Anti-Hero? The Concept of Masculinity in Czech Literature of the Nineteenth Century

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"My name is […] Brouček – Matěj Brouček." (Čech, 1889, 8)[1]

THE MORE COMPLEX MODEL

One of the most fundamental assertions of men's studies says that one should consider masculinity as a cultural concept with historical character. At the same time many scholars who focus on masculinity in Western culture from different points of view (historical, sociological and anthropological) treat the concept of masculinity that dominates modern European history as universally valid rather than considering that it was shaped in the second half of the eighteenth century mainly under the influence of development of capitalism and colonialism and changes in the philosophical category of the subject (Connell 185-7). In my previous research I have had the opportunity to become acquainted with more detailed studies of Western masculinities based on concrete examples taken from English and German cultures. While I have no right to put forward generalizing statements, from my perspective as a Slavist I would nevertheless like to suggest that the "universal" Euro-Atlantic concept is rather more complex than it is commonly assumed to be. Elisabeth Badinter points out in *XY. On Masculine Identity* (1999) that French culture is characterized by a different development of masculinity, particularly in comparison to Anglo-Saxon, even without mentioning Germans. According to her, dialog between the two genders has been characteristic of modern French culture, which has caused the main French code of masculinity to have been typified by a tendency to be gentler and less misogynistic (14; Nye). This is but one example. There are in the outwardly homogenous Western concept a great number of different interactions between different masculinities, especially as mainly the postcolonial point of view dominates in many important works defining contemporary Western masculinity (Connell; Gilmore; Roper & Tosh; Tosh; Mosse).

The area of Central Europe is, from the perspective of men's studies, practically virginal, which means that its local cultural processes not being identical to those in the Western part of the continent can throw some light on the complexity and diversity of the Western concept of masculinity. If we then acknowledge, from the postcolonial point of view, that modern Western (mainly Anglo-American) masculinity came into being in opposition to the "other" and that it was strongly connected with nationalism (Connell 188-9; Gilmore 222), then it seems worth looking at the Central-European area, in which we can observe in the nineteenth century the emancipation processes of many small nations from the hegemony of empire. My hypothesis is that we can also see relationships between dominating and subordinated masculinities in these processes. The Western approach in men's studies to the region is generally a little bit superficial and misleading. A symptomatic example of this perspective is Robert Connell's statement referring to changes in masculinity in this region after the crash of communism in 1989. Connell maintains that this area opened at that time towards the universal Euro-American concept, which was acknowledged by an Australian sociologist as another example of its aggressive expansion (Connell 200). Such an assertion is hardly acceptable because of several false presumptions: firstly, the universal homogeneity of an imaginary socialist model, and secondly, the assumed lack of cultural relationships in the region with Western Europe since the end of the eighteenth century, which is particularly astonishing in reference to socialist countries that came into being on Austro-Hungarian territory, omitting as it does the existence of many small nations in this area that were constructing or reconstructing their national identities during the nineteenth century (hence much before the Iron Curtain fell), creating at the same time historical masculinities not necessarily based on the universal Western concept. I would like to examine one example taken from Czech culture to try to point out this complexity and the processes of constructing a masculinity which has been at least the opposite of, if not subordinated to, the dominating Western concept of German masculinity.

MELTING TESTOSTERONE IN LITERATURE

Once I found in a paragraph by Eva Hauserová, a contemporary feminist Czech writer, the very ironic essence of the Czech masculine ideal. According to Hauserová, a Czech man is a kind of a sugar daddy who is able to keep the famous sharp arrow of masculine aggression in check and has not committed either any bloody ethnic purges on neighboring nations or any terrorist attacks against

Catholics, Hussites or Evangelists (there have obviously been a few exceptions). There is only one activity he is able to do, which is analyzing everything over a glass of beer, and honestly, he is very good at it (Hauserová 78). Hauserová also thinks all of a Czech man's testosterone has melted into beer. Clearly this is a certain kind of stereotype, not entirely corresponding to the truth, but it occurs very often in Czech national self-reflection (Peřina 77). Moreover before this stereotype came into being, Czech culture had been producing a range of icons and clichés for two centuries, which had efficiently laid the groundwork for its creation. These icons are usually literary characters or literary types, which have thus far been the objects of great interest for scholars who carry out gender-blind analyses of national spirit and ignore the maleness of these characters. Furthermore, they have caused violent reactions and constitute a very important element in the system of cultural references.

