

LITERATURY EUROPY WSCHODNIEJ

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FORMAL STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT – ENQUIRY INTO THE CHAPTER, THE TITLE AND THE INTRODUCTION IN JULIUS ZEYER'S PROSE STYLE

This paper surveys three aspects of prosaic works authored by the Czech poet Julius Zeyer, namely, the chapter, the title and the introduction. Our explicit goal is to seek mutual relation between particular forms of horizontal arrangement of the text and its narrative rhythm as deduced from a comprehensive approach to the author's works. The analysis is grounded on presumption that in fiction even the horizontal arrangement of a particular literary work is submitted to the aesthetically communicative function¹. In Czech literary history, the poet, prose writer and dramatist Julius Zeyer (1841–1901) is, together with Jaroslav Vrchlický (1853–1912) and Josef Václav Sládek (1845–1912), traditionally classified as “Lumír affiliated” generation (manifest contributors to “Lumír” periodical). Filling almost five thousand pages, his prose works comprise a massive collection of more than fifty narratives of various genres – from great epics like novels and chronicles, to shorter epic works, which are the largest in number, including (replayed) scenes, stories, short novels, legends, myths, and fairy tales. The genre distribution reveals Zeyer's authorial preference for shorter fiction, i.e. scenes, stories, short novels, and legends, which make up more than 80% of his prose creations. Zeyer's fiction could also be classified according to other formal criteria, e.g. chronologically, embracing his early works written in the 1870s, mid-life narrations of the 1880s, and late prose of the 1890s (e.g. Voborník). The study of motivic structure enables to classify Zeyer's narratives with prevailing Decadent, (neo)Romantic, Gothic, New Art, lithurgic, oriental, occult, and other motives (e.g. Riedlbauchová). Likewise, Zeyer's narrations could be assorted according to themes through setting apart, with regard to the originality, the poet's “replayed scenes” against proses pursuing original themes. Further division could be centred on the proclaimed recipient, distinguishing between texts written for child and adult readers respectively. This study will obviously cover the complete prose works of Julius Zeyer.

¹ M. Čechová, M. Krčmová, E. Minářová, *Současná stylistika*, Praha 2008, p. 304.

The place of chapter in Julius Zeyer's fiction

Large prosaic texts are generally divided into chapters, but in Julius Zeyer, the simple rule of proportion, i.e. a greater extent of the text generates division into chapters, is not applied. Neither is there linear proportionality between the number of pages and the number of chapters, since a largish fictional text is not predictive of a greater number of chapters. The short novel *Jeho svět a její* [His World and Hers] (1874 Lumír) consists of eight chapters and covers 228 pages; the novel *Ondřej Černyšev* (1875 Lumír) includes twelve chapters and 359 pages; whereas the short novel *Xaver* (1876 Lumír), which lacks horizontal plan, has 217 pages. In Zeyer's early creative period, chapters represent a loose succession of detached units, similar in extent. Just like the length of individual chapters in the narratives produced in the poet's early years, which was also strikingly monotonous. If any chapter failed to confirm to the ordinary extent, it was mainly where a chronologically extensive segment of the plot was conveyed by a reflector character. Typical is the minimum application of internal relations between chapter segmentation and space alteration, or major time shifts. Hence in Zeyer's first proses, the chapter segmentation of a text affects the rhythm rather faintly. The same applies to the fiction produced in his middle and final creative periods. Certain flatness of his tectonic endeavours is suggested by frequent headings, horizontally inserted so as to architectonically divide a prose text (most frequently with three asterisks).

