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CROSSING CULTURAL BORDERS. THEME AND NARRATIVE MODE IN
ALEXANDR KLIMENTS'S *NUDA V ČECHÁCH*

"Jag undrar om en nordbo kan förstå."
Lubomír Durovič

"To je to zvláštní na veliké literatuře:
že je tím nejnárodnějším, co národ má, a
přitom mluví řečí srozumitelnou a
důvěrně blízkou všem. Žádná diplomacie
a žádný spolek národů není tak
univerzální jako literatura; ale lidé jí
nepřikládají dost váhy, to je to; proto
se mohou pořád ještě nenávidět nebo si
být cizí".

Karel Čapek, *Cesta na sever*

1. A basic assumption for all of us who are engaged in the study and teaching of a foreign natural language or a foreign national culture must be that a language and a culture is in some sense available even to those who are not born into it. Paradoxically we assume on the one hand the closedness of a communication code which we are out to "crack", while on the other our very activity presupposes that communication across language and cultural barriers is both meaningful and possible. A cultural tradition by definition implies border lines; it is precisely something which is set in limits and defined against that which lies beyond those limits. The border lines may be set in time or space.

A natural distinction exists between language as such and cultural manifestations such as literature. No one can pretend to

My thanks and acknowledgments go to Miloslava Slavičková for her continual help during my work on this article.

understand a foreign language without learning its basic grammar and vocabulary. Literature on the other hand can be claimed (in translation) by any reader, at any time and in any place. No matter how incompetent a reader may be we can never forbid him to read say a novel by Dostoevskij on the grounds that he has not mastered the code. Within the field of reader-reception theory there exist two extreme standpoints: on the one hand the idea that meaning is constituted by the reader during the reading process, and on the other the idea of a common code which unites the author and the reader. Representing the latter, Roger Fowler claims the following:

"The reader's encounter with the text consists basically of the release of knowledge through response to the patterns which the author has deployed in encoding the deep structure of the work. It is an act of discovery of that which he is already equipped, by his place in the community of readers, to discover. The novel he reads is part of the self-same system of signs to which he personally belongs. Or, the same in many respects." (pp. 128-129)

Although Fowler admits that complete identity between reader and text does not exist and indeed would in itself render communication superfluous, his theory is extremely code-orientated and overlooks the fact that people in fact do read literature which stems from alien cultural codes - alien both in time and place.

The question which I propose to examine is the following: How is the narrative situation affected and in which ways is the reader position otherwise determined when fictional communication crosses cultural borders?

2. The fictional narrative situation is understood according to the following scheme which is based on Chatman (151):

Real author > Implied author > Narrator > Narratee > Implied reader > Real reader

Real author and Real reader are external to the text as such. Into this diagram I would insert the position of *characters* between *narrator* and *narratee*. From the point of view of reader reception we may reverse the direction of the arrows and see the starting point of the process as resting with the real, i.e. historical, reader. Obviously the cultural identity of the real reader will determine his identification of the implied reader

position and from there his interpretation of the text. While no interpretation of a fictional text can be disqualified as "wrong", still the term "narrative communication" does imply the desirability of a reader interpretation as directed by the text itself and not taken entirely out of the blue.

Let us briefly consider the distinctive feature of artistic as opposed to non-artistic communication. The purpose of art is to raise to the level of permanency that which otherwise risks being borne away with the passage of time. In a very special way that which is given status as art exists outside time. It is not a question of the physical manifestation of a work of art, but of its ontological status. Thus radioactive waste may exist for thousands of years without becoming art, and similarly it is questionable whether Dostoevskij's *Crime and Punishment* would cease to exist with the destruction of every single copy of the work. In other words, art raises to the level of symbol that which in itself has a place in the non-symbolic world of reality. We can take any part of reality - a written message, an earthenware pot, a description of Russian society at the end of the nineteenth century - and raise it to the level of symbol: we allow it to stand as a monument to its age and beyond that to suggest the unity of humankind through the ages. We transfer it from the diachronic to the synchronic axis. We exchange its specific and pragmatic significance for a universal significance. The universalising power of art is inherent in the artistic process.

On the other hand it is important to stress that art is not pure symbol, pure universalising. Just as words cannot be devoid of their normal, 'communicative', meaning, so art, particularly verbal art, cannot be realised in a vacuum devoid of details which relate to the realia of everyday life. Verbal art is activated along an axis which extends between pure description on the one hand and pure symbolising on the other. All verbal art conveys to some extent communicative information about a milieu specific in time and place. This pole is of course stronger in prose than in poetry, stronger in the novel than in the short story, stronger above all in realism than in symbolism and modernism. Particularly in the case of the novel, a reader is bound to learn basic facts as to how a certain community lives. This information will be of a 'communicative' rather than an artistic kind. It will be absorbed above and beyond the symbolic significance with which - in the context of the work - it is endowed.

The tension between specific description and universal significance is a dynamic factor infusing every work of art. The less

familiar the reader is with the social and the literary context of a specific text, the less able will he be to respond to the interplay between specific and universal emitted by that text. It is feasible to suggest that a reader foreign to the milieu within which a text has arisen will be more absorbed with the basic realities related by the text than will be the reader familiar with the milieu. A description of the Siberian winter or the African jungle will strike the reader who has never been there as being exotic. His curiosity concerning an exotic milieu will probably distract him from responding to the balance of description and symbol on which the text rests. And at the same time he will miss many of the secondary associations which each concrete detail may give rise to for the reader familiar with the milieu. We can put it another way: works of fiction rely to a great extent on the metonymic principle. No realistic description can be exhaustive, there has always to be a selection. The reader's ability to interpret the text will depend on his ability to correlate the selected details with the whole from which they are taken. For the foreign reader, for whom the whole is not automatically given, the significance of the parts may well be misinterpreted, reassembled into the wrong whole.

