

WHEN PARIS MET BOHEMIA:
DISCOVERING THE CZECH NATION THROUGH ITS ART, 1900-1938

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INTRODUCTION

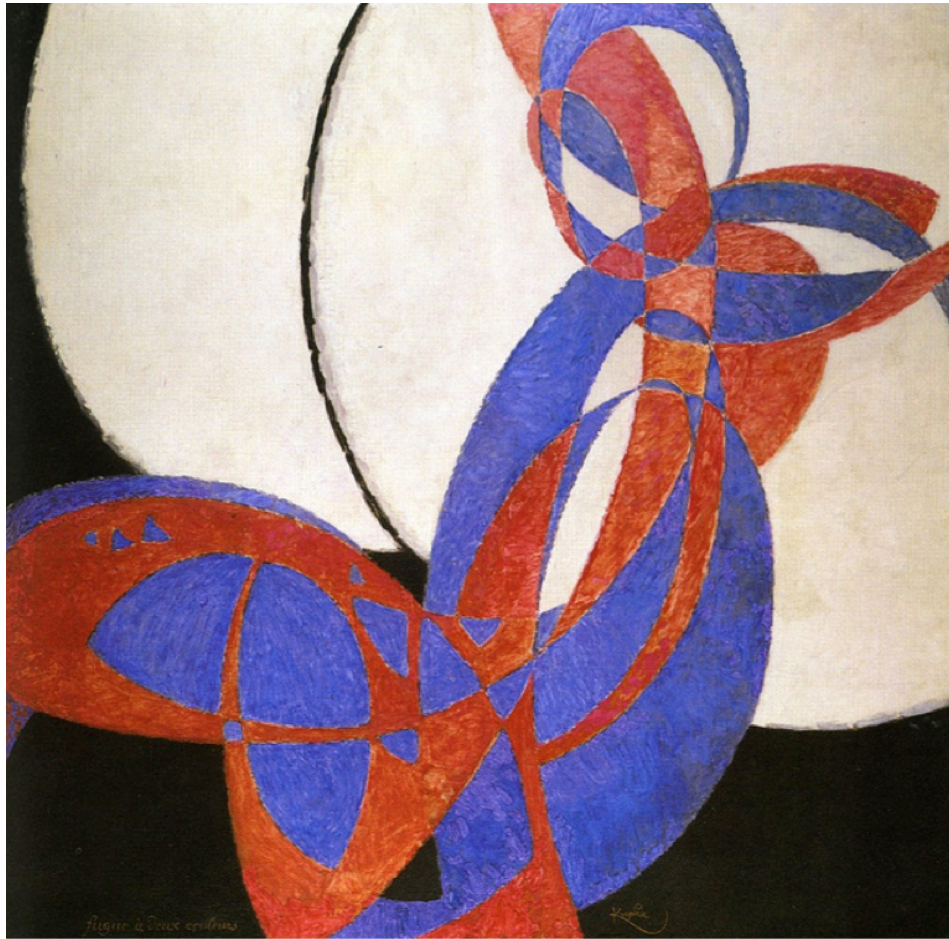


Figure 1: František Kupka, *Fugue in Two Colors*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 210 cm x 200 cm. Prague, Veletržní Palác.

Modern art, French politics, and Czech history unite in the person of František Kupka. Kupka was a modern artist born in Bohemia in 1871. He moved to Paris by 1894, where he became a self-proclaimed anarchist, and spent the remainder of his years in France with brief interludes in Prague. During this time, he pioneered complete abstraction in the French Salon d'Automne with his painting *Fugue in Two Colors* (Figure 1) and engaged in Paris's vibrant social network of artists and thinkers. During the war, Kupka fought on the front lines for France and drew propagandistic designs using historic themes for the Czech

national cause. He became President of the Czech colony in Paris in 1915 and worked with political leaders to advocate for a Czechoslovak state. During the interwar period, Kupka returned to abstraction, resigned from political life, and taught Czech students in Paris to promote artistic exchange between France and the newly formed Czechoslovakia. Kupka's political and artistic transformations mirrored the times in which he lived. He also reflected, in his person, interpretations of Czech art in Paris: ones that saw Czech art as a-national and French-like before 1914, as nationally and historically informed during the war, and as possessing genuine artistic merit that helped maintain a powerful Franco-Czech bond after 1918.

This thesis explores how a small group of French artists and intellectuals based in Paris 'discovered' the Czech nation through its modern art and history in the years leading to World War I through the interwar period. I will argue that these Frenchmen at first praised the 'Frenchness' of Czech modernism and history to celebrate their own liberal values and employed art in their justifications for the establishment of a sovereign Czechoslovak state. Soon after World War I had begun, these and other Frenchmen advocated for an independent Czechoslovak state not only because the Czechs' refined art and history demonstrated its own European value, but also to ensure that a representative of Western European values was firmly situated in the heart of East-Central Europe. In their writings, these Frenchmen intertwined Czech and French modern art and history to pull Czech culture into the 'Western European fold' and defined Czech culture in opposition to that of Germany and Austria-Hungary. World War I also created the context for these Frenchmen to begin to understand Czech art as 'Czech' after independence from Austria-Hungary in 1918. These historic, artistic, and political connections solidified a lively dialogue, albeit an

unequal one, between French artists and intellectuals and their Czech counterparts. This dialogue would flourish through the interwar years.

Central to this thesis is an unlikely alliance of four sets of actors who lived in Paris in the first decades of the twentieth century. The first two sets of actors consist of Frenchmen who wrote about Czech art and history in Paris, the first of which are the French gatekeepers — French artists and art critics whose connections and reputation opened the doors to the Parisian art world for the international and local artists they chose to befriend. These gatekeepers invited Czech artists into the Parisian art world by introducing them to other art professionals, teaching them in their ateliers, or commenting on their work in the press.¹ Before World War I, these gatekeepers only valued Czech art in relation to French modernism and by contrasting it to German culture. These artists and art critics did not have a clear understanding of what ‘Czech’ meant and supported Czech independence during the war based upon their personal connections rather than their genuine appreciation for either Czech modernism or nationalism. These French gatekeepers engaged with Czech art in Paris but in a different sphere from a second set of actors: French cultural advocates who ‘discovered’ the Czech nation through a historic framework. I define these cultural advocates as politically oriented members of society who wrote about traditional Czech art and history to inform French audiences about the Czech Lands. As we will see, these categories of French gatekeepers and cultural advocates are not mutually exclusive, and many inhabited both categories at once.

¹ Patrice Higonnet uses the term ‘gatekeeper’ to describe such well-connected members of the Parisian art world. See Patrice L. R. Higonnet, *Paris: Capital of the World*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2002).

The third and fourth sets of actors whom I discuss consist of the Czech artists and political activists, respectively, who lived in the Czech colony in Paris before, during, and after World War I. Over three thousand Czechs and Slovaks lived in France in 1914, many of who maintained close connections to Prague.² The Czech colony was known for its artists who came to Paris to study, exhibit, and to be part of its dynamic artistic community, such as famed Art Nouveau artist Alphonse Mucha and abstract painter František Kupka.³ During World War I, a select number of political exiles within this foreign community, some of who were artists, worked to persuade the French government to back Czech independence. Czech politician Edvard Beneš led these national lobbyists, befriended many French cultural advocates, and founded the journal *La Nation Tchèque* to further the Czech national cause abroad. Czechs of course inhabited other European capitals such as Vienna and Munich as well. What makes Paris so fascinating, however, are the ways in which politics, art, and history combined to influence the creation of the Czechoslovak nation-state. These interactions also laid the foundation for a strong Franco-Czech bond that would further develop through cultural and political interactions during the interwar years.

Of central concern here are both how the French gatekeepers and advocates *perceived* Czech art and the consequences of those perceptions. I do not seek to celebrate Czech

² Although Slovaks did reside in the Czech colony in Paris, I did not come across any Slovak artists exhibiting in Paris or any French discussions that mention Slovak artists. Slovakia was part of Hungary before World War I, and thus Slovak artists would have most likely traveled to Budapest or Vienna rather than Paris. Additionally, Slovakia was primarily an agrarian state, and its cultural production at the time did not match that of Bohemia or Moravia. Here, I will focus on self-consciously Czech artists who held strong relationships to Prague. Jean-Philippe Namont, *La colonie tchécoslovaque: Une histoire de l'immigration tchèque et slovaque en France (1914-1940)* (Paris: Institute of Slavic Studies, 2011), 47.

³ It is important to realize that 'Czech art' in Paris was not a monolithic entity but was, as art historian Vojtěch Lahoda writes, "created by Czechs, Germans, Austrians, and members of the Jewish community." Once again, I am focusing on self-consciously Czech artists. See Vojtěch Lahoda, "Global Form and Local Spirit: Czech and Central European Modern Art," in *Local Strategies, International Ambitions: Modern Art in Central Europe 1918-1968, Prague, June, 11-14, 2003* (Prague: Artefactum, 2006), 10.

modernism as equal to its French counterpart, as many scholars have done before, but will consider why certain Frenchmen initially took up a celebration of Czech art. Ample scholarship exists concerning the influence of French art in Prague, such as discussions of Rodin and Apollinaire's visits and the Mánes Association's exhibitions of Edvard Munch.⁴ I, however, examine the relationship between Czech art and politics in Paris in the years before, during, and directly after World War I, a time when the modern interconnectedness of art met the modern interconnectedness of politics in Europe.⁵ Modern Czech artists created their canvases as a-national, and yet they became a French litmus test of European worthiness. I hope to probe the implications of rethinking how ideas of nationhood informed interpretations of modern art within the shifting national borders of the early twentieth century.

The pages that follow draw inspiration from a number of literatures. In the French gatekeepers' and cultural advocates' perception of Czech art, there is an echo of France's nineteenth century civilizing mission. Czechoslovakia certainly was not a French colonial project, but Czech artists and politicians nonetheless proved their level of civilization by demonstrating the French-like nature of their culture.⁶ Questions of how Czech art and history related to and reflected a French conception of civilization run throughout this

⁴ Stéphane Reznikow, *Francophilie et identité tchèque (1848-1914)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002), 311; Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁵ Anna Pravdova is a curator at the Veletržní Palác (the modernist branch of the National Gallery in Prague) who has dedicated her research to the French-Czech artistic relationship in the interwar period.

⁶See the first and second chapters of Daniel Sherman's *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire* for an analysis of the interactions of empire, French culture, and modern art in the early twentieth century. Here, he examines the French "civilizing mission" and how colonial ethnography is applied to the metropolitan sphere. Daniel Sherman, *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire, 1945-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 8; Alice Conklin provides an in depth view of the French colonial projects in Africa, Asia, and Oceania. See Alice Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850-1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

thesis.⁷ I also draw inspiration from Larry Wolff's work on the ways in which French philosophers imagined "Eastern Europe" during the Enlightenment. I have learned much from scholars of nationalism, such as Benedict Anderson, who have explored how people have constructed ideas of the nation and national loyalties within a community that is both limited and sovereign.⁸ My thesis differs from these works, in that I explore the intersections of nationalism and international cultural diplomacy. I argue that in Paris, select French writers created an image of another (the Czechs) with the interaction of that other, in an act of multi-directional cultural diplomacy. Yet, literature on the topic tends to remain confined within the boundaries of the nation-state.⁹ I, in turn, examine Czech nationalism and cultural diplomacy from the perspective of these Frenchmen's interactions with Czech politics and art in Paris. Here I hope to reconsider the ways in which we understand the emergence of states in East-Central Europe after World War I.

The following chapters are organized thematically and chronologically. Chapter one focuses on the French gatekeepers' vague understanding of Czech modern art, and how Czech modernism demonstrated the French-like and therefore civilized nature of Czech

⁷ I will use the term 'civilization' in relation to the French gatekeepers' and cultural advocates' perception of Czech art and culture throughout the following chapters. I will employ Raymond Williams' use of the term in his book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, in which he defines civilization as "a state of social order and refinement, especially in conscious historical or cultural contrast to barbarism." Such ideas of civilization begin in the Enlightenment and, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, also began to be associated with modernity. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 23-26.

⁸ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991); Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Edward Said *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

⁹ See, for example, Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Frederick C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: the Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960); Zsolt Nagy, "Grand Delusions: Interwar Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy, 1918-1941," (PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina, 2012).

culture in the years before and during World War I. Chapter two also begins in the years directly before the war and continues through 1917 but focuses instead on politics, history, and traditional Czech art. Here, I consider how French cultural advocates employed Czech art in their discussions of national sovereignty in order to call for independence from the yoke of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They brought together the past with the present, recalling Bohemia's long and intertwined history with France, as well as their shared opposition to German culture. Chapter three follows the French gatekeepers' and cultural advocates' perception of Czech art from 1917 to 1938 and demonstrates how the modern and historic merged once the Czechoslovak nation-state was established. In the interwar period, Czech artists and art critics had finally been given a voice as they interpreted their own art in the French press and in exhibitions in Paris.

CHAPTER 1: THE 'FRENCHNESS' OF CZECH MODERNISM



Figure 2: Anonymous, Salon d'Automne, Grand Palais des Champs-Élysées, Paris, *Salle XI*, 1 October - 8 November, 1912.

The Salon d'Automne was the most prestigious exhibition space in Paris in the first decades of the twentieth century, and this rang particularly true in 1912. The Cubists had exhibited their abstract paintings the previous year, but this year artist František Kupka brought complete abstraction in the Salon d'Automne with his canvas *Fugue in Two Colors* (far left painting in Figure 2). No viewer could dismiss Kupka's painting as a mere sketch, as it hung six feet tall with broad areas of pure color delineating interlocking, round forms. *Fugue in Two Colors* brought full abstraction into the Parisian art scene and with it a plethora of interpretations.¹⁰

Artists from across the world came to Paris to participate in the salons of its thriving art scene. Viewers visited these salons both to see the latest trends in modern art and to be seen as sophisticated members of French society. In writing about the first day of the 1912

¹⁰ Higonnet, *Paris: Capital of the World*, 428-433.

Salon d'Automne, poet and art critic Guillaume Apollinaire penned, "Indeed, anyone who is anyone in Paris art circles was at today's opening."¹¹ A wide range of people and publications documented the events. Each perspective put forward an opinion of abstract art, its aesthetic value, and its place in the context of modern society. The popular culture magazine *La Vie Parisienne* covered Kupka's *Fugue in Two Colors* in a satirical letter printed on October 5, 1912.¹² The publication criticized Kupka's canvas not because it was Czech but because it was strikingly modern. Other members of the French art world took *Fugue in Two Colors* seriously, perceiving it as in line with the trajectory of French modern art. Art historian Leon Rosenthal wrote a review of the 1912 Salon d'Automne in the well-respected *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*. Rosenthal believed the salon's abstractions to be sophisticated products of deep research. He praised the especially numerous works exhibited by "the Slavs" but notes that these new, completely abstract forms "are connected, in a way most certain, to the evolution of French art."¹³ Rosenthal did not specifically praise Kupka's canvas but interpreted his abstraction as a testament to the continued global prestige of the Parisian art world.¹⁴

This chapter explores the French gatekeepers' perception of Czech art in Paris from the turn of the century through 1917. I argue that French art critics and acclaimed modern artists valued Czech modernism in relation to its French counterpart and by contrasting it to German culture. I will present two strands of thought within this argument, the first being the relationship between civilization and modern art. Czech modern art provided a visual

¹¹ Guillaume Apollinaire, "The Opening," *L'Intransigeant*, October 1, 1912, in *Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews 1902-1918*, ed. Leroy C. Breunig, trans. Susan Suleman (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 248.

¹² Dorilas, "Le Salon D'automne," *La Vie Parisienne* 50, no. 40 (Oct. 1912): 713, "...devient une grosse affaire, même une affaire dangereuse."

¹³ Leon Rosenthal, "Les Salons," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 54, no. 2 (1912): 410, 406, "...elles se rattachent, de la façon la plus certaine, à l'évolution de l'art française."

