

Malostranské povídky, Part 1
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Texts with corresponding condensed and/or simplified versions can be an invaluable tool when reading literature with a mixed group of students. In the second-year class at UCLA, one of the core readings is the story “Přivedla žebráka na mizinu” from Jan Neruda’s *Malostranské povídky*. Native speakers and other advanced students read it in the original, while intermediate-level students read a condensed version published with pre- and post-reading questions by Lída Holá (see also Lída Holá’s article following this one, *Co lze dělat s Povídkami malostranskými?*, the full version of which can be found at <http://www.czechstepbystep.cz/Cesky/ceskyindex.htm> → *Pro učitelé*).

In addition to the activities suggested by Holá, students can use the stories as the basis for various communicative extensions. For example, students can work individually or in pairs to plan a day and/or evening in the Malá Strana area, visiting sites mentioned in the stories and others that they themselves chose, using websites such as <http://kamvpraze.cz> and <http://www.pis.cz>. Relatively weak students can answer a fixed set of questions, tailored to their level, while stronger students can be given greater flexibility, perhaps preparing a walking tour of the area, with research on specific sites, or planning an evening in Malá Strana with a character from one of the stories. After this individualized work, the class can meet again as a group to ask each other questions about their plans, compare their plans, invite each other to the sites they chose, and make fictitious plans to meet. Maps of the area from <http://mapy.cz> can be used to scaffold practice in giving directions: a Czech equivalent of the English-language site <http://mapquest.com>, this website provides not only maps, but also detailed directions.

The topic of an afternoon or evening in Malá Strana combines well with review of the genitive case and verbs of motion, topics which tend to present difficulties for heritage and non-heritage students alike. The genitive case can also be brought to life using Vítězslav Nezval’s short cycle of “Domovní znamení” poems and a supplementary text in the Holá collection on house signs, which includes pictures of U Zlatého anděla, U Zlaté husy, U Tří lilíí (the title and setting of another Neruda story), and others. Students enjoy making up their own titles for restaurants, pubs and other places, combining colors and animals in various ways (for

example, U Zlatého preclíku for a made-up pub, U Tří lilíí for a flower shop, or U Zlatého klíče for a library). Nezval also generously provides practice in the genitive plural with his famous poem “Praha s prsty dešti” (Jsem jazyk tvých zvonů ale také tvého deště / Jsem jazyk tvých hrozen ale také tvých nocleháren . . .). Students enjoy using this poem as a basis for their own variations, addressing either Prague or another city of their choice.

To encourage communication in Czech outside of class, students can send each other postcards of a “Domovní znamení” or of other sites in Malá Strana from the site <http://pohlednice.tiscali.cz/?c=168&f=1149> (and others that can be selected from the link “Praha”). Students with a theatrical bent may enjoy putting on a play production based on one or more of the stories. The story “Přivedla žebráka na mizinu” is especially well suited for mixed groups, since it has two well-defined main characters and several lesser roles.

Relatively advanced speakers may be assigned additional readings from Neruda’s *Malostranské povídky*, using pre- and post-reading exercises similar to those described in the Step by Step site. Since recordings of these stories are readily available in the Czech Republic, they can also be used in various ways for listening comprehension. In addition, a search at the site <http://referaty.cz/referaty> (or similar sites) leads to various student reports in Czech on the Neruda stories, essentially plot summaries. Since the language and factual content appear not to be moderated on this site, students can fairly easily act as “teachers,” either individually or in pairs, and make suggestions on how to improve the reports. Reports from this site can also serve as the basis for a lively conversation among advanced students about what makes a viable essay. Students have the option of submitting their own reports to the website, which gives them a chance to “publish” their work.

Finally, independent projects provide a further opportunity to teach in a modular way that accommodates the students’ diverse interests and abilities. *Malostranské povídky* can serve as a starting point for a wide range of student reports, from brief presentations on specific sites mentioned in the stories (such as Chram svatého Mikuláše or Chram svatého Víta) to more abstract topics concerning Neruda’s life and times or the language of various translations. The two English versions readily available, by Michael Heim and Edith Pargeter, create somewhat different images of the Malá Strana area, and a new one by Craig Cravens is forthcoming (see advertisement in this issue).

Students can compare these translations and try their own translations, perhaps in connection with a theatrical performance.

Malostranské povídky, Part 2

Co lze dělat s Povídkami malostranskými?

Lída Holá

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Není tato otázka zbytečná? Není nejlepší prostě povídky vzít a se studenty si je přečíst? – Určitě ne. Tento postup je sice nejjednodušší, ale zároveň asi taky nejhorší varianta, jak při práci s textem postupovat. Následující řádky se snaží poskytnout návod, jak z textu vytěžit maximum a pracovat s ním kreativně a efektivně.

Učitel by si měl především uvědomit, že práce s textem má několik etap:

1. Aktivity před četbou textu (pre-reading activities)
2. Vlastní práce s textem (while-reading activities)
3. Aktivity po četbě textu (post-reading activities)
4. Aktivity po četbě celé knihy

1. Aktivity před čtením.

Cílem těchto aktivit je umožnit studentům, aby děj povídky aktivně předjímal a "předučit" slovní zásobu, se kterou se v textu setkají.

1. 1 Titul povídky.

a) Učitel napíše na tabuli/papír název povídky (samozřejmě, že ne všechny názvy jsou pro tuto aktivitu vhodné). Studenti hádají, o čem asi povídka bude. Kolem názvu lze psát otázky, které studenti vymýšlejí. Po přečtení povídky studenti na tyto otázky odpovídají.

