

The quest for influence

Federico Garcia

“I hope that if I have not yet reached the goal I set for myself, I am at least approaching it. And that goal is to prove that we Czechs are not mere practicing musicians as other nations nickname us, saying that our talent lies only in our fingers, and not in our brains, but that we are endowed with creative force, that we have our own characteristic music.” —*Smetana*

THIS EXCERPT FROM ONE OF SMETANA’S letters shall be the backbone of this article, in which I enquire into the (very complex) issue of nationalism in music. In part I take it as such because it emblematically embodies the spirit of what has been generally accepted as ‘nationalist’ composers or schools (Grieg, Smetana and Dvořák, the Russian ‘five,’ Falla, etc.), the view—held in textbooks and appreciation classes—that it was a reaction against German dominance of art music. This has been recently called into deep question recently with excellent studies on many particular cases: the references on the text are a sample. The label of ‘nationalist,’ in this sense, has been rightly denounced as an utterly simplistic and misleading categorization with no real substance, and on occasion identified, also rightly, as a means of defence of the ‘center’ against the ‘periphery.’

This is indeed an achievement. But it is not necessary to play on the devil’s side to see some problems. To begin with, the plain accumulation of ‘yet another’ proof of the obvious, the repeated learning of the same lesson, raises the question of why scholarship still needs to teach it. The time is ripe for a re-design of the general idea of nationalism in music. The old categorization of non-German musicians as nationalists ‘by default’ has been torn to pieces (though it survives, and there is little reason to think it will die soon, in textbooks: what would replace it?). It would seem that those pieces have to be reassembled in some new way, with the hope that they will more solidly remain together.

The present attempt at joining the pieces has two parts. To set the stage, I first apply to the history of music the model of nationalism (in the large, socio-historical, sense of the word) advanced by Ernest Gellner in his article “Nationalism” and developed to more depth in his book

Nations and Nationalism.¹ Since a Gellnerian and thus materialistic understanding of nationalism calls for a reason in the more mundane, less ‘ideological’ world, I explore in the second part a special need created by the emerging notion of ‘high art’—a need that can be termed ‘the anxiety of influence.’² Smetana’s letter turns out to be a direct and clear case-study for both steps. As the paradigmatic case of what we have been taught to think of ‘nationalist’ composers, it provides an excellent viewpoint for the application of Gellner’s model; but it also opens a discussion on Romanticism and its ‘myth of genius,’ which is central to the definition of the ‘new need’ that—I claim—nationalism is a means of fulfilling.

A note is mandatory here about Michael Beckerman’s study of the Czech case of musical nationalism (from which Smetana’s letter has been extracted), for it is one of the studies that revise the ordinary view.³ Beckerman’s article contains a healthy doses of skepticism as regards the ‘substance’ of national elements in music, i.e., the recognition that Czech music is not made Czech by any particular musical idiom. Another kind of substance, however, is substituted by Beckerman’s sound analysis of how the work of each Czech composer becomes part of the ‘national heritage’ that his successors will inherit, celebrate and sing. Thanks to this substitution, the author seems to believe in the existence of a ‘national Czech school’ in essentially the same terms as the textbook believes in the existence of a Russian one. It is as though the Czech case resisted the attacks that have demolished nationalism (as generally conceived) in Chopin, Glinka, Chávez, . . .

In fact, Smetana’s letter epitomizes the nationalist spirit that was later (wrongly) generalized. Beckerman shows how Smetana’s program found resonance in successive generations of Czech composers, including Dvořák, Janaček and Martinů, and how it provided cohesion to this Czech “extended artistic family.”⁴ It will be seen that my opinion of this phenomenon is less pious: I regard Smetana’s program more as ‘homogenizing’ than ‘cohesive,’ and in my take its grounds are somewhat less altruistic.

¹Ernest Gellner, “Nationalism,” in *Thought and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), and *Nations and nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983). To the latter I shall refer hereafter as *N&N*.

²The adequacy of Bloom’s expression to refer to what I mean should however not imply that we both mean the same. His ‘influence’ is of a more technical nature; mine would be more ‘social’ or ‘historical.’

³Michael Beckerman, “Viewpoint: In search of Czechness in music,” *19th. century music* 10/1 (1986). Smetana’s letter appears in page 66, with no clue as to whose is the emphasis in “*characteristic music*,” which I have personally omitted.

⁴*Idem*, pp. 67–71.

For the most part, I abstract Smetana almost completely, and reduce him to the four lines I have quoted out of context. This is to say, I speak not of the historical Smetana (for whose music I have but admiration) but rather of anyone that could have written those lines. By this token, I hope my study will win the bit of relevance that could be called into question by my own assertion that this is *the one* such testimony. In any case, my own experience shows that the letter, as far as it touches upon issues of nationalism, could have been written by many composers in current times of ‘Everywhereian art musics’ and ‘creative ethnomusicologies.’ Besides, what Smetana wrote as a composer has been endlessly repeated by critics and observers.