The history of masculinity is neither thematically nor theoretically a coherent realm (Tosh 1), but usually rather interdisciplinary research from the fringe of the history of ideas, social behavior or artifacts, in other words, mainly the history of a society's self-description and self-reflection (Frevert 16-17). Until now research on masculinity has been the object of interest of historians and anthropologists, but it is not strongly established in the fields of either literary history and theory, despite the fact that literature is an excellent example of social self-description and has been for the two last centuries, particularly in its popular dimension, a very strong pattern-creating factor.

I think research on Czech masculinities in the field of literary history is even more legitimate because Czech revival culture has, since the end of the eighteenth century, taken the form of a philological culture based on the revival of language and literature. It is characteristic of such a cultural project that seemingly clear philological or literary problems extend considerably beyond a quite limited field and that opinions about them often bespeak something completely different, such as a social program or views on the world, politics or aesthetics. Therefore, literary history is in this case particularly useful for research on masculinity because disputes about certain literary characters could have replaced the battles about masculinity described by historians of other nations that took place in other fields (Macura 41-62). Hence I suggest treating the births of some literary characters and the furious disputes accompanying them as important moments in the process of different concepts of Czech masculinity clashing.

THE BIRTH OF THE ANTI-HERO

My goal is to examine the moment of the Czech anti-hero's birth. He was the first in a whole set of opposite male patterns that were copied and transformed many times by Czech culture, which is still in the process of trying to reckon with them.

The figure of Mr. Matěj Brouček (Mr. Beattle) by Svatopluk Čech – an easy-going landlord of a three-storey house in Prague's Old Town, who thanks to a strange decree of fate goes on fantastic travels across space and time – entered into Czech popular culture in the 1880s and 1890s and enjoyed immediate success. Originally short stories about Mr. Brouček were published in fragments in the magazine *Květy* (*Flowers*), while complete book versions appeared in 1888 and 1889. In the first part of the series *Pravý výlet pana Brouček do měsíce* (*Mr. Brouček's True Trip to the Moon*), the author constructed his figure in quite nice opposition towards the moon's inhabitants, who lived exclusively for fine art and did not have any understanding of everyday life. Because of the wave of fossilized Parnassianism which was passing through Czech literature at the time, neither reviewers nor readers could be entirely sure of whom the satire was aimed at. The problem was further complicated because of the "aesthetic madness" which began to dominate in Vienna in the 1880s. Art in the everyday life of young Austrians in particular started to take a place which could have been compared to the position of rational knowledge, and aesthetic culture became almost a kind of air without which they could not breathe. This situation was instrumental in creating melancholic and neurotic male personalities (Schorske 279-83). The Czech scholar Dagmar Mocná, who has been working on this subject, alleges that the average Czech reader would undoubtedly have found this problematic character familiar (Mocná 41). However, in the second part *Nový epochální výlet pana Brouček tentokrát do patnáctého století* (*Mr. Brouček's New Epochal Trip, This Time to the Fifteenth Century*), where Mr. Brouček is sent back to the time of the Hussite Wars, Svatopluk Čech, whose literary production is considered to be an expression of the Czech collective national and political consciousness at the end of the nineteenth century (Krejčí 252-64), confronted our character's anti-heroic mediocrity with the national myth of the Hussites. The author's intention this time was absolutely clear; his critique was aimed towards a character whose cowardice was compared with the bravery and prowess of the participants of the Bohemian Hussite movement, considered the most heroic period in the history of the nation (Mocná 42). Although Čech's satire was understood by contemporary literary criticism as a constructive critique of the nation and afterwards one

considered Mr. Brouček to be the essence of negative Czech national qualities, the average reader of these stories did not worry about this critical reflection but made, against the author's original intention, an almost complete self-identification with him (Mocná 44-6). In other words, Mr. Brouček, who had been intended as a critique, began to live, in wide mass audiences of popular literature, a completely different life than the one his creator had projected.

One can consider Mr. Brouček the first of a whole range of Czech male literary characters who in some way deny the Western concept of masculinity, but we have to be aware that he is not a new or an extraordinary phenomenon in European literature. Czech literary historians consider Samuel Pickwick by Charles Dickens and Joseph Prudhomme by Henri Monnier to be his predecessors. Characters of this kind were perceived in other cultures more calmly – there were not huge differences in the reactions of reviewers and readers.