Například k povídce "Přivedla žebráka na mizinu" studenti vymýšleli otázky jako například *Kdo byla ta "ona", která přivedla žebráka na mizinu? Kdo byl ten žebrák? Proč byl žebrák? Jak to ta žena udělala?*

b) Studenti hádají titul povídky na základě toho, že jim učitel prozradí jeho strukturu. Například v povídce "U Tří lilíí" věděli studenti, že jde o název hospody a že titul má strukturu *prepozice – číslovka – jméno květiny*. Vymýšleli pak názvy jako *U jedné růže, U tří pampelišek* atd. (Samozřejmě, že při vymýšlení mohou používat slovníky a tabulky deklinace, popř. jim může učitel pomoci s tvary číslovek).

c) Titul povídky lze zašifrovat do jednoduché křížovky. K jejímu vylúštení musí studenti použít slova, která se později v povídce objeví.

1. 2 Obrázek.

Učitel ukáže studentům obrázek, který se k textu vztahuje (pro školní výuku lze obrázek zvětšit a umístit na tabuli). Studenti se rozdělí do dvou týmů a soutěží o to, kdo napíše víc otázek k obrázku. Po přečtení povídky na ně odpovídají.

Například k obrázku k povídce "Doktor Kazisvět" se studenti ptali: *Kdo je ten mrtvý? Je opravdu mrtvý? Proč umřel? Je to exhumace? Ten člověk vpravo je doktor? Kam se dívá ten doktor? Kdo je ta žena vzadu, manželka, sestra nebo milenka? Kdo jsou lidé okolo?*

1. 3 Klíčová slova.

Učitel řekne studentům titul povídky a slova, která jsou pro ni klíčová. Například:

U Tří lilíí: hospoda – tancovat – bouřka – krásná dívka – kamarádka – smrt – líbat

Studenti dostanou za úkol napsat krátký příběh na dané téma.

1. 4 Předučení slovní zásoby.

Učitel upozorní studenty, že v textu se určitě vyskytnou slova, kterým nebudou rozumět. To je normální komunikační situace, kterou by se měli učit překlenout a nenechat se odradit. Studenti nemusí všechna neznámá slova hledat ve slovníku, protože význam si často můžou odvodit z kontextu. Pro předučení neznámých slov jsou dále vhodné tyto aktivity.

a) "Burza slov." Učitel předem vypíše obtížná slova z textu na kartičky a dá je studentům před čtením povídky (tímto způsobem lze předučit i slova z výběrového slovníčku na konci textu). Studenti vybírají slova, která znají, a vysvětlují si je navzájem. Zbylá slova, která nezná žádný student, učitel vysvětluje tak, že definuje jejich význam. Teprve slova, která takto nelze vysvětlit (např. abstraktní slova) hledají studenti ve slovníku.

b) Učitel vypíše obtížná slova na kartičky a na jiné kartičky napíše jejich stručné vysvětlení. Studenti kartičky přiřazují.

2. Aktivity při čtení

2. 1 Doplnování vynechaných slov.

a) Učitel dá studentům text, ale vymaže klíčová/předučená slova. Studenti hádají, jaké slovo v mezeře bude.

b) Učitel vymaže každé n-té slovo (např. každé

třicáté). Stejný postup jako v bodě a).

c) Studenti vynechaná slova dostanou spolu s textem (např. vytištěná nebo vystříhaná) a pouze je doplňují.

Tuto aktivitu lze kombinovat s poslechem nahraného textu.

2. 2 Doplnování děje.

Učitel dá studentům pouze začátek/začátek a konec/konec povídky. Studenti chybějící text doplňují.

Velmi zajímavá je následná vzájemná konfrontace i konfrontace s originálem.

2. 3 Rozstříhaný text.

Učitel text okopíruje a rozstříhá (např. po odstavcích). Úkolem studentů je text seřadit v logické posloupnosti. Tuto aktivitu lze kombinovat i s poslechem nahraného textu, který je pro studenty vodítkem.

2. 4 Přerušování textu

Učitel přečte/pustí z nahrávky/dá studentům vždy jen část povídky a po přečtení tohoto úryvku se ptá: *Co se stalo potom? Jak text pokračuje? Co byste udělali vy?*

Povídky s výraznou pointou můžeme přerušit před koncem. Pokud studentům slíbíme, že jim příběh dopovíme později, máme je takřikajíc “v hrsti” a donutíme je tak udělat i ta nejtěžší gramatická cvičení.

2. 5 “Rádio”

a) Text dostane pouze jeden student, která ho čte nahlas (dělá “rádio”). Ostatní studenti poslouchají, ale zároveň mají právo “rádio” korigovat a napomínat, aby “četlo” hlasitěji, pomaleji, zřetelněji, dramatičtěji, “přetáčet” si ho ještě jednou atd. Studenti se v četbě střídají.

2. 6 “Grab game”

b) Učitel připraví “grab game.” Učitel napíše na kartičky slova/slovní spojení, která se v textu vyskytují. Předem se vysvětlí jejich význam. Učitel čte text po odstavcích, studenti shrabují, co slyší. Kdo shrábne nejvíc slov, vyhrává.

(Při této aktivitě by měl učitel uvážit, jestli bude na kartičky psát základní tvar slova, nebo tvar z textu. To je nutno rozhodnout podle stupně pokročilosti studentů. Tvary jako např. *noha/k noze* totiž znějí studentům jako zcela odlišná slova).

2. 7 Počítání

Text čte učitel, ale studenti mají za úkol dělat čárku, když se v textu objeví určité slovo/gramatický nebo výslovnostní jev (např. v povídce “U Tří lilíí” měli za úkol počítat, kolikrát se v textu objevilo slovo “dívka”).

Poznámka: Takto motivovaný poslech lze využívat i jindy, např. když se studenti poslouchají navzájem (třeba na téma, co dělali o víkendu nebo kam pojedou na dovolenou). Když mluví/čte jeden člověk, ostatní se obvykle nudí a neposlouchají. Učitel je proto může vyzvat, aby např. zaznamenali maximum sloves, která jejich spolužák použil.

