

Summary

SOKOL AND ANTIQUITY IN THE WORK OF JAKUB DEML

Jakub Deml is stereotypically labelled as a “Catholic poet”. Therefore, his temporary involvement in the progressivist, anti-clerical Sokol (“Falcon”) movement caused, and it is still causing, an embarrassment for many interpreters. The present article does not apply any normative criteria. Instead, it attempts to describe the way Jakub Deml realizes his “ressourcement”, namely: how does he combine certain Christian cultural motifs and symbols, which he has kept from his “pre-Sokol” period, with the “new” Sokol system of signs, values, and authoritative names? In the following step, the role of Greek antiquity in Deml’s four “Sokol” books (1923–1926) is analysed. Antiquity was crucial for the Sokol ideology, particularly for Miroslav Tyrš, the founder of Sokol, who was celebrated by Deml in a hagiographic way. Antiquity only holds, however, a surprisingly limited place in Deml’s relevant texts. The list of explicit “Greek” motifs appears to be quite short. Deml shares with Sokol ideology, however, certain values, viewed by them (as by other progressivist movements) as stereotypically “Greek” and implicitly anti-clerical (but not anti-Christian): personal freedom, earthliness, a healthy body, an emotional relationship to a specific local community. Deml’s Sokol involvement did not last long. After several years, it ended with a dramatic break. Nonetheless, it provides an important literary testimony to the intellectual and spiritual openness of Czechoslovak society in the early 1920s, making such unexpected encounters possible.

Keywords: Czech literature; Sokol movement; Jakub Deml; antiquity as inspiration

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