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 418.

connection between the Bohemian Lands and France, and the French gatekeepers interpreted Czech modernism to praise French cultural ascendancy. Through their discussions of Czech modernism, these gatekeepers celebrated how France's art and liberal values enjoyed influence beyond its nation's borders.

The second strand of my argument examines how these French art critics, artists, and even politicians drew upon Czech modernism to 'discover' the Czech nation. They did not have a clear understanding of what 'Czech' meant and took advantage of the concept's supposed emptiness in their writings. Many of these French gatekeepers advocated for Czech independence based upon their connections to Czech artists in Paris rather than a deep understanding of the Czech historic struggle for nationhood. World War I created an environment in which members of the French art world understood Czech art as intertwined with the political tensions of pre-war Europe, whether the artists intended to create this link or not. I will consider Guillaume Apollinaire, Auguste Rodin, and Emile Bourdelle specifically. These Frenchmen were all active, influential members of the Parisian art scene before and during World War I who knew Czech artists. French-Czech political journals, such as *La Nation Tchèque*, also published articles on modern art to comment on the contemporary political atmosphere of Europe during World War I.

"Be Yourself and You Will be Czech"

I define Czech modern art as that made by artists in or associated with the Mánes Union of Fine Arts in Prague and the various art groups that departed from Mánes before the end of the war: Osma (1907-08), Skupina výtvarných umělců (1911-1916), and

Tvrdošíjní (1918-1920).¹⁵ Mánes developed from a previous Czech art society and was founded in 1885 to promote political neutrality and individualism in modern art. The association honored Josef Mánes, a well-respected Czech painter of the previous era who had been inspired by French Romanticism. Its interests at first focused on Czech patriotism but quickly turned to focus on the European avant-garde by the end of the 1880's. It was then that the Mánes Association wrote a manifesto stating, "We want individualism. In no way do we desire to be Czech: be yourself and you will be Czech."¹⁶ These artists strove to depict the essence of modernity in art and exhibited their work on an international stage. Mánes organized exhibitions of European avant-garde art in Prague, showcasing works by Picasso and Edvard Munch. They invited sculptors Rodin and Bourdelle as well as art critics Camille Mauclair and Alexandre Mercereau to visit Prague.¹⁷

Mánes held strong ties to Sztuka in Kraków, the Wiener Secession of Vienna, and Der Blaue Reiter in Munich but nonetheless felt a particularly strong connection with Paris. Many Czech artists went to Paris to study in French academies that were more liberal and open to contemporary trends than those back in Prague and also to meet fellow Czech artists already living in Paris, such as Mucha and Kupka.¹⁸ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, France was the country of elegance and style and, as French literary historian Pascale

¹⁵ Osma (The Eight), Skupina (The Society of Fine Artists), Tvrdošíjní (The Stubborn Ones).) Membership of these art groups overlapped significantly. For instance, Cubist painter Emil Filla was a member of Mánes, Osma, and Skupina. František Kupka never officially joined any of these groups. However, historians such as Ivan T. Berend argue that Kupka admired Mánes, whom he "regarded as his ideal," and thus I have included Kupka in the group of artists I discuss. Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe Before World War II* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 103.

¹⁶ Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska and Piotr Mizia, "Sztuka—Wiener Secession, Mánes: The Central European Art Triangle," *Artibus et Historiae* 27, no. 53 (2006): 25.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 217-259.

¹⁸ Reznikow, *Francophilie et identité tchèque*, 479.

Casanova argues, Paris was “a world literary space, a global literary marketplace.”¹⁹ Paris was a place where Czech artists could gain international recognition for their work.

France’s dynamic intelligentsia exposed Czech artists to aesthetic, philosophical, and spiritual trends that flowed together into open dialogue in Paris, the capital of the art world. Czech Cubist painter Bohumil Kubišta worked in Paris’ vibrant artistic community from 1909-1912. He befriended influential members of the Parisian community both foreign and native alike, such as Apollinaire and famed Cubist dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler. Shortly after returning to Prague from Paris, Kubišta published an article on Josef Mánes in which he described how the character of national art had become the paramount principle for which a work of art was judged. Yet, Kubišta did not believe in national art and explains, “I personally doubt that this path (national art) could lead anywhere at all: the question of national art cannot be satisfactorily answered any more than questions such as ‘What is Art’ and ‘What is Life?’”²⁰ Kubišta understood nationality to be imbedded within a work of art, paralleling Kupka’s belief that the painter’s subconscious would make itself known to the viewer.

French participants in avant-garde circles prided themselves on creating a-national art that transcended political divides. Yet as Kubišta wrote, these critics did not free themselves completely from interpretation based upon national character. Apollinaire was a member of this cultural universe. The years 1905-1914 revealed a national revival in France in which even those associated with the avant-garde had their own strands of nationalism imbedded

¹⁹ Pascale Casanova is quoted in Hubert F. van den Berg and Lidia Głuchowska, “Introduction: The Inter-, Trans- and Postnationality of the Historical Avant-Garde,” in *Transnationality, Internationalism, and Nationhood: European Avant-Garde in the First Half of the Twentieth Century*, eds. Hubert F. van den Berg and Lidia Głuchowska (Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2013), xiii.

²⁰ Bohumil Kubišta, “Josef Mánes Exhibition at the Topič Salon,” in *Prěhled* 9, no. 25 (March 1911), in *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes 1910-1930*, eds. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 57.

within their political and cultural outlooks.²¹ This reawakening of national spirit was in part a response to tensions with Germany but also, according to historian Phillip Nord, resulted from “men of letters anxious to preserve the nation’s cultural pre-eminence.”²² Thus a complicated relationship developed between the avant-garde and the nation. In reality, criticism by propagators of modern art, like Apollinaire, had little to do with the art’s formal qualities and more to do with France’s cultural pre-eminence.

Guillaume Apollinaire

Apollinaire began publishing poems in 1901, but he also wrote as an art critic for various newspapers, such as *L’Intransigeant*, beginning in 1910. In 1912, he launched *Les Soirées de Paris*, an art and literary magazine in which he commented on the direction of avant-garde painting. Apollinaire not only wrote about art but also networked with visual artists in Paris. He introduced Pablo Picasso to Georges Braque in 1907 and met weekly with a group of Cubists in Puteaux (a commune in the suburbs of Paris), including Kupka. Apollinaire was one of the few early critics to defend Cubism, although he detested the term, and he was one of the first to recognize the modernist works of émigré artists in Paris. Apollinaire knew many Czech artists in Paris and had even visited Prague himself in 1902. He called on Gertrude Stein with Cubist Emil Filla at his side, wrote about George Kars’ paintings on multiple occasions, and suggested to Kupka that he read Paul Signac’s color

²¹ This nationalist mood from 1905-1914 was not a mainstream sentiment held throughout all of France. It centered in the Parisian cultural, economic, and political elites. Eugen Weber, *The Nationalist Revival in France, 1905-1914* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1959), 1; Albert Vaiciulenas, “Introduction,” in *Nationhood and Nationalism in France* *From Boulangism to the Great War 1889-1918*, ed. Robert Tombs, 103 (London: Routledge, 2003).

²² Phillip Nord, “Social defence and conservative regeneration: the national revival, 1900-1914,” in *Nationhood and Nationalism in France* *From Boulangism to the Great War 1889-1918*, ed. Robert Tombs, 210 (London: Routledge, 2003).

theory.²³ He promoted French nationalism by discussing foreigners', such as the Czechs', artistic success in relation to what he believed was its superior counterpart, French modernism.

Many of these Czech artists with whom Apollinaire was acquainted lived in the Montparnasse neighborhood, spending ample time in a lively café called the Dôme. In *Paris-Journal*, however, Apollinaire describes the artists of Café Dôme as German, no doubt, because many of them hailed from Germany and Austria-Hungary. He identified the "German painters who have made it [the café] their headquarters," as Dômiers. Apollinaire claimed to dislike German art because the compositions lacked intelligence, but more likely, he criticized the art simply because it was German. Apollinaire described the artistic poverty of Germany as "extraordinary—as extraordinary as the patience with which it is attempting to penetrate the secrets of young French painters."²⁴ In this statement, Apollinaire demonstrates a nationalist sensibility. He believes that French painters have secrets that give their art success, but German artists are unable to unlock this special knowledge even through their extraordinary determination to do so.

²³ Apollinaire never directly mentioned Kupka on his writings. However, art historians agree that he surely would have seen Kupka's *Fugue in Two Colors* in the 1912 Salon d'Automne. They were also in the same discussion group in Puteaux. Apollinaire may have mentioned Kupka in a speech at the opening of the Salon d'Or show, although the speech's text is now lost. See Virginia Spate, *Orphism: The Evolution of Non-Figurative Painting in Paris 1910-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 85-160; Nicholas Sawicki "Between Montparnasse and Prague: Circulating Cubism in Left Bank Paris," in *Foreign Artists and Communities in Modern Paris, 1870-1914: Strangers in Paradise*, eds. Karen L. Carter and Susan Walker (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2015), 74; Leah Dickerman, "Inventing Abstraction," in *Inventing Abstraction 1910-1925: How a Radical Idea Changed Modern Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2013), 21; Alexander von Vegesack and Milena Lamarová, eds., *Czech Cubism: Architecture, Furniture, and Decorative Arts, 1910-1925* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press; Prague: Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, 1992), 93.

²⁴ Before World War I, German modernism was stylistically advanced and is highly celebrated today. German expressionism inspired many Czech artists, and they frequently exhibited in Munich and Berlin before the war; Lahoda, "Global Form and Local Spirit;" Guillaume Apollinaire, "The Dôme and the Dômiers," *Paris-Journal*, 2 July 1914, in *Apollinaire on Art*, 414.

In “The Dôme and the Dômiers,” Apollinaire examines the Dômier artists he actually finds interesting, none of whom are actually German. He praises the picturesque works of a Swedish artist, writes on the gracefulness of an Italian sculptor, and notes Czech painter George Kars as the most interesting artist of the Dômiers. Apollinaire even admits that “more than half of these representatives of German art are not German,” and emphasizes that, “they all work in Paris.”²⁵ Apollinaire imposed this broad German category onto artists of a range of nationalities. He used these representatives of German art to refer to a generalized European other who were able to reach success because of their ‘Frenchness’.²⁶ At the end of the article, Apollinaire argues that the French works at the Parisian salons strongly influenced every acceptable work produced by the Dômiers.²⁷ The value of German art, which was only manifested in Czech, Italian, and Swedish art, was its French influence.

Weeks after Apollinaire wrote about the Dômiers, World War I commenced. The French public initially showed great animosity towards the Dômiers because, on July 18, 1914, citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Empire became enemies of France. Filla recalled Frenchmen coming to Café Dôme with the intent to attack Czech intellectuals, as people knew this location was a place to target East and Central Europeans.²⁸ Filla fled to Holland, and Kars returned to Prague. Some Czech artists, such as František Kupka and Otto

²⁵ It is interesting that Apollinaire groups the Italians, Swedes, and Czechs in his discussion of the Dômier artists. I discussed this oddity with historian Robert Patrick Jameson who theorizes that these nationalities’ place on the periphery of the ‘West’ dates back to the Carolingian period, during which southern Italy, Sweden, and Bohemia were on the geographic outskirts of the Holy Roman Empire. Apollinaire, “The Dôme and the Dômiers,” 414-15.

²⁶ The French perception of Eastern European as *other* dates back to back to Voltaire’s ‘discovery’ of East-Central Europe through means of philosophical geography during the Enlightenment. See Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*.

²⁷ Apollinaire, “The Dôme and the Dômiers,” 415.

²⁸ Sawicki, “Between Montparnasse and Prague,” 77.

Gutfreund, remained in Paris despite the persecution and showed their loyalty to France by fighting for the Allies during World War I.²⁹

Yet, French hostility towards the Germans did not begin with World War I. Most notably, the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 left an open wound after the German states united against Napoleon III. The cession of Alsace and a portion of Lorraine to Germany left the French looking for revenge. The Moroccan Crises of 1905 and 1911 further pushed the already tenuous French-German relationship to its brink in the years before World War I.³⁰ In France, art critics and politicians alike perpetuated German antipathy in cultural and political spheres. France's radical teutonophobia influenced attitudes in the Czech colony in Paris, but Czechs in Bohemia and France alike had their own obvious reasons for their anti-German sentiments.

Anti-German sentiments, as well as uncertainty of national categories further east, permeate Apollinaire's writings as he 'discovers' the Czechs. In his 1910 book *L'Hérésiarque et Cie*, Apollinaire wrote about this discovery in a passage called "Le Passant de Prague." The French narrator travels to Prague (as Apollinaire himself had done in 1902) and walks around the streets speaking German to the people he passes, in attempt to strike up a conversation. The first fifteen people he tries to converse with do not know German, only Czech, but the sixteenth responds to him in French:

²⁹ Apollinaire was of Polish and Italian origin himself and also signed up to fight. Through his demonstrated commitment to his adopted nation, Apollinaire became French during World War I.

³⁰ The Moroccan Crises of 1905 and 1911 explain French hostility towards the Germans in the years before World War I. For more information on this conflict and its effect on state identity and European rivalries, see: R. S. Alexander, *Europe's Uncertain Path 1814-1914: State Formation and Civil Society* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 294-315; and David Cottington, *Cubism in the Shadow of War: Avant-Garde Politics in Paris 1904-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 104-105.

Speak French, sir, we detest the Germans much more than the French do. We hate them, these people who want to impose their language on us, profit from our industry and soil... In Prague, people do not speak anything but Czech. But while you speak French, those who know the language, they will always respond to you with joy.³¹

Apollinaire wrote this anecdote during the same year he began interacting with Czech artists in Montparnasse and Puteaux. Through this fictional trip to Prague and drawing on his own experiences, Apollinaire worked towards ‘discovering’ the Czechs. The Czech connection with the Frenchman was forged through a common distaste for Germans. Apollinaire used the Czech speaker as a vehicle to further his own pro-French, anti-German sentiments. The Czech passerby hates the Germans, admires France, and speaks French, and as the narrator departs, this man from Prague assures him of a continued Czech friendship with France.

In his journal articles and fictional anecdotes alike, Apollinaire applauded the Czechs either because of their indebtedness to French traditions or because of their anti-German sentiments. Their Czech identity remained largely invisible, as did much of their art. This is true in Apollinaire’s discussion of Cubism, which he described in 1911 as “the most notable undertaking in French art today.”³² Apollinaire’s definition of Cubism goes beyond artists of French nationality to encompass other Western Europeans like the Spaniards, particularly the works of Pablo Picasso and Juan Gris.³³ He does not include the Czechs in his definition

³¹ Guillaume Apollinaire, *L’Hérésiarque et Cie* (Paris: P. V. Stock, 1910), 4, “Parlez français, monsieur, nous détestons les Allemands bien plus que ne font les Français. Nous les haïssons, ces gens qui veulent nous imposer leur langue, profitent de nos industries et de notre sol... A Prague, on ne parle que le tchèque. Mais lorsque vous parlerez français, ceux qui sauront vous répondre le feront toujours avec joie.”

³² Guillaume Apollinaire, “The Exceptional Attention Accorded Cubism by the Press Proves its Importance,” *L’Intransigeant*, October 10, 1911, in *Apollinaire on Art*, 183.

