

IN THE MIDDLE OF IT ALL:
PRAGUE, BRNO, AND THE AVANT-GARDE NETWORKS OF INTERWAR EUROPE

BY

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DEDICATION

for a fierce triumvirate of ladies:

Eliška and my two babičky

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~

The seed of this dissertation was planted before I ever made it to Michigan, when I was a Master’s student at Columbia, and had the opportunity to take a course with Noam Elcott on Interwar Film and Photography. It was Professor Elcott who first introduced me to Karel Teige, so he deserves acknowledgement here.

If that early seed has in fact flowered (and it is up to the reader to pass judgment on that), it has not been without the advice and support of my dissertation advisement committee: Tatjana Aleksić, Kerstin Barndt, Nicholas Sawicki, and Jindřich Toman. It has been a pleasure and an honor to spend these years working with Professor Toman, a gentleman and a scholar of transatlantic legend. He embodies the word *Doktorvater* in all its dimensions, and even in the moments that he ruffled my feathers, I was never not grateful for the wisdom of his words and charmed by his good humor. Thank you, Jindra. Professor Aleksić has been a role model for me since early in my graduate school career. She is brilliant and bad ass, and demands no less than that from her students. I am flattered that she found me worthy of her hard truths and high expectations, as well as her friendship. Professor Barndt has also been a mentor and great supporter of my work both within and without academe. Her deep knowledge of the period under discussion in this dissertation, from the German perspective, has helped to elevate this project immeasurably. And I am so grateful to Professor Sawicki for coming onto the committee from outside the UM community. The meticulous, thoughtful comments that he has provided to multiple drafts of this dissertation will surely save any subsequent readers many headaches (and myself some embarrassment). All four members of the committee can be thanked for helping to improve what is to follow; all that is still lacking is of course a measure of my own shortcomings alone.

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~

I would never have set down the questionable life path of a career in Czech Studies if it had not been for my mother's Czech heritage that led me to spend the Spring semester of 2005 in Prague as a student of New York University. My first Czech language class, with Jiří Novák, and Czech literature course, with Tomáš Vrba, are no doubt the reasons I decided to go further down this trail. And Associate Director of NYU in Prague, Thea Favaloro, never stopped offering assistance after that semester ended. She helped me to find a place to live and work when I decided to move back to Prague after graduation and later, in the year between completing my Master's and beginning my PhD, she hired me to work at NYU, in what can only be described as one of the most magical in my life. The joy in that year had a lot to do with my position at NYU in Prague, which introduced me to some of my dearest friends: Maruška Džurňaková, Vendula Krumpholcová, and Eva Sterecová. I am grateful to all of them for putting up with my tangents on obscure literary figures in idiosyncratic Czech, and sometimes also putting me up along with

the world's most meanest little dog on my frequent Prague visits. Eva in turn introduced me to Jakub Hauser, in whom I've found a great friend and colleague.

And I would be remiss if I did not admit that the most magical thing about that year in Prague was discovering a tall and lanky redhead, Ian McLellan Davis, who wrote a Balet bez baletky and has been my ginger biscuit ever since.

~

And I would never have gone to graduate school to study literature of all things if it hadn't been for a life long love of and belief in books, fostered especially by my father and bolstered by his brother, who would recite poetry to me, pipe in mouth, on East Coast visits. I have both my parents to thank for letting me do me, encouraging me to pursue a life in the Humanities from a young age. And thanks to my little brother for humoring me as I tested out my pedagogical skills on him before he could even read.

Libraries—where the books live—have always been where I've wanted to be. And fortunately, I do not actually live in the period that I study, when these hallowed spaces did not so often open their doors to women, as Virginia Woolf reminds us. I must then offer an expression of gratitude here to my favorites: first and foremost, Bobst Library at NYU, in which I have resided for fourteen years and counting; also in New York the Schwarzman Building and Jefferson Market branches of the NYPL, and the Butler and Avery Libraries at Columbia; the National Library in Prague and the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin; the Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library at the University of Michigan and the Malletts Creek Branch of the Ann Arbor District Library; and the Woodland Hills Branch Library in Los Angeles, where it all began.

To close, so that we might begin, I'd like to give the books that have meant the most the final note of thanks here: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (Maya Angelou); *Go Tell It On a Mountain* (James Baldwin); *Camera Lucida* (Roland Barthes); *Madeline* (Ludwig Bemelman); *Between the World and Me* (Ta-Nehisi Coates); *A Moveable Feast* (Ernest Hemingway); *Too Loud a Solitude* (Bohumil Hrabal); *Ulysses* (James Joyce); *Love in the Time of Cholera* (Gabriel García Márquez); *The Argonauts* (Maggie Nelson); *Citizen* (Claudia Rankine); *Museum of Unconditional Surrender* (Dubravka Ugrešić); and *Mrs. Dalloway* (Virginia Woolf). It is their words that give me faith in words, that bring shape to meaning.

PREFACE
THE PLACE WHERE I COME IN

“Method of this project: literary montage. I needn’t say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuable, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them.”¹

Walter Benjamin
Arcades Project (1927-1940)

“That is the topic which concerns me here, and I am going to take a circuitous route to reach it. My apologies, but this apparent detour is the argument itself.”

Susan Buck-Morss
“Hegel and Haiti” (*Critical Inquiry* 2000)²

As I began work on this dissertation some years ago, I had ambitions to write it in the form of a long, deconstructive and deconstructing essay that embodied in its own making a resistance to accepted models and norms that is at its theoretical core. Now, this sounds a tad ridiculous, and at any rate, I very quickly came to understand that if you want a PhD, you better write a Dissertation, not a meandering work of essayistic prose. I fear that all that remains of that early,

¹ Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1999), 460.

² Susan Buck-Morss, “Hegel and Haiti,” in *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 23.

idealist ambition in the pages that follow adds up to organizational issues that will tax one's patience.

If my dissertation, in its stronger moments, has turned out to be just another classic example of what a dissertation is, replete with parenthesis and heavily footnoted, as I dutifully show my tracks through the archives and libraries, I hope I will be permitted a moment here to do something a little different, to let my own "I" enter. In a recent article for *The Guardian*, in 2015, a PhD student at the University of Exeter, Karen O'Donnell, wrote in response to sexist comments about women in academia that, "writing yourself into your work gives an authenticity to your academic voice. It allows you to be honest about why you're doing the work you're doing and why you care. It helps your readers to understand why they should care. It makes your biases clear."³ I subscribe to what O'Donnell states here and feel it is necessary, before proceeding, to state my positionality, and my bias, which is of course there in the following pages even if the "I" mostly disappears after this Prologue.

~

The aim of this dissertation is to add to the careful and convincing scholarship conducted in recent decades that situates the Czech interwar avant-garde in the 1920s within the larger context of an international (largely European) avant-garde, its important place in this history previously having received little attention. But while the Czech avant-garde has been so often disregarded in surveys and exhibition catalogues of European art making in the interwar

³ Karen O'Donnell, "Why academia needs emotional, passionate women," *The Guardian*, July 23, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2015/jul/23/why-academia-needs-emotional-passionate-women>.

period, so too have I both intentionally and inadvertently disregarded so much that also ought to receive attention. The word “international” is used too frequently in this dissertation to indicate an exchange beyond Czech borders but within the geographic confines of Europe, at the risk of suggesting, as Hal Foster wrote recently in the *London Review of Books*, with regards to the collections of the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim, that “‘international’ still mostly means Europe.”⁴ My world view is large enough to see an “international” that reaches well beyond Europe, and yet, paradoxically, in order for the organizing concepts of this dissertation—which seek to deconstruct a center-periphery binary—to be globally relevant, I aim to show here how they operate at the local level. It is my great hope that the methods by which I assert the prominent position of historically marginalized figures of the Czech avant-garde will offer a more universally applicable strategy for restoring agency in a variety of contexts.

Perhaps it could go without saying that this dissertation does not cover everything, as any scholarly undertaking must be necessarily narrow in focus, and yet there is a real danger in assuming that the reader assumes what has been left out. In researching this project, I have worked extensively in archives and I gravitate to what I understand to be relevant, overlooking what holds less interest. In what I choose to photograph or otherwise record, and in what is held in the archive in the first place, a process of exclusion is always in effect. Jacques Derrida writes in *The Postcard*, that the process of collecting is “due to a very strange principle of selection, and which for my part, even today, I consider questionable, as, moreover, the grate,

⁴ Hal Foster, “At the Met Breuer,” *London Review of Books*, March 31, 2016, 28.

the filter, and the economy of sorting can be on every occasion, especially if they destine for preservation, not to say for the archive.”⁵ I do not deny, and in fact strongly insist on, the fact that I applied a grate, a filter, in the “economy of sorting” that is working with vast amounts of archival materials. I thus maintain before moving forward that the following should be read as through a filter of my own making: this is an interpretation of a history formed of specific data points, my own education, privileged socio-economic background, and cultural, literary/linguistic, and artistic interests. There is, without a doubt, some bias in that.

For while this dissertation points to networks previously overlooked and aims to amplify voices little heard, there is at the same time a silencing of others as a consequence. This can be partially attributed to the scope of my project, which takes Devětsil—a group comprised of strictly white European males, with only one female member—as a point from which all external influence is explored. But there is also another filter applied at the archival level, where a not invisible hand determines who and what is worthy of preserving for posterity. Save for a few notable figures—such as Toyen (née Marie Čermínová), the only female member of Devětsil, and the formidable editor Marie Mayerová—women, for instance, made seldom appearance in my work in the archives, and when they did crop up, it was typically in the role of wife, lover, or secretary, writing letters on behalf of more famous men, or writing to these men with words of endearment.

And, while the history of Modernism and the historical avant-garde might reflect, as Partha Mittner writes, an “experimental attitude that constantly sought to push intellectual

⁵ Jacques Derrida, *The Postcard*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 3-4.

frontiers, its ideology of emancipatory innovation, and its antagonistic relation to tradition and authority released new energies in artists raised in a more traditional role,”⁶ the avant-gardists under primary consideration here were emancipatory to a limit. It is hard to imagine that the men that I have made it my project to advocate for, would ever have cared so much for me. Women were largely excluded from the avant-garde movements, or relegated to less visible roles (the Bauhaus is famous for this, and Dadaist Hannah Höch was treated abominably by the others in the Berlin group, including by her lover Raoul Hausmann⁷). Certain nationalities and languages were favored, and a growing turn towards Primitivism, which also captivated members of Devětsil, led to many racist, othering statements that remind us that the very regions I aim here to distance from articulations of the “peripheral” aimed to assert their own proximity to western centers by gesturing towards peripheries further afield. Sure enough, Mittner himself goes on to remind us that “Modernism created its own tacit exclusions and inclusions,” and that “the center-periphery relation is not only one of geography but also power and authority that implicates race, gender, and sexual orientation.”⁸

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The academy has its ways of inuring too many of its chosen ones against a compulsion to apply research findings, writings, and debates to contemporary issues that ought to demand

⁶ Partha Mittner, “Interventions: Decentering Modernism,” *Art Bulletin* 90, no. 4 (2008): 533.

⁷ See: Magdalena Droste, “The Bauhaus Object between Authorship and Anonymity,” in *The Bauhaus Construct: Fashioning Identity, Discourse, and Modernism*, eds. Jeffrey Sautnik and Robin Schuldenfrei (New York: Routledge, 2009), 205-225; Maud Lavin, *Cut With the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Ulrike Müller, *Bauhaus Women*, trans. Emer Lettow and Sarah Kane (Paris: Flammarion, 2009); Malynne Sternstein, “This Impossible Toyen,” in *The Popular Avant-Garde*, ed. Renée Silverman (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 41-58.

⁸ Mittner 540.

all of our attention. Perhaps it is that American campuses are so leafy and idyllic, allowing us to pretend that this utopic vision is but the world on a micro-scale. But this is maybe too facile. Perhaps it is something more sinister, something a little closer to what O'Donnell describes in *The Guardian*: "Rigorous challenging of ideas and robust debate are essential to academia, but I believe that this battle prevents creativity and big thinking. When you know your idea will be attacked, you put forward the smallest, most defensible idea you can."⁹ Though I have made an effort throughout graduate school to find public outlets for my research that allow me to make practical use of the theory by which I operate—that a center-periphery conception of our world is dependent on the maintenance of a hegemonic structure, and only by doing away with such a conception can we begin to move away from something that privileges what is west, what is white, what is male—I feel too that tendency to make my argument tiny, my field of vision small, so as not to step into enemy territory, to come under attack by "the experts," or worse still, to offend, to cause harm, where I meant to do good.

But there is a way beyond this, and many passionate scholars and public intellectuals have lead that way, by tackling large, complex issues and histories with nuance, compassion, and impeccable style: Maggie Nelson, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Carol Mavor, Dubravka Ugrešić, Susan Buck-Morss. Also Jenny Diski and Svetlana Boym, both of whom have passed in the time of writing this dissertation. If these influential figures do not feature much (or at all) in the footnotes of this dissertation, they are most certainly there between the lines. Diski, in her final

⁹ O'Donnell.

column for the *London Review of Books* before her death, wrote illuminatingly on why not knowing, and admitting what we do not know, is so frightening and important:

I am scared of dissolution, of casting my particles to the wind, of having nothing to cast my particles to the wind with, of knowing nothing when knowing everything has been the taste every day, little by little, by knowing what little meant compared to a lot, compared to something or nothing. People have always worried me with questions, questions have always worried me with having no answers. That's what I mean. I don't know enough, or know nothing. And then I get to the nub of it. What should I know about? When great minds have gone to dust, what could it possibly matter what I know or don't know? What arrogance to imagine that my minute fossils of knowledge are of any importance. Then again who is going to win the third world war? How will my grandchildren manage in a world that is daily dispersing, without a grandmother who has already dispersed? Or most simply, I'm curious. What will I not know when I'm not a knowing machine? There are too many questions for an ordinary curious mind. How can nothing be nothing? Help me out here, philosophers, there isn't much time.¹⁰

I contend that it is the job of us humanists to point out what we do not know alongside what we do, to set a precedent that the scientists and economists ought also to follow. So: throughout the writing of this dissertation, I sensed always the sore limits of my own project. I still do, of course. At least, I think, there is some power in acknowledging this, stating outright that even something "finished" is also, and always, a work in progress.

New York
May 2016

¹⁰ Jenny Diski, "Mother's Prettiest Thing," *London Review of Books*, February 4, 2016, 21-22.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to broaden our understanding of what has come to be widely called the “historical avant-garde” (Bürger) of the interwar period to incorporate lesser known—but equally important—sites of literary and artistic production in Europe from outside the western canon. *In the Middle of It All: Prague, Brno, and the Avant-Garde Networks of Interwar Europe* shows how a group of leftist Czech artists, writers, architects, and actors, led by Karel Teige, engaged dialogically with peers at home and around Europe in the 1920s. The networks that Devětsil built, and how it built them, can be observed today in the remaining letters, travel accounts, and publications of its members. These are the media around which this dissertation is organized, in its consideration of both the private and public avant-garde. By presenting the published manifestos and theoretical texts of the avant-garde *in situ*—considering the design of the periodicals in which they appeared, any images that might appear besides text, and what authors were included together in an issue—this dissertation adds both to previous close readings of the texts under consideration (Zusi), as well as seminal work that has stated convincingly the need to introduce the study of ephemeral, printed matter and its design into a history of the avant-gardes of the early Twentieth Century (Drucker).

By looking at the output of the private avant-garde—as manifest in letters and personal photographs, saved clippings from magazines and essay drafts—alongside publicly circulated materials—such as serial journal publications and anthologies—this dissertation shows in detail

how Devětsil utilized correspondence, travel, publishing platforms, and typographic innovation to participate in mutually influential networks of exchange across the continent. The theoretical frame within which these networks are located and analyzed draws from the Social Sciences (Luhmann) as well as Post Colonial Studies (Buck-Morss, Mohanty, Pratt), Periodical Studies (Ardis, Brooker and Thacker, Philpotts, Scholes and Wulfman) and epistolary theory (Altman, Deleuze and Guattari, Derrida, MacArthur). Utilizing such an interdisciplinary model, this dissertation reveals that the outcomes of the interwar exchange described have had a wide reaching impact, not only on art production and intellectual output in then Czechoslovakia, but also with regard to that region's influence around the European continent. Through a series of case studies that take the Czech avant-garde of the 1920s as its focus, this dissertation points out and challenges gaps in our popular, western-centric understanding of the European interwar avant-garde, and resists long held notions of center and periphery.

INTRODUCTION

PERIPHERALLY YOURS

The authors of these experiments—Nezval, Seifert, Voskovec, and, with permission, Teige as well—wish to embrace all the fruits of poetry, liberated from a literature we throw into the scrap heap: it is a poetry of Sunday afternoons, picnics, lit-up cafés, intoxicating cocktails, lively boulevards, spa promenades, but also the poetry of quiet, of night, calm, and peace.¹¹

Karel Teige
“Poetism” (*Host* 1924)

Two years after the end of World War One, in December of 1920, a cohort of young artists, writers, architects, and actors in Prague announced the foundation of the group Devěsil in the paper *Pražské pondělí* (*Prague Monday*). In no uncertain terms, the signatories of this manifesto renounced the past and pledged to forge a path to a better future. “The times are changing,” they opened, “Behind us remains the old era,

¹¹ Karel Teige, “Poetism,” in *Karel Teige/1900-1951: L’Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-garde*, eds. Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha, trans. Alexandra Büchler (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 71. Original: “Autoři těchto experimentů: Nezval, Seifert, Voskovec a, s dovolením, Teige chtěli by obsáhnout všechny květy poesie, zcela odpoutané od literatury, již házíme do starého železa, poesie nedělních odpůldní, výletů, zářících kaváren, opojných alkoholů, oživených bulvárů a lázeňských promenad i poesii ticha, noci, klidu a míru.” [Karel Teige, “Poetismus,” *Host* 3, no. 9-10 (July 1924): 204.]

The published translation is used for this essay, with minor modifications. All other translations in this dissertation are my own unless otherwise noted.

sentenced to decay in the libraries, and before us shines a new day.”¹² Their vision for the future was an international one, situated as they were geographically and temporally in a newly configured Europe, and it was an early goal of the young signatories to align themselves with artists and thinkers from beyond Czechoslovak borders engaged in a similar struggle for (what they considered to be) a non-bourgeois form of art that was fully integrated into everyday life. Even before Devětsil was officially founded, Karel Teige (1900-1951), arguably the most visible member of the group today, wrote to fellow member Artuš Černík (1900-1954) with the comment, “It would be good if our commune, as soon as it is founded, established international ties.”¹³

The newly formed state of Czechoslovakia, founded out of the rubble of World War One in the Fall of 1918, with Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937) as its first President, was right in the middle of a changing Europe, and its young artists and writers were eager to engage with peers beyond the new Czech borders as they created innovative work that expressed both the optimism of a new era, and a grief over the devastation of the First World War. Collectively they worked together to envision a “New Europe” by forging non-hierarchical networks and fostering bold experimentation.

¹² Karel Teige et al., “U.S. Devětsil,” *Pražské ponděli* (Dec. 6, 1920). Anthologized in *Avantgarda známá a neznámá*, ed. Vlačín Štěpán, vol. 1 (Praha: Svoboda, Rudé právo, 1970), 81. Original: “Doba se rozlomila. Za námi zůstává starý čas, odsouzený k zpráchnivění v knihovách, a před námi jiskří nový den.”

¹³ Karel Teige to Artuš Černík, Apr. 1, 1920, Památník Národního Písemnictví, Prague (hereafter cited as PNP), Artuš Černík Archive (hereafter cited as AČ Archive). Original: “bylo by dobře aby naše komuna, jakmile bude založena, měla své styky s cizinou.”

An effort has been made to preserve the spelling, punctuation, and capitalization of the original letters cited throughout this dissertation. Irregularities, misspellings, and typographical peculiarities are therefore retained, and in only exceptional circumstances followed by a “[sic].”

Yet the contributions of these Czech artists and intellectuals have so often been overshadowed by colleagues hailing from larger neighboring nations to the west. In early 1990, art historian Tomáš Vlček went so far in his essay “Art Between Social Crisis and Utopia: The Czech Contribution to the Development of the Avant-Garde Movement in East-Central Europe, 1910-1930” to state that the Czech avant-garde was “so peripheral that both its participants and its contextual development have been overlooked.”¹⁴ But by then, only some months after the fall of the Berlin Wall, things were already on a path towards drastic change. Sonia de Puineuf describes that with more accessibility to state archives post-’89 came an “impulse of rediscovery [that] had offered new views of the theory of centers and peripheries: one removes Paris from its throne as the capital of [the] arts, one pits the cosmopolitan Berlin against the influential Moscow, and between the these east-west poles, one revalorizes Warsaw, Prague, Zagreb and Bucharest.”¹⁵ The validity of this colorful claim does not need to be defended here; there are more books, exhibition catalogues, and articles each year that have reasserted the importance and influence of sites of the European avant-garde previously held as “marginal.” And the Czechs have not been left out of this revival. The title of one very recent volume alone, Derek Sayer’s 2014 *Prague: Capital of the Twentieth Century*,¹⁶ a sweeping survey of the interwar avant-garde that takes Prague as

¹⁴ Tomáš Vlček, “Art Between Social Crisis and Utopia: The Czech Contribution to the Development of the Avant-garde Movement in East-Central Europe, 1910-1930,” *Art Journal* 49, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 34.

¹⁵ Sonia de Puineuf, “A Dot on the Map: Some Remarks on the Magazine *Nová Bratislava*,” *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010): 100.

¹⁶ In Sayer’s choice of subtitle, he is of course referencing Walter Benjamin’s famous *Arcades Project* (in which Benjamin crowns Paris the capital of the Eighteenth Century).

its focal point, suggests a far more central positioning of Prague than what Vlček saw to be hazardously peripheral. But while we can state with confidence that Vlček's characterization of a Prague at risk of being totally lost to oblivion is not today a serious risk for the legacy of the Czech avant-garde, the Czech artistic and intellectual production of the interwar years does still lack the meticulous sort of archival attention that its westerly neighbors have enjoyed. The following is an attempt to join, and add nuance to, recent scholarship that helps correct this oversight.

In Timothy Benson's Introduction to the exhibition catalogue *Central European Avant-gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910-1930*, the curator asks, "Where was?—when was?—the avant-garde of Central Europe?"¹⁷ Benson writes that "there has been little agreement on how it [Central European interwar art] should be interpreted or even what the boundaries of the field of inquiry should be."¹⁸ Benson seeks not to "fix precise boundaries to the regions of Central Europe,"¹⁹ which is also not the intent of my project here, but what I *do* aim to do, and what is lacking in Benson's catalogue, is to map networks transacted by various means and at multiple

Teige himself attempted to assert the quality of Czech art-making vis-à-vis the French situation. In an essay written on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the famous modernist Mánes Gallery, he claims that since the dawn of the Twentieth Century, Czech culture had "overcome provincial oppression" ("překonat provinciální tíseň") so that the "path to the world" was now opened ("otevřít cestu do světa"), setting Prague "next to Paris, [as] one of the most significant centers of European art" ("Praha je dnes vedle Paříže jedním z nejvýznačnějších center evropského umění"). [Teige, "Mezinárodní orientace českého umění," *Světobzor* (1937). Anthologized in *Karel Teige*, eds. Jiří Brabec, Vratislav Effenberger, Květoslav Chvatík and Robert Kalivoda, vol. 2 (Prague: Společnost Karla Teiga, 2012), 391.]

An attempt to deign centers or capitals, however, is far from the mission of this project.

¹⁷ Timothy O. Benson, "Introduction," in *Central European Avant-gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910-1930*, ed. Timothy Benson (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2002), 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

points to express a fluidity in exchange. In this key way, my work is quite different from that of Benson's; Benson paradoxically organizes his catalogue by inscribing distinct geographical boundaries to the sections, despite the claim in the Introduction that he would like to avoid circumscribing geographic territories. In the chapters that follow, the Czech avant-garde is put into direct conversation with affiliated movements elsewhere, so as to highlight artistic affinities largely unobstructed by national borders.

This dissertation also emphasizes the regional Czech context, though, as I describe in detail both the local and international networks forged by the Czech avant-garde. Devětsil used these networks to reach both an audience at home and abroad as it called for a more just and joyful post-war world. Of Devětsil's homegrown –ism, Poetism, Teige writes, "It was born in an atmosphere of cheerful fellowship, *in a world that laughs*, and who cares if it laughs itself to tears?"²⁰ At the heart of Devětsil is an unapologetic embrace of the materials that it believed could produce a better world, which it found in the music halls and cabarets of Paris, a bottle of wine, the products of the cinema, the possibilities of the camera and the printing press. It upheld these things in its artistic and intellectual production, its exhibitions and lectures, with the twofold aim of expanding its own influence while also gaining comrades in a struggle to move beyond the wretchedness of war and envision a future in which it would have no place.

²⁰ Teige, "Poetism," 68. Original: "Zrodilo se v atmosféře jaré družnosti, *ve světě, který se směje*; co na tom, slzí-li mu oči." Emphasis is the author's. [Teige, "Poetismus," 199-200.]

A World That Laughs (*Svět, který se směje*) would become the subtitle in 1928 of the first volume of Teige's two-volume project, *On Humor, Clowns, and Dadaists* (*o humoru clownech a dadaistech*), which will be discussed in Chapter Two.

The networks that Devětsil built, and how it built them, can be observed today in the remaining letters, travel accounts, and publications of its members, and these are the media around which this dissertation is organized, considering both the public (i.e. published) and private (enacted via correspondence and personal travel) avant-garde. To reveal these networks, however, is just one goal of the dissertation. The other is to look closely at the actual work created by Devětsil, to emphasize that the art and literature produced by the group was innovative and on par with work coming from other European centers, and in fact had a reciprocal influence on the production of other major sites of art making in Europe, perhaps most notably at the Bauhaus in Germany (and later, in the 1930s, on the Surrealists in France).

As I situate the work of Devětsil within the greater framework of interwar Europe, the idea of “centers” of production comes itself under scrutiny as I attempt a mapping that undermines the hierarchy of center-periphery relations.²¹ The editors of

²¹ In his dissertation, Matthew Witkovsky describes skeptically attempts made, particularly within Czech scholarship, to ascribe a central positioning to the Czech avant-garde. The skepticism comes not from a questioning of whether Devětsil’s production was of central importance, but rather for its whiff of nationalist rhetoric, a “bizarre juxtaposition of avant-gardism and patriotism.” [Matthew Witkovsky, “Avant-Garde and Center: Devětsil in Czech Culture, 1918-1938” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2002), 11.]

A nationalist reading could be the unintended interpretation of the self-assertive project of Devětsil or the slant of this dissertation, which seeks to position Czech art-making and intellectual production more distinctly within histories of the early Twentieth Century avant-gardes. But it is in fact not my intention to suggest the exceptional status of Devětsil, rather its equal and integral place amongst better known movements.

And while there certainly was a positioning by Devětsil of its importance and relevance within an international arena that connotes a certain level of cultural specificity, neither Devětsil nor Teige meant to further a nationalist position. Though the group was insistent on re-aligning Brno and Prague’s “peripheral” status to reflect the important work coming out of the Czech capital, and place it within a greater international context, this did not, as Derek Sayer notes, spring from “patriotic motives.” Rather, as Sayer writes with some liberty, Teige “hated nationalism with the same modern contempt he reserved for religion, bourgeois marriage, and superfluous decoration on buildings.” [Derek Sayer, “Modernism, Seen from Prague, March 1937,” *Artl@s Bulletin* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 21.]

the 2006 volume *The Avant-Garde and the Margin* write that the “tenets of deconstruction” point to an “ideological flaw” in center-margin articulations: “there is no ‘natural’ center, just as there is no ‘inevitable’ margin.”²² But in the essays in that volume, the concepts of center and periphery/margin are preserved nonetheless, as a way to discuss relationally the distance between two points. And Partha Mittner, in “Interventions: Decentering Modernism” suggests that there could be harm in doing away with these anchoring concepts altogether, that the “concept of the periphery assumes important theoretical significance” in as much as it can point to that fact that even within the avant-garde, “other modernisms were silenced as derivative and suffering from a time lag because of their geographic locations.”²³ Though Mittner makes an important point here that ought not be dismissed, I still attempt in this dissertation to do away with terms that suggest a lesser or inferior status of certain localities of the avant-garde. Even if this attempt is not entirely successful, there is, I

Evidence of Devětsil’s distinctly non-patriotic stance can be found in its publication *Život 2*, which includes a quote attributed to Maurice de Vlaminck, printed in large bold letters: “Stupidity is national. Intelligence is international.” Original: “Hloupost je nacionální. Inteligence je internacionální.” [*Život 2* (1922), 62.]

²² Sanja Bahun-Radunović and Marinos Pourgouris, “Prefaces and Faces: Towards a Centripetal Theory of Modernism,” in *The Avant-Garde and the Margin: New Territories of Modernism*, eds. Sanja Bahun-Radunović and Marinos Pourgouris (Newcastle, UK: Cambirdge Scholars Press, 2006), xiv.

²³ Partha Mittner, “Interventions: Decentering Modernism,” in *Art Bulletin* 90, no. 4 (2008), 540.

This “time lag” is an example of what has also been called “uneven modernity,” which Harsha Ram defines as “the condition in which cultural forms, socio-economic structures and ideological projects associated elsewhere with distinct historical periods or modes of production coexist in close proximity.” [Harsha Ram, “Introducing Georgian Modernism,” *Modernism/Modernity* 21, no. 1 (January 2014): 285.]

A couple years earlier, in a discussion led by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak on the relationship of postcolonial and Post-Soviet theory at the annual meeting of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and European Languages, later printed in the *PMLA*, Ram writes also of an “uneven history” in the case of “discursive elaboration” of Eurasia in comparison to the former Soviet Union, and its “weak institutional legitimacy until its recent, rapid adoption by area studies institutes and centers in the United States.” [Harsha Ram, “Are We Postcolonial? Post-Soviet Space; Between 1917 and 1947: Postcoloniality and Russia-Eurasia” in *PMLA* 121, no. 3 (May 2006): 833.]

hope, something uncomfortable and powerful in suggesting the possibility of a move beyond an articulation of relating centers to peripheries that inherently maintains the hierarchical construct itself.

In his Introduction to the *Exchange and Transformation* catalogue, Benson had described the network of cultural exchange in the early part of the Twentieth Century as “a world of locales without center or peripheries,”²⁴ figured as a set of links between several geographic points. But in fact, some pages earlier, his own expression of the Central European networks in relation to neighbors to the east and west largely undermines such an idyllic statement, pointing to the difficulty of maintaining a democratic commitment to fully circumventing a center-periphery binary in discussions of the Central European avant-garde:

The Central European avant-garde of the early decades of the century was integrally related to its now better-known, well-documented counterparts in Paris and Moscow. Artists and writers coalesced in metropolitan centers such as Berlin, Warsaw, Munich, Vienna, Prague, and Budapest, each a cultural capital in its own right with a long heritage of both “official” culture and artistic innovation. Yearning for the cutting edge, they traveled between cities, and sojourned to Paris and Moscow with an increasing frequency made possible by the rail network created during the late nineteenth century through the influx of Western capital. In turn, they brought a rich variety of artistic approaches to the social network of artists and writers that made up the Western European avant-garde.²⁵

²⁴ Benson 19.

²⁵ Benson 12-13.

In this articulation, Benson fails to convey the sort of a-centric conception that he himself had called for; it is still to Paris or Moscow that the Central European avant-garde must go in order to experience the “cutting edge.” While Benson might aim to do away with the centers and peripheries *within* his loosely demarcated “Central Europe,” the entire region becomes somehow a periphery between two centers, with the “European avant-garde” to the west and Russia to the east. In fact, it was not only the Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, and so forth traveling to these better known locales of interwar artistic production, but also peers from east and west who came to visit them, in order to actively engage in the dynamic work happening in the middle of the European continent.

The German sociologist Niklas Luhmann offers perhaps a more helpful way of conceptualizing what it could mean to consider a set of relationships outside of a center-periphery hegemony. He writes in *Social Systems* of how we might:

orient the general theory of social systems to a general systems theory and thereby justify the use of the concept ‘system.’ We advance a claim to universality for the theory of social systems as well, which is why we speak of a ‘general’ theory of social systems. That is to say, every social contact is understood as a system, up to and including society as the inclusion of all possible contacts. [...] Such a universal claim is a principle of selection. It means that one accepts bodies of thought, ideas, and critique only if and insofar as they make this principle their own.²⁶

²⁶ Niklas Luhmann, *Social Systems*, trans. John Bednarz, Jr. and Dirk Baecker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 15.

But Luhmann’s own “principle of selection” is highly problematic, in that it does not accommodate social groups outside of a European (namely Germanic) tradition. He writes that, “however we may judge the cultural situation of contemporary world society, what is distinguishable as specifically modern has been formed by the European tradition.” [22] Though Luhmann qualifies this assertion with the concession that “the advantage of European rationality with regard to reflection would not

A view to society as something that allows for the “inclusion of all possible contacts” should likewise encourage us to avoid seeking out and identifying systems only where we presume to find connections, and instead map visible interstices where a clear indication of similar “thought, ideas, and critique” is present. From this, it follows that the story of the interwar avant-garde in Europe allows for more sites of inclusion to be mapped based on the observation of real aesthetic and intellectual affinity than the majority of western histories have so far allowed, which focus on the avant-gardes of “major” languages and geographic regions. The proliferation of so many sites of inclusion resulting from this strategy make it so that the concept of “center” is no longer particularly relevant to the vast network described in this dissertation.

An illustrative example of the tendency to call into question or disregard entirely the significant work of the “minor” avant-gardes, simply because they come from outside a western canon, is a book review by the prominent art historian Frederic Schwartz of Teige’s big debut in English, an anthology of essays by and about Teige that appeared in 1999 (*Karel Teige/1900-1951: L’Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde*). Schwartz opens his review of the volume by stating that its editors are attempting “to do justice to art-historical material that has hitherto been marginalized.”²⁷ While Schwartz takes an ambivalently receptive stance towards “a

necessarily mean that reflection leads to a self-verified superiority, to a self-assessing Eurocentrism,” it is hard to imagine how he has in mind anything but that. [23]

²⁷ Frederic J. Schwartz, “The Paper Avant-Garde: Graphic Design and the Margins of Radical Practice,” *Oxford Art Journal* 25, no. 2 (2002): 170.

consideration of ‘peripheral’ activities [to make] us reconsider how we write histories of radical cultural practice,” he would also appear to accept “suspicions of revisionism, provincialism, or personal agendas” as a necessary skeptical stance when “attempts [are made] to extend the cast of characters or the terrain under survey.”²⁸ Such “suspicions” that result from the privileging of a western-centric canon is reflective of what Susan Buck-Morss calls in *Hegel and Haiti* an “awkward truth”: “that if certain constellations of facts are able to enter scholarly consciousness deeply enough, they threaten not only the venerable narratives, but also the entrenched academic disciplines that (re)produce them.”²⁹

Schwartz, it would seem from his review, knows Teige’s writings only from the four essays translated in the MIT publication, and makes generalizations about his career based solely on these texts, which are of course also mediated through English. And yet, he feels comfortable to make conclusions that “Teige was no philosopher” and that he was “less a theorist than a practitioner,” declarations which many studies by scholars of Teige, not the least of which being Peter Zusi’s careful readings of Teige’s theoretical statements, would show to be inaccurate.³⁰ Schwartz writes of the “trap” of Teige’s “all too simple and unselfconscious view from [...] the edge: the artist’s own

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 52-53.

³⁰ Schwartz, “The Paper Avant-Garde,” 171.

From Zusi, see: “The Style of the Present: Karel Teige on Constructivism and Poetism,” *Representations* 88, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 102-124; “Tendentious Modernism: Karel Teige's Path to Functionalism,” *Slavic Review* 67, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 821-839; “Vanishing Points: Walter Benjamin and Karel Teige on the Liquidations of Aura,” *The Modern Language Review* 108, no. 2 (April 2013): 368-395.

strivings to have a broad audience and effect leads one to measure the peripheral figure in need of validation against an international avant-garde with no such need.”³¹ While Teige no doubt aimed to have a broad audience, his success in accomplishing this was not a measure of his networking abilities alone, but rather a reflection of the high quality work and writing that he produced. The oeuvre of Teige and the Devětsil group requires only the same validation that the rest of the “international avant-garde” would certainly also need: an evaluation of the merit of the literary and artistic output produced. It is as though—as Ta-Nehisi Coates describes in *Between the World and Me* in a wholly different context³²—that Schwartz suggests the “peripheral” avant-gardes need to be twice as good, to receive the validation that their peers from the west somehow receive de-facto.

Towards the end of his review, Schwartz concedes that despite the apparently necessary suspicions and doubts, Teige has earned a rightful place in the hegemonic realm of English-language scholarship, and thus “Prague and Teige show us what we are only beginning to attend to: the splendid and painful isolation of the true cosmopolitan cultures of modernity.”³³ As this dissertation will show in great detail, Prague was not isolated in the period Schwartz discusses, when Teige was young and Devětsil at its most active. Rather, Prague, and Brno, were sites of a fluid exchange, and the current study

³¹ Schwartz, “The Paper Avant-Garde,” 171.

³² Coates writes: “All my life I’d heard people tell their black boys and girls to ‘be twice as good,’ which is to say ‘accept half as much.’ [...] No one told those little white children, with their tricycles, to be twice as good. I imagined their parents telling them to take twice as much. It seemed to be that our own rules redoubled plunder.” [Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Random House, 2015), 90-91.]

³³ Schwartz, “The Paper Avant-Garde,” 172.

adds to a growing body of work in English that shows how integrated and essential were lesser considered sites to the historical avant-garde.³⁴

I envision the European avant-garde networks as situated on a vast Venn Diagram, by which various sites of artistic and intellectual production touch against each other where the outlines of two circles meet, and create there a new point of contact. If all these points, then, can be found on the periphery (the outer rim of a circle), perhaps the relation of center-periphery really can be eradicated altogether, and agency might be more impactfully summoned and enacted from the margins. This is meant to be an empowering conception, that reinstates the voices of those too often rendered inaudible not because they are, but because the scaffolding of a western-centric canon has forcefully rendered them so.³⁵

³⁴ For instance, see: Sanja Bahun-Radunović and Marinos Pourgouris, eds. *The Avant-Garde and the Margin: New Territories of Modernism* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006); Timothy O. Benson, "Introduction," in *Central European Avant-gardes: Exchange And Transformation, 1910-1930*, ed. Timothy Benson (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2002), 12-21; Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha, eds. *Karel Teige/1900-1951: L'Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-garde* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999); Partha Mittner, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists And the Avant-garde, 1922-1947* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007); Harsha Ram, "Introducing Georgian Modernism," *Modernism/Modernity* 21, no. 1 (January 2014): 283-288; Derek Sayer, *Prague, Capital of the Twentieth Century: A Surrealist History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

³⁵ There are limits to the success of this endeavor. By taking Prague, and then Brno as the focal point of this dissertation, they are necessarily given more attention than other cities. And, by considering in Chapter Two travel from Prague and Brno almost exclusively to western, urban centers, as well as guests coming from such sites, I recognize that I have reproduced some of the tendencies that it is my project to resist. But while Teige did travel to Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1925, this trip does not figure in any significant way in his correspondence. Additionally, travel outside of the European zone is not discussed at all, for Teige and Černík never left the continent.

This project is thus contingent on analysis and differentiation at the local level.

What, then, did Devětsil do?

In a letter from September 1920, Teige writes to Černík: “As to the group. We’re already working on the by-laws. In the near future we’ll hold a constitutive meeting and draw up an announcement stating that the group is founded, and immediately thereafter we’ll prepare an inaugural evening and accompanying manifesto.”³⁷ Teige, of course, is referring here to Devětsil, and by early December 1920, its formation was announced publically on the pages of *Pražské pondělí*. Then, by Christmas, it was already taking a break from its early founding activities. “Devětsil also took a Christmas holiday,” Teige reports to Černík, but assures him that after the New Year they will be getting straight back to work.³⁸

³⁶ The following offers only a brief outline of the major moments and concepts of Devětsil’s history. For more on the history of Devětsil, see, for instance: Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha, eds. *Karel Teige/1900-1951 L’enfant terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999); Peter Drews, *Devětsil und Poetismus künstlerische Theorie und Praxis der tschechischen literarischen Avantgarde am Beispiel Vítězslav Nezval, Jaroslav Seiferts und Jiří Wolkers* (Munich, 1975); Derek Sayer, *Prague: Capital of the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013); František Šmejkal, ed. *Devětsil: Czech Avant-garde Art, Architecture and Design of the 1920s and 30s* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1990); Josef Vojvodík and Jan Wiendl, eds. *Heslář české avantgardy*, vol. 9 (Prague: Charles University, 2011); Matthew Witkovsky, “Avant-Garde and Center: Devětsil in Czech Culture, 1918-1938” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2002).

³⁷ Teige to Černík, Sept. 14, 1920, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “O spolku. Pracujeme už o stanovách. V nejbližší době bude ustavující schůze, která vydá prohlášení, že sdružení je založeno, a bude ihned připravovat manifestační večer a náš manifest.”

It was not until a year later, however, that the group was established via official channels by registering with the proper authorities. In a postscript to a letter from September 12, 1921, Teige exclaims, “Devětsil is legally founded!” [Teige to Černík, September 12, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.] Original: “Devětsil je legálně ustaven!”

³⁸ Karel Teige to Artuš Černík, Dec. 29, 1920, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Devětsil si také dal vánoční prázdniny.”

The group had reason to need a rest, and had much on its plate looking forward, having announced ambitious plans in their founding manifesto, of “popular lectures on art, readings, theater performances, publishing a general almanac, and an art almanac,” necessitating focused effort to accomplish such a wide range of goals.³⁹ Readers of *Pražské pondělí* are invited at the close of the manifesto to a “literary evening” (“literární večer”) on December 15th at 8pm, when “Devětsil, which is hereby founded, will step before the public for the first time.”⁴⁰ Through a public program meant to be accessible to a wider audience than Devětsil members felt were typically targeted by the intellectual elite, Teige and his young compatriots set out to mark a break with “old literature” (“stará literatura”), in favor of something more proletarian in guise.⁴¹ And they even announce their departure from the “heretofore leader and mentor of the youngest generation,” S. K. Neumann, who was a vocal leftist himself, in order to signal their independence from all that came before.⁴² The earliest (and all-male) members of

³⁹ Teige et al., “U.S. Devětsil,” 82. Original: “populární přednášky o umění, recitační večery, divadelní představení, vydávání almanachu a výtvarnického alba.”

⁴⁰ Ibid., 83. Original: “Devětsil, který se právě ustavil, vystoupí poprvé před veřejnost.”

⁴¹ Ibid., 81.

⁴² Ibid., 82. Original: “A tím se už odkloňují i od St. K. Neumanna, který byl dosud hlavou a učitelem nejmladší generace.”

Stanislav Kostka Neumann (1875-1947) was a Czech poet and publisher closely identified with Anarchist and Communist politics. (One of his pseudonyms was “Antichrist.”) He was the editor of several important periodicals with Communist leanings, *Kmen* (*The Stem*), *Červen* (*Red/June*), and *Proletkult*, at which Devětsil members would publish. [See: “Stanislav Kostka Neumann” in *Lexikon české literatury* vol. 3/1, ed. Jiří Opelík (Prague: Academia, 2000), 509-516.] Teige denounced Neumann both publicly and privately. In April 1921, he writes in a letter to Černík somewhat sophomorically that Neumann, “is markedly aging and as to his idiotic behavior, on that subject it’s not even possible to write.” Original: “už stárne definitivně a jak blbne, o tom nelze ani psát.” [Teige to Černík, Apr. 1, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.] But Teige was also deeply influenced by and indebted to Neumann. To be sure, the relationship between the young artists, embodied in such figures as Teige and Jaroslav Seifert (1901-1986), and the older generation, such as Neumann and the brothers Josef (1887-1945) and Karel (1890-1945) Čapek, was more complicated than a singularly antagonistic stance. There was in fact much cross-generation collaboration in their literary publications and otherwise, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

the newly formed Umělecký svaz (Artists' Association) Devětsil, listed as Artuš Černík, Josef Frič (1900-1973), Josef Havlíček (1899-1961), Adolf Hoffmeister (1902-1973), Karel Prox (1897-1927), Jaroslav Seifert (1901-1986), Ivan Suk (1901-1958), Ladislav Süß, Vladimír Štulc, Karel Teige, Vladislav Vančura (1891-1942), Karel Vaněk (1887-1933), Karel Veselík and Alois Wachsmann (1898-1942), proclaim instead to be "people united by a new way of thinking."⁴³ By defining the old guard as "always class-based" ("vždycky třídní") and pandering to "the demands of the wealthy" ("požadavkům bohatých"), the youthful group of artists situate their young and antagonistic movement as aligned with the middle and working classes.⁴⁴ These avant-gardists, coming of age after World War One, accused their artistic forebears of propagating bourgeois ideals in their artistic and literary output, what they often labeled disparagingly as "academic" art, or that cordoned off in the museum or gallery. In his essay, "The Style of the Present: Karel Teige on Constructivism and Poetism," Zusi writes of "the vicious circle of bourgeois culture" that Devětsil rallied against, which was supposedly, "rooted in the fact that it was precisely the aesthetic power of its greatest artists that perpetuated and deepened

⁴³ Ibid. Original: "lidí spojených novou myšlenkou."

The list of members fluctuated over time. Karel Vaněk dropped out early in the Spring of 1921, for instance, and founded the aptly named New Group (Nová skupina). Toyen (Marie Čerminová, 1902-1980) would become the group's only female member, and an active Devětsil ambassador to Paris. And Vítězslav Nezval (1900-1958) was a later Devětsil member who would become one of its most famous, and antagonistic. And several years later, Teige mentions in a letter that the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson (1896-1982), living at the time in Prague, has joined the group in 1925, the only foreigner to join its ranks. [Teige to Černík, March 27, 1925, PNP, AČ Archive.]

⁴⁴ Ibid., 81.

the most insidious feature of its art: individualism, chaos, and the simultaneity of incompatible visions.”⁴⁵

Devětsil envisioned instead a more democratic and collective form of art that met the modern, urban person in their sphere of daily life. Nevertheless, its members were also largely the product of a bourgeois society and its “vicious circle.” There is certainly preserved a dedication to the individual’s creative expression in Devětsil writings, and few if any of Devětsil’s members, including Teige and Černík, ever did really remove themselves from the sphere of the bourgeois they rallied against, hardly seeking employment and subsistence more representative of the form of Socialism they upheld.⁴⁶ With the development of Poetism, Devětsil sought not only to address, but to embrace this contradiction.

POETISM AMIDST A PROLIFERATION OF –ISMS

Four years after the foundation of Devětsil and the publication of its founding manifesto in a popular weekly, the group introduced its very own –ism in a historical period overflowing with many such linguistic inventions. In the first manifesto of Poetism, published in July 1924 in *Host*,⁴⁷ Teige, no doubt sensitive to the copious amount of –

⁴⁵ Peter Zusi, “The Style of the Present: Karel Teige on Constructivism and Poetism,” *Representations* 88, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 107.

⁴⁶ Both Teige and Černík were college educated, and with the exception of Černík serving a brief stint as a clerk for Czech Railways, neither man seems to have actually held any work outside of their artistic and intellectual pursuits.

⁴⁷ It is notable that the first Poetism manifesto does not appear in a magazine directly under Devětsil control, perhaps in an effort to gain a readership beyond its own circle, in a year in which the only

isms already on hand that had been created to address the unique challenges and demands of the early Twentieth Century, insists that the one he is introducing is not a traditional –ism at all:

Poetism is not an –ism, at least not in the narrow sense of the word as it is currently understood. For there is no –ism in today’s art. Constructivism is the method of all productive work. Poetism—we repeat—is the art of living in the most beautiful sense of the word, a modern Epicureanism. It offers an aesthetic that is in no way prohibitive or pedantic. Nor does it wish to mold the life of today or tomorrow according to some abstract rules. There is no moral code, except for that created by the friendly relationships of common living, person to person—a delightful, liberal bon ton. –ism, after all, is not a very precise word: –isms do not mean what they say, and to explain them literally, almost etymologically and philologically, would be something terribly foolish (i.e. Cubism). Poetism and Constructivism are not to be understood in any other way than as a means toward giving a name to a method, an opinion, a denomination, a simple name (as in the case of Socialism, Communism, Liberalism, etc.).⁴⁸

Poetismus není ismem, totiž ismem v dosavadním úzkém slova smyslu. Neboť dnes není uměleckého ismu. Konstruktivismus je metodou veškeré produktivní práce. Poetismus jest, opakujeme, v nejkrásnějším smyslu slova, uměním žítí, zmodernisovaným epikureismem. Nepřináší estetiku, která by cokoliv zakazovala a nakazovala. Nerad by

specifically Devětsil periodical in active print was the Brno-based *Pásmo*. *Host* was the primary publication of the Literární skupina (Literary Group), with Devětsil ties. Peter Ingerle writes of the journal: “The *Host* magazine played an important role when at the beginning, before the emergence of *Pásmo*, it served as a—partly limited—publication platform of [...] Devětsil. It was mainly to Teige’s credit that the magazine enlarged its format and included a lavish picture supplement. It also attained the dimension of an international forum of modernism. Alongside Teige, who was assigned [...] responsibility for the graphics of the magazine, the editorial staff was also joined by Seifert [...]. However, due to the artistic disagreements between the representatives of the Literary Group and Devětsil this collaboration was soon officially terminated.” [Petr Ingerle, “Brno Devětsil – a local chapter in the history of the international avant-garde,” in *Brno Devětsil and Multimedia Overlaps of the Artistic Avant-Garde*, trans. Miloš Bartoň and Alan Windsor (Brno: Moravian Gallery, 2014), 66.]

⁴⁸ Teige, “Poetism,” 71.

utvářel dnešní i příští život podle abstraktních pravidel. Není kodifikované morálky ; morálka utváří se jen kamarádkými vztahy soužití, od člověka k člověku, rozkošný neúzkoprsý bon-ton. Ismy ostatně jsou ne zcela přesným pojmenováním, neznamenají to, co říkají, a vykládati je doslovně, téměř etymologicky a filologicky, byla by někdy zuřivá pošetilost, (na př. kubism). Poetismus ani konstruktivismus, nesluší se chápati jinak než jako označení metody, názoru, vyznání, jako prosté pojmenování (jako v případech; socialism, komunism, liberalism, etc.).⁴⁹

Teige's vision for Poetism grew out of an interest in Constructivism and a desire to add to it an individualist, humanist slant.⁵⁰ "*Poetism* is the crown of life; Constructivism is its basis," he asserts in Marxist terms.⁵¹ Though it upholds "collective discipline" ("kázeň celku"), that collective at the same time "thirsts for individual freedom" ("žizníme po svobodě individua").⁵² In this first Poetism manifesto, Teige describes an association with Constructivism that uses its principles as a jumping off point for a movement that retains a commitment to the individual not emphasized in this preceding –ism. Poetism simultaneously associates and disassociates itself from its major influence: "Poetism is

⁴⁹ Teige, "Poetismus," 201.

⁵⁰ Although this introductory section mainly highlights the connections between Poetism and Constructivism, there were other influences to the development of Poetism that should also be briefly noted. Early iterations of Bauhaus Modernism under the founding director Walter Gropius (1883-1969), for instance, are also a source for Teige, as was a particular strain of art produced by the crafts' person or "Sunday artist," as outlined by an artist of the slightly older generation, Josef Čapek, in his 1920 book of essays *An Art Most Humble (Nejskromnější umění)*. The connections to the Bauhaus are described in much detail in this dissertation, and the similarities between Josef Čapek's version of a "people's art" and the language of Poetism is also discussed in Chapter Three. The Russian Marxist commissar for culture and education Anatoly Lunacharsky (1875-1933) was also an early influence, and his writings appeared in Czech translation regularly in leftist Czech avant-garde periodicals in the early 1920s, such as the *Červen*, *Proletkult*, and *Kmen*.

⁵¹ Teige, "Poetism," 67. Original: "Poetismus je korunou života, jehož basi je konstruktivismus." [Teige, "Poetismus," 199.]

⁵² Ibid.

not only the opposite but also the necessary complement of Constructivism. It is based on its layout.”⁵³

Zusi describes concisely how Poetism was conceived by Teige as an offshoot of Constructivism:

Constructivism had barely assumed center stage in Teige’s theoretical discourse when it suddenly had to share the spotlight. Over the course of 1923, the credo of Poetism—Czech culture’s most original contribution to the interwar avant-garde—emerged as a counterpart to Constructivism. While Poetism was formed from a confluence of sources (Teige and the poet Vítězslav Nezval being the most important), the conjoining of Constructivism and Poetism into a double program was entirely Teige’s contribution.⁵⁴

In the first Poetism manifesto, as in the founding Devětsil manifesto, Teige sets the work of the young Czech avant-garde against that of more institutionalized and academic art production; Poetism is a “reaction against the ideologically colored poetry ruling the roost in our country. Resistance to romantic aestheticism and traditionalism.”⁵⁵

Poetism was a compelling (non) –ism, as in evidence in its own time and also since, with a recent resurgence of interest in the theoretical work of Teige. The first Poetism manifesto is one of the four essays by Teige translated and published in *Karel Teige/1900-1951: L’Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde*, for instance, and it is undoubtedly one of Teige’s best known and oft quoted texts today. On the

⁵³ Ibid. Original: “Poetismus je nejen protiklad, ale i nezbytný doplněk konstruktivismu. Basuje na jeho půdoryse.”

⁵⁴ Zusi, “The Style of the Present: Karel Teige on Constructivism and Poetism,” 112.

⁵⁵ Teige, “Poetism,” 71. Original: “Byl především reakcí proti u nás vládající ideologické poesii. Odporem proti romantickému estétství a tradicionalismu.” [Teige, “Poetismus,” 203.]

other hand, Devětsil as an active organization was already becoming untenable by the mid-1920s, and was all but defunct by the early 1930s, when many of its major figures moved over to the official group of Czech Surrealism, founded by Vítězslav Nezval in 1934 and eventually joined by Teige as well (before that group underwent its own upheaval in short order). The brief and wondrous life of Devětsil and Poetism can be attributed to a general trend in the avant-garde towards the ephemeral and fleeting. But it is also because of the impossible binaries on which Teige continually insisted, calling for both a materialist and idealist vision of art and life that simply could not be fully supported together in practice.⁵⁶

And yet, while an anti-academic project of art integrated into everyday life was a popular goal of many movements of the interwar avant-garde, it is the unabashed call for living a life that both luxuriates in the pursuit of happiness and is informed by a Socialist vision that sets Teige and the Devětsil project in general apart from other avant-garde movements out of which it grew, or alongside which it developed.⁵⁷ To turn

⁵⁶ Devětsil had been warned of the irreconcilability of such a dualistic program by members of the slightly older generation of Czech modernist artists and writers around the brothers Karel and Josef Čapek. As Thomas Ort writes in his book, *Art and Life in Modernist Prague*: “The artists of Čapek’s generation objected that the collapse of art into life would not dedifferentiate life and restore wholeness to the world but only destroy the sphere of art and with it the free space of the imagination.” [Thomas Ort, *Art and Life in Modernist Prague: Karel Čapek and His Generation, 1911-1938* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 28.]

⁵⁷ The closest parallel to the ideals of Poetism is perhaps to be found in the early ethos of the Bauhaus. In his founding manifesto, Gropius writes of a program that embraces a professionalization of craft over rarified artist’s production—“Artists, sculptors, painters, we all must return to the crafts! [...] There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman. [...] Let us then create a new guild of craftsmen without the class distinctions that raise an arrogant barrier between craftsman and artist!”—while also acknowledging the individual will of the artist within the collective—“The Bauhaus wants to educate architects, painters, and sculptors of all levels, according to their capabilities, to become competent craftsmen or independent creative artists and to form a working community of leading and future artist-craftsmen.” [Walter Gropius, “Programme of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar,” in *Programs and manifestoes on 20th-century architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrads, trans.

again to that first manifesto of Poetism, Teige calls for a form of poetry that exists out in the world, that is a living form:

The possibilities not afforded us by paintings and poems we've set out to find in film, circus, sport, tourism, and life itself. And so, out of Poetism arose visual poems, poetic puzzles and anecdotes, lyrical films. The authors of these experiments—Nezval, Seifert, Voskovec, and, with permission, Teige as well—wish to embrace all the fruits of poetry, liberated from a literature we throw into the scrap heap: a poetry of Sunday afternoons, picnics, lit-up cafés, intoxicating cocktails, lively boulevards, spa promenades, but also the poetry of quiet, of night, calm, and peace.⁵⁸

Možnosti, jež nám neposkytovaly obrazy a básně, jali jsme se hledati ve filmu, v cirku, sportu, turistice a v životě samotném. A tak vznikly obrazové básně, bánícké hádanky a anekdoty, lyrické filmy. Autoři těchto experimentů: Nezval, Seifert, Voskovec a, s dovolením, Teige chtěli by obsáhnout všechny květy poesie, zcela odpoutané od literatury, již házíme do starého železa, poesie nedělních odpůdní, výletů, zářících kaváren, opojných alkoholů, oživených bulvárů a lážeňských promenade i poesii ticha, noci, klidu a míru.⁵⁹

The embrace here of picnics and cocktails—bourgeoisie pleasures far removed from the considerations of so many international avant-garde manifestos of the period—alongside references to and associations with Constructivism, is perhaps the most avant-garde thing about this manifesto. In a notable break from other movements that Teige followed closely, such as Italian Futurism, with its adulation of the machines of

Michael Bullock (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970), 49-50.] Over time, however, the Bauhaus program also codified into something more Constructivist in focus, particularly after Hannes Meyer (1889-1954) replaced Gropius as director in 1928.

⁵⁸ Teige, "Poetism," 71.

⁵⁹ Teige, "Poetismus," 204.

speed and warfare, and, of course, Constructivism, he allows himself to aestheticize the natural alongside the man-made, but in so doing, he also gestures towards something that looks surprisingly like the values of Symbolism.⁶⁰ By attempting to hold together two seemingly irreconcilable ideals, Teige endeavors to resist wholesale association with any tradition whatsoever.

But in what seems to be an irresolvable attempt by Teige to bring into conversation the goals of Constructivism and an –ism that insists on valuing the happiness of each individual, synthesizing a collective ideology with a consideration of personal interiority, Zusi finds a dualism he calls “the fuel for the dialectical machine.”⁶¹ He describes a synthesis of the two –isms as such:

Where Constructivism demanded discipline, order, and a pragmatic outlook, Poetism celebrated the free play of imagination and the carefree indulgence of the senses. Essentially, the tension between the terms resulted from the simultaneous exaltation of hyperrationality and lyrical irrationality.⁶²

⁶⁰ Such apparent contradiction was not specific to the Czech case, and was rather enacted across the avant-gardes, beginning at least with Italian Futurism, which, despite its ardent rejection of the past, Johanna Drucker notes, “retained many traces of the Symbolist tradition.” Drucker writes that “certain terms and vocabulary [...] inherited directly from the Symbolist tradition [...] were essential to [F.T. Marinetti’s] aesthetic stance.” And yet Marinetti “was at pains to distinguish himself from Mallarmé and the Symbolist tradition, and he made this opposition explicit in manifestos and writings even as late as 1919” (ten years after the first Futurist manifesto). [Johanna Drucker, *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909-1923* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 50.]

Teige, by doing nearly the same thing in the 1920s, rather than actually rejecting previous tradition, is in fact recycling its very tropes of resistance, not to mention adapting its aesthetic conventions towards new means.

⁶¹ Zusi, “The Style of the Present,” 103.

Such an explanation could also explain the willingness of Teige, Černík, and others to publish in popular illustrated weeklies, such as *Pestrý týden* and *Gentleman*. Via a forum that reached a wider audience than the *Devětsil* magazines, the Czech avant-gardists could display their efforts at artistic and social innovation alongside pieces of more general, pop culture interest.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 112.

I am not convinced, however, that Poetism, described ambiguously in its founding manifesto as the “the art of life” (“uměním života”)⁶³ is all that committed to the discipline and order of Constructivism. Bourgeois pleasures take precedence over a real will to practical work, and the universalism that Teige describes seems to have less to do with any sort of Socialist project than with a desire for a collective engagement in the art of happiness à la Poetism, “the art of life, *the art of living and enjoying.*”⁶⁴

In the Poetism manifesto, a “sailboat” (“plachetná loď”) is a “modern poem” (“moderní báseň”)⁶⁵ and in Teige’s early essay, “Images and Fore-Images,” a blooming flower or a butterfly can have the same effect: “In the dreamlike beauty and enchantment of blooming flowers or dancing butterflies in the sun can be the most likely fore-image of new art just as it is that of new life.”⁶⁶ In Nezval’s essay “A Drop of

⁶³ The “art of life” tenant (in opposition to “art for art’s sake”), embodied by Poetism, was a central operating principle of the Devětsil project. Many have written on this aspect of Devětsil before. In English, see for instance: Deborah Garfinkle, “Bridging East and West: Czech Surrealism’s Interwar Experiment,” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2003.); Thomas Ort, *Art and Life in Modernist Prague: Karel Čapek and His Generation, 1911-1938* (New York: Palgrave, 2013.); Matthew Witkovsky, “Karel Teige,” in *Avant-Garde Art in Everyday Life*, edited by Matthew Witkovsky (New Haven: Yale University, 2011), 99-116.

In her dissertation, Garfinkle describes the art of life principle as such: “By claiming art was dead (art that was defined by its academicism that was removed from life) Teige created an aesthetic where poetry embraced all art, where poetry and life were synonymous and where popular culture inspired the artist and not the other way around.” [Garfinkle 165-166.] With the exception of the last clause here, this is a succinct and accurate summation, but the Devětsil artist most certainly intended to have a reciprocally influential relationship with “popular culture.” Whether it accomplished that, of course, is an entirely different story.

⁶⁴ Teige, “Poetism,” 66. Original: “uměním života, uměním žítí a užívati.” [Teige, “Poetismus,” 198.]

⁶⁵ Teige, “Poetismus,” 202.

⁶⁶ Karel Teige, “Obrazy a předobrazy,” *Musaion 2* (Spring 1921): 57. Original: “v snivé kráse a čaromoci rozvíjejících se květů a v slunci tančících motýlů mohl by být nejspíše předobrazem nového umění stejně jako nového života.”

Ink” (“Kapka inkoustu”), in an issue of *ReD* dedicated to the manifestos of Poetism, he similarly draws inspiration from natural forms of beauty to conjure the art of life, comparing for example the sounds of a jazz band to “bird song” (“zpěv ptactva”).⁶⁷ But Poetism is not intended to be a catch phrase for an art of purely aesthetic principles or one that overemphasizes the joyful aspects of what it deems to fall within the rubric of art (such as the circus or music hall). As Zusi rightly points out, Teige “exerted considerable effort to avoid having Poetism appear as a decorative addendum to the severe teachings of Constructivism,” and in many ways Teige was successful at this.⁶⁸ A social consciousness is called for in all the Poetism manifestos and publications, which is figured as part of the “concrete work” (“konkretní úkol,” a phrase repeated regularly in Teige’s essays) of the social revolution Teige envisions,⁶⁹ while still upholding a sense of beauty and individuality. That he succeeds at this is by no means certain, but there is something truly magnetic in the struggle. The way that this struggle is articulated in the literary and artistic production of Devětsil under Teige’s leadership, and how this output was used by Devětsil to participate in an international conversation about the place of avant-garde art making in everyday life, is examined throughout this dissertation.

⁶⁷ Vítězslav Nezval, “Kapka inkoustu,” *ReD* 1, no. 9 (June 1928): 312.

⁶⁸ Zusi, “The Style of the Present,” 103-104.

⁶⁹ What Teige means when Teige writes of “revolution” will be explored in Chapter Three.

THE DISSERTATION'S THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The joint platform of Devětsil and Poetism was disseminated at home and abroad through a variety of strategies. The chapters of this dissertation look closely at three of those modes of dissemination: private correspondence, travel, and periodical publication (considered both textually and visually). Discussion of these various means of exchange are woven through all chapters, in an effort to break down artificial barriers between these media that in fact worked integrally to foster a marked level of communication between avant-garde peers in then Czechoslovakia and abroad.

Though the dissertation chapters move from the private to public, from a discussion of correspondence and travel to published materials, this necessary organizational construct only nominally represents the temporal process by which Devětsil managed to establish contacts internationally. That said, in many cases it was the mailed letter that set off a string of later contacts, and a regular return to the written correspondence is employed as the main organizing principle of this dissertation, as excerpts from letters are presented and interpreted throughout to support or problematize claims made in more public venues. The letters that receive especial focus in Chapter One are those exchanged between Teige and Černík, but correspondence of other members of the interwar avant-garde are also considered throughout the dissertation.

In what is left of this Introduction, I outline in some detail preexisting scholarship and the theoretical framework that is utilized in the subsequent four chapters to think about how various modes of exchange worked successfully to further the goals of Devětsil: to spread the ideals of the group within a local, purportedly non-bourgeois context, and to engage in a productive dialogue with likeminded peers abroad. Through extensive archival research, in which I gained access and insight into the personal development of the major figures discussed in this dissertation, and a series of close readings of both the private transmission of their ideas via correspondence, and public manifestations in the form of periodicals, I reveal an intricate network of mutual exchange in which Devětsil participated actively.

THE ROLE OF THE REAL LETTER IN EPISTOLARY THEORY (CHAPTER ONE)

Chapter One is dedicated to a close examination of the letters between Teige and Černík. This correspondence, which offers a relatively unfiltered version of the ideas that ultimately came to represent Devětsil as a codified public program, are what I consider to be the group's foundational letters, thanks to their copiousness and content. The sheer volume of this correspondence (over 300 pages) attests to Černík's primary importance in building Devětsil, especially in Brno. And in these letters, we see how deliberately the two men worked to forge international connections through the Devětsil program. Ultimately, this correspondence is the "working through" of the declarations that appear in complete form in the published manifestos or essays.

The letter is considered here not only as a convenient primary source, but also a literary artifact, and is analyzed as such. In the 1980s, a distinct trend emerged towards validating the epistolary as a legitimate object of literary critique. While *The Purloined Poe*, edited by John Muller and William Richardson and published in 1988, might mark the zenith of the genre's popularity, in the English language context, Janet Altman's 1982 book, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*, paved the way. Altman coined the term "epistolarity" as "the use of the letter's formal properties to create meaning," and focuses on "those occasions, wherever they may be found, when the creation of meaning derives from the structures and potential specific to the letter form."⁷⁰ In a compendium of essays published at the turn of the millennium, *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture*, editors Amanda Gilroy and W. M. Verhoeven place Altman at the forefront of the trend toward letters as a site of academic criticism, describing her work as an "illuminating structuralist analysis of epistolary fiction,"⁷¹ and comment on developments of the subsequent two decades: "since the early 1980s the critical concern with epistolary heartstrings has been subjected to scrutiny by commentators of various persuasions and has been considerably broadened."⁷²

It must, however, be acknowledged that Altman works exclusively with fictional correspondence, with novels that employ the letter as a literary device, not actual letters written without the goal of publication. In 1990, Elizabeth MacArthur takes up

⁷⁰ Janet Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 4.

⁷¹ Amanda Gilroy and W.M. Verhoeven, *Epistolary Histories. Letters, Fiction, Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 8.

⁷² Gilroy and Verhoeven 4.

the torch of “epistolarity” in her book *Extravagant Narratives: Closure and Dynamics in the Epistolary Form*, in which she too considers the letter as it exists in the novel but also maintains, “if one accepts that metonymy and metaphor are equally characteristic of narrative, that all narratives require generative energy as well as structures of meaning, real correspondences may be seen to shed light on the functioning of any narrative.”⁷³ Following on this assertion that the strategies used to analyze the fictional letter can be similarly employed to discuss the real letter, I consider in this chapter and throughout the dissertation exclusively the message sent by mail (in the form of a letter or postcard), not necessarily intended for the bound and closed book. Although the form and ostensible purpose of the fictional and real letter might be the same—to send greetings from a holiday, for instance, to deliver news, to conduct business, simply to check in after an extended silence—the letter embedded in a novel is always a literary device, and thereby ultimately devised to move forward a plot or reveal something about a character. The letter written *as such* cannot be so neatly considered, written as it is within the messy unfolding of a real life, the organizing structure of beginning, middle, and end not yet visible.

Looking again to the oeuvre of epistolary theory written in English thus far, another limitation in its applicability to this project is readily apparent: that of artificial linguistic confines. Altman limits her examples to the “French corpus,” justifying this “disproportion [...] by the fact that the French territory is less charted than its British

⁷³ Elizabeth MacArthur, *Extravagant Narratives: Closure and Dynamics in the Epistolary Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 32.

counterpart.”⁷⁴ Conversely, Gilroy and Verhoeven “focus mainly on Anglo-American texts,” noting Altman’s work in French.⁷⁵ These examples suggest a Franco-Anglophone binary in the last several decades of English-language epistolary theory that is counter to this undertaking, in which I aim to map a non-hegemonic and transnational dialogue, while also pointing to the limitations of the area I can personally cover. That the letters under discussion here are primarily written in Czech, French, and German is a consequence of my interest in the output and collaborations of the Czech avant-garde, and my own linguistic limitations.

The archived letters and their envelopes, collected and catalogued after the real death of the author, provide an archival and first hand account of a particular moment in the development of ideas, though they were surely not always written with that historical context in mind. The author, transacting business or writing a friendly note, might fail to date his letter or write in a script legible to later eyes, but it is not for those generations of scholars and other readers to come that he or she writes. He or she writes for the recipient, who knows the date generally and is accustomed to his friend or colleague’s script. My reception of the correspondence is thus entirely different from how it was originally received by intended addressee, consideration for whom would distinctly individualize the content, tone, length, and even language. Teige’s business-like and bossy letters to Černík, for instance, are nothing like the far more flirtatious and informal ones that he sends to a female friend, Emy Häuslerová. And, presumably

⁷⁴ Altman 10.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1.

(though none exist to confirm), Teige would take another stance still in writing to Bauhaus director Walter Gropius: even the language he would have used—German instead of Czech—would necessarily be different.

My method of retrieval and reading is of course far removed from the way these letters were produced and subsequently received and read one at a time, and over many years. Now held in the archive of the PNP, the Černík-Teige letters can be read as a closed narrative, consumed in full in a few sittings: the original writer and reader are both long dead, the ending is now in plain view. This is an important distinction, because it highlights the fact that the connections, continuities, and ruptures perceivable by reading years' worth of letters in close proximity were likely not available to the recipient, nor the writer. In a conversation conducted over years, generating a multiplicity of ideas and topics, memory might lose the thread, only to be revealed anew to the third party reader.

For these reasons, it is difficult to find the right way to write about letters authoritatively while simultaneously acknowledging the limitations of the genre as a source of historicity. Gilroy and Verhoeven describe the difficulty in “map[ing] epistolary history” that at the same time speaks to a sustained interest in the form as a valid site of scholarly inquiry, despite its status as a genre fraught with slippery and malleable meaning:

not only because new historical contexts are constantly being opened for us that reinflect our readings of earlier texts but also perhaps because the very materiality of the letter, its imbrication in multiple cultural practices, its

potentially nomadic trajectory, makes it a form resistant to the construction of grand narratives. Epistolary history is not, we think, a teleological, linear history but rather a narrative of historically specific cultural connections and disconnections.⁷⁶

The written and sent letter resists a single interpretation; correspondence is a fluid form. As MacArthur so aptly puts it, “the epistolary form presents multiple perspectives and internal commentary, putting into question the possibility of objective truth or stable authority.”⁷⁷ Rather than insist on a fixed historical meaning in my interpretation of the correspondence, I read the letters simply as a marker of “connections and disconnections”; I chart the letters between Černík and Teige, and others, as a key to understanding the linkages—forged and broken—between particular people and ideas.

WRITING TRAVEL DIFFERENTLY (CHAPTER TWO)

Chapter Two goes on to look at the ways in which the dialogue begun in written correspondence is made physical, as Czechs travel away from Prague and Brno, to sites such as Paris, Dessau, and Moscow, and inhabitants of foreign cities likewise make their way to Prague and Brno. Records of travel, and the continuation of relationships forged by physical encounter in the form of correspondence and joint publishing projects, are

⁷⁶ Gilroy and Verhoeven 20.

⁷⁷ MacArthur 22. Discussing the resistance of the letter to fixed interpretation is not meant to suggest that other forms of writing (the novel, the newspaper) do not also utilize this property to effective ends. It is simply that the letter is what is under consideration here, and analysis is confined to this medium.

of especial interest in this chapter. Writings on travel, like the letters discussed in Chapter One, provide insight into how the Czech avant-garde perceived their foreign peers, how they understood their own position in reference to these counterparts, and alternately, how they were received and engaged by the “other.”

Several of the artists and writers associated with Devětsil followed in the footsteps of earlier Czech travelers abroad—such as the Čapek brothers just before them, and, in the Nineteenth Century, the author Jan Neruda (1834-1891) and the Pan-Slavist feuilletonist Karel Havlíček Borovský (1821-1856)—by publishing travel accounts. The artists Jindřich Štyrský (1899-1942) and Toyen, with the journalist Vincenc Nečas even published a guidebook, *A Travel Guide to Paris and Its Environs (Průvodce Paříží a okolím)*, put out by the loyal Devětsil publisher Odeon in 1927. And in the 1930s, Nezval produced a trilogy of travelogues, dedicated to Moscow [*Invisible Moscow (Neviditelná Moskva)*, 1935], Paris [*Rue Gît-le-Coeur (Ulice Gît-le-Coeur)*, 1936], and Prague [*The Prague Flâneur (Pražský chodec)*, 1938]. Nezval also took photographs on these journeys (abroad and within his own city), which are now held in his archive at the Památník národního písemnictví (the National Literary Archive in Prague, officially called in English the Museum of Czech Literature, and hereafter designated as the PNP) and serve as evidence that the trip was made.

These more traditional examples of travel narratives, however, are not the focus of this chapter dedicated, nevertheless, to travel and travel writing. Instead, I turn again to correspondence, as well as newspaper articles and published essays, to construct an

account of travels made to and from Prague and Brno in the 1920s that reflects a uniquely dialogic mode of exchange across various geographic borders. Travel reports sent in the form of postcards while en route or in longer letters mailed later are particularly useful in reconstructing a journey, especially when the one on the road did not keep a travelogue or take photographs (or such items have not survived). For instance, in the summer of 1924, Teige reports to Černík in a letter dated July 23rd that he will travel to Vienna, Venice, Milan, Nice, Marseille, Lyon, Paris, Strasbourg, and Stuttgart. Proof that that itinerary was indeed executed can be charted in a series of postcards sent to Emy Häuslerová (who would later become the wife of the Devětsil-affiliated architect Evžen Linhart).⁷⁸ Together with Seifert he sends her postcards from Vienna (September 9, 1924; this one is likely misdated), Milan (August 15, 1924), Nice (August 16, 1924), and Marseille (August 19, 1924). And, without Seifert, the following year he sends her greetings from Warsaw (October 16, 1925), Moscow (October 23 and November 1, 1925), and Leningrad (November 9, 1925).⁷⁹ Teige received letters too from foreign guests, such as Gropius expressing gratitude for his hospitality after a trip made to Prague. Many of Teige's essays were also influenced by his travel, his first

⁷⁸ In references to Emy in this dissertation from before her marriage, she is called simply Häuslerová, and regarding instances after her marriage, her name is stated as Häuslerová-Linhartová. Though she only went by the latter last name after taking a husband, I have maintained the hyphen to clarify that it is the same woman under discussion, not two distinct characters.