BRAIN VS. HEART IS MIND VS. SENSE, IDEA VS. IMPRESSION, reason vs. passion. The brain suffered attacks from every front in the late nineteenth

“... in our fingers, and
not in our brains...”

and early twentieth centuries—being eventually overthrown by the stomach in dialectic materialism or by the sexual organs in psychoanalysis—but the polarization of brain and heart is the foremost one that persists today in the conception of the world by ‘the man in the street.’ The dichotomy, in its different versions, lies for example at the core of Dahlhaus’s “twin styles,” in the form of ‘exegesis’ vs. ‘experience,’ the two mutually opposed ways of reception that correspond to the music of Beethoven and Rossini, respectively.⁵ Is this dichotomy, moreover, not central to the different images we have of Bach and Vivaldi?

Smetana, however, opposes to the brain the humble fingers, and in doing so he seeks to vindicate rather than to discredit the brain. What he refers to is the opposition between technical dexterity (“practicing musicianship”) and real creativity (“creative force”); in other words, it is not the opposition of two alternative approaches to creation, but between a *real*—the brain—and a fake—the fingers—way to creation. He is, on the other hand, championing himself by aspiring to partake of the “brain tradition” (and claiming to have a right to it, no matter how Czech he is). From his need to convince the world that Czech do have talent in the brain, we can see how convinced he was that true talent lies there: in Dahlhausian terms, we could say that Smetana aims at the ‘exegetical way.’

⁵Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 9ff.

IN THIS SENSE IT IS POSSIBLE TO ASSERT that Smetana was not just a Romantic, but a Romantic of the German kind (if such a thing as a non-German Romantic exists at all). The distinction drawn by

“... not mere practising musicians, but endowed with creative force...”

Smetana (and do not forget that he was musically educated in the German tradition) between “practising musicians” and those “endowed with creative force” is representative of nineteenth-century German ideas and ideals about the good composer, and finds a close parallel in Wagner’s *Meistersingern*. To begin with, as Edward Lowinsky puts it,

Walter is an idealization of genius, Beckmesser a caricature of craftsman. Walter personifies the artist whose creativity rests on inspiration, and whose inspiration springs from an imaginative mind and a generous and sensitive heart, open to love and enthusiasm. Beckmesser’s art rests on the pedantic observation of time-worn rules. His pedantry is at home in a small, petty, scheming mind, equally incapable of noble emotions and of the flight of fancy.⁶

These two extremes need to be interpreted with care. The immediate but dangerous association that comes to mind is the opposition between fresh ‘talent’ and conventional ‘knowledge,’ which is in turn present in the usual schematization of the compositional process as the binary model of ‘inspiration’ and ‘working-out.’ The temptation, then, is to conclude that the contempt the Romantics had for the “time-worn rules” is a contempt for the ‘working-out’ stage: “the idea that the genius, unlike the mere craftsman, can transcend the rules without committing errors ... is a leitmotiv in the history of the concept of musical genius.”⁷

We tend to draw this conclusion, that Romantics had contempt for the ‘working-out,’ mainly (perhaps only) because of the reversal of emphasis performed by the twentieth century: pure technique regained its lost prestige (even acquiring the high-sounding name of ‘musical language,’ to compete with the bombastic ‘inspiration’), and rules were no longer deemed as ‘time-worn,’ but as ‘time-less,’ the creation of them becoming a central part of the composer’s task.⁸ The aesthetics of neoclassicism (both with or without this label), for example, highly depends on this reversal, for only it allows the primitive and the childish to be regarded as ‘pure’ rather than ‘raw.’ Discipline,

⁶Edward E. Lowinsky, “Musical genius: Evolution and origins of a concept,” in Bonnie J. Blackburn (ed.), *Music in the Culture of Renaissance & other Essays* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 40.

⁷*Idem.*

⁸See Helga de la Motte-Haber, “Kreativität und musikalisches Handwerk,” in Reinhard Kopiez and Wolfgang Auhagen (eds.), *Controlling Creative Processes in Music* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998) for a sound account of this process.

objectivity, rigor, soberness, and similar key ideals of neoclassicism show the esteem on which technique and 'working-out' are now held.

