Otakar Theer and the beginnings of Czech accentual verse

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OTAKAR THEER AND THE BEGINNINGS OF CZECH ACCENTUAL VERSE

I

Theoreticians of poetics have frequently sought the reason for the wealth of the verse system used within a specific literature. This had led to the illusion that a rich and fully developed literature must have many systems of verse and many different forms, and it is from this angle that specialists have regarded verse. For example, in 1935 the Polish authority of poetics, F. Siedlecki, wrote that the phonological method, by its thesis „o równozgłoskowym fundamencie wersyfikacji polskiej implikuje jej krańcowe ubóstwo", and concludes that this is in contradiction to the facts, since Polish versification is on the contrary very rich, perhaps the richest of all systems of versification.[1]) I believe that such a position is factually incorrect, even if it is comprehensible as an attitude of defence (in reaction against tendentious theories whose purpose is to denigrate certain literatures). To evaluate versification according to its richness is as if to assess the „perfection" of a language according to the number of its grammatical forms. The richness of a language depends rather upon its capacity for expression, which is no way bound up with the number of its grammatical forms, but with the extent of its vocabulary and its stylistic capacity. With regard to the theory of verse it is more useful to associate morphology with an examination of the semantic value of verse; so far as the description of verse forms is concerned, it is preferable to seek the common denominator of all the known verse varieties rather then split the picture of the verse system into a number of categories, which may be nothing more than a mere logical fabrication:

As far as Czech verse is concerned, I have already explained elsewhere that it would be possible to seek the common basis of all the varieties in the segmentation of the linguistic expression[2]) and to consider the various so-called systems

[1]) Franciszek Siedlecki: *Z dziejów naszego wiersza,* Skamander, IX (1935), p. 422.

[2]) *[The Retrogressive Theory of Verse]* (Teorie verše I, Brno 1966, 9—21), p. 17: "It seems to me that 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 lines 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

as the various means by which segmentation is carried out. Here, however, the important theoretical question arises of where to seek and how to designate the borderline between the different types of verse and systems of verse. I consider that only objectively and statistically ascertainable data do not suffice; we shall have to take into account the standpoint of the audience. The point is that we must ascertain which of the observed elements was in actual fact felt, which of them were in truth relevant. This strikes us for example when we are fixing the borderline between purely syllabic verse and accentual-syllabic verse. Here we must decide where the regulation of the word stress was a purely stylistic fact and where it took on the character of a metrical norm; the mere quantity of elements here is not sufficient. The existence of certain forms does not indicate that they were indeed felt as a special metrical quality and not merely as a stylistic variant. For example, K. Horálek ascertained that the accentual-syllabic line existed in Czech literature even before the debut of the Puchmajer school.[3]) It is, however, another question whether in fact it was felt to be a special quality. Since Dobrovský does not write about it and, further, V. Stach ignores it in his polemics with Dobrovský, I conclude that its specific quality was not felt, even though poems did objectively exist whose verse can be fitted into the frame of the norm valid for accentual-syllabic verse.[4])

The example quoted is at the same time an example of the fact that a single form can be interpreted in different ways, even if there is only one objective description of it (othervise it would not be objective). Is it possible, however, to deduce from this that the theory of verse can find itself on the uncertain ground of presumption? I do not think this is the case. We do have some support, namely in the evidence of contemporaries. The concept of literary background is also important, a concept introduced into literary theory by the school of Russian formalism. The point is that every form is perceived against the background of other forms existing in the consciousness, forms whereby it is measured. If, for example, there exists in the consciousness a purely syllabic system of versification, then even accentual-syllabic verse acquires against this background the features of a syllabic verse; in other words, the syllabic aspect is in the foreground, and a greater or lesser regularity in the distribution of word stresses is taken for a stylistic feature within the bounds of syllabic verse. (For this reason, for example, some types of Polish 'syllabic' verse are from the accentual point of view perceived by the Czech reader as accentual-syllabic.) Conversely, against the background of accentual-syllabic verse we are apt to perceive a composition written in purely syllabic verse as accentual-syllabic verse with a certain number of stress irregularities.

For these reasons, we must always take into account the context in evaluating verse forms. The literary background is, of course, a subjective matter, but we must reckon with all the subjects who form the general literary consciousness. What is decisive for the interpretation of the verse of a particular period must

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suggest themselves; the line would then normally appear as a stylisation 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)."

[3]) *Počátky novočeského verše* (Praha, 1956) (Acta Universitatis Carolinae, Philologica), 47.

