

MODERN CZECH CLASSICS



The MCC series presents contemporary translations of influential literary works that have been unavailable to a global readership due to censorship and the effects of totalitarianism. Readers of English can now become acquainted with works that capture the Central European experience – works that have helped express and form Czech and Central European identity, humor, and imagination.

Titles are accompanied by an afterword. Translations are reviewed and circulated among the global scholarly community before publication.

# The Lesser Histories

Jan Zábřana

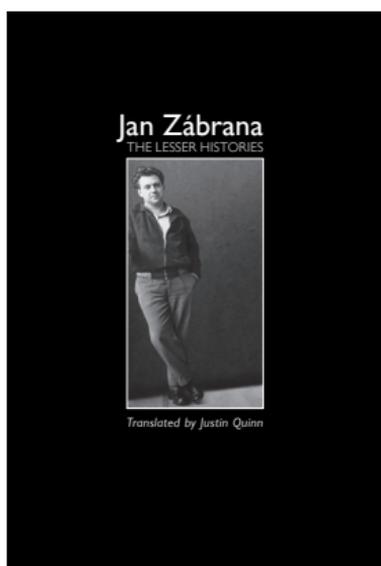
translated & afterword  
by Justin Quinn

2022, paperback, 120 pp.

1. edition

ISBN 9788024649337

CZK 340 / \$18 / £ 11



From the eighth floor of a tower block in Czechoslovakia, Jan Zábřana surveyed the twentieth century. Exiled from his own life by communism, his diary entries reveal a startling perspective: “I’m dead. I died long ago. Why do you keep treating me as if I were one of the living?” / Yet he still wrote *The Lesser Histories*, a collection of sonnets that range through themes of age, sex, and political repression. Often Zábřana’s own voice segues into those of poets he had translated over the years, leaving only a shimmer of subjectivity as he documents a splendid and bitter isolation, immersed in the humor, hatreds, and loves of the everyday. Published in Czech in that ill-fated year of 1968, it was only after the fall of communism that Zábřana was acclaimed as a major twentieth-century writer. Now, with this collection, he can reach English-language readers for the first time.

“Jan Zábřana was one of the most influential Czech translators and poets of the second half of the 20th Century. As an author, Zábřana was obsessed with rewriting his texts. For him, a poem was never complete, never finished.”

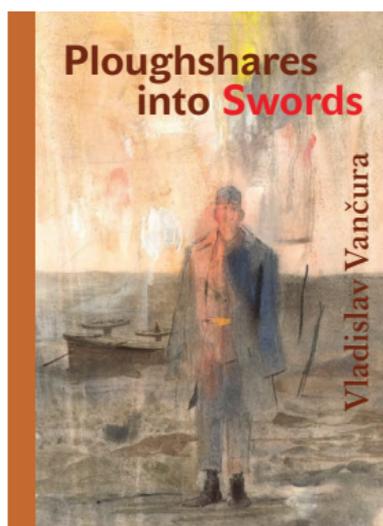
– Petr Eliáš, Albatros

# **Ploughshares into Swords**

**Vladislav Vančura**

**translated by  
David Short  
afterword by  
Rajendra Chitnis**

2021, hardcover, 280 pp.  
1. edition  
ISBN 9788024648149  
CZK 400 / \$ 22 / £ 14



*Ploughshares into Swords* is an expressionist anti-war novel in which Vančura tells the story of the denizens of the Ouhrov estate in language as baroque as the manor that ties them all together. The fragmented narrative introduces the reader to Baron Danowitz, his sons, his French concubine, the farmhand František Hora, and the half-wit murderer Řeka in the autumn of 1913, before revealing their fates during the First World War. Spanning an area from the farmlands of Bohemia to the battlefields of Galicia, the brothels of Budapest and the hospitals of Krakow, the novel takes an unsentimental approach to the war that created Czechoslovakia through a conscious subversion of the prophet Isaiah's injunction that nations should beat their swords into ploughshares. A stunning novel by one of Czech literature's most important writers.

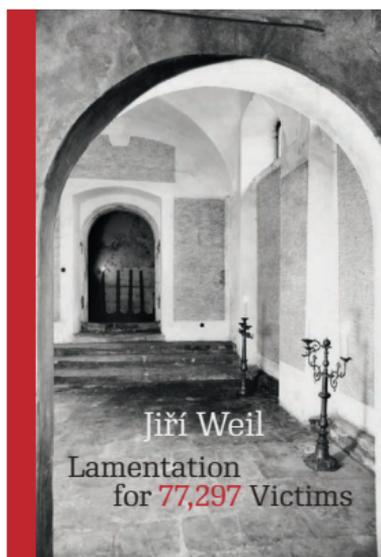
“Standing before the work of Vladislav Vančura, we suddenly feel like we are standing at the crossroads of literary history, as if through the book (much like the Moravian plains) all the major paths connect and flow: east and west, north and south, past and future.”

– Milan Kundera

**Lamentation  
for 77,297 Victims**  
**Jiří Weil**

translated by  
**David T. Lightfoot**  
afterword by  
**Jindřich Toman**

2021, paperback, 66 pp.  
1. edition  
ISBN 9788024645339  
CZK 200 / \$ 12 / £ 8



Jiří Weil's documentary prose poem, *Lamentation for 77,297 Victims*, is a literary monument to the Czech Jews killed during the Holocaust. A remarkable Czech-Jewish writer who worked at Prague's Jewish Museum during the Nazi Occupation and after – he survived the Holocaust by faking his own death – Weil wrote his *Lamentation* while serving as the museum's senior librarian in the 1950s. / This remarkable literary experiment explored new ways to depict the indescribable, combining a narrative of the Shoah, newspaper style accounts of individual lives destroyed by the Holocaust, and quotes from the Tanakh. Together it creates a unique and powerful work.

“Jiri Weil was a writer who witnessed the worst of this century and testified to his experience in works of unflinching and astonishing literary vision.”

– Larry Wolf, NYU, in the *New York Times*

“The harsh criticism Weil received throughout his life reflected his originality and his refusal to fit into received categories.”