2. 8 Chybějící informace

Studenti pracují v párech. Mají stejný text, ale v každém jsou vynechané jiné informace. Navzájem se při četbě ptají na vynechané věci a text kompletují.

3. Aktivity po čtení

3. 1 Otázky k textu

- a) vytvořené předem učitelem
- b) vytvořené studenty (lze pojednat i jako soutěž, kdo k danému textu vytvoří nejvíce otázek)

3. 2 Správná a nesprávná tvrzení

Student posuzuje tvrzení založená na textu, zda jsou správná **S** nebo nesprávná **N**. Lze zvážit i alternativní odpověď **?** pro otázky, na které v textu nelze najít odpověď.

Správná a nesprávná tvrzení si mohou pro sebe navzájem dělat i sami studenti!

3. 3 Výběr z více možností (kvíz)

Student z více tvrzení (a, b, c) zatrhává to, které plně vystihuje text. Toto cvičení je obzvlášť vhodné pro pokročilejší mluvčí, neboť dovoluje procvičit nejen prosté porozumění, ale i jemnější významové nuance textu. I kvíz si studenti můžou napsat sami pro sebe navzájem.

3. 4 Parafráze

- a) Student svými slovy text převypráví, a to buď z paměti nebo s nahlížením do textu.
- b) Student převypráví text v jiném žánru (např. reklama, novinová zpráva, např. z černé kroniky)

3. 5 Nový konec povídky

Studenti dostanou za úkol vymyslet nový konec povídky. Například v povídce “U Tří lilíí” vymysleli

tento nový konec: *Dívka byla velmi chudá a nešťastná. Do hospody se vrátila proto, že chtěla poprosit svého bohatého strýce, který tam pil, o*

peníze na matčin pohřeb.

3. 6 Překlad do mateřského jazyka studenta

Překlad může skýtat velmi zajímavé možnosti procvičení textu, ovšem někdy nespílnitelnou podmínkou je nutnost, aby učitel adekvátně výsledný text kontroloval a konfrontoval s originálem.

3. 7 Souhrn

a) Jednou větou

Student dostane za úkol shrnout text jednou větou, a to libovolně dlouhou.

b) Klíčovými slovy

Student dostane za úkol najít v textu klíčová slova (je vhodné předem stanovit jejich limit, např. maximálně 5, 10 apod.). Lze pojednat i jako výchozí úkol pro dalšího studenta, který má na základě klíčových slov restaurovat text do původní podoby.

c) Novým titulem

Studenti dostanou za úkol vyjádřit obsah textu v stručném nadpisu (opět je vhodné stanovit přibližný limit slov). Studenti mohou vymyslet i nový titul povídky v určitém stylu, např. ve stylu bulvárního tisku. Pro povídku "U Tří lilií" studenti vymysleli tyto tituly:

Láska a smrt. Krásná, ale bezcitná. Smrt v noci. Noc hrůzy. Zabíla matku?

3. 9 Ilustrace, komiksy

Studenti mohou k textu namalovat nové ilustrace, popř. text zaznamenat pomocí komiksových obrázků. Ostatní studenti, kteří tento text neznají (např. ti, kdy minulou lekcí chyběli), ho pak podle těchto obrázků vypravují.

4. Aktivity po přečtení celé knihy

4. 1 Hitparáda

Studenti hlasují o tom, jaká povídka/tři povídky je/ jsou nejlepší a zdůvodňují svoji volbu.

4. 2 Dvojice

Studenti doplňují dvojice:

Pan Ryšánek a ...? Pan Vojtíšek a ...? Krásnooká dívka a ...? Paní Ruska a...? Doktor Kazisvět a...? Paní Scheplerová a ...?

4. 3 Charakteristiky

Student napíše charakteristiku postavy. Ostatní hádají, kdo je to.

4. 4. Roleplay.

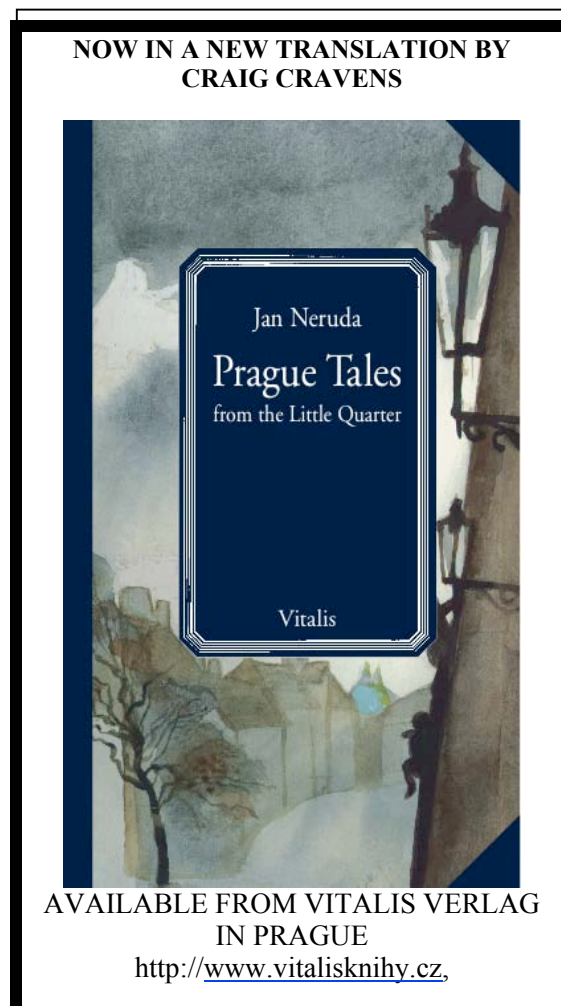
Hrané scény na téma jednotlivých povídek. (Například dialog pana Vojtíška s bábou milionovou.)

