

Libor Pavera

ORCID: 0000-0001-6916-8483

The University of Bielsko-Biala, Poland

E-mail: lpavera@ath.bielsko.pl

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Czech Interwar Literature: How It Was Affected by the Cultural and Philosophical Currents of Europe from the “Great War” to Munich 1938

Abstract

In this study, the author attempts to portray Czech interwar literature, i.e., the period from the beginning of the independent republic to its demise in September 1938 (the signing of the so-called Munich Agreement). He focuses on some necessary political and cultural-historical issues, such as the end of the “Great War”, the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, and the establishment of an independent republic. However, he pays the most attention to the form of literature (prose, poetry, and drama). In conclusion, he notes that literary life significantly diversified and branched out over the two decades. The system of literature deepened in terms of material and genre, but also in terms of ideological and ideological direction. While initially, literature and literary life were quite centralist (just like the original Austro-Hungarian Empire with its bureaucratic apparatus), over time there is a more pronounced differentiation and the emergence of new cultural centers, usually associated with larger cities. He recalls great literary figures (K. Čapek, J. Hašek, etc.) as well as authors from the circle of German-written works.

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The research conducted by historians over time increasingly lead to the confirmation of one idea: the creation of interwar Czechoslovakia in 1918 was not a matter of course. The new republic was an artificial construct (see Moric 2023). The new republic emerged during the collapse of Austria-Hungary, at the end of the “Great War”, and in connection with the prevailing opinion on self-determination of nations within historical conferences held in French castles such as Versailles and Trianon.¹ The so-called Paris Peace Treaties completely redrew the maps of Europe and parts of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific Islands, and also imposed financial sanctions, especially on Germany and its allies.

Interwar Czechoslovakia became a multiethnic state, newly uniting several ethnic groups. Besides the most numerous group of Czechs and Slovaks, it also included significant minorities of Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians, Jews, and others. This historical moment brought many new questions and problems to the entire spectrum of society, including ethnic, national, and cultural differences. It also brought a sense of independence, freedom, and faith in a better tomorrow in building an independent state after centuries of perceived oppression.

Interwar Czechoslovakia was a country with a very complex ethnic structure, encompassing Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia, and Subcarpathian Rus, each of these regions having its own unique linguistic, ethnic, and cultural characteristics. Language, literature, and culture were supposed to aid in building the idea of Czechoslovakia. The language issue was particularly poignant in

1 Data based on the 1921 census: Czechs and Slovaks made up 64.8% of the population, Germans made up 22.3% of the population, Hungarians made up 5.5% of the population, Ruthenians made up 3.4% of the population, Poles made up 0.6% of the population, Jews made up 1.3% of the population, other nationalities made up 2.1% of the population.

interwar Czechoslovakia. Czech and Slovak, although very similar, are two distinct West Slavic languages, each with their own grammar and vocabulary. From the very beginning of the new state (the republican system), the idea of a Czechoslovak language was promoted, which was supposed to consist of two “dialects” – Czech and Slovak. The aim of this idea was to support the creation of the Czechoslovak nation and strengthen the unity of the country, but in reality, it faced considerable resistance from various sides, especially in the border areas inhabited by the German-speaking minority. This minority had its own language and culture and often felt marginalized and discriminated against by the Czechoslovak majority.²

The ethnic and language issue thus played a key role in the politics and society of interwar Czechoslovakia and was one of the main factors that influenced its building and historical development. This phenomenon also influenced the name of some studies and publications that at the time promoted the idea of the existence of the Czechoslovak language and nation (cf. *History of Czechoslovakia*, *History of Czechoslovak Literature*, or even *Grammar of the Czechoslovak Language*). Many of the indicated happenings were foreseen by the first Czechoslovak president Masaryk, who asked intellectuals to publish works on the building of the country.

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk played a key role in the process of creating and shaping Czechoslovakia. At the beginning of the “Great War” in 1914, Masaryk was 64 years old (born March 7, 1850) and had an impressive and almost completed scientific, academic, and political career behind him. He was appointed professor of philosophy at the age of 32 (in 1882 at Charles University), was a member of the Imperial Council, and pursued politics concurrently with his scientific career. He focused his scientific work on philosophical and ethical issues, mostly related to the present (his habilitation thesis dealt with suicide as a social phenomenon), and from

2 Some issues of the common state of the Czechs and Slovaks manifested themselves to varying degrees not only during the so-called First Republic, but much later as well. Specifically, the language issue – the Czech-Slovak question caused tension and was not formally and legally resolved until the end of the existence of the first Czechoslovak Republic (cf. Rychlík 2015).

a historical-philosophical and literary perspective, he evaluated Russia (in the extensive treatise *Russia and Europe*). He did not spare criticism of the Russian political situation and society, but he was able to express himself positively, especially towards the authorial poetics and legacy of some Russian classical authors, and he initiated the creation of a special Czech edition (the so-called Russian Library, introducing Czech readers to the main works of Russian classical literature by L. N. Tolstoy, I. S. Turgenev, F. M. Dostoevsky, D. S. Merezhkovsky, and others). Masaryk's "struggles for truth", in which he stood against anti-Semitism and injustices in the judicial system (the so-called Hilsner affair) or against alleged ancient monuments (the so-called manuscript disputes, i.e., disputes about the antiquity of the forgeries of the Manuscripts of Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora), also contributed to his growing fame.³

The writer Karel Čapek expresses some realities from Masaryk's life and the "state-building" in the book *Hovory s TGM*, "Conversations with TGM" (it is a summary of nine years of "conversation," but also "silence," with the first Czechoslovak president, published between 1925–1935). The title of the book suggests that it is in the form of a conversation, an interview of an aging experienced politician with a relatively young writer and journalist. In reality, it is information from discussions and meetings with Masaryk, captured by Čapek's memory. It is a specific book: it allows insight not only into Masaryk's inner self, seen through the eyes of writer Čapek, but also into Čapek's own self, who has the opportunity to "write history" based on the collected information, creating another construct of history, in this case, a construct about the building of a new state and Masaryk's place within it. Čapek's book, still widely read and

³ These were disputes that were scientifically resolved (Jaroslav Goll, Jaroslav Vlček, T. G. Masaryk, etc.), but only seemingly so, as they often reappear in the Czech environment, in the further development of the Czech lands: after the establishment of Czechoslovakia, opponents of Masaryk took the manuscripts hostage, the manuscript issue reappears in the 1960s and 1970s (allegedly medieval monuments are therefore studied by criminalists at the Forensic Institute using modern forensic methods), and after the revolutionary events at the beginning of the 1990s, when a fairly powerful group of manuscript supporters (Julius Enders, Jiří Urban, etc.) even emerges and develops extensive publishing activities, including websites.

published, was followed by the unfinished *Mlčení s TGM*, “Silence with TGM”. As a whole, it allows one to concretize Masaryk’s views on world revolution, the organization of world order, democracy, patriotism, nationalism, freedom, philosophy, politics, literature, and so on. It is indispensable in understanding the personality of TGM (Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk).

