

# Fair News

20<sup>TH</sup> BOOK WORLD PRAGUE International Book Fair and Literary Festival 2014

FINAL  
EDITION

## Sell Your Copyright!

As various national book markets are constantly shrinking, it is increasingly difficult to conduct business activities exclusively within their range. On Thursday afternoon two literary agents, **PAUL** and **HANA WHITTON**, offered their advice on how to sell your copyright to foreign markets, thereby enhancing your book-production profits.



Some 2000 literary languages exist in the world today, which may seem too big a global market. To address 95 % of the world's population, however, you only need 100 languages, which is already worth an effort. The chief motivation of both authors and publishers is to have their books published in English, but the anglophone market is a tough environment for breakthroughs, being over-saturated with book titles. This is why it is not such a bad idea to look for alternatives. One of these are the BRIC countries – Brazil, Russia, India and China. The advantage of these countries lies in their huge populace and in the fact that their languages are not so frequently exploited in literature. Another alternative are the Hispanic countries. Czech publishers may also find it useful to sell their books at one of the smaller Central- and East-European markets. This is made easier by the shared cultural context and traditions enjoyed by these countries. Publishing your books in neighbouring countries, no matter how small a market they represent in the global perspective, can significantly increase the likelihood that they will eventually be published in one of the world's major languages.

Paul and Hana Whitton recommend the mediation of literary agents – a much more effective way of achieving your goals than trying to sell your rights directly, which is often of no avail. In order for a copyright offer to potentially succeed it is an absolute must to supply well-prepared materials about the book. A synopsis, several pages long, which is not only linguistically perfect but also describes the work on all levels of its content, is an automatic prerequisite. Translation of an excerpt from the book (recommended extent being 25 to 50 pages) must also be included. All these materials are, generally speaking, written in English, which is the language of choice of the entire developed literary world. It is advisable to pay special attention to the translation and have it checked by a native speaker. By doing this you will not have to deal with an embarrassing phone call from a foreign publishing house, which calls just to say that the text makes little sense to them.

The last recommendation voiced by Paul and Hana Whitton was to place your book on the digital – i.e. global – market. You can do this yourself and if you are lucky, your foreign rights will sell. Raš

## 2014 Tourmap Awards

On Friday, the 2014 Tourmap Festival prizes were awarded under the quick-witted auspices of the event's host, actor Tomáš Hanák.

384 tourist maps and 197 tourist guides from all around the world were submitted in the competition's 11<sup>th</sup> edition. A new feature was introduced in the form of an independent collection of electronic maps, which was made necessary by the fast growth of smartphone apps. This year's competition was spiced up by the participation of some exotic countries, such as the Philippines, Laos or Cambodia. The winner of the „Tourist Guides“ category is the catalogue for travel agencies and travel experts **Czech Republic's Unesco Heritage**. In the „Tourist Maps“ category SHOCart publishers came out victorious with a map of **Our Watchtowers** and Freytag & Berndt dominated the „Electronic Maps“ category with the **Phone-maps** mobile app. JaM

## BUSY BOOKSELLERS

Since 2002 the Association of Czech Booksellers and Publishers is the organiser of what became termed the Booksellers Chart. The Book World book fair once again bore witness to the presentation of awards to the most industrious booksellers.

„Every week we draw up a chart of bestselling books in children's literature, fiction and specialist literature, and this would not be possible without the collaboration of various bookshops. We would like to extend our thanks to them for this help and reward the most industrious ones who regularly participate in our polls, like we do every year,“ Marcela Turečková, the Association's secretary said. This year's selection includes twelve bookshops: Mr. Trávníček's bookshop in Prague, Ms. Olšanská's bookshop in Příbram, Olšanská bookshop in Hořovice, Karmelitánské knihkupectví Caritas, Daniela bookshop in Benešov, Libuše Horáčková bookshop, Kniha Českého ráje, Otava bookshop in Jihlava, Kosmas in Nové Butovice, Kanzelsberger, Knihcentrum and Karmelitánské knihkupectví U dómu. JaM

## Miroslav Ivanov Prize Awarded

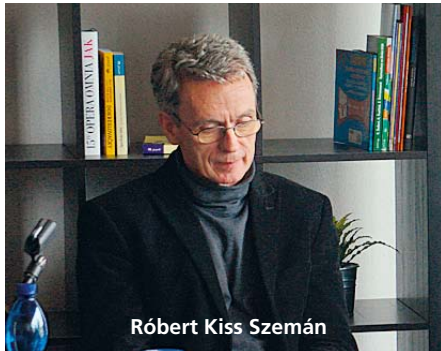


On a symbolic date and time – May 16, at 4 pm or 16.00 hours – the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Miroslav Ivanov prizes were awarded to the best non-fiction titles of yesteryear. The prizes are organised and awarded by the Non-Fiction Literature Authors Club. This year's jury consisted of Jan Halada, Miroslav Kučera, Milan Žák, Jaromír Adlt, Pavlína Kubíková and Jana Čenková. Who were the winners?

