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## LOOKING BEYOND VIENNA 1900: THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE CROATIAN SECESSION

### Abstract

*This paper analyses the political framework of the Croatian Secession as a contribution to research on the relationship between the Secession and patriotism in the fin de siècle Habsburg Monarchy, inaugurated by Carl Schorske. The main proposition is that the specific political and cultural context of fin de siècle Croatia affected the intellectual framing of new, secessionist ideas in such a way that they were necessarily embedded in national(ist) thinking. Therefore, even though they shared common philosophical and stylistic postulates, the Croatian Secession cannot be seen as an imitation of its Viennese counterpart, nor can their mutual relationship be analysed without taking into account the different intellectual, political and cultural contexts. This paper thus advocates the expansion of the spatial perspective of fin de siècle Habsburg studies in which, more often than not, Vienna served as a central and paradigmatic focal point.*

### INTRODUCTION

In his famous book on *fin de siècle* Vienna, Carl Schorske (1915–2015) briefly discussed the relationship between the Vienna Secession and the Austrian government's reform project based on economic and cultural progress. Even though the Viennese secessionists proclaimed a sharp break with the traditional liberal bourgeois culture of their "fathers", which played a dominant role in Austrian society during most of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they soon found themselves under the patronage of the state. The new Austrian government – the *Beamtenministerium* – led by Ernest von Koerber and installed in 1900 after a prolonged parliamentary crisis imposed by mutually combating nationalisms (namely Czech and German), saw in the Secession a new supra-national form of art that could function as a unifying agent in creating a single Austrian cultural identity, a *Kunstvolk*. This was an attempt to circumvent the nationalist political deadlock by advocating economic and cultural reform which could appease the warring factions through mutual self-interest. Therefore, the Austrian government opted to sponsor the secessionist movement generously, as it was seen as being truly cosmopolitan and thus bringing contemporary European currents into the Habsburg Monarchy, reaffirming traditional Habsburg universalism in a modern spirit. In turn, the secessionists openly advocated for a universalist Austrian culture, underscored with noticeable Habsburg loyalism. One of them, Berta Szeps-Zuckerkanl, claimed that her commitment to the movement was "a question of defending

a purely Austrian culture, a form of art that would weld together all the characteristics of our multitude of constituent peoples into a new and proud unity.”<sup>1</sup> Yet things did not go as planned, and the new art project added fuel to the fire of old divisions, while also creating new opponents along the way, such as the antisemitic and antimodernist Christian Socials, led by the mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger. This eventually resulted in the abandonment of the government’s project to use the Vienna Secession as a tool of cultural politics aimed at unifying the Empire’s diverse subjects.<sup>2</sup>

One of the major criticisms directed at Schorske, or rather the research paradigm his book inaugurated, was aimed at the tendency to look at Vienna as being paradigmatic for the Habsburg Monarchy as a whole. Schorske’s critics have shown in more recent studies that the situation might be quite the opposite: Vienna could be seen more as an exception rather than the rule when *fin de siècle* Austria is concerned. For example, Pieter Judson has questioned the claim, based on a Schorskean reading of *fin de siècle* Vienna, that the new political movements, subsumed under the term “illiberal collectivism”, brought about the demise of liberalism in Central Europe, which could not adjust to the circumstances of new, mass politics. A look outside of Vienna, and especially beyond its parliamentary politics, shows us that liberalism successfully interacted with nationalism and that it also participated in mass politics, providing the new movements with fundamental political concepts concerning citizenship and nationhood.<sup>3</sup>

If such was the case with the Austrian half of the Monarchy, then there is more than enough reason to believe that the situation diverged from the Vienna paradigm even more in its Hungarian counterpart. In this paper, I explore the political framework of the Secession in *fin de siècle* Croatia as a small contribution to the research topic inaugurated by Carl Schorske. Can we interpret the Croatian Secession using the analytical tools of the Schorskean paradigm? Was it also a result of a retreat from the political to the cultural on the part of the younger bourgeois generation as a reaction to the advances of nationalism and mass politics? Did it also espouse an explicit or implicit cosmopolitan and antinationalist outlook, combined with Austrian or Habsburg patriotism and loyalism? Or did the different political and cultural context lead the Croatian Secession to adopt a distinct political and ideological framework, perhaps one more in line with Judson’s proposal? The situation is further complicated by the fact that the Croatian and the Vienna Secessions were not discrete but entangled historical phenomena. Therefore, the multiple modalities of intellectual and cultural transfer will have to be discussed as well,

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1 Quoted in Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 237.

