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The moving body : performativity within the Sokol movement in the period of the formation of the modern Czech nation : summary

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SUMMARY

The Moving Body: Performativity within the Sokol Movement in the Period of the Formation of the Modern Czech Nation

The Sokol movement was founded in 1862 in Prague by several leaders of Czech society: Jindřich Fügner, Rudolf Thurn-Taxis, Eduard and Julius Grégrs, Emanuel Tonner, Tomáš Černý and Miroslav Tyrš, who fundamentally influenced the ideological frameworks of the movement. It was led by a massive effort, typical for national movements in the second half of the 19th century, to establish Czech nation as a sovereign one. Sokol movement was focused on development a physical strength and beauty according to the ancient Greek educative model “kalokagathia”. In general, the educative concept was based on premise, that the beauty of a body represents man’s inner mental strength and their ability to protect the nation in military and ideological sense as well.

The main aim of the monograph is to manifest, how the Sokol movement became the inseparable part of Czech culture in the historical period mentioned and how it developed the Czech masculine construct or Czech national identity in general. Due to the effort to maximize its own influence on the Czech culture, the Sokol movement used the cultural performances as a communication channel helping them to represent their ideas in the public citizen’s space of Prague, Czech towns and country side. Sokol movement organized public exercises, parades, outings and finally the Slets, which represented a new form of complex national celebrations, established in 1882. In the second half of the 19th century, the cultural performances used to be the most effective way how to transfer the information among wide range of recipients.

A cultural performance is understood as a communication instrument, based mostly on intentional interaction between audience (usually Czechs) and performers (Sokols), when Sokols represent own subjective reality and try to persuade the audience, that their subjective reality is in fact “true”. Important element modifying the audience’s mind is the aesthetic value of the form, by which the meaning is emerging. Despite the Czech historical research tradition, the monograph is focused mainly on this neglected aesthetic aspect of the cultural performances.

What meanings and especially how they were constructed in such performances, was the key question. In order to analyze the way of creation the meaning in cultural performances, it was necessary to asses their materiality (corporeality, spatiality, tonality, temporality) defined by Erika Fischer-Lichte in the monograph *Transformative Power of the Performance: A new Aesthetics*. Mainly, monograph is oriented on analysis of the body, interpreted on semiotic level as performative bearer of the meaning and its own creator as well. This approach to the body consequently leads to examination of performative aspects of Czech identity construction and Sokol movement’s influence on it.

Monograph is divided into two main parts: the first one called “Genesis of the Sokol Body” is focused on analysis of inspiring sources, historical perception of the body and on the constructive process of the body, fixed by text, which Miroslav Tyrš wrote. The second part called “Moving Body” applied the findings of previous chapters on interpretation of specific mass performances: *Slavnost svěcení praporu Sokola Pražského, 1862* [Consecration of the Prague Sokol’s Flag], *Jubilejní slavnost Sokola Pražského, 1882* [Jubilee Celebration of the Prague Sokol] and *Marathon, Obrazy antické z r. 490 před Kr.* [Marathon, Imagines of the ancient Greece in 490 BC]. These case studies illustrate how Sokol movement constructed the Czech man’s identity through the body and how the movement’s ideas merged with Czech culture in general.