⁷⁹ Of Leningrad Teige reports in full: "Heartfelt greetings from the Venice of the East, from one of the most beautiful cities in the world! It is so pleasant and lovely that I don't want to return to Prague at all." Original: "Srdečné pozdravy z Benátek severu, z jednoho z nejkrásnějších měst světa! Je tu tak příjemně a milo, že se mi naprosto nechce do Prahy." [Teige to Häuslerová, Nov. 9, 1925. In Růžena Hamanová, "Dopisy Karla Teige Emy Häuslerová," *Literární archiv* 24 (1990): 244.]

Teige later sends Häuslerová greetings from Paris on July 30, 1927 and again on June 14, 1929, both on postcards illustrated with the Sacré-Coeur, and in his last missive to her (from the collection of postcards and letters she offered to the PNP in 1984), Teige sends regards from the Bauhaus at Dessau on January 25, 1930, now also addressing Linhart, whom she had married earlier that year.

Paris trip of 1922 being particularly formative, and his lectures at the Bauhaus in Dessau in 1930 were almost simultaneously published in Czech. Additionally, reports on foreign visitors and reviews of lectures they gave while in Prague and Brno were often printed in the press. When father of Italian Futurism Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944) arrived in Prague in December 1921, for instance, it made a splash in the daily papers.

In *Travel Writing: The Self and the World*, Casey Blanton describes the “inherent difficulty of faithfully rendering the foreign into familiar terms,” the generally understood goal of the travel writer.⁸⁰ The task of our main figures here, however, was a bit different than the author of what might typically be understood as travel literature. The writing discussed in this chapter was not necessarily meant to provide a comprehensive account of a foreign place for a large population at home. Rather, travel was used as a means to forge networks with an international avant-garde, and to bring home in the form of influence (as manifest in graphic design, poetry, and theoretical texts, to name a few examples) what was observed abroad. Blanton herself attempts to expand the definition of travel writing to go beyond the “modern travel book” to incorporate “memoirs, journals, and ships’ logs, as well as narratives of adventure, exploration, journey, and escape.”⁸¹ As this list might suggest, the travel with which she is concerned is at a geographical remove from the land-locked European tours I describe, but the attempt to bring a consideration of private documents into a discussion of travel writing is compatible with my own project, which looks beyond the

⁸⁰ Casey Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 1.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

“classic” travel guide to the letter and article, as well as published transcripts or reviews of lectures, which were given to expand the visibility and influence of the foreign visitors.

In recent years, the most compelling writing about travel in a way that disrupts assumed hegemonic centers comes from Postcolonial Studies. Sachidananda Mohanty writes in the Introduction to *Travel Writing and the Empire* that, “Though travel and travel writing have always fascinated human beings ever since the dawn of human history travel literature as a genre has been traditionally regarded as a form of entertainment and relaxation rather than as a matter worthy of serious scholarly or literary attention.”⁸² But, as with a more serious consideration of the letter in/as literature, so too has the genre of travel writing enjoyed a legitimization as a site of literary analysis in recent decades. Writes Mohanty: “Travel writing as a genre has moved out from the earlier periphery of guide books and has come centre stage today. It has accommodated within its fold, while simultaneously critiquing the various social, cultural and ethnographic discourses that lend it a richly textured significance.”⁸³

Mary Louise Pratt writes similarly in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* that she resists any codifying definition of what constitutes the genre. She claims, “I have sought to use the study of tropes as much to disunify as to unify what one might call a rhetoric of travel writing. I have aimed not to circumscribe travel

⁸² Sachidananda Mohanty, “Introduction: Beyond the Imperial Eye,” in *Travel Writing and the Empire*, ed. Sachidananda Mohanty (New Delhi: Katha, 2003), ix.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, xi.

writing as a genre but to suggest its heterogeneity and its interactions with other kinds of expression.”⁸⁴ Likewise, I look to travel literature not as a contained, singular form, but as one element with multiple manifestations (such as the letter, the review, the photograph), a genre among many others by which the interwar avant-garde made and maintained international contacts and continued a conversation.

But the Postcolonial literature I employ here and further in Chapter Two to support a reading of less traditional travel writing as document of a fluid moment of transnational travel, paradoxically, offers again an Anglo-centric narrative. Pratt, in her discussion of “European expansionist initiatives” notes that “much of the momentum on both continents was British, as are many of the writers I discuss here.”⁸⁵ By giving voice to the ones who already hold the dominant position—colonialist British writers—Pratt risks reinforcing the authority it is in fact her project to interrupt.

Pratt asks, “How are metropolitan modes of representation received and appropriated on the periphery?” For the purposes of this study, I would ask this question differently: How are metropolitan modes of representation in presumed centers (i.e. Paris, Berlin, Moscow) received and reappropriated by lesser considered metropolitan centers (i.e. Prague and Brno) so that an exchange of ideas begins to flow dialogically, thereby deconstructing the center-periphery axis? Pratt, in an effort to consider the colonies of the British Empire as active agents not only in shaping outside

⁸⁴ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 11.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

perception of themselves, but also in shaping perceptions of the colonizer, continues her line of inquiry in a way that follows fruitfully from her initial question:

How have Europe's constructions of subordinated others been shaped by those others, by the constructions of themselves and their habitats that they presented to the Europeans? Borders and all, the entity called Europe was constructed from the outside in as much as from the inside out. Can this be said of its modes of representation?⁸⁶

Confining the gaze to look only within Europe as this dissertation does (neither Teige nor Černík ever left the continent), and considering the real and perceived borders that delineate east from west, major from minor, how have the lesser known sites of the interwar avant-garde shaped what we know and how we think about the spaces that have been given more historical attention?⁸⁷ The Bauhaus, for instance, was informed significantly by its major influx of students and instructors from beyond German borders, but is represented predominantly as a German school, as in a major exhibition for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, *Bauhaus: Workshops for Modernity* (2009-2010). By mapping a wider and multidirectional course of movement in the European interwar avant-garde, this chapter eradicates an "inside-outside" binary and replaces it

⁸⁶ Pratt 6.

⁸⁷ There have been other attempts to apply the language of Postcolonial theory to writing about central-eastern Europe and Eurasia in the Post-Soviet period, perhaps beginning with David Chioni Moore, who approaches the effects of "Russocoloniality" in the region and wrote in 2001: "To privilege the Anglo-Franco cases as the colonizing standard and to call the Russo-Soviet experiences deviations, as I have done so far, is wrongly to perpetuate the already superannuated centrality of the Western and Anglo-Franco world. It is time, I think, to break that tradition." [David Chioni Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique," *PMLA* 116, no. 1 (Jan. 2001): 123.]

Also in the *PMLA*, five years later, Ram calls likewise for "an openness to the kinds of questions already being posed in other parts of the globe by transnational methodologies such as postcolonial studies" so that more scholars might consider that "perhaps more modernities, local and imported, were imagined than in Paris or Saint Petersburg." [Ram, "Postcoloniality and Russia-Eurasia," 833.]

with a more accurate representation of how ideas, manifest in publication and pedagogy, were shaped by the transnational period in which they were born.

THE PERIODICAL AS PLATFORM (CHAPTERS THREE AND FOUR)

In Chapters Three and Four, I look explicitly at how the the Czech avant-garde journals made use of the democratizing platform of the periodical to strategically expand the visibility and further the message of Devětsil. I show in the second half of the dissertation how the ideas and interior struggles that appear in private correspondence are made manifest publically as a set of manifestos and aesthetic principles that find an audience in the publication of magazines. The questions, doubts, and proposed solutions introduced in the letters demand to be read alongside the Devětsil publications, as we can see there how the ideas floated about privately are reflected publically, and also, how other publications are reviewed by editors and authors in correspondence.

In her seminal, *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909-1923*, Johanna Drucker writes, “The early twentieth-century avant-garde found no medium more suitable for both production and promotion of their formal innovations and activist agenda than the printed page. [...] Print media were affordable, available, and effective means of communication and public visibility.”⁸⁸ Similarly, in “Making the

⁸⁸ Drucker, *The Visible Word*, 91.

New: Literary Periodicals and the Construction of Modernism,” Peter Marks describes how integral the Modernist magazines were to that construction. Without the magazines, he writes, “the debates carried on and the experiments carried out would not have occurred as regularly and productively as they did.”⁸⁹ Although Drucker is thinking primarily of the western European avant-garde, and Marks is thinking specifically of the “little magazines,” again within an Anglo-American context, in this case much important work in English has also been done to show how the central and eastern European magazines were just as networked, dialogic, and engaged in public conversations around art and politics as the avant-garde and little magazines to the west.⁹⁰ And Marks’ depiction of the little magazines most certainly can apply to the periodicals under consideration here, as they “added materially to the ideas, impulses and experiments that invigorated the literary and cultural life of the early twentieth century.”⁹¹ Indeed, much of Chapter Three and Four is devoted to showing precisely how the avant-garde periodicals of Devětsil—namely *Disk* (1923-1925), *Pásmo* (1924-1926), and *ReD* (1927-1931)⁹²—successfully (and sometimes unsuccessfully) endeavored

⁸⁹ Peter Marks, “Making the New: Literary Periodicals and the Construction of Modernism,” *Precursors and Aftermaths: Literature in English 1914-1945* 2, no. 1 (2004): 37.

⁹⁰ To name just a very few examples, see, for instance: Jeremy Aynsley, *Graphic Design in Germany: 1890-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Robin Kinross, *Modern typography: an essay in critical history* (London: Hyphen Press, 1992, 2004); Nicholas Sawicki, “The View from Prague,” in *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1074-1096; and Irina Subotić, “Avant-Garde Tendencies in Yugoslavia,” *Art Journal* 49, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 21-27.

⁹¹ Marks 37.

⁹² *Disk* was the first periodical to appear fully under Devětsil control, but appeared only twice and with two years between the two issues, certainly pushing the limit of what can be called a “periodical.” Between the publication of the first issue in 1923 and the second in 1925, Devětsil was ultimately required to change the status of the publication officially. In a 1924 letter kept in Černík’s archive, but sent to Teige’s address in Prague, the police bureau in Prague acknowledges the request of Devětsil to have the status of the magazine changed from “periodical” (“periodický”) to “unperiodical”

to reach a wide audience and reflect a sociopolitical stance particular to their post-World War One temporal position.

The avant-garde journal, “only conceivable within the conditions of a highly industrialized culture, one in which mass print culture was the common currency of exchange of ideas and forms,” as Drucker writes, was absolutely integral to any effort in spreading its visionary message quickly and widely.⁹³ Magazines were meant to express a world that is “absolutely modern—networked, with publicity machines and transatlantic culture industries of literary, lifestyle, and artistic publication working at a full tilt and in active exchange with each other.”⁹⁴ Drucker’s work at highlighting the magazine as such a dialogic forum has been at the forefront of a recent legitimization of the periodical as an essential material artifact for describing histories and mapping networks heretofore gone unnoticed or unconsidered. In 1994, Drucker had written in *The Visible Word* of the nearly non-existent state of the study of the early Twentieth Century periodicals when she turned her attention to the subject: “As I began my research, I was struck by the relative paucity of materials dealing with the typographic activity in any serious or systematic manner—especially by contrast to the veritable

(“neperiodický”). [Memorandum, Prague Police Bureau to the Artist’s Association Devětsil, October 15, 1924, PNP, AČ Archive.]

Pásmo began publication in 1924, appeared regularly until 1926, and was predominantly under Černík’s control. But Teige’s discomfort with that, and disapproval of some editorial choices made without his consent significantly strained the two men’s relationship, and the journal ceased production after only two years.

A year later, and almost entirely under Teige’s control, *ReD* was created. It is today perhaps the best known of the three. *ReD* was a last holdout of Devětsil, and when it folded in 1931, the group was already basically defunct.

⁹³ Drucker, “*Le Petit Journal des Refusées: A Graphical Reading*,” *Victorian Poetry* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 147.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

industry of publications on the visual art and literature of the same period.”⁹⁵ Steady development in the field since resulted recently in a convening of a special session at the Modern Languages Association Convention in 2013, titled “What Is a Journal? Towards a Theory of Periodical Studies.” In an opening statement to the roundtable, Ann Ardis made the claim that “the contribution of periodical studies to a fuller understanding of the media ecology of modernity *depends*, I would argue, on scrupulous attention to both the materiality of print and its intermedial relationships with other communication technologies.”⁹⁶ This statement is representative of the methodology employed here as I describe the position of the periodical within a larger framework that also considers private correspondence and personal travel (and to a lesser extent, lectures and exhibitions) to portray a version of the interwar avant-garde that does justice to the intricate means it employed for sharing ideas and conducting conversation.

Marks describes the periodicals as occupying a position that offers a view of Modernism before “reputations were established and hierarchies formed:” “Periodicals in fact provide unrivalled contemporary documentation of such ongoing literary developments, of rivalries and collaborations, of short-lived enthusiasms and failed projects, and of rich and illuminating work of lasting value.”⁹⁷ Again, the letters read alongside the periodicals emphasize this further, working as they can in a dialogue that

⁹⁵ Drucker, *The Visible Word*, 4.

⁹⁶ Ann Ardis, “Towards a Theory of Periodical Studies.” (Lecture, MLA Convention, Boston, Jan. 4, 2013).

⁹⁷ Marks 37.

highlights the period as one in flux, resisting a more codified version of these movements that develops with the backward glance of history.

The aim of the Devětsil magazines was similarly dualistic. While Devětsil was working to project a mature front and clear message to its readers at home, it was also looking to expand its visibility through strategic distribution of the magazines abroad. In the first half of Chapter Three, I describe how Devětsil situated itself in its earliest years vis à vis the slightly older generation of the Čapek brothers and S. K. Neumann, while publishing in their magazines. Before Devětsil had any publications of its own, it was dependent on these platforms, such as Karel Čapek's *Musaion* and Neumann's *Kmen*, to reach an audience in print. The second half of Chapter Three then turns to the publications under full control of Devětsil members, which begin operation in 1922, and discusses the reception of this printed matter once in the hands of comrades in the international avant-garde. These magazines included an impressive list of international contributors, and editors such as Teige and Černík made sure that copies were sent out to strategic colleagues abroad, a successful campaign that led to further collaboration and solicitation of Czech materials for publication elsewhere.

Visually, the Devětsil periodicals under consideration are also evidence of a working through of aesthetic questions related to the concept of "New Typography," which championed an unadorned, "international" graphic style, now widely recognizable by its employment of sans serif fonts and uncluttered page layouts, and governed by principles of standardization. A German engineer and theorist of industrial

standards, Walter Porstmann (1886-1959), published the manual *Language and Type (Sprache und Schrift)* in 1920, which came to be highly influential to the Bauhaus typographers, and ultimately paved the road to New Typography. Porstmann called, for instance, for an all lower case script which was enthusiastically adopted by the Bauhaus.⁹⁸ His status as an engineer also aligned nicely with the craftsman-artist unity of the Bauhaus ideal. It is Jan Tschichold (1902-1974), though, who best deserves to be described as the father of New Typography, publishing a handbook of the same name in 1928, which was already at that point an articulation of a well-known and firmly developed style. In the introduction to *The New Typography*, Tschichold writes of just how omnipresent its principles had become: “Its manifestations confront modern man at every step.”⁹⁹

Teige observed Tschichold’s work closely, and was likewise known by him, and thus examples from the Czech context, such as the photomontaged cover of *Život (Life)* 2, to be discussed in Chapter Four, appear in *The New Typography (Die neue Typographie)*, evidencing Devětsil’s conversant and innovative use of its principles of graphic design. Although partially rooted in such diverse avant-garde movements as Futurism, Dada, and De Stijl, New Typography has come to represent a turning point for

⁹⁸ Herbert Bayer famously explained the Bauhaus use of all lowercase thus: “we write everything lowercase to save time.” [“wir schreiben alles klein, denn wir sparen damit zeit.”] This quote even appeared for a time on Walter Gropius’ stationary.

In the Czechoslovak context, the all lower case convention was adopted in the Brno-based anthology *fronta* (1927), for instance, and in the Slovak magazine, *nová bratislava (new bratislava, 1931-1932)*.

⁹⁹ Jan Tschichold, *The New Typography: A Handbook for Modern Designers*, trans. Ruari McClean (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 7. Original: “Ihre Äußerungen begegnen dem heutigen Menschen auf Schritt und Tritt.” [Jan Tschichold, *Die neue Typographie: ein Handbuch für Zeitgemäss Schaffende* (Berlin: Verlag des Bildungsverbandes der Deutschen Buchdrucker, 1928), 7.]

the Constructivist, Modernist, and anti-academic ideals of the interwar period. Chapter Four charts this development with special focus on the relationship of Bauhaus typographers—specifically Herbert Bayer (1900-1985) and László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946)—with practitioners in Prague and Brno, such as Teige. The pervasiveness of New Typography, and its strict adherence to a fully modern Functionalism, made it an especially convenient way for Devětsil to be a part of a much wider conversation.

The theory and aesthetics of the New Typography, and its adoption by a wide swath of Central European magazines, is key to a discussion of how graphic design functioned to engage a modern public, in magazines, books, and advertisement. Abroad, the Devětsil publications were primarily legible visually, as most editors and other peers from beyond the border could not read Czech, thus rendering the impact of graphic work essential in relaying an accessible and dynamic message to the foreign reader who could in fact not read much of the text. And even text can convey a message without a reading knowledge of its language. Drucker describes the visual component of printed words well in her 1984 essay, “Letterpress Language:” “Writing produces a visual image: the shapes, sizes, and placement of letters on a page contribute to the message produced, creating statements which cannot always be rendered in spoken language.” Such a conception of the use of text to generate information not only through its literal meaning, but also via visual cues, is very close to the way in which the Czech avant-garde (as well as other magazines of “minor” languages, such as the Yugoslav *Zenit* or Polish *Blok*) seemed to conceive of their magazines. The magazines were simultaneously

(and not separately) a visual and textual platform, speaking in different ways to the reader at home and the one abroad.

The “picture poem,” Poetism’s visual manifestation in the form of photomontage, evocatively embodies in its articulations the way that Devětsil members were able to signal visually in the magazines the interesting work they were doing.¹⁰⁰ Its theoretical development and visual manifestation appeared even before Moholy-Nagy’s more famous concept of “typophoto,” in which text and photographic images come together in graphic design to present the “visually most exact presented message.”¹⁰¹ Perhaps the earliest example of the picture poem is the cover image of *Život 2* from 1922, a collaborative photomontage which, as its reproduction in Tschichold’s 1928 *The New Typography* attests, was instantly recognized as an important and innovative contribution to efforts made in graphic design to convey information both visually and textually.

In Chapter Four, I consider how Devětsil used New Typography to engaged in a wider conversation on design in print that could address the modern person, in their

¹⁰⁰ For more on the picture poem, see, for instance: Zdeněk Primus, “Obrazová báseň: entuziastický produkt poetismu,” in *Karel Teige, 1900-1951*, ed. Karel Srp (Prague: Galerie hlavního města Prahy), 49-62); Karel Srp, “Optical Words (Picture Poems and Poetism),” in *Czech Photographic Avant-Garde, 1918-1948*, ed. Vladimír Birgus (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 56-72; Jindřich Toman, *Photo/Montage in Print* (Prague: Kant, 2008), 83-94; and Matthew Witkowsky, *Foto:Modernity in Central Europe, 1918-1945* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2007), 42-47.

Srp associates the advent of the picture poem with the Berlin Dadaists and Soviet Constructivists, specifically linking its output to the collages of Raoul Hausmann (1886-1971) and Hannah Höch (1889-1978), and the book and magazine design of El Lissitzky and Alexander Rodchenko (1891-1956).

¹⁰¹ László Moholy-Nagy, “Typographie-Photographie Typo-Photo,” *Typographische Mitteilungen* (1925). Anthologized in *Texte zur Typografie*, eds. Petra Eisele and Isabel Naegele (Sulgen, Switzerland: Niggli, 2013), 202. Original: “die visuell exaktest dargestellte Mitteilung.”

sphere of life, both via the publication of theoretical texts on the subject, and by producing works that were meant to be the visual articulation of Poetism and New Typography. Early on in *The Visible Word*, Drucker speaks of a need “to examine the ways in which the theorization of both poetic and visual materiality within the arena of modern arts practices was conducive to and supportive of the typographic experiments which are, arguably, one of the distinctive features of early twentieth-century modernism.”¹⁰² It is the project of the fourth and final chapter of this dissertation to show how successfully Devětsil, within the frame of Poetism, accomplished this synthesis.

A brief Conclusion follows these four chapters, in which I suggest how the themes and figures introduced in this dissertation might be carried over into a larger project that spans the whole of the interwar period, incorporating additional movements and important characters into its field of vision.

¹⁰² Drucker, *The Visible Word*, 47.

CHAPTER 1

CORRESPONDENTS: THE PRIVATE AVANT-GARDE

“To whom do you think he is writing?”

For me it is always more important to know that than to know what is being written;
moreover I think it amounts to the same, to the other finally.”

Jacques Derrida
The Postcard (1987)¹⁰³

On my first day in the archive at the PNP in the fall of 2013, I unpacked a carton of Karel Teige’s letters. These are the letters to Teige that managed to survive his move from the center of Prague to a modernist home in Smíchov just before the advent of World War Two, the Second World War itself, his own death of a heart attack on October 1, 1951, and the violence wrought on his estate by the secret police after he died.¹⁰⁴ The unlikely

¹⁰³ Jacques Derrida, *The Postcard*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 17.

¹⁰⁴ Miloš Aulický, Teige’s nephew, in a postscript to a volume of Teige’s works collected and translated into English, offers a charged account of his uncle’s trouble with the Communist Party, stemming from the anti-Stalinist stance Teige adopted even before the Second World War. Aulický writes that after World War Two, “in order to be allowed to work even for minor publishing houses, he was obliged to apologize (for his ideological deviation) and had to issue a public statement of self-criticism. [...] After the communist takeover [...] of Czechoslovakia on 4 February 1948, however, not a single publisher could afford to employ a ‘Trotskyite counterrevolutionary,’ and Teige was effectively left without an official source of income.” Aulický describes how Teige lived in constant fear of the secret police from that period onward until his death of a heart attack at not quite 51 years of age. Upon Teige’s death, Aulický reports that his aunt, Jožka Nevařilová (one of Teige’s two long-term partners along with Eva Ebertová, both of whom apparently knew of and accepted each other), composed his last will herself, “with the intent to secure all movable property in order that it would not be pilfered or fall into the wrong hands,” before killing herself. Teige’s apartment was nevertheless raided, and little conjecture can be made as to what all was stolen or destroyed. Aulický contends that the secret police sealed off Teige’s apartment for

remains of this turmoil were first catalogued by the National Literary Archive at Strahov in 1968, the year of the Prague Spring. In the Fall of 2013, I lifted the lid off the carton with white-gloved hands and that fresh sense of expectation that comes with the first day of working with new materials. At the top was a now rumpled but still shiny white envelope, rimmed in black, sent to Teige by the family of Karel Čapek and containing a printed death notice for the celebrated author, who passed away on Christmas Day 1938. The funereal envelope and its somber contents so powerfully denote the end of one era and the start of another. The dialogue and debate between the artists and intellectuals central to this dissertation—such as Teige and Artuš Černík—and those of a slightly earlier generation—such as Čapek—gave way, concurrent with Čapek’s death from pulmonary edema, to a period of occupation and instability and the onset of the Second World War.

two weeks and ultimately “removed eight linear meters of books in four languages on Marxism. [...] After fourteen days they gave us back the keys along with an order to vacate the apartment within a month.” [Miloš Aulický, “My Uncle, Karel Teige,” in *Karel Teige/1900-1951 L’enfant terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde*, eds. Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha, trans. Eric Dluhosch (Cambridge, Mass.; MIT Press, 1999), 385-386.]

In Jaroslav Seifert’s memoirs, he maintains that Teige died of a heart attack from the stress of trying to finish a book manuscript—*Fenomenologie moderního umění* (*The Phenomenology of Modern Art*)—amidst having slanderous things printed about him in the press. Seifert also describes the role of Teige’s partners in looking after his estate immediately after Teige’s death. Seifert writes: “His wife [referring to Nevařilová, in distinction to Teige’s other lover, Ebertová, whom Seifert refers to as Teige’s girlfriend], as soon as she read the news [of Teige’s death], immediately burned all of Teige’s correspondence. It was not a small job. Even though he visited with both women daily, he also wrote them letters each day. After that, in grief she poisoned herself by oven gas. Miss E. lived only a few more days. She used the time to put the writings Teige had at her house in order, and pass them on to his friends. And then she followed Teige’s wife. She opened the gas valve.” Original: “Jeho žena, jakmile zprávu přečetla, spálila ihned všechnu Teigovu korespondenci. Nebylo jí málo. Ačkoliv se s oběma ženami denně stýkal, oběma psal téměř denně dopisy. A po tomto truchlivém obřadu otrávil se plynem. Slečna E. žila jen několik dní. Čas použila, aby srovnala rukopisy, pokud je Teige měl u ní, a odevzdala je přátelům. A pak následovala Teigovu manželku. Otevřela si kohoutek od plynu.” [Jaroslav Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1993), 511.]

The archived letter—handwritten, typed, or printed as a circular, its simultaneous status as private document¹⁰⁵ and public historical artifact, the profundity of its continued existence despite the unlikelihood of its survival—makes this particular relic especially compelling as a source for writing a certain kind of history. This chapter, drawing in particular on the large volume of remaining letters from Teige to Černík written in the 1920s, charts the personal relationships, professional collaborations, and publishing projects that were cultivated in correspondence between these two members of the Czechoslovak avant-garde. These particular letters bear witness to the founding of the avant-garde group Devětsil in Prague, and the concept of Poetism, the group’s home-grown “art of life” –ism. Owing to the fact that Černík’s primary residence was in Brno for much of the 1920s, while Teige lived only in Prague, the discussion between the two men on what the aims and political ambitions of Devětsil and Poetism would be, and how to extend the group’s reach and influence is recorded primarily on paper. The letters between Teige and his far lesser known counterpart, Černík, are in fact one of the key cultural products of Devětsil’s formation and a mapping of the networks forged between the international avant-gardes more generally. Having received almost no attention up to this point in history, it is these letters that take center stage in this chapter.

¹⁰⁵ Of course, not all mailings are intended as wholly private documents, as the funeral announcement, which would be sent to many, reminds. Invitations, circulars, and the like occupy an in-between status, neither entirely public, nor singularly addressed and private. And even the handwritten letter, sent with one addressee in mind, might have been penned with the aspiration of finding a wider audience than he or she to whom it was addressed.

While some scholarship exists in English on Teige¹⁰⁶ and much more on his interwar avant-garde peers from other countries, Černík has moved silently through history, largely out of view of written narratives of the historical Czech avant-garde. Only very recently, in late 2014, did Černík first receive real focused attention, as a key figure represented in the “Brno Devětsil and Multimedia Overlaps of the Artistic Avant-Garde” exhibition held at the Moravian Gallery in Brno in 2014, and its accompanying, rather lackluster catalogue.¹⁰⁷ As this recent publication suggests, if only in a superficial way, and this dissertation will show in far more detail, Černík’s archive at the PNP reveals that he was a dynamic and integral member of the Czech avant-garde. He was in frequent correspondence with dominant members of Devětsil, as well as key figures of international avant-garde and modernist movements.

Teige was and remains the undisputed head of the interwar Czech avant-garde. Although it is his peer, the poet Jaroslav Seifert, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1984, it is Teige that has been upheld as the leading figure in Devětsil in many recent histories of the movement. In one article, Zusi describes Teige as “the leading

¹⁰⁶ For example, see the following articles and anthologies: Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha, eds. *Karel Teige/1900-1951: L’Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-garde* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999); Eric Dluhosch, ed. *The Minimum Dwelling* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002); Esther Levinger, “Czech Avant-Garde Art: Poetry for the Five Senses,” *The Art Bulletin* 81, no. 3 (Sept. 1999): 513-532; Vladimír Šlapeta, ed. *Modern Architecture In Czechoslovakia And Other Writings* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2000); Matthew Witkovsky, “Karel Teige,” in *Avant-Garde Art in Everyday Life*, ed. Matthew Witkovsky (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2011); Peter Zusi, “The Style of the Present: Karel Teige on Constructivism and Poetism,” *Representations* 88, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 102-124; Zusi, “Tendentious Modernism: Karel Teige’s Path to Functionalism,” *Slavic Review* 67, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 821-839; Zusi, “Vanishing Points: Walter Benjamin and Karel Teige on the Liquidations of Aura,” *Modern Language Review* 108, no. 2 (April 2013): 368-395.

¹⁰⁷ Lucie Česálková and Petr Ingerle, eds. *Brno Devětsil and Multimedia Overlaps of the Artistic Avant-Garde*, trans. Miloš Bartoň and Alan Windsor (Brno: Moravian Gallery, 2014).

theoretical voice of the Czech interwar avant-garde and a prolific critic of modernist literature, art, and architecture.”¹⁰⁸ Teige himself insisted on his primacy. Seifert writes of Teige—whom he calls his “first and great friend”—as “self-sacrificing and good” but also “exacting and orthodox, and he exercised his will authoritatively. In *Devětsil* we resolved things more or less democratically, but ultimately what was decided was really that which Teige wanted.”¹⁰⁹

In the copious amount of preserved letters from Teige to Černík, who would become the leading figure of *Devětsil* in Brno, it is abundantly clear that Teige had no qualms about positioning himself as the man in charge, and Prague as the movement’s center. The center-periphery binary that has resulted in the exclusion of central European cities like Prague from histories of the interwar avant-garde has thus maintained its hold even amongst those who were themselves marginalized, as Teige sought to simultaneously defend Prague’s position as a center of cultural capital in interwar Europe and relegate Brno to secondary status in he and Černík’s combined efforts at widening the influence of the Czech avant-garde. Teige’s language in his letters to Černík—who was both a colleague and a friend—is authoritative and leaves little room for real discussion. When it comes to editorial issues, or organizational matters concerning *Devětsil*, he gives orders far more than he solicits suggestion. Perhaps because Teige had such a loud and insistent voice in his own day, it is his voice

¹⁰⁸ Zusi, “The Style of the Present: Karel Teige on Constructivism and Poetism,” 102.

¹⁰⁹ Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 45. Original: “Karel Teige, můj první a veliký přítel, byl člověk obětavý a hodný. Jako kamarád byl laskavý, ale jako umělec byl přísný a ortodoxní a svou vůli dovedl autoritativně uplatnit. V *Devětsilu* jsme se sice demokraticky na věcech usnášeli, ale o čem jsme se dohodli, bylo pravidelně to, co chtěl Teige.”

that is channeled today in contemporary efforts to revive an interest in the Czech interwar avant-garde. But just as it is the work of this dissertation to add to a growing number of studies that evidence the influential force of the Czech avant-garde in the transnational arena of the interwar period, so too is it the aim to rehabilitate the voice of Černík, who has been almost entirely overlooked in histories of Devětsil, and in so doing encourage further investigation into what other voices have not been tended to, both in the Czech context and within the larger framework of the European interwar avant-garde.

But who was Artuš Černík? Born in July 1900 in Bohemia, only five months before Teige, in the small town of Všechněvice near Pardubice, Černík was only eighteen when World War One came to an end. The next year, he graduated from gymnasium, and it is reported that Černík then began to pursue a law degree in Prague.¹¹⁰ Though this fact is not mentioned anywhere in letters from Teige, it would provide an explanation for how the two men met. In 1919, Teige matriculated into the Philosophical Faculty at Charles University (where he studied Aesthetics and Art History, under František Xaver Šalda,¹¹¹ among others, until 1923), and the surviving correspondence between Černík and Teige takes up at the very end (December 29th) of

¹¹⁰ Bibliographic information for Černík sourced from Vladimír Forst, ed. "Artuš Černík," in *Lexikon České Literatury A-G* (Prague: Academia, 1985), 445. Also Petr Ingerle, "Brno Devětsil – a local chapter in the history of the international avant-garde," *Brno Devětsil and Multimedia Overlaps of the Artistic Avant-Garde*, trans. Miloš Bartoň and Alan Windsor (Brno: Moravian Gallery, 2014), 13-14.

¹¹¹ F. X. Šalda (1867-1937) was one of the preeminent Czech art and literary critics around the turn of the twentieth century. Some of his most influential works are *The Struggle for Tomorrow* (*Boje o zítřek*, 1905) and *Spirit and Work* (*Duše a dílo*, 1913) which center around issues of Symbolism and Romanticism. In the 1920s, he addressed the work of Devětsil as well, as in the essays "On the Youngest Czech Poetry" ("O nejmladší poezii české") and "On Poetism" ("O poetismu").

that year. This first letter—from Teige to Černík—is sent, however, not to an address in Prague, but to Višeňovice 10, Běla u Přelouče, presumably Černík’s family home near Pardubice. All remaining letters sent to Černík from Teige in 1920 are also mailed to this address.¹¹²

In 1921, the letters from Teige begin to be addressed to Černík in Brno, where he enrolled in the law school again, this time at what is now Masaryk University (and from which he graduated in 1924). Shortly after arriving in Brno, Černík began to work as an editor of the literary supplement of the Communist daily *Rovnost* from 1921-1922. It is to the *Rovnost* offices that Teige mails his first Brno letter to Černík, and indeed, Černík’s position there was a predominant subject in Teige’s letters from this period, as Teige recognized Černík’s editorship as useful to propagandizing the work of Devětsil.

Černík continued his formal education as he held this editorial post, and in 1923 (the year before obtaining his law degree), Černík also graduated from the State Railroad Academy and worked as a clerk for Czech Railways at Slatina near Brno and in Rájes near Blansko. Černík thereby had one foot in the world of the intelligentsia (as

¹¹² The one exception is a letter (of which the exact date of mailing is indeterminable) sent from Teige to Černík at an address “züm Böhmerwald, Šumava,” the southwest region of Bohemia bordering with Germany. Šumava is just about 200 kilometers from Munich, a city that Černík visited in 1920, and perhaps stayed there for some time, or made frequent visits. In the letter sent to Šumava, Teige references Černík’s time in Munich: “Mon cher, when I received your letter from Munich, I sent you a letter immediately, already to Višeňovice.” Original: “Mon cher, když jsem dostal tvůj dopis z Mnichova, odepsal jsem ti dopisem hned, už do Višeňovic.” [Teige to Černík, April 1, 1920, PNP, AČ Archive.] In letters from July and August 1920, Teige proposes the possibility of travelling to Munich together.

Though it unclear why Černík was in Munich, it is notable that the city was on the heels of a short-lived Communist Revolution, an attempt to extricate Bavaria from the recently founded Weimar Republic and found instead a Socialist state.

There is also one postcard addressed to Černík at the Prague neighborhood of Vinohrady, with the date attributed to 1920, apparently penciled in by an archivist.

editor and student) and the other in the world of “real” work, in a stable, government job. The railroad and the train were popular motifs for the avant-garde in the interwar period, and Černík’s association with the railroad is occasionally referenced in Teige’s letters to him. Teige even suggests in one letter (to be discussed later on here) that Černík write a poem using the imagery of the rails for the magazine *Disk*.

While in Brno, and also in 1923, Černík founded the Brno chapter of Devětsil at Teige’s suggestion, and quickly began work on launching the Moravian chapter’s important magazine, *Pásmo* (1924-1926). He also served as an editor at *Horizont* (1927-1930, another Brno-based publication) and *Český filmový svět* (*The World of Czech Film*, 1922-1928, now from Prague), which was not associated with Devětsil. Upon relocating to Prague in the late 1920s, he also organized journalists writing about film under the umbrella of the Club for New Film (*Klub za nový film*, 1927) and *Filmklub* (1931). Perhaps best remembered for his work as a film critic, Černík also published poetry, essays on theater and literature, and Soviet culture, as well as translations from German and French. In one of Teige’s letters to Černík sent in 1921, Teige ordains him the “Devětsil minister of foreign affairs” (“zahraniční ministr Devětsilu”),¹¹³ likely in reference to Černík’s early work in translation, and related correspondence requesting permission to translate foreign work (such as the poems of French Utopianist Charles Vildrac, to whom Teige had described Černík as foreign emissary). As Černík’s role as an editor at various publications became more significant by the mid-1920s, so too would

¹¹³ Teige to Černík, April 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.

the scope of his correspondence with important international figures in French and German, including László Moholy-Nagy at the Bauhaus, Paul Dermée (1886-1951) in Paris, and Theo van Doesburg (1883-1931) in Amsterdam. These networks—generated and maintained privately in correspondence and then made publically manifest via publication—will be underscored in detail in later chapters, further asserting Černík’s important and yet thus far overlooked place in the history of the Czech avant-garde.

But in this chapter, Černík’s importance is asserted primarily *through* Teige. For while Černík meticulously saved what appears to be nearly all of his letters from Teige from 1919 through 1927, even preserving the envelopes (which have been invaluable in dating the letters thanks to the postmarks, and in locating Černík thanks to the addresses), in Teige’s archive at the PNP, only seven letters from Černík—all from the year 1927—survive, perhaps because they were simply not saved, perhaps because they were destroyed. It is therefore largely based on the responses Černík received from Teige (and the sheer number of them) that Černík’s own prominent position in the Czech avant-garde is made evident. The magazines to which he contributed and which he edited also play a role in establishing his position. Černík’s editorial work, particularly at *Pásmo*, confirms his status as a central figure within the network of the international interwar avant-garde.

In what follows, close readings are employed of the letters remaining between Teige and Černík that take account both of the medium’s formal elements (in terms of materiality and also rhetorical content) and the historical circumstance in which the

letters were written, as the early tenants of Devětsil were worked through in this important correspondence. The first half of the chapter looks critically at secondary sources on epistolary literature in order to provide a theoretical framework within which to consider the letters, and the second half turns to the correspondence itself, highlighting its use value for situating the origins of Devětsil. The group's political orientation, as worked out in the letters between Teige and Černík receive closer attention in later chapters.

THE LETTER AS LITERARY GENRE

In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe Franz Kafka's (1883-1924) famous letters as a "minor genre" that "have a second generic characteristic."¹¹⁴ They continue:

That which is the greatest horror for the subject of enunciation will be presented as an external obstacle that the subject of the statement, relegated to the letter, will try at all costs to conquer, even if it means perishing. This is called 'The Description of a Struggle.' The horror of Kafka toward all forms of conjugality. A prodigious operation by which he translates this horror into a *topography of obstacles*. (Where to go? how to arrive? Prague, Vienna, Berlin?) The Surveyor.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 31.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

In the letters under discussion here, predominantly of a practical, business-like nature, we do not have the turmoil of fraught personal relationships that we get with Kafka (who, of course, also lived in Prague), but we do have a desire to transform the letter into a mode of transportation. Letters move ideas: between people, across borders. In the Introduction to *Extravagant Narratives*, Elizabeth MacArthur writes that the “metonymy of epistolary novels, and even more, of real correspondences involves taking pleasure in a process rather than striving for an all-important ending.”¹¹⁶ The letter marks a desire for perpetuation and an escape from a fixed meaning. The epistolary form concerns itself with “process over result.”¹¹⁷ It is the movement of letters between two parties, the sender and recipient (and arguably, the marks of the post office assert a third presence, connote a triangulation), that enables the process to continue, the story to expand and move in a multiplicity of directions. “The continuous mutual effort,” writes MacArthur, “to establish the nature and limits of an epistolary relationship ensures connections among the letters and movement from letter to letter.”¹¹⁸ As long as the letter writers live, maintain a personal relationship and physical distance, the story may continue to unfold.

Though this is to some extent true of Teige’s correspondence with Černík—the process of continual writing engendered new and varied ideas, and multiple publishing platforms by which to enact these ideas—it was ultimately with *results* that they were

¹¹⁶ Elizabeth MacArthur, *Extravagant Narratives: Closure and Dynamics in the Epistolary Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 28.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

most concerned. The bound and distributed journals, exhibitions, and theater performances that came successfully to fruition were the happy outcome of the letters' process. In this case, then, it is not so much that letter writing privileges "process over result," but rather that the process of letter writing *is integral to the result*, and with the backward gaze of history, offers a uniquely unfiltered medium by which to observe the avant-garde process.¹¹⁹ The letter, then, becomes in and of itself a "result," and a legitimate source of literary interpretation.

Deleuze and Guattari, too, attempt to break down the literary distinction between the letter sent, and the greater oeuvre of a writer (in their case Kafka).¹²⁰ In no uncertain terms, they argue that such a distinction is artificial:

it is useless to ask whether the letters are a part of the oeuvre or whether they are the source of some of the themes of the work; *they are an integrative part of the writing machine* or the expression machine. It is as such that *we must think of the letters in general as belonging to the writing*, outside the work or not, and understand moreover

¹¹⁹ It should be reminded that the letters themselves are of course also a constructed medium, not entirely unfiltered, as the author seeks to convey a particular sense of self in correspondence. But the letter is, nevertheless, arguably a less labored and mediated version of oneself and one's ideas than would appear in a completed essay, manifesto, or manuscript, which reaches the public presumably only after several drafts, and in collaboration with editors. I have written in greater detail on the myth-making capacity of the epistolary genre in my Master's thesis: Meghan Forbes, "The Final Years: Bohumil Hrabal Writes His Own Story" (MA thesis, Columbia University, 2009).

¹²⁰ There are many famous examples of the extended correspondence of important historical figures, of course. One instance less well known in the American context is the forty plus years of letters sent between the Czech comedians and actors (and Devětsil members), Jiří Voskovec (1905-1981) and Jan Werich (1905-1980) (compiled and published in three volumes by Akropolis between 2007 and 2008 in association with the Jan and Meda Mládek Foundation). This example is a rarity in that both men were celebrated in their own right—after World War Two they each became successful film actors, Werich in Czechoslovakia and Voskovec in America—and so the letters, from both parties equally valued, have been preserved, archived, and ultimately, published. More often, we get only one side of the story and the letters read as a monologic dialogue; the reader can only guess at the tone and subject matter of the letters from the other half, marginalized by the historical record. Such is the case in the Černík-Teige letters, as has already been mentioned.

why certain literary forms such as the novel have naturally made use of the epistolary form.¹²¹

Deleuze and Guattari insist that one “component” of Kafka’s “literary machine” is the letters, for in general “Kafka’s work is not defined by a publishing intention. Kafka evidently did not think of publishing his letters; quite the contrary, he thought of destroying everything he wrote,” Deleuze and Guattari claim, “*as though it were all like letters.*”¹²² Kafka famously insisted to his friend Max Brod (1884-1968) that he did not want the bulk of his writing to be published, letters naturally included.¹²³ And yet, his correspondence, such as that with Felice Bauer (1887-1960) and Milena Jesenská (1896-1944, his Czech translator and an important figure in the Czech avant-garde milieu), is now read as part of his literary oeuvre. Today, there exists no real hierarchical distinction between the various forms of his writing. We have in Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis license to strip from the consideration of the valid place of the letter as literature the question of publication entirely. For the letter, regardless of its intention (for the recipient, for the archive, for the book) is nevertheless a construct of the writer, a depiction of the self, crafted in a particular moment, and to a particular end.

Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between the role of the “subject of enunciation”—the “I” who physically writes—and the “subject of the statement”—the

¹²¹ Deleuze and Guattari 32. Emphasis is my own.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 29. Emphasis is my own.

¹²³ There is a significant body of work that has emerged over the past several years and with which I tend to agree, that disputes Kafka’s supposed desire to have his fiction destroyed. See: Scott Spector, *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation In Kafka's Fin De Siècle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) and also Judith Butler, “Who Owns Kafka?” *The London Review of Books*, March 3, 2011, 3-8.

grammatical “I,” that same pronoun available to everyone. Between the act of writing and the act of sending, the two “I”s separate. The “subject of the statement” as a construct of the “subject of enunciation” is physically distanced from the sovereign “I”.

Deleuze and Guattari write:

Instead of the subject of enunciation using the letter to recount his own situation, it is the subject of the statement that will take on a whole movement that has become fictive or no more than superficial. It is the sending of the letter, the trajectory of the letter, the gestures of the postman that will take the place of the subject of enunciation’s recounting.¹²⁴

Therefore, the act of mailing both physically and temporally removes the “I” of the writer from the “I” in the letter. And now, in the case of the letters considered here, by reading them again almost 100 years after they were originally written, there is arguably a third “I,” one that no longer carries the potential for enacting the promises, goals, or hopes of the letter. The introduction of the third “I” that takes root with the death of the writer marks the point where the contemporary reader can begin to read the letters as a closed system, now that no more letters will ever be produced.

In a 2013 article in *The New Yorker*, Harvard Professor and literary critic James Wood describes our uncomfortable relationship to that third “I”, that disembodied pronoun, that we perhaps once knew animate. “The curious advantage of being able to

¹²⁴ Deleuze and Guattari 30-31.

survey the span of someone else's life, from start to finish, can seem peremptory, high-handed, *forward*," he writes, and continues:

Once a life is contained, made final, as if flattened within the pages of a diary, it becomes a smaller, contracted thing. It is just a life, one of millions, as arbitrary as anyone else's, a named tenancy that will soon become a nameless one; a life that we know, with horror, will be thoroughly forgotten within a few generations.¹²⁵

Wood describes that appalling convenience inherent in death, in that in providing an ending, it allows us to fashion a plot with beginning, middle, and end for not a character in a novel, but a once living being. But in suggesting that the storied life will shortly be forgotten, Wood neglects to think of the archive, that place meant to resist forgetting by collecting the letters, photographs, and other potential ephemera of a life deemed important enough at all costs *not* to forget. Yet his description of the death of the subject as the "awful privilege of seeing a life whole" is an essential component in understanding the role the letters play in constructing a narrative of that life, once that life is ended.¹²⁶ And this narrative, crafted here, is absolutely distinct from the present tense narrative the letter writer constructs while living.

MacArthur describes the difference implicit in the past tense of the narrative form, and the present tense of the epistolary genre. It is the openness of the letter, with its inability to know what will come, that makes it an uncanny time capsule of a particular moment in a larger narrative of ideas as they progress and develop over time.

¹²⁵ James Wood, "Why? The fictions of life and death," *The New Yorker*, Dec. 9, 2013, 34.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

Janet Altman speaks more expansively of the “two contradictory possibilities” inherent in the genre:

(1) the potential finality of the letter—given its conventional mechanism for closing, for “signing off,” and (2) the openendedness of the form—in which the letter writer is always in dialogue with a possible respondent, in which any letter appears as part of a potentially ongoing sequence.¹²⁷

In a dialectic, these two characteristics of the letter, seemingly at odds, synthesize in the later iteration of the letters, when they are no longer read by he or she for whom they were originally intended, but rather by the scholar in the archive, or the larger public if they are transcribed, edited, and published in book form. The trajectory over a period of weeks, years or decades of writing that implies the “openendedness” of the form, becomes truly closed once the writer “signs off” for the final time, signifying a real death, or at least the death of the relationship that was conducted in letters.

During the year of 1921, Teige took to mailing all letters to Černík in the black-rimmed envelopes used to announce a death, like the one he himself would receive from Čapek’s family almost two decades later. Such an ominous choice in stationary for letters that bring no tidings of death is very striking. Perhaps someone in the family had recently died, and so Teige simply chose to use what extra envelopes were on hand. Or, maybe he liked the clean, black-on-white aesthetic of the envelopes, similar in some ways to his own magazine and book design. But the former would seem too accidental

¹²⁷ Janet Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 148.

for a man who appears to have done nearly everything with intention and the latter still does not address the fact that a black rimmed envelope refers, inextricably, to the dead; surely there is something very deliberate in the choice to send an ordinary letter in an envelope that announces death.¹²⁸

Letters, written in the present moment of the author's life, resist death.¹²⁹ But of course, even in the letter, the eventual death of the author is still inevitable, even when not so visible. Perhaps Teige's funereal envelopes are a resistance to the lack of death apparent in the letter, a way for the young Teige to remind the recipient of their mortality, thereby engendering an urgency to the task at hand. The envelopes, addressed and sent in Teige's youth, are a harbinger of the death that did inevitably come (though far more quickly than what should have been inevitable), but which could not be referenced in the vitality of the letters, so full of new ideas and exhortations.

¹²⁸ The careful choice of envelope calls to mind Emily Dickinson's envelope poems, which have recently garnered much attention thanks to their compilation in *The Gorgeous Nothings* (Granary Books, 2013). In a brief conversation with Rebecca Mead for *The New Yorker*, the co-editor Jen Bervin rejects the idea that Dickinson wrote on envelopes out of "Yankee parsimony." "I have seen her write a draft on a piece of gilt-edged stationery—that was in some sense unbelievably wasteful, in this gorgeous way," states Bervin. "I think she is always negotiating with the shape of the page." [Rebecca Mead, Talk of the Town *The New Yorker*, Jan. 27, 2014, 22.]

The black-rimmed envelope was later adapted by Devětsil member Vítězslav Nezval in his poem "Adé" ["Adieu"], which features the use of the same convention to frame his visual poem. As it appears in his book of poems *Pantomima*—published in 1924—this proto-Surrealist poem, which could be read as an elegy to a bird or to the poet, is capped with the image of a supine cross with a feather laying across it.

¹²⁹ The letter, and the "openendedness" of protracted correspondence, in this sense exemplifies the very opposite of the bounded finiteness of the novel. In Walter Benjamin's essay, "The Storyteller," his description of what makes the novel enticing is the precise counterpoint to the allure of the letter. He writes: "The reader of the novel in fact looks for human beings, from whom he derives the 'meaning of life.' Thus, he has to realize in advance, no matter what, that he will share their experience of death: if need be, their figurative death (the end of the novel), but preferably their actual one. How do the characters make him understand that death is already waiting for them—a very definite death, as a very definite place? This is the question which feeds the reader's consuming interest in the events of the novel." [Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, ed. Michael Jennings, trans. Howard Eiland (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1996), 156.]

THE LETTER AS MATERIAL OBJECT

MacArthur describes the “significance of letters as actions and material objects:” they are physical markers of an exchange of ideas, of promises, rebukes, farewells.¹³⁰ Though MacArthur speaks here of the letter as it is used in the novel, it is of course relevant to a definition of the letter as such. It is the materiality of the letter that situates it uniquely as both a physical artifact of a specific time, place, and nation’s postal standards, and an inked document of a writer’s thinking at a particular moment.

The mere fact of the letter’s existence, especially after both sender and recipient are gone, is of course no small feat at all. The letters under consideration here are by necessity an incomplete sampling; they are those that were not discarded, lost, hidden away somewhere, or burned. Derrida writes of the inclination to want to remove the trace of one’s self constructed for a particular other, for fear that it might reach beyond that person, to many others for whom the letter was not written. He describes the letter as, “a residue of what we have said to one another, of what, do not forget, we have made of one another, *of what we have written one another*. Yes, this ‘correspondence,’ you’re right, immediately got beyond us, which is why it should have been burned, all of it, including the cinders of the unconscious—and ‘they’ will never know anything about it.”¹³¹

¹³⁰ MacArthur 14.

¹³¹ Derrida 7. Italics my own.

Emily Dickinson also pondered the risk inherent in embarking on a written correspondence. In one of her “fragment” poems—those written on envelopes and other paper scraps—Dickinson wrote, “What a Hazard a Letter is— | When I think of the Hearts it has Cleft or healed I almost wince to lift my Hand to so much as a superscription.”¹³² These poems have been recently compiled in the 2013 volume, *The Gorgeous Nothings*, and Mark Ford, in his review of the tome for *The London Review of Books*, speaks of Dickinson’s unsent envelope poems as “telling emblems of her urge to communicate, and her almost equally strong urge to withhold communication.”¹³³ Dickinson, who had less than ten poems published in her lifetime, is perhaps now at the climax of her communication with the world—one whom she claimed “never wrote to Me”¹³⁴—as much attention has turned to her envelope poems with the publication of *The Gorgeous Nothings* and an accompanying exhibition at The Drawing Center in Manhattan. Ford notes that “Dickinson’s epistolary and poetic worlds overlap insistently: letters, kept safe from prying eyes by their envelopes, wing their way from one domestic space to another, and the reading of their contents can change everything.”¹³⁵ It is evocative of the power of the letter and its accompanying envelope that they carry so much weight and garner such attention in the present era, in which

¹³² Cited in Mark Ford, “Pomenvylopes,” *The London Review of Books*, June 19, 2014, 26.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Original manuscript in Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, http://www.edickinson.org/editions/2/image_sets/75176.

¹³⁵ Ford 26.

In the Introduction to *The Gorgeous Nothings*, Jen Bervin writes, “Dickinson’s writing materials might best be described as epistolary. Everything she wrote—poems, letters, and drafts, in fascicles, on folios, individual sheets, envelopes, and fragments—was predominantly composed on plain, machine-made stationary.” [Jennifer Bervin, “Studies in Scale: An Introduction,” in *The Gorgeous Nothings*, eds. Jen Bervin and Marta Werner (New York: Granary Books, 2013): 9.]

paper and pen have been so marginalized as necessary tools of communication. It is a return from our contemporary moment of digital correspondence, to a time when the letter on paper, sealed in an envelope, and mailed “from one domestic space to another” was essential to communication, that occupies the focus of this chapter.

The materiality of the letter, then, in a time before the possibility of backing up digitally a copy of the physical trace, cannot be overstated.¹³⁶ The very material form of the letter also dictated its contents, and what of those contents are available to the contemporary reader. Teige, unlike Černík (who made use of a typewriter in all of the few letters that remain from him to Teige), hand-wrote nearly all of his letters, rendering certain words or passages frustratingly inscrutable. In a mailing postmarked the 2nd of October 1924, however, Teige writes his first (saved) letter to Černík on a typewriter, and reports therein, “__ I bought a spectacular ‘Remington!’ and now I’m playing around with it.”¹³⁷ This report is almost by way of apology, as this letter and the few that follow typed on the typewriter are riddled with typographical errors. Teige clearly labored at the machine, and his typed letters are, as a consequence, relatively brief and few in number. In short order, he exchanges the legibility (and modernity!) of the typewritten letter for the more sprawling cursive, in which he appears to have been

¹³⁶ And it was well understood by the letter writer the preciousness of that sent original. Many correspondents kept drafts of their letters in carbon copy duplicate. It is, for instance, thanks to Walter Gropius’ careful cataloguing (always with the help of a female secretary or his wife, Ise) of carbon copies of his sent mail, along with originals received, that later in this dissertation I am able to document his important correspondence with Teige. And Teige himself, who either did not maintain such a careful system (or as has been considered above, had his personal correspondence disturbed by outside parties), does not have copies of his letters sent kept in his archive, but he annotates those he received with the date that a response was sent.

¹³⁷ Teige to Černík, Oct. 2, 1924, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “__ Koupil jsem si nádhernou ‘Remingtonku!’ a tak se teď s ní bavím.”

more comfortable. It is perhaps fitting that a man simultaneously drawn to and ambivalent towards modern technologies would have found the typewriter an unwieldy intermediary in putting his thoughts down on paper.¹³⁸ (Notably, nearly all his saved article drafts are also written by hand.)

The letters, too, that find their way to the archive document what has survived, and hint at what has not. Gaps in the conversation, long periods of silence, topics that appear suddenly with no introduction or preface suggest lost letters, or a physical presence between sender and recipient that obviates the letter as the mediator of conversation. In one example, Teige writes to Černík before a trip to see him, “The subject of pásmo we’ll discuss [in the Czech, literally: ‘by mouth’] in Brno,” marking what will *not* be in this letter (i.e. a discussion of an upcoming issue of *Pásmo*).¹³⁹ And in 1926, Teige begins to send only brief notes on simple postcards (those without illustration, intended specifically for messages to be sent off quickly, like telegrams) to Černík at an address in Vinohrady, a Prague neighborhood. With Černík’s relocation to the Czech capital, the archived letters thin out notably, as the two were able to see each other in person more regularly, but also because their collaboration was by this time less intense.

¹³⁸ Teige may have been feeling what Friedrich Kittler describes in his seminal *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, in which he writes of the age in which the typewriter was introduced as a mode of writing as one “marked by separation or differentiation...a writing that already separates paper and body during textual production, not first during reproduction.” [Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 14.

¹³⁹ Teige to Artuš, January 23, 1924, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “O pásmu ústně v Brně.”

By reading the letter as a historical trace of a conversation and development of ideas, I am constructing a narrative out of what is left. The gaps inherent in this method—the lost letters, the unrecorded conversations—is also the aspect of the letter that makes it equal parts exciting and frustrating as a source for scholarly inquiry, and is perhaps the reason why correspondence has been so frequently overlooked in previous writing on the historical avant-garde. To construct a narrative around letters is to adopt a strategy that yawns wide with holes. From the vantage point of one hundred years hence, I am writing a story in the past tense out of fragments drafted in a now distant present.

STAMPS ON THE ENVELOPE: THE INDELIBLE MARK

The envelope with its stamps and postmarks, when saved, becomes the authority on dating a moment left unrecorded in the margins of the letter. But while this date-stamped postmark can be invaluable in placing a letter in its proper chronological spot in a greater narrative conducted in correspondence, it also marks a nebulous in-between, signifying the delay between when the letter is written, and when it reaches and is read by the recipient.¹⁴⁰ For of course, between writing and receiving the letter must be sent, and what is true today, Derrida reminds us, was only more so the case in

¹⁴⁰ The dates attributed to the majority of the correspondence here from Teige to Černík in fact reflects this liminal space, as Teige dated very few of his letters personally, and it is therefore almost entirely with the postmarked date on the envelopes—envelopes Černík thankfully saved—that I have dated the letters.

the interwar period: the fact of the inconvenience of a stamp, and the lag its absence can generate. Derrida muses, “... I went out to buy stamps, and coming back, going back up the stone stairs, I asked myself what we would have done in order to love each other in 1930 in Berlin when, as they say, you needed wheelbarrows full of marks just to buy a stamp.”¹⁴¹

Once the stamp is obtained, the postmark date denotes the journey—the where and when of it—that brief period when the letter exists outside the hands of the one who wrote it, and for whom it is intended. It is that moment Deleuze and Guattari describe, when the “gestures of the postman”¹⁴² overtake “the place of the subject of enunciation’s recounting.”¹⁴³ The postman becomes, inadvertently, an interloper, a necessary nuisance, even. I “would like to address myself, in a straight line, directly, without *courier*, only to you, but I do not arrive, and that is the worst of it,” writes Derrida.¹⁴⁴ The time that the mailed letter spends with the postal service is the (hopefully) short moment when the letter (or rather, its envelope) is both susceptible to outside influence and might have its largest audience.¹⁴⁵ Derrida: “the word also speaks

¹⁴¹ Derrida 10.

¹⁴² Deleuze and Guattari 30.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁴⁴ Derrida 23.

The poet Jiří Wolker (1900-1924), a member of Devětsil (who ultimately had a rather turbulent relationship with its more prominent members, and left the group in 1923 before dying of tuberculosis the following year), in his poem “The Mailbox” (“Poštovní schránka”), from the 1921 collection *A Guest at Home* (*Host do domu*), imagines the way in which the mailbox symbolizes a site of both coming and going, into which we throw our tidings—“on the one hand sad on the other happy” (“s jedné smutná a s druhé veselá”)—and hope that they make their way to whom we have directed them. Wolker figures the postbox like a flower: our letters are its pollen, the postal worker a bee that comes to disperse it. [Jiří Wolker, *Host do domu* (Plzeň: Benísko, 1921), 14.]

¹⁴⁵ The postcard, with its message brazenly in plain view, is an even more vulnerable form of mailing. Derrida was naturally aware of this: “What I like about post cards is that even if in an envelope, they are made to circulate like an open but illegible letter.” [Derrida 12.]

of the address to be detoured.”¹⁴⁶ The post office may use the envelope as a free and widely distributed source of government messaging (think of any stamp you have ever purchased, and you get the picture). Envelopes from Teige’s letters of the 1920s bear stamped instructions from the post office on how to properly address an envelope and invest in the First Republic (for example, one stamp, frequently in use, bore the message: “subscribe to a 6% capital transport loan” (“upisujte 6% investiční půjčku dopravní”).

The utility of the envelope as a means of propaganda was likewise not lost on the international set of artists and writers under consideration in this dissertation. Perhaps most explicitly, André Breton (1896-1966) used the envelope as a way of propagating Surrealism’s “brand.” He had two custom inked stamps made with which he would mark his outgoing mail. One stamp bears the imperative “AID AND SUPPORT INTELLECTUAL WORK” (“AIDEZ, SOUTENEZ LES TRAVAILLEURS INTELLECTUELS”) in all capital letters, and inscribed in a rectangle, that resembled an official inked marking of the post office. Breton, to further the appearance of his stamp as an official one of the government, would at times even ink this marking over the postage stamps, as the clerk at the post office would do with theirs. In the same vein, Breton designed another

The public status of the postcard was surely not lost on our avant-gardists, who playfully illustrated the static picture postcards available for purchase at tourist destinations. Jindřich Štyrský in particular enjoyed playing with this convention, often adding sketches of stick figures to idyllic tableau, sometimes hanging from nooses. One such figure is hanging from a light post in front of the famous Powder Tower in Prague, on the front of a postcard sent to Vítězslav Nezval, and signed by Štyrský, Toyen, and several other peers. [Jindřich Štyrský et al. to Vítězslav Nezval, Aug. 17, 1927, PNP, Vítězslav Nezval Archive (hereafter cited as VN Archive).]

¹⁴⁶ Derrida 4.

stamp with which to mark his envelopes that on first glance appears to be the official date and place stamp of the post office, maintaining its round shape and size. But on closer examination, this too is clearly the work of Breton himself, and not that of a wing of the French government, for this circle bears the words “Le Surréalisme A.S.D.L.R. [acronym for: au service de la revolution]” with a small red star in its outer ring. Breton’s now famous address “42 Rue Fontaine PARIS” (at which the Czech Surrealist Toyen lived after his death) is inscribed in a center circle.

Similarly, Teige created a stamp with which he sometimes inked his envelopes (in blue), that advertised the U.S. [Umělecký svaz, or Artists’ Association] DEVĚTSIL in capital, serif letters, with his home address directly below, in a smaller, sans serif font, a good decade before he would have ever received a letter from Breton. A year earlier, he adapted stationery from the design of the journal *Disk* (which came out in Prague in only two issues, the first in 1923 and the second in 1925, and was the first periodical published entirely under Devětsil authorship), to be used on matching envelope and writing paper to propagate the publication. As on the journal’s cover, the stationery advertised—in bold, all capital letters—the “international review” in Czech, Russian, French, German, English, and Italian alongside a large, black circle, or disk. Sandwiched between bold, black lines that run the width of both writing paper and envelope is Teige’s home address, to which it is directed that all correspondence be sent. And on the writing paper is also included another line above Teige’s address with the three editors: “KREJCAR + SEIFERT + TEIGE = Directeurs.”

Such examples suggest that the letter writer was not thinking only of the ultimate recipient when addressing the letter, but also of who would see the letter in that time in-between. In his essay for the *London Review of Books*, Ford reminds us that the postal worker is not some unseeing vessel that delivers the mail, but rather a potential voyeur of content not specifically addressed to him or her, whose work necessitates a careful look at the envelope (and who might crave the odd eccentric mailer). “I worked for awhile as a postman,” he writes. “How refreshing it would have been to find amid the bills and circulars and birthday cards [...] fantastically mottoed and illustrated envelopes.”¹⁴⁷ Just as the instructive stamps used by the postal service are not necessarily targeted specifically at he (most likely, at that time, not she) who delivered the mail, but also for the one who opens the envelope, Breton’s slogans or Teige’s propaganda would surely not only have been intended for the presumably like-minded recipient of the letter alone. The marked-up envelope thus represents a subtle, perhaps even subversive, site of avant-garde messaging. Not so very unlike the Devětsil magazine covers, which convey their avant-garde and leftist leanings in bold fonts and striking typographic design, yet far less considered, the envelope (such as the funereal or *Disk* examples) or added inking served as an important tool in manifesting aesthetically the desires and artistic endeavors of the sender.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the envelope’s unique status as the public vessel that discreetly transports the private letter to he or she for whom it is intended, once its

¹⁴⁷ Ford 26.

work is finished, its utility removed, the envelope is so often thrown out.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, such observations as those above are limited to the small scope of the envelopes saved, which number far fewer than the letters found therein. Often, the letter is opened and read, the envelope discarded.

But sometimes, the envelope is saved, catalogued away along with its letter. Černík, fortunately for later scholars, kept a very large number of Teige's envelopes, which tell a story of their own in postal messages, Devětsil propaganda, and funereal borders. The envelopes with their postal markings have proven invaluable in dating the letters, something Teige himself often failed to do. By saving the envelopes in which Teige's letters were couriered, Černík seems to have understood that they were someday destined for the archive, and did his editorial due diligence by organizing his correspondence with care. As only seven of Černík's letters survive in Teige's archive, on the other hand, one might conclude that Teige was less conscious of the historical import of these letters, or less meticulous in organizing his papers. But either possibility would seem doubtful, as Teige so ambitiously built his legacy from a very early age, and made careful records on received letters of responses that he sent. The lack of letters could be more likely attributed to meddling in his estate thanks to his troubled political status in the final years of his life—perhaps he did save Černík's letter, but they were hidden, stolen, destroyed, or discarded after Teige's death. If this is the case, then, ironically, it is not Teige's, but Černík's voice that is all but silenced, with so little of his

¹⁴⁸ Bervin provides a beautiful description of the envelope in the introduction to *The Gorgeous Nothings*: "The economy of the pocket is worth considering. An envelope is a pocket. An envelope refolds discreetly, privately, even after it has been sliced completely open." [Bervin 12.]

correspondence to Teige left behind, whereas Černík's archive brings Teige to life, with over 300 pages of letters addressed to him from his friend and collaborator over thirty years. *All but* silenced, though surely not entirely. Without further ado, let us turn now to look more closely at the contents of these letters from Teige to Černík, which provide insight into the early developments of Devětsil, how the group endeavored to forge networks at home and abroad, and also make evident the important, collaborative role of Černík in the foundation of a Brno chapter of Devětsil and its major publication, *Pásmo*.

THE LETTERS SENT

The first half of this chapter has attempted to ground the letters theoretically, and suggest some ways in which past work that considered real correspondence and epistolary fiction might offer some direction for reading the letter that was not intended as a literary object. But there are also distinct limits to existing sources when considering correspondence existing outside the novel (and, as highlighted in the Introduction, an Anglo-Franco context). The physical object of the letter, its envelope and postal markings, receive serious attention in this analysis of the letter not only as a medium by which collaborators communicated, but as one so well suited to the scholar, excavating data about a time in which one did not live. Shifting now from the general to the particular, the remaining pages of this chapter describe in greater detail what

exactly was contained within those envelopes Černík so dutifully saved. Namely, in the following sections I move from a discussion of how Černík and Teige constructed both a friendship and a business relationship via the post, and what their written conversations reveal about the founding of Devětsil and the group's expansion to Brno and beyond. Particular attention is paid to discussions of the Brno publication *Pásmo*, an especially important topic in the letters that reveals not only how Devětsil aimed to be perceived at home, but also how it strategized reaching and collaborating with a more international group of peers. And finally, we come to the schism that occurred between Černík and Teige, due in large part to editorial decisions at *Pásmo*. Tense working relations and the relocation of Černík to Prague in the late 1920s result in a marked decline in the number of letters that remain from 1926 on. Ultimately, the death of Teige in 1951 ushers in the end of this story, providing that “convenient” narrative ark of beginning, middle, and end James Wood suggests that a life receives in death.

ČERNÍK & TEIGE: COMRADES, ALSO FRIENDS?

The saved letters from Teige to Černík begin at a fast clip in the final days of 1919, when both men are not yet even twenty, after having presumably recently met at Charles University in Prague. When they begin, Černík is living between his family home near Pardubice and Munich, and Teige is in Prague, the geographic distance accounting for the need for postal correspondence. The letters reach a crescendo around 1921, after

the foundation of Devětsil, when Černík moves to Brno. While these letters are to some degree used as a way for two friends to keep in touch, Teige's letters are for the most part officious in tone, from the very beginning suggesting a writer far older than Teige when he took up his correspondence with Černík.

The compendium of letters that Teige writes to Černík, spanning thirty plus years (with a long silence from 1929 to 1949) and totaling over 300 pages, is not always exhilarating reading. They lack the juicy elements that can endow the perusal of the letters of the dead with a sense of voyeurism and intrigue—there is only the slightest and most occasional hint at love affairs, family matters, or other indicators of what might have been happening in either man's personal life.¹⁴⁹ No mention of their university studies ever makes it into these letters. Instead, we have lengthy and regular discussions of accounting matters (often regarding fees owed contributors) and other administrative concerns that would likely occupy two editors. There is rarely evidence that the men were more than colleagues.

¹⁴⁹ On the other hand, in Černík's archive, some sense of his personal affairs can be glimpsed from the large number of letters he saved from various women. The letters of one woman—Míla Jeřábková—stand out for their rather gushing flattery and flirtation. In one letter, Jeřábková praises a recent article by Černík that was published in the popular magazine *Gentleman*, and goes on to say that she has "read all of his books" (that he had loaned her, not authored) and asks in turn if he has read H.G. Wells's *A Short History of the World* and what he thought of it. She goes on: "I look forward to you telling me more when we meet again. And when will that be? Believe me, it feels like an unbearably long time since our last meeting." Original: "přečetla jsem téměř všechny Vaše knihy" [...] "Těším se, že mi o tom řeknete více až se zase setkáme. Kdy to bude? Věříte, že zdá se mi nesmírně dlouhou doba [sic] od našeho posledního setkání." [Míla Jeřábková to Artuš Černík, October 25, 1927, PNP, AČ Archive.]

Teige's letters to his female friend Emy Häuslerová are also far less guarded and more playful than even his most collegial letters sent to Černík.

For example, as Teige organizes the Bazaar of Modern Art (Bazar moderního umění) at the House of the Artists (Dům umelců) in 1923 at the Rudolfinum in Prague,¹⁵⁰ he attempts to sort through the official language on import taxes and shipping fees for bringing foreign art works to Czechoslovakia, a little more than six months before the show is exhibited in November. The letter consists primarily of a large quotation, prefaced with what would suggest careful review of some official import document—“Upon studying the rail tariffs on the pages concerning goods, from page 31 I’ve ascertained that the shipment of articles from abroad:”—and addends a quotation from the document with a symbol that leads to a footnote.¹⁵¹ The footnote reveals that, despite Teige’s studious efforts, he remains baffled by the language of customs. He admits, “that last sentence I don’t understand at all.”¹⁵² Concluding that they need to sort out as soon as possible the import, insurance, and taxes, he asks below his signature, “How much would you guess a shipment of 20 sculptures, drawings, and

¹⁵⁰ The Bazaar of Modern Art was an important exhibition of the Devětsil group that showcased some of its newest members, such as Štyrský and Toyen, as well as international artists like Man Ray (1890-1976). After its run in Prague in late 1923, a reduced number of its works were transferred to Brno, to be shown at the beginning of 1924 in the renamed “Exhibition of New Art,” held in a bookshop. The Bazaar, which has been compared, for instance, to the Dada-Messe, has been given a few brief accounts in English. See, for instance, Esther Levinger, “Czech Avant-Garde Art: Poetry for the Five Senses,” *The Art Bulletin* 81, no. 3 (Sept. 1999), 513-532; František Šmejkal, “Devětsil: An Introduction,” *Devětsil: Czech Avant-Garde Art, Architecture and Design of the 1920s and 30s*, ed. Rostislav Švácha (Oxford, Museum of Modern Art, 1990), 8-27; and Jindřich Toman, “Now You See It, Now You Don’t: Dada in Czechoslovakia, with Notes on High and Low,” *Crisis in the Arts, The History of Dada Vol. 4. The Eastern Dada Orbit: Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Central Europe and Japan*, ed. Stephen Foster (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1998), 11-39.

¹⁵¹ Teige to Černík, April 3, 1923, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Při studování železničního tarifu stran výslavního zboží na str 31 jsem zjistil, že zásilky z cizozemí:” [followed by lengthy quotation from document]

¹⁵² *Ibid.* Original: “této poslední větě vůbec nerozumím.”

watercolors could cost?” implicitly returning to his earlier expressed confusion about the shipping fees.¹⁵³

Though the letters can be dreary and officious, they are also at times charming. The reader is rewarded with occasional moments of beautiful language in these letters from Teige. In a letter from the end of the Summer 1920 he writes of winterizing his family’s country cottage, and reflects on the different quality of his writing in the village versus the city: “And now I take off. My room is definitively ready for its autumnal rest; I have only to close the window. I am using this final opportunity to send a few unadulterated, country greetings to some dear ones.”¹⁵⁴ This letter closes with an admonishing remark regarding Černík’s slow responses (very common in Teige’s notes), but here he is softer in his scolding than what is found in his usual letters. More characteristic of Teige’s tone is a letter from the following summer, in which he complains about lack of news coming from the Moravian capital: “Why don’t you let me know anything from Brno, you jerks!”¹⁵⁵

As the above would suggest, although Teige’s correspondence with Černík is predominantly business related, his letters also document a friendship. As the men do not live in the same geographical space for much of the 1920s, the letter must maintain both relationships — as friends but also founders of Devětsil. In an undated letter, Teige

¹⁵³ Ibid. Original: “Kolik odhaluješ že zásilka 20 soch, kreseb a akvarelů může stát?”

¹⁵⁴ Teige to Černík, Summer 1920, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “I já už odjíždím. Můj pokoj je už definitivně uložen k podzimnímu spánku, už jen zavřít okenice, a já používám poslední příležitosti abych poslal několik nefalšovaně venkovských pozdravů na některé milé mi adresy.”

¹⁵⁵ Teige to Černík, Summer 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “proč vůbec z Brna o sobě nedáváte vědět, pacholci!”

expresses his hope that the two men will be able to meet face to face soon, but in lieu of that, that Černík will write him “some really interesting and terribly long letter, ok?”¹⁵⁶ It is a predominant motif in the correspondence—the desire to meet, and if not possible, then at least for more written tidings—and these long and descriptive letters or brief updates sent on postcards, naturally signify a lack of geographical proximity.

And yet, because most of the correspondence lacks in the personal details that would suggest these “merely” to be letters between friends, the question arises as to *why* Teige would beg of such frequent correspondence, particularly in the early 1920s before the publication of the Devětsil magazines *Disk*, *Pásmo*, and *ReD*, when deadlines and other business matters were not so urgent. Though Teige is at times playful in his letters (such as in an early one from 1920 in which he writes candidly of the older writer Jaroslav Hašek’s¹⁵⁷ perpetual state of drunkenness), more often he can be downright bossy, scolding Černík for his slow responses or failure to follow through with some

¹⁵⁶ Teige to Černík, 1919 or 1920 (date uncertain), PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “nějaký moc zajímavý sáhdodlouhý dopis, vid’?”

¹⁵⁷ Teige writes, “*Mon cher*, to your very lovely writings I respond from the Union Café, where I’ve set up office these days. Jirásek sits next to me, who sends you his heartfelt greetings—aside from us, there is the very entertaining Jaroslav Hašek, always drunk, etc....that’s Prague, productively idling.” Original: “*Mon cher*, na tvé, ostatně velice milé psaní odpovídám v Unionce, kde v těchto [dnech] skoro stabilně úřaduji. Vedle sedí Jirásek, jenž tě dává srdečně pozdravovat—mimo to nás tu velmi baví Jaroslav Hašek, stabilně ožraly, atd.... to je ta Praha, produktivně zahálejší—” [Teige to Černík, December 29, 1920, PNP, AČ Archive.]

(Although the date of this letter is attributed to September 29, 1920 in *Brno Devětsil and Multimedia Overlaps of the Artistic Avant-Garde*, the letter is dated in Teige’s hand to December 29th, which the postmark of the envelope that accompanies it as designated by the PNP also affirms.)

Jaroslav Hašek (1883-1923) is the author of *The Good Soldier Švejk*, and today one of the most famous Czech writers internationally.

