

Nationalising Czech Modernism

Review of :

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Traditional narratives of modernity claim that modern artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries rejected traditional techniques, subjects, and ideologies. These modernists embraced international and universal concepts of newness, and they eschewed national traditions and culture. Art historian Marta Filipová seeks to complicate that formula by analysing narratives of modernity in the Czech art world of the *fin de siècle* and interwar era. She argues for an 'interplay' of two circumstances: 'the adoption of modernity combined with a successful national movement'. (3) The Czech case was unique, according to Filipová, because many artists embraced both nationalism and modernism. In essence, she argues, they 'nationalised modernism'. (3)

Filipová's well-researched monograph offers refreshing approaches to the history of modern art in the Bohemian Lands and, later, Czechoslovakia. Rather than organize her discussion around various modernist movements such as *art nouveau*, cubism, realism, and surrealism, she addresses five themes that intersected with various artistic styles and communities: modernism, the people, society, identity, and traditions. Another approach that sets Filipová's work apart from many art histories is its focus on textual sources. Filipová is interested in how Czechs writers conceived of art, modernity, and the nation. She analyses the discourse in art journals, responses to art exhibits, and other writings by artists and art critics.

Filipová's study spans the late Habsburg Monarchy and the Czechoslovak First Republic. The book's introduction, 'Modernity-History-Politics' grounds her arguments about Czech modernism in the region's complex history. She draws on the scholarship of historians and nationalism theorists, as well as art historians and critics, making her work accessible and useful for a wide array of scholars and advanced students. Since the 1990s, historians have been reassessing the narrative of Czechoslovak history. Following nationalism scholars such as Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner,¹ historians of the Habsburg Monarchy detailed how Czechs created a sense of national belonging through language, art, culture, and, as Filipová

¹ Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983 and Ernst Gellner, *Nationalism*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997.

writes, 'political-cultural competition with local Germans'. (3) By the fall of the Monarchy, this already strong movement 'had coined a temporary, artificial identity of the Czechoslovak nation, [and] managed to construct a relatively stable democracy despite various internal and external problems'. (3) Since nation building coincided with modernism, Filipová argues that Czech authors sought 'to identify what was original and 'authentic' in Czech art (in national terms) that they could bring into modernism'. (3) Once Czechoslovakia was founded, state leaders had a stake in sponsoring art that reflected a national vision and simultaneously conveyed modernity and progress. Art and state symbols had the potential to link the two main Slavic groups, Czechs and Slovaks, as one majority nation, representing about two-thirds of the population, in order to offset the potential influence of a German 'minority' that comprised about 30% of the population. Here Filipová embodies the work of Rogers Brubaker who has written extensively on ways European states legitimized their existence, by reifying an invented identity.²

Filipová's introduction is grounded in multidisciplinary scholarship. She engages with several American and British historians' scholarship on nation-building in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Czechoslovakia. One of her stated goals is to become 'the first examination in English which shows how Czech authors during the period in question constructed modern art and why'. (3) She cites historians Derek Sayer, Tara Zahra, and Cynthia Paces's studies on the development of Czech national museums, theatres, schools, journals, and sites of memory, as well as works by Hugh Agnew, Gary Cohen, Jeremy King, Claire Nolte, and Nancy Wingfield that demonstrate how Czech national enterprises often arose in response to – or conflict with – German culture.³ Filipová does include very recent work by Czech art historians, such as Milena Bartlová, Jindřich Vybíral, and Vendula Hnídková, who have also engaged with discussions of modernism's relationship to the nation, but she states her concern that much of the scholarly literature in the Czech Republic and other Central European countries remains inaccessible to larger

² Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge, MA and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

³ See especially the monographs: Hugh Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2004; Gary Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague 1861-1914*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981; Claire Nolte, *The Sokol in The Czech Lands to 1914: Training for the Nation*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002; Cynthia Paces, *Prague Panoramas: National Memory and Sacred Space in the Twentieth Century*, Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009; Derek Sayer, *Coasts of Bohemia. A Czech History*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998; Nancy Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2007; and Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948*, Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2008. The bibliography also lists numerous articles by these historians.

audiences, due to their publication in local languages only.⁴ Filipová's expertise in the Czech scholarly literature, as well as the work of scholars outside the Czech Republic, brings various approaches, disciplines, and traditions into conversation with one another. Her rich bibliography incorporates mostly Czech and English-language sources, with a smaller number of German and French publications.

