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**Hybrid Constellations and National Authorship:
Prose Fiction by Jaroslav Rudiš (2002–2013)
and Olga Martynova (2013)**

**I. Introduction: Hybrid constellations in prose fiction
after 1990 and in a globalized world**

Experience shows that the number of authors living in two and more countries, writing in two and even more languages, writing for readers (in the case of theatre plays: for audiences) of different countries and cultural contexts tend to increase in moments of historical crisis and change. In the end of the 20th century, after 1989/90, the collapse of communist rule brought about many authorships with twofold identity. In view of the living conditions in many parts of the globalized world (with the possibility of choosing and changing living places), prose fiction – probably more intensively than before – presents and negotiates hybrid constellations along historical, ethnical, religious, linguistic and further lines. No wonder, hybrid constellations have attracted the attention of scholars from different disciplines, among them specialists of literary and cultural studies.¹

¹ In November 2014, the Justus-Liebig-University Gießen organized a workshop titled “Contemporary slavic literatures as world literature. Hybrid constellations” (“Slavische Literaturen der Gegenwart als Weltliteratur. Hybride Konstellationen”). In: Announcement by email-circular, May 2014; in January 2015, the Research Centre “Cultures in Contact”

Scholars exploring hybrid constellations in works of art, frequently refer to Zygmunt Bauman's general characteristics of *Culture in a Liquid Modern World*. A few lines applicable to the authors and texts to be mentioned, partly also discussed here, may recall some of the insight offered in Bauman's study:

in liquid modern times, culture (and most particularly, though not exclusively, its artistic sphere) is fashioned to fit individual freedom of choice and individual responsibility for that choice [...] the responsibility for the choice and its consequences remains where it has been placed by the liquid modern human condition – on the shoulders of the individual, now appointed to the position of chief manager of 'life politics' and its sole executive (Bauman 12).

In the prose fiction to be looked into here, the amount and markedness of hybrid constellations may not only change from author to author, but also from text to text. In the German speaking countries, a number of authors descended from the former Soviet Union or countries under the influence sphere of the Soviet Union, write prose fiction in German. Some of them, e.g. the Kiev born Katja Petrowskaja and Saša Stanišić from Bosnia, write exclusively in German. They only became authors in their new environment. Others, e.g. the Russia-born Olga Martynova, write fictional prose in German, poetry, however, in Russian (Cammann 45). Many of these authors contribute to the innovation of the German literary language, enrich contemporary prose fiction and actual cultural life, e.g. in public lectures and direct communication with their readers (Auffermann 15). While some of them, e.g. Stanišić, largely refer to experience gained in their new environment, others first of all turn to individual and collective memories connected with their homelands. Some of them, and this goes for Olga Martynova, create highly hybrid constellations by mixing or changing between literary and cultural repertoires of Russia, the German speaking countries, the United States and further geographical-historical-cultural environments. Such hybrid constellations, of course, ask for open minded and specifically prepared readerships: expertise in one or the

("Kulturen in Kontakt"), Philological and Cultural Studies Faculty, University of Innsbruck organized a conference devoted to "Transcultural poetry" ("Lyrik transkulturell") with keywords as, e.g., "hybridity", "functions of multilingualism", "transcultural poetics". (Announcement by email-circular, June 2014). All translations from German, Czech and further languages into English are mine, if not indicated otherwise [B.S.].

other national literature does not suffice any longer. Readers have to be willing to change between cultural repertoires of different countries, be open to learn about analogous or different human experience in foreign contexts or perceive seemingly familiar German literary and cultural repertory in new and unfamiliar perspectives. Of course, many readers themselves stem from hybrid linguistic and cultural constellations, have already had closer contact with hybridity and difference of any kind. Similarly as authors make their choice, readers will make their choice in the way they receive the multiple intellectual and aesthetic offer in such fictional prose. The textual make-up affirms the following statement by Bauman concerning contemporary culture: “Culture today consists of offers, not prohibitions; propositions not norms” (Bauman 13).

However, hybrid constellations also occur in prose fiction of authors, who – at least at present – mainly stick to their native language. In such cases native languages are used for presenting and negotiating different historical and cultural repertoires. This is the case with the prose fiction of Jaroslav Rudiš, born in Turnov (Eastern Bohemia) in 1972 and “living and working between the Czech Republic and Germany” (Rudiš, 2013: 36/IV). So this is a representative of a “small literature” in permanent contact with the literature (s) of the German speaking countries. Of course, in view of long phases of common history and shared historical experience up to the recent past, hybrid constellations are part and parcel of Czech, German and Austrian past and present anyhow. While hybrid constellations have been ignored, dismissed and resented many a time in all the countries involved in common history, there is now more openness and readiness to *reappraise* the common middle European past and recent past. A teacher of German and history by profession (Kopáč, ed. 145), Rudiš has chosen reappraisal of individual and common historical experience in post-communist middle Europe as one of several guidelines in his texts.