But precisely the same process led to the polarization of brain and heart I have referred. Reason, logic, mind, stood as the 'objective' counterpart of 'subjective' emotion, magic, sense. 'Inspiration' acquired the meaning it has for us today, a magical, almost divine revelation, that presents itself to the creator to be carved by him—by his 'working-out'—into a work of art. This is the *current* myth of artistic creation. Applying it in retrospect is what leads us to interpret wrongly the Romantic myth, in contrast, as a reverence to pure inspiration (in our sense). Nietzsche's irony that "the artists have a vested interest in our believing in the flash of revelation, the so-called inspiration, as if the idea of the work of art, of poetry, the fundamental idea of a philosophy shone down from heavens as a ray of grace" (from *Menschliches Allzumenschliches*) has a measure of truth, but in reality a Romantic composer would never deny the effort and hard work he has invested in his composition—this would be asking too much from his humility. The role of the middle-man between heavenly ideas and earthy masterwork would be, one guesses, of little pride for a Wagner, a Brahms, a Beethoven. The Romantic myth does not depart, as ours does, from the opposition of talent and *savoir-faire*, but fuses them together in what *they* call 'inspiration.' Thus introduces Lowinsky Wagner's third character:

Between these two extremes stands Hans Sachs, his roots in the world of the mastersingers, but his heart and mind open to Walter's freely inspired art. . . .

Musical creation as the volcanic eruption of a glowing soul in the grip of ecstatic revelation, technical study as the magic means to summon the spirits of the art: this indeed is a truly Romantic concept.⁹

And this is the complete image: the magic reveals itself not only in the sudden "flash of insight," the artistic *Eureka!* There is magic also in the right handling that the true artist makes of those flashes. Moreover, *this* part of the magic is the true mark of genius. Were not this so, it would be hard to explain the Romantic image of the great artist as the self-abandoning worker pursuing beauty and enduring the enormous difficulties his task imposes upon him. The Romantic's idea of himself is much closer to the prophet, whose painful self-denial responds to a divine call, than to the effortless talent-owner for whom everything results easy.

An even better illustration than Wagner's *Meistersingern* is E. T. A. Hoffman's *Kreisleriana*. The

⁹Lowinsky, *Op. Cit.*, p. 40–1.

magical rock from which melodies emerge is not only insufficient (for the melodies are not totally comprehensible), but also dangerous: the true artist has to educate himself to genuinely benefit from it. Stephen Rumph has studied to some depth the relationship between the *Kreisleriana* and the *Bildung*, an essential part of the German self-image that put them (for them) above any other people, and particularly the French.¹⁰ The impact of *Bildung* on music, moreover, might result informally illustrated by two curious coincidences of the ‘invented traditions’ of music history: *not* Germans are, on the one hand, those composers to whom a ‘gift of melody’ is acknowledged (from Albinoni to Nielsen),¹¹ and on the other those who, still ‘young’ and in early stages of their careers, composed a piece destined to be a great breakthrough: Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique* and Stravinsky’s *Sacre*.¹² Germany seems thus to have been ‘destined’ (by herself) to compose with great effort, taking advantage of every melodic material regardless of its melodic value—i.e., what came to be called ‘motive’—and always keeping progress at a regular pace. A history of musical organicism remains to be written, but the impact of *Bildung* upon its development (and that of the high value attained by it) in nineteenth-century Germany seems to be of primary importance (besides the momentous, and more explored, influence of Göthe).¹³

WHAT ROMANTICS HAVE A CONTEMPT for is not the technique that complements and completes the talent in their composite idea of ‘inspiration,’ but rather the conventional procedures that allow anyone to compose a piece—rules that apply mechanically, with no need for “creative force.”

¹⁰Stephen Rumph, “A Kingdom not of this world: The political context of E. T. A. Hoffman’s Beethoven criticism,” *19th-Century Music* 19/1 (1995), pp. 55-58.

¹¹Mozart is often included in the list, bearing also other characteristics that do not fit well with the Romantic ideal, for example being a prodigy for whom ‘everything results easy.’ German Romantics were proud of Mozart, but they regarded him, almost paternally, as a preparation for Beethoven.

¹²Clearly, the limited number of ‘breakthroughs’ makes it somewhat harder to suspect of this coincidence (even if we accept also Penderecki’s *Threnody*). But no doubt there is an evident difference between these young revolutionaries and the image of a Brahms or a Bruckner, working hard for a lifetime to advance through the way of ‘progress.’

¹³For example, see Robert Spaethling, “Music in Goethe’s thought and writing,” in Frederick Hall Gerald Chapple and Hans Schulte (eds.), *The Romantic tradition: German literature and music in the nineteenth century* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1992). Abigail Chantier has recently explored the relationship between Hoffmann and Göthe in “Revisiting E. T. A. Hoffmann’s musical hermeneutics,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 33/1 (2002), particularly from section IV on.

Should the cerebellum (opposite to the cerebrum and supposed to control automatic processes) not so poorly lend itself to metaphor, we could do no better than appeal to it to represent these non-creative devices. For Romantics, anyway, the cerebellum was not an option; but there were the fingers, those little automata whose fluency they were so used to see in performance and improvisation. In fact, the major excision that Romanticism made between composer and performer—a separation obviously *contra naturam* that would make absolutely no sense to a pre-1800 musician—is consistent with the distinction between brain and fingers, just as the twentieth-century division of $\tau\epsilon\chi$ into art and science—equally artificial and nonsensical up to the Renaissance, and only completely realized in the 1900s—is consistent with the opposition of brain and heart. (Which manifests itself also in the partition between composers and musicologists.)

