

**THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL  
IDENTITY IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF  
CZECH ART**

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## **Abstract**

National identity can be expressed in many ways by individuals, groups and states. Since the nineteenth century, Central Europe has been undergoing rapid changes in the political, social and cultural spheres, which was reflected in the self-definition of the nations living in this region, and in their definition by others. The Czech people, who until 1918 were a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, gave birth to a national revival movement in the nineteenth century and eventually emancipated themselves to create an independent Czechoslovakia. The idea of „national identity“ was, therefore, crucial and this was enhanced in many areas of human activity, including the construction of a historical legitimacy for the nation.

The struggle for recognition of the historical existence of the Czech nation was also projected into the discourse adopted for historical and contemporary art writing and exhibition practice. In this thesis, I focus on the ways in which Czech national identity was constructed in the historiography of art. I shall argue that the various ideologies which influenced the writers led to an understanding of Czech art as epitomising certain qualities of the Czech nation. At the same time, the Czech nation was presented as highly advanced because of its artistic achievements.

I shall explore how art historians, historians, artists, archaeologists and philosophers created their notion of a Czech national art on the basis of either negotiating a compromise with the various ethnic groups, methodologies and political affiliations, or by emphasising their opposition to the same. Another contested area was the concept and political uses of artistic quality. It will be my aim to examine broader circumstances of these contestations in the Introduction and more specific ideological motivations behind Czech art history in the subsequent chapters. In Chapter One, I shall outline the main places where art history was practiced in Bohemia and Moravia which were crucial for constructing the discourse on national art. Chapter Two examines the texts of the first Czech art historians in the second half of the nineteenth century who became interested in the national aspects of Czech art because of the political and cultural climate. In Chapter Three, I shall examine the nineteenth century debates between Czech and German authors on the origins of mediaeval art, confirming Czech or German national identity

respectively. Chapter Four studies the rise of Czech art history as a “scientific” discipline in Prague and the attempts of Czech art historians at its professionalisation, which – nevertheless – did not abandon a nationalistic discourse. The main focus of Chapter Five is the co-existence of nationalistic views of Czech art with the attempts of artists and art critics to bring Czech art into a dialogue with Western art. In the following chapter, Chapter Six, this practice is explored in the context of the Viennese university and the so-called Vienna School of art history, particularly the work and legacy of Max Dvořák. The influence of the School on Czech art history is the topic of Chapter Seven, which again brings up the question of the divide between international and national perspectives of Czech art. Criticism of the Czech Vienna School followers from various groups of art historians is examined in Chapter Eight. Finally, in Chapter Nine, I conclude with the exploration of the rise of a new concept of art historical identity, the concept of Czechoslovak identity.

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# Introduction

Attempts to define the specific traits in art of a particular group of people – whether a specific ethnicity, class, or for example gender – have been central to the discipline of art history since the early nineteenth century. Such endeavours had many motivations, from political to personal, and in most cases relied on the identification of a set of typical features that distinguished the art of one group from that of another group.

The search for a national art played a particularly important role in the construction of national identities in Central Europe of the nineteenth century, in the period of the so-called recovery of small nations. The attempts of one of them, the Czechs, to identify what features constitute Czech art and thus support their national identity, are the subject of this thesis. When art history emerged as an academic discipline in the Czech speaking lands around mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, discourses of Czech nationalism and national identity had been already created by Czech national revivalists, especially writers, poets and journalists. Once art history was institutionalised and therefore a recognized public discourse, the notion of “Czech national art” became a tool used for ideological and political purposes. Many writers pointed out the specificities of Czech art in order to demonstrate the uniqueness of the Czech nation, which until 1918 did not have its own state.

This thesis therefore examines the construction of the notion of Czech art in the period of the nation’s emancipation. I am interested in the ways various authors approached art as significant for the nation’s cultural and political rebirth. I scrutinize what works of art were considered national (Czech), what formal and other qualities were emphasised as ‘Czech,’ where Czech art was placed in relation to the art of other nations or regions, and primarily, the motivations of the various authors I consider.

The period I am concerned with spans the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century, when the Czech-speaking lands were under Habsburg rule, and the creation of the independent state of Czechoslovakia. During this period, the Czechs



underwent a radical change, from being a subordinate minority ethnic group within a larger Empire to becoming the core of a larger political entity in union with another Slavic nation, the Slovaks. Such a development was necessarily reflected in the understanding of the historical position of the Czechs in Europe. Historical disciplines, including the history of art, comprehended the Czech (and Slovak) nation on the basis of the current political circumstances and aimed at justifying the political claims of the nation through their research focus.

In most cases the specific character of Czech art (its “Czechness”) was identified, between the 1850s and 1930s, on the basis of contrasting it with the art of other ethnic or social groups (mostly the Germans, Slovaks or the rural peasantry). In more general terms, I explore how Czech national identity was shaped by the current revival movement, politics and philosophies, the geography of the region, or its ethnic composition; all of these factors affected the way Czech art, or art in Bohemia, was understood.<sup>1</sup> In this connection, the theoretical views of the process of construction of national identity shall be explored in greater detail and related to the practices of art history.

An important question, to which I shall keep returning, is whether it was the politically and culturally targeted nationalism of the period between the 1850s and 1930s that affected art historical study of the artworks or, whether art history itself contributed to the construction of nationalist identity through a prejudiced explanation of visual art.<sup>2</sup> As I demonstrate in the remainder of this thesis, art history and wider theories of Czech national identity had reciprocal effects on their development; on the one hand nationalist ideologies in a range of different political environments injected and directed the course of art historical scholarship in its search for a national Czech artistic tradition. On the other hand, art history provided

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<sup>1</sup> The *geographical* region of Bohemia is in German and English texts usually associated with the descendant of the mediaeval kingdom of Bohemia. This *historical* political entity was situated on the Czech crown lands and in this interpretation consists of the Bohemian, Moravian and Silesian parts of the country. Their inhabitants were of both Czech and German language affiliation. In this dissertation, I shall refer to “Bohemia” in this historical meaning.

<sup>2</sup> “Prejudiced” in this sense does not have negative connotations. Rather, along with Jonathan Harris, it means being constructed on the basis of a previously created opinion. Harris, *The new art history: a critical introduction* (London: Routledge, 2001), 30.

a series of tangible monuments and artefacts with which a sense of a national past and national identity could be made visible by nationalist ideologues.

In this dissertation, I am not primarily interested in establishing the “correctness” of the authors I examine, but rather in the political and ideological functions of art historical writing in Czech culture and society. Therefore my reading of art historical texts is not with a view to ascertaining their accuracy in the representation of the past. I rather aim to examine the motives behind their claims and the ways in which they were delivered; I am concerned with questions of *why* the authors adopted these concrete approaches and what political, ideological and other objectives they had in so doing. For that purpose, I have selected texts that highlight specific issues that shaped writing on Czech art, specifically, how it was influenced by the attempts to construct Czech national identity in the given periods. I take these texts as symptomatic of wider debates, even though they represent only a fraction of the research published at the time. As I will demonstrate, however, a great many theoreticians as well as practicing artists were concerned with the idea of Czech national art at some stage of their career.

Likewise, although I refer to specific works of art, my aim is not to provide an overview of Czech art of the period or examine the works of art that authors discuss. I am interested in the *discourses* about art. At the same time, since works of art are in the centre of the discussions, which are examined here, I pay attention to the artistic phenomena in the context of the art historical debates in which they appear.

The chapters in this dissertation are organized in a more or less historical succession in which each of them explores broader aspects of art writing related to the construction of national identity. After summarizing the historical and cultural context of the Czech speaking region, in which the following art historical debates are situated, Chapter One provides a brief outline of the various institutions that have played a key role in the codification of the notion of Czech art. I provide an overview of the newly established societies and museums, which, alongside

institutions of monumental protection, had a great impact on publications on art in Bohemia and Moravia. The critical role in the formation of art historical discourse was played by the scholars at the University and two art schools in Prague, which is another issue I examine in order to provide a sense of where art history was situated. Initially, these scholars published their work in journals – before securing finances for more substantial publications, and it is therefore also my aim to give a brief summary of the early journals of the nineteenth century.

The main focal point of Chapter Two is the initial attempts of Czech authors to establish the nature of art in Bohemia during the rise of nationalistic writing of art history in the second half of the nineteenth century. The authors I study were influenced by the needs of the period to emphasise typically Czech features of art in Bohemia which would confirm the attempts of the Czechs at promoting the idea of a national history and culture. The resulting texts were not always based on research of preserved art historical material, but rather on an idealised view of Czech art projected onto the past.

At the heart of heated debates on the origins and nature of art in Bohemia and Moravia, which took place at this time, were the contrasting views held by authors of Czech and German nationalities. Both these groups attempted to construct histories of art in Bohemia that could be integrated into the art history of the respective national groups and validate its historical claims. As a result, many authors often relied on romanticized notions of the origins of art in the early and high Middle Ages in order to prove which ethnic and national sphere of influence their art belonged to. An indispensable element of this practice, examined in detail in Chapter Three was the establishment of identifiable formal traits that could define the art of the respective nation and distinguish it from all others.

In Chapter Four I explore the rise of professional art history at the end of the nineteenth century. I examine the diverse educational and research establishments in Bohemia and Moravia, focusing mainly on Prague and the Charles University which, in 1882, was split into separate Czech and German parts. Whereas, until the early 1880s, Czech art history lacked a professional attitude and was undertaken by

amateurs enthused by nationalistic and romantic goals, the new generation of professional art historians in the late nineteenth century employed a range of rigorous research methods. This more “scholarly” approach, however, did not bring an end to the exaltation of special qualities of Czech art and rather provided for a more grounded explanation of their nature. I examine the nature of the academic study of art, the main focus of the authors and their aims, given that these writers were probably the most influential in creating a view of Czech art that would be passed onto a wider audience. Such a view could not omit contemporary events in the art world and influences on Czech art from abroad. An important constituent of writing Czech art history of the time was therefore also its reaction to modern art, especially Secessionism.

The views of Czech art, as professed in the academic institutions, were not the only discourses about Czech art created from a national perspective. A significant role was also played by artists and architects who belonged to artists’ clubs and societies or by art journals and the exhibitions they staged. At the end of the nineteenth century, artists and art critics began to look extensively abroad for comparisons and justifications for the state of Czech art and in many cases saw Czech art and art history as provincial and backward. Exhibitions were organized to introduce contemporary foreign art to Czech audiences and to juxtapose it with local art. In Chapter Five examples of these exhibitions will be contrasted with more traditionally organized displays that tried to present culture and arts in Bohemia and Moravia in the great exhibitions of the late nineteenth century. The critical discourse surrounding these events, the writings of a selection of artists and art critics, including national issues, constitute the main topic of this chapter.

The international orientation of modern artists at the beginning of the twentieth century was gradually met also in the institutional discipline of art history. The shortage of academic scholars, from which art history in Bohemia suffered in the nineteenth century, was partly resolved with the arrival of a new generation of art historians who were educated at the University of Vienna. A prominent figure was Max Dvořák, who although of Czech origin, became a key figure in Viennese art history, and helped to devise a range of art historical methods that aimed at turning art history into an objective, rigorous science. Chapter Six, therefore, focuses on

Dvořák's texts on Czech art and on the reception of them in Bohemia. Although writing mostly in German and a loyal subject of the Habsburg Empire, Dvořák was accepted as a Czech art historian, and I explore in detail how Czech art historians construed his ethnicity.

The legacy of Dvořák and of the entire Vienna School has been the subject of extensive commentary.<sup>3</sup> The representatives and the disciples of the School have been praised for a number of innovations in art historical study. In Chapter Seven, I examine some of the main contributions in the work of Czech authors connected with the School and explore why the international orientation of the Vienna School informed the work of these scholars involved in debates about the national aspects of art.

The values and methods of the Czech graduates of the Vienna School who, in the 1910s, came to occupy many significant positions at various art historical institutions in Prague were not unanimously accepted by other Czech scholars, however, and their approach was often challenged. In Chapter Eight, I look at a number of writers who, for different reasons, were critical of the Vienna School. These critics saw the mainly pro-Western orientation of the graduates of the Vienna School, and their ongoing connection with a German-speaking institute, in negative terms, and most importantly, they offered their own alternative classifications of Czech art. In contrast, these authors in most cases emphasised its Slavic connections and put emphasis on the independent character of Czech art.

The links with the Slavic family of nations were emphasised especially after 1918, when the independent state of Czechoslovakia was created. As it joined the two nations of the Czechs and Slovaks into a single political entity, this union required a justification on political, cultural and historical levels. Chapter Nine therefore looks

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<sup>3</sup> For example Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl. Art History and Theory* (New York: Zone Books, 1993); Marco Pozzetto, ed., *La scuola Viennese di storia dell'arte. Atti del XX Convegno* (Gorizia: ICM, 1998); Matthew Rampley, "Max Dvořák: Art History and the Crisis of Modernity," *Art History* 26, no. 2 (April 2003): 214–37; Mitchell Schwarzer, "Cosmopolitan Difference in Max Dvořák's Art History," *Art Bulletin* 74 (December 1992): 669–678; Christopher Wood, ed., *The Vienna School Reader* (New York: Zone Book, 1999); Richard Woodfield, ed., *Framing Formalism: Riegl's Work. Critical Voices in Art, Theory and Criticism* (Amsterdam : G+B Arts International, 2001).

at the newly constructed Czechoslovak identity that was also promoted in art history, and considers the status that Slovak art was given within it. Particular attention is given to the view of Slovak art held by Czech art historians that brought the issue of folk art and the art of the common people into question. Although Czech art was incorporated within the larger concept of Czechoslovak art, it was still viewed as superior to Slovak art, and was seen as directly linked to Western art. Slovak art, in contrast, was seen primarily as folk art. Since folk art had been conceived of alternately, as expressing the true character of the nation, or as a mere derivative of high urban culture, Slovak art was likewise viewed in both positive and negative terms.

### **Czech historiography of Czech art**

In the Czech language, several texts have been published on the topic of the history of art history, which pay smaller or larger attention to the questions of national identity. They can be divided into two groups: those that provide a broad view of the topic, and those that examine national identity in art or art history but focus on one specific historical period. However, none of these texts have undertaken a comprehensive and critical analysis; by ‘critical’ I mean here an approach that highlights the social and political imperatives driving the formation of notions of national identity. Although I do not seek to provide a *complete* overview of the field, my target is to bring a more critically informed view of the various ideological factors that shaped Czech art history and that contributed to ideas about the nature of Czech art.

As far as the broader historiographic surveys on the art history written in Czech are concerned, the most extensive text up to now is *Kapitoly z českého dějepisů umění* (Chapters from Czech art history) published in two volumes in 1986.<sup>4</sup> This text contains contributions by various authors on generalized periods in Czech art history (Enlightenment, Romanticism, cultural history, positivism, the Vienna School, post-war art history) and on the individual authors that fall into them. The content of the individual contributions to *Kapitoly* is not well balanced and lacks a

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<sup>4</sup> Rudolf Chadraba and others, eds., *Kapitoly z českého dějepisů umění* I, II (Prague: Odeon, 1986).

critical approach, as some sections give a lengthy cultural and historical introduction, whereas others are rather sketchy. The same applies to the individual articles on art historians and art critics and their works, which at times shows allegiances to the topic that are too personal.<sup>5</sup> The ideological influences of the time, i.e., the 1980s, are also prominent in the attention paid to the social background of the authors and in the frequent emphasis on their working class origin.<sup>6</sup>

A number of chapters were written by admirers of the art historians concerned, and who therefore adopted an uncritical and celebratory attitude to their subject. In the article on Antonín Matějček (1889–1950), for instance, the author Luboš Hlaváček (coincidentally also Matějček's student), described the start of Matějček's career in this poetic way: "Originally, Matějček contemplated a career as an artist, but he had to conform to his father's wish for more economically stable prospects for the future by studying Romance languages and literature... [Lectures and contacts at the university] only strengthened his desire and courage to study the discipline [of art history] which was closest to his sensitive, musical heart."<sup>7</sup>

Despite its subjectivity and slight dependence on the ideological requirements of the day, *Kapitoly* remains an important factual and reference resource. Apart from this one work, only two other studies of the historiography of Czech art exist, and these are textbook surveys of art history across Europe in general. They are quite broad accounts of the topic and both suffer from a superficiality in dealing with Czech art history. Petr Wittlich in *Literatura k dějinám umění. Vývojový přehled* (Literature on art history. A historical survey) from 1992 offers a brief synopsis of the topic of Western art historiography and focuses on a selection of works by a small number of Czech art historians in one single chapter.<sup>8</sup> The text thus remains "a survey" which offers an account of basic facts, authors and their works, but does not put them into a larger context or comment on them critically.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Chapter by Jiřina Hořejší, "Vojtěch Birnbaum," in *Kapitoly* II.

<sup>6</sup> Carrier, *Principles of Art*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Luboš Hlaváček, "Antonín Matějček a jeho škola," [Antonín Matějček and his school] in *Kapitoly* II, 152.

<sup>8</sup> Petr Wittlich, "Český dějepis umění," [Czech history of art] in *Literatura k dějinám umění. Vývojový přehled* [Literature on the history of art. A survey of the development] (Prague: Karolinum, 1992).

In the other academic textbook *Školy dějin umění* (The schools of art history), Jiří Kroupa examines various art historical approaches and methods in history.<sup>9</sup> His approach is outlined in the “Introduction” in which the history of art history is described as “the history of individual academic scholars [...and as] the recollections of the doyens in the field.”<sup>10</sup> As such, the history of art history presented by Kroupa is selective and reduced to a limited number of allegedly outstanding individuals. This approach again leaves only a little space for the cultural, social and historical context in which their texts appeared.

Moreover, in terms of Czech history of art, Kroupa does not go beyond the descriptive approach typical of *Kapitoly*. He focuses only on art historians at the Charles University and placed them in the context of the overall development of the discipline in Central and Western Europe. His attention to the various stages of Czech art history was thus largely subdued to his main focus on the beginnings of German (and partly French) art history.

As I have suggested, common to these texts is their lack of apprehension of the national bias in the texts by Czech art historians. Only *Kapitoly* acknowledges in a few places that notions of Czech art were subject to the period ideologies, but this recognition is limited only to the nineteenth century situation. More critical accounts dealing with specific issues of nationality in relation to art history have recently appeared in Czech and foreign journals and magazines, also adding to the debate in a more or less successful way.<sup>11</sup> A more recent article, which lies close to the focus of this dissertation, is “The Beginnings of Modern Art History and Art Criticism in the Czech Lands” by Otto M. Urban.<sup>12</sup> It deals mainly with the birth of art criticism in the first art journals in Bohemia and takes into consideration also the political influences. Although Urban focuses on the activities of the two major

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<sup>9</sup> Jiří Kroupa, *Školy dějin umění. Metodologie dějin umění* [The schools of art history. Methodology of art history] (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, Filozofická fakulta, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>11</sup> For example Václav Richter, *Umění a svět: Studie a teorie z dějin umění* [Art and the world: Studies and theory from the history of art], ed. Zdeněk Koudelka and Bohumil Samek (Prague: Academia, 2001); the texts of Ján Bakoš, Milena Bartlová and Jiří Kroupa are mentioned herein.

<sup>12</sup> Otto M. Urban, “The Beginnings of Modern Art History and Art Criticism in the Czech Lands,” *Centropa* 5, No. 1, (2005): 40–48.



artistic journals of the period: *Moderní revue* (Modern Revue) and *Volné směry* (Free Directions), which he took to exemplify the more general development in the early stages of Czech art criticism, in most cases he reiterates material presented in *Kapitoly*. The article thus lacks a more substantial analysis of the cultural and ideological circumstances that gave rise to the contrasting positions of the authors in the art journals and art history in general, the topic I examine in depth here.

A more detailed study of the complex situation of Czech and German historiography is Milena Bartlová's article "Německé dějiny umění středověku v Čechách do roku 1945" (German history of mediaeval art in Bohemia until 1945), which focuses on German art historians who practiced in Bohemia and were interested in Czech mediaeval art.<sup>13</sup> Bartlová examines the motives, methods and approaches of their writing in a historical sequence and calls for a deeper exploration of the delicate relationships between the German and Czech art histories (and art historians) that led to the construction of nationalistically inflected texts. Bartlová is thus one of the few scholars who have examined *German* writing on Czech art and she has emphasised that not only Czech art historians shaped ideas about Czech but also scholars of other nationalities, and who influenced how it was understood abroad rather than within the Czech territory. As such, Her approach comes close to my own understanding of the situation in the history of art history written from a national perspective. However, since she focuses on the German texts only, my thesis aims to expand that into a broader consideration of both Czech and German art historical texts and the ways they construct notions of Czech national art.

An important article that has focused on this particular subject is Jindřich Vybíral's "What Is 'Czech' in Art in Bohemia? Alfred Woltmann and Defensive Mechanisms of Czech Artistic Historiography."<sup>14</sup> Using the German art historian Woltmann (1841–1880) as a starting point, Vybíral examines the various "defensive mechanisms" employed by Czech art historians in the late nineteenth and early

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<sup>13</sup> Milena Bartlová, "Německé dějiny umění středověku v Čechách do roku 1945," in: *Německá medievistika v českých zemích do roku 1945* [German Mediaevalist studies in the Czech lands until 1945] eds. Pavel Soukup and František Šmahel (Prague: Centrum medievistických studií a Centrum pro dějiny vědy, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Jindřich Vybíral, "What Is 'Czech' in Art in Bohemia? Alfred Woltmann and Defensive Mechanisms of Czech Artistic Historiography," *Kunstchronik* LIX, no. 1 (January 2006).

twenty century in their vindication of the “Czechness” of Czech art. Vybíral selects apt examples of art historical texts by Czech authors that consciously or unconsciously reacted to the “threat” from a German author. As it provides a thorough insight into the topic of the construction of Czech national identity in art history, I shall return to this text later on in relation to the German art historians in Prague and expand on some of the claims suggested by Vybíral. Although I partly draw on Vybíral’s theory and subject, my thesis explores a longer period of time, a larger number of topics and considers the various ideological influences on Czech art history in more detail.

## **National identity in art history**

Understanding of national identity is shaped here by my view of it as a socially, politically and ideologically informed construct. In this sense, a national identity can be seen as a set of qualities that are *believed* to have unifying ties for a group of people. This group is identifiable with a nation, when it becomes, to cite Anthony Smith, “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.”<sup>15</sup>

As I shall demonstrate in this thesis, in the Czech historiography of art, such ties were mainly represented by creating a sense of belonging to the homeland, the sense of a shared history and language, and of a shared cultural and artistic tradition. In most cases national identity was equated with ethnic identity, and this idea placed emphasis on the common biological ancestry of the people, and became more important than class and religion.

The shared belief in a common heritage can be preserved, revived and even invented.<sup>16</sup> This heritage comprising national identity can be thus seen as a kind of tradition, a complex of collective values either persisting from the past or recreated in the present with a particular significance.<sup>17</sup> Many scholars have emphasised that

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<sup>15</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 14.

<sup>16</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention*, 1–9.

<sup>17</sup> Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Eric Hobsbawm,

traditions are a deliberate invention of the nineteenth century national and ethnic ‘recoveries’ of various groups.<sup>18</sup> In the context of Czech national identity in art history, I shall apply this notion of constructed traditions in order to examine how and why different concepts of Czech art history were formulated.

Traditions are also usually considered to have two opposing characters. According to one approach, they are identified with conservatism, and hence with the things past which resist innovation and change.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, traditions may be seen as the carriers of residual past knowledge necessary for the formation of the present and future through the process of constant innovation.<sup>20</sup> This latter view considers traditions as creative and as having the potential to mobilize social change or to enhance national awareness. In the national revival movements of the nineteenth century, the traditions of nations were capable of creating a sense of unity and historic connectedness of a certain group of people by reminding them of their common, ancient past.

During the rise of national awareness in Bohemia and Moravia, for example, the Bohemian Kingdom of the fourteenth and fifteenth century was evoked as a natural precursor of the future independent state of the Czechs and a continuous tradition that connected the mediaeval kingdom with the present days was sought. In art history, this was projected, for instance, onto an identification of “Czech” schools of painting under the Luxembourg rulers. The existence of these local schools provided proof of the historical character of Czech art dating back to the Middle Ages, which cultivated its self-sufficient features from then onwards. The values of the past and of lost kingdoms were therefore revived in these cases first on the basis of the territory, language, and arts as part of the nation’s tradition.

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and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Holý, *Little Czech*.

<sup>18</sup> Mainly Hobsbawm and Holý, *ibid*.

<sup>19</sup> Antony Giddens, Ulrich Beck and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994); Jürgen Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971); Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947). Eyerman and Jameson, *Music*, 16 and 31.

<sup>20</sup> Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Paul Feterabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchist Theory of Knowledge* (London: Verso, 1975).

Naturally, traditions had to be not only revived but also, in some cases, reconstructed or even invented. Hobsbawm has claimed that many traditions are created post facto.<sup>21</sup> Some traditions may even be fictitious in order to serve as documents of a specific character and history of society. This was the case of the Czech “mediaeval” manuscripts of Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora “discovered” in 1816 and 1817 respectively. The old Czech myths and legends included in them were “to authenticate the antiquity of Czech history and Slav culture, putting both on a par with their German equivalents.”<sup>22</sup> The manuscripts aroused general excitement and were translated into a number of languages. It was Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (later the first Czechoslovak president) and Jan Gebauer (a Czech-language specialist) who, in the 1880s, finally proved the manuscripts were not authentic, much to the dismay of nationalists of the time. Such falsification was not unique to the Czech environment; the controversies around the mythical Scottish author Ossian a century earlier offer a parallel. Analogies with such forgeries may be also found in the visual arts, again especially in case of mediaeval works of art that were “found” mainly in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Their purpose was to prove the existence of long-lasting artistic traditions in the Czech lands and the stylistic and formal differences between Slavic and Germanic works of art.

### **Creating and preserving traditions**

Once a tradition is created or revived, it needs to be preserved; there are several ways of maintaining a certain piece of history or myth. Depending on the nature of the tradition, it may be institutionalised through, for example, museums, public monuments, or rituals, such as public ceremonies or public holidays.<sup>23</sup> As such, the particular value system of the tradition is spread to a large number of receivers.

Crucial for the preservation of a tradition is the method of its presentation. Traditions are remembered by repetition over a definite amount of time until the

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<sup>21</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention*, 1–9.

<sup>22</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 144–145.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Themes in the Social Sciences) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

notion of historical continuity is created.<sup>24</sup> Particular elements of the past are emphasised in the present at the expense of others which are omitted. In the Czech context, art historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century put emphasis on, for example, the mediaeval visual arts and repeatedly stressed their “Czech” traits. Most German elements were suppressed or dismissed as unimportant. Traditions have thus been continuously reinvented and reconstructed to suit varying needs, in this case, the need to promote Czech national identity.

The Czechs could equally evoke the greatness of, for example, the reforming preacher Jan Hus and the Catholic St Wenceslas through their celebration and symbolic representation during the national revival. The two symbolic representatives, remembered through monuments, literary, musical and visual works and later public holidays and film, were also recalled in the interwar and communist Czechoslovakia when different qualities of these national heroes were stressed to suit the current ideology. As I demonstrate later in Chapter Nine, the historical connections between the Czechs and Slovaks (the tradition of them living together) were also promoted in the united Czechoslovakia when a single Czechoslovak identity and tradition was being established.

## **Political and cultural aspects of Czech nationalism**

### **Nineteenth century**

In most Central European countries, the nineteenth century was *the* period of the revival, or the so-called awakening (in Czech “obrození”), of national consciousness of many groups, which eventually restructured the political and social composition of nations. The Czech and Slovak national revivals likewise took place during this century but not as a uniform movement, since the interests and targets of the leaders and promoters were in a state of flux. Due to the political oppression of the Habsburg state, the early Czech national awakeners active before 1848 were preoccupied with cultural rather than political issues and they represented only themselves, and in some cases the interests of the patriotic

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<sup>24</sup> Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*, 37

aristocrats who subsidised them.<sup>25</sup> These early patriots utilized culture, in this sense the arts, to arouse the national consciousness of the Czech people, defined as the Czech-speaking inhabitants of Bohemia. They promoted the spoken and written word in popular and high literature, theatre performances, music (both folk and contemporary), and visual arts to which they attributed specific national qualities.

In general, the “awakening” of the first half of the nineteenth century (from the 1810s up to the mid-nineteenth century) had its foundations in a romantic view of history that manifested itself in the celebration of historically significant places, persons and events. During the 1840s, nationalism increasingly became a political issue through which the revivalists sought greater political rights within the monarchy. Ladislav Holý, social anthropologist and theorist of nationalism, has argued that the rise of nationalist sentiment in this period was based on the conviction that the nation’s language and culture could only be preserved in an independent state.<sup>26</sup> The second half of the nineteenth century therefore saw the merging of the idea of a sovereign political state within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy with the vision of an independent nation based on its ethnic and cultural unity.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, political autonomy did not have the same significance in Bohemia as in the “nations with history.”<sup>28</sup> In France or post-1871 Germany, for example, the nation and the state were closely linked, which was not seen in Bohemia and Moravia until at least the creation of the independent state in 1918. For a long time, the concept of the Czech nation was defined by its being bound by a native culture, traditions and linguistic ties (as a “Kulturnation”), and not by its possession of political sovereignty (as a “Staatsnation”).

In the wake of 1848, the year of generally unsuccessful revolutions and uprisings but also of the Slavic congress in Prague, Bohemia experienced a cultural revolution in which the Czech-speakers underwent a phase of self-realization.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 69.

<sup>26</sup> Holý, *The Little Czech*, 37.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>28</sup> Friedrich Engels, “Der demokratische Panslawismus,” *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, No. 222 (15 February 1849).

<sup>29</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 89. The Slavic congress took place in June 1848 and was attended by the representatives of Slavic peoples within the Austrian empire, who discussed the situation of the small nations and their coexistence with the Germans and Hungarians. Karel Dvořák, “Za revoluce,” in *Dějiny české literatury* II, 463.

Czech gained equality with German in schools, Czech journalism expanded, theatrical performances in Czech became common practice, and cultural activities aimed at the mobilization of national consciousness rose in general. This focused in particular on sites memorable for their historical and contemporary connections – for example the establishment of the national museum, national theatre, and the cemetery of national heroes at Vyšehrad, the equipping of specific sights with monuments of nationalistic significance, the renaming of places and so on.

The national revival of the nineteenth century was primarily based on the status of Czech as the mother tongue which was both mythicized and sanctified through its resurrection and codification, and through emphasis on its historical pedigree.<sup>30</sup> As a specific marker of the Czech nation, which defined itself against other cultures and nations, the key role of language in the formation of national identity was stressed. This was also a period in which hostility against minorities (especially the ethnic Germans but also the Jews) in Bohemia and Moravia increased, given that language became the grounds for diversification in national identities. At the same time, the links with other Slavic nations were promoted by the “awakeners” and particularly the proximity with the Slovaks and their dialects became a widely discussed issue; this will be explored in more detail in the following chapters.

A demonstration of the national symbolism and historical significances can be found in a number of events and institutions organized and established in the first and second half of the nineteenth century. One of the most evident expressions of the new sense of a Czech identity was the National Theatre, built in Prague between 1867 and 1883, as the “embodiment of the will of the Czech nation to gain national independence and self-sufficiency.”<sup>31</sup> (Fig. 1) The idea that preceded its construction (a Czech theatre for the Czech people), the discussions that accompanied it (on its cultural and national significance), the decoration of the interior and exterior (the subjects and authors) were emblematic for this period of the Czech national “awakening.” No less significant was the subsequent reinterpretation and reception of the works of art and their authors, grouped under

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>31</sup> “Národní divadlo – historická budova,” [The national theatre – the historic building], *Národní divadlo*.

the umbrella term “The Generation of the National Theatre.” Their importance for the national “awakening” and Czech history in general was stressed during the actual construction of the Theatre, in the democratic state of Czechoslovakia between the two wars, as well as in Communist ideology after the Second World War.<sup>32</sup>

*Figure 1 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

The central place of the Theatre in the national “awakening” and beyond was rooted in several factors. The original idea came from the main representatives of the Czech patriotic movement (Palacký, František Ladislav Rieger, Miroslav Tyrš and Jan Neruda) who aimed at the establishment of an independent theatre with performances solely in the Czech language. The construction was funded entirely from public subscription collected in towns and villages across Bohemia and Moravia. After the opening in 1881, the building was seriously damaged by fire and new donations helped to reconstruct and reopen it by 1883. Because it was built from popular funds and had lavish gilded ornamentation, the institution came to be called “The Golden Chapel.”

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example, F. X. Harlas. *Výstava výtvarné generace národního divadla v Praze* [An exhibition of the artistic generation of the National theatre in Prague] (Prague: Myslbeek, 1932); Vladimír Novotný, *Národní galerie 3. České malířství 19.století: Generace Národního divadla* [National Gallery 3. Czech painting of the nineteenth century] (Prague: Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění, 1946); Olga Macková, *České malířství 19.století, vol. 3: Generace Národního divadla* [Czech painting of the nineteenth century. The generation of the National theatre] (Prague: ČTK – Pressfoto, 1954).



The programme of the visual arts that were united in the Theatre ostentatiously proclaimed their belonging to the Czech nation. In its early years, from the dramatic and operatic point of view, the Theatre introduced pieces of Czech drama glorifying the Czech past, such as the opera *Libuše* by Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884), who was, in his own words, “the creator of a Czech style in the branches of dramatic and symphonic music [and] exclusively Czech.”<sup>33</sup> Also the visual style of the building was devised to express Czech national identity in various ways. The monumental architectural style of the building designed by Josef Zítek (1832–1909) and Josef Schulz (1840–1917) is neo-Renaissance and in addition, both the exterior and interior revisit the Renaissance unity of the three arts.<sup>34</sup> The interior decoration depicts scenes that recall both the Czech past and present: the paintings and sculptures range from Slavic mythology to Czech history and show Romantic landscapes from Bohemia and Moravia, as well as portraits of famous Czechs. Their authors included the sculptors Bohuslav Schnirch (1845–1901), Josef Václav Myslbek (1848–1922), painters Julius Mařák (1832–1899), Mikoláš Aleš (1853–1913), Václav Brožík (1851–1901) and Vojtěch Hynais (1854–1925).

Apart from the National Theatre, other historically and nationally important buildings were designed and decorated to remind the Czechs of the great events and personalities in their history and in present times. The Czech Museum building by Josef Schulz from the early nineteenth century, or the Rudolfinum art house, a neo-Renaissance building from 1876–1884 designed by Zítek and Schulz, are only two of the many buildings in the neo-Classical style in Prague (Fig.2–3). In the 1870s, a “Czech local” version of neo-Renaissance was chosen as a style that had the potential to express national aspirations and symbolism.<sup>35</sup> Other examples of buildings that used this style include the Besední dům (Assembly House) in Brno by Theophil Hansen from the early 1870s influenced by Viennese architecture, Ignác Ullmann’s German Assembly House in České Budějovice from 1871, and

<sup>33</sup> Bedřich Smetana to Dr Ludovít Procházka, 31 August, 1882, quoted in Michael Beckerman, “In Search of Czechness in Music,” *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music* 10, No. 1 (Summer 1986): 63.

<sup>34</sup> František Xaver Harlas, “Umělecká generace národního divadla,” [The artistic generation of the National theatre] in *Výstava výtvarné generace národního divadla v Praze, červen, červenec, srpen 1932* (Prague: Průmyslová tiskárna, 1932), 11.

<sup>35</sup> Jindřich Vybíral, “Hledání národního stylu,” [In search of a national style] in *Česká architektura na prahu moderní doby. Devatenáct esejů o devatenáctém století* [Czech architecture at the threshold of modernity. Nineteenth essays of the nineteenth century] (Prague: Argo, VŠUP, 2002), 146.

buildings of the “local Renaissance” by Antonín Wiehl in Prague and his followers (Fig. 4). The “Czech” aspect of this style was ascribed to the inspiration of village architecture, the use of tall structured gables and especially the use of sgraffito.<sup>36</sup>

*Figure 2 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 148–149.

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Such a self-conscious attempt to express the nation in its arts, language and history derived from the efforts of the patriotic leaders to establish the Czechs as a more or less independent nation within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The degree of independence that was claimed for the Czech nation, however, derived from the political and ideological preferences of the national revivalists who, at certain historical moments, looked for links with all or some Slavic peoples.

The loss of independence of the Czech territories during the Thirty Years War (in the so-called Renewed Land Ordinance of 1627), gave rise to the need of the Czechs to put emphasis on the links between the Czech people with other Slavs in Europe, in order to provide a sense of a numerically stronger force. This connection had been, since the twelfth century, based primarily on the similarities of the individual Slavic languages that represented the main constituent of a nation in the process of its rebirth.<sup>37</sup> In fact, many protagonists of Slavic unity had seen the

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<sup>37</sup> Vladislav Štátný, "Slovanství a feudální společnost," in *Slovanství v národním životě Čechů a Slováků* (Prague: Melantrich, 1968), 20.

different Slavic languages, such as Czech, Croat or Polish, as mere dialects of a single Slavic language.<sup>38</sup>

From the early nineteenth century, the Czech national revival used linguistic affinities as a tool that had the potential to integrate the small Czech nation into the larger community of Slavic nations. Gradually, however, the search for Pan-Slavic connections was complemented by attempts to build up a self-sufficient Czech national identity that would be independent of a potential subordination to one of the more powerful Slavic cultures, such as Russia or Poland. Already before 1848 possible alternatives were explored and “Austro-Slavism,” a political programme initiated by the Czechs that sought closer co-operation between the Slavic peoples within the Habsburg monarchy, became another plan for the future of the Czechs. Alongside these concepts, an idea of a single Czechoslovak nation was promoted by other politicians and scholars in the First World War and later.

For the Czech national revivalists at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a short text on the historical origins and typical features of the different peoples of Europe by Johann Gottfried von Herder became fundamental for the construction of national identity. In *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte* (Ideas on the philosophy of history), Herder described the characteristic features of different nations, among them the Slavs and the Germans, which had a crucial impact not only on the writers of the “awakening;” his influence extended well into the twentieth century.<sup>39</sup>

According to Herder, the Germans, “with their bold, enterprising hardiness and valour, their heroic sense of duty” were a people who ruled many countries due to their warlike nature.<sup>40</sup> These features, however, had a downside: Herder held that the Germans also lacked the skills of agriculture, science and the arts that were

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<sup>38</sup> Ján Kollár, *Rozpravy o slovanské vzájemnosti* [Discussions about Slavic solidarity] (1836), ed. Miloš Weingart (Praha: Slovanský ústav, 1929) Josef Dobrovský, *Entwurf zu einem allgemeinen Etymologicon der slawischen Sprache* (Prag : Gottlieb Haase, 1813), Pavel Josef Šafařík, *Geschichte der slawischen Sprache und Literatur nach allen Mundarten* (Ofen: Kön. ung. Universitäts-Schriften, 1826). Kohn, ed., “Pan-Slavism and the West, 1815–1860” in *Pan-Slavism*, 17.

<sup>39</sup> J. G. von Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, 4 vol. (Riga – Leipzig: J.F. Hartknoch, 1784–1791).

<sup>40</sup> Translation in J. G. von Herder, “Germans and Slavs,” in *Pan-Slavism: Its History and Ideology*, ed. Hans Kohn, (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1953), 104. Originally as J. G. von Herder, “Deutsche Völker,” “Slawische Völker,” in *Ideen zur Philosophie*.

performed for them by the subordinate peoples.<sup>41</sup> The Slavs, on the other hand, were seen by Herder as a people with a love for agriculture, domestic arts, commerce and music, who “were never an enterprising people of warriors or adventurers like the Germans [...]. They were charitable, hospitable to excess, lovers of free country ways, yet submissive and obedient, averse to pillage and robbery.”<sup>42</sup> Herder consequently foresaw a great future for the Slavs and claimed:

you [the Slavs]... will finally rouse from your long, languid slumber;  
delivered from your chains of bondage, you will be able to possess and  
use your beautiful regions... and will be free to celebrate there your  
ancient festivals of quiet industry and trade.<sup>43</sup>

Because of the many contributions that the Slavs made to European culture, Herder also called for the study of their history, customs, songs and legends.<sup>44</sup> This description of the qualities of both the Slavs and the Germans, its account of the Slavs’ input into history, as well as its forecast of their future, affected many exponents of the Czech and Slovak national revival.

The later Czech and Slovak “awakeners,” such as Josef Jungmann (1773–1847), who first translated Herder’s text into Czech in 1813, Ján Kollár (1793–1852), Pavel Josef Šafařík (1795–1861) and others, held Herder’s description to be one of their major inspirations and used it to support their views on the qualities of the Czech (or more generically Slavic) people, its literature, music and arts. Kollár, a Slovak poet and politician, for example, emphasised five positive features of the Slavic character: religiousness, diligence, innocent gaiety, love of one’s language and tolerance.<sup>45</sup> His most famous work, *Slávy dcera* (The daughter of Sláva), drew consciously on Herder, whom Kollár acknowledged as his teacher, while he also envisaged the optimistic, triumphant future of the Slavs:<sup>46</sup>

Kant and Wieland have no nationality.  
Schiller is cold to us, Klopstock mute,

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>45</sup> Jan Kollár, *Dobré vlastnosti národu slovanského* [The good qualities of the Slavic nation] (Pest, 1822). Reprinted as Kollár, “Dobré vlastnosti národu slovanského,” in *Obrození národa, Svědectví a dokumenty* [Recovery of the nation. Evidence and documents], ed. Jan Novotný (Prague: Melantrich 1979), pp. 191.

<sup>46</sup> Hans Kohn, “Pan-Slavism and the West, 1815–1860,” 15.

But not you, priest of humanitarianism.  
Contrary to custom, you were the first  
To defend and highly praise the Slavs.  
For that accept from them honour and thanks.<sup>47</sup>

The theme of this lyrical-epic poem is the mythical history of the Slavs and their historical importance on the territory which was now Germanised. Kollár made many references to contemporary events and – influenced by Herder – associated the Slavs with peace, democracy and humanism. At the same time, he did not make any radical political claims for the creation of an independent state. The poem, as well as other Kollár's texts, revised the history of the Slavs (and more importantly the Czechs and Slovaks) in the pre-Romantic tradition<sup>48</sup> with the aim of showing the importance of the Slavic nations for world history and the future and of provoking national consciousness in the members of these nations.<sup>49</sup>

Due to the importance Kollár gave to the Slavic links, he has been often seen as the father of the idea of Slavic unity and solidarity.<sup>50</sup> *Slávy dcera* bore a political programme of Pan-Slavism that should unite the Slavs from the Tatras to Montenegro, from Krkonoše to the Urals.<sup>51</sup> As such, it became an inspiration for many Kollár's contemporaries and followers.

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<sup>47</sup> Jan Kollár, *Slávy dcera. Lyricko-epická báseň v pěti zpěvích* [The daughter of Sláva. A lyrical-epic poem in five parts] (Budapest: Trattner and Károly, 1862), 51, first published in 1824, the abstract translated in: Hans Kohn, "Pan-Slavism and the West, 1815–1860," 16. There is a paradoxical aspect contained in this work. Sláva in Kollár's text is a mythological goddess of the Slavs. Kollár modelled the character of her daughter on his lover, Mína, aka Friederika Schmidt, who was actually the daughter of a German Evangelical pastor. Felix Vodička, "Jan Kollár," in *Dějiny české literatury* II, ed. Jan Mukařovský, 258.

<sup>48</sup> Czech literature studies refer to the first half of the nineteenth century Bohemia as the pre-Romantic, sentimentalist, period. Jan Mukařovský, ed., *Dějiny české literatury* II, *Literatura národního obrození* [The history of Czech literature II. The literature of the national revival] (Prague: Nakladatelství Československé akademie věd, 1960).

<sup>49</sup> Kutnar, "Slovenské dějepisectví v zápase o spisovný jazyk," [Slovak historiography in the struggle for standard language] in *Přehledné dějiny českého a slovenského dějepisectví* I. [A concise history of the Czech and Slovak historiography] (Prague: NLN, 1973), 252; Pynsent, "The myth of Slavness: Pavel Josef Šafařík and Jan Kollár," in *Questions of Identity*, 51.

<sup>50</sup> For example Matija Murko, "Jan Kollár," in *Letopise Matice slovinské* (1895); T. G. Masaryk, "Jan Kollár," *Naše doba* II (1894), Albert Pražák, "K pramenům Kollárovy Slovanské vzájemnosti," [On the sources for Kollár's Slavic solidarity] in *Slovanský sborník věnovaný jeho magnificenci prof. Františku Pastrnkovi* [The Slavic anthology dedicated to his magnificence Professor František Pastrnek], ed. Miloš Weingart (Prague: Klub moderních filologů, 1923) and more recently, for example, Pynsent, "The myth," 48.

<sup>51</sup> Kollár, "Slávy dcera," 313.

In *Slowanské starožitosti* (Slavic antiquities) from 1837, Šafařík tried to prove the equal status of the Slavs with other great European nations and the unity of Slavdom.<sup>52</sup> This historian, linguist and writer from Slovakia also set out to demonstrate the educated nature and moral perfection of the Slavs in a sequel, which he never wrote.<sup>53</sup>

Herder's influence can be felt in many places of Šafařík's works. In "Myšlenky o starobylosti Slovanů v Evropě" (Thoughts on the ancient character of the Slavs in Europe), he stated that "the ancient Slavs ... the tame people with love for peace, agriculture, crafts and trade who always preferred to live their lives in a submissive rather than expansionistic way... became less famous than other rapacious nations."<sup>54</sup>

Both Šafařík and Kollár were actually born in Slovakia and were conscious of the difference between the Czech and Slovak languages and cultures. As Protestants, they used Czech as the language of the late sixteenth century evangelical Kralice Bible in contrast to the Slovak Catholics, who used Slovak.<sup>55</sup> In their early texts, they used the names "Slovak" [Slovák] and "Slav" [Slovan] interchangeably since the Slovaks for them represented the quintessential Slavic nation.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, Šafařík's and Kollár's target was the unity of Czech and Slovak literature in the concept of "Czechoslovak" literature, which would express the Slavic solidarity.<sup>57</sup>

Kollár and Šafařík also argued that Hungarian domination had deprived the Slovaks of their history. By combining their language and culture with that of the Czechs, who had more and varied resources of all kinds, in a Czechoslovak (or Czechoslavic) state, there would be a more successful recovery of the Slovak

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<sup>52</sup> Pavel Josef Šafařík, *Slowanské starožitosti* (Prague: J. Spurný, 1837).

<sup>53</sup> Kutnar, "Palackého souvěkovci," [Palacký's contemporaries] *Přehledné dějiny*, 234.

<sup>54</sup> Pavel Josef Šafařík, "Myšlenky o starobylosti Slovanů v Evropě," in *Čítanka české literatury I, Od počátků do raného obrození (9. století – 1. třetina 19. století)* [Reader in Czech literature I. From the beginnings until the early revival (the 9<sup>th</sup> century – 1<sup>st</sup> third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century)], ed. Jan Lehár (Prague: Český spisovatel, 1997), 557. Originally in *Časopis českého museum* VIII, no. 1 (1834): 23–57.

<sup>55</sup> Felix Vodička, "Vztah mezi literaturou českou a slovenskou," [The relationship between Czech and Slovak literature] in *Dějiny české literatury II*, 47.

<sup>56</sup> Pynsent, "The myth," 56.

<sup>57</sup> Vodička, "Vztah," 153.

nation. Kollár expressed this idea in *Hlasové o potřebě jednoty spisovného jazyka pro Čechy, Moravany a Slováky* (Remarks on the need of the unity of standard language for the Czechs, Moravians and Slovaks). Šafařík propounded this view in *Slowanské starožitnosti*, although in another work, his *Geschichte der Slawischen Sprache* (The history of the Slavic language, 1869), he still stressed the uniqueness of the Slovak language.<sup>58</sup>

They were, at the same time, aware of the contemporary cultural backwardness of the Slovaks due, they claims, to Hungarian dominance lasting almost a thousand years. This recognition, however, helped them to claim that the Slovak language preserved ancient proto-Slavic forms; it was in their view the original Slavic dialect and in fact the mother of the Czech language.<sup>59</sup> According to this interpretation, the Slovaks were thus the forefathers of other Slavic nations.

These two authors similarly tried to construct the ancient quality of the Slavs on the basis of a re-reading of European history and the creation of several myths about them. They held, for example, that Slavic languages were more ancient than Greek due to their structure, and that the Slavs were the first peoples to inhabit Europe and spread throughout it: Slavic settlements, they claimed, could be found in Holland, Belgium, Italy and even England (Windsor and Lake Windermere were, for Kollár, originally Slavic settlements, founded by a Slavic tribe of Veneti in the fifth and sixth century).<sup>60</sup>

Such myth-making, which replaced historical reality with a vision of a great Slavic past and future,<sup>61</sup> was typical of sentimental views of the Slavs in the early nineteenth century, supported by the theoretical writing of Herder. Still, the Pan-Slavic unity yearned for in the texts of Kollár, Šafařík and others was not the only solution to the subordinate state of the Slavic peoples. An alternative to the creation

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<sup>58</sup> Šafařík, *Geschichte der Slawischen Sprache*.

<sup>59</sup> Ján Kollár, *Hlasové o potřebě jednoty spisovného jazyka pro Čechy, Moravany a Slováky* [Calls for the need for a unified standard language for the Czechs, Moravians and Slovaks] (Prague: Kronberg, 1846), 125.

<sup>60</sup> Ján Kollár, *Výklad čili Přímětky a vysvětlivky ku Slávy dceři* [Interpretation, or annotations on The daughter of Sláva] (Pest: Trattner and Károly, 1832), 48; Pynsent, "The myth," 67–72.

<sup>61</sup> Vodička, "Celkové podmínky a základní tendence," 139.



of a union of the Slavs, known as Austro-Slavism, was promoted by Palacký and Havlíček.

### **František Palacký**

Palacký, popularly called the Father of the [Czech] Nation, wrote the first history of the Czech nation initially in German and then in the Czech language. The German version, *Geschichte von Böhmen*,<sup>62</sup> published between 1836 and 1848, was a briefer equivalent of the later Czech *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě* (The History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia)<sup>63</sup> from 1848 till 1867 that was finally revised, extended and republished between 1876 and 1878.<sup>64</sup>

In this work, crucial for subsequent historians and other scholars, Palacký treated the nation as an independent entity responsible for historical events: his history was written as a history of the Czech *nation*. The struggle between the Slavic and Germanic elements was emphasised as a constitutive feature of the nation's history, which was also seen as the struggle between democracy and aristocracy respectively.<sup>65</sup> "It can be stated that Czech history is based mainly on the disputes with Germanness, or on the acceptance and rejection of the German ways and orders by the Czechs."<sup>66</sup> This struggle was led not externally, but "within the Czech lands, not against foreigners, but also against the locals, not by a sword and a shield, but through the spirit and word, constitutions and customs..."<sup>67</sup>

Like Kollár and Šafařík before him, Palacký's ideas about the characters of the Germans and Slavs were adopted from Herder. In the introduction to his *History of the Czech Nation*, outlining the cultural and historical conditions of the Czechs as well as surveying historiography of the topic, Palacký held that after the Germans conquered land and proceeded elsewhere, "the tame Slav quietly followed him and

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<sup>62</sup> František Palacký, *Grösstentheils nach Urkunden und Handschriften* (Prague: Kronberger und Weber, 1836–1867).

<sup>63</sup> Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě dle původních pramenů* I (Prague: F. Tempský, 1848).

<sup>64</sup> Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě* (Prague: F. Tempský, 1876–1878).

<sup>65</sup> Holý, *The Little Czech*, 77.

<sup>66</sup> Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého* I (1848), 12.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

settled next to him.”<sup>68</sup> Palacký saw the Slavs as religious, a quality added on top of the features ascribed by Kollár and Šafařík (and Herder) and, still following Herder, he also described the Slavs as being of a tame and soft nature, stating that they had never been aggressive. Importantly, Palacký held that in order to survive, the Slavs (meaning the Czechs in particular) had to “modify their habits and mix in Roman and German elements into their national life.”<sup>69</sup> Despite the prevalence of German influences in Bohemia and Moravia, according to Palacký, the Czechs managed to preserve their nationality and did not cease to be Slavs.<sup>70</sup> As such, and due to their geographical location, their task was to act as a bridge between the Slavs and the Germans, between the East and the West.<sup>71</sup> This statement drew again on Herder’s conviction that the Slavs would play an important role in the future and would rise from oblivion to a new recognition.

Palacký, nevertheless, was quite moderate in his political demands and predicted that the future of the Czechs lay within the Austrian monarchy, which according to him should be restructured into a union of autonomous national states. This political programme of Austro-Slavism therefore opposed the attempts to bring together all Slavic peoples in a Pan-Slavic unity. Havlíček first introduced the concept of Austro-Slavism in his article “Slovan a Čech” (The Slav and the Czech) from 1848.<sup>72</sup> Here he also ardently criticised Pan-Slavism as a “dangerous” construct based only on the similarity of the individual Slavic languages. Havlíček directly warned against the expansionism of Russia that would become the potential unifier and subjugator of the Slavic nations. He also feared an alliance with Poland for the same reasons. Apart from language, Havlíček also saw customs, religion, type of government, education, sympathies etc. as constituting national identity and consequently also as factors of difference among nations.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 11–12.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 12–13.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 13. The idea that the Czech lands represented a bridge between the East and the West has been popular in Czech history and literature, promoted for example by the fifteenth century king Jiří z Poděbrad, the politicians of interwar Czechoslovakia and after 1989.

<sup>72</sup> Karel Havlíček Borovský, “Slovan a Čech,” *Pražské noviny* 14–21 (15 February –12 March 1846). Reprinted in *Karel Havlíček Borovský, Dílo II. Pražské noviny, Národní noviny, Slovan* [Karel Havlíček Borovský. Work II. Pražské noviny, Národní noviny, Slovan], ed. Alexandr Stich (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1986), 55–81.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 58.

For Havlíček, the only two nations that were not “dangerous” and could be useful to each other, were the Czechs and Illyrians (the Slavs of the Balkans). Therefore the alternative to Pan-Slavism was provided by the Austrian monarchy as “the best guarantee for the preservation of our and the Illyrian nationality and the greater the power of the Austrian empire grows, the more secure our nationalities will be.”<sup>74</sup>

Havlíček also recognized the influence of German culture and German speakers on the Czech language, thinking and customs. In order to revive the Czech (or Czechoslavic) nation, he called for a “search for all that once constituted our nationality or that partly constitutes it today.”<sup>75</sup> It was therefore necessary, for Havlíček, to examine history before “Germanisation,” when the Slavic nations still bore similar qualities, in order to reconnect these events with the present: “From Panslavic ethnography and antiquities [relics] we can best learn what is ours and what is foreign here; there we can see our unspoilt ancestors in a mirror.”<sup>76</sup>

Whether promoting Pan-Slavism or later Austro-Slavism, the Czech patriots of the nineteenth century aimed at emphasising the historical specificity of the Czechs and, possibly, the Slovaks. The linguistic and cultural proximity of these two peoples eventually gave rise to attempts to establish a closer alliance which would follow the demands of a Pan-Slavic or Austro-Slavic programme, or lead to the creation of an entirely independent unity.

## **Twentieth century**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, the national sentiments were complemented by more outward looking opinions of the nation seen in the Central and Western European context. Industrialisation, individualism, and orientation to the future were promoted in Bohemia and Moravia. Also in art, the rise of modernist tendencies led to criticism of what was seen as a nationalistic and reactionary search for Czechness in favour of more cosmopolitan attention to foreign affairs.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 81. Translation from Kohn, *Nationalism*, 159.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 62.

An example of the new approach is the work of Masaryk, whose vision of the nation was present-centred and future-oriented and approached from a sociological point of view.<sup>77</sup> His key text from 1895, *Česká otázka* [The Czech question], reconsiders Czech history, especially the national revival, and pays attention to the place of the nation within Europe: “all the desires of European thinking naturally joined the efforts of our Czech reformation, and that is why our rebirth is a completely natural historical development and, in fact, a part of a pan-European development.”<sup>78</sup> For its significance in Czech history and philosophy, I shall come back to this text in Chapter Seven in relation to similar, increasingly cosmopolitan thinking in art history.

Masaryk also played an important role in the First World War when, together with, for example Edvard Beneš (1884-1948) and the Slovak representative Milan Rastislav Štefánik (1880-1919), he established an exile council in Paris. Although the Czechs officially supported the Austrian offensive activities, talks were held about how to reorganize Central Europe after the end of the conflict. Apart from Masaryk's idea of an independent state, other scenarios were discussed, by for example Karel Kramář (1860-1937), an active Czech politician, who negotiated the creation of a Pan-Slavic state together with Poland and Russia. It was Masaryk, however, who succeeded with his model of an independent Czech state to which the Slovak regions of Hungary (and Ruthenia) were adjoined.<sup>79</sup> The new political coalition of Czechoslovakia established in 1918 meant also a revision of cultural and national ties between the two nations.

### **Czechoslovakia after 1918**

The relation to the national identity of the Slovaks, which reflects also in art history, was an important aspect of the Czech identity creation. During the era of the national revival in the nineteenth century, the Czechs and Slovaks developed ideas of identity separately and jointly, where the latter effort resulted in the creation of Czechoslovakia and the Czechoslovak nation after the First World War.

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<sup>77</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 156.

<sup>78</sup> T. G. Masaryk, *Česká otázka. Snahy a tužby národního obrození* (Prague: Melantrich, 1969), 22.

<sup>79</sup> Masaryk, “Independent Bohemia,” in R. W. Seton-Watson, *Masaryk in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943), 125.

Language played a significant role also in the construction of Slovak national identity. Slovak, however, was in an even more problematic position than Czech, since Latin, Hungarian and even Czech were more common than the vernacular among the educated classes. Consequently, the representatives of the Slovak national revival in the nineteenth century used these other languages for ease of communication. Later, however, Slovak nationalists, like the Czechs, began constructing their identity on the basis of their linguistic specificity, and in opposition to other language communities, primarily the Magyars and, later, the Czechs.

As in Bohemia, where the early revivalists in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had used German to inform the readership about the Czech language and history, in Slovakia of the nineteenth century *Czech* was the lingua franca of the national revival of the Protestants. The dominance of Czech in Slovakia was politically motivated and was a consequence of the Czech (or to a lesser extent German) education of the Slovak awakeners.<sup>80</sup> The second half of the century was therefore characterised by the efforts of some Slovak nationalists to establish Czech as a literary language in order to strengthen the common national identity and the sense of a common nation.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, the Magyar language was proclaimed official in the Kingdom of Hungary, of which Slovakia became a non-autonomous region, commonly referred to by the Hungarians as Upper Hungary.<sup>82</sup>

In general, the Slovak revivalists of the nineteenth century first sought cultural and linguistic independence rather than political autonomy, which was reminiscent of the situation in the Czech lands. While the early nationalists promoted federalization of the Empire with a substantial degree of independence for the Slovaks, the period before the First World War saw the Slovaks struggle for

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<sup>80</sup> Joseph A. Mikus, *Slovakia and the Slovaks* (Washington DC: Three Continents Press, 1977), 74.

<sup>81</sup> Holý, *The Little Czech*, 94.

<sup>82</sup> It could be noted that the political attitude of the Hungarians to the Slovaks was also expressed linguistically in the Hungarian term referring to Slovakia, "Felvidék." This expression means "the upper country," or "the highland," and emphasises the mountainous and consequently remote nature of the region. (Thanks to Anders Blomqvist who brought this fact to my attention.)

complete sovereignty. In the course of the war, however, the more practical creation of a joint Czech-Slovak state was proposed and finally implemented in 1918.

The political partnership of the Czechs and Slovaks, intended as equals, resulted however in an unequal partnership of the two peoples, for substantial, especially economic, differences between them shaped the concept of a common nation. At the time of the formation of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia was largely rural and poor in contrast to the industrially and commercially more developed Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>83</sup> Therefore in the newly merged state of Czechoslovakia, the Czech part suddenly found itself in a superior position to its eastern regions. This contributed not only to a centralising orientation towards Bohemia and Prague in terms of administration, commerce and industry,<sup>84</sup> but also in the privileging of Czech language and culture.

