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> Chide me, dear stone that I may say indeed
> Thou art Hermione; or rather, thou art she
> (Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*)

The alleged statue in William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* that proves "our carver's excellence" by showing Hermione as wrinkled "[a]s she lived now" (SHAKESPEARE 1982: 337) is just one example of the occasional supposed or 'real' animated statue in the history of theatre. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, Craig, Maeterlinck, Jarry, Blok, Marinetti, Schlemmer, the Čapek brothers and other artists, scholars and theatre practitioners questioned the mimetic, realistic, and naturalistic practice of theatre by introducing diverse effigies and puppets on stage and screen. Moreover, as the theatre director and theorist Jindřich Honzl proclaimed in 1940,

> we have freed the concept of "stage" from its constructional [architecture in the original, VA] restrictions, and we can free the concept of "actor" from the restriction which claims that an actor is a human being who represents [presents in the original, VA] a dramatic character in a play. If acting merely consists in [re]presentation[1] of the dramatic character by something else, then not only can a person be an actor but so can a wooden puppet or a machine (for example, Lisicky's, Schlemmer's, and Liesler's mechanical theatre using machines) or anything at all (for example, the advertising thea-

1 Presentation in the original, see more to this below.

> tre of Belgian cooperatives where a bolt of material, a spider's leg, a coffee grinder, and the like were dramatic characters).
> (HONZL 1976: 75)[2]

Honzl expands the ideas the aesthetician Otakar Zich expressed in the book *Estetika dramatického umění* (Aesthetics of the Dramatic Arts, 1931) to the dramatic character, dramatic space, and the *word* of the playwright as well. In fact, he not only transforms Zich's concepts into semiotic ones, but also exposes some principles of modern performance theories inherent in Zich's work. For instance, as the abovementioned passage shows, Honzl sees acting not solely as a presentation of someone on stage by a human being, but he posits that even a piece of wood, or voice (God in Goethe's *Faust*) could signify a *dramatic figure,* akin to sound, which can also represent the *set*.[3]

Many of the experiments Honzl mentioned inspired the theorists of the Prague School, most prominently Bogatyrev, Honzl himself, Mukařovský and Veltruský to undertake several groundbreaking studies,[4] which in turn served as sources of inspiration for contemporary practice and analysis of theatre. In fact, their co-operation exceeds the German theatrical tradition described by Elam,

> in which theoretical and analytic approaches are not considered detrimental to directorial creativity (not by chance the figure of the dramaturg, an integral part of German theatre, has no real equivalent in English and American theatre).
> (ELAM 2002: 200)

By contrast, the scholars of the Prague School were inspired by contemporary performance, folk and puppet theatre, film and drama while the directors Honzl and Burian conceptualized their stage experience with film, stage.

While this 'cross-pollination' appears in the theoretical and artistic works that belong to the "semiotic stage", i.e. the period after the foundation of the

2 The original title "Pohyb divadelního znaku" [The movement of the theatrical sign], published in the journal of the Prague Linguistic Circle *Slovo a slovesnost* 6 (1940): 177–188 has been rendered in English as "Dynamics of the Sign in the Theatre" in *Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions,* ed. L. Matějka and I. Titunik (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976: 74–93). The name of the Austrian architect F. Kiesler correct in the original appears in the translation as Liesler (see above).

3 Honzl's statements about the space point to the expansion of the stage beyond the confines of bourgeois theatre and at the same designate what the Prague School and its predecessors dubbed the *imaginary space* (cf. E. Stehlíková to this topic: STEHLÍKOVÁ 2012).

4 Some of them I discussed elsewhere (AMBROS 2009, 2008, 1999).

Prague Linguistic Circle in 1926, three allegedly "minor" (STEINER 1982: 55)[5] texts devoted to puppet theatre written by Petr Bogatyrev, Jan Mukařovský, and Otakar Zich all published in 1923, i.e. during the pre-semiotic period of the Prague School, laid ground for further scholarly investigation with regard to drama and theatre in general and the relationship of puppets, statues, objects and men in theatre in particular.

It is my intention to introduce these contributions as a repository of the ideas developed later by the same authors and their colleagues. They also show that puppet theatre (cf. Jarry's *Ubu le Roi* and Josef Skupa's theatre) was no longer considered a marginal art aimed at children and performed at fairs. In fact, very much in the vein of contemporary trends puppets were one of the modes in which high-brow and low-brow art were used, a phenomenon often proclaimed by various modern artists in their manifestoes as a component of their respective programmes. Similarly, the theorists of the Prague Linguistic Circle acknowledged and conceptualized this tendency as well.

