

HERMANN BAHR: AN EXTRAORDINARY EXAMPLE OF TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKING, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CENTRAL EUROPE

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1 Cf. Solbrig, Ingeborg. H: Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall. In: Daviau, Donald G. (Ed.): Major Figures of Nineteenth-Century Austrian Literature. Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press 1998, pp. 278-308.

2 Cf. Spörk, Ingrid: Ferdinand Kürnberger. In: Ibid., pp. 309-330.

3 Cf. Steiner, Carl: Karl Emil Franzos. In: Ibid., pp. 221-251.

4 Cf. Daviau, D.G.: Hermann Bahr: The Catalyst of Modernity in the Arts in Austria during the fin de siècle, in: Daviau, D.G.: Understanding Hermann Bahr. St. Ingbert: Röhrig Verlag 2002, pp. 95-126.

5 This word was adopted from the poem *Modern* by Arno Holz, with whom Bahr had lived for a time while studying in Berlin in 1881-1884. Bahr's programmatic essay appeared in Vienna in the first number of E. M. Kafka's new journal *Moderne Dichtung* on Jan. 1, 1890.

6 Bahr, Hermann: Cultur. In: Bahr H.: Bildung. Berlin. Leipzig: Schuster und Loeffler 1900, p. 5.

The Habsburgs, who forged the Austrian Monarchy by annexing the neighboring states and lands to the East and South, always thought more in terms of supranationalism than nationalism. Indeed, it was the influences of the Eastern and Southeastern territories through travel and immigration that turned Austria into a Slavic state. Instead of remaining the most Eastern country of Germany, as reflected in its name *Ostreich*, Austria turned into the most Western country of Central Europe. In the process the country, because of its many Eastern influences, developed differently than Germany did. Thus, crossing borders culturally – transnationalism – is not a new concept to Austria, but one that began in the Middle Ages. During her reign Maria Theresia had fostered connections with the Ottoman Empire, a task acquitted admirably in the early 19th century by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall.¹ At the Austrian court until the 19th century French or Italian were spoken in preference to German. Ferdinand Kürnberger, one of the most important 19th-century Austrian journalists and authors, had worked to mediate the Central European countries in Austria and at the same time insisted that Austrian culture should be raised to the same niveau as that of the Western countries.² The author Karl Emil Franzos worked along the same lines by making Austrians aware of life in Galicia (southern Poland) and by contributing to improving Christian-Jewish relations.³ The man, however, who built on these beginnings and brought the ideas of multiculturalism and transculturalism to full fruition from 1894 to his death in 1934 was Hermann Bahr.⁴ In his self-appointed role as mediator of Austria with foreign cultures and of foreign cultures with Austria, he became a champion of the Slavic realms of the Monarchy in Austria and at the same time a major influence on the cultural development of all of the Slavic countries through the reception of his program of modernity.

Between 1889, when he spent an inspirational year in Paris and changed the focus of his life from politics to literature and the arts, and 1906, when he grew temporarily disillusioned with Vienna, Bahr developed and implemented a comprehensive cultural program under the watchword ›*die Moderne*‹⁵ or ›modernity‹, which was intended to give Austria a ›culture‹. What he meant was a new form of culture, which was not merely a superficial decoration, but one which played an essential role in the life of the people as a lifestyle:

Von Cultur werden wir in einem Lande sprechen dürfen, wenn jeder unbewußt die lebendige Beziehung, die seine Rasse zum ewigen hat, in allem äußert, was er täglich thut.⁶

Bahr's concept of culture involved self-development and staying abreast with the constantly changing world. As an enthusiastic follower of Ernst Mach, he recognized that the world evolved continuously and that the individual must do likewise to stay in harmony with the shifting environment.

Having begun his career in politics, Bahr, after coming into contact with the newest trends in the arts from all over Europe, became convinced that literature and the other arts represented a superior way to order society and thus offered a better path to the future. He also believed that Austria needed to reach outward to become more closely affiliated with Europe and to adopt the newest European models. He postulated two goals: to raise the level of the arts to the same level as that of the Western nations and to establish reciprocal relations with the Western countries. Through and with his friends such as Max Burckhard, director of the *Burgtheater*, Gustav Klimt, the leading painter and first president of the Viennese *Secession*, Joseph Olbrich, the architect who designed the Secessionist building, and his literary colleagues such as Arthur Schnitzler and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Bahr worked to modernize all of the arts in Austria. He also enjoyed the benefit of having his own newspaper *Die Zeit* to publicize his views. He had founded *Die Zeit* in Vienna on October 5, 1894 together with the political journalist Heinrich Kanner and the economist Isidor Singer in order to escape the editorial control he had experienced on other newspapers. Bahr was responsible for the belletristic section and employed it to carry out his cultural program of encouraging a Nietzschean ›revaluation of all values.‹ Thus, as ›die Hebamme der neuen Kunst‹ Bahr carried out both of his aims and helped to propel Austria from the 19th into the 20th century on a cultural par with the Western nations.

7 Cf. Daviau, D.G.: Hermann Bahr and Decadence. In: Daviau 2002, pp. 69-94; Daviau, D.G.: Hermann Bahr's Cultural Relations with America, in: *Ibid.*, pp. 405-439; Daviau, D.G.: Hermann Bahr and England [in press].

8 Bahr, Hermann: Studien zur Kritik der Moderne. Frankfurt/M.: Rütten & Lutting 1894, p. 78.

9 Csáky, Moritz: Hermann Bahrs Tagebücher, Skizzenbücher, Notizheft, Vol. 3, 1901-1903. Wien: Böhlau 1997, p. 413.

10 Bahr, Hermann: 1918. Innsbruck: Verlagsanstalt Tyrolia 1919, p. 282.

11 Daviau, D.G.: Hermann Bahr, Joseph Nadler and the Baroque, in: Daviau 2002, pp. 353-374.

12 Bahr, Hermann: Die Hauptstadt von Europa. Eine Phantasie in Salzburg. In: Bahr, H.: *Bildung*. Berlin, Leipzig: Im Insel-Verlage bei Schuster & Loeffler 1900, pp. 116-122.

