

# Realism in a Modernist Key: Švejk and Company

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## T. Pavel, *The Lives of the Novel* (2013)

The heirs to the comic and sceptical tradition, proud of their kinship with picaresque novels (...), make fun of the irresponsible self caught in a difficult, unpredictable environment.

Hašek, *Good Soldier Svejk* (1921-23), Céline, *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932), Queneau, *Zazie in the Metro* (1959), Hrabal, *I Served the King of England* (1971), Kundera, *Life is Elsewhere* (1973), Bernhard, *Wittgenstein's Nephew* (1982), Sollers, *Women* (1983), Houellebecq, *Elementary Particles* (1998)

## G. Lukács, *Theory of the Novel* (1916)

The complete absence of an inwardly experienced problematic transforms such a soul into pure activity. Because it is at rest within its essential existence, every one of its impulses becomes an action aimed at the outside. The life of a person with such a soul becomes an uninterrupted series of adventures which he himself has chosen.

Cervantes, Balzac, Gogol, Dickens, Pontoppidan

# Modernist generation

Realist tradition (critical, social, naturalism)

Romantic tradition (bohemianism, symbolism, decadence)

Modernism (double-layered structure)

# Hašek in Progress

Syrinx (literary group)

Russian realists

Jakub Arbes (Czech writer)

## *Mezi bibliofily* (Among the Bibliophiles, 1912)

„There was a time when I read a great deal. I have read *The Three Musketeers*, *The Mask of Love*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and other novels. (...) I was very interested in the reading, and so, for instance, I could not wait to see whether Countess Leona would marry Richard the dwarf, who for her sake had become the murderer of his own father, who had shot her fiancé out of jealousy. (...) Yes, I read then. But today I don't read much. I don't care anymore.“

## *Mezi bibliofily* (Among the Bibliophiles, 1912)

So I took four cookies from the bowl and the lady with glasses sitting next to me didn't have a single one left. This made her so sad that she began to talk about Goethe's book, *The Elective Affinities* (*Vyběravé příbuznosti*).

A literary historian sitting opposite me asked me a question: "Do you know the whole of Goethe?"

"From head to toe," I replied gravely, "he wears yellow shoes and a brown hat on his head, is a supervisor of the food tax, and lives in Karmelitská Street. "

# Main plot

The layer of accurately stated or only partially adapted **realia** is very strong - stronger than not only the ordinary reader, but often also the literary scholar is aware of. (Měšťan 1988)

**Chronology** in the Good Soldier Svejk (Měšťan 1982)

I – six months, II – five months, III – six days, IV – two weeks



# Narrator (1/8)

The tortures to which the malingerers were subjected were systematized and the grades were as follows:

1. Strict **diet**, a cup of tea each morning and evening for three days, during which, irrespective, of course, of their complaints, **aspirin** to be given to induce sweating.
2. To ensure they did not think that war was all beer and skittles, **quinine** in powder to be served in generous portions, or so-called 'quinine licking'.
3. The stomach to be pumped out twice a day with a litre of warm water.
4. **Enemas** with soapy water and **glycerine** to be applied.
5. Wrapping up in a sheet soaked in cold water.

# Narrator

And somewhere from the dim ages of history the truth dawned upon Europe that the morrow would obliterate the plans of today. (1/5)

Even the dying consumptive, who was shamming tuberculosis, joined in the laughter. (1/8)

## Narrator (1/9)

Particularly **fine** was a photograph from Serbia of a whole family strung up - a small boy and his father and mother. Two soldiers with bayonets were guarding the tree, and an officer stood **victoriously** in the foreground smoking a cigarette. On the other side in the background a field kitchen could be seen in full operation.

# Hero and the Company

J. Hašková, Haškova **pravda** (Hašek's Truth, Kmen 1927)

Katz, Lukáš, Marek, Dub (Gaifman 1984)

Bretschneider, Palivec, Ms. Müller, Vodička, Baloun, Biegler...

# Situations

against episodes, anecdotes

performativity

commentary

## Švejk's commentary (I/13)

'And the soldiers are buried naked,' said another soldier, ' and into the uniform they put another live man. And so it goes on for ever and ever.'

'Until we've won,' observed Svejk.

**Thank you!**