There is specific scholarly interest in choosing an example from the “small” Czech literature for this case study: the literary history of Bohemia and Moravia – especially during the 19th, but also during the 20th centuries – probably saw more debate on literature having to be either “national” or transcultural, “cosmopolitan” than most other countries in Europe. The debate around what the “small” Czech literature should look like (clearly a long runner) is familiar to Czechs and, of course, to non-Czech scholars of many disciplines.

Some random choice examples taken from Walter Schamschula's *History of Czech Literature* and from a newly published number of *Česká literatura* may illustrate the case. Describing the pivotal role of several Czech literary almanacs and movements, Schamschula, e.g., brings to mind the *Máj*-circle's having been criticized because of "cosmopolitan" attitudes after 1850 and the largely welcomed "national enthusiasm" during the 1870s in the *Ruch*-movement (Schamschula 127, 136). In his English summary of an article concerning Parnassianism in Czech literature, Aleš Haman recalls the "traditional difference between the 'nationalists' and the 'cosmopolitans'" (Haman 236). In view of this historical context, the widening of geographical and historical dimensions far beyond the situation narrated has not only to be related to a globalized world with unlimited access to information, but also to the specifically Czech debate around national affiliation.

In the following, five prose texts by Jaroslav Rudiš will be named and characterized regarding their geographical diversity (par. 2). The central part of this study (par. 3) is devoted to cases of hybridity and negotiation of national and further affiliation in these texts. In order to widen the basis for reflections on literature "in a liquid modern world", Olga Martynová's German novel *Mörikes Schlüsselbein* (*Mörike's collar-bone*), a case of extremely rich and complex hybridity, will also be discussed shortly (par. 4). Concluding considerations (par. 5) concern possibilities of handling hybrid constellations in new and newest prose fiction scholarly.

II. Jaroslav Rudiš's prose fiction and further works: problems in defining national affiliation

The works produced by Jaroslav Rudiš next to his prose fiction, resist unambiguous classification in terms of affiliation. The remarkable many-sided artistic production implies theatre and radio plays (Musilová 60–61), the Graphic Novel *Alois Nebel*, a tetralogy created in cooperation with the artist Jaromír 99 (= Jaromír Švejdlík).² This is, of course, a case of genre hybridity:

² This comic-book (2003–2008), which became "cult" immediately and has been transformed into further media, a film, a theatre play (Musilová 60), is about a railway

a literary-pictorial genre, i.e. medial hybridity. Together with Martin Becker, Rudiš wrote the German opera libretto *Exit 89*.³ And there are further pieces of literature and journalistic texts written in German.⁴

Though the novels – so far – are written in Czech, statements concerning Rudiš's national affiliation as a writer vary to quite some extent. In some sources, he is introduced as a representative of Czech literature only. Radim Kopáč, e.g., presents Rudiš as a Czech author writing in one of the “small, relatively complicated [...], in universal terms uninteresting languages” (Kopáč 10). Kopáč claims that “for Czech writers after 1989 the gate to the world is mainly German, obviously on account of geographical, historical, cultural and linguistic relationship” (Kopáč 10). The critic makes it a point that “success on the German market is a guarantee for success elsewhere” (Kopáč 11).⁵ Such simplistic reference to market rules ignores substantial matter to be explored in this study: the way Rudiš transforms “relationship”, but also difference, into intellectual and aesthetic offer for readers.

Different from Kopáč's classification, brief informations (in newspapers, on book-covers) frequently introduce Rudiš as an author “writing in Czech and German”.⁶ It also happens that critics avoid classification in terms of national affiliation. A literary critic of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, e.g., states: “At the present, Rudiš is one of the most interesting authors of his latitude”.⁷ This appreciation of Rudiš's contribution to actual literature clearly does not think in terms of national literatures, but in terms of segments of a larger European literary landscape. In information given by Rudiš himself and also in his works, this segment is often called middle Europe (Kadlecová 2–3).

station worker of the regional – close to the Polish border – station Bílý Potok (a fictional place name). For Nebel (i.e. ‘fog’, ‘mist’), “the trains passing throughout the whole century clouded his thoughts”. Cf. Kopáč, ed. 127–128, 145.

³ This text was not accessible.

⁴ Cf. the entry in Wikipedia: “Jaroslav Rudiš”. <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/JaroslavRudi%C5%A1>.

⁵ There is good reason to doubt the correctness of Kopáč's observations. Sometimes, translations of Rudiš's texts into other languages, e.g., Finish, French and Polish (Musilová 60; Vogelsang 2) precede the German translations.

⁶ E.g. the book-cover of Rudiš, Jaroslav. *Jaromír 99*. Leipzig: Voland & Quist, 2013.

⁷ Rudiš, Jaroslav. *Vom Ende des Punks in Helsinki*. München: Luchterhand Literaturverlag, 2014 (cover text, quoted from *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*).

