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## LITERARY ANTIUTOPIAS FROM MODERNISM TO POSTMODERNISM

Recourses to utopias and antiutopias are very old. Their genealogy goes back to Plato's Republic or Aristophanes' comedy *Women's Congress*. His other political comedies, like the antiwar dramas *Peace or Lysistrata*, as well as Lucian's *Truth Stories* and a lot of other literary works written before or after Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) are very close to antiutopias. It is symptomatic that these idyllic or satirical pieces were always done in the periods of political oppression, instability or economic recession and the feel of depression and disaffectedness linked with them. Apocalyptic subject matters always go along with the turns of particular centuries or millenniums. Such was also the case in Russia in the late 19th and in the early 20th centuries.

If we compare a factual description of the totalitarian system in the novella *The Republic of the Southern Cross* (*Respublika Juzhnogo Kresta*, 1905-07) by the prominent Russian symbolist Valery Bryusov (Valerij Brjusov, 1873-1924) with its practical application in the novel *We* (*My*, 1924) by Eugen Zamyatin (Jevgenij Ivanovich Zamjatin, 1884-1937)<sup>1</sup>, we find remarkable parallels<sup>2</sup> between these two works, notwithstanding their different characters.

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<sup>1</sup> The novel *We* was not allowed to be published in the Soviet Union, but appeared abroad (in Czech, English etc.), which brought about the author's persecution in his own country. After his personal letter to Stalin he was permitted to leave his homeland. He died in Paris. The present paper was written with the support of the Academie of Sciences Grant Nr.

<sup>2</sup> The volume of Bryusov's stories *The Earth's Axis* (*Zemnaja os'*, 1908), where the novella appeared after its publication in Bryusov's magazine *Vesy*, seems not to have escaped Zamyatin's attention.

While Bryusov, owing to the chosen genre of report, does not leave the level of description of the political system and its gradual decomposition from the inside according to the time-tested scenario of totalitarian self-destruction, Zamyatin's novel has its heroes and antiheroes, as well as a love affair, full of secret and tension built on political taboos. This direction is, after all, consciously followed by George Orwell in his no less famous novel *1984* (1949). The axis of the novel, similar to Zamyatin's *We*, is a love relation against the political background, where the lovers find their refuge in the old world. In Zamyatin the lovers meet in an ancient house with a mysterious lift leading behind the green townwall, and the meeting place in Orwell is a dirty room with rats and bedbugs over Mr. Charrington's shop in the proletarian part of London. The old house in Zamyatin's novel is guarded by an old woman who is tolerant of the extravagancies of the girl that meets her lover in the secret flat. Orwell's lovers get to their rented room through Mr. Charrington's shop. Unlike Zamyatin's characters, Orwell's still have their civil names. The main hero is the narrator Winston (whose name is, certainly not accidentally, identical with the first name of the then Prime Minister Churchill) and his counterpart is Shakespearean Juliet. Zamyatin's engineer, who is the main planner of the mysterious Integral, only bears the code D-503, and his active lover must do with the vowel I. Both the main heroes have the gift of speech. Winston is a typical intellectual, soberly commenting on the intolerable political situation. The autobiographical character of D-503 belongs, owing to his post of the Integral designer, to the official structures. He writes his records, on which the composition of the novel is built, on higher orders. His objective description of events and his own erotic life, including the gradually developing love relation to the dissent oriented I, in the course of time becomes, however, a gloomy evidence of the totalitarian system, the monstrosity of which the writer realizes more and more markedly. In comparison with the two novels, Bryusov's novella is a concise abstract outlining the main problem of totality - complete dehumanization. Bryusov connects the first manifestations of people as personalities with the outbreak of the negation disease, which gradually leads to the absolute liquidation of the Star City and the whole Republic. The monstrosity of the account of the last phases of this horror surpasses erotic scenes from Bryusov's poems *Underground Dwelling* (*Podzemnoye zhilishche*) or *The Women's Town* (*Gorod zhenshchin*) where the places of vice are

at the same time places of death<sup>3</sup>. But Bryusov's faith in the liberating power of destruction is not continued by either Zamyatin or Orwell. Zamyatin's novel ends by the disclosure of the plot and liquidation of its leaders: they are either dissolved electrically or drained of their souls in operations. Zamyatin's D-503 is struck by such a fate too, although before that he is even granted an audience by the Benefactor himself. Similarly, Orwell's Winston, after his last cruel interrogation at the Ministry of Love, understood for the first time what the love to Big Brother meant. This happened at the moment when a projectile, expected for a long time, penetrated through his brain. Modern experience with dictatorship led Bryusov's followers to much more pessimistic conclusions.