In his whole creative output, there are just two prosaic texts, *Román o věrném přátelství Amise a Amila* [The story of true friendship between Amis and Amil] (Lumír 1877) and *Zrada v domě Han* [Betrayal in Hanas' house] (Lumír 1881), and, to some extent, the first part of the novel *Dobrodružství Madrány* [Madrány adventure] (Lumír 1878), which break hitherto regular thematic insularity of the chapters. In *Zrada v domě Han*, the latter of the first two narratives, Zeyer uses the horizontal segmentation of the text to change the perspective of mediating subjects. Following the authorial exposition, the story is narrated by the characters who take turns in succession and whose names mark individual chapters (e.g. Čaokin, Iuenti). In *Román o věrném přátelství Amise a Amila*, the horizontal division of the text into ten fundamental units co-establishes the core formula of the compositional structuring of the narrative. Thus deliberate and regular division of particular heterogeneous thematic units into ten clearly organised sections prevents the impending disintegration of otherwise insufficiently motivated structure of the novel, which in the formation of Zeyer's narrative technique represents an utterly new compositional arrangement of prosaic material, never employed later. All of the ten chapters, except the seventh, are related to the characters and bear the names of fictional characters. The exclusiveness of the crucial seventh chapter (*Bifrost, čarovný pás*) [Bifrost, the magic belt] ensues from its congruence with the thematic plane of narration. It is in this chapter that the storyline structure gets imbalanced (as Thorgerda, with the help of a magic belt, punishes Amis with leprosy, in the Middle Ages considered "God's curse"). The formal arrangement of chapters in this novel (including their names) gives prominence to the storyline structure where the narrative composition is strongly supported by the horizontal arrangement of the text downright from the first chapter, i.e. from balanced narration (*Amis a Amil*) to the last chapter, when narrational balance is restored (*Opět Amis a Amil*) [Amis and Amil again]. Consequently, the narrational outline is not determined by a compositional prescript based on the confron-

tation of two narrative standpoints, as was the case in Zeyer's previous works (the typology of thematic structure². The reader is not any more perplexed by the fantastic and dramatic aspects of the alternate narrative outlook, ingeniously invented by the author in his early fiction through employing the er-form narrator. Starting with this novel, the established compositional principle that is based on temporal rhythm is replaced by local rhythm resting on relations resulting from the changing action and surroundings.

It is for the first time in Julius Zeyer's fiction ever that in *Román o věrném přátelství* non-narrative elements outweigh narrative features and the descriptive style shows an important increase. A descriptive account of concrete qualities, parts, features or segments of objects, phenomena or actions assumes a growing importance. It is here that his narrational progress rises to a peak with the growing proportion of characters' utterances as opposed to the narrator's account. Almost half of the narrated tale is conveyed from the characters' perspective. However, in this novel, a change of the narrational perspective does not beget an alteration of the mediator subject's capacity. In *Román o věrném přátelství Amise a Amila*, Zeyer for the first time introduces a world of passive melancholy recipients, conscious observers of the surrounding fictional world, typical of the subsequent type of narrative (e.g. Amis arrives at an unknown castle to be told Queen Astrida's six-page story. Amil, on the other hand, gives the reader a chance to witness the *Assumption of Virgin Mary* celebration taking place there, or become a spectator of *Rimona*, an inserted twenty seven-page interlude. Jointly they listen to Gaston's story. The protagonist of this procedure, Amis, is mainly the recipient of other characters' stories). This new kind of narrative thus reduces the action role of figures as related to the storyline. In Zeyer, every individual, and now even the narrator himself, conceals a beautiful and recognisable story, worthy of conveying. The new type of Zeyer's narrative is developed from an artful compositional arrangement consisting in the interconnection of two leading thematic units related to the changes in the narrational outline and striving for a distinctly linear storyline, which is interrupted by frequently inserted extrinsic text. It becomes more polythematic as the narrative grows into peculiar epic breadth, changing into a fictional world of a narrative within a narrative.

With the exception of above mentioned *Román o věrném přátelství Amise a Amila* and some other short works of Julius Zeyer, formal arrangement of the text exerts only a minute effect on the rhythm of his prose. The question is whether the extent of his chapters was his choice as an author or whether he was influenced by some exterior factor. A careful comparison of journal and book versions confirms that in this respect Zeyer did not face any exterior imitations. For example, works with fixed compositional structure were often first published in *Lumír* (the "romaneto" *Jeho svět a její* appeared between 16th March, 1874 and 28th May, 1874, ten copies in total; the novel *Ondřej Černyšev* was published between 1st July and 2nd December, 1875, twenty-three copies in total; the novel *Hrabě [Count] Xaver* was published in nine volumes in total from 10th October till 30th December, 1876. By comparison, the novel *Jan Maria Plojhar* was published from 1st January, 1888 to 20th December, 1888. Mutual correspondence between Julius Zeyer and Josef Váckav Sládek, his friend and editor (and the proprietor) of *Lumír*, evidences that the segmentation of Zeyer's prose mostly reflected the actual needs of the editor, who makes an

² M. Schacherl, *K tematické výstavbě raných próz básníka Julia Zeyera*, "Bohemistyka" 2009, no. 2, p. 90–98; M. Schacherl, *Zeyer vypravěč. Výbrané rysy stylu prozaických Julia Zeyera*, České Budějovice 2013.

explicit reference to the way of dividing Zeyer's contributions. In all likelihood, there is no relation between a chapter and a sequence in a periodical copy. Most frequently, one periodical instalment makes up a part of a chapter. Quite frequent is the occurrence of sequences consisting of two chapter segments. In the novel *Ondřej Černyšev*, the beginnings of periodical version and chapter overlap in 17%, while in the novel *Jeho svět a její*, such concordance does not exist. In this respect, the editor did not have to meet any professional obligations just like the author did not attach importance to the chaptering of his texts for periodical publication.