2 For the whole argument see *ibid.*, 236–243.

3 Pieter Judson, “Rethinking the Liberal Legacy,” in *Rethinking Vienna 1900*, ed. Steven Beller (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 57–79. For different aspects of the critique of the Schorskean paradigm, see the other contributions in this book.

contributing to the debate on the relationship between the ideas and their uses by various historical actors in changing social, political, and cultural contexts.<sup>4</sup>

## SECESSION IN THE CROSSFIRE OF POLITICS

The political and cultural context of *fin de siècle* Croatia was different than that of Vienna.<sup>5</sup> Croatian art in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was heavily influenced by and shaped through the national movement, which began with the Illyrian movement and was further developed by its successors, so it followed the romanticist-realist stylistic nexus which blended academic aesthetics, bourgeois tastes and nationalist aims. Cultural institutions were dominated by the Croatian bourgeois elite, whose political power did not match its cultural capital.<sup>6</sup> The government, led from 1883 to 1903 by Count Khuen Héderváry, a capable politician close to the Hungarian liberals, but also to the imperial court, pursued a successful combination of implementing economic and political measures aimed at advocating Hungarian interests in Croatia by encroaching on the provisions of the Croatian-Hungarian Compromise, and cultural politics promoting Habsburg loyalism. The idea was to show that the Croatian nation could prosper under Habsburg rule and its current position within the Monarchy. Investments in high culture and educational institutions, such as the School forum or the new building of the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, were used to obscure the repressive policies that were employed against the opposition, the pressure put on the bureaucracy to ensure support for the government, and electoral gerrymandering.<sup>7</sup> So it might seem, at least rhetorically, that Khuen's cultural politics resembled the proclaimed aims of the Koerber administration, which came years later. In reality, though, it was much more politically opportunistic and focused on promoting the material and political interests of certain dependent groups that supported his government. And just like in the case of Koerber, it was met with staunch criticism and even moral panic based on fears of Magyarization and denationalization

4 For a further discussion on this topic see Nikola Tomašegović, "Transnational Approaches and *fin de siècle* Modernisms: The Case of the Croatian Modernist Movement," *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest*, no. 1 (2020): 173–188.

5 I use "*fin de siècle* Croatia" as a historiographical, not as a geographical or administrative term. The Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia was administratively divided between Cisleithania and Transleithania in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so the term "Civil Croatia and Slavonia" is mostly used to designate the territory under the jurisdiction of the Land Government in Zagreb, while Dalmatia was a separate province in Cisleithania. However, it was precisely the cultural sphere that functioned as a unifying force in Croatian nation-building processes. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Zagreb was already established as the national cultural and intellectual centre, so it was a place of convergence of various nationally conscious agents from other regions as well, including Dalmatia, which are mentioned and discussed in this paper (e.g. Vlaho Bukovac). The term "*fin de siècle* Croatia" thus denotes both the political idea of the "virtual Triune Kingdom" present at the time and, primarily, the shared concept of national culture.

6 For a good overview, see Ivo Frangeš, "Realizam" [Realism], in *Povijest hrvatske književnosti, vol. 4: Ilirizam i realizam*, eds. Slavko Goldstein et. al. (Zagreb: Mladost, 1975), 219–488. On the development of the visual arts in 19<sup>th</sup> century Croatia see Grgo Gamulin, *Hrvatsko slikarstvo XIX. stoljeća* [Croatian Painting in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century], 2 vols. (Zagreb, Naprijed: 1995).

7 Iskra Iveljić, "Kulturna politika u Bansknoj Hrvatskoj 19. stoljeća" [Cultural Politics in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Civil Croatia], *Historijski zbornik*, no. 2 (2016): 362–366. Jaroslav Šidak et. al., *Povijest hrvatskog naroda g. 1860–1914*. [History of the Croatian People, 1860–1914] (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1968), 121–125.

spread by the Croatian opposition. Two main parties comprised the core of the Croatian opposition: the Yugoslav oriented Neodvisna narodna stranka (The Independent National Party) and the Croatian exclusivist Stranka prava (The Party of Rights). Bitter enemies before, by the early 1890s they had established an alliance, motivated by the need to stand up to the Khuen regime, which resulted in a common programme of the Croatian opposition in 1894. They were, however, unable to cope with the political pressures applied by the government, and the opposition recorded a series of consecutive electoral defeats, worsened by mutual bickering and fragmentation.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in the Croatian case, it was the “fathers” who found refuge in the confines of culture amidst their political defeat, and this fact was decisive for the formation of the new, modernist and secessionist movements led by the youth.