[4]) *Z problémů českého verše* (Praha, 1964), 67—80.

then be the way in which the public of the time accepted this verse. We must approach verse from the viewpoint of the audience, after we have given its objective description. This approach is crucial especially where a new form is in the process of acceptance. Typical in modern literatures are the efforts of theoreticians to lend support to new forms, i.e., to affect their subjective conscious acceptance. This postulate is important both for Czech accentual-syllabic verse and purely accentual verse.

II

Accentual verse has a standard number of metrical stresses, but the number of unstressed syllables between the individual metrical stresses is variable. On the other hand syllabic verse has a standard number of syllables in the line, while the stress aspect is irrelevant (with the exception of the close of the lines and, in longer lines, the close of the half-line as well). In its extreme, exclusive form, the accentual line is defined as a line with a fixed number of syllables in the line (the 'purely accentual' line). This is the definition of this verse which is given for Czech literature by myself,[5]) by F. Siedlecki[6]) and M. Dłuska[7]) for Polish literature, and by L. I. Timofejev for Russian.[8]) According to this definition pure accentual verse is the antithesis of pure syllabic verse not only from the aspect of the regulation of metrical stresses, but also from the aspect of the number of syllables in the line, in as much as the number of syllables in the line is always changing, or is irrelevant in pure accentual verse. The opinion of K. Horálek is somewhat different, and he writes of the changing number of unstressed syllables in the whole line;[9]) it follows from this that he does not consider the changing length of the line (or the irrelevance of the number of syllables) to be a relevant feature of accentual verse. He later worked out this opinion more explicitly and I shall return to it.

In Czech literature the first documents of purely accentual verse are found in the *Ohlas písní ruských* by F. L. Čelakovský, published in 1829. In this collection various verse types are represented, especially the syllabic line, and another type of line usually characterized as a line with a changeable number of syllables and a fixed number of metrical stresses.[10]) This line with the irregular number of syllables is sometimes interpreted so that the number of metrical stresses is not preserved with absolute consistency, but is felt as a very strong tendency, capable of awaking a metrical impulse.[11]) As an example I give a fragment of the concluding poem, „Ilja Volžanín", namely lines 189—200;

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[5]) *Úvod do teorie verše,* 3rd ed. (Praha 1964), 96.

[6]) *O nowych badaniach nad budową wiersza,* Język polski, XXV (1945), 53—60 and 69—78, p. 38.

[7]) *Próba teorii wiersza polskiego* (Warszawa, 1962), 234; *System wersyfikacyjny,* in: Wiersz. Podstawowe kategorie opisu I (Wrocław—Warszawa—Kraków, 1963), 41—72, p. 52.

[8]) *Základy teorie literatury* (Praha, 1965), 300.

[9]) *Počátky novočeského verše,* 19.

[10]) Karel Horálek: *Počátky novočeského verše,* 19; Karel Horálek: *Zarys dziejów czeskiego wiersza* (Wrocław, 1957), 48; Jan Mukařovský: *Kapitoly z české poetiky,* II (Praha, 1948), 62.

[11]) *Počátky novočeského verše,* 19.

the number of syllables varies from 10 to 12, and there are regularly four metrical stresses:

Jede on Ilja po širém poli,
i zachtělo se mládenci stranou dáti,
rodnou matičku v domě navštíviti,
poklonu bohaté vdově učiniti,
Marfě Andrejevně mnohorozumné.
Ach, jaké změny na svaté Rusi,
jakéž to bídy po rodném kraji!
Kde město stálo, kde dům matičky,
kámen od kamene, sutiny pusté,
a sutiny trním, hložím zarostlé;
kde ulicemi skákal Iljuška,
hadina se plazí po tmavém býlí.

The source of this line is usually seen in the Russian models, but attention has also been drawn to the connection with the verse of the *Rukopis královédvorský* and *Rukopis zelenohorský* and with the stressed hexameter, which was at that time cultivated in Czech literature.[12]) The points of contact are really very obvious here, and this also appeared in the manner in which this verse was received in the Czech milieu.