In the regional category the prize was awarded to **Petr Kovařík** and **Blanka Frajerová** for their work Klíč k českým hřbitovům (The Key to Czech Cemeteries). **AOS Publishing** from Ústí nad Labem received the publishers' prize. The prize for works published in magazines went to **Heda Bartíková**. The main award in the category of authors up to 39 years of age went to **Miloš Hořejš** for his book Protektorátní Praha jako německé město (Prague under the Protectorate). In the category of works published in the last three years the main prize was awarded to **Jan Zďárek** for his book Hmyzí rodiny a státy (Insect Families and States). The Slovak Author Prize was awarded to **Ján Barica** in memoriam. Our congratulations go to all the winners of the various categories. Raš

# Philological Diving Course

Getting down to work on a nation's icon, one of the great figures of the Czech national revival Ján Kollár, means walking on thin ice. Hungarian literary historian, expert on Czech and Slovak studies, university professor **RÓBERT KISS SZEMÁN** has met the challenge with elegance.



Róbert Kiss Szemán



Peter Zajac

„Writing about Kollár isn't easy, and it's even more difficult when a Hungarian writes about him. Róbert Kiss Szemán knows this, takes it into consideration, and neither provokes nor hides,” literary historian Peter Zajac said at the beginning of the programme. „His work goes beyond [Kollár's best-known text] *Slávy dcera* and also deals with topics related to Kollár's life.” When asked to describe his work on the book, the author called it „a wonderful loss”. „When you get so immersed in something, you can count on losing the affection of your wife, your children, the people around you, because you work is the only thing that matters. My children think I'm a fool, dealing with issues which for them are dead and buried. And yet I find it adventurous.” The author's research is based on brand new foundations and his perspective of both Kollár himself and his work is hailed as almost revolutionary. „When a literary scientist deals with literature, he has to look into various books and magazines – and I did. I studied old magazines, looking for all kinds of links and connections. It was like taking philological diving lessons,” the author added, smiling. „Kollár was a strong man, who could push his way even against the will of the German Prot-

estant community in Pest. He possessed great inner spiritual force, which is reflected in his poetic imagery. It took me long – since my university years – to understand it, but even back then it became rooted in my mind and now I've just returned to it,” Róbert Kiss Szemán confessed his personal relationship with the subject of his research. His perspective of Kollár and the way he presented it to the book fair's visitors was interesting and original, just like his work. We therefore beg to differ with the opinion of his children – Kollár's work is still alive. JaM

## PRIZES OF THE CZECH LITERATURE FUND ENDOWMENT

„Same as last year, it is our aim to draw more attention, in our own way, to the books we support. We firmly believe in the quality of these works despite the fact that they sometimes fail to qualify for those streams of literature that the general public is willing to take account of,” says the Czech Literature Fund Endowment's press release concerning the prize that was awarded at Book World on Friday afternoon. This year's short list included an anthology of the underground movement's second generation entitled ***U nás ve sklepě*** (At Our Cellar), published by Revolver revue, and Patrik Ouředník's ***Svobodný prostor jazyka*** (Language's Space of Freedom) from Torst publishers. The prize of the Czech Literature Fund Endowment for an outstanding work of literature was awarded to Vratislav Effenberger in memoriam for his book ***Republika a varlata*** (Republic and Testicles) from Torst. IK

## THE MANY FACES OF HUMOUR

On Saturday afternoon the Literary Theatre played host to the **Miloslav Švandrlík Award** ceremony, presented by the Writers' Guild of the Czech Republic and the Prague 11 City District.

Miloslav Švandrlík's name is a guarantee of intelligent and catchy humour and the prize's laureates can be proud of their success in this venture. „Among the various cult works, his work is *the* cult work. Miloslav Švandrlík is something like Elvis Presley of humoristic literature,” one of the jury members remarked with (not surprisingly) humour. This year the award was presented to two works. „Humour adopts many forms and where one may prefer the cracking of a joke another might give preference to gentle sparkling wit, which is why a humorous book is not easy to assess. Everyone has their own sense of humour and that is why we have presented two awards this year,” explained the jurors. One award went to **Zdeněk Svěrák** for his book *Po strništi bos*, the other award was presented to **Ervín Hrych** and **Pavel Weigel**, authors of the book *Krhútská kronika*. JaM

## A Trip to the Beach



**Bulgarian literature is something of an exception on the shelves of Czech bookshops, which was yet another reason why Friday's meeting with the author TEODORA DIMOVA was unique.**

The novel entitled *Adriana*, which has been translated into Czech and published by Petr Štengl publishers, enjoys great popularity in Bulgaria and has even been made into a film by director Peter Popzlatev. „For us it was an honour to publish this novel, even though Bulgarian literature counts among what is known as small literatures here in the Czech Republic. We take joy in publishing this type of books,” Petr Štengl said. The ensuing reading made it very clear what made the publisher so captivated by *Adriana*. The author's expressive language is so nuanced, that her description of the beach and the meeting of the three protagonists on top of a diving tower drew the audiences right into the action and one could almost hear the sea splashing in the Literary Café where the meeting was held. The reading was followed by a big applause, which was fully deserved both by the novel and its author. JaM



# Hrabal's Portrait from Hungarian Fragments

This year's guest of honour at the book fair is Hungary and one of the event's topics is Bohumil Hrabal. Combine these two themes together in a single debate and you get interesting recollections from Hungarian authors and translators regarding their fleeting encounters with the popular Czech author, which remind us more of „palavering” legends than expressions of sophisticatedly maintained literary relationships.