Nationalism and contemporary institutions of national identity were almost a privilege of the Czech part of the state while in Slovakia such feelings were almost non-existent.<sup>85</sup> As such, national sentiment was one of the commodities imported to Slovakia. There were two prevailing views of the Slovaks in Bohemia: one saw them as part of the Czech nation and their language as a dialect of Czech. For example Masaryk held that the “Slovaks are Czechs in spite of using their dialect as a literary language.”<sup>86</sup> A number of similar claims were made in the interwar period, to which I shall return to in Chapter Nine when considering the situation in Czechoslovakia more specifically in relation to art historical literature.

The other officially promoted view after 1918 saw the both Czechs and Slovaks as members of a single nation. On the basis of the rather artificial political merger of these two nations in one state, the hybrid of a *Czechoslovak* nation and language was constructed to give official recognition to the equal position of the respective nations in the state. As regards the Czechoslovak language, it was devised in order to verify the bond of the two nations in the newly emerged state and to strengthen its position in the new Europe. Importantly, Czechoslovak nationality and language

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<sup>83</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 172.

<sup>84</sup> Mikus, *Slovakia and the Slovaks*, 33.

<sup>85</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 175.

<sup>86</sup> Masaryk, *Independent Bohemia*, April 1915. Quoted in Holý, *The Little Czech*, 94–95.

were meant to strengthen the number of the Slavic inhabitants within Czechoslovakia and create minorities out of the Germans and Hungarians. For example in Bratislava, in the 1921 census, only 40 per cent of the population claimed Czechoslovak nationality, while 27 and 22 percent were of German and Hungarian origin respectively (the ten remaining percent were of other nationalities).<sup>87</sup> In numerical terms, the post-First World War Czechoslovakia comprised of seven million Czechs, two million Slovaks, three million ethnic Germans, three quarters of a million Hungarians in Slovakia, half a million Ukrainians, and a hundred thousand Poles (Fig. 5).<sup>88</sup> The number of the German inhabitants living in the Czech part was thus still larger than that of the Slovaks in Slovakia and emphasizing a joint Czechoslovak identity could counter some of the claims of the minorities.<sup>89</sup>

*Figure 3 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

## **Conclusion**

Like many countries in Central Europe, the regions of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia underwent many political, social and cultural changes in the past couple of

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<sup>87</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 172.

<sup>88</sup> Holý, *The Little Czech*, 97 and Derek Sayer, *The Coasts*, 168.

<sup>89</sup> Milan Znoj, "The Great Czechoslovak Nation and the Roots of Czech Resentment," *The New Presence*, No. 4 (1998): 10.

centuries. From lands under the Habsburg monarchy with more or less autonomy or independence, they developed into an independent state of Czechoslovakia in 1918. This ultimate emancipation from Austria Hungary was preceded by persistent attempts of the Czechs (and to a lesser extent the Slovaks) to provide proofs for an independent Czech nationality, which could be documented in the history, culture and art of the Czech people.

Several individuals can be recognized as crucial for the rebirth and amplification of national consciousness. The early revivalists Palacký, Kollár and Štefánik, tried to identify the Czechs with a historical and peaceful nation. Masaryk at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century emphasised the place of the Czechs within European history and claimed for linguistic and ethnic affiliations of the Slovaks with the Czechs. Arguments supporting a single nationality of the two peoples eventually led to a creation of a joint state of Czechoslovakia in 1918.

Attempts at recognition of the Czech identity were also made in art history, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters. Art historians, art critics and artists tried to establish a continuous history of Czech art and identify *Czech* character of art that would support the idea of the Czechs as an entity independent of the German culture. A number of recent studies have examined the historiography of Czech art and made references to its dependence on the period ideology. However, no comprehensive examination has been written about the conscious attempts to construct national identity in Czech art history between the second half of the nineteenth century, when the discipline gained institutional recognition, and the new political conditions of independent Czechoslovakia. It will be my task to scrutinize a selection of texts and authors in order to demonstrate to what extent Czech national identity was emphasized and for what reasons.



# **1. Czech Institutions of Art History in the Nineteenth Century**

In this chapter I consider the institutional context behind the emergence of Czech art historical writing in Bohemia and Moravia; the historiography of art emerged not only as a result of the work of politically conscious individuals, but also thanks to the rise of a range of institutions, such as universities, academies, museums, exhibitions and publishers. Most of them were established in the later nineteenth century, and were often set up consciously as Czech equivalents to German institutions that were already in existence, and their function was the deliberate promotion of Czech identity.

As Prague was the main centre where the Czech national revival took place and where art historical research was practised, I shall pay most attention to the situation in the Bohemia capital with its complex ethnic composition. However, I also briefly summarize the state of affairs in Moravia, where a nationally oriented art history developed belatedly due to a stronger attachment of the region to Vienna.

Many museums and clubs in Bohemia and Moravia promoted their activities through publication of journals and magazines, which – similarly to the institutions – were initially aimed at a general audience. It is therefore the purpose of this chapter to examine which institutions started to play an important role for art historical research by collecting art, publishing articles and educating students, and to analyse their place in Czech society of the nineteenth century.

## **Patriotic societies in Prague**

In the nineteenth century, a number of larger aristocratic establishments, as well as smaller scale organizations, were founded by Bohemian patriots. The local aristocracy often identified itself with the heritage of the region and had the resources to support philanthropic activities. In the Czech speaking lands, societies and museums of various types were established during the early nineteenth century mainly in order to collect and preserve artefacts and, with the subsequent rise of

national awareness around the middle of the century, to promote a specifically Czech national identity. As with other regions in Europe, these establishments in Bohemia and Moravia began to play a significant role in the promotion of national culture and in the recreation and presentation of the past.

One of these societies, which was founded on a patriotic basis and only later developed into a more nationally oriented institution, was the “Společnost vlasteneckých přátel umění v Čechách” (The Society of Patriotic Friends of Art in Bohemia), established in 1796 by Bohemian land patriots: burghers, artists and aristocrats, led by Anton Kolowrat-Novohradský and Franz Count of Šternberk Mandescheid.<sup>90</sup> Its aim was to preserve works of art and monuments in Bohemia by collecting them, and it eventually opened an art gallery in Prague. Thus, in 1814, the Picture Gallery of the Society of Patriotic Friends was founded with the intention of educating the general audience and elevating its taste by making works of art accessible to a wider public.<sup>91</sup> In 1885, the Picture Gallery relocated its collections into the newly constructed neo-Renaissance building of the Rudolfinum, which was paid for by the Czech Savings Bank.<sup>92</sup>

In 1818, another institution was founded on the similar basis – the Vlastenecké museum v Čechách (The Patriotic Museum in Bohemia, later renamed the Národní museum - the National Museum) which consciously drew on “the traditions of Charles IV’s and Rudolph II’s collections and their love for art and the sciences.”<sup>93</sup> Focused originally on the natural sciences, a few years later, on Palacký’s initiative, collections of historical, literary and artistic artefacts were added. Despite its encouragement of Czech regional patriotism, the founding charter of the museum as well as the reports and other administrative documents were written in German, as was the case with many other official and literary texts of the Czech national “awakening” period in the early nineteenth century. The charter stipulated that the

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<sup>90</sup> Vlasta Dvořáková, “Osvícenci a romantikové,” [The enlighteners and the romantics] in *Kapitoly*, 54.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> “Galerie Rudolfinum: History,” Rudolfinum.

<sup>93</sup> Josef Hanuš, *Národní museum a naše obrození. K stoletému založení musea* [The national museum and our revival. On the centenary of the museum’s foundation] (Prague: Národní museum 1923), 267–268.

founding members of the society needed only to *understand* Czech while the administrator should both speak and write it.<sup>94</sup>

The museum nevertheless played a significant part in the cultural activities of nineteenth century Bohemia and in the promotion of an awareness of local heritage. In 1827, its own *Časopis Společnosti vlasteneckého musea v Čechách* (The journal of the society of the Patriotic Museum in Bohemia) was founded, in 1831 renamed to *Časopis českého Museum* (The journal of the Czech museum) and in 1855 to *Časopis musea Království českého* (The journal of museum of the Kingdom of Bohemia). Published every three months, it focused on a wide range of subjects, such as Czech history, philology, natural sciences and art, and the contributors included Palacký and the art historian Jan Erazim Vocol (1803–1871).<sup>95</sup>

Various other museums were subsequently founded in Bohemia and Moravia, some of them prompted by large exhibitions that took place within Austria–Hungary or elsewhere.<sup>96</sup> For example the Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition of 1895, which I shall consider in more detail in Chapter Five, was partially organized with the aim of raising money for a new Czech ethnographic museum to be opened in Prague. This eventually happened in 1896 when a large portion of the exhibits were moved to the new Národopisné museum československé (The Czechoslavic Museum of Ethnography) in Prague.<sup>97</sup>

One of the more conservative, but most influential, institutions was the Česká akademie věd a umění (The Czech Academy of Arts and Sciences), originally founded as Česká akademie císaře Františka Josefa pro vědy, slovesnost a umění (The Czech Academy of Emperor Franz Josef for Sciences, Literature and Arts) in 1891 by eight aristocrats and with a large financial contribution from the architect and businessman Josef Hlávka (1831–1908), the Academy's first chair. Hlávka

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Kutnar, “Nové podmínky českého dějepisectví,” [The new conditions for the Czech historiography] in *Přehledné dějiny*, 211.

<sup>96</sup> Václav Vlček, “K vývoji muzejnictví,” [On the development of museology] in *Sborník národního technického muzea v Praze. Acta musei nationalis technici Pragae* 10 [Anthology of the National Technical Museum in Prague], Prague 1971, 9.

<sup>97</sup> Jan Pargač, *Mýtus českého národa, aneb Národopisná výstava československá 1895* [The myth of the Czech nation, or, The Ethnographic Czechoslavic Exhibition of 1895] (Prague: Littera Bohemica, 1996), 74.

himself held a key position in Czech society – he was a successful engineer and architect who supported financially many projects targeted at an increase of Czech national awareness. According to his critics, however, Hlávka's monetary contributions were not entirely altruistic but motivated by his personal, conservative taste.<sup>98</sup> His attitude to heritage and nationalism will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

The main objectives of the Academy included the cultivation and support of Czech culture, language and arts, financial assistance for scholarly, literary and artistic activities, and the protection of historical monuments.<sup>99</sup> As is clear from its name, the Academy was highly indebted to the Austro-Hungarian imperial system and proclaimed support of the Emperor, “the unifying element and the guarantee of stability.”<sup>100</sup>

In the same year, 1891, an equivalent of the Czech Academy of Sciences was founded by the German inhabitants of Bohemia.<sup>101</sup> The Society for the Support of German Science, Arts and Literature in Bohemia (Die Gesellschaft zur Förderung deutscher Wissenschaft, Kunst und Literatur in Böhmen) was established by scholars at the German University in Prague with similar aim to the Czech Academy, namely, to support the literature, arts and science of the Germans living in Bohemia.<sup>102</sup> In practical terms, it meant financial support for various projects, publication of works by concerned individuals, and the organization of exhibitions of the Germans in Bohemia and abroad.<sup>103</sup> Emphasis was placed on promoting

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<sup>98</sup> “Josef Hlávka,” *Volné směry* 12 (1908): 156.

<sup>99</sup> *Almanach české akademie císaře Františka Josefa pro vědy, slovesnost a umění* IV [Almanac of the Czech Academy of Emperor Franz Josef for Sciences, Literature and Arts IV] (Prague: Česká akademie, 1894), 73.

<sup>100</sup> Otakar Hostinský, “Umělecký ruch v národě českém za posledních padesát let,” [Artistic activities of the Czech nation during the last fifty years] in *Almanach české akademie císaře Františka Josefa pro vědy, slovesnost a umění* VIII (Prague: Česká akademie, 1898), 137.

<sup>101</sup> Alena Mišková and Michael Neumüller, eds., *Společnost pro podporu německé vědy, umění a literatury v Čechách / Die Gesellschaft zur Förderung deutscher Wissenschaft, Kunst und Literatur in Böhmen. 1891–1945. Materiály k dějinám a inventář archivního fondu* (Prague: Archiv Akademie věd České republiky 1994).

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>103</sup> The Society survived the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, and in 1924 assumed new statutes and turned into the German Society for Science and Arts in the Czechoslovak Republic (Deutsche Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften und Künste für die Tschechoslowakische Republik). In 1940 it was recognized as an academy, although with effect only in Prague and only until 1945 when it saw its end.

“knowledge of everything marvellous that the [German] nation’s spiritual heroes have accomplished in art and science” because this could “arouse considerable pride in belonging to such a nation.”<sup>104</sup> The two academies thus existed alongside each other with similar goals – and they promoted separate German and Czech cultural activities, the result of which was a strengthened sense of belonging exclusively to either one or the other group.

## **The university in Prague**

A similar situation – the co-existence of separate German and Czech institutions which became gradually linked to increasingly nationalistic goals– appeared in the area of education. Art history gained more authority in Bohemia and Moravia once it was institutionalised, because it was then officially recognized as a tool for strengthening national identity. This potential was soon acknowledged by Czech art historians, who gradually became independent of the disciplines of history and archaeology and developed an alternative to the literature on the history of art in Bohemia that was, until then, dominated by German speaking authors. In Prague, art history was taught at several institutions, three of which had a marked impact on further development of Czech and – in some cases also – German art history. Apart from the University, it was taught at the Uměleckoprůmyslová škola (The School of Decorative Arts) and at the Akademie výtvarných umění (The Academy of Fine Arts); I shall give closer consideration to both of these later (Fig. 6 and 7).

*Figure 4 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

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<sup>104</sup> Philipp Knoll, “Über Nationalgefühl und nationale Erziehung” (1885), in *Beiträge zur heimischen Zeitgeschichte* (Prague: J. G. Calve, 1900), 241.

*Figure 5 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

The centre of art historical scholarship in Bohemia of this period (the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century) was the Karlova univerzita (Charles University), founded in 1348 and called the Karlo-Ferdinandova univerzita (Charles-Ferdinand University) from 1654 until 1920. It was an important birthplace for nationalistic thought in many academic subjects and the individual scholars involved played an important role in the construction of academic discourse for their disciplines. As Masaryk claimed, truly Czech institutions of higher education could have only one national objective: “to follow in the work of Dobrovský, Kollár, Palacký, Havlíček – to complete consistently and practically the unfinished revival.”<sup>105</sup> As such, the University, with many Czech scholars of a pronounced nationalistic disposition, was also a site of many ethnic tensions especially shortly before and after it was divided into separate Czech and German parts in 1882.

During this process, two independent sections were created out of the growing dissatisfaction of the Czechs with the inferior number of lectures in their native language when compared to German. In 1861, for example, out of 187 lecture courses at the University, only 22 were offered in Czech. By 1891, the number of staff was 144, out of which the Czech section had only 10 members of academic

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<sup>105</sup> T. G. Masaryk, *Česká otázka. Snahy a tužby národního obrození* [The Czech question. The efforts and desires of the national revival] (Prague: Melantrich, 1969), 168. First published in Prague: Čas, 1895.

staff fewer than the German one.<sup>106</sup> This division therefore meant that Czech scholarship was recognized and given independence, and that “the process of national awakening in the field of scholarship” was completed.<sup>107</sup> This event is sometimes also seen as marking the end of dilettantism and improvisation in Czech scholarship.<sup>108</sup>

Gradually, the number of students registered at the German part of the University declined. For example, at the beginning of the twentieth century German students in Prague amounted to only some 40 per cent of the number of students who were Czech.<sup>109</sup> Until the foundation of the University in Brno in 1919 (and the department of art history in 1927), German-speaking students from outside of Prague, especially from Moravia and Silesia (including Masaryk and the Vienna School graduate Eugen Dostál), preferred to study in Vienna because of the distance and the atmosphere in Prague which they often sensed as “foreign and hostile,” and dictated by the Czechs.<sup>110</sup>

In many disciplines, the split of the University into the two language-based sections had serious consequences. Most importantly, it led to an increase in the number of staff in most of the individual sections and to the independent development of the respective disciplines. In art history, however, there was a shortage of qualified scholars. Although the first professor of art history, Jan Erazim Vocol, was appointed in 1850, after he died in 1871 the position was not occupied until 1874 when the German scholar Alfred Woltmann (1841–1880) was appointed.<sup>111</sup> Together with Bernhard Grueber (1806–1882), Anton Springer (1825–1891) and Josef Neuwirth (1855–1934), Woltmann was one of the most important German art historians active in Bohemia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and he became a target of particular criticism by the Czechs, as will be examined in the

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<sup>106</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 90.

<sup>107</sup> Kutnar, “Podmínky rozvoje českého dějepisectví,” [The conditions for the development of Czech historiography] in *Přehledné dějiny*, 378.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Jiří Pešek, Alena Mišková and Ludmila Hlaváčová, “Německá univerzita,” [The German university] in *Dějiny Univerzity Karlovy* [The history of the Charles university], vol. 3, 1802–1918, ed. Jan Havránek (Prague: Karolinum, 1997), 310.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>111</sup> Ústav pro dějiny umění FF UK, “Historie ústavu dějin umění,” [The institute for the history of art at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University].

following chapters. The Czech part of the university thus did not have a permanent professorship in art history until Karel Chytil (1857–1934) and Bohumil Matějka (1867–1909) were appointed in 1897. This lack meant that Czech students of art history had to attend lectures by German teachers at the German part of the University.<sup>112</sup>

After 1882, the German part of the University found itself in an ambiguous situation, as it both profited and suffered from the University split. As regards the material means, the German University was in an advantageous position: it received almost all the libraries, collections and facilities, including the art historical teaching aids.<sup>113</sup> They were in fact founded and put together by Woltmann.<sup>114</sup> At the same time, the German part became rather isolated in the growing awareness of nationalism in Prague. The German lecturers did not generally learn Czech and the two language sections did not communicate with each other.<sup>115</sup> This alienation of the two sections at the University reflected and contributed to the increasingly divided nature of Prague culture, in which the two separate linguistic and ethnic groups had their own theatre performances, concerts, and exhibitions.

Instead of cooperating with their Czech counterparts in Prague, staff at the German University preferred to maintain contacts with other universities in Austria–Hungary and Germany, mainly through academics who often moved quite extensively between institutions in the two countries.<sup>116</sup> In this connection it is also worth mentioning that the two groups had contrasting views of employment at the University in Prague. While Czech scholars saw teaching at the Czech University as the highest point of their careers, the Germans preferred to move from Prague to Vienna, Leipzig, or Berlin.<sup>117</sup> This was the case with most art historians, with a few exceptions, such as that of Alwin Schultz (1838–1909), who stayed in Prague until

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<sup>112</sup> Petrůň, “Česká filozofická fakulta 1882–1918,” [The Czech faculty of art 1882–1918] in *Ibid.*, 264.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>114</sup> Petrůň, “Filozofická fakulta,” [The faculty of arts] in *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>115</sup> Pešek, “Německá univerzita v Praze 1882–1918,” [The German university in Prague 1882–1918] in *Ibid.*, 305.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.



his death in 1903.<sup>118</sup> Thus, Neuwirth left Prague for Vienna in 1899. Heinrich Alfred Schmid (1863–1951, a scholar of the Renaissance and antiquity) and Karl Maria Swoboda (1889–1977, a scholar of mediaeval art and architecture) were also active at Prague University for a short period of time before they left for another institution. Schmid left for Göttingen and from there to Basel, while Swoboda, a graduate of the Vienna School under Riegl and assistant of Dvořák, moved to Vienna at the end of the Second World War.

Czech art historians, whether active in the nineteenth or twentieth century, have tended to dismiss the presence and significance of these German scholars. For instance, the contemporary art historian Klement Benda regarded Woltmann's presence at Prague University as insignificant, mentioning him in a few lines merely as a successor in Vocel's post.<sup>119</sup> More attention is given to Grueber, who was the author of the first comprehensive work on mediaeval art in Bohemia.<sup>120</sup> Springer has received attention from Czech scholars mainly because they consider him a Czech art historian who lost interest in national and patriotic ideals.<sup>121</sup> This claim was in fact based on Springer's own statement made in his biography: "I was born as an Austrian, and ended my life as a good German; I was baptized a Catholic... and shall die as a Protestant; my mother-tongue was a Slavic dialect and I hope to secure myself a small place in the history of German scholarship."<sup>122</sup> This stands in contrast to the considerable interest in his work displayed by German and other scholars.<sup>123</sup>

The response to Springer, and in particular the fact that, having been born in Prague, he was a Bohemian can therefore be taken as an indicator of wider attitudes towards German authors on the part of the Czechs. Different interpretations were employed to serve different purposes; while, in 1986, Springer fitted into the history of Czech art history, in his own time (namely in 1871), Antonín Baum, in his heated

<sup>118</sup> Benda, "Rozmach oboru v devadesátých letech," [The development of the discipline in the nineties] in *Kapitoly I*, ed. Chadraba, 197, 205.

<sup>119</sup> Benda, "Jan Erazim Vocel" 103 and 197.

<sup>120</sup> Alfred Woltmann, *Deutsche Kunst in Prag. Ein Vortrag gehalten ... am 25 November 1876* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1876).

<sup>121</sup> Anděla Horová, "Anton Heinrich Springer," in *Kapitoly I*, ed. Chadraba, 123–139.

<sup>122</sup> Anton Heinrich Springer, *Aus meinem Leben* (Berlin: G. Grote, 1892), 4.

<sup>123</sup> See Johannes Rößler, *Die Poetik der Kunstgeschichte. Anton Springer, Carl Justi und die ästhetische Konzeption der deutschen Kunstwissenschaft I* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008).

criticism of German texts on art in Bohemia argued: “Springer lives outside of Bohemia and in the past, he hardly saw a monument of Czech art himself”<sup>124</sup> This short disapproving remark on Springer was aimed at his review of a text on the visual arts in Bohemia, written by Grueber. Baum could not consider Springer’s text as an objective review, but rather an ardent adulation, mainly because both authors were German and Springer, in Baum’s view, did not have the *in situ* experience with the works of art in Bohemia.

In general, Czech scholars have been biased against German authors publishing on Czech art. The authors of *Kapitoly*, for instance, devoted only a few lines to German authors such as Janitschek, professor of art history at the University in Prague between 1878 and 1881, his successor Alwin Schultz or Schultz’s student Neuwirth.<sup>125</sup> Janitschek’s omission may be explained by the fact that he did not spend much time in Prague. Schulz and Neuwirth, however, researched extensively on the topic of art in Bohemia, but due to their affiliation with the German part of the University and with the German Reich, they were either ignored or strongly criticised by their Czech contemporaries. The historiography of art in Bohemia and Moravia has thus been selectively and exclusively understood for a long time as that written by Czech authors only.

It is only in much more recent articles that German scholars active in Bohemia have received greater attention. For example, recently Milena Bartlová has focused on the interaction between the two groups of the linguistically diverse scholars (the Czechs and Germans) and explored the methods and motivations in the German writing, thus acknowledging their significance and place within history of Czech art.<sup>126</sup> She focused in particular on individuals concerned with *mediaeval* history of art in Bohemia, which, as I have argued, was one of the main concerns of art history of that time.

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<sup>124</sup> Antonín Baum, “Jak píší historii umění českého,” *Památky archeologické a místopisné* IX (1871/73): 366.

<sup>125</sup> Klement Benda, “Rozmach oboru v devadesátých letech,” [The Boom in the discipline in the nineties] in *Kapitoly*, 197.

<sup>126</sup> Bartlová, “Německé dějiny.” 67–78.

Although Czech accounts of the historiography of art have treated German art historians in this rather dismissive way, the work of these German authors was crucial for the further development of Czech art history. The question of who should be included within Czech art historiography and why therefore arises in this connection. In contrast to those authors that excluded the authors of German origin, I have taken their views into account in this thesis as significant for the construction of notions of Czech art. The writing of German authors of the second half of the nineteenth century, which was usually nationalistically oriented, provoked many Czech art historians to defend and to a certain extent to construct the entire concept of *Czech art*. Arguments expressed by the German art historians functioned as a catalyst and as the foil against which Czech art writing was defined. At the same time, the language of the publications on Czech art or art in Bohemia should not be regarded as decisive in determining the “nationality” of the texts. Many early art historians, such as Vocel and Zap, who followed the patriotic goals of defining the substance of Czech art, wrote in German.

## **Journals of the nineteenth century**

In the second half of the nineteenth century, gradually, although not exclusively, Czech gained recognition as a language of scholarly publication and eventually prevailed over German. A number of popular magazines and journals were founded during the nineteenth century to promote Czech language and to inform the readers on general issues of interest. Many of the writers I discuss in the following chapters, published their articles about art and architecture in them and treated the subject in a manner accessible to wider audiences. Journals that covered art-related issues include the journal of the Vlastenecké museum (The Patriotic Museum), *Světobzor* (Worldwatch), *Památky archeologické a místopisné* (Archaeological and Topographical Antiquities), which was also published under the title *Památky. Listy pro archaeologii a historii* (Monuments. A Journal for Archaeology and History), *Osvěta, listy pro rozhled v umění, vědě a politice* (Edification. A Journal for Knowledge of Arts, Science, and Politics) (Fig. 8).

*Figure 6 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

Despite the names of many of them, their specialization was not yet fully developed and even *Památky archeologické*, despite its indicated focus on archaeology, was not targeted at scholars but rather at a more general readership.<sup>127</sup> Established in 1854, this journal was originally also published in a German version, which was – nevertheless – abandoned quite soon. The reason for this might be seen as an attempt to concentrate on solely Czech readership, but such a turn inevitably resulted in a rapid decrease in the number of readers of the Czech edition to only several dozen.<sup>128</sup> The primary interest of the journal was historical, especially architectural, monuments from Prehistory to the Middle Ages, the main subject matter of contemporary archaeology. Its aims were directed not towards pure scholarship but – as one of the editors, Karel Vladislav Zap, stated – the encouragement of the interest of the wider public.<sup>129</sup> The public thus first had to become aware of wider cultural and historical contexts before a specialized readership could be developed.

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<sup>127</sup> Karel Sklenář, “One Hundred and Forty Years of an Archaeological Magazine: The Problem of True Tradition,” *Památky archeologické* LXXXV (1994): 7.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 10.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

*Časopis českého museum* was also originally founded as a popular magazine educating a broader *Czech* public and cultivating the Czech language. As the first editor, František Palacký, emphasised, the journal intended to publish “everything that is connected with our life in Bohemia, both the public and the social, also [all that is connected] with the Moravians and Slovaks, who are related to us by language and literature.”<sup>130</sup> Therefore as well as the visual arts, the articles in this journal covered poetry, linguistics, history, geography, patriotic issues and natural sciences; and all were written in Czech.<sup>131</sup>

The magazine *Osvěta* was issued on a monthly basis from 1871 until 1921, again as an educational paper covering a wide range of cultural, scientific and political issues. *Světobzor* (published between 1834 and 1899) was in the first place an illustrated weekly for entertainment, arts and literature, hence a periodical with a wide range of topics and interests. Other journals and magazines that occasionally published articles on the visual arts in this period were *Květy české*, later *Květy* (Czech Blossoms) published from the 1830s to the present, *Slovan* (The Slav, 1869–1876), and *Krok* (A Step, 1821–1840).

These journals attempted to address as wide an audience as possible. This was reflected especially in the content and specialization of the articles. There was no Czech equivalent to the *Mitteilungen der Central Commission*, first issued in Vienna in 1856 or the *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* (The Journal for Fine Art) published in Germany since 1866, which both specialised in historical, art historical, and archaeological subjects. In contrast to the much smaller Czech regions, the German-speaking countries had a considerably larger public interested in the issues of archaeology and art history. Such a difference had an important impact on the shape of early Czech art historical scholarship.

The only Czech journal focused entirely on Czech art in the second half of the nineteenth century was *Method*, which, however, took an exclusive interest in

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<sup>130</sup> František Palacký, *Časopis českého museum* 1 (1827): 5. The first issue of the *Časopis českého museum* was published in 1827, in 1855 it was renamed to the *Časopis Musea Království českého* [Journal of Museum of the Czech Kingdom] and in 1926 to the *Časopis národního musea* [Journal of the National Museum] while it gradually developed a specialised focus on issues of museology.

<sup>131</sup> Macura, *Známění zrodu*, 157–158.

ecclesiastical art in Bohemia. Its owner, publisher and editor was the Catholic priest Ferdinand Josef Lehner, who financed the journal, published between 1875 and 1904, from his own resources. Since he also attempted to write a concise history of *Czech* art in several volumes, I shall come back to him and his contribution to Czech art history later.<sup>132</sup>

Given the aims of these journals, namely, to educate and awaken a broad Czech-speaking audience in the period of increasing nation's self-awareness, the authors writing for them were mostly of Czech origin. German authors writing in Bohemia and Moravia, however, seemed to be more successful at finding financial resources for publications of their works in book form. As I shall show later, the Czechs saw this imbalance as an injustice, and it aggravated the hostility towards German authors based in the Czech lands.

## **Art history in Moravia**

The above-mentioned institutions and journals were located in Prague, which was the heart of national life and of increasing national consciousness in Bohemia. However, art historical research was also conducted outside of Prague, in the various regional centres and often with some delay. When compared to the situation in Bohemia and in Prague especially, the national revival in the historical region of Moravia that would be accompanied by the rise of Czech-written literature and history and national awareness was rather belated. Historically, the Margraviate of Moravia had been politically and culturally much more closely tied to Vienna than Bohemia and Prague, and it was governed independently of Bohemia. This had a natural impact on the development of scholarship in different intellectual areas, including art history. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, authors of the first texts on history, topography or art published predominantly in German mainly as this language had been the *lingua franca* of the Moravian intelligentsia. The German inhabitants also constituted a majority in some of the largest towns in Moravia. In 1880, there were nearly 50,000 Germans as opposed to 30,000 Czechs

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<sup>132</sup> Ferdinand Josef Lehner, *Dějiny umění národa českého I*, 3 vol. (Prague: Unie, 1903).

in the Moravian capital Brno (Brünn) and in 1900, the bishop's seat of Olomouc (Olmütz) had 6,000 Czechs and around 12,000 Germans.<sup>133</sup>

Even here there were clashes between the two ethnic, or linguistic groups, such as the demand, in the mid-1880s, by the Czechs for a Czech University in Brno. This was understood by the German inhabitants as “an attack on the German character of the city” but, nevertheless, led to the establishment of a Czech Technical University in 1899.<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, for a long time, art historical research in Moravia was conducted by individuals usually motivated by a personal interest in art and architecture and without much interest in the nationalistic differences between the Czech and German cultural domains.

In 1817, a regional museum was established in Brno in southern Moravia, by Franz Josef I. Named after the emperor, it was managed by the German-oriented aristocracy and it remained unaffected by the goals of the national revival for a long time.<sup>135</sup> Its opening was followed by the establishment of the Mährisches Gewerbemuseum (the Moravian Museum of Design) founded in Brno in 1873. The first two directors, August Prokop (1838–1915) and Julius Leisching (1865–1933) were both architects, trained in Vienna.<sup>136</sup> Their contribution to art history in Moravia is usually seen in their topographical listing of monuments in the region and cataloguing of works of art, which were published in *Mittheilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn* (between 1883 and 1918).

As regards the writing of history and art history in Moravia, the first texts were composed in German which was – like in Bohemia – the prevailing language of education and academic communication. The first compact history of the region was published in 1860 as *Mährens allgemeine Geschichte* (The general history of Moravia) by the Catholic priest Beda Dudík who, despite the lack of sources, also attempted to interpret art and architecture in a larger context – he described the

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<sup>133</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 85. These numbers were, nevertheless, based on stated language affiliation and, as the contemporary Czech press claimed, may have misrepresented the number of Czechs and Germans. See Jan Sedlák, *Brno secesní* [Secession of Brno] (Brno: Era Group, 2004), 17.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 17–18.

<sup>135</sup> Kutnar, “Nové podmínky,” in *Přehledné dějiny*, 211.

<sup>136</sup> Samek, “Dějiny umění,” *Kapitoly*, 222.

economic, social and cultural conditions of the people in the different historical periods.<sup>137</sup>

Prokop, who also taught at the Technical University in Brno, wrote a concise history of art in Moravia. His *Markgrafschaft Mähren in kunstgeschichtlicher Beziehung* (The Margravate of Moravia from an art historical point of view) from 1904 focused on architecture, which was seen by the author as an integral part of the German cultural sphere.<sup>138</sup> Prokop's successor, Leisching, was the author of *Kunstgeschichte Mährens*, which almost solely focused on German-speaking towns in Moravia and was not published until 1932.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, his attention to the universal development of art history and its relation to the state of affairs in Moravia suggests the influence of Vienna School teaching in Leisching's approach.<sup>140</sup> According to Bohumil Samek, Leisching was a regular participant at international art historical congresses and had contacts in Vienna through his brother, Eduard (1858–1938), who worked as director of the Museum für Kunst und Industrie (The Museum for Art and Industry – now the Museum of Applied Arts) in Vienna from 1909.<sup>141</sup>

Gradually, Czech-speaking patriots in Moravia started founding their own journals, for instance *Vlastivěda moravská* (The Moravian topography) or *Časopis Matice moravské* (Journal of the Moravian foundation). Patriotic associations were also established with the goals of promoting national awareness and general education. Examples could be seen in the women's club Brněnská Vesna, 1870 (Brno's Vesna) or Klub přátel umění (The Friends of Arts Club), in 1900, of which one of the founding members was the architect Dušan Jurkovič (1868–1947), whose practical work drew from folk architecture in Slovakia and Moravia.<sup>142</sup> For the use of

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<sup>137</sup> Kutnar, "Rozvoj ediční činnosti dějepisectví regionálního," [The development of editorial activities of the regional historiography] in *Přehledné dějiny*, 310.

<sup>138</sup> August Prokop, *Markgrafschaft Mähren in kunstgeschichtlicher Beziehung* (Vienn, 1904). Bohumil Samek, "Dějiny umění na Moravě ve druhé polovině 19. století a na počátku 20. století," [The history of art in Moravia in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century] in *Kapitoly I*, ed. Chadraba, 222.

<sup>139</sup> Julius Leisching, *Kunstgeschichte Mährens* (Brno: R.M. Rohrer, 1932).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> "Das Janáček-Lexikon."



motives and forms derived from peasant houses, Jurkovič became one of the main proponents of regionalism in architecture in Central Europe.

These Czech clubs also supported contemporary Moravian and Bohemian visual art as well as research in art history by organizing exhibitions, purchases of works of art and publication of articles. Still more successful were their German counterparts, such as the Mährischer Kunstverein (Moravian Art Club, 1882) and Brünnener Gesellschaft der Kunstfreunde (The Society of Friends of Art in Brno, 1900), initiated by Leisching.<sup>143</sup> Their activities, which consisted in organizing various exhibitions, lectures and art courses, attracted large audiences. Their exhibitions displayed not only local art made by German artists, but over the years of its existence also introduced contemporary international art from, for example, the Viennese Secession and the artistic association Hagenbund.<sup>144</sup>

## Conclusion

During the second half of the nineteenth century a series of museums, academies and educational institutes in Bohemia and Moravia were established that provided institutional support to the national revivalist interest in rediscovering Czech culture and history. Moreover, the Vlastenecké museum, the Obrazárna gallery and the Czech Academy of Arts and Sciences not only aimed at collecting and preserving artefacts and knowledge of the past, they also tried to educate general audience about the past and present of the Czech nation. Their initial concerns were thus with stimulating the interest of wider audiences in Czech national identity, which they did through various activities, such as exhibitions, historical research and publication of articles.

Later, as these institutions became more intellectually and professionally focused, art historical writing was developing into a more rigorous and specialised activity. In contrast, the writings of the first Czech scholars of art, however, were usually published in journals of a rather general focus that, despite their titles, such as

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<sup>143</sup> Sedlák, *Brno*, 43.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 40–41, 43.

*Památky* and *Časopis českého museum*, were meant for a broader public rather than for a small circle of experts.

The apparent lack of specialised scholarship and art historical resources in Czech art history was also prominent in the situation at the Charles-Ferdinand university. Although some Czechs were appointed as professors of art history (Vocel in 1850 and Chytil in 1897), education in Czech in this area was limited to just a few lecture series. Again, Czech art history suffered from an institutional deficit when compared with much more established art history of the German part of the university, which enjoyed a larger number of teachers and students. Even more belated was the development of Czech-language art history in Moravia. Due to their long-standing cultural dominance the German-speaking inhabitants here had the financial resources and contacts necessary for establishment of museums, journals and patriotic clubs that could promote German history and culture of the region.

As I show in the following chapters, writing about art both in Moravia and Bohemia was for a long time targeted at increasing Czech national awareness in a more general sense. Institutions, such as museums, academies and the university, developed patriotic programmes first, and this was followed by the adoption of more serious academic scholarship later, while many of their activities were conducted with a recognition of the existence and better position of their German counterparts.

## **2. The Early Constructions of Czech Identity in Art History**

The initial stages of Czech art history and the first attempts to identify the nature and character of the visual arts in Bohemia date back to the second half of the nineteenth century. Geographically speaking, it was Prague in the second half of the nineteenth century, which developed as a main centre of scholarship. This was where art-historical scholarship in the present-day sense of the word first emerged in the Czech-speaking territories and where the main debates on the nature of Czech art were initiated. Although at the same time, there were some rudiments of art historical research in other parts of today's Czech Republic, for the moment, I shall focus on the capital of Bohemia.

From 1850 onwards a new view of the visual arts and their role in society developed. Works of art became discussed as the authentic expression of the Czech people in the process of their national rebirth and they were assigned the ability to prove the nation's cultural independence and long-lasting tradition. Art history was thus given the task of strengthening national consciousness.

Writings on Czech art history at this time were heavily burdened by Romantic idealism and a rather unsystematic approach to works of art. More "scientific" (i.e. empirical) methods, as they were called, were employed in Czech art history only around the turn of the century. Until the late 1800s, art history was still in the process of developing into discipline with clearly defined methods and approaches. Moreover, it is rather difficult to talk about authors of the texts in question as "art historians," for these texts in this period were in the first place written by historians, archaeologists, or aestheticians and only later by formally trained historians of art.

In this chapter, I examine the earliest examples of art historical literature written by Czech authors on art in Bohemia. These texts can be seen both as attempts to construct a linear, continuous history of Czech art, and also as attempts to transform the study of the history of art into an academic discipline.

## Jan Erazim Vocel, the founder of Czech art history

Attempts to describe the nature of art especially in Bohemia had begun to appear throughout the nineteenth century by authors who in most cases held a very romanticised image of the topic. As early as 1820, František Palacký considered the potential of art in the nation's rebirth and stressed the importance of compiling a national history of art.<sup>145</sup> The visual arts of the Middle Ages in Bohemia became the subject of for example the Russian Alexander Popov (1820–1877), who examined its mediaeval painting in *O starobylé české malbě* (On medieval Czech painting) published in 1846. He invented a number of illuminators to prove the self-sufficiency of Czech art, claiming, for example, a “softness of colour” in the Prague school of painting.<sup>146</sup> The Austrian Ludwig Ritter von Rittersberg (1809–1858) studied Czech and Slavic artistic life in the Middle Ages in an article published in Czech in the revolution year of 1848.<sup>147</sup> Following Herder, Rittersberg identified typical and original features of “Slavic aesthetics” and glorified the common people as the carriers of the national artistic tradition.<sup>148</sup>

The history of art in Bohemia began to be recognized in academic circles and serious scholarly discussions, and started enjoying a stronger position art history after it became institutionalized at the Charles-Ferdinand University after 1850. In this year, the first chair of art history was awarded to Jan Erazim Vocel whose writing showed sentiments for national emancipation of the Czechs.<sup>149</sup>

As the very first professor of art history and archaeology at Prague university, Vocel was the earliest major figure to focus consciously on Czech art and its significance. Vocel laid foundations for the subsequent development of Czech

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<sup>145</sup> František Palacký, “Přehled dějin krásovědy a její literatury,” [A survey of the history of the beauty studies and the literature on it] *Dílo Františka Palackého* IV (Prague: L. Mazáč, 1941), 122. Originally in *Krok* I, no. 4 (1823).

<sup>146</sup> Alexander Nikolaevich Popov, *O starobylé české malbě* [On ancient Czech painting] (Prague: Synové Bohumila Háze, 1846).

<sup>147</sup> Ludvík Ritter von Rittersberg “Myšlenky o slovanském malířství,” [Thoughts about Slavic painting] *Květy a plody* (1848).

<sup>148</sup> Dvořáková, “Osvícenci a romantikové,” 73.

<sup>149</sup> The situation in Moravia was rather different due to a dissimilar intellectual development and a closer attachment to Vienna. For the beginnings of Czech art history in Moravia, see for example Bohumil Samek, “Počátky dějin umění na Moravě. Miloši Stehlíkovi k šedesátinám,” [The beginnings art history in Moravia. To Miloš Stehlík at his sixtieth birthday] *Umění* XXXII (1984). I shall return to the question of art history in Moravia in the following chapter.

academic art history and established a number of its features, such as periodization and terminology. Nevertheless (and not unlike his contemporaries and followers), his approach was still largely indebted to an idealised image of the Czech nation, whose traditions and glorious history, he felt, should be recovered as part of the revival programme that promoted such understanding.

Vocel's article from 1845 "O starožitnostech českých a o potřebě chrániti je před zkázou" (On Czech antiquities and the need to protect them from destruction) is one of his earliest works and, in fact, one of the first modern texts on *Czech* art which sets out to identify its specific traits.<sup>150</sup> Divided into two parts, the text looks at pagan (meaning Prehistoric) and Christian mediaeval works of art. Vocel started the latter part with architecture, giving it the greatest importance, continuing with painting and concluding with sculpture.

Being one of the first scholarly accounts of mediaeval art in Bohemia, this article was meant rather as an prompt for further research into Czech art, which he understood as distinctive in many ways from German art. Vocel sketched out the state of mediaeval art, providing formal descriptions and a few examples of those features he regarded as the most typical, but he did not explain on what basis he considered them "Czech." His list of "antiquities" was limited to works from Bohemia and he mentioned artworks from Moravia only very briefly. Similarly, most of the works he described were located in Bohemia although he suggested that some Czech works of art were preserved abroad.<sup>151</sup>

Vocel understood these works of art to be an inherent part of the national heritage and identity. His perception of nationality was political and ethnical, targeted against the Germans in Bohemia and he was highly reliant on Palacký. Like the latter, Vocel remained moderate in his claims regarding Czech political sovereignty and retained the Austro-Slavic ideal of an autonomous Czech nation within the confines of Austria.<sup>152</sup> This was in his views that the Czech and other Slavic nations

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<sup>150</sup> Jan Erazim Vocel, "O starožitnostech českých a o potřebě chrániti je před zkázou," *Časopis českého museum* XIX (1845).

<sup>151</sup> E.g. the paintings in Mühlhausen church are works of the "Old Czech school," cited in *Ibid.*, 673.

<sup>152</sup> Benda, "Jan Erazim Vocel," in *Kapitoly I*, ed. Chadraba, 90–91.

would be stronger within the Austrian empire, the protection of which they could enjoy.<sup>153</sup>

In his discussion of architecture, Vögel made a historical and formal distinction between two styles of mediaeval art in Bohemia; the “Byzantine” and Gothic styles. Under “Byzantine” he understood Romanesque architectural forms, which was an identification based on the theory of Franz Kugler (1808–1858). The latter argued in 1842 that early mediaeval art had eastern origins and therefore should be called Byzantine.<sup>154</sup> He thereby countered the widespread view that the roots of Romanesque art were German, an idea promoted in Bohemia by, for example Alfred Woltmann and Bernhard Grueber, whom I shall discuss later, and Vögel’s notion fitted easily into the claims of Czech nationalist art historians.

He distinguished between Byzantine and Gothic forms in painting but not in sculpture. In his own, as well as in other writing of the period, sculpture was seen as being in a slightly inferior position to architecture and painting and detailed research on it had not yet been properly started. Nevertheless, in Vögel’s enumeration of different “antiquities” (as he called works of art), he also mentioned “minor” forms of sculpture, such as reliefs on bells, monstrances, inscriptions and others. He did not therefore draw a distinction between higher and lower forms of art (i.e. the applied arts); this appeared only later in Czech art history. The canons of art history, which gave preference to certain forms of art, had not yet been established in this period.

What makes Vögel’s article particularly significant is his suggestion as to who should write national art history, as well as why and how. Regarding the question as to why one should be concerned about national monuments, Vögel pointed out the importance of these remnants of the national past:

Each Czech who cherishes in his heart the love of the honour of his nation and the historical eminence of his homeland surely also

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<sup>153</sup> Cf. for example, Jan Erazim Vögel, “Slovo o české národnosti,” [A word on the Czech nationality] *Časopis českého museum* XIX (1845): 258–267.

<sup>154</sup> Franz Kugler, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Ebner & Seubert, 1842). On the issue of the equation of the Romanesque with Byzantine in Czech art history, see Bartlová, “Německé dějiny umění” and Vybíral, “Hledání národního stylu.”

longingly asks whether the monuments of earlier epochs of the nation  
... were appreciated for their importance.<sup>155</sup>

Protection and thorough attention to national monuments was important for future generations so that they could see the “spiritual strength of their ancestors in the valuable heritage they have left.”<sup>156</sup>

Emphasis on a continuous tradition connecting the ancient past of the Czechs and the Slovaks with the current national revival appeared in many places of Vöcl's text. Writing on the history of monuments, he claimed, “can to a large extent contribute to the permanent and comprehensive strengthening of Czech nationality” as “our national life is connected by numerous links with the past of our homeland and a large part of it is hidden in the remnants of architecture, painting and sculpture [...], in other words in the national monuments.”<sup>157</sup> Vöcl thus believed in an ancient tradition visible in the nation's artistic achievements, which proved the continuity and historical pedigree of the Czech nation.

Vöcl also addressed the issue of the motivations behind Czech history writing. A comprehensive history of Czech art should be compiled in order to overcome reliance on obsolete, particularly German sources.<sup>158</sup> Such a demand was grounded in a more general tendency among the Czech revivalists of the mid-nineteenth century to challenge the traditional dependence on German texts, translations from German and the dominance of German writers. From the 1820s onwards, the Czechs appealed to “break through the chains by which despotism has been binding us since the Battle of the White Mountain,” as Palacký aptly stated.<sup>159</sup> The present political and cultural dominance of the Germans was clearly paralleled in the academic sphere. Vöcl specifically argued that Czech archaeology (which included art history) should be examined and compiled by those scholars who were familiar with the local language and history of the nation.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Vöcl, “O starožitnostech,” 649.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 673.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 681.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 682.

<sup>159</sup> František Palacký, “Korespondence a zápisky III, Korespondence z let 1816–1826,” [Correspondence and notes III. Correspondence from 1816–1826] quoted in Macura, *Znamení zrodu*, 78.

<sup>160</sup> Vöcl, “O starožitnostech,” 680.

For Vöcl only local (meaning Czech) art historians were fully authorized to compile national art history since only they had the knowledge of the language and their understanding of the inherent traditions was incomparably better than the views of the “outsiders.” As Seton-Watson has stated, such a disparity between “native” and “foreign” historians was based on the prejudices against the lack of awareness of the local language and culture. Vöcl, as a Czech “native” scholar dismissed the ability of German – “foreign” – authors to write competently about Czech art. The task of the local scholar, in Vöcl’s view, was therefore to protect the nation’s monuments, collect them and write about them, by which he should be reinforcing the sense of Czech nationality.

These claims again complemented contemporary calls by revivalists for the study of local history and literature. For example, in his *Geschichte der slawischen Sprache und Literatur*, published in German in 1826, Šafařík held that “it is desirable to learn about the homeland first, and then visit foreign countries and [it is desirable to] revitalize one’s own garden first, and then somebody else’s...”<sup>161</sup>

The aim of doing so was again tackled by Vöcl. By comparison with works of art from abroad, the local scholar should justify and defend Czech art of the past against ignorance and the occasional inversion of facts.<sup>162</sup> Here Vöcl implicitly referred to the persistent marginalization of Czech culture by German speakers although he did not give any concrete names. As he concluded,

It arises from the publications of the numerous societies of German archaeologists, for despite their great erudition the German scholars often lack both love of the Slavic inhabitants of these countries and also the knowledge of the Slavic language necessary in order to engage in an impartial study.<sup>163</sup>

### **Vöcl and national art**

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<sup>161</sup> Šafařík, *Geschichte der slawischen Sprache*. Reprinted in *Pavel Josef Šafařík*, ed. Jan Novotný (Prague: Melantrich, 1971), 267.

<sup>162</sup> Vöcl, “O starožitnostech,” 681.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 681.



Vocel's article was his first assignment from the Archaeological Committee, of which he was an executive member. As such, it was commissioned to cover only genuinely Czech historical monuments.<sup>164</sup> In a later article entitled "Začátkové českého umění" (The beginnings of Czech art), published in 1847, also addressed the question of artistic national identity and its construction.<sup>165</sup> The topic of Czech nationality was explored in a further article, "Slovo o české národnosti" (A remark on Czech nationality), which summarized contemporary nationalist thinking.<sup>166</sup>

Despite its emphasis on Czech art in its title, "Začátkové českého umění" focused on the early history of *Slavic* pagan artefacts from Bohemia, which Vocel defined on the basis of the frequent opposition to German, or Germanic culture. Using present-day terminology, he thus referred to for example "Pre-Teutonic Germany," or "ancient Czechs" and applied contemporary nationalistic ideology onto the situation before the concept of nation-states was born.

Examining German influences on Bohemia, Vocel did acknowledge the leading position of the Germans in art, which, in his opinion, had to be ascribed to their earlier adoption of Christianity and not to "some special precedence of the German character."<sup>167</sup> The article was also substantially indebted to Herder's characterization of the Germans and the Slavs in its description of the Germans' "wild national character that rejected a quiet household, agriculture and art" as opposed to the "peaceful nature of the Slavs who [practiced] agriculture, trade, arts and crafts."<sup>168</sup> In characterising the traits of different nationalities he also drew on Šafařík and Kollár, who extended Herder's distinctions with the additional role given to religion. Thus, for Vocel "nationality is embedded in religion," a reflection of the higher origin and the purpose of the people.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Klement Benda, "Jan Erazim Vocel – zakladatel českého dějepisumu umění," [Jan Erazim Vocel – the founder of Czech history of art] *Umění XXVIII* (1981): 1–20; Benda, "Jan Erazim Vocel," in *Kapitoly I*, ed. Chadřaba.

<sup>165</sup> Jan Erazim Vocel, "Začátkové," *Časopis českého museum XXI* (1847): 308–333, 440–454, 530–544, 641–654.

<sup>166</sup> Vocel, "Slovo o české národnosti."

<sup>167</sup> Vocel, "Vyvinování," 321.

<sup>168</sup> Vocel, "Začátkové," 318.

<sup>169</sup> Vocel, "Slovo," 258.

The significance of religion in the definition of national identity was closely related to Vocel's notion of the spiritual, which he identified with the Christian God as well as with artistic achievements. The influence of Hegelianism, according to which the absolute idea is materialized in art, religion and philosophy, was quite clear here and Vocel most probably adopted it from Kugler and Gustav Friedrich Waagen (1794–1868).<sup>170</sup> Both of these German art historians, whose texts Vocel knew, were based in Berlin and applied Hegel's ideas in their art historical work. However, Vocel's account of, for instance the world-ruling spirit, was rather imprecise due to the underdevelopment of the Czech philosophical lexicon in the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>171</sup>

Since the vocabulary of scholarly Czech was still quite limited in the mid-nineteenth century, Vocel's writing was also influenced by the rhetoric of contemporary fiction, poetry and sciences. He applied especially the vocabulary and style of the revived Czech language, the primary focus of the Czech national awakeners.<sup>172</sup> When describing, for example, early mediaeval illumination, Vocel used neologisms that have since disappeared from the Czech language, such as "rozvilina" which denotes the arabesque, although it has been replaced by "arabeska" in contemporary Czech.<sup>173</sup> Also, while classifying art history into periods, he referred to "systems," a term taken over from the sciences.<sup>174</sup>

An important role in the construction (rather than reconstruction) of modern Czech was played by the Czech-German dictionary compiled by Josef Jungmann (1775–1847), one of the main figures of the Czech national "awakening," which "demonstrated the richness of the language" and represented the "joint cultural creation of the patriotic society."<sup>175</sup> The five volumes of the "national" dictionary,

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<sup>170</sup> Benda, "Jan Erazim Vocel," in *Kapitoly*, 96.

<sup>171</sup> Benda, "Jan Erazim Vocel – zakladatel," 6.

<sup>172</sup> Benda, "Jan Erazim Vocel," in *Kapitoly*, 95–97.

<sup>173</sup> Vocel, "Vyvinování křesťanského umění a nejstarší památky jeho, zvláště v Čechách," [The development of Christian art and its eldest works, particularly in Bohemia] *Časopis českého museum* XXVI, No. 1 (1852): 49.

<sup>174</sup> Vocel, "Česká archeologie křesťanského věku," [Czech archaeology of the Christian times] *Časopis českého museum* XXIV (1850): 543.

<sup>175</sup> Macura, *Známění zrodu*, 50.

published between 1834 and 1839, were to emphasise the richness of Czech in contrast to the rational and straightforward qualities of German.<sup>176</sup>

At the time of the national revival, the character given to the recovered Czech language by the Czech awakeners played a significant role in shaping the discourse of both Czech literary and scholarly texts. According to the promoters of the language, such as Jungmann and Václav Hanka (1791–1861), Czech, as an inflectional language, was capable of “musical” (or “melodious”), “sensitive,” and “soft” expressions suitable mainly for poetry.<sup>177</sup>

Vocel held similar views as to the qualities of the Czech language, and urged its use in academic writing. Care and respect for the national language was for him a civic duty especially of the bourgeois classes, who had the capacity to improve the lives of the working classes through education.<sup>178</sup> Language thus became a vital tool in the reconstruction of the nation directed from the affluent classes downwards.

An important aspect of Vocel’s work was the identification of specific artistic schools of Czech painting. He identified them on the basis of their formal features, and he also saw in them the expression of ethnic identity. For example, he characterized the Czech Byzantine “school” of painting by its “wide eyes, eyebrows [that are] emphasised, arms and legs often incorrectly depicted, gowns large and pleated, colourful and bright, often full of jewels. [...] the appearance of the spirit is full, deep and penetrating...”<sup>179</sup> For Vocel this school was primarily based in Bohemia, producing a large number of works, and he made vague references to the “perfection” of some of the works of art. This rather indefinite characterisation of the school was due to two factors: on the one hand it was a reflection of Vocel’s reductive nationalism through which he created the idea of an autonomous Czech artistic identity. He assigned it with characteristics, such as perfection, which he did not specify in more detail. On the other hand, the above-mentioned linguistic insufficiency of the lexicon of Czech art history, in which the concept of “style”

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<sup>176</sup> Josef Jungmann, *Slovník česko-německý* [The Czech-German dictionary], 5 vols. (Prague: Knjžecj arcibiskupská knihtiskárna, 1834–1839).

<sup>177</sup> Macura, *Znamení zrodu*, 41.

<sup>178</sup> Vocel, “Slovo,” 265.

<sup>179</sup> Vocel, “O starožitnostech,” 669.

was not yet properly coined, resulted in a search of a classification of works of art into groups with similar formal features.

Vocel's lifelong interest lay in ancient and mediaeval art, mostly from Bohemia, which reflected a more general Romantic interest in the Middle Ages. Historians, archaeologists, linguists and awakeners turned their attention to the mediaeval period in the early nineteenth century when this part of Czech history was reassessed. Scholars made connections between the Middle Ages and current events in order to understand not only mediaeval life and culture but also to provide a model for the spirit of the contemporary Czech nation, and mediaeval period played a particularly important role in helping define the specific character of national identity and history.<sup>180</sup> As I shall show later, mediaeval culture and art were recovered for this purpose by a number of other art historians.

Vocel also appealed for the production of a comprehensive work on Czech art in the context of the history of European art, and he set out the preconditions for the writers of a successful text on Czech art, which were later followed by Ferdinand Lehner (1837–1914), who further developed the national-historical concept of Czech art. Vocel's concept of the Czech school was likewise essential for the subsequent deeper analysis of Czech art grouped around certain typical traits, its Czechness. However, he took the Czech character of the art works he described for granted and did not provide any further elaboration, since he saw this as self-explanatory, based on the geographical location of the works and on the ethnic origin of the artists. This attitude changed in the late nineteenth century in the wake of the publication of a number of German texts on art in Bohemia that disputed the automatic assumption of Czech authorship.

## **K. V. Zap**

The same reading of history and “antiquities” and attention to national schools is noticeable in the first more detailed treatise on Czech art by Karel Vladislav Zap

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<sup>180</sup> Kutnar, “Nové podmínky,” in *Přehledné dějiny*, 209.

(1812–1871).<sup>181</sup> Zap was Vocel's pupil, and also the editor of the journal *Památky archeologické*. His concept of national history and its importance in the present-day situation was also indebted to Palacký.<sup>182</sup> His definition of Czech art, written for a Czech encyclopaedia, was among the first codifications of the concept. Although Zap stood outside academia, his thoughts were given a widespread recognition due to their inclusion in the *Slovník naučný* (Encyclopaedia), an influential publication edited by the politician František Ladislav Rieger (1818–1903),<sup>183</sup> Rieger compiled the encyclopaedia in twelve volumes between 1859 and 1874 with special emphasis on Slavic topics. There were around 5500 subscribers to the first volume, of which more than four thousand were from Bohemia.<sup>184</sup>

The entry on “Čechy, V. Dějepis umění” (Bohemia, V. History of visual arts), written by Zap in 1862, was part of an extensive account of Bohemia. In keeping with Herder's general characterization of the Slavs and the Germans, Zap emphasised the peaceful and settled nature of the ancient Slavs standing in contrast to the Germanic tribes who “knew nothing but war, raids and hunting.”<sup>185</sup> Already in the first paragraphs Zap thus introduced the tone of his article that was meant as a defence of Czech art. Zap contrasted it with German art, which, according to him, was threatening not only on its own account but also due to the work of German art historians. Although he did not mention any specific names, he dismissed German writers as biased in their arguments: “...the claims of the prejudiced German writers that all seeds of human skills and art came to us from Germany and through Germany is rather fatuous.”<sup>186</sup>

Like Vocel, Zap contrasted Czech with German culture on the basis of a number of works of art. He distinguished several architectural periods: Byzantine (meaning Romanesque); Gothic; Renaissance; Rococo; pseudo-Classicism; and Romantic revived styles (Neo-Baroque, Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Gothic), and subsequently

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<sup>181</sup> Karel Vladislav Zap, *Slovník naučný*, vol. 2, (Prague: Kober, 1860–1874), 442–455, s.v. “Čechy.”

<sup>182</sup> Derek Sayer, “The Language of Nationality and the Nationality of Language: Prague 1780–1920 – Czech Republic history,” *Past & Present*, (November 1996): section 131.

<sup>183</sup> *Slovník naučný*, s.v. “Čechy.”

<sup>184</sup> Hartmanová, “Historie,” 20.

<sup>185</sup> *Slovník naučný*, s.v. “Čechy,” 442.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 442.

applied this division to sculpture and painting. In almost every historical period Zap discovered a Czech national school. He argued, for example, for the existence of a Czech Gothic school of architecture, which originated after the Hussite wars in the mid-fifteenth century, and which materialized especially in the art of the two principal representatives of this national school – the architects Matyáš Rejsek (ca. 1445–1506) and Beneš of Louny (ca. 1454–1534):

The Czechs themselves grasped the new style [of late Gothic] with agility, ... independently without help from anybody else ... founded their own *Czech school of building*, the development of which came from the domestic peace and the strong, awakened national spirit.<sup>187</sup>  
[Zap's emphasis]

Zap regarded the work of the two architects on the cathedral of St. Barbara in Kutná Hora as a masterpiece of the Czech school; this cathedral recreated the foreign forms into an original “grand, admirable unit.”<sup>188</sup> On the one hand, he acknowledged their foreign inspiration but on the other, stressed the original contribution of the two architects, who, he argued, were of Czech origin.<sup>189</sup> The Czech nature of the architecture, in Zap's view, consisted in the specific creative input of the architects and in their ethnic background.