Throughout his life Bahr served as the tireless mediator and publicist of other nations in Austria and of Austria in other countries.⁷ While he was deeply committed to integrating Austria, which in the 1890s was still considered as »Halb-Asien«, into Europe, at the same time he did not neglect relations with the Central European territories of the Monarchy. As early as 1894 he pointed out the need to include the other literatures of the Monarchy:

Und es könnte, wenn sie (die jungen Wiener Schriftsteller) die rechte Gestalt des Österreichischen finden, wie es jetzt ist, mit diesen bunten Spuren aller Völker, mit diesen romanischen, deutschen, slavischen Zeichen, mit dieser biegsamen Versöhnung der fremdesten Kräfte – es könnte schon geschehen, daß sie, in dieser österreichischen gerade, jene europäische Kunst finden würden, die in allen Nationen heute die neuesten, die feinsten Triebe suchen.⁸

Bahr liked to use the metaphor of a bouquet of flowers representing Europe, stating that every flower, no matter how small, contributes to the whole and must be present or it will be missed.⁹ Along the same lines, he reminisced in 1918 about the range of his transnational efforts, including the Eastern lands of the Monarchy:

Denn als guter Europäer hielt ich darauf, den Wienern nicht bloß die Kenntnis norwegischer oder dänischer, portugiesischer oder indischer Dichter und Denker, sondern auch unserer böhmischen, polnischen und kroatischen Brüder zu vermitteln. Ja, solche Vermittlung, womöglich Vermählung, schien mir erst recht eigentlich der Beruf der österreichischen Deutschen. Unsere Sendung ist Brücke zu sein, Brücke zwischen Nord und Süd, aber auch Brücke zwischen West und Ost. Wir österreichischen Deutschen sind auserwählt Nordsüdler zu werden und Westösterler.¹⁰

The means to accomplish this unification Bahr saw in the baroque, which had been revived by Josef Nadler in 1918 in the third volume of his literary history, *Die Geschichte der deutschen Literatur nach Stämmen und Landschaften*. Bahr was overwhelmed by the political implications and possibilities of this rediscovery and devoted the remainder of his career to publicizing the potential of Nadler's contribution for the development of Austria.¹¹ The first North-South baroque movement had already taken place in the Renaissance, according to Bahr. Now after World War I, Bahr anticipated the second wave uniting East and West, precisely what will occur in May 2004, when ten Eastern countries, most former lands of the Austrian Monarchy, join the European Union. Ultimately he predicted a third, all-encompassing baroque movement, which would unify all of Europe. Since the 1890s Bahr had promoted the idea of a united Europe and had anticipated precisely the program that is in the process of realization by the European Union today. He even suggested in 1900 that Salzburg would make an ideal capital of Europe.¹² In the late 1920s he went even further and began talking of globalization. He proposed a global newspaper, to bring all peoples of the world together. His ideas, which during his lifetime seemed so radical, have now become the blueprint for the EU and are all being implemented just as he proposed them. If the EU leaders had known his writings, they could have spared themselves so much of their floundering around for a way to utilize culture as a means of helping unify the member countries. Bahr deserves to be remembered as one of the most important pioneers in helping to build this new Europe. His lifetime of activities represents a model of networking and cultural mediation *par excellence*, and to the present day there is no other author in Austria who can compare with him in this regard in terms of the breadth and significance of his efforts and achievements. The magnitude of his undertaking, the hundreds upon hundreds of names he mediated from so many countries through his essays, reviews and published diaries, is staggering, and so is also the result that he accomplished. When one recognizes that the concept of modernity transformed all of Europe, all of Central and Southeastern Europe and extended to some degree to Russia, it can be viewed as a second Renaissance, which matches the first in significance for the world. Truly the importance of Bahr's contribution to his generation can scarcely be overrated.

Bahr stands as a model of networking, because he devoted his life to informing the German-speaking world about other countries and at the same time to acquainting other nations with Austria and Germany. This mediation is what makes his essays, reviews and especially his published diaries so significant. They constitute his most important, enduring works and can rank alongside of Schnitzler's diaries as some of the most valuable documents for anyone who wishes to understand the *fin de siècle* around 1900. Bahr was convinced that

13 Bahr, Hermann: *Austriaca*. Berlin: S. Fischer 1911, p. 149.

mutual understanding could only result from people knowing one another. He felt that countries usually know only the clichés and lies about each other. When they learn more about others, they discover that the differences are not so great. Also, he believed in the central tenet of democracy that both individuals and nations can only develop to their fullest potential through contact with others.¹³

Bahr's program of modernity was receptive to innovative ideas from all nations, intended to act as a spur to Austrian writers and artists. He called attention, among many others, to Ibsen and Bjørnsen in Norway, to Barrès, Baudelaire, Bourget, Huysmans, Zola and LeMaitre in France, to José Maria de Heredia, Don Juan Valera, Don Pedro de Alarcón and the generation of young writers in Spain, to Shakespeare, Shaw, Wilde, Ellen Key and many other writers and artists in England, to Tolstoi, Dostoevski, Turgenev and Chekhov in Russia, D'Annunzio in Italy, Hauptmann, Sudermann, Wedekind and Thomas Mann in Germany, to Otokar Březina, Jaroslav Kvapil, Josef Svatopluk Machar and Thomas [Tomáš] G. Masaryk from Czechoslovakia, to Andrian, Beer-Hofmann, Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, Zweig and Altenberg in Vienna and to Walt Whitman, Emerson and Thoreau in the U.S. These are only the most representative names of the hundreds that appear in his essays, reviews, correspondences and diaries.