Each of the debate's participants had had some personal experience of Bohumil Hrabal. **László Szigeti**, author of the literary dialogue with Hrabal entitled *Pirouettes on a Postage Stamp*, described the laborious three years (1983 to 1986) of working on the book, by the end of which both he and Hrabal were, according to his opinion, bored. He believes that even a single extra question would have caused frustration on both sides. **Péter Esterházy**, who wrote a novel entitled *Hrabal's Book*, drew exclusively on Hrabal's texts and felt no urge to meet Hrabal in person. He was, in a way, manipulated into meeting the writer by László Szigeti. Esterházy described – through a flowery and entertaining story – the meeting of two people who struggle to find a common topic for conversation. Only the omnipresent beer in Prague's legendary pubs eventually prevented an utter mismatch between the two writers. Nonetheless, Esterházy confessed to great admiration for Hrabal's books – otherwise he would not have written a novel about them. Translator **Zsuzsa Detre** met Hrabal in a much more prosaic way. As a young editor she was working on the publication of Hrabal's book *Joyful Blues*, when an older and more experienced translator suffered heart attack during work on the translation and died. It fell to Zsuzsa to finish the book and Hrabal became her ticket to the world of „great translation literature”. The last debater was **György Varga**, who met Hrabal during his work on translating Hrabal's novel *Too Loud a Solitude*. Hrabal had come to the Book Week in Debrecen and Varga accompanied him. He remembered how Hrabal was interested in some important football match that was to be played that night in Brussels, and how he kept coming back to the match in his thoughts. The next day they learned about the massacre of the fans that had occurred there.

Bohumil Hrabal enjoyed an absolutely unique position on the Hungarian book market – a total of 138 of his titles has so far been published there (including audio and electronic books). But it is not just the number of published titles. Even more important is the feeling of the Hungarians that his work fills a certain gap in Hungary's literature, for which they lack an author of their own. In fact, Hrabal is considered to be as intimately close by the Hungarians that he enjoys, to a certain extent, the status of a domestic writer. In Hun-

gary a similar position among foreign writers only belongs to Thomas Mann. The guests concluded that Bohumil Hrabal enjoys similar popularity in Poland, where it is perhaps even more loudly expressed. It would therefore appear that Bohumil Hrabal is not an entirely Czech writer – he is, primarily, a Central-European writer. What makes him attractive and seductive for readers in the whole Central-European region is certain plebeian literary nature, his ability to lift common and downtrodden characters to the role of literary heroes and, of course, his lively direct speech. Although its language is remarkably stylised, readers feel that Hrabal's characters speak in a very authentic and natural way. Such is the portrait of our writer composed of Hungarian fragments. Raš

## A TASTING OF CONTEMPORARY ROMANIAN LITERATURE

On Saturday afternoon the Romanian book presentation stand introduced six Romanian writers, whose work represented a wide range of approaches. The reading was launched by Ileana Cudalb with an excerpt from her novel *My Daughter America*, a colourful account of the period of bolshevisation of Romania's countryside. Emil Brumar, the doyen of the country's literary delegation at the Prague book fair, presented examples of his intimate poetry residing on the verge of natural lyricism, and confessions of his strong inner feelings. Lavinia Bălulescu, on the other hand, represents the youngest generation of writers. She read from her debut novel entitled *In My Head*, offering a highly subjective symbolic prose set against an apocalyptic backdrop. The middle generation was represented by Bogdan Suceavă, whose other profession is teaching mathematics at an American university. His novel entitled *Coming from an Off-Key Time* is a reminiscence of Bucharest's underground movement of the turn of the 1980s and 90s. After this, Ioan T. Morar, poet, fiction-writer and journalist, read from his novel, which takes a stark look at Roma-related issues through the eyes of a young Romany man. The book is called *Black and Red*. The reading was concluded by the poetess Krista Szöcs introducing her poetry collection *Drawn-up Knees*. Raš

## “Writing Is a Very Lonely Job”

This confession was made on Saturday afternoon by the Swedish writer **ANDERS DE LA MOTTE**, author of highly successful Scandinavian thrillers. His international acclaim was sparked by the trilogy *Game, Buzz and Bubble*, dealing with the abuse of IT technologies, which has up till now been published in twenty seven countries of the world. In the debate, insightfully hosted by Denisa Novotná, de la Motte disclosed how he managed to make his mark among the growing ranks of well-established Scandinavian crime writers. „When I was starting in around 2010, I had to come with something different, something else. My first attempt was a more traditional crime-story and it didn't fare too well. I told myself I needed to come up with a different kind of hero, or perhaps antihero. You could say that the leading character of my books, HP, is a bit of an idiot. Typically the main characters tend to be journalists, policemen, normal people. I didn't want my hero to be typical, but the difficult bit was to get him to actually do something. In his very essence, HP just sits on the couch, smokes and watches dramas. I think he represents a new type of antihero. Another thing which is new is the language HP uses. It is riddled with references to various TV series and



films, which means the hours upon hours I'd spent watching the telly, often not the very best one, could be put to use.”

