

Continuity and discontinuity in the Czech legacy of the Vienna School of art history

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Although the history of Czech art historiography may seem for some a matter of merely local interest, it has considerable wider international relevance, for it represents a rather close following of the Vienna School. As such, its workings can shed light on the character of the Viennese tradition itself. Admittedly, many studies of the topic written by Czech scholars are not exactly self-reflexive.¹ Indeed, there is an indigenous discourse that offers little more than a legitimizing genealogy of leading Czech art historians in a direct teacher-to-pupil line of succession starting with Max Dvořák. The Czech scene rests assured that this genealogy comfortably solves the topic of methodological continuity and discontinuity, but recently a new interest has been initiated from abroad. On the invitation of Matthew Rampley I spoke at a conference in London (2009) which was devoted to art historiography that stemmed from Vienna but was written in languages other than German.² My paper originally questioned the relationship between the Czech art historical tradition and its Viennese source. This article develops the talk given there, while its sequel concerning Czech Marxist art historiography after the Second World War was published in this journal last year.⁴

The main source of information on the history of Czech participation in the Vienna School of art history, accessible to an international readership, was, until recently, an article by Hugo Rokyta published in Austria in 1974.⁵ It reveals quite unambiguously the superior status attached to Max Dvořák in Czech art history. Rokyta describes Dvořák's relationship with his teacher Wickhoff as similar to that

¹ A critical survey of ideas is given from an involved but more detached position by the Slovak author Ján Bakoš, 'Viedenská škola a český a slovenský dejepis umenia' in: Ján Bakoš, *Štyri trasy metodológie dejín umenia*, Bratislava: Veda 2000, 41-66. Interpretive texts concerning the Czech art history and Vienna School include Otto M. Urban, 'The beginnings of modern art history and art criticism in the Czech lands'. *Centropa* 5, 2005, 40-48; Matthew Rampley, 'Art history and the politics of empire: rethinking the Vienna School', *Art Bulletin* 91, 2009, 446-462.

² Cf. Rampley 2009.

⁴ Milena Bartlová, 'Czech art history and Marxism. *Journal of Art Historiography* 7, 2012. I would like to express here my sincere thanks to Marta Filipová and Matthew Rampley for their insightful comments and suggestions and for considerable improvement of my English.

⁵ Hugo Rokyta, 'Max Dvořák und seine Schule in den Böhmischen Ländern'. *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, 28, 1974, 81-89. This was clearly the sole source for the *Dictionary of Art Historians* (www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org). As a result, the website lists six only Czech-speaking art historians as well as Max Dvořák (not to mention such mistakes as labelling Frederick Antal as Czech), some of them of minor stature. Six others are included from pre-war Czechoslovakia who were German speakers. In 2012, a brief survey of Czech and Slovak art historiographies was published in English with further references: Milena Bartlová, 'Art History in the Czech and Slovak Republics: Institutional frameworks, topics and loyalties' in: Matthew Rampley et al. eds., *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe*, Leiden: Brill 2012, 305-314.

of a relationship between father and son. The family paradigm continued at a metaphorical level in the rhetoric used to describe the relationship between Dvořák and his assistant of one year, Antonín Matějček (1889-1950), again in terms of father and son.⁶ Matějček was one of the most influential Czech art historians between the wars and until his death in 1950; he became professor of art history at Prague University in 1930 and served as the Dean of the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University during the controversial Second Czechoslovak Republic (which covered the period between the Munich Agreement in autumn 1938 and the occupation of the rest of the country by the Nazis in spring 1939). After the Communist takeover in 1948, Matějček joined the Communist Party and in addition to teaching he worked on the legislation that would adapt the artistic and cultural life of the country to the new Stalinist rules.⁷ Only his premature death saved him from more open engagement with the totalitarian practices of the new political regime. Metaphors aside, Matějček's daughter married the art historian Jaroslav Pešina (1912-1992), who became a literal heir not only to the scholarly projects of his father-in-law but also to his prominent position with both the art historical institute at Prague University and at the newly founded Academy of Sciences in Prague.