There is a third curious coincidence of interest here: after Beethoven, we see no other great German composer that was also a performance prodigy. There are Liszts, Chopins, Paganinis, Rachmaninovs, Prokofievs—but no Germans.¹⁴ Smetana, to return to him, was a virtuoso who played his first concerto at the age of six, and enjoyed the same fluency at the piano and the violin. Or perhaps suffered them, for German ideals required him to look down on these capabilities. The part of his letter detailed so far reveals him doing so. Smetana was a putative German, adhering to the central myths and concerns of the Germany that, alas, so easily and cruelly looked at him as different.

THERE IS IMPLIED IN SMETANA'S GOAL something of more importance than the relatively harmless contention that the Czechs, no matter how Czech, can indeed fulfill German ideals. It is the assumption that they *understand and share* those ideals.

“...to prove that we Czechs...”

In fact, this is where the fallacy of the old view of nationalism lies: in the assumption that there is agreement about what music ought to be. What else are we supposed to think of when speaking or hearing about the ‘German dominance’ of the musical scene? This agreement in turn is taken as a reason for nationalism: nationalism was the set of different tendencies, ideological, technical, and otherwise, adopted by composers to cope with the paradox of their own non-Germanness and

¹⁴Of course, many German composers were accomplished pianists; but music history did no longer record them as such. It *did* record, by contrast, Schumann's dramatic failure (feminists would be delighted to address how the figure of virtuoso was relegated to Clara). Joachim was a prodigy of the violin, but not a composer, and in any case a Jew.

the Germanness of the accepted universal premises of music. This reason is by definition universal to all non-Germans, and therefore it is no surprising that scholars have looked at all the cases with the same eyes. One of the plainest and most naive of those appreciations is that of the Russian 'school:' supposed it was, and is,¹⁵ that the Five's reaction was the more or less artificial *denial* of German premises and ideals, on account of their inability (embodied in their non-professionalism) to fulfill them. In this view, the Five were wrong enough to regard Tchaikovsky as 'too German' (when it was so obvious that he was 'so Russian'), and this real nationalist had to wait for redemption from Rachmaninov—himself another real nationalist. Some graciously concede that Rimsky-Korsakov had already been able to rectify his early position.

Once the assumption is abandoned, a finer picture arises. Taruskin writes:

Clearly, "Europe" was something Musorgsky felt he could face up to. His self-confidence—easily (and usually) dismissed as the bluster of the callow, the ignorant, the untried—has a suprapersonal, ideological edge as well. Roll callowness, ignorance and innocence together, translate it all into Russian, and the specific nature of his Russian ideology, his national self-definition, will emerge. It is the ideology of *yurodstvo*, Holy Foolery, a state of perfect freedom from cogitation (brains) and charm (beauty), a state of perfect authenticity.¹⁶

It is the plain but deep wisdom of the Fool standing besides Lear's mad grandiloquence.¹⁷ Now, there is of course no way for Lear to ever conceive of his buffoon as more than "the bluster of the callow, the ignorant, the untried:" for anyone accepting the German ideals, including the Germans who forged our old view of nationalism, there was no other possibility than this old view. It is quite natural that it has taken so long for musicology—so clearly a German discipline and concept—to reveal the inappropriateness of its appreciation. If the German image of the Russians is unlikely, it was still the most likely one to arise.¹⁸

¹⁵For example, see David Brawn's four-volume biography of Tchaikovsky. Taruskin refers to it in "P. I. Chaikovsky and the ghetto," in *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), beginning in page 52.

¹⁶Richard Taruskin, "Who am I (and who are you)?," in *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 71.

¹⁷The comparison is not completely crazy, and it is curious that Taruskin does not take the chance to make it explicit in "Handel, Shakespeare, and Musorgsky: The sources and limits of Russian musical realism," in *Musorgsky: Eight essays and an epilog* (Princeton and Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1993).

¹⁸And that is why the perception of this image as a conspiracy of German elites—cf. Sanna Pederson, "A. B. Marx,

IN "NATIONALISM," HIS FIRST, FRESH account of nationalism (see note 1), Ernest Gellner addressed to begin with the process whereby the idea of nation comes into being at the outset of modernity: the nation is the *smallest* political unit able to fulfill the requirements of the new society. Having thus approached the nation from down-up, he completes the model with the up-down direction, i.e., explaining why the nation is also the *biggest* such political unit. Roughly speaking, these two approaches distribute the issue of nationalism into its two kinds, cohesive nationalism vs. divisive nationalism. It is mainly the latter that shall concern us here.

