

Hrabák, Josef

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# THE RETROGRESSIVE THEORY OF VERSE

JOSEF HRABÁK (Brno)

It is the custom to devote the introductory lecture to the history of the problems with which a conference is to deal, and to the current state of research. It seems to me, however, that in the case of the present conference any such remarks would appear either too formal or too proclamatory. In so far as I digress into the current state of research into Czech verse, or into the history of prosodic research, it will be merely in order to achieve a more vivid approach to the problem I wish to deal with.

A characteristic feature of the historical development of Czech prosodic research is that it proceeds in waves, and also that it is closely bound up with creative poetry itself. Periods in which interest in questions of prosody has been prominent are succeeded by periods of marked decline in interest, while at the same time it is characteristic that the critical moments in the development of Czech prosodic research were always the reflection of significant points of departure in Czech cultural development. Evidently investigators did not take up the study of prosodic problems only for their own sake, but were endeavouring to base their work on literary production, to be of service to the practising writer.

This is characteristic for example of the classic manuscript treatise of J. A. Comenius, *O poezii české* (shortly after 1620), by means of which Comenius endeavoured to support his great cultural programme of synthesizing the learning of the Renaissance. Comenius supposed that the solution for the problem of how to achieve a new flowering of Czech poetry lay in quantitative prosody, corresponding to the Renaissance outlook on poetry.<sup>1</sup> A similar close contact with literary practice and with the real cultural needs of the nation can be found in Dobrovský's treatise on *Böhmische Prosodie*, 1795.<sup>2</sup> Dobrovský endeavoured to encourage the rise of the Enlightenment by the introduction of accentual-syllabic verse. A further attempt to introduce quantitative verse, represented by the work of Fr. Palacký and P. J. Šafařík, *Počátkové českého básnictví, obzvláště prozodie* (1818),<sup>3</sup> reflected the real need, namely the endeavour to create a formally exacting poetry, adequate for the cultural needs of the society of the Enlightenment, with its growing dif-

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<sup>1</sup> This treatise was published along with a thorough analysis by Antonín Škarka, *Slezský sborník* 53, 1955.

<sup>2</sup> The treatise was published as a concluding chapter to F. M. Pelcl's work *Grundsätze der böhmischen Grammatik*. — The last to deal with the prosodic reforms of Dobrovský was Jan Mukařovský, *Česká literatura* 2, 1954.

<sup>3</sup> This small work was most recently printed in 1961 thanks to Rudolf Havel, with an introduction by Mikuláš Bakoš. Among more recent literature cf. Mukařovský's study above quoted, n. 2.

ferentiation. The same is true too of the longest synthetic work on Czech verse yet to appear, the extensive study of J. Král *O české prosodii*. This appeared by instalments in the *Listy filologické* in the years 1893—1896.<sup>4</sup> Král in fact formulated in his work the prosodic principles of the Lumír poets, in which a further significant phase in the development of Czech literature was reflected, and wanted to give these principles a theoretical and historical foundation. Such, finally, was the position of the structuralists in their work on Czech verse, which accompanied theoretically the formal upsurge of the avant-garde of the Twenties and Thirties, even although their work was not limited to contemporary poetry only, but dealt with important problems of a general character, embracing historical problems as well.<sup>5</sup>

I consider that the time is now ripe for a further new development of theoretical work on Czech verse. This is shown already by the growing interest in problems of verse aroused by several comparatively widely-based studies, published recently both in book and periodical form.<sup>6</sup> I consider that this contemporary interest in questions of verse is by no means an end in itself, but that it fulfils an important social role. It occurs, too, simultaneously with an altogether unusual interest in poetry, which in recent years has stimulated for example the founding of the Club of Friends of Poetry and of the Poetry Theatres, and has induced too the composition of theoretical works of a wider popular appeal, leading to a profounder comprehension of the poetic word.<sup>7</sup> There is no doubt that poetry occupies a more important place in the life of today than it did about ten years ago, and this situation demands concentrated theoretical work. Besides, the practice of poetry itself demands theoretical studies. The poet of today requires theoretical knowledge and often he is well aware of this. I do not of course intend to say by this that the ideal would be the learned poet, cut off from life, but the point I am making is that the creative process itself takes place in a different way today, a more conscious way, than was the case at the time of, say, romanticism; theoretical knowledge of poetics is not considered today to be the enemy of poetry either on the side of the poetry reader, or on that of the poets themselves.<sup>8</sup>

The connection of Czech works of prosody with the practice of the poets had however its drawbacks, since theoretical research progressed more or less by fits and starts, and more often had the character of a seasonal campaign than that of consistent work. A convincing example is the prosody of Dobrovský and the publi-

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<sup>4</sup> This treatise, amplified by some of Král's further papers, was published posthumously in two volumes with the title *O prosodii české I*, 1923 (published by Jan Jakubec), II, 1938 (published by Bohumil Ryba). Král himself published only a selection, *Česká prosodie*, 1909.