Alois Jirásek (1851-1930) was an author of a much earlier generation, whose plays and fiction concerned themes of Czech legend and history, that aimed at creating a national, Czech language literary canon. He is perhaps best remembered today for his recounting of the *Old Czech Legends (Staré pověsti české)*.

request in what he deems a timely manner. For example, in the summer of 1921, he opens one letter: “What the heck are you doing. Seifert writes me that you are travelling all over the world, having a grand old time.”¹⁵⁸ A few months later, after Karel Vaněk¹⁵⁹ had given a disappointing lecture on behalf of Devětsil, Teige writes to Černík demanding that a lecture he has planned be far better prepared, while also squeezing in a reminder about a book he has not yet returned:

Your lecture, Černík, must be very good, very concrete, your citations precise, to make up for that muck of Vaněk. Even if you have to work on it into the night, it has to be very, very good for the audience. There were a lot of people there, almost “sold out” and it’s my concern that it will be with difficulty that we get many to come a second time. It is damned improvisation that drowned Vaněk, and as a consequence he dragged us with him. Štulc¹⁶⁰ has sent yet another article on Arcos,¹⁶¹ which you will need to use meaningfully. It is otherwise much better to work with fundamental material, than improvise off the top of your head. And one other thing. In your lecture you will absolutely need to include: Küppers: Der Kubismus [Cubism], [name indecipherable]: Französische Malerei

¹⁵⁸ Teige to Černík, July 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Co furt děláš. Seifert mi píše že jezdíš po světě, tak veselou zábavu.”

Seifert seems to have been in nearly as frequent correspondence with Černík as Teige had been, and received several picture postcards from Černík from various trips. Though the ones remaining in Seifert’s archive are from years later than this scolding from Teige, perhaps it was postcards such as these from which Seifert was receiving updates and reporting to Teige on Černík’s earlier travels.

¹⁵⁹ Karel Vaněk, as mentioned in the Introduction, was a founding member of Devětsil. He was a journalist and humorist based in Prague, perhaps most famous for completing the fourth volume of *The Good Soldier Švejk* after Hašek’s death in 1923.

¹⁶⁰ Vladimír Štulc was also named in the founding Devětsil manifesto, and authored the article “Exoticismus” in one of the group’s first major independent publications, the *Revolutionary Anthology of Devětsil (Revoluční sborník Devětsil)*; more on this anthology in Chapter Three. In a special issue of the Communist weekly, *Červen*, dedicated to the work of Devětsil, an excerpt from Štulc’s April 1921 lecture on the theme of “The Order of the World and Work” (“Řád světa a díla”) appears as well as as well as a review he wrote of Georges Duhamel’s collection of poems, *Élégies* appears (a Prague poet who visited Prague in 1921 with Charles Vildrac, which will be discussed at some length in the following chapter).

¹⁶¹ René Arcos (1880-1959) was a poet and member of the French Utopianist settlement, L’abbaye de Créteil, which lasted from 1906-1908. He is mentioned regularly in Teige’s letters to Černík from this period. More on the Abbaye to come in Chapter Two.

[French Painting], Van Gogh, Correspondence, and Bela Lazar: Der Impressionismus [Impressionism].¹⁶²

Tvá přednáška Černíku musí byt velmi dobrá, velmi konkrétní, třebaš citáty prošpikovaná, aby spravila mlhovinu Vaňkovu. I kdybys měl na ní pracovat donoci, člověče musí to být velmi, velmi dobré. Bylo tam moc lidí, skoro “vyprodáno” a je obava že mnozí už po druhé sotva přijdou. Je to prokletá improvisace, ve které je utopen Vaněk za níž následky si potom odneseme my. Štulc ti pošle ještě jeden článek Arcosův, který budeš moci znamenitě použít. Je ostatně mnohem lépe pracovati na základě materiálu, než improvizovat ve vzduchu. A ještě něco. Ke své přednášce potřebuji nezbytně: Küppers: Der Kubismus, [name indecipherable] Französische Malerei, van Gogh, Dopisy a Bela Lazar: Der Impressionismus.¹⁶³

From this detailed outline of how Teige wants Černík to prepare for his lecture, and what he wants the lecture to include, it is easy to forget that this is a letter from a friend and colleague of exactly the same age, and not his university professor. Also, in his role as an editor, Teige regularly attempts to control the written work Černík produces and publishes, such as in the following instance related to the architectural magazine, *Stavba*, which Teige edited: “I will publish your essays in *Stavba*. On the Bauhaus,

¹⁶² Based on a series of letters and postcards sent from Teige to Černík around this time, it appears that while Teige was coaching Černík on his lecture for Prague, Teige was preparing to speak in Brno. In a postcard from May 11, 1921, Teige asks, “How long should my lecture be? 15-20 minutes, right?” [Original: “Jak dlouhá asi má být moje přednáška 15-20 minut, ne?”] In the same postcard he also writes, “We’re happy with the Arcos,” perhaps referring to an essay draft Černík had sent along in advance of his lecture. [Original: “Z Arcose máme radost.”] [Teige to Černík, May 11, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive]

Though I have not uncovered any reports on the outcome (in the press or in a later letter) of the lectures referred to here, Černík did publish a short review of *L’île perdue*, a book of poems by Arcos (a copy of which had been mailed to him from the author to Teige’s address) in *Červen*. It is the same issue, in fact, from April 1921 in which Štulc’s lecture and review had appeared, and another review by Černík also appears, of a book of poems, *Les chantes du désespéré*, by Charles Vildrac.

¹⁶³ Teige to Černík, April 20, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.

however, I will write myself.”¹⁶⁴ Or in 1923, as Teige begins to prepare the second issue of *Disk*, dedicated to Poetism and Constructivism, he asks (in less dictatorial fashion) for a contribution from Černík that could tap into his modern status as railway clerk:

“Perhaps you would like to proliferate awareness of the ‘railway artists’ with some picture poem, nicely composed from railway station elements, semaphores, lights, time tables, advertisements, tickets, Morse code, photographs, a few words well composed?”¹⁶⁵ Teige continues by inserting himself into the proposed project, suggesting that Černík draft sketches for the poem that Teige would realize as a painting.

Though such examples suggest a hegemonic relationship with little foundation in mutual friendship, and we have none of Černík’s responses from the time to determine how he took to such handling from his peer, very early on in the letter writing there are a few hints of a youthful friendship and mutual respect that would sustain the desire for correspondence. Amidst grumpy reminders that Černík owes money to various members of Devětsil for work appearing in *Rovnost*, something truly familiar, and almost romantic, seeps into the letters. “I must send you one of my paintings, which you can hang above your writing desk, so that I am also a little bit with You,” writes Teige

¹⁶⁴ Teige to Černík, December 19, 1923, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Tvé referaty otisknu ve Stavbě. O Bauhausu píší však sám.”

Stavba (1922-1938) was an architectural magazine which exhibited a strong affinity with Functionalist architecture. The Bauhaus was regularly featured on its pages, and it is thanks to *Stavba* that a relationship is formed between the school and Devětsil. Teige served as an editor at *Stavba* and it is in this role that he was first contacted by Gropius in 1923.

¹⁶⁵ Teige to Černík, November 27, 1923, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Nechtěl bys rozmnožit školu ‘nádražních umělců’ nějakou obrazovou bázeň, pěkně složenou z nádražních elementů, semafore, světla, jízdni řády, reklamy, lístky, mors, fotografie, pár slov, hezky to zkomponovat?”

(with characteristic egotism, but also real affection) in April 1921.¹⁶⁶ And further on in the same letter, Teige playfully hints at Černík's apparently robust love life, writing, "I spoke with your sweetheart (or rather, Miss Kantorová, because in your case it's necessary to be specific, so that you know which one I'm talking about), and send you greetings by way of her."¹⁶⁷

Similarly, in a letter from June 30th, 1921, Teige discusses how they ought to manage a series of printing problems in what is most likely the *Revoluční Sborník Devětsil*, and then moves to a more personal matter: "I picked up a very fine female Yugoslav student-comrade and right away we went on a little bender where I had such a good time and got a bit tipsy."¹⁶⁸ This is the only mention in all of Teige's letters to Černík of something even vaguely resembling a flirtation or deeper relationship with a woman, and one of very few instances in which he relates going out drinking just to

¹⁶⁶ Teige to Černík, April 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "Musím poslat nějaký obrázek svůj, který si nad psací stůl pověšíš, abych i já byl tak trošku s Tebou." No later letter from Teige suggests that such a painting was ever sent, though again, we do not have Černík's letters from this period.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. Original: "Mluvil jsem tuhle s tvou milou (totiž slečnou Kantorovou, neboť snad nutno v tvém případě přesně určit, abys věděl s kterou), a vzkázal jsem ti pozdravy."

¹⁶⁸ Teige to Černík, June 30, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "[...] jsem si v sobotu večer namluvil velmi správnou jihoslovanou, studentku-soudružku a hned s ní byl na menším flámu, kde jsem se dobře pomněl a menší opičku si pořídil."

Devětsil members came into contact with a group of Yugoslav avant-gardist studying in Prague. Their events and activities were even announced in the local papers, such as in the April 12, 1921 edition of the daily *Čas [Time]*, in which a meeting of the "Czechoslovak-Yugoslavia League" at the Old Town town hall is mentioned in an upcoming events' listing. In the years 1920-1922, Dragan Aleksić (1901-1958) and Branko Micić (1897-1947) hosted several Dada evenings in Prague. Branko Micić was the brother of Ljubomir Micić (1895-1971), who would become the editor of the Zagreb/Belgrade-based publication, *Zenit* (1921-1926), to be discussed in some detail in Chapter Three. For more on Yugoslav Dada activities in Prague, see: Holger Siegel, *In unseren Seelen flattern schwarze Fahnen: Serbische Avantgarde 1918-1939* (Leipzig: Reclam-Verlag, 1992) and Jindřich Toman, "Now You See It, Now You Don't: Dada in Czechoslovakia, with Notes on High and Low," *Crisis in the Arts, The History of Dada Vol. 4. The Eastern Dada Orbit: Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Central Europe and Japan*, ed. Stephen Foster (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1998), 11-39.

have a good time. Despite a personal biography that would suggest something more vibrant, this aspect of Teige's life simply does not make it into his letters to Černík. But again, though this would point to a relationship that was more business-oriented than friendly, such an evaluation meets resistance in small, poignant moments, when a profound mutual respect and admiration between the two men emerges. In a letter dated April 1, 1921, Teige writes to Černík, as a clear demarcation of their friendship, "Thank you for the violets; it is kind and lovely of you. Because what would a poet do without flowers?"¹⁶⁹

But if the poet needs flowers, Teige does not seem to often think of himself in this capacity; in the letters, his primary concerns lie elsewhere, with more practical than poetic matters. To Černík, Teige's collegiality is more often confined to his salutations and sign offs. Perhaps, the conviviality is abbreviated simply because much work was to be done, and both men were highly efficient in their labor. The vast majority of Teige's words to Černík are reserved for fleshing out the founding ideals of Devětsil, and later Poetism, and making various editorial decisions for the journals on which the two men collaborated (such as *Disk* and *Pásmo*). Teige's letters reveal little about the person and much more about the editor, as he sought to leverage his publications and collaborators to develop a distinctly Czech avant-garde art production and theory.

While much of what is to come in this chapter and later approaches the letter with a focused interest on content, it is of course also necessary to consider the

¹⁶⁹ Teige to Černík, April 1, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "Děkuju za tu fialinku, je to milé a hezké od tebe. Neboť co by dělal básník bez květiny?"

addressee, and how that determines what is written. The comradely, but primarily non-nonsense nature of Teige and Černík's relationship is what engenders this treasure trove of letters from Teige, in which he writes with an openness, and at times, naiveté, certainly not on display in Teige's correspondence to Bauhaus directors Walter Gropius and Hannes Meyer or Russian Formalist and linguist Roman Jakobson. Thanks to their peer status in age, nationality, and education, the letters between Černík and Teige offer a unique and largely unfiltered view into Teige's early artistic and theoretical development, precisely *because* they are to Černík.

ČERNÍK'S ROLE IN EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF DEVĚTSIL: BRNO FOUNDATIONS

While the preceding section has highlighted Teige's tendency in his letters to Černík to assert a position of control, there can be no doubt from the sheer volume of letters Černík received from Teige that Teige absolutely saw Černík as an important collaborator and strategic contact. This is thanks in large part to the latter's international connections, and to his editorial position at the Communist *Rovnost*. Černík invited Seifert and František Halas¹⁷⁰ to write for the cultural section of this magazine, and Teige often sent Černík explicit instructions for how to best propagate Devětsil in the publication (in a letter from 1921, he even sketches a proposed header for the magazine). In November of 1920, days before Devětsil was founded, Teige writes

¹⁷⁰ František Halas (1901-1949) was a poet, and editor of the first issues of *Pásmo* as well as *fronta*.

to Černík with a request that he advertise the new group in the paper in a way that highlights the new movement as young, modern, and leftist:

In the meantime, *Orfeus*¹⁷¹ has finally been published, red posters announcing it have been hung around the city. You'll receive a copy in the coming days and if you write about it in *Rovnost*, I ask you heartily to make it good advertisement for us. Maybe write that it stands for and against a new, entirely new generation, the extreme left *modern* and for the most part in its work also oriented to a leftmost socialism, and that it really could be a paper that could unite these two [the artistic and political lefts] and that perhaps there could be an even tighter and stronger unity: in short, reference in it the purpose of our group.

Zatím konečně už *Orfeus* vyšel, rudé plakáty jeho visí po městě, dostaneš ho ostatně v nejbližších dnech a píšeš li do *Rovnosti*, prosil bych tě velice, abys nám tam udělal náležitou reklamu. Napiš asi, že tu vystupuje a vystoupí nová, zcela nová generace, nejkrajnější levice moderny a většinou dílem i krajně levě orientovaná socialisticky, a že bylo opravdu třeba listu, který by ji sjednotil a že bylo by třeba snad ještě tužšího a užšího sjednocení: zkrátka zmiň se při té příležitosti o našem sdružení."¹⁷²

In this passage, we see that Teige, at twenty years of age, already has a strong sense of

¹⁷¹ Alfred Thomas describes *Orfeus* as the "first venture" of *Devětsil* after its founding in October of that year. Though the publication started out as a *Devětsil* collaboration with some of the older generation of Prague artists, such as Josef Hora and Karel Čapek, "after only three issues the journal was discontinued and the young writers decided to branch out on their own." [Alfred Thomas, *The Bohemian Body: Gender and Sexuality in Modern Czech Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 105.]

A brief glance at *Orfeus* would indicate to the viewer at all familiar with the later output of *Devětsil* that the magazine is far more conservative in style, with only very minor affinities to their later publications. Teige is listed as the co-editor, along with Ladislav Vladyka, of the first issue, in which a reproduction is published of one of Teige's early Cubist-style paintings (more on Teige's early paintings in a style he would almost simultaneously write against is discussed in Chapter Three). But he appears to have nothing to do with the subsequent two issues. Seifert, who has a poem in that first issue as well, also does not reappear as a later contributor.

¹⁷² Teige to Černík, November 14, 1920, PNP, AČ Archive.

how the press can be manipulated as advertisement. Teige sees clearly the use Černík's position at *Rovnost* could have for a burgeoning Devětsil, and appears to have no qualms in suggesting as much to his Brno-based collaborator.

But a year later, it would seem that Teige's enthusiasm for *Rovnost* had soured. Although in April 1921 Teige wrote, "About *Rovnost* we now spread only Praise" ("O *Rovnosti* nyní šíříme samou Chválu"),¹⁷³ by June of that same year, he complains of the direction in which he perceives *Rovnost* to be moving and writes, "Naturally, we are boycotting *Rovnost*. We are really upset with *Rovnost*, but not with you. May such thievish Communism perish!"¹⁷⁴ As the qualifier "thievish" suggests, this outburst likely had less to do with politics or some sudden disavowal of Communism as such, and more to do with economics and the politics of promotion; much frustration had been expressed over outstanding payments due to Seifert from *Rovnost*, as well as a general disappointment that the prominent Communist daily had not promoted the work of Devětsil more energetically.¹⁷⁵ By early 1923 Teige is again seeking to use *Rovnost* as a Devětsil platform, asking in one letter, "Did you write about Devětsil yet in *Rovnost*?"¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Teige to Černík, April 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.

¹⁷⁴ Teige to Černík, June 6, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "Rovnost přirozeně bojkotujeme. Zlobíme se moc na Rovnost ale ne na tebe, ať zhyne tento zlodějský komunismus!!"

¹⁷⁵ In one letter from around this time, Teige complains of a delay in contributor payments from *Rovnost*, and threatens, "Seifert really needs the dough from you guys for a new suit and if he doesn't get it right away, he's resolved to make a public scandal. The scandal is simply this: Rudé Právo [another Communist paper, translated as "The Red Law" or "The Red Justice"] is worse off than *Rovnost* and nevertheless pays a great honorarium, the best in comparison to all the other papers. Shame on *Rovnost* for stealing from its comrades." Original: "Seifert velmi potřebuje od vás prachy na šaty a nedostane-li je ihned, je odhodlán z toho dělat veřejný skandál. Skandál to opravdu je: Rudé Právo je na tom hůře než *Rovnost* a přece platí skvělé honoráře, poměrně nejlepší ze všech listů. Je to od *Rovnosti* hanba že tak okrádá soudruhy." [Teige to Černík, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.]

¹⁷⁶ Teige to Černík, 1923, PNP, AČ Archive. Although there is no date to this letter, it must have been sent very early in the year, as it references the coming publication of *Disk 1*, which came out in January 1923. Original: "Psal jsi už v *Rovnosti* o Devětsilu?"

And in November 1923 he writes more politely in a postscript, “If you write about Disk and the exhibition in Rovnost, kindly send it on to us!”¹⁷⁷

It is clear that Teige saw Brno as integral to the project of spreading the influence of Devětsil from the very beginning, and he used his letters to Černík to keep close reigns on what they were doing there. Devětsil membership was a way to embody and enact the group’s intentions on the ground in real time, and via their publications, to systematically spread their ideals to a wider, popular audience at home and abroad. In December 1923 Teige proposed to Černík that he start a formal Brno chapter of Devětsil, expanding the group into a two city operation. In Teige’s letters to Černík from late 1923 and early 1924, the two men work out a plan for growing the reach and influence of Devětsil within a young Czechoslovakia via the movement of works of art in travelling exhibitions, publications, and visiting lectures, what Petr Ingerle describes as a “transfer of the avant-garde ‘Devětsil’ idea from Prague to Brno and at the same time an expansion of Teige’s field of action.”¹⁷⁸ While the use the word “transfer” here would suggest a direct movement of power and influence from one city to the other that was never in fact intended, it is clear that Teige did begin to see Brno as a strategic place for growing the Devětsil mission, and urged Černík to proactively use his residence there to this end.

¹⁷⁷ Teige to Černík, November 27, 1923, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Píšeš-li o Disku a výstavě v Rovnosti, pošlí nám laskavě!”

¹⁷⁸ Ingerle 24.

“What do you say to founding in Brno an association of BRNO DEVĚTSIL maybe as a branch,” he half asks, half declares,¹⁷⁹ and almost simultaneously with this letter, the group is founded. Once again, the letter brings about concrete, quick results. In a document dated December 15, 1923, the establishment of a Brno chapter is declared, and its operations are outlined in a list of statutes. The first of which make clear that a) the Brno members absolutely envisioned themselves as comprising one arm of the Prague chapter, and b) that Černík was at the helm (the address of the association being his home address):

- I. Name of the group : BRNO DEVĚTSIL , ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROPOGATION AND CREATION OF CONTEMPORARY, ACTIVE CULTURE.
 - II. Seat of the group is : Brno. Address : The Secretariat of the Brno Devětsil in Julianov, Greater Brno, Hosovo nábřeží 10.
-
- I. Jméno spolku : BRNĚNSKÝ DEVĚTSIL , SVAZ PRO PROPAGACI A TVORBU NOVODOBÉ ČINNÉ KULTURY.
 - II. Sídlem spolku jest : Brno. Adresa : Sekretariat Brněnského Devětsilu v Julianově, Velké Brno, Hosovo nábřeží 10.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Teige to Černík, December 10, 1923, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Co bys říkal tomu založit v brně spolek BRNĚNSKÝ DEVĚTSIL asi jako odbočka.”

(In *Brno Devětsil and Multimedia Overlaps of the Artistic Avant-Garde*, this letter is dated to 1922, which does not correspond temporally with actions taken to found the group at the very end of 1923. Though the postmark on the corresponding envelope to the letter is difficult to make out, an archivist has penciled in the date December 10, 1923 next to it, which would correspond well with subsequent letters from late 1923 regarding the foundation of a Brno chapter of Devětsil. I have therefore used this date for the letter as well.)

¹⁸⁰ Statutes of the Brno Devětsil, Dec. 15, 1923. Held at the PNP and reproduced in *Brno Devětsil and Multimedia Overlaps of the Artistic Avant-Garde*, Figure 4.

Four days later, a letter is sent from Teige, further outlining a set of financial and administrative conditions for the Brno chapter, and thus suggesting that he and Černík were in close consultation about the founding of the satellite organization. Teige signs off with enthusiasm: “To the Brno Devětsil many compliments!”¹⁸¹ And then, “And to you many heartfelt greetings with wishes for a pleasant holiday,” in reference to the coming Christmas and New Year’s holidays, and to a friendship that remains there between the lines, even when the discussion in the letters so often sticks only to administrative points.¹⁸² On the 21st of that same month, Černík delivered the statutes to Police Headquarters, requesting that the group be officially recognized. He received a response in January 1924, with a few additional formalities that needed to be met, but for our non-legal purposes here, it can be understood that with the coming of the new year, so too was there a new branch of Devětsil.¹⁸³ An exchange of letters therefore eventuated a physical meeting of Brno artists, which subsequently engendered the official foundation of the group via correspondence with Police Headquarters, a necessary step in officially registering the organization.

Teige never considered the Brno chapter to carry as much influence in determining the direction of the movement, and in fact, it seems that he and Seifert would have preferred that Černík simply move to Prague and consolidate the efforts of

¹⁸¹ Teige to Černík, December 19, 1923, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Brněnskému devětsilu mnoho zdaru!”

¹⁸² Ibid. Original: “U tobě mnoho srdečných pozdravů s přáním příjemných svátků.”

¹⁸³ Ingerle 23.

the key Devětsil figures.¹⁸⁴ It is telling that Teige always refers to the Brno chapter with the qualification “Brněnský Devětsil” in his letters, but to his home chapter simply as *the* “Devětsil”—leaving no room to question that all decisions would come down the line from Prague, who was at the center and who at the periphery. But the Brno chapter also clearly adopted this subsidiary designation, propagating the distinction, for example, on their own printed stationary. Postcards Černík received from Bedřich Václavek, a Brno Devětsil member, featured a classic New Typography style of deep black lines that organize the plane into sections, and in the upper left hand corner is printed the inscription (pulled from the founding documents, with only minor changes): “BRNO DEVĚTSIL Association for the creation and propaganda of contemporary, active culture” in Czech, French, and German.¹⁸⁵

Yet perhaps because of this very distinction, the relationship between the two Devětsil groups seems to have been strained at times and rather non-dialogic, as evidenced in Teige’s letters. He quips in one from 1924, during negotiations to bring the Bazaar of Modern Art from Prague to Brno, “About the bureaucratic letters of the Brno

¹⁸⁴ For instance, in an undated letter from 1924 (written before the 26th of October, a date referenced in the letter to do with some upcoming plans), Seifert urges Černík to move to Prague: “It would be good if you could move to Prague. I think that something could be found from which you could make a bit of money.” Original: “Bylo by dobré, kdybys mohl si přestěhovati do Prahy. Myslím, že by se našlo něco, z čeho bys mohl míti aspoň malé peníze.” [Seifert to Černík, 1924, PNP, AČ Archive.]

¹⁸⁵ Letter from Bedřich Václavek to Artuš Černík, Aug. 28, 1926, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “BRNĚNSKÝ DEVĚTSIL Svaz pro tvorbu a propagandu novodobé činné kultury.”

Bedřich Václavek (1897-1943) was a prominent member of the Brno Devětsil, and in frequent correspondence with Černík. In the early 1920s he showed a strong interest in Dada, and in 1924, he was an editor of the first issues of *Pásmo* with Černík and Halas, and again with Halas and Rossmann of the 1927 Czech anthology *fronta*, which “presented an overview of contemporary avant-garde work in text by 150 Czech and foreign authors.” [Ingerle 87.] He also served as editor at another Brno-based cultural-political publication that ran from 1929-1939, *Index*, with very interesting typographic design by Zdeněk Rossmann (1905-1984), who had studied briefly at the Bauhaus.

devětsil I will not write now. Today or tomorrow at the meeting of Devětsil in Prague all will be discussed and you will receive a group response.”¹⁸⁶ A year later, Teige includes with a separate letter the notes from a Devětsil meeting in Prague—“For the Brno ‘Devětsil’” (“Pro Brněnský ‘Devětsil’”)—that briefly explains why the journal *Disk* can only be printed in Prague (presumably as opposed to Brno), and asks that the Brno chapter send their “best” work for the publication.¹⁸⁷

BRNO DEVĚTSIL’S PUBLISHING ARM: PÁSMO IN THE LETTERS

Despite an authoritative stronghold in Prague, the Brno Devětsil did have its own publication, *Pásmo*, edited in the beginning by a triad of Brno-based artists and poets (Černík, Václavek, and Halas). In the same letter in which Teige suggests the founding of the Brno Devětsil, postmarked December 10, 1923, he applauds the idea of launching a new magazine, apparently mentioned in a previous letter by Černík. “We are immensely happy about the Brno magazine,” he writes on behalf of the Prague circle.¹⁸⁸ But per usual, Teige also attempts to assert his own control over the aesthetic choices made by

¹⁸⁶ Teige to Černík, early 1924, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “O úředních dopisech Brněnského devětsilu teď psát nebudu. Dnes nebo zítra na schůzi Devětsilu se vše projedná a dostanete spolkovou odpověď.”

¹⁸⁷ Teige to Černík, October 1924, PNP, AČ Archive.

¹⁸⁸ Teige to Černík, December 10, 1923, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Z brněnského časopisu máme ohromnou radost.”

Another, more modest example of an expansion of Devětsil influence to Brno is the movement of the Bazaar of Modern Art exhibition there around the very same time, which has been mentioned briefly above. Discussion of the exhibition and its movement to Brno in Teige’s letters to Černík is another example of how what was first worked out in letters ultimately gave way to a “real life” result. For more on the Bazaar, see: Helena Maňasová Hradská, “Avantgarda ve výkladní skřín,” *Brno v minulosti a dnes* 25 (2012): 337-375.

the new publication, writing emphatically, “But I absolutely cannot understand why it would be necessary here in this day and age to reproduce the Old-Master kitsch makers à la El Greco, Michelangelo, and Rembrandt, which is all shit. L’esprit [nouveau] is really academic, the French are all mired in tradition. Why should we irritate our own public with this old [illegible].”¹⁸⁹

Pásmo goes on to become a very important avant-garde periodical—to be discussed further in Chapter Three—and generates much dialogue between Černík and artists working in other countries, namely at the Bauhaus in Dessau. Ever quick to pick up on an opportunity to spread the influence of Devětsil, Teige no doubt understood early on the potential of *Pásmo*, and in such a light it is no accident that he suggests the founding of a Brno Devětsil in the very same letter as he expresses his full support for the new Brno-based publication, of which he was also listed as an editor at a later stage.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. Original: “Ale absolutně nedovedu pochopit, proč by se dnes u nás měli reprodukovat staromistrovský kyčlaři à la Greco, Michelangelo a Rembrandt, na než se sere. L’esprit je moc akademický, francouze jsou zasraní v tradici, ale nač my bychom otravovali své [illegible] publiku tím starým [illegible].”

Devětsil had a long-standing, if somewhat ambivalent relationship with *L’Esprit nouveau*. It would be held up both as a model for *Pásmo*, and an example of what *Pásmo* should *not* be.

Later, in 1927, the main editors of *L’Esprit nouveau*, Paul Dermée and Michel Seuphor (1901-1999), wrote to Černík to announce a new review called “Documents Internationaux de l’Esprit nouveau,” a publication, as the title would suggest, “that assures a large international documentation of all manifestations of ultra-modern art and literature.” Original: “qui assure une large documentation internationale sur toutes les manifestations de l’art et de la littérature ultra-modernes.” In writing to Černík with the news of the revue, they are also calling upon his proven commitment to fostering an international dialogue in print: “We know and value your personal work and all your activities carried out in favor of l’esprit nouveau. We are therefore counting on your help.” Original: “Nous connaissons en effet et apprécions à leur valeur votre oeuvre personnelle et tout ce que votre activité a réalisé en faveur de l’esprit nouveau. Nous comptons donc sur votre collaborations propre.” And of course, they are also seeking his connections to potential subscribers: “We would also value being acquainted with the good book shops in which we could place our review for sale.” Original: “Il nous serait précieux aussi de connaître les bonnes librairies où nous pourrions mettre notre revue en vente.” [Paul Dermée and Michel Seuphor to Černík, April 4, 1927, PNP, AČ Archive.]

Černík was already a founding member of Devětsil, suggesting the active involvement of the Brno avant-garde in the group from the very beginning. The proposal by Teige then to create an official “Brno Devětsil” at once *consolidates* the group into a larger organization with multiple branches, and *divides* it into a multi-centric affair (with not all centers given equal status), not so unlike how the greater European avant-garde network functioned across borders. For such a small group, the question is then *why* Teige might suggest such a venture, and in fact, the founding of *Pásmo* sparked debate amongst Devětsil members for this very reason. It would appear from Teige’s letters to Černík that he saw the two-city division of Devětsil as advantageous to the founding Prague chapter in reaching a larger audience, especially within the context of the burgeoning publishing platform *Pásmo*. But Seifert was concerned that the establishment of a new Devětsil publication from the Moravian capital could in fact signal, as Ingerle describes it, an “embarrassing competition to the already published magazine *Disk*.”¹⁹⁰ On the other hand, if the Brno journal were to be put out as a “Devětsil” publication, it would then also be associated by proxy with Prague Devětsil and its members, and likewise serve as another source of publishing for them. Ultimately, Seifert seems to come around to such a conclusion, suggesting in late 1923 that *Pásmo* pay its contributors “at least a minimal honorarium.”¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Ingerle 32-33. Indeed, only two issues of *Disk* (over the course of two years) ever appear, the second and final issue some months after *Pásmo* begins to be published, in greater and more frequent numbers. It could be argued then, that *Pásmo* did have the effect Seifert feared it might.

¹⁹¹ Seifert to Černík, late 1923, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Ideální by bylo, [...] aby se mohl platit aspoň minimální honorář.”

At the beginning of 1924, Seifert had written to Černík with a report from a meeting of the Prague Devětsil members on how *Pásmo* was to be run:

- 1.) The magazine will be called "Pásmo."
- 2.) The first issue will be published in March, so that until that time Disk has the greater possibility to agitate in Moravia.
- 3.) The magazine will be 4/5 criticism, tending to the following themes: politics, sociology, student movements, art [illegible] and art criticism, sport, etc.
From original Czech literature each issue of "Pásmo" may contain one poem or one prose piece! No more!
Foreign literature can be printed only as an excerpt from an [illegible] article.
Every number may contain only one image.
- 4.) The editorial staff of "Disk" will be affiliates of the editorial staff of "Pásmo" and the editorial staff of "Pásmo" will be affiliates of the editorial staff of "Disk."
- 5.) The editorial staff of "Pásmo," precisely like the editorial staff of "Disk," is liable to [illegible] "Děvetsil."

- 1.) Časopis jmenovati se bude "Pásmo."
- 2.) Prvé číslo vyjde až v březnu, aby do té doby Disk měl větší možnost agitace na Moravě.
- 3.) Časopis bude 4/5 kritický, t. zv. že pěstovati: politiku, sociologii, studentské hnutí, umělecké [illegible] a uměleckou kritiku, sport atd.
Z literatury původní může každé číslo "Pásmo" obsahovati jednu báseň nebo jednu prosu! Více ne!
Cizí literatura může býti otiskována jen jako ukázka [illegible] referátem.
Každé číslo může obsahovati jen jeden obrázek.
- 4.) Redakce "Disku" bude filiální redakcí "Pásma" a redakce "Pásma" bude filiální redakcí "Disku."¹⁹²
- 5.) Redakce "Pásmo" je právě tak jako redakce "Disku" odpovědna [illegible] "Děvetsilu."¹⁹³

¹⁹² Teige writes a similar fourth point in a letter to Černík from December 1923: "It is suggested that the editorial staff of pásmo be the Brno agent of Disk and that the editorial staff of Disk be the Prague affiliate of Pásmo." Original: "Navrhuje se aby redakce pásma byla brněnskou zastupitelkou[?] Disk a redakce Disku pražskou filiálkou Pásma." [Teige, December 1923, PNP, AČ Archive.]

¹⁹³ Seifert to Černík, January 1924, PNP, AČ Archive. Seifert writes in his letter that the meeting took place on the 2nd of January 1923 (instead of 1924), but based on the fact that the idea for *Pásmo* only

These points evidence the strong concern Seifert had that *Pásmo* would come into direct competition with *Disk* by placing restrictions on the new magazine's publication dates and content (and counterintuitively, even its international scope), as well as a clear desire to maintain some editorial authority from Prague. But though the Prague members felt obliged to assert their position here, these rules were neither stringently observed nor enforced.¹⁹⁴ For one thing, *Pásmo* was an internationally representative and respected journal practically from the beginning, engendering regular contact between Černík, Moholy-Nagy, and Adolf Behne (1885-1948), for instance (this correspondence is discussed in Chapter Three and Four). Additionally, while the first issue of *Pásmo* did have only one image, with nearly each subsequent issue the amount of space dedicated to images would increase so that by issue nine of the first year (which includes a small advert for the forthcoming second issue of *Disk*) some pages have even more image than text. In the second and final year of *Pásmo*'s run, it would be a disagreement over the use of images that would eventuate Teige extricating himself from the project entirely.

surfaced at the end of that year, this must be a mistake, attributable to that common slip of the pen that comes with every new year, as we re-set our internal calendars to accommodate a new number.

¹⁹⁴ That is not to say that the Brno wing of the *Pásmo* editorial staff entirely ignored orders coming from Prague. In a letter from September 1925, for instance, Teige (who also asks to be named as an editor of *Pásmo* in this letter) requests that the format of the magazine be changed beginning with the first number of the second volume to match that of *Disk* (now, interestingly enough, expressing a desire to make the magazines appear more the same). Indeed, the format is changed, and the list of editors becomes Černík, Teige, and Jaromír Krejcar (1895-1950), architect and editor of the *Devětsil* issue of *Život*. [Teige to Černík, September 12, 1925, PNP, AČ Archive.]

Once the magazine began to be published, Seifert gives it restrained praise. For example, he writes in one letter: “I really like 75% of *Pásmo*.”¹⁹⁵ Teige is also equivocal in his review of the first issue, offering congratulations alongside a note about some errors that appear: “I received *Pásmo*, which I like a lot, as do all of us in Prague. [...] It’s a pity though that it’s full of errors. I’ll write you again with a more detailed account on that. We wish *pásmo* and you all the best, and that *pásmo* is printed as often as possible [...] and we send our regards to the whole editorial staff.”¹⁹⁶ And to be sure, Seifert did see the value in *Pásmo*, as he beseeches Černík, apparently for the third time, to send “30 copies of issue 1, and 20 copies of issue 2 of *Pásmo*” to him in Prague, so that he may distribute the magazine further, including to Russia.¹⁹⁷ In this proposal it is also clear that Seifert sees the work of *Pásmo* as distinct from that of *Disk*, even though both publications are put out under the umbrella of Devětsil, for he offers to compensate Černík for the issues with copies of *Disk*.

What precisely Seifert and Teige saw as the strength of *Pásmo* will be discussed in a more detailed discussion of the content of the magazine—which included critical reviews and essays, important instances of typophoto and picture poetry, and image reproductions—in Chapter Three.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. Original: “*Pásmo* se mi 75% velmi líbí.”

¹⁹⁶ Teige to Černík, March 21, 1924, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “dostal jsem *Pásmo*, které se mi velmi líbí a které se vůbec v Praze líbí. [...] Škoda že je spousta listových chyb. Budu ti ještě psát o tom všem podrobněji. Přejeme *pásmu* mnoho zdaru, přejeme vám i sobě aby *pásmo* vycházelo co nejčastěji, [...] a pozdravujeme celou redakci.”

¹⁹⁷ Seifert to Artuš, 1924, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Psal jsem ti již dvakrát, abys nám poslal asi 30 č. 1 a 20 č. 20 [sic] *Pásem*.” More on the distribution of the avant-garde magazines will be discussed in Chapter Three.

In the second half of the 1920s, the letters from Teige to Černík peter out markedly, until they stop entirely in 1929 (judging by what is saved), and the correspondence is not resumed for another twenty years. Editorial issues at *Pásmo* seem to be largely responsible for the falling out. Dissent is already hinted at in letters from 1925, but by early 1926 (the same year Meyer writes to Černík with praise for *Pásmo*, some years before becoming the second Bauhaus director), it is clear that Teige's dissatisfaction with *Pásmo's* direction is irresolvable. In a letter from that January, following issue four of the second volume of *Pásmo* (published on January 10, 1926), Teige dives right into his disapproval of an image included without his consent: "Dear Černík, I'm in a rage over the last two issues of *Pásmo*. Why is that [illegible] on the cover. For one thing: it is kitsch, like the theater."¹⁹⁸ The letter continues for four pages, a rant against recent publishing decisions at *Pásmo*, in which Teige appears not to have had a hand. That the choices made in Brno "are sapping my patience" ("vyčerpává mou trpělivost") is abundantly clear, even without this explicit statement, and it is the logical, if harsh conclusion that Teige would state, "I don't want anything to do with this volume of *Pásmo*. [...] I think you yourself know how stupid *Pásmo* is, that it simply doesn't work. It would be better not to print it, than have it do us this discredit."¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Teige to Černík, January 19, 1926, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "Milý Černíku, zuřím na poslední dvě čísla Pásma. Proč je to [illegible] na obálce? Za jedno: je to kyč jako divadlo."

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. Original: "Nechci mít nic společného s tímto ročníkem *Pásma*. [...] Myslím že sám vidíš jak blbé Pásmo je, že to takhle nejde. Bylo by lepší kdyby nevycházelo, než má-li dělat ostudu."

Having given up on *Pásmo*, Teige turns his efforts to establishing *ReD*, described by Nicholas Sawicki in the *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, as “one of the most prominent and widely read avant-garde periodicals published in the Czech language” and first issued in October 1927.²⁰⁰ In September of that year, Teige writes to Černík with the conciliatory invitation to contribute to *ReD*, again exerting his editorial upper hand. He describes the project as consistent with the “32 page format of the Bauhausbücher” and (unsurprisingly) declares curtly, “The editor will be me!” (“Redaktorem jsem já!”)²⁰¹ The tone is still fairly stern, and concludes with a request that Černík return a copy of *Horizont*²⁰² he had lent him, signing off officiously, “I thank you in advance” (“Děkuji Ti předem.”). Here, we have a rare instance in which the letters to Teige survive. Černík, now living in the bourgeoisie Prague neighborhood of Vinohrady, cordially responds that he welcomes “with joy” (“s radostí”) the news of the

Teige is still listed as an editor (along with Krejcar and Černík) of the issue directly following this letter, issue five, dated to January 25, 1926. But by the following month, with the double issue six/seven (published February 25th), Teige’s name is no longer printed on the cover of *Pásmo*, and in fact, now only Černík’s appears. The final issue in which Teige was attributed as an editor was one that featured a reproduction of a Picasso on the cover, and this seems to have been the last straw. As Seifert writes from Prague to Černík: “Imagine, Teige has been writing against painting for two years and here comes the new publication of ‘Pásmo’ with a bad, x-times reproduced Picasso and Utrillo. I think that in this case it would have been better not to print from any printing blocks.” Original: “Přestav si, že Teige už dva roky píše proti malířství a teď vydání ‘Pásmo’ se špatným xkrát reprodukováným Picassem a Utrillem. Myslím, že by bylo v tom případě lepší netisknouti radeji žádných štočků.” [Seifert to Černík, 1926, PNP, AČ Archive.]

This marks a rather quick change in attitude on Teige’s part regarding *Pásmo*, since it was only with the onset of the second volume that he had asked to be added as an editor in the first place.

²⁰⁰ Nicholas Sawicki, “The View from Prague,” in *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, eds. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1096.

²⁰¹ Teige to Černík, September 1927, PNP, AČ Archive.

²⁰² There are two possible magazines Teige could be referring to here. The first is a special edition of the Vienna based *Ma*, published by the Hungarian artist Lajos Kassák (1887-1967). In 1921, a volume dedicated to Alexander Archipenko (1887-1964) was printed with the title “Horizont 1,” and a second dedicated to Kassák’s fellow Hungarian artist Moholy-Nagy was titled “Horizont 2,” both under the imprint of *Ma*. The second possibility is that of the Brno based magazine *Horizont*, designed also by Rossmann, and starting operations the year in which Teige sent this letter. Černík was, at least for a time, an editor at *Horizont*, so it would be more likely that it would have been the Vienna-based publication that Teige would have lent Černík and now want returned.

new publication, leaves the editorial work entirely to Teige's disposition, and arranges a time to visit Teige at home to speak further of the new journal. He promises the return of *Horizont*, and closes convivially, "I wish you and the journal *ReD* all the best."²⁰³ But in subsequent letters from Černík it is clear that they are moving in different directions, no longer collaborators working towards the same end goal, but peers with overlapping interests. While Teige turns his focus to *ReD*, Černík's attention to film criticism leads him to edit *Český filmový svět* and head the Klub za nový film as he settles in Prague. It is perhaps a poignant indicator of their soured relationship that Teige is not a collaborator on these projects, as he too was very interested in film as an integral mode of art-making in the avant-garde, and in 1925 had published a collection of his essays on the subject, *Film*, which Černík had reviewed in *Pásmo*.

But just as Černík's voice joins Teige's in the archival record, the letters fizzle out, only to resume in 1949, after World War Two and a period of so much change, and just before Teige's death. The space in those years, and the damage wrecked on the Czech avant-garde by the Nazi occupation and then the early years of the Communist regime, are painfully evident in Teige's final letters to Černík. Gone is the unfettered optimism of the earliest letters, as he worked through what would become the founding principles of Devětsil. The first letter from Teige to bridge the gap of twenty years, from May 19, 1949, is in response to a letter from Černík. "Dear Artuš," he writes, "I received your letter. What exactly do you mean by 'a Devětsil manifesto'? Precisely put, Devětsil never

²⁰³ Černík to Teige, September 14, 1927, PNP, Karel Teige Archive (hereafter cited as KT Archive). Original: "Přeju Tobě a revue 'ReD' všeho nejlepšího."

published anything that could be called, respectively, that could be explicitly called, a manifesto. Write me please more precisely what you mean, what you have in mind.”²⁰⁴ In a letter from one man named in the original 1920 Devětsil manifesto, as published in *Pražské pondělí*, to another, a denial of such a thing is odd at the very least, and much closer to something heartbreaking. One can only speculate on what would cause Teige to deny the fact of the manifesto to Černík, but it is well known that life was made very hard for him in this period by the secret police, that his correspondence was very likely being censored at this point—no longer private—and that he died of heart failure from the stress of it all two years later.²⁰⁵ In this letter we have a poignant example of how the narrative of the letters as constructed by the writer can shift over time. Almost exactly four years after the end of World War Two, Teige writes in a much more somber tone than in his first letters to Černík from the days following the end of World War One. He describes himself now as “very little satisfied” (“dost malo spokojen”), and attempts to deny the existence of a Devětsil manifesto in a kind of semantic rebuttal.²⁰⁶

In May of 1951, Teige recommends an editorial contact for Černík, a potential source of work, and then signs off with resigned acknowledgment of their similarly diminished circumstances, and the hope that they will have the opportunity to meet in

²⁰⁴ Teige to Černík, May 19, 1949, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Milý Artuši, dostal jsem dnes tvůj dopis. Čemu říkáš přesně ‘manifest Devětsilu’? Přesně vzato, Devětsil nikdy nepublikoval nic, co by se mohlo zvat, respektivě, co by bylo výslovně zvané manifestem. Napiš mi tedy prosím přesněji, co máš na mysli.”

²⁰⁵ As outlined in a lengthy footnote at the beginning of this chapter. Esther Levinger also writes: “In 1950, this utopian concept [of Poetism] would meet harsh reality when the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia declared Teige an enemy of the people with the tacit support of other Devětsil members.” [513.]

²⁰⁶ Teige to Černík, May 19, 1949, PNP, AČ Archive.

person again soon: “Ah well, otherwise I don’t have it any better than you. And I hope, that we will see each other again sometime in the fall or summer.”²⁰⁷ But if they did not have the opportunity to meet that spring or summer, with the blooming of the plum and cherry trees, then it was never again to be. Teige died on the 1st of October 1951. His two female partners, Jožka Nevařilová and Eva Ebertová, killed themselves in the days following, and with their three deaths, so too the valiant hopes of a man who wrote of an -ism that put first and foremost the “art of living in the most beautiful sense of the word.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Teige to Černík, May 26, 1951, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Nu – jinak se nemám lepe než ty. A přece doufám, že se někdy na jaře nebo v létě zase uvidíme.” By the late 1940s, Černík was working in a variety of positions within the film industry, as a dramaturge, a moderator of film imports, and an advisor to students at the Czechoslovak Film Institute (Československý filmový ústav).

²⁰⁸ Teige, “Poetism,” *Karel Teige/1900-1951: L’Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-garde*, eds. Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha, trans. Alexandra Büchler (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 69. Original: “Poetismus jest, opakujeme, v nejkrásnějším smyslu slova, uměním žítí.” Karel Teige, “Poetismus,” *Host* 3, no. 9-10 (July 1924): 201.

CHAPTER 2

DEVĚTSIL EXPANDS ITS REACH

“The Eiffel Tower, to which we had made our pilgrimage, looked upon us unmoved. In Paris it is beautiful, even when it rains. Not to mention when the weather is fine.”

Jaroslav Seifert
All the Beauties of the World (1981)²⁰⁹

“I was thinking, by the way, that it would be really lovely that once you’ve rested after so many kilometers of travel and once you find yourself back in your old homeland, you might allow yourself a trip to Prague, perhaps in late Spring, when, as you know, Prague is most beautiful.”

Karel Teige to Hannes Meyer
Letter dated February 13, 1950²¹⁰

Before Devětsil was founded on October 5, 1920, and the group’s manifesto was published in *Pražské pondělí* on December 6th of that year, there were already intimations of the group in Karel Teige’s letters to Artuš Černík as early as that August.

²⁰⁹ Jaroslav Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1993), 515. Original: “Eiffelova věž, kterou jsme předtím dost zbožně vzývali, dívala se na nás netečně. V Paříži je krásně, i když prší. Natož když je pěkně.”

²¹⁰ Teige to Meyer, February 13, 1950, Getty Research Institute (hereafter cited as GRI), Hannes Meyer Archive (hereafter cited as HM Archive). Original: “Ich denke übrigens, dass es ganz hübsch wäre, wenn Du ausgeruht nach soviel tausend Km Reise und bis Du Dich wieder in Deiner alten Heimat zurechtgefunden hast, Die einen Ausflug nach Prag gönnen würdest, vielleicht im Spätfrühling, wo, wie Du weisst, Prag am schönsten ist.”

“It would be good if our commune, as soon as it is founded, were to establish relations abroad,” writes Teige in a letter dated to the first of August and sent to Černík in Munich, suggesting that the foundation of Devětsil was already on the horizon, and that establishing an international rapport was a priority for Teige from the outset, years before he ever considered expanding the group’s official domain to encompass Brno.²¹¹

One of the predominant themes in Teige’s letters to Černík is a concern for aligning the Czech avant-garde strategically with contemporary international art movements. The fact that Teige saw Devětsil and Poetism as integral to and in dialogue with other contemporary European movements cannot be understated. As will be shown in Chapter Three, this is perhaps most vividly and publically highlighted in the various publications that Devětsil put out. In the private sphere, though, we have the letter as testament to the emphasis Teige placed on maintaining Czech relevance on an international stage. Travel, too, was implemented as a physical mode of exchange between the various sites of the European avant-garde. Often in Teige’s letters to Černík, he enlists Černík’s help in this endeavor to foster long-distance relationships with members of the international avant-garde.

²¹¹ Teige to Černík, August 1, 1920, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Bylo by dobře aby naše komuna, jakmile bude založena, měla své styky s cizinou.”

The use of the word “komuna” or “commune” to describe the nascent group is an interesting choice here that should not go unobserved. It suggests that Teige saw the founding members as a tight knit group, who, if not living together, at least shared common goals and would work together with a specific artistic and social vision. The vision was at this point markedly leftist. (Teige also notably addresses Černík in some of his letters from this period as a “soudruh,” or “comrade.”)

In the August 1 letter, for example, Teige elaborates on the advantage for the not yet formed Devětsil inherent in Černík's visits to Munich:

It would be good if you could promote already the name of the commune [...] and spread information about our authors, architects, painters, and musicians—and if it would be possible, also to undertake an excursion to Bavaria—otherwise the main priority would be these relations.

bylo by dobré, kdybys mohl navázat už jménem této komuny [...] informoval o našich literátech, architektech, malířích i hudebnících—kdyby snad bylo možno potom podniknout nějaký zájezd do Bavor—ostatně hlavní a přední věc byly by tyto styky.²¹²

In evidence here is a strong grasp of the importance of aligning the work of the Czech avant-garde with neighboring peers in Germany, months before Devětsil was officially announced. Teige, not yet twenty years of age, is already actively building a legacy that extends beyond the Czech borders. In a letter one year later, he writes explicitly (and with total disregard for the emissaries of Czech Modernism that came before him): “We are the first generation of Czech artists that is modern-international.”²¹³ But if Teige's generation was not in fact the first to be “modern” and “international,” the fact that Teige included Germany in his goal of forging international relations is a notable shift, as the preceding generations were more content to skip over their most westerly neighbors in their gaze abroad to Italy, England, and above all, France.²¹⁴

²¹² Teige to Černík, April 1, 1920, PNP, AČ Archive.

²¹³ Teige to Černík, December 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Jsme prvá česká umělecká generace, která je moderní-internacionální.”

²¹⁴ There was, to be sure, precedence for a “modern-international” focus amongst Czech artists before Devětsil. Nicholas Sawicki, writes, for instance: “By the early 1910s, an affinity for all things French

Though Teige was instrumental in forging pan-European relations, the vast extent of Černík's international contacts is also clearly on display in his archive, which contains letters from Theo van Doesburg, the architect and editor of *De Stijl* and *Mécano*; to Adolf Behne, Hannes Meyer, László Moholy-Nagy and Jan Tschichold in Germany; Ljubomir Micić of the important Yugoslav magazine *Zenit*; and in France, Phillipe Soupault (1897-1990), Luc Durtain (1881-1959), Charles Vildrac (1882-1971), and Georges Duhamel (1884-1966). Černík's correspondence with compatriots at home, too, suggests that Černík was known for his international connections. In the fall of 1921, Adolf Hoffmeister pens him a rushed and rather all-encompassing request:

I want to write something—and about something—to France, and since I know that you know more things and people there, I ask you for a few addresses of people and magazines. Such magazines as wanted news of us, and also that Frenchie Pirarot or the one Vildrac mentioned—I don't know what he's called or his address—i.e. that Teige wrote. And finally, the addresses of the Romaines, Vildraces, Arcos, Duhamels, [word illegible] du Sablier, NRF, etc. I may actually go to Paris and would need all of it. Don't be annoyed with me for such a request.

and Parisian so thoroughly permeated artistic and cultural life in Prague that the historically Czech city seemed like a French outpost." And also: "By the beginning of the twentieth century, the road between Prague and Paris was well paved. In Prague and its surrounding towns and cities, Paris was considered a requisite stop on the itinerary of artists traveling abroad or seeking to expand their artistic horizons and education. The French capital eclipsed artistic centers closer to home such as Munich and Vienna as a destination of choice, and bonds between the artistic communities of Prague and Paris were strong." [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* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 67, 69.] On the internationalism of the artist's generation directly preceding that of Teige's, see also: Thomas Ort, *Art and Life in Modernist Prague: Karel Čapek and His Generation, 1911-1938* (New York: Palgrave, 2013).

Earlier generations had also looked East, and traveled there. For instance, the journalist Karel Havlíček Borovský (1821-1856), journeyed to Russia in the 1840s, inspired by his interest in Pan-Slavicism. His enthusiasm was tempered, however, by what he observed there. He published his *Images of Russia* (*Obrazy z Rus*) based on his time abroad serially in Czech newspapers.

Chci psát něco a o něco do Francie a poněvadž vím, že ty tam více věcí a lidí znáš prosím tě o několik adres lidí a časopisů. Těch časopisů, které chtěly od nás zprávy a toho Francouze Pirarot nebo jak mi říkal Vildrac, nevím jak se jmenuje a jeho adresu, Teige totiž psal. Pak konečně adresy Romainovu, Vildracovu, Arcosovu, Duhamelovu, [word illegible] du Sablier, NRF, atd. Ja totiž snad pojedu do Paříže a vše bych potřeboval. Nezlob se na mne pro tu žádost.²¹⁵

As briefly touched upon in Chapter One, several of these names—Vildrac, Duhamel, Arcos, and Romain—were important French contacts for Devětsil. And as will be discussed shortly in this chapter, Charles Vildrac and Georges Duhamel were early visitors in the history of Devětsil’s formation, travelling as they did to Prague in April 1921.

The birth of Devětsil and the coming of age of its members in the period directly following the First World War, was conducive to the international exchange of ideas to which Teige aspired. In a newly accessible Europe, the allure of travel was great, and the physical movement of minds and bodies was extremely productive in generating an exchange of ideas within a new milieu. This chapter follows the progression of conversation—often begun in correspondence—to one of its many potential results: a physical meeting. Often times, it was a letter that initiated the travel which then set in motion many other modes of contact after the journey was completed, evidenced in further correspondence, photographs, essays, and publications. Within these various media it becomes clear that multi-directional travel was integral to shaping the artistic identity of the avant-gardes across Europe, whose members travelled and were visited

²¹⁵ Adolf Hoffmeister to Artuš Černík, September 28, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.

by peers across the continent. The examples offered here—of foreigners travelling to Prague (and to a lesser extent, Brno), and Czechs travelling elsewhere—are used to consider how this travel visibly influenced thought and productive output at home and abroad. Visits from Vildrac and Duhamel, as well as the Italian Futurist F.T. Marinetti, all of whom came to Prague in 1921, were seminal events in the fledgling history of Devětsil. But when our Czechs went abroad, too, they were also not merely tourists on holiday, but rather actively engaged in the local avant-gardes, and left behind a strong impression; there was a specificity, and specific intended outcome, to this mode of travel. European hosts abroad then became travelers in turn, visiting Prague and Brno of their own initiative, or at the invitation of Devětsil. Other results were extended correspondence and publication (in the form of travel accounts, reviews and transcripts of lectures, as well as the publication of work by those encountered abroad).

While it might seem likely that in the first years of the 1920s the power relations were more clearly imbalanced, as the fledgling Devětsil sought to introduce itself to more established artists when they came through Prague with little to no knowledge Devětsil, or when Devětsil members themselves traveled, unknown by the milieu into which they sought to insert themselves, the actual situation was in fact rather more complicated. Teige and Jaroslav Seifert's first visit to Paris in June 1922, for instance, might well be described as tourism, but it was also far more than that: a strategic visit in which they conversed with many of the prominent artists and writers of the day, such as Fernand Léger (1881-1955), Jean Cocteau (1889-1963), and Tristan Tzara (1896-1963). On this trip, Teige and Seifert also spent time with Yvan Goll, who had made a trip to

Prague earlier that year.²¹⁶ Goll's collaboration with Devětsil endured for several years, and he would become the Paris correspondent for Devětsil's first periodical *Disk* when it was published in 1923.

And as early as 1923, the Ukrainian-born sculptor, who had immigrated to France, Alexander Archipenko came to Prague specifically due to his connection with Devětsil. The group had published reproductions of his sculptural work already in 1922 in the *Revoluční sborník Devětsil* within Černík's essay "Work in the Russian Visual Arts" ("Ruská výtvarná práce"), as well as in *Život 2*, illustrating an article by Vladimír Štulc on "Modern Sculpture in France" ("Moderní sochařství ve Francii"). Then, in 1923, Devětsil hosted a travelling exhibition of his work at the House of the Artists (Dům umělců) of the Rudolfinum (where the Bazaar would be held later that same year) and put out an accompanying catalogue.²¹⁷ By 1925, Devětsil members Toyen and Jindřich Štyrský were

²¹⁶ Yvan Goll (1891-1950) was a French-German poet, with sympathies towards German Expressionism and was an early proponent of Surrealism. He nevertheless ceded his leading position within a young Surrealist movement in Paris to André Breton in 1924, when the latter wrote the first Surrealist manifesto and failed to include any mention of Goll. Born in France and also heavily involved with German Expressionism, he was for a time an editor at the Yugoslav avant-garde magazine *Zenit*, whose main editor was Ljubomir Micić.

In a letter to Černík, Teige reports on Goll's impending visit and suggests a lecture: "Yvan Goll is likely coming to Prague, and he must do a Devětsil lecture." Original: "Ivan Goll přijede asi do Prahy, musí udělat v Devětsilu přednáška." [Teige to Černík, March 27, 1922, PNP, AČ Archive.]

²¹⁷ The slim, pamphlet-like, catalogue features a New Typography style with bold black lines and a large circle on the cover, much like the cover of *Revoluční sborník Devětsil* (1922) and *Disk* (1923). On the back cover is an advertisement for both the earlier publications in which Archipenko's work had appeared, the *Revoluční sborník Devětsil* and *Život 2*, with the note: "Both anthologies are important manifestations of our artistic avant-garde and have given rise to a living interest and great excitement at home and abroad." Original: "Oba sborníky jsou důležitými manifestacemi naší umělecké avant-gardy a světového moderního hnutí a vzbudily u nás i v cizině živý zájem a veliký rozruch." [Karel Teige, *Archipenko* (Prague: Nákladatelství Devětsil, 1923), back matter.]

Teige described the catalogue in his own words in a letter to Emy Häuslerová: "As a catalogue to the exhibition, we are publishing a small monograph on Archipenko with my text and a few reproductions." Original: "K výstavě jako katalog vydali jsme malou monografii o Archipenkovi s mým textem a několika reprodukcemi." [Karel Teige to Emy Häuslerová, April 27, 1923 in Růžena Hamanová, "Dopisy Karla Teige Emy Häuslerová," *Literární archiv: sborník Památníku národního písemnictví* 24 (1990): 198.]

exhibiting their own works in Paris, the same year in which the French architects Le Corbusier (1887-1965, né Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris) and Amédée Ozenfant (1886-1966, who frequently went by the pseudonym Saugnier) visited Prague to lecture at the invitation of the The Club of Architects (Klub architektů), which published the architectural magazine *Stavba* and to which Corbusier contributed. By the middle of the decade, it was not uncommon for international visitors to make the journey to Prague and Brno specifically in pursuit of contact with Devětsil and its following, evidencing the group's maturation as a movement, and increased field of visibility and influence within the context of a multi-directional European avant-garde. Reciprocally, by the end of the decade, Teige was invited several times to lecture at the Bauhaus.²¹⁸

A/SYMMETRICAL INFLUENCE IN TRAVEL NARRATIVES

Despite the fact though, that the travel charted in this chapter was not decidedly unidirectional, and was relatively dialogic, both the participating subjects and later historians do tend to operate within the framework of presumed hierarchies that

²¹⁸ Teige also traveled East, to Russia in 1924, as did many other Czechs in the early Twentieth Century. By not incorporating a discussion of these travels into this dissertation chapter, I risk perpetuating a western-centric representation of my subject. My reasons, however, for not focusing on this eastward journey here (besides obvious considerations of space and time) is that it is not well represented in the archived correspondence that I have used to reconstruct these travels. There is nothing as rich, for instance, as the letters from Vildrac to Černík that follows the former's 1921 visit to Prague, nor something like the extended recounting of Teige's trip to Paris that Teige sent to Černík in 1922, which I quote from here extensively. A more extended version of this project would incorporate a discussion of Teige's publishing ventures that stem from his trip to the USSR, such as a special issue of *ReD* dedicated to the Tenth Anniversary of Soviet Russia, and Teige's article "Current Creative Work in Soviet Russia" ("Dnešní vytvárná práce sovětského Ruska") in the 1926 volume *SSSR: uváhy, kriticky, poznámky*, ed. Bohumil Mathesius (Prague: Čín, 1926).

privilege the more western zones.²¹⁹ In *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt attempts to show “how travel books by Europeans about non-European parts of the world went (and go) about creating the ‘domestic subject’ of Euroimperialism; how they have engaged metropolitan reading publics with (or to) expansionist enterprises whose material benefits accrued mainly to the very few.”²²⁰ While Pratt’s focus lies primarily with the travel accounts of British colonialists within non-European locales, arguably at far remove from the project of this dissertation, the terminology she employs to discuss an uneven exchange enacted in travel and travel writing is also helpful for discussing the travel between—and the representations of—major and minor sites of the interwar avant-garde in Europe. Pratt employs, for instance, the term “contact zones,” to describe “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.”²²¹ In the case of an exchange between interwar European avant-gardes, the distance traveled and the asymmetry of power relations are certainly not as stark as in the case of colonialism or slavery—the examples Pratt names—and it is by no means my aim to suggest otherwise. But a presumed hierarchy in the exchange I describe between

²¹⁹ In perhaps a superficial, but rather telling example, Seifert writes in his memoirs of his preparations with Teige for their first trip to Paris, in which they both have new suits made: “When we decided to have a look around Paris for the first time, Teige persuaded me that we ought to have new suits made for the journey. He wanted us to represent that country, from which no one expected a thing, in a way that might somewhat represent our modern art; that we both wanted. In Prague, on the other hand, we went around however we liked.” Original: “Když jsme se s Teigem rozhodli, že se poprvé podíváme do Paříže, přemluvil mě, abychom si na cestu dali ušít nové pěkné šaty. Abychom reprezentovali tuto zem, což od nás ani nikdo nechtěl, ale abychom také trochu reprezentovali i naše moderní umění, a to jsme chtěli sami. Po Praze jsme chodili všelijak.” [Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 505.]

²²⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 4.

²²¹ Pratt 4.

citizens of so-called greater and lesser nations manifests itself both by the participants in this exchange in their own day, and since, perpetuated in scholarship that pays little mind to the smaller countries actively engaged in the interwar avant-garde.

The latter is evident, for instance, in even very recent histories and exhibitions of Futurism, Surrealism, and the Bauhaus that omit almost entirely the contributions of artists from outside the nations primarily associated with the movements.²²² Whatever the reasons for this (and some have been suggested in the Introduction to this dissertation already), they “do not need to be intentional” in order to be felt, as writes Susan Buck-Morss in her important essay “Hegel and Haiti.” Buck-Morss continues:

When national histories are conceived as self-contained, or when the separate aspects of history are treated in disciplinary isolation, counterevidence is pushed to the margins as irrelevant. The greater the specialization of knowledge, the more advanced the level of research, the longer and more venerable the scholarly tradition, the easier it is to ignore discordant facts. [...] Disciplinary boundaries allow counterevidence to belong to someone else’s story.²²³

Devětsil was highly active and visible within the international avant-garde in its own day, only to have its contributions overlooked after the fact, or perhaps even considered “irrelevant” or belonging to “someone else’s story.” The earliest visitors to Prague after

²²² For instance, a major exhibition of the Bauhaus at the Museum of Modern Art in New York—*Bauhaus 1919-1933: Workshops for Modernity* (November 8, 2009–January 5, 2010)—and of Italian Futurism at the Guggenheim—*Italian Futurism, 1909-1944: Reconstructing the Universe* (February 21–September 1, 2014)—did little to correct an impression of these movements as largely national in scope.

²²³ Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 23. The text, “Hegel and Haiti,” first appeared as an article in *Critical Inquiry* in 2000 and was then reprinted as part of a full-length book project in 2009.

World War One operated to some extent within these assumed hierarchies. When Vildrac and Duhamel came to Prague in April 1921, to lecture on French poetry, they did arguably serve in a grandfatherly role to young Devětsil members. And in December of that same year, when Marinetti arrived on the Prague theater circuit, he appears to have envisioned himself as a missionary for the movement (a role Marinetti assumed for himself wherever he went). But Devětsil was also feisty and self-assured from its moment of origin, and what follows shows how it selectively took what the group thought useful from its international contacts, and did not hesitate to push back where it saw an older generation of more established artists at odds with its own vision.

Pratt borrows the term “transculturation”—“a phenomenon of the contact zone”²²⁴—from ethnographers “to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture.”²²⁵ In a letter Teige sends Černík after his first Paris visit, as well as in the published essays that result from that trip, the “marginalized” Central European visitor processes and reinterprets in his reporting what he sees in the western capital, a major center of artistic and literary production to which his Czech predecessors had looked for inspiration well before World War One. But Teige is not simply observing what he finds in Paris and diligently bringing that information back to the “provinces” of Prague and Brno. He applies a selective filter to his experience and as an avant-gardist, brings to light what is most applicable to his own practice. And not only via his writings on Paris,

²²⁴ Ibid., 6.

²²⁵ Ibid.

but in his graphic design and other theoretical formulations, influenced as they are by what he found abroad. A prime example of this is Teige's writings on Dada, which will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Sachidananda Mohanty, also writing of Imperialist travel and representations of the colonies in the resulting travel literature, is another productive source for thinking about the uneven power relations negotiated via the travel under consideration here. Mohanty adopts Pratt's work as "pioneering," and Pratt's use of the word "transculturation" as a way "to describe how subordinate groups absorb dominant culture."²²⁶ But, envisioning a more empowering outcome for the colonies, he and the other authors in his volume *Travel Writing and the Empire*, also look to the ways travel writing can "overcome the Manichean divide between cultures and establish bondings across political frontiers," in spite of the "unstated assumption in postcolonial thinking" that "empire is alive and well despite political emancipation of the former colonies."²²⁷ This assumption is certainly not unstated, however, in the work of Buck-Morss, who tackles the "specter of Eurocentricism," rather than simply evoking it, by asking "how Eurocentricism itself was constructed historically."²²⁸ In this project, "Eurocentricism" could here be rephrased as "western Eurocentricism" and the question to be asked: How has western Eurocentricism been constructed historically? If we think of the many exhibitions and volumes dedicated to the interwar avant-garde in Europe, and to how

²²⁶ Sachidananda Mohanty, "Introduction: Beyond the Imperial Eye," in *Travel Writing and the Empire*, ed. Sachidananda Mohanty (New Delhi: Katha, 2003), xiii.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, xx.

²²⁸ Buck-Morss 13. Emphasis is my own.

little representation the European movements between east of Germany receive, we see how pertinent this question is. In an English language context, when we speak of “Europe” we too often mean “western Europe,” and when we say “international” in America, that often means, simply, “European.” But in real time, in the period between the two World Wars, the western hegemony was not so obviously enforced, though no doubt it was highly visible before World War One, and largely reinstated with the second.

This chapter pursues a line of influence that moves *between* sites—not only from the supposed dominant culture to a “lesser” one—to show not merely how Czech artists absorbed what was new in Paris, Moscow, or Dessau, but rather how they incorporated what they found into their own preexisting oeuvre. And—perhaps most importantly though largely overlooked—it also emphasizes that visits to and from Prague had a visible influence on the art production in other places. “Influence” is used cautiously here, for, as Partha Mitter describes in his essay, “Interventions: Decentering Modernism,” an effort at attributing influence “has been the key epistemic tool, implicitly or explicitly, in the asymmetrical valuations of cultural exchanges between Eastern and Western art.”²²⁹ Rather, he suggests that these “exchanges of ideas and forms need not necessarily be interpreted through ideas of domination and dependence.”²³⁰ It is the aim of this chapter to position travel as creative exchange that took place in the 1920s to and from Prague (and, again, to a lesser extent, Brno).

²²⁹ Partha Mittner, “Interventions: Decentering Modernism,” *Art Bulletin* 90, no. 4 (2008): 538.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

Mohanty describes “how travel writing often became a site for the collision and contestation of power. Such accounts could be variously read as a means of cultural domination and appropriation, and alternately as identity formation under colonial rule.”²³¹ “Cultural tourism” was a “commodification of culture.”²³² While the travels of Devětsil members did in fact result in “commodities” in the publication of travelogues, tour guides, and other anthologies for sale those artifacts do not comprise the focus of this chapter. Rather, in what follows, I consider how the effects of travel were worked through after the fact in written correspondence as well as in shorter form, published reviews, and how Devětsil in fact used contact with members from locales of “cultural domination” to subvert or otherwise push against presumed hierarchies. The following section of this chapter, considers how Teige—and Devětsil more generally—managed to step out relatively quickly from a circumstance of (at least perceived) unequal power relations and advocate autonomously. Later sections then move to show how Devětsil operated on equal footing once it had maneuvered out from under western-centric “cultural domination” when meeting Euro-international peers, either in Prague or Brno, or abroad.

²³¹ Mohanty xiv.

²³² Ibid. This can be said of travel writing as a genre in general, as accounts are published and sold, not only often providing evidence of the adventurous spirit and impressive connections of the author, but also bringing in sales revenue.

POST-WAR PRAGUE VISITORS OF THE PRE-WAR GENERATION

In 1921, two visits—by the French poets Vildrac and Duhamel, and the Italian Futurists, led by Marinetti—early in the history of Devětsil would serve as formative contacts with foreign avant-gardists to Prague. Teige understood the value of networking with these older, and more established members, of various artistic and literary traditions, but was not so enamored with their more established status that he did not assess the visitors with reservations. The year 1921 was thus an early opportunity for Teige, and the Czech avant-garde more generally, to observe how their own ideas and artistic production stood up against these foreign imports, and exhibit enough confidence to voice dissent both in private and in print.

A PRAGUE SPRING: POLITICAL DISSENT WITH VISITING ANARCHISTS

In April 1921, Teige met Vildrac and Duhamel when they came to lecture in Prague. In Bettina Knapp's 1972 account of Duhamel, she describes the trip as part of a series of journeys by the author (not always made together with Vildrac) through wide swaths of Europe, including visits to Italy, Germany, Poland, Russia, Finland, Belgium, Holland, and of course, Czechoslovakia.²³³ In the Prague-based, French-language periodical *La Revue*

²³³ Bettina L. Knapp, *Georges Duhamel* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), 97. Both men incorporated their travels into their published writings. See, for instance: Georges Duhamel, *Chant du*

française de Prague (*The French Review of Prague*), Vildrac and Duhamel are remembered seven years after the fact as “the first French writers to visit the young Republic” (referring to the short time that passed between the end of World War One, the foundation of the Czechoslovak First Republic, and the visit of Vildrac and Duhamel).²³⁴

As gleaned from Teige’s letters sent to Černík in Brno while Vildrac and Duhamel were visiting Prague, and brief announcements about their visit in the papers, the men came not as tourists, but as representatives of French letters: they both gave lectures, and Vildrac at least engaged readily with Prague literary circles.²³⁵ On the day they were to arrive in Prague—April 6, 1921—an announcement is posted in the daily *Čas* (which also occasionally published poems by Vildrac, Duhamel, and Jules Romains, 1885-1972), with the title “Czech-French Literary Relations” (“Literární styky česko-francouzské”) about their series of lectures, to be conducted in Prague’s Municipal House (Obecní dům):

In Prague today arrive two leading representatives of the younger French generation, Sirs G. Duhamel and Ch. Vildrac, known to us in translation, most recently via the

Nord (1929) and *Géographie cordiale de l’Europe* (1931); Charles Vildrac, *Russie Neuve; Voyage en U.R.S.S.* (1937).

²³⁴ Unattributed, “Échos de Prague, de Paris et d’ailleurs,” *Le Revue française de Prague* 7, no. 35 (March 1, 1928): 57. Original: “ils ont été les premiers écrivains français à visiter la jeune république.”

This issue also contains an article by second Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš entitled, “France and Czechoslovakia” (“France et Tchécoslovaquie”).

²³⁵ In *The Bohemian Body*, Alfred Thomas describes the men’s popularity with the young Prague poets—who would form Devětsil at one end, and the Literární skupina (Literary Group; founded a month after Devětsil on principles more in line with a Catholic-Socialism than Communism) at the other—for their “professed love of humanity” and a “desire to find a kinship with mankind regardless of differences in ethnicity, language, and nationality.” [Alfred Thomas, *The Bohemian Body: Gender and Sexuality in Modern Czech Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 9.]

premiers of the plays "Light" and "S.S. Tenacity."²³⁶ The French and Artists' Association members here have used the visit of both poets in order to organize a cycle of four lectures, which are arranged as follows: April 8th: G. Duhamel: Pourquoi nous aimons un poète [Why We Love a Poet], April 11th: Ch. Vildrac: L'état actuel de la peinture en France [The Current State of Painting in France]. April 13th, G. Duhamel: Guerre et littérature [War and Literature], April 18th: Ch. Vildrac: Paul Verlaine. Attendance at these lectures cannot be recommended more highly: the French-understanding public will certainly find something of interest and to their sympathies in this ample visit by both of these excellent poets of a friendly nation.

Dnes přibudou do Prahy dva přední representanti mladší literární generace francouzské, pánové G. Duhamel a Ch. Vildrac, známí i u nás z četných překladů, zejména z nedavných premier „Světla“ a „Korábu Tenacity“. Sdružené spolky francouzské a umělecké použily návštěvy obou básníků, aby uspořádaly cyklus čtyř přednášek, jichž pořad je stanoven takto: dne 8. dubna: G. Duhamel: Pourquoi nous aimons un poète, Dne 11. dubna: Ch. Vildrac: L'état actuel de la peinture en France. Dne 13. dubna: G. Duhamel: Guerre et littérature, Dne 18. dubna: Ch. Vildrac: Paul Verlaine. Není zajisté třeba zvláště doporučovati návštěvu těchto přednášek: francouzsky rozumějící obecnstvo dojistá hojnou návštěvou prokáže svůj zájem a své sympatie oběma vynikajícím básníkům spřáteleného národa.²³⁷

Thus it is evident that Vildrac and Duhamel could arrive in Prague expecting a warm reception. The two Frenchmen were poets of an older generation and founders of the short-lived Parisian Utopian settlement, *L'abbaye de Créteil* (named after its location), which was established in 1906 and shuttered two years later in 1908 (though the ideals

²³⁶ Duhamel's play *La Lumière* from 1911 was translated into Czech by Josephina Hrdinová in 1921 and put out by the publisher Aventinum. Vildrac's play *Le Paquebot Tenacity* was first performed in 1920.

²³⁷ Unattributed, "Literární styky česko-francouzské," *Čas*, April 6, 1921, 4.

of the movement lived on in the work and lasting relationships of those involved). Alfred Thomas writes of how their “idealistic belief that collective love could cure mankind’s social ills” was very influential for the young Devětsil members.²³⁸ The *Abbaye* has been associated with Unanimism, a “psychological concept of group consciousness and collective emotion” founded by Romain Rolland (who visited Prague himself in January 1928) in France in 1908 and popular amongst the colony’s members.²³⁹ But Arthur Beattie, who kept correspondence with Vildrac late into his life, maintained that the term had “little appeal for the men [...] for it implied some loss of individuality,” an enduring point of debate for the group.²⁴⁰ The poetry of the Unanimists was discussed and translated in Czech. For instance, the magazine *Aktuality a kuriozity [News and Curiosities]*, introduced the style to its readers in a text published serially in Czech translation over the months just preceding the visit of Vildrac and Duhamel to Prague, the movement is described as “simply an expression of life...unanimous: collective. [...] Unanimous poetry wants to be the *spontaneous fountain* of the real and the soul—we don’t want to

²³⁸ Thomas 109.