With regard to sculpture, “in every field of sculpture, the Czechs created excellent works and were better than many other nations.”<sup>190</sup> (Fig. 9-10) Zap also identified a “Czecho-national” school of woodcarving, active from the fourteenth till the sixteenth centuries, which produced elaborate altars with decoratively carved figures, high-relief images, and a plenitude of gothic pinnacles, arches and tabernacles.<sup>191</sup> He did not explicitly identify any common features of this school but gave a few examples of its works, such as the “aptly painted” altar crucifix with the statues of Mary and John from the church of Our Lady before Teyn in Prague, or the “masterly carving” on the main altar of the St. Barbara cathedral in Kutná Hora (Fig. 11). He mournfully added that “even the most famous works of this type

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 445.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> One of them, however, Beneš of Louny, and especially his nationality became a controversial issue in the Czech art history, to which I shall return shortly.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 449.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 450.

ended up as bric-a-brac regardless of their artistic value and eventually went up in smoke.”<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 450–451.

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It was mediaeval painting that Zap ranked highest, because it had been produced “when the intellect and education of the Czechoslavic nation were flourishing.”<sup>193</sup> In this connection, Zap referred both to panel paintings and also to manuscript illumination over a period of more than three hundred years to strengthen his argument for the independent development of Czech art. He discovered the first reference to “a creation of Czech art, which gained praise even abroad,” namely, a painting of the Virgin Mary, “a Greek-like work surprisingly beautifully executed” from around 1080.<sup>194</sup> For Zap, the high level of intellectual accomplishment in the early Bohemian Kingdom was reflected in the artistic quality of the works produced there, a view held by many historians and philosophers of the time. (Fig. 12-13)<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 451.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Being Vocel’s follower and colleague, Zap shared his theoretical ground in the scholarship of the German scholars, such as Schnaase, Waagen, and early Springer.



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*Figure 11 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

Zap's "old-Bohemian" School of painting was identical in terminology and content to Vögel's definitions of Czech art, but Zap offered a concrete description of the School's typical features. He stressed "the Slavic softness with the soulful and warm expression, [...] the natural composition of robe folds [along] with grace and deep affectionateness."<sup>196</sup> Examples, according to Zap, could be found in the miniatures of the Abbess Kunhuta Passional allegedly by Master Beneš dated to 1320, which were executed several decades before any comparable progress in illumination in Germany. (Fig. 14) "Only in the second half of the fourteenth century, did any active life in painting begin, when the painting schools were founded on the Rhine [...] long after the heyday of the Prague school."<sup>197</sup> Zap drew a similar contrast between these Slavic characteristics and those of works of the later German and Dutch schools in connection with Master Dětřich (Theodorik) of

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 452.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

Prague (Fig. 15). Zap commented with regret on the fact that the German school then came to dominate Bohemian painting in the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>198</sup> In his view, its representatives rigidly followed Nature, which resulted in “caricature-like bodies, with all limbs, faces and parts sharp and angular, with their robes looking like crumpled paper and with stiff presentation in painting.”<sup>199</sup> Despite this apparent regression to German models in the later Middle Ages, a second national school of the sixteenth century developed, according to Zap, bearing features of Dutch, German or Italian inspiration but with typical features of Czech origin.

*Figure 12 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 453.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

*Figure 13 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

Zap considered the Middle Ages crucial in the formation of Czech art; the most detailed and developed descriptions were devoted to mediaeval art, while later periods were passed over in little depth. He disregarded the art of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as “pompous,” “tasteless,” and exaggerated” and called it Rococo.<sup>200</sup> The entire period was for Zap “weary and generally tasteless in its sense for art.”<sup>201</sup> Like Vöcl, he also devoted some attention to applied arts and “minor” artworks, such as seals, goldsmith’s and silversmith’s artefacts, illuminations, miniatures; he did not pay attention only to “high art.”

Although Zap used the notion of Czech art, he did not see the Czechs as an independent nation. Instead, he connected them with the Slavic supra-nation and like Vöcl before him, referred to a Czechoslavic nation. As I have already argued, this latter concept appeared in the rhetoric of the early Czech awakeners, such as Palacký, as well as the Slovaks Kollár and Šafařík. The obvious function of this emphasis on wider Slavic linguistic and cultural interrelatedness was the attempt to evoke a sense of a numerically stronger entity in defence against German (or in some cases Hungarian) culture. It was envisaged that the Czechs would face the German threat better when allied with other groups of similar interests and in a comparable position.

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 477

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 454.

In 1848, Havlíček, for instance, defined the Czechoslavs as the Czechs of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia as well as the Slovaks in Slovakia.<sup>202</sup> This understanding was based on the language similarity of the peoples in the Czech lands and Upper Hungary, as Slovakia was known at the time. It therefore differed from the pan-Slavic idea of the union of *all* Slavic nations (promoted by Kollár) which some people around the mid-nineteenth century (such as Havlíček) rejected as impractical.

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<sup>202</sup> Havlíček, “Slovan a Čech.”

## **F. J. Lehner: the first history of art of the Czech nation**

Vocel's call for a comprehensive history of Czech national art, an appeal that appeared in work texts by many other Czech art historians of the second half of the nineteenth century, was answered by the Catholic priest, Ferdinand Josef Lehner (1837–1914), who made the first attempt at such a work.

He saw it as his patriotic duty to collect and start publishing the history of art of Bohemia and Moravia (Fig. 16–17). He travelled through the Czech lands and focused on architectural, mainly religious, monuments. Between 1875 and 1904 he published his findings as an inventory of religious artworks in his own Catholic journal *Method*, which he founded and sponsored. He attempted to expand the individual articles into a concise history of art of the Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance periods in Bohemia and Moravia in an ambitious series of books, entitled *Dějiny umění národa českého* (The art history of the Czech nation).<sup>203</sup> However, having written and published three volumes on Romanesque art and architecture, the volume on Gothic and subsequent artistic periods was left unfinished. Despite its scale, Lehner's effort, did not have a major impact on contemporaries or on subsequent art historians; for them it was too deeply rooted in the Romanticized writing tradition of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>203</sup> Lehner, *Dějiny umění*.

*Figure 14 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 15 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

As a patriot, Lehner promoted the role of art in the formation of national identity: “the character of a nation is reflected in the nation’s art. The more educated a nation, the more it loves art.”<sup>204</sup> The history of art was therefore for him “a true mirror of the high level of Czech erudition” and all of history was reflected in the works of the architects, sculptors and painters.<sup>205</sup> Examining Romanesque painting and especially the collection of manuscripts from the eleventh century, Lehner identified a genuinely Czech school of painting, which had created several miniature paintings. He published these results in *Method* and returned to them in the Introduction to his *Dějiny umění národa českého*. The quality of this school and the manuscripts, in his view, “illustrates to what heights Czech erudition was elevated already during the spring of national life when the artistic spark, flaring up in the Czech soul, burst into a powerful flame.”<sup>206</sup> Lehner was convinced of the existence of independent Czech artistic schools, and these proved the self-sufficiency of the nation.

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., X–XI.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., X.

The art of each period illustrated, in his view, the prevailing spirit of the nation and the ever-developing progress of humanity: “The spirit of the nation can be detected only from artistic production, from works of poetry and fine arts. [...] The art of each period is the most accurate illustration of the national spirit of this period.”<sup>207</sup> Discussing Czech mediaeval manuscripts, for example, he argued that their ornaments represented the “first sublime product of the national spirit, the independent spring blossom, of the artistic creations of the Czech genius.”<sup>208</sup>

Claims about the spirit of the age, or in Lehner’s case, the spirit of the nation, which materialized in the art of a certain people, as well as the continuing evolvement of the human spirit, were derived from the Hegelian notions and from nineteenth century cultural historians. Lehner adopted these ideas from his teacher, Vocol, with whom he also shared an idealized vision of the past, especially of the Middle Ages. In the tradition of collecting national heritage, he wandered the towns and villages to “carefully collect scraps of old Czech art, both large and small, precious and poor, well-known and unknown, acting as a draughtsman, engineer and publisher.”<sup>209</sup> Like Vocol and other Czech writers at the time, Lehner projected the contemporary geography and thinking about art in Bohemia into the past, when he talked about the “Czech nation” and “Czech art” throughout the ages.

Lehner was unapologetic about the fact that he was project his own ideas onto monuments of the past. For, he stated,: “It was necessary to add personal opinion to theoretical knowledge.”<sup>210</sup> Yet at the same time he held to nineteenth-century notions of objectivity, for “the task of an art historian is to provide the reader with a true picture of what a building looked like.”<sup>211</sup> Lehner made various mistakes in classifying the buildings and their dating, and this, together with the fact that hardly consulted any written historical sources, provoked disapproval from professional art historians in Lehner’s own time and later.<sup>212</sup> For example Zdeněk Wirth described

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>208</sup> Lehner, *Dějiny umění národa českého I*, vol. III, 38.

<sup>209</sup> Lehner, *Dějiny umění národa českého I*, vol.1, IV.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., I.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., V.

<sup>212</sup> For example the art historian Bohumil Matějka (1867–1909) criticised Lehner’s description of the church of St George at the Prague castle. In his view, Lehner refused to acknowledge Baroque modifications of the architecture and insisted on connections of the basilica with Italian models.

Lehner as the last standing Romantic whose work was not art history, but a collection of material and a textbook with elementary terms for beginners.<sup>213</sup>

Lehner was thus criticised for lacking the training of a professional historian or art historian and for producing a work that was nothing more but a topographical survey.<sup>214</sup>

However problematic Lehner's work might have been, he still should be recognized as crucial for the formation of Czech art history for several reasons. In the first place, it was his effort to compile a comprehensive history of the Czech art, which he defined by the nation's frontiers. Within these confines, he looked for the typical features of Czech art and tried to point out the self-sufficient and individual nature of the local achievements. Although his work did not have much of an impact on later Czech art historians, it was subsequently taken up by others, including Josef Strzygowski and the Czech journalist and art critic Florian Zapletal who, in the early twentieth century, used Lehner's contribution to the study of mediaeval churches to support his criticisms of the Czech art historical establishment.

## Conclusion

The early attempts by Czech authors to define the nature and origins of Czech art had many forms but all the texts examined in this chapter bear similarities in their emphasis on the existence and tradition of art that is understood as Czech. The three authors of the second half of the nineteenth century represent a selection of those who participated in the initial construction of Czech art history under the influence of nationalism.

Vocel's historical work on medieval art and architecture of Bohemia consisted in discovering the Czech quality, which was based on the geographical location of the art and on the ethnic origin of the artists. Referring to works of art and historical documents, Vocel managed to lay foundations for a subsequent study of art in Bohemia and Moravia. His pupil, Lehner, continued exploring works of

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<sup>213</sup> Zdeněk Wirth, obituary of Josef Lehner, *Památky archeologické* XXVI (1914): 69-71.

<sup>214</sup> Benda, "Rozmach oboru," 210.



architecture that survived from the Middle Ages. His reading of history was influenced by his attempt to show architectural monuments as he imagined them in order to show a rich resource of ecclesiastical architecture in mediaeval Bohemia. Lehner also wanted to show the erudition of the Czech nation in the past. Zap's notion of Czech art was based on its understanding as superior to the art of other nations. Not very systematic in his approach, Zap selected few works of art that in his view were representative of the Czech nation and showed Czech qualities. They were placed against the traits of German art, which were also given negative appreciation by the author.

As I have demonstrated, all of these authors tried to define "Czechness" of art in Bohemia and Moravia mainly in mediaeval art in order to promote a sense of national consciousness and historicity of the Czech nation through art history. The discipline, however, was still developing its methods and terminology and was heavily reliant on other – more established – subjects, especially on history. The early phase of Czech art history was therefore characteristic for a lack of rigour: contemporary beliefs influenced by period patriotism and nationalism were projected on historical works of art and attention was limited to formal qualities of the works. The use of written sources, historical evidence and awareness of artistic development outside of the Czech speaking lands was being adopted in Czech art history only gradually.

### 3. Czech and German Art History in the 1870s and 1880s

German was for a long time the language of scholarship for historians and art historians in Bohemia and Moravia. It was used not only by German scholars, but also by Czechs who in many cases were educated in it. Gradually, though, Czech became prevalent among the Czech writers.

In the second half of the nineteenth century nationalistic conflicts between Czech and German intellectuals in Bohemia had considerable impact on art history. Writing on art became yet another platform for heated discussions over the precedence of one or the other group in Bohemia. Prague-based German art historians, such as Woltmann, Grueber and Neuwirth, undertook extensive research on art in Bohemia and generally classified art from this region as part of the German artistic canon while, Czech scholars attempted to justify its independent development and the continuous tradition of Czech art.

In this chapter, I examine the debates which ensued from the tendency of German-language authors to place the art of Bohemia within the history of German culture, one which was repeatedly criticised by Czech authors. Although there were a number of German art historians with similar views in the 1870s and 1880s, I will focus on two of them – Woltmann and Grueber – whose descriptions of the character of the art in the region provoked the strongest reactions from their Czech counterparts.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Czech criticism of another German scholar who specialised in mediaeval art in Bohemia, Josef Neuwirth and his texts on art in Bohemia which were not dissimilar of those by Woltmann and Grueber, will be provided later in the context of Max Dvořák's examination of this art historical period.

## German authors on art in Bohemia

The writings of German authors on art in Bohemia provide an important point of comparison in the discussion of the construction of national identity in Czech art. There are two main reasons for their significance: 1. the attitude that the German writers took towards the topic and their own definitions of arts in this region and 2. the reactions they provoked with them among the Czech art historians with their own patriotic feelings.

Both Woltmann and Grueber were based at institutions of higher education in Prague; the former at the Academy of Fine Arts and the University, the latter at the Academy of Art. As such, they had spread their views and had substantial influence across the academic field. Moreover, in contrast to Czech authors who mostly wrote in specialised journals with small distribution numbers, Grueber and Woltmann published monographs that were widely read.

### Alfred Woltmann

Alfred Woltmann took up the post of a professor of art history at the Academy of Fine Arts and at the Charles-Ferdinand University in 1874. He graduated from the University of Berlin, worked at the Technical University in Karlsruhe and after his Prague post, he left to Strasbourg in 1878.<sup>216</sup> His main focus was the art and architecture of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance.

Although he was the author of a number of art historical texts, subsequent Czech commentators have focused mainly on one of his public lectures, *Deutsche Kunst in Prag*, delivered in 1876 and published two years later.<sup>217</sup> Woltmann's basic argument was that all artistic achievements of any quality in Prague had been German or directly derived from German models. On the basis of these claims,

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<sup>216</sup> Bartlová, "Německé dějiny," 70.

<sup>217</sup> See, for example, Jindřich Vybíral, "What Is 'Czech' in Art in Bohemia? Alfred Woltmann and Defensive Mechanisms of Czech Artistic Historiography," *Kunstchronik* LIX, no. 1 (January 2006); Bartlová, "Německé dějiny;" Kroupa, *Školy dějin*. See also Woltmann, *Holbein und seine Zeit* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1871); idem, *Zur Geschichte der böhmischen Miniaturmalerei* (Stuttgart: Spemann, 1877) Woltmann and Matthias Pangerl, *Das Buch der Malerzeche in Prag* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1881).

criticisms were frequently directed at it as a controversial, nationalistic text directed against both the Czechs and the Slavs in general.

The entire lecture provided a survey of art from early Romanesque (Byzantine) times to Woltmann's own day in Prague. The author focused mainly on architecture, for him the most visible historical record and the best document for his argument of the German origins of artworks in Prague.

Woltmann claimed, for example, that in the fourteenth century the emperor Charles IV tried in numerous ways to give the visual arts of Prague an international stamp, but that only German art managed to establish itself here: "The art in Bohemia, which was German through and through, reinvigorated itself through a renewed reliance on Germany."<sup>218</sup>

Woltmann emphasised, for example, the German origin and spelling of the names of, Peter Parler (or Petr Parlér in Czech, ca 1332–1399), the architect of a number of Gothic buildings in and outside Prague, or of Master Dietrich (or Theodorik and even Dětrich in other forms), a panel painter commissioned by Charles IV. According to Woltmann, where artists with Slavic names were documented, they were few or sometimes even invented, and their work was in any case German in its final appearance: "Here the art of the Middle Ages spoke only one language."<sup>219</sup>

Woltmann even claimed that Josef Zíték (1832–1909), the architect of the Prague National Theatre, was also German-oriented due to his Viennese education and the influence of his teacher, the German architect Gottfried Semper: "... in its innermost being it [the Czech theatre] rests as an artistic creation on that art to which the region is naturally oriented, German art."<sup>220</sup> As I will show shortly, for the Czech critics, connecting an architect of the "Golden Chapel" or the medieval artists of Bohemia with German artistic and cultural heritage was unthinkable.

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<sup>218</sup> Woltmann, *Deutsche Kunst*, 25.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 33–34.

Woltmann emphasised in particular the wider religious and political (hence also cultural) reliance of the region on Germany in the past. Consequently, almost all artistic influences came to Bohemia from Germany or through Germany: “In terms of the history of art, Bohemia was a German province.”<sup>221</sup> He acknowledged the presence of Austrian and Italian influences especially in connection with the court from the sixteenth century onward, but no art was for him of genuinely Bohemian origin. In this sense, Woltmann implied that the aristocracy was international, therefore the court art was shaped by more “global” inspirations. The middle class in Bohemia, on the contrary, remained German, a fact that had an impact on the art works commissioned by it.<sup>222</sup>

The polemical lecture provoked a long series of criticisms, directed both at the text and the author, together with a defence of the sovereignty of Czech art. The impact of the lecture has been examined in detail by Jindřich Vybíral, who emphasised the subsequent protests by the Czech students, newspapers and, as I shall examine later, art historians.<sup>223</sup> Vybíral has also suggested that the reactions of the Czech art historians could be read from the point of view of psychoanalysis as a series of defence mechanisms triggered by Woltmann’s assertion of the provinciality and German character of art in Bohemia.<sup>224</sup> He identified Czech responses as containing signs of aggression (consisting in counter-attacks of Woltmann), escape into fantasy (invention of facts aimed to enrich Czech art history), denial (the subject of the dispute is considered as irrelevant), repression (refusal to see the bigger picture – the place of Czech art within European context) and compensation (emphasis on what *is* original and unique in Czech art).

For Czech nationalist ideologues of the time the mediaeval Kingdom of Bohemia, and especially the court in Prague, represented the peak in the development of the genuinely *Czech* culture and arts. The self-sufficient Kingdom with its own language, territory and arts was perceived as a natural precursor of the future independent state of the Czechs. Woltmann’s degrading handling of this period and

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>223</sup> Vybíral, “What Is ‘Czech’ in Art in Bohemia?”

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 2.

the artistic achievements of the Czechs naturally challenged the national pride of the Czech scholars.

*Deutsche Kunst in Prag* was not the only instance where Woltmann expressed his views on art in/of Bohemia. The same pro-German attitudes are evident in the two volumes, published in 1879 and 1882, of *Geschichte der Malerei*.<sup>225</sup> Here, he again classified art of Bohemia as German in character, though “Bohemian” in geographical locality and in subject matter. Referring for example to the Evangelarium from the church of SS. Peter and Paul at Vyšehrad in Prague, Woltmann argued that

the character of this manuscript agrees entirely with the German productions of this period, as indeed the culture and art of Bohemia were mainly German, and among the clergy especially the German element predominated.<sup>226</sup>

Woltmann also described the main features of the fourteenth century School of Prague as

pervaded by a spirit of sacerdotal austerity and solemnity which elsewhere disappears in this century, combined with courtly pomp and splendour, of a cast, it is true, somewhat heavy and dull. Of flow and movement the school shows less, and the soft artificial charm of chivalrous manners plays as little part in its work as does the passionate enthusiasm of religious fervour which constitutes the other half of what we are accustomed to regard as the ideal of the later Middle Age.<sup>227</sup>

This ideal, however, could be found in other German schools “carried to its extreme pitch, but in forms of peculiar charm,” particularly in the school of the Lower Rhine or of Cologne.<sup>228</sup> Therefore the same school of painting, active in the privileged

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<sup>225</sup> Alfred Woltmann and Karl Woermann, *Geschichte der Malerei. Die Malerei des Alterthums* (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1879) and *Geschichte der Malerei. Die Malerei der Renaissance* (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1882). It was also published in English as: *History of Painting. Ancient Early Christian and Mediaeval*, vol. I., ed. By Sidney Colvin (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1880); Woltmann and Woermann, *History of Painting. The Painting of the Renascence*, vol. II., trans. Clara Bell (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1887).

<sup>226</sup> Woltmann, *History of Painting*, vol. I, 283.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 411.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

mediaeval kingdom, which Vögel and Zap praised for its soulful and warm expression, was dismissed by Woltmann as belated.

By including the art of Bohemia within the German sphere of influence, Woltmann created a cultural and ethnic geography of art. The territorial extent of German culture and ethnicity, which corresponded with the frontiers of the Holy Roman Empire and included the Czech-speaking lands, provided Woltmann with imagined boundaries for the occurrence of “German art.” The geographical and cultural place of Bohemia was specified in his remark included, for example, in the section on the Renaissance art in Germany in the second volume of the *History of Painting*: “Nuremberg was also the point from where art was diffused over Eastern Germany – Bohemia and Poland.”<sup>229</sup>

Such a view corresponded with the contemporary German quest for the imperial history of the recently unified German nationalist state. This linkage was based on the notions of cultural, historical and linguistic heritage rather than on the contemporary political realities. Bohemia was thus seen as a cultural province of the German empire and fell into the discourse of the German national reconstruction. Like the Czechs, German art historians were equally involved in the strengthening of the German national identity, which aimed at the promotion of a sense of continuous traditions and artistic expressions of the ethnically homogeneous people. Woltmann’s search for the ethnic roots of the Germanic culture thus indicated that his approach was rooted in nationalism and an aesthetically oriented art history.<sup>230</sup> Significantly though, the same basis could be found in a number of texts by his Czech critics.

### **Bernhard Grueber**

Woltmann’s controversial lecture on the German legacy of the works of art in Prague and its subsequent publication aroused strong reactions among the Czech

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<sup>229</sup> Woltmann, *History of Painting*, vol. II, 118.

<sup>230</sup> Peter Betthausen, Peter H. Feist and Christiane Fork, *Metzler Kunsthistoriker Lexikon. Zweihundert Porträts deutschsprachiger Autoren aus vier Jahrhunderten* (Stuttgart, Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 1999), s.v. ‘Alfred Woltmann,’ 490–493.

audience. Students, especially, demanded Woltmann's dismissal from his post and demonstrated against him in the streets and appealed to the ministry in Vienna.<sup>231</sup> However, Woltmann did not leave Prague until 1878, when he accepted a position at Strasbourg University. After his departure from Prague, Bernhard Grueber took over as chair of art history. Grueber, also of German origin and born in Donauwörth in Bavaria, was in the first place an architect. From 1844 onwards he taught architecture and, later, art history at the Art Academy in Prague, which was divided into separate Czech and German parts in 1869. He also published a four volume work, *Die Kunst des Mittelalters in Böhmen* (Art of the Middle Ages in Bohemia), compiled, as he emphasised, after thirty years of wandering through Bohemia and Moravia on foot.<sup>232</sup>

This work was an attempt at a thorough survey of Bohemian mediaeval art, especially architecture, in which Grueber – like Woltmann – saw art of the territory as a part of German cultural sphere. His views of the past were, therefore, influenced by the contemporary rise of German nationalism and put emphasis on the peak of German culture in the Middle Ages which carried on to the present.<sup>233</sup>

For Czech scholars Grueber's work failed in several respects. The primary deficiency was seen in the fact that it was written by a German author with Pan-Germanic views. Moreover, not being a historian or an art historian but an architect, Grueber paid attention only to the monuments that were *preserved*, especially the architectural ones which he connected the closest with the land. His Czech opponents blamed him for his disregard of monuments that had disappeared during the intervening period, as they also put emphasis on the heritage of formerly existing works and their records in period documents. In many cases, this lack of familiarity with the written sources led Grueber to an inability to distinguish between an original work and a later reconstruction. As a consequence, he

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<sup>231</sup> Vybíral, "What Is 'Czech,'" 1. See also Jindřich Vybíral, "Peter Parler in der Sicht Bernhard Gruebers. Zur Rezeption der Gotik im 19. Jahrhundert," *Architectura*. XXX, no. 30 (2000).

<sup>232</sup> Bernhard Grueber, *Die Kunst des Mittelalters in Böhmen. Nach den Bestehenden Denkmalen Geschildert*, vol. IV, (Wien: Karl Gerold's Sohn, 1871–79). Originally the work was published in *Mitteilungen der Central-Commission XVI* (1871) and *XVIII* (1873) and *Supplementband* (1874).

<sup>233</sup> Vybíral, "Petr Parléř podle Bernharda Gruebera. K recepci gotiky v 19. století," [Petr Parléř according to Bernhard Grueber. On the reception of Gothic in the nineteenth century] *Česká architektura na prahu moderní doby* (Prague: Argo – VŠUP, 2002), 44.



sometimes incorrectly dated the monuments he described, occasionally by hundreds of years, as in the cases of the church in Budeč or the castle of Dívčí kámen (Maidstein) on Vltava. He placed the Budeč church of Sts Peter and Paul in the twelfth century (his Czech contemporaries and recent research agree on the end of the ninth century). The castle, on the other hand, was in Grueber's view built in the tenth century. It was, nevertheless, founded in 1349 by Charles IV.<sup>234</sup>

The four volumes, covering the period from around 1230 until 1530, deal with both high art and the applied arts ("Kleinekünste"), although the greater part of Grueber's attention was on architecture. He did not provide the same strident views on German or Czech art that could be found in Woltmann. He, nevertheless, attributed a large number of works in Bohemia to German artists or to German influences, while he suppressed any significance of the artists of Czech origin. For example when discussing Gothic architecture in Bohemia, Grueber argued that Matthias of Arras in the fourteenth and Matyáš Rejsek in the fifteenth century were of German origin (the former was French and the latter Czech).

Czech critics saw this as a prioritising of German culture in Bohemia at the expense of genuine Czech art.<sup>235</sup> Apart from his alleged refusal to acknowledge Czech achievements, he became a target of criticism of Czech art historians for his distortion or even omission of some historical facts. This resulted in the incorrect dating and classification of the works of art, which I mentioned above, and I shall return to this theme when talking about individual responses to Grueber amongst Czech art historians.

### **Nationality of artists and writers**

German authors such as Woltmann and Grueber, identified the national identity of artworks in Bohemia on the basis of several criteria. First of all, the historical influence of the Germans on culture and politics in Bohemia was seen as a proof of the German character or even origin of the artworks in question. The German

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<sup>234</sup> Benda, "Vocelovi pokračovatelé," 116.

<sup>235</sup> It, nevertheless, needs to be remembered that a large number of works of art and buildings mentioned by Grueber were indeed executed by Germans whose historical presence in Bohemia and Moravia was indisputable.

names of the artists and architects, if known, were further evidence of their German legacy. More problematic for the Czech critics was the task of proving the presence of typically German formal features in the works of visual arts, which might demonstrate their national character. As is clear from the reactions to be examined here, this tactic, employed to construct a national concept of art history, was also typical of the Czech authors.

Both Czech and German writers of this period assumed that the nationality of artists could be detected from their names. Grueber saw most of the artists known by name as German. Peter Parler (aka Petr Parlář in Czech), Theodorik (or Dětřich) and the above-mentioned Matthias of Arras in France (Matyáš z Arrasu, or in Grueber's text Matthias Artrecht) were seen as German artists due to the German spelling of their names in documents, or, alternatively, they were seen as Czech when their names appeared in a "czechized" form in the texts by Vocol, Zap or the architect Antonín Baum (1830–1886).

Interestingly, Grueber considered Beneš of Louny to be of Czech origin. The name of this architect, who would play an important role in the construction of nationality in both Czech and German art history, was in fact Benedikt Ried and he was originally from southern Germany.<sup>236</sup> A particularly lively discussion on the nationality of Beneš of Louny alias Benedikt Ried opened in the 1880s.<sup>237</sup> It was eventually resolved that the architect's name was indeed Ried, that it was commonly written in the German form, and that Ried was indeed of German origin.

Yet in 1881, Karel Bartoloměj Mádl (1859–1932) still considered Beneš and his contemporary Matyáš Rejsek as typical carriers of "Czech" architectural forms who shaped the Czech gothic architecture.<sup>238</sup> Mádl's article was also noteworthy for its list of the basic traits of Slavic (Czech) art: its "softness" and "tenderness", together

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<sup>236</sup> For more sources on the Ried versus Beneš of Louny discussion, see *Kapitoly I*, 119, n. 25. Cf. also Götz Fehr, *Benedikt Ried: ein deutscher Baumeister zwischen Gotik und Renaissance in Böhmen* (Munich: Callwey, 1961); Norbert Nussbaum, "Benedikt Ried und die ergebirgischen Hallen," *Deutsche Kirchenbaukunst der Gotik* (Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchges., 1994).

<sup>237</sup> Ernst Wenicke, "Meister Benesch von Laun ein Deutscher a Gutachten des Werkmeisters Benedikt Ried von Prag," *Anzeiger der Kunde der deutschen Vorzeit*, no. 5 and 7 (1881); Jan Herain, "Beneš Lounský, jinak Benedikt Reta z Pístova, královský kameník," [Beneš of Louny, aka Benedikt Reta of Píšťov, the royal stone-cutter] *Památky archeologické XIV* (1887–89).

<sup>238</sup> Karel B. Mádl, "Matyáš Rejsek a Beneš z Loun. Listy z české gotiky" [Matyáš Rejsek and Beneš of Louny. Extracts from Czech Gothic] *Světovzor XV*, no. 31–35 (1881).

with a “rich playfulness” and preference for richly interwoven vaulting in architecture. These features could be traced, according to Mádl, back to the work of Petr Parléř, for example, who although of German origin (as Mádl admitted), nevertheless “became a naturalised Czech in the full sense of the word” and laid the foundations for a specifically Czech Gothic architecture.<sup>239</sup>

In the background of this celebratory account of the Czech characteristics in the work of the late Gothic architects, Mádl strongly criticized Grueber’s *Die Kunst des Mittelalters in Böhmen*. Mádl dismissed Grueber’s scholarly abilities and his reliance on unexamined assumptions, including the latter’s assumption as to Rejsek place of origin.<sup>240</sup> Mádl also accused Grueber of handling facts arbitrarily in relation to Beneš:

Bernhard Grueber, wherever history and especially his sources remain silent, likes to come up with speculations, often quite apodictically expressed. Although he talks a lot about his excellent education, many a journey by Beneš to Germany and even England, these are nothing but his personal hypotheses...<sup>241</sup>

As was the case with many other texts of this nature, as Vybíral has pointed out, the language of criticism used accusations and personal attacks rather than analysis of the subject matter which might have provided alternative interpretations using material and textual sources.<sup>242</sup>

Like Woltmann, Grueber became a controversial figure for Czech art historians mainly because he selected facts to suit his conviction about the origin and nature of arts in Bohemia. This myth-making, or privileging one group over another on the historical and cultural basis, and projecting values of the present into the past, had two aspects: on the one hand, it was the orientation of the two writers who sought to emphasise and reconstruct the German presence in Central Europe. On the other hand, the Romantic image of the past was still sound in their days and affected the views of mediaeval and other works of art that were examined.

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 415.

<sup>240</sup> “B. Grueber ... claims that came from a village of Prostějov near Chrudim. Why he thinks so, he forgot to mention.” Ibid., 367.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 379.

<sup>242</sup> Vybíral, “What Is ‘Czech.’”

At the same time, it was not only the factual errors in Grueber's work that provoked Czech art historians. As I shall examine later, the fact that Grueber, an "imperial" German, was the author of the first relatively comprehensive treatment of *Czech mediaeval art* became a source of harsh criticism. Moreover, the publication of *Die Kunst des Mittelalters in Böhmen* was sponsored by the State authorities, namely the Ministry of Culture and Education in Vienna, which the Czechs interpreted as the imposition of imperial power and support for Germanic scholarship against that of the Czechs: "These people [the German writers] receive generous support from the government and public funds so that [...] for their money they could disgrace our country, which will get help from no one to purge herself."<sup>243</sup>

## Defences of Czech art

Although these two German authors were dismissed due to their alleged bias and nationalistic orientation, Woltmann and Grueber nevertheless played a highly significant role in Czech art history and in the creation of the concept of "Czech art." The ardent reaction to their claims came primarily from art historians associated with the Czech sections of the educational institutions in Prague, who were provoked to defend the "Czech nature" of art in Bohemia. The way in which they did was also highly prejudiced and chauvinistic, as the Czech critics usually emphasised rather small-minded details in a strongly nationalistic fashion.

In 1871 and 1873, the journal *Památky. Listy pro archeologii a historii* (Monuments. Journal for Archaeology and History) published two articles by Antonín Baum entitled "Jak se píše historie umění českého" (How to write the history of Czech art) and "Jak píší historii českého umění" (How they write the history of Czech art) respectively.<sup>244</sup> In the first article, Baum – who was primarily an architect – commented on the dispute between Fr. W. Unger and Grueber over the origins of Petr Parléř contained in a review Unger of Grueber's discussion of Prague cathedral.

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<sup>243</sup> Baum, "Jak píší," 365; Antonín Baum, "Jak se píše historie umění českého," *Památky. Listy pro archeologii a historii* VI (1871): 248.

<sup>244</sup> Baum, "Jak píší"; Baum, "Jak se píše."

Baum criticised Grueber's *Die Kunst des Mittelalters in Böhmen* with a defensive enumeration of its factual errors and accused him of being partial, by which he expressly meant "pro-German." Such point-scoring, in the place of more in-depth methodological criticism, was common practice.

Thus, for Baum, Grueber should have known the monuments he had visited better, after thirty years of travelling around Bohemia.<sup>245</sup> It was not only with regard to the dating of some churches that Grueber was in error; he had also misrecorded important information about various buildings. For example, in the case of the early mediaeval church in Budeč, which was rebuilt in the eighteenth century, Baum not only corrected Grueber's measurements but also his description of the ground plan, the descriptions of the types of walls, the state of preservation of the vault system and many other aspects. He indicated, for example, that

If the Gothic, which is so visible [to Grueber] in the presbytery, was the first example [of this style] in our country, then we would have to learn Gothic only in the eighteenth century, as the presbytery is a perfect copy. Further on, Mr. Grueber claims that the windows in the church tower and in the nave are rounded and Romanesque; they really are rounded, but pre-modern and ordinary.<sup>246</sup>

Baum also pointed out that in many cases Grueber had failed to recognize later reconstructions and additions, which led him to false conclusions about their dates of origin. Thus the chapel in Břevnov (a village near Prague with the oldest male monastery in Bohemia from 993), which Grueber dated back to 1180, was, according to Baum, built in the second half of the seventeenth century as a copy of a Romanesque church. This was evident from the individual architectural forms and details. Baum's criticisms of Grueber's errors provided the basis for more general ironic comments on what was often held to be the distinctive concerns of German thinking with precision:

Whatever the intention of Mr. Grueber and those who support him, the shallowness, superficiality, perfunctoriness and from the technical and

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<sup>245</sup> Baum, "Jak píší," 370.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 375.

historical point of view so incorrectness and arbitrariness would make us think – if it had not been for the support from Vienna – that they publish it to insult the famous “German thoroughness.”<sup>247</sup>

Baum also took notice of the reception of *Die Kunst des Mittelalters* in Bohemia, and he distinguished between negative reception of the text by “our” readers, by which he meant the Czechs, and the much more positive response it received abroad. In this bitterness and suspicion one can sense a deep-rooted prejudice about the incapacity of foreign writers. As Baum stressed, Grueber ignored art historical works and primary sources written in Czech, moreover other German authors accepted the inaccuracies which Grueber established as correct. At the same time, it is not difficult to understand why Grueber omitted these Czech texts. Many Czech art historians of this time wrote in German as it was the principal language of scholarly discourse in Austro-Hungary of that time. Thus Grueber and other German writers most probably did not consider texts in Czech to be important sources, for the larger number of primary and secondary documents had been written in German or Latin. Similarly, given the German education most academics in Bohemia and Moravia received at the time, it did not feel inappropriate to use German as a tool of communication.

The overall tone of Baum’s lecture thus comes across as rather petty and small-minded. In connection with the church of St. George at the Prague castle, the individual parts of which Grueber allegedly described as “clumsy and unfinished, whereas the interior gives a repulsive impression,” Baum pointed out the German origin of the church stonecutter.<sup>248</sup> He raised the question as to why Grueber had considered the German artisan inept in this case, despite the fact that – as Grueber had claimed - Germany was full of exquisite builders. Was it because “already in the twelfth century those who were unable to achieve anything at home were sent to Bohemia to educate others?”<sup>249</sup> This parallel between the medieval stonecutter and a contemporary German scholar once again challenged the scholarly competence of Grueber, and was a part of Baum’s tactics.

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 382.

<sup>248</sup> Quoted in Baum, Ibid., 372.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 373.

To denounce Grueber's text even further, Baum confessed in the conclusion that after having read Grueber's assertions, he pondered if he should consider them to be a humoristic reading for historians and artists, or if he should discard the text immediately.<sup>250</sup> This attitude put Baum's criticism not only alongside Mádl's scornful account, mentioned above, but also alongside other similar texts by a number of Czech authors I shall mention shortly.

The same tone and immediate dismissal can be seen in the criticisms of Woltmann's and Grueber's texts by another Czech historian, Josef Kalousek (1838–1915). In “O historii výtvarných umění v Čechách” (On the history of visual arts in Bohemia), Kalousek corrected the mistakes and assumptions presented by the two German writers and lamented the non-existence of a “faultless” Czech history of Czech art.<sup>251</sup> The tone Kalousek used was again full of sarcastic comments and personal invective. Thus Woltmann employed “guileful dialectics,” Grueber did not permit the Czechs to build stone churches before the twelfth century, and both authors were “the assassins of the general rules of logic.”<sup>252</sup>

The goal of this “self-defence” was to justify the position of Czech art and Czech artists, to clear them of the prejudice of having German origin, and to attack the academic credibility of Woltmann and Grueber. The means that Kalousek adopted in order to achieve this were present both in the language the author used and in the accusations directed towards the two Germans. Apart from the obvious prejudice that privileged German over local Czech art, Kalousek blamed Grueber for his orientalist (meaning colonialist) perspective. Kalousek compared Grueber's method with that used by the English when writing about Indian art. In Kalousek's opinion “the English speak about their oriental subordinates in India in such a way that they cannot distinguish the reality from the figments of their imagination” and therefore “India, although it must have a great past [...], is deprived of its history. Mr. Grueber's mind seems to be composed in the same orientalist way.”<sup>253</sup> For Kalousek, Grueber's colonialist attitude was dismissive of local achievement, as the

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 381–382.

<sup>251</sup> Josef Kalousek, “O historii výtvarných umění v Čechách,” *Osvěta* 5 (1877).

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 331, 323, and 341.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 329.

German author described the visual art in Bohemia on the basis of an *image* he held about it. The history of Bohemian art was thus modified in order to accommodate Grueber's prior supposition of the dependency of Bohemia on German culture.

Although Kalousek acknowledged the German lead in accepting Christianity in Central Europe and in developing the natural sciences, he attempted to prove throughout the article that German artistic influences were not dominant in Bohemia. Germany functioned more as a mediator of artistic knowledge and skills that were coming from France and Italy. In fact, several times Kalousek referred to the Germans as "middlemen" (or even "traffickers") who played only the part of artistic intermediaries for Bohemia. As such, for Kalousek *any* foreign influence was better than German and stress was thus put on the presence of the French and Latin artistic stimuli in Bohemia:

Let me repeat that apart from this original source [France and Italy], art also came to us through the German middlemen not because of some supernatural artistic ability of the Germans, but simply because the German lands are to be found between France and Italy on the one side and Bohemia on the other.<sup>254</sup>

Woltmann and Grueber were also accused of nationalistic partiality, but by emphasising some facts over others, Kalousek adopted the same attitude. In the first place, he defined the "Czechness" of artists in Bohemia on the basis of their Czech names. In guild documentation, he found a majority of Czech-sounding names, which brought him to the conclusion that the individuals concerned were of Czech origin. At the same time, however, when arguing for the Czech origin of the individual religious orders, Kalousek claimed, "it would be a harsh mistake to consider every monk with a non-Czech name to be German."<sup>255</sup>

Kalousek did not necessarily distinguish among nationalities within unity of the mediaeval Christian world, and considered history from geographical point of view. Central Europe was unquestionably a part of the Holy Roman Empire, in which artistic influences travelled across the political borders. The Church, as the unifying

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 326.



element, encouraged the spread of religion by means of the visual arts and thus styles and schools spread identical artistic ideas throughout the empire. This argument was directed against the predominance of German influences seen as identical with the Holy Roman Empire in mediaeval Bohemia, but it was also used to argue against the national diversity of mediaeval art and in favour of the universal quality, based on religion. Kalousek therefore contradicted his own claims about the genuinely Czech character of art in Bohemia and provided selective explanations in order to diminish the importance of German cultural influence by any means.

This inconsistency was typical of the contemporary practice of the Czech historians and art historians who modified facts or claims in different contexts to suit their aims. Their selective reading of the past in this period was thus targeted at the enhancement of Czech national identity and of the sense of belonging to a specific, historically provable tradition.

Like many of his colleagues, Kalousek offered suggestions as to how Czech art history should be written and what method should be used. It was not enough merely to compare the individual works from the same territory, he argued; these works should be confronted with foreign artefacts (but as implied from the text, preferably not German). “All this [material] should be examined thoroughly and a studious man of science shall arrive at reliable results, although perhaps incomplete.”<sup>256</sup> In Kalousek’s opinion, the art historical survey should be based on *in situ* experience and familiarity with the object being examined. Here Kalousek called for an inductive, positivistic approach, which would not “consider, attribute and denounce everything straight away, according to one’s wish.”<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Kalousek, “O historii,” 333.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 333.

## Conclusion

As a result of the political and ethnic situation in Bohemia, the texts on art in the region written in the second half of the nineteenth century developed into two groups according to national affiliation of their authors. On the one hand, there were works by Czech art historians writing in Czech or German languages; and on the other, those by German authors of both Austrian and German origin, written in German. The writings on Czech art examined here illustrates the situation in the second half of the nineteenth century. The texts written by Czech authors stood in contrast to the two German authors as regards the position to art in Bohemia, but at the same time, showed striking similarities in terms of the strong nationalistic discourse.

The Czechs and Germans did not differ much in one feature, which was the purpose of their scholarly work. Under the influence of the nationalist ideology, the writers pursued similar goals of promoting national consciousness, although each group naturally had a different intended outcome. The early Czech texts on “Czech” artworks were also meant as a call to other scholars, which should have provoked them to write a proper and concise history of *Czech* art. Likewise the stress on the typical Czech features of the Czech artworks was aimed at fostering the sense of national unity of a more general audience and was to demonstrate the historical continuity of art in the Czech lands. Thus attention was paid mostly to the Middle Ages, the heyday of Bohemian Kingdom, and the visual arts of that period.

The German counterparts were motivated by different objectives as their loyalties were split between those to the German Reich on the one hand, and those to Austria–Hungary on the other. Especially after the foundation of the Second Empire in 1871, it was necessary for the Germans to strengthen the internal unity of the newly unified states and restore the sense of historical greatness of the nation. Bohemia was seen as an extension of the Holy Roman Empire, which was understood as German in essence. The linguistic and cultural similarities were more important than any political affiliation at the moment.<sup>258</sup> Additionally, in a more

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<sup>258</sup> Stefan Berger, “The national tradition in German historiography, 1800–1960,” in *Search for Normality*, 26.

general sense, German historiography also emphasised the ethnic unity and it was thus required to evoke a feeling of association with the German nation in all the almost three millions of Germans living in Bohemia and Moravia at the time.

The differences between the two parties were manifested through the fierce debates on the nature and origin of Czech art (or art in Bohemia). Apart from the content of the individual writing, it was especially the purpose of the texts and their audiences, which distinguished the Czech and German art historians.

One of the common features of most of the early texts was the attention to the mediaeval period, namely the Romanesque (sometimes referred to as Byzantine) and Gothic art and it was mainly architecture that was prioritised. This interest stemmed from the overall romanticizing mood and search for the heroic past of Bohemia. Naturally, the effort to reconnect the nation with its glorious history was not exclusive to the Czechs and was echoed also by the German writers. In the time of the political fragmentation of Germany before 1871, the need for unifying elements of the nation, in this sense culture and history, had an importance comparable to that of Czech society.

Since the state borders in the Middle Ages were substantially different from those of the nineteenth century, different theories of the origin of arts in Bohemia and Moravia could be put forward. On the one hand, Bohemia could be seen as a cultural province of the Holy Roman Empire subdued to the German centre (as promoted by Woltmann and Grueber) or, on the other hand, it could be perceived as a self-sufficient hub of artistic production accepting more or less important influences from abroad (a view held by for example Kalousek and Zap).

The concept of national schools in the visual arts was applied by most writers, regardless of their nationality. It was used to characterize a certain number of authors and/or workshops which produced works of art with similar features in a specific geographical location over a certain period of time. The basic difference – while writing about Czech national schools – was, however, in the content and quality of the individual schools. Vocol, Zap and Lehner praised the achievements of the national schools and saw them as illustrative of the more general character of

Czech art. In contrast, Woltmann understood the style of Czech painting of the same period as “rather heavy and dull.”<sup>259</sup>

The language of Czech art historical texts reflected the developing character of the field in Bohemia. In the second half of the nineteenth century Czech art historians still used German as a language of communication and as a means of disseminating their ideas because Czech was still insufficient in vocabulary to express or even describe both abstract and concrete ideas of art history.

The overall character of Czech writing on art was mainly defensive. Even if the texts were not written as a reaction to or critique of art history from the German point of view, comments of self-protective and self-contained nature are traceable in most of them. To provide an alternative to the German texts, Czech authors searched for the typical traits of Czech art that would give resonance to their claims of the original character of local art. Nevertheless, it was not only defence but also offence that became typical of their reactions, especially to Woltmann and Grueber and their academic abilities.

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<sup>259</sup> Woltmann, *History of Painting*, 411.

## 4. Attempts for Scientific History of Czech Art at the Turn of the Century

Art history became a professional discipline once it was institutionalised.<sup>260</sup> In Bohemia, several academic and research institutions incorporated art history in the late nineteenth century partly in order to promote the institution's ideologies. The Charles-Ferdinand University, the Academy of Arts and the School of Decorative Arts in Prague were the main institutes of higher education where art history was based. It is the aim of this chapter to examine the state of the discipline at these institutions at the turn of the century and show the gradual incorporation of a more rigorous attitude towards artistic and historical material in the work of a selection of scholars.

At the institutions in question art history was connected with a few individuals whose views determined the ideological orientation of the teaching and research. These academics also constructed and used the notion of national identity in art in much of their writing, which is the subject examined in this chapter. It is also important to emphasise that most of them came to study the history of art in Bohemia from other disciplines, such as archaeology, history and aesthetics and brought their methods into art history.

The most important and popular topic in the writing of the first Czech art historians had been the art and architecture of the Middle Ages. There were two main reasons for the interest in mediaeval arts: one was the emphasis scholars put on the connection between the modern Czech nation and the mediaeval Bohemian kingdom, with the aim of establishing a link between the nation's present and its allegedly great past. Vocol or Zap, to mention just a few of the authors, perceived the architecture and painting under the emperor Charles IV as the peak in visual production and the cradle of the tradition of the Czech arts.

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<sup>260</sup> Mansfield, *Art History*, 2.

The other reason for the popularity of mediaeval art with Czech art historians was the state of early Czech art historical scholarship in general which I shall shortly consider more closely. The Czech authors of the early studies of Czech art were in most cases historians, archaeologists or architects, whose views of visual art were often derived from their original academic or practical inclinations: the scholars in most cases focused on the early history of the Czech speaking lands, while the architects of the late nineteenth century were surrounded by historicizing architecture.

Despite the dominant interest in the Middle Ages, scholars in the second half of the nineteenth century nevertheless also turned attention to studies of subsequent periods. Still, it was not until the late nineteenth century and mainly the beginning of the twentieth century that the Renaissance, Mannerism, Baroque, and particularly the visual arts of the nineteenth century and recent artistic practice gradually awakened more serious interest.

At the end of the nineteenth century, contemporary art also became a subject of more substantial research by Czech scholars and art critics. Contemporary exhibitions and artists received greater attention in relation to both the overall status of art in Bohemia and also its place within the international development of art and architecture. Awareness of the Secession in Bohemia and the active interest of art historians can be compared to the attention this phenomenon received in Vienna where it opened up a debate between “the conservative bourgeois public” and the more progressive representatives of the art historical institute, mainly Alois Riegl and Franz Wickhoff (1853–1909). In one well-known case these two defend Gustav Klimt’s *Philosophy* mural decorating the ceiling of the University Hall in 1900 against the substantial opposition of many of their colleagues across the University.<sup>261</sup>

The gradual broadening of attention of Czech authors, who extended the scope of their interest from art of historical periods to more contemporary artistic events and

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<sup>261</sup> M. A. Holly, “Spirits and Ghosts in the Historiography of Art,” *The Subjects of Art History. Historical Objects in Contemporary Perspective*, eds. Mark A. Cheetham, M.A.Holly and Keith Moxey (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 52–71.

more recent art history is typical of late nineteenth century art history. It had several causes: first of all, the internal shifts in the discipline of art history were brought about by institutionalisation of the discipline and its search for new topics. At the same time, external influences of the more general cultural and political atmosphere of the day played a significant role on the nature and scope of research. The growing interest of practicing artists in theoretical questions of art production also contributed to the shift in the discourse and brought in fresh voices.

## **Institutional art history in Prague**

Even though it had the status of a regional city within the Austrian empire, Prague has always maintained its status as the cultural and historical capital of Bohemia. A number of patriotic clubs, Czech museums, or newspapers were concentrated in Prague and aimed at promoting national consciousness of the Czech population in the city. While it was a growing centre of Czech cultural life in the second half of the nineteenth century, the German inhabitants ran most of the key institutions of commercial and cultural life in Prague, such as theatres, a concert hall, or a number of educational institutions.<sup>262</sup> At the same time, however, the German population of Prague faced several challenges during this period: the growing national awareness of the Czechs on the one hand and a decrease in their numbers on the other. The forty one percent of the population who declared German as their first language in the Bohemian capital in 1851 dropped to an average of twenty percent by 1880 and to seven percent by 1900.<sup>263</sup> For an understanding of the nature of Prague cultural life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it should also be noted that the two ethnic groups cohabited but tended to organize their own cultural and political activities without much communication. In the late nineteenth century, separate museums, theatres, exhibitions, newspapers and even universities were set up by Czechs and Germans.

Also art history as a discipline had its base in the capital of Bohemia. I shall consider shortly the position of art history at the University in Prague and at other

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<sup>262</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 86.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 84, 86.

institutions important for art historical research in the Prague of late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Alongside that, a few institutions that did not educate students should also be mentioned in brief.

The Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague was the key institution for art history, divided in 1882 into Czech and German parts. In many disciplines, the split of the University into the two language-based sections had serious consequences. Most importantly, it led to an increase in the number of staff in most of the individual sections and to independent parallel developments of the respective disciplines. Art history, however, had suffered a shortage of qualified scholars – after Vocel, the first chair of art history appointed in 1850, died in 1871, the position was not occupied again until 1874, when it was awarded to Alfred Woltmann (1841–1880).

After a short period of art historical teaching delivered by the aesthetician Miroslav Tyrš, art history at the Czech university was fragmented and had a rather weak status. It was not until the habilitation of the Czech art historians Chytil and Matějka in 1897 that a continuous education in art history began at the Czech University at the department of cultural history and the history of visual art.<sup>264</sup> In the meantime, due to the lack of art historical lectures in the Czech University Czech students had to attend lectures by German teachers such as Janitschek, Schultz, or Neuwirth.<sup>265</sup> In 1911, an independent department of art history was finally opened which educated students until 1939 when the entire university was closed down by the Nazis.<sup>266</sup>

The influence of art history at the university at the end of the nineteenth century was growing, although the development of the discipline was belated in comparison with the German counterpart. The subject was also initially mostly linked to disciplines such as archaeology, history, aesthetics, Czech literature and music. Vocel, for example, put great emphasis on the role of archaeology for the history of art and from the mid-nineteenth century, also Tyrš, Otakar Hostinský, Bohumil

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<sup>264</sup> Benda, “Rozmach oboru v devadesátých letech,” in *Kapitoly*, 197.

<sup>265</sup> Petrůň, “Česká filozofická fakulta 1882–1918,” [The Czech faculty of art 1882–1918] in *Ibid.*, 264.

<sup>266</sup> Benda, “Rozmach oboru,” 198.



Matějka, and Karel Chytil approached art history from other disciplines – cultural history, aesthetics and history.

Another approach associated with the increasing interest in culture and its history, was inspired by the study of culture coming from Germany. The individual aspects of culture, including arts, became crucial for historians and art historians at the end of the nineteenth century. The positivistic and empirical study of history and art came to be held in high esteem; the ideal approach was seen in the assumed objectivity and disinterestedness of the natural sciences, following the practices of Moriz Thausing and Rudolf Eitelberger in Vienna.<sup>267</sup> It is, however, almost impossible to categorize individual Czech art historians according to the approaches mentioned above, as their views and methods often developed throughout their career under various influences. Moreover, despite the calls of some scholars for the objective study of the past, Czech historiography continued to employ historical research that would comply with the vision of “the Czech history as an apotheosis of national virtues.”<sup>268</sup> As a result, a number of the art historical texts of the turn of the century, regardless of their proclaimed approach, still aimed at the construction of national consciousness in Czech art history in their respective ways. At the same time, as was shown above, the Czechs often accused their German colleagues of a lack of objectivity and “scientific” rigour.

### **Miroslav Tyrš**

One of the scholars concerned with the role of Czech art in the national life was Miroslav Tyrš (1832-84), who delivered art historical lectures and published art historical research, usually as a supplement to other interests. Tyrš (who was born to a German family as Friedrich Emanuel Tirsch<sup>269</sup>) inclined towards topics in aesthetics and promoted cultivation of both the mind and the body through education and physical exercise respectively (Fig. 18). The most obvious material expression of this approach was his involvement in the foundation of a sports organization Sokol in 1862, targeted at “the physical and in part also the moral education and improvement of the whole nation.”<sup>270</sup> The emblem of this

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<sup>267</sup> Kutnar, “Podmínky rozvoje” in *Přehledné dějiny*, 383.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid, 382.

<sup>269</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 108.

<sup>270</sup> Josef Scheiner, ed. *Pátý slet všesokolský pořádáný v Praze 1907* [The fifth Sokol convention held in Prague 1907] (Prague: Česká obec sokolská, 1907), 6.

organization was a falcon (in Czech “sokol”) designed by Josef Mánes, one of the most significant “national” painters at the time. Tyrš’s interest in the harmony of the physical and mental was derived from his understanding of them in Antiquity and the Renaissance.

*Figure 16 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

These were also the areas of Tyrš’s deepest aesthetic and philosophical focus, which he articulated in, for example, his book *O podmínkách vývoje a zdatu činnosti umělecké* (On the preconditions of the development and success of art practice) from 1873.<sup>271</sup> As the title suggests, the author was concerned to seek out the necessary requirements for the establishment of successful art that he regarded as national. In Tyrš’s view it was not only economic prosperity and freedom, but also the enthusiasm for artistic creation, a location with suitable conditions, general education, refined taste, and an understanding of art that lead to successful artistic creations. He emphasised also national awareness that can be reflected in the work of a specific artist: “All in all, an artist always bears in himself the specific features of the time and the nation.”<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Miroslav Tyrš, *O podmínkách vývoje a zdatu činnosti umělecké* (Prague: I.L. Kober, 1873).

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

Tyrš adopted many ideas from the French historian Hippolyte Taine (1823–1893).<sup>273</sup> It was the specific time and place (moment and milieu) and its expression by a specific group of people that Tyrš saw crucial for the success of art. In this connection, he also stressed the need to be aware of the international character of contemporary art. The belatedness in artistic development in Bohemia, which Tyrš acknowledged, was ascribed by him to this lack of knowledge of international events, insufficient education, shortage of decent publications, and of art galleries and museums that would display foreign art. His call for reform of this situation had a concrete form:

Should we propose yet another Czech club to be put on the list of all those useless ones? A club that would be useful and worthy, though, that would research Bohemia and Moravia from the artistic point of view and publish photographs of work by both local and foreign masters that is discovered ... In this way, we would at last find ourselves on the world market!<sup>274</sup>

Tyrš admitted the existence of works of art in the Czech speaking territories that were executed by non-Czechs. When he suggested that research should be made accessible to a foreign audience and subject to discussion by a wider, international audience, he differed radically from most of his contemporaries, who limited their research to the local conditions and were suspicious of many foreign findings. Likewise, the proposal to use photography for art historical documentation was quite novel in the Czech environment of that time and recommended as an art historical tool at, for example, the Vienna Congress of Art History held at the University in the same year, 1873.<sup>275</sup>

Apart from the art of Antiquity and Renaissance, Tyrš also took an interest in more “exotic” topics, such as for example in the art of the Middle East, the topic of his

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<sup>273</sup> Kapitoly, 164. Tyrš wrote a commentary on Taine’s philosophy in the Czech translation of his book, Hippolyte Taine, *O podstatě díla uměleckého* [On the nature of the work of art] (Prague: J. Otto, 1873).

<sup>274</sup> Tyrš, *O podmínkách*, 30.

<sup>275</sup> Petra Trnková, “Fotografie po dějinách umělecké fotografie,” [Photography after the history of artistic photography] in *Možnosti vizuálních studií*, ed. Marta Filipová and Matthew Rampley, (Brno: Společnost pro odbornou literaturu - Barrister & Principal and Masarykova univerzita, Filozofická fakulta, Seminář dějin umění, 2007), 93.

lecture “O významu studia starého umění orientálního” (On the importance of the study of ancient Oriental art) from 1873.<sup>276</sup> His texts on Czech art covered especially individual Czech artists, such as Mánes and Jaroslav Čermák (1831–1878), a painter of historical and ethnographical subjects related to the Slavic people. Tyrš saw these painters as *national* artists, since they fought for the national cause against the adversities of their time.<sup>277</sup>

For instance, Tyrš related the formal features of Mánes work to his Slavic heritage which he contrasted with German artistic traits. “While Cornelius [one of Mánes’ teachers, 1784-1867] was German through and through in the stiffness and angular quality of his forms, Mánes aspired to become a Slavic master through the complexity and roundness of the forms.”<sup>278</sup> References to stiffness and angularity of shapes were typical comments with which Czech artist described German art. These negative formal features had been identified in German painting already by Zap in 1862 in reference to mediaeval art in Bohemia.

Tyrš also related Mánes’ sketches of country folk with the national and ethnic origin of the people. In Tyrš’s opinion, the artist depicted the typical Slavic characters, found in the Moravian, Slovak and Bohemian country which he in most cases idealised.<sup>279</sup> In a racially questionable comment, Tyrš held that Mánes preferred depicting the inhabitants of the eastern parts of the Czech speaking lands, who “retained greater purity” than those in the Western regions. The smoother features of the Moravians and Slovaks as well as “greater tenderness and softness” of the former were suitable for Mánes’ idealisation and lyrical epical style.<sup>280</sup> The importance Tyrš gave to ethnicity, as well his description of the typical artistic forms stemming from an author’s nationality, are symptomatic of the way in which

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<sup>276</sup> Miroslav Tyrš, “O významu studia starého umění orientálního,” in *O umění. Svazek I. Pojednání obecná* (Prague: Československá obec sokolská, 1932).