The separation of two regions (A and B) of a nation into two independent nations is a result of the fact that "industrialisation and modernisation notoriously proceed in an uneven manner." The wave strikes one of the regions earlier than the other; when it strikes the second region, the first one has already recovered itself from the the "early stages . . . of these processes which cause the greatest disruption, the greatest misery;" the inequality between members of the two regions reaches then a peak: "at the time when dislocation and misery are at their height in B, A is already approaching affluence."

Under those circumstances, two alternatives are possible: either *a*) the members of B migrate and assimilate into A, or *b*) B unfolds a separatist ('nationalist') program. The deciding factor is whether or not a "means of exclusion" is available whereby members of A can (immediately) identify those of B and deprive them of the benefits. (Evidently, "in general, advanced lands do not have any interest in sharing their prosperity with the ill-trained latest arrivals. The solidarity of the working class is a myth."¹⁹) The paradigmatic example of such a mechanism of exclusion is, of course, race.

Where there happens to be such a mechanism, the separatist program proceeds under the leadership of the '*intelligentsia*' of region B. Blaming region A for the bad conditions of B's proletariat—and with the aid of concepts such as 'independence' and 'freedom,'—B's intellectuals gain mo-

Berlin concert life, and German national identity," *19th-Century Music* 18/2 (1994) and to some extent Rumph, *Op. Cit.*— is itself unlikely too. In pages 277–81 of her "How German is it? Nationalism and the idea of serious music in the early nineteenth century," *19th-Century Music* 21/3 (1998), Celia Applegate insightfully (and hilariously) reviews these two articles. I would only add that in Pederson's and Rumph's 'denounces' one could see an anxiety to give some historical relevance to intellectuality, a longing to demonstrate that intellectuals shape history, in the deep fear of realizing that history is much more powerful at creating, shaping and selecting them.

¹⁹Gellner, *Nationalism*, p. 167.

mentum and relevance for their aspirations; eventually the movement triumphs, and the separation is achieved.

SMETANA FITS VERY WELL THE ROLE OF the intelligentsia in the history of musical Czech nationalism. Gellner devotes several pages to the description of the intelligentsia, giving the following three main characteristics:²⁰

“...that we have our own characteristic music...”

- “An intelligentsia is a class which is alienated from its own society by the very fact of its education.”
- It is a “phenomenon essentially connected with *the* transition.” It is temporary by its very nature (after the new nation is born, what had been the intelligentsia becomes the ruling elite).
- It works not for the well-being of ‘their’ (B’s) people, but with the idea in mind that “by creating a national unit whose frontiers become in effect closed to foreign talent ... they create a magnificent monopoly for themselves. ... for the intellectuals, independence means an immediate and enormous advantage: jobs, very good jobs.”

In Smetana’s alignment with the German ideals we see him ‘alienated by the very fact of his education.’ When he thinks and speaks of Czechs and nobody else, he reveals his interest in creating “a national unit whose frontiers become in effect closed to foreign talent.” This point is further illustrated by another of his letters, this one to Dr. Ludevi Prochazka (August 31, 1882):

I am, according to my merits, and according to my efforts, a Czech, and the creator of a Czech style in the branches of dramatic and symphonic music—exclusively Czech.²¹

“Characteristic music” on the one hand, “exclusively Czech” on the other—the monopoly is assured. And by taking care of reminding the reader that he is “the creator” of the monopoly, Smetana completes the Gellnerian picture stating the temporary character of his task and his historical place. His, and only his, is the ‘job, very good job’ of being the Father of the Czech school.

²⁰*Idem*, pp. 166–170.

²¹Quoted by Beckerman, *Op. Cit.*, p. 63, and this from František Bartoš, *Bedřich Smetana: Letters and reminiscences*, originally published as *Smetana ve vzpomínkách a dopisech* [Prague, 1949, 1954] (Prague, 1955), pp. 250–51.

After Smetana's establishment of the Czech style, the situation is no longer 'transitional,' the existence of 'Czechness' in music is already granted and even unescapable.²² The younger Czech composers and musicians will now find newly created positions in the "branches of dramatic and symphonic music" (positions not so easily available were not for the existence of an "exclusively Czech style"), but they will not be the leaders, only the 'beneficiaries,' of the separation. They are, in that sense, the proletariat that Smetana claims (and believes) to be helping.

Two concepts of Gellner's model remain to be adapted after the identification of suitable substitutes for the 'intelligentsia' and the 'proletariat:' 'modernization' and the 'means of exclusion.' ('Region' itself does not have to be substituted, but only modified to mean 'ideological region,' especially ideology of music.) The former has essentially the role of a gravitational center to which the members of the supposed 'region' B aspire, a role that in the case at hand is fulfilled by the German ideals of music. And for the means of exclusion it is easy to find Germanness, or more strictly 'German-speaking-ness.'²³

GELLNER MENTIONS "HOW MISTAKEN Rostow is, in a way, in crediting 'reactive nationalism' with the crucial role in economic development. This observation needs to be turned upside-down. It is the need for growth which generates nationalism, not vice versa."²⁴ Accordingly, I would invert the picture painted by Beckerman of the Czech case in musical nationalism: it is not that the national style was accepted by the composers and generated their mutual, solidary influence. It was 'the anxiety of influence' that created Czech national style.

