



strategy and effect

narartive and semantic techniques
in Hašek's *Schweik*

what are we usually talking about in terms of *Good Soldier Schweik*?

- classification
 - war novel, war chronicle
 - politically/socially critical novel
 - grotesque
 - allegory
 - “The most humorous novel about the war.”
 - “Synthesis of satire and humanism.”
- circumstances of production
- reception and popularity
- ... Schweik

Schweik



who is Schweik?

- beer drinker and pipe smoker
- funny and laughable idiot
- uncanny malingerer and war-avoider (pretending to be an idiot)
- little-big man
- *homo ludens*
- deontic alien
- national literary/cultural phenomenon – typical Czech



Schweik

Schweik I

actional behaviour is in concordance with verbal behaviour → puzzling

acting

- humbleness (vs. teasing, mockery)
- obligation (vs. rebellion)
- subordination (vs. superordination)
- loyalty (vs. disloyalty)
- purposeless playfulness + fabulation (vs. purposeful acting)
- stability (vs. development → emancipation)

verbal behaviour

- literal meaning and (vs.) common sense
- construction via deconstruction (and *vice versa*)
- analogy, hyperbole, irony



Schweik II

- non-psychologized – we do not know much about his motivation, intentionality, preference, purpose
- unpredictable behaviour: switching roles – balancing in the equilibrium “in between” the world of obligatory and of rebellion
- ambiguous and incomprehensible... the question about his identity should be changed: ”function” instead “personality” → ?principle?

narrative principle

- although drawing the reader's attention to himself as to a character, Schweik as an actant is in a servile position to the plot (plot over character)
- Schweik is determined by the story as well as by the topic and motifs (fictionalized real affairs → strong tendency to authetization!)
- Schweik = principle/strategy – narrative tool: a) passively followed by the main plot line + b) actively implementing episodic narratives into the plot
- narrativity: Schweik supports main principles of narrativity: since unpredictable, always surprising, since controversial, causes suspension, keeping the reader in the stage of curiosity (+ the dynamicity of the plot made of short episodes which supports the reader's curiosity)



introduction

A great epoch calls for great men. There are modest unrecognized heroes, without Napoleon's glory or his record of achievements. An analysis of their characters would overshadow even the glory of Alexander the Great. Today, in the streets of Prague, you can come across a man who himself does not realize what his significance is in the history of the great new epoch. Modestly he goes his way, troubling nobody, nor is he himself troubled by journalists applying to him for an interview. If you were to ask him his name, he would answer in a simple and modest tone of voice: "I am Schweik."

(fuzzy) dialectic principle

- big – small (man – history)
- soldier – individual
- plot – episodes
- tours – detours
- construction – deconstruction ...



general principle

- physical: tours – detours → participation – avoidance
- verbal: forking → construction – deconstruction
- semantic: big – small → ideology – humanity

tours and detours

- narrative potential
- authenticational potential – places and people – real world outside war machinery
- semantic potential – specific spaces between relative freedom and non-freedom

+ Schweik

- direct tour of soldiers in war machinery (non-freedom → slaughterhouse) vs. detours (not desertion – not complete exclusion of individuals from the machinery, just delay of its practice) – being put aside from Schweik’s individual view, machinery temporarily does not exist → narrative and semantic contrast and tension
- first detour shows the freedom of outside world, second refers to the ruthless world of war – Schweik’s “space” deteriorates as small world and big world fuse → tendency toward either tragedy or choice



tours and detours

"Well, anyhow, this is the way I'm going," said Schweik; "it's a more comfortable road than yours. I'm going along by the stream where the forget-me-nots grow, and if you want to traipse along in the broiling heat, you can. I stick to what Lieutenant Lukash told us. He said we couldn't miss the way. So I'm going to take it easy across the fields and pick some flowers."

"Don't be a fool, Schweik," said Quatermaster-sergeant Vanek. "You can see from the map that we've got to go to the right, like I said."

"Maps are wrong sometimes," replied Schweik, as he strolled downhill towards the stream...

forking

- **means** — analogy, association, extrapolation, translation
- **function** — compositional-narrative functions → semantics
- **purpose**
 - translation from big history to small history and life — demythization
 - construction — deconstruction (irony, parody, hyperbolization, grotesque)
 - divergence of main plot line and episodes

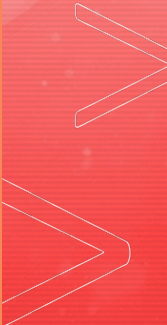


forking

“So they’ve killed our Ferdinand,” said the charwoman to Mr. Schweik...

“Which Ferdinand, Mrs. Muller?” asked Schweik, continuing to massage his knees. “I know two Ferdinands. One of them does jobs for Prusa the chemist, and one day he drank a bottle of hair oil by mistake; and then there’s Ferdinand Kokoska who goes round collecting manure. They wouldn’t be any great loss, either of ’em.”

“There’s some revolvers, Mrs. Muller, that won’t go off, even if you tried till you was dotty. There’s lots like that. But they’re sure to have bought something better than that for the Archduke, and I wouldn’t mind betting, Mrs. Muller, that the man who did it put on his best clothes for the job. You know, it wants a bit of doing to shoot an archduke; it’s not like when a poacher shoots a gamekeeper.”



conclusion

- two parallel rails:
 - big world → war machinery → main plot line → negation of humanity
 - small man → everyday life → episodic plots → essence of humanity
- merge of rails on the horizon = confluence of both narratives as ordinary people become parts of the machinery – visual illusion or not?
- ?What would have been the further development of the novel had it not stayed unfinished?