The place of title in Julius Zeyer's prose

In respect of the relation between the title and a particular work, Zeyer's fiction admits insipidity that is similar to that of the relation between textual segmentation and the conceived fictional world in chaptering. The title, for the most part denoting the textual dominant, suggests what viewpoint the reader should adopt when reading the text³. In Zeyer, the title of a prosaic work often points out the protagonist (*Ondřej Černyšev*; *Xaver*; *Darija*; *Sestra Paskalina*; *Stratonika*, *Amparo*; *Jan Maria Plojhar*; etc.), or possibly a pair of characters (*Donato a Sismonda*, *Rustem a Sohrab*, *Gompači a Komurasaki*). Characters appear in the title as well as in the denomination of the central motif (*Duhový pták* [A rainbow bird]; *Jeho svět a její*; *Román o věrném přátelství Amise a Amila*, *Dobrodružství Madrány*, *Feničtin hřích* [Fenicia's sin]; *Tankreadův omyl* [Tankread's mistake]; *Kunálovy oči* [Kunál's eyes]; etc.). The convention of conceiving a protagonist-oriented title, to some extent automatically, is violated through the name's oddity, even within the author's contemporary context. In *Jan Maria Plojhar*, e.g. the second name suggests the character's fictitious noble descent. The choice of a particular name, specifically in this novel, may demonstrate, along with the characterisation of the hero and the unusual acoustic form of his name⁴, also the split between the maculine aspect of the name which means "God is gracious", or "given by God" or "gift of God"⁵ and the feminine element of Maria, "beloved by God"⁶. A dominant position in the titles of Zeyer's fictional prose is occupied by protagonists. At the same time, a character's major status in the title of a particular work is not supported by directing the narrative focus to the protagonist or a pair of characters. The stories to a large extent describe the progress of the narrated events, not the development of the protagonist whose traits remain constant for the greatest part of the narration.

Authorial introductions in Julius Zeyer's prose

The analysis of the textual structure of Zeyer's prose will be completed by an enquiry into the specific type of narrative introduction to his fiction, known as "authorial introduc-

³ J. Hrabák, *Poetika*, Praha 1977, p. 53.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 55.

⁵ J. Bauer, *Velká kniha o jménech*, Praha 2003, p. 358.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 530.

tion". This, jointly with the launching of action, comments or reflection, but except personal dedications and rather technical introductions, make up an integral and indispensable component of a number of his prose works. The profusion of specific introductions in poetry, drama and even fiction in itself evidences how important they were to their author. In Zeyer, these introductory passages of the presented narrations in the form concrete concerted texts always fulfil an aesthetically communicative function⁷.

Considering their formal structure and content, these introductions represent a diverse collection of texts which may not considerably diverge from the context of contemporary post-Romantic and sentimental literature, but shows Zeyer's favoured approach to prose. Among others, it reveals an intensified authorial intention compared to textual intention. The authorial necessity to interfere with the relational field of fictional world is determining enough and points to the specificity of the poet's personal attitude and needs as an inquisitive man to express his opinions about handling prose material as well as general principles of creation. In contemporary surroundings, Julius Zeyer's authorial introductions received fairly considerable, though contradictory attention of Czech literary critics.