Ohlas písní ruských appeared at a time when the literary background of Czech literature was a very complex one with regard to verse form. This background was formed by poems composed according to the strictly regular accentual-syllabic prosody of J. Dobrovský, and by the poems of the *Rukopis královédvorský* and *Rukopis zelenohorský,* where in places the line with an irregular number of syllables was used, and by quantitative poems, and finally by stressed imitations of the hexameter. In this situation it necessarily followed that the demand for a firm number of syllables in the line (the syllabic principle) was decreased, and so was the demand for a regular succession of stressed and unstressed syllables in the line. For this reason too it appears that the verse of the *Ohlas písní ruských* with its irregular number of syllables was felt to be a kind of 'free' verse in the manner of the verse in some of the compositions of *Rukopis královédvorský* and *Rukopis zelenohorský.* Similarly some of the contemporary writers imitated the supposedly Sanscrit quantitative meter; others composed lines with an irregular alternation of feet, as the stressed imitations of the hexameter. It was in short assigned to the already existing verse forms, and apperently without difficulty. The changeable number of unstressed syllables between the metrical stresses was probably not felt as being completely without a standard regulation, but as a special example of division into feet. In other words, the segmentation of the line was considered to be one of the possible types of division into feet.

This is shown not only by the reactions of contemporaries, but also by the later interpretations. It is a striking fact that we have no contemporary theoretical explanation which would point to the accentual quality (or to any other specific character) of this verse. As far as the later classical metrics are concerned, it is interesting that not even the spokesmen of this theory considered it to be accentual verse, as we may see from the remarks made on this verse

[12]) K. Horálek: *Verš Čelakovského překladů a ohlasů ruských písní, Časopis ČSI,* I, (1956), 365—402, p. 375.

by J. Král in his work on Czech prosody.[13]) Finally, it is significant that this type of verse did not continue to be cultivated. The Czech consciousness of verse regarded it as something exceptional and it had no possibility of gaining a footing without theoretical support. It remained an attempt without any further results, because in the literary context of the time its accentual elements did not appear as a really new metrical quality.

The verse of Erben's *Záhořovo lože* is an indirect indication of this. The last version calls to mind verse structure with an irregular number of syllables, such as Čelakovský introduced into Czech literature in the *Ohlas písní ruských,* but it would seem that in its own day no direct relationships were sensed here. In any case I am not aware that they were discovered by older theorists. Horálek recently interpreted this verse anew as accentual.[14])

The verse of some other poems of Erben's Kytice (1853) raises a special problem. Erben has always been a difficult problem for the theory of verse and comparatively much has been written about his verse in Czech literary theory. Recently K. Horálek opened up the question of his verse once more, pointing out that in Erben we find lines with a fixed number of syllables (i.e., syllabic verse), in which the number of stresses is regulated, but not their position. In this way, for example, Horálek interprets the eight-syllable line as a line of three stresses, and all the other lines of the first part of the poem „Štědrý den" as four-stress; cf., the beginning of the composition:

Tma jako v hrobě, mráz v okna duje,
v světnici teplo u kamen;
v krbu se svítí, stará podřimuje,
děvčata předou měkký len.

„Toč se a vrť, můj kolovrátku!
ejhle, adventu již na krátku,
a blízko, blizoučko štědrý den!"

Mílotě děvčeti přísti, mílo
za smutných zimních večerů;
neb nebude darmo její dílo,
tu pevnou chová důvěru.

Horálek suggests for this line the term 'tono-syllabic line'[15]) and he polemicized at length on this question with J. Levý.[16]) Horálek here is particularly concerned

[13]) Josef Král: *O prosodii české,* I, ed. Jan Jakubec (Praha, 1923); passim (see index).
[14]) *Slabičný verš v slovanské lidové poezii,* Slavia, XXXII (1963), 54—69, p. 64.
[15]) *Ibid.,* 63 (On the verse of the poem "Štědrý den") and 55 (general statements).
[16]) Jiří Levý: *Verš české lidové poezie a jejích ohlasů,* Slavia, XXXI (1962), 242—256; Karel Horálek: *Slabičný verš v slovanské lidové poezii,* Slavia, XXXII (1963), 54—69; Levý: *Ještě jednou k verši české lidové poezie a jejích ohlasů,* Česká literatura, XIII (1965); Horálek: *Verš české folklorizující poezie,* Naše řeč, XLVIII (1965), 291—302; Levý: *Ještě jednou k verši Erbenovy Kytice,* Slovo a slovesnost, XXVII (1966), 53—56; Horálek: *Doslov k odpovědi Levého,* Slovo a slovesnost, XXVII (1966), 53—56. — Here all the previous important treatments of this problem are quoted. Of special relevance among them is *Poznámky k dílu Erbenovu II. — O verši* by Roman Jakobson, Slovo a slovesnost, I (1935), 218—229, where the author examines the accentual interpretation of Erben's verse, advocated by Antonín Grund in his book *Karel Jaromír Erben* (Praha, 1935).

about a rather different conception of the accentual principle of verse than that of which we have spoken above. We must pause at this question.