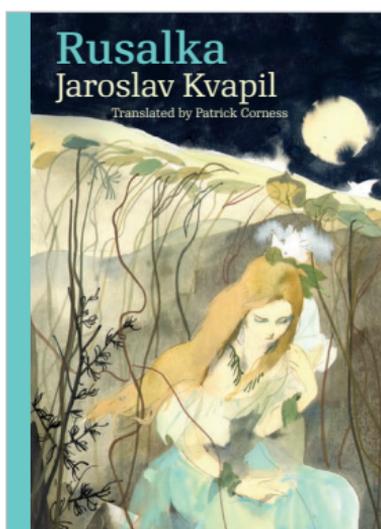
– Jonathan Bolton, Harvard University,  
in the *Yivo Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*

# Rusalka

## Jaroslav Kvapil

translated by  
**Patrick John Corness**  
afterword by  
**Geoffrey Chew**

2020, paperback, 120 pp.  
1. edition, bilingual  
ISBN 9788024643816  
CZK 280 / \$ 12 / £ 8



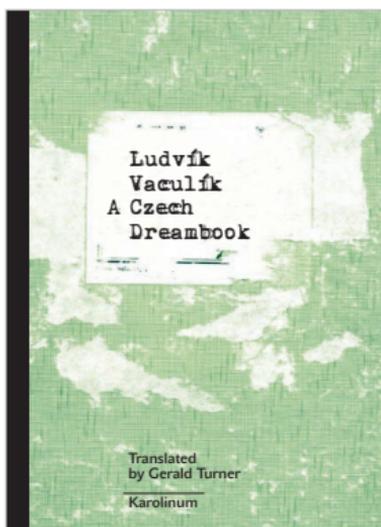
Famous as the libretto for Antonín Dvořák’s opera of the same name, Jaroslav Kvapil’s poem *Rusalka* is an intriguing work of literature on its own. Directly inspired by Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Little Mermaid,” Kvapil’s reinterpretation adds an array of nuanced poetic techniques, a more dramatic tempo, and dark undertones that echo the work of eminent Czech folklorist Karel Jaromír Erben. All of these influences work in tandem to create a poetic work that is familiar yet innovative. Transposed into the folkloric *topos* of a landlocked Bohemia, the mermaid is rendered here as a Slavic *rusalka*—a dangerous water nymph—who must choose between love and immortality. *Rusalka*, while certainly paying homage to the original story’s Scandinavian roots, is a distinct work of modern Czech literature. Newly translated by Patrick John Corness, Kvapil’s work will now find a fresh group of readers looking to get lost in one of Europe’s great lyrical fairy tale traditions.

# **A Czech Dreambook**

**Ludvík Vaculík**

**translated by  
Gerald Turner  
afterword by  
Jonathan Bolton**

2020, hardcover, 574 pp.  
1. edition  
ISBN 9788024638522  
CZK 540 / \$ 27 / £ 17



It's 1979 in Communist Czechoslovakia, ten years into the crushing period known as normalization, and Ludvík Vaculík has writer's block. It has been nearly a decade since he wrote his powerful novel, *The Guinea Pigs*, and it was in 1968 that he wrote his anti-regime manifesto, *Two Thousand Words*, which the Soviet Union used as a pretext for invading Czechoslovakia. On the advice of his friend, the poet and surrealist painter Jiří Kolář, Vaculík begins to keep a diary, "a book about things, people, and events." / Fifty-four weeks later, Vaculík turns out to have written a unique mixture of diary, dream journal, and outright fiction—an inverted *roman à clef* in which the author, his family, his mistresses, and the real leaders of the Czech underground play major roles. / *A Czech Dreambook* has been hailed as the most important work of Czech literature in the past forty years. Vaculík's masterpiece is a brilliant exercise in style, dry humor, and irony—an important portrait of the lives and longings of the dissidents who would become post-Communist elites.

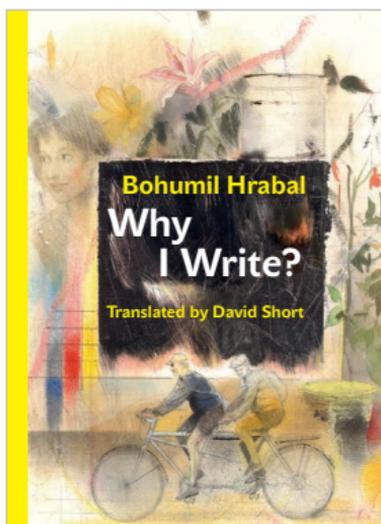
**"An unclassifiable book – history as memoir, through the imagination of an artist."**

– Tom Stoppard

## Why I Write? Bohumil Hrabal

translated by  
David Short  
notes by Jiří Pelán

2019, hardcover, 520 pp.  
1. edition  
ISBN 9788024642680  
CZK 490 / \$ 20 / £ 13



This collection of the earliest prose by one of literature's greatest stylists captures, as scholar Arnault Maréchal put it, "the moment when Hrabal discovered the magic of writing." Taken from the period when Bohumil Hrabal shifted his focus from poetry to prose, these stories—many written in school notebooks, typed and read aloud to friends, or published in samizdat—often showcase raw experiments in style that would define his later works. Others intriguingly utilize forms the author would never pursue again. Featuring the first appearance of key figures from Hrabal's later writings, the book also contains stories that Hrabal would go on to cannibalize for some of his most famous novels. All together, *Why I Write?* offers readers the chance to explore this important nascent phase of Hrabal's writing. Comprising some of his last remaining stories to be translated into English, the collection is a treasure trove for Hrabal devotees and allows us to see clearly why Czech writer and publisher Josef Škvorecký claimed Hrabal was "fundamentally a lyrical poet."

"Hrabal's characters share with slapstick comics a strange invulnerability: they survive the wildest exploits, eating poisonous mushrooms and weathering car explosions not only with impunity but with sunny good humor. In one story in *Why I Write?*, a man bursts into laughter at a relative's funeral. In another, drunken revellers "go to the cemetery" to "wake a few corpses just for the hell of it."

— The New Yorker

# **The Shop on Main Street** **Ladislav Grosman**

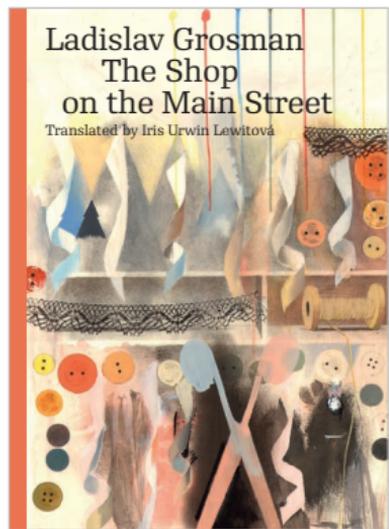
**translated by  
Iris Urwin Lewitová  
afterword by  
Benjamin Frommer**

2019, paperback, 126 pp.

