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ARTUR ZAVODSKÝ

THE DRAMATIC ELEMENT AND THE USE
OF THEATRICAL METHODS IN THE WORK
OF PETR BEZRUČ*

(On the occasion of the Centenary of the birth of Petr Bezruč. Unesco has selected this anniversary as one of the International Cultural Anniversaries for 1967.)

From the first periodical publication of Petr Bezruč's poems, their readers have observed that, especially in those poems where he took a fighting stand against the social and national oppression of the people of Silesia, the reader is literally crushed by the tenseness of emotion, that the poems gain their immediacy of effect by the vivid depiction of character and that they contain dramatic situations. Certain literary historians, too, — e.g. Vojtěch Martínek¹ — have asserted generally the dramatic nature of the poems of Bezruč. Nevertheless the work of Petr Bezruč has not so far been examined sufficiently in detail and concretely from this aspect.

The dramatic element² runs through all the work of Petr Bezruč like a central nerve. Naturally, in the course of more than half a century of the author's creative work, it was modified in the most various ways; above all according

* The Czech poet and Czechoslovak National Artist Petr Bezruč (his real name was Vladimír Vašek) was born on the 15th September, 1867, in Opava and died on the 17th February, 1958, in Olomouc. He is the author of the epoch-making collection of poems *Silesian Songs* (*Slezské písně*), the central core of which — 54 poems sent by the author to Jan Herben, editor of the periodical *Time* (*Čas*) — dates from the years 1899—1900. Over the years further poems were written, so that we can follow the growth of the book and the development of the text of the individual poems throughout half a century — from the periodical and volume publication of the *Silesian Number* (*Slezské číslo*) in 1903 up to 1909, when the collection was considerably extended and first bore the title of *Silesian Songs*, on to a series of further editions, of which the most significant is that of 1928, when the book attained a roughly definitive state; in the later editions of *Silesian Songs* Bezruč added a few more poems, but what he mainly did was to revise the text of the individual poems (for the most part not to their advantage). The most important of the further poems of Bezruč is *The Blue Banded Butterfly* (*Stužkonoska modrá*, 1930). Those poems not included in the *Silesian Songs* are contained in several collections *Paralipoema I*, 1937, *Paralipoema II*, 1938; *To Friends and Enemies* (*Prátelům i nepřátelům*, 1956); *The Little Swan* (*Labutinka*, 1961). The prose work of Petr Bezruč appeared in the volumes *We Are Six* (*Je nás šest*, 1950) and *Tales from Life* (*Povídky ze života*, 1957). A survey of the work of Petr Bezruč and of literature relating to the poet is given by the publication of V. Ficek, A. Kučík: *A Petr Bezruč Bibliography, I, Works* (*Bibliografie P. Bezruče, I, Dílo*, 1953) and V. Ficek, A. Kučík: *A Petr Bezruč Bibliography, II, Literature Relating to the Life and Work of P. Bezruč* (*II, Literatura o životě a díle P. Bezruče*, 1958).

to the different genres employed. We find one quality in the slight realistic sketches (e.g. in the *Studies from the Café Lustig — Studie z Café Lustig*), and another in the humorous anecdotal recollections (e.g. the little volume *The Twilight Hour with Petr Bezruč — Černá hodinka s Petrem Bezručem*) and still another quality in the ballads or the intimate lyrics. But the dramatic elements and the theatrical methods closely related to them fulfil a different function in Bezruč's work in the different periods of his artistic development — they are at their height at the turn of the century, when Bezruč's passionate struggle for the social and national rights of the Silesian people demanded the use in his poems of features typical for drama and the theatre; the dramatic element is much less frequently employed in the calmer, resigned period of Bezruč's work after 1902, which inclines towards narrative verse, and in which the image of the personal destiny of the poet, above all the fate of his love, is interwoven with the fate of his native folk.

In the present study we intend to examine in detail the way in which Bezruč functionally employed dramatic elements and methods typical of the theatre in the various periods of his creative work; at the same time we shall notice the genre to which each of the works dealt with belongs. Finally we shall endeavour to characterize the type of dramatic element found in Bezruč and to assign it to its proper place in the context of world drama.

1

POEMS FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE

The central theme of the core of the Silesian Songs is the two-in-one theme of the poverty of the people in Silesia³ and their denationalization (Germanization and Polonization). Bezruč depicted the social contradictions of a single region, the destiny of the Silesian community as well as the destiny of individuals, whether they were the oppressors of the people (a member of the ruling dynasty of the Hapsburgs, Archduke Friedrich, the coal magnates and their lackeys, the gamekeepers of the great estates and the Germanizing representatives of the towns in the region), or their victims. In his picture of the life of the Silesian region the poet expressed the typical features of the exploited masses in the period of imperialism.

In the hour of mortal danger for the Silesian people Petr Bezruč arose as the semi-mythical singer of their wrongs and prophet of their determination to fight. Bezruč's poems of this period stand on a borderline: they present a truthful, sometimes directly documentary picture of life, but at the same time they soar to the level of a poetic vision, which stylizes reality (landscape and characters) into grandiose symbols. The pits, the factories, the mountains are transformed into a battlefield.

The pathos of Bezruč's fight and his vision of the Silesian people in monumental dimensions demanded an inclination towards the methods of symbolist poems. The dramatic character of the reality depicted (the conflict of master and serf, the national conflict, the conflict between Prague, the centralizing *caput regni*, and the forgotten Silesia, etc.) called directly for the use of elements of drama and the theatrical.

a) Images of the Warrior in Silesian Songs

Petr Bezruč made his decisive stand at the end of the 19th century, when the poet was on the point of death. The main part of *Silesian Songs* originated at the end of 1898 and in 1899. Vladimír Vašek had however for long been disgusted by every kind of national and social injustice. He had in fact been preparing himself for the role of defender of justice ever since his student years.

From the year 1884 (when Vladimír Vašek was about to enter the Fifth Form at the Brno grammar school), there dates the prose poem — a greeting to his sister Helen in the spirit of romanticism — entitled *For the 18th of August . . .* (*Na den 18. srpna . . .*) Here we can find the hero who fights against tyranny, who falls covered with blood; it recalls the fate of the heroes of later poems, *Leonidas* and *Micháلكovice*⁴. We quote the following passage of the prose work in question, as it was printed by Vít Šedivec⁵:

"Upon a time there lived two tribes of men; the one ruled, the others were slaves. The masters were gloomy, the serfs were sad. Unhappy were they. The ruling race sought to forget their griefs in tyranny and oppression, those who obeyed them in hard toil . . . And it came about, that among the race of the downtrodden there arose a great man, who breathed the seed of freedom into the dependent souls of his comrades, aroused with his fiery words the emotion of liberty in their tortured breasts — and the tribe of slaves revolted! And a wild massacre broke out, the crimson earth quaffed ceaselessly the blood of men, and those who had arisen in revolt, the same — fell defeated! — Thousands upon thousands of them fell, only their leader, he who had aroused them, still stood with his blood-stained banner over the dead bodies of his brothers. And him too they cut down. Without a groan, like a defiant giant he fell to the ground. He died with a bitter smile on his lips. Blood streamed from his wounded breast and with a derisive yell of joy the enemy seized the standard from his convulsive grasp. And the mob of the victors poured over the land of his kindred with cries of victory and he could see the burning cottages, the murdered infants, the slaughtered women — — He asked himself: Does mercy exist? — His eyes clouded over, his lips grew pale, and his great, defiant soul soared into the kingdom of shadows . . ."

This was merely a poetical image of a warrior, an image which remained, so to say, at home, merely in the consciousness of the brother and sister. A few years later Vladimír Vašek, now a University student, disgusted with the conditions in Prague, took his stand with regard to life itself. Evidence of this has been preserved in a letter which Vladimír sent to his friend and schoolmate from grammar school, Jan Kadlec. The latter published letters from Vladimír Vašek — obviously adapted — in his article *A Son of His Time* (*Syn svého věku*. Niva, Vol. III, Nos. 1, 2, 3). In a letter of March, 1888, that is of the time when he finally left his studies in Prague, Vladimír Vašek writes of how he had revolted fearlessly against a powerful figure at the University. What is characteristic is the fact that the writer himself compares this fight with the heroism of the heroic warriors of tragedy. We must not allow ourselves here to be led astray by the ostentatious irony of a young man.

"As you see, I am no longer in Prague. I have closed all the doors behind me — quarrelling with all those I was dependent on there. I was seized with the most devilish inclination to pour out on the head of every one that I have

had to do with recently a shower of poisonous brutalities — and you have no idea what a satisfaction it was for me to see one great, tremendously great man, who ruled the whole Faculty, absolutely petrified.

"How would you explain it? Doesn't it seem to you that this fury of mine is identical with the heroism of all the tragic warrior-heroes, who ever declared unequal warfare on the ruling orders of the world?"⁶

On the next occasion Vladimír Vašek attacked a "great, a tremendously great man" in Brno. This was his superior in the Post Office, the Germanophile Haluska, whose sympathies were with Austria. Vladimír pilloried the unpleasant behaviour of Haluska in two articles in the *People's News (Lidové noviny)* at the end of 1898 (29th November and 6th December). O. Králík, who drew attention to this newspaper campaign and who printed the derisive commentary on it from the pen of Vladimír Vašek in a letter of the time, appropriately recalled that the Post Office clerk Vašek here styles his exposure of his hated chief as a heroic epic similar to the Tale of the Expedition of Igor.⁷

The *People's News* attacks on Haluska meant for Vladimír Vašek a slight preparation for his decisive stand against much mightier lords — against the actual wielders of power in the Hapsburg Empire and in Silesia. In February 1899 a warrior bearing the unknown name of Petr Bezruč took his stand before the public.

The struggle against the despotism of the Hapsburgs and to secure justice for the oppressed race of Silesia could be carried on by Bezruč only by means of keenly polemizing with Prague bourgeois pretence at patriotism (cf. the poem *Palacký Centenary — Den Palackého*). As a poet he was obliged to distinguish himself diametrically from the poetry prevalent at that time, from the poets "from the banks of the Vltava, that women love, 'as Paris ordered'". In his profound study *Of Poetic Autostylization, Especially in Bezruč (O básnické autostylizaci, zvláště u Bezruče)*, F. X. Šalda characterized this very vividly in the following words: "This polemical background of the smooth, fashionable poetic fops was essential to Bezruč for his immediate autostylization. It was only against this background that he could work out his style as a wild, rough, barbaric, demonic, semi-mythical figure by means of a unique symbolizing art which was truly mighty, utterly monumental."⁸ Šalda also showed that Bezruč could not sign his mighty and terrifying autostylization of the poetic figure, attaining for example in the poems *I (Já)* and *The Hideous Sight (Škaredý zjev)* even superhuman dimension, with his real name, but was obliged to use a pseudonym if he wished to avoid the images characterizing the figure of the warrior from becoming "a monstrous piece of impudence and theatrical exaggeration".⁸

The poetic method of Bezruč used to express by means of mighty images his own figure or the objectified figure of the warrior, has two characteristic features.

