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THE IDEAL OTHER AND THE INFERIOR SELF?: ORIENTALISM IN WORKS OF JULIUS ZEYER (1841-1901)

by

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ABSTRACT

Viewing the fictional works on Asia and North Africa of the late nineteenth century Czech writer Julius Zeyer (1841–1901) in light of *Orientalism* (1978), a groundbreaking theoretical work by a Palestinian-American scholar of literary history Edward Said, brings a new interpretation of Zeyer's fiction and expands and modifies Said's thesis. Said's theory of Orientalist literature is only partly applicable to Zeyer's work. Zeyer's writings on Asia and North Africa create an alternative utopian reality with idealized characters surrounded by idyllic environments. The approval of the Other in Zeyer's work is an expression of a Czech inferiority complex, which Zeyer shared with other Czech intellectuals of the late nineteenth century. Zeyer's idealization of the Asian and North African Other belongs to a utopian tendency in Czech literary and scholarly Orientalism that prevailed over the last three centuries in the changing political and cultural context. The Czech national inferiority complex as grounds for the idealizing character of Zeyer's writings on Asia and North Africa differs from the power dynamics identified by Said. The reason is that Said stresses that a typical Orientalist author is a member of strong and superior Western colonizing nation. Frequent motifs of alternative realities, such as dreams, visions, insane states of mind, and, especially, art that become real to Zeyer's characters, suggest that Zeyer created his utopia in Asia and North Africa as an alternative reality for himself and his Czech readers, discontented with the political and cultural reality they lived in.

Comparing Zeyer's work to Said's theory reveals that the former is implicitly Orientalist, that is, racist and ethnocentric, in spite of its explicit approval of the Asian and North African Other. With the exception of explicit derogation, typical Orientalist

features exist in Zeyer's work. This finding expands Czech literary criticism, which has traditionally appreciated Zeyer's work for enriching Czech literature with new topics and writing styles.

The ambiguous character of Zeyer's Orientalism, which embraces explicit approval and implicit belittling of the Other, stems from an ambivalent Czech identity in the late nineteenth century. The Czech identity during Zeyer's lifetime had two poles, such as East/West, weak/strong, and exclusion/inclusion. The ambivalent Czech identity that Zeyer shared with his contemporaries gave rise to the ambiguity of his works on Asia and North Africa. This ambiguity challenges any overgeneralization of a binary opposition between the East and the West, the colonized and the colonizer, or the inferior and the superior. The lack of a clear binary opposition between the East and the West in Zeyer's work contests both the overgeneralized "East" of the Orientalist works criticized by Said and the overgeneralized "West" reified by Said in his critique of Orientalism, as his critics point out and as he himself admits in his later works.

Mámě a tátovi. (To mom and dad.)

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INTRODUCTION

Before I went to India in January 1998, I had though that I knew something about religions originating in India, Hinduism and Buddhism. During my trip I found out that India was a very complex place and that many of the religious phenomena I had encountered were hard to fit into particular scholarly notions. I had also tried hard not compare India with what I had expected it to be and I think I succeeded in that. However, the images of the India about which I had read in Czech popularizing and fictional literature kept coming to my mind. The India I remembered from my reading of the Czech books was a very clean place with aristocratic people chanting sacred ancient hymns in Sanskrit, the language "so similar" to the Czech language. When Indians were not chanting, they were cultivating their beautiful bodies through challenging yogic positions or dancing in splendid costumes. The Indian food I used to read about included many mouth-watering delicacies. The India I encountered during my short but intense trip was in many aspects the very opposite of what I remembered from reading the Czech books. Although many Indians very helpful during my daily travels, I found rickshaw and taxi drivers incredibly obnoxious as they were offering me their services or overcharging me. I found bureaucrats at railway stations unhelpful and suspected that they expected bribes. The lack of hygiene related to human bodily functions was repulsive to me. My stomach was constantly turning upside down as I observed the unhygienic way of handling food. That is why I often chose to consume coke and crackers, as they seemed to be the most hygienic food and drink available, although I usually avoid them as unhealthy. India did not disappoint me, but made me wonder why my images of it from Czech literature were so different from what I encountered. That is why I chose to write

my thesis about the way Czech writers and scholars depict the so-called "Orient." Jaroslav Strnad from the Oriental Institute in Prague suggested I write about Julius Zeyer[1] (1841-1901), since his writings are the richest in Asian and North African topics in Czech literature.

Zeyer is a well-known figure in Czech literature, but he is not widely read any more. Before I started working on this thesis, I had not read his books either. Once I did, I was surprised to find that he constructs India and many other Asian and North African countries as utopian places, just like many other Czech authors do. Czech scholarship has not addressed sufficiently the question why Zeyer, along with other Czech writers and scholars, idealizes countries of Asia and North Africa. Vincenc Lesný, professor of Indology at Charles University, Prague, started his speech at the opening of the exhibition *India in Czech Culture* in Prague held in 1948 by asking why Czech people are so attracted to India. He gave an answer in the lines of the Czech tradition claiming common roots with the people of India:

> I have often asked myself what, indeed, attracts [Czechs] to India so much. It seems to me that a [...] link is constituted by the affinity between the soul of our people and that of a people who are linguistically and ethnically nearer to us, Slavs, than, say, to the Romance or Anglo-Saxon races, and whose thought is closer to ours, too.[2]

In the foreword to *Looking Towards India* by Miloslav Krása, Tara Chand, M.P., describes the Czech fascination with her country, India, as a "sociological puzzle" and seeks the causes in the common experience of foreign suppression:

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[1] Pavel Poucha, the head of the Indology Department of the Oriental Institute in Prague in the 1950s, wrote a detailed study of Zeyer's works with Asian and North African themes. He says: "There are numerous Oriental materials and motifs in Zeyer's work, the most of all Czech writers, even more than in the work of Jaroslav Vrchlický. In addition, their content is far more varied." (Julius Zeyer: *Světla východu*, Svobodné Slovo, Praha 1958, p. 538.)

[2] Miloslav Krása, *Looking Towards India*, 5.

> From the Middle Ages on the Czech lands have been strangely drawn towards India. Its literature and art, philosophy and religion, have fascinated the Czech mind. The narrative which Dr. Krása has written demonstrates the close resemblance between the political fortunes of India and Czechoslovakia. Both share similar social problems of diversities of language and culture. They have suffered political domination as a result of their internal differences – India was for nearly two centuries the victim of British imperialist exploitation, as Czechoslovakia was an appendage of Austro-Hungarian imperialism and Hitlerite tyranny. [...] It is a sociological puzzle why the people of Czechoslovakia, geographically so remote from India, ideologically occidental to their very roots and profoundly different from India's extreme orientalism, should have felt, throughout the centuries, attracted to India and its civilization. [3]

It is my aim in this thesis to solve this "sociological puzzle." In addition, I analyze not only the reasons for the Czech idealization of India but also of the reasons for the idealization of other countries of Asia and North Africa. Moreover, I question the repercussions of this idealization.

How does Zeyer's ideal place in the "East" relate to the racism towards Asians and North African in contemporary Czech society? Why do thousands of Gypsies leave the Czech Republic because of its presumed racism when the ethnic origin of Gypsies goes back to the India, whose people are essentially "so close" to the Czechs? Why has a murder of a Czech Gypsy been racially motivated? Why has the Japanese government warned their tourists against racially motivated violence in the Czech Republic, since they may be mistaken for Vietnamese and beaten up? The approval of Asia and North Africa in Czech scholarly and fictional literature over the last three centuries is striking in comparison to the racism that has currently manifested in hate crimes. My intention in the thesis has not been to address comprehensively the roots of Czech racism, but to analyze

[3]Ibid., 6.

works that have contributed to popular images of the racially different Other in the Czech lands.

Since racism and ethnocentrism towards the countries of North Africa and Asia are the subjects of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, I use his theory of the Orientalist discourse to analyze the results of Zeyer's creative practice. In *Orientalism*, the groundbreaking analysis of Western European and American scholarship and fictional writing on North Africa, Edward Said argues that Orientalist literature is both derived from and supports colonizing power. Said's theory is also based on the binary opposition between the East and the West, the colonized and the colonizer, and the inferior and the superior. Recent critics of Said's *Orientalism* suggest that the binary opposition does not fully apply to the literature on Asia and North Africa produced by European writers from nations that were not major colonial powers or to Asian nations that were not colonized. Zeyer's Orientalism does not exactly fit Said's model, because it aims at attaining at least some moral and cultural power for the powerless Czech nation.

I want to establish whether Zeyer's books are at all relevant to Said's theory, since there are two major differences between the former and the latter. Firstly, Said focuses on the Orientalism of major colonial powers, Britain, France, and later the United States. Zeyer, on the other hand, wrote at the times when the Czech nation was forming under the political oppression of Austria-Hungary and cultural and economic subordination to the German minority. Secondly, Said stressed that writers from the major colonial powers have mostly described North Africans and Asians in a very demeaning way, although he admits that overwhelmingly approving depictions misrepresent the subject matter as well. Zeyer created utopian images in his narratives

about Asia and North Africa and his stance is not an exception, but a rule in Czech writings on Asia and North Africa.

Zeyer's idealization of the Other is a programmatic search for a better world, stemming from the Czech national inferiority complex as a weak and subordinated nation. However, the inherent racism and ethnocentrism in Zeyer's work come from the Czech identification with the white, European, and therefore strong nations. Zeyer's multi-lingual family background contributed to his identity as a Western European. Literary works of Zeyer's contemporaries reflect either or both of the extreme stances - the weak, colonized, and Eastern on the one hand, and the white, strong, and Western on the other.[4] The Czech identity of either belonging to both the worlds or being excluded from both of them, that epitomizes the "dividing line"[5] between the "Orient" and "Occident," was very prominent in the late nineteenth century. Czech cultural life was successfully developing, while the Czech lands were still under Austro-Hungarian rule. This ambivalent Czech identity gave rise to the ambiguous nature of Zeyer's Orientalism. This Orientalism explicitly admires while implicitly denigrates the countries of Asia and North Africa. This inherent ambiguity of Czech Orientalism is not only evident in Zeyer's writings and the writings of his nineteenth century contemporaries, but exists also in the Czech literature and scholarship of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries.

Zeyer adopted his story lines from Western European translations of Asian and North African literary and religious texts. He vaguely admits this derivative character by calling his works "renewed images." Evaluating Zeyer's creative practice is not the

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[4] For example, Svatopluk Čech's parody *Výlety pana Broučka* and Alois Jirásek's historical fiction that I discuss later.

[5] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 71.

subject of this thesis. However, the very fact that a nineteenth century writer from a land-locked and colonized Central European country that did not participate in the colonization of Asia and North Africa chose to write about those countries invites analysis. While it is true that Zeyer's work is usually based on Western European translations of Asian and North African literary and religious texts, the decision to use these topics and the selection of the topics is unique to him. Since the story lines in Zeyer's works on Asia and North Africa are not products of his creativity, I choose not to analyze his narratives individually, but to follow patterns in two areas.

Firstly, I identify which topics Zeyer chose most frequently and find out whether these topics are comparable to the typical Orientalist topics identified by Said. The second area that I consider important for the analysis of Zeyer's construction of the Asian and African Other are the more abstract characteristics of his writings, particularly the ways he adapted the works that inspired him. For an analysis of Zeyer's construction of the Asian and North African Other, I consider useful to look at the Czech Self at the end of the nineteenth century and at Zeyer's identity as a Czech. By analyzing Zeyer's work in light of Said's theory, I am offering an interpretation of Zeyer new in Czech literary history. My analysis of Zeyer's works against the background of Said's theory has also repercussions for the former.

Said's *Orientalism* elicited numerous critiques, responses, harsh criticisms as well as numerous emulations that focus on geographic areas different from those, about which he writes. However controversial, his book is a significant contribution to the study of the construction of the Asian and North African Other, different in terms of race, culture, and religion. Said admits that he excluded important work on Asia and North Africa by

European scholars other than British and French. Consequently, he suggests that scholars should undertake an inquiry into the nature of the Orientalism of small European nations.[6] Although in other writings Said pays attention to Yeats and Irish literature as the literature of a colonized Western European nation,[7] he has not specifically addressed Orientalism in the context of a colonized European nation. The marginal Czech case that does not exactly fit into Said's model challenges and modifies aspects of his theory.

Chapter 1 of this thesis characterizes Orientalism as defined by Said. In Chapter 2, I discuss Julius Zeyer's life and work with an emphasis on his relationship to the countries of Asia and North Africa as well as his Czech identity. Chapter 3 stems from my reading of Zeyer's work related to Asia and North Africa as well as secondary literature about these works. This chapter identifies the prevalent repetitive motifs in these works and compares them to the typical Orientalist motifs outlined by Said. Chapter 3 also discusses the applicability yet limitations of Said's concepts of Orientalism in relation to Zeyer. Chapter 4 indicates what motivates Zeyer to use Asian and North African motifs the way he does, showing the relation between his themes and creative practices on the one hand and his identity as a Czech intellectual of the late nineteenth century on the other. The Conclusion reveals the relation between Zeyer's ambivalent identity as a member of a weak/strong nation and his ambiguous, idealizing/denigrating Orientalism. In addition, the Conclusion shows that the power dynamics in Zeyer's work is different from the binary opposites specified by Said. In the Epilogue, I give examples

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[6] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 17.

[7] Edward Said, Terry Eagleton and Fredric Jameson, *Nationalism, colonialism, and literature.* Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1990

of other Czech literary and scholarly writings on Asia and Africa that explicitly idealize the Asian and African Other.

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTALISM ACCORDING TO SAID

Edward Said characterizes Western European and American Orientalism as a way of dominating and exerting authority over the countries of Asia and North Africa.[1] This thesis modifies Said's claims by adding the case of Orientalism coming from a nation that is itself dominated. This research is necessary, since Said identifies only the most prominent characteristics of Orientalism. He stresses the strong/weak dichotomy between Western European and American Orientalists on the one hand and Asian and North African subjects on the other: "Europe was always in a position of strength, not to say domination. There is no way of putting this euphemistically. ... Orientalism is synonymous with European domination of the Orient."[2] Said's characterization of Orientalism as an expression of a strength versus weakness does not apply to the Czech nation in the late nineteenth century, which was then politically and culturally very weak.

Said's main point is that Orientalists have depicted Asians and North Africans in a demeaning manner as lazy, indulgent, sexually perverted, and generally inferior to Europeans:

> The Orient was viewed as if framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, the illustrated manual.[3] One of the important developments in nineteenth-century Orientalism was the distillation of essential ideas about the Orient – its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness [...].[4]

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[1] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

[2] Ibid., 40, 197.

[3] Ibid., 41.

[4] Ibid., 205.

This description of Orientalism does not apply to Zeyer's work, in which he constructed virtual utopias in various parts of Asia and North Africa.

Orientalist knowledge is political knowledge; it is tainted by the political situation in which it emerged, Europe's and America's colonialism and imperialism.[5] At the same time, Orientalist works fostered colonial exploits,[6] since knowledge is power and the knowledge of a subject facilitates its domination:[7]

> [...] Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar [...] and the strange [...]. This vision in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived. Orientals lived in their world, "we" lived in ours. The vision and material reality propped each other up, kept each other going.[8]

Orientalism and the material culture in which it emerges influence each other. The Orientalist ideas can be used for political aims.

To a large degree, Orientalism draws on the British and French colonial experience, posing the *idea* of a backward "Orient" against a superior "Occident" where both the "Orient" and the "Occident" are described in a schematic and stereotypical fashion:

> [T]he Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West. The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other.[9]

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[5] Ibid., 11.

[6] Ibid., 12.

[7] Ibid., 40.

[8] Ibid., 44.

[9] Ibid., 4-5.

Said is critical of the Orientalist reification of the Other - the Them who are different from the Us.

