KAREL ČAPEK’S TRAVELS: ADVENTURES OF A NEW VISION

by

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the theme of travel in the work of Karel Čapek (1890-1938), both in his travelogues and fiction. Instead of assuming travel as a conventional departure to another destination, journey and return home, Čapek experimented with the topic, popular in interwar literatures and arts, as an example of the avant-garde interconnectedness between different genres and arts.

Čapek used three approaches to express his experiences of traveling. First, he founded his own aesthetics of the so called “marginal forms” or “low-brow genres” which he simultaneously interpolated in his prose. Their use, which greatly changes the perspective on travel writing, is visible in comparison between Čapek’s and previous travelogues (chapter 1). Secondly, he introduced skaz as stylized spoken language to Czech literature, and changed the traditional roles of the narrator and his addressees in travelogues (chapter 2). Thirdly, he used visual elements of language, combined verbal and visual arts (illustrations and drawings) in the narrative (chapter 3). Finally, all these elements he interpolated to his prose (chapter 4) through the intertextual links with travelogues.

On the example of the theme of travel in Karel Čapek’s work, my dissertation revisits some current definitions of the historical avant-garde. It shows that the recent theories, predominantly developed on the examples from Western European and Russian
arts, cannot be fully applied to local artistic movements. First, it shows that the notion of the avant-garde cannot be just confined to the writers who called themselves “avant-garde” (such as Karel Teige or Vladislav Vančura). Instead, it should be also expanded to other writers, such as Karel Čapek, marginal to the avant-garde mainstream. Second, the analysis of the theme of travel in Karel Čapek’s opus shows that the Czech avant-garde was not destructive towards its literary heritage. Instead, it offered an alternative reading of tradition through artistic experiments. In extension, it also provided a new understanding of the cultural and literary identity.
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Foreword

A man should not wander around the world; he returns and then he is apprehensive and disgusted.¹

Karel Čapek (1890-1938) earned his international reputation for his plays Rossum’s Universal Robots (Rossumovi univerzální roboti, 1920) and The Insect Play (Ze života hmyzu, 1921), becoming along with Jaroslav Hašek, one of the first world-renowned Czech authors. He wrote poetry in his youth; which he used as literary sketches before he focused on prose and drama. Čapek was also a prominent Czech intellectual and journalist, whose feuilletons elevated journalism to an artistic level. Together with his brother Josef (1887-1945) – a visual artist, graphic designer, and co-author of some early works - Čapek showed an interest in the visual arts, photography, and film.

Throughout Karel Čapek’s diverse output, the theme of travel is a constant source of inspiration for his versatile intellectual interests. He tackled the theme not only as a writer, but also as a literary critic and journalist, thus using his journalistic experience in his literary works and literary devices in his journalism. In the narrow sense of word of the word “travel,” Čapek’s travelogues focus on the concept. They include Letters from Italy (Italské listy, 1923), Letters from England (Anglické listy, 1924), A Trip to Spain (Výlet do Španěl, 1930), Images from Holland (Obrázky z Holandska, 1932), Travels in the North (Cesta na sever, 1936),² and the posthumously published Images from Home

¹ “Člověk se nemá toulat po světě; vrátí se pak a je stísněn a ostráven” (Čapek, Cesty 58).
² I am using here English version of the title Travels to the North as translated by M. and R. Weatherall in 1939 although the original Cesta na sever rather refers to a Journey to the North. The singular noun here depicts the epic character of the journey rather than the plural “travels.”
(Obrázky z domova, 1953).\(^3\) At this point it is important to note that the English translations do not fully correspond with the Czech original. Výlet do Španěl is translated as Letters from Spain, Obrázky z Holandska as Letters from Holland, and Cesta na sever as Travels in the North. The semantic meanings of výlet as an excursion, obrázky as an image (a visual element of narration) and cesta (the epic connotation of a journey) are lost. Also the English edition of Travels in the North, which I use in this dissertation, does not contain poems written by Čapek’s wife, Olga Scheinpflugová.\(^4\)

Although travelogues, as their denotation suggests, are an obvious source of travel-themed writing, the topic wends its way through most of the genres in which Čapek worked. The chronotope of travel, different traveling figures, and intertextual references/allusions with the preceding travelogues repeatedly appear in his fiction. In other words, his fiction interacts intertextually with his journalistic works. The travel theme occurred before the travelogues were written - in Wayside Crosses (Boží muka, 1917), The Garden of Krakonoš (Krakonošova zahrada, 1918), which was co-authored with his brother, Josef; and Painful Tales (Trapné povídky, 1921) and after the travelogues began appearing in print - in The Tales from Two Pockets (Povídky z jedné kapsy, Povídky z druhé kapsy, 1929), Hordubal (1933), Meteor (Povětroň, 1934), and An Ordinary Life (Obyčejný život, 1934). Travel is also an important element in the plays, The Insect Play (Ze života hmyzu, 1921), The Makropulos Case (Věc Makropulos, 1922), and The Mother (Matka, 1938).

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\(^3\) Images from Home (Obrázky z domova, 1953) is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

\(^4\) Meaning of the titles will be discussed more in detail in chapter 1.
Travel even factored into Čapek’s selection for *French Poetry of the New Era* (*Francouzská poezie nové doby*, 1920)\(^5\) and his translation of Guillaume Apollinaire’s “Zone,” which was published separately.\(^6\) His translation of Apollinaire has been widely recognized the generic prototype of specific lyrical forms in Czech and Slovak poetry (Winczer 50).\(^7\) In other words, it was not the work of Apollinaire himself that inaugurated the modern theme of travel in Czech literature, but Čapek’s act of translation. Although many Czech Avant-Garde writers were able to read the French original and translated French poetry into Czech, Čapek’s translation of “Zone” is a culturally specific “transduction,” a “transmission from the authorial to the receiving subject” that can significantly transform the text (Doležel; *Occidental* 167-8). The French flâneur, once introduced into the Czech literary canon, was nevertheless changed according to the preexisting tradition of travel writing in Czech literature. The transduction of the theme of travel continues internally in Czech literature not only in poetry, which was indeed the most explored of the Czech Avant-Garde,\(^8\) but also in prose.

Finally, travel was important because it was considered one of the most popular themes in Czech Poetism. Emerging in 1923 from the artistic group, *Devětsil*, Poetism was a uniquely Czech Avant-Garde literary and artistic movement that questioned the traditional understanding of the arts. In the Avant-Garde spirit, Poetism posited that life and art were equal: “the art of life, the art of being alive, and living life” (Teige, 2012).
“Manifesto”). It broke from the preceding Symbolist movement, which was intellectual and highly individualistic by focusing on novelty, playfulness, artistic improvisation, and populist ideas. Travel - "a source of sensuous delight and well-being" (Levinger 524) – was used because it offered Poetists an opportunity to exoticize and defamiliarize simple, quotidian joys.\(^9\) Film, for instance, as a novelty, is highly influenced by adventure and travel genres. As Karel Teige noted in 1922:

Cinema, being a spectacle of the people, embodies the poetry and literature, which is popular among the people. Jules Verne, Karl May, Nick Carter, westerns, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Brave Captain Corcoran, *Around the World,…in short, popular literature, adventure literature, travel literature, sensational literature – the so-called boulevard and obscure literature (“Foto” 77).

Čapek, however, searched for the idea of travel beyond the limits of adventure literature: he sought a new vision of literature, cultural traditions, and the arts.

At the time of their publication, Čapek’s travelogues had gained significant attention – positive and negative - in the domestic and foreign press.\(^10\) Arne Novák, a Czech

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9 Although Levinger provides insightful analysis, she discusses travel only in the context of visual arts in works like Karel Teige’s picture poems *Travel Postcard* (1923), *Departure for Cythera* (1923-1924), and Jaroslav Seifert’s *On the Waves of TSF* (1925). Similarly to other scholars examining travel in Poetist works, she neglects prose and drama.

literary scholar, recognized the similarities between the treatment of language in *Letters from Italy* and in Čapek’s plays since both deftly incorporated colloquial, conversational speech (“Dojmy”). The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* noted Čapek’s visit to the PEN club in 1924 and announced his plans to travel through England. The writer famous abroad for his *Insect Play* and *R.U.R* disliked the urban atmosphere of London and “thinks the Tubes are terrible – the quintessence of Robotism” (“Correspondence”). For Spectator Literary Supplement the Czech traveler resembles a “rustic” figure within the alienated Anglo-Saxon civilization. He is amazed at the visual quality of architecture and landscapes yet lacking the in-depth sociological perspective: “His sociological deductions are superficial; the whole culture of England is scarcely touched upon except in its visual appeal” (Wertheimer 659). Jan Thon notices the positive lack of “traveling methodology” in *Výlet do Španěl*, stressing the polyphonic quality of the narrator’s language (“Čapek”). “Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant” understands mockery of Holland as art, with the traveler being one of many “mockers,” (…) “who at the same time nevertheless remain charming, harmless mockers, without becoming malicious, mocking one country without causing harm to anybody” (“Letteren”). The positive reception of Čapek’s work continues after the Second World War, but this is beyond the scope of my dissertation.  

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from Italy. Rozhledy 5 (1936); Hora, Josef. “Karel Čapek: *Cesta na sever*” Rev. of Travels to the North. Listy 5 (1937).  
11 In many of the journals found in Karel Čapek’s personal fund in the archives of the Museum of National Literature (*Památník národního písemnictví*) bibliographic information, such as the page number and name of the author are missing. When the bibliographic information is incomplete, I will give only the information available.  
Although there has been a great deal of scholarship on Karel Čapek’s work, the place of his travelogues within the writer’s opus and the aesthetics of the interwar period has not been sufficiently explored. Except for mainly negative appraisals and the personal accounts of people who took part in his travels, the scholarship on Čapek’s travelogues is scattered in different monographs that focus on everything but Čapek’s literary output. Additionally, the travelogues are considered of secondary importance in comparison with his work as a novelist and playwright, in part because his plays and novels brought him international fame. Another crucial problem is the aesthetic understanding of the travelogues. Many monographers position them in the sphere of Čapek’s journalistic practice and keep them completely separate from his literary works. Although literary elements in his newspapers columns have been recognized, their relationship with his fiction has not been sufficiently studied.

For example, in some of the major, comprehensive monographs, such as William Harkins’ Karel Čapek (1962), the only mention of the travelogues is in reference to the significance of physical travel as “another source of pleasure” for Čapek (Harkins 15). Alexander Matuška, in his 1963 study, draws a connection between Čapek’s journalistic


15 See, for instance, Otakar Vočadlo’s Anglické listy Karla Čapka. There are also numerous remarks on traveling in the letters Čapek wrote to his future wife, Olga Scheinplugová, collected in Listy Olze: 1920-1938.

16 For example, there is nothing about the travelogues in the work of Nikol’skii (Nad stranitsami antiutopii K. Chapeka i M. Bulgakova: poetika skrytykh motivov, 2001 and Fantastika a satira v díle Karla Čapka, 1978), which are both considered major contributions to Čapek scholarship. Newer, international scholarship also continues with considerations of his fiction while ignoring the travelogues. See, for instance, Andreas Ohme’s Karel Capeks Roman Krieg mit den Molchen: Verfahren, Intention, Rezeption and Dorothea Uhle’s Avantgarde, Zivilisationskritik und Pragmatismus in Karel Čapeks Boží muka.
and literary work in the art of the feuilleton. He does not link them through stylistic devices, instead focuses on their influences, polemical, and social aspects (164). Bohuslava Bradbrook (1998) also exercises a descriptive approach; situating Čapek’s travel writing within the context of his journalism, in which he sought the “truth, tolerance and trust [that] dominates his writings” (205). Čapek’s German biographer, Eckhard Thiele (1988), mentions the travelogues only as a part of the writer’s activities in the context of personal biography. Ivan Klíma (1962) discusses the travelogues only in relation with Čapek’s correspondence with Olga Scheinpflugová, whose style the author compares with the fragility and melancholy of Franz Kafka (108-116). Although a similar trait like other biographers followed František Buriánek in his monograph on Čapek (1988), he notices the increased importance of the explicit visual elements that were introduced in Letters to England in the form of illustrations, where the author “emphasizes bigger demands on the visual sense” (185). Buriánek’s collection of essays, Variations on Čapek (Čapkovské variace, 1984), reconsiders the writer’s persona, briefly mentioning his A Trip to Spain as the discovery of the heroism (75) and the author’s take on Nazism in Travels to the North (77). Additionally, even the papers in On Karel Čapek: A Michigan Slavic Colloquium (1992), which focuses on the stylistic and narrative aspects of Čapek’s works, did not seriously discuss the travelogues; they are altogether absent.

Some smaller studies stressing the experimental features of the travelogues, especially the treatment of the visual aspects of the narration exist, but a comprehensive
analysis on this topic has not been written yet. Jan Mukařovský analyzes these experiments within the context of “semantic doubling” (významová dvojitost), which is a general characteristic of Čapek’s work. In this case, the visible coexistence of equally important textual and visual signs, both created by the author itself, is an example of doubling (“Výstavba” 382). Mukařovský here obviously also refers to the fact that Čapek was one of the rare authors who illustrated his own work. Danuše Kšicová develops the intermedial and visual aspect of Čapek’s work, outlining his love for the visual arts; his interest in the aesthetic aspects of his journeys; and his philosophical considerations of nature. For instance, in the Natural History Museum in London, Čapek ponders over “a crystalline understanding of the development of the arts, architecture, and civilization from ancient Egypt to contemporary London.” This is, according to Kšicová, a result of Čapek’s “cubist education,” which displayed an understanding of this artistic movement similar to that possessed by the Russian Futurist poet, Velemir Khlebnikov (10). Zdeněk Kožmín talks about the stylistic “intensifications” resulting from Čapek’s semantic and morphological experiments with the use of colours in his travelogues (305-324). Adolf Hoffmeister sees a polymorphous quality to Čapek’s travelogues in the expansion and development of visual signs starting with Letters from England and continuing with the importance of the visual in A Trip to Spain and ending with Travels to the North, in which the traveler “discovers Munch’s exciting morphology” (150). Bohuslav Hoffman finds the “intersemiotic principle” of the travelogues, the polyphony of genres, and

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17 Many specialists, however, stress Čapek’s interest in the visual arts and his practical experience with photography and film. František Laudat, for instance, remarks that Čapek’s “sensitive perception of his environment, so typical of his books, found reflection also in his hobby – photography” (Karel Čapek 6).
18 “Semantic doubling” will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter “Travels between Nature and Art.”
different arts immediately in their titles, which concurrently refer to the textual and visual character of the narratives (203).

My dissertation relies on such intersemiotic impulses to examine travel in the work of Karel Čapek. Čapek, similar to his contemporary Franz Kafka, was “an avid traveler, a voyager who traveled as a reader and a writer despite (or because of) his personal stasis” (Zilcosky 1). In the Czech context, the interwar period (1918-1938), during which Čapek wrote, was the time when a new travel tradition was established. (*O umění 3: 155*) Honza, the fairy-tale figure who epitomizes the average Czech and his provincial mentality, “a heavy-footed, full-blooded peasant” (Jedlička 12), is famous for never leaving his home and sitting “near the hearth, [where] he gained a predilection for looking at not only the world but also at the whole, wide world” (Jedlička 155). As John Zilcosky notes, the modern man of the interwar era could enjoy the wonders of technological developments, heal his nostalgia, redefine his idea of home and “regain his health by boarding a train or steamship and traveling elsewhere” (7).

I argue that in the travelogues, Čapek experiments with the traditional structure of the genre. As I will show, the theme of travel in Karel Čapek’s opus revisits and explores the understanding and limits of interwar, and even of Czech culture. Although Čapek has never been considered an Avant-Garde writer, and was subsequently criticized for his alleged conservative views on art and social issues, his treatment of travel corresponds

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19 For example, in *Poetismus*, the major monograph on Poetism, which also contains the main manifestos and poetic works of the period, Čapek’s name appears only in 1920; he is listed as the translator and editor of an anthology of French poetry, *Francouzská poezie nové doby* (1920), which has been recognized for its influence on the formation of the interwar Czech Avant-Garde. Meanwhile his entire opus in which Avant-Garde elements are concurrent with the poetics of Poetism is omitted (“Chronologický přehled”).

20 Bedřich Václavek, a Marxist critic, describes Čapek’s literary output as conservative and lacking the talent for developing prose and drama so that they were suitable for the technological and social progress of the period. Although Václavek claims that Čapek’s travelogues are esthetically more valuable than his prose
to Avant-Garde poetics. This is visible, for instance, in his manipulation of language, especially in the introduction of oral elements and in changes to the expected communication patterns between the traveler and his addressees; the use of illustrations as independent visual signs rather than as decorative additions to the text; and his new approach to his audience who become directly involved in the creative process because of Čapek’s various narrative techniques.

I argue that his first travelogue *Letters from Italy* represents a link between the Czech tradition of travel writing and the interwar idea of traveling. Čapek, like his literary predecessors, went to Italy; however, he refined the representation of Italy as the archetype for European identity and played with the genre of travel writing itself. He introduced the so-called “simple forms” in literature, a term taken from André Jolles’ study *Simple Forms* (*Einfache Formen*, 1930) to define genres originating in and depicting the fundamental human experience (*Geistbeschäftigung*) to achieve this goal. Specifically, Čapek uses fairy tales and anecdotes, which defamiliarize the narration typically found in travelogues. Within Čapek’s aesthetics, although “simple forms” originate in the human need to depict foundational experiences, they are marginalized because they were traditionally ignored by literary aesthetics and excluded from the canon. Additionally, Čapek introduced *skaz* narration to travelogues to construct narration as a dialogue between the traveler-narrator and his audience by breaking the narrative distance between them. Additionally he played with visual elements of

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21 “simple forms” will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.
22 Here, I refer to Čapek’s aesthetic considerations of simple forms in his collection *In Praise of Newspapers and Other Essays on the Margin of Literature* (*Marsyas, čili na okraj literatury*, 1919-1931), which will be discussed in chapter 1.
narrative, interpolating the elements of visual arts and film into narration, and transforming the travelogue into his own aesthetic statement on history of arts.

*Letters from Italy*, which Čapek wrote only a year after Vítězslav Nezval’s Poetist manifesto “The Marvelous Magician” (“Podivuhodný kouzelník,” 1922), outlines the ideas that the first manifesto of Poetism (1924) expressed a year later in a more assertive manner. As one reviewer noted, the advantage of *Letters from Italy* is that it was “written in Czech” (Žákavec). Here, the reviewer refers to Čapek’s plain, familiar language that is entertaining and understandable by everyone. This language was different from the lofty style found in contemporaneous tractates on art. In the manifesto, Poetism’s chief theoretician, Karel Teige, demanded that Poetism liberate art from museums, libraries and studies. Two years later, in 1925, Teige announced that Futurism had freed the poetic image of Italy that was lying in front of them “as the widow of a departed spirit. The dead mold of museums and galleries, the smell of decay of by-gone Renaissance culture” (“Futurismus” 144). Čapek’s own description of the Vatican mimics Teige’s statement when, in the Vatican museum he states, as another reviewer noted, “that antiquity does not exist” (Brtník). Čapek argues against the strict delineation between the arts and art periods, which suggests the Avant-Garde demand that they should be unshackled from tradition.

Later, the travelogues *Letters from England* and *A Trip to Spain*, adopt the changed narrative structure and nascent intermedial elements from *Letters from Italy*. Furthermore, they change according to the Avant-Garde poetics of the literary and visual arts. While in *Letters from Italy*, visual elements are only implied, the later travelogues gradually challenge the narrative structure with the explicit introduction of intermedial
elements. For example, some illustrations in *Letters from England* follow the aesthetic influence of Expressionism,\(^{23}\) stylistically resembling some of George Grosz’s drawings.\(^{24}\) *A Trip to Spain* challenges the static character of illustrations and introduces the poetics of film and the Surrealist notion of dream.

Both travelogues mark the beginning (*Letters from England*) and the end (*A Trip to Spain*) of the period containing the primary literary experiments with traveling within Czech literature. It was in that period that Vítězslav Nezval wrote *Pantomime* (*Pantomima*, 1924) and *Acrobat* (*Akrobat*, 1927); Karel Teige constructed picture poems like *Departure to Cythera* (*Odjezd na Kytheru*, 1924) and *Tourist Song* (*Turistická báseň*, 1924); Jiří Voskovec wrote *Siphons of Colonial Siestas* (*Sifony koloniálních siest*, 1925) and *Good night* (*Dobrou noc*, 1925); Jaroslav Seifert published a collection of visual poetry, *On the Waves of TSF* (*Na vlnách TSF*, 1925); and Konstantin Biebl composed exotic-themed poetry that was collected in *Along the Golden Chains* (*Zlatými řetezy*, 1926) and *With Ship, Importing Tea and Coffee* (*S lodí jež dováží čaj a kávu*, 1927). After this period, *Images from Holland* (*Obrázky z Holandska*, 1932) continued the experiments with representing travel begun at the beginning of the 1920s, even though this theme was no longer popular. His update to the travelogue reflected current aesthetics, though, as he played with the Surrealist theme of mirror.\(^{25}\) Finally Čapek’s last travelogue *Travels to the North* (*Cesta na sever*, 1936) continues the Avant-Garde

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\(^{23}\) This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

\(^{24}\) here I have in mind some urban scenes and book illustrations made by Grosz. See for instance *Gruss aus Sachsen* [Greetings from Saxon] (*The Berlin of George Grosz*, 140).

\(^{25}\) This will be discussed in more depth in chapter 2.
experiments in travel writing; its stylistic features still recall elements of Surrealist poetics.\footnote{An example of this is the notions of dream and mirroring (zrcadlení) for the creation of new meaning, which Žoržeta Čolakova considers the distinguishing elements of Surrealist poetics, although they were implicitly present in Symbolism and Poetism (57). Dreams and mirroring will be discussed in chapters 1 and 2.}

Reading fiction within the framework provided by the Avant-Garde treatments of travel suggest an interpretation of the interwar movements that differs from the traditional theoretical considerations that generally characterize the Avant-Garde “by the way of negation” towards tradition (Karl 10). This refers to the notion that the Avant-Garde rejected earlier aesthetic values that supposedly define Western European and Russian Avant-Garde movements.\footnote{Examples of this are the studies by Calinescu and Poggioli. I will discuss this topic in the conclusion.} In opposition to this, I suggest that the Czech Avant-Garde emerged as a response to the search for a national and cultural identity typical of Slavic literatures between the 1860s and 1918. It also began a hunt for “new, expressive means more suitable for modern times” (Winczer 25). The exploration of the “new” should not be understood as in terms of an Avant-Garde striving towards the future, which is characteristic, for instance, of the Russian Avant-Garde, especially the works of Velimir Khlebnikov (Flaker, Poetika 68). As I will confirm through my examination of Čapek, the Czech Avant-Garde was a return to and re-examination of the literary tradition, a change in perspective on understanding that tradition, and an emphasis on the aesthetic quality of the present moment.

In this dissertation artistic “modernism” will be synonymous to a German term “die Moderne,” French “modernité” or Slavic version “moderna,” as a phenomenon characteristic in Central European arts and literatures. It frames the period from the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century until 1910 when the national and social functions of literature were
abandoned and writers turned to “modern” poetic models, among them French poetry (Flaker, *Stilske formacije* 83). In addition, the avant-garde is understood as a continuation of modernism, but also in broader terms as “a zone of the avant-garde influence,” characteristic of the region “from Trieste to Gdansk,” encompassing also writers such as Karel Capek, who did not belong to the established avant-garde groups (Flaker, *Poetika osporavanja* 253-4). Eva Strohsová uses the term “the new modernity” (nový modernismus”) in order to describe this continuation, pointing at the poetical heritage from the beginning of the 1890s, especially an awareness of “illusion of national unity” (9) had on generation of poets gathered around the second modernist manifesto *Almanach for the Year 1914* (*Almanach na rok 1914*, published in 1913),28 and impulses on poetry written after the First World War. In addition, Strohsová stresses how this process was accelerated with changes in international poetics, especially the influence of Cubism and Expressionism on visual arts, and Futuristic manifestoes of Marinetti and Apollinaire (24).

Thus, a quest for a new vision could not mean the break with the freshly established Czech national artistic identity. It was "an internal polemic with national-revivalist literature and Romanticism; in other words [it was] a revision of the national function of literature" (Flaker, *Formacije* 84). From a theoretical point of view, the opposition between international and national is the opposition between the periods of expansion (rozšíření), which is characterized by an openness to external literary influences when “phenomena must be comprehended in their width and variety” and contraction (zúžení),

28 The writers and artists around the *Almanach*, a collection of poetry, prose, dramatic fragments and essays, were known as “the generation of the Brothers Capek.” In contrast to the previous generations of writers, this generation was mainly inspired by American and English poetry and motifs of everyday life. To the group belonged František Langer, Otakar Theer, Václav Špála, Miroslav Rutte, Karel and Josef Capek, and Stanislav Kostka Neumann, Vlastislav Hofmann and the others.
which distinguishes literary periods when "under the pressure of the historical situation everything is focused on the artistic understanding of isolated realms of phenomena" (Vodička, “Kategorie” 111).

The search for a new literary function meant simultaneously understanding both diachronic and synchronic literary development. Therefore, literary history is defined by the continuity between periods of expansion and contraction, and in contrast to Bürger’s and Poggioli’s understandings of the Avant-Garde’s conflicts with tradition, the Avant-Garde should be seen as a dialogue with tradition through the use of new aesthetic devices. This is especially visible in the Avant-Garde employment of linguistic exploration and new media, such as radio and television. Considered together, they helped Avant-Garde artists and writers synthesize tradition and their new visions (Vodička, “O modernosti” 104).

To conclude, I will provide a comprehensive study of Čapek’s travelogues based on textual analysis of the narrative experiments in his travel writing. In order to do this, I will look at four crucial aspects of his experimentation with the travel theme: 1. the position of Čapek’s travelogues within the Czech tradition of travel writing, 2. narratorial change within the context of the Avant-Garde narrative, 3. intermedial experiments, and 4. the intertextual relationship between Čapek’s travelogues and his own fiction. The overall theoretical approach will be interdisciplinary but it will focus mainly on the literary and aesthetic theories of the interwar era. To contextualize the travelogues within Czech, I will use Čapek’s own aesthetic considerations of literature and apply them to his literary work. I will look comparatively into his aesthetic theory of “simple forms” as outlined in his collection, In Praise of Newspapers and Other Essays on the Margin of
Literature (Marsyas, čili na okraj literatury, 1931), and analogous theories of the time, for instance Andre Jolles’ and Vladimir Propp’s work on this topic. I will also revisit the contributions of the Prague Linguistic Circle to narrative theory, as well as the beginnings of intertextual and intermedial studies, especially in the work of Jan Mukařovský. Thus, my aim is to also show to what extent Čapek’s and the Avant-Garde’s experiments were a result of close collaboration between artistic theory and practice.

The first chapter, entitled “Establishing Conventions,” discusses the development of travel writing in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Czech literature. The aim of this chapter is two-fold: to demonstrate how earlier Czech travelogues on Italy coincide with Vodička’s concept of literary history and to situate Čapek’s writings about the country in their proper context. Specifically, earlier travelogues used ironic distance to help the authors establish a Czech national identity in contradistinction to the Italian identity, while Čapek did the same thing by using specific narrative devices to foreground the change of narratorial perspective. In this context, I will discuss literature’s “simple forms” and outline how Čapek’s approach to the visual and the narrator differs from tradition.

The second chapter concerns the position of the narrator in the travelogues, especially in connection with skaz. The title “How to Establish Contact with the Natives” refers to the titles of some of Čapek’s shorter works. One example is How the Newspapers Are Made (Jak se dělají noviny, 1937), in which he often humorously depicts the process of artistic or intellectual creation. In other words, chapter 2 illustrates that one of the main aesthetic principles of Karel Čapek is to show how he creates the travelogue, thereby shifting the emphasis from “what” to “how.” The skaz in Čapek’s travelogues,
serves as the new way of addressing the reader,\(^{29}\) or rather as a search for the addressees, as well as a self-address, doubling of the narrator’s identity, resembles, as this chapter will show, the poetics of Guillaume Apollinaire’s poetry, especially as manifested in “Zone.” Thus, the poem links the aesthetics of the two writers. The transposition of the past into present, already visible in “Zone,” is important because it shows Čapek’s striving to depict the presence,\(^{30}\) which exists as an aesthetic quality independent of temporal constraints. In addition, personification of objects and nature present in “Zone,” become part of Čapek’s traveling experience, visible for instance, in *Letters from England*: Čapek’s experience of fear, loneliness and misery on the streets of London resembles the human loneliness in the zoomorphised traffic on the streets of Paris.

The focus of the third chapter, “Travels Between Nature and Art,” is on the poetic techniques that highlight the visual poetics in Čapek’s travelogues, that he again borrowed from Apollinaire and treatment of this theme in his poetry. In Poetism, as many theorists have recognized,\(^{31}\) the notion of travel lies at the core of the Avant-Garde connection between the visual arts and literature.\(^{32}\) The main hypothesis of the travelogues relies on a difference between *pitoresknost* and *malebnost*, two notions introduced in *Letters from Italy*. Although both terms have roughly the same meaning in English – “picturesque” or “colorful” - in Čapek’s narrative, the former is associated with aesthetically devalued phenomena, something overly colorful or kitschy, and the latter is connected to the pleasurable visual qualities of the towns and regions in Italy that

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\(^{29}\) This has been already recognized by Lubomir Dolezel’s *Narativní způsoby v české literatuře*.

\(^{30}\) I have in mind here the Czech word “prítomnost,” which both means “present time” and “presence.”


\(^{32}\) As Levinger suggests, Karel Teige's take on art history rests on the continual success of the visual arts as a "triumph of optics over literary content" and the similar strivings of poetry, which "attained the triumph of sight over sound" (517).
motivate artistic creativity, since the abstract noun *malebnost* is derived from the verb “malovat” – to paint. Simultaneity is achieved in Čapek’s travelogues through ekphrasis as a verbal representation of a work of visual art that is itself “a poetic and rhetorical device and a literary genre” (Wagner 11).

In his first travelogue, *Letters from Italy*, Čapek uses ekphrasis to show the simultaneous coexistence between the present and the past through visual representations. He expands the visual element with the introduction of the so-called iconotext – the use of explicitly visual elements such as illustrations (presented initially as black and white drawings and then in colour) and caricatures. I argue that the illustrations and caricatures are not merely decoration but rather an extension of the visual aspects of Avant-Garde texts: they are independent semantic signs and therefore another level of narrative representation, a simultaneous connection between the visual and textual sign. In Čapek’s work, illustrations are an example of Poetist play and playfulness, a simulation of children’s game a form of defamiliarization, and they both, as Pavol Winczer indicates, “result in the weakening of the referential value of the discourse, i.e. ‘the relationship towards reality’ and incline to self-referentiality” (92).

Lastly, the fourth chapter, “Fictional Travels,” examines the transpositional elements in Čapek’s travelogues that were discussed in chapters 1 through 3 to Čapek’s fiction. As I argue, the theme of travel offers an alternative point of view on his fiction that cuts across the borders of literary genres. I will analyze the fiction according to the relationship between journeys (destinations) and home, which is the central organizing

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33 Čapek’s illustrations were popular among readers, although when they are put in the context of his political views, his critics often denounced them as childish, naïve, and scandalously unnecessary in light of pressing global issues. For example, in 1937, because of his aesthetics, considered childish, he was accused by Jaroslav Durych for the alleged anti-military spirit and support for Communism and of the massacre of clerics in Spain (8-11).
concept in the travelogues. Fiction reverses the semantic use of the structural elements found in the travelogues. The “home” in the travelogues appears as the domestication of the visited place, made through the imitation of oral communication and intermedial authentication. The traveler-narrator in the travelogues physically visits destinations that are comparable to home and therefore domesticated. In Čapek’s fiction, the proximity between home and abroad is another way of diminishing the distance between the narrator and his reader.

My discussion of Čapek’s fiction will examine three different types of travel. The first is “armchair traveling” to exotic destinations, which was popular in Poetism. The idea of the exotic appears in Čapek’s early prose works, The Garden of Krakonoš (Krakonošova zahrada, 1918) and The Luminous Depths (Zářivé hlubiny, 1916). Exotic destinations are also a motif in The Mother (Matka, 1938), in which abroad becomes a place of death. The second group represents traveling as wandering with tramps (tulák, pobuda) as the main characters, in which the idea of home is absent. An example of this is The Insect Play. The last group involves journeys of self-discovery (sebeobjevení), in which internalized ideas of travel challenges the idea of home. As the most diverse of the three types of travel in Čapek, the journey of self-discovery occurs in several ways. Firstly, it can happen through contact with others who are traveling as in The Wayside Crosses. Secondly, self-discovery can transpire as the result of the protagonist’s travels as in some stories from Tales from Two Pockets (Povídky z jedné kapsy, Povídky z druhé

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34 For the sake of clarity, I will select works in which the theme of travel appears as an overall structural element, while those in which it occurs as a motif will only be mentioned briefly. 35 Konstantín Biebl’s poetry, for instance, treats the theme of exotic and home in a manner similar to Karel Čapek’s in his novel, Válka s mloky. In both works, home is perceived from an exotic island, as an antipode or a mirror image, and they gradually replace one another (the experience of colonial exploitation in Biebl’s poetry and the newts becoming men in Čapek’s novel).
Hybler (2019) notes, travel literature is often a result of a return to home. The journey of self-discovery directly relates all versatile travelers from this group to the traditional Czech pilgrim (*poutník*), especially Jan Amos Komenský’s allegorical traveler in *Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart* (*Labyrint světa a ráj srdce*, 1631).

**Introduction**

The introduction consists of two sections. The first provides a general framework for the discussion of travel writing and its importance. It outlines the literary-historical and theoretical aspects of the theme of travel in the history of European literatures and the history of Czech travel writing. The second section continues with the idea of travel and modernism in the context of Guillaume Apollinaire’s aesthetics and his reception among Czech writers. In this part, I discuss the poetic context of his “Zone” and its Czech translation: the similarities between his and Čapek’s understanding of modernity, its literary transductions into the Czech context, and finally, the structural analysis of the travel elements in the poem, which will be used in later discussions of Čapek’s travelogues.

*Travel in literature and theory*

One of the core symbols of European cultural and spiritual identity and “the oldest and largest cluster of metaphor in any language” (Adams 14), travel in the twentieth century became an archetype and "communicable" symbol of human life. (Frye 118) The semantic possibilities of the metaphor of travel stem from the uniquely human capability
to recognize and understand oneself in the process of becoming and to be aware of oneself through experiences of the other. Another important feature of this popular theme is that it can challenge the limits of the travelogue as a genre and exist in other genres. In other words, the problem with travel writing is its “dauntingly heterogeneous character,” which frequently crosses the narrative borders since “travel writing borrows freely from the memoir, journalism, letters, guidebooks, confessional narrative, and most important, fiction” (Kowalewski 7).

A literary-historical overview of the road chronotope (Bakhtin, “Forms” 84) associated with major works in world literature gives insight as to how the notion of “travel literature” challenges generic limits. Gilgamesh, for example, is a returnee, a superhuman, and a hero, who “from a distant journey came home, weary, at peace.” (Gilgamesh 3) Guided by his wisdom, Gilgamesh built the famous walls of Uruk. Odysseus is an archetype of the hero and adventurer who associates his travel adventures with storytelling. Herodotus founded historiography while traveling for the sake of gaining personal knowledge. He knew no difference between the great and small, and was “no less concerned with unimportant cities than with the great. For those that were formerly great are now diminished, while those which are now great were once small” (3).

The Bible presents the ordeal of Jesus Christ as a prototype for the pilgrimage; his life is seen as a road “that a man and human kind must walk along and that is marked by moral imperatives, which imprint the individual life with meaning” (Baleka 38). The biblical road was followed by Dante's *The Divine Comedy* (*La Divina Commedia*, 1308-1321) and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1380s). The medieval times witnessed the
travels of Marco Polo, John Mandeville, and other explorers and adventurers who transformed “the traditional paradigms of pilgrimage and crusade into new forms attentive to observed experience and curiosity towards other lifeways” (Hulme and Youngs 3). The sixteenth century brought Thomas Moore's *Utopia* (1516), the seventeenth century - John Bunyan's allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678). Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615), a parody of spiritual traveling, appeared alongside serious, didactic works.

Journeys also inaugurated the beginnings of modernity in eighteenth-century English literature, whereby “travel is everywhere,” and when “almost every author of consequence – among them Daniel Defoe, Joseph Addison, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, Samuel Johnson, James Boswell, Laurence Sterne, Mary Wollstonecraft – ‘produced one overt travel book’” (Buzard 37). The two traditions, the real and the fictional travels, continued well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with Byron’s Romantic *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-1818) and its epigones, the Symbolists' poetic escapes from the hopelessness and boredom of quotidian life, into *flânerie* as urban traveling, the Apollinairean tradition of the "Zone," and spiritual, Modernist journeys of T. S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1911) and *The Waste Land* (1922), Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915), James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939).

The postmodern idea of travel draws from Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) to expand the theme of travel to the notion of gaze as the narrative, political, and cultural appropriation of the world of a different, often exotic, culture.36 This notion also

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36 Examples of this include Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes: Travel and Transculturaiton*, James Clifford’s *Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Michael Cronin’s *Across the Lines*:
encouraged the interdisciplinary approach to the theme of traveling, bringing together postcolonial criticism, gender politics, and questions of identity as well as transculturation in the postmodern world. For Postmodernists, in the world of displaced identities, the process of traveling assimilates and equates writing with political and cultural theory and finds in its etymology an explicit link between the loss of home and intellectual production. Manfred Pfister notices the etymological connection between travel and theory in ancient Greek (3) and James Clifford articulates it as “The Greek term *theorein*: a practice of travel and observation, a man sent by the polis to another city to witness a religious ceremony. ‘Theory’ is a product of displacement, comparison, a certain distance. To theorize, one leaves home” (Clifford 177).

Postmodernism also recognizes the flexibility and assimilative features of the genre. It expands the understanding of the genre and changes the purpose of writing travelogues from their Modernist aims in the early twentieth century, when journeys were undertaken “for the sake of writing about it” and “as an alternative form of writing for novelists.” (Carr 74) On the one hand, postmodern theorists point to the terminological confusion emerging with the growing popularity of travel writing, and, on the other hand, due to the increasing lack of methodology needed to describe the ever-changing travelogue. Jan Borm, for instance, argues that it would be legitimate to stop using the term “travel writing” for the name of the genre, and to replace it with “a collective term for a variety of texts both predominantly fictional and non-fictional whose main theme is travel” (13). The term he proposes, while taking into account the fictional, literary nature of the

Travel, Language, Translation, and John Zilcosky’s *Kafka’s Travels: Exoticism, Colonialism and the Traffic of Writing.*

37 The terms he lists are “travel book,” “travel narrative,” “journeywork,” “travel memory,” “travel story,” “travelogue,” “metatravelogue,” “traveller's tale,” “travel journey,” or simply “travels” (*The Travels of Sir*)
travel writing, would be “the literature of travel” or “travel literature” (13). While the
generic changes play an important role, the political and cultural implications of the genre
highlighted by Postmodern scholars are outside the scope of my dissertation, although
Čapek’s work is an example of Borm’s mixed definitions.

The Theme of Travel as Expansion of Literary Horizons

The history of Czech travel writing illustrates the “expansive” tendencies of the
literary process. The “expansion” I refer to here is not only geographical, but also
generic. It outlines the transformation of travelers from the medieval pilgrim to the
nineteenth-century outcast, early twentieth-century poet-cum-visual artist, and along with it, changes in the purpose of traveling, and alterations in the articulation of both the
foreign and the domestic. Literary expansion also points to generic diversity; the presence
of the theme of travel in epic poetry, documentary genres, fiction, and, finally, examples
of poetic travelogues with the intermedial elements commonly found at the beginning of
the twentieth century.

The Czech tradition of the travelogue starts in the fourteenth century with a series of
translations of classical literature, Latin chronicles, and the Bible (Kunský 9). Originating
in medieval, Christian scholarship as well as magic and folklore, the hero of early Czech
travelogues is typically a pilgrim (poutník) whose disappointing journeys were marked by
hopeful homecomings. His journeys were undertaken to discover the meaning of world
and Christian consolation. Over the course of the centuries, pilgrim acquired various
functions according to the nature and purpose of his stroll. He became “a pedestrian

\textit{John Mandeville}, and, in a different vein, “travel writing,” “travel literature,” “the literature of travel” and
“the travel genre.”
(chodec), vagabond (tulák), walker (kráčivec), passerby (kolemjdoucí), and witness (svědek)” (Ripellino 38).

Late Czech Renaissance literature opened a path to another type of pilgrimage, the voyage of discovery of concrete geographical spaces. The primary example of this is Kryštof Harant z Polžic's A Voyage to the Holy Land and to Egypt (Cesta do Svaté Země a do Egypta, 1593).38 The travelogue has a two-partite structure. Each half is accompanied by introductions in which the narrator explains his reasons for traveling. He wants to learn from historical experience and the experiences of others in attempt to overcome the inconstancy of the world and human nature (I. XXIII). His journey is an experience of “speculum mortalum, a mirror of mortality” (I. XXIV). The narrator often bases his descriptions of geographical places on the work of classical authors, biblical sources, and the scientific discourse of that period. The narrator despises everything he sees and expresses gratitude to God for letting him return home. Although he recommends traveling for the purpose of learning, he doubts that he would repeat his adventure if he had known that difficulties and human misery would prevail over the pleasures of journey. Ultimately his return provides him with his goal: the secure shelter of a Christian homeland (II. 255-265).

Jan Amos Komenský’s pilgrim-protagonist in Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart (Labyrint světa a ráj srdce, 1623) continues Harant’s desire for a Christian homeland. Beginning with Komenský’s work, the Czech pilgrim became closely associated with Prague, its architectonic features, and references in arts and

38 Among the other voyages of this type, the most important are Martin Kabátník's A Voyage from the Czech Lands to Jerusalem and Cairo (Cesta z Čech do Jeruzaléma a Kaira, 1539) and Prefáť z Vlkanova's A voyage from Prague to Venice and Then From There Across the Sea to Palestine (Cesta z Prahy do Benátek a odtud potom po moři až do Palestiny, 1563).
literature. Komenský’s pilgrim undertakes his journey through the labyrinth of an imagined town that is a world in miniature in search of knowledge and consolation. He disappointingly gives up the material reality that thrives in fruitless human activities and hopes before he returns to the Christianity located in his heart.

The pilgrim’s constant doubt in the purpose of his journey and his passivity towards the world through which he passes makes Komenský’s Baroque allegory modern. The modern theme of hopelessness was approached with modern narrative devices. They include, as Lubomír Doležel has shown, different types of first-person narration, the modulations of which directly affect the macrostructure of the text (“Způsoby” 70). Additionally, Komenský’s pilgrim is the prototype of an individual caught in the net of judgments and trials, “of the unjustly accused innocent, who will be legion in Prague” (Ripellino 42). All of these features - disappointment in the world, doubts in spiritual traveling, the loss and search for the meaning of journey, the world seen through the eyes of the accused, and especially the relation between the traveler and his homeland - will resonate in nineteenth-century Czech literature, which, as the century drew to a close, shows the increasing of popularity of travel writing.

The modern Czech travel tradition and the “the first artistic travelogue” (Justl 480) begins in the early phases of the National Revival with Matěj Zdírak Polák’s Travel to Italy (Cesta do Itálie, 1818), in which the greatness of Italian civilization opposes the neglected and devalued Czech culture at home. This travelogue remained “solitary” for

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39 The theme of Prague will be discussed in the context of Apollinaire’s short story “Prague Walker” (“Le Passant”).
40 Dimitry Čiževský doubts that the Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart is as a journey because ‘the 'wanderings' in the first part are confined to a stroll through the city and the wanderer remains completely passive, a mere spectator and observer (“Labyrinth” 97).
41 Matěj Zdírak Polák’s travelogue will be in detail discussed in chapter 1.
42 this topic will be discussed in chapter 1.
a long time because later travels to Italy such as Jan Kollár’s Italian travel or Karel Hynek Mácha’s diary account of his journey not meant for public use had less aesthetic quality than Polák’s travelogue (480). The scarcity of the travel motif in literature during the Czech National Revival is even more marked when one considers the number of writers and intellectuals who spent a significant period of time abroad (František Ladislav Čelakovský, Jan Evangelista Purkyně, Pavel Jozef Šafarik) without producing a single piece of travel literature (480).

In the Romantic travelogues of Karel Hynek Mácha, the depicted journeys occur within the urban and historical symbols of the Czech lands. In the spirit of Romanticism, Mácha’s travelers are outcasts from the society. They represent the search for the homeland within their physical home country, existing either as a memory of the motherland, which, in order to be rediscovered spiritually, had to be physically abandoned first. The figure on a journey related to the experience of death is a frequent theme of Mácha's poetry and short prose works. In “The Pilgrimage to the Giant Mountains” (“Pouť Krkonošská,” 1833-1834), for example, a wanderer experiences death without the possibility of resurrection. “Márinka,” a short story from Images from My Life (Obrazy ze života mého, 1835-1836), consists of four separate journeys (Grebeníčková 115-178), all of which focus on the possibility of meeting Márinka, the poetic transduction of Goethe’s Mignon. She is an idealized figure that the narrator

43 In his review of Čapek’s Italské listy, Arne Novák notes that the biggest difference between Čapek and the previous tradition of travel writing is the absence of the Romantic tradition embodied by Goethe’s Mignon and presence of the writing tradition as found in the work of Jan Neruda. Čapek was looking for in Italy, as Novák argues, Neruda’s poetic traces. Novák wrote: “Čapek’s Letters from Italy do not resonate with Mignon’s longingly nostalgic song about laurels, lemons, and marble, but with a ditty of a little shepherd from The Garden of Krakonoš who, while carving his flute searches for words and rhymes for thoughts of his somewhat older and considerably more wise, however equally simple and good countryman” (“Dojmy”). The link between Čapek and Neruda as well as return to Goethe will be discussed in chapter 1.
“knows from before,” and who represents the point of departure for a journey with death as its final destination. Trips to Márinka are narrative explorations of the possibility of meeting. These trips are based on the concept of time in which the present moment, past, and future coexist, in which “a singular moment may be experienced and realized only as a clash between being and non-being, for the first time carrying with itself now and finally” (124).

The theme of travel became more popular in the second half of the nineteenth century, when many writers became journalists and travel writing was influenced by other narrative forms, especially reportage and the feuilleton (Míňovská-Pickettová 371). Writers, in the spirit of Pan-Slavism, were undertaking more journeys. Factual and fictional travelogues emerged on a more consistent basis. Karel Havlíček Borovský's narrative travel fragment Images from Russia (Obrazy z Rus, 1843-1846) describes the traveler’s disappointment with the reality of the Russian culture and life. Havlíček Borovský later parodied travel writing in Czech literature in his The Tyrolean Elegies (Tyrolské elegie, 1852), which he wrote after the Hapsburg authorities ordered his deportation to the Tyrolean village of Brixen in December 1851. As a parody of a Greek poem of mourning, the night travel from the hero’s private bedroom through the Czech landscape to an Alpine exile mocks the person deported from his own homeland.

Another journalist-cum-writer, Jan Neruda (1834-1891), published feuilletons written during his journeys in Europe and Near East. Neruda belonged to the May Ones (májovci) along with writers like Josef Václav Frič (1829-1890), Vítězslav Hálek (1835-

44 The travelogue also became the basis of the satiric poem, The Baptism of Saint Vladimir (Křest svatého Vladimíra, 1848-1854), in which the state and sacral power as witnessed in Russia were mocked.
45 Neruda’s travel to Italy will be discussed in chapter 1.
1874) and Adolf Heyduk (1835-1923). Gathered around the almanac *May* (*Máj*, 1858-1860; 1862), which was named in the memory of Mácha’s epic poem, these writers introduced the theme of everyday life in literature along with elements of spoken language and folklore. They also often published in different newspapers and journals, thus connecting the development of prose with journalism. For them, Mácha was not an ideal of romantic hero, but a “representative of autonomous literature that was not subordinated to educational and utilitarian aims” (Voisine-Jechová 275-6).

Neruda spoke of Paris (1863) as seen through its *flâneurs*, who were decadent and invisible observers of urban life, and experiences the unexpected presence of his own, albeit lost identity, in the streets of the French capital:

> With Olympic calm, with indescribable self-confidence, a *flâneur* is sitting in front of a boulevard café and strokes his elegant moustaches; a stream of workers rolls beside him only for his entertainment, he disdains the entire world except a waiter….and just as a *bohémien* deprived us Czechs again of the entire name, the Frenchman does not know us either geographically or ethnographically (“Z pařížských” 23).

Neruda gave an account not only of foreign cultures, but also of the traces left by Czech immigrants in the Hanseatic ports of Europe. His idea of home was characteristic of the era’s cosmopolitanism - home was constructed primarily through comparisons with other places. Despite this dual focus in much of his travel writing, Neruda is best-known for the short-story collection, *Tales of the Little Quarter* (*Malostranské povídky*,

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46 see for instance description of Hamburg and Bremen from “Dvě hanzovní města.” (91)
47 This will be discussed in chapter 1.
1878), which can be read as urban travels through the everyday life of the residents of Malá strana (Little Quarter), a neighborhood in Prague.

By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, traveling had reached its peak in popularity. In addition, fictional travels appeared beside non-fictional travelogues. Decadent and Symbolist writers chose the exotic destinations or exoticised European ones, thus internalizing the notion of traveling. At the close of the nineteenth century, Jakub Arbes (1840-1914) wrote *The Surroundings of Prague (Okolí Prahy*, 1887), a collection of feuilletons describing travel through the natural and historical environment of Prague, thereby replacing distant, exotic destinations with the kaleidoscopic character of the author’s hometown where “a new, unexpected, surprising view opens in front of you” (9-10).

Julius Zeyer (1841-1901) was probably the best-traveled Czech writer of the nineteenth century. The Czech Decadent writer’s travels included Italy, Tunisia, Austria, Poland, Turkey, France, Spain, Russia, Iceland, Georgia, Persia. Despite Zeyer’s wealth of first-hand knowledge of foreign locales, fictional destinations, which he learned about from the various cultures he had studied, figure prominently in his travel writing (Pynsent 11-28). His novel, *Gompači and Komurasaki (Gompači a Komurasaki*, 1884), is set in Japan and drew inspiration from other literary works, such as British diplomat and writer Algernon Mitford’s *Tales of Old Japan* (1871). A comedy, *Brothers (Bratři*, 1882), takes place in China while another comedy, *The Miracle of Love (Lásky div*, 1894), is set in Japan. Zeyer also looked west for exotic locations such as the streets of Paris in *The House at Sinking Star (Dům u tonoucí hvězdy*, 1894). The novel was Zeyer’s response to
the Czech social reality against which the first Modernist manifesto reacted by creating
its own, fictional Czechness:

And exoticism of art is exactly what is motivated by Czech reality. It
represents a protest and an escape from its grey frozenness, and a creation of
its own world internalized in the resistance towards the phenomena of the
external world. The exoticism gives to an artist what his environment
withholds from him… In the Czech lands all natural conditions are more for
the poetry of exoticism than for creation drawing from the phenomena of
reality (Pynsent 199).

The end of the century was also marked by the lyrical travelogues of Jaroslav
Vrchlický (1853-1912), whose journey to Italy was captured in different genres,
including a collection of the poet’s subjective impressions based on his reading of Dante,
Byron’s Childe Harold, and Heinrich Heine. Although Vrchlický returned to Bohemia out
of nostalgia for home, his relationship with his homeland is marked by the spiritual
security of a grave as memory. In a dialogue with his heart in A Year in the South (Rok na
jihu, 1878) Vrchlický realizes that the grave is a memory, and as such it opens his eyes.
He realizes that he has passed through a metamorphosis, bringing home spring as a
rebirth: Italy as a spiritual rebirth: “Now when I calmly look around /…in pale leaves soft
greenery: I feel / that spring has come with me” (“Epilog” 41-2).48

Characteristic of Vrchlický’s poetic travelogues are their visual elements, which
are present either as a generic segment or a theme. In A Year in the South, antiquity is
approached through the Romantic ideal of the femme fatale - a painting model who

48 “v bledých listků zelenej jemnou: / zřím, že jaro přišlo se mnou.”
embodies antique beauty in the present moment (121).\textsuperscript{49} He often also uses pictorial denominations in titles, such as “A Sketch from the Suburbs” (“Skizze z předměstí”). Sketch suggests that the work is the preliminary delineation of an image and an unfinished visual structure.\textsuperscript{50} Vrchlický’s “sketches,” however, are Impressionist; they are a synaesthetic combination of sounds, tastes, and colours that point to calm and melancholic moods. Ekphrasis\textsuperscript{51} is also frequent, conveying sensory impressions and associations with the objects from their image. For example, Vrchlický wrote a series of distichs inspired by a walk through the Louvre. Each of them depicts a certain image or work. The still-life paintings of Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin (1699-1779) are described with light and tactile sensation. The lyric I’s impression gives an unusual and ironic perspective to otherwise “usual” objects: “Such a warmth of colors, such soft shapes! But all together always only pears, teapots, peaches, bowls!” (“Zátiší” 1-2)\textsuperscript{52}

Fictional travelogues were also being translated in the 19\textsuperscript{th} and the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, but it seems that they did not become as prominent as Čapek’s translation of the “Zone.” A Czech writer, Eliška Krásnohorská (1847-1926), for instance translated Lord Byron’s \textit{Childe Harold} (\textit{Childe Haroldova Pout’}, 1890). Laurence Sterne’s \textit{Sentimental Journey} (1768) was translated in 1903 as \textit{Sentimentální cesta po Francii a Italii} (Edmund A. Görlich). Also Heinrich Heine’s lyrical travelogue \textit{The North Sea} (\textit{Book of Songs}, 1827) was translated in 1880 as \textit{Obrazy moře Severního} (\textit{Kniha

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{49} this will be discussed further in chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{50} The \textit{Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists} accepts the traditional understanding of a sketch as “a rough drawing or delineation of something, giving the outlines or prominent features without the detail” but also adds that a sketch can be a “drawing or painting of a slight or unpretentious nature.” The attribute “unpretentious” will be related to Karel Čapek’s notion of traveling in a contrast to Vrchlický’s “sketch.”
\textsuperscript{51} Ekphrasis will be introduced later and discussed in the chapter on intermediality.
\textsuperscript{52} Jaké teplo barvy, světlo, jaké jemné rysy! / Ale vcelku vždy jen hrušky, konve, broskve, misy!
\end{footnotesize}
písní). To the translated fictional travelogues also belongs Jaroslav Vrchlický’s translation of Dante’s *La Divina Commedia* (*Božská komedie*, 1879).

In Vrchlický’s anthologies of translated poetry, the theme of travel does not stand as one of the main themes. The aim of his *Italian Poetry of the New Era* (*Poesie italská nové doby* 1782-1882; 1884) was informative; it tended to provide the Czech reader with a comprehensive chronological overview of what the translator considered “modern” (*Italská*). Moreover, the same argument could be made for the collection of his poetry translations *From Foreign Parnasses* (*Z cizích Parnassů*, 1895), and the anthology of French poetry *Modern French Poets* (*Moderní básnici francouzští*, 1894). The Symbolist theme of travel in the poems such as “A Voyage to Cythera” (“Un Voyage à Cythère”) and “The Voyage” (“Le Voyage”) occurs in *Selections from Flowers of Evil* (*Výbor z Květů zla*, 1895), which Vrchlicky translated together with Jaroslav Goll.

**Transduced Travels**

Čapek’s translations of Apollinaire and later poetic references to him are characterized by the play between the verbal and visual. It was the poetics of the time when “painters and writers were equal,” and “every writer had his painter” (Reyl qtd. in Delauney 169). Apollinaire had Cendrars, and Karel Čapek collaborated with his brother, Josef. Although Josef Čapek designed the covers for his brother’s travelogues, the

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53 Among numerous poets in this collection there are works by Gabriele Rossetti, Alessandro Manzoni, niccolo Tommaseo, Giacomo Leopardi, Tommaso Cannizzaro, Gabriele D’Annunzio and others.
54 This collection brings a selection from Matthew Arnold, William Cullen Bryant, Robert Southey, Walt Whitman, Robert Browning, Friedrich Adler, Konrad Ferdinand Meyer, Eduard Mörike, Ernst von wildenbruch, Pol de Mont, Felix Gras and Victor Hugo.
55 This extensive anthology contains works by Théodore de Banville, Charles Baudelaire, François René de Chateaubriand, Anatole France, Théophile Gautier, Victor Hugo, Alphonse de Lamartine, Charles Marie René Leconte de Lisle, Stéphane Mallarmé, Guy de Maupassant and others.
illustrations inside them were done by Karel Čapek himself. Before Čapek, names of the travelogues were tailored according to the journalistic pictorial terminology, determining them as images (obrázky), sketches, drafts (črty), and studies (studie)\(^{56}\) (Miňovská-Pickettová 374). These titles also recall particular stages in creation of visual works.\(^{57}\) The visual element will be fully emphasized in the Avant-Garde treatment of the theme of traveling.

For many Avant-Garde artists, Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) was an ideal model of the outsider to his own culture. First, he was born to cosmopolitan parents. Secondly, unlike the poet Charles Baudelaire's journeys, Apollinaire’s were not marked by erotic explorations or orientalized desires; they were melancholic and sorrowful departures of a poor European aesthete who was still able to look for beauty in everyday life (Teige, “Apollinaire” 374). Although his poetry influenced the European Avant-Garde in general (Flaker, “Zone” 285),\(^{58}\) it seems that the poet gained the greatest popularity among Czech Avant-Garde writers.\(^{59}\) He was respected for emphasizing the visual qualities in language and considered a founder of the new poetics that connected literature with modern visual arts. His “poetic cubism” (Teige, “Apollinaire” 379) was

\(^{56}\) In her article on Karel Čapek’s travelogues, Alice Jedličková also notices this interference between genres, again seen through their names, for instance Obrázky z Holandska. Jedličková, however, expands the idea of interference into the narrator’s stance towards the narrative, in which the convention of travel writing is replaced with "authorial understanding, or simply said by the way Čapek 'wished to see' [those] countries.' [autorským pojetím, zjednodušeně řečeno tím, jak si Čapek tyto země 'přál vidět.'] (162).

\(^{57}\) An exception to this is the travel writing of Karel Hynek Mácha, which were frequently accompanied by illustrations of the castles and ruins that the Romantic poet had visited. An analysis of his illustrations shows that they are not mere reproductions of the objects seen, but the poet’s subjective representations, including different optical perspectives and temporal constructions (Koloc 69-76).

\(^{58}\) Flaker continues his article with the discussion of the influence of the poem on the structure as the “zone of suicide” (zone des Selbstmordes) in Mayakovsky’s poetry and in the poetry of the Croatian poet Tin Ujević.

\(^{59}\) Pavol Winczer has shown this in his comparative study on Czech, Slovak, and Polish Avant-Garde poetry. While Apollinaire’s influence was crucial for Czech Poetism and, later, for Slovak Surrealism (1935), in Poland, although Apollinaire was widely acclaimed, his influence remained in the background (41).
considered more important than the currently existing abstract philosophies (356). Although this fact is explored in Czech Avant-Garde poetry and visual arts, the influence of Cubism had on prose, especially on the interwar novel, remained neglected. This was important in the Czech context not only in terms of the new artistic expression, but also because of the philosophical implications it had on how history should be represented. As Wendy Steiner notes: "cubism tells us to think of history in a new way, not as a plotted narrative moving towards a resolution, but as a cubist painting whose elements maintain their heterogeneity… in an aestheticized structure of interrelations" (536).