Taken together, the five prose texts stand for a segment of middle Europe. Two of the texts narrated take place in Germany; they are, however, geographically and historically widened by inserted pieces of narrative. The debut novel, *Nebe pod Berlínem* (*The Sky under Berlin*, 2002), takes place in the German capital. Berlin is mainly shown and reflected from the perspective of the system of local traffic, first of all the U-Bahn (underground trains) and persons permanently or temporarily connected with it. Though written in Czech, there is very little Czech cultural repertory in the text. The other piece of prose fiction with mainly a German setting is *Konec punku v Helsinkách* (*The End of Punk in Helsinki*). Here, the geographical dimension is, at least in the first instance, only seemingly widened into Northern Europe. Rudiš makes – jokingly – use of a kind of hybrid phrasing: “Helsinki” does not mean the capital of Finland (‘in Helsinki’), but the name of a small bar in former East Germany. I.e., “punk” comes to an end ‘in the Helsinki (-bar)’. Three of the texts are situated in the Czech Republic. The novel *Grandhotel* is centered in the provincial town Liberec, close to the Czech-German-Polish border. Nevertheless, as will be shown, this is not a case of Czech regional literature. The Czech capital is presented twice. The novel *Potichu* (approx.: ‘silently’), among others, shows the loss of Prague’s traditional, authentic character in face of the effects of globalization. The second ‘Prague-novel’, *Národní třída* (*National avenue*), is situated somewhere in the outskirts of the Czech capital, in an area close to the forest – a living place mainly for outsiders and ‘losers’ of the political change in 1989/90. Except for the different local settings belonging to middle Europe, the texts are thematically connected by a type of quest: especially the central heroes are trying to find a mode of living they can personally accept in the globalized, open and “liquid” present world. Among the thematic accents appearing in most of the texts are German-Czech hybrid constellations, the role of music, first of all punk-music as generation-experience, life conditions under communist rule (i.e. a topic younger generations in middle Europe tend to be unaware of) and others.

There are some types of hybrid constellation in this prose fiction not to be looked into as closely as could be: Taken together, Rudiš makes use of both narrative formations of present Czech prose – the “post-modern imaginative” and the mainly documentary formation (Bock: 2). Furthermore, there is

a change of reference to high and popular genres. Of course, the latter is transcultural device in prose fiction from all over the world.

In the following, a small choice of examples of hybrid constellation, but also of affirmed (by characters in the texts) cultural difference, will be looked into more closely. Specific attention will be given to elements asking for the competence of Czech readers.

III. Examples: hybrid constellations, reappraisal of history, middle Europe and beyond

The main narrator of *Nebe pod Berlínem* – a short novel with ample documentation of U-Bahn and S-Bahn (city trains), lines and stations, in an appendix – is the Czech teacher Bém, i.e. a newcomer from Bohemia. One of the chapters offers the personal account of the somewhat ‘shadowy’ Bertrám, who – obviously unobserved by Berlin’s public – had somehow survived his suicide attempt in the U-Bahn. The last chapter, marked by linguistic hybridity (“Zug nach Hönow” – ‘Train to Hönow’), shows a public concert, at the same time a birthday concert for Bertrám in the station Alexanderplatz, organized by Bém and his friends. The posters announcing the band’s performance “for the living and the dead” (“pro živé a mrtvé”) refer to Milan Kundera’s novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. However, “lightness” is turned into “bitterness”: “Nesmrtelná hořkost bytí” (‘Unbearable Bitterness of Being’) (Rudiš, 2003: 13). Kundera’s novels are certainly not primarily received as part of the Czech literary repertory but as pieces of European and world literature. It is important to note that already in the third line of *Nebe*, reference to the Czech literary tradition is clearly dismissed: The school-director Mácha tells Bém on telephone to come back home and do his job (Rudiš, 2003: 7). Only Czech readers and non-Czech experts will know this school-director has the name of an icon of the Czech cultural repertory – Karel Hynek Mácha.

While this fixed point of the Czech cultural repertory is not included in the narrated landscape of Berlin, the settlements of Czech protestant expellees of the 18th century are documented in the appendix (Rudiš, 2003: 140). If scholars are willing to see the appendix as integral part of *Nebe*, we have to

do with a fictional/nonfictional text, a hybrid genre with even more traces of Europeanness.

Reappraisal of recent European history is brought to mind, when the pre-war Czech Republic is remembered as a *de facto* hybrid ‘national being’: Bém mentions his German grandmother from the Sudetenland and an old Jewish lady now living in the grandmother’s home (Rudiš, 2003: chapter 4). The unspectacular ethnic, linguistic and cultural hybridity of the German capital, at the same time a marker of living conditions in a globalized world, is presented by people from Poland, Russia, Spain, Bulgaria, Great Britain, Island, the United States and many other countries, sometimes with probes of language mix. The music scene shown in several chapters is local as well as transcultural, international.