<sup>5</sup> Roman Jakobson, *Základy českého verše*, 1926; the same, *Verš staročeský*, Čsl. vlastivěda, III, 1934; Jan Mukařovský, *Obecné zásady a vývoj novočeského verše*, *ibid.*, in book form in the collected volume *Kapitoly z české poetiky*, II, 1948.

<sup>6</sup> I quote at random: Miroslav Červenka, *Český volný verš devadesátých let*, 1963; Karel Horálek, *Počátky novočeského verše*, 1956; Josef Hrabák, *Úvod do teorie verše*, 3rd edition, 1964; the same, *Studie o českém verši*, 1959; the same, *Z problémů českého verše*, 1964; Jiří Levý, *Umění překladu*, 1963. — František Daneš is working on questions of verse intonation (*Slovo a slovesnost*, 19, 1958), Jiří Levý studies the application of the theory of information in literary studies, especially with regard to problems of verse (*Česká literatura*, 11, 1963 and 12, 1964, *Slovenská literatura*, 11, 1964), Zdenka Tichá deals with the problems of Old Czech non-scanned verse (*Česká literatura* 10, 1962, *Listy filologické*, 86, 1963 and 87, 1964), etc.

<sup>7</sup> A collective (under the editorship of Jiří Opelík), *Jak číst poezii*, 1963; Josef Hrabák, *Umíte číst poezii?* 1963.

<sup>8</sup> Significant from this aspect is Miroslav Červenka (cf. n. 7).

cation of the *Počátkové* and to some extent too the rise of the Linguistic Circle of Prague. As a result of this irregularity there appeared gaps in the knowledge of the problems of Czech verse, since there was no close sequence between the individual theoretical works. Perhaps one obstacle here was the slight degree of historical profundity of approach. Theoretical studies were not accompanied by the appropriate detailed history of Czech verse. The only exception was Král's treatise on Czech Prosody, in which however the opposite extreme appeared, namely that the historical material thrust itself into the forefront, and thus the field for theoretical consideration was narrowed to an excessive degree. Besides, the material quoted had the character rather of material selected to prove a particular thesis, than that of a really historical survey taking into account the complex character of the whole problem in all its aspects. In the same way the great majority of theories which have so far expounded Czech verse suffer from their a priori or non-historical character, because they incline to be based rather on limited material than on material covering a long period of time.

A further limitation resulting from the prevalent interest in the practice of poetry lies in the fact that this actually limited the interest in general theories of prosody. It was generally some particular problem which was dealt with, some problem which had appeared fundamental for the needs of the time, but there was no conception of approaching the whole question in all its complexity and many-sidedness. The first trend towards progress in this direction was structuralism, but its results were limited by the fact that it often based them on limited material without a sufficient historical background.

In this situation it is no wonder that even today Czech prosody lacks more than anything else works of general theory. To a great extent it is also lacking in fundamental requirements, since no system of concepts for prosodic theory has been worked out and work is often carried on with traditional concepts which have today lost their original content. It is thus no wonder that theoreticians frequently do not understand each other and cannot come to any agreement, because each of them often gives a different meaning to the same term. My purpose is thus in my further considerations to deal with problems of a general character, seen of course through the medium of Czech verse (and, I believe, also Slovak). The basic question must thus be, in what do the fundamentals of verse consist and by what method can we competently analyze them.

There are two ways whereby we can comprehend the fundamentals of verse and classify the various forms of the line: either we can set out from academic verse and leave aside all elements not essential to verse, until we reach a minimum of conditions which distinguish verse from unbound speech (these are then its fundamentals, its basis), or we can set out from the most free verse and ask ourselves, what does it have in addition to what unbound speech has. It is clear that in the first case classification of varieties of verse takes place by subtraction, in the second by addition of elements.

The first way mentioned (this method was used for example by B. Tomashevski (*Stich i jazyk*<sup>9</sup>), is of advantage so far as we set out from the analysis of a developed form, conventionally recognized as verse, and thus in a sense incontestable. The method of "subtraction" has however certain disadvantages. One great dis-

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<sup>9</sup> The collection appeared posthumously in 1959.

advantage is that while we can determine the minimum of elements whereby verse is still distinguishable from prose, we can scarcely control whether or not yet another minimum may be possible. Besides, by the method of subtraction of individual elements we can hardly arrive at all the forms which are "more regular" than those represented by verse containing the minimum of elements distinguishing unbound speech from verse. For we set out, after all, from a single type and — figuratively speaking — we are seeking the way which leads to it, while the various deviations from the main road remain, whether we will or not, outside our field of vision. It is as if from one complex sentence we were to seek, by means of deleting its elements, to erect a complete syntax: it is true that we can reach the simple sentence (though it is doubtful whether we should reach the one-element sentence) and the basic elements of the sentence, but we should not succeed in discovering the wealth of all the existing types of sentence. Besides this — and this is a further disadvantage — we set out in general from the poetry of the past (the verse of Pushkin, of the Lumír poets) and then naturally we can only with difficulty deal with newer types, least of all with contemporary poetry.