Anders de la Motte himself initially worked as a policeman, then he was head of security in a big IT company and currently earns his living as international security advisor. All this means that he is perfectly familiar with the environment he describes in his books and part of Saturday's debate was just about that. IK

# Remembering Arnošt Lustig

Although the programmes of this year's Book World are chiefly dedicated to Bohumil Hrabal, who would have celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday this year, one event on Saturday afternoon reminisced upon Hrabal's significant contemporary, the writer **Arnošt Lustig**.

As the debate showed, these two authors had one thing in common – they could connect truly difficult and tragic moments of history with a deeply human description of the lives of ordinary people with big hearts, making even cruel historic reality somehow acceptable through literature. It is this characteristic feature of their writing that still makes them attractive for young readers, who can thus learn about this increasingly distant history, which they did not experience themselves.

The debate itself, hosted by the literary critic Josef Chuchma with guests Karel Hviždala, Radka Denemarková and Eva Lustigová (writer's daughter) amounted to something of an entropic reminiscence. But it was precisely this disorderliness and disarray in front of a packed auditorium that would no doubt have made Arnošt Lustig happy. He was a man of paradoxes. His work was very serious, his thinking contemplative and philosophical, and his personal life boisterously happy, enjoying celebrity status in the last stages of his



life, obsessed with women and telling bawdy anecdotes. Karel Hviždala described the last weeks of the author's life, during which they co-wrote an important biographical interview, Radka Denemarková recalled how Lustig would often return to works that were already published to re-write them and add extra text, making life complicated for his editors. His daughter Eva revealed that Lustig's heritage includes seven screenplays that have never been filmed and that she is currently offering these scripts to film production around the world.

The most memorable thoughts that were voiced during Saturday's debate were words

written by Arnošt Lustig himself. Here are some of his quotes:

*„If a writer is to write really well, he must only write what is in his blood, in his heart and in his soul.“*

*„Books are pieces of my soul which I share with my readers.“*

*„You live as long as others care to remember to you.“*

The debate was concluded by the screening of Eva Lustigová's film entitled *Your Tear, My Rain*, featuring unique footage of Arnošt Lustig from the last period of his life.

RaŠ



## FACING THE TRUTH

A year has passed and one of Hungary's foremost contemporary writers, **PÉTER ESTERHÁZY**, returned to Book World. Last year he presented in Prague his extensive family saga entitled *Harmonia Caelestis*, this time around he came with a new take on the book entitled *Revised Edition – a Supplement to Harmonia Caelestis*. In the book the author reflects on the shattering discovery that his father had for many years co-operated with the state's secret police. „You have to look truth in the eyes,“ Esterházy said during Saturday's debate with Martin C. Putna. Besides other topics the two protagonists also addressed the issue of the Hungarian catholic church's loyal co-existence with the Socialist-era regime. This is a question Martin C. Putna opened on Friday during a panel discussion on the recently published *Anthology of Hungarian Catholic Literature*, and one on which Péter Esterházy takes a very unambiguous and uncompromising stance. IK

## “Cultural programmes shouldn't put audiences off ...

... and should bring comprehensible quality.” This statement by the executive director of Czech Television Art Tomáš Mottl could be said to sum up the message of the Saturday afternoon presentation of the first nine months of existence of this television channel. Besides Tomáš Mottl the hour-long programme hosted the head of the cultural department and channel's moderator Petr Vizina, authors of the traditional programme focusing on books 333 Jan Schmid and Jan Lukeš, Josef Chuchma on behalf of the television weekly *Jasná řeč* (Clear Talk), and Jiří Podzimek, who is, together with Petr Vizina, responsible for the literary programme *Zavěšená kniha* (A Hung Up Book). The only lady in this predominantly

male group was Suzan Reynolds, who immediately captivated the audience by her remarkable recitation of one of Erben's poems, which, in her rendition, was reminiscent of Alice Cooper's horror rock. On the topic of Erben's translation she added that his *Kytice* is known in England chiefly through Antonín Dvořák's symphonic poems and nobody knows the author of the original poems. In this respects she intends to continue in translating K. H. Mácha and Jaroslav Seifert. The main focus of the programme, however, continued to revolve around the content, future direction and target audience of CT Art, which should maintain its high quality, while remaining open and non-elitist. IK

## Olympia's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

However incredible it may seem, no less than 60 years have passed since the establishment of the former State Publishing House of Physical Training, today known under the name Olympia. Despite all the dramatic twists this period – from 1954 to the present – bore witness to, the publishing house is still on the market and drawing on its tradition, which in most part amounts to sports and tourist literature. On Saturday's meeting to mark the anniversary this history was briefly summed up by the house's former editor-in-chief Karel Zelničák and authors Pavel Toufar, Václav Junek, Jan Cimický, Štěpán Mareš and Miloslav Teslevič. In the presence of many distinguished guests and former employees they recollected both the company's historic milestones as well as their own personal experiences with the publishing house. The debate was hosted by Jaroslav Suchánek. JaM



Štěpán Mareš



# Kai Meyer in Prague

Book World welcomed yet another important guest as part of the Goethe-Institute's effort to bring German-language literature closer to Czech readers. On Saturday afternoon the world-renowned fantasy writer Kai Meyer, author of over fifty books, was scheduled for a discussion. The fantasy & sci-fi theatre was absolutely packed, which meant the writer could rely on a big audience. The programme was hosted by Radek Malý.