One of the most interesting antiutopias by Bryusov is the tragedy in five acts and seven scenes called topically *The Dictator* (*Diktator*, 1921;1984). The author returns in it to a vision from his childhood about the possible settlement of Venus<sup>4</sup>. In Bryusov drama people have finished their expedition to Venus and have brought back with them some inhabitants of that planet, who resemble gorillas. They keep them in cages like animals and plan to send most of the population of the overcrowded Earth to Venus. This populist intention is part of the pre-election campaign of the Central Council Chairman Orm, who later becomes Dictator. But his dictatorship over the globe does not last long. People, tired of many years of expensive preparations for the interplanet expedition, rise up in rebellion. The revolution is gradually joined by more and more continents. The Dictator is saved in the end by a bullet from his sympathetic mistress. The character of Dictator is not entirely negative. Similarly, schematic characters are neither the Marsal from Čapek's play *The White Plague* (1937), nor the main character of Bryusov's drama Orm. He can be noble-minded to women. He is one generation younger than Čapek's Marshal. Contrary to Marshal, he is not a soldier, but a politician. Therefore he cannot believe in his defeat. Bryusov's *The Dictator* was written after the first experience of the October Revolution and the early years of the dictatorship. Čapek's play *The White Plague* is a response to the entry of Nazism into Germany on the eve of World War II, the beginning of which the play anticipates. In spite of that, the cul-

<sup>3</sup> D. Kšicová, *Poéma za romantismu a novoromantismu. Rusko-české paralely*. (*The Longer Lyric Narrative Poem in Romanticism and Neoromanticism. Russian-Czech Parallels.*) Brno, UJEP 1983, 125-144.

<sup>4</sup> Fourteen years old Bryusov wrote fantastic story *The Expedition to Venera* published in the school manuscript journal "The Beginning" (1877). Cf. Archive of Pushkin's House in Petersburg PF 444, Nr. 79.

mination of dictatorship is expressed more explicitly in Bryusov's text. In Čapek's play it remains vague but easily predictable in the world struck by leprosy.

Bryusov, a historian by profession, himself experienced three revolutions. While his drama *The Earth* (*Zemlja*, 1904; 1905) presents the Consul's deposition as a result of one surge of people's rebellion, quite similar to that in Blok's *The King in the Square* (*Korol' na ploschadi*, 1906; 1907), *The Dictator* deals with a world revolution, rolling through continents like an avalanche. The philosopher of Russian communism Nikolay Berdyayev characterizes revolution as an irrational phenomenon reflecting the existence of irrational forces in the history of humankind. This fact does not in any way exclude the revolution planners' rational intentions. Even Lenin, as an extreme rationalist, was, according to Berdyayev, struck by the irrationality of history. The Russian philosopher distinguishes three different views of revolution:

1) revolutionary or counter-revolutionary view, held by people who themselves take part in the events,

2) objective, scientific analysis by historians not participating in the revolution,