If on the other hand we commence with the freest type of verse, the objection may be raised, that "freedom" of verse is a relative matter: for example the Czech verse of the Nineties appears to present-day readers as much more "regular" than the free verse of today. On the other hand, however, by using the method of addition we can better attain to a comprehension of the whole rich complexity of verse forms.

Having shortly indicated the advantages and disadvantages of both possible ways of revealing the fundamentals of verse and of approaching towards a classification of the multiple varieties of verse, I shall now attempt to show which of these must be considered the most advantageous, and give a sketch of the way in which the general theory of verse might best be worked out. Because of the lack of space I can of course indicate only the main line. I mention this not to forestall criticism but for the reason that in the course of detailed working out certain items will obviously differ from what I can now say further in general outline. Thus in my further remarks I shall only be concerned to give a concise exposition of the necessary requirements which could lead to a new theory of verse.

I consider that the most acceptable of the ways indicated is the second. The objection that the "freedom" of verse is of a different degree in the course of historic development is true enough, but we can easily deal with this difficulty. We must undoubtedly count upon this variability as a fact, but it is not an insurmountable obstacle. No theory of verse can deal abstractly with all the theoretically possible forms without becoming an end in itself, but it must confine itself to actually existing forms. We can only start from something which in fact exists and these actually existing forms must be classified and interpreted. From this point of view the latest moment which we can quote is the present, which represents the latest stage of development. If the theory of verse is to contain the entire wealth of facts which were formed in the course of historic development, it cannot ignore the present as the last point of development, by setting out from some earlier phase of development; in this case the theory would be open to doubt, since it would claim to deduce a generalization of the historically changing forms from only part of the historical material. So if we consider the development from the view-point of the stage reached at the present day, then the "freest verse" which has ever existed in the course of historic development cannot escape our

notice. (Since in the case of free verse this is precisely the verse of certain contemporary poets, it is advantageous for us; should however such a situation arise, that the freest type of verse should disappear from contemporary poetry, then we should have to set out from the analysis of the freest type of known verse in the past.)

And now as to the further prerequisites for formulating a scientific theory of verse.

The first prerequisite for constructing a general theory of verse is to realize that it is impossible to create a theory of verse valid for the future. We can it is true decide on the potential possibilities of development and thus foresee along what lines the further development of verse can advance, but we cannot decisively decide whether it will select the one or the other of the latent possibilities contained in the present phase of development. A general theory of developing forms of expression can safely include only what has led to the present stage of development and explain the current stage from the historic point of view. Here we can reach very exact conclusions, all the more so that our conclusions result from the synthesis of knowledge and experience to date; in the course of time however our conclusions must continually be modified — according as the form of verse constantly develops. We must count on this. It need not lead us to the nihilistic opinion that it is useless to formulate theories which do not claim to be valid for all time, or to put it more exactly, which realize their own limitations.

Every theory must be of service to life and so must develop as life itself develops. In the case of the theory of verse the situation is particularly complicated because we must count not only upon the development of the method of acquiring knowledge but also on the fact that the object of our knowledge itself is constantly developing (in distinction, for example, to geology). To adduce free verse as an example is sufficient proof of this. Dobrovský would scarcely have considered the free verse of the Nineties to be a linguistic pattern bound by rules of prosody at all and still less would he have considered the free verse of Holub to be a linguistic expression prosodically organized. Nor need we go even so far back; it suffices only to recall the opinions of some members of the older generation on the free verse of the Nineties or the interpretation of Old Czech unmetrical verse (verse with a varying number of syllables) as rhymed prose. In poetry, in short, we must expect that ever new formations will arise and that we shall always have to take them into account, find their common denominator with older patterns. In other words: we must seek to discover what these newly-developed forms have in common with older forms, what it is that binds them together. And in this we may see the main stumbling-block for a general theory of verse: it is necessary to grasp the object in its fundamentals, and in its development, while not losing sight of its identity in the course of pursuing its development.

This formulation may appear somewhat paradoxical; I shall therefore expound the problem in somewhat greater detail.

If we wish to arrive at the essential features of verse as a specific linguistic system, we must examine it historically and only then from the historical varieties can we abstract their common features. To give a general formulation: every form of expression must be examined in the course of its development, but at the same time with regard to its essence, i. e. to those features which are common to all stages of development. In the study of verse, then, we must examine every verse form under its own specific conditions: for example the trochaic line of the Puch-

majer school poses different problems from those of the trochaic line of the Lumír poets, the free verse of the Nineties poses different problems from those of present-day free verse — but at the same time we must express all the different developmental varieties over a common denominator. We must not lose sight of the fact that — I quote only for the sake of example — alongside the Lumír trochee there exists also the trochee in general, that alongside the free verse of the Nineties there exists also free verse in general. Thus we must constantly combine the study of historically documented forms with generalizations.