Čapek himself noticed Apollinaire’s "thirst for [foreign] countries" and describes the French poet as a personality in the process of becoming, who was palpably influenced by foreign cultures and peoples (O umění 1: 357). As Milan Kundera asserts, modern Czech poetry would probably not exist in its current shape without the “entirely accidental fact, that Čapek translated ‘Zone’” (Alkoholy 9). Kundera here refers to the structural characteristics of Avant-Garde poetry, especially that written by Vítězslav Nezval (9), whose polythematic composition, “The Marvelous Magician” (“Podivuhodný kouzelník,” 1922), was the poetic manifesto of Poetism. More importantly, Kundera interprets Apollinaire's extraordinary popularity in the Czech context (in contrast to the French one, in which he was appraised as a great poet but remained one of many) as the result of a specific Czech perception of world literature. Kundera's previous statement about Čapek translating Zone “accidentally” is questionable, especially in light of his idea that world literature should not be understood as a series of canonized works of art,

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60 Although Kundera treats Apollinaire’s poetry as a “living,” cultural archetype of Prague, which would persist even if its historical Jewish quarter disappeared, “accidental” is also the word that Jaroslav Seifert uses in the context of translations of Apollinaire in his short evaluation of the French poet’s influence on interwar Czech poetry (“Apollinaire v Čechách” 177).
but as the reception of a work in a specific national context. In other words, “every nation has its own ‘history of world literature’” (6). If world literature is the reception of a foreign work of art in a national context, then Apollinaire's popularity was certainly due to specific elements in the Czech poetic tradition echoing in the translation of his poetry.

Apollinaire endowed modern Czech literature with another model for journeys and home. It is the most important transduced element in Apollinaire that brought together the Czech literary tradition and contemporary poetry. Apollinaire's journeys were the aimless, intellectually rewarding wanderings of a \textit{flâneur} who sauntered around with “skill and ease” (Benjamin, “Motifs” 163), unlike the average member of the urban masses who never undertook a trip without a predictable purpose or destination (Arendt 18). The nocturnal stroll in Nezval's “The Marvelous Magician” can therefore be seen as a Czech variation on the \textit{flâneur}. He is the specific transduction of this cultural concept into the Czech context.

In a discussion of \textit{flânerie}, one should not forget that this phenomenon was originally confined to nineteenth-century Paris and the political culture of the Second Empire. Walter Benjamin doubted whether \textit{flâneur}, who internally resisted the traditional ideas of measurable space and time, could exist “once he was deprived of the milieu to which he belonged” (“Motifs” 168). He was specific to the urban landscape and history-preserving, architectonic features of the city and gave voice to the historical internalization, as well as the radically changed relationship between the private and the

\footnote{Milan Kundera develops this thought further in his introduction to Czech modernist literature. He problematizes the notion of world literature, small and big literatures, suggesting rather the importance of reception in national literatures as well as world literature in other contexts. For example, he discusses Bakhtin's analysis of Rabelais (Bakhtin as the first among French and non-French providing such an analysis) and the subsequent change in meaning the foreign works acquires in a different culture. The question he raises is not what big or small literatures are, but what one work or author means in another culture and how is the meaning articulated, which elements are taken, and how the work is perceived in a new context (“Einleitung” 7-22).}
public sphere that made Paris distinct in the imagination of its poets and writers. Once the public space of the street turned into “a dwelling for the *flâneur*” (Benjamin, “Baudelaire” 37), the street also became the intellectual and intimate preoccupation of its inhabitant. Put differently, it became the topic of the new literary and journalistic genres, which were specific to the Parisian poetic identity. Thus, it was the *feuilleton*, which, as Benjamin asserts, turned “a boulevard into an *intérieur*” (37).

Finally, Benjamin found in Baudelaire’s poetry a specific Parisian poetic identity. In his work, says Benjamin, “Paris becomes for the first time a subject of lyric poetry” (“Paris” 157). As a *flâneur* who intimately knew the streets of Paris and despised other cities for the lack of typically Parisian visual perspectives, which brought together the past and present and shifted perspectives on the public and private, Baudelaire felt the existence of history. He was sensitive to the correlation between the old and the new that made Paris unique among other metropolises. His own quest for modernity and novelty was anchored in the historical awareness that the *flâneur’s* stroll through Paris would not be possible without “always quoting primeval history” (157). The existence of the new and the simultaneous awareness of the traditional is one link with the Czech understanding of *flânerie*. Almost a century later, Czech writers were dwelling in the Old World and struggling to create a new one. The position between the old and the new was recognized in Apollinaire. As Kundera notes: Apollinaire witnessed the world of progress from ‘another embankment,’ from the embankment of the past, antiquity.

Maybe therefore directly from the window of the Neuglück's chateau, within whose walls lived the aristocratic family with a governess and a

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62 Baudelaire, says Benjamin, particularly disliked Brussels, because it lacked shop windows, which hinders sight typical of strolling and makes streets "unusable" (“Baudelaire” 50).
private tutor, and the old Romanticist spirit roaming around. How miraculous the emerging civilization must have appeared from that window! (*Alkoholy* 6)

**Apollinaire and Čapek’s Understanding of Modernity**

For Čapek, the complexity of modern literature that was embodied in Apollinaire’s “Zone,” originates in the gap between European Symbolism and American Modernism. In contrast with the Symbolists’ exploration of human spirituality, American Modernism found inspiration in the external world, the idea of technical and social progress, the development of communications, and the emerging and increasingly popular arts such as photography and film, both of which greatly influenced the poetic function of language. Josef Čapek, Karel Čapek’s brother, initially praised America for understanding visual arts as “unmediated creation *in vivo*” as opposed to the European idea of photography, wherein its visual poetics were expected to manufacture “living images according to painted models” (*Nejskromnější* 37).

Among American writers and artists, Karel Čapek especially respected Walt Whitman, whose work he considered crucial for understanding of modern French poetry (*O umění* 1: 302). Whitman here represents the modern aesthete *par excellence* since he considered visual arts, especially photography (in the form of daguerrotypes), a tool for “establishing an honest, personal relationship with the reader” (Reynolds 285). This idea resounds in Čapek’s use of *skaz* and intermedial elements in his travelogues. Photography and the newly emerging popular art in America greatly contributed to Whitman’s poetry, especially collection *Leaves of Grass* (1855). As Whitman himself said “In these *Leaves*
[of Grass] every thing is literally photographed. Nothing is poeticized” (qtd. in Reynolds, 281), which also matches Čapek’s philosophy as captured in the travelogues. Additionally, Čapek praised Whitman's poetic openness to concrete life, in which the “enormous reality of the physical and social world” (O umění 1: 304) became the writer’s primary poetic material. Whitman considered modern poets the public representatives of the people, their poetry airing a message of “social trust,” understanding, and fraternity (O umění 1: 305). The novelty of Modernism was therefore its direct participation and engagement in the progress of civilization:

 unlike this emerging modern time, no other poetic period had such a conception of the world and a thirst for embedding itself and penetrating into the wide stream of the world. The participation in the stream of the world should not be understood in the sense of intuitive philosophy. Many times, it suffices that a poet with naïve astonishment recognizes the new and powerful contents of the modern century, cities, machines, progress, and the enormous mass scale of people (Čapek, O umění 1: 305).

 Although Čapek saw the influence of American Modernism increase, he did not completely discount the European verbal tradition. For Čapek, a new poetics originated in interaction between these two different poetic systems. Thereby, the novelty of modern in literature, and consequently in “Zone,” is in the existence of a number of contemporaneous poetic methods emerging from this intermingling. All of them were subject to the “spirit of change” the result of which was supposed to be an entirely new and anti-traditional art. (332-3) Čapek chose contemporary French as the meeting point between America and Europe. Prior to the publication of his anthology of French poetry,
he highly valued the aptitude of French writing to emulate the richness of the language, especially coffeehouse witticism. He also appraised the new aesthetic ideas provoked by the latest philosophical and sociological currents, which shook traditional poetic concepts, and changed the conventional ideas of space and time (244).

Despite his belief that the new art would emerge from the convergence of contemporary literary currents, Čapek was well aware that a total break with the tradition would be impossible (332-3). His translation of “Zone” is based on the linguistic and stylistic foundations laid by the Czech Symbolists and poets of his own generation. He acknowledged and drew from the Czech Symbolist embodied by poets such as Antonín Sova, Fráňa Šrámek and Karel Toman. Their idea of poetry was based on the rhythm of natural language, as opposed to the lofty style of the previous Parnassian generation. Čapek followed their work concurrently with the latest trends in the French poetry, admiring these authors elevating the loose, rhythmical pattern of poetry from the lexical to the syntactic level, thereby radically changing the traditional versification and influencing the expressive capacity of the Czech language (563). “Before Čapek, we had never read Baudelaire in such a clear presentation and in such a natural form’’

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63 Čapek was greatly influenced by Simon Le Bon's sociology of the masses and Henri Bergson's theory of the absence of causality. Their impact on literature was a loosened structure known as stream of consciousness, in which the world is perceived as an open structure.

64 It appears that Čapek took from these poets not only their ideas about poetry, but also their idea of traveling. This theme is, for instance, present in Karel Toman’s collection Melancholy Pilgrimage (Melancholická pout, 1906), in which travel appears as a spiritual and geographical journey, mentioning places such as London and Paris. The modern theme of wandering through urban spaces (in the metaphor of a lonely and “half rabid” [polovzetzklý] dog) is, for example, present in Karel Toman’s long poem “Cassius” (59). Also, in the collection Sundial (Sluneční hodiny, 1913) Toman introduces the figure of wanderer (tulák), who is characterized by modesty and Christian innocence, traveling with “the innocent souls of the Apostles” [s nevinnou duší apoštolů] (95). This concept will be discussed in greater detail in the context of Čapek’s Letters From Italy.

65 René Wellek asserts that the Symbolist tradition was long forgotten and banned by the interwar Avant-Garde artists. However, as Čapek’s example shows, the earlier movement implicitly existed in Poetism (Wellek 35). Furthermore, Žoržeta Čolakova links Symbolism and the Czech Surrealism, finding the origins of Czech Surrealism in the artistic transformation of the previous tradition (53-60).
“Průvodce” 181) says Nezval about the translator, Čapek, who had never published poetry of his own, but was able to change the poetic trends by mining the existing poetic heritage for gold. If, in the framework of French poetry, Apollinaire’s work represented a “synthesizer of the structural accomplishments of his immediate predecessors” rather than a “radical innovator” (Winczer 38), then the translation of “Zone” in the Czech context was the point where the Czech tradition met Czech modern poetry.

Finally, Čapek's selective view on tradition and cosmopolitanism is visible in his understanding of “national.” It contrasted the definition of the term that began Josef Jungmann's translation of François-René de Chateaubriand's *Atala* (1805). As Felix Vodička shows, in his attempts to create a work which would accommodate the Czech literary context as well as his own late-Enlightenment ideology, Jungmann often disregarded the semantic and thematic structure of the French original (*Počátky* 60). Although Jungmann's translation introduced crucial structural changes into Czech verse and anticipated Romanticism, his lexical choices, archaizing phraseology and vocabulary, and the replacement of pagan motifs with Christian ones, established the perception that Czech culture had mythic origins.

The creation of a national tradition continued with the Ossianic mystifications, *The Manuscript of the Dvůr Králové* (*Rukopis královedvorský*, 1817) and *The Manuscript*

66 Although Čapek never published poetry of his own, he always used poetry as an undercurrent in his writings. He inserts poetry into his plays, *Mother* (*Matka*) and *The Insect Play* (*Ze života hmyzů*). Poetry is also a part of his travelogues, in which he combines it with the narrative prose text visual elements.

67 Čapek inaugurated a new understanding of Baudelaire and French poetry. In his study of French influence on nineteenth-century Czech poetry, Felix Vodička writes that, similar to France, where Baudelaire was considered a poet who belonged to both the Parnassians and the Symbolists, in the Czech context he was praised by the older Lumir school (to which Vrchlický belonged) and younger Symbolist poets. Although these two generations were using Baudelaire as an example of their poetic ideals, they both failed to interpret Baudelaire’s deep analyses of phenomena as sources of evil and failed to produce scholarly criticism of his work (*Impuly* 7-21).
of Zelená Hora (Rukopis zelenohorský, 1818). The debate over their provenance and importance gained momentum on the hundredth anniversary of their discovery in 1918. At that time, Čapek was working on the his anthology of French poetry. When the manuscripts were “discovered,” they were used to constitute Czech culture as “an ideal” and as a ‘play,’” in terms of playing with a “fully developed culture” and emphasizing its aesthetic function, rather than its “common social functions” (Macura, Znamení 109). In the first decades of the twentieth century, though, Čapek did not have to prove the existence of a Czech cultural tradition, as Václav Hanka, one of the “founders” of the manuscripts, did a century earlier. Čapek had the freedom to problematize it. As I will show in the following chapters, Čapek used the principle of playfulness in order to question the existing approach to this heritage and the exclusiveness of representation of the cultural origin in the manuscripts. In a short article written for the National Newspaper (Národní listy) in 1918, he notes that the anniversary again raised the patriotic spirits of those who opposed the results of the philological analysis that proved the ahistorical nature of the texts. These patriots nostalgically tried to claim the opposite by relying on “detective-like approaches” to literary history, such as the chemical analysis of the paper and ink on and with which the manuscripts were written. In other words, they demonstrate how non-literary and ideological approaches to literary heritage, specifically patriotism in this context, anachronistically distort the historical development of language and literature (O umění 1: 477-8).

Čapek’s philosophical views on language in tradition resemble those of Apollinaire. Čapek considered language as the only common denominator of a group of people calling

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68 Both manuscripts are nineteenth-century Czech mystifications, which imitated the pattern of Scottish epic poetry Macpherson published and attributed to Ossian in order to show that the Czech nation had an epic tradition like other nations.
themselves a nation (*In Praise* 136). The idea is found in Apollinaire’s belief that poetry “must first devote [itself] to the nation, in whose language it expresses [itself].” (*Alkoholy* 58) In the article “Tradition and Development” (*Tradicie a vývoj*, 1913), Čapek criticizes the concept of tradition as an imitation of an “age-old national soul” (*O umění* 1: 344). He asserts that national art should be a summary of all the artistic achievements of a single group of people belonging to the same culture and speaking the same language. In 1914, the dynamic nature of tradition resounded in the discussion of changes to the idea of “national literature” in the framework of modernity. “National” could no longer be understood based on the nineteenth-century premises of cultural or racial identity, but as the creative spirit of the people, visible, for instance, in folk or primitive art and open to the interaction with high art. Čapek gave an example of this using eighteenth-century “folk” art, which, through its visible imitation of the Rococo decorative style, proved that instead of relying on mythological archetypes, folk artists drew their inspiration from the artistic tastes of the aristocracy (273-4). Consequently, “folk art” was not an untainted and natural art of the people as the Romantics believed, but was rather a mediation of cultural and social contacts between classes and cultures that was influenced by social and historical changes. Since the aesthetic functions of high art are changeable, “national” could not remain static; it was a constantly evolving concept.

Likewise, Čapek challenged other cultural concepts of the period. “Proletarian art” in Čapek’s understanding of it, was neither art made by an abstract proletarian collective or by the leftist intellectuals concerned for the people nor was it art that depicted the labor of the working class. Instead, it was the art that originated in the literary heritage of the so-called “marginal forms:” the forgotten, sentimental tradition of heroic poems, nineteenth-
century novels for servants, adventure tales, detective stories, and popular film.\textsuperscript{69} In Čapek's opinion, proletarian art was art accessible and acceptable to everybody. It entertained and consoled. It enriched their spirituality while refusing to become degraded by imitating established ideological and collective values “offered under the trade-mark of revolutionary art” (“Proletarian Art” 123).

Transductions of “Zone” as a Poetic Creation of Modernity

In the short introduction accompanying the collection, French Poetry of the New Era (Francouzská poezie nové doby, 1920),\textsuperscript{70} Karel Čapek asserts that the anthology was a symbol of solidarity between the Czech and French nations during the First World War, when the distribution of French journals and literature was strictly prohibited (Francouzská poezie 177). Yet, the main reason for the compilation was not political: it was the translator's own quest for solace during the war (177). As Jan Mukařovský argues, the anthology did not mediate between two national literatures but “fulfilled a role that otherwise very rarely belongs to even original works of poetry” (“Francouzská poezie” 265). The task was to find a solution to the structural and versification problems in modern Czech poetry, which needed to leave behind the outdated Parnassian tradition and draw even with current trends. For Čapek, the translation was verbal art similar to that of “original creation” and an experiment in expanding the poetic function of the Czech language. The translation of each poem in French Poetry of the New Era was a search for a form suitable to envisage the new colors, sounds, and palpable sensations in

\textsuperscript{69} The marginal forms will be discussed in chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{70} There were two editions of the anthology of French poetry. The first was published in 1920 as French Poetry of the New Era (Francouzská poezie nové doby), and the second one appeared in 1936 as French Poetry (Francouzská poezie).
each (Čapek, *Francouzská poezie* 178). In Jiří Levý’s words, translation is “*a decision-making process*, in other words, a series of a certain number of successive situations – *moves* like in a game, - in which a translator always have to decide between a certain (and by rule rather precisely defined) number of alternatives” (73).

As an original work of art, the anthology marked yet another stage of modernity in the Czech literature. The new modern spirit, which was a point of departure for the literary currents of the 1920s and 1930s, will be modernity as introduced by Karel Čapek the translator.

In contrast to Jaroslav Vrchlický’s highly exhaustive anthology of French poetry (1877), Čapek raised questions of Modernism’s complexity through selective principles. (Rubeš 59) Jan Rubeš demonstrates that Čapek excluded several contemporary poetic currents - the Catholic, Parnassian and Hermetic schools - and gave preference to others – the Symbolists, Cubists and Surrealists (60). Likewise, he disregarded French as a national literature, expanding his understanding of “French poetry” to poems written by francophone Belgians and the Italian Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, who translated his own work into French (61).

Čapek’s conception of the aesthetic and social functions of the work of art in the Czech cultural environment dictated his selection. First, his choices were made according to the versification and stylistic adaptability of the original to the Czech literary context. Second, Čapek aimed to introduce poetry that would respond to the aesthetic needs of the

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71 Jaroslav Vrchlický published three translations of the French poetry: *French Poetry of the New Era (Poezie francouzská nové doby, 1877), Modern French Poets (Moderní básnici francouzští, 1894), and Selections from Flowers of Evil (Výbor z Květů zla, 1895).*

72 According to Rubeš, of all of Mallarmé’s poems Čapek selected only one - “The Windows” (“Les fenêtres” - which was “by no means typical of the author of 'Un coup de dés...’” because of the lack of stylistic means in Czech that would allow an aesthetically sophisticated transduction from French. Mallarmé’s "experiments have no equivalent in Czech since they exploit precise semantic codifications specific to French, and are not directly based on poetical images” (60-61).
wider Czech reading public by being contemporary enough to touch on the intricacies of the modern life.

Čapek’s adaptation of Apollinaire also lies in the translation of the very title of the poem. Pavol Winczer argues that the spatial connotations of the original French word “zone” refers to Paris’ industrial suburbs. Čapek’s translation of “zone” into Czech and Slovak, “pásma,” adds a psychological level. The Czech title signifies a “stream of thoughts, representations, memories, thus of something equally fluent, changeable, but without dramatic culminations” (Winczer 51). In other words, Čapek’s adaptation of “Zone” into the Czech context was simultaneously its internalization and therefore its introduction to individual and generic interpretations.

Additionally, as Deborah Garfinkle determines, Čapek relied on two versions of the poem (that of 1912 and 1913) while neglecting the revisions Apollinaire made in the second, 1913 edition of the poem (351). She argues that these changes stem from the different aesthetic and prosodic systems in French and Czech because of which “only by taking Czech considerations into account could Čapek get beyond Apollinaire’s French language to reproduce his spirit” (351). This resulted both in a departure from the French original and the Czech tradition. Regarding the original version of “Zone,” Čapek did not follow the loosened structure of the poem; he replaced it with more structured, compact verses. He also replaced the rhymes with alliteration and assonance and introduced some minor lexical changes to emphasize the phonetic nature of the poem. Additionally, the prosody Čapek used, which included elements of the spoken language, was a clear departure from the academic style of Vrchlický’s earlier translations.
The last modification, which opens up our discussion on the theme of travel, is the adaptation of exilic experience. For example, in connection with the French word “édredon” (eiderdown, featherbed, quilt, duvet), Deborah Garfinkel recognizes that Čapek “mistranslated” for a specific purpose. The word in French summons the image of Jewish emigrant families departing the waiting rooms at Paris’ Saint Lazar's terminal. One of the families carries a crimson quilt, which in the poem is equated with dreams, both of them being “equally unreal” (133). A direct translation of “édredon” into Czech would be “peřina,” but in both editions of “Zone,” Čapek uses “praporek” (which Garfinkel translates as “flag”). Praporek is a symbol typical of Polish homes and a “memorable and worthy token of emigrants’ dreams for better future” (Garfinkel 353). Although Garfinkel allows that “lyrical considerations may have guided Čapek's choice” (353), she suggests that Čapek probably translated “Zone,” with the absence of emigrant experience in the Czech awareness and the recent liberation from the Austro-Hungarian Empire in mind” (355). As she says, “the small flag was dearer to Czech than any comforter could ever hope to be. The little flag flying was a memorable and worthy token of emigrants' dreams for better future” (353).

I suggest that Čapek’s reading of “Zone” resulted in a completely different perspective on exile; it is a constant questioning of home within the homeland, which is based, as opposed to Garfinkel’s interpretation, on the continuous existence of this theme in Czech literature. The modification of the theme according to the Czech literary tradition is visible in the changes made to the poem’s ending.73 The ending of “Zone,” “Farewell Farewell / Sun slit throat” (“Adieu Adieu / Soleil cou coupé”) (166-7)

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73 The ending of “Zone” was an enigma for many literary scholars. For instance, Jean-Pierre Bobillot suggests that the abrupt ending marks the changes in the poem’s subjectivity and versification, i.e. the shifts between free and traditional verse, patterns (“A la fin cou coupé” 301-23).
resonates across the period because of its onomatopoeic features. Garfinkle believes that in order to “maintain the delicate balance between Apollinaire's layers and his lyric,” Čapek “sacrificed the originality of Apollinaire's image and syntax to approximate his novel use of sound” (354). To the original ending “Farewell Farewell / Sun slit throat” (Adieu Adieu / Soleil coupé) Čapek adds “sleeper” in the vocative case in the first edition (spáč) and in the second edition, changes the vocative to “you are sleepy” (“jsi ospalý”), thus phonetically accommodating the last line in order to preserve the assonance of the original. Below is a graphic comparison of the French original, the first Czech edition, and the second Czech edition. All three are then followed by Garfinkle’s English translation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adieu Adieu</th>
<th>S bohem s bohem spáči</th>
<th>Sbohem sbohem jsi ospalý</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soleil coupé</td>
<td>Slunce plá pláče</td>
<td>Slunce uťatá hlava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Se kuku kutáli</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Farewell, farewell sleeper [vocative]  
Sun burns cries  
Farewell, farewell, you are sleepy  
Sun cut-off head  
Is cuckoo call rolling

The origin of the changed ending could be traced, as Garfinkle suggests, to “Le passant” (“Prague Walker,” 1910), which brought Apollinaire in direct contact with Prague, “his spiritual homeland” (364). In the story, a parting between Isaac Laquedem, the Prague incarnation of the Wandering Jew, and a flâneur presages the parting depicted in “Zone:” “Go home and sleep. Farewell’ I took his long, dry hand in mine. ‘Farewell, Wandering Jew, happy traveler without a goal’” (“Jew” 13). Although this is a plausible

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74 The same thing occurs, according to Bruce A. Morrissette, as an “echoing parallel” in the ending of T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922): “Ta. Ta. Goodnight, Goodnight.”
explanation, it still does not explain either the origin of the metaphor of the cut-off head or the abrupt introduction of such a violent metaphor.

Čapek’s ending is instead an allusion to the poet Karel Hynek Mácha. The thematic return to Mácha through this stylistic adaptation shows that Čapek’s treatment of the ending of the “Zone,” in contrast to other proposed solutions, is an adaptation drawing on the nineteenth-century outcast who depicted internal exile in Czech literature. Mácha has been already recognized as the nineteenth-century forebearer of Czech Surrealism\(^{75}\) and according to Vítězslav Nezval, a Czech version of the life and work of Arthur Rimbaud (Směry 20). In Čapek’s version of the ending of “Zone,” the first association to Mácha’s figure of a weary traveler is the sleeper (spáč) in the first edition of the “Zone” and its later metamorphosis into “you are sleepy” (jsi ospály). The parting, bidding someone good night (dobrou noc), and the farewell of the weary walker (umdelý chodec) echoes throughout Mácha’s œuvre.\(^{76}\) In “Pilgrimage to the Giant Mountains” (“Pouť Krkonošská”) Mácha writes: “He [the pilgrim-protagonist] fell silent, quiet around him, only the echo from the mountains to his steeping sides was repeating the bid good night – good night. Good night! Good night! [italics mine] whispered weary traveler” (Cesta 200). In “Marinka:” Good night, [italics mine] oh love! golden cup filled with deadly delights! (220) In Mácha’s poetry: “Good night! [italics mine] forest hums to me” (12), “Be heard my quiet nocturnal wish: “Good night! Silent dream!” (61)\(^{77}\) [italics

\(^{75}\) For the detailed discussion of Mácha’s heritage and influence on Czech Surrealism see Žoržeta Čolakova’s “Karel Hynek Mácha – básník Lautréamontova typu” (Český surrealismus 30. let. Struktura básnického obrazu, 43-53).

\(^{76}\) A bid to have a good night also appears in William Shakespeare’s Hamlet, which is another example of internal exile in world literature.

\(^{77}\) Zavzní moje tiché noční přání: “Dobrou noc!” “Tichý sen!”
mine] and *A weary walker* [italics mine] approaches his fatherland / light of sun hid behind the mountains” (83).\(^7\)

The “cut-off” head could refer to the skull (*lebka*) motif that appears in *May* (*Máj*, 1836), first as an intimation of death in the first intermezzo, in which personified nature plays with a skull that remains present in the poem through assonance and the phonetic correlation between skull (*lebka*) and cradle (*kolébka*). The latter draws mother and homeland into the same sphere of semantic associations: “his cradle and his grave, his only homeland, for inheritance given, the wide earth, the single earth.” (*May* 638)\(^7\) Later, the decapitated head of the poem’s protagonist becomes an artifact that a wanderer finds and the springboard that inspires him to tell his travel story:

My horse’s trot. - I rode to the town by night;

And reaching the hillock, silent resting place,

Which long ago received the dread forests’ lord,

For the first time I saw pale Vilém’s skull (*May* 733-6).\(^8\)

Consequently, the skull motif, which appears as an addition to Apollinaire’s “Zone,” is not a metaphor for a distorted link with tradition, but a possible adaptation of foreign poetics to domestic traditions. It is a bridge with tradition leading over the cosmopolitan aesthetics of travel, or as Vodička would say, the expansion characteristic of the literary process. As I will demonstrate, Apollinaire’s stylistic solutions in Čapek’s interpretation will open up the ways for other travels as well, such as those of Johann Wolfgang Goethe.

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7. *Chodec mlý* se k očině svě bíži, / za hory se ukry slunce svít."

7. *kolébku svou i hrob svůj, matku svou / vlast jedinou v dědictví mi danou, šírou tu zemi, zemi jedinou!”*

8. “Měho to koně krok. - K městu jsem noci jel; / a příšed k pahorku, na němž byl tichý stán / davno již obdržel přestrašný lesů pán, / poprvé Viléma bledou jsem lebku zřel.” Mácha, Karel Hynek.
With regards to the changed ending and the theme of exile, the last adaptation I propose is the adaptation of the theme of travel in the poem. However, before I do that, I will shortly outline the theme of travel in anthology French Poetry of the New Era and its difference with Apollinaire’s vision of traveling.

**Travel in “Zone”**

As the Symbolist metaphor for human life, a journey is included in many poems in the anthology French Poetry of the New Era. Life in these works grows unpredictable. It attains “singular destiny in which the goal moves about”\(^8\) and throughout life, the soul is “a three-master seeking Icaria” (*Flowers* 452-453). The island of Icaria is, however, an imaginary place that voyager longs to see more than his home. Home, despised by the Symbolists, is an obscure, hospital-like place with a sickly atmosphere that unconsciously turns man into an animal.\(^9\) This version of home is an unalterable, static space; an inert, dream-like state; a framed, unmovable picture. It is a reflection of the real world’s material shape.\(^\) Temporally, home is characterized by the past and antiquity with the future’s prospects symbolized by autumn, a period of ageing and dying. From the confined perspective of home, distance is the greatest among all illusions. Thus, escape is a final attempt at reaching that illusion. Man becomes aware of his metamorphosis into an animal only when he witnesses nature changing beyond his control. Home is the

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81 “Singulière fortune où le but se déplace.”
82 [koráb, jenž svou Ikarii hledá] “un trois-mâts cherchant son Icarie.”
83 The image of a hospital and metamorphosis into the animalistic is the central theme of Mallarmé’s poem "Les fenêtres" and Gustave Kahn’s “Par la lande et la mer grise.” (“Through Barren Land and Grey Seas”)
84 Reflection will become an important poetic device in the Czech Avant-Garde. Konstantin Biebl, for example, uses the antipodal reflection in his Javanese poetry (*Zlatými řetézy*, 1926) and Karel Čapek challenges the reportage structure of the travelogue by building descriptions of towns and their inhabitants, such as Amsterdam, on their reflection in water (*Images from Holland*, 1932).
personified sunset, when “the evening bleeds along the tiles” (Mallarmé, Poems 11). Patients cease to be animals and forget about the static frame of suffocation and dying.

“Zone” differs from other poems in the anthology in its approach to the visual nature of poetry and communication pattern visible in the address to the reader. “Zone” retains the Romantic theme of the poet’s desperate flight; however, it gives a new, visual quality to the theme. “Zone,” which along with the poem “Voyager,” represents Apollinaire's notion of traveling in Čapek’s anthology, takes an entirely different approach to antiquity, which was one of the Symbolists’ favourite sources for intertextuality. The ancient topography of Icaria, Odysseus’ travels, or the channel Euripos are outmoded; antiquity remains as an imposed cultural heritage that the previous poetics have already exhausted. They are replaced, in Apollinaire, with “magic geography” [cursives in the original text] that is constructed on the opposition between spatial and psychological movements “without distinguishing between conscious and unconscious” (Couffignal 4). The entire structure of “Zone” “as Apollinaire’s Divine Comedy” is built on the vertical oppositions of Christian allegory of the ascent and the fall. Ascent is related to resurrection, which in Apollinaire, is preceded by the “verticality of the Eiffel Tower, aviation metaphors, and the symbol of the Cross” (5). Daily life in Paris is also symbol of ascension in opposition to the obscure night life of the town, the alternative history of the exile and emigration as forced homelessness, and finally the abrupt ending as the final descent into the Inferno (18-19).

On the other hand, Christianity visually ceases to be a historical religion and becomes a photographic representation of life in Apollinaire: instead of the image as a
whole it offers a series of close-ups.85 The entire route passed by the traveler, which is sparcely depicted in terms of places - from Paris to Mediterranean France, Prague, Koblenz in Germany, Rome, Amsterdam and Paris again - is marked by visually banal objects and the intimacy of everyday life. Examples include melons in Marseille, a love affair with an unattractive girl in Amsterdam, a rosebug asleep, and Czech songs in Prague. In opposition to the grandiosity of antiquity, the newness of the Christian quotidian is also found in interest for the popular arts and media, such as low-brow detective stories, newspapers, biographies, and journals. Lastly, at the end of the poem, Christianity as a human and modest religion becomes an umbrella term for primitive and pagan art rather then the nature of “the modern city, where primitive masks mimic figurines of Christ, [and] the prosaic routine beings to substitute for the sacred ritual” (Scott 159).

Another important aspect of “Zone” is the nature of the poetic subject and the structure of apostrophe in the poem. Its multiple communicative patterns, ranging from self-address to apostrophe of the illocutor and objects, characterizes the poem. The flâneur, who is the protagonist, is invisible to the others during his Parisian journey, but he creates an internal and dialogic world characterized by shifts between a singular identity as seen through its present and past “I” with the apostrophe complicated by the use of the possessive pronoun “my” in opposition with “you.”86 Therefore, the poem

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85 “Snapshot” (“Photographie”) is at the same time the title of a poem from the collection Calligrammes, in which Apollinaire develops the poetics of simultaneity, which features close-ups, unusual angles, details, and the reverse sides of objects. For example: “Photographie tu es l’ombre / Du Soleil / Qu’est sa beauté / Snapshot you are the shadow / Of the Sun / That is her beauty (Apollinaire, Calligrammes 228-9).

86 For example: “Those people [the jugglers] who give open-air performances / Are beginning to be rare in Paris / In my youth you saw many more of them / They’ve nearly all gone to the provinces.” (“Ces gens qui font des tours en plein air / Commencent à être rares à Paris / Dans ma jeunesse on en voyait beaucoup plus qu’aujourd’hui / Ils s’en sont allés Presque tous en province”) See: “Phantom of Clouds” (Apollinaire, Calligrammes 80-81).
shows a new form of subjectivity, a journey through a private past and an unsuccessful attempt to intimate the domestication of concrete places: the poet wanders through Paris but ultimately finds end only his estranged home. The difference between the past and present aspect of the poetic subject, the doubling of a single identity, originates in the technique of simultaneity that Apollinaire originally took from the visual arts.\textsuperscript{87} This is seen in the concurrent representation of the present and the past, which Apollinaire verbally depicts through the use of the historical present tense, thus simultaneously representing the difference between the lyric I’s external journey and his intimate past. From “une jolie rue” (fine street) of the present he switches to the “la jeune rue” (young street), keeping, however, both present through the use of the historical present tense: “Here is the young street and you still a baby / Dressed by your mother only in blue and white” (“Voilà le jeune rue et tu n’es encore qu’un petit enfant / Ta mère ne t’habille que de bleu et de blanc”) (“Zone” 26). The return to the present time is signaled by temporal and spatial deixes like (here), the exclamation “voilà” (here is), and “maintenant” (now) or “ce matin” (this morning). At the same time, deixis shows the existence of an external illocutor. His presence is not as strong as in poems like “Lundi Rue Christine” (Monday in Christine Street), in which different voices overlap, or “Un Fantôme de Nuées” (Phantom of Clouds), both from the collection Calligrams (Calligrammes, 1913-1916), in which the past and present are verbally distinct.\textsuperscript{88} Along with the apostrophe of the self

\textsuperscript{87} Simultaneity here is understood through the notion of “simultanéité,” which Apollinaire’s friend, the painter Robert Delaunay, developed: “Simultaneism: simultaneity of color, simultaneous contrasts and every uneven proportion that results from color, as they are expressed in their representative movement: this is the only reality with which to construct a picture” (Arp and Lissitzky, 75).

\textsuperscript{88} Other poems, such as “Vendémiaire” (from the collection Alcools) intensify the presence of the illocutor, urging him to participate by hearing the story, repeating the verb “to hear:” Écoutez-moi je suis le gosier de Paris / (...) Écoutez mes chants d’universelle ivrognerie”(“[Hear me I am, the gullet of Paris / (...) Hear my songs of universal drunkenness.”) As Matthew Alan Hilton-Watson writes, “the narrator pleads with the
and the address of the reader, other objects are also apostrophized: “From fervent flames
Our Lady gazed down on me in Chartres / Your Sacred Heart’s blood drowned me in
Montmartre” (“Zone” 84) and other voices are also present in the poem, especially
through the personification: “flocks of bridges bleats at the morning”, “choleric bell
barks at noon,” and “busses in bellowing herds roll by”.

These visual and communicative patterns resonate in different forms and to a
different extent in Čapek’s travelogues than in earlier Czech travel writing. In addition to
Apollinaire’s flâneur, Čapek traveler finds “home” in artistic heritage, the region-specific
“natural art” of visited countries, and in representations of the quotidian older artistic
works. His traveler, similar to Apollinaire’s flâneur, “infuses life or presence” into his
narrative (Hilton-Watson 28). He disguises himself under different masks, which provide
the invisibility needed to blend in with the local culture and capture the everyday life that
is undiscovered by Baedekers and tourists. The use of masks is also a way for the narrator
to try to overcome his own sense of foreignness in a foreign country and find someplace
resembling home. Just as the flâneur in “The Prague Walker” traces his native French
culture in newspapers clippings and the posters hanging in bookshop windows and
Prague cafés (“Jew” 4) to discover the hidden and subversive aspects of Prague’s urban
history, Čapek’s travelers long to find facets of Czech culture in foreign ones. It is, in
Bakhtin’s words, “the author’s own real homeland, which serves as [the] organizing

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89 Entouré de flames ferventes Notre-Dame m’a regardé à / Chartres / Le sang de votre Sacré-Cœur m’a
inondé à Montmartre.”
90 “le troupeau des ponts bêle ce matin.”
91 “une cloche rageuse y aboie vers midi.”
92 “Des troupeaux d’autobus migussants près de toi roulent.”
93 Here he approaches Apollinaire and the Avant-Garde’s interest in the local and the natural. Even
Apollinaire in his study “New Spirit and the Poets” talks about cosmopolitan art as the recovery of locally
specific artistic traditions.
center for the point of view, the scales of comparison, the approaches and evaluations determining how alien countries and cultures are seen and understood” (“Forms” 103).
Chapter 1

Establishing Conventions: Czech Travels to Italy

1.1. Introduction

This chapter situates Karel Čapek’s travelogue *Letters from Italy* (*Italské listy* 1923) among Czech travel writing about Italy. In particular, I will compare how Čapek and his antecedents treat the differences between a foreign place that represents an archetypal version of European culture (Italy) and the authors’ own homeland (Bohemia and later the First Czechoslovak Republic) and national identity. An analysis of the opposition between Italy and home will demonstrate that the authors before Čapek traveled to Italy in order to find their own cultural identity, which they discovered in the classical artistic and literary heritage of Italy. Conversely, Čapek was hunting for aesthetic representations of the quotidian, which supported his personal theory of simple forms in literature.

1.2. Expansion and Cultural Identity

Before examining Czech travel literature about Italy, I will explain Felix Vodička’s understanding of literary history, in particular his concept of literary expansion, (which was briefly mentioned in the previous chapter), because it will provide the theoretical background for analyzing the conventions of travel literature. Felix Vodička defines periods of expansion (*rozšíření*) as peaks in literary history; they emerge when the conditions allow poetics to transcend its own borders and extend its possibilities. Thus, the poets considered the pillars of the national literatures are not necessarily “original.” Rather, they emerge as the result of a previous period of
expansion. He elaborates on this with the example of Karel Hynek Mácha. The nineteenth-century Romantic poet be a "streaking meteor, unintegrated and disconnect from the domestic tradition” without the preceding linguistic and stylistic achievements of the Czech National Revival and Pre-Romantic prose. (Vodička, “K.H. Mácha” 349) During this period, the Pre-Romantic prose written established new poetic standards by bringing Czech-language literature closer to the European mainstream. Consequently, Mácha does not represent an isolated and unique phenomenon in nineteenth-century Czech literature but rather the point in time which "contains the entire development of the new Czech literature" (350). Čapek’s translation of “Zone” was a similar achievement during Modernism. Apollinaire’s Czech translator was able to "transform Apollinaire into a Czech poet" (Brousek 21) because a certain poetic tradition existed that enabled Czech literature to adopt a French poem as its own.

Literary expansion as seen in travel writing is important to the construction of cultural identity. It allows writers to witness the other. By doing so, they have the opportunity to discover their own cultural identity anew. The different perspective represented by travel through foreign lands always involves “border crossings both literal and figurative,” and requires balance between the novelty of a new land and recognition of previously written descriptions of it (Kowalewski 7).

Karel Čapek’s understanding of travel writing is influenced by his notion of tradition as dynamic and changeable.9 This results in a playful approach to the notions of national and cultural identity that were formed by the end of the nineteenth century. He shared Apollinaire’s understanding of national identity and national art, whereby the development of new forms of artistic expressions, such as film, infuses universal art with

9 For more detail on this, please see the introduction.
local characteristics, instead of creating a cosmopolitan art that is characterized by “indistinct works, without a particular stress” (*Alkoholy* 91). As Apollinaire writes, “the diversity of literary expressions will be born from ethnic and national diversity, and that is the diversity that should be preserved” (91).

1.3. Czech Travels to Italy

In the introduction, expansion was linked to the theme of travel in the Czech literature in general. In this section, I will connect it with the Czech literary reception of Italy. The Renaissance travelogue of Kryštof Harant z Polžic, *Travels to the Holy Land and Egypt* (*Cesta do Země Sváté a do Egypta*, 1593) is considered the beginning of travel writing in Czech literature. Additionally, he also “discovered” Italy at the time when the young aristocrat visited the Italian peninsula during his journey to the Holy Land. As Jaroslav Pánek argues, the Czech lands were culturally and politically reintegrated into a broader Central European context after the Hussite-dominated fifteenth-century, which was characterized by religious conflict and isolation (661).

Harant understands traveling as both "cestování" (traveling) and "putování" or pilgrimage. His two-part travelogue already mentioned in the first chapter, explores the Mannerist theme of world’s and human’s nature. The theme requires individuals and collectives to learn from both historical experiences and the experiences of the others. This is visible throughout Harant z Polžic’s *Travels to the Holy Land and Egypt*; along with the author’s own impressions of people and places, his travelogue contains numerous references to other works. There are discussions about the etymology of Italian toponyms and nautical terminology, descriptions of sea storms by classical authors, historical events, supernatural phenomena, as well as references (mainly negative in order
to stress the importance of Harant z Polžic’s travel) to the travel writings of his Czech predecessors.

Modern Czech travel also begins in Italy with Milota Zdirad Polák’s travelogue *Travel to Italy* (*Cesta do Italie*; 1815-1819; published in 1820-1823 in the journal *Dobroslav*). Polák’s work is considered the first modern (*novočeský*) travelogue. It appeared as a contrast (foil) to a series of translated travelogues depicting imagined exotic destinations that were popular at that time. (Kusáková 112) The first decades of the nineteenth century, when the travelogue reappeared, were marked by the transition from the Enlightenment to Romantism. During this period, there was “a new perception of audience and the function of literature rather than of new aesthetic tendencies” therefore emphasis was generally given to the informative and educational purposes of literature (Voisine-Jehová 223). The shift in aesthetic tendencies began alongside the interest in linguistics, ethnography and history, which is especially visible in the work of Josef Jungmann (1773-1847) in the field of linguistics and translation, and literary history. He “introduced the masterpieces of European culture and proposed examples that could serve as the basis for Czech poetry’s literary development” (Voisine-Jehová 225). Polák’s travelogue will thus serve as an introduction to new Czech literature, the characteristics of which can be seen in his treatment of Italian cultural history, which consists of knowledge of classical authors blended with the sentimental spirit of the time. *Travels to Italy* shares some traits with Goethe’s Italian journey. Similar to Goethe, Polak’s narrator is grateful to destiny for allowing him to travel alone and experience places in which “spontaneity was dressed in more colorful garments” (38-9). 95

95 přirozenost v barevnější se oblekla oděv.
Goethe’s work on morphology and his Italian journey obviously influenced Jan Kollár’s *Ancient Italy of Slavs* (*Staroitalia slovanská* 1853),\(^{96}\) an example of the ahistoric, pan-Slavic approach to cultural identity present in some intellectual circles in the nineteenth century. Jan Kollár traveled to Italy in order to enlighten his fellow Slavs about the glorious Slavic civilization and the fact that in bygone times Northern Italy was, in fact, Slavic. During his Italian journey, in Latin grammar, toponyms, etymology, and customs Kollár finds the origins of the Slavic civilisation, praising Goethe as a Renaissance genius who discovered the “obvious” fact of Slavic Italy:

On the occasion of such closeness or even contact, what would be more natural than Slavic settlements in Italy in the most ancient times? Goethe felt that because in the Sicilian town of Palermo a Slavic suburb and a Slavic street already existed. He supposedly uttered these prophetic words in a discussion with educated Slavorussians, who were traveling right at that moment: “There is no nation for which Italy is so memorable and important as for the Slavs!” – This is proof that Goethe was not only a poet and a explorer of nature, but also that he had an exceptional knowledge of history and antiquity, real judgement and feeling and a correct, although dark inkling, which is characteristic of the great spirits especially in certain times (xii).\(^{97}\)

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\(^{96}\) Kollár’s work will not be discussed in the context of Italian travelogues because it does not belong to fiction and literature of travel. It is mentioned here as an illustration of the pan-Slavic historical thought built on the theme of traveling.

\(^{97}\) Při této sousednosti ovšem styčnosti, cože bylo přirozenějšího, jako slavské osady v Italii v nejdávnějších časích? Toto cítí Gőthe, proto v městě sicilském Palermo, kde ještě v 12. století předměstí Šlavjanů a slavská ulice byly, v rozmluvě s učenými tam též právě cestujícími Slavorussy řekl prej ta proroká slova: „Italia pro žádný národ tak pamatná a důležitá není, jako pro Slavjany!“ – Důkaz, že Gőthe nejen básnířem a zpytatelem přírody byl, nýbrž že i nevšední známost dějin a starožitností, pravý soud a cít a ono, sice temné ale neklamné, tušení na vysokém stupni měl, které veleduchům, zvláště v jistých dobách, vlastní
A part of Jan Neruda’s *Images from Abroad* (*Obrazy z ciziny*; 1872) is devoted to Italy. Neruda’s sketches belong to a period marked by the development of journalism and the opening of Czech culture to other cultures. Neruda’s travel writing is cosmopolitan. It contains few references to Czechness and home because his travelogues were written in the second part of the nineteenth century. At this point in history, “the process of national revival was considered done” and therefore “writers did not have to fight to introduce the Czech language to all parts of cultural life and to create the foundation for an autonomous national literature” (Voisine-Jechová 273).

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Čapek’s predecessors were Josef Svatopluk Machar, who describes Italy in *Rome* (*Řím*; 1906-1907), and František Xaver Šalda, who wrote *A Few Italian Impressions and Reflections* (*Několik dojmů a reflexí italských* 1911). Machar’s travels in Italy were guided by his belief that great antique cultures and paganism were superior to Christianity, which he criticized in his philosophical feuilletons “Antiquity and Christianity.” (“Antika a křesťanství”; 1919) 98 Although he was one of the prominent figures of Czech modernism and a co-signer of the *Manifesto of Czech Modernism* (*Manifest české moderny*), Machar criticized the patriotism and morality often found in Czech literature, as well as the social role of the Church and its clerics in Czech society (Voisine-Jechová 348).

Although all these travelogues try “to establish what Italy is ‘really’ like and to define what is quintessentially Italian” (Pfister 4), all of them construct an image of Italy based on classical references – from Latin literature and art to Torquato Tasso. In this

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98 References to these feuilletons will be mentioned in connection to Čapek’s fiction and his mockery of Machar in the chapter 4.
manner, they remain within the conventional structure of the Italian experience described in guidebooks and travelogues and as a return to an admirable Italian past. In Manfred Pfister’s words, such representations show that “the construction of Italy is not an individual creation, as much as individual travelers may insist upon autopsia (writing down only what they have seen with their own eyes) and upon authenticity (writing an Italy that is uniquely and originally their own)” (3). In addition, “the Italy for which the traveler sets out is never a tabula rasa but always already inscribed with the traces of previous texts, i.e. pre-scribed by his or her culture” (4). The traces of domestic culture exist to a different extent in all of the aforementioned works, but in Čapek’s case, the genre of travel writing will become the example of how one makes the foreign home.

1.4. A Change of Perspective as a Shift Away from Tradition

I will discuss the development of travel writing in Karel Čapek by examining the representation of Italy in Czech travelogues of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century as my point of departure. Similar to writers from other European countries, Czech writers traveled to Italy in search of their cultural identity, which comparisons with Italian culture would help provide. “At the dawn of the nineteenth century,” writes Roderick Cavaliero, “Italy had been for 200 years the universal art gallery, wunderkammer, museum, classroom and repository of Europe’s heritage” (2). As the centre of European cultural awareness because of its classical Latin roots and its melancholy upon the loss of the Latin civilization, Italy was a popular subject in the fictional and non-fictional travelogues and poetry of nineteenth century writers like
Comparing Čapek’s *Letters from Italy* to earlier travelogues will show that his travelogue continues the earlier tradition, while he engages in defamiliarization by exploring the quotidian in Italy and experimenting with its description. Italy as a central literary destination is preserved, but Čapek’s narration, treatment of the country, and opinions about Czech culture’s relationship to Italian culture were different. In connection with narration, Čapek emphasizes the use of intermedial and oral elements that were only implicitly present in earlier works. Concerning representations of Italy, Čapek preserves the same disgust for everyday life in Italy that his forebears expressed, but he does not distinguish as sharply as nineteenth-century writers between Italy’s glorious past and its “insignificant” present. Earlier Czech writers, despite their rejection of contemporaneous Italy, still characterized their own cultural heritage as subordinate to their vision of Italian culture. Conversely, Čapek sought out representation of the quotidian as it coincided with his own aesthetic theories. As a result of this shift in focus, the aesthetization of the quotidian became an attempt to make a foreign place home. While looking for the shared artistic undercurrents found in everyday life, Čapek articulated his own cultural identity as not inferior to the Italian identity, but equal.

Čapek was able to develop such a universal approach because he wrote at a time when, in contrast to his literary predecessors, he had a place he could call home. Čapek lived in the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938), which emerged after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the interwar era, the First Czechoslovak Republic played a significant economic role as a rich industrial country and was an
independent cultural and political identity under the leadership of Čapek’s close friend, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.

The political implications of the travelogue will be set aside, because I will focus on the narrative and aesthetic consequences of having a home. These are visible in Čapek’s approach to representing the commonplace. In other words, having a home had a huge impact on Čapek’s quest for simplicity. Čapek’s narrative technique is by no means simple in the everyday understanding of the word. Simplicity here is a synonym for the notion of “ordinary man,” which was discussed in the introduction, and which is a frequent topic in criticism about Čapek. Rather, it is a tool of defamiliarization and a change in perspective. Avoiding the classical and expected routes that Baedekers established meant dodging the interference of classical authors and depending on one’s own self, even if that self proved unreliable. Furthermore, simplicity suggested a new method of defamiliarization. It did not necessarily need to approach the world as a tabula rasa, but pushed history into the background while highlighting quotidian life.

On the generic level, simplicity matches Čapek’s aesthetic interests and theoretical considerations of so-called simple, or marginal, forms in literature and the arts. Čapek uses marginal forms – anecdotes, puns, fairy-tales, detective stories, news – which grew out of oral storytelling and often lacked a clear-cut date of historical origin and creator, to challenge the traditional narrative conventions of the travelogue. Čapek ascribes pohádkovost (a fairy-tale quality) to these genres of storytelling, which he believed helped create his own narrative world in the travelogues that differed with those created in earlier travelogues. In other words, foregone antiquity does not lie at the dawn

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99 In the introduction, I demonstrated that Čapek’s idea of simplicity is similar to Apollinaire’s concept of lyrical simultaneity, in which different temporal plains coexist.
of Italian and every other civilization, the quotidian, when experienced miraculously, does.\footnote{It is important to remind the reader again that “quotidian” in Čapek’s writing, along with his understanding of the “ordinary man,” refers to artistic representations of these topics rather than to glorification of the ordinary.} Before I return to the Czech history of the travels to Italy and analysis of “pohádkovost,” I will provide an outline of Karel Čapek’s aesthetic approach to storytelling in the context of the theories of that time.

1.5. Karel Čapek and Simple Forms in Literature

In the 1920s, the connections between the study of folklore and literary science resulted in works like Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale* (*Morfologiia skazki*, 1928) and André Jolles’ *Simple Forms* (*Einfache Formen*, 1930). *In Praise of Newspapers and Other Essays on the Margin of Literature* (*Marsyas čili na okraj literatury*, 1931) was Čapek’s aesthetic contribution to the examination of literary morphology. The interest in simple forms cut across the theoretical and aesthetic boundaries of the period. Many other authors and theorists also showed an interest in these forms. Karel Teige, for instance, considered the function of the anecdote in a manner similar to Čapek (Svět 22-30).

The enthusiasm for research into these forms was an echo of Goethe’s ideas about morphology, which is a scientific methodology used to classify natural phenomena in all their complexity. Goethe’s morphology was interested in primordial or archetypal forms (*Urforms*), because they served as the “beginning point of life that eternally reproduces itself” (“Notes” 94). In the morphology of plants, for instance, the leaf is the example of such a form. Proliferation, or metamorphosis, as Goethe calls it, starts from the leaf, “from top to bottom, a plant is all leaf, united so inseparably with the future bud that one
cannot be imagined without the other” (*Journey* 299). Additionally, each metamorphosis is a unique phenomenon, and only “in very few cases...achieved by [the] mere repetition” (“Notes” 94).

For Čapek in particular, Goethe perfectly embodied the role of Central European philosopher and intellectual.101 Čapek shared Goethe’s understanding of folklore as a dynamic and universal artistic creation that transcends linguistic and national boundaries, which is important to Čapek’s particular search for Czechness in Italy.102 Finally, Čapek understood Goethe as a scientist who explored the world through the eyes of an aesthete and a traveler who therefore had an impact in both realms. For example, Goethe articulated his ideas of morphology during his travel to Italy and “concluded that the antique masterpieces were produced by man in accordance with the same true and natural laws as the masterpieces of nature” (Steigerwald 306).

Goethe’s idea of primordial forms resonates differently in the studies of Jolles and Propp. Jolles characterizes them as the products of *Gestalt*, or as a “typologically determined morphological appearance of things, an active potency in all kinds of doings” (Jolles 6). For Propp, Goethe’s “prospect of discovering general laws that permeate all nature” (“Wondertale” 67) was echoed in the Russian folklorist’s attempts to establish the invariable structure of the wonder tale. Čapek, however, approached the topic more as a writer than as an academic. Although he befriended literary theorists of the time, such as Jan Mukařovský, he pointed to the insufficiency of an academic approach to literature in

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101 For instance, in one of the letters addressed to his future wife Olga Scheinpflugová he reveals that his *Conversations with T. G. Masaryk (Hovory s T. G. Masarykem)* will be partially based on the example of Eckermann’s conversations with Goethe, in which the great poet’s close friend noted Goethe’s thoughts on state of the world and arts (Čapek, *Listy* 229).

102 Čapek wrote that Goethe was an intellectual whose “journey leads from national to human” (“Goethe” 290).
general. To demonstrate the inadequacies of the academic approach, Čapek drew on his own understanding of folklore as the art of urban peripheries and neglected art. In addition, he expanded his morphology of forms to include the semantic morphology of phrases, proverbs, and words. Čapek’s proposal that language is the only common denominator shared by every member of a nation (“Czech Language” 136) - an idea that is similar to Apollinaire’s belief that poetry “must first devote [itself] to the nation, in whose language it expresses [itself]” (Alkoholy 58). However, this should not be understood in the Romantic sense of mystical belonging but rather as a diligent work and creative passion for probing the limits of language. Thus, the writer who explores the Czech nation’s soul is not the one who writes in Czech but the one who profoundly and intimately knows the language. As Čapek asserted: “to know means to work, to always experiment, to always search for and focus; you will never finish with your mother tongue.”

Finally, in Čapek’s case, the eternal reproduction, the notion already mentioned within the discussion of Goethe’s morphology and primordial forms, was the dynamic nature of storytelling as a process that creates forms. Although these forms have a stable structure, they appear brand new every time they are related. For Čapek, the understanding of narration/storytelling as a universal human need provides the point of departure for examining marginal forms. This is the idea of homo narrans, which should

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103 This is, for instance, visible in his discussion of fairy tales in which he enlists different theories of the genre before finally asserting his own. For more, see Čapek’s. “K teorii pohádky” in Marsyas čili na okraj literatury (93-97) or “Towards a Theory of Fairy-Tales” in In Praise of Newspapers and Other Essays on the Margin of Literature (49-55).

104 However, as Oldřich Širovátká argues (148-165), Čapek’s work comes at a time of great ethnologic interest in Czech and Slovak folklore. Václav Tille and Jiří Polivka published works on fairy tales. Polivka published five volumes of Súpis slovenských rozprávok (1923-1931), while Tille worked on cataloguing Czech fairy tales. Polivka also commented on Josef Š. Kubín’s Lidové pohádky z Podkrkonoší (I-II, 1922-1926), which was written in the region of Čapek´s childhood Čapek himself published a collection of artistic fairy tales, Nůše pohádek (I-III, 1918-1920).

105 “avšak umět znamená pracovat, stále zkoušet, stále hledat a soustředit se; nikdy nebudeš hotov s mateřskou řeči”(181).
be considered alongside Johan Huizinga’s *homo ludens*, as the foundation of Western culture (Biti 57).

For Vladimir Propp, a wondertale as a folkloric form is a static creation since the number of functions of the folkloric personae perform is stable and limited. (*Morphology* 21) The creativity of storytellers is therefore constrained; their narration is confined to a predetermined structure. Folkloric personae are, in essence, passive figures because their deeds neither interferes with nor influences their travels (21). Since folkloric narratives are entirely action-oriented, neither the narration’s context nor the external or internal features of the wondertale’s characters are of any interest to the narrator and audience. Only actions matter - time and space are measured in the continual action of folkloric personae, and not in discrete units of time. As Propp argues: the “unity of space is inseparable from [the] unity of time. Like space, time in folklore cannot admit interruptions” (“Folklore” 24). The static functionality of the wondertale makes this folkloric genre different from literary works, since the peasant houses, the various faces and types of servants and masters described by Tolstoy in *A Landowner’s Morning* would be quite impossible in folklore. In folklore the story is told only for the sake of the events” (“Folklore” 21-2).

For André Jolles, simple forms originate in the moment when language becomes saturated, dense and starts to create (dichtet), in order to express a certain phenomenon (18). The newly emerged forms differ from the imitated object because the forms are generated, distorted and reorganized during the creative process (18). Simple forms are by no means structurally simple. As Jolles writes, they belong to different “physical

106 In his later works, however, Propp distinguishes folklore from literature in its changeability versus the static existence of once written work of art. Also, “newer” folkloric genres show different levels of imitation of reality. See “The Nature of Folklore” (7) and “On the Historicity of Folklore” (49).
conditions \textit{[Aggregatzustand]”} (10). Although simple forms are deeply embedded in any given language, they constantly try to undermine its “eternal certainty, \textit{writing [Schrift]”} (262). Since they exist in the no man’s land between literature and folklore, they cannot be easily classified by aesthetic, stylistic or poetic criteria. In Jolles’ words: “Although belonging to the arts [they] never actually become works of art, and although being poetry, [they] do not make a poem” (10).

The saturation of simple forms happens according to the conventions dominating a particular, predefined form. Regardless of how or where a simple form emerged, each follows its genre’s specific, immutable dictates (233). These conventions capture the particular type of spiritual activity/involvement \textit{[Geistbeschäftigung]}. For instance, the legend sprang from Christian ritual and depends exclusively on conventions of the ritual’s performance.

