

Vratislav Effenberger

Born 22 April 1923 in Nymburk, died 10 August in Prague. Between 1945 and 1948 he studied chemistry and history of art. Poet, art and literary theoretician and, after Karel Teige's death, the leading figure of the Surrealist Group in Czechoslovakia.

Decisive encounters: with Vítězslav Nezval (1943), Karel Teige (1945), Zbyněk Havlíček, Karel Hynek and Josef Istler (1946) and Mikuláš Medek (1949) and Ludvík Šváb (1952).

His works, mostly unpublished, consist of eight books of poetry (*Matka země / Mother Earth*, 1940-1944; *Život na dosah ruky / World Within a Hand's Reach*, 1945-1947; *Srdce nebo mrak / Heart or Cloud*, 1948-1951; *Veliké náměstí svobody / The Grand Square of Freedom*, 1952-1957; *Spojování představ / Combining Visions*, 1958-1960; *Problém skladby / The Question of Composition*, 1962-1967; *Nezapomenutelné dějiny / Unforgettable History*, 1965-1986; *Obrazotvorné postupy / Imaginative Procedures*, 1970 till 1986), eighteen theater plays and pantomimes (*Miliardáři / Billionaires*, 1944; *Jela tudy dáma / A Lady Drove Through*, with K. Hynek, 1950; *Poslední umře hlady / The Last One Starves to Death*, with K. Hynek, 1952; *U jezera slz / At the Lake of Tears*, 1952; *Šachová suita / The Chess Suite*, 1953; *Na věčné časy / Forever and Ever*, 1953; *Tatarská svatá / The Tartar Saint*, 1955; *Nebezpečné domy / Dangerous Houses*, with P. Král, 1960; *Vidím město veliké / A Great Town I See*, 1962; *Pušky tuberkulosních / Tuberculars' Rifles*, 1967; *Španělská vesnice / It's All Greek to Me*, 1972; *Svatební hostina / The Wedding Party*, with K. Hynek, 1951; *Gedeon Spilett*, with J. Istler, 1952; *Vzdušné zámky / Machine for Castles in the Air*, 1956; *Poslední cesta kapitána Cooka / The Last Journey of Captain Cook*, 1956; *Willendorfská Venuše / Venus of Willendorf*, 1956; *Jako když se pase pes / As a Grazing Dog*, 1973), four pseudo-novels (*Medusy / Medusas*, 1959; *Motiv smrti / Death Motive*, 1962; *Trochu strachu / A Bite of Fright*, 1970, 1976; *Biče svědomí / Whips of Conscience*, with E. Švankmajerová, 1978), a cycle of pseudo-scripts *Surovost světa a cynismus fantazie / Cruelty of Life and Cynicism of Fantasy* (1946-1986, published by Orbis in 1991).

In the field of theory, Effenberger was the author of a range of broadcast programs and reviews, participated in lecture cycles (1960s) and collaborated externally with the Film and Theater Institute (1970s). Besides these, he also left the manuscripts of two comprehensive studies in the field of evolutionary changes of modern art: *Models and Methods*, and *Consciousness and Imagination* (the second and third part of a cycle started by *Reality and Poetry*) and a whole range of other individual theoretical texts (*Discovering the World*, 1960-1986; *Without Music*, 1948-1950; *Defense of Sex*, 1960-1986; *Symbol Movements*, 1961; etc.).

Only a fraction of his extensive work has been published: *Henri Rousseau* (Odeon, Prague, 1963, 1964), *Básně na zdi / Poems on the Wall* (personal edition of František Muzika, Prague, 1966), *Realita a poesie / Reality and Poetry* (Mladá Fronta, 1966), *Výtvarné projevy surrealismu / Visual Expressions of Surrealism* (Odeon, Prague, 1969), *Surovost světa a cynismus fantazie / Cruelty of Life and Cynicism of Fantasy* (anthology, Sixty-Eight Publishers, Toronto, 1984), *Lov na černého žraloka / The Black Shark Hunt* (two different editions, Le la, Geneva, and Poesie mimo domov, Munich, 1987). He also cooperated on the following projects: K. Teige's *Vývojové proměny v umění / Evolutionary Changes in Art* (Obelisk, Prague, 1966), *K. Teige, I – Svět stavby a básně / The World of Construction and Poem* (first of three volumes of selected writings; the second one was withdrawn from distribution), *Analogon I*, (Čs. spisovatel, Prague, 1969). The essay *Republiku a varlata / Republic and Testicles!*, which presents Effenberger's views on modern politics and history, was written in the 1970s, but not published until 1990 and 1991, when it appeared in parts in *Analogon 2, 3 and 4*.

In addition to contributing to Czechoslovak and foreign periodicals and miscellanea, he cooperated on various projects of the Surrealist Group in Czechoslovakia (catalogs, samizdat anthologies *Znamení zvěrokruhu* (Signs of the Zodiac), 1951; *Objekty* (Objects) 1-5, 1953-1960; *Otevřená hra* (The Open Game), 1978; *Opak zrcadla* (The Opposite of a Mirror), 1985). The publishing house Torst is currently preparing the collected writings of Vratislav Effenberger for publication.

Transl. by Malgosia Turzańska