According to Said, Orientalism is an ethnocentric phenomenon, in which the countries of Asia and North Africa are only the material used for the author's agenda. In other words, Orientalists are not interested in correctly representing the nations of Asia and North Africa or in being true to an "original:" "Orientalism responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West."[10] Orientalist works, therefore, reflect the author's social, political, economic, religious, and cultural environment as well as his personal background and interests more than they reflect the subject matter. In addition, Orientalist works not only mirror the Orientalists' identity, they significantly shape it. The reason is that by constructing a clear and definite Other, Orientalist authors can mold the idea of the Self more clearly than without the Other:[11] "[...] European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self."[12] Orientalists are interested in Asian and North African phenomena only as far as the representation of these phenomena contributes to their identity as superior to Asians and North Africans.

Orientalism is Eurocentric, that is, it distorts the cultural and religious realities of Asia and North Africa in the interests of comparing them to similar European phenomena:[13]

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[10] Ibid., 22.

[11] Ibid., 55.

[12] Ibid., 3.

[13] Ibid., 62.

> Thus the Orient acquired [...] representations, each one more concrete, more internally congruent with some Western exigency than the ones that preceded it. It is as if, having once settled on the Orient as a locale suitable for incarnation of the infinite in a finite shape, Europe could not stop the practice; the Orient and the Oriental, [...] become repetitious pseudoincarnations of some great original (Christ, Europe, the West) they were supposed to be imitating.[14]

Orientalist works are not truthful and there is no intention to make them truthful.[15] The only truthfulness to which Orientalist works aspire is an external one and even when they achieve it, they misrepresents the subject matter. This stress on the visual manifests itself through the frequent Orientalist motifs of a stage set, *tableau vivant*,[16] or *tableau historique*, revealing and presenting to the audience what the Orientalist had uncovered.[17] Except for the visual aspects of their subject matter, Orientalists do not pursue truthfulness of their representation. In their obscure and complex subject matter, they seek phenomena familiar to them from their environment and adjust them to the European sensibility, that is, they Europeanize them.

A belief that an essence of Asian and African peoples can be grasped and expressed, essentialism, distorts the themes of the works on Asia and North Africa. Essentialism, by encouraging compartmentalization of peoples and suggesting that only the Orientalist has the authority and erudition to define the Other's essence, promotes racism:

> On the level of the *thematic*, [the Orientalists] adopt an essentialist conception of the countries, nations and peoples of the Orient under study,

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[14] Ibid., 62.

[15] Ibid., 71.

[16] Ibid., 158.

[17] Ibid., 127.

> a conception which expresses itself through a characterized ethnist typology ... and will soon proceed with it towards racism.[18]

By claiming that a tangible and immutable essence of a nation exists, essentialism contributes to the fixed Orientalist code that draws a sharp line between the Self and the Other and conceals historical change.[19]

The process of delivery of Orientalist knowledge to Europe and America consists of three components: the Orientalist, the Orientalist knowledge, and the "consumer" of such knowledge. The "consumer" of the Orientalist knowledge is important, since he or she is always different from the subject matter. Orientalist literature has not been produced for Asian or North African readers or for any other reader in the world, but for readers in Europe or America:

> [The process] forces the uninitiated Western reader to accept Orientalist codifications [...] as the *true* Orient. [...] The Orient is also [...] circumscribed by a series of attitudes and judgements that send the Western mind, not first to Oriental sources for correction and verification, but rather to the other Orientalist works.[20]

Using the accepted Orientalist code repeatedly and communicating it to the European and American audience strengthens the difference between the Other and the Self.

Orientalism is also anti-empirical and, as a closed system of timeless information, resembles mythology.[21] This codified system of motifs is handed down within the Orientalist field without the information being verified against a contemporary experience, since such verification could ruin the whole system. "To write about the

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[18] Ibid., 97.

[19] Ibid., 333.

[20] Ibid., 67.

[21] Ibid., 70.

modern Orient is [...] to reveal an upsetting demystification of images culled from texts, [...]"[22] says Said. He also affirms that Orientalists prefer the safety of a text to an unstructured personal experience.[23] This applies even to the Orientalists who had traveled to the locales they wrote about: "There is a rather complex dialectic of reinforcement by which the experiences of readers in reality are determined by what they have read, and this in turn influences writers to take up subjects defined in advance by readers' experience."[24] In Chapter 3, I demonstrate that Zeyer adopted the Orientalist code. I also indicate which aspects of the code are particularly striking in his work.

Said emphasizes that during the cultural exchange between Orientalists and their subject matter, the Orientalist imagery remains limited and stereotyped. The stereotypical clichés in Orientalist works include:

> The Sphinx, Cleopatra, Eden, Troy, Sodom and Gomorrah, Astarte, Isis and Osiris, Sheba, Babylon, the Genii, the Magi, Prester John, Mahomet; [...] monsters, devils, heroes; terrors, pleasures, desires;[25]

Other frequent Orientalist motifs are pilgrimage to the Orient, spectacle,[26] sensuality, and, above all, licentious sex.[27] The Oriental splendor is permeated with despotism and cruelty.[28] The "Orient" becomes for the Orientalist writers the quintessential Other, the strange, fascinating, exotic, essentially "feminized" Other that initially attracts through its

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[22] Ibid., 101.

[23] Ibid., 93.

[24] Ibid., 94.

[25] Ibid., 63.

[26] Ibid., 158.

[27] Ibid., 188.

[28] Ibid., 4.

sensuality, but eventually repels. In Chapter 3, I identify which motifs outlined by Said are present in Zeyer's works and which are absent.

Although Said stresses the demeaning aspect of Orientalism, he admits that idealization implies derogation as well, since it does not aim at showing the Other as it is, but only a fantasy, which serves the author's agenda:

> True, the relationship of strong to weak could be disguised or mitigated, as when Balfour acknowledged the "greatness" of Oriental civilizations. But the essential relationship, on political, cultural, and even religious grounds, was seen – in the West, which is what concerns us here – to be one between a strong and a weak partner.[29]

Even when pointing out that representing the greatness of Oriental civilizations is Orientalist, Said insists on the strong/weak dichotomy. This dichotomy does not apply to Zeyer's work. In order to adjust Said's thesis to Zeyer's case, I analyze Zeyer's identity as a Czech writer in the late nineteenth century and, especially, the strong/weak aspects of this identity.

Said's claim of a one-way imperialist power as the only important Orientalist agency is challenged by the British scholar John M. MacKenzie in his recent re-evaluation of Orientalism, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*. MacKenzie questions Said's almost exclusive use of Britain, France and the United States as the epitomes of Orientalist power. MacKenzie states that Said has not substantially explained why German and other Orientalisms "seem to have been more disinterested"[30] in exerting such political, military, or ideological power over the "Orient." Although Said admits that the influence between the Orientalists and the Other is mutual, he does not develop this

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[29] Ibid., 40.

[30] John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts*, 9.

assertion, stressing the superiority derived from Orientalism by the West. MacKenzie suggests exploring the interactive and multifaceted quality of the Orientalist discourse, including other influences of Orientalist knowledge on the West:

> Thus the Orient, or, at least its discourse, has the capacity to become the tool of cultural revolution, a legitimizing source of resistance to those who challenge western conventions, introspection and complacency.[31]

MacKenzie also observes that colonized people themselves used Orientalist concepts. For example, Gandhi appropriated the notion of "spiritual, pre-industrial India" for his construction of the Indian "Utopian vision."[32] MacKenzie encourages scholars to examine critically the use of Orientalist concepts by entities other than the major colonial powers as well the application of Orientalist knowledge for purposes other than gaining colonial power over the Asian and North African Other. In his article "Hermeneutics versus History," published within a review symposium on Said's *Orientalism*, another scholar, David Kopf, argues that the intelligentsia of colonized nations used Orientalist knowledge for their political agenda. Kopf demonstrates that, for example, the Bengal Renaissance "emerged from the encounter with representatives of the dominant British elite."[33] Kopf indicates that other Hindu thinkers drew inspiration from India's encounter with their colonizers and their scholarship: "I still found it disconcerting that many researchers have ignored connections between the Hindu modernizing efforts of Debendranath, Keshub, Dayanand, Vivekananda, Rabindranath, and Gandhi, on the one hand, and early Orientalist scholarship on the other."[34] Based on MacKenzie's and

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[31] Ibid., 10.

[32] Ibid., 12-13.

[33] *Journal of Asian Studies* 39, 3 (May 1980): 500

[34] Ibid., 501

Kopf's arguments about the importance of a colonizer's scholarship for the colonized nation's political agenda, an analysis of Zeyer's adoption of Orientalist themes and his adaptation of them for his own agenda promises meaningful findings.

Said's omission of German Orientalism is also criticized by Fedwa Malti-Douglas in her article "Re-Orienting Orientalism."[35] She argues that focusing predominantly on British and French Orientalisms followed by the focus on the Orientalism of the United States allowed Said to apply a systematic dichotomy between constructs:

colonizer	vs.	*colonized*
we	vs.	*they*
subject	vs.	*object*
active	vs.	*passive*
superior	vs.	*inferior*
masculine	vs.	*feminine*.[36]

Malti-Douglas argues that such strict dichotomy does not apply to all Orientalist writings: "Said has taken a mental structure, that of the fundamental difference between East and West, often but not always present in his subject, Orientalism, and not only overgeneralized it, but also used it to characterize historical processes in which it is clearly out of place."[37] Malti-Douglas' critique invites an analysis of Orientalism that does not stem from and support a colonial power, challenging an overgeneralized binary opposition of the "Occident" versus the "Orient."

MacKenzie also observes that by stressing power and dominance as the "essential" qualities of the "West," in *Orientalism* and in the later *Culture and*

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[35] *Virginia Quarterly Review* 55, 4 (Autumn 1979): 724 – 733.

[36] Ibid., 729.

[37] Ibid., 729-30.

Imperialism (1993), Said endorses "Occidentalism."[38] In *Representations of the Intellectual* (1993), Said clarifies his stance on the essentialized "East" and "West" as well as similar dichotomies:

> The construction of fictions like "East" and "West," to say nothing of racialist essences like subject races, Orientals, Aryans, Negroes and the like, were what my books attempted to combat. Far from encouraging a sense of aggrieved primal innocence in countries which had suffered the ravages of colonialism, I stated repeatedly that mystical abstractions such as these were lies, as were the various rhetorics of blame they arise to; cultures are too intermingled, their contents and histories too interdependent and hybrid for surgical separation into large and mostly ideological opposites like Orient and Occident.[39]

From critiques of *Orientalism* and Said's own clarifications, it follows that a critical assessment of the agents involved in the Orientalist process is necessary. The use of abstract notions, such as the East and the West, for heuristic purposes on the one hand and their overgeneralization and reification on the other, require special attention. Therefore, comparing Said's theory with works by Zeyer, a member of a colonized nation whose identity embraced both the "East " and the "West," enriches the on-going discourse triggered by Said's pathbreaking publication.

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[38] John M. Mackenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts*, 13.

[39] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, XII.

CHAPTER 2

JULIUS ZEYER AS A CZECH ROMANTIC WRITER

Zeyer's writings were influenced by his family background and origin as well as by his social, political and cultural environment. Julius Zeyer was born on April 26, 1841 to a wealthy Prague family. His father owned a lumber business. The Zeyer family lived close to the center of Prague and the city with its mysterious narrow streets fed Zeyer's imagination. His father's side of the family came from impoverished French aristocracy while his mother's family was German Jewish. Young Zeyer's cultural background was, therefore, diverse. His Czech nurse would tell him stories and fairy tales in Czech, influencing his imagination and his identification as a Czech. The Czech communist literary critic Fučík argues that memories of this nurse are reflected in many of Zeyer's female characters; Fučík quotes Zeyer's own words about the nurse's influence on him: "Unawares, the woman was a poet and the memory of her has remained in my mind as well as heart. I think that because of her influence, luckily or unluckily, I became a poet and especially a Czech poet."[1] Zeyer's multi-national background influenced his writings in several ways. The fact that he was not exclusively of Czech heritage may have encouraged him to explore other national identities. In addition, in his family he learned several Western European languages with almost native fluency. These skills opened the doors for him to Western European cultures and probably inspired him to take up the study of lesser-known languages. He was able to make a living as a tutor and translator. The language skills enabled him to study and use Western European Orientalist literature.

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[1] Julius Fučík, *Tři studie*, p. 102.

The young Zeyer studied at a grammar school and, for a short time, at a technical college. He enjoyed reading. Planning to follow his father's example, he learned carpentry in Vienna. He failed the grammar school final exams in mathematics, which prevented him from getting an official university education. Zeyer outlined his uneven interest in various school subjects in a letter to his Polish translator: "I was a lousy student and enjoyed nothing but history, religion – I had a mystical string in me – and languages. I learned several of them."[2] Not being able to enter the university as a full time student, he decided to acquire education on his own and studied the grammars of Coptic, Provençal, and Sanskrit. However, the frequent misspellings, inconsistent transliteration, wrong declensions, and other language mistakes found in his works on India suggest that he had not mastered Sanskrit grammar.[3] The lack of a structured way of learning and the confidence gained from his own guidance may have contributed to the uniqueness of his literary work.

Zeyer's love for travel was satisfied from an early age. He traveled in Germany as an apprentice carpenter. In 1873 and 1880, he traveled to Russia to work as a tutor for the children of Russian nobility. Zeyer also traveled widely in Western Europe, including Germany, Holland, Belgium, and Austria. In his trips to Southern Europe, he covered Italy, Spain, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia, Turkey, and Tunisia. When travelling, Zeyer rarely stayed at one place for a long time, but was constantly on the road. Foreign travel was common among his intellectual generation, but Zeyer traveled to more places and more often than any of his peers. He was able to travel for pleasure and learning because

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[2] Věra Menclová, "Julius Zeyer - dlouhá cesta a věčná touha po návratu." *Lidové noviny*, 2. května 1998, p. 5

[3] Bohumil Straka, *Příspěvek k poznání orientálních předloh Zeyerových*, p. 3.

of his family's wealth or others' generosity; the fact that he did not have a family of his own or a regular job made his frequent departures from the Czech lands relatively easy. His journeys to Greece and Constantinople in 1887 and to Spain in 1890, for example, were funded by the *Svatobor* cultural association.[4] The poet and editor of the magazine *Lumír* Josef Václav Sládek helped Zeyer with some of his journeys, for example to Scandinavia. Zeyer's travels re-enforced his interest in the Other as his subject matter.

Zeyer's personal life also influenced his writing. Zeyer was a bachelor, which enabled him to leave the Czech lands for his frequent and long travels abroad without having to fit a wife and children into his plans. His friend the painter Zdenka Braunerová was in love with him and proposed to him, but he declined her proposal since his heart belonged to Marry Anne Stone. Marry Anne Stone came from a wealthy English family, which would not allow her to marry a writer without a secure income. These unfulfilled affectionate feelings fostered Zeyer's writing about beautiful and noble yet elusive females.[5] While Zeyer liked company and nurtured numerous friendships through mutual visits, he also liked solitude. His abundant travels enabled him to maintain rich correspondence with friends. His numerous letters, most of them to important intellectuals of his times, have been published. Zeyer's correspondence is a valuable source of information about the feelings and opinions that he did not directly express in his fiction. Writing letters was for Zeyer a good way of communicating with the world while keeping his privacy. By maintaining an international correspondence, Zeyer also cultivated his linguistic skills, since he wrote letters not only in Czech, but also in Italian,

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[4] *Svatobor* was an association that supported the social status of Czech writers, including awarding of scholarships.

German, English, Russian, and Polish.[6] His letters show that he despised the pettiness, quarrelsomeness, and lack of integrity that he witnessed among the Czech intellectuals in the capital city of Prague.

