

Summary

EGON HOSTOVSKY: The Literary Adventure of a Czech-Jewish writer in the 20th Century

Jiří Holý

The Theme of Jewishness in Hostovsky's Work and the Novel *House without a Master*

Egon Hostovsky came from an assimilated Jewish family in Eastern Bohemia. During the interwar period he was an active member of the Czech Jewish Movement and chairman of the Academic Association Kapper. He subsequently rejected radical assimilation and proclaimed his interest in Jewish traditions and Jewish culture inspired by the Czech Jewish philosopher Jindřich Kohn. Jewish themes can be found throughout his literary texts, especially those predating the end of World War II. Apart from poet and essayist Otokar Fischer, Hostovsky was probably the first in the Czech literature to formulate motifs about the lack of a homeland and a sense of uprootedness in his Jewish characters. On the other hand, the search for comradeship and harmony is also characteristic of most of his literary works.

Martin Pokorný

An Outline of Hostovsky's "Writer's Disposition"

This brief essay argues for the following points: (a) Hostovsky's *Seven Times the Leading Man* is a markedly poetic and personal self-analysis: Josef Kavalsky, with his semi-supernatural features, is an impersonation of (a certain concept of) the Art of Poetry – and the imperative to overcome Kavalsky's enchantment is a call which directly concerns Hostovsky as an author. (b) The modifications in theme and style which

can be observed in Hostovsky's post-war writing are, in large part, a consequence of this perceived need to "separate oneself from Kavalsky". (c) Hostovsky's self-interpretations, while constituting a crucial factor of his development, ought to be viewed critically whenever they are used as a key to an assessment of his individual works. (d) The key element of Hostovsky's writerly individuality is a unique sensibility regarding the multiplicity of, and inner tension within, the moral emotions that inform our seemingly ordinary perceptions, actions and utterances.

Václav Vaněk

The Cruel Jests of Egon Hostovsky

A characteristic feature of Egon Hostovsky's prose is the ambiguousness or ambiguity of the depicted fictional world. It comes in his prose in different ways, for example through the motives of the game, the dream or the double. Our essay studies how different forms of writer's humor are involved in shaping this polarity. Thus, it notices Hostovsky's irony, whether situational or communicative, and also for the author of a specific type of comic paradox that we have named "cruel jest". At the same time, we observe humor in the Hostovsky's work in a historical perspective – from ironic motifs in the prose of the 1930s to the last writer's prose (*The Plot, Three Nights, The Epidemic*) in which irony ceases to be a typical character or event and becomes the inner rule of the display world.

Erik Gilk

The Early Short Fiction of Egon Hostovsky

This paper deals with the early short stories of Egon Hostovsky, nearly all of them published in periodicals during the period 1923–1938. These (primarily) short fictional texts are very traditional from the formal, compositional and narrative point of view. But perhaps it is more likely that the author was writing without any awareness of modern prose, so that he was focused entirely on representing the mental situation of a central character. These characters are constructed like social outsiders, passive players harrowed by destiny, and their tragic end is easily foreseen by the reader. As a central motive of Hostovsky's early short stories we find a forgiveness of which few are ever really capable.

Václav Sádlo

Regional Elements in the Writings of Egon Hostovsky

This study focuses on a description of the regional elements that characterize Hostovsky's prose works. It shows how the author's childhood and young adult life were

a significant, if not decisive source of inspiration for his psychological and existential works. The landscape of the writer's childhood that emerges in his stories and novels is largely based in reality. Especially in the case of Hostovsky's works from the period of the first and second exile, a number of characters appear whose real counterparts were from the town of Náchod.

Gertraude Zand

Between Testimony and Hallucination: Egon Hostovsky's *Letters from Exile*

This paper focuses on Egon Hostovsky's *Letters from Exile*, which he wrote in 1939 and 1940 while fleeing Europe. Most of the narratives contained therein are written as letters to friends, giving them a special urgency. Authors of similar works – such as *Transit Visa* by Anna Seghers, *The Night in Lisbon* by Erich Maria Remarque, and Hostovsky's own 1943 novella *The Hideout* – also turn to the epistolary form to document their histories. They bear witness to the desperate situation of refugees as they struggle to maintain their individual identities in a chaos of names, documents and languages. At the same time, they describe the dreams and hopes of emigrants, whose very existence so often resembles a miracle. *Letters from Exile*, written on the run, gives an authentic testimony about the fate of the refugee and thus about the author himself.

Miroslav Chocholatý

The Image of the Stranger in Hostovsky's War Prose

This paper focuses on the image of the stranger in Egon Hostovsky's writings. The contextual part deals with the genesis and development of this theme in different periods of Hostovsky's work, posing the question: to what extent are the protagonists strangers by choice, and to what extent, by contrast, is this position imposed on them? To what extent is Hostovsky trying to come to terms with emigration, inner exile, assimilation, integration and ethnic minorities in his prose? In addition to seeking answers to these questions, the article explores the constant features of Hostovsky's poetics, including the movement of individual characters in convergent space, implying their limited existence, as well as motifs of metaphysical guilt which causes the characters to wander like 20th century Ahasvers. The actual analytical space consists of three war novels which were published in the collection *Foreigners Looking for an Apartment* (1967; *Letters from Exile*, *Seven Times the Leading Man* and *Foreigner Looking for an Apartment*). The paper also presents an analysis of the novel *The Hideout*.