A case of Czech difference in relation to other countries, languages respectively, and at the same time a case of linguistic hybridity within Czech, is the application of the linguistic *varieties* – literary, common and spoken Czech (Bermel 3, 5, 12–14, 33) by the narrator and several other characters in the novel. Next to literary Czech, especially markers of common Czech occur in several chapters. Bém’s new girlfriend Katrin, e.g., the daughter of an engine driver, comments Bém’s temporary home in this way: “Docela příšernej bejvák mate. Ale oceňuju, že je umytej haizl a vana” (‘You have a totally dreadful pad. But I appreciate that the loo and bathtub are cleaned’) (Rudiš, 2003: 20). Katrin not only uses the phonological variants – “příšernej” instead of “příšerný” and “oceňuju” instead of “oceňuji”, she also uses colloquial vocabulary for the living space (“bejvak” = German ‘Biwak’; “hajzl” = German ‘Häusl’). Of course, this specific type of oral discourse (Czech readers and critics have needed decades to accept it in works of literature) cannot be reproduced in translations. The German translation, e.g., tries to substitute the specific markers of inner Czech hybridity by German colloquialisms. Katrin says: “ne ziemlich üble Bude, die ihr da habt. Immerhin ist das Klo geputzt” (‘quite nasty a pad you’ve got here. At least the loo is cleaned’) (Rudiš, 2011: 25). Such occasional markers of inner Czech linguistic hybridity are certainly not weighty enough to make Rudiš’s debut text a ‘fundamentally Czech’ novel.

There is more negotiation of Czech identity and more mention of linguistic, ethnical and cultural hybridity in the second novel, *Grandhotel*.

In a specific way, *Grandhotel* reflects the, to quote Aleš Haman, “traditional difference between the ‘nationalists’ and the ‘cosmopolitans’” (s.a.), here: a strong inclination of Czechs to stay at home in fear of losing national identity when abroad.⁸ The narrator, a Czech with the German family name “Fleischman” (literally ‘meatman’, a variant of *Fleischer*, ‘butcher’), appears as an outsider, a sort of eccentric: obsessed with scrupulous daily observation of clouds and weather conditions since his early childhood, he becomes deeply traumatized, when his parents manage to escape to West Germany in late communism, leaving him alone in Liberec, the former Reichenberg. Put in care of his uncle Jégr (‘hunter’), later the manager of the rocket-shaped Grandhotel “above the clouds”, Fleischman keeps observing the weather. Despite his name (his body cannot take meat), he lives on nothing but a daily portion of five biscuits and yellow lemonade.⁹ Almost independent of food, Fleischman manages his dreams come true. Having constructed a balloon and trusting the clouds, he leaves Liberec, the “town confined by mountains, the past, time and fear, because the past is nothing else but fear” (Rudiš, 2006: 9). Fleischman’s act of individual emancipation from the past, i.e. the pre-war past of the German-speaking Sudetenland and the recent past of communist rule, is, among others, seen as a plea for reconciliation with persons who suffered harm by middle European history. Among them is one of the permanent guests in the hotel, Fleischman’s rather aged friend Franz – a German who had kept hiding in his native town and is now waiting for his death ‘at home’.

Through his narration, Fleischman informs his readers about the bilingual reality of Liberec: the change of street names, the semantics of German and Czech vocabulary. Problems of Czech identity are directly phrased by the doctor (doktorka), a psychiatrist who treats his trauma. The doctor confronts him with statements of this clarity: “Že Češi jsou národ, který se bojí pohnout” (“That the

⁸ In one of his interviews, Rudiš self-ironically points at the Czechs’ “unwillingness to leave their (own) plate” (cf. *Vogelsang/Rudiš* 1).

⁹ Full of wit, the novel entirely dismisses the idea of “eating culture and cultural identity” (Heinke M. Kalinke, Klaus Roth, and Tobias Weger, eds. 105–136). Cf. Schultze, Brigitte. *Kaum Gelage, selten Erlesenes, dafür multifunktional: Essen und Trinken in der tschechischen Prosa nach 1989* (Franz, Fries 282–288).

Czechs are a nation [people] which is afraid of moving') (Rudiš, 2006: 125). This certainly helps Fleischman in his decision making.

Familiarity with the Czech cultural repertory, e.g. the literary heritage, then, is no prerequisite to understand the novel *Grandhotel*. Considering the references to the hybrid constellations in the past and the Czech's limited mobility, the readers primarily appealed to are, no doubt, Czechs; next come readers of the German speaking countries and anybody interested in middle European history.¹⁰

Different from central narrators and first person singular-narration in *Nebe pod Berlínem* and *Grandhotel*, Rudiš's third novel, *Potichu*, presents insight into individual life-styles of five main characters. Written in third person and short cuts-construction, the segments of the five life-stories partly meet or belong together for a while, till they come together in a pop-concert turned into disaster: Vladimír Jahn, a former musician in a Prague orchestra, sees his personal mission in 'freeing town. Country. Universe' (Rudiš, 2007: 15) from the permanent noise which – as he thinks – had caused his wife's death of cancer and his own loneliness. So Vladimír extinguishes sources of noise, wherever he can find them. Having cut off electricity in the concert-hall and in all of Prague (at least for some hours), he collapses and probably dies.