First of all: in the poems of Petr Bezruč the author as subject is identified with the people; the poet soliloquizes in the name of the community as its personified representative (cf. for example the poem *The Collier — Horník*). The transition from the subjective to the objective lyric and thence to objective narrative forms is so gradual that at times we can scarcely observe it. The oscillation between subject and object increases the dynamic quality of Bezruč's poems and convincingly stresses the truth of the facts presented.

Secondly: the poet does not remain within the bounds of a single literary kind. He progresses from lyrical description or confession to epic narrative, which

again he renders more vivid by dramatic scenes. The boundaries of literary forms flow into each other and disappear. Lyric, epic and drama appear to cross each other's path and to increase their mutual effect in the smallest possible space of the poem. The transition from epic to the dramatically expressed rendering of the situation can be seen in the first part of the triptych *I*, where first of all the contrast is presented between God's care for happy lands and the single glance of the gloomy demon at the land Under the Beskyd Hills. Immediately after this we witness the dramatic scene of the birth of the "hideous prophet" — Bezruč — and his action:

*He struck at the rock,
down from the crag sprang the hideous prophet,
bred in bondage and of traitor blood,
railing at the moon, cursing the sun,
with clenched fist to the heavens upswung
he felled to the ground in defiance and fury —
his life's portion the demon had granted —
all those murderers, however they are gilded
and bowed to like gods
by the mine-slaves of Těšín —
down from the crag sprang I!*
(Udeřil [démon] v balvan,
ze skály vyskočil škaredý věstec,
z poroby vyrostlý, ze zrádné krve,
k měsíci zaštkal a do slunce zaklel,
sevřenou pěstí se rozmáchl k nebi,
všemi těmi vrahy, nech zářili zlatem,
nech před nimi klečeli jako před bohy
tam před Těšínem ti otroci dolů,
do prachu smýknul svým hněvem, svým vzdorem,
věnem to, jež mu dal do žití démon, —
ze skály vyskočil já!)*

In the same way, without any transitional connecting link, Bezruč moves in the third part of the poem *I* from the lyrical characterization of himself as a prophet to the narrative of the destinies of the people under the Beskyds. The poet then addresses the people, to go on immediately afterwards to reproduce directly the speech of the Count's gamekeepers in their dramatic encounter with individuals. I quote the joining-place between the address to the people and the reproduction of the cry of the "guardian angels":

*When chased from your woods by guardian angels,
low, low, on your knees you will bend!
"You thieving bastard! Is this your wood?
Down on your knees and kiss the ground!
Get out of the woods and up to the court!"***

* Translation by kind permission of Ian Milner, from *Silesian Songs*, a selection translated with an Introduction, by Ian Milner 1966, p. 69.

** Milner, p. 73.

(Z tvých lesů tě honí ven andělé strážní,
 ty se jim kloníš tak hluboce!
 „Ty zloději z Krásné! Je tvoje to dřevo?
 Padni a zem polib v pokoře!
 A ven z panských lesů a hore do Frydku!“)

This is followed by an address to "Him above". Then the speech to the people continues and the triptych is concluded by the narrative of the final fate of the people and of the poet's prayer to the demon of Vengeance.

Consideration of concrete poems will throw further light on these conclusions and perhaps even render them more profound.

The group of five poems (*I, The Hideous Sight, Who'll Stand in My Place — Kdo na moje místo — Leonidas, Michalkovice*) take the form of the dramatic monologue, in which at one moment the artistic methods of all three literary kinds form a syncretic blend and in the next moment become relatively independent of each other. The poem *I* and the poem *The Hideous Sight* express the individual features of the rebel prophet by means of his separate actions: for this reason the final effect of these poems is so strong. At the end of the poem *The Hideous Sight* we find the theatrical scene:

*So shall I stand — my nation long perished —
 a hundred years my brow uplifted to the skies,
 my severed neck touching the blue,**

.....
 (Tak budu já stát — dávno můj zahyne národ —
 sto roků stát budu čelem ku obloze vzpřímen,
 ubitou šiji se azuru dotknu,
)

The poem *Who'll Stand in My Place* takes the form of a soliloquy — the outcry of a miner bleeding in the fight against the coal-barons and the wealthy Jews. In this poem we see particularly clearly the way in which Bezruč oscillated between the lyrical subjective hero and the lyrical hero already objectivized in the character itself. The poem *Who'll Stand in My Place?* is in fact made up of two dramatically exposed situations: the first shows the revolutionary miner in action, the second finds him at the point of death when in vain he casts his eye round in search of someone who will continue his work.

The direct course of the struggle of the fighter against overwhelming German might, betrayed by Polish traitors, can be traced in the soliloquy of the hero of the poem *Leonidas*. It is a grandiose theatrical spectacle, including the alternation of the heights and depths of hope and despair. In the end the mighty warrior falls in his own blood, while the victorious Xerxes and the princes observe his dying moments with a satisfied smile on their lips.

A similar bloody struggle of a single warrior — on this occasion a Roman gladiator — against two opponents, a Thracian and an Ethiopian, is given in the poem *Michalkovice*. The struggle is an uneven one, not only because one man is faced with two, but also in so far as the weapons are concerned: the

* Milner, p. 82.

gladiator has a shield and javelin, his opponents a sword and triton. Here, however, the action is narrated to a greater extent than in the poem *Leonidas*; it is only after the circumstances leading to the fight are narrated that we see the struggle itself. The situation surrounding the fight is however presented in a three-dimensional manner and that by means of a striking contrast: the bored society of spectators (the Emperor, the rich men, the satisfied matrons surrounded by their children, the indifferent plebs) is here placed in sharp contrast to the young gladiator, who is unwilling to die and fights for his life with all his might — but, alas, in vain.

As in the poem *Leonidas*, so too in the poem *Michalkovice*, the centre of the action is filled by objectively delineated figures. The poet achieves the disturbing effects arising from the directly transmitted experience by means of the soliloquies of his character, the soliloquy of the warrior himself.

A different means — fundamentally narrative and therefore less disturbing — is chosen by Bezruč when he expounds the social contrast of master and serf in the poems *Ostrava* and *They and We (Oni a my)*. In *Ostrava* we are confronted with the soliloquy of the objectivized figure of a miner, in the second poem with a group soliloquy. In both cases the solution of the shocking contrasts ("From my blood and from my sweat palaces spring by the Danube's edge"* — „při Dunaji strmí paláce z krve mé a z mého potu"; the goblets of the masters ring loud in the delightful palace — the miners drudge in the flaming pit under the earth) is postponed until the clash of the enemy sides, conceived by the author as belonging to the future ("One day, one day, when the reckoning is due"; "on the dark ground they shall be laid / in their own blood and we in theirs!"** — „přijde den, sůčtujem spolu"; „tož v své krvi oni a v jich krvi my"). The same situation is to be found in the poem *70.000*, a kind of collective monologue — the testament of seventy thousand human beings "hard by Těšín", which concludes with the dramatic scene of crazy mass drunkenness. The dramatic character of this was realized and even increased by the composer Leoš Janáček in his magnificent double male-voice chorus *70.000* and in the male-voice chorus *Ostrava*.

The poem *The Collier (Horník)* is also written as the soliloquy of the hero. Into the monotonous, stereotype daily digging of the miners, which Bezruč emphasizes for us in narrative form by means of several vivid images, there are set several directly theatrical scenes: by Godula the miner's wife is frozen with cold and on her lap her hungry children are crying: "Overhead I hear the clatter of hooves — / the count drives through the village and the rose-cheeked countess / speeds the horse with a wave of the hand"*** — „nade mnou nad hlavou kopyta duní / grof jede dědinou, komtesa ručkou / pohání koně a směje se růžovou tváří"; the miner's wife goes to the mansion to intercede — and here the scene of the Count's seat is presented first as if in a film panorama and then in detail:

*Below his castle of fine yellow stone
the swift river roars and swirls,
and before the gates two black bitches scowl.*****

* Milner, p. 44.

** Milner, p. 59.

*** Milner, p. 79.

**** Milner, p. 80.

(z žltého kamene je jeho zámek,
pod zámkom hučí a láme se Ostravice.
Před branou černé dvě suky se mračí.)

The poem concludes with a scene whose exposition is theatrical: the miner draws himself erect, the reader follows his behaviour in expressive details of movement and mime. The growing revolutionary decision of the mining community is expressed through the actor-like action of the figure, who gradually raises his hammer to take his revenge.

The struggle of the people of Silesia against both want and denationalization is presented by Bezruč not only in images which personify the whole collective, but also in his depictions of concrete individuals defending the fortress from falling. Whether it is the bellringer sounding the alarm in *Domrová II*, who pays no heed to the fact that the "standard falls from the battlements", („zástava z cimbuří se kácí“) or the peasant Křístek, who fights heroically on the battlements, although "a fierce fight rages in the tower" („boj lítý v tvrzi zuří" — *Lazy*).

We have observed that Bezruč sees the situation of his own people dynamically, that he expresses it by the image of a struggle between two sides (often using here motifs from the ancient classical world) and that in his most effective poems he makes great use of dramatic elements, even of theatrical elements. The figure of the warrior frequently acquires the features of a phantom with tragi-comical and grotesque characteristics.

b) The Image of Gero and the Motif of the Encounter

For Petr Bezruč, the oppression of the Silesian people was summed up by the figure of *Marquis Gero*. In this figure Bezruč sharpened and magnified the proportions of an actually existing person — the Archduke Friedrich, owner of the Těšín Chamber — and created a figure which summed up all the hatred and contempt for the common people, the treachery, deceit and cynicism of aristocratic behaviour, and calculating disregard for the human being. This grandiosely depicted enemy demanded an equal figure to represent the other side. This was filled by the personage of the poet-bard, or his objectified representative, the personification of the wrath of the people.

In a number of poems Bezruč sets these two figures against each other, and further, he introduces them together in dramatic scenes. One of the poems in *Silesian Songs* is directly entitled *The Encounter (Setkání)*. Here through the medium of the poet's narrative we can follow the scene where Gero, the hunter of game and seducer of country girls, is resting in the Beskyd forest. A paces few separate the poet from the Marquis, who has hung up his rifle between two elm-trees. What an opportunity for revolutionary action! But there is nothing at hand to shoot the villain with — the poet has left his gun at home.

A similar situation is presented in the poem *You and I (Ty a já)*, in which the poet objectivizes himself in the character of a miner. Gero has arrived in the Beskyds. In a bitter speech addressed to Gero, which pours out on the head of the Archduke a list of all his crimes, the spokesman of the masses calls upon him to get out of his way if he wants to escape with his life. The fight of the two opposing classes is here presented as the unexpected encounter of two actual

people in the Beskyd forest. We see that the author has rendered the reader witness to the threatened clash of mortal enemies, that he has permitted the reader to follow in suspense the manner in which this clash will be resolved. And this is a situation which especially clearly testifies to Bezruč's vision in terms of theatre.

