

# Tearing Down the Wall

Reception of British Art in Bohemian Lands Around  
1900

Two Volumes

Volume 1

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## **Abstract**

At the end of the 19th century, Bohemia (nowadays Czech Republic) was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Czech artists were exposed to a whole array of international art, mainly Austrian, German and French. While there is little to no scholarship on this, British art was among these major formative sources. This thesis is the first comprehensive study on the role of British art in Bohemia at that time. I have identified Czech fine art journals to be the most significant carriers of cultural transfer and use Czech art journalism as a foundation through which I explore individual case studies. The title of my thesis comes from a 1900 article calling for the dismantling of the symbolic wall dividing Bohemian and British art. In my first chapter, I introduce Bohemian art journals and demonstrate their crucial role in the mediation of British art. In the second chapter, I present case studies of the Czech response to the English Pre-Raphaelites. In chapter three, I explore the Czech reception of James McNeill Whistler, who was perceived as a representative of both internationalism and specifically British art. In my final chapter, I analyse the Bohemian fascination with British caricature and illustration. All my case studies are based on Czech fine art journal articles between 1895-1910. Methodologically I explore the ideas of cultural appropriation, cultural transfer, and most importantly horizontal art history, arriving at the conclusion that British art played a significant formative role for Bohemian arts at the end of the century.

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## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work, and that I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged and fully referenced.



## **Introduction:**

Unlike its Western-European counterparts, Czech 19<sup>th</sup> century art is generally not well known in Britain and scarcely written about in anglophone art history. The fragments of it that may be more widely recognised – names such as Alfonse Mucha – would relate to artists settled either in Paris, Vienna or Berlin, and therefore associated with the concurrent French, Austrian and German artworlds. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Czech territory lacked independence both politically and geographically. All the more important was the Czech desire for cultural autonomy, formed out of the tension between the opposing tendencies of nationalism on the one hand, and internationalism on the other. The geographical situation of the Czech territories in Central Europe resulted in the country becoming a crossroads of several overlapping cultural directions. The Austrian voice was the most prominent, coupled with the German and followed by the French. The majority of Czech artists seeking international education would study and work either in Vienna, Berlin or Paris. With such a dominance of Austrian, German and French culture across Czech Lands, where does Britain come into the mixture?

Despite the staggering lack of scholarly literature on the subject, British art played a substantial role in shaping the Czech cultural and artistic environment around the year 1900. In this thesis, I am using Czech fine art journals from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as a gateway to establishing how British art was perceived and understood, looking closely at the articles and reproductions published there, piecing together a complex multicultural puzzle of the various ways that British art transformed Czech culture. While British art came into the Czech Lands as part of a multicultural stream of artistic trends from across Europe and the wider world (including North America and Japan) art specifically from Britain left a lasting imprint on Czech artists. This thesis, based on a detailed exploration of both Czech and British texts, periodicals, and archival materials, is the first and only comprehensive study on the subject.

The importance of British art and its crucial role in the forming of Czech artistic outputs can be demonstrated in the below brief case study, which will be elaborated on in more detail further in the thesis. This brief taster of what is to come later in my thesis illustrates that despite the geographical distance, British art was accessible to Czech audiences and as such it was a notably shaped Czech artists' work at the turn of the century.

### **Bohemian Pre-Raphaelitism – Case Study**

A poignant example of the Czech response to British art is the country's reaction to the phenomenon of Pre-Raphaelitism. In the late 1890s, a wave of admiration for the English Pre-Raphaelites spread among Czech artists. This was substantially strengthened by an increased focus on England due to the passing of John Ruskin in 1900. Until then, Ruskin was only superficially known in the Czech Lands. His death and specifically the way this was covered in the national cultural press substantially changed the Czechs' approach not only to Ruskin but also to England overall. In the leading Czech art journal of the time *Volné Směry* (Free Directions), the art critic Gustav Jaroš published an obituary of John Ruskin in which he wrote that it was time to "tear down the wall" that separates Czech Lands from British culture.<sup>1</sup> [Fig 0:1] Jaroš took Ruskin's decease as an opportunity to highlight the fact that a lot of British culture was not generally known by Czech artists and the public. Rather than a pious account of the English art critic's life, Jaroš's article reads more like a call to arms, encouraging Czech artists to explore the wealth of British culture and art. As a famed promoter of the Pre-Raphaelites, in Czech art journals Ruskin was readily presented as an associate of the movement thus encouraging the nation's artists to explore the Pre-Raphaelite style further.

By this point, the Pre-Raphaelites were not entirely unknown to Czech artists, although the first accounts of the revolutionary movement only appeared in the Czech press in the late 1890s. One of the artists transformed by their work was Max Švabinský (1873 – 1962), whose artistic career was just about to take shape in the late 1890s. In 1895, the young Max met his future wife Ela at the

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<sup>1</sup> Gamma/ Gustav Jaroš, "John Ruskin", *Volné Směry* IV, no. 3 (1900): 89 – 98.

Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition in Prague. Ela soon became his favoured model and began to appear in a series of etchings, drawings, and paintings that Max was producing at the time. Ela remained the key figure in Max's paintings and drawings throughout the late 1890s and into the 1900s, and featured in a broad range of works from realistic portraits to symbolist statement pieces.

The period of Max's focus on Ela is also synonymous with his passion for the English Pre-Raphaelites. In 1962, decades after her divorce with Max, Ela published a book of memoirs detailing her life with Max and providing a valuable insight into the intricate behind-the-scenes of his major paintings. While the memoirs had been edited by Max himself before being published and are therefore not merely a representation of Ela's viewpoint, they are nonetheless a substantially valuable source for the understanding of how Švabinský was inspired by the Pre-Raphaelites.

In her memoirs, Ela writes about the English movement and the role of the national fine art journals in mediating English art to Czech artists during the late 1890s:

Our family was excited by this extraordinary artistic experience: the Prague artistic and literary circles were swept by a wave of interest in the English Pre-Raphaelites. Švabinský would bring us articles and books with reproductions of their paintings. Especially the magazine *Rozhledy* featured a number of their poems and reviews of their work. The reproductions of their paintings totally fascinated me [...]<sup>2</sup>

Ela's testimony clearly supports the key role that fine art journals played in disseminating the English artistic environment. Although in Prague there was a great array of international journals available featuring English art, Ela's account indicates that articles and reproductions in specifically Czech journals had special value to the local artists and national audiences. Among these, *Volné Směry* and *Rozhledy* [Outlooks] were the leading publications. **[Fig 0:2]** While it was Max who introduced Ela and her family to the English movement, Ela

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<sup>2</sup> Ela Švabinská: *Vzpomínky z mládí* (Praha: SNKLU, 1962), 142-3.

herself became a keen follower of the Pre-Raphaelites and a great advocate for their ideals, as the following lines suggest again from her memoirs:

For long, I couldn't let go of my passion for the Pre-Raphaelites, I was truly obsessed with them. Again and again, with my internal passion, I would dive deep into the reproductions of Rossetti's paintings; I felt there is nothing more magical than the type of his model, that there isn't a more moving fantasy than that of Burne-Jones; [...]. My heart would tremble with the thought of the magnificent unearthly world of the Pre-Raphaelites.<sup>3</sup>

It is evident that Ela studies the movement closely and her passion for works by both Rossetti and Burne-Jones come through very clearly in her writing. References to both artists' work are also clearly visible in Max's work. In 1889, Švabinský produced an ink drawing entitled *Joy, Joy* depicting an embracing couple flying through clouds and roses. **[Fig 0:3]** Ela was the model for the female figure, and according to Ela's memoirs the drawing was meant to depict her and Max. The couple is strongly reminiscent of Rossetti's *The Blessed Damozel* (1875 – 78) **[Fig 0.4]** namely the upper segment of the painting where several versions of the same couple are shown embracing each other in a variety of similar poses. **[Fig 0.5]** The couples seem to be floating in a celestial plane among stars and roses. Švabinský's drawing was commissioned for the illustrated newspaper *Zlatá Praha* [Golden Prague] by the editor and poet Jaroslav Vrchlický (1853 – 1912). Vrchlický himself was so taken by Rossetti that in 1896 he wrote two poems dedicated to his paintings *La Bella Mano* and *Astarte Syrica*, after having written an earlier poem entitled "Dante Gabriel Rossetti" in 1891, mostly focusing on the death of Elizabeth Siddall.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, Ela's memoirs provide proof that both she and Max knew *The Blessed Damozel*, or as the French title goes, *La Damoiselle élue*:

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<sup>3</sup> Švabinská, *Vzpomínky*, 143.

<sup>4</sup> Stanislava Fedrová, "Ekfrastické postupy v lyrice a epice: případ Vrchlický", in *Vybrané kapitoly z intermediality*, ed. Jan Schneider, Lenka Krausová (Olomouc: Univerzita v Olomouci, 2008), 107.

My heart would tremble with the thought of the magnificent unearthly world of the Pre-Raphaelites. It was an opium aimed at bringing gorgeous dreams to life, an emotional outburst when looking at the mystical concentration on the face of *Mademoiselle élue* [sic] by Rossetti. The line of her lips, and the richly flowing hair of Miss Elisabeth Siddal – the only model of Rossetti's and later his wife – was endlessly adored.<sup>5</sup>

The emotions running through her writing testify to Ela's – and by proxy to Max's – passion for Rossetti and suggest a thorough and detailed knowledge of his works. Both the painting and the story of *The Blessed Damozel* was popular with Czech journals, and the theme was featured again in the form of the Czech translation of Rossetti's poem in 1899 in *Rozhledy* alongside a long article on Rossetti by the one of the few Czech female critics, Žofie Pohorecká – Šebkova.<sup>6</sup> **[Fig 0.6]** Based on the many Czech articles about the artist published at the turn of the century, it is evident that Rossetti's exposure in Czech Lands was prominent in the late 1890s and that Švabinský as a contributor to Czech art journals would himself get repeatedly inspired by Rossetti's work, including *The Blessed Damozel*. Švabinský's *Joy, Joy* also bears visual resemblance to Rossetti's watercolour *Paolo and Francesca di Rimini* from 1855. **[Fig 0.7]** Švabinský's flying couple mirrors the panel of the watercolour where Paolo and Francesca float at an angle through a myriad of little flames on a darkened background. The way the lovers embrace and navigate the space in a diagonal is closely reflected in Švabinský's drawing.

The motive of embraces also resonated through Švabinský's next major work, *Confluence of Souls* **[Fig 0.8]** completed between 1899 and 1900. This was a series of ink drawings, etchings, and paintings all under the same title and showing the same scene with minor variations, all paying homage to Burne-Jones. Ela's memoirs previously mentioned the Czech appreciation for Burne-Jones, and this continues throughout her writing:

And the idea of Burne-Jones' young lady, looking into the unknown – because 'she was never allowed to look anywhere else' as the poet

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<sup>5</sup> Švabinská, *Vzpomínky*, 143.

<sup>6</sup> Žofie Pohorecká – Šebkova, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti", *Rozhledy* IX, no 1 (1899) 14-20.

Vrchlický wrote – was a new and a gripping thought. It was carrying over the age of Botticelli and Mantegna into our century.<sup>7</sup>

Although Edward Burne-Jones wasn't part of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and his work emerged later than Rossetti's, for the Czech audiences the two artists were received simultaneously as the key representatives of Pre-Raphaelitism and appreciated as contemporaries of each other.

In late 1899, Ela posed again for Max, this time embodying the elusive character of a mystical lover or a phantom fairy embracing a seated man whose expression can be interpreted as puzzled or alarmed. The embrace, placed in the centre of the composition, stands out thanks to its dynamic circular motion created by the fairy's white arm bent at the elbow encircling the man's face. A similar embrace with a circular dynamic of interwoven arms can be seen on Burne-Jones' *Lovers Among the Ruins* from 1894. **[Fig 0.9]** Burne-Jones' work was not only a popular feature in Czech periodicals, but his work also appeared at exhibitions in Paris where Czech cultural tourists could see his paintings in person. Both Rossetti's and Burne-Jones' paintings were also reproduced in Richard Muther's books *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX Jahrhundert* which were widely distributed across Czech lands and were very popular among Czech artists and scholars.

Straight after the *Confluence of Souls*, Švabinský began work on another statement painting, *The Poor Region* (1900). **[Fig 0.10]** Here Švabinský continues with his exploration of Burne-Jones, this time borrowing the pose of the Maid in Burne-Jones' *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid* from 1884 **[Fig 0.11]**. While the visual comparison to the Maid in Burne-Jones' painting is compelling and valid, *The Poor Region* is also a fitting demonstration of the interconnectedness of international artistic phenomena as they were received in Czech Lands. A similar pose to Burne-Jones' Maid and to Ela in *The Poor Region* dominates Jules Bastien-Lepage's *Hay Making* from 1877. **[Fig 0.12]** The central character here is a young woman sitting with her arms resting next

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<sup>7</sup> Švabinská, *Vzpomínky*, 142-3.

to her body and with her legs stretched out and spread slightly as she sits in the rural setting in her work clothes. The Belgian artist was well known not only in Bohemia but across the Central and Eastern European territory.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, a very similar account of a woman sitting in a landscape setting appears in the painting *Spring* by the Danish painter Harald Slott-Møller.<sup>9</sup> [Fig 0.13] As I will repeatedly showcase throughout this thesis, British Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite inspirations do not appear on their own; rather they come into a lively dialogue with other international trends creating multi-layered visual references proliferating through Czech artists' work.

Further in my thesis, I will analyse several other major works by Švabinský and other Czech artists of the period whose work reflected the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic. I will show how Švabinský consciously stylised Ela into a Pre-Raphaelite style model, uncovering similarities in Rossetti's works featuring Elizabeth Siddall and Jane Morris. While this brief case study presented just a short overview of my inquiry into the Pre-Raphaelite inspiration in Czech Lands, it is a telling example of what is the core focus of this thesis - the extent of British 'influence' on Czech Lands and the importance this played in shaping Czech art at the turn of the century.

### **Why British and Czech Art?**

The research focus of this thesis came about thanks to a specific combination of personal and professional experiences. Some aspects of my research are directly dependent on the country I was born in and other aspects arise from the different places where I studied and carried out my previous research. The following paragraphs will provide some insight into the shaping of my research and will establish the rationale behind its specific theme.

My interest in British Victorian art developed in my teenage years. Being born into Communist Czechoslovakia, I was lucky to have witnessed the

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<sup>8</sup> This was well demonstrated at the international conference Naturalism 2022 in Budapest where Bastien Lepage's prominence proliferated through numerous papers. Accessed Oct 18, 2023, <https://en.mng.hu/events/34155/>

<sup>9</sup> A sketch for the composition was recently sold at Christie's, accessed Sept 20, 2023, [https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-6438331?ldp\\_breadcrumb=back&intObjectID=6438331&from=salessummary&lid=1](https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-6438331?ldp_breadcrumb=back&intObjectID=6438331&from=salessummary&lid=1)

transformative Velvet Revolution in 1989, which not only liberated the country from the Communist regime but also opened the borders after forty years of banning foreign travel. In my teenage years, I benefited from this and often travelled to Britain, where I also went to school for a period. This first-hand encounter with British art, and mainly the Pre-Raphaelites, left me fascinated as well as confused as to why there was so little information available about Victorian art in what was then Czechoslovakia, nowadays Czech Republic.<sup>10</sup>

As the dismantling of the old political system opened the country to new possibilities, members of my family found themselves travelling to and eventually settling in various countries: Britain, Sweden, Japan, and USA. From my insular childhood behind the Iron Curtain, as a teenager I suddenly emerged into a familial multicultural melting pot – that is where my fascination began with cultural dialogues, ‘influences’ and transmissions.

I soon developed two areas of major interest: British 19<sup>th</sup> century art, and Japanese art of the Meiji period (1868 – 1912). Neither of these were taught at any of the Czech universities at the time. I got my undergraduate degree from the Charles University in Prague – the oldest and traditionally most highly regarded university in the country – where I studied History of Art. Thanks to my interest in Japanese art, after my studies I secured the position of a Curator at the Czech National Museum in Prague, where I worked with a collection of over twenty-five thousand items of Japanese traditional arts and crafts. This immense and fascinating collection is sadly not very well known abroad, as I soon found out when collaborating with international partners. Such collaborations opened my eyes to new ways of conducting research, often very different and methodologically more diverse than what I was used to in my home country.

This led me to pursuing my MA in Britain via distance study, focusing on a previously unresearched collection of traditional Japanese toys from the Czech National Museum’s collection.<sup>11</sup> What fascinated me the most was the transfer

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<sup>10</sup> Czechoslovakia was dissolved in 1991 and became two separate nations: Czech Republic and Slovakia.

<sup>11</sup> I completed my MA at the University of Central Lancashire in 2014. My dissertation was subsequently published by the National Museum in Prague: Helena Gaudekova and Alice Kraemerova, *Playing All Day Long* (Prague: National Museum, 2013)



of cultural and aesthetic principles between Japan and the 'West', and the different ways that European and American artists reacted to Japanese art. During my research, I came across many British and Czech artists experimenting with Japanese print making, and through this I started discovering connections between Czech artists and British Victorian art. I was surprised to see that there were almost no publications about this theme, neither in Czech, nor in English.

As British art of this period was not taught or researched at any of the Czech universities at the time, I decided I had to move to Britain to pursue my doctoral research. Known for its specialism in Pre-Raphaelite and Victorian art, University of York was my first choice, and I was excited to be accepted there as a PhD candidate with Prof Liz Prettejohn as my supervisor. Given Prof Prettejohn's widely influential work on the Pre-Raphaelites in an international context, I was certain that I had found the perfect setting for my doctoral work.

Embarking on my research of Czech art in Britain, I had the advantage of having in-depth experience with Czech culture, art collections, museums, and universities. Having both studied at and worked with the country's leading institutions, I feel passionate about bringing Czech art into a wider international research context, making art from the former Eastern bloc part of 'Western' art history. As a native speaker of Czech, I had access to primary sources as well as knowledge of past and current publications in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century studies in Czech art. Even after moving to Britain, I retained close contacts with Czech cultural institutions, keeping in touch with researchers and curators in my field. I felt that I was in a unique position to explore the connections between British and Czech 19<sup>th</sup> century art, a research strand that has not been systematically conducted before.

### **In Search of Methodology**

In the early days of my doctoral research into Czech *fin de siècle* art, using mostly Czech publications, I was surprised to see how few mentions there were of Britain and its role in shaping Czech culture. With Bohemia being a small land-locked country dominated for centuries by its more powerful neighbours, I

was used to seeing Czech essays on the influence of German and French culture. Why was Britain not among those major ‘influencers’? Having been fascinated by the English Pre-Raphaelites for years, I was certain that there was more to explore here. Embarking on my PhD research, all I could find in Czech historiography were a few solitary articles mentioning Ruskin, Morris, Rossetti, and Burne-Jones. The majority of these articles, however, rarely moved past a one-sentence statement about *some* influence of the Pre-Raphaelites, without much further inquiry.<sup>12</sup> Among these, the work of Professor Jindřich Vybíral represents the most substantial accounts on the subject, especially his article establishing a connection between the Arts and Crafts movement and Czech art around 1900.<sup>13</sup>

What stood out in my reading of Czech art historical texts was the general disappointment that many authors felt about the belatedness of the Czech reception of international trends. This was certainly so in the case of the reception of British culture, as the first responses to the Pre-Raphaelites, for example, only took place in Bohemia over forty years after the formation of the original Brotherhood (as will be debated in greater detail in the following chapters). Often, in my reading of Czech academic publications, the narrative concerning Czech art of the 1900s revolved around it being derivative, mirroring major European and international trends, thus adding to the stereotype of the ‘periphery’ copying the ‘centres’ of artistic production – a narrative that is persistent still today in relation to Central and Eastern European art, as Matthew Rampley points out in his recent work, on which I will elaborate in further detail later.<sup>14</sup>

When approaching the topic of Bohemian artists ‘borrowing’ artistic ideas from abroad, I first aimed my attention at the concept of cultural appropriation,

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<sup>12</sup> Despite the lack of publications on the specific theme of the Czech reception of British art in late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the articles by Czech scholars that do mention British art in connection to Czech artists include the work of Jiindřich Vybíral, Jana Orliková and Petr Wittlich.

<sup>13</sup> Jiindřich Vybíral, “Ohlas idejí Ars and Crafts v Čechách kolem roku 1900”, in *Co je českého na českém umění* (Prah: UMPRUM,2022) 123-149. I am grateful for several consultations early on in my research with Prof Vybíral who encouraged me to pursue this theme further and provided helpful literature and insights for my research.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Rampley, “Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies: On the Challenges of Writing on Modernism in Central Europe”, *Umění Art 2*, LXIX (2021) 146.

Accessed Dec 20, 2022, [https://craace.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Umeni-2\\_21-Rampley.pdf](https://craace.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Umeni-2_21-Rampley.pdf)

especially the work of Arnd Schneider and James O Young. What intrigued me about their work was the emphasis on the aesthetic value of appropriated artwork, which I thought was especially relevant in a scenario where a perceived 'weaker' culture (Bohemia) was appropriating from a 'stronger' culture (Britain).

In his analysis of cultural appropriation, Arnd Schneider thinks of "cultures as open systems where individual actors negotiate access to, and traffic in, symbolic elements which have no fixed meaning."<sup>15</sup> This view is conducive with my understanding of Bohemian artists and journalists as carriers of cultural transfer where such transfer is not necessarily indicative of the hierarchy between a central and a peripheral culture, but rather reflects a wide system of transmissions across the board. This view is not entirely dissimilar to Piotr Piotrowski's notion of horizontal art history, and resonates with the concept of 'entangled art history' analysed by Rampley and summarised by Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius as follows:

Free both from 'the struggle for mutual recognition' and from ethnocentric partialities, [entangled art history] examines the ways in which 'transfers and entanglements' between the nations are 'mutually constitutive of their identities'<sup>16</sup>.

Arnd Schneider stresses the emphasis on the individual artists carrying the appropriation process: "artists were conceived as the 'interface' in the process of cross-cultural contacts", and thus appropriation "prolongs and extends the experience of what they claim as the original, while also investing it with new meaning and serving as a strategy for identity construction."<sup>17</sup> In resonance with these thoughts, in the context of Bohemian artists adapting features of British art, this process of cultural borrowing leads to both an extension of the original's (e.g., Pre-Raphaelite art's) meaning as well as transforming it into a new meaningful and aesthetically valid creation (e.g. Pre-Raphaelite-inspired works

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<sup>15</sup> Arnd Schneider. "On 'appropriation'. A critical reappraisal of the concept and its application in global art practices." *Social Anthropology* 11, no. 2 (2003): 215.

<sup>16</sup> Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, "The place of Modernism in Central European art" in *Journal of Art Historiography* Number 26 (2022): 8.

<sup>17</sup> Schneider, "On Appropriation", 216.

by Švabinský) which become carriers of new meanings and symbolism within the borrowing culture, not merely derivatives of the original. I also argue that the quality and success of such artworks (such as Švabinský's works inspired by the Pre-Raphaelites) should not be measured by the degree to which they copied features of the 'original' culture, but rather by how they used these features to create new meanings and new value in the context of their original culture, and potentially how this deepened the understanding of the original culture (although this is dependent on the original culture recognising the work of the borrowing culture, which does not always happen, as will be discussed throughout this thesis).

James O Young's thoughts on the aesthetic value of artwork produced via the process of cultural borrowing further support this. Young stands against the theory of the 'aesthetic handicap' and expresses his view that cultural appropriation can result in works of high cultural value and "considerable aesthetic merit".<sup>18</sup> In the context of my research, I see this approach as a good analogy for the recognition of the value of Czech and other 'peripheral' artworks. Central and Eastern European art is typically either viewed as derivative, or it does not even figure as part of 'Western' art history. I understand Young's argument to be in support of the much-needed recognition that art of the periphery can produce autonomous and aesthetically valuable artistic outcomes, and as such I see Young's work as a complementary thought-system to Piotrowski's horizontal art history (more on which later). While both Schneider's and Young's work revolve mainly around cultural appropriation from non-European countries (Africa, Latin America, etc) and while their enquiry covers a broad range of cultural outputs beyond fine arts, I nonetheless consider their work a helpful framework, especially with the aim of rehabilitating the aesthetic value of non-Western-European regions.

In my quest to conquer the idea of 'belatedness' I turned my attention to Japanese philosophy and aesthetics, using the insight into Japanese culture from my previous research and curatorial experience with traditional Japanese

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<sup>18</sup> James O Young, "Art, Authenticity and Appropriation", *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 1, no. 3 (2006): 456.

arts.<sup>19</sup> I was long intrigued by the concept of *Ma* 間 and wondered if it could help me in liberating Bohemian art from the trap of derivativeness. The concept of *Ma* 間 provided me with a helpful metaphor for the positive effect of pausing, or for only responding to stimuli after some space and time have passed. As I explain in detail in the following chapters, *Ma* suggests that delay, silence, or a prolonged pause before a reaction ultimately enriches the reaction which follows after the pause. In this sense, I view the late reception of British art and criticism by Bohemian artists to be not only *not* detrimental to the quality and aesthetic authenticity of Bohemian art of the turn of the century, but I see it as something that in fact brought a special multi-layered quality to these works.

While the concept of *Ma* 間 fitted some of my thinking about the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Czech cultural milieu, it couldn't reflect fully the complexity of the Central European political, historical, and geographical situation. Engaging with the work of contemporary British and international research of Czech, Czechoslovak and generally Slavic cultures was a helpful step towards understanding the situation of Czech Lands within contemporary research outside of the country. Attending and presenting at Slavic and Eastern European studies conferences in the UK and the US during my doctoral studies introduced me to a multidisciplinary cohort of academics and researchers and helped me situate my research within a much larger context, stretching beyond art history.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> My research themes at the National Museums included Japanese woodcut prints at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as Buddhist sculpture and traditional Japanese toys. My publications included the following.

Helena Gaudeková and Alice Kraemerová, *Buddhas, Bódhisattvas and Deities - Japanese Buddhist Art from the Náprstek Museum*, (Prague: National Museum, 2012)

Helena Gaudeková and Alice Kraemerová, "Folding Screens in the Japanese Collection of the Náprstek Museum", *Annals of Naprstek Museum* 35, no. 2 (2014): 95-136

Helena Gaudeková, "Nuances of Beauty - Yoshitoshi's Concept of Women as a Reflection of Contemporary Society", *Annals of Naprstek Museum* 34, no. 1 (2013): 43-59.

Helena Gaudeková and Alice Kraemerová, "Decadent Eccentric and Poetic Moon viewer – Tsukioka Yoshitoshi", *Annals of the Náprstek Museum* 33 (2012): 51-84

Helena Gaudeková and Alice Kraemerová, "Buddhist Art Objects in the Japanese Collection of the Náprstek Museum, Prague, in Tomoe Irene Maria Steineck, Josef Kreiner and Raji C Steineck, *Japanese Collections in European Museums, Vol. IV: Buddhist Art - Reports from the International Symposium Japanese Buddhist Objects in European Collections and Their Impact on the European Image of Japan* (Bonn: 2012) 243-258.

<sup>20</sup> The Slavic studies conferences where I presented my research included: Slavic Studies Study Day at Sheffield University (2017); Bristol University; "Czechoslovakia 100 & BASEES Czech & Slovak Study Day" Cardiff, (2018); Bristol University Department of Russian and Czech Lecture series (2023); Brown University Slavic Department special lecture (2021, 2022, 2023).

Finally, as my part-time doctoral research spanned over six years, I witnessed the partial dissolution of some of these interdisciplinary clusters in the UK due to European academics moving back to the Continent following Brexit. The work of Matthew Rampley and Marta Filipová, who migrated from Birmingham to Brno, has been instrumental for me as it represented a viewpoint of scholars who have been active in both British and Czech academic institutions, which does not only entail the physical displacement between the two countries, but most importantly navigating the methodological discourse and narratives of art history between the two regions, which even today differ to a notable extent.

At this point, it is necessary to say that during the course of writing my thesis, I too had to undergo a transformation of my own thought processes, my writing, my methods and overall approach to art historical research. Having completed my undergraduate studies of art history in Prague at the Philosophical Faculty of the Charles University, I was well equipped with an encyclopaedic knowledge of Czech and international art history. The focus of the course on Czech art history was omnipresent throughout my degree, although the syllabus also included a thorough overview of international art. By 'international' I mean mainly German, French, Austrian and Italian art. Asian or other non-European art were barely represented during my time as an undergraduate – and the same applies to British art, which was presented in the form of sporadic mentions of Gainsborough, Turner, and the architecture of St Paul's Cathedral. I am pleased to see that this has since somewhat changed.<sup>21</sup> It is also necessary to say that this is the case in many universities across the Continent where British Victorian art rarely features as either a taught subject or a research focus.<sup>22</sup>

In my time as a student in Czechia, the focus of undergraduate courses was mainly on learning 'facts' about the history of art. While some essays were submitted as part of seminars, the focus of the course was a series of written

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<sup>21</sup> My undergraduate studies took place between the years 2007 and 2011. I believe that some aspects of the degree and its syllabus have changed since then although judging by the course lists available online, British art figures still only marginally.

<sup>22</sup> I am thankful to the research group "European Romanticism or Romanticism in Europe?" from the University of Jena who provided me with a useful account of the lack research of British 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century art at German universities, as discussed at the international conference Re-imagining European and British Romanticism held in September 2023 at the University of York.

and oral exams designed to probe the students' knowledge of historical facts, dates, and definitions. While one of the obligatory subjects was a course in methodology, the module concluded with an oral exam consisting of presenting key facts about authors and researchers from antiquity to the present day. This focus on facts presented a treasure trove of fascinating information, but not necessarily a prompt for finding actual methods for one's own research.

As a result, while my studies in Prague provided me with an excellent factual overview of the history of Czech art, they ultimately reflected a certain kind of insularity of Czech art history. This insularity has many reasons, one of them being the difficult-to-learn and grammatically complex Czech language, which automatically excludes non-speakers from accessing primary as well as many secondary sources. Apart from that, the turbulent history of Czechoslovakia with its forty years of Communist dictatorship and strict censorship meant that intellectual exchange with the international art historical scene was almost (although not entirely) impossible. In this context, the study of 'imperialistic' countries and their cultures was not encouraged by the regime which meant that any attempts to situate Bohemian Lands within the context of 'Western' art carried a level of danger.

Professor Milena Bartlová, who was herself persecuted during the Communist regime, deals with this in her article for the leading Czech art journal *Umění*:

Unless we take into account what happened to art-historical thinking behind the Iron Curtain before 1990, we will not get below the surface of the problem. Here we come up against an ideological prejudice which without further reflection regards as trivial all art-historical thinking that came into being during the four decades of dictatorship by the Communist parties in the countries of the Soviet bloc."<sup>23</sup>

In my research, I certainly did not regard publications from the time of Communism as trivial; but as someone born into a dictatorship I knew well how to 'read between the lines'. Working with Czech art historical texts from this

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<sup>23</sup> Milena Bartlová, "From which Vantage Points does an Art Historian Look? The History of Central European Art and the Post-colonial Impulse", *Umění Art* LXIX, no. 2 (2021): 177

period often means focusing as intensely on the material that is missing as on the information that is presented.

As an undergraduate in Prague, I was taught by lecturers and professors many of whom had first-hand experiences of the severity of the Communist regime. Many resorted to adjusting to the censorship by adding paragraphs to their publications in which the imperial regimes were undermined by pejorative comments and the power of the proletariat was emphatically celebrated.<sup>24</sup> Others were removed from their academic careers altogether after the Soviet invasion of Prague in 1968 and had to succumb to usually low-skilled manual jobs that were forced upon them by the regime.<sup>25</sup> It is understandable that such conditions were not favourable for the study of international art, and that such hardships did not facilitate the emergence of Czech specialists on British Victorian art.

As a result of this complex situation, Czech art history became somewhat insular and inward-looking, governed by its internal laws and firmly established national narratives. This is to a large extent still the case today, despite the many outstanding academics working at leading Czech universities. As Rampley puts it in his key article on the challenges of writing on modernism in Central Europe, published by the leading Czech art history journal *Umění (Art)* in 2021:

In addition to such local scholarship, a large literature is also devoted to art and architecture on a national level; it is written in the national

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<sup>24</sup> This has been highlighted in 2023 in the exhibition on the 19<sup>th</sup> century Czech painter “Josef Mánes – Man, Artist, Legend” (National Gallery Prague, 30.03. – 16.07.2023) where an entire section of this monographic exhibition was dedicated to showing how during the years under the Communist regime popular and academic literature censored information about Manes and presented a completely misleading narrative about the artist’s relationship with aristocracy. While Mánes’ letters and diaries offer an insight into the mutually beneficial relationship and close friendships he had with the local aristocracy, under the Communist regime this was ignored and rewritten to show Mánes as an artist passionate about the Bohemian peasants and suffering under the demands from his aristocratic funders. The exhibition was curated by Veronika Hulíková and Markéta Dlábková, curators at the National Gallery in Prague.

<sup>25</sup> Perhaps the most famous representative of such a fate was the first post-Communist president Václav Havel (1936 – 2011). Under the Communist regime, Havel originally worked as a playwright. He was a known member of several dissent movements and refused to join the Communist Party. As such he was banned from working for the theatre and forced to accept a job at a brewery in the north-Bohemian town of Trutnov where he was made responsible for physically moving barrels of beer. Havel spent 14 years working for the brewery, mainly doing manual jobs. A similar story was experienced by a large number of academics especially those working within the humanities. One of the large bridges built over the river Moldau in Prague in the 1970s and 1980s was nicknamed “the bride of intelligentsia” as most of the workers delivering the manual labour were former professors from the nearby Charles University.



languages, and the implicit audience is again a national one reflected in the manner in which the narratives are constructed. The large-scale national histories published by state academies mentioned earlier are prominent examples, as are major monographs on individual artists and architects. Such publications may provide contextual overviews in which the wider European background is examined, but, written for a national readership (or interpretative community), the historical and geographical framework (the nation and its identity) may often go unexamined, based on assumptions tacitly shared with the readership. Topographical studies remain a prominent genre, as is positivistic documentation, continuing the genre of *Kunsttopographie* that was central to nineteenth-century art history.<sup>26</sup>

In his article, Rampley outlines how this sense of intellectual isolation continues today even though most major Czech universities, museums and galleries produce bi-lingual publications and catalogues and use English labels in their exhibitions. While specialised academic journals encourage Czech scholars to publish in English, the narrative and assumed shared beliefs of the readership often remain firmly in the national realm. My personal experience resonates with this; while working at the National Museum in Prague, I co-authored three monographs and published several articles, all of them in English. However, despite writing in English, my methodological standpoint remained firmly within the region of the shared national narratives and followed the positivistic topographic approach. As such, my publications were only adding to the growing body of work published in English by Czech scholars – only to be read mainly by Czech scholars as well. Of course, there is still much value in such topographical studies, but they mostly do not engage in an international interdisciplinary dialogue.

In order to situate my research into a wider discourse, I chose the University of York for my doctoral studies specifically for the vibrant international cohort of postgraduates surrounding my supervisor Prof Liz Prettejohn. Many of her postgraduate and doctoral students look at aspects of international art in

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<sup>26</sup> Rampley, "Networks", 159.

relation to British Victorian art, often with a focus on the reception of the Pre-Raphaelites around the world. I was lucky to share my research with peers and colleagues who were uncovering the connections and dialogues concerning British art and its reception in Italy, Germany, Japan and South America, among other locations. Looking at Bohemian art through the lens of these diverse viewpoints opened my eyes to the fact that a lot of what I have learnt and considered to be the generally accepted story of Czech art is in fact one of the many stories that could be told about it.

### **Belonging**

As I began rethinking all I knew about Czech art, I also began to question my own belonging. In the beginning of my doctoral research, I considered myself to be a representative of Czech culture, a Czech researcher living abroad. Over time, as I got fully immersed in the internationally vibrant intellectual richness at the University of York, my entire worldview shifted. My research became more interdisciplinary, more open and responsive to new methods, and to experimentation. The incredibly vibrant PhD cohort at York opened a world of new possibilities to me.

Enthused by the richness of academic and curatorial networks active in the UK in the field of Victorian studies, I frequented many conferences and workshops where I presented my research of Czech art in the context of Victorian studies. The reactions to my talks from my peers and from established professionals and academics were notably different from the narratives I was used to hearing back in Czechia. At the risk of sounding dramatic, this has been the most profound turn in my professional life.

Soon I realised that my research occupies an in-between space between several disciplines. Of course, I considered art history to be the natural home for my research, but now that I was settled in Britain, I discovered a new cohort of scholars who I also belonged with: Slavonic and Eastern European studies. At the time of writing this text, there are only a few places in the UK where Czech

language and culture are being taught.<sup>27</sup> I started frequenting conferences and workshops organised by Slavonic studies departments, often being the only art historian presenting. This was a crucial lesson in making my research accessible to a multidisciplinary audience as well as realising the wider role that my research can play in Britain, beyond art history. Overall, during the course of my doctoral work, I arrived at defining my research as an intersection of art history, cultural studies, Victorian studies, and Slavonic / Central / Eastern European studies. This in-betweenness is therefore reflected in my thesis.

### **What's in a Name – Czechia or Bohemia?**

Situating my research at the intersection of several disciplines brings along perks as well as challenges. Among them, the issues of language, translation and terminology occupy a primal position. This begins as early as deciding which of the many possible names should I use for the country of my research focus. What is nowadays known as the Czech Republic has only existed under this name since 1992. Before then, it was the Czechoslovak Federative Republic. Before then, the country I was born into was called the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

Around the year 1900, which is the period I focus on in my thesis, the geographical area in question was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, formed in 1867, replacing the Austrian Empire which was established in 1804. As part of the Empire, the area nowadays known as the Czech Republic comprised several demographics: the so-called Czech Lands/ Bohemia, Moravia, and parts of Silesia. Silesia was still a part of the first independent republic of Czechoslovakia, formed in 1918, but was no longer a part of the Czechoslovakian Socialist Republic, formed in 1960, which I was later born into.

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<sup>27</sup> Czech language and/or culture is currently taught at the following UK universities: UCL University College London; University of Oxford; University of Sheffield; University of Glasgow and University of Bristol, St Andrews University. Majority of these offer mainly language-focused degrees with additional history and culture seminars. Accessed 03 Sept, 2023, [https://www.mzv.cz/london/en/culture\\_and\\_education/czech\\_studies\\_in\\_the\\_uk/index.html](https://www.mzv.cz/london/en/culture_and_education/czech_studies_in_the_uk/index.html)

Moravian Silesia remains a separate region today. For the purpose of my thesis, I will not be including artists from either Silesia or Slovakia.<sup>28</sup>

The issues with terminology get even more confusing when it comes to translating them into English. In the Czech language, there are several interchangeable terms for the nation's geographical area: *Čechy*; *Česko*; *české země* – all of these translate as 'Czech Lands'. There are nuances though. *Česko* is a term used as a one-word shorthand for The Czech Republic. In 2016, a new English term was declared as the official title of the country: Czechia. *Česko* is therefore best translated as Czechia, but as such it refers to the current state of Czechia, not its historic territories. It also incorporates the region of Moravia.

*Čechy*, on the other hand, is a term derived from the medieval concept of the Czech Lands, and as such it excludes Moravia. The term *Čechy* is not time-specific and refers to a geographical area rather than a political entity. Based on the Latin name for the Czech Lands, this is translated into English as The Lands of the Bohemian Crown – in short: Bohemia.

Throughout my thesis, I am using the terms 'Czech Lands' and 'Bohemia' interchangeably. While the above explanation might seem overly complicated, it reflects the complexities of terminology faced by most scholars in the field. As Steven Mansbach puts in in his editorial with which he opened a wider discussion about the region in the Czech journal *Umění* in 2021:

As many of the authors have acknowledged, even the choice of terminology is characterised by controversy and challenge. Slippage rather than fixity typifies the names we invoke to describe the geography (and periodisation) we study. This instability of terminology is itself rooted in the methodologies one embraces.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Czechoslovakia (1938 -1992) consisted of the Czech and Slovak nations. These have some shared history, but a lot of separate history and culture too. Czech and Slovakian are both Slavic languages and during the duration of Czechoslovakia as a shared state, both languages were legal and were spoken in everyday life and in the media. After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, each country resorted to its own legal language. Slovakian art history is not taught as part of national art history courses in nowadays Czech Republic.

<sup>29</sup> Steven Mansbach, "Methodological Frameworks for a Defiant Region", *Umění Art* LXIX no. 2 (2021):143

Mansbach expresses the impossibility of imposing a clearly defined terminology on a region that has been in flux over the last two centuries and that keeps undergoing substantial territorial changes including in my own lifetime and in recent history. Therefore, for the purposes of my thesis, I decided to call the region of my focus by the two terms: the Czech Lands, and Bohemia. I will also be using interchangeably the adjectives Czech and Bohemian. Sometimes I will introduce terms such as the 'Czech Germans' which will be explained in greater detail later and which refer to the specific mixing of nationalities and identities that were found in the Czech regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the turn of the century.

Due to the complexity of the political situation in Bohemia at the time, I will be spending some time in the individual chapters outlining what impact this had on the artists whose work I analyse. Getting the balance right was certainly a challenge; Czech artists of the period are almost entirely unknown in Britain and in 'Western' art history. I have therefore allocated some space in my thesis to explaining the basic background and essential information about the Czech art scene at the time and its most prominent artistic agents. The format of this thesis does not allow me to elaborate on this in greater detail, but I was determined to provide relevant historical underpinning wherever this was beneficial to my argument.

### **Setting the Scene**

Before going further into my research inquiry, it is necessary to explain the historical setting of Bohemian Lands at the turn of the century<sup>30</sup>. The Czech Lands were then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire ruled by the Habsburgs. The Empire was formed after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, thus replacing the previous entity of the Austrian Empire as an outcome of the Austro-Prussian war. One of the features of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in

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<sup>30</sup> Marta Filipová's monograph published in 2020 begins with a similar account of some of the key historical factors shaping Bohemia at the turn of the century. The focus of her monograph stretches well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century thus extending the basic social-political information until 1938. Despite the publication of Filipová's text in 2020 in English, I decided to nonetheless present some overlapping information in the introduction my thesis, as these historical facts are not widely known in anglophone art history. From the body of historic literature, I have selected those aspects of Bohemian history that are most relevant to my arguments throughout this thesis. Marta Filipová, *Modernity, History, and Politics in Czech Art*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 9-14.

comparison to its predecessor was a proclaimed increased acknowledgement of the individual nation states within the Empire – or at least so it was hoped. As part of the Compromise, the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Hungary was restored, thus ending the eighteen years long dictatorship and absolutism in Hungary, making the Empire a union of two equals.<sup>31</sup> For those Czechs with nationalist tendencies, this was perceived as a betrayal as the Czechs too longed for independence and sovereignty and were bitterly discouraged by losing out on the prospect of more freedom and independence within the arrangements of the new Empire. Ultimately, the Czechs would have to wait until 1918 when the end of the First World War facilitated the formation of the independent democratic state of Czechoslovakia.

Within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Czechs were numerically the third largest ethnic group in the monarchy, settled across Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia.<sup>32</sup> Sharing the borders with Both Germany and Austria, the Czech Lands were a territory of migration and cultural exchange. With German being the main official language of the Empire, the Czechs found themselves fighting for their national language and culture against the German element. As Mutschlechner explains:

Bohemia was the scene of extraordinarily violent national conflicts between Czechs and Germans, the latter a third of the country's population. The capital, Prague, had developed during the nineteenth century into the cultural centre of the Czech nation and was transformed from a German-dominated city to a Czech metropolis. Accordingly, the German contingent dropped in the city to 6.1 % (status in 1910).<sup>33</sup>

The struggle - as some perceived it - against German language and culture was all the stronger as it entailed cultural and linguistic influx from both the German

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<sup>31</sup> Martin Mutschlechner: "The Dual Monarchy: two states in a single empire", Online exhibition *The First World War and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy*, Schloß Schönbrunn Kultur- und Betriebsges.m.b.H, Accessed April 12, 2023, <https://ww1.habsburger.net/en/chapters/dual-monarchy-two-states-single-empire>

<sup>32</sup> Martin Mutschlechner: "The Czechs in the Hapsburg Monarchy", Online exhibition *The First World War and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy* Schloß Schönbrunn Kultur- und Betriebsges.m.b.H, Accessed April 12, 2023, <https://ww1.habsburger.net/en/chapters/czechs-habsburg-monarchy>

<sup>33</sup> Martin Mutschlechner: "The Czechs in the Hapsburg Monarchy" Online exhibition *The First World War and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy* Schloß Schönbrunn Kultur- und Betriebsges.m.b.H, Accessed April 12, 2023, <https://ww1.habsburger.net/en/chapters/czechs-habsburg-monarchy>

Empire, as a neighbouring country, and from within the Austro-Hungarian Empire that the Czech lands were part of. The German language was prominent across the Northern parts of the Bohemian lands where most of the industry was situated in mid-century, as many of the local businesses were set up by German-speaking entrepreneurs. But even in Prague itself, German was omnipresent. The competitiveness between the German and Czech languages can be demonstrated in the establishment of major theatres in Prague. The Estates Theatre, established in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in Prague, staged plays in both Czech and German throughout early 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, in 1862 the so-called Provisional Theatre was built in Prague with the aim to transform into a Czech National Theatre in the future. The goal of the Provisional Theatre was to stage only plays in Czech, which resulted in the Estates Theatre turning to only staging plays in German after 1862.<sup>34</sup> As Mutschlechner suggests, actions like this gave rise to the identity of Prague as the centre of Bohemian culture, and as a result brought about the gradual diminishing of the German community in central Bohemia. Despite this, the German community in Prague at the turn of the century included notable cultural figures such as the writers Franz Kafka and Max Brod, or the etcher Emil Orlik, who will figure in several of the following chapters.

The presence of many German nationals in Bohemia and the pressure of the Austrian legislation were perceived by many Czechs (although not all, as will be shown shortly) as oppressive and exploitative. The desire to solve this unsatisfactory situation among other political pressures led to the establishment of the Czech National Revival, a cultural movement which was first formed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and grew to become a centre point of Czech political and cultural activities throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The movement was underpinned by the desire to oppose the Germanisation imposed on the Bohemian Lands since the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620. Losing the Battle had tragic consequences for the Czech language, as previously Czech was the legislative language of the region between the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Czech literary authors active in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century often express despair over the three

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<sup>34</sup> "The Estates Theatre", *Czech National Theatre*, Accessed April 20, 2023, <https://www.narodni-divadlo.cz/cs/sceny/stavovske-divadlo/historie>

hundred years of German oppression. This line of thought resonated through many articles about art published around the year 1900. While by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Czech artists were eager to open the doors to Europe and had a passion for internationalism, at the same time the idea of ‘Czechness’ in art remained a crucial indicator of artistic relevance and quality. This friction between the desire for both internationalism and ‘Czechness’ at the same time is reflected in the themes I will explore in this thesis and proliferates through all my chapters.

While many articles in major Czech art journals around the turn of the century promoted the narrative of the Czech language, culture and art being oppressed by their Austrian and German counterparts, it is important to note that this was not necessarily a view shared by the entire Bohemian population. In his analysis of nationhood and nationalism in Europe, Rogers Brubaker introduces the phenomenon of ‘national indifference’ which applies in many ways to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Bohemian society.<sup>35</sup> As Brubaker elaborates, large proportions of Czechs did not identify especially strongly with their national belonging to the Czech Lands, but rather prioritised their local and regional connections, combined with a heightened attention to the actual social and economic networks that sustained them in their everyday lives, even if these were not aligned with the nationalist ideals.

According to Brubaker, this was mainly the case with rural areas outside of big cities, and especially outside Prague. There was naturally a higher presence of nationally oriented public figures within the Prague-based, educated middle-classes, while many villages and local regions tied their identity more closely to their respective geographical locations, and less so to a broader national movement. Similarly, members of what could be called the working classes were primarily governed by economic concerns and a sense of belonging with their fellow workers, rather than focusing on theoretical questions of nationhood and ethnicity.

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<sup>35</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1996): 69; 89; 116.



Similarly, many bilingual families simply did not experience much discomfort linked to a potential divide between their Czech and German identities, as there was a large number of German-speaking Czechs who identified with both nationalities and whose lives were conveniently positioned at the intersection of both Czech and German linguistic, cultural and socio-economic forces. Such mixed-identity population therefore did not experience the kind of oppression or a sense of historical hurt which can be found in some of the articles that I will be analysing in this thesis.

The concept of 'national indifference' is further developed by Pieter Judson who shows multiple examples of the interconnectedness of Czech and German identities especially among the middle classes which included the cultural circles.<sup>36</sup> Judson emphasises that many Czechs found the Habsburg administrative and economic system beneficial, and that there was a fruitful interconnectedness and practical collaboration between different ethnicities for business and social purposes.

Judson illustrates this with a series of examples, such as the electoral behaviour of many Czechs who voted for German political representatives who offered practical solutions to socio-economic issues, rather than voting for the Bohemian candidates whose main focus was the nationalist cultural and linguistic uplift of the Czech language and the nation's arts.<sup>37</sup>

In connection to this thesis, it is important to bear in mind that while I will be analysing a series of Czech articles with some nationalist tendencies, I will also be pointing towards artists and art critics who desired an international cultural collaboration without the pretext of the perceived Austrian and German oppression. The political and cultural situation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was complex and multilayered, so while some of the articles I will focus on are vocal about the perceived oppression of Czech artists and point to the many perceived injustices from the Viennese politicians towards Bohemia, it is crucial

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<sup>36</sup> As an example of this, Judson describes how the celebrations in Prague of the German poet Friedrich Schiller in 1859 which was organised and enthusiastically attended by both Czech and German inhabitants. Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire - A New History* (Harvard University Press, 2016): 249-250.

<sup>37</sup> Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 4-5; 191-195.

to remember that the actual situation on the ground was much more varied and that there were many more instances of 'national indifference' than would be implied by the Czech art journals.

### **Czech Art Scene at the Turn of the Century**

*Fin de siècle* Prague was on a transformative journey towards becoming a Bohemian metropolis.<sup>38</sup> In the 1890s, large areas of central Prague, which previously housed the medieval Jewish ghetto, were demolished and replaced with a 'Parisian' quarter. This new quarter was built around the central avenue called Mikulášská (acknowledging the nearby baroque church of St. Nicholas, in Czech: Mikuláš) and later renamed to Pařížská - Parisian Street - and consisted of a series of apartment buildings offering luxury flats to Prague upper-middle classes, such as No.15 featuring elaborate sculptural decoration including a large-scale sculpture of George and the Dragon. **[Fig 0.14]** The technical perks of the new buildings included integrated *en suite* bathrooms, lifts, and telephones, reflecting the new hygienic and cultural standards of an international metropolis.

From an architectural perspective, the Parisian quarter displays a fascinating overview of the evolving styles of the millennium's final decade. Revival styles such as neo-gothic and neo-baroque feature heavily, followed by more cutting-edge Secession / Art Nouveau style with oversize floral motifs, colourful stained-glass windows, and exuberant exterior sculptures, often carrying complex stories and symbolism.<sup>39</sup> Many of the buildings featured custom-made interior and exterior designs, and offered many opportunities for private commissions to Czech painters, sculptors and furniture designers. Moreover, this development stirred a passionate debate about Prague's identity, its role in

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<sup>38</sup> Richard Biegel, *Město v Bouři, Urbanismus a architektura historického centra Prahy 1830 - 1970* [City in a Storm, Urbanism and Architecture of Prague's Historical Centre 1830 - 1970] (Prague: Karolinum, 2022)

<sup>39</sup> An example of this is the apartment house no.15 Pařížská ulice (Paris Street) decorated with a major sculpture of George and the Dragon by Karel Novák, as well as a series of smaller reliefs and busts of Catholic and Hussite personalities, thus opening a fascinating dialogue between the two faiths, both of which had notable representation in Bohemia at the time.

Helena Gaudeková, "Sochař Karel Novák a jeho umělecký závod" [The sculptor Karel Novák and his artistic enterprise] (BA dissertation, Charles University in Prague, 2011), 37-39.

an international context, and the importance of educating and commissioning high-quality Czech artists.

In Prague, from the 1850s, the spirit of the National Revival took the form of fundraising for various major institutional buildings. These attracted the country's leading artists who competed in national competitions for the chance to decorate the buildings. The National Theatre, for example, completed in 1881 in the form of a substantial Neo-Renaissance building, offered dozens of leading artists opportunities to take part in creating artistic decorations for its lavish interiors and exteriors, all of which received excited coverage in the national press. **[Fig 0.15, 0.16]** Unfortunately, due to an accident on the roof of the building, the theatre burned down shortly after its opening. Following a major national push for donations and with support from the central government in Vienna, the theatre was expressly rebuilt within the next two years and opened again in 1883, bringing even more Czech contemporary artists onboard. Among them were artists who had international experience, such as Vojtěch Hynais who previously established a successful career in Paris. Several of the Czech artists analysed in my thesis were also actively involved with the commissions for the Theatre.

Another key building was the Municipal House built between the years 1905 and 1912. **[ Fig 0.17]** When the architectural competition was announced, the brief summarised the house as a multi-purpose space encompassing a concert hall, art gallery, meeting rooms and retail premises. The unusual triangle-like space surrounded by historical architecture inspired the experimental shape of the building and encouraged contributing artists to embrace Secession aesthetic ideals. However, the building was more than an exercise in Art Nouveau. The ideological underpinning of all the artwork adorning the building's exterior and interiors was the celebration of Prague as the 'mother of all cities' - *Praga Mater Urbium* – and as the centre for distinctively Czech culture. Each of the meeting rooms featured an ideological aesthetic programme. One such chamber, for example, celebrated the ten best known literary authors who mainly wrote and published in Czech, as seen on Max Švabinský's large scale

mural *Czech Spring* from 1910 situated in the Rieger Hall and celebrating the anticipated dawn of specifically Czech culture.<sup>40</sup> [Fig 0.18]

An understanding of this strong national feel and its coexistence with a parallel desire to establish Prague's presence on the international scene is a crucial underpinning of this thesis. Almost all the artists whose work I analyse as part of my research – namely Jan Preisler, Max Švabinský, Miloš Jiránek, among others – took part in decorating the Municipal House. In doing so, they were confirming their dedication to the national cause, their support for the Slavic and Bohemian ideals embodied by the building. At the same time, as I will show in the following chapters, these artists were eagerly collecting international art publications and trying out major international trends, from French impressionism to Belgian naturalism, British Pre-Raphaelitism and Japanese woodblock printing. This specific mixture of nationalism and internationalism forms the symbolic backbone of this thesis.

In my research, I do not see these two tendencies as opposing each other. On the contrary, as I will demonstrate, both nationalism and internationalism played major roles in shaping Bohemian art around the turn of the century. Equally, I am not suggesting that British art was more dominant than other international cultural transfers. I do however argue that British art was a crucial part of this entanglement of national and international styles, and as such it deserves to be analysed and understood in-depth, which overall hasn't been the case in past scholarship. My thesis aims to fill this important gap.

The friction between the national and international tendencies was also characteristic of the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, the nation's leading fine art educational establishment. Founded in 1799 by Emperor Francis I, the Academy attracted German teachers from its inception. The first director of the institution was the German etcher Josef Bergler (1753 – 1829), although he was followed in 1836 by the Czech painter František Tkadlík (1786 – 1840). Nonetheless, this was not the last time that a German artist took up the post.

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<sup>40</sup> Václav Mikule, *Obecní Dům v Praze* [The Municipal House in Prague] (Prague: Obecní Dům, 1997)

In 1896, the Academy was in a turmoil, students and staff were upset by the small and unfitting spaces they had available, and financially the institution was on the verge of collapse. The architect and benefactor Josef Hlávka came to the rescue, initiating talks with the Ministry of Education in Vienna, pioneering the idea that the Czech Academy should be run by the local government rather than centrally from Vienna. After some disagreements about this, the Academy was finally nationalised, and the decision was taken by the City of Prague Council to build a new set of studios for the school. Between 1889 and 1902 – the very period that I focus on in this thesis – the Academy's new building was erected, and two extra professors of painting were hired: Václav Brožík and Vojtěch Hynais.<sup>41</sup> Both were Czechs who previously established their careers in Paris and were therefore associated with bringing the latest international tendencies into the Bohemian art world. Their presence was a lasting stimulus for Czech artists and encouraged a heightened attention of the fine art journals to international art.

One of the ways of empowering Czech art students was annual stipends and scholarships enabling awardees to travel abroad. One of the most popular ones was the Josef Hlávka Scholarship which was privately funded; due to Hlávka's many years of involvement with the Academy, their students were always encouraged to apply and many of them received either the award or unofficial support from Hlávka. It was also customary among Czech art students to independently spend some time studying abroad. Vienna, Berlin, Munich and Paris were among the most popular destinations. The Czech student community in Munich, for example, was so large and vibrant that they issued their own magazine and even established a formal *Artistic Union Škréta*.<sup>42</sup>

Studying and living abroad was a crucial part of Czech art students' education. This further emphasised the Czech artists' overall exposure to foreign art and facilitated access to a whole array of international styles. Even if Czech artists such as Max Švabinský or Jan Preisler never visited London, they would have

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<sup>41</sup> An in-depth overview of this period and the development of its leading institutions can be found in the large-scale series *The History of Czech Art* – Jiri Kroupa and Roman Prahel et al., *Dějiny Českého Výtvarného Umění* (III/1-2) 1890-1938 (2 vols.), Prague: Academia, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Taťána Petrasová and Roman Prahel, *Mnichov-Praha: Výtvarné umění mezi tradicí a modernou* [Munich – Prague: Visual Arts Between Tradition and Modernity] (Prague: Academia, 2012)

had the chance to see British artworks exhibited in Paris and Vienna, and they would have had access to publications and reproductions circulated across Austria, Germany, and France. Therefore, for many Czech artists, British art was mediated via various European cities and as such it came with a context that shaped the Czech artists' perception of it.

Apart from study trips, personal travels abroad were a regular part of many Czech artists' lives. Such travels were often inspired by major exhibitions, such as the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1900. The painter Miloš Jiránek, for example, travelled to Paris repeatedly and after each trip he published exhibition reviews in one of the Czech fine art journals. His multilingualism also facilitated access to a vast array of international journals and publications, some of which served as the basis for his articles in Czech art journals. Jiránek was also among those artists who visited London and travelled through Britain, thus bringing a unique personal experience which he utilised in his writing for Czech journals.

### **Networks, Clusters, and Directions of Cultural Transfer**

My enquiry into the role of Britain in shaping Bohemian artists' work around 1900 is underpinned by several methodological approaches; alongside these it touches upon several wider themes linked to researching art of Central and Eastern Europe. Apart from theories revolving around cultural appropriation in the arts, which I outlined earlier, exploring the notions of 'horizontal' and 'entangled' art histories informed the development of my research. While I ultimately agree with Matthew Rampley that horizontal art history does not bring a definitive solution, there are nonetheless some aspects of the discussions of this subject that I find relevant for the arguments made in this thesis.

The concept of horizontal art history originates from the Polish scholar Piotr Piotrowski and was first published in the leading Czech art historical journal *Umění (Art)* in 2008.<sup>43</sup> In his article, Piotrowski explores the challenges of carrying out art historical research in Central and Eastern Europe and suggests

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<sup>43</sup> Piotr Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History", *Umění Art* LVI (2008): 378–383.

new approaches to re-evaluating the art of the region. Piotrowski outlines how Central and Eastern Europe is traditionally considered to be the 'periphery' with the quality of its art production being measured by how close it gets to mirroring the style of the 'centres' – Paris, London, Berlin, New York. Due to the comparison to the 'centres', Eastern European artistic outputs are often seen as backward, delayed and derivative. The lasting effects of the Iron Curtain separating the Eastern bloc from 'Western' art historical discourse adds another way in which the region can easily be misunderstood, combined with language issues which I already alluded to earlier.

While postcolonial theories could seem like a suitable methodological framework, Piotrowski (and others) argue that the history of many Eastern European regions is far too complex for postcolonialism to work. This has become a generally accepted idea, and more recently another addition to this discussion featured in an article by Czech sociologist Ondřej Slačálek who revisited the questions regarding postcolonialism in Czech history and concluded that while useful for some aspects, postcolonial theories do not facilitate a deeper understanding of the region's past. This is also due to the partial 'self-colonising' tendencies that repeatedly took place during both Empires (Austrian and Austro-Hungarian) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as after the fall of the Iron Curtain where they resulted in the palpable desire of Czechoslovakia to be considered the most Western country out of the Eastern Bloc.<sup>44</sup>

In his 2008 article, Piotrowski sets out on a mission to reset the view in which Eastern European countries produce belated and derivative art, by introducing a concept of horizontal art history. Here the dichotomy of the centre versus periphery is dismantled and instead replaced with a more egalitarian view of multiple modernisms and regional expressions, none of which are considered to be more valuable or less valuable than the others. In 2021, thirteen years after Piotrowski's article was published, Matthew Rampley - a British scholar settled in the Czech (and Moravian) city of Brno - revisited the idea of horizontal art

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<sup>44</sup> Ondřej Slačálek, "Postkoloniální střední Evropa? Kunderův „unesený Západ“ v zrcadle postkoloniální kritiky" [Postcolonial Central Europe? Kundera's "hijacked West" in the Light of Postcolonial Criticism] *Slovo a Smysl – Word and Sense* 17, no.2 (2020):105-130.

history. Rampley's article has been of great value to my own research, despite some clear differences between horizontal art history and the case of the Czech-British artistic exchange. While horizontal art history relies on the idea of mutuality, my research shows that the direction of cultural transfer was one way only, from Britain to Bohemia. Despite this, Rampley's summary of Piotrowski's concept, his analysis of the concept's shortfalls and how these relate to contemporary art historical research of Central European art, resonated with a number of issues that I too faced in my research, and which I deem relevant as part of introducing my research of Czech art.

Piotrowski's proposed concept of horizontal art history has been well received and passionately embraced especially by researchers from Eastern European regions, yet the challenge still remains of making the art of these regions part of a wider context of the 'Western' art historical narrative, moving beyond the metric of responding to major centres:

Inasmuch as eastern and central Europe are seen as responding to innovations generated elsewhere, such a structure also depicts the region as backward.<sup>47</sup>

This habit of comparing to the centres also causes the misinterpretation of regional artistic specificities and inventions and presents them as merely an exotic twist on the main art developments from the centres. Inspired by some aspects of horizontal art history, in this thesis, I am adopting a viewpoint where Czech art is seen as contributing to and being in dialogue with British and wider European trends, rather than just imitating them.

In my research, I juxtapose Czech and British artworks and look for similarities, identifying features 'borrowed' by Czech artists. However, I am not using these comparisons as metrics of success in terms of Czech artists being praised for successfully and timely adapting British aesthetics in their work. Instead, I place these comparisons in an international context, and by identifying British artworks as formative within this setting, I am primarily aiming towards a deeper

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<sup>47</sup> Rampley, "Networks," 145.



understanding of how British art was *transformed* in this process, and how it was combined with other art trends of the time – this is what I see as an entanglement. I am looking for similarities as a starting point, with the aim to define what features of British art were understood as relevant by Czech artists, and how these contributed to the character of Czech art at the turn of the century.

As Rampley remarks, the study of Central and Eastern Europe is mostly carried out by researchers based in these areas, or if based abroad, then they often share a personal connection to the area. I too find myself falling within this category. Within the UK, there is currently only a handful of scholars researching Czech culture, and indeed most of them have close personal links to the country. Intriguingly, apart from myself, none of the other UK based researchers of Czech culture are primarily art historians, although some of them deal with aspects of art in their research. Rampley's remark therefore resonate with my personal experience of researching Czech art in the UK over the last seven years.

In his discussion of horizontal art history, Rampley points out that East European art is often viewed as an exotic addition to the main Western European and North American narrative:

Even when the modernisms of, for example, Bucharest, Belgrade or Kaunas, are explored, they are often treated as objects of exotic interest operating within a framework shaped by western Europe and north America. If discussed at all, the modernist art practices of East-Central Europe are usually described in terms of the reception of ideas and practices flowing from elsewhere.<sup>49</sup>

I have experienced this at first hand at many international conferences where I presented my research among scholars focused on areas within the traditional 'Western' art history. This often resulted in the Czech material being presented as part of a 'curiosity panel' of sorts, with other papers that didn't fit the main

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<sup>49</sup> Rampley, "Networks," 146.

narrative. Due to the general lack of knowledge about the art of Central Europe, the discussion would often be based on perceiving Czech art through the lens of 'the West'. While my thesis remains guilty of discussing Czech art mainly in terms of ideas flowing from elsewhere, it was my intention to use this to highlight rarely discussed angles of Czech art, and ultimately to understand Czech art as inherently belonging to the wider 'Western' art historical narrative, where the local variants are regarded not merely as curiosities but as equally valid contributions.

Bartlová aptly analyses the trap that is the comparison to art of the 'centres' using the example of Czech cubism. While cubism itself is outside of the scope of this thesis, Bartlová's examination of this example is equally relevant for the Bohemian 1900s:

Taking the example of Cubism in the Czech lands it is possible to see what from the vantage point of the centre is 'a lack of understanding' as a creative appropriation forming new meanings, whose value is neither less nor greater than the original, but simply different. It is my belief that it is only through such paradigmatic turns that it would be possible to overcome the colonial point of view while avoiding replacement of one injustice by another; not to return to nationalism and conservatism, but instead to demonstrate the emancipating potential of the local.<sup>50</sup>

Bartlová's example resonates with the notion of parallel modernisms, each of them with a local set of characteristics and not one more important than the others. The task of an art historian of the region would then be to take the similarities to other modernisms in different locations as a starting point of enquiry and continue to look for the specific features contributing to the individuality of each region.

A similar idea was formulated by Johannes Grave who suggests that comparisons between 'regional' art and the centre should indeed be merely a starting point, and certainly not the measure of the regional art's quality. The

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<sup>50</sup> Milena Bartlová, "From Which Vantage Points does an Art Historian Look? The History of Central European Art and the Post-colonial Impulse," *Umění* LXIX, no.2 (2021): 182.

interesting aspects of this, according to Grave, are not so much the similarities to the art of the centre, but rather the differences.<sup>51</sup> With this view, the old notion of 'influence' takes on a different role, one where traditional influence is transformed into networks and clusters of cultural transfer, as has been formulated by cultural transfer scholars over recent years. My thesis aims to add to this development.

The dismantling of 'influence' is also analysed by Bartlová as follows:

It will no longer suffice to deconstruct and rethink the category of influence, something on which art history is already working. The same has recently begun to happen to the category of quality, which it will no longer be possible to identify with originality in the sense of an initiating role in a retrospectively constructed sequence of development.<sup>52</sup>

Bartlová's remark points to the critical turn away from the traditional view of originality and quality being only associated with the artistic centres where trends were formulated first. Here I see a resonance with the theories surrounding artistic and cultural appropriation, and specifically the philosopher James O Young who stresses the fact that an artwork that came about via appropriation of art features of the 'centre' or simply another region still retains its artistic authenticity (understood as a synonym to quality) and hence is not a mere derivative of the original artwork.<sup>53</sup>

In my thesis, it is exactly this prism through which I look at Bohemian art around the year 1900. I do not believe that the borrowing of features from French, German and British art is detrimental to the quality or authenticity of Bohemian art. I also do not support the view that a delayed reaction produces artwork of a lesser quality. I celebrate the multi-layered melting pot of 'influences' that made up Czech art around 1900 where French, German, Japanese and British art all mixed and overlapped. I believe that this created a unique situation that resulted

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<sup>51</sup> Based on a discussion at the conference "Rethinking British and European Romanticisms in Transnational Dimensions", Friedrich Schiller University of Jena, Germany, 28.–30. 03. 2023. Accessed 6 May 2023, <https://www.kuk.uni-jena.de/workshop-romanticism>

<sup>52</sup> Bartlová, "From Which Vantage Points," 182.

<sup>53</sup> James O Young, "Art, authenticity and appropriation." *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 1, no.3 (2006): 455–476

in the creation of high quality and aesthetically authentic art with both local, national and international features.

In my research, the concepts of 'horizontal art history', and of 'entangled art history' are understood as thought systems that attempt to describe the complex set of overlaying directions of cultural transfer between countries and cultures; for my topic I focus on the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. For example, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in England were heavily inspired by Italian Quattrocento painting as well as works by Venetian artists such as Titian, Paolo Veronese, and Palma Vecchio. Pre-Raphaelite works were in return influential across Europe in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and had their followers in France, Austria and Germany, where many Czech artists would see their work. Parallel to the fascination with late Rossetti and Burne-Jones across the Continent, other artistic directions were attracting the attention of the same artists who admired the British movement. As a result, the work of the Czech artist Max Švabinský, for example, shows features inspired by Rossetti and Burne-Jones as well as by artists associated with the Symbolist movement in France. At the same time, the influx of Japanese woodblock prints and generally the art, craft and ethnographical material from Asia and Africa, made its imprint (however short-lived) on many concurrent artists.

This example shows that cultural transfer did not always take the form of an equal mutual exchange between two clearly defined regions but rather that the transfers were going simultaneously in multiple directions and combined in unexpected ways both spatially and temporally. While horizontal art history promotes the idea of mutuality, I point towards the multitude of directions that transfers took. Such connections transcended spatial and temporal limitations and united Bohemian artists with the rest of the Continent (and the world) in a collective experiment with combinations of motifs and techniques. Without necessarily stating that horizontal or entangled art histories give the ultimate solution, I see my research as another of the many fragments that come together to form an overarching narrative of a multi-directional cross-cultural transfer typical for European art around 1900.

## **The Fall of the (Chinese) Wall**

I have already outlined that my interest in British art started after the Velvet Revolution which was itself closely associated with the fall of the Berlin Wall. My thesis is centred around the fall of yet another wall, a symbolic 'Chinese wall' that according to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century journalist Gustav Jaroš separated Bohemia from British culture in the year 1900. There are several reasons why my thesis is centred around the year 1900 and is constructed around Czech art journals at the time. In my research, I have identified Czech art journalism to be one of the main carriers of cultural transfer, creating a network of artists and writers who together co-created a vibrant multinational melting pot of international inspirations.

