

Czech Language News

Fall 2005

International Association of Teachers of Czech (IATC-
NAATC)

<http://www.language.brown.edu/IATC/index.html>

Number Twenty-Five

ISSN 1085-2950

Message from the President

Teaching Czech can sometimes be an exercise in renunciation and moderation. Most of us work in smaller programs, where one or two members of staff handle all the teaching. This can mean stark choices. Literature and culture can get crowded out, or reduced to a token presence in the service of a language program (the occasional reading passage, the film at Czech club, the translation approach to reading literature). After all, we can't do everything—or can we?

The contributions in this month's *CLN* take a variety of different viewpoints on the place of literature, history and culture in the classroom, ranging from the general to the specific.

Robert Porter's article searches for a "handle" on Czech literature: an attempt to grasp its essence and define what makes it different from other literatures. Porter contrasts this to the striving of literary theory to render all texts analyzable using the same set of tools—if you like, a sort of globalization of literature that renders national identity a matter of studied indifference. Porter settles on the smallness of Czech literature as its essential greatness. Certainly the idea of *malé české poměry* would make an intriguing theme for a course—has anyone tried it?

Masako Fidler describes an experiment at Brown in which the upper level language classes have been replaced by courses entitled "Topics in Czech Language and Culture" and "Topics Course on War, Revolution and National Identity in Czech Culture." The aim of this restructuring has been to bring content to the foreground in the language classroom and give more space for the sort of multi-level teaching needed in small programs. Could this be a model for other language programs where the traditional three- or four-year syllabus is outdated?

On the specific level, Lída Holá and Susan Kresin explore ways of using Neruda's *Malostranské povídky* in the language classroom. Holá's article is full of specific tips and tasks that the teacher can use to expand students' understanding of the text and increase its relevance to them. Kresin takes up where Holá leaves off, suggesting ways of expanding students' consciousness of the world of Neruda's texts through exploring websites and other resources.

It's good to see the teaching of literature, history and culture in their various guises taking pride of place on the pages of *CLN*. As much as we need the input of fresh ideas for our language classrooms, our non-language syllabi could also occasionally use a bit of dusting off and plumping up. Our organization includes teachers of all stripes—let's hear more on this count.

Neil Bermel

University of Sheffield

Contents

<i>Malostranské povídky, Part I</i> by Susan Kresin	2
<i>Malostranské povídky, Part II</i> by Lída Hola	3
<i>Multi-level Teaching at Brown</i> by Masako U. Fidler.....	6
<i>Special Advertising Section</i>	8
<i>Czech Literature—Or Why Small is Beautiful</i> by Robert Porter	9
<i>Zprávy bleskem</i>	11
<i>Review of "Determinátory neurčitosti v češtině"</i> by Anna Maria Perisutti reviewed by Susan Kresin	12
<i>Cimrman Corner: Cimrman's Operettas</i> by Ladislav Smoljak and Jan Svěrák	13