From the purely theoretical point of view is of course the possibility of a combination of the strict syllabic principle (only the number of syllables in the line is regulated) with the strict accentual principle (only the number of metrical stresses is regulated), in such a form that the number of stresses would be standardized (but not their position), while at the same time the number of syllables in the line. It is, however, uncertain, how such a type of line would be felt — whether as a variant of syllabic verse, or as a variant of accentual verse (with many deviations) — or as a special formation. Hitherto Erben's verse was for the most part been explained within the framework of the accentual-syllabic or syllabic principles.[17]) Horálek supports a different, specific solution. And it is just here that the possibility arises of two or even more interpretations of one and the same verse text.

How should we approach the question in this case and which possibility should we prefer? And is it at all possible to reach an objective explanation and not allow oneself to be deceived on the one hand by subjectivism and on the other by statistical data which neglect the perceiving subject? I believe that it is possible. If we consider a certain phenomenon of language and describe and explain it linguistically (and Erben's verse is such a phenomenon), the related literary-historical problems are still not thereby solved. From the literary-historical aspect we must take into account how this fact was perceived and evaluated in its own time, i.e., in what form (or perhaps rather 'in what interpretation') it entered the consciousness and how it made itself felt in further development.[18]) For this purpose it is of course necessary to follow its genesis, too. The best starting point here is the reconstruction of the literary background and the examination of the opinions of contemporary theoreticians and critics. So far this method has been commonly used in the field of stylistics; e.g., the expression 'the sun rises' is from the linguistic point of view a metaphor, but we cannot attribute to it the stylistic value of a metaphor, because this metaphor is so far accepted into the vocabulary that we do not perceive it as a metaphor. I think it would be useful to take an analogous view of the audience in the investigation of verse, as well.

The literary background in this case is beyond all doubt. Erben's verse with its fixed number of syllables was perceived as the point of intersection of two contexts: on the one hand against the background of the 'literary' verse written according to the prosody of Dobrovský, and on the other against the background of the verse of folk song (deviations from 'literary' verse were at the same time motivated by the authority of folk song). Was, however, the verse of folk song then felt to be a special metrical system? The opinions of the theoreticians of the time do not give much support to this. So far as Erben's verse is concerned, it is surprising that — just as with Čelakovský's *Ohlas písní ruských* — contemporaries and immediate successors made no attempt to explain Erben's verse theoretically as a special new quality, or as an application of

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[17]) Cf. the papers quoted in 5—8.

[18]) This is an analogue and a special case of what in literary theory is known as 'realization of a literary work'. Cf. on this problem Felix Vodička: *Literárněhistorické studium literárních děl,* Slovo a slovesnost, VII (1941), 112—132.

a special metrical principle. The attitude of J. Král to Erben's verse[19]) is analogous to his attitude to the verse of Čelakovský: Král conceives Erben's verse to be a kind of accentual-syllabic verse.

On the other hand the position of Erben's verse in development of Czech verse is a characteristic one. Here the key significance is held by the verse of the „May" poets, who through the mouth of Neruda ranged themselves with their program on the side of Erben.[20]) What, however, did the May poets select from Erben's verse and what did they develop further? J. Mukařovský gives an answer to this in tracing the development of the dactylo-trochee in the May poets:[21]) clearly, what the May poets based their work on was not an accentual principle. In the same way the line of development can be traced backwards from Erben's verse, namely to the verse of Mácha;[22]) here it can be seen that Erben himself works with a line which is fundamentally accentual-syllabic. The features of his verse — taken genetically — spring organically from an older stage. I consider that Erben was not subjectively concerned to create a revolution which would have produced a new quality; neither did his verse objectively achieve any revolution in development of verse.

Here too I could repeat what I have already indicated with regard to the verse of Čelakovský's *Ohlas písní ruských:* a new verse form must in modern literature have theoretical support if it is to be perceived and further developed as an innovation. (It is analogous to the situation with regard to literary trends. A new literary trend can only originate when its creators and their public understand it to be a trend; isolated works bearing the characteristic features of a certain trend do not alone create such a trend.) We can find examples in perhaps every modern literature. This was the case, for example, in Czech literature when the quantitative line was being introduced at the time of humanism and during the National Renascence (the publication of the *Počátkové českého básnictví*),[23]) or in the course of acceptance of the accentual-syllabic principle of Dobrovský and the demand for acceptance of the free verse of the Generation of 1914, to whom Theer also adhered;[24]) in French literature it suffices to mention as an example the role of the theorists in the acceptance of free verse in the period of symbolism,[25]) etc. Since such theoretical works were lacking both for the verse of Čelakovský and for that of Erben in their

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[19]) *O prosodii české,* I, passim.