<sup>277</sup> Miroslav Tyrš, “O Josefu Mánesovi,” [On Josef Mánes] “Život Jaroslava Čermáka a jeho osobnost,” [The life of Jaroslav Čermák and his personality] in Renata Tyršová, ed., *Dra Miroslava Tyrše úvahy a pojednání o umění výtvarném. I* [Reflections and treatises on visual arts by Dr Miroslav Tyrš] (Prague: Sokol, 1901).

<sup>278</sup> Miroslav Tyrš, “K výstavě Mánesově v místnosti Lehmannově,” originally in *Národní listy* (1880), reprinted in Tyršová, ed., *Dra Miroslava Tyrše*, 44.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 54.

even authors who started paying attention to international affairs still remained prejudiced against German inhabitants and culture in Bohemia.

## Karel Chytil

At the end of the nineteenth century, two scholars, Karel Chytil and Bohumil Matějka, established themselves as art history professors and substantially improved the state in the academic discipline. Chytil (1857–1934), educated not in art history but in geography and history, attended an art historical course taught by Moriz Thausing in Vienna between 1878 and 1879.<sup>281</sup> His critics usually emphasised his excessive reliance on sources, his attention to formal and stylistic details and his omission of broader contexts. Nevertheless, he and his work represent an important stage in the history of Czech art historical study on account of his introduction of new methods and attention to periods that had been neglected until then. For his attention to historical evidence and formal analysis that proved to be influential for the further development of art historical scholarship in Prague, Rostislav Švácha called him “the first positivistic art historian in Bohemia.”<sup>282</sup> I shall now look at a selection of Chytil’s texts in more detail both now and later on in Chapter Eight, in relation to his criticism of the methods employed by the Vienna School of art history that became topical for some Czech art historians at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Chytil’s early approach, which complied with the nationalist rhetoric of the time, is well illustrated in his article “Obrazy karlštejské z Belvedere vídeňském” (Paintings from Karlštejn castle in the Belvedere Palace in Vienna), published in 1879 in the journal *Památky archeologické*.<sup>283</sup> Chytil argued for the original and self-sufficient nature of the visual arts produced during the reign of Charles IV. This nationalistically oriented article reiterated the arguments of many of Chytil’s Czech contemporaries, who described Czech art in opposition to the German writing on arts in Bohemia.

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<sup>281</sup> Josef Krása, “Karel Chytil,” in *Kapitoly I*, ed. Chadraba, 172.

<sup>282</sup> Rostislav Švácha, “Historikové kultury,” [The cultural historians] in *Kapitoly I*, ed. Chadraba, 155.

<sup>283</sup> Karel Chytil, “Obrazy karlštejské z Belvedere vídeňském,” *Památky archeologické* XII (1879).

The topic of the article is already evident from the title: four mediaeval paintings from the period of the reign of the king and emperor Charles IV, which were originally located at the castle of Karlštejn – the historical site where kings of Bohemian kept imperial regalia and coronation jewels – and rehoused in the Belvedere museum in Vienna. And although this short contribution was about four specific paintings, Chytil outlined a number of wider views about the nature of mediaeval Czech art.

One of the four paintings had been signed by an Italian painter, Tommaso da Modena, one was attributed to the German Nicholas Wurmser and two to Master Theodorik. Chytil challenged the attribution of one of them, a Crucifixion, to the German painter and argued in favour of authorship “by a master of Czech school, whether he was called Theodorik, or something else.”<sup>284</sup> One of the reasons for these assumptions was Chytil’s observation of the treatment of the drapery in the painting: “The cloth falls down in wide, soft, rounded folds and it is not as creased, stiff and over-particular as the folds of the robes [painted] by the German school.”<sup>285</sup> An obvious inspiration for this remark was Zap’s comment that the German school was characterized by “sharp and angular [body parts], with their robes looking like a crumpled paper and with stiff presentation in painting,” which appeared in his encyclopaedia entry on art in Bohemia.<sup>286</sup>

Chytil discovered similarities between this painting and miniatures in the *Passional* of Abbess Kunhuta, a manuscript from around 1312. In so doing, he constructed a continuous tradition of a Prague school of painting that “held onto the accomplishments of their predecessors, without being confused by any Italian influence.”<sup>287</sup> According to Chytil, the so-called old Prague school of painting therefore originated well before the reign of Charles IV and “without any doubt served as an inspiration for Master Theodorik,” the author of the Karlštejn Crucifixion and the remaining two paintings. (Fig. 19)<sup>288</sup> As French, Italian and German artists and influences were known in Bohemia under Charles IV, Chytil

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>286</sup> *Slovník naučný*, vol. 2, ed. F. L. Rieger (Prague: Kober, 1860–1874), s.v. “Čechy,” 453.

<sup>287</sup> Chytil, “Obrazy karlštejnské,” 268.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 270.

managed to place the origins of the Prague school to the period before this time in order thereby to confirm its authentically Czech character.

*Figure 17 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

Chytil also placed emphasis on the Czech identity of Master Theodorik and suppressed any potential German influences in his work: “the German [painter] Wurmser from Strasburg did not participate in them.”<sup>289</sup> The “Czechness” of the Czech mediaeval school, which worked under Master Theodorik, was constructed on the basis of “comeliness, delicacy, plenitude of [colour] transitions that completely differ from the Germanic way.”<sup>290</sup> These definitions were in fact adopted from a text on arts in Bohemia by the French scholar Alfred Michiels who commented in this way on the colour scheme in the paintings of the Czech school.<sup>291</sup> Chytil followed Michiels in describing the colours as rich and soft, the shadows and lights as having gentle transitions.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>291</sup> Alfred Michiels, “Ecole de Bohême,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* I (1873).

<sup>292</sup> Chytil, “Obrazy karlštejské,” 270.

The argument and aim of Chytil's early article did not differ from the other texts by Czech historians and art historians written in the 1870s and 1880s mentioned in the previous chapter. These authors commonly attempted to discover the origins and specific features of Czech art and contrast them to art by German authors. However, in a much later text on art and architecture from the beginning of the fifteenth century published in 1926, "Umění české na počátku XV. století" (Czech art at the beginning of the fifteenth century), Chytil abandoned this description of the traits of Czech mediaeval painting on the basis of questionable and rather subjective attributes which would be pronounced with a strong nationalistic resonance.<sup>293</sup> In this article, he focused on the "main features" of the visual arts and their "significant details that gave [...] a specific character" to the period under Wenceslas IV and during the Hussite wars.<sup>294</sup> He took into consideration the historical circumstances, under which the works of art were made, and for that he analysed the historical documents. He mostly focused on formal and iconographic descriptions of the individual works and the context of their origin.<sup>295</sup>

Chytil did accentuate the high status and influence of *Czech* painting of this period on, for example, painting in Bavaria or Nuremberg, but he resisted falling into the trap of understanding the past from a nationalized point of view of the present. He regarded this period as "a period of high artistic quality, a period of adopted traditions" and the art of this period was for him "penetrated by the dawn of the modern spirit."<sup>296</sup> This last statement was a reflection of the belief of some Czech art historians that the Middle Ages represented the birth of the modern tradition and spirit of Czech art. It could be found in the work of the Vienna School trained Antonín Matějček, for example, and will be therefore examined in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Chytil's interests were wide and did not lie only in the topic of mediaeval art. He published texts on for, example, Josef Mánes, the art of the court of Rudolf II at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Art Nouveau, or book art. Chytil was also the

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<sup>293</sup> Karel Chytil, "Umění české na počátku XV. století," *Umění II* (1929).

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 376.



first Czech art historian to write on mannerism.<sup>297</sup> His catalogue for the exhibition “Rudolf II, Arts at his Court,” held in 1912 at the Prague castle was complemented by the publication of *Umění a umělci na dvoře Rudolfa II.* (The art and artists of the court of Rudolf II) accompanied by Chytil’s text.<sup>298</sup> For the first time in Czech art history, the essay examined Mannerism, although it had not yet been given the name, as a legitimate transition from the Renaissance to Baroque which had one of its significant centres in Prague. Emphasis on the cosmopolitan character of Prague and its visual arts represented a turn on the part of Chytil from a nationalistic and subjective defence of Czech art, as exemplified by the article on the Karlštejn paintings, to a concern with the achievements of international artists in Bohemia. In this, his approach was reminiscent of the cosmopolitan values of the Vienna School art historians, although they are not evidence of direct influence. These occasional superficial similarities were rather more symptomatic of a more general interest in the topic. Indeed, as I argue later, Chytil was critical of the methods connected with the Vienna School and attempted to provide an alternative to Vienna School teaching.

### **Czech scholars outside of the University**

I have selected Tyrš and Chytil as two scholars based at the Czech part of the University of the time who adopted more empirical methods and who started distancing themselves from the late nineteenth century art historical nationalism. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, art history was also taught at two art schools in Prague, one for higher education, the other a secondary school. In 1799, the Society of Patriotic Friends of Art established the Academy of Fine Arts, though it had rather conservative teaching methods and approaches. Until the late 1860s, art students had to attend theoretical lectures at the University.<sup>299</sup> Alfred Woltmann was also employed by the Academy and contributed to the development of an ideological and nationalistic orientation at this institution.

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<sup>297</sup> Josef Krása, “Karel Chytil,” in *Kapitoly I*, ed. Chadraba, 176.

<sup>298</sup> Karel Chytil, *Umění a umělci na dvoře Rudolfa II* (Prague: Krasoumná jednota, 1912).

<sup>299</sup> Jiří Kotalík, *Almanach Akademie výtvarného umění k 180. výročí založení (1799–1979)* [Almanac of the Academy of Fine Arts at the occasion of its 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary] (Prague: AVU and National Gallery in Prague, 1979).

In 1887 the Academy took a more nationalistic orientation due to the work of the leading Czech contemporary artists such as Julius Mařák, Václav Brožík, or Josef Václav Myslbek. As Derek Sayer has emphasised, the institute now became the “centre for national art.”<sup>300</sup> The promotion of “national art” and “national artists” brought about the dependency on more conservative approach in the methods of instruction. The Academy was later repeatedly criticized on this account by prominent figures of Czech intellectual life, such as František Xaver Šalda (1867–1937) and Miloš Jiránek (1875–1911), and by artistic journals, e.g. *Volné směry*, who represented a younger generation of artists and journalists.<sup>301</sup> Adherence to landscape painting, obsolete teaching methods and the high age of the teachers led to the underdevelopment and stagnation of the institute until younger staff were employed and new departments of architecture and graphic arts established around 1910.<sup>302</sup> In terms of art historical education, the incoming generation of the Vienna School graduates, represented for example by Antonín Matějček, accompanied by other progressive scholars, for instance V. V. Štech (1885–1974), led to a radical change in art historical research and methods practiced at the institution. The achievements and contributions of this later generation at various institutions in Prague are the subject of the following chapters.

Until 1896, when the Academy fell under the administration of the State, the only public art school was the School of Decorative Arts, founded in 1885, which gained university status in 1947. Education in visual arts at this high school was provided in both general and specialized subjects, such as architecture, painting, sculpture, or textiles. Art historical lectures at the School were first delivered by Otakar Hostinský, who also worked at the University, and by Karel Bartoloměj Mádl. Later on, again with the arrival of new graduates after 1910, teaching was conducted by Vienna School students, such as Matějček, Štech and Jaromír Pečírka.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 102.

<sup>301</sup> “Za očistu uměleckých škol českých,” [For purgation of Czech art schools] *Volné směry* XIII (1909).

<sup>302</sup> Kotalík, *Almanach*, 25.

<sup>303</sup> “Historie a současnost,” [History and present days] *Vysoká škola uměleckooprůmyslová* [The School of Decorative Arts].

## Karel Bartoloměj Mádl

Around 1900, most of the Czech art historians I have mentioned in connection with the various institutions tried to apply a positivistic approach to their subject. This demonstrated mostly in their more critical and analytical approach to their material and the attention to detail – in this case historical - inspired by natural sciences.

The same can be said about Mádl who – like Chytil – was also a student of Thausing.<sup>304</sup> In Vienna, he also probably attended the lectures of Franz Wickhoff where he became aware of the latest art historical methods, including the critical use of written sources and formal analysis. In 1886, Mádl was appointed docent in the history of textile arts at the School of Decorative Arts where he later became an ordinary professor.<sup>305</sup> His interest spanned contemporary art, topography in Bohemia, Gothic, Mannerist and Baroque art and architecture.

As I have mentioned earlier, Mádl's notion of what constituted the specifically Czech features in art was typical of his of. In his article on Matyáš Rejsek and Beneš z Loun, his analysis of the formal features of their architecture was deeply influenced by a nationalistic understanding of art in Bohemia.<sup>306</sup>

As with his contemporaries, Mádl's views of Czech identity in art were strongly indebted to wider ongoing debates about Czech identity. However in time his position gradually changed and he also turned his attention to more contemporary issues in Czech art and architecture. He promoted nineteenth century art, as well as Art Nouveau with its international links. Yet despite his interest in the cosmopolitan tendencies of contemporary art, Mádl still remained a Czech nationalist and he did not cease his project of defining the specific qualities of local art.

In an address to the Mánes association of artists, delivered on the tenth anniversary of the association's foundation in 1898, for example, Mádl stated his appreciation of artists who did not distance themselves from the requirements to create national

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<sup>304</sup> Lubomír Konečný, "Karel B. Mádl," in *Kapitoly*, 181.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>306</sup> Mádl, "Matyáš Rejsek."

art.<sup>307</sup> Mádl criticised attempts to construct a Czech national art on the basis of specific kinds of subject matter, whether the depiction of historical events or motives of folk art. A truly modern artist, he argued, sympathises with and knows the people and the countryside and combines the artistic means and techniques that are his own and that he received elsewhere: “The artist who embraces a Czech spirit in himself, who depicts the spirit’s features and emotions in its inner and external living, ... will be the one that produces the fruits of Czech smell and taste.”<sup>308</sup>

For Mádl, it was enough to rely on the expression of one’s Czech soul and heart as well as of the typical features of the Czech world, such as its philosophy and psychology, in order to create a national art. National artists, “these strong individualities [...] intensely concentrate in themselves either the entire soul of the nation, or at least some aspects of it [...]. Their art] is modern and national, as it came out of the soul which is alive in the Czech people and the Czech land today.”<sup>309</sup>

Mádl also acknowledged in this short article that the members of Mánes gave recognition to the art of Mikoláš Aleš, who had been disdained and derided for a long time by the older generation of artists.<sup>310</sup> Aleš, along with Josef Mánes, came to be regarded as the most quintessentially national artist by Mádl’s generation and their successors (Fig. 20–22). An immense number of articles and books have been written on the different aspects of the work of these two from quite an early stage. For example the art historian Antonín Matějček, František Žákavec (1878–1937), Max Dvořák and the artist Miloš Jiránek all wrote on Josef Mánes, while Žákavec and the art historian Václav Vilém Štech (1885–1974), for instance, published on Aleš.<sup>311</sup> For this reason texts on these two artists merit closer investigation.

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<sup>307</sup> Karel B. Mádl, “Mánesu,” [To the Mánes] *Umění včera a dnes* [Art yesterday and today] (Prague: Topič, 1904), 1–10.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 6–7.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>311</sup> For example Antonín Matějček, *Dílo Josefa Mánesa* 1–3 [The oeuvre of Josef Mánes 1–3] (Prague: Jan Štenc, 1920–1927); František Žákavec, *L’oeuvre de Joseph Mánes. Tome II, Le Peuple tchécoslovaque* (Prague: Jan Štenc, 1923); Miloš Jiránek, *Josef Mánes* (Prague: Mánes, 1909); Max Dvořák, “Von Mánes zu Švabinsky” *Die Graphischen Künste* XXVII (1904); V. V. Štech and F. X. Jířík, *Mikoláš Aleš: jeho život a dílo* [Mikoláš Aleš: his life and work] (Prague: F. Topič, 1913) and Žákavec, *Knížka o Alšovi* [A book on Aleš] (Prague: Dědictví Komenského, 1912).

*Figure 18 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 19 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 20 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

For Mádl Aleš's "greatness and Czechness" lay in his soul, character, and nature. The softness and spontaneous character of his sketches and paintings reflected his personal temperament as well as the wider nature of the Czech people.<sup>312</sup> Mádl made similar comments a few years later on the occasion of Aleš's fiftieth birthday in 1902 and again in 1912 in a book on his work. This artist, according to Mádl, "personifies the Czech soul and character" and also the strengths and faults of the people that distinguish it from other races and tribes.<sup>313</sup>

For Mádl, art should grow out of a base that consists of the people and the land, which should crystallize in the work of an artist. Aleš was a fitting example of such a theory: he depicted the Czech countryside with its typical inhabitants and most importantly with their habits and feelings.<sup>314</sup> Similarly, Aleš's subjects came mostly from Czech history and folk culture and in his entire elaboration of his drawings and paintings he used a wide range of folk motives.

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<sup>312</sup> Mádl, "Mánesu," 4–5.

<sup>313</sup> Mádl, "Mikoláš Aleš," *Umění včera a dnes*, 214.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

Mádl's texts also reflected the growing interest in contemporary international art and culture, especially Art Nouveau. In two articles, "Přichozí umění" (Incoming art) from 1898, and "Sloh naší doby" (The style of our time) from 1900, Mádl outlined the origins and main characteristics of the internationally recognized new style.<sup>315</sup> He was critical of the rigid hostility of advocates of national and patriotic art who saw it as alien.<sup>316</sup> According to Mádl, the originality of the new style did not prevent it from being given a national character, for it emerged out of, "the intertwined organism of the family, the land, and the tongue, which in the cases of strong, healthy intellects crystallizes and turns into individual style."<sup>317</sup> Thus although cosmopolitan in nature, works of Art Nouveau took on different forms in different countries as they grew out of the nationality of their authors. Consequently, they created Viennese, English, Flemish, Swedish, or American versions of the new style.

In both articles, Mádl disagreed with the hostility of his compatriots towards art coming to Bohemia from Vienna as "foreign" (meaning Habsburg). The same arguments fuelled suspicion of the older generation of architects in Prague towards the representative of this new artistic tendency, Jan Kotěra (1871–1923), an architect trained in Vienna under Otto Wagner (Fig. 23–24). At the end of the nineteenth century, the Viennese Academy became one of the centres of Secession and its geographical as well as cultural proximity made it into a popular destination for students of architecture and arts from Moravia and Bohemia. After their return to their homeland, they rivalled the advocates of historical and eclectic styles such as the architects Ignác Ulmann, Antonín Barvitius, Josef Mocker and others who often expressed their displeasure at the new architectural forms.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Mádl, "Sloh naší doby," *Umění včera a dnes*.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Petr Wittlich, "Sochařství na přelomu století," [Sculpture at the turn of the century] in *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění IV*, 98–99.

*Figure 21 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 22 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

The mistrust of Kotěra on account of his allegedly foreign influences , can be compared with Woltmann's views on the "Germanness" of Josef Zíték, the architect of the Prague National Theatre. His argument was also based on the fact that Zíték studied under Gottfried Semper and therefore the final design of his buildings must be German in nature. Thirty years later, the same accusations were raised against Kotěra whose style, due to the association with Wagner, was perceived as alien to the Czech environment. Mádl nevertheless showed for example in the article "Příchozí umění" that although Kotěra had studied in the Austrian capital, he was able to develop his own ideas that were independent of Wagner's.



Kotěra's own stance on the debate regarding the national aspects of the new art can be found for example in his article entitled "O novém umění (On new art)" published in *Volné směry* in 1900. He defended modernism and argued for its specific national potential. For him, the local character of modern architecture could be derived from "our" – meaning local – sources: "Seeing how well primitive folk art treats wood – I am learning to find the way how from *our* tasks, from *our* constructions, from *our* material in *our* climate I may be able to find and create *our* form [emphasis mine]." <sup>319</sup> The task of the modern architect was, then, to capture the particular climate and purpose in an appropriate, native form, and also to be truthful to the material. Kotěra and many other authors called art and culture with native or local features "ours."

At the same time, Kotěra denied the possibility that any nation could develop its very own and distinctive art, as in his opinion most nations have a similar system of education and similar culture. <sup>320</sup> "The grounds and therefore also the forms will be identical; only the modes of expression will bear the national character. It is utopian to wish to awaken national art on the basis of a tradition through copies and new combinations..." <sup>321</sup>

Kotěra thus opposed the mere copying of historical models and supported the modern style. Mádl, too, was an advocate of modernism against historicism and argued for its positive role in the formation of national art. In "Příchozí umění" he similarly argued against the opinion of "some scholars" (whom he nevertheless did not name) that Art Nouveau came from Vienna and should therefore be rejected as a German style. Instead, Mádl defended the cosmopolitan origins of the new style. He also recognized the existence of certain tendencies that had the ability to defend national individuality and the desire for a creation of an original Czech national style among the Czechs. He held that one could not live in history, ignore world events and merely copy previous art. In his view: "We cannot protect Czech folk art ... by a mere imitation, by copying, just as we could not prolong the life of the

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<sup>319</sup> Jan Kotěra, "O novém umění," *Volné směry* IV (1899–1900), quoted in Prahel and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 134.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

Renaissance and the Baroque that died out centuries ago.”<sup>322</sup> In Mádl’s view, each new style could be adapted to the local conditions of the nation, of the land, local material and the nuances of the people’s soul. Eventually,

everybody will be able to tell Czech modernism from German... The spirit of the national existence is therefore the *Arcanum* which should transform each alien form into a Czech one. To preserve, to perfect [the spirit], to intensify its expressions is to colour each modernism in Czech.<sup>323</sup>

Folk art had an important place in the writings of both Mádl and Kotěra, as well as in the architectural practice of the latter. Mádl did not reject it as a source of inspiration and, alongside Kotěra, he connected it to the specificities of local culture. Nevertheless, he did not support the mere copying of folk motives; instead he connected folk art with the expression of the spirit of the entire Czech people and the Czech land.

In general, folk culture had become a popular resource not only for the early Czech Romantic awakeners in areas such as literature and music. František Ladislav Čelakovský (1799–1852), Karel Jaromír Erben, or Božena Němcová collected folk tales, poems and stories on which they based their own prose or poetry. In music, some of the most obvious representatives of the same tendency to compose original music on the basis of folk tradition were Smetana, Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904), Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) or Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959). Taking inspiration from folk culture was belated in the case of art and architecture. Motives, shapes, themes, or materials taken from the rural environment in Bohemia and Moravia became crucial for architects and designers, such as Dušan Jurkovič or Jan Koula (1855–1919), as well as for painters such as Joža Uprka (1861–1940) as late as at the end of the century. I examine the attention of Czech art historians and ethnographers to folk culture in the following chapters (Fig. 25–26).

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<sup>322</sup> Mádl, “Příchozí umění,” 68.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

*Figure 23 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 24 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions..*

## Calls for improvement in art historical education

Until now, I have examined the different approaches to Czech art assumed by academic scholars. I have pointed out that art history as a discipline was in a weak position at the institutes of higher education mainly because of a shortage of trained staff. Many Czech authors were aware of the belated nature of the field of Czech art historical study and assumed a critical position towards the situation. The education of students in theory and history of art and the permanent inclusion of art history to the curriculum of the University in Prague consequently became another important subject discussed well until the twentieth century.

When, in 1845, Jan Erazim Vocel wrote his article “O starožitnostech českých a potřebě chrániti je před zkázou,” he suggested who should write Czech art history and how.<sup>324</sup> His comments on the poor state of scholarship in this area and his call for a comprehensive history of Czech art were motivated by his understanding of art as an important component in the history of the Czech nation. This appeal, repeated later by authors such as Josef Kalousek or Antonín Baum, was directed mainly at scholars based at the institutions of higher education in Prague.<sup>325</sup> At the beginning of the twentieth century, the situation in historical education of artists, in particular, had still not considerably improved.

In 1908 and 1909, the art journal *Volné směry* published two commentaries on this topic. “Česká universita a výtvarné umění” (The Czech University and the visual arts) and “Za očistu uměleckých škol českých” (Towards a purging of Czech art schools). Their authors were not named, yet it is most probable that both were written by the journal’s editors of that time, Max Švabinský and Miloš Jiránek respectively.<sup>326</sup> Both of them expressed their misgivings about the situation at the institutions of art education and called for a change.

The author of “Česká universita a výtvarné umění” identified a lack of interest in art education at the Czech University on the part both of the central government in

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<sup>324</sup> Vocel, “O starožitnostech.”

<sup>325</sup> Kalousek, “O historii výtvarných umění,” Baum, “Jak píše” and Baum, “Jak se píše.”

<sup>326</sup> “Česká universita a výtvarné umění,” *Volné směry* XII (1908): 155–156. “Za očistu uměleckých škol českých,” *Volné směry* XIII (1909).

Vienna as well as the Czechs. Art was, for the author, a part of national heritage and therefore should have been a crucial part of education. Speaking on behalf of Czech artists, the article emphasised “the cowardly resistance towards every new idea and new direction” and complained that “we have to put up with such a lack of preparedness of the Czech intelligentsia and such lack of conscious interest.”<sup>327</sup> The overall lack of interest of the Czech intelligentsia in the visual arts and their history, it stated, prevented the successful development of art historical practice. The lack of competent art history teachers led to a lack of systematic study in the area as well as to a low number of university students.

The author nevertheless enthusiastically welcomed the new chairs of art history, Chytil and Matějka, whose lectures brought about an increase of interest in the field from both students and the public. The growing concern for art historical issues was also symptomatic of the improving situation in the cultural life of Czech society.<sup>328</sup>

Although “Za očistu uměleckých škol českých” (Towards a purging of Czech art schools) commented on the situation in practical art education at the Art Academy in Prague, disputes over the character of the institution affected also art historical scholarship. The main issue of dispute here was the bilingual division of the Academy into the Czech and German-speaking parts and the resulting situation, caused by the actions of the academic staff and Czech politicians: “The lack of information and ineptitude of our politicians damaged artistic matters more than the direct attacks of the Germans.”<sup>329</sup>

With a mixture of lament and admiration, the author pointed out that the Germans had achieved their firm position at the Academy due to better organization, better access to information, political foresight and national unity.<sup>330</sup> The Czechs, on the other hand, if they were to continue in the same manner, would have a stagnating, incomplete and old staff as opposed to the young, stronger, politically and nationally reliable and progressive German teachers.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> “Česká universita,” 155.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>329</sup> “Za očistu,” 205.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

The article concluded with an appeal for the establishment of an independent, Czech academy of fine arts, which would “fertilize the intellectual funds of the nation, have a genuinely artistic spirit and become an honest representative before the entire world.”<sup>332</sup> What was significant about this short text was its acknowledgement of the achievements of the German staff on the one hand and its criticism of the Czechs on the other. Similarly, “Česká universita a výtvarné umění” reproached the Czechs for their lack of interest and support of an academic study of art history.

## Conclusion

The main institutions that provided art historical education accommodated scholars of diverse views and bore a number of discussions that would play their role in the future. The most influential schools and organizations were based in Prague; however, art historical scholarship was slowly being formed in the regions too.

Nevertheless one common feature remained: the search for the origins of Czech art. Whether it was seen in mediaeval art and architecture or in folk culture, the aim was to secure the position of Czech art in history and present. Gradually, new ideas and methods were introduced into Czech thinking. Positivism, as an attempted objective approach to facts, on the one hand and the notion of the spirit of the people with its metaphysical overtone on the other started appearing in the texts of for example Chytil and Mádl respectively.

Another formative feature for art history of the late nineteenth century was the continuing disparity between the Czech and German culture in Bohemia, materialized for example in the split of the Prague University into two language-based parts. At the end of the century, the Czech section, nevertheless, suffered of a shortage in art historical lecturers and a more rigorous approach to research. A professional attitude was slowly introduced into the texts of the Czech authors on art historical subjects who were in the first place historians, archaeologists or else.

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<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 206.

As a result, the texts on Czech art became supported by allegedly objective research which, on the other hand, still sometimes took the original “Czechness” of art for granted.

The turn of the century was also a period in which a critical eye was cast on the role of the educational institutions in the rise of national awareness. The study of the history of art was recognized as significant for the Czech nation and the lack of it and the belatedness in rigour was criticised. Unfavourable comparisons were made with the state of German scholarship and involvement in support of visual arts. This was a significant recognition of the cultural and educational advancement of the Germans in Prague and their better achievements in promotion of their culture and history. It could be seen as a step towards acknowledgement of the German cultural and historical position and a realization of the context within which the Czechs found themselves at the beginning of the twentieth century. On the other hand, apart from this occasional acknowledgment of German achievements in science and academia, the cohabitation of the Czechs and Germans in most places in Bohemia (and Moravia) was accompanied with an ignorance of cultural and social activities of the two ethnic groups.

In summary, Czech art historical scholarship at the turn of the century was shaped by a few individuals based at the Prague University and the two art schools. Tyrš, Chytil and Mádl, chosen here as the main representatives, gradually started adopting more methodological approach to the studied material, however, they still used the notion of Czech art in the nationalistic sense. As there was a lack of continuous lecturing in art history in Prague, the authors came to study art history from various disciplines. The belated development of the discipline was recognized by a number of critics who emphasised the importance assigned to art in the national consciousness of the Czechs.

## 5. Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in Art around 1900

The nature and content of academic texts and the character of the academic institutions hosting art historical research shows a close relation to the increasing national awareness of the Czechs in the late nineteenth century. The notion of the “Czech quality” of Czech art, or of art in Bohemia, was nevertheless also built up and sustained through artistic exhibitions and reviews of them outside of the university and academic debate. Major exhibitions on contemporary art or the art of the past contributed significantly to the creation of the notion of Czech national art. Exhibitions were in most cases initiated by artists’ clubs and societies; these could be either progressive or conservative in nature, their orientation having an effect on the resulting structure and intent of the show. In many cases, organizers managed to attract large audiences and thus were able to disseminate the particular views of Czech art that they wanted to present to a wide public.

The turn of attention to international artistic events and away from favouring anything Czech, and the search for the place of Czech art within the international context became an important issue for many at the end of the nineteenth century. Artists, art critics and journalists started reconsidering Czech art as a result of deepening contacts with their counterparts abroad. The birth of art criticism in Bohemia was marked by newly founded artistic journals, such as *Volné směry* (Free Directions) and *Dílo* (The Work) under the Mánes Association, and the competitive *Moderní revue* (Modern Revue) (Fig. 27). They may be taken as the best illustrations of the contrast with the articles published in the more historically-oriented journals, such as *Památky* (Monuments) or *Český časopis historický* (The Czech Journal of History), mentioned in the previous chapters. Where the former joined together a young generation of artists and art critics, the latter were associated with an older generation of mainly positivistic scholars.



*Figure 25 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

The activities of artists and critics can be contrasted not only with the nationalistic texts in historical journals, but also with the staging of two popular exhibition events at the end of the nineteenth century – the Jubilee Exhibition of 1891 and the Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition on 1895.<sup>333</sup> Both presented a vision of the “Czech nation” with its own culture, art, history and technical achievements. However, as they were both held in accord with the official Austrian-Hungarian authorities, they presented the Czechs as an independent ethnic and cultural entity but also as a part of the empire.

It would be a superficial simplification, however, to identify the group around the new journals and exhibitions of contemporary art with an innovative attitude to art and to label the group of the older authors and the organizers of national exhibitions as conservative. It cannot be unambiguously claimed that writing on art by the younger generation of artists and art critics, with more international contacts, was always progressive or internationally-oriented, while art historians based at the University in Prague and in other state institutes that conducted research into Czech art history, were clearly regressive or nationalistic. As I show in this chapter, artists and art critics, whom one would like to see as open-minded and not encumbered in the attempt for reconstruction of a famous national past, sometimes published writings that defended the exceptional and highly original nature of Czech art in a way more usually associated with the outlook of romantic nationalism.

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<sup>333</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 95–96.

I examine in particular the co-existence of older and newer approaches to Czech art in the activities of recently established artistic groups, their publications and exhibition activities. I pay special attention to a selection of individual writers related to these artistic groups and their journals in order to explore the possible nature of their views of art as opposed to those assumed by academic writers and those promoting a nationalist orientation towards art.

The most important exhibitions, which were high profile events in Czech society of the late nineteenth century, were the three that took place in 1891, 1895 and 1898. The first presented the best of industry, business and arts in Bohemia, the second was an ethnographic display of folk culture and the third showed the latest architecture and engineering.

These costly shows organized in Bohemia followed a trend that flourished in many European countries in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>334</sup> The most apparent precedents can be seen in the Industrial Exposition of 1844 organized in Paris and the Great Exhibition of 1851 that took place in London. Similar spectacles of a country's cultural and industrial achievements soon followed also in Central Europe: for example Germany (Munich, 1854), Austria (Vienna, 1873), Hungary (Budapest, 1881 and 1885). Bohemia organized these events usually with the same intention of enhancing their own identities. The two exhibitions of 1891 and 1895 that took place in Prague can be taken as examples of how Czech art and culture were understood at the time.

## **Exhibitions at the end of the century**

### **The Jubilee Exhibition in Prague, 1891**

The Jubilee Exhibition of 1891 was originally intended to bring together all the nations living in the Czech lands. It was staged to commemorate the first industrial exhibition in Prague of 1791 that took place on the occasion of the coronation of

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<sup>334</sup> David Crowley, "The Uses of Peasant Design in Austria-Hungary in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* II, no. 2 (1995): 4.

Emperor Leopold II as Czech king.<sup>335</sup> The project involved the construction of a number of pavilions, commissions of artworks, presentation of expositions and cultural events, which were to display the state of industry, agriculture, and culture in Bohemia and Moravia. The event was situated in Královská obora in Prague (the Royal Park, today's exhibition centre) and presented diverse Czech industries alongside examples of high art and folk culture. The exhibition was also accompanied by the construction of the first electrified tramline in Austria–Hungary connecting the exhibition with the new cableway leading to the newly built Prague equivalent of the Eiffel Tower at Petřín hill.

The delicate politics of the display surfaced in many issues connected with organization of the exposition. Originally, the German minority of the Czech lands were invited to take part in this event. However, due to the political tensions that were leading to a polarisation of the two communities, the Germans refused to participate in the exhibition.<sup>336</sup> The guide, published for the event, as well as the memorial volume from 1894, reflected the bitterness and indignation of the Czechs over the ostentatious withdrawal of the Germans. The entire exhibition consequently became “a jamboree of Czech nationalism”<sup>337</sup> and the impact of the six-month-long event was immense – during this period Prague ceased to be a provincial city and the organizers claimed to have proved that they could implement a project without help of the Germans.<sup>338</sup>

Official exhibition catalogues and various articles celebrated its success and the quality of the displays.<sup>339</sup> In 1894, a memorial volume was published which contained a retrospective view of the event codifying some of the major national

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<sup>335</sup> “Památky. Výstaviště Praha Holešovice,” [Monuments. Praha Holešovice exhibition ground] *Pražská informační služba*.

<sup>336</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 96.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Otakar Vraný, “Jubilejní výstava,” [The jubilee exhibition] *Český rozhlas*.

<sup>339</sup> *Zemská jubilejní výstava v Praze 1891 = Landes-Jubileums Ausstellung in Prag 1891* (Prague: K. Maloch, 1891); *Všeobecná zemská výstava v Praze 1891 na oslavu jubilea první průmyslové výstavy r.1791 v Praze pod protektorátem Jeho cís. a král. Veličenstva císaře Františka Josefa I. Pavillon zemského výboru království Českého = Allgemeine Landes-Ausstellung in Prag 1891 zur Jubiläumsfeier der Erstengewerbe-Ausstellung im Jahre 1791 in Prag unter dem Protectorat Sr. Kais. und Königl. Majestät Kaiser Franz Josef I. Pavillon Landesauschutzes des Königreiches Böhmen* (Prague: Zemský výbor království Českého, 1891); *Průvodce po zemské jubilejní výstavě se stručným popisem Prahy a okolí* [The guide to the Land Jubilee Exhibition with a short description of Prague and the surrounding areas] (Prague: J. Otto, 1891).

achievements.<sup>340</sup> The discussion of the visual arts was written by the novelist, journalist and art critic Karel Matěj. Čapek (1860–1927),<sup>341</sup> who provided detailed descriptions of the exhibition rooms and the individual works of art, especially the paintings. It becomes clear from the overview of the works exhibited that the art section was restricted to a few individuals who depicted historical and rural subjects. This included academic painting and sculpture by, for example, Václav Brožík, František Ženíšek or Josef Václav Myslbek, all members of the so-called Generation of the National Theatre. There were just a few works by the younger generation of artists, including for example the painters Jan Preisler, or Max Švabinský.<sup>342</sup>

Mikoláš Aleš, Jaroslav Čermák and Josef Mánes received the most attention both from the exhibition curators, led by the painter Vojtěch Hynais, and also from Čapek. Mánes, who was represented here by a hundred works, “dominated the exhibition by his greatness.”<sup>343</sup> For Čapek, this artist was proof of the future revival of Czech national art: “those who believe in the future of Czech art, will confirm that Josef Mánes represents the revival of the spirit of this national art in the near future.”<sup>344</sup>

Čapek described the exhibition of sculpture in less detail, partly because it was smaller than the display of paintings: it presented a total of 131 works.<sup>345</sup> Here, he emphasised the role of “the great master” Myslbek whose sculpture of St Joseph was “one of the most beautiful Czech sculptures ever.”<sup>346</sup> St Wenceslas on horseback was, for Čapek, “one of the most beautiful equestrian sculptures and one of the most absorbing statues in the sense of Czech national spirit.”<sup>347</sup> This spirit

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<sup>340</sup> *Jubilejní výstava zemská Království českého v Praze 1891* [The Jubilee land exhibition of the Bohemian kingdom in Prague 1891] (Prague: F. Šimáček, 1894).

<sup>341</sup> He bears no relation to Karel (1890–1938) and Josef Čapek (1887–1945).

<sup>342</sup> Brožík, a professor at the Art Academy in Prague, was a representative of the genre of historical painting. Ženíšek was a painter of “nationally important subjects”: allegories, mythologies, and historical topics. Myslbek was a sculptor of the same orientation.

<sup>343</sup> K. M. Čapek, “Umění. Výstava umělců moderních,” [Art. The exhibition of modern artists] in *Jubilejní výstava zemská*, 716.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, 716–717.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 717.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 718.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, 719.

was embodied especially in the subject matter of this work – the myth of St Wenceslas, the patron saint of the Czech nation.

Čapek also commented on the fact that the German minority living in Bohemia was absent from the exhibition. Their withdrawal meant that works of Czech art owned by this wealthy group were not exhibited, and art produced by ethnic German inhabitants was not included. Čapek did not see the political and nationalistic disputes as negative, though, and claimed that the gaps in the presentation of art were insignificant and that modern art was still presented as a whole.<sup>348</sup> For Čapek, the German artists, “insignificant in importance and number [...] do not have anything in common with Czech art or art in Bohemia,” and their artistic opinion “stands completely outside the mother country, spirit and elementary taste of its people and they are connected with art by the bond of birthplace at the most.”<sup>349</sup> German art, especially modern (meaning contemporary) art, which was exhibited only minimally, was therefore seen by Čapek as no real rival to that of the Czechs.

The promotion and praise of Czech culture in the Exhibition was evident in essays in the Guide that described other sections. Examining the external artistic character of the Exhibition, one author, signed only as K.D., praised “our purely Czech” style.<sup>350</sup> The picture of this Czech style and what “Czechness” at the exposition stood for was complemented by a display of folk art and culture in the section “The Czech Village House” which was discussed by the ethnographer František Vladimír Vykoukal (Fig. 28).<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 677.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 678.

<sup>350</sup> K. D., “Zevní umělecký ráz výstavy,” [The exterior artistic appearance of the exhibition] in Ibid., 730.

<sup>351</sup> F. V. Vykoukal, “Lidové umění,” [Folk art] in Ibid., 737–745.

*Figure 26 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

The author approached the topic of folk culture from the position of an urban dweller, combining romanticizing exoticism and primitivism. As was common for Czech ethnography of the time, the indigenous achievements of the country folk were seen as curious, bizarre and primitive but also as original forms of cultural and artistic life. According to Vykoukal, the exposition was “an accurate imitation of real village buildings with typical and interesting details,” with figurines “representing the types of our people and attempting to portray as truly as possible their facial features, body postures and, naturally, also their peculiar costumes.”<sup>352</sup>

The author thus described the typical architecture, furniture, clothing, tools and many other, usually decorated, objects of those people that constituted an exotic other for the patronizing urban intelligentsia, although they were also called “our people” and “our peasants.”<sup>353</sup> These exhibited “subjects” were approached as the

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 737.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 742.

carriers of the skills and original inventiveness preserved from the past until the present day.

In this attitude to vernacular culture, the section on the “Czech Village House” and the discourse surrounding it recalled the Weltausstellung in Vienna of 1873. This world exhibition represented, among other things, the peoples of the Dual Monarchy and their lives in “ageless tradition” alongside the most topical technical and scientific advancements. As David Crowley has pointed out, the “pervasive discourse of the peasant was shared [...] by oppressor and oppressed” in the individual countries of the Monarchy.<sup>354</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, the Czech intelligentsia thus recreated a view of the peasantry similar to the one that was on display in Vienna as representative of the people of Bohemia and Moravia in a number of cases.

### **The Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition**

The interest in folk culture as a part of national heritage, materialized in the Jubilee and four years later in the Ethnographic exhibition, was part of a wider phenomenon across Europe and North America.<sup>355</sup>

The Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition focused solely on the promotion of the ethnic identity of the Czech-speaking people living in Bohemia and Moravia (Fig. 29). A result of the long-lasting efforts of the ethnographic movement in Bohemia to establish an ethnographic museum in Prague, the exhibition showed what cultural and material products “the Czech people achieved through its own diligence,

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<sup>354</sup> Crowley, “The Uses,” 5.

<sup>355</sup> The activities of the Swedish ethnographer, Artur Hazelius (1833–1901) can be mentioned in this connection. His attempts to preserve Swedish folk culture, including architecture, were prompted by his fear of the spread of industries in the second half of the nineteenth century in Sweden. They also led him to the opening of the open-air museum, Skansen, in 1891 a village of Swedish historic buildings and peasant material culture which became a model for open-air museums in other countries, including Bohemia and Moravia. Václav Vlček, “K vývoji muzejnictví,” [On the development of museology] in *Sborník národního technického muzea v Praze. Acta musei nationalis technici Pragae* 10 (Prague: SPN, 1971), 10.

without the help, patronage, or support”<sup>356</sup> of the Austrian government and “despite all the influences of Western culture.”<sup>357</sup>

*Figure 27 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

The event was initiated by the director of the National Theatre in Prague, František Adolf Šubert (1848–1915) who, inspired by the success of the 1891 exhibition, wanted to focus on the regional differences of the people in Czech lands and Slovakia, their customs and ways of lives. The concept addressed only the Czech-speaking inhabitants and consciously excluded the Germans and other minorities within the region. The political message of the exhibition was obvious: to publicize the interests of the Czech nation in the Czech countryside and to contribute to the Czech-German question with a display of ethnographic exhibits that were allegedly genuinely Czech.<sup>358</sup> In terms of national affiliation, the exhibition therefore presented folk culture and its products as the expressions of a genuine Czechness.

The title of the exhibition also proclaimed the nationalistic beliefs of the organizers who were the representatives of the Czech intelligentsia. Apart from Šubert, the main organizers included the Prague-based professors Otokar Hostinský (theoretician of aesthetics and music), Lubor Niederle (the ethnographer,

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<sup>356</sup> Čeněk Zíbrt, “Národopisná výstava československá,” [The ethnographic Czechoslovak exhibition] *Český lid* V (1896): 2–3.

<sup>357</sup> Josef Kafka, ed., *Národopisná výstava československá v Praze 1895, hlavní katalog a průvodce* [The ethnographic Czechoslovak exhibition in Prague 1895, the official catalogue and guide] (Prague: J. Otto, 1896), 137.

<sup>358</sup> Pargač, *Mýtus*, 27.



anthropologist and archaeologist), the politician and constructor Čeněk Gregor, and members of Czech nobility and land patriots, such as Jan Count Harrach and Arnošt Count Sylva-Taroucca.<sup>359</sup> The name *Czechoslavic* in the official title of the exhibition, was first used in the manifesto entitled *Czechoslavs* from September 9, 1891 which was sent to various organizations and administrative offices.<sup>360</sup> The title tried to emphasise the Czechs's membership of the family of Slavic nations and most probably drew on the concept of Austroslavism promoted by Havlíček and discussed earlier.<sup>361</sup>

In the initial stages of the preparations, inclusion of a Slovak display was suggested in order to proclaim close links of the Czechs and Slovaks. However, the potential Slovak organizers were cautious of raising distrust of the Hungarian government towards any attempt to connect with the Czechs who were under Austrian administration.<sup>362</sup> Slovakia was thus not represented as an integral whole but only through a series of individual exhibits. The organizers, nevertheless, also tried to promote relations with other Slavic nations and a number of delegations of Slavic representatives were invited to visit the event.

Despite the eventual decision not to include an independent Slovak section, the poster to accompany and promote the exhibition depicted the union of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia epitomized by three figures: a Bohemian woman in a folk costume from Chodsko region, a Vlach and a Slovak in a fur coat (Fig. 30).<sup>363</sup> The theme of the painting, by Vojtěch Hynais, was inspired by the painter of folk culture, Joža Uprka, but, like the entire exhibition, the poster was in fact an idealised version of reality. Period newspapers and journals tried to establish who the depicted figures actually were, as exemplified by comments in the daily *Lidové noviny* (People's gazette), published at the time of the exhibition: "The figure on the left [...] is not a Silesian, but a Slovak, the one in the centre is not a Wallachian, but could be a Silesian. To distinguish the types on the basis of their folk costumes is

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<sup>359</sup> Zíbrt, "Národopisná výstava," 1–3.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>361</sup> Karel Havlíček Borovský, "Čech a Slovan," *Pražské noviny*, 1846, reprint in Karel Havlíček Borovský, *Dílo II*.

<sup>362</sup> Pargač, *Mýtus*, 14.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 48.

difficult for everyone.”<sup>364</sup> Such speculations as to the regional accuracy of the costumes had no real impact on the size of the audience.<sup>365</sup>

*Figure 28 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

The different sections at the exhibition presented Czech literature, theatre, music, folk customs, living and crafts, the Czechs from abroad, the Czech woman, and so on. The displays of folk houses and crafts in the so-called Exhibition Village were fitted out with figurines in regional folk costumes undertaking activities illustrative of folk culture. As in the Jubilee Exhibition, the figurines were designed to present the typical features of life in the countryside, as the exhibition coordinators envisaged it. Thus, for example, Čeněk Zíbrt (1864–1932), a distinguished, Prague-based ethnographer and editor of the journal *Český lid* (Czech people), described one exhibit in a way which stressed the archaic character of the folk culture: “A remarkably interesting cultural anachronism is depicted in the figurine, [...] a Wallachian shepherd ignites a wooden fire by rubbing two pieces of wood against each other.” This particular way of igniting fire represented a pagan custom based on a superstition that according to Zíbrt illustrated the fact that “even today, reminders of the ancient images of the effects of a wooden fire have not yet

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<sup>364</sup> *Lidové noviny* 3 (1885), Quoted in Pargač, *Mýtus*, 50.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*

disappeared from the popular life of European nations despite all the progress in the cultural development.”<sup>366</sup> These reminders have survived in a form that can be found “in an intact primitiveness and probably in its original form of the half-educated tribes in America, Africa, Asia and Australia.”<sup>367</sup> According to Zíbrt the figure of the shepherd aroused the interest of many visitors, whose view of it was similar to Zíbrt’s. What he failed to mention was who selected this figurine performing this particular custom to be displayed, as each of the exhibits were carefully chosen by the organizers to communicate a specific message about Czech folk culture. The programme of the individual regional exhibition sections was prepared by the respective regional organization in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia and directed from Prague. The organizers in the regions, who were responsible for the selection of exhibits, consisted of the representatives of local museums, teachers, councillors and other local patriots.<sup>368</sup>

The Exhibition was therefore an idealised portrait of Czech national identity seen through its rural life and customs, but it presented a commonly held view. For instance, Lubor Niederle (1865–1944), a professor of archaeology at the Prague university, pointed out the historical role of the common people as the bearer of national identity referring to the Hussite wars he claimed:

It was the people of the plain Czech villages that rose four and half hundreds years ago to [...] shake off the burden of foreign oppression from the homeland’s shoulders. It was the same people [...] who for hundreds of years carried not only their own language but also the customs and traditions of the ancestors to such an extent that this deprived and almost extinct nation could be awakened to a new life [...].<sup>369</sup>

It should be noted that in this and other accounts of the two exhibitions, the term “lid” was used interchangeably to mean both “people” and “folk” in order to refer

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<sup>366</sup> Zíbrt, “Národopisná výstava,” 12.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> *Národopisná výstava československá v Praze* [The ethnographic Czechoslovak exhibition in Prague] (Prague: Jan Otto, 1896), 22–24.

<sup>369</sup> Luboš Niederle, “Byt lidu vesnického. Výstavní dědina,” [Dwelling of the country folk. The exhibition village] in Emil Kovář, *Národopisná výstava československá v Praze. Druhá zpráva o činnosti výboru* (Prague: 1893), 97.

to the inhabitants of the villages and countryside in Bohemia and Moravia. “Lid” was envisaged as constituting the foundations of the Czech nation in its purity, originality and historicity. One of its main and most important attributes was seen in its “lidovost” (“folksiness”) - the simplicity and unspoilt character of its life and material culture.

The superficial nature of the curiosity about folk culture was visible in many instances of the exhibition, for example, in the fact that numerous exhibits in the Exhibition Village were not accurate in respect of their historical or geographical location, and most of them were proposed as *inspired* by folk traditions. The various houses were designed by for example Jurkovič, the architect Jan Koula, the ethnographer Josef Klvaňa and others. The work of the architects was sometimes completed by finishing touches of actual regional artists and craftsmen for the sake of authenticity. Such was the case of a house from a village in South Moravia, the porch of which was painted by a painter from the village, “Barbora Prachařová, a simple woman with extraordinary taste and skills.” (Fig.31–33).<sup>370</sup>

*Figure 29 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

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<sup>370</sup> Zíbrt, “Národopisná výstava,” 204.

*Figure 30 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 31 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

The character of folk culture as a spectacle was also promoted by various activities that were organized here. For example groups of people from various regions of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia were also invited to participate in the exhibition by performing activities from their life in the exhibition amphitheatre.<sup>371</sup> The Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition, like the section of the Czech Village at the Jubilee Exhibition, thus showed the anachronistic culture of the country people as seen by the curious eye of the city dweller. The people became the primary exhibit. And although referred to as “our folk” the titles of different sections, such as “Co náš lid čte” (What the folk read) and “Byt lidu vesnického” (Dwellings of country folk) suggest that the organizers saw the subjects of the show as “them,” as “exotic others.”

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 411.

### **National and loyal**

These exhibitions were aimed at a large and very general public from all of Bohemia and Moravia, as well as other Slavic groups inside and outside of Austria Hungary, and they also functioned as a statement to the Imperial government of Czech autonomy.

At the same time, however, cultural, ethnic and economic self-sufficiency was understood as operating within the confines of the Empire. Both exhibitions were supported by the official Austrian authorities, who allowed a certain degree of self-recognition on the part of the individual nations. In return, the exhibitions organizers and commentators remained loyal to the emperor. This was more prominent in the case of the Jubilee Exhibition. Rudolf Jaroslav Kronbauer, a Czech journalist and writer, included in his book on the exhibition a detailed chapter entitled “Our king in Prague” describing Franz Josef’s visit to the exhibition and to the city, including the National Theatre (Fig. 34).<sup>372</sup> According to Kronbauer, “the visit of the emperor and the king was the crown and highlight to our great work of culture” and attracted the attention of many people from the whole country who came to Prague to see the ruler and the exhibition. Franz Josef “was astonished by the greatness and beauty of the exhibition which was the proof of the great achievements that the Czech lands had made in the fields of art, industry and agriculture.”<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Rudolf Jaroslav Kronbauer, *Naše jubilejní výstava* (Prague: Josef R. Vilimek, 1892).

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

*Figure 32 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

For Kronbauer's the presence of the king and emperor was also proof of the great success of the exhibition. He claimed that the fatherly figure of Franz Josef was loved by the Czechs and always welcomed: "... it should never be forgotten under any circumstances that of all the nations of Austria it is the Czech nation that has the most loyal feelings and true love for our ruling dynasty."<sup>374</sup>

Although the Ethnographic exhibition, that took place four years later, did not enjoy the patronage of the emperor and was sponsored mainly by local institutions and individuals, the organizers nevertheless looked to invite the emperor and other representatives of the imperial family and administration. According to Zíbrt, however, Franz Josef had to turn the invitation down but "wished all best to the exhibition and noted that he expected its peaceful and dignified course. He asked for a description of its extent and content, [...] and showed interest mainly in the Czechoslovak village with the church and in the Old Prague."<sup>375</sup>

Both the Jubilee and the Ethnographic exhibitions remained reserved in their presentation of the visual arts and were not antagonistic towards the Empire. Although the shows presented what was thought to be the best of Czech art and

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>375</sup> *Národopisná výstava*, 44.

culture of the time, both high and rural, thus aspiring at regional patriotism, the organizers avoided more radical nationalism.

The organizers also stressed the significance of art as a marker of the greatness of the Czech people. Both exhibitions thus claimed to show the best works of “national importance.” The selection of artists at the earlier exhibition emphasised the realistic and romantic tradition of painting, represented mainly by professors at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. Similarly the artistic work produced by the common people, presented at the latter exhibition, “explained in general terms one of the significant sides of the national existence, it became proof [...] of the artistic talent and skills of the Czechoslavic nation.”<sup>376</sup>

These two events may be therefore perceived as rather conservative, especially when placed alongside the artistic cultures emerging in Bohemia and the capital of Prague. The appearance of new artistic developments and the founding of artistic societies at the end of the nineteenth century prompted the organization of numerous much smaller exhibitions that were usually attended by a more specialized audience. They also had their own agenda regarding Czech art.

## **Modern art criticism and the revision of national art**

The urban curiosity about the “primitive” and “unspoilt” everyday life in the countryside at the end of the century can be contrasted with the attempts of the younger generation of artists to modernization and internationalise artistic life in Czech and Moravian towns. It became common for artists to meet in unofficial environments, of which cafes and pubs are perhaps the best known. One commentator on Prague life around 1910 held that “so far, all artistic oppositions, conspiracies and dissolutions, new cliques, clubs and journals have been arranged and prepared in a bourgeois way in restaurants with beer, less often with wine.”<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 305.

<sup>377</sup> František Langer, “Arma virumque cano...,” in *Kavárny a spol. Pražské literární kavárny a hospody* [Cafes etc. Prague literary cafes and pubs], ed. Karl Heinz Jähn (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1990), 92–93.



Some of the most famous venues were in Prague and Brno: the Union café, Slavia, Tůmovka or Arco in Prague, and Slávie, Bellevue, or Avion in Brno are just a few examples.

The Union café, for example, was frequently visited by artists and writers, such as Myslбек, Tyrš, Aleš, who “discussed the problems of national art.”<sup>378</sup> Karel Čapek noted that it was here that

at one table, Wirth edited [the journal] *Styl* [Style] and [his series] *Umělecké památky Čech* [The artistic monuments of Bohemia], [...], at another table Janák and Gočár, Filla, Gutfreund, Franta Langer, Špála and Beneš and others were arranging *Umělecký měsíčník* [Arts monthly] [...] and in all the rooms, V. V. Štech was gradually formed and here Antonín Matějček was born. [...It was] here that the late Matějka lived and chivalrous Kubišta used to sit... and here I suppose was the origin of the historic exhibition of the Osma group.<sup>379</sup>

This particular café was also renowned for its provision of reading material, including Czech, German, English and French journals on the arts and literature, by means of which customers could learn about the latest events abroad.<sup>380</sup> Union and other similar places therefore became lively platforms for discussing art and joining interests into organized clubs.

Clubs uniting artists, art critics, journalist and patriots had existed in Bohemia and Moravia from the beginning of the nineteenth century but it was only at the end of the century that more progressive and internationally oriented associations were founded. Especially from the late nineteenth century onwards, more forward-looking artists' clubs, such as the Salon zamítnutých (Salon des Refusés), were founded in Prague, although their programmes were never uniformly anti-nationalistic.<sup>381</sup> The often cosmopolitan and international orientation of these clubs

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<sup>378</sup> V. V. Štech, “V zamlženém zrcadle,” [In a misty mirror] in *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>379</sup> Karel Čapek, “Ohrožená památka,” [An endangered monument] in *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>380</sup> Langer, “Arma virumque cano...,” 90.

<sup>381</sup> Marek Lašťovka and others, *Pražské spolky: soupis pražských spolků na základě úředních evidencí z let 1895–1990* [Prague clubs: the list of Prague clubs from the official records from 1895–1990] (Prague: Scriptorium, 1998), 173–212.

was significant, though, for providing Czech art with reflection on the international artistic context through exhibitions and reviews of foreign art.

The level of patriotism and conscious endorsement of the notion of national art within artistic clubs varied. Sometimes it was obvious from the name of the society or the club, such as in the case of the Společnost vlasteneckých přátel umění v Čechách – Gesellschaft patriotischer Kunstfreunde in Böhmen (Society of Patriotic Friends of Arts in Bohemia, founded in 1796) or the German Verein für die Geschichte der Deutschen in Böhmen (Club for the History of Germans in Bohemia, 1862). The more cosmopolitan-oriented societies were formed at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century under a diverse range of names such as, for example Mánes, adopted the name of a painter of national importance, Skupina výtvarných umělců (The Group of Visual Artists, 1911) founded by renegades from Mánes, Osma (The Eight, 1907), Devětsil (The Butterbur, 1920) and many others. At times, however, a programme pronounced in a cosmopolitan way would conceal a nationalistic orientation, which was the case of for example Umělecká beseda (The Artistic Society, 1862) or Kruh pro pěstování dějin umění (The Circle for Cultivation of Art History, 1913).

An interesting example, which can help open up the discussion of the links between the radicalism of young artists and their nationalistic views, is *Manifest české moderny* (Manifesto of the Czech Modernism), composed in 1895 by a number of young literary artists and published a year later.<sup>382</sup> The authors included F. X. Šalda (who will shortly be mentioned in more detail), Otokar Březina (1868–1929), Josef Svatopluk Machar (1864–1942), Vilém Mrštík (1863–1912) and Antonín Sova (1864–1928), who were representatives of the incoming young generation. The Manifesto made a declaration in favour individualism and originality in artists' work, and called for an end to "the imitation of national songs, [...] and realistic flat objectivity." Despite some radical claims against nationalism and the concern with "Czechness," however, the Manifesto remained faithful to the idea of a distinctive Czech nation.

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<sup>382</sup> "Manifest české moderny," in František Buriánek ed., *Čítanka českého myšlení o literatuře* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1976). Originally published in *Rozhledy* 1 (1896).

Derek Sayer has seen such proclamations as part of an attempt at “modernisation of national discourse” which still used references to the originality of “Czechness” and emphasised the role of the Czech language. As the Manifesto proclaimed: “We have no fear for our tongue. We are nationally so far advanced, that no power in the world can tear it away from us.”<sup>383</sup> Similar views were expressed by the authors of the Manifesto in relation to class. Questioning whether the working class, despite the declaration of its internationalism, should be included in the concept of a nation, the authors consented: “Nationality is not a patent of [political parties of] the Young Czechs or the Old Czechs. Parties disappear, the nation prevails.”<sup>384</sup>

### **Umělecká beseda**

At the end of the century, echoes of similar attitudes to nationalism and nationality could also be found in groups that included visual artists. The oldest artistic association in Bohemia, the Umělecká beseda, was founded in 1863 and comprised of literary, music and visual arts sections. The visual arts division was responsible for a number of activities connected with the visual arts. The members organized educational lectures in towns and villages, and actively participated in major artistic projects of the period, such as the competition for the National Theatre in Prague. The Umělecká beseda also awarded art prizes, initiated several exhibitions and, between 1921 and 1948, published an important artistic journal, *Život* (Life), which will be discussed later.