2. edition

ISBN 9788024640228

CZK 280 / \$ 12 / £ 8



Written by a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust, *The Shop on Main Street* is the story that inspired the highly successful Academy Award-winning Czechoslovak film. Looking at the Holocaust through the eyes of a complicated individual, the narrative follows a good-natured Slovak carpenter who in 1942 unwittingly becomes a participant in the persecution of Jews. Describing the film adaptation of Ladislav Grosman's novel, the *New York Times* declared it a "human drama that is a moving manifest of the dark dilemma that confronted all people who were caught as witnesses to Hitler's terrible crime."

"A simple Slovak carpenter is caught up in the activities of the fascist Hlinka Guard. This comical and terrifying portrait is both banal and transcendent. That is, *The Shop on Main Street* is narrated in such a style of which dreams and daily life are made; it circles the unanswerable question that, nonetheless, demands an answer: what are you willing to risk to recognize the humanity of your neighbor? A question that has, unfortunately, become increasingly relevant today."

– Marcela Sulak, Bar-Ilan University

"Along with Škvorecký and Fuks, Grosman belongs to the key authors of Czech post-war literature dealing with the Holocaust. Written with great sensitivity and attention to the little people, *The Shop on Main Street* examines the actions of an ordinary man in extraordinary times."

– Anna Hájková, University of Warwick

**Society for the  
Prevention  
of Cruelty  
to Animals**  
**J. R. Pick**

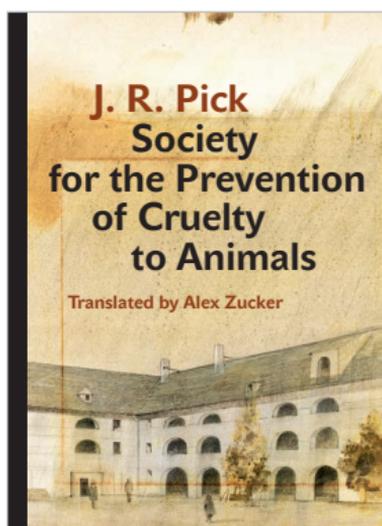
**translated by Alex Zucker**  
**afterword by Zuzana**  
**Justman and Jáchym Topol**

2018, hardcover, 212 pp.

1. edition

ISBN 9788024636993

CZK 380 / \$ 22 / £ 17



Set in 1943 Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia, J. R. Pick's novella *Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals* tells the story of Tony, a thirteen-year-old boy who is deported from Prague to the infamous Terezín ghetto for Jews—the horrific, overcrowded concentration camp where one in four prisoners died of starvation or disease, and a way station to Auschwitz. But it is not the atrocities Tony experiences that make his tale remarkable. It is his ability to find comedy in the incomprehensible. / Tony suffers from tuberculosis, and, lying in his hospital bed one day, he decides to set up an animal welfare organization. Even though no animals are permitted in the camp, he is determined to find just one creature he can care for and protect—and his determination is contagious. Soon prisoners throughout the camp scour Terezín to find Tony a mouse, which he names and carefully guards. But in the fall of 1944, the transports to Auschwitz begin. / In this shockingly funny novella, Pick's draws from the two years he spent imprisoned in Terezín as a teenager. With biting black humor, Pick shines a light on the absurdities and injustice of the Nazi-run Jewish ghetto, using his literary artistry to portray in stunning shorthand what requires Holocaust historians tomes to convey.

“Highly recommended” – Lit Hub

“To write a novel that makes you laugh is a great skill; to write a novel that takes place in a ghetto and still makes you laugh is a true feat.”

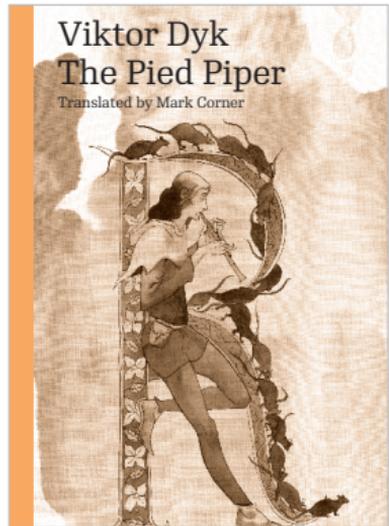
– Los Angeles Review of Books

# The Pied Piper

## Viktor Dyk

translated by  
**Mark Corner**  
afterword by  
**Xavier Galmiche**

2017, paperback, 122 pp.  
1. edition  
ISBN 9788024634401  
CZK 280 / \$ 12 / £ 8



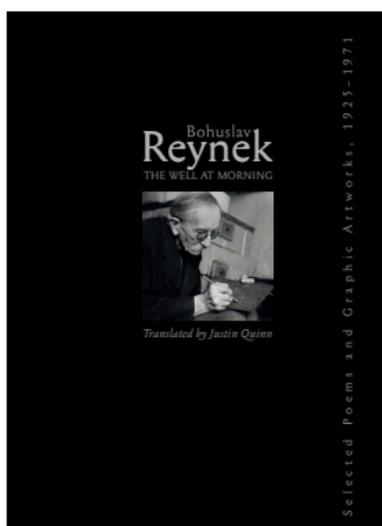
For *The Pied Piper*, Czech writer Viktor Dyk found his muse in the oft-told Saxon legend of the villainous, pipe-playing rat-catcher. Dyk uses the tale as a loose frame for his story of a mysterious wanderer, outcast, and would-be revolutionary—a dreamer typical of fin de siècle Czech literature, who serves Dyk as a timely expression of the conflict between the petty concerns of bourgeois nineteenth-century society and the upcoming artistic generation. Rendered into English by Mark Corner, *The Pied Piper* retains the beautiful style of Dyk’s original Czech. The inspiration for several theatrical and film adaptations, including a noted animated work from critically acclaimed director Jiří Barta, Dyk’s classical novella is given new life by Corner’s translation, proving that the piper is open to new interpretations still.