²²Granted: it continues unexpectedly to this day, cf. Milan Kundera's admiration for Janáček. Unescapable: cf. the dilemma of Dvořák's: initially propelled for his being Czech, eventually expelled for his not being 'universal.'

²³The comparison with the case of the Strauss family of composers in Vienna is illustrative. Johann Jr.'s music was highly appreciated by public and critics alike, but issues of nationalism (which one would think was prominent on account of his Viennese waltzes, polkas, etc.) seem to be absent from the appreciation. Being 'German-speaking-ness' the means of exclusion, these Viennese composers were not affected by it, and thus their case would be an instance of the development that is Gellner's alternative a): assimilation. On the other hand, identifying 'German-speaking-ness' as the means of exclusion brings 'geography' back into the discourse, after having been rejected in the redefinition of 'region' as 'ideological.' But, in principle, musical nationalism is as independent from geography as political nationalism is independent from race or culture.

²⁴Gellner, *Nationalism*, p. 168. He refers to W. W. Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth* (Cambridge, 1966).

Also, rather than looking with admiration at the almost miraculous cordial agreement of all Czech composers, I would look at the lack of debate with some suspicion. In short: what happened to the possible dissidents? Fortunately, in musicology we do not have to deal with the terrible suppressions that similar questions in history might call to mind, but the case of Czech composers, at least as depicted by Beckerman, is a crude confirmation of the fact that 'history is written by the victors.' It is so obvious and natural a fact that it would be even naïve to regret it, but this does not mean that we should not exercise our critical faculties and overlook it as a truism. Leaders, spokesmen, visionaries, are worth of all our respect and attention, but an important part of this very respect should be not denying them their condition of human beings, without which their feats would be less outstanding. Behind their altruism there is always selfishness, their representation of others means always arbitrary selectiveness and judgment.

This is well illustrated by another case in the history of music, because in a sense it failed. It is the Copland's self-appointed role as the spokesman of American composers in the 1920s.²⁵ There cannot be the slightest doubt regarding Copland's value as a human being, which gives more strength to the argument (as compared to, for example, any analysis of the leadership of Wagner or any other musical figure in the loaded Viennese atmosphere). But when it comes to his assertion that experimentalism was over (an assertion made about music in the 1920s, in the very country of Cowell, Ives, Varèse, Cage), it becomes apparent that he was projecting into others *his own*, arbitrary dislike for experimentalism, and 'using' his influential position of power to fight the tendency that so much frightened him because he did not feel at home in it. This is not to say that he was not convinced of his assertion, or that he was deliberately lying and manipulating people for his own sake—it is to say that there is no need to be a Hitler or a Stalin to exert oppression, that deliberate conspiracy is not a condition of exclusion: that both oppression and exclusion are unescapable realities of any representation.

This said, it should be clear that no ethical judgement is intended here about no single person, from Copland to Smetana, from the Germans that invented nationalism as a pejorative category to the Englishman that still today perpetrates it.



²⁵Carol Oja, *Making music modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), particularly chapters 13 and 14 (pp. 231–251).

MANY QUALIFICATIONS SHOULD BE MADE for the application of Gellner's model to Smetana's nationalism. In the first place, it shall be recalled that the case is very particular, and that other movements that were embraced by the old view of musical nationalism are of a very different nature. The nationalism of Chopin is not at all 'of Chopin,' but of the later Polish *intelligentsia*—in the original, purely Gellnerian sense of the word. Chopin himself is not part of the movement, but the movement took him as their musical predecessor.²⁶

Paris has always been a mecca of exoticism, and the role of the latter in Chopin's development and success is later confirmed in the reception and construction of Falla's music as 'nationalist.' A similar fate was suffered by Chávez in his pursue of international renown (deepened by additional issues of nationalism and exoticism in the United States). 'Commercial' motives were more significant than purely ideological inclinations in the way the music of both composers was construed as 'national.'

Secondly, German musical national identity itself was motivated by impulses other than the desire of assimilation to an appealing 'ideological region.' The relationship between 'periphery' and 'center' in this case is of a completely different nature: the periphery is fully aware of its very condition, and realizes that *precisely because of it*, it is more flexible than the different centers; the education of what would be its *intelligentsia*, instead of 'alienating' it, has provided it with a high doses of both knowledge and self-confidence, enough to advance and support 'own' ideals. 'Cosmopolitanism' is thus temporarily transplanted from the metropolis to the province.