While Filipová does not embark on completely new territory in her argument about how the Czech (and later Czechoslovak) nation was invented, she does bring a new body of literature into the conversation. The era's Czech-language art journals, such as *Volné směry* (Free Directions), *Moderní revue* (Modern Review), *Styl* (Style), and *Umělecké měsíčník* (Art Monthly), provide a large portion of Filipová's source base, and she also draws on more general Czech-language journalism such as *Národní listy* (The National Newspaper), *Naše doba* (Our Era), *Lidové noviny* (the People's Gazette), and *Zlatá Praha* (Golden Prague). (26) Filipová's interest in gender leads her to various women's journals and magazines, primarily *Ženské listy* (Women's News) and *Ženský svět* (Women's World) that provided space for a Czech middle-class, elite female readership at the *fin de siècle* and First Republic. Indeed, an important aspect of Filipová's study is her incorporation of gender issues through much of the book. She does not separate women's art and art criticism into its own section; instead, she demonstrates the importance of gender issues, such as women's emancipation, access to education, and artistry, to the national movement. While Filipová underscores male dominance in the Czech art world, her work would benefit from more exploration of masculinity and masculine culture within modernism.⁵

For Filipová there is not a single Czech modernism, but many modernisms with varying approaches to art styles and techniques and diverse opinions on international and national influences. Filipová's first body chapter explores various definitions of 'modernism' and how they developed in the Czech context. She seeks to break down the dichotomy between internationalism as modernism versus national art as provincial and outdated. Filipová cites Czech painter and art critic Miloš Jiránek, who represented the widespread idea that 'art did not lose its national character of significance even if it interacted with external influences'. (23)

In Chapter 1, 'Modernism', which follows the broad introduction, Filipová reveals the proliferation of Czech-oriented art movements and societies at the *fin-de-siècle*. These societies promoted individual creativity and criticized artists' unreflective use of national songs and folklore. Influential groups such as Mánes, Osma, and Sursum gathered artists, who competed with more conservative, bilingual (often German-dominated) groups established in the eighteenth century.

⁴ For example, Milena Bartlová, Jindřich Vybíral, *Budování státu: reprezentace Československav umění, architektuře a design*, Prague: UMPRUM, 201, and Vendula Hnídková, *Národní styl: kultura a politika*, Prague: UMPRUM, 2013.

⁵ See, for example, Jindřich Toman 'Conversational Modernism: Talking Czech Men into Being Gentlemen by Way of *The Gentleman*, 1924–30', *Central Europe*, 13:1-2 (2015), 19-35.

While the largest and most influential new Czech-language art societies centred in Prague, Filipová also highlights regional organizations in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia that grappled with the relationship between modernism and nationalism. Importantly, Filipová points out that none of these organizations abandoned the national discourses that dominated their political and cultural era. She cites various artists and intellectuals who were ‘concerned with the ways modern art can, or indeed should, be reconciled with national art’. (44) One of the period’s most well-known Czech cultural figures, Karel Čapek, sought to redefine this national art. In 1913, he published an essay that rejected the widespread belief that national art was ‘related to national history [and] historic subjects in painting ... [or was] preserved in the traditions and creativity of Czech peasants’. (48) Instead, Čapek and others like him sought a less tangible inspiration for art: ‘the national spirit’. (48) As Filipová explains, ‘Being modern, many commentators across the generations believed, did not exclude being national. They accepted almost without doubt that there indeed was Czech *national* art which could become *modern* Czech national art’’. (49)

Much of Chapter 1 demonstrates the tension between international and national influences on Czech art. Filipová focuses a major section of the chapter on Auguste Rodin’s 1902 visit to Bohemia and Moravia, and the simultaneous exhibition of Rodin’s sculpture, drawing on both primary and secondary literature. Filipová extensively quotes the contributors to contemporary art journals, which devoted numerous articles and even full editions to these events, but she also brings to bear recent scholarship by Czech, American, and French art historians and cultural historians such as Catherine M. Giustino, Nicholas Sawicki, Stefane Reznikow and Petr Wittlich.⁶ Filipová explains that Rodin’s acceptance of the invitation from Czech artists, who in their letter to the French sculptor called Bohemia ‘the threshold of the Slavic orient’, (34) was also seen as a ‘blow to the German’ artistic community. (35) Contemporary newspapers and journals boasted of Czechs and French cultural similarities, while further distancing themselves from their neighbours: Bohemian Germans and German-speaking Jews. This section of Chapter 1 highlights many of Filipová’s broad themes: Czech artists’ constant search for new inspiration, the possibility of being simultaneously national and international in outlook, and a Czech preoccupation with modernity.