At the very beginning Meyer paid tribute to Prague – the city that means a lot to German fantasy literature. Meyer himself set the story of his novel *The Alchemist* in our capital city and plays with the idea of returning to Prague in several chapters of the novel he is currently working on.

The reading of several chapters from the book *Ice Fire* was a true highlight of the event. Besides the author himself the reading was also performed by Helena Dvořáková. This novel counts among Meyer's few works that have been translated into Czech, while not ranking among the author's most popular works in Germany. „Perhaps the problem lies in the Russian topic,” Meyer thinks. „I was a bit afraid of this when I had set some of my books in the Caribbean or China, but these proved less of a problem with the readers than *Ice Fire*.”

The book's plot unfolds in St. Petersburg and one of its main characters is Father Frost. The author drew his inspiration from East-European children's tales and he also mentioned some of his favourite Czech film fairy-tales. Although Meyer never visited St. Petersburg, this represented no obstacle according to him. „Most of the story takes place in a hotel, and you can find one of these anywhere. Quite simple, really. I set one of my novels in Namibia and after six months I felt like I knew



the country intimately, even though I never visited it,” the author reveals.

The debate also turned to the adaptations of Meyer's works. The *Ice Fire* was published in Germany as a comic book, together with two other Meyer's works, and the author shows great openness towards various types of adaptations. The making of a film was also in consideration, but not enough money was raised. Meyer welcomes these efforts and is rather lenient towards the changes that are usually made when a work is adapted for the silver screen. „Nowadays, when you sell your book copyright to someone, you get the money but you must understand that some things will be changed. These are two very different media and some other things will sometimes be needed for a film version.”

A book signing was held after the programme, during which visitors could meet this important figure of foreign fantasy fiction on person. Onš

## War with the Newts in the Prague ZOO

From a distance the Sunday programme at the Large Theatre may have seemed like a lecture in zoology rather than anything to do with books. But it only took a moment's listening to realise that it is by no means out of place here. The Prague ZOO is opening a pavilion with giant salamanders, who many years ago aroused the literary interest of the writer Karel Čapek.

Karel Čapek's *The War with the Newts* is a warning – a depressive and socially significant work. Linking it together with real giant salamanders from the zoo may serve to demystify the book, while at the same time originally bringing it closer to a new generation. „Giant salamanders are interesting animals and in the thirties, when Čapek was alive, they would have been kept in Prague in at least two places. It is most likely that Čapek did observe them, because his description of the giant salamanders is very accurate,” Petr Velenský



from the Prague ZOO explained. „Nowadays the population of giant salamanders is experiencing rapid decline. Their meat is very popular in China and even though they are bred at farms their numbers are decreasing fast, and it's possible that they will soon face extinction.” This is yet another reason why the Prague ZOO decided to display the animals to visitors, besides the obvious connection with Karel Čapek. While looking at the giant salamanders you can relax in special chairs and enjoy listening to excerpts from the book. Listening to the recording, featuring outstanding performances from the likes of Karel Höger, Jaroslava Adamová or Rudolf Deyl, combined with observing these strange-looking amphibians lends a whole new dimension to Čapek's work. Indeed, the giant salamander possesses several features that it shares with human beings – it has similar size, a sort of underdeveloped arms and a big head. Add a little fantasy and it will remind you of a man. In the past the animal's fossils were even considered to be the skeletal remains of human beings from the time of the world deluge. Of course we now know this to be a mistake, but when you look at the giant salamander through Čapek's eyes, it may send shivers down your spine. What if ... JaM

## Bloggers from Our Street

Writer IRENA FUCHSOVÁ decided to persuade the visitors of the Industrial Palace that bloggers are normal and humble people.



Her Saturday afternoon talk-show featured the most successful internet writers from the iDnes.cz portal. The audience could meet in person Vladimír T. Gottwald, Zuzana Hubeňáková-Báslová, Zdeně Merta, Štěpánka Bergerová, Petr Forejtek and Šárka Sudová. These six authors pen a colourful mix of blogs popular with the general public. Besides this, the authors should also be acknowledged for the enthusiasm they feel for their writing, which they came to talk about to the Literary Theatre.