This 'genealogical' continuation of the Vienna School in the art historical system of the new Czechoslovak Republic (or, to be more precise, in the dominant Czech part of it, as in Slovakia an art historical system and tradition only developed after 1918) seems to be completely natural in retrospect. Generally speaking, the ties between Czech culture and the capital in Vienna before the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy in 1918 were deep, strong and decisive. In spite of the period rhetoric to the contrary, the dominance of what in political economy is called path dependency, can be clearly recognized after the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic: the structures of political, social and intellectual life tended to continue rather than to be severed. Among the personae of the Vienna School it was not only Max Dvořák who was born in what was to become Czechoslovakia; one can also mention Rudolf Eitelberger (born in Olomouc, Moravia), Moriz Thausing (born in Čížkovice in Bohemia), Karl Maria Swoboda (Prague-born) and Hans Tietze (also originally from Prague), alongside such other better known examples as Sigmund Freud, Edmund Husserl or Josef A. Schumpeter. Dvořák differed from these men in respect to his acknowledged national identity; in spite of his decision to stay in Vienna and his use of German as the language of his publications, he considered himself to be Czech and maintained close personal ties to leading Czech historians, above all Josef Šusta, who formed the founding generation of the intellectual élite of the new state after 1918.⁸ For art history students from Bohemia and Moravia,

⁶ Jaroslav Pešina, 'Antonín Matějček – život a dílo' in: Jan Royt ed., *Antonín Matějček 1889-1950*, Praha: Karolinum 1994, 7-16; Jan Royt, 'Doslov' in: Antonín Matějček, *Cesty umění*, Praha: Odeon 1984, 238-258.

⁷ Vít Vlnas, 'Od Šestky k trojkám' in: Roman Prahel – Tomáš Winter eds., *Proměny dějin umění*, Praha: Eminent 2007, 201-208. More on this topic in Bartlová 2012.

⁸ Dvořák's national self-identification can be inferred from his letters. See Max Dvořák, *Listy o životě a umění* (Letters on life and art) ed. Jaromír Pečírka, Prague: Jan Laichter 1943. See also Jaromír Pečírka, 'Max Dvořák. Životopis' (Max Dvořák. Biography). In: Max Dvořák, *Umění jako projev ducha* (Art history as the history of spirit), Prague: Jan Laichter 1936, 7-42. On Dvořák see further Rudolf Chadřaba, 'Max Dvořák a Vídeňská škola dějin umění' in: Rudolf Chadřaba et al. eds, *Kapitoly z českého*

therefore, Vienna was the obvious first choice of large international metropolis' before 1918 as well as after.

On the other hand, it was not necessary to go there in order to study art history at all, because the university in Prague had its own art historical institutes. The plural denotes the existence, after the language split of the Charles University in 1882 into two chairs, the Czech and the German.⁹ The art history department in Prague was founded in 1864 and was among the first of seven German speaking academic institutions in the field.¹⁰ Neither the Czech nor the German institute was, however, capable of gaining more than a provincial significance. The art historical agenda at both institutes was strongly informed by the long-standing controversy aimed at recognizing either the Czech (Slavic) or the German national identity of artists and artworks of the past. When Karel Chytil (1857-1934) received the extraordinary professorship as the Czech art history chair in 1904 – he became ordinarius in 1911, a position he was awarded in preference to Max Dvořák – the meaning from the point of view of national cultural politics was clear: the prestigious position must be held by a devoted Czech patriot who had spent his life working in the local framework and according to its linguistic rules of conduct.¹¹ Chytil's first study was published in German in 1884, but all others were only in Czech; Dvořák, on the contrary, published mostly in German with only a few exceptional publications in Czech¹². Around 1900 and in the following decades, his engagement with the Institute for Austrian Historical Research (*Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*), which was strongly identified with the political structures of the monarchy, was a decisive issue that ruled out the idea of offering a possible appointment to Dvořák in Prague. Dvořák's reluctance to engage with the Czech art historical world might have been due to his loyalty to the empire or to his preference for metropolitan Vienna as opposed to provincial Prague, but it was construed by his Czech friends and followers as a disaffection with the conservative