Sometimes Filipová misses opportunities to demonstrate internationalism’s influence beyond discourse. While her focus on ‘art writing’ (49) is helpful in

⁶ Catherine M. Giustino, ‘Rodin in Prague. Modern Art, Cultural Diplomacy, and National Display’, *Slavic Review* 69, no. 3 (2010), 591-619; Nicholas Sawicki, ‘Rodin and the Prague Exhibition of 1902. Promoting Modernism and Advancing Reputations’, *Cantor Arts Centre Journal* 3 (2002-3): 185-197; Stéphane Reznikow, *Francophile et identité tchèque, 1848-1914*, Paris: Campion, 2002; and Petr Wittlich, ‘August Rodin et la modernité tchèque’, *Inspirations françaises recueil dans le cadre de la Saison tchèque en France les 7-8 novembre 2002 à Paris: Université de la Sorbonne établissements de l’école normale supérieure*, vol. 1, 117-138, Prague: Faculté des Lettres à l’université Charles de Prague, 2006.

understanding what artists and critics were trying to do by studying and exhibiting foreign art, Filipová could more often show how artists actually embodied these influences in their own work. For example, the Rodin exhibit's enormous success convinced the Club for the Building of a Jan Hus Memorial in Prague to abandon its original design and to announce a new competition. The winning sculptor, Ladislav Šaloun, drew directly from Rodin, and he wrote about Rodin's influence on his work. Rodin inspired Šaloun to bring deeper emotion and attempt to convey the less tangible national spirit into his work. It is surprising that Šaloun is never mentioned in the monograph, as his Hus Memorial (unveiled 1915) is arguably the most important public art in early twentieth-century Prague. Šaloun also designed Antonín Dvořák's grave memorial at the national cemetery at Vyšehrad and a sculpture of the famous Rabbi of Early Modern Prague, Judah ben Bezalel Loew, which stands at the Old Town New City Hall. Similarly, the sculptor Stanislav Sucharda designed the monument to Czech historian and politician František Palacký (1912), by drawing on Rodin's ability to convey strong emotion in stone.⁷ Filipová instead devotes more analysis to foreign artists. Besides Rodin, Filipová discusses two Prague exhibits of international artists: German artist Anna Costenoble in 1896 and Edvard Munch in 1905. These are fascinating, and the Costenoble section particularly demonstrates Filipová's skill in gender analysis, women artists, and debates about sexuality at the *fin de siècle*. Still, a few more examples of Czech artists whose work branched out from Rodin, Munch, and Costenoble would have enhanced the chapter even more.

Filipová's remaining chapters explore broad themes and concepts that preoccupied Czech artists and critics: the people, society, identity, and traditions. These are obviously intersecting concepts, and it is not always clear how the author differentiates them. The chapters follow somewhat chronologically, giving the impression that each theme dominated a particular era. Chapter 3, 'The People' focuses on the 1890s to World War I, 'Society' encompasses the early years of the Czechoslovak state, Chapters 4 and 5 'Identity' and 'Traditions' mainly examine the later 1920s and 1930s. Yet, because these themes resonated throughout the period of Filipová's study, the narrative sometimes jumps temporally. Frequent authorial statements that certain subjects would be covered further in a future chapter or had been covered more extensively in an earlier chapter sometimes jar the reader. The thematic approach has benefits, in that the reader is introduced to the *ideas* rather than the *forms* that influenced artists. At the same time, the structure can occasionally lead to repetition and overlap.