In the year 1900, John Ruskin's death became central news that made headlines internationally. For Czech fine art journals, this was the start of an increased interest in not only Ruskin himself, but in British Victorian art as a whole. Czech fine art journals were already on a mission to open the region to multinational inspirations and Ruskin's death uncovered a big gap in the country's lack of cultural exchange with Britain. My in-depth study of Czech art journals from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries uncovered that these played a major role in disseminating both images and texts relating to international art, including from Britain. These journals were often edited by artists themselves, with the help of art critics and freelance journalists. As I will show, individual artists often played a multitude of roles at the same time. A perfect example of this is the painter Miloš Jiránek who was multilingual and apart from his artistic work he also translated key texts from French and English. In addition, he travelled to international exhibitions and wrote reviews in Czech of the shows he visited across Europe. Individuals like Jiránek became central figures of cultural transfer, creating a vibrant network of connections closely linked to Czech art journals.

A close study of what articles and reproductions were published in the said journals constitutes the symbolic backbone of this thesis. Each theme explored in the following chapters will be analysed through Czech fine art journals and explored in relation to the network of artists and writers associated with the

journals. I understand the journals as a key platform which played a crucial formative role in the Czech artistic and cultural life around the year 1900.

I centre my research around the year 1900 not only because of Ruskin's death and its ripple effect on Czech journals and artists. The year 1900 is also a practical mid-point between the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which in some ways still symbolically remains within the 'long' 19<sup>th</sup> century, before the social and political structure of the world altered completely with the onset of the First World War. It wasn't until the 1890s that the first responses to the Pre-Raphaelites appeared among Bohemian artists. The late 1890s especially were a fruitful time when reports about Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones made appearances in the Czech press, and when Czech artists started responding to them. John Ruskin's death in 1900 enhanced this tendency and added momentum to the growing interest in British art. Finally, the first decade of the new century stimulated some Czech artists to respond to more recent phenomena in British art, such as the work of James McNeill Whistler. Therefore, while the year 1900 will be the temporal centre-point of my thesis, I will be analysing Czech artwork from between the 1890s and the 1910s, and will make occasional references to British art from as early as the 1840s.

The title of my thesis alludes to the 'Chinese wall' separating Bohemia from access to British art as formulated by the journalist Gustav Jaroš in his article in 1900.<sup>54</sup> While Jaroš expresses his frustration with the insularity of Bohemia, the reality was somewhat more complex. The majority of Czech artists were bilingual, speaking both Czech and German. Even this on its own granted them access to publications in German, which covered a multitude of topics relating to international art trends of the time. In addition, many Czech artists studied in German and Austrian cities, mainly in Vienna, Berlin and Munich. This gave them not only access to German and Austrian art, but also exposure to international touring exhibitions which often included British artworks. Besides this, Paris was among the favourite travel destinations for Czech artists and

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<sup>54</sup> Gamma/ Gustav Jaroš, "John Ruskin", *Volné Směry* IV, no. 3 (1900): 89 – 98.

accounts of Parisian exhibitions are a standard feature in Czech journals of the time.

In late 19<sup>th</sup> century Bohemia, there were several scholarships available both from the Czech Academy of Fine Arts and from private foundations set up by aristocracy, such as the Hlávka stipend awarded to Czech artists to enable them to travel mainly but not exclusively to Rome. Overall, the most common destination for the majority of Czech artists was Paris; it is clear that a much larger number of Czechs travelled to Paris rather than London. However, thanks to the very international exhibitions held in Paris, many Czech artists encountered the originals of British art in the French capital. Reproductions of British art were available all over Europe, but it was often Paris where Czech cultural tourists would see the real-life works by Burne-Jones, for example. In this thesis, I will be dealing with several artists who physically travelled to London, such as Emil Orlik and František Tavík Šimon. However, others, such as Max Švabinský, spent substantial amounts of time in Paris instead, as the French capital was a much sought-after destination for many cultured Czechs.

Despite the fact that Bohemian journals often published articles describing the suppression that Czech artists, and institutions experienced and the lack of access of Czech artists to international trends, in reality there were numerous ways that Czech artists could travel abroad even for extended periods of time. The establishment of some fine art journals was specifically aimed at bringing the Czech readership news about latest art developments from around the globe – including non-European art (although this was still a marginal occurrence). However insular the Czech art world was, there was enough access to foreign materials for it to absorb a whole array of European and international art movements, including British Victorian art.

### **Narrowing the Focus**

In the early stages of my research, I had a grandiose vision of all the subthemes that could be included. Among these were the Arts and Crafts movement, British book design, Victorian sculpture and even architecture. As much as I was tempted to cover these areas in their entirety, I soon realised that an

exhaustive overview would not only require a much larger format but that this could also lead to the solidifying of some already existing views on the ways that Britain was understood by European artists, which is something I wanted my research to question rather than affirm, and to which I wanted to suggest an alternative focal point.

A good example of this is the established (although seldomly thoroughly analysed) stereotype of British crafts and design being the prime interest of foreign artists when it came to 'borrowing' from British art. This notion had been around since the 1930s and 1940s when it was coined by Nikolaus Pevsner in his hugely popular publications, such as *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*.<sup>55</sup> In this seminal work, Pevsner expresses his firm belief that the aesthetics of the German movement Bauhaus and its leading figure Walter Gropius can be traced to the formative 'influence' of William Morris, Arts and Crafts movement and Victorian engineering. The view that Britain was mainly attractive to foreign artists because of its design had been accepted into the Czech art historical mainstream, as a result of which scant mention of the connection between British design and Bohemian culture at the turn of the century has been made in scholarly literature.<sup>56</sup>

While I am not entirely disputing Pevsner's claim, in my research I wanted to show that British art – in a much wider sense, including fine art – was closely followed by Bohemian artists and had stimulated a new direction in Czech artists' work. In order to demonstrate this in its depth and complexity, I have taken the decision to narrow my focus to 2D artistic media, namely painting, drawing and graphic art formats. This focus – which has not been thoroughly interrogated before this thesis – required different source materials than research on design and crafts, and taps into a different range of artistic, entrepreneurial and publishing activities than an inquiry about crafts, architecture or sculpture would require. Naturally, there are some overlaps in the source materials; thanks to these I recognise the importance of the topics

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<sup>55</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936). The book was originally published in 1936 under its this shorter title but has been subsequently republished in several re-editions with the added subtitle: "*From William Morris to Walter Gropius*", such as by Penguin Books in 1960 and again in 1974.

<sup>56</sup> Jindřich Vybíral, *Co je českého na umění v Čechách?* (Praha: VŠUP, 2022): 130-135.



which I had to omit from this thesis, and I look forward with enthusiasm towards researching these themes in a different project in the future.

### **Routes into Inquiry**

Having a closer look at the cluster of international art mediated through journalism to Bohemian artists, it is notable how German and French art would be most frequently featured on the pages of Czech fine art journals. The aim of this thesis is not to deny this by suggesting that British art had more exposure than French or German art – this would be very difficult to claim in the context of the Austro-Hungarian Empire where every Czech spoke German and where French was the second most popular foreign language. My aim, however, is to establish British art as one of the major formative sources for Czech artists and to provide a deeper analysis of what this meant for Czech *fin de siècle* culture.

To achieve this, I will be exploring four major aspects of cultural transfer from Britain to Bohemia: 1) the role of Czech fine art journalism, 2) the Czech response to Pre-Raphaelitism, 3) the Czech reception of James McNeill Whistler, and 4) the role of British caricature and illustration. I will be focusing mainly on painting, drawing and graphic arts, although I will also partially explore some applied arts and include mentions of architecture. As this is the first thorough study on the relation of British art to Czech art around 1900, there was a lot to explore, and therefore it became impossible to cover sculpture, architecture, and applied arts in fullness within the parameters of this thesis, as I explained above. This is by no means a reflection of any lack of material relating to these themes. On the contrary, the material is abundant, and as such it will need to be examined in a separate project beyond this thesis.

In the first chapter, I will focus on introducing several of the leading Czech art journals active at the turn of the century, mainly *Volné Směry* (Free Directions) and *Rozhledy* (Outlooks). I will explain how these journals operated as major transmitters of culture by publishing articles about international art in Czech, and by commissioning translations of key texts from foreign languages. The artist Miloš Jiránek will be shown as a prime example of someone who played a

multi-layered role as an artist, a journalist, and a translator, thus putting into motion a series of reactions from his Bohemian artistic peers.

After a general introduction to the journals, I will present a selection of articles and features specifically relating to British art. I will analyse how the death of John Ruskin contributed to a heightened attention given to Britain and how this propelled the Pre-Raphaelites and other representatives of Victorian art into Czech artists' awareness, and how this stimulated artistic and social discussions. 'Who were the British artists to feature most prominently in Czech journals?', and 'how did Czech artists react to this?' will be among the questions I will be addressing.

Having mapped out the sphere of Czech art journals, my inquiry will continue with the exploration of what role the Pre-Raphaelites played for Czech artists around the year 1900. The Pre-Raphaelites became a popular feature in Czech journals since the late 1890s, and their position strengthened even more after Ruskin's death. As Ruskin was known to be a defender and promoter of Pre-Raphaelitism, Czech essays on the English movement followed the increased interest in Ruskin around 1900. However, this was almost 50 years after the original inception of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Over the decades, the original ideals of the Brotherhood have changed, and new members were welcomed to the wider circle of Pre-Raphaelitism. While Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828 – 1882) was one of the founders of the Brotherhood and therefore a prime member of the movement's first generation, Edward Burne-Jones (1833 – 1898) is an example of the second generation. Due to the 'delayed' reception of Pre-Raphaelitism in Bohemia, reproductions of Rossetti and Burne-Jones appeared simultaneously and often together in a single article where they were both described as 'Pre-Raphaelite' without addressing their very different positions within the movement. In my second chapter, I will analyse how this impacted the Czech understanding and reception of Pre-Raphaelitism.

As an example of the specific networks that mediated British art to Bohemian artists, I will present the case study of the painter and etcher Max Švabinský and his wife Ela Švabinská. While in past art-historical literature Ela usually figures only as a 'muse' and a model, I will use her memoirs to shine a light on

her real role, and in doing so I will show Ela as an instrumental cultural transmitter. Around the turn of the century, Max went through a substantial period of time when he was fascinated by Pre-Raphaelitism which reflected in his own work. I will show that Ela's role in this was formative and instrumental. I will also use Ela's memoirs as a gateway to a deeper understanding of how exactly Pre-Raphaelitism was disseminated among Czech artists, including accounts of how this phase weakened after the turn of the century. I will then relate this to the work of other Czech artists, such as Jan Preisler, and map out how Pre-Raphaelitism stood out among other international styles that inspired Czech artists at the same time.

The Pre-Raphaelite circle and their followers were not the only British artists featured in Czech art journals. Although born in America, James McNeill Whistler was perceived by the Czechs as predominantly a British artist. While many encounters with Whistler's work took place in Paris, for the Bohemian readers and consumers of art, Whistler was firmly associated with London. As such, his layered oeuvre received repeated attention from Czech journals including reproductions and adverts for the latest publications on the artist. In my third chapter, I will explore the various ways in which Whistler was received by Czech artists. Their response to Whistler manifested in many different forms, from Miloš Jiránek's statement series of paintings of women in white, to Emil Orlik's etchings of Venice channelling Whistler's views of the city.

One aspect of Whistler's output which sparked interest among Czech artists were his lithographic works verging on illustration or caricature. Whistler was not the only British artist to conjure such interest. The Czech fascination with British caricature in the 1900s was such that the leading journal *Volné Směry* published a special issue with a series of reproductions, focusing on the caricature art of Britain, Germany and France, written by Miloš Jiránek. My final chapter will therefore take this article as the central point of a debate on the role of British illustration and caricature. I will introduce Bohemian artists whose careers were transformed by the example of British caricaturists. Apart from individual artists, British illustration for children as a whole was formative for the growing interest of Czech cultural figures in quality art for children. This resulted

in a major exhibition in Prague in 1902 showing works by Walter Crane and other British artists whose work helped to establish children's illustration as an autonomous specialism for Bohemian artists.

Throughout this thesis, I will be using a method of visual comparisons of formal or iconographic similarities between Czech and British artworks. As I have already alluded to, it is necessary to move beyond the traditional notion of 'influence' between various artists and art styles; yet throughout the thesis I will be pointing towards similarities and differences between the work of British and Czech artists. My approach to such comparisons of visual features is inspired by the method of 'differential comparison' formulated by Ute Heidmann.<sup>57</sup> While Heidmann's concept is mainly used in literary comparative studies, it remains a useful concept for art historians as well.<sup>58</sup>

Heidmann's approach focuses not only on the similarities and differences but also on the context of the compared works. The type of comparison she foregrounds emphasises the kind of dynamism which is focused on the transformation of themes and motives across timelines and geographical locations. In her work, Heidmann demonstrates that comparisons ultimately point to an underlying continuous cultural dialogue and engagement with visual and literary material from other cultures, and as such any comparison needs to be set within a specific context. For this reason, my thesis focuses in great detail on the Czech fine art journals which mediated British and international art and shows practical examples of the particular societal and political context in Czech Lands and in Britain. Heidmann accentuates that rather than being purely original creations, works of literature (or art, in this case) emerge from an ongoing cultural dialogue – such as my earlier example of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood being obsessed with Italian Quattrocento and openly quoting this aesthetic in their work. This aspect was then subsequently mirrored in the

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<sup>57</sup> The foundations of the concept of 'differential comparison' were first introduced in an article in 2006 and further developed in a subsequent book form 2013: Ute Heidmann, "Mythes en littérature: du comparatisme 'intertextuel' à une poétique différentielle," *Comparative Critical Studies* 3, no. 1 (2006): 37–57. Ute Heidmann, *Métamorphoses du récit: La littérature médiévale et ses reconfigurations modernes* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013).

<sup>58</sup> I am grateful to Prof Evangelista Stead who pointed me in the direction of Ute Heidmann's research in relation to the conference "Worlding Symbolism" where I spoke in May 2024 in Brussels and gave a paper on the Czech responses to Pre-Raphaelitism and Symbolism. The concept was enthusiastically debated among an interdisciplinary body of scholars ranging from literary studies to art history and cultural studies.

Czech works inspired by the Pre-Raphaelites, thus alluding to both the British movement as well as the Italian paintings at the same time, while also setting these motifs into a specifically Czech context.

Heidmann particularly demonstrates this with the example of Greek myths and how these were retold in different periods and various regions.<sup>59</sup> Here the question is not so much which is the original or 'authentic' version, but rather how these variants address the specificities of their cultural and artistic contexts. In a similar vein, for example, I look at Max Švabinský's pastel portrait of his wife using a similar composition to Rossetti's *Proserpine* (*Persephone*) and elaborate on both the similarities (technique, composition, costumes) but also on the differences based on the specific cultural contexts (the Pre-Raphaelite love for literary subjects versus the Czech focus on depicting realistic features rather than literary themes, and Švabinský's use of Ela as an embodiment of a specific Czech geographical region, as will be shown in Chapter 2).<sup>60</sup> I focus on those features and formal similarities that help support my claim that British art was eagerly assimilated by Czech artists and that the encounter with British art had a transformative effect on Czech artists.

While my selection of artists and themes discussed in this thesis is based on their prominence in Bohemian journals between 1890 – 1910 and on the Czech cultural scene, I am aware that this is not an exhaustive account. As my thesis is the first in-depth analysis of the reception of British art in Bohemia in this period, I had to be selective. Some of the artists I write about are part of the Czech national canon, others are yet waiting for their work to become the subject of deeper art-historical analysis. The majority of Czech artists mentioned in my thesis are almost entirely unknown in Britain today, or anywhere outside of the Czech Republic. I hope that my research will help to introduce these Czech artists to British academia and incorporate them into the 'Western' art historical narrative. Equally, I hope that my thesis will open a new avenue of research for Czech scholars, making the reception of British art an

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<sup>59</sup> Ute Heidmann, "Que veut et que fait une comparaison différentielle? Propos recueillis par Jean-Michel Adam & David Martens," *Interférences Littéraires/Littéraire Interferentia*, no. 21 (December 2017): 199–226.; Ute Heidmann, "Mythes en littérature: du comparatisme 'intertextuel' à une poétique différentielle," *Comparative Critical Studies* 3, no. 1 (2006): 37–57.

inherent part of the story of Czech art. Over 120 years after Gustav Jaroš' lament in *Volné Směry*, I wish for this thesis to be one of the tools that breaks down the 'Chinese' wall separating Czech and British culture.

# Chapter 1 – Czech Fine Art Journals Mediating British Art

## Bohemian Journalism Around 1900 – Introductions and Methods

In this chapter, I will be showing Bohemian art journals as one of the key mediators of cultural transfer from Britain to Bohemia. All materials presented in this chapter have come from in-depth research of prime materials, an archive of Czech periodicals spanning the years between circa 1895 and 1905. I deliberately chose the year 1900 as my focus, since it was a year of the culmination of various elements in Bohemian and international culture, symbolically embodied by the 1900 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, a major attraction for many Czechs and the destination of Bohemian journalists. The year 1900 brought not only the much-anticipated turn of the century, but also other major events such as Ruskin's death, which as I will later demonstrate transformed the Czech relationship to Britain, reflected in Bohemian journals in a significant way and shaped the way Czech artists perceived their place in the world. Bohemian art journals dating to the turn of the century provide an incomparable insight into the psyche of Bohemian artistic circles at the time.

My research method consisted of meticulously reading through issues of *Volné Směry* and *Rozhledy*, with some added reading of other journals popular at the time, such as the literary journal *Moderní Revue*, hand picking the articles I deemed relevant for my argument. This was a lengthy process which included moving between the two languages, but I considered it crucial to not only read the chosen articles relating to British art, but also to pay great attention to the articles' original context – as often the context shaped the way they were perceived by their readership. This will become apparent later in this chapter, in instances when I describe the Bohemian artists' reaction to British socially oriented art, which was predominantly shaped by their view of the Austro-

Hungarian aesthetic, as embodied for example by the *Hoftiteltaxenfond* art and design competition, which will be explained in more detail later.<sup>1</sup>

The journals I researched were all written in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Czech language, which brought some interesting challenges. As a native speaker of Czech, getting the general gist of the articles was not a problem for me. Late 19<sup>th</sup> century Czech, however, is rich in terminology and grammar that are no longer in use, and therefore proper understanding of the texts required a deeper grasp of the language. Although written in Czech, the articles would often be intersected with German terminology. In the 1900s, mixing Czech and German naturally arose from the fact that German was the official language of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the time.<sup>2</sup>

The most notable issues arising from this were the spelling of foreign names, and the treatment of foreign female surnames.<sup>3</sup> Czech grammar is complicated, combining the use of feminine, masculine and neuter grammatical genders with seven separate declensions and a complex set of conjugations. As a result, the grammatical distinction between the female and male surnames notably impacts the grammatical structure used around those names in a sentence. Since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it has been customary in Czech language that all female surnames had the suffix *-ová*.<sup>4</sup> A standard male surname *Novák*, for example, becomes *Nováková* in its female mutation. It is customary for women to take on their spouse's surname and add the suffix to it. The grammatical reason behind this is to make female surnames fit better in the complexity of Czech grammar. However, it is also a distinctively Czech, and further East-European/ Slavic trend, thus identifying a surname as belonging to this geo-cultural region.

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<sup>1</sup> "Zprávy a poznámky" *Volné směry* IV/1, 1900, 25-26

<sup>2</sup> I can see a parallel to this in contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century Czech writing, which is heavily influenced by the English language. Since the Velvet Revolution in 1989, English became the most desired and widespread foreign language (as opposed to Russian and German before the Revolution) which led to many anglicisms 'invading' Czech language. Reading current Czech newspapers and journals, for example, would be very difficult for someone with no knowledge of English.

<sup>3</sup> Female surnames are an issue still passionately debated today. In the autumn 2019, Czech Television held a discussion aimed at whether foreign female surnames should be allowed to drop the *-ová* suffix. Some Czech newspapers and internet platforms have already started using foreign surnames without the suffix, and a law has been passed allowing Czech women to take on a foreign surname without the suffix, if they wish to do so – providing their husband or they themselves are of a foreign nationality. The debate relating to this is ongoing and has passionate defenders at both ends.

<sup>4</sup> František Oberpfalcer, "O ženských jménech přechylovaných příponou *-ová*", *Naše řeč*, 17, no.3 (1933): 72–77



When reading through the many articles featured in Czech art journals around 1900, I came across several instances where foreign female surnames were *Czechified* by adding the suffix – such as Siddalová, instead of just Siddal.<sup>5</sup> Arguing that this was mainly for grammatical reasons is only justifiable in relation to surnames. In the case of Siddal, however, we see her first name changed too, from the English Elizabeth to the Czech Alžběta. While using a Czech surname does make the grammatical side of things easier, it does not make so much difference when it comes to the first name. It is therefore arguable whether changing names and surname of foreigners was in reality an act of actively appropriating them and symbolically making them part of the Czech cultural milieu.

This attitude to *Czechifying* foreign surnames resonates with James O Young's term 'subject appropriation' which emerges "when a character is presented as a representative of a culture that isn't the artist's own culture".<sup>6</sup> In his definition of subject appropriation, Young mainly deals with literary fiction and the creation of fictitious characters from foreign cultures. In a way, those Bohemian artists and journalists who published their articles adding Czech-style female suffixes to British surnames created fictitious characters partly borrowed from their original culture. While Elizabeth Siddal clearly belongs to British culture, Alžběta Siddalová is an in-between character, connecting features of both cultures, and thus creating a fictitious liminal entity. She is a character who lives in neither of the two cultures while belonging equally to both.

Having studied Czech art around 1900 for many years, I came to understand that journalism played a central role in the Bohemian cultural circles at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was a platform where new ideas were introduced and where national identity was negotiated. Inspired by Arnd Schneider's definition of cultural appropriation, I view Bohemian art journals as a platform that enabled Bohemian creatives to "negotiate access to, and trafficking in, symbolic elements" of British visual culture.<sup>7</sup> The journals were a not only a vital source

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<sup>5</sup> Such as here: František Václav Krejčí. "Burne-Jones." *Rozhledy - revue umělecká, politická a sociální* VIII, no 1 (1898): 19

<sup>6</sup> James O Young: *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (Blackwell Publishing, 2010): 8.

<sup>7</sup> Arnd Schneider, "On 'appropriation'. A critical reappraisal of the concept and its application in global art practices", *Social Anthropology* 11, no.2 (2003): 215-229.

of information and analysis of British and international art, but most importantly used information on foreign art as a mirror reflecting and evaluating the situation in Bohemia. This analysis of foreign artworlds was crucial for the Czechs' understanding of themselves in their quest for formulating both a nationally and an internationally valid art style.

Bohemian fine art journals form an important base for the understanding of all the subsequent chapters of this thesis. They reflect the Bohemian cultural milieu, the mentality of the artists and editors (as more often than not, the artists *were* the editors), as well as the political, historical and geographical signifiers of the Czech cultural environment.

The methodological underpinning of this inquiry into Bohemian fine art journalism relies on several concepts, one of them being the Japanese *Ma 間*. *Ma 間* is a complex notion which applies to traditional Japanese aesthetics, and permeates aspects of philosophy, poetry and fine arts. *Ma 間* is sometimes translated as an 'in-between' space-time; in practical terms it refers to a pause, break or delay. By creating a buffer of sorts between two entities (or two parts of an entity) *Ma 間* substantially impacts both through the seeming absence of action. In poetry, for example, *Ma 間* relates to the unsaid, the unverballed which nonetheless forms an important part of the poem. In Japanese traditional poetry (especially haiku and tanka) the unsaid plays an equally vital part in the poem to that which is clearly verbalised. In music, *Ma 間* refers to the silences between individual tones, suggesting that the silences (as breaks between sounds) in fact form an integral part of the music itself. In art, *Ma 間* refers to what is in Euro-American sculptural terminology commonly called the 'negative' space. The empty space in art translates to silence in music and suggests a delay in responding to the previous occurrences. This silence and emptiness are not classed as negatives; on the contrary the empty space between an occurrence and a reaction to it is understood as a crucial part of the whole. Rather than a firm theoretical framework, the concept of *Ma 間* provides a helpful metaphor for the Bohemian artists' situation, and I will use it to

strengthen my argument against the perceived lesser value and derivativeness of Czech art at the turn of the century.

On a certain level, Bohemian fine art journals functioned in a similar way as this condensed characterisation of Ma by the contemporary artist Cristina Elias.

Elias first quotes M. Okano who states that:

Ma presupposes division and intermediation, as well as relation and connection, instances in which the notion of border becomes a constant”<sup>8</sup>  
[...] Ma is an empty space where various phenomena appear and disappear, giving birth to signs that are arranged and combined freely, in infinite ways<sup>9</sup>

Elias then summarises:

Here Ma acquires an ambiguous value, functioning both as a separation and as a junction of diverse territories, belonging both to one side and the other and configuring a ‘zone of coexistence, translation and dialogue’<sup>10</sup>

Fine art journals in Bohemia were exactly such a “zone of coexistence, translation and dialogue” – a network of artists and editors creating a platform which brought together news of international art trends alongside accounts of domestic cultural and political occurrences. The Czechs’ desire to make their art more international while keeping its character distinctly national led to a creative tension in the Czech relationship to foreign countries, including Britain. When it came to British art, Bohemian writing about it reflected exactly the “separation” from other countries as well as the “junction” that Czech artists aimed at creating. On the one hand, Czech artists viewed Britain as a very foreign territory, an Empire which couldn’t be more different from the Bohemian position as subjects of another Empire. Equally, though, Bohemian artists and journalists

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<sup>8</sup> M Okano, *MA: interspace of art and communication in Japan* (in Portuguese), (São Paulo: Annablume, 2012), *MA*, 26.

<sup>9</sup> Okano, *MA*, 53.

<sup>10</sup> Cristina Elias & Priscila Arantes: “Suspending Space and Time: The Body Under the Lens of the Japanese Concept of Ma” in *Cross-Cultural Design. Methods, Tools and User Experience*, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019),129.

perceived British art as representative of a possible junction between Bohemian culture and other national cultures beyond the Austro-Hungarian realm. This meant fine art journals created a platform where Czech identity was under constant revision, with both domestic and international artistic context frequently altering the requirements of what the new Czech art should aspire towards.

Crucially this often included covering international trends with a notable delay, such as the Czech essays on the work of Burne-Jones or John Ruskin only having been composed decades after their original works first occurred. This delay, however, does not necessarily need to be regarded as a negative. Thanks to this delay defined as a gap in both space (geographical distance) and time (delay in reception) – a sort of *Ma* – Bohemian artists could relate to the art of Burne-Jones or to the thought of John Ruskin from a unique viewpoint. By the time Pre-Raphaelitism and accounts of Ruskin arrived in Bohemia, Czech artists were already acquainted with movements such as Decadence, Modernism, Symbolism and Art Nouveau, hence their reaction to British art would be shaped by all of these experiences coming together. It was indeed the Czech ‘in between’ *Ma*-like position which enabled them to respond to British art differently, in a new and creative way, enriched by the passing of time between these receptions.

The absence of timely news on British art pre-1890s created a unique starting point for the reactions that were formed afterwards. Cedric Eenoo points out a useful aspect of *Ma*, relevant to the absence of news about Britain in Bohemia before 1900, when they say:

Absence is transformed into an interface, and what is missing becomes prominent in the creation, pointing to a new dimension of the piece.<sup>11</sup>

Taking Eenoo’s words as a metaphor, what was missing for decades from the Bohemian cultural life and became essential towards the end of the century was an international outlook on the arts embodied by a newfound focus on British art, alongside news from other non-German-language domains. British art came

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<sup>11</sup> Cedric Eenoo, “In between”, *IAFOR Journal of Arts & Humanities*, Vol 5, issue 1 (Spring 2018): 105-106

in around the year 1900 like a tidal wave taking Bohemian artists on a new adventurous quest. This resulted in a desire to absorb international art trends, with British art among them, but ultimately aimed at using them as a steppingstone towards creating a new, distinctly Bohemian modern artistic expression. To quote Eenoo again:

The in-between ingredients have several functions: linking, separating, causing interference, or modifying sense. In every scenario, gaps primarily appear as secondary – or invisible, but they play a fundamental role in giving the composition its form, tone and meaning.<sup>12</sup>

The time-space gap between artistic movements such as the Pre-Raphaelites and their reception in Bohemia was crucial as it enabled Czech artists to respond to elements of British art in a specific way which included mixing and merging British artistic features with their German and French counterparts.

The 'new composition' from Eenoo's quotation can be seen as the new wave of Bohemian art, co-created via appropriating elements from the international art scene, including from Britain. Bohemian fine art journals from the turn of the century uncover for us the intricate patchwork of inspirations that were available to Czech artists around the time. With the majority of the journals' editors being fine artists at the same time, analysing the journals provides a unique way of getting to understand the artists' worldview, and the whole thought process behind their art. As the journals combine information on the arts with politically charged reports, this offers an essential gateway to viewing Czech art of the period in its wider societal and political context.

Furthermore, analysing Bohemian journals will enable me to determine what kind of appropriating processes were put in action by Czech artists towards British culture. This will become the key support for the argument that Bohemian art around 1900 was not merely derivative of British and other international art styles, but on the contrary, that the way Bohemian artists worked with these 'cultural borrowings' was creative and authentic. Canadian

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<sup>12</sup>Cedric Eenoo, "In between", *IAFOR Journal of Arts & Humanities*, Vol 5, issue 1 (Spring 2018): 109

philosopher James O Young argues that appropriation can lead to the creation of authentic original artwork if it is produced by the process of ‘making’, rather than ‘taking’: “Works produced by taking are derivative. Works produced by making are original.”<sup>13</sup> Arriving at the conclusion that Bohemian artworks are indeed authentic and original, despite their often-eclectic basis, would not be possible without a thorough interrogation of 1900s Bohemian art journals.

### **Czech Art Journals’ Historic Setting**

To appreciate the importance of Bohemian art journals as an art historical source, it is necessary to understand some of their history and how they evolved toward the end of the century. The Czech National Revival movement, which had been active since the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, supported the emergence of multiple journals and magazines published in the Czech language. The National Revival took on many different forms from its beginnings in the 1800s, and its effects remained noticeable until the onset of the First World War. Although most intensely connected to a generation of literary authors active around the 1830s, the artistic response to the movement only materialised later, from the 1860s onwards, and peaked in the so-called National Theatre Generation. There were artists who collaborated on the external and internal decoration of the National Theatre in Prague, which was conceived in 1844, the foundation stone laid in 1868 and the theatre finished in 1883. This group of artists included Josef Václav Myslbek, Maxmilián Pirner, Mikoláš Aleš, Bohuslav Schnirch, František Ženíšek, Josef Mauder, among others. The majority of these artists were piously focused on national ideals in their art and devoted their careers to celebrating Bohemian history and Slavonic legends and myths, while actively promoting Czech, the country’s mother tongue. The vision behind the National Theatre was to stage mainly original Czech plays and to deliver them in their native language to their Bohemian audiences, who were otherwise not permitted to use Czech as their legal language. The importance of the emergence of culturally oriented press published in Czech language therefore falls into this broader context of the

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<sup>13</sup> This roundtable discussion summarises what Young published in ‘Art, authenticity and Appropriation’ (2006). Accessed 24 September 2020 <https://aestheticsforbirds.com/2018/08/22/artworld-roundtable-is-cultural-appropriation-ever-okay/>.

National Revival ideology, and links to issues between Czechs and Germans and the overall position of the Czechs among the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as will be discussed further in this chapter.

Some artists, however, only joined the National Theatre cohort towards the completion of the building. The painter Vojtěch Hynais (1854 – 1925) was asked to re-create the main curtain for the National Theatre **[Fig 1.1]**, after the original one by František Ženíšek burned down in 1881. The internationally acclaimed Hynais was a bold choice, reflecting the shift in the Bohemian cultural circles from mainly nationally oriented focus towards embracing new trends from abroad. Hynais studied in Vienna and lived in Paris in the late 1870s and early 1880s, establishing himself at the *École des Beaux-Arts*, and later making a living as a newspaper illustrator and porcelain decorator. Hynais was famous for his admiration of Impressionism and for his keen experiments with plein-air painting. The appointment of Hynais for the final version of the National Theatre curtain shows the overall change of mood in Bohemian society, which made it possible for an array of internationally minded magazines and newspapers to be established and to sustainably flourish. Built on the National Revival idea of writing about culture in Czech language, the new magazines gained support from the older artistic generations. However, just like Hynais, the new journalism turned its focus beyond Bohemia and set out on an international mission. While it still supported the nationalist idea against the perceived oppression from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, at the same time there was a palpable desire to reach out beyond Austria and the German speaking realm, and to connect the Czech Lands to a much wider international context.

The first Czech illustrated newspapers started appearing in the 1850s.<sup>14</sup> The following decade saw the gradual decline of the oppressive Absolutism era of the Baron Alexander von Bach, which had been characterised by increased centralization, press censorship and a suppression of all national movements, followed by intense Germanisation. The end of Bach's era brought new freedom and enthusiasm for Czech journalism. However, as there was already an

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<sup>14</sup> Further to Bohemian journalism and literature of the period: Michal Jareš, Pavel Janáček and Petr Šámal, *Povídka, román a periodický tisk v 19. a 20. Století*. (ÚČL AV ČR, 2004)

established readership for German magazines and papers, the emerging Czech periodicals often struggled to maintain viable subscription numbers. Some magazines thus lasted only a couple of years, such as *Obrazy života* (Pictures of Life; ed Josef Vilímek, 1859–1862), *Osvěta* (Edification, only the year 1862), *Rodinná kronika* (The Family Chronicles, eds Schreirer and Fuchs, 1862–1865) and even the later re-imagined *Zlatá Praha* (Golden Prague, 1864–1865), which specialised in contemporary Czech literature under the chief editor Vítězslav Hálek. The first longer lasting success was the magazine *Květy* (Blossoms, 1865–1872) with a broad range of featured themes and an engaging style under the editors Vítězslav Hálek and Jan Neruda.<sup>15</sup>

The most successful periodicals of this era were *Světobzor* (Worldview, 1834 - 1943), which was richly illustrated and created in the style of the so-called penny-papers by Pavel Josef Šafařík as early as 1834. Later the chief editor František Skrejšovský reformed the paper and further grew its success between the years 1867 and 1899. *Zlatá Praha* (Golden Prague) was also revitalised by the influential publisher Jan Otto and established itself as an illustrated news and entertainment paper maintaining its solid position for a number of decades (1884–1929). Both these magazines were richly illustrated and featured reproductions of artwork, mainly however by Bohemian artists (despite the world-view ambition set by one of its titles). However, none of these were fine art journals, and the imagery they used was primarily a documentary backdrop for their articles. Bohemian artists therefore perceived a notable lack of fine art press, and desired a platform that would showcase their work in this context.

The true international ambition of the above-mentioned journals only materialised fully in the generation of artists born between the 1860s and 1870s. Artists such as Alphonse Mucha, František Kupka, Luděk Marold, Jan Preisler, Max Švabinský, Karel Špillar, Miloš Jiránek and Jan Kotěra, among others, went to study and live abroad, most usually to Vienna, Munich, Berlin or Paris. Their connection to the international art-scene reflected positively not only on their desire to be part of this larger picture, but also in the way some of

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<sup>15</sup> Markéta Dlábková, *České ilustrované časopisy 2. poloviny 19. Století*, (PhD thesis, Charles University in Prague, 2016): 4



them published reviews of foreign exhibitions, thus connecting the Bohemian readership to a wider cultural context. International art journals were increasingly more accessible in Prague, as can be seen in an advertisement for the Prague Café Union which includes a list of art journals offered for free to the customers. **[Fig 1.2]** Their cosmopolitan worldview is mirrored mainly in the two purely fine art journals: *Volné směry* (Free Directions) and *Rozhledy* (Outlooks).

Both of the journals intended to place their emphasis on showing reproductions of the Czech leading artists while also focusing on bringing news and essays on international culture. For Bohemian artists, this was a breakthrough as both journals offered a dedicated platform to show Bohemian fine art. *Volné směry* as a fine art magazine featured many more reproductions than *Rozhledy*, which was primarily focused on literature. However, poetry and prose, including translations of foreign works, featured heavily in both magazines. For *Volné Směry*, it was essential to maintain the journal as a platform for Czech artists who would otherwise struggle to get their work published in magazines abroad. While being part of the sizeable Austro-Hungarian Empire did present certain benefits for the Czech cultural scene, the Empire's authoritarian reign over the Czech regions was perceived as oppressive and Bohemian artists believed that their chances of getting their work reproduced by Austrian journals were very small. While *Volné Směry* and *Rozhledy* clearly favoured Bohemian artists' work, the journals' eager interest in artistic activities and cultural events all over the world makes their underlying cosmopolitan philosophy evident.

Overall, Czech journals reproduced a limited number of foreign artworks, probably due to the fact that German and Austrian magazines were already widespread in Bohemia, hence encounters with reproductions from abroad were not difficult to come by. Within the Czech journals, large number of foreign art reproductions were works by Slav artists, mainly Polish and Russian, which links to the National Revival's ideology of a desired pan-Slavic unity, later mirrored in the works of artists such as Alphonse Mucha.<sup>16</sup> While Mucha had

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<sup>16</sup> For more analysis of Mucha's Slav Epic and his Pan-Slavic philosophy, see Marta Filipová's work, especially her conference paper 'The belated romanticism of Alphonse Mucha, 2010. Mucha's Slav Epic has been discussed at the 'Czechoslovakia 100' conference in Cardiff in May 2018 where Marta Filipová presented a paper analysing the Slav Epic in a wider context of contemporary Czech art history. I also presented at the sma eonference about some aspects of Mucha's Slav Epic.

little to do with the emerging Bohemian journals, he was already at that time an embodiment of the success of Bohemian art abroad. With his profitable art business in Paris, creating advertising campaigns and personalised jewellery for Sarah Bernhardt, Mucha was one of the few Bohemians to maintain a long-term successful career abroad. Despite international success, Mucha had a long-standing interest in the ideals of pan-Slavism. His passion for Slavic themes materialised in his series of paintings for the Municipal House in Prague around 1910. **[Fig 1.3]**

While Bohemian periodicals played a crucial role in introducing international artistic phenomena to the Czech readership, it is important to keep in mind that there was already a wide selection of foreign magazines available in Bohemia. Czech periodicals therefore specialised in showcasing mainly Bohemian artists, but with the intention of presenting them within a wider international cultural network with Prague and Bohemia at the core of its attention.

Furthermore, Czech art journals functioned as a kind of multimedia artwork – a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of sorts – as many of their editors were also artists and as the journals combined text and images to create overarching narratives for each issue. Artists were heavily involved both as members of the editorial board, as well as freelance contributors, using their travels and language skills to enrich the journals with translations and reports on international exhibitions. A good example of this practice is the artist Miloš Jiránek, who was fluent in both French and English, and frequented the international art shows in Paris. Jiránek, hugely inspired by the work of Whistler, played an active role in the *Volné Směry* editorial board, and often employed his remarkable language skills for translations of key art criticism articles from abroad.

### **Volné Směry**

*Volné Směry* (Free Directions/ Free Currents) was the most prominent Czech art journal around the year 1900. It was founded in 1896 and its impressive lifespan lasted until 1949, when the newly instigated Communist regime brought an end to the journal's endeavours. With the Communist dictatorship installed in 1948, it was only a matter of time as to when a journal with “freedom” in its title

would be eradicated, especially with its focus on connecting Czechs to the international art scene.

*Volné Směry* was published by the *Mánes Association of Fine Artists - Spolek výtvarných umělců Mánes*, founded in 1887. The Association was named after the painter Josef Mánes (1820 – 1871) who was considered one of the ‘founding fathers’ of modern Bohemian art. The role of Josef Mánes will be further discussed in chapter four in relation to his influential drawings, etchings and illustrations. The Mánes Association was founded by young up-and-coming artists who had experience with studying and working internationally, and as such desired a greater artistic exchange between Bohemia and the rest of the world. The Association’s grandiose aims included organising exhibitions of both Czech and international artists, publishing art journals, commissioning high-quality translations of international art and aesthetics publications, as well as contributing towards the levelling of the conditions that Czech artists experienced in comparison to their Austrian counterparts.<sup>17</sup> Apart from *Volné Směry*, the Association also published the journal *Styl* [Style] (1909–1913, 1920–1938) and set an ambitious plan to publish a series of monographs focusing on international art critics, including John Ruskin, more on which will be debated later in this chapter.

The international dimension of *Volné Směry* is rooted in the very history of the *Mánes* Association, which was originally formed as a club of Czech artists studying at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts in Germany, united under the name *Škréta - a Fellowship of Young Czech Artists in Munich*.<sup>18</sup> This became one of the largest communities of Bohemian students outside of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The group’s first attempt at publishing was a satirical literary and art magazine *Paleta/ Špachtle* (*Palette/ Spatula*) which continued to be issued until 1899 as a forerunner of the later more sophisticated *Volné směry*.

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<sup>17</sup> Eduard Bass, “Počátky S. V. U. Mánes,” *Volné Směry* 28, no.1 (1930–1931): 92; Roman Prah, “Paleta – Špachtle. Idea a praxe časopisu české výtvarné moderny 1885–1899,” *Prameny české moderní kultury* (Praha 1988): 217–240.

<sup>18</sup> Karel Škréta (1610 - 1674) was a prominent Czech Baroque painter with an international outreach, who was traditionally associated with creating a distinctively Czech baroque painting style while achieving international recognition. More on Czech artists’ organisations in Roman Prah and Taťána Petrasová, *Michov -Praha, Výtvarné umění mezi tradicí a modernou* [Munich - Prague, Fine Art Between Tradition and Modernity], (Praha: Academia) 2012.

In 1897, the Prague Academy of Fine Arts underwent a transformation, becoming more open-minded and flexible in its approach to teaching art. This led to a number of the *Škréta* members returning to Prague and reforming their Association to create the future *Mánes*.<sup>19</sup> *Volné Směry* was to become one of the Association's most influential endeavours.

Published throughout the extensive period of 1896–1949, *Volné Směry* attracted a wide array of artists who either contributed with their artwork or provided critical essays. The editorial board was democratically elected on an annual basis at the *Mánes* Association general assembly. The magazine carried a subheading '*the monthly journal about art*' which summarised its position between being a platform for contemporary art and providing space for art criticism and literary texts.<sup>20</sup> In its first issues, literary texts took up a large proportion of the journal, which included poetry and prose by mainly contemporary Czech authors. However, this was intersected by special issues focused on art, and by organising art competitions. The cover images and illustrations were subject to great attention, featuring works by the leading graphic artists Jan Preisler and Vojtěch Preissig, both of whom established a signature look for the magazine, dominated by all-page decorative framing inspired by other European magazines and especially by English book design.<sup>21</sup> **[Fig 1.4, 1.5]** Jan Preisler was among those Bohemian artists fascinated by the English Pre-Raphaelites, together with Max Švabinský, as will be discussed in more detail in a separate chapter.

Each issue featured sections called 'Art News' and 'Exhibitions' which consisted of rather short accounts of exhibitions and publications. Although limited in length, these reports focused intensely on the international art scene, and actively reported on exhibitions held in Vienna, London and Paris, including short reviews of the latest art books published across Europe. At times, the journal also published some of the articles in French as part of a conscious strategy to enable international cultural exchange. Thanks to this, *Volné Směry*

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<sup>19</sup> Josef Mánes (1820 - 1871) was a prominent Czech painter and a leading representative of Czech Romanticism and Realism especially in landscape painting. For the turn of the century artists, Manes had the status of a 'foundation father' of modern Bohemian art.

<sup>20</sup> Prahel and Lenka Bydžovská, *Volné směry – časopis secese a moderny*, (Praha, TORST, 1993), 54.

<sup>21</sup> Prahel and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 49.

was positively reviewed in the international press, as can be seen in an article on contemporary Czech culture by William Ritter in *La Plume* in 1897.<sup>22</sup>

The journal *Volné Směry* was published monthly, with new issues coming out on the last Friday of each month; from the year 1900 new issues were published mid-month.<sup>23</sup> During its peak years, the monthly run was between 500 and 1,000 copies. The exact number varied depending on subscriber numbers, finances and demand. Each new annual series started in November and followed the structure of the academic year with a break over the summer. After 1905, the starting date of each year moved to January. The journal was run by a board which consisted of 12 members at first; gradually this was reduced to six. The Mánes Association was the official owner of the journal, while the actual journalistic and editorial work was carried out by the board members. Most of the board members were recruited from the membership of the Mánes Association, which resulted in the high number of practising artists being active as editors of the journal. As Prahel remarks, the editorial board consisted of painters, sculptors, designers, architects and two specialists in typography and print.<sup>24</sup> Throughout its long run, the journal was consistently printed at the printers' *Eduard Grégr and Son* in Prague; until 1908 reproductions were supplied by a firm called *Unie*.

From the turn of the century, the editorial team often organised events and even small-scale art sales exhibitions which they advertised in the journal, and which were aimed at the readership. The journal was built on the idea of articles being written by specialists and practising artists, and for some time there was a strong sense of collaborative authorship which resulted in artists writing up articles which were then edited by literary authors and critics. The editorial team frequently came together to publish statements and announcements which were published collectively, reinforcing the team spirit of mutuality and collaboration that characterised the journal.

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<sup>22</sup> William Ritter, "Les Jeunes: L'Art Tchèque," *La Plume*, no. 189 (April 15, 1897): 177–179.

<sup>23</sup> Prahel and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 26.

<sup>24</sup> Prahel and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 26.

The journal's finances were extremely tight, especially in the first decade of its existence, which led to no financial rewards being paid for articles; also, artists (including those from abroad) were not paid for the reproductions of their work. However, already by 1900, the journal's editors were receiving a steady monthly wage, and the journal could afford to run competitions for the designs of its covers with an attractive monetary reward for the winning artist. In 1903, the journal had around 1,800 annual subscribers which sustained it financially. While individual issues of the journal were available for purchase, it was the subscriber platform that provided the journal with the stability it needed.

The cost of *Volné Směry* was identical to the Viennese *Ver Sacrum* (more on which below) which initially cost 2 Kronen per issue when it launched in 1898. Subscribers could also pay an annual subscription of 24 Kronen, which is a strategy that *Volné Směry* also adapted. While the annual cost of *Ver Sacrum* increased over time, the Czech journal managed to retain the set price for a substantially longer period than its Austrian counterpart.

## **Rozhledy**

*Rozhledy* (Outlooks) was the second most impactful art and culture journal in Bohemia. The full title of the magazine *Rozhledy* slightly varied throughout the years of its publications. Between 1892 and 1895, the magazine was called *Rozhledy národohospodářské, sociální, politické a literární- Outlooks in national economy, social, political and literary*. In 1895, the magazine published the manifesto 'The Czech Modern', and shortly after changed its title to *Rozhledy - revue umělecká, politická a sociální: Outlooks – An Artistic, Social and Political Revue*.<sup>25</sup> [Fig 1.6]

Although *Rozhledy* did not provide the Czech readership with many artwork reproductions, it did however reflect on a whole array of aspects of international culture and art, including Britain. Apart from articles dealing directly with fine art, *Rozhledy* also published a wide selection of social, political and historical

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<sup>25</sup> "The Czech Modern." *Rozhledy národohospodářské, sociální, politické a literární* V no. 1 (1896): 1

essays, with regular mentions of Britain, its culture, economy and industry. Overall, *Rozhledy* provided an important platform for showcasing aspects of international culture, which proved strongly formative and 'influential' for Bohemian artists.

Since October 1896, the journal shifted its focus towards visual culture and the arts, especially in an international context. The inaugural issue of the newly rebranded magazine formulated its ideological programme very clearly as focusing on "the relationship between oneself and the nation, and between the nation and the international culture."<sup>26</sup> The magazine was built on the idea of providing a platform for the new generation of artists, intellectuals and politicians, who stray away from the nationally oriented inwardness of their predecessors and who strive to pave the way for future integration of the wider world into their realm. The introductory essay emphasized how the current generation differs in every way from their precursors, and how *Rozhledy* introduced a brand new and desired type of publication – interdisciplinary and international. The magazine's inaugural article concluded with a clear statement of its international mission:

*Rozhledy* (...) will aim to become a *revue* for all Bohemian life, especially looking at its contacts and links with worldwide culture.<sup>27</sup>

As an interdisciplinary magazine, each fortnightly issue would offer a mixture of excerpts from contemporary literature, visual arts, dramatic arts, as well as an overview of pressing social and political affairs. Overall, *Rozhledy* did not feature many images and reproductions. The ones that were featured would be carefully selected to illustrate art-related articles, mainly those dealing with foreign artists. The first issue, for example, reproduced only one image, Gustave Moureau's painting 'Death of Orpheus' as part of an essay called 'The New Painting', referring to the artworks exhibited in 1892 in Paris at Paul Durand-Ruel's exhibition, and from there expanding to the current tendencies in French painting.<sup>28</sup> While this article did not refer to British art, it is a good

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<sup>26</sup> "Vstup." *Rozhledy - revue umělecká, politická a sociální* VI no. 1 (1896): 1

<sup>27</sup> "Vstup." *Rozhledy - revue umělecká, politická a sociální* VI, no. 1 (1896) : 3

<sup>28</sup> F. X. Jiřík, "Nové malířství." *Rozhledy - revue umělecká, politická a sociální* VI, no. 1 (1896): 21

example of the international scope of *Rozhledy* which was soon to expand and focus on British material too.

The structure of each issue was organised in such a way that alongside longer articles, there would also be a shorter section entitled 'Outlooks on literature, art and science'. This featured a series of topics presented mostly in a single paragraph each, ranging from introducing new publications, to reviewing exhibitions or announcing new publications. These presented a strong international scope, similar to *Volné Směry's* reviews of a whole array of foreign publications. It is clear the Bohemian readership was hungry for news from around the world, presented with the hope that the often-mentioned cultural abyss could be bridged connecting Bohemia to the cultural world beyond the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The journal *Rozhledy* had a healthy run of 2,000 to 3,000 copies per issue, with a broad following due to its multidisciplinary nature. The cost of a single issue was modest and comparable to other newspapers; an annual subscription was offered for a discounted price. The affordability of the paper was part of the underlying ideology of accessibility and broad distribution.

The journal profiled itself as the leading platform for the discussion of national identity issues and its articles often covered a broad discourse from politics to social issues and a broad cultural overview. Under the leadership of Václav Klofáč, the journal promoted modernist tendencies and encouraged innovative artistic approaches. Although *Rozhledy* was not exclusively an art journal, art and culture played a pivotal role which is reflected in the active participation of many artists as the journal's editors, and a focus on reflecting international contemporary artistic debates.<sup>29</sup> Around 1900, the most active artists-editors were the sculptor Jan Štursa and painter Karel Špillar, who published numerous analyses of the work of Czech and international artists, exploring ideas of national identity and artistic belonging. Some artists specialised in articles on their preferred themes, such as the landscape painter Antonín Slavíček who wrote about issues of nature, art and Impressionism. Similarly, the Symbolist-

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<sup>29</sup> Tomáš Kolich, "Joris Karl Huysmans jako kritik umění a jeho pražské odezvy" AUC PHILOSOPHICA ET HISTORICA, Vol 2016 No 1 (2016), 242.



style sculptor and mystic František Bílek provided articles on philosophical and aesthetic concepts in current Czech art.

In this thesis, my analysis is based predominantly on *Volné Směry* and *Rozhledy*. This is despite the fact that there were other journals available in Bohemia, alongside newspapers such as *Lidové Noviny*, which also published reflections on exhibitions and the Czech cultural life. However, the characteristic feature of *Volné Směry* and *Rozhledy* was that these were largely written by artists themselves, and it was also the artists who had a notable say in what would be showcased in the journals, both in terms of text and reproduced images. This provides a unique insight into the thought and practice of Bohemian artists, which would not be so apparent in other magazines and newspapers of the time. This can be well demonstrated by the example of the painter Miloš Jiránek, who will feature substantially in this thesis both as an artist (mainly in Chapter 4) and as a writer, art critic and translator for *Volné Směry*. While Bohemian artists were heavily involved in editing and producing *Volné Směry* and *Rozhledy*, their involvement in other newspapers and publications was limited. This thesis' strong focus on these specific journals therefore serves the purpose of enabling a closer observation and deeper understanding of the how Czech artists processed British art and in what ways this transformed their work.

### **International Art Journals in Bohemia**

One of the most important features of Bohemian art journals was the fact that they were Czech, and were run by local artists who often doubled as editors and translators, and who were keen to showcase their work and that of their peers. This desire to show the work of Czech artists comes as a reaction to the presence of numerous international journals in Bohemia, and especially in the capital Prague. While in this thesis I focus on a close reading of the two most important Czech art journals, it is vital to note that these existed in a continuous dialogue with international art magazines available to broad audiences in Prague and beyond.

Given the location of Czech Lands within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Austrian journals were the most easily accessible and presented no language barrier thanks to the bilingualism of most Czechs. One of the leading journals to dominate the art scene around the turn of the century was *Ver Sacrum* published by the Vienna Secession between 1898 and 1903.<sup>30</sup> Despite the relatively short span, the journal had notable following among Czech readers and captured the imagination of concurrent leading Czech artists. The focus of the journal on the Secessionism movement corresponded with parallel aesthetic developments of the French Art Nouveau, which is also why the most featured Czech artist in *Ver Sacrum* was Alfons Mucha, whose style became synonymous with Art Nouveau. Several articles in *Ver Sacrum* stated their interest in connecting international art movements, which very much resonated with the desires of the Czech artist and their journals too.<sup>31</sup> Apart from Mucha, the journal featured works by Jan Preisler, František Kupka, and Karel Vítězslav Mašek, although their work appeared less frequently in comparison to Mucha's. In return Czech journals, and especially *Volné Směry*, sometimes alluded to cover designs featured by *Ver Sacrum* and aimed at creating similar statement covers for their issues around the year 1900, which is most apparent in the covers designed by Jan Preisler.

While *Ver Sacrum* was predominantly a fine art journal, *Kunst und Kunsthandwerk* brought together both fine and applied art and various forms of craftsmanship. Published by the Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie (Austrian Museum of Art and Industry) the journal was more geared towards crafts and their various techniques, featured examples of design and architecture, and embraced a multimedia approach. The journal was welcomed as a platform for those Czech artists who dealt with design and craft and lacked similar platforms in Bohemia. Apart from Alfons Mucha, those Czech artists who made their way onto the pages of the journal included the graphic artist and

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<sup>30</sup> Christian M. Nebehay, *The Vienna Secession* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1971), Christian M. Nebehay. *Ver Sacrum, 1898-1903* (Rizzoli, 1977); Valerio Terraroli, *Ver Sacrum: The Vienna Secession Art Magazine 1898–1903*, (Milan: Skira, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> Christian Huemer, *Paris-Vienna, Modern Art Markets and the Transmission of Culture, 1873–1937* (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2013), 85; 93.

topographer Vojtěch Preissig, sculptor and graphic artist František Bílek, and the architects Jan Kotěra and Josef Hoffmann.<sup>32</sup>

Whereas many Czech artists felt that the graphic techniques were not appreciated enough by the Czech art educational establishment, the Austrian journal *Die Graphischen Künste* (The Graphic Arts) was a source of uplift for those who hoped for further recognition of the graphic arts. Published in Vienna between 1879 and 1933, the journal was primarily focused around analysing various graphic art techniques, showcasing individual artists and giving generous space to exhibition reviews, the latter being a similarly important feature in the Czech art journals. The focus on graphic art included book decorations, typography and book illustration. With the establishment of the Viennese Secession, the journal gradually turned more towards this popular style and shifted more prominently towards an international Art Nouveau aesthetic in the first years of the new century.<sup>33</sup>

While not an exhaustive account, the above selection of Austrian journals gives a glimpse of the treasure trove of art related publications that were readily available to Czech artists at the turn of the century. Publications in German would be even more accessible thanks to the fact that most Czechs were bilingual, but even publications in French and English would be eagerly consumed by Czech cultural circles. On the one hand, this richness of such published materials sustained and updated the Bohemian cultural life; on the other hand – despite some Czech artists being featured in international press – there was a palpable desire for Czech art journals to cater specifically to the Bohemian audience and to showcase artwork by Czech artists alongside the more prevalent and internationally acclaimed artists from abroad. My analysis of Bohemian art journals should therefore be viewed as a deep dive into a specific journalistic format, which existed in a much wider literary and artistic context

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<sup>32</sup> Hoffman was Austrian but has spent many years working in Czech Lands and collaborated loosely with Czech artists, so his belonging – like that of so many at the time – transcends his national belonging solely to Austria.

<sup>33</sup> Sabine Tröger, *Kunstpöplarisierung und Kunstwissenschaft. Die Wiener Kunstzeitschrift "Die Graphischen Künste" (1879–1933)* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2011).

with Austrian, German and international publications regularly passing through the hands of Czech authors, artists and journalists.

In comparison to concurrent Austrian art journals, both *Volné Směry* and *Rozhledy* were notably more focused on distinctly Czech themes. Both papers regularly discussed the Czech national identity and issues of Czech belonging as reflected in visual arts. While Czech journals often referred to their Austrian counterparts in terms of discussions of international themes, for the Bohemian editors the main goal was to relate these discussions specifically to the Czech cultural environment. Austrian journals overall reflected a wider international scope without the urge to necessarily discuss worldwide art from a given national perspective.

### **Ruskin and Morris as Role Models**

In both of the Czech art journals - *Volné Směry* and *Rozhledy* - British art was mainly represented by a handful of artists and critics, who symbolically stood for British artistic values. Among them, John Ruskin and William Morris were regarded as role models for the future direction of Czech art. This was mainly to do with their focus on the social aspects of art and the role of art in the wider society, beyond wealthy patrons and the aristocratic circles. The Czech appreciation for such values was closely linked to the perceived submissive role of the Czechs within the Empire and as such related to the underlying (one-sided) rivalry between Prague and Vienna.

While *Volné Směry* aimed at reflecting the wider European art scene, it was predominantly Viennese exhibitions that received the most attention from the editors. Vienna remained the closest 'frenemy' for Czech artists to measure up to. Vienna also represented the gateway through which international art could reach Czech audiences. *Volné Směry* was very efficient in reflecting the ambivalence of the relationship between Bohemian artists and the Viennese cultural scene. One of the reoccurring stereotypes was the belief that Viennese artists are much better supported by the establishment than their Bohemian

counterparts. While this was not necessarily always the case, the editors of *Volné Směry* did little to query the idea.<sup>34</sup>

*Volné Směry* was not the only journal to repeatedly showcase the belief that Bohemian Lands were suppressed, especially by the Austrian part of the Empire. This view was equally supported by literary journals, including *Rozhledy*, and by the daily press. In many ways, such understanding of the period is still prevalent today.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, however, the imperial budget contributed to the establishment of a number of buildings, institutions and public commissions that were carried out in this time with financial support from Vienna.

By the year 1900, *Volné Směry* had substantially expanded the number of featured reports about international art and publications by adding a 'Bibliography' section, alongside extending its other sections on exhibitions and art news. A closer look at the first issue of *Volné Směry* in the year 1900 unveils an extensive international coverage, including a number of references to English artists and critics. Analysing the international art scene was a useful tool for Bohemian artists, enabling them to form a better understanding of their own situation within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Using the words of Arnd Schneider, it can be said that Bohemian artists' interest in the contemporary art scene around the world mirrored "a concept of appropriation based on understanding the other – or the other's products, artefacts – that is appropriation as a practice and experience of learning."<sup>36</sup> Learning about British art was the key starting point that enabled Czech artists' response to these styles.

The issues analysed in Czech journal articles were aimed at scrutinising the support that was offered to Bohemian artists, the overall conditions, and the opportunities available to them in comparison to Austrian artists. Knowledge of the latest aesthetic thought and art criticism from the English-speaking countries was crucial for creating a contrast – or an accord – with the latest development

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<sup>34</sup> Prahel and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 61.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with the historian Jan Rak, 'The founding of Czechoslovakia is still burdened by lies about the Czechs' suffering under Austria', Accessed Nov 16, 2019 [https://www.e15.cz/rozhovory/vznik-ceskoslovenska-zatezuii-stale-zive-lzi-o-utrpeni-pod-rakouskem-rika-historik-jiri-rak-1352831?fbclid=IwAR2fsrxQBQ5F9jHeXworhLRTwVksEvepb5S0\\_k0yqxQvnFXEaKI0KxcNY](https://www.e15.cz/rozhovory/vznik-ceskoslovenska-zatezuii-stale-zive-lzi-o-utrpeni-pod-rakouskem-rika-historik-jiri-rak-1352831?fbclid=IwAR2fsrxQBQ5F9jHeXworhLRTwVksEvepb5S0_k0yqxQvnFXEaKI0KxcNY)

<sup>36</sup> Schneider, "On Appropriation", 222.

on the Bohemian cultural front. This is well demonstrated in the following example.

*Volné Směry* usually featured a selection of news, exhibition reviews and a bibliography in the last third of the magazine. In the first issue of 1900, after several short accounts of exhibitions in St Petersburg and Moscow, the journal announced that a selection of texts by Otto Wagner was now available to Czech readers in the magazine *Česká stráž* (*The Czech Guardian*). This is followed by an excited account of a new set of rules being introduced for the *Hoftitel* art competition in Vienna. Under the orders of the new director of the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna, Artur von Scala, it had been announced that the prestigious *Hoftitel* art competition was now made open to everyone across the Austrian Empire, including Czech artists. Moreover, the competition was now aimed at designing the living quarters, crockery and cutlery as well as clothing suitable for a working family, as opposed to designing purely decorative items for aristocratic use, as the competition was known to do until then. *Volné Směry* made a clear connection between this new development, and the influence of English art criticism:

Art is no longer to create luxury for the wealthy classes, but it is to enlighten and brighten with its shine the household of a working man, it is to enter into the simplest of dwellings, to uplift, cultivate and stimulate morals. John Ruskin and William Morris brought these principles to life, and now their wave is coming to us too.<sup>37</sup>

There is a clear link made here between Ruskin and Morris as the symbols of both artistic and social progress. The author of this article is not only celebrating the fact that the Viennese competition has finally turned from aristocracy towards 'ordinary' people, but mainly highlights that this progressive tendency has come from Britain first, and now it is finally reaching both the Austrian and Czech cultural spheres. Following this, in issue 3 later that year *Volné Směry* would bring an extensive key article commemorating John Ruskin's death and

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<sup>37</sup> "Zprávy a poznámky" *Volné směry* IV, no.1 (1900): 25-26.

calling for the 'Chinese wall' between Bohemia and England to be torn down, which I will analyse later in this chapter.

As the above quotation shows, by explicitly mentioning Ruskin and Morris in connection to the *Hoftitel* competition, the editors express both their belonging with the English social ideal, as well as their nationalist desire to better the lives of the working Czech people. The article continues with the following statement:

In our conditions, the themes of the competition must receive a much greater sympathy than anywhere else. Our art, which continuously desires to be national and folk-like, must surely turn itself towards a similar style of work, as the *Hoftiteltaxenfond* is now calling for!<sup>38</sup>

The editors of *Volné Směry* have thus welcomed the new Austrian initiative and affirmed their support for it by aligning the Bohemian artistic ideals with those of Ruskin and Morris, effectively by mirroring these leading English ideas. Following Arnd Schneider's thoughts on cultural appropriation, it is possible to say that *Volné Směry* fulfilled the "potential to re-signify meaning against the background of structural imbalance between what is appropriated and what is alienated. The transformative act of appropriation happens in an interplay between changing definitions of traditions and nationhood."<sup>39</sup> For Bohemian artists and journalists, negotiating the Bohemian position within the Austro-Hungarian Empire became closely linked to reflecting on both past and current trends in Britain.

### **Bohemians, Germans, and Bohemian Germans**

The relationship between Austrians and Czechs wasn't the only one to be marked with complexity and difficulty which inadvertently permeated into fine arts. Some of the Czech artists who responded to British art at the turn of the century were also linked to the community of the so-called Bohemian Germans. This community consisted of a number of culturally significant personalities

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<sup>38</sup> "Zprávy a poznámky", 25-26.

<sup>39</sup> Schneider, "On Appropriation", 225.

including artists who were born in Prague but used German language more prominently than Czech and identified closely with German culture.

While *Volné Směry* originated from a desire for connecting Bohemia to an international context, the *Mánes Association* first presented itself as nationally oriented.<sup>40</sup> This was due to the on-going conflicts between the Czech and the German community in Bohemia, which manifested themselves in several ways. One of these were the disagreements regarding the newly proposed Czech-German Language Decrees as part of a broader series of arrangements relating to the role of the Czech language and the question of the Czech national belonging within the Empire. At one point, Czech and German languages were proposed to be issued equal status, thus enabling Czechs to use their mother tongue as their official language when dealing with the authorities. However, these negotiations, known under the German umbrella term *Österreichisch-Tschechischer Ausgleich*, never reached a satisfactory conclusion, and as a result stimulated cultural groups such as the *Mánes Association* to turn to nationalism. This created an intriguing contrast between *Mánes* and its counterparts in Germany and other European countries, where Secession-oriented artists' groups generally turned away from regional and national art.<sup>41</sup>

An example of the on-going conflicts is the formation of a new association in 1893 with the aim to promote German-Bohemian artists and cultural figures, called the *Union of German Artists in Bohemia (Verein deutscher bildender Künstler in Böhmen)*. In reaction to this, the members of *Mánes* co-produced the 1895 *Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition* and participated at the publication of the manifesto 'The Czech Modern' in the magazine *Rozhledy*.

**[Fig 1.7]** The exhibition was a tour de force of the Bohemian spirit, making use of the German and Austrian absence to play out a full repertoire of Bohemian and Pan-Slavic ideals. The exhibition took place in the same location as the famed 1891 *Jubilee Exhibition*, and thus carried great gravitas. The 1891 industrial exhibition was boycotted by the Germans and so this was the first

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<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Clegg, *Art, Design & Architecture in Central Europe 1890 – 1920*, (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006), 64.

Prahl and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 13.

<sup>41</sup> Prahl and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 13.



opportunity for the Czech organisers to showcase the strength of Bohemian industry.<sup>42</sup> The subsequent 1895 *Czechoslavic exhibition* was a full-blown show bringing together the arts, crafts and folk art from across the country. The extensive grounds were populated with mock villages from multiple regions, showcasing their folk arts, crafts and customs; villagers would be paraded through the grounds and a series of major festivities took place in the exhibition grounds. Czech art historian Marta Filipová remarks:

The Exhibition focused solely on the promotion of the ethnic identity of the Czech speaking people living in Bohemia and Moravia, consciously excluding any references to the German minority.<sup>43</sup>

Filipová proceeds to quote a Czech article from 1896 stating that the exhibition showed what cultural and material products “the Czech people achieved through their own diligence, without the help, patronage or support [of the Austrian government].<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the 1895 main exhibition catalogue, naturally published in Czech, specifically points to the fact that the exhibition came together by purely Czech forces “and despite all the influences of Western culture”<sup>45</sup>.

The accent on pure Czechness was specifically linked to the academic debates about the authenticity of Czech art, which were taking place on an ongoing basis since the 1870s.<sup>46</sup> The main question was whether Czech art has always been inherently derivative as opposed to original and specific to the Bohemian region throughout the centuries. Medieval art was often the preferred focus of these debates, attempting to analyse any signs of specific Czechness in the Bohemian art production of the Middle Ages. Bohemian art journals would often

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<sup>42</sup> Jan Křen. *Konfliktní společenství – Češi a Němci 1780-1918 [Conflicting Community – The Czechs and the Germans 1780-1918]*. (Karolinum, Praha, 2013), 203

<sup>43</sup> Marta Filipová, “Peasants on Display. The Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition of 1895”, *Journal of Design History* 24, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>44</sup> Čeněk Zíbrt. *Národopisná výstava československá [The Ethnographic Czechoslavic Exhibition]* (Český lid V, Praha, 1986), 2-3. I have discovered this quote thanks to Marta Filipová's conference paper: Marta Filipová. *The Peasants as a Spectacle: The Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition of 1895*. Conference paper, available via Academia.edu.

<sup>45</sup> Josef Kafka, ed. *Národopisná výstava československá v Praze 1895, hlavní katalog a průvodce. [The Ethnographic Czechoslavic Exhibition in Prague 1895, the main catalogue and guide]* (J. Otto, Prague, 1896), 137.

<sup>46</sup> Marta Filipová. *The Construction of National identity in the Historiography of Czech Art*. (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008), 82; Marta Filipová, *Modernity, History, and Politics in Czech Art*, London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 63 – 65.

come back to these themes even as late as the 1900s, and the awareness of the character of these debates is crucial to the understanding of the formative role of Czech art journalism.

There were tight links between the two leading journals, *Rozhledy* and *Volné Směry*, with both magazines cross-referencing each other and the nationalist tone resonating strongly throughout both journals. Their nationalism, however, was mainly aimed at promoting Bohemian art as opposed to Austrian art, while not excluding other international sources of inspiration from beyond the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This is reflected in *Mánes Association's* activities overall, and in *Volné Směry* specifically, which started off with the desire to showcase the under-represented Czech artists and resulted in promoting a broadly internationalist viewpoint.

As an example of this occurs in 1896 in *Volné Směry* in a review of the exhibition “From Lautrec to Vogeler” which took place in the prestigious and internationally minded Topič Salon gallery in Prague.<sup>47</sup> The article reflects positively on the fact that the selected artists presented an international range; there is however a palpable disappointment with regard to the lack of Bohemian artists taking part. The only ‘home artist’, as the article described him, was Emil Orlik (1870 – 1932), who was later to become known for his distinct phase of Japonism, including a length of time spent travelling through Japan and studying woodcut techniques with the Japanese master Kano Tomonobu.<sup>48</sup> For the majority of his career though, Orlik – just like Franz Kafka – was a representative of the aforementioned ‘Bohemian Germans’, a group of culturally significant figures who had spent the majority of their lives in Prague and yet identified as Germans. Listing Orlik in *Volné Směry* as the only ‘home artist’ thus reflects tellingly the ambivalent definition of ‘home’ and the omnipresent question of national and geographical belonging that both artists and art critics faced. I will focus on Orlik in chapter three, where I will analyse his response to James McNeill Whistler.

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<sup>47</sup> “From Lautrec to Vogeler”, *Volné směry* I, no.2 (1896): 98.

<sup>48</sup> Helena Gaudeková and Roman Prahl. “Japonsko a jeho tradiční divadlo v díle Emila Orlika” [Japan and its traditional theatre in the work of Emil Orlik], *DISK* 29 (2009):147-154.