Appearing in 1897, the Croatian Secession immediately found itself caught in the crossfire between the government and the opposition. Yet, as Croatian art and cultural institutions were led mostly by the oppositional elites, they felt more threatened by the secessionist challenge. And the challenge *was* eventually aimed at them. Although questions of aesthetics cannot be discarded as irrelevant, one of the major impetuses for the emergence of the Croatian Secession was the opposition of the young artists to the almost unquestionable authority of Isidor Kršnjavi, head of the Department of Religion and Education in Khuen’s government and a leading figure of his cultural politics. Although he was forced to leave his post in 1896 as a scapegoat for the student demonstrations during Emperor Franz Josef’s visit to Zagreb in October 1895, Kršnjavi was still one of the most influential figures in Croatian cultural affairs.<sup>9</sup> Founder of the Društvo umjetnosti (The Art Society), he was responsible for gathering in Zagreb the group of young Croatian visual artists, led by Vlaho Bukovac, who formed the core of the Croatian Secession. His rigorous overseeing of their work and lack of artistic freedom led the artists, especially Bukovac, to clash with Kršnjavi, and to establish their own society, the Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika (The Society of Croatian Artists).<sup>10</sup> The secessionists found new allies in the nascent modernists, who were building their own movement at the same time, and, from that moment on, new aesthetic, philosophical and artistic concepts and ideas were developed to provide an intellectual and ideological framework for the Croatian Secession, leading directly to a battle with the representatives of the traditional aesthetic and artistic views, which were preponderant in the ranks of the Croatian opposition. The Croatian Secession thus began with the

8 Rene Lovrenčić, *Geneza politike ‘novog kursa’* [The Genesis of the “New Course” Politics] (Zagreb: Institut za hrvatsku povijest, 1972), 53–101.

9 For an analysis of the Croatian student demonstration of 1895 see Sarah Kent, “State Ritual and Ritual Parody: Croatian Student Protest and the Limits of Loyalty at the End of the Nineteenth Century,” in *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy*, eds. Laurence Cole and Daniel Unowsky (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), 162–177.

10 On Kršnjavi see Marina Bregovac Pisk and Kristian Gotić (eds.), *Iso Kršnjavi – veliki utemeljitelj* [Iso Kršnjavi – the Great Founder] (Zagreb: Hrvatski povijesni muzej, 2012) and Olga Maruševski, *Iso Kršnjavi kao graditelj* [Iso Kršnjavi as a Builder] (Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 2009).

clash with Kršnjavi as a proponent of the government, but it soon found itself fending off attacks launched by intellectuals close to the opposition.

The Croatian government and ruling circles sensed the opportunity in this bickering between the proponents of the new and the old art – the so called *Mladi* (the Young) and *Stari* (the Old). Just like Koerber, they morally and materially supported the secessionist artists, even though their plans were not so elaborate as to promote a new, universalist paradigm of art.<sup>11</sup> Count Khuen's reasoning was more political and pragmatic. His support for the new art was a sort of a win-win situation for his government: if the Secession proved successful, it would be easy to underline the government's support and to proclaim it an achievement of its cultural politics; if not, at least it would cause bickering and distrust within Croatian oppositional circles. On December 15, 1898, the Ban opened the first exhibition of the Croatian Secession – *The Croatian Salon* – in Zagreb, in the new Art Pavilion, which was first built as the exposition space for the Croatian artists at the Hungarian Millennial Exhibition of 1896.<sup>12</sup> Cunningly, he saw an opportunity to incorporate this event into his political narrative. In his opening address, Khuen hailed the young artists for their criticism, noting that it was precisely this criticism that enabled progress, in which Croatia was no longer a passive participant but an active factor – with the current exhibition serving as the main proof of this claim.<sup>13</sup> The subtle message was, of course, that his government supported this progress of national culture, while the opposition actively opposed it.