[20]) Jan Neruda: *Hřbitovní kvítí* (Praha, 1858); in the last critical edition (*Spisy Jana Nerudy,* I: *Básně I,* Praha 1951), 41.

[21]) *Kapitoly z české poetiky,* II (Praha, 1948), 68—70.

[22]) *Ibid.,* 63—68.

[23]) *Počátkové českého básnictví, obzvláště prozódie* (Bratislava—Praha, 1818); the last critical edition was published in Bratislava, 1961, with a preface by Mikuláš Bakoš.

[24]) Dobrovský stated his views in a synthetic manner in "Böhmische Prosodie", published as a postscript to the book *Grundsätze der böhmischen Grammatik* by Josef Pelcl. For the latest information see *Dějiny české literatury,* II (Praha, 1960), 70—72. — Among the manifestoes of the generation of 1914 see Otakar Fischer: *O volném verši,* Národní listy, LIII (1913), No. 104, 1 (17th April 1913); Stanislav K. Neumann: *Volný verš a nová poesie,* Scena, I/II (1913—1914), 125—130; Karel Čapek: *Ibid.,* 212—215.

[25]) Cf. Gustave Kahn: *Premiers poèmes, avec une préface sur le vers libre* (Paris, 1897); the same: *Le vers libre* (Paris, 1912). — For more detailed bibliographical references see Hector Talvart et Joseph Place: *Bibliographie des auteurs de langue française* (1801—1949), X (Paris, 1950). Also cf. Remy de Gourmont: *Esthétique de la langue française* (*Le vers libre,* 251—269) (Paris, 1905).

own time, it seems that no accentual principle was felt in them as a special quality, and their verse was fitted into the framework of the existing verse forms of the time. The frontier between accentual prosody and other verse structures does not then run through their poetic works — even although they wrote works in which some theorists see elements that in a different literary context would appear as elements of accentual verse.

III

The first attempt at introducing into Czech literature pure accentual verse as a program is bound up with Otakar Theer's drama *Faëthon,* which was first performed in Prague in 1917. Theer was inclined towards French culture and influenced by the practice of the French symbolists, and tried to achieve a new poetics. He expressed this both in his poetry[26]) and in a theoretical work.[27]) In the above-mentioned drama he created a 'free verse' based on the accentual principle. The hero of the play speaks in lines which have five metrical stresses, but at the same time a free number of syllables in the line. Thus the number of non-stressed syllables between the syllables carrying the metrical stress is inconstant, as is the length of the line. As an example I quote a passage from Act One:

Faëthon: Černý Epafos, rohaté Ioje syn —
trojhlavý kéž shltne jej pes! — dávno,
že lžu, říká, božský mi upírá původ.
„Já," říká, „Diův jsem syn. Jen v paví chvost popatř!
Ta oka z Arga jsou Titana. Pln všecek byl očí
po celém těle, když za strážce žárlivá Héra
matce mé jej určila. Neb Ioju sličnou
v krávu tehdy začarovali, a krutý střeček ji štval
ze země do země. Přilét pak Hermés, posel Diův,
a Okáče uspal a zabil... Až zemřeš, Faëthonte,
jen královský bude ti nápis. Mně však: byl z boha,
bohů otce byl syn..." Již i mé bratry,
šestero bratrů mých získal. „Co se pyšníš?" praví,
„stejní jsou nám rodiče, Meropos vládce,
Klymené ctná; ze stejného jsme lože..." Tatíčku!
Ustrň se nade mnou! Vyslyš mne! Učiň, ať vědí!
Před tváří všech mne vyznej!
Hélios: Tak budiž![28])

If this line was to be unterstood as a special metrical form, it required theoretical support; otherwise the public would not have realized its specific character. It is characteristic that it was dramatic verse in question, that is, verse intended for speaking aloud, and on whose delivery the author had a direct influence. Besides, the basis of the line 'on the ictus principle' was explained in the daily

[26]) The poem „Má poetika" in the volume *Všemu na vzdory* (Praha, 1916). — In the critical edition (*Dílo Otakara Theera, I, Básnické spisy,* Praha, 1930), 121—124.