The poem *Marquis Gero* takes the form of a dramatic invective. It is as if the poet hurled his angry accusations in the face of the enemy of the common people. So far as Bezruč's verses delineate the figure of Gero, they employ partial depictions of actions. The slavish devotion of the servants and the defenceless plight of the defeated is expressed by the author in a dynamic total image, consisting of two smaller pictures set in contrast:

*The hem of your garment is borne by a hundred hands,
A hundred serfs fall at your feet.
(Lem tvého roucha sto pozvedá ruk,
sto rabů do noh ti padne.)*

Similarly the poet characterizes the contradictory behaviour of Marquis Gero in a couple of images into which much action is compressed:

*For us the whip lash, the hempen rope,
the princely smile only for them, for them.
(Pro nás švih bičem a konopnou šnuru,
knížecí úsměv jen pro ně, jen pro ně.)*

The revolt of the underdogs, it is true, is carried forward into the future, but the idea of it is presented in a scene of wholly theatrical suggestivity (the perceiver is presented with a complex exposition of colour — blood, sound — drum-beats, and movement of people in the same way as on the stage). The scene consists of two parts. The second part follows on from the first and gradually leads to its culmination: in the course of the revolt the poet-leader seizes the bridle of Gero's horse, the people in rebellion pull the Marquis from the saddle.

In the poem *Pětvald* the situation of revolt is spread over a greater expanse of time; its causes, too, are shown by a concrete scene. Here against Gero there stands an objective figure — Petr Dombrovský. The very name indicates that it is none other than the alter ego of Petr Bezruč. Of the six stanzas of the poem the first four depict the dramatic clash of Gero with the representative of the oppressed masses. The Marquis's horse is about to ride down a girl without reason. Dombrovský rescues the girl but receives a blow in the face from Gero's whip. After this dramatic scene, of which we are as it were spectators, — so vivid and three-dimensional is the poet's report — there follow six lines in which Bezruč addresses Dombrovský: What, is it possible to forget the bloody blow? Not even drink can drive out the knowledge of the shame! But the day of revenge will come! The poet presents the situation of the revolt by this image: the people stop Gero's horse, the Marquis is dragged out of the carriage and Dombrovský pays back his debt to the arrogant lord. As we can see, Bezruč holds up the mirror to this society of antagonistic classes by means of two stage scenes, which he comments in an emotionally moved way. In these scenes the representatives of the two classes are brought face to face.

In sharp contrast to the victorious conclusion of the two poems we have just discussed, stands the tragically disconsolate poem *Fate (Osud)*. It is really a single dramatic scene — the poet is dying and Gero is watching his death. The gestures and expressions of the dying man are shown precisely as they would be in the theatre (his eyes turn up, his head slowly falls back, sweat pours from his brow, his sides are shuddering). And the victory of Gero is also expressed by a concrete mime ("a smile plays over the proud lip of the Marquis Gero" — „úsměv jde pyšným rtem markýze Gera“).

We find considerable extremes in the depiction of the relations between Gero and the poet in *Silesian Songs*. We recognize poems which show both extreme possibilities — the defeat of Gero (or at least the expression of the will to get rid of him by violence) and the victory of Gero. In other cases Bezruč merely presents the class antinomy; but hesitates before a solution. In the field of imagery this is shown by the fact that the poet avoids the encounter with Gero. In the poem *From Ostrava to Těšín (Z Ostravy do Těšína)* Bezruč accompanies a miner's widow. We learn the substance of their dialogue through the author's narrative. For this reason the poem has lost much of its three-dimensional quality of presentation and so too much of its exciting effect. In *The Village on the Ostravice (Dědina nad Ostravicí)*, too, we have no direct encounter of the Count from the mansion (who is none other than Marquis Gero indicated in general terms) and the poet, who appears here as a ploughman behind his plough. The contrast of the two classes, given by the difference in the action of the lord, comfortably riding in his carriage, and the peasant, working for him in the field, is expressed by the double address of the poet to the Count. The poet's energy as it were spends itself previously in the two dramatic scenes from the ancient classical world (Achilles dragging the corpse of Hector; the Roman rider slaying the "barbarian"), which are given as similes for the defeatist mood and silent humiliation of the Silesian people.

The motif of encounter — in the course of which a dialogue results between the poet and the man encountered — is used by Bezruč to envisage the increasing Germanization and Polonization of the people in Silesia. In the poem *Two Gravediggers (Dva hrobníci)* the poet introduces us (in the character of "a poor Highlander from the Beskyds") to two gravediggers; they are filling in the grave of a Silesian peasant who is unwilling to die. The process of the Germanization of the people is expressed thus in an effective dramatic scene.

In a much sharper way, with heart-rending painfulness and overwhelmingly vivid visuality, the poem *Blendovice* shows the gradual Polonization. Here too the scene is set in a graveyard. The Silesian people is here personified as a poor child, calling in its hour of need for help to its "Father" — Bezruč. The composition of this poem is masterly: epic narrative (two stanzas — like stage direction in a play — introduce the concentrated features of the wintry cold of the graveyard, tell of the poet's arrival there and of how he finds the child by the open grave) alternates with a scene giving the emotionally roused dialogue of the poet and the child; the final stanza gives in a short epilogue the result of the tragic encounter — the poet flees wildly from the graveyard, the child sinks into the grave.

The poem *Tošonovice* moves to a much calmer note. At its centre, framed by two narratives, stands the dialogue of the poet with a girl, who has rightly felt insulted when he asks her if she is Polish. Typical for Bezruč's artistic method

is the fact that before he allows the girl to reply in direct speech, he shows her reaction as it were by a stage direction which notes her expressions:

*She bared her white teeth,
and gave me an ugly look,
that bonny lass from Tošonovice.
(Vyhrnulo bílé zoubky,
zle se na mne podívalo
švarné děvče z Tošonovic.)*

Yet again the motif of encounter became a means whereby the poet showed the progress of Germanization and social deterioration of the people under the Beskyd Hills. I am thinking of the poem *Andrew (Ondráš)*, which evokes the encounter of Bezruč with the gigantic figure of the Silesian outlaw — the righter of feudal wrongs. The poem is divided into three parts: the first sets the scene in the mountains up to the encounter of the poet with Andrew; the central, and longest part of the poem, reproduces in direct speech the excited dialogue of the outlaw and the bard of the people. A scene of half-crazy sarcastic laughter — by means of which Ondráš gives his opinion of the laws of Marquis Gero, which permit and justify the endless oppression of the people — brings the poem to an end.

In depicting the society of sharpened class conflicts in Silesia, Bezruč makes very effective use of the dramatic element of the encounter of two people, most frequently the encounter of a representative of the ruling class and of the oppressed class. The crushing images of the dying out of the Silesian folk are interwoven by Bezruč with the emotionally heightened presence of the author, sharply distinguishing the borderline between justice and injustice, inciting to opposition against the masters and to more intensive work for the good of the people.

c) The Tragic in the Social Ballads of Bezruč

When Petr Bezruč depicted the sharpened social conflicts, the dramas presented by life in Silesia at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, one form must have appeared to be particularly suitable for his purpose, a form in essence dramatic — the ballad.

Bezruč wrote a number of ballads. The artistic results achieved represent a qualitatively higher level in the history of the Czech ballad, including the social ballad, which on the model of folk songs had been composed in Bohemia by V. Hálek, J. Neruda, V. Šolc, J. Vrchlický, J. V. Sládek and others. In the course of the development of Czech ballad-writing towards wider and more profound social themes, we must see Bezruč not only as the culminator of the previous tradition, but also as extending it, as the creator of the social ballad in the period of critical realism, whose work was carried on after the First World War by the poets J. Wolker, J. Hora, J. Hořejší, etc.

The ballad is often shortly characterized as a tragedy in song. If the song-like character of the ballad, conditioned by the regular stanzas, the use of euphony (especially of resounding refrains) and the concentrated, contracted imagery, is fundamentally clear enough, the tragic in ballads is explained in literary theory only sporadically, and as a rule incorrectly into the bargain. Thus it will be

necessary to characterize shortly the fundamental nature of tragedy and determine the fundamental features of the aesthetic category 'the tragic'.

The concept of 'the tragic' cannot be mechanically identified — as is often done — with the suffering of a character, or with his death, both of which call up our sympathy. It cannot be doubted that alarm for the hero's fate, sympathy for his suffering and amazement at his death form an inseparable part of the aesthetic category of the tragic. But we have here only an important *accompanying* aspect of the tragic, by no means its fundamental one.

The basis of tragedy is an insoluble dilemma: the hero finds himself in an irreconcilable conflict with his surroundings, a conflict which ends with his destruction, his death.

Objectively, what is tragic is the suffering or destruction of people whose fight reflects the struggle of contradictory tendencies in social life and has by no means a purely individual range, but rather a significance which is generally human.

The tragic is always associated with a hero in whom the sense of responsibility, the highest degree of nobility and greatness of soul predominate over selfishness, over his concern with his own prosperity. At the same time, of course, the fundamentally human nature of the hero's identity no way disappears — he is no lay figure of virtue, but a living man. The tragic hero in class society fights boldly against social evils, defends justice, honour, the interests of the oppressed, the freedom and independence of his native land, etc. He acts in such conditions, in such a combination of circumstances, where social evil is so strong that the hero has insufficient strength to be victorious over it, to bring into being successfully the progress which is thrusting itself forward, which will one day form new relationships between people and permit new thoughts to shine forth.

A man who suffers and even it may be perishes in the struggle for a historically regressive aim, cannot be considered a truly tragic figure (e.g. Tybalt in Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* or Adolf Hitler in the last days of his life, brimming over with dramatic content). There are however cases where the hero endeavours to free himself from the reactionary forces in the midst of which he grew up, suspects the truth that a new life will be victorious, but loses his way on the path to the future (e.g. Yegor Bulichov in Gorky's drama of that name). The fate of such a hero is marked by the tragic and can become the theme of a tragedy.

The character of the tragic changes according to historical conditions. In ancient classical times it was different (compare the fight of the noble and self-sacrificing Prometheus against the gods for the happiness of mankind, or the struggle of Oedipus against a mercilessly crushing fate), from what it was at the Renaissance in Shakespeare, whose heroes fall in the just fight against wrong (e.g. Hamlet), as victims of outmoded family hatred (e.g. Romeo and Juliet), or pay with their death for passionate ambition (e.g. Richard III, who casts the principles of humaneness out of his path). Under capitalism heroes beat in vain on the bars of the cage of financial relationships which are paramount in that society and which destroy the noblest longings of human beings (Maryša in the drama of that name by the Mrštík brothers). In works of naturalism the tragic is expressed by the desperate fight of the character against the overwhelming circumstances of life which he is unable to change (cf. for example Oswald and his mother in Ibsen's *Ghosts* — both of whom try in vain to ward off the blows of Oswald's inherited disease). In Chekhov the tragic has highly individual characteristics (e.g. the tragic fate of Serebryakov in *Uncle Vanya*; Serebryakov realizes the empty, uncreative nature of his wasted life, after he has sacrificed himself for a person who only pretended to be a great individual). In the context of the fight for victorious socialism and under that social system the tragic has a qualitatively different character to what it had in previous periods: the hero fights as a member of a great community and dies in the struggle to attain the noblest values for the whole of society; the death of the hero forms part of the struggle of the working class (or else of the whole of society) and the hero has sacrificed his life to achieve a common aim. The death of revolutionaries (e.g. the fighting commander of the people, Chapayev) is tragic not because of its insoluble character, but because of its historical optimism; for it contributed to the triumph of the progressive cause. It is an "optimistic tragedy", as Vishnyevski expressed it in the title of his brilliant play.