Bahr's interests extended to art, the theater, dance and marginally to music. He promoted the English »arts-and-crafts« movement of William Morris and Charles Rennie McIntosh, and this idea of blending artistic form and function was adopted by the *Wiener Werkstätte*, which was founded in 1903 and is currently celebrating its 100th anniversary. He started the worldwide career of Eleonora Duse, helped Max Burckhard to modernize the repertoire of the Burgtheater and introduce a modern style of acting. He celebrated Isadora Duncan's natural style of dancing. He introduced the *Nervenkunst* of Decadence to Austria and Germany as a corrective to Berlin Naturalism and held up Maeterlinck as the model of the new literary form, a synthesis of Naturalism and Romanticism. He publicized Mach's idea of the fluid or non-fixed ego and was an advocate of Impressionism and subsequently of Expressionism. This list is by no means comprehensive, but it serves to illustrate what a wide-ranging and far-seeing thinker, organizer, mediator and catalyst Bahr was.

Although Bahr's influence spread through all of the Central and Southeastern states of the Monarchy, in the following I will restrict myself for reasons of space to demonstrating Bahr's networking with Dalmatia and Czechoslovakia, where he became most deeply involved culturally and politically, as representative examples for all. Although this topic is of major importance in terms of recognizing an additional important facet of Bahr's amazing accomplishments, it has been totally ignored by Western scholars. My aim is to show the various ways in which he contributed significantly to the cultural and social development of Central and South-Eastern Europe. For just as he was instrumental in helping to usher Austria into the 20th century and aligned the country with Europe, his program of modernity spread throughout the Slavic nations and accomplished the same result. In addition, as will be seen, Bahr's networking efforts were broad-based, ranging from his overall program of cultural modernity to politics to close personal friendships and personal assistance. Conversely, I also wish to describe his efforts to publicize not only writers and other artists through his articles, reviews and diaries to make Austrians aware of their cultural achievements, but also to show his activist involvement through his criticism of the neglect of the Eastern states of the Monarchy by the Austrian government officials charged with overseeing them. Finally, I will discuss his work to promote tourism to help the economy of these countries as well as his personal efforts to help young Slavic writers in Vienna, in some cases by hiring them to write for his newspaper *Die Zeit* and in others by publicizing their works. As will be seen, all scholars who have dealt with the reception of Viennese modernity in Central and Southeast Europe, have acknowledged Bahr's primary role. It is clear that his contribution to these countries is no less important than it was to Vienna.

In taking up the cause of the Eastern lands and territories Bahr was an exception in his generation, which from the Emperor on down had little regard for and paid little attention to their needs or demands. Bahr was also one of the earliest voices in Austria to lend his support, beginning in the 1890s and continuing in terms increasingly critical of the Austrian official policies up to the dissolution of the Monarchy, mandated by the *Versailles Treaty* following World War I. His becoming a friend and advocate of the Eastern lands and territories shows how much Bahr had changed from his days at the University of Vienna in 1883, when, as a follower of Georg von Schönerer's *German National Party*, he advocated annexation with

14 Bahr, Herrmann: Letter to his father, dated May 2, 1883. In: Schmidt, Adalbert (Ed.): Hermann Bahr: Briefwechsel mit seinem Vater. Wien: Bauer 1971, p. 23.

15 Stern, Joseph Peter: Das Wien der Jahrhundertwende aus tschechischer Sicht, in: Österr. Osthefte 28/1 (1986), p. 9.

16 Ibid., p. 17.

17 Konstantinović, Zoran: Wiener Moderne und die slawischen Literaturen, in: The Slavic Literatures and Modernism. A Nobel Symposium August 5-8, 1985, p. 315.

18 Stern 1986, p. 17.

19 Konstantinović 1985, p. 316.

20 Qtd. in Jähnichen, Manfred: Hermann Bahr und die Tschechen. In: Krauss, W., et al. (Eds.): Slawisch-Deutsche Wechselbeziehungen in Sprache, Literatur und Kultur. Berlin: Akademia 1969, p. 368.

21 Maliarova, Edita: Hermann Bahr und Prag. In: Cerny, Frantisek (Ed.): Das tschechische Theater, Vol. I, Prague 1995, p. 132.

Germany and declared himself ready to fight against the Slavic invasion, which he felt represented a threat to Austria.¹⁴

There was in fact a high level of immigration in the late 19th century. The population of Vienna in 1900 was 1.6 million, of which 550,000 were Easterners who had moved to Vienna in search of greater opportunities. The glamorous Vienna was the magnet, attracting these immigrants, but most found that the streets were not paved with gold any more than those in America and were forced to live in dreary housing conditions and take menial jobs. This situation is reflected in the Austrian literature of the time, which, with the exception of a few writers such as Stifter and Ebner-Eschenbach, treated only fringe figures such as Czech maids, cooks, manual workers and prostitutes. The Czechs, as Joseph Stern shows, had little reason to be happy with Habsburg rule, which consisted of a series of humiliations.¹⁵

Another person who showed the two sides of life in Vienna in the 1890s was the Czech author Josef Svatopluk Machar in his novel *Tristium Vindobona*, where he described »die vornehmen in ihren Karossen mit goldbetreßten Lakaien und jene ausgeherngelten Menschen in den Seitenwegen der Allee.«¹⁶ So, too, Tadeusz/Thaddäus Rittner, the Polish/Austrian dramatist, narrative writer and essayist, who was successful in rising to the position of *Sektionschef* in Vienna, described how difficult life was for immigrants who did not want to assimilate but tried to keep their national identity.¹⁷ This situation contributed to intensifying the nationalist demand for independence from Habsburg rule.

After studying in Berlin for three years, spending a year in Paris and traveling to Russia and Spain, Bahr had adopted a completely new point of view toward the East. He now believed that Austrians needed greater understanding of the Eastern realms of the Monarchy and that the government should improve its administration and end the neglect, condescending attitude and poor treatment they received from Austrian officials.