Zeyer was brought up in the Catholic faith, nurtured by his mother's and nurse's religiousness, and grew up to be a devout yet non-dogmatic believer. In letters to his friends, such as the Christian mystical sculptor František Bílek,[7] Zeyer expressed his tendency towards Christian pietism and longings for mystical practice. He believed in miracles, visions, and the soul's eternal life.[8] His faith was reflected in his numerous works with Biblical themes, such as *Tři legendy o Krucifixu* (Three Legends of the Cross), which gained him support of the Czech Catholic circles.[9] Zeyer also contributed to the magazine of the Czech Catholic writers, *Katolická moderna* (Catholic Modernity). He used to go to early morning Mass and pray at home.[10] Zeyer was also interested in the occult and non-Christian religions, as we learn from the memoirs of his friend, a pharmacist at Vodňany and a minor writer, František Herites:

> Thanks to his ruminations and imagination, Zeyer had firm beliefs and unshakable conviction about supernatural forces and powers. Many traces of his religious and philosophical views are contained in his works. He

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[5] For example, Mingea in *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví.*

[6] Before his journey to Spain, Zeyer learned also Spanish.

[7] Bílek's religious carvings are an important part of the Czech cultural heritage. For example, his large crucifix is displayed at St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague. Bílek was also open to other religions, as suggests his sculpture of the Hindu deity Krishna.

[8] Josef Šach, O náboženském smýšlení Julia Zeyera. *Osvěta*, Praha 1908, pp. 822 – 833.

[9] J. Š. Kvapil, Půl století Zeyerova kultu a hodnocení. *Slovesná věda*, Praha 1951, p. 15.

[10] Anonym, O náboženském smýšlení Zeyerově. *Nový obzor*, 1913, p. 42

> would enjoy talking about such things and argue using views completely contrary to the views of his opponents.[11]

Zeyer's interest in non-Christian religions did not contradict his Catholic faith. In a lecture on a Czech traveler and art-collector Vojta Náprstek, Zeyer expressed his universalistic beliefs, affirming the equal value of different religions:

> I know that such spiritual heights exist where one breaths the Divine breath, no matter what path one has taken and whether the individual entering there has faith in God or not.[12]

Although Zeyer was interested in non-Christian religions, there is no evidence that he practiced them. Zeyer planned to join a Catholic monastic order at a late age, but never realized this dream.[13]

From 1873 on, Zeyer published his prose and poetry in numerous Czech literary magazines, such as *Paleček* (Tom Thumb), *Světozor* (World Monitor), *Květy* (Blossoms), *Ruch* (Bustle), *Osvěta* (Awareness), *Nový život* (New Life), *Almanach secese* (The Art Nouveau Almanach), and *Lumír* (named after a Czech pre-Christian mythical hero). *Lumír*, founded in 1870s, was a very significant Czech literary magazine. Zeyer's first publications in *Lumír* were minor works of prose with either occult or social themes, such as *Z papíru na kornouty* (From the Wrapping Paper), *Duhový pták* (The Rainbow Bird), and *Jeho a její svět* (His and her Worlds). A large number of Zeyer's more mature works were first published in *Lumír*.[14] The contributors to *Lumír* paid close attention to cultural developments outside the Czech lands. Their translations of poetry and prose included

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[11] František Herites, "Vzpomínky na Julia Zeyera." *Lumír*, p. 254

[12] Anonym, "O náboženském smýšlení Zeyerově." *Nový obzor*, 1913, p. 42

[13] Věra Menclová, "Julius Zeyer - dlouhá cesta a věčná touha po návratu." *Lidové noviny*, 2. května 1998, p. 5

[14] Miloš Pohorský, *Dějiny české literatury III*, pp. 205 - 206

literary works from both large and small nations of Western and Eastern Europe, Asia, and America. The foreign literary works were translated with the intent to enrich Czech literature, while curbing the influence of German literature. The editors of *Lumír* aimed to inform their readers about recent cultural developments in the world. Original works by Czech writers were also published, many inspired by foreign cultures. Although members of the *Lumír* circle promoted cosmopolitanism in literature, Zeyer, with his themes from Asia and North Africa, was the extreme proponent of their program.

Zeyer's first major work was *Ondřej Černyšev* (Ondřej Černyšev) (1876), a historic novel about Russia at the end of the eighteenth century. Another major novel, *Román o věrném přátelství Amise a Amila* (The Novel of the Faithful Friendship between Amis and Amil) (1880) narrates the experiences of two knights in medieval France. For other narratives, Zeyer chose Italian, Irish, Spanish, North African, or Asian themes. Thus, for example, *Dobrodružství Madrány* (Madrána's Adventures) (1882) and *Báje Šošany* (Šošana's Tales) (1880) are set in the Middle East and *Sestra Paskalina* (Sister Paskalina) (1887) in medieval Bohemia and India.

Zeyer paraphrased many Western European translations of Asian and North African narratives, calling his creations "renewed images." One of them is *Gompači a Komurasaki* (Gompači and Komurasaki) (1884), a story of tragic love set in Japan. Zeyer called his other works with more original plots "novellas." However, the line between these two types of works is blurred. In the 1880s, Zeyer wrote historical epic poems with heroic themes. They include a series of poems on the Czech mythical pagan past, *Vyšehrad* (The Vyšehrad Castle) (1880); an epic poem from Russian history, *Zpěv o*

pomstě za Igora (Lay of the Hosts of Igor) (1884); and an epic poem about pre-Christian Irish history, *Ossianův návrat* (Ossian's Return) (1905).

Besides prose and epic poetry, Zeyer also wrote drama, but his plays have been more read than staged. In 1883, the Czech National Theater was opened, which was a very significant event in Czech cultural life. Inspired by the new outlet for Czech dramatists, Zeyer contributed his dream-like dramatic poems *Sulamit* (Sulamit) and the Irish legend on love and passion *Legenda z Erinu* (The Erin Legend) (1886). Zeyer's later drama, a lyrical fairy tale, *Radúz a Mahulena* (Radúz and Mahulena) (1898), takes place in pagan Slovakia. The Czech composer Josef Suk set the fairy tale to music. Although the fact is not fully recognized, Zeyer's inspiration for the plot of *Radúz a Mahulena* comes from Indian dramas by Kalidasa (fifth century CE). Zeyer acknowledges this by calling the sister of the main female character Prija, a version of a Hindi female name.[15] Zeyer's complete works were published soon after his death, in 1902 – 1907; the centenary publication in 1941 – 1949 in honor of Zeyer's birth remains incomplete.

Because he romanticized and glorified his subject matter and paid more attention to the emotions of his characters than the realism of the narratives, literary critics classify Zeyer as a romantic writer. Another reason is that he turned away from the growing capitalism, that is, materialism of the nineteenth-century industrial society. However, because his literary career took place in the late nineteenth century, some authors call him a neo-romantic or the last European romantic. In an obituary published in *Lumír*, he is

[15] For example, Máchal claims that the story is a "renewed image" of a Slovak story recorded by the Czech writer Božena Němcová. He refers to the evil princesses Prija and Živa as "well known pseudo-mythical names." Máchal stresses the typical Slovak character of the story: "The scent of the Slovak national tradition exudes from everything in the story." J. Máchal, Ze studií o Juliu Zeyerovi. *Listy filologické*, 1904, pp. 219-231.

called the purest and truest romantic.[16] Fučík points out that before Zeyer, the conditions of Czech literature were not ripe for a writer of romantic epics.[17] A Czech-American literary historian René Wellek likens Zeyer's imagination to that of the British pre-Raphaelites.[18] The critical evaluation of Zeyer's work has dramatically oscillated over time, as Pynsent points out:

> Julius Zeyer was underestimated as a writer in his own time and perhaps overestimated in the period between his death in 1901 and the beginning of the Great War. Between the wars he was placed in works of literary criticism as a plagiarizing or unoriginal or unCzech curiosity of 19th century literature. In and around 1941, the centenary of his birth, a plethora of works was published concerning him. Since the Second World War he has been sadly neglected and often cruelly castigated.[19]

The outstanding Czech literary critic F. X. Šalda appreciates the extent of Zeyer' idealism unusual in the cultural context he lived in: "Zeyer seems to be an underestimated phenomenon [...]; it is a miracle to me that someone in Bohemia of the 1880s was able to rise so high." Šalda criticizes Zeyer's adoption of Asian and North African works without making all his sources known and, at the same time, admits that the results of Zeyer's literary theft command respect.[20] Věra Menclová, who teaches literary history at Charles University, Prague, gives a concise and paradoxical evaluation of Zeyer: "Try to borrow Zeyer's books from a library. They will be checked out, lost, and completely unavailable. Is there a greater honor for an author one hundred years [from his death]?"[21] Zeyer died

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[16] Antonín Nečásek, "Julius Zeyer." *Lumír*, Praha 1901, pp. 217 - 218

[17] Julius Fučík, *Tři studie*, p. 114

[18] *Anthology of Czech Poetry*, introduction by René Wellek, 299.

[19] Robert B. Pynsent, *Julius Zeyer: The Path to Decadence*, 5.

[20] Josef Polák, *Česká literatura 19. století*, pp. 178, 199

[21] Věra Menclová, "Julius Zeyer - dlouhá cesta a věčná touha po návratu." *Lidové noviny*, 2. května 1998, p. 5

in 1901 and was buried at the Slavín cemetery at Vyšehrad, a site of a mythical pre-Christian castle and, from the 1860s, a burial place of outstanding Czech intellectuals and a national shrine. Zeyer's funeral was attended by many prominent Czech figures.[22]

Zeyer consciously cultivated a Czech identity that significantly influenced his writings. His first, teen-age writings were in German. Because of his multi-lingual background, his Czech was at first clumsy and when he published in *Lumír*, the poet Sládek would edit his works. Czech national identity was only crystallizing during Zeyer's lifetime. As the Canadian sociologist Derek Sayer stresses, the *Report of the Prague Statistical Commission of 1871* suggests that "a clear consciousness of national identity among the majority of Austro-Hungarian nations was, so to speak, still in diapers."[23] This report was published when Zeyer was thirty years old, and, as we will see later in his letters, he was clear about being Czech.

Sayer's historical account of the Czech lands, *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History*, has the underlying subject of Czech identity, which has manifested various degrees of ambiguity over centuries. Sayer stresses the paradoxical tension between the definition of identity as "the quality of being the same"[24] and the fluidity of Czech identity.

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[22] Robert B. Pynsent, *Julius Zeyer: A Path to Decadence*, 19.

[23] Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, 29.

[24] Ibid., 3.

During the long periods of political and cultural domination[25] experienced by the Czech people, Czech intellectuals have expressed their political views through their work as well as through social action. During Zeyer's lifetime, Czech linguistic nationalism grew in opposition to the official German language.[26] The Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia were a part of Austria-Hungary, where German was the official language. Moreover, the Germans, who were then a minority in the Czech lands, held the economic and cultural power. For example, before 1850, no high school in Bohemia gave instruction in Czech.[27] Before 1860, only governmental newspapers were published in Czech in Bohemia. This situation changed dramatically over the next few decades, at the time when Zeyer's career as a writer was flourishing: "[B]y 1890 there were seventeen dailies, one four-times-weekly, two thrice weekly, thirty twice weekly, and seventy-five weekly papers coming out in the Czech language."[28] The role of Czech writers promoting Czech nationalism was intense and Zeyer took this role seriously, as his private correspondence reveals.

Zeyer expressed his national identity indirectly in his fiction. While he avoided writing about the contemporary Czech situation because it was disturbing to him, he created utopian places of the beautiful and noble Other as an alternate reality for himself and his Czech readers. He also envisioned a utopian future for Czech and other Slavs by explicitly placing them beyond both the East and the West, as if they were to epitomize

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[25] As Sayer puts it, "For all but twenty years between the battle of the White Mountain in 1620 and the Velvet Revolution in 1989, the Czech lands have been an appendage of Vienna, Berlin, or Moscow." *The Coasts of Bohemia*, 16.

[26] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 96.

[27] Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, 90.

[28] Ibid., 93.

the best of both worlds. In *Zu was schreibt man Preise aus?* (What is valued?) Zeyer attributes the Slavs with the best characteristics of other peoples:

> [the Slavs] unite in themselves Indian wisdom, Hellenic courage, Roman power, simplicity, and virtue, [...][29]

Such identity between and beyond East and West is characteristic of both Romantics and Czechs. In *Imagining India*, the American Indologist Ronald Inden describes the Romantic position in-between the two constructed entities:

> Romantics typically took the stance not of supporters of Western values and institutions, but of critics of them. Yet Romantics do not necessarily (or usually) accept those of the East as ready-made substitutes. Rather, they situate themselves between or outside of *either*.[30]

Claiming an identity that excludes both the East and the West is also typical of the Czechs. A Czech-British anthropologist Ladislav Holý argues that from the nineteenth century onwards, the Czechs have constructed for themselves an identity of a connecting element between two worlds:

> Their country lies at the crossroad between East and West and it often saw the solution to its political predicament by thinking of itself as a "bridge" between the two. The image of a bridge expresses again the positive value ascribed to centrality: a structure that links the two sides. Czech national identity has been built on this metaphor since nineteenth-century national revival. In the introduction to his *History of the Czech Nation*, Palacký[31] identifies the historical task of the Czech nation as to "serve as a bridge between German and Slav, between East and West in Europe."[32]

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[29] Ibid., 49.

[30] Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, 67.

[31] A Hungarian professor of philosophy J. C. Nyíri claims that Palacký's idea of mediation between Western advancement of knowledge and Eastern backwardness referred to Austria as a whole. British contemporary press maintained that Hungary was to play a major role in this mediation. Similarly to the Czechs, Hungarians went also through an East/West (traditionalism/liberalism) identity crisis at the turn of the century, which saw expression in poetry. Barry Smith, ed., *Structure and Gestalt: Philosophy and Literature in Austria-Hungary and her successor states*. Linguistic and Literary Studies in Eastern Europe, volume 7, John Benjamins B. V., Amsterdam 1981.

[32] Ladislav Holý, "Metaphors of the natural and the artificial in Czech political discourse." *Man* 29, 4 (1994) 820.

Czech identity is also interpreted as inclusive of two facets, the strong and the weak or the "great Czechness" and "little Czechness." A Czech philosopher of the twentieth century Jan Patočka explains that such dual identity reflected the way the modern Czech nation was formed. The modern Czech nation developed from freed serfs who gained freedom not because of their own struggle, but by governmental decrees. The language they spoke was the single most important element that defined their national identity. Patočka argues that since the modern Czech nation lacked their own strong ruling class, they as a nation lack inner strength. In trying times, because of this "little Czechness," they prefer their own survival to the higher ideas and goals cherished thanks to their identification with the "great Czechness."[33] The two poles of the Czech identity are the thesis of Holý's book and are expressed succinctly in its title, *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation.* The Czech dual identity is expressed by the poet and literary and art critic, Arnošt Procházka, as the extremes of inferiority and superiority: "As a national whole, we are peculiar people. We see ourselves as sky-reaching giants or we underestimate ourselves as completely lame."[34]

The dual identity of "inclusion/exclusion" applies also to the language and ethnic background of Bohemia's inhabitants. "Was [Franz] Kafka then a Czech or a German? Or both? Or neither?,"[35] asks Derek Sayer. Czech identity challenges constructs such as "Europe" or "the West."[36] Sayer maintains that Bohemia is not a part of Eastern Europe -

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[33] Robert B. Pynsent, *Questions of Identity*, 186.

[34] Robert B. Pynsent, *Julius Zeyer: The Path to* Decadence, 191.

[35] Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, 118.

[36] Ibid., 16.

geographically, socially or culturally. However, outsiders often do not perceive Bohemia in this way. In 1849, Friedrich Engels stated that the Czechs are an "historically absolutely nonexistent nation who have never had a history of their own."[37] The Czechs themselves often doubt the importance of their history in the history of Europe.[38]

The notion of being a small nation with little importance held true especially in the second half of the nineteenth century when Czech national awareness was crystallizing. Notions of smallness were expressed in the Czech social and cultural life. For example, in 1891, the "Petřínská rozhledna," a tower resembling the Eiffel Tower, but much smaller, was erected on the Petřín hill overlooking Prague. In official publications, it was referred to as "small but ours." Zeyer's contemporary, the poet and writer Svatopluk Čech, parodied the widely-accepted notion of "the little Czech" in his book *Příběhy pana Broučka* (The Adventures of Mr. Littlebug). Another Zeyer's contemporary, the writer Alois Jirásek, painted quite a different picture of the Czechs by emphasizing the greatness of Czech history. For his historic novels covering over one thousand years, he chose the periods when the Czechs fought for their religious, political, or cultural freedom, bestowing on his contemporaries a sense of worth.[39]

Zeyer lived and wrote his works on Asia and North Africa during the times when the multifaceted Czech identity manifested itself in Czech cultural life. Through his personal life, Zeyer embraced this identity. His critics argue that his personality included more than one disposition. J. Šach, in his analysis of Zeyer's religious thought, attributed to Zeyer essences of Slav, French, and "Oriental" identities:

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[37] Ibid., 128.