[27]) *Věstník České akademie,* 1916, 399. In the review which he himself wrote of his book *Všemu na vzdory* (to which a prize from the M. Havelka foundation was awarded), O. Theer stated among other things: "Learn to look at life with your own eyes; if you are a poet, you ought to devise a verse pattern which will bring order into your chaos."

[28]) *Dílo O. Theera,* I (cf. note 26), 155—156.

press,[29]) and the verse aroused the critical and polemical reaction of the leading worker in the field of metrics, J. Král.[30])

This verse uses not only word stress, but also sentence emphasis. For this reason complete words are sometimes neutralized in it with regard to stress (in the quoted passage cf. for example the line 'v krávu tehdy začarovali, a krutý střeček ji štval'). It is in this that the greatest 'freedom' lies, because it permits several interpretations and thus gives particular possibilities for artistic rendering. This was precisely the point which Král most disliked, for he could not find in the linguistic material any indubitable signals of the stresses. Král quotes as an example three lines and adds a commentary. Since this is a very significant point, I print it in its entirely:

Nor with other lines of the poem do I know how to scan them in order to achieve only five stresses; e.g., in the lines:

> Pohledem posilň mne! Nechť moudré otcovské síly
> znamení dej úsměvu, ať vše vůkol jasem zazáří!
> Ani ty, takto když před tebou stojím, neznáš mne, nesmrtelná?

Here indeed it would be necessary for the poet to mark in some way those syllables in his poem which he considers important and stressed, so that they could be read and listened to according to his intentions. For both reader and listener will register in these and in other lines a greater number of stresses. The real rhythm is, however, capable of being perceived without such aids. If they are required, it is incontrovertible evidence that rhythm is achieved not by some objective means of division, but by a completely subjective one, which can be used by anybody according to his wish and mood. O. Fischer too already objected to this practice of O. Theer in his article „Divadelní studie" (*Osvěta*, 1917, no. 6, 358), in which he gives an opinion on the whole favourable to the poet's verse and speaks of the 'captivating' power of its rhythm, saying, with complete truth (p. 359): „With more than one line it requires a certain goodwill before I can count just these five stresses." He also rightly complains that Theer's lines, if written consecutively like prose, can hardly be distinguished as lines, making in fact the same complaint as I have above.[31])

Král completes his arguments thus:

A series of dissimilar sections, dissimilarly divided, will never give the impression of a rhythmic series. We need not then wonder that at least some reviewers after the first performance of this lyric poem about Phaëthon felt that the poet's verses were heard by them at times as unbound speech!

In the time of cubism, futurism, and other -isms it is understandable that poets too would like to gain fame by the discovery of some new rhythm. But this is a labour of Sisyphus. No new rhythm can be found, since rhythm is something which was, is and always and everywhere will be the same. Therefore it is also difficult to find some new, really rhythmical line. He who seeks to do so will never find anything but a-rhythmicality; even should he adorn it with the false name 'free rhythm'.[32])

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[29]) *Venkov*, 23rd March 1917, No. 3. — The essential part of it reprinted in: Josef Král, *O prosodii české*, I, 690.

[30]) *Nový rhythmus, Listy filologické*, XLIV (1917), 342–348. — Reprinted in: *O prosodii české*, I, 688–695.

[31]) *O prosodii české*, I, 694.

[32]) *Ibid.*, p. 695.

It is clear from the quotation that Král took his stand consistently on the side of accentual-syllabic verse, which he considered to be the only correct and possible one for Czech literature. I have no intention of analyzing his opinions here; I am merely intending to demonstrate that it was precisely because of its theoretical accompaniment that Theer's verse was felt to have a special quality which could not be forced into the framework of accentual-syllabic verse with various licences and 'faults' — and even the older metrics had to accept the challenge.

In what do I see the significant features by which the structure of Theer's verse differs from the structure of Čelakovský's verse with its changing number of syllables, or from the type of verse of Erben above quoted? It is mainly in two things: in the form of the segments of the line and in the variability as far as the position of the metrical stress is concerned (and in connection with this, in the simultaneous variability as far as the limit of the segments is concerned).