By opening the pages of his newspaper *Die Zeit* to writers and journalists and by his personal support, Bahr contributed directly to literary and cultural mediation. Stern notes »die rührige Publizistik Hermann Bahrs,«¹⁸ without, however, mentioning any specific details.

Vienna, which absorbed all of the new European developments in literature and the other arts through Bahr's program of modernity, acted as a major stimulus for the immigrant writers and artists. Konstantinović comments on its wide-ranging influence in the Eastern countries:

Ganz unmittelbar wirkte sich die Wiener Moderne befruchtend und neue Leitbilder schaffend auf die literarisch-künstlerische und zum Teil auch auf die politisch-ideologische Erneuerungen sowohl bei den Slowenen und Kroaten, bei den Tschechen und Slowaken, bei den Polen, Ukrainern in Galizien also auch bei den Serben aus[...].¹⁹

The writers not only gained new influences from the West, but could also participate directly by writing for Bahr's *Die Zeit*, as did a number of authors such as Josef Svatopluk Machar and Thomas G. Masaryk, who later served as the first president of the Czech Republic. Bahr became acquainted with Machar, who had lived in Vienna since 1889, and learned from him that Czech literature was undergoing the same process of renewal in terms of modernity as was developing in Vienna. He thus wrote to him, asking for a contribution to the first issue:

Ich möchte gleich in den ersten Nummern die slawischen Literaturen kräftig betonen und bitte Sie, darum zu sorgen, daß ich einiges über die Böhmische und die südslawische Moderne recht bald, spätestens bis Anfang oder Mitte September schon erhalte.²⁰

Machar invited František Krejčí to write the requested article, and as a result the latter continued to write for *Die Zeit* on contemporary Czech culture and literature until 1897. Machar also solicited articles from other Czech writers and critics such as F.X. Šalda, Josef Kaizl, Karel Kramář, among others. Through Bahr's generosity and spirit of helpfulness,

Die Zeit wurde [...] zur bedeutendsten Zeitschrifttribüne einiger führender tschechischer Persönlichkeiten and der Wende des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, in der sie in einer Weltsprache, also mit außergewöhnlicher Wirkung, ihre philosophischen, politischen, ethischen und kulturellen Konzeptionen formulieren und auch verteidigen konnten, was natürlich für die Entwicklung der tschechischen Gesellschaft, Wissenschaft und Kunst eine große Bedeutung hatte.²¹

22 Konstantinović 1985, p. 317.

23 Konstantinović, Zoran: Die Wiener Moderne im Bewußtsein der slawischen Völker. In.: *Slavia* 64/1-2 (1995), p. 70.

24 Castle, Eduard: Die neue Generation um Hermann Bahr. In: Nagl, J. / Zeidler, J. / Castle, E.: *Deutsch-Österreichische Literaturgeschichte*. Wien: Fromm 1937, p. 1664.

25 Konstantinović 1995, p. 68.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

Eastern journalists and authors could also write for the *Österreichische Rundschau* and for *Ver Sacrum*, the prestigious journal of the Secession, of which Bahr was also one of the editors. Two Croatian journals, *Mladost* in 1898 and *Glas* in 1899, founded in Vienna, show

wie viel diese jungen Pioniere einer neuen Literatur und Kunstrichtung Hermann Bahr und seiner Zeitschrift *Die Zeit*, seinen literarischen Konferenzen für junge Dichter, seinem Interesse auch für das literarische Schaffen der Slawen verdankten.²²

The Polish journal *Życie*, founded in Cracow, was also modeled on Bahr's program and on his newspaper *Die Zeit* – evident even in its subtitle, emphasizing an interest in literary, scientific and social questions.²³ Stanisław Przybyszewski became the editor in 1898, and to demonstrate its nationalist political direction, he stopped writing in German and from then on wrote only in his mother tongue. In every nation, writers congregated around a journal, and the journals were mostly all influenced by Bahr's program of modernity, which not only involved an approach to literature and the arts, but also a lifestyle of independence of thought and self-development.

Thus Bahr's newspaper *Die Zeit* played an important role by enabling Bahr to publicize the Eastern countries, to help Eastern writers directly by inviting them to contribute to the belletristic section, which he edited, and by serving as a model for Easterners to found their own periodicals both in Vienna and in their own countries. Because of its prestige, *Die Zeit* also played a central role in counteracting negative propaganda and false portrayals of Czech literature and culture in other German-language periodicals.²⁴ The young writers and artists were exposed to the newest European-wide trends and fashions, which Bahr was bringing to Vienna, and from there they could broaden their horizons to other cultural centers like Munich, Berlin and Paris. In turn they modernized the literature and other arts in their respective countries, usually through a journal founded in either Vienna or in their own country on the model of *Die Zeit*. Thus this newspaper was of inestimable influence in modernizing the literature and the arts in Slavic countries. Konstantinović states: »Sie [*Die Zeit*] ist von außerordentlicher Bedeutung als Stätte europaweiter literarischer Begegnungen und auch viele slawische Schriftsteller kommen dort zu Wort.«²⁵ Konstantinović correctly assesses Bahr's contribution to the reception of modernity among Slavic peoples. He was not alone in creating the program of modernity,

aber in der Art wie er sie vorstellte und wie sie mit Wien verbunden war, bietet sie auch eine Möglichkeit, die slawischen Literaturen über die Berührungen zu ihr miteinander in Verbindung zu setzen.²⁶

Other leading authors who were immediately received by the Eastern countries were Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, Altenberg and Karl Kraus, who came from Bohemia and always stressed that he was not Viennese. Bahr's influence on the development of modernity in the Eastern realms of the Monarchy was not simply indirect through his writings, but also included his active personal support. How influential Bahr became can be shown by the case of the writer Miroslav Krleža, who also studied in Vienna. Bahr spread the word that the young man had talent, and Krleža believed that this endorsement legitimized his ability and gained him acceptance into the circle of Zagreb writers.²⁷ Here he played an important role in gaining acceptance of the program of modernity as well as in rejecting the mythologization of the Habsburgs.