3) a historio-sophistic, religious-apocalyptic view, held by people who experience the revolution agonizingly and are able to detach themselves from its everyday manifestations. Only these people can understand revolution as an inner apocalypse of history. This is because, according to Berdyayev, apocalypse is not only a message on the end of the world and the Last Judgement, but also knowledge of the permanent proximity of the end in the historical flow of time, conviction that it is possible to judge history inside history itself, and accusation of the failure of history. Berdyayev states, with a considerable amount of pessimism, that in our world full of sin and evil there is no possibility of continuous and gradual development. The recurring concentration of evil always initiates the process of decomposition. Since society often feels a lack of creative and revitalizing powers, the judgement on society is inevitable, time is broken and irrational forces push forward; if considered from above, not from below, they are the manifestation of sense winning against nonsense. Revolution has an ontological sense, pessimistic in its essence. The understanding of this sense turns against those who are persuaded that society can endlessly exist in harmony even at moments when it has accumulated a lot of evil, hidden under a seemingly quiet surface. Revolution is no worse than war, sometimes bringing even more evil and misery. All history is wicked and full of

blood and terror<sup>5</sup>. Also this is described in Bryusov's antiutopias; they depict just that kind of accumulation of negative powers in society that result in the rise of its emotions. Such was the totalitarian political system in *The Republic of the Southern Cross* and Orm's world dictatorship, such was the despair of the last inhabitants of *The Earth*. Bryusov's pessimistic vision of the end of humankind is becoming a highly topical memento for today's society.

A certain messianic power is discovered by European antiutopias basing their poetics on a grotesque vision of the world. They proceed from the philosophy of pragmatism, as from one of the varieties of the philosophy of life. Although we do not mostly know how deeply these authors knew that philosophy (except for Karel Čapek, who wrote his doctor's work on pragmatism<sup>6</sup>), we can recognize it when we analyse the poetics of their literary works. Even the inclusion of the representatives of pragmatism into the evolution of the philosophy of life itself (from Wilhelm Dilthey and Henri Bergson to existentialism) shows how multiform pragmatism is. In the light of the future emergence of aesthetics it is necessary to know that even Ch. S. Peirce, whose system of signs suggested structuralism and semiotics, belonged to pragmatism. William James's evolution from dualism to the theory of inert monism is characteristic of the avant-garde. John Dewey - the exponent of the high period of pragmatism is a predecessor of the contemporary American neopragmatism, close to European hermeneutics<sup>7</sup>. Their interest in life experience is close to the poetic view of everydayness ugliness or even repulsiveness in literature. That is the reason of portraying people from *The Lower Depths*, as Gorky did in his popular play. The Čapek Brothers used this topic in *The Insect Play* (1921) through the transformation the character of the Tramp in a specific poetic form.

Čapek's conception of pragmatism is obvious from his monograph dealing with that school of thought; its reflection in the author's juvenalia has been subjected to aesthetic analysis<sup>8</sup>. One of the most impor-

<sup>5</sup> N. A. Berdjajev, *Istoki i smysl ruského komunizmu*. Moskva., Nauka 1990, 106-108. Reprintnoje vosproizvedenije izd. Pariž, Imca-Press 1955.

<sup>6</sup> Karel Čapek, *Pragmatismus čili filosofie praktického života*. Praha, F. Topič 1918, 2nd ed. 1925.

<sup>7</sup> Jaroslav Hroch, *Soudobá anglo-americká a kanadská filosofie*. Brno, MU 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Karel Čapek, *Pragmatismus... op. cit.* Milan Suchomel, *Začátky Čapkovy prózy a pragmatismus*. F. Wollmanovi kásedmdesátinám. Praha, SPN 1958, 359-369.

tant ethical categories considered in W. James' *Pragmatism*<sup>9</sup> is the pragmatic theory of truth. Čapek's formulation of the relation between pragmatism and practice explains to a large extent his relativism. Čapek emphasizes that "pragmatism accepts as truth what better than other things fulfils the task to lead us in our lives and what adapts itself to all the requirements of experience"...<sup>10</sup> His explanation of the misunderstanding accompanying the pragmatistic conception is quite lapidary: "The pragmatic theory of truth concerns the recognition of truth, not its discovering"(21). This is the source of Čapek's humbleness before the reality of this world, which to a high degree influenced his style, his way of perceiving reality and his professional interest in anecdotes, folk humour, proverbs and nursery rhymes, as well as his critical analysis of pornography or proletarian art, in the kitschy form of which he saw "a slice of bread spread with a thick layer of ideology". It is characteristic that the volume of these essays from the years 1919-1931 ends with *A Praise of the Czech Language*<sup>11</sup> Čapek's masterly handling of language is testified by his translations of French poetry from as early as 1920, which are evaluated today as the most experimental part of his work. In the end of Apollinaire's *La Zone*, for example, Čapek finds adequate means for translating the remarkable union of careless children's play with the motif of violent death:

Adieu Adieu                      Sbohem, sbohem jsi ospalý

Soleil cou coupé.              Slunce uťatá hlava  
Se kuku kutálí<sup>12</sup>.