Chapter 2, entitled 'The People', explores rural art and folk traditions. Filipová distinguishes between the 'romanticised image of the peasantry constructed by the national revival' and the position of *fin de siècle* 'artists and art

⁷ See especially Paces, *Prague Panoramas* and Sayer, *Coasts of Bohemia*. For Šaloun's own reflections, see Ladislav Šaloun, *L. Šalouna Husův pomník v Hořicích*, Prague: Unie, 1914.

writers who both attempted to position vernacular art as being an important component of modernism.’ (47) She uses the term ‘vernacular culture’ instead of ‘folk art’ or ‘people’s art’ (*lidové umění*) throughout the chapter, to avoid reifying the Czech national revivalists’ romanticising of the peasantry. To further complicate the semantics, a similar term was emerging in the late nineteenth century—*umění lid* (the art of the people)—which described proletarian art with embodied political meaning (the focus of chapter 3). Filipová’s explanations for terms she uses reveal the complex relationship of language and nation in a bilingual region. However, the use of chapter titles ‘The People’ for chapter 2 and ‘Society’ for Chapter 3 adds some confusion. Proletariat art also claimed the term ‘the people,’ and the term ‘society’ generally encompasses the full array of social classes. Perhaps more straightforward chapter titles (The Country and The City or Peasants and Workers) would have better conveyed the content of the chapters. Despite some semantic confusion, this is an excellent chapter, at the heart of Filipová’s thesis. She demonstrates how artists and art writers used rural art forms—for example, embroidery, architecture, songs, and dances—to ‘question the modern Czech identity.’ (58) Czech art writers rejected the ‘academicism, nationalism, or historicism’ (77) that had overtaken interpretations rural art and instead looked to how aspects of rural and amateur art could inform modernism.

One particular strength of Filipová’s work is her decentring of Prague. While she discusses how Prague-based artists viewed vernacular art and how events like Prague’s Jubilee Exhibition of 1891 showcased it, she also introduces readers to lesser known artists and art organizations in Moravia, which held art exhibits and sought ways to combine folk traditions with modern techniques. Moravian Slavs sought to create a distinct culture that attracted tourists to the region. The town of Luhačovice housed ‘a number of villas, hotels, and other structures using a combination of Arts and Crafts with vernacular details to accommodate Czech-speaking patriots’ (66) and sponsored art exhibits such as the 1892 Exhibition of Art, Industry, and Ethnography and the 1902 Slovak Art Exhibition. Similarly, the Association of Moravian Visual Artists sponsored art that sought modern ways to explore traditional rural culture. Filipová not only demonstrates various modernisms here, but also various national identities. For example, Luhačovice sat on the border of Moravia, Austria, and Northern Hungary (which would become Slovakia in 1918). Filipová explains, ‘Rather than either Czech or Slovak, the identity that was encouraged here was non-German and non-Hungarian’. (66) This region also displayed pride in its unique dialect, a blend of Czech and Slovak, that set them apart from other ‘Czech’ regions.

In chapter 2, Filipová profiles the painter Joža Uprka, ‘the most prominent example of this effort to combine attention to regional folk culture with international modernism’. (68) In fact, Uprka’s studio was a stop on Rodin’s itinerary, and his work become even more popular abroad than locally. Uprka ‘combined an academic approach to his subjects with modernist composition.’ (68) These techniques included ‘strong tonal contrast’ and ‘linear treatment of their

subjects'. (68) Uprka's paintings also appeared in poster art, thus combining traditional technique with modern printing. Moravian artists also turned to architecture. These designers, most notably Dušan Jurkovič, were inspired by international movements in England, Scotland, and Germany, which created a 'new style informed by the local architectural language—especially ornament, colour, techniques, and material—yet, constructed to suit the needs of the early twentieth century'. (74) Filipová concludes this important chapter by calling vernacular culture 'a popular resource that could be imitated or reinvented for the purpose of the present'. (78)

Chapter 3, 'Society', moves into the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic and returns to the city. Filipová focuses on proletarian art (mainly art that conveyed leftist values rather than art made by workers). The chapter has some of the semantic overlaps discussed above: the term 'the people' described the urban working class too, and 'society' does not immediately convey working-class identity to readers. Still, Chapter 3 is another strong exploration of the relationship of modernism and nationalism. Filipová contrasts the Czech left-wing modernists with Italian and French futurists who had rejected the idea of the nation. On the other hand, Czechs, such as Stanislav Neumann, a representative of the far left in the Czech art world, still used phrases such as 'strong modern nation', 'absolute Czech values' and the 'spirit of the homeland' in his writings. (90) Various movements—cubist architecture, primitivism, and poetism—became popular in this era. The most important *avant-garde* art society of the era, *Devětsil*, was influenced by Soviet art and theory. *Devětsil* spokesman, Karel Teige called for a 'people's art, an unspoilt, urban culture, the 'freshness' of which could act...as a potential impulse for the new modern art of an ideal classless society'. (103) Less radical thinkers, such as Karel and Josef Čapek, still embraced urban modernism, arguing for accessibility and valuing unofficial art, such as shop signs, toys, and pottery. President Tomáš Masaryk took a strong interest in these discussions and sought to infuse modern styles into the Prague Castle, the seat of government. While Czech proletarian art had origins before Czechoslovakia's formation, the new state's establishment led to public discussions of 'the role of art and architecture in improving the lives of the proletariat'. (109)