Furthermore, the aforementioned texts (unfortunately not available in English) are also indicative of a development in theatre represented not only by Edward Gordon Craig but also by the French poet Stephan Mallarmé and his Czech colleague Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic who, as Heinrich von Kleist before them, preferred puppets to live actors. Karásek considers an actor even a surrogate puppet. To him "[a] puppet of an emperor always stays an emperor. The puppet is a symbol, the actor is only an interpreter, an instrument" (KARÁSEK in SOKOL 1987: 12). The poet seems to support Kleist's argument about the advantage of puppets over the human being in terms of movements that defy gravity. In his reflection on marionettes Kleist (KLEIST) also includes another aspect, a reversal of the mimetic approach, namely that a human being strives to imitate the posture of a statue.

PUPPETS AND STATUES IN "MINOR" TEXTS

Mukařovský's "Tiny People"[6]

In a review of a puppet production of Jaroslav Hašek's dramatized novel *The Fortunes of the Good Soldier Švejk* published also in 1923, Jan Mukařovský praises the particular performance which was among the earliest of the numerous dramatic presentations of the novel. Some of the features Mukařovský mentions in his brief review appear later in more elaborate studies by himself

5 So the commentary about Zich's article in the introduction to Bogatyrev's by Peter Steiner, the editor of the volume in which Bogatyrev's article on Zich appeared in English.

6 "Drobní lidé" in SOKOL F. *Svět loutkového divadla*. Prague, Albatros, 1987, 35–38.

and his colleagues. For instance, Mukařovský lists the advantages of such a theatre of "tiny people" and emphasizes that although puppets are rarely individualized, most of them are able "to keep the audience in tension through a mere play with gestures" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ in SOKOL 1987: 36). He compares the puppets to the masks of the Hellenistic theatre tradition and refers to the childlike joy produced by "live people and animated things" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ in SOKOL 1987: 38).

Zich on Puppets

The performance described by Mukařovský seems to correspond with the wish of Otakar Zich, Mukařovský's predecessor as the chair of Aesthetics at the Charles University of Prague, for the puppets to perform more sophisticated texts. Zich further distinguishes between two different styles of puppet theatre: the first one is close to caricature in fine arts; the second has a symbolic, anti-realistic character. To Zich the puppets, in contrast to sculptures, talk and move albeit not by themselves. Similar to Mukařovský, however, he too draws a parallel to the use of masks in the theatre of actors and notes as well that the puppets have a reduced set of mimic signs, which makes them easily recognizable. In this regard they are akin to the category of *emploi* – stock characters described by R. Jakobson:

> In studying theatre, one distinguishes the *emploi* from the *role*; the emplois (within the limits of a certain stage genre and style, of course) are fixed; for example, the *emploi* of the *jeune-premier*, of the *intriguante*, of the *raisonneur* does not depend on whether an officer or a poet is the *jeune-premier* in a given play or on whether he commits suicide or marries happily at the end.
> (JAKOBSON 1975: 2)

In addition, Zich suggested a further distinction when he posited that because of their inanimate nature the puppets can be regarded on the one hand as comic and grotesque. On the other hand, however, if the puppets are close to animated creatures they appear to be mysterious or uncanny. Zich illustrates this type pointing to two animated statues, namely the Golem, and the effigy in *Don Juan*.

The fact Zich underlines, that the puppets belong to the category of fine arts, emphasizes the approximation and cross-fertilization of different art forms already in the early twenties, typical most prominently of the theatre ex-

periments performed by the artists of Devětsil[7] and addressed by the Prague School in the following decades. As Petr Bogatyrev states in his review of Zich's article, the importance of this "minor" work goes beyond puppet theatre and has relevance also for other arts (BOGATYREV 1982: 58).

Bogatyrev on Folk Theatre and Puppets

Bogatyrev's own study on Russian folk theatre and Czech puppet theatre is introduced by a foreword signed by the Russian group OPOJAZ, which voices a demand similar to Zich's suggestions about a new type of stylization in puppet theatre. The group proposes to stress the verbal character of a play instead of putting the emphasis on the *syuzhet*. In an allusion to the famous work by Chlebnikov "Slovo kak takovoe" (1913), the text describes the national/folk theatre as a theatre of the "word as such".