A year later, the 1897 issue of *Rozhledy* featured an extensive essay entitled ‘*The German impact on our Awakening*’. While this is obviously aimed at exploring the undoubtedly immense sphere of German influence, the essay keenly promotes a multinational approach:

Apart from (...) our own strength as a nation, manifesting itself and growing spontaneously, our awakening has come about *thanks to the specific and definable foreign influences*<sup>49</sup>, which we can classify, estimate and categorise.<sup>50</sup>

The article is based on a book by the Slovenian literary scholar based at the University in Vienna, Dr Matyáš Murko, whose main argument is that the Czech ‘*National Awakening*’ was heavily based on German Romanticism. This however is not interpreted in the sense that the Czech movement was derivative of German thought. On the contrary, the rooting of the Czech awakening in the in-depth knowledge of German culture is used by Murko (and highlighted in the *Rozhledy* article) as proof of the interconnectedness of Bohemian and European cultures:

And that is, I believe, the strongest take-away from Murko’s meritorious work, that it relates our efforts to European culture. He, who can read between the lines, will find many a suggestion there for future cultural work in our country.<sup>51</sup>

The article demonstrates the complexity of Czech-German relations, and the various viewpoints that could be derived from discussions on the theme. Translations of British art essays and criticism, featured by Czech art journals, need to be viewed within this context, as one of the ways of fostering the idea of connectedness between the (loosely defined) Czechness and the desire to belong to an international community – even if this belonging was linked to somehow reconciling Germany’s role in Czech culture and history. This desire

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<sup>49</sup> This section of the text is highlighted by double spacing in the original magazine.

<sup>50</sup> “The German impact on our Awakening”, *Rozhledy - revue umělecká, politická a sociální* VI, no. 9 (1897): 390.

<sup>51</sup> “The German impact”, 395.

to belong to an international community prepared a fertile ground for the reception of British art.

### **Negotiating Bohemian Artistic Identity**

Apart from the Czechoslovak Exhibition, there was another major reaction of the *Mánes* Association to the German-Czech situation. It was in *Rozhledy* in 1895 that a group of forward-thinking literary authors published *Manifesto České moderny – The Manifesto of Czech Modern*.<sup>52</sup> This was mainly led by the emerging figures in literature, with some artists tagging on. In the visual arts, the manifesto touched on the themes of symbolism, decadence and impressionism – even though these movements were understood as principles of primarily literary works rather than relating to visual culture. The important impact this had on visual arts, however, was the emphasis on translating foreign literature into Czech, making the current cultural trends available to Bohemian readership. This included not only prose and poetry, but also art criticism and key aesthetic essays.

The most striking aspect of the manifesto is the way it urges its readers to transgress the nationalistic views of value in art:

(...) a new world arises, and what we ask of an artist is: Be yours and be yourself! Let's not accentuate our C z e c h n e s s : be yourself and thus you will be Czech. (...) We recognise no national maps. All we want is art which serves no luxury and is not subject to any whims of literary fashion.<sup>53</sup>

Further on, the manifesto declares it does not side with any political establishment but demands social and economic equality across the whole of Europe. This was a categorical rejection of the values of the Czech National Awakening of the previous generation, who viewed serving the nation as a sacred task of its artists. The original draft of the manifesto was presented by

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<sup>52</sup> "The Czech Modern." *Rozhledy národohospodářské, sociální, politické a literární* V no. 1 (1896): 1-4; Jaroslava Janáčková and Marie Lukešová eds. *The Czech modern*, p. 260-265, *Knih textů: česká literatura od počátků k dnešku, vol. II, Od romantismu k symbolismu 19. století*, (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 1999), 619–622. Also available at <https://books.openedition.org/ceup/1098>

<sup>53</sup> Manifesto of the Czech Modern, *Rozhledy*, vol 5 issue 1, 1896, p1

the poet Josef Svatopluk Machar who based it on the European modernist literary movement with direct references to Hermann Bahr.<sup>54</sup> The draft was however substantially enriched by the contributions from the literary and art critic František Xaver Šalda, who was later intensely involved in *Volné Směry* as one of the magazine's most influential editors. While the manifesto was predominantly aimed at literature, its overall concepts of artistic freedom, social equality, and most importantly the international interconnectedness of modern art, proved attractive and formative for literary and visual artists in equal measure.

The ongoing debate about Czechness, its meaning and its concrete artistic form was reflected strongly in the Bohemian art journals and impacted the way British art was received. This was only natural as the journal's editors and contributors were mainly artists and other cultural figures who actively partook in the debates, which took place at various societal levels, ranging from students' associations to the political and academic arenas. The journals took upon themselves to reflect equally on two seemingly opposing issues: the nature of Bohemian/ Czech art, and the necessity for Czech art to connect to and actively work with artistic trends from across Europe and the wider world. For this reason, some issues of *Volné Směry* feature side by side articles analysing the essence of nationalism in art, and articles about British art, thus entering into a mutual dialogue. This was exactly the case with Šalda's article about nationalism in art being placed next to an extensive coverage of James McNeil Whistler's art, which I will analyse in detail in chapter three.

The overall emphasis on making international art more accessible to Bohemian readership manifested in several ways in Czech art journals, one of them being the journals' detailed reporting about international art exhibitions in Bohemia. This is well demonstrated in the second issue of *Volné Směry* published in its first year of 1896, which opens its 'Exhibitions' section with a mention of the exhibition of Walter Crane in the private gallery called the Topič Salon in

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<sup>54</sup> Janáčková and Lukešová, *Kniha textů*, 619–622. Translation of excerpts accessible at: <https://books.openedition.org/ceup/1098>

Prague, claiming it to be one of the most impressive shows ever held in the establishment.<sup>55</sup>

Early in the following year, the journal follows up the story with a report about Walter Crane's artwork being included in the publication '*Pictures from Bohemia Drawn with Pen and Pencil*'.<sup>56</sup> [Fig 1:8, 1:9] Crane's line drawing and some watercolours featured throughout the publication together with the work of other English and Czech artists, which was an unusual and much welcomed phenomenon. The report in *Volné Směry* further states that the publication "also features many illustrations by Czech artists, including one of a group of countrymen wearing the Domažlice folk costume by Aleš, the Czech Walter Crane".<sup>57</sup> [Fig 1:10] The comparison is interesting especially as the two illustrations demonstrate a very different style. Crane's light sketchy illustrations contrast rather with Aleš's much more detailed work with starker contrasts and a more finished look.

The analogy between Aleš and Crane is picked up again two months later in a report in *Volné Směry* devoted to an article on Aleš by the Flemish poet Paul de Monte in the Antwerp art revue '*De Vlaamse School*'.<sup>58</sup> The Antwerp journal quotes another article from the French journal '*La Plume*' composed by William Ritter. The international dimension of *Volné Směry* is showcased perfectly in this example as the paper mentions and even directly quotes from both of the articles in *De Vlaamse School* and *La Plume*. In his text in *La Plume*, Ritter states that the Czechs consider Aleš to be their Walter Crane, although Aleš's drawing skills are raw and more folk-like in comparison to Crane. While Ritter's description of the Czech artist – who was recognised as a leading national artist by his countrymen – was not flattering, the very fact that *Volné Směry* quoted

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<sup>55</sup> "Výstavy", *Volné Směry* I, no 2, (1896): 98.

<sup>56</sup> "Waltera Cranea obrázky a črty z Čech", *Volné Směry* I, no 5, (1897), 243. The publication details are stated as: (London, printed by William Clowes and sons 1894). The title of the book has several spelling mistakes, as it says '*Drason*' instead of '*Drawn*', and '*wirth*' instead of '*with*'. This probably reflects the lack of good knowledge of the English language among *Volné směry* editors and proof-readers at that point. Today the publication is available online. James Baker, *Pictures from bohemia Drawn with Pen and Pencil*, (London: Religious Tract Society, 1894). Accessed Oct 19, 2023, <https://archive.org/details/picturesfrombohe00bake/page/6>

<sup>57</sup> "Waltera Cranea obrázky a črty z Čech", *Volné Směry* I, vol 5, (1897), 243). Mikoláš Aleš (1851 -1913) was one of the most important personalities of the so called 'National Theatre generation'. His style developed from early Neo-Romantism towards an illustrative style edging towards Art Nouveau. He focused on nationally oriented subjects and glorified the life and folklore of the country-life.

<sup>58</sup> "Zprávy umělecké", *Volné Směry* I, vol 7, (1897): 335.

both the Antwerp as well as the French journal shows how connected the editorial board was to art criticism across Europe, well beyond the Austro-Hungarian cultural domain. I will be analysing the connection between Aleš' and Crane in more detail in the fourth chapter.

The aspiration to bring an international outlook on art to the Czech readership had strengthened towards the year 1900. This is reflected in the style of advertising *Volné Směry* adapted at this time. The 1901-02 advert for a coffee house called Union states that the café was “the meeting place of Czech artists” and strengthens this claim by listing the art journals that the café made available for their clients to read: “*Volné Směry, Art et Décoration, The Studio, Deutsche Kunst & Dekoration, Mir Iskustva, Die Kunst, Kunst fur Alle, etc.*”<sup>59</sup>

**[Fig 1:2]**

Furthermore, from 1900 onward the *Volné Směry* colophon and a selection of articles were published in both Czech and French, which was not surprisingly one of the reasons why August Rodin agreed to exhibit in Prague in 1902.<sup>60</sup> *Volné Směry* received positive reviews and mentions from other European cultural personalities, such as Richard Muther, Ludwig Hevesi and Julius Meier-Graefe, establishing a lively mutual exchange between Bohemian and other European critics.<sup>61</sup> This was crucial for the mediation of British art to the Bohemian audiences. Richard Muther's publications on 19<sup>th</sup> century art were popular in Bohemia and acted as important mediators of British art, especially the Pre-Raphaelites, as I will demonstrate in my second chapter. Similarly, other international art critics' whose works were translated and published in Czech journal often played the role of updating Czech knowledge about British art.

The *Mánes* Association (which published *Volné Směry*) held its first independent exhibition in 1898 in the aforementioned Prague based Topič Salon where Walter Crane's works were shown two years earlier. The clear

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<sup>59</sup> Prah and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 28.

<sup>60</sup> Jana Hunter, “Czech Modernity and the Spectacle of Rodin's Exhibition in Prague, 1902” (Conference paper at Modern European History Workshop 2020 -2021, University of Cambridge, Cambridge and online, February 11, 2021)

<sup>61</sup> Prah and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 29.

message communicated by the exhibition was the Association's ambition to secure their own exhibition space, which would save them from having to share the space in Rudolfinum gallery with the *Kunstverein für Böhmen*, still affected by the Czech-German disagreements. *Volné Směry* reprinted the exhibition's opening speech as part of an article by the art critic Stanislav Kostka Neuman. Here, it was confirmed that the exhibition's aim was to help establish the autonomy of Czech art so that the artists could "breathe freely in their own home."<sup>62</sup> Showing art from Britain was therefore viewed as part of the wider mission to gain more autonomy for Czech art.

While the Topič Salon intended to counterbalance the number of German artists exhibiting in Prague, there was still a large number of Germans showing their art at the gallery. Between 1894 and 1899, these artists included H. Thoma, J. Sattler, Fr. Stassen and A. Böcklin. Nonetheless, the Topič Salon remained the most attractive venue for showing other international non-German artists, including those from Britain. Apart from the successful exhibition of Walter Crane, in 1896<sup>63</sup> the Salon showed an extensive exhibition of drawings and etchings showcasing contemporary artworks from across Europe, "from Lautrec to Vogeler".<sup>64</sup> The December issue of *Volné Směry* brought a detailed review of the exhibition which showed almost 60 artists and 160 etchings and lithographs. The review opens by stating that this was one of the most interesting exhibitions held at the gallery, apart from Walter Crane's exhibition which was considered to be the most notable highlight of the gallery's history.

As the above examples suggest, Czech artistic circles at the turn of the century navigated a focus on nationalistic ideals combined with complex set international influxes. Marta Filipova eloquently summarises this multilayer situation in her definition of Czech modernism:

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<sup>62</sup> Stanislav Kostka Neumann, *První výstava spolku Mánes*, *Volné Směry* II, vol 4, (February 1898), 231-5; Elizabeth Clegg, *Art, Design & Architecture in Central Europe 1890 – 1920*, (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006), 68.

<sup>63</sup> Kristýna Brožová Hochmuth, "Výstavní činnost Topičova salonu", *Topičův salon 1894-1899* (Praha: Archiv výtvarného umění, 2015), 46.

<sup>64</sup> Tomáš Vlček, *Praha 1900 – Studie k dějinám kultury a umění Prahy v letech 1890–1914*, (Panorama, Praha, 1986), 71.



I present modernism in the Czech lands with emphasis on its complexity – as a single, yet multi-directional phenomenon, containing a multitude of exchanges and influences that took place across regional as well as national borders.<sup>65</sup>

Czech fine art journals were a crucial mediator across this complexity, navigating and bridging both the nationalist and the international dimensions of the Czech art world.

### **English Artists in Czech Journals**

While Vienna presented the nearest cultural epicentre for Prague artists, Prague itself attracted attention from Western Europe as the place of the “crossover of the refined and decadent culture with the primitive Slav culture.”<sup>66</sup> This was also partly due to the rising influence of the emerging Czech art historians who had been educated at the Viennese school of art history, such as Vincenc Kramář, Zdeněk Wirth, Alois Matějček and V.V. Štech.<sup>67</sup> In 1904, *Volné Směry* published the essay ‘*Von Mánes bis Švabinký*’ by the Czech art historian Max Dvořák, which was a reprint from its German version in *Die Graphischen Künste*, showing the mutuality that existed between Czech and German art journals.

*Volné Směry* and the Mánes Association in general had a broader ambition in mind, which had unfortunately never materialised: an extensive edition of translations of art critical essays and theory texts was intended to be published alongside *Volné Směry*. The journal developed a healthy pool of subscribers, hence it was expected that the majority of these would support the planned series of publications. Among the suggested translations were prominent works by English authors: the collected works of Oscar Wilde, Walter Pater and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The extensive plans included publishing artists’ monographic

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<sup>65</sup> Marta Filipová, *Modernity, History, and Politics in Czech Art*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 7.

<sup>66</sup> Prahel and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 61.

<sup>67</sup> An in-depth study of Czech historiography of the period was presented by Marta Filipová in her doctoral thesis and the recent monograph which is based on the thesis and explores the theme further. Marta Filipová, “The construction of national identity in the historiography of Czech art,” (PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2009); Marta Filipová, *Modernity, History, and Politics in Czech Art*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2020).

overviews as well as selected texts of art critics. The whole initiative carried the title *Routes and Goals (Dráhy a cíle)* but only a fragment of the plans was realised in the form of a small selection of texts published in *Volné Směry* from 1905 onward.<sup>68</sup> The two main characters behind the project were the art critic František Xaver Šalda and the painter Miloš Jiránek, both of whom will feature prominently throughout this thesis. Jiránek's artistic work was well known to have been inspired by Impressionism as well as by J. M. W. Whistler, as will be elaborated on in a separate chapter. The aspirational publishing and translating goals of *Volné Směry* underline the importance of the British cultural impact, and the recognition that a deeper knowledge of these texts was essential for the formation of a uniquely Czech take on concurrent international art.

With this in mind, having a closer look at some of the journals' articles about British art will enable me to identify those features of British art and art criticism that were deemed most influential from the perspective of Czech artists. The journal *Volné Směry* in the year 1900 makes for a brilliant case study, providing insight into the many forms that British art took in the journal, and showcasing the number of articles and references to British art. The 'Bibliography' section of the 1900 issue nr. 1 of *Volné směry* features multiple mentions of English art. As noted earlier, *Volné směry* and other culture-oriented magazines would cross-reference each other on an on-going basis. Here, *Volné směry* draw attention to the article '*Dante Gabriel Rossetti*' by Žofie Pohorecká-Šebkova, published in *Rozhledy*.<sup>69</sup> The journal's following page brings the news of a two-part biography of William Morris, "a poet but mostly a promoter of art and its effects in the everyday life"<sup>70</sup>. The book '*The Life of William Morris*' was written by J. W. Mackail, and *Volné Směry* even quote its original price of 32 shillings, before stating that their Czech readers should expect an article on Morris very soon. This indicates the dedication of the journal to continuously bring more insights about British artists and overall culture, and the belief that Czech readers were keen to welcome this information.

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<sup>68</sup> Prah and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 69.

<sup>69</sup> Žofie Pohorecká-Šebkova. "Dante Gabriel Rossetti." *Rozhledy - revue umělecká, politická a sociální* IX, no 1 (1899): 14-20.

<sup>70</sup> "Bibliografie" *Volné směry* IV, no 1 (1900): 27.

Further on the same page, the bibliography continues with a description of the latest book of Shakespearean illustrations (The Chiswick Shakespeare) by “the poetic and insightful young English artist Byam Shaw”. The publication in five volumes is deemed extremely beautifully presented and well worth the price of 1sh 6d, “which we recommend to our readers as the price is very low”.<sup>71</sup> Apart from showing the editors were aware of Shaw’s work, this entry also uncovers an intimate knowledge of book prices in contemporary London and suggests that it was not at all difficult for the Czech readers to purchase the publication.

This is followed by mentions of the English artist Henry Osipov whose book of illustrations was published in London and is quoted to the *Volné Směry* readership as costing 6 pence a volume. The editors of *Volné Směry* claim that English critics give appraisal for Osipov’s “perfect judgement, great sensitivity, true poetics and great technical efficiency”.<sup>72</sup> This claim alone implies that the editors had access to and knowledge of English critical writing about contemporary art, and that they deemed it important to share this with their Bohemian readership.

Furthermore, this notion of the editors extends towards setting English artists as role models for their Bohemian counterparts – bearing in mind that many of the Czech articles would be written by artists themselves, and thus it would be Bohemian artists actively seeking to model their practice on the knowledge of British culture. This approach is well aligned with Arnd Schneider’s re-defining of appropriation, where he emphasises the role of the individual artists in carrying out the appropriation process when he says that “artists were conceived as ‘the interface’ in the process of cross-cultural contacts”, and appropriation “prolongs and extends the experience of what they claim as the original, while also investing it with new meaning and serving as a strategy for identity construction.”<sup>73</sup> Getting a deeper understanding of British art was linked to enriching and improving the work of Czech artists, elevating Czech art to an international level.

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<sup>71</sup> “Bibliografie”, 27

<sup>72</sup> “Bibliografie” *Volné směry* IV, no 1 (1900): 27

<sup>73</sup> Schneider, “On Appropriation”, 216.

This was certainly the case with the following description of the publication of 400 illustrations by Helen Stratton<sup>74</sup> in a new edition of Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales. The comments read:

Many a lesson is to be learnt from the work of Helen Stratton about how our illustrators should accompany fairy tales for children.<sup>75</sup>

It is no accident that the editor in chief for this volume of *Volné Směry* was Stanislav Sucharda (1866 – 1916), a sculptor whose deep interest in fairy tales culminated two years later with the series *Panna Krásná Liliána – The Beautiful Maiden Liliána*. In 1902, the first Czech exhibition of art for children was opened in Prague where the input of English artists such as Helen Stratton played a crucial role, as I will analyse in chapter four.

The decision to organise the first Czech exhibition for children originated in the shared belief that Bohemian artists must reflect the shift in the reform of artistic taste coming to the Continent from England. The changes in the concept of children's upbringing and the role of art in education were linked to the interest in folk art as the 'childhood' of the nation.<sup>76</sup> Again, Bohemian artists were connected to the wider interest in children's aesthetics and symbolism, which was reflected in a previous issue of *Ver Sacrum* devoted to illustration and fairy tales, or in an article covering the same theme published in *Dekorative Kunst*. In 1902, the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague held the exhibition 'Art and the Child', which also received much attention in *Volné Směry*. It is therefore not surprising that Helen Stratton's work would attract notable attention from Bohemian artists, and that it was seen as an example worth following – potentially even a direct inspiration for the 1902 exhibition, as I will analyse in my fourth chapter.

In 1899, *Volné Směry* informed about the untimely death of "the bizarre English artist" Aubrey Beardsley. In the current issue, two editions of the artist's drawings were advertised, including a short summary of Beardsley's life. Here it

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<sup>74</sup> In *Volné směry*, the artist's surname is featured with a spelling mistake (missing one T) and with the Czech feminine suffix added: 'Stratonová'

<sup>75</sup> "Bibliografie", 27

<sup>76</sup> Prah and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 95.

says that the “bizarre and curious personal style” of the artist has now found many “blind followers” in England, who however are not capable of extending what was valuable in Beardsley, but instead keep copying the artist’s weaker features, taking them to the extremes. The article finishes off with a warning premonition: “The result of this foolish copying mania will be that in the end people will finally turn away in disgust – from Beardsley himself!”<sup>77</sup>

While Beardsley has been repeatedly mentioned in *Volné Směry* over several years, no reproductions of his work were published in the journal.<sup>78</sup>

Nevertheless, the author of the above quote was evidently well acquainted with both Beardsley’s work, the contemporary artistic reaction to Beardsley in England, as well as the English critics’ response to it. Some knowledge of Beardsley’s style was also expected from *Volné směry*’s general readership, which applies to other foreign artists who frequently featured in the magazine without ever having images their artwork reproduced. John Constable, for example, has been mentioned over forty times in *Volné Směry*, with none of his paintings ever featured.<sup>79</sup>

The last two ‘Bibliography’ paragraphs of the 1900 first issue devoted to English publications mention Gleeson White’s ‘*The Master Painters of Britain*’ including a brief outline of the book, the number of illustrations and a description of essays in the book. The last publication to be mentioned dealing with English art is Percy E. Bate’s ‘*The Pre-Raphaelite painters*’ with 7 photogravures and 84 illustrations.<sup>81</sup> The same publication is advertised in *The Studio* 79, October 1899.<sup>82</sup> The wording of the publication review is however different from the *Volné Směry* entry, which indicates that this hasn’t been simply translated and copied into the Czech paper.

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<sup>77</sup> “Bibliografie”, 27

<sup>78</sup> A review of Beardsley’s exhibition held at the Miethke Gallery in Vienna was published in *Volné Směry* IX, no.1 (1905): 97-98. Shorter remarks about Beardsley include his work being mentioned in relation to new art publications in *Volné Směry* IV, no. 1 (1900): 27; in an article on the artist Hanuš Schweiger in *Volné Směry* IV, no. 2 (1900): 80; in exhibitions review in *Volné Směry* V, no. 2 (1901): 38, among other.

<sup>79</sup> John Constable is mentioned in the following issues of the journal, among other: *Volné Směry* VI, no. 5 (1902): 137; *Volné Směry* IX, no. 1 (1905): 131, 283; *Volné Směry* X, no. 1 (1906): 344.

<sup>81</sup> “Bibliografie”, 27.

<sup>82</sup> “Studio Talk”, *The Studio* 79 (October 1899): 66. Accessed Sept 16, 2022, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/studio1900>

Interestingly, the same issue of *The Studio* also features a reproduction of the painting ‘*Le Boudoir*’ by the Bohemian artist Luděk Marold. **[Fig 1:11, 1:12]** While Marold has spent a number of years in Paris and is often associated with French art, *The Studio* correctly links him to Prague and suggest that Marold’s “work displays qualities of technique which are worthy of the highest commendation”.<sup>83</sup> While the paragraph suggests *The Studio* was keen to follow Marold’s work in the future, the artist himself had unexpectedly passed away in December 1898, just 33 years old, cutting short a successful international career.<sup>84</sup> It was only after his death that his first major exhibition was held in Prague in 1899, which is probably where the correspondent of *The Studio* might have noticed Marold, as the article specifically connects the reproduced painting to Prague. Marold also previously worked for British publishers as he illustrated several novels for *The Graphic* and created several posters for the *India Exhibition* at Earl’s Court in London in 1895.<sup>85</sup> **[Fig 1:13]**

Among the British artists appearing in *Volné Směry*, the most often mentioned artists were Aubrey Beardsley, Edward Burne-Jones, John Constable, Walter Crane, Thomas Gainsborough, William Hogarth, Ford Madox-Brown, Henry Martin, William Morris, William Nicholson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Singer Sargent<sup>86</sup>, Charles Haslewood Shannon, Wilson Steer, J. M. W. Turner, George Frederic Watts, and James McNeil Whistler.<sup>87</sup> The majority of these would be mentioned in the ‘Bibliography’ or ‘Art News’ sections, where the latest publications dealing with said artists are announced and reviewed. Some of these, however, would be part of larger critical essays.

As I have illustrated, *Volné Směry* in the year 1900 provides a good example of the palpable presence of English artists in Czech art journalism. This richness of English material continues in a steady fashion throughout the year. The

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<sup>83</sup> “Studio Talk” *The Studio* 79 (October 1899): 66

<sup>84</sup> “Luděk Marold”, *Volné Směry* III, no. 2 (1899) unnumbered opening page announcing Marold’s sudden passing.

<sup>85</sup> Michal Janata, “The Studio: An illustrated magazine of fine and applied art”, *National Library of Technology website* catalogue entry. Accessed 20 Aug, 2023, <https://www.techlib.cz/cs/82890-the-studio-an-illustrated-magazine-of-fine-and-applied-art>

Jana Orliková, *Luděk Marold 1865-1898*, (Praha: Obecni Dum, 1998), 117.

<sup>86</sup> Although Sargent was American, he often figures among British artists in the Czech journals.

<sup>87</sup> This line-up was compiled based on an analysis of VS and with the aid of the index of : Prah and Bydžovská , *Volné směry*,190-193.

fourth issue, for example, featured a translation from the 1898 *Art Journal's* autobiographical article by Walter Crane. The English theme was followed by the sixth issue, which brought a separate page of translated quotations from John Ruskin, followed by the ground-breaking and programmatic article by the art critic and art historian K. B. Mádl entitled “*The Style of Our Era*”. [Fig 1:14] This overview of modern tendencies mainly in design and architecture featured a number of English artists, and the article was accompanied by multiple reproductions. These include ‘*Flora*’ – a textile design by Morris and Burne-Jones (1886) [Fig 1:15 ], a blanket design by Walter Crane, bookbinding by William Morris, interiors by M. H. Baillie-Scott [Fig 1:16, 1:17] and an etching of the Whitechapel gallery in London by H.C. Townsend (the latter reproduced from *The Studio* from 1899).<sup>88</sup> [Fig 1:18, 1:19] The article further featured interior design and architecture images from Belgium (Brussels), Italy (Turin), Germany (Berlin, Munich) and Vienna. Mádl’s article became one of the most important texts ever published by the journal, pointing towards the latest developments in art and architecture with John Ruskin, William Morris, Walter Crane and M. H. Baillie-Scott as the heroes of this new aesthetic.<sup>89</sup> In this context, what Mádl offered was in line with Arnd Schneider’s proposed definition of cultural appropriation as “a hermeneutic procedure investing cultural elements with new signification, and those who appropriate are being transformed in the process”.<sup>90</sup> Mádl’s article was strategically bringing a selection of foreign artists and architects (many of who were British) to the Bohemian cultural circles with the intention to use these as examples worth following, thus transforming the Czech art scene.

Having said that, Mádl is also clear that these are not models to be simply copied, but examples of a novel approach which should be integrated into Bohemian artistic strategy. Mádl calls for Bohemian art to reflect these trends, unify art and life in a contemporary fashion, and seek to be informed by the widest scope of international inputs with Britain at its core. This determination to

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<sup>88</sup> K. B. Mádl, “The Style of Our Era.” *Volné Směry* IV, no. 6 (1900): 155.

Harrison C. Townsend: Plan for the Whitechapel Art gallery, *The Studio* Vol. 16 (1899): 197.

<sup>89</sup> Also analysed in Jindřich Vybíral, “Ohlas idejí Arts and Crafts v Čechách kolem 1900” [The Reception of Art and Crafts Movement in Bohemia around 1900] in Jindřich Vybíral, *Co je českého na umění v Čechách*, (Praha: UMPRUM, 2022), 219-220.

<sup>90</sup> Schneider, “Appropriation”, 225

bring together international styles to create a specific Czech take on them resonates with the definition of appropriation as presented by the Canadian philosopher James O. Young, who differentiates between 'taking' and 'making'.<sup>91</sup> The simple 'taking' of elements from another culture is not deemed 'authentic' by Young, while the process of 'making' brings together the cultural borrowing with an original creative process, thus resulting in a genuine and artistic piece. The difference between the two, is, according to Young, an aesthetic difference. Artists creating via the process of 'making' are thus implementing features from other cultures, but these features are further reworked to fit their new environment, they are made to function within a different cultural and visual context and thus become a complex combination of the imported elements and the domestic tradition and context. As such, these artworks are not superficial copies but rather embody a true dialogue between the two cultures. This is indeed what Mádl is calling for – by pointing out individual artists worth following, Mádl encourages Bohemian artists to educate themselves about these artists, analyse their style, and use their work in the process of 'making' to create a contemporary, internationally informed, and yet notably Czech outputs.

### **Key Czech Articles on British Art**

Bohemian awareness of British art was mainly shaped by the selection of British artists who were presented by the leading Czech art journals. As was pointed out before, there was a large selection of German and Austrian journals and publications available, where the bi-lingual Bohemian readership could learn about the arts of Britain. However, the particular selection of British artists that were featured in Czech journals came with a subliminal 'blessing' given by their authors, many of whom were key Czech cultural figures. Journals like *Volné Směry* and *Rozhledy* would only publish essays on artists they believed to be crucial in the search for a modern, international, and yet fully national Bohemian art.

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<sup>91</sup> Young, "Art authenticity and Appropriation", 455-476.



*Rozhledy* was one of the richest platforms where British artists and critics were introduced to the Bohemian readership, causing sensational responses. In her memoirs, the wife of one of the leading Czech painters, Ela Švabinská recalls: “Especially the magazine *Rozhledy* featured a number of [Pre-Raphaelite] poems and reviews of their work.”<sup>92</sup> As an interdisciplinary magazine, *Rozhledy* would feature Pre-Raphaelite poetry on various occasions, not always necessarily linked to the brotherhood’s paintings. Overall, *Rozhledy* did not feature a lot of pictorial content; all the more impactful it was when they eventually did showcase Pre-Raphaelite reproductions.

In November 1896, *Rozhledy* published a translation of Walter Crane’s essay on William Morris.<sup>93</sup> **[Fig 1:20]** This was in response to Crane’s exhibition held at the independent gallery Topič Salon the previous year, and which was also repeatedly mentioned by *Volné Směry*. The article begins with a brief summary of Morris’ life, and states that the translation of Crane’s text is based on an article published in the current *Progressive Review* as well as the Stuttgart-based *Neue Zeit*.<sup>94</sup> It was not unusual for both *Rozhledy* and *Volné směry* to refer to multiple language sources, most often German and French. The brief introduction about Morris’ life also refers to the translation of a section of Morris’ credo ‘*How I became a Socialist*’ which was published in German in *Arbeiterzeitung*. As members of a bi-lingual society, Czech readers were expected to pursue further reading in German, which also meant Bohemian magazines would focus on mainly translating texts from less accessible languages, such as English.

This article on Morris was part of a series aimed at bringing Crane’s essays in parts over several issues of *Rozhledy*. There were no reproductions in the 1896 issue, probably due to the fact that Crane’s work would have been known to the readership from his Prague exhibition. In January 1897, the Crane series continued by moving to the cover page of *Rozhledy* under the title “Art and Everyday Life”.<sup>95</sup> **[Fig 1:21]** It is a translation of the twelfth chapter of Crane’s

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<sup>92</sup> Ela Švabinská: *Vzpomínky z mládeži* (Praha: SNKLU, 1962), 142.

<sup>93</sup> Walter Crane, “William Morris”, *Rozhledy - revue umělecká, politická a sociální* VI, no. 4 (1896): 161.

<sup>94</sup> Crane, “William Morris”, 161.

<sup>95</sup> Walter Crane, “Umění a všední život” [Art and Everyday Life], *Rozhledy - revue umělecká, politická a sociální* VI, no.7 (1897): 289 – 292.

book “The Claims of Decorative Art”. An editorial footnote explains that this current article has been intended for publication in *Rozhledy* for some time. However, when Crane’s article on Morris appeared just several months prior, the editorial board deemed it important to bring this new piece to their Czech readership to maintain the momentum, and therefore Crane’s texts appear in two consecutive issues of *Rozhledy*. This shows that the editors of *Rozhledy* were keeping up to date with the international publishing on art and aimed at making their journal reflect on the latest topics available to the readership from beyond the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In October 1898, *Rozhledy* featured an extensive obituary-style essay on Edward Burne-Jones, who passed away in June the same year. The article included two large size reproductions of *The Golden Stairs* (1880) [Fig 1:22] and *The Annunciation* (1879). The editors take the artist’s death as an impetus for presenting more of his works to the Bohemian public, accentuating Burne-Jones’s crucial role within the Brotherhood:

His death is one those visible acts that bring Pre-Raphaelitism to its conclusion - this important, famous movement, which had been embracing the whole of Europe for four decades and which became so utterly characteristic of European art of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>96</sup>

By proclaiming the Pre-Raphaelites to be ‘characteristic of European art’, rather than specifically of British art, the authors suggest that this European heritage belongs equally to the Bohemians, as if legitimising their engagement with Pre-Raphaelitism.

Burne-Jones is described as a member of the second wave of the movement, but at the same time as “the most creative spirit of the Pre-Raphaelite school.”<sup>97</sup> The article shows him as a student coming to London to meet Rossetti, and eventually becoming equally as important to the Brotherhood as the master

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<sup>96</sup> František Václav Krejčí. “Burne-Jones.” *Rozhledy - revue umělecká, politická a sociální* VIII, no 1 (1898): 13.

<sup>97</sup> Krejčí. “Burne-Jones”, 13.

himself. While the article displays great admiration for the Pre-Raphaelites, this does not necessarily mean that England itself is perceived in the same light:

Overall, modern England is a terribly un-artistic and an uncultured country; and should it create a great artist, then only by irritating them into active resistance against it. Only that explains how this country of hidebound morality and bigotry could give the world Byron and Shelley, and that nowhere else flourishes such a cult of Classical Antiquity, and nowhere is so much love for Italy, the country of beauty, as there is here, in the land of factory chimneys, coal and mist.<sup>98</sup>

Burne-Jones, alongside Morris, Ruskin and Rossetti, are perceived as representatives of the antidote to the depressing picture of England painted in the above lines. As if there was a hope that if Morris, Ruskin and Rossetti could transform the art of their homeland, perhaps implementing inspiration from these artists may contribute to the much-anticipated transformation of the Bohemian Lands too.

Burne-Jones's work is praised for its synthetic qualities of merging Classical Antiquity with the Middle Ages: "[...] his Antiquity is Christianised, his Middle Ages modernised; there is no boundary between historical ages and styles."<sup>99</sup> Especially the painting *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid* [Fig 0:11] received great attention mainly for its connection to the Czech poet Julius Zeyer (1841 – 1901). Between the years 1894 and 1898, Zeyer published several volumes entitled *Renewed Paintings*, where he combined prose with poetry to reflect on his travels through Europe, gathering inspiration from the visual arts. The publication featured a series of poems inspired by Burne-Jones in general and by *King Cophetua* in particular. The article in *Rozhledy* claims that the issue featuring poems inspired Burne-Jones was "one the most charming issues of the whole series".<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Krejčí. "Burne-Jones", 16.

<sup>99</sup> Krejčí. "Burne-Jones", 12.

<sup>100</sup> Krejčí. "Burne-Jones", 12

Zeyer was multi-lingual and as such was fluent in English. Although he never visited England, he was fascinated by English literature and used academic textbooks in English to study ancient cultures of the Middle East and the Orient. He also travelled widely across Europe, including Scandinavia, Russia, Spain, Belgium and France, among other.<sup>101</sup> Zeyer's inspiration by *King Cophetua* shows that English art was impactful despite the fact that not many Bohemian artists actually visited Britain. Mediation of British art via other foreign sources, mainly French and German, was vital for the spreading of English visual arts among Bohemian cultural circles. Zeyer being a poet also resonates with the two-fold impact of Pre-Raphaelitism, both in terms of their art and their poetry, which often featured side by side in Bohemian journals.

The article in *Rozhledy* on Burne-Jones was written by František Václav Krejčí (1867 – 1941), a journalist and critic who also published in *Volné směry* and other cultural journals, before becoming increasingly engaged in socialist politics. In Krejčí's view, Burne-Jones surpassed all the other Pre-Raphaelites, including his own master Rossetti:

“[...] Rossetti dipped his brush too much in his own blood to paint the subjective history of his heart, hypnotised by the demonic-spiritualist vision of a woman, which he saw in that Elisabeth Siddal [*Alžbětě Siddalové*], his lover and wife, who became fatal for his life and art.”<sup>102</sup>

Unlike Rossetti, Burne-Jones is praised for overcoming the personal dimension and transcending it into a “pure melancholy dream, detached from real life (...) his myths are no ideological symbols, like it is with Richard Wagner – the greatest modern artist of myths – (Burne-Jones' art) is a poetry of mere shadows, breathing with nothing but swoon and death.”<sup>103</sup> However dark the final lines of the article seem, it is clear that Krejčí had good knowledge of Rossetti's as well as Burn-Jones' work, and that he perceived a strong

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<sup>101</sup> Jan Voborník: *Julius Zeyer* (Praha: Unie, 1907). Accessed Oct 12, 2023, <https://archive.org/details/juliuszeyer00vobouoft/page/n11>

<sup>102</sup> Krejčí, “Burne-Jones”, 19.

<sup>103</sup> Krejčí. “Burne-Jones”, 19.

resonance between Burne-Jones' aesthetics and the Bohemian artistic and literary inclinations.

Nearly a year after the Burne-Jones' obituary, *Rozhledy* published an essay on Rossetti featuring a translation of his poem *The Blessed Damozel*. [Fig 0:6] The author of the article was Žofie Pohorecká –Šebkova (1877 – 1963), member of one of the small but impactful cohorts of Bohemian female cultural figures active in literature and education.<sup>104</sup> In 1899, the year of the publication of the Rossetti article, Pohorecká –Šebkova married a renowned medical doctor and followed him to the small town of Kouřim in Central Bohemia. Pohorecká –Šebkova thus became one of the few women to continue working in culture after her marriage and from outside of Prague. She was a valued translator, bringing less known poetry and prose from England, Russia, Germany and Poland. Her brilliant knowledge of English enabled her to focus on translating English novels and poetry, bringing this new voice to Bohemian readership as well as organising talks and lectures across the Central Bohemian region.

In her article in *Rozhledy*, Pohorecká –Šebkova links Rossetti to the outbreak of decadence and devotes notable attention to a vivid description of Rossetti's "sloppy style", and his "blasé spirit of an extensive sickly erotic feeling".<sup>105</sup> Equally so, her portrayal of the relationship dynamics between Rossetti and Siddal falls within the *femme fatale* framework, as the below quotation indicates:

[...] the young milliner *Alžběta Siddalová* [sic], became the representative of type of his art. She was his angel and his demon, a Muse who inspired him to create the most beautiful works, and a vampire who sucked away the blood of his veins.<sup>106</sup>

Such lines had palpable effect on the Bohemian cultural circles, as will be later shown on the example of the painter Max Švabinský who was dubbed the

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<sup>104</sup> "Pohorecká –Šebkova", Literární archiv Památníku národního písemnictví / Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature. Accessed 12 Aug 2022, <http://www.badatelna.eu/fond/5139/uvod/>

<sup>105</sup> Žofie Pohorecká –Šebkova, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti." *Rozhledy - revue umělecká, politická a sociální* IX, no 1 (1899): 14-20

<sup>106</sup> Pohorecká –Šebkova, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," 16.

Czech Rossetti, and his wife Ela, who was considered to be the Czech embodiment of Siddal.<sup>107</sup>

Apart from Siddal's impact on Rossetti's painting, the article focuses mainly on Rossetti's literary and poetic work and again accentuates Siddal's role in them:

The foundation stone of Rossetti's creative strength is a deep concept of his female characters and the relationship between men and women. His love affair with *A. Siddalovou* [sic] and her death, the abundant love of the poet – in Dante's words 'l'amor, che muove l'sole e l'altre stelle' – all his suffering and pain were the soil out of which these magical and mystical flowers of poetry grew, and all the troublesome as well as the beautiful that they emanate.<sup>108</sup>

Pohorecká –Šebkova concludes that Rossetti's specific literary and artistic style came about thanks to a mixture of mentalities, "English and Italian, German spirituality and the Southern heat of the senses"<sup>109</sup>. Similar to Krejčí and his obituary of Burne-Jones, Pohorecká –Šebkova contrasts the grey and industrial vision of contemporary England to that of Italy, from where she argues Rossetti drew his passionate and affectionate approach to painting. It is however undoubtedly the literary side of Rossetti that most excited the journalists of *Rozhledy*:

Decadence, symbolism, mysticism, neo-Christianity and being a visionary – these movements for which literature has only found suitable expressions in the last years, were all pre-formed in Rossetti.<sup>110</sup>

This last sentence stands out in relation to one of the reoccurring frustrations of Bohemian cultural circles, that of the delay which often occurred in new trends finding their way to Bohemian Lands. By suggesting that Rossetti pre-dated movements like decadence and symbolism, Pohorecká –Šebkova levels the playing field for the tardy Bohemians: Rossetti was a visionary who is only now

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<sup>107</sup> Švabinská, *Vzpomínky z mládí*.

<sup>108</sup> Pohorecká –Šebkova. "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," 17

<sup>109</sup> Pohorecká –Šebkova. "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," 17

<sup>110</sup> Pohorecká –Šebkova. "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," 19.

being fully appreciated across Europe, thus the Czechs are enjoying his genius alongside other countries (mainly France – due to the mention of symbolism and decadence) hence for once the Czechs are delayed no more than other countries on the Continent.

In line with this, I argue that the Czech ‘delay’ in receiving Pre-Raphaelitism gave Czech artists an authentic position from which they related to English art, one that was informed by more recent developments in their geographical regions, and thus presented a specific and equally so authentic way of relating to the English artistic phenomena, such as Pre-Raphaelitism. Approaching Rossetti, for example, through the prism of already having engaged with movements such as symbolism and decadence then enabled Czech artists to create a specific original ‘mixture’ of cultural borrowings, bringing fragments of British art into a rich intercultural melange.

### **John Ruskin in *Volné Směry* – Tearing Down the Wall**

The work of John Ruskin was closely connected to how Czech artists and intellectuals understood and responded to British art. Ruskin repeatedly featured in Bohemian art journals, especially after his passing in 1900. The following short overview of Ruskin’s work will enable me to point to those features of his work that were especially highlighted in the Czech press, and how this transformed the Czech understanding of British art.

John Ruskin (1819 - 1900) was an immensely influential art critic, social thinker and writer whose impact permeated multiple disciplines and included themes of art and art history, education, social and economic issues and the criticism of extensive industrialisation.<sup>111</sup> Ruskin was also a prolific artist and draftsman, but despite having produced a wealth of artwork, he considered his artwork to be merely a supplement to his main oeuvre, which was his written work. During his

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<sup>111</sup> Ruskin’s vast work has been studied extensively by art historians and literary scholars. Tim Hilton’s monographs explore Ruskin’s life and work in two parts and are considered among the most comprehensive accounts of Ruskin’s life. These publications present both Ruskin’s work as well as a nuanced account of his character and the key events on his life and relationships which had a notable effect on his scholarly outputs. Tim Hilton: *John Ruskin: The Early Years, 1819–1859* (1985). Tim Hilton: *John Ruskin: The Later Years, 1859–1900* (2000).

life, Ruskin sometimes used his drawings as illustrations to his writings, such as in his book “The Stones of Venice”.<sup>112</sup>

Ruskin’s writing was characteristic in combining the aesthetic appreciation of beauty and nature with a moral perspective and with a strong focus on the role of art in society, as well the accessibility of art for all regardless of their social class. This was linked to his critique of industrialisation, which he suggested should be combatted through craftsmanship, which ultimately supported the emergence of the Arts and Crafts movement. As an art critic, Ruskin also substantially helped to promote the emerging Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848 when Ruskin openly supported Rossetti and others from the original PRB circle. It was Ruskin’s support and excited reception that opened the doors for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood towards mainstream appreciation as well as the art markets.

In his monumental five-volume work “Modern Painters” (1843 – 1860) Ruskin focused on the painter J.M.W. Turner and argued that artistic beauty should be grounded in close observation of nature.<sup>113</sup> The artists’ role should be to capture the truthfulness of nature, but not necessarily in the form of mere imitation. Turner’s work was for Ruskin a perfect example of a truthful representation of nature, capturing the aesthetic of nature beyond literal appearances.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> “The Stones of Venice” featured multiple illustrations, some of which were by Ruskin himself. Ruskin produced a large body of architectural studies for the publications, often annotated in his handwriting. Ruskin’s illustrations appear in all three volumes of the publication. John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*.

*Volume the First: The Foundations* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1851); John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice. Volume the Second: The Sea-stories* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1853); John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice. Volume the Third: The Fall* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1853).

<sup>113</sup> Useful secondary sources concerning ‘Modern Painters’ include the following: Robert Hewison, *John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); George P. Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); John D. Rosenberg, *The Darkening Glass: A Portrait of Ruskin’s Genius* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); Jeremy Melius, “Of Ruskinian Topography: Visible and Legible Saliency in *Modern Painters*,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 15, no. 2 (2016); Kelly Freeman & Thomas Hughes, Ruskin’s Ecologies: Figures of Relation From Modern Painters to The Storm Cloud” (The Courtauld, London, 2021).

<sup>114</sup> John Ruskin, *Modern Painters Vol. I: Of General Principles, and of Truth* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1843); John Ruskin, *Modern Painters Vol. II: Of Truth and Theoretic Faculties* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1846); John Ruskin, *Modern Painters Vol. III: Of Many Things* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1856); John Ruskin, *Modern Painters Vol. IV: Mountain Beauty* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1856); John Ruskin, *Modern Painters Vol. V: Of Leaf Beauty; Of Cloud Beauty; Of Ideas of Relation* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1860).



In the aforementioned “Stones of Venice” (1851 – 1853), Ruskin contrasts historic Venetian architecture to the industrial developments in Britain.<sup>115</sup> According to Ruskin, the rise of industrialisation led to the development of architecture that embodies conformity and exploitation, as opposed to the high craftsmanship of the past. Ruskin’s focus on geology and the role of stone and marble in Venetian architecture had notable ecological undertones, which are being explored mainly in recent scholarship in connection to the Anthropocene.<sup>116</sup>

Ruskin was extremely passionate about the social dimension of art, which was also one of the themes that Czech journals specifically reflected on. In Ruskin’s works such as ‘Unto His Last’ (1860) the critic extended his reasoning beyond aesthetics and focused on social issues.<sup>117</sup> He argued that art was crucial for society, and criticised capitalism and industrialisation for the way they devalued human labour and artistic integrity.<sup>118</sup> In effect, Ruskin laid the foundations for the modern debates about the social and ethical role of art. This work was repeatedly referred to in the Czech press, as I will discuss below.

John Ruskin’s death in January 1900 brought a true breakthrough in the approach of Bohemian journalism towards Britain. The article entitled simply “John Ruskin”, published in the third issue of 1900 *Volně Směry*, was the first to be solely dedicated to Ruskin.<sup>119</sup> While there were mentions of Ruskin and Morris in the magazine the previous year, the extent of the 1900 article and its agitated tone was unprecedented. **[Fig 1:23]**

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<sup>115</sup> John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice, Volume I: The Foundations* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1851); John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice, Volume II: The Sea-Stories* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1853); John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice, Volume III: The Fall* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1853).

<sup>116</sup> Scholarly accounts of Ruskin’s “Stones of Venice” and the ecological aspects of his work include the following: Suzanne Fagence Cooper and Richard Johns, *Ruskin, Turner and the Storm Cloud*, (York Art Gallery, Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Paul Holberton Publishing, 2019); Jeremy Davies, “Storm-Clouds on the Horizon: John Ruskin and the Emergence of Anthropogenic Climate Change,” *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, no. 19 (2014); Eric Gidal, *Ossianic Unconformities: Bardic Poetry in the Industrial Age* (University of Virginia Press, 2015);

<sup>117</sup> The essays were first published serially in Cornhill Magazine in 1860 before being published as a single volume in 1862. John Ruskin, “Unto This Last,” *Cornhill Magazine* 2 (August–November 1860): 155–166, 278–286, 408–421, 542–554; John Ruskin, *Unto This Last: Four Essays on the First Principles of Political Economy* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1862).

<sup>118</sup> Recent scholarly literature analysing *Unto His Last* and Ruskin’s work in terms of social justice and accessibility of the arts include the following: Tim Barringer, Tara Contractor, Victoria Hepburn, Judith Stapleton, and Courtney Skipton Long, eds., *Unto This Last: Two Hundred Years of John Ruskin* (New Haven, CT: Yale Centre for British Art in association with Yale University Press, 2019).

<sup>119</sup> Gamma/ Gustav Jaroš, “John Ruskin”, *Volně Směry* IV, no. 3 (1900): 89 – 98.

The article was signed 'Gamma', a pseudonym used by the author and critic Gustav Jaroš (1867-1948). Jaroš was active as an editor for a number of years and worked for several magazines including *Volné Směry* until the 1920s. The opening paragraph of the article on Ruskin clearly states Jaroš's disappointment with the fact that while cultural contacts with France are flourishing, there still exists a "literary Chinese wall" between Bohemia and Britain:

The legendary Chinese wall against foreign literature, which used to encircle our dear Czech Lands, is said to have been torn down - someone declared recently. We however politely beg to differ, or at least we are ready to admit that the wall has been torn down on the borders with certain countries only, such as with the French. But not even the most flamboyant self-applause could disguise the fact that the wall still stands sturdy and solid, for example, against the culture of England. How immensely thick this Chinese wall between Bohemia and England must be, when news of John Ruskin is only now beginning to bashfully appear in patchy reports – after 50 years of his grand, legendary and deeply meaningful activity. And Ruskin is not the only one who – until yesterday, or even today – remained completely unknown to the good old little Czech people! What an immense number of personalities there have been in England over the last 50 years – poets, philosophers, painters, sculptors, journalists – whose names do not yet resonate at all in the minds of Czech readers. [...] The Chinese wall is indeed still towering with many levels over Bohemia, and it will take many diligent workers, and numerous tools to get it all dismantled!<sup>120</sup>

The article continues by pledging to return to the theme of Ruskin in the coming years again. There is a palpable flurry of emotions throughout the article, a determination to set the translation of Ruskin's work as the goal of *Volné Směry's* publishing activities. Ruskin's early life is described with a romantic flare and a certain degree of poetic glorification. He is rightly linked to the

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<sup>120</sup> Jaroš, "John Ruskin", 89.

spreading of Pre-Raphaelite art, which “has set off the wave of neo-idealism in European art,” according to Jaroš.<sup>121</sup>

The support for Turner, Italian art and the Pre-Raphaelites were not to define Ruskin’s life, however. The greatest achievement of Ruskin, according to the article, was to teach his fellow countrymen to turn away from the appreciation of opulent aristocratic type of beauty towards the appreciation of the art for everyday life. This began by Ruskin’s tutorials on how to perceive the visual world of nature, and continues towards a socially engaged idea, both of which are enthusiastically welcomed by Jaroš.

The choice of artwork for the article played an important role in linking Bohemian artists to the themes of Ruskin’s thought. The opening image used for the article was a drawing by Jan Preisler (1872 – 1918), depicting a young man sowing seeds in the countryside, as if symbolically planting Ruskin’s ideas into the fertile soil of the Bohemian artworld. **[Fig 1:24]** The man’s face communicates both a sense of sadness, as well as hope for next year’s harvest. The motif of the youth in a landscape was one particularly dear to Preisler and one which he returned to repeatedly for a number of years. An allegory of the young Bohemian art looking for its authenticity in nature was well suited for the overall mood of the article with its fresh hope and intense desire to reinvent itself as well as the Bohemian society.

Ruskin’s reflection of the negative impact of industry on English landscape, city life and art are well reflected in the article. Ruskin’s fight against the industry is portrayed in an expressive and emotionally engaged way, not hiding the fact that Ruskin’s vision has also been ridiculed and bulldozed by the forces of the capitalist business-oriented mind-set surrounding heavy industry in the country – embodied in the text by the term ‘*manchesterism*’. Concentrating on the publications *Unto this Last* and *Munera Pulveris*, *Volné Směry* portrays Ruskin’s battle with the political and economic powers, giving him an almost martyr-like status.

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<sup>121</sup> Jaroš, “John Ruskin”, 90.

Ruskin's *Unto This Last* (1860) challenges the economic theories of his day with focus on the critique of the economists Adam Smith and John Stuart Mills, which resulted in a push-back after the publication. Ruskin stands against the concept that people should be driven predominantly by profit and self-interest. Instead, the writer proposes an economy based on moral and social responsibility somewhat grounded in religious belief, urging business leaders to actively care for the wellbeing of all classes. One of the practical suggestions was Ruskin's idea that workers' wages which should be stable and reflect the value of the work, rather than fluctuate in relation to the austere and artificial market forces.<sup>122</sup> Finally, Ruskin calls for greater support from the government for art education, which is a point that Czech artists and critics felt passionate about, given how often *Volné Směry* published laments over the lack of support for Czech artists and their educational bodies.

The other text by Ruskin mentioned in Jaroš' article is *Munera Pulveris* [Gifts of the Dust] from 1872. Here, Ruskin continues critiquing the contemporary approach to the economy, suggesting that priority should be given to human welfare and moral values over commercial profit.<sup>123</sup> The key idea, which the Czech readership could appreciate, was Ruskin's take on the concept of value which is not so much linked to the material goods as much as to an overall desire to improve life through the implementation of education and justice.

Furthermore, amongst Ruskin's bibliography, *Fors Clavigera* belongs among the works that *Volné Směry* and later other journals repeatedly referred to. This text from 1871 was originally published as a series of monthly letters addressed to working men and labourers in Britain and is considered one of the most controversial works by the author. The series of letters continued to be published until 1884. *Volné Směry* returned to this work several times, bringing remarks on Ruskin and short excerpts from this work for several years after his passing. In *Fors Clavigera*, Ruskin focuses on his critique of industrialisation as a force which dehumanises workers. What he sees as a remedy is a return to

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<sup>122</sup> John Ruskin, *Unto This Last and Other Essays on political economy*, (The World Library: London, 1912), 29 -31.

<sup>123</sup> John Ruskin, *Munera Pulveris: Six Essays on the Elements of Political Economy* (London: George Allen, 1894): 124-128.

moral responsibility, societal focus and the beauty of craftsmanship. For Ruskin, labour in the newly built factories was soulless and created a stark contrast to the meaningful craftsmanship of medieval guilds.<sup>124</sup> This of course links through his other works to the aesthetic values promoted by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who too identified both medieval and concurrent guilds as an ideal way of working.

Based on these texts, in Jaroš' article the current political situation in Britain is described as based on "cruel selfishness and unscrupulous competition"<sup>125</sup>. After the publication of "Fors Clavigera", the article continues, Ruskin was declared the arch-enemy by the press, for his "fiery Don Quixote idealism".<sup>126</sup> Following the ideas expressed in *Fors Clavigera*, Jaroš's article also celebrates Ruskin for the establishing of the Guild of St George and for the formation of the Museum of Sheffield's collection as an example of a constructive and meaningful step forward towards social equality through the arts. Such link between artists, crafters and museums would resonate well with the Prague-based circle around Vojtěch Náprstek, founder of the Industrial Museum, later to become Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures. Náprstek awarded bursaries to travellers for purchasing artwork and local craft items across the globe with the aim to exhibit these in the Museum. This charitable activity not only enabled a great number of Bohemians to embark on long-distance travel to the far East and beyond but also established the basis of an outstanding museum collection.<sup>127</sup> The museum is also featured in the aforementioned publication "Pictures from Bohemia Drawn with Pen and Pencil" where its connections to English culture are clearly highlighted:

If the national museums are full of rich historic objects, there is a lesser museum that is most remarkable, as the outcome of the patriotic love of one man, who from small beginnings has at length built a really fine

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<sup>124</sup> John Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain*, vol. 1 (London: George Allen., 1871), 31-35.

<sup>125</sup> Jaroš, "John Ruskin", 94.

<sup>126</sup> Jaroš, "John Ruskin", 94.

<sup>127</sup> The Náprstek Museum holds one of the richest ethnographic collections in Europe and is nowadays part of the National Museum complex. Its largest collection is the Japanese art and craft collection with over 25,000 items dating from 15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> century. Accessed May 19, 2020, <https://www.nm.cz/en/visit-us/buildings/naprstek-museum-of-asian-african-and-american-cultures>

museum and filled it with most interesting objects illustrative of Bohemian life. This man, Mr. Vojta Naperstek [sic] by incessant work has amassed a curious collection; and the rich costumes of the Bohemian peasantry especially can be studied here. Connected with this museum is an English and American reading-room, and not far from it stands the house wherein John Hus [sic] lived whilst preaching in Prague before Queen Sophie, and congregations intent upon hearing his new expositions of Scripture and of the teaching of the English master, Wyclif.<sup>128</sup>

The final passages of Jaroš's article returns to the concept of nature in both Ruskin's own art as well as his writings:

Ruskin taught his fellow men to adhere to nature, to learn to understand it, and to appreciate the Spirit which at all times flows through it in the form of Justice and Beauty.<sup>129</sup>

Ruskin is even being compared to a prophet and his writing style similar to the Bible; his fiery language is said to stream "directly from depth of his heart". The almost religious climax of the article reflects the enthusiasm with which Ruskin's work was welcomed by the editors at *Volné Směry*.

The initial article on Ruskin was soon followed by a series of excerpts from Ruskin's "Two paths I" and "Lectures on Art II"; and the transformative essay "The Style of Our Era" by K. B. Mádl.<sup>130</sup> **[Fig 1:14]** Ruskin's *Two Paths* is a collection of lectures given in 1858 and 1859. The lectures focused mainly on the social and moral responsibilities of art and design and their executors, artists and designers. According to Ruskin, art embodies values which can either elevate or degrade society, hence the importance of art in a wider societal and historical context. The lectures were structured in such a way so that each lecture contrasted a genuine, nature-inspired aesthetic aimed to support human happiness, against a mechanised, soulless form of industrial

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<sup>128</sup> James Baker, *Pictures from Bohemia Drawn with Pen and Paper*, (London: Religious Tract Society, 1894), 89. Accessed Oct 20, 2023.

<https://archive.org/details/picturesfrombohe00bake/page/88/mode/2up?q=voita>

<sup>129</sup> Jaroš, "John Ruskin", 96

<sup>130</sup> Jindřich Vybíral: "The Reception of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Bohemia around 1900", *Centropa* IV, no.3 (2004): 218-230.

production which goes against individual creativity and collective thriving. The theme that resonated through the lectures was a critique of cheap mechanised manufacturing processes which produce low quality goods and thus corrupt morality. Ruskin claims that art should mirror natural beauty rather than mimic artificial standards set by mechanisation. In his lecture “The Work of Iron” for example, Ruskin suggests that materials like iron can be either used for enduring structures of beauty inspired by nature, or it can be used for utilitarian products of degrading design, all depending on the moral and aesthetic attitudes of the makers.<sup>131</sup> The excerpts from Ruskin’s lectures that were translated and published in *Volné Směry* were however very short and did not allow for a full play-out of the contrasts in Ruskin’s original text. Nonetheless, Ruskin’s focus on the value of nature in art and his anti-industrial spirit was evident in the selected passages.

This was followed in the journal’s issue by the article “The Style of Our Era” by K. B. Mádl which featured reproductions of the works of William Morris and Walter Crane, among others. The reproductions throughout the article clearly resonate with Ruskin’s celebration of nature-derived hand-crafted design. Mádl opens his essay with a provocative statement saying that the Czechs had never created a style of their own, unlike the English, French, Italian or Spanish.<sup>132</sup> The Czech specificity, according to Mádl, lays in the tendency to add nuances to already established foreign styles, “when we are artistically and nationally strong enough to do so.”<sup>133</sup> Mádl further suggests there had not been a new style created world-wide since the gothic era, finally overthrowing the Greco-Roman dictatorship - which was then however to return, poisoning the following centuries with derivative repetition. The reproductions in the article, Mádl explains, were chosen to demonstrate the national variation of what is soon to become a new style. It is yet a nameless style, Mádl explains, yet it is evident that there truly is a ‘style’ coming together no matter the differences in its

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<sup>131</sup> John Ruskin, *The Two Paths: Being Lectures on Art, and Its Application to Decoration and Manufacture* (New York: John Wiley and Son, 1871), “The Work of Iron,” 131-168.

<sup>132</sup> Karel Boromejský Mádl, “Styl naší doby.” *Volné směry* IV no. 6 (1900) : 159

<sup>133</sup> Mádl, “Styl naší doby,” 159.

national variants. In this sense, Mádl views Czech artists to be an intrinsic part of an ongoing international transformation.

The founding fathers of the new style are identified as theorists and men of letters and are listed as follows: “John Ruskin in England, Viollet-le-Duc in France, and Gottfried Semper in Germany”; their work reflects the “the tectonic and colourful beauty, the moral, ethical and aesthetical meaning of lines, shapes and materials” coming together in the triumphant “union of life and art”.<sup>134</sup> Ruskin played a crucial part in this, as the following paragraph unveils:

John Ruskin with his fiery gospel of truth, where he looked for and discovered beauty, with which he stood up for the Pre-Raphaelites; William Morris and Walter Crane are their disciples. Their art is not so new in its form but rather with its overall feel and its tendency. It is not without interest, that both of them end up in Socialism, just like their great initiator Ruskin.<sup>135</sup>

The social aspect of art – pioneered by Ruskin – is enthusiastically highlighted several times throughout the article, emphasizing that art’s main goal is to bring pleasure into the everyday working life, and uplifting in a practical manner the living premises of working people. This was very much mirrored by the Czech enthusiastic response to the new objectives of the *Hoftiteltaxenfond* competition as discussed earlier.

While the social aspect is praised, the English are considered “utmost conservative”, but also “conservative, yet not backward”. This corresponds to the analysis of the English countryside and village life:

The beauty and originality of gothic, celebrated by Ruskin, forms the basis for the works of Morris; nature and the *Englified* elegance of the lines of Antiquity dominate every view of Crane’s. Scott is the true artistic son of the English countryside, expressive in its solid, conscious, peacefully flowing happiness. [...] A charming comfort from the outside,

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<sup>134</sup> Mádl, “Styl naší doby,” 160.

<sup>135</sup> Mádl, “Styl naší doby,” 161.



and a lovely cosiness on the inside, where art is in charge of everything.”<sup>136</sup>

Mádl praises English artists and architects, appreciating their ability to create a distinctly national style. He mentions Italy as perhaps the one continental country most visited by the British. While English artists travel to Italy in great numbers, they never seem to be too impacted by the Greco-Roman aesthetic ideal, which Mádl deems so poisonous for Continental art. In Mádl’s article, the architect M. H. Baillie Scott is presented as a creator of the new modern English houses, where “the external structure of the building, its plasticity and silhouette, is the expression of its internal organism,” a sentiment much reflected in the work of the Czech architect Jan Kotěra, images of whose works were also featured in the journal.<sup>137</sup> Crane and Morris are named among architects who originated from being painters, together with Henri van de Velde, Otto Eckmann and B. Pankok, emphasizing the international interconnectedness of this new style.

According to Mádl, the architectural revolution in Brussels, started by Victor Horta, is directly linked to Morris and Crane’s interiors, and is said to follow in the footsteps of the English artists.<sup>138</sup> Morris and Crane are celebrated for bringing Ruskin’s theory of ‘truth to nature’ to life by broadening the scope of the materials used, and by exposing materials in their natural states. Following this English lesson and other sources of inspiration – such as Japanese art – it is Henri Van de Velde who is proclaimed by Mádl to be “the most important modernist”<sup>139</sup>

In the context of this new style of work, “the French have proved to be even so much more conservative than the English” which is explained by the fact that the evolution of French art had never been interrupted. Leaving France behind, Mádl shifts his focus to Sweden and the Stockholm exhibition of 1897; from there he turns towards Vienna, followed by Turin and several other continental

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<sup>136</sup> Mádl, “Styl naší doby,” 164.

<sup>137</sup> I am addressing the topic of Jan Kotěra and his inspiration from British architecture in an upcoming article “Jan Kotěra and British art in fin de siècle Czech art journals” to be published in an edited volume, ed. Ladislav Zikmund-Lender, publisher: Akademie výtvarných umění, Pravý úhel, VŠUP, 2024.

<sup>138</sup> Mádl, “Styl naší doby,” 168.

<sup>139</sup> Mádl, “Styl naší doby,” 171.

cities. The essay concludes: “In all directions and places the same activity and the same efforts. [...] Who would dare to say that our era has no ideal?”<sup>140</sup>

While the article does not mention any specific Bohemian artists, there is a palpable feeling of the Bohemians belonging among the joint efforts towards a new style across the whole of Europe. Although Vienna, with its arch-architect Otto Wagner, was geographically the closest metropolitan and cultural epicentre to Prague, the article only mentions the city briefly and not without criticism. English artists and architects, on the other hand, are placed in the very centre of attention, and are used as a measure of success. Brussels is showcased as the best European example of grasping the English ideal and transforming it from a national variant into an autonomous genuine style. The article’s overall tone is one of enthusiasm and hope. Bohemian art and architecture, however peripheral they may seem, are considered part of the overall development towards a new style. Ruskin, Morris and Crane are deemed pivotal in this creative process. After all, it was only a few months back when *Volné Směry* published Ruskin’s obituary, expressing the desire to break through the ‘thick Chinese wall’ separating Bohemia from English culture. Since then, “The Style of Our Era” claims that progress has been made, and now considers Bohemian artists aware of the latest developments across Europe, with Ruskin and Morris’s lessons at its very core.

### **Ruskin’s Ongoing Legacy in Bohemia**

While throughout this thesis, I will be returning mainly to the article on Ruskin from *Volné Směry* published in 1900 – which was the first and most groundbreaking account – there were other journals and newspapers that featured accounts of Ruskin. In 1901, following Jaroš’s call for more exposure of Ruskin’s work in Bohemia, the writer and critic F.X. Šalda translated Ruskin’s book *Sesame and Lillies*, a written version of his lectures on the importance of reading and analysing women’s roles in society.<sup>141</sup> In his preface, Šalda

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<sup>140</sup> Mádl, “Styl naší doby,” 174.

<sup>141</sup> John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*. London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1865); John Ruskin, *Sezam a lilie – Tři přednášky* (Prague: J.Otto, 1901) translated by F X Šalda. Here Ruskin presents a rather Victorian view of women as idealised creature whose man ole in society is to create a nurturing environment. The work however highlights the importance of education and books as a route towards the bettering of the society.

admires Ruskin's synthesis of the scientific and artistic and focuses on Ruskin's fight for the equality of fine and applied / decorative arts. For Šalda, as well as the broader Czech cultural circles, declaring applied and decorative arts equal to fine art was a key point in Ruskin's writing that resonated through Czech art journals and manifested in a heightened attention to reproductions of not only paintings and sculpture but also decorative arts in both *Volné Směry* and *Rozhledy*.

The following year, in 1902, Šalda published a short review of a translation of Ruskin's *Lectures on Art* by V. A. Jung.<sup>142</sup> Here, Šalda came up for the first time with his own title for Ruskin: "The apostle of beauty".<sup>143</sup> This title specifically linked to Ruskin's emphasis on the joy that beauty brings into everyday life. Šalda believes that "Lectures on Art" bring together all the main aspects of Ruskin's work and thus are the perfect read for those Czechs who want to get acquainted with the British critic's thought. Šalda points out the practical aspects of Ruskin's thought and summarises that the critic is inviting all art teachers to stop teaching their pupils artistic phraseology and rather invite pupils to grasp their pencils and start sketching selected classical artworks of the past.<sup>144</sup> This practical approach was close to the thinking of the Czech cultural circles, and to Bohemian artists and critics who were keen to find practical hands-on solutions rather than further theoretical elaborations.

One of the key texts on Ruskin outside of *Volné Směry* and *Rozhledy* is an extensive article published in the journal *Dílo* [Oeuvre] in 1905. *Dílo* was published from 1903 until 1949 by the Union of Fine Artists (Jednota umělců výtvarných); from 1909 the journal had the subtitle "Monthly Magazine Focusing on Czech, Slovak and Decorative Art"; the title would vary slightly over the next decades.<sup>145</sup> The focus of the journal was clearly established as aiming to

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<sup>142</sup> F.X. Šalda, "Johna Ruskina výklady o umění", *Volné směry* VI, no.5 (1902): 136.

<sup>143</sup> Stuart Eagles, "The Apostle of Beauty: Some Turn-of-the-Century Perceptions of Ruskin in Central and Eastern Europe," in *John Ruskin's Europe: A Collection of Cross-Cultural Essays with an Introductory Lecture by Salvatore Settis*, ed. Jeanne Clegg and Paul Tucker (New York: Pallas Athene, 2020), 404.

<sup>144</sup> F.X. Šalda, "Johna Ruskina výklady o umění", *Volné směry* VI, no.5 (1902): 136.

<sup>145</sup> Czech National Digital Library, catalogue entry, *Rozhledy*, accessed February 21, 2025, <https://ndk.cz/periodical/uuid:9489bf20-0ecf-11e1-9762-000d606f5dc6>.

promote specifically Czech and Slovak art, with a special emphasis on popularising themes of design and traditional as well as emerging crafts.

The article from 1905 was written by Dr František Xaver Jiřík (1857 – 1930) a Czech writer, scholar, literary critic and an active contributor to several journals. In his article entitled “John Ruskin and his Aesthetic Theory”<sup>146</sup>, Jiřík presents an in-depth study of Ruskin’s thought and reflects on those aspects of Ruskin’s work that he found most resonant with the developing Bohemian modern culture. Jiřík interspersed his article with quotations from Ruskin’s work, and generally divides Ruskin’s oeuvre into two main themes: one in which Ruskin is an advocate for the principles of creating art in the pre-Raphael era in Italian art (which chimed with his passion for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood); the other theme being Ruskin as a critic of technology, industrialisation and an advocate for more socially conscious attitudes to business.<sup>147</sup>

Unlike Jaroš in his first report on Ruskin, five years later, Jiřík is not completely uncritical about Ruskin. He acknowledges that the English writer’s aesthetic theories did not always prove viable, but Jiřík urges Czech readers to appreciate the main contribution of Ruskin’s work: the support for the resurgence of hand-crafted design and high-quality manufactured goods, encouraging ceramics and the textile industry to go back to a more personal approach and the establishing of support systems such as St. George’s Guild. However, Jiřík suggests that focusing too much on theory while neglecting the lived practical experience was ultimately Ruskin’s downfall. William Morris, unlike Ruskin, brought practical solutions to many of the theoretical issues of Ruskin, according to Jiřík. The underlying motivation for compiling his article on Ruskin, Jiřík states, was to stimulate the Czech readership to get further acquainted with the work of the English critic.<sup>148</sup> This can be read as a response to Jaroš from five years earlier, who urged his Czech followers to open their minds to Ruskin’s work, and by proxy to the culture and arts of Britain.