“You may think you know the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, but probably not the way Dyk tells it in this novella... There’s a timeless storybook quality to Corner’s translation, but Dyk’s work also feels remarkably contemporary, even now. *The Pied Piper* is a work of fine balances, one that lives on in the mind after reading.”  
– European Literature Network

**The Well at  
Morning:  
Selected Poems  
and Graphic  
Artworks,  
1925–1971**  
**Bohuslav Reynek**

translated by **Justin Quinn**  
essays by **Martin C. Putna,**  
**Jan Šerých, Justin Quinn**

2017, hardcover, 179 pp.  
1. edition  
ISBN 9788024634258  
CZK 490 / \$ 28 / £ 17



Poet and artist Bohuslav Reynek spent most of his life in the relative obscurity of the Czech-Moravian Highlands; although he suffered at the hands of the Communist regime, he cannot be numbered among the dissident poets of Eastern Europe who won acclaim for their political poetry in the second half of the twentieth century. Rather, Reynek belongs to an older pastoral-devotional tradition—a kindred spirit to the likes of English-language poets Gerard Manley Hopkins, William Wordsworth, Robert Frost, and Edward Thomas. *The Well at Morning* presents a selection of poems from across his life and is illustrated with twenty-five of his own color etchings. Also featuring three essays by leading scholars that place Reynek’s life and work alongside those of his better-known peers, this book presents a noted Czech artist to the wider world, reshaping and amplifying our understanding of modern European poetry.

“Justin Quinn’s rendering of Reynek’s poems appears effortless, but it has in fact been a labor of love for many years. The result feels more like transubstantiation than translation... Quinn has given an authentic English voice to a rural Czech poet whose work is fresh and revelatory today.” – Los Angeles Review of Books

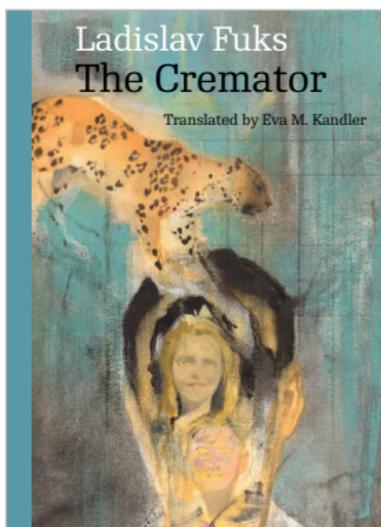
“Reynek took the pastoral as his great theme, and Quinn’s deft translations alluringly echo the environmental emphasis of some of his own poems.”  
– Words Without Borders

# The Cremator

## Ladislav Fuks

translated by  
**Eva M. Kandler**  
afterword by  
**Rajendra Chitnis**

2016, paperback, 182 pp.  
2. edition  
ISBN 9788024632902  
CZK 280 / \$ 18 / £ 14



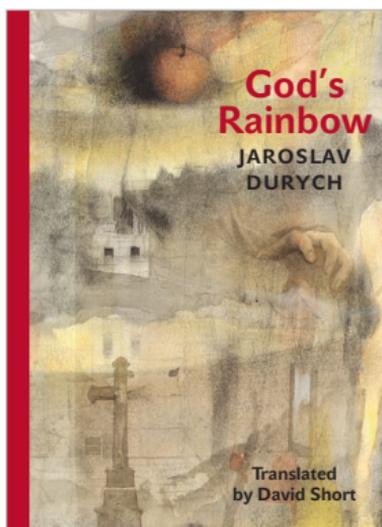
Although *The Cremator* was written in 1967, the plot is set three decades earlier. Ladislav Fuks wrote a book permeated with anxiety, fear, lawlessness, and loneliness set against the background of Nazi occupation and ideology. This grotesque novella presents a psychological drama about a man who, while absolutely convinced that he is doing good, destroys the people dearest to him. Here the image of evil gradually loses its firm contours and takes on the form of an unassuming crematory worker. Comparable to Klaus Mann's *Mefisto* (1936), *The Cremator* is a novel about the metamorphosis of a man obsessed with greatness. A study of the totalitarian mindset with stunning resonance for today, *The Cremator* is a disturbing, powerful work of literary horror.

# God's Rainbow

## Jaroslav Durych

translated by **David Short**  
afterword by  
**Rajendra Chitnis**

2016, hardcover, 256 pp.  
1. edition  
ISBN 9788024632919  
CZK 450 / \$ 25 / £ 19



Although Jaroslav Durych completed *God's Rainbow* in 1955, it was not published until 1969, long after his death. This was due to several factors: not only was Durych considered a controversial author, but its theme was problematic for the Communist Party as well. The dream-like story about guilt and reconciliation takes place in the Sudeten border region after the displacement of its German inhabitants following World War II. An elderly, lonely man arrives in a depopulated and devastated village in search of the informer whose act left a mark on the man's life. Instead, he meets a young German girl who has secretly returned to her house after having experienced and miraculously survived all the horrors of the end of the war in the German borderlands. Although on the verge of exhaustion, both protagonists must come to terms with the past, a painful experience, before they find the courage to make a fresh start.

“Durych, one of the leading Czech writers of the twentieth century, wrote *God's Rainbow* in 1955 and then kept the manuscript under a pile of coal in his cellar. He had miraculously escaped the forced labor meted out to fellow Catholic writers under Stalinism, but the discovery of this neo-baroque text would have sealed his fate. Not only did it preach Christian forgiveness, quote Latin prayers, and allude repeatedly to the Marian cult, Mary Magdalene, Adam and Eve, the devil, hell and damnation, but it also challenged the official silence about post-war atrocities against Bohemian Germans.”

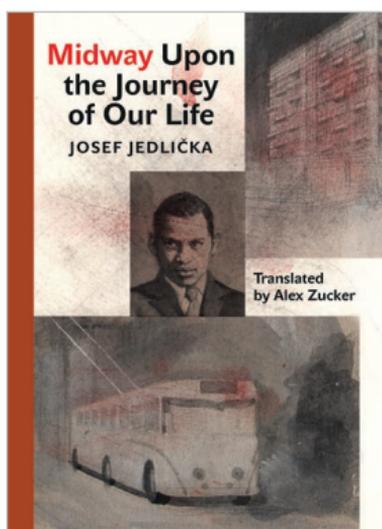
– Times Literary Supplement

# Midway Upon the Journey of Our Life

Josef Jedlička

translated by Alex Zucker  
afterword by  
Rajendra Chitnis

2016, hardcover, 192 pp.  
1. edition  
ISBN 9788024631271  
CZK 430 / \$ 25 / £ 19



Josef Jedlička's *Midway Upon the Journey of Our Life*, written in the years 1954–7, was a slap in the face to the reigning aesthetic of socialist realism in Communist Czechoslovakia. In this post-modern antiheroic novel, heavily influenced by Russian writer and theorist Viktor Shklovsky, meditative and speculative reflections intertwine with darkly comic scenes from the everyday life of the author and his neighbors, dwelling in a Le Corbusier-style tenement block in north Bohemia. The chronology of the narrative ranges from May 1945 to the early 1950s, as Jedlička and his compatriots go about the business of “building a new society” and the mythology that undergirds it. Due to its critical stance toward communism, the novel could not be published in Czech until 1966, amid the easing of cultural control leading up to Prague Spring, and even then it was still censored. A complete version did not appear until 1994, five years after the Velvet Revolution.