The other four characters are the young amateur-singer Vanda who is sure she will stop taking cocaine shortly,¹¹ at her 18th birthday. Having dropped school and left her friend Harry, Vanda – temporarily – stays with the tram conductor Petr. He on his part had dropped his studies of electrical engineering in the middle of exams to follow his new friend Klára and, left by Klára, returned home to do temporary work as a tram conductor. A further character is the American lawyer Wayne, a representative of Prague's more and more international population after 1989/1990. Wayne is considering family life with his Czech friend Hana, a polyglot representative of the Czech Republic in institutions of the European Union.

¹⁰ Cf. Thomas Kirschner interviewing the author (Kirschner 1–2).

¹¹ In *Potichu*, the characters' handling of food and drink, including narcotics, mirror ways of living with and without a 'project' (Schultze 246).

In *Potichu*, hybrid constellations connected with middle Europe are missing.¹² Instead, uncountable instances of hybridity are connected with the presentation of the entirely internationalized life in the city of Prague. The former identity of a singular middle European cultural centre is replaced by, to quote the author, “a sort of Disneyland for tourists” (Vogelsang/Rudiš 2). There is, e.g., hardly any reference to the Czech literary repertory. Cultural goods of any type, be it literature, painting, films or music, are marked as transcultural, international: Hana, disoriented by a recent love story and decided to leave Wayne, keeps trying to carry on with a novel by Pessoa. And another example: Sitting in the office he shares with his partner Dave, Wayne looks at an “abstract picture of a young Czech avant-garde artist with an international future” (Rudiš, 2007: 74). Linguistic hybridity is mainly, but not exclusively, given by pieces of the *lingua franca* English, inserted into the Czech text (Rudiš, 2007: 20, 30, 98 etc.). News from all over the world literally flood Prague – an echo of the global world. In contrast, instances recalling the Czechs’ alleged unwillingness ‘to move’ are remarkably rare. One of the episodic characters of the novel, the tram driver Hrouda with his daily midmorning snack “carefully packed” “of course, by mummy” (Rudiš, 2007: 47. Cf. Schultze 300), recalls unwavering resistance to change of any kind.

Remarkable space is, however, given to the American social and cultural repertory, especially the guide-line of having everything under control.¹³ Among Wayne’s patterns of behavior is regular, controlled physical exercise, controlled eating and drinking (“biomüsli s ošechy” – ‘biomüsli with nuts’) (Rudiš, 2007: 14. Cf. Schultze 292–295). Having seen on TV a wounded in the Iraq war American soldier resembling his brother Mike and realizing Hana will not return to him, Wayne loses his constantly trained self-control. He fails in professional challenge, starts a brawl in the sudden darkness of the broken up concert, is arrested by police.

This Prague-novel does not call for the specific competence of Czech readers. It envisages any reader frustrated at Prague’s having lost much of its

¹² The author affirms this observation in one of his interviews (Vogelsang/Rudiš 2).

¹³ Natalie Weidenfeld makes it a point that Americans like to have everything “*clean*, and, first of all, *safe*”, whereas the “idea everything could be controlled perfectly well, of course, remains an illusion” (Weidenfeld 2).

traditional uniqueness after 1990. Considering the variety of personal problems to be handled by the main characters (but also by episodic characters, in case they realize need for change), *Potichu* can appeal to European readers and also to readers from all over the world.

In Rudiš's fourth novel, *Konec punku v Helsinkách*, the presentation of hybrid constellations does not go beyond what is already contained in the other pieces of prose fiction. With two geographical centres – a German city in former East Germany and a Czech small town in Northern Moravia, Jeseník (i.e. Freiwaldau in former Sudetenland) – the novel is clearly marked as middle European. Some further place names stand for the 'open' world after 1989/1990. A specific variant of fictional hybridity is – similarly as in *Nebe pod Berlínem*, but more purposefully – given in the make-up of the novel: though rendered in Czech, the text has two ethnically/linguistically different main informants: Ole, a man of forty and owner of the unpretentious bar "Helsinki" which has to be given up because of severe shortcomings in its statics and Nancy, a Czech girl of seventeen who had written a diary from January 1987 to September 1987, until she was killed during her attempt to leave communist Czechoslovakia together with her new East German friend Ole. Years afterwards, Ole keeps recalling his short encounter with Nancy during a spectacular punk festival in Pilsen, i.e. a festival attended by politically resistant young people from many countries behind the iron curtain.¹⁴ Ole, finally, detects Nancy's diary in the Finnish capital Helsinki (so the title of the novel has a subtext) and he can find the man who had made a living out of his knowledge of Czech and German by betraying fugitive citizens to the police.