3. I have chosen to examine this problem complex in connection with a reading of Alexandr Kliment's *Nuda v Čechách*. I have chosen this text because it originates in Czechoslovakia - albeit Bohemia and not Slovakia - and because it revolves around the theme of emigration - thanks to which phenomenon Professor Durovič and I have chanced to become colleagues at one and the same department. I have chosen this novel because I find it fascinating and stimulating, both from the point of view of theme and of narrative mode. The fact that I am fundamentally an 'incompetent' reader of Czech literature has brought to my awareness the complexity of the interrelationship between the various reader positions in the narrative contract, and the need to exert oneself and face uncertainty when reading a foreign text.

I shall concentrate on two aspects of this novel which I consider to have a direct bearing on reader response. Firstly I shall examine the balance between concrete description and symbolisation as presented above. Secondly I shall examine the device of second person address which is used extensively throughout the text; my question concerns whether this device contributes to the reader's sense of familiarisation or alienation as regards his position within the narrative contract.

4. Alexandr Kliment's *Nuda v Čechách* is a novel steeped in the realia of the Czech countryside, Czech politics, Czech history and Czech culture. A symptom of this absorption with things Czech may be seen in the welter of proper names - both personal (historical) and geographical in which the text abounds, e.g.:

/1/ *Rekl jsem, zčásti upřímě, že si vzpomínám na jednu ulici, kterou jsem chodíval a která se před válkou jmenovala Sokolská. Když přišli Němci, přejmenovali tu ulici na Segertovu. Po válce se ulice jmenovala Kellerova, ale ne příliš dlouho. Opět byla přejmenována na Janáčkovu. Teď se jmenuje Kmochova. Komické, což? Nezeštárneš pod jednou vlajkou, ale co bych se rozčiloval. (p. 132)*

The main theme of the book is the first-person hero-narrator's relationship to his country, Bohemia. This relationship materialises in the conflict which is intimated in the title of the book, *Nuda v Čechách*: on the one hand frustration as far as his public and professional life is concerned, and on the other a persistent love and sense of belonging which is expressed through the image of the countryside. This conflict emerges in the dilemma which provides the narrative pretext for the book, namely the decision whether or not to emigrate. The theme of emigration is interwoven with a love affair: for many years the narrator Mikuláš has been obsessed by an 'abstract' love for the painter Olga. At the beginning of the book Mikuláš is on his way to tell Olga that he will emigrate with her. During the course of the evening (considerably further on in the novel), Olga utters the fatal words, "Je to prosté, Mikuláši ... Protože nemáš, co opustit." (p. 64) and Mikuláš' decision is undone for him. For the remainder of the novel he works through to a complete sense of unity with the Czech countryside and rejects the plan of emigration.

Into this flimsy narrative frame is woven the real texture of the novel which is written as a series of memories and reflections which are threaded together within the acute situation, namely the emigration dilemma. The novel is written in the first person and totally disregards chronology as far as story time is concerned.¹⁾ The novel does not therefore conform to the traditional third-person narrated chronological account typical of the realistic novel. The important axis is not a reconstruction of 'what happened' but rather a reconstruction of what has determined the life of the first-person narrator. This has important repercussions for my concern with realia as opposed to symbols. The first person viewpoint guarantees from the beginning a criterion

of relevance according to which the details related have *ipso facto* a significance over and above their status as passing moments of reality. Furthermore achronology itself assists in the release of the related details from a position firmly rooted in time and place. But achronology notwithstanding, the narrated details are presented with a strong sense of coherence: fragmentation is not used to disperse a sense of total meaning, but rather the opposite. The fragments are painstakingly linked together to form a tight network of those relevant details which have constituted Mikuláš' life. No related detail falls out of the core of significance to remain irrelevant, but each and every one slots into the significant pattern of the hero's life. The method is one of absolute achronology and absolute relevance. This is in part achieved by the device of repetition. Events related and above all the narrator's comments to them, once introduced into the text, become fixed reference points which are used in the exposition of new details. With the completion of the narrative the reader has been given what he feels to be a complete and coherent rendering of one man's life in a specific milieu; accordingly the text answers to the criteria normally assumed in defining the novel.

In stressing the fact that each detail presented has symbolic significance, at least for the hero-narrator, I would at the same time point out that the details in themselves are exquisitely realistic. In spite of the fact that they are in some sense made 'abstract', lifted from their place in time and space, they bear with them a sense of authenticity; they belong in the fictional world where they have actually 'occurred'. Kvetuška offering her geraniums to the rain (pp. 175-6), Jarmila mysteriously smiling with her hair spread out in front of a closed chest (pp. 85-6), the box of champagne bequeathed to Mikuláš by his friend Kormund which disappears into the upper regions of the paternoster elevator, just as Kormund himself had once disappeared when they were small and Mikuláš was too afraid to go with him (p. 172 ff): these details and countless others like them remain vivid in the actuality of their having happened, however symbolic their subsequent significance may have become for Mikuláš' life-pattern. Authenticity is of course a difficult quality to prove: in the given instance it has to do with the specificness of each detail or incident. These are not typical, neutral, but on the contrary they suggest the unique: poignant, piquant, with an element of the bizarre, they express the pathos of the moment actually experienced in the life of a unique human being.

5. Persuing this masterful balance between the concrete detail

and its symbolic status, I propose to examine the image of the countryside which is the most persistent and central image in the text. Virtually all other themes and images in the novel are defined according to their interplay with this the central image.