Bahr's involvement with the Slavic countries of the Monarchy began in terms of literature, but also included the other arts and the theater. Painters and sculptors were invited to exhibit in the Secession along with Austrians and Europeans. Eventually his concern expanded to include politics. After 1900, Bahr became increasingly critical of the way government officials managed the Eastern states – his most hated figure was the *Hofrat*, who in his petrified form personified for him everything wrong with Austria's bureaucratic rule – but he never entertained any notion of breaking up the Monarchy. Perhaps because he did not know the languages of the countries he was defending, he failed to recognize the strength of the nationalist sentiment, combined with commensurate anti-Habsburg feeling. He did recognize that for the Monarchy the necessity of finding the proper relationship with the Slavs was the major problem of the time. In viewing the procession of changing ministers, Andrassy, Taaffe, etc., he saw that no one could rule the Slavic states under the old system of Austrian absolutism but that a totally new attitude and helpful approach was needed. Austria and the Slavic states

28 Bahr, H.: *Dalmatinische Reise*.
Berlin: S. Fischer, 1909, p.1

29 Ibid., p. 5.

30 Ibid., pp. 98-99.

31 Ibid., p. 72.

32 Ibid., p. 68

need to cooperate, to enrich each other reciprocally in order to develop a common culture and, each in its own way, to develop fully. This transnational form of interaction would create a truly supranational state and thus serve as the model for a future unified Europe.

To understand how Bahr viewed Vienna's relations with the Eastern lands, it is necessary to know his deeply rooted views, which formed the bedrock of his thinking:

1. He believed in the Austrian Monarchy and wanted to see it continue.
2. Austria was to him an autonomous country, separate from Germany.
3. Austria's role, as established by Bismarck, was to create a harmonious relationship with the Slavs.
4. Austria was no longer a German land, but a Slavic country.
5. All countries needed to know each other better.
6. All individuals and countries must interact with others to achieve self-fulfillment.
7. Austria had a nationalism problem among the lands because of the Habsburg ruling principle of absolutism.
8. Austrian bureaucrats prevented harmonious relations with the Slavic nations because they wanted to protect their positions.
9. The Slavic nations wanted independence, like Hungary, but within the framework of the Austrian Monarchy.
10. The Slavic peoples wanted to remain loyal to the Monarchy.
11. Austria should be transformed into a Federal Republic, which would resolve the problems with the Slavic states and strengthen the Monarchy.
12. This system of diversity within unity would make the Monarchy the model for a United States of Europe.
13. Austria's future central role within the coming united states of Europe would be to serve as a bridge between East and West, North and South.

This program developed by stages primarily between the years 1908 to 1918, that is, from the book *Dalmatinische Reise* in 1909, through *Austriaca* (1911), the article *Böhmen* (1916), the book *Schwarzgelb* (1917) and his published diary *1918* (1919).

Bahr was particularly attracted by Dalmatia, which he frequently visited and which ranked next to the Lido as his favorite vacation spot. His book *Dalmatinische Reise*, part travel book, praising the country and the people to encourage tourism, part political diatribe against the Austrian mismanagement of the country, gives eloquent testimony of his strong feelings for the country and of his equally strong feelings of outrage that the people are being held down and treated so badly. For Bahr Dalmatia represents *Altösterreich*, beautiful, unspoiled Austria, a »Sonnenland, Märchenland, Zauberland.«²⁸ In the middle of winter he would find solace in fantasizing about the blue ocean along the coast of Dalmatia. When he was seriously ill in 1904, he saved himself by heeding the voice within that told him to flee to the blue ocean, which in fact worked its magic on him.²⁹

During his visit of 1909 he traveled throughout the country and provided richly detailed descriptions of the beauty, history and culture. He held up people like the author Milan Begović, known as the Croatian Hermann Bahr, for his role in spreading modernity. He translated d'Annunzio for the Dalmatians and in 1908 worked as dramaturge and director with Baron Berger in Hamburg and in 1912 in the same capacity for the *Neue Wiener Bühne*. Another key figure was his Prague friend Jaroslav Kvapil, who often traveled to Berlin to keep up with the latest trends in theater. Bahr extolled such men as examples of the desire of the people of both Dalmatia and Czechoslovakia for everything German. He also included a brief survey of the literature to show that Dalmatia is a land of culture as well as of natural beauty.³⁰

Impressionistic descriptions of the sea, the natural surroundings and the buildings were clearly intended to encourage tourism. He also illustrated the appeal of the country by pointing out that Kaiser Maximilian and Crown Prince Rudolf once owned estates on the island of Lacroma, lying off the coast of Dubrovnik. Also Richard the Lion-Hearted saved his life there, when his boat sank in a storm.³¹ Dalmatia should have been a Mecca for rich European tourists, but it had no decent hotels. This situation illustrated the difficulty facing the Dalmatian people: Austria wanted a demonstration of Austrian patriotism by seeing the Dalmatians build up the infrastructure of the country on their own initiative; while the people first wanted something from Austria to give them a reason to become Austrian patriots.³² They wan-

33 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

34 *Ibid.*

35 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 161.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 162.

ted to be a real Austrian country and loyal Austrians, according to Bahr, but they were not treated that way, and that was their quarrel with the Austrian bureaucracy. The Austrian administrators continued to make the same mistakes in ruling Dalmatia as they had made in Upper Italy and Trieste: they ruled to gain benefits for Austria at the expense of the lands. Bahr stated that Austrians hate change, but they would have to learn to accept other nationalities. In the city of Zara [Zadar] they built a wall to conceal that their control ended there and the Orient began. The people sent their sons to America, but when they returned they could not utilize what they have learned, because Vienna would not provide support. It is small wonder, said Bahr, that this economic need translated into national feeling.³³ He added Goethe's view that revolutions are never the fault of the people but of the government.