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<sup>146</sup> F.X.Jiřík, “John Ruskin a jeho umělecká teorie”, *Dílo* 3 (1905): 3-22; 76-79; John Ruskin, *Výklady o umění* (Prague: Jan Leichter, 1901) translated by Václav Alois Jung.

<sup>147</sup> Jirik, *John Ruskin*, 3.

<sup>148</sup> Jirik, *John Ruskin*, 4.

Jiřík's article is intersected with quotes from Ruskin, but only in some cases is an indication given of the source of the quotes (such as on page 12 when a long passage is attributed to *Stones of Venice*). The images complementing the article are almost entirely of art-nouveau-style everyday objects made by individual Czech artists-designers, and various Czech educational establishments. Symbolically, Ruskin's call for unique individually produced design objects is brought to life by designers from across Bohemia on the pages of *Dílo*. One of the reproductions also shows a decorative drawing used as a cover of the journal *Rozhledy*, the journal I have introduced and discussed earlier in this chapter.

Jiřík contrasts Ruskin to German philosophers and states that unlike them, Ruskin does not present a coherent overarching theory but rather focuses on individual empirical examples based on an in-depth art historical knowledge and analysis of cultural heritage.<sup>149</sup> According to Jiřík, Ruskin views all types of art as equal, be it fine art or applied arts and design, they all are the product of the same creative spirit, which Jiřík showcases on a passage from Ruskin's *Aratra Pentelici* a series of essays on sculpture and its ethical and educational role in society.<sup>150</sup> In this passage, Ruskin claims that there is no hierarchy in artistic techniques, be it painting, sculpture, architecture or decorative arts.<sup>151</sup> The topic of hierarchy of artistic techniques and genres was discussed in the Czech press in the year of Ruskin's passing in an article by the painter Miloš Jiránek in *Volné Směry*, which I will analyse in depth in Chapter 4. In Jiránek's article, the main argument was centred on elevating the status of etchings and graphic techniques in contrast to painting, and this text was accompanied by a series of images featuring British drawings and illustrations. Jiřík's text from 1905 therefore continues with this discussion, bringing Ruskin's writings as a strong argument supporting the equality of artistic genres and techniques, as desired already five years ago by Jiránek.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Jiřík, *John Ruskin*, 8.

<sup>150</sup> John Ruskin, *Aratra Pentelici: Six Lectures on the Elements of Sculpture*, (London: George Allen, 1872).

<sup>151</sup> Jiřík, *John Ruskin*, 14.

<sup>152</sup> Miloš Jiránek, „Kreslíři – Karikaturisté“, *Volné směry* IV, no.7 (1900): 211-267.

In Jiřík's article in *Dílo*, another long passage of translated text is given to Ruskin's admiration for Turner as formulated in his "Modern Painters". Jiřík specifically highlights Ruskin's desire to see an artist as someone who does not observe nature with a scientific eye, but rather retains a sense of wonder, capturing nature not in its scientific detail, but in the aesthetic and sensual manifestation of its powers.<sup>153</sup> Finally, Ruskin's highest goal for the arts, Jiřík summarises, is for art to create a faithful image of a good person, which requires not only "a trained hand and trained senses, but also requires a heart and a spirit."<sup>154</sup> An artist's goal is to not spend too much time in thinking but rather in working, in creating with the intent to better the lives of others and ultimately of humankind. Such thoughts resonated with the overall Czech artistic milieu at the turn of the century where the sense of a common shared value in art manifested in the desire for the bettering of the lives of Czech people, empowering their culture through Czech literature and art. Such aspirations are framed by Jiřík as examples of Ruskin's legacy: art as the highest form of morality and societal responsibility, which acutely resonated with the Czech cultural circles at the time.

The interest in Ruskin that was unleashed in Czech readers by Jaroš continued after the year 1900 and manifested in an ongoing effort to translate key works by Ruskin.<sup>155</sup> Among these, the translations by F.X. Šalda and V.A. Jung played a key part. Ruskin's work continued to be translated and published well into the 1930s, although by then it did not create as strong a ripple effect as it did in the 1900s when Ruskin's focus on the Pre-Raphaelites resonated with the Czech cultural circles' interest in the movement, as I will debate in greater detail in Chapter 2. Czech art journals, especially *Volné Směry*, *Rozhledy*, and *Dílo*, played a crucial role in the dissemination of Ruskin's ideas and in placing these in the current context of the Czech search for a modern national artistic expression.

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<sup>153</sup> Jiřík, *John Ruskin*, 77-78.

<sup>154</sup> Jiřík, *John Ruskin*, 78.

<sup>155</sup> Published translations of John Ruskin in Czech: John Ruskin, *Sezam a lilie – Tři přednášky* (Prague: J. Otto, 1901) translated by F X Šalda; John Ruskin, *Výklady o umění* (Prague: Jan Leichter, 1901) translated by Václav Alois Jung; John Ruskin, *Tomu poslednímu* (Prague: B. Kočí, 1910) translated by Miloš Seifert.

## **Conclusion**

Bohemian fine art journals were a crucial platform that facilitated the processes of ‘cultural borrowing’ for Czech artists via the interplay of domestic and international cultural contacts and exchange.<sup>156</sup> With most of the journals’ editors being artists at the same time, the discussions that took place across the journals’ pages were central to the formation of the Bohemian artistic scene. Studying these journals uncovers the Bohemian fascination with British art and culture despite of – or precisely because – Britain’s geographical and political position being so palpably different from the Czech one. With Bohemia being a colony of sorts within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, looking for inspiration in Britain with its powerful Empire might come as an ambivalent yet understandable choice. When elaborating on his redefinition of cultural appropriation, Arnd Schneider argues, that “cultures ‘flirt’ with their alternatives, gain critical distance, formulate complete perspectives on others, embrace negatives, confront and even admire what they themselves are not.”<sup>157</sup> In case of the Bohemians, this was an important part of their relationship to Britain – a relationship that was equally constituted of admiration as it was formed by misunderstanding, condemnation of the country’s heinous capitalism, and the temporality of the delay in transmission of some major works, such as the oeuvre of John Ruskin. This resulted in a setting that enabled, as Schneider formulates it, “a concept of appropriation that takes account of the inherent inequality in transactions as cultural transactions and yet allows for the possibility of ‘understanding by appropriating.’”<sup>158</sup>

A closer study of Czech fine art journals shows that while Bohemians considered themselves to be on the cultural periphery, the capital Prague and other larger cities were very well connected to cultural news and publications from all over Europe. Crucially, numerous Czech artists went to study abroad, either to Paris, Munich, Berlin or Vienna. All of these cities were cultural

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<sup>156</sup> The term ‘cultural borrowing’ is taken from Arnd Schneider, “Appropriation” (2003).

<sup>157</sup> Schneider, “Appropriation,” 224.

<sup>158</sup> Schneider, “Appropriation,” 222.

melting-pots in their own right and thus provided many opportunities for artists from various national backgrounds to meet and exchange ideas, images and literature.

Moreover, the nature of this international network was also very interdisciplinary, which enabled personalities such as the French actress Sarah Bernhardt to act as connecting agents between fine artists. Bernhardt's link to the Paris-based Bohemian painter Alfons Mucha as well as the English artist William Nicholson co-created and interlaced international network connecting Bohemian creatives to Britain.

Apart from travels abroad, Bohemian artists had plenty of international resources at hand in their home country. Czech magazines and journals such as *Rozhledy* and *Volné Směry* were eager to reflect on a broad range of cultural trends, and intentionally focused on bringing an array of foreign artists' work to the Czech readership. Britain was represented by essays on fine arts, art criticism as well as literature. For example, translations of Rossetti's poetry appeared repeatedly in *Rozhledy* throughout a number of issues, while other articles on Rossetti focused on his artistic output. Similarly, Ruskin was presented as an artist as well as an art critic; Morris was enthusiastically linked to the social aspects of promoting art as an opposition to industry, while his own artwork was also analysed and images of it reproduced. There was certainly no shortage of information on British culture, especially in and after the year 1900.

Magazines such as *Rozhledy* focused mainly on text and featured very few images overall. *Volné Směry*, on the other hand, was the foremost platform for showcasing Czech contemporary art and as such featured numerous reproductions in every issue. While images of English artists' work were not shown very often, articles referring to English art clearly show that Czech readers were well acquainted with contemporary English art production. One of the reasons for this was the omnipresence of Austrian, German and French literature and magazines in Bohemia. British art was thus often mediated through international journalism, literature, and criticism.



This kaleidoscopic nature of Czech art of the period has often caused art historians to dismiss these efforts as merely derivative, producing an eclectic mixture of borrowed elements. This falls within the concept of the ‘aesthetic handicap’ where cultural appropriation is considered as leading to second-grade products of little aesthetic value. Based on the study of Bohemian art journals, I propose a different view on this, one that resonates with James O Young’s argument that “artists who engage in cultural appropriation may produce works of considerable aesthetic merit.”<sup>159</sup> The key to this, as Young explains, is the concept of ‘innovative content appropriation’ defined below:

Artists who engage in this sort of appropriation appropriate a style or a motif from a culture but use it in a way that would not be used in the culture in which it originated.”<sup>160</sup>

Finally, Young concludes that there is:

[...] no reason to believe that outsiders [non-members of the original culture] will not be able to make aesthetically successful innovative re-use of styles and motifs developed by other cultures.<sup>161</sup>

This is further supported by Nelson Goodman, who adds that employing content from a culture other than the artist’s is not only not an aesthetic handicap but should be rather viewed as simply an ‘aesthetic property’.<sup>162</sup> With this approach, the artist’s membership in a particular originating culture is no longer required as a premise for the successful implementation of elements of that culture in their work. The key is in the artist’s innovative approach to the borrowed elements, such as taking a quintessentially Pre-Raphaelite character but stripping them of their original literary symbolism and using them in the context of Bohemian contemporary life – examples of which I will analyse in the following chapter.

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<sup>159</sup> Young, “Art, Authenticity and Appropriation,” 456.

<sup>160</sup> Young, “Art, Authenticity and Appropriation,” 458.

<sup>161</sup> Young, “Art, Authenticity and Appropriation,” 459.

<sup>162</sup> Young, “Art, Authenticity and Appropriation,” 456

It is thanks to Bohemian fine art journals that we can closely observe the process of Czech artists and theorists analysing British art, placing it into the intricate mosaic of Czech and international art trends, and evaluating it against the forging of the desired Bohemian identity. With the majority of Czechs being bi-lingual – and with German being the official first language of the Empire – German literature and journalism were easily accessible to readers interested in culture, covering topics and artists reaching far beyond Austria and Germany. French books and journals were also readily available, either through subscription via *Volné Směry*, or via several educational and entertainment establishments especially in larger cities. Thanks to this arrangement, journals such as *Rozhledy* and *Volné Směry* were not under pressure to reproduce images of English artwork as these could be easily accessible through other foreign media. Czech papers could focus on providing good quality translations of English criticism, poetry and exhibition news, while leaving the Bohemian readership to seek images elsewhere.

Among the articles focusing on Britain, obituaries played a key role. The obituary of Burne-Jones in *Rozhledy* was one of the very few articles to feature several reproductions of the artist's work, thus stressing the artist's importance. It was however the obituary of John Ruskin published in *Volné Směry* that clearly formulated the desire to bridge the gap between British and Bohemian culture. The article recognised Ruskin as one of the key personalities of contemporary culture and critical thinking within and beyond Britain. As such, the understanding of Ruskin is deemed crucial for the Bohemian cultural circles – it is Ruskin's close links to social equality and the role of art in everyday life which is presented to the Czech readers as fundamental issues for both British and Bohemian contemporary art. Ruskin's ideals might have reached Bohemia as late as the year of his passing, but once they arrived, their impact was immediately palpable, and left a lasting legacy.

The image of Britain that Bohemian journals created was one of a rather gloomy country intersected with heavy industry and characterised by social inequality – but one which also brought to light the remedy to all of these ailments. The cure was seen in the aesthetics and ideals of the Pre-Raphaelites, in the writings of

John Ruskin and in the craftsmanship of William Morris. English ideals were accepted and merged with the Bohemian vision to such an extent, that F. X. Šalda, one of the best renown editors of *Volné Směry*, even referred to Ruskin as one of his spiritual godfathers, together with Carlyle, Goethe, Taine and Nietzsche.<sup>163</sup> It was especially the social aspects of applied art and the desired social equality where the Bohemian cultural circles truly connected to Ruskin and Morris, where Bohemia seemed to be facing the very same issues as Britain – despite their almost opposing positions within the colonial discourse.

As the analyses of case studies from Bohemian journals throughout this chapter revealed, Czech artists were not appropriating features of British art just because it was the latest craze, but deliberately took inspiration from Britain even though some of these trends (such as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood) were already well established and in some cases almost old-fashioned by the time they arrived in Bohemia. This delay in reception allowed for an effective re-contextualisation, re-interpretation and creative reworkings of some of the older British movements into the Bohemian contexts (such as Pre-Raphaelitism or the thought of John Ruskin). This in effect led to a distinctive and nationally specific understanding of British art in Bohemia, which led to different conclusions about British artists than contemporary British criticism made. Walter Crane, for instance, was perhaps appreciated as an illustrator in Britain, but would hardly be considered a front-line artist representing the art of the nation abroad. In Bohemian galleries and fine art journals, however, Crane was re-signified with a brand-new meaning, and his art was incorporated into the imaginary Pantheon of international styles worth following in the Czech quest for a new national art.<sup>164</sup>

The lively international network of relationships, amid which Bohemian artists formed their view of life and art, would not be possible without the distinctive role that British art played in it. The emotions exclaimed at the start of Ruskin's

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<sup>163</sup> F. X. Šalda, "Smysl tzv.renesance uměleckého průmyslu," *Volné směry* VII (1903): 137-138. Jindřich Vybíral, "The Reception of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Bohemia Around 1900", *Centropa* 43 (2004): 221.

<sup>164</sup> Crane's painting *A Dream (Voyage de Reves)* was purchased by the predecessor of the Czech National Gallery in 1902. Accessed Oct 20, 2023. <https://www.ptejteseknihovny.cz/dotazy/walter-crane;> [https://sbirky.ngprague.cz/dielo/CZE:NG.K\\_1668](https://sbirky.ngprague.cz/dielo/CZE:NG.K_1668)

obituary in *Volné Směry*, the fascination Rossetti and Burne-Jones stirred up in Prague culture salons, and the numerous articles and essays dealing with British artists and exhibitions in Czech journals present a sizable body of evidence for the presence of British art in Czech Lands and the transformative effect this had on Bohemian culture.

In conclusion, this extensive study of Bohemian periodicals reveals that Britain was not on the fringes of Bohemian artists' radar, as the lack of scholarly analysis would suggest, but on the contrary, it uncovers that British art and culture played a significant role in the formation of Bohemian artistic identity. British art was featured repeatedly in Czech journals, with each new article receiving more notable responses, causing a ripple effect in the dissemination of knowledge and appreciation for British art within a larger context of international art journalism. The following chapters of this thesis will be looking in more detail at the individual artistic responses to movements such as the Pre-Raphaelites, or the reflections of British illustration and caricature. While British art was naturally presented to the Czech readers as part of a wider international network, its specific character stood out for Bohemian artists, enforced by the authority and independence of the British Empire as a political superpower, as well as by the requirements for the social dimension of art, palpably relatable in the Central European region. All this positioned Britain in a place of heightened significance for Bohemian artists, creating a lasting effect on Bohemian art and culture at the turn of the century.

## Chapter 2 – Re-inventing the Pre-Raphaelites

### Introduction

While there have always been some researchers dealing with international art, Czechoslovak (and later Czech) art history was traditionally more focused on national issues and less so on international themes, and to an even lesser extent on British art.<sup>1</sup> However, if there is one British movement that received some attention in previous scholarship relating to late 19<sup>th</sup> century Bohemian artists, it would be the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

The timing of the Bohemian reception of Pre-Raphaelite art shows what can be superficially seen as a ‘delay’ in reflecting the Pre-Raphaelite inspiration. As we have seen in the previous chapter, it was only between the late 1890s and around the year 1900 that articles covering the Pre-Raphaelites appeared in Bohemian art journals, causing a sensation. It was the second wave of Pre-Raphaelite art that was shown in Czech journals first, soon to be followed by excited accounts of the ‘original’ Brotherhood. For the Czech readers, the distinct Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics started off a fascination with Britain and its culture. This chapter will look at the way Czech artists reacted to this new discovery and what aspects of Pre-Raphaelite art they adapted and reinterpreted in their work. Throughout this chapter, I will be using the term ‘Pre-Raphaelitism’ to refer to both artists who formed the original Brotherhood, as well as those who are associated with the style despite not being members of the Brotherhood. A good example of this is the work of Edward Burne-Jones, who was not part of the Brotherhood in its original inception the 1840s but was closely associated with the aesthetic until the end of the century.

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<sup>1</sup> Those Czechoslovak art historians who dealt with international art included researchers such as Vratislav Effenberger; Jindřich Chalupecký, and Václav Černý. However, the number of art historians exploring the mainly domestic art scene was always dominant. This is partly due to the impact of the Communist regime (1948-1989) which made impossible for Czechoslovak researchers to focus on foreign themes associated with the Western ‘bourgeois’ culture. This changed after the 1989 Velvet revolution enabling researchers such as Prof. Jindřich Vybíral to embrace and promote research of British art. I am very grateful to Prof. Vybíral for his encouragement and several consultations at the start of my research.

In this chapter, I will argue that the ‘delay’ in the reception of the Pre-Raphaelite movement in Bohemia is in reality not a handicap. I have introduced Young’s views on ‘aesthetic handicap’ in the previous chapter in connection to Czech artists’ borrowing of features from British art. In this current chapter, I will relate the concept of a handicap to the Czech delay in the reception of British art. James O. Young who argues that:

It is often suggested that artists from one culture (outsiders) cannot successfully employ styles, stories, motifs and other artistic content developed in the context of another culture. I call this suggestion the aesthetic handicap thesis and argue against it. Cultural appropriation can result in works of high aesthetic value.<sup>2</sup>

My understanding of ‘delay’ is linked to Young’s ‘aesthetic handicap’ in the sense that a delayed reception of an art style can easily be interpreted as resulting in such a handicap. The delay is actually referred to as soon as the year 1900, when Jaroš’ article complains about the lack of information about British art in Bohemia. The notion that the delay in reception was detrimental to the quality of Czech art at the turn of the century then resonated through many subsequent articles in the Czech press and was later adopted in academic accounts of the period as well. In this chapter, I will be focusing on the positive aspects that the delay in reception facilitated, thus dismantling the concept of the delay causing an aesthetic handicap to Czech artists’ work.

I will also be looking at this ‘delay’ through the prism of the Japanese concept of *Ma* 間, redefining the ‘time-space gap’ between Bohemian artists of the 1900s and Pre-Raphaelitism as a space that enabled in Czech artists a more creative response to British trends, and invested the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics with new meaning. I will be demonstrating this with case studies of the work of several artists.

For Bohemian artists, the exposure to reproductions of Pre-Raphaelite works was emphasized by a similar reception already happening in Vienna, Berlin and

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<sup>2</sup> James O. Young, “Art, Authenticity and Appropriation,” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 1, no. 3 (2006): 455–76.

Paris, which were all cultural hotspots closely monitored by the Czech artistic circles. In other words, British art which was shown in Vienna, Paris, Berlin or Munich would have also made an impression in Prague. This stands even if this closeness with specifically Vienna can be characterised by a sort of a love-hate relationship, as I have shown in some of the Czech fine art journal articles debated in the previous chapter. Most Bohemian artists not only encountered several generations of Pre-Raphaelite art all at once, with the works of the original Brotherhood already intersected with the later Pre-Raphaelitism, but it also already came with numerous other responses to the style from other countries where the aesthetic was already reflected.

An example of this can be the journal *Ver Sacrum*, the main outlet for the new Viennese Secession aesthetics. Published in German and thus easily accessible to the bilingual Czech readership, the journal was among those exported to Prague and eagerly consumed by Czech artists. Apart from signature Secession artwork (whose links to Pre-Raphaelitism are notable but beyond the scope of this thesis) *Ver Sacrum* also published texts on British art, such as the 1898 articles *Der Englische Stil* [Fig 2.1] and a short obituary of Burne-Jones.<sup>3</sup> [Fig 2.2] For Bohemian artists, the English material was presented to them with the context of the Austrian, German and other international perceptions of it, which would have been – to a certain degree – inseparable from the original English artwork. To an extent, the Pre-Raphaelite material would be perceived as part of a layered international fusion.

A strong reaction to the Pre-Raphaelites is notable among artists taking over the Bohemian art scene in the 1890s, such as Max Švabinský and Jan Preisler. The following case studies will uncover some of the most potent Pre-Raphaelite themes and styles that resonated through these artists' work.

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<sup>3</sup> H. Bahr, "Der Englische Stil", *Ver Sacrum* 1, no. 7 (1898). Accessed 10 Aug, 2023, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/vs1898/0203>;

"Burne-Jones", *Ver Sacrum* 1, no 8, (1898). Accessed Aug 10, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.6363#0237>

## **Alžběta Siddalová and the Czech Rossetti**

Throughout the 1890s and early 1900s, the Czech painter and etcher Max Švabinský (1873 – 1962) was particularly inspired by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Švabinský is amongst the most celebrated Czech artists of the late nineteenth and early 20th century. His work from the turn of the century until the early 1910s was closely connected to his model, fiancée and later wife, Ela Švabinská (née Vejrychová), who was passionate about Pre-Raphaelite art and was even compared to Elizabeth Siddall.<sup>4</sup>

Before I dive deeper into this sub-chapter, it is essential to describe in more detail the context of my research of Ela and Max Švabinský, specifically its place within the recent surge of interest in the female agency of Pre-Raphaelite women. It was only in the last five years that art historians of the Victorian era turned their eyes from the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood to the less obvious but nonetheless mighty network of women by which it was supported and complemented.

While some research into the women surrounding Pre-Raphaelitism already existed, the real game changer came in the form of the major blockbuster exhibition “Pre-Raphaelite Sisters” held at the National Portrait Gallery in London from October 2019 until January 2020, just before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>5</sup> The exhibition was the first large scale effort to introduce the work of the women who were until then merely thought of as models, ‘stunners’ or simply wives and lovers of the main protagonists of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

Before Jan Marsh famously rebranded her in the early 1990s, women such as Elizabeth Siddall were almost exclusively referred to by the diminutives of their first names – Lizzie, in this case – and hardly ever credited for their own artistic

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<sup>4</sup> Siddall’s name appeared in several mutations across various journals in the 1890s and 1900s, such as *Volné Směry*, *Rozhledy* and books, ranging from Alžběta to Elizabetha to Elisabeth. In my thesis, I am using the spelling with two Ls to honour the original spelling of Elizabeth’s surname. This is despite the fact that Bohemian journals from around 1900 only ever use the one L and don’t recognize Elizabeth as an artist in her own right. To pay homage to her wider personality and talent, I decided to use her original surname Siddall throughout this chapter.

<sup>5</sup> National Portrait Gallery. “Pre-Raphaelite Sisters.” Accessed November 22, 2024. <https://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/exhibitions/2019/pre-raphaelite-sisters/>.



endeavours.<sup>6</sup> Marsh published an extensive overview of Siddal's work and argued that Siddal was an independent and autonomous artist, rather than a tragic lover of Rossetti; she was much more than just a stunning model who dabbled in painting on the side of her sweeping love affair with the founder of the Brotherhood. Even after this account though, the stereotype of calling Rossetti's model "Lizzie" rather than Siddall prevailed and penetrated through both academic publications as well as popular outreach, such as the television series "Desperate Romantics" (2009) which depicted the Brotherhood mainly as promiscuous lovers caught in scandalous love-affairs.<sup>7</sup>

The NPG exhibition was therefore groundbreaking in not only bringing Siddall further out of the shadows but in introducing another twelve "women behind the pictures and their creative roles in Pre-Raphaelite's successive phases between 1850 and 1900."<sup>8</sup> The selection of women featured Joanna Wells, Fanny Cornforth, Marie Spartali Stillman, Evelyn de Morgan, Christina Rossetti, Georgiana Burne-Jones, Effie Millais, Elizabeth Siddall, Maria Zambaco, Jane Morris, Annie Miller and Fanny Eaton. Significantly, the display did not only focus on paintings and examples of fine art, but also incorporated crafts such as costume making, accessories design and embroidery, among other crafts.

Alongside the exhibition, a conference was organised at the University of York under the title "Pre-Raphaelite Sisters: Making Art."<sup>9</sup> The focus of the conference was to present research into the women surrounding the Pre-Raphaelites and showcase the diverse ways in which they were creative in their own right, as well as the varied ways in which they contributed to the aesthetic of the Brotherhood. I presented at the conference, showcasing the research that eventually formed this subchapter. Therefore, my understanding of the collaboration between Ela and Max Švabinský needs to be seen within the wider recent and current research on the role of women artists and models in the shaping of Pre-Raphaelitism.

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<sup>6</sup> Jan Marsh, *The Legend of Elizabeth Siddal* (London: Quartet Books, 1989)

<sup>7</sup> BBC Press. *Desperate Romantics press pack*. Accessed November 22, 2024.

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2009/06\\_june/25/romantics.shtml](https://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2009/06_june/25/romantics.shtml)

<sup>8</sup> "Pre-Raphaelite Sisters" <https://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/exhibitions/2019/pre-raphaelite-sisters/>.

<sup>9</sup> University of York. "Pre-Raphaelite Sisters: Making Art." Accessed November 22, 2024.

<https://psistersconference.home.blog>

One of the main points made by several speakers at the conference was that Pre-Raphaelite women were not always painters or etchers with a body of work left after their passing, such as it was in Siddall's case. Many of the so called 'muses' played important behind-the-scenes roles as managers of their husbands' studios as well as models and set designers for larger compositions. Acknowledging the creative agency of these women and appreciating their input when it comes to the fashion, props and compositions of Pre-Raphaelite paintings, is part of the recent shift in understanding of Pre-Raphaelitism as a collaborative endeavour.

The conference held at the University of York resulted in a publication in 2022, "Pre-Raphaelite Sisters: Art, Poetry and Female Agency in Victorian Britain" edited by Glenda Youde and Robert Wilkes.<sup>10</sup> The publication expanded on the twelve women presented at the NPG exhibition and opened the discussions further to incorporate more creative outputs, more diverse roles for the women, and a wider geographical area, including Bohemia and the work of Ela and Max Švabinský in my contribution.<sup>11</sup>

In the following paragraphs, I will focus on Ela Švabinská and her multilayered role as both a model and a powerful co-creator and contributor to Max's work. While Ela did not produce a body work that could be exhibited, she did however play a significant role in the dynamic partnership with Max which she deserves to be credited for. The stories of the English Pre-Raphaelite women and their involvement with the Brotherhood can be seen as a blueprint for uncovering the extent of Ela's involvement with Max's work. Not surprisingly, it was Ela who wrote extensively about her admiration for the Pre-Raphaelites, as if to suggest that the role of the women behind the movement was in many ways similar to her own.

Max Švabinský's work can be divided into two main periods. The first one, taking place from the 1890s to 1914, is closely linked to Ela.<sup>13</sup> The second

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<sup>10</sup> Glenda Youde and Robert Wilkes, eds., *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters: Art, Poetry and Female Agency in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2022).

<sup>11</sup> Helena Cox, "Alžběta Siddalová and the Czech Rossetti," in *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters: Art, Poetry and Female Agency in Victorian Britain*, eds Glenda Youde and Robert Wilkes, (London: Peter Lang, 2022) 331-360.

<sup>13</sup> Throughout this chapter, I will use first names to differentiate between husband and wife.

phase reflects Max's reinventing of himself alongside his second wife. It is through Ela that we have a rare insight into the artist's life, thanks to her memoirs published in the 1960s. Max's later life is also reflected in another memoir, this time by his adopted daughter Zuzana Švabinská. While both memoirs present a personal reflection on Švabinský, they are nonetheless a worthy source of some of the behind-the-scenes of Max's professional as well as personal life.

Švabinský was born in the small town of Kroměříž in 1873. He was an illegitimate child born out of wedlock, and legend has it that his mother, steeped in shame, did not leave the house for several years after Max was born.<sup>14</sup> Allegedly, she only ventured into the town centre when Max was 10 years old, and deemed a miracle child thanks to his artistic talent he held his first exhibition in the window of the local pharmacy. This anecdote perhaps explains the importance of the role that family played in Max's later life with Ela.

Max first moved to Prague in 1891 to enrol at the Academy of Arts, joining the Studio of Prof Maxmilian Pirner. This was a good time to join the Academy which had recently undergone a reformation. The previous generation of Academy professors – traditionally referred to as *The National Theatre generation* – were mainly concerned with the nationalistic ideals. This pro-Bohemian focus however often overshadowed the artistic quality of their work. The inward-looking tendency of this period meant less attention to foreign art and thus often resulted in strengthening a kind of insularity.

The following generation of students – referred to as simply *The 90s Generation* – were led by more progressive teachers. After 1893, Václav Brožík (1851 – 1901) and Vojtěch Hynais (1854 – 1925) were invited to teach at the Prague Academy. Both had lived in France for substantial periods of time and were informed about the latest developments in painting. Especially Hynais, whose work on the curtain of the National Theatre I showed earlier, had the allure of a rebel as he adopted the French impressionist style much earlier than anyone

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<sup>14</sup> Jana Orliková, *Max Švabinský - ráj a mýtus* (Praha: Gallery, 2001), 6.; "Slasti a hořkosti mistra Švabinského" Czech Television, October 2023. Czech TV documentary on Max Švabinský written and directed by Michael Kaboš. Accessed Oct 20, 2023. <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/14254397706-slasti-a-horkosti-mistra-svabinskeho/>

else in the Czech Lands. His impressionist sympathies greatly shaped the young Švabinský, although as Max would later confide in Ela, he never fully believed impressionism was the right way forward. While Švabinský enjoyed the impressionist method of working with light and observing the natural phenomena, he was very reserved when it came to what he saw as the impressionists' disrespect for traditional pictorial composition.<sup>15</sup> For Švabinský, a strong flavour of realism in painting was considered paramount, which is where his admiration for the Pre-Raphaelite attention to detail became prominent.<sup>16</sup>

Max and Ela first met in 1895 at the *Czechoslavic Exhibition* in Prague. She was visiting the exhibition with the rest of the cultured Vejrych family who were well known in Prague cultural circles. Švabinský immediately bonded with them and together they formed a kind of a mutually beneficial arrangement: for the illegitimate Max, the Vejrych family meant stability and acceptance both on a personal and the social level. He, on the other hand, brought fine arts into the family equation and connected the family to his cohort of up-and-coming artistic friends. According to the Czech art historian Jana Orliková, the Vejrychs had utmost admiration for Max as a respected personality on the Czech artistic scene, and therefore allowed him to behave in a domineering fashion to them, and especially to Ela.<sup>17</sup> This behaviour had a strong impact on the artwork produced with Ela as his model, creating a specific melancholy type, at first inspired by early Rossetti and later developing into a more sensual style evocative of both the mature Rossetti and Burne-Jones.

Towards the end of her life, in 1962, Ela published a book of memoirs entitled *Memories of Youth*. **[Fig 2.3]** The extensive publication covers her early life and her two decades with Max, before their divorce, initiated by Max leaving Ela for his long-term lover. Ela was intrinsically connected to Max's art between circa

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<sup>15</sup> Švabinská, *Vzpomínky*, 172.

<sup>16</sup> Švabinský's focus on realism was also highlighted by the latest documentary by the Czech Television, a national TV service. The documentary sadly completely omitted the role of any international art in Švabinský's work. In the final minutes of the documentary, a recording of Švabinský's voice from the 1960s encourages young artists to never forget the importance of realistic depiction of nature and the prevailing importance of realism among the temporal -isms of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. "Slasti a hořkosti mistra Švabinského" Czech Television, October 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Jana Orliková, "O Maxi Švabinském," Lecture held at the Municipal Library at Česká Třebová, April 5, 2012.

1890 and the 1910s. She was the main model for Max and co-created the whole artistic, social, and spiritual environment linked to Max's early work. Some of the paintings and etchings from this period are still today considered to be Max's leading masterpieces. The writing of Ela's memoirs was actually stimulated by Max, after his second wife Anna passed away. Max also edited the volume, which is important to have in mind when analysing it. The memoirs make it clear that Ela, Max and the whole of their cultural circle were fascinated by the Pre-Raphaelites, especially Rossetti and Burne-Jones as featured by concurrent Czech journals. This is mirrored in Max's work from around 1900, and in the way he stylised Ela in a clearly Pre-Raphaelite fashion.

In her memoirs, Ela reflects on the time when she originally met Max and when he first started painting her:

I was not to be like all the other girls, I had to be 'something different'. Naturally, he was such an outstanding personality with all his talent, and so I had to adapt to that.<sup>18</sup>

This statement relates to a time when Ela started modelling for Max just after 1895, immediately becoming the key subject of his paintings. Ela's statement above resonates somewhat with Christina Rossetti's poem *In an Artist's Studio* and especially with the famous last line: "Not as she is, but as she fills his dream".<sup>19</sup> Christina's poem is believed to represent Elizabeth Siddall and revolves around the male gaze. Dante Gabriel Rossetti was obsessed with Siddall after they met and immediately started using her as a model for an array of his paintings. Christina, Dante Gabriel's sister and, in many ways, a practical supporter of his work, recognised Siddall as a talented young woman who was nonetheless treated by Dante Gabriel and the rest of the Brotherhood as someone who needs to embody their dreams and visions rather than her own artistic talents. This story was to a certain extent mirrored in Ela's own life where her own talent for music and her love of playing the piano had to stay in the background as Max needed Ela to 'fill his dream', as Christina's poem

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<sup>18</sup> Švabinská: *Vzpomínky*, 143.

<sup>19</sup> The original notebook with the hand-written poem is part of the British Library collection and its scan is available online: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/notebook-of-christina-rossetti-two-of-six>

formulates it. Nonetheless, I argue that Ela's agency – however subtly hidden in her writing – is demonstrated clearly in the many compositional references that I will shortly show in Švabinský's paintings.

To get a deeper understanding of how Bohemian artists responded to the Pre-Raphaelites, I want to elaborate on a passage from Ela's memoirs relating to the late 1890s period:

The whole of our family was excited by this extraordinary artistic experience: the Prague artistic and literary circles were swept by a wave of interest in the English Pre-Raphaelites. Švabinský would bring us articles and books with reproductions of their paintings. Especially the magazine *Rozhledy* featured a number of their poems and reviews of their work. The reproductions of their paintings totally fascinated me, [...] we would look at them with utmost excitement.<sup>20</sup>

This passage from Ela's memoirs shows the importance of Czech art journals as mediators of British art and specifically for spreading critical analysis of the Pre-Raphaelites. Ela's focus on the journal *Rozhledy*, which was mainly a literary journal, reveals the interconnection between Pre-Raphaelite art and poetry, as they were often presented together in *Rozhledy*. Ela also captured vividly the fact that the appearance of Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics and poetry created a craze among Czech cultural circles; Ela points out how her entire family were fascinated by the English movement, although apart from Max there were no other artists in the family, showing how Pre-Raphaelitism captured the imagination of a wider readership, beyond the artists themselves. Ela further explains how she understood Pre-Raphaelite art:

[...] All the external beauty sprouted from a deep sea of emotional tremor. This gentle, ethereal world of subtle beings was turning away from the perfection of antiquity of the genius of Rafael, and totally away from

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<sup>20</sup> Švabinská: *Vzpomínky*, 142.

Leonardo's realism; with its gentleness it moved the people of our time who were also turning away from reality into the world of fairy-tales.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the perceived belatedness of the reception of the movement, Ela suggests that when Pre-Raphaelites' works finally made it to Czech journals, they tapped into the Bohemian audiences' hunger for magic, fairy tales and mysticism. This appreciation of mysticism and dreaminess is also characteristic of Secession, Jugendstil, decadence and symbolism, which were all also covered by Czech art journals. Despite the several decades' delay between the original formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Czech reception of it, once it arrived in Bohemia it was perfectly aligned with the general cultural mood of the time and fit perfectly along other art movements shaping Czech culture at the time.

Ela continues to explain the reasons why Pre-Raphaelite art captured the imagination of the Czech cultural circles:

It was an opium aimed at bringing gorgeous dreams to life, an emotional outburst when looking at the mystical concentration on the face of *Mademoiselle élue* [sic] by Rossetti. The line of her lips, and the richly flowing hair of Miss Elisabeth Sidal [sic] – the only model of Rossetti's and later his wife – was endlessly adored. And the idea of Burne-Jones' young lady, looking into the unknown – because 'she was never allowed to look anywhere else' as the poet Vrchlický wrote – was a new and gripping thought. It was carrying over the age of Botticelli and Mantegna into our century.<sup>22</sup>

Ela displays a good knowledge of Rossetti's works despite misspelling the title of Rossetti's painting *La Damoiselle élue* also known as *The Blessed Damozel* from 1878.<sup>23</sup> [Fig 2.4] Ela also points out Siddall as the only model Rossetti ever had, which was not correct. This could have been due to a focus on the

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<sup>21</sup> Švabinská: *Vzpomínky*, 142-3.

<sup>22</sup> Švabinská: *Vzpomínky*, 142-3. Siddall's name is spelt with an 's' instead of 'z' and her surname is 'Czechified' by adding the female suffix: *Elisabetha Sidalová*

<sup>23</sup> Rossetti made a slightly altered version of the composition in 1879, this version doesn't show the group of embracing figures at the top of the painting. This version is part of the collection at National Museums Liverpool <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/artifact/blessed-damoze>

dramatic personal story of Rossetti and Siddall which featured repeatedly throughout Czech articles on the artist, such as the article by Pohorecká-Šebkova, analysed in the previous chapter.<sup>24</sup> The popularity of the ecstatic and demonic passion between Rossetti and Siddall was also propelled by the story about Rossetti's decision to exhume Siddall's coffin seven years after her death in order to retrieve a book of his hand-written poems which he previously had buried with her body. This macabre narrative was welcomed by the decadent circles represented by literary authors such as Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic, who wrote in dramatic detail about the unearthing of Rossetti's poems from Siddall's grave in his book *The Gothic Soul* from 1900, re-published again in 1905.<sup>25</sup> When describing the story, Karásek refers to Siddall with her Czechified name as 'Alžběta Siddalová' making the story feel closer to the Czech reader. Karásek narrates the story using references to Rossetti's paintings *Paolo and Francesca* and *Beata Beatrix*, both of which were formative works for Švabinský, as I will demonstrate further in this chapter.

In Karásek's version, he focuses on the fact that Elizabeth's body was in a state of decay and as such reminded Rossetti that the true Muse is not found in any particular lover but rather in the artist himself as a source of his own creativity. In contrast to this, the legends that were popularised in Britain about the unearthing postulated that Elizabeth's body was intact, and that her glowing red hair had filled the coffin and stunned everyone during the exhumation.<sup>26</sup> Despite Karásek's different take on the story, the gruesomeness and exalted emotions of the plot were so popular in Bohemia that they probably overshadowed other aspects of Rossetti's life and didn't leave much space for the role of other seminal models, such as Jane Morris; despite the fact that Max's own work reflected on Rossetti's paintings featuring specifically Jane Morris, as I will show in greater detail throughout this chapter. The role of an artist's model was viewed as crucial and as such Ela was excited to embody this for Max.

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<sup>24</sup> Pohorecká –Šebkova, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti", 14-20.

<sup>25</sup> Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic, *Gotická duše*, (Praha: Kamila Neumannova, 1905): 8-9. With thanks to Dr Julia Mutton-Matlock who drew my attention to this passage.

<sup>26</sup> Madeline Emerald Thiele, "Rossetti's Coffin Gesture", Accessed Oct 20, 2023, <https://madeleineemeraldthiele.wordpress.com/2017/12/06/rossettis-coffin-gesture/>



Despite the fact that Ela's memoirs are written in a submissive tone, adoring Max as a person and as an artist, the memoirs nonetheless reveal the role Ela herself played in promoting the movement and how her own passion for all things Pre-Raphaelite impacted the intensity with which Max reacted to the style in his work. Ela writes:

For long, I couldn't let go of my passion for the Pre-Raphaelites, I was truly obsessed with them. Again and again, with my inner passion, I would dive deep into the reproductions of Rossetti's paintings; I felt there is nothing more magical than the type of his model, that there isn't a more moving fantasy than that of Burne-Jones; I could almost hear the lulling airy sound of his Vivien's voice as she recites the verses to the poet Merlin for so long that it makes him collapse with enchantment. My heart would tremble with the thought of the magnificent unearthly world of the Pre-Raphaelites.<sup>27</sup>

Ela's evocative description relates to Edward Burne-Jones' painting *The Beguiling of Merlin* from 1877. **[Fig 2.5]** Ela captures eloquently the emotional charge of the painting with Merlin collapsing under the blossoming tree branches as if weighted down by the aesthetic and poetic intensity of the moment. This reflects the close observation she must have performed with the artwork and her close study of the nature of Pre-Raphaelite works. Based on her excited writing, it is clear that Ela's interest in the Pre-Raphaelites was not superficial, but rather something that occupied her mind for a long period of time. In the passage above, she mentions poetry as well as painting, allowing herself to indulge in the characteristic features of Pre-Raphaelitism of bringing art and literature together. Unlike Max, whose personality was much more analytical and business-minded, Ela describes with great sensitivity her emotional involvement with the movement. While her role has not yet received enough scholarly attention, based on her thoughtful reflections and appreciation for the movement and her position as a well-connected member of the Prague

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<sup>27</sup> Švabinská, *Vzpomínky*, 142-3.

cultural circles, I propose to view Ela as one of the crucial mediators of Pre-Raphaelitism within the Czech cultural context.<sup>28</sup>

Looking deeper into the selected quotations from Ela's memoirs, she stressed the dreaminess, mysticism and detachment from real life as one most striking features of Pre-Raphaelite art. It does not come as a surprise that these were particularly attractive to Ela, who describes further in her memoirs how Max preferred her to stay away from public life and any friendships with other girls, and instead to devote her time to contemplating art. Immersed in such a lifestyle, Ela argues that not only herself but the whole of her generation were dreamers. This was mirrored not only in Švabinský's work but also in the work of Jan Preisler and other Czech artists at the time.

In the passage quoted above, Ela outlines the main features of the Pre-Raphaelite inspiration in Bohemia: the specific type of feminine beauty infused with symbolic stylisation, and the fairy-tale motifs embodying a medieval-inspired escapism. It is clear that Ela had a good understanding of the Pre-Raphaelites, although not exhaustive. Ela's words confirm what I have demonstrated in my previous chapter on Bohemian fine art journalism, that both Czech and international journals played a pivotal part in spreading reproductions and promoting aesthetic ideals of British art. This was of course only possible thanks to the easy access to international art journals, which were available not only in Bohemia but across the entire Austro-Hungarian Empire and beyond, as recent research on the Polish response to Arts and Crafts movement confirms.<sup>29</sup> While the Polish response to British art is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worth pointing out that in Poland, just like in Bohemia, it was both domestic and international journals that were the prominent promoters of international art. This means that artistic styles and developments would reach countries such as Poland and Bohemia as a stream of images and

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<sup>28</sup> Helena Cox, "Alžběta Siddalová and the Czech Rossetti," in *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters: Art, Poetry and Female Agency in Victorian Britain*, eds Glenda Youde and Robert Wilkes, (London: Peter Lang, 2022) 331-360.

<sup>29</sup> In a zoom talk organised to celebrate the launch of the book *Young Poland*, Andrzej Szczerski talked about the ease with which Polish artists acquired copies of *The Studio* both in partitioned Poland and across the Austro-Hungarian Empire. See also: Andrzej Szczerski, *Views of Albion: The Reception of British Art and Design in Central Europe, 1890-1918* (Peter Lang, 2015); Julia Griffin and Andrzej Szczerski (eds): *Young Poland: The Arts and Crafts Movement 1890-1918* (Lund Humphries Press, 2020)

articles mixing artwork from multiple countries. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that British art was always consumed in context with other national and international art styles from a variety of regions.

Further in Ela's memoirs, Ela's account of the Pre-Raphaelites indicates her intense emotional investment in promoting their work in Bohemia and in sharing her views with Max. Ela's memoirs can be tricky to decipher; she often uses submissive statements and refers to Max exclusively as Švabinský, while other members of her family and friends are referred to with their first names. It is as though Ela is going the extra mile to convince the reader that it was Švabinský who oversaw everything in their lives, from where they travelled to what Ela was wearing<sup>30</sup>. This could be because the memoirs were only edited for publishing in the 1960s when Švabinský enjoyed a high status as a 'National Artist'.<sup>31</sup>

However, having read Ela's statements about the Pre-Raphaelites, I believe she not only adored the Brotherhood, but also used whatever influence she had on Švabinský to make him reflect their aesthetics in his work. And this is where her own agency comes to the fore. Unlike 'muses' like Siddall, who produced their own body of work, Ela has not left behind a tangible legacy in terms of her own artworks; yet she undoubtedly played a role in shaping the Bohemian reception of Pre-Raphaelitism.

While in her writing, Ela likes to create the illusion of her keeping a low profile and following whatever Švabinský dictated, the reality might have been more dynamic. Repeatedly throughout her memoirs, Ela describes the collaboration that would take place across the entire family whenever Švabinský announced an intention to paint a piece of work with Ela as the main model. Unlike portraits and commissions, which brought Max his notable income, the paintings that featured Ela were created out on his own initiative and were not commissioned

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<sup>30</sup> In her memoirs, Ela describes in great detail her journey to Paris in 1899 and how critical Max was of her attire, inspecting and supervising Ela's fashion choices: "Extremely happy to see each other again. The artist's critical eye immediately focuses on my attire (always so nerve-wracking!) Luckily, this time he was satisfied." Švabinská, *Vzpomínky z mládí*, 166.

<sup>31</sup> 'National Artist' is an official high-ranking award mainly popular during the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Švabinský was awarded this title in 1945, as soon as the Communist Party came into power. He subsequently worked on many official commissions and until the end of this life he remained in the 'good books' of the Party, unlike many other artists who refused such awards and were harshly prosecuted by the Party in the 1950s.

by a third party – although they almost always ended up having a very public life and going from one exhibition to another.

The whole of Ela's family would be thrown into the preparations of Max's paintings. Max's close relationship with Ela's parents comes across on the many family photographs from Kozlov, some showing intimate and playful moments, others capturing the daily life mainly lived outdoors in the cottage garden **[Fig 2.6]** where Max also situated a whole series of his compositions throughout the years. **[Fig 2.7]** Ela records the process in which Švabinský would choose the theme and the general 'look' he wanted to create in a painting, and then tasked Ela's mother and grandmother with sewing the costumes and sourcing props. Ela's family was close-knit, and especially the women of the family kept in close touch and collaborated on many creative tasks for Max. Family members were often used as models by Max, especially during the summer when Ela and Max stayed at the family summer cottage at Kozlov. A photograph from Kozlov captures a scene most likely showing the process of Ela getting arranged for a sitting, with her parasol matching her dress and the rest of the family assisting with props. **[Fig 2.8]** According to Ela, Max would oversee the process, but given how much admiration for the Pre-Raphaelites Ela had, I envisage her part to be rather crucial in the creating of the ideal 'setup' for Max's artwork. Ela never mentions how Max arrived at the actual poses she takes up in his paintings, which makes me wonder whether it could have been she rather than he who found the perfect pose derived from one of Ela's beloved Pre-Raphaelite works. Ela's own agency, however well hidden in her writing, comes through in her passion and knowledge of Pre-Raphaelite art, and in the way she feels herself into the paintings described in her text. She demonstrates both intellectual and emotional understanding of the English works, one that perhaps surpassed what Max himself knew about the movement. This is something that Ela would never say openly in her memoirs, which were constructed as a literary monument to Švabinský.

The importance of Ela's role in the mediation of Pre-Raphaelite art stands out when contrasted to Max's own views, described further in Ela's memoirs:

[...] this meditative world - turned away from real life and its joys - was not part of his character.<sup>32</sup>

As a reaction, Ela highlights her disappointment with Švabinský's viewpoints:

This group of mystics had a strong impact on the Czech cultural circles, but it failed to leave any memorable traces. [...] I was devastated when after some time, Švabinský explained to me that this kind of art had no future, that it was not addressing artistic issues, and that it had too much literature in it.<sup>33</sup>

Ela emphasises the short-lived character of the impact. It is, to a degree, characteristic of this generation not only in Britain but also elsewhere in Europe to claim a youthful fascination with the Pre-Raphaelites which later gets discarded. Aby Warburg, for instance, adored Burne-Jones in the 1880s and '90s before growing cold towards the artists' work. In the case of Ela and Max, there is a complex set of temporalities at play: Ela's much later recollection of a youthful moment, which passes quickly, and also involves a 'delayed' response to an earlier artistic movement, which can therefore be experienced non-chronologically with the second generation of Pre-Raphaelites being actually encountered first, and then becoming simultaneous in their reception.

After having described how invested she was in studying the Pre-Raphaelites, Ela's account of Max's lukewarm attitude to their work comes as a surprise. And yet, as will be shown below, Švabinský's work is full of references to the Brotherhood. The way Ela describes this in her memoirs indicates that her own excitement with the Pre-Raphaelites exceeded Max's, and was also much more long-lived, and perhaps more personal as Ela writes about the movement with much emotional engagement. I therefore argue that Ela's role in Švabinský's work is much greater than what she was credited for, and that she was far more than 'a stunner' fitting into the beauty ideal formed by the Pre-Raphaelites and their followers. Just like Elizabeth Siddall, Jane Morris and other Pre-Raphaelite 'muses', Ela too was far more than a model but rather an essential collaborator

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<sup>32</sup> Švabinská, *Vzpomínky*, 124-5.

<sup>33</sup> Švabinská: *Vzpomínky*, 143.

and contributor to the aesthetic, intellectual and practical setup which was crucial for production of Max's artwork.<sup>34</sup>

At the aforementioned conference on Pre-Raphaelite women held in 2020, and based on her previous research, Suzanne Fagence Cooper analysed the case of Effie Gray.<sup>35</sup> Effie was originally married to the critic John Ruskin; however, the marriage was later annulled as Effie courageously proved that the union was never consummated. Towards the end of her marriage to Ruskin, Effie fell in love with the Pre-Raphaelite painter John Everet Millais, whom she married after the annulment of her first marriage. Effie's subsequent role in shaping Millais' work can be compared to that of Ela's in relation to Max's oeuvre.

In her account of Effie's agency in her new role as Mrs Millais, Fagence Cooper stresses the various roles that Effie played for Millais. To begin with, Effie created a warm and emotionally supportive environment, which was important to Effie, especially after her strenuous and emotionally distant years with Ruskin. On a more tangible level, Effie practically ran the day-to-day business of Millais' studio, including social and administrative tasks, professional networking and establishing a social network in the Victorian high society which benefited Millais' standing and resulted in numerous commissions and sales. As Fagence Cooper described in her conference paper, a good embodiment of this is the painting "Eve of St. Agnes" from 1862. By this time, Effie and John had children, whom they had to send away for a few days so the couple could work on the painting. Effie modelled for the main character standing in her undergarments in the King's Room at the Knole Hotel in Kent. The painting needed to depict a moon-lit night, for which reason Effie would model at night. In her correspondence, Effie describes the various undertakings and the long hours she had to stand in the freezing room in her undergarments.<sup>36</sup> Fagence Cooper points out that while Millais painted the famed picture, Effie's

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<sup>34</sup> The practical creative input by women associated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement (and often degraded to the role of the 'muse') were discussed at the international conference *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters: Making Art*, organised by Glenda Youde and Robert Wilkes in December 2019 at the University of York and supported by the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art. Accessed Oct 20, 2023, <https://prsistersconference.home.blog>

<sup>35</sup> Suzanne Fagence Cooper, *The Model Wife: The Passionate Lives of Effie Gray, Ruskin and Millais* (London: Duckworth, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Suzanne Fagence Cooper, *Effie Gray: The Passionate Lives of Effie Gray, Ruskin and Millais* (St. Martin's Press, 2011): 151.

involvement was crucial in terms of her sensitive understanding of the subject matter, her sourcing of the costumes and even finalising the pose, on top of the actual modelling for multiple hours after having arranged for her children to be entertained elsewhere for the weekend. At this point in their marriage, Effie would manage the studio as well as care for the couple's children, and she would be involved in the decision-making process regarding the subject matters of Millais's paintings, as well as effectively marketing her husband's work among the society's upper circles. Such holistic involvement can hardly be squeezed into categorising Effie as merely her husband's favourite model.

Similarly, Ela was essential to Max's success, and it is no coincidence that all of Max's works that reflect Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic come from the period of falling in love with Ela and later marrying her. Ela's presence in all of Max's works that strongly resonate with Pre-Raphaelite style, together with her passionate way of writing about the Brotherhood, signify that Ela's role in enabling the creation of Max's artworks was central. At the end of her conference paper in 2020, Fagence Cooper suggested that it is necessary to reframe the way we look at Pre-Raphaelite 'muses', and that credit needs to be given to the various ways in which women were involved in co-creating the environment that enabled Pre-Raphaelite art. I argue that Ela was a crucial part of Max's Pre-Raphaelite phase and that her role in Max's paintings extended beyond her modelling. This materialised namely in her passion for and understanding of the Pre-Raphaelite material, her skills in costume making and her practical support in sourcing suitable costumes, props and crafted items for Max's artworks. The currently growing scholarly recognition for Pre-Raphaelite 'sisters' does not necessarily involve only those women who themselves painted but widens to celebrate those who contributed to the creation of Pre-Raphaelite masterpieces in many different ways behind-the-scenes.

### **Searching for the Czech Pre-Raphaelite Feminine Type**

The Pre-Raphaelites are generally known to have developed a 'type' of feminine beauty based around their models, or 'stunners' as the more

sensational literature tends to call them even today.<sup>37</sup> However, what exactly is this feminine beauty ideal remains unclear, especially as this ‘type’ seems to have evolved from the early pale-skinned and slender Elizabeth Siddal to the later opulent and lush aesthetic ideal embodied by Fanny Cornforth and Alexa Wilding. For the Bohemian admirers of the Pre-Raphaelites, all these types would have been viewed at once through publications such as Richard Muther’s *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX. Jahrhundert* published in 1893 in German, and *The History of Modern Painting* published in English in 1895-96.<sup>38</sup> Muther’s books had great following among the Bohemian cultural circles and unlike many of the contemporary fine art journals, these hefty books were richly illustrated with numerous reproductions. In the section on English painting, Muther features a selection of Rossetti’s work all in close proximity of each other showing paintings modelled by Elizabeth Siddall, Alexa Wilding and Jane Morris. Reproducing all these works together created a sequence capturing the entire evolution of Rossetti’s aesthetics and the development of his female ‘type’ which was then consumed all at once by Bohemian readers of the compendium<sup>39</sup>. **[Fig 2.9 ]**

Large anthologies like Muther’s enabled Czech artists to turn around the aforementioned ‘delay’ of reception into a quickly acquired overview of Pre-Raphaelite art. Muther’s works compressed the whole evolution of the Brotherhood into about a hundred pages of text and images, merging the distinct phases and the changes in style from early Rossetti to late Burne-Jones. The ideal of feminine beauty, for example, was a condensed one, bringing together the entire span of the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics. Moreover, Muther’s large-scope books comprised overviews of paintings across the whole of Europe and beyond, creating a mesmerizingly wide choice for Bohemian artists, who were looking for inspiration beyond their constricting landlocked and culturally ‘colonised’ territory. Browsing Muther’s richly illustrated volumes uncovers paintings from a broad variety of countries representing many different

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<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Prettejohn, “Stunning Sisters”, *Aspectus*, (2020), Accessed May 08, 2021, <https://aspectus.york.ac.uk/Issues/2-2020/in-conversation-pre-raphaelite-sisters>

<sup>38</sup> Richard Muther, *History of Modern Painting* (London: Henry & Co, 1896) 561– 644.

Richard Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX Jahrhundert*, (München: G. Hirth, 1893) 480 – 518.

<sup>39</sup> Muther, *History of Modern Painting*, 573 -591.



movements and styles. For Bohemian artists, such volumes acted like an interface where an intricate set of temporalities come together in a dynamic flow of visual stimulation.

Perhaps because of encountering their work all at once, in her memoirs Ela cherishes the dreamy nature of the Brotherhood but rather fails to recognise the Pre-Raphaelite attention to their contemporaries' work, their staggering take on realism and their deep interest in social issues and societal matters. It seems that Ela, and probably Max as well, saw the Brotherhood exclusively as an idealistic group aiming at mysticism and a fairy-tale like escapism.

From Ela's accounts, it appears that one of the greatest lessons that Švabinský took from the Pre-Raphaelites was the necessity to identify and establish a characteristic look for a female protagonist appearing throughout various paintings. Švabinský was much less interested in the myth and legends behind the artworks; perhaps with the exception of his first major work, the *Communion of Souls*, he did not go into any great imaginative trouble when naming his paintings, and he never linked them to existing poems or novels, as was typical for Rossetti and Burne-Jones. Unlike Ela and her detailed emotionally charged descriptions of Pre-Raphaelite works, Max himself was probably far less interested in any mythology behind their or his work. It is therefore not hard to imagine that Ela, vocal about her admiration for Siddall, would play a part in stylising herself into a reflection of the famed Pre-Raphaelite model.

With less emphasis on mythology and the literary sources involved in his paintings, Švabinský created a succession of works featuring Ela as the new type of feminine beauty informed by English art: *Communion of Souls* (1896), *Pink Portrait* (painted in Paris in 1898), *The Poor Region* (1900), *Paradisea Apoda* (1901), *The Grey Portrait* (drawing and etching, both 1902), *Camelias/Lilith* (1903), *By the Loom* (1903), *Birds-of-Paradise* (1904).<sup>40</sup> Some of these were primarily portraits of Ela, others used Ela's looks as part of a broader narrative.

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<sup>40</sup> Hana Volavková, *Max Švabinský* (Praha: Málá galerie, 1977), 32.

The gentle charcoal and watercolour drawing *Paradisea Apoda* (Latin term for the Greater Bird-of-paradise) from 1901 captures Ela with – in her own words – ‘Rossetti-like lush hair’<sup>41</sup>. **[Fig 2.10]** In her memoirs, Ela describes how much she desired to pose in Švabinský’s studio, but the artist objected. For him the studio was a place of business and commercial commissions, while what he intended with Ela was what really mattered to him in terms of his personal artistic expression. Art for personal pleasure and self-expression had to be kept separate from the commercial business of the studio. Ela’s mother was tasked with sewing a special tunic for the picture, and a bird-of-paradise was bought which the couple adored so much that not only did they keep it, but its purchase started off Švabinský’s large collection of exotic birds and butterflies.<sup>42</sup>

In a much later memoir from 2002 by Zuzana Švabinská (Max’s adopted daughter from his second wife Anna) the author recalls the painting:

Thinking about muses, next to Beatrice I’m imagining the melancholy Eliška – Elizabeth Vejrychová [sic] whom Max so loved to compare to Miss Elisabeth Sidal [sic] from Gabriel Dante Rossetti’s paintings. On his painting *Paradisea Apoda*, Max merged the looks of both to such an extent, that we can no longer be sure which of the two it depicts.<sup>43</sup>

Zuzana Švabinská certainly has a point when saying that the drawing does not focus on capturing Ela’s real likeness as much as on merging her looks with those of Sidal. *Beata Beatrix* from 1864 -1870 **[Fig 2.11]** which was also reproduced in Muther’s publication would be a suitable candidate for a source of inspiration for *Paradise Apoda*.<sup>44</sup> Following Zuzana Švabinská’s description, Sidal’s looks as well as the entire atmosphere of the painting are not far-fetched from Ela’s melancholy expression.

However, there is more to unpack about *Paradisea Apoda* than just Ela’s resemblance to Sidal. Although the above quotation explicitly mentions Sidal

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<sup>41</sup> Švabinská, *Vzpomínky*, 205.

<sup>42</sup> While the parameters of this thesis don’t allow me to elaborate on this further, I would like to acknowledge the potentially exploitative nature of Švabinský’s collecting activities, mainly in relation to exotic birds and butterflies.

<sup>43</sup> Zuzana Švabinská: *Svetla Pameti* (Praha: Academia, 2002), 209.

<sup>44</sup> Muther, *History of Modern Painting*, 152-168.

as the main source of inspiration, I believe that there was a fair share of Jane Morris in the drawing too. Rossetti's *Proserpina* [Fig 2.12] came in several versions, but for the purpose of this analysis I will focus on the one from 1880 drawn with coloured chalks. The technique itself plays an important role as Švabinský often favoured drawing to painting, so it is likely he felt an affinity with Rossetti's pastel drawing. Jane Morris as Proserpina displays her full body of wavy dark hair cascading over her shoulders where they meet the neckline of a tunic. Both the waves of hair and the tunic are mirrored in Ela's attire in *Paradisea Apoda*. Depicting Ela's hair in this way is unique among Švabinský's work and this might be the only work where Ela's hair looks wavy and is not tucked in a bun. In *Proserpine*, a vine of green ivy is making its way along the left side of the figure. Švabinský reflects this compositional element with featuring some twigs and flowers on the wallpaper on the left of Ela, which is also the most colourful part of the picture.

Known for his lack of sympathy for myth and literature, Švabinský takes Rossetti's composition and transposes it into a neutral space somewhere between an imaginary realm and contemporary life. Ela's bird-of-paradise replaces the pomegranate of Proserpine and Beatrix's red dove. Rather than a historical symbol or a mythical metaphor, it is reasonable to guess that the bird-of-paradise stood for a general admiration for nature, for the exotic and the blissful. Not long after finishing this drawing, Švabinský started to collect exotic birds and butterflies. This passion later resulted in his explicit erotic series of engravings set in an imaginary exotic paradise, featuring birds, butterflies and nude portraits of Švabinský and his second wife satisfying their desire for one another.

*Paradisea Apoda* was probably informed by a series of sources featuring Burne-Jones, Rossetti, and both Siddall and Jane Morris. The third volume of Richard Muther's *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX Jahrhundert* presented a helpful anthology of paintings and drawings by Rossetti featuring both models, their portraits spread conveniently across several pages, almost like a sales catalogue of feminine beauty.<sup>45</sup> With her mother overseeing the costumes and

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<sup>45</sup> Muther: *Geschichte der Malerei*, 475 – 483.

Max composing the artworks, Ela would have been an important active agent in creating all these artworks. Max was of course the executor of these images, but Ela's own vision of Pre-Raphaelite beauty and her agency in embodying this ideal was essential for their creation.

Švabinský's *Paradisea Apoda* embodies two aspects of the Czech reception of the Pre-Raphaelites. On one level, there was the overlapping of international art styles where Švabinský would have seen works by British artists such as Rossetti as well as French symbolist and decadent painters such as Gustav Moreau, Puvis de Chavannes, as well as Belgian painters such as Fernand Khnopff and Jules Bastien-Lepage, alongside artists from across Europe (and beyond). I have already mentioned above that this resulted in a creative mixing of aspects of the work of many international styles, making it challenging to link a certain visual feature of an artwork to any particular style without acknowledging the other styles present throughout the continent.

The other aspect demonstrated in *Paradisea Apoda* was the mixing of recent art movements with more ancient ones. The composition of *Paradisea Apoda* is not only reminiscent of Rossetti, but Rossetti himself found inspiration in the Italian Quattrocento and Cinquecento, and for this painting specifically in Titian's *Flora*. Rossetti had a long-standing passion for Titian and admired his sensual way of painting and the mystical atmosphere that Titian's work evoked. Czech artists such as Švabinský would therefore react to vibrant multilayered and multinational visual stimuli, bringing together various temporalities and places of origin.

Throughout his career, Rossetti was vocal about his admiration for the Venetian Cinquecento, especially Titian, Veronese and Giorgione – which were among the names he submitted for his 'List of Immortals' drew up with William Holman Hunt in 1848.<sup>46</sup> Rossetti's depictions of voluptuous female busts from the 1860s even led John Ruskin to remark that Rossetti was "the nearest to Titian – of any man living".<sup>47</sup> Rossetti also shared his passion for Titian's work with other members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle, especially whenever he travelled to Italy

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<sup>46</sup> Dianne Sachko Macleod, "Date Gabriel Rossetti and Titian", *Apollo* 121 (London, 1985): 36-39.

<sup>47</sup> Macleod, "Rossetti and Titian", 36.

and specifically when he visited the Uffizi.<sup>48</sup> Rossetti's devotion to Titian was present throughout contemporary art criticism as well, which is best demonstrated by reference to Frederick George Stephens (1827 -1907), British art critic and a non-artist member of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and English poet, novelist and critic Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837 – 1909). Both wrote extensively about Rossetti's inspiration from Italian Renaissance, and specifically compared Rossetti's work to that of Titian, including a detailed analysis of several of Rossetti's and Titian's paintings from the 1860s.<sup>49</sup> Swinburne summarised this simply and eloquently when he wrote about Rossetti's paintings for 1864, stating that his "pictures of the year are magnificent, they recall the greatness, the perfect beauty and luxurious power of Titian and Giorgione."<sup>50</sup>

Rossetti's fascination with Titian was recognised (by concurrent critics as well as nowadays historians) as a formative source of inspiration for the artist, but as such this does not take away from Rossetti's originality in terms of translating his lessons from Titian into a characteristic mature Pre-Raphaelite style. The Czech reception of Rossetti's work will therefore equally include his early Italian inspirations as well as his later Titian-inspired style. When analysing works such as *Paradisea Apoda* by Švabinský, the similarities to Titian's compositions need to be seen through the mediation by Rossetti

Paintings like Titian's *Flora* were also inspiring to a wide array of artists, each of whom adapted those elements of Titian that worked best for their particular style. Rossetti's take on *Flora* means he translated the image into the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic; from one Greek legend to another, Titian's symbolic *Flora* turns into Rossetti's Proserpina, which in Švabinský's hands takes on the form of a portrait of Ela, a more realistic rendering of a concrete person who nonetheless wears a specially made costume as an allusion to her character's previous incarnations. Titian painted *Flora* in lush vibrant oil paint; Rossetti experimented with the medium and translated the theme into pastel, which was

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<sup>48</sup> Carolyn Porter, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Italian Renaissance: Envisioning Aesthetic Beauty and the Past Through Images of Women," (PhD thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2010), 131.

<sup>49</sup> Porter, "Rossetti and Italian renaissance", 156.

<sup>50</sup> Cecil Y. Lang, *The Swinburne Letters 1*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959 – 1962): 103.

taken on by Švabinský who combined Titian's costume and composition with Rossetti's technique and staged the scene in his and Ela's Prague flat. Such interconnectedness and overlapping of temporalities and geographical origins is typical for the Czech reception of British as well as international art in general at the turn of the century.

### **Communions and Embraces**

Švabinský's early series of drawings and paintings from 1896, known under the shared title *Communion of Souls*, remain till this day, at least for the Czech audiences, among the most famous works of the artist. **[Fig 2.13]** This is so despite the fact that Švabinský himself considered the series to be an anomaly of sorts among his work. Surprisingly, the best-known version of the *Communion of Souls* – an oil painting from 1896 - was actually not the final version of the composition. As Ela describes in her memoirs, the artist worked on several variants of the composition, the oil version being the first one to be completed. However, it was only the ink drawing of the same title that Švabinský considered to be the very final rendition of this motif, completed later the same year. **[Fig 2.14]** Here again Švabinský's admiration for drawing overshadows his work in oil paints, similar to the example of *Proserpina* debated above.

The year 1896 saw the start of Švabinský's obsession with producing drawings and sketches of his now fiancée Ela. *Communion of Souls*, however, transgresses the stage of merely capturing Ela's likeness and presents a truly symbolist and romantic vision in Švabinský's work. Ela's memoirs describe how the artist drew inspiration from their own relationship.<sup>51</sup> According to Ela, the painting depicts the inner dilemma of the artist: symbolically married to his art, but equally so attracted to his earthly lover – that's why, Ela suggests, the young man in the painting seems so tortured and bewildered. The young man's expression carried an important meaning to Max, who had a study of the man's face published in *Volné Směry* in 1898. **[Fig 2.15]** According to Ela, a true artist should live purely for his vision of art. The young man from the painting

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<sup>51</sup> Švabinská: *Vzpomínky*, 124-5.

therefore represents Švabinský, overwhelmed and distracted by his sudden emotional engagement with Ela, feeling obliged not to abandon neither his art, nor his love. Having overcome this difficulty after all, Ela continues in her typical romantic fashion, the two souls merge in their mutual love.<sup>52</sup> Ela's memoirs were only published in 1962 and edited by Švabinský himself. To what an extent is her text an authentic reflection of the story of the painting, or whether it is a projection dreamt up all those decades later, is not easy to decipher.

At the time the *Communion* was painted, Ela lived with her parents and brother while Švabinský was finishing his final year at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. Although the main characters of *The Communion* bear some physical resemblance to Ela and Max, they are not straightforward portraits. The most striking feature of the painting are the man's glaring eyes, staring into the distance. The preliminary sketch of the man's face was reproduced in *Volné Směry* in 1898, two years after the completion of the painting, paying homage to the intensity of this gaze.<sup>53</sup>

Traditionally in Czech art history, the *Communion* painting was interpreted as an embodiment of Švabinský's interest in the inner life of an individual where the female figure would represent a muse soothing the aching soul of the inwardly tortured artist.<sup>54</sup> However, the 2014 - 2015 exhibition *Mysterious Horizons*, organised by the Czech National Gallery, introduced the idea of linking this painting to Edvard Munch's *Vampire* series, begun in 1893.<sup>55</sup> **[Fig 2.16]** This connection feeds into the lively interconnectedness of personalities and artworks across borders that so strongly informed the character of Bohemian art. Munch's *Vampire* series is also linked to the Polish poet Stanisław Przybyszewsky who lived in Berlin, published in German and kept in close contact with Czech writers and artists associated with the *Moderní Revue* magazine.<sup>56</sup> Švabinský would have certainly known of Przybyszewsky and

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<sup>52</sup> Švabinská: *Vzpomínky*, 124-5.

<sup>53</sup> Max Švabinský, "Studie", *Volné Směry* II, no 7 (1898), 326.