³³ Apollinaire dedicated each section of his book *Aesthetic Meditations: The Cubist Painters* to an artist whom he considered to fall within the confines of French Cubism. This included Picasso, Georges Braque, Jean Metzinger, Albert Gleizes, Marie Laurencin, Juan Gris, Fernand Léger, Francis Picabia, and Marcel Duchamp. Other major figures in the Parisian art world published texts on the Cubists around this same time, most notably David Henry Kahnweiler and artist Jean Metzinger. Kahnweiler and Metzinger personally knew Czech Cubist painters but did not mention these artists in their canonical texts of Cubism. Czech art historian

of Cubism, despite the fact that artists from Prague had one of the most successful Cubist schools outside of Paris. In his book *Aesthetic Meditations: The Cubist Painters*, Apollinaire does not mention any Czech artists. The manuscript originally included a chapter on foreign Cubisms and specifically highlighted the Czech strand, but this chapter was removed before the book's final publication.³⁴

Apollinaire recognized that Czech artists participated in the Cubist movement, but never cites a specific work they created. In writing about the 1912 Salon des Indépendants, Apollinaire mentions painter Bohumil Kubišta as an observer and appreciator of French Cubism, but not as someone actively participating in the movement: "A Czech painter, on whom the Destiny that presides over the distribution of patronyms bestowed the name of Kubišta, wandered through the Indépendants yesterday in search of works by his quasi namesakes, the French cubists."³⁵ This humorous comparison is typical of Apollinaire's writing but illuminates the poet's true perspective. Kubišta was a successful painter in 1912, not someone lost in the dizzying labyrinth of the salon searching out works by his 'quasi-namesakes.' Apollinaire noted Kubišta in his critique of the salon to emphasize the prominence of the French tradition, neglecting to mention that Czech artists had developed their own, individual strand of Cubism by 1912.

French Cubism appeared first chronologically, but Czech artists reacted to this movement with what art historian Miroslav Lamáč refers to as Cubo-Expressionism: the dematerialization of structures of reality through exaltation of form to magnify the intensity

Vincenc Kramář wrote the only other early authoritative text on Cubism, although it was not well known at the time; Guillaume Apollinaire, *Aesthetic Meditations: The Cubist Painters* (Paris: Eugène Figuière Éditeurs, 1913).

³⁴ It remains unclear why this chapter was removed from Apollinaire's book. It is also unclear as to if this removal was initiated by the publisher or by Apollinaire himself. Sawicki "Between Montparnasse and Prague," 75.

³⁵ Guillaume Apollinaire, "The Opening," *L'Intransigeant*, March 20, 1912, 214.

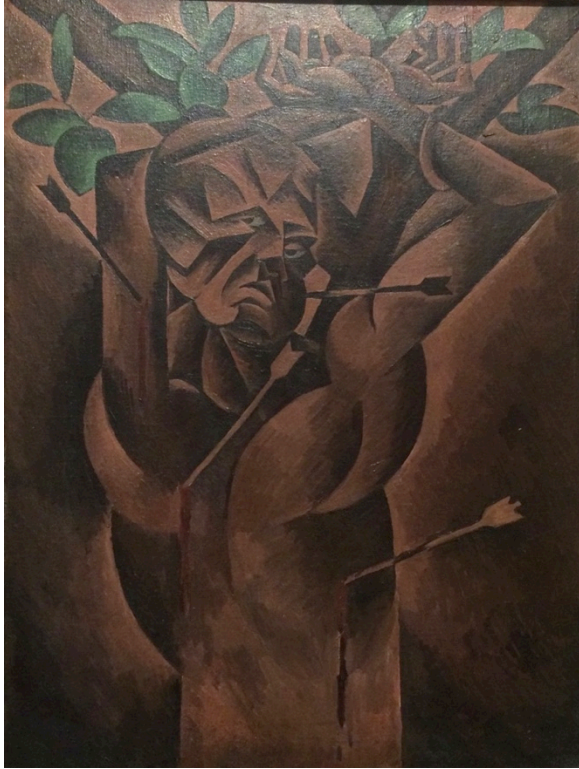


Figure 3: Bohumil Kubišta, *Saint Sebastian*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 98 cm x 74.5 cm. Prague, Veletržní Palác,



Figure 4: Jean Metzinger, *Woman with a Fan*, 1912-13. Oil on canvas, 90.7 cm x 64.2 cm. New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

of interior ideas.³⁶ A comparison of two 1912 works, Bohumil Kubišta's *Saint Sebastian* (Figure 3) and salon Cubist Jean Metzinger's *Woman with a Fan* (Figure 4), illuminates the differences and similarities.³⁷ Both paintings have a muted color palette and are figural in subject, although Metzinger focused on a contemporary subject and Kubišta rendered a historical one. Metzinger manipulated Cubism to explore how the movement of the fan affects the air surrounding a human figure, while Kubišta utilized geometric forms to dramatize a religious theme, here, the martyrdom of a saint.

³⁶ Miroslav Lamáč, "Introduction," in *Le Cubisme à Prague et la collection Kramář* (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, 1969), 2.2.

³⁷ Pablo Picasso and Juan Gris did not exhibit in the salons, because their dealer, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler would not allow them to do so for marketing reasons. The salon Cubists, such as Metzinger and Gleizes, produced figural Cubist paintings that were more akin to the Czech Cubo-expressionist style than that of Picasso and Gris.

Czech Cubists combined the multi-perspectival, fragmented forms of Cubism with insights from their Bohemian context. Kubišta manipulated Cubist forms not to negate Prague's expressive Baroque traditions but to renew them in a manner that related to a Czech national past as well as its modern, pan-European context.³⁸ Kubišta believed that during the time of Josef Mánes in the mid-nineteenth century, "French culture exercised influence not only on the inner lives of individuals but also on the entire nation [of Bohemia]."³⁹ Now, Kubišta wrote that the French tradition continued to inform the development of Czech art, but that Czech Cubism matched the success of its French counterpart by 1912.⁴⁰ Despite Kubišta's insistence on the distinctive nature of Czech art, Apollinaire continued to see it as a derivative of the French tradition.

Nations from across the continent looked to France as a political model and example of democratic values as leader of the Allied forces, and French art illustrated these values for an international audience. After the war broke out, Apollinaire inserted this civilizing factor into his discussions of European arts' relationship to French modernism. A Norway-based art gallery asked Apollinaire to write the text for an exhibition catalog highlighting French art in Oslo in November 1916. In this text, Apollinaire compares France to Ancient Greece, describing France as a model "for centuries to come, and [that] will be studied and imitated by thousands of artists of every nation."⁴¹ According to Apollinaire, the French tradition exercised its influence over not just Bohemia but every nation in 1916. Apollinaire speaks to

³⁸ Vegesack and Lamarová, *Czech Cubism: Architecture, Furniture, and Decorative Arts 1910-1925*, 28.

³⁹ Kubišta, "Josef Mánes Exhibition at the Topič Salon," 58.

⁴⁰ Bohumil Kubišta, "Druhá výstava Skupiny výtvarných umělců v Obrcním dome," in *Česká kultura* 1, no. 2 (October 18, 1912), in *Czech Modern Painters 1888-1918*, ed. and trans. Petr Wittlich (Prague: Charles University, 2012), 147.

⁴¹ Guillaume Apollinaire, "The Wonderful Flowering of French Art," in *Catalogue od Den Freankse Utstilling* (Oslo: Kunstnerforbundet, 1916), in *Apollinaire on Art*, 447.

the “light of France,” that nation’s “sublime duty,” and “the lofty tradition of French civilization.”⁴²

Art and Cultural Diplomacy

Not long after the start of World War I, two men, Edvard Beneš and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk travelled to nations of the Allied Powers, beginning to work toward the creation of a nation-state for the Czechs.⁴³ They promoted the Czechs as a people dedicated to the Western, democratic ideals of France in order to prove the legitimacy of the Czech national project. Beneš and Masaryk succeeded, in part, because they understood the French perspective of Bohemia, and they deployed the “Czech Question” for their own benefit.⁴⁴ Beneš and Masaryk addressed the ways in which the French understood their ‘Czechness’. Beneš and Masaryk were not French politicians but politicians in France, thinking from the French perspective in order to give their new state Western legitimacy.

Beneš was ideally suited to lobby for French support. He studied at the Sorbonne and received a degree in Dijon in 1908 but returned to Prague to teach. Beneš also had strong ties to the Czech artist community in Paris. In 1909, a group of Czech artists in Paris led by Hanuš Jelínek identified Edvard Beneš as a key ally in their efforts to promote Czech art and

⁴² Apollinaire, “The Wonderful Flowering of French Art,” 446-447.

⁴³ Most Czech political leaders in Bohemia, as well as the vast majority of the population, only began to envision the dissolution of the dual-monarchy late into the war.

⁴⁴ “The Czech Question” was a Western political way to ask Lenin’s famous question “What is to be done?” about Eastern Europe during the First World War. Book chapters such as René Pichon’s addition to *Les Pays Tchèque*, numerous articles in *La Nation Tchèque*, and discussions in French parliament consider “The Czech Question.” One also frequently comes across references to “The Slavic Question” and the “The Polish Question”; René Pichon, “La Question Tchèque,” In *Les Pays Tchèques Bohême, Moravie, Silésie, Slovaquie: Leur passé, leur présent, leur avenir*, ed. La Ligue Franco-Tchèque (Paris: Ligue Fanco-Tchèque, 1917), 15-43.

the Czech national project.⁴⁵ Jelínek wanted to create a Franco-Czech association in Prague upon his return from studying art in Paris and gathered art critic Rudolf Kepl as well as Czech artists Bohumil Kafka, František Kupka, Miloš Jiránek and Ludvík Striml to assist in this process.⁴⁶ The group wanted the Franco-Czech association to reach beyond artistic circles to include political actors. Miloš Jiránek responded to Jelínek's call by asking, "Who is this E. Beneš who writes in *Noviny* on contemporary France? This one could be a first-class recruit for such action."⁴⁷ Those ties remained strong when Beneš returned to Paris, this time, to lobby for national independence. In an article on Beneš' work with the National Czech Council, historian František Kolař states that upon arrival in Paris in 1916, "Beneš initially began to connect with representatives of the French political and cultural circles"; he cites French historian Ernest Denis as a member of the French political circle and Ludvík Striml in the cultural circle.⁴⁸

Beneš fostered relationships with Czech artists in Paris but also with French cultural elites, artists, and editors of political journals to make the Czech cause known to the wider French public. Beneš implored various Parisian journals to print material about Czechoslovakia's struggle for statehood.⁴⁹ Beneš' believed in France's international influence and the weight of the Parisian press and assisted in founding the French political journal *La*

⁴⁵ Miloš Jiránek (1875-1911) died before World War I but was influential in organizing exhibitions of French art in Prague after his extended stay in Paris.

⁴⁶ Camille Mauclair became close to Striml after first meeting him in Prague. Mauclair wrote about Striml in *Les Pays Tchèques Bohême, Moravie, Silésie, Slovaquie: Leur passé, leur présent, leur avenir*; Alfred Fichelle, "Les Tchécoslovaques en France," *Le Figaro en Tchécoslovaquie*, 29 February 1928.

⁴⁷ Reznikow, *Francophilie et identité tchèque*, 507, "Qui est cet E. Beneš qui écrit dans *Noviny* sur la France contemporaine? Celui-là serait pourrait être une recrue de premier ordre pour une telle action."

⁴⁸ František Kolař, "Edouard Beneš et le Conseil National Tchécoslovaque de la Rue Bonaparte," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 169 (Jan. 1993): 10, "Beneš commença tout d'abord à lier des contacts avec des représentants des milieux politiques et culturels français."

⁴⁹ Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 45.

Nation Tchèque. Czech and French historians wrote for *La Nation Tchèque* to advocate for Czech independence and perpetuate the connection between French civilization and Czech art. In the first article of the journal, French historian Ernest Denis explicitly states the journal's aim: "to present to the European public the aspiration and the desires of the people of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the first being that of the Czechs and Slovaks... the independence of Bohemia."⁵⁰

La Nation Tchèque frequently included articles about painting and literature during the war, including one on July 1, 1915 titled, "The Czecho-Slovaks: The Letters and the Arts." The article takes note of Czech literature as well as nation-builders such as the nineteenth century Czech historian František Palacký. The art section of the article narrates the artistic accomplishments of Bohemia, describing the contributions of the artist Josef Mánes as well as the work produced by the Mánes Association. The article then sounds a familiar theme:

The great French masters are the inspiration and models of the young artists of Prague, many of whom have long attracted the attention not only of their own country but also of foreign art critics. In recent years, the works of the Czech artists alone have saved the honor of the Austrian sections in international exhibitions.⁵¹

This brief excerpt highlights three things already discussed above: Czech artists seeking recognition in Paris, an ode to French greatness, and the poor quality of German art. The authors of *La Nation Tchèque* knew how to convey the Czech national project to their French

⁵⁰ Ernest Denis, "Notre Programme," *La Nation Tchèque* 1, no. 1 (May 1915): 3, "de présenter au public européen les aspirations et les désirs des peuples de la monarchie Austro-Hongroise, en première linge des Tchèques et des Slovaques... l'indépendance de Bohême."

⁵¹ "Les Tchéco-Slovaques : Les Lettres et Arts," *La Nation Tchèque* 1, no. 5 (July 1915): 77, "Les grandes maitres français sont les inspireurs et les modelés des jeunes artistes de Prague, parmi lesquels un grand nombre attirent depuis longtemps l'attention non seulement de leur propre pays, mais aussi des critiques d'art étrangers. Ces dernières années, ce furent les œuvres seules des artistes tchèques qui sauvèrent l'honneur des sections autrichiennes dans les expositions internationales."

audience. Tellingly, other articles in the journal recognized ancient folk art because it was quintessentially Czech and applauded modern art because it was quintessentially French.

Although I focus on the visual arts, *La Nation Tchèque* included many articles dedicated not only to Czech visual art but also to ‘the arts’ in general. In March 1917 the Czech colony in Paris put on three nights of Czech music and poetry in Paris under the patronage of French historians such as Denis, politicians like Stéphan Pichon (a French Senator), and Auguste Rodin, among others. These three evenings of art worked “to make the French public aware of the extent to which the Czechs have participated in the progress of modern art through the works of their principal composers and poets.”⁵²

Notable French artists also began to call for Czech national independence because of their connections to Czech artists. One such advocate was sculptor Auguste Rodin. He exhibited in Prague in 1902 and taught Czech students in Paris after his return, but during World War I Rodin advocated for the creation of a Czechoslovak state.⁵³ In 1916 Rodin added his signature to a letter written to Aristide Briand, French Minister of Foreign Affairs, requesting that France support the creation of a Czechoslovak state after the war.⁵⁴ A variety of French politicians and artists collaborated on this confident yet provocative letter, including novelist Lucien Descaves, playwright Eugène Brieux, composer Claude Debussy, and painter Léon Bonnat. The letter referred to the Czechs as “an enslaved nationality” who,

⁵² L. Mathieu, “Faits et Informations: Trois soirées d’art tchèque,” *La Nation Tchèque* 2, no. 22 (July 1917): 352, “Elles ont pour but de faire connaître au public français en quelle mesure les Tchèques ont participé, par les œuvres de leurs principaux compositeurs et poètes, au progrès de l’art moderne.”

⁵³ Cathleen M. Giustino, “Rodin in Prague: Modern Art, Cultural Diplomacy, and National Display,” *Slavic Review* 69, no. 3 (2010): 591-619.

⁵⁴ Comité Directeur de la Ligue Franco-Tchèque, “Avant-propos,” in *Les Pays Tchèques Bohême, Moravie, Silésie, Slovaquie: Leur passé, leur présent, leur avenir*, 12.

when operating under a free system, turned to France as their loyal friend.⁵⁵ Rodin remained an ardent Czechophile during his life and, after his death in 1917, *La Nation Tchèque* described him as “a protector of Czech art and an admirer of the popular art of Czechoslovakia”—one year before Czechoslovakia existed as an independent state.⁵⁶

Rodin’s interest in Bohemia and its artists inspired his protégé, symbolist sculptor Emile Bourdelle, to visit Prague in 1909. Bourdelle befriended many Czech artists during his time in Bohemia. Art historian Vaclav Štech travelled to Paris with the purpose of reconnecting with Bourdelle, and Cubist sculptor Otto Gutfreund followed Bourdelle to Paris to study under him in his atelier and at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière.⁵⁷ In 1918, Bourdelle designed and sponsored the Revolutionary Czechoslovak Medal to be awarded to all those who fought for an autonomous Czechoslovak state. During the war, Edvard Beneš worked to create a vibrant dialogue between the future Czechoslovakia and France and used art to do so. Beneš connected not only to Czech artists in Paris but also to supportive French artists such as Bourdelle. Beneš responded to Bourdelle’s designs for the Revolutionary Czechoslovak Medal with sincere gratitude and praise for France:

How can we thank you for the new proof of friendship you give to our nation? You may be assured that the Czechoslovak people, so fervent in your art, will be glad to possess in this medal a tangible pledge of the attachment that you show to it. In recognition, Czechoslovakia will associate it with the memory of the great artist that you are, to all of France, noble and generous, of which we see in you a pure emanation...⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Comité Directeur de la Ligue Franco-Tchèque, “Avant-propos,” 13.