From the beginning, the Croatian Secession was thus intertwined with national politics and the question of the desired direction of the development of national culture. Unlike Vienna, where the emergence of mass politics had already caused the fragmentation and diversification of party politics, these processes were just starting to pick up their pace in Croatia. So, the secessionists found themselves caught in the crossfire between the two dominant political forces: the government and the opposition. The debate that soon emerged was therefore on the surface about questions of aesthetics and style, but it was underpinned by the crucial concept of national culture, and it sublimated the political conflicts of the time.

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11 For example, among the founding members of the secessionist Society of Croatian Artists were Ivo Mallin, one of the most important officials in Khuen's government and Milutin Kukuljević, the great county prefect of the Bjelovar-Križevci County, politically close to Khuen. "Društvo hrv. umjetnika" [Society of Croatian Artists], *Hrvatski salon*, vols. 1 and 2 (1898): 10, 23.

12 For an interesting analysis of the Croatian participation in this exhibition see Rachel Rossner, "The secessionists are the Croats. They've been given their own pavilion...": Vlaho Bukovac's Battle for Croatian Autonomy at the 1896 Millennial Exhibition in Budapest," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, no. 1 (Spring 2007), accessed November 21, 2021, <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring07/141-qthe-secessionists-are-the-croats-theyve-been-given-their-own-pavilion-q-vlaho-bukovacs-battle-for-croatian-autonomy-at-the-1896-millennial-exhibition-in-budapest>. See also Lea Ukrainčik (ed.), *Hrvatski salon, Zagreb 1898.: 100 godina Umjetničkog paviljona* [The Croatian Salon, Zagreb 1898: 100 Years of the Art Pavilion] (Zagreb: Umjetnički paviljon u Zagrebu, 1999).

13 "Svečano otvorenje umjetničke izložbe i umjetničkog paviljona dne 15. prosinca 1898." [The Opening Ceremony of the Art Exhibition and the Art Pavilion on December 15, 1898], *Hrvatski salon*, vol. 2 (1898): 22.

## SECESSION AND PATRIOTISM

Even before the first secessionist exhibition took place in Zagreb, a harsh debate emerged between the advocates of the new and the old art. Franjo Ksaver Kuhač, a traditionalist musicologist, launched a rabid attack on what he called “artistic secessionism” and “literary decadentism”.<sup>14</sup> For him, this new art was nothing but a foreign, German import aimed at poisoning and destroying the Croatian youth and culture in general:

It is not enough, that Croatia has to fight with various foreign elements in our fatherland, so that it preserves its nationality and its survival, but also in the most recent times some domestic current appeared, which strives to completely corrupt our youth, to rip out from their hearts the sense of morality, religion, patriotism and other noble feelings and characteristics ... This coveting for originality was imported in Croatia by foreign agitators, who aim to hinder Croats in their natural development, to poison their hearts and brains and find *Absatzgebiet* for their products that mock every morality and reason. To be able to accomplish that Croats become slaves of the sins of others, they strove to win over Croatian writers and painters.<sup>15</sup>

The debate was thus framed primarily in national terms from the beginning. The foremost question was whether new, secessionist art was or was not essentially Croatian. For the antimodernists, traditional aesthetics were intertwined with patriotism. The classic bourgeois ideals of beauty and morality were bound up with the idea of the Homeland in an artistic paradigm that demanded sublimated and idealized representations of reality. The aim was to uplift the patriotic spirit and to correct individual moral deviations that could plague the nation. To question these traditional norms thus represented, in the eyes of the national cultural elite, an attack on established patriotic values. The polemic between the opposing philosophical, aesthetic, and artistic ideas was therefore underpinned by a debate on the dominant meaning of the concepts of nation, national culture, and patriotism. It became of utmost importance to show that the new artistic ideas represented a new impetus, and not a hinderance, for the national development.