<sup>54</sup> Hana Volavkova, *Max Švabinský* (Praha: Odeon, 1977), 22

<sup>55</sup> Otto M Urban: *Tajemné dálky 1880 – 1914* (Praha: Arbor Vitae, 2015)

<sup>56</sup> Piotr Policht, "Sex, Art & Vampires: The Friendship of Stanisław Przybyszewski & Edvard Munch", *Culture.PL Series: Spirituality*, Accessed Sept 19, 2022, <https://culture.pl/en/article/sex-art-vampires-the-friendship-of-stanislaw-przybyszewski-edvard-munch>

Katherine David-Fox: "Prague-Vienna, Prague-Berlin: The Hidden Geography of Czech Modernism," *Slavic Review* 59, Nr. 4 (2000), 751.

Munch and the whole debate around the *Vampire* series. The *Communion* could therefore be viewed as a meeting of two almost opposing trends, the 'dreamy and romantic' (as described by Ela) Pre-Raphaelite feel, mixing with the more decadent German and Nordic flavour.

The fact that Švabinský was 'influenced' by Pre-Raphaelitism almost 20 years after the original Brotherhood was formed creates a fantastic opportunity for a unique mixture of styles. Artworks such as the *Communion* provide a platform for bringing together the gentleness and historic romanticism of the Brotherhood with the decadent modern twist, developing on the Continent and especially in the German speaking cultural domain in the 1880s and '90s. While traditionally the delay in the reception of Pre-Raphaelitism (and other styles) was viewed as detrimental to the originality and quality of Czech art, I argue that this delay presented a unique opportunity for the experience of a condensed temporality which enabled Czech artists to experience the entire development of the movement at once, infused with the concurrent consumption of other European and international trends which all informed Bohemian art at the turn of the century.

In her memoirs, Ela repeatedly mentioned the artist Edward Burne-Jones and pointed out the admiration she and Max had for the artist. The resemblance of Burne-Jones' *Love among the Ruins* to the *Communion* has previously been suggested in Czech art history.<sup>57</sup> **[Fig 2.17]** In Burne-Jones's painting, it is the female figure that casts her deep and unsettled gaze into the distance while embracing her lover with both arms. The young man reaffirms the embrace while resting his head against her forehead, his eyes shut. Burne-Jones' painting is loosely based on Robert Browning's poem, which ends with the explicit exclamation "Love is best".<sup>58</sup> The lovers embrace each other while resting each in their own realms of pensiveness – closed eyes in case of the man, and the distant look of the woman. Crucially though, *Love among the Ruins* seems to be celebrating a connection between the two, while the

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<sup>57</sup> Petr Wittlich, *Česká secese* (Praha: Odeon, 1982), 57.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Browning, "Love Among the Ruins", *The Poetry Foundation*, Accessed June 14, 2022, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43763/love-among-the-ruins>



*Communion* revolves around the young man's gaze, alluding to anything but closeness.

Burne-Jones's masterpiece oil painting was preceded by a watercolour by twenty years, finished in 1873. It was only after the watercolour was accidentally damaged that Burne-Jones painted the oil version, completed in 1894 – only two years before Švabinský's *Communion*. It is worth noting that both Burne-Jones and Švabinský often worked in watercolour and ink, as well as an array of other media, even if the oil versions of their paintings remain the best known today.

Another affinity between the two works is their possible link to the artists' personal lives. The *Communion* is often seen as an autobiographical depiction of Max and Ela, the view being supported by Ela's memoirs. Burne-Jones' painting is similarly linked to his own passionate (extramarital) love affair with Maria Zambaco.

What is typical for Švabinský though is his primal focus on the characters portrayed instead of their surroundings. He gives us a glimpse of architecture in the background, and the wall immediately behind the figures seems overgrown with flowering bushes, bringing about a similar atmosphere to Burne-Jones' ruins. While Švabinský's architectural fragment plays a significant role on the ink drawing, it disappears completely on the oil painting, replaced by a row of coniferous trees or bushes. For Burne-Jones, the architecture depicted takes on a much more elaborate and prominent form, while both works retain a sense of a flat pictorial space.

Burne-Jones however was not a solitary influence. Švabinský was intrigued by the theme of embracing and kissing figures, a topic he kept on exploring for several years, as can be seen in his charcoal sketch and the final ink drawing *Joy, Joy* from 1898. [Fig 2.18, 2.19]. It is likely that Švabinský sought inspiration from Muther's extensive books. Richard Muther's publications were popular among Czech artists; his *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX Jahrhundert* (in

German, 1893)<sup>59</sup> and *History of Modern Painting* (in English, 1896)<sup>60</sup> show several reproductions of other Pre-Raphaelite artworks that could fuel Švabinský's imagination. The pages 470 and 471 of the German version as well as pages 572 and 573 in the English version show Rossetti's cover of *The Early Italian Poets* on the verso, and *Ecce Ancilla Domini* on the recto (the exact same layout is kept in both versions). [Fig 2.20, 2.21] The two images bring together two distinct features of Švabinský's *Communion*: a tender, loving or even passionate embrace, and a sense of distance and apprehension. Rossetti's Virgin Mary [Fig 2.22] certainly embodies fear and distance, with her distant gaze, avoiding the presence of the angel. Perhaps her facial expression and her contrived posture are not that far from Švabinský's young man whose piercing eyes convey discomfort and angst.

While Virgin Mary leans away from the angel approaching her, in the *Communion* the 'muse' pulls the young man towards herself in an embrace equally soothing as discomfiting. Rossetti's couple from *The Early Italian Poets* [Fig 2.23] shows a composition comprising a seated man and a woman leaning down towards him, not dissimilar to the *Communion*, although in Rossetti's work the passion is clearly mutual, very much like in *Joy, Joy*. Together, the two reproductions from the verso and recto – which Max is very likely to have seen – create a combination of closeness and emotional distance that strongly resonate with Švabinský's *Communion* and later his *Joy, Joy*.

The theme of two figures embracing, and with one of them being a mythical creature, appears in other Bohemian artists' work of the time, that of Jan Preisler. Jan Preisler (1872 – 1918) worked as a professor at the Academy of Applied Arts in Prague and later at the Academy of Fine Arts. A solitary figure fascinated with nature, Preisler is best known for creating a signature-style by mixing elements of symbolism, impressionism, and neo-romanticism. Together with Švabinský, he was one of those Czech artists widely open to international influences and straying away from a strictly Slavic narrative, which was much discussed in the cultural circles of the period. Both Švabinský and Preisler were

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<sup>59</sup> Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei*, 470-471.

<sup>60</sup> Muther, *The History of Modern Painting*, 572-573.

especially captivated by the second wave of Pre-Raphaelite art with Burne-Jones at the centre of their worship. Neither of them copied Burne-Jones' work explicitly, but both of them borrowed certain elements and incorporated them into their work.

While in this chapter I will concentrate on Preisler's response to British art and I will point out individual British artists whose work I see as being reflected in Preisler's paintings, it is nonetheless important to accentuate yet again that Preisler (and other Czech artists analysed in this thesis) did not work in isolation and did not focus exclusively on British art. Their reception of motifs appearing in British art must be viewed in the context of a vibrant international art scene with which Bohemian artists were in a constant dialogue.

Preisler was particularly engaged in the discussions about French contemporary art. In his letter to the members of the Mánes Association from 1909, Preisler passionately points out that artistic developments do not just appear on their own accord but rather stream from a much deeper and longer tradition, as can be seen in French art. Preisler insists that merely copying the final result of a long tradition of artistic development would be a misunderstanding of it. Whether in the case of impressionism or any later style of modern French painting, Preisler urges that merely copying something does not constitute an understanding of it and does not contribute to building a sustainable tradition.<sup>61</sup>

Whenever Preisler paraphrases a composition in his work, be it from French or British artworks, it is crucial to understand that this is not merely a superficial transposition of the formal arrangements of the composition, but rather an act of conscious analysis based on an in-depth study of the subject as well as the study of the artists and artistic traditions that these came from. Nothing is superficial with Preisler, but rather infused with meanings, symbols and a deep appreciation for different national artistic traditions.

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<sup>61</sup> Karel Srp, "Otevřený kruh 1908 - 1917" in in *Jan Preisler 1872 - 1918* (Praha: Obecni Dum, 2003), 208.

A notable example of Preisler's work showing the motif of a communion and an embrace is his oil painting *Kiss* from 1895, linking again to Muther's books. **[Fig 2.24]** Muther's chapter on English art from 1893 included reproductions of Watts's *Orpheus and Eurydice* and *Artemis and Endymion*.<sup>62</sup> **[Fig 2.25]** Watts painted two versions of *Endymion*, both in 1872. The one reproduced by Muther (now in a private collection) is dominated by hues of browns and beige where Artemis' swirly white fabric is shown with plenty of detail **[Fig 2.26]** This version was also converted into a print and widely distributed, before a copy of the print was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1892, proving the long-standing popularity of the composition.<sup>63</sup> The other version (now at the Watts Gallery Trust) is more abstracted and its overall dominant tone is light blue and turquoise colour. **[Fig 2.27]** Artemis is depicted as a spiritual being, transparent and aetheric, appearing in front of our eyes from the mist surrounding the reclining Shepard. This version of Artemis is very similar to the fairy from Preisler's *Kiss*, who appears less material than her human counterpart as she hovers above the ground.

Preisler's *Kiss* reflects the circular dynamic composition of *Artemis and Endymion* including the fluttering fabrics and the closeness of the figures in the gentle gestures of their hands. *Artemis and Endymion* show a dynamic composition, swirling with movement suggesting a circular dynamic powered by the arrangements of the figures. While Watts' layout is horizontal, adding to the almost mesmerizing swirling effect, Preisler's work turns the couple upwards in a portrait format although the overall shape of the piece is almost square. Nonetheless, Preisler's figures create a similar oval shape of spiral-like motion towards one another accentuated with the dynamic fabrics in Watts' work and the richly textured wings of Preisler's angel. While the other painting by Watts, reproduced in the same spread in Muther's book, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, shows a different composition, it still focuses on two figures in a dynamic embrace. **[Fig 2.28]** For Švabinský and Preisler, the two paintings would have worked as

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<sup>62</sup> Muther: *Geschichte der Malerei*, 514 - 515.

It is interesting that Muther refers to the latter painting as *Artemis and Endymion* as the work, which exists in several versions, is usually reproduced under the title of just *Endymion* in later literature.

<sup>63</sup> Hilary Morgan and Peter Nahum, *Burne-Jones, The Pre-Raphaelites and Their Century*, (London: Peter Nahum, 1989) Catalogue number 118.

aesthetic stimuli for a creating dynamic compositions of embracing couples which was a theme that both artists explored around the same time in the mid to late 1890s.

Preisler had a passion for charcoal drawing and alongside his oil painting, which is now kept at the National Gallery in Prague, he produced a detailed charcoal drawing of the same composition, the location of which is unfortunately unknown.<sup>64</sup> The drawing was Preisler's first independent work after leaving art school and as Lenka Byždovská suggests, he perceived this work as a personal one and did not allow it to be reproduced for a number of years.<sup>65</sup> The story behind the painting was the idea of an encounter with a beautiful scent of a flowering bush embodied by the floating embrace of an androgenous winged creature. Preisler was known as a vocal admirer of Burne-Jones, and he would have consulted Muther's book in search of Pre-Raphaelite reproductions. Watts' works, listed just a few pages away from Burne-Jones', would have struck a chord with artists like Preisler and Švabinský. Watts' influence on Czech artists was also channelled via Paris; mainly through the painter Vojtěch Hynais who was based in Paris while working with both Švabinský and Preisler on a series of allegories for the Viennese publisher Gerlach & Schenk. Hynais considered Watts to be the "father of all allegories" and therefore promoted his art among fellow Bohemian artists back in Prague.<sup>66</sup>

In 1898, two years after *The Communion*, Švabinský produced an ink drawing *Joy, Joy* which was again linked to the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics, especially that of Rossetti.<sup>67</sup> **[Fig 2.18]** The composition of the final ink drawing, as well as of a detailed charcoal sketch **[Fig 2.29]** show a pair of lovers indulging in an intense embrace, kissing each other on the lips as they float among scattered roses; on the final version the background consists of swirling sculptural clouds while the bottom part of the composition shows a flurry of joyful putti. The lovers bear resemblance to Ela and Max and thus also the central couple of *The Communion*. The male figure is almost identical while the female character has

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<sup>64</sup> Lenka Byždovská, "Řeč mlčení" in *Jan Preisler 1872 - 1918* (Praha: Obecní Dum, 2003), 23 image 11.

<sup>65</sup> Lenka Byždovská, "Řeč mlčení," 25.

<sup>66</sup> Volavkova: *Max Švabinský*, 12.

<sup>67</sup> Jana Orliková, *Ráj a mytus* (Praha: Gallery, 2001), 14.

lost her powerful long hair to a neat bun. The young man's hair is fluttering wildly in the wind while the woman's hair rests tidy, as if undisturbed by the joyful swirl. From the worried young man in the *Communion*, Švabinský newly transformed his avatar to portray himself as revitalised, clutching his beloved with not a shadow of a doubt. Ela's long hair had been tamed and Švabinský's uncertainties about the relationship cleared. Reinforced by his professional vision, the artist stands energetically in charge of both his talent and his fiancée.

The motive of two lovers floating in their embrace resonates with several British works. Following on the line of enquiry centred on Muther's publications, the English version of *The History of Modern Painting* shows a full-page reproduction of Watts' *Paolo and Francesca* from 1872-75.<sup>68</sup> [Fig 2.30] The painting [Fig 2.31] shows a similar main theme to *Joy, Joy*, a couple in a mutual embrace with fluttering drapes floating through clouds situated diagonally ascending upwards from left to right. While Švabinský's technique is different (ink drawing as opposed to oil painting) the compositional similarity is notable.

*Joy, Joy* also bears striking resemblance to another depiction of the same narrative, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's watercolour from 1855 *Paolo and Francesca di Rimini* [Fig 2.32] as Petr Wittlich pointed out in his 1982 ground-breaking publication on Czech Secession.<sup>69</sup> An interesting connection to this theme from Dante is also mentioned in *The Gothic Soul*, a novel by the Karásek ze Lvovic which I introduced earlier in this chapter. In his novel from 1900, Karásek contrasts the eternal love of Paolo and Francesca to the temporal nature of human life, which he demonstrates with the description of Rossetti unearthing his poems from Siddall's grave.<sup>70</sup> In *Joy, Joy*, the earthly and the heavenly meet in perhaps a more tangible way than in Rossetti's work, which is based on Dante's poetic narrative. In *Joy, Joy*, Švabinský based the female figure on a realistic study of Ela and while the couple are clearly not placed in an earthly setting, the fact that the drawing does not illustrate a literary source makes the

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<sup>68</sup> Muther, *History of Modern Painting*, 632. Interestingly, the German version *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX Jahrhundert* does not show this reproduction at all, while many other images are duplicated in both language versions.

<sup>69</sup> Petr Wittlich, *Česká secese* (Praha: odeon, 1982), 57.

<sup>70</sup> Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic, *Gotická duše*, (Praha: Kamila Neumannova, 1905), 8-9.

depiction closer to Max's personal expression of his feelings towards his fiancée.

In Rossetti's *Paolo and Francesca*, it is especially the first and the last section of the triptych that relates to *Joy, Joy*. The first scene shows a tender kiss shared by the couple. The third part of Rossetti's triptych was originally intended to form the centre of the composition, painted in oil; however, in the end only the watercolour version was painted with Paolo and Francesca flying through hell at the far right of the triptych.<sup>71</sup> Although Francesca's hair plays a far more visually stunning role in the painting in comparison to Ela, overall the depiction of the lovers' intense emotions are strikingly similar, accentuating the dynamic diagonal flow of the couple in each other's arms. For Švabinský, ink drawing represented the highest technique; in the case of *Joy, joy* – unlike the *Communion* – Max never converted it to an oil painting.

Švabinský's main intention with the drawing was to get it published in the weekly newspaper *Zlatá Praha (Golden Prague)* which was very popular at that time for combining news and politics with reviews of cultural activities in the municipality. Švabinský originally named the drawing *The Dream of Young Age*. However, when he showed the drawing to the newspaper's editor and well-respected Czech poet Jaroslav Vrchlický, the poet allegedly sighed "Joy, joy...!", hence the painting became known under this new title<sup>72</sup>. Vrchlický had an interest in Rossetti himself, which he demonstrated in two poems published in 1896 and dedicated to Rossetti's paintings *La Bella Mano* and *Astarte Syrica*.<sup>73</sup> Vrchlický was exceptionally gifted in his knowledge of languages, he translated prose and poetry from a range of languages including English, French, Italian, Spanish and several others.<sup>74</sup> He would have read Rossetti's poems in English; Vrchlický never officially translated any of Rossetti's poems,

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<sup>71</sup> Robert Upstone, *The Pre-Raphaelite Dream* (London: Tate, 2003), 72.

<sup>72</sup> Orliková, *Ráj a mytus*, 14.

<sup>73</sup> Czech electronic library – fulltext database of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century poetry/ Česka elektronická knihovna - plnotextová databáza české poezie 19. a počátku 20. Století, Accessed May 13, 2020, <http://www.ceska-poezie.cz/cek>

<sup>74</sup> "Jaroslav Vrchlický", *Online Literary Database*, Accessed April 6, 2021, <http://www.svet-literatury.wz.cz/autori/vrchlicky.htm>

but his own works shows that he had good knowledge of both Pre-Raphaelite poetry and artwork.

I have previously mentioned the connection between Pre-Raphaelite art and poetry in Czech periodicals where articles on Rossetti sometimes appeared together with the Czech translations of his poetry, such as in *Rozhledy* in 1899<sup>75</sup>. [Fig 2.33]. The poem featured there was the Czech translation of *The Blessed Damozel*, linked to Rossetti's painting from 1875. [Fig 2.34] The poem and the painting belong among Rossetti's so called 'double works of art' (i.e. artworks that feature poems) and so it is therefore apt that the Czech translation was featured together with the article.<sup>76</sup> There are two versions of the painting, an earlier one from 1871-78, and a later replica made for Frederick Leyland in 1879.<sup>77</sup> The upper third of the original older painting shows a series of embracing couples in various stages of the embrace. Some of the couples are kissing on the lips, others are pressing their cheeks together, others are resting heads on each other's shoulders or stretching their arms towards an embrace. There are red roses scattered around the swirling couples. Švabinský's embracing couple from *Joy, Joy* is almost like another addition to this pantheon of embraces.

Švabinský was very fond of the drawing *Joy, joy*. According to Ela, he decided to show the work to Mikoláš Aleš (1852 – 1913) an icon of the preceding generation of Czech painters. Ela recorded how insulted Švabinský felt after Aleš half-jokingly suggested that the composition would have worked better if the young man had "grasped his young love by her backside".<sup>78</sup> *Joy, Joy* falls within the phase of Švabinský's work inspired by the purity of idealised love. There is a rather astonishing difference between these early works of the artist, and his later etchings depicting his second wife. After leaving Ela in 1919, Švabinský produced numerous etchings depicting himself and his new love as

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<sup>75</sup> Pohorecká –Šebkova, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," 14-20.

<sup>76</sup> At the University of York, there are currently two PhD projects exploring Rossetti's 'double works' by Kayleigh Williams and by Nicholas Dunn.

<sup>77</sup> A reproduction of the painting also featured in Richard Muther's books, but both English and German version only show the first version of the painting without the embracing couples at the top. Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX Jahrhundert*, 472; Muther, *History of Modern Painting*, 579.

<sup>78</sup> Švabinská, *Světla paměti*, 78. When translating this passage, I decided to go with the term 'backside' as this is a colloquial expression, in line with the Czech humorous original.



Adam and Eve in paradise. As if fascinated with his newly embraced sexuality, the artist indulged in depicting scenes of intense erotic feel, a far cry from the virgin-like decency of his early works portraying Ela. This further supports my argument that Ela played a substantial role in the creation of Švabinský's artwork inspired by the Pre-Raphaelitism. The artist remained the same, but Max's leaving Ela meant a radical shift in his work – as radical as the role that Ela must have played in constructing Max's artistic identity.

### **Countryside as a Socially Engaged Narrative**

Švabinský's fascination with Ela as his main model took on several forms. The works I introduced in the previous section placed Ela in an idealised unearthly setting building mainly on the aesthetics of Rossetti's late works – although neither of these were directly linked to any literary or mythological sources, which was particularly important to Švabinský. Max's next statement painting shifted Ela's role from portraying a symbolic lover to embodying a symbol of the Bohemian countryside. His large vibrant painting *The Poor Region* [Fig 2.35] from 1900 carries a social message and celebrates the resilient inhabitants of rural Bohemia. Unlike Švabinský's colour-coordinated portraits of Ela and his enamoured joyous drawing of the two lovers, the *Poor Region* introduces a new angle in the artist's oeuvre. Ela is no longer a symbol of unearthly love and or semi-mystical creature. Quite the contrary, here Ela transforms into a very palpable metaphor for the working country folk of the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands.

*The Poor Region* is one of Švabinský's best-known works, well established in the Czech national pantheon and having proliferated into the national psyche beyond the art historical and academic circles. In 2013, a drawing of Švabinský painting *Poor Region* even appeared as a 'Google Doodle' header celebrating 140 years anniversary of the artist's birth, thus symbolically setting the artist and his work in a popularised contemporary context.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> TS, "Sto čtyřicáté výročí narození Maxe Švabinského slaví i český Google", *iDnes Zpravodajství*, Sept 17, 2013, Accessed 21 Oct 2023, [https://www.idnes.cz/kultura/vytvarne-umeni/google-svabinsky.A130916\\_155235\\_vytvarne-umeni\\_ts](https://www.idnes.cz/kultura/vytvarne-umeni/google-svabinsky.A130916_155235_vytvarne-umeni_ts)

This large-scale oil painting came about as a reaction to the artist's stay in Paris, where Švabinský spent a year between 1898 and 1899. Ela also visited Max in Paris and travelled with him back home via Dresden. As we know from Ela's memoirs, Švabinský was enchanted by the impressionists but thought they lacked the rules of classical pictorial composition. Combining the impressionist light style of painting, fully mastering plain-air painting skills and yet being able to produce a well-structured composition – that was Švabinský's great plan.<sup>80</sup> He started to work on the idea of *Poor Region* towards the end of his Parisian sojourn and began painting as soon as he returned to Prague in late 1899.

The idea behind the painting was to create a modern allegory of the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands where Ela's family owned a holiday cottage. After meeting Ela, Švabinský visited the cottage on a regular basis and after their marriage Ela and he would spend every summer there. A great number of Švabinský's paintings had been conceived during the idyllic summers at the village of Kozlov. The Bohemian-Moravian Highlands was an area known for the hard lives of its inhabitants with difficult farming conditions and harsh mountainous climate. The visual sublime beauty of these lands contrasted with the poor social and economic circumstances of its people. *Poor Region* was meant to be a celebration of the strength of those who call this region their home, as well as social criticism of the harshness of life there, deprived of the modern technological inventions that were available in Prague or other larger cities.

For the first time, Švabinský is perhaps unconsciously tapping into the socially minded stream of Pre-Raphaelite works, represented by paintings like Ford Madox Brown's *Work* (1852 -1865) or – perhaps of a more relevant composition – John Everett Millais's *Blind Girl* (1856). **[Fig 2.36]** The character of the blind girl was both an allegorical painting as well as a study of the of poverty in the countryside. The work can be interpreted as an allegory of the senses, contrasting the visually stunning scenery of a double rainbow on a stormy day to the blindness of the main protagonist. A note hanging under the young

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According to the article Švabinský and Alphonse Mucha are the only artists among the only 17 Czech-related themes ever featured in a Google Doodle.

<sup>80</sup> Švabinská: *Vzpomínky*, 170.

woman's shawl reads 'pity the blind'; her eyes are closed and her expression emotionless. The young woman has temporarily neglected her accordion, she's holding the little girl's tiny palm with one hand, while reaching out to touch the leaves of grass on the ground next to her in a gesture almost identical to Ela's in *The Poor Region*. Apart from the analogy of the senses, the painting can be read as a criticism of poverty and the societal status of the disabled, who were often criminalised and pushed to the fringes of the society.<sup>81</sup> In this interpretation, Millais uses the blind girl as a symbolic embodiment of the disabled and impoverished in his country. Similarly, Max portrays Ela as a personification of the poor and struggling region of the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands.

I have previously linked Švabinský's *Communion* to Burne-Jones's *Love Among the Ruins*. [Fig 2.17] There are however more works by Burne-Jones that show similarities to Švabinský's work. Muther's "*Geschichte der Malerei*" from 1894 included numerous Pre-Raphaelite reproductions, including Burne-Jones' *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid* from 1884.<sup>82</sup> [Fig 2.37, 2.38] It is extremely likely that Švabinský would have been acquainted with the volume especially as it also featured a reproduction of Burne-Jones' depiction of Merlin and Vivien, which Ela describes in her memoirs.<sup>83</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that *King Cophetua* is reflected in *Poor Region*. The seated female figure strikes a similar pose to the beggar girl in Burne-Jones's painting *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid* of 1884. Ela's pose in *Poor Region*, as well as her unsettled look towards the viewer, both relate to Burne-Jones' beggar maid. Just like a beggar, Ela represents the poverty of her land, its bare and rugged beauty, the hardship of its inhabitants. Burne-Jones shows the King infatuated by the sight of the beautiful maiden. In *Poor Region*, the viewer is placed in the position of the King – facing the seated Ela, the viewer cannot but be charmed by her, as well as unsettled by her poverty. Švabinský

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<sup>81</sup> Graeme Douglas, "Pity the blind"? Hidden stories of empowerment and inclusion in John Everett Millais' *The Blind Girl* (1856)", *Midlands Art Papers* 3, Special Issue: Inclusion, Disability and Access in the Arts (2019/20), Accessed Sept 20, 2023, <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/lcahm/departments/historyofart/research/projects/map/issue3/douglas-pity-the-blind.aspx>

<sup>82</sup> Muther: *Geschichte der Malerei*, 483.

<sup>83</sup> Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei*, 493; Švabinská, *Vzpomínky* 142-3.

makes a powerful statement, merging his admiration for his fiancée with paying respects to the Highlands. With Ela's pose so strongly reminiscent of the beggar maid, the painting can be read as a tribute to Burne-Jones too.

On one level, *The Poor Region* was a rite of transition for Švabinský. Towards the end of his stay in Paris, he proposed to Ela and negotiated with her family about the practical steps leading to their marriage. Švabinský also needed to make sure his mother and grandmother would approve. Ela remarks in her memoirs that he had to make special promises to them that nothing would change in the way he treated them and that he would not shorten the time spent with them in order to be with his new wife. Painting a tribute to the Highlands where Ela came from can therefore be interpreted as a statement of his personal belonging. Although Švabinský always took great care of his mother, it was undoubtedly Ela's family that he now bonded with on an emotional as well as on a societal level.

It was also with Ela's family where Švabinský would indulge in many talks about art, including about his English favourites, such as Burne-Jones. In her memoirs, Ela recorded how after one of the frequent debates about art her mother exclaimed in happiness:

You see, even I now know very well who Rembrandt is, and Rafael, Menzel and Burne-Jones!<sup>84</sup>

However, as with other Bohemian artists at the time, I am not looking for a single source of inspiration but rather for a cluster of references. Apart from Burne-Jones, Švabinský would have followed other examples too. He admired the work of Jules Bastien-Lepage, an artist with a strong following across Central and Eastern Europe, whose 1877 painting *Haymaking* shows the main female protagonist sitting in a similar pose to Ela in *Poor Region*.<sup>85</sup> [Fig 2.39] A reproduction of haymaking also featured in Muther's *Geschichte der Malerei im*

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<sup>84</sup> Švabinská: *Vzpomínky*, 108.

<sup>85</sup> Bastien Lepage has immense following across central and eastern Europe, as was shown during the 2022 international conference on Naturalism in Hungary. An array of international speakers addressed the role of Bastien-LePage uncovering his wide international following and his widespread fame across Central and Eastern Europe. Conference website, Accessed May 16, 2023, <https://en.mng.hu/events/34155/>

*XIX Jahrhundert*<sup>86</sup>. **[Fig 2.40]** But there would have been more recent art forms at play too; as an avid follower of art journals and publications, Švabinský would have surely seen the Viennese magazine *Ver Sacrum* which published regular reports from the Viennese Camera Club. In July 1889, this report included a photograph by Heinrich Kuhn of two rural Dutch women, ‘Grijetje and Tryntje’, one standing and the other reclining in a pose very similar to *Poor Region*.<sup>87</sup> **[Fig 2.41]** As photography was much debated among Bohemian artists, as was *Ver Sacrum* overall, perhaps the photograph assisted in composing Ela’s posture for *Poor Region*. In this way, the influence of Burne-Jones is situated alongside other international artists’ work and alongside contemporary art journalism.

There are notable differences between these works, though. In Bastien-Lepage’s painting, the dominant feature is its naturalism and almost a documentary precision, as if we as the viewers were simply observing a scene that is taking place regardless of our presence. It doesn’t take much to buy into the story and into the believability of its protagonists. In contrast, in *The Poor Region*, Ela is looking straight at the viewer, creating an unearthly and unsettling scene. Ela’s gesture of clutching onto the blossoming heather creates a feeling of anxiety and desperation, perhaps reminiscent of Ophelia picking flowers before her tragic death. Unlike in *Haymaking*, where both peasants rest after their hard work, Švabinský’s painting does not make it clear what character Ela is embodying and why is she seated precisely where we find her. Unlike in Bastien-Lepage’s painting, Ela is not resting with her family and co-workers, she is on her own in an abandoned landscape thus defying a clear narrative. Bastien-Lepage’s young woman is appropriately dressed for a hard day’s work in the fields, while Ela’s attire feels clearly like a costume, with her ragged strap top much alike the beggar maid in Burne-Jones. Although Švabinský’s intention was to highlight the hard life of the inhabitants of this particular region, Ela’s look creates a rather more mysterious, symbolic and

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<sup>86</sup> Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei*, 12.

<sup>87</sup> “Aus Dem Wiener Camera Club”, *Ver Sacrum* 1, no. 7 (1898): 31.

even historicising feel, not necessarily resonant with the region's concurrent working folk.

Further to add to the mosaic of international formative works for Švabinský is the painting *Spring* by the Danish painter Harald Slott-Møller from 1896.<sup>88</sup> **[Fig 2.42]** The artist is also mentioned by Muther although *Spring* is not reproduced in his publications.<sup>89</sup> Harald Slott-Møller (1864 – 1937) was a prominent Danish painter and sculptor, associated mainly with the Symbolism movement. While the Danish social, political and financial situation was different from the Bohemian conditions, there were nonetheless shared areas of interest for the artists of both countries at the time. These included questions of nationalism, the diversification of arts, crafts and design, as well as the reception of Art Nouveau. Slott-Møller was one of the prominent members of the *Skønvirke* movement, the Danish version of Art Nouveau which emphasised the role of decorative arts and the synthesis of art and modern life.

There is an interesting link between Švabinský and Harald Slott-Møller: that of the role of their wives. Harald's wife Agnes is known to have been the model to many of his paintings, while also maintaining her own prolific career as a painter. Agnes Slott-Møller (1862 – 1937) was mainly known for her nationalistic themes in painting, as well as her historic painting in the Symbolist style. Born in Copenhagen, Agnes was lucky to be supported by her family in her desire to study art. While the options to study art as a woman were limited at the time across the Continent, Agnes attended the Danish Art School for Women, a forward-looking institution, one of the pioneering establishments in art education for women in an international context. Unlike Ela, Agnes was institutionally supported in her quest to become a professional artist and became well established in her lifetime. Her interest in Norse folklore and history led her to develop a passion for nationally-themed depictions of historical or mythological scenes. When Agnes married Harald in 1888, both artists exhibited together and explored various aspects of Symbolism while retaining their individual

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<sup>88</sup> Many thanks to my supervisor Liz Prettejohn who alerted me to the painting just as a sketch of it went on sale at Christies. Accessed Sept 11, 2023, [https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-6438331?ldp\\_breadcrumb=back&intObjectID=6438331&from=salessummary&lid=1](https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-6438331?ldp_breadcrumb=back&intObjectID=6438331&from=salessummary&lid=1)

<sup>89</sup> Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei*, 260.

distinct styles. For Agnes, her personal style combined decorative detail with allegorical and patriotic subjects celebrating Denmark's cultural past.<sup>90</sup>

As Lene Østermark-Johansen remarks, Agnes and Harald were avid readers of English art journals such as *The Studio* and *The Magazine of Art* and were great admirers of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.<sup>91</sup> The couple also repeatedly visited London in the years 1896-97, and again in 1899-1900. They met with British artists such as Walter Crane and Robert Anning Bell – both artists who had a notable following in Bohemia, as I will analyse in Chapter 4. The Slott-Møllers even exhibited at the Royal Academy in the late 1890s and for some time they fostered the hope that they may move their artistic careers to London. This was however stopped by the Boer war and by Agnes' second pregnancy. Agnes, who was heavily invested in promoting Danish folklore and legends, even started translating Danish legends into English, although a publication of these never materialised. Agnes' understanding of Pre-Raphaelitism inspired her to focus on the medieval aspects of their paintings and to explore the literary sources associated with Pre-Raphaelite artworks. As I have already suggested, Švabinský's take on the Brotherhood came from a completely different perspective as the Czech painter considered both the medievalism and the close links to literature to be the least appealing features of Pre-Raphaelite works.

While Agnes was active as a professional artist, she also modelled for Harald's paintings, similarly to Ela. Harald's *Spring* was created as a statement piece to be shown at the exhibition "Den Frie Udstilling" in 1896 where a selection of Danish artists exhibited works that went against the mainstream academic conventions. The exhibition was part of the Danish Symbolist and Modernist movements, and as such, *Spring* was a representative of the Danish upbeat, fresh and cutting-edge approach to painting at the time. In the exhibition, the

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<sup>90</sup> Iben Overgaard, "Agnes Slott-Møller – With and Against the Times", Iben Overgaard, ed., *Agnes Slott-Møller: A Thing of Beauty is a Thing of Joy Forever*, (Viborg: [Skovgaard Museet](#), 2008): 8.

<sup>91</sup> Lene Østermark-Johansen, "From an immortal name in Heaven to Perdition in Hell: Agnes Slott-Møller and the English Art World", Iben Overgaard, ed., *Agnes Slott-Møller: A Thing of Beauty is a Thing of Joy Forever*, (Viborg: [Skovgaard Museet](#), 2008): 15; 89. I am very grateful to Lene for pointing my attention to the Slott-Møllers and for our stimulating discussions about the similarities between the Švabinskýs and the Danish couple. I would like to carry on further research of this theme in the future.

painting was appreciated as one of the foundational pieces of Danish modernity.

Agnes' role in the painting is much debated and corresponds in part to how I have positioned Ela as the 'producer' of Max's works. It has been suggested that the marriage of Harald and Agnes was based on Agnes' multilayered role as a wife, a caretaker, an artist as well as a model.<sup>92</sup> The similarity between Ela and Agnes therefore situates the *Poor Region* into a rich international context. Again, what comes to light here is the overlapping of several networks – that of women artists, that of the changing status of female agency in art in terms of redefining the term 'muse', but also an international network of artists from the traditional centres and peripheries who travel through the continent, exhibit and visit other artists' exhibitions, read international art journals and create works inspired by a vibrant array of 'influences' – Pre-Raphaelite, Symbolist, Modern, Art Nouveau... Our existing terminology does not seem to be sufficient for such an interconnected world of mutual exposures and intertwining.

Slott-Møller's *Spring* shows several striking resemblances to *Poor Region* although its protagonist seems younger than Ela. The title *Spring* also identifies the scene more clearly as a metaphor for the season of the year which would explain why Harald depicts Agnes as a younger woman, symbolising the awakening of both womanhood and the season of the year. In *Spring*, the model is seated in a similar pose to Ela, and her attire seems similarly costume-like rather than a farming dress like the one in *Haymakers*. The colour palette of *Spring* is much warmer and more cheerful as it celebrates the season of blooms and the natural awakening. While *Spring* was not reproduced in *Volné Směry* and Ela does not mention the work in her memoirs, the compositional resemblance to *Poor Region* is striking. The socially critical aspect of *Poor Region* remains however the main difference distinguishing the three works. The female character's pose is similar, but Burne-Jones' work is a tribute to a legendary narrative, Bastien-Lepage explores the boundaries of naturalism,

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<sup>92</sup> Helle Nanny Brendstrup, "Agnes Slott-Møller relationship with the Painter Harald Slott-Møller Before and During their Marriage", Iben Overgaard, ed., *Agnes Slott-Møller: A Thing of Beauty is a Thing of Joy Forever*, (Viborg: [Skovgaard Museet](#), 2008): 19.



Slott-Møller's aim was an allegory while Švabinský focused on a mixture of both allegory and naturalism.

In 1900, after the completion of *The Poor Region*, Švabinský experimented with a similarly socially minded theme in his series of drawings and etchings *By the Loom*. [Fig 2.43, 2.44] Originally produced as a round painting in 1900, *By the Loom* was later exhibited in the USA and bought for San Francisco where it was destroyed in a major fire accident. This left Švabinský with only the drawing and watercolour versions, and a series of lithograph replicas of the painting, printed in 1903. The original circular drawing was exhibited as part of the seventh exhibition of the Manes Association in Prague, and apart from being reproduced in *Volné Směry*, the painting was also mentioned in *The Studio* in 1904, where a photograph was shown from the exhibition showing the prominence of the painting in the display. The excited account of the work reads: "Quite a masterpiece in drawing was the large rondo *U stavu* ('at the loom') which would find its equals only in a large international exhibition."<sup>93</sup>

The lithograph uses Ela as the main subject of the painting, but this time she is literally interwoven into the dominant the entire composition: a large domestic loom. The composition takes place in the Kozlov, the beloved village where Švabinský and Ela's family owned a house which they used as a summer residence. Originally a small village hut, the house was extended it into a comfortable country cottage, and Švabinský even decorated its façade with a mural painting of St Wenceslas, the patron of Bohemia.<sup>94</sup>

*By the Loom* is set in an interior of a room typical for the Kozlov region with its low wooden ceilings and religious icons on the walls. The room was modelled after the Švabinský's' neighbours in Kozlov, a countryside-based rural family who owned the depicted loom. Due to the lack of quality farming-land in the Highlands, many families in the region used weaving as their main income stream. This was the case with the neighbours' family where the father was a full-time weaver. Švabinský visited the family and according to Ela's memoirs,

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<sup>93</sup> "Studio Talk – Prague", *The Studio*, no.131 (1904): 83 – 85.

<sup>94</sup> 'St Wenceslas receiving gifts' was painted by Max Švabinský with the help of Ela's brother Rudolf Vejrych and friend Otakar Vaňáč. The cottage is now part of the Town Museum Česká Třebová. Accessed Aug 12, 2022, <http://mmct.cz/pristupne-pamatky-chaloupka-maxe-svabinskeho.php>

he was entranced by the subdued light in the room and the giant construction of the loom which dominated the whole space.<sup>95</sup> Ela devotes several pages of her memoirs to Max's experience of discovering the loom, and to the fascination stirred among the villagers when Max started working on the painting directly in the neighbours' room.

For Švabinský, the loom itself represented the craft of weaving which by 1900 was a disappearing industry. Looms like this one would traditionally secure the livelihood of an entire family and would be one of the most common sources of income in the region. With the industrial revolution reaching Bohemian Lands, and with Ruskin's criticism of industrialisation only just becoming the talk of the day among Bohemian intellectuals, Švabinský most probably intended this work to be a tribute to those values of handicraft and manual production that were mirrored in William Morris' work, whose designs were reproduced in *Volné Směry* the same year.

As I have shown in the previous chapter, Both Ruskin and Morris were much debated in Czech fine art journals in the year 1900. Their focus on anti-industrialisation and the value of handicrafts and manual production was contrasted with the industrial advancements that were taking place across Austria-Hungary. In the light of these debates, Švabinský's aim to point to the endangered craft of manual weaving fits within a larger debate, reaching beyond the borders of central Europe and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. With *By the Loom*, Švabinský was joining forces with Morris, Ruskin, and the Pre-Raphaelites in making a case for the value of manual craft. Švabinský intuitively continued in the spirit captured in an endearing Burne-Jones' sketch of William Morris from 1880, which shows Morris diving into a loom, demonstrating the craft to the public with unhindered passion.<sup>96</sup> **[Fig 2.45]**

As Ela points out, Švabinský was also inspired by the "green light" in the room and this was captured on the painting, which had a circular shape, unlike the lithograph which survives today.<sup>97</sup> Ela further describes how she modelled for

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<sup>95</sup> Švabinská, *Vzpomínky*, 212-214.

<sup>96</sup> Morris' passion for weaving features throughout the publication Suzanne Fagence Cooper, *How We Might Live: At Home with Jane and William Morris*, (Quercus Publishing, 2022)

<sup>97</sup> Švabinská, *Vzpomínky*, 213

the composition every day throughout the whole summer with many onlookers from the village coming to have a peek, fascinated by the fact that a “noble gentleman from Prague” came to the village to paint an ordinary loom.<sup>98</sup>

In the lithograph, Ela has fallen asleep on the loom in daytime as there is fresh light coming through the window - a feature that would have been more prominent on the perished painting. Ela describes that her character was meant to look as if she was lulled to sleep by the sunlight pouring in through the window, leaving the world of labour and drifting off to a land of dreams.<sup>99</sup> This statement resonates with her remarks, debated earlier in this chapter, about the Pre-Raphaelites being mainly interested in the world of dreams and fantasies.

But there is more to the image than just the sweet slumber of a village girl. Similar to *Poor Region*, in *By the Loom*, Ela symbolically embodies the whole region and its industry, the decline of traditional ways of making a living and thus a decline of the sustainable lifestyle of the region’s communities. The young village girl’s rest is a premonition of her and her region’s looms going silent, overshadowed by industrial weaving, shutting down the last resort of financial income for thousands of families.

On another level, in resonance with the debates that took place in passionate articles across Czech art journals of the day, Ela could be a symbol of Bohemian art and its stagnation as it finds itself torn between the nationalist ideals and the outward looking tendency towards international art. Švabinský returned from Paris just a year before completing *By the Loom*, so he would have had a first-hand experience of the differences between the more insular Bohemian and the internationally vibrant French cultural milieu.

Formally, there is much in *By the Loom* that Švabinský borrowed from Pre-Raphaelite artwork. Ela’s figure bears a striking resemblance to Burne-Jones’ *The Garden Court* from his *Briar Rose* series [Fig 2.46], a series of works that span over two decades and encompassed three separate series.<sup>100</sup> Ela is

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<sup>98</sup> Švabinská, *Vzpomínky*, 213

<sup>99</sup> Švabinská, *Vzpomínky*, 213

<sup>100</sup> Watercolour sketch for the painting from the Cleveland Museum dates 1872, the final painting dates to 1894. Accessed Aug 11, 2023. <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MjU4Mg==>

almost a perfect mirror image of Burne-Jones's sleeping maiden, with the loom framing her collapsed body, and her arms and hands stretched out in almost an identical pose. In the 1872 watercolour sketch now at the Cleveland Museum, **[Fig 2.47]**, Burne-Jones seemed to have been equally as fascinated by the construction of the loom as later Švabinský was upon seeing the loom in Kozlov. In Burne-Jones' sketch, the straight and sturdy lines of the loom dominate the composition, giving it a geometric grounding. In the final painting, the loom still represents a notable compositional device, slicing the picture into two halves.

When Ela describes how captivated Švabinský was upon seeing the neighbours' loom, what she perhaps means is that Max was fascinated by the loom exactly because it reminded him of Burne-Jones' composition. However, with Max's passion for realism, his intention was to transpose Burne-Jones' composition from its fairy-tale dimension back to the reality of contemporary countryside living. This is reflected in Ela's dress, which is based on the local traditional costume.

Švabinský's lithograph sits somewhere between Burne-Jones' fairy-tale and the contemporary reports on the advancements of the textile industry. Images of modern mechanised looms were common in the 1890s in Britain, as Kristina Huneault demonstrates on the depictions such as Alexander Gow and Co's General Union of Associations of Loom Onlookers' emblem from 1890 **[Fig 2.48]**, or the painted silk central panel of the Blackburn and District Weavers', Winders' and Warpers' Association from 1901-02.<sup>101</sup> **[Fig 2.49]**

In Prague, the brewery owner turned museum founder Vojta Náprstek (1826 – 1894) promoted industrial advancements in technology with the ultimately charitable aim of liberating women from the ordeal of manual labour at home. **[Fig 2.50]** Fuelled by this vision, Náprstek and a group of his friends even travelled to London in the early 1860s and purchased several industrial devices. His aim was to bring these back to Prague and exhibit them in his planned

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<sup>101</sup> Kristina Huneault, *Difficult Subjects, Working Women and Visual Culture, Britain 1880 – 1914* (Ashgate, 2002) 164, 171.

Industrial Museum which was finally founded in 1866 and was openly inspired by the Kensington Museum as well as the 1862 London exhibition.<sup>102</sup>

Náprstek's fascination with technology was mainly aimed at liberating women from the burden of domestic manual labour. Náprstek even brought from London to Prague several issues of *The English Women's Journal* and used it as an example of the forward-thinking women who, in his view, surpassed their male counterparts.<sup>103</sup> Such view of female agency must have intrigued the young Ela, who oftentimes mentions in her memoirs how lifechanging it was when Max hired a maid to help Ela out with housework and cooking, and only with the maid in the house could Ela enjoy her artistic pastimes.

However, by the year 1900, the debate in Czech cultural circles shifted from the general adoration of technology and its efficiency towards a more critical approach, mainly linked to the loss of traditional skills and crafts in the countryside. As Marta Filipová showed, Bohemian peasants and country folk were used as a spectacle during the Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition of 1895.<sup>104</sup> Given how important a role folklore and traditional designs played in the attempts to formulate the specific character of Czech 'national' art, the booming industrial production directly endangered the very existence of the country-life crafts. This created a problem for those artists and theorists who based their artistic 'Czechness' on traditional crafts linked to the life of peasants and their lifestyle. *By the Loom* can therefore be seen as Švabinský's response to this situation, siding with those Bohemian artists and thinkers who promoted the thoughts of Ruskin and Morris in the Czech press in the 1900s.

While the condemnation of industrialisation certainly played a notable role in the creation of *By the Loom*, Švabinský was equally as inspired by the visual aesthetics of the Pre-Raphaelites. With both Ela and Max being passionate about Rossetti and Siddal, the comparison lends itself to the series of personal drawings by Rossetti of Siddal sleeping, resting, or reading. Like Rossetti, Švabinský would sketch Ela in various poses before deciding on a final

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<sup>102</sup> Milena Secká, *Vojta Náprstek: Mecenáš, sběratel a vlastenec* (Vyšehrad, 2011), 114 - 118

<sup>103</sup> Secká, *Vojta Náprstek*, 122

<sup>104</sup> Marta Filipová, "Peasants on Display - Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition of 1895", *Journal of Design History* 24, no. 1 (2011), 15–36.

composition. While *By the Loom* seemed to have been sparked by a physical encounter with the instrument in a Kozlov cottage, the composition of the lithograph resembles in many ways *Dante's Dream at the Time of the Death of Beatrice* (1871) [Fig 2.51] by Rossetti which was reproduced in Muther's *Geschichte* as well as in its English version<sup>105</sup>. [Fig 2.52] Here too the composition is dominated by the angular structure of Beatrice's bed, set in a wooden room with subdued light coming in from an opening above the bed. Beatrice herself is collapsing, and while she is falling backwards as life leaves her, her gesture seems as natural as Ela's folding herself over the loom's rim. On the right, the symbolic red dove of Beatrice's life makes its way out of the room. In a similar place in Švabinský's composition we see an outline of an icon-like religious painting, probably the Virgin and Child. In both compositions, the right-hand side is dedicated to spirituality, and the main character is a woman collapsing - into sleep in Švabinský's case, and into eternal sleep in Rossetti's. Both compositions feature candelabra, fixed above Beatrice's bed and above the loom. While Ela notes that the candelabra was actually part of the neighbour's interior, it is not unthinkable that Švabinský would appreciate the object exactly because it reminded him of Rossetti's painting. Merging the two seemingly opposing tendencies of realism and symbolism is after all a signature style of Švabinský, one that was so strongly informed by Pre-Raphaelite art.

### **Fairy-Tales and Medieval Escapism**

The previously mentioned long and passionate passage in Ela's memoirs describes the dreaminess and out-of-this-world feeling that Pre-Raphaelite paintings evoked in Bohemian audiences. It was therefore often fairy-tale-like, spiritual and supernatural motifs where Bohemian artists reached for Pre-Raphaelite inspiration.

Fairy tale motifs play a central role especially in the early work of Jan Preisler. Preisler embarked on his career in fine arts with a pencil and charcoal drawing called *Easter*. [Fig 2.53] Produced in 1895, the drawing was awarded first prize

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<sup>105</sup> Muther, *History of Modern Painting*, 163-164.; Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei*, 474.

of the *Světazor* magazine and was successfully exhibited at the annual Mánes Association exhibition in 1896. The drawing opened Preisler's professional career with introducing the two themes that would become the main features of his signature style. These were the motif of a young boy, or a youth on the verge of adulthood, and the theme of the beginning of spring, set in a non-specific landscape populated with fairies and spirits. In her essay on Preisler, Lenka Byždovská points out the androgynous look of some of Preisler's figures, linking them to Walter Pater's idea of the "love of strange souls" and the concept of strangeness and beauty as he outlined in his book *The Renaissance* published in 1873.<sup>106</sup>

This applies to *Easter's* main character in the central panel, a young shepherd captured in a state of surprise and trance upon a mystical vision. **[Fig 2.54]** As Petr Wittlich pointed out, the shepherd's looks are a mixture of a boy's face with the features of Preisler's mature female model and friend.<sup>107</sup> The unifying characteristic of almost all Preisler's characters is the dreamy and introspective expression of their faces, not far from the characteristic pensive look of Pre-Raphaelite figures. Preisler's characters are mainly placed in the awakening spring landscape, interpreted by Wittlich as a symbol for puberty and youth, a natural cycle of openness, sensitivity as well as scepticism and introversion.

While the pre-Raphaelite aesthetics played an important role in *Easter*, the drawing is again the case of a work inspired by multiple sources. *Easter* presents a unique mixture of genres and styles. With the crucified Christ on the right-hand side wing of the triptych, the suggestion could be that this is primarily a religious artwork. However, as Byždovská point out, it is the shepherd, and not Christ, that is situated in the centre of the composition, making this work revolve around the personal mystical experience of the boy rather than about the Christian feast. This unusual shift contrasts somewhat to what concurrent art critic Karel Čapek-Chod wrote about the artwork in *Světazor*, where he said that it needs to be presented to the readers "without any words, so that it can speak for itself".<sup>108</sup> This suggests that for Preisler, the understanding and use of

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<sup>106</sup> Lenka Byždovská, "Řeč mlčení", in *Jan Preisler 1872-1918* (Obecní Dům, Praha: 2003), 30

<sup>107</sup> Petr Wittlich, *Jan Preisler – Kresby* (Praha: 1988), 26

<sup>108</sup> K. M. Čapek, "Velikonoce, Karton Jana Preislera" in *Světazor*, 30/ 21 (1895-1896) 251-2

Pre-Raphaelite style came somewhat more naturally without theoretical intellectual elaboration. Unlike Švabinský, Preisler did not feel that Pre-Raphaelitism was too dependent on literary sources, and that in fact works like theirs would be naturally understandable to viewers even without having been propped up by any literary or poetic allusions.

The left wing of the triptych *Easter* shows four angels squeezed into the somewhat contriving space of the drawing. **[Fig 2.55]** The dense feeling these create is reminiscent of the angel heads in Rossetti's paintings from the 1870s, such as *The Blessed Damozel* (1871-8) **[Fig 2.4]** and *La Ghirlandata* (1873). **[Fig 2.56]** The jammed faces of the two angels in *Easter* in the bottom half seem to allude to *The Beloved* (1866-6). One of Preisler's angels here has its face completely covered by another angel's hand, similarly to two women's faces being obscured in the background of *The Beloved*.<sup>109</sup> **[Fig 2.57]** The vertical swirling of the left-wing space also revives the spiralling stairwell of Burne-Jones' *Golden Stairs*, **[Fig 2.58]** which was a painting well known by Bohemian artists and reproduced in *Volné Směry* as well as in Muther's publications.<sup>110</sup> **[Fig 2.59]**

The young boy himself – the hero of the central panel – is a good example of the mixing and merging of 'influences'. Preisler was known for his love of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes and as Byždovská suggests, *Easter* bears resemblance to his *Prodigal Son* from 1879.<sup>111</sup> **[Fig 2.60]** De Chavannes received some notable attention from the editors of *Volné Směry* in 1900 when a long article with numerous reproductions was published by the journal.<sup>112</sup> De Chavannes' composition is indeed very close to Preisler's with the figure off centre and a view of the landscape with grazing sheep among tall trees. De Chavannes' shepherd, however, is a grown man, in line with the Biblical origin of the story. As such, his composition lacks Preisler's hints to puberty and the inevitable painful adulating of the human soul, so typical of Preisler's work.

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<sup>109</sup> Kirsty Stone Walker, *Rossetti Angles Great and Small*, blog post <http://fannycornforth.blogspot.com/2016/12/tuesday-20th-december-rossetti-angels.html>

<sup>110</sup> Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei*, 498.

<sup>111</sup> Byždovská, "Řeč mlčení," 27.

<sup>112</sup> Rodenbach, G, "Puvis de Chavannes", *Volné Směry* IV, no. 4 (1900): 144 – 148.



In a different social context, John Brett's *Stonebreaker* from 1857-58 employs a similar composition to *Easter*.<sup>113</sup> [Fig 2.61] Brett, and like the early Švabinský as well, was critical of the working conditions of those engaged in manual labour. Brett's young boy is tasked with the repetitive and health-endangering act of breaking stones, his face screwed up in a combination of hardship and determination. The boy's age is closer to Preisler's shepherd than to De Chavannes' young man. The facial expressions of both boys carry a strong emotional charge, and it is no coincidence that both are going through an inner transformation while carrying out their job in the unspoilt natural setting surrounding them. Brett's painting was famously applauded by Ruskin, and although Brett was not among the frequently showcased artists in the Czech fine art journals, it is possible that Preisler might have discovered his work through his interest in Ruskin and his support of the Pre-Raphaelites. Preisler was also an active member of *Volné Směry* editorial board and would therefore be among those involved in promoting Ruskin's work in the journal. Preisler's drawings were used as illustrations for the journal's obituary of John Ruskin in 1900, which is where the writer Gustav Jaroš expressed the nation's desire to become closer to British art and culture.<sup>114</sup>

In 1896, Preisler completed a charcoal drawing called *Wind and Breeze* [Figs 2.62 – 2.65] taking inspiration from Burne-Jones. As Wittlich pointed out, the linearity of the wind-spirits' bodies resonates with Burne-Jones' style.<sup>115</sup> Preisler held Burne-Jones in high regard, and of course other Czech artists like Švabinský were paraphrasing his works around the same time. Preisler's *Wind and Breeze* is however linked to a wider international context, again mixing the initial inspiration from the Pre-Raphaelites with an international range of references.

Preisler's drawing taps into the popular fashion of showing nymphs and spirits in the form of scantily clad women placed in a natural setting. Bram Dijkstra calls them "the nymphs with the broken back" and points out the strong sexual

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<sup>113</sup> Tim Barringer, *Men At Work – Art and Labour in Victorian Britain*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 97-99.

<sup>114</sup> Jaroš, "John Ruskin," 89

<sup>115</sup> Wittlich, *Česká secese*, 57.

undertones of similar works, such as Gabriel Guay's *Poem of the Woods* (1889) [Fig 2.66] or Arthur Hacker's *Leaf Drift* (1902).<sup>116</sup> [Fig 2.67] In relation to Hacker it is interesting to point out that Preisler's *Wind and Breeze* was actually created earlier than many of Hacker's works featuring naked fairies sensually drifting through natural elements. Most of Hacker's works in the vein were painted in the early 1900s, such as *The Cloud* from 1901-02. [Fig 2.68] In comparison to Hacker, Preisler's work carries notably stronger undertones of melancholy and introspection, offering a less straightforward sexual sensuality. The motif of semi naked nymphs was popular in various iterations across Europe, so Preisler's focus on the theme was again the result of a very cosmopolitan overview of the 'trending' advancements in the arts.

Another telling example of Preisler's skill in combining sources of inspiration and mixing Pre-Raphaelitism with French art with both a medieval and a fairy-tale aspect is his series of paintings called *The Adventurous Knight Cycle*. [Fig 2.69] Although he never finished this work, Preisler created several oil and pastel sketches [Fig 2.70] for the cycle and spent almost a whole year focusing on the project between 1897 and 1898. The series was planned to consist of four main canvases: two narrow portrait format canvases at each end, and two square central canvases. Between them, two narrow scroll-like paintings were inserted, alluding to the vertical formats typical of Japanese art.<sup>117</sup> [Fig 2.71]

The main protagonist of the series is a medieval-looking knight in his armour but without his helmet, revealing his young face and free flowing long lush hair. The first painting of the series sees him walking across a field with his sword leisurely swung across his shoulder. As he enters the central scene, he pauses in a pensive pose amidst a flowery meadow, out of which a scurry of naked fairies or spirits is seen reaching out to him and grabbing his armoured hands. This central-left canvas was most probably inspired by Georges Antoine Rochegrosse's *Knight among the Flowers* from 1894, as suggested by Wittlich and widely accepted among Czech art historians.<sup>118</sup> [ Fig 2.72] The

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<sup>116</sup> Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity – Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-siecle Culture* (Oxford University Press: 1986), 99-100.

<sup>117</sup> For the context of the reception of Japanese art in Bohemia see: Marketa Hánová: *Japonisme in the Fine Arts of the Czech Lands* (National Gallery in Prague: 2010)

<sup>118</sup> Wittlich, *Jan Preisler – Kresby*.

resemblance is striking, but Preisler's polyptych had a greater ambition than copying Rochegrosse's decorative and eye-catching work. Preisler's ambition was much more contemplative and thoughtful, straying away from the decorativeness of the theme to a deeper reflection. And as it often is the case with more complex thought, the triptych raised more questions than answers.

The second central panel on the right-hand side transcends the physicality of the flower spirits and replaces them with a more spiritual and symbolic figure of a woman, seated behind the knight and looking away from him, as can be seen on one of the sketches. **[Fig 2.73]** On the overall oil sketch the change of seasons is marked by a change of mood, shifting from an energetic spring vibrancy towards an autumnal melancholy. **[Fig 2.71]** The two main figures may remind us of Švabinský's *Communion*, but in Preisler's sketch, the couple part ways, with the etheric muse facing the other way, and the knight left to his solitude. The face of the knight is mirrored in Preisler's illustrations published later in *Volné Směry*, in the 9th issue of 1899, followed by the article *From the Writing of John Ruskin*, featuring Czech translations from *Lectures on Art and The Laws of Fésole*.<sup>119</sup> **[Fig 2.74, 2.75]** Here the knight transforms into a farmer sowing seeds in a spring landscape. As I mentioned earlier, there was an important connection between Preisler, and Ruskin's texts published in the journal. It is important to realise the connection between Preisler's knight and the illustrations for *Volné Směry* that intersected translations of Ruskin's texts. Since Preisler was on the editorial board of *Volné Směry*, it is likely that featuring his illustrations next to Ruskin's text was a programmatic statement.

As Byždovská points out, when in 1921 the Czechoslovakian art historian František Žákavec wrote about Preisler's *Adventurous Knight* cycle, he asked: "What undertakings is this Wagnerian or Burne-Jones-esque Percival pursuing?"<sup>120</sup> The reference to Burne-Jones is especially fitting in relation to his series *The Briar Rose*, which exists in several versions, most notably the 'large' and 'small' versions.<sup>121</sup> **[Fig 2.76, 2.77]**. Burne-Jones worked on these for over

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<sup>119</sup> "Fragmenty z knih Johna Ruskina," *Volné Směry* III, no. 9 (1899): 479 – 488.

<sup>120</sup> Byždovská, "Řeč mlčení," 59.; František Žákavec, *Jan Preisler* (Praha: 1921), 2.

<sup>121</sup> Edward Burne-Jones, "The Prince Enters the Wood", oil on canvas, 61.3 x 129.5 cm, The MET, Accessed Sept 12, 2023, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/888175>

two decades from late 1860s until the year 1890 when the cycle was exhibited at Agnews Gallery in London. The exhibition was greatly successful and as a result a set of luxurious photogravures was produced in 1892 at one-third the scale of the originals, using a technique that combines photography and etching, as the proof of the series from the MET demonstrates.<sup>122</sup> **[Fig 2.78]** Reproducing the series as photogravures enabled their international dissemination and enhanced accessibility of Burne-Jones' work, which already had a notable following on the Continent. Preisler's reaction to the series resonates not only in his unfinished series of the *Adventurous Knight* but proliferates further into his work ranging from painting to illustration, such as his charcoal drawing illustrating a passage from the poem by the Czech poet Jan Neruda from 1901, where Preisler combines the character of the black-haired knight in his armour with a maiden hidden in an overgrowth of thorny rose bushes, directly referencing Burne-Jones' Briar Rose cycle. **[Fig 2.79]** This is of course the same time when Švabinský was working on his *By the Loom* painting and drawings, with Ela explicitly quoting one of Burne-Jones' *Briar Rose* figures. This confirms what Ela suggested in her memoirs, that the Pre-Raphaelites did grasp the imagination of a number of Bohemian artists and that Švabinský was by far not alone in reflecting their work. Equally so, while both Švabinský and Preisler borrowed selected motifs from Burne-Jones, they also transformed these in line with their own personal styles and narratives, not merely copying the British artist, but infusing his motifs with their own Bohemian content and symbolism.

Apart from Burne-Jones, Sir Arthur Hacker's *Sir Percival with the Grail Cup* from 1890 lends itself to a comparison with Preisler's cycle **[Fig 2.80]**. In posing his question, Žákavec puts his finger on the merging of 'influences' typical not only for Preisler but for the entire Bohemian artistic climate at the turn of the century. The mention of Wagner of course denotes not only German culture but also hints to the entire German-speaking cultural sphere including the wider Austro-

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<sup>122</sup> The photogravures of the Briar Rose Series were published after they were exhibited to great acclaim at Agnew's London gallery in 1890. William Morris even composed a poem for the original frame. MET online catalogue, Accessed Sept 12, 2023, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/633642>

Hungarian Empire. Most importantly though, Žákavec understands Preisler as being connected equally to both the German and the British traditions.

Shortly after completing his illustrations for Jan Neruda's poems, Preisler created a series of canvases and sketches under the title *Fairy-tale* from 1901-1902. [Fig 2.81, 2.82] In *Fairy-tale*, Preisler combines the female character from the Neruda illustration (where she was shown trapped in a bush of wild roses) but leaves out the character of the knight. The imagined dialogical situation of the illustration shifts from the starting position where the maiden looks at the knight, to the final painting where the princess looks at the viewer, thus placing them in the position of her now absent partner. In doing so, Preisler has shifted the agency from the knight to the viewer, making the princess' face pose the imaginary question to the viewer as to whether they will or won't rush to her rescue – and whether she needs saving at all.

Preisler's *Fairy-Tale* makes it obvious that its roots are in a fantastical world. The princess, whose legs are encircled by several branches of wild roses, sits facing the viewer while a large dark dragon lies peacefully besides her. While the roses cannot be but a reference to Burne-Jones' *Briar Rose* series (a reference already implemented in the illustration to Neruda's poem) the painting seems to suggest a continuation of the *Briar Rose* rather than just creating a look-alike of it. Preisler's princess is wide awake; grasping a wild rose in her hand suggests that she has some command over her destiny. This princess sits empowered, aware of her strength, with both the roses and the dragon under her command. It seems like Preisler is offering Burne-Jones a resolution for his *Briar Rose* cycle, as well as a climax to his own unfinished cycle of the *Adventurous Knight*.

Dragons were a popular theme among Pre-Raphaelite painters, often appearing as part of the legend of St George and the Dragon, or in a more general medieval reference frame. Burne-Jones's cycle of *The Legend of St George and the Dragon* from the 1860s [Fig 2.83] portrays the dragon as a dark-skinned creature, a very similar look to Preisler's *Fairy-tale*. Especially the lozenge-shaped head of the creature is clear in both works, although Preisler captures the dragon at a moment when it's already been defeated and rests

lifeless next to the triumphant princess. A black dragon also appears in a later work by Burne-Jones, *Perseus slaying the dragon* from 1888. **[Fig 2.84]** While the knights provide all the agency and action in Burne-Jones, Preisler takes this agency and gives it to the princess who is shown sat next to a dragon who is already slayed, with no man in sight. The expression of the princess is calm and confident. In this sense, Preisler presents a very modern and emancipated twist on the 'maiden in distress' theme.

While finishing *Fairy-tale*, Preisler also worked on one of his most celebrated paintings called *Spring*. **[Fig 2.85 – 2.87]** This triptych featured Preisler's signature elements: a pensive young man surrounded by nymphs or fairies, personifications of nature as well as the man's soul and his own search for meaning. The many preparatory studies Preisler carried out before finalising the composition show his fascination with Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix*, whose posture Preisler replicated on his model and repeatedly sketched in search for the perfect composition for the triptych's left panel. **[Fig 2.87, 2.88]** Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix* was handily featured in Muther's publication among a series of his studies of Jane Morris, which resonate with Preisler's composition of the female figure in *Spring*.<sup>123</sup> **[Fig 2.89, 2.90]** Here too, Preisler's aim was not so much in simply copying Rossetti, but rather transposing Rossetti's aesthetics into a new context; into the climate of a Bohemian landscape where the young man's soul-searching stood for the cultural puberty of the Czech nation, and its awakening to the desire to formulate its own artistic expression, built on embracing international art tendencies.

In this view, Preisler is not only reflecting Pre-Raphaelite art but taking it further with his own artistic agency. Such a mature considered *response*, rather than an immediate impulsive *reaction*, was possible thanks to both the 'delay' in reception of Pre-Raphaelitism and the fact that the movement was received alongside an array of international styles and artistic tendencies. I understand Preisler's *Adventurous Knight* and *Fairy-tale* as a 'response' and as an addition to the ideas and concepts suggested by Burne-Jones and other associated Pre-

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<sup>123</sup> Reproduction of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix* in Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei*, 473.  
Reproduction of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's study for *Beata Beatrix* in Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei*, 477.

Raphaelite British artists. Artists like Preisler and Švabinský were creating a conscious response to British art, one that encompasses a wide array of international sources and carves its own authentic path rather than jumping on a short-lived trend. I argue that it is this kind of artistic authenticity derived from cultural borrowing that James O Young has in mind when he speaks about the “aesthetic handicap” and when he argues that: “Cultural appropriation can result in works of high aesthetic value.”<sup>124</sup>

Preisler’s admiration for the Pre-Raphaelites manifested in his short but poignant obituary of Burne-Jones, published in *Volné Směry* in 1898.<sup>125</sup> In his text, Preisler defines Burne-Jones as one of the leading figures of the Brotherhood which he acknowledges as a “magnificent epoch in English art”<sup>126</sup>. While Preisler suggests that Burne-Jones took too much direct inspiration from gothic and renaissance, the features of Burne-Jones’s art that Preisler celebrates the most are defined by Preisler as:

(...) the soft melancholy character of his works and the overall way he expresses the sovereignty of feeling which makes his works among the most prominent of our time.<sup>127</sup>

Preisler clearly thinks of Burne-Jones as both a key player in the Pre-Raphaelite circle as well as his own contemporary. This means that for Preisler, Burne-Jones is the single figure bridging the ‘delay’ with which the Brotherhood was received in Bohemia. While Preisler must have known that the Brotherhood originally formed almost fifty years earlier, by the time of the obituary, Burne-Jones was viewed as a connecting element between the original Pre-Raphaelites and the contemporary art scene. Viewing the first wave of the Brotherhood through the prism of Burne-Jones and his relevance in the age of the coming together of symbolism, romanticism, decadence, and impressionism means that for Bohemian artists, the Brotherhood was not a movement of the past. Instead, they perceived both Pre-Raphaelitism, Burne-Jones and all the other *-isms* of the 1890s and 1900s as one cumulative multifaceted

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<sup>124</sup> Young, “Art, authenticity and appropriation,” 455-476

<sup>125</sup> Jan Preisler, “V Anglii zemřel v červnu..”, *Volné Směry* 2, no.10 (1898): 475-476.

<sup>126</sup> Preisler, “V Anglii zemřel v červnu..”, 475-476.

<sup>127</sup> Preisler, “V Anglii zemřel v červnu..”, 475-476.

phenomenon where every individual artist and art style mattered as part of an eclectic whole.

In this context, the fact that the reception of Pre-Raphaelite art was 'delayed' in Bohemia means that when it finally got there, it was received as part of a much richer context, and it was viewed as a contemporary and highly relevant style. Bohemian artists were not 'catching up' with a long-established movement but rather they were actualising and updating the Pre-Raphaelite ideals, making them part of an international cluster of influences, and letting Pre-Raphaelite paintings become part of the visual language of contemporary Bohemian expression. In this broader sense, the Pre-Raphaelites did leave a lasting impact on Bohemian artists as these artists did not merely 'react' to Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics, but 'responded' to it by integrating it into their own specific Bohemian mixture of cultural and artistic references and contemporary ideals.

## **Conclusion**

The Pre-Raphaelites played a key role in the work of Bohemian artists at the turn of the century. Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic was mediated through both Czech and international journalism and via publications such as Richard Muther's anthologies of international and modern painting. I have demonstrated the importance of the movement for Czech culture by focusing on case studies by two leading Bohemian artists, Max Švabinský and Jan Preisler.

In a closer analysis of Švabinský's work, I have introduced his model and first wife Ela who was a key mediator of Pre-Raphaelite art. Her memoirs published in 1962 provide a priceless insight into Max's artistic practice and reveal Ela's central position as an admirer and promoter of Pre-Raphaelitism. Ela's account of this period of Max's work reveals his own fascination with the British movement, which is reflected in a series of his paintings and drawings created between 1896 and 1900 which all display features, compositions and themes borrowed from Pre-Raphaelite works. Švabinský however takes these features and transposes them into the Bohemian environment, adding the context of



social criticism resonating with the thought and work of John Ruskin and William Morris.