Henri Pyre points out that in the case of Duhamel, he did not only engage in humanitarian practices via his art, but also by serving as a surgeon throughout World War One. “For four years,” he writes with not a little aggrandizement for his subject, “his sole occupation was to live, in a hospital, near the front of battle, with the wounded soldiers, trying to relieve their physical and mental miseries.” [Henri Pyre, “Georges Duhamel,” *The French Review* 3, no. 2 (Nov. 1929): 103.]

²³⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. “Unanimism,” accessed October 26, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/art/Unanimism>.

For more on the Abbaye and French Unanimism, see, for instance, the following sources in French and English: Arthur H. Beattie, “Charles Vildrac and the Abbaye de Créteil,” *The French Review* 29, no. 3 (Jan. 1956): 219-227; Marianne W. Martin, “Futurism, Unanimism and Apollinaire,” *Art Journal* 28, no. 3 (Spring 1969): 258-268; Arlette Lafay, *Georges Duhamel et l'idée de civilisation: Colloque international organisé Par la Bibliothèque nationale et l'association les amis de Georges Duhamel at de l'Abbaye de Créteil, 4-5 Mars 1993* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1994).

²⁴⁰ Beattie 226.

impose between the self and life, a membrane of abstract intellect/understanding.”²⁴¹

It is perhaps on the point of upholding the individual, while also considering collective consciousness, that these French Utopianists struck a chord with the young Teige. But he took issue with their lack of explicitly Communist rhetoric, and over time distanced himself and Devětsil from the men he was initially so eager to meet. So while Vildrac and Duhamel may indeed have been of great influence, as Thomas maintains, and the relationship started with the older men in a more dominant role, Devětsil ultimately musters the confidence to reject certain tenants of the older, more established model. The visit of Vildrac and Duhamel to Prague illustrates Teige’s tendency to almost simultaneously form alliances with and issue critiques against more established groups on the international level. As will be outlined in detail in Chapter Three, Teige was already doing this locally, with older Czech intellectuals and artists, but Vildrac and Duhamel are perhaps the first figures from abroad with whom Teige launches a dialogue of debate.

To be sure, Teige made a point of seeking out the poets on their visit to Prague,

²⁴¹ G. Walch, “Unanimismus,” *Aktuality a kuriozity* 1, no. 1 (Sept. 1920): 2-3. Emphasis is the author’s. Original: “Unanimismem vyzoomíte prostě vyjadřování života...unanimního: kolektivního. [...] Poesie unanimistická naopak chce býti *spontáním výtryskem* skutečna a duše—nehceme klásti mezi sebe a život clonu abstraktního rozumu.”

Aktuality a kuriozity—described on its cover as a “literary, art, and political anthology” (“Sborník literární, umělecký a politický”)—ran in one volume from 1920 to 1921 in ten numbers (nine of which appeared as double issues). Though a second volume is announced on the cover of number 9-10, this subsequent publication does not appear to have come to fruition. The editor (and translator of the Unanimism article), Věnceslava Boučková, is the *only* female editor out of all the publications under consideration in this dissertation. And yet (or perhaps because of) her singular female status, practically nothing appears to have been written about her or her publication.

Aside from the Unanimism text, Boučková translated Honoré Balzac’s *The Physiology of Marriage* [*Physiologie du mariage*] into Czech and published it both serially in *Aktuality a kuriozity*, as well as as a stand alone book, printed under her publishing house of the same name.

and saw in them a strategic point of contact with the greater literary scene in Paris, albeit of an older generation. Upon meeting the men, Teige reports to Černík that though Duhamel suffered from a hangover and sick stomach, Vildrac was more congenial and, according to Teige, “is entirely in accordance with us.”²⁴² Though Duhamel does not figure prominently in Teige and Černík’s letters, and there is no record—contrary to the case of Vildrac—that he corresponded with the Czechs himself, we do have a brief accounting of his time in Prague in Knapp’s biography. She writes that:

Czechoslovakia thrilled Duhamel (1925). What aroused his sympathy most forcefully perhaps was the spirit of democracy which seemed to permeate every aspect—the very ‘soul’—of this people. He wrote about their idealism; he reacted to their sincerity almost instantly. There is no question as to the affinity which existed between him and the Czech people.²⁴³

This account, albeit highly subjective in tone and summoning an idealized version of the new post-war Europe, does suggest that there was at least some mutual interest between Duhamel and the Czech avant-garde.

There is more primary evidence, however of Vildrac’s engagement with Devětsil. He was apparently eager to speak to Teige on the state of contemporary art and literature in France, and Teige writes of how he offered to put Černík in contact with whomever he desired.²⁴⁴ “In short,” Teige writes in April 1921 during their visit, “what

²⁴² Teige to Černík, April 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “úplně s námi souhlasí.”

²⁴³ Knapp 97. I have found no evidence that Duhamel travelled again to Prague in 1925, the year that he went to Finland, a trip he later wrote on at length in *Chant du Nord*. Knapp’s dating of the Prague trip to that year is perhaps an error, and in fact a reference to the visit from April 1921.

²⁴⁴ Well not *actually* everyone Černík desired. Vildrac seems to have done some filtering of Černík’s requests. Of one contact, Teige writes: “He [Vildrac] was surprised that you also wanted the

we wanted, we have. They promised to write, and mainly it's the real contact with the youngest generation of artists—which we have to use to our utmost advantage."²⁴⁵ The addresses that Teige had been given he includes in this letter, such as for René Arcos in Geneva and Georges Chennevière in Paris.

It would seem that the young and enterprising Teige used every opportunity to take advantage of the Frenchmen's trip to Prague, visiting their lectures and socializing with the aim of engendering further contact. In one letter he reports to Černík:

On Friday I was at the lecture of Duhamel with Štulc, I spoke with him and Vildrac and we passed on your greetings—otherwise they wanted [to meet you? (word illegible)] and were surprised, that they hadn't seen you yet [...]. —They sent on their greetings to you. I will speak with them in more detail on Wednesday. In Sunday's *Čas* they are running a very detailed account of the content of Duhamel's speech, which might be of help for your own lecture.

V pátek jsem byl na přednášce Duhamelově a se Štulcem jsme s Vildracem a sním mluvili, vyřídli pozdravy od Tebe—ostatně oni chtěli si [illegible] a vůbec se divili, že tě posud neviděli [...]. —Dávají tě pozdravovat. Ostatně ve středu budu s nimi mluvit ještě podrobněji. V *Čase* nedělním otiskují velmi podrobný obsah Duhamelovy řeči jenž ti snad může být ku pomoci pro tvou přednášku.²⁴⁶

The article Teige is very likely referencing in this letter appears in the Sunday, April 10th printing of *Čas*, titled, "Why We Love the Poet: Duhamel's first lecture in Prague" ("Proč milujeme básníka. Duhamelova první přednáška v Praze"). In this review—in which Teige names Vildrac, Duhamel, Romain, and Chennevière as the dominant figures in

address of Pirarot, apparently he's an ultra-reactionary." The address is not included. Original: "Divil se žes chtěl adresu Pirarotu, je to prej ultrareakcionář." [Teige to Černík, April 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.]

²⁴⁵ Ibid. Original: "Zkrátka co jsme chtěli máme, slíbili psát, a hlavně je tu kontakt se skutečně nejmladší generací výtvarnou—kterého musíme použít co nejhojněji."

²⁴⁶ Teige to Černík, April 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.

contemporary French literature—Duhamel’s lecture is described in proto-Surrealist terms. Teige reports that Duhamel instructed his audience that:

We must forget the life of the street, along which we walk regularly, and not acknowledge the thousand and one cares of our everyday, we must forget the thoughts that revolve around external interests, if we want to enter into the esoteric and dream-like. [...] *History is not a history of actions but rather a history in thoughts and of thoughts, of abstract material: dreams, passions, and desires.*

Musíme zapomenouti na život ulice, po niž jsme právě šli, nevědět o tisíci a jedné starosti všedních našich dní, zapomenouti svých myšlenek, obírajících se vnějších zájmy, chceme-li vstoupiti do tajemna a snění. [...] *Dějiny nejsou dějinami činů jako spíše dějinami myšlenky a myšlenek, abstraktních hodnot: snu, víry, a touhy.*²⁴⁷

Two days, later, on April 12th, Teige again reports for *Čas*, this time on Vildrac’s first lecture, on French painting.²⁴⁸ Here he emphasizes “Paris remains the center and focal point of European painting, a site of pilgrimage that draws artists and foreigners from all lands.”²⁴⁹ But though Teige opens with this acknowledgement of the strength and allure of the French painterly tradition, he closes with a tacit reminder that the French are now also in turn travelling to Prague, which should thus evince their awareness of that city’s own artistic merit: “Vildrac concluded by offering the *regards of the French*

²⁴⁷ Teige, “Proč milujeme básníka. Duhamelova první přednáška v Praze,” *Čas*, April 10, 1921, 8. Emphasis is the author’s.

²⁴⁸ A year later, in the first issue of *Le Revue française de Prague*, a brief (and not entirely positive) review of Vildrac’s lecture also appears, in which Prague is described as a city where “avant-garde art has numerous and fervent partisans” (“L’art d’avant-garde y a de nombreux et fervents partisans”). [Daniel Essertier, “Arts,” *Le Revue française de Prague* 1, no. 1 (March 30, 1922): 35.]

²⁴⁹ Teige, “Kronika denní. Charles Vildrac o přítomném francouzském malířství. Přednáška v obecním domě 11. Dubna 1921,” *Čas*, April 12, 1921, 5. Original: “Paříž ovšem je stále centrem a ohniskem veškeré malby evropské, poutem, jež váže umělce-cizince všech zemí.”

*painters to Czech artists, namely those of the ‘Mánes’ society.”*²⁵⁰ Thus Teige’s representation of the more established international visitors to a Czech audience is one that first positions the men as important, well-respected, and sought-after figures, and then points out that such impressive types have sought out the company of the Czech milieu, thereby elevating the latter’s status.

Even before the arrival of Vildrac and Duhamel in Prague, Teige seems to have been laying the foundation for their reception. In a postcard sent just before their arrival, Teige wrote to Černík urgently: “Most importantly he [Seifert] wants to let you know that you ought to send him all your translations of the poems by Vil and Duh. They’ll go together with the Čapek and Ruttový translations in an anthology by [the publisher František] Borový.”²⁵¹ Correspondence kept in Černík’s archive at the PNP makes evident that he had been in touch with Vildrac well ahead of his and Duhamel’s

²⁵⁰ Ibid. Original: “[...] zakončil Vildrac *pozdravem francouzských malířů české obci umělecké*, zejména spolku ‘Mánes.’” Emphasis is the author’s.

²⁵¹ Teige to Černík, April 2, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Hořejší ti vzkazuje abys mu ihned poslal všechny své překlady básní Vil Duh. Hodlá zároveň se svými Čapovými a Ruttovými překlady vydat antologii u Borového.”

Karel Čapek had translated a volume of French poetry for the publisher František Borový a year earlier, in 1920—*French Poetry of the New Era (Francouzská poesie nové doby)*—in which neither Vildrac nor Duhamel are included. Some poets that do number among its subjects are Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, Jean-Arthur Rimbaud, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Marinetti, major influences of Čapek’s generation, but also for Devětsil members. A later volume like the one Teige describes here, that would include translations by Vildrac and Duhamel does not appear to have come to fruition.

The “Ruttový” mentioned here is likely be Miroslav Rutte (1889-1954), a Czech literary and theater critic who also wrote prose and poetry and worked for the paper *Narodní listy* (translated alternately as *The National Pages*, *The National Press*, or *The Peoples’ Paper* and which reported closely on Marinetti’s visit to Prague). He collaborated with Čapek on a few publishing projects, and his own writings and translations appeared regularly in the early 1920s via the same publishers that often put out Devětsil-affiliated works, such as Otakar Štorch-Marien, Aventinum, and Orbis. His first book with the publisher František Borový, however, appears not to have come out until 1940—*20 Lectures on Theater (20 kázání o divadle)*.

trip to Prague to seek permission to translate some of Vildrac's poems.²⁵² Already the previous year, on the 19th of November, 1920, Černík initiated contact with Vildrac, requesting to translate the poems collected as *Livre d'amour* (1914), and also asking that Vildrac help to keep the young Czechs of Devětsil informed about developments in France by providing Černík with examples of more French work: "Would you have the desire to keep me informed of contemporary literature and visual art in France, and in turn, permit me to provide you with information regarding our work, and of our review, 'Orfeus'?"²⁵³ By offering to forward Vildrac *Orfeus*, Černík suggests that this is a mutually beneficial relationship, conducted on mutually beneficial terms. And as a testament to how connected the Czechs were with what was going on in Paris, Vildrac responds that he cannot grant Černík permission to translate all the texts about which he has inquired, because another young Czech, Zdeněk Kalista (1900-1982, of the exact same age as Černík, and a member of the Literární skupina) had already gained permission to translate a book of Vildrac's work.²⁵⁴ Černík had already translated work

²⁵² This is but one instance in which a member of Devětsil writes with a request to translate the work of a foreign writer. Translations are sometimes credited as "authorized" in the Czech avant-garde magazines, suggesting that contact and consent with the original author was obtained. There have been far fewer (if any) examples encountered in researching this dissertation in which a member of Devětsil is asked for the same permission by an editor from abroad. Instead, foreign editors more commonly asked to reproduce images from the Czech magazines, and expressed respectful frustration that they could not read the Czech textual content.

More commonly, Devětsil members had their writing rendered in German or French through translations of the author's own doing. Thus, the politics of translation introduces an important instance in which the transnational European networks could not be a wholly mutually dialog between the "major" and "minor" languages, as Devětsil was reliant on the foreign language skills of its members to propagate itself multilingually. A passable knowledge of French was necessary to conduct relations with Vildrac and Duhamel, for instance, and Devětsil's literary representation in other languages was contingent on its members ability to self-translate.

²⁵³ Artuš Černík to Charles Vildrac, November 19, 1920, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "Auriez vous envie la bouté de m'informer nur la literature et l'art plastique moderne en France et moi de ma part je me permetterai de vous donner des informations de nos travaux et de notre revue 'Orfeus.'"

²⁵⁴ Charles Vildrac to Artuš Černík, February 1, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.

by Duhamel before writing this request to Vildrac: a short text—“Wonder” (“Div”)—had appeared in the July 24, 1919 issue of *Kmen*, and several other Duhamel poems appeared that year in *Kmen* via various translators. Several poems by Duhamel also appeared in *Červen* in 1918 to 1919, one of which—“To the Poor Person” (“Chudému člověku”)—was translated by Černík and appeared on the August 28, 1919 cover. The following year, in the May 20th issue of *Kmen*, an excerpt from Vildrac’s book *Découvertes* appeared in a translation by Černík, and more poems from the book appear in the February 17th issue, now—just following Černík’s correspondence with Vildrac—attributed as an “authorized translation” (“Autorisovaný překlad A. Černíka”).

This correspondence, and the high frequency with which Vildrac and Duhamel were translated into Czech, is important because it substantiates what the report in *Čas* on the day of their arrival purports: that by the time Vildrac and Duhamel arrived in Prague, they were already relatively well known there, but also that, in turn, they were well aware of the young literary movements in Prague. Thanks to Černík’s

On the cover of the January 13, 1921 issue of *Kmen*, just before Černík received this response from Vildrac, two poems by Kalista appear, followed by his translation of a short text by Vildrac, “Testament.”

Červen was a Communist bi-weekly edited by S.K. Neumann, which advertised itself as committed to “New Art, Nature, The Technical Age, Socialism, and Freedom” (“Nové umění – Příroda – Technická doba – Socialismus – Svoboda”) on its banner during its first year of operations.

Kmen, a Communist weekly and later monthly, existed in two iterations, first from 1917-1922 under the editorship of F. X. Šalda (volumes one and two), S.K. Neumann (volumes three and four), and Karel Vaněk (volume five). The magazine then revived in 1926 under Julius Fučík, and stayed in print until 1929.

For a limited introduction to *Kmen*, see Anne Jamison’s “*Kmen*: A Far Away Magazine About Which We Know Nothing,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 44, no. 1-2 (2007): 51-66. This article focuses on the 1920-1921 year of the publication, under Neumann, and highlights Franz Kafka’s interest in the magazine. The work of this article, which, as the title would suggest (riffing off of Neville Chamberlin’s dismissive remarks about Czechoslovakia in 1938), highlights the “outsider” quality of Czech language and culture, and argues for the relevance of *Kmen* as an object of study via the famous Prague German author who read it and saw his story “The Stoker” published in it via Milena Jesenská’s translation. This approach is in many ways counter to the methodologies of this dissertation.

correspondence and translations (by himself and others), as well as his editorial connections at *Rovnost*, he seems to have carved out a place for himself in the Prague visit of Vildrac and Duhamel in absentia. It was to these two French men that Teige described Černík as the “foreign minister of Devětsil,” and upon the departure of Vildrac and Duhamel from Prague, Teige reports (at the end of a letter, quoted already in Chapter One, in which he sternly instructs Černík to prepare well for a coming lecture): “I should write you once again how we said goodbye to Vildrac and D, who both send their greetings and an *au revoir!*”²⁵⁵ Without ever having actually met him, Vildrac and Duhamel nevertheless make sure to bid Černík adieu.

As a testament to the fact that Teige was not just fabricating these messages to stroke Černík’s pride, that very same April Vildrac wrote personally to Černík to say that he is sorry to have missed him in Prague on his recent visit there, though he was glad to have spent time with Teige and Štulc. Vildrac grants Černík further permission to publish excerpts of his work in *Rovnost*, writing, “If you would be interested in the translation, it would not be at all inconvenient. On the contrary!”²⁵⁶ And he closes with the expressed wish to return to Prague again in the coming year, and to meet Černík on that subsequent visit. The 1921 visit had left such a favorable impression of Prague and its people on Vildrac, that he planned to return again quickly (though there is no evidence that a subsequent trip was made).

²⁵⁵ Teige to Černík, April 20, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Psal bych ti pak ještě jak jsme se rozloučili s Vildracem a D, kteří tě dávají pozdravovat a au revoir!”

²⁵⁶ Vildrac to Černík, April 26, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “S’il vous intéressai de les traduire, il n’y verrait aucun inconvenient, au contraire.”

But at the same time, Devětsil had already begun to take a critical stance towards the values of Vildrac and Duhamel. The artistic and social ideals of the two men had been highly influential to the young Teige, who wrote to Černík in April 1921 of a discussion from their Prague visit: “regarding politics, they feel just about as we do, that the poet ought not to get mixed up in the concrete, but at the same time, a revolutionary he must be.”²⁵⁷ However, by June of that year his sympathy for Vildrac’s humanist politics had waned, in preference for a more hard line Communist stance. Vildrac does not seem to have seen the link between the collective ideals of the *Abbaye* and Communism that Teige and Černík had projected. Beattie maintains that, “The *Abbaye* had [...] no political doctrine; it had no specific literary doctrine either. It sought freedom for the individual artist, in an atmosphere of fraternity and good will, to fulfill his own personality and to create according to his own nature and his own talents.”²⁵⁸ This claim was made in the McCarthy-era America of the 1950s, which would present ample encouragement to disown any Communist tenants in the work of the poet Beattie aims to champion; in his own writings to Černík, Vildrac does indeed allow a certain sympathy for the Communist ideals of social equality. But Beattie’s claim does

²⁵⁷ Teige to Černík, April 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “o politice soudí asi to co my, že se do konkrétního básník plect nemá, ale revolucionářem být musí.”

This is a somewhat surprising formulation as Teige was in fact often emphasizing the importance of “concrete work” (“konkrétní úkol”) in the arts. Teige’s own shift in position could perhaps be one factor in his shift in enthusiasm for Vildrac after his visit.

²⁵⁸ Beattie 226.

Knapp, in 1972, makes similar claims to the anti-Communist stance of her subject, in this case, Duhamel. She describes a trip he made to Russia in the late 1920s, but is quick to disassociate the trip from any affiliation with the country’s political structure. She writes: “Though he visited museums, hotels, theaters, schools, and libraries, trying to remain as truthful as possible, he could not help deprecating Communism for its dictatorial methods, the restrictions it imposed upon intellectuals and their pursuits. Those who think and create, he wrote, must suffer the ignominies of humiliation in this Communist land.” [Knapp 97-98.]

still outline an important part—that Teige too observed, and ultimately protested—of Vildrac’s ethos: that he was a poet first and foremost, and encouraged the development of the individual artist over considerations of a collective good.

In later letters from Vildrac to Černík, their relationship begins to crumble, and Vildrac emphatically maintains his ambiguous stance towards Communism, rather than defend himself against such accusations. Teige, on the other hand, sought to marry a respect for the individual with equal concern for the public as a whole, and was ultimately disappointed with the prioritizing of the self in Vildrac and Duhamel’s conception of the poet. Devětsil’s program was in fact quite removed from that of the (by then long defunct) *Abbaye*, where, according to Beattie, “They were seeking no general remedy for the miseries of society, but were concerned with their own plight, the plight of the aspiring artist.”²⁵⁹ But it would seem from Teige’s reports on the Vildrac and Duhamel lectures in *Čas* that Teige had in fact hoped for something rather different. In his article on Vildrac’s “informative and evocative” (“informativní a nabádavý”) talk on French painting, for instance, Teige wrote of the snobbery rampant in contemporary art that resulted in a clientele that “purchased the signature on the painting over the painting itself.”²⁶⁰ He concludes that “only social transformation can liberate their [the

²⁵⁹ Beattie 225.

²⁶⁰ Teige, “Kronika denní,” 8. Original: “[...] snobské znalce, kteří kupují spíše podpisy na obrazech než obrazy samotné.”

Of course, such purchasing practices have an added unwanted impact for the Czech artist, whose name is likely little known within the context of a western-centric art world.

artists'] work as a total creation of the work of the person, which Vildrac does not doubt will come about sooner or later."²⁶¹

At the same time, in a series of letters that follow the visit of the French poets, between Vildrac and Černík, it is evident that concern had been voiced to Černík from Prague that the company the French poets kept there (purportedly too bourgeoisie and academic) looked a bit too much like the "snobby expert" Teige wrote against. Rather impudently, Černík relays these complaints to Vildrac, even as he seeks to gain permission to translate his works, and even though he was not in Prague himself to observe first hand the offending behavior. In one letter from June, Vildrac writes defensively, "I don't know if in Prague I made the acquaintance exclusively of the bourgeoisie, as you say, and I don't know either about that which you call the proletariat. The majority of the people I saw, besides your friends, are professors, intellectuals, artists—all without fortune as myself."²⁶² But lest Devětsil have become too confident in its own movement, and precocious in voicing its opinions, Vildrac turns his letter into something of a talking down, often quoting Černík's own letter in his rebuttal. He calls into question what he views as Černík's nationalist-revolutionary stance, countering, "I didn't have the impression at all that you are living in a 'democratic paradise,'"²⁶³ and retorts that Černík's attack on Vildrac for hanging around

²⁶¹ Ibid. Original: "Vědí ovšem dobře, že vysvobodí jejich práci jako veškerou tvůrčí práci člověkovu teprve sociální předměna, o níž Vildrac nepochybuje, že přijde dříve či později."

²⁶² Vildrac to Černík, June 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "Je ne sais si à Prague j'ai fait exclusivement la connaissance de votre bourgeoisie, comme vous le dites, et je ne sais non plus ce que vous appelez prolétariat. La majorité des gens que j'ai vus, en outre de vos amis, sont des professeurs, intellectuels, artistes sans fortune comme moi-même."

²⁶³ Ibid. Original: "Je n'ai pas eu l'impression que vous viviez dans 'un paradis démocratique.'"

with a bourgeoisie set is in fact much like the tactics of the bourgeoisie itself. “Watch out!” he warns. “You speak exactly like the bourgeoisie.”²⁶⁴ Vildrac also writes against any notions of a Czechoslovak Communist coup: “In fact it’s very evident that if there were to be a Communist government tomorrow in Prague, the country would be blocked immediately economically, and occupied by the French army, the Hungarians, the Poles, that sell a ‘re-establishment of order’.”²⁶⁵ These are the cautionary words of an older man, who has seen some of his own youthful ideals squashed, as with the short lived Utopian settlement, and uses his age and position to write to the young avant-gardist in cautionary and condescending tones. He lectures further: “Political value is not the same thing as social value, and is too often the opposite of moral value. [...] If I try to console the human heart, don’t then ask that my lectures adhere to the Third International—.”²⁶⁶ Though he signs off respectfully—“My friendship to your comrade Teige. And equally fraternally to you.”—and even provides Černík with one more address—that of Durtain—this is the last letter in the archive from Vildrac to Černík.²⁶⁷ It appears in this case, that a relationship forged via travel and the prospect of publication, was subsequently squandered in correspondence, in which the young Czech avant-garde attempted to assert a position of authority prematurely and over enthusiastically.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. Original: “Prenez garde! Vous parlez en ce cas exactement comme les bourgeois.”

²⁶⁵ Ibid. Original: “En fait il est bien évident que s’il avait demain un gouvernement communiste à Prague, le pays serait immédiatement bloqué économiquement et occupé par des armées françaises, Hongroises, Polonaises que vendraient ‘rétablir d’ordre’.”

²⁶⁶ Ibid. Original: “La valeur politique n’étant pas même la valeur sociale, et étant trop souvent le contraire de la valeur morale. [...] Si j’essaye de consoler le cœur humain, n’exigez pas de mes lecteurs leur adhésion à le 3^{ème} Internationale —.”

The Third International, or Communist International, was (as the title self-explains) an international Communist organization, which ran from 1919-1943.

²⁶⁷ Ibid. Original: “Mes amitiés à votre camarade Teige. Et bien fraternellement à vous.”

Rather than succeeding in warming his subject to Devětsil's position, Černík was spoken to as a naughty child and received a slap on the wrist, in response to his own rather bold push-back (likely instigated by Teige).²⁶⁸

But Vildrac's impression of Prague was not entirely spoiled by this skirmish. In 1928, in *La Revue française de Prague*, in a short column titled, "How the French See Czechoslovakia," Vildrac has responded to a questionnaire put to French travelers to Prague by the paper *Narodní listy* as to why they traveled to Czechoslovakia, and what their impressions were from the voyage. Vildrac's response—described in the column as "a lovely letter vibrant in its sympathy" ("une belle lettre vibrant de sympathie")—is quoted in what appears to be its full length, and he describes feeling immediately at home there, "like family with all whom I met in Prague" ("comme en famille, avec toutes les personnes que j'ai connues à Prague").²⁶⁹ He goes on to describe the atmosphere in the city as one of "sublime simplicity, spontaneous élan, and that seriousness the characterizes the heart of the Slav."²⁷⁰

In subsequent years, Devětsil would do better in waging its battles, likely learning from this early tiff how to better argue their case going forward. As with the

²⁶⁸ Criticisms of Vildrac in the Prague context did not only come from Devětsil's corner. In a brief account of Vildrac's lecture on contemporary French art in *La Revue française de Prague*, the visit of Vildrac and Duhamel is described as "memorable" ("mémorable"), and it is acknowledged that Vildrac is admired in Prague. But it is also quipped that, in the avant-garde atmosphere of Prague, Vildrac's views were "retrograde." ["Arts," 35.]

²⁶⁹ "Échos de Prague, de Paris et d'ailleurs," 57.

²⁷⁰ Ibid. Original: "cette sublime simplicité, cet élan spontané et ce sérieux qui caractérisent le coeur slave."

Evidence that Vildrac may not truly have felt among family in Prague, even in his compliments of the city, published appreciatively, can be found in his inclination to exoticize the stereotype of the "Slavic soul."

example of Marinetti to follow, Teige later looked directly to the press, using his access to various publishing outlets to air grievances in a more polished, and public, way.

THE FUTURE COMES TO PRAGUE

“He came, he was listened to, he conquered,” wrote Teige in *Aktuality a kuriozity* after F.T. Marinetti’s first visit to Prague.²⁷¹ No doubt with some irony here, Teige highlights the dominance of Marinetti on the stage of the international avant-garde. In late 1921, half a year after the visit of Vildrac and Duhamel, a group of Italian Futurists, headed by Marinetti, arrived in the Czech capital to put on a stage production. Through these performances, the Italian visitors acted as missionaries for the (Italian) Futurist cause.²⁷² They were ambassadors for a specific, nationalist manifestation of the avant-garde, while also international networkers, seeking to broaden the range of their visibility and influence.

²⁷¹ Teige, “F. T. Marinetti a Futurismus,” *Aktuality a kuriozity* 1, no. 8-10 (1922): 77. Original: “Přišel, byl slyšán a zvítězil.”

²⁷² This section is dedicated specifically to the Italian Futurists, as distinguished from Russian Futurism, which developed some years later, and whose members did not specifically bring its program to Prague. The work of the Russian Futurists was however known in Prague and of interest to Devětsil members; one of its leading poets, Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930), visited Prague in 1927, and Roman Jakobson, who had been actively involved in the development of Russian Futurism and was living in Prague throughout the 1920s, brought the Soviet and Prague avant-gardes into conversation with the more academic work of the Prague Linguistic Circle. For more on these efforts, see Jindřich Toman, *The Magic of a Common Language: Jakobson, Mathesius, Trubetzkoy, and the Prague Linguistic Circle* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995).

In an exhibition catalogue for a 2012 show on Czech Futurism at the Western Czech Gallery (Západočeská galerie) in Plzeň, Marinetti's visit, which lasted from December 8th through the 18th of 1921, is described as follows:

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti visited Prague and presented three nights of Futurist theater synthesis at the Švanda Theater. Every night he prefaced the performance with a lecture on Futurism, and recited a few of his own poems. This was followed by some Futurist enactments from members of the Švanda Theater cast. On the stage, Enrico Prampolini and Federico de Pistoris installed intensely colored abstract decorations constructed from screens.

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti navštívil Prahu a ve Švandově divadle uvedl tři večery futuristických divadelních syntéz. Každý večer zahájil přednáškou o futurismu, sám recitoval několik vlastních básní. Následovalo několik futuristických syntéz za účasti herců Švandovo divadla. Enrico Prampolini a Federico de Pistoris instalovali na jevišti abstraktní dekoraci z jednoduchých zástěn v intenzivních barvách.²⁷³

The performances, which ran from the 12th to 17th, received much attention in the local press, in such major papers as *Národní listy* and the leading Communist daily, *Rudé*

²⁷³ Alena Pomajzlová, ed. "Chronology," *Rytmy + pohyb + světlo: impulsy futurismu v českém umění* (Plzeň: Západočeská galerie, 2012), 285.

Enrico Prampolini (1894-1956) was an Italian Futurist painter, sculptor, and set designer who served as a correspondent for *Disk* in Italy. Prampolini was also listed as a foreign editor at the Czech architectural magazine *Horizont* (1927-1930). In one undated letter, likely from 1924, Prampolini writes to Černík with praise for *Pásmo*, which he calls "very good – simple – active – audacious – original" ("tre [sic] bien – semple – actif – audacieux – original") and gives him permission to reproduce an article and two images of his. [Enrico Prampolini to Artuš Černík, undated (presumably 1924), PNP, AČ Archive.] No text and only one image by Prampolini does ultimately appear in *Pásmo*, in issue 7/8 of volume one, titled "Study for a Spatial Construction" ("Studie prostorové konstrukce"). It is placed next to László Moholy-Nagy's important essay, "Guidelines for a Synthetic Newspaper" ("Richtlinien für eine Synthetische Zeitschrift"). Prampolini's essays and illustrations (especially pertaining to stage design) appeared in several other Czech interwar periodicals and anthologies as well, including *Rozpravy Aventina*, *Veraikon*, *Stavba*, and *Život*.

právo (*The Red Right or The Red Law*).²⁷⁴ In his article, “F.T. Marinetti and Futurism” for *Aktuality a kuriozity*, Teige publishes a review of the impact of the Futurist visit to Prague, as well as the reception of the Czechs by the Futurists, and likewise describes the atmosphere of the audience as “electric.”²⁷⁵ He summarizes unequivocally that the “Futurist evenings” were “a rip-roaring and unexpected success.”²⁷⁶ And that Marinetti in turn appreciated and applauded the enthusiastic Czech crowd, purportedly crying out at the close of a public performance: “Long live Futurist Prague!”²⁷⁷

In the very first issue of the Communist *Proletkult* from January 1922, however, a wholly less enthusiastic reception to Marinetti and his brand of Futurism is portrayed in an unsigned review. Although it concedes Futurism’s “wide influence on the development of modern art after Impressionism,” it contends that “after the World War it has come to mean ‘anachronism.’”²⁷⁸ The one-paragraph blurb concludes: “The whole of the Futurist movement is held to be no longer relevant, especially here.” Though Marinetti may have imagined himself as bringing the Future with him on his travels, the climate in post-war Prague was not inclined to genuflect. As Vildrac’s views had been

²⁷⁴ In a short segment entitled “Miscellaneous News” of *Rudé právo*, from December 15, 1921 there is a report on the Futurist’s visit, and Marinetti is figured as he who pushes the Prague bourgeoisie out of apathetic, urban blasé: “Bourgeoisie Prague, doing nothing, ever bored, has been thrown into agitation these past days. Marinetti, Marinetti!” Original: “Měštácká Praha, nic nedělající, nudící se, byla vzrušena v těchto dnech. Marinetti, Marinetti!” [Fert., “Různé zprávy. F. T. Marinetti,” *Rudé právo*, December 15, 1921, 4.]

²⁷⁵ Teige, “F. T. Marinetti a Futurismus,” 77. Teige writes: “The atmosphere in the Švanda Theater was truly as though charged by an exceeding amount of electricity.” Original: “Ovzduší Švandova divadla bylo skutečně jakoby nabito prazvláštní elektřinou.”

²⁷⁶ Ibid. Original: “Futuristické večery ... měly hlučný a nečekaný úspěch.”

²⁷⁷ Ibid. Original (cited here in Czech. Elsewhere in the essay also printed in French, the language Teige used to correspond with Marinetti): “Ať žije futuristická Praha!”

²⁷⁸ Unattributed, “Futurism,” *Proletkult* 1, no. 1 (Jan. 4, 1922): 13. Original: “po světové válce znamená anachronism.”

decisively “retrograde” for the city’s cultured avant-gardists, so too was Marinetti already passé. Far from kowtowing to the international literati as it rolled through Prague, the leftist community of artists and writers there saw themselves as out avant-garding the more famous avant-gardes.

In a letter to Černík from December 1921, Teige indeed exhibits that he was less enthusiastic about the Futurists than might have been evident at first glance in his published review in *Aktuality a kuriozity*. As he did with Vildrac and Duhamel, Teige makes sure to introduce himself personally to Marinetti at one of his public events, and reports rather haughtily to Černík, “On Marinetti: We spoke with him, he’s excited about us, but us with him less so.”²⁷⁹ Teige, however, does go on to write with some kind words for Marinetti, especially as pertaining to the assistance he might offer the younger avant-guardists: “He is a pleasant and marvelously tempered guy, a superb orator. [...] He took some of my photographs, which he will reproduce. At the theater

²⁷⁹ Teige to Černík, December 17, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “O Marinettim: Mluvili jsme s ním, je námi nadšen, ale my jím méně.”

Teige’s nonchalance is echoed in a review by the journalist Josef Koniček for the *Tribuna*, titled “Marinetti in Prague”: “We saw him yesterday. He is not as young as he used to be.” [“Marinetti v Praze: Syntetické divadlo ve Švandově divadle,” *Tribuna*, Dec. 15, 1921, 3. Cited and translated in Mahulena Nešlehová, “Impulses of Futurism and Czech Art,” in *International Futurism in Arts and Literature*, ed. Günter Berghaus (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 137.]

Futurism, if not Marinetti, received a similarly cool reception in Prague with the 1913 exhibition at the Mozarteum. As Mahulena Nešlehová writes, “The tenets of Italian Futurism were received in the Czech Lands with reservation rather than open enthusiasm.” [126.] In other circles, Gertrude Stein strikes a similarly irreverent tone with regards to meeting Marinetti and the Futurists in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in the early 1910s: “It was about this time [1912] that the futurists, the Italian futurists, had their big show in Paris and it made a great deal of noise. [...] The futurists all of them lead by Severini thronged around Picasso. He brought them all to the house. Marinetti came by himself later as I remember. In any case everybody found the futurists very dull.” [Cited in Marjorie Perloff, “Grammar in Use: Wittgenstein / Gertrude Stein / Marinetti,” *South Central Review* 13, no. 2-3 (Summer-Autumn, 1996): 47.]

during his lecture he spoke of Devětsil.²⁸⁰ Thus, as in his meeting with Vildrac, Teige emphasizes the strategic component of making contact with a leading member of a highly visible avant-garde movement from abroad. In *Aktuality a kuriozity* Teige boasts similarly: “Marinetti also established during his time in Prague a relationship with young Czech artists and voiced at his lectures an active sympathy with the Czech artistic avant-garde, which he designated as a real force of the future.”²⁸¹

The endorsement of the Italian Futurists, despite ambivalent feeling towards its project, would have carried great weight for Teige, as, to be sure, the presence of Marinetti in Prague was in the popular consciousness; Teige himself reported that the visit of 1921 brought to the Czech public a “renewed interest in Futurism.”²⁸² The Futurists had exhibited in Prague already in December 1913, at the Havel Gallery of the Mozarteum,²⁸³ and the Marinetti visit of 1921 came on the heels of a second exhibition

²⁸⁰ Ibid. Original: “Je to příjemný a užasně temperamentní chlap, výtečný řečník, [illegible]. Vzal si některé mé fotografie které bude reprodukovat. Ve švaňdáku ve své přednášce mluvil o Devětsilu.”

It is striking here that Teige mentions his own photography, though I am unaware of any such examples appearing in an Italian Futurist publication, or elsewhere.

²⁸¹ Teige, “F. T. Marinetti a Futurismus,” 79. Original: “Marinetti navázal za svého pobytu v Praze také styky s mladými českými umělci a vyslovil na svých přednáškách své živé sympatie s českou uměleckou avantgardou, již označil jako sílu budoucnosti.”

²⁸² Ibid. Original: “u nás nový zájem o futurismus.”

The reception of Futurism amongst Czech artists and intellectuals was rather mixed. Following on the work of František Šmejkal, Nešlehová has written that, “Futurism in the Czech Lands had a major influence on two generations of artists—the prewar innovators and the Devětsil avant-garde of the 1920s. Each responded to its stimulus in a different manner and with different intensity. The former generation exercised a certain restraint and displayed only partial understanding of the modernist revolt sparked by Futurism, whereas the postwar avant-garde, like other avant-garde movements of the time, arrived at a fuller appreciation of the impulse given by the Futurists and shared with them their admiration of the modern world.” [Nešlehová 122.] This is a rather simplistic description of Devětsil’s reception of Futurism however, which was in fact rather ambivalent. And the older generation of artists, too, of course had an “admiration of the modern world,” which they displayed in their own creative practices.

²⁸³ The 1913 exhibition included works by Italian Futurists Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916), Carl Carrà (1881-1966), Luigi Russolo (1883-1947), and Gino Severini (1883-1966). Though the show “was greeted with little public interest,” according to Nešlehová it did receive decent attention in the local press, with reviews by both Karel and Josef Čapek, for instance. At the same time, a concurrent show on a

at the Dům umělců at the Rudolfinum that Fall, for which Prampolini, who “was responsible for its organization [...] stayed in Prague for several months, where he worked in close collaboration with Ugo Dagone, an Italian journalist residing in Prague.”²⁸⁴

This interest was sustained at least through the following year, when Prampolini again prepared stage designs, now for a production of Marinetti’s “Fire Drum” for the National Theater in Prague, with sound accompaniment by Russolo. The premier of this play, just before Christmas on December 20, 1922 at one of the most iconic theaters in Prague, signals how widely the work of the Futurists was known in the Czech capital. It was a far-reaching, popular presence that Devětsil himself could not yet emulate.

Perhaps in part as a reaction to this, Teige’s letters and published writings show that Devětsil’s generally enthusiastic reception of Futurism was tempered by a simultaneous desire to maintain a distance from the movement, defining themselves as a younger, and even more “antitraditionalist” group. So it is that Teige on one hand upholds the early endeavors of Futurism as exhibiting a “radical antitraditionalism” (“radikální antitraditionalismus”) that helped to free Italian art from “stagnation” (“stagnace”), and he is grateful for praise from Marinetti in such a context, but on the other hand, he points to an academicizing of Futurism that has put it at risk of

more conservative strain of contemporary Italian Art—the National Exhibition of Italian Art—“turned out to be a flop with the Prague public.” [Nešlehová 126, 136.]

For more on the reception of Italian Futurism in Czech art, see, for instance: Alena Pomajzlová, ed. *Rytmy + pohyb + světlo: impulsy futurismu v českém umění* (Plzeň: Západočeská galerie, 2012); František Šmejkal, “Futurismus a české umění,” *Umění* 36, no. 1 (1988): 20-53. And in English: Mahulena Nešlehová, “Impulses of Futurism and Czech Art,” *International Futurism in Arts and Literature*, ed. Günter Berghaus (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 122-143.

²⁸⁴ Nešlehová 133.

“becoming passé” (“Futurismus stává se passéismem”).²⁸⁵ Even within Teige’s essay in *Aktuality a kuriozity* he moves from a tone of respect and praise, to distancing Devětsil from the principles of Futurism (which increasingly evidenced an affiliation with Italian Fascism via its own Futurist political party). As he opens, so he closes, by describing how Marinetti called out in the Švanda Theater, “Long live Futurist Prague!” But this time he adds a disclaimer: “If he called out: Vive la Prague futuriste! he surely meant by that a Prague that is advanced and modern, for a Futurist Czech art never has been and never will be!”²⁸⁶

Teige stance towards and representation of Italian Futurism in print remained fraught throughout the 1920s, but there is not the evidence of an extended debate in correspondence, as with Vildrac and Černík. Rather, Teige spars publically with various tenants upheld by Marinetti, and Futurism more generally, in his essays, a method he was using at the same time to distinguish the work of Devětsil from the slightly older generation of Czech artists. This strategy—of utilizing the periodical as a mode not only of publicly manifested exchange, but also debate—will be described at length in Chapter Three. For now, the visit of Marinetti to Prague in late 1921, stands as an early example of how the Czech gaze outward was by no means uncritical as it received avant-garde travelers from abroad. The next section turns to the first major instance of Teige’s own journeys beyond Czech borders, and considers how he absorbed and interpreted foreign trends when encountering them on home turf.

²⁸⁵ Teige, “F. T. Marinetti a Futurismus,” 77, 79.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 79. Original: “Volal-li: Vive la Prague futuriste! mohl tím zajisté mysliti toliko Prahu prokokovou a moderní, ježto futuristické české umění nikdy nebylo a nebude!”

TEIGE TRAVELS TO PARIS

When Teige journeyed abroad on his first major trip, not yet twenty-two years of age, he headed to Paris, in the summer of 1922. In a letter postmarked June 14, 1922 Teige writes to Seifert, who had travelled ahead of him to Paris, with news that he will definitely be joining him there in a few day's time, and requests that Seifert meet him at the station.²⁸⁷ In his memoir, Seifert recalls their time in Paris together: "When I was with Teige in Paris, we would stroll daily to the entrance of the Louvre with leisurely ease."²⁸⁸ In Seifert's reminiscences, and in Teige's own recounting of the trip in a letter to Černík (to be discussed below), this particular journey to Paris is figured primarily as a tourist's trip, as they took in the major sites of the city, though it is also clear that Teige was simultaneously at work making the acquaintance of major artists and writers, and taking in the latest artistic developments in this major site of artistic pilgrimage.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Karel Teige to Jaroslav Seifert, June 14, 1922, PNP, Jaroslav Seifert Archive (hereafter JS Archive).

On a (Charlie Chaplin) postcard of the same date, Teige also writes to another Devětsil member Jaroslav Jíra, who lived in Paris, and with whom it would seem from this note that Teige plans to stay. He writes that he will arrive on Sunday, and will send a telegraph with the exact time of his arrival, asking that Jíra (as he asked Seifert) meet him at the station, or "if not, I'll come by taxi." Original: "ne-li, přijedu taxíkem." [Karel Teige to Jaroslav Jíra, June 14, 1922, PNP, KT Archive.]

²⁸⁸ Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 46. Original: "Když jsem byl s Teigem v Paříži, míjeli jsme denně vchod do Louvru s ležérní samozřejmostí." The 1922 trip to Paris with Teige is mentioned often in Seifert's memoir, clearly a seminal moment in his life. Towards the end of the book, in a chapter in which Seifert details Teige's death, he recounts a happier moment, after they have had their new suits made and arrived in Paris to show them off: "The Eiffel Tower, to which we had made our pilgrimage, looked upon us unmoved. In Paris it is beautiful, even when it rains. Not to mention when the weather is fair. [...] Farewell, Paris! You'll never again be so beautiful!" Original: "Eiffelova věž, kterou jsme předtím dost zbožně vzývali, dívala se na nás netečně. V Paříži je krásně, i když prší. Natož když je pěkně. [...] Sbohem, Paříži! Už nikdy nebudeš tak krásná!" [515.]

²⁸⁹ In the brief article "Optical Words," Karel Srp lists the various personages Teige met on that first trip to Paris, which is impressive in its length, including: Goll, Ozenfant, Le Corbusier, Fernand Léger, Pierre Reverdy, Man Ray, Alred Birot, Constantin Brancusi, Mikhail Larionov, and Ossip Zadkine. [Karel Srp,

Teige's friend Evy Häuslerová-Linhartová later recounted her memories of time spent in Paris together (where they convened in 1922 and again in 1924), telling of how Teige loved to visit small galleries and "sit before the paintings and expound upon them, expound upon them so long, that the owner of the gallery would come and look in on us—probably because he wanted to know what we were doing there for so long."²⁹⁰ That first trip to Paris was a particularly formative moment for the young and ambitious Teige, and he synthesized his experiences there into his later theoretical output. In a letter to Häuslerová from 1923, he regrets not being able to return with her to Paris that summer, and recalls the life of the city nostalgically:

Paris is an absolutely beautiful city, there is real life there, and where there is life, there is everything, beauty, industriousness, intensity, everything, everything. It is certainly not by chance that this city has bred the most exquisite forms of modern art: but, as you you know, that art, however interesting, isn't anywhere near as beautiful as that life. The Louvre and purveyors of modern pictures are definitely something *ce qu'il faut voir* but nothing more.

Paříž je jistě krásné město, je tam opravdu život, a kde je život, je vše, krása, píle, horlivost, vše, vše. Není jistě náhodou, že v tomto městě zrodily se nejnádhernější tvary moderního umění: ale Vy víte, že toto umění jakkoliv zajímavé, není zdaleka tak krásné jako ten život. Louvre i obchodníci s moderními obrazy jsou jistě něco, *ce qu'il faut voir*, ale také nic více.²⁹¹

This ebullient conception of Paris is also a rare portrayal of the letter's author in which

"Optical Words (Picture Poems and Poetism)," in *Czech Photographic Avant-Garde, 1918-1948*, ed. Vladimír Birgus (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 56.]

²⁹⁰ Häuslerová-Linhartová quoted in Hamanová 192. Original: "Tam jsme sedávali před obrazy a Karel vykládal, vykládal tak dlouho, až se na nás přišel podívat majitel galérie—asi chtěl vědět, co tam tak dlouho děláme."

²⁹¹ Teige to Häuslerová, June 23, 1923. In Hamanová 200.

he allows himself to express without restraint a boyish excitement and admiration for Paris, the city that has the singular capacity to bring out this uninhibited side of our young protagonist. Even here though, in what might be dismissed as a tourist's gushing, Teige's conception of a Poetist "art of life" can be found, as the city itself takes precedence over the art it inspires, or rather, becomes art itself. Much in the same way that Seifert would reminisce about the city in his memoirs, Teige writes to Häuslerová that the "vibrant street, the Eiffel Tower, the little path in the park, can sometimes mean something just as much if not more to us than so-called art."²⁹² Paris was fertile ground for the development of ideas that would become Poetism, as Teige observed a life that was art itself.

Perhaps the earliest of Teige's writings on the 1922 trip to Paris is his own unfiltered and enthusiastic account in a letter to Černík from September 1922. From the correspondence that remains, there is a gap in Teige's letters to Černík spanning from the end of May, just before he leaves for Paris, to September, once he has returned. When he does finally write in a long letter describing his time there, Teige's excitement over the trip is palpable, and it is clear how deeply he was influenced by what he observed. To some extent this trip can be viewed as Teige's study abroad moment, traveling as he does to gay Paree at the age of twenty-one, and very excited by all he experiences there. But of course, Teige was not your average youth, having at such a young age already founded an avant-garde movement and made contact with older

²⁹² Ibid. Original: "oživená ulice, Eiffelka, cestička v parku, může pro nás znamenat někdy právě tolik a i více než tzv. umění."

local and international figures of prominent reputation. Thus it should be no surprise that he also used his trip strategically, meeting as many important figures of Dada, (soon to be) Surrealism, and related movements as he could manage. He not only wrote and published about what he found in Paris, and adapted those observations to his later work, but he brought French contributions into Devětsil publications, and likewise, brought Devětsil itself to the attention of the French art and literary circles.

In the letter to Černík in which he gushes about his time in Paris, the reader is reminded of Teige's young age, something that so rarely happens in his correspondence from this period. As he giddily slides into French for a few sentences to quote from what is likely a flyer for a *bal costumé* that he attended on June 30th, and which was "arranged as a work of mutual benefit and a mode of propaganda for French art abroad,"²⁹³ the figure of a young twenty-something returned wide-eyed from a great adventure emerges. In French, he describes for Černík the evening in Montparnasse (and here you can almost hear his voice bouncing up into a higher register as he moves into all capitals, which may be a rendering of the capitalization as seen on a flyer, but also suggests Teige's own sympathies with the sentiment): "You shall dance to the rhythm of the Negro Jazz Band and the frenzied music of the great orchestra. A

²⁹³ Teige to Černík, September 1922, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "~ pořádáno au profit d'une oeuvre d'entre-aide et d'une action de propagande de l'art français à l'étranger."

With a word thrown in in Czech, it appears that Teige is excerpting from the flyer, reverting to his native tongue the French text does not supply the word, or where he does not have the sufficient vocabulary.

TREMENDOUS PROGRAM!! All the great Artists of the Music Halls of Paris again assured us of their gracious support.”²⁹⁴

The “great artists” who appear to have supported the evening by donating works or otherwise backing the cause of international visibility and exchange, amounts to a very impressive inventory indeed. “A selection,” Teige writes, in Czech, and continues:

Kisling, Lipschitz [spelled by Teige: Lipšić], André Lhote, Zadkine, S. Romov, Bissière, Cendrars, Cocteau, Delaunay, Dermée, Fels, Feder, Foujita [spelled by Teige: Fužita], Gleizes, Gris, Jeanneret, Léger, Kisling [repeated], Picasso, Picabia, Raynal, W. George, Salmon, Stravinsky, Survage, Tzara, Utrillo, etc: you can imagine how wild and joyful and eccentric that was and though perhaps not entirely proletariat, certainly not petit-bourgeoisie!²⁹⁵

Teige’s participation in such internationally representative events, at an early moment in Devětsil’s history, would likely have garnered much optimism in the group’s young leader that more well established artistic and intellectual centers were indeed interested in seeking out productive relationships with peers abroad. It is notable too that the benefit had the support of all the brightest lights of Paris in this endeavor, who are not all French, but often imports themselves.

²⁹⁴ Ibid. Original: “Vous danserez au rythme des Jazz-Band nègres et de la musique endiablée du grande orchestre. FORMIDABLE PROGRAMME!! Les plus grands Artistes des Music Halls de Paris nous ont déjà assuré de leur gracieux concours.”

²⁹⁵ Teige to Černík, September 1922, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Z výboru: [names as above] dovedeš si asi představit jak divoké a veselé a výstřední to bylo a přitom snad ne [illegible] proletářské, ale [illegible] neměšťácké!”

With some exception, most of the names above tend to be of an older generation of artists, whom Teige admired and even collaborated with but would ultimately come to write against (such as Picasso and Jeanneret, aka Le Corbusier). Léger and his writing on *photogénie* proved to be highly influential on Teige’s subsequent essays on film, anthologized under the title *Film* in 1925 by Odeon.

A ball organized with the intention of spreading knowledge of French art abroad would strongly suggest that it was no longer assumed that all the world was looking to Paris de facto as the center of the art world. As with the visit of Vildrac and Duhamel to Prague the year before, the French were beginning to look beyond their own borders to keep a finger on the pulse of avant-garde innovations, and take advantage of those foreign visitors who made the trip to Paris. Teige and Seifert had travelled entirely of their own initiative, and it fell to them to make themselves known to a wider, international group of artists; ultimately, they were successful at this. Paris was ripe in the post-World War One years to receive young, foreign talent with openness and interest.

So it is that by the time Štyrský and Toyen arrived in Paris in 1925 the two were very visible representatives of Devětsil and a modern, young Czech art. They exhibited frequently during an extended stay in Paris, beginning with a group show—“L’art d’aujourd’hui”—at the Salle de la rue de La Ville-l’Evêque in late 1925, followed by a show of their “Artificialist” paintings in their own studio in Montrouge in October 1926.²⁹⁶ A subsequent exhibition was held at the Galerie d’Art Moderne, followed by

²⁹⁶ On Štyrský and Toyen’s Artificialism, Esther Levinger writes that, they “replaced the geometric structure of their work with organic, almost monochrome forms, which acquired evocative functions and which they called artificialism.” [Esther Levinger, “Czech Avant-Garde Art: Poetry for the Five Senses,” *The Art Bulletin* 81, no. 3 (September 1999): 530.] An exhibition of their work from this period toured through the Czech Republic in 1992-1993. For more on Artificialism, see the accompanying catalogue: Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, eds. *Štyrský, Toyen: Artificialismus, 1926-1931* (Prague: Středočeská galerie, 1992).

another at the Galerie Vavin, which included a catalogue with an introduction by Philippe Soupault.²⁹⁷

And Soupault made his own visit to Prague shortly thereafter, first in November 1926 and then again in May 1927 with the editor Léon Pierre-Quint (1895-1958). Karla Huebner writes that he was “perhaps the first of the younger French avant-gardists to come to Prague.”²⁹⁸ In *Kmen*, Teige reports on the two mens’ visit; much like Vildrac and Duhamel, Soupault and Pierre-Quint made public appearances, with Pierre-Quint lecturing on Proust, and Soupault on the “modern French novel” (“o moderním francouzském románu”).²⁹⁹ Shortly after their visit, Soupault’s poem “To Prague” (“Do Prahy”) was featured prominently when the first issue of *ReD*. In a collection of Soupault’s writings put out by an imprint of the French publisher Gallimard decades later, a special “Annexe” is devoted to Soupault’s “Voyage à Prague,” which includes his poetry written at the time, as well as a full reprinting of the cover page of *Kmen*’s July 1927 issue, in which the transcript of Soupault’s lecture in Prague has been printed in full, translated into Czech by Teige. In the French volume, drawings of Soupault by Hoffmeister are reproduced (he would also illustrate Romains’ time in Prague a year

²⁹⁷ Soupault, like Goll, was a “failed” Surrealist, expelled from the group in its very early days, in 1926. Derek Sayer writes (taking Mark Polizzotti’s biography of Breton, *Revolution of the Mind*, as his source, and imbuing his account with the sort of embellishment characteristic of his book): “Breton forced Philippe Soupault out of the Paris surrealist group at the end of 1926 for wasting his talent in journalism, publishing in an Italian fascist journal, and smoking English cigarettes.” [Derek Sayer, *Prague, Capital of the Twentieth Century: A Surrealist History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 243.]

In *Kmen*, Teige describes the clear line of influence from Apollinaire in Soupault’s poetry, and aligns his work with Orfism.

²⁹⁸ Karla Huebner, “Eroticism, Identity, and Cultural Context: Toyen and the Prague Avant-Garde” (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2008), 86.

²⁹⁹ Karel Teige, “Léon Pierre-Quint a Philippe Soupault,” *Kmen* 1, no. 8 (May 1927): 196.

later), as well as a drawing of a woman, dedicated to Soupault by the Paris-based Czech artist (and frequent Devětsil correspondent), Josef Šima (1891-1971). The Gallimard volume includes a short piece by Soupault titled “Poets of Prague” (“Les poètes de Prague”), first published in *La revue nouvelle* in 1929, which documents Soupault’s familiarity with Devětsil members, no doubt thanks to their earlier visits to Paris. “Here is the petite figure of Teige, here the round figure of Nezval,” writes Soupault, playing into typical characterizations of the two major figures of Devětsil.³⁰⁰ He continues: “The thin black line that is Styrsky [*sic*], and here Hoffmeister, Karel Konrad, Voskovec, Werich...Here are my friends.”³⁰¹

TEIGE’S PARIS IN PUBLICATION

The Paris connections that Teige made are also evidenced in his own articles. The juvenile excitement in the letter Teige sent to Černík about Paris in 1922 is channeled more concretely and in more staid fashion into some of Teige’s published writings. His essay “Cubism, Orfism, Purism, and Neocubism in Today’s Paris” (“Kubismus, Orfismus, Purismus, a Neokubismus v dnešní Paříži”) comes directly out of this 1922 trip and is

³⁰⁰ Philippe Soupault, “Les poètes de Prague,” *La Revue nouvelle* 51-52 (Oct./Nov. 1929). Anthologized in *Mémoires de l’oubli: 1927-1933* (Paris: Lachenal & Ritter, 1997), 151. Original: “Voici l’ombre petite de Karel Teige, l’ombre ronde de Nezval.”

³⁰¹ Ibid. Original: “le mince filet noir qui est Styrsky, voici Hoffmeister, Karel Konrad, Voskovec, Werich... Voice mes amis.”

Soupault here recalls Vildrac’s statement made the year earlier, in 1928, for *La Revue française de Prague*, when he said that he felt among “family” in Prague.

published in *Veraikon* the same year.³⁰² This essay, which opens with a rather light and humorous rumination on the question of whether Cubism is “dead or not” (“Je tedy kubismus již mrtev, či nikoliv?”) is in fact concerned less with that question, which it “leaves to history to decide” (“definitivní rozhodnutí ponechejme historii”), than with showing off Teige’s strong handle on the successive developments of artistic movements that led up to the present moment.³⁰³ Teige introduces Cubism similarly to Futurism, as a welcome alternative to its “sickly” (“neduživý”) forebears—“lemonade impressionism, banal, multi-colored decorativism, hollow academicism, and disingenuous eclecticism”³⁰⁴—and he offers a tour through trends in contemporary French art, recalling to some extent the talk Vildrac gave on the subject in Prague, which Teige had reviewed for *Čas* in 1921. He claims the progeny of Cubism to be Purism (the domain of Le Corbusier and Ozenfant, he writes), Orfism, and Neocubism. Orfism Teige associates with the French artist Robert Delaunay (1885-1941) and poet Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), as well as the Czech painter František Kupka (1871-1957).

³⁰² *Veraikon* (1912-1937) was an art review edited by the Czech painter Emil Pacovský (1879-1948). In the early 1920s, it became a reliable forum for Devětsil to publish (for instance, a 1921 article by Černík is accompanied with a reproduction of a painting by Teige), but by 1924, with a few of their own publications now under their belt, contributions by the likes of Teige, Seifert, and Černík peter out.

Veraikon’s international representation was strong, and the magazine also showed a pronounced inclination towards engaging with, and responding to, burgeoning artistic movements, such as Devětsil. The same volume in which Teige’s Paris essay appears, for instance, includes an essay by Prampolini titled, “Directions in Italian ‘Avant-Garde’ Painting and the New ‘Painterly Absolute’” (“Směry italského malířství ‘avant-gardy’ a nové ‘malířství absolutní’”), accompanied by a reproduction of one of his “plastic constructions” [“konstrukce plastiky”] as well as a portrait of Marinetti rendered by the female Czech Futurist who had lived in Italy for many years, Růžena Zátková. (The same portrait later appears in *Pásmo* volume 1, number 10.)

³⁰³ Teige, “Kubismus, Orfismus, Purismus, a Neokubismus v dnešní Paříži,” *Veraikon* 8 (1922): 98, 100.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 100. Original: “limonádové impresionismus, banální pestrobarevný dekorativismus, dutý akademismus a lživý eklekticismus.”

Regarding Neocubism, Teige deems Juan Gris (1887-1927) to be “the most distinguished and most important figure.”³⁰⁵ Another representative for Teige is Fernand Léger (1881-1955), “the painter of our contemporary moment, our mechanical century of Euro-American civilization, of machinism,” whom he had met in Paris.³⁰⁶ Teige, who would use Léger’s cubist renderings of Charlie Chaplin in several of his later publications writes further, “Let us not forget that Léger is also the designer of several exceptional modern books, ‘Chapliniada’ by Goll, the poetry of Blaise Cendrars, the essays of Ilya Ehrenburg.”³⁰⁷ At this point, Teige himself was already engaged in book design (to be highlighted in Chapter Four), and this aspect of Léger’s oeuvre was no doubt of especial interest and inspiration to him.

Teige closes the Cubism article with an account of the work of Ozenfant and Le Corbusier, whom he identifies as the “editors of the review ‘L’Esprit Nouveau,’ the best known journal of today’s art world”³⁰⁸ (the very journal he would later criticize in a

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 105. Original: “Mezi dnešními kubisty malíři jest postavou nejvýznačnější a nejdůležitější Juan Gris.”

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 106. Original: “Mezi všemi jest Fernand Léger nejspíše malířem naší současnosti, našeho století strojové euro-americké civilisace, mašinismu.”

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 106. Original: “Nezapomeňme však take na Léger jako autora výpravy několika znamenitých moderních knih, ‘Chapliniady’ Ivana Golla, básní Blaise Cendrarse, essayí Iljy Ehrenburga.”

Blaise Cendrars (1885-1941) was a Swiss-French novelist, peer to many of the other French artists and poets named already in this dissertation, such as Apollinaire, Delaunay, and Cocteau. Ilya Ehrenburg (1891-1967) was a Soviet writer and editor, with ties to the Surrealist movement in Paris.

Charlie Chaplin (1889-1977) was hugely popular amongst the interwar avant-gardes. As Seifert recalls in *All the Beauties of the World*, “We loved Chaplin’s smile, his beard, cane, and oversized shoes; but all the exertion of the painters, to have their names be better known, we saw that as a struggle in vain.” [Seifert 45.] Original: “Milovali jsme úsměv Chaplinův, jeho knírek, hůl a rozšmajdané boty, ale veškeré úsilí malířů, byt’ jejich jména byla sebeslavnější, považovali jsme za marné pachtění.” In two letters from Léger to Teige from November 1922, not long after Teige returned from Paris, Léger writes of a specific image—“Charlot,” an illustration of Charlie Chaplin that would ultimately appear in the *Revoluční Sborník Devětsil* that Fall and in Teige’s 1925 book *Film*—that Teige has apparently requested to reproduce on postcards.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 112. Original: “redaktoři revue ‘L’Esprit Nouveau’, která jest nejlépe vedeným listem dnešního uměleckého světa.”

letter to Černík as “really academic, the French are all mired in tradition”³⁰⁹). The concluding lines of this essay are a harbinger of the Constructivist affinities Teige would display in his as yet to be named –ism, Poetism: “The pictures of Ozenfant and Jeanneret [Le Corbusier], close in some ways to those of Juan Gris and in others to Léger, resemble in their sober engineering mechanical drawings. Purism is the zenith of applied Cubism. And it is the precursor of a new architecture, a constructivist epoch.”³¹⁰

“Cubism, Orfism, Purism, and Neocubism in Today’s Paris” was also a way for Teige to show off his recently acquired knowledge of the Parisian art world by providing an actual account of the state of contemporary French art as witnessed first hand, which he reports to be “experiencing a deep crisis.”³¹¹ Within the essay, Teige manages to slip in several references to personal visits he made to important galleries and ateliers (such as to that of the Cubist sculptor Jacques Lipchitz). In a brief section on the work of Braque, Teige mentions that Braque’s studio is private and known to only his closest friends. In a not-insignificant parenthetical aside, Teige adds, “Kisling told me about it.”³¹² Teige claims Paris to be the city in which all the major Cubist artists live, with the exception of Archipenko in Berlin (though he had also lived in Paris for some time), whom he deems the “initiator of Cubist sculpture.”³¹³ and offers a series of gallery

(Recall that Paul Dermée and Michel Seuphor would also serve as editors at *L’Esprit nouveau*, and write to Černík in that capacity.)

³⁰⁹Teige to Černík, December 10, 1923, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “L’esprit je moc akademický, francouze jsou zasraní v tradici.”

³¹⁰Teige, “Kubismus, Orfismus, Purismus, a Neokubismus v dnešní Paříži,” 112. Original: “Obrazy Ozenfantovy a Jeanneretovy, blízké s jedné strany Juanu Grisovi a s druhé Légerovi, podobají se suchým inženýrským výkresům. Purismus je vyvrcholením, zvědečtěním kubismu. A je předzvěstí nové architektonické, konstruktivní epochy.”

³¹¹Ibid., 100. Original: “Dnešní francouzské umění prožívá hluboké krize.”

³¹²Ibid., 104. Original: “Kisling mi o něm vypravoval.”

³¹³Ibid., 110. Original: “iniciátor kubistického sochařství.”

addresses that show such artists as Picasso, whose work could be found in the gallery of Paul Rosenberg and Paul Guillaume on the rue de la Boétie (which Häuslerová recalled visiting with Teige).

While Teige highlighted his Constructivist sympathies in the Cubism essay, in another piece that developed out of his observations in Paris, Teige appraises and admires the more fluid and vibrant aspects of the city. First published in 1924 in the magazine *Sršatec (Joker)*,³¹⁴ and reprinted in *Pásmo* a year after that, the essay “On Humor, Clowns, and Dadaists” (“O humoru, clownech a dadaistech”), turns to the Parisian music halls and their performers. Then, in 1928, the first volume of a two-part book came out with the same title, i.e. *On Humor, Clowns, and Dadaists*. This first volume, with the subtitle *The World Which Laughs (Svět, který se směje)*, features a photomontage with Chaplin on its cover.³¹⁵ In the earliest iteration of this essay, Teige highlights his enthusiasm for the music halls of Paris, and a desire to bring such a concept to Prague, where he sees it to be sorely lacking. In an essay that insists on the

³¹⁴ *Sršatec* was a satirical weekly, which Jaroslav Seifert edited from 1923-1927. *Joker* is a liberal translation of the title, which more literally refers to someone who is ironic, but also to something prickly, like a short haircut, or a porcupine.

³¹⁵ Teige toys with the idea of turning the essay “On Humor, Clowns, and Dadaists” into a more comprehensive publication at least as early as March 1925, in a letter to Černík. Envisioning the essay as a book series, he writes, “it seems to me that that would be best, because I don’t know which of the current themes could be made so that both the text and number of images would fit into such a small book.” Original: “zdá se mi to nejvhodnější, poněvadž nevím které z aktuálních temat dalo by se zpracovati tak , aby i textem , i počtem vyobrazení hodilo se do tak malé knížky.” [Teige to Černík, March 27, 1925, PNP, AČ Archive.]

In the epilogue to the first volume of the book, Teige similarly describes the necessity to take the ideas that originated in the essay and expand them into a much larger publication: “The author returned to this study in the summer of 1926 and reworked it, expanded and filled it in so that it took on the dimensions of a larger book. [...] For technical reasons the author came to the decision to divide the book into a more comprehensive book in two parts.” Original: “Autor vrátil k této studii v létě 1926 přepracoval ji, rozšířil a doplnil tak, že vzrostla do rozměrů větší knihy. Technické důvody přivedly autora k tomu, aby rozdělil tuto obsáhlejší knihu ve dva díly.” [Karel Teige, *O humoru, clownech a dadistech: Svět, který směje* (Prague: Odeon, 1928), 90.]

healing power of humor in a post war world—“There used to be an internal need to smile at the hours of greatest tragedy: we know with what new and wild flowers bloomed the humor of the World War”³¹⁶—Teige describes the music hall as the place in which the elements of a “liberating stupidity” (“osvobující hloupostí”) in modern poetry and art, that encompasses sport, dance, jazz, and laughter synthesize. Teige’s description of the music halls (as relayed from a printed flyer in French) in his letter to Černík is echoed in this essay: “The *music hall* is the modern saturnalia. Eccentrics, negroes, lascivious dancing, actors, belly dancers, boxers, rag-time, jazz band, flaxen light, a symphony of electric smells, rather miraculous and abnormal synchronic theater, a frenzy of laughter and a hurricane of life.”³¹⁷

Teige explicitly connects this call for an “eccentric” form of public art and humor that combats the pain of post-war society to Dada: “The character of modern humor is DADA. *Dadaism* is funny and in no way an unmerited literary movement.”³¹⁸ His interpretation of Dada comes to very nearly represent the art of life approach embodied by Poetism, which is also introduced the year that this essay is published in *Sršatec*. Dada (and ultimately, Poetism) is “not only literary creation. [...] Dada wants that the person grief-struck by war can experience a little happiness, and in so doing, carry on.

³¹⁶ Teige “O humoru, clownech a dadaistech,” *Sršatec* (July-September 1924). Anthologized in *Avantgarda známá a neznámá*, ed. Vlašín Štěpán, vol. 1 (Praha: Svoboda, 1970), 571. Original: “Bývá dokonce vnitřní potřebou smáti se v nejtragičtějších hodinách: víme, jakými novými a divokými květy vykvetl humor za světové války.”

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 584. Original: “*Music-hall* jsou moderní saturnálie. Excentrikové, negerky, lascivní tance, herci, břichomluvcí, boxeři, rag-times, džezbend, plavé světlo symfonie elektrických vůní, tot’ zázračné a abnormální synchronické divadlo, frenezie smíchu a uragán života.”

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 576. Emphasis is the author’s. Original: “Charakter moderního humoru je DADA. *Dadaismus* je zábavné a nikoliv nezaslužné hnutí literární.”

[...] The humor and character of our age is *Dada*. The spirit of Dada is the spirit of the circus clown. *Dada presents to us the spectacular circus.*"³¹⁹

Teige might be thinking here of the Dadaist sentiment expressed that same year in the "Manifesto of Mr. Antipyrine," penned by Tzara: "We are circus directors whistling amid the winds of carnivals convents bawdy houses theatres realities sentiments restaurants HoHiHoHo Bang."³²⁰ Teige explicitly names Tzara as "one of its [Dada's] most notable representatives,"³²¹ and in the afterward to *The World Which Laughs* associates Tzara with the genesis of Dada. Its development, he writes, can be seen as following a path "from Baudelaire to Tzara."³²² Teige met Tzara in Paris in 1922, and Tzara is represented in the various versions of "On Humor, Clowns, and Dadaists," suggesting the strong impact of that meeting (though no letters between Tzara and Teige exist today, and Teige is not included in his publications). Here also Teige explicitly makes the connection between Dada and Poetism. The conception of *On Humor*,

³¹⁹ Ibid., 580, 582. Emphasis is the author's. Original: "Dada není pouze literární tvorba. ... Dada chce, aby člověk válkou zdrcený dobyl si trošku veselosti a myslí, aby se pokračovalo v získávání jí. ... Humor a charakter naší doby, tot' *dada*. Duch dada je duch klauna a augusta z cirku. *Dada uvádí nás do velkolepého cirkusu.*"

³²⁰ Tristan Tzara, "Manifesto of Mr. Antipyrine," in *Sept manifestes Dada* (Paris: Editions Jean Budry, 1924). Anthologized in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Motherwell, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Wittenborn, Schulz, 1951), 75.

³²¹ Ibid. Original: "jeden z jeho nejvýznačnějších představitelů."

Notably, around this same time Tzara had a house built for himself (completed in 1926) in the Montmartre neighborhood of Paris by the Viennese architect Adolf Loos (1870-1933), whose 1908 essay "Ornament and Crime" laid the way for later Functionalist schools, such as the Werkbund and the Bauhaus. The work of Loos was also prominent in the Czech lands, the most famous example perhaps being the Villa Müller (1930) in Prague, built almost simultaneously with third Bauhaus director Mies van der Rohe's famous Villa Tugendhat in Brno. His work was well known by Teige and occasionally quoted in his essays.

³²² Teige, *O humoru, clownech a dadistech: Svět, který směje*, 90. Original: "podává genesi dadaismu přehledem vývoje Baudelairea až k Tzarovi."

Clowns, and Dadaists—a book dedicated to Dada and play—Teige writes, is, “in the opinion of the author, an expression of a new aesthetic theory, called *Poetism*.”³²³

While Teige’s Paris visits were an enduring influence on his later writings, Teige’s view of the European avant-garde was by no means monocentric or solely western-looking. He kept tabs on major movements and figures across the continent, and collaborated with artists coming from many corners. The example of Kiev-born Archipenko, which has already been briefly mentioned and will be touched on again shortly, is but one example. In what follows, relations with artists in the central Europeans region are emphasized. Devětsil’s interest in goings-on closer to home in the 1920s is especially notable when one considers that before 1920 Czech artists and intellectuals had tended to overlook their nearest neighbors for Paris, something that decidedly cannot be said about Devětsil.

³²³ Ibid., 91. Emphasis is the author’s. Original: “podle názoru autorova, je jádrem nové estetické teorie, která se zve *poetismem*.”

The version of Dada that Teige proffers here, which conveniently aligns, in his interpretation, with Poetism, is, however, a somewhat vulgarized representation of Dada as Tzara conceived of it. To be sure, the project of Dada and Devětsil do converge on many points—in their resistance to “bourgeoisie” and “academic” art, and a commitment to the preservation of individuality—but Dada was by no means merely a by-product of popular entertainment. Though Tzara writes, “art is not serious I assure you,” he maintains that in Dada, “we are not naïve [...] we are not simple and we are all quite able to discuss the intelligence.” [Tzara 76.] Though there is no space to go into this in detail here, the conception of Dada was far more nuanced and complex than the quotations cited above might suggest. Teige himself does address this across his own writings on Dada; in his essay “Dada” for *Host* in 1926, Teige offers a rather different version of the movement than in “On Humor, Clowns, and Dadaists,” emphasizing here its nihilistic and tragicomic aspect.

Tzara is also a particularly illustrative figure of the limits of a center-periphery binary, as a native Romanian and émigré to France. As Sanja Bahun-Radunović and Marinos Pourgouris write in the Introduction to *The Avant-Garde and the Margin*, Tzara occupies a “liminal space—the non-space—between center and margin. [...] Tzara’s ambiguous position in modernism, his simultaneous canonization and marginalization [...] complicates his casual placement in what is probably the most antagonistic and polemical of modernist movements: Dada.” [Sanja Bahun-Radunović and Marinos Pourgouris, “Prefaces and Faces: Towards a Centripetal Theory of Modernism,” in *The Avant-Garde and the Margin: New Territories of Modernism*, eds. Sanja Bahun-Radunović and Marinos Pourgouris (Newcastle, UK: Cambirdge Scholars Press, 2006), xvi-xvii.]

A MULTIPLICITY OF CENTERS

As Devětsil grew in scope and experience, it began to attract peers around Europe to Prague, either by invitation or out of the traveler's own desire to visit the city and meet with the impressive young Czech avant-gardists. While this section will look primarily at visits that occurred in the mid to late 1920s (after the trips of Vildrac and Duhamel, and Marinetti, for instance) by Central European figures, the exchange continued into the mid-1930s, when heightened interest in Surrealism, brought the focus back to Paris. Devětsil's knowledge of, and interest in, a broad range of contemporary movements meant that its reach was wide in terms of whom it sought to bring to Prague. Likewise, the group's ability to reflect in its own work a wide swathe of international affiliations brought attention from many corners of Europe to Prague and Brno. The largest section here is culled from examples of what might be the most significant and clearly dialogic of relationships cultivated by Teige and Devětsil: its contact with the Bauhaus and some of its major figures, such as the first two directors, Gropius and Meyer.

