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## THE SIGN NATURE OF THE LANGUAGE AND STYLE IN THE WORK OF SLOVAK SHORT-STORY WRITER DUŠAN DUŠEK

A characteristic feature of Slovak short story writer Dušan Dušek, who is from the point of view of the reader's intention a "two-housed" author, is his specific symbiosis of both child and adult aspect. Children's world in his stories creates an integral part of adult world not only in its thematic-personal level of the text, but above all in its deep semantic structure and in the way how the thematised life subject matter is viewed and interpreted by the narrator. In fact, Dušek's narrator carries the experiences and impressions piled up during his childhood, preserves the ability to see common things from their miraculous, surprising, and unconventional point of view, which is typical of children. And moreover, adult meditateness, psychologically precise analysis of sensual perception and intellectual stimuli of childhood and adulthood is being attached to it.

Story is not essential for Dušek's prose. It is usually poor, without any dramatic action. On the other hand, it is its atmosphere, detail and sensually concrete perception which are important. The world of his heroes as well as their inner dramas has been put together from all these elements like in a mosaic. Thus, his stories contain a kind of impressionistic colourfulness, sensualistic concreteness, but also grotesqueness and imaginativeness similar to the world of art of Salvator Dali or even Marc Sagall.

Dušek's sensitive work with the language and stylistic sign can be closer seen in his short story *Na konci záhrady* (2), which might be considered to be a master-like "penetrant" analysis of the phenomenon of child's sorrow.

*Even the introductory words of the story (Ked' mala mama sedem rokov, povedala si, že utečie. - When mother was seven, she said that she would run away)* indicate some circumstances: most of all the author's remembrance and tenderness towards the narrated story (represented by the word *mama* (*mother*) which is an untraditional name for a child hero), as well as the presence of the tension - running away from home. The motivation for the tension, namely the reason for the escape, remains a secret until the moment of getting ready for the journey and it becomes an important source of the theme tension in the large, but stative introductory passage which is intended to evoke the atmosphere of a hot August day. Sensually concrete details of visual, luminous type (*úzke lúče vysokého slnka - thin rays of the high sun, prach chvejúci a lesknúci sa v nich ako kúsky striebra - dust that shines like pieces of silver, zltnúce hrušky - pears turning yellow*) evoke the idea of blinding brightness and sweet languor of a hot, sunny summer day. In contrast with it the mental state of the heroine is put, who had been beaten by her parents as she had forgotten to fulfill her duties in her of play. The ground plan of this fragile epic conflict is based on a child's grief depicted with great understanding without any indication of its brushing aside. Dušek managed to work out almost in a diminutive way the ambivalence of the feeling of children's injustice in which self-pity is connected with anger with those who caused it. It is an ambivalence based on an inevitable need for home safety and a feeling of grief evoked by *necessity* to leave it and thus to punish the adults, which is also perceived by the heroine as her personal misfortune making her melancholy and sulks more intensive.

When modelling the heroine's sensual world there is a striking assistance of spacial opposition such as *domov - home* (here, familiar environment) - *svet - the world* (there, unknown and terrifying space). Home is concretized by enjoyable experiences in the heroine's image: secrecies of her loafing, the warmth of the duvet, which is warmed on the stove before going to bed, stroking, sweet spicy smell of the kitchen, honey, bread, butter, sugar and salt, from which she decided to take same for the journey. The world is something that is both horizontally and vertically spacious and extends as far as *the end of the garden, to the distant tops of the trees*, it is something that lies *in an even bigger distance*, it means beyond the borderline of the fence, which separates the known area from the unknown and foreign one, it is something that has to become a means of the child's revenge for the injustice she had experienced. The base of the tension is the opposition *they* (the adults

with their demands and duties) *and me* (the child with its need for freedom and playing). The heroine's rejection of the originators of her grief is manifested by her naming them in her inner monologue impersonally as *they*. The depth and the greatness of her grievance is expressed by the expressive sentence construction with the polysynthetic use of the conjunction *a*: *Zbili ju, a tak musí odísť a nevrátit'sa a už ich nikdy nemôže viac vidieť a ani ju už nikdy neuvidia* (She has been beaten, **and** thus she has to leave, **and** not to come back, **and** she won't see them any more, **and** she will not be seen by them).

A feeling of uncertainty and desolation is emphasized at the moment when the heroine is setting for her journey. At the beginning, there is a different view of the native home: due to her internal disposition it suddenly moves from the position here to the position *there*. She is losing her life certainty, the little girl suddenly realises that it stands *quiet and its bright walls shine as the snow in winter*. From this point on a feeling of getting lost, and smallness enters the heroine's spacial perception. That is expressed not explicitly by describing mental states, but based on her spacial perception. While on the one hand, the author presents the immovability and stability of the house as the security of a nest (1), which is being left, on the other hand, he emphasizes the spaciousness and motion of the area where the heroine is starting off: *high chestnut trees, the shades of the leaves, the garden was long, the wide trunk of the chestnut tree where she could hide, high grass, the endless blue sky*. The base of the sujet tension then becomes the heroine's wandering through this "gigantic" space and getting over "difficulties" on her journey, which is very similar to that of fairy tale heroes. These "difficulties" are of different kind, they appear in the form of the heroine's irresolution - the source of which is her desire to stay at home, in the form of bees that she is afraid of, but she has to pass them on her journey, and in the form of the lure of the raspberries, which she used to eat in the evenings.