Švabinský's and Preisler were both closely involved with *Volné Směry* where they regularly published their sketches and paintings. Jan Preisler even wrote an obituary of Burne-Jones, and his illustrations were featured in an article about John Ruskin in the journal. Preisler's own passion for Pre-Raphaelitism took the form of a magical exploration of the Bohemian landscape, inhabited by mythical creatures, princesses, maidens, and knights. Having taken direct inspiration from Rossetti and Burne-Jones, Preisler also explored French impressionism and symbolism arriving at a specific combination of all these styles.

While the role of Pre-Raphaelitism in Czech artists' work at the turn of the century has not yet been subject to an in-depth scholarly exploration, I have shown through the above examples and case studies how substantial this impact was and how Pre-Raphaelite features and direct quotations from key works by Rossetti and Burne-Jones became part of iconic Czech works which are now firmly established in the Bohemian artistic pantheon.

## Chapter 3 – Czechness, Britishness and Internationalism: The Czech Take on James McNeill Whistler

### Introduction – Whistler and the Role of Nationalism in Czech Art

James McNeill Whistler was already known among Bohemian cultural circles during his life, but it was his death in 1903 that stirred up a heightened interest in his legacy and brought about a concentrated review of his work. As in the case of Ruskin, the magazine *Volné Směry* paid the most notable tributes to the deceased artist. The first issue of the journal in 1904 was almost entirely dedicated to Whistler; analysing the journal's response will serve me as a gateway to understanding the imprint that Whistler's work left on Bohemian artists.

As shown in the previous chapter, reporting on international artists' deaths played a notable role for the Czech readership as well as for artists. Ruskin's death in 1900 prompted a heightened focus on British art and encouraged Bohemian intelligentsia to explore exhibitions and publications from Britain. This was also reflected in the journal *Volné Směry* publishing many literature reviews and reports about Viennese exhibitions specifically featuring British artists.<sup>1</sup>

In response to Whistler's death in July 1903, *Volné Směry* printed a short yet passionate obituary summarising Whistler's contribution to the artworld.<sup>2</sup> **[Fig 3.1]** I argue that the journal's editors subsequently decided to create an issue that would celebrate Whistler in a much more profound way. This led to the creation of the first issue of 1904 which – despite not stating so blatantly – displayed a strong commitment to celebrating the artist. **[Fig 3.2]** This was not a standard reaction to a foreign artist's death; in fact, it was unique for *Volné Směry* or any Czech journal to put such an emphasis on a single foreign artist's

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<sup>1</sup> Roman Prah: *Volné Směry, časopis secese a moderny* (Torst: Praha, 1993): 150

<sup>2</sup> *Volné Směry* (vol 7, issue 5, 1903) 249-50

legacy.<sup>3</sup> While not all the articles in the issue are strictly speaking about Whistler, they all revolve around themes that were connected to Whistler in one way or another, from a debate about nationalism in art in general and the role of artists' national belonging to a series of detailed reviews of the latest books on Whistler published in Britain. Based on this, I propose the interpretation of this issue to be a celebration of Whistler and the lessons that he was understood to embody for Czech artists, mainly the questions of national belonging versus internationalism in fine art. I argue that Whistler became a catalyst for the tension between 'Czechness' and internationalism which was already well established in the Czech cultural circles, and which found a perfect stimulus in Whistler.

The issue opened with an essay by the renowned Czech art and literary critic František Xaver Šalda (1867 – 1937). His essay titled "The Problem of Nationality in Art" was originally delivered as a lecture by Šalda in May 1903, before Whistler's passing.<sup>4</sup> **[Fig 3.3]** Although the article does not explicitly mention Whistler, I believe that choosing to open the entire issue with this text was a deliberate statement in favour of what Whistler stood for in his life and art, and for the relevance of his legacy to Bohemian artists.

Following Šalda's essay, the issue in question of *Volné Směry* also featured Whistler's famed "10 o'clock Lecture" translated into Czech by none other than Šalda himself and illustrated with a drawing by Jan Preisler **[Fig 3.4]**. I have introduced Preisler in the preceding chapter and focused on his work inspired by the Pre-Raphaelites. The sketch used to illustrate the 10 o'clock lecture was later reworked into a major painting called *Black Lake*, more on which later.

The so called "10 o'clock Lecture" was originally delivered in 1885 and is one of Whistler's most famous articulations of his artistic philosophy. In this lecture, first given in 1885 at Oxford, followed by Cambridge, Whistler introduced the idea of 'art for art's sake' which became symptomatic of a wide array of British artists united under the 'Aesthetic Movement' which also encompassed the Pre-

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<sup>3</sup> There were instances when *Volné Směry* dedicated entire issues or large sections of the journal to individual Czech artists, such as an issue celebrating the etcher Hanuš Schweiger in *Volné Směry* 4, no. 2 (1900).

<sup>4</sup> F.X. Šalda, "Problém národnosti v umění", *Volné Směry* 8, no. 1 (1904): 3.

Raphaelites. Whistler argued that the value of art is independent of morals, religious, social or societal functions, and that its main purpose is to achieve a sense of beauty and visual harmony. In one of the most famous passages, Whistler compares painting to a symphony and suggests that art should be appreciated as abstracted from morality or any particular educational message. Just as a symphony is not expected to be explicitly understood as a political, social or moral commentary, art should be freed from conveying an explicit meaning and should be left to create a unique emotional impact on its consumer. Whistler also compared the technique of painting to composing musical harmony:

Nature contains the elements in colour and form of all pictures, as the keyboard contains the notes of all music. But the artist is born to pick, and choose, and group with science, these elements, that the result may be beautiful – as the musician gathers his notes, and forms his chords, until he brings forth from chaos glorious harmony.<sup>5</sup>

The idea of harmony became key in the work of the Czech painter Miloš Jiránek, as I will demonstrate later in this chapter. For Whistler, achieving harmony was the sole purpose of art, rather than to educate or serve any specific narrative, or social or moral agenda. The artist's role, according to Whistler, is to actively select those elements from nature that together create visual harmony. Art should therefore not imitate nature but take it as a starting point which will be transformed in the artist's hands.

The year 1904 was the first time that Whistler's lecture was published in the Czech language. Due to the length of the text, the lecture was divided in two parts, intersected by another set of articles including literature reviews and shorter remarks. One of these was Camille Mauclair's article "James Whistler and the Secret of Painting" including numerous reproductions of Whistler's works.<sup>6</sup> Mauclair was a popular figure for the Czechs, and this was not the first time that his writing was translated into Czech and published in the journal.

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<sup>5</sup> James McNeill Whistler, *Mr. Whistler's Ten O'Clock* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1888): 14.

<sup>6</sup> Camille Mauclair, "James Whistler a tajemství v malbě", *Volné Směry* 8, no. 1 (1904): 34-49

To emphasise its overall anglophone tone, the issue also featured a translation of Oscar Wilde's "The Critic as Artist - Upon the Importance of Doing Nothing and Discussing Everything", and a detailed review of every chapter of the recently published book "The Art of James McNeill Whistler" by T.R. Way & G.R. Dennis.<sup>7</sup> This review opens with the empathic statement that it was indeed the artist's death that sparked an increased interest in his work, despite the reviewed publication already being planned for several years. Perhaps this statement relates mainly to the reception of Whistler specifically in the Bohemian context, where obituaries of international artists provided a prompt towards a deeper analysis of both their work and the entire culture of the country they represent.

Obituaries also worked as a 'time machine' of sorts that propelled the Czech art scene towards 'catching up' with foreign artists – at least this was the sentiment expressed in these texts. My argument, as I have outlined previously, is that there was really no need to 'catch up' as the encounters with foreign art were in a way enriched by this 'delay', creating a set of new and innovative international connections across a variety of *-isms*. In the case of Ruskin, the Czech obituary came out not long after the British one, while the overall reception of Ruskin's thought was yet about to properly begin. Obituaries helped the Czech readership to condense the temporalities, reflecting on the deceased at the same time as they were mourned in their homeland. This cannot be said of their work, which was naturally known in their homeland for decades while only just finding a way to the Bohemian audiences through the obituaries. The editors of *Volné Směry* (including Šalda) therefore decided not only to feature Whistler's obituary itself, but assembled articles and illustrations that reflected as much of the artist's overall work and thought as possible.<sup>8</sup>

Šalda's opening essay provides the key to the understanding of the wider narrative that *Volné Směry* created about Whistler. To get a deeper

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<sup>7</sup> Oscar Wilde, "Kritik umělcem s několika poznámkami o důležitosti nicnedělání," *Volné Směry* 8, no. 1 (1904): 77-81.

"Literatura", *Volné Směry* 8, no. 1 (1904): 82- 84.

<sup>8</sup> This said, as I will show later in this chapter, many Bohemian artist had prior knowledge of Whistler's work. These were however only those artists who visited Paris or London or both and encountered Whistler's work in situ before their return to Bohemia.

understanding of why this essay played such a key role, it is important to introduce Šalda first and find out about his place in the Bohemian cultural context.

František Xaver Šalda (1867 – 1937) was one of the leading figures of the literary generation of the 1890s. Between 1894 and 1908, he worked as a contributor to the large-scale “Otto’s Encyclopaedia” focusing on articles about German, French, and English literature.<sup>9</sup> Šalda was multilingual and eagerly published on a wide array of themes ranging from religion and politics to art, culture, and of course literature. Apart from his extensive research and translation work for the Encyclopaedia, his other articles were published by a wide variety of Czech journals, including *Volné Směry*.

In 1903 and 1904, Šalda was part of the *Volné Směry* editorial team. In the first issue of 1904, Šalda is listed alongside the other three editors together with the designer Franta Anýž, and the painters Arnošt Hofbauer and Jan Preisler.<sup>10</sup> **[Fig 3.2]** As one of the four editors, Šalda had a strong enough influence over the contents of the issue and it would not be hard to imagine that it was he who suggested a line-up of articles celebrating Whistler. Both Šalda and Preisler, as I will show shortly, had a particular fondness of Whistler. For both, Whistler symbolised what Bohemian artist longed to understand, namely the relationship between an artist’s national belonging and the potential of their art to obtain greatness from elsewhere, beyond nationalism.

Šalda’s article (a transcript of his lecture, in fact) is a clearly formulated opposition against the wing of Bohemian artists who promoted the traditional narrative of nationality and nationalism as the key purpose of Bohemian art. In his article, Šalda suggests that nationalism in art relies on the repetition of old formulas, aged legends, and embedded beliefs about the past glory of a nation, failing to focus on the true grandeur of art itself.

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<sup>9</sup> This iconic publication was produced by the Prague-based publisher Jan Otto between 1888 and 1909 and it was the first extensive encyclopaedic publication to be written in Czech. Until 2010, this remained the single largest encyclopaedia written in the Czech language. Ottův slovník naučný (Prague: J.Otto, 1888), Accessed Jan 18, 2023, <https://kramerius5.nkp.cz/view/uuid:1cb5aaf0-e6e3-11e4-a794-5ef3fc9bb22f?page=uuid:f3f1faa0-05a6-11e5-95ff-5ef3fc9bb22f>

<sup>10</sup> Frontispiece, *Volné Směry* 8, no. 1 (1904):1

Yet, Šalda believes that there is a way of embracing national themes while being authentic and forward-looking:

To be national means to work on a mythical goal and task, to participate at the drama of the world, where nationality is just one of its elements and actors [...]. The term of our national art is therefore so murderous because our sense of nationality in itself is so negative, mechanical and corpse-like. [...] But nationality is not a negation, not a fiction, not a mechanical, logical or psychological formula [...] – nationality is a positive, a value of life, an open road to culture, a warm stream of love and strength, a stream of guilt and purgation, of passion and gentleness, of truth and tragedy rolling under the stars from one age to another, a beam of light through which the soul of the world reveals itself to us and invites us to collaborate on the spiritual work on this earth. <sup>11</sup>

Šalda's lengthy and extremely passionately formulated text focuses on uniting the extremes of his seemingly opposing beliefs. On the one hand, he suggests that national art is retrograde, backward-looking and holding back the growth and development of the nation. He also condemns artists whose work reflects the aesthetic taste of the contemporary middle-class society and who cater for what the mainstream audiences desire. This type of nationalism in art was popular with the previous 'National Theatre Generation' of artists who delivered to the Bohemian public a good portion of glorified national legends, even at the cost of inventing and faking some of them.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, however, Šalda offers a solution which revolves around embracing a different kind of nationalism, one that he believes is essential for both the growth of a nation's cultural life, and the benefit of the wider world:

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<sup>11</sup> Šalda, "Problém národnosti v umění," 5.

<sup>12</sup> One of the most famous cases of forgery were the Zelenohorský and Kralovedvorský illuminated manuscripts, allegedly discovered in the 1820s. The manuscripts were widely influential in the ongoing debates regarding the validity of Bohemian culture and its validity in the context of the Austrian and Austro-Hungarian Empires. The manuscripts were only proved to be fakes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, casting light on the excessive desire of Bohemian artists and intelligentsia to promote and exaggerate the role Bohemian culture played in history. Imagery inspired by the Manuscripts permeated into many 19<sup>th</sup> century Bohemian nationalistic artworks. Marta Filipová links the manuscripts to the Scottish Ossian. Filipová, *Modernity, History and Politics in Czech Art*, 12.

National art must be an act of both a destructive and a creative criticism, it mustn't just blindly and passively copy, but it must distinguish with a characterful and heroic judgement: all truly national art and poetry is primarily an act of a judgement over a nation.<sup>13</sup>

Šalda is convinced that being critical towards oneself is one of the leading attributes of a successful national art. He passionately describes and demonstrates this in his article, mainly using examples from the literary world. He chooses the French poet and translator Alfred de Vigny as an example of a successful national poet, while condemning his Bohemian counterpart Jan Neruda (1834 – 1891). Neruda's much loved genteel style, considered to be the pinnacle on national literature at the time, is scrutinised by Šalda and called out for its meekness and unwillingness to reflect the harsh reality and provinciality of Bohemian cultural life. I argue that the kind of nationalism that Šalda celebrates is something that he recognised in Whistler, in the fluidity of his national belonging and the ability to creatively transgress any one particular nationality.

While Šalda refrains from referring to any particular artists, he does refer to fine art explicitly in a paragraph that could easily be read as a reference to the work of Whistler, especially so in the context of placing this essay as a prologue to Whistler's 10 o'clock lecture in the year's first issue of *Volné Směry* in 1904:

It will be clear to you that, for example, a purely colourist fantasy, a colourful symphony of a great painter, may be and is positively and typically national, even though it might not have anything in common with the average views on colour and the colourist approach of the given nation, and indeed especially because it does not [sic] have anything in common with these: it can be national in a heroic way, in the way it poetically unites light and darkness, in a way it feels and evaluates the hues and accords of colour, through its audacity and gentleness with which it binds, gradates and harmonises – because the tones and valeurs of colour are nothing but expressions of a nerve character and

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<sup>13</sup> Šalda, "Problém národnosti v umění," 6.



judgement, a manifestation of a culture of senses, and a tact of the heart.<sup>14</sup>

This description of painting is almost impossible not to connect to Whistler's art, reproduced a few pages down in the same issue. When Šalda originally wrote this piece in the form of a lecture, Whistler would have been still alive. He was known to Bohemian artists, but the press did not devote as much attention to Whistler as it did after his passing. Whistler died a few months after Šalda delivered his lecture, in May 1903. In his lecture, Šalda deliberately uses musical terms when referring to colours, in the vein of Whistler's own terminology. It is more than likely that Šalda, who was multilingual and often translated texts from various languages, knew Whistler's 10 o'clock lecture when composing his essay. Moreover, the fact that both articles in *Volné Směry* were originally delivered as lectures and subsequently published as essays adds to the overall sense of the alignment of thought and style between the two authors.

There are multiple passages where Šalda's writing resonates with Whistler's own lecture. Towards the end of his essay, Šalda passionately explains that:

more blessed is the one who in a high and beautiful way is nation-less, that is one who searched and found cultural gods according to the needs of his own heart and character in a foreign nation, [...] than one who in a low, empty and fallow way remains national by living dully and materially in their own nation [...].<sup>15</sup>

The key here is the distinguishing between nationality as something one is born into, as opposed to something that one actively creates. This resonated through the many concurrent and ongoing Bohemian artists' disputes regarding their national identity, revolving around the questions of geographical versus cultural belonging.<sup>16</sup> Some Bohemian artists and critics believed that the way forward

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<sup>14</sup> Šalda, "Problém národnosti v umění," 7.

<sup>15</sup> Šalda, "Problém národnosti v umění," 10.

<sup>16</sup> This can be well illustrated on the so called 'Czech Germans' at the run of the century, such as Franz Kafka or the artist Emil Orlik. Mainly based in Prague, these were cultural figures born in Bohemia but closely linked to the German speaking cultural milieu and therefore often 'stuck' between the two cultures and languages.

was in crediting Czech culture with more historical importance and autonomy by way of highlighting in what ways it differs from German and Austrian culture. Others, like Šalda, were ready to let go of the past and redefine the term 'nationality' altogether. I argue that Whistler's fluid approach to national belonging and the audacity of his art stimulated a whole new strand of the debate on nationalism in the Bohemian cultural circles, and that Šalda purposefully used the line-up of articles in *Volné Směry* to link Whistler to the question of nationalism in Czech art.

By condemning the superficial and mediocre style of nationalism, Šalda's essay hints at a similar sentiment expressed in Whistler's lecture. As Suzanne Fagence Cooper remarks:

Whistler scoffed at the 'fabled link between the grandeur of Art and the glories and virtues of the State'. Beauty was wedded to individuals, not to Nations.<sup>17</sup>

To the Czech readers, Whistler was known to exist somewhere in-between several cultures. He was recognised as an American based in London, but most of his work came to Bohemian audiences via Paris. Šalda didn't have to spell out Whistler's name to celebrate this multi-national attitude in his essay – by this point, his identity would have been instantly recognised by Bohemian readers. While the connection to Whistler may or may not have been evident in May 1903 when Šalda delivered the lecture, it would have most certainly been clear when Šalda's essay opened the first issue of *Volné Směry* in 1904, followed by a layered tribute to Whistler permeating throughout the entire issue, which I will detail later in this sub-chapter.

Before having a closer look on how Šalda and *Volné Směry* orchestrated a tribute to Whistler, it is necessary to add that Šalda was not alone in his passion for a national yet internationally informed art. The questions regarding

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<sup>17</sup> Suzanne Fagence Cooper, "Art Happens: James Whistler and the Ten O'clock lecture," *Suzanne Fagence Cooper*, July 15, 2014, accessed September 30, 2021, <http://suzannefagencecooper.blogspot.com/2014/07/art-happens-james-whistler-and-ten.html>

nationalism in art were debated all over Europe, so Šalda and *Volné Směry* were tapping into a timely and widespread debate.

This is well demonstrated with the example of the Italian novel “The Flame” from 1900, where Gabrielle D’Annunzio presents an array of theories regarding the visual and performative arts inspired mainly by the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and Richard Wagner. The novel was translated into German the same year that the Italian original was published, capturing the imagination of the German-speaking cultural sphere, including the Prague artistic circles.

D’Annunzio uses the novel to present his vision for the future of Italian art; his main point can be summarised as the desire for Italian art to acknowledge its outstanding national roots (mainly the Renaissance and masters such as Da Vinci and Michelangelo) but at the same time to retain a sense of universal aspirations and interconnectedness with the broader European art scene. While great art must arise from a deep connection to national history and identity, D’Annunzio warns that art must also not become parochial and provincial as a result. Masters such as Da Vinci and Michelangelo, the novel claims, were also influenced by wider European developments in art and did not work in isolation from the art world beyond Italy. Overall, D’Annunzio’s view promotes an expansive way of thinking and working rather than an isolationist mindset.

This is very much in harmony with Šalda’s own opinions, quoted throughout this chapter. Šalda too believed that Bohemian history and national identity should be the natural foundation of the nation’s art, and that this was the first step towards using this rootedness in national history to create an international future for their art. Šalda’s view on the importance of Bohemian artists for the nation resonates with D’Annunzio’s protagonist, Stelio Effrena, who embodies the belief in the artist as a national representative whose work reaches a global audience and needs to relate to universal themes as well as serving a nationalist purpose.

While D’Annunzio’s later work ultimately leaned towards a proto-fascist and somewhat imperialist tendencies, his early 1900 novel had a lot in common with Šalda’s own thinking and idealism. They both believed that great art needs to

be rooted in the nation's history and national identity; for D'Annunzio this was the Italian Renaissance, for Šalda it was a set of cultural values promoted by the Czech National Awakening (as outlined earlier in the thesis). D'Annunzio promoted the idea that Italian art must regain the status of its past glory, which complements Šalda's desire to use art as a way of asserting cultural independence for Bohemia. Both writers saw nationalism as a crucial element of any nation's cultural output but ultimately recognised it as cultural driving force rather than a policy of isolationism. D'Annunzio repeatedly uses the example of the Renaissance Masters to show how these deeply rooted national artists actively contributed to cultural developments across Europe. Similarly, Šalda encourages Czech artists to actively engage with European modernity in its multiple forms. Šalda's extensive lecture, which I have analysed earlier in this chapter, and the entire first issue of *Volné Směry* in 1904, can be seen as a materialisation of Šalda's exploration of the questions of national identity and internationalism, much influenced by works like D'Annunzio's novel. The 1904 issue of *Volné Směry* therefore reflects the timely Bohemian reaction to an ongoing international debate. In the following paragraphs, I will analyse how the arrangement of articles and reproductions of Whistler in the Czech journal fittingly reflected the main ideas of this debate.

The journal *Volné Směry* was not always generous when it came to reproducing images of foreign artists' work. This was mainly because the journal's main aim was to celebrate Bohemian artists by becoming a platform for showcasing their work. As I have shown in the previous chapters, while Bohemian journals often referred to the Pre-Raphaelites, examples of their work were only reproduced sparingly. All the more impressive it is to see the wide selection of reproductions of Whistler's art featured in the first issue of *Volné Směry* in 1904.<sup>18</sup> Over the 19 pages of Mauclair's article on Whistler, the journal features 13 reproductions of Whistler's work from the 1860s and 1870s. **[Fig 3.5 A – Y]** To demonstrate the selection of Whistler's artwork, in volume II of my thesis I present a complete overview of the reproduced paintings by Whistler as well as contemporary reproductions of the paintings. The selection shows some overlaps but also

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<sup>18</sup> Camille Mauclair: "James Whistler and the Secret of Painting," *Volné Směry* 8, no 1. (1904): 35-49.

differences in comparison to the reproductions in Muther's compendia, which feature a slightly different selection again in each language version.<sup>19</sup> *Volné Směry*, for example, feature a reproduction of *Variations in Flesh Colour and Green—The Balcony* which is not shown in Muther's book neither in German nor in English. As the painting is of one of Whistler's Japoneseque scenes, perhaps including the image resonated with the attention that Japanese art was receiving in Bohemia at the time. Mauclair's article focuses only on painting which explains why all the reproductions in *Volné Směry* are of Whistler's paintings and not of his etchings and other graphic arts despite the artist being primarily known as an etcher.

The selection of Whistler's paintings in *Volné Směry* is nonetheless a valuable resource of works which the Czech editors deemed important enough to share with their audiences. The reproductions complement Mauclair's text and present a good overview of Whistler's nocturnes as well as his accomplished portraits, thus showing a whole range of Whistler's painting styles. This includes artworks inspired by Japan, such as *Variations in Flesh Colour and Green—The Balcony* (1864 – 1879) and *Symphony in White nr 3. (1865 – 67)* which were attractive to those Bohemian artists such as Emil Orlik and František Tavík Šimon who themselves were experimenting with Japonism at the turn of the century. I will be looking at Emil Orlik later in this chapter, examining Orlik's decision to travel to Japan in 1906 to spend almost a whole year discovering the technique of Japanese woodblock printing. Perhaps the focus on Whistler in 1904 played a role in Orlik's fascination with Japan.

As I have established, Mauclair's article was accompanied by reproductions of Whistler's paintings, excluding any representations of his graphic arts. However, the wider *Volné Směry* issue featured a series of reproductions of Czech artists' graphic works, as if suggesting a link to Whistler's etchings. Viktor Stretti (1878 – 1957) was represented with two etchings, *In the Theatre* and *From the Latin Quarter*.<sup>20</sup> In 1898, Stretti left Prague to study in Munich where he learnt the

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<sup>19</sup> Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX Jahrhundert*, 523 – 537. Muther, *The History of Modern Painting*, 645 – 657.

<sup>20</sup> Stretti's etching of the Latin Quarter was reproduced in *The Studio International* in 1903 with the comment: "Victor Stretti's etchings show great promise and much talent." A.S.L., "Studio-Talk", *The Studio International*, no. 118 (1903): 306.

technique of etching and since then his work became synonymous with the technique, which was yet rarely used by most Prague-based artists. Stretti went on to travel extensively and published albums of landscapes and cityscapes from his travels through Europe and the Orient.

Another Bohemian graphic artist featured in the journal was František Tavík Šimon who's etching *The Shadows of Venice* represented one from the many works that Šimon produced in the city, a theme he returned to over several years and which he certainly owed to Whistler. As in the case of Stretti, Šimon went on to travel and spent most of his life abroad, making brief appearances back in Prague to sell his successful travel albums. Max Švabinský, whose Pre-Raphaelite inspired works I introduced in the last chapter, had his drawing *Camelia* reproduced which originated as a coloured drawing but resulted in a series of etchings of the same composition. This group of featured artists indicated the growing strength of graphic techniques in Bohemian art, despite these techniques not being taught at any of the two major Prague-based art schools.

Miloš Jiránek was among several Bohemian painters showcased in the issue. Jiránek was close friends with Šalda, both being multilingual and providing translations of international art criticism and cultural journalism to a variety of Bohemian journals. As I will show later in this chapter, in 1910 Jiránek declared Whistler to be one of his key sources of inspiration and devoted a series of works to the artist.

By choosing to show reproductions of the above mentioned Bohemian artists - who were associated with traveling and studying abroad, and who were among the most cosmopolitan figures on the Czech art scene - I argue that Šalda and the other editors at *Volné Směry* were establishing a conscious link between Whistler and these Bohemian artists. The chosen artists embodied the notion of cosmopolitanism against nationalism in resonance with Šalda's ideals outlined in his opening essay. Using his essay as a prologue to Whistler's work, and by

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Stretti travelled to London in 1913 and engaged with the lithographer Josef Pönnel in later years. Robert Gibbs, "A Whistlerian in Prague: Viktor Stretti and Joseph Pönnel", in *Connecting Whistler – Essays in Honour of Margaret F. MacDonald*, Erma Hermes, Joanna Meacock, and Grishka Petri, eds. (2010), Accessed Dec 13, 2021. [http://radar.gsa.ac.uk/3283/1/Connecting\\_Whistler.pdf](http://radar.gsa.ac.uk/3283/1/Connecting_Whistler.pdf)

reproducing works of the most well-travelled Czech artists, Šalda is establishing a clear connection between Whistler and Bohemian contemporary art scene. The following sections of this chapter will examine the work of these Czech artists in greater detail and will elaborate on how Whistler's work informed their own artistic practice.

### **Whistler's Venice and London in Bohemian art**

In 1879, Whistler was commissioned by the Fine Art Society in London to travel to Venice. His stay was planned for three months, but enchanted by the city, Whistler stayed over fourteen months, producing an extensive series of prints, alongside pastel sketches and drawings.<sup>21</sup> Similar to his capturing of the backstreets of London and the lively buzz of the docks and Battersea embankment, in Venice Whistler often captured the back alleys and snickets hidden from the majestic vistas that made the city so desirable. With travellers from all over Europe flocking to the city and artists eager to record its historic atmosphere, Whistler chose a different approach, one that would feel very close to the hearts of Bohemian artists following in the artist's imaginary footsteps over two decades later. Whistler's artistic enquiry brought out from the shadows the unglamorous inhabitants of Venice, back alleys flocked with beggars, private doorways overgrown with vines and semi-abstracted views of the lagoons where gondolas and ship-masts turn into a rhythm of expressive marks and smudges.

In his exploration of the less glamorous aspects of Venice, Whistler was following a trend which was unleashed in 1872 with the publication of Gustav Doré's illustrated book "London, A Pilgrimage". Doré joined forces with the journalist and playwright Blanchard Jerrold who came up with the idea to create a cultural survey of the city, uncovering both its lavish quarters beaming with culture and theatres flocked by the higher society, as well as showing the impoverished parts of the city, its workshops and the daily lives of its less fortunate inhabitants. Doré secured a commission for the book from Grand &

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<sup>21</sup> "Portraits, Pastels, Prints: Whistler in The Frick Collection - Pastels and Prints: Whistler in Venice", *The Frick Collection*, Special exhibition June 2 - August 23, 2009, Accessed March 26, 2022, <https://www.frick.org/sites/default/files/archivedsite/exhibitions/whistler/prints.htm>

Co. and together with Blanchard Jerrold the two embarked on a four-year-long exploration of London. The result was an extensive publication with 180 engravings by Doré, where he exposed a wide range of the lesser-known London, such as its slums, prisons and flower-girls in rags making their way through the East End, as well as grand civic celebrations at Westminster and on the Thames showcasing the glamour and wealth that the city was famed for. While the book received mixed reviews when it first came out, it became an embodiment of a new way of portraying cities, and a revolutionary change of perspective when it came to representing Victorian society. Whistler's exploration of Venice is therefore his specific personalised contribution to a wider discourse and a widely recognised artistic tradition.

Whistler's Venetian work is clearly reflected in the 1904 first issue of *Volně Směry*, where an array of Bohemian artists was chosen to show reproductions of their work alongside the issue's articles. František Tavík Šimon's *The Shadows of Venice* [Fig 3.6] appears to be in direct conversation with Whistler's depictions of Venetian back alleys. The figure dominating Šimon's print seems to have wandered over from Whistler's *The Beggars* print [Fig 3.7] from *Series of Twelve Etchings* (the "First Venice Set"), first published by the Fine Art Society in December 1880.<sup>22</sup> Šimon's work carries the same interest in the interplay between light and darkness, contrasting the figures against the narrowing space of a run-down snicket. Like in Whistler's prints, this alley is no Doge's Palace; there are no outstanding architectural features, the walls are covered with patches of fallen-off paint, exposing the brickwork. Like in *The Beggars* and other similar prints by Whistler, if Venice never featured in the title, we would have no way of knowing where the scene is situated.

It is important to note that Whistler's stay in Venice in 1879 was also tinged by his debilitating dispute with John Ruskin the preceding year. Whistler's behind-the-scenes view of Venice and his focus on those not so well-off living in the city was stimulated by his own financial loss on legal expenses after the legal case

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<sup>22</sup> James McNeill Whistler, "The Beggars", *The MET Museum* catalogue entry, Accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/372574>



with Ruskin, and the poverty this had thrown him into.<sup>23</sup> Desperate to avoid an image of Venice previously sketched (literally and figuratively) by Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice* from the 1850s, Whistler's Venice uncovers a different side to the city. More than two decades later, Šimon gets inspired by this humbler approach to Venice and reflects a taste for the backstreets of the city in his own work. With Bohemian art journals only discovering Ruskin after his death in 1900, it is likely that the deeper reasons for Whistler's reimagination of Venice remained unnoticed by Whistler's Bohemian followers. Šimon, whose work was informed by the Pre-Raphaelites in the late 1890s, created a portrait etching of John Ruskin in 1903 which he signed using his Japan-inspired red seal. **[Fig 3.8]** The seal shows the overlapping of his initials, combined in such a way as to create the illusion of a Japanese kanji character – a way of signalling the artist's appreciation of Japanese art, in the style of Whistler's own stylised signature butterfly. By this time, Japanese motifs were permeating into Bohemian art from various directions, and therefore Šimon's etching of Ruskin adorned with a Japanese signature seems to play a special role, one of connecting the spheres of influence of Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelites, Whistler and Japan in one melting pot of overlaid inspirations.

František Tavík Šimon (1877 – 1942) was one of the most cosmopolitan Bohemian artists. Šimon enrolled in the Prague Academy of Fine Arts in 1894, and since 1898 he regularly participated at the Mánes Association exhibitions, which was the Association originally linked to the establishing of *Volné Směry*.<sup>24</sup> In 1902, Šimon received the prestigious Josef Hlávka travel scholarship, which enabled him to visit Italy.<sup>25</sup> The following year, Šimon was awarded another scholarship from the same sponsor, this time enabling Šimon to spend some time in Paris, where he saw Whistler's works for the first time. Aside from Paris, Šimon visited Normandy (where he met his future wife) as well as London, Belgium and Holland.

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<sup>23</sup> Suzanne Fagnance-Cooper: "Art Happens': James Whistler and Ten O'Clock Lecture", July 14, 2014, accessed May 18, 2021, <http://suzannefagnancecooper.blogspot.com/2014/07/art-happens-james-whistler-and-ten.html>

<sup>24</sup> In the absence of a monograph the largest compendium of the artists' work is the online catalogue of his works. Tavík František Šimon, *Online catalogue raisonne*, accessed Feb 01, 2022, <https://tfsimon.com/index1.htm>

<sup>25</sup> "Cestovní a studijní nadace založené Jos. Hlávkou," *Národní Listy*, (March 21, 1908).

During his travels, Šimon met with Bohemian artists who had already made France their home, such as the sculptor Josef Kratina. Šimon was also actively networking in Paris, where he befriended J.F. Raffaëlli, who was the in the lead of *Salon de la Société de la Gravure originale en Couleurs*, which Šimon later also joined.<sup>26</sup> Working in an internationally minded manner similar to Whistler, Šimon was less concerned with establishing himself in Prague and more focused on developing an international career. Following this vision, he moved to Paris in 1904 together with another Czech artist, Ferdinand Michl (1877 - 1951).<sup>27</sup>

In a later essay, Šimon describes how he and Michl were part of the young generation of Bohemian artists in Paris, and only occasionally met up with the 'old' generation represented mostly by the famed and financially successful Alphonse Mucha.<sup>28</sup> While for these Bohemian artists Mucha represented the past, Whistler – despite having passed away by then – stood for their artistic future. Šimon was so taken by seeing Whistler's art in Paris that in 1905 he set off to visit his exhibition in London. He made a sketch of a young fashionable lady admiring the etchings in the exhibition **[Fig 3.9]** and wrote a letter to his fiancée, dated 24 March 1905, describing his fascination:

The next day, we went to the Whistler exhibition which we enjoyed with particular relish – so much so that we almost got drunk on it. One could lose one's mind! I can't find and don't have any words to express my feelings. I consider myself a lucky man that I can see artworks by this master and I am sorry for everyone who cannot see and take relish in them. We will go there several more times and we will hardly be able to say goodbye. Besides, we have excellent weather, warm sunny days. You are constantly on my mind, my dear, and I regret we are not here

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<sup>26</sup> <https://tfsimon.com/index1.htm>

<sup>27</sup> It is worth noting that Czech artists such as Kratina and Michl, who established their artistic careers abroad, remained on the margins of Czechoslovak and later Czech art history. This was mainly caused by the intellectual embargo imposed by the Communist government (1948 - 1989) which prohibited art historians from exploring artists settled beyond the Iron Curtain. This position outside of the 'Czech canon', so to say, is still characteristic of many artists, F. T. Šimon being one of them. His work does not feature in the HE art history curriculum, there is no monograph of the artist and only very limited literature. The most comprehensive work on the artist is the online resource heavily quoted in this chapter, which is the result of an international collaboration reflecting the international lifestyle of the artist.

<sup>28</sup> F.T. Šimon, "Ze Štefánikova života v Paříži," in Arnošt Bareš, ed., *Štefánikuv Memorial* (Praha, Památník Odboje, 1929), 79-84.

together. We are a little disappointed in the London girls, maybe we're not in luck, or did Whistler overshadow everything?<sup>29</sup>

Even after Whistler's passing, Šimon's letter expresses clearly that his art was still in the forefront of Bohemian artists' admiration. However, Šimon realises the privilege he has in seeing the artwork in situ. While Šimon was surrounded by cosmopolitan artists, he was also aware of many of his fellow countrymen who could not afford to visit London. Further in his letter, Šimon mentions visiting other galleries, and expresses his disappointment as he was not able to see the Watts collection of works which was exhibited at the Royal Academy prior to his arrival. Despite having visited many displays in the English capital, Šimon was clearly completely overcome by Whistler's exhibition, which, as he says, overshadowed everything else. Knowing this, we may see the use of Šimon's *Shadows of Venice* in the 1904 *Volné Směry* article as a premonition, a statement certifying that Whistler's passing was not the end of his reception in Bohemia – on the contrary, Bohemian artists like Šimon were only at the beginning of emulating Whistler's signature style.

While *Volné Směry* only reproduced one Venetian theme by Šimon, the artist produced a whole series of prints inspired by the city across several years. These span from recording sceneries hidden away from the famous sites, such as his *Venetian Nocturne* [Fig 3.10], to incorporating some of the iconic sites as in the *Gondola* series from 1903 [Fig 3.11]. In the vein of Whistler's experimentation with etching techniques, Šimon continued to develop his printmaking methods and produced colour aquatints such as *Evening Mood in a Lagoon in Venice* [Fig 3.12, 3.13]. This work was carried out after Šimon visited Whistler's exhibition in London, which only proves the prevalence of Whistler's impact on Šimon. Examples of Whistler's works similar to Šimon's include etchings from the *First Venice Series* from 1880 [Fig 3.14] and paintings such as *Nocturne in Blue and Silver: The Lagoon, Venice* (1879-80) [Fig 3.1].

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<sup>29</sup> "A letter by T.F.Šimon to his fiancée Vilma. London 1905", *Catalogue raisonné*, A scan of the original letter in Czech and excerpts translated into English, accessed April 13, 2023, <https://fsimon.com/London.html>

While Šimon is yet waiting to be fully appreciated by Czech art historians, he is already known to be a representative of a small group of Czech artists who expressed themselves mainly through the medium of etching and graphic techniques. The life and art of Emil Orlik (1870 – 1932) resonates with Šimon's in many ways. Although Orlik's work was not reproduced in the 1904 issue of *Volné Směry*, his art was well known in Prague at the turn of the century. Orlik belonged to the so called 'Prague Germans'; although born in Prague, Orlik studied in Munich and thought of himself as German most of his life. Later he moved to Berlin where he finally settled in 1905. Like Šimon, Orlik too visited London and produced a series of prints there in 1898 [Fig 3.16; 3.17; 3.18] before embarking on his journey to Japan in 1900, where he devoted himself to a year-long study of Japanese woodblock prints.<sup>30</sup> Orlik first discovered Japanese art while traversing Europe in 1898, London was one of the many stops as he moved through Continental Europe via the Netherlands and Belgium, and after spending time in Paris, obligatory to any artist of the time. While continental European travel was an adventure that several Bohemian artists undertook, the fact that Orlik did include London and other cities in Britain in his travels indicates his special interest in the country and its art.

One of Orlik's greatest contributions to Bohemian art was his fascination with graphic techniques and his openness to experimenting, which can be compared to Whistler's own passion for etching in all its forms. In his woodcut print *From London* [Fig 3.16] his woodcut version of *London Loafers*, [Fig 3.18] Orlik's style is strongly reminiscent of the work of William Nicholson, whose portrait of Whistler was featured in *Volné Směry*'s tribute to Whistler [Fig 3.19]. Orlik got acquainted with Nicholson's *An Alphabet* (1898) when in London and perhaps his interest in Nicholson led to the special issue of *Volné Směry* in 1900, focused on caricature, which I will debate in detail in the following chapter.

In both Nicholson's *An Alphabet* and Orlik's *From London*, bold outlines and contrasting block colours combine a kind of sketchiness and caricature with capturing the likeness of characters. When in London, Orlik was already fascinated by woodblock printing, but did not yet venture to Japan to emulate

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<sup>30</sup> Gaudekova and Prah, "Japonsko a jeho tradiční divadlo v díle Emila Orlika," 147-154.

the nation's characteristic features of the technique. By the turn of the century, Orlik would have studied both British etching and Japanese woodblock printing. The overlapping of styles and the particular mix of British and Japanese trademarks are characteristic of not only Orlik but also of the broader Bohemian artistic milieu around 1900.

Like Whistler, Orlik kept experimenting with an array of graphic techniques. In London, Orlik seemed to have been more interested in the lives of the city's less privileged inhabitants populating the less well-known sites; perhaps Whistler's take on Venice played its role here as an example worth following. Orlik repeatedly captured the motif of workers and beggars resting on a bench, some of them reading papers, others nodding off with exhaustion. A good example of the fluctuating of his technique is his lithograph *On Victoria Embankment* from 1898, contrasted against the woodblock print *London Loafers* from the same year [Fig 3.17, 3.18]. A similar motif rendered in two different techniques delivers very different results. While the composition in both cases focuses on a group of men resting on a bench, the lithograph offers a more atmospheric glimpse of the scene, reminiscent of Whistler's *The Beggars* despite the lithograph allowing for softer lines than the drypoint used for *The Beggars* [Fig 3.7]. Orlik's *London Loafers*, on the other hand, transposes the motif into style closely linked to Nicholson. Losing its busy metropolitan background, the scene is set in a park, using a block khaki green colour as its monochromatic background. Nicholson chose a similar approach a year later in 1899 for his portrait of Whistler, positioning Whistler dressed all in black against a light beige block background – it was this image that was reproduced in *Volné Směry* in 1904 as part of the layered tribute to Whistler [Fig 3.19].

In the Bohemian context, Whistler's inquisitive spirit and devotion to etching and graphic art in general substantially helped to promote the artform and encouraged artist like Orlik and Šimon to promote graphic art, even though none of its techniques were taught at Czech art schools. Graphic techniques were only accessible to those Bohemian artists who had the chance to study abroad, and who could travel to Paris and London to see for themselves the growing body of graphic artists, spearheaded by Whistler. As a result, artists

like Orlik and Šimon ultimately either settled abroad or spent large proportions of their careers living and working all around the world. Whistler's iconic depictions of Venice inspired Bohemian artists to experiment with similar techniques and with ways of recording their own travels to the city, and to other destinations, including London. Whistler was therefore inspirational on several levels: as a promoter of graphic techniques, as an artist who existed between nations and continents, and finally as an artist whose unique style inspired Bohemian artists even decades after his work was first exhibited.

### **Whistler's Paintings Reflected in Czech Art – *Studies in White* by Miloš Jiránek**

As I have shown, Whistler's contribution to the field of graphic art set into motion several Bohemian artists and stimulated their work. However, the first issue of *Volné Směry* in 1904, which I am using as a centre point for this chapter, stood out thanks to reproducing a large number of Whistler's paintings, rather than his graphic art, and by featuring the translation of Camille Mauclair's article on Whistler as a painter. The chosen reproductions presented a comprehensive overview of Whistler's varied oeuvre, from portraits, including the iconic one of his Mother, to landscape painting and Japonism style works featuring his model and partner for a time, Joe Hiffernan. [Fig 3.5A – 3.5Y]. As I pointed out earlier, it was not customary for *Volné Směry* to feature so many reproductions of a single foreign artist, mainly because the journal's underlying aim was to promote Bohemian artists and their work. I therefore believe that the editorial board took the decision to feature such a rich selection of Whistler's paintings not only to illustrate Mauclair's article but also to suggest a link between the Bohemian artist's work featured in the same issue.

As I have already established, the issue opened with Šalda's extensive essay on the role of nationality in art. Following the essay, the journal featured a series of pages with reproductions of Bohemian artists' work, among them several paintings by Miloš Jiránek (1874 – 1911). An established painter with the knowledge of an astonishing range of foreign languages, Jiránek was closely

involved with *Volné Směry* since 1899, sending in reports from international exhibitions, translating foreign texts and submitting his own writing and artwork. In 1900, Jiránek travelled all over the Continent with a special stopover in Paris, where he visited the *Exposition Universelle* and other exhibitions all of which he reported on back to Prague in the form of articles for the journal.<sup>31</sup> While in Paris, Jiránek also met up with Auguste Rodin and interviewed him for the 1901 special issue of *Volné Směry*, and even sketched Rodin's sculptures in situ at the exhibition to make up for the fact that Rodin did not own copyright to the photographs from his Parisian show.<sup>32</sup> Rodin finally visited Prague in 1902 with both Jiránek and Šalda heavily involved in the journal's coverage of the visit.<sup>33</sup>

Jiránek's close involvement with *Volné Směry* indicates that featuring his artwork together with Mauclair's article on Whistler was not accidental. The two artworks featured were *Autumn snow* and *St Anthony's Church* [Fig 3.20]. Both were from Jiránek's recent trip to Slovakia where he stayed for a number of months, sketching the life and customs of the local folk. These works indicate a shift in Jiránek's work from realism towards a method of painting using broader and bolder brushstrokes inspired by impressionism, focusing on capturing the often outdoor rituals and customs of Slavs from villages across Slovakia. Leaving his previous tendency towards realism aside, Jiránek turned towards colour and viewed his compositions as colour harmonies rather than realistic accounts of the countryside dwellers. This is a shift that may have been stimulated by a variety of factors, including his recent visit to Paris, and last but not least, his encounter with Whistler's work both from Jiránek's travels and from his close involvement with the *Volné Směry* editorial team. Featuring his paintings in the same issue as the tribute to Whistler was a conscious nod towards the bond between Whistler and Jiránek.

This bond was yet to grow and mature. It was Jiránek's sojourn in Slovakia that unleashed the artist's passion for colour harmonies and the desire to use the

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<sup>31</sup> Tomáš Winter, *Miloš Jiránek - Zápas o moderní malbu* (Arbor Vitae, 2012), 36-37.

<sup>32</sup> Tomáš Winter, *Miloš Jiránek - Zápas o moderní malbu* (Arbor Vitae, 2012) 37

<sup>33</sup> Rodin's visit to Prague and further to the Bohemian Lands is beyond the scope of this thesis. Some excellent research is currently being made of Rodin's journey and experience in Prague by the historian and PhD researcher Jana Hunter (Oxford University) and has been subject to the research of Marta Filipova (History of Art, Masaryk university in Brno).

canvas as a place for the free reign of colour, partly inspired by the vibrant folk costumes of the region. In Slovakia, however, Jiránek still followed a strong narrative, celebrating the Slavic way of life and bringing a taste of artistic savageness to the urban Prague audiences. Soon he would move away from this towards a motif that strongly resonated with Whistler and his array of works featuring Joanna Hiffernan<sup>34</sup>. Some of these were also featured in *Volné Směry: Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl* (1864) [Fig 3.5S] and *Symphony in White nr 3* (1865 – 67) [Fig 3.5Y]. In 1905 (a year after *Volné Směry* published their tribute to Whistler) Jiránek painted a portrait of his fiancée, Antonína [Fig 3.21]. The portrait is clearly inspired by Whistler, showing Antonína in profile, sitting on a chair wearing a black dress. As Tomáš Winter points out, the painting is conceived as a portrait depicting the likeness of Jiránek's partner, however at the same time it transcends this into a symbolic realm where Antonína joins Whistler's Mother, and later Joanna Hiffernan, in being a vessel for the artistic exploration of subtle colour harmonies.<sup>35</sup> Jiránek had a close relationship with the painting of Whistler's Mother even at the time of his studies at the Academy of Art in Prague, where he hung a reproduction of the artwork on the wall of his studio, as the Czech art historians Tomáš Winter and Klára Hofbauerová-Heyrovská point out.<sup>36</sup>

In contrast to the painting of Whistler's Mother from 1871 [Fig 3.5U], more than thirty years later, Jiránek's portrait of his fiancée displays a bolder painting style in line with concurrent post-impressionist techniques. Antonína is sitting facing the opposite way than Whistler's Mother, and her posture seems more collapsed, somewhat resigned in comparison to the stark and composed posture of the Mother. Whistler's work alludes to the Golden Age of Netherlandish painting with its silvery tones and overall neatness, including attention to details of the interior, such as the decorative curtain in the background. Jiránek, on the other hand, emptied the background of any

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<sup>34</sup> The 2022 exhibition *Whistler's Woman in White: Joanna Hiffernan* held at the Royal Academy in London elaborated in great depth on the importance of the creative partnership between Whistler and Hiffernan, the dynamic of which links to my previous chapter and the creative partnership between Švabinský and his wife. Some of the paintings exhibited at the RA are among the ones reproduced in 1904 in *Volné Směry*.

<sup>35</sup> Winter: *Miloš Jiránek*, 91.

<sup>36</sup> Winter: *Miloš Jiránek*, 91; Klára Hofbauerová-Heyrovská: *Mezi vědci a umělci* (Jos R. Vilimek, Praha, 1947) 161.



distractions and the only object in the painting is the chair that Antonína is sitting on. The white upholstery of the chair becomes the brightest spot of the painting, conjuring a vibrant contrast between the white of the chair and the deep black of Antonína's dress, mirroring a similar contrast in Whistler's painting between his Mother's dress and her white lace head-cover and sleeves.

In his article on Whistler's painting, published in the first *Volné Směry* issue in 1904, Mauclair describes Whistler's ability to capture the spiritual essence of his sitters, painting a "fluid" and "spiritual and magnetic atmosphere".<sup>37</sup> This inward sensitivity and openness to the subtle nuances of colour in an introspective harmony inspired Jiránek to switch from his previous focus on capturing the Slavic folk culture, and instead concentrate on his new-found individualism, strengthened by meeting Antonína and getting engaged to her. While this shift would have been stimulated by multiple factors, Whistler's influence was certainly in the lead of propelling this change in Jiránek. While Jiránek's earlier work was varied and revolved around an array of themes and styles, the motif of portraying Antonína in colour harmonies of whites and greys remained with Jiránek until his untimely death in 1911.

In the last years of his life, Jiránek painted a series of portraits of Antonína which he called – very much in Whistler's style – *Studies in White* (1910). Two of the oil on canvas *Studies* are part of the collections of the National Gallery in Prague and the Regional Gallery in Liberec [Fig 3.22, 3.23] while the third *Study* is privately owned. [Fig 3.24]. There is however a pastel sketch for the third *Study* in the Gallery of Fine Arts in Ostrava [Fig 3.25]. All dating from 1910, it is evident that Jiránek considered his Whistlerian explorations pivotal to his practice. This is even reinforced by the fact that since the autumn of 1909, Jiránek had been planning to organise a grand retrospective of his work and hoped that this exhibition would earn him critical acclaim.<sup>38</sup> The show opened in April 1910, and to Jiránek's disappointment it evoked lukewarm if not straightforward negative reactions. The retrospective covered most of Jiránek's

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<sup>37</sup> Mauclair, "James McNeill Whistler," 36.

<sup>38</sup> Winter, *Miloš Jiránek*, 121.

prolific oeuvre, including his latest works, the three *Studies in White*. Jiránek painted all three at the start of the year, prior to the exhibition opening in April. He worked with Antonína who modelled for him, yet the paintings were not portraits, but rather studies of the effect of light on a white-dressed figure in a bright interior. In this endeavour, Jiránek clearly followed in the footsteps of Whistler's three *Symphonies in White* (1861 – 67) two of which were also reproduced by *Volné Směry* in 1904. Another iconic example from this series is Whistler's *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl* (1862). **[Fig 3.26]** Jiránek saw one of Whistler's white series in Paris when he visited the city in 1900 and wrote that it was “a miracle of courage and independence, to paint so bright and colourful when everyone around painted brown and black”.<sup>39</sup> Jiránek was so impressed by Whistler that he adapted his own painting style to mirror this new aesthetic.

Jiránek's *Study in White I* **[Fig. 3.22]** shows Antonína standing in what appears to be a doorway, although the background is not very suggestive, and it is not entirely clear where she is standing. Antonina's arms are spread open, holding on to the opposite sides of the doorway. The left side of her body is reminiscent of Whistler's *Symphony in White No.2*, where Joanna Hiffernan's left arm is lifted and positioned on the ledge of the fireplace. **[Fig 3.5R]** Antonína's gaze is turned towards the floor, her expression is that of a very subtle smile. Her dress is entirely white apart from a green belt. Although the painting was finished and has been exhibited in 1910, Jiránek left the bottom right side of the painting very sketchy, with patches of empty canvas, and with a series of rough painterly brushstrokes taking his post-impressionist painting style even further towards expressionism. Antonína's dress shines with its pure whiteness against the background of an array of subtle grey and green tones mixed with the white of the walls and the doorway behind her. The play of light and the visual negotiations between her dress and the white background are the true centre-points of the painting.

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<sup>39</sup> Miloš Jiránek, “Listy z Paříže” (1900) in Jiří Kotalík, ed, *O českém malířství moderním a jiné práce*, (Praha: SNKLHU, 1962), 200.

In *Study in White II* [Fig. 3.23] Jiránek provides more details on where exactly Antonína is standing. We meet Antonína in the same white doorway, but this time we also get a glimpse of a yellow room, bringing new tonality to the overall colour scheme of whites and greys. To further emphasize that this series of paintings aimed at exploring colour harmonies rather than illustrating a narrative, Jiránek positioned Antonína so that she faces away from the viewer. The right side of the painting carries a similar colour harmony in whites and greys as *Study I*, where the left side opens a narrow view of an adjacent room painted in warm yellow and featuring dark red chairs and a brownish rug on the floor. This tonal arrangement is reminiscent of Whistler's *Symphony in White No. 1* [Fig. 3.26] where Joanna Hiffernan dressed in white with a white curtain behind her stands on a bear skin and an ornamental rug, contrasting against the otherwise monochrome upper part of the painting. From the point of colour distribution, Jiránek's *Study II* is a horizontal version of Whistler's *Symphony No 1*.

A later third painting from Jiránek's series, *Study in White III*, [Fig 3.24] concludes the cycle and explores yet another composition using Antonína as the model posing in the same location, set against the white doorway with a glimpse of the yellow painted room in the background. The texture of this last painting is harsher, using a dryer paint achieving a thicker texture where individual brushstrokes merge into a tapestry of almost three-dimensional haptic surface. Antonina's posture is intriguing, connecting the white of the doorway with the yellow room, and dominating the paintings with her face exposed and turned towards the viewer. Unlike the previous two *Studies*, Antonina's pose is not relaxed and provokes the viewer, asking for interpretation of the tension that permeates through the posture. Her inquisitive expression suggests a back story, and somewhat takes away from the previous paintings' focus on the colour harmonies.

While there are many similarities between Whistler's and Jiránek's series of studies in white, there is also a major difference. Jiránek's paint application is markedly different from Whistler's, where Jiránek uses notably less oil medium, resulting in much thicker and drier paint. In some places on his canvases,

Jiránek's impasto-style results in thick layers of paint; in other places the underlayer of bare canvas is revealed between strokes of dry, almost pastel-like brushstrokes. Jiránek's preference for this technique of painting does not correlate with Whistler as much as with Jiránek's contemporaries. This is where the difference in temporalities manifests most prominently.

Jiránek was painting his portraits of Antonina around 1910, at a time when Czech art was dominated by the cubist and expressionist group *Osma* (The Eight) formed in 1907. The founding of *Osma* followed a major exhibition of Edvard Munch in Prague in 1905 where a large selection of Munch's work was shown stunning Czech artistic circles and causing a palpable knock-on effect. Jiránek's tendency towards a more contemporary style of painting therefore reflects the impact of Munch and the subsequent work by the *Osma* artists (such as Emil Filla, Bohumil Kubišta and Willi Nowak) who were Jiránek's contemporaries and friends. While the technique of his painting resonated with his contemporaries, Jiránek's admiration for Whistler clearly demonstrated in his choice of subjects and in his subtle and thought-through work with colour harmonies, distinctly different from the bold, colourful and geometric style of *Osma*.

Focusing on the theme of women in white was however unique to Jiránek and remained very distant from most of his contemporaries, owing much to Whistler rather than Jiránek's fellow Czech artist friends. Naturally, the theme of women in white in general extends beyond Whistler, as was shown at the 2022 exhibition *Whistler's Woman in White: Joanna Hiffernan* at the Royal Academy.<sup>40</sup> The exhibition curators Margaret McDonald and Ann Dumas brought together not only all of Whistler's *Symphonies* but also similar works, united by the theme of women in white, by both British and foreign artists spanning the decades from John Everett Millais' *Somnambulist* (1871) [Fig. 3.27] to Fernand Khnopff's *Portrait of Marguerite Khnopff* (1887) and *Madeleine Mabilie* (1888) [Fig. 3.28, 3.29] and Gustav Klimt's *Portrait of Hermine Gallia* (1904) [Fig. 3.30]. While Millais' work is not stripped of a

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<sup>40</sup> *Whistler's Woman in White: Joanna Hiffernan*, Exhibition at the Royal Academy, 26 Feb – 22 May 2022, curated by Margaret McDonald and Ann Dumas. Accessed Oct 21, 2023, <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/whistler-woman-in-white>

narrative (the candle in the woman's hand, a house with the lights on seen in the distance, the cliff edge that the woman is dangerously close to all indicate a possible complex story), Khnopff's and Klimt's paintings are primarily portraits, straying from their original function towards a visual experiment. The same can be said of Jiránek's series of paintings seemingly depicting Antonina, but in reality, borrowing Antonina's figure as a pretext for a tonal study of the colour of light on an array of white surfaces and textures.

Khnopff, who was well known among Bohemian artists, also painted the *Portrait of Marguerite Khnopff* (1887) [Fig 3.29] which was not part of the Royal Academy exhibition, but which fits well in the imaginary line-up of works that would have played its role in inspiring Jiránek's *White Studies* series. Showing the artist's sister standing against a white doorway, Khnopff's painting creates a clear link to Jiránek's *Study in White I*, where the white doorway turns into an almost abstracted sign, giving a hint of where the figure is standing, but not providing certainty enough to spark any tangible narrative.

The motif of women in white was of course not limited to these artists, or artists of any specific nationality. The Danish painter Peder Severin Krøyer's portrait of his wife Maria from 1890 [Fig 3.31] shows Maria dressed in white standing next to a green doorway, creating a similar colour contrast to Jiránek's *White Study I* with Antonina's green belt punctuating through the sea of white tones. The theme of women in white set against an unclear background was alive well into the 1910s, both in a modernist fashion, such as the Klimt's aforementioned painting from 1904 [Fig. 3.30] or in more traditional style, such as Henry Silkstone Hopwood's *Lady in White* from 1908 [Fig. 3.32].

Jiránek's *Studies in White* from 1904 sit comfortably within this context. There is no doubt that Whistler played a key role for Jiránek, who admired the artist from the time of his studies, but who also saw Whistler's work first-hand in Paris in 1900. Equally so, Jiránek's sources of inspiration would have been multiple and layered, and as such they would include artists other than Whistler and would move fluidly across the decades from the 1860s when Whistler first experimented with the subject. Once again, the 'delay' in Jiránek's reaction to Whistler's work was not detrimental, but rather enhanced the artist's perception

and his artistic output. For Jiránek, Whistler's work was both topical and new (exhibited in Paris and London where Jiránek travelled) as well as rooted in other artists' interpretations of a similar subject. The Bohemian environment was really only discovering Whistler in the 1900s and especially around the time of his death. Therefore, artists like Jiránek would have seen Whistler's work at the same time as works by Klimt and Khnopff. I believe that Jiránek's *White Studies* – painted specially for his grand retrospective exhibition – embody the notion that the 'delay' in reception is not only not a disadvantage, but a real gain: it enabled Jiránek to mirror Whistler's work in his *White Studies*, but also to reflect on a whole synthesis of Whistler's followers and receptions from other artists active at the time. Ultimately, this process proved to be enriching and transformative for Bohemian painting of the early 1900s.

### **Whistler's Painting Reflected in Czech Art – Jan Preisler and the 10 O'clock Lecture**

In the previous chapter, I have introduced Jan Preisler (1872 – 1918) as a painter associated with the Bohemian take on Symbolism and someone who explored the legacy of the Pre-Raphaelites in his work. Excelling in drawing as well as painting, Preisler entered the Prague art scene with his large-scale drawing cycles, such as *Easter* and *Wind and Breeze*, both from 1896. These were followed by large scale paintings such as *Fairy-Tale* (1901-02) with clear links to the work of Burne-Jones. In the preceding chapter, I have shown the connection between these works and the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics. In this chapter, I will be exploring Preisler's painting *Black Lake* [Fig. 3.33] from 1904, considered to be one of the most iconic paintings by the artists and a signifier of the Bohemian belonging to the wider circles of European Symbolism.

*Black Lake* was finished in 1904, the same year when *Volné Směry* published their tribute to Whistler. However, the painting was not finished in time to be used for the journal's first issue of 1904, which led to the editors reproducing Preisler's sketch for the *Black Lake* instead. Preisler was known to produce numerous preparatory sketches and variants of the composition of his major paintings and *Black Lake* was no exception. Many of these would be turned into lithographs and sold individually or used as sketches in the process of creating

subsequent paintings. The main motif from the *Black Lake* – a young ethereal boy leaning against a white horse on the bank of a deep blue-black lake – appears in many alternations throughout an extensive body of sketches. Some of these feature other figures reclining in the landscape, whereas some focus on the pose of the main male figure [Fig 3.34]. There is also a sequence of paintings by Preisler from the same period featuring the motif of a dark lake, often surrounded by white and beige coloured rocky landscape with symbolic figures populating its landscape – some of the versions revive the central couple from Preisler's earlier painting *Spring* (1900) discussed in the previous chapter.

When the drawing of the *Black Lake* was used as the page header for the translation of Whistler's *10 o'clock Lecture*, it is possible that Preisler was not yet sure what to call the painting (or at this stage, the series of sketches that would eventually lead to the creation of the painting) [Fig. 3.4]. In the journal's overall list of reproductions, Preisler's drawing is simply called 'a header'. This indicates that the painting's identity and title were yet to be fully formed. However, the preparations for the painting must have been already intriguing for the journal editors, as they used it alongside Whistler's lecture. It is worth noting that the header and footer for Whistler's lecture are the only two artworks by Preisler reproduced in the entire of the 8<sup>th</sup> volume of *Volné Směry* covering the season 1903-1904. This further supports my argument that this illustration had an important symbolic meaning for the development of Bohemian art at the time.

Preisler was intrigued by the motif of white cliffs since his visit to Capri in 1902, although the landscape he painted was also not dissimilar to the Královédvorský region in Central Bohemia where Preisler grew up. Most importantly through, Preisler's series of *Black Lake* drawings and paintings marked a shift in the artist's style towards using a limited palette, mainly aimed at interrogating the interplay between black and white with sporadically added colour accents and highlights. This shift can be understood as the result of Whistler's posthumous exhibition in London and the wave of interest in Whistler that resonated through the Czech press, including *Volné Směry* and the graphic

work by artists such as F.T. Šimon and Hugo Boettinger, as discussed earlier in this chapter.<sup>41</sup>

Preisler was preoccupied with the Black Lake series since 1903 and fully immersed himself in the work throughout 1904 and 1905. The decision to ask Preisler to provide a header for Whistler's lecture in *Volné Směry* in October 1904 must have been a conscious gesture from the editors, aiming to show the work by an artist whose own oeuvre was transformed by the encounter with Whistler's art. Preisler took to the task with all seriousness and prepared several versions of the header using black charcoal on grey paper [Fig. 3.34].<sup>42</sup> This study featured the young man leaning against a rock in the foreground next to a semi-ornamental tree (described by Wittlich as the "tree of life") set against the dark area of the lake which takes up most of the composition. In the background another rock can be seen in the form of an island emerging from the dark waves. This composition appears on some paint sketches too; on some versions there is a female figure sitting on the island provoking a feeling of longing and desire in the young man, such as in the sketch from the National Gallery [Fig 3.35] In this version, the young man is leaning against the white horse in a gesture of contemplation, facing away from the viewer, while the horse is positioned with his gaze towards the lake. The many other sketches and drawings revolving around this motif show that Preisler was experimenting with various layouts of the composition, moving the main figure around and trying alternative poses. The final header used in *Volné Směry* [Fig. 3.4] is however the one that finally led to the creation of the painting *Black Lake* later in 1904 [Fig 3.33] and as such was representative of this major work of Preisler's.

The final painting keeps the composition almost identical to the *Volné Směry* header with some minor changes, such as the facial features and expression of the young man, and the position of the hind legs of the horse. The composition itself is reminiscent of the work of Puvis de Chavannes, who was another major

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<sup>41</sup> In Czechoslovak art history, this connection between Preisler and Whistler was first suggested by Prof. Matějček in 1950 and quoted by Prof. Wittlich in 2003. However, no deeper of this was offered in previous literature. Antonin Matějček, *Jan Preisler* (Praha, 1950), 61; Petr Wittlich, "Trpká krása 1907–1907" in *Jan Preisler 1872–1918*, ed. Petr Wittlich, Lenka Bydžovská, Karel Srp and Polana Bregantová (Praha: Obecní Dům, 2003), 147.

<sup>42</sup> Wittlich, "Trpká krása," 154.



inspiration for Preisler, as I have established in the previous chapter. However, the real star of the show here is the colour – or rather the deliberate lack of it. Preisler's previous major paintings such as *Spring* and the decorative mural for the Regional House in Hradec Králové [Fig 3.36] used a much broader colour palette and indulged in Preisler's typical shades of red, orange and pink on the ladies' attires. The change that came with Whistler resulted in Preisler changing his palette, scaling it down and bringing to the foreground the dialogue between the contrasting dark surface of the lake and the white, grey, and beige tones of the rocks and the shoreline. The painting's delicate colour balance between the two main players – black and white – is accentuated in several places with sudden appearances of vivid purple (the bush near the young man) and some orange and red (on the man's lips). The figure of the young man with his white horse is borrowed from Preisler's last painting, the mural for Hradec Králové. Nonetheless, the figure has undergone a transformation, being freed from the narrative of a young villager (in a folk costume) leading the horse, turning instead into a highly symbolic figure, naked except for the drapery hiding his genitals, and using his horse as an externalisation of his own strength and sexuality, rather than an animal linked to farming and folk country life.

The transition from the mural to *Black Lake* was therefore a profound transformation for Preisler, one that was strongly informed by the colour harmonies introduced by Whistler. There could not have been a more fitting place for Preisler's drawing of *Black Lake* than above Whistler's *10 o'clock Lecture*, which revolved around liberating art from all its societal, economical, and nationalistic ties. Preisler's new painting style was thus recognised as a direct legacy of Whistler, as well as a living link to Whistler's ideals, as outlined in his *Lecture*.

Another two painterly sketches from the *Black Lake* series, both now in private collections, show Preisler's fascination with the colour harmonies provoked by the coexistence of the dark lake and the bright rocks in a very Whistler-like fashion. The *Study for Black Lake* [Fig 3.37] shows a somewhat zoomed-in version of the final painting, capturing the young man's body up to his knees, and allowing the horizontal torso of the horse to dominate the painting. While

this is a sketch and therefore lacks many details, and displays very dynamic sketchy brushstrokes, it seems that the main purpose of this exercise was to explore the difference in the overall colour harmony when the composition became tighter, allowing less space for the black surface of the lake. The result is a brighter palette and a keen observation of the effects of 'white on white'; similar to Whistler's *Symphony in White No. 1* [Fig 3.26] where Whistler positioned the model wearing a white dress against a white background: here too Preisler places the white horse against the white cliffs, exploring the possibilities of capturing the interaction of the nuances of white in paint. The 'white on white' approach makes this particular sketch stand out, as no other version of the painting retains this composition. Even the *Volné Směry* header strayed away from this and contrasted the white horse against the dark surface of the lake. I therefore view the *Study for Black Lake* [Fig 3.37] as a crucial step on Preisler's journey in Whistler's footsteps, as well as one of the reasons why the journal's editors would see Preisler's work on the *Black Lake* series as transformative.

A smaller study, also from a private collection, shows a darker version of *Black Lake* with an altered composition [Fig 3.38]. The young man has mounted the horse - which is now black - and is riding the horse towards the end of the cliffs overlooking the dark abyss of the lake. The left-hand side of the painting introduces the motif of the youth riding the black horse, while on the right the grey cliffs descend into the dark water surface. Here above the dark waters, Preisler introduces new players to the composition: several purple-blue birds in flight and a tree with bright yellow-gold blossoms. The motif of golden fruit or buds on a dark background of tree branches appears in another sketch from the Olomouc Museum [Fig 3.39]. The dark tree with its golden buds is reminiscent of Whistler's *Nocturne in Black and Gold – The Falling Rocket*<sup>43</sup> [Fig 3.5I, J] with its dark illegible background perforated by a cloud of gold lights, which was reproduced in *Volné Směry*. Although Preisler did not explore this motif further,

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<sup>43</sup> Whistler's painting was exhibited in Munich in 1888 where Czech artists could easily visit. Muther, "The History of Modern Painting", 650.

experimenting with the golden lights in the style of the *Falling Rocket* further points towards a profound inspiration by Whistler's painting.

In a later letter to the sculptor Stanislav Sucharda, Preisler explains the origins of his *Black Lake* cycle.<sup>44</sup> Preisler uncovers that his choice of using black colour for the lake was linked to the feeling of sadness which he experienced in that period of his life, and even suggests that the "painting with the young man with the white horse in front of a black lake could be called melancholy or something similar."<sup>45</sup> Preisler considers the painting to be full of colour, rather than "black and grey" and describes how the darkness of the lake and the man's drapery gradually eases off and brightens up as it cascades through the cliffs to finally find its pure whiteness in the body of the horse. The way Preisler writes about colours in *Black Lake* in his letter resonates deeply both with Whistler's own work, as well as with Šalda's description of the brave colour harmonies exploring a world of aesthetics beyond the nationalistic themes in art, with which I opened this chapter. Preisler's drawing in *Volné Směry* thus embodies the entire discourse of modern Bohemian art with its desire to stray from nationalism, as described by Šalda, towards aesthetic autonomy, embodied in Whistler's *Lecture*. *Volné Směry*'s clever editing and correlating of text and images created a true 'Gesamtkunstwerk', a manifesto of the young generation of Bohemian artists, clearly stating their desires for the future of the country's art.

### **Whistler's Paintings and Max Švabinský**

I have introduced Max Švabinský in the previous chapter, examining his - and his wife's - passion for the English Pre-Raphaelites which substantially impacted Švabinský's work for a period of time from the 1890s until around 1905.<sup>46</sup> Whistler was another great source of inspiration for Švabinský, and again his wife and model Ela played her part in forming this connection. It was mainly Max's portraits of Ela where Švabinský experimented with introducing colour harmonies borrowed from Whistler, arriving at a slightly different effect

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<sup>44</sup> Jan Preisler, "Jan Preisler St. Suchardovi," *Vytvarné umění* 6 (Praha, 1956): 228-229.

<sup>45</sup> Petr Wittlich, "Trpká krása," 154.