ANTI-HERO AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF GREAT CHANGES

The self-identification of a wide range of Czech readers with Mr. Brouček is unique and anachronistic against the background of changes in Western masculinity because the popularity of this character increased during the 1880s and 1890s, which was the period during which different concepts of masculinity in Western culture clashed. On the one hand, some works on this topic talk about the great crisis of masculinity, of which the most important aspect was the male fear of the traditional gender difference being obliterated (Badinter 21-22; Showalter 9-18), something caused by the women's emancipation movement as well as the coming into prominence of subordinated masculinities like the decadent, aesthete and homosexual. On the other hand, one can find descriptions of the increasing need to present the dominating form of masculinity in works of other scholars (such as Frevert, Izenberg, Stearns, and Tosh). The bourgeois masculinity that had formed at the beginning of the nineteenth century based on owning a household and proper social status was gradually breaking down, particularly in Germany and England. Beginning in 1871 the young national German country eagerly started to cultivate a masculine profile, which was confirmed by military triumphs. The military ideology of blood and iron infiltrated bourgeois German society and glamorized the new role of the soldier (Frevert 195; Hagemann 185-8). At the same time, the increasing cult of empire in Great Britain was luring young middle-class men with the great adventure guaranteed by colonial life (Tosh 107). Hence, a brisk, rakish and proud masculinity came to prominence.

Taking these circumstances into account, we can say that the Czech concept, the embodiment of which is Mr. Brouček and afterwards such characters as Václav Kondelík and Josef Švejk (who is probably the best known), went in an absolutely different direction, at least in the realm of literary national icons. I am not claiming that this was the only Czech concept of masculinity at that time because the negative reactions of literary criticism or even literature itself are proof of competing tendencies in Czech culture, which were trying to make the vision of the Czech man fit better with the "universal" Western pattern. However, the deep self-identification of readers with Čech's anti-hero distinctly shows that during the 1890s something different happened in Czech culture when it came to changes in Western masculinity, particularly in relation to the militarizing German concept. The 1890s meant for Czech culture a huge development in modernist literature. But it was not an effeminate aesthete–decadent who became the object of intensive national-gender criticism but rather an "animal fatty" like Mr. Brouček, who was the embodiment of pragmatism, satisfied loyalty, stagnation, restraint of small acts, hedonism, bourgeois narrow-mindedness and plebeianism (Mocná 11). I think it is a time to look at our anti-hero's masculinity against the background of the historical masculinities at the turn of the twentieth century.

MR. BROUČEK AND BOURGEOIS MASCULINITY

The very first thing that we can determine about Mr. Brouček is that he is a proper citizen of Prague, whose social status is determined by the ownership of a three-storey house located in Prague's Old Town. Hence, this icon should firstly be analyzed from the perspective of European bourgeois masculinity and its erosion at the end of the nineteenth century. Previous critical analysis and interpretations of this character have emphasized that he is another modification of the vision circulating in contemporary European literature of a "man about town," whereas stories about him have been considered to be a pamphlet about the values of the mentally and spiritually narrow-minded bourgeois world. However, the longer I look at Mr. Brouček from the perspective of nineteenth-century bourgeois masculinity, the stronger the impression I have that he belongs to the bourgeois class only formally and financially and doesn't really fulfill the conditions of being a true bourgeois man. This is particularly visible if one considers our anti-hero from the perspective of the main virtues of bourgeois masculinity: hard work and supporting a household.

The German historian Ute Frevert claims, on the basis of analyzing many memoirs, that male identity in German bourgeois society was achieved by sustained hard work (236-51). John Tosh also points out that the strong increase in the work ethic in English society resulted in hard work being considered by the middle class as one of the basic elements of the manliness code (34). Our anti-hero, however, does not treat work as his main vocation. Even if he assures us many times that his duties connected with collecting rents and keeping the house in order are extremely taxing, at the beginning of the first part of his adventures it is stated that he has plenty of time between collection periods. From this point of view he can be considered a multiplication of the vision of the bourgeois man created by French literature. Renting (as opposed to owning) and an idle lifestyle were typical characteristics of the satirical portrait of the French bourgeois man (Hrbata 55). There is, however, a particular detail that prevents us from considering Mr. Brouček a figure used only to deride the egoistic desire of profit and lazy narrow-mindedness considered the typical negative virtues of the bourgeois class. Mr. Brouček seems at first to be a good citizen of his local society. In his opinions about the worlds he travels to, he uses the perspective of *publico bono*, or accordance with the law of council and state administration. He conscientiously pays his taxes, even if he does not like to. This refers especially towards his estimation about the arrangement in fifteenth-century Prague. Therefore, I think Mr. Brouček is not easily interpreted univocally. On the one hand, if one considers him to be a typical bourgeois man, he does not really fit the model of bourgeois male identity based mainly on hard work and a household. On the other hand, if he is only a caricature, there is the problem that some of his virtues are too positive from the perspective of social criticism, "If heaven helps me to get to Prague, I want to be as perfect citizen as possible there" (Čech, 1889, 104). [2]