Masaryk, together with his closest exiled collaborators – Edvard Beneš and Milan Rastislav Štefánik, was the leading figure of the Czech national movement abroad and sought to gain support for the creation of an independent state. He had to work with his collaborators alongside the resistance “at home” (the Maffie group), in the Czech lands, on political and military matters, especially the creation of an independent army. This army was formed on the battlefields of the “Great War” mainly from soldiers who refused to serve and fight in the uniforms of the Austro-Hungarian army, to which these soldiers as citizens of Austria-Hungary belonged (the so-called legionnaires). Many of the legionnaires were also poets and otherwise versatile writers or publicists. They testified and talked about their time serving in the First World War through their texts – during the war, after the end of the “Great War” after 1918, and later, when they finally returned to their homes (their journeys home usually lasted several months, took on the character of anabases, and were not without adventurous elements).

A large number of the legionnaires published texts before the war, usually as epigones of symbolist or decadent poets. This is also the case with Rudolf Medek, who during the “Great War” on the Eastern Front went over to the Russians and in 1916 became a volunteer in the Czechoslovak army, which was forming beyond the future Czechoslovakia. His war poetry is filled with pathos – the lyrical subject stands face to face with war, death, his own existence, and the genre returns to the ode and hymn, the oldest forms of the song (the cycle *Lví srdce* “Lion’s Heart”, first published in Irkutsk in 1919, later reissued in the independent republic). He became a model for other poet-legionnaires. After the end of the war and his return, he wrote verses influenced by vitalism. Later, he also devoted himself to drama and the novel, often again with legionnaire themes. Following in his footsteps were Oldřich Zemek and

Adolf Veselý, better known as a journalist. Other important legionnaires that should be mentioned include: František Langer, Josef Kopta, or František Kubka. Even among the legionnaires, there were discussions: mainly about disputes or differences between literary individualism and socialist views (represented by poets and writers of the youngest, avant-garde generation), between Slavism of the older type and the new type of international humanity, between conservative views and experimentation in literature and drama of the new, upcoming post-revolutionary and post-war era.

Traditionally, as is typical in times of national threat or war, writers usually begin to return to the past in their texts. They refer to positive, glorious, and symbolic historical epochs, older recognized literary figures, famous figures associated with national history, or try to express revolutionary ideas abroad. During the “Great War”, the literary public returned to living authors of the older generation (Alois Jirásek, Eliška Krásnohorská, etc.), who demonstrated the enduring values of the Czech nation and its bright figures with their historicism; their themes created analogies to the present, and therefore these authors became relevant again. It was about finding and discovering a certain national pathos.

During the “Great War”, Emperor Franz Joseph I died (1916) and his successor, Archduke Charles I, promised greater openness towards the individual nations of the monarchy and modernization of the empire, including changes to the outdated centralist system. However, his ministers understood the monarch’s changes differently: they essentially wanted to maintain the status quo. While one part of the Czech political and scientific public expressed loyalty to the ministers, another part of the representation took a radical stance and, in the spirit of the powers of the Entente (Great Britain, France, Russia, and Italy), sought national independence. It was about the practical application of the concept of “self-determination of nations”, later closely associated with American President Woodrow Wilson, who incorporated it into his “Fourteen Points” in 1918, which were to serve as the basis for peace negotiations and the arrangement of the world after the war. The fifth point of these principles directly called for a “free, open understanding based on mutually guaranteed political self-determination of nations”, which

means that each nation should have the right to decide its political fate (see the speech “Fourteen Points”).⁴

Especially at the instigation of the director of the National Theatre in Prague and playwright Jaroslav Kvapil, a petition or statement of Czech writers was created: a document often referred to as the manifesto of Czech writers. The document was published in the agrarian newspaper *Večer* on May 17, 1917, and it was a significant step towards the independence and sovereignty of Czechoslovakia: writers and intellectual elites condemned the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and expressed support for an independent Czech state. One of the main signatories of the document was writer Alois Jirásek, the author of numerous historical novels, short stories, and dramas, which contributed to shaping the Czech national identity. His legacy was also used and politically abused in later periods.⁵ Jirásek’s relationship with Masaryk evolved over time. It is undeniable that Jirásek valued Masaryk (it was indeed Jirásek who welcomed President Masaryk – “The Liberator” – at Prague’s main train station in November 1918). Masaryk also spoke positively about Jirásek’s work and activities. This is best documented by a seemingly trivial detail: on the occasion of Jirásek’s seventieth birthday, Masaryk had his public congratulations published in the press, in which he wrote among other things:

You taught people to read with interest, to think and to ponder, that is to say, you paved the way to freedom. You affected their feelings, strengthened and fortified their will, the source of determination and brave deeds. For that, every Czech and Slovak heart is filled with gratitude to you, Master Jirásek...

4 The Entente countries used the idea for various purposes and selectively. On the one hand, the self-determination of nations provided an ideological basis for breaking up the empires of the Central Powers, such as the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary. On the other hand, the principle of self-determination of nations was suppressed (especially in the Middle East) in favor of maintaining colonial control. Therefore, it has its supporters (it is a fundamental principle of democracy and human rights) and opponents (it leads to ethnic conflicts, instability of the political system, etc.).

5 The document was signed by 222 writers and intellectuals, whose literary, social, and political paths later varied significantly (including Jakub Deml, brothers Josef and Karel Čapek, Viktor Dyk, Jindřich Šimon Baar, Marie Majerová, Zdeněk Nejedlý, and others).

A whole range of representatives of the historical public expressed their opinions (publicly and privately) in the “ideological ferment”. The “dispute about the meaning of Czech history”, traditionally referred to as the tension between the supporters of the concept of Czech history from the pens of T.G. Masaryk and Josef Pekař, essentially a representative of modern Western-style Protestantism on the one hand and Czech conservative Catholicism on the other, has actually remained unfinished throughout the 20th century (see Havelka 1995–2006).