“A rediscovered gem”

– European Literature Network

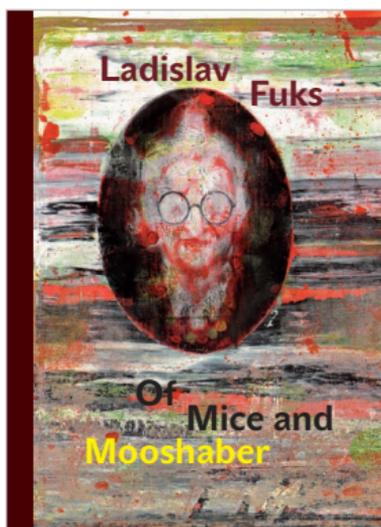
“An overlooked classic”

– Radio Free Europe

# Of Mice and Mooshaber Ladislav Fuks

translated by  
**Mark Corner**  
afterword by  
**Rajendra Chitnis**

2014, hardcover, 512 pp.  
1. edition  
ISBN 9788024622163  
CZK 490 / \$ 20 / £ 15



Written before the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 but not published until 1970, *Of Mice and Mooshaber* is an allegorical novel that shows evil's destructive influence on humans. The story takes place in an unspecified country in which the ruler has been overthrown and replaced by a dictator. The protagonist, Mrs. Mooshaber, is an old widow whose husband was a coachman in a brewery. Her life revolves around her job as a caretaker for troublesome children, her own ungrateful children, and her fear of mice, which she tries to catch in traps. Blending elements of the grotesque with the fantastic, Fuks's novel of heartbreaking tragedy speaks to the evil that can be found within the human soul.

“This excellent depiction of a totalitarian society, whose prophetic, almost clairvoyant vision of the year 1989 holds a distorted mirror up to its time and society, while also representing a fascinating exploration of the depths of the human soul.”

– Theatre Husa na provázku

**Rambling On:  
An Apprentice's  
Guide to the Gift  
of the Gab**  
**Bohumil Hrabal**

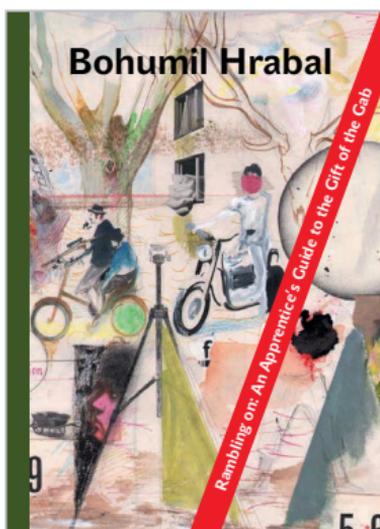
translated by **David Short**  
afterword by **Václav Kadlec**

2014, hardcover, 352 pp.

1. edition

ISBN 9788024623160

CZK 390/ \$ 20 / £ 15



Hrabal's collection of stories is set in his beloved village of Kersko. Several of the stories were written before the 1968 Soviet invasion of Prague but had to be reworked when they were rejected by Communist censors during the 1970s. This edition features the original, uncensored versions of those stories—preserving the author's original intention.

“An excellent introduction to the great Czech writer, in both content and form: the book is beautifully bound into a cloth cover and features an impressive number of collages by Jiří Grus that illustrate magnificently the whimsy of Hrabal's prose. The book is a delight to hold and to read.”

– Los Angeles Review of Books

“Delightful tales of mischief and wonder set in and around the author's Kersko hideaway. Short's translation captures the rough jewels of Hrabal's rhythmic and roaming phrase-making, which, more often than not, culminates in an astonishing tenderness laden with little wisdoms.”

– Times Literary Supplement

## Behind the Lines: Bugulma and Other Stories

Jaroslav Hašek

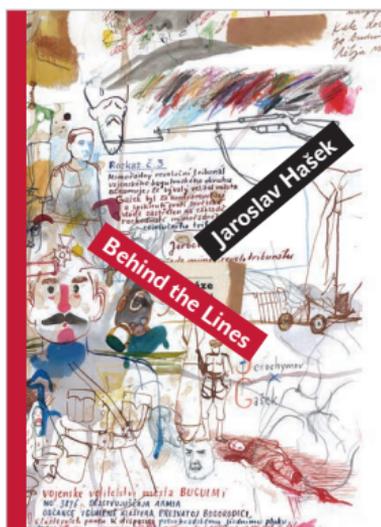
translated by Mark Corner  
afterword by Robert  
B. Pynsent

2012, hardcover, 224 pp.

1. edition

ISBN 9788024620138

CZK 390 / \$ 25 / £ 19



Hašek was remarkably prolific, and he wrote hundreds of short stories that all display both his extraordinary gift for satire and his profound distrust of authority. Here, in a new English translation, are a series of short stories based on Hašek's experiences as a Red Commissar in the Russian Civil War and his return to Czechoslovakia. First published in the *Prague Tribune*, these nine stories are considered to be some of his best, and they provide delightful entertainment as well as important background and insight into *The Good Soldier Švejk*. This collection is much more than a tool for understanding Hašek's better known novel; it is a significant work in its own right. *Behind the Lines* focuses on the Russian town of Bugulma, and takes aim, with mordant wit, at the inefficiency of small town bureaucracy. A hidden gem remarkable for its modern, ribald sense of humor, *Behind the Lines* is an enjoyable, fast-paced anthology of great literary and historical value.

“Hašek is still very relevant, and the sense of being a traveler in a disordered universe does bear some parallels with the modern day. Coping with a globalized world, there are similar ways in which one can feel discomforted by the loss of clear forms of identification that used to exist.”