This novel assembles a number of further German and Czech life stories. Traces of typically middle European hybrid constellations are mainly contained in Nancy's diary. The notes dated "June", e.g., mention "half Slovaks" and "half Romanians" in post-war former Sudetenland (Rudiš, 2010: 152). So this part of Moravia keeps being ethnically hybrid. The marker of middle Europeanness is only founded differently. Here again, except for the novel's being written in

¹⁴ Rudiš emphasizes that the novel mainly explores "the last punk-generation and the question what happened to these people later on; how much remained of this power and energy". (Cf. Vogelsang/Rudiš 2).

Czech, Czech readers can hardly be seen as privileged recipients. Familiarity with the Czech cultural repertory is not asked for. Readers from middle European and many other countries may either recall or learn about life in late communism and after 1989 and also about the role of a music-scene defying political borders, 'generation problems' of having to adjust to grown-up life in a rather regulated world.

Rudiš's fifth novel, *Národní třída*, is probably more easily accessible to Czech readers than to non-Czech recipients: 1. common Czech marked by a number of deviations from literary Czech largely dominates the linguistic texture (Klíčová 19); 2. the title-giving demonstration on the National avenue (November 17, 1989) leading to the end of communist rule in Czechoslovakia may be forgotten in other countries by now; 3. the main place of action is, different from *Potichu*, not the Prague for tourists, but a settlement somewhere in the outskirts of the Czech capital – a place where losers of the political change and outsiders live; 4. the main character, Vandam, a man probably in the forties and of hardly more than average intelligence, had dropped out of his job as a policeman after the November demonstrations. So this short novel sounds out the situation of people at the brim of post-communist society. Large parts of these explorations are contained in monologues, Vandam's 'instruction on life',¹⁵ mainly conveyed to the regular visitors of the bar "Severka" (Kadlecová 1).

Vandam's advice – except for his understanding of when to use his fists – show he is at odds with many aspects of living conditions in the globalized world of the 21st century. One out of many instructions is: "Valej do tebe, že jen když se zadlužíš, existuješ" ("Turn over in your mind that only getting into debt, you exist") (Rudiš, 2013: 12). Much of the reasoning is bizarre and contradictory, it recalls, e.g., populist report. In one of his fictitious dialogues, Vandam quotes "someone" comparing the "nicer" women in the past to "feminobioecologists" – "feminobioekologistky" – of the present (Rudiš, 2013: 35). Only experts will know this funny compound recalls Czech-German linguistic closeness: whereas the forming of compounds is rather limited in other Slavic languages, Czech has largely adopted this linguistic device from German.

¹⁵ In an interview with Kateřina Kadlecová, Rudiš emphasizes that Vandam is "a bit of a lunatic with his 'instructions on life'", however, also "good and upright" (Kadlecová 1).

Similarly as in the other novels (an exception being *Potichu*), Czech-German hybrid constellations are presented and commented in different ways. Watching a film together with Lucka, the owner of the bar “Severka”, Vandam tells her he knows “a little German, probably as every Czech” (“jako každej Czech”) (Rudiš, 2013: 70). Talking about his father, he uses the colloquial word “foťr” (cf. the German word ‘Vater’); talking to his father, he uses the Czech form of address “Tati” (‘daddy’) (Rudiš, 2013: 107–108). Negotiating national affiliation and markers of Czechness, Vandam is sure about a specific sense for humor: “českej humor” (Rudiš, 2013: 52, 62, 64 passim).

While the Czech cultural repertory, i.e. reference to Czech literature of the 19th and 20th centuries, to music, painting etc. is missing, Vandam repeatedly articulates his familiarity with historical events since Roman times up to the present. Taken together, the data – among them the Treaty of Westfalia, August 1968 in Prague and the Battle of Verdun (Rudiš, 2013: 11, 15–17, 62 passim) – reveal a double affiliation: to Czech historical contexts and, even more so, to Europe. This short novel can probably less easily be received as a contribution to middle European prose fiction of the 21st century than Rudiš’s other four texts.¹⁶ It cannot be excluded literary historians will look for further ‘lowbrow’ characters in Czech fiction. Placed into a – potential – literary history of middle European dimensions, the novel may certainly stand for a type of text already registered.

IV. Hybrid constellations in Olga Martynova’s *Mörikes Schlüsselbein* (2013)

Olga Martynova’s second German novel¹⁷ is a case of remarkable contrast to Rudiš’s Czech and middle European prose fiction. Transculturality and hybrid

¹⁶ Rudiš himself mentions his indebtedness to a recent publication, “real incidents”, by the contemporary Czech author Emil Hakl (Kádlecová/Rudiš 1).