As Propp demonstrated with his brief comparison of Tolstoy’s \textit{A Landowner’s Morning} and wondertales, simple forms are static while literature is dynamic. The common point between simple and artistic forms is their dependency on language’s creative power. While artistic forms depend on the vocabulary of the author, simple forms are restricted in their lexical choices. The forms are recognized, in part, according to their lexicon i.e. “linguistic gesture.” Beyond each genre’s gesture, the simple forms are not recognizable as such and therefore cease to exist (Jolles 235).

Simple forms creatively reformulate objective phenomena, but they no longer correspond to the historical nature of the world they imitate (18). The forms originate as a way to analyze and reduce the manifold phenomena of the world to something comprehensible. Legend, for example, breaks historical narration into fragments. In the
process of imitating the phenomenon, legend reduces the entire life of a saint and historical circumstances of his or her biography to the notion of miracle, which, following the conventions of the form, becomes the definitive representation of his life (40). “Simple forms are therefore representations of reality that challenge the authority of official historical narratives. They are distinct from historical discourse, because they are “imaginary events, events invented by the narrator” (White 27). Jolles confirms their subversive power when he writes that “simple forms” are often challenged by the “tyranny of history,” which “works as an enemy of Saga, threatening it, re-adjusting it, denigrating it and [making it] misrepresent the words in the mouth” (65).

The idea of *homo narrans* radically distinguishes Čapek from both Jolles and Propp. Čapek admits that these simple forms are also closed structures. They are not, however, confined to, nor completed in time. Contrary to the ideas of simple forms as being defined by either functions (Propp) or “linguistic gesture” (Jolles), Čapek asserts that being related from person to person, simple forms change due to the influence of the narrator. Moreover, simple forms originate in certain social rituals and within certain social groups. The social element, however, emphasizes narrating as an everyday activity and does not attempt to invest the narration of simple forms with magic. For example, the detective story, according to Čapek, is a remnant of ancient hunts and one of the oldest narrative structures. Probably the most famous among them is Odysseus’ search for Achilles among the daughters of Lycomedes (“Holmesiana” 112). Additionally, the courtroom report, according to Čapek, is nothing but a “substitute for the conditions when once upon a time a whole tribe used to sit ceremoniously round a fire while cases were being heard” (“Newspapers” 19). In Čapek’s view of simple forms, the press plays an
important part. It is present everywhere and always, from the beginnings of civilization to the present day. It exists in stone carvings, Egyptian monuments, as well as in storytelling. After all, “the newspapers are as old as the human kind. Herodotus was a journalist, and Scheherazade is nothing but the symbol of an evening edition” (“Holmesiana” 112).

By altering the understanding of folklore, Čapek also altered the understanding of its magical nature. The magical elements in folklore are not the remnant of ancient rituals, but stem from daily encounters with phenomena that Čapek describes as “fairy-tale.” (pohádkové) (“Motifs” 74) For instance, “fairy-tale are evenings with our beloved” (74). A wide array of phenomena can be considered fairy-tale according to Čapek; every day the newspapers select certain events and infuse them with uniqueness, exceptionality and fairy-tale elements. Fairy tales include, for instance, stories narrated by nursemaids, who transpose elements of reality to create magic.

Anecdotes spring from various social groups with long traditions, such as doctors and craftsmen, but their form constantly fluctuates as an anecdote is transmitted from one person to another. It lacks a specific author and its exact form is dependant on their “passer-on” (“Anecdote” 29) - on the one who is passing on the anecdote. Although the anecdote is an archaic genre, retold numerous times, it always expresses a new dimension of the objects seen and it “always poses as brand-new” (“Anecdote” 30). As Čapek argues:

A joke, an anecdote, a pun is not playing with things but playing with words; it is constant amazement at the sense and nonsense in words; it is detachment from their serious and objective meaning. They say that man
became human when he began to speak; but no sooner did he begin to speak than on the second day he made a joke; he found to his astonishment that one can play with words (“Anecdote” 38).

The fairy-tale and novelty are explanations for the similarity of fairy tales originating in different geographic locations. People share a universal human experience. The magical world of fairy tales is a product of human curiosity to find the unknown or fairy-tale around them and not the by-product of dreams and hallucinations. Fairy tales allow people to explore still-unvisited places even the fairy-tale personae enlisted by Čapek do not originate from faraway regions beyond the ends of the earth. Instead, they portray the fairy-tale achievements of the ordinary man (“Personalities” 83).

The newness (or fairy-tale) of forms brings about another important element in Čapek’s aesthetic theory that is absent in both Propp and Jolles. While Propp and Jolles approached already canonised verbal forms academically, Čapek considered these genres living, artistic forms and creative, artistic constructs. Čapek regards riddles, puns and other oral forms of storytelling as miraculous, i.e. fairy-tale, connections between words (“Říkadla” 87). Čapek applies morphological principles to proverbs and words themselves in his collection *In the Captivity of Words* (*V zajetí slov*; posthumously published in 1969). The abundance of the natural phenomena equals morphological variety of words and their meanings. In Čapek’s words:

> A living language is something like nature, in which every stalk, every sparrow is somehow different from any other sparrow. To a certain extent,

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107 An essay, “Proverbs or About Prosody” (Říkadla čili o prozódii), was not included in the English edition *In Praise of Newspapers*. Vladislav Vančura, another friend of Jan Mukařovský recognized the lyrical quality of curses. He defined them as “a type of trope, a kind of metonymy, apostrophe, parable abbreviation, replacement of a unexpressive term with expressive or the aphoristic judgement” (98).
every man has his own idiom; every family has its own jargon, every group, every class has its own vocabulary, its cadence, its characteristic expressions; and particularly every poet and writer has his own language (“O dnešním” 202).

Propp focused on the examination of the folktale according to functions, and Jolles looked at simple forms as “states of matter” that fluctuate between folklore and literature, intending to become literary works, but never succeeding. Meanwhile, Čapek approached them as artistic forms that possess the qualities of high literature. In folkloric genres, he sees words becoming liberated from their traditional referential function. Children’s riddles, for instance, are as old as poetry itself; they are indeed poetry because they estrange words and stress their autonomous, self-referential function (“Říkadla” 87). The same poetic principles at work in riddles are also visible in literary works like Mácha’s May (Máj; 1836). Čapek, however, was not interested in simple forms only from a theoretical standpoint, he also had a practical interest in them because he included them in his writings.

As a result of his thinking on folklore and defamiliarization, Čapek acquired the tools to create a multi-focal and multi-genre mode of storytelling that, notwithstanding its complexities, was meant to make his work more accessible to a wide audience – one that knew how to read folklore.

1.6. Čapek’s Return to the European Tradition of Travel: Goethe’s Travels

All three authors – Čapek, Jolles and Propp - recognize the archetype of traveling in simple forms, but Čapek is the only one among them for whom the notion of traveling
went beyond traditional folkloric structures. In contrast to Jolles and Propp, self-awareness is expressed when Čapek emphasizes the importance of the narrator’s/traveller’s gaze, i.e. his perspective. Both Čapek and Goethe traveled to Italy to escape from their own quotidian life. The result of their travel was a new perspective on the world as presented by its primordial forms.

While Goethe was concerned with reaching a destination, Čapek focused his attention on the process of traveling. Metaphorically this is represented by Goethe’s hunt for the Urform and Čapek’s search for how to communicate with his reader. As Zdeněk Hrbata notes: the “possibilities of writing began to prevail over reaching one’s destination” (89). Both Čapek and Goethe felt that they had to witness the world with their own eyes in order to make sense of things. Goethe’s flight from the everyday dullness of “formless Germany” to an Italy “rich in forms” (“Manuscript” 167) gave him the opportunity to immerse himself anonymously into everyday life and practice of his own way of seeing the world though which “opened up to me (Journey 16). Goethe’s escape to Italy was led by his obsession with the classics whose writings opened his eyes, while simultaneously preventing him from experiencing the world with his own mind. The classics made him feel that “historical knowledge was of no benefit to me, for while the things stood there only a hand’s breadth away, I was separated from them by an impenetrable wall” (Journey 82). He writes excitedly from Naples that he was close to discovering the source plant and “the secret of plant generation and structure (…), the simplest thing imaginable (…) I have quite clearly and unquestionably found the main feature, the location of the bud, and I already see everything else in a general way, just a
few more points need to be better defined.” The model of morphology he was looking for “will be applicable to all other living things” (*Journey* 256).

Goethe realized that the abundance of nature can be comprehended only through its aesthetic articulation” (¨Brochure¨ 172). Goethe was privately criticized by his friends and openly disparaged by the scientific community for mixing science and art. Goethe appreciated the artistic interpretation of his work on plant morphology. He argued that the purpose of the artist is to teach the others how “to represent budding and creeping floral ornaments in the manner of the ancients, that is, as progressive movement. The plant must issue from the simplest leaves, which are gradually diversified, notched, and multiplied” (“Brochure” 171).

Čapek’s journey to Italy was the result of a desire for a clear view of things and the inner peace it offered. He wanted to avoid structuring his foreign experiences on readings of the classics because he associated them with the routes and standardized interpretations of ancient monuments found in Baedekers. He was, after all, looking for a new perspective that would resurrect petrified ancient monuments and transform them into living beings. His experience is that of a painter and a photographer who perceives undiscovered details of familiar archetypal objects. In this manner, the narrator defamiliarizes the seen objects, juxtaposing the static with the notion of constant change. In Čapek’s own words:

> It seems that I say little of monuments of antiquity. I could certainly write more about them; it is all set forth in the guide-book, the century of erection, thickness and number of columns. But perhaps I have a spirit far too unhistorical; my best impressions of the antique are rather derived
from the order of nature, e. g., the golden sunset in the golden temples of Girgenti, or the white noonday glow in the Greek theatre, where beautiful green lizards run along the seats; or a solitary laurus nobilis by a split column, an enormous black adder in the courtyard of the house of the tragic poet at Pompeii, the odour of mint and begonias – ah, the most beautiful and boundless in the world are not things but moments, seconds that cannot be detained (Italy 56; Italské 38).

Despite Čapek’s quest for novelty during his travels, he still found himself yearning for home. The deeper into the south he went, the more he longed for home, which was embodied in the idea of the north. Čapek’s Italian travelogue is constructed as a direct address to his Czech audience from whom he expected understanding and compassion. The direct address was also a reminder of his homeland. Moreover, he inserted allusions to previous Czech accounts of Italy, such as those by Josef Svatopluk Machar, to reinforce the link between his Italian-based narrator and Czech readers.

In a letter to his future wife, Olga Scheinpflugová, Čapek describes the exhaustion he experienced when he reached his final destination in the south. It felt like being in the fog that was covering the hills of Calabria, which he saw from his window. His search for primordial forms was a figurative journey out of the fog that covered his mind and senses; it was a search for artistic forms suitable to express the palpable world. In his

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108 In Czech, “užovka” is not a black adder but a grass snake.
109 Zdá se, že mluvím málo o antických památkách. Mohl bych toho jistě napsat víc; v průvodci je udáno vše, století vzniku, tluště a dříků a počet sloupů. Ale snad mám ducha příliš nehistorického; mě nejlepší dojmy z antiky jsou spíš přírodní, jako na příklad zlatý západ ve zlatových tempatech girgentských, nebo bilý polední úpav v řeckém divadle, kdy po sedadlích běhají překrásné zelené ještěrky; nebo osamělý laurus nobilis u přeraženého sloupu, ohromná čemr užovka na dvoře tragického básníka v Pompejích, vůně máty a begónií – ach, to nejkrásnější a nejbezhraničnější na světě nejsou věci, nýbrž chvíle, okamžiky, vteřiny nezachytitelné.
110 Due to Čapek’s selective view on tradition, intertextual references to Machar will be discussed in the chapter on intermediated.
fictional travelogue *Hordubal* (1933), which will be discussed in the last chapter as an example of the interaction between travel and fiction, the metaphor of fog becomes the metaphor of clouds surrounding the main character, who experiences spiritual calm, becomes aware of his inner chaos, and comprehends his troubles quite clearly while undertaking a journey into the mountains. While being high in the mountains, he realizes how “the clouds melt away, and nothing is left behind, not even as much as when you breathe on the glass.”\(^{111}\) He realizes that what he needs is not knowledge about things, but sight: “And God gazes too” (*Novels 57; Hordubal 73*).\(^{112}\)

In Čapek’s Italian journey, the notion of gaze is indeed divine. Goethe looks forward to breaking social conventions and traveling freely without a servant. Meanwhile, Čapek’s traveler directly experiences the world through his simplicity, muteness,\(^{113}\) and directness. If Goethe was looking for antiquity, then Čapek’s experience of Italy was based on the understanding of Christianity as the aesthetic quality of the quotidian, that can be found in Apollinaire’s poetry. The notion of language and art as the only means of conveying the world comes from God who rested on the seventh day after he “saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (*The Holy Bible*, Gen. 1-31). Čapek bases his travel narrative on visual elements and frequent intermedial connections with visual art. The impact of the images by great painters is often present; it becomes clear to Čapek that it was not that the landscape that inspired painters to create images, but that artistic representations affect how the landscape is viewed:

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\(^{111}\) “rozplývají se oblaka a nic po nich nezbude, ani jako když na sklo dechněš.”

\(^{112}\) “J Bůh zirá.”

\(^{113}\) Here, Čapek refers to his inability to understand and converse in Italian (*Italy* 60; *Italské* 38).
Burckhardt says that Tuscany created the early Renaissance, but I rather think that early Renaissance created Tuscany; blue and golden mountains in the background, in front hillocks fashioned so that on each should be a fort, a castle, or little citadel, slopes planted with cypress, pine groves, oak groves, acacia groves, garlands of grapes, juicy and bluish wreaths from the workshop of the Robbias, blue and green, wild and delicious little streams: after this manner painted Fra Angelico, Fra Lippi, Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, Piero di Cosimo and all the rest, and believe me, they gave to this land this delicious, tender, and artistic plenitude and made of it a picture-book, so that we might turn over the leaves with enjoyment, smiles, and bright eyes…114 (Italy 82-3; Italské 53).

1.7. The Loss of Traditional References

Within the context of Czech travel writing, Čapek’s considerations of the fairy-tale nature of quotidian experience are a decisive difference from preceding Czech travelogues. Here, the term “quotidiant” refers to more than one of the main conventions of travel literature. Its description is used to persuade the reader of the traveler’s authentic experience of and in the visited country. Quotidiant is also relevant to the generic level and creates a new form of intertextuality. Čapek’s treatment of the quotidiant challenges the conventional sources of intertextual references found in travelogues: “the oral

114 “Burckhard praví, že Toskána vytvořila ranou renesanci. Já však mysliím, že raná renesanarce vytvořila Toskánu: vzduh modré i zlaté hory, před nimi kopce dělané jen proto, aby na každém byl hrad, zámek či tvrzíčka, svahy posazené cypríšemi, hájky piniové, hájky dubové, hájky akátové, girlandy révy, šťavnaté a modrávě pletence z dílny Robbiů, modré a zelené říčky divě a lahdné: zrovna tak to maloval Fra Angelico, Fra Lippi, Ghirlandajo a Botticelli a Piero di Cosmo a ti všichni ostatní, a veřte mi, že oni dali té zemi tuto lahdnou plnost něžnou a melánbou a učinili z ní obrázkovou knihu, abychom v ní s potěšením, s úsměvem, s jasnýma očima listovali..."
references (legends or different stories connected with the given place) and finally literary references, which can be divided into the travelogues of predecessors and cultural-historical and geographical discourse aimed at specialists” (Encyklopedie 75).

Nineteenth- and the early twentieth-century travelogues appear more or less as intertextual links with the previous sources on Italy and the country’s classical origins, which were considered the point of departure for an Italian experience. Čapek did not use such references; his travel philosophy followed Goethe’s. His textual references to the German writer, however, show his tendency to use text to authenticate the timeless quality of the quotidian experience as well as to parody the traditional conventions of travel writing. More precisely, Čapek associates Goethe with a new reception of the German writer’s work by using trivial motifs, such as a herd of goats on the streets of Naples, and mocking touristic clichés:

Goethe has allegedly written about the herds of goats, which in the morning run about the streets of Naples to be milked on the spot. At 6.30 a.m. there is a hideous roaring below my window; I thrust out my head, and behold a herd of goats chewing (they have faces like English ladies) and a chap milking them with an encouraging roar; as soon as he perceives me he desists, reaches out his hand and calls out something115 (Italy 41; Italské 30).

Although all of the narrators in the above-listed travelogues claim that their personal discovery of Italy is novel, that assertion contradicts one of the primary

115 Už Goethe prý psal o stádech koz, jež ráno běhají po Naplesských ulicích, aby byly na místě podojeny. Ráno o půl sedmé je pod mým oknem strašný řev; vystrčím ven hlavu, a dole přežvykuje stádo koz (mají obličej jako anglické ladies) a jakýsi chlapík je s povzbuzujícím řevem doji; a když mne zmerčí, pustí vemeno, natáhne ruku a něco na mne volá.
requirements of travel writing: allusions to earlier narratives about Italy. In particular, they glorify the classical past in order to draw negative attention to the author’s contemporaneous reality. The narrators’ attempt to individualize their traveling experience notwithstanding, their journeys through Italy remain to a great extent journeys through the Italian past. Consequently, the present is seen as an unavoidable and often a tiresome necessity. The reason for disappointment with the present in most travelogues is the relationship between temporal distance between the past and the present and the travelers’ expectations, their own understanding of cultural memory as static and finished in time, and the present state of culture, as seen in dirty streets and chaotic urban life. The classical for them is the secure haven for cultural identity. In Renate Lachmann’s words:

The classical becomes the place where, from the interplay between remembering and forgetting, everything that seems to confirm the identity of a group interested in building models is retained, nurtured, and carefully preserved. The mechanisms controlling exclusion and inclusion, as well as those governing suppression and emphasis, are geared toward axiological positions whose signifiers form the explicit concepts of a culture (176).

In all of the travelogues preceding Čapek’s *Letters from Italy*, the interest in the past was part of the travelers’ attempts to understand the nature of historical processes. In Italy, the historical process was based either on a conflict between antiquity and Christianity or on an internal conflict leading to the fall of antiquity. Machar describes Christianity in negative terms as a primitive force undermining Antiquity. Šalda contemplates an internal reason for the destruction of antiquity and understands the two epochs as a natural transformation of culture, philosophy, and knowledge. For Šalda,
Christianity is a continuation of antique ideals: “Nay, ancient philosophy came by itself to the outcomes, which monks and Christian hermits could accept.” While Machar and Šalda treat both periods as cultural epochs of the past, Čapek disregards the importance of these eras and abolishes the opposition between the past and present.

Čapek’s interpretation of Christianity is intimate and complex. For Čapek, Christianity ceased to be a religion and becomes instead an alternative perspective on antiquity, a defamiliarizing gaze on antique monuments. Where others see Roman arcades, Čapek’s traveler sees a shadow play. Also, the idea of Christianity is closely related to the “primitive,” “folk” or “pagan,” all synonyms in Čapek, and representing an undercurrent in every culture. Christianity is therefore also an aspect of the aesthetic pleasure one feels when immersed in the present moment. Finally, it represents a search for the aesthetic representations of everyday life in the artistic works of the past. Neruda’s notion of Christianity resembles that of Čapek in his attempts to show its immediacy, but in contrast to Čapek, Christianity was still understood in relation to past cultural epochs. Christianity, in Neruda’s travel writing, marks the Italian landscapes and people, but in the form of past legends:

Nevertheless, you cannot separate an Italian from the immediacy of nature – an Italian city belongs all of its surroundings. And the surroundings of Naples are the most beautiful in the world. It is spilled over by sight, you will not be surprised by a legend that it is a part of heaven, that Christ, traveling through the world, was crying here moved with such beauty. Since then “Lacrymae Christi” have dried

116 “Nikoliv, antická filosofie sama ze sebe došla k výsledkům, jež mohli přijmouti mniši a poustevníci křesťanští.”
out, but the region has remained, magically beautiful, and you cannot but be elated\textsuperscript{117} ("Neapol" 195).

Čapek’s attitude towards the static idea of cultural epochs is predominantly negative. He considers them to be cosmopolitan (in Apollinaire’s negative definition of the word) and foreign to the local culture. Both the grandiose aspects of pagan antiquity and the stylizations of the Christian Baroque are, in Čapek’s view, alien to the true Italian spirit. “True Italian spirit” instead should be found in artistic representations of the quotidian. The focus on the everyday does not necessarily mean that Čapek unreservedly celebrates the quotidian. After all, he describes street life negatively. His approach, however, is purely visual and perspectival: his focus shifts from the representation of Italy as a museum of a fallen civilisation to a new Italian narrative that he constructs on his personal view of individual images from a different museum. This museum represents what he thought to be the eternal quality of everyday life. For example, a conventional walk through a museum is an opportunity to mock traditional travelogues:

There are people who stand in a certain relationship to the antique (many have definite relationship with the antique), and others who acquire such relationship. In the second case their superficial proceedings are as follows: when they first arrive at a great repository of the antique, such as the Vatican or Thermal or Naplesian museums, they begin by lingering piously before every statue and whispering in raptures some classical tag, e.g. \textit{Caesar pontem fieri jussit} (Caesar ordered a bridge to be built). After

\textsuperscript{117} Avšak Italián neodlučíš od bezprostřednosti přírodní a k italskému městu patří celé jeho vůkolí. A to vůkolí Naplesské je nejkrásnější na světě. Přelití je zrakem, nezadivíš se pověsti, že to kus samého nebe, a že Ježíš, putuje světem, plakal zde pohnutím nad tolerou krásou. „Lacrymae Christi“ od té doby sice zkysaly, ale kraj zůstal, čarovně krásný, a neubrániš se pohnutí.
the first half hour they unobtrusively accelerate their step. After an hour they pass through the remoter halls at a brisk pace. And after the succeeding fifteen minutes they would like to have a velocipede\textsuperscript{118} (\textit{Italy} 69; \textit{Italské} 45).

The positive attitude towards antiquity and Christianity is visible in situations where travelers unexpectedly start feeling the concurrent existence of different historical times:

Thus I wandered in the golden dust of the sunset, speaking in turn Czech, Italian, and French, like the leader of some bacchante procession; whoever met us, a rider on ass or mule, removed his hat and gazed at us for some time. As long as I live I shall never understand this antique event\textsuperscript{119} (\textit{Italy} 55; \textit{Italské} 37).

This is a fairy-tale experience because a new world appears in it - open to syncretism and the traveler’s nonchalance. This is the world created “by accident,” “by the way,” “in passing” or “as something else.” It seems to be set apart from the main part of the narrative even though it is still recognizes the conventions of earlier travelogues that emphasized another angle on reality. For example, due to unexpected rains, Čapek’s traveler did not see much of San Marino. He writes: “many of the beauties of this

\textsuperscript{118} Jsou lidé, kteří mají k antice poměr (někteří dokonce mají poměr s antikou), a jiní, kteří poměr teprve ziskávají. V tomto druhém případě je průběh asi takový: když po prvé přijdou do velkého skladiště antik, takhle do vatikánského nebo thermského nebo Naplesského musea, zprvu prodlévají zbožně před každou sochou a šepťají si uchváceni nějaký klasický citát, např. „Caesar pontem fieri iussit“. Po první půlhodinové nenápadně zrychlují krok. Po hodině putují dalším sály řízným pochodem. A za dalších patnáct minut by už chtěli mít velocipéd.

\textsuperscript{119} Takto jsem putoval ve zlatém prachu západu, mluvě střídavě česky, italsky a francouzsky, podoben vůdcí jakéhosi bakhického průvodu; kdo nás potkal jeda na oslu či mezku, smekl klobouk a dlouho se za námi ohlížel. Jakživ nepochopím tuto antickou událost.
honourable state escaped me” (*Italy* 25; *Italské* 19). However, his journey through the clouds to a small country within another country results in a fairy-tale location, in “a wonderful rocky nest surrounded on every side by clouds and vaporous precipices” (*Italy* 25; *Italské* 19). In the *Letters from Italy*, everything is taken incidentally, but the “incidental information” remains as a reference to the genre of travelogue in the background: “*And then again something entirely different:* the little garden in the old half-ruined cloisters” of San Giovanni degli Eremiti (*Italy* 52; *Italské* 35; emphasis mine).

A series of incidents and changing perspectives creates Čapek’s narrative. These are undisturbed by earlier accounts of Italy because Čapek’s traveller is more interested in living things than in dead objects. According to his preferences, he relies on the unexpressed and untold. Without intertextual references and guides, he goes and sees a world that he has not seen before. Thus, nature in his descriptions is completely personified and alive; active and oneiric. In the state of wandering, when a traveler is not looking for anything, history’s concrete spatial-temporal loses its form:

In a delicious spring shower, trees of violet and yellow hues, unknown to me by name, droop over the brick walls. Straight streets with coloured window-shutters – red, yellow, green; little Romanesque columns; red palaces; red churches; and through it all surges, forces itself, and blooms

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120 “ušlo mi mnoho z krás toho cítkodného státu.”
121 “v podivuhodném skalním hnízdě obklopeném na všech stranách mraky a dýmajícími propastmi.”
122 In the English translation, the Czech word “chodba” (corridor) is replaced with “cloister.”
123 *A opět něco zcela jiného: zahrádka v staré, polozřícené křižové chodbě v San Giovanni degli Eremiti.*
vigorously, the fresh green of moist spring. One strolls aimlessly, since he lives in a dream (*Italy* 22; *Italské* 16-7).

1.8. Changes in Temporality

The opposition between narrative as a museum and narrative as a picture leads to one of the main differences between Čapek’s *Letters from Italy* and previous travelogues, which is visible in that of the temporal dimension of each narrative. Visual experience (*zraková zkušenost*) is traditionally considered “the main precondition of the travelogue” (*Encyklopedie* 75). As such, it was taken for granted. Čapek, however, elevates it, which results in a one-dimensional narrative as the temporal dimension is leveled into one image through the use of ekphrasis. The Renaissance works of Giotto, for example, are simultaneously works from the past from the perspective of Čapek’s narrator and aesthetic representations of the present moment that the narrator witnesses. Thus, it is not known whether an image originates in the object or if an object is a product of its aesthetic image. Put differently, temporal unidimensionality is created through ekphrastic experience. This occurred only sporadically in the nineteenth century (especially in Neruda), while it is actualized in Čapek’s narrative and elevated to one of his work’s structural and philosophical dominants. Ekphrasis is the “focusing competent of a work of art” that “rules, determines and transforms the remaining components.” (Jakobson, “The Dominant” 82).

Other visual techniques were treated in the same manner. It will be shown in the chapter on intermediality that Čapek used illustration to communicate with the reader,

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124 V libezném jarním děšti se překlání přes cihlové zdi fialově a žlutě kvetoucí stromy, jichž neznám. Rovné ulice s barevnými okénicemi; červená, žlutá, zelená; románské sloupky, červené palácky, červené kostely; a všude z toho čouhá, prodírá se, kvete prudce svěží zeleň vlhkého jara. Člověk jde bez cíle, nebot žije ve snu.
rather than merely as illustrator embellishment. The use of illustrations also explicitly emphasises the visual element of travel writing, which, in the nineteenth century, was only implied by the titles of the entire works. These reflected the influence of the visual arts by borrowing from art terminology that usually referred to the fragmentary and unfinished nature of the travelogue - the work of art in the process of becoming. Neruda, for instance, wrote “obrázky” (small images) referring to small forms of writing in which a particularly small part of reality is depicted.\footnote{In chapter 3 on intermediality, the small forms of writing will be related to small visual forms, especially within the Dutch tradition.}

In contrast to Čapek’s travelogue, in which the difference between the past and the present is erased, the treatment of time in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writing is still multi-dimensional: past and present are clearly distinguished, and do not exist concurrently. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century travelogues often use ekphrasis to either stress differences between the real and ideal Italy or to express longing for bygone times. For Čapek, the experience of Italy was truly an aesthetic experience of looking at the image itself, while for his predecessors, it was a walk through a museum.

The above-mentioned thesis may be illustrated through examples from other travelogues. Milota Zdirad Polák’s travelogue, written at the beginning of the nineteenth century serves as an informative catalogue of the visual arts. One of his walks ends with reminiscences of Giotto. In the master’s works, Polák notices the quality of quotidian details but does not extend it, like Čapek, to his here-and-now. Instead, Polák contextualizes his work by comparing it to the classical tradition: “his first attempt was in painting a fly on the nose of his master, who, going around, tried to chase the fly away,
which can be compared to the stories of the miraculous painters Parrhasius and Zeuxis” (110-1).  

Machar, meanwhile, denies that simple folk aesthetic forms (in this case paintings of idyllic Alpine landscapes in village pubs) can have any artistic value. He does not understand how anybody can find aesthetic pleasure in what he considers kitsch. He is, however, perplexed when he discovers the similarities between the folkloric visual representation of the landscape in pubs and the actual landscape (13-4). Šalda praises paintings of the French Baroque painter Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) as the most wonderful initiation (zasvěcení) into Rome’s natural, stylistic and cultural landscapes but again contextualizes the painter’s representation of trees, which are “striving towards the sky so solemnly and with such heroic pathos,” and situates the circular terrain of arena in the context of classical heroism and the Roman theatre (158). Even Neruda’s narrator is disappointed because his journey does not end with a satisfactory link between the representation and the original:

Really, the glory of Venice was magnificent. “Venezia in Gloria,” the painting of that Veronese, who portrayed himself in another image, in “Supper in the House of Levi” (Academy), as the veritable gentleman, still shines in its insurmountable beauty. Nevertheless, what still shines in the image, does not shine any more in reality (“Zrcadla” 243).  

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126 “jeho první pokus pozůstával v vymalování mouchy na nose obrazu mistra svého, který jda okolo, mouchu dolů sháněl; což se k přiběhům zázračných malířů Parrhasia a Zeuxis přirovnat může.”

127 “které se týče k nebi tak slavnostně a s takovým heroickým pathosem.”

128 Arci, sláva Benátek byla velká. „Venezia in gloria,” obraz toho Veronese, jenž sama sebe nakreslil na jiném obrazu, na „Večeři v domě Levi” (Akademie) co hotového kavalíra, skví se posud v nepřekonatelné krásé své. Avšak, co se na obrazu leskne, neleskne se více v skutečnosti.
Since there is no ekphrasis in these earlier travelogues, and visual representations cannot correspond to the quotidian reality, the mirrors here play a completely different role than in Čapek’s travelogues. In comparison with his travelogues, especially Images from Holland (Obrázky z Holandska; 1932) and Travels in the North (Cesta na sever; 1936), where they represent a living past that coexists alongside the present, in Neruda’s narrative, they reflect history, but only as monuments and not as living representations. In other words, they do not create a parallel world, but a reflection of the past: “The embankments of Canalazzo are strings, on which the Venetian gentry threaded marble monuments to its glory and pride, its water is a mirror, in which the history of Venetian families and the history of Italian architecture are reflected” (246).

1.9. The Treatment of Simple Forms

Čapek’s theories about simple forms and intertextuality are visible in his treatment of proverbs, anecdotes, epitaphs, inscriptions, tablets and other textual simple forms. His distinct use of simple forms can be illustrated by comparing Čapek and Neruda. The main difference between the employment of simple forms is the intertextual relation between the simple form and the past. Čapek posits that simple forms are lyrical, in other words containing a language’s creative powers. Čapek not only notes simple forms, but also uses them in intergeneric play. This is evident in the comparison between an inscription on Giotto’s home and a poem:

Giotto, Master Jottus, has here in the cathedral a memorial tablet from the year 1490 on which it is written” Hoc nomen longi carminis instar erat

129 “Břehy Canalazza jsou šňůrami, na které benátská aristokracie navlékla mramorové pomníky své slávy i pýchy, jeho voda je zrcadlem, ve kterém se obráží historie benátských rodů i historie italské architektury.”
(this name has the value of a long poem). That is true indeed: I have written down this name as though it were a poem, and am delighted that I shall meet with it again at Assisi (*Italy 28; Italské 22*).\(^{130}\)

Although both Čapek and Neruda treat the description of landscapes similarly, i.e. praising its picturesqueness, in Neruda’s travel writing, the description of nature is full of allusions to history, culture and religion. Landscapes and buildings are described with constant reference to anecdotes about famous people, mythology, Christian legends and their place in the literary canon. Neruda also uses allusions in the context of storytelling, and converses with history, fictionalizing it. Anecdotes, in Neruda, fictionalize travel writing and authenticate the narrator’s experience, even while the temporal distance between the past and the present is maintained:

There is a small church on the way to the catacombs, named: “Domine, quo vadis?” According to the legend, St. Peter was kept here during the night before he was supposed to be crucified on the “mountain of golden sand.” His friends helped him escape; but when he came out from the detention, Lord Jesus Christ himself suddenly appeared on the road in front of him. “Dominus, where are you going?” asked the frightened son of the fisherman from Bethesda. “Venio iterum crucifi” – I go to let myself be crucified once again, Christ answered seriously in the church language (“Římské” 224).\(^{131}\)

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\(^{130}\) Giotto, magister Jottus má tu v dómě pamětní desku z roku 1490, kde je napsáno: „Hoc nomen longi carminis instar erat.“ Toto jméno prý rovná se dlouhé básn. Nuže, tot pravda; napsal jsem tedy to jméno jako báseň a těším se, že se s ním shledám ještě v Assisi.

\(^{131}\) Na cestě ke katakombám je malý kostelíček, nazvaný: „Domine, quo vadis?“ Zde byl dle legendy držán sv. Petr v tu noc, po které měl být ukřižován na „hoře zlatopískové.“ Prátelé jeho mu pomohli k útěku; když ale byl z vězení vyšel, tu se mu náhle objevil na cestě sám Kristus pán. „Domine, kam jdeš?“ ptal se
Conversely, in Čapek’s travelogues, a change of temporal perspective often resembles the implied structure of enigma that must be solved:

At the entry a distinguished looking gentleman attaches himself to you without a word; in his hand is something like a straw plait and he whistles pleasantly. Too late unhappily you find out that the distinguished gentleman is a guide, who at some hole lights the straw plait for ten seconds so as to raise a little smoke (Italy 43; Italské 31).132

Such constructs in Čapek often offer an unexpected and new perspective on tradition and history; they stand against the historical narrative as they reverse and explain the creation of the meaning: “If you dig anywhere with a spade you will find masonry, arches, and square foundation stones. Then if all this is called baths, a palace, or a theatre of this or that Caesar, people come along and stare at it” (Italy 64; Italské 42).133

Finally, the fairy-tale elements, which were already discussed in Čapek’s treatment of the quotidian, usually refer to the creation of something which is especially visible in the treatment of the landscape. Thus, in contrast to nineteenth-century travelogues, in which landscapes usually represent a pattern of historical or cultural memory, Čapek’s treatment of them attempts to capture them anew. While the previous travelers emphasise the blue colour as essential characteristic for the Italian landscapes, Čapek delves into the colour’s fairy-tale origin:

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132 U vchodu se na tebe beze slova pověsí vznešený pán; má v ruci jakýsi slaměný cop a pěkně si hvízdá. Bohužel příliš pozdě shledáš, že vznešený pán je průvodce, který u jakési díry zapálí na deset vteřin slaměný pletenec, aby to jaksi kouřilo.
133 kdekoliv skoro hrábneta motyku, najdete zdivo, oblouky, kvádrové základy. Pak se tomu řekne thermy nebo palác nebo divadlo toho či onoho císaře a lidé se na to chodí dívat.
The Umbrian deity created a plain, so that on it should grow vineyards and poplars; knolls, so that on these should arise curling forests, cypresses and hermitages; and mountains, so that on them should arise towns with Etruscan bastions, little Gothic houses, and a vast Romano-Romanesque castle. The Umbrian deity had again a beautiful blue colour for the sky, and a still more lovely colour with which he painted distances and mountains. Therefore Umbria is so marvelously blue, the bluest of all lands (Italy 78; Italské 50).134

In contrast to the tradition of travel writing, everything in Čapek is transferred to the present moment, especially epitaphs and proverbs. Although the epitaph is not an oral simple form, Čapek uses it in the context of orality. As an inscription on a tombstone – a message left from the deceased to future visitors of his grave, who are usually incidental passersby or travelers - the epitaph is suitable for articulating the connection between the past and present (Encyklopedie 159). Additionally, the epitaph often has intergeneric qualities since it is frequently written in verse. In literature, epitaphs are usually mocking because they are addressed to their creator who is still alive. Čapek, however, subverts traditional definitions of epitaphs by stressing the memorability of the present moment and substituting the importance of their writers for the ordinary people and “unimportant” members of a community. The inscriptions the narrator in Letters from Italy finds in the Roman catacombs do not refer to the past, but to the eternity of the present moment and individual experience:

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134 Umbrický bůh stvořil rovinu, aby na ní rostly vinice a topoly, pahrbky, aby na nich rostly kadeřavé háje, cypřiše a samoty, a hory, aby na nich vyrostla města s etruskými hradbami, gotickými domečky a náramným římsko-románským kastelem. Umbrický bůh pak měl překrásnou modrou barvu pro oblohu a ještě pěknější barvu, jíž natřel dálnky a hory. Proto je Umbrie tak zázračně modrá, nejmodřejší ze všech zemí.
The walls are covered with tablets from the catacombs; some fragments of relief; a childishly sketched fish or little sheep, and above all a mass of tombstone inscriptions. URSUS VIXIT AN XXXXI. Some Ursus lived forty-one years, and you – you are living at thirty-three. IRENE IN PACE. LAVRITIO CONG BENE MERENTI UXOR. The wife had this carved in stone in honour of worthy Lauritius. Bene merens, that sums up the praise: he was honest and meritorious; can more than that be desired of a man? 
And now be bene merens yourself. CHERENNIUS VETERANUS. He evidently lived a very long life and died in solitude, since no one has ascribed him a dedication… Lauritius was neither Caesar nor hero nor consul, he was only bene merens; but thus Christian simplicity has preserved his deserving and modest name for ever and ever (Italy 77; Italské 49).  

Conversely, nineteenth-century travelogues include such forms to reconnect the present with history and generalize individual experience. Jan Neruda, for example, used proverbs, which frequently appear in his travelogues as voices of the anonymous collective and an element of the spoken language. Their inclusion functions as the use of the voice of the other, foreign subject (cizího subjektu) (Mukařovský, “Přísloví” 297) and as a parodic authentication of experiences inherent in traveling:

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135 Stěny jsou polepeny deskami z katakomb; nějaký úlomek reliéfu, dětsky nakreslená ryba či beránek, a hlavně spousta náhrobních nápisů. URSUS VIXIT AN XXXXI. Nějaký Ursus žil jedenačtyřicet let; a ty, ty žiješ teprve třiatřicet. IRENE IN PACE. LAVRITIO CONG BENE MERENTI UXOR. To manželka dala vytésat zasloužilému Lauritiůvi. Bene merens, toť celá chvála; byl hodný a zasloužilý; je-li pak třeba žádat na člověku víc? I ty bud bene merens. CHERENNIUS VETERANUS. Tento patrně žil velmi dlouho a zemřel osamělí; nebot nikdo mu nepřipsal věnování. (...) Lauritius nebyl ani císařem ani hrdinou ani konsulem; byl jenom bene merens; toliko křesťanská prostota zachovala jeho zasloužilé a skromné jméno pro věky věkův.
Mothers or older sisters bring bed sheets here and simply shake a lot of fleas down to the street, in a moment they are on you like a mite. A Palestinian proverb says: ‘The king of fleas has his castle in Tiberias,” but his army is here in Naples” (“Neapol” 189).136

While Čapek uses forms that preserve living and individual memory (in the case of the inscription, of deceased), which is congruent with his philosophy of the present moment, the inscriptions in Neruda’s narrative often stress general experience and the distance between the past and present. The contextualization of inscriptions is illustrated by the walls of Pompei. The story about Pompei’s destruction is introduced through the contemplation of history, which is influenced by the unexpected and sudden power of nature to suddenly turn life into death (208). Through inscriptions, the narrative works against the time: the past tense of narration is in opposition with the gnomic present tense of the inscriptions:

What a merry and beautiful life they lived in this beautiful region! “Hic habitat felicitas,” which is written in one place, could remain in all streets and on all houses proudly: “Here lives happiness.” In Pompei, nobody was so poor that he had nothing to eat, nowhere to sleep and nothing to wear. The richer invited the poorer to their lunches and the richest organized theatres for all the others. “He who does not invite me to lunch is a bully” – “Let he who calls me to his table be healthy” was similarly

136 “Maminky nebo starší sestřičky přinášejí prostěradla z posteli sem a vysypávají spoustu blech prostě dolů na ulici, za chvíli máš jich na sobě jako čmelíků. Palestýnské pořekadlo dí: “Král blech má dvůr svůj v Tabarieh,” ale vojsko své má až zde v Naplesi.”
written on public walls as the appeals to those who had something (211).\textsuperscript{137}

Along with the alterationss in the visual nature of the travelogue, the position of the narrator also changes. As Čapek warns the reader not to think about his narrative in the framework of traditional travel writing, his narrator also modifies the genre’s conventions. Travelers in the nineteenth and early twentieth century traditionally claim that their experiences are authentic. At the very least, they try to show their discontent with repeating others’ voices often by despising tourists for their repeatedly stereotypical perceptions of foreign places. As I previously stated, Polák is grateful for the solitude of his traveling. Neruda’s narrator is unable to escape from traditional references and descriptions: “I hate being the one thousandth and first traveler who must describe Rome with two words: ‘city of opposites.’“ But I cannot help myself, that is what Rome is - its colours are varied like on a small mosaic table” (237).\textsuperscript{138} Additionally, Machar is aware that the authentic experience of Italy can only be given through the voice of its inhabitants: “A Roman will show you everything that you want to see. And he will show you that in such a persuasive manner that disbelief would immediately represent a sin. People come here to see something, so why not indicate what they want to see” (56).\textsuperscript{139} Šalda apologizes for writing about something that is no longer charming because it has lost its novelty: “According to many opinions I should start these lines with an apology

\begin{footnotes}
\item[137] Jak veselý a krásný život žili as zde v tom krásném kraji! „Hic habitat felicitas“ napsáno na jednom místě, mohlo stát ale po všech ulicích a po všech domech pyšně: „Zde bydlí štěstí“. V Pompejí nebyl nikdo tak chud, aby byl neměl co jíst, kde spát a čím se šatit. (...) Bohatší zvali chudší k obědům svým a nejbohatší pořádali všem ostatním divadla. „Kdo mne nezve k obědu, surovcem jest“ – „Zdráv budiž, kdo mne volá k stolu svému“ a podobně psáno na stěnách veřejných co výzev těm, kdož něco měli.
\item[138] „Mrzí mne, že jsem už asi tisíci a první cestovatel, který Řím musí vyznáct dvěma slovy: co „město protiv“. Ale nemohu sobě pomoci, Řím jím je, barvy jeho jsou různý jako na mosaikovém stolku.”
\item[139] Říman vám ukáže všecko, co jen chcete vidět. A ukáže vám to tak přesvědčivě, že by bylo přímo hřichem neuvěřit tomu. Lidé sem přijedou, aby něco viděli, proč jim tedy neoznačit, co chtějí vidět.”
\end{footnotes}
that I write about Italy, about which a lot has been already written, about Italy, which really is not a novelty, and every angle of which has been already described, photographed, painted, versified numerous times. In other words, [the novelty has been] thoroughly sucked out” (“Několik dojmů” 155). Before Čapek, however, no travel-narrator disguised himself in order to challenge and change his own identity of belonging and bring about another, truer level of authenticity. Čapek was able to do this because of the fairy-tale nature of traveling and rediscovering a land that again regains its novelty.

1.10. The Structure of Addresses

In contrast to the lyric address, which in Čapek’s travelogues can be traced to poetry, the address of the reader or the poetic other is implicit in the preceding travelogues. Polák does not address his reader; he constructs his travelogue as the testimony of a traveler walking through galleries and museums. He even introduces poetry as a lyric authentication of his monologue. Machar’s travelogue is to a certain extent fictionalized with the introduction of a Russian fugitive Sofia Petrovna who

140 „Bylo by mně snad po soudů мнóhých zahájití tyto řádky omlouvou, že píši o Itálii, o níž se tolik již napsalo, o Itálii, která věru není novinou a jejíž každý kout jest již několikáte popsán, ofotografován, okreslen, opěn, slovem: důkladně vyssát.”
141 Machar’s melancholy should be read in the context of late nineteenth-century modernist tendencies. He was among the authors of the “Manifesto of Czech Modernism” (“Manifest české moderny”; 1895), an aesthetic and political program calling for individualism in the arts and politics and supporting the idea of the Czech identity not in “Czechtness” as a nationality, but as creative and aesthetic individualism, which can be found in the works of writer Jan Neruda, composer Bedřich Smetana and painter Josef Mánes. The idea of national seen through the scope of individualism is beyond the domain of any political party or artistic school. The manifesto of Czech modernism also represents the stage of the awareness of the national language which should not be preserved, but used as a “device for higher aims,” (prostředkem k vyšším účelům) an idea later articulated by Čapek. They also stand against the mimetic principles in art, asking for “the truth in art, but not the one which is a photograph of external objects, but of internal, virtuous truth, whose norm is its carrier – the individual. („pravdu v umění, ne tu, jež je fotografií věcí vnějších, ale tu poctivou pravdu vnitřní, již je normou Jen její nositel – individuvm.) (“Česká moderna” 619-23) Czech modernism is also interesting from the point of view of another reference to Goethe. In his reflections on that time, F. V. Krejčí, also one of the co-authors of the manifesto, stresses the positive influences of international poetics on Czech literature. He, however, stresses the Czechs’ central position in European culture, given by their geographic vicinity to the Germans and their Goethean tradition (622).
functions as a mysterious co-traveller. She underscores the narrator’s melancholy, which is sparked by the lost civilization. Petrovna’s melancholy and sadness with regard to the present moment, which is characterized by the revolutionary events in her home country, is in opposition with the narrator’s nostalgia for past times.

Šalda uses the second-person address, but there is no dialogue. “You” is a passive reciever of Šalda’s narrative. The narrator’s walk through a gallery and address to the reader is similar to Čapek’s; however, the narrator remains an omnipresent guide who uses the presence of the other only to confirm his opinions. For example: “or stand for a little bit in front of Apollo of Belvedere. The sculpture that was totally glorified by Winckelmann and his colleagues was very coldly rejected later on; you do not possibly identify yourself with those naturalistic opponents” (“Několik dojmů” 180).142

The only nineteenth-century travelogue that uses direct address is Neruda. The narrator in Čapek’s Letters from Italy, however, travels without a plan, while in Neruda’s case, he still obeys the conventions of visiting a list of tourist attractions, even though Neruda parodies previous literary sources:

In Venice, first take a look at either the surroundings of Saint Marco or to Grand Canal; it does not matter which of the two comes first, but you are stupid, if you don’t go first to the canal,” says an Italian epigram. A man does not want to appear stupid in the eyes of the deceased epigrammatist and thus goes to see first the “wonder of the world,” the “Venetian corso,” that miraculous fusion of the town with the sea (“Zrcadla” 245).143

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142 Nebo postůj před Apollinem Belvederským. Winckelmannem a jeho vrstevníky navýsost vynešená socha byla později odbytá velmi chladně; neztožnuje se nijak s těmito naturalistickými odpůrci.  
143 “V Benátkách nejdříve se podívej buď do vůkolí Sv. Marka buď na Canal grande; je sice rozhodně jedno, na co z obého dřív, jsi ale hlupec, nepůjdeš-li před dřív na kanál,” praví italský epigram. Člověk nechce být
With the use of second-person narration, both authors create dynamic sketches of everyday life. Čapek writes

You go for a stroll at Pouzzoli; some driver is determined that you shall take his carriage; well, you give up resisting him in every way. For half an hour he drives beside you with repeated yells: first in Italian, you do not understand; then in English, you make as though you did not; then French, German, and at last he bawls: Da, da, khorosho, gospoda, otto lire, acht, majher, mosjé ver á tu, tu kompri, otto lire, ser, ejt, ejt, ejt (Italy 42; Italské 30-1).¹⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Neruda writes:

In that moment you feel a light twitch of the coat. You reach quickly – a napkin is gone! A boy thief jumps and turns few steps away from you. If you want, go after him; if you catch him, they will crowd around you, and somebody will stab you with a knife (“Neapol” 191).¹⁴⁵

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¹⁴⁴ Čapek: Jdeš pěšky kdesi v Pouzzoli; nějaký vetturino si umíní, že musíš jet jeho drožkou; nuže, vzdej se odporu. Půl hodiny jede vedle tebe a křičí, křičí; nejdřív italsky, nerozumiš; pak anglicky, a děláš, jako bys nerozuměl; pak francouzsky, německy, a nakonec povykuje: da, da, charašo, gaspada, otto lire, acht, majher, mosjé, vera tú, tú kompri, otto lire, ser, ejt, ejt, ejt.”

1.11. Finding Home

Finally, the treatment of the narrator affects the relationship between a foreign place and home. In Polák’s travelogue, communication with the addressee is almost missing, and the traveler refers to home in terms of differences between the attitudes to cultural heritage. He stresses the love and respect ordinary Italians have for their art and, in the spirit of the Enlightenment, condemns the lack of the same in his own homeland. In other words, through the treatment of artistic heritage, he idealizes Italian culture at the expense of Czech culture:

The simple people know their sculptures and pyramids and justly evaluate the paintings and abilities of the masters. In our lands, unfortunately, eyes from paintings are scratched out, names are written on them, and arms, noses, fingers are freely torn from nice sculptures (173).\textsuperscript{146}

In Machar’s travelogue there is a similar discrepancy between the foreign place and home: “That city [Rome] is not particularly beautiful. In vain would one try to find here a view [equal to the one] from František’s embankment of Hradčany, sometime in May when Petřín stands on the left as if sprinkled with snow” (10).\textsuperscript{147} Šalda refers to home only in relation to the travel as gaining a new and fresh view of things: “To a reflective spirit the sun often suddenly illuminates what was eluding from him at home in the fog of doubts and uncertainty” (“Několik dojmů” 155).\textsuperscript{148} For Neruda “to be at home” means to be “in the world:”

\textsuperscript{146}Sprostí lidé znají své sochy a pyramidy a posuzují důvodně obrazy a schopnosti mistrů. V našich zemích, bohužel, obrazům oči se vyškrabují, na nich se jména piší a pěkným sochám ruce, nosy, prsty svěvolně se urážejí.
\textsuperscript{147}“Není to město [Rome] zvláště krásné. Pohled z Františkova nábřeží na Hradčany, tak v květnu, kdy v levo stojí jakoby sněhem posypaný Petřín, marně by zde člověk hledal.”
\textsuperscript{148}“Přemítavému duchu osvítí její slunce často naráz, co unikalo mu doma v mlhy pochyb a nejistot.”
I don’t know why but it is certain that during the two times I stayed in Trieste, after couple of minutes I felt like I was at home – probably because Trieste is really a cosmopolitan town whose every inhabitant has too much work and too little will to care about foreigners, who are thrown to him by the waves on the shore like young sardines (‘Terst’ 277).\textsuperscript{149}

Since Čapek’s narrator does not have an anchor in intertextual references, but rather, relies exclusively on his visual abilities, he exchanges the security of omnipresent referential knowledge for the simulated unreality of narration. He acts as a traveler who is, unlike to his predecessors, not well-traveled. While Neruda finds his home a broader cosmopolitan context by comparing his Italian travels with earlier trips abroad, Čapek’s narrator mocks the conventions of travel writing through his own lack of knowledge of the foreign places. Neruda, for example, states: “From a low position, down from the sea, there is no such solid, fascinating impression such as for instance on Constantinople; the bay of Naples unfolds in too big a curve” (“Neapol” 195).\textsuperscript{150} Meanwhile, Čapek’s narrator declares: “These Venetian streets decidedly remind me of the East, clearly because I have never been in the East, or of the Middle Ages for perhaps the same reason” (Italy 13; Italské 12).\textsuperscript{151}

In contrast to Neruda, however, in Čapek’s travelogue there is a constant reminder of the narrator’s identity because of the metaphor of Czech eyes. Neruda’s narrator describes Naples:

\textsuperscript{149} Nevím proč, ale jistě je, že jsem za dvojího svého pobytu v Terstu byl hned po několika minutách jako doma – snad proto, že Terst je město skutečně světové, jehož každý obyvatel má příliš mnoho práce a příliš málo vůle, aby se staral o cizince, jichž mu vlny vyhodí na břeh jako mladých sardelek.

\textsuperscript{150} „Z nízkého místa, dole z moře, není pro příchozího tak celistvého, uchvacujícího dojmu jako na př. na Cařihrad; rozkládáť se záliv Naplesský ve příliš velkém záhybu. Neruda, Jan. “Naples.”

\textsuperscript{151} Čapek: Tedy benátské ulice mi rozhodně připomínají Orient, patrně proto, že jsem nikdy v Orientě nebyl, anebo středověk, asi z téhož důvodu.
The town itself is not much, whoever sees Rome, Venice, Constantinople, Florence, Prague will be surprised by sober dullness of Naples, with the exception of blue and yellow cupolas, colorful towers and often almost Oriental flat roofs, “Moorish” as its inhabitants themselves (“Neapol” 195).152

Čapek, on the other hand, writes: “But go into the town, my friend; roam the streets, peer into things with your Czech eyes and take what comfort you can from the artistic view of this life; after a time you will feel a little upset with it” (Italy 45; Italské 32).153

To conclude, in contrast to the preceding travelogues that are partially built on the opposition between the traveler’s destination and his homeland, in Čapek’s Letters from Italy, home is found in the history of local art, which represents the aesthetic quality and timelessness of the quotidian as the distinctive feature of a foreign country. Čapek’s narrator constantly exposes his double belonging, thus aesthetically equating his own culture with Italian culture, which was considered the foundation of European civilization. This was possible for Čapek because he lived at a time when, in contrast to his predecessors, he could be proud of the fact that he had a homeland – The First Czechoslovak Republic. Earlier Czech travelers did have an independent homeland, but their travelogues, as seen with the aid of Vodička’s literary expansion, nevertheless show the literary-historical development of the notions of foreign and home.

152 Na městě samém není mnoho, kdo viděl Řím, Benátky, Cařihrad, Florenc, Prahu, podiví se střízlivé jednotvárnosti Napolese, jež vyznačuje se leda modrými a žlutými báními, barevnými věžmi a často až orientálně plochými střechami, „maureskními“ jak již obyvatelstvo samo.
153 Čapek: Ale pojď do města, člověče; putuj ulicemi, mrkej na vše českými kukadly a těš se, jak můžeš, z malebnosti tohoto života; za chvíli ti bude z toho trochu nanie.
Summary

This chapter focused on the construction of cultural and literary identity in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Czech travelogues. Italian travels were the point of departure since Italy plays an important role in the search for European and Czech cultural identities. It was shown that, in contrast to his literary predecessors, for whom writing about Italy was to a large extent an intertextual journey into the country’s classical artistic and literary heritage, Čapek in his *Letters from Italy* changed the perspective and introduced the notion of simplicity as a tool of defamiliarization. This allowed him to look for aesthetic representations of quotidian. On the generic level, it was shown how Čapek quest for simplicity corresponds to his interest in the so-called “marginal forms” of literature. The analysis of the different approaches to travel to Italy showed how Čapek applied his own aesthetic theory to his literary practice, which produced a change of perspective and a shift from the traditional conventions of travel writing.
Chapter 2

In Search of Companionship

2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the function of oral narration in Čapek’s travelogues. I will show the relationship between the poetics of simultaneity as articulated in “Zone” with Čapek’s travel writing. In the travelogues, simultaneity is as a dynamic link between skaz and the conventions of written narratives. Similarly, it shows how skaz challenges the generic boundaries of the traditional travelogue as well as the distance between the narrator and his addressees. First, it changes the traditional roles of the narrator and his addressees in travelogues: the narrator is not only an expert guide, but also the one actively seeking companionship from his addresses. Second, in Karel Čapek’s work, skaz interacts with elements from other genres and media like poetry and the visual arts. Third, skaz becomes a suitable narrative tool within Čapek’s poetics of the present moment (přítomnost), as outlined in introduction and discussed in the previous chapter. Finally, by changing the pattern of communication, skaz redefines the notions of foreign places and home.

I will first contextualize Čapek’s travelogues by briefly discussing the changing role of the narrator in the 1920s. This examination will include an introduction to skaz, which will inform my analysis. My consideration of skaz will include an overview of the theories of skaz that were formulated during the interwar period and their connection with Karel Čapek’s storytelling aesthetics. Here, I refer to the poetics of the present moment (přítomnost) and its articulation through the use of elements from the other arts,
especially the visual arts and film. The chapter will then conclude with an analysis of Čapek’s travelogues – *Letters from Italy* (*Italské listy*), *Letters from England* (*Anglické listy*), *Images from Holland* (*Obrázky z Holandska*), *A Trip to Spain* (*Výlet do Španěl*), and *Travels in the North* (*Cesta na sever*). In this final section, I will analyze the use of the aforementioned intermedial elements and *skaz*, and show how they were introduced according to the literary fashion of the day and consequently changed the nature of the travel writing in the 1920s and the 1930s.

2.2. Activization of the Narrator

In the introduction to his *Letters from Italy*, Karel Čapek’s narrator steps out, addresses his audience, gives his personal opinion about the narration, and cautions the reader not to consider the narrative that follows a tourist guide or traditional travelogue. In the theoretical terms,

the narrator no longer hides in the narration like an invisible, although existent potency, but comes forward as an independent subject who stands above the story, interferes with it, comments on it, evaluates it, converses with the reader, and even converses with the characters. The elements of direct narration are the linguistic manifestation of such narratorial activity.

(Doležel, *O stylu* 151)

The narrator invites his readers to interpret the text “for whatever they feel inclined” (Čapek, *Italy* xi; *Italské* 10)\(^{154}\) and to “rely - without the road-map – entirely on the peculiar grace which accompanies a traveler and points out more to him than it is at all

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\(^{154}\)“za cokoliv jiného budou chtít”
possible to describe or narrate” (Italy xi; Italské 10).\textsuperscript{155} This is an example of the “powerful activization of the narrator” (Doležel, O stylu 151) – a phenomenon of the 1920s that contrasted with the “predominantly silent, hidden, abstract, ‘omniscient’ narrator from a work ‘like from life’” (Hodrová 513).\textsuperscript{156} In other words, the activated narrator shows how the narration is created.