Even this is a specific prelude to the future drama of the absurd. The social theme of people from the bottom of society, discussed by M. Gorky and also Apollinaire, is also represented in the Čapek Brothers' *The Insect Play* (*Ze života hmyzu*, 1921). The only real man appearing in the play is the Rousseau-style Tramp (Wanderer). He in fact plays the role of the ancient chorus in the drama, since he remarks on all the ongoing

<sup>9</sup> William James, *Pragmatism: a New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. 1907.

<sup>10</sup> Karel Čapek, *Pragmatismus čili Filosofie praktického života*, op. cit. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Karel Čapek, *Marsyas, čili na okraj literatury*. Praha, Aventinum, Fr. Borový 1931.

<sup>12</sup> G. Apollinaire, *La Zone*. (Alcools). Oeuvres poétiques. Paris, Gallimard 1956. G. Apollinaire, *Pásmo*. In: Karel Čapek, *Francouzská poezie nové doby*. Praha, Československý spisovatel 1968, 135.

events. The insect, shown in the anthropomorphical way, makes an allegory of human vices. The poetics based on the play on words, later on used by Čapek brilliantly in his fairy tales, successfully applied in the first scene, depicting the love play of butterflies, flying from one flower to another. The climax of love is connected with the motif of fall, accompanying the opposite pole of love, which is death. And death is the dark background against which the obviously symbolic play develops. The dung beetle rolling a ball of manure parodies a greedy lust for wealth, and the war between the yellow and the black ants over a bit of the path between two blades of grass shows the very principle of the pointlessness of wars of aggression. The basic existential feelings - the expectation of something extraordinary in connection with the birth of a new individual - are expressed in a masterly way by the exclamations of the pupa announcing its birth. The preceding long time, full of expectations, gives place to the trauma of reality, symbolized by the one-day existence of the mayfly. However, even a being capable of higher knowledge - the Tramp, perceived as a deity against the background of the miniature insect - is confronted with what sets Man apart from divine substance, namely his or her own death.

A title almost identical with that used by the Čapek Brothers appears after nearly eighty years: it is *The Insect's Life* (*Zhizn nasekomych*, 1999) by a young Russian postmodernist Viktor Pelevin. It is hard to say how much Pelevin may have been interested in the Czech authors' play and whether he knew it at all, but there are undeniable correlations between the two works. What connects them is not only the same allegorical character, but also a similar ironic and satirical distance. Nevertheless, the times when they originated are completely different, which what results in a number of different connotations. The war theme, so distinctive in the drama by the Čapek Brothers, who still vividly remembered the horrors of World War I, gives place in Pelevin to the stereotype of everyday life, emphasized by permanent blending of the post-Soviet reality and its problems - especially alcoholism and drug abuse. The language level reflects the problems by using argot and specific Russian invectives and curses. All this is transferred into the absurd world of insects, permanently mingling with the world of people; unexpected metamorphoses enable the transformations. The two main protagonists - the inseparable young friends Mitya and Dima - during all the novel hold a repeatedly resumed existential discussion, in the course of which they alternately become people or mosquitoes. Many