Ivo Pilar, a young adherent of the new art, responded to Kuhač in a series of articles (later published as a pamphlet) on the Secession, which he takes as a general name denoting all new artistic currents in both literature and the visual arts. Where Kuhač saw danger, Pilar saw opportunity. For him, the new art which had been developing in Croatia was not a concoction of foreign agents aimed at destroying Croatian culture, but an expression of its natural and historical progress. The fact that the Secession appeared so early in Croatia –

14 Franjo Ksaver Kuhač, *Anarkija u hrvatskoj književnosti i umjetnosti: poslanica umjetničkim secesionistima i književnim dekadentima* [The Anarchy in Croatian Literature and Art: An Epistle to the Artistic Secessionists and Literary Decadents] (Zagreb: self-published, 1898).

15 Ibid., 4. All translations are by the author.

basically at the same time as in Vienna – signalled that Croatian culture had finally caught up with Europe. A new phase was thus emerging in Croatian cultural life in which art would not be measured by standards of its or its author's presumed patriotism, but by its artistic value and with world-class criteria in mind. That is why the traditionalists felt threatened. It was not Croatian culture as such, but traditionalists' monopoly in the matters of culture that was in peril:

But nowhere should we be more wary of conservatism as in art... Because behind conservatism always lurks stagnation and regression, and underneath it hides one-third ignorance and spiritual poverty, and two-thirds the interests of those who have until now been *beati possidentes*, i.e. those who no longer have moral or intellectual strength to change and refresh, but desperately cling to the old and defend it by all means necessary, because they feel that with it decays their significance, influence and power.<sup>16</sup>

If Khuen was subtle and vague in his praise for the Secession's role in the advancement of national culture in his opening speech, the organizers of the *Croatian Salon* went out of their way precisely to underscore this point. Ksaver Šandor Gjalski, a writer and one of the key role models for the literary modernist movement in Croatia, penned a letter to the secessionist artists which was published as a preface to the publication accompanying their exhibition. Contrary to the fears expounded by the members of the older generation that the new art posed a threat to the Croatian culture and thus for its national being, Gjalski, "as a nationalist",<sup>17</sup> saw it as something to be happy about, because it placed Croatian art on a par with the art of the most advanced countries of the world. "And with that," he praised the secessionists, "you not only serve art itself, but also assuredly contribute to your homeland, your people and their cultural efforts."<sup>18</sup> In other words, if the Secession fights for the freedom of expression and serves art, then it serves the nation as well, because today only great art can contribute to the progress of national culture.

This was the key argument of one of the main ideologues of Croatian *fin de siècle* modernism, Milivoj Dežman, who wrote the programmatic article for the *Croatian Salon*. It is worth noting that the Croatian Secession worked in close collaboration with the Croatian modernist movement, the Movement of the Young. This movement emerged around the same time as the Secession and was led by student and youth groups in Prague, Vienna and Zagreb. Disillusioned with the state of Croatian politics and culture, these groups turned to new intellectual currents which they observed, especially in Prague and Vienna. They appropriated new, modernist ideas and political methods, modified them, and applied them to the Croatian situation. Their

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16 Ivo Pilar, *Secesija: studija o modernoj umjetnosti* [The Secession: A Study on Modern Art] (Zagreb: Tisak Dioničke tiskare, 1898), 34.

17 Šandor Gjalski, "Uvod" [Preface], *Hrvatski salon*, vol. 1 (1898): 1.

18 Ibid.

critique was primarily directed toward the Croatian oppositional elites in the area of politics and culture. The modernists chastised the opposition for their passivity, for clinging to anachronistic political concepts, such as the historical state right, and for losing sight of the Yugoslav ideas of their predecessors.<sup>19</sup> Just like their Czech role models in the *Česká moderna* manifesto, they called for a rejuvenation of national politics and culture based on the acceptance of modern social and political movements, the idea of strong individuality and the freedom of expression.<sup>20</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the modernists and the secessionists saw in each other natural allies. The secessionist Society of Croatian Artists also included the Klub hrvatskih književnika (the Croatian Writer's Club) which was home to modernist inclined writers and intellectuals. The modernists therefore functioned as ideologues, theoreticians, propagators and polemicists of the Secession, whose high-profile events and publications in turn served as a platform for the popularization of modernist ideas.