In the context of the emerging hybrid travel genres of the 1920s, Vladimír Macura posits that the lyrical travelogue is an example of such new/altered and dynamic role played by the narrator. This new type of narrator, who appeared first in prose and then in poetry, challenges the Baedekers as the prototype for all travel writing. “The general ‘langue’ of an endless number of concretely realized travels,” whereby “a subject is entirely anonymous and impersonal, neither concretized nor thematized” is subverted (Encyklopedie 34). The newly emerging travel writing of the 1920s abandons

not only the systematic completeness of the Baedeker type (relative completeness, integrity of information for the need of potential future travels) but also the completeness of personal travelogues (relative coherence, integrity of information in the framework of only one travel, therefore their certain, even disguised, but basically explicit connectedness). (Encyklopedie 34)

The invitation for a free interpretation of the form calls for the reconsideration of the generic limits of the travelogue (Jedličková 162), which in Čapek’s case, in the light of the above-mentioned narratorial changes, is far from conventional. This gesture also means that the narrator imposes his own right to construct and interpret his travel as

\textsuperscript{155} “a aby, až sami někam pojedou, spoléhali krom jízdního řádu jen a jen na zvláštní milost, jež doprovází pocestný lid a ukáže mu více, než vůbec je možno napsat a vypravovat”
freely as he would like. If the task of the nineteenth-century traveler was to “write down, what I saw” (Miňovská-Pickettová 372), the twentieth-century traveler undertakes his journey in order to address others about not only his trip but also about how he structured his experiences into a story.157 Consequently, the activisation of the narrator’s role in the travelogues of the 1920s (and 1930s) indicates that the travelogue ceased at that time to be primarily a traveler’s opportunity to elaborate on his adventures and became a model of interaction between the reader and the narrator, who constantly breaks the physical and narrative distances between the two. He does so by including the reader in the creation of the narrative. To return to Čapek, in his travel causersies, the contact between the narrator and his reader is represented by skaz,158 which is “the first person narration that has the characteristics of the spoken rather than the written word” (Lodge 18). Lena Szilárd elaborates that skaz is

a form of narration which, from the lexical, syntactical, phraseological, and intonational points of view, stylizes the spoken language of the narrator, who generally serves as a representative of a world which does not belong to the contemporary, norm-providing culture. (“Skaz” 181)

Creation of an alternative culture of travel writing pertains especially to Čapek’s travelogues. As it was shown in the previous chapter, this alternative culture was created through the shift of perspective in regards to traditional genre norms. This chapter will expand this idea by focusing on the stylistic possibilities of skaz as a narrative tool of


158 Lubomir Doležel refers to the spoken elements in Karel Čapek’s works, which both establish a link to the nineteenth-century tradition of Jan Neruda (the link will be discussed in the chapter on intertextuality) and represents a new chapter in modern Czech verbal art (“Dva moderní vypravěči” 100-120). The appearance of skaz in Čapek’s travelogues as a subversive and defamiliarizing element has not been discussed yet.
defamiliarization. Before I do this, though, I will turn to theoretical considerations of skaz from the interwar period.

2.3. Theoretical considerations of skaz

The dichotomy between the spoken and the written language remains the main feature distinguishing skaz from not only other forms of first-person narration but also from folkloric narrative modes that imitate oral storytelling. Szilárd links skaz with the historical development of literature and what Vodička calls “literary expansion:” Skaz is a narrative form that opposes and subverts mainstream culture and a phenomenon of a “highly developed written culture” when “geographical and social horizons are in expansion” and when skaz “represents a non-literary form in the presence of a developed culture.”

A similar interpretation of skaz was expressed by Aleksandar Flaker in his typology of the narrators in “jeans prose,” in which a young narrator “builds his specific style on the basis of the spoken language of urban youth and subverts traditional and existing social and cultural structures” (Proza 36). Meanwhile, David Lodge argues that skaz was for modern American novelists such as Mark Twain “an obvious way to free themselves from the inherited literary traditions of England and Europe” (18).

He also notes that skaz correlates with similar phenomena in other art forms of the period, which suggests the intermedial nature of narrative expression in general. As Lodge states, “there’s something surprisingly poetic about this prose, a subtle manipulation of the rhythms of colloquial speech which makes it an effortless pleasure to read, and re-read. As jazz musicians say, it swings” (20). The link between skaz in

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159 For Lena Szilárd, such period in Czech culture occurred before the First World War and during the interwar period (“Skaz” 183)
American literature and American jazz - a popular and highly improvisational musical form - can be compared to Čapek’s poetics of the visual arts and literature. In his attempt to familiarize his readers with his own fictionalized construction of the countries he visited, Čapek’s narrator, for instance, includes caricatures. By broadening the inherent qualities of traditional travel to include the visual arts, Čapek pulled those other art forms closer to literature.

The concurrent presence of a written narration and the imitation of spoken language distinguishes skaz from other forms of first-person narration. Such a dichotomy makes two distinctions: firstly, between “the factual author of the text and its formal narrator, and secondly, between the formal listener of the ‘skaz’ and its factual reader” (Szilárd 182). In contrast, folkloristic stylization aims at the identification of the author with the narrator and the world-picture he represents, which is articulated as an ethical norm (182). The author and the actual reader are, in Szilárd’s interpretation, clearly distinguished from the narrator and his listener, but this distance is covered with the use of different narrative “masks,” which are supposed “to secure the warmth of more stable, ‘household,’ private relations between the author and the reader” (188).

Wolf Schmid emphasizes the use of masks as an intrinsic feature of skaz. He furthermore distinguishes between character skaz (kharakternyi skaz) and ornamental skaz (ornamental’nyi skaz). The former is the utterance of the narrator instead of the character, whose unreliability, lack of sophistication, narrow intellectual horizons, and naïve stance as a man of the people (chelovek ot naroda) distinguishes him from the author. This distinction results in diglossia (dvougosost’), orality, spontaneity, the simulation of conversational speech (razgovornost’), and dialogicity, because “the
speaker’s orientation towards his listener and his listener’s reactions are inherent in *skaz.*”

In Schmid’s words:

Inasmuch as the narrator, as a rule, assumes that the listener is one of “his own” people and that the audience is empathetic and well-wishing, dialogicity, more often than not, adopts not a strained character but rather appears only in clarifications directed towards the audience and in the anticipation of questions. As soon as the speaker refers a critical evaluation to his audience, the tension between the semantic positions of the storyteller and the listener grows. (273)

As I will show, in his travelogues, Čapek’s narrators use masks to play with various aspects of identity and belonging, and develop their own aesthetics of being a *chelovek ot naroda.* The narrators do this in order to challenge the traditional narrative distances between the traveler and his audience in the genre of travel writing.

Before returning to this topic, as well as the stylistics of *skaz* in Karel Čapek’s travelogues, I will briefly outline the Formalist theory of *skaz.* This is important in relation to Čapek’s understanding of the poetics of *skaz* because it provides the immediate context for Čapek’s theories.

In the context of the interwar period, at the first glance, Čapek’s interpretation of the improvisational nature of oral forms and his constant quest for novelty by imitating orality resembles the understanding of *skaz* as outlined in Boris Eikhenbaum’s article “The Illusion of Skaz” (1918). Eikhenbaum defines the fairy tale as an oral improvisation and underlines orality as the undercurrent of written genres, which are always changing
in the act of narration. “After all,” Eikhenbaum concludes “the artist, by nature is always an improviser” (234).

2.4. Čapek and skaz

Čapek himself implied the importance of skaz when defining the oral character of storytelling as an underlying trait of both folkloric genres and high literature. Additionally, the social context inherent to skaz brings events of community-wide importance to the audience. This is, for instance, visible in the nature and development of the fairytale, which was originally not literature but a folkloric genre that was transmitted among community members and generations. As a memory of a bygone, pre-recorded time, it remained a part of children’s literature. Consequently, it preserved the simultaneous existence and inextricable link between the past and present.  

The relationship between the narrator and his audience is dynamic. He uses the distance conventional in travel writing as an opportunity to create his own fictional representation of the visited countries he describes. I will show, however, that the distance or “remoteness” is the transposition of the temporal element in fairytales to physical distance in travelogues. As Čapek notes: “Almost all fairy-stories have one common quality: a strange remoteness. Once upon a time, beyond nine mountains and rivers” (“Fairy-Tales” 56). In other words, the traveler’s take on foreign countries often creates a fairy-tale fictional world. Moreover, the narrator recreates the experience of traveling which would help him to appropriate a foreign land as his own homeland. The narrator creates an intimate atmosphere, treating his listeners as a familiar, indeed

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160 Simultaneity of the past and the present will be discussed later on in the chapter as a part of skaz narration. Čapek’s aesthetics of storytelling, especially his collection In Praise of the Newspapers (49-73).
intimate group of people whose opinions and prejudices he understands and accepts as his own.\textsuperscript{161} He also challenges them with his defamiliarized perspective on the experience of traveling. Despite the distance between the traveler, who is hidden behind various masks, and his audience, both are Czechs. The implicit presence of his Czech listeners/’readers’ speech is a sign of “skaz’s orientation towards someone else’s voice, its double-voicedness” (Bakhtin, \textit{Problems} 194). It shows that Čapek’s travelogues indeed contain his notion of Czechness. In contrast with earlier, traditional travel writing, in which Czechness was established as inferior to the cultures of the countries visited by the authors, Čapek’s traveler constructs the image of Czech lands or rather of the First Czechoslovak Republic as culturally equal and sharing the same European cultural identity as the countries he visits. Finally, heteroglossia, “a dialogue of languages” (Bakhtin, “Discourse” 294), of the narrative is achieved through the active inclusion of non-Czech others. This is done through direct discourse, usually featuring local inhabitants whose statements function to authenticate the narrator’s point of view, or through unmarked direct discourse as a mixture of foreign languages as foreign voices that contribute to the authentication of the narrator’s experience.

Although both Čapek and Eikhenbaum in theory stress the oral character of storytelling and the improvising role of the narrator, in artistic practice such an understanding of \textit{skaz} is inevitably challenged by the very fact that oral narration changes as it is transposed into a written genre. The simplification of \textit{skaz} as the imitation of oral narration as well as the understanding of \textit{skaz} as the imitation of colloquial speech was

\textsuperscript{161} This has been discussed by Lubomír Doležel who focused on Čapek’s short stories. The short stories are examples of the creation of an informal narrating community (“Dva moderní vypravěči” 106)
criticized by Vinogradov,\textsuperscript{162} for whom \textit{skaz} is a stylistic device with a complicated and ambiguous structure, the origins of which are in the realm of oral narration, yet is “rooted in the verbal-semantic picture of a literary work that is destined not only for dramatic recitation and declamatory stage delivery, but that has its own objective nature for everyone” (238). For Vinogradov, it is “clearly useless to apply the notion of oral speech as our raw material without any preliminary processing” (239).

Vinogradov finds the essence of \textit{skaz} in the written form of the narrative monologue and sees \textit{skaz} as “a self-willed literary, artistic orientation toward an oral monologue of the narrative type; it is an artistic imitation of monologic speech which contains a narrative plot and is constructed, as it were, as if it were being directly spoken” (244). According to Vinogradov, the illusion of orality in \textit{skaz} corresponds to the expectations of society “to which it will seem to be more oral recitation than printed literature” (244). Finally, the ambiguous and dynamic nature of \textit{skaz} emphasises the shared narrative context between the narrator and recipients, the recipients’ expectations and ability to fill the gaps in narration, and especially the narrator’s power to challenge those expectations and force the recipients to accept a different perspective on the narrated subject or experience (245). To conclude, because of its monologic nature, \textit{skaz}, in contrast to dialogue, is able to create a new world. On the other hand, dialogue does not create anew the whole world. It only creates people since their utterances are perceived mostly as a linguistic characteristic and an accompaniment of actions (248).

Čapek’s aesthetic treatment of \textit{skaz} in his travelogues overlaps with the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and Jan Mukařovský who both challenge the strict opposition between

\textsuperscript{162} Vinogradov’s criticism of Eikhenbaum’s approach is outlined in detail in Irwin R. Titunik’s \textit{The Problem of Skaz in Russian Literature}. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1975.
monologic and dialogic discourse. Instead, they emphasise the implicit dialogic nature of languages and fiction. In “Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics” (1929), written at the same time as Čapek was working on In the Praise of the Newspapers (Marsyas čili na okraji literatury, 1931), Bakhtin criticizes Eikhenbaum’s limitations of skaz as the imitation of oral speech only. Bakhtin posited that “in most cases skaz is introduced precisely for the sake of someone else’s voice, a voice socially distinct, carrying with it precisely those points of view and evaluations necessary to the author” (Problems 192). Bakhtin shifts the focus of skaz from simulation of oral narration to diglossia:

A strict distinction in skaz between an orientation toward another person’s discourse and an orientation toward oral speech is absolutely indispensable. To see in skaz only oral speech is to miss the main point. What is more, a whole series of intonational, syntactic, and other language phenomena in skaz (when the author is oriented toward another person’s speech) can be explained precisely by its double-voicedness, by the intersection within it of two voices and two accents. (Problems, 192)

Thus, oral speech is not the differentia specifica of skaz but the logical consequence of the particular social position of the skaz storyteller. It stems from the fact that the skaz storyteller does not originate in fiction but represents “the lower social strata” and belongs “to the common people.” (Problems, 192)

In his study “Dialogue and Monologue” (“Dialog a monolog” 1940), Jan Mukařovský shows how the division between the two is blurred; elements of one always exist simultaneously and implicitly within the other: “the monologic and dialogic qualities comprise the basic polarity of linguistic activity, a polarity which reaches a
temporary and always renewed equilibrium in every utterance, whether formally monologic or dialogic” (“Dialogue” 112). Although Mukařovský does not refer directly to skaz, his understanding of dialogue and monologue may contribute to an understanding of it. In his 1939 study on Čapek, Mukařovský defines Čapek’s prose as dialogic; the reader is

a silent partner in the conversation, who is constantly being told that his opinion of the matter is important; the minute humorous distortions of reality are addressed to him; on his emotional participation are calculated the lyrical passages; here we can really begin to speak of an interpenetration of prose with dialogue. (“Čapek’s Prose” 147)

Dialogicity of Čapek’s prose is not the only source of skaz. The emergence of skaz in Karel Čapek’s travelogues is also related to his journalistic practice as well as his understanding of the aesthetics of newspapers. The beginning of Čapek’s travels coincides with the early years of his tenure at The People’s News (Lidové noviny), where he worked from 1921 to 1938. All of Čapek’s travelogues, except for the lengthy Travels in the North, were written for various newspapers and magazines, and published in the form of feuilletons, which the author would send directly from his destinations or submit for publishing afterwards. Čapek outlines his aesthetic understanding of newspapers in

163 Letters from Italy was written during Čapek’s seven-week Italian journey that started in April 1923. It was published in Lidové noviny in the form of eleven feuilletons or columns in the period between April 24 and June 14, 1923. Some parts of the manuscript were published in other journals after his return while some of them were published only in the book. Letters from England was written during Čapek’s two-month stay in the United Kingdom where Čapek was a guest of the PEN club in London. Together with the author’s illustrations, they were published in The People’s News (Lidové noviny) in the period between June 16 and August 21, 1924. Letters from England appeared in Aventinum Discussions (Rozpravy Aventina) in 1924 as well as in English papers like The Guardian. The fragments from A Trip to Spain was published in Rozpravy Aventina during the period between November 10, 1929 and March 9, 1930. Images from Holland were written, similar to A Trip to Spain, after the author’s return home. The illustrations were
*In Praise of Newspapers* by tackling both the language norm and the content. He argues against the anonymity of the newspapers, suggesting that they are not written by journalists but that they “write themselves” because the common phraseology used is not “a private possession but the property of a whole guild” (“Newspapers” 15). He also complains that “the newspaper world is made up of exceptional events, unusual cases, and frequently of miracles and wonders” (“Newspapers” 9). He tries to elevate journalistic writing to an artistic level and to solve, as Eva Strohsová argues, “the relationship between a convention and a novelty,” showing that they represent “two poles, which do not rule out each other, but supplement and balance” (“Román” 131).

In his travelogues Čapek questions the standardized aspects of newspaper writing. He reverses the relationship between the news and its conventional expression, using journalistic language and genres as the backdrop for redefining the significance of the news. One result achieved by Čapek was a deautomatized point of view on the world and how it is conveyed in travelogues. Since, for Čapek, quotidian life is extraordinary, newspapers and, be extension, travel writing provide information about the extraordinary. This might be illustrated using the comparison between Čapek’s and his colleague and writer Eduard Bass’ vision of Holland in his *A Diary from Holland* (*Holandský deníček*, 1930). Both writers attempt to depict the everyday life of Holland by choosing alternative routes. However, in contrast to Bass, the aestheticization of descriptions by interpolating elements from the visual arts (such as perspective, illustrations, or film) becomes a dominant in Čapek’s narrative. As I will show, the grachten and canals of Amsterdam are, for Čapek, an aesthetic extension of the objects he sees and the simultaneous existence of

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printed in *Lidové noviny* July 26 and September 6, 1931. Two fragments were published in the journal *The Presence* (*Přítomnost*) in 1931 and 1932 (Halík 385-7).
the present and the past. For Bass, the canals are just an architectural part of the “tradition of the town, confined in defense” (19). The convention of reporting becomes a dialogue with the reader. In other words, the simulation of communication aims “to draw the reader’s/listener’s attention more intensively to the object that the actualized language devices expressed” (Mukařovský, “Jazyk spisovný” 36).

Also, the emergence/inclusion/manipulation of skaz relates to the different generic forms Čapek implies in the titles of his travelogues. “Listy” in Letters from Italy and Letters from England refers to both to “list” as a “sheet of paper” and as a “letter,” thus indicating the shortness and concision of the narrative as well as its intimate character. These letters are sent to an individual with whom the letter writer maintains close and personal contact, although he hopes that the intimate piece of writing will someday become public. “Výlet” means “outing, ride, often in company, for refreshment, with an educational purpose” (Slovník 269). Presenting an opportunity to leisurely gaze at the world, an excursion traditionally uncovers unusual wonders of the world while emphasizing the traveler’s wish to take an alternative path that is “marginal” in the context of established traveling conventions. “Obrázky,” which was used in the titles of nineteenth-century travelogues, refers to “cestopisné obrázky,” “travel images.” In other words, “obrázky” refers not only to the formal shortness and compactness of the travelogue, in which the main narratorial stance is viewing but also to the closed framework of the completed visual structure and theme of the work. As Alice Jedličková points out:

the selection of such a denomination signals that it [the travelogue] is about separate and unrelated ‘snapshots’ from a particular field. The diminutive
expresses their ‘small’ size and obviously also a capacity of their meaning; that is to say that they should not be understood as a substantial narration about followed facts, but rather as a record of a certain complex of predominantly visual impressions, as a depiction of the ‘surface’ of things.” (163)

In contrast, “cesta” in the title of the last travelogue Travels in the North refers to a long, unfinished journey that approaches epic narration.

The last feature of Čapek’s use of skaz is the interpolation of techniques found in other genres, especially in poetry. At many points, the second-person apostrophe in Čapek’s travelogues recalls the apostrophe found in Apollinaire’s poetry.164 Another trait is the lyricism of Čapek’s prose narrative, which is visible in his distortion of traditional syntax and in the explicit interpolation of poems into the narrative text. As found in Apollinaire’s poetry, the most important element of lyricism is simultaneity, which plays an important role in Čapek’s treatment of time.

While I am not claiming that Čapek’s work should be understood within the framework of either the Cubist or Surrealist movements, I need to point to some obvious links between his approach to storytelling and the Avant-Garde aesthetics of the interwar period. The stylistic and aesthetic connection between Čapek and the Avant-Garde appeared in his efforts to show “an interchange between the subject and the object” (Balakian 14). Although Anna Balakian states that Surrealists: “In fact, instead of abstracting the object, instead of emptying it of its physical attributes, they [the Surrealists] decided to add to its qualities through their ability to see” (14), here assessment applies equally to the non-Surrealist, Čapek. Simultaneity, in Čapek’s

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164 Skaz is an instance of first-person narration with the emphasized apostrophe of the listener, but for the second-person narration itself in twentieth-century prose Bruce Morrissette draws from Apollinaire’s “Zone” (“Narrative ‘You’” 1-24).
travelogues, appears through the concurrent existence of the deictical dichotomy between “here” and “there,” in other words, the contrast between the foreign place and home. Furthermore, in the travelogues, the past coexists simultaneously with the present moment; thus stressing the narrator’s aesthetic understanding of the quotidiant and his aesthetic notion of presence (*přítomnost*). Finally, simultaneity here links the visual and the textual elements as a “structurally functional connection between the verbal and pictural image” (Čolakova 34), which will be discussed in more detail in this and the third chapter.

2.5. Letters from Italy

This particular travelogue is important because it establishes Čapek’s poetics of *skáz*. The narrator takes the mask of a child in order to relate his traveling experience from an alternative perspective, subverting the leading traveling culture established by the norm-providing Baedekers. Also, there is a marked difference between the oral and the spoken, which will be analyzed through the use of different grammatical categories. I will show how this dichotomy determines the traveler’s connection with the foreign country through his relationship with the reader and the traveler’s involvement in the narration. In other words, *skáz* reflects the different implications of the traveler’s presence (*přítomnost*) in the traveling experience. Since he provides his own visual interpretation of a distant country, the first implied link with the visual arts and *skáz* is derived. Additionally, *Letters from Italy* also shows how the dichotomy between the spoken and the oral results in a variety of narrative ‘you’ possibilities and heteroglossia, and reveals how even nature and towns, traditionally considered passive objects of
admiration, change into interlocutors important for the creation of the traveling experience.

Čapek indicated in the introduction to *Letters from Italy* that his travelogues follow a new poetics of travel writing, which are defined by a reliance on instincts and the nonchalant selection of places on the map to see, rather than by Hegelian aesthetics and philosophy, which teach us that “Absolute Reason realizes itself in the course of this world” (*Italy* x; *Italské* 9). The very beginning of *Letters from Italy* articulates the difference between seeing (experiencing) and writing, which supports Szilárd’s dichotomy between the author who travels, sees, experiences, and possesses knowledge of the world and the narrator who is aware of memory’s instability and aims to provide only a selective view of the traveling experience, i.e. a subjective narrative written from a personal point of view. Consequently, Čapek’s travel narrative becomes an alternative to and subversion of the Baedekers of the genre preceding him that claim to map the world completely and reliably. Baedekers are as foreign to a local culture as are the tourists who visit it, appropriate it, and humiliate it with amateurish copies:

A fifth group are copyists…. Not a single copy, heaven knows, nor a single lady copyist is the least pretty. To-day at Fiesole three of them painted the promenade round the monastery and the cypresses; a few steps away was a child rolling on the grass with a dog, and that was so charming that I forgot to glance at these fanciful promenades and the “magnificent view of Florence and the valley of the Arno (thus Baedeker describes it): but…” (*Italy* 30; *Italské* 22-3)

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165 "v běhu světa se uskutečňuje Absolutní Rozum."
166 “Pátý druh pak jsou kopiště….Bůh ví, ani jedna kopie, ani jedna kopistka nebyla sebemíň hezká. Dnes ve Fiesole hnedle tři malovaly klášterní ambit a cypřiše; pár kroků od nich se válelo v trávě dítě se
While traveling is a complex and chaotic sensory experience, the act of writing orders things and puts them in perspective: “If what follows is a trifle confused and lacks conciseness I cannot help it, since I have in no way set down what I saw in regular order. There is a little of a great deal: I shall arrange it in order subsequently, but in such a way that I shall forget it all again”\(^\text{167}\) (Italy 13; Italšké 11).

\[2.5.1.\textit{The Oral and the Written}\]

The distinction between the written component of \textit{skaz} and the imitation of oral speech is evident throughout \textit{Letters from Italy}. The narration recalls oral storytelling: periods are replaced with semicolons, and the narrator often exchanges verbs related to talking for verbs connected with writing, thus pointing to the ambiguous nature of Čapek’s narrative. Semantically, such switches emphasize the differences and connections between written narration, which is a solitary act for the narrator because it is performed at a distance from the future reader, and the oral component, which implies intimate act of storytelling in a circle of listeners, who become initiated in the process of narration. The traveler’s encounter with Padua, for example, is expressed through the opposition of the moment when he puts a period at the end of the sentence, which symbolically marks the end of narration, and the \textit{verbum dicendi} “říct,” which can be translated as “to say,” “to tell,” “to utter,” or “to pronounce:” “Having ended this holy day at a point and then had supper (not at Padua, however, but at Ferrara), I had, after writing the above, and experience I want to relate at once: beware on your travels through

\[\text{štěnětem, a to bylo tak krásné, že jsem se zapomněl divat i na ty snívě ambity i na „nádhernou **vyhledíku na Florencii a údolí Arna (jak praví baedeker); ale...“}\]
\[167\] “Bude-li to, co následuje, trochu zmatené a nepřehledné, nemohu za to; neboť sám nemám nijak spořádáno to, co jsem viděl. Je toho trochu mnoho; do pořádku to dávám až dodatečně, a to tím, že vše zase zapomenu.”
Italy of the so-called *vino di paese* (wine of the country)” (*Italy* 20; *Italské* 15). Thus the notion of writing and the use of verbs denoting writing emphasizes the present place and time. In turn, this highlights the personal narrator. His experience in San Marino, for example, is related to the point in time: “A spacious motor-car with the inscription “Rimini-San Marino” bore me off to what is said to be the smallest Republic in the world. These lines are written in the very centre of the Republic” (*Italy* 24-5; *Italské* 19). Such references to the specific time when the narrator writes the text of the travelogue once again authenticate his experience.

Another example of this practice is the use of a verb “sednout” (to sit), in *Images from Holland*. In the context of his travelogues, the verb symbolizes the act of storytelling in a circle of equal and valued participants and art made from a human perspective that represents everyday life. In *Letters from England*, the verb indicates a calm condition, in which only anecdotes, i.e. small forms, instead of monumental historical narratives may be related: “Yes, yes, yes, I have been everywhere; but now allow me to sit down and speak of something else. What did I want to say?” (*England* 45; *Anglické* 88). The unreliable stance of the *skaz* narrator thus follows the carefree approach of the *flâneur*, who mocks the unwritten, yet generally accepted catalogue of must-see places that are inescapable in the traditional poetics of travel literature.

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168 “Ukončiv tento svatý den tečkou a potom večeři (jenže ne už v Padově, nýbrž ve Ferraře), učinil jsem od předchozí věty zkušenost, kterou vám chci právě říci: varujte se na svých cestách po Itálii tak zvaného vina di paese.”
169 “Jakýsi rozložitý autovehikel s nápisem Rimini-San Marino mne svedl, abych jel do této nejmenší prý republiky na světě. Tyto řádky piši právě v jejím středu.”
170 “*The seated art*” will be discussed in the chapter 3.
171 “Ano, ano, ano, byl jsem všude; ale nyní mi dovolte, *abych si sedl* a povídal o něčem jiném. Co jsem chtěl říci?”
The new traveler, led by chance and his own fortuity, instinctively creates his own list of places “that ‘must be visited’ in blessed Italy”\(^{172}\) (\textit{Italy x; Italské 9}). The subjectivity and purposeful focus on things of traditionally minor importance give Čapek’s narrator the power of a traveler who creates his own, fictional, alternative version of Italy through the act of writing (and telling). He simultaneously ventures into fictionalized and constructed experience, in which he chooses what is actually new and convinces the readers of the authenticity of his experience. He discovers the freedom of a multi-faceted traveler, who, wearing a mask of a poet, a wannabe painter or a clown, connects different realms of experience because he understands that wandering and writing are parallel creative processes that produce illusion. As he states:

One stroll aimlessly, since he lives in a dream. In a dream one desires nothing: but when he beholds a magnificent garden beyond the marble loggia, which I have seen and shall see again, there is a longing to be able to remain there, to cease flight through space and time, and to abide in the midst of this dream. (\textit{Italy 22; Italské 17})\(^{173}\)

Dreams are not only a different aspect of experience. They also become an element to Surrealist poetics, which will be visible in Čapek’s later travelogues.

\(^{172}\) “která se „mají vidět“ v požehnané Itálii.”

\(^{173}\) “Člověk jde bez cíle, neboť žije ve snu. Ve snu člověk něčeho nežádá; ale zahlédne-li mramorovou logii tu nejkrásnější zahradu, jakou kdy viděl a bude vidět, žádá si, aby tu mohl pobýt, aby se přestal řítit prostorem a časem a mohl pobýt uprostřed toho snu.”
2.5.2. Child-like Perspective

The abundance of experiences in traveling in *Letters from Italy*, on the one hand, and the narrative selection, on the other, force the narrator to assert his power and classify incidents into likes and dislikes (*Italy* 13; *Italské* 11). Their enumeration at the beginning of the Italian travelogue is the first initiation of the reader in the course of traveling. The narrator uses a stylized, child-like approach, whereby, at first glance, a simplified image substitutes for a symbol of power and simultaneously mocks it. The example of this is uniformity of the state borders, where customs officers resemble one another despite of belonging to different states. “That clean-shaved gentleman on the frontier” (*Italy* 13; *Italské* 11) continues to reappear throughout Čapek’s travelogues both verbally and in illustration.

However, the custom officers also symbolize a linear nature of travel, the road a traveler has to pass in order to reach his destination (Fig. 1). Čapek mocks this idea at the end of *A Trip to Spain*, where he contrasts the illustrations of the uniformed customs officers belonging to different countries (France, Belgium, and Germany) with a figure of a Spaniard turning his back to a reader/viewer. Here is the point where Čapek in a humorous manner plays with the poetics of simultaneity. Different geographical spaces and the idea of “zone” travel are here visually limited to a concrete, one-dimensional space of the paper and straight-forward, frontal position of the officers. On the other side, the figure of Spaniard weaving at the traveler challenges the flatness of the poetics of
simultaneity. His position from the back visually deepens this space and introduces another important semantic dimension of traveling – that of return.  


The naïve and child-like approach to narration turns into one of the most important elements in the creation of the dialogic context of *skaz*. The infantile perspective, which is marginal and subversive, is used for the creation of mysterious fictional worlds, anecdotal meaning, the creation of illusion, or humor which, similar to dreams, is another perspective on reality. The childish perspective as a tool to defamiliarize the previously written world and the narrator hiding behind the mask of modesty is furthermore accompanied by narrative unreliability, which is an example of the limited intellectual horizons that Schmid lists as one of the main features of *skaz*. In Čapek’s travelogues, the

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174 The theme of return will be discussed in the context of *Images from Holland* in this chapter as well as in chapter 5, especially in discussion of *Hordubal*. 
unreliability of the narrator becomes an instrument of both mockery and self-mockery: “Unhappily I am lacking in appreciation of this architectonic gold lacework and all this mercantile frippery of old Venice” (Italy 17; Italské 13). Additionally, the narrator’s unreliability is sometimes marked by a shift in perspective where it concerns visual phenomena, which he does not know how to describe. “I don’t know how to say it” (Italy 19; Italské 15) and its linguistic variants are thus frequently found in Čapek’s travelogues. In other travelogues, the impossibility of describing the visual, which occurs occasionally in Letters from Italy, will be solved by the addition of illustrations.

Objects able to create illusions respond in a certain way to the naïve narrator. In order to familiarize the readers with his take on things, the narrator strips the usual meaning from objects and creates anecdotal possibilities. The figure of the border guard does not produce a mystery in Letters from Italy. A couchette, however, is full of objects that respond to a contact by creating a parallel world. Couchettes are full of different fine brass levers, buttons, knobs, latches, handles, and all kinds of apparatus. If you press or pull one, immediately there appears some convenience for slumber, and invention or an acquisition…. Perhaps in this way they can produce dreams of paradise or something similar. (Italy 15-6; Italské 12)

The unusual links, which are a tool of defamiliarization, are often made through comparisons to familiar things, and frequently they return to the narrator who becomes an object of self-mockery. The Italian gendarmerie, for example is described thusly:

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175 “Bohužel schází mi smysl pro tuto architektonickou posamerterii a pro celé to kupecké vetešnictví starých Benátek.”
176 “ja nevim, jak to říci.”
177 “Ilačítek, knofliků, vypinačů, klik a všelijakých aparátů. Když na to zmačknete nebo za to zatáhnete, hned se udělá nějaký spáčí komfort, vynález nebo vymoženost….Snad se tím dají dělat rajské sny či co.”
They patrol everywhere in couples, in skirts embroidered with a flaming bomb and on their heads a kind of boat, like those formerly worn by grammar-school professors, but set crossways. They are immeasurably sympathetic and comical, and remind me – I know not why – of the Brothers Čapek. (*Italy* 16; *Italské* 12)\(^{178}\)

2.5.3. *Readers, listeners, and creation of narrative distances*

The opposition between “responsiveness” and “non-responsiveness,” to which I referred in the previous section, in other words, Čapek’s ability to defamiliarize, determines the relationship between the narrator and the foreign country as well as his relationship with the reader. On the one hand, it articulates different possibilities for domesticating the foreign culture being experiences, which becomes a stand-in for home for the narrator and gives a dialogic quality to the narration. The reader begins to gain insight and understanding. On the other hand, it imposes “foreignness” as a forceful and non-creative appropriation of foreign culture through the imitation of local customs typical of tourists and the implementation of elements which the narrator finds foreign to Italian culture, for instance fascism. The distinction between the possibility of domestication and the feeling of alienation on the part of the narrator will be especially important in the treatment of the illustrations. The interpolation of an explicitly visual element is a symbol of both alienation (*Letters from England*) and a feeling of belonging to another culture (Čapek’s other travelogues).\(^{179}\)

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\(^{178}\) “Chodí vždycky po dvou, mají na šosech vyšitou hořící pumu a na hlavách takové lodi, jako dřív nosivali gymnasiální profesori, jenže posazeně napříč. Jsou nadmíru sympatičtí a směšní a pořád mi – nevím proč – připominají bratry Čapky.”

\(^{179}\) This will be discussed in chapter 3.
It was argued in the previous chapter that the narrator does not want to write about objects that have already been described. He enters into a dialogic relation with his literary predecessors and their understanding of the genre, acknowledging that the others have seen things before him, but preferring his own subjective and defamiliarizing interpretation of seen objects. He suggests that such objects loose their mystery. To produce a mystery, the narrator does not have to change facts, but perspective; the customs officers become lifeless and comic figures while souvenirs of Venice are not a metonymy for the city, but the opposite. The city becomes metonymy for its souvenirs: “I had no desire to write much about Venice, and think it is familiar to everyone. It is actually as unsettling as the different souvenirs de Venise” (Italy 16; Italské 13). The creation of mystery is also a game the narrator plays with reader expectations. The narrator avoids talking about the expected and the known, asserting that his travel is about his own experiences and perspective on previously described objects. However, in the assertion of the narrative “I,” the previously related history remains in the background. The narrator’s proximity to the readership and his sense of belonging in Italy is also, as it was showed in the previous chapter, in insertion of his voice above the voices of previous witnesses of Italy. The narrator swears that he respected the experts and saw everything that there was to see in Italy but decides to narrate from his personal perspective. Although he is sitting at the fountain of St. Andrew in Rome, which is obviously not the main and officially recognized tourist attraction, he still imitates the language of guides, mocking his attitude (he is “splašený” - startled) as well as the

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180 This point will be discussed in chapter 4.
181 In the English translation, the sense of the present moment is lost because the conditional used by Čapek (“Nechtěl bych mnoho psát”) is replaced with the past tense (“I had no desire to...”). “Nechtěl bych mnoho psát o Benátkách; myslím, že je každý zná. Jsou skutečně až rušivě podobné všelikým ‘souvenirs de Venice.’”
stereotypical tourist appearance and prejudices: English ladies are, for example, “waterproof” (nepromokavé Angličanky), thus they resemble objects. In addition, he is introducing his listeners to the narrative, using the demonstrative pronouns to point to the objects seen and opposing his own orientation in space with the gestures of the tour guide:

Upon my honour, I have not omitted a single celebrated monument or arch, nor left out a single museum or mausoleum or baths, and now I will tell you about some more modest places; I have a mania for wandering, and when I wanted to sit down and regard nothing I preferred taking a seat by San Lorenzo, where there is a little fountain, rather than in the shadow of the Colosseum, where a scared guide explains to waterproof Englishmen\(^2\) whence flowed that water and where they have left the historic lions. \(\text{(Italy 73; Italské 48)}\)\(^3\)

The implication that the listener is present happens on different levels. There are explicit references to the listeners. In these cases, their part of the dialogue is included structurally as an implied answer. Such constructions usually consist of the negative form of imperative, which the narrator uses to establish his own control over the fictional world: “To-day I went through all the churches of Padua and Ferrara: do not ask me how

\(^2\) In the Czech original, Čapek clearly refers to English ladies (Angličanky) and not Englishmen.

\(^3\) “Na mou čest, nevynechá jsem žádnou slavnou památku ani oblouk, neodpustil jsem si žádné museum ani thermy ani mausoleum, ale budu vám povídat o místech skromnějších; mám už takovou potulnickou máníi, a když už tedy se mi chtělo sedět a na nic se nekoukat, sedělo se mi lépe u svatého Vavřince, co je ten maličký vodotrysk, než ve stínu Kolosea, kde splašený guida vykládá nepromokavým Angličankám, kudy tam tekla ta voda a kde tu poušťeli ty historické lvy.”
many there were. And now I maintain that Christianity perished in the south with the Romanesque style, and in the north with the Gothic.” *(Italy 21; Italské 16)*

The presence of the listener is also suggested through the use of verbs of seeing. These verbs emphasize physical proximity between the narrator and the listener. This is also an instance of the use of the first person plural apostrophe, which not only indicates an agreement between the narrator and his audience but also emphasises the simulation of oral speech. Again, it is the *skaz* narrator who addresses his listeners:

And then, just look at Venetian Renaissance, which begins directly from the Corinthian order, with balustrades, balconies, marble and all this pompous stucco-work! Nothing has been thought out here: let us take for example that open loggia in the middle of the façade, which is certainly pretty but a little too small for good architecture. *(Italy 17; Italské 13-4)*

Verbs of seeing are also often accompanied with the verbs of motion. They suggest that as the narrator moves through the town, so does his audience. In such a fictional world, the objects and animals are personified. Onomatopoeia is also used to signify the dialogic relation within objects. Objects are personified by the narrator’s human presence and therefore are treated as equals with their human audience. For example, hooves respond to the clinking sound of the wheel:

But for all that it has its charm: you saunter through the streets as in a dream; the canals purl along, the band plays at St. Mark’s, twenty languages blend in ceaseless hum; and you feel as though you had

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184 “Za dnešní den jsem prošel všechny kostely Padovy a Ferrary; neptejte se, kolik jich bylo. A nyní tvrdím, že křesťanství zemřelo tady na jihu s románským slohem, na severu s gotikou.”

185 “A jen se tedy povidejte na benátskou renesanci, která z něčeho nic začíná hned korintským řádem, balustrádami, balkony a mramorem a celým tím okázalým štukatéřstvím. Nic se tu nevymyslelo, řekněme, až na tu otevřenou loggii uprostřed průčeli, což je sice pěkné, ale na dobrou architekturu trochu málo.”
wadding in the ears or were surrounded by stupefying unreality. Then all
at once you come upon the Lido; suddenly a little tramway bell tinkles in
your ear, wheels rattle, there is a clatter of hoofs, and the spell is broken. O
goodness, in all Venice there is not a single live horse. (Italy 18; Italské
14)\textsuperscript{186}

In contrast to the conspiratorial atmosphere created by the narrator, he overtly
marks the distance between him and his listeners/readers at the point when the narrative
turns into discussion of art appreciation. It becomes clear that, although often expressed
through self-mockery, the aim of the narrator’s travel was to construct his own aesthetic
and philosophical manifesto on art:

If at that moment I had before me a certain … who among you, in
Bohemia, writes such frightful nonsense about the theatre, I should fell
him to the ground: such was my frame of mind. I should also fell many
others who write on art, for instance … and other esteemed personalities,*
and then, sprinkled with their blood, singing lustily, magnifying Giotto,
Mantegna, and Donatello, I should have retired to rest and in dreams have
gazed on the little church dell’ Arena, the altar at Santo, and the Eremitani
chapel.” (Italy 20; Italské 15-6)\textsuperscript{187}

\textsuperscript{186} “Ale ano, má to své kouzlo; potloukáte se po ulicích jako ve snu; kanály šplouchají, u sv. Marka hraje
kapela, dvacaterý jazyk splývá v nekonečný šum; a vám je, jako byste měli v uších vatnu nebo jako by vás
obestíralo oblízující neslyšné. A jednou vystoupíte na Lidu; náhle vám zařinčí do uší zvonek malé
tramvaje, zacinká kolo, ozvou se evakuující kopyta, a kouzlo je zlomeno: bože, vždy v celých Benátkách
není jediný živý kůň."

\textsuperscript{187} “Nuže, kdybych v této chvíli měl před sebou jistého**, který tam u vás, v Čechách, píše hrozně
hlouposti o divadle, školil bych jej; neboť v takové jsem rázi. Školil bych ještě mnoho jiných, kteří píší o
umění, na příklad*** a jiné jinak vážené osobnosti*, a pak, potřísňen jich krvi a hlasitě zpívaje, velebě
Giotta, Mantegnu a Donatello, šel bych si lehnout a ještě usinaje bych viděl kostelíček del’ Arena a oltář v
Santu a kapli v Eremitani.”
Another instance of the awareness of physical distance is the point at which the
narrator recognizes his experience and narrative of Italy as an illusion.

Whither have you fled? And then\textsuperscript{188} Perugia is a dream, an idea, a
Bethlehem between blue sky and blue earth: Bethlehem but something
greater, a little city of palaces and fortified houses, Etruscan gates and
marvellous views. (\textit{Italy} 79-80; \textit{Italské} 51)\textsuperscript{189}

Consequently, he reminds himself that although fiction helped him to domesticate the
country, in the mirror of his physical homeland (the First Czechoslovak Republic), it
remained an illusion.

\textit{2.5.4. Other Forms of the Second-Person Address}

The previous use of the second-person address points to the intergeneric interaction
between traditionally high-brow and low-brow art, popular genres, and journalism. As
Bruce Morrissette argues: “aside the imperative or command uses of ‘you’” there is “a
family of cases in which ‘you’ invites the reader to place himself in the position of the
writer, with the clear implication that anyone who so places himself will witness the
identical scene or perform the same action” (\textit{Narrative ‘You’} 3). Morrissette finds the
origins of such an address in cookbooks and guidebooks: “as early as Pausanias, we find,
‘If you get further away, you seem to see a woman bowed down and weeping
\textit{(Description of Greece, I, xxi, 3)}” Especially in cookbooks, there are a “whole group of
‘you’ modes related to publicity, advertising, and journalese.” They “constitute deliberate
stylistic tricks or mannerisms, borrowed consciously or unconsciously from writers of

\textsuperscript{188} The English translation treats the Czech “i” in this context as “also” and “and then.”
\textsuperscript{189} “Kam jsi to prchl! I Perugia je sen, vidína a Betléme mezi modrým nebem a modrou zemí; Betléme o něco
větší, městečko paláců a pevnostních domů, etruských bran a podivuhodných výhledů...”
fiction or essays of more serious intent” (“Narrative ‘You’” 3). Examples of this appear frequently in Čapek’s travelogues, where the cultural landscape of Sicily is a culinary mix of different ingredients:

The Spanish influence came last; the first was Greek, the second and third Saracen and Norman; Renaissance here only amounts to a fraud. Strew all these different strata of culture with a dazzling sun, African soil, a heap of dust, and splendid vegetation, and there you have Sicily. *(Italy 48; Italské 34)*

Another type of second-person address relates to places in such a way that through the use of personification, they become anthropomorphized. Anthropomorphization is used to defamiliarize an object, which in the context of the narrator’s search for the modesty of human creation, becomes an alternative perspective on the idea of travel. From this point of view, places are not objects of description and passive aesthetic appreciation but partners in communication: “But thou, Rimini, art in no wise least among the cities of Italy” *(Italy 24; Italské 18)*. Objects are foregrounded, while the human element is only implied. The example of this is the image of *invisible hands* playing organ as a subject of the sentence compared with the indefinite animate pronoun (nikdo):

“I think of you once more, golden mosaics, for I have found some more beautiful and sanctified in Sts. Cosmas and Damian. No one enters there, and no one was there apart from the organ, upon which invisible hands played preludes” *(Italy 73; Italské 48)*.

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190c Španělský vliv je poslední; první je řecký, druhý a třetí je saracénský a normanský; renesance sem zasáhla jen tak šejdrem. Ty různé kulturní složky zalijte oslňujícím sluncem, africkou půdou, spoustou prachu a překrásnou vegetací, a máte Sicíliii.”

191 “vzpomínám na vás ještě jednou, zlaté mosaiky, nebot’ našel jsem ještě krásnější a světější v SS. Cosma e Damiano, kam nechodi nikdo, kde nebyl nikdo než varhany, na nichž přeludovalý neviditelné ruce.”
The treatment of the local people through the third person narration reflects the narrator’s mainly negative stand on the everyday life in the streets of Italian towns. Since the travelogue is mainly constructed as a conversation with a group of listeners with whom the narrator identifies and whose language he speaks and understands, contact with the locals is very limited and usually marked by conflict and disbelief. In communication with them, there double-voicedness is absent, which is a feature of skaz. Thus, there is no direct address:

A native, engineer by profession, entered into conversation with me: in a frightful verbal duel (he struggled with French and I with Italian, in the course of which both languages landed us in maddening contradictions), he explained to me that San Marino is actually an independent Republic, which during the war only raised volunteers; that is has altogether five thousand inhabitants over which Signore Gozzi holds sway in a blessed and comfortable manner, though I noticed on corner-stones inscriptions proclaiming evviva for some other grandeur, evidently an opponent. (Italy 25; Italské 19)¹⁹²

In other instances, the voices of the local people turn into onomatopoeic noise, which is as a heteroglossic intrusion into the narrative: Da, da, knorosho, gospoda, otto lire, acht, majher, mosjé verà tu, tu kompri, otto lire, ser, ejt, ejt, ejt (Italy 42; Italské 30-31).¹⁹³

¹⁹² “Jeden domorodec, inženýr, se dal se mnou do řeči; v strašlivém slovním zápase (on totiž zápasil s francouzštinou a já s italštinou, při čemž oba jazyky nám kladly odpor přímo zběsilý) mi vysvětil, že San Marino je opravdu nezávislá republika, jež za války stavěla jenom dobrovolníky; že má úhrnem pět tisíc občanů, kterým požehnáně a celkem klidně vládne sinor Gozzi, ač jsem sám viděl na patnících nápisy provolávající “evviva” jiné veličině, patrně opoziční.”
¹⁹³ “da, da, charaso, gaspada, otto lire, acht, majher, mosje, vera tu, tu kompri, otto lire, ser, ejt, ejt, ejt.”
Thus, for the narrator’s construction of his fictional world, the locals become a foreign element that he ridicules, reducing their entire existence to a silly position. Čapek’s treatment of the typical Italian could also be read as a mockery typical of the interwar period. For example, Čapek’s description of the Fascist rally, which is stripped of its meaning and reduced to symbolic black shirts, which he compares to “our chimney sweeps” (Italy 23; Italské 18) to simultaneously ridicule the Fascists and make them familiar to his Czech readers. He stresses the disruptive nature of “these ‘black shirts’ [who] parade the town with guns and bands” (Italy 23; Italské 28). Their slogans are “scrawled” (Italy 28; Italské 23) on the walls of Ravenna. Their official greeting is expressed through an onomatopoeic verb with animal features. The simplified, almost child-like perception of a dangerous thing, i.e. Fascism, is entirely defamiliarized when the narrator uses derivatives of the verb “seknout,” which means “to chop.” An ax is “sekerá” and chopping/cutting is “seknuti.” Čapek’s writes: “As regards the Fascisti their yell is ejaejaeja, and their salute is such a violent sweep of the arm through the air that one is scared” (Italy 28-9; Italské 22). Together, these words have ominous associations with such decapitation.

194 “běhají” tito “černokošilatý” s puškami a kapelami po městě.
195 “Co se fascistů týče, tedy jejich křik je “ejaejaeja” a jejich pozdrav takové seknutí rukou do vzduchu, že se člověk lekne.”
2.6. Letters from England

While in *Letters from Italy*, the visual element was implied, I will show how in *Letters from England*, Čapek introduces illustration to the narration as an explicitly visual element. Illustrations add another dimension to the dichotomy between the written and the spoken, as well as to narrative distances. They defamiliarize both the experience of the quotidian in a foreign country and the reader’s expectations. The alienation from the foreign country results in the use of heteroglossia and the introduction of new grammatical categories such as the passive, which will also be analyzed. I will examine how the simulation of a child’s perspective, which in the previous travelogue enabled the traveler to find the alternative culture of the country and express his feeling of belonging to it, changes here into the loss of the idea of home.

2.6.1. Skaz and Illustration

In *Letters from England*, the nature of *skaz* changes because of the interpolation of illustrations into the narrative. Illustrations are another important element in the domestication of foreign places because they help the narrator to start “from the beginning” and to organize his experience into a logical chain. (*England* 24; *Anglické* 73) As the explicit visual part of the narration, illustration adds another dimension to the existent dichotomy between writing and telling – drawing. The following excerpt exemplifies how the semantic notion of drawing simultaneously connects the narration as a past temporal dimension (the picture was drawn in Folkestone where the narrator landed) and illusion of orality as occurring at the present moment, in which the narrator confirms his listeners’/viewers’ input about his creation:
The white parts are simply cliffs and above them grow grass. True, it is all built quite solidly enough, one might almost say on rock, but to have a continent beneath one’s feet makes one feel more secure. I have also drawn you a picture of Folkestone, which is where I landed. In the sunset it looked like a castle with crenellations; later, however, it became clear that these were only chimneys. (England 24-5; Anglické 74)

The white parts are again mentioned at the end of Letters from England, when the narrator recognizes the physical distance needed for story-telling. His return home represents a moment when narration becomes meaningless and storytelling ends because the miracle of bringing the news from a distance diminishes as the narrator’s physical distance from the place described grows and he approaches his own culture:

The white coast of England meanwhile has disappeared; shame: I forgot to say goodbye. But when I am at home, I will mull over everything that I have seen and when there will be talk of something, of the bringing up the children, of transportation, literature of the respect of man for man, of horses or armchairs, of what people are like or what they ought to be like, I will begin to say like an expert, ‘Now, in England…’ But no-one will listen to me. (England 149; Anglické 166-7)

Challenge of narrative distances again stems from the nature of storytelling as articulated in Čapek’s aesthetics of the fairytale. The temporal and physical remoteness of

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196 “To bílé jsou prostě skály a nahoře roste trava; je to sice stavěno dosti důkladně, tak říkajíc na skále, ale mit pod nohama kontinent, lidi, to je přece jen solidnější pocit. Dále jsem vám nakreslil Folkestone, kde jsem přistál. V západu slunce to vypadalo jako hrad a cimbuří; později se ukázalo, že to jsou komíny.”
197 “Anglický bílý břeh zatím zmizel; škoda, zapomněl jsem se rozloučit. Ale až budu doma, budu si přemílat všechno, co jsem viděl, ať bude o čemkoliv řeč, o výchově dětí nebo o dopravnicvtví, o literatuře nebo o úctě člověka k člověku, o koních nebo o lenoškách, o tom, jaké lidé jsou nebo jaci by měli být, začnu znalecky povídat: ‘To v Anglii..’ Ale nikdo mne už nebude poslouchat.”
fairytales (as well as the physical remoteness of traveling) lead to the creation of a miraculous world that does not need to be fantastic or supernatural. It must only be new and estranged, thereby challenging the limits of versimilitude:

Their world need not be fantastic or supernatural; it is only placed beyond natural and controllable reality: it does not come into conflict with experience because it is lifted beyond its reach. In principle the question of truth and of any material relation to reality does not come into consideration. (“Fairy-Tales” 57)

Finally, in the context of dichotomies, the illustrations in *Letters from England* point to the differences between the author and the narrator/drawer, which was discussed above in the theoretical considerations of skaz. The quality of the author’s experience and the intensity of his travels cannot be fully and mechanically articulated in the narrator’s discourse. In other words, the illustrations are a sign of the narrator’s unreliability because they highlight the selective nature of representation. While in Italy, the listeners were invited to see (“podívejte se”) and be guided through towns and galleries. In *Letters from England*, they are forced to become aware of the limitations of representation:

I have drawn this lighthouse but you can’t see that it is a pale, blue night, that the green and red lamps of the buoys and ships are sparkling on the sea, that I am sitting under the lighthouse and have a black cat in my lap – I mean a real cat¹⁹⁸, that I am patting the sea, the bird, the little lights on

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¹⁹⁸ In the English translation “cat” is translated as “bird”
the sea and the whole world in a preposterous fit of joy at being in the
world. (England 127-8; Anglické 150)\(^{199}\)

On the other hand, the illustrations can be seen as the narrator’s alienation in a
foreign country, in which he did not find the artistic representations of quotidian (like in
Italy) he was looking for. In this case, the naïve narration distances the foreign country
and shows the reader a general impression of England as isolated and English culture as
confined, which even alienates the locals. In other words, illustrations do not exist
because the beauty is indescribable but because there is nothing worth illustrating: “These
houses look a little like family tombs. I tried to draw them but, try as I might, I couldn’t
achieve a sufficiently hopeless appearance. Besides this, I haven’t god any grey paint
with me to paint them” (England 34; Anglické 80).\(^{200}\)

2.6.2. Functions of the Passive Mode and Passivization of the Narrator

Unlike the narrator in Letters from Italy, the narrator in Letters from England is
passive. The passive mood was used sporadically in Letters from Italy. There, it
expressed the narrator’s alienation from the local culture that he found in the
cosmopolitan environment of international hotels that offered fake representations of
genuine Italian experiences. However, in Letters from England the passive voice is
frequently used in order to describe the impossibility of belonging to the place,
dissatisfaction with the situation, and the powerlessness felt by the narrator in England.
Whereas in Italy, the naïve point of view of the child’s perspective gave the narrator

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\(^{199}\) “Ten maják jsem nakreslil, ale není tam vidět, že je bledě modrá noc, že na moři jiskří zelené a rudé
lampy bójí a lodí, že sedím pod majákem a mám na klině černou kočku – mysím skutečnou kočku – a
hladím moře, čiču, světělka na vodě a celý svět v záchvatu pošetilé radosti, že jsem na světě.”

\(^{200}\) “Ty domky vypadají trochu jako rodinné hroby; pokusil jsem se je nakreslit, ale ať jsem dělal co chtěl,
nedosáhl jsem výrazu dosti beznadějného; mimo to nemám s sebou šedivou barvu, kterou bych je natřel.”
freedom to move and experience the world from a different, “human” angle, in England, childish helplessness constrains his movements. While in Italy, he would narrate from a child’s perspective, in England, the perspective reverses and he becomes the one treated like a child. The passive constructions consequently suggest both the narrator’s lack of interest in seeing the sights and the dearth of impressions England makes on him. In contrast with Letters from Italy, where forgetfulness played a role in recreating the subjective experience of traveling and emphasized the narrator’s point of view, in Letters from England the loss of memory and problems of orientation stem from the passive perspective of a child and treatment as an object:

They loaded me onto a train and took me out at Surbiton, cheered me up, fed me and put me into a feather bed. It was as dark there as at home and the dreams I had were all-embracing: something about the boat, something about Prague and something strange which I have already forgotten.

(England 26-7; Anglické 81)\textsuperscript{201}

Englishmen appear as invisible participants in the journey: “The table is oaken and very palatable is the Guildford beer in clay tankards and the speech of merry people over English bacon and cheese. Once more, thank you and now I must go on” (England 76; Anglické 109).\textsuperscript{202}

\textsuperscript{201} “Naložili mne do vlaku a vyndali mne v Surbitonu, těšili, krmili a uložili mne do peřin; I byla tma jako u nás, ticho jako u nás, a sny, které jsem měl, byly všelijaké, něco o lodi, něco o Praze a něco divného, co jsem už zapomněl.”

\textsuperscript{202} “stůl je dubový, a dobře chutná guildfordské pivo z hliněných džbánků a řeč veselých lidí nad anglickým špekem a sýrem. Ještě jednou vám děkuji a musím zase dál.”
2.6.3. The Failure of Domestication

Forced passivity is the crux of the narrator’s criticism and disillusionment with modern civilisation. He believes that it makes a man afraid, which, in turn abolishes the value of human life and transforms it into that of bacteria: “Yes, I freely admit it, I was scared; I was scared of getting lost, of my bus not coming, of something happening to me, of my being damned, of human life having no worth, of man being a hypertrophied bacterium…of man being powerless” (England 36-7; Anglické 82-3). In relation to objects, the people on the streets become small and insignificant in opposition to the buses that resemble mastodons. In other words, the passive voice radically changes the perspective of the narration; the objects that the narrator encounters become the subjects of his narrative since verbs of motion, zoomorphism, and personification make them active. Human and animal elements overlap. The narrator thus becomes overwhelmed and fears any active movement since the most banal thing, such as crossing the street, becomes impossible. In this situation, the narrator’s experience of London resembles Apollinaire’s experience of Paris from “Zone:” “Now you stride alone through the Paris crowds / Busses in bellowing herds roll by” (70-71). Čapek echoes this:

A fourfold line of vehicles shunts along without end or interruption; buses, chugging mastodons tearing along in herds with bevies of little people on their backs, delivery vans, lorries, a flying pack of cars, steam engines, people running, tractors, ambulances;…but even I can’t go any further,

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203 “Ano, beze všeho se vám přiznám, že jsem se bál: bál jsem se, že se ztratím, že mne přejede autobus, že se mi něco stane, že jsem ztracen, že lidský život nemá ceny, že člověk je zvětšená bakterie,…že člověk je bezmocný.”

204 “Nyní ty kráčiš sám davem po Paříži / Kol tebe stáda autobusů řvou říčí a víří”.
remembering the horror which the idea awoke in me that I would have to
cross to the other side of the street. (England 36; Anglické 81)\textsuperscript{205}

The disappointment and alienation from England results in self-mockery as well
as a parody of biblical pilgrimages and suffering:

Ely, eley, la’ma sabachtha’ni! You betrayed me, Ely, dead town lying at the
foot of a Romanesque cathedral, when, tired and thirsty at five o’clock in the
afternoon, I beat on the doors of tea-rooms and pubs, bars, newsagents’ and
stationers’ but wasn’t admitted. (England 84; Anglické 115)\textsuperscript{206}

Whereas in Italy, there was a general cohesion between the idea of a foreign land
and home, in England, “nothing exists” while “everything exists” at home. In other
words, nothing makes the traveler comfortable in England, and consequently, his
attempts to domesticate the country fail. For this reason, the opposition between home
and the foreign place is more intense in England than it was in Italy. Additionally, the
“homeland” seems to be a question of belonging that sight and experience facilitate:

In our country, in Italy and in France a street is a sort of great pub or
public garden, a village green, a meeting place, a playing field and a
theatre, an extended home and a threshold. Here it is something which
doesn’t belong to anyone and doesn’t bring anyone closer to other people.

\textsuperscript{205} “Bez konce a přerušení je cesta čtyřnásobný pás vehiklů: busy, supající mastodonti, říční se ve stádech s
hejny lidiček na zádech; předoucí auta, náklady, parní mašiny, cyklisti, busy, busy, leticí směčka aut, běžící lidi, traktory, ambulance;…ale ani já nemohu dál, vzpomínaje na hrůzu, kterou tehdy ve mně zvýšila představa, že musím přeběhnout na druhou stranu ulice.”

\textsuperscript{206} “Ely, Ely, lama sabachtani! Zradilo jsi mne, Ely, mrtvé město ležící u nohou románské katedrály, když unaven a žízníc jsem o páté hodině odpoledne tloukl na dveře čajoven a hospod, výčepů, trafik i papírníků, ale nebylo mi otevřeno.”
Here one doesn’t meet people and things; here one only passes them by.