In practice we run across considerable difficulties with this. The situation for the investigator in the field of Czech verse is particularly difficult because what we have hitherto is merely slighter or specialized works of a monographic character dealing with the individual forms of verse, and only very occasionally has anyone set out to investigate a specific form over a lengthy period of time. For this reason the research worker is laid open to the danger that one and the same verse type involuntarily disintegrates into individual forms without any inner developmental connection, forms, that is to say, isolated from each other and apparently independent; in this way of course the integrity of the material studied is lost, the object studied loses its identity, disintegrates into several objects of varying character. As an example I quote the problem of the eight-syllable line in Czech literature. If we compare with each other the Old Czech line, the Renaissance line, that of the period after the Battle of the White Mountain and the line of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as mutually isolated forms, it appears to us that we are dealing with a line which is now purely syllabic and now accentual-syllabic. If however we see the Czech eight-syllable line as a whole, which of course has been modified in the course of time, the developmental variants appear in a different light, as variants of the same form, which however cannot be well characterized either as syllabic or as accentual verse.

A danger of the opposite kind also threatens. In the course of abstract generalization based on examination over a short period of time the individual varieties are easily lost, they fade away into the abstract prosodic scheme. If we were for example to characterize the line without a fixed number of syllables only according to the norms of present-day free verse, we should lose sight of the specific character of the Old Czech unmetrical verse, we should not differentiate the two systems from each other.

I see, then, the main problem of method as lying in the question of how to proceed, in order not to lose the identity of the object examined (i. e. so that the general problem of verse should not break up into for example the problem of the romantic iambic line, the Lumír iambic line, and so on), and on the other hand, in order not to lose sight of development, i. e. to find such a formula whereby we should define for example the "iamb in general", "the trochee in general", and so on, in fact so that our definition would include all the historically documented varieties, or a formula which would provide room enough for them within our definition.

I consider that here we must learn from two other disciplines, from history and from linguistics. The combination of the theory of verse with linguistics already has a long and fruitful tradition, but the connection with history has so far been very little worked out.

As far as the combination with linguistics is concerned, there frequently appears in the verse theory of today a tendency for linguistics to reign supreme. In

the whole field of prosody.<sup>10</sup> This tendency conceals the danger that in the investigation of verse the communicated content will be neglected. This danger can be avoided only by ensuring that the prosodological aspects are not separated from the literary-historical aspects. The linguistic aspect cannot however be underestimated in any circumstances. I myself cannot help feeling that Czech literary theory at the present day, so far as it concerns verse, has not yet dealt adequately with the latest results of linguistics. I am thinking especially of the application of the theory of information. Anyhow even the discussion of whether Timofeyev for example overestimates affectiveness in his expounding of the fundamentals of verse, or whether M. Dluska does not overestimate its expressiveness,<sup>11</sup> would obviously take on a different tone if there were a closer cooperation between theoreticians of literature and of linguistics.

In what way should prosody learn from linguistics and in what way should it base itself on them? Above all in the search for those elements of language which are stylized and systematized in verse. These are not only stress and length or number of syllables, as traditional prosody teaches; the reality is more complicated. I think that future theories of verse will not be able to depend on these traditional prosodic factors to the extent that used to be the case, and that they will have to widen their horizon. In order to quote at least one example: some contemporary verse does not base itself so much on the repetition of traditional prosodic means, as on the repetition of thematic units. Thematic repetition is then primary, the formal identity of lines and groups of lines ("stanzas") are the passive result of thematic repetition. In traditional poems in stanza form the repetition of the same rhythmical pattern (stanza) frequently implied a repetition of thematic wholes, the stanza pattern appeared as primary, placed above the thematic structure; in the cases I have in mind the opposite is true. As an example I quote Miroslav Holub's poem "The Teacher":<sup>12</sup>

The world goes round,  
says the schoolboy.  
Not at all, the world goes round,  
says the teacher.

The hills turn green,  
says the schoolboy.  
Not at all, the hills turn green,  
says the teacher.

Two and two make four,  
says the schoolboy.  
Two and two make four,  
amends the teacher.

For the teacher knows best.

Země se točí,  
říká žáček.  
Nikoli, země se točí,  
říká učitel.

Hory se zelenají,  
říká žáček.  
Nikoli, hory se zelenají,  
říká učitel.

Dvakrát dvě jsou čtyři,  
říká žáček.  
Dvakrát dvě jsou čtyři,  
opravuje ho učitel.

Protože učitel to ví líp.

The poem quoted appears to suggest the conclusion that the system of repetitions which arouse the impression of versified statement, need not always have an acoustic character but may be based on a specific organization of thematic structure.