The conclusive key to Mikuláš' fascination and even obsession with the Czech countryside is, achronologically, presented at the very end of the novel (pp. 217-220). Here is related the childhood incident which henceforward becomes the expression of the hero's most fundamental psychological reactions. As a very small child Mikuláš is drawn up a hill in his pram by his parents; reaching the brow of the hill his parents pause to admire the view and forget about the pram inadvertently letting it roll back downwards; Mikuláš senses only his parents reaction, for the view is as yet out of his sight, and thus prepared he climbs out of his pram and walks up to join his parents. Having admired the view from above the little child is introduced into the landscape by what is described as a ritual initiation: his father turns him upside-down. The incident is concluded as follows:

/2/ A byl jsem a jsem navždycky určen a stalo se to na vrchu, kterému se oduždycky říká Trojánka. Můj otec mě převrátil do krajiny a krajina se převrátila do mě, je to můj svět, můj osud, moje historie, můj jazyk, moje myšlenka, můj projekt, řikejte si tomu, jak chcete; je to a já jsem v tom zanesen (p. 220)

The incident has the ring of authenticity: it teeters on the border line between being ordinary to the point of banal and being extraordinary, an earth-shattering experience. Outwardly very little happens, but from the inside the little child's senses and imagination are awoken. The incident combines for him perception and being; it is aesthetic and existential. It is the kind of incident which occurs in every childhood and which becomes for the sensitive child a psychological fixture, a point of no return. For Mikuláš this incident is a point of definition: it fashions his powers of perception and gives his life its existential direction. It is the source of his passion for viewing the landscape from above, in contrast to his brother Béda's passion for geology, for what lies buried beneath the landscape (see pp. 122 ff; 132 ff). It is the source of the sensation of being turned upside-down with which he subsequently experiences strongly emotional situations (for example pp. 12, 64, 179). It is an incident which took but a moment in time and occurred at a specific place, and likewise it is an incident which lends itself to universalising:

/3/ Nemysli si, že vůbec nějaké jméno vstupuje do tvého osudu náhodou. Bylo to přece tak triviální jako u základů školy. Tak ses naučil číst, psát a počítat. A kdybys už nikdy nezaznamenal žádnou jinou úplnou lásku, tahle byla taky trojjediná jako náš milý Pán Bůh; to byl přece tvůj tatínek a to byla přece tvoje maminka a to jsem já. A tvůj život sám? Jednak na zemi, zároveň v pekle a jednak na nebesích. (p. 219)

What is interesting from the point of view of our discussion is that the concrete description of the incident which actually took place succeeds in the text reference to the symbolic significance which it subsequently gained in Mikuláš' life. When the full incident is related in the closing pages of the novel, the permanent significance of the real happening has long since become an established fact.

At the end of the novel the narrator specifically confirms that for him the Czech countryside is a means of self-definition. This statement justifies in retrospect the fact that every aspect of his life as exposed in the novel has in some sense been channelled through the image of the landscape. Here I shall merely intimate the way in which different aspects of the narrator's life are pitched against or linked together through the central image of the landscape:

a) The narrator identifies himself with the landscape:

/4/ Nikdy jsem neměl v krajině pocit, že jsem pozorován, ačkoli jsem si jist, že se krajina taky dívá; má svoje oka. Je bezbranná. Její pasivita mě vždycky dojímalá. Kolikrát jsem se spolu s tváří krajiny choulil u stromu nebo seděl prokřehlý v dřevařské boudě, zatímco námi otřásal vítr, bouřka, vichřice se sněhem. Kolikrát mi krajina nastavila nejen svůj reliéf, ale v něm i oko, abych se díval do nitra krajiny, jejíž časové vrstvy nejsou jen geologické. Četl jsem v nich slova a chápal gesta a rozeznával znaky profilované pod povrch spolu s vodou z lidského osudu. (pp. 97-98)

b) The narrator defines his various relationships and above all his love affairs through his relationship to the landscape:

/5/ Tak sedím taky v krajině, opírám se o strom a podívám se na pahorky, pole a les. Jsem od malička pohlavní člověk,

divám se na krajinu jako na ženu a vy jste první, Miládko, komu se za to nemusím omlouvat. (p. 161)

If the landscape takes the form of a woman, then too Mikuláš experiences his abstract love for Olga as love for, even obsession with, the landscape:

/6/ Tak jsem tě ve svých představách miloval jako domovskou krajinu. Byl jsem v ní přítomen, i když jsem se tou krajinou zrovna neprocházel a seděl jsem u prkna a kreslil čáru za čarou, nekonečné množství bodů. (pp. 29-30)

At the same time he betrays his wife Jarmila when, in the act of making love to her, he gazes over the vineyard wall into the empty landscape beyond (pp. 116, 146-147):

/7/ "Byla to kamenná zeď, Jarmilo", řekl jsem, "a já budu upřímný. Kameny v té zdi byly ještě teplé. A já jsem se přes tu zeď nedíval nikam jinam než do krajiny. Podoba té krajiny se mi spojuje s podobou jedné určité ženy, ale v tom máš pravdu, že je to abstraktní. Toho se nemusíš bát." (p. 146)

c) The narrator's profession of architect interacts in a dynamic way with his passion for the Czech countryside. Mikuláš gives frequent expression to an awareness of ecology; his desire is for a society where human beings live in symbiosis with nature, building their lives, deaths and cultural manifestations into the countryside but not exploiting the same. Mikuláš has written articles on so-called "universal architecture" and in his youth projected a housing estate according to his idealistic principles. But when the raw and short-sighted state apparatus rejected his project and demanded instead that he draw box after box of unecological housing projects, Mikuláš betrayed his former ideals and prostituted his professional calling. Discussing architecture with Jarmila he says:

/8/ "Příbytek je umělý prostor. Dům je technický výraz pro duchovní, archaický pocit domova. Architekt se tedy vyjadřuje technicky, ale jde o to, aby nezapomínal na svoje lidské povolání. Každý prostor, který projektuje, by měl pojímat jako součást přírody a jako součást prostoru vesmírného, universálního. Jeskyně jím tenkrát byla. Byl jím dokonce ještě i barokní kostel. Empírová kasárna už ne." (p. 80)

The fact that Mikuláš has failed as an architect is a permanent grievance to him; it is this that has led to his social passivity, to his feeling of apathy (*nuda*) and set in motion the conflict which culminates in the emigration dilemma.