(England 33; Anglické 79)

Since the feeling of alienation is more intense in England than in Italy, the references to the homeland are stronger in Letters from England than in Letters from Italy. Thus, the interpolation of the Czech into the experience of England is direct, and not just assumed and referred to in the skaz style of the narrative. In Italy, the listeners experienced the land directly through the verbs of seeing and guided tours through Italian art. In England, the physical distance between the narrator and listener is recognized and the conditional mode is used to understand the differences between the two countries and the impossibility of creating a familiar home-like space in the English landscape:

My uncle, Czech peasant farmer, how you would shake your head with indignation looking at the red and black herds of cows on the most beautiful meadows in the world and say, ‘What a waste of such beautiful dung!’ And you would say, ‘Why don’t they sow turnips here? And here, people, here there could be wheat and here potatoes and here in place of this shrubbery I would plant cherry trees and sour cherry trees and here Lucerne and here oats and here on this land rye or rapeseed.’ (England 74; Anglické 108)

The narrator puts on a mask of a local inhabitant with the knowledge of an insider in his reply to his uncle, a foreigner. Now the situation between “here” and “there,” between

\[\text{\footnotesize \textsuperscript{207} "U nás, v Itálii, ve Francii je ulice jakási veliká hospoda nebo veřejný sad, náves, shromaždiště, hřiště a divadlo, rozšířený domov a zápraží; \textit{tady} je něčím, co nepatří nikomu a nikoho nesbližuje s ostatními; \textit{tady} nepotkáváte lidí a věcí, zde je jenom míjíte." \textsuperscript{208} "Můj strýče, český sedláku, jak byste potrásl v nevoli hlavou, divajte se na červená a černá stáda krav na nejkrásnějších lukách světa a řekl byste: Jaká škoda toho krásného hnoje! A řekl byste: Proč \textit{tadyhle} nenasázejí řepy, a \textit{tuhle}, lidí, \textit{tuhle} by mohla být pšenka, a \textit{tady} brambory, a \textit{tady} bych nasázel místo toho křoví třešně a vajksle; a \textit{tady} vojtěšku, a \textit{tuhle} ovísek, a \textit{tady} na tom lánu žito nebo řepku."} \]
home and abroad, changes. The narrator stands facing the idea of home as someone who has to illuminate the otherness of the foreign country. However, the uncle points to the automatization of work and life using the verb “robot,” the etymological origin of the word “robot:”

You know, uncle, apparently it isn’t worth the work here. For the information, wheat comes here from Australia and sugar from India and potatoes from Africa or somewhere. And you know, uncle, there aren’t any peasants here anymore and this is only a sort of a garden. ‘And you know, my boy,’ you would say, ‘I like it more the way it is in our country. Perhaps it’s only a turnip but at least you can see the work…Good heavens, my boy, why, there isn’t a person in sight; only someone over there riding a bicycle and here, damn it, someone in one of those stinking cars again. My boy, my boy, does no-one graft around here?’ (England 74; Anglické 108) 

2.7. A Trip to Spain

In A Trip to Spain, the visual aspect of the travelogue has been expanded through the use of cinematic features and the aesthetics of games. This was in accordance with Poetist poetics, which favored intermediality in narrative texts. These features add to the dichotomy between the written and the oral by disguising the narrator this time as a poet who addresses his colleagues and offers his traveling experience as an intimate poetic

209 “Víte, strýčku, ono to práv tady nestojí za tu práci; abyste věděl, pšenka sem chodi z Austrálie a cukr z Indie a brambory z Afriky nebo odkud; víte, strýčku, tady už nejsou sedláci; a tohle je jen taková zahrada. – A víš, hochu, řekl byste, to se mne u nás líbí vic; je to třeba jen řepa, ale člověk aspoň vidi tu práci…. Namoutě, hochu, vždyť tu není vidět člověčka; jen tamhle jede někdo na kole, a tady, kus, zas někdo na tom smradlavém autě; hochu, hochu, copak tu nikdo nic nerobi?”
manifesto and his own personal aesthetics of traveling. Cinematic elements, similar to those in Surrealism, also result in the expansion of the possibilities of description and create parallel fictional worlds, especially those defined by dreams. Additionally, the interpolation of foreign languages, in other words, heteroglossia, here emphasizes the intermedial nature of the Spanish language, especially its connection with music. Games, considered an intrinsic and primordial part of the quotidian, challenge the understanding of domestic and foreign, and elevate the narrator’s belonging to a group to being supranational.

Written in 1930, *A Trip to Spain* is probably the most playful of all Čapek’s travelogues. It is playful in terms of the *skaz* narration, on which the aesthetics of other genres, especially visual ones, have an obvious influence.\(^{210}\) *A Trip to Spain* preserves the *skaz* features seen in the previous travelogues such as the second-person plural address, apostrophy of the object, and its personification but it also evokes the Poetist poetics that liberate art and elevate the quotidian to the level of art - “the best museum is the street of living people”\(^{211}\) (*Spain* 33; *Výlet* 201). The equality of life and art appears in the narrator’s attitude towards learning Spanish, which he views not as a verbal language but as the language of the senses: “Every nation has its own tongue, and indeed its own daintiness of tongue. Get to know its tongue; eat its foods and drink its wines. Attune yourself wholeheartedly to the harmonies of its fish and cheeses”\(^{212}\) (*Spain* 35-6; *Výlet* 203). The narrator’s use of *verba dicendi* as a direct address to the readers and their initiation as listeners in the course of narration as well as the imitation of a subjective and

\(^{210}\) This part will deal with the influence of photography and film only on the narrative itself, while the forthcoming chapter will extend it to caricatures.

\(^{211}\) “nejlepší museum je ulice živých lidi.”

\(^{212}\) “Každý národní má svůj jazyk, dokonce svůj mlšný jazyk. Poznej jeho jazyk; jez jeho jídla a pij jeho vín. Otevři se dokořán harmonii jeho rybiček a sýrů, jeho vín.”
alternative course of travel, which is mapped according to the narrator’s aesthetic choices and in opposition to the inventory of the already described places, is also typical of the skaz narration in *A Trip to Spain*. In contrast to Čapek’s previous travelogues, the heteroglossia and onomatopoeic properties of unrecognizable human voices in *Letters from England*, the human voice in *A Trip to Spain* imitates music. By equating language and music the narrator reveals that he feels as though he is a part of the local culture. To demonstrate this, he inserts a significant number of Spanish words and phrases into the narrative:

*Oiga, camarero, una copita de Fundador.* You know, *caballeros*, this has quite taken my fancy: all this crowd, this noise, which is not an uproar, the gay courtesy, the charm…a bright and bustling crowd which chats and strolls in a good-tempered allegro. (*Spain 25-6; Výlet 195*)

2.7.1. Mocking the Poetics of Traveling

The dichotomy between the author’s traveling experience and the narrator’s discourse is marked by the narrator’s (parodic) intention to talk about the international trains “for poetic reasons” (*Spain 7; Výlet 181*). Indeed, travelogue is addressed specifically to fellow poets and friends. In other words, it represents the narrator’s view of the poetic devices representing distance: “My poetical friends, allow me to tell you the plain truth about Pullmans and Sleeping Cars: if you must know, they look infinitely more enticing from outside, when they flash past some sleepy little station, than from

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213 The translation marks words of Spanish origin with italics. This is, however, not the case in the Czech original since it forms the part of Čapek’s poetics of the simultaneous presence of the other.
214 “Oiga, camarero, una copita de Fundador. Slyšte, cabaleros, tady se mi zalíbilo; tolík lidi, hluk, který není vřava, veselá zdvořilošt, půvab...jasný a hlasitý dav, který se baví a fláská v dobromyslném allegru.”
215 “z důvodů básnických.”
within” (Spain 8; Výlet 181). The mention of Pullmans here recalls, for instance, Jaroslav Seifert’s poem “Honeymoon” (“Svatební cesta” 1925), in which the international train is associated with a romanticized view of modernity:

Unending anxiety of train station bells

wedding cars ah Wagon lits

that marital bliss is like fragile glass

a honied moon is descending. (5-8)

Čapek’s narrative appears as a challenge to find a new mode of writing and experiencing. It establishes a new poetics, it challenges the old way of seeing, in other words, it defamiliarizes the view of the already seen:

If you were to detach them from their surroundings, boiling them down and depriving them of their life and all their small local odours, and then put them elsewhere, you would not notice anything remarkable about them; why, you would say, this is quite a nice wide street, but what else is there? (Spain 21; Výlet 193)

The Poetist images of trains are destroyed/contradicted by the actual experience of traveling, in which the miracle of distances (kouzlo dálek) becomes just an annoying and uncomfortable long trip to a foreign country. Luggage plastered with hotel labels does not represent distance, since they can be purchased at a travel agency for a small amount of money (Spain 10; Výlet 183). The poetic illusion of distances is very different

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216 “Přátelé, poeti, dovolte, abych vám podal svědectví o pullmanech a sleepingách; vězte, že nekonečné dobrodružnějí vypadají zvenčí, když zářící proletí ospalou staničkou, nežli z vnitřku.”
217 “Nádražníh zvonků věčný střed / ach Wagon lits vagony svatební / to štěstí manželské je jako křehké sklo / medový měsíc se naklání.”
218 „Kdybyste je vyřízl z jejich okolí, vyvařili, zbavili jejich života a takového toho místního zápašku a pak je postavili někde jinde, nenašli byte na nich nic zvláštního; inu, řekli byte, je to docela pěkná a široká ulice, a co dál?”
219 For more about this, please see the forthcoming chapter
from that of home where the joy of poetry is rediscovered by riding local trains, which offer the convenience of a short ride. The image also transposes the poetic quality from the superficiality of the Poetist image of international travel to home:

And the Pullman, as it whirls by, suggests all the magic of distant places, for you must know that nothing less than first-class travel accommodation will satisfy the fine frenzy of the poet….A local train from Prague to Řepy jogs along at a less impressive speed, but at least you know that in half an hour you’ll be able to get out and pursue some fresh adventure. (Spain 7-8; Výlet 181-2)220

Finally, the narrator repeats his own poetics of travel that were already present in Letters from Italy: the poet is the one who in his modesty travels the world, remaining invisible and thus finding his home within a foreign culture: “surrender yourself into the hands of God, and try to sleep like a corpse in a coffin, while unknown and strange regions are whizzing past outside, and at home poets are writing verses about International Expresses” (Spain 12; Výlet 185).221

The dynamics of the game textually requires the frequent use of verbs of motion. They already appeared in Letters from England, especially when the narrator describes his train travel in Scotland but in A Trip to Spain, they occur much more frequently. The abundance of verbs of motion suggests that cinematic techniques were close to the narrative structure of Čapek’s travelogues, especially with regard to space. Although the semantic function of illustrations belongs to the discussion of intermedial elements found

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220 “Rychlostí a leticí pullman připomíná veškeré kouzlo dálek; nebot vězte, že básnická fantasie si libuje jenom v prvoříčních spojích....Lokálka z Prahy do Řep ovšem uhání rychlostí méně imposantní; ale aspoň vité, že za půl hodiny z ni vylezeete a můžete se ubírat za nějakým jiným dobrodružstvím.”
221 “odevzdejte se do rukou božích a pokuste se spát jako nebožtík v rakvičce, zatím co venku ubihají neznámé a podivné kraje a doma básníci piší o Mezinárodních expresech.”
in Čapek’s travelogue, it is important at this point to stress the influence of film on the illustrations in *A Trip to Spain* in connection with the narrative techniques used that are reminiscent of cinematic techniques. The narrator describes rapid movement through places, which consecutively replace one another, making the narrative tempt faster. The narrator perceives countries at a fast pace, using synecdoche in order to depict each location’s essence. The use of verbs of motion, the breakdown of ordinary syntax, the use of commas, and the literary equivalent of movie shots in which each place’s essence is depicted in one or two images:

Czech apple-trees are followed by the fir-trees of Brandenburg on white stretches of sand, a windmill waves its arms as if it were running away, the country-side is neatly leveled out and produces chiefly advertisements of cigarettes and margarine.\(^{222}\) …winsome Belgium; a mother with her baby in her arms, a young soldier watering a horse, an inn at the bottom of a hill, the chimney-stacks and formidable towers of industry, a Gothic church and an iron-foundry, some cows among the mine-shafts- (*Spain* 13-4; *Výlet* 86-8)\(^{223}\)

In a world that is constantly in motion, émigrés are those who remain beyond the movement. Immigration is the condition between the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the international and the exoticism of local trains. The émigrés, according to Čapek, are those who stay when the evening comes, nature overwhelms them, and they fall asleep, too tired to move (*Spain* 9; *Výlet* 182-3).

\(^{222}\) The English translation omits the sentence “To je Německo,” “That is Germany.”

\(^{223}\) “Po českých jabloních přijdou braniborské borovice na bílých písečnách, větrník mává křídly, jako by někam běžel, země je rovně natažená a plodí hlavně reklamní tabule cigarette a margarine. To je Německo….milá Belgie; maminka s dítětem na rukou, vojáček napájející koně, hospoda v údolí, komínů a strašné věže průmyslu, gotický kostel a železná tavrína, stádo krav mezi šachtami;”
2.7.2. The Poetics of Dreams

The filmic atmosphere of Spain also stems from the fact that everything in that country is seen through the opposition of reality and dream. Although Čapek never belonged to any of Avant-Garde groups, the notion of dreams in *A Trip to Spain* recalls the poetics of Surrealism, in which man became an “inveterate dreamer” (Breton 3), expanding the understanding of dreams from a physiological to an existential condition of human kind. The dream should not be “reduced to a mere parentheses, as is the night” (11). Dreaming is the state when, as Czech Surrealist Vítězslav Nezval states, the loosening of the mind’s logic in “a condition out of thought” leads to the unbounded creation of poetic images (“Obrazotvornost” 70).

In the travelogue, a dream is the constant and simultaneous presence of the other. In Spain, otherness is marked by the vivid presence of Moorish culture within framework of Spanish identity: a “Spanish garden is an intimate dream. In those nooks soft with shade, gurgling waters, cool majolica, dazing fragrance and tropical leafage is the gentle tread of another, a more pleasure-loving race; here, too, the Moors have left their traces” (*Spain* 89; *Výlet* 242). The dream allows the narrator to change perspective, create a fictional reality, and shift from a general and indefinite image to fragments and narrative details. In other words, dreaming is the alternative structure of the experienced world. The travelers sees everything from his dream, which is his individual escape from the

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224 To a certain extent, Čapek’s perception of the magical in everyday life could be associated with the Surrealist marvelous. Similar links could also be drawn between the use of the child-like perspective and admiration of games.
225 “Španělská zahrada je intimní sen. V těch sladkých koutech stínů, zurčící vodičky, chladivé majoliky, opojná vůně a tropického lupení je podnes slyšet tiché kročeje jiné, poživačnější rasy; i tudy prošli Mauři.”
poetics of Poetism’s international trains, but at the same time it is also its continuation in the aesthetics of Surrealism.

Spain, for example, is first seen through a gloomy distance during a night when nothing is visible. The traveler does not know what he sees, and everything looks like a dream or illusion. Čapek’s description of entering and leaving Spain foregrounds dreaming as one of the main thematic threads in A Trip to Spain:

And yet as far as I am concerned, the land of Spain is shrouded with an impenetrable mystery, for the sound reason that I entered it and left it again at dead of night; it was just as if we had been taken blindfold across the River Acheron or through the Mountains of Dreams. I tried to distinguish something in the darkness outside; I saw something that looked like a cluster of black patches on the bare hill-sides; perhaps they were rocks or trees, but they might also have been large animals. (Spain 17; Výlet 189)\(^{226}\)

2.7.3. The Use of Perspectives

Dreams also pervade the culture; they characterize the relation between home and Spain: “And when subsequently the Latin farmer and the Visigothic knight with sword and crucifix drove out the oriental sorcerer, they never got rid of this richly woven dream;” (Spain 74; Výlet 230).\(^{227}\) In A Trip to Spain, a dream-like perspective is the lens

\(^{226}\)“A přece země španělská je pro mne zastřena neproniknutelným tajemstvím, z toho vážného důvodu, že jsem do ní vstoupil a z ní zase odcházel za černé nočí; bylo to, jako by nás převáželi se zavázanýma očima přes řeku Achéron nebo skrze Hory Snů; Pokoušel jsem se něco rozoznati v teh čemných chvětech; viděl jsem cho jako nakůtené černé skvůry na holiých stráních; snad to byly šály nebo stormy, ale mohla to být veliká zvířata."

\(^{227}\)“A když pak latinský sedlák s visigoškým rytířem mechem a křížem vypudil orientálního kouzelníka, nezbúval se už nikdy toho bohatě tkaného snu;"
through which the narrator experiences the country. There everything is a dream because of the architecture of passages and prospects that allows him to see everything from various perspectives: “As if in a dream…glimpses of shady majolica courtyards where fountains gurgle amid flower-pots; glimpses of serried streets between bare walls and barred windows; glimpses of the sky;” (Spain 28; Výlet 198) Perspectives are also quite unexpected: “a bird’s-eye view of Toledo is revealed to you: one single surge of flat roofs beneath the blue sky: an Arab town, glistening in the brown rocks, gardens on the floors, and delightful, languorous pation with an intimate and comely life of their own” (Spain 29-30; Výlet 199).

Perspective as a narrative technique close to visual arts and film, which is present to some extent in Letters from Italy, is frequently employed in A Trip to Spain, and often serves as connection between two semantic fields. Perspective expands the deictical dichotomy between here and there that exists in Čapek’s earlier travelouges to include views from inside and outside, shifts from generalizations to specifics, and, as a consequence of this, the associative relationship between the concrete and metaphorical. Seymour Chatman calls this the “focus of spatial attention.” In other words:

the framed area to which the implied audience’s attention is directed by the discourse, that portion of the total story-space that is “remarked” or closed in upon, according to the requirements of the medium, through a

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228 In the English text, the plural “snách” is translated as the singular “dream.”
229 The English translation treats the Czech word “průhled,” (“opening, vista, view, look”) as “glimpse”
230 “Jako ve snách. (...) průhledy do stinných majolikových dvorečků, kde zurčí fontánka uprostřed květináčů; průhledy do těsných uliček mezi holými zdi a zamřížovanými okny; průhledy do nebe.”
231 “Toledo z ptačí perspektivy: jediná vlna plochých střech pod modrými nebesy: arabské město, svítící v hnědých skalách; zahrady na střechách a sladká, lenošná patia s životem důvěrným a sličným.”
narrator or through the camera eye – literary, as in film, or figuratively, as in verbal literature. (102)

This cinematic element is transposed into literary narration through focalization, which is, as Mieke Bal defines it, “the relationship between the ‘vision,’ the agent that sees and that which is seen” (142). Bal distinguishes this from other similar theories of point of view as making “a distinction between those who see and those who speak” (143). This is how Čapek uses focalization and changes perspectives, he introduces the general picture and leads his audience into the details which they can grasp only because of their own ability to see:

And from the Giralda you can see the whole of Seville, so white and shiny that it makes your eyes ache, and pink with its flat, tiled house-tops braided with faience cupolas and belfries and battlements, palm-trees and cypresses;…But if your sight is good, you will see even more; you will see families at the back of the patio, gardens on balconies and terraces and flat house-tops, wherever there is room for the smallest flower-pot,…And now that we have the white town before us, let us make a pilgrimage to two places, which are particularly worthy of respect, and which are adorned with a whole set of masterly and worshipful works. (Spain 74-7; Výlet 231-2)²³²

In other words, the cinematic element turns the public sphere of the town into a series of private worlds constructed by the individual’s ability to see.

²³² “A z Giraldy vidíte celou Sevillu, bílou a jásonou, až oči boli, a růžovou plochými prejzovými střechami, protkanou fajánkovými báními a zvonicemi a cimbuřími, palmami a cypřišemi; (...) Ale máte-li dobré oči, uvidíte ještě vic; uvidíte rodiny na dne patii, zahrádky na balkonech a terasách a plochých střechách, vžude kde se dá postavit nějaký ten kořenáček, (...) A když už máme před sebou celé město, vykonejme pout' na dvě místa zvláště etichodná a vyzdobená vším dilem mistrným a oslavným.”
A distinction and connection between inside and outside is simultaneously a view into intimate and private matters. Lattice as a typical decorative feature of Spanish houses is not an object of division here but a frame that enables a peek into private life and suggests the openness of Spanish culture. The endless possibility of this view inside leads to the impossibility of enumeration:

But at this point of time I cannot tell you everything that was inside. Alabaster altars and vast lattices and the tomb of Columbus. Murillo and wood carvings, gold and traceries, marble and Baroque and retables and pulpits and many Catholic objects which I did not even see. (*Spain* 77; *Výlet* 232-3)\(^{233}\)

Perspective is also created out of light, which is considered a typical feature of the Spanish landscape; however, through the unusual narrator’s view: “in this sunny land it will be readily understood that this is not really a garden which produces plants, but a garden produced out of shade” (*Spain* 86; *Výlet* 240).\(^{234}\)

Finally, a variety of perspectives changes a familiar place into something unrecognizable, a summary of different associations:

And yet you could not say at what point the country undergoes such a change, or in what the change consists; suddenly it reminds you of something else. It is no longer Africa, but something familiar to you; it might be the Corniche at Marseilles or the Riviera di Levante; once more it is Latin

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\(^{233}\) “Ale co je uvnitř, to vám není známo. Alabastrové oltáře a nesmírné mříže a Kolumbův náhrobek, Murillo a řezby, zlato a vykládání, mramor a barok a retábla a pulpity a ještě mnoho katolických věcí, které jsem ani neviděl.”

\(^{234}\) “a v této slunné zemi člověk pochopí, že to vlastně není zahrada z vegetace, nýbrž zahrada ze stínu.”
country, the warm and sparkling Mediterranean basin, and when you look at
the map, you discover that it is called Cataluña. (*Spain* 163; *Výlet* 295)\(^{235}\)

2.7.4. The Poetics of Games

Some chapters in *A Trip to Spain* are devoted to descriptions of different national
games such as *corrida* or *pelota* and dances such as Romani dances and the tango. The
notion of play is connected with the narrator’s view of Spain through its folklore and
games, which he sees as an essential part of culture. Additionally, the interplay of
different cultural and historical influences creates the local culture. Games are therefore
the synthesis and altered perspective of the primitive and the civilized, of animal and
human, since “a man is of course an animal, who laughs, probably undoubtedly because,
it is a reasonable animal” (Teige, *Svět* 9). Through games different times and modes of
existence coexist. *Corrida* represents a battle between man and beast and is beautiful only
to the insider, whereas the outsiders see only cruelty. Thus *pelota* cannot be defined with
international sport terminology, such as “‘catching the ball’; but in reality the process is
not one of catching, but involves rather a species of magic” (*Spain* 177; *Výlet* 306).\(^{236}\)

Games are also associated with cinema. For instance, *pelota* resembles

A slow-motion film; but in reality you see four white figures, each leaping
in his line, and smack bank, smack bang, smack bang, the ball flies above
them and remains almost invisible; if the player misses it, if the ball
bounces on the ground twice, or if some other mysterious slip is made, that

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\(^{235}\) “A přece bys nemohl říci, na kterém místě se ten kraj tak změnil, ani v čem je ta změna; najednou ti
připomíná něco jiného, už to není Afrika, ale něco známého: mohla by to být Corniche v Marseille nebo
Riviera di Levante; je to už zase země latinská, vlahá a jílká kotlinu mediteránní; a když hledáš na mapě,
kde jsi, vidiš, že se to jmenuje Cataluña.”

\(^{236}\) “chytat míček; ve skutečnosti to není chytání, ale jakési kouzelnictví.”
ends the round and the other team scores one point; the touts begin to wave their arms and with a terrific yell announce fresh bets. (*Spain* 176; *Výlet 305*)

The description of games offers the narrator a chance to synthesize the visual and textual; each account is accompanied by illustrations depicting the specific movements of the game and resembling free associations. In this way, they become the part of the dream-like landscape of Spanish culture by mixing the literal and the figurative. For instance, the traditional Spanish dance flamenco diminishes the difference between human and animal at the moment when a singer acoustically and physically begins resembling a bird. He is zoomorphised and estranged before he returns to his human shape. The narrator’s onomatopoeic game with music and animal sounds reflects the transformation:

The cantos flamencos are sung in this way: the singer, whose name is Niño de Utrecht or something of that sort, sits down on a chair among the guitar-players, who plunge into a jangling overture interspersed with pizzicato swirlings, pauses and breaks; and to this the singer begins to add his warblings like a canary, with eyes half-closed, head thrown back and hands resting on his knees. Yes, he screeches like a bird; he unsheathes his voice in a long, full-throated yell, which gets louder and louder, and is appallingly intense and protracted, as if, for a bet, he was trying to find out how long he could keep it up with one breath; suddenly this outstretched voice begins to quaver in a long trill, a protracted and piercing coloratura.

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237 “zpomaleny film: ve skutečnosti vidíte čtyři bílé figurky, skákající každá na své čáře, a bum plesk, bum plesk, bum plesk, nad nimi litá míček skoro neviditelný; mine-li jej hráč, poskočí-li míček dvakrát po zemi nebo stane-li se jiná tajemná chyba, je jedno kolo u konce, to druhé mužstvo dostane bod k dobru, makléři počnou mávat rukama a se strašným křikem vyvolávají nové sázky.”
which indulges in a tune of its own, performs a fluttering ripple, starts off on a queer, graceful meander, and suddenly sinks and dies away as the guitars chime in with a brisk strumming. (*Spain 137-9; Výlet 274-5*)

The appreciation of games also stems from an appreciation of daily life. In contrast with *Letters from Italy*, in which the narrator sought visual representations of everyday life but remained negative towards the quotidian, and *Letters from England*, in which the appreciation of quotidian is non-existent, in *A Trip to Spain*, the narrator sees art in everyday life itself. He perceives everyday activities such as shoe shining, everyday language, and street life as aesthetic forms of music and dance that typify the Spanish mentality:

The cleaning of boots is a national Spanish trade; or in exacter terms, the cleaning of boots is a national Spanish dance or ceremony. In other parts of the world, Naples, for instance, a bootblack will hurl himself upon your footwear furiously, and will start brushing it as if he were conducting the experiment in physics, by which heat or electricity is produced as the result of friction. Spanish bootcleaning is a dance, which, like the Siamese dances, is performed only with the hands. (*Spain 23; Výlet 193-4*)

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238 “*Cantos flamencos se zpívají takto:* zpěvák, který se jmenuje Niño de Utreta nebo nějak podobně, si sedne na židli mezi guittarristy, kteří spustí říčivý úvod prosetý pizzicatovými prškami, prodlevy a přeryvy; a do toho počne zpěvák zpívat jako kanár, s očima přimhouřenýma, hlavou zdviženou a rukama složenýma na kolenou. Opravdu se rozkřičí jako pták: vytási hlas dlouhým a vysokým, stoupajícím jekem z plna hrdla, strašně intensivně a táhlé, jako by se vsázel, jak dlouho to na jeden dech vydrží; najednou se ten napjatý hlas rozkmitá dlouhým trylchem, táhlou a skučivou koloraturou, která si prohrává sama se sebou, opisuje kmitající vlnovku, rozvíjí se podivným a zdobným meandrém a náhle klesá a odumírá za ryčného zadrnčení guitar.”

239 “Čištění bot je národní španělská živnost; přesněji řečeno, čištění bot je národní španělský tanec nebo obřad. Jinde na světě, dejme tomu v Naplesi, se takový čistič bot vrhne na váš střevic s jakouž zuřivostí a
The national identity as seen through games and dreams leads to a new understanding of the opposition between foreign and home. The games become the essence of the national and cultural idea. They simultaneously embody the primitive and the civilized, the past and the present. The narrator feels that he is a part of the Spanish culture because he finds aesthetic pleasure and confirmation of his ideas in everyday life there. He also witnesses the unity of nature in contrast with the variety of human activities and traditions. This time, the narrator not only identifies with the Czech national identity, but also with a supranational identity, which he constructs in contrast with Spain. We (my), in this case, as everybody but the Spaniards:

Spain has not yet ceased to be in close touch with nature, and has still not lost sight of its history; that is why it has managed to preserve itself to such an extent. And all that the rest of us can do is to observe, with a certain amount of wonder, how fine a thing it is to be a nation. (Spain 156; Výlet 290)\textsuperscript{240}

The narrator’s identification with Spanish culture parodically disappears at the moment of writing. The travelogue is written after returning home. That is the moment when the narrator feels the peculiarity of each culture and the “inappropriate” application of one to another:

By chance, while I am writing this, the cat has climbed on to my lap and is purring away for all she is worth. Now I must admit that, although the animal is really in my way and won’t take no for an answer, I somehow

\textsuperscript{240} “Španělsko ještě nepřestalo být přírodou a dosud se nevzpamatovalo ze svých dějin; proto si dovedlo tolerativně toho uchovat. A my ostatní, my se můžeme tak trochu divit, jaká krásná věc je být národem.”
couldn’t bring it over myself to kill her with a spear or an espada, whether on foot or on horseback. (Spain 103; Výlet 252)²⁴¹

2.8. Images from Holland

In Images from Holland, all the previously mentioned features, such as the difference between the oral and the written and interpolation of illustrations, appear with the addition of the new elements that add to the dichotomy between the written and the oral and to narrative distances. The first one is the introduction of the linked themes of return and exile as an emphasis on the closure of traveling and an important tie with travels depicted in Čapek’s fictional works. The second one is introduction of the theme of mirroring, which is yet another element of the Surrealist poetics that appears in Čapek’s travelogues. I will show how mirroring as a visual feature adds a new temporal dimension to the experience of the quotidian - that of the simultaneous existence of the present and the past.

Like A Trip to Spain, Images from Holland (1932) – the shortest of Čapek’s travelogues – was written after Čapek returned home. The act of writing from home brings about the difference between the author and the traveling narrator, which was mentioned earlier, because that is the point at which listeners expected to hear about the commonalities and typicalities²⁴² of Dutch life. The narrator, however, decides to change his perspective and talk from the point of view of his own, subjective experience (Holland 7; Obrázky 319). Similar to Letters from Italy, in this travelogue, the narrator

²⁴¹ “Náhodou zatím co toto píši, vlezla si mi na klin kočka a přede z plna hrdla. Tedy přiznám se, ačkoliv mi to zvíře vlastně překáží a nemohu se ho zbavit, že bych jaksi nebyl s to je usmrtit kopím ani espadou, pěšky ani a caballo.”
²⁴² Because it is connected to visual representations, the notion of “typicality” will be discussed further in the forthcoming chapter
again looks for the alternative path. He gets off the train and keeps away from the main roads in order to find his own vision of the country that is different from its previous representations. His trip is a rediscovery of Holland’s people, nature, and history – “the soul of the place” (Holland 33; Obrázky 351).

Consequently, he chooses a selective approach to travel writing, deciding about what he is going to narrate and what he will omit.

In the travelogue, the second-person address is used less frequently than in *A Trip to Spain*, thus signaling a preference for written narration over direct oral communication with his audience. As a result of this preference, the narration is more an act of witnessing, establishing a clear distinction between Holland and home, between the narrator and his readers, who are not involved in the narration but remain apart from the narrator. The use of the past tense in combination with imperatives such as “imagine,” - clearly pointing to readers’ acceptance of the narrator’s version of things - is therefore significant. Čapek writes: “I saw the operations connected with the draining of the Zuider Zee. Imagine a real sea, which could be fitted in somewhere between Oldham, Stoke, Derby and Sheffield, let us say; a sea with storms and steamers and all the maritime appurtenances” (Holland 25; Obrázky 342).

Čapek also guides the reader through a gallery of his own illustrations, juxtaposing poetic descriptions with his plain illustrations (Obrázky 319-21). Finally, the narrator frequently uses self-address, which further authenticates his subjective

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243 “duši kraje.”
244 The English translation changes the Czech original to make it more meaningful to an English reader. Whereas Čapek refers to the Czechoslovak towns Kladno, Příbram, Tábor, and Kolín, Paul Selver, the translator, opts to use the names of English towns – Oldham, Stoke, Derby, and Sheffield. “Viděl jsem práce na vysušení Zuidersehorského moře. Představte si skutečné moře, které by se vešlo tak asi mezi Kladno, Příbram, Tábor a Kolín; moře s bouřemi a ostrovy a parníky a veškerým mořským příslušenstvím.”
245 This part is missing from the English translation.
impressions of Holland: “man alive, this is a place where you could spend hours looking at the horizon and sifting the warm sand between your fingers; you’ll probably never take a trip over there any more, but never mind, the world is wide” (Holland 27-8; Obrázky 344).246

2.8.1. The Theme of Return

*Images from Holland* introduces the notion of return as part of travel writing. A return was already described at the end of *A Trip to Spain* in biblical terms: “Having beheld all this and marveled thereat, the pilgrim set out on his homeward journey” (Holland 185; Obrázky 312).247 The third-person narration in *A Trip to Spain*, as well as the scene of return in the train, is reminiscent of the beginning of the novel *Hordubal* (1933). There, a peasant returns to his native Slovak village after working in America. In contrast with *Hordubal*, though, narrative of which will explore the tension between familiar places and unfamiliar changes as well ad the problematics of seeing, in *A Trip to Spain*, the narrator refers to himself and to his lack of sight: “Just look at the fellow and see what a fool he is! There he sits in the corner like a bundle of misery, and he is annoyed because he did not see more of it” (Holland 187; Obrázky 313).248 The paradox situation of return as the awareness of forgetting will be developed in the narrative trilogy and fictional travelogues of the 1930s, *Hordubal* (1933), *Povětroň* (1934), and *Obyčejný život* (1934). The unsuccessful return to the non-existent home in which the experienced country remains present only in a few photos from collected newspapers clippings

246 “člověče, tady bys vydržel hodiny, divaje se k obzoru a přesypaje teplý písek mezi prsty; už asi nepoplujíš v tam tu stranu, ale to je jedno, svět je veliký.”
247 “Vida to vše a podiviv se, nastoupil pouťník svůj návrat k domovu.”
248 “Vida ho, hlupáka! Tak tady sedí v koutě jako hromádka neštěstí a mrzí ho, že toho neviděl více.”
(Hordubal), the reconstruction of the exotic personality through interpretations (Povětroň), and the final failure of the concept of ordinary man (Obyčejný život) will be discussed in the following chapter.

In Images from Holland, the notion of return develops in a short meta-textual narrative fragment in which the traveler-outsider explains the paradox and anachronistic nature of traveling. At the beginning, the traveler inevitably experiences railway stations as the gateway to new countries. At first glance, everything is the same - one landscape resembles another. Travel extends into history while the traveler becomes acquainted with the architecture and arts in the new country. It finally ends with the exploration of the country’s natural beauty. However, the most precious moments, such as sounds of the windmill, are discovered only during the later stages of the trip, when the narrator already has a stockpile of experiences and is forgetting and delving into memory. The full awareness of the journey occurs only upon return when the traveler realizes how diverse the world is as he slowly forgets the details (Holland 8; Obrázky 325).

2.8.2. Mirroring

In Holland, the theme of dream from previous travelogues as a form of simultaneity is transposed into mirroring,249 reflecting the fact that the country is built on water. In poetry, mirroring corresponds with Nezval’s considerations of polythematic poetry, which originates in a new understanding of the poetic image (“Obrazotvornost” 63-74). According to Nezval, a poetic image is not of secondary importance in relation to the object it represents and is not created in order to limit or explain the poetic object. Rather, it maintains the same semantic importance as the object. In Nezval’s words: “both

249 The visual category of mirroring will be discussed in the forthcoming chapter.
images are independent and when one follows another, we perceive them as if they were uttered simultaneously, as we perceive a musical chord, which is the result of the simultaneous sound of few tones” (68). The consequence of this treatment of the (formerly) secondary poetic image is its liberation. It becomes, in opposition to the plain comparison, “a theme, even just for one moment” (68). The creation of this type of poetic image is most likely when logic weakens, i.e. during dreams (70). Mirroring is at the same time the most prominent defamiliarizing element in Holland and an opportunity to introduce the dichotomy between home and Holland: “It is like this: at home, there are streets between houses, but in Holland, there is simply water between the houses” (Holland 13; Obrázky 331). The mirrored image has the same importance as the actual object and both of them coexist.

Finally, mirroring enables the simultaneous existence of the past and the present. The past in this case is unreal, just like the past’s image in the water. Nevertheless, it is alive and present. The mirror is the link between reality and dreams, between the past and the present. The associative nature of mirroring in Images from Holland is evident as the narrator expands the notion of mirroring. He starts with a description of the architecture and the urban features of the canals that serve as streets before expanding the town into the water. This is, incidentally, also a continuation of personification of objects.

As, on their sand, they could not to any extent stretch upwards, they simply reversed the process and produced a looking-glass effect downwards. It is the people who live on top, restfully and staidly; underneath, it is their shadows which move, even more restfully and

\[250\] “tetiž to je tak: tam, kde u nás bývá uprostřed mezi domy ulice, je v Holandsku uprostřed mezi domy jednoduše voda.”
staidly. I should not wonder if the surface of the grachts still reflected the shadows of people from bygone centuries, men in broad ruffs and women in mob caps. You see, these grachts are very old and consequently somewhat unreal. The towns appear to be standing, not on the earth, but on their own reflections; these highly respectable streets appear to emerge from bottomless depths of dreams; the houses appear to be intended as houses and, at the same time, as reflections of houses. (15; Czech 331)251

The diversity of the world is, in Images from Holland, like it was in Čapek’s other travelogues, mainly depicted by examining how objects and experiences are made. The country on the shores of the ocean is made in a way that “you take a bit of sea, fence it in and pump it out; and at the bottom is left a deposit to which a respectable slice of Europe, by means of its rivers, supplies its best swampy soil, and the sea its fine sand;” (Holland 24; Obrázky 341).252

In Holland, the narrator feels out of place in a world marked by the sea. He is a foreigner in a dream realm because he is not capable of describing the maritime world with his “continental dictionary:”

you haven’t much of a chance, my good man, with your landlubber vocabulary among those mooing ocean-cows and elephants and swarthly pigs, in this vast ocean-stable, where the animals snort and feed and sleep, where bells ring and chains clank; look at those brown Malays with the

251 “Protože na svém písku se nemohli příliš rozmáchnout do výšky, udělali to prostě obráceně: nazrcadlili si to do hloubky. Nahoře tiše a vážně žijí lidé; dole ještě tišší a vážněji se pohybují jejich stiny. Nedivil bych se, kdyby v zrcadle grachtů se pohybovaly odrady lidí z minulých staletí, muž v širokých krejzlikách a žen v čepcích. Ty grachty jsou totiž velmi staré a následkem toho jaksi neskutečné. Jako by ta města ani nestála na zemi, nýbrž na svém vlastním zrcadlení; jako by se ty solidní ulice nořily z bezesudné tůně snů; jako by ty domy měly být zárovn domem i obrazem domu.”
252 “vezme se kus moře, ohradí se a vypumpuje se; i zůstane dno, na něž pořádný kus Evropy dodává řekami své nejlepší bahno a moře jemný písek.”
flower-patterned turbans; look at that viscous, oily water: gold from every quarter of the globe is dissolved in it. (*Holland* 31; *Obrázky* 349)\textsuperscript{253}

As it will be argued in the chapter on intermediality, a journey to Holland, especially in light of its history of visual art, challenges the narrator’s notion of home and the security of everydayness with the introduction of the theme of exile. What relates the two spaces, that of home and Holland (the exilic space), is their smallness, which affects the national mindset and has had certain historical consequences for both Holland and the First Czechoslovak Republic. The narrator’s reconsideration of a shared (European) history, which is signaled by his use of the first-person plural, is seen through art history (including architecture). The Czech identity is characterized as the artist remnants of the Holy Roman Empire and the Habsburg Empire, both of which affected all of Europe at some point in time.

If you follow the tracks of the Habsburgs, you will find, not only baroque, but sundry other mutual traits; thus, to take only one instance, the Spanish flamencos by their very name are connected with the artistic tradition of old Flanders. Perhaps an ampler world-order would bring about amongst us and all other peoples a great deliverance and creative ardour, a kermesse of the spirit, a Dionysiac abundance. (*Holland* 56; *Obrázky* 377)\textsuperscript{254}

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\textsuperscript{253} “Kampak se hrabeš, člověče, se svým suchozemským slovníkem mezi tyhle bučicí mořské krávy a slony a černé svině, do toho nesmiřného mořského chléva, kde to funí, krmí se, spí a zvoní a řinči řetezy, koucej, tady ti hnědi Malajici s květovanými turbany, koucej, ta slizká a olejnatá voda: to je roztok zlata z celého světa.”

\textsuperscript{254} “Jdete-li po stopách Habsburků, nenajdete jenom barok, nýbrž i všelikou jinou vzájemnost; flamendři naších zemí i bohémští flamencos španělí už svým jménem navazují na kulturní tradici starých Flander. Snad by s nějakým širším řadem světa přišlo na nás a na všechny velké uvolnění a tvořivá bujarost, kermesse ducha, bohatost dionýská.”
2.9. Travels in the North

*Travels in the North* is the apotheosis of the narrator’s constantly developing travel philosophy and exploration of intermediality, to which Čapek adds some new features. The most important addition is the explicit presence of a dialogic other. In this case, the second narrator and the insertion of poetry as a new genre and perspective enrich the journey and create new narrative facets. The theme of the mirror in Čapek’s final travelogue expands the experience of the quotidian into a dichotomy between the natural and supernatural, which exist side by side one another. At the same time, the coexistence between these two planes becomes the culmination of the traveler’s experience and his key to discovering Europe’s alternative beginning, that of the European North. North as a new and intimate beginning is diametrically opposed to Mediterranean antiquity, which is traditionally considered the cradle of European identity.

2.9.1. Presence of the Other

In contrast with the previous travelogues that were constructed as a combination of verbal and visual narratives by a single author, *Travels in the North* includes poems written by another author - Čapek’s wife, Olga Scheinpflugová, who accompanied him on his journey to Scandinavia. This travelogue also marks the first time that poetry is explicitly used in the travelogues because previously it had only been implied through the lyricism of the prose text. Poetry written by another narrative subject adds an additional point of view and the authenticating presence to the text. The poem “Malären,” for instance, is a metaphor for Sweden. It is about water, which had early been introduced in
the mirroring principle in *Images from Holland*. Scheinpflugová’s poem turns water into a metaphor for a picture as its surface becomes a Gobelin tapestry with white sails imprinted on it. The poem also foreshadows the travelers’ advancement further north where the endless waters change into white, the endless nights of the polar circle commence, and the supernatural world becomes the beginning rather than the last border of Europe.

The intrusion of another narrative subject has other consequences for the travelogue’s narrative. So far, the travelogues have been constructed as a traveler’s interior monologue or used *skaz*, whereby the narrator simulated the elements of spoken language and directly addressed his readers, who were also listeners to his tale and viewers of his illustrations. The second narrative subject explicitly introduces dialogue; questions and answers are no longer implied and yet another perspective on the trip is present, which authenticates the narrator’s experiences. An example of this is the voice of the ship captain who encourages the traveler to disbelieve his perception and be fearless in front of the power of nature. The voice of the second narrator introduces “Czechness” and emphasizes the feeling of the traveler’s foreignness. In another instance, the narrator has an interior dialogue and becomes a local inhabitant who narrates from his own point of view, looking at the boat full of foreigners from a detached point of view. The introduction of the second narrating subject - both external and internal - is again another example of mirroring, or in other words, of semantic doubling.

The *Håkon Adalstein* bellowed like the tethered bullock; well, well, we’re coming. And if you sailed without us and left us here, I should get used to it too; I should write articles for the local Avisen and go for walks into a
forest of a thousand years ago. What should I write about? Well, actualities, chiefly about infinity, of the last millennium, and what is new among the trolls;…And the Håkon Adalstein arrived, quite a new and comfortable boat; she carried thirty foreigners of various nationalities, but they were not armed, and were not at war among themselves, instead they were peacefully buying postcards, and behaving altogether like educated people. (North 125-6; Cesta 123-4)

2.9.2. Traveling philosophy

In contrast to Čapek’s other travelogues, Travels in the North, the longest of them, starts with references to the epic past. The epic also refers to the epic nature of travels and discoveries while simultaneously unveiling that this would be the main feature of the travelogue. The narrator contextualises his own journey among other journeys: “This journey began a very long time ago in the early days of my youth” (North 11; Cesta 9). The narrator then continues with appropriation of the north, which becomes his own north, which is different from the north experienced and described by others.

As well, Travels in the North is a summary of Čapek’s traveling philosophy. At the beginning of the travelogue, the narrator schematizes four types of traveling, which overlap. All four types were undertaken by the narrator in his past. The first are polar

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255 “Håkon Adalstein bučí jako přívázaný býček; nu, nu, už jdeme. A kdybyste nám ujeli a nechali nás tady, nu co, taky bych si zvykl; psal bych články do zdejších Aviser a chodil bych na procházky do lesa před mnoha tisíci lety. O čem bych psal? Inu, takové aktuality, hlavně o nekonečnosti, o posledních tisíciletích a o tom, co je nového mezi trolly;…A byl tu Håkon Adalstein, docela nová a útulná loď; vezl třicet cizinců z různých národů, ale nebyli ozbrojeni a neválčili mezi sebou, nýbrž pokojně kupovali pohlednice a chovali se vůbec jako vzdělaní lidé.”
256 “Ta cesta se začala hodně dávno, za časných dnů mladosti.”
discoveries from the beginning of the centuries. These mapped (and from a narrative point of view constructed) the unknown world of the poles, and Čapek eagerly followed and admired these expeditions. The second is “arm-chair traveling” in literature, which equal to the polar discoveries because they also explore the fantastic and lost worlds that exist beyond human imagination. This type of traveling is mapped by Scandinavian writers and artists but the map is never finished. (North 12; Cesta 9) That is where the narrator feels at home and has to see whether the actual countries really resemble his travels through literature. In other words, he wants to verify the foreign landscapes through his own literary representations. His journey is thus a journey into literature as “the most national thing that a nation possesses, and at the same time speaks with a tongue which is comprehensible and intimately familiar to everyone” (North 12-3; Cesta 10-1).  

The third type of travel is internal and it is at the same time a journey (cesta) and a pilgrimage (pouť). The north is now not only a geographical region, i.e. the end of Europe or the northern experience in literature, but also a symbol for the melancholic, cold beauty found in nature, which is, in turn, a symbol for the melancholic, cold beauty of soul. The first illustrations in the travelogue show how the flat terrain of Denmark changes into the hills and forests of Sweden into the mountains, icebergs, and calm seas of Norway, which are not hospitable since “we too, are already north and carry deep in our souls a fragment of our cool and sweet North which does not melt even in the swelter of harvest” (North 14; Cesta 12).  

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257 “tím nejnárodnějším, co národ má, a přitom mluví řečí srozumitelnou a důvěrně blízkou všem.”
258 “i my už jsme sever a nosíme v hloubi duše kus svého chladného a sladkého severu, který neroztaje ani žňovým úpalem.”
the hardships of travel in order to find something resembling Christian paradise. As it is visible from his words, the language confirms the Biblical connotation of the pilgrimage: and when you make a pilgrimage – but it is a sweat, man; a dreadful trouble and worry; and then when you make a pilgrimage, let it be right into the loveliest paradise; and then say if it isn’t what you were looking for. Yes, thank God, it is it; I have seen my North and it was good. *(North 14; Cesta 13)*

The last type of travel is to gain knowledge of the Germanic race. If man travels for the sake of learning about different nations and comparing them with his own, then he should travel in order to familiarize himself with those happier and progressive ones. Here, Čapek does not refer directly to the Germanic race in relation to Fascism but goes to get a “glimpse of pure-blooded Germans” *(North 15; Cesta 13)* extending from the carefree people of Denmark at its south, paradisal point to the northern regions where any human presence becomes inadequate: “I went to have a look at the midnight part of Europe; and thank God, it’s not so bad with her yet” *(North 15-6; Cesta 13).*

### 2.9.3. Mirroring as the Creation of the Supernatural World

At first sight, everything in Denmark and Germany is the same except for the uniforms of the railway staff. The homogeneity suggests that governments differentiate between different peoples *(North 19; Cesta 17).* The gate to the north and the land of Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy-tales and Søren Kierkegaard’s philosophy of

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259 “A když už putovat – vždyť je to námaha, člověče, hrozná trampota a starost; a když už tedy putovat, ať je to hned do rámě nejsličnějšího; a pak řekni, není-li to to, co jsi hledal. Ano, chvála bohu, je to ono; viděl jsem svůj sever, a dobré to bylo.”

260 “ať se jde podívat na půluční kousek Evropy; a chvála bohu, ještě to s ní není tak zlé.”
melancholy, Denmark is a country of peasants, of carefree and happy people, a country where the state army exists only as a caricature of the Royal Guard (North 31; Cesta 29). It is a country without fear, a land of children, a paradise on earth with the highest percentage of suicides in which, as the narrator says, the unhappy ones die because their own unhappiness embarrasses them (North 28; Cesta 26), and where the grandiosity of the castle at Elsinor does not match the melancholic mood of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark (North 34; Cesta 31).

The use of perspectives and their cinematic nature is also important in this travelogue. Čapek sees Norway in the distance and tries to figure out by changing his vantage point how it is different from Sweden.

And wooden cottages the same as on the other side of the frontier, but poorer; and no longer are they made of perpendicular planks, but of horizontal boards, and they are brown and grey like the rocks; and they do not stand any longer only just on the ground, but on stone, or on little wooden legs so that they do not get wet from below; and they are not covered with tiles, shingle, or thatch, but – with – what, in fact? – is it turf? Or peat? Even [now]261 I don’t really know. (North 68; Cesta 66)262

The principle of mirroring, already introduced as a specific tool of simultaneity in *Images from Holland*, is even more strongly emphasised in *Travels in the North*. In *Travels in the North*, mirroring is foregrounded to the extent that it creates a supernatural world within the known one by completely abolishing the balance between oneric states

261 The English translation omits “now” (*teď*), which in the narrative is an important temporal category.
262 “A dřevené chalupy jako na druhé straně hranic, ale chudší; a už nejsou z kolmých prken, ale z vodorovných trámů, a jsou hnedě a šedivé jako ty skály; a už nestojí jen tak na zemi, ale na kamenných nebo dřevených nožičkách, aby jim nebylo odpodu mokro; a nejsou kryty taškou, šindelem nebo došky, nýbrž – čím vlastně? Je to drn nebo rašelina? Nevím to přesně ani teď.”
and the physical environment. Supernatural worlds “violate the laws of the actual world” because “what is impossible in the natural world becomes possible in its supernatural counterpart.” (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 115) Moreover, they are worlds “transcending the human world but constructed by the human imagination” (117). In *Travels in the North*, the supernatural worlds are constructed as not only a defamiliarized perspective on life and creativity, but also as the traveler’s inadequacies in the prevailing world of nature. At first, the defamiliarized view is just an intrusion of the supernatural (fantastic) into the realm of the comprehensible. Later on, it develops into an imbalance between human comprehension and nature, to the extent that natural objects become personified while people become unable to cope with their own fantasy and turn into passive agents, losing their balance and ability to comprehend the world they witness. The limitations of the physical and the human are contrasted with the visual and nature. The traveler rhetorically asks: “Is there no end to the journey, and to gazing about? Ye, there is an end to the journey; but there’s no end to the Northern day” (*North* 94; *Cesta* 93).

However, the biggest wonder in Sweden is its nature, especially its limitless forests. The fantastic component of the natural world mirrors the world of man. As in the mirror imagery discussed in the context of *Images from Holland*, the mirroring in *Travels in the North* reaches beyond the depicted object and becomes the object’s semantic extension. It is the case when, as Umberto Eco says, the mirror acquires the function of prosthesis (*protiéza*), which, “in the broad sense of the word is every tool, which expands the circle of activity of an organ” (22). Furthermore, “in that sense the mirror is simply a neutral prosthesis, which allows spotting the visual object there, where the eye would not spot it (looking at oneself, around the corner, to the body cavity), with the same

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263 “Což není nikde konec cesty a divání? Ale ano, konec cesty; jenom že není konce severnímu dni.”
effectiveness and clarity” (22). In other words, the experienced world becomes overwhelming and fictionally larger than the narration, transposing it into fantasy and myth. Sweden is divided between the wild realms of nature and the cultivated world of people. The more the traveler explores the magnificence and limitlessness of nature, the more is he overwhelmed by its supernatural element and the awareness of his own alienation within its realm. Forests are the supernatural world within nature. The vegetation, constantly growing and proliferating, is a metaphor for life itself. The “real German forest” as mythological and therefore a timeless, fictional dwelling is the supernatural world within the nature’s creation. The more the traveler, overwhelmed by fear, becomes aware of the mythological aspect, the more he longs to return to the realm of man. Now, the supernatural world of human Sweden becomes a shelter for the narrator that protects him from the wonders and supernatural world of nature.

And then water without end, furrowed by a small steamer and sailing boats with the silver line of the horizon somewhere as far as – my friends, how big the world is! And again it closes up, from both sides high trees so that you have hardly a strip of heaven above your head; and again the glistening gaze of a lake swings past, making space for heaven, distance, light and the dazzling brightness; and the narrow, silver edge of a river cuts into the woods, the smooth little mirror of a tiny water-lily lake gives a sparkle; a red farmhouse is reflected in the silver water-level, silver birches, and dark alders, black and white cows on a bank as green as moss
– thank God, here again man and cows and rooks live on a flat bank of deep woods and waters. *(North 49; Cesta 46)*

The northern tip of Europe is at the continent’s very beginning; it is the source of European identity and civilization. The end of the journey brings about the recognition that the road to the beginnings of Europe leads through surreal and oneric conditions, only to break the illusion and finish in the darkness of the ordinary European night: “You see, man, these are no longer Swedish dusks, transparent and grey, and cool like the water in bays, nor the metaphysical vertigo of the midnight sun; this is already the very ordinary, oppressive, European night. Well, what about it, we went to have a look at God’s peace, and now we travel home again” *(North 268; Cesta 264).*

**Summary**

In this chapter, I have shown how *skaz* changed the nature of travel writing in the 1920s. My discussion began with the activized position of the narrator and the theoretical and aesthetic considerations of *skaz* during the interwar period. Characterizations of *skaz* progressed from considerations of its monologic nature (Eikhenbaum) to understanding its dialogic character (diglossia) and the constant presence of the addressee in each utterance (Vinogradov, Bakhtin). In the analyzed travelogues, *skaz* was also understood within Čapek’s own storytelling aesthetics, the fictional world of fairytales, and the

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264 “a pak vodstvo bez konce, brázděné parníčkem a plachetkami, se stříbrnou čárkou obzoru až tam někde – lidi, jak je ten svět veliký! A zase se to zavře, s obou stran vysoký les, že stěží máš nad hlavou proužek nebes; i rozmáhně se opět lesklá širočina jezera i udělá místo pro nebesa, dálku, světlo a oslnivý třpyt; i zařízne se do lesů úzký, stříbrný bříšek, a zabýšti se hladké zrcátko jezírka leknínového; červený dvorec se obráží v tiché hladině, stříbrné břízy a černé olše, černobilé kravky na břehu zeleném jako mech – chvála bohu, tady už zase žijí lidé a krávy a vrány na plochém břehu hlubokých vod a lesů.”

265 “Vidíš, člověče, to už nejsou švédské soumraky, průhledné a zelené a chladné jako voda zálivů, ani metafysická závaří půlnočního slunce; to už je docela obyčejná, těžká evropská noc. Nu co, byli jsme se podívat na boží mir, a teď zase jedeme domu.”
inclusion of other written genres - low-brow, journalism and poetry - and elements of the visual arts (film and illustration). The analysis of travelogues showed how these elements were used. In my discussion of *Letters from Italy*, I established the main theoretical considerations, which included the difference between the narrator/storyteller and his readers/listeners, the simultaneous existence of the past and the present, of domestication of foreign places, and the discovery of home in a foreign place. Using *Letters from England*, I showed how the narrator was rendered a passive part of his narration and how illustrations (from a narrative point of view) were used as a replacement for aesthetic impressions. *A Trip to Spain* featured characteristic interpolations of film elements into the narration and the articulation of identity as belonging to a supranational formation based on the understanding of games as undercurrent of an ethnicity. *A Trip to Spain* also shows how the use of perspective as an element of the visual arts affects *skaz* narration. *Images from Holland* introduced the theme of the mirror as yet another form of poetic simultaneity and featured additional themes such as return and exile. Finally, *Travels in the North* serves as a summary of Čapek’s traveling philosophy and depicts travel as an adventure into a supernatural, fictional world beyond human comprehension.
Chapter 3
Travels between Nature and Art

3.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the intermedial elements in Čapek’s travelogue. Intermediality is understood here as a particular form of intertextuality, involving the interaction between literature and the visual arts. I have already touched upon certain facets of intermediality. In the introduction, I examined it in the context of Apollinaire’s poetics; his use of simultanité, which he borrowed from the visual arts, and his adaptation of photographic techniques to represent life. In the previous chapters, I briefly mentioned how Čapek’s utilization of intermediality created different forms of address in the narration.

In this chapter, I will analyze how Čapek visually depicted the process of transforming his biographical travels into literary journeys. Specifically, I will explore three elements of intermediality: iconotexts, which include explicitly visual elements such as illustrations; ekphrasis, which is the narrative representation of art works; and the visual elements of language. The discussion will start with a brief overview of intermedial studies. It will then continue with an overview of the Prague Linguistic Circle’s contributions to the field and their connection with Karel Čapek. Finally, I will examine the intermedial elements present in Čapek’s travelogues.
3.2. Intermediality and the Prague Linguistic Circle

Intermedial studies, as Aleksandar Flaker argues, are the product of twentieth-century literary theory (Flaker, *Nomadi* 14). Although intergeneric references, as a challenge of the idea of mimesis, existed in European aesthetic thought since Horatius Flaccus Quintus’ *The Art of Poetry* (c. 18 BCE) and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s study *Laokoon: An Essay on the Limits of Art and Poetry* (1766), in which the author provides the classic definition of the visual as spatial and body-oriented and the verbal as temporal and action-oriented arts (55), modern artistic practice challenged his distinction between the visual and verbal.

Despite intermediality’s presence in since the Augustan age of the Roman Empire, the term “intermedial” originated in Oskar Walzel’s lecture “Mutual Elucidation of Arts” (“Wechselseitige Erhellung der Künste,” 1917) (Flaker, *Nomadi* 14) and then in North American literary scholarship of the late 1960s (Konstantinović 153). Later, the French Structuralist school recognized the concept; It appeared, for instance, in the late essays of Roland Barthes (*The Responsibility*). As a “particular form of an area of intertextuality” (Wagner 12), intermedial studies expanded the methodological field of comparative literary studies to the examination of links between literature and other arts forms (Konstantinović 153-60), interpreting the history of literature as the history of interartistic connections, in which “a glance at an old tradition dating back as far as Homer’s description of Achilles’ shield will easily convince us that poetry and painting have constantly proceeded hand in hand, in a sisterly emulation of aims and means of expression” (Praz 5).
Although intermediality is now receiving attention, the beginnings of contemporary, intermedial, and semiotic thought are linked to the theoretical practices of the Prague School. For instance, “The Statue in Pushkin’s Poetic Mythology” (“Socha v symbolice Puškinově,” 1937), Roman Jakobson isolated the image of the statue in Pushkin’s work, building his argument on the creation of a particular poetic myth upon the simultaneous analysis of Pushkin’s literary text and the poet’s own notes and drawings. Furthermore, Jakobson’s post-war linguistic studies, written in the United States, are to a certain extent also intermedial, pointing to the prevalence of visual elements in language (“On the Relation” 338-45) as well as “correspondences between the functions of grammar in poetry and of relational geometry in painting” (“Poetry” 46).266

Jan Mukařovsky’s key studies, such as “Dialectic Contradictions in Modern Art” (“Dialektické rozpořady v moderním umění,” 1935), “Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts” (“Estetická funkce, norma a hodnota jako sociální fakty,” 1936), “Art” (“Umění,” 1940), and “The Essence of Visual Arts” (“Podstata výtvarných umění,” 1944), can also be read from the point of view of intermediality. “Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts” and “Art” underscore that the internal development of literature results from both a dynamic exchange between the literary canon and traditionally marginal forms that failed to merit aesthetic attention and interaction with the other arts. Their techniques are transposed from one artistic medium to another; photography, film, and even horticulture initially belonged to the non-artistic sphere, and become art. Film, as a new artistic form, both drew and eventually gained independence

266 Jakobson here notes the similarities between the Hussite chorale Zisskiana cantio and the visual art of the epoch.
from other arts, especially painting, epic poetry, and theater. As it developed, its narrative structure began influencing verbal art (Mukařovský, “Estetická funkce” 22).