It is clear how not only writers, but also historians, along with intellectual elites, showed increased interest in political matters. Scientific fields usually resist politicization in everyday social operations: however, at the end of the First World War, several wishes and desires came together: the desire to end the monarchy, to end the raging war, to emancipate the entire spectrum of Czech society, and to catch up with the developed Western world. The politicization of scientific and cultural-social life (including literary) will be one of the typical features of the interwar era of the First Czechoslovak Republic.

From the beginning of the 20th century, foreign philosophical currents and literary influences had a significant impact on the Czech scientific, cultural, and literary environment. These “currents” already traditionally came to Central Europe from the French environment, especially vitalism in the form of Henri Bergson’s philosophy (“*élán vitale*”). American pragmatic philosophy (particularly William James and Charles S. Peirce), which found its advocate in Masaryk and his collaborators, also emerged, specifically as a reaction to illusionism and relativism. It gained popularity through the practical application of ideas and the evaluation of the truthfulness of concepts based on their practical consequences. Vitalism was viewed as a response to the mechanistic and materialistic view of the world by a number of literary authors (František Halas, Karel Čapek, etc.).

Although earlier impressionism, with the capture of immediate impressions and moods through light, color, and atmosphere, preferring landscape and everyday life, was already past its zenith, futurism – the extreme consequence of literary impressionism

with the simultaneous capture of perceptions and impressions, however, preferring speed, progress, and rejection of tradition – newly appears in the Italian and French environment and from there in other European countries. In the Czech environment, it found its application within the avant-garde movement Devětsil, especially within the framework of Poetism (J. Seifert, V. Nezval, etc.). Marinetti's ideas were received ambiguously and somewhat reservedly in the Czech environment. On the one hand, his celebration of modernity and technology inspired a number of Czech artists, on the other hand, his aggressive and confrontational style, as well as his political views (Marinetti was, for example, a great admirer of Mussolini and fascism), were often criticized in the Czech environment.

The Unanimist movement also permeated many areas, including literature, as did the results of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis and his students and followers, and the original visual art direction of Cubism with its premises. The concept of Unanimism was described by its founder, French poet and writer Jules Romains, as an emphasis on collective experience, community, and what unites people, rather than what divides them: it pointed to the emergence of a collective soul. Under its influence, large collective novels were created, focusing on the depiction of various groups and communities and on portraying their shared experiences and emotions. A suitable example might be Romains' novel cycle "Les Hommes de bonne volonté" (*Lidé dobré vůle*, "Men of Good Will"), which became popular in the Czech environment. Some Unanimist ideas appear in Czech interwar prose, for example in the works of Karel Čapek, who often emphasized the importance of solidarity and mutual understanding among people, which can be understood as being influenced by Unanimism. However, it never became as strong and dominant a direction in the Czech environment as Cubism or Surrealism.

The influence of translated literature is usually forgotten. However, when discussing the beginning of the interwar period of Czech culture and literature, one cannot overlook the anthology of translations from new, modern French poetry. Some authors of modern French poetry were known in the Czech environment through

the translations of Jaroslav Vrchlický, but his translations were considered archaic. A new anthology of modern French poetry was compiled by the linguistically gifted Karel Čapek (*Francouzská poezie nové doby*, “French Poetry of the New Age”, 1920). Young authors looked up to it, and in it they sought inspiration for their literary art. Similar anthologies were created more during the post-revolutionary and post-war period, not only from French literature. Newer selections from French poets were published in the collections of Hanuš Jelínek and Jindřich Hořejší, Adolf Felix from Italian poets, Otakar Vočadlo establishes the “Standard Library” and introduces American authors (J. Galsworthy, S. Lewis, Th. Dreiser, G.K. Chesterton, etc.). Even before the “Great War”, Scandinavian, Russian, and Polish literature were popular among readers.

While the political scene was oriented towards this foreign, especially French, environment under the influence of the war situation and the victory of the Allied powers, science, philosophy, along with cultural and literary personalities, did not resist continuing to explore the German and Austrian “ideological worlds”. The ideas about the decline of Western civilization finally resonated with people not only at the time when Oswald Spengler published his fundamental work – it is a problem that is still current and Spengler belongs to analyzed scholars to this day. There is no doubt that Spengler’s conception of the development of civilizations was influenced, like many other fields, including literary history, by the influential theory of Charles Darwin, from who he picked up cyclical alternation of history (in Darwin’s species) with stages of origin, maturation, golden age of maturation and decline.⁶ The German philosopher and historian published his work *Zánik Západu* (“The Decline of the West”, “Der Untergang des Abendlandes”) in two volumes in 1918 and 1922. According to Spengler, the West, or Western civilization, is in the late, decadent phase of its cycle – in a stage he called “civilization”, which for him was synonymous

6 One only needs to look at history or literary history textbooks, for example, to see how the explanation is structured and to take a closer look at the titles of some chapters („peak” of literature, „golden era” of literature, etc.). Does the development of literature really proceed so unequivocally and analogously to the evolution of animal species?

with inevitable and unstoppable decadence and decline. Spengler's ideas must have resonated with many people who experienced the horrors of the "Great War" and the social changes that occurred during and after the war.

Undoubtedly, influences can be found in the creative work of Karel Čapek, where categories such as "humanity", "civilization", "decline" can be found in his works. This does not mean that Čapek agreed with pessimistic views on the future of Western civilization – his vision was largely optimistic and his conception of man (especially the "small", "little" man) was permeated with humanism.

One of Spengler's critics was the leading Czech literary critic F.X. Šalda, who nevertheless acknowledged that Spengler's views constitute a significant discussion contribution to the future of Western civilization. Spengler was rejected mainly for excessive pessimism and fatalism, which at that time was in conflict with the post-war situation – it promised the building of a new world, faith in progress and the possibility of society improving.

The results of the work of psychoanalysts found greater application – both direct and indirect – in the Czech cultural and literary environment. It was not just about the categories that Freud and his followers worked with (consciousness, preconsciousness, subconsciousness, Id, Ego, Superego, etc.). Excessive pansexualism, which one of his students, Carl Gustav Jung, criticized Freud for, as well as the emphasis placed on dreams and primal experiences, found application in the poetry of surrealists, as well as in the prose of Marcel Proust and James Joyce, who were translated, interpreted and imitated in the Czech environment. Psychoanalysis found its *raison d'être* most notably among the surrealists (in the poetry of Vítězslav Nezval or Toyen).