4. 5 Bingo.

Studenti sestaví seznam postav z knihy. Pak si každý student si na papír napíše čtyři postavy (například *krásnooká dívka, pan Vojtíšek, bába milionová, doktor Kazisvět*). Učitel čte předem připravené charakteristiky postav (jednoduché nebo složité podle stupně pokročilosti studentů). Např.: *Mladá dívka, která měla krásné oči./ Ta, které kamarádka šeptala, že musí jít z vážného důvodu domů.*

Studenti zaškrtnou postavu, jejíž charakteristiku slyší. Kdo má všechny čtyři, vyhraje. Musí však zopakovat charakteristiky na důkaz, že je rozpoznal správně.

4. 6. Kdo jsem?



Student se „převtělí“ do jedné z postav. Ostatní mají otázkami určit, koho představuje. Student může odpovídat pouze třemi slovy: *ano*, *ne* a *nevím*. Zajímavé je, když student představuje okrajovou postavu.

taught in Czech with rotating sections. This means that each of them is built around a specific theme, such as family dynamics, life style under socialism, the Czech national revival, German occupation, and the Velvet Revolution. CZ41 and 61 therefore overtly

Multi-level teaching at Brown
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In the instruction of less commonly taught languages multi-level teaching is often a solution to running the language program. Czech is no exception. This small article does not provide “a bag of tricks” for teaching students of different levels simultaneously, but is an attempt to illustrate how we strengthened our Czech language program with multi-level teaching where we reversed the existing concept of a language classroom by explicitly placing content to the forefront.

One strong prejudice that exists in academia and in America in general is that language courses are not intellectually challenging. In contrast to other courses labeled as “content courses” that are said to promote analytical and critical thinking, language courses are at best considered as “skill-building” courses. As language teachers we all know that this is an erroneous notion. While courses taught in English often consist of learning *about* a culture, language study involves *experiencing* another culture through its speakers’ discourse-cognitive system, i.e. how they view and conceptualize the world. Learning verbal aspect in Czech, for example, is not merely learning how perfective and imperfective verbs look, but how a Czech speaker views reality and what part of the situation s/he accentuates. Acquiring a set of different cognitive processes and their linguistic manifestations as one’s own necessarily entails some degree of discomfort; this brings students to a realization that what they consider as default cognitive reflexes is actually part of their culture, which they never noticed before learning a new language.

In order to highlight this intellectually valuable function of language study, we created a sequence of CZ41 (Topics in Czech Language and Culture) and CZ61 (Topics Course on War, Revolution and National Identity in Czech Culture) above the first-year introductory Czech, to replace the second-year and third-year Czech sequences (Intermediate and Advanced Czech). CZ41 and CZ61 are courses

foreground content. This is not to say that these courses do not involve learning of linguistic structures. Both CZ41 and 61 have two major objectives: (1) development of the structural knowledge of Czech for simple but coherent and logical discussions and (2) development of interpretive and analytical thinking using selected aspects of Czech culture. CZ41 has more tasks related to language; it is for intermediate to intermediate-advanced students of Czech. CZ61 is a culture course with an ancillary objective to improve language skills for intermediate-advanced to advanced-level students. The important point here is that the need to teach structural aspects of language does not dictate the type of cultural components introduced. The courses use authentic materials, e.g. films, excerpts from Czech history books, literary texts, and journalistic articles that serve the purpose of studying culture. Structural components covered during each hour must be relevant to the salient cultural points. Although any material contains many worthy grammar points, the instructor must pick one or two that are essential for discussions and analysis in Czech. Sometimes these grammar points are bound to repeat themselves, but this is also part of a natural cognitive development; there is a reason why certain grammar points occur more often than others because of the need to express certain cultural concepts more often. Besides, the higher the frequency, the more likely a learner – native or non-native - acquires them more efficiently; this is a simulation of linguistic-cognitive development embedded in culture. The instructor therefore must overcome the fear that s/he is not explaining and drilling every grammar point that occurs in one material.

CZ41 and 61 are conducted in a collaborative teaching and peer-tutoring environment. Such type of cooperation is also a natural environment for language learning. In interactions with native speakers, a student of Czech will naturally encounter people of different ages and/or backgrounds; differences in lexical knowledge and language competence between a non-native learner and his/her interlocutors (and even among native speakers) are to be expected in real-life situations. With some navigation by the instructor as a moderator, this mode of teaching also allows

students to develop politeness strategies and other patterns of socio-linguistic behavior.

As Czech Republic re-established itself as one of the Central European states and became a member of the European Union, there is an increasing educational need to teach Czech culture to students who study various subjects, e.g. history, politics, visual arts, literature. CZ41 and 61 compactly combine hard-to-find contents on Czech

with various types of study abroad programs. Under the old system a student may come back to Brown in the fall after taking intermediate Czech in Prague (the equivalent of CZ30). Such a student would either have to wait for one semester to take the second-semester intermediate Czech (CZ40) in the following semester, only to lose his/her Czech in the meantime. The other option is to enroll in CZ50 if the student is willing to do extra work outside class; the

history and culture in Czech to respond to the needs of such students. In practical terms, students can complete the three-year cycle of Czech required for Slavic Studies¹ and International Relations at Brown by taking different sections of CZ41 and 61, but the courses also make accessible study of Czech culture and language to others.

Consistent offering of all three levels of Czech is important to most undergraduate students since everyone chooses his/her concentration only at the end of the second year and must finish by the end of the fourth year to graduate. Annual offering of all language levels is especially vital in the Brown context of "The Open Curriculum" where no requirements are imposed on students except for those in their own concentrations. In this environment students may take courses taught in English applicable towards Slavic Studies, but may decide to take a Slavic language to build their second concentration later, especially in combination with study abroad. Such students would be likely to be lost, if different levels of Czech were taught in alternating years, as in the case of most other institutions. The number of this year's graduating seniors fulfilled their Slavic language requirement by taking Czech was nearly the same as the number of those who fulfilled their Slavic language requirement by taking Russian²; we anticipate more students who will complete their Slavic Studies major with Czech next year.