⁵⁶ “Échos et Nouvelles : Auguste Rodin et la Bohême,” *La Nation Tchèque* 3, no. 15 (Jan. 1918): 541.

⁵⁷ Karolína Fabelová, “Bourdelle à Prague en 1909 et son rapport aux artistes tchèques et à August Rodin,” *Umeni* LVII (2009): 375.

⁵⁸ Edvard Beneš, “Edvard Beneš to Emile Antoine Bourdelle,” 27 November 1919, letter from the archives of the Bourdelle Museum in *Ibid.*, 384, “Comment vous remercier de la nouvelle preuve d’amitié que vous donnez à notre nation? Vous pouvez être assuré que le peuple tchécoslovaque, si fervent de votre art, sera heureux de posséder dans cette médaille un gage tangible de l’attachement que vous lui portez. Dans sa reconnaissance, il

Bourdelle created this medal after visiting Prague and meeting Bohemia's most promising artists, some of whom he continued to teach back in Paris. Bourdelle believed in the new Czechoslovak state and chose to honor those who actively fought to create it, using his art to do so. Beneš' response praised Bourdelle's fine sculptures but, more importantly, stated that Bourdelle manifested the noble and generous traits of the French nation. Beneš claimed that this modern sculptor represented France and its values, and by bestowing honor on Czechoslovak soldiers, showed the Czech national project of being worthy of praise by this noble Western power.

'Discovery' through Modernism

The artistic, political, and historical merged at the turn of the century. French gatekeepers and cultural elites who considered themselves friends of the Czech cause valued Czech art for its French character. Apollinaire, Rodin, and Bourdelle acknowledged Czech artists, but they did so in different ways. Apollinaire attempted to bring Czech art into the Western European fold by promoting it as a student of its French counterpart. Rodin integrated the Czechs into the Parisian art community and advocated to the French government for eventual Czech statehood. Bourdelle taught Czech students and created a medal for the Czech and Slovak soldiers who gave their lives for France. The majority of Frenchmen neither knew nor cared about the Czech national cause before World War I. Yet, French gatekeepers of the Parisian art scene recognized Czech modernism, even if they did so because it embodied French style and values.

associera au souvenir du grand artiste que vous êtes, toute la France noble et généreuse dont il voit en vous une pure émanation.”

Before and during World War I, Czech modernism was riddled with contradictions. As architect Pavel Janák wrote in 1913, “Foreign countries find this Czech art ‘peculiar,’ ‘Slavic,’ while at home it continues to be dispelled from the nation and called non-Czech. Even so, this is a manifestation of the growing power of intrinsic national energy.”⁵⁹ Modernist art drew meaning from this pivotal, violent point in history because it rejected the past. French gatekeepers considered Czech modernism aesthetically advanced because the French influence had drawn it away from the backward art of the Germans. These Frenchmen ‘discovered’ Czech culture and civilization through their encounters with Czech modernism in Paris. And yet attempts to describe the national character of Czech modernism remained, for the French gatekeepers, rather ambiguous. A more rooted understanding of the Czechs and their nation required a deeper sense of Czech history.

⁵⁹ This Pavel Janák quote comes from wall text of the Cubist House in Prague.

CHAPTER 2: THE POLITICS OF CZECH HISTORICAL IMAGERY



Figure 5: Anonymous, *The Bohemian Cross*, 1905. Crécy-en-Ponthieu Communal Cemetery, France.

On October 1, 1905, the office of *Ami des monuments et des arts* (Friends of Monuments and the Arts) held a ceremony for the unveiling of a Bohemian Cross in the Crécy-en-Ponthieu Communal Cemetery (Figure 5).⁶⁰ This politically charged ceremony honored John of Luxembourg, King of Bohemia and Count of Luxembourg, who led French

⁶⁰ It is interesting to note that this monument was constructed in 1905, the same year Dreyfus was pardoned. For the relationship between intellectuals, politics, and the Dreyfus affair in France, see Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les Intellectuels en France, de l'Affaire Dreyfus à nous jours* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1986).

troops against the English during the One Hundred Years War.⁶¹ John of Luxembourg died in the 1346 Battle of Crécy and was honored over five hundred years later with a monument in Crécy. This ceremony did not celebrate the King of Bohemia himself but used this monarch as a symbol to demonstrate the long and amiable relationship between Bohemia and France. The Bohemian Cross brought together Czech and French history in the French landscape. It acted as a tangible evocation of the intangible ideas of the nation, a visual symbol of a historic occasion that French and Czech patrons alike used for political means. Two years later, Charles Normand, the director of *Ami des monuments et des arts*, returned to the unveiling of the Bohemian Cross and published a pamphlet titled *Czech Monuments and Memory in Paris*.⁶²

Normand's pamphlet lists the important political and artistic persons from France, Luxemburg, and Bohemia who attended the ceremony, and thus played a part in forging a memory of Franco-Czech relations. French historians and military personnel celebrated the unveiling of the monument alongside French and Czech politicians, notable locals, and representatives of the arts. Interestingly enough, Czech painter Rodolphe Vácha is listed not under the constituency of Bohemia but as the only Czech under the section "Invited from Paris."⁶³ Mayor of Prague Vladimír Srb gave a toast after the unveiling "to these two peoples who are destined to like each other in the future as in the past," a sentiment that would

⁶¹ John of Luxembourg charged into battle with these final words: "Far from it that the King of Bohemia flee, but to get there lead me where there is greatest uproar of the fight in vigor; the Lord is with us..." He neglected his royal duties in Prague and chose instead to spend most of his life in Paris; Benessius of Weitmil, *Chronicles of Prague*, 370, <http://www.clavmon.cz/clavis/FRRB/chronica/CRONICA%20ECCLESIAE%20PRAGENSIS.htm>.

⁶² The relationship between the Middle Ages, nationalism, religion, and contemporary politics also permeated French historical memory. In 1911, Poincaré made Jeanne d'Arc Day as national French holiday.

⁶³ Charles Normand, *Les Monuments et Souvenirs Tchèques en France* (Paris: Bureau de l'Ami des Monument et des Arts, 1907), 11.

become further solidified a decade later during World War I.⁶⁴ French historian Louis Léger wrote about the ceremony in his 1911 book *La Renaissance Tchèque*, in which he describes the ceremony not as an official bringing together of two peoples but as a family reunion.⁶⁵

The following pages will explore the French cultural advocates' perception and use of historic Czech imagery in Paris directly before and during World War I. This chapter mimics the previous chapter in terms of scope, focusing on the turn of the century through 1917. French historians, art critics, and notable politicians became advocates for the Czech nation in Paris. They engaged in a search for what historian Ludmilla Jordanova describes as a "useable past," and discovered the Czech nation through Bohemia's rich history and longstanding relationship with France.⁶⁶ The French cultural advocates took up a Czech tradition of looking to the past to trace national awakening.⁶⁷ They interacted with Czech politicians and historians in Paris who were also evaluating Czech history through the lens of the political climate leading to World War I. These French and Czech cultural advocates linked the past with the contemporary politics and Czech history with French history in order to demonstrate Bohemia's historic connection with Western Europe, and thus legitimize the Czech national project.

While French modernists struggled to find value in Czech art beyond it being a reflection of French art, cultural advocates found meaning in the past and employed historic art and memory to promote a national cause (or national *causes*). Czech visual art did not

⁶⁴ Normand, *Les Monuments et Souvenirs Tchèques*, 18, "à ces deux peuples qui sont destinés à s'aimer dans l'avenir comme dans le passé."

⁶⁵ Louis Léger, *La Renaissance Tchèque au dix-neuvième siècle* (Paris: Maisons Félix Alcan et Guillaumin Réunies, 1911), 248.

⁶⁶ Ludmilla J. Jordanova, *History in Practice* (London: Arnold, 2000), 147.

⁶⁷ Cynthia Paces, *Prague Panoramas: National Memory and Sacred Space in the Twentieth Century* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).

remain confined to the elite Parisian art world but permeated political and historical ceremonies, professional relationships, and historical publications. These French cultural advocates did not typically engage modern art on its own terms, but instead employed art with historic and traditional themes to imagine Czech modern national identity.

Nationalism permeated the outlook of the French cultural advocates, most of who fell on the right-wing side of the political spectrum. These cultural advocates worked to defend the established order, and they manipulated history for this aim. Anti-Semitism, the church, and anti-German rhetoric became defining factors of right-wing nationalism.⁶⁸ The 1905-1914 nationalist revival prompted right-wing politicians to protect historic monuments and the French Ministry of Fine Arts to call for a Renaissance of the decorative arts.⁶⁹ Art critic Camille Mauclair was at the forefront of this movement and, as an active member of the Ligue de la Patrie Française, was regarded as a militant nationalist.⁷⁰ Mauclair envisioned an intertwined Franco-Czech history based in France's moral authority and was among the first Frenchmen to begin to value Czech art on its own terms.

Camille Mauclair

Camille Mauclair worked as a poet, art critic, and novelist who traveled in the same art circles as Apollinaire, although Mauclair was drastically more conservative and publically criticized the avant-garde. He held a committee position for the Salon des Indépendants and befriended many artists in Paris, French and foreign alike. As the art critic for the famed periodical *Mercur de France*, Mauclair published his views of art in Paris in numerous

⁶⁸ Weber, *The National Revival in France*, 11.

⁶⁹ Phillip Nord, "Social defence and conservative regeneration," 216.

⁷⁰ Reznikow, *Francophilie et identité tchèque*, 311.

newspapers, novels, and edited volumes. After visiting Prague in 1907, Mauclair became a dedicated Czechophile and an active proponent of Czech art and culture in France both before and during World War I.

Mauclair first wrote on Czech art in 1911 in the preface for a book on Bohemian, Moravian, and Silesian clothing and embroidery. Published in Paris and Prague, *Le Paysan Tchèque: Bohême, Moravie, Silésie: Costumes et Broderies* focuses on the historic art of Bohemia and its relation to politics. In the preface, Mauclair implores his French readers to learn about the fine arts and decorative crafts of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia and then introduces a number of familiar themes.⁷¹ He associates Czech artistic output with the French tradition and the political injustices of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Bohemian embroidery, he claims, had been a weapon in the cultural battle against German hegemony. Mauclair argues that traditional Czech art and craft, the richness of Czech history, and the civilization of the Czechs were, in some way, indebted to French culture.

But what differentiated Mauclair from art critics like Apollinaire was his deep appreciation for and knowledge of traditional Czech artistry and history. He describes Prague as “a city of admirable art. One can find elite painters there and sculptors of whom Josef Mánes was the ancestor and some can compete with their most illustrious colleagues in Europe.”⁷² He praises Czech artists in Prague in addition to the valiant Czech effort in furthering their own political aims: “It is not a question only of art: there is a noble human

⁷¹ Camille Mauclair, “Préface,” in *Le Paysan Tchèque: Bohême, Moravie, Silésie: Costumes et Broderies*, eds. Renáta Tyršová and Henri Hantich (Paris: Librairie Nilsson and Prague: Librairie F. Topič, 1911), iv.

⁷² *Ibid.*, ii; “C’est [Prague] une ville d’art admirable. On y trouve une élite de peintres et de sculpteurs dont Josef Manès a été l’ancêtre et dont quelques-uns peuvent rivaliser avec leurs plus illustres confrères d’Europe.”

lesson in perseverance, persuasive evidence of high moral merit of small nationalities.”⁷³ T. G. Masaryk gave a lecture on a similar topic at King’s College, University College of London just one year earlier titled, *The Problem of Small Nations in the European Crisis*. Both Maclair and Masaryk were thinking about the relationship between Bohemia and Europe before World War I.

Maclair’s preface in *Le Paysan Tchèque* imagines a strong historical bond between the French and Czech people, the latter of whom he refers to as the “Slavs of Western Europe.”⁷⁴ He refers to the Czechs as Western Slavs, thus distinguishing them from ‘eastern’ Slaves such as the Russians.⁷⁵ Instead, Maclair emphasizes the Czechs’ occidental status to underline their shared heritage with France and distaste for Germans. He believed the intellectual and artistic exchange between Paris and Prague already existed but that the Czechs could “find support in the West of Latin genius,” by which he meant, of course, France.⁷⁶ Maclair writes highly of Czech artists working in Paris as well as Bohemian museums, particularly the ethnography museum, which represents “an exceptional civilization.”⁷⁷ Czech craft and fine art of the past and present physically manifested this Western ‘delicate beauty’ that the eastern Magyars or Russians could one day destroy.

⁷³ Camille Maclair, “Préface,” ii-iii, “Il ne s’agit point seulement d’art: il y a là une noble leçon de persévérance humaine, une preuve convaincante du haute mérite moral des petites nationalités.”

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, ii.

⁷⁵ Maclair advocates for a Czechoslovakia that included the Slovaks in addition to the Czechs. It is important to note that the Slovaks’ main rivals were the Hungarians; The categorizations of “Eastern” and “Western” Europe have been long debated by various scholars. For two different yet equally compelling arguments, see Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, *Under Eastern Eyes: A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008) and Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*.

⁷⁶ Maclair, “Préface,” in *Le Paysan Tchèque*, ii, “bien qu’il trouve un point d’appui à l’extrême occident dans le génie latin.”

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, iii.

Mauclair's interest in Czech art and history would only grow in the coming years, culminating in a chapter to an edited volume published in 1917. The Franco-Czech association published this text, *Les Pays Tchèques: Bohême, Moravie, Silésie, Slovaquie: Leur passé, leur présent, leur avenir*, to provide evidence to the French public that the Czechs deserved an autonomous state at the end of the war.⁷⁸ The book covers a plethora of topics including the historic role of Bohemia and the state of the Czech economy during the war. Each chapter represents a different discipline (geography, language, education, etc.) and is written by a different prominent French figure. The editors included a chapter on the visual arts, written by Mauclair, as evidence in this justification. Mauclair dedicated his chapter not only to the "glory of the Czechoslovak people," as stated in the official book dedication, but also implicitly to the glory of the French nation, although his conception of the French nation is a narrow one, bound in anti-Semitism and right-wing politics.⁷⁹ He argues that Czech culture made itself worthy of recognition and political autonomy through its strong artistic production and rich history.

In his chapter, Mauclair endows Czech art with its own history, noting the flourishing of artistic production in the Baroque period (even though this was a product of the Habsburg counter-reformation) and an ensuing silence that followed when the Austrians tightened their control on Prague. A renewal of national claims awoke in the nineteenth century, which propelled a revived desire for the production of Czech art.⁸⁰ Mauclair's history provides a context for Czech artists living, working, and exhibiting in Paris directly before

⁷⁸ Comite Directeur de la Ligue Franco-Tchèque, "Avant-propos," in *Les Pays Tchèques*, ii, 11, "Nous avons essayé de rassembler ici tout l'essentiel de ce qui concerne cette noble nation: son glorieux passé... son développement intellectuel, artistique, économique, ses aspirations actuelles vers l'Indépendance, et l'héroïque collaboration de ses vaillants fils à la guerre mondiale."