<sup>46</sup> Similar to my previous chapter, I will be using the artist's first name Max, and his wife's first name Ela, throughout the chapter to avoid potential confusion regarding their surnames.

than what we have previously seen with Jiránek, perhaps a more polished one and centred around Švabinský's immaculate draughtsmanship.

Max first encountered Whistler's work in Paris in 1899 during his year-long stay in the city. Ela too came to visit, and the couple saw several exhibitions together. Moreover, they visited other Bohemian artists settled in Paris, such as Alphonse Mucha, who even spent some time teaching together with Whistler at the Académie Carmen.<sup>47</sup> This connection further embedded in Švabinský a fascination with Whistler's work, which is reflected in Švabinský's paintings, drawings and watercolours from this period.

Švabinský was obsessed with Whistler even before Whistler's death, which is well illustrated by the similarity of one of his works with a detail described in an article in *Volné Směry* in 1903. The unsigned article was a short but emphatic announcement of Whistler's death, describing very generally some of the outstanding features of the artist's work. When it came to Whistler's portraits, the author remarks that even the tiniest detail on his paintings summarises the whole personality of the sitter – such as the act of putting on a glove.<sup>48</sup> The author probably had in mind Whistler's *Arrangement in Black- The Lady in the Yellow Buskin- Portrait of Lady Archibald Campbell* from 1882-84, which was reproduced by *Volné Směry* in 1904 as part of the commemorative issue celebrating Whistler's work. **[Fig 3.5P, 3.5Q]** A very similar gesture to this painting is mirrored in Švabinský's *Grey Portrait* from 1902 **[Fig 3.40]**. This ink and watercolour painting reflects Švabinský's outstanding qualities as a draughtsman, which were also a characteristic feature of his graphic works, namely mainly etching and lithographs. Ela sat as a model for the painting, which was conceived from the start as study of the precisely balanced colour harmony of greys and blues, aiming to follow Whistler's example. Ela's gesture of putting on a glove is a true focal point of the artwork, and one that ties the

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<sup>47</sup> Wittlich, *Česká Secese*, 108.

"Carmern Rossi", *The paintings of James McNeill Whistler – A catalogue Raisonné*, University of Glasgow, accessed Sept 20, 2022, <https://www.whistlerpaintings.gla.ac.uk/catalogue/biog/?nid=RossC>

Académie Carmen was short lived enterprise but during its short existence it brought together Whistler and much as well as other Bohemian artists, such as Vojtěch Preissig who devoted his work to graphic techniques and subsequently spent several decades living and teaching in Boston, Massachusetts. Académie Carmen closed in 1901.

<sup>48</sup> "Zprávy a poznámky – James M. A. Whistler", *Volné Směry* VII, no.7 (1903): 249-250.

painting closely to Whistler's earlier work which Švabinský would have seen even before Whistler's passing.

As I have established in the previous chapters, Švabinský's work in this period was very much centred around Ela and the various ways of portraying her. Between 1898 and 1904, Max created a portrait series of Ela exploring the harmonies of the chosen tonal palette and often experimenting with several versions of the same motif, transposing it from a warm to a cold colour palette. From the technical point of view, Švabinský like Whistler worked in a variety of techniques, switching between watercolours, etchings, ink drawings and oil painting.

The *Pink Portrait* from 1898 [Fig 3.41] shows Ela standing in front of a background of greenery, perhaps a row of hedges. The flat background gives no hints as to where exactly the scene is situated. Ela is wearing a light-pink dress and a large straw hat with ribbons and floral decoration. A large yellow feather is projected from her hat towards the greenery behind her. Ela appears to be standing still, but her right hand is clutching at the side of her ornate skirt as if she is just about to walk and needs the rim of the skirt lifting. The texture of the dress is painted with great attention to detail, creating an almost sculptural effect when depicting the embroidery on the fabric. Ela's signature melancholy gaze is cast at the viewer. With flowers in her hair and her expensive looking pink dress, Ela's sombre expression contrasts somewhat with the summery feel of the painting.

Ela's memoirs repeatedly confirm Švabinský's fascination with the colours of Ela's dress and accessories. The artist's aim throughout the series of portraits was to use Ela and her clothes as a starting point for the exploration of colour harmonies. In the *Pink Portrait*, the greenery behind Ela is chosen deliberately to allow for the subtle interplay between the pink of the fabric and the green shades of the hedges. Švabinský benefitted from the support of the Vejrych family and especially Ela's mother, who did not hesitate to secure any attire for Ela, following instructions from the artist. As Ela remarks in her memoirs about the ongoing series of her portraits: "Ink drawings, oils, first lithographs... it was like a fever consuming him day and night. He would have me dressed up, I was

barely eighteen...like Rembrandt did with his Saskia."<sup>49</sup> While today such a statement raises a worrying flurry of questions regarding consent and the power balance between the couple, for now this will need to be explored beyond the confines of this thesis. Ela's memoirs however reflect convincingly Max's artistic mindset and his passion for using portraits of Ela as an exercise in the exploration of colour harmonies in paint.

Švabinský's *Pink Portrait* represents a clear parallel to Whistler's *Harmony in Pink and in Grey: Portrait of Lady Meux* which was also reproduced by Muther's *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX Jahrhundert*.<sup>50</sup> [Fig 3.42]. In the same vein of Whistlerian exploration of subtle tonality, the *Pink Portrait* was followed by the *Grey Portrait* in 1902. [Fig3.40] This ink drawing with added watercolour tones was preceded by sketches in warm tones of beige and orange, but finally settled on a silver-like tonality for the final and much more detailed version of the composition. Ela is portrayed seated on a sofa against a dark blue wall. Next to the sofa an indoor rose bush towers over Ela's head. The deep-red roses are mirrored by lighter roses on the light fabric covering the sofa, on which Ela is resting. As ever, Ela's enigmatic melancholy expression alludes to an introspective mood. Her face is turned towards the viewer, but her gaze does not meet ours. Her attire is perfectly coordinated to create an overall symphony of greys and light blues. Her gesture of securing a glove on her hand as if she is about to depart contrasts with the overall pensive atmosphere of the work. Her left glove is being adjusted on her hand while her right glove lies on a small orange pillow next to Ela. The colour scheme of the work is strongly reminiscent of Whistler's *Arrangement in Grey and Black No 1* known as *Whistler's Mother* from 1871. [Fig 3.5T, 3.5U] It was not accidental that Švabinský called his work the *Grey Portrait*, accentuating the importance of the colour scheme above anything else.

The painting of *Whistler's Mother* fascinated Švabinský for some time. In 1903, Švabinský produced a large-scale ink and watercolour drawing called *Two*

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<sup>49</sup> Volavkova: *Max Švabinský*, 32. I would like to acknowledge that Ela's remark raises the questions of consent and power balance in their relationship which would deserve further exploration, beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>50</sup> Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX Jahrhundert*, 533.

*Mothers*. [Fig 3.43] While the colour scheme of this work is much more vibrant and varied in comparison to Whistler, the main motif of an elderly woman seated on a chair and seen from a profile is similar. Švabinský's drawing shows two older women, Ela's mother and grandmother, seated in the shade in the garden at Kozlov. Especially the younger of the two, Ela's mother, is seen almost from her profile and in a pose close to *Whistler's Mother*, with her hands resting in her lap and her dress and shawl falling to the ground in heavy fabric folds. Unlike Whistler, Švabinský's depiction of the old woman comes across more colourful, with attention given to the ornate embroidery on her 'Scottish shawl' (as referred to by Ela). The drawing is incredibly detailed and showcases Švabinský's mastery of ink drawing, unparalleled among his contemporaries.

The following year, in 1904, as part of the 'Whistlerian' issue, *Volné Směry* reproduced Max's coloured drawing, later turned into an etching, called *Camelia* [Fig 3.44, 3.45]. This work is perhaps as inspired by the Pre-Raphaelites as it is by Whistler. Švabinský produced several versions of the drawing, turning these into coloured and black-and-white etchings. A reproduction of *Camelia* was published in *The Studio* in 1904.<sup>51</sup> With Ela as the model, the gesture of combing her long hair next to the opulent blooming camelias chimes with the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic and brings to mind the later works of Rossetti, as I have explored in the previous chapter. However, the sensitive exploration of subtle colour harmonies of greys, blues and pinks suggests that Max was looking at Whistler too, bringing him into his mixture of English inspirations.

Also in 1904, Švabinský returned to his fascination with Whistler's mother once again with his ink and watercolour drawing *Ela Wearing a Hat* [Fig 3.46]. Here Švabinský used both a similar colour scheme and a similar composition to *Whistler's Mother*. Švabinský zooms in to Whistler's composition and shows Ela's profile with an opulent sizeable hat, decorated with large, curved seagull feathers. We can only see Ela's torso as the composition is cut off at her elbows. She is wrapped in a heavy winter coat with a furry scarf around her neck. Ela is leaning against the back of a chair; the background is monochrome and gives no indication of her surroundings. Ela's expression is sombre and

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<sup>51</sup> "Studio Talk – Prague," *The Studio*, no.131 (1904): 87  
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emotionless, resonating with *Whistler's Mother*, although a similar expression can be found on almost all Max's depictions of Ela.

In her memoirs Ela describes the excitement that Max felt upon buying her the hat with the decorative seagull. According to Ela, Max was captivated by the colour harmonies of the hat and the seagull feathers, and decided he needed to capture this in a painting.<sup>52</sup> As always, Ela's entire outfit was colour-coordinated to match Švabinský's artistic vision. Švabinský's desire to dedicate an entire portrait to capturing the colour harmony of a seagull hat resonated deeply with Whistler's view of painting, embodied by his famous statement relating to *Symphony in White, No. 1*: "My painting simply represents a girl dressed in white standing in front of a white curtain."<sup>53</sup> In both Whistler's and Švabinský's paintings from this period, the sitters embodied a pretext for a painterly exploration of tonal harmonies, aiming at an aesthetic idea far removed from any symbolism or any particular specificities of their respective models. In this way, Whistler's and Švabinský's aims were perfectly aligned.

### **Conclusion – Lasting Impact?**

Whistler had a transformative effect on Bohemian art around and well beyond the 1900s. Whistler's death in 1903 sparked a flurry of interest in Bohemian cultural circles, replicating a similar situation to Ruskin's passing in 1900. Since then, the Bohemian interest in British art has been on the rise, so when Whistler died in 1903, Czech artists and critics jumped at this opportunity and used it to promote the values and innovations of British art, which Whistler was perceived to embody. While Whistler mainly represented Britain in the Bohemian milieu, he also stood as a truly cosmopolitan figure. He was known to be of American origin, and a number of his works were exhibited in Paris where many Bohemian artists travelled either as part of their studies or specifically to visit popular exhibitions.

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<sup>52</sup> Švabinská, *Vzpomínky*, 250.

<sup>53</sup> Robin Spencer, "Whistler's 'The White Girl', Painting, Poetry and Meaning", *The Burlington Magazine* 140, no. 1142 (1998): 305.



In Bohemia, the turn of the century represented a time of two rivalling tendencies, one being a nationalistic view of art, the other an international outlook. For art journals such as *Volné Směry*, writing about Whistler became a way of expressing their views on the politics of art, leaning towards the international view on art. As I have shown, the entire first issue of *Volné Směry* in 1904 was dedicated as much to celebrating Whistler as to using his artwork and his *10 o'clock Lecture* as manifestations of his cosmopolitan views on modern art. At this time, *Volné Směry* had two agile editors, the literary and art critic F.X. Šalda and the artist Miloš Jiránek. Both played a key role in Bohemian culture of the time; both were multilingual and utilised their knowledge of English to produce good quality translations from English for the journal. Together they constructed the first issue of *Volné Směry* as a layered tribute to Whistler, making a distinct connection between the artist and the concurrent Czech artistic environment.

This was further supported by the choice of reproductions for the issue, which featured a number of Bohemian artists responding to Whistler. Whistler's oeuvre is rich and varied, encompassing a broad range of styles and techniques from engravings to various graphic techniques to drawing and painting. As a result, there are a number of Bohemian artists who reflected different aspects of Whistler's work, each in their own specific way. In this chapter, first I discussed a selection of Bohemian graphic artworks. These included the cityscapes and landscapes by Viktor Stretti and T.F. Šimon, which were inspired by Whistler's series from Venice, while Emil Orlik's sketches from his extensive travels all over Britain reflected Whistler's interest in the substrata of society and the lower classes of working London.

In the field of painting, I focused on the striking example of Miloš Jiránek, who was a prolific editor and translator working for *Volné Směry*, as well as a progressive artist. I have shown that Jiránek himself went through a period when he focused on predominantly Slavic themes and the focus on folk life across the Bohemian Lands. This period was however overcome when Jiránek embarked on a series of three statement pieces: portraits of his wife Antonina which he called *White Studies* and which he painted especially for the purpose

of showing them as the highlights of his retrospective exhibition held in 1910. Working on this series seven years after Whistler's death further proves my argument that Whistler left a lasting mark on Bohemian artists not only immediately around his death – when the Czech journals highlighted his work – but even years later. It remains a tragedy that due to Jiránek's untimely death in 1911 we cannot see how his passion for Whistler would have developed after his retrospective exhibition.

Another painter who responded to Whistler was Jan Preisler. His illustration for the *Black Lake* was used by *Volné Směry* as the header for Whistler's *10 O'clock Lecture* translated into Czech for the very first time. The small illustration was a grand statement as it was linked to one of Preisler's most iconic pieces. Preisler painted several versions of the *Black Lake*, all of them being painterly explorations of the collisions and convergences between light and shadow, while keeping to a highly symbolic language linking to the French and Belgian Symbolist movement. Preisler was one of the most vocal promoters of openness to international art and as such his response to Whistler reflects his belief that Bohemian art needed a lively dialogue with international art developments.

Finally, I demonstrated through the work of Max Švabinský the multi-layered nature of Bohemian art of the 1900s. As shown in my previous chapter, Max and his wife Ela were intensely inspired by the Pre-Raphaelites. At the same time, however, they also emulated many features of Whistler's art. In this chapter, I focused on Švabinský's portraits of Ela, which were conceived as tonal and colour studies. In Švabinský's work, the Pre-Raphaelite inspiration went hand in hand with an admiration for Whistler. While Švabinský's key portraits inspired by Whistler date from around the time of Whistler's passing and stretch to 1904, similarly to Jiránek's case, Whistler's legacy is palpable in Švabinský's work well into the late 1910s. A major change in Švabinský's work only took place after the end of the First World War, partly due to divorcing his first wife Ela, and refocusing his work towards a sensual exploration prompted by the marriage to his second wife. Overall, in the case of all the artists

analysed in this chapter, it is safe to say that some aspects of Whistler's work continued to permeate their work until the outbreak of the War.

The First World War was a major factor that impacted the Bohemian Lands, changing the political structure of the country. No longer part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Bohemian Lands became part of the newly founded Czechoslovak Republic (or Czechoslovakia), formally established by its first 'Founding President' Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk in 1918. This was such a substantial social, political, and cultural change that the entire art scene in Bohemia had to significantly transform in order to reflect this major shift. Therefore, it would be impossible to say whether Whistler's work would have inspired Bohemian artists even post the 1910s, had it not been for the War. It is however safe to say that Whistler's varied and multi-faceted work left a lasting impact on Bohemian artists around 1900, stretching on for another decade, before the course of history diverted not only Bohemian, but the entire European cultural life.

## Chapter 4 – British Caricature and Illustration Reflected in Bohemian Art

### Introducing British Caricature and Illustration in *Volné Směry*

In the previous three chapters, I have established the importance of Bohemian fine art journals, mainly *Volné Směry* and *Rozhledy*, for the dissemination of British art in the Bohemian Lands. I have analysed the Bohemian reception of the Pre-Raphaelite movement and elaborated on how this was reflected in Czech painting. My enquiry has been centred around Czech fine art journals and the way they shaped Bohemian artistic and critical thinking. In this current chapter, I will analyse the increased focus on British art in *Volné Směry*, manifesting in an extensive article on British caricature and illustration. This was a reaction to the initial article on Ruskin from 1900, which opened the doors to British art to the Bohemian readership. I will argue that as a result of this exposure in *Volné Směry*, British caricature and illustration stimulated Bohemian artists to focus on illustration and graphic techniques as an art form in their own right, and substantially refocused the work of some artists to encompass drawing and illustration – including that for children – in their work post 1900, culminating in an exhibition of illustrations for children in 1902.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of the chapter is to report ‘on the ground’ on how Czech artists received information on British caricature and illustration through the domestic press. Therefore, this chapter will be based around two articles featured back-to-back in *Volné Směry* in 1900, both exploring the theme of caricature and illustration.<sup>2</sup> The first article elaborates on European caricature, including that of England, while the second focuses on Bohemian caricature. I will be using these two essays, and images reproduced with them, to analyse the Bohemian view on English caricature and illustration. I will be looking at what aspects of

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<sup>1</sup> Prah and Bydžovská, *Volné směry*, 95.

<sup>2</sup> Miloš Jiránek, „Kreslíři – Karikaturisté“, *Volné směry* IV, no.7 (1900): 211-267.  
Gustav Jaroš, „Česká karitatura“, *Volné směry* IV, no.7 (1900): 2679-274.

the British artwork resonated most with the Czech audience, and how this manifested in the work of Bohemian artists. I will explore what made English illustration stand out in comparison to artworks from Germany and France, which were also showcased in the article. Finally, I will be drawing parallels between the British and Bohemian artists featured in both articles. I will show that both articles were transformative for Bohemian artists and that British caricature and illustration substantially informed Czech artists' work and the understanding of the value of specifically children's illustration around and after the turn of the century.

Throughout my inquiry into Bohemian journals' writing about British art, I consider both the textual and the pictorial part of the articles as equally valuable. Jiránek's article featured illustrations of British artists while Bohemian artists' work was shown alongside Jaroš's essay. I will be examining the individual illustrations throughout this chapter.

The year 1900 represented a turning point in the *Volné Směry* journal's approach to British artists. As I have shown in the first chapter, in issue 3 of *Volné Směry* (1900) the obituary of John Ruskin introduced the art critic to the Bohemian audience while expressing the desire to "tear down the Chinese wall" separating Bohemian audiences from British art and culture.<sup>3</sup> I argue that the obituary was a proclamation of the editorial board's interest in British art, calling for a more extensive coverage of the country's visual culture in the future, which in effect meant opening up to British cultural influences. The author of the article on Ruskin was Gustav Jaroš, writing under his usual pseudonym GAMMA. It is no accident that Jaroš was also the author of the article on Czech caricature that I will be analysing in this chapter.

The two articles on international and Czech caricature, both richly illustrated, were put together as a special supplement to the 4<sup>th</sup> issue of the journal in 1900. Together the two articles featured reproductions that span a total of 67 pages. It was very rare for *Volné Směry* to publish such a large and richly illustrated supplement. This alone indicates the importance of the topic of

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<sup>3</sup> Jaroš, "John Ruskin", 89.

international caricature and illustration to the journal's editorial board, and to Czech artists in general.

The supplement consisted of two articles, the first being on international caricature. This major extensive essay was entitled "Draftsmen – Caricaturists" and written by the painter and translator Miloš Jiránek (1875 – 1911).<sup>4</sup> I have introduced Jiránek in the previous chapter where I have analysed his work in connection to James McNeill Whistler. Aside from being a painter, Jiránek was also known as a prolific translator from a number of languages, including French and English.

Jiránek's article is focused on drawings, illustrations and caricatures from France, England, and Germany. Each country is analysed separately with an array of mostly black and white reproductions. The section entitled "England" features the following five artists: Charles Keene (1823 – 1891) George Du Maurier (1834 – 1896) Randolph Caldecott (1846 – 1886), William Nicholson (1872 – 1949) and Charles Dana Gibson (1867 – 1944). Jiránek included Gibson even though he was American, not English. Jiránek understood Gibson to be a representative of the English-speaking world and therefore included him in the English section of the article.

In his prologue to the article, Jiránek stresses the importance of drawing and its indisputable place among fine art disciplines. This is despite the fact, Jiránek remarks, that in comparison to painting, drawing often receives undermining comments. He nonetheless concludes with expressing his opinion that Bohemian caricature holds its ground in the European context, even though there are not many artists producing caricature in contemporary Bohemia – as Jiránek says, Czech artists only do caricature "en passant".<sup>5</sup>

Following Jiránek's essay, the journal's special supplement features another article, this time signed with the pseudonym GAMMA, referring to the art critic Gustav Jaroš – the author of the obituary of John Ruskin from the previous issue of *Volné Směry*. Jaroš's text, entitled simply "Czech Caricature", analyses

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<sup>4</sup> Jiránek, "Kreslíři – Karikaturisté," 207- 265.

<sup>5</sup> Jiránek, "Kreslíři – Karikaturisté", 212

several Bohemian illustrators and caricaturists and – unlike Jiránek’s essay – remains largely critical. Jaroš opens his essay with the exclamation that “there is no Czech caricature” and proceeds to outline why this is the case.<sup>6</sup> The main issue, Jaroš argues, is the state of the Czech society, its narrow-mindedness, and the curse of being a small nation. In comparison to well-developed nations, Jaroš claims, Bohemian culture is backward and suffocates anyone who dares experiment with caricature. Together, the articles delivered a powerful message promoting more openness towards international art, as well as a critical assessment of where Bohemian artists stood in this context.

### **What is ‘Caricature’?**

Before I undertake a closer analysis of the individual articles, first I want to focus on the terminology used in both articles and clarify the terms ‘caricature’ and ‘illustration’. Both articles (by Jiránek and by Jaroš) repeatedly use the term caricature while also admitting that most of the reproduced artworks are not actually caricatures but rather comedic or satirical illustrations, or even just sketches and drawings without necessarily displaying the component of humour or satire. While neither article is exact with its terminology, it is important to explore the meanings of the term ‘caricature’ and ‘draughtsman’ and what this meant for the relationship between British and Bohemian art.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines caricature as “exaggeration by means of often ludicrous distortion of parts or characteristics”<sup>7</sup> This definition only applies to some of the many reproductions in both Jaroš’s and Jiránek’s articles. Jaroš especially is very clear about his loose understanding of the term caricature. In fact, Jaroš uses the seeming incapability of Czech drawing to become caricature as a means of criticising the state of Czech art and society altogether. First, he describes what caricature is, very much in line with the Merriam-Webster definition. Then he points out, that without the exaggeration, without the disproportion and an admixture of irony, an image simply isn’t a caricature but just a “picture of a cheerful, humorous state of mind, non-

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<sup>6</sup> Jaroš, “Česká Karikatura,” 269 – 274.

<sup>7</sup> “Caricature”, *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, accessed Sept 30, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/caricature>

tendentious naturalistic reproduction of reality etc, and so I think that many examples shown in this article are not really caricatures.”<sup>8</sup> Jaroš continues to expand on his opinion that caricature can only flourish in well-developed large nations, where the political, social and cultural conditions encourage artists to satirise their society, a good example of this being Britain. In contrast to that, according to Jaroš, Czech society is too small to allow the freedom to criticise through caricature, requiring extreme bravery from artists who would dare to produce caricatures in such a close-knit and judgemental environment. As Jaroš puts it:

Caricature is born from freer environments, at a certain level of national welfare as a kind of luxury of wealth; there are no conditions for it in poor countries, not like in counties where the style of life became refined, having a bad rather than good influence on those countries. Even this condition we lack so far. Caricature requires a greater variety and diversity of life’s manifestations; in underdeveloped circumstances it becomes hollow and humdrum, finally exhausting itself pointlessly with well-established types: students, officers, clergymen, peasants, as shown in the fate of the many humoristic magazines, once famed.<sup>9</sup>

Jaroš does not question the use of the term ‘caricature’ in his article but rather uses it to further strengthen the point which he has already made in his obituary of Ruskin: that Bohemian Lands need to open up to international art, to countries that manifest this perceived higher standard of societal and cultural life, such as Britain along with France and Germany showcased in Jiránek’s article. Jaroš’s underlying view remains critical of the Bohemian environment, and the way out of this ‘curse of the small nation’, according to Jaroš, is the exposure to art from other countries. This resonates with the fact that the entire special supplement begins with a poem dedicated to “the painter Kupka in Paris”, alluding to one of the few Czech artists who established a successful career abroad.<sup>10</sup> The reproductions in Jaroš’s article also include work by the

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<sup>8</sup> Jaroš, “Česká Karikatura”, 270

<sup>9</sup> Jaroš, “Česká Karikatura”, 272

<sup>10</sup> J.S.Machar, “Karikatury”, *Volné Směry*, 4 (1900): 266  
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recently untimely deceased Luděk Marold, another Czech painter who found a home and a prosperous career in Paris.<sup>11</sup>

Although Jiránek's article takes a more merciful approach to Bohemian caricaturists, both articles nonetheless agree on the importance of having access to international art. Jiránek's article was even written while he was visiting the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, as if to emphasize the point that the knowledge of international art was crucial for both Czech artists and art critics. The key to understanding why both authors are happy to use the term "caricature", even though they repeatedly point out its inadequate use, is in the fact that both believed that reporting on international illustrations, caricatures, drawings, and woodcut prints was in itself more important than dwelling on precise terminology.

The overall title of the special supplement of *Volné Směry* is "Draughtsmen – Caricaturists", the same as the title of Jiránek's article. As I have established, both authors frequently use the term 'caricature', even admitting that it does not fit many of the pictured artworks. The term 'draughtsmen' comes as a saving grace to both authors, giving them more flexibility. Given that a large proportion of the reproduced images were book illustrations, it is rather puzzling that neither author uses the term 'illustrators'. In fact, neither terms 'illustration' nor 'illustrator' figure in any *Volné Směry* issue until issue 6 in 1902, when both are used in a review of the latest books published in England. Here however, 'illustration' refers to a choice of imagery to be reproduced in a book on fine art, not a work of art created specifically to illustrate a given text. The same issue features Kate Greenaway's obituary, where she is only ever referred to as "kreslířka" – a draughtswoman (in Czech language literally a woman who draws).<sup>12</sup> This explains Jiránek's and Jaroš' choice of terminology, using the word 'draughtsmen' as a broader term encompassing those artists who used an array of drawing and graphic techniques to create illustrations for books and magazines, as well as fine artists using drawing as a means for sketching. In this chapter, I will be using the term 'illustrations' to refer to works which we

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<sup>11</sup> In the year of Marold's death, he had his painting 'In the Boudoir' was highly praised and reproduced by The Studio. Luděk Marold, "The Boudoir," *The Studio*, no.18 (1900): 66.

<sup>12</sup> "Kate Greenaway died...", *Volné Směry*, 6 (1902): 133.

today understand as illustrations, i.e., pictures specifically designed for books and magazines to reflect the textual part of these publications.

Back in the articles, both authors agree that drawing, illustrations and even some graphic techniques are not yet regarded as autonomous in the Bohemian environment. For this reason, Jiránek included in his article the woodblock prints of William Nicholson, whose work I will analyse in more detail further in this chapter. The underlying idea behind the articles was not only to show the wide range of international artists working in the field of caricature, drawing and graphic art, but also to point out that these art forms can be seen as autonomous, not merely a second fiddle to painting, which is how they were still understood in Bohemia at the time. To make this point successfully, Jiránek and Jaroš had to adopt more flexibility with their terminology which allowed them to showcase a wider array of artists, both international and Bohemian.

Liberating drawing and graphic arts from the hierarchy of artistic disciplines came hand in hand with another major change: looking at British art as something that Bohemian artists need to get acquainted with. In the previous chapters, I have shown examples of *Volné Směry* advocating a more international outlook and bringing news of exhibitions from Vienna, Paris and beyond. As the century grew to a close, the journal increasingly focused on reviews of international literature on art, including British publications. A good example is the year 1899 when *Volné Směry* published excerpts from the first Czech translation of Ruskin's writing.<sup>13</sup> These excerpts were introduced to celebrate Ruskin's anniversary with the prologue clearly stating that Ruskin was at the time almost entirely unknown in Bohemia, just as was the case with a large proportion of British art overall.

This account was followed by the obituary of Ruskin in the third issue of 1900, where the tone changed from stating that Bohemian artists had little knowledge of Ruskin and British art, to openly pledging to change this.<sup>14</sup> I argue that Jiránek's and Jaroš's supplement devoted to caricature and illustration was a major step in the journal's initiative to open the treasure trove of British art for

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<sup>13</sup> "Z Knih Johna Ruskina", *Volné Směry*, 9 (1899): 479-480

<sup>14</sup> Jaroš, "John Ruskin," 89-96.

the Czech audiences and artists. While previously *Volné Směry* would publish reviews of art in France and Germany, dedicating a whole section of the journal's special supplement to British art was out of the ordinary, and as such needs to be understood as a clear nod towards the journal's pledge to further highlight British art.

In this context, the choice to focus the supplement on caricature and illustration indicates that Britain was seen as a place where these disciplines are advanced and that the specifically British perspective offers a novel view of these artistic disciplines and their role in society. It is notable that the three countries showcased in Jiránek's article were France, Britain, and Germany, in this order. There is no section dedicated to Austria, and Austrian artists are not mentioned in Jaroš's article on Czech artists either<sup>15</sup>. This in itself establishes a new power balance between the spheres of influence on Bohemian art where Czech artists are viewed as an autonomous entity outside of the sphere of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Jiránek also goes to great length to repeat several times that his article only features art and artists whose work he could see in person, instead of taking information about them from secondary sources or the critical writings of other authors. This further supports my argument that by the year 1900, British art was becoming increasingly more accessible to Bohemian artists, and embodied a new desire for the growth and development of Czech art.

### **Selecting British Caricaturists**

In 1900, Jiránek travelled to Paris to visit the *Exposition Universelle*. It was during his time in the French metropolis that he composed his article for *Volné Směry*, introducing Czech readers to French, English and German caricature and illustration. Jiránek was in a prime position to offer such an international overview thanks to his language skills, which enabled him to read in all four languages – French, English, German and Czech. Jiránek therefore structured

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<sup>15</sup> As Bohemian Lands were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Czech artists were sometimes referred to as Austrian, especially in international press.

his extensive article into several sections according to the nationality of the featured artists.

Jiránek was keen to use his article to raise questions about the supposed lesser value of drawing in comparison to painting. For this reason, he opens the article with a prologue focusing on the value of artforms beyond painting. He describes how the idea of the article came to him after an event when Jiránek was showing some of his friends his “small collection of drawings, caricatures, lithographs and Japanese prints”.<sup>16</sup> Present among the guests, a thirteen-year-old girl asked Jiránek whether such artworks are really as valuable as paintings by Raphael or Rembrandt. This interaction sparked the desire in Jiránek to open a debate about the value of drawing, illustrations, caricatures, and graphic techniques, contrasting the situation in Bohemia and abroad.

In his prologue, Jiránek states that in Bohemia, only painters are duly respected, while draughtsmen, lithographers and woodblock printers are seen as obscure, and caricaturists contributing to popular magazines are often met with straightforward disrespect. Jiránek is upset by this and proceeds to profess that unlike painters, draughtsmen and artists using graphic techniques are much better at capturing the real contemporary life of the society and therefore contribute to both art and cultural history.<sup>17</sup> Making a parallel between journalism and drawing, Jiránek suggests that “choosing a pencil, a pen, a lithographic charcoal” allows artists to “stenograph” their experiences of life and society, unlike oil painting which makes it impossible to get such a speedy journalistic snapshot of reality.<sup>18</sup> This approach suggests that by analysing French, English and German caricature and drawing, Jiránek’s aim is to get a glimpse of these countries’ social and societal life as well, recorded in the ‘journalistic snapshots’ of drawing and caricature. His interest isn’t only artistic, but also societal, which again links to Jaroš’s provocation in the obituary of Ruskin, urging Bohemian artists to get better acquainted with the life and art of Britain.

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<sup>16</sup> Jiránek, “Kreslíři – Karikaturisté”, 211.

<sup>17</sup> Jiránek, “Kreslíři – Karikaturisté”, 211.

<sup>18</sup> Jiránek, “Kreslíři – Karikaturisté”, 212.

Towards the end of the prologue, Jiránek predicts the future developments in art: documentation (such as for scientific purposes) will belong to photography, while the documentation “of the soul” will be the purpose of drawing, lithography, and engraving. Painting itself will focus on portraits, landscapes, and the decorative uses of colour.<sup>19</sup> Jiránek’s choice of international illustrations and caricatures is therefore aimed at proving this point, establishing Bohemian draughtsmen and caricaturists as the future of ‘soulful’ art, and making sure that they are exposed to the leading trends in the field, embodied by works from France, England and Germany. Jiránek finally ends on a high note, stating that Bohemian caricature proudly stands its ground in comparison to its European counterparts - a point strongly disputed by Jaroš several pages later.

Jiránek had high hopes for his article and intended it as both an overview of caricature in the earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as a dive into contemporary trends. This was of course a mission that would have needed much more space than *Volné Směry* had available. In the section on French caricature, Jiránek began his overview as early as the 1830s, from Daumier and Degas to Jean-Louis Forain (1852 – 1931) and Théophile Steinlen (1859 – 1923), among others. Adding a note to the French section, Jiránek points out that his stay in Paris would inevitably lead to adding more artists, but the space was limited, and he simply could not include any more.

In comparison to this, Jiránek’s access to British artists was perhaps more limited and deprived of some of the latest developments in British illustration which are generally missing from his article. Nonetheless, as Jiránek stresses throughout his essay, he felt there was abundance of material available in Prague to make his analysis of British art thorough enough. Jiránek notes that being based in Prague and choosing which French and English caricaturists to introduce in *Volné Směry* takes notable effort, mainly as there are many libraries to visit and numerous international magazines to go through. This confirms that even without his visit to Paris, Jiránek would encounter international journals and magazines in Prague that gave him enough material

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<sup>19</sup> Jiránek, “Kreslíři – Karikaturisté”, 212.

for his article.<sup>20</sup> This is an important testimony to the accessibility of British art in Bohemia and mainly in Prague.

Despite this, Jiránek opens the English section of his article with a statement that he is aware that there is a whole generation of British artists whose works are *not* accessible to Bohemian audiences; these include: “Gillray, Rowlandson, the Cruikshanks”.<sup>21</sup> Jiránek refers to Huysmans’s writing on Thomas Rowlandson and points out that Huysmans believed Rowlandson to be the greatest British caricaturist of all time. Jiránek also talks about Hogarth’s work being the true beginning of British caricature – although Jiránek himself is clearly not impressed with Hogarth’s moralising tendencies and does not see him as a figure that should inspire young Czech artists.<sup>22</sup> Jiránek notes that all he could find by these older artists were reproductions and the words of foreign art critics, which he believes is not a good enough foundation for him to write about these artists. This highlights the thorough attitude of the writers and editors at *Volné Směry*, who refused to merely reproduce foreign reviews and essays and devoted their time and effort to physically seeing international art before they reported on it in the journal.

This important note also indicates that Jiránek must have seen the original works of the artists he subsequently analysed in his article. This implies that while the previous generation of Czech artists would not have been exposed to British art as much, the tables have now turned, and British art is becoming a prominent source of inspiration for the Czechs. The inaccessibility of the older generation of British artists resonates with the discussions on the ‘delay’ in reception of British art, mentioned in my previous chapters, and explains why the previous generation of British artists (including the original early Pre-Raphaelites) would not have been reflected on by Czech artists until decades later.

The British artists that Jiránek presents in his article are as follows: George Du Mourier (1834 – 1896), Charles Keene (1823 – 1891), Randolph Caldecott

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<sup>20</sup> Jiránek, “Kreslíři – Karikaturisté”, 231.

<sup>21</sup> Jiránek, “Kreslíři – Karikaturisté”, 238.

<sup>22</sup> Jiránek quotes French sources: J.K.Huysmans, “L’art modern, Certaines”; A. Alexandre: “L’Art Du Rire” (1892), 132.

(1846 – 1896) and Charles Dana Gibson (1867 – 1944). Jiránek also writes about William Nicholson (1872 – 1949) but I will focus on Nicholson in a separate section when I analyse his work in connection to the Czech etcher and engraver Emil Orlik. Gibson was an American artist and Jiránek is aware of this, however he considers Gibson to be part of the English-speaking cultural sphere. The desire to include Gibson was probably also sparked by to the Czech readers' interest in America, which reflected in various articles in *Volné Směry* around 1900.

It is interesting that the majority of the artists selected by Jiránek still represent an older generation, and some of them were already deceased when the article was published. Keene, for example, was greatly admired by Pre-Raphaelite artists in the 1870s and 1880s, but by the year 1900, he would no longer be a representative of the latest developments in British illustration. For Jiránek, focusing on artists such as Keene could have been linked to Bohemian artists' interest in the Pre-Raphaelites, which was only gathering momentum from the late 1890s. Keene's work would therefore be seen as a representative of a style linked to the wider Pre-Raphaelite circles, and therefore attractive to current Bohemian artists. If Bohemian artists were only fully immersing themselves in the Pre-Raphaelite legacy around the year 1900, it would naturally be too early for them to appreciate a satirical take on the movement at the same time.

Jiránek does not always reveal his sources, and it is therefore difficult to analyse where his information about English artists came from. Throughout this thesis, I have repeatedly referred to Richard Muther's anthologies of Western painting, which had been a sought-after resource for Bohemian artists and intellectuals in both their German and English iterations. Aside from Muther's extensive body of work, Bohemian artists and writers had another notable resource, this time written in their very own mother tongue. Compiled by the Czech scholar, editor and publisher Jan Otto, *Otto's Encyclopaedia* ("Ottův slovník naučný" in Czech) comprised multiple volumes published between 1888 and 1909. There were several editors working on the volumes throughout their long publication span; it is noteworthy that one of them was Tomáš Masaryk, who later in 1918 became the first Czechoslovak president.

Overall, the *Encyclopaedia* consisted of 27 volumes and contained over 180 thousand entries organised in alphabetical order. The editorial board consisted of over 50 employees who in the process of writing individual entries also consulted leading Czech scholars and experts.<sup>23</sup> *Otto's Encyclopaedia* was viewed by its readers as an embodiment of the National Awakening movement's ideals, and as a demonstration of the autonomous history and culture of the Bohemian Lands.

Unlike Muther's compendia, *Otto's Encyclopaedia* was not primarily oriented towards the arts. However, internationally famed artists were featured in it to some extent, alongside writers, playwrights and musicians. Some illustrations can be found throughout the *Encyclopaedia*, although almost none of them are reproductions of artworks; mainly the images show biological specimens, geographical studies and technological inventions rather than artworks. While the *Encyclopaedia* was a useful resource for Czech scholars and the public, it was not a go-to publication for artists, although many of the artistic entries offered selected bibliographies for further research.

Out of the caricaturists and illustrators presented by Jiránek in *Volné Směry*, only Charles Keene has a separate entry.<sup>24</sup> The brief note about him merely states that Keene is an English artist who publishes in *Punch* and belongs among the world's leading illustrators. There is no further bibliography provided for Keene.

Some better-known artists were given more space, such as James McNeill Whistler, who has his own entry.<sup>25</sup> The text spanning several paragraphs (as opposed to Keen's single sentence) briefly outlines Whistler's most famous works, mentions the international dimension of his life and concludes with a short bibliography including publications in Czech, mainly the article "Whistler and the mystery of painting" from *Volné Směry*, analysed thoroughly in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Apart from having his own entry, Whistler is also contextually

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<sup>23</sup> Dagmar Hartmanová, "Historie československé encyklopedistiky do roku 1945," *Národní knihovna: Knihovnická revue* 11, no. 1 (2000): 15–21.

<sup>24</sup> *Ottův slovník naučný: Illustrovaná encyklopaedie obecných vědomostí*, vol. 14, *Kartel – Kraj* (Prague: J. Otto, 1899), 134.

<sup>25</sup> *Ottův slovník naučný: Illustrovaná encyklopaedie obecných vědomostí*, vol. 27, *Vůz–Žyžkowski* (Prague: J. Otto, 1908), 211–12.



mentioned in the entry of John Ruskin (where their infamous conflict and law suit is noted) and in the entry for Hubert Herkomer (1849 – 1914). Herkomer was a Bavarian-born British artist, whose work the *Encyclopaedia* compares with some of his British and continental predecessors and contemporaries, mostly to the detriment of Herkomer and to the benefit of Whistler, Bastien-Lepage and Gainsborough, who are all shown as examples of greater mastery of painting than Herkomer.<sup>26</sup> Of course the particular style and tone of the entries was also dependent on the individual style of its writers and contributors, whose approach changed somewhat throughout the span of the publication.

Among the longest artistic entries is that on John Ruskin, which also contains some information about J.M.W. Turner, whom Ruskin admired.<sup>27</sup> The text also includes a long list of Ruskin's main publications. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, mentioned in Ruskin's entry, has a long entry himself spanning over two pages.<sup>28</sup> Here a special attention is given to the Czech translations of his poetry by highlighting in the Czech bibliography the article by Žofie Pohorecká – Šebkova, which I analysed in Chapters 1 and 2. While most of the *Encyclopaedia*'s entries are more geared towards providing basic biographical information rather than art historic accounts, the passage on Rossetti includes an analysis of the main developments in his painting style over the decades of his oeuvre, and describes the painter's associations with William Morris and other members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle.

Furthermore, the *Encyclopaedia* includes brief entries for older English artists such as Constable and Gainsborough, providing a basic overview and sometimes bibliography of mainly the Czech articles written about them, where available. Overall, the *Encyclopaedia* was a useful resource but not one specifically geared towards art connoisseurs, and as such it included only brief summaries of artists' lives with some bibliography but not exhaustive. There were no reproductions of artists' works, and the selection of English artists

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<sup>26</sup> *Ottův slovník naučný: Illustrovaná encyklopaedie obecných vědomostí*, vol. 11, *Hédypathie–Hýždě* (Prague: J. Otto, 1897), 172.

<sup>27</sup> *Ottův slovník naučný: Illustrovaná encyklopaedie obecných vědomostí*, vol. 22, *Rozkošný–Schloppe* (Prague: J. Otto, n.d.), 131.

<sup>28</sup> *Ottův slovník naučný: Illustrovaná encyklopaedie obecných vědomostí*, vol. 21, *R (Ř)–Rozkoš* (Prague: J. Otto, 1904), 1051.

covered mainly the more renowned names, with less emphasis on less widely known contemporary artists.

### **British Societal Caricature and Intercultural Mediation**

Jiránek's interest in caricature, as a gateway towards a 'journalistic snapshot' of the British society, manifested in his selection of artists for his article. There are two caricaturists who focused specifically on a satirical take on British society: George Du Maurier (1834 – 1896) and Charles Keene (1823 – 1891). Jiránek explicitly mentions that his knowledge of Du Maurier is mainly based on his work shown in *Punch*, which was accessible in Czech libraries and cafes at the turn of the century.

As I have shown in my last chapter, Jiránek as an artist himself was a great admirer of Whistler and produced paintings reflecting Whistler's harmonies until his untimely death in 1911. Jiránek's writing on art reflects this passion for Whistler even in 1900, when he analysis Du Maurier's work and states that some of his interiors were reminiscent of Whistler's elegant compositions.<sup>29</sup> This of course could be partly because Whistler and Du Maurier knew each other from the years that Du Maurier spent in Paris, which Jiránek would have been well aware of.<sup>30</sup>

Du Maurier was a confident member of the higher society, although his own family background was surprisingly fraudulent. Brought up in France to believe his family can be traced back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Du Maurier grew up with a sense of entitlement, although in reality there was nothing aristocratic about his roots. Trying different studies and professions to no great success, Du Maurier found his calling in satirical illustrations and made a name for himself from the 1860s.<sup>31</sup> From 1861, he was a regular contributor to the satirical magazine *Once a Week*. Soon he earned a reputation and few years later became a

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<sup>29</sup> Jiránek, "Kreslíři – Karikaturisté", 239

<sup>30</sup> "Charles Du Maurier", *The Victorian web*, accessed May 6, 2023, <https://victorianweb.org/art/illustration/dumaurier/pva95.html> Accessed 6 Oct 2022

<sup>31</sup> Gleeson White, *English Illustration: The Sixties*. (Archibald Constable and Co. 1897)

Du Maurier figures profusely throughout the publication, showing the numerous illustrations he created for the *Punch* and other periodicals.

member of staff at *Punch* where he worked until his death.<sup>32</sup> Despite his close collaboration with *Punch*, du Maurier was also active in a range of magazine from the 1860s until the end of his life: *The Illustrated London News* in 1860, *Once a Week* (1860-1867), *Good Words* (1861 and 1872), the *Illustrated Times* in 1862, *London Society*(1862-1868), the *Sunday Magazine*(1864), *The Leisure Hour* (1864-1865), *Harper's Magazine*(1880-1897), and the *English Illustrated Magazine* (1884 and 1887).<sup>33</sup>

The two images by Du Maurier featured in Jiránek's article are both representative of the artist's interest in the life of upper echelons of society. The first image [Fig 4.1, 4.2] shows an elderly lady dressed in an opulent attire making her way along a railing in a richly decorated interior showing heavy curtains and a bird cage in the background. The other image is of a couple reclining on a sofa in a similarly upper-class interior with a large portrait painting in the background [Fig 4.3]. Unfortunately, the image captions do not give any titles or any indication of where these images come from. They were probably used in an illustrated magazine or as book illustrations. One of the drawings was originally called *The Way to Woo*. [Fig 4.4]

Another characteristic feature of Du Maurier's work is his satirical take on the Aesthetic movement and the cult of beauty, embodied in his series "A Legend of Camelot" from 1898.<sup>34</sup> [Fig 4.5, 4.6] These illustrations reflect the artist's impeccable knowledge of Rossetti and other Pre-Raphaelites, and of artists following the Aesthetic ideal. Crowded compositions with vivid details and swirls of long feminine hair taking over the pictorial space, the historical and dreamy setting, altogether a perfect parody delivered convincingly with skill and insight.

Jiránek, however, does not mention this work, and none of the reproductions in *Volné Směry* come from the series. Jiránek chose those of Du Maurier's images that reflected a city lifestyle, more or less contemporary, not an educated

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<sup>32</sup> "Charles Du Maurier", *The Victorian web*; Jennifer A Greenhill, "Troubled Abstraction: Whiteness in Charles Dana Gibson and George Du Maurier", *Art history* 34, no. 4 (2011): 732-753; Simon Cooke, Paul Goldman, *George Du Maurier: Illustrator, Author, Critic Beyond Svengali* (London: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>33</sup> "Charles Du Maurier," *The Victorian web*; , Paul Goldman, *George Du Maurier: Illustrator, Author, Critic Beyond Svengali* (London: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>34</sup> The pictures and poems were first published in *Punch*, and later published as a booklet.

George Du Maurier, *A Legend of Camelot: Pictures and Poems, etc* (Harper and Brothers, New York and London, 1898)

mockery of the Aesthetic movement. I argue that this choice is to do with the ‘delayed’ reception of Pre-Raphaelitism and the Aesthetic movement in Bohemia. In 1900, Bohemian artists were still in the process of looking to both the original Brotherhood and the subsequent generation of Pre-Raphaelite artists for inspiration. As I have shown in my previous chapters, artists such as Max Švabinský and Jan Preisler were producing Pre-Raphaelite inspired paintings in the late 1890s and into the 1900s. This later enchantment with Pre-Raphaelite art meant that Czech artists were not yet ready for Du Maurier’s satirical take on their newly discovered sources of inspiration.

George du Maurier’s work was used with equal success in journals and magazines, as well as illustrations for books. Unfortunately, Jiránek’s article does not specify the sources of the reproduced images in *Volné Směry*, but it is probable that they come from *Punch*, as Jiránek explicitly refers to reading the paper when writing his essay. In *Punch* and other satirical magazines, illustrations would be accompanied by a strap line, or even several lines outlining the dialogue taking place between the pictured characters.<sup>35</sup> Without the textual part, it is very difficult to say whether the image was a satirical picture, or one created as a book illustration. Jiránek does not elaborate on the reproductions chosen and provides no clues as to their provenance.

For example, his illustration featured in *Volné Směry* on page 297 [Fig 4.3] originally included the title *The Way to Woo* [Fig 4.4] and featured a transcript of the dialogue happening between the characters as well as the date 1875. By not featuring the English text and the date, *Volné Směry* places this illustration somehow outside of the timeline, once again disrupting the sense of ‘delay’ in the reception of the image.

Apart from his prolific career with *Punch*, du Maurier produced a wealth of illustrations for an array of books. Paul Goldman summarises the artist as follows:

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<sup>35</sup> An example of this is George du Maurier’s picture “Nincompoopiana – The Mutual Admiration Society” published in *Punch* (20 December 1879), 282. Victorian Web, accessed Nov 11, 2022, <https://victorianweb.org/art/illustration/dumaurier/111.html>

The art of George du Maurier can perhaps, somewhat tongue in cheek, be described as being akin to an elephant – easy to recognize, but extremely hard to define.<sup>36</sup>

This is thanks to what Goldman defines as an ability to “modify his response to match the text and drawing on a wide variety of styles, his achievement in illustration was chameleon-like”.<sup>37</sup> From satirical scenes for *Punch* and his clever mockery of Aestheticism, to a wide array of book illustrations, and even being the author of his own fiction writing, Du Maurier was a complex creative character with many different aspects of his work inspiring Bohemian artists.

However, the version of Du Maurier that Jiránek presented in *Volné Směry* was a somewhat one-sided view of the artist. Both images reproduced in the journal show scenes from high-society urban life, richly decorated interiors with well-dressed inhabitants. Jiránek’s interest was in capturing aspects of British upper-class life that would otherwise be inaccessible to Bohemian artists. In this sense, du Maurier was a good representative of *Punch* and other magazines interested in the societal side of Britain’s upper classes, using a rich and dense visual style populating the images with characters, patterned textiles, textures surfaces and populated sceneries, mirroring the Victorians’ decorative desire to have every inch covered reflecting the business, dynamics and complexity of modern life.<sup>38</sup> This density of space and richness in details were characteristic of British Victorian illustration and stands out in comparison to the illustrations shown in Jiránek’s article in the French and German sections. Jiránek therefore showcases the busyness of these compositions as a typically British feature.

Baker’s description of Victorian art could also be applied to the next artist selected by Jiránek for his article: Charles Keene (1823 – 1891). In line with his interest in the artists’ personalities and their social standing, Jiránek states that Keene was the opposite of du Maurier, keeping away from the high society and

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<sup>36</sup> Paul Goldman, “George Du Maurier as a Draughtsman and Illustrator”, in *George du Maurier: Illustrator, Author, Critic: Beyond Svengali*, ed Simon Cooke, and Paul Goldman (London, New York: Routledge, 2016), 17.

<sup>37</sup> Goldman, “George Du Maurier as a Draughtsman and Illustrator,” 18.

<sup>38</sup> Rachel Teukolsky, *Picture World: Image, Aesthetics, and Victorian New Media* (Oxford University Press, 2020); Kate Flint, *The Victorians and Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For comparison with the French cultural environment, see Patricia Mainardi, *Another World – 19<sup>th</sup> Century Illustrated Print Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

living a simple life. Jiránek describes how Keene was known to socialise mainly with the working classes, taking long walks through the backstreets of London, singing, and playing the Bagpipes in his free time. By showcasing Keene's work in his article, [Fig 4.7 – 4.11] Jiránek presents another aspect of the British society, a more sombre one linked to the social injustice and poor working conditions of the lower classes. The Bohemian press at the turn of the century had a fascination with the British industrial revolution and often reported on both the successes of British industry as well as the environmental and societal impact of this on the country, as I have shown in my first chapter. Jiránek's choice of Keene for the article therefore reflects genuine interest in the understanding of the complexity of British societal structure, economy, and social values.

Jiránek mistakenly gives the year of Keene's death as 1889, referring to Claude Phillips' article on Keene in *Gazette des Beaux Arts* from the same year.<sup>39</sup> Although Jiránek could read English, throughout his article he repeatedly refers to French journals, the only English magazine he explicitly describes reading being *Punch*. Similar mistakes in dates and spelling appear across the board in the Czech coverage of British art materials, as I have shown in the case of the Pre-Raphaelites in the previous chapters.

The ever-present interconnectedness of British, French and German sources is a characteristic feature of my enquiry into the reception of British art in Bohemia. It may be argued that it would have been 'easier' to claim the power of British art over Bohemian artists if I could show that the Czechs interacted with British visual and literary sources directly, without the need for a middleman in the form of French and German sources. However, when reading about British art in French and German magazines, Bohemian artists were getting the added value of having information presented to them already enriched by their French and German contexts. There are different ways of looking at this: we can either view the added layer of French or German

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<sup>39</sup> Jiránek, "Kreslíři – Karikaturisté", 240. Jiránek mistakenly references Claude Phillips' article as being from 1889. In reality, the article is from 1891, from the year that Keene passed away. Claude Phillips, "Les Artistes Contemporaines – Charles Keene", *Gazette des beaux-arts : courrier européen de l'art et de la curiosité*, 2 (1891): 327-337.

interpretation as a barrier clouding the English original, or we can look at this mediation as something that would enable Bohemian artists to relate more easily to some aspects of British art, as they could link these to cultural phenomena they already knew from French and German culture and journalism.

The Bohemian close cultural ties to both France and Germany meant that many Czech artists had a very good grasp of what was happening in those countries in the cultural sphere, and based on this, reading about British art gave Czech artist the option to juxtapose the information presented about Britain and set it into an international framework. Writers and critics based between cultures were best suited to mediate as they had a prior understanding of the cultural translation needed to communicate well across borders. Claude Phillips (1846 – 1924) who was an art critic active in Britain and as the correspondent of *Gazette des Beaux Arts* in France, is a perfect example of such cultural translation that Bohemian artists would benefit from. In Phillips' articles, Czech artists would get British art presented within a cultural context that they already understood and which they could relate to.<sup>40</sup>

Phillips' writing, together with the French texts by J. K. Huysmans and A. Alexander provided an insight for Jiránek into British caricaturists and illustrators. In his article, Jiránek quotes a long passage from the *Gazette*, describing Keene's ability to capture the varied characters from all over London and coming to the metropolis from the countryside; from "cockneys of all sorts" to "the muscular, hairy highlanders" and the "fat rich City merchants".<sup>41</sup> Most interestingly, Jiránek does not translate or explain the terms 'highlander' or 'cockney' despite the fact that Phillips himself does. In Phillips' original text, he puts the term 'cockney' in brackets and adds an explanation "aux vrais citoyens

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<sup>40</sup> There are several major publications looking into the cultural transfer between Bohemia and Germany, such as: Roman Prahel and Taťána Petrasová, *Mnichov – Praha, Výtvarné Umění Mezi Tradicí a Modernou*, (Praha: Academia, 2012). A current PhD research project by Kristyna Hochmuck at the Charles University in Prague is focusing on the reception of French art in Bohemia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>41</sup> Jiránek, "Kreslíři – Karikaturisté", 242. Jiránek mistakenly references Claude Phillips' article as being from 1889. In reality, the article is from 1891: Claude Phillips, "Les Artistes Contemporains – Charles Keene", *Gazette des beaux-arts : courrier européen de l'art et de la curiosité*, 2 (1891): 327-337. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k2031329/f359.image.r=Keene> Accessed Oct 8 2022.

(*cockneys*) de Londres”.<sup>42</sup> Jiránek uses both terms, ‘cockneys’ and ‘highlanders’, without any further explanation in Czech, which suggests that he had good confidence that his Czech readership would be familiar with those terms, perhaps from reading *Punch* where such characters were often portrayed.

Jiránek only borrowed one of the reproductions of Keene’s work from Phillips’ article, the man taking off his hat [Fig 4.10, 4.11]. This indicates that while Jiránek was using French journals as a source of biographical information, he was not reliant on them for visual material, and most probably resorted to British publications to gather the images for his essay. Apart from the man with a hat, Jiránek choose three other images to represent Keene’s work in *Volné Směry*. The first image is of a scene from London suburbs, showing a drunk and ragged looking middle-aged man in front of a pub, leaning on a bollard while chatting to a tall man with a bag swung over his shoulder [Fig 4.8]. In the background, the pub owner is shown pushing a large beer barrel while being observed by a young boy. As in the case of most images in the article, there is no indication of where the image is from or what narrative it relates to. There is no strap line or dialogue to guide us through the scene.

While international journals such as the French *Gazette*, which Jiránek used as one of his sources, added references and descriptions to Keene’s illustrations, Jiránek and other *Volné Směry* editors did not take this approach in their articles. The attitude towards captioning images was somewhat flaky even when it came to Bohemian artists’ work in *Volné Směry*, although the quality of captioning varies greatly throughout the journal and throughout individual articles. As I will show shortly, while Keene’s illustrations have no captions except for the artist’s name, Caldecott’s pictures are fully captioned naming each book that they were reproduced from.

Another image of Keene’s that Jiránek chose shows is a well to do gentleman trying to get on an omnibus, which however seems to be already completely full [Fig 4.9]. The omnibus driver is shown opening the doors to the carriage, only

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<sup>42</sup> Claude Phillips, “Les Artistes Contemporaines – Charles Keene”, *Gazette des beaux-arts : courrier européen de l’art et de la curiosité*, 2 (1891): 330.



to show that there is no space left. A busy street in London with crowded carriages and horses speeding by is shown in the background.<sup>43</sup> While it is not clear whether the two images are connected, on the next page another of Keene's works shows almost an identical view but this time from the inside of a carriage [Fig 4.10]. The dark interior of an omnibus carriage shows four passengers and a baby crammed into the confined space of the compartment. A large gentleman fixing something on the side of the carriage wall, a young lady looking disturbed, a young man looking out of the carriage door and an older woman holding the crying baby on her lap. The opened back door of the carriage shows the silhouette of the driver who is about to blow his whistle, probably alarming the passengers to something upsetting or urgent happening outside. The whole scene conveys a busy and pressured atmosphere typical of a big city with its constant rush and encounters between strangers who are forced to share the confined spaces on public transport.<sup>44</sup> This aspect of Keene's work and his reflection of the struggles of urban life of the working classes must have been welcomed by Czech artists, who at the turn of the century were experiencing a large 'rebranding' of Prague as an international metropolis with its medieval quarters being replaced by high-end contemporary modern blocks of flats, controversial and much debated across Czech journals and especially *Volné Směry*. This transformation brought to the surface the unsatisfactory standards of living conditions for many people in the poorer parts of the city, including the former Jewish ghetto which was subsequently partly demolished, causing much controversy.<sup>45</sup> Jiránek's feature on Keene thus related to contemporary issues in the Czech society.

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<sup>43</sup> An image search on Google suggests that the image comes from 1881 but there is no source quoted for the image. Google image search, accessed Sept 13, 2023, <https://www.istockphoto.com/vector/man-asking-for-a-ride-on-the-stagecoach-qm855520058-140755985>

<sup>44</sup> Paintings of omnibuses and public transport in London have a long tradition with some famous examples from the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century such as William Maw Egley's "Omnibus Life in London" from 1859; George William Joy's "The Bayswater Omnibus", 1895; or Alfred Morgan's "An Omnibus Ride to Piccadilly Circus, Mr Gladstone Travelling with Ordinary Passengers" from 1885. With Prague being a smaller and rather slow-paced city, such depictions did not find many followers among Bohemian artists.

<sup>45</sup> Current research on Czech urban architecture at the time and the Czech exploration of the British 'garden cities' is being undertaken by Vendula Hnídková. Vendula Hnídková, "Lost in Translation? The Idea of the Garden City and its Migration to the Czech Lands, 1900–1938", *Art East Central* 1, no.1 (2021): 77-104. Research on the reception of Jewish culture in Czech fin de siècle is undertaken by Eva Janáčková. Eva Janáčková (ed.), *Images of Malice. Visual Representations of Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in the Bohemian Lands* (Praha, 2022).

All of Keene's pictures reproduced in *Volné Směry* are in a similar style, busy and full of detail, full of energy and again covering as much of the pictorial space as possible. Both Jiránek's and Phillips' articles mention Keene's admiration for the German artist Adolph Menzel, who allegedly took a subscription to *Punch* only because of Keene's illustrations.<sup>46</sup> Jiránek elaborates on the friendship between the two artists and claims that Keene was a suitable counterpart for Menzel as both artists excelled at capturing the physiognomy and facial expressions of their characters in a way that no other artist of the time could. The connection between Keene and Menzel brings to the fore again the interconnectedness of international art and the fact that British art was not received in separation but rather in the context of other international art movements, and especially those from France and Germany.

Interestingly, in his portrayal of Keene, Jiránek fails to mention the relationship between Keene and the Pre-Raphaelites, who admired the artist in the 1860s and whose earlier work was reciprocally a source of inspiration for Keene as well. In the *Gazette*, Phillips explains how the influence of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood reflects in Keene's "curious feminine types and the pronounced lines of his draperies" and describes how Keene ultimately merged this interest in certain types and depiction of details with an acute observation of reality, finally arriving at a "powerful and joyful naturalism without any ulterior motive."<sup>47</sup> Such reflections are completely absent from Jiránek's account of Keene. Just like in the case of omitting the Pre-Raphaelite influence in connection to Du Maurier, this could be because of Jiránek's desire to use his article as a vehicle to promote drawing, illustration, and caricature, rather than painting which was more closely associated with Pre-Raphaelitism.

Another reason might have been Jiránek's own artistic preferences. I have previously explored Jiránek's enthusiastic reception of Whistler, but it is fair to say that Jiránek remained rather untouched by the fascination that the wider Pre-Raphaelite circles gave rise to in artists such as Švabinský or Preisler.

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<sup>46</sup> Paul Goldman, "The Artist's Artist: An Introduction to Charles Keene's Work", *The Victorian Web*, originally published April 17 2014, accessed Oct 8, 2022, <https://victorianweb.org/art/illustration/keene/goldman.html>

<sup>47</sup> Claude Phillips, "Les Artistes Contemporaines – Charles Keene", *Gazette des beaux-arts: courrier européen de l'art et de la curiosité*, 2 (1891): 328. Translation from French by Helena Cox.

While Jiránek was known to be the author of numerous critical essays, he was also an artist in his own right and it seems that in this case at least, his personal dispassionate response to Pre-Raphaelitism filtered through into his writing, and into the way he portrayed British illustrators in his article.

### **“There is no Czech Caricature”**

In the above section, I have introduced some of the British artists who were featured in Jiránek’s major article. Overall in his essay, Jiránek analysed French, British, and German caricature. His focus was on introducing and analysing individual artists chosen to demonstrate the character of caricature and illustration in their respective countries. Jiránek only mentions Czech caricature marginally, expressing his belief that it has good standing in comparison to the international artists showcased in his extensive article.

However, following immediately after Jiránek’s text in the same journal supplement was another article focusing on caricature, this time looking specifically on Bohemian caricature. Written by Gustav Jaroš, the article presented a very different viewpoint from Jiránek:

Czech caricature? If I were to talk about specifically Czech caricature, it would make for a very short chapter. It would consist of precisely three words and a full stop – “There’s no Czech caricature”. To clarify, I mean such caricature that would demonstrate its Czechness as a sum of characteristic features that would differentiate it from French, English or German caricature.<sup>48</sup>

Jaroš’ view of the Czech cultural scene is radically different from Jiránek’s. Throughout his essay, Jaroš expresses his frustration with the Czech cultural environment, which is a sentiment that appears often throughout the journal. Although *Volné Směry* was established with the intention to uplift Bohemian artists, give them a platform and spread the news about the exciting developments in Bohemian arts, very often the tone of the individual articles ended up being much more sombre. As I have shown in my first chapter, the

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<sup>48</sup> Jaroš, “Česká Karikatura”, 269.

journal often published complaints about what the writers perceived as an unfair distribution of arts funding within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, although these were not always necessarily a true reflection of reality. Jaroš' essay on Czech caricature echoes a similar voice; there is an irritation in his tone, a frustration with an environment that does not allow artists the flexibility needed to create freely.

The issue of 'Czechness', which Jaroš stresses in the above quotation, is a recurring theme in the journal. In my previous chapter, I have introduced the essayist and art critic Frantisek Xaver Šalda and his transformative essay "The Problem of Nationality in Art" published in *Volné Směry* in 1904, where Šalda argues that true art exists beyond nationalities, and that looking for this elusive Czechness in art can only lead to stagnation.<sup>49</sup> Jaroš's article would be one of many that would bring up the issue of Czechness, contributing to a debate in the journal which ultimately led to the creation of Šalda's essay. Šalda's call for a more international outlook on art led to a new wave of appreciation of foreign artists, as I have demonstrated through the example of Whistler's work featured in the journal at the same time as Šalda's essay. Ultimately, the debates about Czechness and the characteristics of specific nationhood in Bohemian art were a feature of Czech art history for many decades throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>50</sup>

Back in the year 1900, Jaroš's article analyses the role of caricature within the international art sphere. Here he points out that caricature as an art form has a great potential to communicate across languages and borders because it does so without words, without the need for any specific language. Jaroš therefore sees caricature as a very potent factor in international journalism, one that is more powerful than journalistic writing alone because it's easily understandable even without language. This was certainly relevant to Bohemian artists who had access to various satirical journals from the German speaking realm as well as

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<sup>49</sup> F X Šalda, "Problém národnosti v umění" [The Problem of Nationality in Art], *Volné směry* VIII, no.1 (1904): 3-11.

<sup>50</sup> Filipova, *Modernity, History and Politics in Czech Art*, 38-42.

French and English, where caricature had the power to be understood without the artists necessarily being able to read the articles in foreign languages.

Unlike Jiránek, who provided no insight into his choice of terminology, Jaroš dedicates notable space in his article to the explanation of what he understands to be caricature: a mocking or humorous drawing with exaggerated parts and a sense of irony created by the disproportionality of the portrayed.<sup>51</sup> What Jaroš sees as crucial is a “certain level of aggressiveness” without which caricature is simply not caricature but only a comical drawing. It could be argued that almost all of the images reproduced alongside Jaroš’s article are indeed not caricatures but rather comical drawings and illustrations.

Jaroš’s essay is conceived as one ongoing argument proving that caricature as a format was impossible in Bohemia. His disappointment with the state of affairs in the country is palpable throughout the article. Bohemia is by no means short of political corruption, Jaroš states, or social and societal failures that deserve to be mocked by caricatures. On the contrary, he exclaims, there is in fact too much going wrong in Bohemia, preventing artists from having the mental and social flexibility to attempt authentic caricature. This is also the justification Jaroš gives for his choice of images reproduced in the article, almost none of which fit within his own definition of the genre.

Another dimension of the problem that Jaroš explores is the divide he sees between Bohemian artists – including literary writers and poets – and the reality of Czech life. Jaroš claims that Czech artists prefer to “live some kind of idyll outside of real Czech life, divided by some invisible wall from the rest of the nation.”<sup>52</sup> Jaroš sees this as the key determinant in understanding why there are no proper caricaturists in Bohemia. He explains that if artists do not have the courage to dive into the raw everyday life of the country, then no caricature is possible. This is clearly reflected in the images reproduced in the article, none of which respond to contemporary life in the country. Equally so, this might be the very reason that Jiránek in his essay chose to showcase the work of Du Maurier and Keene, both of whom worked exactly on the themes of

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<sup>51</sup> Jaroš, “Česká Karikatura”, 270.

<sup>52</sup> Jaroš, “Česká Karikatura”, 271.

contemporary British life, showing all layers of its society and an array of social and societal issues.

While Jaroš' criticism is aimed at contemporary Czech fine artists, he seems to be completely ignorant of the cohort of artists and draughtsmen who contributed to the turbulent scene of humoristic journals in the country. As mentioned previously, in principle there was no shortage of humoristic and satirical magazines operating in Bohemia from the 1880s onward. However, many of these lasted only one season with merely a handful of volumes published, unlike their famed counterparts in Britain.<sup>53</sup>

### **Josef Mánes as a Symbol of Czech Caricature**

Jaroš's article begins with several illustrations and lithographs by Josef Mánes (1820–1871) an artist who by this point had been dead for almost 30 years. While both Jiránek and Jaroš want to reach a contemporary audience, they both focus partly on artists who were by no means new to the art scene, and in the case of Mánes, by 1900 he would have been well established as part of the Czech national canon. This resonates with Jiránek's choice to highlight the works of Du Maurier and Keene, who both represented well-established artists rather than the young blood that journals such as *Volné Směry* originally intended to promote.

An image by Mánes is even shown at the very start of the entire journal's special issue as a symbolic header for both Jaroš's and Jiránek's articles [Fig 4.12]. There is no caption except for stating Mánes' name. The picture originally comes from the German magazine *Erinnerungen* from 1860, where it was featured together with a short dialogue of the two main characters.<sup>54</sup> The image shows a middle-aged man and a woman talking in the street; the woman is

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<sup>53</sup> An impressive overview of title pages of satirical and humoristic magazines in Bohemia from the 1850s to the 1890s gives an indication of the number of magazines being established. However, archival research reveals that many of these only produced a few numbers before being discontinued. Roman Prahel, Radim Vondráček and Martin Sekera (eds), *Karikatura a její příbuzní - Obrazový humor v českém prostředí v 19. století* [Caricature and its relatives – Pictorial humour in Bohemia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century] (Praha: Arbor Vitae, 2014), 222-230.

<sup>54</sup> The text underneath the illustration read as follows: “- Miss Fanny, do you recognise me?...”, -“My God, Mr Muller, you look just like your father!” Translation from an exhibition label at the exhibition “Josef Manes – Man, Artist, Legend”, National Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic, 30/3—16/7 2023.

dressed in an opulent crinoline and the man is holding his top hat in his hands – a fashion style which would have been outdated by the 1900s. The German signs in the background give no certainty to the location of the drawing as Prague and other Czech cities would have predominantly German signage until the end of the First World War and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The image displays some of the signs that I have described in relation to Du Maurier's and Keene's works – a busy composition capturing the richness of textiles and accessories on the figures and sketching out the surrounding with suggestive details leaving little to the imagination. A similar style can be seen on Du Maurier's drawing of an elderly woman making her way through the stairwell in a well to do interior **[Fig 4.2]** reproduced a few pages up from Manes' illustration. The busy drawing, skilfully depicting a variety of textiles of the old woman, as well as the rich furnishings surrounding her, make for a busy Dickensian style artwork. It is worth referring to Dickens in relation to illustrations, as books such as "The Pickwick Papers" had a great following in Bohemia, and Jiránek himself refers to this throughout his article.<sup>55</sup> Both Du Maurier and Keene illustrated Dickens at certain points in their lives and Jiránek's makes sure to mention this in his essay. Using Mánes' illustration as a sort of a title page for the caricature supplement can therefore be read as a conscious nod towards linking Mánes to British artists like Keene and Du Maurier, especially as this busy Victorian – Dickensian style is unique to British illustration. Out the entirety of the reproductions from Jiránek's article on international caricature, there are no other examples of this style, except for Keene, Du Maurier and works by the American artist Chares Dana Gibson. Two of the three images by Gibson **[Figs 4.13 - 4.14]** display similar features of showing a well to do society with a lush depiction of ladies' robes and suggesting high society interiors. Associating this style with specifically British art would be the reason why Gibson was included in the English section of the article despite Jiránek clearly stating that the artist was American. I suggest reading the placement of Mánes' illustration at the very start of the entire

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<sup>55</sup> A complete translation of The Pickwick papers was published in 1898 but featured no illustrations. Charles Dickens, *Klub Pickwickův*, (Praha, J.Otta, 1898)

supplement as a gesture of establishing a clear link between Mánes and a generation of British illustrators who would have been no longer alive in the year 1900, but whose role in the country's art was considered pivotal.