[38] Ibid., 11.

> [L]et us think of Zeyer's unusual personality, in which the fiery Oriental nature mixes with the soft and good-hearted nature of a Slav and the Romanticism and glamour of a Frenchman. This strange unity and merging of three completely different elements explain much of Zeyer's [life and work], including his religious thought.[40]

Another angle of the extremes in Zeyer's life is given by the critic F. V. Krejčí, who traces the effects of Zeyer's two different lifestyles on two sides of his writings:

> The rest of his life vacillates between two poles: the life of a cosmopolitan traveler and that of a country loner. His freedom to satisfy the two proclivities makes the corresponding features in his works more powerful. The traveler finds in Europe the impressions, impulses, materials, and colors for the fabulous external surface of his works. The country dweller weaves these found treasures in deep inner concentration and, from underneath their glitzy, exotic, and fantastic surface, unearths far-reaching mystical relations; he animates the fables, fantasies, and fairy tales from extinct worlds with a living soul, igniting them with the insatiable white flame of his sweetly burning feelings and longings.[41]

From F. V. Krejčí's analysis, it follows that Zeyer embraced two different lifestyles, which manifested themselves in his works. These particular lifestyles do not exactly correspond to the binary notions of Czech identity in the late nineteenth century. Nor do the conceptions of Czech identity as defined by writers and scholars exactly correlate with each other. Nonetheless, these analyses reveal that during Zeyer's lifetime, Czech self-perception was ambivalent. Moreover, the extremes of the Czech identity of the late nineteenth century manifested themselves in Czech culture and literature.

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[39]Ibid., 131.

[40] J. Šach, "O náboženském smýšlení Zeyerově." *Osvěta*, Praha 1912, p. 832.

[41] F. V. Krejčí, "Julius Zeyer." *Zlatá Praha*, 1901, ročník XVIII, číslo 14, pp. 158–163.

Like other Czech artists of the late nineteenth century,[42] and, especially, as a contributor to the cosmopolitan magazine *Lumír*, Zeyer chose the Other as his material. His identity as a Czech brought two points of reference to his writings. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 4, he despised the political and cultural subordination of the Czech nation, which he perceived as a nation that had lost its power under Austro-Hungarian colonization. Since Zeyer was well read in Western European literature and was a seasoned traveler in Western Europe, Western European culture was an integral part of his world outlook. In this respect, he identified himself with the strong and white Western Europeans.

[42] Zeyer's friend Sládek, for example, focused on the American and Native American Other. He translated Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* from English and the Czech composer Antonín Dvořák included the theme in his *New World Symphony*.

CHAPTER 3

ORIENTALISM IN ZEYER'S MOTIFS AND CREATIVE PRACTICE

Throughout his work set in Asia or North Africa or referring to their cultures, Zeyer uses a set of motifs – or repetitive themes or ideas - comparable to the typical Orientalist motifs outlined by Said. The use of these motifs helps Zeyer to construct the ideal "Other." Recognizing Zeyer's motifs is necessary to establish whether his works are Orientalist and, if so, how his Orientalism differs from the most typical model defined by Said. The recurrent motifs are vital for an analysis of Zeyer's work from a Saidian perspective, since, according to Said, particular stereotypical themes indicate the Orientalist nature of writings on Asia and North Africa. Zeyer borrowed plots for his works on Asia and North Africa from Western European translations of Asian and North African literary and religious works. Therefore, the story lines and the development of characters are not typically products of his imagination. The motifs that he chose to adopt repeatedly as well as the way he adapted them are the significant elements in his creative process. In this chapter, after I present Zeyer's typical motifs, I will describe his typical ways of adaptation, such as transposing Asian narratives to Europe or elevating the narratives to a utopian level.

Zeyer's most prevalent motifs emphasize the sensuous and exotic atmosphere of the "Oriental" life, the strange attraction of the religions, and the powerful impact of "Oriental" art. These themes are in several cases interwoven with an expression of discontent with the inferior position of the Czechs in the late nineteenth century. These categories of motifs that I have identified have fluid and overlapping boundaries. Zeyer

used the motifs to create an alternative, utopian reality. Chapter 4 discusses what motivated Zeyer to choose these topics.

The motif of the "Orient" or, in other words, Asia and North Africa as a homogenized entity, is frequent in Zeyer's work. For example, in *Záletnice* (The Flirt) the beautiful city was full of "people of all colors, all nations borne by Asia and Africa."[1] Šošana, the young female storyteller of *Báje Šošany*, "traveled through Asia and most of Africa."[2]A story narrated within *Večer u Idalie* (An Evening at Idalia's) is said to have happened in either Japan or China, as if there was not much difference between them. Zeyer does not locate his stories in sub-Saharan Africa. He mentions black people in *Král Menkera* (King Menkera); they are either a band of clowns who fail to be amusing, Nubian slaves fanning king Menkera of Memfis, or a pack of half-naked indolent slaves pulling a carriage.[3] In *Záletnice*, which is most probably set in India, the only black people mentioned are slaves carrying a palanquin. Although Zeyer often conceives of Asia and Africa as a single cultural entity without much difference between the specific countries, when he mentions black-skinned people at all, they are in anonymous groups of servants. In taking this stance, his work clearly reflects contemporary racism.

Another prevailing theme in Zeyer's writings about Asia and North Africa is the mystical quality he assigns to these places. In his usage, the Czech "mystický" stands for 1) related to mysticism or 2) mysterious. Zeyer also calls Asia and North Africa the "fabulous Orient"[4] and "the great, mystical, holy Orient."[5] Šošana's tales "opened to

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[1] Julius Zeyer, *Záletnice, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 26-27, p. 216

[2] Idem., *Báje Šošany, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 8-10, p. 8

[3] Idem., *Král Menkera, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 8-10, pp. 44, 45, 48

[4] Idem., *Báje Šošany, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 8-10, p. 14

[Valerius] the distant perspectives into the mystical dusks of the East."[6] In *Aziz a Aziza* (Aziz and Aziza), Zeyer introduces the setting as mystical and mysterious: "the mystical Africa with streets full of secrets in Tunisia, with barred windows that open only for a short time to let in mysterious figures." In *Záletnice*, Zeyer describes the setting in India as a place with "mystical trees, ... great voices of sacred chants, and Brahmanic and Buddhist messages."[7] The city where the story takes place is "great, beautiful, rich, with gardens blooming like paradises, treasures brought in from all parts of the world, ... splendid, and magnificent."[8] In *Báje Šošany*, Valerius experienced the "blooming paradises of the East"[9] through the tales told by Šošana. In *Večer u Idalie*, the Japanese city Kyoto is "a sacred city [...] with numerous temples full of immense riches and an endless army of deities made of bronze and marble, granite and precious woods."[10] Zeyer gives the places in Asia and Africa generalized attributes of mysticism, mystery, and splendor. Never does he depict in detail any areas of squalor, poverty, or criminal behavior. Even red-light districts are given a magical dimension. He fills the places in Asia and North Africa with sacredness and opulence.

Zeyer also frequently uses the motif of fragrance in his works. For example, in *Báje Šošany*, Zeyer says: "a double fragrance was exuding from her heavy eyebrows;" in *Gompači a Komurasaki*, he describes the red-light district as an "area of flowers

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[5] Idem., *Báje Šošany, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 8-10, p. 17

[6] Idem., *Báje Šošany, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 8-10, p. 17

[7] Idem., *Záletnice, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 26-27, p. 215

[8] Idem., *Záletnice, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 26-27, p. 216

[9] Idem., *Báje Šošany, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 8-10, p. 22

[10] Idem., *Večer u Idalie, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 6-7, p. 269

mesmerizing with their magical fragrance."[11] Not all critics lauded Zeyer's sensualism, however. In a pithy comment, the Czech literary critic F. X. Šalda captured the atmosphere in Zeyer's works as "voluptuous baths of colors and nuances."[12] Zeyer's imagination was uniquely sensual in Czech literature and he was especially a pioneer in re-creating scents through his writing.

Another frequent motif is the high value of Asian cultures and religions. Zeyer especially appreciates Chinese arts and crafts. In *Večer u Idalie*, he describes a breathtaking, sophisticated, and opulent Chinese garden and concludes with a compliment to Chinese culture: "They can do all these things in China, as you know. They can do even more: they make their own nature and that seems to them nothing special."[13] In *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví*, set in China, Zeyer refers to the non-Chinese as Barbarians and also puts Chinese crafts above European: "No one in Europe has a notion of the beauty of these vases; the Chinese hide them from foreigners, so that the eyes of Barbarians did not desecrate the vases."[14] Zeyer expresses an admiration for Chinese crafts as being superior to the European crafts. The narrator in his story actually assumes the stance of the Chinese, who perceived the non-Chinese as barbarians.

Zeyer's use of Hindu religious thought in a novel that takes place in Europe illustrates that he was not interested in Asia and North Africa exclusively as a picturesque and sensual setting, but also in the meaning of their religious texts. Two passages from the *Upanishads* play an important role in Zeyer's pivotal novel, *Jan Maria Plojhar* (Jan

[11] Robert B. Pynsent, *Julius Zeyer: The Path to Decadence*, 118

[12] F. X. Šalda, *Mladé zápasy*, p. 189

[13] Julius Zeyer, *Večer u Idalie*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 6-7, pp. 230-231

[14] Idem., *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 14-15, p. 314

Maria Plojhar). Although the novel takes place in Italy, Catarina, one of the main characters, finds two passages from the *Katha Upanishad* translated and paraphrased by the late Monsieur Astucci. In the passages, the righteous Gautama teaches his first-born son, Načiketas, that giving one's most precious possessions to the poor is very valuable. When Načiketas asks to whom the father will give himself, i.e. the first-born son, the father pledges him to Jama, the god of death. When Načiketas walks to Jama's house, Jama offers him the fulfillment of three wishes. Načiketas' first wish is that his father Gautama achieve peace. The second wish is missing in the manuscript and the third wish is to know what happens after death. Instead of a reply, Jama offers to Načiketas worldly riches and when Načiketas rejects them, Jama admits that the soul is superior to all worldly things. This claim encourages Načiketas to enter the house of death. In another passage in the novel, the main character, Plojhar, expresses an idea about death similar to Hindu ideas. He believes that, after death, one merges with something larger than himself.[15] Plojhar's fate in the novel ends with his death, which corresponds to the topic in the Upanishadic passage. The application of a Hindu religious text to a novel about Europe demonstrates that Zeyer was not interested only in a sensual rendering of an "Oriental environment," but he seriously pondered the meaning of an important Hindu religious text.

Another Asian religion that Zeyer makes more familiar to his readers is Buddhism. In *Záletnice*, he spells out the Buddhist Four Noble Truths. Following this religious code made the main character, Upagupta,[16] a noble and happy person full of

[15] Idem., *Jan Maria Plojhar*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 28-29, p. 158

[16] Idem., *Záletnice*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 26-27, p. 216

compassion and grace. Through a positive character who is a fervent adherent of Buddhism, Zeyer presents Buddhism as an attractive and valuable teaching.

A very frequent motif in Zeyer's work is the beauty of his characters, especially of women. He often imbues their beauty with noble qualities. The physical and psychological beauty of his characters is at the core of his glorification of Asians and North Africans as the ideal Other. The stress on female beauty helps create "the Orient" as a feminine, and therefore weak and passive place. In *Báje Šošany*, Šošana is "beautiful, noble, good, ... an angel."[17] In *Aziz a Aziza*, Arabian women are described as "having noble-minded sight behind their veils."[18] The Japanese women in *Večer u Idalie* are graceful, beautiful, and beautifully dressed.[19] Zeyer depicts both the principal female characters in his narratives as well as anonymous Asian and North African women as unusually beautiful, graceful, and noble.

Some of Zeyer's Asian and African male characters also tend to be unusually good looking. For example, Upagupta from *Záletnice* is "beautiful [...] like a passion flower with dew burning inside and unaware of his beauty, although the eyes of passing-by women talked about his beauty with desire." Upagupta was not only strikingly handsome, but also an honest, pious, and devoted Buddhist.[20] Lu-šeng in *Sen životem* from *Večer u Idalie* was also unusually handsome.[21] In *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví*, Zeyer pays attention to handsome males, too, by summarizing the story with the

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[17] Idem., *Báje Šošany, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 8-10, p. 20

[18] Idem., *Aziz a Aziza, Spisy Julia Zeyera* , svazek 26-27, p. 6

[19] Idem., *Večer u Idalie, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 6-7, p. 250

[20] Idem., *Záletnice, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 26-27, p. 216

[21] Idem., *Večer u Idalie, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 6-7, p. 314

proverb: "Handsome men have short lives and beautiful women are not happy."[22] Occasionally, Zeyer portrays also a male character of unusual beauty. Like the beauty of his numerous female characters, Upagupta's physical beauty goes hand in hand with his spirituality.

Courtesans and seductresses are another frequent motif in Zeyer's work on Asia and North Africa. This motif overlaps with a pervasive motif in most of Zeyer's work - love. Affectionate behavior of beautiful and sensuous women reinforces Zeyer's imaginary "Orient" as an ideal place where sensual and romantic desires are satisfied, albeit temporarily. While female eroticism is a typical Orientalist motif pervasive throughout Orientalist literature, this motif coincides with Zeyer's interest in both strong female characters and sensuality. A courtesan is the principal character in *Záletnice* where she is referred to in a less critical manner as a "flirt" or "princess of love." After she is rejected by the handsome and fervently Buddhist Upagupta, she kills one of her lover-clients, Kasjapa, and is maimed as a punishment. Then Upagupta has compassion on her and she dies in peace. In *Aziz a Aziza*, a beautiful and cruel sultanness seduces Aziz, who is to marry his cousin Aziza. Aziza dies broken-hearted. When the sultanness finds out, she expels Aziz from her life. In *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví*, the well-traveled Umbriani recollects the beautiful lovers he had: "the bliss experienced at the feet of all kinds of exotic princesses and the Syrian dancers who loved him, ... languid and dreamy like Sulamit."[23] In some stories, Zeyer does not draw a sharp line between beautiful Asian or North African women and courtesans. He depicts the seductresses,

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[22] Idem., *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 14-15, p. 333

[23] Idem., *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 14 –15, p. 297

female lovers, courtesans, and unattainable chimerical beauties as full-blooded persons with their own integrity. In addition, his rendering of eroticism is reserved, shy, and respectful. By avoiding lasciviousness, Zeyer dignifies the characters of courtesans and the whole image of Asia and North Africa. His modest yet sensuous version of a typical Orientalist character adds attractiveness to his imaginary utopia without the repulsion that commonly accompanies typical Orientalist, overtly sexual themes. Zeyer adopts the motif of a courtesan and removes from it whatever might not fit into his imaginary idealized world of the Other.

Within his stories, Zeyer often makes transitions to other, equally authentic realities, created through art, dreams, visions, or madness. These alternative levels of reality facilitate his writing about the Other, since they enable him to transfer his characters into distant times and places. While dreaming is a typical Orientalist motif, in Zeyer's work all these alternative realities replace the typical Orientalist motif of a pilgrimage. The reason is that Zeyer did not have any experience of traveling to Asia and the motif of a pilgrimage to Asia and North Africa was not common in Czech literature. The alternative states in Zeyer's works also make it possible for the characters to travel beyond the geographically realistic Japan or China to places that are purely a product of his imagination. In such places, never visited by a human, utopian fantasies can occur without losing their credibility.