DEVĚTSIL'S EARLY DRAW: ARCHIPENKO AT THE RUDOLFINUM

The efforts of the young Devětsil members to establish mutually productive contacts from their very beginning stages rather quickly bore fruit. When in April-May 1923 Devětsil hosted the Prague leg of a traveling exhibition of the work of Archipenko, the artist himself traveled to Prague (before emigrating to the United States later that same

year).³²⁴ In a postcard to Černík dated March 22, 1923, Teige writes in full: “Černík, It would be really nice for us if you could come to Prague on Saturday, or some other day, but very soon. It’s necessary to talk with you about Archipenko, etc. Write when you are coming over the holiday [presumably referring to Easter]. Your Teige.”³²⁵ In another undated letter from around the same time, Teige expounds on what he would like to discuss about the exhibition with Černík, namely the cost of transport of Archipenko’s sculptures from Berlin—where they were on exhibit previously—to Prague. What Teige proposes (to avoid import taxes) sounds quite a bit like smuggling: “I think for financial reasons it would be most convenient for you to do a three-day trip to Berlin and bring back the whole exhibition, 15-20 small sculptures, drawings, aquarelles, and unframed photos, as Mitgepäck [hand luggage].”³²⁶ Otherwise, he implies, the exhibition will not be fiscally possible for Devětsil, which would be an “immense pity.”³²⁷ Though no later

³²⁴ The Ukrainian born Archipenko was of course not the only Prague visitor from the USSR. Also in 1923, another artist from Kiev, Ehrenburg came to Prague, “as a guest of Devětsil,” as Teige later wrote in *Stavba* in 1927. For *Stavba* (in an article in which Teige is critical of Ehrenburg’s turn towards Romanticism), Teige writes that Ehrenburg lectured already in Prague in February 1926 at the invitation of the Devětsil-affiliated Liberated Theater (Osvobozené divadlo). [Karel Teige, “Přednáška Ilji Erenburga v Praze čili Konstruktivismus a Romanticismus,” *Stavba* 5, no. 9 (1927): 145.]

When Mayakovsky came to Prague in 1927, Jiří Weil (1900-1959), a Jewish novelist who had first visited the Soviet Union in 1922 as part of a Communist delegation, reported briefly on Mayakovsky’s visit for *Kmen*, writing that Mayakovsky “appeared in Prague somewhat abruptly and unexpected.” Original: “Majakovskij se objevil v Praze jaksi náhle a nečekaně.” [Jiří Weil, “Hosté v Praze: Vladimír Majakovskij,” *Kmen* 1, no. 8 (May 1927): 196.]

Weil reports that Mayakovsky largely fraternized with Devětsil members, naming Seifert and Karel Konrad specifically, and gave two lectures, one of which was also hosted by the Liberated Theater. (Directly following Weil’s report on Mayakovsky’s visit in *Kmen* is Teige’s report on Soupault’s sojourn in Prague.)

³²⁵ Teige to Černík, March 22, 1923, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Černíku, bylo by nám velmi milé kdybys mohl v sobotu nebo kterýkoliv jiný den, ale hodně brzo přijeti do Prahy. Nutně bylo by s tebou mluvit stran Archipenka etc. Napiš kdy přijedeš o svátcích. Tvůj Teige.”

³²⁶ Teige to Černík, undated (March 1923), PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Myslím totiž že z finančních důvodů byl by nejvyhodnější, kdybys si udělal na 3 dny do Berlína výlet a celou výstavu, 15-20 malých sošek, kresby, akvarely a foto nezarámované – s sebou jako Mitgepäck vzít.”

³²⁷ Ibid. Original: “užasná škoda.”

letter provides a clue as to whether Černík did execute this exhibition run, the show did indeed come to Prague, and the slender exhibition catalogue designed by Teige reveals that over fifty works of sculpture (marble and bronze), aquarelles, drawings, lithographs, and photographs were displayed at the Rudolfinum in April and May 1923. Of the images reproduced in the small catalogue, some had already appeared in the Devětsil issue of the artists' association Umělecká beseda's magazine *Život*, and a loan of the printing blocks from the organization is credited on the back cover of the catalogue. Also in the catalogue, directly following a short essay by Teige is an excerpt from a letter by Archipenko to the author, translated into Czech (the presumably French original is not held in the PNP):

The work, which I send to Prague, is of a widely assorted character; there are realistic works and abstract works. — As an artist I have dedicated myself fully to artistic searching; I am not particularly a revolutionary nor conservative artist. I seek the new in an effort to resolve plastic problems, which inspire me and guide my feeling.

Práce, jež zasílám do Prahy, jsou velice rozmanitého charakteru; jsou tu díla realistická i díla abstraktní. — Jako umělec věnoval jsem se plně uměleckému hledání; nejsem patrně ani revolučním, ani konservativním problému, které mi inspiruje má doba a řídí můj cit.³²⁸

In this rather ambivalent articulation, it is almost as though Archipenko is anticipating the kind of attack that Devětsil launched against Vildrac, and very likely, he is responding to pointed questions that Teige would have sent him about his revolutionary stance. Not willing to associate with any political line here, Archipenko is instead figured

³²⁸ Teige, *Archipenko*, 13.

in the preceding article that Teige writes for the catalogue as revolutionary on his own terms, as in, revolutionary for pushing the bounds of sculptural plasticity, rather than for any sort of social stance. By quoting directly from a letter Archipenko sent to him, Teige also subtly and strategically displays how connected he was to major figures of the international avant-garde, a tactic he would employ again in a special issue of *ReD* dedicated to Italian Futurism and Marinetti in 1928 (to be discussed in the subsequent chapter).

Interestingly enough, Archipenko's arrival in Prague for the exhibition, as well as some looming book deadlines, interfered with Teige's own tentative plans to travel to Paris that summer. In the June 23, 1923 letter in which Teige laments to Häuslerová that he is not able to join her there, he explains, "Contrary to my original plan, the arrival of Archipenko held me in Prague for about a week."³²⁹ Teige ultimately did not manage to make it to Paris that summer.

THEO VAN DOESBURG: A VISIT PROPOSED

An early proposed visit to Prague is another instance of a planned trip that had to be waylaid by Teige, but that strongly displays how a mutual conversation across the avant-gardes was enacted in a private-public sphere of journal publications, travel, and correspondence. In early October 1924, Theo van Doesburg³³⁰ sent word to Teige from

³²⁹ Teige to Häuslerová, June 23, 1923. In Hamanová 199. Original: "Příjezd Archipenkův zdržel mne v Praze o týden proti mému plánu."

³³⁰ Theo van Doesburg (1883-1931) was a Dutch artist who founded the De Stijl movement with Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) and was the editor of a magazine by the same name. He also edited and

Paris that he will be traveling to Vienna for a conference from the 10th to 13th of October and proposes to tack on a side trip to the Czech capitals. “Would it not be possible to combine the trip with lectures in Prague and Brno?” he asks, suggesting the dates for his visit as “for example, the 20th of October in Prague, and the 21st or 22nd of October in Brno!”³³¹ Teige immediately relays this information to Černík, and the two set about to organize a series of lectures for van Doesburg in the two cities—to be conducted in German in Brno and in French in Prague (the language in which van Doesburg wrote his own letters to Teige³³²). As the cost of van Doesburg’s travel would be a significant expense for Devětsil, Teige pragmatically recommends that the expenses be divided between the Prague and Brno chapters: “You could cover the trip to Brno, the stay in Brno, and a portion of the trip to Prague, we the remainder, and the trip back to Vienna or to the border of the Republic. In Brno he could stay two days with Svrčka, in Prague, with me.”³³³ Though van Doesburg’s visit would be a financial strain for Devětsil, Teige is eager to accommodate the founding member of De Stijl. He instructs Černík to, “write him straight away please if you decide that you can manage it. Things are hurrying along!” and includes van Doesburg’s address in Vienna.³³⁴

contributed to a Dada-ist publication *Mécano* under a variety of pseudonyms. He served a brief stint at the Bauhaus, but left after a falling out with Mondrian.

³³¹ Theo van Doesburg to Teige, October 7, 1924, PNP, KT Archive. Original: “Si est il pas possible de combiner le voyage avec la conference à Prague et Brno?” and “Par exemple 20 Octobre à Prague at 21 ou 22 Octobre à Brno!”

³³² In the case of this particular exchange, the hierarchy of language is even removed, as neither van Doesburg’s native Dutch nor Teige’s Czech is known by both parties, and they adopt a third language in which to correspond.

³³³ Teige to Černík, October 1924, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Vy byste hradili cest u do Brna ,pobyt vBrně a část cesty do Prahy, my zbytek a cestu zpět do Vídně nebo eventuelně na hranice republiky:vBrně by mohl bydleti u Svrčka 2dny, v Praze u mne.”

³³⁴ Ibid. Original: “Napiš mu prosím ,jestliže se rozhodnete přednášku uspořádat,ihned. Věc spěchá!”

This sort of arrangement, proposed by the visitor, and accommodated by the host, albeit in no-frills fashion, is notable here for its far remove from the travel of foreign visitors to Prague before the first World War. When Rodin came to Prague for a 1902 exhibition of his sculptures hosted by the Mánes Gallery, for instance, Nicholas Sawicki writes, “Rodin did not initiate such publicity, but it required his consent.”³³⁵ And when Rodin arrived, he was certainly not offered up someone’s couch, as van Doesburg might have been. In her essay, “Rodin in Prague: Modern Art, Cultural Diplomacy, and National Display,” Cathleen Giustino describes Rodin’s lavish reception in the Czech capital thus: “Rodin’s Czech hosts rolled out the red carpet for the well-known foreigner, many of them optimistically imagining how the eyes of the world would follow his visit and absorb an empowering image of the Czech self to be disseminated abroad.”³³⁶ By the 1920s, such pomp and circumstance had given way to a more practical, democratic approach to travel, as evident not only in the way Devětsil accommodated guests, but likewise in the sort of accommodation its members could expect abroad, invited to stay as the “personal guest” of the host, an indication of intimacy, but also presumably a practical way to avoid extra expenses.

³³⁵ Nicholas Sawicki, “Rodin and the Prague Exhibition of 1902: Promoting Modernisms and Advancing Reputations,” *Cantor Arts Center Journal* 3 (2002-2003): 187.

³³⁶ Cathleen M. Giustino, “Rodin in Prague: Modern Art, Cultural Diplomacy, and National Display,” *Slavic Review* 69, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 592. Giustino describes Rodin’s Prague reception and accommodations further: “Rodin arrived at Prague’s Francis Joseph Train Station to a crowd greeting him with calls of ‘Sláva Rodinovi!’ (Glory to Rodin!) and ‘Vive la France!’ After hearing brief speeches and waving to his admirers, he was driven to the Hotel Central near the heart of downtown Prague, where an even larger crowd awaited him. Prague had a number of hotels suitable for eminent visitors, but in 1902 the Hotel Central, designed by the Austro-German Friedrich Ohmann, was the only one decorated in the new, progressive art nouveau style.” [610.]

Despite the early enthusiasm for van Doesburg's visit and the role Teige played in organizing lectures on van Doesburg's suggestions, the Prague lecture was not to be, apparently a decision Teige came to himself. In a letter from later in the month of October, Teige reports to Černík, "we had to put off the DOESBURG lecture, it isn't possible to realize it without preparation. If you pull it off in Brno, I'd like to come, so that I could speak with him, otherwise however I have to put off his lecture until later, November."³³⁷ This is the last mention of the visit in the letters, but it is clear from Teige's correspondence with Häuslerová that van Doesburg did in fact go to Brno, and that Teige met him there: Teige mails her a postcard dated October 24, 1924 with the briefest of notes, simply "Greetings from Teige, Černík, Théo van Doesburg."³³⁸ Though this tiny tidings—and the only firm evidence I have found of van Doesburg's physical presence in Czechoslovakia—is extremely useful in affirming that the Brno leg of his trip did indeed occur, it of course does not say much (or rather, does not say anything), about how van Doesburg spent his time there.

To this end, a statement published in *Pásmo* on the cover of a late 1924 issue is more revealing. Co-signed by Teige and van Doesburg, a statement against the Exhibition of December Artists to be held in Paris in the Spring of 1925 proposes instead a Congress of the Constructivist Movement. It is a brief proclamation "against all decorative or romantic and speculative production" ("proti veškeré dekorativní nebo

³³⁷ Teige to Černík, October 1924, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "DOESBURGOVU přednášku jsme nuceni odložit, nelze ji v Praze uskutečnit bez příprav. Koná-li se přesto v Brně, rád bych přijel, abych s ním mohl mluvit jinak však žádám a odložení své přednášky na později, listopad."

³³⁸ Teige to Häuslerová, Oct. 24, 1924. In Hamanová 240. Original: "Pozdravuje Teige, Černík, Théo van Doesburg."

romantické a spekulativní produkci”) and calls for serious consideration of “questions of international propaganda” (“otázky internacionální propagandy”) for Constructivism.³³⁹

The statement notably does not include Černík as a signatory, though we have his signature on the Brno postcard with van Doesburg’s that Teige sent to Häuslerová, and the location listed under the statement is not Brno but rather Prague, dated to October 29, 1924. This suggests either that van Doesburg did continue on to Prague after his time in Brno, or that, though the statement appears in the Brno-based publication *Pásmo*, Teige still insists on maintaining at some level the dominance from Prague.

WALTER GROPIUS REACHES OVER THE BORDER

By the time of Teige and van Doesburg’s joint declaration, Teige had ensured Devětsil as a serious focal point of the interwar European avant-garde. A folder of letters kept at the Bauhaus-Archiv in Berlin, containing correspondence which takes up in the same year as the Archipenko show, from the Bauhaus founder and first director Walter Gropius to Teige, is perhaps the most evocative evidence that developments in Prague were followed closely beyond Czech borders. The director’s first letter to Teige, from March 1923, is not in response to one he received from his Czech counterpart already, but is rather an attempt to *initiate* contact. The two-page letter is the result of Gropius

³³⁹ Theo van Doesburg and Karel Teige, “Výzva/Aufruf!” *Pásmo* 1, no. 7-8 (1924): 1. Original also in German: “gegen alle dekorative oder romantisch und spekulative Produktion”/“Frage der internationaler Propaganda.”

having seen *Stavba*³⁴⁰ thanks to another architect and contributor to the magazine, Adolf Behne.³⁴¹ It is from Behne that Gropius subsequently received Teige's contact information. Gropius writes to Teige in the hopes that he will find in him a Czech partner to help curate the international architectural section of the first Bauhaus exhibition.

On the official letterhead of the Bauhaus, Gropius writes:

I have already for some time held a particular interest in Czech architecture, because I find that your country is one of the few places in the modern world where—as far as I understand it, as pertaining to Functionalism—in terms of architecture really new and significant attempts are recorded. I saw your new magazine “Stavba” at Behne’s and it interests me exceedingly. When I was in Prague over a year ago, I wrote to various architects, whose work interested me (Chochol, Gočár [*sic*], and others), but unfortunately, received no reply. I found various articles in Dr. Čapek’s [*sic*] *Musaion*, on subjects on which I’d also once written. [it appears as though this last word is then struck out and something else is written in cursive over it instead, but the ink has smeared, making the word difficult to read] I don’t know whether it is for anti-German reasons that a relationship has not yet materialized. But my wish is

³⁴⁰ Even after Gropius leaves the Bauhaus, *Stavba* continues to report on the school, as evidenced for instance, by the fact that Teige publishes his article “Ten Years of the Bauhaus” (“Deset let Bauhausu” in February 1930) in this magazine (as opposed to *ReD*, for instance, which publishes its own special issue dedicated the Bauhaus in 1930). In this article, Teige appraises the importance and impressive developments of the school, and also points to some of its flaws as he sees them (largely associated with Gropius’ tenure).

³⁴¹ Adolf Behne (1885-1948) was a theorist of architectural Modernism, who, though not actually a member of the Bauhaus, as a friend of Gropius and regular commentator on the school, was informative in shaping its curriculum. Behne’s writings regularly appear in the Czech magazines of the 1920s, and from letters kept in Teige’s archive at the PNP, it is clear he was a major ambassador for *Stavba*. In a letter from June 21, 1923, for instance (just months after Gropius has reached out to Teige thanks to Behne), Behne informs Teige that he will propagate the magazine in the next issue of the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (*The Socialist Monthly*). He also asks if Teige has heard of the Dutch architectural magazine *Wendigen*, and reports that he has already told its editor, Hendricus Theodorus Wijdeveld (1885-1987) of Teige’s work in turn. [Behne to Teige, June 21, 1923, PNP, KT Archive.]

Černík would later send Behne copies of *Pásmo*, in which Behne’s work was also published, and received updates on the publication of Behne’s book *Modern Functionalist Building* (*Das moderne Zweckbau*), which was subsequently advertised in *Pásmo*.

to reach over the border and make possible an objective professional exchange.

I am sending you here the printed materials of the Bauhaus school, which I founded and now run and which has no parallel anywhere and I ask that you make yourself aware of my endeavors. The names of my colleagues will give you a sense of our artistic intentions. Regarding the exhibition, which after four years of silence we hope to finally bring off, I intend to put together concurrently an exhibition of the best modern, international architecture. I would really like to include examples of Czech work in this. Would you please help me to achieve this and allow me to ask that you put in an order for your magazine at a reduced rate for the reading room of the Bauhaus? The state of our finances unfortunately makes impossible the payment of a higher price.

I would be very grateful to you, should you care to support me in my work.

I send you my greetings as your very humble,
Gropius

Enclosed: Essay, Exhibition Program, Statutes

Sehr geehrter Herr!

Ich habe mich bereits seit längerer Zeit aus besonderem Interesse mit tschechischer Architektur befaßt, weil ich finde, daß bei Ihnen eine der ganz wenigen Stellen der modernen Welt ist, wo in der Architektur, so wie ich sie verstehe—aus den Funktionellen heraus—, wirklich neue und starke Versuche zu verzeichnen sind. Ihre neue Zeitschrift "Stavba", die ich bei Behne sah, interessiert mich außerordentlich. Als ich vor einem Jahr in Prag war, schrieb ich bereits an verschiedene Architekten, deren Arbeiten mich interessierten (Chochol, Goçar und andere), aber leider ohne Nachricht von ihnen zu bekommen. Ich hatte verschiedene Arbeiten in Musäion des Dr. Çhapek gefunden, an den ich auch einmal schrieb. Ich weiß nicht, ob es antideutsche Gründe sind, daß eine Verbindung bisher nicht zu Stande kam. Mein Wunsch ist es, auch über die Grenzen einen sachlichen Arbeitsaustausch zu ermöglichen.

Ich übersende Ihnen in der Anlage die Drucksachen des Staatlichen Bauhauses, das ich gegründet habe und leite und das in seiner Art nirgends eine Parallele hat und bitte Sie, von meinen Bestrebungen Kenntnis zu nennen. Die

Namen der Mitarbeiter geben Ihnen auch ein Bild unserer künstlerischen Absichten. Auf der Ausstellung, die wir nach vierjährigen Schweigen in diesem Jahr zum ersten Mal herausbringen wollen, beabsichtige ich auch eine Ausstellung der besten modernen internationalen Architekturen zusammen zu bringen. Sehr gern würde ich hierbei auch tschechische Arbeiten bringen. Würden Sie mir dazu verhelfen und dürfte ich wohl bitten, daß Sie Ihre Zeitschrift für das Lesezimmer des Staatlichen Bauhauses zu einem ermäßigten Preis zur Verfügung stellen, da unsere Geldverhältnisse leider die Zahlung der hohen Valutapreise unmöglich machen.

Ich wäre Ihnen sehr dankbar, wenn Sie mich bei meiner Arbeit unterstützen wollten.

Ich begrüße Sie als Ihr sehr ergebener, Gropius
Anlage: Aufsatz, Ausstellungsprogramm, Satzungen.³⁴²

There is much that is important in this first letter from Gropius, in which the Bauhaus director not only introduces the school and its work, but suggests parallels between his own architectural ethos and what he sees happening in Czech architecture, and attempts to alleviate any “anti-German” post-World War One sentiment in the name of collaboration. And Gropius writes with a specific purpose: to solicit from Teige assistance in including the work of Czech architects for an international architecture installation to comprise a part of what would become the famous Bauhaus Exhibition in Weimar of July-September 1923. It is testament to the great value Gropius sees in examples of contemporary Czech architecture that despite failed attempts to connect with the (Cubist) architects Josef Chochol (1880-1956) and Josef Gočár (1880-1945), as well as the author and editor Karel Čapek, he perseveres via Teige in his effort to make

³⁴² Walter Gropius to Karel Teige, March 6, 1923, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin (hereafter cited as BHA), Walter Gropius Archive (hereafter cited as WG Archive).

contact. Though these figures would appear not to have reacted to Gropius' efforts at collaboration, Teige eagerly responds to his solicitations.³⁴³ This is clear from Gropius' next letter, dated less than twenty days later, to March 22nd, and indicating that Teige had written back to him in the interim. In it, Gropius discusses reproducing images of his own work in *Stavba* (which becomes a reliable platform for Bauhaus news), and what he would like from Teige for the architecture exhibition. In May, Gropius expresses appreciation to Teige for this assistance, writing, "I am especially pleased that you will make an effort to provide items for our Exhibition of International Architects."³⁴⁴

In lieu of the travel of the architects themselves, the travel of their work helped significantly to widen the sphere of visibility for innovation in Czech architecture. From a printed announcement (produced by Moholy-Nagy) for the 1923 Bauhaus Exhibition that was circulated as a mailer, one can observe the list of Czech architects to be represented as part of the "International Architecture Exhibition"—including Chochol,

³⁴³ Gropius clearly continued to have interest in the older generation of artists and architects, repeatedly asking Teige for images of their work for various exhibitions and publications. For instance, in May 1924 he writes, "To the frequently mentioned project 'International Architecture,' I would really like to include the work from Chochol that is included in Carel [*sic*] Čapek's *Musaion* from 1921, titled: *Obytný Dům* [Residential House]. Since I don't know Chochol's address, I'd be very grateful to you if you wouldn't mind to send along a photograph or good printing block of it." Original: "Für das mehrfach erwähnte Werk 'Internationale Architektur' möchte ich sehr gern eine Arbeit von Chochol haben, die in der Zeitschrift 'Musaion' herausgeber Carel Čapek, *Musaion* 1921 in den Schwarz-weißen Kunstbeilagen enthalten ist, betitelt : *Obytný Dům*. Da ich die Adresse von Chochol nicht kenne, wäre ich Ihnen sehr dankbar, wenn Sie mir die Übersendung einer guten Fotografie oder auch eines guten Klischeeabzuges vermitteln wollten." [Gropius to Teige, May 21, 1924, BHA, WG Archive.]

Teige appears to have regularly complied with these requests, despite somewhat strained relations with these older artists—Teige sparred publicly on the pages of *Musaion* with its editor Karel Čapek, and as Sawicki has pointed out, Teige wrote against Gočár's move towards "rondocubism" in *Stavba* around this same time. [Nicholas Sawicki, "Writing the History of the 'Czechoslovak Official Modern'" *Centropa* 5, no. 1 (January 2005): 4-15.]

³⁴⁴ Gropius to Teige, May 26, 1923, BHA, WG Archive. Original: "Ich freue mich besonders, daß Sie sich mit dafür einsetzen, unsere Ausstellung internationaler Architekten zu beschicken."

Krejcar, Jaroslav Fragner (1898-1967), Karel Honzík (1900-1966), Jan Koula (1896-1975; who joined *Stavba* as an editor in 1928), Evžen Linhart (1889-1949; who would marry Häuslerová in 1930), and Vít Obrtel (1901-1988; editor of *Kvart*): the third largest group to be represented behind Germany and Holland. In a letter to Teige from July 1923, Gropius encloses two posters and ten of these programs for the coming exhibition, and asks that Teige distribute them. In a postscript he emphasizes the reliance he places on Teige to propagate the exhibition, and sees in him an important connection to other Czech publications, which also highlights how the avant-garde periodical and popular paper were viewed as a means of (often free) advertisement and a way to increase audience share. Gropius writes: “Since we are lacking the addresses of the leading papers, we are sending you here some exemplars of a press kit about the Bauhaus Exhibition and ask you emphatically to pass them on to the major papers.”³⁴⁵

Though to my knowledge no letters from Teige to Gropius survive, those that were sent to Teige indicate strongly that the relationship was one of mutual respect, and collaborative on every level, as they continue for years to work together on publication projects and exhibitions, and help bring visibility to each other’s movements. In the year after the Bauhaus Exhibition, Gropius introduces what can only be the *Bauhausbücher* series, described in a letter to Teige as a series of books on contemporary themes, in a format that is “18 x 23 centimeters” and comprised of “16 pages of text and 32 pages of illustrations, possibly more text and less illustration, but in

³⁴⁵ Gropius to Teige, July 18, 1923, BHA, WG Archive. Original: “Da uns die Adressen der führenden tschechischen Zeitungen fehlen, senden wir Ihnen anliegend einige Exemplare einer Zeitungen über die Bauhausausstellung und bitten Sie sehr, die Notiz an führenden Zeitungen weiter zu geben.”

total around 48 pages.”³⁴⁶ For the series (which would ultimately number fourteen books in total, about half the number of projects originally pursued), he asks Teige to contribute a book on the theme of the “modern Czech art movement” (“tschechische moderne Kunstbewegung”) for which he would receive an honorarium of 15% of the sale price. While Gropius allows that Teige might propose another subject, he notes, “We namely want to offer a portrait of parallel, international endeavors.”³⁴⁷ It is evident from another letter sent less than ten days later, on June 25th, that Teige wrote back immediately in favor of the book proposal, suggesting to include his picture poems in the Czech volume (to which Gropius agrees). In various prospects for the Bauhaus books, Teige is named as the author of an upcoming issue, but no such book is ever actually included in the series.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ Gropius to Teige, June 18, 1924, BHA, WG Archive. The books are described almost identically within the Bauhausbücher themselves. For example, from the last page of the eighth volume, Moholy-Nagy’s seminal *Painting Photography Film* (the eighth in the series): “Every book contains approximately **16 to 32** pages of text and **32 to 96** full page illustrations, or **48 to 60** pages of text • format is **18x23** centimeters •” [Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei Photographie Film* (Munich: Albert Langen Verlag, 1925), endpage.]

³⁴⁷ Gropius to Teige, June 18, 1924, BHA, WG Archive.

³⁴⁸ It seems likely that Teige himself chose not to pursue the publication of a Bauhaus book. In a letter from September 1925, Moholy-Nagy informs Teige that the first series is completed and it is now necessary to set a timeline for the coming books. Regarding Teige’s book “on czech art” (“über die tschechische kunst”), Moholy-Nagy asks that Teige “let us know, when approximately you can have your book finished” (“wir bitten sie, uns mitzuteilen, wann sie ihren band ungefähr fertig stellen können”) and invites him to “decide on the typographic form yourself, or leave it to us; the same goes for the cover” (“sie können die typographische form des buches selbst bestimmen, oder auch uns überlassen; dasselbe gilt von dem umschlag”). [László Moholy-Nagy to Karel Teige, Sept. 11, 1925, BHA, László Moholy-Nagy Archive (hereafter cited as LMN Archive).] Despite this flexibility and clearly indicated respect for Teige’s own design work, and the full intention to dedicate a Bauhausbuch to Czech art, Teige never produces the volume.

Černík, too, was involved in discussions surrounding the Bauhausbücher, as evidenced in letters he received from Moholy-Nagy, who taught at the school from 1923 to 1928 (the period that also marks the heyday of typography there). It appears that Černík himself proposed printing a volume, as Moholy-Nagy writes (in the lowercase script that was the Bauhaus standard at the time) with “heartfelt thanks” for the “suggestion that you could bring out a separate number of the bauhaus series,” and asks that he specify to what end Černík envisions the Czech edition would ultimately serve: “at the beginning of next year we will be able to carry that out, if you let us know whether that issue is a propaganda issue for a)

Not long thereafter, over the winter holidays of 1924 to 1925, Gropius visits Prague with his wife. The possibility of a trip had already been broached by Gropius in the spring of 1923, when he suggested that he might “speak in Prague sometime.”³⁴⁹ At that early point in his correspondence with Teige he had asked, “Would it not be possible to arrange a lecture? [...] In such a way I am trying to bring all like minded spirits from all sides into contact with one another.”³⁵⁰ In evidence here is Gropius’ strong desire to align the work he is doing as the director of the Bauhaus, then in Weimar, with what he sees as a similar movement in the field of new Czech architecture. The prospect of visiting Prague is often mentioned in his letters to Teige, and finally, with his December 1924 visit, is accomplished. Shortly after the van Doesburg trip to Brno, Gropius arrives in Prague with his wife.³⁵¹ In a letter from Gropius to Teige following this trip, we see that in Prague, Gropius also stayed not in a hotel, but

the bauhausbücher series or b) propaganda for the bauhaus workshop products.” Original: “für ihre anregung, dass sie ein separates bauhausheft herausbringen können, danken wir herzlichst, wir werden das auch am anfang des nächsten jahres durchführen können, wenn sie uns mitteilen, dass dieses heft ein propogandaheft für a) die bauhausbücher sein soll oder b) eine propoganda nur für die bauhauswerkstätten-erzeugnisse.” [László Moholy-Nagy to Artuš Černík, December 11, 1925, PNP, AČ Archive.]

Moholy-Nagy also visited Prague, with his wife Lucia, in 1926. “I am so happy that I got to meet you all in Prague,” Lucia Moholy (1894-1989) wrote to Černík that summer after they had returned to Dessau. Original: “ich freue mich sehr, dass ich Sie alle in Prag kennen gelernt habe.” [Lucia Moholy-Nagy to Artuš Černík, June 8, 1926, PNP, AČ Archive.] Lucia Moholy was herself from the German Jewish enclave of Prague. For more on her youth there, and her time in Dessau, see: Meghan Forbes, “‘What I Could Lose’: The Fate of Lucia Moholy,” in *Michigan Quarterly Review* 55, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 24-42; Lucia Moholy, *Marginalian zu Moholy-Nagy/Mohoy-Nagy, Marginal Notes* (Krefeld: Scherpe Verlag, 1972); Rolf Sachsse, *Lucia Moholy Bauhaus Fotografin* (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv, 1995).

³⁴⁹ Walter Gropius to Karel Teige, May 26, 1923, BHA, WG Archive. Original: “Ich wäre sehr gern einmal in Prag sprechen.”

³⁵⁰ Ibid. Original: “Wäre es nicht möglich, einen solchen Vortrag zu arrangieren? [...] So versuche ich nach allen Seiten die zusammengehören Geister in Kontakt zu bringen.”

³⁵¹ Markéta Svobodová writes that Gropius fit in two lectures on this visit, in Prague on December 5, 1924 and in Brno the very next day. [Marketa Svobodová, “Českoslovenští studenti architektury na Bauhausu,” *Umění* 54, no. 5 (2006): 407.]

rather as Teige's guest. In a letter from Gropius to Teige following this trip, the former is effusive in his thanks (on behalf of himself and his wife Ise), and invites Teige to Weimar in turn:

We felt extraordinarily at ease in Prague, which above all is owing to you. We have been speaking of you often here and it would make us truly happy should you be able to visit us soon. As it is possible that we will be away in February, it would be lovely if you could come soon. Perhaps it would be possible to organize it so that you can give a lecture at the Bauhaus. We are trying to put together a travel allowance for you and in Weimar you'd be my personal guest. What would the journey cost, how much would we need to get together? Let me know soon, please, whether it is possible to bring this proposal to fruition.

Wir haben uns in Prag ausserordentlich wohl gefühlt, woran vor allem Sie schuld waren. Wir haben hier sehr viel von Ihnen gesprochen und es würde uns herzlich freuen, wenn Sie uns bald besuchten. Da es möglich ist, dass wir im Februar abwesend sind, wäre es schön, wenn Sie bald kommen könnten. Vielleicht läßt es sich wirklich so einrichten, dass Sie im Bauhaus einen Vortrag halten. Wir versuchen die Reisespesen für Sie zu sammeln und in Weimar selbst sind Sie mein Gast. Was kostet die Reise, was müssten wir zusammenbringen? Bitte lassen Sie mich bald wissen, ob sich dieser Vorschlag durchführen läßt.³⁵²

Yet, as with the Bauhausbücher, Teige does not take Gropius up on this friendly offer, and in a letter sent almost a year and a half later, in June 1926, Gropius complains that he has lost all contact with Teige. By that time, the Bauhaus was no longer in Weimar, but in Dessau. As Teige would later relate in his 1930 essay "Ten Years of the Bauhaus"—which he wrote for *Stavba* and which has heretofore influenced scholarship

³⁵² Gropius to Teige, January 14, 1925, BHA, WG Archive.

that paints Teige's relationship with Gropius as wholly less congenial than what I have described above—on its new campus (which Gropius designed), the Bauhaus gained wider recognition. Out of this more global interest in the school emerged an imitative, internationally recognized Bauhaus-style (derisively called "Bauhausstil"), which Teige criticizes in that 1930 essay as a "caricature of the best intentions of the institution and its leaders."³⁵³

But though Teige is subtly critical of Gropius in this essay, "Ten Years of the Bauhaus" would not be written and published until 1930, after Gropius had left the school.³⁵⁴ In the Gropius letter of 1926 (the only one that remains from him from that year), in which he describes briefly for Teige the construction of the new school in Dessau, he urges again, "won't you finally come visit the Bauhaus?!"³⁵⁵ And though the two continue corresponding and collaborating on exhibitions and publications at least through 1930 (when the archive goes silent), it would not be until the school was under the direction of Meyer, with whom Teige more closely identified both politically and artistically, that Teige would make the trip to Dessau.

³⁵³ Karel Teige, "Ten Years at the Bauhaus," in *Between Worlds: a Sourcebook of Central European Avant-gardes, 1910-1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson, trans. Irina Žantovská Murray (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2002), 636. Original: "stala se karikaturou lepších úmyslů ústavu a jeho vůdců." [Teige, "Deset let Bauhausu," *Stavba* 8, no. 10 (Feb. 1930): 148.] In the case of this text, I use the pre-existing translation, though I have modified the title to "Ten Years of the Bauhaus" in my references to it in the body of the text.

³⁵⁴ A draft of the essay in Teige's archive at the PNP reveals that Teige wrote at least one draft in German (apparently written while Teige was visiting the Bauhaus in Dessau in 1930), though it appears to have only been published in Czech, a language that Gropius could not read. It is not unlikely, though, that its content would have been relayed to Gropius.

³⁵⁵ Gropius to Teige, June 28, 1926, BHA, WG Archive. Original: "kommen sie endlich einmal das bauhaus besuchen!"

It is perhaps for this reason that it is typically thought that Teige only formed a strong connection to the school with the second director, Meyer, whose leftist politics and a commitment to Constructivism were by the late 1920s more in line with Teige's own inclinations. Gropius' interest in Czech architects of the Cubist generation, and his desire to keep the orientation of the Bauhaus as apolitical as possible, were likely sources of irritation for Teige. The letters from Gropius cited above, however, show that Teige already had strong and positive ties to the Bauhaus school well before the change of directors in 1928. The ascension of Meyer therefore marks not so much a beginning of a relationship between Devětsil and the Bauhaus, but rather a continuation and strengthening of collaboration.

HANNES MEYER BUILDS THE BRIDGE

Meyer succeeded Gropius at the Bauhaus in 1928 and served as director through 1930, and, as a vocal enthusiast of political and architectural developments in the USSR, significantly reoriented the school. In "Ten Years of the Bauhaus," Teige writes with praise for Meyer as the new, Communist director, for effectively reorganizing the curriculum to become "a school worthy of its name: a school of Constructivist design, not just in architecture but in photography, typography and advertising."³⁵⁶

³⁵⁶ Teige, "Ten Years at the Bauhaus," 634. Original: "Bauhaus se reorganizuje, stává se školou, která je práva svému názvu, školou konstruktivní tvorby nejen v oblasti architektury, ale i ve fotografii, v typografii, v reklamě." [Teige, "Deset let Bauhausu," 148.]

On October 14, 1928, Meyer writes to Teige (almost always in all lower-case script), taking up Gropius' attempts to bring Teige to the Bauhaus, with the suggested theme for a lecture: "modern czech design: architecture, painting, the plastic arts, advertisement, typo- and photography."³⁵⁷ Unlike Gropius, Meyer is ultimately successful in his attempt, though it would be incorrect to interpret this to mean that with the change in directors, Teige immediately packed his bags for Dessau. In fact, it would take over a year and significant effort on Meyer's part to see Teige's visit materialize. Meyer proposes multiple dates for the lectures over the course of several letters: February 13, 1929, March 3rd, April 20th, June 10th-15th (now with the proposed title "czechoslovak art in the first decade of the republic" ["die tschechoslovakische kunst im ersten dezenium der republik"]), and September 10th-20th. In these letters, Meyer also inquires about the development of the issue of Teige's *ReD* to be dedicated to the Bauhaus, and in a letter from March 14th, suggests that an added benefit for Teige of coming personally to Dessau would be that he "could then choose himself the material for the bauhaus issue."³⁵⁸ In July, after proposing the set of dates in September for Teige's lecture, Meyer asks again about the status of the publication, requesting to be informed "when and how the already announced bauhaus-issue of the magazine

³⁵⁷ Meyer to Teige, October 17, 1928, BHA, HM Archive. Original: "moderne tschechische gestaltung: architektur, malerei, plastik, werbekunst, typo-u. photographie."

³⁵⁸ Meyer to Teige, March 14, 1929, BHA, HM Archive. Original: "anlässlich ihres hierseins können sie dann nach ihrer freien wahl das material für die bauhausnummer der zeitschrift 'RED' selbst aussuchen."

'RED' is coming together. i am exceedingly interested in this and would be very grateful for a detailed report."³⁵⁹

Though, again, we do not have Teige's response to this letter, we do have a note he made at the top of Meyer's, scrawled in pencil, that indicates the date in which he sent a response: September 3, 1929, nearly two months after Teige had received this letter from Meyer. And yet, only two days later, on September 5th, Meyer writes back expressing frustration over that fact that Teige has had to postpone his lecture once again, as well as the publication date of the Bauhaus issue of *ReD*, now apparently slated to come out "at the earliest in November or December."³⁶⁰ Meyer does not hide his disappointment in these delays, echoing Gropius in his lament: "it is a real shame that you have not realized your plans to come to the bauhaus, as i'll now have to try to find another way to build the bridge to czechoslovakia."³⁶¹ Meyer's formulation sounds much like Gropius' earlier expressed desire "to reach over the border" and facilitate greater contact with the young Czech architectural movements, and suggests that he may now himself visit Prague before Teige makes it to Dessau. This does indeed come to pass, with a visit by Meyer to Prague in December of 1929.

Meyer's frustrations are outweighed, however, by his strong desire to bring Teige to the Bauhaus, and he writes to him again on October 31, 1929, before Teige has

³⁵⁹ Meyer to Teige, July 11, 1929, BHA, HM Archive. Original: "wann und wie die bereits angekündigte bauhaus-nummer der zeitschrift 'RED' zusammengestellt wird. ich interessiere mich ausserordentlich hierfür und wär ihnen für ausführlichen bericht sehr dankbar."

³⁶⁰ Meyer to Teige, September 5, 1929, BHA, HM Archive. Original: "frühestens im november oder december."

³⁶¹ Ibid. Original: "es ist sehr schade, dass sie ihren plan ans bauhaus zu kommen nich verwirklicht haben, so muss ich versuchen, auf anderen wegen die brücke zur tchechoslowakei zu schlagen."

ever made it to Dessau to speak, to ask if Teige would be interested in a more permanent appointment there. “I believe that so eminent and active an artist and writer can very comfortably find a place with us,” Meyer writes, and though there are still financial details that would have to be sorted before he can officially offer Teige a position, he suggests a place for him at the Bauhaus in the areas of “advertisement, writing, stage, and typography.”³⁶² Though nothing further is mentioned of what would seem to have been a very exciting proposal to Teige, the correspondence continues, as further travel is arranged between Prague and Dessau, and the details of the special issue of *ReD* are discussed. The publication of the Bauhaus issue of *ReD* in March 1930 (which is advertised in an addendum to “Ten Years of the Bauhaus” in *Stavba*) would ultimately prove to mark a second peak in the collaboration between the Bauhaus and Devětsil (with the 1923 Exhibition in Weimar being the first).

When Meyer comes to Prague in December 1929, it is at the invitation of Teige and the Association of Architects there. Though Meyer is apparently given short notice of the scheduled date of his lecture and offered a fee (1,000 crowns) that Meyer suggests is rather low, he nevertheless accepts the invitation in order to “personally offer an expression of thanks, for the many types of propaganda support we have had from you personally, and your circle.”³⁶³ He writes to Teige that he will speak (at the

³⁶² Meyer to Teige, October 31, 1929, BHA, HM Archive. Original: “ich glaube, dass ein so eminent modernistisch tätiger künstler und schriftsteller wie sie sehr wohl einen platz unter uns finden kann [...] ich könnte mir vorstellen, dass sie am Bauhaus vorwiegend in der propaganda, in der schriftstellerei, der bühne und typografie wirkten!”

³⁶³ Meyer to Teige, December 3, 1929, BHA, HM Archive. Original: “wenn ich trotzdem zusage, so geschieht es hautpsächlich [*sic*] zur festigung der so vielfachen beziehungen zwischen der tschechoslowakei bezw. prag und den bauhaus, und ich möchte auch persönlich damit meinen dank zum

main City Library, or Městská knihovna, in Prague) on the subject of “living building” (“lebendiges bauen”) and “unless you report to the contrary, i will arrive in prague at the latest on 12.14.29 in the morning.”³⁶⁴ From a report that Teige published on Meyer’s lecture in *Stavba* some months later, it appears that the event ultimately took place a day earlier, on December 13th, and with the title “Unbridled Building” (“Entfesseltes Bauen”).³⁶⁵ Teige writes warmly of the lecture, summarizing Meyer’s work as propounding a “theory of modern architecture that insisently integrates sociological data, and he offered a Marxist interpretation of unique architectural phenomena and problems. [...] Architecture is not art. [...] It is the synthetic resolution of the basic elements of economic, material, social, cultural, and psychological information. It is science.”³⁶⁶ What Teige values in Meyer’s architectural philosophy is what Teige, of course, emphasizes in his own writings around Poetism which by this time have been developed for some years. “Synthetic,” a word used by Moholy-Nagy in *Pásmo* to call for a magazine in which textual and graphic elements are fully integrated, and taken up by Teige in the execution of *ReD*, had come to represent for Teige by this point a mode by which art and life become undifferentiated elements. Teige also takes the opportunity in his review of Meyer’s lecture to praise the Bauhaus (a synthetic school, in its

ausdruck bringen, für die vielfache art der propagandistischen unterstützung, welche wir durch sie persönlich und in ihren kreisen erfahren durften.”

³⁶⁴ Ibid. Original: “ohne ihren gegenbericht treffe ich spätestens am 14.12.29. vormittags in prag sein.”

³⁶⁵ Meyer proposes in a later letter to Teige to give a lecture in Brno and Bratislava with the same title in Summer or Fall of 1930. [Meyer to Teige, May 26, 1930, BHA, HM Archive.]

³⁶⁶ Karel Teige, “Rozhled: Hannes Meyer,” *Stavba* 8, no. 9 (March 1930), 142. Original: “teorie moderní architektury opírá se významně o data sociologická a podal přesně marxistický výklad jednotlivých architektonických fenomenů a problémů. [...] Architektura není uměním. [...] Je syntetickým řešením na podkladě hospodářských, výrobních, sociálních, kulturních a psychologických dat. Je vědou.”

interdisciplinary curriculum), writing that images Meyer shows in his lecture from the school, “once again evidenced that that institute is truly the most vibrant and most modern school of architecture and modern design, an institute that has no competition anywhere and should be the example for all professional schools.”³⁶⁷

The next letter from Meyer evidences another productive consequence of travel: yet another invitation to travel in kind. Just four days after the date of his Prague lecture, Meyer sends on a legal document with which Teige may request to travel to Germany, which confirms that Teige will be offering a guest course at the Bauhaus from January 19th to 26th. In an accompanying letter, Meyer proposes to Teige that he provide a series of lectures at the Bauhaus on such subjects as “the material and technique of new literature, towards a psychology of print and word” and “the new typography: printing for the book and advertisement.”³⁶⁸ The opportunity to give these lectures is testament to how widely Teige’s work was respected, and but one more indication that it was not only Teige and his fellow Czech artists who were paying attention to what was going on abroad. Rather, by engaging so actively with these foreign artists, their work in turn was followed and promoted from beyond Czechoslovak borders. Again, this sort of productive, dialogic exchange is perhaps nowhere so expressly seen as in the enduring relationship between Devětsil and the

³⁶⁷ Ibid. Original: “znovu dosvědčily, že tento ústav je skutečně nejživějším a nejmodernějším učilištěm architektury a modern tvorby, ústav, který nemá nikde konkurence a který by měl být vzorem všem odborným školám.”

³⁶⁸ Meyer to Teige, January 6, 1930, BHA, HM Archive. Original: “material und technik der neuen literatur, zur psychologie der schrift und des wortes” and “neue typografie: buchdruck and werbedruck.”

Bauhaus, including its directors, teachers, and students (a handful of whom were Czech themselves, such as the important Brno-based typographer Zdeněk Rossmann).

This time, Teige really does come to Dessau, and the impact of the physical encounter of Teige with the Bauhaus was imported back to Prague and Brno, via a series of related lectures and publications after Teige's 1930 visit to the Bauhaus, as well as the "Ten Years of the Bauhaus" essay, which he wrote while there (which is signed "Dessau, January 1930"). Teige devoted an entire issue of *ReD* (directly following the issue dedicated to the Bauhaus) to one long essay derived from one of the lectures he prepared for his visit to the Bauhaus, entitled "Towards a Sociology of Architecture" ("K sociologii architektury"). At the close of the essay, he writes and has printed in the all lower case script employed in most Bauhaus correspondence and publications from this time:

this study, an attempt at a sociology of architecture, was written in december 1929, as the basis for a series of lectures, which the author presented that semester at the bauhaus in dessau. in czech the author offers this excerpt from that study, conceived as lectures on the sociology of the city and living quarters, arranged by the socialist teaching association and later by the left front in prague and brno.

tato studie, pokus o sociologii architektury, byla nápsana v prosinci 1929, jako podklad pro cyklus přednášek, které autor četl v tomto semestru na bauhause v dessavě. česky podal autor výtahy z této studie přednáškami o sociologii města a obydlí, pořádanými socialistickým sdružením učitelstva a později levou frontou v praze a v brně.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁹ Karel Teige, "K sociologii architektury," *ReD* 3, no. 6-7 (March-April): 220.

In Teige's archive at the PNP a folder with the title "Začátek přednášky o typografii" ("Beginnings of a Lecture on Typography") includes an undated, handwritten manuscript that could perhaps be notes for one of his lectures at the Bauhaus. In the manuscript, he starts by thanking the audience for the invitation to speak on typography, and goes on in a few short pages to relate developments in the

If Teige began work on these essays in December 1929, as he states here, then it might also be argued that they were not simply written for the Bauhaus students, but also under the influence of the Bauhaus faculty, as Meyer's trip to Prague at the invitation of the Association of Architects took place that very month, and would likely have made its way in some capacity into Teige's own writings, beyond merely his *Stavba* report on the lecture.

The exchange in travel between Teige and Meyer would continue through the Spring of 1930, with Teige scheduled to return for lectures in Dessau from March 3rd to 8th, and in May, Meyer proposes to lecture himself in Brno and Bratislava.³⁷⁰ But Meyer's communist activities had begun to bring him unwelcome attention from the mayor of Dessau, and that summer Meyer was deposed as Bauhaus director.³⁷¹ On July 31st, Meyer sends a letter to Teige that opens, "i wanted to to quickly let you know today that i was 'given the sack.'"³⁷² It follows, Meyer writes, that

medium to Constructivism, normalization, photography, and photomontage, familiar themes from his essays on typography.

³⁷⁰ Meyer to Teige, February 12, 1930 and May 26, 1930, BHA, HM Archive.

³⁷¹ In a chapter on Meyer's tenure as Bauhaus director in a large volume dedicated to the school, Martin Kieren writes: "From 1927 there was a Communist Party cell at the Bauhaus which, as the global economic crisis began, directed its propaganda with increasing frequency at the Bauhaus itself. As director, Meyer did not prohibit this, but indirectly encouraged it. [...] In the eyes of some Bauhaus masters he had stood by and done nothing to prevent the work of the Communist Party cell. And it was this group of Bauhaus masters who sent a report to the Anhalt government and to the mayor of Dessau, leading to Meyer's dismissal." [Martin Kieren, "The Bauhaus on the Road to Production Cooperative—The Director Hannes Meyer," *Bauhaus*, eds. Jeannine Fiedler and Peter Feierabend, trans. Kristin Zeier (Postdam: Tandem Verlag, 2006), 213.

³⁷² Meyer to Teige, July 31, 1930, BHA, HM Archive. Original: "ich möchte ihnen heute eilig erzählen, dass ich 'gegangen worden bin.'"

For more on Meyer's departure from the Bauhaus and subsequent years in Moscow, see, for instance: Éva Forgács, "Between the Town and the Gown: On Hannes Meyer's Dismissal from the Bauhaus," *Journal of Design History* 23, no. 3 (2010): 265-174; and Martin Kieren, "The Bauhaus on the

plans for Teige to lecture at the Bauhaus after the summer holiday are now null. The letters to Teige from that period thus turn to the unrest at the Bauhaus and Meyer enlists Teige in informing the public of his own position in the Czech press, sending along a draft of an open letter that he authored and would like circulated in the press (to which Teige and other members of Levá fronta respond with letters of protest to the magistrate in Dessau, and the public.³⁷³ Teige responds by generating letters of protest to be sent to the magistrate in Dessau from the Left Front, *Stavba*, and other Prague and Brno-based organizations and publications, and also prints a public statement in support of Meyer in the penultimate issue of *ReD*. Thus Teige and his circle once more participated in the legitimization of the Bauhaus, having propagated the school and its exhibitions in the Czech lands, and now defending its politics at home and in Germany

Road to Production Cooperative—The Director Hannes Meyer,” *Bauhaus*, eds. Jeannine Fiedler and Peter Feierabend, trans. Kristin Zeier (Postdam: Tandem Verlag, 2006), 204-215.

Just as the Bauhaus closes its doors in Dessau, the School of Arts and Crafts in Bratislava was founded, announced as the “Bauhaus of Bratislava” in a brand new avant-garde magazine there, *Nová Bratislava*. Though this school, too, would have a short existence, Sonia de Puineuf describes how, for a time in the 1930s, it emerged a potential haven for Bauhaus instructors. “The school saw visits from László Moholy-Nagy, Jan Tschichold, Hannes Meyer (who also contributed to *Nová Bratislava*), Karel Teige, Ladislav Sutnar, and František Kalivoda. [...] Bratislava was spotted as a place of possible freedom: as proof are the letters of Gyula Pap and Josef Albers, who were trying to acquire a [*sic*] posts in the school after [the] Bauhaus was definitely liquidated.” [Sonia de Puineuf, “A Dot on the Map: Some Remarks on the Magazine *Nová Bratislava*,” *The Journal of Modern Periodicals* 1, no. 1 (2010): 109.]

³⁷³ This open letter does not remain in the archive with the rest of Meyer’s correspondence, but from subsequent mail from Meyer, it can be inferred that Teige criticized Meyer for what he saw as a lack of overt Marxism in it. On August 28, 1930, Meyer concedes: “i am fully aware, that in my letter there is very little that is marxist, and in making this connection you are entirely correct.” Original: ich bin mir völlig klar, dass aus meinem brief sehr wenig marxistisches hervorgeht und un dieser beziehung haben sie völlig recht.” [Meyer to Teige, August 29, 1930, BHA, HM Archive.] Meyer goes on to defend his position, highlighting that his Marxist stance should be inherently understood, and ultimately asks Teige if he can stay with him on his way to Moscow.

Éva Forgács describes how Meyer made similar requests to circulate news of his dismissal to others as well, including Gantner, and his lover Lotte Beese, who was living and working in Brno at the time for the architect Bohuslav Fuchs. [Forgács 270-271.]

(already when the school first came under pressure while still at its Weimar location with Gropius as director, and now with the deposal of Meyer).

No longer tied to the school in Dessau, Meyer makes plans to move to Moscow, where he remained for several years, bringing with him several of his Bauhaus students, including at least one Czech, Antonín Urban.³⁷⁴ When he travels to Prague in the weeks following his dismissal, then, it is only as a stopover on his eastward journey. At the end of August 1930, he writes to Teige: “i had hoped to come to prague for some days: i should buy a suit, and also take the opportunity to speak with you and some others. but is there somewhere i could sleep? i am not doing well financially now, at least until i sort out my future.”³⁷⁵ In a subsequent letter, he writes that he will be staying with his friend Nina Balcerová, and requests to Teige that on this layover in Prague, “if possible, to give no lecture. i must recover my strength. at the end of october i journey to moscow. i just can’t.”³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ Svobodová records that after working for the architect Krejcar in Prague, Urban, who had studied under Meyer at the Bauhaus, followed him to Moscow in 1931 and took Soviet citizenship in 1937. [Svobodová 412.]

Kieren describes Meyer’s post-Bauhaus movements in some detail: “After his dismissal, before the year was out, he moved to the Soviet Union with a few Bauhaus students, who had been expelled and shared his views and his sympathetic interest in the work of reconstruction in the USSR. He lived and worked there for the next five years, but without doing any building, after which he returned to Switzerland. In his homeland, between 1936 and 1939, he built a kindergarten, but otherwise had no commissions whatsoever. This was also true of the years 1939 to 1949, which he spent in Mexico as a teacher and architectural expert. He devoted his last years, up until his death in 1954 in Switzerland, to theoretical studies.” [Kieren 213-214.]

³⁷⁵ Meyer to Teige, August 29, 1930, BHA, HM Archive. Original: “ich hatte eigentlich den wunsch, einige tage nach prag zu kommen: ich sollte ein kleid kaufen für mich, unter mit der gelegenheit könnte ich mit ihnen und einigen andern sprechen. aber gibt es irgendwo schlafgelegenheit für mich? Ich bin materiell jetzt sehr schlecht daran bis zur klärung meiner zukunft.”

³⁷⁶ Ibid., September 4, 1930. Original: “ich möchte, wenn möglich, keinen vortrag halten. ich muss mich erholen. ende oktober reise ich nach moskau. ich kann nicht.”

Though Meyer is to return to Prague in January 1936³⁷⁷ on his way back home to Switzerland from Moscow (before heading further west, to Mexico), the close of his time at the Bauhaus generally marks the end of his active collaboration with Devětsil, which was no longer existent by the mid-1930s at any rate: the final issue of *ReD* appeared in 1931, and several of the core Devětsil members, led by Vítězslav Nezval and ultimately joined by Teige himself, moved to form the Surrealist group in 1934. In 1950, Teige receives a postcard from Meyer, sent from Switzerland, in which he announces that, “after 34 days of sea crossing, from Veracruz over Cuba-Venezuela-Tenerife-Barcelona-Marseille, we have landed in Geneva,” and asks for an update on Teige: “And what are you doing these days?” he asks. “A professor? An author on art? What else??”³⁷⁸ Much had changed in the two decades that passed since the mens’ more active collaboration, and back in Europe, after six years in Moscow and a decade in Mexico, where he lived out the Second World War, Meyer writes: “Here in Switzerland, it’s difficult to orient ourselves. One could think there was no war in Europe!”³⁷⁹

In the only letter that appears to remain from Teige to Meyer, dated February 13, 1950, Teige welcomes Meyer back in Europe, and suggests that, after traveling “so many thousand kilometers” (“so viel tausend Km”) he pay Prague a long overdue visit,

³⁷⁷ Svobodová reports that Meyer lectured in Prague in the meantime on August 29, 1931, and in Brno on August 30. If this is the case, then it would suggest that Meyer travelled westward during his tenure in Moscow. The date of his arrival in Moscow is conflicting in various reports, but the most compelling evidence (not the least of which being the letters to Teige I quote here) suggests he first arrived in the Fall of 1930.

³⁷⁸ Meyer to Teige, January 17, 1950, PNP, KT Archive. Original: “zunächst benachrichtige ich Dich, dass wir nach 34 Tagen Seefahrt, von Veracruz über Cuba-Venezuela-Tenerifa-Barcelona-Marseille in Genua gelandet sind [...] un was machst Du eigentlich jetzt? Professur? Schriftsteller über Kunst? Was sonst??”

³⁷⁹ Ibid. Original: “Hier in der Schweiz fällt es uns schwer, uns zu orientieren. Man denkt, es war kein Krieg in Europa!”

“perhaps in late Spring, when, as you know, Prague is most beautiful.”³⁸⁰ In response to Meyer’s other inquiries, Teige reports on his rather abject job prospects: “I am a professor nowhere, and have no solid employment. What I need, I earn through my typographic work, I write papers as always, and am preparing at the moment a large book—expected to be the largest that I’ve written up to this point.”³⁸¹ But Teige died before this book is published and in 1954, Meyer himself passed away, the same year as Černík.

Considered against the backdrop of the Gropius correspondence, Teige’s collaboration with Meyer can be posited neither as a total rupture nor a beginning. Though Teige’s relationship with Meyer does appear to have been stronger and certainly lasted longer than his engagement with Gropius, it also exhibits some of the same past communicative failures (as, for instance, in the regular postponement of proposed trips, a recurring motif in both the Gropius and Meyer correspondence). Teige’s sustained relationship with Meyer marks not only a personal preference for the second Bauhaus director, but also, of course, a closer political affinity, which intensified as some Devětsil members, including Teige, became more actively political and formed around The Left Front. But a look at the letters from Gropius to Teige also remind us

³⁸⁰ Teige to Meyer, February 13, 1950, GRI, HM Archive. Original: “vielleicht im Spätfrühling, wo, wie Du weisst, Prag am schönsten ist.”

³⁸¹ Ibid. Original: “Ich bin nirgendwo Professor und habe keine feste Stellung. Was ich brauche, verdiene ich mir durch typographische Arbeiten, schreibe Abhandlungen wie immer und bereite mir jetzt ein grösseres Buch vor – voraussichtlich das grösste, dass ich bisher geschrieben habe.”

The book Teige mentions here is likely what Seifert later calls *The Phenomenology of Modern Art* in his memoir.

that the young Devětsil leader readily collaborated with the first Bauhaus director as well.

In the second half of this dissertation, we turn from these private instances of dialogic and interpersonal exchange enacted in correspondence and travel, to look more closely at the material outcomes of these transnational networks forged in correspondence and travel. The following two chapters consider the textual and graphic production of Devětsil periodicals and anthologies, within the context of both local and, of course, international, trends.

CHAPTER 3

PUBLISHING PLATFORMS: PROPAGATING THE POLITICAL

“The new world is built from raw and rare materials: from dreams, passion, love, and a hatred of the past, and from beautiful virtue. [...] In the dreamlike beauty and enchantment of blooming flowers, or of dancing butterflies in the sun, can be found the most apt fore-image of new art and new life.”

Karel Teige
“Images and Fore-Images” (*Musaion* 1920)³⁸²

Returning now from travel to textual considerations of how networks were generated and maintained across the avant-gardes, the second half of this dissertation examines the publishing platform as a mode of exchange. Whereas Chapter Four will show how the serial publications of the interwar avant-garde functioned *visually* to signal the editors’ place within an international dialogue (what Matthew Philpotts might call the journals’ “compositional codes”), this chapter looks more closely at their written

³⁸² Karel Teige, “Obrazy a předobrazy,” *Musaion* 2 (Spring 1921): 56-57. Original: “Nový svět jest budován z látek ryzích a vzácných: ze snu, víry, lásky a nenávisti k minulu a z krásných ctností. [...] V snivé kráse a čaromoci rozvíjejících se květů a v slunci tančících motýlů mohl by být nejspíše předobrazem nového umění stejně jako nového života.”

content and modes of distribution (or their “temporal” and “social” codes, considering “the wide network of actors involved in the creation, circulation and reception of the journal”).³⁸³ The content of the magazines under consideration here serve a two-fold purpose, their micro and macro functions.³⁸⁴ On the micro level, the magazines were intended to educate the Czech reader at home on interwar trends in the avant-garde, being forged both locally and abroad, and to engage a popular audience in these developments. They were also a forum by which the young Czech avant-garde conversed with its predecessors at home. The first half of the chapter examines how the Devětsil affiliated magazines portrayed a specific sociopolitical stance, through which their editors engaged in debates locally on the place of art in post (first world) war society. On the macro level, the magazines were intended to be shared with artistic peers abroad, and all aspects of the magazines were carefully curated to achieve that goal and thus sustain an active dialogue with members of an international avant-garde. The second half of this chapter shows how serial publications kept the Czech avant-garde in conversation with peers abroad—in some cases already underway thanks to travel, exhibitions, or correspondence, but in other instances, initiated entirely via the

³⁸³ Matthew Philpotts, “Defining the Thick Journal: Periodical Codes and Common Habitus” (lecture, MLA Convention, Boston, Jan. 4, 2013).

³⁸⁴ As Ann Ardis noted in her opening remarks to the Modern Languages Association [MLA] Special Session “What is a Journal? Towards a Theory of Periodical Studies,” the study of serial publications is especially well suited to “attending simultaneously to both macro- and micro-level analysis: for addressing the dialogics of an increasingly complexly mediated, post-bourgeois public sphere *through* analysis of the ‘politics of the page’ (George Bornstein’s phrasing), that is, through the study of literary artifacts in their original sites of publication.” [Ann Ardis, “Towards a Theory of Periodical Studies” (lecture, MLA Convention, Boston, Jan. 4, 2013).]

publications themselves. This discussion is then continued in Chapter Four with a focus on visual considerations.

Of course, the use of the magazine as a platform for exchange and conversation in the interwar period is in no way particular to the Czech context. The very fact that the Czechs (and namely Teige) *also* employed the magazine in such a way makes it a medium well worth investigating here. In *Modernism and the Magazines: An Introduction*, Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman describe the dialogic function in the magazines of a more Anglo-American persuasion: “where artists, impresarios, critics, and philosophers could address one another directly, with a segment of the public listening in on those conversations about what kind of visual, verbal, and musical works were best suited for the modern world.”³⁸⁵ More so than the book—which is potentially much longer and more narrow in focus, takes longer to reach the publication stage, and cannot as easily be dialogic—the magazine was the platform that allowed Teige to reach a large, and yet still targeted, audience quickly. As correspondence and travel have the capacity to cultivate and expand a network of professional relationships and friendships in the predominantly private sphere, the magazine has the capacity to do that in public, reaching a wider, but still focused, group.

The Devětsil publications functioned to solidify and disseminate the values of the Czech avant-garde through these standard uses of the magazine, bringing artists and thinkers of different geographical locations and media into close contact, and

³⁸⁵ Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman, *Modernism in the Magazines: An Introduction* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 74.

disseminating ideas discussed within a relatively small circle to a larger public. In short, the avant-garde journal served as an efficient, affordable vehicle for the theoretical position of the artists and intellectuals it represented. Within this context it is not surprising that it was so often in these serial publications that the avant-garde manifestos of the early Twentieth Century were published. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker write in their Introduction to the multi-volume *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines* of “the close ties between the defiance of the manifesto form and the vehicle for that defiance, the magazine.”³⁸⁶ They describe how Ezra Pound (1885-1972), with his “little magazines” envisioned the serial publication not only as a place in which the manifesto might be printed, but rather as an embodiment of the manifesto itself. For Pound, they write: “a magazine does not only publicize the manifestos of a movement, the magazine itself functions as a form of manifesto.”³⁸⁷ And Scholes and Wulfman describe the magazine as having a performative capacity: “a self-conscious movement, in which works of art and literature appeared together with manifestos and critical exegeses.”³⁸⁸

Some of the most important manifestos of the period were even introduced in newspapers. As already noted, Devětsil announced itself in the weekly paper *Pražské pondělí* [*Prague Monday*] in December 1920, and such a choice in platform for its founding manifesto situated the movement within a growing tradition. Perhaps most

³⁸⁶ Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, “General Introduction,” in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, ed. Peter Drucker, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.

³⁸⁷ Brooker and Thacker 2.

³⁸⁸ Scholes and Wulfman 73.

famously and influentially, F.T. Marinetti's 1909 Futurist Manifesto was first printed in the French daily paper *Le Figaro*, and a special issue of *ReD* dedicated to Futurism from February 1929 came out to correspond with its twentieth anniversary.³⁸⁹ If we may read the manifesto as an integral component for the functioning of the avant-garde, a work of literature itself, then the Devětsil, and later, Poetist manifestos conveniently reside within the art-life intersection they describe. They are both the theoretical explanation of a new movement that is purported to be life itself, and an active participant in that life. Though, as Luca Somigli writes in his history of turn of the century manifestos, "in its broadest application [...] the manifesto as a genre of discourse belongs to the pragmatic realm of politics," it is a genre that enjoyed marked popularity with the early Twentieth Century avant-gardes.³⁹⁰ Teige's manifestos were published either in the popular press, or in his own magazines, embodying one of the most important aspects of the genre's capacity for exchange, as it enabled the wide spread of Devětsil ideas at home, in a forum that also made visible for the Czech public the ways in which the local avant-garde fostered affinities with movements abroad, and likewise reinterpreted foreign trends into a distinctly Czech context. Johanna Drucker describes the use of the print medium in the early Twentieth Century, "not merely as an incidental record of the life and spirit of the times of avant-garde activity, but as one of the primary means of its

³⁸⁹ In *Legitimizing the Artist: Manifesto Writing and European Modernism, 1885-1915*, Luca Somigli writes that while "futurism was by no means the first literary movement or the first 'ism' to appear on the scene of European culture, much has been written about the foundational role of this manifesto." [Luca Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist: Manifesto Writing and European Modernism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 93.]

³⁹⁰ Somigli 32.

realization,” and indeed, this does align closely with the way that Devětsil utilized its publications (though Drucker herself overlooks the Czechs in making this assessment).³⁹¹

While three magazines in particular—*Disk* (1923-1925), *Pásmo* (1924-1926), and *ReD* (1927-1931)³⁹²—are given especial space in this dissertation, Teige edited an impressive number of publications in his fifty-one years, also including the architectural periodical *Stavba* (1923-1938; Teige was editor from 1923-1928) and the *Revoluční sborník Devětsil* in 1922, and produced articles for a wide range of publications at which he did not have much editorial sway, such as at *Host* (in which the first Poetist manifesto was published). He used the magazines as material manifesto; they take on a performative aspect through his careful consideration of textual content and design elements, and their strategic distribution. Teige’s adoption and adaptation of the graphic conventions of New Typography (as the following chapter will show) distinguished his projects from concurrent ones at home (such as *Pestrý Týden*, 1926-1945, or *Gentleman*, 1924-1930³⁹³) and other avant-garde productions abroad, while at

³⁹¹ Johanna Drucker, *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909-1923* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 91.

³⁹² The short life of these magazines is characteristic across the avant-garde periodicals and the Anglo-American little magazines. For instance, the American *The Little Review*, edited by Margaret Anderson (1886-1973) with help from Ezra Pound abroad, Harriet Shaw Weaver (1876-1961) and T.S. Eliot’s (1888-1965) *Egoist* in Britain, and the international project of *Broom* all had very brief periods of activity. The latter’s coeditor Malcolm Cowley describes the little magazine thus: “Usually the history of the little magazine is summarised in its format. The first issue consists, let us say, of sixty-four pages, with half tone illustrations, printed on coated paper. The second issue has sixty-four pages, illustrated with line cuts. The third has only forty-eight pages; the fourth has thirty-two, without illustrations; the fifth never appears.” [Malcolm Cowley, *Exile’s Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951), 188.] While this description of decline is perhaps a bit exaggerated, it is not so far from a fair depiction of the circumstances of the avant-garde journals under discussion here.

³⁹³ These were popular, illustrated periodicals that although targeted to a wider audience, nonetheless bore some similarity to the avant-garde Devětsil publications. Teige was a regular contributor to early issues of *Pestrý Týden*, where he wrote on similar subjects as he did for his own publications, such as the transfer of the Bauhaus to Dessau. And Černík wrote often for *Gentleman*. It is also worth noting

the same time aligning his work with these very same publications (to which he often also contributed).

This chapter examines how Teige evoked his particular version of the “art of life” (as embodied by Poetism) via editorial decisions, made alone and with others, including Černík, as well as by publishing articles in magazines not directly under his own control. It also looks to how Teige in particular, and Devětsil more broadly, used the publication as a platform to distinguish itself from its artistic and intellectual forbears at home while facilitating an international exchange.

DEVĚTSIL’S VOICE IN THE PUBLICATIONS OF THE “ČAPEK GENERATION” AND NEUMANN

Teige’s generation of artists entered the world of serial publishing via previously established platforms such as those put out by the Čapek brothers³⁹⁴ on one hand and S.K. Neumann on the other. This put the younger group in the uncomfortable position of

here Milena Jesenská (translator and love interest of Franz Kafka, and the one-time wife of Czech architect and *Život 2* editor Jaromír Krejcar) though not actually a member of Devětsil, was a regular columnist for these magazines.

³⁹⁴ In Thomas Ort’s book dedicated to what is called the “Čapek generation,” Ort describes how there is actually no consensus on what (or who) that actually comprises: “Some emphasize prewar links, others postwar connections. Some restrict the notion of a Čapek generation to literary figures, others consider it a broader cultural and political phenomenon.” But, Ort writes, on all these lists, a few names consistently appear: Karel and Josef Čapek, Josef Kodíček (1892-1954), František Langer (1888-1965), and Ferdinand Peroutka (1895-1978). [Thomas Ort, *Art and Life in Modernist Prague: Karel Čapek and His Generation, 1911-1938* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 14.]

Ort also maintains that it was precisely in relation to Devětsil that the existence of a “Čapek generation” was formulated: “It was in the clash with the postwar avant-garde that the idea of a Čapek generation was first articulated.” [Ort 28.]

needing the help of its forebears to secure its footing in the wider milieu of Czech intellectual life while at the same time trying to make sure it was not overshadowed by them, ensuring that its unique and emphatically new position was heard. In a letter from August 1, 1920, in which Teige emphasizes to Černík the importance of cultivating interest for their young movement internationally, he also suggests that the artists of the group “Tvrdošijní” (the “Obstinate Ones”)³⁹⁵ are perhaps already better known abroad, the insinuation being that an association with this older group of artists will legitimize the younger one. But in a letter from April of the following year, it is clear that Teige is disgruntled by Tvrdošijní’s privileged position as the face of the Czech avant-garde in an international context. He whines, “Nebeský writes to me that at [publication title illegible] in Paris there is interest in doing a Czech issue—but dedicated to the Tvrdošijní group! [...] They beat us everywhere and monopolize everything.”³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ Tvrdošijní, writes Ort, “was organized in 1918 by Josef Čapek and included five other figures, all visual artists, of the prewar modernist movement: Vlastislav Hofman, Rudolf Kremlička, Otakar Mrvánek, Václav Špála, and Jan Zrzavý.” As Ort also notes, the group was associated with Cubism as well as other strains of pre-war Modernism. [Ort 121.] Seifert, in his autobiography, produces the same list of names. [Jaroslav Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1993), 37.] Interestingly, in the above mentioned letter from Teige to Černík, Teige associates the group with a rather different set of personages: “[S.K.] Neumann, [Vladimír] Šrámek, Čapek, Bartoš, [Richard] Weiner etc...” [Teige to Černík, August 1, 1920, PNP, AČ Archive.]

In his autobiography, Seifert, describes how Teige was in fact the only member of Devětsil to cultivate a relationship with the older set: “Only Teige was personally acquainted with the Tvrdošijní members. Already for some years he had written for *Čas* and the *Tribuna* and he met the painters at openings. The rest of us were too young and still so little known that we didn’t even allow ourselves to consider a meeting.” Original: “S Tvrdošijnými znal se osobně jen Teige. Už několik let psal výtvarný referát do Času a Tribuny a na vernisážích se s malíři seznámil, My ostatní byli příliš mladí a ještě málo známí, že na nějaké seznámení jsme se nedovolili ani pomyslit.” [Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 38.]

³⁹⁶ Teige to Černík, April 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Nebeský mi píše že v [word illegible] v Paříži je ochoten udělat české číslo—ovšem Tvrdošijné! [...] oni nás předejdou všade a vše si monopolisují.”

Although Tvrdošijní would have been well known abroad, the level of popularity Teige describes here suggests that he is using the group’s name loosely, and likely had the Čapek brothers in mind specifically, Karel in particular being enormously popular abroad, though not technically a member of

This push and pull between a simultaneous need for the older generation, who, with their preexisting magazines, such as *Musaion* (originally edited by Karel Čapek and later by Nebeský), provided a platform by which to spread the message of Devětsil, and a resentment of the older generation for taking an almost grandfatherly stance toward the young artists, is also evident on the page in Teige's early publishing history. In Spring 1921, for example, at twenty years of age, Teige published his important essay "Obrazy a předobrazy" ("Images and Fore-Images") in *Musaion*, the most prominent journal of Čapek's circle.³⁹⁷ In the essay, Teige calls for his generation of artists "to build a new world."³⁹⁸ And to do that, he writes, they cannot move with the currents in "modern art" ("moderní umění") but rather must align themselves with the "plans of a new life, a new organization of the world, and its sanctification."³⁹⁹ The emphasis on "new" leaves little room to look back to the examples of predecessors: "The only path," proclaims

Tvrdošíjní. As Ort writes, during the 1920s and 1930s "his plays ran for months on end in New York and London, and [...] his novels were translated immediately and printed in huge runs." [Ort 25.]

Václav Nebeský (1889-1949) was an art historian and champion of the Tvrdošíjní group, who had a more ambivalent relationship to Devětsil. As Ort writes, "Nebeský praised the group, on the one hand, for broadening the definition of art and discovering so many 'new beauties' in the industrial products of modern civilization, much as his own generation had done. On the other hand, he worried that in Devětsil's theory and practice, the specific content of art was getting dispersed. [...] He asked if art, continuing down this road, could remain art at all." [Ort 139.]

Two years after Teige sends the above quoted letter to Černík, in 1923 Nebeský contributed an article to *L'Esprit nouveau* (issue 19), titled "Tchécoslovaquie. La Situation des arts plastiques," which included reproductions of work by members of the Tvrdošíjní group rather than Devětsil, such as Josef Čapek, Bohumil Kubišta (1884-1918), Emil Filla (1882-1953), Josef Šíma (1891-1971), Otto Gutfreund (1889-1927), Zrzavý (1890-1977), Špála (1885-1946), and Kremlička (1886-1932).

³⁹⁷ Teige mentions the publication in one letter to Černík from September 1920. Just before he reports on an upcoming meeting that will mark the foundation of Devětsil, he writes, "I'm trying to send to Čapek a lot for *Musaion*." Original: "snažím toho napsat Čapkovi mnoho do *Musaionu*." [Teige to Černík, Sep. 14, 1920, PNP, AČ Archive.] In the next issue, of Spring 1921, "Images and Fore-images" appears.

³⁹⁸ Teige, "Obrazy a předobrazy," 52. Original: "vybudovati nový svět."

³⁹⁹ Ibid. Original: "s plany nového života, nové organizace světa a jeho posvěcení."

