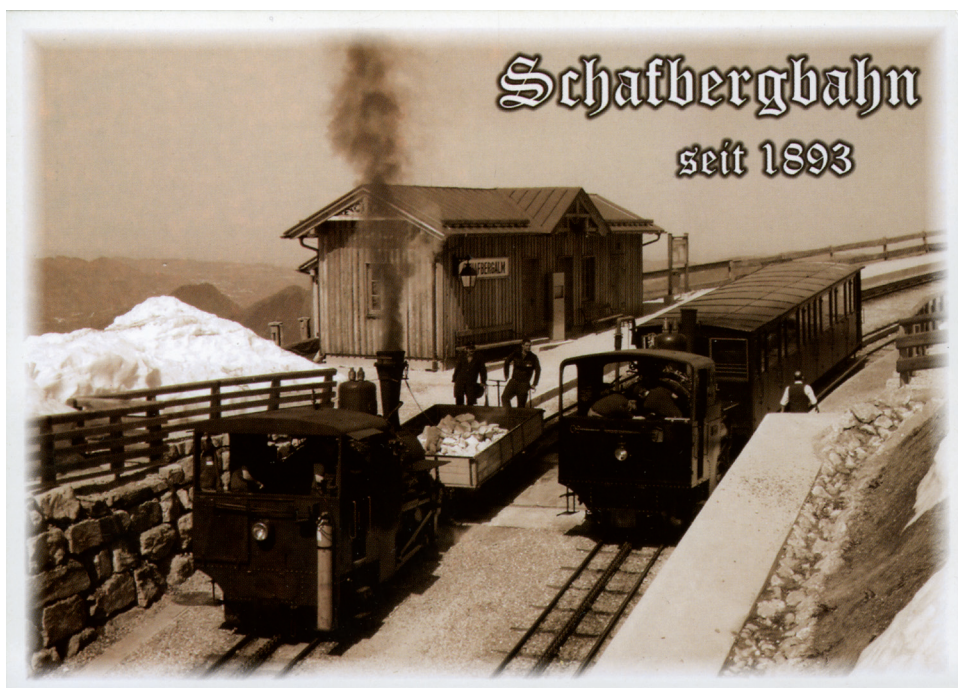


Introduction

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The growth of popular and mass tourism at the turn of the 20th century, associated to a large extent with the spread of new forms of transport, above all railway, contributed to radical changes in the mountain landscape. Postcards sent at the time from well-known resorts in the Alps, the Carpathians and the Sudetes increasingly depicted civilisational developments rapidly transforming the primeval mountain landscape. In many cases they were effective advertisements of modern tourist infrastructure, first of all hostels and all kinds of mountain railways providing those incapable of withstanding the difficulties of treks which demanded excellent physical condition with easy access to attractive tourist sports as well as quick, spectacular ascents of picturesque peaks without any great effort.



1. Old postcard (reprint): Schafberg Railway (Schafbergbahn from 1893)

There is no doubt that owing to the expansion of civilisation infringing on the natural mountain ecosystem and drastically changing the aesthetics of the mountain landscape the late 19th and early 20th century were a critical moment

ending a period of sentimental-romantic fascination with the “terrible charm of the wildness” of nature in the mountains as well as the contemplative, elitist style of experiencing its noble beauty, and beginning a process of making the mountains available as attractive recreational sites to numerous tourists from various social classes, ethnic and national groups, which in some cases was also connected with the development of new attitudes to the mountains and various forms of ideologisation and appropriation of the mountain landscape.



2. Old postcard (reprint): train at the Bad Ischl station with tourists arriving in the resort

This irreversible expansion of civilisation in the mountains, heralding the future degradation of unique landscapes, may have in a way become the reason behind the fascination with the mountains in the literature and art of the period as well as their aesthetic and semantic valorisation in modernist literary and philosophical reflection. Becoming an important source of artistic inspiration at the turn of the century, the mountain landscape was sometimes interpreted as a space of freedom, a cradle of culture and religion. It is worth citing at this point a little known fragment of a sketch by Franciszek Siła-Nowicki, a poet from the Young Poland period, whose work is associated with the beginnings of the Young Poland movement of the Tatras:

“High mountains have always made a moving impression in the human mind. Contact with these immutable works of nature, the sight of the fruits of its titanic work and power, distance from all forms of social life and proximity

to the infinity of space and time leave a mark of some humiliation on the proud Promethean thoughts of humans.

At the same time — strangely enough — they raise the same thoughts to unattainable heights. It is easy to understand here why the oldest philosophy and religion originated in the huge mountains of India, which, like a temple with the icy peaks reaching the boundaries of eternal winter as its columns supporting the vast vaults of the blue space resounded for the first time with the holy Vedic hymns about infinity.

From there came the spring from which flew the great river of the development of philosophy and religion of numerous nations”¹.

The current, 10th volume of ‘Góry – Literatura – Kultura’ [‘Mountains – Literature – Culture’] contains a selection of sketches and treatises largely focusing on cultural, social and artistic phenomena from the turn of the 20th century, phenomena symptomatic of the modern perception and exploration of the mountains and their landscape, particularly the Alps, the Sudetes and the Carpathians, as well as other hills and highlands serving important functions in the local and regional perspective (Kashubia, former eastern regions of Poland). There are also sketches devoted to Stanisław Witkiewicz and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz as artists who were patrons of the Young Poland movement in the Tatras, artists particularly associated with the Tatras and Zakopane, which in 2015 celebrated the Witkiewicz Year.

Wrocław, 22 October 2016
Ewa Grzęda

¹ F. Nowicki, “Wycieczka w Tatry”, *Świat* 1888, no. 24, p. 570.