It is a rare pleasure reading a book of essays in which every text contributes insightfully to the success of the whole volume. *Jesuit Art and Czech Lands, 1556–1729* offers a fascinating, wide-ranging, and beautifully researched examination of how the Society of Jesus creatively and flexibly wielded art in its efforts to strengthen the Catholic Church and convert Protestants in Bohemia and Moravia. The essays explore the rich and often contentious historical contexts of these lands’ early modern religious and cultural landscapes.

Michal Šroněk’s lengthy introduction delves smartly into the long history of religious dissent beginning with Jan Hus and the resulting Hussite War (1420–34), the reformed Unity of the Brethren, the legally sanctioned Utraquist Church, and the uprising of the Estates (1618–20). St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague was stripped of its paintings and sculptures on December 21–23, 1619. With the imperial victory at the Battle of White Mountain (1620), the Catholic Church reasserted its confessional domination. The Jesuits and older religious orders were crucial agents in the re-Catholicization. Šroněk writes, the “book explores the artistic strategies the Jesuits used to promote and reintroduce the cults of miraculous images and saints and local Catholic customs” (xix) in these lands. They stressed art’s didactic, meditative, and visual roles in their missionary activities. The introduction concludes with two maps of Jesuit colleges and Marian pilgrimage sites in the Czech lands, followed by a helpful timeline from 1415 to 1781.

In chapter 1 ("The Church that Žižka Destroyed: The First Jesuit Churches in the Czech Lands"), Ondřej Jakubec notes the Jesuits established colleges in seven cities prior to 1600. Typically, they took over older monasteries and churches. In Prague, they moved into the former Dominican monastery of St. Clement by the Charles Bridge in 1556. As later essays make clear, the

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Dominicans never forgave the loss of this monastery. Jakubec describes the Society’s “social animation of architecture” (31) as spaces for engaging the public through art, plays, processions, and other sensory experiences. Where changes to the architecture were possible, the Jesuits stressed functionality and stylistic plurality.

Michal Šroněk’s “Marian Columns from Rome to Central Europe: The Transfer of Symbolic Triumph” in chapter 2 describes how the Virgin Assumpta statue erected by Pope Paul V in front of Santa Maria Maggiore in 1613–14 inspired the prominently placed columns in Munich (1638), Vienna (1647), and Prague (1650). Mary assumes the role of protectress, a political and religious symbol. The Marian column in Prague stands in the Old Town Square before the city hall and the main parish church of Our Lady. The Virgin was credited with Prague’s Old Town successfully resisting the siege by Swedish forces in 1648. Šroněk details the Society’s promotion of the Immaculate Virgin Mary throughout these lands.

In chapter 3, Michal Šroněk and Kateřina Horníčková investigate the Society’s use of devotional print and painting series in their missionary work. Building on precedents such as the richly illustrated books by Jerónimo Nadal and Georg Scherer, Matthias Tanner authored four books from 1675 stressing the Jesuits’ global mission, including the martyrdom of its members. The authors explore the pilgrimage from Prague to Stará Boleslav, the site of St. Wenceslaus’s martyrdom. As it was known, the Sacred Way originally included forty-four chapels administered by the Jesuits along the route. Each was decorated with depictions of St. Wenceslaus, calculated repetitions of Bohemia’s patron saint to demonstrate the lands’ ancient Catholic heritage.

In chapter 4, Kateřina Horníčková discusses the Society’s adoption of medieval Marian images as historical exempla of a lost ideal from the “uncorrupted early church” (128). These served as models for renewing Catholicism. She includes a nice explanation (126–39) of post-Trent attitudes towards religious images. Robert Bellarmine cited the antiquity of these devotional objects to counter Protestant criticisms and iconoclasm. Francisco de Borja championed the Salus Populi Romani, the icon of the Virgin and Child in Santa Maria Maggiore, thought to be painted by or after St. Luke. Copies were sent to Jesuit colleges. Existing medieval paintings and statues of the Virgin and Child, such as the Madonna of Tuřany (c.1300) in Brno, were credited with protective powers.

In chapter 5, Martin Deutsch focuses on the 1573 copy of the Salus Populi Romani that was sent from Rome to Prague and then to Brno. The picture stood in the Jesuit novices’ chapel in the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. It was referred to as a Roman palladium, an ancient object on which
the safety of a town or region depends. He notes this replica was normally not accessible except to the novices; however, it was publicly displayed during the Swedish siege in 1645, the Turkish attacks of 1593, 1599, 1623, and 1683, and whenever plague threatened. Since the Virgin left no bodily relics, images like this served as antique replacements.