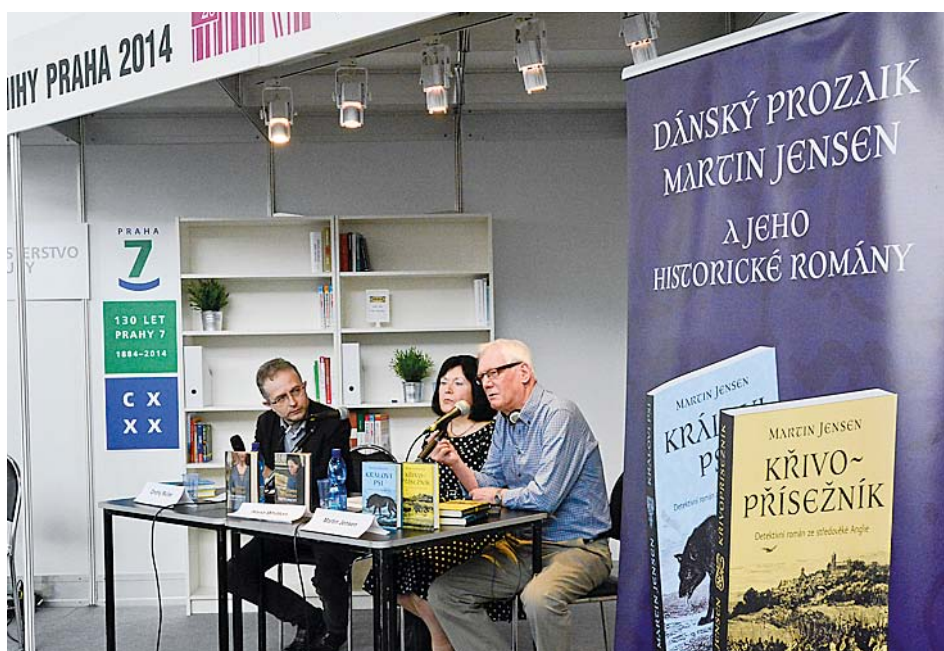
The trickiest question the host asked her guests was why they decided to write a blog in the first place. The answers were quite varied, but all the bloggers agreed that blogs should be written for the readers, whose reactions are the biggest reward for bloggers. A certain role was also attributed to the wish to make a mark in public life and to share one's opinions. Blogs count among the literary forms from which their authors cannot make a living – this is why some fairly peculiar stuff may appear in them, adding to the blog's popularity. The author may later publish a book anthology of his or her best articles.

The entire evening enjoyed a relaxed atmosphere, with welcome touches of some of the authors' characteristic humour. At the end the moderator invited the audience to join in yet another meeting with the authors, this time taking place at the MAFRA Publishing stand, where visitors could also buy latest books from the above-said bloggers. Onš

# A Bit of Harmless History

During a very friendly Saturday encounter in the book fair's Large Theatre, **HANA WHITTON** and **MARTIN JENSEN** allowed the visitors a look behind the scenes of their creative enterprises.

On the surface it may have seemed that these two authors, although specialising in the same literary genre, have little in common. However, their meeting in Prague revealed that they actually share a lot more than one would expect. Both chose England as the scene of their historical crime stories, although neither of them calls this island country their home. Hana Whitton had married there several years ago, while Martin does live on an island, but in Denmark. „English history is so rich and intricate that it just awes you. It influenced the entire world and what is more, it is closely connected with the histories of all the neighbouring states, which includes Denmark,” Martin explains. „I started writing detective stories set against historic background by chance, really. My husband Paul once took me on a trip to Goldstone, where I came across the story of a murdered girl who had played a role in the power struggle between Henry II and his ambitious wife Eleanor of Aquitaine. The mystery of her death remains unsolved and I was so drawn to the story that I started my own investigation in order to disclose as much of her story as I possibly could,” added Hana, whose story is set in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Martin Jensen situated some of his stories into the same period – yet another parallel between the two authors. Both also arrived at the conclusion that although their heroes live in the ancient past, they are trying to see them through the eyes of today. „I have to admit that it took me a while to arrive at this perspective, but in the



end I realised that they were just like us, going through the same situations and facing the same problems, only in a different age,” Hana Whitton confessed. When asked how much of their real lives is projected into their work, Hana Whitton mentioned flowers, which she is very fond of, while Martin admitted that he often lets his characters drink beer, which he likes himself. „But this is also quite natural. I mean, would you expect them to drink cappuccino? What could they drink at the time? They drank beer, which means it has, in fact, very little to do with me. I'm the type of author that doesn't really draw on his own life. I'm a fiction author,” he answered

with his characteristic sense of humour. Humour is another link between the work of these two authors – they both like to use it, even though each does so in a different way. The meeting with the two authors revealed not only that writing what you enjoy and take interest in leads to literary subtlety, but also that the genre of historical crime story is enjoying growing interest among readers. Which is just as well, because if you read books by these two authors you will not only enjoy yourself, but also learn a lot of history which you may have already forgotten.

JaM

## Korean Reading Courtship

On late Saturday afternoon **ARGO publishers** introduced **Book World** visitors to its new edition of **Korean authors**.