dějepis umění (Chapters in Czech historiography of art), Vol. 2, Prague: Odeon, 1987, 9-70; Mitchell Schwarzer, 'Cosmopolitan Difference in Max Dvořák's Art Historiography'. *The Art Bulletin* 74, 1992, 669-678; Matthew Rampley, 'Max Dvořák: art history and the crisis of modernity', *Art History* 26, 2003, 214-237; Ján Bakoš, 'Max Dvořák – a neglected re-visionist' in: Michael V. Schwarz – Maria Theisen eds., *Wiener Schule. Erinnerung und Perspektiven = Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 53, 2004, 55-72; Nicholas Sawicky, 'Modernist paradigms after the war: the case of Max Dvořák' in: Vojtěch Lahoda ed., *Local strategies, international ambitions. Modern art in central Europe 1918-1968*, Prague: Artefactum 2006, 47-52; Jiří Kroupa, 'Max Dvořák dnes. Od duchovních věd ke vědám kulturním', *Opuscula historiae artium* 61, 2012. 2-12.

⁹ Werner Höflechner, 'Zur Etablierung der Kunstgeschichte an den Universitäten in Wien, Prag und Innsbruck. Samt einem Ausblick auf ihre Geschichte bis 1938.' In: Werner Höflechner – Götz Pöchat eds., *100 Jahre Kunstgeschichte an der Universität Graz*, Graz: Karl-Franzens Universität 1992, 6-17; Milena Bartlová, *Naše, národní umění*, Brno: Barrister & Principal 2009, 67-84.

¹⁰ Heinrich Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution. Studien zur Geschichte einer Disziplin*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1979.

¹¹ Josef Krása, 'Karel Chytil' in: Chadraba 1987, 172-180; Pavla Krchňavá, *Karel Chytil – život a dílo* (unpublished MA thesis, Faculty of Education, Charles' University in Prague, 2005).

¹² These include his early contributions from 1895-1902 and his share on the book written jointly with Bohuslav Matějka, *Soupis památek historických a uměleckých v politickém okresu roudnickém, II. Zámek roudnický* (Index of artistic and historical monuments in the Roudnice county. Part II: Castle of Roudnice), Prague 1907.

resistance in the local milieu of Prague when faced with the modern scientific intellectual horizons being opened up in Vienna.

During the twenty years of the Czechoslovak First Republic, the battle-cry of popular politics was 'away from Vienna, away from Rome!' Chytil gave a programmatic public speech early in 1919 and he called for the anticipated future for Czech art history: to break free from both German and Viennese influences and to devote itself more intensively to the study of the Czechoslovak art historical heritage.¹³ The focus on the transnational concept of '*ars una*', art as a single, global, phenomenon with a unified history, which was characteristic of the Vienna School, was far removed from the general atmosphere in Czech society.¹⁴ From this point of view, it was not at all self-evident that former Vienna School students should establish themselves in all the art historical institutions of the new state, founded as one of the successors to Austro-Hungarian Habsburg monarchy in 1918. Their success in the 1920s was due to their concentrated efforts to achieve this desired aim. The finishing line was reached in 1934, when Dvořák's last assistant, Karl Maria Swoboda (1889-1977), was appointed professor at the German art historical institute in Prague.¹⁵ The German university officials were afraid that the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment might obstruct the final appointment, because such retarding strategies were common in Czechoslovakia in the 1920s and 30s, as the government was often openly inimical to its large German minority. To their utter surprise, the Vienna *dozent* Swoboda was named immediately. The reason behind this was the fact that the divisional head at the Ministry was the art historian Zdeněk Wirth (1878-1961), the single most powerful man in Czech art politics of the First Republic, who immediately hailed the moment as a final triumph for the Viennese circle.¹⁶ Although Wirth had personally not studied in Vienna but rather in Prague, he was convinced of the superiority of Viennese approaches to art history and formed a life-long friendship with its most prominent Czech representatives.