As regards the form of the segments of the line, characteristic here is the fact that there are more possibilities than in the older types of verse in which we find traces of the accentual principle. Certainly it was bound up with the literary background too: in the time of Theer there already existed a fair amount of free verse which had rejected division into feet, while in the time of Čelakovský the greatest part of the literary background was formed by verse divided into feet. And so, whereas in the so-called accentual verse of Čelakovský or Erben segments appear which were usually capable of being fitted into the framework of the traditional feet, so that these lines could find a place in the traditional versification (it was usually a case of dactyls and trochees), in the verse of Theer the picture is more varied. Segments appear both one-syllable, und also comparatively long. For example in the line

sestra tvá, Eiréné, brzo vyšle[33])

the word 'tvá' is an independent segment (i.e., a one-syllable 'foot'): when it is realized acoustically there are two stressed beats (two metrical stresses) next to each other, which are not divided by any unstressed syllable. Similar lines of course can be found in Čelakovský, but there it is rather a case of a variant in the number of metrical stresses than any peculiarity in the manner of stressing. For example the second to the last line of the above-quoted passage from „Ilja Volžanín"

kde ulicemi skákal Iljuška

could be explained according to Theer's poetics by saying that one metrical stress falls on the word 'kde' and the second on the word 'skákal'. But, as has already been said, in the accentual line of Čelakovský the number of metrical stresses is purely a metrical tendency, so that this line was probably read as a three-beat one (the word 'kde' being unstressed). In Theer on the other hand the number of stresses is the only signal of metre (and we must not forget this was dramatic verse, where the entirity of the line could not be expressed graphically) and therefore metrical stress had sometimes to be placed where in normal

[33]) Act I. — *Dílo O. Theera* (cf. note 26), 153.

pronunciation it would be suppressed (in the phrase 'sestra tvá', the word 'tvá' is stressed).

Long segments often have variable limits, just as the position of the metrical stress is variable. As an example I quote the line:

Před tváří všech jsem trpěl, před tváří všech ať jsem pomstěn[34])

Here the second half-line can be interpreted either as: 'před tváří všech | ať jsem pomstěn' or 'před tváří všech ať jsem | pomstěn' (with special emphasis on 'pomstěn'). The dual interpretation is possible because the line is not perceived on the basis of division into feet.

The variability of the limits between the segments is — to speak generally — caused primarily by the variability of the position of metrical stress. The same line often permits more than one interpretation, and considerable freedom exists. Thus it may even happen that the same group of words is interpreted in one way at one time and elsewhere in a different way. It suffices to compare the two half-lines of the last-quoted line: one of them has three heavy stresses and the second only two, but in both the same expression 'před tváří všech' occurs, and this of course must in each half-line be metrically interpreted differently. (Theoretically, of course, this line could be explained as a six-stress line, which would be comprehensible in its position at the end of a speech, but in this way the basic metrical rule of Theer's verse would be interrupted without regard for the fact that the two-stress interpretation of the second half-line corresponds well to the sense with its stress on the words 'všech' and 'pomstěn'.) Since the place of the metric stress is not signalized unambiguously, the limits of the segments are also unfixed; the line loses the character of being divided into feet, which could be ascertained in the accentual lines of Čelakovský and of Erben. These accentual lines of Čelakovský and Erben could then be fitted into the traditional lines divided into feet.

I consider that it is precisely these two characteristics which are distinctive in Theer's verse and which make it so distinctively different from all older verse types. We see in it an attempt at creating completely new metrical standards, that is, an entirely new type of verse.

It still remains to determinate where the genetic roots of this line lie. It is striking that Theer, who devoted himself so largely to French literature, did not make use of free verse as it was first worked out in French literature, but endeavoured to find his own prosodic type. There was here evidently some connection with the theme of his composition. Since in the Czech rhythmic consciousness the idea of verse with a firm number of metrical stresses and a changing number of syllables in the line was bound up with the conception of the verse of antiquity, Theer evidently wanted to suggest by means of this verse the atmosphere of the ancient world. At the same time it is of interest that he considered his attempt to be completely new and revolutionary — and himself found no connection with Čelakovský and Erben. Evidently he did not observe the accentual elements in their verse.

In conclusion I should like to draw attention to one further thing: Theer's verse shows that the accentual principle can be used in a Czech literary context

[34]) *Ibid.*, p. 158.

only when extra-linguistic means draw attention to its metrical properties — in the case of Theer, performance on the stage and theoretical explanations. This opinion is supported also by the graphic realization of this verse type in contemporary poetry, for example in Taufer's translations of Majakovskij.