Literary and visual art often has a life of its own in Zeyer's narratives. Literary figures, painted figures, and painted landscape become as real as the rest of the stories. Many of Zeyer's stories have a European narrator whose tales are presented as believable reality. In *Večer u Idalie*, Gracian, a Czech writer, tells stories about painted figures who

become alive and further tell stories. In *Večer u Idalie*, the other reality is created through visual art. Zeyer talks of numerous examples of such a phenomenon occurring in Japan and China, including an account of a garden wall that was painted so realistically that an emperor and his daughter entered it and disappeared behind it forever.[24] In the same story, we also encounter a woman whose ancestor came to life from a shadow on a rock.[25] After Gracian from *Večer u Idalie* finishes telling the story "Sen životem" (Dream Becoming Life), he likens himself to the main character of his story, admitting that he too was searching for happiness outside himself. In *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví*, the narrator, Umbriani, is born in his Chinese reincarnation from a mother who emerged as an enlivened figure from a painting. Umbriani's father in that reincarnation joined the mother in the world behind the canvas. This art world is supposedly more real than the "real" world, since the characters can see not only the whole world, but also the inner lives of cities and persons.[26] In *Jan Maria Plojhar*, Catarina identifies the main character, the ailing Plojhar, with Načiketas from the Upanishads and with the ill-fated Czech nation.[27] Plojhar's values are similar to those of Načiketas,[28] and their deaths are parallel to the fate of Plojhar's native city of Prague and, indirectly, the Czech nation.[29] Catarina's vision of walking next to Načiketas-Plojhar into the house of death becomes reality at the end of the novel, when she chooses to commit suicide by Plojhar's

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[24] Idem., *Večer u Idalie*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 6-7, p. 238

[25] Idem., *Večer u Idalie*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 6-7, p. 300

[26] Idem., *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 14-15, p. 324

[27] Idem., *Jan Maria Plojhar*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 28-29, část 2, pp. 27, 121

[28] Idem., *Jan Maria Plojhar*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 28-29, část 2, p. 103

[29] Idem., *Jan Maria Plojhar*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 28-29, část 2, p. 144

deathbed. Zeyer's narratives often include a primary level of reality and another level, created by the characters who are literary or visual artists. These levels become interchangeable and attain the same validity between each other.

Like Zeyer's characters who created make-believe worlds according to their fancy through their art, Zeyer created his narratives as an alternative, utopian reality for himself and his Czech readers. In more realistic works, such as *Jan Maria Plojhar*, Zeyer compares the fate of Načiketas from the *Katha Upanishad* to that of the main Czech character, Plojhar, and metaphorically also to the city of Prague and the Czech lands. The interchangeability between Zeyer's character and the character from the *Upanishads* shows that Zeyer imagined that literary characters could become alive in the real world and, consequently, the utopian places he created could become real.

Dreams and dreaming are a significant motif within the broader topic of alternative realities in Zeyer's works on Asia and North Africa; this motif is very frequent in Orientalist literature. Similarly to other Orientalist works, both European and non-European characters have vivid dreams hardly distinguishable from their primary reality. By letting both categories of characters dream, Zeyer indirectly admits that the so-called "Orient" was not only a dream-like, hazy and mystical place, but that it was also a product of European dreaming. Dreams are often an explanation for other realities occurring in the lives of Zeyer's characters. When the Czech nun Paskalina has a vision of the fourth magi, Zeyer describes her "As if she was deeply dreaming."[30] When Paskalina is facing the Virgin Mary, she is unsure whether she "is conscious or being played with by a dream." In *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví*, Umbriani is not sure

[30] Idem., *Sestra Paskalina. Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 22-24, p. 72

whether his experience of ideal love to the Chinese Mingea in another reality was a beautiful dream or whether the painful reality without this love is a dream. "Life is a dream and dream is life. Where is the line between a vision and reality?"[31] asks Umbriani. A narrative within *Večer u Idalie* is even called "Sen životem" (Dream becoming life). Lu-šeng falls asleep under a blanket that has the power to induce dreams of fame, riches, and happiness. First he dreams of having such a life and then, still in his dream, he "wakes up" and experiences a happy and rich life at the emperor's court. Only later does he really wake up and realize that his happy life as a nobleman was a dream within a dream. Zeyer also gives metaphorical dreamlike qualities to numerous phenomena. For example, Upagupta's honest and religious life is "like chastity's dream."[32] In the lives of some of Zeyer's characters, dreaming explains their experience of other realities. The extent of these alternative realities ranges from a single short vision to a whole new life in a different time and place.

Zeyer often refers to the experience of another reality and, especially a religious experience, as madness. In *Báje Šošany,* hashish induces in Valerius "blissful madness." Before Gracian, the storyteller from *Večer u Idalie,* tells his stories, he experiences them in what he calls visions, while his listener, Idalia, calls these experiences hallucinations.[33] In *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví*, the main character, Umbriani, admits that people like himself, who cannot distinguish between dream and wakefulness, are madmen. He agrees to tell a story to the narrator only when the latter admits that his writing would be

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[31] Idem., *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 14-15, p. 308

[32] Idem., *Záletnice*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 26-27, p. 216

[33] Idem., *Večer u Idalie*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 6-7, p. 225

considered "crazy" in the Czech lands.[34] Umbriani also believes that he is a reincarnation of his own great-uncle and admits that sober people ascribe such belief in metempsychosis only to crazy people. Some of Zeyer's characters refer to their unusual experiences as madness. However, Zeyer ascribes such a vocabulary to European characters who have no religious explanation for alternative realities, such as visions or reincarnation.

In his works on Asia and North Africa, Zeyer infrequently expresses his grief over the subordination and inadequacy of the Czech people, unable to take charge of their circumstances. Valerius, the young Czech poet in *Báje Šošany*, traveled through the world and returned to "the homeland and the society that he had held in contempt."[35] In *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví*, the narrator, who has Zeyer's autobiographic traits, and the main character, the Italian Umbriani, who lives in the Russian city of Odessa, share a passion for adventure. This passion differs from the lifestyle of their "honorable" and settled fellow citizens who stay at home and despise their adventurers.[36] Through the dialogue of these characters Zeyer expresses the tension between Czech narrow-mindedness and his longing for worldliness. The Czech feeling of inferiority in Zeyer's times is a major theme in Zeyer's primary work, *Jan Maria Plojhar*. In this novel, the main character frequently expresses his love, his hope as well as his loss of love and hope for the Czech nation. Plojhar leaves his native, ill fated Czech lands to find death abroad. He expresses his despair:

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[34] Idem., *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví*, svazek 14-15, p. 302

[35] Idem., *Báje Šošany, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 8-10, p. 21

[36] Idem., *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví, Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 24-25, p. 296

> The gods are in Prague thrown into mud and those who have overthrown them and crushed them sit in their place laughing ... shame and shackles are inherited among the slaves, but salvation is not coming ... And the children of those murdered and humiliated, seeing that they wait in vain, are gradually joining the murderers' children and are also laughing – and that is the bottom of hells, despair and death for those who never can shamefully surrender.[37]

Because Zeyer's motif of the inferior Czech Self is not very frequent in his works on Asia and North Africa, this minor motif adds unexpected bitterness to the otherwise sweet tone of his stories. However, the inferiority of the Czechs is the central motif in Zeyer's main novel, about the death of a Czech man in Italy, *Jan Maria Plojhar*; this fact reveals how important this motif was for Zeyer.

Although Zeyer's characters in Asia and North Africa fall sick and die, he does not elaborate on their physical suffering the same way he does with his Slavic characters. A strong motif of sickness is present only in Zeyer's novels set in Europe: *Jan Maria Plojhar*, *Dům U tonoucí hvězdy*, and *Ondřej Černyšev*. These major works demonstrate that Zeyer knows how to write about physical suffering and sickness. Therefore, the fact that he *avoids* writing in length about sickness and death of his Asian and North African characters shows that he wants to construct the "Orient" as a utopian place.

Zeyer idealizes the countries of Asia and North Africa, describing them as a monolithic, mystical, and opulent place full of noble, beautiful people, sensual pleasures, a place veiled in dreams and visions. Sub-Saharan Africans, who do not fit into the category of "Orientals," are either clowns or slaves. Zeyer produces a picture of a place where dreaming and reality are indistinguishable. Both his European and non-European characters dream and enjoy their lives experienced in the dream. At the same time, while European characters enjoy their dreams, other Europeans, whom Zeyer calls narrow-

[37] Idem., *Jan Maria Plojhar*, *Spisy Julia Zeyera*, svazek 28-29, p. 27-28

minded, say that experiencing alternate realities is a sign of insanity. In this dream-like existence, creating yet another utopian world is possible through art, either literary or visual. A serious sickness is hardly ever a major turning point in the lives of Zeyer's Asian and North African characters as if physical suffering was not a major concern for them. Through his motifs, Zeyer creates a utopian environment different from that of his own, and characters whose lives are different from those of his contemporaries by being full of sensuality and pleasure. In other words, through these motifs, Zeyer creates an ideal Other.

Other features of Orientalism, as defined by Said, are present in Zeyer's writings on Asia and North Africa. Although Said stresses the denigrating aspect of Orientalism, he also mentions idealization as an Orientalist trait, albeit a less frequent one than denigration.[38] Idealization is the main Orientalist feature in Zeyer's works. Zeyer also aimed at delivering what he considered the essential qualities of the Other and the core plots of the stories he was paraphrasing. At the same time, he deliberately changed what he considered insignificant details into elements familiar to his readers. He adjusted some Asian and North African local customs to ones to which his Czech readers could relate. Zeyer situated his stories in broad geographical areas, such as China or Japan. In some cases, he implied the locality by references to its religions, such as Buddhism or Hinduism. Zeyer does not specify historic time, such as a particular century. While he develops the psychology of his characters more than the Orientalist writers analyzed by Said, his portrayal of the physique and attire of his characters is much more thorough than their psychological characterization. Zeyer is a master in depicting the physical

[38] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 40.

environment, especially its visual and olfactory qualities. In spite of the fact that Zeyer carefully selected his sources and modified them to serve his utopian goals, he accepted the interpretive mode of presenting the Asia and North Africa he found in the Orientalist works of his times. At first sight, Zeyer's rendering of this material seems to favor the foreign cultures and peoples completely, but he is in fact being covertly Orientalist, that is, racist and ethnocentric. Moreover, while Zeyer's Czech critics have identified qualities such as essentialism or Europeanization in Zeyer's writings, they have generally considered them positive. When we analyze Zeyer's works on Asia and North Africa in the light of Said's *Orientalism*, we will establish a different interpretation from that of Czech literary criticism.

Zeyer was only one of many Czech and non-Czech writers and scholars throughout history who have written about the countries of Asia and North Africa from an idealizing perspective. As John Drew says in his *India and the Romantic Imagination*, "There has been a tendency for Europeans to idealize India."[39] However, the Czech idealization is relatively more extensive than that of other Europeans in terms of both the number of Czech authors involved and the geographic areas covered. The reasons for the Czech idealization of Asia and North Africa are different in certain important respects from those in Western European writings. Inden stresses that Western Europeans idealized India in the Middle Ages but largely abandoned this perspective in the centuries to come:

> The dreams or images of medieval Europeans differed from those of the nineteenth-century scholar and imperialist. The medieval Europeans did

[39] John Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination*, 9.

> not see India as an *inferior* land of the *past*, but as a *superior* land of the *future*.[40]

Unlike Western Europeans, Czech literary and scholarly Orientalism retained the pre-colonial idealizing of India until at least the 1970s, as I demonstrate in the Epilogue. Moreover, Czech authors have included in this idealization many other countries of Asia and North Africa. This attitude has never changed into outright derogation. A possible reason is that the Czech lands have not been a colonizing power needing to prove their superiority over their colonial subjects. On the contrary, throughout history, Czech people experienced several periods of their own colonization, and, consequently, felt a need for a utopia. They could nurture the idea of a perfect place in the "East" because direct contacts with Asian and North African peoples were limited.

The intensity and extent of Zeyer's idealization is evident not only from the motifs he used, but also from a comparison of his writings and his direct sources, that is the Western European translations of Asian and North African literary and religious works he used. In his detailed analysis, Poucha gives numerous examples of how Zeyer elevates the topics in his sources to a higher esthetic level: "If he found something awkward, he elevated it to the sphere of beauty."[41] For example, Zeyer beautifies the love story of Aziz and Aziza by adding picturesque descriptions of a house and its decorations and a bazaar. Zeyer also enhances the emotional passages of the narrative and deepens Aziza's character by making her more perceptive than the character in the material he is paraphrasing.[42] In *Král Menkera*, a hymn inspired by ancient Egyptian mythology, Zeyer

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[40] Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, 48.

[41] Pavel Poucha, *Světla východu*, p. 582

[42] Ibid., p. 583

omits passages referring to a phallic cult. Poucha claims that Zeyer was not personally opposed to erotic literature, having books on Asian arts of love in his bookcase, and argues that his particular way of aesthetic feeling prevented him from including a phallic motif. Zeyer idealizes his material by adding what he considers externally and psychologically beautiful and by avoiding what seems to him aesthetically inappropriate.

Zeyer also idealizes the widely accepted Orientalist motif of the courtesan that he adopted into his writings. Said characterizes the model of an Oriental courtesan as a woman who never expresses her feelings and never talks about herself and her life.[43] Zeyer's courtesans, on the other hand, are more fully-fledged individuals. Moreover, he expresses their sexuality and sensuality very subtly and tastefully.

Zeyer idealized not only courtesans, but also his other female characters and their romantic relationships and transformed them in dreamy, chimerical experiences. In *Báje Šošany*, the female narrator Šošana says: "Who loves me, loves his vision." In *Blaho v zahradě kvetoucích broskví*, Hoang-ti, a Chinese reincarnation of Umbriani, loves Mingea, who is just a ghost to the other characters. While Said stresses that a typical Orientalist motif is sex and especially licentious sex, Zeyer avoids any lasciviousness or obscenity.

Negative motifs such as violence,[44] poverty, sickness, or death are marginal in Zeyer's writings on Asia and North Africa. Zeyer does not completely remove negativity from his stories, but significantly mitigates the brutality he finds in his sources. Poucha demonstrates that in *Záletnice*, Zeyer humanizes Upagupta's treatment of a dying

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[43] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

[44] Miloš Marten in *Akkord*, 64, argues that Zeyer avoids the motifs of bravery, resistance, and violence including the heroism that could be derived from them.

courtesan.[45] Instead of repeating the vivid and detailed description of the cruel torture that Aśóka was promising to his unfaithful wife, as does his English source, Zeyer lets Aśóka state pithily that "The wicked woman will die at the executioner's hand." Zeyer's stories about Asia and North Africa contain elements of violence, just like his sources, but he significantly curbs the extent and vividness of this violence.

Zeyer applies his idealization only to the Other. Poucha stresses that Zeyer typically raises his material into a higher sphere, eliminates everything lowly and ordinary, and adds a vivid description of interiors. Poucha sees these features as typical Romanticism of the nineteenth century,[46] but he also suggests that it was Zeyer's particular kind of aesthetic feeling that led to his elevation of everything that seemed too base and too realistic.[47] However, while he chooses to idealize the Other, whether the Other in time or space or both, he never idealizes the Czech society he lived in. When he writes about a contemporary Czech character, such as Jan Maria Plojhar in the novel of the same title, the character is ill, unhappy and dies at the end of the novel along with the woman he loves. Zeyer's love for the noble and the beautiful could not be expressed in writings about the Self, which he considered inferior. The only way to express his desire for a Utopia, was to write about the Other.

Zeyer's writings on Asia and North Africa do not come from direct experience. With the exception of Tunisia and the Russian borders with Turkey, Zeyer did not travel to Northern Africa or Asia. This counter-experiential quality complements the frequent

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[45] Pavel Poucha, *Světla východu*, p. 546

[46] Ibid., p. 547

[47] Ibid., p. 624

motif of dreaming he ascribes to both his European narrators and non-European characters. His lack of personal experiences with the particular countries he writes about prevents him, and therefore also his characters, from an eye-opening demystification.