Art historical research and teaching in German in the country was completely suppressed after the wholesale expulsion of the German-speaking inhabitants of Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of WWII and Czech art history was retrospectively construed as a purely Czech-language national enterprise. For many subsequent decades, the Czech art historical establishment was a sort of intellectual family. The resemblance of its inner workings to familial psychology is rather embarrassing, complete with emotional quarrels among Chytil's and Dvořák's lines

¹³ Karel Chytil, 'O příštích úkolech dějin a historiků umění ve státě Čsl', *Naše doba* 26, 1919, 753-756.

¹⁴ Ján Bakoš, 'From Universalism to Nationalism. Transformations of Vienna School Ideas in Central Europe' in: Adam Labuda et al. eds., *Die Kunsthistoriographien in Ostmitteleuropa und der nationale Diskurs*, Berlin: Gebrüder Mann Verlag 2004, 79-101; Ján Bakoš, Vienna School Disciples and 'the New Tasks' of Art History, *Ars* 40, 2007, 145-155; Ján Bakoš, 'Paths and Strategies in the Historiography of Art in Central Europe', *Ars* 43, 2010, 85-116.

¹⁵ Bartlová 2009, 77.

¹⁶ Wirth is considered a controversial personality and historical evaluation of his activities remains selective and scarce. Cf. Jiří Roháček – Kristina Uhlíková eds., *Zdeněk Wirth pohledem dnešní doby*, Prague: Artefactum 2010.

of descent down to the late 1960s.¹⁷ Indeed, one could argue that until recently, Czech-language commentaries on the history of Czech art history seemed to be more intent on glossing over the hidden fissures and unpleasant facts than with critically analyzing it, in order to present, as it were, a pleasing family picture.

Among the founding generation of Czechoslovak art historians oriented towards the Vienna School there were two intellectually dominant and important personalities: Vojtěch Birnbaum (1877-1934) and Vincenc Kramář (1877-1960). Although they studied in Vienna they were not Dvořák's students because both were only three years younger than him; instead they defended their dissertations in 1903 and 1904 with Franz Wickhoff and Alois Riegl respectively.¹⁸ Birnbaum was the more influential of the two, because although he was materially able to afford the sheltered life of private scholar, he was persuaded to take up the second chair – beside that of Chytil – which was created for him with the help of Wirth at the Czech speaking Prague University in 1921.¹⁹ Prior to his early death in 1934, he educated an extensive group of students who ensured the firm establishment of the Viennese art historical tradition between 1930s and 1970s.²⁰

Birnbaum introduced Riegl and Dvořák's ideas on monument protection into the newly created system of state monument (heritage) protection and he also participated in the attempt to write the first concise history of Czech art, which did not, however, have enough momentum to continue beyond the end of the Middle Ages.²¹ He was most influential, however, through the methodological system he passed on to his students and which remains until this day as a basis for the majority of Czech art historians. The main art historical objective and research tool is the construction of a narrative of artistic development, construed according to laws which Birnbaum believed to be accessible with the help of a scientifically rigorous method and are thus objective and true. Birnbaum elaborated on Riegl and Dvořák's concept of the genetic continuity of art historical development to formulate his own 'law of transgression' (the term does not refer to morally transgressive practices but to a shift of a vital artistic energy), which combined the vital idea of stylistic development and the concept of the national character of artistic production. Such a synthesis was a necessary prerequisite for Vienna School methodology to gain acceptance in the Czech context, in which a central focus consisted of intellectual elaborations on the conflict between Slavs and Germans.²² Birnbaum's 'law' supposes that artistic styles follow each other in a spiral of quasi-organic growth and that each has the tendency to fulfil all of its inherent

¹⁷ The Czech-German conflict is described from a psychoanalytical viewpoint by Jindřich Vybíral, 'What is 'Czech' in art in Bohemia? Alfred Woltmann and defensive mechanisms of Czech artistic historiography', *Kunstchronik*, 59, 2006, 1-7.

¹⁸ Julius Schlosser, *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte*. Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung, Ergänzungs-Band 13, Innsbruck 1934, 213-226 list of dissertations.

¹⁹ Ivo Hlobil, 'Vojtěch Birnbaum – život a dílo v dobových souvislostech' in: Vojtěch Birnbaum, *Vývojové zákonitosti v umění*, Prague: Odeon 1987, 379-411; Jiřina Hořejší, 'Vojtěch Birnbaum' in: Chadraba 1987, 101-117.