The moment of the culminating tension, if there is any in Dušek's works, is the arriving at the borderline (the fence at the back of the garden) and crossing it, *there* - it means to the unknown, foreign world. Uncertainty and doubts are compensated in a typical childish way: by food. She exculpates her lack of determination to continue her wandering by the inevitability: to eat. Her hesitation is reflected also in expressive sentence construction and in the lexis by the indicative use of adverbs and particles such as *first, anyway, still, always*, and also by the use of necessity modal verb *must*: *First, she is going to eat. It is*

*lunchtime, anyway. They've been still, ringing the bell. And there is a long journey ahead. I must eat.*

Detension at the end of the story is as inconspicuous as tension is in the introduction: after a snap on a summer afternoon, only a few steps behind the garden fence the heroine *got up, went back to the garden and noticed the house between the trees... and when she moved again, she didn't even realise that she was walking towards the house.* In the concept of *the house*, in its reliable stableness, the sign meaning of regained security of the nest is being reactualised. The feeling of happiness and freedom, which flows from this understanding, is again expressed in a very delicate way: *She felt as if it had been the longest day in her life, and as if there had never been so much sunshine around, everything seemed to be nearer and more familiar. And thus, she smiled.* The feeling of happiness is shared by spatial signs as well: the stable position of the house, which is waiting for her where she had left it and which seems to be so near again, the feeling of motionless time, the new sign validity of the notion of the sun, which has appeared so far only as the characteristic feature of summer atmosphere. Now everything becomes the symbol of happiness.

All the short stories written by D. Dušek similarly to his prose *Na konci záhrady*, represent a kind of a certain inner experience of the main hero. What is determining in his work are not the story peripetia, but the sensuous world of the main characters. In the poetic character of Dušek's prose, which is usually an artistic of the phenomena of sorrow, disappointment, discovery, and happiness, a firm place is occupied by concrete sensuality, impression and situations. The sujet is usually based on a change in the situation, or on a moody picture of his heroes' experience and the way how they perceive the world. The conflict is shifted to the depth of the text, the tension is subtle and in its essence it does not deny the harmony and joy of life, but on the other hand it denies its unperturbed idyllic character. It points out the fact that even a harmonious life can be filled with contradictions. Dušek's programme of writing about what has surprised him, made happy, disappointed, or taken him by surprise in this world is exactly the artistic treatment of such contradictions.

The style of Dušek's prose in a way compensates the lack of dramatic character and vividness by an antropomorphic sight of the objective world. Thus, it creates a kind of magic reality in which the things, phenomena and living creatures are interwoven on the basis of such dynamic symptoms of reality that are connected with playing in

human experience.

The modelling of the time and space in the author's prose has its specificity as well. The space in its horizontal dimension is usually determined in an intimate way by the familiar environment of home (room, house, yard, garden, street, town, Záhorie-Bratislava). The system of the realia modelling the vertical spacial dimension on the axis of depth-height (chimney, roof, the height of the trees, tree branches) functions as a sign of freedom. It is very often completed by a motive of birds and flying as a sign of a desire for freedom and panoramic view of the world.

In connection with the category of time, modelling of the atmosphere of late summer and early autumn is characteristic for Dušek. It is a period which intensively irritates the senses by its colourfulness, brightness of the sound, and the sweet smell of ripe fruit. It fits into the sensualist-impressive base of Dušek's epic world.

Dušek's short stories evoke a special mixture of happiness and nostalgia which usually appear in childhood memories when one is already an adult. The angle of recollecting elicits such steps that require emphasis on detail and fragment, and as a result, conflicts which could form the basis for an action story are neglected. The world is depicted through its fragrance, tastes, colours, sounds, and touches. He succeeds in expressing the live through "enjoyment" and "pain" with the help of the sign usage of language and stylistic devices.

translated by Rita Rafajlovičová

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## ZNAKOWA NATURA JĘZYKA I STYLU W DZIELE SŁOWACKIEGO NOWELISTY DUŠANA DUŠKA

(Streszczenie)

Prozę słowackiego prozaika Dušana Duška charakteryzuje w tematyce, konstrukcji postaci oraz w głębokich strukturach semantycznych, współistnienie „dziecięcego” i „dorosłego” aspektu narracyjnego, także połączenie analizy intelektualnej z fragmentami doświadczeń i doznaniem zmysłowymi. Podstawą tych opowieści nie jest ani dramatyczna akcja, ani rozbudowana fabuła, ale atmosfera zdarzeń i emocjonalny świat postaci modelowany za sprawą szczegółu i subtelności użycia znaków językowo-stylistycznych.

Niniejszy szkic w tej perspektywie interpretuje nowelę Duška *Na konci záhrady* (*Na końcu sadu*) ze zbioru *Pravdivý príbeh o Pačovci* (*Prawdziwa historia Pačo*). Autorka zwraca tu szczególną uwagę na mistrzowską analizę dziecięcej krzywdy i żalu, jaki jej towarzyszy, zaś we wnioskach zmierza do określenia specyfiki języka i stylu oraz czasoprzestrzeni w twórczości Duška.