Teige, “is that which leads to tomorrow.”⁴⁰⁰ And indeed, elsewhere in the essay, this strict adherence to a forward looking mode is set in explicit opposition to a backward looking glance: “The new world is built from raw and rare materials: from dreams, passion, love, and a hatred of the past, and from beautiful virtue.”⁴⁰¹

Despite publishing Teige’s essay, Čapek uses his editorial powers to caution against Teige’s bold and uni-directional call to arms, writing with the wisdom that comes with his thirty years to Teige’s twenty, in a paragraph that directly follows Teige’s essay: “I don’t see the state of art today so unambiguously as does the author of the ‘Fore-images.’ Yes, it is possible to simplify the rather complicated situation of art today by depicting it as simply split in two directions—‘yesterday’ and ‘tomorrow’—but that distinction is artificial and arbitrary.”⁴⁰² Thus Čapek attempts to deconstruct the binary Teige proffers, one that suggests the possibility of looking only forward or back, and offers no resolution of the two modes. Yet Teige’s call for an art “of the people” resonates with Čapek, who describes a similar sentiment in his response to Teige: “The demand for a formal purity and spatial harmony remains henceforth the work of the good art practitioner, which is at the same time the good practitioner of progress.”⁴⁰³ He depicts here the artist as working in the service of human development, not merely

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid. Original: “Jediná je cesta, jež vede k zítřku.”

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 56. Original: “Nový svět jest budován z látek ryzích a vzácných: ze snu, víry, lásky a nenávisti k minulu a z krásných ctností.”

⁴⁰² Karel Čapek, “Poznámka,” *Musaion* 2 (Spring 1921): 58. Original: “nevidím ani dnešní stav umění tak jednoznačně vytčen jako pisatel předobrazů. Ano, je možno zjednodušit si ten poněkud složitý obraz dnešního umění rozdělením na směry ‘včerejší’ a ‘zítřejší’; ale toto rozdělení je umělé a libovolné.”

⁴⁰³ Ibid. Original: “Požadavek formální čistoty, skladnosti a prostorové harmonie zůstává nadále úkolem dobrého dělníka umění, který je zároveň dobrým dělníkem vývoje.”

as some muse-inspired conduit for great works destined for gallery walls. But at the same time, Čapek never conceded the place of art as undifferentiated from everyday life, and it is on this point that the difference of position between Devětsil and Čapek's generation remained irreconcilable.

Earlier that same year, in February 1921, Teige had already published another manifesto to the forward march in *Kmen* (then under the direction of Neumann, and, as a Communist publication, not in keeping with Čapek's world view which embraced instead the First Republic and a Czechoslovak democracy), titled "In a New Direction" ("Novým směrem"). The same issue features a poem by Seifert, "Modlitba na chodníku" ("Prayer on the Sidewalk").⁴⁰⁴ And it also includes a brief review of an Academic Library (Akademická knihovna) book series, which was edited by Teige's own father, Josef Teige, and which receives praise for its efforts at making widely accessible "human knowledge" ("lidské vědění").⁴⁰⁵ Teige's essay echoes the Devětsil manifesto and "Images and Fore-images" in its insistent call for a break with past traditions⁴⁰⁶ in an attempt to forge a new way forward via "spurious and revolutionary theories" ("pochybnými a revolučními teoriemi").⁴⁰⁷ It is a bold essay that includes the statement, "there is no doubt [...] that we have stood on the boundary of two worlds. And that the only resolution is in

⁴⁰⁴ As noted in Chapter Two, Černík also published his own poetry as well as translations in *Kmen*. In a letter, Teige praises Černík's poetry, which had made the cover of the September 16, 1920 issue: "myself and the others really liked your new poems in *Kmen*." Original: "mně i ostatním se velmi líbily tvé nové básně v *Kmeni*." [Teige to Černík, Sept. 18, 1920, PNP, AČ Archive.]

⁴⁰⁵ vh, "Referáty: Akademická knihovna," *Kmen* 4, no. 48 (Feb. 24, 1921): 574.

⁴⁰⁶ Across various essays, the bourgeoisie, the academic, the museum, and older artists (including many with whom he seeks to build alliances at home and abroad), all fall under this rubric in Teige's attacks.

⁴⁰⁷ Teige, "Novým směrem," *Kmen* 4, no. 48 (Feb. 24, 1921): 571.

Revolution.”⁴⁰⁸ But, just as Čapek ultimately gave himself the final word in *Musaion*, so too is Teige’s bold call for revolution in *Kmen* assuaged by an asterisk at the end of the title that leads to the following statement at the bottom of the first page of the essay:

We make public willingly and loyally this programmatic article, even if we don’t agree on some details. Still holding to the opinion we briefly announced in a note on Devětsil (*Kmen*, no. 46), on the other hand we like that this new youth, bursting with life, attempts to think independently and distinguish itself from its direct predecessors. Namely we invite an ideal attempt at revolution, whose goal is a “single stem of art” in a liberated people.

Uveřejňujeme ochotně a loajálně tento programový článek, třebaže s některými detaily nesouhlasíme. Travjíce na názoru, který jsme stručně vyslovili v poznámce o Devětsilu (*Kmen*, č. 46), jsme na druhé straně rádi, že nová mládež, překypujíc životem, snaží se myslit samostatně a odlišit se i od svých bezprostředních předchůdců. Zejména tu však vítáme ideovou snahu revoluční, jejímž cílem je „jednotný peň umění“ v osvobozeném lidství.⁴⁰⁹

In a tone of quasi-benevolence, quasi-condescension, the anonymous editorial board (presumably just Neumann himself) encourages the revolutionary impulse of the younger generation, in what is also an indirect disparagement of the Čapek generation, the “direct predecessors” from whom Neumann is glad to see Devětsil diverge.

Despite these published rebuttals and qualifications, the mere fact that the old and new generation are publishing side by side in these magazines is a clear sign that

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 570. Original: “není pochyby, ... že jsme stanuli na rozhraní dvou světů. A že tímto řešením jest Revoluce.”

⁴⁰⁹ S.K. Neumann, *Kmen* 4, no. 48 (Feb. 24, 1921): 569. The section in quotes—a “single stem of art”—is a quotation from Teige’s own essay. It is perhaps worth noting that in the magazine *Kmen*, whose title can be translated to mean “stem” or “tree trunk,” Teige had used the archaic “peň” in this formulation instead, which has the same meaning.

they also share certain affiliations in their thinking about the direction that new art and literature ought to be headed. In the issue of *Kmen* that Neumann references above (number 46), he had introduced Devětsil and its early actions in the pages of his magazine, indeed writing with some ambivalence, but nevertheless promoting the new group:

On Sunday, February 6th, the first undertaking of the artists' association "Devětsil" took place on the "Revolutionary Stage" as the matinee recitation. The opening remarks were given by Karel Teige, very pugnacious, though to some extent unclear and not cohesive. He was followed with readings of more or less dilettantish verse and poetry by A. Černík, J. Suk, Vl. Vančura, Jar. Seifert, A. Hoffmeister and Karel Vaňek. Of this group Seifert had the greatest success and Hoffmeister was also occasionally good.

V neděli 6. února se v "Revoluční scéně" matinée jako první recitační podnik uměleckého spolku "Devětsil", úvodní slovo, velmi výbojně, ale poněkud nejasné a zpřeházené, pronesl Karel Teige a pak recitovány byly přednášeči více nebo méně diletujícími verše a prósy A. Černíka, J. Suka, Vl. Vančury, Jar. Seiferta, A. Hoffmeistera a Karla Vaňka, z nichž největší úspěch měl Seifert a částečně i Hoffmeister.⁴¹⁰

Neumann, an ardent Communist, does make a point to praise the group for their "correct" emphasis on the collective over the individual, and adds his hope that they "do not understand collective art so intellectually and coldly as Karel Čapek in *R.U.R.*, [...] and not in the direction of the 'soul', as recommended by M. [Miroslav] Rutte."⁴¹¹

⁴¹⁰ Neumann, "Devětsil," *Kmen* 4, no. 46 (Feb. 10, 1921): 550.

Seifert returned the complement that year when his first published poetry collection "City in Tears" ("Město v slzách") from 1921 was dedicated to Neumann.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 551. Original: "Nebude, doufáme, rozuměti kolektivnímu umění tak intelektuálně a studeně jako Karel Čapek v *R.U.R.*, ... ani na cestě za 'duší,' kterou jí doporučuje M. Rutte."

Here Neumann makes explicit his distance from the political position of the group around Čapek. So when Neumann encourages Devětsil then two issues later to “distinguish itself from its direct predecessors,” we can safely infer just who he has in mind. But reading the early essays of Devětsil side by side with the slightly older generation (both in the Communist direction of Neumann, and the individualist-humanist line of the Čapek brothers) makes clear that all shared a vision of the world that moved art out of the museum and into the public, a move away from a conception of a national art towards an international avant-garde. Those associated with the Čapek generation, Neumann’s brand of Communism, and Devětsil in fact all often appeared alongside each other in various publications.

Of the affinities between Devětsil and the Čapek generation, Ort writes, “Like Devětsil, the artists of Čapek’s generation deplored the alienation of art from society characteristic of modern times. They too longed for a unified culture in which the distance between art and life would be bridged.”⁴¹² The essay “In a New Direction,” for Neumann’s *Kmen* in fact expresses something that would surely have found a sympathetic audience in the Čapek brothers too, as it calls for the necessity of art to near those elements of “*primary creation*” (“*primární tvorba*”) including “*folk art, childrens’ painting, and national song*” (“*lidové umění, dětské malůvky a národní*

R.U.R., or *Rossum’s Universal Robots*, is one of Čapek’s most famous plays, and tells of a factory that creates robots and ships them all over the world. Things go awry, however, when the robots are allowed to feel emotions. The play has a rather dystopic view of collective, non-individualized labor. It is also the work credited with coining the word “robot,” from the Czech word “*robota*,” or labor/drudgery.

Teige’s relationship to Rutte has already been briefly noted in Chapter Two, footnote 250.

⁴¹² Ort 125.

píseň”).⁴¹³ It likewise champions an art that eradicates any distinction between “so-called great art” (“tak. zv. velikého umění”) and “*second rate and derivative folk production, that will be the single stem of art*, bringing forth new, non-academic images, more comprehensive than the area of painted canvas; symbols of an age for all living, believing people.”⁴¹⁴ It is this aspect of the article that Neumann embraced in his response, and is also worth comparing to Josef Čapek’s essay, “People Painting” (“Malíři z lidu”), first published in *Kmen* (though not yet under Neumann’s editorship, but rather F.X. Šalda), and ultimately included in his book *An Art Most Humble (Nejskromnější umění, 1920)*, which is advertised on the inside of the back cover of the issue of *Musaion* in which Teige published “Images and Fore-Images.”⁴¹⁵

In “People Painting,” Čapek insists that art is “Creation begot of human hands, of the human heart and soul, creation of new things, which join the whole of life and the world. It is conceived somewhere around that place where for the first time a person touches on the material that comes from him *his own origin*.”⁴¹⁶ Čapek declares that art

⁴¹³ Teige, “Novým směrem,” 571. Emphasis is the author’s.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid. Emphasis is the author’s. Original: “*druhořadé a odvozené produkce lidové, že bude jednotý peň umění, nesoucí nové obrazy, neakademické a obsažnější než plocha pomalovaného plátna, symboly doby pro všechny žijící a věřící lidi.*”

⁴¹⁵ Ort has also noted the affinities between *An Art Most Humble* (which he calls “Josef Čapek’s 1920 study of primitive art”) and the writings of Devětsil. Ort claims that the volume (which is a compilation of essay originally published in various magazines), “was widely accepted by [Teige] and others as one of the principal sources of the younger generation’s interest in primitivism.” [Ort 125.] My interest in *An Art Most Humble*, however, is not for its supposed emphasis on Primitivism, which I do not read as a major characteristic of this text (though Teige himself did), but rather its embrace of the art of the so-called Sunday painter, who Čapek champions not out of any perceivable socialist inclination, but rather out of an affinity for the so-called “non-academic.” What exactly the “non-academic” meant for Čapek and Teige was similar: it was an art not born of art school (which Čapek himself had attended) and destined for the museum or gallery, but could instead be found on the street, on shop signs and in advertisement, integrated into everyday life.

⁴¹⁶ Josef Čapek, *Nejskromnější umění* (Prague: Aventinum, 1920), 5. Emphasis is the author’s. Original: “Umění je vytvářením, vytvářením z lidských rukou, z lidského srdce a ducha, vytvářením nové

“is not, then, only sequestered in galleries and art magazines, where your taste and art education are allowed to attain the quality of perfection, to the exclusion of all the rest, which do not deserve attention.”⁴¹⁷ This is likewise reiterated in Teige’s essay, “Umění dnes a zítra” (“The Art of Today and Tomorrow”), which now appears in the first anthology under full Devětsil control, *Revoluční sborník Devětsil*: “New painting will be born neither in the galleries nor salons.”⁴¹⁸ In terms that Teige echoes, Čapek defines his “art most humble,” as that which “wants to clearly represent to you the things useful and necessary to man; it is imbued with a piety for work and for life and knows the necessity and joy in both; it does not set forth high goals but brings to life a modesty by methods pure and emotional, and this is no small task.”⁴¹⁹ The compatibility in Čapek and Teige’s articulations of a new, non-academic art that pervades all aspects of life reflects a shared knowledge of and interest in Expressionism and Primitivism, and is an affinity acknowledged by Teige himself. In a letter to Černík from December 1921, Teige speaks highly of Čapek’s book, which was published that year: “On the human spirit and

věci, jež se přiřazuje k ostatnímu součtu života a světa. Počíná tedy již asi tam, kde po prvé zasáhne člověk v hmotu, aby jí dal *svůj* původ.”

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 5. Original: “Umění není tedy uzavřeno jen v galeriích a uměleckých časopisech, kde se dovolává vašeho vkusu a estetické výchovy jakožto dosažená dokonalost, vůči níž to ostatní nezasluhuje pozornosti.”

⁴¹⁸ Teige, “Umění dnes a zítra,” *Revoluční sborník Devětsil* (Prague: Večernice, 1922), 195. Original: “Nové malířství nezrodí se ani v galériích, ani v salonech.”

⁴¹⁹ Josef Čapek 6. Original: “Chce vám čistě znázorniti věci prospěšné, potřebné člověku; je produchnuto pietou k práci a k životu a zná i nutnosti i radosti mezi oběma; neklade si vysokých met, ale uskutečňuje svou skromnost způsobem ryzím a dojmavým, a to není malá zásluha.”

tenor you read something broadly in our direction; the question of Primitivism has been taken on excellently in Čapek's *An Art Most Humble*."⁴²⁰

This uneasy relationship of influence and exchange, as the young Czech artists sought to innovate independent of the existing canon all the while inherently respecting the work of their predecessors, is manifest frequently in these early years of Devětsil. As we have already seen in Chapter Two, Teige was relatively comfortable forging relationships in public with groups or individuals that he complained about in private, as he recognized collaboration with an older generation as extremely useful to himself and a younger group of artists. In the spring of 1921, for example, Teige became art editor of *Červen* (which included both the Čapek brothers and Neumann as contributors), and was also a member of Proletkult, which Neumann founded later that Summer and published a magazine by the same name.⁴²¹

⁴²⁰ Teige to Černík, December 17, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "O duchu a rázu lidového se povšechně dočteš něco v našem směru; otázku primitivismu vzal do ruky šikovně Čapek Nejskromější umění."

⁴²¹ *Proletkult* pronounced itself to be the "Weekly of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia for Proletariat Culture" ("Týdeník komunistické stran Československá pro proletářskou umění") on the cover of each issue, along with the slogan, "Proletariats of the World, Unite!" ("Proletáři všech zemí, spojte se!") It lasted for only two years, from 1922 until 1924, and seems to have struggled with censorship in the period of the democratic First Republic: beginning with the sixth issue, from February 15, 1922, printed on the cover are the words, "Published after confiscation" ("Vydáno po konfiskaci"). Perhaps for this reason the editors are not listed anywhere on its pages.

Proletkult picks up in the year after *Červen*, which had also been edited by Neumann, seized operations. In its last year running—1921—the banner at the top of each issue printed under the title "*Červen*" read "Proletkult – Communism – Literature – New Art" ("Proletkult – Komunism – Literatura – Nové umění"). When the magazine gave way to a different publication that bears as title the first word in this banner, Neumann explained that the new publication, as an "organ of proletariat culture" ("orgán proletářské kultury") has some parallels to *Červen*, but while the former publication had been "more or less private ("vice méně soukromý"), in contrast, "the weekly 'Proletkult' must take into consideration a wider mass of the party, with an eye to satisfying their needs" ("Týdeník 'Proletkult' musí však nyní míti na zřeteli širší massy strany a vyhovovati jejich potřebám."). [S.K. Neumann (unsigned), "Úvodní slovo," *Proletkult* 1, no. 1 (Jan. 4, 1922): 1.]

Teige was, however, expelled in short order from Proletkult in January 1922, along with Seifert, though several of the latter's poems as well as an advertisement for his first book, *City in Tears* (which, again, had been dedicated to Neumann), appear in the first *Proletkult* issue from January 4th. To Černík, Teige describes the dismissal in a letter from early that month: "the situation in Prague is terribly tense. [...] He [Ivan Olbracht, 1882-1952, one of the *Proletkult* editors] has given us leave from Proletkult and now aspires to remove us from the party, at which he just may just succeed. [...] Even if we won't be cast out, we've decided [...]: We won't do anything, won't write anything, for Rudé právo, Proletkult, or Rovnost."⁴²² (This should be read as a bit hyperbolic, or at any rate a resolution quickly dissolved, as Teige does indeed publish an essay on Moravian artists in the February 15, 1922 issue of *Proletkult*.)

By March 1922, the situation seems to have improved little. "In Prague we are working more diligently even though we are doing so under the worst circumstances," Teige writes mid-month.⁴²³ And yet, with no explanation as to how relations were mended, less than ten days later he writes to report that Proletkult intends to publish a special issue on Devětsil (which was to come out in May), and that they have less than two weeks to collect materials for it.⁴²⁴ This issue would indeed appear on May 3, 1922,

⁴²² Teige to Černík, January 7, 1922, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "situace v Praze je ukrutně napjatá. [...] Dal nás z proletkultu vyloučit a nyní usiluje o naše vyloučení ze strany, což se mu možná podaří. [...] I když nebudeme vyloučení, rozhodli jsme [...]: nic nebudeme dělat, do Rudého práva, Proletkultu ani do Rovnosti nebudeme psát."

Teige had only written to Černík the month before with news that he had joined the group. [Teige to Černík, December 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.]

⁴²³ Teige to Černík, March 15, 1922, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "V Praze jsme pilněji ač pracujeme v nejhorsích okolnostech."

⁴²⁴ Teige to Černík, March 23, 1922, PNP, AČ Archive.

with contributions from Seifert, Černík, Jindřich Hořejší (1886-1941), Vladislav Vančura (1891-1942), Jiří Wolker (1900-1924), Karel Schulz (1899-1943), and others, and at the back, there is a listing of upcoming Devětsil lectures. Notably, no essay by Teige is included, and in a note at the end of the issue in which it is explained that this number of *Proletkult* has been dedicated to the the “comradely artist’s association Devětsil,” it is Seifert and not Teige who is named as the group’s founder.⁴²⁵

The rather tumultuous relationship between the new and the old ultimately benefited the young artists of Devětsil. They achieved broad exposure thanks to publishing platforms that existed before Devětsil had any of their own. In 1922, when they were handed over editorial control by the Umělecká beseda for a special Devětsil issue of their publication *Život*, this served as a transitional moment towards greater autonomy. And in the same year, they put out the *Revoluční sborník Devětsil*.⁴²⁶ By 1923, with the publication of the first (of only two) issues of *Disk*, Devětsil had its first serial publication to call its own, and began to have full editorial control over the publications in which its member’s work primarily appeared.

⁴²⁵ Backmatter in *Proletkult* 1, no. 17 (May 3, 1922): 571. Original: “Toto číslo Proletkultu věnované soudružskému uměleckému svazu Devětsil sestavil J. Seifert.”

⁴²⁶ Teige writes to Černík in September 1922 of how Devětsil came to be invited to collaborate on the special issue of *Život*, and how he saw this publication might work in tandem with the *Revoluční sborník Devětsil*: “Perhaps you know the architect Krejcar—good and totally singular—our guy at the Umělecká beseda, was appointed [...] editor of ŽIVOT, which will be a parallel in the visual arts to our anthology. [...] We of Devětsil have promised him accordingly our most committed collaboration.” Original: “Tak snad víš arch Krejčar [sic], dobrý a jediný zcela. Náš člověk v Umělecké besedě zmocnil se [...] redakce ŽIVOTA, který tedy bude výtvarnou paralelou našeho sborníku. [...] Tak jsme mu tedy v Devětsilu slíbili nejjívenější [?] spolupráci.” [Teige to Černík, 1922, PNP, AČ Archive.]

TECHNOLOGIES OF THE REVOLUTION

In April 1921, Teige complains in a letter to Černík of a “stupid” attack of his article in *Musaion* (which goes unnamed, but is presumably “In a New Direction”) by Nebeský (who would succeed Karel Čapek as editor at *Musaion* for its third and final volume) and asks:

If he knits art into politics [or, confuses art with politics], it looks just as weak as if he knits politics into art. [...] Are we knitting politics into art? Revolution = politics? The interconnectivity, and the consciousness of this interconnectivity—of art and life—does that have to be denied?! What Nebeský has in mind is art for art’s sake.

Plete-li se umění do politiky vypadá to stejně chabě jako plete-li se politika do umění. [...] Pleteme politiku do umění? Revoluce = politika? Souvislost a vědomí této souvislosti – umění a života – to se má popřít?! Co si myslí Nebeský je umění pro umění.⁴²⁷

This letter was sent just days after Nebeský had published a sharp criticism of Devětsil in the paper *Tribuna*, charging, Ort writes, “the young generation with having lost faith in the independent status of art.”⁴²⁸ While Nebeský had criticized Devětsil for its “politicization of art,”⁴²⁹ in Teige’s series of comparisons in his letter to Černík, art and life are the purest of symbiotic relationships, and revolution is integral to a process that allows the sphere of politics, art, and everyday life to come together. Devětsil’s platform

⁴²⁷ Teige to Černík, April 1, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.

⁴²⁸ Ort 137.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

was at far remove from “art for art’s sake”; theirs was instead formulated as the “art of life.” To offer Ort’s succinct account of this: “In its most radical formulation, the project of the postwar avant-garde amounted to an attempt to dissolve the boundaries between art and life and to live life as art.”⁴³⁰ It is in this, Ort points out, that Devětsil was most at odds with the slightly earlier Čapek generation. And, at the same time, the group remained to some extent at odds with the version of Communism preached by Neumann and his circle.

When Teige published “The Art of Today and Tomorrow” in the *Revoluční sborník Devětsil*, it served as a programmatic statement on the place of art in Devětsil’s project. In the middle of the essay, in large, capital letters is the statement “NEW ART IS NO LONGER ART!” framed in black outline.⁴³¹ Teige’s conception of an art that is not art (in the sense of what he called the “academic”), not cordoned off from the public in galleries and museums, but rather in the public view and integral to life, is a well known and oft-cited aspect of Devětsil’s program, and has been discussed in some detail in the Introduction to this dissertation. And if the essay’s content failed to convey this to the

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 28.

⁴³¹ Teige, “Umění dnes a zítra,” 199. Original: “NOVÉ UMĚNÍ PŘESTANE BÝTI UMĚNÍM!” This phrase, repeated often by Teige, was in fact taken from the controversial figure Ilya Ehrenburg. In *Stavba* in 1927, at a point when Devětsil’s relationship with Ehrenburg had soured due to his turn towards Romanticism and a “romantic-sentimental mood” (“romanticko-sentimentální nálada”), Teige writes of how “his [Ehrenburg’s] definition [...] ‘New art is no longer art,’ was often cited on our pages” (“Jeho definice [...] ‘Nové umění přestane být uměním’ byly často ze našich stran citovány”). [Karel Teige, “Přednáška Ilji Erenburga v Praze čili Konstruktivismus a Romanticismus,” *Stavba* 5, no. 9 (1927), 145-146.]

Teige and Nezval had a rather tumultuous relationship with Ehrenburg. Though the relationship started off as one of mutual affection, after being introduced to each other through the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson, Ehrenburg’s vision of Communism eventually put him sharply at odds with André Breton and thus both the French and Czech Surrealists by the mid-1930s, which even led to blows. For more on Ehrenburg and his relationship to the Czech avant-garde, see Deborah Garfinkle, “Bridging East and West: Czech Surrealism’s Interwar Experiment” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2003).

reader, at the very end of the essay, the statement, “ALL THE BEAUTIES OF THE WORLD” [“VŠECKY KRÁSY SVĚTA”] appears in all capitals and wedged between two hands that point back at the words (a common typographic trope of the time).⁴³² But a picture of what Teige really intended for his “art of life” program to look like is slippery, and his articulation of this artistic program as “revolution” shifts across his writings. As the primary outlet for his theoretical tracts, and as a place for these texts to exist in conversation with image and other related literary production, such as poetry and politically oriented essays, the *Devětsil* anthologies and magazines are a good place to start in order to trace how Teige’s conception of revolution, and revolutionary art making, transformed over time.

Peter Zusi has already attempted to chart how Teige’s position on the topic of revolution shifted in the early 1920s. He writes in this essay, “The Style of the Present: Karel Teige on Constructivism and Poetism,” that “Teige’s theory of proletarian art implicitly understood revolution in its etymological sense: as a return—at a higher level of developments of course—to an earlier state, that is, as a return to history. At the end of 1922, with the publication of *Život 2* and Teige’s increasing focus on Constructivism, this scheme had changed.”⁴³³ A reading of Teige’s correspondence alongside his articles

⁴³² Teige, “Umění dnes a zítra,” 202. Recall that the slogan “All the Beauties of the World” would become the title of Seifert’s autobiography; it is also the title of a poem by Seifert with which *Život 2* opens.

⁴³³ Peter Zusi, “The Style of the Present: Karel Teige on Constructivism and Poetism,” *Representations* 8, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 110.

Zusi’s conception of a “return to history” here refers to a statement made earlier in his article: “Teige’s critique of bourgeois art as inherently historicist thus emerged from the context of his theory of proletarian art. Teige in this period (1921 through mid-1922) portrayed the present as just starting to emerge from an aesthetic inerratum that stretched back to the beginning of its autonomy under capitalism. [...] Bourgeois art was historicist precisely because it did not belong to any true historical style.

reveals *how* Teige's stance on revolution came to be revised and refined in his published writings. In Teige's letters to Černík, Teige is continually in a process of working through, more willing to express his doubts and frustrations about the limits of an art of life model than he is on the printed page, making it especially useful to read his public and private writings side by side. After Devětsil's formation in late 1920, as members labored to define the group's social and artistic values, Teige writes frequently to Černík in an exploratory mode, especially present in the letters of those early years in which Zusi notes a drastic change in position, and less so in his later, all-business letters from 1923 onwards.

In these earlier letters from 1921 and 1922, we can witness Teige working through his political position, and the role of art in relation to politics (or vice versa). Two months after he wrote to Černík on the subject of revolution and politics with regards to Nebeský, Teige again attempts to articulate how these two major issues can be productively related, this time vis à vis Vildrac. Teige writes, "I think that we ought to respond [to a letter from Vildrac] that to us it doesn't concern politics, but Revolution."⁴³⁴ Teige writes to Černík to push back at the prospect of publishing a letter written by Vildrac in *Rovnost*, and suggests his own vision of revolution in opposition to Vildrac's:

Boys — What do we want from the anarchist? [...] Let him write his beautiful poetry, which we will always admire,

Capitalism had interrupted the great narrative, and the Bolshevik Revolution was the first sign that such a narrative was to be taken up again." [109-110.]

⁴³⁴ Teige to Černík, June 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "Myslím, že byste měli odpovědět že nám nejde o politiku, ale o Revoluci."

which in our opinion truly can be a solace only for the proletariat and which says nothing to the bourgeoisie. [...] He sympathizes ardently albeit platonically with revolution, he has compassion for love, tenderness for the proletariat, but that doesn't make a revolution: he's nothing more than a chivalrous and spiritually agitated petit-bourgeoisie.

Hoši — co chcete od anarchisty? [...] Nechte ho, ať píše své krásné básně, kterým se budeme vždy obdivovati, které dle našich názorů skutečně mohou být útěchou jen proletariátu a které buržoasii nemohou nic říct, [...] sympatisuje vřele avšak platonicky s revolucí, má soucit lásku, něhu k proletariátu ale revoluci nedělá: není nic než lidsky ušlechtilý a duchovně vzrušený maloměšťák.⁴³⁵

Here we can observe Teige working through what revolution might mean in the creative sphere, and what emerges is something that will ultimately gird the principles of Poetism. There is an unapologetic appreciation of the “beautiful” (which Devětsil will come to call “new beauty” with the subtitle for *Život 2*: “Sborník nové krásy,” or “Anthology of New Beauty”), but by no means in conjunction with a pacifist view towards art making disconnected from revolutionary concerns. Teige figures revolution as a dynamic stance against the stasis of peace. Further on in this letter Teige writes

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

Vildrac for his part, in response to a similar attack apparently lodged at him in a letter from Černík maintained that it is his humanitarian impulse and identity as a poet that guide his principles, not politics. He writes: “I am for my part sooner an Anarchist than a Communist, and in every case absolutely independent as the poet should be. But I am overly enamored with social justice for my sympathies not to align with Communism.” Original: “Je suis pour ma part tôt anarchiste qui communiste, et en tous cas absolument indépendant comme doit être le poète. Mais je suis trop éprise de justice sociale pour que mes sympathies n’aillent pas aux communistes.” [Vildrac to Černík, June 12, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.]

with not a little condescension, “He celebrates peace, but we fight, or hope to fight, in the revolution.”⁴³⁶

What Teige actually means, here, however, is not particularly clear. Nowhere does he explicitly voice a call to arms, and his most “revolutionary” writings hardly seem at odds with peace. Teige’s “fight” is not a violent one, but rather embodied in agitation and disruption of the status quo (itself hard to define in the newly formed state of Czechoslovakia), and largely to be launched on the page. In what Teige calls “revolutionary art practice” (“revoluční umělecká práce”), the individualist work of creating art ought never to be severed from the revolutionary aspects of such production. In early 1921, in his essay “In a New Direction,” he writes:

in the age from which grows the images that want to be the fore-images of tomorrow, towards which tend the whole of revolutionary work and human endeavor, allow us to speak only of art, thought, and culture: we are no longer expounding just on space, composition, color, dynamics, verse, and rhythm, but on the human being and on life.

v době, z níž se rodí obrazy, které chtějí býti předobrazy zítřku, k němuž směřuje veškerá revoluční práce a snaha lidská, dovolte nám, abychom hovořili jen o umění, myšlence a kultuře: rozprávíme tak již nikoliv o prostoru, skladbě, koloritu, dynamice, verši a rýmu, nýbrž o člověku a o životě.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁶ Teige to Černík, June 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Oslavuje [referring to Vildrac] mír, ale my bojujeme, nebo doufáme bojovati v revoluci.”

Teige is writing on the defensive here, as this is the same month in which Černík received the letter from Vildrac, in which he scolds Černík (and by association, Teige) for what he sees to be their overwrought Communist, revolutionary stance. It is perhaps this letter that has been proposed to be printed in *Rovnost*.

⁴³⁷ Teige, “Novým směrem,” 569.

Creating art thus becomes, in Teige's vision, something with a real impact on human lives, just as utile as harvesting fields or building buildings. Again, inextricable from life itself. The "beauty" in the art Teige describes is born of "labor and *concrete work*" ("práce a *konkrétní úkol*").⁴³⁸

Teige was sensitive to the ways in which his work as an artist can figure into his revolutionary aspirations, instructing Černík in June 1921, "write to Vildrac that we are of the opinion that we can all either follow the reactionary forces that will eventually imprison us, or the Revolution, which might liberate us. And that we are not only abstractly revolutionary: that we are aware of the very concrete work and obey with passion revolutionary disciples."⁴³⁹ Therein might lie the appeal Teige found in Constructivism, which, as Zusi writes, "makes art once again useful—a tool to be grasped and applied towards the improvement of everyday life."⁴⁴⁰

But if Vildrac might have been too dispassionate and apolitical for Teige, Teige was wary of the out and out embrace of technology by Marinetti, who would form his own Futurist (Fascist-leaning) political party and famously went so far as to call war "beautiful." Having witnessed the devastation that industrialized warfare had wrought

⁴³⁸ Teige, "Umění dnes a zítra," 202. Emphasis is the author's.

The above could be more literally translated as "work and concrete task," but the phrase "konkrétní úkol" is employed often in Teige's essays, to describe something rendered in English more accurately as "concrete work," as it figures, literally, the work of the artist as something concrete, as "real work," not the bourgeoisie dalliance of gentlemen painting canvases destined for the gallery.

⁴³⁹ Teige to Černík, June 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "A Vildracovi napište že soudíme že jsme všichni buď závislí na reakci, které nás eventualně uvězní, nebo na Revoluci, která nas snad osvobodí. A že nejsme jen abstrakně revoluční: že si uvědomujeme velmi konkrétní úkoly a podrobujeme se s nadšením revoluční kázní."

⁴⁴⁰ Peter Zusi, "Vanishing Points: Walter Benjamin and Karel Teige on the Liquidations of Aura," *The Modern Language Review* 108, no. 2 (April 2013): 379.

during World War One, but also appreciating the “new beauty” of the machine, Teige’s relationship to industrialization was fraught and contradictory, changing over time. Teige associates the beautiful and revolutionary aspect of new art with “machine production,” but he also cautions against unchecked enthusiasm. In “Images and Fore-images” he writes: “The world of industrialism and technology, civilization, factories, transatlantic steamers, and airplanes, which formerly caused us wonder and exaltation, we’ve now experienced in these fiery days of European carnage to the point of the impossible, and total disruption.”⁴⁴¹

So it is that on one hand Teige embraced new technologies and observed closely the developments of Italian Futurism and Russian Constructivism, while on the other hand he was critical of the alienating properties of a mechanized future, and skeptical of the lack of humanism and empathy in the Futurist or Constructivist program. As Zusi—whose work offers perhaps the most cogent account of Teige’s interest in technology, Marxism, and Constructivism—writes: “rather than seeing technology’s intrusion into the realm of the aesthetic as a form of dehumanization or alienation, Teige emphasizes that this shift in fact brings art (with all the caveats he attaches to the term) closer to the masses.”⁴⁴² In much of Teige’s writings from the early 1920s, there is an almost naïve impulse to call for his readers to consider the individual alongside modern progress, and to see the individual as inherent to that progress. The magazine embodies

⁴⁴¹ Teige, “Obrazy a předobrazy,” 53. Original: “Svět industrialismu a techniky, civilisace, továren, transatlantiků a aeroplánů, jenž nás kdysi udivoval a exaltoval, prožili jsme nyní v požárných dnech evropského krveprolití až do nemožnosti a rozvratu.”

⁴⁴² Zusi, “Vanishing Points,” 381.

this kind of beauty, as a tangible, concrete platform for Teige's ideals, and a platform by which "new beauty" can reach the public in their domestic spaces.

POETISM IN PRINT: A MANIFESTO IN CIRCULATION

Život 2 was a very early manifestation of how Teige and Devětsil aimed to make transparent their social values, and embody on the page their particular stance to revolution. It is also another example in which Devětsil was provided a platform for its project thanks to more established artists. In this case, members of the Umělecká beseda invited Devětsil to guest edit the second volume of their publication, *Život*, which was a radical departure stylistically from what the magazine produced before and after, but is now by far the most recognized issue. The volume is nothing if not a dynamic and physical embodiment of the Devětsil art of life approach in a post-war world that calls for revolution not via a violent or nationalist stance, but rather by embodying the "new beauty" advertised on the anthology's cover: an embrace of all that is modern and industrial without losing the individual's humanity to the machine. Devětsil's conception of revolution, as articulated by Teige, was something amorphous, more of a working through than the intransigent stance his published writings might suggest. *Život 2* (whose main editor was Krejcar) is the manifesto embodied, it is Devětsil's first bold statement of an "art of life" project (as would be articulated in the

first Poetism manifesto) in its textual as well as visual content, and it underscores the propagandistic capacity of the magazine platform.

Život 2 is an early embodiment of Poetism, two years before the –ism is named, as it speaks for the difficult-to-define social ideals of Devětsil via a blend of local and national influences, textual and visual cues. It embodies in its very form what Teige would later describe as the essence of Poetism: “Humanity has emerged from the war tired, troubled, bitterly robbed of all illusions, unable to feel desire, to love, to lead a new, better life. Poetism (within its limits) wants to cure the moral hangover and psychological shock, as well as the malaise of its aftermath.”⁴⁴³ *Život 2*, with its photographs of Charlie Chaplin, luxury liners, and the Eiffel Tower upholds the good life, the modern, and the humorous. The volume opens with Seifert’s poem, “All the Beauties of the World,” exalting the “beautiful ballerinas dancing on posters among letters” (“krasné baletky tančící na plakátech mezi písmeny”), “aeroplanes like doves” (“aeroplány jako holubi”), and the “poet who remains alone and lightheaded among flowers” (“básník zůstal sám uprostřed květin zmámený”).⁴⁴⁴ And in his essay, “Foto Kino Film,” Teige includes among the “joys of the electric century” (“radostí elektrického století”—a direct quote of an essay by Černík in the *Revoluční Sborník Devětsil*) the

⁴⁴³ Karel Teige, “Poetismus,” *Host* 3, no. 9-10 (July 1924): 202. Anthologized and translated in *Karel Teige/1900-1951: L’Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-garde*, eds. Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha, trans. Alexandra Büchler (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 70. Original: “Z války vyšlo lidstvo znaveno, zneklidněno, hořce zbaveno ilusí, nemohoucí toužiti, milovati a vésti nový, lepší život. Poetismus (v mezích svých možností) chce vyléčit tuto morální kocovinu a mentální otrěsy i chorobí z ní plynoucí.”

⁴⁴⁴ Jaroslav Seifert, “Všecky krásy světa,” *Život 2* (1922): 5.

circus, music hall, cabaret, sport, and of course, film.⁴⁴⁵ In an essay with the title, “Made in America,” Krejcar enthusiastically applauds examples of American industry—automobiles, airplanes, and skyscrapers—that epitomize a “new beauty” that simultaneously meet the real needs of the modern person. Within the essay are several photographic reproductions of New York skyscrapers. Retaining an American focus, Krejcar’s essay is followed by a tribute to the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), and then a poem dedicated to the illuminated advertisements that light up Broadway in New York.⁴⁴⁶

By 1923, with the publication of the first *Disk*, and in 1924, with the beginnings of *Pásmo*, Devětsil had increasingly more opportunities to put forth their distinct vision, which would soon come to be explicitly linked to Poetism. The first mention of the new –ism in the surviving letters to Černík appears on November 27, 1923. The inaugural issue of *Disk* had come out that year, and Teige discusses in the letter what should be included in the second issue (which ultimately would not appear until 1925): “It will be exclusively Poetism and Constructivism,” he writes.⁴⁴⁷ In a subsequent letter in which plans for the publication of *Pásmo* are discussed, Teige jots down disjointedly what looks like a series of free-associative notes. On the bottom left-hand side of two facing

⁴⁴⁵ Teige, “Foto Kino Film,” *Život 2* (1922): 163.

⁴⁴⁶ The poem is by the American poet Alfred Kreymborg (1883-1966), and had previously been anthologized in a volume of American poetry edited by the writer Claire Goll (1890-1977), wife of Yvan Goll, which appeared in German as *Die Neue Welt* (*The New World*). In *Život 2*, Kreymborg’s poem appears in Czech, translated by Černík.

⁴⁴⁷ Teige to Černík, November 27, 1923, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: ““Bude výhradně Poetismus a Konstruktivismus.” He also suggests in this letter the inclusion of “picture poems” in the second *Disk*. Not coincidentally, it was that very November that he had created what is now one of the most famous examples of his work in this medium, “Pozdrav z cesty” [“Travel Greetings”].

pages he writes in an italicized script: “*construction – economy – utility – typisization – collectivism – the assumption of modern architectural production.* [the subsequent text written below a line of separation] *socialization of art – questions of artistic production – development of the machine, never ideological -.*”⁴⁴⁸ On the facing right hand page he leads with an arrow from these notes to a series of what could be called slogans, some of Teige’s own devising, and others as quotation, all underlined: “Art is the greatest flower in the Epicurean garden. Poetism = the art of today. The new spirit is the art of construction Le Corbusier, Saugnier [...] The new art is no longer art Ehrenburg.”⁴⁴⁹

What appears here to be an almost random series of briefly jotted key terms and associations is a true harbinger of how the –ism will ultimately be articulated as manifestos and slogans in the magazines. In both this letter as well as the actual founding manifesto we have the contradictory association of Epicureanism with Socialism and Constructivism, a juxtaposition that somehow synthesizes into a call for non-ideological, concrete, and productive work in the fields of art and architecture. Two years after writing this letter, and a year following the publication of the first Poetism manifesto, Teige writes in *Disk*, in his important essay “Constructivism and the

⁴⁴⁸ Teige to Černík, December 1923, PNP, AČ Archive. Emphasis is the author’s. Original: “*konstrukce – ekonomie – účelnost – typisace – kolektivismus – předpoklad moderní architektonické produkce. socialisace umění – otázky umělecké produkce – děje se strojem, nikoliv ideologicky –.*”

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid. Original: “Umění je nejznámějším květem v Epikurově zahradě, Poetism = umění dnešku, Nový duch je duchem konstrukce Le Corbusier Saugnier [...] Nové umění přestane šli [?] uměním Erenburg.”

The writings and plans of French architects Le Corbusier and Saugnier (Ozenfant) had appeared the year before in the special *Devětsil* issue of *Život*, in which they contributed articles on Purism, and their work was of great interest to Teige (though he would later write against Le Corbusier). Essays by Ehrenburg had also appeared in *Život 2*, as well as in the *Revoluční sborník Devětsil*. As mentioned above, this quote of Ehrenburg’s (“New art is no longer art”) was a popular one for Teige, and had appeared in the latter publication.

Liquidation of 'Art'" ("Konstruktivismus a likvidace 'umění'") that "*Industrial civilization is fundamentally at odds with a civilization of arts and crafts.* [...] As long as we live in homes made of cement, dress ourselves, enjoy a water supply system and electric lighting, ride in trains and read the newspapers, we are not naked in the garden of Eden."⁴⁵⁰ On the published page, we encounter Teige's stance as significantly hardened against the esoteric towards a more fully expressed commitment to Constructivism, a development whose progress we can track over the letters to Černík from 1923 to 1925.

In a letter postmarked March 31, 1924, now only four months prior to the publication of the first Poetism manifesto, Teige writes to Černík on the bold *Disk* letterhead and elucidates further on the association he sees between the ideals of *Pásmo*, Poetism, and a socially conscious art in general. He once again puts together a list of key terms (or as he calls them, "tenets") that situate Poetism amidst several other pre-existing -isms. He requests that this list be printed on the front page of *Pásmo* alongside editorial matter such as issue number and price:

~~new art~~ modern culture – academic engineering – cinema – theater – construction arts [...] – marxism – the socialization of art – photography (25 works from around the world, if you like) urbanism – purism – constructivism – **poetism.**

~~nové umění~~ moderní kultura – inženýrství akademika [...] – kino – divadlo – stavební umění [...] – marxismus –

⁴⁵⁰ Teige, "Konstruktivismus a likvidace 'umění'," *Disk* 2 (1925): 6. Emphasis is the author's. Original: "*Nebot'civilisace strojová je podstatně v rozporu s civilisací umění a řemesel. Tento rozpor se neodstraní neuznáním auta, gramofonu, kina a linotypu. Esteti mívají šprýmovné představy o životě. Pokud bydlíme v betonových domech, šatíme se, užíváme vodovodu, elektrického osvětlení, jezdíme vlakem a čteme noviny, nejsme nazí v rajském pralese.*"

socialisace umění – fotografie (25 dílů světa, chcete-li)
urbanismus – purismus – konstruktivismus – **poetismus**.⁴⁵¹

We have here nuanced, revealing changes to Teige's earlier notes from December. The phrase "socialization of art," as well as an emphasis on architecture remain firmly in place, while "konstrukce" ("construction") becomes explicitly "konstruktivismus" ("Constructivism"), and "Marxism," "Purism," and "Urbanism" are all added, along with cinema. "New art" is stricken from the record this time around, amended with the phrase "modern culture," which would have likely represented better for Teige the more all encompassing kind of art he aimed to propagate.

What actually appears on the cover of the first issue of *Pásmo* (whose editors at this point do not include Teige, but rather Černík, Halas, and Václavěk) is:

modern prose, poetry, marxism, technical engineering, cinema and theater, sport, building, the propagation and popularization of civilized culture, reproductions of paintings and sculptures, photography from five parts of the world, urbanism, constructivism and poetism, the aesthetics of the machine.

moderní prosa, básně, marxismus, inženýrská technika, kino a divadlo, sport, stavitelství, propagace a popularisace civilizační kultury, reprodukce moderních obrazů a soch, fotografie z 5 dílů světa, urbanismus, konstruktivismus a poetismus, estetika stroje.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵¹ Teige to Černík, March 31, 1924, PNP, AČ Archive.

At this point, Teige goes silent on the topic of Poetism for the Spring and Summer months during which the manifesto is actually published. There are no letters at all from Teige to Černík from May through October 1924, at which point Teige asks Černík to translate the manifesto into German. [Teige to Černík, October 2, 1924, PNP, AČ Archive.]

⁴⁵² Header, *Pásmo* 1, no. 1 (1924): 1. By the second issue, the list has adjusted somewhat to "**THE CIRCUS (CIRKUS)**, cinema, clown art (umění clownů), modern prose, **MARXISM**, the technical (technika), fashion (moda), **cinematography (kinografie)**, the propagation and popularization of civilized culture, **photography** from five parts of the world, **SPORT**, constructivism, **poetism**, the aesthetics of the machine,

Though this published list looks much like the one in the letter Teige sent to Černík, Poetism no longer gets the last word. For all Devětsil's ambivalence towards the machine, its embodiment of what "new beauty" can be surpasses the –ism itself; the machine as aesthetic object becomes perhaps its most material representation.

These consistencies and minor changes, adaptations and influences across the letters and into print provide insight into *how* the final and published product comes into being; it is a process of addition and elision that is lost in the printed version if considered on its own. The letters document the development of ideas. It is then via other platforms that these ideas firm into publishable and "complete" shape and are circulated. While the publishing stage is the phase by which the private becomes public and the Czech avant-garde represents itself as a self-assured and cohesive unit, the letters add a dimension of understanding to the public manifesto, revealing a more nuanced and layered understanding to a "definitive" text.

When Poetism is finally systematically articulated in the first manifesto to the –ism in July 1924 in *Host*, it unapologetically embraces a mode that will allow the modern person jolted by war to enjoy life in a technologically informed age. Incorporating language not readily found in other avant-garde manifestos of the day, it welcomes a broad range of things that can be the "art of life":

city construction [stavba měst], bibliography (bibliografie), inserts (insert)" and is then done away with entirely in future issues. [Header, *Pásmo* 1, no. 2 (1924): 1. Emphasis is in the original.]

If the new art, and that which we call POETISM, is the art of life, *the art of living and enjoying*, it must become, eventually and as a matter of course, as delightful and accessible as sport, love, wine, and all manner of other delectations. It cannot be a profession; rather, it is a universal need. No individual life, if it is a life lived morally—with smiles, happiness, love, and dignity—will be able to do without it.⁴⁵³

Je-li nové umění, a to, co nazveme POETISMEM, uměním života, uměním žítí a užívání, musí být posléze tak samozřejmě, rozkošné a dostupné jako sport, láska, víno a všechny lahůdky. Nemůže býti zaměstnáním, jest spíše obecnou potřebou. Žadný individuální život, ma-li být prožit morálně, to jest: v úsměvech, štěstí, lásce a důstojnost, neobejde se bez něho.⁴⁵⁴

As discussed earlier in the Introduction, what is perhaps most revolutionary in the stance Teige outlines here is the insistence of incorporating words like “love,” “smiles,” “happiness,” not to mention a regard (rather narrowly framed) for the “moral” and “dignity,” into a manifesto that has Constructivism at its base.

Poetism is figured as something palliative in this first manifesto. As discussed in Chapter Two, Dada and its absurdist humor was one approach Teige considered as a useful tool for working through the tragedy of the First World War, and Poetism was to be a homegrown coping mechanism.⁴⁵⁵ In another manifesto to the –ism, which

⁴⁵³ Teige, “Poetism,” *Karel Teige/1900-1951: L’Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-garde* 66.

⁴⁵⁴ Teige, “Poetismus,” *Host* 198.

⁴⁵⁵ Again, though, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Teige at times offers a very particular interpretation of Dada to make it best correspond to the Poetist project. In the above pages, Teige’s commitment to “beauty” as an important aspect of the “art of life” has been emphasized. Tzara’s version of Dada, at least, did not tend to see art so much as a part of life, but rather subsumed by life, or said another way, in Tzara’s own words: “Life is far more interesting.” (This is actually closer, not surprisingly, to Teige’s depiction of Paris as related in a letter to Emy Häuslerová, as discussed in Chapter Two.) In his

appeared in *ReD* four years after its first explicit declaration, Teige describes Poetism as a much needed solution to the suffering brought about by the devastation of World War

One:

the first years after the World War, when we lived in a world rooted in change, woefully disrupted, rattled by the horrors of those dark years of bloodshed, in the days of endless tragedy, in the days of political and social tremors, [...] of economic and cultural crises and social earthquakes, the terrors of revolution faced by a world in arms—those first years after the war we forged out of this reality a new core in the midst of a world that had become entirely dissimilar from the one in which previous generations had lived, worked, and grown old.

Prvá léta po světové válce, kdy žili jsme svět od základů změněný, bolestně rozvrácený, vyděšený hrůzou černých lev krveprolití, v dnech ustavičných tragedií, v dnech politických a sociálních otřesů, [...] hospodářských a kulturních krisí i sociálního zemětřesení, hrozby revoluce před branami světa—tato prvá léta po válce postavila nás před poměry a skutečnosti z jádra nové, doprostřed světa, jenž se stal naprosto nepodobným světu, v němž žila, pracovala a sestárila předchozí generace.⁴⁵⁶

This poignant passage is an important reminder that Teige and his peers so emphatically rejected the practices of earlier generations not merely out of a flippant, youthful

“Lecture on Dada,” which first appeared in Schwitters’s *Merz*, Tzara writes: “Art is not the most precious manifestation of life. Art has not the celestial and universal value that people like to attribute to it. [...] The Beautiful and the True in art do not exist.” [Tristan Tzara, “Lecture on Dada,” in *Dada, the Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Motherwell, trans. not attributed (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1981), 248. Original: “L’art n’est pas la manifestation la plus précieuse de la vie. L’art n’a pas cette valeur celeste a générale qu’on se plaît a lui accorder. La vie est autrement intéressant. Dada connaît la juste mesure qu’il faut donner a l’art; il l’introduit avec des moyens subtils et perfides dans les actes de la fantaisie cotidienne. Et reciproquement. En art, Dada ramène tout à une simplicité initiale, mais toujours relative. [...] Le Beau et la Vérité en art n’existent pas.” [Tristan Tzara, “Conference sur Dada,” *Merz* 2, no. 7 (Jan. 1924): 69.]

⁴⁵⁶ Teige, “Manifest Poetismu,” *ReD* 1, no. 7 (June 1928): 318.

obstinacy, but rather out of a deep rooted despair and disgust borne out of witnessing of a war they had no hand in starting, but were forced to grapple with its consequences. It is also distinct in its explicit disregard of violence, of a “world in arms” that is literally bearing weapons. It is not these literal arms, we can thus infer, that Teige has in mind when he writes in the first issue of *ReD*, “*ReD* wants to be the collaborator of all who construct a new human universe, a partner in arms for social revolution.”⁴⁵⁷ In this iteration, it would be fair to infer that the “arms” he has in mind look more like composing sticks than pistols. In the opening statement of that first issue he writes: “*ReD* wants to be the manifestation and at the same time propagation of a modern spirit.”⁴⁵⁸ Marx’s specter⁴⁵⁹ has been adapted to Teige’s purposes to be an all-pervasive, friendly ghost that both reflects and *is* the desire for a world that is grounded in utilitarian function and vitalized by an aesthetic and literary commitment to “new beauty.” Teige’s vision of a socialist “new beauty” was a markedly international one, and the rest of this chapter is dedicated to the ways the Devětsil publications participated in a greater continental network, via editorial decisions around content and distribution.

⁴⁵⁷ Teige, “ReD: Revue Svazu Moderní Kultury ‘Devětsil’ Praha 1927,” *ReD* 1, no. 1 (October 1927): 1. Original: “*ReD* chce býti spolupracovníkem všech konstruktérů nového lidského vesmíru, spolubojovníkem sociální revoluce.”

⁴⁵⁸ Teige, “ReD. Revue Svazu Moderní Kultury ‘Devětsil’,” 1. Original: “*ReD* chce býti manifestací a zároveň propagací moderního ducha.”

In the Poetism manifesto published in *ReD*, Teige credits a similar iteration of Poetism—“a new era in the history of the human spirit”—to F. X. Šalda. Original: “nové éry v dějinách lidské duše.” [Teige, “Manifest Poetismu,” 317.]

⁴⁵⁹ Marx and Engels’ *The Communist Manifesto* famously starts with the sentence “A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of communism.” Original: “Ein Gespenst geht um in Europa—das Gespenst des Kommunismus.” [Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (London, 1848), 3.]

PUBLICATIONS BUILD THE INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE

Teige in Prague, and his fellow Devětsil member Černík in the Moravian capital of Brno, worked deliberately to bring attention from beyond the young Czechoslovak borders to their avant-garde publishing projects by including a healthy amount of international representation in their magazines, and by sending copies to strategic peers abroad. In this way, Teige was able to simultaneously educate a wider Czech public on art production and social engagement in foreign lands and reciprocally, to showcase to an international audience the awareness of and receptivity to foreign art movements within Czechoslovakia. To reach out to the international avant-garde and bring exposure to that international circle to readers at home, the Czech publications often featured at least some text in foreign languages, most often in German and French. A notable example of the way an international exchange was manifest in the pages of the magazines is in the first issue of Teige's *ReD* from October 1927, which opens with a poem by Phillipe Soupault, titled "Do Prahy" ("To Prague"), a reminiscence on the author's time in Prague earlier that same year.⁴⁶⁰ With the exception of the title and a line about the unforgettable taste of "bilá káva" ("white coffee"), the poem is reproduced in French, and is followed by an editorial note that highlights the level of

⁴⁶⁰ As mentioned in the prior chapter, Soupault had visited Prague once in 1926 and again in 1927. Evidence of Soupault's later visit to Prague appears also in magazines not under Devětsil directorship, but with which they collaborated and in which Devětsil members published, such as *Kmen* and *Rozpravy Aventina*. The "Do Prahy" poem was also reproduced in *Kmen*, with a note that it had originally been published in *ReD*. More recently, in the 1997 Gallimard edition that includes Soupault's Prague poems, "Do Prahy" appears again.

exchange between the French and Czech milieus.⁴⁶¹ The poem by Soupault is then followed by a poem for him, written by Nezval, which is also published in French (translated from Czech by the comedian and actor Jiří Voskovec, and appearing that year as well in *La Revue française de Prague*), and names a string of French visitors to Prague, including Guillaume Apollinaire. The editors of *ReD* reproduce a preface (now translated into Czech) that had initially appeared (in French) in the Paris-based magazine *L'Intransigeant* with Nezval's poem: "Mr. Vítězslav Nezval has written a poem dedicated to Philip Soupault, a poem of beautiful, modern form and happy invention.—Apollinaire and Soupault, formerly in Prague, 20 years apart in age, have both born the seed that has grown into a friendship."⁴⁶² A short poem—"June 14th, 1915" from his book *Calligrammes*—by Apollinaire appears on the same page as Nezval's poem starts, running horizontally and wedged between thick black lines, in this case printed in Czech and translated by Teige.

At pretty much every turn, the Czech avant-garde signaled its international alignment, and had aimed to do so from its very beginnings. Already in 1922 with *Život* 2, a page dedicated to the names and locations of "collaborators" reveals the wide and

⁴⁶¹ Philippe Soupault, "Do Prahy," *ReD* 1, no. 1 (Oct. 1927): 4.

⁴⁶² "Novinářská zpráva," *ReD* 1, no. 1 (Oct. 1927): 4. Original: "Pařížský 'L'INTRANSIGEANT' otiskuje tuto noticku, nadepsanou: 'Mladí Češi a My': Pan Vítězslav Nezval napsal báseň, věnovanou Philippu Soupaultovi, báseň krásné moderní formy a veselé invence. — Apollinaire a Soupault, pobývše v Praze, v časové vzdálenosti dvaceti let od sebe, zasili zrna, jež tu vzkvétají v přátelství."

L'Intransigeant was a daily illustrated paper, to which Apollinaire contributed. Apollinaire, writes Derek Sayer, "made a brief visit" to Prague "during the first week of March 1902." [Derek Sayer, *Prague, Capital of the Twentieth Century: A Surrealist History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 35.] His recollection of the city would make its way into the poem "Zone," from *Alcohols (Alcools)* of 1913.

A year earlier, in his introduction to his typophoto book of poetry *Abeceda (Alphabet)*, Nezval cites another French poet, Rimbaud, and specifically his "Sonnet of the Vowels" as an influence on the poems he created for that extended poem. [Vítězslav Nezval, *Abeceda* (Prague: J. Otto, 1926), 3.]

international scope of the publication. The list includes: “Archipenko—Berlin;” “Delluc—(Cinéa) Paris;” “Erenburg [*sic*—Vesc [*sic*], Berlin;” “Modigliani [post mortem];” Jeanneret (Le Corbusier Saugnier)—‘L’Esprit nouveau’, Paris;” and even “Charlie Chaplin—U.S.A. Los Angeles [*sic*].” Le Corbusier (Jeanneret) and Saugnier (Ozenfant) have an especially significant presence in *Život 2*, contributing, for instance, an article titled “Architecture and Purism.” This article is reproduced with images of Corbusier’s architectural work, and includes a subtitle that affirms it was “written especially for ‘Život’” (“psaný specialně pro ‘Život’”).⁴⁶³ They also contributed a separate article entitled simply “Le Purisme” (this time confusingly attributed to Ozenfant and Jeanneret, rather than Corbusier and Saugnier). Both essays were printed in French, and on the following pages in Czech translation. In a letter to Teige, Le Corbusier thanks him for including him in the issue, and praises the final product, though the date of this letter (and the content of one prior), suggest there was some delay in getting Le Corbusier his copy. “I have received *Život* and thank you you emphatically; I offer you all my compliments for the beautiful edition that you have put together.”⁴⁶⁴

The following year, at the beginning of 1923, just days after informing Černík that the first issue of *Disk* is about to appear, Teige writes on stationary printed with the

⁴⁶³ Le Corbusier and Saugnier, “Architektura a Purism/Architecture et Purisme,” *Život 2* (1922): 74.

⁴⁶⁴ Le Corbusier to Teige, March 3, 1923, PNP, KT Archive. Original: “J’ai bien reçu votre *Zivot* [*sic*] et je vous en remercie vivement je vous fais tous mes compliments pour la belle edition que vous avez faite.”

In a letter from around the same time to Černík, Teige suggests the difficulties they had in getting the copies to contributors on time, in defense of apparent complaints from Černík that he himself had not received his copy: “The Beseda people make the most trouble; copies sent abroad had to be paid for out of our own pockets!!” Original: “Besedčané dělají největší obtiže a exempláře do ciziny jsme musili za vlastní peníze posílat!!” [Teige to Černík, 1923, PNP, AČ Archive.]

Disk letterhead that includes the title of the journal also in Russian, French, German, English, and Italian. The publishers' names and the contact information for the publication (Černá 12a, Teige's home address at that time) are printed in Czech and French. On the cover of *Pásmo* (the "Mezinárodní moderní leták"), the title of the magazine and its description was translated into English ("The Zone international pamphlet"), French ("*La zone* pamphlet international"), German ("*Die Zone* internationale Flugblatt"), and Italian ("*La zone* rivista internazionale"). This convention of providing basic editorial information in a multitude of languages was maintained on the cover of the actual journal, and across a broad swath of journals in which Teige had a hand, a custom commonly employed in other international avant-garde magazines as well, such as Theo van Doesburg's *Mécano*, the Berlin based *Veshch/Objekt/Gegenstand* of Ehrenburg and El Lissitzky (1890-1941), and the Yugoslav publication *Zenit*, edited Ljubomir Micić, along with Yvan Goll from issues eight through thirteen. While in some instances this is a largely symbolic gesture towards internationalism, as the reader would need to be able to read Czech to have access to most of the published text, there are some important instances, such as the Soupault and Nezval poems quoted above, in which full poems or articles were reproduced in a foreign language, a convention also adopted by *Veshch* and *Zenit*, for instance. On the very first page of *Pásmo* 4 from 1924 there are articles in Czech (as the original language in a poem by František Halas, but also in translation, in a statement by *Ma* editor Lajos Kassák), Polish (by the Constructivist and *Blok* editor Mieczysław Szczuka), and German (by Kurt Schwitters and Willi Baumeister). And in the same magazine a year later, László Moholy-Nagy's

important example of “typophoto” called “Dynamic of a Metropolis” (“Dynamik der Großstadt”) is printed in German.

There are also a few instances in which Czech writers chose to have their work published at home in a foreign language. For instance, also in 1925, in *Disk 2* Nezval publishes in German—“Rocket” (“Rakete”), subtitled as a “Photographic Poem” (“Photogenisches Gedicht”)—as does Vančura in an essay entitled “The New Art” (“Die Neue Kunst”). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Czechs occasionally translated themselves as a means by which to reach further into the consciousness of the greater European avant-garde. Such is the case with Teige’s important essay “Moderní typó” (“Modern Typography”), which was reproduced in the trade journal, *Typografia* in both Czech and German.

A list Teige makes out for Černík in January 1927, of printing blocks (“štočky”) that were used in the publication of *Pásmo* and *Disk* as he requests their return, suggests just how frequently international art was featured in Czech avant-garde publishing. The requested images reflect Devětsil’s simultaneously eastward and westward gaze, and include Mies van der Rohe’s “Skyscraper” (*Pásmo* vol. 1, issue 10), a Le Corbusier model and Adolf Loos villa (*Pásmo* volume 1, issue 13-14; what Teige calls the “blue” issue because of the color of the paper used), a Moholy-Nagy photograph (*Pásmo* vol. 1, issue 9), various paintings by Picasso and Picabia, an image of the silent French film comedian Max Linder (*Pásmo* vol. 2, issue 2; there is in fact no such image in

this issue though Teige writes it is there), Léger's Chaplin portrait (*Pásmo* vol. 2, issue 5), and Vladimir Tatlin's tower (*Pásmo* vol. 2, issue 9-10: final issue of the magazine).⁴⁶⁵

Such an interest in international artmaking alongside a desire to establish the unique and relevant place of the Czech avant-garde within this international context, could at times generate oppositional editorial demands. In December 1924, Teige proposes topics and content for future issues of *Pásmo*. In adjoining sentences, he urges that the journal simultaneously offer a greater representation of Czech art, while somehow also showcasing more international works:

For the next issues of Pasma some suggestions: more representative Czech things, namely architecture. Obtain the collaboration of Ježek, who is now in Paris. Do a modern German number: Bauhaus, G, Merz, Grosz. I have an article on modern German art. Still missing in pásmo all these important writers: Ozenfant a Jeanneret. Gropius. Oud. Mondrian. Doesburg, [Mies] v.d. Rohe, Lissitzky, Tatlin, Lipchi[tz] Gabo Pevsner, Ehrenburg a Kozincová, Malevich, Rodchenko, Meierhold, Mayakovsky, R.Hausmann, Hans Arp, Walden, Marinetti, Gleizes, Reverdy, Tzara, Ribemont-Dessaignes. Apollinaire, Birot, Huidobro, Jacob, Perret, Loos, Salmon, Juan Gris,—fill this in with other examples so that it is exhaustive!

Don't forget in the theater issue about Burian, Longen and Ferenc or about the circus.

Pro další sešity Pasma některé návrhy: více reprezentativních českých věcí, architektury zejména. Získat spolupráci Ježkovu, jenž bude teď v Paříži Udělat moderní německé číslo: Bauhaus, G, Merz, Grosz. Mám článek o moderním německém umění..Jště chybí v pásmu tito důležití cizí autoři: Ozenfant a Jeanneret. Gropius. Oud. Mondrian. Doesburg, v.d. Rohe, Lissitzky, Tatlin, Lipchi Gabo Pevsner, Erenburg a Kozincová, Malevič, Rodčenko, Meierhold, Majakovskij, R.Hausmann, Hans Arp, Walden,

⁴⁶⁵ Teige to Černík, January 1927, PNP, AČ Archive.

Marinetti, Gleizes, Reverdy, Tzara, Ribemont-Dessaignes.
Apollinaire, Birot , Huidobro, Jacob, Perret, Loos, Salmon,
Juan Gris,—doplňovat tedy ukázky, aby byly jednou úplné!
Nezapomenout v divadelním čísle na Buriana, Longena a
Ferenca a na cirkus.⁴⁶⁶

This broad list of names looks to have been run off at great speed (typed on a typewriter, most spacing is omitted between the names; spelling and diacritical errors also abound, and are preserved above), cobbled together seemingly in a stream of conscious fashion. The Bauhaus and Tristan Tzara, Juan Gris and Adolf Loos, El Lissitzky and Apollinaire are set side by side in a list of editorial suggestions. It is a long and expansive list, an ambitious if not outright impossible set of names and topics to be covered coherently in one small journal (and indeed, while the magazine was expansive in scope it ultimately did not include all of these names), especially if we consider that the sentence with which this paragraph begins marks a demand as well for “more representative Czech things, namely architecture.”⁴⁶⁷ Demand for such broad

⁴⁶⁶ Teige to Černík, Oct 1924, PNP, AČ Archive.

⁴⁶⁷ Such a conundrum (of representing international movements without overshadowing developments at home) is evident in Teige’s own writing and art making. His knowledge of the international Zeitgeist was encyclopedic, and his writings at times come off as simply a translation of foreign ideas into Czech. Teige set his feelers in many directions, and absorbed greedily what he observed happening in other European cities. Teige’s nephew, Miloš Aulický, describes his “phenomenal memory” as something “with which he dazzled his friends: in discussions he often cited from memory dozens of sources, together with all evidentiary data.” [Miloš Aulický, “Postscript: My Uncle, Karel Teige,” in *Karel Teige: L’enfant terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant Garde*, eds. Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha, trans. trans. Alexandra Büchler (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 384.] And Karel Srp writes in the same volumes, “he had no trouble absorbing the tenor of his surroundings.” [Karel Srp, “Karel Teige in the Twenties: The Moment of Sweet Ejaculation,” in *Karel Teige: L’enfant terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant Garde*, eds. Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha, trans. Karolína Vočadlo (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 21.] Similarly Zusi allows: “Teige [...] made no claim to originality. He saw himself as a discursive analyst, synthesizer, and progogator of international trends that were already widespread by the early 1920s, freely adopting ideas and slogans from other figures (for example, from Soviet Constructivists active in Berlin such as El Lissitzky and Ilya Ehrenburg, who themselves were transmitting and transforming currents from Moscow).” [Zusi, “Vanishing Points,” 376.]

international representation also contradicts the initial outlines set by the Devětsil group in Prague for the Brno publication.

One instance, concerning the architecture publication *MSA (Mezinárodní soudobá architektura, or International Contemporary Architecture)*,⁴⁶⁸ highlights that even when text was in Czech, compelling photographs and graphic design ensured the overall project of the Czech avant-garde was recognized abroad as innovative and in tandem with other developments across Europe. When Teige sent a copy of *MSA* to Josef Gantner (1896-1988), an editor of *Das neue Frankfurt*, he received a letter in response in which Gantner thanks Teige for the exemplar but also laments, “What a pity that I don’t understand Czech!”⁴⁶⁹ This was a typical response from the Czechs’ peers abroad, but—thanks in great part to excellent use of international typographic conventions and an astute selection of images, which might be described as the actual *lingua franca* of the international avant-garde magazines—this seems to be less a way to skirt further conversation or to discourage the sending of future issues, but rather an expression of genuine interest in what is coming out of Prague and Brno and a desire to

In addition to Zusi’s eastern example, in Teige’s 1925 book of essays, *Film*, he adopts his language from the French avant-garde. Such French neologisms as *photogénie* and *cinégraphie* are translated directly into Czech as *fotogenie* and *kinografie* in his own film theory writings. Before Teige borrowed the former for his own purposes, Ian Christie points out that *photogénie* was appropriated by Delluc from Louis Daguerre, who had coined the term for photography, and Delluc re-anointed it as the “the law of cinema.” [Ian Christie, “French Avant-garde Film in the Twenties: From ‘Specificity’ to ‘Surrealism,’” in *Film as Film* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979), 38.]

⁴⁶⁸ *MSA* appeared in three volumes, the first published in 1929, the second (the one Teige mails to Joseph Gantner) in 1930, and the third and final volume in 1931. It was put out by what was essentially the house publisher of Devětsil, Odeon. *ReD*—also published by Odeon—is advertised on its pages, and it is generally dedicated to international examples of Functionalist and Constructivist architecture.

⁴⁶⁹ Josef Gantner to Karel Teige, November 18, 1930, PNP, KT Archive.

Das neue Frankfurt was headed by Ernst May; it was only when the publication transitioned in 1932 to become *Die neue Stadt*, that Gantner took over as main editor.

better understand these publications.⁴⁷⁰ For despite the professed linguistic block, Gantner is intrigued enough by what he sees to ask Teige to find someone to write a review of *MSA* in German or French for *Das neue Frankfurt* (indicating that he presumably does not know himself anyone with the Czech linguistic skills who would be up to the task). And, as a postscript he requests, “Please send me immediately the cliché of the Prague housing estate, page 227,” so that he may reproduce it further.⁴⁷¹

Testament to Teige’s growing international reputation, the power of the images he selects for publication and his innovative graphic design, Gantner is willing to further publicize the *MSA* project without even being able to read the text.

The foreign language skills of Devětsil members seem to have varied widely,⁴⁷² and many of the avant-gardists, rather than publishing their own texts in foreign languages, focused on translating the work of their peers into Czech for the reader at home. Karel Čapek, Černík, and Nezval, for instance all translated from the French. The title of the magazine *Pásmo* is in and of itself an example of the ways in which Devětsil attempted to signal that the Czech publications were aligned with an international

⁴⁷⁰ Adolf Behne expresses this explicitly. After years of receiving *Stavba* and then *ReD* from Teige, he declares, “It is really about time we learn Czech!” Original: “es ist wirklich Zeit, dass man Tschechisch lernt.” [Adolf Behne to Karel Teige, Oct. 15, 1929, PNP, KT Archive.]

⁴⁷¹ Josef Gantner to Karel Teige, November 18, 1930, PNP, KT Archive. The image Gantner refers to is a model for the Baba colony, a series of Functionalist houses designed by prominent Czech architects who formed the Czechoslovak Werkbund and were influenced by similar colonies in Vienna and Stuttgart of the German Werkbund.

⁴⁷² For example, in one letter to Černík with corrections for *Pásmo* from March 1924, Teige encloses a slip of paper with grammatical corrections to the “most flagrant mistakes” (“nejkřiklavějších chyby”) from a text written in German by Jiří Wolker. [Teige to Černík, March 31, 1924, PNP, AČ Archive.] And Garfinkle describes in some detail in the Introduction to her dissertation, “Bridging East and West: Czech Surrealism’s Interwar Experiment,” the comparative lack of education and linguistic skills of Nezval to Teige.

milieu. Even though *Pásmo* was run by Černík, a letter from Teige in late 1923 suggests that Teige was very active in determining the journal's name. In the letter, Teige expresses his opposition to the proposed name of the publication, "Avion," writing, "it's only the title that I don't quite like—it's too technical, suited to an aviation magazine, like AUTO for drivers."⁴⁷³ In place of "Avion," Teige proposes several other titles: "FORM, THE ZONE, THE COLOR OF THE TIMES, SIREN, PANORAMA, POINT."⁴⁷⁴ As history tells us, *Pásmo* is the title ultimately chosen, which was meant to represent diverse affiliations for Devětsil. It was, for instance, the same word used by Karel Čapek as the title of his wildly popular translation of Guillaume Apollinaire's poem "The Zone," which Teige glowingly reviewed in 1919 for *Kmen*.⁴⁷⁵ This translation had been enthusiastically welcomed by the young avant-garde, for it served, as Garfinkle writes, "the aims of cultural development" at home.⁴⁷⁶ For Devětsil, Apollinaire was a model of modern French poetry, and Čapek's translation (of Apollinaire's poem that includes mention of Prague) made Apollinaire's work available to the general Czech reader. "Pásmo" can also mean "band" or "belt" and on the cover of the magazine the "P" in "Pásmo" was designed to resemble a filmstrip, signifying the journal's emphasis on the filmic art,

⁴⁷³ Ibid. Original: Original: "jenom titul se nám poněkud nelíbí – je příliš odborně vhodný pro aviatorský časopis, jako AUTO pro automobilisty."

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid. Original: "TVAR, PÁSMO, BARVA ČASU, SIRENA, PANORAMA, BOD."

A magazine with the title *Panorama* did in fact exist, and first appeared in the very same year Teige suggests this name (1923). But it was not a publication of Devětsil. Its editors included Miloslav Novotný, Míla Grimmichová, and Václav Poláček and it was put out by the Communist publisher Družstevní práce, with whom Teige occasionally worked.

⁴⁷⁵ Teige, "Guillaume Apollinaire (Několik poznámek k českému překlad 'Pásma'.)", *Kmen* 3, no. 7 (June 19, 1919): 51.

⁴⁷⁶ Deborah Garfinkle, "Karel Čapek's 'Pásmo' and the Construction of Literary Modernity through the Art of Translation," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 47, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 356.

which was Černík's main theoretical area of interest, also of great interest to Teige and the avant-garde more generally.⁴⁷⁷

Beyond translation, the Devětsil members also used their publications as a way to report at home on literary and artistic developments abroad. To cite just a very few examples, Černík published the article "Ruská výtvarná práce" ("The Art of Russia") in the 1922 *Revoluční sborník Devětsil*, and Teige published several articles on the Bauhaus, including one in the popular illustrated magazine *Pestrý Týden* from January 1927. Also in 1927, in the first issue of *ReD*, Julius Fučík wrote an essay entitled "Charles Baudelaire," in which he praises the poet and flâneur so popular in the interwar period as the one who hit upon "the singular road to a poetry of the modern person, the road to *self determined poetry*."⁴⁷⁸ This aspect of the magazines occupies the focus of the following sections of this chapter.

Related to this, the Devětsil magazines also provided information about movements abroad and signaled their international alignment through the employment of a very particular form of advertisement. As Michael Cowan writes, there were many

⁴⁷⁷ Concurrent examples of very similar "P"s crop up elsewhere, again evidencing a kind of international adoption of popular imagery. In Tschichold's important book, *The New Typography*, he includes typographic work from Kurt Schwitters' (1887-1948) advertisements for the firm Pelikan, which features a "P" quite like that used on the front page of *Pásmo*. Also in Tschichold's book, an example of a printed "b" from Max Burchartz is similarly reminiscent, as is another "P" included in a political poster by an unknown typographer.

⁴⁷⁸ Julius Fučík, "Charles Baudelaire," *ReD* 1, no. 1 (Oct. 1927): 10. Original: "jedinou cestu poesie moderního člověka, cestu k *seburčení poesie*."