German Expressionism arrived in the Czech environment somewhat belatedly. While in Germany, in connection with Expressionism, they speak directly of the "Expressionist decade" in the first decade of the 20th century, in the Czech environment, there was a strong emphasis on the negative and tragic aspects of human existence and the effort to emotionally and subjectively depict reality, to prefer expression over impression, to express oneself against reality with heightened emotionality, with the aim of reviving values suppressed

and silenced by war and civilization. These values are displayed in the texts of authors who debuted before the “Great War” and continued to create during the war, or published their texts after the war, even though these works were stuck in a certain time and space. One of them was the poet and prose writer Fráňa Šrámek, an author with a strong emotional charge and a tragic view of the world. Some of his collections (*Splav* “Weir”, 1916) or dramas became models and inspirations for young authors in the future (for example, for Jiří Wolker, especially in his debut *Host do domu* “Guest to the House”, 1921).

However, it is necessary to emphasize that Šrámek was not a pure Expressionist in the sense that his work was fully in line with this artistic direction. His work is influenced by a number of other artistic trends, including Symbolism and Impressionism, and his poetry is often considered transitional between older and more modern forms. At the same time, however, it features some characteristic elements of Expressionism, such as intense emotionality and the tendency to depict tragic and negative aspects of human existence. Therefore, he is sometimes referred to as an author who is influenced by Expressionism, without creating fully within its framework.

Marxist literary criticism referred to the authors under the name “anarchist troublemakers”, which was systematically introduced into literary history by František Buriánek, a Marxist literary historian and critic, author of a number of monographs on Šrámek, Dyk, Gellner and Bezruč. Another poet whose work intertwines elements of expressionism with older strains of impressionism and symbolism is Karel Toman. His poetic oeuvre is marked by a profound sense of solitude and alienation, capturing a diminished universe; yet, within his verses, one can find experiences of collective hope, a desire for justice, and the capacity for self-sacrifice.

The result of the preceding interpretation should not be the conclusion that the Czech cultural and literary environment was dependent only on foreign philosophical and literary currents and directions, which were more or less absorbed on Czech soil, mixed with domestic literary traditions, and contributed to the creation of new and original art. Modernism particularly aimed at and emphasized novelty, innovation, originality and a certain “completeness”,

as opposed to postmodernism (in *re-writing* or *remaking*) and seriality. It is also necessary to mention the artistic association founded in 1920 – Devětsil. It would certainly not be an overestimation to consider the founding as one of the most important avant-garde movements in Central Europe in the interwar period. Devětsil was founded in response to cultural and social changes after World War I and wanted to be part of the international avant-garde movement.

The movement had a great influence on the development of Czech literature, visual art, architecture, and film in the 1920s and 1930s. Its name “Devětsil” comes from the Slavic name for the petasites plant, which symbolizes strength and growth. The name was chosen to reflect the dynamism and energy of this movement, and basically the whole new post-revolutionary and post-war stage. Devětsil was created as a reaction to traditional artistic forms and sought a radical renewal of art. Individual members of the movement were definitely inspired by various avant-garde directions, including Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism, and Dadaism. Nevertheless, they sought to create original and authentic artistic forms that would express the specific social and cultural conditions of the new Czechoslovakia. Its members advocated for the integration of art with life and wanted art to become part of the everyday life of ordinary people. They held the view that art should serve social purposes and should be accessible to all: they therefore adhered to the ideas of the socialist revolution and collectivism, defended against manifestations of civilism and formalism, in fact, on the contrary, they were close to the ideas of Marxism and communism. The program of the association went through several developmental phases, which reflected changes in avant-garde thinking at the time.

The original artistic union Devětsil was built on the legal subjectivity of the association with firm statutes and enforceable conditions for its members. Although the first chairman was the prose writer and playwright Vladislav Vančura and the second was the director Jindřich Honzl, the role of the *spiritus agens* of the association was played throughout its existence, until 1930, by Karel Teige. Among the main representatives of the movement were poets Jaroslav Seifert, Vítězslav Nezval, the already mentioned writers Karel Teige

and Vladislav Vančura, as well as the painter and graphic artist Toyen (under the real name Marie Čermínová).

Devětsil went through several phases. The first phase (1920–1923) was characterized by the search for new artistic forms and experimentation with various styles, filled with the proclamation of a theoretical program, but also the promotion of so-called proletarian art. In the second phase (1923–1925), the movement turned to Poetism, which was defined as a joyful and optimistic artistic direction. During this time, members of Devětsil also engaged in the creation of leftist and proletarian artistic works: these were not only literary expressions, but also theatrical, architectural, or painting. The third phase (1926–1930) was characterized by conflicts between various groups within the movement and the gradual fading of its influence.

In the first phase, authors creating in the spirit of so-called proletarian literature were primarily inscribed in the awareness of the reading public and in literary history. The central place among them is occupied by poets Josef Hora, Jindřich Hořejší, and especially Jiří Wolker (1900–1924), who initially began to write in the style of decadents in his first attempts, but at the same time tried to use various traditional literary forms (ballad, short story, fairy tale, drama, sketch, program article). He came from a bourgeois family from Prostějov, significant for his transformation from a Catholic young man to a spokesman for the collective – the proletariat. Wolker's work is known for its Franciscan detail and delicate interest in the minutiae of the life of an "ordinary" person: with almost childlike joy. Wolker discovers the world of simple things, which according to him are small miracles. His verses are full of optimism, "enchantment from life" (vitalism) and hope for a better future. Vitalism, and the dream paradise on earth that grows out of it, is even stronger than the class differences that Wolker reflects. The verses are formally close to songs, children's rhymes or folk songs. This may be the reason for his popularity with readers, but later mixed reactions from critics. He was most prominent in two poetry collections – *Host do domu* "Guest to the House" and *Těžká hodina* "Trying time".

After his premature death from tuberculosis, members of Devětsil published an article in 1924 called *Dosti Wolker!* ("Tired of Wolker" in

the magazine *Pásmo*).⁷ In it, they condemned Wolker's verses as well as those who overestimated his poetry. On the contrary, there were those who appreciated and defended Wolker's pieces and creative gestures. It can be said that it was a time of "generational discussion" about the form of contemporary art. Artuš Černík, František Halas and Bedřich Václavek were all significantly involved in it. In the discussions about Wolker, other prominent poets of his generation were named: Konstantin Biebl, Jaroslav Seifert, and Vítězslav Nezval. Some literary historians even believe that it would be more appropriate to talk about the Taiga generation than the Wolker generation.

