Antonín Sova

Antonín Sova (1864–1928) left a lasting mark on Czech cultural history as a poet, prose writer, and the first director of the Municipal Library of Prague, a post he held from 1898 to 1920. After graduating from the grammar school in Písek, the young Sova moved to Prague to study law. However, he was soon forced to abandon his studies for financial reasons and return home. It was only his appointment as library director that gained him a stable income. He was actively involved in the work of the literary association *Máj* and the literary section of *Umělecká beseda*. In 1895, he signed the collective manifesto of *Czech Modernism*. Sova's literary output was shaped by the prevailing artistic movements of the time – Realism, Symbolism, and Impressionism. He published twenty-five poetry collections, three novels, and several volumes of short stories, proving himself to be not only an exceptional poet.

A particularly notable work is *Ivo's Novel* (1902), which launched a continuous tradition of lyrical prose in Czech literature. In terms of genre, it may be classified as a romance novel. It can also be considered a *roman à clef* – a specific type of novel in which a seemingly fictional story is told, but beneath the surface, through coded references and allusions, one can discern real-life prototypes and real characters. In this case, they are the painter **Jan Vochoč** and the Bulgarian poet **Ljuba Splítková**, whose father had Czech roots.