The issue becomes even more complicated if one takes into account the second aspect of male bourgeois identity: the household. According to definitions of "man" in nineteenth-century German lexica, it referred in the bourgeois class only to adult male individuals able to take on the insignia of masculinity, that is to say, to support their own households by having a proper post or source of income which enabled them to keep a wife and children (Frevert, 1997, 47-8). John Tosh has also shown that in the bourgeois class of English society one can observe a gradual increase in household ideology connected with enforcing the work ethic. Supporting a family became the essence of masculine bourgeois qualifications, and bachelorhood a suspicious and ambivalent status, although it changed a little bit in the period of time that is in the scope of our interest: the attractiveness of

bachelorhood increased as the space of the home slowly became synonymous with coercion, routine, boredom and female values (35-40).

Mr. Brouček is a stubborn old bachelor. At one point the narrator lets the reader know why the character dislikes the institution of marriage. The "comfort" of family life is presented as a terror of conventions – a perfect illustration of the change happening at the turn of the twentieth century:

> Besides the vision of an armchair of tortures in a living-room, in front of a cup of tea and a biscuit, among amusing old aunties […], all that kissing mother-in-law's hand and greeting all around, constant asking and thanking with an obligatory blissful smile, serviceably carrying all kinds of blankets and pets, […] – apart from this horrible vision of marriage he had also run away from the port of family life because of a fear of crazy waves of emotions. (Čech 80)[3]

Mr. Brouček is not easy to classify. His attitude regarding family life is not consistent with bourgeois masculinity, but the alternative he chooses fits neither the tendency to great worldly (mainly colonial) adventure nor to militarization, which replaced the very strong position of the *pater familias* in German culture in the second half on the nineteenth century (Frevert 47-8).

PRIVATE OR PUBLIC MASCULINITY?

The problem of the changing attitude towards family life is very closely connected with the issue of the relationship between masculinity and the private and public spheres. David Gilmore thinks that a rule of being good at being a man is inscribed into the majority of masculinities, which means the proper presenting of a given pattern in public. He also points out that this conviction about public masculinity has been taken from the Greek heritage, where masculinity was considered as external efficiency and external admiration (36). Modern bourgeois culture made a certain revaluation in this area. Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, discourse about the home tried to convince masculinity of the benefits of comfort, economy and self-respect, which were ensured by the home in opposition to convivial social life (Tosh 70-1). However, men's attitudes towards home life were always a little ambivalent, something evident in the huge popularity, at least in England, of male associations as the form of demonstrating public masculinity in the nineteenth century, and our literary anti-hero is quite exemplary here.

Mr. Brouček basically takes place in public. His ordinary Prague life revolves around two pubs (U kohouta and U Wurfla), the essence

of big city life. Mr. Brouček is so spiritually and bodily bound up with the pubs that their space almost automatically searches for him: "That is the true pub – Mr. Brouček called. It has stopped me on its own, as it knew I was awfully thirsty. That is actually a sign of fortune we should go inside" (Čech 115).[4] This is theoretically a marvelous space in which to present the exuberant masculinity of town bachelor culture at the end of the nineteenth century, but only theoretically because the pinnacle of demonstrating masculinity in Czech public space is the above-mentioned stereotypical drinking of beer (Mr. Brouček was able to drink an average of 10 pints every night) as well as the delivering by drinking companions of immortal truths about life and the world (Peřina 78). The essence of these male excesses in Czech public space is contained in the wistful statement by Mr. Brouček, which he utters when he thinks he is going to die on the moon:

> Maybe once some friends of mine coming back from the pub U Kohouta or from Wurfl's would say to each other: The beer was lovely tonight, wasn't it? Even the deceased Mr. Brouček would not find any defect in it… (Čech 38)[5]