The ballad has a number of common features with the tragedy. In the first place it depicts the conflict of man with elements hostile to him. The appearance of this enemy is transformed in the course of the long history of the ballad, depending on the social conditions of the epoch. At first the ballad heroes stand

against an ineluctable fate, then against a supernatural demonic being (such as the revenant, the water-sprite, fairies, etc.), against their own passions and instincts (such as desire for money, unfaithfulness, etc.), against the fury of the elements (such as fire, flood, etc.). In more recent times the central figures of ballads perish beneath the wheels of social contradictions, economic and moral want under capitalism (poverty, prostitution) and in the tumult of imperialistic wars. As an example of the "optimistic" ballad of socialist imprint we might quote the *Ballad of the Stoker's Eyes* by Jiří Wolker. Here the hero loses his eyesight and dies, but by his sacrifice brings happiness to the whole of society.

Just as in tragedy, perhaps in fact even more so, since it is a not too extensive form, the ballad avoids detailed delineation. It uses wide dimensions, concentration of events; a number of less significant circumstances are forgotten, so that the action presented is bound to have gaps.

The ballad is bound up with the drama through its way of heightening the action, which is frequently presented in dramatic scenes, in the form of dialogue between the participating characters. Since in the ballad, as in tragedy, the struggle is waged to the end and the protagonist generally dies, the ballad calls up in the beholder horror, terror, caused by the hero's suffering and destruction, pity for his fate.

In tragedy the author usually remains hidden behind the action, which is communicated in an objective way. Here classical Greek tragedy forms an exception with its chorus (the chorus in Greek tragedy addresses the heroes or makes various remarks relating to the action, various suppositions and prophecies), as does that tragedy which, so far as the chorus is concerned, more or less follows the ancient Greek example — as instances, let us quote the *Irkutsk Tale* of A. Arbuzov or *A Love Like that (Taková láska)* by Pavel Kohout. The ballad does not follow the rules for objective presentation of an incident. The author generally interrupts the action to comment on events, or addresses the characters, etc.; in this way he expresses his sympathy or antipathy.

Thus, to put it shortly, the structure of the ballad stands on three pillars: that of the concentrated plot, sketched in only in its main outline and presented with many gaps, that of the culminating struggle of hostile parties, and that of the author's emotionally excited attitude to the action.

The social ballads of Bezruč — with the exception of a few which are not very striking and which will be dealt with in due course — have one common feature: with a unique degree of visual clarity and three-dimensional presentation the poet has revealed concrete people and phenomena, both the victims in the struggle against the rich men (Maryčka Magdónova driven to suicide, the hounded crofter Dulava, the persecuted schoolmaster in the Těšín village, the miner Mazur, who perishes in the pit), and also the enemies of the poor (Gero and his employees, the mayor Hochfelder, the high burghers of Frýdek, the civil engineer from Modrá). The representatives of the two hostile parties find themselves in a conflict which demonstrates their personal characteristics. The encounter of the popular hero with the world of capitalism ends tragically, his life is destroyed by historical necessity.

Ballads dealing with the poverty of the people and their denationalization undoubtedly take a position at the very centre of Bezruč's balladry: not only because of the rebellious character of his themes, but also because of their high artistic craftsmanship, which literally enchants the reader. The dramatic character

of these ballads is striking and forms the main structural line of this artistic form.

One of the jewels of Czech poetry is the ballad *Maryčka Magdónova*. It has a comparatively narrow range — twelve four-line stanzas. In this limited space Bezruč has presented the tragedy of the Beskyd people. The young girl, Maryčka — the central figure of the ballad — dies by her own hand, unable to cut the knot of social contradictions. Hers is a figure that is tragic in the true sense of the word.

If we follow in detail the exposition, gradual culmination and conclusion of the action of *Maryčka Magdónova*, we are literally crushed by the suggestive power of its dramatic character. This ballad might well be the scenario of a thrilling film. A closer examination of its structure will confirm this. The individual scenes of the poem are presented with the concise, sober lines of a woodcut. We may follow it verse by verse. In the first verse: the miner Magdon is on his way home from Ostrava; the Bartovice inn; Magdon is flung out of it with a broken head; in Staré Hamry under the Beskyds Maryčka weeps. Second stanza: Maryčka's mother dies under the coal truck; the five orphans are sobbing. The third verse is a lyrical intermezzo. The poet — not unlike the manner of the chorus in classical Greek tragedies — expresses his emotion by means of searching questions and by addressing Maryčka directly. The fourth stanza sets out in an epic way the basic contradiction of capitalism in the Beskyd countryside: the vast forests of the mine-owner, Marquis Gero — the drudgery of the Beskyd miners in the pits that belong to him, and the lack of fuel for the orphan children. In the fifth stanza the action continues: the mayor of Staré Hamry, Hochfelder, has seen Maryčka gathering wood and has no intention of keeping quiet. Half of the entire poem is devoted to the depiction of Maryčka's journey to Frýdek and her suicide. This is the heart of the ballad's action; the poet makes use of film sequences to present it. Sixth stanza: the constable leads Maryčka off under arrest to Frýdek. His appearance and equipment reach the reader by means of a stage direction. The seventh stanza describes the behaviour of Maryčka, broken down and weeping. The eighth and ninth stanzas express Maryčka's ideas in the form of two contrasting scenes — Hochfelder will look on complacently at her shame and the burghers of Frýdek will laugh spitefully at her — while at home the orphan children are helpless. The tenth stanza delineates the wild scenery along the banks of the Ostravice. The eleventh stanza describes the girl's death. The detail are overwhelming and presented in the manner of film:

*Your black hair caught on the rocks below,
red with blood are your white hands.*
(Černé tvé vlasy se na skále chytly,
bílé tvé ruce se zbarvily krví.)*

The last stanza, with its bare communication of the facts about the graveyard, where Maryčka lies in the corner reserved for suicides, concludes the tragedy with an ironic coda — the poor go on being persecuted after death, even the Church is on the side of the powerful.

So too Bezruč's remarkable ballad *The Field in the Hills* (*Pole na horách*). The theme introduces a persecuted crofter and the arbitrary despotism of the wealthy

* Milner, p. 35.

Count) is really a film scenario. The action of the poem presents the following scenes: 1) the field at the foot of Lysá Hill; the blue potato blossom — the flowing surface of the oat field; the smile of Jura Dulava; 2) Jura is working in the field — the Count's hares, deer and stags are ruining his work; 3) the encounter with the Prussian gamekeeper — Jura falls dead to the ground; 4) the graveyard on Pražma, where Dulava lies buried; 5) the landowner's hunt, the dance of the hares; the dead Jura grinds his teeth; 6) Dulava's field is overgrown with thistles, the tom-cats chase each other with no-one to drive them away; an old man tells the children that Jura haunts the field.

In the ballad *Schoolmaster Halfar (Kantor Halfar)* Bezruč illustrated the consequences of the national fight of the Silesian people on the fate of the persecuted teacher: Halfar refuses to betray his mother tongue, but pays for his proud defiance by the loss of his personal happiness. He finds a way out of an insoluble dilemma in the same way as Maryčka Magdonova — by voluntary death. In this poem, too, (apart from the first three stanzas which give a narrative sketch of the basic contradictions of Halfar's life) Bezruč uses a dramatic approach. Beginning with the fourth stanza, each stanza contains a single dramatic scene. The action is evoked by the most concentrated strokes and strong situations: the merry dance music in the tavern — the wedding of Halfar's sweetheart in the church) Halfar carries on his fight against the masters, and continues to teach in Czech; Halfar alone in the fields and tavern; the village girl is horrified by the news that the schoolmaster has hanged himself (how can we fail to recall the messenger in Greek tragedy bearing news of the death of important figures?); the humble funeral of Halfar, who pays for his boldness even by his sad fate after death.

The heart of the action in the ballad *Bernard Žár* is the tragic quarrel of the renegade with his own mother, who cannot bring herself to deny her native tongue. The figure of Žár is not tragic in the noble sense — for this burgher of Frydek takes a historically retrogressive stand. The poet makes Žár die at the height of his "fortune" in the circle of his Germanized family. The truly tragic figure is however Žár's mother, a woman who loves her son with an unlimited, touching love, such as we find in Neruda; for her — in spite of his shocking behaviour to his mother — he is nevertheless still her son.

The ballad *Bernard Žár* has an interesting structure. Once more it combines the epic, the narrative, which is concentrated in the first two stanzas and presents as it were an exposition of the tragedy (Žár, the wealthy renegade, drives out of his house even his own mother, because she speaks Czech), with dramatic scenes, which are evoked in a vivid three-dimensional manner (especially the funeral). Bezruč has selected two culminating situations from the whole story: the illness and the funeral of Žár. Both situations are rendered more acute by the polarity of the relationship between Žár and his mother: Žár makes his confession — his mother cries in the courtyard; the splendour of the funeral with the German choir — the mother, utterly crushed, stands at the back in the graveyard.

The tragedies of three members of a single mining family pile up in the ballad *Pětváld II*. In a three-act plot (the death of Mazur's wife, the death of Mazur, the moral downfall of Halka) the action gradually culminates. Between the three acts in the life of the miner's family lengthy periods of time elapse; the poet is here using the leaps which are a feature of the ballad. Naturally the centre of

attention is the figure of the proud, nationally conscious miner, typical representative of the Těšín people. The unwavering character of his attitude is shown by Bezruč in these two scenes: Mazur in the inn and the encounter of Mazur with the engineer. Both scenes are presented in dialogue; in the concentration of his expression the poet omits introductory sentences. Some places in the poem are effective thanks to the theatrical manner in which Bezruč expresses what is passing in Mazur's mind. That is, he depicts the miner's expression and gesticulation ("Mazur bit on his lip, he'd feel foolish letting moisture brim over his lash" („Pysk hryzl Mazur, bylo mu směšno přes brvu vodu lít"); "Mazur grimaced, and banged down his glass" („šklebil se Mazur a udeřil sklenkou").