As far as the combination with history is concerned, I think it is necessary, if

<sup>10</sup> For this cf. Josef Hrabák, *Z problémů českého verše*, 1964, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Miroslav Červenka, *Český volný verš devadesátých let*, 1963, p. 66, Česká literatura, 9, 1961, p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> *Jdi a otevři dveře*, 1961, p. 30.



only for the fact that the cognition of the fundamentals of every object which is undergoing development must be historical and must take into consideration the whole known and cognizable development of that object. With this purpose the theory of verse must base itself on the recognition (already applied in literary history) that the meaning of the past can be apprehended only through the medium of the present. This means that for the comprehension of development we must set out from our knowledge of the latest stage of development and from it we must endeavour to understand earlier stages. In the case of the theory of verse this means that it must be built up *retrogressively*, i. e. that it must set out from the contemporary developmental stage of verse and from that angle must examine both the development of verse and its general features and fundamentals. I have mentioned above that the common features of "verse in general" cannot be studied without the history of verse forms.

In practical application this of course means that as new verse forms appear, the theory of verse may have to be modified. But this is not a feature of prosodic theory only. The same approach is required wherever we are tracing the development of a living organism and wish to expose its basic nature. What we require of a retrogressive study of verse is to a certain extent the reverse of the older view, according to which newer phenomena are regularly explained according to earlier, subsequent phenomena according to preceding, and this indication of cause and effect is seen as the complete interpretation of development. Naturally I have no intention of denying the interpretation of development as a chain of cause and effect, however I should like to make this interpretation more profound by asking the question, what has been the significance of the development? And this can be revealed only when we ask something more than merely what was the cause of certain phenomena; we must at the same time enquire, what were the consequences of the phenomena examined. Then we shall be able to assess the phenomena historically, i. e. to decide which elements led to an advance, which of them were a preparation for the future and which on the other hand led no further. I am thus not affirming some idealistic teleology: I am not interested in an idealistically conceived goal of development, but in the consequences of the individual phenomena for future development. It is then a question of tracing out the threads which lead from the past to the present, from the earliest times to the latest known stage of development, i. e. up to the present day. From this attitude of course it follows that the fundamental feature of every phenomenon whose development continues up to the present day must be abstracted precisely from the position of the present-day stage of development, or at least that this contemporary stage of development must not be relegated to a footnote.

It is precisely by the process of analysing the general features from the perspective of the present stage that the identity of the object examined is preserved through all the transformations it has undergone in the course of its development. Such a viewpoint, then, as was reached for example by J. Král,<sup>13</sup> is impossible. Král built up his general theory of Czech verse basically on the verse of the Lumír poets, i. e. on a poetry which had already been outdistanced by development and for this reason Král was obliged to take his stand against verse which disturbed the norms of the Lumír verse, although it was precisely therein that the elements developed by the further generations of poets were to be found.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. n. 4.

And now a few concrete remarks as to how I consider the retrogressive study of verse should be carried out.

It seems to me that the fundamental feature of verse as opposed to "unbound speech" lies in the specific division of the linguistic utterance (in the particular method of segmentation). I suggest that varieties of verse might be classified according to the manner of segmentation; sometimes smaller units appear than the line, and we arrive even at feet, sometimes alongside the line there exist larger units, for example in Old Czech literature the couplet, elsewhere stanzas. We must then always have in mind that while the line is a kind of "natural" unit, the basic one, it is not however the only unit, there may exist both smaller and larger units. From this point of view the analogy of the sentence, the phrase and the paragraph suggest themselves; the line would then normally appear as a stylization of the sentence and the numerous varieties of line would correspond to the types and forms of sentences. A specific characteristic of line structure would — to carry on the analogy — then be above all the fact that the individual possible constructions could be reduced to norms and the normalizing process could deal even with smaller or larger units than the sentence (division of lines into syntagms — the combination of lines into stanzas).

The variety of forms of line which we encounter in the course of history at first appears to be quite haphazard, however, after considering thoroughly the analogy of line structure with sentence structure and by making use of the lessons of linguistics we can understand not only the multiplicity of forms of line, but also their inner coherence. It is a phenomenon similar to that of the number of sentence forms, which is practically unlimited. In studying the line in connection with the study of sentence structure, prosody should find considerable help in mathematical and statistical linguistics, because it would be useful to ascertain the comparative frequency of sentence types in the standard literary language in relation to line forms; it is possible that here a convergence may emerge, but a divergence is equally possible. (The differentiation of verse forms may be the result of increase in the number of sentence forms, but in the standard literary language the opposite may well be the case.) This type of investigation might even enable us to show how the mutual relationship between prose and verse develops in the course of history.

By taking the study of sentence forms as the initial point of the study of the line we should have to take into consideration too the structure of meaning of the line. Hence would follow the direct road to the investigation of what the relationships of the line and types of line have been to the various literary genres and eventually to the communicated content in general.