Increased flexibility of CZ41 and 61 in accommodating students of different levels ensures continuity in language study even in combination

experience studying with students who are uniformly at a higher level may be discouraging. The topics courses CZ41 and 61 can accommodate students who come back from study abroad in Prague³ more easily. Since they assume that it is natural to have students of different levels from the start and encourage collaborative learning, students are encouraged rather than discouraged by the amount of input they receive. Different experiences in the Czech Republic brought by different students are also meaningful resources to use in the classroom.

Multi-level topics courses and annual offering of all three-year levels to undergraduate students contribute to nurturing a new generation of professionals and researchers. It is worth pointing out that there have been a small but systematically increasing number of young people who apply for federal and other grants to study exciting topics related to Czech culture: e.g. French-Czech cultural interaction in the inter-war period, the role of women in Charter 77, the role of music in Czech history. Czech Republic is the most competitive region for grant applications in comparison to other Central-East Europe nations and Russia. Some applicants are enrolled in a PhD program in various areas (e.g. history, public policy, comparative literature) and are at their dissertation stage. Other people wish to work in the Czech Republic (e.g. real estate, advertising, social services, and teaching). Many of these young promising people unfortunately do not have sufficient preparation in language; their project proposals also manifest lack of systematic cultural knowledge even in what they wish to pursue. Culture-centered multi-level teaching of Czech at Brown will then in fact provide a maximum opportunity for students to receive formal instruction in Czech language and culture already at the

¹ The required language component for the Slavic Studies major at Brown consists of 3 years of Czech or Russian, or 2 years of both.

² Czech and Russian language programs do not compete for students. Students in Czech have academic interests quite different from those in Russian. In fact, by taking one Slavic language, some students become interested in the other and end up taking both Czech and Russian in parallel, three years each.

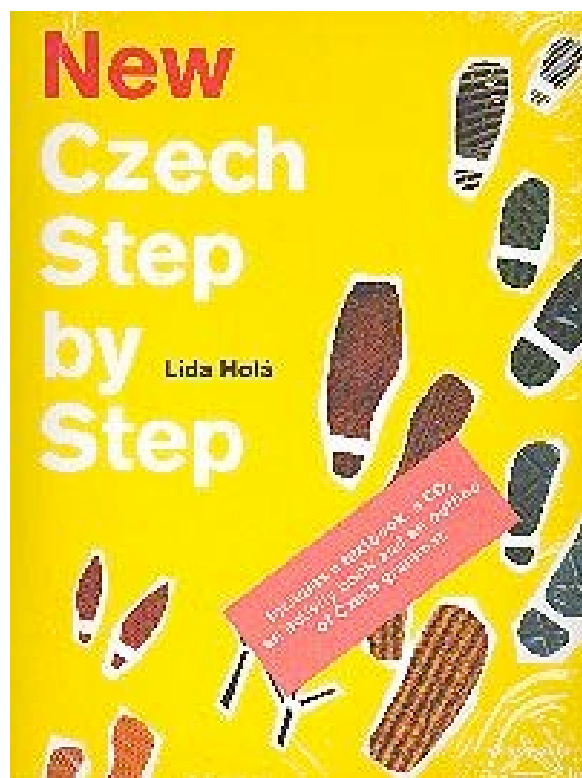
³ Brown-in-Prague program is not an immersion program, but Czech language is a required course. Those students who have taken Czech at Brown and who wish to participate in this program are taught on a more advanced level in a separate group.

undergraduate level in order to be competitive in their future scholarly and professional activities.

In the US we can still come across university administrators who repeatedly question the profitability of teaching Czech and other less commonly taught languages. They are not only out of step with the significant geo-political changes in Europe, the post-communist world, and new developments in Asia. When we observe our students, however, the needs for Czech are there, and they are increasing, and we cannot afford to lose the impetus. Courses that foreground culture with rotating topics can make important contributions to the intellectual development of the future

generation of researchers and professionals.

A NEW TEXTBOOK BY LÍDA HOLÁ



NEW *Czech Step by Step*, a textbook of Czech for foreigners, has won first place in the Most Beautiful Book competition for 2004 in the textbook category. Its author is Lída Holá, a member of IATC and author of the original color-coded grammar, which is usable for all Slavonic languages. Susan Kresin UCLA also contributed to the teaching content of the textbook, the ReDesign studio developed the design and Michaela Kukovičová provided the accompanying original illustrations and collages. The textbook, published by Akropolis, can be found at: www.czechstepbystep.cz.

A NEW BOOK BY CRAIG CRAVENS AND
DAVID ZERSEN, eds.

Transcontinental ENCOUNTERS

Central Europe Meets the American Heartland



CRAIG CRAVENS AND DAVID ZERSEN, EDITORS

This collection of seven essays constitutes an important contribution to immigration history. The essays are unified around the theme of Central Europeans and their presence in the United States and Canada. Scholars representing such disciplines as history, linguistics, folklore, and musicology have focused on the way these immigrants influenced the New World and in turn were influenced by the new setting. To order, please contact Concordia University Press at CUAPress@concordia.edu.

Czech Literature—Or Why Small is Beautiful

Robert Porter
University of Glasgow

War and Peace, *Crime and Punishment*, *Life and Fate* are the sort of titles that for many epitomize Russian literature. Big themes, contrasting themes, investigations that purport to offer the reader a key to his or her existence, that may show her or him how to live, will explain history, God, philosophy. Lev Tolstoy and Fedor Dostoevsky in the 19th century and, in the 20th, Vasilii Grossman (plus a good many others) have given their readers huge and dense works, where not a page is wasted, works entirely commensurate with the vastness of Russia, with all her contradictions and contrasts. Lest anyone suspect me of being objective, I confess that I am ignoring completely the brilliant short stories of Nikolai Gogol and Anton Chekhov, as well as the ambiguities, ironies and mad comedy of Mikhail Zoshchenko and Mikhail Bulgakov.