Baudelaire was, as is well documented, a favorite of the interwar avant-garde, and the Czech context was no exception. In a letter to Černík after Teige's first visit to Paris, he reports excitedly in a postscript: "I only have Baudelaire with me here, fleurs du mal, a popular edition printed on not-bad paper, which I bought on the banks in Paris for 3 sous. It's something marvelous!" Original: "Mám zde jen Baudelaira, fleurs du mal, lidové vydání nešpatném papiře které jsem si v Paříži na nábřeží koupil za 3 sous. To je něco užásného!" [Teige to Černík, August 1922, PNP, AČ Archive.]

notable “synergies between avant-garde aesthetics and advertising,” and the sort of advertisement or promotion employed by the magazines of the avant-garde was in many ways integral to the periodicals’ other content, as opposed to separate or apart from it.⁴⁷⁹ While some of the avant-garde magazines did bring in a bit of revenue from advertising that tended not to read as integrally into the graphic design of a given publication, unpaid advertisement—the kind that served as artistic collaboration—was aesthetically consistent. This form of advertisement typically appeared either as a list—often printed in a bold, sans serif font—publicizing magazines from several different countries, or as an insert wedged somewhere in the body of the magazine. At the end of *Disk 1*, for instance, a long list of international avant-garde magazines is advertised, including *L’Esprit nouveau*, *Merz*, *G*, and *Zenit*. The magazines thus kept their readers up-to-date on new publications at home and abroad by devoting a significant amount of each issue to the promotion of other magazines and the work of international peers.

And though the editors did not collect advertising revenue for this sort of cross promotion, it used this sort of voluntary and selective promotion to signal an alliance with groups and movements across borders, most likely with the hope or expectation that the favor would be returned. Drucker describes how an absence of revenue generating advertisement was a notable characteristic of early Twentieth Century avant-garde publications was. She writes, “advertising was minimal and, where it existed, consisted almost exclusively of notices for other literary publications.”⁴⁸⁰ Though

⁴⁷⁹ Michael Cowan, “Advertising, Rhythm, and the Filmic Avant-Garde in Weimar: Guido Seeber and Julius Pinschewer’s *Kipho Film*,” *October* 131 (Winter 2010): 30.

⁴⁸⁰ Drucker, *The Visible Word*, 104.

Drucker is looking to examples some years earlier than the scope of this dissertation, and certainly not in a Czech context, her observation is also true of magazines such as *Disk*, *ReD*, and *Pásmo*, which were likewise advertised in other publications abroad. In short, these publications presented “advertising” copy in the form of curated lists of other international journals put together at the editors’ discretion in order to forge alignments with these other operations.

DISTRIBUTION AS EXCHANGE: GROPIUS AND MEYER AGAIN

And finally, once the magazines were printed, Teige made sure that all efforts towards international representation in the journals of the Czech avant-garde were recognized abroad, by sending exemplars out to notable international figures. He clearly saw this as a key component to furthering the reach of the Czech avant-garde in a European context. His letters to Černík at times feature a laundry list of foreign names and addresses to whom to send various periodicals. As early as 1921, before Devětsil had any real publications of its own, he writes to Černík with one such list of addresses to which he suggests he send the political journal *Červen*. Several years later, when it came time to distribute *Pásmo*, Teige’s list had expanded. Sent in a letter from April 1924, the *Pásmo* list is characteristically impressive, a who’s who of the major figures of the day, including Ehrenburg (living in Berlin at the time), Walter Gropius (at the Bauhaus in Weimar), Ossip Zadkine (in Paris), and the journal *G* (published in Berlin by El Lissitzky,

who was also working with Ehrenburg on *Veshch*) as well as *Zenit*, associated here with Goll.⁴⁸¹ After a markedly long gap in the collected and saved letters from Teige to Černík of this period, Teige writes again in July 1924 with the addresses of the same important figures, and new personalities added, such as Baumeister and van Doesburg.⁴⁸² Below the appended list of addresses, Teige scrawls the exclamation “definitely!! these are important addresses! Send me as well some copies for propaganda on my travels. I’m stopping in Vienna, Trieste, Venice, Milan, Genoa, Nice, Marseille, Lyon, Paris, Strasbourg, Stuttgart.”⁴⁸³

Teige’s early contact with Gropius is a salient example of the fact that when he wrote to Černík with lists of where to send *Devětsil* publications, it was not a futile exercise, in which the magazines went directly from foreign mailbox to foreign garbage bin. *Devětsil* was constantly struggling financially, and was out of necessity very strategic in deciding where to send its periodicals. Thanks to carefully considered lists such as the

⁴⁸¹ Teige to Černík, April 17, 1924, PNP, AČ Archive.

Though the magazines were generally directed westward, ties to the Soviet Union and South Slavic avant-gardes can be ascertained throughout this list, which includes several émigrés living in Berlin and Paris. Ehrenburg, born in Kiev, lived in various centers of Europe, such as Paris, Vienna, and Berlin, where he was residing when Teige suggested they send him a copy of *Pásmo*. In Berlin, he worked closely with the Russian Suprematist-Constructivist El Lissitzky, on the magazine *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet*, a trilingual publication dedicated to bringing Western awareness to developments in Russian art. Ossip Zadkine (1890-1967) was a Cubist sculptor and a Russian living in Paris. And as mentioned already in Chapter Two, Goll was French-German.

⁴⁸² Teige to Černík, July 23, 1924, PNP, AČ Archive.

Notable figures also took it upon themselves to request exemplars, when they did not automatically receive them. None other than Jan Tschichold sent Černík a postcard just before Christmas 1925 requesting a copy of *Veraikon*. [Tschichold to Černík, Dec. 21, 1925, PNP, AČ Archive.] And the Italian scholar of Slavonic studies, Wolfgang Giusti (1901-1979), sent Teige a postcard from within Prague in 1928—notably, writing in Czech—requesting three to four copies of the most recent version of *ReD*, and offering to pick them up directly from the publisher. [Giusti to Teige, March 21, 1928, PNP, KT Archive.]

⁴⁸³ Teige to Černík, July 23, 1924, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “určitě!! jsou to důležitý adresy! Pošli mi rovněž několik exemplářů na cestu pro propagaci. Stavím se ve Vídni, v Terstu, Benátkách, Milaně, Janově, Nizze, Marseillu, Lyon, Paříži, Strasburgu, Stuttgartu.”

ones detailed above, the Czech avant-garde maintained very real contact with foreign contemporaries, and the impulse towards an international exchange of images and other content to be published was multidirectional. The correspondence Gropius initiated with Teige, as already discussed in Chapter Two, is the result of seeing Teige's architecture magazine *Stavba* thanks to Adolf Behne, who was a regular contributor to the magazine, and from whom Gropius subsequently received Teige's contact information.

In 1924, a year after Teige helped Gropius with the first major Bauhaus exhibition, and shortly following a series of letters in which Gropius thanks Teige for his support of the school through a period of political duress,⁴⁸⁴ Gropius responds warmly to a proposal Teige appears to have made to do a special issue on young German architecture, presumably for *Stavba*. Gropius confirms he will be of assistance to Teige, reiterating that he thinks highly of the work coming out of the Czech lands: "After the experiences of the last year, I expect a lot from such an exchange."⁴⁸⁵ Gropius suggests that he understands such a collaboration on this special issue (which never does fully materialize, though Gropius did indeed contribute writing for *Stavba*, and the Bauhaus enjoyed frequent attention on its pages) as not only a way to generate exposure abroad for the work he was doing at the Bauhaus, but also, in a sense, to return a favor, since

⁴⁸⁴ In the Gropius papers at the Bauhaus-Archiv in Berlin, there is a saved section of *Stavba*, called "Rozhled" ("Round Up," literally "Panorama"), which includes an article Teige wrote in defense of the Bauhaus. Though the article is in Czech, it is clear from penciled notations on the backside of the article that Gropius labored through it in order to gather some basic understanding of the article's content.

⁴⁸⁵ Gropius to Teige, June 25, 1924, BHA, WG Archive. Original: "Ich verspreche mir nach den Erfahrungen des letzten Jahres gerade viel von solchem Austausch."

Teige had been his point person in Prague as he worked to advertise his Weimar exhibition the previous year.

As the correspondence between Teige and Gropius continues throughout the 1920s, it is Teige's role as editor of *Stavba* that continued to hold the most interest for the Bauhaus director, and it is in this capacity that Gropius most commonly addresses him. In mid-April 1924, Gropius asks that Teige send him the very first issue of *Stavba*, explaining, "I'm missing that one, and I want to bind the volume for myself."⁴⁸⁶ And two years later, he complains (now in the all lowercase script in standard use at the Bauhaus by this time) that Teige and his *Stavba* seem to have vanished—"for almost a full year i have not been able to get your magazine, for which i showed so great an interest."⁴⁸⁷ He asks, "can the issues be sent at a later date? we really miss that we cannot properly continue to follow your endeavors."⁴⁸⁸

By this time, as has been shown in Chapter Two, the relationship between Teige and Gropius had waned, in great part likely due to Teige's reservations about the direction he observed the Bauhaus take when it first moved to Dessau in 1925-1926. But when Meyer stepped in as director in 1928, relations with the school intensified once again, with the most vivid (and final) example of that collaboration taking the form of the special issue of *ReD* dedicated to the Bauhaus. But even before Meyer succeeded

⁴⁸⁶ Gropius to Teige, April 15, 1924, BHA, WG Archive. Original: "Es fehlt mir und ich möchte mir den Jahrgang binden lassen."

⁴⁸⁷ Gropius to Teige, June 28, 1926, BHA, WG Archive. Original: "seit fast einem jahr kann ich ihre zeitschrift nicht mehr bekommen, die ich so grosses interesse entgegenbrachte"

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid. Original: "können die nummern nicht nachgeliefert werden? es fehlt uns direkt, dass wir ihre bestrebungen nicht richtig weiter verfolgen können."

Gropius as the director of the Bauhaus, he had already had significant contact with Devětsil and its publications, specifically as he passed back and forth photographic images with Černík for their respective magazines.

An extended exchange in letters between Černík and Meyer as they swapped photographs and printing blocks to be included in each other's publications (namely *Pásmo* on Černík's end and Meyer's architectural magazine *ABC*), evidence once again how the network of exchange was built simultaneously in the public and the private sphere. The first letter from Meyer that appears in Černík's correspondence filed at the PNP (none of Černík's responses remain either at the PNP or the Bauhaus-Archiv) dates from July 21, 1925 and is in response to an invitation by Černík to have work appear in *Pásmo*, which Meyer readily accepts. Much like Moholy-Nagy would a few months later, Meyer includes four photographs and writes, "These same ones are not yet published in any international magazines and only once published in the Swiss Magazine 'WORK'."⁴⁸⁹ The emphasis here that the publication in *Pásmo* will be the first foreign printing of the photographs again suggests a privileging of the Czech avant-garde as a place to showcase the unique work of Meyer's Co-op. Meyer was likely motivated in his regard for *Pásmo* by the strong reception of past periodicals of the Czech avant-garde, such as *Stavba*, and by the strong representation of other European architects, such as Le

⁴⁸⁹ Hannes Meyer to Černík, July 21, 1925, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "Dieselben sind noch in keiner ausländischen Zeitschrift veröffentlicht worden und nur ein Mal publiziert worden in der schweizerischen Zeitschrift 'DAS WERK.'"

The photographs are of Le Théâtre Co-op, a group Meyer formed in Basel, Switzerland with Jean Bard.

Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and van Doesburg already on display on *Pásmo's* pages.
(Meyer's images, however, were ultimately never included.)

In the time that elapses between this letter with enclosed images from 1925, and his next saved letter from 1926, an issue of *Pásmo* (volume two, issue eight) dedicated to the stagings of the Liberated Theater has come out. Meyer expresses strong interest in this number. He writes:

I had a look with great interest at the photoplastic works and theater photos of Czech artists in the last issue of PASMO. Unfortunately, I cannot read Czech. But even so I thank you for your thoughtfulness. I will send you in return my next issue of ABC (1926, no. 2) and a special issue of WORK which I am preparing at the moment.

For the special issue of WORK, I'd like to ask of you whether you couldn't lend me the photographs (not the printing blocks) of the stage construction for "Aristophanes" to reproduce. The best one for me would be the photo which is in the photoplastic image by TEIGE, and to the bottom left, on the edge of page 89, because there the stage scaffolding appears more constructive than in the image above left on page 88. If you could also send me one other photo with it of the circus image in the middle of page 89, that would be very good.

Mit grossem Interesse habe ich in der letzten Nummer des PASMO die fotoplastischen Arbeiten und die Theater-Fotos tschechischer Künstler angeschaut. Leider kann ich das Tschechische nicht lesen. Aber auch so sage ich Ihnen Dank für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit. Ich werde Ihnen im Gegendienst demnächst meine Nummer von ABC/1926/2 zusenden und eine Sondernummer von DAS WERK, die jetzt von mir vorbereitet wird.

Für diese Sondernummer WERK möchte ich anfragen, ob Sie mir nicht die Fotografien (nicht die Klischés) der Bühnen=konstruktion zu "Aristofanes" leihen würden zu Reproduktions=zwecken. Am liebsten wäre mir die Foto, welche auf der Fotoplastik von TEIGE zu unterst links am

Rand enthalten ist auf Seite 89, denn dort erscheint das Bühnengerüst noch konstruktiver als auf der Abbildung links oben auf Seite 88. Wenn Sie mir auch noch eine Foto des Zirkusbildes in der Mitte von Seite 89 mitschicken könnten, wäre dies sehr gut.⁴⁹⁰

By sending Meyer a copy of *Pásmo*, Černík generates an exchange of publications, as Meyer promises to send the journals in which he has a hand—*ABC* and *Das Werk*—in return. And most importantly, Meyer in turn asks to include images he has now just seen in this issue of *Pásmo* in the special issue of *Das Werk* that he is editing.⁴⁹¹ The request suggests a further utility in sending the Czech publications to peers abroad: not only did the act help increase the visibility of what avant-garde art making and theory looked like in Prague and Brno, but also initiated at least the potentiality of a recruitment of Czech images for foreign publications of repute. Meyer's comment, "unfortunately I cannot read Czech," is telling, and again, oft repeated, highlighting once more the strategic interest Devětsil had in adopting the emphasis of "visual communication" propounded by New Typography.⁴⁹² The incorporation of photographs

⁴⁹⁰ Meyer to Černík, May 16, 1926, PNP, AČ Archive.

⁴⁹¹ In a later letter, Meyer is adamant in asserting his role at *Das Werk* as only related to this special issue, apparently in response to requests by Černík for ten copies of the special issue. He writes, "regarding work this is the thing: my influence there is only temporary and in passing." Original: "mit dem werk ist es so eine sache: mein einfluss dort ist ganz temporär und vorübergehend." [Meyer to Černík, September 27, 1926, PNP, AČ Archive.]

⁴⁹² In a letter to Teige after World War Two, Meyer suggests that at one point he was studying Czech, but has entirely forgotten what he had learned. Upon returning to Switzerland after ten years in Mexico, he reports: "English, French, and Spanish I now speak as well as German. Russian I can still read rather well, but my spoken skills are out of practice. Since I no longer have the opportunity to go for walks in Šarka with my teacher (since 1936), I have unfortunately made no progress in Czech. May Jožka [Teige's longtime partner] forgive me!" Original: "Englisch, Französisch und Spanisch spreche ich heute so gut, wie Deutsch. Russisch lese ich noch ganz gut, bin aber zum Sprechen aus der Übung. Seitdem ich nicht mehr mit meiner Lehrmeisterin in die 'Sarka' spazieren ging (seit 1936) habe ich leider im Tschechischen keine Fortschritte gemacht! Jozka möge mir verzeihen!" [Meyer to Teige, February 23, 1950, PNP, KT Archive.]

in the magazines, either on their own and unadulterated, or as part of a montage, was essential to producing what Srp calls “a simple, visual language in which photography provided optical concepts instead of written words.”⁴⁹³

Meyer’s special issue of *Das Werk*—which came out in July 1926 and was a rather drastic departure both in terms of design and in content from its regularly scheduled programming—reflected an impressively broad geographic and linguistic scope in the work it aimed to promote. Though all the text itself is in German, there are images of architecture and architectural plans from Paris (Le Corbusier) to Leningrad (Nathan Altman). There are reproductions of two photograms by Moholy-Nagy, as well as images of the graphic work of his Hungarian colleague and editor of *Ma*, Lajos Kassák, whose essay “Advertisement” (“Die Reklame”) appears in this special issue. There is a page from El Lissitzky’s children’s book *From Two Quadrants (Von 2 Quadranten)* published by De Stijl. And two images from *Pásmo* that originally appeared in the issue Meyer praised in his letter.

In the issue of *Pásmo* dedicated to the Liberated Theater a photomontage by Teige and Otakar Mrkvička (Teige’s collaborator on book cover designs) appears featuring several of the company’s actors and stage designs, and is the image Meyer had mentioned to Černík. It includes a photograph of the “constructive” image Meyer describes as well as another with a large sign reading “CIRKUS.” The former, which features actors climbing on a staging of wood scaffolding, in a scene from *Aristophanes*

⁴⁹³ Karel Srp, (Picture Poems and Poetism),” in *Czech Photographic Avant-Garde, 1918-1948*, ed. Vladimír Birgus (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 59.

directed by Jiří Frejka (1904-1952), with set design by Antonín Heythum (1901-1954), is included in *Das Werk*. The second image in *Das Werk*, however, is not the “circus image” Meyer had requested, but another in which an actor is also perched atop a wooden scaffolding (again of Heythum’s design), in a staging of Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes’ *The Silent Canary*, this time directed by Jindřich Honzl (1894-1953).

In yet another nod to the internationalism of this special issue, and the capacity of the avant-garde magazines to facilitate networks of exchange more generally, besides the two images of Czech theater appears a list of “Some Contemporary Records” (“Einige Zeitgemässe Grammophonplatten“), that include new releases of the Foxtrot and Stravinsky, but also, and perhaps most interestingly, “1 Spoken Word Record” (“1 Sprechplatte”): that of the *Lautgedichte* of Kurt Schwitters, a so-called “Merz-Platte.”⁴⁹⁴ The following pages feature a convention common across the avant-garde magazines, that of including lists of new publications, with sections dedicated to books and magazines, and a whole page devoted to little blurbs for each of the first eight Bauhaus books. Again, advertisement was a central mode by which the principles of New Typography were put on display, and the Constructivist magazines’ emphasis on graphic principles such as typophoto rendered it well suited to include advertising materials organic to the aesthetic whole of the publication. This form of advertisement was typically used to promote other avant-garde magazines, and this was certainly the case in Meyer’s issue of *Das Werk*, which also included pages of more traditional

⁴⁹⁴ “Merz” was a term used frequently by Schwitters in the 1920s, and throughout the rest of his life, in relation to his collages, assemblages, and other works, and was also the name of a magazine he put out from 1923-1932.

advertisement that were clearly more in line with the publication's usual design. What is remarkable in Meyer's special issue is that he also dedicates two pages to a set of photographs that feature the covers of many periodical publications, such as the Bauhausbücher, *Ma*, *Merz*, Tschichold's issue of *Typographische Mitteilungen*, *De Stijl*, *L'Esprit nouveau*, *Blok*, *Der Sturm*, *The Little Review*, *ABC*, *Zenit* and *Pásmo*. And, as might be expected, the issue of *Pásmo* that has been selected for the photograph is the very one dedicated to the Liberated Theater from which images are reproduced in *Das Werk*.

In a letter dated June 8, 1926, Meyer returns photos Černík had sent him to be reproduced, and reports also that an essay by Černík will be published (though it ultimately is not), likely in German translation, though Černík had provided him with a French version.⁴⁹⁵ In kind, he requests the return of "the photos from THEATER CO-OP, that I sent over a year ago."⁴⁹⁶ Whereas Meyer addresses Černík in his first several

⁴⁹⁵ Meyer writes: "Perhaps it will be translated into German, because the French translation is not totally clear." Original: "Vielleicht wird er noch ins Deutsche übersetzt, denn die französische Ueber=setzung ist nicht ganz eindeutig." [Meyer to Černík, June 8, 1926, PNP, AČ Archive.]

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid. Original: "die Fotos vom THEATER CO-OP, die ich vor einem Jahr Ihnen sandte." The delayed return of printing blocks is a constant problem. So many of Teige's letters to Černík echo such a request, the urgency of tone increasing as months pass, suggesting that Černík was often slow (or entirely remiss) in returning these important items, upon which the reproductions of images depended. In December of 1925, Moholy-Nagy had sent along printing blocks to be used for reproduction, and added: "i'd be very grateful to you if you would send these back to me, of which i have no copies, if you do not want to use them." Original: "ich wäre ihnen sehr dankbar, wenn sie diese, da ich keine kopien mehr davon besitze, an mich zurückschicken würden, im falle sie dieselben nicht verwenden wollen." [Moholy-Nagy to Černík, December 11, 1925, PNP, AČ Archive.] Yet, with Moholy-Nagy too it seems that Černík is remiss in returning these items in a timely manner, as his wife, Lucia, is charged the following summer with writing in pursuit of not missing printing blocks, but rather original photograms. In the letter in which she remarks that she was happy to meet "you all" in Prague, she politely also notes: "Moholy told me that he sent you original photograms and photographs of his plastic works. Would you be so kind as to send them back as soon as possible? those are his only ones." Original: "Moholy sagt mir, er habe bei Ihnen noch Originale von Fotogrammen und verschiedene Fotografien seiner Plastiken. Können Sie so

letters as the editor of *Pásmo*, in September of 1926 he begins to refer to him in association with the magazine *Horizont*, which is first published in 1927 and in which Teige's "Words, Words, Words" appeared in the first four issues. In this single-page letter, a prodigious amount of magazines are mentioned: on Meyer's side *ABC*, *Das Werk*, *Construction*, and on Černík's *Disk*, *Pásmo*, and *Horizont*. In May 1927 Meyer informs Černík of his new address at the Bauhaus in Dessau (where his missing images should be returned in the future), and sends Černík a copy of the second issue of *Bauhaus*, the school's in-house magazine publication. Meyer signs off here with optimism for continued collaboration: "in the hope that we also stay in contact in the future, i send you greetings with all my esteem, Hannes Meyer."⁴⁹⁷

This signing off, however, marks the final one in this narrative in letters. But the disappearance of a continued correspondence between Meyer and Černík cannot be interpreted as an end of the conversation, as we have seen already that not far after the letters to Černík let off, Teige's correspondence with Meyer regarding, among other things, the special issue of *ReD* dedicated to the Bauhaus pick up, in 1928.

freundlich sein, diese Fotos möglichst bald zurückschicken? da es seine einzigen sind." [Lucia Moholy-Nagy to Černík, June 8, 1926, PNP, AČ Archive.]

Of course, this is a problem distinct to its time. The sending of the image for reproduction represented a subsequent *lack* of that image on the part of the sender, and on the faith that it would be returned. Today, a sending represents instead a *doubling*, in that with the distribution of a file via email, both sender and recipient(s) are in possession of the identical file image, making the sharing of images a far less precious exchange.

⁴⁹⁷ Meyer to Černík, June 8, 1926, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "in der hoffnung, auch zukünftig mit ihnen in verbindug zu bleiben, begrüsse ich sie mit aller wertschätzung. Hannes Meyer."

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION IN *ReD*: SPECIAL ISSUES ON ITALIAN FUTURISM AND THE BAUHAUS

The opening statement to the first issue of *ReD* and its inclusion on the first pages of French poetry situated the magazine as a distinctly international and cross-disciplinary project that was strongly maintained going forward. The second issue was dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the Soviet Union, and featured examples of the Soviet book, architecture, painting, film, and theater. And two other issues of *ReD* were devoted explicitly to international movements: issue six of volume two from February 1929 was dedicated to Marinetti and “International Futurism” (“světový futurismus”), and one year later, issue five of volume three from February 1930 was dedicated to the Bauhaus school at Dessau, under the direction of Meyer. These editorial choices not only showcased to the reader at home with which movements abroad Devětsil felt its project to be aligned, but also instigated actual correspondence and collaboration with representatives of these movements, and led in turn to more active representation of the work of Devětsil in an international sphere.

In February 1928, despite Teige’s fraught relationship with Marinetti and Italian Futurism in general, an issue of *ReD* is dedicated to the group. It opens with a (scaled-down, black and white) reproduction of one of Marinetti’s brief but visually impactful (thanks to a red-inked letterhead that fills nearly the whole page and includes a Futurist man in motion) letters to Teige. Though a caption to the letter suggests that it is being included simply as an example of strong graphic design, the fact that not a blank page of

this exemplary stationary is printed, but rather one that bears a hand-written note to Teige would suggest other motivations.⁴⁹⁸ The letter opens, “My dear Teige, I have not forgotten you!” signalling to the reader on the very first page of the issue that Devětsil still rests in the good favor of the Futurists.⁴⁹⁹ It goes on to say, “I have received everything. Thank you, thank you, from all my heart. You will receive soon all that is necessary for the issue dedicated to Futurism.”⁵⁰⁰ The issue to which he refers, of course, is the issue of *ReD* in which this very letter is published. Then at the bottom of the page is one such item that Marinetti might have forwarded along for the issue: his poem “Successivement,” which embodies in its form his “parole in libertà” (“words in freedom”). The majority of the issue, though, is composed of an extended essay by Teige on Marinetti and Italian Futurism (essentially a third, much longer version of what first appeared in *Aktuality a kuriozity* in 1922 and then again in 1925 in *Pásmo*). In the midst of this article, another fragment from what appears to be one of Marinetti’s letters to Teige is reproduced, this time on a page with an example of Marinetti’s “words in freedom,” as well as an advertisement for the second edition of its Czech translation, which had first been printed in 1922, and featured cover design by Josef Čapek. Again, the choice of excerpt from Marinetti’s letter is strategic, as it once more

⁴⁹⁸ In contrast, in *The New Typography* (1928), Tschichold used only blank stationary when reproducing examples of well executed typographic design (including examples of Teige’s work).

⁴⁹⁹ F.T. Marinetti to Karel Teige, undated letter. Reproduced in *ReD* 2:6 (Feb. 1929), 174. Original: “Mon cher Teige, je ne vous ai pas oublié!”

Similarly, in issue fifteen of *Zenit* from June 1922, the editor Micić had reproduced in a simple typed column a note (in Italian) sent to him by Marinetti with praise for his magazine.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid. Original: “J’ai tout reçu. Merci, merci de tout mon coeur. Vous recevrez bientôt [*sic*] ce qu’il faut pour le numéro consacré à Futurisme.”

Here too, we have yet another instance in which the sharing of journals facilitated an interaction in letters and further collaboration. In another undated letter, kept in Teige’s archive, he specifically thanks Teige for sending him a copy of Teige’s 1925 publication *Film*.

unequivocally aligns Marinetti with Devětsil. In this one he writes: “With all my sympathies to my Devětsil friends.”⁵⁰¹

But the issue of *ReD* that involved perhaps the most active participation with an outside party was the one dedicated to the Bauhaus. This issue, published in February 1930, opens with photographs of the campus in Dessau on the cover and title page. There is the imperative in Czech, “young people! are you looking for an art and design school or academy? **study at the bauhaus!**” followed by a subsequent command in German, “young people of the world, come to the bauhaus!”⁵⁰² This is evocative, of course, of the Communist slogan, “Workers of the world, unite!” but it also a direct reference to a 1929 brochure published by the school, which features the same text in bold black letters, alongside a cut-out of a pointing hand, on the back cover. The emphasis on the “young” is hard to miss here: these statements are printed alongside a photograph of three young couples dancing in pairs, making art out of their youth and bodies (and also indicating that both men and women were welcome as students). The

⁵⁰¹ F. T. Marinetti to Karel Teige, undated letter. In *ReD* 2, no. 6 (Feb. 1929): 188. Original: “Avec toute ma sympathie pour les amis de Devetsil [*sic*].”

Although the original of this particular letter does not appear in the collected letters of Marinetti in Teige’s archive at the PNP, it can be observed in the folder of such letters there that in these (extremely brief) epistles Marinetti regularly sent a similar greeting to Teige and his colleagues. For instance, the entirety of one letter, sent presumably after the publication of the February 1929 issue of *ReD* dedicated to Futurism, reads: “to ReD and to Teige, all my sympathies.” Original: “à ReD à Teige toute ma sympathie.”

⁵⁰² Hannes Meyer, “bauhaus & společnost,” *ReD* 3, no. 5 (February 1930): 130. Emphasis in the original: “mladí lidé! Co hledáte na umělecko-průmyslových školách či akademiích? **studujte na bauhause!** [...] junge menschen aller länder, kommt ans bauhaus!”

words and images work together as an urgent and alluring portrait of the Bauhaus, before any information is provided as to what the school actually is.⁵⁰³

But that information quickly follows. On the same page, separated only by a bold black line, appears an essay (which features line breaks that make it appear as a poem) titled “bauhaus and associates” by Meyer and printed in Czech (translated from the original German, which was printed in the 1929 Bauhaus brochure).⁵⁰⁴ The essay is simultaneously a manifesto (“the bauhaus at dessau is not an art, but rather a social phenomenon [...] our work is in the service of the people”⁵⁰⁵) and a statement of the school’s values, asserted frequently in distinction from what the school does *not* value. In a subtle attack on the direction of the Bauhaus under Gropius, Meyer proclaims: “we aren’t looking for a bauhaus style or a bauhaus mode, or any popular flat, printed ornament, horizontal-vertical work and neoplastic engineering, we aren’t looking for geometric and stereometric pictures, foreign to life and unfriendly to function, we aren’t in timbuktu: ritual and hierarchy aren’t the dictators of our creation.”⁵⁰⁶ Meyer’s

⁵⁰³ The school had been propagated too in earlier issues of *ReD*, in the form of images and articles by its students and instructors, and unpaid advertisements like those mentioned briefly already. The Bauhaus and its art production were regularly featured in *ReD* in a way that also blurred the line between pure content and advertisement material. In the May 1929 issue dedicated to examples of international contemporary architecture, a photomontage by Czech Bauhaus student Josef Hausenblas that uses a photograph of the Eiffel Tower is featured on the same page as an advertisement for Štyrský and Toyen’s guidebook to Paris. Many issues include notices about the school, such as in the May 1928 issue that celebrates May Day in Moscow on its cover, and includes a subtle advert inside for the Bauhaus, typographically consistent with the general style of *ReD*, in its use of strong black lines and other graphics to navigate the viewer’s eye around the information provided.

⁵⁰⁴ Although Meyer sent Teige a version of his essay a full year earlier, on January 29, 1929 and explicitly asked Teige to take on the Czech translation himself, Meyer’s text is ultimately translated by Jaroslava Václavková, wife of Bedřich Václavek. [Meyer to Teige, January 29, 1929, BHA, HM Archive.]

⁵⁰⁵ Meyer, “bauhaus & společnost,” 130. Original: “není bauhaus v dessavě uměleckým, ale sociálním fenoménem. [...] Okruh našich úkolů určuje společnost.”

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 130, 132. Original: “nehledáme Bauhaus-stylu, ani bauhausovské módy, ani módně ploché plošné ornamentiky, horizontálně-vertikálně dělené a neoplasticky nastrojené, nehledáme,

rejection of a “Bauhaus style,” or “Bauhausstil,” is echoed in Teige’s own writing around the same time, in his appraisal of the Bauhaus in “Ten Years of the Bauhaus,” for *Stavba*, published one month later in April 1930, which is also the issue directly following that in which Teige had reviewed Meyer’s Prague lecture.

Meyer had been actively involved in the development of this special Bauhaus issue. His letters preserved in the Bauhaus Archive show that he was in regular conversation with Teige about its conception, and furnished images for reproduction. Examples of work are included by instructors Josef Albers (1888-1976), Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), Paul Klee (1879-1940), and Joost Schmidt (1893-1948); there are ample reproductions of photographic work, architectural plans (including several attributed to Meyer), and scenes from the Bauhaus stage. In a letter to Teige from December 1929, Meyer recaps what they had discussed together on his visit to Prague. Meyer put down in writing that “the February 1930 number has been reserved” (“reserviert wird die februar-nummer 1930”) for the Bauhaus issue, and that he is aware that “the final remaining materials must be in your hand at the latest on January 20, 1930” (“das letzte material muss spätestens bis 20. Januar 1930”).⁵⁰⁷ Meyer goes on to write that while he understands a typical issue has an edition size of approximately

geometrických nebo stereometrických obrazců, cizích životu a nepřátelských funkcí, nejsme v timbaktu: ritual a hierarchie nejsou diktátory našeho tvoření.”

What Meyer rejects here is consistent with general trends of interwar Modernism: gone are vestiges of the ornamental, an adherence to stringent doctrine and inherited hegemonies. Somewhat surprisingly though, there is also in evidence a resistance to the rigidly geometric, thereby making space for the “personal and localized,” [136] echoing the Poetist call for an art that is both utilitarian and humanitarian more than a doctrine of Constructivist architecture.

⁵⁰⁷ Meyer to Teige, December 30, 1929, BHA, HM Archive.

1,400 copies, the Bauhaus would be willing to take on the cost of printing an additional 1,000 copies in order to circulate wider what Meyer clearly sees to be an extremely valuable publication for advertising the school. Meyer breaks down specifically how those additional 1,000 copies would be distributed: “500 copies = ‘the circle of friends of the bauhaus,’ 200 copies = bauhaus members, 300 copies = for distribution amongst visitors and other interested parties.”⁵⁰⁸

Finally, in February 1930 the issue is published. But this does not stop Meyer from writing with some post-publication corrections to Teige. He objects, for instance, to the fact that a plan for the Törten Estates built on the edges of Dessau and associated with the Bauhaus is attributed solely to Meyer, when, as Meyer writes, “i was in fact proud that for the first time a truly collective—i.e. anonymous—work had been executed at the bauhaus.”⁵⁰⁹ But ultimately, Meyer concedes that he finds the Bauhaus issue of *ReD* he had awaited with great anticipation to be “on the whole very nice.”⁵¹⁰

As recounted in the previous chapter, not long after this special issue of *ReD*, Meyer himself is forced to step down as director of the Bauhaus, under National Socialist pressure, and the school shortly thereafter relocated, this time to Berlin, where it continued for three more years under the direction of Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969)

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid. Original: “500 stück = ‘kreis der freunde des bauhauses,’ 200 stück = bauhausangehörige, 300 stück = zur verteilung an interessenten und besucher.”

⁵⁰⁹ Meyer to Teige, March 24, 1930, BHA, HM Archive. Original: “ich war doch so stolz, dass zum ersten male eine wirkliche — also anonym — kollektive arbeit im Bauhaus stattfindet.”

⁵¹⁰ Ibid. Original: “sonst aber: der ganze sehr sympatisch.”

before it was forced to close for good. *ReD* ceased to publish the year after Meyer's dismissal, with its last issue appearing in July 1931.

REPRESENTATIONS OF DEVĚTSIL ABROAD: THE CASE OF *ZENIT*

Early in this chapter it was noted that the impulse to use the periodical as a platform for international exchange was by no means specific to the Czech case. And indeed, the shared commitment to this project is what helped to make the avant-garde magazine such an effective vehicle for cross-collaboration. Just as Devětsil devoted issues or extended sections of its magazines to artistic movements beyond Czech borders, so too did Devětsil enjoy serious attention in foreign magazines. The group was featured in Meyer's issue of *Das Werk*, the Polish *Blok*, and Hungarian (Viennese-based) *Ma*, and many others besides. A rather early example, dating almost concurrently to the formation of Devětsil as a group, is *Zenit*, a Serbo-Croatian publication that began operations in 1921.

The magazine was founded in Zagreb by Ljubomir Micić, and moved operations to Belgrade in 1923. Between October 1921 (issue eight) and April 1922 (issue thirteen), Goll joined Micić as editor. The magazine included work in Cyrillic and Latin script, reflecting the diversity of the Yugoslav languages, and also published content in German, French, English, Czech, and others. To make the international scope of the magazine even more explicit, throughout each issue, the locale of each contributor was

included in parenthesis behind the author or artist's name. While the first three issues of *Zenit* have a notably German Expressionist style, the design of the magazine shifts dramatically in the fourth issue, to orient the publication towards principals of New Typography and Constructivism. As if to make sure this re-orientation has not been lost on the reader, in the issue in which Goll joins Micić as editor, an essay by Goll is included with the title, "Expressionism is Dead" ("Der Expressionismus stirbt").⁵¹¹

Very early in the magazine's history, the editors of *Zenit* proposed to Teige that they do a special issue on young Czech artists. (Already in the second issue, from March 1921, a poem was printed in Czech by the non-Devěsil poet Alois Soukup, 1905-1970) Teige writes to Černík in 1921 that he "spoke with the Prague representative" of *Zenit*, and that there was interest in dedicating a full issue of the magazine to the young Czech artists.⁵¹² Teige is reserved in his evaluation of *Zenit*, describing the group's aesthetic orientation almost comically as "dadaist futurist-neofuturist" ("dadaistický futurista-novofuturista") and the magazine as "pretty weak" ("dost chabý").⁵¹³ But, Teige notes,

⁵¹¹ In this essay, Goll suggests that Expressionism, with all its pathos, is not compatible with Socialism, and is more a philosophy than a mode of art making. This rather bizarre essay, that touches in a few paragraphs on far too many major issues (such as Jews in Germany between the wars and Primitivism) to get into here, is something of an obituary to Expressionism. Goll even ascribes to Expressionism dates of birth and death: "Expressionism (1910-1920) was not an artistic form but rather an *attitude*. Far more by way of a worldview than a necessary component to art." Original: "Der ganze Expressionismus (1910-1920) [war] nicht einer künstlerischeren Form sondern einer *Gesinnung* Name. Viel mehr Sinn einer Weltanschauung, als Objekt eines Kunstbedürfnisses." [Yvan Goll, "Der Expressionismus stirbt," *Zenit* 1, no. 8 (October 1921): 8.]

⁵¹² Teige to Černík, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "Mluvil jsem s pražským zástupcem redakce 'Zenitu'."

It is likely that the representative to whom he is referring is the brother of Micić, Branko Micić (who went by the name Vladimir Poljanski in his contributions in *Zenit*), whose residence is listed as "Prague" beside his name when his work is published in *Zenit*. He was a part of the group of Dadaist Yugoslav students living in Prague in the early 1920s, as described in Chapter One.

⁵¹³ Ibid. Teige is likely referring here in particular to the first three issues, quite at odds with Teige's own artistic affinities. Later issues, which incorporated principles of Dada, Constructivism, and

there is the possibility of a small honorarium for Devětsil (again, always in need of funds), and also that the magazine had a wide distribution, which would have been welcome advertisement for the young group and its members.⁵¹⁴ The unabashedly socialist politics of *Zenit* would also no doubt have been a strong draw for the left-oriented Devětsil.

By July (the month in which a woodcut by Teige entitled “Summer” was printed in *Zenit*), Teige’s interest in a Czech issue seems to have heightened while at the same time the mail brings no news from Černík. In a letter, he tucks right into him: “Dear Artuš, what the heck are you doing? Seifert writes me that you are traveling around the world, having a grand time. But are you taking care of the Zenit thing?”⁵¹⁵ He emphasizes the international and cosmopolitan leanings of the magazine, represented by the likes of “Gleizes, Survage, Modigliani, etc;” in essence, he generalizes almost flippantly, “all nations, all authors...”⁵¹⁶

New Typography in its textual content and graphic design, would be more of a piece with later Devětsil publications, though certain editorial decisions, such as including a self portrait of Egon Schiele on the cover of issue four, would likely not have won much favor with Teige.

⁵¹⁴ Teige reports in the same letter that *Zenit*’s circulation amounts to five thousand copies within Yugoslavia, and another two to three thousand across Europe. If this truly was the circulation of *Zenit*, it would reflect a substantial print run, far greater (by several thousands) than any of the Devětsil periodicals.

⁵¹⁵ Teige to Černík, July 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “Milý Artuši, co furt děláš. Seifert mi píše že jezdíš po světě, tak veselou zábavu. Ale tohle obstaral jsi si už ten Zenit?”

Again in another letter from the summer, Teige writes to Černík, “Please, don’t forget about our number of Zenit. Write to B. Micič-Poljanski at his address in Vinohrady, Pod Karlovem 4 (2nd floor) a letter in German, that you are going to write about it in *Rovnost*.” Original: “Prosím, nezapomeň na to naše číslo Zenitu. Napiš si tomu B. Micič-Poljanskému na Vinohradech Pod Karlovem 4 (II patro) německý dopis a on ti pošle všechna čísla Zenitu, abys o tom psal v *Rovnosti*.” [Teige to Černík, Summer 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.]

⁵¹⁶ Teige to Černík, July 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “je to hlavně sympatické tou konsekvntní internacionálností a kosmopolitismem [...] Všecky národy, autoři...”

A portrait by Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920) is reproduced in the same issue (six) as Teige’s woodcut “Summer.”

Thus efforts were made to provide *Zenit's* editors with materials for the proposed special issue, though the result—issue seven from September 1921 (the issue before Goll joined as coeditor)—is not entirely dedicated to the young Czechs. All but two of the reproduced images are by Prague artists and early Devětsil members, though the group is represented with Cubo-Expressionist paintings aesthetically quite dissimilar to work in the slightly later, more Constructivist style by which Devětsil is recognized today. And judging from the letter Teige sent to Černík in July of 1921, what comes out in *Zenit* in September is a significantly stripped-down version of the materials that had initially been sent to the editors, which seem to have also included texts and poems in the Czech original, as well as German translations. In this letter he had also encouraged Černík to send along his own work for the publication—“a selection of your two best poems/or 1 prose piece (in German) and 1 poem (in Czech)/or maybe one in German translation”—though in the end, the only text published in this issue to come from Prague is a Dadaist poem, attributed to Vladimir Poljanski, so in fact not by a Czech but a Yugoslav, and published in Serbo-Croatian.⁵¹⁷

But perhaps there was some consolation in the lack of an explicitly “Czech” issue in that *Zenit* continued to consistently publish the work of the Prague avant-garde. In the subsequent issue, number eight from October 1921, a notably Cubist painting by Teige in the style of Josef Čapek, titled “Prague (1920),” is printed, and then, in November, Seifert’s poem “City in Tears” is published (with some spelling errors,

⁵¹⁷ Teige to Černík, July 9, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “vyběr své dvě nejlepší básně nebo 1 prósu (německy) a 1 báseň (česky) možno-li jednu v německém překladě.”

including in the title of the poem itself⁵¹⁸). *City in Tears* appears again (now spelled correctly) in issue eleven from February 1922, not in the form of a poem, but rather in a warm review for a book by the same name, in a section toward the back of *Zenit* on new local and international publications.⁵¹⁹ Several other Czech books and magazines with which Devětsil was involved are also named on the same page as *City in Tears* is reviewed, including *Host*, *Proletkult*, and *Veraikon*. In a salient example of how this sort of promotion worked dialogically, and which brings us back to an early point of reference in this chapter, below the review of Seifert's book is an announcement that Goll's "Paris is Burning" ("Paris brennt") had appeared in Neumann's *Červen* (which had first been promoted in issue five of *Zenit*). Goll's poem was featured (in Czech translation) on the cover of *Červen* on December 8, 1921.⁵²⁰

In January 1922, Teige continues to encourage Černík to send him something for *Zenit*, as in one postcard, where he asks for one of his "more wild" ("divočejší") poems, apparently not realizing that Černík had in fact already sent two poems directly to Micić.⁵²¹ A poem of Černík's eventually appears in the February 1922 issue of *Zenit*, the

⁵¹⁸ Though all Czech verse in *Zenit* is printed in Czech, in keeping with the magazine's ardent internationalism, spelling errors such as those in Seifert's poem suggest that it was for good reason that Teige had written to Černík suggesting that they send work not in Czech, but rather in German or French translation: "Definitely on account of the foreigners we have to send them our German translations and we could also dig up at least some article in French." Original: "Rozhodně k vůli cizině tam musí být naše německé překlady a měli bychom sehnat, alespoň článek, i francouzsky." [Teige to Černík, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive.]

⁵¹⁹ In the preface to *City in Tears*, Teige makes clear the Socialist bent of the collection, writing that it is an "uncompromising declaration" of Devětsil's proletariat leanings. Its staunchly leftist orientation thus made it a natural choice for a review in *Zenit*, which had a similar political orientation.

⁵²⁰ Goll was a regular fixture in Czech publications of the period, with essays and poems appearing also in *Index*, *Kmen*, *Proletkult*, the *Revoluční sborník Devětsil*, *Rozpravy Aventina*, and *Stavba*. Additionally, a caricature of Goll by Teige is included in the Devětsil issue of *Život* 2.

⁵²¹ Teige to Černík, early January, 1922, PNP, AČ Archive.

same number in which a review of *City in Tears* appears. Černík's poem, "At the House of Moving Pictures" ("V biografu"), describes the empathic experience of watching scenes from everyday life, such as lovers embracing, unfold on the screen.⁵²² On the page facing Černík's poem, an essay by Ehrenburg is printed (in Serbo-Croatian translation), further highlighting the international, multilingual slant of the magazine, not to mention its Soviet sympathies. Alongside Ehrenburg's essay is a small reproduction of Tatlin's tower, designed (but never constructed) as a Monument to the Third International, which appears again on a larger scale on the cover of this issue, which names Černík as a contributor, and also lists Seifert's book (here, again, spelled incorrectly).

The young Czechs continue to maintain some presence in *Zenit*—for example with a poem by Adolf Hoffmeister in issue fourteen—but from early 1922 the collaboration notably peters out. This might have been on Teige's part: already in the letter to Černík from December 27, 1921 in which Micić acknowledges receiving two poems from him, he reports, "From Teige I've been expecting an answer for a long time already."⁵²³ Oddly, at a time in which the magazine moved more in an artistic and political direction closer to Teige's own position, Teige seems to lose interest in maintaining the *Zenit* affiliation, after hounding Černík to foster that relationship just months before.

⁵²² Černík writes, "And anyway, how deceptively life flows along on the screen." Original: "A přece jak klamně tu na plátně život teče." [Artuš Černík, "V biografu," *Zenit* 1, no. 11 (Feb. 1922): 3.]

⁵²³ Micić to Černík, Dec. 12, 1921, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: "Von Teige warte ich sehr lange Antworte."

Zenit, lasting not even six years, still had a longer run than any of the major Devětsil publications. Irina Subotić describes how after “periodic prohibition” *Zenit* “was finally proscribed by the authorities in December 1926” due to its socialist sympathies.⁵²⁴ In the forty-third and final issue of *Zenit*, a retrospective list of the magazine’s “collaborators” is printed, which shows just how international the publication was. The list includes three Czechs—Seifert, Teige, and Hoffmeister—as well as several other figures with whom the Czechs collaborated, such as Archipenko, the Paris-based artist Zadkine, *L’Esprit nouveau* editors Paul Dermée and Michel Seuphor, van Doesburg, Gropius and Moholy-Nagy, Lajos Kassák, Marinetti, and, of course, Goll.

This list is a concise testament to just how interconnected the editors and contributors of the various European interwar avant-gardes were, and suggests that the networks this chapter has so far charted is but a sampling of how the interwar periodicals can be studied today to map a complex and multi-centric network across the European continent. So it is that the conversation between the avant-gardes can be mapped in ever widening circles, with new points of intersection as time moves forward. This chapter has attempted to show how these networks were forged by Devětsil at home (in relation and in opposition to the previous generation of artists and intellectuals around the Čapek brothers on one hand, and Neumann on the other), and across Europe. While this chapter focused on the textual nature of this exchange, enacted as a dialogue in print and privately, the fourth and final chapter of this

⁵²⁴ Irina Subotić, “Avant-Garde Tendencies in Yugoslavia,” *Art Journal* 49, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 23.

dissertation looks to how the graphic design conventions and image curation of the magazines were also integral to their international reception.

CHAPTER 4

TYPOGRAPHY, OR TEXT AND IMAGE

“All printed word is in tough competition with photography, film, and radio. We must read quickly, just as we speak concisely. [...] The poster must be ascertainable as we speed by on public transport or in a car.”

Josef Albers
“Economy of Form in Print” (*Offset* 1926)⁵²⁵

“We speak today with electric light bulbs.”

Karel Teige
“Words, Words, Words” (*Horizont* 1927)⁵²⁶

In this fourth and final chapter, a focus on the periodical as a site of local dialogue and international exchange continues, with particular emphasis here on the Czech-German dialogue. But an examination of how the Czech interwar avant-garde publications functioned as an open forum by which ideas were circulated shifts from a predominantly textual analysis to look more closely at how the graphic design of these

⁵²⁵ Josef Albers, “Ökonomie der Schriftform,” *Offset* 7 (1926). Anthologized in *bauhaus: drucksachen, typografie, reklame*, ed. Gerd Fleischmann (Stuttgart: Oktagon, 1995), 23. Original: “Alle Schrift erfährt starke Konkurrenz durch Foto, Kino und Radio. Wir müssen schnell lesen, wie knapp sprechen. [...] Das Plakat muß erfaßbar sein, wenn wir in der Elektrischen und im Auto vorbeifahren.”

⁵²⁶ Karel Teige, “Slova, slova, slova (Part Four),” *Horizont* 1, no. 4 (April 1927): 72. Original: “Mluvíme dnes žárovkami.”

publications expressed, often a-textually, the artistic affinities and political ideals of the periodicals' editors. The ways in which Devětsil (and specifically Karel Teige) adopted and then adapted the widely recognizable conventions of New Typography (Neue Typographie) to the design of the Czech magazines played a major role in garnishing the sort of local and international attention the group so earnestly desired. And, as with the example of Gropius writing to Teige in 1923 after seeing *Stavba*, it was sometimes entirely on the basis of what could be gleaned by looking, rather than reading, that peers abroad were able to understand just how vital was the work going on in Prague and Brno. New Typography's emphasis on both visual and textual information and how the two elements interact on the page became a useful tool for the Czechs, whose mother tongue would not be widely familiar to an international audience. Its form was universally recognizable—in a bold, stripped-down graphic design—and was employed across many publications of various nations and languages, from the Czech *Disk*, to Yugoslav *Zenit* (after issue three), to the *Bauhausbücher*, the Polish *Blok*, and Dutch *Mécano*, to name only a few cases.

Typography was one of the major sites in which figures like Teige, László Moholy-Nagy, and El Lissitzky could explore the limits of art-making in a world of rapidly developing technologies. El Lissitzky, in his now oft-quoted "Topographie der Typographie" ("Topography of Typography"), published in 1923 in Kurt Schwitters' journal *Merz*, and reproduced in *The New Typography*, boldly states, "The new book

demands a new writer.”⁵²⁷ By considering both textual and visual elements in order to produce a message, the new typographers aspired to fulfill this role. This marks a drastic shift from the Nineteenth Century, when, as Johanna Drucker writes in *The Visible Word*, “since writing was the means for providing access to spoken language, any of the aspects of its function which might suggest autonomy (writing as a visual medium distinct from spoken language) were necessarily eliminated—not as undesirable, but as *inconceivable*, a position whose exclusion was far more fundamental and non-negotiable.”⁵²⁸ Typographers like El Lissitzky were instrumental in making what was before “inconceivable” absolutely instrumental to innovation in graphic production, and for inspiration they looked to a new, largely extra-linguistic mode of art: film. Early films provided a model for pushing the dynamism of the page to be more cinematic, to express multiple temporalities simultaneously—for “the printed page to transcend space and time,”⁵²⁹ as Lissitzky wrote—and convey information optically.

The potential of typography, and debates around its use and limits, in the 1920s represented a fruitful mode by which Teige could signal his participation in an international dialogue on aesthetics and perception, by re-publishing the writings of other typographers (often in Czech translation) and responding to their ideas with his own theoretical texts. And while the magazines provided a public forum for this

⁵²⁷ El Lissitzky, “Topographie der Typographie,” *Merz* 4 (July 1923): 47. Original: “Das neue Buch fordert den neuen Schriftsteller.” The use of hyphen in the word “Schriftsteller” here underscores Lissitzky’s use of the word “writer” to mean, literally, the one who sets down script.

⁵²⁸ Johanna Drucker, *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909-1923* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 15.

⁵²⁹ El Lissitzky 47. Original: “Der gedruckte Bogen überwindet Raum und Zeit.”

conversation in texts, they were also a platform by which editors like Teige could signal their active engagement in a transnational artistic dialogue through their own graphic production and by publishing an internationally curated set of photographs and regularly exchanging images for reproduction. A chapter on the visual aspects of the magazine, from a perspective of design considerations in theory and in practice, is therefore necessary in order to explore more fully how the Devětsil publications were meant to be received internationally, and what their unique contribution was to an international conversation around New Typography.

While this chapter looks primarily at a Czech-German exchange around contemporary instances of graphic design, the output of the Devětsil magazines also reflects a knowledge of, and interest in, other traditions, both geographically and temporally speaking. An excerpt from Stéphane Mallarmé's (1843-1898) poem, "Un coup de dés" ("A Throw of the Dice") appears in an issue of *ReD* dedicated to typography, for instance. And in an earlier issue of the magazine from June 1928, Teige had already mentioned the French Symbolist's visual poem in a special issue (put out in collaboration with Nezval) dedicated to Poetism manifestos. In that issue Teige praises Mallarmé for creating, "a poem that is not only a breakthrough for words and their sounds, but also as a *typographical table* of letters on a page, *an optical arrangement*, *a relationship of black and white.*"⁵³⁰ The approbation of typographical experiment

⁵³⁰ Karel Teige, "Manifest Poetismu," in *ReD* 1:9 (June 1928), 322. Emphasis is the author's. Original: "Poslední Mallarméovo dílo 'Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard' realisuje báseň nejen obsahem slov a jejich zvukem, ale i *typografickém rozvrhem* písma na stránce, *optickou soustavou*, *poměry mezi černou a bílou.*"

combined with sound experiment is consistent with Teige's articulation of a Poetism for all the senses, which he expounds in this same manifesto to the –ism. Acclaim for the French Symbolist might seem out of place in a magazine designed on the Constructivist principles of New Typography, if not for the fact that so many other avant-gardists expressed similar sentiment.⁵³¹

In fact, the aural-visual capacity that Teige sees in the poetics of Mallarmé was very close to what he had called for in Czech graphic design a year later, in his essay "Words, Words, Words" ("Slova, slova, slova") printed serially in the first four issues of *Horizont*. In the third installment, Teige describes the ways in which typography can work expediently to convey the content's information to its reader: "the eye reads namely what the ear should hear. Modern posters, signs, advertisements and signals grasp the optical meaning of a form, its size, color and layout of typographic material: here the word excels in its optical value."⁵³² The emphasis Teige places on "optical"

⁵³¹ Drucker, without making any connection between Mallarmé and Teige, devotes a significant amount of space in *The Visible Word* to "A Throw of the Dice," which she situates as "the single most striking precedent for avant-garde experiment with the visual form of poetic language" and "a touchstone of both historical and aesthetic reference for all subsequent twentieth-century typographical experimental poetry." [Drucker, *The Visible Word*, 50.] Drucker acknowledges Mallarmé's late work as "the demarcating point from which modernity, as a radical rethinking of representational strategy within the field of poetics, comes into being and comes before a literary audience, especially within the francophone poetics of much of Western Europe and Russia." [Ibid., 51.] Though this line of influence hops right over the geographical area under principle scrutiny here, Teige's reference to Mallarmé in the *ReD* Poetism manifesto is but one bit of evidence that reminds us in reality the line from Paris to Moscow was not actually so direct.

⁵³² Teige, "Slova, slova, slova (Part Three)," *Horizont* 1, no. 3 (March 1927): 47. Original: "oko čte, co by mělo vlastně ucho slyšet. Moderní plakáty, návěští, reklamy a signály uchopily optický význam tvaru, velikosti, barvy a rozvrhu typografického materiálu: zde vyniklo slovo jako optická hodnota."

Claire Badaracco writes, in depicting how the magazine took off in early Twentieth Century America, that the "two classes of printing that mattered above all" in order to "catch the public eye" were "book composition and display advertising." [Claire Badaracco, *Trading Words: Poetry, Typography, and Illustrated Books in the Modern Literary Economy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 3.] Although she is describing typographic innovation within a significantly different economic and cultural

considerations in the execution of New Typography, not only evidences his influence from the early Symbolist experiments in form of the Nineteenth Century, but also put him into dialogue with contemporary typographers, namely working in Germany.

Teige joined Moholy-Nagy, Schwitters, and others in seeking a poetry that goes entirely beyond linguistic elements to convey sense. Raymond Williams writes in *Politics of Modernism* of language in the cosmopolitan avant-gardes as “a new kind of fact: either simply as ‘medium,’ aesthetic or instrumental, [...] or, of course, as system: the distanced, even the alien fact.”⁵³³ Williams has in mind practitioners of the avant-garde working together in a single cosmopolitan center coming from a variety of national and linguistic backgrounds, as would have been the case, for instance, in Paris. But for a city like Prague, which perhaps encountered foreign visitors more often than foreign residents, language as an aesthetic medium was absolutely vital to the legibility and reception of its periodicals abroad. In “Words, Words, Words,” Teige imagined a

context, the new typographers were keyed in to these very concerns: using graphic design in printed matter and advertisement to keep up with the urban public consumer. In “Images and Fore-images” in 1921, Teige includes among items that ought to be considered legitimate forms of art, “signs, leaflets, advertisement, illustrated magazines, and book covers.” Original: “návěští, prospekty, reklamu, ilustrované časopisy a knižní obalky.” [Teige, “Obrazy a předobrazy,” *Musaion* 2 (Spring 1921): 55.] And in his 1927 essay, “Modern Typography,” dedicated to the medium, he underscores further the visual impact of public, printed material: “I see the book cover, which I usually design in collaboration with Mrkvička, as the poster for a book.” [Teige, “Modern Typography,” 94, 96.] Original: “Obálky (které provádím většinou za spolupráce O. Mrkvičky) nazírám jako plakát knihy.” [“Moderní Typo,” 104.]

Aleksandar Bošković, in a discussion of the Czech picture poems in his dissertation, calls the book cover a “well-defined public space.” [Aleksandar Bošković, “Photopoetry and the Bioscopic Book: Russian and Czech Avant-Garde Experiments in the 1920s” (PhD diss., University of Michigan Ann Arbor, 2013), 231.]

⁵³³ Raymond Williams, *Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London, New York: Verso Books, 1989), 77.

“speech without words. A speech without an alphabet. The possibility of a non-verbal typographic communication.”⁵³⁴

Drucker’s work of the past several decades calls convincingly for the study of printed matter and its graphic design to be incorporated into preexisting art historical narratives. In *The Visible Word*, she insists on the “relation between the literary conception and visual production” of the works that she takes under consideration, namely from French, Italian, and Russian instances of the early Twentieth Century.⁵³⁵ Across her large body of writing on typography and graphic design, Drucker engages in a reading of both textual (letter-form) and visual elements. In a more recent article from 2006, Drucker describes how we often overlook visual elements in the act of “serious” reading, but nevertheless maintains that, “these [graphical] elements deserve their particular, specific, descriptively analytic attention for the contribution they make to our processes of interpretation.”⁵³⁶ And, in her article on the San Francisco Victorian humorist publication *Le Petit Journal des Refusées* from 2010, she reiterates her concern that “we not dismiss the aesthetic properties of graphical works when we read them, either as fine art objects or as products of mass culture. The graphical features are an embodiment of, and an index to, the sensibility and ideas of these works.”⁵³⁷

⁵³⁴ Teige, “Slova, Slova, Slova (Part One),” 3. Original: “řečí beze slov. Řečí bez abecedy. ... Možnost bezeslovesného sdělení typografií.”

⁵³⁵ Drucker, *The Visible Word*, 2.

⁵³⁶ Johanna Drucker, “Graphical Readings and the Visual Aesthetics of Textuality,” *Text* 16 (2006): 270-271.

⁵³⁷ Johanna Drucker, “*Le Petit Journal des Refusées*: A Graphical Reading,” *Victorian Poetry* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 148.

So it is not novel (but still, rather infrequently performed) to argue, in a project that uses the periodical as a means to map a dialogue, that one must also consider the design of these material objects alongside their textual content. But while Drucker has paved the way for serious consideration of the printed matter of the early Twentieth Century avant-gardes as important art historical objects, perhaps most notably in *The Visible Word*, she tends to overlook the geographical area significant to this work, hopping over Central Europe from a focus on Western examples like Guillaume Apollinaire and F.T. Marinetti, for instance, to more Eastern ones, like Ilya Zdanevich (1894-1975, born in Russia and emigrated to France), and generally emphasizes pre-World War One innovations. Additionally, Drucker's focus on how text might be read visually tends to preclude a reading of texts that are not poetry and that appear in a more standard printed form.

Avant-garde though they were, the Devětsil magazines were in fact consistently dominated by block text, typically appearing in standardized columns. And while there are numerous examples of close readings of the theoretical texts of Devětsil, such as those cited in the previous chapter by Peter Zusi, these readings often do not take into account where these essays first appeared, alongside what other writers, and besides what images. Here, I have attempted to bring textual analysis of writings that do not necessarily feature in and of themselves innovative graphic display into conversation with all the elements of the full page spread and the overall design of the periodicals in which these texts originally appeared.

In this chapter, I further situate the Czech avant-garde magazine as a platform of exchange by looking closely at how the Devětsil publications engaged in conversations about typography through published essays on that theme, the employment of and innovation upon new trends in graphic design, and the curation of photographic images for reproduction. Through these strategies, Devětsil signaled its firm place in the development of artistic and intellectual production in the interwar European avant-garde, and examples of its graphic design in book and magazine publication are now central to its legacy. Teige was at the forefront of this effort, and the following pays particular attention to his role as typographer and theorist of typography (limiting the scope of this survey to his output of the 1920s), as he participated in international conversations and showcased his project of Poetism visually. This chapter investigates the way typography facilitated a multilingual and transnational dialogue, both in theoretical essays on typography and via extra-linguistic visual cues that signaled Devětsil's commitment to the design principles expounded in essay form.

TYPOGRAPHY AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

“Typography is visual communication” (“Typo je sdělení optické”), writes Teige in “Modern Typography” (“Moderní typó”), an article that he published in the trade

magazine *Typografia*.⁵³⁸ The essay highlights the potential of typography to aid in communicating information by reaching beyond considerations of textual layout alone, to also consider elements of graphic design. In language that echoes much of the rhetoric of New Typography, Teige writes that:

Its [typography's] rules must therefore be based on optical rules. The modern way of seeing, educated by urban civilization and by the spectacle of contemporary life, new color spectra and strong colors ordered geometrically and orthogonally, is characterized by heightened perceptiveness. The angle of vision is widening. Posters achieve *simultaneous communication by means of a suitable layout of their surface* and the use of *various type* that makes it possible to *regulate coherent reading*. The modern way of seeing is refined, capable of rapid accommodation, piercing, quick, and lissome.⁵³⁹

Zákonnost její [typografie] musí být tedy určena podle optických zákonů. Moderní zrak, vychovaný městskou civilizací a podivnou soudobého života, novým barevnými škálami, prudce křičícími barvami, rozvrženými geometricky a ortogonálně, vyznačuje se zvýšenou vnímavostí. Rozšiřuje se zorný úhel. Plakáty právě realizují *simultánní sdělení: pomocí vhodného svazku plochy a použitím rozmanitého písma dovedou regulovati souvislost čtení*. Moderní zrak je

⁵³⁸ Karel Teige, "Modern Typography," in *Karel Teige/1900-1951: L'enfant terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde*, eds. Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha, trans. Alexandra Büchler (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 100. Original as "Moderní Typo," in *Typografia* 34 (1927): 194.

Typografia included essays and samples of work by many of the practitioners of New Typography. The same volume (from 1927) in which Teige's "Moderní Typo" essay appears (in Czech and German) also features Herbert Bayer's (1900-1985) "Attempt at a New Script" ("Versuch einer neuen Schrift," appearing in Czech as "Pokus o nové písmo"), Moholy-Nagy's "Contemporary Typography" ("Zeitgemäße Typographie," appearing in Czech as "Časová typografie") and Jan Tschichold's "New Creation" ("elementare typographie," appearing in Czech translation as "Nová tvorba"). Teige's essay appears in an issue that also features a short piece by Josef Čapek, titled "The Book Cover" ("Knižní obálka"), which was also printed in both Czech and German. In conversation with Teige's "Moderní Typo," Čapek's brief essay seeks to establish book cover design as a true form of art, and elucidate on the process of designing a book cover with relation to the volume's content. Examples of book covers by Čapek and Teige are also reproduced.

⁵³⁹ Teige, "Modern Typography," 100. Slight adjustments made to existing translation.

rafinovaný, se schopnosti rychlých akomodací, pronikavý,
zběžný a svižný.⁵⁴⁰

There was an attempt to articulate these new “optical rules,” in order to keep up with the pace of life in “urban civilization,” across the interwar avant-garde in various places. Already in 1923, for instance, we can see an emphasis on graphic “communication” in one of Moholy-Nagy’s first projects at the Bauhaus, in which he published in the Bauhausverlag a manifesto of typography, aptly titled, “The New Typography.” It opens declaratively: “Typography is an instrument of communication. It must present a clear message in the most powerful form.”⁵⁴¹ “Clarity” (“Klarheit”) and “communication” (“Mitteilung”) were of utmost importance to the new typographers, and they aimed to adhere to these tenets via a textual-visual presentation of information that could be grasped quickly, keeping pace with the “tempo” (a favorite word of Moholy-Nagy’s) of modern urbanity. And likewise, in 1925, Tschichold wrote in his own manifesto on typography, titled “elementary typography” (“elementare typographie”): “1. The purpose of all typography is communication.”⁵⁴² In 1927, the manifesto appeared in Czech translation in *Typografia*, the same year in which the journal published Teige’s “Modern Typography,” in both Czech and German. The following year, when Tschichold

⁵⁴⁰ Teige, “Moderní typo,” 194. Emphasis is the author’s.

⁵⁴¹ Moholy-Nagy, “Die neue Typographie,” *Bauhausverlag* (1923). Anthologized in *bauhaus: drucksachen, typografie, reklame*, 15. Original: “Die Typographie ist ein Instrument der Mitteilung. Sie muß eine klare Mitteilung in der eindringlichsten Form sein.”

⁵⁴² Jan Tschichold, “elementare typographie,” *Typographische Mitteilungen* (1925). Anthologized in *bauhaus: drucksachen, typografie, reklame*, 333. Original: “1. Die neue Typographie ist zweckbetont.”

The special issue of *Typographische Mitteilungen* (*Typographic News*) in which this manifesto originally appeared is edited by Tschichold; the volume was also titled “elementary typography.”

published *The New Typography* in book form, he writes similarly, “the essence of the New Typography is clarity,” and that there is a “need for clarity in communication.”⁵⁴³

It was then already what Jeremy Aynsley has called “a retrospective analysis.”⁵⁴⁴ Within a decade of the style’s inception, Tschichold was already able to amass a huge amount of existing, international examples of New Typography, as found in advertisements, postcards, letterheads, and periodicals. And examples of Czech work figure prominently. When Tschichold produces a list with the heading, “Today, artists in all these countries are producing new work in our field,” Czechoslovakia is included and Teige is named explicitly, along with the Brno typographers Zdeněk Rossmann and Bohumil Markalous (1882-1952).⁵⁴⁵ At the very back of the book, in bibliographic notes, *Pásmo* is cited as an example of what Tschichold calls “Periodicals for Modern Design” (“Zeitschriften für neue Gestaltung”), and several books with cover designs by Teige are also named as being of particular interest, including *Život 2*.⁵⁴⁶ Even Teige’s Prague residence (then at Černá 12a) is provided in a registry of physical addresses that represents a who’s who of the interwar avant-garde, including Theo van Doesburg, Moholy-Nagy, El Lissitzky, Schwitters, and Tristan Tzara.⁵⁴⁷ In turn, in a series of

⁵⁴³ Tschichold, *The New Typography: A Handbook for Modern Designers* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995), 66, 69. Original: “Das Wesen der Neuen Typographie ist Klarheit.”/“Die Forderung nach Klarheit der Mitteilung.”. [Tschichold, *Die neue Typographie: Ein Handbuch für Zeitgemäss Schaffende* (Berlin: Verlag des Bildungsverbandes der Deutschen Buchdrucker, 1928), 67, 70.]

⁵⁴⁴ Jeremy Aynsley, “The New Typography as Commercial Sign” (lecture, Museum Sztuki, Lodz, Poland, October 11, 2014).

⁵⁴⁵ Tschichold, *Die neue Typographie: Ein Handbuch für Zeitgemäss Schaffende* (Berlin: Verlag des Bildungsverbandes der Deutschen Buchdrucker, 1928), 60-61.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 234. Original: “Zeitschriften für neue Gestaltung.”

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 229. Such a list, of personal contact information, in a book dedicated to samples of New Typography, suggests that the volume was intended to be used and shared by practicing typographers who might want to contact one another. This is also supported by the book’s subtitle, which describes the

postcards from Tschichold kept in Černík's archive at the PNP, one can read that Tschichold was eager to have sections of the book published in the architectural magazine *Horizont*, though Teige was not actually an editor at the magazine and no such project comes to fruition.⁵⁴⁸

Tschichold himself came to Prague and Brno over the winter holiday of 1930-1931 to lecture on "photomontage: its history, fundamentals, and use" ("fotomontáž: její historie, její podstata a obory použití"). In a glowing review that appears in *Rozpravy Aventina* that January, Teige reports on the Prague lecture, describing it enthusiastically as "certainly one of the most important events of our cultural season."⁵⁴⁹ Teige highlights the significance of Tschichold's travel within the context of what impact he hopes it might have on aesthetic developments at home, concluding: "One would hope that the Prague and Brno lectures of Tschichold will mark the beginning of a working relationship of our professional circles with this master graphic artists of contemporary Germany."⁵⁵⁰

volume as a "handbook." The international scope of the list again points to the universal aim of the project.

⁵⁴⁸ *Horizont* (1927-1932), based in Brno, was primarily an architectural magazine, but Teige's essay "Words, Words, Words" on typography appeared serially in the first four issues. Petr Ingerle describes *Horizont* as a "direct continuation of the publishing activity of the Brno Devětsil [...]," but in fact Devětsil members are represented only minimally, and after the first year, largely disappear from the pages. [Petr Ingerle, "Brno Devětsil – a local chapter in the history of the international avant-garde," in *Brno Devětsil and Multimedia Overlaps of the Artistic Avant-Garde*, trans. Miloš Bartoň and Alan Windsor (Brno: Moravian Gallery, 2014), 88.]

⁵⁴⁹ Teige, "Jan Tschichold v Praze," *Rozpravy Aventina*, 6, no. 18 (Jan. 1931): 212. Original: "Tschicholdova přednáška byla jistě jednou z nejvýznamnějších událostí naší kulturní sezony."

⁵⁵⁰ Teige, "Jan Tschichold v Praze," 212. Original: "Bylo by si přáti, aby pražská a brněnská přednáška Tschicholdova byla počátkem pracovního spojení našich odborných kruhů s tímto vůdčím grafikem dnešního Německa."

Perhaps nowhere is Teige so obviously in conversation with new typographers further afield than in his published response to Herbert Bayer's proposal of a new, universal script, which Bayer had published in a special Bauhaus issue of the typographic trade magazine *Offset* in 1926, and which appeared in Czech translation in *Typografia*, in 1927. In the aptly titled "Versuch einer neuen Schrift" ("Attempt at a New Typeface") Bayer makes a familiar call for a lettering that matches the speed and technology of modern life. And Bayer does not only theorize a new, universal, and international font, he also publishes alongside his article a rendering of the proposed "neue Schrift," an all lowercase sans-serif typeface (which has become immensely popular in the decades since, but was never actually "cut as type" during Bayer's tenure at the Bauhaus⁵⁵¹).

⁵⁵¹ Robin Kinross, *Unjustified texts: perspectives on typography* (London: Hyphen Press, 2002), 237.

Herbert Bayer acknowledges himself that the typeface was not widely used at the time of its inception, and yet "enjoyed" great popularity in the post World War Two era. Fifty years after its first appearance in *Offset*, he writes a letter (in English, and still in all lowercase) from America to Hans Wingler, the director of the Bauhaus-Archiv in Berlin, complaining that, "it has been bothering me for some time that my type design 'universal type' which i developed in 1925 at the bauhaus, has been virtually copied and is on the market in a number of different versions. it is being used extensively and from the enclosed advertisement you can see that it is even used with the word 'bauhaus.' some letters have been altered and bastardized and a capital letter alphabet has been added to it, which was not my intention at the time. i thought this might interest you and i wonder if some legal action can be taken. it does not seem to me to be right that somebody can just take over a design when i could not place it with any type foundry because it was too radical at that time. this is the first time to my knowledge that credit to me has been given by the manufacturer." [Herbert Bayer to Hans Wingler, March 4th, 1976, BHA, Herbert Bayer Archive.]

The included clipping is an advertisement from the International Typeface Corporation (ITC) Foundry that announces the "ITC Bauhaus" as "the newest text and display typeface to be issued by ITC. [...] The Bauhaus series owes its source of inspiration to the 'Universal' typeface originally designed by Herbert Bayer in 1925. Mr. Bayer created the prototypes for this typeface while a professor at the historic Bahaus in Dessau, Germany." [Advertisement, *Upper and Lower Case, The International Journal of Typographics* 2, no. 3 (September 1975).]

Mike Mills, in his brief essay, "Herbert Bayer's Universal Type in its Historical Contexts," tracks some of the other places Bayer's design has been found since, from the logo for Bloomingdale's and Mobil gas, to the credits of the 1990s television show *Roseanne*. More recently, Google's logo re-design also incorporated Bayer's work, which Sarah Archer pointed out for *Hyperallergic*. Bayer's irritation at the appropriation of his typeface without due credit, as expressed to Wingler, renders highly doubtful Archer's pithy statement that the new Google logo would have made Bayer's "heart sing." [Sarah Archer,

Mike Mills, in outlining the historical context of Bayer's universal script, describes how it "embraced industry and technology [and] adopted the techniques of mass production and the rationalized methods of the engineer," which further highlights the emphasis the new typographers placed on design that reflected urban speed and modern technological innovations.⁵⁵²

In *Typografia*, where Bayer's treatise, "Attempt at a New Typeface," had already been reproduced in Czech, Teige takes the opportunity with his essay, "Modern Typography," to respond to Bayer's proposed typeface and gives it a mixed, though on the whole positive, review:

Bayer's type, used by the author of this essay several times for book cover design, will have to be further refined, but it is already a *justified new form* aiming to perfect type in the sense of desirable simplification. Progressive simplification is the meaning of long-term development. Discarding ornaments. Simplifying the range of characters.⁵⁵³

Bayerovo písmo, jehož autor této stati několikrát použil při návrzích knižních obálek, jistě se bude ještě musit vytríbit, avšak je nicméně *oprávněným novým tvarem*, který vede zdokonalení písma ve smyslu žádoucího zjednodušení. Postupující zjednodušení-tot' smysl dlouhodobého vývoje. Zbaviti se ornamentů. Zjednodušit kasu.⁵⁵⁴

"The Bauhaus Connection in Google's New Logo," *Hyperallergic*, Sept. 2, 2015, <http://hyperallergic.com/233993/the-bauhaus-connection-in-googles-new-logo/>.]

⁵⁵² Mike Mills, "Herbert Bayer's Universal Type in its Historical Contexts," in *The ABC's of Triangle, Square, Circle: The Bauhaus and Design Theory*, eds. Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991), 40.

⁵⁵³ Teige, "Modern Typography," 103. Emphasis is the author's.

⁵⁵⁴ Teige, "Moderní Typo," 196. Emphasis is the author's.

The essay is printed in both Czech and German, suggesting that Teige might have hoped Bayer, and a larger circle of German typographers, would have the opportunity to read the statement. And Teige too does not only describe what he finds lacking in Bayer's new font. In 1928 he designs and publishes his own proposal for a universal script, a nuanced revision of Bayer's, which appears in the April 1929 issue of *ReD*, dedicated to "foto film typo" and which adopted Bayer's convention of all lowercase print. The two alphabets (Bayer's and Teige's) are reproduced side by side in *ReD*, in the middle of Oldřich Poskočil's essay, "new typographic tendencies."⁵⁵⁵ In his essay, Poskočil reiterates the rejection of ornament in New Typography, and the use of photography as a fundamental means by which to convey information in printed matter. He also asserts the position of Czech typography within a field "that knows no borders" ("nezná hranic") and "accepts the thoughts of colleagues from other countries."⁵⁵⁶ Poskočil simultaneously addresses the capacity for Czech typographers to innovate technically, and their interest in looking to international examples for inspiration. It was within the context of this idea of a borderless culture that Teige sought to engage in just such an international conversation, and was able to have the impact abroad that he did.