While Said identifies pilgrimage as a frequent motif in Orientalist writings,[48] it is not frequent in Zeyer's works. Instead, Zeyer uses other, less realistic means of transferring his European characters to the distant lands: dreaming, visions, hallucinations, and reincarnation. This difference motifs reflects the particular circumstances of Czech Orientalism, which, especially in Zeyer's case, did not come from personal experience. Although Zeyer frames *Aziz and Aziza* as a story heard by the narrator during his travels in North Africa, it is in fact a paraphrase of a story from the English version of *Arabian Nights*. The fact that Zeyer did not travel to most of the Asian and North African countries he wrote about is related to the subordinate character of Czech society in his times. Travel supported colonialist power, as is observed by the poet and literary critic Rana Kabbani: "The idea of travel as a means of gathering and recording information is commonly found in societies that exercise a high degree of political power."[49] Although travel to Asia and North Africa was a very significant factor in Orientalism, Zeyer's inexperience with the countries he wrote about is paradoxically another Orientalist trait in his writings. The reason is that even the Orientalists who did travel abundantly to the locales they wrote about looked at their subject matter through an Orientalist lens. They did not report their objective findings, but built upon the Orientalist

[48] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 166-197.

[49] Rana Kabbani, *Europe's Myth of Orient*, 1.

myths they had read about before their journeys.[50] The counter-experiential quality of Zeyer's writings has causes and consequences different from those in the colonial societies. Through his imaginary travel to Asia and North Africa, Zeyer attained for himself and for his Czech readers, an identity similar to that of the peoples who gathered the information, that is the politically and culturally powerful Europeans.

Zeyer's works on Asia and North Africa are not anchored in a specific time but hover in myth-like timelessness. Vague localities are also frequent; instead of naming the cities given in his sources, Zeyer speaks of his locations as of "big cities." Zeyer often refers to the whole of Asia and Africa as a single geographic and cultural whole. Such lack of specific temporal and geographical definition is another feature of Orientalism, as defined by Said.

Zeyer tries to render the visual essence of his Asian and North African settings as truthfully as possible, his circumstances permitting. Although he had never visited most of the places he wrote about, he avidly and meticulously studied scholarly writings of those who did. Poucha appreciates this quality of Zeyer's writings, demonstrating that other Czech scholars of Asian cultures, who were Zeyer's contemporaries, praised him for his truthfulness to the subject matter:

> Zeyer studied his literary subject matter in every detail. However, he paid such close attention also to the necessary customs and institutions [...]. Therefore, an Orientalist finds in Zeyer's works only a few places where he could criticize him for misunderstanding or lack of education. Zeyer deserved the praise extended to him by scholars-Orientalists *par*

[50] "[A]s a form of growing knowledge Orientalism resorted mainly to citations of predecessor scholars in the field for its nutrients. Even when new materials came his way, the Orientalist judged them by borrowing from predecessors (as scholars so often do) their perspectives, ideologies, and guiding theses," Said explains the dynamics between Orientalists' travel experiences and the counter-experiential quality of Orientalism (*Orientalism*, 177).

> *excellence*, such as Rudolf Dvořák,[51] who dedicated his scholarly translations of Oriental works to Zeyer.[52]

Poucha points out that in Rudolf Dvořák's translation of the *Song of Songs* into Czech, Dvořák's dedication to Zeyer reads: "To the interpreter *par excellence* of the Orient in our literature."[53] The Czech poet, writer and critic Jiří Karásek from Lvovice argues that Zeyer's artistic skills are at their best when he depicts the visual qualities and sensuality of the setting:

> [T]hat he did not live only from dead books is obvious from the intense, sharp color he used to paint his fantasies, from the expressive plasticity he used for outlining, from the joy of color, sensuality of tone that he lent to the creations of his imagination.[54]

Zeyer is a master in the depiction of the visual in his Asian and North African narratives, as many of his critics note and praise. However, according to Said, the stress on the visual is another typical Orientalist quality, contributing to the overall demeaning perspective of Orientalist writings.

From Zeyer's statements, it follows that he intends to seize what he believes is the essence of his sources and rejoices when he succeeds in doing that. Poucha identified numerous instances where Zeyer expresses the "essence" of the narratives he is paraphrasing. For example, Zeyer expresses the idea of capturing the sensual essence of China in a dedication of his play *Bratři* (Brothers) to the Brauner sisters:

> If you can find in my unworthy attempt [...] only a trace of that elegant bizarreness so peculiar to China, only a slight rustle of its silk, only a

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[51] Rudolf Dvořák was a founder of Asian and North African studies in the Czech lands. He studied several Asian and Middle-Eastern languages, including Hebrew, Arabic, and Chinese.

[52] Pavel Poucha, *Světla východu*, p. 537

[53] Ibid., p. 538

[54] Jiří Karásek from Lvovice, "Za Juliem Zeyerem." *Moderní revue*, svazek XII, p. 158.

> dream of the sweetness of its perfume, then I shall have attained the fulfillment of my wish.[55]

This short note also reveals other Orientalist features, such as references to the sensuality of China, visual refinement, and its own, striking and odd way of Otherness.

Zeyer also finds essentialism in the endeavors of the Czech collector of non-European artifacts Vojta Náprstek, praising his ability to identify the Chinese essence:

> Náprstek recognized Chinese culture and its importance ... more from an inner vision than from detailed study [...]. The silent, wise, sober peasant people with their religious cult of love for the parents were most congenial to Náprstek, as he could feel some Slavonic affinity to this old nation of the Far East.[56]

Poucha has identified Zeyer's essentialism, arguing that in a passage from the *Upanishads* in *Jan Maria Plojhar*, Zeyer understands and renders the essential issues very well.[57] Poucha also says that in *Aziz a Aziza*, Zeyer succeeded in delivering "the true core" of the story. In *Rustem a Sohrab* (Rustem and Sohrab), Poucha finds that Zeyer selected what he thought was the essential part of the narrative.[58] Regarding *Povést o pavouku* (The Spider Story), Poucha observes that Zeyer preserves the essential features of Greey's English version, adjusting the rest of the fairy tale to the tradition of European fairy tales.[59] Zeyer's essentialism is obvious from his own remarks as well as from Poucha's comparisons between Zeyer's versions and the Western European translations he used. Poucha correctly points out that capturing the "essence" of the "Oriental"

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[55] Tomáš Vlček, *National Sensualism: Czech Fin-de-Siècle Art*, 3.

[56] Ibid., 110.

[57] Pavel Poucha, *Světla východu*, p. 553

[58] Ibid., p. 563

[59] Ibid., p. 615

sources leaves the rest of the material to be adjusted to European sensibility, but considers both essentialism and Europeanization desirable.

Zeyer adjusts his Asian and North African themes to what he considers European taste and sensibility. To his Asian and North African characters and environment, he gives what he understands as European qualities, or he transposes Asian and North African plots to a European environment. Zeyer often adapts his narratives in an effort to make them more comprehensible to his Czech readers. Poucha demonstrates numerous instances when Zeyer changes his source in such a way as to present information familiar to his Czech audience. For example, Zeyer leaves out the mythological features of his story *Záletnice*, trying to make the story more believable. Poucha argues that Zeyer's story is more European-like, since he lets the flirt Alambuša know true love, while the English version and the Indian original speak of her romantic relationship as a whim.[60] In the Indian original and in Summer's English version, Alambuša receives punishment for her crime committed for a low and dishonest reason. In Zeyer's version, however, the courtesan receives punishment for a murder committed for higher motives – the disgust for Kasjapa.

Zeyer also places originally Asian stories in Europe. For example, his dramatic poem *Radúz a Mahulena* is set in pre-Christian Slovakia. However, Janáček and Máchal found Indian elements in the tale. Máchal identified the influence of two Sanskrit dramas, Śakuntala and Urvaší, by the famous Indian playwright Kalidasa, in this tale.[61] According to Poucha, the source for Zeyer's *Stratonika, Kus helénské romantiky* (Stratonika, A

[60] Ibid., p. 545

[61] Ibid., p. 541

Piece of Hellenic Romanticism) is a Hindi novel by Tahsímuddín. This novel was published in French by Garin de Tassy under the title *Allégories, récits poétiques chants populaire traduit de l'arabe, du persan, de l'hindustanie et du turc*. Zeyer transposes the story into Greece but includes vague references to India. For example, his character Seleuk says that in his mind he was "on the banks of Indus and Ganges."[62] In the story "O velkém bolu boha Izanagi" (On the Great Sorrow of the God Izanagi) from *Večer u Idalie*, Zeyer lets the divine beings Izanagi and Izanami stand on "crenellated heavens."[63] In comparison, the translation by Pfitzmaier talks about a floating Japanese bridge of the heavens.[64] Zeyer also often inserts his commentary into the text.[65] He frequently and deliberately changes elements of the narratives that he chooses to paraphrase. The reasons for such changes and for inserting his commentaries are most probably attempts to make his versions more readable, understandable, and acceptable by and to his readers.

Poucha considers Zeyer's Europeanization of Asian and North African themes worthy of praise:

> The beautiful rhythmical language, dramatization, emotiveness, motivation, reflecting European understanding, and framing the stories are permanent qualities that we find in Zeyer's "renewed images" – a splendid contribution that only improved the ancient stories.[66]

Thanks to his extensive knowledge of Middle Eastern and Asian religions, Poucha is able to identify the specific instances when Zeyer Europeanizes his subject material.

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[62] Ibid., p. 557

[63] cimbuří nebes

[64] Pavel Poucha, *Světla východu*, p. 601

[65] Ibid., p. 589

[66] Ibid., p. 556

Zeyer's Europocentrism also manifests itself through his frequent use of a Czech or other European narrator. Framing his Asian and North African stories as products of the European imagination shows that Zeyer does not intend to talk about the foreign countries in themselves but in relation to the Czech lands or Europe. The motif of a narrator also supports Said's idea of the three elements in the process of delivery of Orientalist knowledge to Europe and America: the Orientalist, Orientalist knowledge, and the "consumer" of such knowledge. The idea of a European narrator is strong in Zeyer's writings and so is the idea of the consumer, since Zeyer's fictional narrators have also their Czech or other European fictional listeners. The motif of a European narrator is another Orientalist quality of Zeyer's writings.

Zeyer changes the actions and motivations of characters, the location of stories, and cultural details in ways he believes are more familiar and acceptable to his Czech readers. He also inserts his commentaries, making them indistinguishable from the texts he is paraphrasing. His frequent use of a Czech or other European narrator shows that he is serious about making his subject matter acceptable for his readers. Through the narrator, he interprets the stories in the particular way that he wants the readers to believe. While Zeyer's Europeanization is clear to Poucha, only in the light of Said's definition of Orientalism is it recognizable as an Orientalist, and, therefore, a denigrating feature.

Zeyer's works reflect the situation of Czech society at the end of the nineteenth century. The author himself reveals the autobiographical quality of some of his works. His numerous critics discover that in the works about the Other, he actually writes about the Self. For example, Zeyer expresses his feelings and state of mind when he was

writing *Jan Maria Plojhar* in a letter to Otokar Červený. His emotional state coincides with the fate of the main character and with the passages from the *Katha Upanishad*, quoted in the novel:

> As far as *Plojhar* is concerned, I do not know what literary value the book has. I was writing it during the time so painful for me. Yet this time of my escape from Prague to the country, when everything was boiling in me and yet coming to peace and calm in resignation tasted bittersweet like an elegy.[67]

Záhoř also identifies Zeyer's self-centeredness in his use of the *Katha Upanishad* in *Jan Maria Plojhar* and criticizes what he considers an abuse of the religious text: "Here, too, Zeyer presents only himself, just as he does in most of his reconstructions. He imbues the Indian poem with his sweetish pessimism, tainting the poem's spirit."[68] Záhoř argues that Zeyer omits the second question in the passage from the *Katha Upanishad* because he does not comprehend the paradoxical contradiction between the three questions. Záhoř is a rare critic of Zeyer's, openly criticizing Zeyer's modification of his sources. Zeyer's contemporary, the Czech poet Jaroslav Vrchlický, captures the mirroring character of Zeyer's work in the poetic epitaph to Zeyer:

> He was one of those who gazed at the ancient time,
> Reviving in it the mirror of the present. [...]
> Through him, the souls of long-gone centuries lived,
> Merging with the spirit of today.[69]

Karásek also observes that while writing about the past, Zeyer expressed views about the present:

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[67] Julius Zeyer, *Dopisy třem přátelům*, p. 60

[68] Zdeněk Záhoř, "*Upanišad Káthaka* v Zeyerově *Plojharovi*." *Česká kultura*, 1913 svazek 1, číslo 2, p. 60-61

[69] Pavel Poucha, *Světla východu*, p. 625

> Zeyer was not a poet of reality, but a poet of the past, of a dream. Yet for him, this was not a reason to lose a sense of precision, a sense of reality – and his books are images of the real, they are expressions of how the present reflected itself in his mind.[70]

Zeyer himself admits that in his major novel with an Asian religious motif he projects autobiographical features.

Zeyer used British, German, and French Orientalist material to produce his writings. However, he did not make his sources known in all cases. In addition, he had his notes burned before his death. Through detailed comparative work based on his extensive knowledge of Asian and Middle Eastern religions, the scholar Poucha has identified many Western European versions of Asian and North African texts that Zeyer used as his sources. According to Poucha, in many cases, Zeyer used more than one Western European text for producing a single story. For example, Zeyer compiled *Aziz a Aziza* from two English versions of Sheherezada's *Arabian Tales*.[71] Zeyer used Western European sources not only for fiction, but also for an occasional short work of non-fiction. For example, he based his essay on Egyptology on a French treatise.[72] Such use of secondary sources without direct experience is, according to Said, a sign of disrespect for the subject matter typical of Orientalism.[73]

Both the motifs that Zeyer selected to include in his writings about Asia and North Africa and those that he excluded or limited reflect the Orientalist code of his times. For example, although he does not denigrate Asian and North African women and

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[70] Jiří Karásek from Lvovice, Za Juliem Zeyerem. *Moderní revue*, XII, 5, 8. února 1901, p. 157

[71] Pavel Poucha, *Světla východu*, p. 581

[72] Ibid., p. 568

[73] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 197.

does not describe or hint at sexual perversion, his stress on female characters and their beauty is a major Orientalist cliché. Both the motifs that Zeyer repetitively includes in his writings and those that he omits are a part of the Orientalist code he adopts.

Studying Zeyer in the context of his time and circumstances is necessary for revealing that he was not truly interested in the countries and peoples of Asia and North Africa as they are. Comparing Zeyer's writings on Asia and North Africa to the main ideas in Said's *Orientalism* brings to light an Orientalist quality of Zeyer's work. Although Zeyer's works include many of the qualities that Said identified as Orientalist, that is, ethnocentric and racist, the main difference between Zeyer's works and typical Orientalist works is that Zeyer does not explicitly belittle the Other; nonetheless, his Orientalism takes the form of idealization. As I have demonstrated in the Introduction, contemporary Czech society grapples with racism and hate crimes. Czech literature, such as Zeyer's covertly Orientalist works, have contributed to Czech popular images of the Asian and African Other, where the Other is constructed not only as explicitly ideal, but also as implicitly inferior.

CHAPTER 4

THE MOTIVES

In Zeyer's times, the Czechs had no strong or direct political, economic, or cultural ties to the countries of Asia and North Africa about which he wrote. He himself had never visited Asia. Therefore, his motivation for writing extensively about the so-called Orient is not immediately obvious. Moreover, identifying such motives is not a task promising definitive answers. Nevertheless, Zeyer's private correspondence, the insights of his friends and critics, as well as his literary work are rich sources of information for understanding what led him to write in his unique way.