scenes, including the erotic ones, thus gain a burlesque character. Pelevin uses a favourite means of postmodernistic authors, a number of quotations from various texts. The principle itself of inserting heterogeneous materials into new connections is not at all a new feature. The changes rather concern new ways of quotations and their functions in new artistic texts. Velemir Khlebnikov, for example, uses configured quotations from Pushkin's works as one of the means of reaching peculiarity<sup>13</sup>. In Pelevin we can meet several types of text, from propaganda slogans and advertisements via presentations of verses, which is a popular method of European romanticism, to pseudoscientific papers from the journal *Magadan Anthrap*. Karel Čapek works with similar materials in his antiutopian novel *War with the Newts (Válka smloky, 1936)*. The way of their use is, though, different in these two authors. Čapek intersperses the main stream of narration with passages from sketches, reports, letters, telegrams, resolutions and professional papers, accompanied by references to literature - and all that in a graphically arranged form - to strengthen the authenticity of the text as much as possible. The absurdity of the current reality witnessed by Pelevin projects into the way of his quotations. The longest passage is a newspaper article read monotonously by the mother of a girl who secretly for the first time has brought home her lover. The dull words from the press presented by the mother, who suffers from insomnia, thus makes the background to the daughter's first love experience.

No less absurd situations can be found in Jiří Kratochvíl's novel-carnival *An Immortal Story, or Sonia Trocka-Sammlerová's Life (Nesmrtelný příběh, aneb, Život Soni Trocké-Sammlerové, 1997)*. Zoomorphous allegory here is, however, used in a wider sense of the word than in Pelevin. Every chapter is marked by the name of an animal, from the chimpanzee, via the snake, wolf and elephant up to the panther, built into the text as the titles of abstract pictures. Kratochvíl's story of an immortal heroine is conceived as a testimony of the 20th century. Sonia is born on the carnival night of New Year's Eve in 1900 and wakes up after a period of pupation during the ringing of keys at the close of 1989, completely changed and ready to start a new life. Pelevin develops the existence of species *ad infinitum*. The author suggests this by mutual

<sup>13</sup> D. Kšicová, *Puškinskije tradicii i antitradicii vápoemach Velemira Chlebnikova*. Zagadnienia Rodzajów literackich, Wrocław 1983. t. XXV, z. 1/48, s. 43-57. Detto in: D. Kšicová, *Poéma za romantismu a novoromantismu. Rusko-české paralely*. Brno, Univerzita J. E. Purkyně, sv. 249, 1983, 153-166.

interconnection between Marina's and her mother's fates and by picturesque peripetias of their partners. The time extent of Pelevin's book is much more concise than is the case in Kratochvil's novel. His heroine lives through a short summer of love to end painfully on a flypaper. Both the authors inform the reader of the exact scene of the action: in Pelevin it is a Crimean resort in different seasons of the year, in Kratochvil his native town of Brno. Both of them use their culturological knowledge for romantic titles of the chapters and subsections of their novels (*The Russian Forest*, *Life under the Tsar*, *The Third Rome* in Pelevin<sup>14</sup>, *A May Fairy Tale*, *A Bloody Wedding*, *The Limping Devil*, *Lazarus' Resurrection* and others in Kratochvil<sup>15</sup>). Various types of allusions are characteristic of postmodernist texts. Each of the two authors refers to topical political problems, even if they do so on different scales. Owing to the fact that Kratochvil's novel maps the whole 20th century, it suggests its most important moments in a hint or poetical nutshell, often appearing in a fantastic form. His heroine Sonia - a light-hearted narrator resembling Bohumil Hrabal's heroes - has a varied erotic life, since her eternal lover Bruno, who died tragically on the same night as she was born, meets her in metamorphoses, always in a different animal form. Scenes known from the frescos at Pompeii thus come to life in the form of travestied *Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri. Pelevin's novel, on the other hand, is mostly set in the 1990s. Instead of Russian and German background and reminiscences used by Kratochvil due to the international origins of Sonia's parents, Pelevin incorporates the English language and schematic features of American culture into his novel. One of his heroes, who appears as a cockroach or a cicada, finishes a long subterranean journey to come to the surface of the earth at the very place where he once fell from a tree on which his pupa hung. The same motif was used by Kratochvil in the finale of his novel, where during the real socialism Sonia becomes politically unacceptable and therefore

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<sup>14</sup> *The Russian Forest* is the name of Leonov's novel and also a new drug. *Zhizn za tsarya* was the title under which Glinka's opera *Ivan Susanin* was played at the tsar's request in the 19th century. In the novel it is an anticipating motif - an omen of the tragical death of Marina's husband. *The Third Rome* comes from the figurative phrase *Moscow - the third Rome*, which after the fall of the Byzantine Empire was to help to unite Russia, with the centre in Moscow. In the novel it serves as a pretext for Marina's meeting her partner.