The fundamental approach for the classification of lines would then be the method of segmentation of the utterance. At the same time it is possible to carry out classification not only according to the size of the normalized units (half-line, foot, couplet, stanza, etc., — free verse, foot verse and so on) but also according to further elements which assist its structure. These are for example the following: a regular number of syllables (length of line — syllabic verse), regular grouping or a regular number of metrical stresses (accentual verse), normalized length of syllables (quantitative verse). Thus we arrive at the traditional concepts of syllabic, accentual and quantitative verse. There would be no sense in eliminating these traditionally accepted concepts. When a certain form has developed historically and is felt to be a specific formation, we must deal with it in this sense. It

would be wrong to ignore the subjective factor in cultural development. A certain form is objectivized as a specific quality precisely because certain objectively existing morphological elements are subjectively felt.<sup>14</sup> It must however be emphasized that even although we arrive at traditional forms (syllabic verse, etc.) we transfer their interpretation to a different sphere: I consider the number of syllables, the regularized distribution of stress and quantity not as the proper basis of the line, but only as elements supporting its segmentation. They are it is true in a special way organized, but from the view-point of the fundamentals of the line, which I see in its segmentation, they are secondary elements.

From what I have said it follows that it will be of value to carry out within the traditional hierarchy of rhythm-forming elements a certain reorganization and that those elements which traditionally are considered to be the very basis of the line will have to be relegated to a place of secondary importance. In connection with the change of approach to the manner of segmentation it will be necessary to examine the line to a greater extent from the standpoint of meaning than has been done hitherto. The final result of this will also entail a closer connection between theory of verse and literary history.

*Translated by Jessie Kocmanová*

## RÉTROGRÁDNÍ TEORIE VERŠE

Autor odpovídá na některé metodologické otázky zásadní povahy. Protože své vývody ilustruje českým veršem, podává napřed stručnou charakteristiku dosavadní české versologické práce. Konstatuje, že pro převážnou většinu českého versologického studia je charakteristická těsná souvislost s básnickou praxí, což má však za důsledek určitou nárazovost, ba přímo kampaňovitost při práci. Z tohoto postoje vyplývají trojí důsledky: 1. Mezi jednotlivými pracemi není těsná návaznost, takže vznikají mezery v poznání českého verše. 2. Versologické zkoumání není vždy dosti historicky podloženo (a pokud jde o velkou práci J. Krále, vadí zase apriornost). 3. Reší se úzce vymezená problematika a jen zřídka problematika obecné povahy. Za nejzávažnější rys české versologické práce pokládá autor malý zřetel k obecné metodologické problematice. Právě k těmto otázkám zaměřuje svůj referát. Klade si v něm dvě těsně související otázky: pokouší se zjisfit, jakou metodou je možno dobrat se podstaty verše (ve srovnání s řečí „nevázanou“), a uvažuje o tom, jak klasifikovat jednotlivé veršové různotvarů.

K odhalení podstaty verše vedou dvě cesty: buď vyjdeme z maximálně vázaného akademického verše a odmyslíme si všechny složky pro verš nepodstatné, až dojdeme k minimu podmínek, jimiž se liší verš od řeči „nevázané“ (a jsou tedy jeho základem), nebo vyjdeme naopak z verše nejvolnějšího a ptáme se, co má navíc proti „nevázané“ řeči. Lze tedy postupovat buď metodou subtrakce nebo metodou adice rytmotvorných prvků. Autor se domnívá, že je schůdnější cesta druhá, která také lépe umožňuje klasifikovat veškeré bohatství veršových různotvarů.

Dále se zabývá autor předpoklady pro vybudování obecné teorie verše. Prvním předpokladem je názor, že nelze vybudovat teorii verše beze zbytku platnou dopředu; dovedeme totiž určit potenciální vývojové možnosti verše, a tím předvídat, kudy by mohl jít jeho další vývoj, nedovedeme však určit, zda si vývoj vybere tu nebo onu z možností latentně obsažených v dnešním vývojovém stadiu. Zobecnující teorie vyvíjející se formy může tedy bezpečně zachytit jen to, co vedlo k dnešnímu vývojovému stadiu, a dnešní vývojové stadium historicky vyložit.

Hlavní kámen úrazu dosavadní české teorie verše je v tom, že se jí nedařilo zobecnit podstatu verše jako stále se vyvíjejícího objektu, stále hrozí nebezpečí, že se verš rozdrobí při studiu na spoustu navzájem nesouvisejících různotvarů. Autor soudí, že lze tomuto nebezpečí nejlépe čelit, opře-li se teorie verše jednak o lingvistiku, jednak o historii.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Josef Hrabák, *Úvahy o problematice žánrového povědomí v současné české próze*, Česká literatura, 11, 1963.

Hlavní pomoc lingvistiky spočívá ve vyhledání jazykových prvků, které jsou ve verši stylizovány a systematizovány. Zdá se, že nebude možno přistí teorii verše zakládat na tradičních prozodických činitelích v oné míře, jak tomu bylo dosud.

Pokud jde o sepětí versologie s historií, autor je pokládá za nutné už proto, že poznání každého objektu, který se vyvíjí, musí být historické a musí brát v úvahu celý známý a poznatelný vývoj tohoto objektu. Proto si musí versolog osvojit metodologii historického bádání. Teorie verše se bude muset v první řadě opřít o poznání, že smysl minulosti lze poznat pouze médiem přítomnosti, tj. že pro pochopení minulosti musíme vycházet ze znalosti posledního vývojového stadia a z něho se musíme snažit o výklad a pochopení stadií předcházejících. Pro teorii verše to znamená, že musí být budována *retrográdně*, tj. musí vycházet z dnešního vývojového stadia verše a pod jeho zorným úhlem musí zkoumat stejné vývoj verše, jako abstrahovat jeho obecné rysy (rysy společné všem vývojovým stadiím, rysy spojující v celek všechny historicky vzniklé různoty).