As a theme the passion for houses, for building (see for example pp. 38, 126-127), has an interesting effect on the theme of the countryside. It lifts the image of countryside from the realm of nostalgia, from a seeking of childhood roots, from an object for perception and the senses, and gives it a social and cultural dimension.

d) For the narrator the Czech countryside is by implication the repository of the national heritage. That which has existed in time has of course existed also in space. The historical past, both political and cultural, in as far as it is available is manifest in the countryside. Not only the woods, but also the village graveyards, the railway lines and indeed Prague itself with its magnificent display of statues and churches is seen to be a part of the space which is Bohemia, a part of the landscape. Time and again the narrator makes his way across Charles Bridge and convenes with the statues; time and again he views the church towers in the Old Town (cf. p. 193ff):

/9/ Šli jsme přes Karlův most. Uprostřed mostu jsme se zastavili. Kromě nás tři a špalíru soch byl most liduprázdný. Několik okamžiků jsme se podobali sochám, taky jsme spolu mlčeli. Taky jsme v sobě měli legendy o mukách, lásce, smrti a vykoupení. Co bylo kdysi živé, už se stává minulostí, už to má definitivní rysy a zkamenělé gesto a já jsem byl rád, že ten náš poslední pohled, který nám byl určen k zapamatování, je překryt sněhem. (p. 189)

/10/ Těla spuštěná do hrobu v krajině s tradicí neleží v nicotě. Leží v dějinách a sama jsou dějinami. Kamenné zdi porostlé šípky, bezinkou a tavolníky věnčí i kosti těch, pro které už nikdo živý kytky netrhá. Jejich jména na náhrobcích rozmyl déšť, ale já jsem s vámi, přátelé moji. Nyní i na věky naše je království krajiny, amen. A vidíš, Olgo, budiž námi opuštěno. (p. 17)

e) The narrator's strong sense of identity with the heritage of his country Bohemia, available to him through its concrete manifestations in the countryside (and towns), is matched by a fear for the future of his country:

/11/ Měl jsem už naši krajinu křížem krážem prochozenou, promyšlenou a prožitou a tak jsem se jí zastával. Je hanobená. Chátrá. Umírá. Je sprostě a bez citu vykořisťovaná. Posedlost produktivitou ji proměňuje v bezúčelnou periferii průmyslových měst. Krajina je ohrožena, a protože je ohrožena krajina, je ohrožen i člověk, který v ní žije. Čechy jsou malá země uprostřed Evropy a jejich obyvatel už nemá, kam ustoupit, aby začal znovu. Jestli zásadně nezměníme způsob života, naše země ztratí tvář. Zničit krajinu, znamená zbavit se chleba, vody a vzduchu. A nebude importováno. Nebude odkud a nebude za co. (p. 109)

Fear for the future is both a political and an ecological fear, since the two aspects are intertwined, but once again it is the countryside before him which in a concrete way embodies the fear: the housing projects which are recently built and already delapidated, the absence of the gigantic statue of Stalin which had once adorned the city:

/12/ Ještě jsem se ohlédl k místu, kde kdysi stával pomník. Teď už tam nestojí nic. Na tom prázdném místě tuším historii a je to taky moje historie, Olgo. (p. 76)

To conclude: as a central image, the countryside is rich in potential. While descriptions of nature easily lend themselves to lyrical expression, the image of the countryside is, at the same time, naturally linked to the fate of the country as a political and cultural unit with its historical past, its present and its future. In Kliment's novel this potential is exploited to the full: the image of the Czech countryside gives to the novel with its fragmentary and achronological composition a strong sense of unity; it provides a central core of relevance through which the various aspects of Mikuláš' life are succeedingly exposed. Furthermore it connects the life of one man with the fate of his country, it connects the present with the past, space with time, nature with human culture. It expresses the inter-relevance of the various emotional, intellectual and social spheres of a single human life as well as the inter-relevance of the various aspects of the life of a nation.

6. To conclude this section of my analysis let me repeat that while the exposition of the book depends to a large extent on concrete description (as opposed for example to philosophical conjecture), this never remains an end in itself. On the contrary concrete description is used with the utmost selectivity which

assures the higher relevance of each detail chosen. First person narration and achronology help to release the details from an all too realistic, time-orientated description. As we saw above, an event from the past may be presented first as a significant symbol, and only subsequently as an incident which took place at a certain moment in time.

Achronology of story presentation does not entail lack of development on the thematic level. There is a development within the narrator's relationship to his situation in Bohemia, notwithstanding that the material used to express this relationship is to a great extent identical at its different stages. Time again the same images, fragments, set remarks are repeated and yet their combined significance slowly shifts. In the beginning of the novel the image of the countryside is closely associated with the narrator's feelings for Olga: his abstract love for her is expressed as a sense of longing provoked by shifts of colour in the landscape, the sound of a train whistle through the landscape. But once Olga has denied that Mikuláš has anything to leave behind when he emigrates, then her significance, the Czech landscape as realised in her being, gradually subsides. Increasingly the narrator reaches down to the deeper roots of an emotional and perceptive awareness of life that began and must remain with his childhood experiences of the countryside.

In *Nuda v Čechách* the endowing of the metonymic details with symbolic value, the making timeless of events which took place in time and space, is achieved within the text and leaves little room for speculation on the part of the reader, native or foreign to the Czech nation. The narrator, as he himself admits, suffers from an incessant need to aestheticise (cf. p. 38); he lacks the ability to let his life pass with the flow of time, and instead takes it with him in the form of pictures and meaningful incidents cast as permanent fixtures.

