

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis deals with reader empathy towards literary characters in Jan Balabán's short stories, specifically focusing on the means of text construction that enable this empathy. The theoretical part of the thesis first defines the subjects of the empathic response – the literary character and the reader. Subsequently, the empathic process is also defined. In the practical part, three short stories from different short story collections by Jan Balabán are then analysed, because the sub-research of the bachelor's thesis is focused on the transformation of the means of text construction key to eliciting an empathic response in the context of Balabán's work. The analyses themselves are structured into the different levels of literary character, narrator, story, space-time and language. The analyses then show that the empathic response in the reader is elicited in a similar way in the first two stories, mainly due to the blurring of the distinctions between the narrator's zone and the character's zone, which evokes a similarity with interpersonal interaction, as well as due to the sites of non-determinism that result in the elicitation of so-called external inferences. The third short story is more descriptive, the character's feelings are captured more explicitly, there is no blurring of the aforementioned zones, but there are still similar means of text construction used to evoke empathy in the reader as in the previous stories. These are mainly the depiction of characters in a difficult life situation and elements of text updating, resulting in activation of reading, and therefore a deeper reflection on the read text. Investigating the reader's empathic process is undoubtedly a highly subjective discipline, yet the author of the bachelor's thesis, primarily with the help of his own reading experience, interpretive skills and the available literature, has attempted to analyse the stories as non-objectively as possible.

KEYWORDS

Empathy, literary character, reader, short story, Jan Balabán