Regarding Gibson, the final image reproduced in the article **[Fig 4.15]** brings into the mixture the flavour of women's sport and the overall female emancipation, much debated in the Czech intellectual circles at the turn of the century. This theme was popularised especially by the American Ladies' Club based at the Náprstek Industrial Museum in Prague, with its focus on liberating women from housework, as I discussed earlier.

Back in the article, another reproduction of Mánes' lithograph symbolically closes Jiránek's part of the supplement and opens Jaroš' section on Czech caricature, as if Mánes' work was the proverbial red thread linking the two sections together **[Fig 4.16]**. This image has a caption identifying it as a lithograph taken from the German magazine *Erinnerungen* to which Mánes regularly contributed with a variety of works, including ethnographical studies of Czech and Slovak traditional costumes.<sup>56</sup> *Volné Směry* however reproduced only his work focused on urban lifestyle. Both lithographs used in the article on caricature were reproduced again in 1905 in a biography of Mánes written by none other than Miloš Jiránek.<sup>57</sup> The publication was the first of an intended series of "illustrated artists' biographies" published by *Volné Směry*. As I have shown in the first chapter, the journal originally planned to publish a series of monographs focusing on both Bohemian and international artists, however financial difficulties prevented this plan from being fully realised. Josef Mánes was chosen to be the first Bohemian artist to have a biography of his written by Jiránek; the book features over 100 pages of mainly images, including the two lithographs from the 1900 article on caricature.<sup>58</sup> It is clear that Mánes was perceived by Jiránek (and by the journal's wider editorial board) as a founding

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<sup>56</sup> Renáta Tyršová, "Národopisné studie našich umělců", in *Český lid*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1898), 13.

<sup>57</sup> Miloš Jiránek, *Josef Mánes: výbor z jeho díla s úvodním textem Miloše Jiránka*, (Praha: Volné Směry) 1905.

<sup>58</sup> Jiránek, *Josef Mánes*, 18, 19, 22.



father of Bohemian art, and as such his illustrations were highlighted as representatives of a link to specifically English drawing and caricature.

Mánes' illustrations symbolically opened and closed Jiránek's article on international caricature. Jaroš' article also starts with an illustration relating to Mánes – but this time with a radically shifted meaning. Perhaps the only true caricature in the entire article, Mikoláš Aleš's satirical depiction of Josef Mánes shows the legendary artist as a giant-like figure making his way across the Old Town Square in Prague, holding a lit candle in his left hand **[Fig 4.17]**. The drawing was published in the satirical magazine *Šotek* in 1880, nine years after Mánes' death. Despite his iconic position in the Czech artistic pantheon, Mánes was also known for the unfortunate events leading to his premature death in 1871, aged 51. From 1866 onward, Mánes developed a form of a degenerative mental illness which manifested in episodes of insanity when the artist acted in a deranged manner, collapsed in public places and was incapable of work. In Mánes' biography, written by Jiránek in 1905, the author concludes with a moving story in which the elderly Mánes is seen at a café seated at a table lighting up a small lamp in the middle of the day. Once the lamp was lit, Mánes stood up and wandered through the nearby park; as Jiránek concludes: "never has the spring sun shone on a sadder scene in the streets of Prague."<sup>59</sup>

A reproduction of Aleš' rendition of the scene sits on the page alongside a paragraph in which Jaroš explains that Czech caricature does not exist due to the "impossible conditions" in the country. While Mánes is portrayed in Jiránek's article as an equal of the well-established English caricaturists, such as Keene and Du Maurier, Aleš' satirical take on Mánes shows that unlike in Britain, Bohemian artists were not well supported, resulting in the ultimate ill fate of caricature in the country. If Jiránek showcases Mánes as a peer to international caricaturists, Jaroš demotes him (via reproducing Aleš' drawing) to a symbol of the unfortunate conditions in the country which are preventing the kind of

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<sup>59</sup> Jiránek: *Josef Mánes*; Miloš Jiránek, *Dojmy a potulky a jiné práce*, (Praha, 1959), 95.

evolution of caricature that Bohemian artists could observe in Britain, France, or Germany.<sup>60</sup>

When Aleš's caricature of Mánes was first published in 1880, it had a caption stating that the image shows "Josef Mánes looking for a benefactor."<sup>61</sup> Among the figures pictured as dwarfs under Mánes' feet, one of the characters has been identified as Christian Ruben, the former director of the Czech Academy of Fine Arts. Another figure stood for Professor Alfred Woltmann, the infamous author of a lecture in which he denied the Bohemian Lands any original art and put forward a theory in which all Bohemian art was essentially German.<sup>62</sup> This triggered a massive backlash from Bohemian students, artists and art critics alike.<sup>63</sup> Aleš's caricature therefore links to a wider debate which ultimately connects to my earlier discussion about Šalda and his concept of Czechness in art. On the one hand, Bohemian artists craved autonomy and appreciation for the Czech contribution to European art history; on the other hand, the younger generation desired to abandon the inward-looking nationalism of the Mánes generation. Focusing their attention on British art was part of this new wave of thinking.

Mánes was the perfect representation of the duality typical for the turn of the century Bohemia. As Petr Wittlich summarises, Mánes was marked with the unbridgeable paradox of oscillating between the poles of the official celebratory appraisal and the desire for modernity in all its complexity.<sup>64</sup> In this context, using Aleš's caricature of Mánes from 1880 as part of Jaroš's article in 1900 signalled the continuation of this situation which was still dividing opinions twenty years on.

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<sup>60</sup> The comparison between Bohemian and Western European illustrated journals (not necessarily just satirical journals) is shown in the extensive study by Makéta Dlábková based on her master's thesis where she contrasts mainly the French and German illustrated journals of the 19th century with the precarities that illustrated magazines faced in Bohemia until the end of the century.

Makéta Dlábková, „K problematice českých ilustrovaných časopisů druhé poloviny 19. století“, *Auc Philosophica Et Historica*, Vol 2016 No 1 (2016), 95–124.

<sup>61</sup> Petr Wittlich: "Josefa Mánesa svíce", in Eva Bendová and Pavla Machalíková, eds, *Kariéra s paletou – umění, umělec a umělectví v 19 století*, (Plzeň: B&P Publishing, 2019), 105.

<sup>62</sup> Wittlich: "Josefa Mánesa svíce", 105.

<sup>63</sup> More on the Woltmann's lecture and the Czech reaction: Jindřich Vybíral, "What is 'Czech' Art in Bohemia? Alfred Woltmann and defensive mechanisms of Czech artistic historiography", *Kunst Chronik* 59, no.1 (2006): 1-7.

<sup>64</sup> Wittlich: "Josefa Mánesa svíce", 107.

Paradoxically, while Jaroš is writing about the need for fresh Czech caricature, the images alongside his article are predominantly by artists of the past generations. Aside from the legendary Josef Mánes, the article is accompanied by reproductions of a series of illustrations by Josef's brother Quido Mánes (1828-1880). The Mánes family of artists comprised several siblings; Quido was of the older generation. At one point, the family was supported by their sister, Amálie Mánesová, who ran a successful private art school in Prague.<sup>65</sup> Showing six reproductions of Quido's illustrations for Miquel de Cervantes' "Don Quixote" [Fig 4.18, 4.19] demonstrates Jaroš's belief that book illustrations are the closest to caricature that Bohemian artists can get. While Jiránek understands caricature as something almost synonymous to illustration, Jaroš is almost using his images as proof that there indeed is no Czech caricature. In doing so, he is missing the opportunity to appreciate Quido Manes' work for what it really was, a series of quality illustrations for a novel that was appreciated all over Europe and which was illustrated by many other artists in its national variants. In this sense, while the Mánes brothers' work might not have included caricatures, they were nonetheless good examples of illustrations executed to an international standard.

### **Orlik, Nicholson and the Autonomy of Graphic Art**

While Jiránek's overall tone comes across as milder and kinder towards Czech artists than Jaroš's, both essays carry a degree of complaining. For Jiránek, one of the main goals of his essay is to highlight the importance of illustrations and graphic techniques which he feels are not valued enough in the Czech cultural environment. In fact, the entire essay starts with Jiránek describing his collection of Japanese woodblock prints and etchings by various Western artists and discussing the value of these in comparison to painting. By showcasing a range of British artists with excellent skills in caricature, illustration and graphic techniques, Jiránek was making a broader point about the value that should be given to these techniques in the Czech environment. I argue that this was the reason why Jiránek included William Nicholson in his essay, despite the fact

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<sup>65</sup> Markéta Dlábková and Veronika Hulíková, *Josef Mánes 1820-1871 : člověk, umělec, legenda*, (Praha: Narodni galerie, 2022), 30, 41.

that Nicholson was not strictly speaking a caricaturist or an illustrator. Nicholson had a prominent position in the article and his lithographs from London streets were the only images to be reproduced in colour.<sup>66</sup> These works had a close connection to the Czech artist Emil Orlik, an etcher who was also on the mission to fight for more recognition for graphic arts.

I have already explored the Czech-German etcher, printmaker, and painter Emil Orlik (1870 – 1932) in chapter three and elaborated on the connection between his work and James McNeill Whistler. In this chapter, I will return to Orlik, this time in relation to his fascination with woodblock printing and lithography, and I will be focusing on his work's strong connection to the prints of William Nicholson (1872 – 1949).

Jiránek himself reflects on the fact that Nicholson does not exactly fit well with the other artists showcased in his article, stating he is mainly known for his woodblock prints and his posters, rather than as a caricaturist. Nonetheless, Jiránek continues, Nicholson's gift of being able to observe and capture people from all walks of life as well as to portray leading cultural figures – such as in his albums “London Types” and “Twelve Portraits” – make him an ideal addition to the group of caricaturists already discussed in the article. In this case, Jiránek is not as interested in the comedic aspect of caricature but rather understands caricature as a format where close observation is key and where capturing a certain ‘type’ of person or scene is the more important aspect.

In the article, there are five reproductions of Nicholson's work, one being in colour. **[Fig 4.20]** Three of these are portraits of Sir Henry Irving **[Fig 4.20, 4.21]**, Sarah Bernhardt **[Fig 4.20, 4.23]** (the latter in colour) and James McNeill Whistler **[Fig 4.24, 4.25]** from the album “Twelve Portraits” (1899).<sup>67</sup> The remaining two images show a young woman and a newspaper boy from “London Types” (1898) **[Figs 4.22, 4.26]**. The choice of reproductions is reflected in Jiránek's praise for Nicholson's decision to use mundane everyday motifs as the main theme for his compositions: “for which he found a completely

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<sup>66</sup> Jiránek, “Kreslíři – karikaturisté”, 254.

<sup>67</sup> The caption in *Volné Směry* shows a misspelling: “Irwing”. The album is only referred to as “Portraits”, not its full title “Twelve Portraits”. “London Types” are mistakenly given as “Types of London”. Jiránek, “Kreslíři – Karikaturisté”, 244.

autonomous and utterly original formula”.<sup>68</sup> This formula also included an admixture of Japanese art, as Jiránek remarks, a connection that Nicholson shared with both Whistler and Orlik.<sup>69</sup>

It is not surprising that Orlik would find Nicholson’s work inspiring, given his deep interest in Japanese art and his research of both Japanese art and the art of European artists who responded to Japanese aesthetics. By the year 1900, Orlik would have been a well established figure on the Bohemian cultural scene, it is therefore puzzling that neither Jiránek nor Jaroš mention Orlik in their articles. This might have been due to Orlik’s belonging to the group of cultural figures and artists known as the ‘Bohemian Germans’ and his close ties with German culture which included his friendship with Franz Kafka, Franz Werfel, Max Brod and Reiner Maria Rilke. While being born in Prague, Orlik spent many years in Munich where he studied and where he returned periodically between his stays in Prague and his journeys abroad, before finally settling in Berlin in the 1910s. In 1900, Orlik had a major success with his exhibition in Brunn in Austria and was part of several international exhibitions, none of which were reviewed by *Volné Směry*.<sup>70</sup>

When analysing the section of Jiránek’s essay on Nicholson, it is intriguing to see how Jiránek encountered the English artist’s work. While praising Nicholson overall, Jiránek remains slightly critical of Nicholson’s use of dark shadows which Jiránek feels are too strong, creating too stark a contrast in Nicholson’s prints. When describing this contrast, Jiránek explicitly says that those works of Nicholson “that you normally see in exhibitions” have a better balance of light and shadow because they are hand printed; in contrast to his prints produced *en masse* for sale which lack details and are overall coarser.<sup>71</sup> This remark suggests that seeing Nicholson’s works in exhibitions was something Jiránek felt his readers would easily do, although he fails to indicate where would these

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<sup>68</sup> Jiránek, “Kreslíři – Karikaturisté”, 246

<sup>69</sup> Marketa Hánová, *Japonisme in the Fine Arts of the Czech Lands* (Prague: National Gallery) 2010.

<sup>70</sup> “Emil Orlik”, *Orlik Prints*, Online catalogue raisonné, accessed Oct 14, 2022, <http://www.orlikprints.com/essay.html>

<sup>71</sup> Jiránek, “Kreslíři – Karikaturisté”, 248

exhibitions take place – let us not forget that Jiránek was staying in Paris when writing his article.

In 1900, when the supplement “Draughtsmen – Caricaturists” was published, Orlik was undertaking his first major journey to Japan. His interest in Japanese art, however, started much earlier and sparked an interest in Orlik in the technique of woodblock printing. Between 1896 and 1899, Orlik published an album entitled *Small Woodcuts* (Kleine Holzschnitte).<sup>72</sup> This eclectic mix of 34 prints covers a wide spectrum of themes from Orlik’s own *ex libris* to landscapes, animals and depictions of villagers and city dwellers.

Geographically, the prints span several countries from Bohemia to Slovakia, Germany, the Netherlands – and Britain! The album features two scenes from London, where Orlik visited in 1898: a working-class man striding with a young lady entitled “From London” [Fig 4.27], and a group of men resting on a bench entitled “London Loafers” [Fig 4.28]. Both works, along most of the *Small Woodcuts* ensemble, display a style strongly reminiscent of Nicholson. Bold thick lines outlining the main features of the figures; the strong contrast between light and shadow, and use of empty and monochrome spaces, all of which refer simultaneously to Nicholson and to Japanese ukiyo-e prints. There are some indications that Orlik met Nicholson while staying in London as well which would explain even further Orlik’s body of work clearly following Nicholson’s trademark style from this period.<sup>73</sup>

Both Orlik and Nicholson were on a similar trajectory with their work before the turn of the century. Nicholson worked in partnership with his brother-in-law James Pryde under the pseudonym of The Brothers Beggarstaff.<sup>74</sup> Ironically, while Jiránek used the example of Nicholson to strengthen the position of drawing and graphic arts in Bohemia, Nicholson himself produced the famed posters and graphic albums as a way of making ends meet before establishing

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<sup>72</sup> Emil Orlik, *Kleine Holzschnitte* (Small Woodcuts), MoMA online catalogue, accessed Oct 22, 2022, [https://www.moma.org/s/ge/collection\\_ge/object/object\\_objid-131042.html](https://www.moma.org/s/ge/collection_ge/object/object_objid-131042.html)

<sup>73</sup> I have come across the suggestion that Orlik and Nicholson have met in various sources, including Orlik’s online catalogue raisonné *OrlikPrints.com* but I wasn’t able to locate the original source of this information.

<sup>74</sup> Emma Shaw, “Beggarstaffs: William Nicholson & James Pryde,” University of Cambridge online exhibition, accessed 20 Aug, 2023, <https://www.cam.ac.uk/beggarstaffs>

himself primarily as a painter after the year 1900 with the encouragement of James McNeil Whistler. By 1900, when Jiránek was writing his essay in Paris, Nicholson would have been known to the Czech audiences primarily as the master of woodblock prints and lithographs.

Similarly, Orlik's work looked very different pre and post the year 1900. When visiting London in 1898, Orlik produced a body of work including woodblock prints and etchings; some of the etchings display a gentler style than his woodblock prints, such as the etching "Blind Man in London" with the soft contours of the man's large overcoat **[Fig 4.29]**. While Orlik produced a whole range of engravings in London, it was his woodcut prints that received major attention after Orlik published some of them in his *Small Woodcuts* album. After London, in 1900 Orlik embarked on his long-planned trip to Japan. He stayed for a number of months and even got involved in working in the studio of the Japanese woodblock printer Kano Tomonobu.<sup>75</sup> During his stay, Orlik also collected Japanese art including a large collection of traditional woodblock prints which he exhibited in 1902 in Berlin, Dresden, Prague and Brno.<sup>76</sup> After Orlik's return from Japan, the theme of Japanese landscapes and people played a dominant role in Orlik's work for several years, culminating in the album "From Japan" (*Aus Japan*) published in 1902. The album included scenes from Japanese traditional life, such as the typical rickshaw drivers **[Fig 4.30]** but also views of behind the scenes from the woodblock printing studio where Orlik worked, proving Orlik's insight into the traditional way of woodblock printing **[Fig 4.31]**. However, like Nicholson, he too subsequently switched his attention to painting, summarising his Japanese phase in a statement painting *A Model* in 1904, featuring a naked blonde woman in a studio with a Japanese folding screen and traditional kabuki theatre masks. Shortly afterwards, Orlik secured a teaching position at the Academy of the Museum of Applied Arts in Berlin where he stayed for the next almost thirty years, leaving Prague behind and making Berlin his permanent home.

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<sup>75</sup> Gaudekova and Prah, "Japonsko a jeho tradiční divadlo," 147-154.

<sup>76</sup> Marketa Hánová, "Emil Orlik: From Japan", *Journal of Japonisme*, 3 (2018): 84-105.

The early 1900s were therefore transformative for both Nicholson and Orlik. Meeting in the late 1890s, both artists were at the height of producing work in their signature style of woodblock prints and lithographs. Given that both Nicholson's and Orlik's woodblock print albums were published almost simultaneously, it is astonishing the Orlik was not mentioned in neither Jiránek's nor Jaroš' articles in *Volné Směry*. Omitting Orlik could be one of the reasons why in his article Jaroš arrives at a very bleak verdict about the state of caricature in Bohemia.

### **'Submit to the Children's Soul' – British Children's Illustration** **Transforming Czech Art**

Jiránek's revolutionary article on British caricature achieved a whole array of outcomes. Aside from the focus on establishing graphic techniques as autonomous and equal to painting, the article also highlighted a feature of British illustration which substantially transformed Czech art: illustration for children. In Czech art journalism, the main protagonists of children's illustration from Britain were Randolph Caldecott and Walter Crane, with occasional mentions of Kate Greenaway and several others. In his article on caricature, Jiránek's main focus was devoted especially to Caldecott.

Randolph Caldecott's work could not have made a starker contrast to Keene and Du Maurier's richly populated scenes overflowing with details. The six images of Caldecott's book illustrations which Jiránek chose are all captioned with a clear indication of where they were taken from. The illustrations come from the children's books "The Fox Jumps Over the Parson's Gate" [4.32, 4.33] "Three Jovial Huntsmen" [Fig 4.34] and "The Mad Dog".<sup>77</sup> [Fig 4.35] While these books consist of a combination of both coloured and black and white illustrations, Jiránek only chose the latter for *Volné Směry*.<sup>78</sup> This was a standard practice of selecting visual material and while the journal did

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<sup>77</sup> Jiránek, "Kreslíři – Karikaturisté", 242-243

<sup>78</sup> Randolph Caldecott, *The Fox Jumps over the Parson's Gate*, (London & New York, Frederick Warne & Co, 1880).

Randolph Caldecott, *Three Jovial Huntsmen*, (London & New York, Frederick Warne & Co, 1880)

Randolph Caldecott, *The Mad Dog*, (London, George Routledge and Sons, 1879).



reproduce images in colour occasionally, it was most usual to see their images in black and white.

Caldecott's illustrations selected by Jiránek are light and elegant in their style, often composed from just a few lines strung together. The pictorial space is open-ended, suggestive rather than clearly defined. Only those details are shown that are necessary for the portrayal of a character and their environment. Textiles and draperies are sketched without being filled with ornaments, keeping to an overall sense of lightness and elegance. Unlike Du Maurier or Keene, Caldecott's humour and satire is communicated in a light-weight manner and invites the viewer (be it an adult or a child) to be part of the scenery – there are no borders to the individual scenes, no boundary between the artwork and the viewer's imagination.

Jiránek's paragraphs on Caldecott overflow with his evident love for the illustrator's work. Jiránek points out that Caldecott's work is not so easy to find in magazines, except for *The Graphic* for which Caldecott worked for a time. This alone suggests that Jiránek – and other Bohemian artists by proxy – had access to and knowledge of British illustrated books and magazines. I argue that Jiránek's article together with the accessibility of British illustrated books, and the importance given to illustrations for children in Britain, were the leading impetuses for organising a major exhibition called "Art for the Children's Age" which took place in 1902 in the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague, and which received great attention in the Czech press.

Jiránek emphasises that Caldecott – alongside Walter Crane and Kate Greenaway – is one of the leading masters of children's illustration in Britain. Jiránek takes the example of "The Mad Dog" and describes the principle of the majority of Caldecott's illustrated books: a simple story told through comical rhymes, each of the rhymes illustrated with a pen and ink drawing. The magic of Caldecott's work, Jiránek stipulates, lies in the genius combination of excitement, drama, and fun in both the rhymes and the drawings. In comparison to the space given to the other artists, Jiránek spends a considerably longer time on describing the cheerful histories from Caldecott's books, and finally exclaims:

I myself cannot remember feeling a more blissful joy than when I got my hands on these charming books for the first time – possibly only in my childhood with Andersen’s fairy tales, the only literary analogy to Caldecott’s art.<sup>79</sup>

Although Andersen’s writing represents a very different genre from Caldecott’s humorous untroubled world, Jiránek sees the two as equals, reaching a level of perfection in their work for children.

In Caldecott’s case, Jiránek explains, this perfection is achieved by the artist’s impeccable knowledge of drawing and his skill of capturing the essence of a person, an animal, or a landscape with just a few lines. Jiránek points out the role of landscapes and animals in Caldecott’s work as important factors in setting the scene and delivering perfectly paced story telling. In this way Caldecott’s work is close to Japanese masters, Jiránek claims, as well as occasionally borrowing some motifs from Crane, which is most notable in Caldecott’s “The Queen of Hearts” with its historical costumes and medieval architectural setting while retaining the lightness and linearity of Caldecott’s style.<sup>80</sup> **[Fig 4.36, 4.37]** Jiránek concludes by stating that Caldecott is “the greatest charmer I’ve ever encountered among the British.”<sup>81</sup>

Jiránek’s remark linking Caldecott to Japanese art uncovers a similarity in the mode of cultural transfer between Britain, Japan and Bohemia. While French and German culture was linguistically and geographically easily accessible to Czech artists, British culture – just like Japanese culture – was often assimilated via other international sources. Czech artists encountered many English artworks at exhibitions in Paris, Vienna and Berlin, which is where they would access Japanese art as well. As was shown in recent scholarship, the reception of Japanese art in Bohemia took on many forms, despite the fact that only very few Czech artists actually travelled to Japan or had any first-hand experience with Japanese artwork. I argue that this is similar to the dissemination of British art: while only a handful of Czech artists ventured to Britain, the encounter with

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<sup>79</sup> Jiránek, “Kreslíři – Karikaturisté”, 244

<sup>80</sup> Randolph Caldecott, *The Queen of Hearts – a Sing a Song for Sixpence*, (George Routledge & Sons, London, 1887)

<sup>81</sup> Jiránek, “Kreslíři – Karikaturisté”, 246. In the Czech original, Jiránek uses the French word “charmeur”.

British art mediated through other European countries was majorly formative for Czech artists. This is why Jiránek can safely compare Caldecott to Japanese woodblock print makers, safe in the knowledge that the Bohemian readership would be familiar with these works. This example also emphasises the importance of mediated intercultural encounters, where knowledge about a national culture would be mediated via other nations or cultures without this diminishing the impact of this encounter.

Jiránek's enthusiasm for Caldecott, and for his work specifically aimed at children, was transformative for the Bohemian artistic world. Thanks to the accessibility of British illustrated books for children in Bohemia, Britain was viewed as the cradle of children's illustration as well as a leading example of the modern approach to producing art for children. The exhibition "Art for the Children's Age" which opened in 1902 was the first exhibition in Bohemia to focus on illustrations for this demographic. The reviews of the exhibition all refer to the British material displayed, which I argue was also thanks to Jiránek and his article.

Jiránek's passion for Caldecott and children's illustration came at a time when debates about approach to children's education were underway across a variety of journals and magazines in Bohemia, such as *Časopis pokrokového studentstva* (The Magazine of Progressive Studentship), *Naše Doba: revue pro vědu, umění a život sociální* (Our Times: A Revue of Science, Art and Societal Life) or *Přehled: týdeník věnovaný veřejným otázkám* (Overview: A Weekly Paper on Public Issues). The role of art in education of children was repeatedly debated in these papers, and while it would be outside the scope of this thesis to explore these journals further, it suffices to say that Jiránek's introduction to Caldecott came at the perfect time to spark the debate about the value of art for children to such an extent that this made way for the idea of the 1902 exhibition to be conceived.

The leading role of British art in the exhibition is best summarised by the show's review in the *Přehled* (Overview) magazine. First, the review – like Jiránek's article – praises the Japanese masters and their way of making art accessible

to children.<sup>82</sup> The spotlight is then shifted towards Britain when the author exclaims that only the British could compete with Japanese art. The reviewer continues with an overview of the exhibited works, praising Walter Crane as the leading British illustrator and presenting an overview of other exhibited works:

Apart from Crane, we recognise the untroubled humour of Caldecott and the works of several other artists from the rich and beautiful British children's literature, which is becoming the leading example of this type of literature among other nations, as there is so much profound attention and interest devoted to it [in Britain]. This is not the case in France. In there, picture books for children either come across as random, or they are shackled by the intention to draw in a special way for children, lacking the act of simply submitting oneself to the child's soul. This is the case of Riviere, Caran d'Ache, Boutet de Monvel, and even our own Mucha.<sup>83</sup>

The review expresses the overall impression that British illustrated books left on Czech artists, that of a style of work for children that was specific to Britain and distinctly differed from other national styles that Czech artists explored. This explains why in his essay Jiránek was so generous with the space given to Caldecott and why so many of Caldecott's drawings were reproduced in the article. In the French section of his essay on caricature, Jiránek also mentions Caran D'Ache, who featured in the above quotation, but his works are not seen as a leading example of illustrations for children. Art for children is identified as a uniquely British feature, unrivalled, and transformative for Czech artists.

The majority of the other reviews of the 1902 exhibition "Art for the Children's Age" also highlight Caldecott's work, alongside Walter Crane, Kate Greeaway,

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<sup>82</sup> While multiple Bohemian magazines show admiration for Japanese masters and mainly ukiyo-e artists, there is perhaps a level of misunderstanding of Japanese art. In ukiyo-e, the stylisation and cartoon-like simplification of landscapes, figures and animals was not primarily aimed at children, but was part of a long artistic tradition and linked to the technique of ink painting and the philosophy of Buddhism and Zen. Distinguishing between art for children and that for adults can be extremely hard in the context of Japanese art, as I have shown in the monograph I co-authored on traditional Japanese toys: Helena Gaudeková and Alice Kraemerová, *Playing All Day Long – Traditional Japanese Toys from the Náprstek Museum in Prague*, (Prague, National Museum, 2013)

<sup>83</sup> "Výstava uměleckoprůmyslového musea", exhibition review, *Přehled: týdeník věnovaný veřejným otázkám* (Overview: A Weekly Paper on Public Issues), 20.6.1903, 471.

as well as Rosina Emmet.<sup>84</sup> I will be looking at Walter Crane later in this chapter. The grouping of Caldecott, Crane and Greenaway is a phenomenon reflected in the majority of writing on British caricature in Britain as well as abroad.<sup>85</sup> Jiránek himself leaves out any women artists from his article, except for a very brief mention of Greenaway; although she and other women artists were featured in the 1902 exhibition. Jiránek's article from 1900 most likely played the role of a signpost, highlighting Caldecott, raising awareness of his work in Bohemia which then naturally led to the Czech discovery of Greenaway and other artists who were subsequently featured in the 1902 exhibition. The importance of such articles in *Volné Směry* is therefore not only based on the content alone which they presented, but also on the knock-on effect that they enabled, materialising in exhibitions and further exposure of British artists in Bohemia.

Jiránek's focus on Caldecott also links to the already partially discussed issue of terminology. Clearly Jiránek's essay was influential in the sense that it highlighted Caldecott, Crane and Greenaway as illustrators focusing on the art for children, which was something that stood out in comparison to other European countries. Jiránek however does not address the question whether Caldecott's work for children falls under the broadly proposed term of 'caricature', or indeed 'illustration', neither of which were defined in his text. I understand Jiránek's lack of descriptive terminology as a gesture towards a looser understanding of the differences between the different types of caricature, illustration, and drawing. After all, he makes it clear that one of the underlying missions of his essay is to liberate drawing and graphic arts from the supremacy of painting as the leading art form, as it was understood at the concurrent art institutions in Bohemia. It was this broader understanding of drawing and caricature that enabled children's illustrations to be highlighted in Jiránek's essay, setting off new Bohemian fascination with British illustration for children, laying the foundations for the exhibition "Art for the Children's Age"

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<sup>84</sup> "Výstava umění pro věk dětský", exhibition review, *Ženský svět, list paní a dívek českých (Women's World, a newsletter of Czech ladies and young women)*, 20.6.1903, 146-147.

<sup>85</sup> Gleeson White, "Children's Books and Their Illustrators", *The International Studio Special Winter Number*, (1897-8), 5,7, 32-53.

and opening up a new chapter for Bohemian artists interested in illustration art for children. Walter Crane and Randolph Caldecott stood out among the artists who inspired the Czech awakening to children's art.

### **The Topič Salon and British Art for Children**

In Jiránek's article, promoting art for children and advocating for greater appreciation of graphic arts and illustrations went hand in hand. The year 1900, when Jiránek's article was published, saw the establishment of the first Czech professional body devoted to printing and publishing of illustrated books called "Union – The Czech Society for Graphic Arts, Combined Printing and Publishing Enterprise in Prague".<sup>86</sup> The vision of this new establishment was to focus on all forms of graphic arts, from supporting artists and promoting book illustrators and book publishers, advocating for the creation of high-quality richly illustrated and professionally edited and printed books and publications. The ambition here was to become the centre for high quality illustrated press "across the Slav world".<sup>87</sup> The focus on Slavic countries was linked to the desire to design and print Czech and Slavic publications, while reflecting on the international standards of the industry. British book design and illustrations were recognised as the pinnacle of the industry and admired by the Union membership from the turn of the century onwards and well into the 1910s.<sup>88</sup>

One of the founding members of the Union was František Topič (1858 – 1941) who ran a successful private gallery The Topič Salon with a large bookstore and publishing house. The bookstore was famed for its wide selection of international literature, including British publications and specifically books for children. Topič's role in the mediation of international art was further strengthened in 1900 when he released a series of publications focusing on the analyses and reviews of the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, making the exhibition and its international dimension more accessible to the Czech readership. As a gallery, The Topič Salon soon became recognised as a centre of international and experimental displays and as such gained substantial

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<sup>86</sup> Alice Hekrdlová, "Nakladatelství F. Topič na prahu 20 století", in Petr Šámal and Alice Hekrdlová, eds, *Topičův salon 1906 - 1911* (Praha: Společnost Topičova Salonu, 2016), 13.

<sup>87</sup> *Dvacet let činnosti grafické unie, a.s. v Praze 1900 – 1920* (Praha: Česká grafická unie, 1920), 4.

<sup>88</sup> Hekrdlová, "Nakladatelství F. Topič," 21.

following especially by progressive Czech artists, despite some criticism suggesting that the gallery was too commercially oriented. In 1895, the gallery even held an exhibition of Walter Crane, making him one of the very few British artists to show their work in Prague.<sup>89</sup>

The Union and the Topič gallery had great interest in the exhibition “Art for Children’s Age” especially as the show featured original watercolours by Richard Lauda which were used as illustrations for the Union’s publication “Joys of the Little Ones”<sup>90</sup> [Fig 4.38] The book was published in 1903 straight after the exhibition and consisted of twenty-four colourful watercolour and ink full-page drawings by Lauda. Each picture included a traditional Czech poem; the poems symbolically spanned a whole year celebrating traditional folk festivities. Each page was divided into several sections, with one of the sections being the dominant image, and the rest of the page featuring poems in an Art Nouveau style script alongside symbolic floral decoration. [Fig 4.39, 4.40] The book stood out thanks to its lavish full-colour reproductions, and featured several proud logos and statements reminding readers that the book was published by the Union.

Five years later, in 1908, Richard Lauda’s large retrospective exhibition was organised by the Union and held at the Topič Salon gallery. While the exhibition featured a whole array of his works, Lauda specifically included his original watercolours from “Joys of the Little Ones”. Despite this being eight years after Jiránek’s article and after the formation of Union, a critical review of the exhibition specifically mentioned the watercolours and highlighted the fact that their inspiration sources were British illustrations:

In 1902 Lauda worked on the gorgeous book “Joys of the Little Ones”. Its origins are of interest. At that time, Lauda encountered English books for children by Walter Crane and Anning Bell. He liked them, and while he was unaware of the establishing of the new art-education movement in our homeland, he planned out his book with which he hoped to bring joy to the little ones. He based the book on the images of his own childhood

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<sup>89</sup> Hekrdlová, “Nakladatelství F. Topič,” 33.

<sup>90</sup> Richard Lauda, *Radosti malých* (Praha: Česká grafická společnost Unie, 1903).

and wished for the city children to partake on the joys of children from the country even if just through images; he felt sorry for city children as their life was so limited by the grey urban walls and lacked the colours which adorn life in the countryside.<sup>91</sup>

Eight years after Jiránek's ground-breaking article, British illustration is still identified as the one major source for Czech artists. In fact, the quotation directly suggests that English illustrated books unleashed in Czech artists the desire to create art for children, as was the case with Lauda. Not surprisingly Lauda's first children's book reflects some of the foundation stones of British illustration, including stylised oversized flowers, mirroring the famous series by Walter Crane, *Flora's Feast: A Masque of Flowers* [Fig 4.41] and the tender sensitivity towards countryside and landscape, which is so palpable in Caldecott's work and that Jiránek himself points out in his essay in *Volné Směry*. Jiránek's article from 1900 was therefore perfectly timed and evidently captured the imagination of Czech artists who responded not only to Jiránek's infatuation with Caldecott, but expanded the field of British artists who became instrumental in the very introduction of art for children into the Bohemian Lands.

Ultimately, Richard Lauda's impact and the exhibition of his work had a knock-on effect which in the 1906 led to the opening of the Union's first exhibition of art for children. [Fig 4.42] The word "first" figuring in the title suggests that the Union planned a series of exhibitions, which sadly never materialised. Nonetheless, Lauda's work unleashed a growing interest in children's art which was directly stimulated by examples of children's illustrations from Britain.

### **Lessons from Crane and Caldecott**

Illustrated books by English artists such as Walter Crane and Anning Bell were gaining popularity among Czech artists at the turn of the century. Given Crane's exposure in Bohemia, it is surprising that the artist doesn't play much of a role in Jiránek's article in *Volné Směry*. The Czech public could admire Crane's art in their homeland at the exhibition held at the Topič Salon in 1895. Unfortunately,

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<sup>91</sup> Tereza Novotná, "Výstavní činnost Topičova Salonu 1906-1911", in *Topčův salon 1906-1911*, ed. Tereza Novotná (Praha: Společnost Topičova Salonu, 2016), 54-56.



there was no catalogue produced for the exhibition, so it remains unclear what the display consisted of. However, from the reviews in the contemporaneous press, it seems that the exhibition showed a wide range of Crane's work from paintings to wallpaper and textile designs, book binding, drawings including political satire and most importantly children's illustrations.<sup>92</sup>

Among the oil paintings exhibited was Crane's *Bridge of Life* from 1884. Crane's popularity in Bohemia was such that in 1905, Crane exhibited his work again this time at the annual exhibition of Fine Arts Union (Krasoumná Jednota). His pastel drawing *A Dream, Voyage de Rêve* from 1902, depicting a similar theme, was subsequently bought for the National Gallery in Prague.<sup>93</sup> **[Fig 4.43]** In 2023, a facsimile of Crane's pastel was shown at the exhibition *Golden Times – Czech Fin de Siècle Art* at the West-Bohemian Gallery in Pilsen. Crane's work was presented in the section of the exhibition showcasing the international art 'influences' on Czech artists. Due to the lack of British art in Czech collections, including the painting in the exhibition was a rare and welcome nod towards the acknowledgement of the role of Crane and British art in general for Czech culture at the turn of the century.<sup>94</sup>

Crane's well-established position in the Czech cultural circles at the time was also most likely the reason why Jiránek felt there was no need to introduce the illustrator in his essay; instead Jiránek simply referred to Crane without showing any of his work, safe in the knowledge that his readers will have known Crane's signature style already. Unlike Du Maurier, Keene and Caldecott, Crane had indeed featured in *Volné Směry* numerous times at the turn of the century. Only in 1900, Crane's work appeared in almost all issues published that year. In fact, a full-page feature on Crane could be found in issue 6, the issue preceding the special issue on caricature.<sup>95</sup> It was an overview of Crane's artistic ideas based on the Easter extra number of the *Art Journal* from 1898.<sup>96</sup> The Czech summary

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<sup>92</sup> Kristýna Brožová: „Výstavní činnost Topičova salonu“, in *Topičův salon 1894 99*, ed. Kristýna Brožová, (Praha: Společnost Topičova salonu, 2016), 46.

<sup>93</sup> Walter Crane, *Cesta na věčnost/ A Dream, Voyage de Rêve*, 1902, Národní galerie v Praze, inv. no. K 1668. Accessed Oct 13, 2023, [https://sbirky.ngprague.cz/dielo/CZE:NG.K\\_1668](https://sbirky.ngprague.cz/dielo/CZE:NG.K_1668)

<sup>94</sup> *Golden Times – Bohemian fin de siècle art from the collection of the West Bohemian Gallery in Pilsen*, 05 April 2023 – 03 Sept 2023, accessed Oct 12, 2023, <http://www.zpc-galerie.cz/>

<sup>95</sup> “Umělecký názor Waltera Crane”, *Volné Směry* 4, no.6 (1900): 203-204.

<sup>96</sup> “The Work of Walter Crane with Notes by the Artist”, *The Easter Art Annual for 1898: Extra Number of the Art Journal* (London: J. S. Virtue, 1898).

covers a page and a half, which means it brings a very condensed but considerable review of Crane's ideas.<sup>97</sup>

One of the leading ideas presented here is Crane's distinguishing between two types of art: one that mirrors nature and is more or less a direct reflection of external looks of things; and the other, which reflects on the internal quality of things, and – “as a poet chooses his words” – aims towards stylisation and decorativeness.<sup>98</sup> In this context, illustrations fall within the second category, allowing a poetic take on reality and infusing external looks with the internal fullness of spirit and imagination. As I have suggested in the previous chapters, I argue that in *Volné Směry*, the individual articles were curated in a way to create an overall *Gesamtkunstwerk* where the themes discussed, and the images chosen, all co-created an overarching narrative. Focusing on Crane's analysis of decorative art should therefore be seen in the context of the “Draughtsmen - Caricaturists” supplement. If Jiránek's mission was to show illustration, caricature and drawing as having equal value to painting, then highlighting Crane's high opinion on decorative arts was part of this complex argument.

In his article, Jiránek refers to Crane mainly in the context of children's illustrations confirming the importance of this genre to the Bohemian audiences; a genre that was considered quintessentially British and as such unique among the other international sources which Czech artists were emulating. With Jiránek – and with the Bohemian reception of British art overall – terminology plays an indicative rather than a determinant role. Crane's book covers and illustrations appeared in Czech periodicals often without direct context, hence some of this work would have been perceived as being aimed at children even if that wasn't always the case. Crane's art is reflected in the work of Bohemian artists such as Mikoláš Aleš and Artuš Scheiner, both of whom were highlighted in the article on Czech caricature, written by Gustav Jaroš.

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<sup>97</sup> This was part of a series dedicated to Crane, each focusing on a different aspect of his work, published across several issues of *Volné Směry*.

<sup>98</sup> “Umělecký názor Waltera Crane”, *Volné Směry* 4, no.6 (1900): 203.

While nowadays Aleš is firmly established as one of the brightest stars of the Bohemian pantheon, Artuš Scheiner (1863 – 1938) is one of the semi-forgotten artists of the Bohemian *fin-de-siècle*. In a way, this is an indication of Jiránek losing his battle for the recognition of illustration as a discipline equal to painting. While Aleš produced statement paintings for major exhibitions in Prague and abroad, Scheiner based his career almost entirely on illustrations for books and magazines. The fact that artists who primarily produced illustrations are much more easily forgotten is true both in the Bohemian and the British contexts; this is very well reflected in the current ongoing research of British illustrated magazines by Junxia Wang.<sup>99</sup>

Scheiner's story is one of talent and determination, as he was completely self-taught and first started drawing as a hobby alongside his job as a financial administrator in Prague. Since the late 1890s, Scheiner contributed to popular illustrated magazines, such as *Světovzor* and *Zlatá Praha*, both magazines which I explored in my first chapter where I introduced their style as combination of news from the metropolis and the world with illustrations reflecting societal issues and providing light-touch entertainment. These illustrated magazines were among the few stable periodicals, unlike the ever-changing scene of the purely satirical journals, which in the Bohemian environment often lasted less than a year before going bankrupt.<sup>100</sup> Apart from periodicals, Scheiner gradually shifted his attention to illustrating books.

Scheiner's work from the late 1890s is full of potential but remains rather conservative. His illustrations for Josef Merhaut's book "The Snake and Other Stories" from 1892 display some experimentation with art-nouveau stylisation but primarily they sit within the broad range of mainstream book illustration of the time [Fig 4.44].<sup>101</sup> Thanks to his success with illustrated magazines, during the 1890s, Scheiner spent more and more time drawing and by 1900 he was

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<sup>99</sup> Based on a discussion with Junxia Wang, PhD candidate at the University of York. Wang's research focuses on Walter Sickert and works of lesser-known illustrators whose works Sickert appropriated: John Gilbert, Kenny Meadows, Georgie Bowers, Adelaide Claxton, Alfred Bryan, and Francesco Sargent. Sickert introduced these artists in the catalogue for his exhibition "English Echoes: A series of New Paintings by Richard Sickert ARA" at Leicester Gallery in May 1931. Based on discussions and emails from October 2022.

<sup>100</sup> Alice Helrdlová, "Knihupec, nakladatel, vlastenec. Frantisek Topič a knižní produkce na sklonku 19 století," in *Topičův salon 1894 99*, ed. Kristýna Brožová, (Praha: Společnost Topičova salonu, 2016), 19.

<sup>101</sup> Josef Merhaut, *Had a jiné povídky*, (Telč, Nákladem Emila Šolce, 1892)

one of the five artists featured in Jaroš' article on Czech caricature – a sign that he was now considered to be a professional illustrator. This exposure presented Scheiner in the context of international caricature, and especially the fact that his work was featured in the volume of *Volné Směry*, where Crane's work was analysed as well, indicates the connection that was established between Scheiner's work and that of Crane. Scheiner would have come across Crane before and seen his exhibition at the Topič Gallery, especially as Scheiner's own illustrations often featured in the humourist paper *Švanda Dudák*, published by Topič. In addition to that, the heightened focus on Crane throughout all the volumes of *Volné Směry* in 1900 meant that Scheiner had the opportunity to infuse his own work with inspiration from Crane.

I have previously established that showcasing Caldecott's work had a transformative effect on those Bohemian artists who had an interest in children's illustrations and that this ultimately led to the creation of the exhibition "Art for Children's Age" in 1902. Scheiner's own transformation followed a similar timeline. The growing demand for quality children's illustration was also closely connected to the popularity of fairy tales both in fine arts and among the general public. Fairy tales symbolically link illustrators such as Scheiner to fine artists and painters such as Jan Preisler. As I have shown, Preisler often combined Pre-Raphaelite and fairy-tale motifs in his paintings. Scheiner even paid a visual homage to Preisler in his illustration for the fairy tale "The Mouse King and Prince Junák: Stories of Brave Dwarfs" from 1905. **[Fig 4.45]** Scheiner situated a young maiden in the centre of the composition, seated in the midst of a birch forest. The pose of the maiden is almost exactly taken from Preisler's *Spring* (1900) for which he sketched his models in a pose inspired by Rossetti's *Beata Beatrice*, as I have shown in my second chapter. The stiffness of the maiden's back and her unnaturally firm and upright pose as well as the use of birch trees connects Scheiner's illustration to several major artworks of Preisler's.

In 1902 – the year of the major exhibition of children's illustrations in Prague – Scheiner illustrated Václav Říha's fairy-tale "A Book about Růženka and Bobeš"

(Knížka o Růžence a Bobešovi).<sup>102</sup> Over its 40 pages, the book features 25 illustrations, many of them full-page or covering majority of the pages, fitting alongside the text in creative patterns [Fig 4.46]. Scheiner's name is included on the title page where the book is presented as being co-created by both its author and its illustrator. The illustrations play a fundamental role in the book's success: they are not an add-on to the story, rather they play as key a role as the text of the book itself. The illustrations are carefully placed to create an overall aesthetic effect where the images meet the text, carefully considering the layout of the pages where the illustrations often directly dictate the page's layout and how much space is left for the text on each individual page – similarly to Crane's "Echoes of Hellas" reproduced in the *Art Journal* special in 1898 [Fig 4.47] which was a journal well known to the Czech audiences and referred to on the pages of *Volné Směry*.

With this work, Scheiner stepped out of the cohort of contractors of illustrated magazines and claimed the spotlight as an artist-illustrator in his own right, an artist with a clearly defined vision. He presents the readers with impressive fully formed vistas of art nouveau fantasy architecture [Fig 4.48] (not unlike some of the architectural sketches of the architect Jan Kotěra, who was also heavily featured in *Volné Směry* in the 1900s, and whose work inspired by English architecture was outlined in the introduction of this thesis).<sup>103</sup> Scheiner's visual language now has its clear vocabulary: thick black outlines, inspiration from medieval and historic fashion, a post-Pre-Raphaelite sensibility and an elegant stylisation in line with continental Art Nouveau. All the illustrations are in black and white, employing stark contrasts between light and shadow, and oscillating between detailed depictions of historical costumes on the one hand, and a freestyle linear depiction bordering on caricature on the other, as can be seen in the scenes with the princess Růženka [Fig 4.49, 4.50]. The princess is shown in long intricately decorated dresses depicted in stark black lines with no shading. In other illustrations, members of the royal court are shown in baroque-

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<sup>102</sup> Václav Říha, *Knížka o Růžence a Bobešovi*, (Prague, J.Laichter, 1902)

<sup>103</sup> Jan Kotěra, „O novém umění“, *Volné směry* 4, no.6 (1900) 189 -195.

Ladislav Zikmund-Lender, Helena Čapková, eds., *Mýtus architekta - Jan Kotěra 150*, (Praha: VŠUP, 2022) I also deal with Jan Kotěra and analyse his article "On new art" in my upcoming article "Jan Kotěra and British art in fin de siècle Czech art journals" which will be published as part of the English edition of Zikmund-Lender's above edited volume in 2024.

inspired costumes with no shading, with an overpowering presence of ornamentation set in a busy composition filling up the entire pictorial space [Fig 4.51].

There are clear visual nods towards both Caldecott and Crane. Caldecott's light line-drawings are reflected especially in the latter part of the book where one of the heroes, the boy Bobeš, features as a simple linear outline with no details or patterns on his clothes [Fig 4.52] just like many of Caldecott's characters, including those reproduced in *Volné Směry*. Inspiration from Crane manifests in many features throughout the book: the flattened style of drawing, the use of historical costumes spanning the Middle Ages to the Baroque, [Fig 4.53] in densely populated compositions [Fig 4.54], with rich patterns and exquisitely drawn details including floral fabric patterns, and effective contrasts of black and white [Fig 4.55].

It is fair to say that there is also a palpable touch of Aubrey Beardsley, a report on whom appeared in the first issue of *Volné Směry* in 1900, referring to some of Beardsley's older prints being published in London. This was part of a series of reviews of recent publications on British art, including Gleeson White's "The Master Painters in Britain", and various books on Byam Shaw, Charles Dana Gibson, Helen Stratton and the Pre-Raphaelites.<sup>104</sup> All these reviews support my argument that there was a great interest in British illustration among the Bohemian audiences and that the reviewed books were accessible for Czech artists to see. While unlike some of the other artists, Beardsley's work was however never reproduced in the *Volné Směry*, there is little doubt that Bohemian artists would have had access to some his work and would have seen reproductions in international magazines. The reason that Jiránek never included Beardsley in his overview of British caricaturists might be because the artist was considered to be a stand-alone figure, positioned outside the canon of other illustrators and caricaturists.

Scheiner's career in illustration continued successfully into the 1910s, when he illustrated a great number of fairy-tale books, such as *Goldilocks* from 1911,

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<sup>104</sup> "Bibliografie," *Volné Směry* 4, no.1 (1900): 27.

[Fig 4.56] and even throughout the 1920s with the ongoing support from the Topič publishing house. His signature style comprised a combination of romantic medieval looking female types derived from the Pre-Raphaelite tradition, combined with a richness of ornamental details echoing the Arts and Craft, infused with Art Nouveau and Secession style ornamentation as can be seen on an illustration to a traditional Czech fairy-tale *Three Golden Hairs of Grandfather Know-All* from 1914. [Fig 4.57]. Scheiner arrived at a specific combination of Caldecott's simple but extremely effective linear drawings with Crane's obsession with ornament and decorativeness. I argue that Scheiner only developed his signature style after exploring British illustrators, including Caldecott and Crane, which happened in conjunction with Jiránek's article in *Volné Směry* in 1900, thus transforming the sphere of Czech book illustration and especially children's illustration at the time.

### **Conclusion**

In my previous chapters, I analysed how articles in major Czech art journals presented British art and how this informed the work of Czech artists. Among the periodicals, *Volné Směry* had the leading role. After looking into how Czech journals portrayed Pre-Raphaelitism, Victorian art and the work of James McNeil Whistler, this final chapter shifted its focus from painting to drawing, etching, caricature, and illustrations. Based on two articles in a special supplement of *Volné Směry* from 1900, this chapter analysed the texts of Miloš Jiránek and Gustav Jaroš respectively, and explored how British caricature and illustration changed the work of Czech artists.

Miloš Jiránek's article on British caricature had a transformative effect on Czech artists in two major ways: it advocated for greater recognition for the graphic arts, and within this it specifically promoted the importance of quality illustrations for children. In effect, this transformed the careers of artists such as Emil Orlik, who increasingly specialised in graphic techniques, or Artuš Scheiner who established himself as a specialist in children's illustration.

Similar to my previous chapters, I acknowledge that the British material was presented to the Czech artists and readership in its international context and

was therefore part of a more complex process of osmosis. Jiránek's article "Draughtsmen – Caricaturists" covered caricature in France and Germany as well as British caricature. However, dedicating an entire chapter to British art reflects Jiránek's and the journal's desire to get Bohemian audiences to engage with British art more actively – this was after all a mission clearly stated in the obituary of John Ruskin in *Volné Směry* earlier in 1900. Publishing a detailed analysis of British caricature and illustration was therefore a conscious step towards an increased engagement of Czech artists with British art.

This exposure set in motion the process of liberating Bohemian drawing and illustration from the hierarchy in which painting previously dominated all disciplines. The knock-on effect of this had several important outcomes. One of these was the heightened attention to children's illustration, which ultimately led to the first ever exhibition of art for children in Bohemia, held in Prague in 1902.

As a result of the exposure to British illustration, Artuš Scheiner was one of the few Bohemian artists to work entirely in the format of illustration for books and magazines. His work benefited substantially from British illustration and stimulated Scheiner to create a specific personal style with visual links to the work of Walter Crane, Randolph Caldecott and the legacy of Pre-Raphaelitism. For artists such as Emil Orlik, the new appreciation for woodblock printing sparked by William Nicholson resulted in Orlik's visit to England and was followed by a phase of Orlik's work clearly responding to Nicholson's style.

British caricature and illustration were therefore significantly transformative for a whole array of Bohemian artists and contributed to the development of new areas of creativity within Bohemian art post 1900.



## Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have been asking questions about the Czech reception of British art around the year 1900. Did British art shape Bohemian culture in any way at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? And if so, how and through which channels? What were the major networks through which British art permeated the Czech artistic environment? And what was the result of the Czech encounter with British art?

At the beginning, I started with an almost blank slate. While there are several Czech scholars who published articles with some mentions of the link between British and Czech art at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these were mostly sporadic and occasional. Overall, there was no substantial scholarly publication on the subject. I set out to prove that British art not only had a presence in Bohemia throughout the 1890s and 1900s, but also that it substantially contributed to many Czech artists' work. I did this through an in-depth study of Czech fine art journals from the turn of the century, where I collated a significant number of articles and publications dealing with British art and identified those Bohemian artists who reacted to this in their work.

To help me with such a broad enquiry, I combined several methodological approaches. Inspired by the discussions around cultural appropriation, I focused on James O Young's concept of art and authenticity which according to him grants the status of aesthetic authenticity to works that were created through the process of cultural borrowing and layering of features from various countries and cultures.<sup>1</sup> I chose this methodology because it addressed the issue of Bohemian art's value and the problem of derivativeness that appears repeatedly throughout both historical and contemporary Czech art historical literature, and is present in the majority of scholarship on Eastern European art. I have shown that Bohemian artists were not merely copying British art but rather hand-picked certain motifs and styles, and combined them with both other international 'influences' and Czech national subjects, thus re-signifying the original works and infusing them with new meanings. This is especially true when it comes to

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<sup>1</sup> James O Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (Wiley, 2008)

artwork inspired by the search for the elusive 'Czechness' which led artists to borrow elements from other national art styles and then infuse them with vernacular and decorative features portraying Bohemian national legends and folklore.

In terms of the transmission of aesthetic values from Britain, I have identified Czech fine art journals to be the key carrier of cultural transfer and have centred my research around them. I have shown journals such as *Volné Směry* and *Rozhledy* to be highly influential collaborative enterprises run by artists, critics, and journalists. I also pointed towards the fact that many artists played multiple roles as both fine artists as well as journalists, editors, and art critics. I suggested that the journals should be understood as composite artworks – a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of sorts – where illustrations, reproductions and text all work together to co-create an overarching narrative. In the articles I selected, this overarching narrative is focused on encouraging Czech artists to seek inspiration from British art.

While previous scholarship concentrated mainly on the German and French 'influences' in Bohemia, I have gathered evidence to show that Bohemian journals featured numerous articles and reproductions of British art. These were not random or accidental, rather they represented statements and testimonies about the changing taste of the Czech audiences. They reflected a conscious desire for a deeper understanding of British culture on the whole, and a greater exposure of Czech artists to specific movements within British art, such as Pre-Raphaelitism or children's illustration. British art came to symbolise intellectual and political freedom as well as a movement towards a more socially minded society embodied by the ideals of Ruskin and Morris.

Based on my in-depth research of Czech periodicals, I have identified the passing of John Ruskin in 1900 as one of the turning points which encouraged Czech artists to explore British art with more intensity and purpose. It was really after Ruskin's death that Bohemian artists and journalists turned their attention to Britain with enthusiasm and rigour, fuelled by the desire to familiarise themselves with the latest developments in the country. Gustav Jaroš' obituary

of John Ruskin published in *Volné Směry* in 1900 acted as a catalyst bringing about a radical change in the way British art was perceived in Bohemia.

Through in-depth research of Czech journals, I have identified several key areas where the Bohemian reception of British art was most notable. In the four chapters of my thesis, I have explored these in detail. In doing so, I introduced a number of Bohemian artists (mostly completely unknown outside of Czech scholarship) and analysed their work through the prism of their cultural borrowing from British art. These themes included a thorough analysis of Czech fine art journals at the turn of the century, the Bohemian reception of Pre-Raphaelitism, the role of James McNeil Whistler, and the Czech response to British caricature and illustration.

Via this thorough enquiry into the selected themes, I have shown that Czech artists had access to British art and a desire to get inspired by it. They actively sought Czech and foreign literature about British art and engaged with British art at international exhibitions in France and Austria. While sometimes British art was mediated to Czech audiences via other countries and cities (mainly Paris and Vienna) the encounter with British art was profound and had a transformative effect on the work of Czech artists.

My selection of artists was focused on those whose work appeared in Czech fine art journals around the year 1900, or whose work (artistic or otherwise) was associated with the journals. Some of the artists I focused on are well known among Czech art historians and are generally accepted among the national pantheon (such as Jan Preisler and Max Švabinský). Others are still in the margins of art historical interest in Czechia, deserving future scholarly attention (such as Emil Orlik, František Tavík Šimon and Artuš Scheiner). I hope that my thesis will be an impetus for further research into these artists and for a deeper understanding of the multi-layered network of international art that shaped Czech artists well beyond the established sources from France and Germany.

One of the challenges I faced during my research was the fact that Czech artists from the turn of the century are almost entirely unknown in Britain. Identifying the right balance between providing sufficient biographical and

historical grounding while not spending too much time on listing background information was something I confronted on multiple occasions. Having grown up in Czechia and having studied my undergraduate degree there, I had an in-depth knowledge of Czech artists and was used to the narratives which were presented about them by Czech art historians and the Czech cultural media. On occasion I found it challenging to ‘unlearn’ a lot of what I knew about Czech art and develop a way of seeing the old facts in a new light. Ultimately, this shift in perspective has been one of the most enriching experiences of my doctoral journey.

Despite having spent almost seven years carrying out the research for this thesis, I feel that I have barely scraped the surface. Every chapter I wrote uncovered another range of topics that needs to be explored. Among the themes that I haven’t covered in my thesis, but which lend themselves to further exploration, are questions relating to architecture, especially the role of the architect Jan Kotěra whose work reflects the English family house tradition. There is also more research needed on the Arts and Crafts movement and how this connects to the development of vernacular crafts and applied arts in Bohemia. The role of William Morris and the reception of his ideals and art would benefit from further scholarly attention. A desirable outcome of this could be a publication similar to “Young Poland – The Polish Arts and Crafts Movement” by Julia Griffin and Andrzej Szczerski published in 2020.<sup>3</sup>

While I have dedicated an entire chapter to British illustration and caricature, there is yet more that needs to be explored within this topic. My enquiry only covered artists associated with Czech fine art journals, but there are many more both British and Czech artists whose work could be linked. Bohemian book illustration flourished after the year 1900, following the British example. While I have touched on some aspects of this, a deeper exploration of Czech illustration and book design inspired by Britain would make an exciting theme for future research.

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<sup>3</sup> Julia Griffin and Andrzej Szczerski, *Young Poland – The Polish Arts and Crafts Movement 1890- 1918* (London: Lund Humphries, 2020)

One of the greatest challenges I see in connection to my research is that while my primary aim was to bring Czech art into the context of Western art history, in doing so I have disconnected Bohemia from its local context within Central and Eastern Europe. In the aforementioned key text on Central European modernism, Matthew Rampley states that while realistically unachievable, the goal for researchers of these geographical areas should be both to connect their work to the Western narrative, while also looking for parallels and connections across the East European artistic landscape. Rampley adds that this is however almost impossible due to the many different languages spoken in Eastern Europe and the stylistic variety across the region. Mastering both the Western narrative and a thorough knowledge of Eastern European art would be extremely difficult to achieve for any individual. In this aspect, I hope my research will contribute to debates in both the Western and the Eastern-European cultural realm, and that it will open new avenues for researchers in both territories.

Similarly, another area worth further exploration is the context of other countries' reactions to British art. Throughout my research, I have benefited immensely from the work of my supervisor Prof Liz Prettejohn and from the cluster of her doctoral students, many of whom explore the reception of Pre-Raphaelitism around the world. Supervisions and consultations with my peers had a significant impact on my work, my way of thinking and my research. From these discussions, I understood that there were notable similarities in how Pre-Raphaelitism was received in other countries, such as in Italy or Germany.<sup>4</sup> While this is beyond the scope of my thesis, I believe that exploring these global similarities and differences is worth further enquiry. Creating a network of scholars united by this shared interest would be the best way forward. Thanks to Prof Prettejohn, the History of Art department at York already has a vibrant cohort where much of this work is being carried out. Helping to establish a dedicated network of international scholars with a focus on this task is among the goals that I would like to concentrate on in the future.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, Eduardo de Maio's research deal with the Italian reception, Christine Neubauer focuses on Germany, Dr Miguel Gaete explores Latin America, among others.

To make sure my research is not only ‘preaching to the already converted’ scholars with an existing interest in Bohemian art history, I have presented parts of this thesis at conferences, mainly in the UK, Continental Europe and North America. For example, in 2023, I talked about the Czech reception of the Pre-Raphaelites at an international conference held in London, organised by the Tate in collaboration with the Paul Mellon Centre alongside the major exhibition *Rossettis: In Relation*.<sup>7</sup> I also published a paper about the subject in a collection of conference proceedings “Pre-Raphaelite Sisters: Art, Poetry and Female Agency in Victorian Britain”.<sup>8</sup> Also in 2023, I presented a talk about the work of Josef Mánes at the international workshops “Rethinking British & European Romanticisms in Transnational Dimensions” at the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena and at York. Finally, I gave several talks about the Bohemian fin-de-siècle at Brown University, USA. While most of my presentations were aimed at academics and students, I have also given talks about Bohemian art to the general public and within lifelong learning settings in the UK.

Through doing these presentations, I recognise the importance of spreading information on Central European art in engaging ways that resonate with current research strands in ‘Western’ art history. I have found that this is best achieved by bringing Czech 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century artists into an international discourse, presenting their work in relation to current topics in British, European and international art history. This needs to be supported by identifying themes which methodologically unite different geographical areas – such as cultural transfer, cultural borrowing, appropriation, horizontal and transnational art history. This enables Central and Eastern European artworks to enter into a lively dialogue and truly enhance some of the traditionally Western themes. Based on my experience from the last years, I increasingly find that British and American scholars in Pre-Raphaelite studies will find their research enriched by the encounter with the Czech response to the movement. I am hopeful that this genuine interest which I have repeatedly witnessed will eventually break the

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<sup>7</sup> *Rossettis: In Relation* conference organised co-organised by Tate, Paul Mellon Centre for British art and the University of York, accessed Sept 23, 2023, <https://www.paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk/whats-on/forthcoming/rossettis-in-relation-conference>

<sup>8</sup> Glenda Youde, Robert Wilkes, eds, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters - Art, Poetry and Female Agency in Victorian Britain*, (London: Peter Lang, 2022) accessed Aug 12, 2023, <https://www.peterlang.com/document/1290518>

cycle of marginalisation and will offer Czech art more than a mere existence on the fringes of 'Western' art history.

While working on my research, I was very encouraged by what I believe to be a hopeful development towards bringing into the spotlight some of the marginalised themes from the fringes of the 'Western' narrative. During the years spent on my research, I have become part of a cluster of international doctoral and post-doctoral researchers mainly (but not exclusively) associated with the University of York, Yale University, and the Paul Mellon Centre. Discussions held at their conferences and symposia led to a clear formulation of the desire to work collaboratively on the theme of the international reception and mutual dialogues with Pre-Raphaelitism and Victorian art which would bring together input from Western and Eastern European countries as well as from Asia and America. At the time of writing this thesis, funding applications are being prepared for this collaboration<sup>10</sup>. My research presented in this thesis was part of the many formative discussions held by this cluster, and I am confident that with the right support this development will facilitate at least some part of the vision for a large-scale multi-national collaborative effort.

Such multi-national partnership could be a much-needed step towards ending the marginalisation of some geographical areas, including Central and Eastern European art. The traditional measure of comparison should cease to be used between artists from the centre as arbiters of innovation, and artists of the periphery as merely imitating the development of the centre. Rampley suggests two possible ways, one being the 'associative art history' of the Czech art historian Tomáš Pospiszyl who demonstrates that despite superficial visual similarities to European and North American artists, the work of Czech artists from the post-1945 era "has its own genealogy and is the product of very

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<sup>10</sup> At the time of writing, Christin Neubauer and Dr Marte Stinis, both international alumni from UoY, are preparing a funding application focused on the international response to Pre-Raphaelitism. This comes as result of several years of sharing research on the wide reception of PRB at York and beyond. It is important to highlight the role of Prof Liz Prettejohn in connecting similarly minded scholars and students and encouraging such internationally minded research among her PhD students – this thesis being the result of precisely such encouragement.

specific circumstances”.<sup>11</sup> The same could certainly be said about the majority of Czech artists discussed in my thesis, whose work fits within a completely different temporal, social and political framework from the work of their Victorian predecessors and peers.

In my research of 1900s periodicals as carriers of cultural transfer, I often felt like I was standing on the crossroads between art and socio-political research. While I acknowledged that both aspects were valuable, I took the decision to focus on the art and aesthetic analysis primarily on this occasion given the academic purpose of my thesis. However, the visual parallels described in my thesis were not presented with the intention to be used as a measure of comparative quality or value based on the periphery vs centre dichotomy, which I have repeatedly stressed throughout my chapters.

Arguably, the marginalisation of Central and Eastern European art is rooted rather deeply in the current ‘Western’ mainstream narrative. Rampley suggests that the marginalisation of art from the periphery “will only begin to be dismantled if its art can be seen to have a bearing on the history of Modernism elsewhere,” and as such creating a genuine interest in this art “would necessitate engaging with and impinging directly on the interests and conceptions of historians of the Modernism of the canonical centres of Western Europe”.<sup>12</sup> From the perspective of my research, this point resonates with the above paragraphs where I have demonstrated my strategic position as someone (linguistically, geographically, and culturally) in between art historical exploration in British Victorian studies as well as in Czech *fin de siècle*. I find that presenting my research and publishing the findings from this thesis in the international context of British Victorian studies creates genuine interest in Czech art among scholars who otherwise work almost entirely with Western European regions and narratives. Presenting Czech artists of the turn of the century as autonomous players essentially entangled in the complex network of British and international art lies at the very core of this thesis.

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<sup>11</sup> Tomáš Pospiszyl, *An Associative Art History*, Prague 2018; Rampley, “Networks” 158.

<sup>12</sup> Rampley, “Networks” 159



In line with this, I have conceived my thesis as a body of research aimed at primarily a scholarly audience with no prior knowledge of Bohemian art. Over the last six years, I have developed ways of presenting my research to audiences outside of the Czech cultural sphere and I have specifically targeted audiences whose proximate interests indeed lay anywhere but in Central Europe. Initially, I felt that my theme was too ‘exotic’ for my audiences, and I first had to develop effective ways of meaningfully introducing my geo-cultural area. However, over the years I have observed a change in perception. In the world of Victorian studies, for example, there is a growing tendency towards bringing research from traditionally marginalised areas into the centre of attention alongside well established traditional topics. This is becoming more and more common not only in academic communities, but also among wider audiences, such as public groups of Victorian art enthusiasts, and even across social media platforms.<sup>14</sup> The shifting of interest towards previously marginalised regions might be slow, but once unleashed, its potential to grow is immeasurable.

Over the four chapters of this thesis, I have gathered evidence and shown case studies to support my argument that British art substantially contributed to the formation of the Czech artistic scene at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and as such it significantly expands and alters our understanding of both Czech and British art of the period. I view Czech *fin de siècle* artists as authentic and valuable players on the international art scene around 1900, and I argue that the Czech response to British art is a key theme equally relevant for both the current Czech scholarship, as well as the ‘Western’ and ultimately transnational art history.

Further, I argue that the infamous ‘delay’ in the reception of British art in Bohemia is not detrimental to the quality and authenticity of Czech art around 1900. On the contrary, this ‘delay’ enabled older British works, such as the

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<sup>14</sup> Using social media platforms for sharing academic research findings with the public is well established at many universities in the UK and worldwide. Over the last year, the British Pre-Raphaelite Society’s social media sky-rocketed, attracting over 70k followers on their Instagram in the first year alone. The account is run by curator Hannah Squire and often features reports on research findings. I believe there is great potential in the future for social media to propel change in the perception of those geographical areas that are currently marginalised by the mainstream ‘Western’ art historical discourse.

original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, to be actualised, updated and brought into the context of concurrent European and international art styles at the turn of the century, creating a vibrant mix of Victorian art with an array of international *isms*.

Based on my research findings, I argue that British art should be seen as a strong formative force in the Czech cultural environment of the 1900s, and as such it should figure more prominently in the teaching and research of Czech art history, alongside well-studied 'influences' from France and Germany. In the spirit of reciprocity, British Victorian art should be more prominently present at Czech universities, and equally so Czech artists responding to Victorian art should be featured as part of international Pre-Raphaelite studies.

Finally, studying the role of British art in shaping the Bohemian art scene around 1900 fits with and supports the development of important present-day methodological discussions, such as the current resurfacing of Horizontal Art History, as well as entangled art history, decolonisation, the study of networks, cultural transfer, and artistic appropriation. As such it is an important topic which can facilitate further methodological developments with crucial implications for the entire discipline of art history.

In his article from 1900, Gustav Jaroš complained about the symbolic 'Chinese wall' separating British culture from Bohemian Lands, finishing his essay with an exclamation that "much diligent work using many different tools" is yet needed to dismantle this wall. Borrowing his metaphor more than 120 years later, I wish for this thesis to be seen as a contribution towards finally pulling down the barriers between the study of British and Czech art at the turn of the century. All the research presented here was carried out with a deep-felt desire for it to help establish new meaningful connections between British and Czech scholarship and culture. I wish for these connections to be infused with the power to transform how we see the historic contacts, and most importantly how we live out contemporary interactions between not only Britain and Czechia, but across the international network of the traditional 'centres' and 'peripheries'.

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