Bahr stated that the Croats wanted to join and form one people with the Croats in Dalmatia, but that this move was opposed because the Austrians did not want them to become too strong. The bureaucracy felt that the states would be easier to rule if they were kept poor and hungry.³⁴ The *Staatskünstler*, according to Bahr, were still clinging to an old Austria that had found its meaning in Germany. After being cast out of Germany in 1867, they needed to find a new meaning, and this new meaning had to be the Balkans. The strength of the South Slavs was Austria's future. The difference between Austrians and Germans derived from the fact that Austrians are a mixture of races, »in uns rufen hundert Stimmen der Vergangenheit.«³⁵ But the bureaucracy did not want to recognize that Austria had become a Slavic country nor was it the desire of the Eastern territories to become Austrian. Anger and frustration over being treated as second-class citizens was the reason why the Eastern lands had been impossible to administer, as witnessed by the steady progression of Ministers, and why this would continue to be the case until a major change in policy occurs.

The final section of the book deals with an exchange between Bahr and various bureaucrats who had criticized him in print for his views. Bahr had published an essay in the *Berliner Tageblatt* entitled *Um Berliner wird gebeten*, urging Berliners to come to visit and invest in Dalmatia. Then Bahr's essay *Dalmatinisches Abenteuer* followed in the *Neue Freie Presse* on March 2, 1908. This brought a scornful response from *Regierungsrat* Herr Baron von Chlumecky in the *Österreichische Rundschau* on March 15, denouncing Bahr's criticism of the government, his complaint at having been asked for his passport and having his camera and films confiscated. (Bahr never did get his films returned, which explains the absence of his pictures in the book). Chlumecky argued that the Dalmatians remained so poor because they used all their energies being engaged in national and political struggles rather than in building the country. Bahr sent a reply, which for one reason or another kept getting lost and never appeared in print. So instead he wrote to Nikolaus Nardelli, the *Statthalter* of Dalmatia and noted, among other injustices, that valuable old guns had been confiscated and never returned. He also mentioned the curious coincidence that various government figures suddenly owned collections of fine old weapons. The *Statthalter* responded that all confiscated guns without exception were in custody. But now under Bahr's threat to expose this systematic plundering in the European press, he ordered that all old guns be immediately returned and that no further old guns be confiscated.³⁶ Given the reactions that excerpts aroused, Bahr felt that his book would be considered a threat when it was really »nur zornige Liebe. Ich will helfen, Österreichs schönstes Land vor seinen tückisch schleichenden Verderbern zu retten und ihm Freiheit zu bringen.«³⁷ The book and this exchange of letters with officials show that Bahr did not only describe problems in his writings, but that he was willing to take an activist stand and become personally involved. He was willing to back up his words with deeds. His advocacy of better treatment for Dalmatia was only one instance of his willingness to demonstrate civil courage and moral leadership when the occasion demanded. To fight for the underdog was one of his most basic character traits.

Over the years, Bahr developed closer ties to Czechoslovakia than to any of the other Slavic nations. His grandfather Engelbert Bahr had served as head postmaster in Prague for a time in 1834, Bahr as a schoolboy had visited Prague, and while studying in Berlin he had become acquainted with Karel Kramář, who made Bahr, at that time a proponent of *Großdeutschum*, aware of the nationalist goals of Czech politicians.

An important chapter in Bahr's ongoing relationship with the Czechs began in Prague in 1906, when Max Reinhardt introduced him to the Director of the National Theater, Jaroslav Kvapil, who had adopted Bahr's program of modernity. The two men thought very much alike, and they formed a strong friendship that lasted throughout their lifetimes, despite the many

38 Maliarova 1995, p. 154.

39 Bahr, H.: Letter from Germany. In: The London Mercury, Vol. 3 (November-April 1921), p. 206.

40 Bahr, H.: Kritik der Gegenwart. Augsburg: Haas & Grabherr 1922, p. 173f.

41 Bahr, H.: Liebe der Lebenden 2. Hildesheim: Borgmeyer 1922, p. 298.

42 Jähnichen 1969, p. 363.

43 Bahr, H.: Tagebuch, Berlin: Paul Cassirer 1909, p. 172.

44 Maliarova 1995, p. 140.

45 Ibid., p. 141.

46 Ibid., p. 142.

vicissitudes to which it was subjected. They formed such a mutual admiration society, praising each other in their writings, that they were good-naturedly satirized for it.³⁸ Kvapil performed so many of Bahr's plays in his theater, that for several years prior to 1912 Bahr was the most performed German-speaking author in Prague.

Bahr strongly supported Czech authors and artists by publicizing them in his writings, none more than the symbolic poet Otakar Březina, whom he promoted often in his published diaries and even heralded in England, calling him »the greatest poet of Bohemia and at this moment the most powerful rhapsodic poet alive.«³⁹ In his view, Březina combined Walt Whitman and Dostoevski and had European dimensions. He enthusiastically greeted the German translation *Winde von Mittag nach Mitternacht* by Emil Saudek and Stefan Zweig in 1922,⁴⁰ and in 1923 he expressed the hope that Březina would win the Nobel prize for literature, for which he was a candidate.⁴¹ Through his writings Bahr played a role in spreading awareness of Czech literature and culture throughout Europe.⁴²

Bahr also became personally engaged. For example, on May 15, 1908 Bahr wrote that he had to travel to Prague to see the modern peasant play *Maryša* by the Mrštík brothers, simply because the Viennese refused to allow bringing the performance to Vienna. In his customary manner Bahr used that specific incident to illustrate a larger theme, namely, that this play, which surpassed the limited Naturalism of Anzengruber and of Hauptmann's *Fuhrmann Henschel*, illustrated how the Czech writers adopted other approaches and added their own touch to improve on them. So, too, the director and dramatist Jaroslav Kvapil, whom Bahr called the Bohemian Reinhardt, surpassed his models Reinhardt and Stanislawski. He highly praised Kvapil for his ability to take foreign ideas and develop them further into something of his own creation.

