

The most valuable part of the study is the development and execution of a new study subject *Intercultural communicative competence* for university teacher trainees. The efficiency of this subject is supported by the YOGA form questionnaire and focus group discussions with the students. The researcher and teacher - as the same person - appears to have done a very valuable job creating a completely new subject, and she has succeeded in achieving better results i.e. developing the ICC of her students. My only criticism is the choice of quantitative content analyses of the focus group, as the quantitative outcomes comparing the focus groups at the beginning and then at the end of the semester, do not show the development of ICC. The author herself points additionally to the importance of qualitative analyses which she also carried out, as the numbers (quantitative analysis) in this case did not reflect the real development of ICC. The YOGA form questionnaire at the beginning and the end of the course showed a positive development of the ICC of the teacher trainees. Comparison of the questionnaire outcomes and the qualitative analyses of the focus groups support the reliability of research. The author proved that the development of ICC is also possible in an artificial classroom environment. I agree with Kostkova's point that to be interculturally communicatively competent does not guarantee to be a good teacher of ICC. There is definitely a need to create a subject, which would be didactically preparing teachers on how to develop ICC of their learners within English language lessons. I suggest that the created subject of *Intercultural communicative competence* should be applied into other study programmes, not only foreign language teacher courses, as education of interculturally competent people is one of the priorities of the education in general, and not only the domain of foreign language study.

Eva Reid

### **Slovakia, a Shattered Idyll, Could Become His Home**

*Milan Kovacovic: Ma's Dictionary: Straddling the Social Class Divide. Duluth: Greysolon Press, 2011. 340p. ISBN 978-0578081687*

Saint-Aquilin, Bzince pod Javorinou, Paris, Chicago, San Francisco, Würzburg, Duluth. These are just few places Milan Kovacovic's life is connected with and which together create an exotic setting for a memoir written by a professor of French language, literature and culture at the University of Minnesota.

To understand his quest for identity, as he states it to be the primary impulse that initiated the writing of this book, it is useful to review his ethnic and social background. Kovacovic was born in 1942 to Slovak parents who worked for a

rich family in a village in Normandy. When Milan after eighteen months loses his father, who dies of cancer, life for him and his two elder sisters gets very hard and this unhappy beginning changes his life path forever. Due to financial problems, as his Maman becomes the only bread giver, Milan has to live with elderly, although, loving couple whom he calls Pépère and Mémère. Kovacovic is afterwards separated with his sister Eva, who is left with Slovak relatives in Bzince, for seventeen years.

After finishing lyceum at the age of 15, Milan routes to The United States of America with self-willed mother to find out that American dream is just too far from him. He also realizes that the social stability he used to indulge in as a son of a favored cook and the luxury of wearing fine clothes has disappeared from his life. It is then apparent, as the subtitle of the memoir indicates, that after losing father and sisters, material wealth for Kovacovic represent also mental stability and by entering the new world he deprived of this much needed secure point.

Consequently, Kovacovic is lifted, not solely by his passiveness, into the world of manual work and many pages in the book describe wasted time of a teenager seen from the perspective of an old man who is able to spot adolescent frailties: "I envied people my age, namely students, who had a perspective on the future along with seemingly achievable projects or goals. I hungered for employment that would allow me some measure of self-direction and autonomy. This aspiration seemed unrealistic and unattainable for 'people like me'". (p.152) Furthermore, he explains the insecure social path from the viewpoint of an immigrant in 1965 who is triggered by following American dream: "But without support from family or any other source, I could progress only under an institutional umbrella, in my case the military. Whether due to lack of imagination on my part, or lucid perception of reality, I saw no other possibility. 'America – the land of opportunity' had become for me a myth, a cruel hoax." (p.265) It is quite peculiar for a reader to see how Kovacovic afterwards takes taste in study by attending numerous courses in the army.

Kovacovic chooses special moments and puts them separately in the book. Several chapters have appeared in literary journals receiving various awards, to be exact the Minnesota State Arts Board and the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council. Interestingly, Ma's Dictionary, the first excerpt to be published, telling the story of Maman's dictionary and its essential place in her life, was chosen for Boundaries of Twilight (1991), a volume of poetry and prose where not only well established but unknown writers of Slovak and Czech ancestry revealed their sense of ethnicity.

The answer for a question what will become of a boy with French accent and poor background in America is clear from the very beginning and the back cover

reveals that the memoir follows the journey of a professor in France, Slovakia and the U.S.A. What is then the most expressive means in this story? Whether it is through his honesty, writing talent or accuracy in depicting life situations, one has to admit that all these devices together enable him to touch reader's heart and employ reader's mind. To imagine a voyage portrayed in the book he adds his personal photos with Maman, sisters or just a picture of one of his step homes in Paris.

If the narration set in France is guided by his Maman and Pèpère and Mémère, in America themes of intimate and professional life predominates. Subchapter Slovakia, A Shattered Idyll is intended to explicate Kovacovic's Slovak background but, surprisingly, he does not pay much attention to depiction of life in his parents' native village Bzince pod Javorinou that he revisited when working for international airlines in San Francisco. The last part of the book called Fast Forward is more a personal essay than a memoir because the core of the text is about university teaching and Kovacovic confesses how much he has found himself in this profession.

Ma's Dictionary is an important memoir for Slovak culture for several reasons. Although Kovacovic was born in France, his maternal and paternal roots lie in Slovakia. Slovak readers will find in this book a true, well written story by a man who can handle poetic words, who achieved his American dream, and finally, who sets to find out who he really is. Moreover, Ma's Dictionary, in many respects, follows a very exceptional line along with Thomas Bell's *In the Midst of Life* or Paul Wilkes' *In Due Season*. We shall, after all, have one daring wish - let there be more memoirs from our American compatriots who perceive Slovakia as an idyll.

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