⁷⁹ Ligue Franco-Tchèque, "Opening Notes," in *Les Pays Tchèques*, ii.

⁸⁰ Camille Mauclair, "Les Arts Tchèques," in *Les Pays Tchèques*, 102.

and during World War I. Mauclair mentions many nationalist nineteenth-century Czech artists and even provides a list of exceptional contemporary artists. František Kupka, François Simon, Louis Striml, L. Beneš, and Jaroslav Spillar's names appear on Mauclair's list of Czech artists living in Paris.⁸¹ Mauclair cited the excellent artistic production, both historic and modern, of Czech artists, such as these listed, as evidence of a distinctly Czech national character.

Both Mauclair's 1911 preface and 1917 chapter politicize Czech history and art in a way that praises French values and dramatizes the Czech battle against German oppression. Mauclair believes French artists to be crucial, historic actors to the success of Czech art and describes them as "missionaries of the French liberal spirit."⁸² With this Western European inspiration, Czechs artists proved the Bohemian Lands worthy of an autonomous nation-state through their contributions to the visual arts. Mauclair concludes his 1917 chapter on Czech art focusing on art's role after the impending fall of the dual-monarchy: "I will simply say that Czech art is ready to provide its royal gift to the new, free Bohemia, that immanent justice and the fulfillment of destinies will certainly be born tomorrow from the immense cataclysm, on the corpse of the fallen Austrian eagle."⁸³

⁸¹ Ludvík Striml had welcomed Mauclair during his visit to Prague. Striml was not only a modern artist but also a member of the Czech colony of Paris who eventually became a diplomat and Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs; Mauclair, "Les Arts Tchèques," in *Les Pays Tchèques*, 103-105.

⁸² Mauclair, "Préface," in *Le Paysan Tchèque*, ii.

⁸³ Mauclair, "Les Arts Tchèques," in *Les Pays Tchèques*, 112, "Je dirai simplement que l'art tchèque est tout prêt à fournir son royal cadeau à la nouvelle Bohême libre que la justice immanente et l'accomplissement des destins feront certainement naître demain de l'immense cataclysme, sur le cadavre de l'aigle autrichienne..."

Mauclair knew many members of the Czech colony in Paris and referenced both Czech historians and artists in his writings. The colony burgeoned in the latter half of the nineteenth century and continued to thrive through the interwar period. These Czechs living in Paris had a stable émigré community, but there also was a large group of Czechs who moved between Paris and Prague. Historians disagree on *who* made up the Czech colony of France during World War I and *how* these citizens propelled their national project forward. Stéphane Reznikow argues against “the image so often perpetuated of a colony of artists and students, a colony of Mucha and Jelínek,” while Andrea Orzoff aims to dispel the myth that it was just “a few inconsequential professors successfully petitioning the Great Powers, amassing an army, and persuading the world’s leaders to guarantee the existence of a new state.”⁸⁴ Both historians are correct in their claims. The Czech colony in Paris during World War I was comprised neither merely of artists or professors. It included a wide diversity of Czechs. However, many of the influential political actors trained as professors and artists, historians and art critics. These members of the Czech colony in Paris altered the French perception of their homeland and the history of their nation.

As discussed in chapter one, Beneš deployed art as cultural diplomacy to promote the Czech national cause in Paris. His partner, T. G. Masaryk, led the wartime émigré nationalist movement and eventually became the first president of Czechoslovakia in 1918. During the war, Masaryk advocated for the creation of a Czechoslovak nation-state while engaging in unofficial cultural diplomacy by using his personal connections and knowledge of history. Based in exile in London, Masaryk often held dinners for Western leaders and

⁸⁴ Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 23; Reznikow, *Francophilie et identité tchèque*, 480.

journalists where he told stories of the Czech's historic dedication to democracy.⁸⁵ He also worked with other East-Central European aspiring nations to win the approval of United States. He spoke, for example, following a performance by famed Polish pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski in 1918.⁸⁶ This concert in Carnegie Hall campaigned for an autonomous and democratic Poland, which would be situated next to an independent Czechoslovakia.

Masaryk trained as an academic and lectured on a variety of historic topics as well as poetry and philosophy.⁸⁷ While traveling in Paris and London, he focused many of his lectures on Jan Hus. To Masaryk, the early stages of the Protestant Reformation, as demonstrated in the late fourteenth century Hussite movement, paralleled the national stirrings of Bohemia during World War I.⁸⁸ Father of the Czech Nation, František Palacký, had written on Jan Hus to the same ends in the early nineteenth century during the Czech national revival. He was a politician and historian in Bohemia who saw Jan Hus's early Protestant teachings and Jan Žižka's participation in the Hussite Wars as a sign of early nationalist fervor that surfaced one again in the nineteenth century. To both Masaryk and Palacký, Jan Hus represented the ultimate Czech dissident. He preached what he believed even though it eventually led to being burned at the stake. Such Protestant values, they argued, persisted in Bohemia and informed the contemporary democratic spirit of the Czech nation.

⁸⁵ Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 5.

⁸⁶ Paderewski was appointed Prime Minister of Poland in 1919; Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 6.

⁸⁷ Masaryk became a lecturer of philosophy at the University of Vienna in 1879, taught as a professor in philosophy in the Czech section of Charles University in Prague in 1882, assisted in founding University College London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies in 1915, and taught as a professor at King's College in London during World War I.

⁸⁸ Paces, *Prague Panoramas*, 23.

Masaryk was not alone in combining history and modern politics to serve the Czech nation. French historians worked towards this aim as well, such as Chair of Modern History at the Sorbonne, professor Ernest Denis. Denis was an early scholar of the Bohemian Lands in Paris. He befriended Beneš, Masaryk, and Kupka and worked alongside these Czech activists to promote the Czech national cause.⁸⁹ Denis helped found *La Nation Tchèque* and under his editorship, the political journal published many articles on visual art, music, and literature for a French audience. In the first issue of *La Nation Tchèque* published in May 1, 1915, Denis recounted the story of the brave John of Luxembourg who sacrificed his life for France. He believed a Czech nation would be “an natural intermediary between Western Europe and the Orthodox Slavs.”⁹⁰ Denis continued to work for the journal through June 1917, when he passed this duty on to Beneš. He died shortly after the war ended but is remembered in Prague and Paris for his tireless efforts in supporting the Czech nation.

Long before Denis founded *La Nation Tchèque*, Louis Léger initiated the modern, accepted study of Slavic history in late nineteenth century France and paved the way for other French historians to study Slavic history. Léger began writing on Slavic history after studying history at Collège de France. He traveled through Bohemia in 1864 on his way to Poland to learn more about the January Uprising that occurred the previous year.⁹¹ On this trip, Léger decided to devote his scholarship to Slavic history, which no Parisian before him had

⁸⁹ After he studied in Paris, Denis went to Charles University in Prague and met František Palacký. He not only worked to promote the Czech national cause but also independence for all Slavic peoples from Austria-Hungary.

⁹⁰ Ernest Denis, “Notre Programme,” 1, “Elle sera l’intermédiaire naturel entre l’Europe occidentale et les Slaves orthodoxes.”

⁹¹ See Stefan Kieniewicz, “Polish Society and the Insurrection of 1863,” *Past & Present* 37 (July 1967): 130-148.

ventured to write exclusively on except Cyprien Robert.⁹² Only at the turn of the century, however, did Léger's work receive widespread recognition. The French government even refused to use his translation skills with foreign dignitaries from East-Central Europe because they believed Léger to be a Russian agent.⁹³

Léger published one of his first works in 1867, *Bohême historique, pittoresque, et littéraire*, to connect the culture of Bohemia to France, demonstrating the relevance of Czech culture to students and scholars in Paris. He co-authored this book with Czech radical politician Josef Václav Frič and largely focused on describing Czech poetry, literature, song, and artistic treasures.⁹⁴ In 1907, Charles Normand dedicated his pamphlet on the unveiling of the Bohemian Cross to Léger because he was “an ardent and indefatigable propagator of regenerative work of the Franco-Czech union.”⁹⁵ Léger continued this work as Chair of Slavic Languages and Literature at the Collège de France, a position created a century earlier for Adam Mickiewicz, and acted in the political sphere by advocating for Czechoslovak independence during World War I. As a cultural historian, Léger anticipated the importance of Bohemia's rich artistic past to the world politics of his day.

Léger drew from the tradition begun by Palacký and focused his academic work on Jan Hus and the wars that followed Hus' denouncement of the Catholic Church. In 1886, Léger published the second series of his book *Nouvelles Études Slaves*, in which he wrote a

⁹² Cyprien Robert only began publishing works a few years before Léger and never wrote specifically on Bohemia. Robert began as an art theorist with his first published essay dedicated to the philosophy of art in 1836. Interestingly enough, the first modern historian in France dedicated to Slavic scholarship was also interested in art as “one of the most important branches of civilization.” Cyprien Robert, *Essai d'une philosophie de l'art* (Paris: Debécourt Library, 1836), v.

⁹³ R. W. Seaton-Watson, “Louis Leger,” *The Slavonic Review* 2.5 (Dec 1923), 424.

⁹⁴ Louis Léger, *Bohême historique, pittoresque, et littéraire* (Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1867), 176.

⁹⁵ Normand, *Les Monuments et Souvenirs Tchèques*, 8, “l'ardent et infatigable propagateur de l'œuvre bienfaisante d'union Franco-Tchèque.”

chapter on Jan Žižka.⁹⁶ In the nineteenth century, Jan Žižka was considered a Protestant follower of Jan Hus and cunning warrior who fought for Bohemia.⁹⁷ He never lost a battle and utilized unorthodox combat tactics in addition to strong discipline to conquer the armies of the Holy Roman Empire and Hungary in 1421. Žižka entered into the mythology of Czech history during the following centuries and remained a powerful symbol in Czech iconography during World War I because of his historic relation to the Czech national cause. *Nouvelles Études Slaves* informed its French audience of this great Czech warrior who terrified Central European powers and “was not just a fierce warrior, but he was a convinced Christian and fervent patriot.”⁹⁸ One can imagine why the French historian highlighted Žižka’s characteristics of Christianity and patriotism that exude Western values and traditions in contrast to stereotypical eastern values of paganism and barbarism. Léger wrote about this respected figure from Czech military history to praise the history of the Czechs and their early Protestantism, while making this history relevant to the present day struggle among Czechs against the government of Austria-Hungary, a quintessentially Central European power.

Léger, Denis, and Masaryk mobilized Czech history to advocate for the Czech nation during World War I and were joined in these efforts, surprisingly perhaps, by František Kupka. Kupka remained in Paris during the war and became a prominent member of the

⁹⁶ Louis Léger, *Nouvelles Études Slaves, deuxième série* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1886), 139- 182.

⁹⁷ Jan Hus is a crucial figure for Czech national identity and appears not only as a key figure in Alphonse Mucha’s *Slav Epic* but also is prominently commemorated in a statue in the center of Prague’s Old Town Square. For more information see Phillip N. Haberker, *Patron Saint and Prophet: Jan Hus in the Bohemian and German Reformations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁹⁸ Léger, *Nouvelles Études Slaves*, 161, “Jan Žižka, n’était pas seulement un farouche homme de guerre, c’était un chrétien convaincu et un patriote fervent.”

Czech colony in Paris.⁹⁹ In early October 1915, the three Czech organizations operating in Paris during the years before the First World War unanimously voted to reorganize their foreign colony into a single French branch of the National Czech Alliance. They elected Kupka as their president, pointing to his patriotism and renowned competence.¹⁰⁰ According to *La Nation Tchèque*, the purpose of this convergence and new presidency was to represent all Czech residents in France and unite them with Czech colonies overseas through a consistent message of Czech political interests.¹⁰¹

Kupka lived in Paris yet remained tied to his Czech heritage, and thus was a natural choice for a leader to promote his homeland through visual means. He had served as a soldier in the French army fighting as a Czech Legionnaire soon after the war had begun. The abstract artist now turned to his immediate experiences for inspiration. He drew cartoons and sketches of the battlefields, which he later donated to the Memorial of Resistance in Prague. Kupka thus combined his connections in the Parisian social scene with his artistic talent to promote the Czech national cause both politically and artistically using history as a source of powerful imagery.

Kupka, taking up the tradition Léger began through his writing twenty years earlier, referenced Hussite warrior Jan Žižka in his art to make a political statement in France about the future of Bohemia during the First World War. Kupka designed bannerettes for the Czechoslovak legions fighting for France (Figure 6). The central banner reads ‘First 1,000 of Jan Žižka’ with a monument-like pedestal separating the two phrases. The phrase “first

⁹⁹ Meda Mládková, “Introduction,” *Volontaires Tchèques de France: František Kupka a Otto Gutfreund*, ed. Meda Mládková, trans. Sandra Průša (Prague: Kampa Museum, 2006), 3.

¹⁰⁰ The Committee of the Colony of Czech Volunteers, The National Council of Czecho-Slovak Colonies, and the Franco-Czech Alliance existed as independent Czech organizations in Paris previous to the National Czech Alliance. See L. Mathieu, “Amitiés Tchèques,” *La Nation Tchèque* 1, no. 1 (May 1915): 15.

¹⁰¹ L. Mathieu, “Les Colonies Tchèques: En France,” *La Nation Tchèque* 1, no. 12 (Oct. 1915): 196.



Figure 6: František Kupka, *Designs for bannerettes for the Czechoslovak legions in France*, 1916-1918. Gouache and watercolor, 26.5 cm x 34.5 cm. Military History Institute in Prague.

1000” refers to the first one thousand Czech soldiers who volunteered to fight for the Allies and therefore the Czech national cause. Kupka placed his reference to these brave men who fought for an independent state on a pedestal supported by the name Jan Žižka. By employing Žižka’s memory on Czech propaganda banners in France, Kupka used Czech history to imply that the Czechoslovak army in France would certainly prevail over Austria-Hungary.

“Because of their Civilization and History”

At the end of the war, Masaryk commissioned artist Bohumil Kafka (a friend of Camille Mauclair) to create a large equestrian statue of Jan Žižka to overlook the city of Prague (Figure 7). This monument installed on Vitkov Hill on the tenth anniversary of



Figure 7: Bohumil Kafka, *Equestrian Statue of Jan Žižka*, 1928. Prague, National Monument in Vitkov.

Czechoslovak independence proclaims Czech statehood and history throughout the city and is well known in Prague today. Less known, however, are the ways in which Žižka's reputation as a Protestant warrior was deployed in France during World War I. Masaryk, Léger, Denis and Kupka drew upon the Hussites as they narrated Czech history, worked to define the Czech nation, and eventually lobbied for its independence. Czech historical imagery and politics became intertwined in France and the developing Czechoslovak state during the war. At a festival of national Czech music in 1917 Etienne Fournol made the following remarks: "But we must also give part of our hearts to the Czechs who deserve it because of their civilization and history, because of their political spirit and because they are

the greatest anti-German force in the heart of Europe.”¹⁰² Fournol does not just define the Czechs by their own qualities but, primarily, in opposition to Germany.

History is crucial to understanding the ways in which French and Czech historians, politicians, and art critics employed traditional visual imagery to advocate for the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918. The Czech and French dialogues in the struggle for nationhood did not occur in isolation but were deeply intertwined with one another in Paris. Before the war Czech artist Miloš Jiránek wrote about how foreigners understood art from Bohemia: “This is an interesting lesson: it is clear that our art can make an impact and attract interest abroad only when it is distinctively Czech. This means that if we want to conquer foreign parts, we must send out not simply art but ‘Czech’ art.”¹⁰³ French gatekeepers discovered the ‘Frenchness’ of the Czechs through their modern art, but such art did not become ‘Czech’ until it combined with Czech history. Cultural advocates in Paris wrote about Czech history that pointed to Protestantism, French liberal values, and Western civilization. These previously siloed discussions of modernism and history came together at the end of the war, and created the context for understanding Czech art as ‘Czech’ in Paris during the interwar period.