The writings of Hoffmann and A. B. Marx attest, it is true, an aversion and contempt for France—complicated by the political uneasiness of the time—but it is clear at every step that they were supported much more by knowledge than by prejudice or irrational hatred. On the other hand, in *Neue und Alte Kirchenmusik*, Hoffmann praises Italian music, and Marx seems "to have believed that listeners in Berlin would come to understand the greatness of native musical com-

²⁶The "characteristic scenario" built by Gellner in *N&N*, pp. 58ff. comes to mind. In the *intelligentsia* of his Ruritania—incidentally, this is the name of the kingdom of *The Prisoner of Zenda*, Anthony Hope's novel—figures "the great Ruritanian national composer L., [who] made well known to the international musical public the lament-songs [of the Ruritanian peasants] (painstakingly collected by village schoolmasters late in the nineteenth century...)." There seems to be no 'real' musical case on which Gellner has based his account, but a mixture of elements of Kodály, Chopin, and others. The historical Chopin was (mis)taken by Polish *intelligentsia* as the heroic collector of folk songs, as Barbara Milewski, "Chopin's Mazurkas and the Myth of Folk," *19th-Century Music* 23/2 (2000) has made clear.

position only if they were broadly educated in the European musical idiom: this is an attitude entirely typical of the German enlightenment's hopeful orientation to questions of nationality."²⁷ It is Forkel's pride for the Bachian synthesis.

This kind of nationalism is repeated in the case of Russia and Musorgsky, already treated (cf. page 8). If Smetana shouts 'not because we are not you do we know less than you,' the 'synthetical nationalists' would seem to say 'we know better, because we know you and your opponent and ourselves'—a very different attitude indeed.

I HAVE ASSESSED THAT 'GERMAN-SPEAKING-NESS' was the 'means of exclusion' that motivated Smetana's separatist program. There is some need to elaborate on this, partly because of the complex relationship between Bohemia and Germany at the time (which, for example, manifests itself ironically in Smetana's own *very German* education—in fact, it is said that he was not fluent in Czech), but more importantly because that assertion would give German people, the German individuals, a much more active rôle than it seems realistic in the effective, xenophobic exclusion that non-Germans could feel. The process of exclusion seems to be—at least in these realms, more 'metaphysical' than plain economic well-being—a two-way road, an active 'collaboration' of excluding and feeling-excluded. Not only Germany nicknamed Bohemians (read Smetana) as practicing musicians, Bohemia nicknamed Germans to nickname her. Neither Berlioz nor Lisz (who *could* write their languages) did so, and they had no problem to be considered by Wagner as part of the (German) 'Music of the Future,' and indeed very much partook of the Romantic ideals.²⁸

“...other nations
nickname us...”

By feeling, reacting to and using an exclusion for not being German (no doubt with some real 'stimulus'), Smetana gave this exclusion its final, solid, and definitive form—he *realized* it. Having thus 'programmed' the Czech nation to be perceived as different, little could be done to prevent it from actually *looking* different—the case of Dvořák and his struggle to get respected as 'more' than a Czech composer is sadly illustrative.



²⁷ Applegate, *Op. Cit.*, p. 280.

²⁸ Although each finds his way also into one of my 'non-German coincidences': Liszt as a piano virtuoso (page 7), Berlioz as the young composer of a musical breakthrough (page 6).

BUT THERE IS A MUCH MORE IMPORTANT 'qualification' to do to the model. The "modernisation" that sets Gellner's model in motion, when taken from the economic, everyday-life, sphere, to the higher (?) universe of art, is somewhat emptied of its motive force. Why, or what, does really Smetana 'desire' in the ideological region A? I have spoken of Smetana 'using' his Czechness, creating a 'monopoly,' and similar expressions, but the form of the profit he could get from it has not been explained. In fact, all these questions can be reduced to a common logical source: the precise definition of the *currency* of the 'ideological world,' in terms of which ideological region A is desirable, Smetana's monopoly gives him wealth, and Martinů is proletariat.

It is this *currency* what could be named 'influence.' Influence is the new need that Romantic composers had to face and cope with. It is the defining characteristic of 'high art,' or simply 'art,' as opposed to 'artisanship,' in the sense that the main aim of the product of an artisan is not influence but *use*. Vivaldi composed 'five hundred times the same piece' to be used the corresponding five hundred times, Bach his cantatas, Haydn and Mozart their symphonies. 'Artisan' and the pre-capitalist craftsman are actually very similar: as Applegate remarks, "[f]or musicians, the pre-modern world of hometown and court had consisted of unlike and incomparable relationships, each governed by its own rules and presenting its own possibilities or lack of them; indeed the category of musician, as a predictable set of professional experiences and expectations, hardly existed in the social-political world of central Europe before 1790."²⁹ It is interesting that Applegate's date of 1790 coincides with the sectionalization of the article "Conservatories" in the *New Grove*.³⁰ After this date, this institution flourishes, and only in the late nineteenth century began "a refocussing of conservatories towards the training of high-level musicians . . . in such cities as Leipzig, Cologne, Moscow and St Petersburg."³¹ The change from a home-based training, at any rate by a mentor, that closely resembles the institution of apprenticeship of feudalist, pre-capitalist crafts (also recalled by pre-1800 families practising music for generations), to the specialized training for a "predictable set of experiences and expectations" mirrors in the sphere of music the birth of "generic training" that Gellner points to as a characteristic of industrial society.³² Consistently, the

²⁹*Idem*, p. 284.