“Accused, do you plead guilty?”

“No.”

“But you killed him.”

“Yes.”

This (slightly paraphrased) opening exchange in Karel Čapek’s pocket tale “The Crime on the Farm” (*Zločin v chalupě*) was perhaps my first discovery, made nearly forty years ago, that while the Czech language bore some resemblance to Russian, the literature was *different*. In three pages, Čapek gives us a delightful and hilarious moral conundrum and one of his (irritating) morals, which we can take or leave. Call his manner jejune philosophizing or lightness of touch, Čapek’s narratives, along with so much other Czech fiction, come to us scholars of Russian literature as refreshing as a glass of Pilsner Urquell on a sultry summer’s day.

My fondness for the “smallness” of Czech literature was buttressed by a line from Milan Kundera’s first play *The Owners of the Keys* (*Majitelé klíčů*) of 1962, a drama that he seems now to have pretty much disowned, although it still has value and was in its day a runaway success in communist Czechoslovakia and in the Soviet Union. The hero, struggling to choose between a comfortable private life and the demands of history and politics during Nazi occupation, challenges head-on the words that Maksim Gorky’s hero utters. Kundera has his hero declare: “‘Man’ doesn’t have a proud ring to it. He’s pathetic.” In Russian literature one finds hysteria and extremes,

grotesques, demons and saints. As if seeking to explain Russian despotism, someone once asked what kind of a government would you need to govern the characters in a Dostoevsky novel. It was left to Czech skepticism and the nation's sense of the ridiculous to demythologize Russia: Karel Havlíček Borovský overcame his initial pan-Slavism to produce a satirical view of Russia. Vladislav Vančura in his novel *The End of the Old Times* (*Konec starých časů*), in the character of the outrageous Prince Megalrogov offers a similarly less than enthusiastic picture of Russia in the early 1920s.

In the Preface to my *Introduction to Twentieth-Century Czech Fiction* (2001)^{*}, I wrote that “for better or worse” a good many students of Czech come to it—the way I did—after embarking on a study of Russian. Without studying Russian, I doubt that I would have acquired any interest in Czech culture at all. Yet a grounding in Russian literature is a poor introduction, or no introduction at all, to Czech literature. Central Europe, however one defines it, is made up largely of small nations, and there is the (extreme?) view that Russia is simply too big to be really European. My first Czech tutor started us off with Čapek, as the least linguistically demanding of serious Czech writers. Any others that I have enjoyed I have discovered for myself with the help of Czech friends. Yet Čapek alone does not prepare you for the verbal dexterity of Bohumil Hrabal, nor for Jaroslav Hašek’s bawdy genius, still less for Vladimír Holan’s somber, difficult verse. Even in terms of “content” Čapek alone is too Anglophile, urbane and didactic to give a reliable inkling of Czech literature’s black comedy and ironic ambiguities. I have always felt—and still feel—that there is a crying need for a good, sensible, sympathetic, balanced history of Czech literature aimed at the Anglophone market. Robert Pynsent’s lengthy Introduction to his anthology *Czech Prose and Verse* (1979) is worthy, if a bit censorious, and anyway short and covers only the period 1774 to 1939. Arne Novák’s work, published in 1932 and tinkered with by Antonín Grund to cover the period up to the end of the war was made available in English in 1976. Translated by Peter Kussi and with an updating supplement by William Harkins this

errors, is awkward and seems painfully dated and crude at times.

It is for others to judge the merits or otherwise of my own book. I am only too aware that it offers just a tiny part of the story and, anyway, goes into more detail over plot and characters than a broader survey could or should ever allow for. Still, it is intended to be primarily a “starter pack”. At the other extreme, we have highly specialized monographs on individual authors or specific aspects of Czech literature that are of interest only to the miniscule number of Bohemists to be found outside the Czech Republic. What a pity that the late Karel Brušák, who taught at Cambridge University for decades, did not translate his alleged erudition into print and do for Czech literature what D.S. Mirsky did in the 1920s for Russian literature! Mirsky’s *A History of Russian Literature from the Earliest Times to the Death of Dostoevsky* (1927) and *Contemporary Russian Literature 1881-1925* (1926) were truly pioneering and helped create a generation of Russianists, so that—at least in the 1960s and early 1970s—it looked as if Russian Studies could gain an equal place in our universities with the other major European cultures. Yet in Britain the study of nearly all modern languages has gone into reverse and none more so than Slavonic languages. And not just languages...

The fact is that the study of literature is now very different from what it was when I began. English-language literature is still a vast industry but its study has become increasingly centered around “theory” and has shaded into “cultural studies”. In my view it is a sorry state of affairs when in our universities we are producing graduates who can theorize about literature but are incapable of reading it if it happens to be in a foreign language. One of Josef Škvorecký’s characters, a writer in *The Engineer of Human Souls* (*Příběh inženýra lidských duší*) (1977), whom I quote with some glee in my book, goes further and suggests that critics cannot read literature properly—even when it is written in a language they can supposedly understand:

The snobs treat us like charlatans, if not outright criminals, when our work is not

volume (*Czech Literature* by Arne Novák) takes us from early beginnings to the mid 1970s, but it has

successful. Except that it usually seems to me that they can’t hear.