¹⁰² Etienne Fournol, “Une Allocution,” *La Nation Tchèque* 2, no. 24 (April 1917): 376, “Mais il faut aussi donner une part de notre cœur aux Tchèques qui le méritent par leur civilisation et leur histoire, par leur esprit politique et parce qu’ils sont au centre de l’Europe la plus grande force antigermainique.”

¹⁰³ Miloš Jiránek, “The Czechness of our art.” *Radikální listy* 7, no. 4 (Jan. 1900), in *Between Worlds*, 56.

CHAPTER 3: CZECH ART AS 'CZECH'

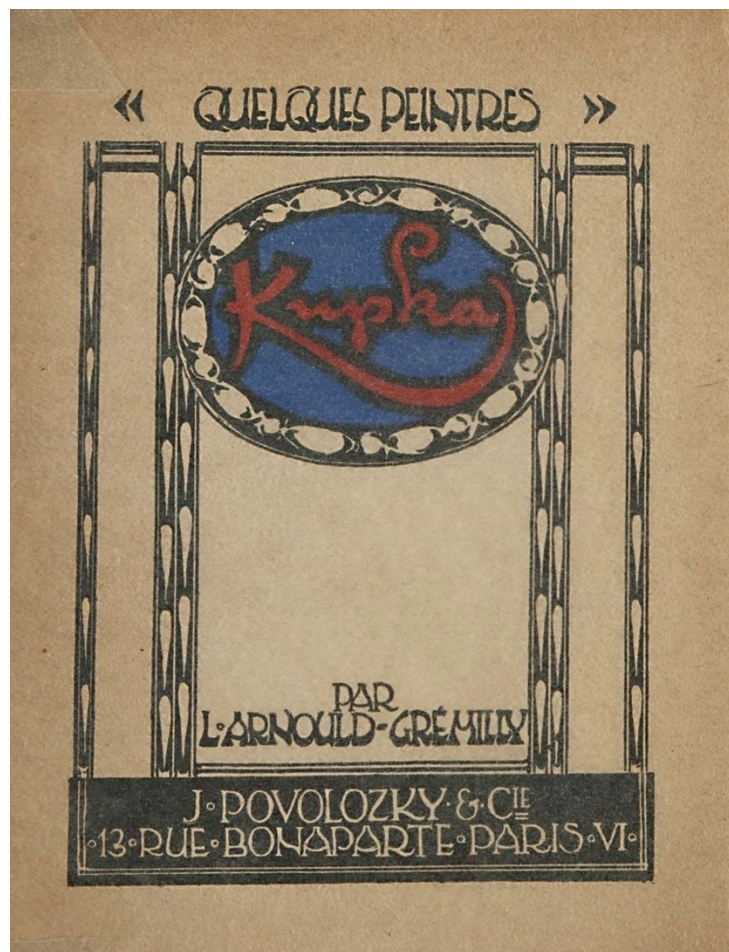


Figure 8: Cover of Povolozky catalog: Louis Arnould Grémilly.
Frank Kupka. Paris: J. Povolozky .and Co., 1922.

In 1921, the Parisian Povolozky Gallery at 17 rue des Beaux-Arts presented Kupka's first solo exhibition in France. This exhibit displayed his works completed since 1920, specifically highlighting his black and white print series. Jacques Povolozky owned the gallery and a publishing house situated directly next door that was dedicated to translating French works into Russian and Russian works into French, with the hope of overcoming German

influence in Eastern Europe.¹⁰⁴ He also sought to promote multicultural encounters in Paris and thus did not limit his gallery and publishing house just to the exchange of French and Russian culture; he also held exhibitions of popular French modern artists such as Francis Picabia and Albert Gleizes. Kupka's 1921 exhibition, however, is remembered as the gallery's most prestigious show. Various journals and newspapers promoted the exhibition, such as *La Gazette de Beaux-Arts* and the Communist newspaper *L'Humanité*. Due to the exhibition's success, Povolozky publishing house produced a luxurious text, essentially Kupka's first catalog in Paris, in 1922 (Figure 8).

French poet Louis Arnould Grémilly, friend of Kupka, wrote the extensive text that accompanied the twenty etchings and three color reproductions in the catalog.¹⁰⁵ Prior to the war, Kupka's Orphist paintings had been categorized as 'French' despite his intent to avoid any overt national connotations in his art before World War I. But Grémilly changed Kupka's own explanation and the pre-war narrative by titling a section of the catalog "L'Orphisme et les Slaves." Grémilly conflated Orphism with Kupka's Slavic heritage, which both labeled the artist's work by his ethnicity and aided Povolozky's goal of culturally uniting France and Russia.

After the First World War, French writers, critics, and politicians alike imposed seemingly paradoxical modern and historical, and 'French' and national interpretations onto art created by the generation of Czech artists working before and through the war. Many of these artists lived in Paris and all supported a democratic Czechoslovakia. In his book on the

¹⁰⁴ Imprimerie Union, "Jaques Povolozky," 2013, accessed February 10, 2017, <http://imprimerieunion.org/annees-russes/jacques-povolozky>.

¹⁰⁵ Louis Arnould Grémilly studied music and wrote poetry. These lyrical interests, along with his contributions to the interwar French publication *Paris-Prague* beginning in 1923, may have been why the Povolozky Gallery asked him to write the text for Kupka's first solo exhibition.

generation of artists to which they belonged, Thomas Ort refers to these modernists as “strident critics of reason, emphasizing the subjective and provisional character of all knowledge and the impossibility of its disentanglement from individual beliefs, desires, and values.”¹⁰⁶ These Czech modern artists participated in pan-European artistic movements, but did not throw off their cloak of patriotism, even if they intentionally chose not to express such patriotism in their work. In the prevailing French conception, the new Czechoslovak nation needed to be ‘civilized’ to exist as a European nation. The new state would also need a rich history that justified its longevity and the recent delineation of its borders. Yet, after the war, Czech critics and artists had greater agency in the interpretation of their artwork. French periodicals and fine art journals published Czech critics’ writing in French about the art that they identified with their new nation-state. These select French cultural elites, Czech artists, and politicians fused the modern and historic after 1918 to show that the Bohemian Lands were worthy of nationhood. The French representatives at the Paris Peace Conference worked towards this aim by advocating for the official establishment of Czechoslovakia.

Czechoslovakia came into existence thanks, in large part, to French efforts. The French government recognized the Czechoslovak National Council as the exile government of the future Czechoslovak state in 1916 and urged allied representatives from the United Kingdom and the United States at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 to do the same.¹⁰⁷ Acting on behalf of the Czechoslovak National Council, Edvard Beneš represented the Bohemian Lands at the conference. Nation building was both a domestic and an

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Ort, *Art and Life in Modernist Prague: Karel Čapek and His Generation: 1911-1938* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 3.

¹⁰⁷ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001), 229-242.

international process, but these two spheres employed the same ideas differently. With input from the Czechoslovak National Council, the Entente manufactured Czechoslovakia in a conference room in Paris. This small council presented the concept of an invented, sovereign nation to the world.

A French representative at the conference described the Czechs as “refreshingly Western” and Beneš and Masaryk as “unfailingly cooperative, reasonable, and persuasive as they stressed the Czechs’ deep-seated democratic traditions.”¹⁰⁸ These Western nations wanted Czechoslovakia to provide an alternative Central European culture to that of the Germans. They presumed that the new state would play a major role in determining the political balance between East and West, acting as a buffer between Western Europe and the looming Bolshevism of the newly formed Soviet Union.¹⁰⁹ People of the Czech Lands would not have wished to be used as a political buffer, but they did believe that their culture incorporated aspects of both the East and West. Literary historian Vaclav Černý wrote, “so that we would try and utilize our original way. The East and West, so we could be true to ourselves.”¹¹⁰ As a new nation-state, Czechoslovakia had to combine the East and the West, its historic culture (or *cultures*: Czech, Moravian, Slovakian, Silesian), and a new political entity, a process in which art played a local and international role.¹¹¹ French gatekeepers and cultural advocates were crucial actors for promoting Czech independence.

¹⁰⁸ Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 9.

¹⁰⁹ Milan Pech, “Czechoslovak Art: Between the West and the East,” *Centropa: A Journal of Central European Architecture and Related Arts* 15, no. 3 (2015): 226.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹¹¹ Lidia Głuchowska, “The ‘New World’ of the Avant-Garde and the ‘New States’ in Central Europe: Perspectives of a Postnational and Postcolonial New Art History Postface,” in *Transnationality, Internationalism, and Nationhood*, 192.

Czech art in Paris began to gain recognition on its own terms after the war. Commentary by Czech critics, but written in French, began to permeate French artistic journals and newspapers. Czech writers gradually gained a more authoritative voice in France, as now both the Czechs and the French inhabited democratic nation-states in Europe. French-Czech cultural exchange certainly existed before the war. Many French artists visited and exhibited in Prague as early as 1905, but this was a multi-directional exchange from the beginning. Czech artists like Mucha and Kupka helped develop Art Nouveau and Orphism in Paris, but they did not merely copy French trends. Many Czech artists working in Paris incorporated the history and culture of the Bohemian Lands into their work. After the war, this exchange flourished. Finally, work made by Czech artists could be categorized as 'Czech Art,' rather than 'German Art' or 'Austro-Hungarian Art.' While Czech exhibitions proliferated and monuments arose in Paris, Czech artists and art historians at home dealt with the need to combine historicism and modernism, as the French gatekeepers and cultural advocates in Paris had done after the war.

Kupka after the Great War

In 1912, a group of French art critics interpreted the abstraction of Kupka's *Fugue in Two Colors* as an offense to French national art. During the war, Kupka ceased making art except for his drawings of the Czech legionnaires on French battlefields and political bannerettes for the Czech army, both of which were political in nature. After the war, Kupka continued working on the supposedly a-national fractal abstractions that he began exploring previous to 1918, which Louis Arnoult Grémilly deemed atavistic in the 1922 catalog of Kupka's first solo exhibition. Grémilly begins the Povolozky Gallery catalog by denouncing

both the decadence of pre-war Cubism and anecdotal history painting. He instead labels Kupka an Orphist, a term that defied both categories.¹¹² Crucially, Grémilly moved beyond Apollinaire's definition of Orphism coined at the Section d'Or, and even beyond its origination in the French salon, to define Orphism as Slavic.

“For the artist, the only thing that counts is the process of creation by which the two worlds — the abstract and the real — confront each other,” Kupka wrote in *Creation in the Plastic Arts*, published in 1923.¹¹³ Kupka held many theories about the interconnectedness of life and the synthesis of the abstract and the real, which he had developed by studying a range of subjects from philosophy to biology at the Sorbonne. *Creation in the Plastic Arts* was a culmination of his theories, diverse academic pursuits, and life experiences. The same year, he completed *Cosmic Spring II* (Figure 9), the product of eleven years of planning, research, and political engagement.

In *Cosmic Spring II*, a sphere radiates over the canvas, beginning in the upper left corner and spreading to cover a kaleidoscope of abstract forms that resemble a fractured Pangaea. Kupka frequently played with the spherical form of the eye, more specifically the retina, and its relationship to the brain — how eyes convert the surrounding world to synapses in the brain, which in turn works to understand the surrounding world. The retina covers these pseudo-land forms in *Cosmic Spring II*, and thus the micro-scale perception of the retina combines with the macro-scale morphology of the planet. Kupka believed one's brain interprets the world by combining tradition, education, and what Bourdieu would later

¹¹² Louis Arnould Grémilly, *Frank Kupka* (Paris: J. Povolozy and Co., 1922), 12-28.

¹¹³ *Creation in the Plastic Arts* was Kupka's first book, and Povolozy published the text in French. František Kupka, *La Création dans les arts plastiques*, translated by Erika Abrams (Paris: Editions Cercle d'art, 1989), 221.



Figure 9: František Kupka, *Cosmic Spring II*, 1911-1923. Oil on canvas. Prague, Veletrzní Palác.

refer to as the ‘habitus’ with the subconscious knowledge it possesses before birth.¹¹⁴ Kupka employed the term ‘atavism’ throughout *Creation in the Plastic Arts*, defining it, as art historian Dorothy Kosinski has noted, as the “essential, inherent characteristics of all forms and organisms in the universe, developed from their reacting to their environment and fulfilling the need for survival and growth.”¹¹⁵

In the exhibition catalog, Grémilly associates atavism with Kupka’s artwork, but in a different way to Kupka’s own interpretation. Indeed, Kupka may have been responding to

¹¹⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Cultural Capital,” in John Richardson ed., *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241-258; Vanessa Bruce, “Everything In Its Right Place: František Kupka’s Oeuvre As a Pioneer in Abstract Art,” *Ouragora* (June 1, 2005), 5-7.

¹¹⁵ Dorothy Kosinski, “Kupka’s Reception: Identity and Otherness,” in *Painting the Universe: František Kupka, Pioneer in Abstract Art*, eds. Jaroslav Anděl and Dorothy Kosinski (Ostfilden-Ruit: Gerd Hatje, 1997), 105.

Grémilly's ideas of atavism in *Creation in the Plastic Arts*, which he published one year after the catalog. Grémilly noted an atavistic quality in Kupka's work, but identified this remote ancestor not as a universal instinct to survive and develop but as a sign of his Slavic heritage: "There might be in Kupka's repugnance for easy forms something other than a new joy; no doubt we must look there for an atavism, an ethnic influence, stronger than any education."¹¹⁶ Through Grémilly's misguided interpretation of Kupka's atavism, *Cosmic Spring II* moves from representing a universal reaction to one's environment to exposing a national spirit that extends beyond any scientific research, philosophical ideas, or life experiences.

Grémilly's use of the term 'Slavic' may reflect the Russian owner and ties of the Povolozky Gallery, but other French art critics also began to associate Kupka's international style with his heritage during the interwar period. In 1921, long-time friend of the Czechs Alexandre Mercereau wrote that through his work in the plastic arts, Kupka honored "Czecho-Slovakia, where he was born."¹¹⁷ Less than four years after Czechoslovak independence, this French art critic imposed a national designation onto an international style that pre-dated Czechoslovakia. In 1929 Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg of the European De Stijl movement identified Kupka's Orphic style as "Slavic expressionism," paralleling Grémilly's interpretation.¹¹⁸ All of these critics, however, considered Kupka's Czechoslovakian origin or Slavic nature a positive attribute, a stark contrast to the absence of any positive qualities associated with his national origin before the war. After the creation of

¹¹⁶ Grémilly, *Frank Kupka*, 56, "Il y a peut-être dans la répugnance d'un Kupka pour les formes faciles, autre chose qu'une joie nouvelle, sans doute devons-nous y rechercher un atavisme, une influence ethnique, plus forts que l'éducation reçue."

¹¹⁷ Alexandre Mercereau, *Les Hommes du Jour*, June 1921, in Grémilly, *Frank Kupka*, 78.

¹¹⁸ Theo van Doesburg, *De Groene Amsterdammer*, November 30, 1929, in Kosinski, "Kupka's Reception: Identity and Otherness," 105.

a democratic Czechoslovakia, to have Slavic heritage (or to be from the Czech Lands) and to identify as European were no longer mutually exclusive.

Yet, Grémilly claims that Orphism had been Slavic since its conception by Apollinaire. Apollinaire was of Polish origin, although he was born in Rome and immigrated to France in his teens. Grémilly associates Apollinaire with his Slavic ancestry stating, “Nothing is surprising in this vision in a Slav, like Apollinaire Guillaume of Kostrovizsky, which is his real name.”¹¹⁹ To make Kupka’s Orphism Slavic, Grémilly reconsiders the French origin of the movement and not only draws out the Slavic heritage of Apollinaire but also identifies Slavic traits in the style itself:

He [Apollinaire] was convinced of this ethnic fact that the Slavs hear as much as they see, that in them, hearing effectively collaborates with the conception of plastic work in the same way as vision and touch. Many examples of this can be seen in Russian, Polish, or Serbian paintings. The same is true of the first two paintings by Kupka exhibited in 1912.¹²⁰

The Slavic nature of Orphism manifests not only in Kupka’s art but also in the innate sense of hearing possessed by Slavs from across East-Central Europe.¹²¹ Orphism began not as a national movement but a European one. It epitomized the avant-garde and originated in French exhibitions. But since the creation of the Czechoslovak nation state, critics like Grémilly felt the need to combine this European movement with the heritage of some of its

¹¹⁹ Grémilly, *Frank Kupka*, 38, “Rien d’étonnant en cette vision chez un slave, comme Apollinaire Guillaume de Kostrovizsky de son vrai nom.”