The theses of proletarian literature did not appear only among poets (J. Hora, J. Wolker), but also in prose, drama, or journalistic genres. For example, Marie Majerová, a far-left oriented author of novels, short stories, dramas, feuilletons, and literature for young people, published the novel *Nejkrásnější svět* "The most beautiful world", with a female character longing for self-determination and a plot set in various environments, from the countryside to industrial Prague. Ivan Olbracht's reports (*Obrazy ze soudobého Ruska*, "Images from Contemporary Russia") can also be attributed to the journalism of proletarian literature. The over-lyricism of contemporary poetry was probably also felt by the central author of proletarian art Jiří Wolker: he tried to bring a timeless confession, especially in ballads with social themes (*Balada o nenarozeném dítěti*, *Balada o očích topičových*, *Balada o námořníku*, etc.) and in fairy tales. While in the ballad he followed the Czech ballad tradition started by K.J. Erben, J. Neruda and P. Bezruč, in fairy tales he followed the tradition of the modern artificial fairy tale created by H. Ch. Andersen. His fairy tales are even more civil and radical, without so-called "easy time and space" or typical fairy-tale motifs and the supernatural.

7 In the unique and materially rich anthology "Avantgarde Known Unknown", compiled by a team of authors led by Štěpán Vlašín in the 1960s, Vladimír Doštal, a Marxist literary critic and historian, distinguishes five waves of critical disputes or discussions about the form of literary art in the introductory study. The first wave runs until 1924 and primarily concerns proletarian poetry. The second wave, from 1924–1925, discusses the transformation of proletarian art into Poetism, and the discussion opens up questions about the relationship between art and Marxism and the revolutionary movement.

Some poets of the generation were enchanted by the even older and more experienced J.S. Machar, the leading modernist poet of the 1890s, but the young authors debuting after the “Great War” were more impressed by the translations of French poets by the young Karel Čapek (most notably, the ‘divine rascal’ A. Rimbaud, followed by G. Apollinaire with his notable poem *Pásmo* ‘Zone’ from the collection “Alcools”). Not only Wolker, but also Vítězslav Nezval, followed the models of “pásmo” in the 1920s. Nezval considered poetry to be “a wonderful magician” (the collection *Podivuhodný kouzelník*): the magician comes into the world to reveal the exciting beauty of life to people, including the revolution. Nezval searches for an anchor of life and creative support; he later finds it in the idea of social revolution and in the arms of the Communist Party, which he joins. Socialism is for him a certain analogy to the robust era of the Renaissance.

Like Nezval, poets Konstantin Biebl or Jaroslav Seifert (1901–1986), the only Czech laureate of the Nobel Prize for Literature, transitioned from proletarian poetry to Poetism. Seifert himself in his thanksgiving speech to the Swedish Academy recalled that he received the prize for the entire generation. Joy of life, playfulness, language invention can be found in his collections *Na vlnách TSF* “On the Waves of TSF” (1925), *Slavík zpívá špatně* “The Nightingale Sings Badly” and *Poštovní holub* “The Postal Pigeon” (1929). In the last two, however, playfulness is overshadowed by nostalgia, memories and the passage of time. The Swedish Academy in 1984 particularly appreciated his “rich and diverse work, which with fearless free-thinking celebrates humanity”. Konstantin Biebl (*S lodí, jež dováží čaj a kávu* “With the Ship that imports Tea and Coffee”, *Nový Ikaros* “The New Icarus”, etc.) and especially the work of Vítězslav Nezval (*Pantomima* “Pantomime”, *Akrobat* “Acrobat”, *Edison*, etc.) should also be attributed to the period of Poetism.

With the coming economic and geopolitical crisis, in the 1930s, Nezval loses the immediacy, the playfulness of the original Poetism, the world of sensual beauty, exotic distances, the beauty of the modern metropolis; in the atmosphere of the time, they would already sound false. Echoes of Poetism can still be found in Nezval in the 1930s, but more often these are manifestations of Surrealism

(these are Nezval's collections *Žena v množném čísle* "Woman in the Plural Form", *Praha s prsty deště* "Prague with Fingers of Rain", *Absolutní hrobař* "The Absolute Gravedigger", etc.).

The playfulness of Poetism was also manifested in contemporary prose, especially in Vladislav Vančura (novella *Rozmarné léto* "Capricious Summer", 1927, also successfully filmed, *Markéta Lazarová*, *Konec starých časů* "The End of Old Times", etc.). He worked significantly with language, far more significantly than with narration, as if he wanted to "revive the word". In a time of growing interest in structuralism, Vančura thought about the functionality of language in relation to the chosen genre, character, social environment, etc. He went so far as to create a distinctive, specific literary language, which is unmistakable and characteristic just for Vančura's characters, his prose, dramas, and film scripts.

At the opposite ideological pole from Vančura stood Jaroslav Durych, an author of lyric poetry grounded in a profound understanding of theory, but primarily a short story writer, novelist, and author of religious plays in the style of Spanish Baroque drama. His interpretation of Czech religious history was distinctly Catholic, as can be seen, for example, in his novels set during the Thirty Years' War and the Baroque period (such as the larger Wallenstein trilogy *Bloudění* "Wandering", 1929). Some of his prose is highly lyrical, but the title of the greatest poet of Czech prose is often attributed to Jan Čep, who primarily distinguished himself as a profound short story writer (*Dvojí domov* "Double Home", 1926; *Zeměžluč* "Bitterness", 1931).

The work of spiritually oriented authors grows out of their religious faith and their understanding of humanity and the world, both in content and expression. Jan Zahradníček was an exceptionally talented poet and translator, whose poetry to a large extent anticipates religiously existentialist works (with motifs of death, nothingness, decay, loneliness, etc.): as seen in his collections *Pokoušení smrti* "Death's Temptation", *Jeřáby* "Cranes", *Žiznivé léto* "Thirsty Summer". Other authors who can be classified within the spiritual line include František Lazecký, Josef Kostohryz, and Bohuslav Reynek.