<sup>15</sup> They are allusions to the works by V. Mrštík, G. Lorca, A. R. Lesage, to a New Testament parable or a cycle of folk tales from the surroundings of Brno.

forlorn. Consequently she climbs up to the cupola of her native house and pupates there for a few years. Forgrounded is thus the hidden subtext of her name (cf. the meaning of the Russian words "sonia, sonny" - "sleepyhead, sleepy"). She does not wake up until the winter of 1989, when people welcomed the fall of socialism by ringing their keys. She comes to life never to be old, like the heroines of Roman novels.

Kratochvíl presents more authentic characters and absurd humour in his novel than Pelevin, who feels closer connection with the existential and Eastern philosophy. Kratochvíl uses allusions to a number of writers and dissidents, like Jiří Mahen, Vaculík and Havel. Pelevin innovates the popular Russian theme of doubles in the absurd depiction of the pre-death fight with one's own trunk. Both novels have a ring composition. The immortal Sonia, when a hundred years old, becomes the governess of a child still unborn. Pelevin's American mosquito Sam, who had a romance with the beautiful little fly Natasha, witnesses her death on a flypaper. Only few securities remain in life: a big ball of manure, also depicted by Čapek in a masterly fashion, cold wind blowing from the sea, and a fragment of an optimistic song which vividly resembles the final scene of Artsibashev's novel *Sanin*.

Nevertheless, the sunny symbol of optimism, which in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century brought a cleansing wave of vitalism, gets quite a different meaning at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, marked with Derrida's deconstruction. The billboard slogans and optimistic songs that accompanied whole generations of working people on their way to a better future have brought quite different semantics of such texts. The verses from the end of Pelevin's novel thus become its ironic unravelling. The principle of freedom (analysed by the existentialist Václav Černý on the basis of Dostoyevsky's novels) is in belles lettres often expressed by the symbol of flight, which was so out of reach of primitive people that it became the source of many myths. In interpreting flight and symbols associated with it, Mircea Eliade says that their aim is freedom reached with the help of transcendence. He connects the thirst for reaching the absolute freedom with the inner psyche of Man, especially with his desire for something inaccessible. The effort of getting rid of one's own insufficiency, connected with the image of fall, and the endeavour to get back the lost naturalness and freedom rank among the main signs of human psyche. Transcendence, accompanying the rituals performed by shamans, yogis, alchemists or Buddhist Arhats, is connected with the feeling of flight. One of the symbols of the Arhat learning is the ability

to break through the roof of one's own house, which is the world, and thus find oneself in the universe<sup>16</sup>. This is the source of the popular allegory of a bird or winged insect which becomes a messenger or observer of what is happening deep below. A characteristic feature of the early avant-gardists, such as Apollinaire, was their enthusiasm for the current technology, the aeroplane above all. But only three years after the origin of Apollinaire's *Zone* the same motif changed from the symbol of free flight into a depressive shadow of death. Therefore the angels from one of Natalia Goncharova's engravings from the cycle *Mystical Images of the War* (*Mysticheskiye obrazy voyni*, 1914) try to stop, with their bare hands and spread out wings, the lethal flight of aeroplanes<sup>17</sup>. The return to the Rousseauian ideal of pure Nature, symbolized by the Tramp (Wanderer) in the Čapek Brothers' play, changes unexpectedly into satire. From the pupa, transformed into a mayfly, the young beauty is born only to die immediately after the birth. The inevitable connection of love and death, quite natural for the "primitive" man, gains quite a new, and often catastrophic, content in the historical man's conception. This is shown by antiutopias, so popular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as by the theatre of the absurd and other postmodernist works close to that theatre. Pelevin's *The Insect's Life* begins with the flight of three espionage mosquitoes. The novel connects flight with love and death in the same way as the Čapek Brothers' play does, the stylistic level is different, though. The Čapeks' butterfly lightness with which the dadaistically playful amorous couples fly from one flower to another, is in Pelevin replaced by a very realistic description of the contemporary young people's behaviour. The scene of the action is depicted exactly, including naturalistic details. In Kratochvil's novel, the myth of flight is captured in the original mythical form as a ship with a mysterious mission, or by a levitation scene during the funeral of a girl who died tragically: the priest unexpectedly soars up to the vault of the cathedral, as if he performed one of the rituals described by Eliade. The reincarnation of a girl into her suffering mother, who herself gradually becomes a child, is another