The way in which the happiness of a young girl was crushed under the millstone of a hard life is spoken of in the poem *Žermanice*. Apart from *Maryčka Magdonova* it is clearly here that Bezruč employed to the greatest extent the features characteristic of the ballad as a tragedy in song. *Žermanice* overwhelms us with its unique melodic line. After the epic exposition in the first stanza the poem has actually two parts: the action of the second part takes place after several decades — without even the most fugitive reminder from Bezruč of the events which have occurred over such a considerable period (here we can recognize the creative method of the leap in the action, characteristic of the ballad). In the first dramatic part we find a double address to the girl (an offer of marriage, a warning). The second part of the action is formed really by two scenes: Maryčka carries wine to the workers on the track and meets her one-time sweetheart; Maryčka looks into the water — her present appearance contrasts tragically with her former beauty. The visual character of these scenes, presented as it were in a single stroke, is still further increased by the author's identification with the fate of the unfortunate couple. This identification is interwoven with the pictorial material throughout the whole structure of the poem and is also reflected in the emotional modification of the refrain.

In Bezruč's social ballads *Maryčka Magdonova*, *Bernard Žár*, *Pětváld II* and *Žermanice* it is the family that is depicted; but family drama is not here confined to the home, it goes beyond its walls and pours itself out into the life of the whole of society; it is as if the rays of social contradictions met and were deflected in the prism of the family.

The poem *The Rock Anemone (Koniklec)* is a ballad masterpiece, a true pearl, combining in an indissoluble whole the lyrical participation of the poet along with epic narrative and a dramatic approach. The tragic fate of the poor girl who goes into service and becomes the prey of the wealthy merchants of Těšín is brought home to us by the poet's delicately indicated parallel with the plucked and faded flower. The author appears in the poem as a protagonist — the companion of the girl on her journey; he speaks to her and follows her fate with painful participation.

The ballad *Death of an Emperor (Smrt césarova)* occupies a special place in the *Silesian Songs*. The tale of the killing of the brutal Roman Emperor Domitian, destroyer of 7,000 Dacians, is apparently presented by the poet on a calm epic level (his reference to Tacitus as a source is a pretended one — Bezruč invented the action of the ballad). But in the context of the other revolutionary poems of Bezruč its *raison d'être* is on the one hand as a warning to all the mighty, that a just fate rules over all their arrogance, on the other hand as a summons to anarchistic action. It is true that the main line of the plot is formed by the

fall of a powerful man, but it is not here a question of a tragic hero in the noble sense. The poem is strongly interwoven with the dramatic element. Each of its three parts, acts, as it were, which follow each other after longer intervals of time, has its own dramatic core. The first part: after the introductory narrative of the meeting of Domitian with three Dacians there follows the scene of the dialogue of the two hostile sides: we hear only a short report of the death of the seven thousand. The second part: a short narrative of the meeting of Domitian with the Dacian sybil-princess is followed by a dramatically tense dialogue between the two and the Emperor's order to slay the sybil along with the mercenary soldier Septimus. The third part of the poem is the monologue of the satisfied Emperor over his goblet of wine. The Epilogue to the whole drama is provided by the conversation between the brother and the son of Septimus.

The time has come to sum up our observations on the art of Bezruč in the social ballad.

A characteristic feature of the social ballad of Bezruč is that the poet succeeds in combining and preserving the balance between the most personal of experiences, full of fire, passion and militant pathos, and objectivity in presentation and the historical truth of the typical incidents depicted. Bezruč, who had gone on foot through all the villages and towns in the Ostrava region, the Opava and Těšín regions and under the Beskyds, and knew the life of their people, succeeded in endowing his poems with a suggestive concrete quality and a rich fullness of colour both in their depth and in their characteristic details.

Of all the literary kinds it was precisely the ballad which best enabled Bezruč to show the basic social contradictions in the life of the Silesian region under capitalism. As a ballad writer Bezruč concentrates his recognition of reality into sharp, laconically and lapidarily expressed images.

Bezruč attains this plasticity of image above all by the use of dramatic and sometimes directly theatrical approaches in the depicting of reality. The common feature which the drama (and above all tragedy) has with the ballad is that it renders explicit so to say the peaks of the action, while less important matters are communicated or the spectator (or perceiver) is informed of them by means of the narrative of one of the characters (in the drama) or through the mouth of the narrator (in epic and in the epic theatre). Bezruč's ballads for the most part in a masterly way combine epic narrative with dramatic and even theatrical principles; in general the key and culminating parts of the action are presented dramatically and theatrically in Bezruč's poems. Wherever the author of *Silesian Songs* did not abide by these principles (e.g. in the poem of the Twenties, *Hanyš Horehled*, which merely describes the unfortunate effects of natural forces on the work of the Highlanders, in which man appears only as a lay figure and not an active participant, or in the poem *Two Grave Mounds (Dvě mohyly)*, also of the Twenties, which merely describes the natural scenery by the River Ostravice and in which mere reference is made to the death of two unfortunates), there arose artistically colourless forms, productions which are lacking in the overwhelming power of Bezruč's ballad masterpieces.

THE DRAMATIC ELEMENT IN THE LYRIC

There are very few intimate lyrics among Bezruč's poems. This striking fact can be explained by the shyness of the author of *Silesian Songs*, his incapacity, as he himself expressed it in a letter, to take his private feelings to market. Whenever Bezruč wanted to speak about himself and present his autostylization of his prophetic and warrior personality, he was obliged to use a pseudonym. In expressing the sentiments of love he selected the forms of various intimations or the method of more or less objectifying epic pictures (including dramatic scenes) or parallels.

a) The Reflection of Unfulfilled Love In Bezruč's Lyrics and the Objectifying of this Experience

Two amatory experiences are reflected in Bezruč's lyrics — one connected with the Beskyds and one which is bound up with the figure of Fanyňka Tomková.

The first, "Beskyd", experience, was most urgently expressed lyrically in the poem *Hučín*. It was no mere chance that Bezruč later revised this amatory confession, so that we have several versions of *Hučín*. Attempts to objectivize the "Beskyd" love affair can be found in the poems *Return (Návrat)*, *Only Once (Jen Jedenkrát)*, and more remotely also in the poem *The Butterfly (Motýl)*.

The poem *The Return* contains within the framework of narrative telling of the poet's visit to his native village a detailed examination of how reality has changed compared with previous years. The questions which the poet asks ("How is the priest?" "How is the headmaster?" "How is the old Count keeping?" — „Zdráv farář?" „Zdráv rektor?" „Zdráv starý gróf je-li?" — "How is . . . Maryčka from up the village?" „Zdráva-li . . . gónra Maryčka?") presuppose the presence of an informer. And so at least potentially the poem contains dialogue, dramatic conversation. Actually an answer appears to the main question, that relating to Maryčka:

*Her love was abroad. Well a rich man
applied, that few could compare with;
true enough that he drank from morning to night —
he could afford to, that dyer from Frýdek.
(Milý byl v cizině. Tož zaprosil
bohatec, jakých pořídku;
pravda, že od rána do noci pil,
měl z čeho, ten barvíř z Frydku.)*

Here the dialogue has become complete; it is a conversation between two people.

The poem *Only Once* was composed by Bezruč as a parallel objectively presented between the situation of the northern valley (first part of the poem) and the fate of his own love (second part of the poem). In the second half of the poem the objective character of the narrative breaks down and the author speaks, emotionally moved, to the beloved woman in a dramatic scene.

A potential dialogue forms the centre of the enchanting lyric *The Butterfly*.

The first four lines describe the natural scenery and indicate the dramatic excitement called up by the flight of the butterfly, or by the addressing of the butterfly. For the butterfly does not reply to the poet's questions, of whether it is love or good fortune. It is as if the poet himself answered his questions in the affirmative by inviting the butterfly to fly away: for to him, to Petr Bezruč, this symbol of happiness in love does not belong. The unstated answer, the unfinished dialogue, with their subdued mystery, excite us even more, tease us like a secret which has not been entirely revealed.

The lyric poems full of glowing love and passionate enchantment with Fanyňka Tomková — *The Little Swan (Labutinka)* — were not intended by Bezruč for the public. He sent them only to the beloved girl as the expression of his feelings, without inner censorship, without objectivization, as the reflection of his own innermost soul in which nothing was concealed. Bezruč did not entrust these poems to the press. They did not appear until after his death.¹¹

The unrequited love of Petr Bezruč for Fanyňka Tomková was reflected in and transformed in several narrative-lyrical poems, which took shape from the year 1902 onwards. Dramatic effects appear only partially in these — grief and sorrow divert the poet's expression first into self-irony and then are projected into the destinies of unhappy men, who often come to a tragic end.¹²

In the two-stanza poem *The Beauty (Kráska)*, the author does not speak by way of a lyrical confession of such a delicate matter as being refused by a girl. He uses the form of dramatic scene: the poet has spoken for the community and has attained fame; now he has cast his eye on the beauty. The girl however refuses him (her reply is given in direct speech). The poem is given ironic point by the dual use of the same image in the refrain, where however it is each time used in a different context.

On the border-line between lyrical confession of betrayed love and an attempt to render this lyrical material objectively in the experience of another person lie the poems *Paper Mojšl (Papírový Mojšl)*¹³ and *The Little Swan*. The poet wanders through both poems like a pilgrim, who enters into the action and projects his own subjective feelings into it.

Paper Mojšl is rendered dramatic by the very parallel between the poet and Mojšl. In comparing the two types, which finally turn out to be complementary, there results a contact of images produced by the resistance between the impulses arising from the two characters. The poem begins with a lyric prologue about the Jews, continues with a narrative account of the rescue of Mojšl from death and culminates with a broadly developed dramatic scene — the conversation between the poet and Mojšl, which is reproduced in direct speech. Bezruč presented this conversation so expressively and three-dimensionally that it could easily be performed on the stage. The frequent remarks of the poet show the way here, remarks which characterize the behaviour of the speaker and describe his expression and gestures ("I gave a puff at my cigarette" — „dým jsem pustil z smotku“; "Homeric laughter rang out from the tables" — „homérický smích zněl ode stolů“; "He laughed through his nose at this" — „nosem smál se k tomu“). These remarks have the character of stage directions in a play.

Typical of the poem *The Little Swan* is the way in which Bezruč enlivens the introductory description of "Labutinka" in the street or the narrative of his two-years' absence by conveying the facts through addressing the girl. Apart from the two scenes which are presented directly in dialogue (the poet and the mother;

the poet and his informer), the poem is really the poet's emotionally aroused authorial monologue addressed to the beloved girl.

The ballad of the sad fate of Hlubek, called *Krásné Pole*, has advanced much further to the objectivization of disillusionment in love. If it were not for the occasional addressing of the passive hero and if at the end of the poem the poet-pilgrim did not enter the action (both of which facts make it certain that the author is disturbed by the fate of Hlubek), we could speak of Bezruč's remoteness from the events expounded.