Moreover, during his fantastic and dangerous travels our anti-hero distinctly longs to come back to the safety and coziness of the pub's space, and not so much to his home. There seems to be a certain shift in space semantics here: public space acquires virtues of the private sphere and seems to be a good place to escape to from the rush of life, a role it plays better than the home. Scholars of nineteenth-century Czech culture have paid a great deal of attention to the problem of the pub, and they have come to the conclusion that while at the beginning of the nineteenth century the pub was perceived as a place of moral fall, by the turn of the twentieth century it had come to be considered a limited small world where all one's troubles disappeared in a harmonious stupor (Haman 57). As a result of this change, this space and drinking beer started to produce a specific type of masculinity, which is demonstrated only by fictional achievements because the brevity, strength and will for them in the real life outside the pub was lacking (Peřina 78).

MR. BROUČEK TOWARDS MILITARY AND CONQUERING MASCULINITY

If we have managed to agree that Mr. Brouček does not really fit the norm of Western bourgeois masculinity in the nineteenth century, we should then confront him with the concepts that started to gradually replace this traditional masculinity. As I have pointed out above, we

will see as a result of this comparison a large dissimilarity between this Czech icon and the universal Western concept. However, this comparison seems to be necessary because, as I show here, Svatopluk Čech's texts enter into discussion with these processes of changes.

The new patterns of Western masculinity that arose at the end of the nineteenth century have already been presented, but I would like to foreground their rootedness in collective unawareness. On the basis of historical work on these issues, one can say that the ability to defend and conquer was the most important virtue of male character for the new imperial British man and for the militarized man of united Germany (Tosh 193; Frevert 361-2). A man had to be strong, brave, courageous, able to take a risk and stand up to every danger because otherwise he would squander his masculinity and lose the respect of others. If we look at this concept of masculinity from the perspective of archetypes created by human culture, we will find almost all these elements in the warrior archetype. Many cultures dream of the warrior as an embodiment of bravery, endurance and devotion to an idea that goes far beyond an individual's interest (Rohr & Martos 139-40). In other words, one can reduce this kind of masculinity to a few basic determinants, such as honor, gallantry and a developed spiritual side as the result of devotion to an idea. Moreover, some scholars say that this type of military, conquering masculinity was a kind of a response to a gradual effeminacy caused by fin-de-siècle culture.

Let's start with the latter problem, and then let's have a detailed look at the standpoint of Čech's texts and his character towards these determinants. Our anti-hero's first trip to the moon settles matters with an effeminate and ethereal masculinity. While this issue has been out of the scope of interest of Czech literary history, which has paid attention only to the critique of Parnassianism, our anti-hero takes it on and compares himself to the moon inhabitants a few times, stating that he is a true man: "God has pretty strange servants on his planets. But on the Earth we are the real men in comparison with these crazy Moon frights. They do not have any proper meat on them" (Čech 73).[6] This comparison puts him in a distinctly favorable light. Perhaps the vision of grotesquely spiritual Moon characters who use poetry to communicate and have many androgynous virtues – "the most delicate, transparent and pale skin of his face; some kind of dreamy, silver light of the moon was resting on him" (Čech 45)[7] – is also a critique of the future man who was starting to be promoted by highly artistic modernist literature.

After critiquing effeminate masculinity, Mr. Brouček is then presented as holding some of its views. During his trip to the moon

he declares pacifistic views and the information that there is no army on the moon meets his full appreciation (Čech 113).[8] Not until the second trip to the fifteenth century, when he is confronted with the glory of the medieval Czechs, are honor and courage presented as essential virtues for his masculinity. Using every possible argument, Mr. Brouček defends himself against proving his masculinity by fulfilling the warrior archetype:

> I had completely forgotten about that bloody siege. It is a pretty sad thing, but a weapon would not be very helpful in this case. I shall not be as naïve as to go against the army, and I hope they will leave a peaceful man in peace. If that is not the case, I shall not defend myself because I would not succeed and furthermore I would probably only make the soldiers angrier anyway. In this case I shall offer my soul to God and allow them to cut me into pieces.
> – What are you saying? I hope you are joking. I do not believe any man is able to think in such a shameful way and to confess his shame. (Čech 70)[9]

Even if Mr. Brouček could convince himself of the necessity of fighting, his body would not be convinced:

> He was pale as a wall and his legs were shaking […]. His shaking hand wiped sweat from his frightened face. He admits he was in that moment almost out of his mind; he felt only mortal fear; he was extremely pale, his hair was messy and there was cold sweat on his face, his knees were shaking and his teeth were chattering. (Čech 111, 126)[10]

His insubordinate body, filled with beer, refuses to behave in socially expected ways (Connell 56-7).