According to Rudolf Matys, the historian of Umělecká beseda, its artists and art critics were conscious of the European artistic context, and this was responsible for their less partisan and nationalist view of Czech art.<sup>385</sup> Matys saw this approach reflected in the nature of exhibitions that often displayed foreign art. Exhibitions of individual historical paintings of the Polish artist Jan Matejko (in 1870, 1873 and 1885) and the German Carl Friedrich Lessing (1863) as well as works of Russian artists (Ivan Aivazovski: 1871, Vasily V. Vereshchagin: 1886) were organized by

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<sup>383</sup> “Manifest české moderny,” quoted in Sayer, *The Coasts*, 154.

<sup>384</sup> “Manifest,” in Buriánek, *Čítanka*, 132.

<sup>385</sup> Rudolf Matys, *V umění volnost* [Freedom in art] (Prague: Academia, 2003), 104.

Umělecká beseda.<sup>386</sup> Matys, however, provides a rather idealized reading of the activities of Umělecká beseda, whose views were in fact rather conservative. The works of art exhibited in these exhibitions were in most cases connected with Czech or Slavic history and mythology. Lessing's "Hus at the Council of Constance" (1842), Matejko's paintings depicting Polish history or Russian realistic paintings promoted the idea of links among the Slavic nations, their histories and cultures. They laid emphasis on Pan-Slavic unity and indirectly contrasted it with the Germanic art and culture. The Umělecká beseda thus also contributed to the creation of a canon of national heroes – such as Jan Hus or František Palacký – and of national artists – for example Josef Mánes, Jaroslav Čermák and others. It achieved that by a display of the artists work as well as by showing the subjects of national importance that were outlined in the national histories of for example Palacký.

After the establishment of the Spolek výtvarných umělců Mánes (the Association of the Visual Artists Mánes), a more progressive artistic society, the theorists and artists connected with Umělecká beseda, such as František Xaver Harlas (1865–1947) and František Xaver Jířík (1867–1947), increasingly defended traditional values in their activities, as in, for example the selection of artists for the Jubilee Exhibition in Prague in 1891.

In the late nineteenth century, the artistic committee of the Umělecká beseda, responsible for giving advice on artworks to some of the most important institutions, promoted nationalism in an unambiguous way, when it participated in the selection of commissions for various decorations and constructions in Prague. For example, in 1886 it recommended that the artistic decoration of the Museum of the Czech Kingdom should be executed solely by Czech artists.<sup>387</sup> However, in this case the Regional Committee, which had the final decision, omitted artists' national or ethnic origin in the entry requirements for the competition. It eased the demands of the Society for the ethnic exclusivity and opened the competition up to artists who were either born in Bohemia or permanently resident there.<sup>388</sup> Their

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 106–107.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid., 115–116.

requirements thus did not rely on ethnic background but rather on the residency of the artists.

## **Mánes**

From early on, the Umělecká beseda found a potent rival in another club that united artists and theorists of various opinions. The Spolek výtvarných umělců Mánes (The Association of the Visual Artists Mánes) was founded in 1887 and inherited its name from one of the best-received Czech painters, Josef Mánes (1820–1871).<sup>389</sup> The initial members of this association were Czech art students from Prague, and they were later joined by art theorists and writers, including Antonín Matějček, Vincenc Kramář, Zdeněk Wirth, as well as some foreign artists, such as Eduard Munch, Auguste Rodin, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí and Le Corbusier.

The international orientation of the association was also based on the fact that many of the art students from the Prague academies were also informed by their journeys to and temporary studies at art institutes and studios in Germany and France where they encountered the latest achievements of contemporary art in Western Europe.<sup>390</sup> From the second half of the 1880s onwards, Czech artists started looking for inspiration mostly in these countries – they frequently travelled and studied mainly in Paris and less and less in Munich and Vienna.<sup>391</sup> The rise of modernist tendencies mostly visible in the large urban centres and culminating in the works of the Czech avant-garde had also a great impact on the change in artistic idiom.

The Mánes group became highly influential by organizing exhibitions and publishing various texts on art. The exhibition activities of Mánes started in 1898 with the display of young Czech artists, such as Mikoláš Aleš, Antonín Hudeček, Antonín Slavíček, Zdenka Braunerová, Stanislav Sucharda and Joža Uprka in the

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<sup>389</sup> “O spolku,” [About the club] *S.V.U. Mánes*. In 1949 the activities of the association were restricted and in 1956 the association was disbanded and its property confiscated. This lasted until the renewal of Mánes in 1990.

<sup>390</sup> On the topic of contacts between Mánes and other associations, mainly Hagebund in Vienna, see for example Roman Prah, “Hagebund a Mánes: mezi Vídní a Prahou,” [Hagebund and Mánes: between Vienna and Prague] *Umění XLV* (1997): 445–460.

<sup>391</sup> Tomáš Vlček, “Malířství, kresba a grafika generace devadesátých let,” [Painting, drawing and graphic art of the 1890s generation] in *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění IV, 1939–1958*, ed. Rostislav Švácha and Marie Platovská (Prague: Academia, 2005), 24.

exhibition hall of the so-called Topičův salon (Topič's Salon) in Prague (Fig. 35). Regular exhibitions of Mánes members followed. Significantly, foreign artists, such as Rodin (1902), Munch (1905), or a selection of Russian artists (1904), were exhibited by Mánes and their exhibitions proved to be highly influential on local artists.<sup>392</sup>

*Figure 33: Poster of a permanent exhibition hall Topičův salon in Prague.*

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<sup>392</sup> Ibid., 84. The catalogue of Rodin's exhibition included contributions by F. X. Šalda, "Géniova mateřština," [The native tongue of the genius] and by Stanislav Sucharda, "Sochař Rodin a život mistrův," [The sculptor Rodin and the life of the master] in *Sochař A. Rodin* [The sculptor A. Rodin] (Prague: Spolek výtvarných umělců Mánes, 1902); also F. X. Šalda, "Rodinova výstava v Praze" [Rodin's exhibition in Prague] (1902), *Soubor díla F. X. Šaldy. Kritické projevy 5 1901–1904*, ed. Emanuel Macek (Prague: Melantrich, 1951); F. X. Šalda, "Násilník snu. Několik glos k dílu Munchovu," *Volné směry* IX, (1904–5). Published in English as "The Violent Dreamer: Some Remarks on the Work of Edvard Munch," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 28, No. 2 (1969): 149–153.

## *Volné směry*

In addition to its frequent exhibitions, Mánes established the journal *Volné směry* (Free directions), in which it aimed to promote systematically awareness of the visual arts, poetry and fiction among the inhabitants of Bohemia and Moravia. Founded in 1896, the journal consciously aimed at acquainting the public with the visual arts and literature with active advocacy of contemporary artistic achievements.<sup>393</sup> Its contributors were not only art historians but also journalists and artists and the journal soon became a platform for lively discussion on modern art although it did not avoid referring to the older generation of artists and more historical artistic periods.

As regards the readership, the articles and other short texts published in this first Czech regular art journal were read not only by the intelligentsia but also by local artists, poets and were sent to institutes and clubs of education. Nevertheless, as Prah! and Bydžovská have pointed out, due to the number of high quality illustrations published in *Volné směry* as well as in other similar journals, the readership was actually difficult to identify. The number of people who simply enjoyed the illustrations was equal to the number of the actual readers, at least in the initial years of the existence of *Volné směry*.<sup>394</sup> Still, with the specification of the journal's interests and crystallization of its position, *Volné směry* attracted a more stable circle of readers and became associated with contemporary artistic activities in Prague.<sup>395</sup>

Because of its great influence and specific focus, I shall now briefly examine a some of the articles published in *Volné směry* in the first decades of its existence, and which offer an overview of the changing interests and politics of the editors. One of the most striking features of the journal was its international orientation, which can be documented in the topics and authors selected for publication. A double issue on Rodin had already been published prior to the 1902 exhibition of Rodin's work in Prague and included articles that proved to be seminal for the

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<sup>393</sup> Roman Prah! and Lenka Bydžovská, *Volné směry: časopis secese a moderny* [Free directions: the journal of Secession and Modernism] (Prague: Torst, 1993), 26–27.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., 9.

practice of Czech artists.<sup>396</sup> The 1905 exhibition of Eduard Munch had a similar impact on the Czech artistic and general public. The event was accompanied by a catalogue and by articles in newspapers and journals, including *Volné směry*.

In general, visits of foreign, especially French, artists and theoreticians and further exhibitions in Prague increased in number at the beginning of the century.<sup>397</sup> This new attention to French art and frequent translations of French authors reflected the conscious turn of the Czechs to French culture and against the official Habsburg politics of Vienna.<sup>398</sup> This turn towards the West became even more prominent later in the twentieth century.

The journal also included translations of numerous articles by foreign authors, including John Ruskin (his passages from *The Two Paths*), Paul Gauguin (his journals), Richard Muther (articles on German art and on museums), Karl Scheffler (articles on contemporary architecture), or Friedrich Nietzsche (an essay on art).<sup>399</sup> The artistic exchange was to a certain extent reciprocal as French and other aestheticians saw Prague as a melting pot of “refined and decadent culture with a primitive Slavic culture” and paid attention to local recent art affairs.<sup>400</sup>

A curiosity towards Prague could be found, for example, in essays by Alfred Michiels - previously mentioned in connection with his article “Ecole de Bohême” in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* - or by the French-Swiss author, William Ritter (1867–1955), who wrote a number of articles on Czech and Slavic art and culture.<sup>401</sup> Ritter, a friend of Le Corbusier and an enthusiast for vernacular architectural and artistic forms, was in fact one of the first authors from outside of Germany and Austria who wrote texts on Central European contemporary art.<sup>402</sup> Ritter was

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<sup>396</sup> Vlček, “Malířství, kresba,” 84.

<sup>397</sup> Prah and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 61.

<sup>398</sup> Vlček, “Malířství, kresba,” 84.

<sup>399</sup> For example Paul Gauguin, “Z knihy Noa-Noa,” [From the book Noa-Noa] *Volné směry* X, XIII, Richard Muther, “Die Prager moderne galerie” *Volné směry* IX (1904-1905); Friedrich Nietzsche, “O umění,” *Volné směry* XIV (1910).

<sup>400</sup> Prah and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 65.

<sup>401</sup> See e.g. William Ritter, *Études d'Art étranger, etc.* (Paris: Société du Mercure de France, 1906); Ritter, “Le peinture tchèque,” *Art et les Artistes* 16, (1913): 265–280; Ritter, *Smetana* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1907).

<sup>402</sup> Francesco Passanti, “The Vernacular, Modernism, and Le Corbusier,” *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 56, No. 4, (1997): 438–451.



interested in the artist's roots and identity which, for him, were intimately linked with history and the place into which the artist is born.<sup>403</sup> An artist's work, in Ritter's opinion, should be analysed in the context of the artist's ethnic or cultural background.<sup>404</sup>

Ritter's articles on Czech art were, nevertheless, attacked by some Czech commentators for being too critical of the local artistic culture. For example the Czech reception of Ritter's survey of European art, *Études d'Art étranger*, in which he attempted a critical assessment of different artistic forms, from opera to painting, was quite negative.<sup>405</sup> Indeed, ironically, Ritter argued against the establishment of an international artistic style and against modern art in general. In relation to the 1905 exhibition of Eduard Munch in Prague, Ritter commented that the Czechs accepted Munch's art too readily and uncritically.<sup>406</sup>

Consequently, Miloš Jiránek's review of Ritter's *Études d'Art étranger* in *Volné směry* accused the author of being prejudiced against modern art as well as against Czech art.<sup>407</sup> In Jiránek's opinion, Ritter saw Czech artists as snobbish and backward, jumping at the latest fashion (in this case Munch's work) without understanding the previous artistic developments of the particular style.<sup>408</sup> Jiránek, a painter and editor of *Volné směry*, argued that Ritter could not prove this alleged lack of comprehension on the part the Czechs. In defence, Jiránek emphasised that the organizers of the Munch exhibition were neither art historians nor art teachers, and that to demand a historical approach to his work was misplaced. The Mánes members responsible for introducing Munch's work to Prague's public were mostly "artists [who] have a subjective, a-historical relationship to the contemporary arts and [who] cannot deny this attitude."<sup>409</sup> Artists, claimed Jiránek, found it more useful to be confronted with contemporary work which was "rich in stimuli and

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 444.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 445.

<sup>405</sup> Miloš Jiránek, "William Ritter: Études d'Art étranger. Mercure de France 1906," *Volné směry* X (1906)

<sup>406</sup> Ritter, *Études*.

<sup>407</sup> Jiránek, "William Ritter," 195–196.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid., 196.

closer to our present feelings than the probably more harmonious masters of the old schools.”<sup>410</sup>

This was an important point, as Jiránek was highlighting the difference between the concern of artists and those of art historians: the artists who organized the Munch exhibition were motivated by their eagerness to become familiar with contemporary art; they were not interested in the “historical and pedagogic aims” typical of the work of art historians.<sup>411</sup>

Despite the international orientation of the Mánes members, Jiránek’s review also demonstrated how sensitive the Czech audience still was towards criticism from abroad. When defending Czech art, Jiránek turned Ritter’s comments back on him and declared the latter to be a conservative who could not understand peripheral art. This attitude was reminiscent of the defensive arguments of for example Antonín Baum or Josef Kalousek in the 1880s towards German authors writing on art in Bohemia.

### ***The Art-Revival in Austria***

A similarly defensive reaction to writing on Czech art published abroad appeared in connection with a special issue of the journal *Studio* on “The Art-Revival in Austria” which dealt with the topic of contemporary art in Austria.<sup>412</sup> Chapters on modern painting, plastic arts, architecture, and decorative arts were covered by Austrian authors and edited by Charles Holme. In 1906, the book was reviewed in *Volné směry*; the name of the author of the short article was not given, but most probably it was one of the current editors of the Czech journal at the time: Jiránek, Jan Preisler, F. X. Šalda or Vladimír Županský.<sup>413</sup> The review offered a good example of how both foreign texts and exhibitions on art in Bohemia were received, while the *Studio* issue showed how the concept of Austrian art was understood both in Austria–Hungary and in Britain. The Czech author also demonstrated that the rather small-minded views on the nineteenth century had carried on into the

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<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

<sup>412</sup> Charles Holme, ed., *The Art-Revival in Austria* (London, Paris and New York: The Studio, 1906).

<sup>413</sup> “Z časopisů,” [From magazines] *Volné směry* X (1906): 227–228.

twentieth, for he dismissed the foreign text as prejudiced against Czech art despite its not insignificant attention to the topic.

According to Holme, *The Art-Revival in Austria* aimed to show the artistic recovery in Austria after centuries of conservatism and academism.<sup>414</sup> For the authors, Austria stood for the entire Austro-Hungarian Empire with its capital of Vienna, and this received the most attention in regards of art produced there. This became one its aspects that were criticized by the reviewer in *Volné směry*, who reproved the authors of the *Studio* issue for prioritising artists from Vienna. He highlighted that “for all authors, the notion of Austrian and Viennese art is almost identical.”<sup>415</sup>

The author of the section on painting in *The Art-Revival in Austria*, Ludwig Hevesi, identified the Czech painters Luděk Marold and Alfons Mucha as artists who managed to find success in Paris. Hans Schweiger, Joža Uprka, Max Švabinský and Emil Orlik were for Hevesi “the four principal artists of the Czecho-Slav nation” at the time (Fig. 36–38).<sup>416</sup> Hevesi examined their work in more detail pointing out especially their curious subjects and depiction methods. For example “the peasant-painter” Uprka, “who lives and works in the unpronounceable Hroznova Lhota,” depicted “peasant-life of that place” in unquenchable colour and movement.<sup>417</sup> The author also mentioned “an energetic and productive genius” of Švabinský who “devised a peculiar technique of coloured pen-sketches.”<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> Holme, *The Art-Revival*, a i.

<sup>415</sup> “Z časopisů,” 227.

<sup>416</sup> Holme, *The Art-Revival*, a xii.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., a xiii.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid. a xii

*Figure 34 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 35 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 36 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

Hevesi briefly referred to a few other Czech painters, and the section on painting in *The Art-Revival in Austria* had the highest number of Czech artists. The other sections on sculpture, architecture and decorative arts successively mentioned fewer and fewer representatives from Bohemia or Moravia.

The criticism of *The Art-Revival in Austria* in *Volné směry* was therefore directed mostly against the “superficial and neglectful characteristics in the text” which, according to the reviewer, were the result of the focus of *The Studio* on a very large public.<sup>419</sup> The contemptuous tone of the review thus dismissed the relevance and expertise of the journal: “This special volume is a perfect proof of a [...] journalistic (and what’s more, Viennese) superficiality and one-sidedness.”<sup>420</sup> The claims, that this “shallow information is not a national tragedy” and that it was unimportant for the actual arts, were meant as a dismissal of the importance of the book.<sup>421</sup>

The author of the review in *Volné směry* did not want to acknowledge the position of Czech art within the broader context of Central European art at the time. From today’s point of view, considering the nature and politics of the time when these texts were written, *The Studio* issue in fact made references to a proportionally high number of Czech artists within the text. For example Galicia was mentioned only in passing, in reference to the Zakopane style of Stanislaw Witkiewicz. And although the authors examined art in the Austro-Hungarian Empire from the geographical point of view and put most emphasis on Vienna, they were nevertheless aware of the linguistic and ethnic differences within the region. Hevesi, for example, recognized that in the linguistically varied Empire, “aesthetics are at the same time politics, and artistic growth means also an increase of national importance.”<sup>422</sup> Still, the reception of these foreign attempts in *Volné směry* was negative.

### **Julius Meier-Graefe**

Reviews of foreign publications and exhibitions by Czechs represent only a fraction of articles published in *Volné směry*. A relatively large space was also given to foreign authors whose opinions on art complied with the philosophy of *Volné směry* editors. One of the most published authors was Julius Meier-Graefe (1867–1935) who became associated with Mánes after their exhibition of Eduard Munch in 1905. There were several reasons for the subsequent close cooperation and for the number of translations of Meier-Graefe’s texts in *Volné směry*. By 1905, the Mánes

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<sup>419</sup> “Z časopisů,” 227.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>422</sup> Holme, *The Art-Revival*, a xi.

association had turned its interest from conservative Munich towards more open-minded Berlin, with which Meier-Graefe was connected. The motivation behind this change of attention was that the modern, internationally oriented views of Berlin artists, theoreticians and journals, such as *Kunst und Künstler*, were more acceptable and closer to *Volné směry* intentions than the patriotic and conservative attitudes of Munich.<sup>423</sup>

Importantly too, Meier-Graefe, the author of *Die Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst* (The development of modern art) opposed the division of art according to national boundaries and stood aloof of the praise of German art by his contemporaries.<sup>424</sup> In the 1905-6 volume of *Volné směry*, his article entitled “Nacionalismus” (Nationalism) written for a book on the German realist painter Adolph Menzel was published in the translation of F. X. Šalda.<sup>425</sup>

In “Nacionalismus,” Meier-Graefe contested the appropriation of artists for national interests and held that nationality in art had been generally overemphasised. Referring not only to German artists but artists in general, he emphasised that they did not become automatically national and that their work could not be national by choice.<sup>426</sup>

The main requirements for producing national art were seen by Meier-Graefe in following local traditions and local models. “This is what the entire German art of the first half of the nineteenth century practiced, although the desire was not expressed as strongly as today.”<sup>427</sup> And such practices were the reason why “German art stagnated [...]. Painting that lives only from local sources does not possess even the slightest bases of artistic decency.”<sup>428</sup> In Meier-Graefe’s opinion, the artists who wanted to achieve something new, had to leave Germany and seek inspiration abroad and “what they achieved [...] represents the only German art of

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<sup>423</sup> Prahl and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 62.

<sup>424</sup> Julius Meier-Graefe, *Die Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst* (Stuttgart: Julius Hoffmann, 1904).

<sup>425</sup> Julius Meier-Graefe, “Nacionalismus,” *Volné směry* X (1905/1906): 13–20, 65–67. Originally published as a part of *Der junge Menzel. Ein Problem der Kunstökonomie Deutschlands* (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1906).

<sup>426</sup> Meier-Graefe, “Nacionalismus,” 20.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

the last fifty years that is worth mentioning.”<sup>429</sup> Meier-Graefe nevertheless noted that at the beginning of the twentieth century, German art again fortified itself by national walls.

Many thoughts expressed in this extract from Meier-Graefe’s book were in compliance with the position of Mánes and *Volné směry*. It was for example the recognition that nationality in art was not spontaneous and that artists needed to draw inspiration from the best achievements abroad that found a response in the writing of Czech authors around *Volné směry*, for instance in that of F.X. Šalda.

### **F. X. Šalda**

Meier-Graefe’s anti-German attitude matched the views of art of F. X. Šalda and the entire orientation of the journal under his editorship from 1903 until 1907. Šalda, a literary critic in the first place, never studied history or art history but his critical essays and reviews of exhibitions and of other artistic events make him an important representative of the newly emerging and developing art criticism of Bohemia, with which *Volné směry* was closely connected. He assumed a more critical stance towards Czech art and promoted a supranational attitude towards art in general, expressing views similar to those of Meier-Graefe.

Šalda’s early essays and articles in *Volné směry* commented mainly on the contemporary artistic and cultural situation. Apart from his reviews of the Rodin and Munch exhibitions,<sup>430</sup> Šalda also reviewed other exhibitions in Prague, for example that of the Russian artist Nikolai Konstantinovich Roerich (1874–1947), as well as works of art displayed abroad, mostly in Paris (Fig. 39).<sup>431</sup> Moreover, he published a number of book reviews, obituaries, short literary pieces and observations on the more general cultural situation.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid.

<sup>430</sup> E.g. F. X. Šalda, “Násilník snu. Několik glos k dílu Munchovu,” *Volné směry* IX, (1904–5): 103–105.

<sup>431</sup> Šalda, “Nikolaj Konstantinovič Roerich. Kritická glossa k jeho výstavě,” [Nikolai Konstantinovich Roerich. A critical commentary on his exhibition] *Volné směry* 10 (1906): 83–86; idem, “Moskevští,” [The Moscow ones] *Volné směry* 10 (1906): 137–139.

<sup>432</sup> Šalda, “S. K. Neumann, poctivec a gentleman,” [S. K. Neumann, a man of honour and a gentleman], *Radikální listy* 14, no. 36 (1907): 4–5; idem, *O naší moderní kultuře divadelně dramatické* [On our modern theatrical dramatical culture] (Prague: Girgal, 1937); idem, *Moderní*

*Figure 37 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

In his art writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, Šalda was influenced by a number of German-speaking art historians. Apart from Meier-Graefe the main influences were Alois Riegl, Franz Wickhoff, Heinrich Wölfflin, and Wilhelm Dilthey.<sup>433</sup> The representatives of the Vienna School inspired him with their emphasis on the continuous development of art.<sup>434</sup> Šalda's international orientation and attention, especially to French art, however, changed during his life, especially after he left *Volné směry* in 1907, when he gradually complemented his approach with more patriotic opinions on Czech art. Rather more nationalistic writing appeared during the First World War as a typical reaction to the new threat to the Czech nation and the country from the Germans. Šalda's writing from this later

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*literatura česká* [Modern Czech literature] (Prague: Grosman a Svoboda, 1909); idem, *Jean Arthur Rimbaud, božský rošťák* [Jean Arthur Rimbaud, the divine rascal] (Prague: Aventinum, 1930).

<sup>433</sup> Tomáš Vlček, "Počátky dějin moderního umění," [The beginnings of the history of modern art] in *Kapitoly II*, ed. Chadraba, 194–198.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid., 198.



period should be therefore considered in more detail in relationship to his attention to patriotic issues in visual arts.

During the First World War, Šalda continued writing for Czech newspapers and journals, commenting on the situation in Czech art and culture. The three articles I shall focus on were published in 1916: “O národním umění” (On national art) and in 1918: “Problémy národnosti v umění” (The issues of nationality in art) and “Smysl země” (The meaning of the land).<sup>435</sup> In all of them, Šalda searched for the characteristic features of Czech art and its grounds.

In these articles Šalda rejected the connection between national art and folk art, a postulate of most nineteenth century awakeners but on which also survived into the twentieth century. For Šalda, folk art could not be treated as a unified style and because it was subjected to external, especially urban, influences, it could not become a national art.<sup>436</sup>

In his opinion, “Czech art of the past never created an entirely independent style,” with only one exception.<sup>437</sup> Like J. E. Vocel and K. L. Zap before him Šalda saw the only authentically Czech style as having appeared under Charles IV, exemplified by the murals and panel paintings in the Karlštejn castle, miniature painting, sculptures of the St. Vitus cathedral, or architecture of the Charles’ bridge tower. What constituted the originality of these works in Šalda’s view was the search for formal and unique solutions in painting, and the livelier expression of monumental sculptures and segmentation of the building mass.<sup>438</sup> Other periods in the history of Czech art had not developed their original formal features.<sup>439</sup>

In more general terms, Czech art was for Šalda characterized by its “metamorphosis of space and composition into ornament, [its] metamorphosis of sculpture into picturesqueness, [and its] disregard of pure form,” which was utilized not only by local artists but also by foreigners who adapted these elemental traits of local works

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<sup>435</sup> F. X. Šalda, “O národním umění,” and “Problém národnosti v umění” in *Boje o zítřek* (Prague: Melantrich, 1948); Šalda, “Smysl země” *Budoucnost. Revue českého socialismu* 1 (1918).

<sup>436</sup> Šalda, “O národním umění,” 205.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>439</sup> Šalda, “Smysl země,” 240.

of art.<sup>440</sup> As a result their (foreigners') works of art created in the Czech lands were "more picturesque and softer" than those in their native lands.

For Šalda, the land was one of the most crucial constituents of national art. The soil united people into a single nation and defined the character of its inhabitants. The land was also capable of transforming foreigners who lived in the country as well as their work: the formal features imported from abroad were converted by the nature of the land and its *genius loci* and they became more decorative and ornamental in the outline, colour, and interiors.<sup>441</sup>

Along with the claim that it was the soil and its *genius loci* that recreated foreign influences into original, local expressions, Šalda also addressed the comprehensibility of the local art forms. In "O národním umění," he argued that the local – meaning Czech – art could be fully comprehended only by the natives.<sup>442</sup> Due to their familiarity with the country's history, rhythm of the life, and the collective ideals, only local people could understand the inherent meaning of art. Foreigners, on the other hand, may only appreciate the external forms and see the local arts as an interesting aesthetic or ethnographic phenomenon. They could not completely grasp the same qualities as the people connected directly with the land.

As Seton-Watson suggested, such an opinion was based on a dismissive attitude to foreigners who were seen as disadvantaged by not knowing the local culture, traditions and language.<sup>443</sup> Or, as Šalda claimed, they were handicapped by not being connected with the land. Šalda's ongoing emphasis on the importance of land in the formation of art and its features ensued from his patriotism. The land was for Šalda a permanent value which especially in times of war represented one of the few certainties. This joint identity based on being rooted and living together in a particular location was not so much connected to uncertain political boundaries but rather to the idea of a shared history and culture of one place with which the people could identify with.<sup>444</sup> In this, an important role was played by the typical

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<sup>440</sup> Šalda, "O národním umění," 207.

<sup>441</sup> Šalda, "Smysl země," 234–6.

<sup>442</sup> Šalda, "O národním umění," 220.

<sup>443</sup> Seton-Watson, "On Trying to be a Historian," 7.

<sup>444</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, 117.

inhabitants of Bohemia and Moravia, which Šalda found in the common people of the countryside.

Šalda's views on Czech art were clearly worded in his articles written during and after the Great War. He saw decorative and ornamental qualities, rhythm and movement of line and colour to be central for Czech art.<sup>445</sup> They materialized especially in the Czech "patriotic" art that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>446</sup> Šalda found examples of such art in the work of for example Josef Mánes and Mikoláš Aleš and their use of ornament. For Šalda, Mánes was a typical representative of the Czech nation – the peasant, who retained the values of the past with the sense of patriotism and represented the general affections of the nation.<sup>447</sup> His ornamentation and decoration, the two crucial artistic means of expression, were inspired by folk motives which he developed into a complicated and independent style.<sup>448</sup> Aleš moved from the depiction of passionate and dramatic scenes to a pure lyricism of decoration. His exultant ornament, inspired by Mánes, could be seen by Šalda as a precursor of modern artistic expression.<sup>449</sup>

In "Problém národnosti v umění" (The problem of nationality in art) from 1918, Šalda again returned to the question of what constituted national art and claimed that it was not the subject or style that the authors used, that characterized national art.<sup>450</sup> National art was not based in anything "analytical or descriptive, in neither a logical nor a psychological formula."<sup>451</sup> The individual features of national art could be in fact common to more than one nation and thus national artists should be critical of the nation's past, they should be national through their heroism, and through the positive and moral qualities of their work.<sup>452</sup> These abstract qualities of moral character made for example Rembrandt and Dürer German visual artists, or Aleš a Czech painter, as Šalda pointed out.<sup>453</sup> Often, these national artists were dismissed during their lives and did not comply with the standards of their time or

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<sup>445</sup> Šalda, "O národním umění," 207.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 212–213.

<sup>449</sup> Šalda, "Mikoláš Aleš," in *O umění*, 597 and 605.

<sup>450</sup> Šalda, "Problém národnosti."

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 127–128.

with conventional methods, which made them exceptional.<sup>454</sup> In Šalda's opinion, the fact that they did not comply with the common taste and challenged it courageously made them national artists.

In agreement with his call for a critical attitude of artists to their nation's heritage, Šalda also provided a critical reading of national art, particularly when he refused the idea that national art was based on a specific form and content. He also differentiated between Czech patriotic art of the eighteenth century and the Czech style he ascribed to the art under Charles IV and Wenceslas IV. Still, at least in the case of Mánes, as I have already mentioned, Šalda stressed the typical subject of the peasant who possess the closest relations to the land in which they live and thus preserved the national qualities from the past.

In summary, Šalda's critical nationalism in the visual arts was based on his belief in a connection between works of art and the land in which they originated. This type of nationalism, not based on language or ethnicity, sought the geographical foundations of the nation and relied on territorial cultural ties. Šalda provided a different view of the creation of the communal identity: for him it was formed by the common experience and culture of the people within the geographical boundaries. The land thus provided the boundaries for the sense of a stable and coherent, but still imagined community.

### **Other art journals and activities in the early twentieth century**

In the early twentieth century, when art criticism became an indispensable part of the art world, a large number of other publications came to life in Bohemia and Moravia. In addition to the journals initiated by the Mánes association and the Umělecká beseda, a number of other periodicals concerned with art criticism and contemporary art were published, and which were connected with various groups of artists and art critics. Of these the most significant were *Moderní revue* (The Modern Revue, published 1894–1925) and the short-lived *Umělecký měsíčník* (Arts

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<sup>454</sup> Ibid., 117 and 129.

Monthly, 1911–1914) both of which provided a voice for the incoming generation of artists and art theorists.

More avant-garde and radical publications came into existence in the 1920s and 1930s and some of them will be examined in Chapter Nine. For instance, the artistic group Devětsil published its revue *ReD* (in full: Revue Devětsilu, The Revue of Devětsil) edited by the avant-garde artist and art theorist Karel Teige (1900–1951), and a journal: *Disk* (Disc). Teige, also contributed to another journal, *Červen* (June), which was associated with the artistic group Tvrdošijní (The Obstinates) and proclaimed allegiance to socialism. The short-lived *Červen*, which started in 1918, was replaced in 1920 by *Musaion*, also associated with a number of avant-garde figures and radicals of the day. Most of these journals had the same contributors but did not enjoy a long publication period. However, they became important platforms for left-oriented avant-garde artists and theorists and published original texts as well as translations.

The more progressive attitude to art which these journals adopted, however, did not completely replace the patriotic positions defending genuinely Czech artistic forms. As I have demonstrated by reference to the case of Šalda, the First World War brought back nationalistic feelings in the new political circumstances. Another striking example of such a fusion is the publication of the journal *Život* by Umělecká Beseda. Whereas the first volume from 1921 was still concerned with the search for typical Czech art, the second volume of 1922 was edited by two representatives of progressive modernism, the architect Jaromír Krejcar (1895–1950) and Karel Teige.

The two volumes therefore outlined two co-existing views on art in the early 1920s: one promoting its national roots after the Great War, the other looking for international connections and new potential of art. The former was expressed in for example Vlastimil Rada's article "Cestou pravdy" (On the route of truth) in the 1921 volume. Rada, a painter and a graphic artist, took a critical stance towards abstract tendencies and French orientation of Czech art:

So far, our modern art has revelled in solving the formal problems constructed by France, and as a result, we have judged ourselves by

French standards. [...] The future of our art is nevertheless not in solving the so-called worldwide (i.e. French) formal problems; our visual arts will take up a significant position in the world once they are able to deal with Czech formal problems, once we start judge ourselves by ourselves.<sup>455</sup>

At the same time, Rada refused traditionalism as practiced in the nineteenth century which, according to him, survived in some form up to his own time:

[...] the second-hand paintings that [...] are executed as a superficial imitation of our best national painters cannot be the basis of our artistic development. Similarly we do not need expeditions into mythical Old-Slavic prehistory to understand our ancient national character; our Czech myth lies in our presence [...].<sup>456</sup>

A contrasting view – one that stood against traditionalism – was introduced by the 1922 volume. The concept of this anthology was inspired by the Parisian journal *L'Esprit Nouveau*, and gave space to representatives of the club of the Czech avant-garde Devětsil, such as the poets Vítězslav Nezval, Jaroslav Seifert, or the editors Teige and Krejcar, as well as to a number of foreign contributors, including Le Corbusier.<sup>457</sup>

Teige's view of modern art was indicated in the title of his article "Foto kino film."<sup>458</sup> Following the beliefs of modernist artists in progress, future and new forms of art, Teige promoted photography, film, music, theatre and a blend of these forms as the basis of the modern art of the future. His vision also included "new proletarian art" which would be international, popular and collective.<sup>459</sup> Teige called for non-exclusivity of art, a topic to which I shall return again in Chapter Nine.

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<sup>455</sup> Vlastimil Rada, "Cestou pravdy," *Život* 1 (1921): 29.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> Matys, *V umění*, 139.

<sup>458</sup> Karel Teige, "Foto kino film," *Život* 2 (1922): 153–168.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid, 168.

What “modern art” meant was also addressed by the other editor of the 1922 volume of *Život*, Jaromír Krejcar.<sup>460</sup> This article exemplified an approach of the modernist artists that combined nationalistic and avant-garde ideas. His article published in German as “Die moderne Čechische Kunst” recapitulated the previous ten years. In this short overview, he identified Bohumil Kubišta as the “greatest modern Czech painter” and emphasised the contacts of artists with contemporary foreign events. Still, despite the international inspirations of cubism, Krejcar held that “a tendency to the creation of Czech cubism” occurred, exemplified mainly in Czech cubist architecture of Ján Gočár, Pavel Janák and Vlastislav Hofman.<sup>461</sup> After the Great War, two main artistic streams could be recognized in Czech art according to Krejcar: the aristocratic and bourgeois neo-classical tendencies and those advocated by the author summarized in the motto “purism, collectivism, internationalism,” which Krejcar represented.<sup>462</sup> Krejcar therefore openly propagated internationalism and the necessary inspiration of Czech artists abroad. At the same time, he recognized purely Czech tendencies in the new styles coming from abroad and emphasises the originality of Czech artists.

The two artistic directions in the early 1920s were also in a way characteristic of the theoretical tendencies in art history, although the split was again not always strictly clear. On the one hand, there was a turn to “new art, [which], disregarding the past, lives in the present and is concerned with the future.”<sup>463</sup> On the other hand, conservative tendencies persisted, which aimed at recovering national art preserved in the work of neo-classical and realistic artists. This approach found its counterpart in the ongoing concern on the part of many art historians to find the typically Czech features of the art and architecture of the past.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored how a number of popular social and cultural events in Bohemia at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries helped to construct the Czech national identity in visual arts and architecture. These events, such as the

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<sup>460</sup> Jaromír Krejcar, “Die moderne Čechische Kunst,” *Život* 2 (1922): 169–175.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid, 173–174.

<sup>463</sup> Krejcar, “Die moderne Čechische Kunst,” 174.

foundation of different artistic clubs or the staging of large or small exhibitions, meant an important change for the cultural and artistic life especially in the city of Prague and naturally influenced the views of Czech art.

This shift reflected more general changes in society: the inward-looking attitudes to Czech culture situated within the Austro-Hungarian empire were gradually replaced by more internationally oriented views. However, as I pointed out, at the turn of the century the new cosmopolitan thinking coexisted alongside imperial loyalties rooted among more conservative artists and authors both in Prague and in Moravia. Similarly, the historical context of the First World War lead some of the modernist authors to re-evaluate their critical views of Czech art in favour of more patriotic claims about the substance of national art.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the large-scale exhibitions of the previous century, significant for their loyalty to the Empire, their restrained patriotism and their interest in folk culture, slowly gave way to smaller displays of individual artists, artistic clubs, or various art themes. A significant development was the increasing exposure of the public to foreign art, especially in Prague, which provoked both positive and negative reactions in the press and among visual artists themselves. These exhibitions were organized by newly founded art clubs, for example the Mánes group, or Umělecká beseda, whose members also participated in publication of artistic journals, such *Volné směry*, *Moderní revue* and *Umělecký měsíčník*. Although the older generation of art historians was sometimes involved in these journals, the majority of authors came from a new generation of artists and journalists, interested in contemporary art and its international relations.

This continuing expansion of artistic topics and the turn of attention to more international issues in art journals, nevertheless, did not necessarily mean a change in the views of the substance of Czech national art. The two successive editors of *Volné směry*, Jiránek and Šalda, well informed about contemporary art and culture outside Bohemia, provided familiar comments on Czech art and its originality. Jiránek's critique of William Ritter's text on Munch and its inspiration for Czech artists represented a hostile approach to criticism from abroad, of the kinds which had appeared in Czech art historical writing as early as the 1870s. Šalda's search for



the characteristic features of Czech art during and after the war, which he found in ornament, and his stress on the dependence of works of art on the character of the land, was similarly indebted to a line of thinking that had been influential some thirty years previously.

## **6. Max Dvořák, the Vienna School and Czech Art History**

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the history of art in the Czech speaking environment of Bohemia and Moravia was built on the foundations of historical scholarship initially practiced mainly at the University in Prague. The subjects, aims and rhetoric of art historical texts were often affected by the political character of the period of their origin and the nationalistic sentiments of their authors.

Increasingly, the rather limited discourse of the national revival, which in art history was prejudiced in favour of everything Czech, was complemented by new tendencies in assessing historical facts and events. I have pointed to some of those most influential on the art historical writing: the gradual institutionalisation of art history at the university in Prague, as well as at other institutions, and the rise of art criticism in the form of exhibition organizing and reviews published in newly-established art journals. Of particular importance were the attempts to introduce foreign art into the Czech environment through exhibitions and articles, on the one hand, and the contacts that art critics and artists established with their counterparts abroad, on the other, which led to an appreciation of Czech art with the context of international artistic development.

At the same time, commentators on the visual arts in the Czech lands recognized the need to transform art history into an established discipline with well-defined methods which would provide art history students with a comprehensive education and would lead to large numbers of publications. This included the compilation of a concise history of Czech art, which was still missing. The endeavour to determine a set of art historical methods, and the growing awareness of the international context of art practice and theory, became more prominent topics in Czech art history from around 1900 onwards. Several factors played an important role in this and had a major impact on Czech art historical discourse. Apart from the University in Prague, a crucial driving force in art historical education was the University in Vienna, an institution that projected a strong influence on scholars in all regions of the Habsburg Empire. In this chapter I examine in detail the consequences that

“Viennese” teaching had on Czech art historians and I consider its legacies for Czech art history, especially through the work of Max Dvořák. The small number of texts he wrote on art in Bohemia provide good examples of some of the ideas informing his own approaches to art and the approaches devised by other Vienna School members. I also consider some of the reasons why a new emphasis on international contexts for art developed in Vienna and why it was so eagerly accepted by many Czech art historians.

The increasing move of many Czech art historians away from a rigid nationalistic discourse was connected with the universalistic views of art of the Vienna School, as well as with the influences of related fields. Art criticism, as described in the previous chapter, and academic disciplines such as history and philosophy at the University in Prague had been opening up to the consideration of local events within broader international contexts. It is one of my aims to draw parallels here between these “local” stimuli and the impact of the Vienna School and to show they changed art history in the Czech-speaking environment.

Nevertheless, as the examples I use demonstrate, this conscious turn to Czech art within the international context did not necessary lead to a complete abandonment of nationalistic jargon or of the concern with identifying the unique traits of national Czech art. The political dependence of Bohemia and Moravia on Austria–Hungary and the presence of a powerful German minority still drove a desire to specify the distinctive qualities of artworks produced within these two regions and by the Czechs. Narrating the independent history and art of the Czech people – in other words, the creation of a common heritage and a common identity – therefore aimed at contributing to the securing of greater political and cultural rights within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In the Czech language, the term “Vienna art-historical school” was first used and described by Vincenc Kramář, one of the Czech students of the Institute of Art History at the University of Vienna.<sup>464</sup> In his obituary to Franz Wickhoff, published

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<sup>464</sup> Vincenc Kramář, “Franz Wickhoff,” *Volné směry* XIII (1909): 211–214. However, in a text from 1905, which remained unpublished until 2000, Kramář talked about “The Vienna School” in connection with Max Dvořák. Cf. Vincenc Kramář, “Několik slov o metodě historického studia

in *Volné směry* in 1909, Kramář identified the deceased scholar and Alois Riegl as the “very founders of the Viennese art-historical School which has nowadays adopted a leading position in its field.”<sup>465</sup> Kramář characterized the School as a progressive centre which aimed at putting “an end to dilettantism and shallowness” in the study of art history, which had been hitherto overly preoccupied with iconography and factual information.<sup>466</sup> In Kramář’s description, the Vienna School stressed a critical approach to material and analytical attention to detail: it focused on the “temporal and local provenience of the artwork, its inherent artistic content, its birth from both internal and external factors, and the genetic connection with [...] the global development of art.”<sup>467</sup> Apart from this critical analytical approach, the School – as Kramář noted – also developed a synthetic view of art history, which placed all works of art into a single universal and continuous artistic development. Kramář saw this universalistic view of art as the most important feature of the Vienna School by which it effaced “state borders, national differences” and temporal distances.<sup>468</sup>

Kramář developed his ideas about the Vienna School the following year, in a review of Max Dvořák’s *Das Rätsel der Kunst der Brüder van Eyck* (The riddle of the van Eyck brothers’ art).<sup>469</sup> In this article, entitled “O vídeňské škole dějin umění” (On the Vienna School of art history), Kramář traced the origins of the School to several art historical predecessors. These included the attempts by Karl Friedrich von Rumohr (1785–1842) to transform art history into a historical science (Wissenschaft),<sup>470</sup> by using an objective and aesthetically “unprejudiced” approach to the works of art.<sup>471</sup>

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moderního výtvarného umění,” [A few words on the method of the historical study of modern visual art] in *Vincenc Kramář. Od starých mistrů k Picassovi* (Prague: National Gallery, 2000), 206–207.

<sup>465</sup> Kramář, “Franz Wickhoff,” 211.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

<sup>469</sup> Vincenc Kramář, “O vídeňské škole dějin umění,” *Volné směry* XIV (1910).

<sup>470</sup> It should be pointed out that the Czech “věda,” meaning “science,” was a term that many Czech scholars of the time applied to the empirical art historical scholarship, in order to emphasise its objective and rigorous character, derived from natural sciences.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid., 43. Rumohr was a German art historian who put emphasis on empirical research and became influential for a whole series of art historians in Germany and Austria. Kroupa, *Školy*, 97–100, Peter Betthausen, Peter H. Feist und Christiane Fork, *Metzler Kunsthistoriker Lexikon. Zweihundert Porträts deutschsprachiger Autoren aus vier Jahrhunderten* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1999), s.v. “Rumohr,” 330–332.

Another prompt was, according to Kramář, the method of Giovanni Morelli (1816–1891), whose meticulous research into all forms of the artwork (painting), including attention to the unconscious repetition of certain details, the similarities of which help to stipulate the geographical provenience of a painting's origin, resembled those used in the natural sciences by its exactness. Like Rumohr, Morelli also attempted to transform art history into a “serious” discipline.<sup>472</sup>

Kramář also associated the initial stages of the School with the publication of the journals *Recensionen und Mittheilungen über die Kunst* (Reviews and reports on arts, published between 1862 and 1865), *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* (A journal of visual arts, 1866–1932)<sup>473</sup> He also saw the concern of Classical archaeology of the 1880s with establishing genetic links between artistic phenomena as providing a further significant impetus for the School. According to Kramář, all of these innovative efforts were organically synthesized into an original, objective, historical method.<sup>474</sup> These two articles Kramář wrote in 1909 and 1910 represent one of the first attempts to theorise and conceptualise the phenomenon of the “Vienna School,” which soon became a recognized art historical concept.

The history of the Vienna School has been well documented, I shall therefore discuss only those issues of significance for the constitution of Czech art history.<sup>475</sup> In 1874, Theodor von Sickel (1826–1901) reorganized the Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung (“IÖG,” The Institute for Austrian Historical Research) at the University of Vienna and incorporated art history into its curriculum; Rudolf Eitelberger and Moriz Thausing became associated with the Institute.

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<sup>472</sup> Betthausen, *Metzler Kunsthistoriker Lexikon*, 275.

<sup>473</sup> Kramář, “O vídeňské škole,” 78.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>475</sup> See for instance Otto Benesch, “Die Wiener kunsthistorische Schule,” *Oesterreichische Rundschau* 38 (1920); Julius Alwin Ritter von Schlosser, “Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte. Rückblick auf ein Säculum deutscher Gelehrtenarbeit in Österreich,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* XIII, No. 2 (1934); or more recently Christopher S. Wood, ed., *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s* (New York: Zone and London: MIT, 2000) and Edwin Lachnit, *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte und die Kunst ihrer Zeit. Zum Verhältnis von Methode und Forschungsgegenstand am Beginn der Moderne* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2005).

In 1885, Thausing was succeeded by Wickhoff as professor extraordinarius who then became ordinarius after Eitelberger's death in 1891. Wickhoff was primarily interested in the "classical" periods of Roman art, early Christian art and the Renaissance, but he also paid attention to the Viennese Secession and Impressionism.<sup>476</sup> In his research, he combined history, history of art, archaeology, philosophy and connoisseurship. He also argued against the linear development of the history of art, putting emphasis on few creative individuals who use innovative style and thus outstand the majority of artists of the particular period.<sup>477</sup>

Alois Riegl was appointed extraordinarius and ordinarius in 1894 and 1897 respectively. His general interests lay in textiles and decorative art, but he also wrote and lectured on monument protection, late Roman applied art, Baroque art and architecture, and contemporary art.<sup>478</sup> He approached works of art from a formalist point of view, which allowed him to take into account also anonymous works.<sup>479</sup> Importantly, Riegl did not conceive of artistic development in terms of peaks and troughs, and he played an important role in introducing hitherto neglected and marginalised artistic practices into art historical scholarship. His theoretical concept of the "Kunstwollen," or "art drive" was also significant for his Czech students.

Thausing, Wickhoff and Riegl held important positions outside of the University and thus exercised influence on other art historical institutes in Vienna. Thausing was a director of the Albertina from 1873, Wickhoff an inspector at the Kunstgewerbe-Museum, while Riegl was curator of textiles at the Museums für Kunst und Industrie and from 1903 the chief conservator at the k. k. Central Commission for Research and Preservation of Historical Monuments (Zentralkommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und historischen Denkmale), where he published a number of important texts on monument

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<sup>476</sup> Franz Wickhoff, "Giorgiones Bilder zu römischen Heldengedichten," *Jahrbuch der Königl. Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* III (1895): 34–43, Feist, *Metzler Kunsthistoriker Lexikon*, s.v. "Franz Wickhoff," 466–468.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, 467.

<sup>478</sup> See, for example, Alois Riegl, *Altorientalische Teppiche* (Leipzig: Weigel, 1891); *idem*, *Die Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom* (Vienna: Schroll, 1908); *idem*, *Spät-römische Kunstindustrie* (Vienna: K. K. Hof- und Staats-druckerei, 1901)

<sup>479</sup> Wolfgang Kemp, "Alois Riegl," *Altmeister moderner Kunstgeschichte*, ed. by Heinrich Dilly, 42.

protection, including a draft law for the preservation of monuments. There, he also worked with his student, Max Dvořák. A similar situation could also be observed in the Czech environment where, upon their return to Bohemia or Moravia, art history graduates from the University of Vienna took up key positions in various official places.

At the University of Vienna the death of Wickhoff in 1909 led to disputes over the succession, resulting in the compromise of both Dvořák and Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941) being appointed as ordinarius. Acrimonious personal and scholarly disputes between them led, in 1911, to the division of the department into the I. Kunsthistorisches Institut (The First Art-Historical Institute) run by Strzygowski, and the Kunsthistorischer Apparat (The Art Historical Section) led by Dvořák.

Strzygowski played an important role in a number of art historical debates at the beginning of the twentieth century, especially in polemical disputes with other members of the Vienna School. He often contradicted the methods and conclusions of Riegl and Wickhoff particularly in relation to the origins of early mediaeval art.<sup>480</sup> Nevertheless, apart from these controversies and Strzygowski's racist claims about the Nordic or Aryan origins of art, some of Strzygowski's theories were adopted and developed by many of his followers.<sup>481</sup>

In order to understand the key debates that took place in art history at the University of Vienna and their transformative impact on the discipline, it is necessary to consider briefly the larger context in which they developed. This has been suggested by a number of contemporary art and cultural historians. For example Michael Ann Holly has linked the specific approaches and methods of the School with the overall cultural and historical atmosphere of the period.<sup>482</sup> Fin de siècle Vienna was a contradictory site in which a renewed interest in the empirical sciences and positivism coincided with the rise of psychoanalysis and mysticism.

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<sup>480</sup> This topic will be examined in more depth in Chapter Seven in relation to its impact on Czech art history.

<sup>481</sup> For example Hans Sedlmayr, Otto Demus and Fritz Novotny. Cf. also Christian Maranci, "Armenian Architecture as Aryan Architecture: The Role of Indo-European Studies in the Theories of Josef Strzygowski," *Visual Resources* 13 (1998): 363–380; or Ján Elsner, "The Birth of Late Antiquity: Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901," *Art History* 25, no. 3, (2002): 358–379.

<sup>482</sup> Holly, "Spirits and Ghosts."

Class, ethnic and gender identities were in flux; such an ambience became manifest in the changing cultural and artistic values of the time which have been described as a “generational rebellion against the fathers and a search for new self-definitions.”<sup>483</sup> A similar “rebellion” happened, according to Holly, in the Vienna School, where Wickhoff and Riegl introduced new methods with which to consider art of various historical periods, and the same could be said about their students who later exported some of their ideas to Prague. Also, the scholars in question paid attention also to contemporary art, as well as to the visual arts of diverse geographical and historical regions, for example to Late Antiquity.<sup>484</sup>

Ján Bakoš has also stressed the importance of the political environment in Vienna of the day, which was shaped by the attempts of the different nations to decentralize the power and to gain a greater degree of independence.<sup>485</sup> The Vienna School served as a tool for the Empire to assert itself against such tendencies. As Bakoš stated: “art historical institutions were expected to help to overcome social, as well as national, controversies of the restored multinational Empire” by creating a sense of trans-national cultural heritage.<sup>486</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Austrian bourgeoisie was in a rather weak position and was thus dependent on and loyal to the emperor.<sup>487</sup> Despite the fact that the university in Vienna of that time experienced a drop in the number of aristocratic students and saw an increase in students from the lower-middle (as well as working) classes, loyalty to the Empire was inherent within the university environment.<sup>488</sup> An emphasis on cosmopolitan thinking *within* the boundaries of the Empire became also typical for the Vienna School of art history.<sup>489</sup> In other words, most of the scholars based at the University remained loyal to the Empire and its philosophy of a union of different peoples and nations within the political

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<sup>483</sup> Carl Schorske, *Fin de siècle Vienna* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), xvii–xviii.

<sup>484</sup> E.g. Riegl, *Altorientalische Teppiche*, and Wickhoff, *Roman Art: some of its principles and their application to early Christian painting* (London: Heinemann, 1900).

<sup>485</sup> Bakoš, “From Universalism to Nationalism,” 79.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>487</sup> Schorske, *Fin de siècle*, 7.

<sup>488</sup> Gary B. Cohen, “Ideals and Reality in the Austrian Universities, 1850–1914,” *Rediscovering History: Culture, Politics, and the Psyche*, ed. Michael S. Roth (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 90–91.

<sup>489</sup> Margaret Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).



boundaries of Austria–Hungary. Their attitude thus reflected official Austrian ideology.

The minister of culture between 1900 and 1905, Wilhelm Ritter von Hartel (1839–1907), saw art as capable of transcending national conflicts as it spoke common language and led to mutual understanding and respect.<sup>490</sup> Art, which constantly evolved without experiencing any periods of “decline,” had thus the same quality in all parts of the Empire.<sup>491</sup> Cosmopolitan in its own right, art was understood as having the ability to overcome the threat of fragmentation of the Empire into distinct national cultures. This alliance of politics and art history was no coincidence; Hartel was also a classics scholar and closely co-operated with Wickhoff on, for example, the annotated publication of *Die Wiener Genesis*, an illuminated manuscript from the fifth century.<sup>492</sup>

Cosmopolitanism, however, was not the only innovative feature of the Vienna School. Although each of the “members” made their own original contribution to the study of art, the School’s methodology can be summarized into several key concepts. In particular, the specific kind of scholarship that was born in Vienna was inspired by historicism and a drive towards scientific rigour.<sup>493</sup> These two features were manifested in the interest in history and its cultural expressions. Critical attention turned away from romanticizing views of the past towards a more rigid, formal analysis of artefacts and the study of relevant sources. The scholars therefore sought an “objective,” empirical approach to the material, unaffected by questions of aesthetic preference.

The break with normative aesthetic and judgements of art in favour of the appreciation of art of all periods was one of the most marked features of the Viennese art historians. For them, all works of art became concrete instances of

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<sup>490</sup> Schorske, *Fin de siècle*, 237.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid.

<sup>492</sup> Wilhelm Ritter von Hartel and Franz Wickhoff, *Die Wiener Genesis* (Prague, Vienna: Tempsky – Leipzig: Freytag, 1895).

<sup>493</sup> Holly, “Spirits and Ghosts,” 55. In this context, “historicism” refers to historical determinism and to the belief in historical laws.

styles that each had their necessary and logical place in the continuous development of art.<sup>494</sup>

## **Czech art history under the influence of Vienna**

The figures of the Vienna School, who were most influential for the study of art history in Bohemia and Moravia, were Dvořák, Wickhoff and Riegl. Their Czech students from Vienna were, however, not the only art historians or art critics active in Prague and later in Brno at the beginning of the twentieth century. Older generations of art historians, the graduates from both language parts of the university in Prague, as well as artists also wrote about Czech arts and contributed significantly to the construction of the national identity in the historiography of art. I shall therefore examine the texts of these various groups of authors, interested in historical periods and increasingly in contemporary art, as well as the impact the Vienna School teaching might have had on them.

The influence of the Vienna School on art historical methods has been recognized as substantial for the further development of the art historical scholarship, and I shall focus primarily on the exchange of ideas between the Vienna representatives and their Czech students. However, in the following chapter, I will also provide an overview of the art historical alternatives that were in place at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The list of students at the art historical departments of the Vienna University includes a number of figures who came to be highly influential on the course of Czech art history.<sup>495</sup> In first place stands the student and colleague of Riegl and Wickhoff, Max Dvořák, followed by Vincenc Kramář and Vojtěch Birnbaum. I shall also look at the work of Eugen Dostál, a student of Dvořák, who established art history at the Masaryk University in Brno, as well as at the texts by Zdeněk Wirth (1878–1961) and V. V. Štech.

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<sup>494</sup> Ján Bakoš, “Viedenská škola dejín umenia a český dejepis umenia,” [The Vienna school of art history and the Czech history of art] *Bulletin Moravské galerie* 54 (1998): 5–12.

<sup>495</sup> The list was published in Marco Pozzetto, ed., *La Scuola Viennese di storia dell'arte. Atti del XX Convegno* (Gorizia: ICM, 1998) 259, 293.

The list of students in *La scuola Viennese* enumerated those students who were formally registered at the art historical institutes. As such, it did not include for example Antonín Matějček, who was greatly influenced by Dvořák, but never officially enrolled as a student at the Vienna University. Such was the case with a number of other students who sometimes attended art historical lectures without an official registration. This was also true of Karel Chytil, who attended the lectures by Moritz Thausing in 1878 and 1879.<sup>496</sup>

### **Max Dvořák and Czech art**

Czech historiographers have usually understood Dvořák to be a Czech art historian who was prevented from developing his career in Prague due to historical circumstances. However, Dvořák wrote only a few texts on the visual arts in Bohemia at the beginning of his career and he wrote them in German. For this reason, I wish to show how the early work of this cosmopolitan scholar was interpreted in his native country and how it reflected some of the key debates that took place in Czech society of the time. In particular I consider the way Dvořák's approach to Czech art was formulated within the ideological and methodological framework of the Vienna School.

Dvořák was born in Roudnice, a town in the north of Bohemia, and initially studied history at the Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague, where he was most influenced by his teacher at the history department, Jaroslav Goll (1846–1929).<sup>497</sup> Goll understood Czech history as belonging within the broader sequence of historical events in Europe.<sup>498</sup> In focusing on the place of Czech history within a wider set of universally historical forces and connection, Goll's school was reminiscent of the basic approaches of the Vienna School of art history. This fact illustrates a broader tendency in scholarship of that time, which was not exclusive only to the Vienna School.

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<sup>496</sup> Krása, "Chytil," in *Kapitoly* I, 172.

<sup>497</sup> Goll's methods were inspired by Leopold Ranke's positivist history and materialized in rigorous collection of material and its critical assessment. Chadřaba, "Max Dvořák a vídeňská škola dějin umění," [Max Dvořák and the Vienna school of art history] in *Kapitoly II*, ed. Chadřaba, 36.

<sup>498</sup> Kutnar, "Historické dílo Jaroslava Golla," [The historical work of Jaroslav Goll] in *Přehledné dějiny*, 385.

In 1894 Dvořák moved to Vienna in order to continue studying history at the Institut für Geschichtsforschung, and gradually turned to the history of art, taught at the time by Wickoff and Riegl. It was in this initial stage in his time at the University in Vienna that Dvořák published his few works on art in Bohemia. The two texts I wish to examine in more detail now, are “K dějinám malířství českého doby Karlovy” (On the history of Czech painting during the era of Charles IV) from 1899 and “Von Mánes zu Švabinský” (From Manes to Švabinský) published in 1904.<sup>499</sup> In Chapter Eight, when outlining some of the main lines of criticism of the Vienna School, I will briefly come back to Dvořák’s “Die Illuminatoren des Johann von Neumarkt” (The illuminators of Johann of Neumarkt) published in 1901.<sup>500</sup>

These texts were written in a relatively short period of time and represent an early stage in Dvořák’s methodological development. In addition he wrote a number of short articles and reviews in Czech on historical and art historical topics, and also commented on various contemporary events in Bohemia, which, together with his historical articles, he published mainly in the journal *Český časopis historický* (The Czech journal of history). He also published a number of topographic studies, revolving especially around his native Roudnice; these included journal articles and a book.<sup>501</sup> Later, however, Dvořák turned his attention from Bohemia to other topics, leaving the art and topography of Bohemia outside his main interest, and became concerned with other topics, such as Flemish art, the Italian Renaissance, Gothic art and architecture, or early Christian painting.<sup>502</sup> It was partly this

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<sup>499</sup> Max Dvořák, “K dějinám malířství českého doby Karlovy,” *Český časopis historický* V (1899), and Max Dvořák, “Von Mánes zu Švabinský” and in Czech as “Od Mánesa ke Švabinskému,” *Volné směry* XIV (1910).