²⁰ The leading figures were František Matouš, Vladimír Denkstein, Jan Květ, Emanuel Poche, Růžena Vacková, Hana Volavková, Vojtěch Volavka, Václav Richter.

²¹ Zdeněk Wirth ed., *Dějepis výtvarného umění v ěechách*, Vol. 1, Prague: ěeskoslovenská vlastivěda 1931.

²² Bartlová 2009; Bakoš 2010.

possibilities. The vital energy is taken up by the nation, whose inherent capabilities and virtues are closest to the intrinsic character of the period in stylistic development.²³ According to this notion, it was the sensuality typical of the Czechs (and the Slavs in general) that ensured that the nation's single most important contribution to European artistic development should be the dynamic architecture of the Baroque. According to Birnbaum, this was proof of the high artistic achievements of the Slavic Czechs, as the Baroque was the most mature phase in the development of classically inspired art of the Renaissance and, as such, it was the most valuable phase in the lifespan of any style.

Vincenc Kramář differed from Birnbaum profoundly in many respects, but Kramář felt, too, that he must serve the new nation state in spite of his personal inclination to the life of an independent private scholar, an option that was possible for him, like Birnbaum, thanks to the financial independence he enjoyed as the member of a wealthy bourgeois family.²⁴ Kramář became director of the main art historical museum in the country, the Picture Gallery, which belonged to the private Society of Patriotic Friends of Arts (*Gesellschaft patriotischer Kunstfreunde*), founded in 1796. He managed to bring together the collection of the Picture Gallery with that of another private corporation, the Modern Gallery. The life-long efforts of Kramář were dedicated to bringing these collections under state ownership and patronage. The aim was successful only after his forced retirement during the Second World War, when the state of Czechoslovakia fell apart and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was incorporated into the Third Reich.²⁵ Kramář provided the museum with firm foundations thanks to his deep and informed interest in the restoration and conservation of artworks – a field which stood in contrast to the position of Vienna School art historians who, for all their theoretical pronouncements, were not inclined to attribute much importance to the concrete material state of their research objects.²⁶ Kramář was a kind of self-proclaimed outsider to the academic art historical establishment, a position he acquired not only because he had 'difficult personality features'²⁷ but also because he was a superior, quite original thinker, a quality often not much appreciated in self-contained intellectual communities. Although he wrote extensively, most of his texts have remained unpublished, due, perhaps, to his excessively self critical attitude.

²³ Vojtěch Birnbaum, 'Doplněk k vývojovým zákonům?' In: Birnbaum 1987, 47-50; Vojtěch Birnbaum, 'Metoda dějin umění', *ibidem*, 51-65. – Cf. review of the 1987 Birnbaum collection by Jaromír Homolka – Karel Srp – Milan Sláma, *Umění* 37, 1989, 363-371

²⁴ Josef Krása, 'Vincenc Kramář' in: Chadraba 1987, 118-125; Karel Srp, 'Situace českého dějepisu umění ve dvacátých letech' *ibidem*, 71-94; Josef Krása, 'Dílo Vincence Kramáře v českých dějinách umění' in: Vincenc Kramář, *O obrazech a galeriích*. Prague: Odeon 1983, 449-477; Vojtěch Lahoda – Olga Uhrová eds., *Vincenc Kramář: od starých mistrů k Picassovi*, Exhibition catalogue Národní galerie v Praze 2000.

²⁵ Vít Vlnas ed., *Obrazárna v Čechách 1796-1918* (The picture gallery in Bohemia, 1796-1918). Exhibition catalogue, Národní galerie v Praze 1996; Vít Vlnas, 'Vincenc Kramář jako ředitel veřejné galerie' in: Lahoda – Uhrová 2000, 164-169.

²⁶ Zuzana Bauerová, *Konzervovanie – reštaurovanie umeleckých diel v Československu 1918-1971*. PhD thesis defended at Masaryk University Brno in 2009, accessible online

http://is.muni.cz/th/162685/ff_d/Konzervovanie_restaurovanie_v_Ceskoslovensku_1918_1971.pdf

²⁷ Vlnas 2000.