¹⁷ Olga Borisovna Martynova (1962) grew up and studied Russian Language and Literature in Leningrad. Since 1990, she lives in Germany – writing poetry and essays in Russian, prose fiction and different types of non-fictional prose in German. Her first German novel, *Sogar Papageien überleben uns* appeared in 2010. Cf: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olga_Borissowna_Martynowa 1 [Download: 10 II 2014]. The author’s name and the

constellations encompass central Europe (Germany, but also France), Russia (including Siberia), the United States and further countries. Different from Rudiš, Martynova has chosen language switching for her novels, i.e. writes in German. Whereas the Czech cultural repertory, especially literature, is almost absent in Rudiš's prose, not only Russian literature but literature as such – the creation of possible worlds and worlds totally different from everyday life – is at the centre of this novel. The title-giving collar-bone of the German poet Eduard Mörike (1804–1875) prepares the reader to enigma and asks for his readiness to try 'cracking some bones'. The collar-bone, a sort of appeal to active receptional attitude, goes back to a students' joke – an exhibit placed in a show-case in Tübingen (Martynova, 2013: 27–32, 317). Emphasizing the role of literature, Martynova, of course, joins the strongest component of the Russian cultural repertory and heritage: *literature*. Choosing German instead of her native Russian, the author, in a way, claims a transcultural position for literature. A specific mobility and widening of geographical and cultural perspectives can already be sensed in the fragmented plotlines replacing traditional coherent plots. These plotlines present life-histories of the members of a patchwork-family, further relations and several circles of friends in Germany, Russia and the United States. Almost everybody is linked with literature. E.g., Marina, the central female character, besides working with a cultural foundation, is writing a book on the Russian poet and dramatist Daniil Charms; her former husband, the emeritus professor Andreas Bach, is writing a study on Germans in 19th century Russia; Moritz, Bach's son from a second marriage, is at the point of becoming an author etc. A study doing justice to this case of literature on literature might need a king size article. Instead, this passage will only illustrate two cases of hybridity in Martynova's novel: implicit 'reading lists' – authors' names, sometimes the titles of texts and quotations – referring to the Russian and the German literary repertories and the coining of German vocabulary within the narration.

The Russian names contain a remarkable number of classics, among them Puškin, Tolstoj, Gogol', Lermontov, Leskov, Dostoevskij, Bunin, Čechov, Mandel'stam, Charms and others (Martynova, 2013: 270, 40, 303, 11, 18, 302,

names of Russian authors of the 19th and 20th centuries occurring in the novel are rendered in international transliteration.

312, 172, 11, 135, 204 passim). These authors' names and some of their works are clearly not recalled the way they are taught in schools and universities. Some instances look like pure name dropping. Others show a character's personal access to an author of the canon. Some of the German repertory is given e.g. Mörike, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Kleist, Hölderlin and Benn (Martynova, 2013: 27, 31, 129, 218, 313, 174, 38, 317, 49 passim). Further, neither Russian nor German authors, e.g. Oscar Wilde (Martynova, 2013: 55), could be named. Readers will have to find out for themselves in which instances they ought to look for common motives and associations to gain insight into the capacity and functioning of literature and maybe, find connections between literature and their personal situation.

The coining of German vocabulary not to be found in dictionaries and deviation from habitualized language use or even from rules of grammar will be illustrated by a few examples. The largest contribution to German literary language consists in – partly remarkably concrete, partly clearly poetic – compounds. A girl with a “tall body and a round dark head” is called a “Streichholz mädchen” (literally: ‘matchgirl’) (Martynova, 2013: 28); a couple's debate on small change induces the compound “Kleingeldwahnvorstellungen” (‘small change delusions’) (Martynova, 2013: 33); rain in the United States is seen as “Sprudelnebel” (‘sparkling mist’) poured into the “Riesenglas Amerika” (‘giant glass America’) (Martynova, 2013: 51). It happens that an uncountable noun is used as a countable noun. A public lecture ends with the question if Russia's “Vergangenheiten” (‘pasts’) will eventually “announce themselves” (Martynova, 2013: 74). Further incidents of hybridity are connected with English, e.g., in juxtapositions of British to oral American English (Martynova, 2013: 74, 79). The linguistic fabric in *Mörikes Schlüsselbein* clearly affirms Steven G. Kellman's observation that “to translingual authors, no utterance can be automatic” (Kellman 30).

Next to aspects of translingual authorship Martynova's novel deserves further research concerning transculturality. This has to include the presentation of encounters with a shaman in Siberia and reflections on the culture of Ancient Egypt.

V. Summary: hybrid constellations given and chosen

The “liquid modern human condition” (Bauman 12) – with the coming into being of uncountable types of transcultural identities¹⁸ – is, no doubt, the main context for shrinking validity of the concept of national authorship. This study explores two clearly different, if not contrasting, cases of questioning of national authorship: Jaroslav Rudiš’s five novels written in his native Czech and Olga Martynova’s German novel *Mörikes Schlüsselbein*, a text written in conditions of translingual authorship. Hybrid constellations, historically given or chosen voluntarily, are a basic marker of authors at the brim or outside of national literature. The form of self-positioning within new affiliations may – but must not – be a case of personal choice.