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 38-39, “Il était convaincu de ce fait ethnique que les Slaves entendent autant qu’ils voient, que chez eux l’ouïe coopère effectivement à la conception d’une œuvre plastique au même titre que la vue et le toucher. On a pour s’en rendre compte maint exemple dans la peinture russe, polonaise, ou serbe... De même les deux premières toiles de Kupka exposées en 1912.”

¹²¹ Grémilly mentions ‘Delaunay’ (although he does specify whether he is referring to Sonia or Robert) once in the catalog in regards to Orphism, but he does not connect Sonia Terk-Delaunay’s origin in the Russian Empire (modern day Ukraine) to her Orphism. She too is Slavic, but her heritage seems to be subsumed by her husband’s French heritage. Grémilly only mentions this ‘Slavicness’ in relation to Kupka and Apollinaire.

initial proponents. In the 'Bibliography and Further Details' section at the end of the catalog, Grémilly writes, "If ethnic influence has any importance in determining the character of an artist like Kupka, what further satisfaction will there be in knowing that he was born to such a millennium, to this day?"¹²²

Within Grémilly's text, an othering still occurs both in regard to the Germans and the East. Such othering is inherently present in the nature of a catalog published to unite French and Slavic culture against German influence. Grémilly makes reference to Kupka's enemies by mentioning his studio's address in the Paris suburbs next to the symbolic Rond-Point de la Défense.¹²³ On this hill stands a bronze monument celebrating a rare French victory over the Germans during the Franco-Prussian War. Later, Grémilly claims that the Germans have no taste for the plastic arts but thankfully the Latin Church and Napoleon have saved French culture from their influence.¹²⁴

According to Grémilly, Czechs might have been a sophisticated people in Central Europe and a democratic buffer between Western Europe and the Soviet Union, but they still embodied oriental characteristics that made them separate from yet interesting to the French public. He writes that Kupka's Orphism was inspired just as much by Confucius as it was by the West. The French poet even goes as far as to state that one day, poets will look towards the Orient and "declare without blushing that they find Sinbad the Sailor is just as interesting as Ulysses."¹²⁵ The French are still imagining the East as flexible, not as

¹²² Grémilly, *Frank Kupka*, 68, "Si l'influence ethnique a quelque importance pour déterminer le caractère d'un artiste comme Kupka, quelle nécessaire satisfaction aura-t-on de plus en sachant qu'il est né à tel millésime, à tel jour?"

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹²⁴ Before the war, Mauclair stated the opposite: that the church had saved Czech culture from this German influence. *Ibid.*, 56.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 51, "déclareront sans rougir qu'ils trouvent Sinbad le Marin intéressant qu'Ulysse."

geography but as a category that can be imposed as both a positive and a negative trait.

Though Grémilly makes certain to distance Kupka from Islam by emphasizing that he is not a Muslim but one who “respects the past without narrow idolatry for all that preceded us.”¹²⁶

Kupka appropriately blended history with the present and, although from the East, became worthy of Western European praise.

Kupka desired to embrace his national heritage after the war but returned to Prague in 1919 only to find that the majority of the artistic community there still did not accept his paintings. President Masaryk nonetheless approved his professorship at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague in November 1919, partially because of his leadership during the war.¹²⁷ The academy asked Kupka to remain and teach in Prague, but he wrote a letter to a friend stating,

I am not returning to Prague; not because I wouldn't want to. I wanted to, and I wanted to dedicate myself to the development of Czech art. But they don't want me there... In Prague I have finished with all things patriotic and military. I have enough of the Czech fatherland. Well, I had paid with whatever I could, whilst others—friends—have paid with their lives and their health. The war is over: it's the end of collective lunacy; long live strong individualities.¹²⁸

Kupka convinced the academy to let him teach Czech students in Paris, and the Ministry of Education sent scholarship students to study under his guidance. The academy perceived him as a radical painter and told him to teach only theory, not studio, to his Czech students.

Kupka did so until 1938 and worked to distance himself from Czech culture, claiming he had become “too French” during his decades in Paris.¹²⁹ Kupka wanted to be an individual free

¹²⁶ Grémilly, *Frank Kupka*, 60, “Respectueux des œuvres du passé, sans étroite idolâtrie pour tout ce qui nous a précédé.”

¹²⁷ Anna Pravdová, “František Kupka and His Czech Fine Arts Students in France,” *Centropa: a journal of central European architecture and related arts* 6, no. 2 (May 2006): 115.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 120, “Sometimes I ask myself if I am not already too French for those frightened Czech heads (his students in Paris).”

from national constraints both in his occupation and paintings but was able to escape neither. He supported the Czechoslovak state and fought to create it but could not act or create as an individual free from the implications of being a Czech artist in Paris.

Published, Exhibited, Celebrated

Czech artists had exhibited in the Salon d'Automne and Salon des Indépendents in Paris before the First World War but were not granted individual shows and dedicated exhibitions in Paris prior to 1922. Kupka's show at the Povolozky Gallery in Paris and subsequent catalog in 1922 marked the first of these events and publications in France. The creation of a national Czechoslovak entity led to a greater reciprocal exchange of works of art and visual art publications between France and Czechoslovakia, leading to numerous exhibitions in Paris designed to demonstrate the national and modern nature of Czech art. Czech artists thus became recognized as such.

In 1920, Antoine Matejček and Zdenek Wirth published a book titled *L'Art Tchèque Contemporain* in order to introduce contemporary Czech art to an expanded French public.¹³⁰ They had considered a Czech exhibition in Paris, but it did not come to fruition. The authors wrote that such an exhibition before the war would not have represented *Czech* art, because Austria imposed on them a German national style. But the defeat of Austria made the exhibition and publication of Czech art in Entente nations possible:

¹³⁰ The book was originally published in Czechoslovakia in Czech but was quickly translated to the French one year later to reach its intended audience. The Czech government published many texts such as this in order to spread knowledge of Czech culture abroad. Matejček himself acted as a liaison between Paris and Prague. He worked for the Prague Academy of Fine Art and was a close friend of Kupka's, whom he assisted financially.

Now that we are free, thanks precisely to the peoples of the Entente, nothing prevents us from appearing before the friendly nations in our true light, presenting to our people of good will our art, Czechoslovak art, made with our own resources, inspired by an old tradition and often marked by distinct [distinctly Czech] characteristics.¹³¹

These authors claim an ‘old and marked’ tradition for contemporary Czech art, and only by having an independent nation could they share this art internationally. *L’Art Tchèque Contemporain* mentions Czech participation at the Parisian salons and articles about them published in periodicals like *L’Art et les Artists* and *Mercure de France* before the war, noting how such publications continued and became more prolific afterwards. The outcome of the war changed the way modern Czech art was shown and perceived, as now, according to these Czech critics, a-national modern art could be truly Czech because the Austro-Hungarian Empire no longer shackled Czech culture.

In 1923, a publication titled *Paris-Prague: Revue Hebdomadaire* came out in Paris to celebrate the French and Czechoslovak relationship. Contributors included the usual suspects such as Léger and Maclair (Denis and Apollinaire had died) as well as lesser known Czech and French contributors, including Louis Arnould Grémilly. Maclair contributed an article titled “L’Art et les Artists” in which he discussed the influence of the Renaissance in contemporary French and Czech art. Maurice Raynal wrote an article in *Paris-Prague* called “Le mouvement artistique” on March 20, 1923. Raynal, like Maclair, wrote on contemporary art in France, mentioning the pictorial Dadaism of Max Ernst and the large canvases of

¹³¹ Antoine Matejček and Zdenek Wirth, *L’Art Tchèque Contemporain* (Prague: Jan Štenc, 1920), 1, “Maintenant que nous voilà libres, grâce précisément aux peuples de l’Entente, rien ne nous empêche plus de paraître devant les nations amies sous notre vrai jour, présentant aux gens de bonne volonté notre art à nous, l’art tchécoslovaque, issu de nos propres ressources, inspiré d’une tradition assez ancienne et marqué, souvent, d’un caractère spécial.”

Delaunay among others. He did not just pen an overview of Czech or French art but integrated them, along with other art from Europe, into a cohesive history. He mentioned the rare harmony of Filla's canvases in the same sentence as Polish Cubist Louis Marcoussis and French Cubist André Lhote. A paragraph about French artist Paul Signac merges into a discussion of Hungarian artist Ladislav Medgyes and Czech expressionist Jan Matulka. Raynal's revised history of modern art included not only Czech artists, which he clearly states are of Czech origin, but also Hungarian and Polish artists.¹³²

Raynal's integrated history is followed by a plea by a certain Markalous for Czech modern art to be appreciated not through the lens of its Parisian display, but through the perspective of Czech art and history.¹³³ Markalous nationalizes Czech art in Paris. The way he approaches this task, however, is quite different from Grémilly, Mauclair, or even Raynal. Instead, Markalous urges French viewers to consider not a national category but a national context for this artistic production:

In general, the works of Czech artists in Parisian exhibitions do not correspond to the character, and sometimes even to the level of indigenous production... The French observer, if he does not know the good artistic production of Prague, cannot understand the tendencies of modern Czechoslovak art. He finds himself before the work of a single individual dominated by the authoritative influence of contemporary French art, from which he cannot escape, but against which he could react with all his individuality. He endures it rather passively, not even defending himself against French art. He does not seek an outlet in revolt, of which we are supplied with such a fine example by M. Kupka, and even by M. Coubine.¹³⁴

¹³² Maurice Raynal, "Le Mouvement Artistique," *Paris-Prague* 1, no. 3 (March 1923), 33.

¹³³ Jaroslav Anděl ed., *Art for all the senses: the interwar avant-garde in Czechoslovakia* (Prague: National Gallery, 1993).

¹³⁴ Kubín naturalized as a French citizen after the First World War and changed his name to Coubine. Sawicki, "Between Montparnasse and Prague," 68; B. Markalous, "Les artistes tchécoslovaques aux expositions parisiennes," *Paris-Prague* 1, no. 3 (March 1923), 34, "En général, les œuvres des artistes tchèques dans les expositions parisiennes ne correspondent pas au caractère, ni parfois même au niveau de la production indigène... L'observateur français, s'il ne connaît pas la bonne production artistique de Prague, ne peut pas, même approximativement, se rendre compte des tendances de l'art moderne tchécoslovaque. Il se trouve devant

To understand modern Czech art, Markalous claims that that French viewers need to be aware of Czechoslovak 'indigenous production.' He reveals in this cross-cultural publication that the French have been defining Czech art for the Czechs. Markalous seems to be offering a call to Czech artists exhibiting in Paris to react to stereotypes and generalizations by fighting for the individuality of their work. Markalous continues along these lines in further issues of *Paris-Prague* over the next three months, providing the reader with information on how Czech art has little by little joined an international artistic community. He hypothesizes that an evolution has begun for Czechoslovak art in which there will be greater participation in Paris but that a retrospective, historical perspective is needed for the French observer to fully appreciate Czechoslovak art.¹³⁵

Shows and monographs featuring Czech artists proliferated in France during the interwar years. Coubine showed twelve paintings at the Salon des Tuileries in 1922; his first monograph was published the same year by a French version of the Italian art magazine *Valori Plastici*. The Barbazanges Gallery also exhibited his work. In 1928, a conference was held in Strasbourg on the beauties of the Czechoslovak Republic, citing both the ancient and the modern as subjects worthy of investigation.¹³⁶ The Jeu de Paume Gallery in the Tuileries held a joint exhibition of Mucha and Kupkas' work in June of 1936. The catalog refers to them as the two masters of Czechoslovak contemporary painting. Czech art critics of the time would not have labeled Mucha in that way. The catalog combines the concept of

l'œuvre d'un seul individu dominé par une impérieuse influence de l'art français contemporain, à laquelle il ne peut échapper, mais contre laquelle il pourrait réagir de toute son individualité. Il la subit plutôt passivement, ne se défendant même pas contre elle. Il ne cherche pas une issue dans la révolte, dont pourtant un si bel exemple nous est livré par M. Kupka et même par M. Coubine."

¹³⁵ Markalous, "*Les artistes tchécoslovaques aux expositions parisiennes*," 34.

¹³⁶ Jean-Philippe Namont, *La colonie tchécoslovaque*, 205.

“masters of contemporary Czechoslovak painting” with Kupka’s oriental mysticism and Mucha’s spiritual symbolism. The exhibition designated both artists as “masters” and identified them as Eastern because of their interest in the Orient and spiritualism.¹³⁷ In 1937, Galerie Jean Charpentier held an exhibition of Czech and Slovak modern art and published the first comprehensive text on Czech and Slovak avant-garde artists in Paris.¹³⁸

Select Czech artists not only exhibited in the French artistic context but also created monuments in Paris to celebrate the Czechoslovak legionnaires who fought for the Allies. Czech modern sculptor Jaroslav Hruška was chosen for this project and designed a sculpture for La Targette Czechoslovakian Cemetery to commemorate a battle fought on May 9, 1915, in which many Czech soldiers sacrificed their lives for France (Figure 10).¹³⁹ Hruška lived in Paris from 1920-1926 and exhibited his sculptures at the Grand Palais before completing this monument in 1925. A Czech correspondent for the French newspaper *Comœda* referred to Hruška’s artistic works alongside that of Cubist sculptor Otto Gutfreund and Maclair’s friend, Czech sculptor Otakar Španiel.¹⁴⁰ Hruška was well connected to the Parisian art scene, and the National Fine Arts Society in France honored him for his mature technique and the excellent quality of his sculptures.¹⁴¹

Hruška’s *La Targette Czechoslovakian Memorial* recalls previous Czech monuments in greater Paris such as the Bohemian Cross dedicated to Jean de Luxembourg at Crécy. The parallel themes — Czech soldiers coming to fight for the French on French soil — draw a

¹³⁷ Gustave Kahn, “François Kupka,” *F. Kupka A. Mucha: Œuvres Exposées, Musée des Écoles Étrangères Contemporaines* (Paris: Jeu de Paume des Tuileries, 1936), 3-5.

¹³⁸ *Cubist Art from Czechoslovakia: An Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture by Czech and French Artists*, ed. The Arts Council of Great Britain (London: Tate Gallery, 1967), 20.

¹³⁹ Namont, *La colonie tchécoslovaque*, 216.

¹⁴⁰ Emmanuel Siblik, “Les Artistes tchécoslovaque et l’ambiance de Paris,” *Comœda*, June 25, 1923.

¹⁴¹ Hruška was also known for his relief portraits of Louis Léger and Ernest Denis. Markalous, “Les artistes tchécoslovaques aux expositions parisiennes,” 6.



Figure 10: Jaroslav Hruška, *La Targette Czechoslovakian Memorial*, 1925. La Targette Czechoslovakian Cemetery, Neuville-Saint-Vaast, France.

continuous history from the Middle Ages through the First World War. Hruška's monument, however, does not blatantly mimic the religious themes present in the John of Luxembourg narrative, although they are present in the work as well. Hruška frames the Czech soldiers in a triangular niche flanked by triangles extending from each side. In its crisp, layered geometry that seems to radiate from the central figures, the form recalls the geometric contours of Cubist architecture popular in Prague at the time. Yet this geometric encasing also resembles a shrine, enclosing the soldiers, one of whom is alive and the other dead, draped over the lap of the sitting soldier. The relationship of the bodies makes a clear reference to the Pieta, a traditional Christian iconographic image in which the dead Christ

lays on the lap of the Virgin Mary. The text on the monument reads, “They chose to die for liberty, ” implying that that the Czech legionnaires chose to sacrifice themselves, almost religiously, like their medieval forerunner John of Luxembourg, for their own fatherland and for France.