As is evident from Zeyer's letters that I quote below, he despised the political circumstances in which he lived. Zeyer loved material and physical beauty, as I will also demonstrate later in this chapter. The motifs of material, physical, psychological, and spiritual beauty characterized in the previous chapter indicate that beauty in all forms was important to him in his literary creations. Zeyer elevated the thematic elements that were not noble enough for him to a higher, utopian level.[1] This process suggests that creating an ideal world was more important for him than remaining true to the works that inspired him. Therefore, Zeyer's utopian works with Asian and North African themes can be interpreted as an expression of his artistic and personal search for the ideal. The causes for this search fall into three categories. Firstly, the European Romantic turning away from materialism; secondly, the Czech national discontent with the state of political and cultural affairs; and thirdly, Zeyer's personal longings for travel and beauty. Poucha identifies three similar causes of Zeyer's interest in Asian and North African motifs:

[1] See passage on idealization in the chapter on Zeyer's Orientalism.

Romanticism, belonging to the *Lumír* circle of writers,[2] and an obvious effort to expand his own comprehensive literary education led Zeyer to a deep interest in Oriental literatures.[3] The Romantic artistic trends prevailing in Europe before and during Zeyer's lifetime, the unfavorable Czech cultural situation as a nation dominated by Austria-Hungary, as well as Zeyer's personal interest in travel and his multi-cultural background influenced his choice of material. The three areas of Zeyer's motivation are interrelated. For example, since he despised the Czech political situation, he turned away from it towards the Other, which he could depict as beautiful and noble. By doing so, he subscribed to Western European cultural trends and, at the same time, satisfied his personal interests.

The first and broadest area of influence on Zeyer's topics that I identified is European Romanticism. Identifying Zeyer as a Romantic is important, since it shows that, albeit unique within Czech literary history, Zeyer's works were an integral part of European culture and some of their qualities were inspired by the literary sensibility at the end of the nineteenth century. Choosing the subject matter of the Other and romanticizing it, Zeyer falls into the category of a Romantic writer. Czech Romanticism came later than the Romanticism in other European literatures and, therefore, to a large degree, Czech Romantic writers drew inspiration from the works of their predecessors

[2] The magazine *Lumír*, founded in 1873, attracted writers interested in the literatures of other nations. From 1877, the magazine's editor Josef Václav Sládek intentionally cultivated *Lumír*'s orientation towards translations from other languages. For example, he introduced a regular column "From New Poetry," encouraging the magazine contributors to follow the latest developments in foreign poetry and to submit translations. Miloš Pohorský, *Dějiny české literatury III*, p. 205

[3] Pavel Poucha, *Světla východu*, p. 537

Pynsent identifies a passage in *Dům u tonoucí hvězdy*[4] (The House of the Drowning Star) where Zeyer complains about the materialism of modern Europe: "The Aryan Europe has become so materialistic that it has almost completely lost its Aryan ideal and noble qualities. Next to greed, it bows to a single god – *success*."[5] Reading contemporary French Orientalist scholarly works also inspired Zeyer to write about Asia and North Africa; According to Professor Jan Vobornik, a literary historian, Zeyer stopped writing his versions of Celtic myths and started adapting Indian and Iranian myths, once he found out that French Orientalists were publishing their scholarly works on Asian and North African cultures.[6] A contemporary Czech critic, Tomáš Vlček, attributes Zeyer's motivation for writing about Asia and North Africa to his dislike for capitalism: "[Zeyer] drew his inspiration for his opposition [...] to the barbarism of modern capitalist society [...] from the expressive means of oriental art."[7]

The second area of influence I have identified as significant for Zeyer's choice of the "Oriental" motifs is his despair over the political situation of the Czechs in the second half of the nineteenth century. His letters and his friends' observations reveal this despair, which remains almost concealed in his fictional writings. Zeyer's fellowship with the Czech intellectuals who intended to enrich the weakened Czech culture by exposing it to the achievements of other cultures encouraged his efforts to explore the Other.

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[4] Ibid., 149.

[5] Julius Zeyer, *Spisy*, svazek 24, p. 129

[6] Pavel Poucha, *Světla východu*, p. 540

[7] Tomáš Vlček, *National Sensualism: Czech Fin-de-Siècle Art. Intellectuals and the future in the Habsburg Monarchy 1890-1914.*, III.

Zeyer's Other covered not only Asia and North Africa, but also the mythic past of many Western and Eastern European peoples, including Czech pagan mythology. Zeyer's painful reaction to the subordination of the Czech nation did not translate into laudatory epics about Czech history. Vobornik points out that Zeyer's works about Czech history are of "mystical," not epic nature. Vobornik further explains that Zeyer chose not to idealize the Czech historic Self for reasons inherent in the history of Czech literature, including the absence of good historical writing.[8] The university professor and member of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences Karel Krejčí explains Vobornik's statement by pointing out the non-heroic nature of Czech culture, history, and natural environment that prompted Zeyer to avoid nationalistic epics on the Czech past:

> 1. There is no real environment, a stratum of aristocratic spirit with similar sensibilities like his.
> 2. There is no tradition of aristocratic culture.
> 3. There is no material reality, such as monumental nature or a grand, exciting national life.[9]

Zeyer chose other cultures and societies as his subject matter because he despised the society in which he lived. As I will demonstrate bellow, he expressed this discontent in his personal letters and his friends confirmed it their recollections of Zeyer. Writing laudatory epics about the Czech historic past was not appealing to Zeyer either. As I have shown in Chapter 3, Zeyer avoided violent themes as much as he could; epic descriptions of the Czech past would probably require brutal scenes, such as battles or immolations. Karel Krejčí explains that, based on Czech history, epics full of noble characters and deeds and breathtaking environments could not be rooted in material reality.

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[8] Jan Vobornik, *O poesii Julia Zeyera. Kritická studie*, p. 13

[9] Milena Honzíková, *Julius Zeyer a Vilém Mrštík, Dvě možnosti české moderní prózy*, p. 17

Zeyer's interest in the Other was enhanced by his contact and close co-operation with other Czech intellectuals. Czech writers of Zeyer's times were striving to promote Czech culture, since they were aware of its disadvantaged position in the presence of the German minority and Austro-Hungarian political power. Czech art and politics have often been very closely intertwined, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. Vlček characterizes the link between Czech art, politics, and nationalism in Zeyer's times:

> The relationship between art and politics [...] in Czech culture at the end of the [nineteenth] century [...] was based on the idea of the preservation of national culture as the primary ground for any policy of national self-determination.[10]

As we have seen, Zeyer was a major contributor to the magazine *Lumír*. The literary program of the *Lumír* group of writers was to include Czech literature in world literature by introducing world literature to the Czech reading public. As I have shown in Chapter 2, *Lumír* published translations of works from many languages as well as original works about other cultures. Zeyer's turning towards the Other is the other side of his turning away from the inferior Self, that is, from Czech society that suffered political subordination to Austria-Hungary and felt economically and culturally inferior to the German minority. Many of Zeyer's contemporaries also wrote about other cultures, but Zeyer was unique in embracing a large number of Asian and North African themes.

In private letters to friends, Zeyer frequently expressed his unhappiness about the political state of affairs. In these letters, Zeyer is much more open about his political stance than he is in his literary work. For example, in a letter to Herites, Zeyer shares the

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[10] Tomáš Vlček, *National Sensualism: Czech Fin-de-Siècle Art. Intellectuals and the future in the Habsburg Monarchy 1890-1914*, 107.

sorrow he felt about the subordinate situation of the Czechs: "We will have a lot to share and will console each other in the misery, which is the curse over our nation."[11] In a letter to Otokar Červený, Zeyer also expressed his despair with the political *status quo*:

> Yesterday, at the anniversary of the battle at the White Mountain,[12] I was terribly sad. Centuries have passed and the oppression is without end and our murderers are still victorious just like on the first day after the battle. What a reason to despair.[13]

Zeyer traces Czech powerlessness all the way back to 1620. In a letter to a Polish writer Przesmycki, Zeyer laments the forced re-Catholization and the ensuing emigration of Czech intelligentsia that had weakened[14] Czech culture from the 17th century on:

> We in Bohemia are still ill from the weakening after the extensive emigration. The emigrants had hoped they would come back and they never did. Our enemies have usurped everything and taken the vacant positions and we cannot take hold of them any longer.[15]

In another letter to Przesmycki, Zeyer complains about the German and Austro-Hungarian oppression:

> The situation is very sad [in the Czech lands.] You cannot imagine the brutal rudeness of the Germans coming not from courage, but from the knowledge that the emperor supports them and the whole state apparatus

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[11] Božena Heritesová, ed., *Přátelé Zeyer – Herites*, p. 101

[12] A. H. Hermann in *A History of the Czechs*, 60, stresses that the defeat of the Bohemian Protestants was "fateful" not only for the Czechs: "[t]he end of an independent Czech kingdom was also to be a turning-point in the history of Europe. In that tense situation, when hawkish parties were getting the upper hand in both the Protestant and Catholic camps of Europe, the news that the Habsburg governors had been chased from Prague must have had the same electrifying effect as, 350 years later, did the news that the Czechs were trying to free themselves from Soviet domination."

[13] Julius Zeyer, *Listy třem přátelům*, 64

[14] The idea of a complete stagnation during the Dark Ages of Czech culture between 1620 and 1848 has been challenged. For example, René Wellek in *Essays on Czech Literature*, 24, argues that a rich tradition of Czech Catholic devotional poetry as well as popular oral literature flourished in the centuries to come after 1620. One branch of the Czech revivalists of the late eighteenth-century continued in this tradition, instead of, as is commonly believed, drawing upon the Czech literature that had existed before 1620.

[15] Julius Zeyer, *Korespondence Julia Zeyera s polskými spisovateli*, p. 255

> openly and covertly supports them. I don't know how this will end [...], but bearing it costs me a lot of my heart's blood.[16]

Some critics argue that Zeyer almost excluded German themes from his work, in spite of his own German heritage, because of the anti-German atmosphere in Czech literary and cultural circles in during Zeyer's life.[17] Zeyer's dislike for the state of Czech politics was reflected in his personal life. Since Prague symbolized for him the Czech lands and intellectual and political subordination, he moved to the small town of Vodňany. In a letter from Vodňany, Zeyer shared his grief over Czech politics with the poet Sládek. Like in his other letters, Zeyer does not address specific political issues, but he does reveal his dislike of the life in Prague: "I would hate to be in Prague right now. Everything is turning upside down in me. I am thinking of what is going on here. We are an unlucky nation. My god, when will this suffering of ours end?"[18] Quite often, Zeyer shared in his private letters his despair over the lack of political and cultural freedom for Czechs in his times, which, as we have seen, he traced back to 1620, when forced re-Catholization started in the Czech lands. However, although Zeyer is open about his general unhappiness, he does not go into specific details about the current Czech political life. This lack of interest in the depressing events of daily politics went hand in hand with his interest in the utopian aspects of the Other.

Zeyer's political feelings were obvious to his intellectual friends and they often expressed their observations about Zeyer's political nature. For example, Vobornik writes about Zeyer's state of mind when he was moving from Prague to Vodňany:

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[16]Ibid., p. 238

[17] Jan Krejčí, "F. V. Krejčí, Julius Zeyer. Kritická studie." *Listy filologické*, 1902, p. 81

[18] J. Š. Kvapil, *Sládek – Zeyer: Vzájemná korespondence*, p. 244

> [W]hat were the causes of [Zeyer's] deep crisis before he left for Vodňany, a crisis so terrible that he was near suicide? There were several reasons: primarily, the pain of national longing. In his imagination, he saw the greatness of his nation and, in reality, he saw and felt the terrible humiliation and sad state of affairs with no hope for redemption.[19]

Neither in his correspondence nor in the memoirs of his contemporaries do we come across Zeyer's dealing with specific issues in Czech cultural and political life. His interest in politics was, therefore, of a general nature, and as such, was expressed indirectly in his numerous utopian writings about the Other. The specific mode he adapts of Asian and North African themes reflects his sorrow over the Czech situation and his desire to escape to a better world.

The third reason why Zeyer wrote about the Other was his interest in traveling and personally exploring foreign cultures as well as his love for beauty in all forms. Longing for travel to far-away lands was not only a peculiar personal trait of Zeyer's, but a frequent motif in Czech culture. In addition, the land-locked character of Czech geographical space invites the association between sea travel and the Other. The motif of travel and, especially, oceanic travel was widely adopted by other Czech writers and poets. For example, Zeyer's friend Sládek traveled extensively in the United States and introduced Native American themes to Czech culture. Konstantin Biebl, a member of the poetist generation that came after Zeyer, composed poetry about travels to Java. The Italian Slavicist Angelo Maria Ripellino observes and essentializes this Czech *wanderlust*: "The longing for the sea and wide open spaces is always present in Czech culture and in the very nature of the Homo Bohemicus."[20] Like many of his

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[19] Jan Vobornik, *O poesii Julia Zeyera. Kritická studie*, p. 21

[20] Angelo Maria Ripellino, *Magic Prague*, 270.

contemporaries from the *Lumír* generation, Zeyer traveled extensively. However, none of the Czech writers traveled as far as Asia in Zeyer's times. If Zeyer had had an opportunity through business or government employment to visit the Asian countries he wrote about, he would have probably gone there.

In a letter to the Polish writer Przesmycki, Zeyer expounds on his travels in Europe when he was roughing it as a manual worker. He says that he loved that period of his life in spite of the physical inconvenience.

> Those were the times that now seem to be a May dream. My palms, unused to work, would gush with blood. At times, I slept on straw, or, when wandering, on the ground under the open sky. At times, I ate nothing but dry bread. Those times were still beautiful beyond description. You can find my impressions from those times and the state of my soul then, in a way, in the foreword to *Báje Šošany*.[21]

Zeyer reveals that the background for his character Šošana, who is a wanderer, comes from his own experiences. Similarly, Poucha identifies the longings for the East of Zeyer's character Madrána with Zeyer's own longings.[22] Vobornik describes Zeyer's longings for escaping to far-away, utopian lands:

> Then he felt so repulsed by all his surroundings, society and state, that he would prefer to see himself on a far-away island. His longing for unlimited liberty painted for him a seductive picture of voluntary happiness somewhere overseas apart from European civilization, without fetter of any laws and orders, [...][23]

In his eulogy of Zeyer, Vobornik identifies the most important feature of Zeyer's character as the force of longing. Vobornik specifies Zeyer's longing for the distant and the beautiful, and the knowledge of precious and old things. The latter had emerged early

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[21] Julius Zeyer, *Korespondence Julia Zeyera s polskými spisovateli*, p. 84

[22] Pavel Poucha, *Světla východu*, p. 547

[23] Jan Vobornik, *Mučedník touhy*, p. 23

in Zeyer's life, fed by his nanny's tales and abundant reading.[24] Karásek argues that Zeyer is not an escapist, but that all his work is a protest and struggle against his every-day banal reality.[25] Zeyer enjoyed surrounding himself with beautiful things and, during his travels in Europe, Russia, and North Africa, he acquired a large number of valuable artifacts which he displayed with special care in his home. The value of his collection is acknowledged by the fact that his entire room, including furniture and decorations, is on display at the Náprstek Museum in Prague.[26]

Menclová, who included Zeyer in her recent series of newspaper articles on the journeys of Czech revivalist writers, summarizes the whole of Zeyer's life as an expression of his longing for the distant and the beautiful:

> All of Zeyer's life seems to have been a journey in search of a haven, calm, beauty, and understanding. Zeyer was on this journey both in reality and in his dreams, permanently searching for the great loves, landscapes, and heroes, of which he was fantacizing.[27]

In some of his works on Asia and North Africa, Zeyer directly expresses his love for travel far from Europe and its perceived constraints. His love for travel was interrelated with his love for the beautiful, since his love for the beautiful was unsatisfied by his immediate surroundings.

The three areas of Zeyer's conscious and unconscious motivation for writing about the Other are well recorded in Zeyer's correspondence and in the accounts of his friends and critics. Zeyer shares his unhappiness with the Czech political, cultural, and

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Jiří Karásek from Lvovice, "Za Juliem Zeyerem." *Moderní revue*, ročník XII, číslo 5, p. 157

[26] The Náprstek museum displays a rich collection of Asian, African, and American folk objects.