Furthermore, in the part devoted to puppet theatre Bogatyrev points to the interest of the contemporary Russian directors in puppets and mentions Molière's comedies staged in Berlin "(…) in which the movements of the actors was stylized after that of puppets" (BOGATYREV 1999: 88). Incidentally, Karel Čapek's *RUR* was performed in Berlin in the same year. The success of this performance initiated the international acclaim of the set designer, Friedrich Kiesler, who introduced TANAGRA, a fair booth technology in an innovative way that foregrounded the interchangeability of men and robots by projecting diminished live actors on a screen. Moreover, by contrast to the previous use of animated statues, the robots as the collective hero of the play altered the position of puppets and figures on stage and screen (Lang's *Metropolis*), while Kiesler stressed their inter-medial potential (AMBROS 2008). According to L. Styan "the mechanical gestures and movements of the actors playing the robots provided a norm of stylized performance which impressed audiences everywhere" (STYAN 1981: 55).

Another revision of the conventional approach to folk theatre is present in the second part of Bogatyrev's book. It deals with Russian folk theatre and lists several tropes related to rhetorical devices in poetry that Bogatyrev considers as typical of this type of theatre thus transposing the literary analysis of the Russian Formalists to theatre. In fact as F. Deák remarks the "strongly codified" nature of the analysed material allowed Bogatyrev to "carry over the concept of language and speech from the field of language phenomena to art" (DEÁK 1976: 90).

7 It was an association of artists that experimented with different types of art. The name means "nine powers" and alludes to the nine Muses. The group was founded in 1920 and dissolved in 1930.

In another volume, a collection of articles on Chaplin, which OPOJAZ published also in 1923, Bogatyrev, known primarily as an ethnographer, applied his knowledge to two films: *The Kid* and *The Count*. In the case of *The Kid* he points out that parallelism (the Kid repeats the gestures and action of his foster father) and contrast are used to replace the causal linking of the *syuzhet*. When he speaks about the mixture of melodrama and buffoonery he mentions the mystery plays, especially the medieval *Mastičkář*, as an example of a tradition in which contrast appears as a principle of composition, i.e. dramatic structure. In addition, he claims that the stability of Chaplin's mask guides the spectators' expectation as does his walking stick and hat, both reminiscent of props in folk theatre and music hall. Bogatyrev concludes by pointing out that Chaplin's performance is based on a tradition that is as rich as that of the Moscow artistic theatre, hence removing the dividing line between these two seemingly opposite types of theatre. Furthermore, in his article on Chaplin as a false count Bogatyrev elaborates on Max Reinhardt's direct contact with the audience and compares it with the Russian folk play about the Car Maximilian.

Actor's Figure [Herecká Postava] and Statue

In 1931, five years after the foundation of the Prague Linguistic Circle, Mukařovský published an article on Chaplin as well. It is this short film review, which 50 years later Keir Elam considered fundamental for semiotics of drama and theatre. The original title of the study "Pokus o strukturní rozbor hereckého zjevu" [An Attempt to Structural Analysis of Actor Figure] suggests a connection to one of the central concepts in Zich's *Aesthetics of the Dramatic Arts* published also in 1931 namely "*herecká postava*" – the *actor's figure*. As the subtitle reveals the author examines Chaplin's acting in *City Lights*. Translated into English, however, as "An Attempt at a Structural Analysis of a Dramatic Figure" the actor's phenomenon/appearance is transformed into a dramatic figure,[8] hence suggesting a connection to drama. By contrast the term "herecký zjev" implies a visual perception, which corresponds with Zich's notion of the actor's figure that is the work of the actor which he considers a "pictorial art" (ZICH 1986: 43). The visual quality of the figure eliminates the notion of representation and as Oleg Sus points out, Zich's concept of presentation as "presented and presenting [that] will shift into the Structuralist sign and meaning" (SUS 2010: 231), or as the commentators of the second edition of Zich's work interpret it, as the distinction between *sign and meaning* (ZICH 1986: 341). Incidentally, Sus seems to follow Veltruský's

8 More on this concept in (QUINN 1989: 78) and more recently in (MEERZON 2005).

translation of Bühler's term (*Darstellung*), which Mukařovský replaced with "*zobrazení*" (although "representation" is possible, the connotation with pictorial in "depiction" is preferable) (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1948: I: 159).[9] Unfortunately in English the rather misleading term "referential" obscures the complexity of this particular concept, inherent in the following quote:

> As much as marble is not a sculpture, only shaped marble is, in much the same way, only the shaped actor is the character, with the difference that the actor himself accomplishes the shaping of the character, while being shaped himself.
> (ZICH 1986: 41)

Although Zich's book is considered proto-semiotic by most of his interpreters (Procházka, Osolsobě, Winner, Sus), it offers a number of *stimuli* for the several concepts of the subsequent "semiotic stage" (QUINN 1995). In fact Elam considers both Zich's book and Mukařovský's aforementioned article as the foundation of the semiotics of theatre and drama. In addition, Mukařovský's review of Chaplin opens with a definition of "structure" as,

> a system of components aesthetically deautomatized [actualized, VA] and organized into a complex hierarchy, which is unified by the prevalence of one component over the others […]
> (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1982: 171)

Akin to his earlier observations about puppet theatre he stresses the role of gestures, which he divides here into two categories: social and individual ones. His description is somewhat reminiscent of Bogatyrev's notion of contrast and parallelism derived from the formalist approach to poetry.