– [www.radio.cz](http://www.radio.cz)

# The Chattertooth Eleven

Eduard Bass

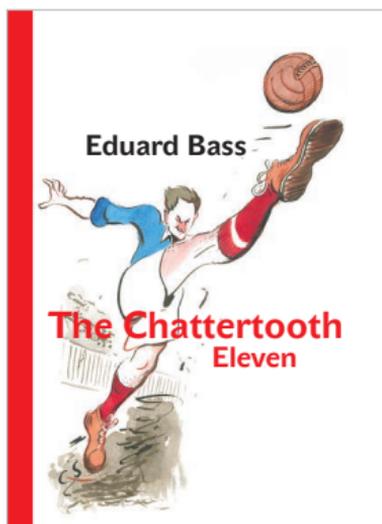
translated by  
Ruby Hobling  
foreword by Mark Corner

2009, hardcover, 224 pp.

1. edition

ISBN 9788024615738

CZK 390 / \$ 25 / £ 19



In 1922, the same year that saw the establishment of the Czechoslovak Football Association, a former singer and cabaret director from Prague published a novel about soccer. Eighty-six years later, that novel, Eduard Bass's *The Chattertooth Eleven*, has been reprinted more than thirty times, been made into a film, and is one of the most popular works of Czech fiction in history. This book tells the extraordinary adventures of an ordinary father, Chattertooth, and his eleven sons—whom he has raised as an unbeatable soccer team. This humorous tale—set in the aftermath of World War I—celebrates fair play and perseverance while simultaneously taking a gently satirical stance towards the Czech infatuation with soccer.

“It was published in 1922... and has since enchanted generations of young and adult readers.”

– Radio Prague International

## Everyday Spooks

Karel Michal

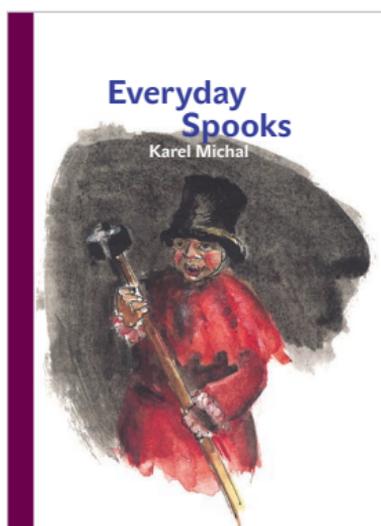
translated by David Short

2008, hardcover, 226 pp.

1. edition

ISBN 9788024614946

CZK 390 / \$ 25 / £ 19



Prague-born Karel Michal lived a significant part of his adult life under Czechoslovakia's oppressive Communist regime. Prevented from studying at university as a young man, he cycled through a number of professions before finally turning to writing in the early 1960s. Michal's works offer a Kafkaesque perspective on the mechanism of the absurd and argue for substantial reinterpretation of the concept of ordinary life under totalitarianism. With *Everyday Spooks*, Michal presents an unforgettable assortment of fantastic creatures that inhabit his strange vision of everyday reality in 50s and 60s-Communist Czechoslovakia. This collection of seven short stories describes bizarre encounters where the past melts into the present, ordinary people meet comic and anxious figures and interact with ghosts, and mundane speech drifts repeatedly into absurdity.

“In each story, Michal seems to toy with his reader as he toys with his characters—and as the ghost of a dead cat might toy with his prey... but the story itself is genius, its cat utterly logical.”

– Review of Contemporary Fiction

**Pirouettes on  
a Postage Stamp:  
An Interview-novel  
with Questions  
Asked and Answers  
Recorded by László  
Szigeti  
Bohumil Hrabal**

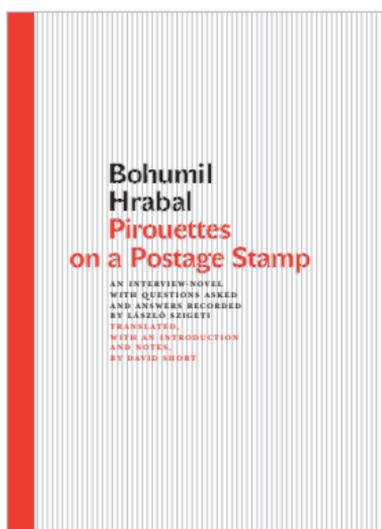
**translated by David Short  
introduction and notes  
by David Short**

2008, hardcover, 192 pp.

1. edition

ISBN 9788024614472

CZK 390 / \$ 20 / £ 15



Novelist Bohumil Hrabal (1914–97) was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia and spent decades working manual labor before turning to writing in his late forties. From that point, he quickly made his mark on the Czech literary scene; by his death he was ranked with Jaroslav Hašek, Karel Čapek, and Milan Kundera as among the nation’s greatest twentieth-century writers. Known for writing about political questions with humor and vivid expressiveness, Hrabal also was given to experimentation—his early novel *Dancing Lessons for the Advanced in Age*, for example, consists of a single extended sentence.

*Pirouettes on a Postage Stamp* carries Hrabal’s experimentation to the field of autobiography. On its surface a verbatim record of an oral interview conducted by Hungarian journalist László Szigeti, the book confuses and confounds with false starts, digressions, and philosophical asides. Yet despite all the games and distractions, Hrabal’s personality shines through, compelling and unforgettable, making *Pirouettes on a Postage Stamp* an unexpected treat for any lover of Czech literature.

# **We Were a Handful** Karel Poláček

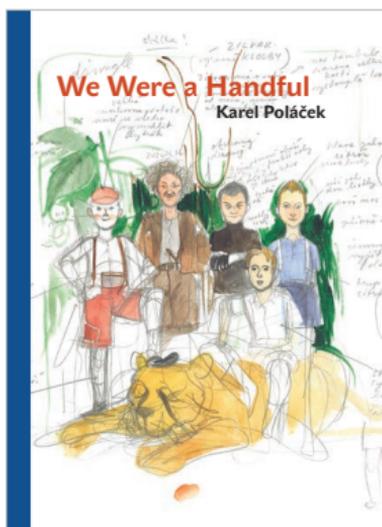
**translated by  
Mark Corner**

2007, hardcover, 396 pp.