Při praktické aplikaci retrográdního studia verše musíme ovšem počítat s tím, že bude třeba obecnou teorii verše stále modifikovat podle toho, jak se budou vynořovat nové versové formy. Ale to není jen zvlátností nauky o verši — stejný postup je nezbytný všude tam, kde se sleduje problematika stále se vyvíjejícího organismu a kde chceme pochopit jeho podstatu.

Požadavek retrográdního studia verše je do jisté míry obrácením staršího stanoviska, podle něhož se vykládá mladší jev z pravidla z jevu staršího, jev následující z jevu předcházejícího. Dlouho býval viděn právě v tomto postižení příčin a následků úplný výklad vývoje. Autor ovšem nechce popírat výklad vývoje jako řetězce příčin a následků, avšak chce jeho výklad prohloubit tím, že klade otázku, jaký byl smysl vývoje; a ten odhalíme pouze tehdy, neptáme-li se pouze na to, jaké byly příčiny jevů — musíme se současně ptát, jaké byly jejich důsledky. Teprve pak můžeme jevy historicky hodnotit, tj. určit, které prvky vedly dále, které připravovaly budoucí stav. Nejde tedy o hlásání nějaké idealistické teleologie, nýbrž o vysledování nitek, které vedou od minulosti k dnešku. Z tohoto postoje ovšem vyplývá, že se podstatné rysy každého objektu, jehož vývoj sahá až po dnešek, musí abstrahovat z platformy dnešního vývojového stadia, resp. že se nesmí toto dnešní vývojové stadium dát do závorek.

Závěrem autor podává několik konkrétních poznámek o tom, jak si představuje retrográdní studium verše.

Podstatu verše (v protikladu k „nevázané“ řeči) vidí ve specifickém členění jazykového projevu, tedy v segmentaci. Normovaný počet slabik (sylabická stránka verše), normování přízvuků (tónická stránka verše) nebo normování kvantit (časomíra) není tedy nejvladnější podstatou verše, nýbrž jde o další prvky podtrhující segmentaci. Přitom autor upozorňuje na analogická hlediska takto pojaté teorie se syntaktickým studiem.

Z uvedených výkladů vyplývá, že bude účelné provést v tradiční hierarchii rytmotvorných prvků určitě přeskupení a že ony prvky, které se tradičně pokládají za vlastní bázi verše, bude třeba posunout co do jejich důležitosti až na druhé místo. V souvislosti s přesunutím zřetele ke způsobu členění bude třeba zkoumat verš více z hlediska významového, než se dalo dosud. To bude ve svých důsledcích znamenat těsnější spojení nauky o verši s literární historií.

## РЕТРОГРАДНАЯ ТЕОРИЯ СТИХА

Автор отвечает в своей статье на некоторые методологические вопросы основного характера. Автор иллюстрирует свои выводы на материале чешского стиха, он прежде всего дает краткую характеристику чешской стиховедческой работы. Автор констатирует, что для большей части чешского стиховедческого изучения характерна тесная связь с поэтической практикой, следствием чего однако является известная „штурмовщина“, работа рыбками. С этой точки зрения можно сделать три вывода: 1. Между отдельными работами отсутствует тесный контакт, так что возникают пробелы в изучении чешского стиха. 2. Стиховедческое исследование не всегда в достаточной мере исторически обосновано (что касается большого труда И. Краля, его минусом является априорность). 3. Решается узко ограниченная проблематика и только изредка проблематика общего характера. Наиболее важной чертой чешской стиховедческой работы автор статьи считает то обстоятельство, что до сих пор обращали мало внимания на общую методологическую проблематику. Реферат ставит своей целью разрешение именно этих вопросов. Автор реферата останавливается на двух вопросах, находящихся в тесной связи между собой: он пытается установить, каким методом можно постигнуть сущность стиха (по сравнению с прозой) и обсуждает то, как классифицировать отдельные стиховые формы.

К раскрытию сущности стиха ведут два пути: либо можно исходить из „максимально стихотворного“ академического стиха и мысленно отрешиться от всех элементов несущественных для стиха, так что можно прийти к минимуму условий, отличающих стих от прозы (и являющихся, следовательно, его основой), либо наоборот можно основываться на наиболее свободном стихе и можно задать вопрос, в чем заключается его отличие от прозы. В таком случае возможно пользоваться или методом субтракции или же методом адидии ритмообразующих элементов. Автор предполагает, что меньше препятствий будет на втором пути, который также предоставляет большие возможности для классификации всего разнообразия стиховых форм.