In Chapter 4, Filipová takes on the broad topic of 'Identity'. This term has been widely debated and—by some historians—discredited. Jeremy King, Tara Zahra, and Peter Judson, for example, have questioned whether most Central Europeans created a sense of self around the nation, and caution against the semantic slippage between identity and nation.⁸ In this chapter, the term identity particularly encompasses how artists and art writers contributed to the creation of a

⁸ Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002; Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007; Pieter M. Judson and Marsha L. Rozenblitt (eds.) *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe*, New York: Berghahn Books, 2004; and Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*.

new Czechoslovak identity; however, Filipová does not problematize or historicize the term.

Filipová sees a strong link between 'Czechoslovak identity and art history'. (120) Like most of the book, Filipová's focus here is on the intellectuals who did strongly identify with their nationality, rather than the influence these writers had on people's self-perception. Descendants of the Czech-focused national revival suddenly had to reconcile a 'nation state' that included Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians, Poles, and Jews. (Some Jews self-identified with an ethnicity, such as German or Czech, and others selected 'Jewish' on the national census.) The strong, established national movement influenced some Czechs to try to nationalise the country in their own image. Czech art historians, for example, dominated the department at Comenius University in Bratislava. Yet, there were also deliberate attempts to create a single Czechoslovak nation, which united Czechs and Slovaks. This tactic enabled 'Czechoslovaks' to claim majority status and cast the one-third German population as ethnic minorities. An important 1926 art history textbook by Zdeněk Wirth, the 'chief conservator and protector of monuments of the new Czechoslovak state,' characterized the entire region's art history as 'Czechoslovak art'. (128) Yet, examples of artwork were primarily Czech; for example, a section of the text book that characterised the Baroque Era as 'a peak in the history of Czechoslovak art' only included examples from Prague, 'leaving out any monuments from Moravia and let alone Slovakia'. (129) Another text from 1928 and also compiled by Wirth, criticized the linkage between vernacular art and national art. A contributor to the volume, Antonín Matějček 'did acknowledge the historical importance of folk art at a specific period in the past, but not in the present'. (132) Filipová importantly demonstrates a tension between the need to create a unified Czechoslovak identity and the view held by many Czech art critics that Slovakia and Ruthenia were 'enrooted in vernacular culture, and hence understood as backward'. (138) Historical studies of the past three decades have demonstrated the Czech-Slovak tensions in politics, religion, and the economy, and Filipová joins this conversation by bringing in visual arts and art writing.⁹

Chapter 5, 'Traditions', brings the narrative into the later interwar period. Filipová does problematise the term 'tradition,' explaining that 'for many authors, tradition was synonymous with a regressive tendency'. (145) Yet, she argues, 'tradition was given a multitude of meanings, which ranged from the sustenance of historicist expression to seeing it as being linked with the artistic practices of a specific social class or gender'. (145-46) Much of the chapter analyses Alfons Mucha's *The Slav Epic*, a twenty-canvas painting cycle the artist bestowed on the city of Prague in 1928, in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the state. The

⁹ See for example, Ladislav Holý, *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation. National Identity and the Post-Communist Social Transformation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, and Jan Rychlík, 'Czech-Slovak Relations, 1918-1939,' in *Czechoslovakia in Nationalist and Fascist Europe, 1918-1948*, edited by Mark Cornwall and R. J. W. Evans, London: British Academy, 2007, 13-26.

enormous opus garnered a range of opinions, which highlight some of Filipová's arguments about the various Czech(oslovak) modernisms in the early twentieth century. Some critics disparaged Mucha's 'historicizing paintings which they saw as full of pathos,' While others—notably Josef Čapek—discounted the work as lacking 'artistic merits'. (152) Others, representing the Western-oriented *avant garde* disliked the thematic pan-Slavism, which linked the Czechs too closely with Russia and the Soviet Union. Yet, many on the left, such as Karel Teige thought the work as representative of 'commercial kitsch, which preserved the institutional status quo, traditions and conservative academic values in art'. (153) Despite the criticisms, Mucha's *The Slav Epic* remains one of the most discussed artworks of the era.¹⁰