In *Krásné Pole* we find several dramatic scenes; between them the different narratives have the function of a substance binding the series of scenes in a single whole and serve to bridge the gap from one scene to another. The following are the strikingly dramatic scenes: at the fence of the Bystroň family Hlubek is watching the lovely Beruška Bystroňova; at the village dance Hlubek does not join in, the girls make fun of his shyness. Hlubek watches Beruška; the dialogue between Hlubek's fortunate rival and Beruška — all that is literally reproduced is the girl's message to Hlubek; the scene between Hlubek and his father; Hlubek's talk with the gipsy woman — the author merely gives the words of the gipsy; Hlubek goes to *Krásné Pole*; Hlubek looks in at the window (scenes of looking through a window into a room or hall can also be found in Bezruč's poem *Sviadnov II* and in *The Fancy-Dress Ball (Maškarní ples)*; the dying Hlubek; Hlubek's neglected grave. As in some other cases here too Bezruč depicts the development in his hero's inner soul by noting his expressions (e.g. "carefully he looked into his son's face, silent as the face of the dead" — „pozorně hleděl do synova líce, to mlčenlivé jak tvář mrtvého jest“; "And his eyes remained fixed on the clock" — „a na hodinách zůstal třet okem“).

In *Krásné Pole* Bezruč made use of tragic irony in a very suggestive way — the predicted fate of the characters was not fulfilled: he who was to have died, lives on in the greatest happiness; he who was to have attained happiness dies in dreary loneliness. The prophecy of fate does not come true in Bezruč so far as it concerns personal happiness — such is the painful philosophy of the poem *Krásné Pole*.

In the poems *Harvest (Žně)* and *Sviadnov II*, war affects the lives of individuals and mercilessly crushes their happiness in love.

In the ballad *Harvest* the betrothed of the miller's daughter falls in the field of battle. After the introductory stanza, in which he sketches the basic facts, Bezruč continues as if he were writing a film scenario. Twice he shows a panorama (a hilly landscape with farm-steading and mill; work in the harvest, and the tumult of war contrasted with it), and twice he switches to detail, in the form of the fair daughter of Chylek the miller, first of all gazing at her own beauty in the stream, then

... when she slipped her kerchief
from off her dark hair, gazing longingly
into the distance, the miller's daughter wondrously fair,
her breast heaving with a sweet desire.

(... šátek sešinula
kdy s temných vlasů, dívala se teskně
v dál divukrásná mlynářova dcera
a prsa sladkou vzdýmala se touhou.)

The action of the ballad *Sviadnov II* — if we omit the narrative introduction sketching-in the situation — is presented as it were in four acts: Buzek bids farewell to his wife, who swears to her faithful love (the wife's direct speech is quoted); Buzek returns home wounded and on looking through the window he sees his wife's unfaithfulness; the dramatic scene of Buzek's death; the ironical conclusion: the suicide's wife kisses the young farm-hand.

The true ballad character was denied to the poem *An Idyll in the Mill (Idyla ve mlýně)*, which merely shows the isolated case of the wife's betrayal and murder of the husband. Apparent happiness — how can we fail to think of Ibsen's technique of revealing the truth about reality — turns out in the end to be based on the destruction of the happiness of another and on a crime. The poem — an incident worthy of a court of justice — does not arouse in the reader the emotion that comes from the action of tragic figures, but merely calls up amazement and horror at the unfeeling nature of human beings.

The plot of the poem is presented as in the epic theatre. The poet-narrator relates the circumstances of the action, which culminates in the scene when the question is raised of the miller's gun, and concludes with the poet's conversation with the Highlander, which eventually throws light on the incident. The amazement of the miller and his wife is presented in a theatrical way:

... that the man's face became
as white as the snow, and endless
fear spread over the woman's cheek?
(že se sněhem pobarvila
muže tvář a nekonečná
úzkost táhla lícem ženy?)

b) Other Lyrics

Besides experiences of love, the lyric poetry of Bezruč takes its material from other fields. It draws on memories of youth, it is inspired by nature, expresses the poet's relationship to various people, characterizes the author's work, communicates the feelings of old age and the thought of death. Here too we find evidence that Bezruč does not desire to express his feelings "completely" and therefore selects an objectivizing approach (including the dramatic way of depicting). I shall notice only a few cases from this field of Bezruč's lyric poetry. My purpose is only to demonstrate my thesis.

As an example of the lyric springing from memories of youth we may mention the poems *Hrabyň* and *The Blue Banded Butterfly (Stužkonoska modrá)*.

Both of these, besides the passages expressed in an enchanting, typically lyrical way, have also dramatic scenes (in *Hrabyň*: Father Böhm preaches, the boy bows his head; the priest's talk with the boy. In the *Blue Banded Butterfly*, there are two conversations: the boy shows his butterflies to the guest; the German student gives the information that the Blue Banded Butterfly is the most valuable of butterflies; we follow the catching of the butterfly as if it were a dramatic scene.

A parable of the sorrow of those poets, who have expressed all that they wanted to say, is presented in the poem *The Captive Thrush (Chycený Drozd)*, whose

effect is tragic. This poem, too, combines epic narrative with the dramatic scenes of the three meetings of the narrator with his uncle the bird-catcher. The third meeting especially is presented as a distinctive scene, expressing the appearance, physical actions and expressions of the old man.

When Bezruč presents his personal opinion of various people, he uses dramatic approaches frequently. For example, J. S. Machar is caught in a single central pose — Machar is gazing from the Danube towards Bohemia, similar to Alcibiades (1864—1914). In the poem *In Memory of the Wife of Miloslav Hýsek (Za choťi Miloslava Hýska)* the lyrical attitude to the dead woman is presented by three little pictures (film shots) from her life. In the poem *In Memory of Anton Růžička of Žarovice (Za Antonem Růžičkou z Žarovic)*¹⁴ Bezruč brings the appearance of the innkeeper before us in a lapidary way by reproducing in dialogue his own disagreement with him on the curative properties of a certain herb.

There is a comparatively large number of lyrics which reflect the moods and feelings of Bezruč in his old age. In these poems too the poet either conceals his emotion — once in his conversation with his personified pipe and book (*Two Lasses — Dvě děvuchy*), again in the ironic dialogue with someone who has come to congratulate him (*Noli tangere*), elsewhere by means of a dialogue with cruel fate (*Conversation with Fate — Rozmluva s osudem*) — or else he underlines the three-dimensional character of the images by their immediate exposition as if on the stage (the sound of his mother's voice; Charon rowing the boat — in the poem *The Far Shore — Druhý břeh*).

Bezruč indicates his life-long connection with song by the visual personification of song in the three periods of his life — at first the song steps before the poet, then alongside him and after death it will walk behind his funeral hearse (*The Fellow Pilgrim — Souputnice*).

As can be seen, the transitional points between the lyric, the epic and the dramatically presented material are not sudden in Bezruč; the combination and the interplay of creative approaches characteristic for one or the other of the three literary kinds are almost the rule in Bezruč.

3

THE DRAMATIC ELEMENT AND THEATRICAL APPROACHES IN BEZRUČ'S PROSE WORK

In the corpus of Bezruč's work, prose forms a part whose significance is somewhat marginal. Nothing in this statement can be changed by the fact that it was precisely with the prose *Studies from the 'Café Lustig' (Studie z 'Café Lustig')* that the future poet made his debut, that later he wrote similar sketches from the Post Office (these were not preserved) and that he first intended to present the material from the life of the Beskyds in the form of a novel.

Even the prose work of Petr Bezruč bears witness to the fact that their author had a distinct gift for dramatic methods of dealing creatively with material.

Vladimír Vašek's first-published work, *Studies from the 'Café Lustig'* (they date from as early as 1888), incline much more to the description of individuals, of their external characteristics, rather than to the evocation of the actual

characters. Nevertheless we do find within these "studies", which are written almost like reports from natural science, giving vivid descriptions of people in the café, decidedly dramatic scenes. The individual figures of *The Large Party* (*Velká partie*) are not merely described. We find even their conversation recorded: the narrator and the minute-keeper of the company also participate. The young author proceeds in his most dramatic way in the third "grade", entitled "Mr. Špaček at Billiards". The very description of Špaček's game and his facial expressions is completely scenic, as the following observations of the author for example demonstrate: [Špaček] jumps away from the billiard table, begins to dance round about it, gets back to where he started, pots a ball, bites his lip and turns round to face you: "And what about that?"¹⁵ A clear piece of evidence for the dramatic verve of the young writer, his art of graduating the action and seizing the heart of a character in a scenic manner, is the presentation of the billiard duel between the guard and Špaček. Here obviously we have the best passage in all the early works of Ratibor Suk.*

At some time towards the end of World War I and not long afterwards there originated *Three Sketches from Old Russia* (*Tři kresby z dřevní Rusi*), satirically intended by way of a pretended Russian background to represent the conditions in this country. The first prose item — *The Audience* (*Audience*) — introduces the town prefect Hrabalov in the act of receiving his subordinates, and ordering each of them to perform his obligations towards his superior. It is a dramatic scene worthy of the miniature scenic art of Chekhov. The second prose piece — *Ministrovo jitro* (*The Morning of the Minister*) — is almost entirely written in the technique of the dramatic play. Here is a short extract:

The Minister: I am dissatisfied, Mr. Secretary.

The Secretary (disturbed): Your Excell- Sir, who or what could possibly have dared . . .

The Minister (flings a pile of morning newspapers on the desk):

Very dissatisfied. In three out of twenty of the morning papers there is not a single line about me!

Also the third prose piece — *Anonymous Letter* (*Anonymní list*) — while of narrative structure, expounds two pieces dramatically; Shcheluchin in conversation with the letter-writer ascertains the effect of his anonymous letter; the scene of Shcheluchin's thrashing.

The Republic before St. Peter (*Republika před sv. Petrem*) (a prose work which originated before 1923) is once more a dramatic scene in which Bezruč sarcastically expresses by the contrasted reports of Serbs and Czechs to St. Peter in Heaven his opposition to upstart title holders. In this prose work the authorial narrative is limited basically to the function of stage directions in a play. I quote a short example:

"Halt!" thundered Peter. The ship stopped and innumerable figures rushed in disorder to the gangway.

"Halt and leave the ship one by one. And each of you will announce his name."

And here the first long shade reached Peter and pronounced, bowing slightly:

"Public Ordinary University Professor atque juris utriusque duplex Doctor Jaroslav Kapucínek."

* An early pseudonym of Vladimír Vašek.

A central position among Bezruč's prose works is held by three short pieces: *The Young Innocent* (*Mládáiko*), *The Earnings of Elenka Hričovská* (*Zárobek Elenky Hričovské*) and *The Army Watch* (*Vojanský zigar*). All of these draw upon the author's memories.

The action of the tale *The Young Innocent* is situated at some time in the eighteen-seventies and has about it something of the antiquated style of the semi-romantic tales of Vítězslav Hálek. Even although it is for the most part narrated, there are also to be found in it places recalling scenes in a drama (e.g. the scene after the saving of the life of the "distinguished person", presented mostly in dialogue).

The prose works *The Earnings of Elenka Hričovská* and *The Army Watch* stand on a much higher artistic level. Both form a pendant to Bezruč's ballads, not only because of their concentration, the closed character of their presentation, but also because of their structure.