What I mean is, they do not have good ears. They cannot hear what literature has in common with music and what makes it art. It’s no problem to define the technical procedures,

^{*} For a judicious review of Porter’s book see the fall 2002 issue of the *Slavic and East European Journal* (46.3). *Editor’s Note*.

to analyze and praise them; stream of
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ess, achronology, the narrative point of view and consistency in the categories of narrative forms. But what is all that without the ancient and unacquirable talent of *mimesis*? That secret ability, unaccessible to reason, to awaken in the reader the joy of recognition [...] In the end, every art is a mystery.

Škvorecký's main hero in *The Engineer*, Danny Smiřický, observes his students with a mixture of indulgence and disdain as they embark on intellectual wild goose chases, under the influence of published critics: one hapless tutee will discourse on the color imagery in *The Scarlet Letter*; another will expatiate on the latent homosexuality in *Huckleberry Finn*; a third will routinely apply Marxist doctrine, no matter what the text.

The contention that all good literature must offer "mystery" and at the same time the "joy of recognition" can be presented to potential students of Czech literature as a perfect reason for studying it and even for taking on the awesome task of learning the language. The "smallness" of Czech literature is in fact its greatness, just as Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*, through language and observation, can give us a whole universe in a tiny Welsh fishing village in the compass of a single day. Hrabal's little people with their fantastic tales perform the same task as Dylan Thomas and lob in some alluring judgments on history and life along the way: one of Hrabal's characters declares, "I don't like optimists. Adolf Hitler was an optimist. If he hadn't been an optimist he wouldn't have gone to war." Here is a statement not without relevance sixty years after the end of the Second World War.

I realize my distaste for literary theory puts me in many quarters among the dinosaurs. Yet, it does seem to me that students should read a text before theorizing about it. And isn't literary criticism, at bottom, simply an honest attempt to articulate reasons for why an individual or a group like or dislike a given work? So isn't the important thing first to be able to read a text? And anyway doesn't the best theorizing come from the practitioners? A young Milan Kundera published a book on Vančura in 1960 called *The Art of the Novel: Vladislav Vančura's Journey in Search of the Great Epic (Umění románu: Cesta Vladislava Vančury za velkou epikou)*. Though no doubt an embarrassment to him now and despite its mauling at the hands of the communist censorship, it did

have something to say about an important writer of

the First Republic, who in many ways encapsulated the contradictions and intellectual cross-currents of that era. Kundera's later book of criticism (1988), bearing the title *The Art of the Novel* in a deliberate attempt to override his previous work, gave us an engrossing collection of pithy essays addressing the novel across Europe. By now, Kundera had

established himself as one of the world's foremost exponents of the genre and his theorizing offered us an invitation into his own workshop as well as a fascinating angle on novelists from Cervantes to Kafka. Elaborating on Škvorecký's words about the common ground between literature and music, Kundera tells us why, in his view, a novel is like a symphony, why its future lies in themes and variations and explains why, just as Schoenberg is different from Mozart, Kafka is different from Flaubert.

What, in practice, is the best way to start students off on a study of Czech literature? Čapek is certainly a good standby, but his comedy might seem insipid by today's standards and if female students today ever picked up on his views on the woman's role in politics, there would be riots in the seminar room. The opening pages of *The Good Soldier Švejk (Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka)* offer a magnificent example of how the banal can outgun the monumental, but they are over-quoted and linguistically not straightforward. For students with strong literary sensibilities, especially if they know Aleksander Pushkin's *The Gypsies*, Karel Hynek Mácha's *Máj* is excellent—linguistically not too demanding, repetitive but never tedious, and on the familiar territory of European Romanticism. My own choice would be Václav Havel's one-acter *Audience*. It is modern, colloquial yet very accessible, repetitive, funny and, in its way, a brilliant examination of the psychosis induced by attenuated totalitarianism. Together with its sister play *Private View (Vernisáž)* it says much about the globalized, trivialised and materialistic world in which we are all trapped.

Whither the study of Czech literature? Kundera has globalized his art, nurtured in totalitarianism and the traditions of Central Europe, by developing a Czech style that has facilitated translation into major languages, and latterly by writing in French himself. Paul Wilson, James Naughton and several others have done sterling translation work. Robert Porter still, occasionally, harbors the quixotic view that some bright, energetic Anglophone slavist will

produce a History of Czech literature, which in turn will attract, help and inspire more students in the field. Yet, in a world beset by trivia and where literature has to compete with many other media, it might be the case that the future is in the area of cultural studies and popular culture generally. Will modern Czech film, cabaret, small theatre and the visual arts ultimately have more to say to the world?

Zprávy bleskem

“The Crown of Bohemia, 1347–1437,” an exhibition of over 160 Czech masterpieces including painting sculpture, and illuminated manuscripts, will be on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York from Sep 20th to Jan 3.

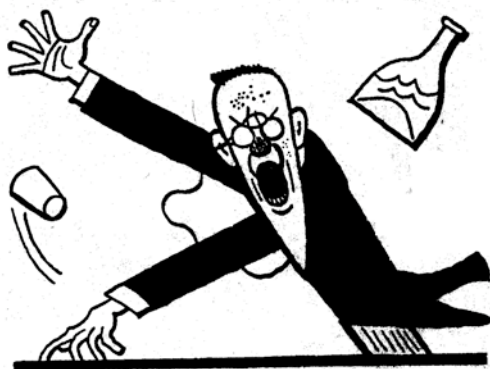
Charles Mills, Visiting Assistant Professor of Russian and Linguistics at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois recently defended his doctoral dissertation, “Czech Clitic Placement,” at the University of Washington in Seattle.

Ludmila Veselovská of Palacký University in Olomouc will be visiting Knox College in May to present two talks on Czech Syntax.

Craig Cravens, Fellow of Czech Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, has been awarded the 2005 Silver Spurs Centennial Teaching Award. The award comes with a \$6,000 cash prize most of which Dr. Cravens spent on “drinks for the house!”

A roundtable discussion on “Czech Studies on American Higher Education” will take place at the annual meeting of AATSEEL in Washington D.C. on Dec 29th, 1:30–3:30.