Michal Topor

“I will break Laurin’s face if it’s the last thing I do,” or Hostovsky’s “Mythomania,” or The Feud in Exile of Egon Hostovsky and Arne Laurin

In the summer of 1943, in London’s *New Liberty* (publicly) and by special statement (internally, within the official agenda), Egon Hostovsky attacked the reputation of Arne Laurin, a journalist of the First Republic and editor-in-chief at Prager Presse – and an emigré like Hostovsky, living in New York. It was the outcome of longstanding differences. This study complements and corrects the attention and interpretation given by Vladimír Papoušek (in *Psalms of Petfield*, 2012), illuminating the breakdown of Hostovsky’s exile situation.

Marie Zetová

Nostalgia, Which Had No Content: For the Motives of Memory and Recollection in Selected Works by Egon Hostovsky

This study focuses on the motifs of memory and reminiscence within Hostovsky’s fiction, especially in the context of his *Letters from Exile*. Hostovsky is looked upon not only as an author who had to leave his country, but also as an author who was acquainted to some extent with Freudian psychoanalysis and who was deeply concerned with the question of the subject’s relationship to his or her past. Close readings of selected passages from Hostovsky’s short stories reveal some interesting parallels between his literary work and psychoanalytic theory. However, the aim of the present text is not to prove that Hostovsky deliberately drew upon Freud or that psychoanalysis was his main source of inspiration. It is rather to illustrate that Hostovsky himself is a thorough observer of the human psyche whose works capture something significant about the way we relate to our past.

Olga Hostovská

Egon Hostovsky and Victorious February

This contribution focuses on the novel *Missing*, comparing it, from the social and literary perspective of the period, with other novels published in Czechoslovakia at that time, namely *Citizen Brych* by Jan Otčenáška and *Iron Ceiling* by Bohuslav Březovský. It is a kind of prose that speaks as well to the theme of the Communist coup in 1948, each one from a different ideological position. The author also works through the case of the confusion concerning Lubor Zink’s novel *February*, first attributed to Hostovsky, as would-be continuation of Hostovsky’s *Missing*.

Juan Zamora

Missing: Between the West and the East, or Hostovsky's Ministry of Fear

The novel *Missing* was first published in 1951 (in Danish translation), at a time when crime fiction genres (as defined by Seed, Scaggs, or Sýkora in the Czech context) were published only marginally. Hostovsky's text, set in the period around the Communists' rise to power in February 1948, can only be partly classified as spy fiction, as a crime fiction sub-genre. While the book does feature some of the stereotypes that characterize stories about spies in a politically divided world, it tends to exceed and complicate the usual genre reading, thanks to the focused writing and more complicated *syžet*. Hostovsky's novel was published the same year as Václav Řezáč's novel *The Arrival*, but it reads more like another novel published that year: Graham Greene's *The Ministry of Fear*.

Barbora Svobodová

What's Left of *The Midnight Patient*, or *Les Espions* by Henri-Georges Clouzot

This article focuses on the novel *The Midnight Patient* (1954) by Czech writer in exile Egon Hostovský, looking specifically at the film *Les Espions* (1957, Henri-Georges Clouzot) which was inspired by Hostovsky's novel. The movie is not very well known in the Czech context, so the article presents the circumstances of the genesis of film while working through a comparison of the novel and film. The adaptation is not seen as *a priori* inferior; instead, the article seeks to point out differences between the two works, exploring the interpretation of Hostovsky's themes by the director as *auteur* in order to better understand his artistic process and construction of the film plot. The essay then turns to Clouzot's intention to transfer Franz Kafka's ideas to the screen, an intention which he communicated with the audience in order to address expectations before filming began. The choice of Kafka as a starting point reflects the influence of existentialist philosophy, as well as Clouzot's artistic ambitions. In view of the fact that the director failed in this intention, the cool reception of the film by individual critics, and spectators themselves, is also examined. Finally, the relation between the Czech author and film medium as a whole is outlined.

Štěpánka Pašková

How To Publish *The Midnight Patient*?

The novel *The Midnight Patient* was one of the most successful novels by Egon Hostovsky. The question arises, however, whether it can be appreciated by Czech readers as well. This paper compares the first Czech edition of the novel (New York, 1959), the

second edition (Prague, 1969 – the books were printed, but later confiscated) and the edition published as part of *The Writings of Egon Hostovsky* (Prague, 1997). Finally, the author presents her own publishing solution, based on preparations for publication of the novel *The Midnight Patient* within *Česká knižnice serie* (Brno, 2018).

Agata Firlej

**Confident Against Your Will: Another Key for Unpacking
the Character of the Central European Hero in the Prose of Egon
Hostovsky and Janusz Głowacki (Based on the Novels *Missing*
and *Give Us This Day*)**

The aim of this article is to analyze aspects of the Middle European character who feels pressured by so-called Great History. This theme is evident in the prose of Hostovsky and Głowacki, especially in the novels discussed here. In addition to their experience with the communist regime and emigration to America, which influenced their way of writing, the writers share a similar Jewish background that seems to have made them more acutely aware of their position of helplessness vis-à-vis Great History. Hostovsky and Głowacki belong to a special group of Middle European writers who propose a specific way of confronting the problem of resistance, power and history.

Translated by Peter Gaffney