<sup>500</sup> Max Dvořák, “Die Illuminatoren des Johann von Neumarkt,” *Jahrbuch der Kunstsammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 22 (1901).

<sup>501</sup> Mainly, Dvořák and Bohumil Matějka, *Soupis památek historických a uměleckých v politickém okrese roudnickém II. Zámek roudnický* (Prague: Archeologická komise při České akademii císaře Františka Josefa pro vědy, slovesnost a umění 1907); translated into German as *Topographie der historischen und Kunstdenkmale. Der politische Bezirk Raudnitz. II. Raudnitzer Schloss* (Prague: Arch. Kommission bei der böhm. Franz-Josef-Akademie für Wissenschaften, Literatur und Kunst: 1910). For a detailed, but not comprehensive bibliography, see Karl Maria Swoboda and Johannes Wilde, eds., *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kunstgeschichte von Max Dvořák* (Munich: Piper, 1929).

<sup>502</sup> Dvořák, *Italianische Kunstwerke in Dalmatien. Kunstgeschichtliches Jahrbuch der k.k. Zentralkommission* 5 (Vienna: 1911): 1–3, idem, *Idealismus und Naturalismus in der gotischen Skulptur und Malerei* (Munich and Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1918); idem, *Pieter Bruegel der Ältere. Siebenunddreissig Farbenlichtdrucke nach seine Hauptwerken in Wien und eine Einführung in seine Kunst von Max Dvořák* (Vienna: Hölzel, 1921) and others.

combination of the early attention to the aspects of Czech art and the later awareness of the universal relationships and of the developments in art that the followers from Bohemia adopted. Dvořák's critical view of Czech art, his emphasis on its French, Italian and German influences, and his attention to the specific character of a period in question (its "spirit") were some of the main ideas that were taken over by his Czech students.

### **The history of Czech painting during the reign of Charles IV**

In 1899, when he published his text on painting in Bohemia "K dějinám malířství českého doby Karlovy," Dvořák was already established at Vienna although he still kept close connections with Prague, especially with Goll. Dvořák submitted this article to Goll with the aim of having it published in the *Český časopis historický*, of which Goll was the chief editor. Dvořák intended the text as a reaction to the publication of a three-volume history of art in Bohemia by the German art historian Josef Neuwirth, and he intended to pay special attention to the section on painting under the House of Luxembourg (Fig. 40–42).<sup>503</sup>

*Figure 38 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

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<sup>503</sup> Josef Neuwirth, *Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte Böhmens veröffentlicht von der Gesellschaft für Förderung deutscher Wissenschaft, Kunst und Litteratur in Böhmen* I – III (Prague: Calve, 1896), 97–98.

*Figure 39 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 40 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

Neuwirth and Dvořák had several professional encounters with each other, as they were both employed as general conservators at the Zentralkommission in Vienna. Their relationship was competitive, which became apparent as early as 1905 in connection with the contest over the chair of art history at the University of Vienna following Riegl's death. In a letter addressed to his friend in Prague, Dvořák confessed: "You cannot imagine the pressure and opposition against me, what, for example Neuwirth disseminates about me – that I cannot speak a word in German, that I am a political agitator and so forth."<sup>504</sup>

Neuwirth (1855–1934) was employed as an art history professor at the German section of the Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague. In 1899 he moved to the Polytechnic University in Vienna and from 1925, already in independent Czechoslovakia, he also taught at the Polytechnic Institute in Brno. He was of a nationalistic orientation even as a student; during his studies in Prague, he had been a member of the *Corps Austria*, a faction of the association of German and Austrian students. Neuwirth's pro-Germanic orientation, which deepened after the

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<sup>504</sup> Max Dvořák to Josef Šusta, 9 July 1905, in *Listy o životě a umění: dopisy Jaroslavu Gollovi, Josefu Pekařovi a Josefu Šustovi* [Papers on life and art: letters to Jaroslav Goll, Josef Pekař and Josef Šusta], ed. Jaromír Pečírka (Prague: Vyšehrad, 1943), 150.

establishment of independent Czechoslovakia in 1918, was also reflected in his writing and according to some scholars, he might have partly initiated the protectorate historiography of the Nazis.<sup>505</sup> In his *Geschichte der christischen Kunst in Böhmen bis zum Aussterben der Přemysliden* (The history of Christian art until the last Premyslids) from 1888, he had already indicated the dependence of art in Bohemia under the Premyslid dynasty on those of Germany and, like Alfred Woltmann in the 1870s, he saw local artworks as imitations of German forms.<sup>506</sup> Neuwirth also proclaimed the works of art of mediaeval Bohemia to be German in their ethnic origin in an anthology entitled *Deutschböhmen* (German Bohemia) from 1919 and on the basis of this claim tried to question the legitimacy of the new state of Czechoslovakia.<sup>507</sup>

Neuwirth connected the history of art to specific historical events, mainly the history of the Church, while he took into account also the social aspects of the various periods. He took an interest mainly in the mediaeval arts and architecture of Bohemia and emphasis on similarities with German, French and Italian works of art was of central importance in his writing. In particular, Neuwirth proclaimed the precedence of German art in a strongly nationalistic way and as such, became a frequent subject of criticism from the Czech scholars.

The tense situation in Bohemia, especially regarding the relationship between the Czech and German ethnic groups at the beginning of the twentieth century, was reflected in Dvořák's approach. When preparing his review of Neuwirth, Dvořák was explicitly asked by Goll not to be controversial, as one can surmise from Dvořák's letter to his teacher: "Regarding Neuwirth, I aimed at pointing at the issues that would hardly be mentioned elsewhere. [...] According to your wish, I tried to say everything in the most moderate manner and many a thing I only implied."<sup>508</sup> All in all, Dvořák indeed remained moderate and in many cases, he commended Neuwirth for his findings and contributions to the subject. Dvořák saw Neuwirth's treatise as the first rigorous publication on the topic, which set a firm

<sup>505</sup> Josef Krása, *Encyklopedie českého výtvarného umění* [The encyclopaedia of Czech visual arts], ed. Emanuel Poche (Prague: Academia, 1975), s.v. "Neuwirth, Josef," 334.

<sup>506</sup> Josef Neuwirth, *Geschichte der christischen Kunst bis zum Aussterben der Premysliden* (Prague: Calve, 1888), 481.

<sup>507</sup> Bartlová, "Německé dějiny," 74.

<sup>508</sup> Max Dvořák to Jaroslav Goll, 18 June 1899, in *Listy*, 69.

basis for the further study of Czech monumental painting of the respective period.<sup>509</sup> *Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte Böhmens* was, in Dvořák's opinion, grounded on firmer bases than the works of earlier art historians, such as Grueber or Lehner. Lehner's extensive writings on mediaeval art and architecture had been published from 1875 onwards and, as I argued earlier, were not considered serious scholarly works. Dvořák condemned them as worthless:

I was appalled at the content [of Lehner's texts] – it is far worse than I had imagined. As soon as I finish the bulk of the accumulated work, I shall write a report on this – a short one, because it is not worth a long one. But merciless, since there is no place for any scruples here.<sup>510</sup>

Much of Dvořák's criticism of Neuwirth's text was based on spotting factual errors, as well as taking issue with his methods. Dvořák saw some of Neuwirth's conclusions, for example his identification of the inspiration for some of the paintings, as incorrect and based on an arbitrary selection of material.<sup>511</sup> Putting aside the factual errors, the most important issue for my argument is the attitude of both writers, Neuwirth and Dvořák, who tried to place Czech art into the wider context of European art. Both of them admitted the existence and significance of a specific mediaeval school and its contribution to the history of art and at the same time, both envisaged this school as an integral part of Germanic culture. Neuwirth in particular argued that the paintings in Karlštejn, which bore no signs of Czech involvement, celebrated *German* imperial rule.<sup>512</sup> He held, for example, that "Nowhere is there any particular Czechoslavic involvement demonstrated either in the peculiar material which aims at the glorification of the German Empire or in the way it has been executed artistically."<sup>513</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> Dvořák, "K dějinám," 248.

<sup>510</sup> Max Dvořák to Jaroslav Goll, 27 November 1902, in *Listy*, 107. Dvořák, however, never wrote the review of Lehner's text.

<sup>511</sup> Simultaneously, he suggested his own theories regarding painting of the period under the reign of Charles IV, using different documents. Dvořák also assigned a dissimilar degree of input to the individual painters than Neuwirth, and searched for his own explanation for the origins of the Czech school that he identified in the fourteenth century (Dvořák, "K dějinám," 240). Criticism of the link between western inspirations and Bohemian art that Dvořák established was provided already by Josef Strzygowski and later by Dvořák's student, Eugen Dostál. For this debate, see Chapter Seven.

<sup>512</sup> Josef Neuwirth, *Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte Böhmens III. Die Wandgemälde im Kreutzgange des Emausklosters in Prag*. Quoted in Dvořák, "K dějinám," 245.

<sup>513</sup> Dvořák, "K dějinám," 245.



For Dvořák, in contrast, the painting of the Luxembourg period was the only “Czech artistic school which was in itself a new stage in the general development of art.”<sup>514</sup> Dvořák acknowledged Italian and French influences on the mediaeval painting in Bohemia, but it was in the Bohemia of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries that painting acquired a distinctive quality for the first time in Central Europe and in the modern age:

There were achievements in Bohemia due to which modern painting differed from mediaeval and that occurred gradually and in various locations, for the first time north of the Alps and outside of France, linked together with a bond of a certain local character.<sup>515</sup>

In more general terms, Dvořák recognized the existence of a unique “Czech school,” despite the fact that its painters mostly came or were influenced from abroad. Nevertheless, like Neuwirth, he also saw it as a constituent of German artistic traditions and German culture: “The so-called school of Prague is ranked first among the German schools of painting of the modern era.”<sup>516</sup> In Dvořák’s eyes therefore the Czech school was not an expression of the Czech nation or the Czech people, in contrast to the art historians of the Czech national revival of the late nineteenth century. Instead, for Dvořák, the “Czech School” manifested universal trends in artistic development connected with the specific geographical location of its origin, i.e. Bohemia, which was at that time a part of the German cultural sphere. The originality of art of this period was thus embedded in its particular geography, which had a characteristic ethnic and cultural composition of both Germans and Czechs .

### **From Mánes to Švabinský**

The article on two nineteenth century painters of Czech origin is also a demonstration of Dvořák’s interest in more contemporary visual arts. Dvořák did not write it as a result of personal inclination but as a commission from the Austrian journal on graphic arts, *Die graphischen Künste* in 1904.<sup>517</sup> In this extensive article

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<sup>514</sup> Ibid, 238.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid.

<sup>517</sup> Dvořák, “Von Manes,” 12–24.

Dvořák offered a broad account of Czech art and its original achievements in the second half of the nineteenth century. The article was subsequently translated from the original German into Czech by Zdeněk Wirth and published in *Volné směry* in 1910.<sup>518</sup>

It is interesting that Dvořák did not consider it necessary to publish the same text in Czech. German was, after all, still the *lingua franca* of Central European art history. On the other hand, making the text eventually available in the Czech journal and in the Czech language meant that it could also be accessed by readers who could not read German, and this was in keeping with the policy of the publishers of *Volné směry*, which aimed acquainting the wider Czech public with visual art and literature. Its articles and comments were read not only by academics but also by local artists and poets, while copies of the journal were distributed to public libraries, various institutes and clubs of education across Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>519</sup>

According to Dvořák, the aim of the article was to show “the place of the Czech nation within the general artistic development,” using the example of two artists.<sup>520</sup> These two painters, Mánes and Švabinský (1873–1962), have been generally considered by Czech art history as significant figures and reflect a long-lasting recognition of Mánes in Czech art history.<sup>521</sup> For Dvořák, Mánes was a representative of the so-called “second Rococo,” who depicted mostly idealized subject matters, including landscapes, historic themes or peasants. He received his initial artistic education from his father, Antonín, who was also a painter. At the Academy in Prague he was taught by a “boring Nazarene, Tkadlík and by the Düsseldorf-based [Paul] Ruben, a painter without any talent.”<sup>522</sup> Later, Mánes also studied in Munich, but was not too influenced by its official art. Instead, he followed the local historicizing tradition, which he transformed through his own artistic development, informed by international artistic tendencies, especially in France (Fig.43–44).

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<sup>518</sup> Dvořák, “Od Mánesa,” 275–298.

<sup>519</sup> Prahl and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 28–29.

<sup>520</sup> Dvořák, “Od Mánesa,” 277.

<sup>521</sup> Cf. the previously mentioned texts by Miroslav Tyrš, Karel Chytil, K. B. Mádl and Miloš Jiránek.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid.

*Figure 41 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 42 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

Švabinský, both painter and a graphic artist, was only thirty years old when Dvořák wrote his article. (Fig. 45–46) He had studied at the Prague Academy under Maxmilián Pirner (1854–1924), who was still under influence of Romanticism, but this had had no real impact on Švabinský's work.<sup>523</sup> In his multifaceted oeuvre, ranging from portraits to symbolic paintings with erotic motives, Švabinský's inspiration came mainly from nineteenth century Impressionism, Art Nouveau and Symbolism, and combined neo-Romantic and symbolist features.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>523</sup> Dvořák, "Od Mánesa," 290.

<sup>524</sup> Vlček, "Malířství, kresba," in *Dějiny českého*, 44.

*Figure 43 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 44 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

For Dvořák, the two artists marked the beginning and end of a specific period, namely “the history of modern artistic life.”<sup>525</sup> However, Dvořák did not treat the artists as one-off individual geniuses, rather, he was concerned to explain their work – even though he recognised its originality– within the wider context of European (French, German, and English) art. This view, putting Czech art into the international perspective, later became inspirational for the writing of the Czech followers of the Vienna School, such as Matějček or Kramář.

While emphasising the international context, Dvořák also recognized the existence of *national* artists and of the concept of *national* art. He commented, for instance, on who might be considered a national artist. In the case of Mánes, he related his work to the early phase of the national “awakening,” the spirit of which had had a great impact on the artist.<sup>526</sup> This rational manifestation of a certain period in an artist’s work again foreshadowed Dvořák’s future theory of *Geistesgeschichte* which also proved to be crucial for Czech art history.<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> Dvořák, “Od Mánesa,” 277.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>527</sup> On the concept of *Geistesgeschichte*, see for example Dvořák, *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* (Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1924); Michael Ann Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984); Eugene Kleinbauer, “Geistesgeschichte and Art History,” *Art Journal* 30, no. 2 (1970–71).

Consequently, Mánes's paintings reflected the desire for "political and cultural sovereignty" which replaced "the former injustice and the lack of cultural self-confidence" of the Czech nation.<sup>528</sup> According to Dvořák, the subjects that Mánes depicted could be considered national. They included scenes of the unique way of life of the people, or the nation's past and present. It was not the subjects, however, that made Mánes a national artist but their roots in local tradition: "national individualism, as well as the personal one, is not dependent on some act of will, it is a circumstance, the influence of which is taught to us by hundreds and thousands of years."<sup>529</sup> Although the work of Mánes and Švabinský had to be understood within a wider European context, it did not, Dvořák claimed, merely consist of "a random imitation of foreign models." Rather, it was individual and distinctively Czech inasmuch as it provided an independent transformation of different impulses into a sovereign artistic expression.<sup>530</sup>

In general, Dvořák held that artists absorb previous artistic developments, which they then outmatch, developing their own artistic position, which is then turned into an individual style. The influences on the Czech artists in question stemmed from two sources: France and Germany, which they then transformed into an original local style.

Mitchell Schwarzer has pointed to this duality in the formation of national art, and which Dvořák had incorporated into his writing.<sup>531</sup> Although Schwarzer pays attention only to Dvořák's notions of "Germanic" art, his conclusions about the duality are applicable to Dvořák's articles on Czech art as well. The combination of new ideas and forms with the local character produced, according to Dvořák, national artistic varieties.<sup>532</sup> In other words, national cultures have their own versions of wider worldviews, which are manifested through the formal features of the works of art. Thus, for, Dvořák, the Czech painters in question were indebted both to artistic currents of a more universal character and also to local traditions, which had been inevitably present in the individual nations. In putting forward this

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<sup>528</sup> Dvořák, "Od Mánesa," 285.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid., 288.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>531</sup> Mitchell Schwarzer, "Cosmopolitan Difference in Max Dvořák's Art Historiography," *The Art Bulletin* LXXIV, No. 4 (1992): 669–678.

<sup>532</sup> Ibid., 674.

idea, Dvořák was arguing against nationalist art historians who emphasised the autonomous original inventiveness of Czech art. This repeated the notion expressed in his earlier article on mediaeval painting, where he had argued for the interplay within Czech art between universal and local tendencies in art.

### **The Reception of Dvořák's ideas in Bohemia**

Analysis of the response to Dvořák's scholarly work and personality during his lifetime and immediately after his death completes the picture of Dvořák's attitude to Bohemia and the attitude of the Czechs towards him. Dvořák's personal correspondence with Goll, the historian Josef Šusta, who was also Dvořák's friend, and Vincenc Kramář, Dvořák's fellow student in Vienna, is also highly informative about his position and the reception of his ideas.<sup>533</sup>

For his Czech followers Dvořák soon became an iconic scholar who turned into the object of a rather uncritical veneration. This is clear from a debate over his work between two of his followers, Dostál and Matějček, which I discuss shortly. Dostál revised some of the findings that Dvořák had made in connection with mediaeval illumination and was criticised for being disrespectful towards his teacher. Apart from Dostál's criticism of Dvořák's factual conclusions, other objections were usually expressed against Dvořák's art historical method and against his approach to monument protection.

Dvořák's comments on the situation in Prague were sometimes far from complimentary and documented his ambivalent attitude, based on his personal experience. Quite early on, in 1898, Dvořák expressed his contempt for the petty intrigues at all levels of national life in the Monarchy, from high politics to academia. The various animosities, especially between the Czechs and Germans, and the various political interests, also had a considerable impact on his own position in the Czech academic environment. For instance, in 1904, he was not nominated as a candidate for the chair in art history at the Prague University, which

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<sup>533</sup> Jaromír Pečírka, ed., *Listy*; Jiří Křížek, "Dopisy Maxe Dvořáka Vincenci Kramářovi z let 1900–1921," [Letters of Max Dvořák to Vincenc Kramář from 1900–1921] *Zprávy památkové péče* 64, No. 6 (2004): 554–557. Unfortunately, the replies to Dvořák have not survived and in case of Kramář, they still await appropriate attention.

he understood as an offence. The reasons given in the selection committee statement were Dvořák's short academic practice, his young age, and the fact that he was based in Vienna.<sup>534</sup> As all of those were indeed true, Dvořák's loyalty to the Empire and his association with the Viennese University were most probably the issues here. This arises from the decision the committee made, when it foresaw that Dvořák would be better off at Vienna and appointed Bohumil Matějka, a "fully tested" candidate, instead.<sup>535</sup>

When Dvořák's name appeared again later on, in 1905, in connection with an associate professorship at the University in Prague, the whole issue was affected by nationalistic adversities produced by the political atmosphere of that time. This animosity arose from the fact that, in the meantime, Dvořák had been appointed extraordinary professor at Vienna. His selection was accompanied by a chauvinistic campaign by the Bohemian Germans and the appointment at Prague University therefore became a sensitive issue. Dvořák commented on the situation in a letter to Kramář: "the Liberec [newspaper] *Deutsches Volksblatt* published yet another very cruel attack on Wickhoff and me, the awfulness of which directly points to its origins in Vienna."<sup>536</sup>

The last time that Dvořák was considered a candidate in Prague was shortly after the First World War. By then however, he was already well-established in Vienna and did not have any intention of leaving, despite the troubled post-war situation.<sup>537</sup> He also saw himself as a follower of Wickhoff's objective to transform "art history into an exact historical science," which for him was easier to accomplish in Vienna where the number of students was higher.<sup>538</sup>

In respect of the animosities that were taking place in Prague, it is worth mentioning Dvořák's argument with Josef Hlávka, a Czech engineer and patron of artists, and

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<sup>534</sup> Klement Benda, "Rozmach oboru," in *Kapitoly I*, ed. Chadraba, 204–205.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>536</sup> Max Dvořák to Vincenc Kramář, 7 August 1905, in Křížek, "Dopisy Maxe Dvořáka," 556.

<sup>537</sup> In this regard, Dvořák mentioned for example the regulation preventing non-Germans from working in Austrian offices (which, however, did not apply to universities) and interruptions in teaching due to lack of coal. Cf. Max Dvořák to Jaroslav Goll, 15 January 1920, in *Listy*, 194.

<sup>538</sup> Max Dvořák to Jaroslav Goll, 28 April 1909, in Ibid., 170–171.

Jan Koula, a historicizing architect, over a number of reconstructions in Prague.<sup>539</sup> In debate over the reconstruction of the Prague Castle and a number of churches in Prague, Dvořák acted as a representative of the Central Commission for Research and Preservation of Historic Monuments and, as such, he was seen as a foreigner interfering in local affairs.

Although Hlávka was known for his invectives against Vienna, represented in this case by Dvořák, these disputes might also be seen as a generational disagreement over the “Konservieren, nicht Restaurieren” attitude to the protection of monuments. Conservation was a relatively new attitude to monuments, widely propagated by Georg Dehio in Germany and by Alois Riegl and Dvořák in Vienna. It was based on the preference for preserving buildings in their current state over reconstructing them and/or adding any missing parts in a historicizing way. In contrast, Hlávka defended restoration and in relation to the Prague Castle (and the Vladislav Hall in particular), he and the Prague Archaeological Commission, which he represented, demanded “a complete reconstruction of the ancient past in the way it once used to be.”<sup>540</sup> The disputes were fierce and long-lasting and even the Archduke Franz Ferdinand d’Este paid a visit to the castle in order to get acquainted with the situation. And although a survey among architects and art historians in 1907 showed that a majority of the public supported the conservation, the reconstruction of the mediaeval Vladislav Hall at the Prague castle began only after the First World War.<sup>541</sup>

In Bohemia, Dvořák, the representative of the imperial monument protection office, was given a more critical reception than Dvořák the art historian. One can even claim that Dvořák, the art historian, was seen as more Czech than Dvořák, the general conservator. After his death in 1921, a large number of obituaries appeared in Czech journals, such as the *Český časopis historický*, *Památky archeologické*, or *Volné směry* and in newspapers such as *Lidové noviny*, and *Národní listy*. Generally, the authors focused on his academic role and emphasised his “Czechness” together with his constant attention to local affairs. As one author,

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<sup>539</sup> On the debate, see for example Viktor Kotrba, “Max Dvořák a zápas.”

<sup>540</sup> Quoted in Ibid, 269.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid., 271.



Bohumil Markalous, commented: “despite the fact that he was and he *had to stay* [my emphasis] in foreign service, he was still engaged in our cause. He would have liked to prove this by transferring his post from the comfort of the Viennese environment to our Czech university ground, still poor [in scholarly excellence].”<sup>542</sup> Although this remark applied to Dvořák’s earlier efforts of to become professor in Prague and omitted his own rejection of the post in 1919, Markalous identified the potential reasons that led to the failure of this transfer as pettiness and narrow-mindedness.<sup>543</sup>

In the same way, Jaromír Pečírka critically commented on the marginalization of Dvořák in Bohemia: “[German official scholarship] appreciated him more than Czech academia.”<sup>544</sup> At the same time, Pečírka also anticipated that Dvořák’s followers would come mainly from his native land because his “Czech soul” could only be truly understood in his homeland. Pečírka’s view was that “Dvořák’s science [i.e. methodology / scholarship] is Czech science.”<sup>545</sup>

The same attitude to Dvořák, which treated him as a Czech art historian, who was forced to work in Vienna by circumstances and almost against his will, can be detected in most subsequent writing on him by Czech authors. Hugo Rokyta (1912–1999) devoted a large part of his research to the architecture and arts in the Czech lands and was an important figure in the protection of monuments in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War. In “Max Dvořák a jeho škola v Českých zemích” (Max Dvořák and his school in the Czech lands), he regarded Dvořák as an outstanding art historian of his time without equal.<sup>546</sup> As late as 1991, Rokyta thus saw him as “a scientist of international calibre who remained a patriot and a European, without the slightest attempt at voluntary assimilation.”<sup>547</sup> Importantly, he classified Dvořák within the broader context of Czech and Austrian

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<sup>542</sup> Bohumil Markalous, “Max Dvořák,” *Lidové noviny*, February 16, 1921, quoted in Bohumil Markalous, *Estetika praktického života* [The aesthetics of a practical life] (Prague: Odeon, 1989), 430–433.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid., 430.

<sup>544</sup> Jaromír Pečírka, “Max Dvořák,” *Český časopis historický* XXVII (1921): 7.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid.

<sup>546</sup> Hugo Rokyta, “Max Dvořák a jeho škola v českých zemích,” *Památky a příroda* 16, No. 10 (1991): 600–603. In German published as Hugo Rokyta, “Max Dvořák und seine Schule in den Böhmisches Ländern,” *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst- und Denkmalpflege* 28, No. 3 (1974): 81–89.

<sup>547</sup> Rokyta, “Max Dvořák,” 603.

scholarship, focusing on Dvořák's followers and on their contribution to Czech and German art history.

Similarly, Dvořák's student Matějček, stressed the fact that Dvořák had retained his Czech identity throughout his whole life, even though he had enemies both in Bohemia and Austria.<sup>548</sup> The former consisted of those jealous of Dvořák's achievements in Vienna, who feared his return to Prague. The latter were of German origin and despised the fact that a Czech was appointed professor at the University of Vienna. Matějček mentioned in particular Strzygowski and the protests of German students at the time of Dvořák's appointment in Vienna in 1905.<sup>549</sup> Matějček also argued that despite his long-lasting association with foreign institutions, Dvořák should be rather called a "Czech cosmopolitan." Matějček thus referred to an obituary published in *Lidové noviny* on 11 February 1921: "Disputes appeared whether [Dvořák] was more German or Czech. This is an incorrectly posed question. ...He was a true Czech cosmopolitan. A cosmopolitan and a gentleman."<sup>550</sup>

From these remarks on Dvořák, one can summarize his contemporaries' and followers' attitude towards Dvořák's identity. For most Czech authors he was, by virtue of the place of his birth and death, a Czech art historian, and this was supported by his continuing contacts with the homeland, his attempts to get a permanent post at the Charles-Ferdinand University, his friendship with colleagues in Prague, and his subsequent academic influence on representatives of Czech art history. On a more superficial level, they also speculated about his Czech "soul" and his support for the "Czech cause" as defined by for example Pečírka and Matějček.

This importance that Dvořák's Czech followers attached to his affiliation with the Czech environment, conflicted, however, with Dvořák's own views. As a loyal Habsburg subject, he gradually became disassociated from Bohemia and from the

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<sup>548</sup> Antonín Matějček, "Max Dvořák," *Národní listy*, December 19, 1921, reprinted in Antonín Matějček, "Max Dvořák," *Hlasý světa a domova* [The voices of the world and home] (Prague: Spolek výtvarných umělců Mánes, 1931).

<sup>549</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid., 171.

nationalistic quarrels between the Czechs and the Germans there. His interests turned to more universal issues in art and to genetic connections in artistic development. Furthermore, it is known that Dvořák disapproved of the political changes in 1918 and supported the monarchical composition of Central Europe.<sup>551</sup> The nature of the period and place in which he lived was cosmopolitan and for that reason, as was already suggested by Matějček, Dvořák should rather be regarded as an art historian of the Austrian Empire.

Alongside uncritical appraisals of Dvořák's contribution, a gradual reassessment of his findings took place. One particular example also demonstrates how strong Dvořák's legacy in Bohemia was and the responses criticism of this scholar could provoke.

In an extensive article "Čechy a Avignon," (Bohemia and Avignon) Eugen Dostál, a student of Dvořák and the first professor of art history at Masaryk University in Brno, opposed the latter's conclusions about the origins of Bohemian illumination outlined in "Die Illuminatoren des Johann von Neumarkt."<sup>552</sup> Dvořák had claimed in this text that Bohemian painting of this period, commissioned by Johann von Neumarkt, the bishop and chancellor to Charles IV, was directly derived from the style of the papal court in Avignon. The court produced illuminated manuscripts that combined French and Italian features and were transferred to Bohemia by the bishop (Fig. 47).

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<sup>551</sup> Luděk Novák, "Umění 19. a 20. století v díle Maxe Dvořáka," [The art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Max Dvořák's work] *Umění* IX, No. 6 (1961). Cf. Matthew Rampley, "Max Dvořák: Art History."

<sup>552</sup> Dvořák, "Die Illuminatoren."

*Figure 45 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

Dostál expressed scepticism towards the Avignon inspiration of the manuscripts and argued that the paintings commissioned by Johann of Neumarkt were inspired directly by Italian sources, as in the case of panel paintings produced during the reign of Charles IV.<sup>553</sup> Dvořák argued for this connection on the basis of stylistic analysis of manuscripts from Avignon, which he borrowed from the French art historian Louis Courajod and therefore never consulted, and those that were of an earlier date. Using palaeographic methods of analysis, Dostál concluded that the manuscripts Dvořák had used were actually later, dating back to the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

As I am not interested here in the actual detail of his findings; I will focus instead on the nature and outcomes of the debate, which illustrated personal loyalties to Dvořák's legacy.<sup>554</sup> Dostál did not deny Dvořák's original contribution to the research of the fourteenth century miniature painting in Bohemia: "Dvořák placed Czech illumination art under Charles [IV] into the development of world art [...]"

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<sup>553</sup> Eugen Dostál, "Čechy a Avignon. Příspěvky ke vzniku českého umění iluminátorského v XIV. století," [Bohemia and Avignon. Contributions on the origins of Czech illumination in the fourteenth century] *Časopis Matice moravské* 46 (1922).

<sup>554</sup> More recent researchers, represented by for example Karel Stejskal, have agreed that the influences on this set of manuscripts came from Paris. Karel Stejskal, "Počátky gotického malířství," [The beginnings of Gothic painting] in *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění. Od počátků do konce středověku* (I/1), ed. Josef Krása (Prague: Academia, 1984), 295.

and emphasised the role that new Czech art played in the artistic development of the neighbouring countries.”<sup>555</sup> Nevertheless, Dostál was critical of the fact that Dvořák omitted many important issues:

Dvořák depicted in a brilliant way all the conditions of the boom of a new artistic centre and it will always be to his credit that he put emphasis on the role that the new papal residency played in the history of cultural development of the fourteenth century, although in some parts of his work, he overestimated the influence of Avignon and neglected the undiminished importance of other centres of Western European culture.<sup>556</sup>

It was the approach and the selection of sources that, according to Dostál, were the weaknesses in Dvořák’s account: “The masterly style and exquisite portrayal skilfully overshadowed the weak points of his theory.”<sup>557</sup> Similarly, Dostál held that since Dvořák had been aware of some of the flaws in his account, he came up with a hypothesis about lost manuscripts that had been of a fine quality. If they had been preserved, they would have proven the inspiration of Bohemian illuminators in French miniatures of Avignon, in keeping with Dvořák’s conviction.<sup>558</sup> Dostál deliberately avoided these “cultural historical and artistic-philosophical conclusions” typical of Dvořák’s approach and based his views on an analytical examination of tangible (and preserved) material.<sup>559</sup>

Dostál published his article in 1922 in the *Časopis Matice moravské* (Journal of the Moravian foundation), the year after Dvořák’s death and the year after he was appointed professor extraordinarius at the university in Brno. The article and its argument aroused strong opposition from Dostál’s colleagues in Prague, exemplified by a review written by Matějček and published in the journal *Naše věda* (Our science) in the same year.<sup>560</sup> The same journal published Dostál’s reply

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<sup>555</sup> Dostál, “Čechy a Avignon,” 5.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>557</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid.

<sup>560</sup> Antonín Matějček, “E. Dostál: Čechy a Avignon. Příspěvky ke vzniku českého umění iluminátorského v XIV. století”, *Naše věda* V (1922): 142–157.

to Matějček and one last account of Matějček's counter-arguments.<sup>561</sup> The extent of this discussion suggests that many crucial themes were addressed by the two scholars who, although they underwent the same training in Vienna, arrived at diverse and almost contradictory conclusions.

The overall tone of Matějček's review was defensive and structured as a justification of Dvořák against Dostál's reinterpretation of the topic. In brief, Matějček restated Dvořák's opinion that Bohemian illumination of the second half of the fourteenth century was derived from Avignon and he noted that Dostál's "feeble" criticism of this theory could not diminish the "charm of Dvořák's provident ideology, in which the most scholarly spirit and mind of a creative genius speak out through the mouth of an art historian."<sup>562</sup>

Of interest in this dispute is also the question as to why the topic of fourteenth-century painting in Bohemia should be central to art historical research.<sup>563</sup> Many Czech art historians (Vocel, Chytil, Matějka and others) regarded Bohemian art of this period, and painting especially, as the departure point for the further development of art in Bohemia. From these origins, Matějček derived a continuous artistic tradition that had lasted to his time, and this was also the reason why it was essential to determine the national origins of art of this early period. Through the sense of continuity, this dynamic tradition also demonstrated the ancient quality of the Czech nation and historical connectedness with the great past.<sup>564</sup>

Matějček insisted on the sole dependency of early Bohemian painting on Western models, which was first outlined by Dvořák, teacher of both Matějček and Dostál. And this (the alleged attack on the legacy of Dvořák) seemed to be the main reason that provoked Matějček to challenge Dostál:

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<sup>561</sup> Eugen Dostál, "Diskuse," [A discussion] *Naše věda* 5, 1922, 227–234 and Antonín Matějček, "Replika," [A reply] *Ibid.*, 234 – 236.

<sup>562</sup> Matějček, "E. Dostál: Čechy a Avignon," 157.

<sup>563</sup> Matějček claimed, "the final and satisfactory conclusion [on the origins of mediaeval art] will allow for a full comprehension and appreciation of the artistic contribution of the nations north of the Alps to the significant artistic transformations [in Bohemia]. The mediaeval painting that resulted from these transformations was modern and established a tradition that has been influential until present." *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>564</sup> Cf. the Introduction and the theory of tradition in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention and Holý, The Little Czech*.

E. Dostál, Dvořák's student, turns to the work of his teacher with an offensive harshness and fights Dvořák's views in such a tone as if it was a work of his adversary or a work of yesterday's date, not a work of the teacher's youth, 20 years old [...] which is a length of time that teaches consideration and piety towards the work of one's predecessors.<sup>565</sup>

The fact that Dostál did not support his teacher's hypothesis and revised it was proof to Matějček that the "excellent qualities of a teacher do not pass to students, that an outstanding example irritates, rather than prompts to following and replication."<sup>566</sup> For Matějček, Dostál did not approach Dvořák with enough reverence and despite the occasional flattery to his teacher, Dostál chose "an inexcusably harsh tone."<sup>567</sup> Matějček was also convinced that "this work ["Čechy a Avignon"] would not have been printed in this form had Dvořák been still alive" and he regretted the timing of the publication as Dvořák could not defend himself.<sup>568</sup>

The dispute between Dostál and Matějček was typical of the rather petty quarrels that had survived in Czech art history from the nineteenth century. So far, it was criticism from abroad that had been understood as a national insult and alternative opinions were not accepted. Now, also the criticism of a respected scholar which came from his own ranks, became a personal offence and a sign of disrespect. At the same time, this particular debate also demonstrated how important it still was for the Czechs, even internationally oriented, to locate the historical roots of Czech art.

## Conclusion

Some commentators on Dvořák's work, including Bakoš and Schwarzer, have depicted him as an advocate of the multi-national character of the Habsburg

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<sup>565</sup> Matějček, "E. Dostál: Čechy a Avignon," 149.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid.

monarchy.<sup>569</sup> This cannot be denied, especially given Dvořák's interests in transitional artistic periods and the international nature of art. However, as I have argued above, in his early writings his work partly engaged in the search for the reasons of national and local differences in arts. This dual character prompted Czech followers of the Vienna School to link the history of Czech national art to wider universal artistic phenomena.

After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, it was Dvořák and Riegl who partly inspired the individual national views on art history. Students of these two scholars who had come to study to Vienna and then returned back to their countries, were faced with the need to reconstruct the nature of art history in the newly formed nation states of Central Europe.<sup>570</sup> The role of a specific national art was placed by the Vienna School students into the context of the universal evolution of art. The exact, rigorous methods, along with the conceptualised views of art, were therefore applied to explain the unique position of a nation's art. It was the methods of "formalism [...] allied with scientism," which replaced monarchic patriotism with national patriotism.<sup>571</sup>

In Dvořák, a concern with these genetic evolutionary relations was already evident in his articles on Mánes and Švabinský and on the mediaeval Czech school of painting. Dvořák placed the school under the Luxembourgs into a wide universal context of mediaeval painting while also acknowledging its original contribution stemming from the local conditions. Similarly, he described the nature of *national* art in the relationship to the two Czech nineteenth century painters who also transformed the general artistic inspirations into self-sufficient, authentic forms.

Later, however, Dvořák became less concerned with notions of national art and instead he examined the continuous evolution of art and its ability to materialize a period worldview in itself. Such universalistic concepts, typical also of other representatives of the Vienna School, were also passed onto the students. These concepts, such as the break with historicism, attention to the spirit of the age, and

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<sup>569</sup> Bakoš, "From Universalism;" Schwarzer, "Cosmopolitan Difference."

<sup>570</sup> Bakoš, "From Universalism," 86.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid., 87.



the views of tradition in arts and culture, aimed to replace the previous romantic notions of Czech art and became quintessential for the construction of the history of Czech art in the new century.

## 7. The Internationalisation of Art History

The Czech students of the Vienna School became dominant in the further development of Czech art history from around 1910 onwards. Through their work, the traditional attention to the specific traits of Czech art, influenced so far by the nationalistic attitudes of the nineteenth century, was complemented by more cosmopolitan views of artistic development.

At the same time, the School's graduates from the "small" nations of Austria–Hungary (such as the Czechs, Croats, Slovenes and so on) combined claims to be participating in the universal development of art with an emphasis on the unique qualities of local practices. The work of two authors, Vincenc Kramář and Vojtěch Birnbaum (1877–1934), demonstrates the extent to which this amalgamation of nationalism and internationalism became one of the most significant legacies of the Vienna School. In the Czech environment, the followers of the School's theories therefore tried to create a sense of the belonging of Czech art to the international artistic development while still stressing its original place in history, culture and geography.

However, the Vienna School followers were not the only scholars to attempt to introduce a new ideological outlook into their research by viewing Czech art within an international context. There was a rising interest more generally in classifying Czech history and art as belonging to the mainstream of European art which attempted to break free from the narrow nationalism of the nineteenth century. I shall, therefore, also examine some of the ideas that came from sources other than the Vienna School.

At the end of the nineteenth century, "the content and style of Czech culture [...] corresponded to the new circumstances, expressing the complex social reality of modern times and the problems of the modern individual."<sup>572</sup> With the rise of modernism, the intensification of processes of industrialisation and increasing

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<sup>572</sup> Kutnar, "Podmínky rozvoje," in *Přehledné dějiny I*, 377.

urbanisation, it was necessary to revise cultural values and break free from romantic, nationalistic interests and criteria when viewing historical and art historical phenomena. Wider political developments (continuing disputes with the German inhabitants, the radicalisation of Czech politicians and even the establishment of *Czech* institutions, such as the Academy of Sciences) had an impact on scholarship, in that historical studies were required by Czech intellectuals and politicians to emphasise the participation of Czech “national” culture in European history and to stress how much the Czechs were an integral part of mainstream Europe.<sup>573</sup> Such arguments, demonstrating the international historical significance of Czech culture also supported claims to legitimacy of the newly independent state of Czechoslovakia which, following the end of the First World War and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was born in 1918.

During the interwar period, Czechoslovak politicians were oriented mainly towards Western Europe, and these inclinations were also reflected in the visual arts and their theories. Of all the successor states, only Czechoslovakia preserved the more positive features of the dissolved Empire: functional industry, a complex system of bureaucracy and an effective education system.<sup>574</sup> The importance of Prague as a centre increased, as the city remained the seat of the most significant political and cultural institutions. Other cities, such as Brno in Moravia and Bratislava in Slovakia, only gradually strengthened their positions as economic, educational and cultural hubs.

Independence also highlighted national differences within the state and the powerful position of the national minorities. Czechoslovakia, with its various ethnic groups, could be compared to a small version of Austro-Hungarian Empire, since it also retained, amongst other things, the parliamentary system of the dissolved Reich.<sup>575</sup> In 1918, the newly born republic consisted of 6.8 million Czechs, 3.1 million Germans, 1.9 million Slovaks and 0.7 million Hungarians, not to mention the Rusyns, Ukrainians, Russians and Jews. For this reason, the national identity of the new nation had to be reinvented under new conditions: the existence of a

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<sup>573</sup> Kutnar, “Závěr,” in *Ibid.*, 673.

<sup>574</sup> Clegg, *Art, Design and Architecture in Central Europe, 1890–1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 227.

<sup>575</sup> F. N. Bradley, quoted in Sayer, *The Coasts*, 168.

Czechoslovak state called for a justification of the cohabitation of the Czech and Slovak nations. The main motivation was the need to strengthen the identity of the Czechs and Slovaks against the strong German and Hungarian minorities living on the territory. As a part of this process, the concept of a unified Czechoslovak nationality, as well as of a joint Czechoslovak language, was invented and transferred to the visual arts in the form of “Czechoslovak art,” which is the subject of Chapter Nine. A side-effect of the creation of “Czechoslovakism” was a marginalization of the Slovaks in favour of the historically more successful and already well-established *Czech* identity.<sup>576</sup>

### **Scholarship in Prague**

A number of Czech art historians promoted the concept of Czechoslovak art in their texts. Before I return to this in detail, more general influences on Czech art history that were equally important to those disseminated by the Vienna School need to be examined. At the beginning of the twentieth century, historians slowly abandoned the romantic historicism of the second half of the nineteenth century and turned to – in their view – more “objective,” positivistic approaches based on the study of supposedly indisputable facts. The key figure in the field was Jaroslav Goll, Dvořák’s teacher in Prague, to whom I have already referred in the previous chapter. This historian and university professor based his methods on empirical research into “historical facts in their genetic context.”<sup>577</sup> His authority was such that Czech historical and art historical scholarship remained influenced by his positivism far into the twentieth century.<sup>578</sup>

Parallels between the situation in the field of history and art history can be drawn for several reasons. By the turn of the century, institutional art history was still subordinate to the discipline of history and was not yet recognized as an independent subject – an autonomous department in the Czech part of Charles University was not established until 1911. A number of future art historians of the early twentieth century, including Dvořák and Birnbaum, trained as historians and

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<sup>576</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>577</sup> Kutnar, “Historické dílo,” *Přehledné dějiny*, 398.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid.

were influenced by the methods of Goll and later by those of the historian Josef Pekař (1870–1937), Goll’s disciple and successor.

### **Masaryk and the “Czech question”**

In order to understand the line of thinking applied by Goll and Pekař, it is worth putting their methods alongside the approaches to history developed by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937). Back in 1912, both Goll and Pekař entered into an ongoing dispute over the meaning of Czech history and its rudiments with Masaryk, who at that time worked at the University in Prague as a professor in philosophy. Their disagreement can be summarized as a clash between two views: on the one hand, Czech history seen as a continuity of the Catholic tradition formed by the two ninth century missionaries, St Cyril and St Methodius, and revived during the nineteenth century or, on the other, Czech history and culture as shaped by the long-lasting influences of Humanism and reformed Protestantism within a European context. Goll and Pekař tried to defend the former, while Masaryk espoused the latter.<sup>579</sup>

Masaryk aimed at incorporating Czech history into the European intellectual framework. In his crucial work, *Česká otázka* (The Czech question), first published in 1895, Masaryk warned against “historicism,” which he understood as an idealization and ideologization of the past and excessive dwelling on the history as it had been constructed by the nineteenth century national revivalists.<sup>580</sup> When discussing the legacy of historicism for the nation’s development, he claimed that the history written by, for example, Palacký was idealized and focused only on a limited selection of events and issues.<sup>581</sup> Although Masaryk requested a revision of the entire history of the Czech nation with an international context in mind, attention to the historical origins of the Czechs seemed to be of highest importance for him. He thus idealised history and created an image of a nation as a *political*

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<sup>579</sup> Kutnar, “Gollovi žáci,” [Goll’s students] *Přehledné dějiny*, 494

<sup>580</sup> Masaryk, *Česká otázka*, 180–181.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid.

(rather than ethnic) entity with a strong democratic tradition and high cultural education.<sup>582</sup>

Masaryk also suggested a comparison of “our culture with the progress and work of other nations.”<sup>583</sup> The Czechs should adopt, though not uncritically, those achievements that were made abroad earlier, regardless of the country of origin.<sup>584</sup> Masaryk thus argued against the traditional Czech animosity towards German authors and everything German: “Very often we declare un-Czech what the Germans have and we do not mind things French, even though they do not often fit in...”<sup>585</sup> He therefore called for the abandonment of a past burdened with nationalistic prejudices and disputes, and called for an openness to international cultural and scientific exchange and for acceptance of ideas from abroad.

Masaryk’s *Česká otázka*, republished many times, was influential on the Czech audience and had analogies with other attempts to reconstruct the historical and political national identities of people in various European countries.<sup>586</sup> Texts with a similar title but with different levels of nationalistic input and a less philosophical approach were published in, for example, Poland, Lithuania or Germany.<sup>587</sup> Masaryk’s ideas in his own Czech question, pronounced already in 1895 for the first time, predicted the future attempts of a more general turn towards internationalism in Czech society and Czech history. The same also happened amongst Czech art historians who started looking for relations between Czech art and art of Western Europe in order to put Czech art into the Western European context.

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<sup>582</sup> Milan Znoj, “Realistické pojetí národa,” [Realistic understanding of the nation] *Na pozvání Masarykova ústavu* 2 [Invited by the Masaryk’s Institute 2] (Prague: Masarykův ústav AV ČR, 2005), 15.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid.

<sup>586</sup> *Česká otázka* was republished in 1908, 1924, 1936, 1948, 1969, 1990 and 2000. It was also translated into German as *Die tschechische Frage: die Bestrebungen und Anliegen der nationalen Wiedergeburt* (Prague: 1908).

<sup>587</sup> A number of texts on the Polish question were published already in the nineteenth century. On Lithuania, see Anatonas Smetona, *Die litauische Frage*, (Berlin: Das neue Litauen, 1917). In German-speaking countries, the “German question” was concerned with redefinition of German frontiers and territorial demands. Cf. for example Hans Lades, *Die Tschechen und die deutsche Frage* (Erlangen: Palm & Enke 1938) and later Wilhelm Röpke, *Die deutsche Frage* (Erlenbach-Zürich: E. Rentsch, 1945).

### **Karel Čapek and the question of national art**

A further notable attempt to come to terms with the legacy of nineteenth-century historicism and romanticism can be found in the work of the Czech novelist, playwright, journalist and artist Karel Čapek (1890–1938). His personal involvement in the visual arts as well as his brother Josef's career as painter provoked his own interest in this area. In 1913, *Volné směry*, edited at the time by Antonín Matějček and Karel's brother Josef, Karel Čapek published an article entitled "Otázka národního umění" (The question of national art).<sup>588</sup> Here he distinguished between two attitudes towards Czech national art. National art could be seen either as "an expression of the nation's need to have its own art" or as a "gradual, although usually slightly belated evening out of the [...] advancements of European art."<sup>589</sup> However, the role of national art especially of a small nation was, according to Čapek, commonly viewed as an expression of "the nation's living traditions and the local spirit" in which "art becomes the main, and almost the only principle of national sectionalism, self-reliance, or pure tribal self-preservation in an international struggle."<sup>590</sup>

The author challenged this latter view as outmoded. Historicism, represented by a concern with national mythology, epic poems, historical novels and drama, historical subjects in painting and historicizing styles in architecture, was, for Čapek, one of the two formative sources of the construct of national art, as it had been developed by the Czechs.<sup>591</sup> The other one was folk art, the role of which Čapek found similarly contestable since folk art had always transformed formal features of high art: "Our folk art is not by far as old and original as is universally believed – largely it is a popularly assimilated style of the eighteenth century which was the one that had the most impact on the soul of the people."<sup>592</sup>

Čapek even disputed the "Czech" and "folk quality" of the work of national artists, such as Josef Mánes and Mikuláš Aleš of "the patriotic generation and the so-called

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<sup>588</sup> Karel Čapek, "Otázka národního umění," *Volné směry* XVII (1913): 160.

<sup>589</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>590</sup> Ibid.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid., 161. Čapek did not provide examples to specify his list.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid.

national generation of painters of the National Theatre construction period.”<sup>593</sup> Instead, he put their work into the context of European art. In the case of Mánes, he identified, in particular, German Romanticism and the art of Jean-Honoré Fragonard as formative influences, and in the case of Aleš, it was historicism and folk traditionalism.<sup>594</sup> Čapek’s reading of the work of these two painters in relation to national art was quite radical, since both Aleš and Mánes had been generally regarded as epitomes of national art. For Čapek Mánes’s eclectic work was outdated, and Aleš’ idyllic depiction of the rural people was naïve; their work was superficial and typified a nostalgic longing for the past, and they did not constitute a viable tradition.<sup>595</sup>

Čapek added that the true spirit of a nation lived in the present and the future, in the vision that a nation had about itself. As with Masaryk, he held that the identity of the nation should not be sought in the past and the nation’s memories, but rather in its progressive strivings towards the future: in its contemporary thought and art:

The love for new ideas and new art – this is the living and growing nation, which is not an historical nation or a national rustic paradise, [it is] a creative nation which advances towards the new and towards the future [...], a nation that does not fall behind the shifting humanity, but rather keeps up in the first rank.<sup>596</sup>

## **The Vienna School disciples and the internationalisation of art history**

A similarly critical approach to nationalist historiography can be found in the work of a number of Vienna School graduates active in Bohemia and Moravia after the war. The importance of the individual Czech art historians inspired by the School may be illustrated by the positions they took up in Prague upon their return from Vienna. Matějček, a student of Max Dvořák, also worked with him at the

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<sup>593</sup> Ibid.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid.

<sup>595</sup> Čapek, “Otázka,” 161.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid., 162.



Zentralkommission für Denkmalpflege in Vienna. From 1917 and 1920, he taught at the Academy of Arts and Design and at the Academy of Fine Art in Prague respectively and became an extraordinarius professor at the Charles University in 1926 and ordinarius four years later. After the Second World War, he became responsible for visual art at the Ministry of Education. His interests lay across the field of the history of art: he published works on mediaeval art, and on the Renaissance and Baroque periods, as well as on the nineteenth-century and contemporary artistic issues mostly in Bohemia.<sup>597</sup>

Vojtěch Birnbaum, who attended Riegl's and Wickhoff's lectures in Vienna, became first an independent scholar and later, after the First World War, a professor at the Charles-Ferdinand university in Prague. His focus was on classical and early mediaeval architecture as well as on theoretical questions, writing a number of important texts on methodological and historiographical issues in art history.<sup>598</sup> Czech art was for him subdued to general historical laws, by which he acknowledged the position of Czech art in the larger context of European art. The links between the visual arts in Bohemia and the wider history of European art were also explored by Eugen Dostál (1889–1943), who first started working in the Department of Monument Protection in Brno in 1918 and, in 1921, started teaching art history at the Masaryk University. In 1928 he became the first professor of the newly established department of art history there. Like Birnbaum, he was interested in mediaeval art and architecture, but examined also topics in for example Baroque art.<sup>599</sup>

Zdeněk Wirth worked in the Zentralkommission in Vienna with Riegl and Dvořák; after the end of the First World War, in which he fought, he became the chief conservator and protector of monuments of the new Czechoslovak state. He

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<sup>597</sup> Antonín Matějček, *Umění 19. století* [The art of the nineteenth century] (Prague: Topič, 1915); idem, *Pasionál abatyše Kunhuty* [Passional of Abbess Kunhuta] (Prague: Jan Štenc, 1922); idem, *Mistři rané renesance* [The masters of the Early Renaissance] (Prague: Orbis, 1942).

<sup>598</sup> Vojtěch Birnbaum, "Barokní princip v dějinách architektury," [The Baroque principle in the history of architecture] *Styl: měsíčník pro architekturu, umělecké řemeslo a úpravu měst* [Style: a monthly for architecture, applied arts and urbanism] (Prague: Mánes, 1924); "Metoda dějin umění," [The method of art history] in *Listy z dějin umění* [Letters from the history of art] (Prague: Václav Petr, 1947).

<sup>599</sup> Eugen Dostál, "Čechy a Avignon," *Venceslas Hollar*, (Prague: 1924); *Umělecké památky Brna* [The artistic monuments of Brno] (Prague: 1928); "Eine neue böhmische Madonna," *Prager Presse* 12, No. 352 (1932).

retained a high position even after 1945 and became responsible for the “protection, survey and classification of the confiscated palaces and important historical objects.”<sup>600</sup> Apart from work in the field of monumental protection, his publications focused on contemporary and historical architecture in Bohemia with particular focus on the urban character of Bohemia.<sup>601</sup>

Václav Vilém Štech was one of the few key art historians of the time who did not study in Vienna but in Prague under Hostinský and Matějka. Still, he was to a large extent also influenced by the methods associated with the Vienna School. After graduation, he was appointed director of the Municipal Museum in Prague and after 1918 he worked at the Ministry of Education. Later, he taught at the Academies of Art and Design and Fine Art in Prague. His interests were wide, ranging from art and architectural monuments in Bohemia to artistic and visual production of other cultures and nations, including non-European ones.<sup>602</sup> Štech searched for those qualities of the various artistic phenomena that distinguished them from each other and which made them distinctive and original. Unlike his colleagues, for example Birnbaum, he thus did not look for generalised laws in the development of art.<sup>603</sup>

Kramář, the first to have written in Czech about the Vienna School, was one of the first scholars to implement their principles in his work (Fig. 48–49).<sup>604</sup> In Vienna, he studied under Wickhoff, Riegl and Schlosser and was in frequent contact with

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<sup>600</sup> Emanuel Poche, *Encyklopedie*, s.v. Wirth Zdeněk, 570.

<sup>601</sup> This attitude shall be explored in more detail in respect to his texts on folk art in Czechoslovakia. Zdeněk Wirth, “Zásady ochrany památek,” [Principles of monument protection] *Věstník Klubu Za starou Prahu* [Bulletin of the Club for Old Prague] (Prague: Klub za starou Prahu, 1910); Wirth and Antonín Matějček, *Architektura česká 1800–1920* [Czech Architecture 1800–1950] (Prague: Jan Štenc, 1920); Wirth, “Vývoj zásad a praxe ochrany památek 1800–1950,” [The Development of the rules and practice for protection of monuments 1800–1950] *Umění* II, No. 5 (1956).

<sup>602</sup> V. V. Štech, *Estetika fotografie* [The aesthetics of photography] (Prague: V. V. Štech, 1922); idem, *Československé malířství a sochařství nové doby 1–7* [Czechoslovak painting and sculpture of the new age 1–7] (Prague: Vydavatelstvo Družstevní práce, 1938–1939); idem, *České dějiny v díle Mikoláše Alše* [The Czech history in the work of Mikoláš Aleš] (Prague: Orbis, 1952); idem, “Úvod” [Introduction], in *Umění čtyř světadílů z českých sbírek mimoevropského umění* [The art of four continents in Czech art collections from outside of Europe], ed. Lubor Hájek (Prague: Orbis, 1956).

<sup>603</sup> Jaroslav Slavík, “Václav Vilém Štech,” *Kapitoly II*, ed. Chadraba, 149.

<sup>604</sup> Various scholars differ in their opinion on the influence of Vienna School teaching on Kramář throughout his life. According to Krása, Kramář inclined rather to the teaching of Wickhoff and Dvořák than to that of Riegl. Kramář emphasised objectivity in the study of art history, but did not deny the subjective position of the scholar. Krása, “Vincenc Kramář,” in *Kapitoly II*, ed. by Chadraba, 118.

Dvořák.<sup>605</sup> After military service during the First World War, he was appointed director of the state gallery in Prague, today the National Gallery, and became responsible for a great number of major purchases. Kramář also collected works of arts for his private collection, which ranged from mediaeval painting to Picasso and contemporary Czech art. Although his interests were quite wide, Kramář came to be recognized as a specialist in Cubist art, through which he approached art of other historical periods.<sup>606</sup>

*Figure 46 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

### **Kramář's reception of the Vienna School's methods**

Following the beliefs of his teachers, Kramář refused to accept the notion of decline in the history of art. At the same time, he did not conceive history of art as immanent or continuous but rather looked for contrasting polarities, which was most probably inspired by Riegl and Dvořák.<sup>607</sup> The latter, for example, started paying attention to disruptions in artistic development and looked for the links

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<sup>605</sup> Ibid.

<sup>606</sup> Bakoš, "Viedenská škola," 9.

<sup>607</sup> Vincenc Kramář, "Nové umění a kritika," *O obrazech a galeriích* [On images and galleries], ed. Josef Krása (Prague: Oden, 1983), 36.

between contemporary art and the art of historical periods.<sup>608</sup> Similarly, Kramář saw artistic development as a complex, autonomous process and he examined surviving traditions and their rebirth into new forms.<sup>609</sup> In his opinion,

In every period, there is a certain prevalent way of understanding and expressing the world. Alongside, there is either an older way that is fading away, which is destined to re-emerge again in some decades, but in a new form, to live a new life. Or, another style is germinating which despite all its revolutionary character follows in the forms seemingly extinct for a long time.<sup>610</sup>

This interpretation of the development of art came close to Dvořák's later convictions about discontinuity in art, which stressed the "irrationality" of artistic development and the role of certain key individuals, who embodied the spirit and worldview of the time.<sup>611</sup> Kramář focused on a small number of artists, such as Picasso, Emil Filla (1882–1953), or Caravaggio, whom he held as crucial for the development of certain specific artistic tendencies (Fig. 49–50). For example, he found rudiments of Cubism in the work of Caravaggio, in his "new unity created by the spirit" and related it to the work of Picasso through their joint depiction of "over-subjectified reality."<sup>612</sup> Modern art was thus for Kramář the result of previous surviving tendencies that were reborn in new forms.<sup>613</sup> Just as Dvořák saw a connection between El Greco and Expressionism, so Kramář used modern art – in this case, Cubism – as a lens through which to view older art, such as that of Caravaggio.<sup>614</sup>

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<sup>608</sup> Cf. for example, Dvořák, "Über Greco und den Manierismus," in Dvořák, *Kunstgeschichte*, but also Dvořák, "Von Manes zu Švabinsky."

<sup>609</sup> Karel Srp, "Umění na jiném základě," [Art with a different base] Vincenc Kramář. *Od starých mistrů k Picassovi*, 137.

<sup>610</sup> Kramář, "Nové umění," 36.

<sup>611</sup> Dvořák, review of M. L. Gothein, *Geschichte der Gartenkunst*, in Max Dvořák, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*; Krása, "Vincenc Kramář," in *Kapitoly*, 122; Bakoš, "Viedeňská škola," 8.

<sup>612</sup> Kramář, "O obrazech a galeriích," quoted in Srp, "Umění na jiném základě," 132.

<sup>613</sup> Kramář, "Nové umění."

<sup>614</sup> Dvořák, "Über Greco und den Manierismus," Vojtěch Lahoda, "We are searching in our history for our own loves," *Umění LV* (2007): 203.