1. edition

ISBN 9788024614496

CZK 490 / \$ 30 / £ 23

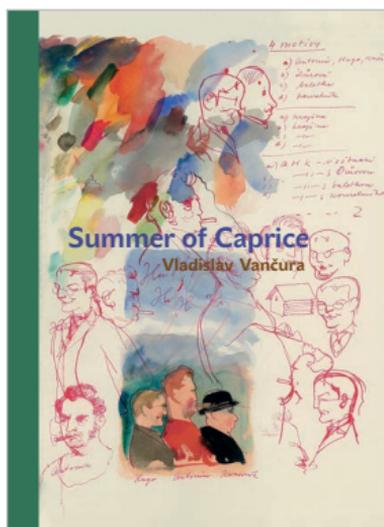


A favorite work of Czech humor, *We Were a Handful* depicts the adventures of five boys from a small Czech town through the diary of Petr Bajza, the grocer's son. Written by Karel Poláček at the height of World War II, before his deportation to Auschwitz in 1944, this book draws on the happier years of Poláček's own childhood as inspiration. As we look upon the world through Petr's eyes, we too marvel at the incomprehensible world of grownups; join in fights between gangs of neighborhood kids; and laugh at the charming language of children, a major source of the book's humor. This translation at last offers English-language readers the opportunity to share in Petr's (and Poláček's) childhood and reminds us that joy and laughter are possible even in the darkest times.

# Summer of Caprice Vladislav Vančura

translated by  
Mark Corner

2006, hardcover, 204 pp.  
1. edition  
ISBN 9788024611952  
CZK 480 / \$ 30 / £ 23



*Summer of Caprice*, a captivating comic novel first published in 1926, is a classic of Czech literature, yet it is little known elsewhere. Commonly considered untranslatable due to the complexities of the text, which is characterized by a playful narrative and an exceptional mastery of language, and its profound cultural context, it is rendered here in English that beautifully captures Vladislav Vančura's experimental style—or, as the author himself called it, his “poetism in prose.” Mixing the archaic with the innovative, raw colloquialisms with biblical quotations, *Summer of Caprice* opens an uproarious window onto the Czech spirit, humor, and way of life as it tells the tale of a magician and his girlfriend arriving at a sleepy summer resort and turning the lives of the protagonists upside down over three shocking days.

“Just as scattered rays converge in a single golden strand in the lens of a magnifying glass, Vančura's creative endeavors converge in a single, undivided stream.”

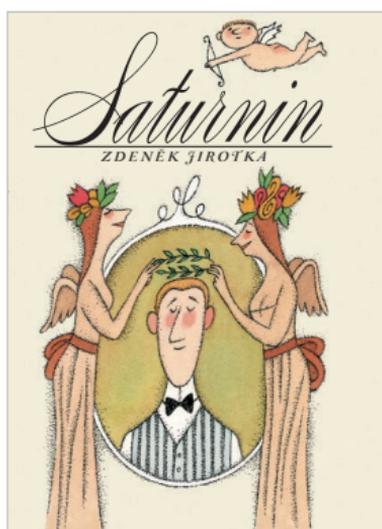
– Milan Kundera

## Saturnin

### Zdeněk Jirotka

translated by  
Mark Corner

2003, 2005, 2009, 2013,  
hardcover, 264 pp., 4. edition  
ISBN 9788024606835  
CZK 440 / \$ 30 / £ 23



On its initial publication in Czech in 1942, *Saturnin* was a best-seller, its gentle satire offering an unexpected—if temporary—reprieve from the grim reality of the German occupation. In the years since, the novel has been hailed as a classic of Czech literature, and this translation makes it available to English-language readers for the first time—which is entirely appropriate, for author Zdeněk Jirotka clearly modeled his light comedy on the English masters Jerome K. Jerome and P. G. Wodehouse. The novel’s main character, Saturnin, a “gentleman’s gentleman” who obviously owes a debt to Wodehouse’s beloved Jeeves, wages a constant battle to protect his master from romantic disaster and intrusive relatives, such as Aunt Catherine, the “Prancing Dictionary of Slavic Proverbs.” *Saturnin* will warm the heart of any fan of literary comedy.

“*Saturnin*... has a delicious dry humor and an imaginative flair that makes it much more than just the ‘Czech Jeeves.’ There are a surprising number of belly-laughs for a novel that is more than half a century old.”

— Times Literary Supplement

## Now Available in Paperback

### **We Were a Handful** Karel Poláček

2016

ISBN 9788024632858

CZK 280 / \$ 12 / £ 9

### **Summer of Caprice** Vladislav Vančura

2016

ISBN 9788024632896

CZK 280 / \$ 12 / £ 9

### **Saturnin** Zdeněk Jirotka

2016

ISBN 9788024632889

CZK 280 / \$ 12 / £ 9

### **Rambling on: An Apprentice's Guide to the Gift of the Gab** Bohumil Hrabal

2016

ISBN 9788024632865

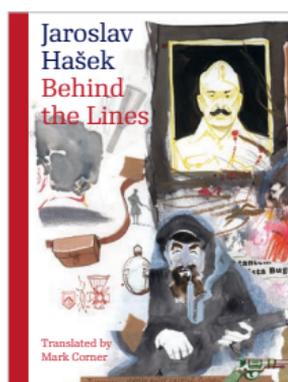
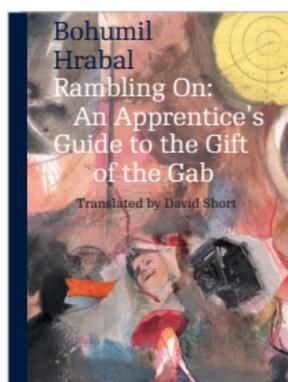
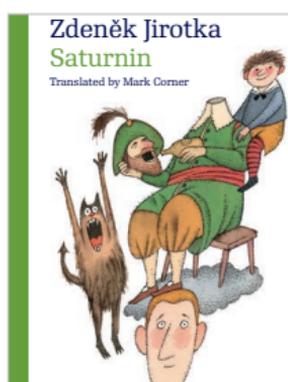
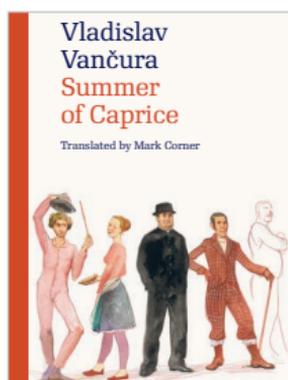
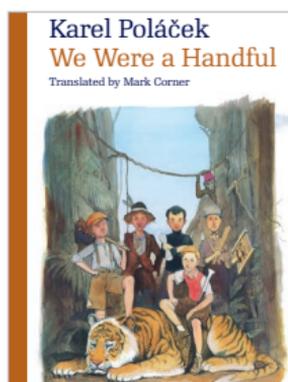
CZK 280 / \$ 12 / £ 9