Notwithstanding the fact that each picture is in itself realistic we cannot call the narrative method 'realism'. Neither is this 'symbolism' where meaning is deliberately kept elusive and where the concrete detail is in itself merely a pretext, its task being to refer to another and higher reality. In Kliment's book we have to do precisely with the symbolisation of the concrete detail as concrete detail, with symbolisation in the sense of raising the temporary and fleeting to the level of the permanent, of giving lasting significance to a human life, to a national existence, which are each in themselves composed of moments discrete in time and place.

7. In *Nuda v Čechách* identity of narrator and protagonist assures that first person reference dominates the text. Less conventional is the activation of the first person counterpart, the second person, a potential inherent to the narrative situation but seldom exploited. The second part of this analysis is devoted to the extensive and multiple use of second person reference and address, a specific narrative device which has direct bearing on reader participation in the text.

In a narrative situation any direct second person reference or address amounts to a concretisation of the narratee. In *Nuda v Čechách* second person references are frequent, but the real exploitation of the narrative possibility results from the fact that the identity of the narratee is not constant. Most frequently the narrator addresses one or other of the novel's characters in the second person singular; on other occasions he addresses himself and occasionally he appeals directly to the reader. Frequently the use of the second person reference is veiled in ambiguity. In narrative fiction the position of narratee is likely to correspond in some sense with the reader. However this is far from obligatory: in a novel of letters, a novel in diary form, the recipient of the text is ostensibly not the reader. Of course the reader is ultimately the recipient of the text which includes its apparent or concretised narratee. In any case the implied reader position and through that the position of the real reader is necessarily sought and defined in interaction with the position of narratee. A fundamental operation in narrative interpretation is to ascertain the direction of the address, concrete as well as implied. If we correlate the given text with the narrative scheme on p. we see that it is characterised by an instability of identity in the different narrative positions. Mikuláš, is narrator, character and, on occasion, explicit narratee; the central characters, Olga, Jarmila etc., are both characters in the story and, on occasion, recipients of the same. Accordingly the reader is alternately invited to receive the narrative directly and to adopt the position of an eavesdropper overhearing a private conversation.

In the following analysis I have categorised the second person references and addresses according to six different usages.²⁾ Frequently one usage modulates to another within what appears to be one and the same address. In investigating these usages I am concerned with whether they further a sense of intimacy between reader and narrator, or whether, on the contrary, they alinate the reader from the text. Here it must be borne in mind that ambiguity and uncertainty in the text will probably be experienced more

strongly by the foreign reader, whether or not he is reading the text in the original or in translation.

7.1. The most conventional use of the second person singular reference is the use approximating to the generalised "one"; the you is universal and does not actually entail second person address. This usage creates contact between speaker and listener and stylistically underlines the familiarity and universality of that which is articulated:

/13/ *Ale ve čtyřiceti letech, i když ti někdo říká jen to, že tě miluje, před tvé jméno vždycky ještě cosi vytýká; a vždycky je to určeno časem, který jsi už prožil. (p. 131)*

In Kliment's novel this conventional use, occurring extensively, is infected by all the other uses of second person reference and address. Furthermore it frequently modulates to a more specific second person address as in the following example:

/14/ *Náš takovou myšlenku a takovou myšlenku ty přece musíš taky znát; dítě ji tak ještě nedovedlo vyslovit: jestli jim dneska večer nepřinesu meloun, umřu. A meloun je zelený a kulatý jako svět. Uvnitř je rudý.*

Velmi silně cítíš, že něco chceš, a hledáš a běháš a namáháš se, až konečně najdeš stánek, který je ještě nepřikryt plachtou a u kterého sedí melancholik a řekne:

"Tak si vyber, Nikuláši, jednu zelenou hlavu!"

Zaplatiš a ani se nediviš, že někdo neznámý tě oslovil jménem. Na to si vzpomeneš teprve po mnoha letech a pomyslíš si, že by se to dalo nějak logicky vysvětlit, ale nechceš se rozčilovat, a radši jen vzpomínáš a vzpomínku přijímáš jako obraz a obraz, Olgo, nebyl malován proto, aby byl vysvětlován, obraz byl malován proto, aby se stal obrazem. Dívám se. (pp. 135-136)

The example comprises three paragraphs. The first sentence, in the present tense, (*Náš takovou myšlenku*), refers to a universal second person singular. Immediately the address modulates to a specific but unidentified second person singular who is in fact addressed frequently throughout the text with precisely this phrase (see 7.6): *a takovou myšlenku ty přece musíš taky znát*. It is the two particles *přece* and *taky* which conflict with the conventional generalised use of the second person singular. At the beginning of the following paragraph (*Velmi silně cítíš...*) the generalised second person singular is reinstated and there follows a description of how people in general go about procuring a water

melon. As the description progresses however it becomes increasingly more specific to the point where the universalisation implied by the stylistic device is put under considerable strain. With the reference to *melancholik* and his direct address to Mikuláš (*Tak si vyber, Mikuláši...*) the description erupts its generalised form and modulates to a specific reference to the child Mikuláš as remembered by himself: the narrator addresses his child self. The actual shift from generalised to specific "you" is elusive. In the following paragraph yet another shift occurs: the narrator who has been addressing his child self suddenly turns to his adult companion, Olga, and addresses her by name.

Whereas a straight use of the generalised second person singular could be understood to enforce the reader's familiarity with the content of the narration, in the present case the normal usage suffers interference from the series of shifts in the identity of the second person singular. As a result the reader is likely to experience a sense of insecurity and disorientation.