³⁰William Weber et. al., "Conservatories," in L. Macy (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online* (<<http://www.grovemusic.com>>) (Accessed Oct. 1 2002).

³¹*Idem*, §III, 1 (by Weber).

³²"Industrial society may by most criteria be the most highly specialized society ever; but its educational system is

institution of patronage also underwent a deep change: from the *employer* of a musician, a painter, an astrologer, stems the later *supporter* of arts and sciences (although the aim of both, prestige, remains the same).

In this way, the musician entered the world of the mobile, generic worker, “among the movers and doers, the free professionals who were known not by what they had or what they were in a particular community but by what they did, by their ambition, aggressiveness, skills—in short, their achievement,” as Applegate puts it.³³

AND YET,

Beauty is unique and incomparable, it is the work of the genius. It was this conception which, after a long struggle against theories of classicism and neoclassicism, became prevalent in the eighteenth century and which paved the way for our modern aesthetic. “*Genius*,” says Kant in his *Critique of Judgment*, “is the innate mental disposition (*ingenium*) through which Nature gives the rule to Art.” It is “a *talent* for producing that for which no definite rule can be given; it is not a mere aptitude for what can be learnt by a rule. Hence *originality* must be its first property.” This force of originality is the prerogative and Distinction of art; it cannot be extended to other fields of human activity. “Nature by the medium of genius does not prescribe rules to Science, but to Art; and to it only in so far as it is to be beautiful Art.”³⁴

Here we find the problem “to which the thesis of musical autonomy posed a solution:”³⁵ the contradiction of generic nature versus the dream of ‘genius.’ These “movers and doers” the artists entered a race for ‘genius’ (rather than ‘power,’ the general aim of other movers and doers).³⁶ Power had since long ago a measure—money, land, etc. But “ambition, aggressiveness, skills, achievement” in terms of genius had to be given a common scale, according to which to judge. The only feasible scale was, it would seem, *influence*: just how much and how long successors

unquestionably the *least* specialized, the most universally standardized, that has ever existed.” Gellner, *N&N*, p. 27.

³³ *Op. Cit.*, p. 284.

³⁴ Ernst Cassirer, *An essay on man: An introduction to a philosophy of human culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 227; he refers to Kant’s sections 46, 47.

³⁵ Applegate, *Op. Cit.*, p. 281.

³⁶ Of course, this is not to say that they did not like power, or even that ‘genius’ and ‘power’ can be defined in a mutually exclusive way. The middle-term of ‘prestige,’ essential ingredient of both genius and power, is being overlooked here, for the sake of keeping things manageable.

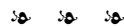
would remember and look at one with awe.

This is, incidentally, what accounts for the remarkably sudden and completely unnatural cult to personality that stroke Western culture and changed it forever. History recorded the *Illiad* and the *Odissey*, and *a posteriori* defined Homer as their author—it recorded the greatness of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and *a priori* defines every work of theirs as a masterpiece. And the whole sphere of culture converted to this new belief. Our pride for ritually crediting our sources, the battles for priority, our quest for such things as the ‘style’ and ‘early influences’ of the great masters, all that would be rather much ado about nothing to a pre-modern—in music, to a pre-Beethovenian.

Similarly, this explains the exegesis of Dahlhaus’ German style. Influence—with cult to personality in an embryonic stage—had had its model and precedent in the Aristotelian scholastic, which created exegesis as the perfect way to ‘pay,’ the check of influence as currency. *Use* was degraded—Oscar Wilde’s “All art is useless”—, performance was excised from genius, and the contempt for ‘low entertainment’ was agreed upon. Musicology was born as the bank, the repository and distributor of the new kind of wealth. Today, moreover, it is in process of expansion and colonization, we could perhaps say globalization, imposing and projecting features of ‘high’ art to the surviving artisanship of folk and the musical industry of pop.

IN THE ECONOMY OF ‘INFLUENCE,’ AS in any other, all is valid. Nationalism is but one of the common ways to invest for profit. Smetana succeeded in having much, very much more influence than he would probably have gained should he not have decided to become “the creator of a Czech style.” (Dvořák, it seems, won less than he could for having invested in the bank of a newly created, poor nation.) Others invested, with varying degrees of success, in exoticism, modernism, grandiosity, neoclassicism, . . . Yes, we composers have all set goals for ourselves.

“... the goal I have set for myself...”



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