Earlier I made the presumption that Mr. Brouček could have been convinced that fighting may have been justifiable, which is actually impossible because that requires deep spirituality and a strong belief in a superior idea. Our anti-hero, on the other hand, is completely deprived of any spiritual aspect. He accepts only empiricism on a limited scope:

> Mr. Brouček […] did not long for things which are beyond everyday goods. A good dinner, a fresh drink and proper comfort, it was enough to make him absolutely happy. […] Without any emotions […], he did not understand how anybody could be angry about things which are invisible or unsubstantial. (Čech 57-8)[11]

His unexpected travels lead him to worlds that are thoroughly spiritual – one time it is an admiration for abstract art, another time medieval religious spirituality. He absolutely does not understand either of

them and even expresses the opinion that the ancient Czechs with their too high ideas and spirituality profaned the pub's space, which is, in his philosophy of life, a very particular sacred sphere: "At the beginning he was angry with the ancient Czechs, that they did not know how to chat in a pub about something smarter than politics or even religion" (Čech 124).[12] Hence, Mr. Brouček is the type of person who is resistant to any idea (regardless of its character – artistic, religious or patriotic) which could force him to fulfill his masculinity in a military and conquering way. In this context, most characteristic of Mr. Brouček is the description of the relationship between the male gender and nationalism. In a common Western understanding, masculinity is seen as being proved by fighting for one's nation and country, whereas the narrator says about our anti-hero: "Mr. Brouček has nothing against so-called patriotism, if it stays within rational limits; but expecting […] a man to sacrifice all his possessions or even life for patriotism or any other idea is total madness, isn't it?" (Čech 169-70).[13] In this way the author showed the way for further Czech literary anti-heroes.

As we have seen, these stories about Mr. Brouček conduct a dialog with an increasingly aggressive and conquering masculinity. Both his trips can be interpreted in the category of the dream, albeit a very special dream, in other words, a heavy drinker's vision that has been caused by a too intensive visit to a pub. During the first trip, it is a dream of Empire that is dreamed. The narrator at the beginning of the story gives the reader a taste of new Czech colonial conquests (it sounds like an oxymoron):

> I see in my soul the joyful confusion that my book can cause for our nation, what kind of hate would fulfill the hearts of our enemies […], a human steps on the moon, what's more: the steps of a simple Czech citizen who has exceeded Columbus! (Čech 16-17)[14]

But this earnest version of Czech colonialist vision is only placed in front of the reader when Mr. Brouček notices that the moon inhabitants are in fact Czechs. They speak only Czech, *ergo* the moon is a Czech colony. At this moment his feeling of pride starts to grow, as well as the need to demonstrate imperial force, which is certainly connected, at least in a verbal dimension, with very strong feelings of manliness. One has to treat it as a parody, but the tone of nostalgia for the possibility of imperialism still remains.

The second trip, on the other hand, is a dream of glory gained on the battlefield, one the nineteenth-century descendants of the brave Hussites could only have dreamed of. At this moment it is worth

paying attention to Čech's double-dealing strategy. Mr. Brouček's lack of aggressive masculinity is shown against a backdrop of the bravery and warlike spirit of the ancient Czechs, not against the background of another nation, particularly the German one. While still a critique, warlike masculinity is not completely refused to Czech men because they are presented as having in their blood the heritage of the great Hussite warriors.

These two dreams can be seen as an expression of a certain nostalgia because the Czech concept of masculinity has not chosen the way of the warrior or the conqueror. However, if one takes into consideration the fact that Mr. Brouček was not completely rejected by readers, and even not entirely by his author, perhaps there was nothing to regret.

Finally, I would like to try to answer the question of why in the period in which the Western concept of masculinity was changing Czech culture created in its popular dimension an icon which did not fit the direction of these changes, but on the contrary, one that gained popularity and became the established cultural ideal that Czech men had to take a stand on in some way. I suppose of pivotal importance at this point is the basic statement for men's studies that was my point of departure: that every single identity, especially uncertain ones, is constructed by comparing and fearing an "other" (Tosh 49). If for the British conquering masculinity the "others" were colonial peoples, in the case of Czech culture one can (a little bit *à rebours*) talk about the "other" being the more highly developed German culture and thus, as scholars of the Czech nineteenth century have noted, it was German gender codes that Czechs were in almost willful opposition toward in trying to create their own and completely opposite patterns (Macura 31-41). Moreover, the more overstated and striking this oppositional attitude is, the more the dominating group valorizes its own gender code virtues with the simultaneous marginalization and stigmatization of other concepts of masculinity (Tosh 43).