7.2. The narrator frequently addresses himself in the second person singular. The referential pronoun "I" is replaced by "you". Self-address may be directed to the narrator's past or present self. The use of first and second person pronouns is instable:

/15/ A tou krajinou jede vlak. V dálce je ještě malý. Nežůstane hračka navždycky součástí tvého předmětného nazírání? A nejsi ty sám jako jeden bod hračky z dálky nazírán strojedoucím, který tě pozoruje z kouřící, příjíždějící mašinky? Musíte se protnout. Sjíždíte se. Kdo a co projede dřív? On a vláček? Já a nákladůček? (p. 18)

The device of self-address is disorientating for the reader. In the first place the genre of fictional narrative is undermined and the narrative contract put under strain. The narrator usurps the position of the narratee, causing a shift and necessitating a readjustment on the part of the reader. Instead of being the apparent recipient of the text the reader is put into the position of an eavesdropper who has chanced upon the private thoughts of an individual communing with himself. Even though the privatisation is but a narrative device, it challenges the narrative situation which by definition assumes a public act of communication. By turning the communication inwards the narrator pretends to deny its significance for the reader.

In the second place self-address frequently gives rise to a

sense of ambiguity (cf. /14/). It is not always clear whether the narrator is referring to a generalised second person singular or whether he is addressing himself (cf. 7.1). This is due to the fact that the narrator's self-addresses usually occur in the present tense, ostensibly in discourse time, even when they refer to incidents from the the past (cf. /15/). The transition to self-address may be confused as in the following example where the second person singular in the first sentence refers to Jarmila, while the second sentence only makes sense thematically if we understand the second person pronoun to refer to the narrator himself:

/16/ Dokonce i svoje oči jsem zauřel poslušně, jak sis přála a jak velí bůh lásky při polibcích. A přesto, přesto, přes to vidíš v tahu barev noci s modrým odstupňováním krajinu, která má v jazyce tvé matky ženský rod. (p. 146)

In the following example the second person reference comes abruptly in the middle of a reflection about the phenomenon of Stalin and those who flocked to his funeral demonstrations. Apparently the second person reference is ambiguous but it seems to make the best sense if we interpret it as self-address:

/17/ Zemřel génius moci, který rozhodoval také o tobě, ať jsi chtěl, nebo nechtěl, ať jsi o tom věděl, nebo nevěděl, ať jsi s ním souhlasil, nebo nesouhlasil. Přímou či nepřímou, ale podstatným způsobem ovlivnil také tvůj život a také tvůj projekt života, a nikdo se tomu nevyhnul od Tichého oceánu až sem na břeh Labe, a byl to taky jen člověk, žádný bůh. (p. 108)

7.3. The most extensive use of second person reference and address is incurred by the narrator's frequent appeals to the novel's characters, individuals central to his life story. Of these the most frequently addressed is Olga (cf. /14/ above). Others addressed personally are for example Jarmila (cf. /16/), Miládka, Béda, Kormund, Stepan and on one occasion even pan Bedřich Smetana (p. 72)! These personal addresses frequently involve address by name, but not always; they can be directed to the addressee either in the past or in the present, in story or in discourse time.

As in the case of self-address, the personal addresses turn the narrative away from the reader into the narrator's private life-sphere. For a narratee who approximates in some sense to the reader they substitute a narratee who is one of the characters,

part of the story. They enforce a temporary exclusion of the reader from the discourse. This "exclusion" is at odds with the narrative contract itself and forces the reader to readjust his position.

Furthermore, as in the case of self-address, the identity of the second person addressee is not always immediately obvious from the text. This gives rise to a sense of uncertainty and alienation on the part of the reader as in the following example:

/18/ *Jarmila byla ctižádostivá i za mě. Nikdy se mi nepodařilo ji přesvědčit, že je to její chyba a nikoli moje. Náš svět je v úžasném pohybu, v úžasně proměně. Nezdá se ti, že je to kočovná epocha? Co na tom, že jeden Mikuláš Svoboda nic nepostaví. Aspoň si šlaštině promyslí jednu svoji myšlenku. Jsem o to méně lidský, že nic neprodukuju? Že o své věci jen přemýšlím?*

"Mám pro tebe jediné slovo", řekla Jarmila. "Jsi flákač".
(p. 80)

In this example Jarmila is the third person (psychological) subject of the first two sentences, in which the author discusses her from a detached point of view. Here the narratee is clearly the reader who is given an insight into the sort of person who Jarmila was, as seen from the point of view of the narrator. The fourth sentence turns unexpectedly into a direct interrogative address to a second person singular: *Nezdá se ti, že...* A consistent interpretation assumes that the second person here addressed is the reader himself, but the context soon enforces a readjustment: it is Jarmila herself who is being addressed by the narrator, either in veiled quotation of the actual conversation which took place between them in the story time (free indirect style), or within the discourse time by way of a continuation of the dispute. In retrospect the third sentence too (*Náš svět je v úžasném pohybu...*) must also be understood to comprise part of the direct address to Jarmila, and not as it at first appeared part of a general appraisal directed towards the reader. The direct quotation from Jarmila's speech puts an end both to the narrator's musings and to the reader's sense of disorientation. It confirms the fact that the second person address was veiled quotation, that is free indirect style.