Štěpán Vácha addresses the cultic staging of images of Jesuit saints, notably Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier, even before their canonization in 1622. Brno’s Jesuit church already included a picture of Ignatius on an altar in 1606–8. He discusses the early seventeenth-century painting of Ignatius’ Vision of La Storta in the Church of St. Savior in Prague and documented miracles in 1608 and 1612. Johann Michael Reinwaldt’s Death of St. Francis Xavier (1736) in St. Savior also was credited with miracles. As Francis Xavier’s cult grew, twelve thousand prints circulated throughout the region after this painting.

Katrin Sterba’s “From Visible to Invisible: Teaching Catholic Dogma in the Jesuit Church and Corpus Christi Chapel in Olomouc” provides a detailed discussion of the art and decoration of the Church of Mary of the Snow constructed between 1712 and 1716. The Corpus Christi Chapel, erected 1721–24, replaced an earlier chapel that housed five miraculous hosts that supposedly bled when carried into battle. One of the resulting images of the Virgin Mary shows her urging Christ to protect Moravia, which is pictured on a map. In addition to Ignatius and Francis Xavier, the church featured representations of Sts. Aloysius Gonzaga and Stanislaus Kostka. Here and elsewhere, the Jesuits championed their own saints.

Martin Mádl’s “Rivalry and Inspiration: The Jesuits and other Religious Orders in the Czech Lands after 1620” is a perfect conclusion to this volume. After 1627, Catholicism was the only official church in Bohemia and Moravia. The Jesuits were not the only religious order spurring this confessional renewal. The Society’s success inspired other orders to imitate their use of art; however, the Jesuits also had their adversaries, most notably the Dominicans. In the eighteenth century, Prague’s Dominicans were still smarting about losing the St. Clement monastery. While the Jesuits claimed to be the most faithful followers of Christ, the Benedictines pointed to the much earlier global missionary activities of St. Benedict and other early brothers. Johann Georg Etgens’s ceiling painting (1726–27) in the Benedictine church in Rajhrad (Figure 8.6) portrayed three of their saints as the apostles of Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The Cistercian Augustin Sartorius entitled a chapter of his Cisterciens in the Jesuits to argue that the use of Christ’s name and monogram long predates the Jesuits. He metaphorically describes the Cistercians as water and the Jesuits as fire. The Benedict Cross (Figures 8.10 and 8.12) comes to serve as a Benedictine symbol
The Portuguese Jesuit Pedro da Fonseca (1527–99) has been more often cited in historiographical reviews of Second Scholasticism and Jesuit thought than studied in his original sources. The main goal of this work is to offer a study, albeit partial, that is direct and profound, of some relevant questions that reflect Fonseca’s treatment of diverse philosophical issues, both in dialogue with the preceding philosophical tradition and in considering the impact this author had on posterity. To this end, the editors focus on two main lines developed by this author: his pedagogical and civic project rooted in humanism and his contribution to the discourse on metaphysical problems.

Highlighting these two features is appropriate, as they represent the Jesuit character within this specific scholasticism, which, contrary to the position of significant Renaissance humanists such as Erasmus, Arias Montano, or Vives, is not opposed to humanism but is rather a form of Scholastic humanism. In this sense, it is a concrete response to the pedagogical challenge of renewing and socially extending education, to the civic challenge in the integral formation of individuals who assume their responsibility and contribute to public life, and the renewal and reconstruction of knowledge in dialogue with classical authors, particularly Aristotle, but also through openness to the sciences and in-depth knowledge of the sources of Scripture and patristics.

Cristiano Casalini and Mário Carvalho, respectively, in the first section of the book, delve into these aspects. The former conducts a detailed study of Fonseca’s humanist training and his adoption of linguistic rigor in handling much as the IHS monogram does for the Jesuits. Mádl concludes with a nice explanation of Jacob Massen, S.J.’s iconomystical theory and how universal images communicate much more readily than words that must be rendered into the local languages.

I know of no better introduction to Jesuit art and culture in the Czech lands. English-language literature on this subject is sorely lacking. The stimulating discussions of the essays will richly reward the attentive reader.

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