To conclude, as I hope to have shown here, the stories about Mr. Brouček and his travels invite reflection on other historical changes in the Czech concepts of masculinity, which are only a few among many others in Central Europe.

NOTES

[1] In the original: "Jsem […] Brouček – Matěj Brouček."

[2] In the original: "Dá-li mi nebe, že se jednou opět do Prahy dostanu, chci tam býti občanem jako putička."

[3] In the original: "Vedle představy mučednického křesla v parádním pokoji, před šálkem čaje s piškotem, v kole zábavných starých tet (…), všecho toho líbání ruky matince a klanění se na všechny strany, ustavičného prošení a děkování s povinným blaženým úsměvem, úslužného nošení všelijakých pokrývek a psíků, (…) – že vedle té představy celého toho předpeklí ženitby odstrašila ho od přistavu manželského hlavně obava před blouznivým vlnobitím citů."

[4] In the original: "Opravdu hospoda - zvolal. A sama si mně zadržela, jako by tušila, že mám pekelnou řízeň. Toť zrovna pokynutí osudu, abychom vešli."

[5] In the original: "Leda že snad někdy mojí staří kamarádi, jdouce za jasné noci od kohouta nebo od Wurfla, mezi sebou prohodili: Było to dnes pivečko, co? Na tom by ani nebožtík Brouček neshledal chybičky…"

[6] In the original: "Má to pánbůh také divnou čeládku na svých planetách. To jsme my na zemi přece jen chlapíci proti těm potřeštěným měsíčním strašidlům. Vždyť to nemá ani kus pořádného masa na sobě."

[7] In the original: "Přejemné, průsvitné bledé pleti jeho tváře; spočívalo na ní cosi jako snivá, stříbrná zář luny."

[8] In the original: "Tohle není špatné zařízení, pomyslil si Brouček."

[9] In the original: "– Ach zapoměl jsem na to zpropadené obležení. Je to náramně smutná věc, ale zbraň by mi při tom ďasa pomohla. Takovým blahovcem nebudu, abych se postavil proti vojsku, a pokojného člověka nechají snad také s pokojem; ne-li, branit se nebudu, poněvadž bych nic nepořídil a darmo vojáky ještě více podrážděl. To poručím raději duší pánubohu a nechám se rozsekat. – Co pravíš? Zajisté žertuješ. Nevěřím, by který muž tak henebně smýšlel a sám hanbu svou vyznával."

[10] In the original: "Byl bled jako stěna a nohy se pod nim třásly […]. Chvějící se rukou utíral si z uděšeného obličeje bohaté krůpěje potu; Přiznává se, že v té chvíli byl skoro bez ducha, bez myšlenky; cítil jen smrtelnou úzkost a nesmírnou hrůzou; byl prý jistě bled jako křída, vlasy se mu ježily, čelo kryl studený pot, kolena se mu třásla, ba i zuby prý mu cvakaly."

[11] In the original: "Pan Broucek netoužil nikterak po věcech které by se vznášely nad všední požitky. Dobrý oběd, řízný nápoj a náležité pohodlí stačily mu úplně k vezdejšímu blahu. […] Beze všeho vzrušení a rozechvění, […] nechápajícím, jak se může kdo rozčilovati pro věci, jichž nelze viděti a hmatati."

[12] In the original: "Ač zpočátku se mrzel na Staročechy, že ani v krčmě neznají rozumnější rozprávky než o politice a dokonce o náboženství."

[13] In the original: "Pán Brouček nemá nic proti takzvanému vlastenectví, pokud zůstává v rozumných mezích; Ale chtíti jako husité, aby člověk z vlastenectví nebo vůbec pro nějaké zásady vydával v nebezpečí své jmění aneb dokonce svůj život, toť přece hotové šílenství."

[14] In the original: "Již vidím v duchu radostný poplach, jaký knížka moje vzbudí po národě našém, jakou závisti naplní naše odpůrce […], noha lidská a to noha prostého občana českého, který tím daleko převýšil slávu samého Kolumba!"

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