### **Behind the Lines: Bugulma and Other Stories** Jaroslav Hašek

2016

ISBN 9788024632872

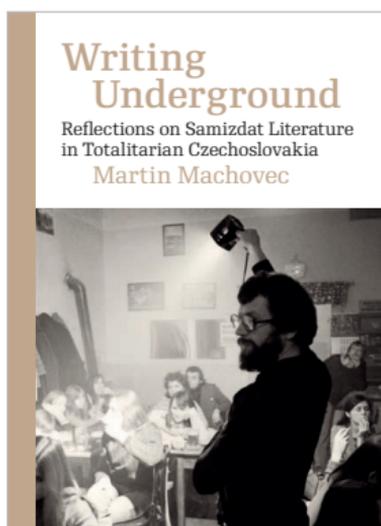
CZK 280 / \$ 12 / £ 9



Scholarship

**Writing Underground:  
Reflections on Samizdat  
Literature in Totalitarian  
Czechoslovakia**  
**Martin Machovec**

2020, paperback, 200 pp.  
1. edition  
ISBN 9788024641256  
CZK TBD / \$ 18 / £ 14



In this collection of writings produced between 2000 and 2018, the pioneering literary historian of the Czech underground, Martin Machovec, examines the multifarious nature of the underground phenomenon. After devoting considerable attention to the circle surrounding the band The Plastic People of the Universe and their manager, the poet Ivan M. Jirous, Machovec turns outward to examine the broader concept of the underground, comparing the Czech incarnation not only with the movements of its Central and Eastern European neighbors, but also with those in the world at large. In one essay, he reflects on the so-called Půlnoc Editions, which published illegal texts in the darkest days of the late forties and early fifties. In other essays, Machovec examines the relationship between illegal texts published at home (samizdat) and those smuggled out to be published abroad (tamizdat), as well as the range of literature that can be classified as samizdat, drawing attention to movements frequently overlooked by literary critics. In his final, previously unpublished essay, Machovec examines Jirous's "Report on the Third Czech Musical Revival" not as a merely historical document, but as literature itself.

"Machovec is a leading expert on Czechoslovak underground culture. His essays from the last two decades rely on insider knowledge, an enormous archive, and decades of analytical engagement. They are an indispensable source for any researcher of underground music, literature, and art in Czechoslovakia."

– Veronika Tuckerová, Harvard University

Scholarship

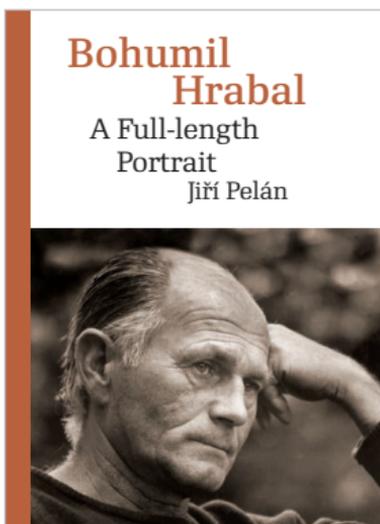
**Bohumil Hrabal:  
A Full-length Portrait**  
Jiří Pelán

2019, paperback, 140 pp.

1. edition

ISBN 9788024639093

CZK 260 / \$ 15 / £ 10



Described by Parul Sehgal in the *New York Times Book Review* as “one of the great prose stylists of the twentieth century; the scourge of state censors; the gregarious bar hound and lover of gossip, beer, cats, and women (in roughly that order),” Bohumil Hrabal is one of the most important, most translated, and most idiosyncratic Czech authors. In *Bohumil Hrabal: A Full-length Portrait*, Jiří Pelán makes the case that this praise is far too narrow. A respected scholar of French and Italian literature, Pelán approaches Hrabal as a comparatist, expertly situating him within the context of European and world literature as he explores the entirety of Hrabal’s oeuvre and its development over sixty years. Concise, clear, and as compulsively readable as the works of Hrabal himself, *Bohumil Hrabal* was universally praised by critics in its original Czech edition as one of best works of Hrabal criticism. Here it is beautifully rendered into English for the first time by David Short, a celebrated translator of Hrabal’s works. Also featuring a fascinating selection of black-and-white images from Hrabal’s life, *Bohumil Hrabal* is essential reading for anyone interested in this crucial Czech author.

Scholarship

**Views from the Inside:  
Czech Underground  
Literature and Culture  
(1948–1989)  
Martin Machovec (ed.)**

2018, paperback, 112 pp.  
2. edition  
ISBN 9788024635927  
CZK 260 / \$ 15 / £ 10

**Views  
from the Inside**  
Czech Underground  
Literature  
and Culture  
(1948–1989)  
Martin Machovec  
(ed.)

From political novels to surrealist poetry and censored rock and roll, Czech underground culture of the later twentieth century displayed an astonishing, and unheralded, variety. This fascinating exploration of that underground movement—the historical, sociological, and psychological background that gave rise to it; the literature, music, and arts that comprised it; and its more recent incorporation into the mainstream—draws on the voices of scholars and critics who themselves played an integral role in generating it. Featuring the writings of Czech poet Ivan Martin Jirous, philosopher-poet Egon Bondy, and writer Jáchym Topol, as well as Canadian expat and translator Paul Wilson—many of which have never before been available in English—in addition to an expanded bibliography reflecting advances in scholarship, this second edition of *Views from the Inside* is both a work of literature and an eye-opening volume of criticism.

“An essential selection of texts from and about the Czech underground of the 1970s and 1980s. Key participants provide reflections on an unofficial culture driven by underground rock, samizdat, and civic resistance. The collection is a perfect tool for classwork focusing on relations between culture and politics.”

— Jindřich Toman, University of Michigan



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Charles University is the largest educational institution in the Czech Republic, with 8,000 faculty members and 52,000 students. Although Karolinum Press was established in 1990, the university's publishing tradition can be traced back to humanist prints from the 16th century. As part of the university, Karolinum Press supports research and education in all of the disciplines taught at the institution's 17 colleges. The books published reflect this wide scope, ranging from the humanities to natural sciences and medicine. We publish scientific monographs, journals, and textbooks used around the country. Our independent series present prestigious publications on the history of Charles University, titles in art history, language textbooks and many disciplinary and interdisciplinary series, including translations of renowned foreign publications focusing on literary criticism, history of culture, linguistics and philosophy.