„We started publishing Korean authors last year at the instigation of the Czech ambassador to Korea who is very active in the field of culture. He also helped us to get support from the South-Korean fund for the publishing of Korea's literature abroad,” ARGO publishers director Milan Gelnar described the origins of this very interesting venture in the Czech publishing context. „We plan to publish a total of ten books and so far we have brought out three. We are trying to introduce Czech readers to Korean literature in its full scope, including both historical novels and contemporary works,” Milan Gelnar added and passed the microphone to translator and Koreanist Miriam Löwensteinová. „I would like to start by saying that South-Korean literature has a great potential and rich history. It was moulded by the Japanese occupation, Korean war, as well as the dictatorships which the country experienced. In the last twenty

years we can talk of modern literature that is heading to the world.” The first book Miriam Löwensteinová presented was a historic novel by the female author **Han Moo-sook**. „For a long time female literature was virtually non-existent in Korea. It was some kind of a side activity for women whose main task was to care for the family. Professional authors are a fairly modern phenomenon. This book proves that women enjoy an important position within the context of South-Korean literature. But naturally it also has many more merits. One interesting thing is the author's description of landscapes, which is incredibly textured – perhaps because she originally worked as a calligraphist and possesses remarkable imagination.” In his book *The Poet*, author **Yi Mun-yol** writes about systematic persecution, when children and families suffer for the deeds of their fathers. „I think this is not just a Korean theme – it resounds throughout the world. Similar persecution took place, and still is taking place, in many countries. Yi Mun-yol tells the story of his pro-

tagonists with such wit, sharpness and precision, that it immediately captivates you. His nomination for the Nobel Prize was well-earned,” Miriam Löwensteinová added. The third South-Korean work that ARGO introduced to Czech readers is called *Your Republic Is Calling You*. „The author **Kim Young-ha** wrote an entirely contemporary work devoid of any South-Korean sentiment, that often appears in older literature. The story of a North-Korean spy in South Korea, who, in the space of a single day, has to deal with his double life, could take place anywhere in the world. Experts consider this author to be one of the foremost contemporary South-Korean writers,” Miriam Löwensteinová added. To conclude this presentation of Korean literature's first incursion into our literary market, the ARGO Publishers director promised to publish more titles soon and added that the planned series of ten books will be accompanied by several children's books.

JaM



# A Requiem for Bohumil Hrabal

„If this was a hundred years ago, we would all be gathered at a mass. But because it's today, we are sitting at a book fair, remembering Bohumil Hrabal.“ With these words **Jiří Podzimek** started a debate with two Czech film directors – **JIRÍ MENZEL** and **PETR KOLIHA** – who have probably contributed the most to the literary great's adaptation from books to the screen.



Petr Koliha

Jiří Podzimek

Jiří Menzel

With his characteristic scepticism Jiří Menzel remarked that he would like to know where people will be gathered a hundred years from now, and that he personally sees little hope. After that all the talk was about Bohumil Hrabal.

Jiří Menzel said that his relatively regular meetings with Hrabal had covered more than a half of Hrabal's life, and that their relationship reminded him of that between an older and younger brother. Hrabal, the older brother, was more educated, better-read and more diligent. He also possessed, however, a very contrasting nature to his. While Menzel was essentially a town-boy and an abstinent, Hrabal was a man of nature and beer. Today Jiří

Menzel feels that Hrabal's outlook and wisdom had served to his advantage. Petr Koliha admitted that the age difference between him and Hrabal was greater, which meant their relationship was more along the lines student – teacher. Koliha's mother was a fellow-student and friend of Vladimír Boudník from art school, which is why Petr Koliha remembers both Boudník and Bondy (important protagonists of Hrabal's works) since childhood from innumerable gatherings in garden restaurants.

Both directors agreed that Bohumil Hrabal wrote his texts as though he was describing an already finished film. He had a fine feeling for editing, visual detail, and exploited this in

his literature. Both also talked about Hrabal's ability to write very fast with a minimum of subsequent cuts and changes. Jiří Menzel compared it to the lightness with which Mozart wrote notes. Although it may seem that writing came natural to Hrabal, it stemmed from his huge skill and formulating ability. And there were numerous other qualities, too. Bohumil Hrabal liked to say that he was more of a recorder (*zapisovatel*) than a writer (*spisovatel*). As Jiří Menzel noted, in his life Hrabal had listened to incredible loads of pub talk, which often amounted to little more than a twaddle. And yet, from this huge amount of verbal rubbish, he had mined some rare diamonds. Rather than making stories up, he employed his genius in selecting from everything that had been said. He had a similar genius for phrasing direct speech, which in his books looks very natural and authentic, as though he was jotting it down right in the pub. The truth is, however, that Hrabal's dialogue was very much stylised. Menzel summed it up thus: „He knew how to cut a dialogue down to make sure that there is not a single redundant word. His dialogues are on the very verge of verbal economy – he didn't just let his language loose.“

Had Hrabal listened to today's debate, he would probably have blushed a lot and would conclude it by some self-deprecating remark to make up for all the praise. Unfortunately, he could not, which was why Jiří Menzel borrowed one sentence uttered in front of him by the late Mrs. Hrabal: „I don't know what you're all seeing in him. In my opinion a writer is someone, who is capable of penning Kája Mařík.“

Raš

## NFA and Digital Film Restoration

On Sunday noon a lecture by Anna Batisová from the National Film Archive was held, focusing on the topic of digitalisation of old Czech films, with the rather poetic title: *Sure, but it's got to be the most beautiful ones we've got!* If you are asking what has digitalisation of old films got to do with books, the answer is simple. Each restoration is accompanied by a book, which not only records what repairs and changes had to be made, but also researches various interesting facts surrounding the making of the film and its opening night.