The Earnings of Elenka Hričovská is composed entirely in the manner of Bezruč's social ballads. After an initial narrative, which introduces the plot situation, there follows the dialogue between the Jewish landlady of the tavern, Spitzová, and the Slovakian girl who has been sold into "service" and must pay her debt to her mistress by prostitution. The central point of this prose work is the dramatic scene in which Elenka comes to the Post Office with her secret earnings. The short epilogue — like the epilogue in several of Bezruč's ballads — concludes this little work which is a complaint against the social and moral misery of poverty-stricken young girls.

The story *The Army Watch* is comparable to those ballads of Bezruč in which war plays a destructive part in the life of simple people. Authorial narrative sketches the previous history of the headmaster and gives us a glimpse of his idyllic life in an optimistic light. But war destroys this happiness — the headmaster's beloved son falls in battle. Bezruč has set into the action the figures of two friends who are of entirely different character — the shy son of the headmaster and the clownish, apparently rough, but in fact good-hearted Bernard. This contrapuntal placing of the characters indicates the author's feeling for the dramatic structure of a work. The two key places in the tale are presented as dramatic scenes (the return of the two lads from being conscripted; the return of the wounded Bernard and the comforting lie he tells about the headmaster's son). The blow of truth at the end of the tale comes unexpectedly and in detail reminds us of film methods (the watch of the headmaster's dead son which Bernard lays unobserved on the table).

The small volume *The Crooked Smile of the Lizard* (*Křivý úsměv ještěrský*) collected a series of short incidents from Bezruč's life. Some of these skilfully combine narrative with dramatic methods. The dramatic scene is always found at the centre, standing out in relief and underlining the main part of the action. I give three examples.

The distinguished and well-balanced short work *Russian Spies in Starý Hrozenkov* (*Ruští vyzvědači na Starém Hrozenkově*) is really (apart from the short narrative introduction) a dramatic scene with all its attributes — dialogue and accompanying stage directions relating to the expression, appearance and intonation of the characters.

A similar case is that of the miniature-anecdote *The Tramp at Rajhrad* (*Tramp v Rajhradě*), which is close to the dramatic jokes of Chekhov

not only with its scenario but also with the dialogue form of presentation and the ironic focus.

The two pages of *The Emperor's Man Before the Court* (Císařský muž před soudem) actually consist of three dramatic scenes, as it were three acts of a comedy (Cibulcov's slaps in the face; Pírek at the judicial consultation; Pírek absolved of blame before the court).

CONCLUSION

Throughout all his work Petr Bezruč employed as his main artistic methods the dramatic and theatrical ways of depicting reality. He employed them functionally, but in different ways at the different stages of his creative work or in the different genres.

The central part of Bezruč's poetry is devoted to the fight for the social and national rights of the people of the Silesian region. Here Bezruč presented dynamic reality as the struggle of two parties. The dramatic nature of reality itself (the conflict of the ruling class with the subjugated people) called directly for the employment of methods typical of the drama and the theatre. Bezruč created the mighty figure of the poet-warrior (at times using motifs from the ancient world, elsewhere endowing him with the features of a tragi-comic phantom). He embodied in the figure of the treacherous Marquis Gero the prime enemy of the working people. The motif of the encounter of the poet with Gero, along with the motifs of the encounters of representatives of the ruling class with those of the people, enabled Bezruč to work effectively with dramatic and theatrical methods.

The drama provided by life in Silesia, the Ostrava region and the Těšín region at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century gave Bezruč a basis for his social ballads. For the ballad form was capable of explaining in a unique way the social contradictions and permitted Bezruč to develop his material as a tragedy in song, with all the features of dramatic effect and interwoven with the poet's own figure. In the history of the Czech ballad Bezruč is the creator of the ballad in the period of critical realism.

The source of the tragic in Bezruč's ballads is the destruction of the hero in circumstances of insoluble social disproportion (*Maryčka Magdonova*, *Schoolmaster Haljar*, etc.). Some of Bezruč's ballads are situated against the background of the family; but they also go beyond the boundaries of the family, reflecting a wider social connection (cf. the tragedy of the renegade's mother in the poem *Bernard Žár*). So far as Bezruč depicted the fate of women under capitalism (e.g. in the ballad *Žermanice*) he used it to demonstrate the crisis of the bourgeois system; here the dramatic in Bezruč is identical with the dramatic in the plays of the critical realists (e.g. with the dramatic in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Gabriela Preissová's *The Farmer's Woman* [*Gazdina roba*] in Ostrovský's *The Storm*).

The dramatic element and theatrical methods were employed to a much lesser extent in Bezruč's love lyrics, in which the poet — with the exception of a few burning lyrics inspired by the figure of Fanyňka Tomková, which were not published till after Bezruč's death — selected the form of varied objectivizing narrative depictions (although here too he presented certain places as dramatic

scenes — e.g. in the poems *Paper Mojšl* and *Swan's-down*) and parallels (e.g. in the poem *Only Once*).

Most of his prose works are marginal to the work of Petr Bezruč. But they, too, provide evidence that their author was inclined to treat his material dramatically. Certain of his smaller prose works (e.g. *The Audience* or *The Tramp at Rajhrad*) are close in their use of dialogue and ironical focussing of the situation to the theatrical miniatures of Chekhov. The prose works *The Earnings of Elenka Hričovská* and *The Army Watch* form a pendant to Bezruč's ballads, expressing the terrible tragedies of the common people under capitalism and in the same way constructed dramatically.

Typical for the artistic method of Petr Bezruč is the intertwining and amalgamation of the creative methods of lyric, epic and drama within a single work. The frequent application of the dramatic element is not surprising in a poet who was intimately acquainted with a reality full of contradictions and expressed it in vivid, three-dimensional images.

Perhaps in conclusion we are entitled to ask the question: why did a writer who so often gave evidence of his inclination to a dramatic and theatrical vision never make a direct attempt to compose a play, why did he not write for the theatre?

I fancy that there is only one answer to this: the art of the theatre is an art which presupposes the co-operation of a group of people (the dramatist, producer, actors, etc.). Thus it is the "most social" of the arts. Bezruč from his youth avoided large gatherings — he was an isolated figure. We have his own words for it that during his studies in Prague he never even went to the National Theatre.¹⁶ The proverbial timidity of the poet had the result that his rudimentary dramatic talent could be expressed neither in the drama nor in the place where the word of the author is embodied in a new theatrical art — on the stage.

Translated by Jessie Kocmanová

NOTES

¹ In the monograph *Petr Bezruč*, 2nd Edition, Ostrava, 1924.

² To define, or at least to characterize the aesthetic category 'dramatism', 'the dramatic element' is an exceedingly difficult task.

In the most general sense we might see in 'dramatism' that basic element which forms the very core of the drama as an artistic kind (a basic literary genre). However: how can we state what is the fundamental in the drama, when the significance of the concept 'drama' has changed so much in the course of several thousand years? It was one thing in classical antiquity, another in the Middle Ages, another in the Romantic period and yet another in the time of Naturalism, and still something different in the 20th century in Eugene O'Neill or in the modern drama, whether model or absurd. And this is merely to remain in the field of Europe or America; matters become more complicated when we consider the situation of the drama in Japan, China or other countries of the Asian dramatic "system". If we try then to seek an abstraction which would cover the fundamental features of the drama in all eras and countries we find ourselves in incredible difficulties.

In order to find a way out of these difficulties, let us first of all distinguish from the drama -- as a different field—stage (theatrical) phenomena. There are two reasons for this. Not only drama can be presented on the stage, both lyric and narrative poetry can be presented, as well as various spectacles, shows, revues, etc. The text of every drama is merely a scheme, and while it tells us a great deal about the characters (especially about their inner world and their relationships to other characters), and about events, it lets us know comparatively little about

the physical action of the characters, their gestures, mimicry, place on the stage, etc. A theatrical performance results from the dramaturgically experienced interpretation of the author's text and its concrete rendering on the stage. The written drama, then, is merely an incomplete score for the future theatrical performance, which exists, to be sure, potentially in the dramatist's text but must first of all be realized as a new form by the producer in co-operation with the whole mechanism of the theatre and all the subordinated arts (acting, dance, scenic design, film, music, etc.) as a new synthetic art — the stage-play. In distinction to other arts the main advantage and unique property of the theatre lies in the fact that the course of action of the characters develops directly before the gaze of the spectators present and that the images of people are created by living actors in the present moment.

We could characterize drama as a dialogue text of individual characteristic qualities, designed for performance, and not for reading. What is known as closet drama, which existed in the course of literary history, did not count on being performed on the stage, but has really vanished in the last decades, and that for two reasons: either it was not drama, a form with specific qualities of aesthetic image, or else the conditions which at one time — whether for technical or for other reasons — did not permit a particular drama to be staged, no longer exist, so that the modern theatre is capable of staging any dramatic text. We consider the fundamentals of the drama to lie in the representation of conflict by means of dialogue and in the potentiality of stage production of this representation.

The so-called narrative drama (whether we are thinking of certain forms of the medieval drama or of different modifications of the narrative theatre today — e.g. the theatre of Brechtian poetics) is merely a border-line form, which however always contains a certain conflict. The structure of the relationships of epic and dramatic method in the narrative drama would require a special analysis.

Just as the epic (narrative) theatre represents a synthesis of dramatic and epic methods, there exist *mutatis mutandis* similar relations between lyric and the model drama (e.g. Dürrenmatt) or the absurd drama (e.g. Ionesco). In the lyric, on the basis of word-objects, there arise images which by means of association, etc., call up in the reader thoughts and emotions. In productions of the model or the absurd drama the spectator is able to confront the scenes on the stage with his own experience of life and to reach certain intellectual conclusions from this confrontation.

In discussing the dramatic element in the work of Petr Bezruč we shall have in mind that type of dramatic element which can be found in realistic dramas, and concretely above all in the realistic drama of the 19th century. For as we hope to show in the present paper, it is to this drama that the dramatic element running through the work of the author of *Silesian Songs* is inclined.

The dramatic element in realistic drama reflects the dialectical contradictions of reality, the many-sided antithesis in the life of society, of social classes and groups and also in the life of the individual. The artistic images filled with the dramatic element demonstrate the shifts of power, the disputes and struggles of people, their interests, thoughts, desires, passions and experiences.

The basis of the artistic image in the drama is the action of the characters, both physical and verbal. The action of the drama arises from the action of the people. The basis of the realistic drama is determined by the fact that the author from the wealth of various actions selects such action, such a course of events (or a single event) which forms the determining link for the problem expounded. Drama depicts the process of development as antithetical, as the clash of various deliberate endeavours, which tend towards and lead to action. The most highly concentrated and the most acute form in which the dramatic element is expressed is the dramatic conflict. In this the nature and innermost world of the characters involved is revealed. We may thus define the realistic drama as the depiction of the origin, development and solution of a conflict, a dynamic collision. At the end of the drama we find the characters in new mutual relationships.

Having regard to the fact that the realistic dramatist selects a plot situation in which the interests of the parties involved clash in the sharpest way, in which the deliberate endeavours of people are transformed into real passions, so that every figure in the struggle reveals the basis of the vital content of his being, the plot of the drama must be concentrated as much as possible and its development speeded up. The concentration of the action is connected with the fact that the less significant moments are not shown on the stage; as a rule the characters merely pass on information about them in the course of the action.