Kramář differed from Birnbaum in maintaining a reserved distance toward the idea of art historical evolutionary constructions. He belonged to the first generation of Vienna School followers who studied modern art systematically with the help of the conceptual apparatus developed to understand pre-modern periods. His conviction that the art historian naturally appreciates affinities between historic and contemporary art contrasted with the prevailing belief that an artwork is a historical phenomenon closed on itself.²⁸ Kramář is best known today for the fact that while in Paris before the First World War, he recognized the qualities of the early Picasso and of Cubism. He published an important study on Cubism in 1921 and was a notable collector of Cubist works.²⁹ His private collection nowadays forms the core of the modern exhibition at the National Gallery in Prague. A firm believer in the state ownership of museums and artworks, Kramář gave his own Cubist pictures and sculptures to the state before his death in 1960. He joined the Communist Party in 1945 and in the early 1950s participated in the discussions concerning both Communist and Marxist approaches to art and art theory.³⁰

In order to conclude this survey of the dialectics of continuity and discontinuity in Czech art history after 1918, it is worth briefly commenting on the developments in art history in Moravia. The university in Brno was not founded until after the new Czechoslovak republic had been established, with a chair in art history being installed there in 1928.³¹ With the single exception of Eugen Dostál (1889-1943), who had studied with Max Dvořák, the art historians in Brno were prominent representatives of the second generation of Czech Vienna School followers, i.e. they had no direct experience of having studied in Vienna. The medievalist Albert Kutal (1904-1976) is considered as an informal pupil of Kramář, while Václav Richter (1900-1970) was the only one of his generation to have engaged in theoretical questions concerning art history. Although he studied with Matějček in Prague, Richter's critical review of his teacher's monumental book on world art history may have been the most extensive and self-conscious theoretical text in Czech before the war, and in the 1960s he developed his own theory of art that drew heavily on the work of Martin Heidegger.³²

It may be useful to complete this picture of connections between Czech art history and Vienna with a comment on the 'dark side' of the Vienna School humanist project, namely, its archetypal enemy at the First Institute, Josef Strzygowski.³³ If it were not for the enmity between the two Art History Institutes in

²⁸ Karel Srp, 'Umění na jiném základě' in: Lahoda – Uhrová 2000, 129-138.

²⁹ Vincenc Kramář, *Kubismus*. Brno: Moravsko-Slezská Revue, 1921. Kramář's text has since been translated into French and German as *Le Cubisme*, Paris, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, 2002 and as 'Der Kubismus,' trans. Kristina Kallert, in Heinke Fabritius and Ludger Hagedorn, eds, *Frühling in Prag oder Wege des Kubismus*, Munich, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2005, 207-336.

³⁰ For more detail, see Bartlová 2012.

³¹ Jiří Kroupa – Lubomír Slaviček eds., *Almanach Sedmdesát let Semináře dějin umění Masarykovy univerzity v Brně 1927–1997*, Brno: Masarykova univerzita 1997.

³² Václav Richter, 'Review of Antonín Matějček: Dějepis umění', *Český časopis historický* 43, 1936, 561-576. Most of Richter's output is unfortunately not accessible in international languages; cf. Václav Richter, *Umění a svět* (Art and the world), Prague: Academia 2001.

³³ Eva Frodl-Kraft, 'Eine Aporie und der Versuch Ihrer Deutung: Josef Strzygowski – Julius v. Schlosser'. *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 42, 1989, 7-52; Ernő Marosi, 'Josef Strzygowski als

Vienna, Strzygowski would have been, in fact, a much more likely candidate as the dominant influence in Czech art history, even though he had no Czech students of his own. The Czechoslovak state was conceived of in 1918 as a national state of the Slavic 'Czechoslovak nation' and its extended shape on the map suggested the common metaphor of a bridge between the East and the West. Attention to the art historical heritage of the Orthodox East fitted well into this concept and it conformed to the long-standing and popular tradition of patriotic 'love for the Slavs'.³⁴ Czechs admittedly lacked interest in Strzygowski's project of including non-European art into the program of art historical research, because the landlocked country had never had any overseas imperial contacts. Nevertheless his championing of the intrinsic value of the artistic traditions of the 'barbarians' outside of the Mediterranean area was potentially inspiring. The leading historian of architecture Václav Mencl (1905-1978) was receptive to the evaluation of wooden folk architecture and he collaborated with Florián Zapletal (1884-1969), a rather obscure defender of Strzygowski's ideas who was based in Olomouc.³⁵