Parallel to the theoretical examination of Chaplin's performance, the idea of statues appears also in the concurrent work of Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich aka V+W; actors in the "Liberated theatre" founded in 1926, which according to Herta Schmid created a "specific European type of anti-illusionistic avant-garde theatre" (SCHMID 1990: 106). The comedians themselves mentioned the tradition of the music hall as a source of inspiration.[10] Moreover, their direct contact with the audience was also similar to that described by Bogatyrev in the case of Russian folk drama.

9 More to this in V. Ambros "Proměny Re-Prezentace" [Transformations of Re-presentation] (AMBROS 2012: 147−156).

10 J. Voskovec and J.Werich in "Music-Hall a co z toho pošlo" (VOSKOVEC and WERICH 1967: 296−299).

V+W recovered the tradition of popular and folk theatre most prominently when they performed in front of the curtain where they addressed the spectators. They were often dressed in the costume of fictional characters while their faces identified them as a specific sort of clown wearing masks. These, however, stressed the departure from the conventional white face, and an identifiable character, since their faces were close to abstract paintings. Moreover, as Voskovec admits, they were attracted to clowns, because they are not people in the first place, but statues. Voskovec claims: "We preferred that to the actor who pretends to be someone else" (SCHONBERG 1995: 31).[11] Unlike Chaplin, whose "stage figure" foregrounded gestures, V+W evoked contrast and parallelism described by Bogatyrev both as characters and as clowns.

Jakobson and Mukařovský on Statues

On the occasion of the centennial of Pushkin's death in 1936, Roman Jakobson explored the topic of the statue as another type of the antinomy between static and dynamic features discussed by Bogatyrev, and Mukařovský. This seminal article which introduces topics originally rejected by the Formalists such as intertextuality and the writer's biography, appeared in English as "The Statue in Pushkin's Poetic Mythology". The title of the original, however, ("Socha v symbolice Puškinově") published in *Slovo a slovesnost* 3 (JAKOBSON 1937: 2–24) does not mention mythology but refers to Pushkin's symbol system in three different genres:

> In the drama, in the epic poem, and in the fairytale[12] the image of the animated statue evokes the opposite image of *rigidified people* whether it involves a mere comparison of them to a statue, an accidental situation, or actual dying and death. Here the boundary between life and immobile dead matter is deliberately obliterated.
> (JAKOBSON 1975: 8)

Jakobson adds another aspect, which he sees connected with the statue – its temporal dimension:

> The conventional space of the statue merges with the real space into which the statue has been placed, and despite its atemporal substance, an idea of something that has preceded the represented state and of something that

11 I wish to thank Mgr. Eva Šlaisová for drawing my attention to this passage.

12 *The Stone Guest,* the narrative poem *The Bronze Horseman*, and *The Fairytale of the Golden Cockerel*.

> should follow it comes of itself to mind: the statue is placed in temporal succession.
> (JAKOBSON 1975: 328)

The function of the statue on stage when it is part of the set, however, differs from that of a sculpture in another location. As Mukařovský claims, in theatre it appears as "a motionless actor, a contrast to a live actor" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978: 205). Mukařovský refers to this dichotomy in his article "On the Current State of the Theory of Theatre", in which he analyses the relationship of theatre with other kind of arts. Akin to Jakobson he emphasizes: "The immobility of a statue and the mobility of a live person is a constant antinomy between the poles of which the dramatic figure oscillates on stage." He notes that Craig drew "attention to this hidden but always present antinomy of the art of acting". Furthermore, "a pose reveals the static and dynamic characteristics of two arts – sculpture and acting" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1982: 206). Another aspect Mukařovský refers to is "[…] the transition between the immobility of a solid mask and the make-up of a modern actor is quite continuous" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1982: 206).