The language of literature between the two wars changed significantly compared to the previous literary language. Not only is the literary standard language used, as it is often confused with

the language of colloquial Czech, but it is also enriched with new expressions from the field of military (especially in legionnaire literature), technical (advancements in science, technology, and crafts), or sports-related vocabulary, as seen in prose with sports themes, for example, in E. Bass's (*Klapzubova jedenáctka*, "Klapzub's Eleven"). Bass's novel is considered a piece of classic Czech humorous literature. The story takes place in the fictional village of Dolní Košíkov, where a poor Czech cottager Klapzuba trains his eleven sons for football. The eleven gradually become so good that they make it to the highest Czech competition and even win a match against England, which is a huge success in the context of the time, when football was considered a typically English game. In addition, the book also describes other aspects of life in a Czech village in the 1920s and also emphasizes ethical principles (sense of fair play).

Similarly to Bass, K. Čapek and other authors also liked the "small", "minor" Czech person as the main character. The connection of writing activity with journalism also influences the language: this is the case not only with Bass, Čapek, but also with K. Poláček, I. Olbracht, M. Majerová and others. Many authors, for example Poláček, were even criticized by colleagues that they should have two tables: one literary and one journalistic, because the difference in styles was blurred and unaffected by criticism. It should be reminded that in the time between the two wars some book genres were created in installments just in daily or weekly newspapers: novels often came out in installments under the line or in a certain place in the newspapers, only later were the parts included in the wholes (for example, the novel-feuilleton).

Alongside avant-garde "games with language" and the literary system in general, a pragmatic line is noticeable in Czech literature between the two wars. This includes Karel Čapek (1890–1938) and a group of authors from his circle. He became one of the most significant Czech writers of the 20th century, known at home and in the world for his novels, short stories, plays, and essays. His work is widely recognized for its intellectual approach, wit, and ability to deal with deep philosophical questions. Perhaps the most striking of the contemporary philosophical directions was pragmatism, which developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, primarily in the

USA. The truth or value of any idea or concept depends on its practical usefulness and effectiveness, so pragmatism emphasizes the practical consequences and functions of ideas, unlike abstract principles or doctrines. Therefore, the pragmatic approach allowed Čapek to look at the practical aspects of life, solve specific problems, analyze social and cultural issues from a practical perspective. Čapek for that reason placed great emphasis on practical, moral, and social issues: he asked questions probing the essence of human life, thought about the role of technology, the nature of evil, and the possibilities and threats that the future brings. Čapek also often emphasized the value of human labor, social justice, and human solidarity. His work gained worldwide acclaim with the drama *R.U.R* (1921), in which the word robot (invented by his brother Josef) appears for the first time for artificial workers created by people for the purpose of performing work (robot probably from the old word “robota” means work). Robots are capable of learning and improving, during the play they become self-aware and independent, which leads to a rebellion and eventually the extinction of mankind. This concept undoubtedly influenced on the development of science fiction, artificial intelligence (AI), or modern robotics.

Fear for the fate of man, and more broadly the fate of mankind, is also manifested in other Čapek’s works (the novel *Krakatit*, in response to the growing fascism and Nazism in Europe, then *Válka s mloky* “War with the Newts” or the plays *Bílá nemoc* “The White Disease”, and *Matka* “Mother”). They take the form of allegorical-utopian, yet contemporarily felt ideas and moods: Čapek advocates for the defense of democratic freedoms and rights.

The entire group of writers and cultural workers around Karel Čapek and his brother Josef, a poet and more importantly a Cubism-influenced painter, was popular and active in literature. This group also included the publicist Ferdinand Peroutka and other intellectuals and journalists from *Lidové noviny*, in which Čapek published his texts almost daily: Karel Poláček or Eduard Bass. They are commonly referred to as the “Friday Men”. Originally, they used to meet on Thursdays, but later they met regularly on Fridays at the Čapek brothers’ villa. Sometimes the First Republic President T.G. Masaryk also visited, as well as left-leaning writers such as Vladislav Vančura or Ivan Olbracht.

The round table, a group of ideologically diverse individuals hosted by Karel Čapek in his Prague villa, was indeed a social center for many significant Czech intellectuals and artists in the interwar period. Although it was a relatively small group, its members had a large influence on Czech literature, art, and public discussions in the interwar period. The discussions and exchanges of views that took place during these meetings influenced many works and views expressed by these intellectuals in their works. Many of them did not survive World War II (Čapek died under the pressures of the reaction already at Christmas 1938; his brother Josef, journalist Ferdinand Peroutka and humorous prose writer Karel Poláček were taken to German Nazi concentration camps in 1938).

Left-leaning authors have already been mentioned. Some were influenced by the idea of a world revolution, others were directly inspired by the artistic principles and doctrines of so-called socialist realism, which came to the Czech lands from the Soviet Union. These left-wing concepts were significantly implemented in the social novel: by Marie Majerová (the novel chronicle *Siréna* “Siren”, *Havířská balada* “Miner’s Ballad”, etc.), Marie Pujmanová (*Lidé na náměstí*, “People at the Crossroads”), Jiří Weil (*Moskva-hranice*, “Moscow-Border”). In Czech literary history, the term “socially engaged prose” was coined specifically due to the work of these authors and others (Jiří Weil, Karel Nový, Helena Malířová, Ivan Olbracht, Božena Benešová, Karel Konrad, etc.).

A very significant part of Czech interwar literature is psychological literature. It draws from a contradictory time – both post-war development and interwar events, foreshadowing the second existential fall). The novels and short stories of Egon Hostovský (*Případ profesora Körnera*, “The Case of Professor Körner”, *Žhář* “The Arsonist”, *Danajský dar* “The Danaid Gift”, etc.) were artistically breakthrough and innovative, while Jaroslav Havlíček’s novels (*Neviditelný* “The Invisible”, *Petrolejové lampy* “Petroleum Lamps”) tended towards naturalism. Among the female authors of this line, the prose of Jarmila Glazarová (*Roky v kruhu* “Years in a Circle”, *Vlčí jáma* “Wolf Pit”, *Advent*) stands out.

Many authors benefited from their journalistic craft: this is the case of Karel Poláček or Eduard Bass – in *Lidové noviny* they made

a living writing barrel stories and other articles with themes from the criminal milieu. If it was not about crime, it was about explaining a mystery or a mystery (this is also the case with K. Čapek and his detective stories).

They introduce – against the rural theme in the literature of the second half of the 19th century – the theme of (small) towns and the city hero (K. Poláček, *Okresní město* “District Town”). They are able to, however, show a lively interest in archaic structures of society, in old Hasidic legends and myths, which they find in the environment of Transcarpathian Ukraine (Subcarpathian Rus), that is, in the area that became part of Czechoslovakia. Ivan Olbracht, Karel Čapek, Vladislav Vančura, and others travel to the eastern edge of the republic on study trips and discover old settlements in poverty. Thus, Olbracht comes up with the character of Nikola Šuhaj and numerous proses inspired by the Subcarpathian Rus (*Golet v údolí*, “Golet in the Valley”, *O smutných očích Hany Karadžičové*, “About the Sad Eyes of Hana Karadžič”, etc.) or Karel Čapek with his novel *Hordubal* (which is part of the so-called noetic trilogy “Hordubal” – “Povětroň” – “Obyčejný život”).