7.4. Very occasionally the narrator addresses several people directly in the second person plural. Excluding here the simultaneous address of two or more individuals (e.g. Olga and Jarmila, see p. 194), there are two addresses to *přátelé moji*:

/19/ *Těla spuštěná do hrobu v krajině s tradicí neleží v nicotě. Leží v dějinách a sama jsou dějinami. Kamenné zdi porostlé šípkovím, bezinkou a tavolníky věnčí i kosti těch, pro které už nikdo živý kytky netrhá. Jejich jména na náhrobcích rozmyl déšť, ale já jsem s vámi, přátelé moji. Nyní i na věky naše je království krajiny, amen. A vidíš, Olgo, budiž námi opuštěno. (p. 17)*

/20/ *Chodil jsem do projekce o hodinu dřív a odcházel jsem, když jsem už v prstech neudržel násadku. Tady moje oko nezávisle na jakémkoliv citu bystře sledovalo divadélko černého na bílém: nekonečnou řadu bodů za nekonečnou řadou bodů a to je přímka. Přátelé moji, nikdy jsem za těmito přímkami neviděl nějaký zvláštní obsah. Kreslil jsem více méně bez zájmu... (p. 57)*

In /19/ the narrator addresses his anonymous countrymen who are dead and buried in his native soil of Bohemia. In /20/ he addresses those of his contemporaries who would accuse him of being unworthy of his vocation as an architect. Since these addresses are both vaguer and wider, they do not 'exclude' the reader, usurp his position as narratee, in the same way as to the directly personal references to Olga and Jarmila etc. The plural addresses are experienced as rhetorical rather than actual and as such they pose no threat to reader orientation.

7.5. A more interesting device is the address of an unnamed second person plural which must be understood to refer to the proper recipients of the narrative in narrative time, the readers:

/21/ *Ještě jsem se zastavil na dvoře kostela Panny Marie pod řetězem. Gotický chrám shořel v husitských válkách. Jako všechny ostatní shořel zbytečně. Zůstaly tu jen dvě hranaté kamenné věže a gotický portál. Kostel obnovili v baroku s pěkným a vzdušným odstupem dvora. Jděte dounitř! Na dvoře vysoko ohraničeném budovami Maltézských rytířů rostou záhony hortensií. (p. 10)*

/22/ *Tak si to tak taky někdy zkuste s pocitem, jako by vás váš už neviditelný otec měl vzít těsně nad kotníky, a rozkročmo se podívejte po hlavě vzhůru tam do krajiny z kteréhokoli předělu na kterýkoli horizont; uvidíte. Krátce se vám převrátí pohled a už jsme naužďycky jiní. Tak vzniká láska. (pp. 219-220)*

These addresses to the reader occur infrequently. On each occasion they come as a surprise, as a disruption of the otherwise unexpressed relation to the reader. They constitute curiosities thrown in for fun rather than part of a sustained narrative mode. Paradoxically, instead of enforcing intimacy and familiarity between reader and narrator, the device of direct reader address underlines the artificiality of the narrative situation by drawing attention to the fact that narrator and reader are not in fact in actual direct contact with one another. The narrator pretends that the reader can just drop into a particular church in Prague (/21/), but how many actual readers can obey the summons? Particularly in the given text where the device of direct second person address is so widely and diversely used, the effect of direct reader address causes confusion and uncertainty.

7.6. We come finally to the most tantalising of all the second person addresses, namely the address of a second person singular who appears to be in intimate relationship with the narrator, but who is simply not identifiable from the text itself:

/23/ A já jsem těsně před rozpadem, ale ještě ne tak na zhroutení byl zrovna dost nešťastný, ačkoli jsem na malé zastávce jedl švestky s vlastní ženou, a nemělo by být omylu. Všiml sis? Švestka chutná stejně, ať je ti dobře nebo zle. Je to tak netečné. Je to proto méně krásné? (p. 129)

/24/ Můj příběh je jiný a snad to ani není příběh, je to jen jeden pohled. Myslíš, že řeknu pohled přes zeď na tah barev noci s modrým odstupňováním? Jistě. Taky. Ale... (p. 217)

Attention is drawn to this mysterious second person through the repetition of a specific phrase and its slight variations: *to přece musíš taky znát.*³⁾ The phrase occurs as a sort of aside on numerous occasions and in various contexts. It functions as an appeal for confirmation of the authenticity of the narrator's most intimate experiences, as in the following example:

/25/ Šel jsem chvilí zamyšleně bokem spolu s koly, která rzila moji krajinu, potom v čele s koňmi a potom jako dítě v nákladu voňavého sena; to přece musíš taky znát, nachází hlavu spadnout naznak, zelený horizont se obrátí vzhůru nohama a po cestě, která vede modří nemodří, se nad tebou, se pod tebou houpe, lucerna a bílý oblak s kulovitým břichem. Vemena jeřabin ti pohladí tvář. A nevíš, jestli z

uěčného bdění konečně po prvé usínáš, nebo jestli jsi ze sna konečně po prvé a možná naposled opravdu bdělý a dospělý jako strýček Boleslav. (pp. 160-161)

Through its repetition the phrase becomes more and more insistent, and since the identity of the second person remains a mystery, more and more tantalisingly significant. It is interesting to note that the phrase occurs only sparingly in the beginning of the book, while in the the final two chapters it occurs extensively. The phrase occurs for the first time on p. 20, in a context closely associated with Olga:

/26/ Někdy se mi zdálo, že srůstám s krásnou lhostejností architektury stromů a trav. A netečnost sněhu, který želestí, když hustě padá, to přece taky musíš znát. (p. 20)

Two paragraphs before the narrator has directly addressed Olga in his thoughts by name, and the paragraph which follows the quoted example begins: *Olga se na mě usmála*. A first reading naturally yields the interpretation that the remark *to přece taky musíš znát* is addressed to Olga. But as the narrative continues and the remark occurs with greater frequency it comes to exceed each of the single occasions on which it occurs and to express an intimacy and vitality more significant than that warranted by any of the individual relationships related. So that reading the narrative for a second time, the interpretation that the second person singular in /26/ is Olga must be rejected. At the end of the narrative, when the phrase is used most persistently, the relationship to Olga has been superceded by the narrator's fully-avowed love for his countryside and his intent to remain in Bohemia and not fulfil the plan to emigrate with Olga.

