holocaust”

Grootauditorium, Academieggebouw with reception at Hortus Botanicus to follow

**June 19-23, 2024, Annual Meeting of the Austria Centers, Andrásy Universität Budapest**





## Meet Dr. Lena Sadovski, Visiting Researcher to the Austria Centre Leiden in 2023

### What did you do before coming to Leiden?

I was at the University of Vienna working on my PhD thesis about Venetian Dalmatia in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. I defended my thesis only one week before coming to Leiden!

### What are some of the topics of your research and teaching?

In my thesis, I analyse the social structures of Venetian Dalmatia in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, thus Venice, Dalmatia and the Adriatic space in the late medieval and early modern period are a core topic of my research. Important issues in this time and region were multilingualism and religious diversity, which I deal with in articles about Slavic literacy among the Venetians or Jews who converted to Christianity in Apulia and then emigrated to Dalmatia. Another aspect of religious studies that I am now focusing on in my post-doc project at the Austrian Academy of Sciences is concerned with Catholic communities in the Ottoman Balkans, more precisely in Bulgaria in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. It is fascinating to see how a very small community of Catholics survived among a majority Orthodox Christian population and under Muslim rule, and how these Catholics even constituted the intellectual elite of Bulgaria in this time.



### How did your time in Leiden help your research/professional development?

My time in Leiden gave me the opportunity to thoroughly rework my dissertation and prepare the manuscripts of two books that will be published on the basis of my thesis. For future positions, it will be very helpful to have my dissertation published in two books – one of them in English, the other in German – in such a short time after completing the PhD. The welcoming atmosphere at Leiden University and the Austria Centre Leiden (and the cool Dutch summers!) enabled me to work in a concentrated way without the usual distractions back home, and the feedback I got from colleagues helped me to sharpen my arguments and improve my writings.

### Do you have anything to add about how the Austria Centre Leiden helped you after your PhD?

I am very grateful for getting the opportunity of a first research stay abroad in the post-doc-phase immediately after my PhD defence. By coming to Leiden so quickly and meeting people of different academic backgrounds who were truly interested in my research, I felt supported in further pursuing an academic career. For many positions and grants a desired qualification of the applicant is international experience and being connected to researchers abroad; in addition to my other international partners and networks, the stay in Leiden and the association with the Austria Centre there and in other places worldwide has been and also will be of great help in this regard. I am thus very much looking forward to joining the next annual convention of the Austria Centres in Budapest and to getting to know more people from this great network!

## Music and Words: The Austria Centre, the Practicum Musicae Orkest and Grensverleggend/Crossing Borders

On Sunday, April 23, 2023, Sarah Cramsey gave a special lecture alongside the Practicum Musicae Orkest at the Cultuurhuis de Paulus in Oegstgeest. Cramsey spoke about the borders which encircle and criss-cross Mitteleuropa. Maps both real and imagined reveal historic borders, geological borders, religious borders, ethnic borders, national borders, cultural borders and political borders. In fact, Cramsey argued, to be “Central European” in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and even today is to be a “border-crosser.” The lecture situated the musical experience of border crossing in larger contexts, illuminated the composers Anton Bruckner, Karl Goldmark, Josef Suk and Joachim Raff as border crossers themselves and showed how a discussion of “borders” offers unique lens to learn about the history, culture and music of Central Europe. After all, you “know that you have arrived in Central Europe, when you hear it.”



Leiden graduate student **Lily Jalink** worked with Cramsey to create the program for the event. She answered a few questions about the orchestra and her involvement in PMO for the Austria Centre.

### **What is the Practicum Musicae Orkest and what kind of events do you do?**

Since fall 2019, the Practicum Musicae Orkest (PMO) provides a place for students who are developing both academically and musically at a high level. Founded by students of the minor of the same name offered by Leiden University and the Royal Conservatory of Music in The Hague, the orchestra focuses primarily on participants of this program, but also on other (former) students who play music at a high level. For this group, the PMO offers opportunities to develop orchestral and ensemble playing in addition to individual training and to build knowledge of repertoire for small symphonic and chamber orchestra.