In his programmatic article titled *Our Aspirations*, Dežman discarded the accusations of foreign influence made against the modernists and the secessionists as hypocrisy because Croatian culture had constantly observed what was going on abroad and profited from foreign appropriations, from the Illyrian movement onwards. The young modernists and artists respected the achievements of their elders, but tradition must not be used to the detriment of progress. No one can usurp the right to judge others on their patriotism. The secessionists should be given a chance to prove their worth. If the freedom of artistic expression is stifled, if everything new was discarded from the start as unpatriotic and dangerous, then one could only expect stagnation, and Croatian culture would truly be in jeopardy. Freedom is thus the only prerequisite for the advancement of culture; let the secessionists create, and time will tell whether their art contributed to Croatian culture or not: "If we now look for our role models not only in the people, but also outside of the homeland, are we traitors because of that? It is asked whether it is useful or harmful? Did not our ancestors have to at least partially trample on tradition by making a new step? One thing remained the same in all epochs – and that is the love for the homeland – and who can deny us that?"<sup>21</sup>

This principal argument, that the Secession was beneficial to Croatian art and culture, was demonstrated at the international exhibitions. In 1899, the Exhibition of art and arts and crafts of the peoples of Austria-Hungary was held in Saint Petersburg, organized by the Russian imperial society for the

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19 The Young envisioned themselves as being part of a continuous generational tradition of the national movement. The first generation, the "grandfathers", were the Illyrians and their immediate successors, primarily the founders and leaders of Yugoslavism (Franjo Rački, Josip Juraj Strossmayer and others). The second generation were the "fathers", the political elite of their own age, whom they criticized for abandoning the ideals of the "grandfathers". And the third generation, the "children", were of course the Young themselves, set on a mission to restore the true ideals of the "grandfathers".

20 For a broader discussion on this topic see Tomašegović, "Transnational Approaches," 176–183.

21 Ivanov [Milivoj Dežman], "Naše težnje" [Our Aspirations], *Hrvatski salon*, vol. 1 (1898): 8.

advancement of art. The exhibition was divided – just like the Monarchy – into two parts: Austrian and Hungarian. One of the organizers of the Croatian part of the exhibition, a young modernist named Dušan Plavšić, claimed that the general negative reviews of the exhibition stemmed from this basic organizational principle, which caused political concerns to dominate artistic ones.<sup>22</sup> Yet Croatian art, which was exhibited in a separate room under the Hungarian part of the exhibition (mirroring its political sub-dualist arrangement), received critical acclaim and overshadowed its Viennese (*Künstlerhaus*, though, not the Secession) and Hungarian counterparts. In this way, the successes of the new secessionist art in Croatia reinforced the Croatian position within the Monarchy as a distinctive nation and presented it to the world in its own light, notwithstanding the formal dualist construction of the state.

## CONCLUSION

A less Vienna-centric approach when *fin de siècle* studies are concerned offers fresh perspectives on the dissemination of contemporary aesthetic and artistic ideas and intellectual currents. The local context was often fundamental for their specific iterations. To focus solely on the general or the ideal type narrows the perspective in the same manner as it does when one confines oneself inside national boundaries. It is the interaction between the specific and the general that proves central to the understanding of the spread of ideas, and in practice it is carried out by historical actors who appropriate, modify and transfer ideas according to specific contexts and situations.

The case of the Croatian Secession thus reinforces the claim of Schorske's critics that research with a dominant focus on Vienna may in many ways prove to be a hinderance when *fin de siècle* Habsburg studies are concerned. Although artistically and intellectually related, even through direct links, the Viennese and the Croatian Secession functioned in different political and cultural contexts. The predominance of the national in Croatian political and cultural space caused the Secession to be framed primarily in national terms. General, shared secessionist and modernist principles were therefore embedded in national(ist) reasoning: the appropriation of contemporary intellectual and cultural currents meant the modernization and "catching-up" of national culture with European developments; freedom of artistic expression became a prerequisite for the creation of great national art; to be modern meant to present one's national culture to the world in a positive and progressive light, etc. And while the Croatian government and ruling circles tried to use the Secession to their own advantage, this too had more to do with the local political context than with the idea of creating a supra-national, universalist Habsburg art. For the Croatian Secession, therefore, the question was not how to look more Viennese, but how to look more Croatian.

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22 Dušan Plavšić, "Petrogradska izložba" [The Saint Petersburg Exhibition], *Život*, no. 4 (1900): 141–145. See also his response to the critics in Dušan Nikolajev Plavšić, "List na uredništvo" [A Letter to the Editorial Board], *Hrvatska domovina*, December 28, 1899.