The remark *to přece musíš taky znát* and its variations occurs in a number of different contexts as for example: the water melon incident /14/ (p. 135); the meeting with with the civilian in Kormund's flat (p. 172); in connection with a blasphemous rendering of Lord's Prayer (p. 174); the description of Kvetuška setting down her begonias in the rain (p. 175); the erotic scene with Olga and Jarmila (pp. 198, 202). The situations which prompt the remark are extremely varied and neither is there any one character who seems to be their inspiration. Nevertheless a certain pattern in its usage does finally emerge. On several occasions the remark is associated with a memory from childhood (cf. /25/):

/27/ Poklekl jsem k jejich nohám. Tma byla živá a dýchala, to přece musíš taky znát. Tetka je nemocná a strýček Boleslav tě pošle přes krátkou předsíň do dlouhé komory pro česnek. (p. 196)

It is connected with feelings and perceptions which are deeply lodged in the narrator's psyche, sensations which have become engrained in him during childhood and now determine his adult emotional and perceptive patterns. On several occasions the remark accompanies situations which give expression to the narrator's sense of vulnerability:

/28/ Tak zase vzniká láska.

Dostaneš čaj, čaj vypiješ a co nad to? Jsi lady a nemůžeš jinak; to přece musíš taky znát. Dlouze se ti převarčí pohled, až se ti ustálí, a konečně jsi svůj. Nemáš co opustit, máš jen sebe a tak sebe přinášíš. (pp. 178-179)

The implication of the appeal is the need to establish a modicum of commonness of these the narrator's most intimate, or perhaps non-communicable experiences. The specificity of the second person addressee is implied in the emphatic particle *přece*; while his otherness to the narrator is expressed by *taky*.⁴⁾ The intimacy and the specificity of the second person excludes the possibility that this is an address to the reader. Furthermore on two occasions the remark is complemented by a specific reference to a shared past:

/29/ Zůstala stát v dešti. Potom poklekla i s květináči nejdřív na jedno a pak na druhé koleno. To přece musíš taky znát; taky ses jednou modlil na posteli, aby to nikdo neviděl. (p. 175)

Tak se ještě krátce podíváš do zlatého kruhu, který jako by tě oslňoval a tím pohlcoval, na to si přece taky vzpomínáš; kolikrát jsme se tak nerozumně podívali do slunce. (p. 158)

Again the past referred to suggests a time of immaturity and impressionability and it carries us beyond the involvement with Olga and Jarmila, to a time more basic to the narrator's personality and identity. In other words the reference is exclusive, it excludes the reader and the main characters of the narrative, while at the same time it is an attempt to be inclusive, to include one person at least in the most intimate experiences of the narrator.

8. Conclusions

In my reading of Kliment's *Nuda v Čechách*, the identification of the mysterious second person addressee has been a major problem of interpretation. Unable to identify this persistent addressee I felt unable to identify the implied reader position and ultimately my own position as reader of the text. Certainly this kind of narrative dilemma is particularly pertinent for a reader unfamiliar with the language, style and genres of a foreign literature since neither ambiguity nor uncertainty lends itself to adequate translation. By admitting to a narrative dilemma I do not mean to imply that the novel, or even my reading of the same, is inadequate, or that narrative communication, within or across cultural borders, should be plain sailing. On the contrary: in this instance provocation on the level of narrative address is particularly effective since it provokes the reader to participate more actively in the narrative process. In *Nuda v Čechách*, the narrative dilemma (who is being addressed?) makes tangible the thematic dilemma (what would I leave behind if I emigrated?).

Both aspects of the novel here analysed, the image of the writer's native countryside and the narrative device of direct second person address, may be subsumed under a general polarisation between inclusivity and exclusivity, between belonging and not belonging. An inherent aspect of any communication act, this question becomes acute when, as in the present case, a work of fiction crosses cultural borders. In fact the closing words of Kliment's novel focus on this very question:

/30/ Samozřejmě, že to mohla být krajina někde pod Moskvou, u Heidelbergu nebo na Utahu, ale stalo se to na Trojánkách. Tak jsem teda tady. (p. 220)

These words maintain rather than solve the tension between inclusivity and exclusivity: it might have happened somewhere else, but it didn't; this might have happened to you, but it didn't etc. 5)

The theme of national identity is of course a universal theme and as such it invites the reader to identify with the sender position. In itself then the theme of *Nuda v Čechách* could have led to a sense of inclusivity on the part of the reader. What happens though is that this theme, revolving as it does around notions such as national and cultural identity and its reverse, alienation, is implemented by a narrative device which in itself gives rise to a sense of insecurity and accordingly alienation. The device of second person address is ostensibly a device to

achieve familiarisation on the part of the reader, who is thereby acknowledged and securely included in the communication act. When, as in the present case, doubt arises as to who is actually meant by the second person addressee, then the device achieves not familiarisation but insecurity and confusion. In the present novel the exploitation of the various I/YOU relationships which may be incurred within the narrative situation implements the theme in an ingenious way: the reader, uncertain as to whether or not he is included as receiver of the narrative is made to experience directly, the dilemma of being excluded from a beloved native land, of hesitating an attempt at inclusion in a foreign country, an unknown culture.

NOTES

1. For the distinction between storytime and discourse time see Chatman.
2. Interrogative forms, including rhetorical questions, which do not actually express second person address are not considered here notwithstanding the fact that they occur frequently in the text and are not without relevance. They should be considered in a more detailed analysis. In the last resort of course all verbal address implies a second person addressee.
3. Cf. other repeated phrases such as: *ale co bych se rozčiloval /1/; tak barev noci s modrým odstupňováním /16/, cf. /22/*
4. Is the author talking himself? Such an interpretation would solve the question of intimacy but not the pathos of an appeal for verification beyond his own experiences.
5. It is worth noting Kliment's dedication: *Josefovi a Zdeně za mořem, únor 1978.*

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