The new region, hitherto unthematized by Czech artificial literature, with its distinctive characters and untamed nature, provided a rich source of inspiration, also thanks to its unique cultural and linguistic context, which differed from most of the rest of Czechoslovakia. Similarly, the region of Czech Silesia found literary capture not only in the poetry of Petr Bezruč, but especially in the prose of Vojtěch Martínek, A. C. Nor, and others.

A completely unique place in Czech interwar literature belongs to Jaroslav Hašek (1883–1923) and his extensive, unfortunately unfinished novel *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka* (“The Good Soldier Švejk”). Hašek was a distinctive figure in Czech cultural life: a humorist and mystifier, a short story writer and novelist, a member of the Prague Bohemia. He started as a journalist, founded a satirical party, was drafted into the war in 1915, was captured on the Russian front, joined the Bolsheviks in 1918, and even served as a deputy district commander in Bugulma. His character Švejk and the whole novel have been variously interpreted and accepted since its publication: differently by Czech and German-written literary criticism, as

well as in terms of its significance for Czech literature and overall meaning.

In the novel, Hašek tells the story of the soldier Švejk, who is mobilized into the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I and experiences various absurd situations. The reception of the novel was originally mixed, with its evaluation by Ivan Olbracht adding to its significance. The novel was first published as a serial in 1921–1923 and caused controversy in the Czech environment for its satirical and ironic view of war, the military, and state bureaucracy. Some readers and critics understood Hašek's humor and satire and appreciated the novel as a strong social and political critique. On the other hand, some critics condemned the novel for its vulgarity and cynicism. The novel often ridiculed the mindless Austro-Hungarian army and state bureaucracy. In the German-written literary criticism, some voices appreciated Hašek's humor and satire, but also its timelessness, absurdity and existential problems of an individual tossed by the gears of time.

The Good Soldier Švejk is considered overrated by some researchers, while others consider it one of the peaks of Czech literature and one of the most significant anti-war novels in general. Its translations into many languages and its international recognition attest to its lasting significance and influence, although it should be noted that not all translations reflect the actual Czech text of Hašek (this is the case, for example, with the Polish translation by Hułka-Łaskowski). Fundamentally, the greatest attention to Hašek's work was ensured by its German translation (it would be worth paying detailed attention to the contemporary and later reactions of readers and critics to the Good Soldier Švejk and his various interpretations, cf. Merhaut 2014). Švejk is thus considered a specific literary type of character (see J. Jedlička, 1992), and the novel then as an absurd text with elements of grotesque, which both summarizes older styles of (humorous) novel (M. de Cervantes, F. Rabelais, Ch. Dickens, etc.) and foreshadows the development of prose in the 20th century.

Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich are among the most significant figures of the Czech theater and film scene of the 20th century. In 1926, they founded the Liberated Theater (*Osvobozené divadlo*) together with musician Jaroslav Ježek, which became an icon of

Czech avant-garde and satirical theater. The Liberated Theater was characterized by its innovative approach to theater, which combined elements of cabaret, revue, burlesque, and political satire. The theater used humor and irony as means to critique societal and political conditions in Czechoslovakia and Europe.

Voskovec and Werich created a number of significant plays that are still considered classics of Czech theater. These include *Vest Pocket Revue*, *Rub a líc* "Heads and Tails", *Kat a Blázen* "The Executioner and the Fool", *Balada z hadrů* "Ballad of Rags", and others. Their plays often contained elements of absurd humor, wordplay, and satire. A significant element was also the music of Jaroslav Ježek, which accompanied the plays and underscored their atmosphere. Some of the plays were also filmed (the film *Hej rup!* "Hold Tight!" – a satire on life in the First Republic of Czechoslovakia is well-known). However, with the rise of Nazism, both emigrated to the USA, where they continued their artistic careers. Only Werich returned to Czechoslovakia after the end of World War II. Another distinctive, this time avant-garde, left-wing and pro-communist oriented theater, was the D34 of Emil František Burian (the numeral following the letter D signifies the year of the theater season). Commercially successful were the theaters in Prague of Vlasta Burian or Oldřich Nový.

In addition to radio broadcasting (initially the private Radiojournal from 1923, later the state radio), it was a new type of medium in which writers also found their place. Another phenomenon that developed in independent Czechoslovakia was film. One of the most famous and oldest film studios in Europe was Barrandov Film Studios, founded in 1931. During the interwar period, it became an important center of film production and a place of collaboration with writers (they often contributed to film scripts – K. Čapek, V. Nezval, V. Vančura). Many significant personalities appeared on the interwar stage in the field of acting, such as Oldřich Nový, Lída Baarová, Adina Mandlová, and Hugo Haas, as well as directors like Martin Frič, Karel Lamač, Václav Wasserman, Otakar Vávra, Gustav Machatý, and others. As for foreign-language films, films in several languages, including German and Slovak, were shot at Barrandov to reflect the language diversity of Czechoslovakia. Some of these films included

the German-language film “Der Zinker” (1931) directed by Karel Lamač and the Slovak-language film “Jánošík” (1935) directed by Martin Frič.

Although the Devětsil movement officially ceased to exist in 1930, its influence on Czech culture essentially persists to this day: both in the literary plane and in the form of allusions, studies, and discussions about the avant-garde that have been held during the 20th and 21st centuries. Its members continued to create and had a significant influence on the development of modern Czech art (for example, surrealism in the 1930s).

German-written Jewish literature is inextricably linked with the German-speaking literary circle in Prague, which represented a significant part of cultural life in Prague from the 19th century until World War II. This literature combines elements of German, Jewish, and Czech culture and is known for its originality and high literary value. It includes authors such as Franz Kafka, Max Brod, Franz Werfel, Egon Erwin Kisch, and many others. These authors represent the diversity and depth of this literary circle, and their works are considered classics of world literature.