“Transhistorical Analysis”: The Case of Czechoslovakia

Such conversations about the historic and modern and the creation of a Czech identity portrayed through art occurred in Prague as in Paris, but as Markalous’ text “Les artistes tchécoslovaques aux expositions parisiennes” demonstrates, this dialogue manifested itself in a different way locally. After the war, Czech artists, critics, and politicians in Prague used modern art to reassess the past.

In 1919, the Czech government appointed Vincenc Kramář director of the Gallery of the Patriotic Friends of the Art of Bohemia, the historic art society of which the picture gallery became the central art collection of the new Czechoslovak state in 1918. He remained there until 1939 and over his twenty-year tenure transformed the collection into a modern and professional art gallery.¹⁴² Kramář was an audacious art collector and renowned art theoretician and historian in Prague with an international reputation. He studied art history at universities in Munich and Vienna but followed his love of Czech illuminated manuscripts and Baroque paintings back to Prague, where he earned another degree under Bohumil Matejka.¹⁴³ In 1910, Kramář began frequently travelling to Paris, where he became infatuated

¹⁴² “History of the National Gallery in Prague,” *Národní Galerie*, Accessed 10 February 2017, <http://www.ngprague.cz/en/history-of-the-national-gallery-in-prague>.

¹⁴³ Jana Claverie et. al. eds. *Vincenc Karmář: un théoricien et collectionneur du cubisme à Prague* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2002), 195.

with Cubism through the early works of Picasso and Braque. Kahnweiler, who was also a friend of Filla, introduced Kramář to Apollinaire and Picasso. Picasso was particularly fond of Kramář and played word games with his Czech surname, as Apollinaire had done with Kubišta before the war.¹⁴⁴ Kramář trained as a medieval and Baroque Czech historian, but Picasso's paintings interested Kramář because he believed they could be used to analyze art of the past. He employed Picasso's canvases made from 1910-1912 to better understand Caravaggio's chiaroscuro, using a "transhistorical model" to unite art of the past and present, from Western and Central Europe.¹⁴⁵

Kramář's technique of analysis did not transfer to Parisian circles, but it affected the way he collected the modern art of Prague and Paris and the historic art of Bohemia for the Gallery of the Patriotic Friends, which would eventually become the National Gallery of Prague. He travelled to Paris to purchase works of French and Czech Cubists alike for acquisition into the collection. Many works by Filla, Coubine, and Kubišta entered the collection during this period. In the first four years at the society, Kramář purchased over forty-five works of French modern art that remain in the gallery today.¹⁴⁶ During this acquisition of modern art, he also assembled a gallery of Czech Baroque paintings and sculptures that had been in Prague since Rudolf created his internationally renowned *kunstammer* in Prague Castle in the 16th century. This synthesis of Czech Baroque art combined with Kramář's collection of Cubist works provided the perfect opportunity for him to practice his transhistorical model of analysis.

¹⁴⁴ Vojtěch Lahoda, "The Canon of Cubism and the Case of Vincenc Kramář: On the Place of Czech Cubism in the History of Modern Art," in *Internationalism, and Nationhood: European Avant-Garde in the First Half of the Twentieth Century*, 139.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹⁴⁶ Namont, *La colonie tchécoslovaque*, 216.

Cubism as a Point of Departure

Czech modernism developed in Prague as well as in Paris but faced its own set of challenges at home. The pre-war generation of modern artists had effectively merged with the Czechoslovak national project. They did not turn to radical politics but supported Czechoslovak democracy and thus reinforced the state. And yet young artists in both Prague and Paris resented this historicization of modern art. Cubism had become enshrined as a national style, and young artists of the new left perceived it as something that had to be overcome. They reacted against Cubism created by the pre-war generation to form their own movement, Devětsil, which became the new post-war avant-garde. Members of Devětsil were too young to have participated in the national struggle for independence, as had artists like Kupka and Gutfreund, and saw nothing worthy of salvation.¹⁴⁷

The Devětsil artists benefitted from the Franco-Czech relationship and legitimacy that Czech artists helped develop in the pre-war years, but they rejected the politics of the pre-war generation.¹⁴⁸ Devětsil created a new a-national art that paralleled Breton's Surrealism in Paris and looked to the Soviet Union for inspiration. Many of the movement's artists joined the communist party. Similarly, Surrealists in Paris also became active members of the political left. Communism was born in France in December 1920 with the establishment of the Parti Communiste, Section Française de l'Internationale Communiste and flourished throughout the decade. Breton joined the party along with four other Surrealists in 1927.¹⁴⁹ Like Devětsil, French youth who did not participate in the war

¹⁴⁷ Ort, *Art and Life in Modernist Prague*, 122. Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914-1925* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

¹⁴⁸ Sayer, *Coasts of Bohemia*.

¹⁴⁹ Robin Klaus, "Surrealism, Communism, and the Politics of Revolution," *Black and Gold* 2, no. 1 (2016): 1-2.

propelled this movement and became some of the most radical members of interwar French politics.¹⁵⁰ Every new movement needs a point of departure. Art historian Lidia Głuchowska claims, “These contradictions (post-war avant-garde opposing national mythology) were the strongest in areas where ‘new states’ were created in regions marked by a cultural — ethnic and national — ‘polyphony’ of an almost postmodern provenance, as was most obvious in the Czech regions.”¹⁵¹ Devětsil’s reaction was, in a way, postmodern, because modern had become nationalized in Czechoslovakia after the war.

The Czech-French relationship continued to flourish through the interwar period in terms of the Czech colony in Paris, political relations, and artistic exchange. Kupka taught Czech students in Paris, and Kramář bought French modern paintings for the future National Gallery in Prague. French politicians and Edvard Beneš worked together to make Czechoslovakia an official entity in a conference room in Paris, and this sign of devoted friendship led to a blossoming of Czechs’ allure with France after the war.¹⁵² Czech art historian Anna Pravdová refers to this relationship as an “old and complex phenomenon,” in which these nations united through a distancing from German culture.¹⁵³ The Czechs proved themselves worthy of having an independent nation through their politicians’ tireless efforts abroad during the war and their artists’ work that demonstrated refined, Western European taste. Czechoslovakia was the only East-Central European nation to remain democratic during the interwar period, and this democratic nation remained tied strongly to her Western European counterpart, France.

¹⁵⁰ Susan Whitney, *Mobilizing Youth: Communists and Catholics in Interwar France* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

¹⁵¹ Głuchowska, “The ‘New World’ of the Avant-Garde and the ‘New States’ in Central Europe,” 192.

¹⁵² Pravdová, “František Kupka and His Czech Fine Arts Students in France,” 114.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 114.

CONCLUSION

Vibrant cultural and artistic exchange continued to flourish between France and Czechoslovakia until France signed the Munich Agreement in 1938. The agreement stated that Nazi Germany had the right to annex the Sudetenland, the western portion of Czechoslovakia bordering Germany and Austria in which ethnic Germans comprised the majority of the population. Adolf Hitler used Woodrow Wilson's principle of self-determination to justify this annexation, since the German majority had voted overwhelmingly for Konrad Henlein's nationalist Sudeten German Party and its calls to "return to the Reich" in 1935. Although the government of Czechoslovakia had used self-determination to justify its own creation in 1918, it in no way supported German annexation. President Beneš, who assumed power after Masaryk's death in 1935, was neither consulted nor invited to the meeting in Munich. The Czechoslovak state did not see this annexation as an 'agreement' but rather referred to it as The Munich Betrayal.

The 1938 betrayal marked a rupture in French-Czechoslovak relations and artistic exchange. Thereafter, most of the French artistic gatekeepers and cultural elites were no longer seen as allies as they had been before the First World War and through the interwar period. France, the cultural authority of the avant-garde, had betrayed the Czechoslovak state and its art, leaving it vulnerable to the Nazi and later the Soviet powers. Czech modernists began engaging in a battle against both fascist and communist ideologies. Fascists interpreted avant-garde art not as the height of civilization but as "degenerate," and the communists referred to it as "monstrous formalism."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Pech, "Czechoslovak Art: Between the West and the East," 223.

The Munich Agreement not only ruptured the French- Czechoslovak relationship and jeopardized the avant-garde but also intimately affected Czech artists who had strong ties to France. After the Munich Agreement, Beneš' democratic Czechoslovakia fell and was replaced by a right wing, authoritarian government known as the Second Czechoslovak Republic. Months later, the Czech Academy of Fine Arts ordered Kupka to either move back to Prague or retire. Kupka could not fathom either retiring or leaving France, and so he refused both options and continued to work with his Czech students. When the Germans invaded the Second Czechoslovak Republic in March 1939, Kupka was forced into retirement and fled from Paris to a small French town where he waited out the war.¹⁵⁵ Other Czech artists in France such as Striml and Coubine also managed to survive the war by staying out of the public eye. Most Czech artists in Prague did not fare so well. The Gestapo arrested Filla on the first day of World War II and imprisoned him first in Dachau and then in Buchenwald. The Nazis arrested Aphonse Mucha and Cubist painter Josef Čapek in 1939. Mucha died shortly after he caught pneumonia during Gestapo interrogations. Čapek was sentenced to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp where he died in 1945.

Emil Filla managed to survive and exhibited his Cubist paintings in Prague after the war ended and before Czechoslovakia became a Soviet satellite state in 1948.¹⁵⁶ Modern art did not align with Soviet aesthetics and thus was repressed until the Velvet Revolution in 1989, even during the Prague Spring. It was not until the 1980s that the Director of the National Gallery in Prague, Jiří Kotalík, began giving deliberately underpublicized lectures on twentieth-century Czech modernism, which were followed by audacious exhibitions at the

¹⁵⁵ Pravdová, "František Kupka and His Czech Fine Arts Students in France," 124.

¹⁵⁶ Filla continued painting after 1948 but could no longer exhibit his work.

Prague City Gallery that showed art from the 1890s through World War II.¹⁵⁷ Finally, in 1995, the democratic Czech Republic provided Czech modern art with a permanent home in the Veletržní Palác, the modern and contemporary branch of the National Gallery of Prague, where paintings such as Kupka's *Fugue in Two Colors* can be seen today.¹⁵⁸

In a 2006 exhibition catalog of Kupka and Gutfreund's art in France during World War I, art historian Meda Mládková describes Kupka's 1912 *Fugue in Two Colors* as "The Czech Samothrace."¹⁵⁹ The title alludes to the Hellenistic sculpture known as the *Nike of Samothrace* that crowns the primary staircase of the Louvre Museum in Paris. The sculpture of a winged goddess landing on the bow of a ship conveys triumph through its larger-than-life, powerful yet ethereal form produced to commemorate a Greek naval victory in the second century BCE. For centuries, and certainly in France in 1918, this sculpture epitomized victory guided by the divine. Mládková provides two explanations as to why this painting created in Paris is the 'Czech Samothrace;' the first relates to questions of ownership and display and the second to retrospective nationalistic interpretations. Kupka refused to sell this painting despite its success in the salon, because he desired that it end up in Prague, the symbolic and political center of the new Czechoslovak nation-state he worked endlessly to promote and protect during the war. He finally sold the painting in 1945 to Edvard Beneš, who purchased the *Fugue* specifically to hang in the Prague Castle, the seat of Czechoslovak

¹⁵⁷ Derek Sayer, "The Unbearable Lightness of Building: A Cautionary Tale," in "Memory/History/Democracy," special issue, *Grey Room* 16 (Summer 2004): 11-12.

¹⁵⁸ The Veletržní Palác is an appropriate setting for modern Czech art. In 1924, Czech architects Oldřich Tyl and Josef Fuchs designed the Veletržní Palác in the International style of French architect Le Corbusier. It burned to the ground in 1947, so today visitors see its 1986 reconstruction. *Ibid.*, 15-16.

¹⁵⁹ Meda Mládková, "Introduction," 2.

government.¹⁶⁰ This abstract painting, created before the war, meant to be free from political connotations, became associated with the Czech state both by its owner and site of display.

However, the display and ownership of the painting alone are not enough to deem Kupka's work the ultimate symbol of Czech triumph. When Mládková studied the preliminary drawings for the *Fugue*, she came across a small watercolor sketch from 1912 that Kupka gifted to General Husák, one of the leaders of the Slovak National Uprising against Nazi Germany and later vice-premier under Alexander Dubček. Mládková recognized the motif of the Czechoslovakian flag in the colors of this early version of the *Fugue*, undeniable in the interlocking blue, red, and white curves. Yet, a black color field anchors the work with its overwhelming presence on the left and bottom sides of the painting. The black curves up the middle of the canvas to define the orphic shapes in stark contrast to the blue, red, and white, making the colors even more vibrant. When Mládková asked General Husák's widow if she knew what the black symbolized, she responded, "Of course, I remember well. It is victory over Austria."¹⁶¹

The victory over Austria defines and makes more vibrant the motif of the Czechoslovak flag. Yet victory over Austria did not materialize until six years after Kupka completed the final version of the *Fugue*, interpretations of General Husák's preliminary sketch aside. The *Fugue*'s placement in the Prague Castle, with General Husák's widows' description of the sketch infused the painting with political associations it did not originally invite. The international and modern style of Kupka's Orphism, like so much of the art produced by the Czechs in Paris, had become infused with national and historical meaning.

¹⁶⁰ Beneš led Czechoslovakia as president from 1935-1938 and 1945-1948.

¹⁶¹ Mládková, "Introduction," 2.

Czech modernism reconciled and made compatible the modern and the historic and the national and the international, as represented by Kupka's Fugue.

Interpretations of Czech art changed over time both in France and back in Czechoslovakia, and continue to do so today. Czech artists had immersed themselves in the Parisian art community and created art in this cultural capital of Europe since the last decade of the nineteenth century. But it was in the years before and during the First World War that the French gatekeepers of the art world and elite cultural advocates of the Czechoslovak state began commenting on Czech art in Paris and drawing connections between modernism, the shared history of France and Bohemia, and European civilization as epitomized by French culture. At first, they valued Czech art because of its relationship to Western European culture and employed it in the French process of 'discovering' the Czech nation. This discovery eventually led the cultural advocates to lobby for the creation of Czechoslovakia after the war, citing Czech modern art in the justification of this political act.

The artistic gatekeepers and elite cultural advocates perceived the Czechs and then Czechoslovakia as a bulwark of Western European culture and values on the western edge of Eastern Europe. Modern art was supposedly a-national but, over time, became tinged with nationalistic ideas. French cultural advocates also worked to give the Czechs and Czech art a history that was deeply intertwined with the French past, a history that stretched from the Middle Ages to the present. This past showed the longevity and cultural ascendancy of the fight for nationhood and justified the creation of a new state along its 'historic' borders.

Many Czech modern artists also advocated for the state, though not necessarily through their art but through their actions. They fought on the French battlefields as Legionnaires and built monuments in France that recalled the history of the French-Czech

relationship. Czechs in Paris influenced the development of the state, such as Beneš' diplomatic efforts and Kupka's influence as both an acclaimed artist and president of the Czech colony in Paris. Select Czech artists also obtained legitimacy within the Parisian art world. Beginning in 1917, Czech critics and artists had greater influence over the interpretation of their own art and were given not only individual exhibitions and publications but also a more prominent voice in the Parisian press. Throughout the interwar period, Czech art at home and abroad continued to serve political, cultural, and diplomatic purposes. Czech artists and activists and their French advocates participated in the creation of a new state — one of the most quintessentially political acts possible — and developed the context for understanding Czech modern art as 'Czech'.

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