During this visit Kvapil also introduced him to other writers and artists, like the composer and director Kovarich, a master who belongs in Berlin, and took him to an art exhibit, where he met such painters as the Orliks, Uprka and Mikuláš Aleš. Bahr reported that all of the writers and painters showed this capacity to take everything European and develop it into a higher form, calling it a Czech characteristic that enables them to work for the united Europe of the future. Bahr's efforts on behalf of the play *Maryša* resulted in its being performed with success in the Raimund Theater in Vienna on March 16, 1909 in Levetzow's translation. On another occasion Bahr defended the opera singer Destinn [Ema Destinová], who was being defamed in the German press because she called herself a *Böhmin*.⁴³ Bahr tried to persuade the Burgtheater to give guest performances in Prague, in order to form a connection between Slavic and Austrian culture.⁴⁴

Prior to Bahr, no other Austrian had shown so much interest in assisting the Czechs to become known in Vienna and Europe or had made such an effort to bring new ideas to them. For that reason his mediation was greatly appreciated and his opinions taken seriously. He became so well known and so highly regarded that his standing in the years 1908 to 1912 reached cult status.⁴⁵ There was great interest in his writings and particularly in his plays, which, following the lead of Kvapil in the National Theater, were staged in many theaters. *Josephine*, *Der Krampus*, *Sanna*, *Die Wienerinnen*, *Das Konzert*, *Die Kinder* and *Das Prinzip* were performed in translation and were also published in book form. Until World War I Bahr was the German-language author most performed on Czech stages, followed by Schnitzler, Schönherr, Hofmannsthal, Hauptmann, Sudermann and Wedekind. The novel *Die Rahl* was also translated, along with *Dialog vom Tragischen*, *Wien* and *Dalmatinische Reise*.⁴⁶ Many Czech critics considered *Wien* Bahr's finest work, a judgment that indicates their admiration for the anti-Habsburg slant of this political polemic.

What made Bahr's involvement in promoting the cause of Dalmatia, Czechoslovakia and other Eastern countries of the Monarchy so special was his early recognition that literature for them was not only a cultural, aesthetic concern, but was also involved with language, that is, it became a political matter of national identity. The Slavic writers could not openly express this festering problem of nationalism, but Bahr with his European-wide reputation and fearless nature became their spokesman in Austria. He wanted very much to be helpful, but strangely and unfortunately he viewed the problem of Slavic nationalism differently than it was conceived in the different nations. Ultimately, as will be seen, his misguided conception caused a problem between Bahr and the very people he was trying to support, resulting in the complete loss of the prominent reputation he had acquired.

47 Bahr 1911, p. 149.

48 Ibid., pp. 149-150.

49 Ibid., p. 166.

To understand Bahr's position, it is necessary to recall the lesson he received in Berlin in 1887 from one of Bismarck's aides on the importance of a separate Austria for Germany. From that time on, Bahr, who, as a follower of Schönerer, had been pressing for *Anschluss* with Germany, became an ardent proponent of an autonomous Austrian Monarchy and never deviated from that belief. While he staunchly defended the right of the various nations to autonomy and self-determination, he always emphasized that they wanted to remain within the framework of the Monarchy. Bahr took over the idea of Ferdinand Kürnberger that Austria had a nationality problem, not because of the nationalities but because of the Habsburg ruling system of absolutism. For that reason he publicized the idea that the Austrian government should become democratic, which he defined thus:

Alle Demokratie ruht ja auf der Wahrnehmung, daß das Individuum in der Berührung mit anderen stärker wird, ja durch sie recht eigentlich erst ganz zu sich selbst kommt.⁴⁷

The same is true for nations, as Austria and the other countries must recognize:

Erst wenn sie (die Nation) einsehen lernt, daß sie durch diesen Verband mit anderen Nationen fähiger zu sich selbst und selbst ihres eigenen Wesens nun erst ganz bewußt und zur Erfüllung ihres tiefsten Sinns ermutigt wird, kann sie bereit sein, sich hinzugeben. Durch die Demokratie wird zum ersten Mal ein Versuch unternommen, Österreich möglich zu machen.⁴⁸

The ideal solution, in Bahr's view, was to change Austria into a Federal Republic, overseeing its lands and territories as independent nations with self-rule and self-determination. In short, he pressed for the same arrangement with all of the states that Austria had entered into with Hungary in 1867. He believed that this approach would preserve the Monarchy and end the problems with all of the Slavic realms, which were proving impossible to govern under the current conditions and would continue to be so. He did not believe he was betraying Austria by this suggestion but rather was convinced that his plan would bring an end to nationalistic aspirations and thus improve and strengthen Austria. In addition, by allowing diversity within the unity, Austria would serve as a model for a unified Europe. How perceptive and how right Bahr's proposal was can be seen in the fact that precisely this phraseology of diversity within unity is being employed by the European Union, the Council of Europe and UNESCO at the present time. However, when he proposed it, Bahr's idea was as idealistic as it was totally impractical and inconceivable, given, on the one hand, the rigid thinking of the Austrian bureaucracy, which he felt always worked to prevent Austria from developing harmonious relations with the Eastern lands, and, on the other hand, the strong nationalist feelings of the Slavic peoples for total freedom from Habsburg rule. It was another of his basic ideas, for which he was ridiculed, that nations do not understand each other only because they do not know each other: »Was sie trennt, sind nur die Lügen, die jede von der anderen glaubt.«⁴⁹ Here in a nutshell is the essence of his motivation to mediate between nations by bringing information to both sides.