[27] Věra Menclová, "Julius Zeyer – dlouhá cesta a věčná touha po návratu." *Lidové noviny*, 2. května 1998, p. 5

economic subordination so frequently in his letters, and his despair is so striking to his contemporaries, that a political motivation for his writing about the Other is beyond doubt. Furthermore, he occasionally expresses his hopelessness over the inferiority of the Czechs also in his books, as I have demonstrated in Chapter 3. His love for beauty persistently drove him to look for it outside his daily environment, which did not satisfy his desire. As I have shown in Chapter 2, Czech intellectuals of the second half of the nineteenth-century took interest in other cultures, making an effort to expand the Czech cultural horizons. This cultural environment enhanced and encouraged Zeyer's fascination with the Other. His access to the current Western European scholarship influenced his choice of the Asian and North African Other as his subject matter. His multi-national background gave him an opportunity to reach far beyond Czech and European themes and look into the Asian and North African Other that had not been significantly explored by other Czech writers of his times.[28]

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[28] Robert B. Pynsent, *Julius Zeyer: The Path to Decadence*, 63.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis has been twofold. Firstly, I enrich Said's theory by analyzing a case in which Orientalism is produced by a Czech writer of the late nineteenth century, that is a member of a nation that was then colonized by Austria-Hungary. I show that the Orientalism of a particular writer can be fully understood only in terms of the political and cultural context in which it is produced. Said has clearly demonstrated the condescending nature of the Orientalism produced by writers from the major colonial powers and he has recommended that Orientalisms of small European nations be studied. However, he disregards the fact that the power dynamics leading to Orientalism produced by colonized nations differs from his model.

Secondly, a new view of Zeyer's writings on Asia and North Africa reveals itself when his work is viewed in relation to Said's theory. The Orientalism in Zeyer's work is demeaning, ethnocentric, and racist, but these qualities are implicit, unlike in most of the works by British, French, or American authors, about which Said speaks. What differentiates Zeyer most Western European and American Orientalist authors is his conspicuous idealization of the Other. Another difference is that this idealization does not stem only from Romanticism, as it does in the case of Western European or American utopian Orientalist works; it also comes from the colonized position of the Czech lands during Zeyer's lifetime and in the preceding centuries. In addition, as I demonstrate in the epilogue, Zeyer's Asian and North African utopias are not isolated, but belong to an idealizing trend in the Czech Orientalist writing of the last three centuries. Said's claim that Orientalist knowledge is political knowledge[1] applies to Czech Orientalism, but with

[1] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 11.

a different meaning from the Western European and American Orientalism of which Said speaks. While I agree with Said that Orientalist works generally serve their originators to establish their superiority over the Other, Zeyer's Orientalism aims at mitigating the sense of inferiority of the Czech Self.

Zeyer is an important yet contradictory figure in Czech literary history. His evaluation has wavered between extremes of adoration and mockery. However, his critics, including outstanding Czech scholars of Asian and North African cultures, have almost unanimously praised his rendering of Asian and North African themes. These critics have appreciated that he expressed the "essence" of the Other while adjusting "the less important" elements to the taste of European readers. They have also rated positively the fact that he expressed the burning issues of his times through writing about the Other, distant both in time and place. Only through the Saidian lens do we see that Zeyer's works are Orientalist, and, therefore, subtly belittling of the Asians and North Africans he seems to be glorifying.

Zeyer felt that the Czech Self was in an inferior position and that it frequently reacted to colonization with degrading behavior. That is why Zeyer chose to write about the Other, ascribing to it all the qualities he wished the Czechs to have. The covertly demeaning quality of Zeyer's work that I have uncovered stems from his identification with the strong, white and European West. The striking idealization of the Other comes from Zeyer's identification with the mysterious, beautiful, and feminized East. The political and cultural environment in the late nineteenth century, when the Czechs were subordinated to Austria-Hungary while they were reaping the efforts of their national revival, created a Czech identity that oscillated between two poles. These two poles are

identified with notions such as little Czechness/great Czechness, strong/weak, or East/West. Both extremes were expressed in literature. The ambivalent Czech identity contributed to the ambiguous character of Zeyer's writings, challenging any overgeneralized binary concepts, such as the strong versus the weak; the colonizer versus the colonized; the European as opposed to the non-European; and the "Occident" wholly different from the "Orient." This challenge applies both to the overgeneralized "Orient" that Said comments on in *Orientalism* and the overgeneralized "Occident" that he reifies in the same book.

EPILOGUE

In the Introduction to *Orientalism*,[1] Said asks how the phenomenon of Orientalism changes over epochs. Czech literary and scholarly Orientalism preserved its idealizing character from the time of the Czech national Renaissance in the eighteenth century through at least the 1970s.

Czech nationalists of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries spread information about India and its languages in support of their agenda of Czech national revival to draw power from the ideal Other. They used German sources for their research as well as the Sanskrit Grammar written in Czech by the Czech Jesuit missionary to Goa Karel Přikryl.[2] For example, the founder of the first modern Czech publishing house, Jan Matěj Kramérius, published in 1803 *Historické vypsání Mogolského císařství* (An Historical Description of the Mughal Empire), which encourages readers to draw inspiration from the virtues and great deeds of the Indian people.[3]

The central point in the Czech national revival was the revival of the written Czech language, and, therefore, linguistics was at the forefront of the movement. The Czech language has been the single most important element in defining Czech identity from the time of the national revival on,[4] since geography or religion have never provided unique parameters for such definition.[5] Therefore, the Czechs have considered their

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[1] Ibid., 15.

[2] Dušan Zbavitel: *Oriental Studies in Czechoslovakia*, p. 21

[3] Miloslav Krása, *Looking Towards India*, p. 62

[4] Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, 107.

[5] Language defined geography, as Mark Cornwall argues: "It can be said that for a large number of Czechs or Germans living in the crownlands (*Kronländer*) of Bohemia-Moravia during this period [1880-1940], the border which most concerned them in their everyday life was not the state boundary of the Habsburg Empire or Czechoslovakia, but the language border which separated them from their Czech or German

language almost sacred,[6] which explains the attempts of the Czech revivalists to prove that it was related to Sanskrit, the sacred language of the distant Indian Other. Such a link was meant to demonstrate that Czech was not inferior to German.[7] The nationalists felt that such proof was necessary, since Czech was at that time mostly a language of peasants in the Czech lands. The nobility and the growing capitalist class, the state bureaucrats, and the German minority spoke German.[8] The national identity of the revivalists themselves was not distinctly "Czech." Some of their works were first published in German.[9] In addition, some of the revivalists (the historian František Palacký) and also writers (Karel Hynek Mácha), painters (Josef Mánes), and musicians (Bedřich Smetana) of the period used German at home, in their diaries or private correspondence. Other revivalists, such as Jan Kollár or Pavel Josef Šafařík, were Slovak, but they wrote in Czech.

The Romantic assumption that Sanskrit was the primeval source of all Indo-European languages was acted upon by the leading figure in Czech philology, the Catholic priest Josef Dobrovský. He pointed out the close similarity of word roots and endings between Slavic languages and ancient Indian languages. In 1821, a Czech

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neighbors." The Struggle on the Czech-German Language Border, 1880-1940. *English Historical Review*, September 1994, 915-951

[6] In 1946, the bilingual Czech/German Jewish writer Pavel Eisner published his homage to the Czech language *Chrám a tvrz* (The Temple and the Fortress,) referred to by Ripellino as "a fervent, almost enraptured treatise," *Magic Prague*, 23. *Chrám a tvrz* was still considered relevant in 1985, when my undergraduate advisor, a professor of Russian, recommended reading it to the freshmen in the linguistics program at Charles University, Prague.

[7] Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities*, 71, argues that Jungmann's pioneering five-volume Czech-German Dictionary achieved exactly that: "within the covers of the Czech-German/German-Czech dictionary the paired languages had a common status."

[8] Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, 80.

[9] For example, Josef Dobrovský's *Geschichte der bömischen Sprache und Literatur* (1792).

philologist and historian of literature Josef Jungmann wrote in the magazine *Krok* (Step)[10] about metric systems in Indian poetry, used them in his own poetry, and encouraged others to use the Indian meters as well. In his other articles, he called Sanskrit the "real mother of the Slavonic Tongue" and "the most perfect language under the Sun."[11] Antonín Jungmann published articles on the correspondence between Sanskrit and Slavic languages, comparison between Hindu and Slavic deities, and other articles on India and Sanskrit. The strongest claims about the affinity between Slavic languages and Sanskrit were made by Ján Kollár. In his linguistic treatises as well as in his historic works on Slavic prehistory, he expresses his ideas of Slavic-Ancient Indian affinity in regards to life, language, and mythology. Kollár's knowledge of Sanskrit and Indian life and customs was minimal and most of the comparisons are not valid. The Slovak linguist, historian, and writer Pavel Josef Šafařík demonstrated a good knowledge of Sanskrit in his articles where he, in a more scholarly fashion than Kollár, looked for parallels between the Indians and the Slavs. Pynsent argues that these "mythopoets" turned to the Indian culture, since Indian religions were known then as civilized paganism, which "was the ideal sort of paganism for the Slavs to have had."[12]

In the second half of the twentieth century, Czech Orientalist scholarship has reinforced the notion of the peoples of Asia and North Africa as a very special Other. In the 1950s through 1970s, Czech scholars published several accounts of Czech relations with Asia and Africa. A number of Czech studies on Czech Orientalism focus on India. In 1959, the Czech Indologist Dušan Zbavitel published an informative account of Czech

[10] Krok was also the father of Princess Libuše, the important figure in pre-Christian mythology of Bohemia.

[11] Miloslav Krása, *Looking Towards India*, 63

and Slovak Orientalist scholarship, *Oriental Studies in Czechoslovakia.* In the Introduction, Jaroslav Průšek, professor of Sinology, member of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, and director of the Oriental Institute in Prague, argues that the research on Asia and North Africa has a unique role in Czechoslovak learning.

> Oriental studies occupies a special place in Czechoslovak scholarship and in our cultural life as a whole. We might even say that it has struck deeper roots here than in cultural life elsewhere.[13]

Průšek stresses that in the second half of the twentieth century, the Czechoslovak public was interested in the countries of Asia and North Africa along the lines of the Communist propaganda of friendship with the pro-Soviet Asian and North African nations. In 1967, the Prague Oriental Institute published in Moscow *Asian and African Studies in Czechoslovakia*, edited by Miroslav Oplt. This book focuses on the history of linguistic studies, including the Orientalist efforts of the Czech nationalists at the turn of the eighteenth century. In 1969, Miloslav Krása's *Looking Towards India* was published. Krása supports the argument of Czech and Slovak historic affinity with India. He narrates the connection between the two countries through history and details the works on Indian culture by Czech intellectuals, both Orientalists and experts in other fields. As if continuing in the comparative efforts of the Czech National revival I mentioned above, Krása gives a comparative chronology of the two countries. He also pays attention to such political events as Tagore's visit to Czechoslovakia and the overwhelming positive response it elicited among the Czech and Slovak people. Krása's *Looking Toward India* supports the argument that Czech writers and scholars turn toward India with the intention of validating Czech language and culture.

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[12] Robert B. Pynsent, *Questions of Identity*, 66.

All three of these historical accounts of Czech Orientalism were published in the English language in Moscow. This fact indicates that they were a part of the communist government policy of "friendship" towards the nations of Asia and Africa. The reasons for such positive perception of Asian and North African countries are different from those in the nineteenth century, since after the second world war the approval was dictated by the ruling establishment. Although the reasons changed, the trend of seeing only the good in the Asian and North African Other continues in Czech scholarship. The three histories of Czech writings on Asia and North Africa are also unanimously approving of the Czech Orientalists. Such an attitude is understandable in pre-Saidian scholarship.

[13] Miloslav Krása, *Looking Towards India*, 7

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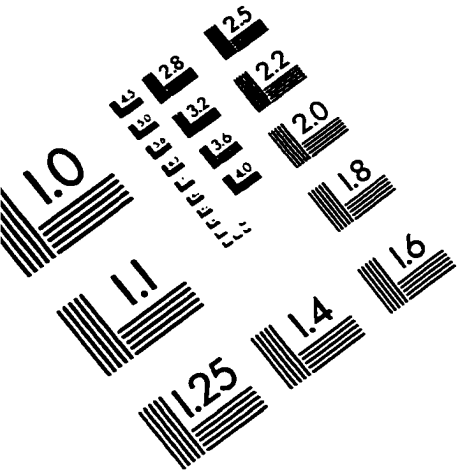

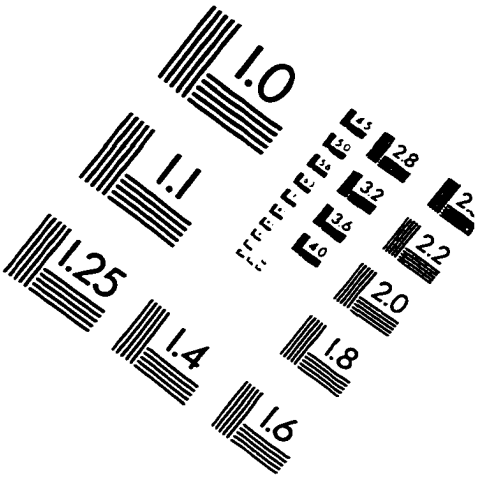

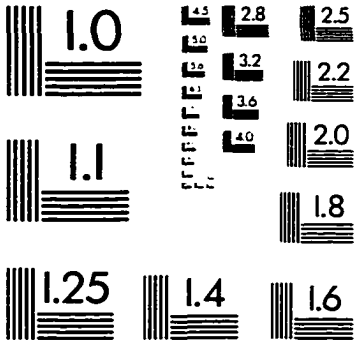

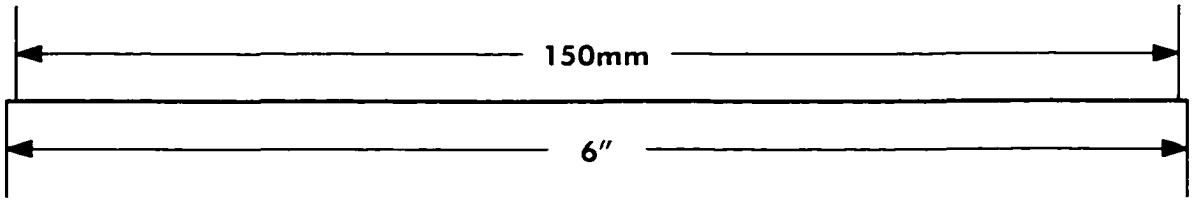

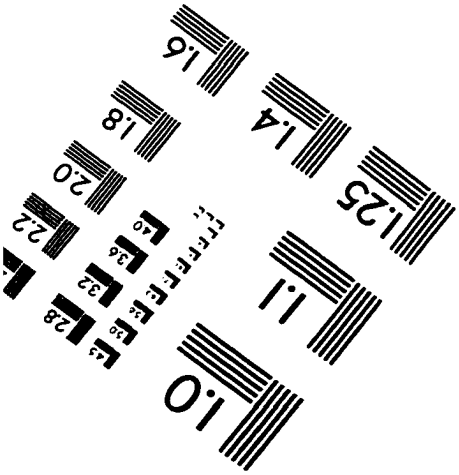

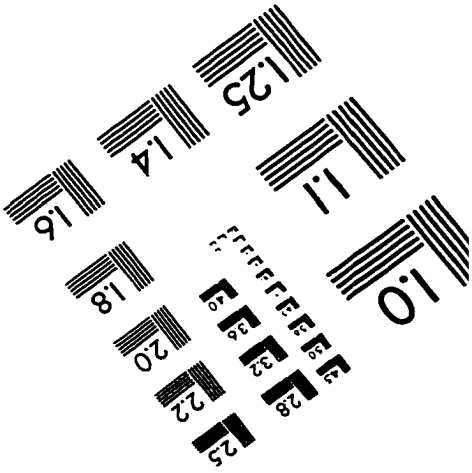

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