Rudiš’s novels and short novels have a specific context. In the face of Czechs’ and Germans’ living side by side in Bohemia and Moravia and centuries of shared history, hybrid constellations belong to Czech language and culture. By recalling Czech-German hybrid constellations and also the hybridity contained in the Czech linguistic variants, Rudiš emphasizes hybridity as a marker of his native culture and country. A further specific context is the historical quarrel around Czech authors being either “nationalists” or “cosmopolitans”. While present day adjustment of many authors to the condition of transculturality is seen as a matter of fact, many Czechs and non-Czech specialists (historians, slavists) are still aware of moralizing attitudes towards “national” and “cosmopolitan” tendencies in literature. Then there is the alleged immobility. Through referring jokingly to this Czech self-characteristic (e.g. in Fleischman’s talks with his therapist in *Grandhotel* and in the tram conductor Hroudá’s self-satisfied daily routine in *Potichu*), by locating two of his novels in Germany and by portraying Prague as non-Czech, non-European, but as global “Disneyland”, Rudiš moves his prose away from traditional patterns of Czech national literature. Highlighting a number of clearly middle European contexts, e.g. events in

¹⁸ A remarkable variety of constellations is presented in this collection of studies *Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature* (2013).

recent history, he creates for himself an authorship which might be described as “middle European with a Czech background”.¹⁹

In Olga Martynova’s novel *Mörikes Schlüsselbein*, distancing from the Russian language is not only given by language-switching from Russian to German. Strictly speaking, the novel is a contribution to the literatures of Germany, Austria and Switzerland (the German speaking parts of the country). Letting her – mostly hybrid by themselves (Jewish-Russian, Russian-German) – characters move all over the world and dive into history (e.g. of Ancient Egypt), Martynova dismisses the concept of national authorship. In a way, the hidden protagonist of her novel is literary creation as such. Martynova thus internationalizes a traditional marker of the Russian cultural repertory.²⁰ Through presenting Russian characters mostly multilingual and without cultural bias, the author, of course, exposes a specific *segment of Russian culturality* ever since – of a Russian cultural elite open to the world and without xenophobia.²¹

With regard to the prose fiction looked into here, labels as, e.g., “national literature”, “national authorship” are not justified any longer. Description has to take the place of clear-cut categories. Attempts at handling large parts of contemporary prose fiction scholarly will, as has been done here, have to 1. explore hybrid constellations in every single text, 2. ascertain in which way a national cultural repertory is affirmed (ignored respectively) and 3. register affiliations replacing national affiliation (belonging) – affiliations to a continent, a macro-region, social communities etc. Scholarly approach will largely depend on the subject matter to be explored and the make-up of a given text, given texts.

¹⁹ This ‘circumscription’ could be further justified by including the texts written in German, several of them in co-operation with Martin Becker, and also by exploring the film projects in several European countries.

²⁰ However, among the artistic device amply used in *Mörikes Schlüsselbein* is – as many of the compounds show – *ostranenie*, i.e. ‘making things strange (unfamiliar)’. This may be seen as a reference to Russian literary and scholarly tradition.

²¹ This section of Russian culture is also presented in Martynova’s novel *Sogar Papageien überleben uns*. The narrator, Marina, explains: “To a Russian well-read child is (was?) everything equally important, it was (is?) ruler of his/her realm of books and his/her world-history” (Martynova, 2012: 130).

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Hybrid Constellations and National Authorship: Prose Fiction by Jaroslav Rudiš (2002–2013) and Olga Martynova (2013)

Summary

Multiple hybrid constellations in large parts of contemporary prose fiction give reason to question the validity of terms as, e.g., "national authorship". This comparative study analyzes prose fiction of two Slavic-born authors; The Czech writer and translator Jaroslav Rudiš writing his novels in Czech and the Russian-born Olga Martynova writing prose fiction in German, poetry, however, in Russian. By leaving aside Czech-German history and also by settling two out of five novels in Germany, Rudiš seems to envisage for himself an authorship which might be called "middle European with a Czech background". Martynova, on the other hand, has been establishing her authorship as a novel-writer – of two texts so far – in reference to the Russian but also to the German and further cultural repertoires. In a way, she has internationalized the literature-centered Russian cultural heritage.

Attempts at trying to handle the overall hybridity in contemporary prose fiction, among others, have to ascertain in which way national and cultural repertoires are affirmed, mixed, re-written etc. and what types of affiliation (cultural, geographical, historical, social) are being exposed in single texts.

Keywords: comparative literature, 21st century prose fiction, Slavic-born writers, hybrid constellations, language switching, Jaroslav Rudiš, Olga Martynova

Słowa kluczowe: literatura porównawcza, proza fikcyjna XXI wieku, pisarze o słowiańskich korzeniach, hybrydowe konstelacje, zmiana języków, Jaroslav Rudiš, Olga Martynova