Mencl spent the early part of his career in the 1930s at the University in Bratislava and following his forced retirement during the Second World War he wrote a theoretically ambitious book on medieval architecture, in which he developed Birnbaum's idea of 'Czech / Slavic sensuality' as the defining formal quality of Bohemian architecture in the second half of the fourteenth century, which was, brought to its highest form by Peter Parler. Echoing the methodological approach being pioneered by the representatives of the 'Second Vienna, School,' he placed the concept of the artistic *Gestalt* at the heart of his approach. Any dialogue with Hans Sedlmayr that might have been present in Mencl's book was not permitted to evolve, however, in the post-war years.³⁶ Under the Communist Party-led authoritarian regime in Czechoslovakia, cross-border intellectual exchange was forcibly restricted and connections severed. Moreover, in the early 1950s, Mencl did not conform to the new political situation and thus he was not allowed to take up any formal academic position; as a result he remained active in the institutional care of monuments.

Birnbaum and Matějček wrote bitter criticisms of both Chytil's and Zapletal's desire to sever intellectual ties between art history in the new national state and Vienna or Germany. Nevertheless, in order to satisfy the political demands placed by the interwar Czechoslovak state on art history, institutional solutions were found, including admission of the collaborators of the Russian art historian Nikolaj

Entwerfer von nationalen Kunstgeschichten' in: Olaf Peters, Ruth Heftrig, Barbara Schellewald, eds, *Kunstgeschichte im Dritten Reich. Theorien, Methoden, Praktiken*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2008, 103-113; Georg Vasold, 'Riegl, Strzygowski und die Entwicklung der Kunst', *Ars* 41, 2008, 95-111.

³⁴ Chytil 1919; Vojtěch Birnbaum, 'Západ nebo Východ?' (West or East?). *Zprávy Volných směrů*, 1919, 49-53; František Hýbl ed., *Florián Zapletal – život a dílo* (Florián Zapletal: Life and Work), Přerov: Muzeum Komenského v Přerově 2006.

³⁵ Vlasta Dvořáková, 'Václav Mencl' in: Rudolf Chadraba 1987, 317-325; Klára Benešová, 'Václav Mencl' in: Anděla Horová ed., *Nová encyklopedie českého výtvarného umění*, Praha: Academia 1995, 503; on Zapletal see Hýbl 2006.

³⁶ Václav Mencl, *Česká architektura doby lucemburské* (Czech architecture of the Luxemburg era), Prague: Sfinx 1948. Later Marxist-Leninist writers never mentioned Mencl's work in their criticism of Sedlmayr. Cf. Luděk Novák, 'Review of Hans Sedlmayr: Kunst und Wahrheit', *Umění* 8, 1960, 87-92.

Pavlovič Kondakov (1844-1925) to the specially created seminary of Eastern Orthodox art at the Czech Prague University Institute in 1929. The true patriarch of art history in Russia, Kondakov had been given personal refuge in Prague by President Masaryk after he fled the Communist revolution in Russia and arrived there via Constantinople in 1921, only to die a few years later.³⁷