The fatal miscalculation in Bahr's approach was a complete misreading of the discontent that had been festering in the Slavic peoples for years and especially after Hungary was declared a kingdom and gained the right of self-determination in 1867. The people he met during his visits to Prague and Dalmatia and who provided him with information about the artistic, social and political situation, were all educated, cultured writers, artists, theater directors and performers, who were sympathetic to Bahr. They apparently did not want to tell their greatest champion in Austria and Europe, their helpmate and friend, that his view of Slavic loyalty to the Emperor and to Austria was completely wrong. For his part Bahr could not believe that all the people he talked to were not being completely candid and truthful. Thus, insulated from any contact with the reality of the strong anti-Habsburg feeling among the Slavic nations and unable to read the publications, Bahr could continue to emphasize in his writings that the people, while rightly wanting independence and self-rule, at the same time wanted to remain loyal Austrians. Only because he misread the temper of the people could he believe that his plan was the perfect solution to the Slavic problem because it accommodated the wishes of both sides. How he, who was normally so perceptive about social conditions, could have missed this widespread and deep-seated hostility to Austria after working with so many people and after so many visits between 1894 and World War I remains a great mystery. It seems that

50 Bahr, H.: Böhmen. In: Neue Deutsche Rundschau, 27/1 (1916), pp. 36-49. [Reprinted in Schwarzgelb, Bahr, H. Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag 1917, pp. 78-100.]

51 Ibid., p. 47.

52 Ibid., p. 49.

53 Ibid., p. 48.

54 Maliarova 1995, p. 156.

55 Ibid., 158.

56 Jählichen 1969, p. 377.

it was a case of his wanting to believe his own vision of what should be rather than the reality of what was.

How strongly Bahr felt about his plan can be seen in the fact that in 1915 he went to the lengths of traveling to Prague, so that he could verify the rumors of discontent that were circulating and check the veracity of accusations that the Czechs were using the war to further their nationalist ambitions. After numerous conversations with a cross section of people representing every political persuasion and feeling certain of his facts, Bahr was so pleased with what he had learned that he immediately sent a report of his visit to the government, before he published his findings in the essay *Böhmen* in 1916, a continuation of his views in *Austriaca* and his most important political work since *Wien* in 1907.⁵⁰ He was elated to find his belief confirmed that the Czechs want to gain autonomy under an arrangement such as that of Austria with Hungary, that is, with the Emperor as King of Böhmen.⁵¹ Their wish is for a new form of the Monarchy as a federal republic. He concludes that Austria has to be open to every Czech, and they have to be able to believe in Austria again:

Es gibt keine österreichische Politik als die des unerschütterlichen Vertrauens auf Österreich, der strengen Gerechtigkeit gegen alle seine Völker und des entschlossenen Willens, daß Österreich ihrer aller Vaterland werden muß, Vaterland an Leib und Seele.⁵²

He reports that fears of the Czechs being tempted by overtures from Russia are unwarranted, because it would go against their history to be Russian. They are oriented to the West, and they are Catholic.⁵³ A benefit of the war, he felt, was that it united all of the states with Austria and ended all talk of individual state nationalism. He believed that this would remain the case after the war.

Bahr's reading of the temper of the Czechs as well as of all of the other Central European states couldn't have been more wrong. It was possibly the worst misjudgment of his life, for it was the complete opposite of the truth: none of the dependencies wanted to stay within the Habsburg orbit under any conditions. The article aroused a storm of controversy and was immediately banned in both Austria and Germany, while resulting in sharply negative reactions in Czechoslovakia.⁵⁴ All of the admiration and high regard for Bahr quickly dissipated, and from this time on he became an object of criticism. In the postwar period Bahr continued to be mentioned in the press with respect for all of his cultural and political efforts on behalf of Czechoslovakia, and upon his death he received many glowing eulogies. However, because of his incredible political misjudgment, certainly the worst misreading of social circumstances he had ever made, even his extraordinarily high reputation as a dramatist was now subject to reevaluation and criticized as being overrated. From being the most performed German-speaking author on Czech stages, his plays now disappeared from the theaters, until finally only occasional performances of *Das Konzert* remained.

On February 27, 1916 Bahr wrote to Kvapil, whose friendship remained solid, to convey his purpose in the article:

Wie unvermeidlich und vor allem unauschiebbar es mir scheint, daß der tschechischen Nation ihr Recht und Eigenverwaltung, völlige Selbständigkeit und ungestörte nationale, geistige und wissenschaftliche Fortentwicklung gewährt und verbürgt wird, ja wie ich es für eine Grundbedingung und Hauptforderung der Existenz Österreichs halte, das glaube ich Ihnen zusagen zu können.⁵⁵

At the insistence of the American president Woodrow Wilson, the *Versailles Treaty* carried out Bahr's demand for autonomy and self-determination for all of the Slavic states, with the one major difference that the Monarchy was abolished and no affiliation with Austria remained. One day after the founding of the Czech Republic on October 29, 1918, Bahr sent Kvapil a telegram of congratulation on achieving national freedom, his final gesture of friendship and goodwill, ending their correspondence.

Having seen his goal achieved, albeit in a different form than he had intended, Bahr felt that his work on behalf of the Slavic states was done. And as usual when a specific task had been completed, Bahr moved on to the next one. He did not, as Manfred Jählichen concludes in his otherwise excellent article, grow resigned and retreat to Munich. Neither did he convert to Catholicism.⁵⁶ He was born a Catholic, turned atheist in his Schönerer years 1881-1885 and pronounced himself *konfessionslos* to marry the Jewish Rosa Jokl in 1887, before finding his

57 Cf. Daviau, D.G.: Hermann Bahr,
Josef Nadler and the Baroque. In:
Daviau 2002, pp. 353-374.

way back to the church between 1903 and 1914, when he formally again embraced Catholicism. He moved to Munich in 1922, so that his wife could teach in the Academy of Performing Arts, and during his remaining years until his death in 1934 he remained as active as ever, as his bibliography shows. His major project now was the formation of a unified Europe, including the Central European states, through an East-West baroque movement.⁵⁷ In this context, which was the ultimate goal of all of his mediation efforts, he now turned his full attention to England, which he felt needed to be better understood in German-speaking lands, because it was central to the formation of a united states of Europe, which became his dominant theme for the remainder of his life and which is now coming to fruition exactly as he had envisioned.



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