As regards the relation that authorial introduction has to the subsequent narration and the position of instrumental subject in it, Zeyer's writings offer three elemental forms of the poet's textual idiosyncracies. One is represented by a concerted text preserving full mediation and autonomy of form and content. An er-form narrator presents a coherent story which is connected to the subsequent narration through various meanings (e.g. *Báje Šošany* [Šošany fable]). A variation of this narrational introduction takes the shape of concerted texts presented by an ich-form narrator involved in the narrated story. Authorial introductions are either formally removed, constituting the first chapter (e.g. *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví* [Bliss in the blooming peach garden]), or blending with the text (e.g. *Vertumnus a Pomona* or *Tankreadův omyl*). In contrast to the extent of Zeyer's prose texts, these introductions are either fairly voluminous, like *Vůně, ze zápisků na cestách* [Fragrance, notes from the travel] (12% of the text); *Vertumnus a Pomona* (14% of the text); *Tankreadův omyl* (8% of the text); *Král Kofétua* [King Kofétua] (7% of the text), or they are short, not larger than one page (*Kristina zázračná, V soumraku bohů*) [Wonderful Kristina, In the twilight of the gods]. Zeyer's concerted texts of the third type are conveyed by an ich-form narrator with illusory mediation being violated and the narrator being assigned to an attentive author (*Dobrodružství Madrány, Lumír* 1878; *Gompači a Komurasaki* 1884). Such subordinate texts are not extensive (in *Dobrodružství Madrány* comprise about 1% and in *Gompači a Komurasaki* about 2% of the text). The resulting typology evidences that Zeyer's concerted authorial introductions undergo certain development. Diachronic comparison of all texts featuring this type of introduction reveals a noticeable shift from the placement and meaning independence in his early prose writings towards its gradual melting into the ensuing narrative in his closing years.

The unifying force in Zeyer's authorial introductions is materialisation of intradiegetic, or heterodiegetic, narrational levels, namely the link between the narrator and the related story. The texts accentuate the position of a mediating subject, specifically the relating subject. The mediation of the er-form authorial narrator is blended with personalised nar-

⁷ More detail in V. Skalická, *Autorské úvody v díle Julia Zeyera*, [in:] *Texty, Sny, Obrazy. Sborník zeyerovských přednášek*, ed. T. Vlček, Písek 1997, s. 42–51.

rators who, thanks to the changing mediating process, have only minimum subjective influence on the narration or interpretation. The changed narrational perspective does not add new qualities to the mediating process, neither is markedly altered the position of the new storyteller. So the introduction of another mediating subject is more motivated by the justified narrative authorisation and the recipient's accentuated involvement.

The authorial introductions thus specify the explicit transpositions of the inquisitive author's notions of reality and the created fictional world. It is where Zeyer frequently offers his alternative perception of the subsequent fictional world. The concerted authorial introductions hence combine the modes that can be traced in all of his prose works and which prevail in most of his narrations. The concerted texts convey the explicit initiation of a subsequent story, enabling the author to express the specified reflection linked with its genesis, personal stylisation, the need to share or defend the poet's creative method and its ideological function. They specify the conditions of a narrative process – such as the narrator (who tells the story), the recipient (who perceives the story) or the determining conditions of the narrative process. In Zeyer, these features often constitute motivation or impulse towards the mediating process alone. The narrational strategy of formally separated authorial introductions above all emphasises the original, individual externalisation that is closely connected to the space and atmosphere created during the mediating process, i.e. to the origin of the story influencing it.

Both quantitative and qualitative aspects of authorial introductions probably refer to the poet's complex personality, which was created in the contemporary conditions accentuating the deepening contradiction between the poet's desires and concrete reality. Julius Zeyer, today perceived as a melancholy neo-Romantic poet, misunderstood in his time, and an aesthete whose uncompromising attitudes must have often brought his works a contradictory or negative reception, to which he responded in his authorial introductions. He was a contemplative humanist, consistent and rejecting compromises both in his personal life and attitudes towards himself and the other people, which made him authentic. His individual stylisation, little comprehensible now, was and still is successful because of its absoluteness and because it constituted a compact unity of personal attitudes, opinions and artistic works. In Czech literature, Zeyer's life and literary creations represent a unique entirety challenging pundits to new interpretations and confrontations over the established canon as created by his contemporaries and passed on by many other generations of recipients.

Conclusion

The analysed features of the textual structure, chapter and title in Julius Zeyer's prosaic works affect the narrational rhythm only faintly and do not assume any distinctive functions. The authorial introductions, along with the poet's private correspondence, provide an important source of information for the study of his personality and individual stylisation. Most frequently, they accentuate the situational moment of the genesis of a conveyed story, or they include polemicising defence of the inquisitive author's creative method.

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A Formal Structure of Text – enquiry into the chapter, the title and the introduction in Julius Zeyer’s prose style

Summary

This paper analyses three aspects (the chapter, the title and the introduction) of prose by Julius Zeyer, a Czech poet. My explicit goal is to seek a relation between the specific forms of the text’s horizontal arrangement and its narrative rhythm as deduced from a comprehensive approach to the author’s works. The analysis relies on a presumption that in fiction, even the horizontal arrangement of a specific literary work is submitted to the function of aesthetic communication.

Keywords: Julius Zeyer, style, chapter, title, introduction