For Mukařovský, intermediality becomes an intrinsic feature of arts because a work of art always strives to overcome the “limits given by the material [of its own artistic medium], leaning once towards this and next time towards that [material] from other arts” (“The Essence” 233). Mukařovský argues that modern movements and schools, such as Cubism and Surrealism, drew significantly on poetry, transposing figures of speech into painting, sculpture, collage, and assemblage. Multiperspectivity in Cubism, for example, is a transposition of synecdoche - a figure of speech in which one part is made to represent the whole - while Surrealism inherited the torso as a theme from literature transposed it into fragmented, defamiliarized visual structures (“Knoetice” 310). At that moment “poetry and the art of painting become more than ever sisters, while the qualitative difference between signs they use – here the word, there colour and line – recedes in the background” (“K noetice” 311).

In spite of all efforts, a total liberation from the limits of the artistic material cannot occur. Instead, the recipient medium visibly changes during the transposition. Therefore, according to Mukařovský, the “dialectic contradictions” of modern art are visible in the “usual metaphorical clichés” such as the “musicality” of a poem or a painting, the “poeticity” of music of painting, the “plasticity” of a poem or picture, and even in the complex structures of, for example, Richard Wagner’s musical structures transposed into Thomas Mann’s novels (“Contraindications” 148-9). Furthermore, transposition of an image into verbal art does not affect the reader’s optical perception; rather, it shapes the verbal features of the work of art. Hence the verbal representation of
an image is never of the same quality as the image itself; instead, it is only its verbal equivalent. In Mukařovský’s words:

Thus, if literature attempts to depict according to the model of graphic art, it cannot compel words to have an effect upon vision; an attempt at coloration in literature will therefore have quite a different result than in visual art. A noticeable shift in vocabulary will occur: adjectives, nouns, and also verbs capable of signifying, not directly presenting, a color will increase excessively in the given writer’s vocabulary and will provide it with a special character...These individual verbal techniques can, of course, correspond to various manners of painting, but even in that case they will not be their equals but will be only their verbal equivalents.

(“The Essence” 233-4)

A new take on “poeticity” is visible in the studies Mukařovský wrote during the 1940s, focusing on the works of modern artists, in which the term is incorporated into the lexicon of the visual arts. Here, I have in mind the studies on the Czech Avant-Garde painters and visual artists, Josef Šíma and Jan Zrzavý. in the study on Josef Šíma (1891-1971), Mukařovský argues that the Czech Avant-Garde painter and visual artist founded his art upon the “limitations of his vocabulary” and expanded a variety of semantic meanings with use of only two colors, green and blue (“Josef Šíma” 307).

Mukařovský’s aesthetic considerations of poeticity offer new perspectives on transposition into other artistic media. Transposed to contemporary abstract paintings, the designation refers to the “semantic relationships with which the painting is interlaced that make its internal structure analogous to the structure of a lyric poem (“Poezie” 296).
Poeticity influences a spectator’s perception in a way that “the meaning of the picture in the spectator’s mind actualizes and internally diversifies only during the perception, therefore in time. That counts for all paintings, regardless the period, type or school” (“Poezie” 296). The internal diversification leads to the “optic isolation of constituent portrayed objects” (“Poezie” 297) and a dynamic tension between them, resulting in a loosened structure of the visual work. Optically isolated objects become independent signs in mutual connection with other objects. The result is, that along with the theme, all other elements, such as lines and colours, carry semantic meaning and thus may be analyzed as signs. Colour for instance, is not just

an optic phenomenon, but also a sign: its meaning is given by the circumstances, that in a spectator it elicits certain absorption of ideas, frequently unspecific, other times considerably obvious: even in an entirely non-thematic image, blue colour – as the “abstract” art has illustratively shown – will, according to its position on the surface of the painting, signify either skies or water surface; the meaning of colour may even become conventional – compare medieval symbolism of colours.

(“Poezie” 296)

Mukařovský’s work on Čapek focused mainly on the development of his prose and the intergeneric features of its structure. These traits also apply to the travelogues, the main theme of which is traveling as a search for new perspectives on things. As Mukařovský argued, Čapek approached the new vision, or request for clarity, through defamiliarizing views of things from multiple perspectives and stylistic devices that connect different semantic fields, such as unusual comparisons that link two objects
belonging to distant semantic fields and transpose meaning from one semantic field to another (“Vývoj” 325-6).

I argue that the implementation of all these different devices was also done within the framework of the visual arts and intermediality, through which the narrators-travelers in the travelogues articulate their experiences through each foreign culture’s attitude towards the visual arts – both its creation and purpose. Čapek’s travels are built primarily on his search for representations of spiritual ideas in paintings and architecture and not on documentary accounts of the landscapes he sees.

In his travels Čapek’s “ordinary man” was mainly searching for and admiring the past (Thomas 118). Despite the narrator appearing as a member of the masses, as the previous chapter demonstrated, the ordinariness is just a mask provided by the skáz narration. The discovery of Čapek’s new poetics of the present moment needed the disguise. A closer examination of the narrative, especially the narrator’s erudition, and interest in bygone times which is apparent when he critiques art or provides pictorial descriptions, questions the ordinariness of his views. The frequent excursions into the past exist only as an exploration of how the present moment is represented in works of art, or, in other words, in the simultaneity of the past and present. As Mukařovský shows, Čapek’s prose is built on his link with modern poetry, with simultaneity as one of its main features. The lyrisation of his prose grew out of his translations of French poetry and the transposition of French poetics into the poetics of Poetism.267 Therefore the narrator’s disguise and imitation of both the ordinary man’s speech and point of view did not mean that he failed to recognize present dangers like the beginnings of Facism

267 Here it should not be forgotten that the Czech poetic tradition was foregrounded through Čapek’s adaptation of the “Zone.”
(Thomas 126) or that he generalized the experience of foreignness with the “blind fanaticism” of “a tourist or petite-bourgeois” (Thomas 127).

Instead, in his travelogues, Čapek experimented with the idea and representation of “the ordinary.” The ordinary man in Čapek tried to provide an escape from the pathos of traveling, and provided a new, defamiliarizing point of view, which permitted an understanding of his own cultural identity. To defamiliarize means here to find the essence of “the ordinary.” In Italy, the traveler was trying to be invisible in his attempts to avoid the fashionable travels prescribed by the Baedekers and to search for his own vision of Italian culture. In England and Holland, the narrator is everything but “ordinary,” since he visited both countries to participate in meetings with foreign colleagues. In England, the search for alternative paths was basically an escape into nature and tradition, which made Scotland the exotic foil to a cosmopolitan and alienating London. In Holland, the traveler found “the ordinary” in the history of visual arts, which typically represented the present moment. The narrative adventure in Spain was entitled “a trip” or “an excursion” (výlet), the term signifying traveling for leisure and fun. Finally, Čapek’s journey to Scandinavia was a meeting with the creative possibilities of nature and the failure of the idea of “the ordinary.” It was the arrival in a world where nature overwhelms people and anything they could create. In the face of nature, “the ordinary” becomes entirely insignificant.
3.3. Intermedial Elements in Karel Čapek’s Travelogues: Ekphrasis, Iconotext and Visuality

In order to emphasize the simultaneous existence of the past and present through visual representations, Čapek applies different narrative techniques to connect visual with verbal elements. First, he uses ekphrasis, which is the verbal representation of artwork that is itself “a poetical and rhetorical device and a literary genre” (Wagner 11). Additionally, Čapek uses grammatical categories and diction to simulate the painterly qualities of the experienced foreign culture. He also utilizes his own illustrations and caricatures, which is not only a centuries-old combination of visual representation and embellishment of the text, but also a popular feature of fictional and non-fictional children’s books, “intended not to stand alone as independent works of art but to contribute to the sequence and mood that advance the story” (Kümmerling-Meibauer, “Illustrations”). The phenomenon is known in contemporary literary theory as iconotext, a combination of images and text or “the use of (by way of reference or allusion, in an explicit or implicit way) an image in a text or vice versa” (Wagner 11). Čapek’s iconotexts, in all of his travelogues except for Letters from Italy, are essentially pictorial versions of literary simple forms (discussed in chapter 1), adding a visual dimension to the narrative. At the same time, they provide an unusual perspective on familiar objects or relations, thus acquainting the reader with the narrator’s image of the foreign culture under discussion.

Mukařovský’s treatment of the transposition of one art form into another pertains to Karel Čapek’s treatment of the visual arts within his travelogues, which are works of verbal art. Čapek’s handling of visual elements is reminiscent of Jan Amos Komenský,
especially his *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (1659), a Latin textbook for children that Komenský wrote in accordance with his method of language acquisition.\textsuperscript{268} His methodology featured the association of the pictorial and the textual. Ultimately, Komenský’s textbook is a journey into the world, which readers experience through naming. They start with the imitation of sounds that the “Tongue knoweth how to / imitate and the hand / can picture out” (*Orbis* 3). As Komenský states in the preface, *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* is “a little book, as you see, of no great bulk, yet a brief of the world, and a whole language: *full of Pictures, Nomenclatures, and Descriptions of things*” (vi).

Komenský’s basic idea that the best method of learning is a direct association between the visual and verbal may be understood in modern terms as a manual for how to incorporate visual elements within a text. In Komenský’s model, the representation of the actual world is three-fold. The picture embraces in itself the whole of the world, titles capture it in general terms, and the verbal decryption provides more detail. Komenský defines pictures as “Representations of all visible things (to which also things invisible are reduced after their fashion), of the whole world” (*Orbis* vi). Each representation is accompanied with nomenclature, the inscriptions or titles, “expressing the whole thing by its own general Term” (*Orbis* vi). Finally, the verbal part, a word or a phrase matching the picture is his pictorial dictionary, are called “the descriptions” or figures “added to every piece of the Picture, and the term of it, always sheweth what things belongeth one to another” (*Orbis* vii).

\textsuperscript{268} In “Benjamin’s Optic: The World as Image and Thing,” Esther Leslie discusses the influence of Komenský’s work on Benjamin’s understanding of the optical and visuality, thus placing the seventeenth-century Czech philosopher and pedagogue into the Avant-Garde context of the 1920s (Leslie 52-67).
Komenský’s pedagogical theory foreshadows modern aesthetic and theoretical writings on intermediality in arts. Roland Barthes, for instance, distinguishes three levels of message codification in the drawing. First, it contains historically recognized codification (such as the use of perspective), then follows the distinction between the representation of significant and insignificant, in other words, the fact that “the drawing does not reproduce everything (often it reproduces very little), without its ceasing, however, to be a strong message” (43). Lastly, the drawing requires the recipient’s initiation into the knowledge of the craft, his understanding of the construction and semantic complexity of the illustration (43). In other words, as a work of art, book illustrations have an aesthetic function.

Finally, postmodern theory often recognizes that visual and written systems frequently interfere with one another since even writing systems are defined as “language visually created with the help of the signs” (Tokár 31). Both pictorial and written signs record ideas and thoughts in their respective media; however, “the impact of images is more direct and more general” because they address a wider audience while the text as the “visually fixed language” (Tokár 31) may “express terms and abstractions and display the accurate meaning of complicated ideas” (Kapr, qtd. in Tokár 31).

By incorporating his own illustrations and drawing into his literary texts, to a certain extent, Čapek’s address to his readers recalls that of treating them like children. In that way, the visual element of the travelogues becomes an extension of the child-like perspective discussed in chapter 2. The inclusion of his illustrations also allows Čapek to mock and play with different concepts of travel writing. As Peter Wagner shows with the example of the English painter, satirist, and cartoonist William Hogarth’s (1697-1794)
graphic works, illustrations accompanied by a textual element such as a short story can imply, subvert, and rely on high genres while interpolating elements of low-brow genres into the text. Hogarth here refers to illustrations as an intrinsic part of Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726). He shows how the visual elements change text into iconotext, while challenging the traditional understanding of the travelogue in literary theory. With the introduction of iconotexts, *Gulliver’s Travels* becomes more than travel writing; a semantic reading of the illustrations reveals a sophisticated use of many genres within the novel and becomes a parody of travel writing. In other words, it shows “travel literature to be the major genre whose forms and styles are consistently aped, imitated, parodied and, finally, subverted” (Wagner 39).

The use of illustrations was also Čapek’s understanding of simplicity as one of the principles of his version of proletarian literature. Čapek included drawings in his tales and short prose fragments that were first published in newspapers. In his travelogues, he also used illustrations and sketches that he made during his journeys and polished after returning home. For him, similar to Komenský, seeing was a way into the world at large. As Olga Scheinpflugová recalls in *The Czech Novel* (*Český román*, 1947), Čapek said allegedly about his journey to Italy that “I go again somewhere to live with my eyes” (262). Vision and travel were of almost religious importance to the writer; they were ways of clearing out spiritual confusion and finding perspective.

Finally, intermediality in Čapek’s work cannot be considered without acknowledging his interest in so-called primitive or exotic art, which he shared with his brother Josef Čapek. A writer, visual artist, and graphic designer, Josef Čapek developed an aesthetic theory of marginal forms in the visual arts, which preceded Karel Čapek’s
poetics of comparable forms in literature. *The Art of Natural Peoples (Umění přírodních národů)* is Josef Čapek’s study on exotic arts that he conceived during his visit to Paris in 1910 and 1911. There, he became acquainted with Cubist painting, which drew its motifs not only from non-European art, but also from the collections of African art and Picasso’s works on this theme that he found in Trocadéro, where he was sketching. (*Přírodních národů* 9).

### 3.4. The Exotic Undercurrent of Everyday Life

Josef Čapek’s interest in the exotic arts is also connected with the idea of travel. His interest started in the library of his father, a small town doctor, who had a collection of works mapping the boundaries of the fictional and actual world. As he recalls, the most appealing books were the three volumes of German geographer and explorer Friedrich Ratzel’s *Anthropology (Völkerkunde)*, Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, and the fictional travels of Jules Verne (*Přírodních národů* 11). The fictional travels through exotic art made Josef Čapek assume that “the exotic” was just otherness in the sense of being different from our own conception of the world and containing existential solutions inapplicable to our own conditions.

Moreover, the exotic was not a modern invention but an undercurrent of European civilization, influenced throughout the centuries by travel and exploration. Thus, he stressed magic, which was Josef Čapek’s term for his brother’s “fairy-tale” (*pohádkový*) mentioned earlier, as the common point and universal beginning of both “primitive” and European art. Primordial man created because he was amazed by the natural magic of things and the magic of reality surrounding him; he used geometrical principles to
classify the complexity of a world marked by the magic of manifold palpable phenomena. The quotientian magic, magic articulating the relationship between palpable things remained present throughout the centuries, embodied in works of Tintoretto, Rembrandt, Picasso, Shakespeare and other great artists. In other words, similar to his brother Karel, for Josef Čapek magic was the creation of the new world on the basis of manifold objects and phenomena, the creation of something out of nothing (Umění 51).

The Most Modest Art⁷⁶⁹ (Nejskromnější umění, 1920) contains Josef Čapek’s theory of peripheral forms in the visual arts, and is a counterpart to his brother’s collection In Praise of the Newspapers. If Karel Čapek’s marginal forms lay in oral storytelling outside the literary canon, “the most modest art,” e.g. photographs, movies, ceramics, signboards, masks, old sofas, as Josef Čapek calls it, lives outside galleries and museums.²⁷⁰ Similar to his brother, Josef Čapek understood folklore as the art created by laymen and dilettantes in the suburbs of urban centers (Nejskromnější 61). It is, as Josef Čapek says, the art of poverty, the universal art which, in contrast to the conservative folklore theories, does not belong and does not try to become affiliated with any particular national tradition (Nejskromnější 67). The periphery, both in the urban centres and in literature and arts, thus does not belong to anybody. The art of the periphery, Čapek further argues, cannot be destroyed by industrialization: there will be always somebody who will paint or decorate a loaf of bread and carve objects from wood (Nejskromnější 67).

Josef Čapek appreciates the peripheral forms of visual arts and crafts for their direct contact with life, its secrets and origins (Nejskromnější 29). According to Josef

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²⁶⁹ The Most Modest Art is a translation Derek Sayer uses in his book The Coasts of Bohemia (203).
²⁷⁰ this thought was similar to the Avant-Garde strivings to liberate the arts from museums and galleries
Čapek, peripheral forms are not created from pre-existing poetics. Instead, their purpose was to make life more enjoyable and comfortable. In other words, similar to story-telling, they try to mediate among man, his daily needs, and life itself (Nejskromnější 6). Their direct contact with life distances them from kitsch. Just as the anecdote changes every time it is told, colors distinguish the peripheral forms from kitsch because they are malleable and are the “living possibility of even greater perfection, improvement, even beauty” (Nejskromnější 17). Since they do not originate in artistic theory, their aesthetic value is unmediated and in immediate contact with life. They represent its organicity, roughness, the charm of its blemishes, and its raw nature. They are created according to the size of their creator: the table is a mirror of the man whose size it imitates. It is human need rendered material (Nejskromnější 49). The consideration of the marginal visual forms, as well as doubts about their “marginality” will resound in Karel Čapek’s travelogues.

3.5. Letters From Italy

3.5.1. A Journey into the Tradition of Visual Representations

*Letters from Italy*, Čapek’s first travelogue, is a journey through Italian visual arts and architecture. Also, it is the only travelogue in which Čapek did not use his own illustrations or caricatures.

The reason for the absence of caricatures and illustrations otherwise characteristic of Čapek’s work, may be connected with the function of the travelogue as the background for the narrator’s aesthetic theory of the visual arts and discussion of the notion of beauty. The narrator in *Letters from Italy* is a *flâneur* who perceives Italy through the Italian
artistic tradition and captures the present moment only through its representations in artwork. He attempts to avoid “Italianicity” in its negative context as Barthes defines it - an abstract and imposed notion signifying something that “is not Italy” but is “the condensed essence of all that can be Italian, from spaghetti to painting” (37). By avoiding the condensed essence of the country, the narrator rediscovers “true Italianicity,” the real Italian spirit, which for him is a mutual interaction between works of art and the culture that they represent.

The work of art is a defamiliarizing representation of its cultural context. As I will show, the process of discovery leads to the defamiliarization of both the objects seen and their verbal representations. In contrast to the poetics of proletarian literature, not everything in everyday life is ideally beautiful for the flâneur, whose view of life is critically selective. Instead, the moments that have become eternal through their visual representations are beautiful. Such an approach derived from Čapek’s poetics of proletarian literature, which was about the aesthetic representation of the present moment rather than literature written by proletarians for proletarians (“Proletarian Art” 123-32).

In the traveler’s Italian journey, the intellectual avoidance of “Italianicity” and the search for a new perception of people and places means traveling beyond the guidelines provided by Baedekers and previously written travelogues. Although these signal a desire for novelty, steering clear of tour guides is a cliché, the wish of unconventional travelers to witness something with their own eyes. It is also criticism of Čapek’s flâneur of earlier perceptions of Italian art, which are predominantly based on the classical tradition. The narrator despises classic Roman art and architecture because it encapsulates the abstract “Italianicity”; in his eyes the colossal Roman monuments are foreign to the Italian
cultural context. Through his attitude, the narrator argues against a generalized interpretation of antiquity as a compact stylistic epoch on which the characteristics of “universal beauty” are based.

In his search for beauty, the flâneur looks instead for the “primitive, unexhausted ethnical characteristic” (Čapek, *Italy* 67; *Italské* 66) as the omnipresent creative power in art history. This creative potency is obvious in folkloric simplicity, which, contrary to the imposition of universal cultural elements, is essential and native to Italian (and every other) culture. The essence of the “primitive” art, however, lies in the selection of artistic material and not in its exoticism. In contrast to classical art, the primitive and folkloric is still living, able to model, transform, and signify. It is alive because the material it is made from, which mediates between the represented actual world and the work of art, is still “breathing.” Even the narrator’s idea of home is related to the notion of the living material. In contrast to the antique sculptures made of stone, the narrator’s land is “wooden” (*země dřevěná*). As he says,

I, however, am from a land where wood abounds and love wood with sense of touch and eyes, for it is almost living material, naïve and humane, Gothic, non-antique, and good for domestic construction. Flowing water, that is the whole poetry of the north; the motive of the kelpie and undine opposed to that of the satyr. (*Italy* 105; *Italské* 66)271

Thus if one wants to understand the fall of antiquity, one has to comprehend the powerful modesty of this “new, and more fresh attitude to the world” (*Italy* 98; *Italské* 105).

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271 “Já však jsem ze země dřevené a mám dřevo rád hmatem i očima, nebot je to látku těměř živá, naivní a lidová, gotická, strohá, neantická a domostrojná. Tející voda, to zas je celá poesie severu; toť vodnický a rusalčin motiv proti motivu satyrskému.”
In the narrator’s words, “However it may come about, the people creeps unwillingly and instinctively back to itself and experiences a regeneration.” (Italy 72; Italské 47)

3.5.2. Behind a Mask of a Franciscan

A search for the alternative Italian tradition beyond the petrified antiquity is the reason why the flâneur in Letters from Italy decides to disguise himself as a Franciscan pilgrim and perceive Italy through the aura of Christianity. The Franciscan tradition lives in the shadow of the monumental Roman architecture and Franciscan modesty and humility allows the narrator to perceive reality as raw and unstable artistic material, and to capture the undiscovered and hidden moments of everyday life. Čapek recognizes the negative aspects of “Italianicity” as Barthes defines it – an abstract and imposed notion signifying something that “is not Italy” but is “the condensed essence of all that can be Italian, from spaghetti to painting” (Barthes 37). The narrator attempts to avoid the condensed essence of the country and to rediscover “true Italianicity” – the real Italian spirit coinciding with his world view – which for him is determined by the interaction between works of art and the culture that they represent. Modest and unpretentious Christianity is thus the true essence of “positive Italianicity” as Čapek conjures it up. The narrator wants to talk about “less pretentious places” and therefore chooses the geographically elevated locations of San Marino or Rocca di Popa, places that offer a clear and wide perspective in contrast to Rome and its megalomaniac spirit (Italy 37; Italské 27).

272 The view of antiquity from the point of view of its “enemies”: “Ano, je to jiný, svěžejší poměr k světu;”
273 “At’ délá co délá, národ se posléze vrátí bezděčně a pudově zase sám k sobě a přerozuje se v sobě samém.”
Yet another reason for the flâneur to wear the mask of a Franciscan is an intertextual reference to the Czech history of travel writing, as discussed in the first chapter. In *Letters from Italy*, the traditional, goal-oriented Czech pilgrim and the modern Apollinairean flâneur, a predominantly urban concept, meet. Mukařovský has already pointed out the similarities between Čapek’s and Neruda’s stylistic features in their travelogues, linking Karel Čapek and his literary predecessor through their fusion of journalism and poetry and the imitation of spoken language (“Vývoj” 347). Although the references to the flâneur’s “Czechness” are scattered throughout the narrative in memories of home and comparisons between Italy and the First Czechoslovak Republic, there is only one reference to Czech travel writing, which, regardless of its singularity, points to the dialogic nature with the previous tradition. Čapek’s *Letters from Italy* allude to Josef Svatopluk Machar, who indicates in the dedication of his feuilletons from Rome (1906-1907) that he traveled to Italy in search of antiquity. In Machar’s imagination, antiquity is personified by a woman. In Rome he found “her white bones and saw her beautiful grave” (8).

In contrast to Čapek’s synthesis of a pilgrim and a flâneur who writes his notes on his immediate experience of the actual world, Machar’s traveler writes his feuilletons as a retrospective of his Italian journey while sitting at the fountain beside “a big marble

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274 Čapek travesties Machar’s attitude towards Antiquity and Christianity in a short narrative fragment, “Antiquity and Christianity” (“Antika a křesťanství”), a part of his early collection *The Garden of Krakonoš (Krakonošova zahrada)*, which he co-authored with his brother, Josef. In the introduction to *Krakonošova zahrada*, the writers indicate that their literary models and poetic inspiration comes from the work of the Symbolist poets. The narrative fragment, in which Machar appears as the main figure, is an implicit manifesto of their understanding of literature, which presages the spirit of Poetism by suggesting that the present moment of life is beautiful. The context of the narrative is Machar’s lecture on Antiquity and his negative attitude towards Christianity. The travesty emerges in the opposition of the speaker’s pathos while presenting the theme of the bygone glory of Classicism with the power of living, which is personified by the beautiful, blonde hair of a woman sitting in front of the narrators. The blonde hair becomes a metaphor for the energy and vitality of Eve, and the feminine aspect of both Antiquity and Christianity (39-42).
Ocean” during his last day in Rome (8). Although Machar enjoys some simple pleasures, such as the silent life of plants, these unassuming things are overshadowed by Rome’s antique monuments as the author contemplates the eternal city and its position as the center of the world (10-11). Additionally, although Machar’s traveler inserts elements of the spoken language as the simulation of the present moment, he does not perceive the actual world as something alive and thus worth visually representing. He walks among the sculptures and monuments of the past, through the memory of historical times that cannot be resuscitated. Among his favorite destinations are museums that function as the *vitae* of dead heroes and imperators. He is walking through the halls where “imperators follow one after another in chronologic order starting with the Iulius family” (72). Beauty irretrievably remains only in the monumental past world the subject of nostalgia: “The bones of a bygone, more beautiful world, bereft, scattered around, desperately sad. They have their silent pride and proud contempt – but sadness in the first place” (108).

For Čapek’s Franciscan *flâneur*, the hidden side of Italy, it’s “true Italianicity” is in the quotidian’s historical representation. The narrator sees the Italian landscape and Italian architecture as an open and unbounded gallery. A search for clarity and the avoidance of Baedekers as well as the rehabilitation of modesty means, at this point, also going beyond conventionally represented *malebnost* (picturesqueness, quaintness), which is a semantic notion that frequently occurs in *Letters from Italy*. For the *flâneur*, *malebnost* as the first visual impression of Italian cities is nothing but kitsch. The description of Naples, where everything is only “noise, disorder, and picturesqueness”

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275 “velkého mramorového Oceana”
276 “imperátoři následují za sebou v chronologickém pořádku rodem julským začínají.”
277 „Kosti zašlého, krásnějšího světa, zloupené, rozházené, zoufale smutné. Mají svou mlčící pýchu a hrdé opovržení – ale smutek především.”
(Italy 47; Italské 33), \(^{278}\) reminds the narrator of the Baroque characteristic of amassing objects and chaining together nouns and onomatopoeic verbs that transform human voices into animal roars and cries. The flâneur’s attitude towards the big city centers is reminiscent of the pilgrim’s confrontation with the city in Komenský’s Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart. Its messy and filthy streets are “picturesque,” but not beautiful (Labyrinth 32). \(^{279}\) Furthermore, the notion of malebnost extends beyond “picturesqueness” to “uncreativity” (netvořivost) in Čapek. The city of Naples, for example, is “not creative” because it lacks a significant history of the visual arts (Italy 45; Italské 33). \(^{280}\) Yet, as an aesthetic contrast, in the heart of the not-creative city is a gallery of anonymous folk art, the aesthetic value of which equals that of the paintings by Eduard Munch or the naïve art of Henri Rousseau.

3.5.3. Semantic Functions of Colors

On the other hand, the “non-creativity” of the city and the lack of aesthetic tradition are excused by Naples’ natural surroundings. They are an example of simple beauty and provide a clear perspective on the things the flâneur is striving to find. Similar to Mukařovský’s interpretation of Josef Šíma’s work, blue and green, the two colors of nature, represent the flâneur’s ideal of beauty. “Blue” is frequently used as an adjective adding a quality of the natural color to the objects described, and in Mukařovský’s words, its use multiplies “excessively” to emphasize a certain visual quality (“Mezi poesii” 256). The distance is blue, the sea is blue, and the mountains surrounding Naples are blue. The image is intensified when a static quality of blueness transforms: during the sunset

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\(^{278}\) “křik, neřád a malebnost”

\(^{279}\) “píoreskni”

\(^{280}\) “netvořivě”
“everything has a bluish tinge” (všechno promodrá), and even a boat floating on the sea surface beacons with green, blue and golden lights (Italy 44; Italské 32). The depiction of visual perspective, which serves as a contrast between clarity and cliché, also follows an intensification of blueness, or its “semantic concentration” as a characteristic feature of Čapek’s narrative texts (Kožmín 306). The narrator introduces the landscape from a distance and familiarizes the reader with it through spatial deixis, as if he wants to lead his audience through the process of pictorial creation: “here in the front stands a nice pine tree, and the blue yonder is Capri” (Italy 44; Italské 32) and when the twilight comes, everything turns blue.

The semantic field of “blueness” expands past the visual limits of the color: it becomes a metaphor for tranquility (Italy 78; Italské 50). This happens when the narrator applies ekphrasis as a device suitable for expressing the present moment through its visual representation. The emphasis on the blueness of the landscape is thus not coincidental; it is in relation to the visual Renaissance poetics of Giotto, especially his representation of the vita of St. Francis (Fig. 2). The flâneur appreciates Giotto’s works as wise and “infinitely placid” (Italy 78; Italské 50). While he despises heat, filth, dust, masses of people, colossal architecture, and labyrinths of the Italian towns as typical Baroque kitsch and exaggeration, he finds real beauty in Giotto’s clean geometrical perspective, which the painter used to simulate the endless blue of the Mediterranean skies, the humility of St. Francis, and the simple eternity of life. Because the Franciscan pilgrim is also a flâneur, his aim is not to build a chapel to St. Francis as a place of Christian devotion but to create “St. Giotto” and his representation of the Catholic saint.

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281 “tuhe napřed pěkná pinie, tamhle to modré je Capri.”
282 “tichost”
283 “neskonale mírná”
Fig. 2. Giotto di Bondone. *Homage of a Simple Man* (1295-1300). Fresco, St. Francis, Upper Church, Assisi, Italy. 6 May 2008. 
http://fadis.library.utoronto.ca/cgi-bin/WebObjects/FADIS.woa/2/wo/fFShtFI1SX0L1NerzXKWIHM/8.8.1.13.0.0.1.1.1.1.4.1.0.35.0

The images, especially the cycle of St. Francis in the Upper Church of St. Francesco in Assisi are predominantly colored in blue. The narrator praises Giotto’s poetics of finding the beauty in the actual moment, the simultaneity of the present and the past, and directly transposes Giotto’s pictures into his own experience of the actual world. In other words, the *flâneur* defamiliarizes the actual moment by perceiving it through Giotto’s pictures. Leaving the shade of the monastery, the narrator sinks into life as personified by one of Giotto’s images:

But hardly had I reeled out of the shadow of a church when I was lost; absorbed in light; overpowered by blue; blinded, deafened by calm; bewitched by the view. Imagine Bethlehem in midday glow; the very cubes of unplastered stones, little Gothic window arches, bow windows, arches from house to house, and between them the blue profundity of earth and sky. In the deep shadow of the alleys women sew or work *bene merentes*; it is all like Giotto’s pictures. The fourteenth century hovers over all: it is as clean as though the ground were swept with trailing robes
and palm branches….and then quickly, quickly hasten away, so that a fleeting dream may stay which will not endure. (Italy 79; Italské 50-51)\textsuperscript{284} Thus as we saw, Čapek’s travel to Italy offers an alternative way of representing tradition and the present state of the visited country. Čapek developed his traveling poetics around his intimate journey to the history of visual arts and their depiction of the quotidian. He organized his own narrative around these representations, creating his image of Italy through an interartistic dialogue with the selectively chosen visual techniques and works of visual arts.

3.6. Letters From England

3.6.1. Iconotext: The Function of Illustrations and Caricatures

Although \textit{ekphrasis} and other intermedial techniques from \textit{Letters from Italy} continue to be used in the travelogues that followed, \textit{Letters from England, A Trip to Spain, Images from Holland}, and \textit{A Journey to the North}, other intermedial elements are also gradually introduced according to the specifications of the narrator’s defamiliarized perception of the visited country, his understanding of its local and unique artistic tradition, and the poetics of the time. If the travelogue genre in \textit{Letters from Italy}, which was a dialogue on the nature and ideals of the visual arts, presaged the poetics of Poetism, then the other travelogues, following the Poetist tendencies of the 1920s and first half of

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{284} „ale sotva jsem se vymotal z kostelního stinu, byl jsem ztracen; pohlcen světlem; udolán modří; oslepen, ohlušen tichem; učarovan výhledy. Představte si Betlém v poledním žáru; samé kostky z neomítnutých kamenů, gotické obloučky oken, arkýře, oblouky od domu k domu, a mezi nimi modrá hlubina země i nebes. V hlubokém stinu chodeb šijí ženy nebo pracují bene merentes; je to jako Giottvovy obrazy. Se vším všudy je to čtrnácté století; a čisto, jako by půda byla umetena prostřenými rouchy a rataolestmi palmovými….A proto rychle, rychle odtud! Aby to zůstalo prchavým snem, jenž netrvá.”
\end{flushright}
the 1930s, expanded the intermedial possibilities of literature and overcame the boundaries separating narrative and visual genres.

This began with the use of illustrations, which Čapek established for the first time as an explicit visual element. In the *Letters from England*, the travelogue written in 1924, the year of the onset of Poetism, they had an aesthetic, defamiliarizing function. In *A Trip to Spain*, illustrations attempt to overcome the confines of their own genre by emulating filmic structure, analyzing the depicted subject (a shoe cleaner, flamenco dancer, a Spanish woman) through a series of movements. These functions are also present in *Images from Holland* but the portrayal of movement focuses on mirrors, which is yet another feature of Avant-Garde poetics.

Illustrations and caricatures in general were praised by many Modernist and Avant-Garde artists as a new, albeit not entirely anti-traditional, art. Although the beginnings of the book illustration have been often sought in the medieval illuminated manuscripts, modern theory of visual arts considers even Paleolithic cave art and Egyptian art as the origin of illustration. The distant genesis of illustrations that was already recognized in Josef Čapek’s *The Art of the Natural Peoples*. The return to illustration should be understood as a variation on the Avant-Garde return to so-called primitive art as yet another redefinition of the folkloric and a challenge to the limits of the canon of modern European art. Some illustrations in Karel Čapek’s travelogues are reminiscent of the illustrations used in Josef Čapek’s *The Art of the Natural Peoples*. For instance, those depicting a hunt (*Přírodních národů* 150-2) as a series of movements recall the filmic elements in *A Trip to Spain*, which I will discuss in this chapter. As outlined in *The Most Modest Art*, they also follow the poetics of folklore, which is

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285 See, for instance, *A History of Book Illustration: 29 Points of View* and *Kontexty umeleckej ilustrácie*. 
defined as the art of urban peripheries rather than the petrified representations of traditional rural customs.

Caricature was attractive because of the lack of traditional psychological characterization in it, which subverted the Realist point of view by presenting an exaggerated and defamiliarized view of the represented objects. In one of his letters from the Paris Exposition Universelle dated on 31 of May 1900, Modernist Croatian poet Antun Gustav Matoš remarks that everything may be understood as a caricature, including the human soul and life itself. Thus, Paris is “the biggest varoš [city – Hungarian] because it is the biggest comedian among the cities. The great caricaturists Holbein, titanic Spaniard Goya, Cruickshank, Hogarth, Bunbury, C. Vernet, Daumier and the others have their biggest followers here” (158).

In his travelogues, Čapek both explicitly and implicitly refers to some of these artists. In particular, he expresses admiration for Goya’s modernity of themes and style. Even prior to the publication of Čapek’s anthology of French poetry, he highly valued the new art of illustration in France which was similar to the aptitude of French to emulate richness of the language, spanning from coffeehouse witticisms to gentlemen’s talk to “the apostolic persuasiveness of the propagators of the merry Gospel from the blessed country of Paris” (O umění I.31).

In the 1940s, E. H. Gombrich emphasized caricatures as a comic art, which, from the times of Aristoteles’ Poetics, has “ranked as inferior” because “it was reproached for lack of content;...considered incompatible with the ‘grand manner’ proper to the dignity of an artist;” and moreover “because a picture which tells a story is thought to be inferior to one which embodies the true artist’s ‘pure vision’” (3). The caricature has become

286 “apoštolskou přesvědčivostí hlasatelů veselého evangelia z požehnané země pařížské”
praised for its ability to defamiliarize and to transform a human character into “a completely new and ridiculous figure which nevertheless resembles the original in a striking and surprising way” (12).

In contrast to the flâneur in Letters from Italy, the traveler in Letters from England is profane. There are no references to art history and therefore there is no ekphrasis. Moreover, as it was already stated in the previous chapter, the flâneur cannot exist in England because of its treatment of the visual arts, which are confined to museums and private collections, away from the streets, which are not made for viewing and leisure, but are only for reaching one’s destination. As well, his pictorial representations, which he indicates in the subtitle of the travelogue – “for greater clarity guided by the author’s drawings”\(^{287}\) – is his take on the previous knowledge and expectations of England he gained through the comedies, caricatures, and illustrations that he knew before he visited the island. Sadly, what he imagined turned to be just an illusion of his youth (England 150; Anglické 168).

The narrator’s journey begins with illustrations as a visual introduction to England (Fig. 3). At the same time, his pictures familiarize the reader with a distant culture and foreground their expectations of “England.” In contrast with the Italian travelogue, in which distance provided clarity and perspective, in Letters from England, distance frustrates reader expectations by describing the place as “simply cliffs and above them grows grass”\(^{288}\) (England 24; Anglické 74) while the accompanying illustrations of the rocks entitled “Folkstone” and “Dover” function as authentication of the traveler’s first experience of the new country.

\(^{287}\) Čapek here refers to “greater clarity” (větší názornost) but that notion is lost in the English translation of Geoffrey Newsome that I use. He translates the subtitle as: “with illustrations by the author.”

\(^{288}\) “To bílé jsou prostě skály, a nahoře roste tráva;”
Insularity is important because it makes England “England.” Since Englishmen live on the island, they do and do not belong to Europe. Moreover, as the narrator continues, the insular nature becomes internalized as Englishmen create their own islands wherever they go in the world, and prefer to stick to their own traditions (England 156; Anglické 172). Insularity is what makes the country characteristic of its travelers and colonizers, i.e. imperial.

289 The view of antiquity from the point of view of its “enemies”: “Ano, je to jiný, svěžejší poměr k světu;”
As opposed to the Italian travelogue, in which the traveler was navigating his own way beyond Baroque kitsch and searching for simplicity, in England, the way off well-known paths leads through nature. The freedom of pedestrians to choose to walk across lawns rather than following the footpath makes the country the “most fairy-tale” (England 30; Anglické 76). Nature here is an inextricable part of tradition; in the form of artistic material, it mediates between people and art. Similar to Italy, the narrator develops a link between nature and human society as the material acquires artistic functions and aestheticizes everyday life. For example, the symbol of Scotland is stone that folk artists use for sculptures and ordinary people for houses; (English 92; Anglické 122) Scotland itself becomes a stony land (země kamenná), with iron skies above it. The presence of man in Scotland is also marked by stone: in a deserted landscape only low artificial stony formations that divide the fields present evidence of the presence of man (England 100; Anglické 128).

The metaphor for England are the centuries old trees penetrating everyday life, growing in the parks, aestheticizing the life of people in the form of elegant club furniture or the construction of typical English houses (England 29; Anglické 76). Nature is what makes England “England” and it even influences political life in the country. Since the narrator focuses on artistic material rather than its function, the perspective shifts from institutions and symbols of power to the material from which that power is made. The narrator does not think that it is important to describe the institutions of power in England, but the construction of power solely supported by the trees garners his attention. As the narrator says, “Maybe these trees have a large influence on Toryism in England. I
think that they preserve aristocratic instincts, historical precedent, conservatism, protectionism, golf, the House of Lords and other old and peculiar things.” (England 28-9; Anglické 76)291

The absence of living art on the streets of England is unsuccessfully substituted with artistic riches collected from all around the world. If Italy imported Baroque and Classicism as tradition, England imported different traditions as a symbol of the country’s colonial past. Visits to galleries and museum produce a sad discovery of the state of so-called primitive art. The narrator walks through galleries containing rare, exotic, and ancient artistic objects collected from around the world. Viewing them, he witnesses the eternal creativity of the human spirit, which exhibits the same power and aesthetic value in Rembrandt’s works and in a dancing mask from the Gold Coast (England 51; Anglické 92). The ultimate grotesque result of such an approach to human creativity appears to be the uniformization of human productivity (Fig. 4). The traveler walks through the exhibition halls of the British Empire Exhibition and witnesses the uniformity behind the abundance of products and richness of production from the English colonies. The accompanying illustration subverts the mechanical reproduction subsuming the creative richness of the empire in the caricature of the same armchair made in four different English colonies (England 65; Anglické 102).

291 “Možná, že ty stromy mají velký vliv na torysmus v Anglii. Myslím, že udržují aristokratické pudy, historismus, konservativnost, celní ochranu, golf, dům lordů a jiné zvláštní a staré věci.”
The narrator sadly states how even the “primitive” arts lost its heterogeneity and become a mechanical product instead of art itself:

There is no folk art anymore; the black man in Benin carves figures from elephants’ tusks as if he had studied at the Munich Academy and if you were to give him a piece of wood he would carve an armchair out of it.

Well, good God, obviously he has ceased being a savage and has become – what, actually? – yes, he has become an employee of civilized industry.

*(England 66; Anglické 102-103)*

If visual nature is characteristic of Italy, then England is defined by its auditive features. Knowledge of the language in Italy did not matter because the traveler was searching for visual representations. In England, where art does not exist in public spaces, the lack of language proficiency turns human voices into noise. The traveler in England is constantly surrounded by noise. Noise is often conveyed in the narration

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292 “Není už lidového domorodého umění; černoch v Béninu vyřezává ze sloních klů figurky, jako by vychodil Mnichovskou akademii, a date-li mu kus dřeva, vyréže z něho klubovku. Inu bože, patrně přestal být divochem a stal se – čím vlastně? ano, stal se zaměstnancem civilisovaného průmyslu.”

293 This is also an intertextual element that appears in *Tales from One Pocket* and *Tales from Another Pocket.*
through animal sounds, as well as in the illustrations combined with textual elements. One such illustration is “Traffic” (Fig. 5) which has great depth of field, distortion, and a mass of people and objects that resemble an Expressionist painting (England 38; Anglické 82). As the narrator says, it is just an attempt at imitation because the visual limitations of the image do not allow any auditory quality: in reality everything is even worse (England 39; Anglické 83). The illustration resembles a tunnel in which the surrounding walls display a plethora of advertisements and through which an unrecognizable mass of vehicles makes its way. It depicts the narrator’s fear that human life in such an environment loses its meaning.


For Čapek, human voices turn into unrecognizable phonetic components, in which meaning is lost (England 39; Anglické 83). The illustration and the narrative description of Hyde Park, for example, reveal the narrator’s attitude towards the cosmopolitan city in
which people become a zoomorphic mass. The absence of language acquisition does not lead to a closer, humble and modest contact with things, as was the case in Italy, but to the impossibility of communication. The defamiliarized view of Hyde Park, in which a marble archway known as Marble Arch “leads nowhere” turns it into an open public area where everybody may come with a chair to sit and talk. On the illustration, groups of people surrounding a speaker start resembling divisions of the lowest organisms and cell colonies (Anglické 84; England 41).

The narrator goes from one group to another and links different amateur political, religious speeches and singing, and at the end of the day, links all of them to the voices of sheep confined to an edge of the park. Sheep become personified. The English character consists of voice itself – that is why the narrator prefers above all orators in Hyde Park. The voice is what makes them natural and simple, almost divine – similar to sheep, which in the text serves as one of the symbols of “Anglicity” (England 43; Anglické 85).

3.6.3. The Discovery of Colors

The journey outside of England to Scotland becomes a new exploration of colors. After discovering that natural colors are the aesthetic essence of the Scottish landscape and tradition, the narrator uses green and blue extensively, as he did in Letters from Italy. He wants to travel through “the greenest of green valleys” (England 97; Anglické 126), and see “blue and black mountains above green mound” (England 98; Anglické 126), and admire the valleys with light and dark greenery (England 98; Anglické 126). On the Island of Skye, the blue color turns into abstract blueness, which is impossible to express.

294 “nejzelenějším ze zelených údolí.”
295 “modré a černé hory nad zelenými valy”
296 “světlá a černá zeleň”
in all of its nuances because, similar to the blueness found in Italy, it symbolizes the beginnings of creation. The island itself is named after a synonym for heaven (Skye). The blueness changes the limits of color, not only because it exists in all of its nuances, but also as it absorbs all other ranges of the spectrum:

Once a week the sun shines and then the mountain peaks are revealed in all their inexpressible shades of blue. There are bluenesses which are azure, pearl, hazy or indigo, black, pink and green, bluenesses which are deep, tinged, similar to steam, to an air raid or to a mere memory of something beautifully blue. I saw all of these and countless other blues on the blue peaks of the Cuillin, but to top it all there was also a blue sky and a blue bay and this can’t be described at all. I tell you, unknown and heavenly virtues arose in me at the sight of this immense blueness.

(England 103-104; Anglické 131)

The feeling of total solitude is also visually expressed through the preposition “without” (bez), which refers to the absence or lack of something. The preposition “without” here also stands in opposition to the previously described London, which is overcrowded. This leads to the extreme utilitarian purpose of the city’s streets, where reaching a destination is paramount and does not allow further creation of signifieds. Also, the use of this preposition is again a play with the limits of the narration, with the idea of how something is made. The lack of something is the end of life and of directions;

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297 “Jednou za týden svití slunce a pak se odhalí štity hor ve všech nevýslovných odstínech modrostí; i jest modrost azurová, perlet’ová, omžená nebo indigová, černá, růžová i zelená; modrost hluboká, nadechnutá, podobná parám, náletu nebo pouhé vzpomínce na něco krásně modrého. Tyto všechny a nesčetné jiné modrosti jsem viděl na modrých štítech Cuillinu, ale bylo tam ještě ke všemu modré nebe a modrý mořský záliv, a to už se vůbec nedá vypovědět; pravím vám, že vyvstaly ve mně neznámé a božské ctnosti při pohledu na tuto nesmírnou modrost.”
it is the narrator’s defamiliarized view of the landscape where the human presence and a human understanding of progress and chronology are completely absent:

The end of life. Here perhaps nothing has changed for ten thousand years; people have only brought roads here and built railway lines, but the earth hasn’t changed. Nowhere are there either trees or thickets, only a cold lake, horsetail and bracken, brown heaths without end, black stones without…its [the lake’s] surface empty of birds, a region empty of people, anxiety without a cause, a road without a goal. I don’t know what I’m looking for, but this finally is solitude. Drink of this enormous sadness before you return among people, swell with solitude, unsatiated soul, for you have never seen anything greater than this desolation. (100-101; Anglické 128)

The representation of Scotland as “the end of life and of directions” points to the conflicting character of imperialist Britain. While London as the centre of the Empire displays its power hosting colonial exhibitions and museums with the natural and artistic artifacts collected in the colonies and all around the world, Scotland, as the internal part of the Empire, with its landscapes and absence of humans, represents the Empire’s internal dissolution.

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298 Konec života; tady se snad nic nezměnilo za deset tisíc let; jen cesty lidé vedli a postavili dráhy, ale země se nezměnila; nikde stromu ani křoviska, jen studená jezera, přeslička a kapradi, bez konce hnědé vřesoviska, bez konce černé kamení,…hladina bez ptáků, krajin bez lidí, úzkost bez příčiny, cesta bez cíle, nevím, co hledám, ale toto je konečně samota; napij se z tohoto nesmírného smutku, nežlí se vrátiš mezi lidi, nabotnej samotou, duše neukojená; nebot’ neviděls nic většího než tuto upuštěnost.”

299 In his travelogue Čapek does not refer to Britain in general but he rather talks about it’s parts, England and Scotland.
3.7. A Trip to Spain

3.7.1. Illustrations and Film

In *A Trip to Spain*, the narrator introduces a new type of illustration, signifying a series of movements. In contrast to the static illustrations in *Letters from England*, that portray typical English architecture and natural features, where the only movement resembled Expressionist images, in *A Trip to Spain*, the theme of the illustrations is often movement itself. Consequently, the motif of movements leads to the use of film poetics in the narrative, which is visible in the depiction of motion and the use of perspective.

The simulation of film introduces another semantic contrast between seeing and the limited possibilities of perception. As I discussed in previous chapter 2, the play with the motif of train mocks the Poetist idealization of international trains passing through distant landscapes. In fact, although the train provides the narrator with the possibility of view, it restricts his movement. The confinement is visible in a set of four caricatures of a passenger who is trying to reach his bunk bed while attempting to not step on the head of the passenger sleeping below him (Fig. 6).
In contrast to the illustrations in *Letters from England*, this sequence of drawings, as well as some other illustrations in the travelogue, has frames (Fig. 7). The sequential representation of motion is an obvious link to the cinematic elements in the narrative, where, as Mukařovský argues, space presented in a succession of images gives the feeling of transition from one image to another (“K estetice” 174). Also, the use of a frame has the same effect. Although there are many similarities between the film and the illustration, especially in the use of perspective and details, as Mukařovský points out, the main difference between film and book illustration is the existence of the frame in film. While the framed sequence in film is the size of the screen, “equivalence between
illustration and film (with the exception of the movement) would be possible to discuss first when all illustrations from one work, both details and units, would occupy the space of the entire pages” (“K estetice” 174-175).

Fig. 7. The Use of Frames. Čapek, Karel. Výlet do Španěl. Italské listy, Anglické listy, Výlet do Španěl, Obrázky z Holandska (Praha: ČS, 1968) 187.
3.7.2. A Walk through the Gallery of Everyday Life

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the depiction of movement is not only a metaphor for traveling, but also the symbolic essence of Spanish folk culture (Fig. 8). Movement is to Spain what the humility of Giotto is to Italy or insularity is to England.

![Fig. 8. Depiction of shoe cleaners. Výlet do Španěl. Italské listy, Anglické listy, Výlet do Španěl, Obrázky z Holandska (Praha: ČS, 1968) 193.](image)

The movement is the essence of Čapek’s “Spanicity” as it visually leads the reader through Spanish streets and galleries. The aesthetization of the streets and everyday life allows different perspectives on walking and simulation of different realities. While walking, dreams interweave with reality. Walking changes perspective: one can imitate walking through a museum or a dream while walking in Toledo. The presence of different civilizations, such as the Christian and the Moorish ones that inform Spanish culture, enables the flâneur to see Toledo from the vantage point of different cultures. However, the presence of the shared cultural heritage represents a link between the foreign land and home:

For instance, Toledo has a gate known as Bisagra nueva, rather in the style of Terezín, with a Habsburg double eagle which is distinctly above life-size; it looks as if it led to our Terezín or Josefov, but contrary to all expectations it debouches
into a quarter which is called Arrabál and looks it, too. Whereupon you are in
front of another gate which is called the Gate of the Sun, and looks as if you had
been set down in Bagdad, but instead of that the Moorish portal leads into the
streets of the most Catholic of towns, (*Spain* 27; *Výlet* 197)

Similar to Čapek’s treatment of landscape through the lens of Giotto’s work in
*Letters from Italy*, Spain is perceived through the work of artists whose output represents
the narrator’s ideal of the ordinary man and notion of the folkloric. Seville, for example,
still lives marked by the presence of Cervantes, who lived in the local pub and wrote
there his short-stories. The narrator views the life of Sevillans through his own “research”
of Cervantes’ life, his love for the local food and wines, and reconstructs the image of the
writer through what the narrator sees on the streets and in pubs. Similar to their great
predecessor, Sevillans are sitting in the pubs drinking the local *toledano* wine and eating
spicy chorizo sausages. Cervantes’ national language was therefore the language of
traditional Spanish cuisine and the musical artistry of its wines, “which are as numerous
as musical instruments” (36; *Výlet* 203), there are “wines as penetrating as a Basque
reedpipe, as harsh as *vendas*, as deep as guitars” (36; *Výlet* 204).

The paintings of Doménicos Theotokopóulos, or El Greco, who succeeded in
combining Gothic verticality with the “Baroque whirlwind” (42; *Výlet* 208), are
another artistic discovery for the narrator. The accompanying illustration depicts a viewer
looking at El Greco’s painting (Fig. 9). The sketch displays only the work’s verticality,
the viewer sees only the profile of the hanging picture, while the image on the canvas
remains hidden.

300 jichž je tolik jako hudebních nástrojů;
301 pronikavá jako baskické pišťaly, drsná jako vendas, hluboká jako guitarry
302 barokní vichřice
The traveler applauds El Greco for his achievement in fusing two representations of the divine, the Gothic one in which God is directly and clearly seen and the one dictated by Baroque mysticism. El Greco liberated the Western Baroque from the representation of divine through its human shape and dehumanized the image of God, making it grotesque, and thus almost like a caricature (Spain 43; Výlet 209). Thus, the fake and decorated, touristy humanity of the painter’s house and garden cannot, according to the narrator, belong to El Greco. The dehumanization of God is his expression of pure religiosity and Christian devotion (Spain 44; Výlet 210).

The narrator’s tour through Spanish art proceeds to the paintings of Goya. Goya’s work presents yet another, although dramatically different, representation of the human. In contrast to El Greco, the narrator praises Goya for rediscovering folk art, or a
folklorised Rococo (Fig. 10). Goya is the painter of vernacular, folkloric motifs; of a new, pure, revolutionary, and true representation of sexuality. His paintings are pictorial representations of folk poetry or high Rococo art transformed into simple folkloric forms. In his grotesques and caricatures he mapped modern Spanish life in its everyday and folkloric forms.

![Image](image.png)


Goya’s paintings resemble Spanish folksongs, such as the *jota* and *seguidilla*. He is also a predecessor of journalism and implicitly of caricature because he developed his graphic, yet fantastic works as the “feuilletons of a tremendous journalist” (*Spain* 50; *Výlet* 213) who portrayed poverty, life’s cruelty, wars, and inquisition (Fig. 11). Similar to El Greco, he is “the most modern painter,” although undiscovered by the world. He is “the most modern” because neither learned academism nor playfulness

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303 fejetóny nesmírného žurnalisty
intrudes on his work. He was able to see and the ability to see meant that he had the
ability to be a doer of deeds; he is “a fighter, an arbiter, a firebrand” (*Spain 50; Výlet
213).*304 His exhibitions are small revolutions themselves: “Francisco Goya y Lucientes is
erecting barricades in the Prado” (*Spain 50; Výlet 213).*305

![Image](image_url)

Fig. 11. Goya y Lucientes, Francesco de. *The 3rd of May 1808 in Madrid: The Executions

http://www.museodelprado.es/en/ingles/collection/on-line-gallery/on-line-gallery/obra/el-
3-de-mayo-de-1808-en-madrid-los-fusilamientos-en-la-montana-del-principe-pio-2/

The art of Spain poses the question of the origin of the image of man and God.
The Spanish cultural mosaic is characterized by Moorish art, which prohibited any
representation of the human kind because of its resemblance of the divine (*Spain 51;
Výlet 215).* Spanish Catholic artists also dealt with this question. Zurbaran spent his life
painting priests, Don Esteban painted boys. There are also figures of Christ made of wax
and tombstones that remind the viewer of bodily disintegration. Their work is in
accordance with the natural features of the Spanish landscape, where the divine is still

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304 “jednat, rvát se, soudit a burcovat.” Ibid. p. 213. The English version replaces the verbs with “He is.”
305 Francisco Goya y Lucientes staví v Pradu barikády.
present. In other words, the artistic works and creative power of nature offer here different perspectives of the same Spanish essence. The illustration of Montserrat, hosting the Virgin of Mary sanctuary, grotesquely resembles human fingers in the position of prayer. The narrator gradually develops his vision of Montserrat into the metaphor of divine touch, as an imprint of divine thumbs modeling the landscape with joy of creation:

Or rather, they look as if they were still marked by the furrowed imprint of the fingers which created this land. From the summit of Montserrat you see the imprint of the divine thumbs which kneaded this warm, russet region with a special creative zest. (185; Výlet 312)\textsuperscript{306}

Spanish visual art was a protest against the lack of representation of the human form, and as the narrator states, its Christianity brought nothing more than the representation of the human. Because of the passion for the human, the beauty of the Spanish landscapes was completely neglected in the history of the visual arts. In narrator’s words,

Up to the nineteenth century, Spain, vastly picturesque though it is, has no landscape painting; only images of man, of man on a wooden cross, of man in the height of his power, of man the cripple, of man dead and in decay... until the apocalyptic democracy of Francisco de Goya y Lucientes. (Spain 54-5; Výlet 217)\textsuperscript{307}

\textsuperscript{306} Neb ještě spíš jako by na nich zůstal zbrázděný otisk prstů, které stvořily tuto zemi. Z vrcholu Montserratu vidíte otisk božích palců, jež hněty ten teplý a brutnatý kraj se zvláštní autorskou radostí.”

\textsuperscript{307} “Země tak nesmírně malebná jako Španělsko nemá až do devatenáctého století žádné krajinářství: jen obrazy člověka, člověka na dřevě kříže, člověka v moci stojícího, člověka mrzáka, člověka mrtvého a v rozkladu...až po apokalyptickou demokracii Francisca de Goya y Lucientes.”
3.8. Images from Holland

3.8.1. The Semantic Doubling

The shortest of all the travelogues, *Images from Holland*, uses the narrative techniques and themes that appeared in the previous travelogues, such as *ekphrasis* in connection with previous visual representations of the country and the combination of the author’s own illustrations and narrative. Furthermore, the use of the visual and textual in this travelogue is developed and echoes the use of the Surrealist aesthetics of mirrors or “semantic doubling,” which will be discussed in the text. The water motif in *Images from Holland* is part of the author’s semantic doubling; Čapek plays with the motif to visually and textually depict an alternative fictional world and emphasize his vision of the simultaneous coexistence of the present and past in Holland. The “Hollandicity” in this travelogue becomes a search through everyday life and art history for representations of Holland’s “typicalities.”