Далее автор уделяет внимание предпосылкам построения общей теории стиха. Первым предварительным условием здесь является взгляд, что нельзя построить теорию стиха, которая предусмотрела бы развитие стиха в будущем; то есть мы сможем определить потенциальные эволюционные возможности стиха, что нам позволит предвидеть, в каком направлении могло бы пойти его дальнейшее развитие, однако мы не сумеем определить, выберет ли себе процесс развития ту или другую из возможностей, скрытых в современной эволюционной стадии. Следовательно, обобщающая теория развивающейся формы может точно уловить только то, что вело к современной стадии эволюции, и может эту современную стадию исторически объяснить.

Главный недостаток существующей до сих пор чешской теории стиха заключается в том, что ей не удалось обобщить сущность стиха, как непрерывно развивающегося объекта, т. е. что не удалось сохранить при изучении эволюции стиха идентичность объекта: постоянно угрожает опасность, что при анализе стих раздробится на множество различных форм, не находящихся во взаимной связи. Автор полагает, что с этой опасностью лучше всего бороться, если теория стиха будет опираться с одной стороны на лингвистику и с другой стороны на историю.

Главная помощь лингвистики состоит в поисках языковых элементов, которые в стихе стилизованы и систематизированы. По всей вероятности будущую теорию стиха нельзя будет основывать на традиционных просодических факторах в той мере, как это бывало до сих пор.

Поскольку дело касается сочетания стиховедения с историей, автор считает его необходимым уже по той причине, что изучение каждого объекта, находящегося в эволюции, должно быть историческим и должно принимать во внимание все известное и доступное изучению развития этого объекта. Вот почему исследователь в области стиховедения должен усвоить методологию исторического научного изучения. Теория стиха должна быть прежде всего опираться на понимание того, что смысл прошлого нельзя познавать посредством настоящего, т. е., что для понимания прошлого мы должны исходить из знания последней эволюционной стадии и, опираясь на нее, мы должны стремиться истолковать и понять предшествующие стадии. Для теории стиха это значит, что она должна строиться ретроградно, т. е. что она должна исходить из современной эволюционной стадии стиха и с ее точки зрения должна не только исследовать развитие стиха, но и абстрагировать его общие черты (черты, совместные всем эволюционным стадиям, черты, соединяющие в одно целое все исторически возникшие различные формы).

Разумеется, при практическом применении ретроградного изучения стиха мы должны считать, с тем, что надо будет постепенно модифицировать общую теорию стиха в зависимости от появления новых стиховых форм. Но это составляет не только особенность науки о стихе; тот же метод необходим всюду, где прослеживается проблемам беспрепятственно развивающегося организма и где мы желаем понять его сущность.

Требование ретроградного изучения стиха является в известной степени оборотной стороной прежней точки зрения, согласно которой позднейшие явления обычно объясняют на основании более ранних явлений, явление же последующее — в зависимости от явления предыдущего. Именно в этом постижении причин и следствий долго видели полное объяснение процесса эволюции. Автор, разумеется, не хотел бы отрицать объяснения этого процесса, как цепи причин и последствий, однако он хотел бы углубить его объяснение, выдвигая вопрос, в чем заключается смысл развития; его мы сможем обнаружить только тогда, если мы не будем задавать вопроса, в чем заключались причины явлений — мы должны в то же время спрашивать, каковы были их последствия. Только в таком случае возможно произвести историческую оценку явлений, т. е. определить, какие элементы способствовали продвижению вперед и какие из них подготавливали будущие явления. Речь идет не о какой-нибудь идеалистической телеологии а об анализе путей, ведущих от прошлого к настоящему. Из этого положения, конечно вытекает то, что существенные черты каждого объекта, развитие которого соприкасается с настоящим, должны быть абстрагированы

с точки зрения современной эволюционной стадии, или же что нельзя эту современную стадию развития заключить в скобки.

В заключение автор приводит несколько конкретных замечаний, как он представляет себе ретроградное изучение стиха.

Сущность стиха (в противовес прозе) автор видит в специфическом расчленении языкового высказывания, т. е. в сегментации. Нормированное количество слогов (силлабическая сторона стиха), нормировка ударения (тоническая сторона стиха), или нормировка количества (метрический размер) не являются таким образом характернейшей чертой стиха; следовательно здесь речь идет о дальнейших элементах, подчеркивающих сегментацию. При этом автор обращает внимание на аналогичные точки зрения понимаемой таким образом теории стиха с его синтаксическим изучением.

Из приведенных объяснений вытекает, что будет целесообразно провести в традиционной иерархии ритмообразующих элементов известную перегруппировку, и что эти элементы, которые по традиции считаются собственно базисом стиха, надо будет продвинуть, в зависимости от важности занимаемого ими места, на другую позицию. В связи с изменением взгляда на метод членения надо будет более подробно исследовать стих с точки зрения его значения, чем это делалось до сих пор. Это будет означать в результате более тесную связь науки о стихе с историей литературы.

*Перевела Вера Новотная*