⁵⁵⁵ Oldřich Poskočil to Artuš Černík, September 14, 1927, PNP, AČ Archive. Poskočil was a professional typographer, of which little has been written, though he regularly contributed to Czech typographic trade publications, such as *Český almanach typografický* and *Typografia*. He expressed admiration for the typographic work of Devětsil, which is on display, for example, in a letter to Černík in which he praises his work as the editor of the magazine *Horizont*. Poskočil was in touch with Teige about publication even after World War Two, when Poskočil worked for Orbis.

⁵⁵⁶ Oldřich Poskočil, "nové typografické tendence," *ReD* 2, no. 8 (April 1929): 256. Original: "přejímají myšlenky svých kolegů z ostatních států."

Poskočil's essay directly follows one by Moholy-Nagy, "k mluvicímu filmu" ("on talkies"), with first publication credited to the "international revue 'i 10'" ("z internacionale revue 'i 10'") in 1928, and now published in *ReD* in an "authorized translation" ("autoris. překl.") attributed only to "j. n." [László Moholy-Nagy, "k mluvicímu filmu," *ReD* 2, no. 8 (April 1929): 253-255.]

Poskočil's essay is followed by a brief list of six points by Teige, written in German with the standard title "new typography," which echoes demands that a "functional and Constructivist typography" ("funktionelle und konstruktivistische Typographie") break from decorative and academic traditions, employing instead "clearly legible and geometric" ("klar lesbar u. geometrische") typefaces and fully utilizing the possibilities of new technologies.⁵⁵⁷ As with "Modern Typography" in *Typografia*, Teige's writing here appears in the Czech publication *ReD* in German (and this time, only in German), signaling explicitly that he intended for his participation in discussions around New Typography to be observed and understood by those with whom he was engaging, such as Bayer.

TEIGE AS TYPOGRAPHER: IMAGE AS TEXT, TEXT AS IMAGE

Teige thus intended for his writings on typography to be part of an international conversation, but as a practitioner in the field, he also (and perhaps, even more effectively), signaled his position if not a-textually, then extra-linguistically, in the striking aesthetics of his magazine and book cover designs. His work in graphic design was also his primary and enduring source of income. Recall that, to Hannes Meyer, towards the end of his life in 1950, he writes in response to the former Bauhaus

⁵⁵⁷ Karel Teige, "neue typographie," *ReD* 2, no. 8 (1928-1929): 258-259.

director's inquiries into Teige's current occupation: "I am a professor nowhere, and have no solid employment. What I need, I earn through my typographic work."⁵⁵⁸

But Teige was not professionally trained in the field of typography or graphic design. As Frederic Schwartz notes, the new typographers found themselves "in new fields with no established social or professional status,"⁵⁵⁹ and it is in this particular context that, despite his lack of training, Teige was able to enter into the working realm of typography and design, and his work in the field became one of the major ways in which he engaged in a dialogue with an international community. Teige received his education in contemporary typography, and formed his own unique style, through assiduous study of print materials that he gathered from periodicals and posters around Europe. In a surviving folder of clippings related to typography that Teige collected, now housed at the PNP, we are offered a glimpse into how Teige kept up with writings on typography beyond Czech borders.

Besides articles kept from Czech trade magazines with titles like, "The Artist and Industrial Propaganda" ("Výtvarník a průmyslová propaganda") and "How to Use Typography in Propagandistic Print" ("Jak využití typografie v tisku propagačním"), both by the painter and *Veraikon* editor Emil Pacovský, there are also pages pulled from foreign magazines that feature articles, advertisement, and photographic images. There is an article in French entitled "La typografie" (the author attributed only as "Christian")

⁵⁵⁸ Teige to Meyer, February 13, 1950, GRI, HM Archive. Original: "Ich bin nirgendwo Professor und habe keine feste Stellung. Was ich brauche, verdiene ich mir nur durch typographische Arbeiten."

⁵⁵⁹ Frederic J. Schwartz, "The Eye of the Expert: Walter Benjamin and the Avant Garde," *Art History* 24, no. 3 (2001): 429.

from *L'Esprit nouveau* and a heavily underlined copy of Tschichold's 1930 essay "yet another new type" ("noch eine neue schrift") which includes an image (with its caption underlined in Teige's copy with red pen) of Teige's proposed alterations to Bayer's universal script as well as a reproduction of the cover of *Construction and poetry (Stavba a báseň, 1927)*, which Teige designed and for which he used Bayer's script. There is another page pulled from an undesignated publication that includes an image of a proposal for a new typeface by Tschichold himself, and which bears a handwritten note by Teige—"photo is dispensible" ("foto steht zur Verfügung")—that suggests he would like to reproduce the image somewhere. There is a folded German poster announcing the 1929 exhibition on New Typography at the Folkwang Museum in Essen, organized by the northwest chapter of the German Werkbund.⁵⁶⁰

And there are cutouts from German advertisements, namely of faucet knobs and door handles, desks and chairs, that include texts and photographs. Together, these clippings give a strong sense of what Teige was looking for in models of good typography, just as the images collected in Tschichold's *The New Typography* give a very clear idea of what kind of design he upheld as successful and modern. To look at these clippings alongside Teige's own typographic production is to understand what a close eye he kept on European trends and discussions surrounding typography, how this self-education impacted his own production, and how his typographic work in turn entered

⁵⁶⁰ Although I do not have evidence that Teige participated in this 1929 exhibition, he was included in several others in Germany around this time, such as the New Typography show at the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin that spring, and at the Folkwang Museum, in the International Exhibition of the Art of Advertisement (Internationale Ausstellung der Kunst der Werbung) in 1931.

into the international conversation and influenced the work of others. As Karel Srp describes it, Teige “became the first of his generation to advocate for and foster a relationship between Czech typography and the rest of the world, and brought Czech typography from the margins to an internationally respected level.”⁵⁶¹

But Teige went further than simply bringing Czech typography into line with developments abroad; he in turn influenced developments elsewhere (as the reproductions of his work in Tschichold’s manuscripts suggest). As the editor and collaborator on so many magazines, his page layouts, which were graphically striking and which also deliberately brought a range of international figures into conversation on his pages, in essence forced the international avant-garde to take note of what was going on in Prague and Brno.

Also from the folder of clippings on typography at the PNP, we have hints into Teige’s creative process in designing his book and magazine projects, thanks to sample brochures he kept from the Průmyslová tiskárna (Industrial Print Shop) in Prague, which advertise various typefaces. These brochures are now cut up and marked with notes in Teige’s hand, as he experimented with fonts, sizes, and capitalization. In a booklet for the “Pierre Didot” set of typefaces for instance, Teige has written underneath one all capital, block letter font the word “DOSLOV” (“Introduction”) in pencil, to get a sense of what the spacing would look like using this font. In another booklet for “Empiriana,” he has employed the same practice with the words “Sociální pracovníce” (“social worker”),

⁵⁶¹ Karel Srp, *Karel Teige a typografie* (Prague: Arbor vitae, 2009), 7.

written in pencil under various versions of the typeface. On another page, capital versions of the letters “E,” “K,” and “L” have been cut out, presumably so as to place them in a mock-up.

A particularly telling scrap from Teige’s clippings on typography is that of a carefully cut out faucet knob from an advertisement.⁵⁶² The curves of the handle are sensuous in their roundness, and perhaps for Teige, evocative of an unadorned and yet magnetic typographic form; a capital “D” or perhaps a “p” could be read in the handle’s protrusions, a period at its center, and an “O” at its base. Conceivably, this image is the ultimate resolution of an attempt to combine text and image in a way that most effectively presents information. It is simultaneously abstract and without words, and yet we recognize it and know its function. Cut away from its advertising copy, the photograph of the faucet knob tells us all we need to know about it (except maybe the most important thing from the perspective of advertising: where it can be purchased). The knob’s sleek, modern design evokes what can be understood as its efficiency and reliability. And its form, comprised of curves and straight lines, echoes letterforms, perhaps embodying for Teige a totally visual mode of conveying information.

The collection of such images of utilitarian items kept with Teige’s clippings on typography, when seen together, offer a strong justification for reading these objects as models of a typography Teige ultimately aspired towards: one that was able to convey

⁵⁶² The text on the backside of the knob is in German, and in this folder of clippings are several pages of advertisements for various domestic objects—faucets, chairs, desks—also in German. While I am not able to discern from the collection of loose pages which magazine the knob is clipped from, it appears to have been a German architecture or interior design trade magazine.

information not solely by means of text but also via image. And the mechanized components of modern life—from the offset printing press to the bathroom faucet—become comrades in this effort.

POETISM ON THE COVER: ŽIVOT 2 AND RED

Teige saw graphic design as integral to the project of Poetism, and he used his work in this field to describe what he called (echoing Moholy-Nagy) a “synthetic” mode of art making in which various letter-forms, images, and graphic elements were placed side and meant to be read together. Teige’s magazines, were a forum by which to present this broad “art of life” vision, not only in their manifestos, articles, and poetry, but also through their design. Where the Czech avant-garde brought something distinct to an international conversation about typography and graphic design was above all in its application of New Typography principles to a visual expression of Poetism, which was exemplified in photomontage, and what Teige called “typographic composition,” and the “picture poem.”⁵⁶³ These visual manifestations of Poetism are particularly visible on the covers of the magazines—such as *ReD*—books—like Jaroslav Seifert’s *Sheer Love*

⁵⁶³ An example of a “typographic composition” appears on the cover of the December 1927 issue of *ReD*, which includes an illustration by Teige that would appear the following year in Konstantin Biebl’s book of poetry, *S lodí, jež dováží čaj a kávu* (*By the Boat that Delivers Tea and Coffee*).

Karel Srp describes the picture poem as “pure typography and optical poetry.” [Srp, “Karel Teige in the Twenties: The Moment of Sweet Ejaculation,” in *Karel Teige: L’enfant terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant Garde*, eds. Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha, trans. Karolina Vočadlo (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 32.] The picture poem will be discussed at some length in the following pages.

(*Samá láska*, 1923⁵⁶⁴) and Teige's *Film*—and anthologies—of which the *Život 2* cover is a particularly important early example.

Designed two years before the –ism was first publically articulated in Teige's 1924 manifesto published by *Host*, the *Život 2* cover (purportedly the collaborative work of Teige, Jaromír Krejcar, Bedřich Feuerstein, and Josef Šíma) can be read as a harbinger for what would later be called Poetism, much like its content, as discussed in the previous chapter. The text and photographs selected for the cover and collaged together celebrate an international and technologized future. The composition exudes a Constructivist, New Typography design, but also reflects innovation with, and a will to diverge from, this internationally recognized model. And this boldness is rewarded: the cover would be reproduced over and again in Tschichold's various writings, and was widely praised in its own time (an assessment that holds up to this day). The cover showcases the juxtaposition of signifiers classical and modern, man made and natural. A car tire is set before an ancient Doric column, and both foreground a still sea scape and sky behind.⁵⁶⁵ By setting the wheel and column against the sea, references are made

⁵⁶⁴ Teige's collaborator Otakar Mrkvička designed the cover for this volume. Srp coins the term "optical words" to describe the use of photomontage and type to represent "the majority of the iconographical motifs of the picture poem," as embodied on this cover. [Srp, "Optical Words (Picture Poems and Poetism)," 58.]

⁵⁶⁵ Jindřich Toman suggests that the inception for the idea of this collage might be traced to *L'Esprit nouveau*, specifically to images illustrating a collection of photographs of automobiles that Le Corbusier titled "Des Yeux qui ne voient pas... III: Les Autos" ("Eyes That Cannot See... Part III: Automobiles"). But, Toman writes, "while Le Corbusier uses a traditional layout, the Czech authors merge images into a single visual field, exploiting the force of metonymy—only a part of the temple, the column, and only a part of the automobile, the wheel, are visible in the resulting image." (By "traditional layout," Toman refers to the fact that the Le Corbusier example is a standard page spread of distinct photographs, not a collage at all in the traditional sense.) [Jindřich Toman, *Photo/montage in Print* (Prague: Kant, 2009), 80.]

simultaneously to that which is not man-made as well as both modern and classical man's technological ingenuity. Consistent with Teige's ambivalence toward the machine (as discussed in some detail in the prior chapter), an enthusiasm for the mechanics of modernity, upheld as models of "new beauty," is tempered by an homage to what is naturally beautiful. But ultimately, the modern breaks away from the classical and the natural, as the wheel is set in front of both sea and column; it is the latest development in modernity's progression.

And on the same plane with the tire, the title of the publication—**ŽIVOT**—is printed in large black, sans serif capital letters and floats at the top of the page, with sky and column behind it. At the bottom of the page are words that compose the subtitle to the special issue of this publication of the Umělecká beseda: "Anthology of New Beauty" ("Sborník nové krásy"), set on the cover in a white slender oval in a more stylized, serif font. The cover becomes the embodiment of an "art of life" statement, which is further articulated throughout the content of the magazine. Inside *Život 2*, the pages are graced with photographs that further signal visually Devětsil's international interests. There are reproductions of Tibetan architecture and what is labeled an "Indian" totem pole,⁵⁶⁶ as

⁵⁶⁶ In the *Revoluční sborník Devětsil*, Vladimír Štulc publishes an article "Exoticism" ("Exotismus") that also features an image of a totem pole. His definition of the "exotic" is essentially anything not white, Western, or European: "**Asia** i.e. China, Japan, Tibet, India and the Islamic world, **America**, i.e. the art of the Native Americans, of the old, primeval, dead cultures, that linger on today, **Africa**, i.e. the art of the black people, and **Australia and the Pacific**. Original: "**Asie** t. j. Čína, Japonsko, Tibet, Indie a svět islamu, **Amerika** t. j. umění domorodných Indiánů, at starých, staletí mrtvých kultur, či dnes dožívající, **Africa** t. j. umění černošské a **Australie s Tichomořím**." [Vladimír Štulc, "Exotismus," *Revoluční sborník Devětsil* (1922): 179.]

This circumscribing of all culture that is essentially outside the realm of his own—as he puts it, "all art outside Europe" ("všechno umění mimoevropské")—in an undifferentiated manner, is not particular to Štulc or Devětsil, but rather a reflection of a popular trend in art-making of that time, known as Primitivism, inhabited, for instance, by Picasso and Paul Gauguin, both of whom he mentions in his

well as examples of the ultra-modern, as in a photograph of the construction of the Titanic and images of airplanes. An illustration of Vladimir Tatlin's tower is printed side by side with a photograph of the Eiffel Tower.⁵⁶⁷ In the center of the volume, there are advertisements for the upcoming *Disk* and the concurrent *Revoluční sborník Devětsil*, as well as for the French publication *L'Esprit nouveau*, at which Le Corbusier and Ozenfant were both editors. Šrp describes *Život 2* as the moment that the "Czech avant-garde [entered] the international art scene [...] and by the late 1920s and early 1930s it had been written into the history of European typography."⁵⁶⁸

As with *Život 2*, the typographic design of *ReD*—especially on its covers—is central to understanding how Teige introduced a "synthetic" Poetism for all the senses into his own work. It is *ReD* that most evocatively embodies Teige's "art of life" vision. The magazine, which began production five years after *Život 2* was put out, is quickly identifiable, as almost all of the covers bear the word "RED" in capital, block letters (reminiscent of *Život 2*, but with a harder edge and in a stenciled style), typically in the upper left-hand corner. The number of the issue is printed relatively large, proudly

article. Primitivism gave Štulc a way to speak about and embrace non-European art that also conveniently served as a rejection of the sanctified space of the gallery and museum, but is also served to align Czech art production with a western tradition as in contrast to the "other."

⁵⁶⁷ This is an instance, however, of where a purely visual, i.e. a-textual, reading breaks down. As Nicholas Sawicki points out in "The View from Prague," though the two towers are placed side by side in a way that would suggest that they are considered by the editors to be of equal stature, a caption below praises the Eiffel Tower as both "beautiful" ("krásný") and "constructive work" ("konstrukterské dílo"), intended to serve as an observation tower. Tatlin's tower, however, is criticized for its misuse, or even abuse, of technological possibilities in creating a tower without function beyond its symbolic value as a monument the Third International. It is accused of simply showing off its "machinistic elan" ("mašínistické' elan"). [Unattributed caption, *Život. 2* (1922): 45. Referenced in Nicholas Sawicki, *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1090.]

⁵⁶⁸ Šrp, "Optical Words (Picture Poems and Poetism)," 57.

announcing that the journal carries on, which, as we have seen with *Disk*, was by no means a given. The rest of the space is broken up into a series of compartments by the use of vertical and horizontal lines of varying widths and lengths to organize information, typically (and notably non-synthetically) dividing text from image. A block on the left-hand, lower two-thirds of the page is often dedicated to a photomontage or typographic composition. There is usually a slender column to the right, in which a pointing hand—so popular in avant-garde typography—might lead the eye to a list of names, the contributors in a given issue.

To look a bit more closely at one cover, from April 1928 and for an issue dedicated the Liberated Theater—a production of the Devětsil actors and comedians Jiří Voskovec (1905-1981) and Jan Werich (1905-1980), directed by Honzl, with set design by Heythum—the wider, left-hand partition is given over to a photomontage by photographer and Devětsil member Jaroslav Rössler (1902-1990), which doubles as advertisement for the Prague production of the play “Methusalem” by Yvan Goll.⁵⁶⁹ In the montage, a dancer in simple, modern costume perches in a slender wine glass on tip-toe, and a showgirl with feathered head dress skips across a vinyl record, which is being played on a phonograph machine. Another showgirl dances amongst the electric

⁵⁶⁹ The example offered here, of a photomontage not by Teige himself, but nevertheless representative of Teige’s conception of Poetism, illustrates that the –ism was not realized by Teige alone, but was also enacted by others in the Czech avant-garde, and further afield. This is not to say that other artists and poets across the interwar avant-garde in Europe set out to create works specifically with Poetism in mind, but rather (as with the example already mentioned of Dada), Teige was able to recognize facets of Poetism in much work produced in the 1920s. Teige’s own contributions to Poetism lay primarily in its theoretical articulation, as well as the design and editorial selections of the journals he edited, such as *ReD*.

sign boards of music halls or movie palaces, like those celebrated five years earlier in *Život 2*. The montage, with its unapologetic embrace of fun and undoubtedly bourgeoisie pleasures, set within the frame of a compartmentalized, Functionalist cover design, embodies the contradictions of Poetism that make room for an “art of life” project that takes as its base, and then willfully departs from, the principles of Constructivism.

This cover as a whole, and the photomontage in particular, can be read as an example of what Teige had envisioned as a collaborative use of image and text, in which synthetic poetry results from the employment of new modes of mechanical reproduction, as expressed in the first issue of *Disk* from 1923. In his essay “Painting and Poetry” (“Malířství a poezie”), that appeared there, Teige discusses how poetry has shifted from a predominantly aural art form, to a visual one, and he seeks to eradicate the distinction between what is textual and what is visual matter: “Recitation [of poetry] has no sense now and the economy of poetic expression is above all optical, mechanical, typographical, not phonetic and onomatopoeic. *Poetry is read like a modern picture. A modern picture is read like a poem.*”⁵⁷⁰ *ReD* might be seen as a later attempt at bringing to fruition what Teige calls for in “Painting and Poetry,” the embodiment of what Teige outlined in the essay as the picture poem. In Rössler’s montage, in which a photograph of a record player stands in metonymically for music, and specifically music that has

⁵⁷⁰ Teige, “Malířství a poezie,” *Disk 1*, no. 1 (1923): 20. Emphasis is the author’s. Original: “Recitace stává se nesmyslem a ekonomie básnického výrazu je především optická, výtvarná, typografická, ne fonetická a onomatopoická. *Báseň se čte jako moderní obraz. Moderní obraz se čte jako báseň.*”

been mechanically recorded and mechanically projected, we find the visual expression of what Teige means here. The poem on this cover of *ReD* is a picture. The picture is the poem. It is legible without words. It is a picture poem.

And that same year in “Words, Words, Words,” Teige clearly articulated what the picture poem and Poetism more generally are pushing towards, echoing the language of the first Poetism manifesto from 1924 and the scientific pronouncement of the picture poem in *Disk* in 1923:

Poetism truly points to the possibility of a *poetry without words*, the possibility to make poetry out of more sound material, constructive and scientifically examined and certified, out of more solid material than simply the actual word: to make poetry out of light, color, smell, sound, movement, energy.

Poetismus právě ukázal na možnost *básní beze slov*, na možnost básnit materiálem spolehlivějším, konstruktivním a vědecky prozkoumaným a přezkoušeným, materiálem solidnějším, než je tak osobní slovo: básnit světlem, barvou, vůní, zvukem, pohybem, energií.⁵⁷¹

Rössler’s montage on the April 1928 cover of *ReD* is an exemplary manifestation of this “poetry without words” in its reference to senses that go beyond the printed page: the gramophone as a metonym for sound, the dancing girls for movement, the wine bottle and drinking glass for taste, the electric signs for light.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷¹ Teige, “Slova, slova, slova (Part Four),” 72-73. Emphasis is my own.

⁵⁷² The elements in this collage could signify a wide range of things, of course. For instance, the show girls stand in for the experience of the cabaret, and the wine for a night in a café. It is not my intention here to suggest a Saussurian line between one signifier and a single signified, only to suggest a few possibilities to illustrate a different point.

As early as 1923, Teige posits the picture poem as an inevitable outcome of new possibilities introduced by mechanical reproduction, which does away with a reliance on text, and a need for preserving the original. In "Painting and Poetry," Teige writes boldly:

We present (in the 2nd number of *Disk*) the **PICTURE POEM**, which is the resolution to the problem of the relationship of painting and poetry. That fusion is likely to induce sooner or later the *liquidation*, if gradually, of the traditional modes of painting and poetry. *The picture poems entirely conform to present demands.* Mechanical reproduction allows for pictures in book form. It will be necessary to publish books of *picture* poetry. Mechanical reproduction broadly and securely procures the popularization of art. It is printing that is the intermediary between artistic production and the viewer, not the museum and exhibitions. [...] Mechanical reproduction and printing ultimately render the original useless; after they've gone to print we throw our handwritten manuscripts into the wastebasket.

Uvidíte (v 2. čísle Disku) **OBRAZOVÉ BÁSNĚ**, které jsou řešením problémů společných malbě a poezii. Tato fúze pravěpodobně vyvolá dříve či později *likvidace*, třeba pozvolnou, tradičních způsobů malířských a básnických. *Obrazové básně jsou zcela konformní aktuálním požadavkům.* Mechanická reprodukce umožňuje knižní formu obrazu. Bude nutno vydávat knihy *obrazových* básní. Mechanická reprodukce obstará zlidovění umění ve velkém a bezpečně. Tisk je prostředníkem mezi uměleckou produkcí a diváky, ne musea a výstavy. [...] Mechanická reprodukce a tisk učiní posléze zbytečnými originály, vždyť přece rukopisy házíme po otištění do koše.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷³ Teige, "Malířství a poezie," 20. Emphasis is the author's. For more on Teige's use of the term "liquidation" see Peter Zusi, "Vanishing Points: Walter Benjamin and Karel Teige on the Liquidations of the Aura," *The Modern Language Review* 108, no. 2 (April 2013): 368-395.)

Teige's expressed desire here to move towards an entirely mechanical form of art making, in which the publisher and printing press truly become the democratizers of artistic expression by expanding the possibilities of production and popular access, only strengthens over the decade. Raymond Williams, apparently without Teige in mind, describes something quite like what Teige had articulated in "Painting and Poetry" when describing the outcome of urbanization and increased mobility that brought the "experience of small minorities" to a wider population in modernity: "on the one hand the 'old, settled' language and its literary forms and on the other hand the 'new, dynamic' language and its necessarily new forms."⁵⁷⁴ But where Williams sees a "familiar polarization, of an ideological kind,"⁵⁷⁵ between the materials of traditional artistic practice and the products of new modes of artistic creation, Teige was able to find a resolution, or a synthesis in the "fusion" of the "old" forms that together make the picture poem.

Again, the emphasis on the role of technology in this process distinctly brought Teige into conversation with other international avant-garde typographers, such as El Lissitzky and Moholy-Nagy. In his statement that the Czech picture poems are intended to "entirely conform to present demands" Teige answers El Lissitzky's call in "Topography of Typography" of the same year that the arrangement of text and photographic printing blocks reflect the mode of printing itself, in order to "realize a new optics" ("die neue Optik realisieren").⁵⁷⁶ Teige's "fusion" of the traditional arts of

⁵⁷⁴ Williams 79.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ El Lissitzky, "Topographie der Typographie," 47.

painting and poetry, of the visual and textual, in order to liquidate these genre altogether in the picture poem, seems already to be reaching towards something like Moholy-Nagy's formulation of "synthesis," as it is described in his essay "Guidelines for a Synthetic Newspaper" ("Richtlinien für eine Synthetische Zeitschrift") printed in German in *Pásmo* in late 1925. Moholy-Nagy takes El Lissitzky's demands in "Topography of Typography" to their next logical level: he writes of a need for a publication with "no differentiation of status" between "art, science, technology, trade work, etc."⁵⁷⁷

While Teige seems to have envisioned something like this for *Disk*, it was not until the publication of *ReD*, founded in 1927 (a year after *Pásmo* concluded), that he succeeds in creating a publication that more fully embodies such a synthetic mode. The inaugural issue opens with a two-page explication of the purpose of the journal that highlights its basis in Poetism, now in a language that closely echoes Moholy-Nagy's text in *Pásmo*:

ReD (=review of Devětsil) wants to be a synthetic magazine of international, modern works of culture. [...] It wants to be the prospector of ideas that have been realized, and those that are not or cannot be realized, a reporter from the workrooms and ateliers, where designs and forms of new living values crystallize. [...]

ReD, wants to be a truly synthetic publication of modern cultural creation, wants to collaborate effectively towards the creation of new aesthetic, scientific, social, and living forms.

⁵⁷⁷ Moholy-Nagy, "Richtlinien für eine Synthetische Zeitschrift," *Pásmo* 1, no. 7-8 (1925): 5. Original: "keine getrennten Rangklassen für Kunst, Wissenschaft, Technik, Handwerk usw."

ReD (=revue Devětsilu) chce býti synthetickým časopisem mezinárodní moderní kulturní tvorby. [...] Chce býti prospektem ideí, které se realizují, i těch, které dosud nejsou či nemohou býti realizovaný, reportérem z pracoven a atelierů, kde kristalisují návrhy a formy nových životních hodnot. [...]

ReD chtěje býti skutečně synthetickým listem moderní kulturní tvorby, chtěje spolupůsobiti účinně při vytváření nových estetických, vědeckých, sociálních i životních forem.⁵⁷⁸

The all pervasiveness of Teige's list here is the embodiment of its "synthetic" project, enacted within the frame of the journal's Poetist vision.

This is meant to suggest that Teige was in a productive dialogue with other practitioners of typography abroad, not that he is merely quoting in his own writings from the wide range of theoretical formulations on contemporary typography. Teige's thought and artistic output reflects how he was simultaneously influencing and influenced by a wider international conversation. It is notable that the first Poetism manifesto was published in the same year Moholy-Nagy purports to have written "Guidelines for a Synthetic Newspaper" (1924). And it was via Poetism, and its publishing platforms, such as *ReD*, that Devětsil brought its most unique contribution to the dialogue of the interwar avant-garde. Related as it was to such concepts as Moholy-Nagy's "synthesis" and "typophoto," and Tschichold's *New Typography*, these interventions were recognizable in a wider European milieu. Teige's "Poetism" is comparable to Moholy-Nagy's "synthesis," and his "picture poem" as outlined in the

⁵⁷⁸ Karel Teige, "ReD: Revue Svazu Moderní Kultury 'Devětsil'," *ReD* 1, no. 1 (October 1927): 1.

1923 issue of *Disk* is Moholy-Nagy's "typophoto," two years *avant la lettre*. In the following section, Teige's formulation of picture poem as an aspect of Poetism is placed into further conversation with Moholy-Nagy's typophoto, and additional visual manifestations of these concepts are considered.

PICTURE POEM, TYPOPHOTO, FILM: WORKING THROUGH CHALLENGES IN *DISK* AND *PÁSMO*

In Moholy-Nagy's 1925 essay, "Typographie-Photographie Typo-Photo," which appeared in Tschichold's issue of *Typographische Mitteilungen*, Moholy-Nagy describes a "visual literature" ("visuelle Literatur") that finds its resolution also in a fusion of the textual and the visual.⁵⁷⁹ "What is Typhoto?" asks Moholy-Nagy, and responds with a synthetic statement: "Typography is a printed message, a presentation of thoughts. Photography is a visual presentation of what is optically comprehensible. Typophoto is the visually most exact presented message."⁵⁸⁰ In 1927, now two years after Moholy-Nagy's statement, Teige praises this synthesis of image and text explicitly in "Modern

⁵⁷⁹ László Moholy-Nagy, "Typographie-Photographie Typo-Photo," *Typographische Mitteilungen* (1925). Anthologized in *Texte zur Typografie*, eds. Petra Eisele and Isabel Naegele (Sulgen, Switzerland: Niggli, 2013), 204.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 202. Original: "Was ist Typophoto? Typographie ist in Druck gestaltete Mitteilung, Gedankendarstellung. Photographie ist visuelle Darstellung des optisch Fassbaren. Das Typophoto ist die visuell exaktest dargestellte Mitteilung."

The same formulation also appears in Moholy-Nagy's *Malerei Photographie Film*, also published in 1925.

Typography” as, “that perfect combination of typography and photography, producing what Moholy-Nagy calls *typophoto*.”⁵⁸¹

Teige’s definition in “Modern Typography” of typography as “visual communication,” published in the same year as the first issue of *ReD*, would be especially welcome to the practitioners of an avant-garde in a lesser known language. But if the inevitable project of the international avant-garde would be to produce information visually, the second and final issue of *Disk* from 1925, advertised as it had been in the first issue from 1923 to be devoted to the picture poem, and with two year’s time between the first and second issue to bring this concept to fruition, does not yet accomplish that goal, and is instead extremely text heavy.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸¹ Teige, “Modern Typography,” 99. Emphasis is the author’s. Original: “dokonalé spojení typografie s fotografií v to, co zve Moholy-Nagy: *typofoto*.”

⁵⁸² Only one year after the publication of *Disk 2*, in 1926, the printing of Nezval’s poem *Abeceda* in book form offers perhaps the most successful, extended example of the picture poem as Poetism. The poem was first printed (as text only) in *Disk* in 1923 in the very issue in which Teige announces the picture poem. When the poem is published as a book in 1926, it is with accompanying photographs of the “dance compositions” (“taneční komposice”, as they are credited on the cover) of Milča Mayerová (1901-1977) and typographic design (“typografická úprava”) by Teige. With Nezval as poet and Teige as typographer, *Alphabet* as a stand-alone book is, Matthew Witkovsky writes, a “consummate expression of Poetism [...] In Teige’s writings, Poetism heralded a revolutionary synthesis of verbal and visual signs that would give poetry the immediacy of advertising billboards.” Nezval describes in the forward to the book how when he first wrote the poem, around Christmas of 1922, he was seeking a poetics of new content, and found in the letters of the alphabet “a poetry of the most subjectless object” (“poesie nejbezprostřednější objekt.”). [Vítězslav Nezval, *Abeceda* (Prague: J. Otto, 1926), 3.] When writing the poem, Nezval was not thinking of the visual aspects of the work that would later develop, but in the forward, he acknowledges the importance of these elements added later, highlighting the major role that the dance and typographic components ultimately played in turning his poetry into a synthetic work that breaks down barriers between distinct art forms in order to create a dynamic work of Poetism.

An extended discussion of *Abeceda* in its book form, however, does not fit within the scope of this chapter on periodicals. The book has also enjoyed considerable attention by other scholars. See, for instance: Aleksandar Bošković, “Photopoetry and the Bioscopic Book: Russian and Czech Avant-Garde Experiments in the 1920s” (PhD diss., University of Michigan Ann Arbor, 2013), 246-282; Josef Vojvodík, “Abeceda,” in *Heslář české avantgardy*, ed. Josef Vojvodík and Jan Wiendl (Prague: Charles University, 2011), 63-73; Matthew S. Witkovsky, “Staging Language: Milča Mayerová and the Czech Book *Alphabet*,” *The Art Bulletin* 86:1 (March 2004): 114-135. A full reprint and English translation of *Abeceda* has been

A statement that Drucker makes in relation to Marinetti's theory and practice might have well applied to Teige's own aspirations in this period:

Marinetti's experimental typographic work was accompanied by systematic calls for revolutionizing the visual, literary, and graphic form. The program of reform Marinetti called for was in some ways more radical than the work he achieved or brought forth in its name, but the implications of the positions he took are striking and mark clear breaks with the poetic positions in which he had been trained. Marinetti's well-documented infatuation with the concept of modernity defined as speed, simultaneity, and sensation established the basis of his stylistics.⁵⁸³

The scientific program of the picture poem that Teige outlines in "Painting and Poetry" is also far more radical in its evocation than in its actual expression with *Disk 2*. While the issue does maintain a Constructivist aesthetic, it does not display any particularly notable graphic innovation, with the exception being the article with which the issue opens, entitled "New Techniques in the Poetic Craft" ("Nové techniky v básnickém řemesle") by Bedřich Václavek.⁵⁸⁴ It is a four-page exploration of the ways in which typography can bring poetry closer to eliciting a message with visual impact by positing poetry as a technical and scientific skill. The language of Václavek's text—which opposes

published as well: Vítězslav Nezval, *Abeceda*, eds. and trans. Jindřich Toman and Matthew Witkovsky (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 2001).

⁵⁸³ Drucker, *The Invisible Word*, 105.

⁵⁸⁴ It is important to note, if only briefly, that Václavek's pictorial essay is followed by Teige's important, "Constructivism and the Liquidation of Art," which, as Zusi has written, "does not pretend to originality, but merely reflects theoretically on what he saw enacted by avant-garde circles in Moscow, Berlin, and elsewhere. [...] The primary characteristic of the emerging era, Teige claims, is that it transforms the category of art so radically that the very word becomes practically unusable." [Zusi "Vanishing Points," 378-379.] While it is certainly not the intention of this project (nor that of Zusi's), to depict Teige as merely a translator of foreign ideas and innovations into Czech, Zusi's comment is pertinent here in that it reminds us once again that all decisions around content and graphic design of the *Devětsil* magazines were intended to reflect actively their engagement in an international conversation.

the “poet of 30 years ago” (“Bávník před 30ti lety”) to the “poet of today” (“Bávník dnes”), whose “mentality” (“mentalita”) can be characterized by “an accelerated rhythm” (“zrychlený rytmus”), “activity” (“aktivnost”), and “methodicalness” (“metodičnost”), for instance—is reminiscent of Teige’s in *Disk 1*. And it is also emblematic of the sentiment across the avant-gardes at this time, in what Michael Cowan describes as “a move away from models of genius and artistic inspiration toward an understanding of the artist’s role as being more akin to that of a technician.”⁵⁸⁵

El Lissitzky illustrated that in “Topography of Typography” when he coined the term “book space” (“Buchraum”) to instrumentalize the object and talk about the need for developments in typography to correspond not to some artistic ideal but to technological progress: “The design of the book space, through the material of the type and in accordance with the rules of typographic mechanics, must correspond to the tension and pressure of the content.”⁵⁸⁶ Two years later (in the same year that *Disk 2* was put out), Tschichold suggests “the arrangement of the strongest of opposites” (“die Gestaltung stärkster Gegensätze”) to create a “simultaneity” (“Simultanität”) through the consideration of forms and colors, and their arrangement as positive elements in negative space (the “un-pressed paper” [“unbedrucktes Papier”]), as a way to break

⁵⁸⁵ Michael Cowan, “Advertising, Rhythm, and the Filmic Avant-Garde in Weimar: Guido Seeber and Julius Pinschewer’s *Kipho* Film,” *October* 131 (Winter 2010): 24.

⁵⁸⁶ El Lissitzky, “Topographie der Typographie,” 47. Original: “Die Gestaltung des Buchraumes durch das Material des Satzes nach den Gesetzen der typographischen Mechanik muß den Zug- und Druckspannungen des Inhaltes entsprechen.”

Writing about El Lissitzky’s “book space” Schwartz describes how, for the avant-garde typographer in the 1920s, “traditional culture’s flat printed page and its steady, orderly unfolding of information was clearly no longer valid as a model of visual attention and organization for the modern subject surrounded by a world of machines, traffic and text.” [Schwartz 410.]

away from prior printing conventions and forge new possibilities.⁵⁸⁷ And, in 1927, as though summarizing all the voices in this conversation, in “Words, Words, Words,” Teige declares, “We have shown that the contemporary crisis in literature is a crisis of material.”⁵⁸⁸ In 1925, Václavek’s exegeses in the second *Disk* stands as but another attempt to address this.

But Václavek’s “New Techniques in the Poetic Craft” hardly pushes the limits of the printing press, typeset as it is in a traditional, linear form employed for centuries, and which the likes of Marinetti and Apollinaire had already attempted to resist and break apart.⁵⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Václavek does play with the use of different (serif and sans) fonts of various size and boldness, variance in the centering of lines, boxed texts, a vertical line reading, and the use of leader and a pointing finger dingbat to highlight especially important parts of the text, and in these ways he suggests one possible solution for reading a poem “visually,” if still so heavily dependent on the text itself for full comprehension of the message. Still, though, this is a very different kind of visual poetry than what we have in Rössler’s photomontage, or any number of examples that appear in *ReD* once it begins publication in 1927, where something closer to the aspirations Teige voices in the first *Disk* is achieved. In fact, the April 1929 issue of *ReD*, dedicated to “foto- film- typo- grafie” fits the bill of what is advertised for *Disk 2* much better than what materialized there, as its pages are filled with examples of

⁵⁸⁷ Tschichold, “elementare typographie,” 333.

⁵⁸⁸ Teige “Slova, slova, slova” (Part Three), 47. Original: “Soudobá krise literatury je, ukázali jsme, krisí materiálu.”

⁵⁸⁹ See Drucker, *The Visible Word*, 105-168.

photography, photograms, poster and advertisement design, film strips, picture poems, and “typomontage” (“typomontáž”).⁵⁹⁰ In this same issue Mallarme’s *A Throw of the Dice* is wedged between Poskočil’s “new typographic tendencies” and Teige’s “new typography.” In contrast, in *Disk 2*, there is only a single page designated explicitly to the picture poem, again, in an issue that was purportedly to be dedicated to the genre. On the page, three images are included, all reflections on travel. They are captioned: “K.Teige: A Tourist’s Picture Poem” (“Turistická obrazová báseň”), “Jiří Voskovec: Siphoning of Colonial Siestas (“Sifony koloniálních siest”) and “Štyrský: Souvenir” (“Vzpomínka”).⁵⁹¹

The bulk of the issue is dedicated to what might be called filmic poems, or, as a few are subtitled, “lyrical films” (“lyrický film“), which attempt to conjure cinematic scenes, but textually rather than graphically, and appear as lists. There is a poem by Vítězslav Nezval called “Rocket. A Poem in Images.” (“Rakete. Fotogenisches Gedicht.”), published in German, and another by Voskovec titled “NICOTINE A poem of Smoke: Libretto for a Lyrical Film.” (“NIKOTIN Báseň dýmu (Libreto pro lyrický film.)” Černík has two such poems printed, titled, “Glass Poetry. A Blueprint for a Lyrical Film.” (“Skleněná báseň. Návrh lyrického filmu.”) and “Trouble on the Rails at the Wetland Valley.” (“Železniční neštěstí v Údolí Bažin.”). The latter is dedicated to Teige and has the subheading “A Film Tragedy” (“Filmová tragedie”). Like the other lyrical films, this one

⁵⁹⁰ The latter is used to refer to Teige’s designs for another Biebl book of poems, *Rupture (Zlom)*, which are similar to what Teige had earlier called “typographic compositions.” (See footnote number 562.)

⁵⁹¹ The first in this group, often referred to as the “Pozdrav z cesty” (“Travel Greetings”) postcard, is perhaps the most famous and widely cited example of the picture poem. Here too, Witkovsky’s *Foto:Modernity* (42-47) is a good source.

appears as a series of numbered lines that unfold the scene in which the action takes place. The first six lines of “Trouble on the Rails” are provided here:

1. A black dot on a white surface,
 2. As it grows, it revolves wildly,
 3. Until it transforms into a plastic globe.
 4. The movement ceases when the circle, containing a plastic map of America, exceeds the screen’s frame.
 5. In the middle is a photograph of the the southern part of the United States, which continues to grow, until it takes up the whole screen.
 6. The long wetland valley, photographed from an airplane, headed towards earth.
-
1. Černá tečka v bílém poli,
 2. Jež se zvětšuje, prudce se otáčejíc,
 3. Až se promění v plastickou zeměkouli.
 4. Pohyb se zastaví, když kruh, obsahující plastickou mapu Ameriky, přesahuje obrysy plátna.
 5. Středem fotografie jest západní část Spojených Států, jež se stále zvětšuje, až zaujme sama celé plátno.
 6. Dlouhé Údoli Bažin, fotografováno z aeroplánu, jenž se snáší k zemi.⁵⁹²

While there is no space here to discuss this script in relation to films actually being created at the time, or to other such filmic poems, these first six lines do reflect and repeat standard film tropes of the period, neither in content nor in graphic layout particularly innovative, but nevertheless indicative of Černík’s eye to contemporary, American film production and film writing.

It is interesting that the issue of *Disk* initially intended to be dedicated to the picture poem as a representation of Poetism, instead features so many of these wholly

⁵⁹² Artuš Černík, “Železniční neštěstí v Údolí Bažin,” *Disk* 2 (1925), 16.

textual lyrical films. While these textual scripts do not address the ways in which printed matter can be cinematic visually, their inclusion in *Disk* at least nods to Devětsil's greater participation in conversations around parallels between film and typography. And an earlier example of a picture poem, "Departure for Kythera" ("Odjezd na Kytheru"), created by Teige in 1924 and reproduced as the final image in his book *Film* from 1925, is subtitled "Moment of a Lyrical Film" ("Moment lyrického filmu"), representing a completely different conceptualization of the lyrical film—as predominantly visual rather than textual—than what is included in *Disk 2*. The image includes photographs of an ocean liner and sailboat, a crane and a series of stairs, as well as an advertisement for the "American Line," collaged within a Constructivist grid. "Departure for Kythera"—another photomontage as picture poem—is not an entirely a-textual version of a lyrical film though: it includes two phrases within the image ("Au revoir!" in italics in the upper right corner and "Bon Vent!" in capital letters in the center) and is followed by a list of five directions that refer to it explicitly, designated as the scene's "process" or "action" ("postup"). From Černík's Deep South in "Trouble on the Rails," we move now to the sea in "Departure for Kythera":

1. Abstract geometric composition in movement.
2. The composition comes into focus: a harbor, liners, a crane, a poster are visible.
3. At the same time: the crane turns on its axis as required by the composition (horizontally) and to the right above a motorboat passes the harbor and leaves in its trail (important for the composition) a white wake.
4. A sailboat departs, turns, inclines to one side, disappears into the distance, becomes smaller and smaller. On a staircase to the right a hand waving a white kerchief is visible.

5. The sailboat disappears; illuminated text pops up: Au revoir! Bon vent! — — — —
1. Abstraktní geometrická kompozice v pohybu.
 2. Tato kompozice se stále více zaoťruje: je vidět přístav, parníky, jeřáb, plakát.
 3. Současně: jeřáb otočí se do polohy, vyžadované komposicí (horizontále) a vpravo nahoře přejede motorový člun přístavem zanechávaje za sebou (komposičně důležitou) bílou brázdu vln.
 4. Plachetní lod' se rozjíždí, otáčí se, naklánějíc se na bok, mizí do dálky, stále menší a menší. Na schodišti na pravo je vidět ruku s mávajícím bílým šátkem.
 5. Plachetní lod' mizí v dálce; vyskočí světelný nápis: Au revoir! Bon vent! — — — —⁵⁹³

This scene, like Černík's in *Disk*, indicates a strong interest in popular filmic tropes of the period, as the objects in the scene come gradually into focus and then move around, out of, or into the frame to add layers of information and build suspense.⁵⁹⁴ The filmic list and its accompanying, illustrative picture poem, "Departure for Kythera" offers an example of the lyrical film much closer to what might have been intended for *Disk 2*. One can only imagine the amount of work and additional expense that would have gone into illustrating all the film scripts in *Disk 2* in this way, and find in this an explanation for their omission. The single page of picture poems that do appear in *Disk*, with this example, also from 1925, in mind, might therefore be read as an illustration of what

⁵⁹³ Karel Teige, *Film* (Prague: Václav Petr, 1925), 125.

⁵⁹⁴ In her close reading of "Departure for Kythera," Esther Levinger also suggests that Devětsil is taking its cues from Hollywood, writing, "At the time this picture was made (1923-24) the United States—"America"—was apparently modern Cythera. For Teige and his friends in Devětsil, it represented the land where all dreams came true, at least in filmmaking." [Esther Levinger, "Czech Avant-Garde Art: Poetry for the Five Senses," *The Art Bulletin* 81, no. 3 (September 1999): 521.]

further scenes would have been rendered to accompany Nezval, Voskovec, and Černík's scripts had the constraints of the magazine allowed.

These various iterations of the lyrical film were part of a wider effort to innovate graphically in order to express information filmically, in response to technological advancements in printing. It was Walter Porstmann (briefly introduced in the early pages of this dissertation) who perhaps laid the groundwork in Central Europe for thinking about print and film together, when he wrote in his typographic manual *Sprache und Schrift*, that from “a system of writing in images. [...] the leap is not far to film.”⁵⁹⁵ But where Porstmann, widely read at the Bauhaus, predicted that printed matter would eventually be made irrelevant by film as the most efficient way of conveying information, Moholy-Nagy, Teige, and other new typographers looked to film instead as a model of the simultaneity they sought to achieve in printed form. In other words, film pushed them to innovate within the constraints of the printed page to create something dynamic, something cinematic, an impulse that is reflected even in the fully textual lyrical films in *Disk 2*. For Moholy-Nagy, typophoto was the solution to this challenge, a system for bringing together what Porstmann characterized as the two-dimensional writing system of photography with one-dimensional text, in a synthesis that was the “visually most exact presented message.”

⁵⁹⁵ Walter Porstmann, *Sprache und Schrift* (Berlin: Verlag des Vereins Deutscher Ingenieure, 1920), 59-60. Original: “eine bilderschrift. [...] der sprung nicht weit bis zum film ist.”

It might also be argued, though, that attempts were already being made westward, in France, to address the filmic in poetry and graphic arrangement. Friedrich Kittler writes that Mallarmé's “A Throw of a Dice,” and Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*—discussed already here—are “typographic poems that attempt to bring writers on par with film and phonography.” [Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 229.]

With a nod to its filmic capacity, Moholy-Nagy continues: “Typophoto regulates the new tempo of the new, visual literature,”⁵⁹⁶ and indeed, the best-known example of Moholy-Nagy’s typophoto, was labelled by the artist as a “film sketch” in its introductory notes: “Dynamic of a Metropolis” (“Dynamik der Großstadt”).⁵⁹⁷ The most famous version of the sketch is the one that appears in the eighth Bauhausbuch, an exegeses on new new ways of seeing titled *Painting Photography Film (Malerei Photographie Film)* which Moholy-Nagy co-authored with his wife Lucia Moholy (though she is almost always stripped of credit in this collaboration⁵⁹⁸), and is the version that Schwartz has in mind when he calls it “a manifesto of the New Typography.”⁵⁹⁹ But it was first printed in Hungarian in *Ma* in 1924, and then, in 1925—the same year in which it was published in a Bauhausbuch—it appeared in issue 11-12 of *Pásmo*, in German.⁶⁰⁰

The *Pásmo* version, which is prefaced with the same introduction that appears in the Bauhausbuch, likely came about from Černík seeing its publication there.⁶⁰¹ As has

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., 204. Original: “Das Typophoto regelt das neue Tempo der neuen, visuellen Literatur.”

⁵⁹⁷ Under the title of “Dynamic of a Metropolis” as it appears in the eighth Bauhausbuch, Moholy-Nagy includes, “Sketch for a film; also typophoto.” Original: “Skizze zu einem Film, Gleichzeitig zu Typophoto.” [Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei Photographie Film* (Munich: Albert Langen Verlag, 1925), 120.]

⁵⁹⁸ See Meghan Forbes, “‘What I Could Lose’: The Fate of Lucia Moholy,” *Michigan Quarterly Review* 55, no. 1 (Winter 2016), 24-42; Lucia Moholy, *Marginalien zu Moholy-Nagy/Moholy-Nagy, Marginal Notes* (Krefeld: Scherpe Verlag, 1972).

⁵⁹⁹ Schwartz 404.

⁶⁰⁰ The Bauhausbuch version, in which the sketch is printed over multiple page spreads, is the only version of the three that includes photographic reprints, and is a fully realized example of typophoto. Perhaps for this reason, very little attention has been given to the renderings of “Dynamic of a Metropolis” that appear in the Hungarian or Czech publications. In contrast, a fair amount of scholarship has already been dedicated to the version appearing in *Malerei Photographie Film*. See, for instance: Michael Cowan, “Advertising, Rhythm, and the Filmic Avant-Garde in Weimar: Guido Seeber and Julius Pinschewer’s *Kipho* Film,” *October* 131 (Winter 2010): 23-50; Andreas Haus, *Moholy-Nagy: Photographs and Photograms*, trans. Frederic Samson (New York: Pantheon Books), 1980; Frederic J. Schwartz, “The Eye of the Expert: Walter Benjamin and the Avant Garde,” *Art History* 24, no. 3 (2001): 401-444.

⁶⁰¹ Importantly, in his introduction, Moholy-Nagy states that, in order to produce a more “dynamic” version of “Dynamic of a Metropolis,” he had waited for the technology to catch up to his

already been discussed, Moholy-Nagy himself was in touch with both Teige and Černík with regards to the Bauhausbücher and potential Czech collaborations, and it is not surprising that Devětsil would have been keen to publish a version of “Dynamic of a Metropolis” themselves. (And, as already discussed, his “Guidelines for a Synthetic Magazine” had appeared in *Pásmo* already earlier that year.) The film sketch (as it appeared in the Bauhausbuch) might have offered a solution for Teige to something he described already in 1921, in “The Art of Today and Tomorrow” in the *Revoluční Sborník Devětsil*, in which he compared the invention of the printing press to that of moving film as a way to think of the role the machine plays in reproducing and propagating art outside of the gallery or museum hall:

It has been rightly said that the discovery of the cinema is for us as important as the discovery of the printing press for the people of the Renaissance: here, too, machine production disseminates art to its viewers. And what’s more: the heroes of cinema projected photographically on the screen are captured for eternity, are immortal. And the vinyl record preserves the voice of its singers. —Yes, all of

capacity for innovation. Although Moholy-Nagy also wanted to turn his sketch into an actual film, this goal was never realized. In the introduction, which is then quoted in *Pásmo*, Moholy-Nagy cites financial issues as well as the sketch’s “bizarre” form as reasons it has yet to find a studio home: “The manuscript sketch ‘Dynamic of a Metropolis’ came into being in the years 1921-1922. I wanted to carry out the film together with my friend Carl Koch from the ‘Institute for Cultural Research,’ who gave me the idea for this project. We have unfortunately up to this point not pulled it off; the Institute has no money for it. Bigger companies like UFA didn’t dare take on the risk of such a bizarre publication; other film people, ‘despite the good idea, can’t find **the plot** in it,’ and thus refrained from filing.” Original: “Die Manuskriptskizze Dynamik der Groß-stadt entstand im Jahre 1921-1922. Ich wollte sie zusammen mit meinem Freunde Carl Koch von dem ‘Institut für Kulturforschung’, der mir zu dieser Arbeit viele Anregungen gegeben hat, durchführen. Wir sind leider bis heute nicht dazu gekommen; das Institut hatte kein Geld dafür. Größere Geschellschaften wie die UFA wagten damals das Risiko des bizarre Erscheinenden nicht; andere Filmleute haben ‘trotz der guten Idee **die Handlung** darin nicht gefunden’ und darum die Verfilmung abgelehnt.” [Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei Photographie Film*, 120. Emphasis is the author’s.]

Moholy-Nagy did however make a short film (at 8 minutes and 40 seconds) in 1931-1932 called *Berliner Stilleben* [*A Berlin Still Life*] that might be considered a close representation of what he imagined “Dynamic of a Metropolis” would be.

modern artistic culture consists and must consist in mechanical production.

Bylo správně řečeno, že je pro nás vynález kina tak důležitý jako vynález knihotisku pro člověka renesance: i zde strojová výroba rozšiřuje umění mezi diváctvo. A co více: hrdinové kina fotografií promítnutou na plátně dobývají věčnosti a nesmrtelnosti. Desky gramofonů přežijí hlasy zpěváků. —*Ano, všechna moderní umělecká kultura spočívá a musí spočívat na strojové výrobě.*⁶⁰²

Teige's comparison of the development of filmmaking to that of the printing press, as the newest form of technical reproduction that brings information to a wide audience, and can likewise preserve that information beyond the lifespan of its active participants, also echoes Porstmann's portrayal of film as a new system of writing better suited to conveying information in fast-paced modernity. Like Porstmann, Teige sees in the potential of film an ultimatum for printed matter: to convey information as quickly and as efficiently as possible, as a mode of "visual communication." By reimagining the work of the printing press to produce something closer to the work of film, again, the printed page becomes cinematic in aspiration.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰² Teige, "Umění dnes a zítra," 193. Emphasis is the author's.

Zusi points out that, "In contrast to his statements about other visual media (such as the picture poem), Teige writes here of technological *production* (*výroba*), not reproduction (*reprodukce*)." [Zusi, "Vanishing Points," 383.]

⁶⁰³ Bošković, in a section of his dissertation titled "Film as a Poetist Machine," looks to the use of photography in particular to address how Teige imagined the sequence of pages as something of a film reel. He describes Teige's view of the "whole outside world" as one that had "become a proto-cinematic poem, since it had been mediated by the modern technologies of image production and reproduction that themselves make the world appear beautiful, enhanced, sensational, simultaneously lyric, epic, and dramatic, in a word—poetic." [Bošković 221.]

Where in Teige's formulation in "The Art of Today and Tomorrow" the movie screen is the projection surface for photographic reproduction, Moholy-Nagy, with the Bauhausbuch version of "Dynamic of a Metropolis," attempts to make the page another such screen on which photographic images are reproduced alongside minimal text, in order to "have an impact visually, and **only** visually."⁶⁰⁴ But while "Dynamik of a Metropolis" is arguably the most fully realized rendering of a lyrical film, again, the *Pásmo* version of "Dynamic of a Metropolis" is a notably stripped down version of what appears in *Malerei Photographie Film*, hardly pushing at the limits of "mechanical production." In *Pásmo*, it is printed almost entirely without illustration, save for some small circles and straight lines placed together to suggest train signals, and triangles to convey direction of movement.⁶⁰⁵ It is also not printed on the cover of the issue, rather two out of three columns on page three and four are designated for its reproduction. This is not an open page spread; the reader is required to turn the page to access the second half of the sketch, so that the full piece cannot be viewed simultaneously. So

⁶⁰⁴ Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei Photographie Film*, 114-115. Emphasis is the author's. Original: "Er möchte visuell, **nur** visuell wirken."

This is also, of course, the exact opposite effect of the "lyric films" in *Disk II*, which are almost entirely dependent on a textual reading to be interpreted.

⁶⁰⁵ The graphic representation of train signals is in fact the only thing to remain constant in all three early publications of the film sketch. The railways and their locomotives were a popular trope across the avant-garde (the most famous example being, perhaps, Walter Ruttmann's 1927 *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (*Symphony of a Metropolis*), so well suited—along with airplanes and automobiles—as they were to express the speed of modern life, and stemming from an interest in the the machine as art/as subject of art so forcefully articulated by the Italian Futurists. In *Pásmo*, another example of the avant-garde interest in trains is also a stronger example of typographic experiment than the version of "Dynamic of a Metropolis" printed there: Karel Schulz's "Travel by Train" ("Jízda vlakem"). This visual poem had appeared in the second issue of *Pásmo* from 1924, and employs elements adopted from Futurism and Dada to evoke a story of a train crash with visual cues and use of onomatopoeia. It takes up about three-quarters of one (large-format) page, and, similar to Václavek's "New Techniques in the Poetic Craft" (published the following year in *Disk*), it employs a variety of font sizes and weights in serif and sans serif typefaces, as well as leader and other dingbats, and vertical letter placement, to create a dynamic image that can be appreciated even without a reading knowledge of the Czech text itself.

while Teige, like Moholy-Nagy, would call for a “*poetry without words*” (in “Words, Words, Words”) in 1927, and declare Poetism up to the task, examples from *Pásmo* and *Disk* in 1925 fall somewhere short of the mark, though Devětsil’s interest in creating printed matter that is cinematic and a-textual is clearly indicated.

But while the *Pásmo* version of “Dynamic of a Metropolis” does not have the dynamism of the Bauhausbuch printing, a book publication and a periodical on newspaper print can hardly be held to the same standard, and there is strong evidence that *Pásmo* continued to hold great interest for Moholy-Nagy. Though he does not directly reference the inclusion of “Dynamic of a Metropolis” in *Pásmo*, Moholy-Nagy did write to Černík with praise for other issues of the magazine, and continued to have his articles and images printed within its pages. In a letter dated November 27, 1925, for instance, Moholy-Nagy writes to Černík: “dear mr. černik! I have received the last number of ‘pasmo’ and find it superb that the magazine is able to expand its reach.”⁶⁰⁶ In that same letter, Moholy-Nagy proposes to Černík that he publish in *Pásmo* some photographs Moholy-Nagy took on a recent trip to Paris:

during my summer travels i made a series of photographs, also in paris, of the eiffel tower, and i think that these photographs came out so nicely that one can comfortably make them public. i’ve always missed respectable eiffel tower photographs in particular. the only nice photos i’ve seen to exist of the eiffel tower in literature were put out by “stavba.” please look through these photographs for ones you would like to publish, and send the other ones back to me at my address soon.

⁶⁰⁶ László Moholy-Nagy to Artuš Černík, November 27, 1925, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “lieber herr černik! ich habe die letzte nummer von ‘pasmo’ bekommen und ich finde es grossartig, dass sie die zeitschrift im umgang so erweitern konnten.”

ich habe während meiner sommerreise eine reihe von aufnahmen gemacht, u.a. auch in paris von dem eiffelturm und ich glaube, dass diese aufnahmen so schön geworden sind, dass man sie ruhig veröffentlichen kann.anständige eiffelturm-aufnahmen habe ich nämlich immer vermisst. Die einzigen schönen aufnahmen, welche von dem eiffelturm in der literature existieren, hatte s.zt. die "stavba" gebracht. Ich bitte sie, von den aufnahmen die auszusuchen, welche sie gern veröffentlichen wollen und ich bitte,die anderen gleich an meine adresse zurückzuschicken.⁶⁰⁷

In this proposal we have yet more evidence of the dialogic relationship across the avant-garde, as Moholy-Nagy thinks specifically of a Czech publication for his photographs, based on the merit of past work in *Pásmo* and *Stavba*. Two of Moholy-Nagy's Constructivist photographs of the Eiffel Tower would ultimately appear in *Pásmo* in the month directly following this letter, in December 1925.⁶⁰⁸ In letters spanning the next year, Moholy-Nagy frequently references the magazine in letters to Černík, reflecting the high esteem that he had for the publication, and the value he saw in having his own work appear there.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁸ A different Eiffel Tower image reproduction printed in the "foto film typo" issue of *ReD* from April 1929 offers a particularly good example of the ways in which advertisement became indistinguishable from standard editorial content. The photographer is unattributed; rather the name of Gustave Eiffel—the architect of the tower—is listed beside the image. The tower is shot from a disorienting perspective, and as though it has been rendered unrecognizable, the name of the Eiffel Tower is set alongside this iconic monument, in Czech, German, and French. Below the reproduction is another photograph of the Eiffel Tower, this time taken from across the Jardin du Champs de Mars and accompanied by an endorsement of Paris—"Paris, at the center of science and art, a focal point of contemporary culture, the cradle of modern architecture" ("Paříž, středisko vědy a umění, ohnísko soudobé kultury, kolébku moderní architektury")—that flows seamlessly into a marketing campaign for Štyrský and Toyen's Paris guide—"you can experience it all with the most comprehensive Czech guide to Paris" ("pomůže Vám seznáti nejobsáhlejší český průvodce Paříží"). This final claim is followed with the publisher's information, but on first glance at this page, there is little to distinguish this advertisement at the bottom from the more purely editorial content at the top. [*ReD* 2, no. 8 (April 1929): 252.]

In February 1926, Moholy-Nagy suggests that one of his keystone essays on typography, “Zeitgemässe Typographie” [“Contemporary Typography”], be reproduced in *Pásmo*, and in the same letter asks Černík “kindly, for nos. 4 and 5, volume 2 for our archive, in order to have them all at our disposal.”⁶⁰⁹ And though the essay did not appear in *Pásmo* before it quite operations later that year, it was published in the Czech trade magazine *Typografia* in 1927 in Czech translation, the same year in which the magazine published Bayer’s “Attempt at a New Script,” Tschichold’s “New Creation,” and Teige’s “Modern Typography.”

The New Typography—envisioned as a new way of conveying information, a new way of seeing, and a new way of reading—was in essence an attempt to develop a new language that was universal and international. Its methods, which stripped away ornament along with many previously held distinctions—between established, so-called “academic” art and the new art forms of mechanical reproduction, and between the ability of text versus image to convey information, between “major” and “minor” languages—called for a standardization that resulted in what Poskočil proclaimed to be an art “that knows no borders.”

Teige found much to like in this method, and perhaps more so than with any other genre in which he worked, he saw typography, an art form that met the person in

⁶⁰⁹ Moholy-Nagy to Černík, February 3, 1926, PNP, AČ Archive. Original: “den sonderabzug aus der ‘Gutenberg-festschrift’ erlaube ich, wenn sie es wünschen, in dem ‘pasmó’ abzudrucken.” And: “ich bitte sie höflichst, für unser archiv ‘pasmó’ nr. 4 und 5, 2. jahrgang, zur verfügung stellen zu wollen.”

their homes and on the streets in the form of advertisement, book, and of course, magazine design, as the most effective means to create an art that was thoroughly representative of his social and aesthetic ideals, that was life itself. In his essays on typography, and as a practitioner of graphic design, he engaged with fellow typographers abroad, as together they actively embraced and made manifest “a mechanical beauty [...] that is the real work of the modern person.”⁶¹⁰

⁶¹⁰ Teige, “Konstruktivismus a likvidace ‘umění’,” 7. Original: “mechanická krása [...] je prostě dílem moderního člověka.”

CONCLUSION

MAINTAINING THE MARGIN

Vítězslav Nezval founded the Czech Surrealist group on March 21, 1934, a consequence of his initial contact with the French circle in 1933. As the myth goes, Nezval met André Breton in Paris entirely by chance, and did not hesitate to use this fortuitous first meeting as an opportunity to open a dialogue between the French Surrealist group and the Czech avant-garde. By this time, there was no more Devětsil, per se, though many of its same associates had migrated to the Surrealist group, including Karel Teige. The birth of a distinctly Czech Surrealism, then, is an example of continuation marked by disjuncture, as Devětsil disbands and many of its members migrate there together.

Surrealism can be an archetype of both international dialogue and imbalanced power relations—evidenced not only in a trickle down from Paris, but also in the movement’s well-documented subjugation of women⁶¹¹ and the aggressive exclusion of members with political views that did not align with Breton’s particular interpretation of Communism. The Czech interest in French Surrealism also marks a moment in which Prague once more directs its gaze to Paris, as this shift roughly coincides with the

⁶¹¹ In English, see for instance: Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf E. Kuenzli, and Gwen Raaberg, eds. *Surrealism and Women* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991); Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985); Gen Doy, *Claude Cahun: A Sensual Politics of Photography* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Penelope Rosemont, *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998).

complete closure of the Bauhaus in 1933 due to National Socialist pressure, and the subsequent scattering of its students and instructors across Europe and further afield.

And there was in the case of Surrealism, as with the Bauhaus, some reciprocated interest. At the invitation of the recently founded Czech circle, Breton and Paul Éluard (1895-1952) visited Prague in the Spring of 1935. And it is as a result of this trip that the Czech Surrealists were officially invited by the French group to Paris, which led to a subsequent visit in the summer of 1935 (to coincide with the first International Congress of Writers in Defense of Culture) that became the subject of Nezval's travelogue *Rue Gît-le-Coeur* (*Ulice Gît-le-Coeur*).⁶¹² The exchange between Prague and Paris of 1935, in which the two Surrealist groups pay one another a visit, marks a physical encounter that engenders another kind of dialogue. Nezval, as an outsider, experiences the city of Paris via the text and image of *Nadja* (Breton's 1928 photographically illustrated Surrealist novel) and then relays his own encounter with that city in *Rue Gît-le-Coeur*, also a photographically illustrated volume that bears many striking parallels to its predecessor, at once a list (of street names, cafés, people), a diary, and a Surrealist experiment.⁶¹³ Nezval also continued his conversation with Breton, as well as Éluard, in extended correspondence, which is now held at the PNP.

⁶¹² For more on *Rue Gît-le-Coeur* and Nezval's activities while in Paris in 1935, see: Deborah Garfinkle's dissertation chapter, "The Street Called 'The Resting Place of the Heart' (Paris)," in "Bridging East and West: Czech Surrealism's Interwar Experiment" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2003), 134-227.

⁶¹³ Derek Sayer recounts that Éluard had, "knowing of Nezval's love of *Nadja* [...] presented him with a luxury copy of the book containing many more photographs than the published version," on his 1935 visit to Paris. [Derek Sayer, *Prague, Capital of the Twentieth Century: A Surrealist History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 375.] And on that trip, Breton also took Nezval to meet the figure who was the model for *Nadja* herself, as Nezval recounts in *Ulice Gît-le-Coeur*.

The case of Czech Surrealism serves, at this moment of conclusion, as an indication that the mechanisms described in this dissertation, which facilitated an unprecedentedly dialogic exchange between members of the Czech avant-garde and other European movements, continued to operate into the second decade of the interwar period (though with increasing difficulty, and ultimately stymied with the German occupation of Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939). The archive bears witness to a conversation conducted in letters, travel, and print analogous to the relationships described already on these pages. But Surrealism's antagonisms are also well-known, and the relationship between Breton, Nezval, Teige, and other major figures would be a rather turbulent one. A study of Surrealism as it was enacted in the 1930s in Prague and Paris is a productive counterpoint to interrupt the narrative offered in this dissertation of the exceptionally non-hierarchical relationships forged in the 1920s.

Though Surrealism would last for many more decades in different iterations, Nezval announced that the group he had founded in 1934 was no longer operative by 1938, at which point, as Garfinkle writes, he "had traded his pin-up of Breton for Stalin."⁶¹⁴ But in *Rue Gît-le-Coeur*, Nezval's stance towards Breton can only be described as idolatrous. Modeling the book off of Breton's *Nadja*, Nezval weaves dreamlike fragments and place-specific details together to create a narrative that features simultaneously a traveler's didactic accounting and the Surrealist's "psychic

⁶¹⁴ Garfinkle, "Bridging East and West," 22.

automatism.”⁶¹⁵ On the very first page of the text, Nezval writes breathlessly: “I had the feeling, as though I’d arrived on the Boulevard de Sébastopol out of nowhere.”⁶¹⁶ It is as though the Czech Surrealist is transported to Paris as in a dream, a word and a sentiment that recurs throughout the travelogue. The uncanny soon gives way, however, to a detailed account that meticulously maps the Czech Surrealist’s trek through the city in search of a resting place on the Place du Panthéon.

Nezval’s close reading of the text and image of *Nadja* (which he had translated into Czech⁶¹⁷) enables him, upon alighting on the Place du Panthéon, to register one of many happy “coincidences” that are the mark of his Surrealist travel account:

But what was our surprise when we alighted on the Place du Panthéon. The hotel, which we had chosen by chance, neighbored another hotel—that hotel which we knew well from its illustration in *Nadja* and in which, according to his own recollection, lived he, to whom we had paid our first [Paris] visit. It was the “Hôtel des Grands Hommes.”

Ale jaké bylo naše překvapení, když jsme dali zastavit na Place du Panthéon. Hotel, který jsme si bezděčně zvolili, sousedil s jiným hotelem, s hotelem, jehož fotografii jsme dobře znali k ilustraci k “Nadje” a ve kterém, podle svého

⁶¹⁵ A term used by Breton to describe the process of writing in his first Manifesto of Surrealism from 1924. André Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism,” in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1972), 26.

⁶¹⁶ Vítězslav Nezval, *Ulice Gît-le-Coeur* (Prague: František Borovský, 1936), 7. Original: “směl jsem mítí dojem, jako bych byl vstoupil na Sebastopolsky bulvár odníkud.”

⁶¹⁷ Nezval completed the *Nadja* translation with Miloš Hlávka (1907-1945) and Bedřich Vaníček (1885-1955), and it was published in 1935, the same year of Nezval’s trip to Paris that is recounted in *Rue Gît-le-Coeur*. Nezval also translated Breton’s *Les Vases Communicants* (as *Spojité nádoby*, 1934) with Jindřich Honzl, another text that had a significant impact on Nezval’s reception of Paris. Nezval writes in a small synopsis of his translations that translating *Nadja* and *Communicating Vessels* revealed to him “the most direct way to he [Breton] himself.” Original: “nejpřímější cestu k sobě samotnému.” [Vítězslav Nezval, “Spojité nádoby a Nadja,” in *Manifesty, eseje a kritické projevy z let 1931-1941*, ed. Milan Blahynka, vol. 25 (Prague, Českoslovenký spisovatel, 1974), 287.]

vlastního přiřznání, bydlel ten, jemuž měla platit první naše návštěva. Byl to “Hôtel des Grands Hommes.”⁶¹⁸

The “he” for whom he had (returned) to Paris, was, of course, Breton, and it is thanks to the decision to incorporate photographs into the narrative of *Nadja* that Nezval is purportedly able to so quickly recognize the Hôtel des Grand Hommes as that in which Breton once lived. And, just as Breton had included a photograph of the Hôtel des Grand Hommes in *Nadja*, so Nezval in turn has a photograph of the two hotels—the one in which Breton had lived, and the neighboring one in which Nezval had rented a room—reproduced in *Rue Gît-le-Coeur*. As with the placement of the Place du Panthéon image in *Nadja*, so too is this image the first photograph to appear in Nezval’s book.

A hotel for “Great Men” is no doubt an apt place for the self-assured Breton to have once resided, and at its door on the Place du Panthéon (just across the way from where the impenetrable Jacques Doucet Library of the Sorbonne now holds many of the old Surrealists’ papers) offers perhaps the ideal place to park this dissertation, dedicated as it has been to so many of the Great (White) Men of the historical avant-garde. But lest we give them all the glory, a moment for the one female member of Devětsil and Czech Surrealism—Toyen—is due before closing. For her case offers a potential way out of the paradigm of writing, and rewriting, histories out of what is at our disposal in the archives, which tend to be boxes upon boxes of materials dedicated to the Great Men and very few to their female counterparts.

⁶¹⁸ Nezval, *Ulice Gît-le-Coeur*, 8-9.

When Nezval alighted upon the Place du Panthéon, he was accompanied by Jindřich Štyrský and Toyen, who, again, had co-authored a travel guide to Paris with the journalist Vincenc Nečas the decade prior. As Nezval recounts in his Paris travelogue, the sickly Štyrský mostly languished in the hospital during this trip, and died in Prague in 1942 in the middle of World War Two. Toyen, who lived to be seventy-eight, immigrated to Paris after the Second World War, and became one of the most important and loyal representatives of Czech *and* French Surrealism. After Breton's death in 1966, she even took up residence at his famous address: 42, rue Fontaine. It is Toyen, and not Nezval or Teige, who carried the torch longest of that early strain of Czech Surrealism. But in her underrepresentation both then and later, Toyen also stands as an example of how the movement constructed its own hegemony, and how that model has been propagated through scholarship for decades. Even now, as University of Chicago professor Malynne Sternstein has written, Toyen's "legacy continues to be constrained by readings of her work that focus on her gender," which Sternstein contends risks overshadowing her artistic contributions to Surrealist painting and also, illustration and book cover design.⁶¹⁹ But while Sternstein holds that, "Toyen is famously quiet when discussing her art and art theory,"⁶²⁰ it is perhaps more accurate to say that she has been *made quiet*

⁶¹⁹ Malynne Sternstein, "This Impossible Toyen," in *The Popular Avant-Garde*, ed. Renée Silverman (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 41.

Sternstein's remark should not be accepted uncritically, however, as others had already done much in the 2000s to lay the groundwork for greater visibility and respect for Toyen, namely Karel Srp and Lenka Bydžovská in the Czech Republic, and Deborah Garfinkle and Karla Huebner in the United States. See: Deborah Garfinkle, "Bridging East and West: Czech Surrealism's Interwar Experiment" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2003); Karla Huebner, "Eroticism, Identity, and Cultural Context: Toyen and the Prague Avant-Garde" (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2008); Karel Srp, *Toyen*, trans. Karolina Vočadlo (Prague: City Gallery Prague and Argo, 2000); Karel Srp and Lenka Bydžovská, *Knihy s Toyen* (Prague: Akropolis, 2003).

⁶²⁰ Sternstein 57.

due to the little attention placed on her unpublished writings and correspondence (both sent and received), as well as insufficient analysis of the few manifestos and essays printed in her lifetime that she co-authored. Virtually nothing has been written as well about the two guide books to Paris she published with Štyrský and Nečas, both put out in 1927 by Devětsil's publisher Odeon, and which provide incomparable access into what the Czech avant-gardists found interesting in Paris, and how they sought to convey that to the average, middle class traveler.

Far from being subsumed, though, by the “gender trap,”⁶²¹ the quality of Toyen's art production is not in question—neither here nor elsewhere—as a recent (if diminutive) show at the Museum Kampa in Prague illustrates.⁶²² Even in her earliest years of work, Toyen was recognized as a formidable artist worthy of note. Sternstein writes: “Toyen's Czech contemporaries provide deeply keen readings of her work. The critical analysis of Karel Teige and Jan Mukařovský, for example, remind us of Toyen's primary historicity.”⁶²³ By making the archival record work for her, then, as it does for her male counterparts, or at least by pointing to its insufficiency, Toyen would be integral to a project that more generally seeks to show how fully embedded Czech artists were in artistic and intellectual production in Europe between the two World Wars, and points as well to where and how such efforts were blocked. By expanding the project of this dissertation to encompass the full span of the interwar years, introducing

⁶²¹ Ibid., 41.

⁶²² *Toyen: Vidím neboť je noc (I See For it is Night)* ran from September 4, 2015 through January 3, 2016 and was curated by Karel Srp.

⁶²³ Sternstein 49.

as well instances in which networks were thwarted, the breadth, significance, and application of the project will grow in step.

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Aktuality a curiosity

Bauhuasbücher

Bauhaus Zeitschrift

Čas

Červen

Der Dada

Disk

Die Form

G

Horizont

Host

Index

junge menschen kommt ans bauhaus!

Kmen

Ma

Mécano

Merz

Musaion

Odeon

Orfeus

Pásmo

Proletkult

ReD

Revoluční sborník Devětsil

Rozpravy Aventina

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Stavba

Surrealismus

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Typographia

Typographische Mitteilungen

Veraikon

Das Werk

Zenit

Život

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