The combination of visual and verbal, as well as the conflict between their semantic codes makes the narrative dynamic. As Hillis J. Miller argues: “a picture and a text juxtaposed will always have different meanings or logoi. They will always conflict irreconcilably with one another, since they are different signs, just as would two different sentences side by side, or two different pictures” (95). In Čapek’s opus, the conflicting interaction between illustrations and narrative is an example of “semantic doubling” (*významová dvojíost*), which Mukařovský uses to express how, in Čapek’s œuvre, different syntactic elements and semantic fields are brought together in order to create an atmosphere of fantasy and miracle (“Výstavba” 382). In his travelogues, semantic
doubling overcomes a textual level and becomes a confrontation between textual and visual. In Mukařovský’s words it is

a mutual relationship between a verbal and a visual sign, a text and illustrations in Čapek’s texts, if they are made by the author himself. As it has been already known, the most common relationship between text and image is that of subordination of an image by the text; however, reverse also happens, a text accompanying an image. Čapek does not choose either of two possibilities; his illustration and his text interpenetrate (Letters from England, Letters from Spain, Letters from Holland, Journeys in the North). (382-3)

The semantic doubling in Images from Holland and Journey to the North is present in the mirroring principle, which only implicitly existed in the previous narratives. The theme of mirrors is ideal for showing how Holland was created on the water (Fig. 12). Buildings and trees, as depicted in the illustrations, are reflected in the water, creating two simultaneous urban worlds: “they doubled their dimensions vertically: by reflection in the water” (Holland 15; Obrázky 331). The doubling distorts the viewer’s perspective of the actual world, making him unsure which one is actual and which is only a reflection. Moreover, it changes the concept of time by introducing a dream-like state that I analyzed in chapter 2. At the same time, it opposes the historicity of the place and puts history and the present moment side by side since the narrator would not be surprised “if the surface of the grachten still reflected the shadows of people

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308 “jedno (co) nahoře a druhé zrcadlené ve vodě.”
from bygone centuries, men in broad ruffs and women in mob caps. You see, these grachts are very old and consequently somehow unreal” (15; Obrázky 331).\textsuperscript{309}


\textsuperscript{309} “kdyby v zrcadle grachtů se pohybovaly odrazy lidí z minulých staletí, mužů v širokých krejzlikách a žen v čepcích. Ty grachty jsou totiž velmi staré a následkem toho jaksi neskutečné.”
3.8.2. *In Search of “Typicalities”*

The narrator indicates at the beginning of *Images from Holland* that this travelogue was written upon his return home (*Holland 7; Obrázky 319*). The temporal distance represented by his return challenges reader expectations of the imagined “typicality” of “Holandicity” of the “Dutch,” especially of typical “Dutch faces” and “Dutch landscapes” in order to emphasise the subjective and defamiliarizing perspective of the narrator (Fig. 13). Typicality is approached from two perspectives: via art history and through an outsider’s defamiliarizing point of view. Looking for typical representations, the narrator refers to the well-known Dutch physiognomies depicted in the work of great, seventeenth-century, Dutch masters.

The traveler, however, wishes to offer his own “examples” of ordinary Dutch people seen on the streets and railway stations to support the image in Dutch art (*Holland 7; Obrázky 319*).

![Fig. 13. “Ordinary Dutch people.” Čapek, Karel. Obrázky z Holandska. Italské listy, Anglické listy, Výlet do Španěl, Obrázky z Holandska (Praha: ČS, 1968) 319.](image)

The defamiliarizing journey of the traveler-intellectual, who is sometimes disguised by a clown mask or that of a naïve child, through Holland begins with a walk through his own gallery of caricatures of participants at the PEN Congress (Fig. 14). He transforms his readers into viewers with the use of deixis, graphically breaking the flow
of his own sentences with interpolated images, the sketchy and humorous nature of which opposes the attributes of seriousness and importance expressed by words. An example of this is the caricature of John Galsworthy, “whiter than he was before, with face light and soft, as if it was illuminated by moonlight” (Obrázky 320).


310 The English translation omits this part; the translation is mine. The original is “bělejší než býval dříve, s tváří světlou a jemnou, jako by byla ozářená světlem měsíčním.”
The impossibility of description is that of the light in Holland, an element also
present in *Letters from Italy*, known for its *ekphrastic* quality. As one of the most
important semantic notions, the nature of light is described in “Dutch light” (Holandské
světlo”), a short and independent narrative fragment that serves as an introduction to the
work of the old masters such as Rembrandt as cultural “insiders,” who know how to
depict its translucent quality, which cannot be expressed by words. The simulation of
pictorial arts again replaces the impossibility of narration.

Similar to *Letters from Italy*, the idea of visuality in Holland is in relation with the
ideas of folklore and art. Here, visuality becomes “a keyword for visual culture both a
mode of representing imperial culture and a means of resisting it by means of reverse
appropriation” (Mirzoeff 53). The narrator opposes the natural folkloric quality of
everyday life of Holland with Oud Holland, which is a marketable and artificial creation,
a touristy imitation of the folkloric that is confined by the needs of the market. It is ripped
away from the quotidian and easily reproduced in tourists’ snapshots. Folk costumes in
such an artificial environment are nothing but masks for life, a phenomenon of folklore
which “should receive a government grant, as if it were a sort of national park” (*Holland
43; *Obrázky* 364).311

The same debasement of folk culture can occur back home, in the First
Czechoslovak Republic. Čapek’s mockery of the use of folk culture in Oud Holland is
reminiscent of of Karel Teige, who stated in 1928 that “owing to the clumsiness of the
state art propaganda, foreigners, for instance, have the impression of Czechoslovakia, that

311 “subvencionovat folklór jako jakýsi národní park.”
in Prague we walk in folk costumes, and that our apartments look like rustic sitting-rooms by [Pavel] Janák“

3.8.3. “Sedentary Art”

The idea of the ordinariness of Holland comes from Dutch visual artists known as “small masters” (Holland 47; Obrázky 368). Their diminutive moniker derives not only from the small format of their images, but also from their subject matter: the small houses, the rooms within those houses, everyday objects, and portraits of people who live in those houses, rather than the divine motifs found in cathedrals (Holland 47; Obrázky 368). Thus, the small art at the same time creates and mirrors the intimacy specific to Dutch houses and pubs. It is an art that mirrors life without pathos and grandiose gestures, an art that can be described as “sedentary.” As the narrator states:

Nobody can preach sitting down; all he can do is to talk. By sitting down permanently on its wicker footstool, Dutch art banished all high-flown heroics from itself and the world which it portrays; it began to look at things more from close quarters and more from below. (Holland 48-49; Obrázky 369)

The small art is therefore an exilic art that “hounded out of the cathedrals, it found its way into the kitchen, the tavern, the world of clodhoppers, shopkeepers, old ladies and charitable societies, and made itself remarkably snug and contented there” (Holland 47;
Small art is the visual equivalent of the anecdote; both are seated. It is made by artists who created while sitting and therefore created art at eye level. In other words, the mirroring in Dutch small art reflects a world adjusted to the human perspective (Holland 48; Obrázky 369). As the narrator points out:

Dutch art is the work of seated painters for sedentary townsfolk; an urban art which sometimes paints peasants, but does so with the condescending banter of sedate urban shopkeepers. They are fond of still-lifes. They are fond of pictures which tell a story; stories provide entertainment for sedentary people. (Holland 48; Obrázky 369)

“Seated art” found its representatives among Dutch painters such as Vermeer van Delft (1635-1675), Frans Hals (1580-1666), and Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669). Čapek’s narrator again leads the reader-spectator through a gallery of images, praising Frans Hals for his art of portraits (even own self-portrait that resembles a caricature; Fig. 15), and Vermeer van Delft for the photographic clarity of his vision (Fig. 16-18), the way light illuminates the depicted objects and his celebration everyday life (Holland 49; Obrázky 370).

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316 vyhnáno z chrámu, vniklo do kuchyně, do hospody, do světa chrapounů, kupců, tetek a dobročinných spolků a ulebedilo se tam s nápadným uspokojením.
317 In the English translation, “anecdote” is replaced with “story.”
318 In contrast to the Italian masters, especially Michelangelo, whose paintings were “above” human perspective, the Dutch masters viewed their subjects from a more profane point of view.
319 Je to umění sedících malířů pro sedavé měšťany; městské umění, které někdy maluje sedláky, ale s povýšenými ochucenými usedlými městskými kupců. Mají rádi zátiší. Mají rádi anekdotické obrazy; anekdota je zábava lidí sedavných.
Fig. 15. Hals, Frans. *Frans Post* (1655). Private collection. 6 May 2008.

http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/h/hals/frans/index.html

Fig. 17. Van Delft, Vermeer. *The Kitchenmaid* (1658). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/vermeer/kitchen-maid/kitchen-maid.jpg

Fig. 18. Van Delft, Vermeer. *Woman in Blue, Reading the Letter* (1662-1663).

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. 6 May 2008.

http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/vermeer/i/woman-blue.jpg

Despite the praise the narrator lavishes on small art, it has destructive and limiting tendencies, which are especially visible when considering the work and reception of Rembrandt. Rembrandt also looked from the low perspective of “seated art,” but he was “one of the first romantics in the world and he had to be born in that bright, humdrum,
shallow Holland, of all places” (Holland 50; Obrázky 371). Originating from the “small masters,” Rembrandt combined the human with the divine, developing his own grotesque Realism (Fig. 19; Fig. 20). The grotesque representations of the supernatural and the divine are characteristic of human features and faces: “The warm gloom of his pictures glimmers with gems and the body’s decay, the bearded heads of Talmudists, and the moist eye of Susanna. The Son of Man and the countenance of man” (Holland 50; Obrázky 371). The greatest irony of all is that the artist, who lived in internal exile, had numerous epigones in his own country (Holland 50; Obázky 371). For the traveler looking for the smallness and an idealized ordinariness in life, the biggest mystery is at the heart of life in this small nation. At the core of the mirroring and happy balance between the grand and the quotidian, there is sadness and horrifying beauty (Holland 50; Obrázky Czech 372). If the “typical” is synonymous to the representation of “the ordinary,” then the notion of internal exile represents doubt in Čapek’s idealization of the ordinary. In other words, it signifies the discovery of the real “Hollandicity,” that Rembrandt was “too grand” for the “small” and “seated” Holland.

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320 jeden z prvních romantiků světa, a musel se zrovna narodit v tom jasném, maloměstském, plochoučkém Holandsku. ibid. p. 371; English: ibid. p. 50
321 Z teplé tmě jeho obrazů září drahokamy a sešlost těla, bradaté hlavy talmudistů a vlhké oči Suzaniny, Syn Člověka a tvář člověka.

http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/rembrandt/1650slaughtered-ox.jpg


http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/rembrandt/1630nicolaes-tulp.jpg
3.9. Travels to the North

3.9.1. Fantasy and the Abundance of Forms

The last travelogue that Čapek wrote, except for the posthumously published *Images from Home*, is a culmination of the intermedial narrative techniques he used in his first three travelogues (*ekphrasis*, iconotext, lyrisation, and mirroring) and features the explicit appearance of certain elements that the author had implicitly used earlier. This travelogue again stresses the visual features of the narrative itself, especially the use of colors. The colors are also explicitly present because, in contrast with the previous travelogues, many illustrations in *Travels to the North* are printed in color (Fig. 21). The notion of semantic doubling is also expanded here. Introduced in *Images from Holland* as a both a visual and textual device to capture the simultaneous existence of the past and present, semantic doubling in *Travels in the North* creates a supernatural world within the narrative. This world, in which nature becomes too wide and incomprehensible for humans, becomes the essence of “Scandinavicity.”
Distinguishing Denmark and Sweden as the continuation of the northern experience, is the geological texture of Sweden. Granite is the material lying in the core of all creation - from the Paleolithic tombstones to houses and carved Viking runes. At first sight, Sweden is also characterized by red and white farms, scattered throughout the country. The narrator, however, compares the farms with human faces that differ from one another, each one possessing unique features. The abundance of forms and their uniqueness is why, in this travelogue, the number of illustrations almost overwhelms the text.

If the illustrations in *A Trip to Spain* were studies in movement, in *Journey to the North*, they are studies in the variety of forms visible in close-ups. The configuration of
each farm, the organization of stables, dwellings, barns, and mows is different (Fig. 22). Also, the construction of the windows and the shapes of the houses appear as products of the imagination rather than depictions of actual world. The limitless variation of houses and farms becomes similar to a world of fantasy (*North 44; Cesta 40*). The narrator implies that such an abundance of forms may be expressed only with colors that were not within his reach at the moment. Since the narrator finds expressing the variations impossible, he has to shift his attention to another object. In his words:

> Here fantasy is almost inexhaustible, what to do with the windows, how to group them or to spread them out over the façade, and how to frame them: into the width or the height, into square, triangle, rhomb or semicircle, in twos or threes. I should have gone on for ever drawing it, but without the red, white, and green colour it’s not the right thing; and besides, these houses pushed together, built up, and added to are a great nuisance with perspective. Therefore I have to let you stand, Swedish farms. Amidst your pastures, granite walls, willows and ancient trees, and turn to something else, say, the woods or the lakes; (*North 44; Cesta 40-1*)

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322 „…skoro nevyčerpatelná je zdejší fantasie, co dělat s okny, jak je sdružit nebo rozhodit po průčeli a jak je rámovat: na šířku nebo na výšku, do čtverce, trojúhelníku, kosočtverce či polokruhu, po dvou nebo po třech. Byl bych s tím kreslit napořádat, ale bez červené, bílé a zelené barvy to není to pravé; a mimo to ty do sebe zastrkané, nastavované a přístavované domky dají ukruhovou páračku s perspektivou. Pročež vás musím nechat stát, švédské dvorce, uprostřed vašich pastvin, žulových zidek, vrbíček a starých stromů, a obrátit se k něčemu jinému, řekněme k lesům nebo jezerům.
Fig. 22. Depiction of stables and dwellings. Čapek, Karel. Cesta na sever (Praha: ČSS, 1955) 38-9.

The narrator is building his image of Sweden gradually, introducing colors and objects as he encounters them, simulating his movement through the country. His depiction of Sweden resembles the representation of other places that he has visited. The travelogue is a work in progress; not only the narrative unfolds as the narrator explores and depicts new places, but also images, which is a technique Čapek used as early as Letters from Italy. The narrator introduces an image not only in its spatial, but also in its temporal dimension; a feature characteristic of the distortion of tradition in modern art.

Black granite, red farmhouses, and black forests are not enough for the first impression of the typical Swedish landscape: “the silent lakes are still missing for the impression to be complete” (North 46; Cesta 46). The motif of water gradually develops through details such as a silver grass blade suddenly flashing in a dark forest, and a gradation of color associations from silver willow trees among which there are the small lakes and which reflect the sky to choppy lakes with cold, iron surfaces that change

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323 ještě tedy chybí stříbrná jezera, aby ten první dojem byl celý.
into the endless waters and the silver line of the horizon as a metaphor for the greatness of the world (North 46; Cesta 46). Water becomes the world itself.

3.9.2. The Supernatural World on the Water

As it was previously said, the theme of water in Journey to the North is a continuation of mirroring in Images from Holland. Stockholm, for instance, is peculiar for the bridge at the city center, which, although it is small in comparison with other famous bridges, is probably the only bridge in the world literary keeping a city together to spite the limitless presence of water upon which the city is built. Water creates the world of Stockholm, it changes into a supernatural element because salt water and fresh water merge into an endless surface, the feeling of which make foreigners loose their balance since they have the sensation that the ground is disappearing and that they are walking on water (North 48; Cesta 48-49). Water gives a fictional character to the country because “a romantic lake must be small; the smaller the more antique it looks, more fairylike, or how should I express it” (North 65; Cesta 62).\(^{324}\)

The gradation in the mirroring principle continues as the narrator travels through Norway and approaches the North Pole as the final point of Europe (Fig. 23). He witnesses “a dumb and bottomless mirage” (North 156; Cesta 153)\(^{325}\) that turns the world of nature upside down and transforms the natural into the supernatural. Objects, such as the boat, become personified living creatures who fear the unknown world where man,

\(^{324}\)“Romantické jezero musí být malé; čím menší, tím vypadá starodávněji, osaměleji, pohádkověji nebo jak bych to řekl.”

\(^{325}\)němě a bezedné zrcadlení
losing his balance, does not see the sky above him, but the converted image of “the blue fjord of heaven” (North 156; Cesta 153).\textsuperscript{326}

The principle of mirroring demonstrates that the travelogue is a journey into a supernatural world, which was discussed in the second chapter, whose creation (almost in Biblical sense of the word) the traveler wants to portray. The unreality is green, smooth, and “silent like a dream” (North 177; Cesta 174);\textsuperscript{327} it becomes timeless and limitleses (North 178; Cesta 175). The unreality is conveyed by the reflected image, in which the narrator feels that the water should not be disturbed by breathing; the ship becomes an illusion and the surrounding mountains lose their base. Since it is a supernatural world, the only way for the traveler to describe it is to use the attributes of known materials, such as “crinkled like silk,” “glistening and nacreous,” and “soft like oil” (North 177; Cesta 174).\textsuperscript{328}

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\textsuperscript{326} modrý fjord nebes.
\textsuperscript{327} tichá jako sen
\textsuperscript{328} hedvábñe navlnená; perleťové zářící; olejnaté měkká;

Fig. 23. Depiction of mirroring. Čapek, Karel. Cesta na sever (Praha: ČSS, 1955) 152.
Another method Čapek uses is to provide a constant variation of the image of water: “Yes, the vast ocean is simply inexpressible; it has its moments of fearful indigo blue, or of steely grey or of opal, flowing brightness (...) I say, is nothing compared with the water of the Norwegian suns.”[^329] The supernatural quality is defined by comparing it with the actual world, which the narrator calls “the human planet” (North 179; Cesta 175).[^330] Although the traveler dwells upon his inability to describe the supernatural world, which is beyond ordinary human perception, he contrasts the lyrical description of the water with a summary of objects he sees as yet another narratorial perspective: “God, what am I to do with it!...I give it up; as if I could report on something that is not of this world! Briefly, it is all rock, and below is the smooth water in which everything is reflected; and that’s it” (North 177-8; Cesta 174).[^331] The description finally ends with the proposition that the cosmic dimension is the only truthful comparison between the supernatural and the physical world.

That water is transparent, and green like emerald, or something, and as quiet as death, or like infinity, and terrible like the Milky Way; and these mountains are quite unreal, because they do not stand upon any shore, but on a mere bottomless mirage;...and so you see, didn’t I tell you that it is another world? And this is not the Håkon Adalstein, but a phantom boat which glides without sound on the silent expanse; and it is the zero hour,

[^329]: “Pravda, on už obyčejný šírý oceán je nevýslovný; má své chvíle strašlivé indigové modři nebo sýhravé šedi nebo opálové, rozteklé světlosti (...) říkám, není nic proti vodám norských sundů.”
[^330]: Lidská planeta
[^331]: Bože, co si s tím mám počít! (...) copak mohu podat zprávu o něčem, co není s tohoto světa? Zkrátka jsou to samé skály a dole je hladká voda a v ní se to všechno zrcadlí; a je to.
which on the human planet they call midnight, but in this world there is no
night, or time. (*North* 178-179; *Cesta* 175)\(^{332}\)

Due to the supernatural quality of nature, everything human and historical is
subordinate, even inappropriate. Thus, tourists climb to the three “Royal Hills” (Fig. 24)
only to find no historical artefacts, history is only present in the name (*North* 61; *Cesta*
58-9).\(^{333}\)

![Royal Hills](image.png)

Fig. 24. Royal Hills. Čapek, Karel. *Cesta na sever* (Praha: ČSS, 1955) 58.

Temporal authority does not exist in Stockholm because it is built on water (*North* 52-3;
*Cesta* 50-1). Finally, Čapek uses a Surrealist image of a table left by the road and
mailboxes hanging from trees as metaphors for people living in loneliness yet relying on
and being confident of one another (*North* 64; *Cesta* 61). The depiction of a group of
religious Americans and their blunt statements on the boat is a grotesque of inappropriate
human behavior in the supernatural world of nature where the mountains are personified
as “sad like the end of the world” (*North* 108; *Cesta* 107).\(^{334}\)

At the beginning of the traveler’s Scandinavian journey, there is still a creative
balance between man and nature. In Norway, stone is the material of artistry and nature,
while wood is for people. People create because wood can be easily shaped, modeled, and

\(^{332}\)…cos ta voda je průhledná a zelená jako smaragd nebo co, a klidná jako smrt nebo jako konečnost, a
strašná jako Mléčná Dráha; a ty hory nejsou vůbec skutečné, protože nestojí na žádném břehu, nýbrž na
pouhé bezedném zrcadlení; (…) tak vidíte, neříkal jsem, že je to jiný svět? A my nejsme žádný Hákon
Adalstein, nýbrž loď’ stínů, jež se bezhlasně šíre po hladině mlčení; a je hodina nultá, které se na lidské
planetě říká půlnoč, ale v tomto jiném světě není noci ani času.

\(^{333}\)královské páhorky;

\(^{334}\)“smutné jako konec světa.”
painted. Folk art made of wood is characteristic of the mountain regions because there are woods and forests. Wooden constructions are made by man while nature models in stone (North 83; Cesta 85).

The imbalance between men and nature begins with the inappropriate behavior of outsiders, especially tourists, for whom the northern landscapes are an incomprehensible supernatural world. The last northern point of Europe is characteristic of the mental hospital as the biggest building in the area and trade, which can survive even at the point when fishing or agriculture is not possible (North 195-7; Cesta 193-4). The inappropriate language of foreigners that distorts the still waters is contrasted with the large number of illustrations that seem to fill the gap between the divine wonders of nature and ordinariness of the group of religious people (North 110; Cesta 110).

A number of illustrations of mountains and forests is used to show their uniqueness and personified individuality (Fig. 25; Fig. 26). Anthropomorphization here populates the landscape. The mountains “file past in all of their beauty;” some of them are

solitary and terribly clear individuality, while the others shake hands with each other and are content to form a massif. Each has a different face and thinks by himself; I tell you, Nature is a tremendous individualist, and to everything she creates she gives character. (North 142; Cesta 140)\textsuperscript{335}

\textsuperscript{335} defilují mimo hory ve vší své krásě; samotná a strašně vyhraněná individualita, zatím co jiné si navzájem podávají ruce a spokojí se s tím, že tvoří horstvo. Každá má jinou tvář a myslí si své; řikám vám, příroda je nesmírný individualista a všemu, co vytvoří, dává osobnost.
The narrator uses a lot of illustrations because words are ineffective in expressing the beauty and variety of the rocks, which belong completely to the visual sphere:

I tell you, all this can be seen and sensed with the eyes, for the eyes are a divine instrument, and the best part of the brain: they are more sensitive than the tips of the fingers, and sharper than the point of a knife; what a lot can one do with one’s eyes, but words, I say, are good for nothing; and I shall not say any more about what I saw. (North 172; Cesta 170)\(^{336}\)

The quality and colors of the shadows therefore resemble different materials, acquiring at the same time palpable features; mountains should be painted, air and color should be

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\(^{336}\) pravím, to všechno se dá vidět a hmatat očima, neboť oči jsou božský nástroj a nejlepší část mozku; jsou cítlivější než konečky prstů a ostřejší nežli špička nože; co všechno se dá očima pořidit, ale slova, jářku, nejsou k ničemu; a já už nebudu povidat, co jsem viděl.
written, while the beauty of the sea is indescribable (*North* 170; *Cesta* 172). Thus, the use of the coloured illustrations in *Journey to the North*.

The feeling of eternity is also emphasised by daylight, the transparency of the light, already mentioned in the context of the previous travelogues, in which everything is reflected and loses its shape, becoming additionally estranged. In Sweden, water, forests, and light are limitless and eternal. As a combination of natural and supernatural elements, Sweden becomes the world of eternity

And particularly the strangest thing, the immense northern day, and bright night when you don’t care for going to bed, when you don’t even know whether it’s already to-day or yesterday, and whether people are already on the move, or still on the move; it doesn’t even get dark, it only turns pale, transparent, and phantasmagoric; it isn’t darkness at all, but an odd, ghastly light without any source, which seems to rise up from the walls, roads and water – then only the voices grow low and you stay sitting.

(*North* 53; *Cesta* 51)\(^{337}\)

Furthermore, the northern midday light in Norway changes the narrator’s perspective on the entire world, casting a shadow on things and giving a peculiar quality to reality (Fig. 27). Due to this light, man sees all details very clearly but from a distance and becomes aware of how the two worlds - the supernatural world of the north and his own world - mirror one another: “and you see, extremely sharply, every dear feature on the face of the earth, but with the seducing and sublime detachment of distance. The northern day has

\(^{337}\) A hlavně to nejdivnější, předlouhý severní den a bílá noc, kdy se člověku nechce jít spat, kdy ani neviš, je-li už den a chodi-li to už lidé nebo ještě lidé: ani se nesetní, jenom se udělá bledé a průsvitně a přízračně; není to vůbec tma, nýbrž liché a strašidelně světlo, které nemá zdroje a zdá se vystupovat ze zdi a cest a vod – to se jenom ztřumí hlasý a sedí se dál.
the finesse of the fifth hour; and if I might choose, well then, I say, give me the northern light” (North 154; Česta 151). The land of the short northern day is for the narrator the real, natural beginning of the Europe for which he was searching.

Fig. 27. The nature of light. Čapek, Karel. Česta na sever (Praha: ČSS, 1955) 227.

Summary

This chapter focused on the intermedial elements in the work of Karel Čapek, in particular the iconotext (the explicit visual element in the narrative, such as illustrations), ekphrasis (the narrative representation of works of visual art), and the visual elements of the language - especially the use of colours. They are all semantic signs that simultaneously interact with the textual narrative. The chapter aesthetically situates Karel Čapek’s work within the notion of aesthetic function and the intermedial studies of the Prague Linguistic Circle, especially the idea of expanding the limits of different arts, challenging the traditional idea of the literary canon, and the interaction between poetry, prose, and visual arts. I drew attention to these elements in Karel Čapek’s travelogues and linked them with Josef Čapek’s aesthetic theory of small visual forms and Jan Amos

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338 …i vidi člověk přejsně každou drahou podrobnost na tváři světa, ale s vábným a vznešeným odstupem dálky. Severní den má jemnost hodiny páté; a kdybych si mohl vybírat, tož dejte mi, jářku, světlo severní.
Komenský’s treatment of the visual in narratives. The analysis of the travelogues demonstrated how the visual poetics of the narrative changed in connection with the poetics of the period, from *ekphrasis* in *Letters from Italy*, which I consider to be a manifesto of visual arts, to the use of illustrations in *Letters from England*, and finally to the interaction among illustrations, film, and games in *A Trip to Spain*. The discussion continued with an examination of *Images from Holland* and *Journey to the North*, which both featured the use of mirroring - or in Mukařovský’s terminology, semantic doubling - as a tool in creating the fictional world.
Chapter 4

Fictional Travels

4.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the theme of travel in Karel Čapek’s fiction. Travel is not a mere motif, but the catalyst for an intertextual interaction between the writer’s travelogues and fiction. Intertextuality is understood here as the dialogical relationship between texts, as the “absorption and transformation of the other” (Kristeva, “Word” 37), and as “a writing response to (a function or negation of) another text or other texts” (Kristeva, “Semiology” 29). While in the second and third third chapters, I focused on the expansion of travelogue conventions in Čapek through the introduction of oral and visual elements, this chapter focuses on the theme of travel in Karel Čapek’s fiction. The relationship between the two illuminates how concrete travel becomes spiritual, thereby shifting the focus from foreign destinations to home.

Fiction reverses the position of home: in contrast to the travelogues, in which home was a point of reference, in Čapek fiction, home ceases to exist. While the travelogues depict destinations through comparisons with home, Čapek uses his fictional works to challenge the possibility of comparison. Instead, he makes a distinction between those who travel and those who narrate.

I divide the fictional works into three groups according to the type of destination each work features. The first includes exotic destinations, where home is a distant memory and the journey is foregrounded. The exotic appears in early works like The Garden of Krakonoš (Krakonošova zahrada, 1918) and The Luminous Depths (Zářivé
hlubiny, 1916), while it assumes a different function in later works, such as Meteor (Povětroň, 1934) and War With the Newts (Válka s mloky, 1936). In the second group, home disappears and travel itself becomes the central motif as Čapek focuses on the aimless wandering of characters like tramps (tulák, pobuda). The primary example of this type of work is From the Life of Insects (Ze života hmyzu, 1921), a play that Čapek co-authored with Josef Čapek. The last group of fiction includes internalized journeys of self-discovery (sebeobjevení) that challenge the very idea of a physical home. As the most diverse among the three, the journey of self-discovery includes contact with the other - either meeting the traveling other as in The Wayside Crosses (Boží muka, 1917) or by encountering others while away from home, as in some stories from Tales from Two Pockets (Povídky z jedné kapsy, Povídky z druhé kapsy, 1929) and the novel An Ordinary Life (Obyčejný život, 1934). To this third group of travels also belongs the novel Hordubal (1933), in which the return of a peasant from Subcarpathian Ruthenia to his village represents the simultaneous loss of home and failed self-discovery. The journey of self-discovery directly relates all travelers from this group to the traditional Czech pilgrim (poutník), especially Komenský’s allegorical traveler in Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart.

339 The play, The Outlaw (Loupežník, 1920), and The Fateful Game of Love (Lásky hra osudna, 1922; written with Josef Čapek), The Makropulos Secret (Věc Makropulos, 1922), as well as travel to fantastic places such as Krakatit (1924). The Absolute at Large (Tovarna na absolutno, 1922), and Adam the Creator (Adam Stvořitel, 1927; written with Josef Čapek).
4.2. Exotic destinations

This section aims to discuss the first group of fiction characteristic of exotic destinations, where the concept of home remains only a memory. Within this group, I will discuss *The Garden of Krakonoš (Krakonošova zahrada, 1918)* and *The Luminous Depths (Zářivé hlubiny, 1916)*, *Meteor (Povětroň, 1934)* and *War With the Newts (Válka s mloky, 1936)*.

4.2.1. The Garden of Krakonoš

Co-authored by Josef and Karel Čapek, *The Garden of Krakonoš* is a collection of short stories, narrative fragments, anecdotes and aphorisms, often humorous and narrated from the point of view of a double (or plural) narrator.

The exotic here is everything beyond reach, such as childhood, in this case the garden of Krakonoš, which is, “in the narrow sense” a return to “that region” (“onen kraj”) of the narrator’s childhood (*Zahrada* 9). The geographical reality of the mountains of Krakonoše is here interwoven with the supernatural world of childhood dreams and the mysterious and bygone cultures that mark the region. The first person narration with the lyrical second-person address, which is characteristic of the later travelogues, addresses a child, or rather himself, reminding him of this place of mystery and the first “paradise of the world” (*Zahrada* 10). The exoticism is also present in the construction of the two narrators’ fictional autobiography, since they rely on adventure literature as a source of exoticism and the personal experience of leaving. The Czech identity is not constrained by the country’s physical borders here, but defined through literature. In other words, it is fictional:
It is said, that exoticism is not a Czech quality, that we adhere to our country like dough to kneading trough. This is certainly true; but haven’t you, gentlemen, ever read Robinson Crusoe, The Last of the Mohicans, and Jules Verne? And haven’t you [singular form] lived in Bohemia? Haven’t you had friends similar to you? Is it just a coincidence that one of them became a comedian, the second one died in America, and the third vanished into the world as a sailor? You too [second-person singular] were the same. (Zahrada 12)340

Throughout the collection there are references to the history of travel symbols. Paradise is interpreted in Christian terms as a lost and irretrievable world and an escape into illusion. It is a return to the Symbolist contribution to Czech literary heritage as presented in Čapek’s anthology of French poetry,341 on which the author was working concurrently,342 especially the maritime motifs and their metaphors in the history of literature. Many of the poems in the collection The Garden of Krakonoš describe sea journeys to unknown destinations. An example is anecdotes in “The Ships of Phoenicians” (“Lodi Fajáků”), in which the plural narrators play with the cultural symbolism of ships. They intertextually rely on Phoenicians as generous and good-hearted sailors, “fond of rowing” (Homer 175), who live on the island of Scheria and who helped Odysseus return to Ithaca. The motif of ship in the anecdotes also represents an

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340 Říká se, že exotismus není českou vlastností, že lpíme na své zemi jako těsto na díži. Jistě je to pravda; ale což vy, pánové, jste nikdy nečetli Robinsona Crusoe, Posledního Mohykána a Jules Vernea, a což jsi nežil v Čechách, neměl jsi kamarádů, jako jsi ty sám, což je to náhoda, že jeden z nich se dal ke komedianům, druhý zahynul v Americe a třetí se ztratil ve světě jako námořník? I ty jsi byl takový.
341 The theme of travel in the anthology of the French poetry was discussed in the introduction chapter
342 The juvenile prose are a product of collaboration between Josef and Karel Čapek, and the idea of the anthology was also conceived by both brothers as a collaborative project (including other writers), but at the end it remained Karel Čapek’s work alone (Francouzská poezie 186).
inter textual connection to Horace’s ode “To the Republic,” where the poet compares the state with a “battered” yet “ship so proud” (43) that is courageous enough to sail on unpredictable and dangerous seas. Trips to Cythera were also a popular motif in Symbolist poetry. An example is Baudelaire’s “A Voyage to Cythera” (“Un Voyage à Cythère”) from *Flowers of Evil* (*Le Fleurs du Mal*, 1857). The ship also appears as the barque of Peter, a Christian symbol for spiritual stability on unpredictable seas and “the Harbour of Salvation.” (“Ship” 420).

Ships are also connected with utopian travels to unreachable destinations (Čapek, *Zahrada* 96). The theme of ships continues with the Ship of Fools as an allegory in literature and painting; it is a “ship filled with allegorical representations of the vices, especially of the flesh, e.g. a (half) naked woman, wine-glasses, bagpipeplayer, etc.... [or] sailing as an end in itself, without higher motive or end” (“Ship” 421). The last ship is a parodic return to Czech tradition, in which František Ladislav Čelakovský, the nineteenth-century Czech intellectual and writer, known for his interest in folk poetry, calls upon the sea to disturb his barque of life, and the entire poetic tradition glorifying the distances fails in the eyes of experienced sailors who know that “velocity is unimportant, winds are unimportant, distance is unimportant. The the most important fundament of the ship is an anchor” (Čapek, *Zahrada* 97).343

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4.2.2. The Luminous Depths

*The Luminous Depths* is an early collection of short stories co-authored by Josef and Karel Čapek. The collection is characteristic of narrative and thematic play with low and popular genres, such as stories of adventure, travel, sentimental stories and yellow journalism.

An example of the use of yellow journalism is a story “Scandal and Journalism” (“Skandál a žurnalistika”). The narrative is constructed from newspaper clippings following the flight of two lovers to Canada. The story, “The Luminous Depths” (“Zářivé hlubiny”), from the eponymous collection fictionalizes the tragedy of the Titanic by introducing the point of view of a witness who distinguishes between the actual sinking (with a list of deceased as hard proof) and his love for a girl on the ship. The dual perspective opens a path to the supernatural world, making the entire event look like a dream: “I think about her, who is in a strange world of evanescence, and I always connect with her, crossing alone into the unreality where she is” (Čapek, *Zahrada*, 169).

In contrast with the travelogues, the fictional exotic is connected with the loss of identity. After deciding to depart from everyday life, the travelers are ordinary men converted into unfortunate sailors, unable to communicate their experience to the others. Manoel M. L. from “The Living Flame” (“Živý plamen”) sails into the world of open and miraculous spaces, far from the disappointment and confinement represented by home. In “The Island” (“Ostrov”) Don Luiz experiences an accident and wakes up on an exotic, paradisal island from which there is no return (149). With time, Don Luiz loses language as the only trace of his identity and remains in limbo between his foreignness and his

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344 Myslím na ni, jež je v podivném světě zmizení a s níž se stále spojují přecházejí sám v neskutečnost, kde je ona.
inability to communicate with the native people on the island. His language and memory of his homeland returns with the arrival of a Portugese ship’s crew (“Ostrov” 151). He fails to board the ship and remains on the island, because he is caught between the illusion of paradise and his own lost identity. For the first time, he sees the ugly side of life on the island: his beautiful mistress becomes an ugly old woman and the exotic landscape is a prison. The island becomes usucceful substitute for home, replicating many of its negative features.

4.2.3. Meteor

In Meteor, three narrators - a Sister of Mercy, a clairvoyant, and a poet - try to reconstruct the life of an unknown and disfigured foreigner, who is lying in a coma in a hospital ward after a plane crash. All of them agree that the survivor is an exotic vagabond, but in contrast to those who rely on their own imagination, two doctors act as observers and commentators on the stories. They find an anatomical explanation for Case X’s life; his physiognomy, in contrast to his obvious intellect, merged animal and human features, showing the anatomical predisposition for wanderings.

That also shows a roving disposition, doesn’t it. As you were good enough to remark, it is a body of an educated man; that Case X was not born a tramp, and if he became a sailor or an adventurer, it reveals the damnable cleavage in his life. What sort of a conflict was it? It’s all the same;

345 This will be discussed in the context of Wayside Crosses.
whether it was of one kind or another, it was conditioned simply by his constitution. \((\text{Novels 227; Povětroň 183})^{346}\)

In \textit{Meteor}, the exotic is related to the notion of the fall and an unfortunate return home.\(^{347}\) For the clairvoyant, the unknown man had to die because he knew that returning home would not change anything. The return was just the end of his physical essence: "‘And... why did he crash?’ ‘He was at home then.’ The clairvoyant raised his eyes, ‘understand, he had to crash. He could not do anything more. It was enough that he had come back’" \((\text{Novels 225; Povětroň 182})^{348}\). The clairvoyant suggests that the other should not be looked for in the distance, but within oneself: "There is no the second sight but to watch oneself; what is called telepathy is not reception from a distance, but from close at hand, the very shortest distance, and the most difficult to attain – from one’s self” \((\text{Novels 206; Povětroň 167})^{349}\). Moreover, the clairvoyant refuses the idea that Case X was a traveler, because his life cannot be measured by physical distances:

I have a feeling of tremendous life dimensions; in that man there is much space, much sea, but he was not a traveler. Understand that the life space of a traveler is measurable; but here – an objective is lacking here; there is

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\(^{346}\) I to ukazuje na toulavou obsesi, ne? Jak jste si ráčil všimnout, je to tělo vzdělaného člověka; ten Případ se nenarodil jako šupák, a stal-li se plavcem nebo dobrodruhem, svědčí to o zatáčeném přelomu života. Jaký to byl konflikt? To je lhostejno; at’ byl takový, nebo onaký, byl podminěn prostě jeho konstituci.

\(^{347}\) The notion of the fall without the idea of home will be discussed with examples from \textit{From the Life of Insects}.

\(^{348}\) "‘A... proč se zřítil?’ ‘To už byl doma.’ Jasnovidec zvedl oči. ‘Rozumíte, musel se zřítit. Nebyl by už mohl nic udělat. Stačí, že se vrátil.”"

\(^{349}\) “Není jiného jasnozrcení než pozorovat sama sebe; to, čemu se říká telepatie, není citění do dálky, nýbrž do blízka, do blízkosti nejbližší a nejtiže přístupné: do sebe sama.”
no fixed point from which it would be possible to fix distances and directions. (*Novels* 209; *Povětroň* 169-70)

According to the clairvoyant, the impetus for his wanderings was a discrepancy between his free intellect and limiting external circumstances. Consequently, the clairvoyant, similar to tramp in *The Insect Play*, which will be discussed in continuation of this chapter, supports the doctor’s assessment of “roving disposition” but stresses the insignificance of the actual destinations. He also plays with exotic names, a technique present in *A Trip to Spain* that suggests that the Poetist interest in the exotic is now a relic of a past era:

It must be like that. Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti, Porto Rico,” he enumerated like a school-boy. “Martinique, Barbados, the Antilles, and B-Bahama Islands,” he ran on happily with relief: God, for how many years haven’t I recalled those names,” he rejoiced. “I used to like so much those exotic words. Antilles, antelopes, mantillas –“( *Novels* 219; *Povětroň* 177)

The poet identifies with the man who never landed; the man’s life becomes his own life, and the fragments of the airplane become fragments of the story with which he equates life with a journey (*Novels* 242; *Povětroň* 195). He does not want to assign a home to Case X, knowing that denying him home would be the only way to protect his anonymity and thus his personality: “If we give him a home we shall know him, so to

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350 “Mám pocit ohromného životního rozsahu; v tom člověku je mnoho prostoru, mnoho moře, ale nebyl cestovatelem. Rozumíte, životní prostor cestovatelův je měřitelný; ale tady – Chybí tu jakýkoliv cíl; není tu pevného bodu, od kterého by bylo možno určit vzdálenost a směry.”
351 “Bude to asi tak. Kuba, Jamajka, Haiti, Portorico,” vypočítával jako školák. „Martinique, Barbados, Antily, a B – Bahamské ostrovy,“ vyklopil s úlevou. „Bože, kolik let jsem si už na ta jméne nevzpomněl.“ Radoval se. „Míval jsem tak rád ta exotická slova: Antily, antilopy, mantily –.,”
speak, from his childhood up; he will cease to be unknown, and will lose what is now his strongest and most peculiar characteristic” (*Novels* 243; *Povětroň* 196).352

Like the clairvoyant, the poet is also interested in the idea of the return of Case X as a fall; however, he focuses on the Case X’s exotic experience: “but chiefly for me he was a man from the Antilles, the man *who had been there*. That was decisive. From that moment he was *my* Case X, which I had to solve; I set out in pursuit of him, and it was, my friend, a long and devious trail”353 (*Novels* 239; *Povětroň* 193-4). The exotic islands are for modern poets “the islands of my desire,” but not in romantic terms of a lost earthly paradise. Rather, they are the place “where everything is in conflict and where ages copulate in an addled medley of cultures” (*Novels* 265; *Povětroň* 214).354 The encounter with the islands bears nothing but disappointment, though, and resembles *Letters from England*. There is no art which would be original to the culture, or exoticism and sentamentalism, but only diseases and weed:

And all this brought together from everywhere, swept up and moved from the whole world; fabulous sweepings, in which it is possible to rummage; Spanish, African, British and French traditions in a state of anachronous exclusiveness or grotesque bastardization. Only humming-birds, toads, jungle, and tobacco, not counting the weeds, and diseases are genuine there. Others sprung-up on the rubbish-heap of the human business.

(*Novels* 264-5; *Povětroň* 214)355

352 “Dáme-li mu domov, budeme ho znát, abych tak řekl, odmalička; přestane být neznámým a ztratí to, co je nyní jeho nejsilnějším a určujícím znakem.”
353 “ale hlavně to byl pro mne muž z Antil, člověk, *który tam był*. To rozhodlo. Od toho okamžiku byl *mým* Případem X, jejž mi bylo řešit; pustil jsem se za ním, a byla to, člověče, dlouhá a klikatá cesta.”
354 “ostrovy mé touhy,”; “kde se všechno utkává, kde se páří věky ve zvrhlém mišení kultur.”
355 A to všechno odešád dovezeno, smeteno, nastěhováno z celého světa; báječné harabúrdí, ve kterém se lze přehrávat; španělské, africké, britské, francouzské tradice ve stavu anachronické výlučnosti nebo
The poet uses the technique of *in medias res* to allude to the poetics of epic poetry, directly introducing the addressee to the central point of narration: “the crash of the man who had not reached his destination” (*Novels* 244; *Povětroň* 197). He also allows for the possibility that the unfortunate incident was maybe a new journey: “Was he flying somewhere on a new project, or was he coming home?” (*Novels* 244; *Povětroň* 197). The poet’s reconstruction of Case X’s life interprets the foreigner as somebody who lost his memory as the only possibility for really starting to travel: “Case X sustained a mental injury and lost, had to lose, his memory, for reasons which were in him; for him it was the only possible way, the only exit to get away from himself; it was something like an escape into another life” (*Novels* 249; *Povětroň* 202).

In *Meteor*, the loss of memory is another perspective on the previous physical travels: it is the moment when a man sees everything anew; the defamiliarized world is allowed to be miraculous. It is paradoxically another variation on heteroglossia as outlined in *Letters from Italy*, where the loss of language skills was praised because it led to an unmoored identity that permitted the narrator to draw closer to the other:

Sometime, perhaps, you had the experience of finding yourself in a foreign world in which you could not make yourself understood either by speech or money. It is true that you did not lose your identity, but that was of no avail; your education, social standing, name, and the other things that make up the ordinary I were of no use; you were merely an unknown man...
in the streets of a foreign town. Perhaps you will remember that in such circumstances you apprehended everything with a strange and almost dreamlike intensity; deprived of all accessories you were only a man, a being, an inner man, only eyes, and heart, only amazement, helplessness, and resignation.\textsuperscript{361} (Novels 249-50; Povětroň 202)

4.2.4. War with the Newts

War with the Newts is a satire in which a Czech captain finds giant salamanders on the island of Sumatra and trains them to become cheap labour and entertainers. However, salamanders learn from human behaviour and slowly become very human-like, starting to invade the world of the human beings.

In War with the Newts, written in the same year as Travels to the North, storytelling about an exotic destination is replaced by experiencing the exotic world itself. Since the newts are a mirror image of man, the exotic destinations - equatorial islands - gradually reflect home (\v{C}apek, Válka 9-11).\textsuperscript{362} At first, the newts are the mirror image of their “creator,” a sea captain with two variations on the same name, Van Toch and Vantoch, a Czech compatriot (\v{c}eský krajan), and a foreigner who mixes Czech with foreign languages. The newts learn their first expressions from him while hunting for pearls and adapt them phonetically. For example, “nyfe” (War 61; Válka 67)\textsuperscript{363} is

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{361} Snad se vám někdy stalo, že jste se octl v cizím světě, kde jste se nemohl dobře dorozumět jazykem ani peněži. Neztratil jste sice svou identitu, ale nebyla vám nic platna; vaše vzdělání, sociální postavení, jméno a cokoliv ještě skládá naše občanské já, vám nesloužilo k ničemu; byl jste jen neznámý člověk na ulici cizího města. Snad si vzpomenete, že v takových chvílích jste vnímal všechno se zvláštní a téměř s novou intenzitou; jiva živan všeho přídatného, byl jste jen člověk, jen subjekt a nitro, jen oči a srdce, jen podiv, bezradnost a odevzdání. Nic není lyričtějšího, než ztratit sebe sama.
\item \textsuperscript{362} Čapek mentions this in the introduction to the novel. However, there is no introduction to the English translation.
\item \textsuperscript{363} nají, nají
\end{itemize}
adaptation of “knife.” Eventually, the image in the mirror reverses; this animal “is so intelligent and talented it can talk like a human being” *(War 89; Válka 96).*

In the novel, the journey into exotic lands results in the exoticization of home. As the newt population grows and their habitat spreads, it creates a parallel world to the human one, which limits and questions the notion of home, because the newt “phenomenon” extends into mythological and historical dimensions. Once the newts reach Prague, Mr. Povondra concludes: “Oceans covered everything once, and they’ll do so again. This is the end of the world. A gentleman told me once that where Prague is now was sea-bed at one time. I think the Newts were the cause of it even then” *(War 234; Válka 244).*

The travel and the experience of the exotic in the novel are constructed through a metatextual play with genres. The newts dominate the news during the summer, when nothing important happens - reportages on ordinary life and entertaining adventure stories from distant countries replace political columns. In the absence of events, the ordinary man faces his ordinariness and looks forward to an escape from it, “sprawled out in agonies of boredom on sandy beaches or in the dappled shade of trees” *(War 21; Válka 29).* The escape from boredom is therefore found in populist adventure fiction and the accounts of travelers to exotic places.

There is also a difference in the poetic representation of the exotic. In contrast to Vantoch’s firsthand experience of exotic places, Bondy, a businessman who has never...
seen the world, relies on his imagination. He thinks that Vantoch is hallucinating when he talks about his attempts to coach the newts to hunt for pearls (*War 49; Válka 56*).\(^{368}\) For Bondy, doing business that has anything to do with exotic dreams is incomprehensible because he is aware that poetry is a lie:

Tell me, Sindbad the sailor, about Surabaya or the Phoneix Islands. Have you not been drawn off course by the Magnetic Mountain? Have you never been carried off by the bird Roc? And are you not returning home with a cargo of pearls, cinnamon and bezoar? OK, man, let’s have your lies!\(^{369}\) (*War 32; Válka 40*).

Bondy can order events only as a classic adventure novel that resembles the works of Jack London and Joseph Conrad:

Captain van Toch’s style was, let us say, the style of the adventure novel. It was the style of Jack London, of Joseph Conrad and others. The old, exotic, colonial, almost heroic style. I do not deny that in its way it fascinated me. But after Captain van Toch’s death we have no right to continue such adventurous or juvenile epics. What lies ahead of us, gentlemen, is not a new chapter but a whole new concept, a task for a new and substantially different imagination. (*War 101; Válka 108*)\(^{370}\)

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368 The Swede, Jensen, thinks that the Irishman, Dingle, is also delirious when he hears his version of Vantoch’s mysterious activities on the exotic islands.

369 “Povídej mi, námořníku Sidibáde, o Surabají nebo o Féníkových ostrovech. Nepřitáhla tě Magnetová hora, neunesl tě do svého hnízda pták Noh? Nevracíš se s nákladem perel, skořice a bezoáru? Nu tak, člověče, začnět lhát?”

370 “Sloh kapitána van Tocha, to byl, řekl bych, styl dobrodružných románů. To byl styl Jack Londona, Josepha Conrada a jiných. Starý, exotický, koloniální, téměř heroický sloh. Nezapírám, že mě svým způsobem okouzlil. Ale po smrti kapitána van Tocha nemáme práva pokračovat v té dobrodružné a juvenilní epice. To, co je před námi, není nová kapitola, nýbrž nová koncepce, pánové, úkol pro novou a podstatně jinou imaginaci.”
The strongest elements in Čapek’s representation of the exotic are intermedial. There are numerous relations to film; from the constant spatial-temporal shifts in the novel that mirror filmic structures to a parody of adventure films. For example, while visiting the island of the newts, an actor, Li, fantasizes about acting in an adventure movie on the island. She models her film on several formulas such as the plot of *King Kong* (1933), even though no gorillas live on the island. She even finds a confirmation of her fantasy in some of her real life experiences: “Those cannibals would want to sacrifice me to their idols and they’d be singing Hawaiian songs meanwhile. You know, like those negroes at the Paradise restaurants” (*War 55; Válka 62*).371

The play with different genres and their interpolation into the narrative structure are not only intertextual, but also intermedial, since they often emphasize graphic and visual perception. Forming a collage, the inclusion of these elements resembles the simultaneous coexistence of different temporal and spatial plains. In other words, it is reminiscent of the poetics in “Zone.” Besides representing the intrusion of another point of view into the narrative, the intermedial elements also authenticate it, which is similar to the function of the illustrations in a narrative. The illustrations also expand the fictional world by introducing narratives belonging to different cultures (foreign alphabets and languages) and the news, which spans great distances. To this of images belong the illustrations of Van Toch’s business cards and simple forms, such as movie announcements headlines: “Film actress assaulted by sea monsters. A modern woman’s sex appeal triumphs over prehistoric lizards! Fossil reptiles prefer blondes” (*War 70;* 371

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371 Ti lidozrouli by mé chtěli obětovat svým modlám a zpívali by k tomu havajské písně. Víš, takové jako ti černoši v restaurantu Paradise.”
Válka 76),\textsuperscript{372} which are graphically foregrounded. There are also articles elaborating on the discovery of the newts, newspapers clipping in different languages documenting the presence of the newts (War 119; Válka 127),\textsuperscript{373} telegrams (War 212-3; Válka 221), letters (War 92-3; Válka 100), and historical accounts of the discovery accompanied by illustration of its skeleton, which look like woodcuts. These images, like those in Journey to the North, act as an expanded mirror:

“The figure (in Czech it is ‘obraz’ thus ‘image’) here presented,” he writes, “which I hereby submit to the world of learning, is beyond any doubt the image of Man who witnessed the Great Flood. These are not lines from which but a lively imagination had to construe something that would resemble Man, but everywhere there is complete conformity and perfect concordance with the several parts of the human skeleton.” (War 75-6; Válka 82)\textsuperscript{374}

The mirror image of an anthropomorphized animal and man continues in constant allusions to newspapers and in Čapek’s parodic approach to the newspapers narrative in the collection In Praise of Literature: the newts become readers who prefer courtroom stories, horse races, and football; not because they are familiar with them, but because

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{372} “Filmová umělkyně přepadena mořskými nestvůrami. Sex-appeal moderní ženy vítězí nad pravěkými ještěry. Fosilní plazi dávají přednost blondýnkám!”

\textsuperscript{373} Povondra, the man responsible for the historic meeting between Van Toch and Bondy, collects the articles and all other forms of evidence about the newts, thereby creating a history. He collects them for his own memory. His actions echo those of Hordubal.

\textsuperscript{374} „PŘILOŽENÝ TUTO OBRAZ, PÍŠE, „JEIŽ PŘEKLÁDÁM UČENÉMU SVĚTU V PĚKNÉM DŘEVOŘYTÄU, JEST ZAJISTÉ BEZE VŠÍ POCHYBY OBRAZEM ČLOVÉKA, JENŽ BYL SVĚDKEM POTOPY SVĚTA; NEŠÍTU LÍNIÍ, Z NICHŽ BY SI BUJNÁ OBRAZNOST MUSELA TEPRVE SESTROJITI NĚCO, CO BY BYLO PODOBNO ČLOVÉKU, NÝBRŽ VŠUDE ÚPLNÁ SHODA S JEDNOSTIVÝMI DÍLY KOSTRY LIDSKÉ A DOKONALÁ SOUMĚRNOST.” In the Czech original the text is capitalized, in English, it is not.
they exist in the newspapers (War 83; Válka 89). Finally, there is a parody of what makes the news - the newts who talk like people:

It would certainly be an exaggeration to claim that about that time there existed no other subject of conversation or newspaper attention than the talking newts. People and newspapers were also concerned with the next war, with the depression, with the cup final, with vitamins and with fashion; nevertheless, the talking newts did enjoy a great deal of publicity, and moreover of uninformed publicity. (War 91; Válka 99)575

*War with the Newts* parodies the domestication of foreign places found in the travelogues. In the second part of the novel, in a report titled “Our Friend on the Galapagos Islands,” the narrator travels to a distant island with his spouse, a poet. This is a direct reference to *Travels to the North*, which was also published in 1936. In the travelogue, Čapek and his wife, whose poems form a part of the travelogue, undertake a trip to Scandinavia. The unusual “domestic” element in *War with the Newts*, the home within a foreign and exotic land, is a newt, a gardener (an obvious piece of self-mockery), using bookish Czech to flaunt his knowledge of Czech history. The couple is happy to meet somebody who speaks their language, even though he is a newt. The characters learn from this type of domestication, but the reader recognizes it as a parodic account on cultural representation, national identity, and intertextual self-mockery:

The Newt thought for a while. “Tell your fellow countrymen,” he finally said with deep emotion, “tell them… not to fall back into the age-old Slav discord… but to keep the Battle of Lipany and especially the White

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575 Bylo by zajisté přepináním tvrdit, že se v té době o jiném nmluvilo a nepsalo než o mluvících mlocích. Mluvilo a psalo se také o příšti válce, o hospodářské krizi, o ligových zápasech, o vitamínách a o módě; nicméně o mluvících mlocích se psalo velmi mnoho a zejména velmi neodborné.
Mountain in grateful memory! Goodbye, my compliments,” he suddenly concluded, trying to control his feelings.” (War 149-50; Válka 152)

The expansion of the world through intermedially authenticated stories about the newts stops once the exotic realm of the newts starts invading the Czech shores. The selection of a word “shore” here refers to literary representation of Bohemia by the sea in William Shakespeare’s The Winter Tale (1609-1610). The isolated place called home consequently “shrinks” and disappears once the invasion is understood in mythological framework. Mr. Povondra is the first to recognize and witness newts in the center of Prague, in the mythological river, the Vltava, by the National Theater.

From the river, immediately in front of the National Theatre, a large black head was showing above the water, slowly advancing upstream….

“That was no catfish, Frankie,” the old gentleman said in what did not seem like his normal voice. “We’re going home. This is the end.” (War 232-233; Válka 242)

It is visible that he faces the previously distant and thus fictional world created so far by newspapers. It is as if the expanded reflection mentioned in the creation of the supernatural world of Sweden in Travels to the North is not only shrinking, but also radically changing its original object. His first reaction is to go home. Earlier on, the newts constantly limited the space of home while encroaching on the human environment. But at home, one seems to be unable to cope with the supernatural.

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376 Mlokov na chvíli zamyslel: „Řekněte svým krajanům,“ pravil posléze s hlubokým pohnutím, „řekněte jim... aby nepropadl staré slovanské nesvornosti... a aby chovali ve vděčně paměti Lipany a zejména Bílou horu! Nazdar, má poklona,” skončil náhle, snaží se přemoci své city.”
377 Z Vltavy právě před Národním divadlem koukala z vody veliká, černá hlava a postupovala pomalu proti proudu,...
“To nebyl sumec, Frantíku,” povídal starý pán jakýmsi nesvým hlasem. „Půjdeme domů. To je konec.”
4.3. Wandering without a Home: The Insect Play

Čapek’s early The Insect Play forms the second group of fiction where the theme of travel occurs. Here, the idea of home is abandoned and journey itself becomes the leitmotif as Čapek focuses on the aimless wandering of characters like tramps and vagabonds (tulák, pobuda).

A tramp (tulák), a returnee from World War I, suddenly finds himself among various species of insects personifying different aspects of human society. In contrast to the insects obsessed with material goods and power, the tramp, an erudite, pre-war man who once knew Latin and now knows “everything,” is homeless. As a person without home he sees everything, judges, and looks for a way (vše vidi, soudí a hledá cestu), and as a wanderer is far from the human concept of love, which is marked by being in pairs and having possessions:

TRAMP: Everything wants to be a pair. Only you are alone in the darkness, wandering along the bumpy road. In vain you open your heart to love’s chase. (Insect 97; Ze života 230)

Since the tramp is the one who sees everything, he becomes the dramatic equivalent of an omnipresent narrator – the omnipresent observer. Similar to the novel, Meteor, where the fall of Case X is narrated, here the fall of man is performed:

TRAMP: (Lies on the ground, leaning on his elbow) You – you – you [omitted in translation, added by me] think I’m drunk? No way.

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378 The authors (Josef Čapek co-authored the play) state in the introduction that the play is a mirror of medieval mysteries, which allegorically represent human vices. In this, its contemporary version, insects personify different groups of people (Ze života 226).
379 In this edition of the play, Czech “tulák” is translated as “traveler.” I have replaced “traveler” with “tramp,” a term closer to the original. The parts omitted in the translation will be translated by me.
380 “Vše chce být párem; ty jen, který tu potmě / stojiš, / sám, sám, sám, bloudíš klikatou cestou, / marně, marně, marně þys rozpřáhl obé ruce / v honiþce lásky.”
Everything else is spinning. [See how I fell? Straight as an arrow! Like a hero! I was… representing the Fall of Man!] [What a spectacle! omitted in translation, added by me] (Insect 95; Ze života 227)

The fall of man becomes the Christian idea of the fall and a parody of the tramp’s “humility:”

(Looks around). See what I mean? Everything’s spinning. The whole planet. The whole universe. Just for me. What an honour. (Straightens his clothes). Sorry, I’m not dressed to be the centre of all this cosmic harmony. (Threws his cap on the ground.). There, that’s your centre now. Spin round her, she’s strong… so I took a tumble, under my cross. You thought I was pissed too, little flower? (Insect 95; Ze života 228)

The tramp’s journey leads through mirror representations of man. The doubling (as exhibited by the coupling of the insects) originates in the nature of his rootlessness: if he had roots, he notes that he would not wander the earth like a tramp (Insect 95; Ze života 228). Similar to the travelogues and Čapek’s use of verbs for seeing, the wanderer’s ability to see plays an important role in the play. In contrast with the subjective stance of the narrator in the travelogues, though, the equation of men and insects comes from the tramp’s detached perspective: “Butterfly, dung-beetle, ant. Man or insect, I’m not bothered. I don’t make trouble. [I am just watching – omitted in the translation] (Insect 95; Ze života 228). It also comes from his position as a human being.