The world’s most famous representative of this circle was Franz Kafka, particularly with masterpieces like *Proces* “The Trial”, *Zámek* “The Castle”, and *Proměna* “The Metamorphosis”. He was born and raised in Prague in a Jewish family. He was characterized by a deep exploration of the human psyche, expression of life’s absurdity, and criticism of bureaucracy and state machinery. He first published his works in German, some of which remained unfinished: after Kafka’s premature death, they were published by his friend Max Brod, a German-Jewish writer, composer, and critic. Kafka’s work influenced many writers and philosophers around the world and is to this day considered one of the most significant in modern literature.

The Prague German Jewish literature circle also includes Franz Werfel, an Austrian writer of Jewish origin, who spent part of his life in Prague. He was a member of the Prague Circle and became famous for his lyrical poems and dramas, but also for the novel *Čtyřicet dnů Musa Dagħ* (“The Forty Days of Musa Dagħ”) depicting the Armenian genocide, or *Píseň o Bernadettě* (“The Song of Bernadette”), describing her visions of the Virgin Mary in Lourdes, France).

In the interwar period, the number of German journalism titles also grew. Egon Erwin Kisch, a Czech journalist and writer of Jewish origin, wrote in both Czech and German. He was known for his reports, in which he combined literary and journalistic elements. He became famous as a “raging reporter” and his work influenced the development of the journalistic genre in the 20th century. His most famous works are *Zaren, Popen, Bolschewiken* („Tsars, Popes, Bolsheviks”), *Abenteuer in fünf Kontinenten* (“Adventures on Five Continents”), and *Paradies Amerika* (“Paradise America”).

German Jewish literature (especially its creators) was later exposed to growing antisemitism and Nazism, which led to the emigration of many authors and eventually to its decline after World War II. However, its significance and legacy survived and is today considered one of the most significant parts of the European literary tradition.

Books began to become accessible among people, mainly thanks to a dense network of libraries. Library professionals learned from the organization of libraries in Western and Scandinavian countries. The Library Act of 1919 required the establishment of a public library in all political municipalities. Similarly to schools in minority areas operating in the minority’s main language, the law required libraries to create minority sections. The legal regulation naturally took into account books that were worthless or corrupted the morals of youth; these were not to be included in the collections and, on the contrary, began to appear in private libraries that loaned books on a commercial basis. The removal of books can be considered as state censorship interventions. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly mention censorship and the possibility of confiscating objectionable literature: although censorship was abolished after the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia, certain standards (including monarchist ones) remained in force, and although the constitution of 1920 guaranteed the freedom to “express opinion by word, print, picture, etc.,” various new norms were added (in 1933, the so-called Small Press Act), which maintained a certain degree of censorship throughout the interwar period. (For more details, see *V obecném zájmu*, “In the Public Interest”, vol. I., Praha 2015.)

In literary science and criticism, the top was reached by Arne Novák, a professor at Masaryk University, who wrote reviews for

Lidové noviny and many magazines and newspapers, Albert Pražák, Miloslav Hýsek, Roman O. Jakobson, Jan Mukařovský, Otakar Fischer (also a poet and translator), Frank Wollman, Vojtěch Jirát, Antonín Matěj Píša, Karel Teige, Bedřich Václavek, Václav Černý and especially F.X. Šalda, who began his literary and literary-critical career in the 1890s of the 19th century. In addition to literary studies traditionally cultivated at the Charles University, significant centers began to emerge in Bratislava and Brno, centered around scholars from Comenius and Masaryk University, both founded in 1919. Around these academic figures, the foundations of the later Prague Linguistic Circle (PLC) were established on October 6th, 1926, with the presence of five Czech and Russian philologists. Jakobson's work particularly exerted profound influence across various humanities disciplines. Born in Russia, he spent a significant portion of his career in Czechoslovakia, predominantly in Brno and Prague. This intellectual circle became a hub for intense dialogue among linguists, literary theorists, and other scholars. Within the circle, Jakobson introduced many of his concepts and theories, from phonetics and phonology to versification and binary oppositions in language, which later had a significant impact on the study of language and communication. Notable figures within the PLC, besides Jakobson, included Nikolai Sergeyevich Trubetzkoy, Jan Mukařovský, Vilém Mathesius, Bohuslav Havránek, Jindřich Honzl, among others (cf. Steiner 1982, Vachek 1999, Pospíšil–Paučová 2019).

It should not be overlooked that the quality of a literary creator or literature of a certain time and space is often evidenced and underscored by prestigious world awards. For the Nobel Prize in Literature, Czech authors of the period were nominated: Jaroslav Vrchlický (twice), Alois Jirásek, Otakar Březina (nominated eight times), J.S. Machar (twice) or Karel Čapek (nominated seven times).

Particularly Čapek's work, known all over the world in translations, permeated with futurological insight and expressing in literary form concerns about the fate of the "little man" in the dangerous machine called the world, is one of the highlights of Czech interwar prose and drama, but also a highlight of the heritage of world literature and culture. Just like the masterful work of Jaroslav Hašek, bringing into the world of literature a new, specifically type of

hero, soldier Švejk, expressing in his adventures, dialogues, and reflections the timeless humanistic mission. "In the Bible, we find almost everything, but in Švejk [we find] absolutely everything," is a legendary sentence attributed to the writer and screenwriter Zdeněk Mahler. Both Hašek and Čapek warned in their own way against war (pacifism), against the misuse of technology and power, and aligned themselves alongside a long line of authors oriented towards irenicism, pacifism, and humanism.

From the overview of literary events and expressions of individual authorial poetics, it is clear how literary and cultural life differentiated and how it branched out. It deepened in terms of material and genre, but also in terms of ideological and ideological direction. What is surprising is that initially, literature and literary life were quite centralist. Just like the original Austro-Hungarian Empire, in whose centralist system most of the inhabitants of the first Czechoslovak Republic still lived and knew it. Over time, there is a more pronounced differentiation and the emergence of other cultural centers, usually associated with larger cities (Brno and the local Literary Group of Expressionists, but also Olomouc, Stará Říše, Nový Jičín, etc.).

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Libor Pavera – is a university professor in aesthetics and focuses on aesthetics, literary culture and pedagogical systems in Central Europe. He first dealt with the theory and history of literature in earlier periods (the medieval manuscript of Nicholas of Goats, Baroque rhetoric in the form of sermons). In recent years, he has focused on the theory of genres (genology / genres studies), associated in the world with the research of P. van Thieghem, S. Skwarczyńska and other followers, and on the history and theory of school systems in Central Europe and mentoring. He is also the editor of some of the older literary monuments and organizer of workshops and conferences.