

THE JOSEPHIST ENLIGHTENMENT TRADITION IN
BOHEMIA AND THE POETRY OF KAREL H. MÁCHA

Zdeněk V. David/Christina N. Wall

By imbibing his philosophical and poetical orientation directly from German sources, Karel H. Macha challenged the Austro-Bohemian Realism entrenched in Czech philosophical and literary thought. This direct connection with German Romanticism, which amplified the German Idealist philosophy in Mácha's work, has been underappreciated. Previously, Mácha's Romanticism has been traced to Polish and/or Russian exemplars, ignoring the impact of the German provenance. While Mácha's approach lacks the patriotic pathos of Polish Romanticism and the playfulness of its Russian counterpart, it bears the clear marks of horror, decay, and death of the German genre. Mácha's devotion to Romanticism both harkened back to the mystique of the Counter Reformation and clashed with the sobriety of the Catholic

Enlightenment. In Czech thought, this legacy was reinforced by the Utraquist tradition of the Bohemian Reformation which had been rediscovered during the Josephist phase of the Enlightenment. What caused resentment in Bohemia assured Mácha a favorable reception in areas where German Romanticism and philosophical Idealism blossomed, particularly Germany, Poland and Slovakia, and attests to the presence of two philosophical traditions in east-central Europe. Mácha's work serves as a prism through which to examine these two clashing cultures.