The chapter delves into the gender analysis that appeared strongly in Chapters 1 and 2 but was later eclipsed by other themes. The association of regressive tradition with women's or domestic art often predominated the view of even the most progressive male artists and critics. A 1919 exhibition sponsored by the artistic section of the Central Association of Czech Women drew critique from Karel Čapek, who regretted that 'the exhibited works lacked femininity that would differentiate them from the male counterparts' (166), and art critic Václav Nebeský, who believed that 'a woman cannot match a man and his artistic genius, [but] she can excel in 'decoration or applied arts'. (166) However, not all female artists conformed to contemporary stereotypes. Filipová profiles the breakthrough Czechoslovak female artist, Marie Čermínová, who renamed herself the gender-neutral 'Toyen' (from the French *citoyen*). The artist strongly identified with the political and artistic left and joined *Devětsil* in 1923. Throughout her life, Toyen subverted gendered expectations in artistic expression, personal presentation, and linguistic conventions. Toyen's work 'frequently contained images close to surrealism and explicit sexual references'. (167) Filipová posits Toyen as an important figure who disrupted the male-dominated *avant garde* with her androgynous presentation and erotic subjects, while distancing herself from so-called women's arts, the decorative and domestic.¹¹

¹⁰ See, for example, Erin Dusza, 'Pan-Slavism in Alphonse Mucha's Slav Epic,' *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2014), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring14/dusza-onpan-slavism-in-alphonse-mucha-s-slav-epic> and Marta Filipová, "'What Shall We Do With It?'" Finding A Place for Alfons Mucha and His Slav Epic', *Austrian History Yearbook* 46 (April 2015), 203-227.

¹¹ Karla Huebner's forthcoming monograph will enhance these complex debates about Toyen's place in the *avant garde*. Karla Huebner, *Magnetic Woman: Toyen and the Surrealist Erotic* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, November 2020). Her earlier works on Toyen have highlighted the gendered identities, and male domination, of the Czech *avant garde*. See especially, Karla Huebner, 'Fire Smoulders in the Veins: Toyen's Queer Desire and Its Roots in Prague Surrealism', *Papers of Surrealism* 8 (2010), 1-22 and Karla Huebner, 'In Pursuit of Toyen: Feminist Biography in an Art-Historical Context', *Journal of Women's History* 25, no. 1 (2013), 14-36.

Filipová's well-written conclusion recaps the important themes from her monograph. She writes, 'debates about Czech modern art revolved not only around its attempts to establish a relationship with the international artistic context, they kept returning to the question of its relation to Czech modern society, nation, and, eventually, state'. (179) She stresses the importance of the region's complex ethnic makeup and stratified class structure, and she reminds her readers that Prague was not the only centre of Czech(oslovak) art.

Overall, Filipová's arguments are quite convincing and firmly grounded in both primary source research and secondary scholarship from various fields. An author cannot do everything in a single monograph, but there are further areas available for exploration by Filipová or other scholars. More research on gender and sexuality in Czech(oslovak) art might analyse how and why gendered images predominated much of the nationalist art and could seek to uncover gender in more abstract modernism. One might also ask why modernism's focus on progress seemed limited to male achievements in art, even though Czech progressivism was closely linked with women's emancipation. The question of social class could also bear further fruitful research and analysis. Both rural and proletarian art was seen as 'the people's art,' but much of Filipová's focus in this monograph centres on how the intellectuals and artists depicted these groups rather than how these populations viewed themselves artistically and creatively. Finally, it would be fascinating to see more analysis of Slovak and Ruthenian art, in the excellent model Filipová provides for Moravia. Hopefully, art historians and cultural historians will continue to take up these questions, as we have not concluded the debate about what identity, nation, and modernity meant or mean in regions that have overlapping histories, diverse ethnic groups, and various levels of development. Marta Filipová's book will certainly inspire other scholars and advanced students to pursue further research on Czech modernisms.

Cynthia Paces is professor and chair of history at The College of New Jersey. Her monograph, *Prague Panoramas: National Memory and Sacred Space in the Twentieth Century* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009) explored the relationship among religion, nationalism, and public space in Prague. She has published articles on national memory, public health, and religion. Currently she is writing a history of Prague since the early Middle Ages.

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