381 In this English edition of Čapek’s play, “strom” (a tree) is translated as “arrow.”
382 This part was omitted in the English translation and inserted elsewhere
384 (Rozhlíži se) Tak co? Všechno se točí kolem mne. Celá země. Celý vesmír. Přílišná čest pro mne. (Rovná si šaty.) Odpust’ tě, nejsem na to oblečen, abych byl středem harmonie sfér… Aha, už vím. Padnul jsem pod svým křížem. A ty sis myslela, květinko, že jsem opilý?
Being human, he is able to see only from that perspective, which is an idea that is later developed in *Images from Holland*. The tramp says: If I had roots in the earth I’d stare up at the sky (*Raises himself up on his knees*), the very heavens above! Lovely! I could spend my whole life looking up there! (*Stands up, pointing at another member of the audience*). But I can’t, can I – I’m man. I have to look at my fellow-men (*Looks around*[ omitted in the translation]). And I see them [added by me]. (*Insect 95-6; Ze života 228*)

The semantic notion of doubling, previously discussed in the context of the travelogues, also appears in this play. In search for humans, the wanderer’s mirror image becomes that of a pilgrim (*poutník*) which appears in the epilogue to the play. Another doubling is that of the wanderer and the addressee (the audience). The wanderer’s human position breaks the theatrical illusion that simultaneously keeps theater in the realm of hypothetical, as-if worlds and encourages audience members to identify with the fictional world. The wanderer is often positioned at proscenium, where he sleeps at the beginning of the first and second act. This grants him the privilege of viewing the insects and participating in the intersubjective communication between the addressee and the play. This is essentially the theatrical version of the second-person address, which is a main element in the construction of the travelogues. Whereas the addresses in the travelogues would familiarize the narrator with the foreign place being visited, in *The Insect Play*, Čapek breaks the theatrical illusion. The tramp’s position is according to the rules of the genre, and therefore is paradoxically the only one with which the audience cannot

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385 Kdybych měl kořen nebo cibuličku v zemi, díval bych se na nebe (*zvedne se na kolena*), do nebes! Do smrti bych se díval rovnou do nebe (*Vstane.*) Ale že jsem jenom člověk, musím se divat na lidi. (*Rozhlíži se*). A já je vidím.
386 As the authors outline, the play is an updated version of the medieval mystery play, therefore, according to the law of the genre, the audience-addressee recognizes vices rather than virtues. See Čapek, Josef and Karel. “*Předmluva*” (*Ze života 225*); The introduction does not exist in the English translation.
identify. The viewer recognizes the insects as embodiments of its own vices, but cannot identify with the observer-tramp. The impossibility of communication and thus identification results in the failure of domestication as the wanderer cannot recognize the dramatic world as home. Additionally, he cannot create a home, which would produce the identification of the audience (addressee) with the world seen through his eyes. As the authors say, “Each spectator or reader could see himself in a wandering tramp; instead – upset or alarmed – he assumed to see his image or the image of his society in vermin, which were here” (Ze života 225).387

4.4. The Road to Self-Discovery

The most diverse among the three, the last group of fiction includes internalized journeys of self-discovery (sebeobjevení) that challenges the very idea of an actual home. The contact with the other is an important part of this journey. Obvious examples of such intersubjectivity would be works such as: The Wayside Crosses (Boží muka, 1917) or Tales from Two Pockets (Povídky z jedné kapsy, Povídky z druhé kapsy, 1929), and the novel An Ordinary Life (Obyčejný život, 1934). The failed self-discovery and the loss of home are both present in the novel Hordubal (1933). The journey of self-discovery directly relates all travelers from this group to the traditional Czech pilgrim (poutník), especially to Komenský’s allegorical traveler in Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart.

4.4.1. Wayside Crosses

*Wayside Crosses* is a collection of short stories typical of the theme of search, which is imbued with metaphysical dimensions. Another important element is mystery – the narrators often address the metaphysical aspect of human life and existence through the notion of the ‘miraculous’ in everyday events.

Here is also where the journey of self-discovery starts. The title of which Čapek explained in a letter to another Czech writer as the “crossroads or intersections of life” (Čapek 223). Here, one does not have to leave ordinary life to experience the unknown, because the unknown invades the ordinary and distorts its “ordinariness.” The intersection is therefore a symbol of meeting and parting. It is the place where the ordinary man, too weak to leave a world in which he is surrounded by familiar things deprived of their mystery, meets the traveler, who, in certain cases, becomes a projection of the ordinary man’s inner self.

Conversely, the travelers in the stories contained in *Wayside Crosses* are always unusual figures who unexpectedly arrive from unknown and distant places. They are anonymous foreigners, unexpected tourists, lost men, lost brothers, runaways, and wanna-be outcasts who do not come to terms with their past. They internalize the experience of traveling without really perceiving the outside world. Physical travel is therefore mentioned only as a background information for the conversation between the traveler and his “finder.” Sometimes, like in the story “Lída,” the travelers are forcefully returned from their escapes to restore the order of everyday life.

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388 “rozcestí nebo křižovatky života.” This is taken from Čapek’s letter to Stanislav Kostka Neumann dated 5 December 1917. The letter is not included in the English translation of *Wayside Crosses* that I will cite in my dissertation.
Their faces are usually hidden from the viewer.\textsuperscript{389} They often maintain static positions such as lying in bed or sitting by the road,\textsuperscript{390} a motif, which is present in \textit{The Insect Play}, and they are sometimes found in somnambulic conditions in unpopulated and unexpected places, such as forests. These anonymous travelers either threaten the idea of the known, the comfortable, and the domestic or they appear as long-lost and forgotten relatives. Their physical presence often makes their discoverers aware of how familiar things can be made strange and beautiful.\textsuperscript{391}

The encounter between the domestic and the unknown is depicted in the short story “The Footprint” (“Šlépěj”). In contrast to the second variation of the story\textsuperscript{392} from \textit{Stories from One Pocket} (\textit{Povídky z jedné kapsy}, 1928), in which Mr. Rybka consciously decides to walk home along an unusual route to witness a new world without evidence of human existence that was created by a snowfall (\textit{Šlepěje} 128; \textit{Footprints} 107), Mr. Boura accidentally meets a stranger who shows him one footprint in the snow (\textit{Footprint} 11; \textit{Šlepěj} 11). The reader does not learn anything about Mr. Boura’s history, and even the stranger remains anonymous. What matters is that they want to see whether the stranger can still recognize vestiges of the known in the unknown. Initially, the stranger is trying to trace the people who possibly went along the same path as him. The road itself is new because it represents the end of the world, the beginning of the unknown and the eternal,

\textsuperscript{389} See, for instance, the short story “Historie beze slov” (\textit{Muka} 82-5); English: “Story Without Words” (\textit{Crossroads} 35-8).
\textsuperscript{390} See, for instance, “Nápis” (\textit{Muka} 92-4); English: “Graffito” (\textit{Crossroads} 46-50)
\textsuperscript{391} An instance of this is the short story “Story without Words” (“Historie bez slov”), in which Ježek becomes inspired by the story of a mysterious traveler sees how the entire nature around him, from ants, butterflies to clouds, moves and travels. The end of this sentence makes no grammatical sense. I can’t fix it because I don’t know what you’re trying to say. At that moment, Ježek establishes communication with the world addressing nature and his own soul, and establishing the intersubjective dialogical pattern commonly found in the travelogues (“Story” 38; “Historie” 87).
\textsuperscript{392} This variation shall not be discussed here because it does not address/exemplify the notion of travel.
which is a motif present in *An Ordinary Life* (*Obyčejný život*)\(^{393}\) and then altered in *Travels to the North*. However, Boura does not leave the well-trodden path in search of clues to explain the extraordinary discovery of a single footprint in the snow. Instead, he parts with the mysterious walker when it becomes clear that the presence of one step suppresses all human experience and diminishes all hope for the existence of the road of salvation:

> Perhaps some sort of deity is proceeding along his own route; he takes it,\(^ {394}\) one step at a time, without a break. Perhaps his route is some sort that we should follow; then we walk step by step in the footprints of a deity. Perhaps it’s the road to salvation. And it’s appalling to have before us one surely *certain* step on this route that lies before us and not be able to follow it further. (*Footprint* 17-8; *Šlepěj* 16)\(^ {395}\)

The second part of the story – “Elegy” (“Elegie”) – reveals that Boura is himself not a traveler, but only a witness. He unexpectedly meets his brother, an alienated and unstable personality, who is unknown to many. He is returning from abroad. His arrival transposes the realm of the unknown onto the personal level, i.e. onto the closest of kin. Boura does not initially see his brother and does not even recognize him – which is one aspect of distance; it creates mystery. Ironically, distance can also foster familiarity since Boura feels that he and his brother must regain a sense of commonality in order to be able to understand each other: “But look, brother, we can sit together like this for years,

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\(^ {393}\) *An Ordinary Life* will be discussed later on in this chapter

\(^ {394}\) Here, the English translation omits an adverb “bez incoherence” or “jde bez incoherence” – he takes it incoherently, one step at a time. Thus, the translation omits the supernatural dimension of the narrative.

\(^ {395}\) “Snad se nějaké božstvo ubírá svou cestou; jde bez inkoherence a postupně; snad jeho cesta je jakési vůdcovství, kterého se máme chopit. Bylo by nám možno krok za krokem jít ve stopách božstva. Snad by to byla cesta spásy. To všechno je možné - - A je to strašné mít *docela určité* jeden krok této cesty před sebou a nemoci ji dále sledovat.”
making small talk about insignificant, everyday things, about everything we know; it’s possible that vast numbers of trivialities are necessary for people to become closer, to understand each other” (“Elegy” 27; “Elegie” 76).  

4.4.2. Tales from Two Pockets

The journey of self-discovery continues in Tales from Two Pockets (Povídky z jedné kapsy, Povídky z druhé kapsy, 1929), a collection of detective stories, with elements of the poetics of Letters from Italy and Letters from England added to the mix. In contrast to Wayside Crosses, the characters, whether they are detectives or ordinary people, face mysteries when they leave their usual routes. I mentioned an example of this previously, “Footprints.” The clear evidence of a link between the poetics of travel from the travelogues and the detective stories is discovered in the nature of traveling and the travelers themselves. Letters from Italy was organized as a contrast between the Baedekers that provide an automated way to view the world and new possibilities that are guided by chance and stretching beyond well-trodden paths. The flâneur-narrator avoids places of accepted historical importance and strolls around trying to capture the life of people while the number of “coincidences” of finding unimportant places turns into the real aim of traveling in his artistic pilgrimage.  

An example of the interaction with the Italian travelogue is the short story “The Blue Chrysanthemum” (“Modrá chryzantéma”). In it, Klára, who is “the village idiot, you

396 “Hleď, bratrě, budeme léta tak sedět a mluvit o maličkostech, o věcech denních a nepatrných, o všem, co víme; je třeba nesmírně mnohá všednosti, aby se lidé sbližili a srozuměli”.
397 This idea is, for example, present in a short story “Clairvoyant” (“Jasnovidec”) and also “Dr. Mejzlik’s Case” (“Případ dr. Mejzlíka”), in which detective Mejzlik explains to an old magician how his night stroll through Prague, which led him to witness the crime, was after all not coincidental at all (“Case” 15; “Případ” 10).
know, deaf and dumb, a crazy, simple-minded fool of a girl who wandered all over, braying as cheerful as can be” (“Chrysanthemum” 20; “Chryzantéma” 14) buys an unusual flower. The blue colour is chosen not only because it gives an unusual and exotic flavour to the flower, but also because it transposes the blue that was one of the favoured colours in *Letters from Italy* to the short story. In *Letters from Italy*, blue related to the unpretentious creativity of nature, serenity, sky, and Giotto’s artistic representations of the heavens and modest man. The motif of the blue flower is also an intertextual reference to Novalis’ *Heinrich von Oftendingen* (1802), where the flower appears in a dream of the protagonist and awakens in him associations of travel and distant regions, thereby moving him into an unreal world. The blue flower is therefore a symbol of novelty as yet unseen in the ordinary world. The flower comes in a stranger’s reminiscence: “For in the world where I had always lived, who ever bothered about flowers? Besides, such a strange passion for a flower is something I never heard of before” (Novalis 15).

In Čapek’s short story, the place of origin of the flower was found by an old man who saw the “scene of crime” – the place where the flower grows – from the window of the train compartment. It is the most unexpected place – not a botanical garden with rare flowers, but the modest home of a loner near the train tracks. It is seen in a moment when the narrator would scarcely expect to find something: he finds the flowers while looking through the train window. He finds the blue chrysanthemum only because he decides to avoid taking his usual path:

There you have it, mister: there was that sign with ‘Walking on the rails is forbidden’ written on it, and nobody, not us, not the policemen, not the

[398 “tamní idiot, hluchoněmá bláznivá káča, která kudy šla, tudy blaženě hýkala.”]
gypsies, not even the kids figured they could go there and look for blue chrysanthemums. What power there is in a warning sign! For all I know, there may be blue primroses growing in some railway guard’s little garden, or the tree of knowledge or pure gold ferns; but nobody ever discovers them because walking on the tracks is strictly forbidden and that’s that. Only crazy Klara went there, because she was an idiot and didn’t know how to read. (“Chrysanthemum” 25; “Chryzantéma” 18)

Klára’s inability to read recalls the modesty of the traveler from Letters from Italy who found his lack of language skills a way of getting closer to local people. In Klára’s case, her physical disability (being unable to communicate with the external world) becomes an advantage. She challenges the ordinariness of the world while making her way through it in silence. She finds miracles, such as the blue chrysanthemum, in places disregarded by ordinary people.

4.4.3. Hordubal

The return of the ordinary man in Hordubal (1933), a three-part novel about the murder of a Slovak returnee from America, starts with an interior monologue with polyphonic features, in which a man wishes that his long journey would end. In his mind, his past Slovak identity mixes with his present American one, as the image of how his homecoming should look and how it actually appears conflict with one another. Bored by his lengthy journey, he convinces himself that, in comparison with Slovak rural trains,

399 “Tak to vidíte, pane: že tam byla tabulka s nápisem Zakázaná cesta, nikoho, ani nás, ani četníky, ani cikány, ani děti, nenapadlo, že by tam někdo mohl jít hledat modré chryzantémy. Možná, že u vechtrovských domků rostou modré petrklíčce nebo strom poznání nebo zlaté kapradí, ale nikdo je nikdy neobjeví, protože po trati chodí se přísně zapovidá, a basta. Jenom bláznivá Klára se tam dostala, protože byla idiot a neuměla číst.”
American trains are elegant and comfortable, and he appears as a care-free American. Due to the simultaneous existence of the real and the ideal in the monologue, the Slovak does not resemble an imagined American, but rather a man exhausted from a long trip:

The second one from the window dozed with his mouth open, all sweaty and tired, and his head hung down as if he were lifeless. Oh, God, oh, god, it’s already eleven, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen days; (...) if only I could stretch my legs, put a bundle of hay under my head and sleep, sleep, sleep... *(Novels 11; *Hordubal* 15)*

Although the context of travel is different, a similar narrative structure and motif appear in *A Trip to Spain*, which Čapek wrote just three years earlier. Since the travelogue, as mentioned before, foregrounds the poetics of the local trains instead of the artificial atmosphere of the international first class, the worth of the real and the ideal are switched. The narrator values the local trains more highly in *A Trip to Spain*:

Sometimes he gazes listlessly out of the window; a small station whisks past, and he can’t read the name of it; a township flits by and he can’t get out there; he’ll never stroll along that road bordered with plane-trees, he’ll never dawdle on that bridge and spit in the river – in fact he won’t even find out what the river is called. Confound it all, thinks the man in the Pullman, where are we? What, only Bordeaux? Good Lord, this is a slow business! *(Spain 9; Výlet 182)*

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400 Ten druhý od okna klimá s otevřenými ústy, zpocen únavou, a hlava se mu kláti jako neživá. Ach bože, ach bože, to už je jedenáct, třináct, čtrnáct, patnáct dní; (kdybych mohl aspoň natáhnut nohy, nastlat si pod hlavu sena a spát, spát, spát...)

401 Někdy se netečně podívá oknem; tam ubíhá stanička, jejíhož jména nemůže přečíst, mihně se městečko, ve kterém nemůže vystoupit; nikdy nepůjde po této cestě vroubené platany, nezastaví se tam na tom mostě, aby plivnul do řeky a nezví ani, jak se ta řeka jmenuje; k čertu s tím vším, mýslí si člověk v pullmanu. Kde to jsme? Hrome, teprve Bordeaux? Kriste pane, to se to vleče!"
Although the strange man in the novel claims to be a returnee from America, in a
dialogue he imagines to lead with his co-travelers he doubts that he fits the image of a
typical American (Novels 11; Hordubal 15). Čapek withholds his name for a while until
later, in a dialogue with the peasants, he becomes known as Hordubal. This return
questions the existence of typicality through the use of double mirroring, which was
discussed in the context of Images from Holland and Travels to the North. In Hordubal,
the beginning of the narrative indicates that the physical distances change into distance
between home and abroad changed into smaller, but no less profound distances at home:
the returnee sees the same surrounding that he left eight years ago, but in the course of
the narrative he fails to realize that his memory of the past overwhelms the reality of the
present moment. Home has changed but the protagonist fails to acknowledge that. In the
first moments of his return, he is still a person who exists in the past to erase the
alienation he felt in America. Hordubal thinks he is who he was before:

there is no America any more, eight years have vanished; everything is as
it was, a shiny beetle on the head of a thistle, smooth grass, and far away
the sound of cow-bells, the pass behind Kriva, the brown clumps of
sedges, and the way home, a road trodden by the soft steps of mountain
men, who wear home-made shoes and have never been to America, a road
smelling of cows and of the forest. (Novels 17; Hordubal 19)\textsuperscript{402}

\textsuperscript{402} už není Ameriky a není osmi let; je všecko, co bylo, lesklý brouk v hlavičce bodláku, klouzavá tráva a
z dálky zvonce krav, sedlo nad Krivou, hnědé trsy ostřice a cesta domů –
- cesta měkkými kroky horala, jenž nosí opáňky a nebyl v Americe, cesta vonící krávami a lesem. The
English translation does not follow the lyrical enjambment, which is marked by a dash between the two
passages above and therefore omits the lyrical tone of the narrative, which resembles the style of
Apollinaire’s “Zone.”
From the beginning, Hordubal describes the coal miner’s life in America as difficult and lonely. The virtue of his stay there was not in the aesthetic experience of people, places and objects. Unlike the traveler in *Letters from Italy*, who considered his inability to speak the language an advantage, Hordubal sees the function of the language as overcoming hardship: “a fellow can endure a lot if only he could make himself understood” (*Novels 14; Hordubal 18*).403 The years of labor also transposed the hardship of survival onto the return home; Hordubal states: “It’s a hard job to get home, sir” (*Novels 14; Hordubal 18*).404

The troublesome homecoming begins with a series of failures of visual identification; in contrast to travelers looking for confirmation of their expectations in visual representations, Hordubal, who relies on his memory, is perplexed by what he sees. He does not realize that a newly built house replaced the wooden hut he left years ago (*Novels 19; Hordubal 21*). He unsuccessfully seeks confirmations in his own visual perception and, caught between memory and reality, constantly tries to find a reason to hide his disbelief: “Good afternoon, didn’t Polana Hordubal once live here? I’m sorry, sir, I don’t know what I’ve done with my eyes” (*Novels 19; Hordubal 21*).405 His modest bag, as the only physical remnant and proof of his American identity, appears to be his only personal belonging at home, where he feels uncomfortable and unwelcomed: Juraj Hordubal does not sit on the chair; “Very quietly Juraj Hordubal sat down on the box” (*Novels 20; Hordubal 22*).406

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403a "Člověk mnoho vydrží, jen kdyby se aspon mohl domluvit."
404a "Těžká, pane, je cesta domů." The English translation changes the meaning of the sentence, omitting the notion of travel, exchanging “cesta” (travel, road) with “job.” The direct translation would thus be: “The road home is hard, sir.”
405 “Dobrý den, hospodáři, nebývala tedy Polana Hordubalová? Prosím za odpuštění, pane, nevím, kam jsem dal oči.”
406 “Juraj Hordubal potichoučku usedá na svůj kufřík.”
In comparison with the travelogues, the treatment of folkloric objects is especially important. Once the symbol of aesthetically appreciated folk art and an expression of the creative power of ordinary man, folk objects lose their aesthetic power and become symbols of illusion of home when they exist in their natural environment, i.e. a peasant home. This fuels the motif of impossibility of the real return: “But this is – like home: the painted cupboard, the oak table, oak chairs – Hordubal’s heart throbbed: but I’ve return home at last!” (Novels 103; Hordubal 84). The objects, however, no longer possess mysterious powers. In contrast to those surprising course of events in the train compartment on the way to Spain, where a press of a button would activate an almost miraculous event, here they become a troublesome burden and a source of ultimate disappointment:

Hordubal knelt down before the box, Mother of God, everything has got messed up during the journey! He searched for the electric lamp. Hafia will be astonished! “So you see, Hafia, you press this button here, and it lights.” But what’s wrong, it doesn’t want to light; Hordubal pressed the

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407 Something similar happens with the motif and genre of the folksong. With the changed idea of home, the folkloric dialogue between people in love becomes just an illusion: “Hordubal stood up in the darkness, like a pillar, and his heart beat fast. Polana is proud, she wouldn’t say: here you have me: you must go after her as if she were a girl, you must feel about in the darkness, and she will laugh quietly: ah, Juraj, you silly, for eight years I’ve been thinking about you.” “Hordubal stoji ve tmě jako sloup a srdce mu buchá. Polana je hrdá, neřekne: tady mě máš; sám musíš za ni jako za dívčí, po tmě budeš šířit a ona se potichu zasměje, ach, Juro, ty hloupý, osm let na tebe myslíš” (Novels 23; Hordubal 38). As well, the nature once admired in the travelogues, and frequently related by its non-existence in the native land, loses its beauty: “The plain. From here even the plain is visible. Blue, level – like the sea, well, a weary waste.” “Rovina. Odtud je vidět i rovinu. Modrá, rovná – jako moře, inu, taková pustina. Proto oni tak rychlo jednou: smutná ji je cesta, člověk jde – jde a jako by šlapal na jednom místě” (Novels 52; Hordubal 46).

408 “Vzdyt je to – jako doma: malovaná skřín, dubový stůl, dubový stůl, dubové židle – Hordubalovi zabouchalo srdce: vzdyt já jsem se konečně vrátil domů! In the genre of detective stories, the same objects become the part of the police investigation.
button, turned the little thing round and round, and became filled with sadness. (Novels 21; Hordubal 23)

Ekphrasis, which in the travelogues ultimately confirmed the traveling experience and authenticated its visual representation, lacks the aesthetic function and loses its magical powers in Hordubal. The strong ekphrastic elements in the text, as physical verification of Hordubal’s years of absence, are newspaper clippings and photographs illustrating life of America. In contrast to the travelogues, where the ekphrasis authenticated discovering a foreign place, recognition and communication with the other, Hordubal does not establish a meaningful contact at home, which would help him familiarize the others with his experiences: “‘Look, Hafia, look at these ladies – and see here, see how these people are fighting with each other, ha, ha, what? That’s football, you know, a game they play in America. And see here, look at these big houses –’” (Novels 22; Hordubal 23). Unfortunately, these efforts to introduce America to Hafia fail.

In contrast to the travelogues (with the exception of Letters from England), in which illustrations help simulate child-like perspective praised for its authentic perception and creative power; here, in the presence of a real child, Hafia, it reverses the child-like perspective: there is nothing childish in Hordubal’s pictures as representations of reality. Instead, the child finds reality itself amusing. Just as objects and real animals do not enter into a dialogic relationship with Hordubal, Hafia does not enter the dialogic communication with pictures. Her distance from the pictures arises because the person presenting them is foreign to her, even though it is her father, who does not seem capable

409 “Hordubal kleče u kufru, matičko boží, to se to všechno cestou zmuchlalo, a hledá elektrickou baterku, to se bude Hafie diví! ‘Tak vidiš, Hafie, tady stiskněš ten gombík, a svítí to.’ Nu copak, copak, ono to něchce svítit; Hordubal mačká na knoflík, obráci baterku se všech stran a zesmutní.”

410 “Podívej se, Hafie, tady ty dámý – a tu, pozírej, jak ti se bíjí, haha, co? To je football, víš? Taková hra, co se hraje v Americe. A toto, ty vysoké domy –’”
of establishing a communication. She does not admire pictures of animals and newspaper clippings shown by a foreigner, but responds, addressing a person close to her, with the recognition of interest for the real animals:

Hafia whispered into his ear: “Uncle Stepan, I’ve seen such a beautiful little puppy to-day!” “Have you really?” inquired Manya importantly. “And I’ve seen a hare with three little ones.”… [Hordubal]: “Children get used to things; but that she didn’t mention those pictures I brought her from America!” (Novels 32; Hordubal 31-2)\(^{411}\)

Additionally, the ordinary man Hordubal is also not able to overcome the discrepancy between different languages. In the travelogues, the combination of languages was used as heteroglossia; they provided a dialogic communication between languages and an additional point of view. In Hordubal, heteroglosia results in even deeper misunderstandings and alienation:

A wave of pleasure and emotion ran through Juraj Hordubal: See how the child is getting used to me already! ‘This… you know, this is Felix the cat.’ ‘But it’s pussy,’ objected Hafia. ‘Ha, ha, of course, it’s a pussy! You are clever, Hafia! Yes, it’s… a sort of American tom-cat, all right….Hafia dashed towards the entrance as if released. (Novels 22; Czech 23-4)\(^{412}\)

Even adults do not enter into dialogue with Hordubal, and there is no exchange of dialogues like there is in the travelogues. “The Jew stood at the bar, and stared at Juraj.

\(^{411}\) “Hafie mu šeptá do ucha: ‘Strýčku Štěpáne, já ti dnes viděla krásné štěnátko!’ ‘Ale jdi,’ diví se důležitě Manya. ‘A já jsem ti viděl zajíčci s třemi mladými zajíčky.’ (...) (Hordubal): Což, zvykne si dítě; ale že se ani nezmínila o těch obrázcích, co jsem ji dovezl z Ameriky.”

\(^{412}\) “Juraje Hordubal a to zaplavilo radostí a dojetím: tak vida, dítě si už zvyká! „To... viš, to je Felix the cat.“ „Ale vždy je to mačka,“ protestuje Hafie. „Haha, to se rozumí, že je to mačka! Ty jsi moudrá, Hafie! Ano, to je... takový americký kocour, all right.“ (...) Hafie vyrazil na zápraží jako vysvobozená.”
Shall I begin a conversation with him? The Jew wondered. He’s not talkative it seems, he looks so, so, better not interfere; what fellow from the district can it be?” (Novels 35; Hordubal 33).413

This last example shows the semantic role of names in the process of domestication. In other words, how the narrator intimately connects with Hordubal by using his personal name, or showing how power is regained through the process of naming. Hordubal senses the influence Štěpán (called “Manya”) has on people and how he has altered the landscape around him. Hordubal, however, still keeps his symbolic function of the master so he thinks that he is the real master: “he felt glad that he had begun so easily to talk to Stepan, like a master to a workman” (Novels 27; Hordubal 35).414 The “master,” though, is the one who knows everything, but Hordubal cannot orientate himself even in his own home and local region:

“And where are you from?” asked Juraj.

“From down there, from Rybary, do you know the place, sir?”

Hordubal didn’t but he nodded: so, from Rybary; what master wouldn’t know? (Novels 28-9; Hordubal 37)415

Finally, it becomes apparent that for Hordubal, being the “master” means only having his own room, being isolated within his own house. Manya, who is on the other side, is a part of home and therefore has power to appropriate Hordubal’s American identity: “‘Look,’ said Stepan boasting, ‘this knife has come all the way from America. I will carve an

413“Žid stoji u pultu a zírá na Juraje. Mám se s ním dát do řeči? Myslí si žid. Hovorný asi není, hledí jaksi takší, raději ho nechat; který pak ze zdejších by to mohl být?”
414“ale zároveň má radost, že tak šťastně začal Štěpánovi tykat jako gazda čeledinoví.”
415“A odkud jsi ty?” diví se Juraj. “Tady dole, z Rýbarů, znáte, pane?” Nezná Hordubal, ale kývá: tak, tak, z Rýbarů; co by neznal gazda?
American doll for you with it. Would you like it?’ ‘Yes, uncle,’ cried Hafia, ‘but you will, won’t you?’” *(Novels 33; Hordubal 32).*

The biggest difference in the distances included in *Hordubal* is not the horizontal space between America and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, but the vertical distance between views - between Miša, a shepherd who has not seen much of the world, and Hordubal, who likes to see himself as an experienced traveler. Miša only understands America within the narrow limits of his intimate knowledge: “‘There – there are other pastures there,’ said Míša” *(Novels 55; Hordubal 48).* However, Miša’s advantage is that he lives in a world of mountain heights, thereby seeing the world from a different perspective. On the other hand, Hordubal is no longer capable of articulating his memories and past: “‘I could tell you things about America, Misa,’ he said. ‘I’ve forgotten a lot already, but wait a bit, I shall remember –’” *(Novels 100-1; Hordubal 83).*

What *Letters from Italy* and *Hordubal* have in common, is the notion of traveling as a search for spiritual tranquility. In *Letters from Italy*, the traveler was looking for elevated places in order to find clear inner sight; climbing up through a cloud, Hordubal becomes aware of his inner calm as he tries to comprehend his troubles more clearly. He realizes how “the clouds melt away, and nothing is left behind, not even as much as when you breathe on the glass” *(Novels 57; Hordubal 50).*

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416 “Hleď,” honosi se Štěpán, “to je nůž až z Ameriky, tím ti vyřezu americkou panenku, nepochceš?” “Jé, strýčku,” pišti Hafie, “ale jistě!” Czech “ale jistě” meaning “for sure” is here translated as “but you will, won’t you?”

417 “Tam – to už jsou jiné pastviny,’ povídá Míša.”


419 “rozplývají se oblaka a nic po nich nezbude, ani jako když na sklo dechněš.”
gazes” (*Novels* 57; *Hordubal* 50). However, with the insecure pace of the Subcarpathian peasant, who is lost between two identities, it is difficult to reach the top of a mountain. His pilgrimage follows a difficult road, which is reflected by the stream of consciousness narration about the possible troubles of climbing:

Mind your head or you’ll knock into it. And now it’s rolled away over the hill, and now again you’re in it, and you can’t see three yards in front of you, you just keep on going, forcing your way through a thick fog, and you don’t know where you are. And Hordubal gasped as he climbed slowly and laboriously into the clouds” (*Novels* 98; *Hordubal* 81).

Even the way back is not any easier, and it becomes difficult to find home:

Juraj walked and walked, he really didn’t know where. But I must go home, he thought, and so he had to go forwards. But he didn’t know whether he was going uphill or down….Eh, it’s all the same, only home.

And Juraj Hordubal plunged into the clouds. (*Novels* 101-2; *Hordubal* 84)

In the second and the third part, the novel changes into a detective story and a courtroom drama. Both genres offer another view of traveling. They not only add another perspective on Hordubal’s death, but they also parody subjective descriptions, which are the most important part of travel writing. The detective story is, in its way, a journey in search of truth, but it also continues the destruction of the folkloric world of Hordubal’s

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420 “Bůh zírá.”
421 “Pozor na hlavu, abys do nich nenarazil. A ted se to převalilo přes kopec, a už jsi v nich; na tři kroky nevidíš a jen šlepeš, protlačuješ se hustou mlhou, nevíš, kde jsi. A Hordubal sipevě oddechuje a těžce, pomalu stoupá do oblak.”
422 “Juraj jde, jde, a neví vlastně kam; vždyť se mám vrátit domů, myslí si, a proto musí jít. Jenže neví, jde-li hore či dolů; snad dolu, protože – jako by padal….A, to je jedno, jen domů. A Juraj Hordubal se ponořuje do oblak.”
imagination and introduces figures who violently intrude (multiplying in the introduction of the “expert from Prague” as yet another voice external to the story) on life in the village. The second and third parts of the novel act as a foil Hordubal’s intimate journey for truth, which is now forgotten and unknowable. The simulation of a naïve, child-like approach from the travelogues here becomes the naïve perception of the child whose statement is taken during the trial (Novels 135-6; Hordubal 110-1). At the very end, the people from the village community give their final version of the events, giving themselves the right to represent Christian morality, yet offering an additional aspect of the “ordinary man:” he is not the one who sees, but the one who judges (Novels 149; Hordubal 122).

4.4.4. An Ordinary Life

In An Ordinary Life (Obyčejný život), the life of an ordinary man unfolds through his autobiography, which is found after his death. In the course of writing his life story, the ordinary man realizes that his life, similar to the journeys undertaken in the travelogues, was not ordinary at all. An Ordinary Life resembles Hordubal because it suggests that the ordinary man cannot travel well because he does so for power and appropriation rather than for adventure or knowledge. From the perspective of the stereotypical ordinary man, the world of Hordubal is an ideal of life. As Hordubal tells his imagined brothers: “Go away, to smash rocks! I should go to America or somewhere. And not only dream about adventures, that’s nothing. To have a go, damn it, try your luck
and set out into the world. At least you enjoy something and learn” (Novels 454; Obyčejný 366).  

In contrast to the wanderings in Hordubal and Meteor, in An Ordinary Life, an ordinary man is trying to organize his own life by writing. From the very beginning of the novel, life is associated with the notion of a road leading in one direction. The ideal occurs on a clear, comfortable, and straight road.

I must say that glancing back I almost find pleasure in the straight and clear path that is behind me; it has its beauty, like a good, straight road, on which it is impossible to go astray. I am almost proud that it is such a direct and comfortable road; I can compass it in one glance right back to childhood and again enjoy its distinctness. (Novels 323-4; Obyčejný 263)

As his writing unfolds, the protagonist discovers that his identity consists of a multitude of different personalities. He realizes that his life was a journey from one isolated world to another, an escape from his own poetic self. His lyrical beginnings conflicted with the social role of being a carpenter’s son and gender stereotypes of a romantic, motherly female and a hardworking, practical male. The narrator’s poetic self had to be abandoned because it did not belong to the inherited family values. The world of childhood is represented as a number of journeys to worlds of others, “expeditions into

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423 “Jdi někam, lámat skálu! To já bych šel do Ameriky nebo kam. A ne jenom fantazírovat o nějakých dobrodružstvích, to nic není. Zkusit to, sakra, zkusit své štěstí a pustit se do světa – Člověk aspon něco užije a pozná.”

424 “Musím říci, že při pohledu nazpět nalézám přímo zalíbení v té přímočaré a jasně cestě, která je za mnou; má to svou krásu jako dobrá a rovná silnice, na níž nelze zabloudit. Jsem skoro hrd na to, že je to taková správná a pohodlná cesta; mohu ji obsáhnout jediným pohledem až po dětsví a znovu se potěšit její zřetelnosti.”
their world” (Novels 328; Obyčejný 266), of their works and professions, but obviously not of his own.

The separation from life starts thus with a convalescence: “In this way, in fact, the idyllic part of my life began: in convalescence. That was the important and decisive crossing” (Novels 407; Obyčejný 344). However, by the end of his narration, the ordinary man realizes that because of his ability to see things from various angles, the poet was the only one who did not really belong to a “household” (domácnost) of other inner personalities:

A strange household. Once somebody forced his way in, that was the poet; he turned everything upside down and haunted this place worse than that ghost; but the others, those self-respecting people, somehow squeezed him out from that decent and almost venerable household – that was already a long time ago a terribly long time ago. (Novels 448; Obyčejný 362)

The road therefore as a metaphor for life is foregrounded when the ordinary man becomes a clerk at the railway station. He is a passive witness of movement. He sees a travelers through his office windows, and juxtaposes and subsequently glorifies his idea of the stable, “ordinary life.” For him, travelers embody something devilish and entirely negative; they are people from the margins of society who have lost their direction and unconsciously wander around. The idea of stability in An Ordinary Life opposes the poetics of flânerie:

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425 “výpravy do jejich světa.”
426 “tím se vlastně začala idyličnost mého života: rekonvalescencí. To byla ta důležitá a rozhodující výhybka.”
427 “Divná domácnost. Jednou tam vtrhl někdo, byl to básník; obrátil všechno vzhůru noham a strašil hůř než to strašidlo; ale ti druží, ti sebedbali, ho nějak vytačili z té slušné a skoro etnické domácnosti, - to už je dávno, hrozně dávno.”
God knows what sort of obstinacy or something there was in me: in the office I got a sort of savage pleasure from the fact that it was ruining me; besides that agitated haste of arrival and departure, always that rush, always that disorder; a station, particularly a big station, is congested, a little like a festering ganglion – the devil knows why so much riff-raff, petty thieves, pimps, wenches, and queer individuals collect there; perhaps because people who are coming or going are already de-railed from their lines of habit and become, so to speak, a favourable spot upon which all kinds of vice can sprout. (Novels 359; Obyčejný 290)428

His appointment to another position, a small railway station in the mountains, represents a new phase in his contemplations on the notion of ordinariness. There, the railways end and contact between the human and natural, similar to that in Hordubal, and as-yet-unwritten Journey to the North, resemble the “end of the world,” at the same time physical and supernatural:

And this is really the last station in the world: the line runs to its end in the grass and shepherd’s-purse, and then comes the universe. Right behind those buffers. You might say that the wood and the river are murmuring, and instead it’s the universe, the stars rustle like the alder leaves and the

428 “Bůhví jaký to byl ve mně vzdor nebo co: nalézal jsem ve své kanceláři jakousi vzteklou zálibu už proto, že mě nícíla; k tomu ten rozčilený spěch přijezdů a odjezdů, pořád ten chvat, pořád ten nepořádek; nádraží, jmenovitě nádraží velkého města, je překrvaná, trochu jako zjišťená uzlína – čert ví, proč se sem tábene tolik pakáže, zlodějičků, pasáků, cour a divných individuí; snad proto, že lidé, kteří přijíždějí nebo odjíždějí se, abych tak řekl, příznivou půdou, na které může bujet veškerá něrest.”
mountain breeze blows between the worlds: Lord, it’s good to fill your lungs! (Novels 362; Obyčejný 292)\footnote{“a toto je opravdu poslední stanice na světě: kolej dobíhá v trávě a pastuší tobole, a pak už je hned vesmír. Hned za tím nárazíštěm. Člověk by řekl, to hučí řeka a les, a zatím to hučí vesmír, hvězdy šelestí jako listy oši a horský vítr provívá mezi světy; pane, to se to dýše!”}

He becomes aware that the meaning of the ordinary man is in trying to find the exact, already prescribed routes that are similar to those found in Baedekers. For him, the route involved following tasks and responsibilities - “it was a relief to stick to the prescribed line of lessons and tasks”\footnote{In the English translation, “cesta,” which can be translates as path, road, lane, course, route, course, voyage, or travel is replaced with “line.”} - while everything around the tracks should be disregarded and diminished (Novels 364; Obyčejný 295). To follow the railroad was to follow the practicality of his father and the illusion of stability, although the hidden and unusual signs around the railroad\footnote{This is similar to the metaphor of a blue chrysanthemum.} were his early childhood memories and are important in the forbidden sexual experiences from his childhood (Novels 364; Obyčejný 294).

Work for the railways continues the journey of proving himself to his father. As such, the “ordinary man” here is different from the “ordinary man” from the travelogues, who is trying to simulate modesty in order to find home within a foreign place and acquire another perception on things. This type of ordinary man does not perceive the external world, because he is constantly focused on himself and carries his emotional luggage wherever he goes:

And there’s another thing, apparently a mere detail, perhaps I am making too much of it: my derailment began at the moment when, with my box in my hand, I stood on the platform, helpless and miserable, almost crying with embarrassment and shame. For a very long time I felt ashamed of that
defeat. Who knows: perhaps I became a young gentleman on the railways and later on a rather bigger cog in the railways, also to efface and redeem for myself that painful and humiliating moment on the platform. (Novels 365; Obyčejný 295)\(^{432}\)

The railway station acts as a world within the world, isolated from the rest by rules and fences (Novels 367; Obyčejný 299), and connected only to other train stations. People who do not work at the station are not privileged and do not have access to all of it. As a closed and confined world, the railway station becomes a world of mystery (Novels 371; Obyčejný 300) and a playground for the ordinary man: “Every closed world becomes something of a game; therefore we form exclusive, ours only, jealously guarded regions of pastimes and hobbies to be able to give ourselves up to our favourite game.” (Novels 372; Obyčejný 300).\(^{433}\) The notion of game here therefore differs from games in the travelogues, where the narrator would often assume a child-like approach. In contrast to the travelogues, where games were matters of aesthetic improvisations, here they become something with precise rules, artificially isolated from everyday life. They focus only on one object and they do not include the others. On the contrary, they help exclude otherness:

A game is a serious matter, it has its rules and its binding order. A game is an absorber, tender, or passionate concentration on something, on something only; therefore, let that on which we concentrate be isolated

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\(^{432}\) “A je tu ještě ta zdánlivá malíčkost, nevím, zda si ji nezveličuji: mé vyšinutí se začalo v té chvíli, když jsem s kufrem v ruce uvázl na perónu, bezradný a ubohý, div že jsem neplakal hambou a rozpaky. Dlouho jsem se palčivě styděl za tuto porážku. Kdožví: třeba jsem se stal páinem u dráhy a nakonec j poněkud vyšším kolečkem v železnici č také proto, abych sám před sebou odčinil a napravil ten trapný a pokorující okamžik na perónu.”

\(^{433}\) Každý uzavřený svět se stává poněkud hrou; pročež si tvoříme výlučně, jen naše, žárlivě ohrazené oblasti svých zálib a koničků, abychom se mohli oddat své znejmílejší hře
from everything else, separated by its rules, and removed from the reality around. And therefore, I think a game likes to be on a reduced scale; if something is made small and tiny and it is removed from that other reality, to a greater extend and deeper it is a world of its own, our world, in which we can forget that there still is another. *(Novels 372-3; Obyčejný 300-11)*

Similar to the world of the railway station, all other worlds on the journey of the ordinary man, such as that of a marriage, also become isolated worlds appropriated by “us:”

We, that no longer meant the station, it didn’t mean men in joint service, it meant just we two, wife and I. Our table, our lamp, our supper, our bed: that “ours” was like an agreeable light, which fell on the fittings of our home and made them different, nicer, and rare than all the others. *(Novels 380; Obyčejný 306)*

The road, which does not really belong to the official autobiography of the ordinary man, is the road to understanding others, an escape from isolation. In contrast to the omnipresent dialogization with objects and people, and the constant presence of the other in the travelogues, the genre of autobiography offers a monological approach, even among many of the ordinary man’s personalities. The only time when he really reaches the others is the story of heroism during World War I, his participation in the fight against Germans, gave him a chance to participate in a community and show his masculinity.

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434 “Hra, to je věc vážná, má svá pravidla a svůj závazný řád. Hra je pohřížené, něžné nebo náruživé soustředění na něco, na jenom něco; proto budiž to, nač se upoutáváme, izolováno ode všeho ostatního, vyděleno svými pravidly a vyňato z té okolní skutečnosti. A proto, myslím, má hra zálibu ve zmenšeném měřítku; je-li něco uděláno malinkým a zdrobnělým, je to vynato z té druhé skutečnosti, je to víc a hloubější světem pro sebe, naším světem, ve kterém můžeme zapomenout, že je ještě nějaký jiný.”

435 “My, to už není nádraží, to nejsou mužové ve společné službě, to jsme jen my dva, žena a já. Náš stůl, naše lampa, naše večeře, naše lože: to “naše” je jako příjemné osvětlení, jež dopadá na věci domova a činí je jinými, pěknějšími a vzácnějšími než všechny druhé.”
This part of his story, however, does not belong to the official autobiography, “which doesn’t fit in to any other continuous story and which stands by itself, let its origin be what it may” (Novels 440; Obyčejný 355). This is because the story of heroism does not follow the tracks of ordinariness.

The lyrical element that remains constant is the affection for the notion of traveling and railroads. Here, he stands as a poet who understands the railway tracks as a connection to the exotic distances and connection with others: “You look how the lines are running, they fascinate you somehow, and by itself it starts you off into distance; and already you’re off on the infinite journey of adventure always the same and always different” (Novels 422-3; Obyčejný 341-2). In relation to this is the last phase of life, “which I should have forgotten completely,” that of the ordinary man as a beggar who does not want anything and due to his simplicity can reach the end of the world. The notion of a beggar recalls the narrator’s stance in Letters from Italy, where he praises modesty, the lack of language skills, and detachment from the material world as the alternative way to experience it:

Lord, and there’s still another life which I should have forgotten completely. Different and almost contrary to this and all the others: in fact, only such strange moments, as if they belonged to a completely different life. For instance, a longing to be something like a beggar at a church door; the desire not to wish to be anything, and to give up everything; to be poor and alone and in that to find peculiar pleasure or holiness – I don’t

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436 “nezapadá do žádné jiné souvislé historie a stojí sama o sobě, kde se vzala, tu se vzala.”
437 “Člověk se divá, jak běží koleje, nějak ho fascinuji a samo od sebe se to v něm rozjede do dálky; a už se ubírá nekonečnou cestou dobrodružství pořád týchž a pořád jiných.” The English translation replaces the neutral third-person narration with second-person narration.
know how to express it…like those buffers at the last station in the world, nothing but rusty rails, shepherd’s purse, and hair-grass, nothing but just the end of the world, a forsaken place, and good for nothing; there I felt best. (Novels 442; Obyčejný 357)  

Finally, the “ordinary man” realizes that everything he has written so far is just a snapshot of his life – an ekphrastic element – a multiperspectival image with simultaneous personal sequences of possibilities and conditions. It is displayed in front of him in its temporal simultaneity, which is a structural element that Čapek had already used in the travelogues. It introduces the modern principles of representing space and time: “I know it is only an image; but it is the only image in which I can see my whole life, not enrolled in time, but complete as it stands, with everything that was, and yet with infinitely much that perhaps might have been” (Novels 447; Obyčejný 361).

**Summary**

This chapter focused on the theme of home in Čapek’s fiction from an intertextual point of view. I have argued that, in contrast to travelogues, where the home was a fixed point of comparison, in the author’s fiction, home ceases to exist in varying degrees. On the one hand, the analysis shows that, while the position of the narrator changes, intermedial techniques and simultaneity are used in Čapek’s fiction. In regard to the position of home, the fiction was divided into three groups. The first group represented exotic destinations, which are often unsuccessful substitutes for home. The early prose

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438 “Můj bože, a ještě jiný život, na který bych byl nadobro zapomněl. Jiný a skoro opačný než tenhle a než všechny ostatní, - vlastně jenom takové divné okamžiky, které jako by náležely do docela jiného života. Například – taková touha být něco jako žebřík u chrámových dveří; touha nic nechtí a všeho se vzdáti; být chudý a sám a v tom nacházet zvláštní radost nebo svatost, - nevím, jak bych to řekl....třeba to náraziště na poslední stanici světa, nic než rezavé koleje, pastuší tobolka a suchá travina, nic než právě konec světa, místo opuštěné a k níčemu dobré; tam mně bylo nejlíp.”

439 “Já vím, je to jen obraz; ale to je jediný obraz, na kterém mohu vidět celý svůj život, ne rozvinutý v čase, ale celý najednou, se vším, co bylo, a ještě s nekonečně mnohým, co nad to mohlo být.”
(The Garden of Krakonoš; The Luminous Depths), as well as the novel Meteor and War with the Newts, belongs to this group. The second group depicts wandering without home, because the concept is completely lost. The Insect Play was analyzed as an example of this group. The last group features spiritual journeys of self-discovery. This treatment of travel begins in the short stories in The Wayside Crosses and the detective stories in Tales from Two Pockets, and continues in the novels Hordubal and An Ordinary Life, where the theme of travel finally becomes synonymous with life-writing.
Conclusion

My dissertation tends to examine the theme of travel in the work of Karel Čapek. According to my main argument, I contend that Čapek experimented with the topic of travel and showed the interconnectedness between different genres, as well as, the visual and verbal arts which are primarily seen as avant-garde undertakings. He used three approaches to express his experiences of traveling. First, he founded his own aesthetics of the so-called “marginal forms” which he simultaneously interpolated in his prose. The use of “marginal forms” is visible in comparison between Čapek’s travelogue and the analysis of this same theme in the Czech literary tradition. Secondly, he introduced *skaz* as stylized spoken language to Czech literature. Thirdly, he used visual elements of language, and combined verbal and visual arts (illustrations and drawings) in his narratives. Finally, my dissertation offers a new reading of his prose from the point of view of the theme of travel and the intertextual links between the travelogues and the notion of travel in fiction.

The first chapter, “Establishing Conventions: Czech Travels to Italy,” situates Čapek’s travelogues within the tradition of Czech travel writing, in particular writing about Italy. My analysis of Čapek’s nineteenth- and twentieth-century forebears examines how they constructed the generic conventions to which Čapek reacted in *Letters from Italy*. Instead of negating or rejecting the previous tradition, Čapek instead challenged the conventions of the genre by changing perspective on the travel experience. In contrast to previous travelers, he, in the spirit of Apollinaire’s “Zone,” did not refer to antiquity in his travelogue, because he did not see classical culture as the basis for an imagined, European identity. Similar to the French poet, Čapek envisions his own version of
Christianity; it is a newly discovered aesthetic quality of the present moment that is depicted in the history of visual arts. Rather than relying on classical sources as the depository for the Italian identity, he searches for this identity in his conception of simplicity. The obvious literary manifestation of this is in the narrative techniques of the so-called simple forms, which he conceptualized in his collection, *In Praise of Newspapers and Other Essays on the Margin of Literature*.

The chapter “In Search of Companionship” reveals another way in which Čapek challenges the narrative conventions of travel writing. In the context of the interwar period, authors activated their narrators and seemingly involved them in the construction of narration. Specifically, Čapek organized his travelogues around the dialogic relationship between various types of addressees. In other words, he shifted the notion of the travelogue from a description of places to a conversation about them. This was achieved through the use of skaz, which was a popular tool in the works of interwar writers. The dual nature of skaz, the simultaneous references to an oral and written discourse, helped the narrator in Čapek’s travelogues to play with and challenge the conventions of the genre. Moreover, the narrator conjures up his addressees through personification and heteroglossia. Another aspect of skaz is an altered perspective as yet another element in travel writing. I showed how skaz changes according to introduction of other elements in the narration, such as visual arts (illustrations) and film techniques.

“How to Illustrate Nature and Art” shifts from purely narrative experiments to the interaction between narrative and visual signs, focusing on the visual elements in the narrative. I discussed three elements: iconotexts or the explicit visual elements in the narrative, such as illustrations; ekphrasis, or the narrative representation of works of
visual art; and, finally, the visual elements found in Čapek’s language, especially his use of colors. If *skaz* challenged the internal narrative features of travel writing, which are traditionally understood as a relating of the traveler’s experience to a conventionally distant audience at home, then the visual elements challenged the generic features by showing the extent to which the components of other arts, especially visual and film, can be interpolated into and articulated in the narration.

Similar to the previous chapter, chapter 3 also chronologically follows the development of the visual features of the narratives in the context of the poetics of the period, starting with *Letters From Italy* as an artistic manifesto, to the introduction of illustrations in *Letters From England* and the filmic facets of *A Trip to Spain*. These developments occurred concurrently with Čapek’s and the Avant-Garde’s poetic and aesthetic interest in film. The analysis concludes with *Images From Holland* and *Travels to the North*, in which the semantic doubling is analyzed from the visual side.

The last chapter, “Fictional Travels,” offers another possibility of reading Čapek’s opus from a vantage point in which travel is the dominant. In other words, this reading of Čapek’s fiction focuses on the intertextual links between the travelogues and his fiction, in which travel and aesthetic features found in the travelogue occur. From this point of view, it becomes obvious how Čapek’s fiction interacts with his travel writing, and how the quest for the identity, which was also dealt with in the travelogues, semantically expands in the context of Čapek’s fictional works. In the travelogues, Čapek uses the actual physical distances in Europe to explore different cultural aspects of countries close to his homeland, yet not in the neighbourhood and historically belonging to just recently (1918) dissolved Austria-Hungary. He does this in order to present his own aesthetic
theory of cultural identity (especially visible in the representation of the quotidian in art), and to redefine the idea of Czechness (implicitly present in the narratives) in the newly established First Czecho-Slovak Republic, and its significance within the shared European cultural heritage. In other words, he creates a new map of Europe from the point of view of a Czech traveler carrying his locally authentic Czech identity. The fictional travels focus on the internalized notion of traveling. They feature a travel to exotic destinations in which there are no references to a home. They rather expound traveling as the loss of home, or depict traveling in spiritual terms as a process of self-discovery.

Although the theme of travel in Czech literature has taken different forms in different historical periods, it has always been connected with question of national and cultural identities. Especially in the works of nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, such as Milota Zdirad Polák, Jan Neruda or Josef Svatopluk Machar, the act of traveling and writing represented an intellectual need to articulate the position of one’s own identity within a broader European context. Meanwhile, like other writers of the period, Čapek, who lived in recognized nation-state - the newly established First Czechoslovak Republic - , did not have to use travel writing to explore the position of his own national literature and culture within a European context but only to posit it as equally important. Rather, he and other interwar writers used travelogues to aesthetically challenge the boundaries and functions of the populer genre.

Also, in the first decades of the twentieth century, Czech artists started traveling to make contact with prominent foreign writers and artists of the period. The visits of these foreign luminaries to Prague, references to the city in their works (Apollinarie’s
“Zone”), and exhibitions and happenings of international importance organized in the city made the Czech capital one of the hubs of the European Avant-Garde. At the same time, due to the work of the Prague Linguistic Circle, which gathered Czech and foreign linguists, literary historians and folklorists, Prague became a place where interwar artistic practice and theory merged.440

Artistic and intellectual interaction, as well as the dynamic development and aesthetic contributions question the position of Central Europe as marginal in the European interwar canon.441 Newer theories442 of the Avant-Garde have recognized this, shifting the importance of Paris as a cultural center of modern culture to the metropolises of the European “periphery,” such as Prague, Bucharest, Belgrade, Zagreb, and Warsaw (Benson 63-4). Prague here is viewed within the traveling theme as depicted in Avant-Garde works. The example of visual art serves to show how their vocabulary, following the principles of Western European poetics, became a new form of communication recognizable beyond the confinement of national histories and languages (Benson 64). The Central European Avant-Garde drew on international Avant-Garde poetics in order to recreate and foreground its own literary heritage, revisit local national mythology, and cast a new light on earlier literary traditions. The multicultural and cosmopolitan spirit of Central European urban centers as meeting points “surveyed and tried to assimilate cultural artifacts from tribal and folk traditions, Far Eastern cultures, and premodern and

440 On the relationship between the teachings of the Prague Linguistic Circle and the Avant-Garde practice see Frank Illing’s Jan Mukařovský und die Avantgarde: die strukturalistische Aesthetik im Kontext von Poetismus und Surrealismus.
441 The margins here are not being discussed in terms of post-colonial “othering,” but as a part of Europe that needs to be “reintegrated” into the European mainstream
442 The newer theories, similar to different theoretical approaches, such as that of Peter Bürger, mainly consider visual arts, and disregard the Avant-Garde in literature (Murphy 1). See Benson, Timothy (ed). Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910-1930 and Steven Mansbach’s Modern Art in Europe: From the Baltics to the Balkans, 1890-1938.
contemporary West European societies” (Benson, “Exchange” 42). Consequently, “a wholesale application of the iconographic categories developed to assess Western modern art may be inadequate to explicate the meanings and analyze the themes favoured in the East [of Europe]” (Mansbach 3).

As my thesis shows, the theme of travel in literature and the arts became an exploration of and experiment with generic and artistic limits. It found its expression in the variety of new and hybrid genres, such as collage and visual poetry. Instead of focusing on the question of identity, Čapek took the theme of travel as a popular topic that cuts across the genres and arts of the interwar era, and focus on an aesthetic investigation of the genre itself. In order to do this, he linked his journalistic and literary practice. His interest in the aesthetic aspects of everyday life, especially its photographic quality, which defamiliarized the Baedekers, aided him. He estranged travel literature by relying on and foregrounding elements from the Czech tradition of travel writing and the subjecting them to the interwar experiments of Avant-Garde. In particular, he played with the genres typical to the Avant-Garde, such as intermediality in literature.

Čapek drew from the tradition of travel writing in a playful way, using already existent characteristics and connecting them with international trends in poetics and the fine arts. In this way, the treatment of travel in Čapek’s work reveals that the current definitions of the Avant-Garde, that emerged from the theoretical and mainly Marxist considerations of Western European and Russian Avant-Garde movements, that define the period as generally rejecting tradition are insufficient for understanding “local” Avant-Garde movements, such as the Czech Avant-Garde.443

443 For instance Peter Bürger’s Theory of the Avant-Garde and Renato Poggioli’s The Theory of the Avant-Garde.
Instead of negating the past, the Czech Avant-Garde (and the avant-garde in general) was, as Květoslav Chvatík writes, anything but destructive; at the peak of its poetic expansion, the Czech Avant-Garde offered an alternative to the already existing poetics and institutions of art, with which it contemporaneously existed. For instance, it created independent journals and opened art schools, small publishing houses and theatres (125). Additionally, as Chvatík argues, the avant-garde “overcame the traditional, static image of the world and the man with its new, dynamic and multidimensional vision” (125). Similar views have been voiced by other theorists, among them Eva Strohsová, who emphasizes continuity in the literary process (Zrození moderny, 1963).

Moreover, the analysis of the travel theme in Čapek’s work, especially the use of the narrative and visual experiments typical of the interwar period, underscores the need to reconsider the notion of the historical Avant-Garde. Although Čapek has never been labeled along with writers and theorists, such as Vladislav Vančura or Karel Teige, as Avant-Garde, his treatment of travel uses aspects of Avant-Garde aesthetics. Čapek indeed related to the previous tradition, but as my analysis shows, he changed the genre of travel writing by using experimental narrative and visual techniques that were typical of the interwar period. Wendy Steiner argues that the multiperspectivity of Cubism established a new “historiography,” and the “heterogeneity” of Cubist writing showed “the very fragility of the distinction between the Avant-Garde and mainstream” (“Historiography” 522). Jan Mukařovský notes the expansionist tendencies of the Avant-Garde, which should not be strictly confined to the authors who defined themselves as the
“Avant-Garde,” but also expanded to other authors of the period, who were either “marginal” to the movement or in the open conflict with the Avant-Garde’s ideological principles. Mukařovský here refers to the authors belonging to the pre-war generations, such as Karel Čapek, whose literary work and achievements in the field of translation are essential for understanding the early Avant-Garde. The Avant-Garde was, after all, not an isolated phenomenon; it was instead dialogic and in “some kind of connection with everything that was happening at that time in the arts, in culture in general, and in all of public life” (“Základní principy” 22).

My dissertation has shown how, in the period of Czech Modernism and Avant-Garde, traveling became a metaphor for exploration of the world at large and of generic limits. On the one hand, as the title points out, the adventure of travel becomes simultaneously, an adventure of discovering the new and rediscovering the known and familiar. The Czech Avant-Garde remains the topic that requires further research and hopefully my dissertation offers a new interpretation of the travel genre, as well as the interwar period. Čapek does shed light on Avant-Garde aesthetics because his travel writing provides a case study of the interwar period that problematizes all of the easy classifications and categories found in literary history books. Discovering and rediscovering Čapek means discovering and rediscovering the historical Avant-Garde.

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This was defined by Aleksandar Flaker as the “zone of the Avant-Garde influence” (“O pojmu avangarde” 253-4).
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