<sup>16</sup> Mircea Eliade (*Mythes, rêves et mystères*, 1957), *Mýty, sny a mystéria*. Praha, Oikoymenth 93-94.

<sup>17</sup> N. S. Goncharova, *Mysticheskiye obrazy voyni*. Moskva, Izd. V.N. Kašina 1914. The engraving *War Memorial* (*Bratskaya mogila*) shows an angel with his arms crossed and his big Greek eyes full of reproach, staring at the bodies of the dead. A black angel on a white horse walks over the corpses and skulls with black holes instead of eyes and lips.

expression of transcendence. Kratochvil uses one more myth described by Eliade – people's ability to talk with animals<sup>18</sup>.

Kratochvil's heroine Sonia has this shaman talent as well; she is supposed to give her mission over to people of the third millennium. All these complicated crossroads, where reality meets the world of absurd transformations, bears testimony to the fact that the present people appreciate even a myth in the form of caricature, since it enables the authors to delve into hidden layers of reality. Another solution is offered by liberating humour and laughter.

#### LITERACKIE ANTYUTOPIE OD MODERNIZMU DO POSTMODERNIZMU

##### Streszczenie

W odwzorowywaniu procesu prowadzącego od modernizmu do awangardy zostaje ukazanych wiele problemów aktualnych również obecnie. Cały system znaków w rosyjskich i czeskich literaturach pokazuje narastanie konfliktów w kwestiach społecznych, moralnych i estetycznych. Porównując katastroficzne i polityczne antyutopie Waleriego Brusowa oraz Zamiatina i Orwella, można zauważyć wzrost kryzysu w społeczeństwie, wraz ze skłonnością do dalszego jego narastania, co jest groźnym sygnałem także dla teraźniejszości.

Korelacja między filozofią pragmatyzmu a literaturą, ukazana zostaje w porównaniu sztuki *Ze života hmyzu* Karela i Josefa Čapków, z powieściami absurdu – *Žyžň nasiekomych* Wiktora Pielewina (pol. *Życie owadów*) i *Nesmrtelný příběh* Jiřého Kratochvila – wszyscy odkrywają wyzwalający efekt groteskowego wyobrażenia świata.

Antyutopia zawiera w swej istocie aktualne znaki czasu, z którym jest związana, wnosi interesujące świadectwo do przemian stylu życia oraz własnej poetyki. Analiza dziewiętnastowiecznych i dwudziestowiecznych autorów pokazuje, że nie tylko symbol, ale także mit są wciąż żywe, chociaż ukazanie tego bardzo często jest abstrakcją, zgodnie ze współczesnym systemem myślenia. Prowokacyjna forma programu sztuki zamianifestowanego w modernizmie i w szczególności awangarda oraz ich wewnętrzny związek, jest jednym z fundamentalnych praw ewolucji w taki sam sposób, jak są nim semantyczne i strukturalne związki między literaturą, sztuką, muzyką oraz innymi formami kultury. Wewnętrzny związek modernizmu i awangardy odzwierciedlony w postmodernizmie, który wykorzystuje opinie na temat obu zjawisk, nadaje im nowe kształty.

<sup>18</sup> Eliade takes the ability of shamans to make contacts with animals as an expression of the desire for the lost paradise. Baptism also helps to gain back the primary purity. We can become close to animals if we give them names. Cf. M. Eliade, op. cit. 58-59. The friendship with animals is one of the main lines in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*.