*Figure 47 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 48 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

For Kramář, art had to be understood on the basis of the relation between historical artistic developments and contemporary practices. Familiarity with the two was indispensable for the comprehension of new art, such as the work of Cézanne and his successors Picasso and Braque. For Kramář, the art critic who wished to explain a work of modern art successfully had to possess an awareness of both historical and international art, because “new art is of international character and broad disposition.”<sup>615</sup> Moreover, other “spiritual currents” of our time need to be examined, since “our artistic transformation is only a part of a more universal development.”<sup>616</sup> At the same time, an art critic must adopt an “objective” viewpoint, free of personal prejudice and dilettantism. He must also possess a reliable intuition, artistic tolerance and analytical and synthetic abilities.<sup>617</sup>

Kramář also criticised “contemporary artists” who wrote on art, as well as “some scholars,” whom he saw in most cases as petty and conservative in their views.<sup>618</sup> He, however, did not mention any specific names and his criticism remained

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<sup>615</sup> Kramář, “Nové umění,” 38.

<sup>616</sup> Ibid.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid., 38–39. Frequent positive references to Henry Khanweiler suggest that this art critic and collector was for Kramář a model figure.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid., 39–40.

general: “Our art criticism has more smugness than a devoted love for the [right] cause and we feel it all the more painfully, since we hoped that in our own state, there would be more understanding for general concerns than we had experienced before.”<sup>619</sup> Interest in the internationalisation of art historical study was crucial also for Kramář, and he critically touched on the problem of the distinction between national and international art. One issue he targeted was the demand by conservative critics that local artists should include features in their work that were obviously derived from the historical development of “our” art. Whoever did not follow this was typically seen as “a ruthless and unprincipled cosmopolitan, who would best be expelled by our society from the national union, even though his works may be more Czech in its character than all those [works] produced according to the national recipes.”<sup>620</sup> Kramář’s defence of cosmopolitanism and internationalism against such simplistic nationalism, pronounced in rather sarcastic form, was close to the stances held by Masaryk and Čapek.

Despite the attention to general issues in modern art, Kramář devoted a substantial proportion of his writing to the specific nature of Czech art. For instance his account of Cubism from 1921 dealt quite extensively with the concept of national art in relation to national traditions in the last section.<sup>621</sup> The main subject of the article was a reaction to Henry Kahnweiler’s book, *Der Weg zum Kubismus* from 1920.<sup>622</sup> Kramář defended the originality and topicality of Cubism, represented for him mainly by Picasso and Braque, and explained it on the basis of formal analysis. He overviewed the key stylistic stages in the work of Picasso and related them to their historical precedents (such as the work of Cézanne, Ingres, Greek ancient art and so on).

In the closing chapter Kramář left aside the main topic of the article and focused on the theoretical problem of “our” art, as he mostly called Czech art. This key article was first published in 1921 in the journal *Moravskoslezská revue* (Moravian-Silesian revue), but was based on earlier writings that had remained unpublished

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<sup>619</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>621</sup> Kramář, “Kubismus,” *O obrazech a galeriích*.

<sup>622</sup> Henry Kahnweiler, *Der Weg zum Kubismus* (Munich: Delphin Verlag, 1920).

due to the interruption by the First World War.<sup>623</sup> However critical of the way that the idea of a national art was commonly interpreted by art historians, Kramář nevertheless recognized its existence. Conscious of the contemporary clashes between exponents of the idea of an international avant-garde and the defenders of a narrow nationalism, Kramář tried to reconcile the two positions and prove that they did not necessarily exclude each other.<sup>624</sup> He argued for

... art that is less Czech, but in the first place better, proper art and the replacement of the endless quarrels about the nature of “Czechness” with tireless work in the service of humanity and our own ideas. Only in this way can a new art be born [...] that will be of international standing and still remain Czech, because created by intelligent Czech artists, rooted firmly in our life and tradition.<sup>625</sup>

Authentic *Czech* art was not to be found in mere copies of those regarded as national artists because: “...many paintings of today, made in the light of Picasso’s achievements, contain far more of the true, genuine “Czechness” than paintings which have the names of Mánes or Aleš written all over them.”<sup>626</sup> This “Czechness” was, in Kramář’s opinion, created through “the spirit and rhythm with which they are enlivened” and not by superficial means.<sup>627</sup>

For Kramář a good national artist needed to be familiar with the traditions he came from, and was required to be able to reassess and apply them under his own specific conditions.<sup>628</sup> The complexity of the relation of a Czech artist to his tradition, which included folk art, should be based on the full understanding of all contexts, both local and international:

It is not enough to look at the external appearance of paintings of some of our masters and speedily deduce a formula freshened up by some modern additions. We need intelligent artists who are able to experience, feel and think deeply over our tradition in its entirety and

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<sup>623</sup> Krása, “Dílo Vincence Kramáře,” 461.

<sup>624</sup> Kramář, “Kubismus,” 103.

<sup>625</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>626</sup> Kramář, “Kubismus,” 106.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid., 105.

who can contemplate the nature of our contemporary and historical national life.<sup>629</sup>

This emphasis on the need for an awareness of the traditions of a specific location, and an ability to preserve such traditions through artistic work while redefining it under new conditions, echoed the attempts by other Czech art historians, such as Mádl or Kramář's contemporary Matějček, to recover the historical remnants of Czech national life embedded in the nation's past.

Kramář consequently expressed the belief that Czech artists had to be aware of the historical as well as modern contexts of their work, both regionally and internationally: "It is necessary that our artists live the lives of their nation, that they know its contemporary and historical culture," and were aware of the "most original, most valuable" in the nation.<sup>630</sup> In this connection, Kramář referred to an exhibition of the work of Josef Mánes and to his "pure idealism and relentless artistic discipline," which could be passed to contemporary artists and audience like, for example, the music of Bedřich Smetana.<sup>631</sup> Kramář noted, however, that the exhibition had poor attendance and thus a minimal impact.<sup>632</sup>

Despite his personal interest in international modernism, Kramář still held to the idea of the national specificity of art: "[Those who] are able to penetrate the subtle structure of a work of art and feel its rhythm can sense the firm difference between the spiritual content of Czech modern painting and a French one."<sup>633</sup> The distinctiveness of Czech paintings, their Czech quality, did not lie in their external similarity with old masters, but in "the spirit and rhythm."<sup>634</sup>

### **The spirit of the nation and the world spirit**

Authors who were trying to break free from the nationalistic historicism of the nineteenth century through their attention to universalistic, international contexts

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<sup>629</sup> Ibid.

<sup>630</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid.

<sup>633</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>634</sup> Ibid.



also made a wide use of perhaps one of the most influential concepts adopted by Czech art history, namely the theories of the worldview, *Weltanschauung*, and the period spirit.<sup>635</sup> Kramář called for an internationalisation of perspectives through attention to what was happening outside of the Czech borders. Drawing on Dvořák and Hegel, he placed a nation's art within a more general artistic development and considered art as a part of the spirit of the age, or *Geist*. The visual arts could thus be comprehended as “the expression and spiritual manifestation of a unified totality of thought underlying all aspects of cultural and other human phenomena.”<sup>636</sup> This totality, in Kramář's interpretation, was of universal nature and thus created allegedly equal position for all nations.

This approach, commonly referred to as *Geistesgeschichte*, is associated with Dvořák who developed it on the basis of Dilthey's hermeneutic historiography.<sup>637</sup> Already in his article on Mánes and Švabinský, Dvořák had suggested locating the two artists into the more general context of European art and explained their work as a combination of foreign and local influences, as inevitably reflecting the period spirit. He developed this practice of locating an artistic phenomenon into a universal context in more depth later, in for example “Idealismus und Naturalismus in der gotischen Skulptur und Malerei” first published in 1918 or in his account of Rembrandt from 1921.<sup>638</sup>

The theory of the impact of the period spirit on art found its application also in writing on Czech art by for example Kramář, Birnbaum, Matějček, Pečírka, as well as Šalda, although each of the authors reworked the theory in an original way.<sup>639</sup> As I have suggested above, Kramář sought the Czech quality of “our” art in the “spirit” and “rhythm” of the execution of a painting, not in the external similarity of forms

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<sup>635</sup> For more on the concepts, see for example Kleinbauer, “Geistesgeschichte;” Wood, *The Vienna School Reader*; Dagobert Frey, *Gotik und Renaissance als Grundlagen der modernen Weltanschauung*, (Augsberg: B. Filser, 1929).

<sup>636</sup> Kleinbauer, “Geistesgeschichte,” 148.

<sup>637</sup> Wilhelm Dilthey, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970). First published in 1910.

<sup>638</sup> Dvořák, *Idealismus und Naturalismus in der gotischen Skulptur und Malerei* (Munich and Berlin: 1918); *Rembrandt, Die Nachtwache* (Vienna: 1921). In some these later texts, for example on Rembrandt, Dvořák paid attention also to the psychology of artistic creation. The Czech art historians, however, did not adopt this interest.

<sup>639</sup> Birnbaum, for example, opposed the possibility of finding common features in all forms artistic expressions. See his “Metoda dějin umění.”

with canonical masters. In the article on Cubism, for example, he held that paintings inspired by Picasso could be more Czech than those created in a traditionalistic way.<sup>640</sup>

Kramář's use of the notion of an artist's "Czech quality" – his "Czechness" – bears certain similarities to Šalda's views, for both of them were concerned with the hard-to-define link between the artist's origin, external influences and the artist's work. Šalda referred to the spirit of the place, the *genius loci*, or the "land," as providing the strongest bond between the birth of a nation and its art.<sup>641</sup> For Kramář, "an artist of Czech blood, in symbiosis with Czech life and culture, an artist of intelligence, feelings and imagination, will always create Czech art, whether he deals with local formal problems [...] or follows foreign forms."<sup>642</sup> Being firmly embedded in "our" tradition and life and informed about international artistic "spirits," was sufficient for a Czech artist to produce art of international quality, which still remains Czech.<sup>643</sup> Šalda also emphasised the need to match Europe and its contemporary erudition before adopting a personal style. Both authors thus identified a local spirit as important for the creation of national art together with a grasp of the international situation. Kramář, however, understood such a spirit as originating in a particular cultural and intellectual worldview while for Šalda, it was connected more with the geography of a local environment.

### **Birnbaum and the spirit of the nation**

Kramář can be seen as an example of a Vienna School disciple who applied some of the School's values, but who still looked for specifically national characteristics, especially in the work of distinguished artists such as the cubist painter Emil Filla (1882–1953) or Mánes. It is useful to compare his approach with that of another notable Czech scholar and Vienna School graduate, Vojtěch Birnbaum.<sup>644</sup> Although

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<sup>640</sup> Kramář, "Kubismus," 106.

<sup>641</sup> Šalda, "O národním umění," 208.

<sup>642</sup> Kramář, "Kubismus," 106.

<sup>643</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>644</sup> According to some later interpretations of his work, Birnbaum was initially influenced by Goll, the history professor in Prague, his friend Šalda and in Vienna he most inclined to the teaching of Riegl and his contemporary Dvořák. See Ivo Hlobil, "Vojtěch Birnbaum – život a dílo v dobových

he was subjected to the same ideological views of art as Kramář, Birnbaum transformed those into a very different approach.

Birnbaum outlined his views on the notion of national art in his lecture “Methoda dějin umění” (The method of art history) delivered in 1934.<sup>645</sup> The basic argument here was critical of the conviction that the art of each nation reflected the nation’s spirit or that it was possible to establish a nation’s characteristics from its works of art.<sup>646</sup> Birbaum also pointed out that his usage of the term “nation” denoted “a cultural collective with its own arts, whether it corresponds with the ethnographic nation or not.”<sup>647</sup> The link between a nation and its art was – in his view – complex, because a number of prerequisites were necessary for the national spirit to be demonstrated in visual arts: “the very character of the specific nation must be well-pronounced and defined so that it is worthwhile to be expressed in the visual arts.” There also must be “an excellent artistic aptitude and a life interest in art [... and] a creative force.”<sup>648</sup> These needed to be accompanied by the tendency to become independent and the ability to contain all the preconditions of national art. According to Birnbaum, national art should also contain other expressions of the national soul, such as the “reason, emotion and senses” which demonstrate the “versatility of the expression of the national spirit.”<sup>649</sup>

There are analogies with Riegl’s concept of *Kunstwollen*.<sup>650</sup> Talking of for example Rembrandt, Riegl held that, “the great artist, even the genius, is nothing but the executor ... of the *Kunstwollen* of his nation and age.”<sup>651</sup> Still, the “greatest

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souvislostech” [Vojtěch Birnbaum – life and work in the context of the time] in *Vojtěch Birnbaum. Vývojové zákonitosti v umění* [Vojtěch Birnbaum. The developmental principles in art] (Prague: Odeon, 1987), 383. Jiřina Hořejší, “Vojtěch Birnbaum,” in *Kapitoly II*, 103; Josef Krása, “Dílo Vincence Kramáře v českých dějinách umění,” [The work of Vincenc Kramář in the Czech history of art] in *O obrazech a galeriích*, 467

<sup>645</sup> Birnbaum, “Metoda,” 173–190.

<sup>646</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>647</sup> Ibid.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid., 175–176.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>650</sup> Cf., for example, Alois Riegl, *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (Vienna: K. K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1901). According to Otto Pächt (1902–1988), Riegl’s *Kunstwollen* described the volition, a wilful intention in the period for artistic creations, or, it was the will-to-form, as E. H. Gombrich (1901–2002), another graduate from Vienna. Otto Pächt, “Art Historians and Art Critics. Riegl” *The Burlington Magazine* 105, No. 722 (May 1963), 190; E. H. Gombrich, “Introduction,” *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1982), 16.

<sup>651</sup> Alois Riegl quoted in Pächt, “Art Historians,” 191.

embodiment of the artist genius of a nation” was affected by foreign influences which the artist reworked into his own, original, artistic solutions.<sup>652</sup>

Riegl also put emphasis on the role of the specific geographic location combined with the specific character of the period in the formation of the original character of an artwork. Some contemporary art historians have therefore seen the theory of *Kunstwollen* as nationalistic because of Riegl’s connection between national and local style on the one hand and group psychology of a particular nation, or race, on the other.<sup>653</sup>

For Birnbaum the art of one nation could not be created with the tools devised by another nation’s spirit but rather had to be developed out of “its own, new [tools] created in its own image.”<sup>654</sup> A combination of all the traits, “a distinctive national character, artistic talent and interest, creative ability, the will to universal expression and the will to a complete independence,” produces art that expresses a national spirit.<sup>655</sup> The absence of any one of them leads to failure in the creation of national art. Birnbaum provided an example of a case when one of the missing features – in this instance the lack of creative ability – prevented the emergence of a national art. Birnbaum claimed that the Germans, for instance despite having a well-pronounced national character and intention or will to create, “were never capable of purely original, national art, unlike, for example, the Greeks or the French, since they had lacked the creative abilities.”<sup>656</sup> With this statement, Birnbaum in fact lapsed into the same national chauvinism, which was typical of the nineteenth century texts.

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<sup>652</sup> Ibid.

<sup>653</sup> Authors usually emphasise Riegl’s attention to national psychology and national stylistic constants (Kemp) or the attempt to define Germanic art and ethnic differences in art (Olin). See, for example, Ján Bakoš, “Alois Riegl – otec umeleckohistorického nacionalizmu?” [Alois Riegl – the father of art historical nationalism?] in *Regnum Bohemiae et Sacrum. Romanum Imperium* (České Budějovice: Ústav dějin křesťanského umění Katolické teologické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy v Praze, 2005), 399–408; Wolfgang Kemp, “Alois Riegl,” in Dilly, *Altmeister*; E. H. Gombrich, “Kunstwissenschaft,” in *Das Atlantisbuch der Kunst: eine Encyklopädie der bildenden Künste* (Zurich: Atlantis-Verlag, 1952); Margaret Olin, “Alois Riegl, The Late Roman Empire in the Late Habsburg Empire,” in *The Habsburg Legacy. National Identity in Historical Perspective*, eds. Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994).

<sup>654</sup> Birnbaum, “Methoda dějin umění,” 177.

<sup>655</sup> Ibid.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid., 178.

Although such comments seem excessively nationalistic, Birnbaum tried to remain critical of the idea of Czech national art as well. Using the example of Gothic architecture, he perceived the Czech version of it as “reduced in form and deprived in idea” when compared to French Gothic, which was for him the “true expression of the French spirit of the day.”<sup>657</sup> Birnbaum saw only a few instances of the successful development of a truly national art; these included Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian and pre-classical Aegean art, Greek and Roman art Antiquity and Gothic. However, it did not include Romanesque art and nor any art of the Modern Age as “both the Renaissance and Baroque also borrowed their morphology from Antiquity.”<sup>658</sup>

The national quality of art was in Birnbaum’s view closely connected with the level of artistic originality: only a fully original art can be purely national.<sup>659</sup> “The less a nation expresses itself in its art and the more it borrows from elsewhere, the smaller is, naturally, its originality.”<sup>660</sup> Such an opinion could potentially become problematic, when assessing the originality of Czech art. However, although Birnbaum described for example early Czech Gothic art as a formally reduced version of French Gothic, it might have been this very reduction, as he held, that made “our Gothic the expression of our specific national character...”<sup>661</sup> At the same time, Czech Gothic adopted some architectural forms, for instance radial vaults or vault ribs converging on the walls, very soon after they were developed in the West. The reason for that was in Birbaum’s view “a particular feature of our national character [...], namely the aspiration to novelty, [and] the attempt to introduce the latest [trends] into our country as soon as they were born somewhere else.”<sup>662</sup> Still, the above-mentioned national qualities that materialised in Czech Gothic architecture were for Birnbaum its only positive features, as it lagged behind French Gothic in everything else.<sup>663</sup>

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<sup>657</sup> Ibid., 183 and 179.

<sup>658</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>659</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>660</sup> Ibid.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid., 182–183.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid.

Birnbaum also developed a theory of the transgression of styles. According to this, “certain kinds of art and certain styles develop only up to a certain level in the country and nation of its origin and birth. At a certain point, the development in this ambience stops to stagnation and further development happens elsewhere, in another country or in another nation.”<sup>664</sup>

He argued that artistic development is not reliant solely on the “abilities of the nation’s spirit;” once the creative strength of the nation was depleted, artistic development was capable of moving to a location with “enough creative ability and unconsumed freshness.”<sup>665</sup> In a new location, or locations, art could materialize its potential to develop to its “ultimate outcomes and possibilities.”<sup>666</sup> Birbaum thus recognized the capacity of artistic forms to develop further in new cultures that were different from their place of origin, creating innovative, self-sufficient versions of the original artistic phenomenon.

Birnbaum thereby defended the quality of art in “provincial” countries, including Bohemia. Gothic architecture, which developed in the Ile de France, came, in his view, to stagnate in this region around mid-thirteenth century, and was adopted in southern France where the High Gothic style was accomplished. “Another process, then, which leads to the birth of Late Gothic, does not take place in France at all, but in Bohemia ([in the work of] Petr Parléř) and in Germany, especially in the south.”<sup>667</sup> The same happened in the Late Baroque period, which according to Birnbaum found its final existence north of the Alps, in Austria, Bohemia and southern Germany.<sup>668</sup>

Gothic and Baroque were the two historical periods that Birnbaum was most interested in. In many texts, he paid attention to their late stages and established relations between them. One of his most important texts was “Barokní princip v dějinách architektury” (The Baroque principle in the history of architecture) from

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<sup>664</sup> Vojtěch Birnbaum, “Doplňěk k vývojovým zákonům,” [An addition to the developmental laws] in *Listy z dějin umění*, 269.

<sup>665</sup> Birnbaum, “Doplňěk,” 272.

<sup>666</sup> *Ibid.*, 272–273.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid.*

1922, which examined the late forms of architectural styles that Birnbaum entitled “baroque.”<sup>669</sup>

Tendencies that are very similar, or even identical with the Baroque style are revealed also in the final evolutionary periods of other styles, or at least of those that were allowed to be accomplished to their ultimate consequences. In fact, every style has a tendency towards baroque and this is the permanent refrain in the history of art.<sup>670</sup>

Birnbaum outlined the transgression theory already here, as he laid emphasis on the baroque stages of a style that usually developed outside of the country of the style’s origin. Thus, he emphasised the Late Gothic architecture of Petr Parléř, “a personality who has not been appreciated enough in this country and even less abroad.”<sup>671</sup> Describing Parléř’s architecture of St Vitus cathedral in Prague, Birnbaum stressed his highly original ideas of construction and structural relations, which diverged from the stylistic norms of Gothic (Fig. 51–52).<sup>672</sup> He thus concluded that to a certain extent, Parléř was comparable to Michelangelo working 150 years later, although under different conditions.

Birnbaum indeed recognized that Michelangelo could not possibly have been familiar with Parléř’s work nor been inspired by it.<sup>673</sup> Nevertheless, by comparing Parléř with Michelangelo, he put the two artists on the same level, giving Parléř – and his work in Bohemia – substantial recognition. As such, he tried to show the originality of art in Bohemia and its correlation with artistic events abroad which appeared under similar conditions.

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<sup>669</sup> Birnbaum, “Barokní princip,” 209.

<sup>670</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid., 229–230.

<sup>673</sup> Ibid., 230.

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## Conclusion

Michael Ann Holly has compared the ideological and methodological change in the art historical discourse at the University of Vienna with the overall situation in fin-de-siècle Austria. The idea of the period spirit was one of the key concepts developed by Dvořák and applied to artistic and cultural phenomena in different geographical and time conditions. It also proved to be influential in the Czech environment where scholars such as Birnbaum and Kramář used it in their different ways to support their claims regarding the position of Czech art within world art history. The spirit of each nation was conceived of as original and capable of producing specific, national, art forms and Czech art was thus given a recognized place.

Both Birnbaum and Kramář tried to establish a relation between international and national art which would lift Czech art onto the same level as artistic production abroad. Thus, for instance, Kramář's notion of the "spirit" and "rhythm" of Czech cubism made it equal to but also distinguishable in terms of its national quality from the French paradigm. In his opinion, the specificities of the local conditions could be derived from the nation's traditions, which in the combination with foreign influences resulted in original, national expression in art. Likewise, Birnbaum's idea of the developmental similarities of styles in different countries proved that artistic achievements could be accomplished in the artistic "periphery" under distinctive local conditions.

Despite their interest in international influences and universal relations in art, these two representatives of the Czech students of the Vienna School still concerned themselves to a large extent with the notion of national art. Both took it for granted that Czech art could be national and that it might contain distinctive qualities that made it authentically Czech.

At the same time, similar views on the interaction between domestic tradition and incentives coming from outside, which helped to classify Czech art within the artistic development in the West, could nevertheless be detected in the work of other writers, such as Masaryk or Čapek, who were not associated with the Vienna School. Therefore when Czech art historians saw Czech art as derived both from national

conditions and from stimuli from abroad, they themselves drew their theories from both local intellectual traditions and international scholarship.

## 8. Criticisms of the Vienna School and its Ideology

The proponents of the Vienna School ideas and values came to dominate Czech art history from around 1910 onwards. As I have shown above, they were not the only art historians active in Bohemia and Moravia before and after the First World War, as a number of other scholars researched in and published on the topic of Czech art. It is therefore vital to take such scholarship conducted outside the Vienna School orbit into consideration when talking about Czech art history. These various scholars represented different approaches and traditions in viewing Czech art and were often more or less ardent critics of the Vienna School ideology providing, as a result, an alternative reading of the history of Czech art.

It is possible to identify several areas from which such criticism arose and describe the difference in the approach or ideology on concrete examples. I will, however, concentrate on the two most significant criticisms, starting with the work of Karel Chytil at the Czech division of Prague University. The second area of criticism relates to the debate between Riegl and Wickhoff, on the one hand, and Strzygowski, namely. the question of the Eastern or Western origins of early mediaeval art and architecture.

### **Against the method: Karel Chytil**

Karel Chytil, mentioned previously in connection with the development of art history at the university in Prague, taught a number of students in art history at the Charles-Ferdinand University. He was appointed extraordinary professor of art history in 1904 at the Czech part of the Charles-Ferdinand University and in 1911 became head of the Art History Department.

Chytil's general approach is usually described as positivistic, since he paid most attention to the "objective" examination of period sources based on the methods of natural sciences. Chytil thus was not interested in stylistic and formal analysis and was not interested in theoretical and abstract questions of art history.<sup>674</sup>

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<sup>674</sup> Krása, "Karel Chytil," in *Kapitoly* I, 174.

His early approach, however, may be related to the nationalistic debates in the latter half of the nineteenth century that were concerned with defending Czech art and artists on the basis of various strategies, examined in Chapter Three. In his first article from 1879, Chytil joined the nationalistic-oriented group of contemporary Czech authors, such as Zap and Baum, who searched for the original Czech qualities in art. His “Obrazy karlštejnské z Belvedere vídeňském” studied in detail in Chapter Four, represented these views quite well, as he singled out the originality of the paintings by Master Theodorik and his circle on the basis of rather abstract traits, such as richness, softness, and capability of colour transition.<sup>675</sup>

Although with time, Chytil lost some of the dogmatic views that emphasised the genuinely Czech qualities of art, he remained interested in the unique contribution of Czech artists. This was common also for the students of the Vienna School, and Chytil became openly critical of the School and its ideology. Such a stance can be seen, for example, in his lecture “O příštích úkolech dějin a historiků umění v československém státě” (On the future tasks of the history and art historians in the Czechoslovak state) delivered to the Circle for Cultivation of the History of Art in 1919, in which he discussed the nature of art historical study in Bohemia.<sup>676</sup> This lecture, which was a contribution to wider discussion of art history education in the region and was published in the same year, can thus be related to a number of other texts on the same topic published in *Volné směry* and analysed in Chapter Four. Chytil held that the primary tasks of art historians working in the new Czechoslovakia was to pay attention especially to the country and the state. With the new frontiers, the scope of research of local art historians had been extended into the “lands of the former territory of the Czech Crown lands.”<sup>677</sup>

Chytil’s criticism of the Vienna School focused on the question of who should study what art. Chytil claimed that young Viennese and German scholars used Prague as a “training ground” and published their works on grand topics accompanied by costly

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<sup>675</sup> Chytil, “Obrazy karlštejnské,” 270.

<sup>676</sup> Chytil, “O příštích úkolech dějin a historiků umění v československém státě,” *Naše doba* XXVI (1919): 753–766. The Circle was a club of art history specialists and non-specialists, founded in 1913 out of the initiative of Chytil (Marek Laštovka, *Pražské spolky*, Praha: Scriptorium, 1998).

<sup>677</sup> Chytil, “O příštích úkolech,” 754.

reproductions.<sup>678</sup> Real art historical work, however, rested on high quality research on individual topographical issues, on fieldwork.<sup>679</sup> The search for “Kunstwollen” and “Zeitgeist” represented to him a momentary fashion and opened research up to “speculation, theorizing and aesthetization.”<sup>680</sup> In other words, instead of looking for abstract theoretical and hypothetical laws, Czech art historians should, according to Chytil, “collect raw material, search for and discover authorship and links which are not readily apparent.”<sup>681</sup>

In addition to studying art and architecture within the political frontiers of Czechoslovakia, Chytil argued for a focus on “Slavic art” of the Slavic countries, such as Serbia, Bulgaria and Russia, and especially of the Byzantine and Pre-Christian periods. The reason for this was seen by Chytil in the fact that “Vienna did not favour the study of Byzantine and Orthodox art, fearing any relations with Russia and it smelled Pan-Slavism in everything.”<sup>682</sup> In this connection it is interesting to note that Chytil omitted to mention Josef Strzygowski, who by 1919 had published a number of works on Byzantine and Christian art in Eastern Europe and the Near East and was part of the Viennese art historical circles.<sup>683</sup>

This exclusion might have originated from Chytil’s demand to “de-Germanize” and particularly to “de-Viennize” Czech scholarship, meaning, to liberate it from any accounts that were German in origin. In his opinion, “we have been buried deep in Viennism which has affected us with its power, its proximity, blandishment and shine.”<sup>684</sup> Chytil equated Viennese scholarship with German on the basis of linguistic and ethnic similarities and criticized German influence on art history: “For a few decades, we have been persuaded that the history of art is a German science par

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<sup>678</sup> Ibid., 754.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid.

<sup>680</sup> Ibid., 758.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid.

<sup>682</sup> Ibid., 757.

<sup>683</sup> For example Josef Strzygowski, *Orient oder Rom? Beiträge zur Geschichte der Spätantiken und Frühchristlichen Kunst* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1900); *Kleinasien, ein Neuland der Kunstgeschichte*, Leipzig: C. Hinrichs, 1903); *Die Baukunst der Armenien und Europa* (Vienna: Schroll & Co., G.m.b.H., 1918).

<sup>684</sup> Chytil, “O příštích úkolech,” 761.

excellence, that other nations are secondary in the discipline [...]. Only the Germans had the right method and their method became a salvable word.”<sup>685</sup>

At the same time, Chytil recognized the advanced position of German in art history and other disciplines, which had been built up through the precise organization of universities, academies, scholars, monument protection, libraries and publishing houses. In this connection Chytil pointed to the abundance of publications in the German language, facilitated by better material and financial resources, and which had led, he argued, to an “over-production” and constant change in views.<sup>686</sup> Many quarrels, polemics, personal adversities, the existence of cliques, intrigues and fights for jobs had emerged also as a result of this situation. And, as Chytil added, “diverse hypotheses have been accepted here too [in Bohemia] as sheer facts. “Autos efa” [*he* said that] applies not only to the masters but is also transferred onto the disciples.”<sup>687</sup> These claims may thus have also been motivated by the fact that by 1919, the year of the publication of “O příštích úkolech,” many important art historical positions were occupied by the Vienna School graduates who were employing ideas adopted from their teachers.

In summary, Chytil’s criticism of the Vienna School focused both on methodology and the topics that should be studied. He promoted more empirically based research of sources and specific art works against the broader, speculative and theorizing issues in art history favoured by the Vienna School. According to Chytil, Czech (and Slovak) art historians should first examine their own heritage before looking for the connections of local art with Western art. He also dismissed certain approaches as intrinsically German or Austrian, and his methodological critique was thus an argument against the dependence of Czech art history on German or Viennese scholarship.

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<sup>685</sup> Ibid., 761.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid., 762.

<sup>687</sup> Ibid., 761–762.

## Against a Western orientation: Florian Zapletal and Josef Strzygowski

The second criticism of the Vienna School and its influence was not unconnected to Chytil's views. It came from a group of art historical "outsiders" who sought to contest the dominant position of the graduates from Vienna. By "outsiders" I mean an incongruent group of scholars or amateurs who have not generally appeared in accounts of Czech art history and who stood outside the main institutions. Their outsider status, however, does not mean that they made a negligible contribution to some of the fundamental discussions that helped to construct art history in Czechoslovakia especially after 1918. I shall focus on two of them, Florian Zapletal, a journalist and historian, and Jaroslav Nebeský, a Slavophile historian.

Florian Zapletal (1884–1969), a free-lance art historian, photographer and journalist, studied Czech and German languages in Prague and also for two semesters in Vienna.<sup>688</sup> It is not clear whether Zapletal attended any art historical courses in Vienna, but he certainly spent some time studying art history under Chytil in Prague around 1906.<sup>689</sup> There is evidence that Zapletal submitted an art historical thesis on the Moravian Baroque painter Martin Chvátal at the Faculty of Arts of the Masaryk University in Brno in 1922.<sup>690</sup> The thesis was, however, rejected for its methodological weakness, insufficient depth and lack of consistency in its subject.<sup>691</sup>

Zapletal, nevertheless, made an important subsequent contribution to the debate on Czech art history when, in 1919, he and Jaroslav Nebeský criticised Birnbaum's book

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<sup>688</sup> Kristina Glacová, "Florian Zapletal historik umění(?)," [Florian Zapletal, an art historian(?)] *Život a dílo. Sborník příspěvků z konference Muzea Komenského v Přerově, p. o. 18.–19. října 2005* [Life and work. An anthology of contributions from a conference by the Museum of Komenský in Přerov on 18–19 October 2005], ed. František Hýbl (Přerov: Muzeum Komenského v Přerově, 2006), 157.

<sup>689</sup> Ivo Hlobil, "Polemika Zapletala s Vojtěchem Birnbaumem o směřování českých dějin umění po vzniku Československé republiky," [The argument between Zapletal and Vojtěch Birnbaum about the direction of Czech art history after the establishment of the Czechoslovak republic] in *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>690</sup> Glacová, "Florian Zapletal," 158.

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid.* In relation to the context, in which Zapletal's claims appeared, it may also be worth to remark that in 1961, he mentioned in one of his diaries that he had been a student of Max Dvořák. This information is nevertheless supported by no concrete evidence and disproved by for example Kristina Glacová. She considered this statement as Zapletal's fabrication of uncertain motivation, which he only mentioned at the late stage of his life. *Ibid.*, 8.

on architecture in Ravenna.<sup>692</sup> Nebeský (1892–1937), a rather obscure figure, was a graduate of art history in Prague, who had strong inclinations towards pan-Slavism and was interested in the historical legacy of the Czech nation. After the birth of Czechoslovakia, he argued passionately for the orientation of art history, art and politics towards the East and expressed his views on the matter in a number of articles.<sup>693</sup>

In the study of Ravenna criticised by Zapletal and Nebeský, Birnbaum had developed the views of his teachers, Wickhoff and Riegl, in relation not only to Ravenna but also to the early Christian basilicas and rotundas in Bohemia, the inspiration for which he found in the West (i.e. in Italy, France and Germany).<sup>694</sup> Birbaum located the roots of Pre-Christian architecture in Rome, which, in his opinion had developed entirely independently of any Eastern influences.<sup>695</sup>

Nebeský and Zapletal published their criticism not only of this account but also of the entire legacy of the Vienna School in the journal *Umělecký list* (Artistic gazette).<sup>696</sup> The orientation of this short-lived journal (published between 1919 and 1922) was rather conservative: its mission, expressed in the second volume was to “find, in the first place, the Slav in us, to follow the path of Mánes and Aleš. Only these men of genius can lead us from the crisis of the present.”<sup>697</sup>

In the same year, Birnbaum replied to them in a supplement to *Volné směry*<sup>698</sup> after which Zapletal, Birnbaum’s main target, reacted to some of Birnbaum’s accusations

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<sup>692</sup> Vojtěch Birnbaum, *Ravennská architektura* [Ravenna architecture] (Prague: Česká akademie císaře Františka Josefa pro vědy, slovesnost a umění, 1916 and 1921); Jaro Nebeský, “Západ nebo východ?” *Umělecký list* I (1919): 121–122. Florian Zapletal, “Západ nebo východ?” *Umělecký list* I (1919): 147–151.

<sup>693</sup> For example Jaroslav Nebeský, “Krise západnictví,” [The crisis of pro-Western thinking] *Umělecký list* II, No. 1–2 (1920): 29–36.

<sup>694</sup> Vojtěch Birnbaum, “Stavební povaha nestarších českých bazilik,” [The construction nature of the oldest Czech basilicas] *Časopis společnosti přátel starožitností českých* XXVII (1919): 1–22; Vojtěch Birnbaum, “K otázce našich rotund,” [The question of our rotundas] *Památky archeologické* XXXV (1927): 167–185.

<sup>695</sup> Vojtěch Birnbaum, *Ravennská architektura*, quoted in Jiřina Hořejší, “Vojtěch Birnbaum” in *Kapitoly*, 105.

<sup>696</sup> Florian Zapletal, “Západ nebo východ?” *Umělecký list* I, 4–5 (1919): 111–113, Jaro Nebeský, “Západ nebo východ,” *Umělecký list* I, 4–5 (1919): 121–122.

<sup>697</sup> František Hoplíček, “Editorial,” *Umělecký list* II, No. 1–2 (1920): iii.

<sup>698</sup> Vojtěch Birnbaum, “Západ nebo východ?” *Zprávy Volných směrů* (1919): 49–53.



in a follow-up article in *Umělecký list*.<sup>699</sup> In both articles, Zapletal directed his criticism mainly against the hypothesis of the western origins of early Christian architecture, which actually echoed the disputes between the representatives of the two factions at the Vienna institutes as mentioned earlier.

To sum up the main points of the critique, Nebeský, in the first place, accused Birnbaum of being Pragocentric, prejudiced, arrogant; above all, the author of *Ravennská architektura* was blamed for using a “German method.”<sup>700</sup> This latter feature in particular was singled out by Zapletal as the main flaw in Birnbaum’s text. Zapletal claimed that the method used by Birnbaum is “German, it is Viennese, this is why [Birnbaum] can see so little, so poorly, this is why he is so vague about what he calls the *breadth of knowledge* [emphasis mine].”<sup>701</sup> This breadth of knowledge – by which Zapletal meant universalism– was taken as characteristic of the so-called German method. The “search for large-scale historical relations and connections and immersion into the psychological depths of creativity” were the words Zapletal used to describe the approach. Like Chytil, Zapletal was hostile to the abstract and theoretical ideas of the Vienna School and its followers.

Similarly, according to Zapletal, Birnbaum limited himself only to German textual sources which, for his critic, was another element of the German method. According to Zapletal, the excessive orientation towards Vienna and Germany threatened to isolate Czech art history: it was necessary to “break windows through the German walls which have isolated us from Europe and the rest of the world and condemned us to intellectual misery.”<sup>702</sup> This statement was reminiscent of the appeal to “break through the chains by which despotism has been binding us since the Battle of the White Mountain,” pronounced by Palacký a century earlier.<sup>703</sup> Palacký’s reading of the history of the Czech nation remained influential long into the twentieth century as it codified the existence of the Czech nation as a historically legitimate entity. Both

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<sup>699</sup> Zapletal, “Západ nebo východ?” *Umělecký list* I, No. 1 (1919): 147–151.

<sup>700</sup> Nebeský, “Západ nebo východ,” 112.

<sup>701</sup> Zapletal, “Západ nebo východ?” 149.

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>703</sup> Hans Kohn, “Pan-Slavism and the West, 1815–1860,” *Pan-Slavism*, 108; František Palacký, “Korespondence a zápisky III, Korespondence z let 1816–1826,” quoted in Macura, *Znamení zrodu*, 78.

Palacký and Zapletal saw the Germans as a threat to Czech autonomy, as something that isolated them and prevented them from their rightful development.

As an alternative to using the “German method,” Zapletal suggested that “specifically Czech values” should be injected into texts on these topics.<sup>704</sup> This meant, according to him, that attention should be turned to that art which was the most Slavic in the history of the nations in the new Czechoslovak state: early mediaeval, or Byzantine art.<sup>705</sup> Simultaneously, it was vital to study the Slavic art of other East European nations. Of course Zapletal’s appeal to break through German walls actually led in his concept to the construction of new walls. They would merely enclose Czech, or Slavic art in a new way, isolating it from the rest of artistic development in a way similar to the isolation that he saw invoked by German art history and German art.

It is at this point that Zapletal’s claims also approached those of Karel Chytil, who also promoted the study of Slavic artistic links. Moreover, Zapletal, whose article was published in the same year as Chytil’s lecture, in 1919, and hence after the establishment of Czechoslovakia, wished to realign art history with the new political borders: “Today, when Slovakia and Ruthenia constitute parts of our state, we need to request Byzantine studies more vehemently and more emphatically, otherwise we will not be able to understand the Slovak and Ruthenian souls in all the nuances of their creativity.”<sup>706</sup> He also lamented the fact that “Moravia and Slovakia have been studied by the Germans and Hungarians... not from the viewpoint of our history, not from our national and state perspective but from a foreign one...”<sup>707</sup> Zapletal consequently maintained that the Byzantine art of Czechoslovakia should be studied by local scholars of Slavic origin, not by “foreigners” or those who use foreign methods.

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<sup>704</sup> Zapletal, “Západ nebo východ?” 147.

<sup>705</sup> Ibid.

<sup>706</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid., 149.

## Birnbaum's defence of the Vienna School

In reply, Birnbaum addressed several points that are essential for an understanding of the contemporary state of affairs in Czech art history. He held that it was premature to turn attention to Slavic art of the East. Czech art historians should, in his opinion, first study “our own material, we have the right and obligation to address the great questions of Western European art into which we have been wedged since 1000.”<sup>708</sup> Although Birnbaum tried to consider art within universal relations, at the same time he put emphasis on the distinguishing qualities of Czech art and aimed to establish connections between Czech and *Western* European art.

Most significantly, he picked up the accusations of being German in method and pointed to the indisputable historical and artistic connections between the Czechs and Germans: “We [the Czechs] do not have a cultural domain, not even a great cultural personality, that would not be under a stronger or weaker [...] German influence.”<sup>709</sup>

This was an important change in the attitude of *some* Czech art historians, represented here by Birnbaum, towards the acknowledgement of the German legacy in Czech scholarship but also in Czech history: “Since the days of our awakening, the accusation of being German, or alien, has been meant to kill anything of any worth.”<sup>710</sup> In this connection, Birnbaum reminded his readers of the impact of German culture on the Czech intelligentsia: Masaryk studied in Vienna and the composer Bedřich Smetana was under the direct influence of Richard Wagner.<sup>711</sup> In other words, Birnbaum suggested a reading of the history of Czech art from a different viewpoint, with an emphasis on the Western (and German) links rather than on the Slavic ones. Such statements would have been almost unthinkable in the late nineteenth century in the disputes that took place between the Czech scholars on one hand and the Germans on the other. Now, the battle lines were redrawn according to the preference for Eastern or Western artistic origins, as well as for the affiliations with the respective sections of the Vienna School.

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<sup>708</sup> Birnbaum, “Západ nebo východ?” 53.

<sup>709</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>710</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>711</sup> Ibid., 52.

Birnbaum's reply to Zapletal contained yet another significant point, which related to the fact that Zapletal called the methods of the Vienna School "German." For many Czech scholars, the main representative of the Vienna School was Max Dvořák, a scholar of Czech origin. For them the Vienna School was not, therefore, necessarily associated with being German. The legacy of Dvořák among his students was very strong and as I have shown in the dispute between Dostál and Matějček, there were intense personal loyalties to him and to his legacy. Birnbaum turned Zapletal's accusations back against him, referring to "the amateurs and dilettantes who favoured the "method" of the pro-eastern Viennese school which, at any rate, means a deep drop [in the quality of] in German scientific thinking."<sup>712</sup> This was meant as a direct assault on Zapletal's association with Russian academia, for Zapletal had studied and lived in Russia for some time, but it was also an allusion to the ongoing debate in Vienna itself regarding the Eastern or Western origins of early Christian architecture.

Although Birnbaum did not name him directly, he was clearly targeting Strzygowski, who had argued for the Syrian and Armenian origins of early mediaeval architecture.<sup>713</sup> The method of this orientalist school under Strzygowski consisted of – Birnbaum claimed sarcastically – a systematic approach which, in the absence of proof, argued that evidence existed somewhere, but in "some very far eastern land where no one has ever been."<sup>714</sup> For Strzygowski had in fact claimed that somewhere in the Far East, documents of the original inspiration for European art were to be found, although it was not possible to determine where exactly.<sup>715</sup> As for Birnbaum, he suggested that such a far eastern land might be the area around Uzhhorod (now in the Ukraine) where "maybe some of the Eastern art could be found."<sup>716</sup>

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<sup>712</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>713</sup> For example Josef Strzygowski, "Der Schmuck der älteren el-Hadrakirche im syrischen Kloster der sketischen Wüste," *Oriens Christianus* 1 (1901) 356–372; *Kleinasion, ein Neuland der Kunstgeschichte* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1913).

<sup>714</sup> Birnbaum, "Západ nebo východ?" 52.

<sup>715</sup> For example Josef Strzygowski, review of *The Sarcophagus of Claudia Antonia Sabina and the Asiatic Sarcophagi*, by Charles Rufus Morey, *Art Bulletin* 7, No. 2 (December 1924): 69–71; Strzygowski, *Origins of Christian church art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).

<sup>716</sup> Birnbaum, "Západ nebo východ?" 52.

## Strzygowski and the architecture of the Western Slavs

In this context, it is relevant to discuss in more detail the reaction of Birnbaum to Strzygowski, when in 1925 the latter gave a lecture at the Czech university in Prague on the Pre-Romanesque ecclesiastical architecture of the Western Slavs.<sup>717</sup> Strzygowski published the lecture in the following year, and it thus became accessible to the students and supporters of Dvořák who, it seems, had failed to attend the original lecture. As Zapletal complained after the lecture:

Our art historians did not attend, although the lecturer talked exclusively on art historical topics [...]. It is absolutely incomprehensible why a student or a supporter of Dvořák's art historical school could not come and listen to the scholarly reasoning of an advocate, so to speak a founder, of the second art historical school in Vienna...<sup>718</sup>

The main argument of Strzygowski's lecture was based on the assumption that early mediaeval architecture in wood and stone served as vital stimuli for the later architectural development of, for example, Baroque churches. He identified several types of wooden churches in the early Romanesque period, which were indigenous to Bohemia, and he argued that their floor plan could be detected in churches of much earlier date. For example, the eighteenth century wooden church in Velké Karlovice (Fig. 53) with a Greek cross ground plan and gabled roof, was one of the types that were influenced by Romanesque centralised churches and that could be found not only in Central Europe but also in Finland (in the town of Ruovesi).<sup>719</sup> These types of early mediaeval constructions therefore constituted for Strzygowski a continuous tradition with their origins in the country inhabited by the Western Slavs.

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<sup>717</sup> Strzygowski, "Der vorromanische Kirchenbau der Westslawen," *Slavie* III (1926).

<sup>718</sup> Florian Zapletal, "Josef Strzygowski v Praze," [Josef Strzygowski in Prague] *Československá republika* 77, March 18, 1924.

<sup>719</sup> Strzygowski, "Der vorromanische Kirchenbau," 411 and 432.

*Figure 51 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 52 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

Some of these churches were preserved as copies (e. g. Velké Karlovice), but most of them had not survived (a church in Vlňoves from the fourteenth century, Fig. 54). According to Strzygowski, these wooden and, later, stone churches in Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia and Sub-Carpathenian Ruthenia, had also had an influence on the development of so-called high art.<sup>720</sup> This opinion can be again connected with a long-standing dispute between the two groups of scholars in Vienna. Riegl and his followers in Czechoslovakia held that wooden churches had been derived from stone architecture and, what is more, like all folk art, local wooden architecture took its inspiration from high art. Strzygowski, on the other hand, was aware and critical of these opposing “humanistic” theories, as he called them, which clashed with his own “objective research.”<sup>721</sup>

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<sup>720</sup> Ibid., 466.  
<sup>721</sup> Ibid., 445.

*Figure 53 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

Strzygowski partly built his argument around Lehner's book *Dějiny umění národa českého* (The art history of the Czech nation), and explored in detail earlier in Chapter Two. Strzygowski was complimentary of most of Lehner's conclusions and discoveries, although he former argued for the local origins of the churches in question whereas Lehner had indicated Byzantine origins. Strzygowski also argued that although Lehner had encountered mistrust towards his work from the Czechs, he had challenged the conventional typology of church building and that the significance of his research and fieldwork had been recently recognized.<sup>722</sup> For the same reason, Strzygowski also praised Zapletal who had conducted extensive research into the area of wooden churches especially in Moravia, Slovakia and Ruthenia.

Like Zapletal, Lehner had been another outsider in Czech art history. His three volumes on Romanesque art and architecture presented a highly subjective and romanticised view of what works of art and architecture might have looked like in the past while he used tangible historical sources only scarcely. The fact that Strzygowski referred to the work of these two minor art historians was naturally picked up and developed by his critics, and his lecture provoked strong reactions. Birnbaum responded in an article entitled "Nový názor na počátky české křesťanské architektury" (A new view of the origins of Czech Christian architecture), which was

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<sup>722</sup> Ibid., 444–445.

published in 1925.<sup>723</sup> It might also be pointed out that Birnbaum understood Strzygowski's architecture of the "Western Slavs" as solely "Czech" architecture.<sup>724</sup>

Birnbaum found Strzygowski's view on the domestic origin of Christian architecture in Bohemia and Moravia surprising because this opinion:

... is pronounced by a German, which Strzygowski is despite his Slavic name. It would not be so unexpected if this was expressed by a Czech scholar of a more nationalistic than scientific nature... And it is even more curious that the German Strzygowski blames Lehner (the same Lehner, which we came to consider a nationalist to the point of scholarly inferiority) for not defending the originality of Czech Romanesque architecture with sufficient energy and for sinning against it by acknowledging that its origins were imported from abroad. And it is not free of a comic tinge that a Czech art historian must refute this proof of originality imposed on us by Strzygowski.<sup>725</sup>

This extract summarizes the principal points of Birnbaum's objections. Firstly, Strzygowski was of Austrian-German nationality and he wrote on Czech (Slavic) architecture from a stance that would be rather expected from a Czech nationalist. For Birnbaum, Strzygowski also relied on the conclusions of a writer seen as an art historical dilettante. In addition, Birnbaum disputed Strzygowski's method, since – Birnbaum held – Strzygowski based his arguments on non-existent sources, overestimated their value, and ignored extant ones.<sup>726</sup> This approach was far from the "scientific" and "historical-philological" method Birnbaum associated with the legacy of Dvořák's school in Vienna.

Likewise, Birnbaum maintained that Strzygowski's theory of the local origins of early mediaeval wooden architecture was outdated and unoriginal, since it could be detected in the writing of early nineteenth-century Romantic writers, for example in the "sentimental cult of the Barbar" constructed by the French art historian Louis

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<sup>723</sup> Vojtěch Birnbaum, "Nový názor na počátky české křesťanské architektury," [A new view of the origins of Czech Christian architecture] *Niederlův sborník. Obzor praehistorický* IV (Prague: Společnost československých praehistoriků, 1925), 1–11.

<sup>724</sup> This topic is developed in more detail in the following chapter.

<sup>725</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>726</sup> Birnbaum, "Nový názor," 9.



Courajod or even in Palacký's views of the originality of the local Slavic styles.<sup>727</sup>

According to Birnbaum,

To see folk art as a reverberation of ancient, original local art from the pre-Christian period was a constituent of the local beliefs dozens of years ago, mostly in the time of the ethnographic exhibition of 1895. Since then, thanks to some younger art historians, a less romantic opinion, and one less rooted in our national vanity has prevailed, and such an opinion is closer to the truth.<sup>728</sup>

For the Vienna School followers in Bohemia, folk art represented a belated appropriation of "pan-European art," disseminated to the people by the culture of the towns, churches and castles. This provided the grounds, therefore, for yet another disagreement between the two factions of the Vienna School. In Bohemia, these contrasts where, nevertheless, mainly based on the different views of the origins of early mediaeval art and architecture. The Czech students of the Vienna School almost unilaterally accepted the presumptions of Riegl and Wickhoff regarding the Western origins of Central European architecture. For this dependence, they were accused by their critics, Nebeský and Zapletal, of being pro-German and prejudiced.

## Conclusion

It is possible to draw clear parallels between the situation in Czech art history in the 1920s and that of the 1870s. The Czech art historians of the 1870s were united in their defence of Czech art against German authors, such as Woltmann or Grueber, who argued for the German origin of the artworks in question. The enumeration of factual mistakes, the use of ironic language, strongly worded invective and a selective reading of their opponents' conclusions were only a few examples of the approach of the Czechs at that time. Some of the reactions of the writers of the 1920 to the opposing views of their colleagues may well remind one of these disputes from fifty years before.

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<sup>727</sup> Ibid.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid., 10.

Where the debates of the 1920s differed from those of the late nineteenth century was that the promoters of the Vienna School ideas were more dogmatic and rigid about the ideologies and theories of their teachers, which they supported in a passionate manner. Their predecessors of the 1870s aimed to lay claim to the Czech character of Bohemian and Moravian art against those authors who sought to emphasise the German presence in Central Europe. The approach the early art historians used did not differ much from that of the national awakeners, whose aim was the recovery of Czech national consciousness rather than strict historical accuracy. Now, the objective was to seek artistic affiliation with either the West or the East and thus construct a cultural and historical belonging to the particular geographical and *political* sphere. The “occidental” historians and art historians sought to establish links with the West that would – in their view – put the Czechs amount the industrial, civilized and progressive nations. On the other hand, those oriented towards the East, pursued to retain or recover the connections with the Slavic nations and Slavic traditions.

Interestingly, the question as to who should study Czech or foreign art, a topic that underlay many a discussion in the second half of the nineteenth century, also reappeared in these debates of the 1920s. Chytil was critical of the “young scholars from Vienna” who were only interested in Prague’s grand art and architecture, while the fine (analytical), rather exhausting, fieldwork remained undone. Zapletal also commented on who should examine Czech art and from what point of view, when he noted with regret the lack of art history texts written from a Czech national perspective. In his dismissive comments on Strzygowski, Birbaum, too, made it clear who was and who was not qualified to write about Czech art. In summary, the scholars argued that art history should be written from a specific point of view that complied with the ideological framework of their beliefs in political affiliations.

The new methods and approaches in art history that were introduced to Czechoslovakia by the followers of the “pro-Western” branch of the Vienna School were therefore not accepted unilaterally. Still, the Czech graduates from Vienna – such as Matějček, Birnbaum, Wirth, Kramář, Dostál, or Štech – all either direct students of Dvořák, Riegl or Wickhoff, or proponents of their ideas, built up very

strong positions in the discipline, took up crucial posts at various institutions and thus influenced the course of Czech art history for many decades.

## 9. The Art of the Czechoslovak People

In previous chapters, I have referred to the situation in the new political environment of the Czechoslovak state after 1918. At last, the Czechs were independent of the Austrian Monarchy, which also had a massive impact on ideas about Czech national identity at cultural, social and political levels.

When in 1918 the Czechs and Slovaks entered into the joint political unity of the Czechoslovak Republic, they found themselves in a new situation. The coexistence of different national and ethnic groups within the new state, the conscious turn of politics in the choice of foreign allies and the search for a new identity meant that the two ethnic groups had to reconsider their present and their past.

During the First World War, Czech (and Slovak) diplomats worked on at least three different scenarios of the possible future of the countries. One of them was based around negotiations for a state within a reorganized Austrian federation with more autonomy than prior to the War. Karel Kramář, for example, a deputy of the Young Czech Party in the Austro-Hungarian Reichsrat and, after 1918, the first prime minister of Czechoslovakia, promoted the creation of a Pan-Slavic-style political entity under the protection of Russia. In contrast, the future president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, promoted the idea of a completely independent political unit (either a republic or a kingdom) of the Czech, eventually Czech and Slovak, people.

Although connections with post-revolutionary Russia, which for many represented the protective shield, were not cut off, overall orientation of political thinking and aspirations was towards the West. Historical links were stressed especially with France through, for example, the 1848 revolution. The Czech position in the Franco-Prussian war, in which the Czechs supported the French, was also emphasised and seen as a link between the two nations. A manifesto of the journal *La Nation Tchèque* published by the French supporters and Czech exiles in France during the War and written most probably by the chief editor, Ernest Denis, exemplifies this stance:

[...] the Czech and French traditions became fused, they were inspired by the same ideas, they embraced the same faith. Nowhere did our revolution of 1848 have such a rapid and profound impact as in Prague. Nowhere did our disasters inspire more sincere and long-lasting pain.<sup>729</sup>

For many reasons, the alliance of Czechs and Slovaks came out as the winning concept in the diplomatic and cultural negotiations surrounding nationhood. A number of political speeches and declarations at the end of the Great War spoke about the “united Czechoslovak nation,” the main motivation being to create a state with a Slavic majority which would be more sustainable against the internal and external presence of the Germans and Hungarians. Czechoslovakia was created on the idea of a single-nation state of a Czechoslovak people with a common Czechoslovak vernacular. Language continued to be seen as the determining attribute of a nation, and hence, a single Czechoslovak language equalled a single Czechoslovak nation.<sup>730</sup> Although originating in the eighteenth-century ideas of Johann Gottfried Herder, such a conception continued to be held to into the twentieth century, and Herder’s writings on the Slavs were still influential for important writers such as Alois Jirásek (1851–1930) and Zdeněk Nejedlý (1878–1962), and played an active role in shaping debates over the future composition of the Czechoslovak state.<sup>731</sup>

Already in 1915, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk in his confidential memorandum *Independent Bohemia* written in England declared that a post-war Bohemian state should consist of the Czech regions (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) and that “to these would be added the Slovak districts of North Hungary...” because “the Slovaks are Czechs, even though they use their dialect as their literary language.”<sup>732</sup> As part of the Czech nation, the Slovaks “strive for independence and accept the programme of union with Bohemia.”<sup>733</sup>

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<sup>729</sup> *La nation tchèque*, ed. Ernest Dennis (Paris: Conseil National des Pays Tcheques, 1 May 1915).

<sup>730</sup> Holý, *The Little Czech*, 91.

<sup>731</sup> Emanuel Rádl, *Válka Čechů s Němci* [The war of the Czechs with the Germans] (Prague: Čin, 1928), 95.

<sup>732</sup> T. G. Masaryk, “Independent Bohemia,” in R. W. Seton-Watson, *Masaryk in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943), 125.

<sup>733</sup> *Ibid.*

There are a number of other examples of this political stance which, apart from aiming at the creation of a stronger single ethnic majority within the new state, followed in the attempts of the national awakeners of the nineteenth century to construct a nation of Czechoslavs (cf. the Czechoslavic Ethnographical Exhibition) who were only later renamed Czechoslovaks.<sup>734</sup> As Holý has stated, during the First World War, “talk about the Czech or Czechoslovak nation was sometimes the conscious strategy of Czech and Slovak diplomats in their effort not to confuse the politicians of the Alliance, who were expected to be unfamiliar with the history and ethnic composition of Central Europe.”<sup>735</sup> Aside from Masaryk’s “Memorandum,” the “The Washington Declaration” of 18 October 1918 mentioned both the Czechoslovak nation as well as the entitlement of the Czechs to unification with their Slovak brothers. Likewise a declaration of the Czech members of parliament from 1917 called for “the unification of all branches of the Czechoslovak nation in a democratic Czech state also containing the Slovak branch of the nation.”<sup>736</sup>

By the end of the First World War, the Slovaks of Czechoslovakia became allegedly equal to the Czechs. Although the ethnic unity was created to prove on the international field that Czechoslovakia existed as one single national majority, historically speaking, the Czech part of the state had enjoyed better economic, educational and social conditions, and had been more successful in creating its own distinctive identity through the nineteenth century national revival. A by-product of this fact was that in the newly independent state the Czechs came to be increasingly dominant in political and cultural terms, leading to growing dissatisfaction on the part of the Slovaks with their marginalization within the state. In 1924, R. W. Seton-Watson noted that at the time of negotiation on the union of the Czechs and Slovaks, the Czechs “had the educated class and the trained officials whom Magyar policy had consistently denied to the Slovaks, therefore were at once able to provide adequate machinery for the new state.”<sup>737</sup>

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<sup>734</sup> Holý, *The Little Czech*, 93.

<sup>735</sup> Holý, 95.

<sup>736</sup> Quoted in *ibid.* It should also be noted that the French title of the Czechoslovak National Council, the Paris-based exile government during the First World War, was “Conseil National des Pays Tchèques,” where, again, “Tchèques” stood for both Czech and Slovak. Although this body of politicians attempted to create a new political entity, they wished to prevent any fears of balkanisation of Central Europe that the Allies might have had. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>737</sup> R. W. Seton-Watson, *The New Slovakia* (Prague: F. Borový, 1924), 6.

After 1918, however, the idea of the Czechoslovak people and Czechoslovak language was widely promoted in press and politics and attempts to prove their existence by finding evidence in history were made. According to Miroslav Hroch, in old, collapsing regimes, non-dominant ethnic groups seek community in shared culture and/or language.<sup>738</sup> Once the imminent dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire had become apparent to political representatives of the Czechs and Slovaks, they decided to act as a homogeneous community. Typical for this phase of the development of nation-states is, for Hroch, the search for the relics of political autonomy, recovery of the memory of the former independence and reconnection with a mediaeval written language.<sup>739</sup> The Czechs and Slovaks worked together to combine these prerequisites in order to successfully create an independent political entity in a way which was similar to the strategies of the Czech national revivalists.