1967

OTAKAR THEER A ZAČÁTKY ČESKÉHO TÓNICKÉHO VERŠE

Teoretickým východiskem stati je názor, že hranice mezi jednotlivými veršovými typy a různotvary nelze určit pouze na základě objektivních statistických údajů, ale že je nutno brát zřetel k subjektivnímu činiteli, tj. že relevantnost prvků usystemizovaných ve verši nedá se určit jen kvantitativně. Výrazným příkladem může být hranice mezi čistě sylabickým a sylabotónickým veršem; na první pohled se zdá, že jde prostě o míru, do jaké je uspořádána distribuce slovních přízvuků, ve skutečnosti však může mít verš čistě sylabický v některých případech vyhraněnější podobu co do pravidelnosti ve střídání slabik přízvučných a nepřízvučných než verš sylabotónický. V takových případech je nutno odhalit, kde jde o prvek stylistický a kde jde o prvek metrický, a tu se nemůžeme obejít bez svědectví vnímatelů.

Otázku, do jaké míry jsou subjektivně pociťovány metrické kvality, které objektivně existují ve veršovaném projevu, sleduje dále autor na českém verši čistě tónickém (tj. na verši, v němž je normován pouze počet těžkých dob, nikoli však jejich místo). Zabývá se veršem, který uváděl do české literatury Čelakovský v některých básních Ohlasu písní ruských, a veršem některých básní Erbenovy Kytice. Vyvozuje, že nová veršová forma musí mít v moderní literatuře teoretickou oporu, aby mohla být pociťována čtenářstvem jako nová kvalita; bez teoretické opory by mohla být nová veršová forma chápána jako různotvar (zpravidla jako „chybný" různotvar) forem existujících již v povědomí a tvořících literární pozadí.

Skutečné teoretické opory se dostalo v české literatuře tónickému verši až na počátku dvacátého století, kdy ho použil v dramatě Faëthon Otakar Theer a kdy došlo k diskusi o charakter tohoto metrického typu. Užití této formy bylo podporováno dvěma faktory: (1) Šlo o drama, při jehož realizaci se muselo dostat hercům instrukce, jak tento verš recitovat, takže při jevištním provedení byl jeho charakter jednoznačně určen. (2) V českém povědomí se verš se stálým počtem těžkých dob a proměnlivým počtem slabik asocioval s přízvučně napodobovaným časoměrným veršem antickým, který byl v Theerově době dosud v živém povědomí; tím bylo uvedení čistě tónického verše v Theerově hře do jisté míry motivováno.

Отакар Тээр и зарождение чешского тонического стиха

Теоретической исходной точкой настоящей статьи является мнение, что нельзя определять границу между отдельными стиховыми типами и их разновидностями лишь на основе объективных статистических данных. Необходимо считаться с субъективным фактором. Значительность элементов, систематизированных в стихе, нельзя определять лишь количественно. Ярким примером может послужить различие между чисто силлабическим и силлабо-тоническим стихом. На первый взгляд кажется, что различие между ними зависит от степени распределения словесных ударений. На самом деле, чередование ударяемых и безударных слогов в силлабическом стихе может быть иногда более регулярным, чем в силлабо-тоническом стихе. Тогда необходимо установить, имеет ли данный элемент стилистический или метрический характер. В таком случае нельзя обойтись без свидетельства читателей.

На основе анализа чешского чисто тонического стиха автор статьи пытается ответить на вопрос, в какой степени ощущаются метрические качества, объективно существующие в стихотворном выражении. Материалом для анализа служит ему стих, введенный в чешскую литературу Франтишеком Челаковским (1799—1852) в некоторых стихотворениях его сборника „Отголосок русских песен" (1829), а также в отдельных стихотворениях сборника „Букет" (1853) Карла Яромира Эрбена (1811—1870). Автор статьи приходит к заключению, что новая стиховая форма современной литературы должна

опираться на теоретический базис, без которого она не может восприниматься читателями в качестве нового явления. Новая стиховая форма без теоретического базиса рискует быть воспринимаемой как равновидность форм (как правило, как „ошибочная" разновидность), существующих в сознании читателей и создающих литературный фон.

Чешский тонический стих получил теоретический базис только в начале XX века, а именно в драме „Фаэтон" Отакара Тээра. В это время разгорелись прения о характере этого метрического типа. Использованию именно этой формы способствовали два фактора: 1. драма, для реализации которой актеры получали указания, как декламировать ее стих; тем самым определялся уже заранее характер этого стиха для сценического исполнения; 2. стих с регулярным числом ударяемых слогов и нерегулярным числом слогов сближался в чешском сознании с античным метрическим стихом, живущим еще в сознании современников Тээра. Этим и мотивировалось отчасти использование чисто тонического стиха в пьесе Тээра.