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Tuition waivers for beginning Czech are available through a generous grant from the American Council Societies for graduate students specializing in East European studies in any discipline.

Review of *Determinátory neurčitosti v češtině*, by Anna Maria Perisutti.

Susan Kresin

University of California, Los Angeles

Determinátory neurčitosti v češtině is a study of indefiniteness in Czech, a dissertation based on the author's doctoral studies at Masaryk University in Brno. As the author notes, there is a remarkable variety of means for expressing indefiniteness in Czech: lexical, syntactic and prosodic devices interact to create a colorfully variegated web of meaning. Perisutti focuses on certain lexical operators that she considers to be the "core" elements in the modern language, namely, zero-modification, *jeden*, *ně-*, *-si* and *-koli*. Occurring in a paradigmatic relation, they can be directly compared and contrasted in sentences such as *Viděl jsem 0 / nějakého / jakéhosi / jednoho studenta*.

Perusetti's study is unique in its dual focus on both synchronic and diachronic material. After a thorough survey and discussion of the literature on indefiniteness and related concepts, she devotes a separate chapter to each of the operators listed above. Each chapter is divided into two parts. The first part addresses the use of the operator in the contemporary language: Perusetti reviews the

literature on the particular operator and its English parallels, and discusses the various syntactic, semantic and discursive contexts in which it is used. The second part of each chapter, somewhat briefer than the first but still quite substantial, has a diachronic focus. In this part, the author first addresses the etymological origins of the operator, and then analyzes its use in texts from the Gothic period through the Baroque. Both the synchronic and diachronic parts of each chapter include a wide breadth of examples, a fact that makes the book useful not only for linguists, but also for language teachers who are looking for thorough explanations and contrastive illustrations of this tricky point of Czech grammar. The author is to be commended for her well researched and thoroughly documented study, the first of its kind on this topic.

Kohn Doctoral Fellowships at Masaryk University

Two Kohn Doctoral Scholarships will be awarded annually, one to a citizen of the United States of America and the other to a citizen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Applicants must be currently enrolled in doctoral degree programs. The scholarships are intended to allow their recipients to carry out their studies or do

research at Masaryk University and to contribute to the activities of the departments where they are received. They cover all fields of teaching and research at the university.

The scholarships, each with a value of 100,000 Kč, are awarded for a period of 10 months. Scholarship holders are exempt from tuition fees. Accommodation, to be paid for by the scholarship recipients, is available in double rooms at the university halls of residence. Travel costs and health insurance are also the responsibility of the scholarship winners.

The application deadline for the scholarships is June 15, 2005. The selection of successful candidates will be made by the Rector of Masaryk University and confirmed by the heirs of Pavel Kohn. The results of the selection process will be made public without unreasonable delay. For more information go to:

http://www.rect.muni.cz/ois/students/scholarships_at_mu/Kohn%20Doctoral%20Scholarships



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Cimrman Corner

Cimrman's Operettas Ladislav Smoljak, Jan Svěrák

translated by
 Craig Cravens and Katarína Dolejšiová

Cimrman's road to the operetta was not an easy one. As with everything else he did, here too he wanted to achieve absolute perfection. For instance, the question of rhyme haunted Cimrman the librettist most of all. Rhymes such as "beauty-duty," "carry-fairy," "stick-prick," rhymes which to us seem perfect, Cimrman considered mere half-rhymes. According to him, the listener was entitled to absolute consonance. This theoretical consideration brought Cimrman to the theory of absolute rhyme, the basis of which is the notion that the perfect rhyme can be formed only through the repetition of one and the same word.

Let's have a look at an example from his operetta *Uhlířské Janovice* and the aria of Jan the Coal Burner:

I once loved a maiden oh so fair
 Whose eyes were just as fair
 Her hair was oh so golden
 In the field the straw she weaved was just as golden

Our lovely old clock
 Strikes four o'clock

Scarcely had I begun to speak
 Than she bade me speak
 And ask her parents for her hand
 As I sat holding her hand

Our lovely old clock
 Strikes four o'clock

And so she agreed to wed
 Snd soon we did wed
 Now we live on a farm
 And now her parents also live on the farm

Our lovely old clock
 Strikes four o'clock

As you can see, the verses are quite melodic. But a more discriminating listener cannot help but feel that this perfection in rhyme was achieved at the expense of content. Thus Cimrman searched for a way to preserve the absolute rhyme without limiting the ideational content, so to speak. This he achieved with his so-called "acoustic constant." The principle consisted of concluding each line of verse with an identical and extremely melodious group of syllables, which however made no semantic sense in the given language.

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Cimrman's absolute constants met with warm reception in his day, which is born out by the fact that Cimrman's ballad of *The Madam from Austin* has already become popularized in central Texas. The madam travels throughout the surrounding villages purchasing poor, young girls for her disreputable enterprise.

Here comes the Madam from Austin,
Ee ay ee ay oh.
What does the Madam from Austin wish?
Ee ay ee ay oh.
It is a daughter that I wish,
Ee ay ee ay oh.
Which one shall it be?
Ee ay ee ay oh.
It shall be Růžena,
Ee ay ee ay oh.
But we will not give her to you,
Ee ay ee ay oh.
Then we'll take her from you,
Ee ay ee ay oh.

Of the other constants, we will mention only the most successful. For example, of the domestic absolute constants we have "bach bach jukharay," which is still popular in Mississippi. From Houston we have "kaabrt." From abroad we must mention at least the Mexican "yoy," the alpine "hoy-dala-ridy," and the Russian, "ya, ya, yupy yupy ya." Finally, in far away Iraq, we find an acoustic constant that has become the rallying cry for children abandoned by their fathers, who are searching for their deadbeat dads: "Bag-dad, Bag-dad."

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