### **Albert Pražák and the idea of the Czechoslovak nation**

Czechoslovakism was promoted in historical as well as in *art* historical texts. An example of this conscious re-reading of history was Albert Pražák's book *Československý národ* (The Czechoslovak nation) of 1925, written at a time of an increasing resistance of the Slovaks to the Czechoslovak idea and Hungarian criticism of it.<sup>740</sup> Pražák was a historian of Czech literature and – after the end of the First World War – a professor at the newly established university in Bratislava. He focused on the links between Czech and Slovak literary works and although genuinely interested in Slovak literature, he also promoted the idea of a single Czechoslovak nation and identity.<sup>741</sup>

Pražák observed that “the Czechoslovaks as a political nation are the Czechoslovak political triumph over the Magyars” in conjunction with the contemporary attempt to prove a Slavic majority over the German and Magyar minorities in the new state. He quoted a great number of contemporary and historical sources that supported the idea

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<sup>738</sup> Miroslav Hroch, “The Social Precondition of National Revival in Europe,” (1985), quoted in Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 159–160.

<sup>739</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>740</sup> Albert Pražák, *Československý národ* (Bratislava: Akademie, 1925).

<sup>741</sup> Kutnar, “Dějiny literatury, umění a hudby,” [The history of literature, art and music] in *Přehledné dějiny*, 891–892.

of “Czechoslovakism.”<sup>742</sup> In the chapter entitled “Doklady pro název ‘Československý národ’” (The proofs of the title “Czechoslovak nation”), Pražák claimed that historically, the Slovaks had also been called Czechs, Czechs or Slovaks, Czechoslovaks, and Czech Slavs.<sup>743</sup> In broader terms, the names of the Czechs and Slovaks as a single nation could appear in many forms: both as Czechoslovaks and Czechoslavs, which were for Pražák interchangeable. The author found the earliest evidence in a thirteenth century anonymous text that had mentioned the appellation “Selanos et Boemos” and “Selavos et Boemi” and presented various other historical and contemporary sources that had referred to for example the “Bohemo-Slavi,” “die böhmischen Slaven,” or “Czechoslavs.”<sup>744</sup> Pražák considered all these different variations of the names for the Slavs, Czechs, Bohemians and Slovaks as proof of the existence of joint Czechoslovak identity that had been thereby confirmed by historical sources.

For Pražák the historical proof in support of the idea of one single nation of the Czechs and Slovaks entitled one to speak of “a sociological, historical, traditional, ethnographical, linguistic, literary” unity. Consequently, “the Czechoslovak political organization has a joint national and state will and ensures [...] its future on the ruins of the sad political past and on the decay of all artificial elements which were brought into our life with the aim to divide.”<sup>745</sup> The Czechoslovak nation therefore had existed, according to Pražák, in the distant past (in the times of the Great Moravian Empire) and was reborn (recovered) upon the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

Pražák produced numerous examples of the common past and heritage of the Czechs, Moravians and Slovaks. The fact that the Czechs and Slovaks could understand each other, for example, meant for Pražák that the two groups spoke one language with different dialects. Likewise the similarities of the rural cultures in the region of Moravian Slovakia (Slovácko) and in Slovakia and the similarity of their material culture expressed “Czechoslovak national unity.”<sup>746</sup>

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<sup>742</sup> Pražák, *Československý národ*, 49.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>744</sup> Ibid., 14–28.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>746</sup> Ibid., 11.



## Czechoslovak art

After 1918, the idea of *Czechoslovakism* also appeared in the discipline of art history where a wide range of books, articles and exhibitions used the concept of “Czechoslovak art.” I shall now look at a selection of publications that consciously employed this construct and examine their targets, authors and audiences. Many of the texts implementing the notion of Czechoslovak art came from the Czech graduates from the Vienna School as an application of the theory of the universal development of art. Significantly, the concept was adopted also by non-Czech authors and became recognized abroad.

One of the earliest examples was an exhibition of *Czechoslovak* artists by the Prague-based artistic group Mánes held in Bern in 1919. A Swiss reviewer A.W., whose report on the exhibition was reprinted in *Volné směry*, understood the exhibition of Czechoslovak art to offer proof of the “rightfulness of self-determination [of Czechoslovak people]... and of the maturity which they present to the world for approval.”<sup>747</sup> He or she also gave a thorough account of the different traditions traceable in the paintings, sculptures and graphic works exhibited, pointing out especially French and German inspirations. It is notable, however, that while A.W. used the term “Czechoslovak art” throughout his review, none of the artists mentioned came from the Slovak part of the state.

It is difficult to determine how closely the review reflected the actual composition of the Bern exhibition or if it was the author’s decision to comment on Czech artists only as the readers might have been more familiar with them.<sup>748</sup> This bias, nevertheless, became a commonplace in texts of other writers too, especially where they were of Czech origin.

In 1926 and 1928 two books were published on the same topic and both of them came from the Vienna School disciples. Both *Československé umění* (Czechoslovak art, 1926) and *Umění československého lidu* (The art of the Czechoslovak people,

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<sup>747</sup> A. W., “Čechoslovácké umění. Úvaha o výstavě čechoslováckých umělců v Bernské Kunsthalle,” [Czechoslovak art. Remarks on the exhibition of Czechoslovak artists in Kunsthalle in Bern], *Zprávy Volných směrů* 53 (1919). First published in *Berner Intelligenzblatt*, July 20, 1919.

<sup>748</sup> Apart from the short article, it has not been possible to establish any more about the exhibition from archival or library sources.

1928) were intended as introductory texts for a “Czechoslovak” audience and in the case of the former volume, which was published in English, German and French, also for a foreign readership.

*Československé umění* was written by Wirth, Birnbaum, Matějček and the archaeologist Josef Schráníl, as “in a way the expression of the opinions of one generation on the meaning of our art,” with special attention to “both the greatest periods in the history of Czechoslovak art: Gothic and Baroque, and the significant individuals characteristic for this development.”<sup>749</sup>

As in the review of the Swiss exhibition, the authors of *Československé umění* neglected to mention any Slovak artworks and even the extensive illustrative part did not include a single work from Slovakia. The selection represented the canonical Czech works of art and architecture. Examining the history of Czechoslovak art from the early Middle Ages until the late nineteenth century, each author was nevertheless conscious of the currently topical political construct of Czechoslovak art. Each section on a specific period therefore started with a sentence using the adjective *Czechoslovak* in one form or another. In the section on mediaeval art, the author for example claimed that “the development of Romanesque sculpture in *Czechoslovakia* was closely connected ... with the development of monumental architecture.”<sup>750</sup> Nevertheless, this is where notions of Czechoslovakism stopped and the following lines dealt with the situation in Bohemia, mostly in Prague, and, less frequently, in Moravia: “In the second half of the twelfth century, the artistic quality and technical perfection of sculpture in *Bohemia* increased [emphasis mine].”<sup>751</sup>

The same pattern was repeated in the case of each subsequent artistic phenomenon or period which the authors mentioned: “*Czechoslovak* Gothic painting is by far the most famous chapter in our history of culture” while subsequently it was argued, for example, that “the features of the new style started coming to *Bohemia* quite late...” Similarly, in the case of Baroque art, the authors noted that “in the last decade of the seventeenth century, Baroque in *Czechoslovakia* finds new forms of development,”

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<sup>749</sup> Zdeněk Wirth, ed., *Československé umění*, (Prague: Vesmír, 1926), 32.

<sup>750</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>751</sup> Ibid.

followed by claims that “the greatest document of *Czech Baroque* is *Prague* [emphasis mine].”<sup>752</sup>

As a result, the attention to artistic development in Czechoslovakia was limited to Bohemia. This image was supported also by the other text, *Umění československého lidu*, which addressed folk, or popular art.<sup>753</sup> Though this book, authored by Wirth (who was again the editor), Matějček and the ethnographer Ladislav Lábek (1882–1970), was not distributed in other languages like *Československé umění*, its message was equally important.<sup>754</sup> The authors intended it as a critique of the widespread tendency to see folk art as the authentic expression of the national spirit. In contrast Wirth, Matějček and Ládek emphasised the dependence of vernacular artistic forms on “high” art. The authors saw folk art as a belated, often conservative and primitive response to the predominant art styles favoured by the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie; they thereby placed folk art within the wider evolution of the artistic culture of Western Europe.<sup>755</sup>

The geographical frontiers of interest of *Umění československého lidu* remained the same as in *Československé umění* – they were identical with political composition of Czechoslovakia – but now attention was also turned to the regions east of Moravia (Fig. 56–57). According to the authors,

The different level of cultural maturity in the individual Czechoslovak lands until the mid-nineteenth century and the uneven progress of cultural level here [in the eastern regions] meant that ... while folk art has almost died out in Bohemia, there are several enclaves in Moravia and large areas of living folk art in Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia.<sup>756</sup>

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<sup>752</sup> Ibid.

<sup>753</sup> Zdeněk Wirth, ed. *Umění československého lidu* (Prague: Vesmír, 1928).

<sup>754</sup> Wirth wrote the general introduction and the part on architecture, Matějček on folk ornament, painting and sculpture and Lábek on pottery, glass, costume and textiles.

<sup>755</sup> Wirth, *Umění československého lidu*, 11.

<sup>756</sup> Ibid.

*Figure 54 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 55 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

Such a claim again supported the notion of a modern Czech nation and a rural, folkish Slovakia (and Ruthenia). Focusing on the different aspects of folk art (architecture, interior decoration, ornament, pottery, minor sculpture, traditional costume), their material, techniques and sources of inspiration, this book presented a good number of examples from various regions in Slovakia both in text and in picture.

As I have suggested above, the concept of a Czechoslovak nation and of Czechoslovak art was partly constructed in the various political memoranda and texts on the Czechoslovak nation with the intention of proving the existence of the unity to foreign audiences. In addition to the exhibition in Bern on Czechoslovak Art, or Wirth's book of the same name, other texts on this topic were published to support the notion.

A volume of a fortnightly French journal *L'art vivant* devoted to Czechoslovak art was published in 1928. In general, this journal focused on diverse artistic topics, including the presentation of the art of various countries in post-First World War Europe. Due to the selection of authors (Kramář, Matějček, Birnbaum, Pečírka and Štech), the story it told about Czechoslovak art was the same as in those other texts mentioned previously; the main chapters were entirely dedicated to different historical aspects of the visual arts in Bohemia and Moravia. Attention was turned, for example, to mediaeval art and architecture, the art of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Bohemia and predominantly in Prague. Slovakia and Ruthenia only appeared in Zdeněk Wirth's account of folk art, in connection with the applied arts (e.g. lace) and contemporary popular art. The article on the latter topic was written by Josef Vydra (1884–1959), the only scholar based in Bratislava. Vydra as a Czech scholar originally came from Brno and his interest was in applied art and design. From 1928 he was based at the High School of Applied Arts in Bratislava, popularly referred to as the "Slovak Bauhaus."<sup>757</sup>

## **The history of art in Slovakia**

In this connection, I also shall briefly mention the state of art historical scholarship in Slovakia at the moment of creation of the independent state. It is important to emphasise that historiographic writing on this topic published in Czech and Slovak journals was dominated by texts that gave preference to writers of Czech and Slovak origins and ignored the German or Hungarian authors, who still took interest in the topic of art in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia. They had been active in these regions

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<sup>757</sup> Ján Bakoš, "Český dejepis umenia a Slovensko," [Czech history of art and Slovakia] *Umění* XXXVI, No. 3 (1982): 212.

in the pre-war and interwar periods and, like the Germans in Bohemia, had developed their own views of local works of art.

Before the creation of the independent state, the understanding of art in Slovakia had been shaped by several historical circumstances. According to Bakoš, the nineteenth-century Slovak national rebirth based the national culture on literature and ethnography, rather than on visual art: “The Slovak intelligentsia did not have enough art historians, nor a concept of artworks being part of the national culture.”<sup>758</sup> The study of art and architecture in Slovakia had thus been left to the Hungarians who classified it as a part of Hungarian heritage. After the creation of Czechoslovakia, the first non-Hungarian scholars interested in Slovak art were from the Czech part of the state – the pupils of Karel Chytil and Vojtěch Birnbaum - who engaged in the promotion of the joint historical legacy of the Czechoslovak nation.<sup>759</sup>

Although attention to Slovak art remained marginal during the interwar period, an increasing number of art historians became interested in the topic. Within Czechoslovakia, however, Slovak art was still seen as secondary to Czech and research of it was only developing. Apart from Josef Vydra, whom I have already mentioned, Slovak art and architecture became a topic of interest for Czech scholars, such as Jan Hofman (1883–1945), a former student of Karel Chytil and, later, for their Slovak counterparts. Hofman focused on architectural monuments in Slovakia and their protection. In 1921, he superseded the architect Dušan Jurkovič at the government office for monumental protection.<sup>760</sup> Another significant figure was Václav Mencl (1905–1978), a student of Birnbaum, who pioneered research of Slovak mediaeval architecture, and his wife, Dobroslava Menclová (1904–1978), who undertook extensive research into Slovak historical monuments. Josef Polák (1886–1945), director of the Východoslovenské múzeum Košice (The Museum of East Slovakia in Košice) where he organized a number of exhibitions of contemporary Slovak, Czech and Western European art, also authored a survey of Slovak art history in Czech in 1925, the first attempt at a synthetic analysis of the

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<sup>758</sup> Ibid.

<sup>759</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>760</sup> Ibid.

history of arts in this region.<sup>761</sup> Gizela Weyde (1894–1966), a student of Max Dvořák and the classical archaeologist Emanuel Löwy, worked in the city museum of Bratislava.<sup>762</sup> Her work focused on the formal analysis of mainly Baroque art in Bratislava, and this was connected with her Viennese training.<sup>763</sup> Nevertheless, after she failed to find a permanent job in Bratislava, Weyde left for Germany in 1928.

The teaching of art history at the university in Bratislava, which was established in 1919, started in 1924 with František Žákavec (1878–1937), another Czech art historian. Although based in Bratislava, Žákavec devoted his research to topics in Czech and Western European art, especially the nineteenth century. He concentrated mainly on canonical artists, such as Josef Mánes, Mikuláš Aleš, Max Švabinský, or Auguste Rodin, but he also produced more general studies on Impressionism.<sup>764</sup> As a university teacher, he trained a new generation of Slovak art historians, among them Alžběta Mayerová-Günterová (1905–1973). Mayerová-Günterová also studied in Vienna under Hans Tietze and initially worked in the Municipal Museum of Bratislava and later the city of Martin in Central Slovakia. She curated a number of exhibitions there, including, for example “The Slovak people in the artworks of Czechoslovak artists” and she attempted to identify the specific national features of Slovak art and culture.

Vladimír Wagner (1900–1955), referred to as “the first Slovak art historian,” studied in Prague under Birnbaum.<sup>765</sup> Wagner’s attention was scattered over a large number of topics from mediaeval architecture to contemporary Slovak art and that was most probably the reason why he lacked the scientific approach of some of his colleagues (e.g. Václav Mencl).<sup>766</sup> He nevertheless wrote the first history of Slovak art, *Dejiny*

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<sup>761</sup> Jan Polák, “Výtvarné umění na Slovensku,” [The visual arts in Slovakia] *Slovenská čítanka*, ed. Jan Kabelík (Prague: Emil Šolc, 1925). Quoted in Ingrid Ciulisová, “Lesk a bieda slovenskej kunsthistorie (Slovenský dejepis umenia 1919–1939),” [The shine and destitution of Slovak art history (Slovak art history 1919–1939)] *Ars* I (1993): 70.

<sup>762</sup> Although Weyde was not listed among Dvořák’s graduates in *La scuola Viennese di storia dell’arte*, she was referred to as Dvořák’s student who had graduated in 1921, in the year of Dvořák’s death. Cf. for example Ciulisová, “Lesk a bieda.”

<sup>763</sup> Ciulisová, “Lesk a bieda,” 68.

<sup>764</sup> Žákavec, *Knížka o Alšovi*; idem, *L’oeuvre de Joseph Mánes*. Viera Luxová, “Doc. PhDr. Alžběta Günterová-Mayerová (1905–1973),” *Ars* IX–X (1975–76): 329–337.

<sup>765</sup> Bakoš, “Český dejepis,” 213.

<sup>766</sup> Ciulisová, “Lesk a bieda,” 69.

*výtvarného umenia na Slovensku* (The history of visual art in Slovakia) published in 1930.<sup>767</sup>

Being slightly general and lacking detailed analysis, this book explored the development of the visual arts in the Slovak region from the “earliest times” of the second century, when the Romans occupied the territory, until the contemporary artistic events of the twentieth century. Wagner emphasised mainly the achievements of the nineteenth century which “saw national existence and self-awareness [of the nation] as the basis for the idea of art.”<sup>768</sup> Because art “cannot always be explained on the basis of general aesthetics of European art,” Wagner looked for the specificities of Slovak art.<sup>769</sup> He derived them from the milieu, in which art originated, the artistic tradition in all its expressions, and from the Slovak people who were the historical holders and creators of the works of art. The author was therefore conscious of the rather marginalized position of Slovak art in comparison to the tradition of Western Europe, but emphasised the connections between Slovak and European culture and stressed the active role of the Slovak region in the creation of its own art, especially in contemporary painting.<sup>770</sup>

Wagner also recognized the long-lasting reliance of the Slovak people on “the means of secondary artistic production, of – for example – the art of “folk primitives” [ľudový primitívi].” For Wagner, folk art in Slovakia had had a long tradition which in some places could be traced back to the twelfth century and it represented the spiritual “alertness” of the nation in the times of “national silence and social and economic dependency.”<sup>771</sup>

*Dejiny výtvarného umenia na Slovensku* was not the only book that attempted to view the development of art in Slovakia in relation to the progress of art in Central Europe (with the exception of Hungary). Polák, Mencl and Hofman all tried to establish Slovakia as a distinctive, if not independent, artistic region, with a specific climate

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<sup>767</sup> Vladimír Wagner, *Dejiny výtvarného umenia na Slovensku* [The history of visual arts in Slovakia] (Trnava: Spolok svätého Vojtěcha, 1930).

<sup>768</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>769</sup> Ibid.

<sup>770</sup> Ibid., 6 and 97.

<sup>771</sup> Ibid., 5



and economy.<sup>772</sup> The authors' emphasis on the general, universal development of art gave the opportunity for historians of Slovak art to incorporate Slovak art into the wider European context and to equate artistic boundaries with political state frontiers.

Slovak art was understood by Slovak art historians as more or less derived from superior Western forms, but for Czech art historians of the interwar period, Slovak art and the expression of the Slovak national identity consisted in folk art (Fig. 58–59).<sup>773</sup> Slovakia was identified through its folk art because for many, as David Crowley noted, Slovak culture was – for a long time – a peasant culture.<sup>774</sup> From the nineteenth century onwards the idea of “the backward nature of Slovakia” was confirmed through its becoming the object of intensive ethnographic study.<sup>775</sup>

*Figure 56 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

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<sup>772</sup> Bakoš, “Český dějepis,” 213.

<sup>773</sup> Václav Mencl, “Ako sme začínali,” [How we were beginning] *Pamiatky a príroda*, No. 2–6 (1976), quoted in Bakoš, “Český dějepis,” 222, note 71.

<sup>774</sup> Crowley, “The Uses,” 15.

<sup>775</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

*Figure 57 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

Such an approach had become evident in events such as the Czechoslovak Exhibition in Prague in 1895 or the earlier Weltausstellung of 1873 in Vienna where Slovakia was presented through its rural material culture. At the same time, however, native Slovak architects and theorists, such as Jurkovič, also consciously emphasised the vernacular character of Slovakia and parts of Moravia in their practical and theoretical work.<sup>776</sup>

It was in keeping with tradition that the two Czech publications on “Czechoslovak art” and the French *L’art vivant en Tchécoslovaquie* all presented art in Slovakia as based on peasant or folk culture. The authors that reappeared in all three publications (Wirth, Kramář, Matějček, Birnbaum, Pečírka, and Štech) were directly or indirectly the products of Vienna. Wirth, Matějček and Štech also published extensively on folk

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<sup>776</sup> For example in Dušan Jurkovič, *Práce lidu našeho* [The works of our people] (Vienna: A. Schroll, 1905).

art which was another important topic in which for example Alois Riegl had been interested.<sup>777</sup> For instance in *Volkskunst, Hausfleiss und Hausindustrie*, Riegl examined the economic and social circumstances related to the production of folk art, an approach that Štech adopted.<sup>778</sup>

There were other criticisms of the identification of national art with vernacular culture of alongside those articulated by Wirth and his Vienna-trained colleagues. In his article “O národním umění” (On national art) published in 1916 F. X. Šalda, for example, argued against the understanding of folk art as an independent, self-sustained style and pointed out its dependence on ornament and bourgeois art.<sup>779</sup> Similar opinions had also been expressed earlier by Karel Čapek in 1913.<sup>780</sup>

This marginalization of folk art and design, and the move away from the romantic idealisation of peasant culture, became typical for Czech writers in the 1920s. In contrast, at the beginning of the century, folk art was still conceived as “ahistorical and the product of noble instinct” in Bohemia as well as in – for instance – Hungary, Slovakia or Poland.<sup>781</sup> Large groups in these countries existed as peasant peoples and the division lines between the urban and the rural became associated with an ethnic split.<sup>782</sup>

Due to industrialisation, modernisation and economic migration, the peasant culture of Bohemia had been constantly declining and the Czechs came to the critical views of folk (peasant) culture, since they wanted to fashion themselves as an industrial, urban and “western” people. This idea of the modern Czech nation was confirmed by the status and size of Prague, with its multi-ethnic history, cultural institutions, and embrace of contemporary architectural styles.<sup>783</sup>

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<sup>777</sup> Riegl, *Stilfragen* and idem, *Volkskunst, Hausfleiss und Hausindustrie* (Berlin: G. Siemens, 1894).

<sup>778</sup> V. V. Štech, “Podstata lidového umění,” [The basis of folk art] *Pod povrchem tvarů* (Prague: Václav Petr, 1941); idem, “Umění města a venkova,” [Art of the city and the countryside] *Pod povrchem tvarů*.

<sup>779</sup> Šalda, “O národním umění.”

<sup>780</sup> Čapek, “Otázka národního umění.”

<sup>781</sup> Crowley, “The Uses,” 1–2.

<sup>782</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>783</sup> Clegg, *Art*, 227.

## Folk art in Czech art history

Most Czech art historians who graduated from Vienna developed critical ideas on folk art and its origins. Matějček and Wirth, for example, stood up against the excessive exaltation of folk art in art history and its association with the true national culture, although Štech, while critical of some aspects of folk art, still found connections between folk art and national culture. Matějček and Wirth were also sceptical of the use of folk motives in contemporary design and visual art and fought against the application of folkloric forms to architecture and art. This stance paralleled the work of contemporary practising artists of the Czech avant-garde and modernism who called for a purity of form and break off from binding traditions. As their point of view was likewise significant for understanding of the relationship between folk art and national art, I shall return to the subject of the modernist attitudes shortly.

The absorption of motifs from folk art into contemporary art practice, and the conflation of national art with folk art had already been criticised by Zdeněk Wirth in 1910.<sup>784</sup> In his article “Lidové a moderní umění” (Folk art and modern art) he identified folk art as “a residuum of autochthonous culture” that was affiliated with the forms of “great” high, official art.<sup>785</sup> For this reason, Wirth thought it impossible to “see in folk art the so-called national art, i.e. the art that would represent the nation on the cultural field of the highest criteria and was *in nuce* the expression of the artistic abilities of the race, speaking the same language.”<sup>786</sup>

Instead, folk art was for Wirth a product of one particular class of the nation, that is, the peasant estate or the small people of the villages.<sup>787</sup> Originally, this class was defined by its isolation, its relative self-sufficiency, the influence of the patriarchal family structure and its slow pace of life. Consequently, according to Wirth, their artistic practices were determined by a rustic naivety, informed by the instincts of the primitive soul and traditions.<sup>788</sup> Folk culture declined in the nineteenth century with

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<sup>784</sup> Zdeněk Wirth, “Lidové a moderní umění,” *Styl. Časopis pro architekturu, umělecká řemesla a úpravu měst* II (1909–1910): 9–16.

<sup>785</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 and 9.

<sup>786</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>787</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>788</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

the rise of modern industry, better communication and changing living conditions, and its remnants could be only “seen in museums or Slovak villages.”<sup>789</sup> It became a historical document and an antique and in Wirth’s opinion, it should have stayed as such rather than been exploited in the form of ornaments and folk motives by contemporary design industry.<sup>790</sup> This view thus repeated Riegl’s critical stance towards folk art and its use by contemporary art and design, which he had articulated in *Volkskunst, Hausfleiss und Hausindustrie* in 1894.<sup>791</sup>

Matějček expressed a similar scepticism towards folk art and its role in the universal development of art. He opposed the equation of folk culture with national culture, and criticised the use and re-use of folk motives in contemporary art and design, as well as the conscious attempts to produce folk art.<sup>792</sup> Such an endeavour was for Matějček a “modest reduction of the older programme of national art,” which was now dead: “the art of great national artists is a closed chapter in the history of our art and [...] the art drive [Kunstwollen] of our younger generations cannot be forced to follow depleted and dead ideas.”<sup>793</sup>

Thus defined, folk art, however, differed from contemporary views which, as Matějček claimed, understood folk art only as peasant art. For him, high art consisted of independent, original artworks by great individuals and these works were genetically interconnected. Folk art, on the other hand, in a more general sense, was the art of anonymous authors without an individual, personal will; it was a secondary and derivative art, incapable of creating new values.<sup>794</sup> For Matějček, folk art was always derived from primary, higher forms of art, and it was this high art, which produced the particular creative style or epoch.

Like Wirth, Matějček saw folk art as a historical relic, a concern of the past, and a derivative of high art. It existed in all phases of artistic history, but rose to prominence in the mid-seventeenth century, when small towns, the Church and the

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<sup>789</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>790</sup> Ibid., 15–16.

<sup>791</sup> Riegl, *Volkskunst*.

<sup>792</sup> Antonín Matějček, “O vyschlém prameni,” *Hlasy světa a domova* (Prague: Spolek výtvarných umělců Mánes, 1931), 201.

<sup>793</sup> Ibid.

<sup>794</sup> Ibid., 205.

castle became centres of intermediation of art and culture. Baroque ornaments could therefore be detected in folk art until the end of the nineteenth century demonstrating its conservative nature. For that reason, Matějček argued that folk art (in other words the art of the peasants) flourished when there was a lack of Czech artists and national art,

when the nation as a whole was pushed away from cooperation in artistic culture and [... Czech art] was only local art. [...] In this period without national art, the people assumed the creativity and nationalized the outcomes of the great international culture.<sup>795</sup>

Matějček nevertheless pointed out that although historically important, the significance of folk art should not be overestimated in the present day, especially since the nation had its own artistic geniuses. The new independent art brought folk art to decline and death.<sup>796</sup> The national art of today was to be found not in the class that once produced folk art, but where “the power of the national spirit has its greatest creative tension, where a true artistic act is born,” that is in the strata of consciously creative individuals.<sup>797</sup>

Not all Czech art historians shared this view of folk art and its role. “Podstata lidového umění” (The basis of folk art) by Štech was meant as a reaction to Wirth’s book *Umění československého lidu*, in which Štech pointed out its qualities and contribution but also drew attention to its generalizations.<sup>798</sup> Štech studied under Wölfflin for anti-Viennese political reasons but was ultimately rather more influenced by the Vienna School.<sup>799</sup> He wrote a number of articles on folk art in which he described it as a complex expression of a specific social class. His approach therefore was a mixture of social history of art and stylistic analysis. Štech examined the relation between the artist and society and took into consideration the economic aspects of the period. They could be traced the best in the dichotomy between the

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<sup>795</sup> Ibid., 218

<sup>796</sup> Ibid., 218–219

<sup>797</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>798</sup> V. V. Štech, “Podstata.”

<sup>799</sup> Slavík, “Václav Vilém Štech,” in *Kapitoly II*, ed. Chadřaba, 143–144.

visual culture of the city and the village.<sup>800</sup> The production of works of art was thus in Štech's opinion based on the social class of both their author and of their owner.<sup>801</sup>

Štech saw folk art as an appropriation of higher forms of art (he used the term "rustikalizace," i.e. "rustication"). This process of appropriation was for him a transfer, reformulation, and reassessment of extraneous models which could be taken from abroad or from a different class. Folk art therefore reused the ideas and motives of the works of art which were originally meant for a higher class and in doing so, folk art was trying to come to terms with the art of a different social class.<sup>802</sup> According to Štech, "a special, melodic sense in our folk art connects the segment and matter and transfers each objective fact [...] into a lyrical ornament."<sup>803</sup> Here, Štech in fact continued the heroizing and romanticizing attitude towards Czech and Slovak folk art which was common in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in the writing of for example the ethnographers Zíbrt, Vykoukal or František Ladislav Čelakovský (1799–1852). At the same time, Štech's view of folk art was influenced by contemporary thinking, mainly the search for links between the local and external stimuli. He envisaged that folk art was shaped by local tradition and, simultaneously, by external influences (the art of a higher class, foreign artistic forms). Štech also claimed that since folk art was a collective art, it was national, and although in decline, it was capable of reviving contemporary art by its freshness.<sup>804</sup> These ideas brought him close to the opinions of some representatives of Czech modernism, for instance Teige and Josef Čapek, as I will mention shortly.

Like Wirth and Matějček, Štech took a number of examples from Slovakia, where "so many independent regions are hardly accessible" and where many artefacts of "high" culture, such as that of the Romans or Magyars, had been preserved.<sup>805</sup> Slovak folk art "more clearly retained the joint destinies" than any urban artistic practice, for it contains, "the reasons of political divisions and unions ... [and] the blood relation of the Czech and Slovak peoples... It has a different rhythm from that characteristic of Hungarian art, it has a different logic, a different imagination and different colour

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<sup>800</sup> V. V. Štech, "Umění města a venkova."

<sup>801</sup> Štech, "Umění města," 52.

<sup>802</sup> Štech, "Podstata," 47.

<sup>803</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>804</sup> Štech, "Umění města," 59.

<sup>805</sup> Štech, "Podstata" 47.

and melodic quality.”<sup>806</sup> This view of Slovakia and her art was again consciously drawn from the current political and cultural situation: the birth of a new Czechoslovak state in which the Czechs and Slovaks were seen as brotherly nations, and yet it was deliberately intended to contradict Czech assumptions about the superiority of Czech art. On other hand, for Štech Slovak folk art was still related to Czech due to their “blood relations” and was seen as independent of Hungarian and German works of art.

Once again, such a claim supported the idea of the unity and strength of the two nations against the minorities within the new state that had been politically and culturally dominant before the Great War. During the early years of Czechoslovakia, the idea of a Czechoslovak nation, people and language was promoted in many spheres of political and cultural life. To justify such a construct, it was necessary to (re-)create the tradition according to which the Czechs and Slovaks consisted of a joint entity and the Great Moravian Empire of the ninth and tenth centuries became the first historical state cohabitated by both groups.

### **Modernists and folk art**

Some of the criticism of folk art originated in the modernist approach to art and its negative attitude to ornamentation. From the 1890s, Czech artists and architects started to use non-ornamental forms free of abundant decoration.<sup>807</sup> The proclamations of the purity of forms outlined by for example Adolf Loos in 1908, were supported by a number of Czech art historians (including Matějček and Wirth, for instance) as well as by a number of Czech modern and avant-garde artists.<sup>808</sup> The 1913 Czech version of the Futurist Manifesto, entitled “Otevřená okna” (Open windows), condemned folk art.<sup>809</sup> Its author, S. K. Neumann (1875–1947), assumed a

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<sup>806</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>807</sup> Tomáš Vlček, “Umění secese a symbolismu, počátky modernosti,” [The art of Secession and symbolism, the beginnings of modernism] *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění*, 31.

<sup>808</sup> Adolf Loos, “Ornament und Verbrechen,” 1908. Antonín Matějček and Zdeněk Wirth, *Česká architektura 1800–1920* [Czech architecture 1800–1920] (Prague: Jan Štenc, 1922); Zdeněk Wirth, “Urbanismus a regionalismus v české minulosti,” [Urbanism and regionalism in Czech history] *Architektura II* (1940).

<sup>809</sup> S. K. Neumann, “Otevřená okna,” in Jiří Padrta, *Osma a Skupina výtvarných umělců 1907–1917* (Prague: Odeon, 1992), 138–40.



radical attitude against the nationalistic promotion of folk culture surviving from the nineteenth century to emphasise a future-oriented modernism.<sup>810</sup>

Neumann was a Czech poet, journalist and art critic who always promoted contemporary art of the time: in succession, he defended Art Nouveau, cubism, surrealism, and socialist realism. Neumann acknowledged the key influences of regional (or folk) art on contemporary artistic production, but insisted that artists should not imitate works of folk art on a superficial level (it should not adopt only the visible formal features) and demanded that they should also be knowledgeable of current developments in European art. Neumann held that the combination of these two prerequisites could subsequently lead to the creation of art of national character.<sup>811</sup>

Due to his concern with modernist tendencies in the visual arts, and his interest in urban culture and technological progress, Neumann disconnected himself with the remnants of tradition and folklore, a distance that was clear in “Otevřená okna.” He called for an end to many phenomena of traditional Czech culture, including the work of some Czech poets, artists journals, “the kitschy superficiality of academism and impressionism, [...], folklore, embroidery from Slovácko, Alfons Mucha, [...] The Museum of Arts and Crafts, [...], Dr Kramář and Baroque [...],” and he called for an end to historicism, professors, politics, women’s handicrafts (Fig. 60).<sup>812</sup> At the same time, Neumann cried out “Long live ... fauvism, expressionism, cubism, [...] artistic advertisement, [...] modernity, flowing life and civil art,” machines, cinema, new materials and artists and architects, such as Vincenc Beneš, Josef and Karel Čapek, Josef Gočár, Bohumil Kubišta, or Otto Gutfreund.<sup>813</sup>

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<sup>810</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts*, 158.

<sup>811</sup> František Šmejkal, “Stanislav K. Neumann,” in *Kapitoly*, 213. Šmejkal does not mention any specific work on the topic.

<sup>812</sup> Neumann, “Otevřená okna,” 139–140.

<sup>813</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

*Figure 58 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

Such a turn towards the future was apparent in the wider circle of Czech modernist artists who saw historical, traditional and regional aspects of culture as an anachronistic. The relationship between folk art and modern art was, however, more complex and often did not sink into a simple rejection. Some of the artists Neumann celebrated, for example the cubist architect Gočár, explicitly used motives of folk art in their work. Such “lower” forms of art, and practices of everyday life also became inspirational for the modernistic tendencies in the 1910s and 1920s of for example cubism, rondocubism and poetism and artists such as Josef Čapek, Václav Špála (1885–1945), Teige and others.<sup>814</sup>

The increasing awareness of social issues in art meant that artists and art historians turned their attention to the working classes and the rural peasants as an indispensable part of the nation. Ideally, art could be made by anybody and the

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<sup>814</sup> Derek Sayer, “Surrealities,” *Central European Avant-Gardes 1910–1930: Exchange and Transformation*, ed. Timothy O. Benson (Los Angeles: County Museum of Art and Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 94.

worker was therefore placed into the centre of the new international style. In this sense, however, the products of the vernacular culture came to be seen as popular art in the wider sense, and not just the folk art of rural tradition. This substitution of popular art and folk art stemmed from the ambiguity of the Czech language in this regard. The noun “folk” is *lid* in Czech, which translated back to English as “people.” “Folk art” is then *lidové umění*, the art of the people, or popular art with no real distinction between the popular art produced by the working classes, and the artefacts traditionally associated with the countryside.

After the Bolshevik revolution in Russia of 1917, when the Czech modernists, such as Neumann, Teige, Čapek as well as the poet Jaroslav Seifert (1901–1986) and the painters Václav Špála, Otakar Mrkvička (1898–1957) and Josef Šíma (1891–1971), started to adopt socialist views of culture and art, art of the urban proletariat came to be regarded as folk art, meaning people’s art. It was often used as an inspiration by artists and publicists, such as Teige and Čapek, who praised their freshness and originality (Fig. 61–62).<sup>815</sup>

*Figure 59 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

*Figure 60 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*

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<sup>815</sup> Vojtěch Lahoda, “Civilismus, primitivismus a sociální tendence,” [Civilism, primitivism and social tendencies] 337 and “Proměny realismu a kubismu v malířství,” [The changes of Realism and Cubism in painting] in *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění*, 347.

As I have already suggested, a number of practicing artists provided an important additional voice to the writings of professional art. Teige and Čapek, both artists and prolific writers on art, made many remarks on the relationship between international and national art and between the forms of high and low art and thus contributed to the debate on the nature of Czech art and its relationship to the tradition.

Josef Čapek (1887–1945), the elder brother of the writer Karel Čapek, was a painter, illustrator and writer as well who addressed the question of popular – amateur – art forms in a collection of essays published as *Nejskromnější umění* (The humblest art).<sup>816</sup> His focus was on art “without ambitions,” as exemplified by shop signs, pottery, toys, or photography, and their relation to high art. Čapek understood the art of everyday life as the expressions of popular culture produced by unambitious dilettantes, which was nevertheless self-sustained and inspiring for professional artists:

I do not talk here about folk art as it is habitually understood: national or peasant art. Here I mean contemporary people’s art, the work of artisans and dilettantes from amongst the people; urban art, or rather – suburban art.<sup>817</sup>

Čapek was aware of the roots of folk art in the “tradition of the high art styles and in its own spirit.”<sup>818</sup> By contrast “amateur art” was, he argued, arbitrary, disconnected from the specific culture and although at times inspired by higher art, it retained a certain level of purity, originality, and its own common sense.<sup>819</sup>

Teige, the leading artist and theoretician of the Czech avant-garde, was also an advocate of *people’s* art, its “freshness” could act, he believed, as a potential impulse for the new modern art of an ideal classless society. In this context, “folk” (people’s) art included the practices of the urban working class. In his view, everyone should be

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<sup>816</sup> Josef Čapek, *Nejskromnější umění* (Prague: Dauphin, 1997), first published as Josef Čapek, *Nejskromnější umění* (Prague: Aventinum, 1920).

<sup>817</sup> Čapek, “Co potkáváme,” [What we encounter] *Nejskromnější umění* (Prague: Dauphin, 1997), 83.

<sup>818</sup> Čapek, “A závěr,” *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>819</sup> *Ibid.*, 91–92.

able to make works of art, which will be enabled by the progress and accessibility of technology.<sup>820</sup>

Teige was conscious of the economic and social influences on art production, and he recognised the link between the art of the nineteenth century and the rise of the bourgeoisie, and its consequent isolation of art from the rest of society.<sup>821</sup> This led in his opinion to the commercialisation of art and to a dependence on the market and the market value. At the same time, “capitalist industrialism gradually brought about the mass extinction of folk art production,” which stood in opposition to the official art.<sup>822</sup> This official art was associated with the ruling ideology, tradition, academicism and the public sphere, and was exemplified by the works of painters such as Brožík, Mucha and Hynais.<sup>823</sup> Bourgeois art was also accompanied by “folk kitsch [lidový kýč] or kitsch for the people [kýč pro lid]” which represented the greatest decline of art production.<sup>824</sup> Following Marxist theory, Teige understood these art forms as the result of surplus production that were meant to “deliberately keep the people in the state of ignorance.”<sup>825</sup>

Teige saw a bright future for overcoming this division in a classless society following Marx and Engels’ outline in *Deutsche Ideologie* (German ideology).<sup>826</sup> Teige claimed further that everyone would be capable of poetry and lyricism once art lost its professional status and new technologies of art production (such as collage, photography, etching) became accessible to all. Teige described this new art already in 1924 in his article “Poetismus” (Poetism) and in 1928 in “Manifest poetismu” (Poetist manifesto).<sup>827</sup> He saw Poetismus not as a specific style, but rather as a way of life which “integrated ourselves into the rhythm of collective European creation” and

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<sup>820</sup> Karel Teige, *Jarmark umění* [The jamboree of art] (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1964), 53. First published as Teige, *Jarmark umění* (Prague: Nakladatelství a galerie Živého umění F.J. Müllera, 1936).

<sup>821</sup> Teige, *Jarmark umění* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1964), 13.

<sup>822</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>823</sup> Ibid., 48–49.

<sup>824</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>825</sup> Ibid., 51. Cf. also Clement Greenberg, “The Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” *Partisan Review* 6 (1939).

<sup>826</sup> Teige, *Jarmark umění*, 52. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Deutsche Ideologie*, written in 1846, first published by Vienna: Verlag für Literatur und Politik, 1932.

<sup>827</sup> Karel Teige, “Poetism,” *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910–1930*, eds. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 579–582. Originally published as Karel Teige, “Poetismus,” *Host* 3, No. 9–10 (July 1923). Karel Teige, “Excerpts from Poetism manifesto,” *Between Worlds*, 593–601. Originally as Karel Teige, “Manifest poetismu,” *ReD* 1, No. 9 (1928).

replaced “national insularity and parochialism.”<sup>828</sup> This art would rise from “the disappearance of handicrafts, the abolition of decorative art, mass production, norms, and standardization” and the “everyday activity of humankind.”<sup>829</sup>

Both Teige and Čapek held a rather romanticized view of the working classes, whom they believed capable of producing a new independent art that would be of international nature. They understood the works of the contemporary common man as a specific form of people’s art, which was not bound to any tradition or influences of high art. Their views of art were thus not concerned with a definition of the specific Czech quality but instead; they put more emphasis on the more universal class distinctions. As such, their arguments should be perceived in the light of contemporary artistic events (mainly the international character of the avant-garde) but also alongside the Western-oriented views of the Czech art historians, replacing ethnic division with class division.

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<sup>828</sup> Teige, “Poetism,” 594.

<sup>829</sup> *Ibid.*, 579.

## **The construction of Czechoslovak art: conclusion**

The multifaceted attitude to amateur (people's) art shaped the understanding of modern art in Czechoslovakia. In the 1920s, it came to be viewed as either the traditional material practices of the people in the countryside, or as the contemporary popular culture of the cities. In each case folk art was seen as providing an alternative to the academic art criticised by modernist artists and art critics. In this sense, folk art was not understood as purely national in the way nineteenth century ethnography examined in Chapter Five saw it, but still represented unspoilt artistic production.

Some art historians and artists, such as Wirth, Matějček and Neumann, understood folk art as an anachronistic and regressive expression of high art that came to an end with social and economic modernisation. Teige and Čapek, on the other hand, defended the creativity and originality of the classes that produced popular folk art, although they understood folk art as the art of the urban working class. Their views were shared by Štech who saw the freshness of folk art as capable of reviving contemporary art.

Like Wirth and Matějček, Štech had in mind the culture of the rural areas of the new Czechoslovak state. After Czechoslovakia was founded in 1918 such rural regions were associated mostly with Slovakia and Ruthenia, while Bohemia and Moravia were identified as more culturally and economically advanced.

Such views were codified in the writings of art historians based in Prague. Although maintaining such "colonialist" attitudes, some of them nevertheless looked to integrate the visual arts of Slovakia and Ruthenia into the Western (and Czechoslovak) history of art. There were generally two ways of achieving this. One consisted in the application of the universalistic theory adopted from the Vienna School that allowed them to look abroad for similarities of styles that confirmed the developmental unity and interconnectedness of art. If similarities between Slovak and Western (which included also Czech) art were found, Slovak art could be placed on the same level with it.

The other method incorporated the art of Slovakia into the common denominator of a newly invented construct of Czechoslovak art. With this concept, the Czech and Slovak arts were seen as an identical expression of a single nation of the Czechoslovaks, although one which still prioritised the historically more visible Czechs. And since the attempts to include Czech art into the art history of Western Europe were already well established, Czech authors dominated the discussion of Czechoslovak, Slovak and Ruthenian art.



## Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored several stages in the invention and re-invention of the history of “Czech national art” over a period of almost a hundred years. I have shown how the discipline of art history participated in the construction of Czech national identity in a period of changing political circumstances and broadening ethnic differences. I have emphasised the role of writing of the history of Czech art as an ideologically motivated practice targeted at the creation of an image of the Czechs, which did not treat them as a marginal group but, instead, as a culturally independent and historical entity.

The period this thesis covered was one of profound changes in Czech society, politics, culture and arts. While in 1850, the Czech speaking inhabitants were subject to Austria Hungary, by the 1920s they already enjoyed an independent state together with the Slovaks and the minority groups of Ruthenians, Germans and Hungarians. Between these two dates, Bohemia, Moravia and, to some extent, Slovakia saw an increase of national awareness in many aspects of social and political life, which was reflected also in the cultural and artistic sphere.

As a part of the Habsburg Empire with central government in Vienna and a region with a strong historical presence of a German minority, nineteenth-century Czech society continued to build its own national symbols and institutions that would confirm its status as a sovereign entity. In political terms, however, the Czechs were relatively unsuccessful in their calls for greater autonomy within the Empire. Their efforts to transform the Monarchy into a federation of equally treated nations, promoted by for instance by Palacký and a number of Czech nineteenth century political parties, were put on hold mainly as an aftermath of the restructuring of Austria into the Dual Monarchy in 1867.

At the cultural level, however, the first stage of national revival was already completed by 1850. Writers and historians Palacký, Havlíček, Štefánik and Kollár who had called for a greater recognition of the history and culture in the Czech

speaking regions, constructed the vision of a continuous tradition of the nation dating back to the Middle Ages.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the process of national reassertion continued at various levels, and manifested, in particular, in the creation of cultural institutions. A number of Czech museums, interest clubs, artists' societies as well as journals were established in the name of reviving the Czech nation, and individuals connected with them created a picture of the Czechs as an historical nation with its own culture and arts to the local and foreign audiences. Thus, for example, the Umělecká beseda and Mánes artistic clubs were founded in 1863 and 1887 respectively, the Moravian Museum of Applied Arts opened in 1873 in Brno, while the painting gallery of the Rudolfinum was established in 1884 in Prague, followed by the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague a year later. A significant national event was the opening of the Czech National Theatre, which became the expression of Czech national and cultural independence and a site of many works of art considered of national importance. In fact, all of these institutions could be understood as expressions of Czech national identity in opposition to their German counterparts (museums, theatres, artists clubs), which were already well established.

A significant role in this process of contestation was played by art history. The subject was given recognition for its potential to strengthen the awareness of Czech national history and the richness of its artistic heritage, especially after Vocel was appointed the first chair of art history at Prague University in 1850. In the wake of the wider search for Czech and Slavic cultural traits, early art historians, including Vocel and his colleagues Mádl and Lehner, attempted to identify these national traits in the visual arts. All three focused on the one period they felt was the most important in the history of Czech lands – the Middle Ages.

The project of identifying the quintessential features of Czech art was driven by many motivations. One of the main ones was a reaction to the strong presence of German minority in Bohemia and Moravia and the resulting effort of the Czechs to prove that Czech art and Czech culture were distinctive from that of the Germans. The art historical texts that were written in this tone had often a defensive character and saw German outcomes (both artistic and art historical) as negative and

regressive. Their Czech authors thus usually came across as lacking a professional and critical approach to the material. Although this started to change gradually with the improving status that art history received at the Charles-Ferdinand University, many authors of both nationalities still continued to claim art in Bohemia for their own respective national groups.

Naturally, the German inhabitants had their own institutions as well as understanding of their place in Bohemia. The conflicts between the two groups culminated in Prague in the 1880s when the university divided into Czech and German parts. The nationalistic disagreements were prominent in the art historical debates of the day, in which authors of both groups produced rival accounts of the nature and origins of art in Bohemia. The principal points of conflict were the claims to the German or Czech affiliation of the art of Bohemia. Where Czech authors, such as Baum, Zap and Mádl, focused on the identification of Czech names of artists and Czech and Slavic artistic features, German authors such as Grueber and Woltmann highlighted the long-lasting influence of German art, including the historical presence of German artists and architects existence in Bohemia. Grueber and Woltmann were based at the university and the Art Academy in Prague which in the last two decades of the nineteenth century saw an increase in the number of scholars of both language groups.

Their Czech counterparts, mainly Karel Chytil or K. B. Mádl, helped to institutionalise Czech art history and broaden its research focus. Chytil was also the first Czech art historian who started using more rigorous approach and employed positivistic methods. Despite these efforts, however, nationalistic writing prevailed even in Chytil's treatments of Czech art, which, in his view, contained the qualities of the nation and was related to the nation's greatness.

Although the University continued to be an important site of art historical scholarship of both nationalities, discourses of national art were also created outside of the academia, through exhibitions and art journals. While the end of the century saw an increase in progressive tendencies among artists, a development that became evident in a growing concern with the international contexts of Czech art, traditionalistic attitudes persisted among the more conservative scholars. The latter way of thinking was demonstrated in, for example, the two great exhibitions of 1891 and 1895 in

Prague which - according to their organizers - showed the best of national culture on the one hand, but also remained loyal to the monarchy.

The turn to cosmopolitan thinking at the end of the century happened in both politics and culture and provided an alternative to the inward looking stance of previous decades. In the year of the Czechoslovak exhibition, 1895, Masaryk published his key work *Česká otázka*, which reassessed Czech history away from narrow-minded nationalism and sought to find the place for the Czechs in the context of European history. In the same year, the Modernist manifesto was written by several representatives of the Czech avant-garde. It called for freedom of expression at all levels of human life as well as for end to empty nationalism. F. X. Šalda, amongst them, helped to introduce a number of international artists and authors to Czech audience in the journals he edited. The new art of the Secession, Impressionism and later non-figurative art, usually linked to foreign influences, also contributed to a rethinking of the position of Czech art in its European context, which made its way into the writing of many art historians and art critics (such as Jiránek, Mádl and Čapek).

The emphasis on the contextual issues in which the art of a certain period appears was a concern of the so-called Vienna School of Art History, connected around the turn of the century with Wickhoff, Riegl and Dvořák. The latter, in particular, being of Czech origin, played an important role in the further development of Czech art history. Dvořák's interest in transitional artistic periods and the international nature of art followed his early understanding of art as having national qualities. Although his writings on this topic in relation to Czech art were few, he was an important formative influence on younger Czech scholars, such as Kramář, Matějček and Birnbaum. Despite the fact that Dvořák spent most of his academic life in the service of Austrian authorities, his influence on Czech art history was immense and long-lasting. Alongside Riegl and Wickhoff, his impact can be seen especially in the adoption by Czechs of an approach to art history that saw it as genetic and evolutionary, without peaks and declines. This allowed the Czech art historians to include Czech art into the wider development of European art as a legitimate artistic phenomenon.

The above-mentioned scholars, as well as Wirth and Štěch were the most important art historians of the early twentieth century, who either studied in Vienna or were well informed of the Vienna School methods. They occupied key positions in art historical institutions in Prague at the beginning of the twentieth century and therefore disseminated the approaches and ideology of the Vienna School. At the same time, each of these scholars managed to incorporate their own interpretation of the universal development of art in relation to national art, a topic that never entirely disappeared. Kramář, for example, defending the cubism of Emil Filla against those who criticised the new style for being alien, argued that even works that were influenced by international artistic developments had a discernible Czech quality.

It was one of the legacies of the Vienna School that its Czech students paid great attention to contemporary art, particularly in Western Europe. This western orientation in art and art history was disputed, however, by some Czech scholars who saw Czech history and art as more closely related to Slavic, that is “Eastern,” cultures. These issues became most prominent after the First World War in which the Czech politicians looked for a number of different outcomes of the dissolving Habsburg monarchy. Whereas the politician Karel Kramář tried to negotiate an alliance of the Russian, Polish and Czech nations in a Pan-Slavic state, an exile council was established in Paris, which – presided by T. G. Masaryk – sought an independent political state for the Czechs (and eventually Slovaks), which was supported by the Allies.

After the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918, the search for political allegiances with either East or West was reflected in art history as well. The new political circumstances of the Czechoslovak state had considerable impact on Czech art history. In the new union of the Czechs and Slovaks, the powerful minorities of the Germans and Hungarians were outnumbered. Although they preserved their own cultures and institutions, they lost many of the privileges they had enjoyed until then. To strengthen the identity of the two Slavic nations even more, the idea of a “Czechoslovak” nation was promoted at number of intellectual and political levels. Art historians also started referring to Czechoslovak art as the art of the unified Czechoslovak entity in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia. However, the dominating canon emphasised the art of the Czech-speaking countries to that of the Slovak

regions, which the interpretations reduced to the production of folk and “primitive” art.

From an early inward looking, narrow view of Czech art as a phenomenon that carried the essential features of the nations through history by which it distinguished it from art of other nations, especially the Germans, many Czech writers developed more open-minded notions of Czech art. It came to be understood as a part of a larger European artistic context and equal with Western development.

Nevertheless, as I have pointed out here, the second approach made their authors open to accusations of being too western or pro-German. Thus the idea of the specific character of Czech art – its “Czechness” – was employed by authors of various ideological affiliations, whether they were Romantics, nationalists, rationalists, or modernists. Whether they tried to guarantee Czech art a place in the canon of Western, Slavic, anti-German or entirely independent context, they took the *concept* of Czech national art for granted.

In the period between the 1850s and 1930s, the history of Czech art and the attempts to identify its specifically Czech qualities were formulated as a contestation of difference. Writers on Czech art created the notion of the “Czechness” of Czech art on the basis of either negotiating a compromise with or by emphasising its opposition to various other ethnic groups, methodologies, political affiliations, or artistic quality.

### **The contestation of ethnic origin**

Many tensions in Bohemia and Moravia ensued from the ethnic composition of the region, which had a large and wealthy German minority. For those who attempted to accentuate the unique qualities of Czech art, German culture, and in particular, that in Bohemia and Moravia, together with authors of German origin who published on art in the region, were the primary focus of difference. The features that were assigned by German authors, such as Woltmann, Grueber, or Neuwirth, to works of art of Czech or German origin were contested by Czech authors like Baum, Zap or Kalousek who usually adopted a highly nationalistic approach to local art.

In Bohemia, the division of artistic traits according to ethnic background and character of the people was much indebted to Herder's account of the Germans and the Slavs, which proved to be highly influential for Czech historians, linguists, or art historians well into the twentieth century. The initial total rejection of anything German in the nineteenth century gradually changed, however, into recognition in the following century of the contribution that German culture and scholarship had made. Such a turn was most prominent in the appreciation of the so-called Vienna School, represented for the Czechs principally by Max Dvořák, who had followers in, for example, Vojtěch Birnbaum, Antonín Matějček, or Vincenc Kramář. The changed attitude towards German scholarship, was not universal, however, and in the case of many only led to a reformulation of the nature of the difference, against which the character of Czech art was set.

Apart from German art and culture, Czech art and culture came to be defined in opposition to Slavic folk culture and, after the creation of Czechoslovakia, that of the Slovaks. Some Czech art historians, for instance Matějček or Wirth, therefore defined Czech art on the basis of its dissimilarity with folk art, which was usually seen as primitive and backward. Similar qualities were attributed to art of the Slovaks, who were seen as consisting mostly of peasants.

### **The contestation of method**

The recognition of the German presence (and in fact their existence) in Bohemia, Moravia and, later, Czechoslovakia, was prominent in the acceptance of the methods that were associated with "German art history," mainly those of positivism and the Vienna School, represented for the Czechs by Max Dvořák, Alois Riegl and Franz Wickhoff. The belief of students of the Vienna School such as Matějček, Wirth, Birnbaum and Štech that all art formed part of a single universal process and that the history of art had no peaks and or periods of decline, provided them with grounds to claim that Czech art was of the same quality as art elsewhere.

Before this happened, though, Czech art history had been dominated mainly by romanticizing of the past followed by a more empirical approach to facts. For some nineteenth century authors, such as Vocel, Kalousek, or Mádl, Czech art had

developed in an unbroken tradition traceable back into the Middle Ages. Czech art thus had its own independent history unrelated to that elsewhere (or more specifically of the German Reich), and it retained the historical memory of the “Czech kingdom,” which justified the individuality of the Czech people.

Such a handling of history was exemplified in the views regarding the so-called Czech school of painting in Bohemia during the reign of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV. Many authors of Czech origin in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries assigned the school precedence over German schools and described its uniquely Czech features. Examples could be found in Zap’s analysis of Gothic architecture or Chytil’s examination of the supposedly Czech school of painting of the fourteenth century. Whereas the former author is usually associated with the romanticizing view of Czech history in the wake of national “awakening,” the latter was a proponent of a rigorous and empirical study of material, yet still his judgements were swayed by nationalist imperatives.

### **The contestation of politics**

The fact that Czech-speaking regions were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918 had an effect on the discipline of art history too. From the mid-nineteenth century, Czech politicians strove for recognition of the Czech-speaking lands as a culturally autonomous, but not necessarily independent region with a certain number of political rights.

Again, it was the Kingdom of Charles and Wenceslas IV that became an important inspiration for the recreation of Czech national identity in terms of artistic achievements as well as political independence. As a once great political institution, historians and art historians tried to establish an unbroken tradition that would connect the mediaeval kingdom with the present and confirm the significance of the Czechs in Central Europe.

Czech art was never seen by Czech art historians as a part of a larger Austrian whole, and political and cultural affiliations were sought elsewhere, mainly with other Slavic



groups both within the Empire and also outside of it, through the idea of a Pan-Slavic unity. This quest for common artistic roots eventually led to the construction of a Czechoslovak identity. All of these attempts were reflected in art history and in the efforts of Czech authors to view Czech art as associated with the Slavic East.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, political, cultural and artistic affiliations were more often sought also in the West. Apart from the Czech students of the Vienna School who promoted these links, art critics and practicing artists, such as Jiránek, Kotěra and later Krejcar or Teige, also turned their attention to Western Europe, especially to French art. Yet, despite such a conscious search for cultural roots in Western European art, most authors held that Czech art, both historical and contemporary, had a distinctive national quality. As various art historians and art critics of the beginning of the twentieth century (Šalda, Jiránek, Čapek, or Mádl) claimed, Czech art was still believed to maintain specifically Czech traditions, language and history.

### **The contestation of artistic quality**

Although a highly subjective concept, the quality of art was one of the main tools that could constitute art's national association. When in the 1870s Czech historians and art historians tried to define Czech art, they focused on its painterly qualities and emphasised its lyricism, which distinguished it from the allegedly crude qualities of German art. Similar attempts could be found in the texts of many later authors (i.e. Šalda, Chytil, Kramář, or Matějček) who stressed the uniqueness of Czech art, which they usually derived from the "high quality" of the Czech nation. This notion of a historically, ethnically and linguistically legitimate nation was taken over from the early nineteenth century national awakeners, such as Palacký, Kollár, Jungmann, or Šafařík, and became widely implemented in art history.

Quality was often linked with historicity and tradition: the older the nation and its arts, the higher its quality in the present. Origins in the distant past were sought in order to justify the position and character of Czech art. Much attention was turned to early mediaeval art and architecture on the one hand and visual culture of folk people

on the other. These could be understood as retaining the traditions and links with other Slavic groups, as well as carrying the historical identity of the nation.

Between the 1850s and the 1930s, many authors located the essence of Czech art in various features: in the ethnicity of the author, the geographical origin of the work, style, inspiration, or for example the amount of tradition that was followed. Although it might be claimed that Czech art history was continually rewritten according to the current political and cultural situation, several recurring traits that established “Czechness” of Czech art can be detected in its history. For the majority of authors I have examined, early mediaeval painting and architecture in Bohemia and its character became crucial, as they constituted the beginnings of a distinctly “Czech” art. Individual artists, such as Mikoláš Aleš or Josef Mánes were also treated as being of national significance, due to the subjects they depicted and the methods they used. And it may also be seen as a legacy of these prominent early art historical constructions that Czech art history is still preoccupied with these artistic phenomena today.

In summary, in the period I have examined here, the idea of the Czech nation and its identity was consciously constructed in writing on Czech art on the basis of difference or equality with a variety of other cultures and nations. On the one hand, the “Czechness” of Czech art was built up as a specific set of unique qualities that distinguished it from the current opposite and reinforced the idea of a Czech nation. On the other hand, Czech art was placed into the universal development of Western art and made equal with it. As I have shown, this was driven by the loyalties of the authors to various ideologies (political, cultural, ethnic, methodological) and although dissimilar in their orientation, the authors remained preoccupied with the construction of Czech national identity in art. The historiography of Czech art of the period in question can be therefore seen as a more or less conscious attempt to place Czech art aside or against the art of other political and ethnic groups.

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