But to avoid misunderstanding, we should begin, really, by explaining two terms. Digitalisation of a film amounts to a simple transcription from an analogue medium (film negative or distribution copy) to a new one (usually a digital broadcasting tape). This copying procedure takes but a couple of hours and it does not amend the film in any way. Digital restoration of a film, on the other

hand, is a lengthy and expensive process, during which the film is scanned frame by frame from an available source, after which both the film's image and sound undergo a clean-up. Reference copies, i.e. chiefly distribution copies from the time the film was new, are used for comparison. Digital restoration is preceded by scientific research, which studies and summarises the authors' intentions and attempts to respect these in the applied technological amendments. The digital restoration process is so costly that only one film a year is eligible for this „general repair“ in the Czech Republic. In 2011 this film was Marketa Lazarová by František Vlácil, in 2012 Všichni dobří rodáci (All My Good Countrymen) by Vojtěch Jasný, in 2013 Miloš Forman's Hoří, má panenko (Firemen's Ball) and this year a digitally-restored copy will be made of Jiří Menzel's Oscar-winning *Ostře sledované vlaky* (Closely Watched Trains). Raš

## STOP FOOLING AROUND! FOOLS.CZ

The programme topping off the Literature online thematic section was a presentation of the literary manifesto of a group calling themselves *Blázni.cz* (Fools.cz). It would be difficult to describe what *Blázni.cz* are, so let us at least say what they are not. *Blázni.cz* are not a movement that would publish serious literature exclusively in printed form. *Blázni.cz* are not a group of bloggers. *Blázni.cz* are not a webzine, or a web magazine. *Blázni.cz* live both on the net and in the real world. If you want to publish like mad with *Fools.cz* you must attend a real-life meeting. If you show yourself capable of fooling around in the right way, you receive a key and using this key you can publish alongside other „fools“ virtually on their website. If you publish with „fools“, you can put all your shyness from going public aside, because you already are, in a way, a fool. A group of these courageous „fools“ read from their works and it was up to the audience to decide what is normal... Normal is to fool around every once in a while. Raš

# Comic Book Look at a Czech Century

The Czech Century TV series reminded the audiences of some of the times our history would like to have forgotten. One such moment was the conflict between Klement Gottwald and Rudolf Slánský. Their story has now been published in comic-book form.



Some time ago screenwriter Pavel Kosatík and director Robert Sedláček undertook an ungrateful task, when they decided to remind the Czechs of their not always rosy past. Such were the origins of the Czech Century TV series, which, when broadcast by Czech Television, immediately became very popular. It would appear that for Czech audiences the past is not so much a past, as it is a topic which is still alive. The almost fratricidal struggle for power in early 1950s after communism had usurped power, taking place between long-time friends Klement Gottwald and Rudolf

Slánský, sparked off the biggest discussion of all the works in the series, which is also why it was used as the basis of a book. But this is not a book like many other – Vojtěch Mašek made it into a comic book. „Of course I knew the script but I didn't want to see the episode. I was afraid that it would influence me too much. That is also why my characters do not have the faces of the actors, but are based on the real historical protagonists of the story,” Vojtěch Mašek explained. Actors David Novotný and Radek Holub, who played Slánský and Alexej Čepička in the TV series, confessed that

they failed to grow attached to their film characters and that they did not even try. „I didn't want to understand him. I know that they were people like us who lived their own lives and had their reasons for doing what they did, but I didn't want to understand them,” actor David Novotný described his feelings when playing Rudolf Slánský. „When I saw how my script was filmed, I was almost surprised at how dramatic it all became,” Pavel Kosatík added to the discussion. „Not that I would be unaware of the strong potential of this theme, but all of a sudden I realised that descendants of these people are still alive and what they will think about it when they see it. We wrote it with a certain lightness, not really thinking about this at all, and all of a sudden it dawned on me. What will happen when I meet them?” Pavel Kosatík admitted some of his worries. His nightmare came true when he met Rudolf Slánský's daughter. „I was afraid she'd be mad at me and I'll know that there is nothing I can do about it any more, but she was terrific and I could finally relax. She sees the topic from a healthy distance and is a successful businesswoman. In one debate they asked her what would her father have said about the fact that she's a businesswoman. She jokingly answered that he would have probably nationalised all her property. That was when I had calmed down,” Pavel Kosatík recollected. A the end of this meeting with authors and actors and artist behind the comic-book version of the TV episode How Gottwald Murdered Slánský, visitors were invited to watch the upcoming episodes of the the Czech Century series, which Czech Television will be screening in autumn. JaM



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