MAN AND OBJECT IN THEATRE

Preceding Mukařovský's study on theory was an article by Jiří Veltruský who as a member of the Prague Linguistic Circle belonged to the second generation of the group. In his seminal article "Man and Object in Theatre" Veltruský (1964: 83–91) focuses on several types of transition "between the sphere of man and the sphere of object" including that observed by Honzl when "the scenery becomes an actor" (HONZL 1976: 84) or when "[t]he action may fall to the 'zero level', and the figure is then converted into a part of the set" (VELTRUSKÝ 1964: 86).

While Mukařovský did not continue this line of research, Veltruský published some of his most important contributions to this topic in exile. Among them was his belated reflection on the book by Bogatyrev on Czech folk theatre.[13] As Veltruský mentions in his introduction to the English version of his original talk presented in 1940 in Mukařovský's apartment:

> It was to be published in the journal of the Prague Linguistic Circle, *Slovo a slovesnost*, where a review by Honzl of Bogatyrev's book *Lidové divadlo české a slovenské* ([Czech and Slovak Folk Theatre], 1940) appeared the

13 *Lidové divadlo české a slovenské* [Czech and Slovak Folk Theatre] (BOGATYREV 1940).

> same year (HONZL 1940). But after Hitler broke the German-Soviet pact in 1941, Nazi censorship banned Bogatyrev's name from print; I did not want to publish this critique in Prague after the war because we heard rumors, probably unfounded, that Bogatyrev, who had returned to the USSR in 1940, was in disfavor there.
> (VELTRUSKÝ 1987: 141)

Veltruský continued writing about puppets in several studies in which he continuously revised the positions of his colleagues as well as his own. The following quote is an example of such a change:

> It is true that if we conceive theatrical action as a continuous flow of meanings, any component of theatre, an inanimate object as well as a living person, can become an agent, i.e. a subject of action [cf. VELTRUSKÝ 1964]. But the fact remains that inanimate objects cannot act physically. They signify action only when that signification is bestowed on them by human beings; even a marionette cannot act unless its strings or wires are pulled by the puppeteer.
> (VELTRUSKÝ 1987: 153)

In his 1983 article on puppetry and acting[14] he introduces the term "vivification" when he speaks about the fact that the puppets are perceived as living creatures that act intentionally [jednající (…) z vlastní iniciativy] (VELTRUSKÝ 1994: 206). By contrast to Jakobson's rigidification, Veltruský refers to this phenomenon as "giving the impression of life [dávání dojmu života]".

Reviewing Prague School, Veltruský returned to Zich's article on puppets by stating:

> In certain forms of puppet theatre, […] the opposition between the statue and the actor turns into an internal antinomy of the stage figure, it being understood that the signs making up the stage figure are distributed between the puppet and the puppeteer.
> (ZICH 1923 in VELTRUSKÝ 1981: 228)

Yet later Veltruský pointed out that "inanimate objects cannot act physically. They signify action only when that signification is bestowed on them by hu-

14 Published in Czech as "Loutkové divadlo a herectví" [Puppet Theatre and Acting] (VELTRUSKÝ 1994: 189–237).

man beings; even a marionette cannot act unless its strings or wires are pulled by the puppeteer"(VELTRUSKÝ 1987: 153).

Veltruský's studies written in exile show his commitment to the concepts of the Prague Linguistic Circle and indicate the possibilities of their development. As J. Císař stated in 1963 about the Prague School in general, Veltruský as the other scholars, even when they explored specific aspects, they all "analysed theatre as a unity [celek]" (CÍSAŘ 1967: 1).

In conclusion, in spite of the fact that the *opus magnum* is missing, the material provided by the members of the Prague School and their supporters (such as the literary studies by M. Součková) beginning with the "minor" texts discussed here offer to students and teachers of drama, theatre and cinema alike many valuable *stimuli*. In fact, the present issue is an attempt to continue the lively exchanges in a group in which as Milada Součková once remarked even the Czechs spoke with a foreign accent. "The Prague School revisited" hopefully means *status nascendi* of the semiotics of drama and theatre at this time in Brno.

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Photograph © Patrice Pavis

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Summary

Veronika Ambros: Puppets, Statues, Men, Objects, and the Prague School

At the turn of the 20th century as the penchant to imitate real people began to change, theoreticians and practitioners of theatre turned their attention to puppets. This was the case of three theorists (Jan Mukařovský, Otakar Zich, and Petr Bogatyrev), who became the leading members of the Prague Linguistic Circle. This contribution shows that their studies written in 1923, contained many important ideas developed later by Bogatyrev, Mukařovský, Jiří Veltruský, and Roman Jakobson. They all contributed considerably to contemporary theories of acting, theatre in general, and puppet theatre in particular.