The gradual, biographical depicting of persons is remote from the dramatic revelation of character. At the same time of course we do not wish to deny the various possibilities which

result from the combination of the epic and the dramatic methods — this occurs both in narrative practice (the novel, the novella, etc.) and in dramatic practice (e.g. the epic theatre of Brecht).

Drama presents conflicts by means of dialogue between the characters and by means of the author's stage directions, which denote the physical action of the persons or characterize the various circumstances of time and place in which the drama occurs, external intervention in the action, etc. So far as the dramatist wants to reveal the inner life of a character, their seething feelings, doubts, hesitation and so forth, he makes use of monologue. Organically inserted monologue developed according to rule serves to account for the actions of a character or precedes an important decision.

An important feature of the drama is the gradation of the action, which rises from the complication of the plot to the climax and hastens from culmination to solution. An experienced dramatist knows how to work cunningly upon the spectator's feelings of curiosity, fear or pity. The spectator, if he is really gripped by a drama or a work steeped in the dramatic element, anticipates events, guesses their further development, constructs various possible conclusions of the action, hopes for the best for the hero, trembles for his fate and wishes him a favourable solution of the critical and dangerous situations involved. From these feelings, thoughts and emotions dramatic tension is aroused in the spectator. The dramatist or narrator employing dramatic creative methods can preserve tension in two ways. The most common and perhaps too the dramatically most effective is that method of increasing dramatic tension whereby the author again and again surprises the spectator by introducing new, unexpected events, moments and motifs, so that the observer sees ahead in a different way from the author and must continually correct his "anticipations" in the course of following the action. This is the case with all works which use detection methods for the revelation of mysteries. Naturally, each situation and moment in the action must arise according to rule from the activity of the characters participating in the action and must not result from exterior and hence unnatural interventions of the author. We meet with another type of drama in those cases where the spectator so to speak knows everything, sees where events are trending, and follows with amazement the struggle of the hero who is trying to escape from danger and to change the course of events to his own advantage. This is the case with the titular hero in Sophocles' drama of Oedipus Rex. The ancient Greek spectator knew the fate of Oedipus from the myth; but nevertheless this did not mean that the tension felt by the spectator in following his struggle was lessened. A technically clever author knows how to increase tension: he only apparently resolves the conflict, thus calming the spectator for a while; immediately afterwards he introduces new factors, new facts into the action, and achieves an unexpected continuation. The author for a while does not intensify the tension of the supreme moments of the drama — it is as if he were to switch off the engine for a little so that it continues at the same level. He introduces a calming motif or directs attention away from the main plot line to an episodic character — all for one purpose; so that the tension once aroused can increase still further in the subsequent course of the action.

The source of dramatic conflicts in realistic works of art lies in the objective contradictions in the life of society and in the antitheses of reality itself, which are expressed by the struggle of antagonistic forces. The dramatic element in realistic art and above all in the drama is provided by the clash and struggle of typical characters acting in typical situations.

Of course it is not only the drama or the film, which we conceive as an independent kind of dramatic art, which are filled with the dramatic element. The great prose writers (e.g. Stendhal in the *Chartreuse de Parme*, Tolstoy in *Anna Karenina*, Marie Majerová in *The Hooter [Siréna]*, Sholokhov in *Virgin Soil Upturned*) made successful use of the most various aspects of the dramatic element. Thus it is not by chance that their works have been dramatized and filmed. In a somewhat different sense we speak of the dramatic element of symphonic compositions (e.g. Janáček's *Taras Bulba*) or we may point to the dramatic element of graphic cycles (e.g. Goya).

³ In the region whose industrial centre is the town of Ostrava.

⁴ The great similarity between passages in the greeting to his sister Helen *For the 18th of August*... and these later poems from *Silesian Songs*, which call up the image of the warrior fighting against odds and covered with blood was pointed out by Miroslav Ivanov. cf. his concluding remarks to the book *Tales from Life*, which collects the prose works of Bezruč (Prague, 1957, p. 157).

⁵ Vít Šedivec, *From the Chronicles of the Bezruč Family (Z kroniky rodu Bezručova)*. Volume II (Brno, 1938), p. 28.

⁶ Niva, Vol. III, No. 2 (16th December, 1892).

⁷ cf. on this *Chapters on Silesian Songs (Kapitoly o Slezských písničkách)*, Ostrava, 1957.

⁸ F. X. Saldá, *On Poetic Autostylization, Especially in Bezruč (O básnické autostylizaci, zvláště u Bezruče)*. Quoted from the work *Literary Historical and Critical Studies (Studie literárně historické a kritické)*, Prague, 1937, p. 69.

⁷ F. X. Saldá, op. cit., p. 72.

¹⁰ Here and in all further cases I quote the poetry of Bezruč from the 1951 edition of *Silesian Songs*.

¹¹ They appeared in 1961 (*The Little Swan — Labutinka*, Ostrava, 1961).

¹² For Fanyňka Tomková and the poems which originated in the relationship of Bezruč to her, see in detail the study of Artur Závodský *The "Little Swan" of Bezruč and the Poems Connected with Her (Bezručova Labutinka a básně k ní se vížící)*, (Silesian Journal — Slezský sborník, 1957, p. 317—336).

¹³ With regard to the fact that in 1904 Bezruč revised an already outlined poem as *Paper Mojlš*, see my study *The "Little Swan" of Bezruč and the Poems Connected with Her*.

¹⁴ The poems *Za choťi Miloslava Hýska* and *Za Antonem Růžičkou z Žarovic* are published in the publication of Petr Bezruč, *To Friends and Enemies (Přátelům i nepřátelům — Prague, 1958)*.

¹⁵ I quote from the *Studies from the "Café Lustig"* as they are printed in the publication Petr Bezruč, *Tales from Life (Povídky ze života)*. In analysing and quoting other prose works of Bezruč I also use this text.

¹⁶ On the 2nd July, 1886 Vladimír Vašek writes to his friend Jaroslav Kunz from Prague: "You have mentioned that I have given up something of my own nature in Prague. What the hell, don't I give up enough when we are together? I can tell you right away, that even if I give in to you in everything, still I won't go to the theatre, where you, you ideal innocent, will be all the time. I still haven't been in that ridiculous theatre and I've no intention of going. So what?" Quoted from the publication *Petr Bezruč Writes to the Friends of his Youth (Petr Bezruč píše přáteli z mládeži — Ostrava, 1963, p. 34—35)*.

DRAMATISMUS A DIVADELNÍ POSTUPY V DÍLE PETRA BEZRUČE

Petr Bezruč uplatnil v celém svém díle jako hlavní umělecký postup dramatické a scénické způsoby zobrazování skutečnosti. Využil jich funkčně, ale rozdílně v jednotlivých etapách své tvorby nebo v různých žánrech.

Ústřední část Bezručovy poezie je věnována boji za sociální a národní práva lidu v slezském regionu. Bezruč tu podal dynamickou skutečnost jako zápas dvou stran. Dramatičnost samé skutečnosti (konflikt vládnoucí třídy s porobeným lidem) přímo volala po užitéch postupech příznačných pro drama a divadlo. Bezruč vytvořil grandiózní postavu barda-bojovníka (někdy při tom exploatoval antické motivy, jindy mu dal rysy fantómu tragikomického). Hlavního nepřítele pracujících mas ztělesnil v postavě záluďného markýze Gera. Motiv setkání pěvce s Gerem, jakož i motivy setkání představitelů vládnoucí třídy s představiteli lidu umožnily Bezručovi, aby pádne pracoval s postupy dramatickými a divadelními.

Dramata, jež přinášel život ve Slezsku, na Ostravsku a na Těšínsku koncem 19. století a na počátku 20. století stala se Bezručovi podkladem pro jeho sociální balady. Útvar balady mohl totiž jedinečným způsobem osvětlit společenské protiklady a dovoloval Bezručovi exponovat látku jako tragédii v písni, se všemi znaky dramatismu i s básnickým prolínáním osobním. V dějinách české baladistiky stojí Bezruč jako tvůrce balady z údobí kritického realismu. Zdrojem tragická v Bezručových baladách je zánik hrdiny v soukolí neřešitelných sociálních disproporcí (Maryčka Magdonova, Kantor Halfar aj.). Některé Bezručovy balady jsou situovány do prostředí rodiny, ale i pak překračují hranice rodiny, zachycující širší společenské souvislosti (srov. tragédii odrodilcovy matky v básni *Bernard Žár*). Pokud Bezruč zobrazoval osudy ženy za kapitalismu (např. v baladě *Žermanice*) ukázal krizi buržoazního systému; zde se jeho dramaticko ztotožňuje s dramatickým her kritických realistů (např. s dramatickým Nory H. Ibsena, *Gazdiny roby* G. Preissové, *Bouře* A. N. Ostrovského).

Mnohem méně uplatnil se dramatismus a divadelní postupy v Bezručově milostné lyrice, v níž básník — s výjimkou několika horoucích lyrických čísel inspirovaných zjevem Fanyňky Tomkové, které byly otřeseny až po Bezručově smrti — volil formu rozmanitých objektivujících obrazů epických (ale i tu podal některá místa jako dramatické scény — např. v básních *Papírový Mojlš* a *Labutinka*) a paralelismů (např. v básni *Jen jedenkrát*).

Prozaické práce zůstaly většinou na okraji díla Petra Bezruče. Ale též ony svědčí, že jejich autor měl sklon ztvářovat látky dramaticky. Některé menší prózy (např. *Audience* nebo *Tramp*

v Rajhradě) se dialogičností, ironickým vyostřením situací blíží umění scénických miniatur A. P. Čechova. Novely Zárobek Elenky Hričovské a Vojanský zigar tvoří pandán Bezručových balad, vyslovují hrůzné tradéie příslušníků lidu za kapitalismu a jsou stejně jako ony vybudovány dramaticky.

Příznačné pro uměleckou metodu Petra Bezruče je křížení a amalgamování tvárných postupů lyriky, epiky a dramatu v jednom díle. Silné uplatnění živlu dramatického nepřekvapí u básníka, který rozporuplnou skutečnost zevrubně poznal a zachycoval v živých, plastických obrazech.

Vtírá se otázka: proč se umělec, který tolikrát osvědčil svůj dar vidění dramatického a divadelního, nepokusil přímo o drama, proč nepsal pro divadelní scénu? Odpovědět by se dalo takto: Divadelní umění je umění, které předpokládá spolupráci kolektivu lidí (dramatika, režiséra, výtvarníka, herců atd.). V tom smyslu je to umění „nejspolečenštější“. Bezruč se od mládí vyhýbal velkým shromážděním, byl samotář. Za studií v Praze nenavštívil ani Národní divadlo. Přísluvečná plachost básníkova tedy způsobila, že se jeho rudimentární talent dramatický neprojevil v dramatu a pak na místě, kde se slovo autorovo stává tělem nového, syntetického umění divadelního — na jevišti.