Somewhat surprisingly, the first and rather strong revival of interest in Strzygowski in Europe took place in Czech art history in the 1970s, when a leading art historian, Rudolf Chadraba (1922-2011), explicitly drew on Strzygowski's work when arguing that there was massive Persian and Middle Eastern influence on Czech medieval art, which he claimed to be able to identify in the art of the era of Charles IV in the fourteenth century. His construct was based on formal comparisons between, for example, Parthian sculpted reliefs and Theoderic's panel paintings of saint at Karlštejn castle, and its main aim was to reconfigure medieval art in Bohemia as pagan in its nature and aims. Chadraba interpreted rather far-flung relationships as direct influences based on the ethnic relationship of the Slavic Czechs with cultures in the territory now occupied by Iran.³⁸ Chadraba's claim that there was an intrinsic alliance between medieval Slavs in Bohemia and their eastern family, which chimed with the arguments of other leading medievalists, enabled Czech art history to satisfy the demands of the neo-Stalinist political authorities, namely, that the historical sciences should prove the deep and inevitable affinities between the Czechs and the East, above all the Russians.³⁹ In the same decades, however, the same Rudolf Chadraba wrote an extensive essay on the Vienna School for an authoritative publication on the history of Czech art history.⁴⁰ In this essay he argued that the sole truly scientific art historical method was the Viennese tradition that culminated with the work of Max Dvořák, and indeed his treatment of Dvořák borders on hagiography. If it is possible that in the mind of this devoted follower both Dvořák and Strzygowski shared equal prominence as representatives of the Vienna School, might it not suggest that their ways of thinking were in some respects closer to each other than it was possible to discern in their own time? Wide apart in their pronounced intentions, they nevertheless shared a propensity to use rather generalized concepts as direct explanations of key art historical questions. One might go further and suggest that the emotional anger vented by the members of the Second Institute against Strzygowski itself, betray that what

³⁷ Hana J. Hlaváčková ed., *Ze sbírek bývalého Kondakovova institutu. Ikony, koptské textilie* (From the collections of the former Kondakov Institute. Icons, Coptic textiles), exhibition catalogue, Prague: Národní galerie v Praze, 1995.

³⁸ Rudolf Chadraba, *Profetický historismus Karla IV. a přemyslovská tradice* (The prophetic historicism of Charles IV and the Přemyslid tradition). In: Václav Vaněček ed., *Karolus Quartus*, Prague: Karolinum 1984, 421-452 and numerous other essays on the topic. Most important is the book by Rudolf Chadraba, *Staroměstská mostecká věž a triumfální symbolika v umění Karla IV.* (The Old Town bridge tower in Prague and the triumphalist symbolism in the art of Charles IV), Prague: Academia 1971. The core of the argument here is backed by citations from Strzygowski.

³⁹ Milena Bartlová, 'Slavonic features' of Bohemian medieval painting from the point of view of racist and Marxist-Leninist theories' in: Adam Labuda et al. eds., *Die Kunsthistoriographien in Ostmitteleuropa und der nationale Diskurs*, Berlin: Gebrüder Mann Verlag 2004, 173-179.

⁴⁰ Chadraba 1987.

happened in the confrontation was a repression of the shadow which mirrored what the subject did not want to realize in itself.

The relationship between Czech art history and the Vienna School took another rather surprising turn around 1960.⁴¹ Jaromír Neumann, a prominent Marxist-Leninist art historian and pupil of Antonín Matějček, mined the late texts by Max Dvořák and created a specific synthesis of the latter's notion of art history as *Geistesgeschichte* with Panofsky's 'second iconology', and introduced the result as a tool for a Marxist historical dialectic approach to history.⁴² Czech art history thus claimed to achieve a formalist, direct and objective approach to the ideological superstructure of past times without any recourse to the social history of art. Such paradoxical 'Marxism without classes' proved extremely effective and successful during the neo-Stalinist period of the 1970-80s when its predominance assured Czech art historians a relatively sheltered position towards political demands. The reputation of a field that protected eternal spiritual values from ideological attack has continued to work well after the demise of the Communist regime. Young students who enter art historical departments at the three major universities in Prague, Brno and Olomouc are offered the proud self-proclamations of the respective institutes that they can join a long and respectable line of descent in art historical scholarship. From this longer perspective it can be concluded that Czech art history was and remains an especially enduring branch of the Viennese art historical tradition.

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⁴¹ The topic of the post-war developments in the tradition of Czech art history is elaborated in detail, with arguments and bibliography in Bartlová, 'Czech Art History and Marxism,' *Journal of Art Historiography*, 7, 2012.

⁴² Possible contact or even collaboration of Jaromír Neumann with Jan Białostocki is not clear at the moment and the topic is in need of further international research effort.