### **How long have you been part of the Practicum Musicae Orkest and what do you like about this organization?**

I myself have been part of the orchestra since its founding in the fall of 2019. Since April 2022 I've also been contributing to the organisation as a board-member. In a larger group, it is often the case that mainly the conductor has something to say, and the rest have to listen to him/her. Especially as a string player, like myself, you are one of many. In a small orchestra, each individual person is important to the musical whole. Furthermore, I like the connection the PM Orchestra tries to make with academia. Music rarely stands on its own, and I find it very interesting to put it in its (historical) context and learn more about the background of a piece. I don't know any other student orchestra that tries to combine these things in every concert. Want more info? Check out our [website!](#)





## **The Austria Centre Leiden traveled to Berkeley for the Convention of Austria Centers**

The fifteenth Annual Convention of Austria Centers took place in Berkeley, California, USA in May 2023. There, colleagues gathered from around the world, coming from Jerusalem, Olomouc, Vienna, Budapest, Edmonton, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Berkeley and, of course, Leiden. The Austria Center Leiden was represented by Prof. dr. Sarah Cramsey (who in fact did her doctorate at the University of California, Berkeley), Mr. Steven Verburg (B.A. graduate in History and winner of the 2022 Mr. Hugu Weiland Prize for Best Thesis in Central European Studies) and Ms. Anneke Romijnders (B.A. graduate in Religious Studies and current B.A. student in International Studies). The trio joined their colleagues from around the world on trips to the beautiful redwood forest in Muir Woods, the “campus” of Google, Stanford University, the city of San Francisco and, of course, to sights in Berkeley, California. Beyond this, Cramsey, Verburg and Romijnders gave presentations to the conference attendees and interested members of the public to showcase the great work in Central European studies being done at Leiden. This event was generously sponsored by the OeAD, Austria’s Agency for Education and Internationalisation which works on behalf of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research.

According to Romijnders, the event was a “unique coming together of a diverse group of people, all passionate about research related to Austria. ‘Austria’ should be understood in the broadest sense here. Research topics ranged from modern-day integration policies in Vienna to religious figures in the Byzantine Empire. As a result, the conference showed the rich history of Austrian studies while allowing for, a variety of interests to come together.” For Verburg, the event stimulated “a scholarly and cordial atmosphere” to discuss “ongoing research on Central Europe, which allowed for a broad understanding of historical, and current, developments and topics of interest. This atmosphere was both created by the academic events in the mornings, as well as by the well-organised activities in the afternoon and the lively dinners that followed.” At the dinners, Romijnder remarked, we heard “conversations simultaneously in German, English and Czech. This made for some wonderful interactions stimulated by a shared love for Austrian studies. Yet, it also showed the power of national roots and belongingness.”



## Prof. Ismee Tames, Dr. Kathryn Brackney and Dr. Rebekka Grossmann attend book launch for Sarah Cramsey's *Uprooting the Diaspora* alongside 70 guests

On September 20, 2023, the Austria Centre Leiden and the Leiden Jewish Studies Association convened a panel to celebrate the launch of Prof. dr. Cramsey's new book *Uprooting the Diaspora: Jewish Belonging and the "Ethnic Revolution" in Poland and Czechoslovakia, 1936-1946*. The [book](#) was published by the Modern Jewish Experience Series at Indiana University Press in 2023. Dr. Corey Williams, Programme Chair of Religious Studies, hosted the event which included comments from Dr. Rebekka Grossmann (Leiden Institute History), Dr. Kate Brackney (Leiden Institute History) and Prof. dr. Ismee Tames (Utrecht University and NIOD). More than 70 people attended this event and the reception following it including representatives from the Austrian Embassy in The Hague, from the Czech Embassy in The Hague and the Czech Cultural Centre in Rotterdam.

The invited panelists had much to say about Cramsey's book. Brackney, a historian whose own research explores how aesthetic norms have developed for remembering the Holocaust and other genocides, noted that Cramsey used a unique collection of documents from "various officials and advocates from United Nation's Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, the Czech government-in-exile, and the World Jewish Congress" to "illuminate the complex international and institutional backdrop that made emigration" away from Europe an option for European Jews after the Second World War and the Holocaust. According to Brackney, Cramsey's work shows that the "motivations of these officials weren't just humanitarian, though. By the end of 1946, what Hitler initially starts is a project that the Allies, returned governments-in-exile, and Soviets are determined to finish: that is, a radical re-organization of East Central Europe through massive population transfers.

Grossmann, a historian of migration and the unique visual culture attached to it, delivered an eloquent review of Cramsey's book. For Grossmann, the protagonists of *Uprooting the Diaspora* "help us to understand a history that was both regional and transnational at the same time, a history that occurred in places like Warsaw or the Czech border town of Nachod just as much as it did in Geneva, New York, or London. It is therefore a perfect example of how to show that microhistories can be written as global history and that global history has much to contribute to local histories."

Finally, Tames situated Cramsey's work more broadly, ending her comments with a profound statement. *Uprooting the Diaspora* reveals the "violence" embedded in the ethnic and national categories that were created in the 1940s and continue to be utilized today. There was "violence", Tames observed, in the act of category creation itself. Cramsey responded to questions from the panelists and all responded to questions from the audience which included more than 30 students.

